

*WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE
PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE
FOR APPROVAL AT WSC '87*

**20 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
ABOUT NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS**

I.

- Q.** How and when did N.A. start?
- A.** Narcotics Anonymous, as we know it today, was started by a group of addicts seeking recovery. They made a decision to follow the example of those who had gone before them. It began in July 1953 in Southern California. It has since grown into a worldwide Fellowship with many thousands of meetings.

II.

- Q.** Who are the members of Narcotics Anonymous?
- A.** Our members come from all walks of life. Anyone with the desire to stop using may join our Fellowship. We seem to have many differences. The drugs we used, the circumstances of our lives and the degree to which our disease had progressed may have been different. We do share two important things in common; the disease of addiction and the desire to stop using drugs.

III.

- Q.** Is N.A. only for narcotics addicts?
- A.** No. When our Fellowship was named in the 1950's the understanding of the words narcotic and addict was different than today. The influence of the drug culture in the 1960's and 1970's changed that understanding. A greater variety of drugs are in use today. Only a few are known commonly as narcotics. Over the same period of time the Program of Narcotics Anonymous has remained the same. We believe our problem is not the use of any specific drug or group of drugs. Our problem is the disease of addiction, and our program is one of abstinence from all drugs.

IV.

- Q.** Does an addict have to be clean to attend an N.A. meeting?
- A.** Newcomers don't have to be clean when they get here but after the first meeting we suggest that they keep coming back and come back clean. We want the place where we recover to be a safe place. For that reason we ask that no drugs or paraphernalia be brought to any meeting.

V.

Q. Can non-addicts become N.A. members?

A. Non-addicts are very important to N.A., but not as members. Many professionals who work with addicts attend our open meetings to find out for themselves how N.A. works. Family and friends of addicts often attend our social functions and open meetings. Membership, however, is restricted to addicts. We need to preserve the atmosphere of trust and identification so necessary to our recovery. The highest priority at our meetings is the maintenance of an atmosphere where a suffering addict may find hope and recovery.

VI.

Q. What about dual addiction?

A. The term dual addiction has no application for us. We believe there is one disease, regardless of drugs used. All addicts are welcome in N.A. We make no distinction among them.

VII.

Q. How do addicts of such diverse backgrounds relate?

A. By using a vocabulary that is in common with our recovery, we do not set any addict or drug apart from others. We use the term addict when describing ourselves, regardless of drugs used. We use the terms "clean", "cleantime", and "recovery" to refer to the recovery process, rather than terms that apply to specific drugs. This way we carry one consistent, clear message that applies to us all.

VIII.

Q. Where are N.A. meetings held?

A. There is no certain kind of facility in which N.A. meetings are held. Regardless of where our meetings are located, they are in no way affiliated with any facility.

IX.

Q. How can addicts find N.A. meetings?

A. If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us out. If those who work with addicts are unaware of our existence, they cannot refer them to us. Most cities have N.A. Phonelines listed in their directories. The people answering them will be happy to give you the location of the N.A. meeting nearest you, or send a meeting list upon request. If no Phoneline is listed in your area, feel free to contact our World Service Office at P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409.

X.

Q. What are N.A. meetings like?

A. Since N.A. meetings are self governing, there are many different kinds of meetings. Some are topic discussion meetings, some are speaker meetings, some are literature discussion meetings, and some are part of or combinations of these. Many are open to the public and others are for addicts only. There are a few common threads running through them all.

The primary purpose of every N.A. meeting is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. There are no counselors or professional people present. N.A. meetings are run by addicts for addicts. We have found that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel.

Regardless of format, N.A. meetings usually start with readings from our literature and move into the portion mentioned above. There is time for announcements and perhaps more reading at the end. They usually close with a prayer.

XI.

Q. What is the difference between "open" and "closed" N.A. meetings?

A. An "open" meeting is one which non-addicts may attend to see how N.A. functions. A "closed" meeting is only for those who are there because of their own addiction problem.

XII.

Q. Is N.A. a religious organization?

A. No. Narcotics Anonymous is not affiliated with any religious group and espouses no religious beliefs. Our program is a set of principles--Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions--which are spiritual in nature. While these principles mention God, each member is free to develop their own concept of a higher power. What is important to us is that our recovery is based on these principles and that they work.

XIII.

- Q. Is there any formal organization to N.A.?**
- A. N.A. is made up of thousands of self governing groups. These groups are held together by common principles; the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of N.A. We have learned that for our Fellowship, leadership by example and selfless service works and that direction and manipulation fail. We choose not to have presidents, masters or directors. Instead we have secretaries, treasurers and representatives. These titles imply service rather than control. There is a network of service committees whose function is to unify and strengthen the N.A. groups. These committees exist to help groups carry the N.A. message. Some committees provide services to help increase the number of addicts who know about N.A. so they may attend meetings. Others provide services to groups such as literature development, phonenumber operation, guidance in applying our principles, etc.. These services are provided by recovering addicts, all members of the N.A. Fellowship. There is no governing body in N.A. No part of N.A. has authority over any part of the Fellowship.**

XIV.

- Q. What about meetings held in hospitals and institutions?**
- A. N.A. Service Committees sponsor presentations of N.A. recovery in jails, treatment centers and recovery houses. If a facility wishes to have one of these meetings held regularly, they may call the local phonenumber or write to the World Service Office, Attn: H&I Coordinator.**

XV.

- Q. What does it cost to participate in N.A.?**
- A. Nothing. There are no initiation fees or dues. N.A. is not professional. We are all addicts, here for our own recovery. We take a collection at every meeting from members who wish to contribute. This money pays the groups expenses; rent, coffee, and literature. The balance is sent to other levels of service to help carry the N.A. message to the addict who still suffers. In this way we remain free of outside control, and self supporting through our own contributions.**

XVI.

- Q. How are N.A. groups funded?**
- A. Solely through the contributions of their members. N.A. accepts no grants, gifts, or contributions from any outside sources.**

XVII.

- Q. What are N.A. service offices?**

- A. They are primary distribution centers for our literature. At times Regional Service Offices serve as meeting places for our service committees. Our N.A. Phonelines are often located there. These service centers may employ management, clerical and shipping personnel as special workers to get the necessary work done. Some offices are funded wholly by the sale of N.A. literature. Others are funded by member and group contributions. The World Service Office, located in Van Nuys, California is the Fellowship's World Service Center.

XVIII.

- Q. Does N.A. operate detox or treatment facilities?
- A. No. N.A. is not a professional organization, and we are not affiliated with any professional agencies or facilities. We employ no counselors or treatment staff. Many treatment centers introduce their patients to N.A. before they release them. We are grateful for their cooperation, but cannot allow this to influence us in any way. We remain, simply, a Fellowship of recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. Our program is a set of principles written so simply we can follow them in our daily lives.

XIX.

- Q. Why is it anonymous?
- A. The principle of anonymity protects the membership and reputation of the Fellowship and provides a safe setting for each and every member to seek recovery on an equal basis. No individual inside or outside the Fellowship represents Narcotics Anonymous.

XX.

- Q. How can I find out more about N.A.?
- A. Call the N.A. Phoneline in your community, or contact our World Service Office.