

1

Twelve Steps of life

2 *"Through abstinence and through working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics*
3 *Anonymous, our lives have become useful."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 8**

5 Before coming to Narcotics Anonymous, our lives were centered around
6 using. For the most part, we had very little energy left over for jobs, relationships,
7 or other activities. We served only our addiction.

8 The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous provide a simple way to turn our
9 lives around. We start by staying clean, a day at a time. When our energy is no
10 longer channeled into our addiction, we find that we have the energy to pursue
11 other interests. As we grow in recovery, we become able to sustain healthy
12 relationships. We become trustworthy employees. Hobbies and recreation seem
13 more inviting. Through participation in Narcotics Anonymous, we help others.

14 Narcotics Anonymous does not promise us that we will find good jobs, loving
15 relationships, or a fulfilling life. But when we work the Twelve Steps to the best of
16 our ability, we find that we can become the type of people who are *capable* of
17 finding employment, sustaining loving relationships, and helping others. We stop
18 serving our disease, and begin serving God and others. The Twelve Steps are
19 the key to transforming our lives.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will have the wisdom to use the Twelve Steps in my life, and
21 the courage to grow in my recovery. I will practice my program to become a
22 responsible, productive member of society.

The path to self-acceptance

"The most effective means of achieving self acceptance is through applying the Twelve Steps of recovery."

I.P. #19, "Self Acceptance"

Our addiction has been a source of shame to many of us. We have hidden ourselves from others, sure that if anyone got to know who we really were they would reject us. N.A. helps us learn self-acceptance.

Many of us find a great deal of relief just from attending meetings, hearing fellow addicts share their stories, and discovering that others have felt the same way we feel about ourselves. When others share honestly with us who they are, we feel free to do the same. As we learn to tell others the truth about ourselves, we learn to accept ourselves.

Self-disclosure, however, is only the beginning. Once we've shared the things that make us uncomfortable with our lives, we need to find a different way to live-- and that's where the steps come in. We develop a concept of a Higher Power. We inventory our lives, in detail, and discuss our inventory with our sponsor. We ask the God of our understanding to remove our character defects, the shortcomings that are the source of our troubles. We take responsibility for the things we've done and make amends for them. And we incorporate all these disciplines into our daily lives, "practicing these principles in all our affairs."

By working the steps, we can become people we are proud to be. We can freely tell the truth about ourselves, for we have nothing to hide.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will walk the path to self-acceptance. I will show up, tell the truth, and work the steps.

1 I can't, but we can

2 *"From the isolation of our addiction, we find a fellowship of people with a common*
3 *bond... Our faith, strength and hope come from people sharing their recovery..."*

4 **Basic Text, pp. 94-95**

5 Admit no weakness, conceal all shortcomings, deny every failure, go it alone--
6 that was the creed many of us followed. We denied that we were powerless over
7 our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable, despite all evidence to
8 the contrary. Many of us would not surrender without the assurance there was
9 something worth surrendering to. We took our First Step only when we had
10 evidence that addicts could recover in Narcotics Anonymous.

11 In N.A., we find others who've been in the same predicament, with the same
12 needs, who've found tools that have worked for them. Those addicts are willing
13 to share those tools with us and give us the emotional support we need as we
14 learn to use them. Other addicts know how important the help of others can be
15 because they've been given that help themselves. When we become a part of
16 Narcotics Anonymous, we join a society of addicts like ourselves, a group of
17 people who know that we must help one another recover.

18 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will join in the bond of recovery. I will find the faith,
19 strength, and hope I need in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Powerlessness and personal responsibility

"Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities, we were actually creating our own problems."

Basic Text, p. 13

When we refuse to take responsibility for our lives, we give away all of our personal power. We need to remember that we are powerless over our addiction—not our personal behavior.

Many of us misuse the concept of powerlessness to avoid making decisions or hold onto things we have outgrown. We claim powerlessness over our own actions. We blame others for our circumstances rather than take positive action to change those circumstances. If we continue to avoid responsibility by claiming that we are "powerless," we set ourselves up for the same despair and misery we experienced in our active addiction. The potential for spending our recovery years feeling like victims is very real.

Instead of living our lives by default, we learn how to make responsible choices and take risks. We may make mistakes, but we learn from these mistakes. A heightened awareness of ourselves and an increased willingness to accept personal responsibility gives us the freedom to change, to make choices, and to grow.

JUST FOR TODAY: My feelings, actions, and choices are mine. I will accept responsibility for them.

Surrender

"We didn't stumble into this fellowship brimming with love, honesty, open-mindedness or willingness.... When we were beaten, we became willing."

Basic Text, p. 20

Surrender may be the necessary foundation for recovery, but sometimes we fight it. Most of us look back after some clean time and wonder why on earth we fought so hard to deny our powerlessness when surrender is what finally saved our lives.

As we recover, new opportunities to surrender present themselves. We can either struggle with everyone and everything we encounter or we can recall the benefits of our first surrender and stop fighting.

Most of the pain we experience is not the result of surrendering. In fact, when we surrender, the pain ends and hope takes its place. We begin to believe that all will be well and, after some time, realize that our lives are much better as a result. We feel the same way as we did when we gave up the illusion that we could control our using--relieved, free, and filled with fresh hope.

JUST FOR TODAY: Is there a surrender I need to make today? I will remember my first surrender and remind myself that I don't need to fight anymore.

Acceptance and change

"Freedom to change seems to come after acceptance of ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 56

Fear and denial are the opposites of acceptance. None of us are perfect, even in our own eyes; all of us have certain traits that, given the chance, we would like to change. We sometimes become overwhelmed when contemplating how far short we fall of our ideals, so overwhelmed that we fear there's no chance of becoming the people we'd like to be. That's when our defense mechanism of denial kicks in, taking us to the opposite extreme: nothing about ourselves needs changing, we tell ourselves. Neither extreme gives us the freedom to change.

Whether we are long-time N.A. members or new to recovery, the freedom to change is acquired by working the Twelve Steps. When we admit our powerlessness and the unmanageability of our lives, we counteract the lie that says we don't *have* to change. In coming to believe that a Power greater than we are can help us, we lose our fear that we are damaged beyond repair; we come to believe we *can* change. We turn ourselves over to the care of the God of our understanding, and tap the strength we need to make a thorough, honest examination of ourselves. We admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being what we've found. We accept the good and the bad in ourselves; with this acceptance, we become free to change.

JUST FOR TODAY: I want to change. By working the steps, I will counter fear and denial, and find the acceptance needed to change.

God's will today

"This decision demands continued acceptance, ever increasing faith, and a daily commitment to recovery."

IP-14, "One Addict's Experience..."

Sometimes, we really live the Third Step--and it's great! We don't regret the past, we aren't afraid of the future, and we're generally pleased with the present. Sometimes, though, we lose our vision of God's will in our life.

Many of us dream of erasing the mistakes of our past, but the past cannot be erased. Many of us are grateful this is so, for our past experiences have brought us to the recovery we enjoy today. By working the program, we can learn to accept the past, and reconcile ourselves with it by amending our wrongs. Those same Twelve Steps can help eliminate our worries over the future. When we practice N.A. principles on a daily basis in all our affairs, we can leave the results up to our Higher Power.

It seems as though our members with the strongest faith are the ones who are best able to live in the present moment. Enjoyment, appreciation, and gratitude for the quality of our lives--these are the results of faith in life itself. When we practice the principles of our program, today is the only day we need.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will make the most of today, and trust that God has yesterday and tomorrow in His care.

Fellowship

"In N.A. our joys are multiplied by sharing good days; our sorrows are lessened by sharing the bad. For the first time in our lives we don't have to experience anything alone."

I.P. #16, "For the Newcomer"

There is joy in recovery, and there is hardship. Each of us takes pleasure in the joys of living clean, and each of us uses the tools of the program to work through the hardships. But our joys pass all too quickly if we don't share them with others, while hardships borne alone may be long in passing. In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, we multiply our joys and divide our burdens by sharing them with one another.

We addicts experience pleasures in recovery that, sometimes, only another addict can appreciate. Fellow members understand when we tell them of the pride we take today in fulfilling commitments, the warmth we feel in mending damaged relationships, the relief we experience in not having to take anything to make it through the day. When we share these joys with recovering addicts, others respond with stories of similar experiences. We add their joy to ours, and our joy is multiplied. The same principle applies to the challenges we encounter as recovering addicts. By sharing our challenges and allowing other N.A. members to share their strength with us, our load is lightened.

The fellowship we have in Narcotics Anonymous is precious. Sharing together, we enhance the joys and diminish the burdens of life in recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will share my joys and my burdens with other recovering addicts. I will also share in theirs. I cherish the blessing of fellowship.

Faith

"As we develop faith in our daily lives, we find that our Higher Power supplies us with the strength and guidance that we need."

Basic Text, p. 91

I came into recovery very frightened and insecure. I felt weak and alone. I was uncertain of my direction, and didn't know where to go for answers. I was told that if I found some faith in a Power greater than myself, I would find security and guidance. I wanted that feeling of safety and strength. But faith didn't come like a birthday present, whole and fully formed, wrapped with a ribbon. It took time to grow.

The seed was planted when I asked my Higher Power for help and then acknowledged the source of my help when it came. I nurtured the tiny seed of faith with the sunlight of my prayers each day. My faith grew, a reward for risking life on its own terms. One day I realized my faith had become like a huge spreading tree; it didn't stop the storms of my life, but I knew that I was safe in its shelter.

JUST FOR TODAY: I know that faith in my Higher Power will not calm the storms of life, but it will calm my heart. I will let my faith shelter me in times of trouble.

1

2

3

4

8

5

2

Spiritual awakenings

"Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps..."

Step Twelve

How will I know when I have had a spiritual awakening? For many of us, a spiritual awakening comes gradually. Perhaps our first spiritual awareness is as simple as a new appreciation for life. Maybe one day we'll suddenly discover the sound of birds singing early in the morning. The simple beauty of a flower may remind us that there is a Power greater than ourselves at work around us.

Often, our spiritual awakening is something that grows stronger over time. We can strive for more spiritual awareness simply by living our lives. We can persist in efforts to improve our conscious contact through prayer and meditation on a daily basis. We can listen within for the guidance we need. We can question other addicts about their experiences with spirituality. We can take time to appreciate the world around us.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will reflect on the spiritual awakenings I have experienced. I will strive to be God-conscious. I will take time out in the day to appreciate my Higher Power's handiwork.

Meditation for beginners

"For some, prayer is asking for God's help; meditation is listening for God's answer.... Quieting the mind through meditation brings an inner peace that brings us into contact with the God within us."

Basic Text, p. 44-45

"Be patient when you're learning to meditate," my sponsor told me. "You know how a newborn baby takes a few weeks to open its eyes and distinguish shapes? Well, it's the same with meditation. It takes practice to know what to 'listen' for."

I'm glad my sponsor told me that, or I would have quit after a week or two of meditating. For the first few weeks I sat each morning, stilled my thoughts, and "listened," just as the Basic Text says--but "heard" nothing. It took a few more weeks before anything really happened. Even then, what happened was barely noticeable. I was rising from my morning meditations feeling just a little better about my life, a little more empathy for those I encountered during the day, and a little more in touch with my Higher Power and its will for me.

There was nothing dramatic in that awareness--no bolts of lightning or claps of thunder. Instead, it was something quietly powerful. I was taking time to get my ego and my ideas out of the way. In that clear space, I was improving my conscious contact with the source of my daily recovery, the God of my own understanding. Meditation was new, and it took time and practice. But, like all the steps, it worked--when I worked it.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will practice "listening" for knowledge of God's will for me, even if I don't know what to "listen" for yet.

Choosing life

"Change from self-destructive patterns of life became necessary."

Basic Text, p. 15

Active addiction is a smoldering death-wish. Each of us courted death every time we used. Our lifestyles, too, put us at risk. The life of an addict is sold cheaply with every day and every dose.

The first pattern we change is the pattern of using. Staying clean is the start of our journey into life. But our self-destructive behavior usually went far deeper than just our using. Even in recovery, we may still treat ourselves as if we are worthless. When we treat ourselves badly, we feel badly. And when we feel badly, we seek relief--maybe even in our old solution, drugs.

Choosing recovery means choosing life. We decide each day that we want to live and be free. Each time we avoid self-destructive behavior, we choose recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will choose life by choosing recovery. I will take care of myself.

Contribution

"We recognize our spiritual growth when we are able to reach out and help others."

Basic Text, p. 56

To make a difference in the world, to contribute something special is perhaps the highest aspiration of the human heart. Each one of us, no matter what our personal makeup, has a unique quality to offer.

Chances are that at some time in our recovery we met someone who reached us when no one else could. Whether it was someone who made us laugh at our first meeting, a warm and compassionate sponsor, or an understanding friend who supported us through an emotional storm, that person made all the difference in the world.

All of us have had the gift of recovery shared with us by another recovering addict. For that, we owe a debt of gratitude that can only be repaid by volunteering ourselves to others. The individual message we carry may help a newcomer that only we can reach.

There are many ways to serve our fellowship. Each of us will find that we do some things better than others, but all service work is equally important. If we are willing to serve, we're sure to find that particular way to contribute that's right for us.

JUST FOR TODAY: My contribution makes a difference. I will offer a helping hand today.

Decision-making

"Before we got clean, most of our actions were guided by impulse. Today, we are not locked into this type of thinking."

Basic Text, p. 87

Life is a series of decisions, actions, and consequences. When we were using, our decisions were usually driven by our disease, resulting in self-destructive actions and dire consequences. We came to see decision-making as a rigged game, one we should play as little as possible.

Given that, many of us have great difficulty learning to make decisions in recovery. Slowly, by working the Twelve Steps, we gain practice in making healthy decisions, ones that give positive results. Where our disease once affected our will and our lives, we ask our Higher Power to care for us. We inventory our values and our actions, check our findings with someone we trust, and ask the God of our understanding to remove our shortcomings. In working the steps we gain freedom from the influence of our disease, and we learn principles of decision-making that can guide us in all our affairs.

Today, our decisions and their consequences need not be influenced by our disease. Our faith gives us the courage and direction to make good decisions and the strength to act on them. The result of that kind of decision-making is a life worth living.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will use the principles of the Twelve Steps to make healthy decisions. I will ask my Higher Power for the strength to act on those decisions.

A God of our own understanding

"Many of us understand God to be simply whatever force keeps us clean."

Basic Text, p. 25

Some of us enter recovery with a working understanding of a Higher Power. For a lot of us, however, "God" is a troublesome word. We may doubt the existence of *any* sort of Power greater than ourselves. Or we may remember uncomfortable experiences with religion and shy away from "the God stuff."

Starting over in recovery means we can start over in our spiritual life, too. If we're not comfortable with what we learned when we were growing up, we can try a different approach to our spirituality. We don't have to understand everything all at once, or find the answers to all our questions right away. Sometimes it's enough just to know that other N.A. members believe, and that their belief helps keep them clean.

JUST FOR TODAY: All I have to know right now about my Higher Power is that it is the power that helps keep me clean.

Letting go of our defects

"If [character defects] contributed to our health and happiness, we would not have come to such a state of desperation."

Basic Text, p. 34

Getting started on the Sixth and Seventh Steps isn't always easy. We may feel as though we have so much wrong with us that we are totally defective. We feel like hiding under a rock. Under no circumstance do we want our fellow addicts to know about our inadequacies.

We will probably go through a time of examining everything we say and do in order to identify our character defects and make sure we suppress them. We may look back at one particular day, cringing at what we're certain is the most embarrassing thing we've ever said. We become determined to be rid of these horrible traits at all costs.

But nowhere in the Sixth or Seventh Steps does it say we work on or control our defects of character. In fact, the more attention we focus on them, the more firmly entrenched they will become in our lives. It takes humility to recognize that we can't control our defects any more than we can control our addiction. We can't "work on" our defects; we can only ask a loving God to remove them.

Letting go of something painful can be as difficult as letting go of something pleasant. But let's face it--holding on is a lot of work. Considering what we're holding onto, the effort just isn't worthwhile. It's time to let go of our character defects and ask God to remove them.

JUST FOR TODAY: I'm ready to have my defects removed. I will let go and allow a loving Higher Power to care for me.

Depression

"We are no longer fighting fear, anger, guilt, self-pity or depression."

Basic Text, p. 26

As addicts, many of us experience depression from time to time. When we feel depressed, we may be tempted to isolate ourselves. However, if we do this, our depression may turn to despair. We can't afford to let depression lead us back to using.

Instead, we try to go about the routine of our lives. We make meeting attendance and contact with our sponsors top priorities. Sharing about our feelings with others may let us know that we aren't the only ones who have been depressed in recovery. Working with a newcomer can work wonders for our own state of mind. And, most importantly, prayer and meditation can help us tap the Power we need to survive depression.

We practice acceptance and remember that feelings like depression will unquestionably pass in time. Rather than struggle with our feelings, we accept them and ask for the strength to walk through them.

JUST FOR TODAY: I accept that my feelings of depression won't last forever. I will talk openly about my feelings with my sponsor or another person who understands.

Service or circus?

"Serving the needs of our members and making our message available gives us a feeling of joy."

Basic Text, p. 95

Once there were two area service committees. In one area, service was torture: interminable business meetings, motions and amendments and counter-motions, egos and power-plays and manipulation and personalities. Most members, not being fond of self-abuse, stayed as far away from the "area circus" as possible.

In the other area, service was a joy. Addicts joined the area committee for no other reason than to find better ways of carrying the message. They put their heads and hearts together, they sought the guidance of a loving Higher Power, they charted a course, they split up the work among themselves, and they did what needed to be done in Narcotics Anonymous. They served quietly, without fanfare, and they served selflessly. They grew closer to one another, to their Higher Power, and to the addict who still suffered. And they invited others to join them.

What was the difference between these two areas? In the first area, those with something more than ego to offer stayed away from service, unwilling to get involved in "all that insanity." In the second, those who had experienced a spiritual awakening in N.A. joined their strength to share it with others--and got back a thousand times more than they gave.

JUST FOR TODAY: I was given my recovery freely in N.A.; I will share my recovery just as freely. This day, I will look for a way to offer my talents in service to Narcotics Anonymous.

Trust

"Just for today I will have faith in someone in N.A. who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery."

Basic Text, p. 90

Learning to trust is a risky proposition. Our past experience as using addicts has taught us that our companions could not be trusted. Most of all, we couldn't trust ourselves.

Now that we're in recovery, trust is essential. We need something to hang onto, believe in, and give us hope in our recovery. For some of us, the first thing we can trust is the words of other members sharing in meetings; we feel the truth in their words.

Finding someone we can trust makes it easier to ask for help. And as we grow to trust in their recovery, we learn to trust our own.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will decide to trust someone. I will act on that trust.

Tolerance

"...ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

Tradition Twelve

Sometimes it's hard to accept others' character defects. As we recover together, we not only listen to others talk in meetings, we also watch how they walk through their recovery. The more we get to know other members, the more we become aware of how they live their lives. We may form opinions about how they "work their program." We may find that certain members upset us, or we may even hear ourselves say, "If I worked their program, I would surely use."

We have found tolerance to be a principle that not only strengthens our own recovery but also our relationships with individuals who are a source of irritation to us. It becomes easier to accept other members' frailties when we remember that we ourselves rarely turn over our own character defects until we become painfully aware of them.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will strive to accept others as they are. I will try not to judge others. I will focus on the principles of love and acceptance.

Surrender is for everyone

"If, after a period of time, we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery, we have probably stopped doing one or more of the things that helped us in the earlier stages of our recovery."

Basic Text, p. 92

Surrender is just for newcomers, right? Wrong!

After we've been around awhile, some of us succumb to a condition particular to oldtimers. We think we know something about recovery, about God, about N.A., about ourselves--and we do. The problem is, we think we know *enough*, and we think that merely *knowing* is enough. But it's what we learn and what we do *after* we think we know it all that really makes the difference.

Conceit and complacency can land us in deep trouble. When we find that "applying the principles" on our own power just isn't working, we can practice what worked for us in the first place: surrender. When we find we are still powerless, our lives again unmanageable, we need to seek the care of a Power greater than ourselves. And when we discover that self-therapy isn't so therapeutic after all, we need to take advantage of the therapeutic value of one addict helping another.

JUST FOR TODAY: I need guidance. I need support. I need a Power beyond my own. I will go to a meeting, reach out to a newcomer, call my sponsor, pray to my Higher Power--I will do something that says, "I surrender."

Letting go of the past

"It is not where we were that counts, but where we are going."

Basic Text, p. 22

When we first find recovery, some of us feel shame or despair at calling ourselves "addicts." In the early days, we may be filled with both fear and hope as we struggle to find new meaning in our lives. The past may seem inescapable and overpowering. It may be hard to think of ourselves in any way other than the way we always have.

While memories of the past can serve as reminders of what's waiting for us if we use again, they can also keep us stuck in a nightmare of shame and fear. While it may be difficult to let go of those memories, each day in recovery can bring us that much farther away from our active addiction. Each day, we can find more to look forward to and less to punish ourselves for.

In recovery, all doors are open to us. We have many choices. Our new life is rich and full of promise. While we cannot forget the past, we don't have to live in it. We can move on.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will pack my bags and move out of my past into a present filled with hope.

Step One

"We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable."

Step One

The First Step begins with "we," and there's a reason for that. There is great strength in making a verbal admission of our powerlessness. And when we go to meetings and make this admission, we gain more than personal strength. We become members, part of a collective "we" that allows us, together, to recover from our addiction. With membership in N.A. comes a wealth of experience: the experience of other addicts who have found a way to recover from their disease.

No longer must we try to solve the puzzle of our addiction on our own. When we honestly admit our powerlessness over our addiction, we can begin the search for a better way to live. We won't be searching alone--we're in good company.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will start the day with an admission of my powerlessness over addiction. I will remind myself that the First Step starts with "we," and know that I never have to be alone with my disease again.

1 **Keep coming back!**

2 *"Meetings keep us in touch with where we've been, but more importantly with*
3 *where we could go in our recovery."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 54**

5 In many ways, addicts are different. When we came to Narcotics Anonymous
6 we found others like ourselves, people who understood us and whom we could
7 understand. No longer did we feel like aliens, strangers wherever we went. We
8 were at home in N.A. meetings, among friends.

9 We don't stop being addicts after we've been clean a while. We still need to
10 identify with other addicts. We continue coming to N.A. meetings to keep in touch
11 with who we are, where we've come from, and where we're going. Every meeting
12 reminds us that we can never use drugs successfully. Every meeting reminds us
13 that we'll never be cured, but that by practicing the principles of the program we
14 can recover. And every meeting offers us the experience and example of other
15 addicts in ongoing recovery.

16 At meetings, we see how different people work their program, and where it's
17 gotten them. If we want the lives we see others living, we can find out whether
18 they're happy and, if so, what they've done to get where they are. Narcotics
19 Anonymous meetings offer us identification with where we've been and where we
20 can go--identification we can't do without and can't get anywhere else. That
21 identification keeps us coming back.

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will attend an N.A. meeting to remind myself of who I am,
23 where I've come from, and where I can go in my recovery.

Doing good, feeling good

"We examine our actions, reactions, and motives. We often find that we've been doing better than we've been feeling."

Basic Text, p. 42

The way we treat others reveals our own state of being. When we are at peace, we're most likely to treat others with respect and compassion. However, when we're feeling off center, we're likely to respond to others with intolerance and impatience. When we take regular inventory, we'll probably notice a pattern: We treat others badly when we feel bad about ourselves.

What might not be revealed in an inventory, however, is an equal and opposite truth: When we treat others well, we feel good about ourselves. When we add this positive truth to the negative facts we find about ourselves in our inventory, we can teach ourselves to behave differently.

When we feel badly, we can pause to pray for guidance and strength. Then, we make a decision to treat those around us with kindness, gentleness, and the same concern we'd like to be shown. A decision to be kind will nurture and sustain the happiness and peace of mind we all wish for. And the joy we inspire will lift the spirits of those around us, in turn fostering our own spiritual well-being.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will offer a kind word to all, especially if I'm feeling low. By doing good, I will begin to feel good.

Forgiveness

"As we realize our need to be forgiven, we tend to be more forgiving. At least, we know that we are no longer intentionally making life miserable for people."

Basic Text, p. 38

In our addiction we often treated others badly, sometimes finding ways to make their lives miserable. In our recovery, we may still have a tendency to pass judgment on others' actions because we think we know how that person should behave. But as we progress in our recovery we often find that, to accept ourselves, we must accept those around us.

It may be difficult to watch as someone's insanity manifests itself. But if we detach ourselves from the problem, we can start living in the solution. And if we feel affected by another's actions, we can extend the principle of forgiveness.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will strive to forgive rather than be forgiven. I will try to act in such a way that I feel worthy of self-love.

Reservations

"Relapse is never an accident. Relapse is a sign that we have a reservation in our program."

Basic Text, p. 76

A reservation is something we set aside for future use. In our case, a reservation is the expectation that, if such-and-such happens, we will surely relapse. What event do we expect will be too painful to bear? Maybe we think that if a spouse or lover leaves us, we will have to get high. If we lose our job, surely, we think, we will use. Or maybe it's the death of a loved one that we expect to be unbearable. In any case, the reservations we harbor give us permission to use when they come true--as they often do.

We can prepare ourselves for success instead of relapse by examining our expectations and altering them where we can. Most of us carry within us a catalog of anticipated misery closely related to our fears. We can learn how to survive pain by watching other members live through similar pain. We can apply their lessons to our own expectations. Instead of telling ourselves we will have to get high if *this* happens, we can quietly reassure ourselves that we, too, can stay clean through whatever life brings us today.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will check for any reservations that may endanger my recovery and share them with another addict.

Freedom to choose

"Enforced morality lacks the power that comes to us when we choose to live a spiritual life."

Basic Text, p. 44

In our active addiction, many of us lived our lives by default. We were unwilling or unable to make choices about how we wanted to act, what we preferred to do, or even where we would live. We allowed the drugs or other people to make our most basic decisions for us. Freedom from active addiction means, among other things, the freedom to make those choices for ourselves.

Freedom of choice is a wonderful gift, but it's also a great responsibility. Choice allows us to find out who we are and what we believe in. However, in exercising it, we're called on to weigh our own choices and accept the consequences. This leads some of us to seek out someone who will make our choices for us--our sponsor, our home group, our N.A. friends--just as our disease made our choices for us when we were using. *That's not recovery.*

Seeking others' experience is one thing; abdicating personal responsibility is something else. If we don't use the gift of freedom we've been given, if we refuse to accept the responsibilities that go along with it, we'll lose that gift and our lives will be diminished. We are responsible for our own recovery and our own choices. Difficult as it may seem, we must make those choices for ourselves and become willing to accept the consequences.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am grateful for the freedom to live as I choose. Today, I will accept responsibility for my recovery, make my own choices, and accept the consequences.

As we understand

"We examined our lives and discovered who we really are. To be truly humble is to accept and honestly try to be ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 35

As a using addict, the demands of my disease determined my personality. I could be whoever or whatever I needed to be in order to get my fix. I was a survival machine, adapting easily to every circumstance of the using life.

Once I began my recovery, I entered a new and different life. I had no idea what behavior was appropriate for me in any given situation. I didn't know how to talk to people, how to dress, or how to behave in public. I couldn't be myself because I didn't know who I was anymore.

The Twelve Steps gave me a simple method for finding out who I really am. I uncovered my assets and my defects, the things I like about myself and the things I'm not so thrilled about. Through the healing power of the Twelve Steps, I began to understand that I am an individual, created to be who I am by the Higher Power of my understanding. The real healing began when I understood that if my Higher Power created me this way, it must be okay to be who I really am.

JUST FOR TODAY: By working the steps I can experience the freedom to be myself, the person my Higher Power intended me to be.

Honest relationships

"One of the most profound changes in our lives is in the realm of personal relationships."

Basic Text, p. 55

Recovery gives many of us relationships that are closer and more intimate than any we've had before. As time passes, we find ourselves gravitating toward those who eventually become our friends, our sponsors, and our partners in life. Shared laughter, shared tears, and shared struggles bring shared respect and lasting empathy.

What, then, do we do when we find that we don't agree with our friends on everything? We may discover that we don't share the same taste in music as our dearest friend, or that we don't agree with our spouse about how the furniture should be arranged, or even find ourselves voting differently than our sponsor at a service committee meeting. Does conflict mean that the friendship, the marriage, or the sponsorship is over? No!

These types of conflict are not only to be expected in any long-lasting relationship, but are actually an indication that both people are emotionally healthy and honest individuals. In any relationship where both people agree on absolutely everything, chances are that only one person is doing the thinking. If we sacrifice our honesty and integrity to avoid conflicts or disagreements, we give away the best of what we bring to our relationships. We experience the full measure of partnership with another human being only when we are fully honest.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will welcome the differences that make each one of us special. Today, I will be myself as honestly as I can be.

Group conscience

"Working with others is only the beginning of service work."

Basic Text, p. 56

Service work entails a selfless devotion to carrying the message to the still-suffering addict. But our attitude of service cannot stop there. Service also requires that we look at ourselves and our motives. Our efforts at service make us highly visible to the fellowship. In N.A., it is easy to become a "big fish in a little pond." Our controlling attitude can easily drive away the newcomer.

Group conscience is one of the most important principles in service. It is vital to remember that the group conscience is what counts, not just our individual beliefs and desires. We lend our thoughts and beliefs to the development of a group conscience. Then when that conscience arises, we accept its guidance. The key is working with others, not against them. If we remember that we strive together to develop a collective conscience, we will see that all sides have equal merit. When all the discussions are over, all sides will come back together to carry a unified message.

It is often tempting to think that we know what is best for the group. If we remember that it doesn't matter if we get our way, then it is easier to allow service to be the vehicle it is intended to be--a way to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will take part in the development of group conscience. I will remember that the world won't end just because I don't get my way. I will think about our primary purpose in all my service efforts. I will reach out to a newcomer.

Coming out of isolation

"We find ourselves doing and enjoying things that we never thought we would be doing."

Basic Text, p. 98

I was never a "social user." Active addiction kept me isolated for many reasons. In the beginning, I avoided family and friends so they wouldn't find out I was using. I soon avoided *all* non-addicts, fearing moral backlash and legal repercussions. I belittled people who had "normal" lives, with families and hobbies; I called them "uncool," believing I could never enjoy the simple pleasures of life. Eventually, I even avoided other addicts; I didn't want to share my drugs. My world became very narrow, and my concerns were confined to the daily maintenance of my disease.

Today, my world is much bigger. I enjoy activities with other recovering addicts. I have time for my family. And I've discovered many other pursuits that give me pleasure. What a change from the past! I can live life just as fully as the "normal" people I once scorned. Enjoyment has returned to my life, a gift of recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I can find pleasure in the simple routines of daily living.

The recovery partnership

"As long as I take it easy and make a commitment with my Higher Power to do the best I can, I know I will be taken care of today."

Basic Text, p. 120

Many of us feel that our fundamental commitment in recovery is to our Higher Power. Knowing that we lack the power to stay clean and find recovery on our own, we enter into a partnership with a Power greater than we are. We make a commitment to live in the care of our Higher Power and, in return, our Higher Power will guide us.

This partnership is vital to staying clean. The early days of recovery often feel like the hardest thing we've ever done. But the strength of our commitment to recovery and the power of God's care is sufficient to carry us through, just for today.

Our part in this partnership is to do the very best we can each day, showing up for life and doing what's put in front of us, applying the principles of recovery to the best of our ability. We promise to do the *best* we can--not to fake it, not to pretend to be superhuman, but simply to do the footwork of recovery. In fulfilling our part of the recovery partnership, we experience the care our Partner has provided us.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will honor my commitment to a partnership with my Higher Power.

Finding fulfillment

"We weren't oriented toward fulfillment; we focused on the emptiness and worthlessness of it all."

Basic Text, p. 86

There were probably hundreds of times in our active addiction when we wished we could become someone else. We may have wished we could trade places with someone who owned a nice car or had a larger home, a better job, a more attractive mate--anything but what we had. So severe was our despair that we could hardly imagine anyone being in worse shape than ourselves.

In recovery, we may find we are experiencing a different sort of envy. We may continue to compare our insides with others' outsides and feel as though we still don't have enough of anything. We may think everyone, from the newest member to the oldest oldtimer, sounds better at meetings than we do. We may think that everyone else must be working a better program because they have a better car, a larger home, more money, and so on.

The recovery process experienced through our Twelve Steps will take us from an attitude of envy and low self-esteem to a place of spiritual fulfillment and deep appreciation for what we have. We find that we would never willingly trade places with another, for what we have discovered within ourselves is priceless.

JUST FOR TODAY: In my life, there is much to be grateful for. I will cherish the spiritual fulfillment I have found in recovery.

Standing for something

"...we could feel time, touch reality and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us."

Basic Text, p. 85

In our active addiction, we were prepared to compromise everything we believed in just to get our hands on more drugs. Whether we stole from our families and friends, sold ourselves, or lied to our employers, we were ignoring the values that mattered most to us. Each time we compromised another dearly held belief, another chunk of the mortar holding our characters together fell away. When many of us came to our first meeting, nothing was left but the ruin of our former selves.

We will locate our lost values as we carry out our first honest self-examination. But in order to rebuild our characters, we'll find it necessary to maintain those values, no matter how great the temptation to shove them aside. We will need to be honest, even when we think we could fool everyone by lying. If we ignore our values, we'll discover that the biggest fibs we've told have been the ones we've told ourselves.

We don't want to start the demolition of our spirits again after all the work we've put into their restoration. It's essential that we stand for something, or we risk falling for anything. Whatever we find important to us, we honor.

JUST FOR TODAY: I stand for something. My strength is the result of living my values.

Indirect amends

"Indirect amends may be necessary where direct ones would be unsafe or endanger other people."

Basic Text, p. 40

When I used, I allowed nothing to stand in the way of that next high. As a result, I didn't always know precisely whom I had injured, either financially or emotionally. When it came time to make amends through my Ninth Step, I found that there were so many people I had victimized that I might never remember them all.

With the help of my sponsor and other recovering members of N.A., I found a solution to this obstacle. I vowed to complete these nameless amends by making restitution to my community. I focused my service efforts on helping the still-suffering addict. In this manner, I found a way to give back to society.

Today, through the love and guidance of members in N.A., I am giving back to the world around me rather than taking. I am making my community a better place to live by carrying the message of recovery to those I encounter in my daily life.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will make indirect amends by reaching out to an addict who may need help. I will strive in some small way to make my community a better place to live.

Detachment

"Addiction is a family disease, but we could only change ourselves."

I.P. #13, "Youth and Recovery"

Many of us come from severely damaged families. At times, the insanity that reigns among our relatives feels overwhelming. Sometimes we feel like packing our bags and moving far, far away.

We pray that our family members will join us in recovery but, to our great sadness, that does not always happen. Sometimes, despite our best efforts to carry the message, we find that we cannot help those we hold most dear. Our group experience has taught us that, frequently, we are too close to deeply loved relatives to help them. We learn it is better to leave them in our Higher Power's hands.

We have found that when we stop trying to settle the problems of family members, we give them the room they need to work things out in their own lives. Stock phrases like "I'm sure you two will work it out" and "Gee, that must be painful for you" remind our relatives that we are not able to solve their problems for them. These phrases also give us the freedom to live our own lives. For the sake of our family's sanity and our own, we must let our relatives find their own ways to recover.

JUST FOR TODAY: There is a God in charge of my family. I commit my loved ones to God's care. I pray for the ability to work my own program and let my family work theirs.

The message of our meetings

"The fact that we, each and every group, focus on carrying the message provides consistency; addicts can count on us."

Basic Text, pp. 64-65

Those times when we grow disgusted with meetings and find ourselves complaining that "they don't know how to share" or "it was another whining session" are probably an indication that, again, we need to give away what we hope to have.

Tales of our antics in active addiction may be screamingly funny. Stories of our old bizarre reactions to life when using may be interesting. But they tend to carry the mess more than the message. Philosophical arguments on the nature of God are fascinating. Discussions of service and current controversies in N.A. have their place--however, it's not at an N.A. meeting.

What we share about how we got into recovery and how we stayed here through practicing the Twelve Steps is the real message of recovery. That's what we are all looking for when we go to a meeting. Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the still-suffering addict, and what we share at meetings can either contribute significantly to this effort or detract greatly. The choice, and the responsibility, is all ours.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will share my recovery at an N.A. meeting.

Fear

"We have found that we had no choice except to completely change our old ways of thinking or go back to using."

Basic Text, p. 21

My "old ways of thinking" were dominated by fear. I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to get my daily drugs or that there wouldn't be enough. I feared discovery, arrest, and incarceration. Further down the list were fears of financial problems, homelessness, overdose, and illness. And my fear controlled my actions.

The early days of recovery weren't a great deal different; then, too, fear dominated my thinking. What if staying clean hurts too much? What if I can't make it? What if the people in N.A. don't like me? What if N.A. doesn't work? The fear behind these thoughts still controlled my behavior; it kept me from taking the risks necessary to stay clean and grow. It seemed easier to resign myself to certain failure by not trying than to risk everything on a slim hope and perhaps be disappointed. And that was just what I did: withdrew from life in resignation.

For some people, the willingness to change our old ways of thinking comes only after relapse--and that's what happened to me. When I returned to N.A., shaken and sick, I finally became willing to do whatever I was told by other members to do. For me, that included changing my old cynical doubts into affirmations of hope.

JUST FOR TODAY: I pray for the willingness to change my old ways of thinking, and for the ability to overcome my fears.

Just for today

"When we stop living in the here and now, our problems become magnified unreasonably."

Basic Text, p. 96

"Just for today"--it's a comforting thought. If I try to live in the past I find myself torn by painful, disquieting memories. The lessons of my using are not the teachers I seek for recovery. Living in tomorrow means moving in with fear. I cannot see the shape of the secret future, and uncertainty brings worry. My life looks overwhelming when I have lost the focus of today.

Living in the moment offers me freedom. In this moment, I know that I am safe. I am not using, and I have everything I need. What's more, life is happening in the here and now. The past is gone and the future has yet to arrive; my worrying won't change any of it. Today, I will enjoy my recovery, this very minute.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will stay in the here and now. Today--this moment--I am free.

1 **A treatable illness**

2 *"Addiction is a disease that involves more than the use of drugs."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 3**

4 At our first meeting, we may have been taken aback at the way members
5 shared about how the disease of addiction had affected their lives. We thought to
6 ourselves, "Disease? I've just got a drug problem! What in the world are they
7 talking about?"

8 After some time in the program, we began to see that our addiction ran deeper
9 than our obsessive, compulsive drug use. We saw that we suffered from a
10 chronic illness that affected many areas of our lives. We didn't know where we'd
11 caught this disease, but in examining ourselves we realized that it had been
12 present in us for many years.

13 Just as the disease of addiction affects every area of our lives, so does the
14 N.A. program. We attend our first meeting with all the symptoms present: the
15 spiritual void, the emotional agony, the powerlessness, the unmanageability.

16 Treating our illness involves much more than mere abstinence. We use the
17 Twelve Steps, and though they don't "cure" our illness, they do begin to heal us.
18 And as we recover, we experience the gift of life.

19 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will treat my illness with the Twelve Steps.

Light seeks light

"We must give freely and gratefully that which has been freely and gratefully given to us."

Basic Text, p. 47

In recovery, we receive many gifts. Perhaps the greatest gift is the awakening of the spirit that begins when we stop using and grows stronger as we apply the steps in our lives. Slowly, the radiance of recovery dispels the darkness of our disease.

This stirring of light within is a direct result of our new relationship with a Higher Power, a relationship initiated and developed by living the Twelve Steps. It's free. We don't have to *earn* it, we just need to learn to *apply* it.

One of the ways we express our gratitude for the gifts of recovery is to help others find their way. We can do this by sharing in meetings or by accepting a commitment to sponsorship. The spiritual life given us in recovery asks for expression; light seeks light. We offer to share our gifts, so more of us may live.

JUST FOR TODAY: The gift of spirit grows when I share it. I will find someone to share it with.

1 Where there's smoke...

2 *"Complacency is the enemy of members with substantial clean time. If we remain*
3 *complacent for long, the recovery process ceases."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 80**

5 Recognizing complacency in our recovery is like seeing smoke in a room.
6 Only our immediate response will prevent an inferno. The smoke thickens when
7 our meeting attendance drops. It thickens further still if our contact with
8 newcomers decreases. Our eyes will water and our throats will burn without
9 regular contact with our sponsors. In the end, we won't be able to see through
10 the smoke to find our way out. By the time we finally catch sight of the flames, it
11 may be too late. We'll charge through the smoke in a full-scale panic, trying to
12 remember the way out. As it gets hotter, we'll lose our heads and may even lose
13 our lives.

14 We must learn to recognize the smoke of complacency before it blazes out of
15 control. In N.A., we have all the help we need to do that. We need to spend time
16 with other recovering addicts, because they may smell the smoke before we do.
17 Newcomers will remind us of how painful the blisters can be. Our sponsors will
18 make sure our water supply is kept full, and recovery literature in easy reach can
19 be used to extinguish the small flare-ups that happen from time to time. Regular
20 participation in our recovery will surely enable us to see that wisp of smoke long
21 before it becomes a major conflagration.

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will participate in the full range of my recovery. My
23 commitment to N.A. is just as strong today as it was in the beginning of my
24 recovery.

Friendships

"Our friendships become deep and we experience the warmth and caring which results from addicts sharing recovery and a new life."

I.P. No. 19, "Self Acceptance"

Most of us came to Narcotics Anonymous with few friends. And most of us arrived without the slightest understanding of what it takes to build lasting friendships. Over time, though, we learn that friendships require work. At one time or another, all friendships are challenging. Like any relationship, friendship is a learning process.

Our friends love us enough to tell us the truth about ourselves. The old saying, "The truth will set you free, but first it will make you furious," seems especially true in friendship. This can make friendships awkward. We may find ourselves avoiding certain meetings rather than face our friends. We have found, though, that friends speak out of concern for us. They want the best for us. Our friends accept us despite our shortcomings. They understand that we are still a work in progress.

Friends are there for us when we're not there for ourselves. Friends help us gain valuable perspective on the events in our lives and our recovery. It is important that we actively cultivate friendships, for we have learned that we cannot recover alone.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will be grateful for the friends I have. I will take an active part in my friendships.

Resolutions (December 31)

"We review our past performance and our present behavior to see what we want to keep and what we want to discard."

Basic Text, p. 29

As the year winds to a close, it is customary to reflect on the past twelve months and make resolutions for the coming year. Perhaps we resolve that we'll diet or stop smoking. Maybe, upon reflection, we promise ourselves that we will treat our children with more respect. Perhaps we decide to pay off our bills. There are many areas we can spotlight for much-needed growth.

But what about our conscious contact? What do we think our Higher Power wants for us this year? Perhaps we've been uncomfortable in our job or our relationship, holding on only out of fear. Perhaps we are holding on to some troubling defect of character that we've been afraid to share with our sponsor. What part of our lives really needs improvement this year?

As this year ends, we find it beneficial to take some moments away from our plans to spend time with our Higher Power. We can begin to reflect on what will benefit us most in the new year. We think about the areas where we have grown in the past year, and target areas that really require work. What more fitting way to end the year?

JUST FOR TODAY: I will set aside an hour to commune with my Higher Power. I will review the past year, meditating on what stands between me and my Higher Power's will for my life.

**Carrying the message,
not the addict**

"They can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, threatened, beaten, or locked up, but they will not stop until they want to stop."

Basic Text, p. 62

Perhaps one of the most difficult understandings we must face in our recovery is that we are as powerless over another's addiction as we are over our own. We may think that because we've had a spiritual awakening in our own lives we should be able to persuade another addict to find recovery.

But there are limits to what we can do to help another addict. We cannot force them to stop using. We cannot give them the results of the steps or grow for them. We cannot take away their loneliness or their pain. There is nothing we can say to convince a scared addict to surrender the familiar misery of addiction for the frightening uncertainty of recovery. We cannot jump inside other peoples' skins, shift their goals, or decide for them what is best for them.

However, if we refuse to try to exert this power over another's addiction, we may help them. They may grow if we allow them to face reality, painful though it may be. They may become more productive, by their own definition, as long as we don't try and do it for them. They can become the authority on their own lives, provided we are only authorities on our own. If we can accept all this, we can become what we were meant to be--carriers of the message, not the addict.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will accept that I am powerless not only over my own addiction, but also over everyone else's. I will carry the message, not the addict.

The language of empathy

"...the addict would find from the start as much identification as each needed to convince himself that he could stay clean, by the example of others who had recovered for many years."

Basic Text, p. 85

Many of us attended our first meeting and, not being entirely sure that N.A. was for us, found much to criticize. Either we felt as though no one had suffered like we had or that we hadn't suffered enough. But as we listened we started to hear something new, a wordless language with its roots in recognition, belief, and faith. Desiring to belong, we kept listening.

We find all the identification we need as we learn to understand and speak the language of empathy. To understand this special language, we listen with our hearts. The language of empathy uses few words; it feels more than it speaks. It doesn't preach or lecture--it listens. It can reach out and touch the spirit of another addict without a single spoken word.

Fluency in the language of empathy comes to us through practice. The more we use this language with other addicts and with our Higher Power, the more we understand this language. It is because of the language of empathy that we are alive today.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will listen with my heart. With each passing day, I will become more fluent in the language of empathy.

1

Hope

2 *"Gradually, as we become more God-centered than self-centered, our despair*
3 *turns to hope."*

4

Basic Text, p. 92

5 Despair is the relentless companion of the using addict. It colored our every
6 waking moment. Despair was born of our experience in active addiction: No
7 matter what measures we tried to make our lives better, we slid ever deeper into
8 misery. Attempts we made to control our lives frequently met with failure. In a
9 sense, our First Step admission of powerlessness was an acknowledgment of
10 despair.

11 Steps Two and Three lead us gradually out of that despair and into new hope.
12 Having accepted that so many of our efforts to change have failed, we come to
13 believe that there is a greater Power than ourselves. We believe this Power can--
14 and will--help us. We practice the Second and Third Steps as an affirmation of
15 our hope for a better life, turning to this Power for guidance. As we come to rely
16 more and more on a greater Power for the management of our day-to-day life, the
17 despair arising from our long experiment with self-reliance disappears.

18 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will reaffirm my Third Step decision. I know that, with a
19 Higher Power in my life, there is hope.

Walking the way we talk

"Words mean nothing until we put them into action."

Basic Text, p. 56

The Twelfth Step reminds us to practice these principles in all our affairs. In N.A., we see living examples of this suggestion all around us. The more experienced members, who seem to have an aura of peace surrounding them, demonstrate the rewards of applying this bit of wisdom in their lives.

To receive the rewards of this step, it is vital that we practice the spiritual principles of recovery even when no one is looking. If we talk about recovery at meetings but continue to live as we did in active addiction, our fellow members may suspect that we are doing nothing more than quoting bumper stickers.

What we pass on to newer members comes more from how we live than what we say. If we advise someone to "turn it over" without having experienced the miracle of the Third Step, chances are the message will fail to reach the ears of the newcomer for whom it's intended. On the other hand, if we "walk what we talk" and share our genuine experience in recovery, the message will surely be evident to all.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will practice the principles of recovery, even when I'm the only one who knows.

An awakening of the spirit

"The last thing we expected was an awakening of the spirit."

Basic Text, p. 48

Few of us came to our first Narcotics Anonymous meeting aching to take a personal inventory or believing that a spiritual void existed in our souls. We had no inkling that we were about to embark on a journey which would awaken our sleeping spirits.

Like a loud alarm clock, the First Step brings us to semi-consciousness-- although at this point, we may not be sure whether we want to climb out of bed or maybe sleep for just five more minutes. The gentle hand shaking our shoulders as we apply the Second and Third Steps causes us to stand up, stretch and yawn. We need to wipe the sleep from our eyes to write the Fourth Step and share our Fifth. But as we work the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Steps, we begin noticing a spring in our step and the start of a smile on our lips. Our spirits sing in the shower as we take the Tenth and Eleventh Steps. And then we practice the Twelfth, leaving the house in search of others to awaken.

We don't have to spend the rest of our lives in a spiritual coma. We may not like to get up in the morning but, once out of bed, we're almost always glad we did.

JUST FOR TODAY: To awaken my sleepy spirit, I will use the Twelve Steps.

1 **Fulfilling our dreams**

2 *"Dreams that we gave up long ago can now become realities."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 68**

4 All things begin with a dream. But how many of us fulfilled our dreams while
5 using? Even if we managed to complete something we had started, our addiction
6 usually robbed us of any pride in our accomplishment. Perhaps when we used,
7 we dreamed of the day when we would be clean. That day has come. We can
8 use this day to make our dreams come true.

9 To fulfill our dreams we must take action, but our lack of self-confidence may
10 keep us from trying. We can begin by setting realistic goals. The success we
11 experience when we attain our initial goals allows us to dream a bigger dream the
12 next time around.

13 Some of our members share that when they compare the ambitions they have
14 when they first got clean with what they had actually achieved in recovery, they
15 are astounded. In recovery, we often find more dreams come true than we could
16 ever have imagined.

17 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will remember that all things begin with a dream. Today, I
18 will allow myself to make my dreams come true.

Sick as our secrets

"It would be tragic to write [out an inventory only to] shove it in a drawer. These defects grow in the dark, and die in the light of exposure."

Basic Text, p. 31

How many times have we heard it said that we are only as sick as our secrets? While many members choose not to use meetings to share the intimate details of their lives, it is important that we each discover what works best for us. What about those behaviors we have carried into our recovery that, if discovered, would cause us shame? How much are we comfortable disclosing, and to whom? If we are uncomfortable sharing some details of our lives in meetings, to whom do we turn?

We have found the answer in sponsorship. Although a relationship with a sponsor takes time to build, it is important that we come to trust our sponsors enough to be completely honest. Our defects only have power as long as they stay hidden. If we want to be free of those defects, we must expose them. Secrets are only secrets until we tell another human being.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will expose my secrets. I will practice being honest with my sponsor.

1 The First Step--an action step

2 *"Do we understand that we have no real control over drugs?"*

3 **Basic Text, p. 18**

4 At first, many of us may have thought the First Step required no action--we just
5 surrender and go on to Step Two But Step One *does* require action!

6 The action we take in the First Step will be evident in the way we live, even
7 from our first day clean. If we truly believe that we are powerless over our
8 addiction, we will not choose to be around drugs. To continue to live with or
9 associate with practicing addicts may indicate a reservation in our program. An
10 absolute belief that the First Step applies to us will insure that we clear our homes
11 of all drugs and paraphernalia.

12 As time goes on, we'll not only continue with the basics, but add new actions
13 to our First Step repertoire. We'll learn to feel our feelings rather than trying to
14 control them. We'll stop trying to be our own and only guides on our recovery
15 journey; self-sponsorship will cease. We'll begin looking to a Power greater than
16 ourselves more and more for spiritual satisfaction rather than trying to fill that void
17 with something else.

18 Surrender is only the beginning. Once we surrender, we need to learn how to
19 live in the peace we have found.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will take all the action necessary to practice the First Step.
21 I truly believe it applies to me.

We all belong

"Although 'politics makes strange bedfellows,' as the old saying goes, addiction makes us one of a kind."

Basic Text, p. 84

What a mixture of folks we have in Narcotics Anonymous! In any given meeting, on any given night, we'll find a variety of people that probably never would have sat down in a room together if it weren't for the disease of addiction.

A member who is a physician described his unwillingness to identify at his first meeting by refusing to go into "that room full of junkies." Another member with an extensive background in jails and institutions shared a similar story, except that her shock and surprise stemmed from the realization that "there were nice people there--wearing suits, yet!" These two friends recently celebrated their seventh wedding anniversary.

The most unlikely people form friendships, sponsor each other, and do service work together. We meet in the rooms of recovery together, sharing the bonds of past suffering and hope for the future. We meet on mutual ground, with our focus on the two things we all have in common--addiction and recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: No matter what my personal circumstances, I belong.