

I can't--we can

"We had convinced ourselves that we could make it alone and proceeded to live life on that basis. The results were disastrous and, in the end, each of us had to admit that self-sufficiency was a lie."

Basic Text, p. 59

"I can't, but we can." This simple but profound truth applies initially to our first need as NA members: Together, we can stay clean, but when we isolate ourselves, we're in bad company. To recover, we need the support of other addicts.

Self-sufficiency impedes more than just our ability to stay clean. With or without drugs, living on self-will inevitably leads to disaster. We depend on other people for everything from goods and services to love and companionship, yet self-will puts us in constant conflict with those very people. To live a fulfilling life, we need harmony with others.

Other addicts and others in our communities are not the only ones we depend on. Power is not a human attribute, yet we need power to live. We find it in a Power greater than ourselves which provides the guidance and strength we lack on our own. When we pretend to be self-sufficient, we isolate ourselves from the one source of power sufficient to effectively guide us through life: our Higher Power.

Self-sufficiency doesn't work. We need other addicts; we need other people; and, to live fully, we need a Power greater than our own.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will seek the support of other recovering addicts; harmony with others in my community; and the care of my Higher Power. *I can't, but we can.*

The simple inventory

"Continuing to take a personal inventory means that we form a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, attitudes and relationships on a regular basis."

Basic Text, p. 41

The daily inventory is a tool we can use to simplify our lives. The most complicated part of taking a regular inventory is deciding how to start. Should we write it out? What should we examine? In how much detail? And how do we know when we've finished? In no time, we've turned a simple exercise into a major project.

Here's one simple approach to the daily inventory. We set aside a few minutes at the close of each day to sit quietly and check out our feelings. Is there a knot, big or small, in our gut? Do we feel uncomfortable about the day we've just finished? What happened? What was our part in the affair? Do we owe any amends? If we could do it over again, what would we do differently?

We also want to monitor the positive aspects in our daily inventory. What has given us satisfaction today? Were we productive? Responsible? Kind? Loving? Did we give unselfishly of ourselves? Did we fully experience the love and beauty the day offered us? What did we do today that we would want to do again?

Our daily inventory doesn't have to be complicated to be effective. It is a very simple tool we can use to keep in daily touch with ourselves.

JUST FOR TODAY: I want to keep in touch with the way I feel in living this life I've been given. At the end of this day, I will take a brief, simple inventory.

The Power of love

"We begin to see that God's love has been present all the time, just waiting for us to accept it."

Basic Text, p. 46

God's love is the transforming Power that drives our recovery. With that love, we find freedom from the hopeless, desperate cycle of using, self-hatred, and more using. With that love, we gain a sense of reason and purpose in our once purposeless lives. With that love, we are given the inner direction and strength we need to begin a new way of life: the NA way. With that love, we begin to see things differently, as if with new eyes.

As we examine our lives through the eyes of love, we make what may be a startling discovery: The loving God we've so recently come to understand has always been with us and has always loved us. We recall the times when we asked for the aid of a Higher Power, and were given it. We even recall times when we didn't ask for such help, yet were given it anyway. We realize that a loving Higher Power has cared for us all along, preserving our lives till the day when we could accept that love for ourselves.

The Power of love has been with us all along. Today, we are grateful to have survived long enough to become consciously aware of that love's presence in our world and our lives. Its vitality floods our very being, guiding our recovery and showing us how to live.

JUST FOR TODAY: I accept the love of a Higher Power in my life. I am conscious of that Power's guidance and strength within me. Today, I claim it for my own.

Happiness

"We come to know happiness, joy and freedom."

Basic Text, p. 88

If someone stopped you on the street today and asked you if you were happy, what would you say? "Well, gee, let's see... I have a place to live, food in the refrigerator, a job, my car is running... Well, yes, I guess I'm happy," you might respond. These are outward examples of things that we have traditionally associated with happiness. We often forget, however, that happiness is a choice; no one can *make* us happy.

Happiness is what we find in our involvement with Narcotics Anonymous. The happiness we derive from a life focused on service to the addict who still suffers is great indeed. When we place service to others ahead of our own desires, we find that we take the focus off ourselves. As a result, we live a more contented, harmonious life. In being of service to others, we find our own needs more than fulfilled.

Happiness. What is it, really? We can think of happiness as contentment and satisfaction. Both of these states of mind seem to come to us when we least strive for them. As we live just for today, carrying the message to the addict who still suffers, we find contentment, happiness, and a deeply meaningful life.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am going to be happy. I will find my happiness by being of service to others.

Romance and recovery

"Relationships can be a terribly painful area."

Basic Text, p. 78

Love is like an elixir for some of us. The excitement of a new lover, the intrigue of exploring intimacy, the sense of release we get from allowing ourselves to become vulnerable--these are all powerful emotions. But we can't forget that we have only a daily reprieve from our addiction. Holding onto this daily reprieve must be the top priority in any recovering addict's life.

We can become too involved in our relationship. We can neglect old friends and our sponsors in the process. Then, when things get difficult, we often feel that we can no longer reach out to those who helped us prior to our romantic involvement. This belief can lay the groundwork for a relapse. By consistently working our program and attending meetings, we insure that we have a network of recovery, even when we're deep in a romance.

Our desire to be romantically involved is natural. But we mustn't forget that, without our program, even the healthiest relationship will not guard us against the strength of our addiction.

JUST FOR TODAY: In my desire for romance, I will not ignore my recovery.

Cluttered spirits

"We try to remember that when we make amends, we are doing it for ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 40

As long as we still owe amends, our spirits are cluttered with things we don't need. We're carrying the extra load of an apology owed, a resentment held, or unexpressed remorse. It's like having a messy house. We could leave so we don't have to see the mess, or maybe just step over the piles of debris and pretend they aren't there. But ignoring the disorder won't make it disappear. In the end, the dirty dishes, the crumb-filled carpet, and the overflowing wastebaskets are still there, waiting to be cleaned up.

A cluttered spirit is just as hard to live with as a messy home. We always seem to be tripping over yesterday's leavings. Every time we turn around and try to go somewhere, there is something blocking our path. The more we neglect our responsibility to make amends, the more cluttered our spirits become. And we can't even hire someone to clean up. We have to do the work ourselves.

However, we gain a deep sense of satisfaction from making our own amends. Just as we would feel after we've cleaned our homes and have time to enjoy a bit of sunshine through sparkling windows, so will our spirits rejoice at our freedom to truly enjoy our recovery. And once the big mess is cleaned up, all we have to do is pick up after ourselves as we go along.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will clear away what's cluttering my spirit by making the amends I owe.

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Recovery at home

"We can enjoy our families in a new way and may become a credit to them instead of an embarrassment or a burden."

Basic Text, p. 100

We're doing great in recovery, aren't we? We go to a meeting every day, we spend every evening with our friends in the fellowship, and every weekend we dash off to a service workshop. But if things are falling to pieces at home, we're not doing so great after all.

We expect our families to understand. After all, we're not using drugs anymore. Why don't they recognize our progress? Don't they understand how important our meetings, our service, and our involvement with the fellowship are?

Our families will not appreciate the change NA is working in our lives unless we show them. If we rush off to a meeting the same way we rushed off to use drugs, what has changed? If we continue to ignore the needs and desires of our partners and children, failing to accept our responsibilities at home, we aren't "practicing these principles in all our affairs."

We must live the program everywhere we go, in everything we do. If we want the spiritual life to be more than a theory, we have to *live* it at home. When we do this, the people we share our lives with are sure to notice the change and be grateful that we've found NA.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will take my recovery home with me.

Understanding humility

"Humility is a result of getting honest with ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 35

Humility was an idea so foreign to most of us that we ignored it as long as we could. When we first saw the word "humbly" ahead in Step Seven, we may have figured it meant we had quite a bit of humiliation in store. Perhaps we chose to look it up in the dictionary, only to become even more confused by the definition. We didn't understand how "lowliness and subservience" applied to recovery.

To be humble does not mean we are the lowest form of life. On the contrary, becoming humble means we attain a realistic view of ourselves and where we fit in the world. We have grown into a state of awareness founded on our acceptance of all aspects of ourselves. We neither deny our good qualities nor overemphasize our defects. We honestly accept who we are.

No one of us will ever attain a state of perfect humility. But we can certainly strive to honestly admit our faults, accept our assets, and rely on our Higher Power as a source of strength. Humility doesn't mean we have to crawl life's path on our hands and knees; it just means we must admit we cannot recover on our own. We need each other and, above all, we need the Power of a loving God.

JUST FOR TODAY: To be humble, I will honestly accept all facets of myself, seeing my true place in the world. For the strength I need to fill that place, I will rely on the God of my understanding.

The gratitude list

"We focus on anything that isn't going our way and ignore all the beauty in our lives."

Basic Text, p. 77

It's easy to be grateful when everything runs smoothly. If we get a raise at work, we're grateful. If we get married, we're grateful. If someone surprises us with a nice present or an unasked favor, we're grateful. But if we get fired, divorced, or disappointed, gratitude flies out the window. We find ourselves becoming obsessed with the things that are wrong, even though everything else may be wonderful.

This is where we can use gratitude list. We sit down with a pen and paper and list the people for whom we are grateful. We all have people who've supported us through life's upheavals. We list the spiritual assets we have attained, for we know we could never make it through our present circumstances without them. Last, but not least, we list our recovery itself. Whatever we have that we are grateful for goes on the list.

We're sure to find that we have literally hundreds of things in our lives that inspire our gratitude. Even those of us who are suffering from an illness or who have lost all material wealth will find blessings of a spiritual nature for which we can be thankful. An awakening of the spirit is the most valuable gift an addict can receive.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will write a list of things, both material and spiritual, for which I am grateful.

1 **Loneliness vs. being alone**

2 *"Sharing with others keeps us from feeling isolated and alone."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 81**

4 There is a difference between being alone and being lonely. Being lonely is a
5 state of the heart, an emptiness that makes us feel sad and sometimes hopeless.
6 Loneliness is not always alleviated when we enter into relationships or surround
7 ourselves with others. Some of us are lonely even in a room full of people.

8 Many of us came to Narcotics Anonymous out of the desperate loneliness of
9 our addiction. After coming to meetings, we begin to make new friends, and often
10 our feelings of loneliness ease. But many of us must contend with loneliness
11 throughout our recovery.

12 What is the cure for loneliness? The best cure is to begin a relationship with a
13 Higher Power that can help fill the emptiness of our heart. We find that when we
14 have a belief in a Higher Power, we never have to feel lonely. We can be alone
15 more comfortably when we have a conscious contact with a God of our
16 understanding.

17 We often find deep fulfillment in our interactions with others as we progress in
18 our recovery. Yet we also find that, the closer we draw to our Higher Power, the
19 less we need to surround ourselves with others. We begin to find a spirit within us
20 that is our constant companion as we continue to explore and deepen our
21 connection with a Power greater than ourselves. We realize we are spiritually
22 connected with something bigger than us.

23 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will take comfort in my conscious contact with a Higher
24 Power. I am never alone.

Priorities

"The good times can also be a trap; the danger is that we may forget that our first priority is to stay clean."

Basic Text, p. 42

Things can get really good in our recovery. Perhaps we've found our "soul mate," built a rewarding career, started a family. Maybe our relationships with our family members have healed. Things are going so well, we barely have time to attend meetings. Perhaps we begin to reintegrate into society so successfully that we forget that we don't always react to situations like others do.

Maybe, just maybe, we've put some priorities ahead of ourselves. Is meeting attendance still a priority to us? Do we still sponsor? Do we phone *our* sponsors? What step are we working? Are we still willing to drag ourselves out of bed at some ungodly hour for a Twelfth Step call? Do we remember to practice principles in *all* our affairs? If others in NA reach out to us, are we available? Do we remember where we came from, or have the "good times" allowed us to forget?

To stay clean, we must remember that we are only one drug away from our past. We stay grateful for the good times, but we don't let them divert us from our continuing recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

JUST FOR TODAY: I'm grateful for the good times, but I've not forgotten from where I've come. Today, my first priority is staying clean and growing in my recovery.

The love of the fellowship

"Today, secure in the love of the fellowship, we can finally look another human being in the eye and be grateful for who we are."

Basic Text, p. 89

When we were using, few of us could tolerate looking someone in the eye--we were ashamed of who we were. Our minds were not occupied with anything decent or healthy, and we knew it. Our time, money, and energy weren't spent building loving relationships, sharing with others, or seeking to better our communities. We were trapped in a spiral of obsession and compulsion that went only in one direction: downward.

In recovery, our journey down that spiral path has been cut short. But what is it that has turned us around, drawing us back upward into the open spaces of the wide, free world? The love of the fellowship has done this.

In the company of other addicts, we knew we would not be rejected. By the example of other addicts, we were shown how to begin taking a positive part in the life around us. When we were unsure which way to turn, when we stumbled, when we had to correct a wrong we'd done, we knew our fellow members were there to encourage us.

Slowly, we've gotten the feel of our freedom. No longer are we locked up in our disease; we are free to build and grow and share along with everyone else. And when we need support to take our next step, it is there. The security we've found in the love of the fellowship has made our new lives possible.

JUST FOR TODAY: I can look anyone in the eye without shame. I am grateful for the loving support that has made this possible.

Up or down

"This is our road to spiritual growth. We change every day.... This growth is not the result of wishing but of action and prayer."

Basic Text, pp. 35-36

Our spiritual condition is never static; if it's not growing, it's decaying. If we stand still, our spiritual progress will lose its upward momentum. Gradually, our growth will slow, then halt, then reverse itself. Our tolerance will wear thin; our willingness to serve others will wane; our minds will narrow and close. Before long, we'll be right back where we started: in conflict with everyone and everything around us, unable to bear even ourselves.

Our only option is to actively participate in our program of spiritual growth. We pray, seeking knowledge greater than our own from a Power greater than ourselves. We open our minds and keep them open, becoming teachable and taking advantage of what others have to share with us. We demonstrate our willingness to try new ideas and new ways of doing things, experiencing life in a whole new way. Our spiritual progress picks up speed and momentum, driven by the Higher Power we are coming to understand better each day.

Up or down--it's one or the other, with very little in between, where spiritual growth is concerned. Recovery is not fueled by wishing and dreaming, we've discovered, but by prayer and action.

JUST FOR TODAY: The only constant in my spiritual condition is change. I cannot rely on yesterday's program. Today, I seek new spiritual growth through prayer and action.

Conflict

"We learn that conflicts are a part of reality, and we learn new ways to resolve them instead of running from them."

Basic Text, p. 87

From time to time, we all experience conflicts. It may be that we just can't get along with that new co-worker. Maybe our friends are driving us crazy. Or perhaps our partners aren't living up to our expectations. Dealing with any conflict is difficult for recovering addicts.

When tempers rise, it is often a good idea to back away from the situation until cooler minds prevail. We can always return for further discussion when we have calmed down. We can't avoid troubling situations, but we can use time and distance to find perspective.

Conflict is a part of life. We can't go through our entire recovery without encountering disagreements and differences of opinion. Sometimes we can back away from these situations, taking time to reflect on them, but there always comes a time when conflict must be resolved. When that time comes, we take a deep breath, say a prayer, and apply the principles our program has given us: honesty, openness, responsibility, forgiveness, trust, and all the rest. We didn't get clean to keep running from life--and in recovery, we don't have to run anymore.

JUST FOR TODAY: The principles my program has given me are sufficient to guide me through any situation. I will strive to confront conflict in a healthy way.

Rationalizing away our recovery

"As a result of the Twelve Steps, I'm not able to hold on to old ways of deceiving myself."

Basic Text, p. 176

We all rationalize. Sometimes we know we are rationalizing, admit we are rationalizing, yet continue to behave according to our rationalizations! Recovery can become very painful when we decide that, for one reason or another, the simple principles of the program don't apply to us.

With the help of our sponsors and others in NA, we can begin to look at the excuses we use for our behavior. Do we find that some principles just don't apply to us? Do we believe that we know more than everyone else in Narcotics Anonymous, even those who have been clean for many years? What makes us think that we're so special?

There is no doubt, we can successfully rationalize our way through part of our recovery. But, eventually, we must squarely face the truth and start acting accordingly. The principles in the Twelve Steps guide us to a new life in recovery. There is little room for rationalization there.

JUST FOR TODAY: I cannot work the steps and also continue deceiving myself. I will examine my thinking for rationalizations, reveal them to my sponsor, and be rid of them.

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The shape of our thoughts

"By shaping our thoughts with spiritual ideals, we are freed to become who we want to be."

Basic Text, p. 101

Addiction shaped our thoughts in its own way. Whatever their shape may once have been, they became misshapen once our disease took full sway over our lives. Our obsession with drugs and self molded our moods, our actions, and the very shape of our lives.

Each of the spiritual ideals of our program serves to straighten out one or another of the kinks in our thinking that developed in our active addiction. Denial is counteracted by admission, secretiveness by honesty, isolation by fellowship, and despair by faith in a loving Higher Power. The spiritual ideals we find in recovery are restoring the shape of our thoughts and our lives to their natural condition.

And what is that "natural condition"? It is the condition we truly seek for ourselves, a reflection of our highest dreams. How do we know this? Because our thoughts are being shaped in recovery by the spiritual ideals we find in our developing relationship with the God we've come to understand in NA.

No longer does addiction shape our thoughts. Today, our lives are being shaped by our recovery and our Higher Power.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will allow spiritual ideals to shape my thoughts. In that design, I will find the shape of my own Higher Power.

Sharing our gratitude

"My gratitude speaks when I care and when I share with others the NA way."

Gratitude Prayer

The longer we stay clean, the more we experience feelings of gratitude for our recovery. These feelings of gratitude aren't limited to particular gifts like new friends or the ability to be employed. More frequently, they arise from the overall sense of joy we feel in our new lives. Those feelings are enhanced by our certainty of the course our lives would have taken if it weren't for the miracle we've experienced in Narcotics Anonymous.

These feelings are so all-encompassing, so wondrous, and sometimes so overwhelming that we often can't find words for them. We sometimes openly weep with happiness while sharing in a meeting, yet we grope for words to express what we are feeling. We want so badly to convey to newcomers the gratitude we feel, but it seems that our language lacks the superlatives to describe it.

When we share with tears in our eyes, when we choke up and can't talk at all-- these are the times when our gratitude speaks most clearly. We share our gratitude directly from our hearts; with their hearts, others hear and understand. Our gratitude speaks eloquently, though our words may not.

JUST FOR TODAY: My gratitude has a voice of its own; when it speaks, the heart understands. Today, I will share my gratitude with others, whether I can find the words or not.

Hardships

"We felt different.... Only after surrender are we able to overcome the alienation of addiction."

Basic Text, p. 22

"But you don't understand!" we spluttered, trying to cover up. "I'm different! I've *really* got it rough!" We used these lines over and over in our active addiction, either trying to escape the consequences of our actions or avoid following the rules that applied to everyone else. We may have cried it at our first meeting. Perhaps we've even caught ourselves whining it recently.

So many of us feel different or unique. As addicts, we can use almost anything to alienate ourselves. But there's no excuse for missing out on recovery, nothing that can make us ineligible for the program--not a life-threatening illness, not poverty, not anything. There are thousands of addicts who have found recovery despite the real hardships they've faced. Through working the program, their spiritual awareness has grown, in spite of--or perhaps in response to--those hardships.

Our individual circumstances and differences are irrelevant when it comes to recovery. By letting go of our uniqueness and surrendering to this simple way of life, we're bound to find that we feel a part of something. And feeling a part of something gives us the strength to walk through life, hardships and all.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will let go of my uniqueness and embrace the principles of recovery I have in common with so many others. My hardships do not exclude me from recovery; rather, they draw me into it.

"Recovery"

"Narcotics Anonymous offers addicts a program of recovery that is more than just a life without drugs. Not only is this way of life better than the hell we lived, it is better than any life that we have ever known."

Basic Text, p. 103

Few of us have any interest in "recovering" what we had before we started using. Many of us suffered severely from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Getting high and staying high seemed like the only possible way to cope with such abuse. Others suffered in less noticeable but equally painful ways before addiction took hold. We lacked direction and purpose. We were spiritually empty. We felt isolated, unable to empathize with others. We had none of the things that give life its sense and value. We took drugs in a vain attempt to fill the emptiness inside ourselves. Most of us wouldn't *want* to "recover" what we used to have.

Ultimately, the recovery we find in NA is something different: a chance at a new life. We've been given tools to clear the wreckage from our lives. We've been given support in courageously setting forth on a new path. And we've been given the gift of conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves, providing us with the inner strength and direction we so sorely lacked in the past.

Recovering? Yes, in every way. We're recovering a whole new life, better than anything we ever dreamed possible. We are grateful.

JUST FOR TODAY: I've recovered something I never had, something I never imagined possible: the life of a recovering addict. Thank you, Higher Power, in more than words can say.

Freed from insanity

"Do I believe it would be insane to walk up to someone and say, 'May I please have a heart attack or a fatal accident?' "

Basic Text, p. 23

We've heard it said that, unless we're in love, we can't remember what love feels like. The same could be said of insanity: Once we're freed of it, we may forget how truly bizarre our insane thinking can be. But to be grateful for the degree of sanity to which we've been restored in Narcotics Anonymous, we need to remember just how truly insane we've been.

Today, it may be hard to imagine saying something as ridiculous as, "May I please have a heart attack or a fatal accident?" No one in their right mind is going to ask for such things. And that's the point. In our active addiction, we were not in our right mind. Each day we practiced our addiction, we courted fatal disease, degradation, exploitation, impoverishment, imprisonment, death by violence, even death by sheer stupidity. In that context, the idea of asking for a heart attack or a fatal accident doesn't sound all that far out. That's how insane we've been.

The program, the fellowship, and our Higher Power--together, they've worked a miracle. The Second Step is not a vain hope--it is reality. Knowing the degree of the insanity we've experienced, we can appreciate all the more the miraculous power that has restored us thus far to sanity. For that, we are truly grateful.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will take some time to recall how insane I've been while practicing my addiction. Then, I will thank my Higher Power for the sanity that's been restored to my life.

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Small things

"In the past, we made simple situations into problems; we made mountains out of molehills."

Basic Text, p. 87

Making mountains out of molehills seems to be our specialty. Have you heard it said that to an addict, a flat tire is a traumatic event? Or how about those of us who forget all pretense of principle when confronted with a bad driver? And what about that can opener that won't work--you know, the one you just threw out the second story window? We can relate when we hear others share, "God, grant me patience *right now!*"

No, it's not the major setbacks that drive us to distraction. The big things--divorce, death, serious illness, the loss of a job--will throw us, but we survive them. We've learned from experience that we must reach out to our Higher Power and others to make it through life's major crises. It's the small things, the constant day-to-day challenges of living life without the use of drugs, that seem to affect most addicts in recovery.

When the little things get to us, the Serenity Prayer can help us regain our perspective. We can all remember that "turning over" these small matters to the care of our Higher Power results in peace of mind and a refreshed perspective on life.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will work on patience. I will try to keep from blowing things out of proportion, and walk with my Higher Power through my day.

Feeling God's will

"I sincerely believed that a Higher Power could restore my sanity and that I would stop trying to figure out what God's will was, just accept things for what they were, and be grateful."

Basic Text, p. 198

The longer we stay clean, the less surely we "know" what our Higher Power's will for us is--and the less it matters. Knowledge of our Higher Power's will becomes less a "knowing" thing and more a "feeling" thing. We still practice the Eleventh Step faithfully. But rather than look for "signs" from our Higher Power, we begin to rely more on our intuition, trusting our feelings about what will make us comfortable.

After staying clean a few years, what we *do* seem to know is when we are acting *against* God's will for us. When we are going against God's will, we get that old uncomfortable feeling in our gut. That queasiness is a warning that, if we continue in this direction, ahead lie many sleepless nights. We need to pay attention to such feelings, for they are often signals that we are acting contrary to our Higher Power's will for us.

Our Eleventh Step clearly states the true goal of prayer and meditation: improvement of our conscious contact with the God of our understanding, bringing us clearer knowledge of our Higher Power's will for us, and the power to carry it out. We know God's will most clearly by how it feels, not by "signs" or words--and it feels *right*.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will pray for the knowledge of my Higher Power's will for me and the power to carry it out. I will pay attention to my feelings, and act when they feel right.

Responsible recovery

"...we accept responsibility for our problems and see that we're equally responsible for our solutions."

Basic Text, p. 94

Some of us, well accustomed to leaving our personal responsibilities to others, may attempt the same behavior in recovery. We quickly find out it doesn't work.

For instance, we are considering making a change in our lives, so we call our sponsors and ask them what we should do. Under the guise of seeking direction, we are actually asking our sponsor to assume responsibility for making decisions about our life. Or maybe we've been short with someone at a meeting, so we ask that person's best friend to make our apologies for us. Perhaps we've imposed on a friend several times in the last month to cover our service commitment. Could it be that we've asked a friend to analyze our behavior and identify our shortcomings, rather than taking our own personal inventory?

Recovery is something that has to be worked for. It isn't going to be handed to us on a silver platter, nor can we expect our friends or our sponsors to be responsible for the work we must do ourselves. We recover by making our own decisions, doing our own service, and working our own steps. By doing it for ourselves, we receive the rewards.

JUST FOR TODAY: I accept responsibility for my life and my recovery.

The value of the past

"This firsthand experience in all phases of illness and recovery is of unparalleled, therapeutic value. We are here to share freely with any addict who wants to recover."

Basic Text, p. 10

Most of us came into the program with some serious regrets. We never finished high school, or we missed going to college. We destroyed friendships and marriages. We lost jobs. And we knew that we couldn't change any of it. We may have thought that we'd always be regretful and simply have to find a way to live with our regrets.

On the contrary, we find that our past represents an untapped gold mine the first time we are called on to share it with a struggling newcomer. As we listen to someone share their Fifth Step with us, we can give a special form of comfort that no one else could provide--our own experience. We've done the same things. We've had the same feelings of shame and remorse. We've suffered in the ways only an addict can suffer. We relate--and so can they.

Our past is valuable--in fact, priceless--because we can use all of it to help the addict who still suffers. Our Higher Power can work through us when we share our past. That possibility is why we are here, and its fulfillment is the most important goal we have to accomplish.

JUST FOR TODAY: I no longer regret my past because, with it, I can share with other addicts, perhaps averting the pain or even death of another.

Keeping the gift

"Life takes on a new meaning when we open ourselves to this gift."

Basic Text, p. 102

Neglecting our recovery is like neglecting any other gift we've been given. Suppose someone gave you a new car. Would you let it sit in the driveway until the tires rotted? Would you just drive it, ignoring routine maintenance, until it expired on the road? Of course not! You would go to great lengths to maintain the condition of such a valuable gift.

Recovery is also a gift, and we have to care for it if we want to keep it. While our recovery doesn't come with an extended warranty, there is a routine maintenance schedule. This maintenance includes regular meeting attendance and various forms of service. We'll have to do some daily cleaning--our Tenth Step--and, once in a while, a major Fourth Step overhaul will be required. But if we maintain the gift of recovery, thanking the Giver each day, it will continue.

The gift of recovery is one that grows with the giving. Unless we give it away, we can't keep it. But in sharing our recovery with others, we come to value it all the more.

JUST FOR TODAY: My recovery is a gift, and I want to keep it. I'll do the required maintenance, and I'll share my recovery with others.

Traveling the open road

"This is our road to spiritual growth."

Basic Text, p. 35

When we arrived at our first NA meeting, it looked like the end of the road to many of us. We weren't going to be able to use anymore. We were spiritually bankrupt. Most of us were totally isolated and didn't think we had much to live for. Little did we realize that, as we began our program of recovery, we were stepping onto a road of unlimited possibilities.

At first, just not using was tough enough. Yet, as we watched other addicts working the steps and applying those principles in their lives, we began to see that recovery was more than just not using. The lives of our NA friends had changed. They had a relationship with the God of their understanding. They were responsible members of the fellowship and of society. They had a reason to live. We began to believe these things were possible for us, too.

As we continue our recovery journey, we can get sidetracked by complacency, intolerance, or dishonesty. When we do, we need to recognize the signs quickly and get back on our path--the open road to freedom and growth.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am continuing to develop my spiritual, social, and general living skills by applying the principles of my program. My travels on the open road of recovery are unlimited.

Exploring spiritual options

"The nature of our belief will determine the manner of our prayers and meditation."

Basic Text, p. 43

How do we pray? For each NA member, this is a deeply personal matter. Many of us find that, over time, we develop a manner of prayer and meditation based on what we learn from others and what we are comfortable with.

Some of us arrive in NA with a closed mind toward a Power greater than ourselves. But when we sit down with our sponsors and discuss our difficulty, looking at the Second Step in depth, we are pleased to find that we can choose any concept of a Higher Power that appeals to us.

Just as our definition of a Power greater than ourselves differs from addict to addict, so does our manner of achieving a "conscious contact." Some attend religious services; some chant; some sit quietly or talk with whatever is out there; some find a spiritual connection by communing with nature. The "right way" to pray and meditate is whatever way helps us improve our conscious contact with our own Higher Power.

Asking others how they found their spiritual guidance is always a good place to begin. Reading literature before we enter periods of meditation can also help us. Many have gone before us on this search. As we seek spiritual growth, we can greatly benefit from their experience.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will explore my options for improving my conscious contact with the God of my understanding.

Any lengths

"...I was ready to go to any lengths to stay clean."

Basic Text, p. 217

"Any lengths?" newcomers ask. "What do you mean, *any lengths*?" Looking back at our active addiction and the lengths we were willing to go to in order to stay high can help to explain. Were we willing to drive many miles to get drugs? Yes, we usually were. Then it makes sense that, if we are as concerned about staying clean as we were about using, we will try anything to find a ride to a meeting.

In our addiction, didn't we often do crazy, insane things or use unknown substances at the direction of others? Then why do we often find it so hard to take direction in recovery, especially when the direction is designed to help us grow? And when we used, didn't we often, in desperation, turn to our Higher Power, saying, "Please, just get me out of this one!" Then why do we find it so hard to ask for God's help in our recovery?

When we used, we usually had an open mind when it came to finding ways and means to get more drugs. If we can apply this same principle of open-mindedness to our recovery, we may surprise ourselves by how easily we begin to grasp the NA program. Our best thinking, it is often said, got us into the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. If we are willing to go to any lengths, follow directions, and stay open-minded, we can stay clean.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am willing to go to any lengths to stay clean. I will become as open-minded and ready to take direction as I need to be.

1 **Don't look back**

2 *The steps offer "a big change from a life dominated by guilt and remorse. Our*
3 *futures are changed, because we don't have to avoid those who we have harmed.*
4 *As a result... we receive a new freedom that can end isolation."*

5 **Basic Text, p. 38**

6 Many of us come to Narcotics Anonymous full of regrets about our past. Our
7 steps help us begin to resolve those regrets. We examine our lives, admit our
8 wrongs, make amends for them, and sincerely try to change our behavior. In
9 doing so, we find a joyous sense of freedom.

10 No longer must we deny or regret our past. Once we've made our amends,
11 what's done is truly over and gone. From that point on, where we come from
12 ceases to be the most important thing about us. It's where we are going that
13 counts.

14 In NA, we begin to look forward. True, we live and stay clean just for today.
15 But we find that we can begin to set goals, dream dreams, and look ahead to the
16 joys a life in recovery has to offer. Looking forward keeps us centered in where
17 we are going, not remorseful or regretful about our past. After all, it is hard to
18 move forward if we are looking back.

19 **JUST FOR TODAY:** The steps have freed me from regrets over my past. Today,
20 I look forward to my new life in recovery.

God's will, not ours

"We know that if we pray for God's will, we will receive what is best for us, regardless of what we think."

Basic Text, p. 44

By the time we came to NA, our inner voices had become unreliable and self-destructive. Addiction had warped our desires, our interests, our sense of what was best for ourselves. That's why it's been so important in recovery to develop our belief in a Power greater than ourselves, something that could provide saner, more reliable guidance than our own. We've begun learning how to rely on this Power's care and to trust the inner direction it provides us.

As with all learning processes, it takes practice to "pray *only* for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out." The selfish, ego-driven attitudes we developed in our addiction are not cast off overnight. Those attitudes may affect the way we pray. We may even find ourselves praying something like , "Relieve me of this character defect so I can look good."

The more straightforward we are about our own ideas and desires, the easier it will be to distinguish between our own will and our Higher Power's will. "Just for your information, God," we might pray, "here's what I want in this situation. Nonetheless, I ask that your will, not mine, be done." Once we do this, we are prepared to recognize and accept our Higher Power's guidance.

JUST FOR TODAY: Higher Power, I've learned to trust your guidance, yet I still have my own ideas about how I want to live my life. Let me share those ideas with you, and then let me clearly understand your will for me. In the end, let your will, not mine, be done.

Higher Powered

"Daily practice of our Twelve Step program enables us to change from what we were to people guided by a Higher Power."

Basic Text, p. 83

Who have we been, and who have we become? There are a couple of ways to answer this question. One is very simple: We came to Narcotics Anonymous as addicts, our addiction killing us. In NA, we've been freed from our obsession with drugs and our compulsion to use. And our lives have changed.

But that's only the tip of the iceberg. Who have we *really* been? In the past, we were people without power or direction. We felt like we had no purpose, no reason for living. Our lives didn't make any more sense to us than they did to our families, our friends, or our neighbors.

Who are we *really* becoming? Today, we are not merely clean addicts, but people with a sense of direction, a purpose, and a Power greater than ourselves. Through daily practice of the Twelve Steps, we've begun to understand how our addiction warped our feelings, motivations, and behavior. Gradually, the destructive force of our disease has been replaced by the life-giving force of our Higher Power.

Recovery means more than cleaning up--it means *Powering* up. We have done more than shed some bad habits; we are becoming new people, guided by a Higher Power.

JUST FOR TODAY: The guidance I need to become a new person is ready at hand. Today, I will draw further away from my old lack of direction and closer to my Higher Power.

Build, don't destroy

"Our negative sense of self has been replaced by a positive concern for others."

Basic Text, p. 16

Spreading gossip feeds a dark hunger in us. Sometimes we think the only way we can feel good about ourselves is to make someone else look bad by comparison. But the kind of self-esteem that can be purchased at another's expense is hollow and not worth the price.

How, then, do we deal with our negative sense of self? Simple. We replace it with a positive concern for others. Rather than dwell on our low self-esteem, we turn to those around us and seek to be of service to them.

This may seem to be a way of avoiding the issue, but it's not. There's nothing we can do by dwelling on our low sense of self except work ourselves into a stew of self-pity. But by replacing our self-pity with active, loving concern for others, we become the kind of people we *can* respect.

The way to build our self-esteem is not to tear others down, but to build them up through love and positive concern. To help us with this, we can ask ourselves if we are contributing to the problem or to the solution. Today, we can choose to build instead of destroy.

JUST FOR TODAY: Though I may be feeling low, I don't need to tear someone down to build myself up. Today, I will replace my negative sense of self with a positive concern for others. I will build, not destroy.

Our Higher Power's care

"We believe that our Higher Power will take care of us."

Basic Text, p. 55

Our program is based on the idea that the application of simple principles can produce profound effects in our lives. One such principle is that, if we ask, our Higher Power will care for us. Because this principle is so basic, we may tend to ignore it. Unless we learn to consciously apply this spiritual truth, we may miss out on something as essential to our recovery as breathing is to life itself.

What happens when we find ourselves stressed or panicked? If we have consistently sought to improve our relationship with our Higher Power, we'll have no problem. Rather than acting rashly, we will stop for a moment and briefly remind ourselves of particular instances in the past when our Higher Power has shown its care for us. This will assure us that our Higher Power is still in charge of our lives. Then, we will seek guidance and power for the situation at hand and proceed calmly, confident that our lives are in God's hands.

"Our program is a set of principles," our White Booklet tells us. The more consistently we seek to improve our conscious appreciation of these principles, the more readily we will be able to apply them.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will seek to improve my conscious contact with the Higher Power that cares for me. When the need arises, I know I will be able to trust in that care.

Exchanging love

"...we give love because it was given so freely to us. New frontiers are open to us as we learn how to love. Love can be the flow of life energy from one person to another."

Basic Text, pp. 100-101

Love given, and love received, is the essence of life itself. It is the universal common denominator, connecting us to those around us. Addiction deprived us of that connection, locking us within ourselves.

The love we find in the NA program reopens the world to us. It unlocks the cage of addiction which once imprisoned us. By receiving love from other NA members, we find out--perhaps for the first time--what love is and what it can do. We hear fellow members talk about the sharing of love, and we sense the substance it lends to their lives.

We begin to suspect that, if giving and receiving love means so much to others, maybe it can give meaning to our lives, too. We sense that we are on the verge of a great discovery, yet we also sense that we won't fully understand the meaning of love unless we give ours away. We try it, and discover the missing connection between ourselves and the world.

Today, we realize that what they said was true: "We keep what we have only by giving it away."

JUST FOR TODAY: Life is a new frontier for me, and the vehicle I will use to explore it is love. I will give freely the love I have received.

A closed mind

"A new idea cannot be grafted onto a closed mind.... Open-mindedness leads us to the very insights that have eluded us during our lives."

Basic Text, p. 93

We arrived in NA at the lowest point in our lives. We'd just about run out of ideas. What we needed most when we got here were new ideas, new ways of living, shared from the experience of people who'd seen those ideas work. Yet our closed minds prevented us from taking in the very ideas we needed to live.

Denial keeps us from appreciating just how badly we really need new ideas and new direction. By admitting our powerlessness and recognizing how truly unmanageable our lives have become, we allow ourselves to see how much we need what NA has to offer.

Self-dependence and self-will can keep us from admitting even the possibility of the existence a Power greater than ourselves. However, when we admit the sorry state self-will has gotten us into, we open our eyes and our minds to new possibilities. When others tell us of a Power that has brought sanity to their lives, we begin to believe that such a Power may do the same for us.

A tree stripped of its branches will die unless new branches can be grafted onto its trunk. In the same way, addiction stripped us of whatever direction we had. To grow or even to *survive*, we must open our minds and allow new ideas to be grafted onto our lives.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will ask my Higher Power to open my mind to the new ideas of recovery.

Guarding our recovery

"Remember that we... are ultimately responsible for our recovery and our decisions."

Basic Text, p. 99

Most of us will face choices that challenge our recovery. If we find ourselves in extreme physical pain, for example, we will have to decide whether or not we will take medication. We will have to be very honest with ourselves about the severity of our pain, honest with our doctor about our addiction and our recovery, and honest with our sponsor. In the end, however, the decision is ours, for we are the ones who must live with the consequences.

Another common challenge is the choice of attending a party where alcohol will be served. Again, we should consider our own spiritual state. If someone who supports our recovery can attend the event with us, so much the better. However, if we don't feel up to such a challenge, we should probably decline the invitation. Today, we know that preserving our recovery is more important than saving face.

All such decisions are tough ones, requiring not only our careful consideration but the guidance of our sponsors and complete surrender to a Higher Power. Using all of these resources, we make the best decision we can. Ultimately, however, the decision is ours. Today, we are responsible for our own recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: When faced with a decision that may challenge my recovery, I will consult all the resources at my disposal before I make my choice.

Take a deep breath and talk to God

"Sometimes when we pray, a remarkable thing happens: We find the means, ways, and energies to perform tasks far beyond our capacities."

Basic Text, p. 44

Coping successfully with life's minor annoyances and frustrations is sometimes the most difficult skill we have to learn in recovery. Yet, we are faced with small inconveniences daily. From untangling the knots in our children's shoelaces to standing in line at the market, our days are filled with minor difficulties that we must deal with somehow.

If we're not careful, we may find ourselves dealing with these difficulties by bullying our way through each problem, or grinding our teeth while giving ourselves a stern lecture about how we *should* handle them. These are extreme examples of poor coping skills, but even if we're not this bad, there's probably room for improvement.

Each time life presents us with another little setback to our daily plans, we can simply take a deep breath and talk to the God of our understanding. Knowing we can draw patience, tolerance, or whatever we need from that Power, we find ourselves coping better and smiling more often.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will take a deep breath and talk to my God whenever I feel frustrated.

Love and addiction

"Some of us first saw the effects of addiction on the people closest to us. We were very dependent on them to carry us through life. We felt angry, disappointed and hurt when they found other interests, friends and loved ones."

Basic Text, p. 7

Addiction affected every area of our lives. Just as we sought the drug that would make everything alright, so we sought people to fix us. We made impossible demands, driving away those who had anything of worth to offer us. Often, the only people left were those who were themselves too needy to be capable of denying our unrealistic expectations. It's no wonder that we were unable to establish and maintain healthy intimate relationships in our addiction.

Today, in recovery, we've stopped expecting drugs to fix us. If we still expect people to fix us, perhaps it's time to extend our recovery program to our relationships. We begin by admitting we have a problem--that we don't know the first thing about how to have healthy intimate relationships. We seek out members who've had similar problems and have found relief. We talk with them and listen to what they share about this aspect of their recovery. We apply the program to all our affairs, seeking the same kind of freedom in our relationships that we find throughout our recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: Loving relationships are within my reach. Today, I will examine the effects of addiction on my relationships so that I can begin seeking recovery.

Depending on our Higher Power

"As recovering addicts, we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has shifted from the things around us to a loving God and the inner strength we get in our relationship with Him."

Basic Text, pp. 67-68

For many addicts, rebelliousness is second nature. We didn't want to depend on anyone or anything, and especially not on God. The beauty of using, we thought, was that it gave us the power to be and feel anything we wanted, all by ourselves. But the price we paid for this illusory freedom was a dependence beyond our worst nightmares. Rather than freeing us, using enslaved us.

When we came to Narcotics Anonymous, we learned that dependence on God didn't have to mean what we may have thought it meant. Yes, if we wanted to be restored to sanity, we would need to tap "a Power greater than ourselves." However, we could choose our own concept of this Higher Power--we could even make one up. Dependence on a Higher Power would not limit us, we discovered; it would free us.

The power we find in recovery is the power we lacked on our own. It is the love we were afraid to depend on others for. It is the sense of personal direction we never had, the guidance we couldn't humble ourselves to ask for or trust others to give. It is all these things, and it is our own. Today, we are grateful to have a Higher Power to depend on.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will depend on the love and inner strength I draw from the God of my own understanding.

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

Not all of us arrive in NA and automatically stay clean. But if we keep coming back, we find the support we need for our recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Staying clean is easier when we have someone who believes in us even when we don't believe in ourselves.

Even the most frequent relapser in NA usually has one staunch supporter who is always there, no matter what. It is imperative that we find that one person or group of people who believes in us. When we ask them if we will ever get clean, they will always reply, "Yes, you can and you will. Just keep coming back!"

We all need someone who believes in us, especially when we can't believe in ourselves. When we relapse, we undermine our already shattered self-confidence, sometimes so badly that we begin to feel utterly hopeless. At such times, we need the support of our loyal NA friends. They tell us that this can be our last relapse. They know from experience that if we keep coming to meetings, we will eventually get clean and stay clean.

It's hard for many of us to believe in ourselves. But when someone loves us unconditionally, offering support no matter how many times we've relapsed, recovery in NA becomes a little more real for us.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will find someone who believes in me. I will believe in them.

Keep coming back!

"We are grateful that we were made so welcome at meetings that we felt comfortable."

Basic Text, p. 80

Remember how scared we were when we walked into our first NA meeting? Even if we walked in with a friend, most of us recall how difficult it was to attend that first meeting. What was it that kept us coming back? Most of us have grateful memories of the welcome we were given and how comfortable that made us feel. When we raised our hand as a newcomer, we opened the door for other members to approach us and welcome us.

Sometimes the difference between those addicts who walk back out the door of their first meeting, never to return to NA, and the addicts who stay to seek recovery is the simple hug of an NA member. When we have been clean awhile, it's easy to step back from the procession of newcomers--after all, we've seen so many people come and go. But members with some clean time can make the difference between the addict who doesn't return and the addict who keeps coming back. By offering our phone numbers, a hug, or just a warm welcome, we extend the hand of Narcotics Anonymous to the addict who still suffers.

JUST FOR TODAY: I remember the welcome I was given when I first came to NA. Today, I will express my gratitude by offering a hug to a newcomer.

1

God does for us

2 *"Ongoing recovery is dependent on our relationship with a loving God who cares*
3 *for us and will do for us what we find impossible to do for ourselves."*

4

Basic Text, p. 96

5 How often have we heard it said in meetings that "God does for us what we
6 cannot do for ourselves"? At times we may get stuck in our recovery, unable,
7 afraid, or unwilling to make the decisions we know we must make to move
8 forward. Perhaps we are unable to end a relationship that just isn't working.
9 Maybe our job has become a source of too much conflict. Or perhaps we feel we
10 need to find a new sponsor, but are afraid to begin the search. Through the
11 grace of our Higher Power, unexpected change may occur in precisely the area
12 we felt unable to alter.

13 We sometimes allow ourselves to become stuck in the problem instead of
14 moving forward toward the solution. At these times, we often find that our Higher
15 Power does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Perhaps our partner decides
16 to end our relationship. We may get fired, or laid off. Or our sponsor tells us that
17 he or she can no longer work with us, forcing us to look for a new one.

18 Sometimes what occurs in our lives can be frightening, as change often
19 seems. But we also hear that "God never closes a door without opening another
20 one." As we move forward with faith, the strength of our Higher Power is never far
21 from us. Our recovery is strengthened by these changes.

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I trust that the God of my understanding will do for me what I
23 cannot do for myself.

"I'm sorry"

"The main thing [the Eighth Step] does for us is to help build awareness that, little by little, we are gaining new attitudes about ourselves and how we deal with other people."

Basic Text, p. 38

To say "I'm sorry" probably isn't such a foreign idea to most of us. In our active addiction, it may have been a very familiar phrase. We were always telling people how sorry we were, and were probably deeply surprised when someone, tired of our meaningless apologies, responded with, "You sure are. In fact, you're the sorriest excuse for..." That may have been our first clue that an "I'm sorry" didn't really make any difference to those we harmed, especially when we both knew that we'd just do the same thing again.

Many of us thought that making amends would be another "I'm sorry." However, the action we take in those steps is entirely different. Making amends means to make changes and, above all, to make the situation *right*. If we stole money, we don't just say "I'm sorry. I'll never do it again now that I'm clean." We pay the money back. If we neglected or abused our families, we don't just apologize. We begin to treat them with respect.

Amending our behavior and the way we treat ourselves and others is the whole purpose of working the steps. We're no longer just "sorry"; we're responsible.

JUST FOR TODAY: I accept responsibility for myself and my recovery. Today, I will amend some particular thing I'm sorry for.

Those who want to recover

"We have seen the program work for any addict who honestly and sincerely wants to stop [using drugs]."

Basic Text, p. 10

How do we know when someone honestly and sincerely wants to stop using drugs? The truth is that we don't know! Because we cannot read minds or know another's motives and desires, we simply have to hope for the best.

We may talk to a newcomer at a meeting and think we'll never see them again, only to find them several years later doing well in their recovery. We may be tempted to give up on someone who keeps relapsing or doesn't get clean right away, but we must not. No matter how unwilling someone may seem, a simple fact remains--*the addict is at a meeting*.

We may never know the results of our Twelfth Step work; it is not up to us to gauge the willingness of a newcomer. The message we carry is a part of us. We carry it everywhere and share it freely, leaving the results to a Power greater than ourselves.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will share my recovery with any addict, anywhere, anytime, and under any circumstances. I will leave the results to my Higher Power.

Ask for mercy, not justice

"Many of us have difficulty admitting that we caused harm for others... We cut away our justifications and our ideas of being a victim."

Basic Text, p. 37

Our lives are progressing nicely. Things are going good, and each year in recovery brings more material and spiritual gifts. We may have a little money in the bank, a new car, or a committed relationship. We have a little self-confidence, and our faith in a Higher Power is growing.

Then, something happens. Someone breaks into our new car and steals the stereo, or the person we're in the relationship with becomes unfaithful. Right away, we feel victimized. "Where's the justice?" we wail. But if we take a look back on our own behavior, we may find that we've been guilty of doing what's just been done to us. We realize we wouldn't really want justice--not for ourselves, and not for others. What we want is mercy.

We thank a loving God for the compassion we've been shown, and we take the time to appreciate all the precious gifts that recovery brings.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will pray for mercy, not justice. I am grateful for the compassion I've been shown, and will offer mercy to others.

Honest prayer

"Although honesty is difficult to practice, it is most rewarding."

Basic Text, p. 92

How difficult we find it to be honest! Many of us come to NA so confused about what really happened in our lives that it sometimes takes months and years to sort it all out. The truth of our history is not always as we have told it. How can we begin to be more truthful?

Many of us find it the easiest to be honest in prayer. With our fellow addicts, we sometimes find that we have a hard time telling the whole truth. We feel certain that we won't be accepted if we let others know us as we really are. It's hard to live up to the "terminally hip and fatally cool" image so many of us portrayed! In prayer, we find an acceptance from our Higher Power that allows us to open our hearts with honesty.

As we practice this honesty with the God of our understanding, we can find that it has a ripple effect in our communications with others. We get in the habit of being honest. We begin to practice honesty with others, with our sponsors, when we share at meetings, and when we work with others. In return, we find our lives enriched by deepening friendships. We even find that we can be more honest with ourselves, the most important person to be truthful with!

Honesty is a quality that is developed through practice. It isn't always easy to be totally truthful, but when we begin with our Higher Power, we find it easier to extend our honesty to others.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will be honest with God, myself, and others.

"Pure" motives

"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

Imagine a daily meditation book with this kind of message: "When you wake up in the morning, before you rise from your bed, take a moment for reflection. Lie back, gather your thoughts, and consider your plans for the day. One by one, review the motives behind those plans. If your motives are not entirely pure, roll over and go back to sleep." Nonsense, isn't it?

No matter how long we've been clean, almost all of us have mixed motives behind almost everything we do. However, that's no reason to put our lives on hold. We don't have to wait for our motives to become perfectly pure before we start living our recovery.

As the program works its way into our lives, we begin acting less frequently on our more questionable motives. We regularly examine ourselves, and we talk with our sponsors about what we find. We pray for knowledge of our Higher Power's will for us, and we seek the power to act on the knowledge we're given. The result? We don't get perfect, but we do get better.

We've begun working a spiritual program. We won't ever become spiritual giants. But if we look at ourselves realistically, we'll probably realize that we've been doing better than we've been feeling.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will examine myself realistically. I will seek the power to act on my best motives, and not to act on my worst.

1

God's guidance

2 *"Our Higher Power is accessible to us at all times. We receive guidance when we*
3 *ask for knowledge of God's will for us."*

4

Basic Text, p. 92

5 It's not always easy to make the right decision. This is especially true for
6 addicts learning to live by spiritual principles for the first time. In addiction, we
7 developed self-destructive, anti-social impulses. When conflict arose, we took our
8 cues from those negative impulses. Our disease didn't prepare us to make
9 sound decisions.

10 Today, to find the direction we need, we ask our Higher Power. We stop; we
11 pray; and, quietly, we listen within for guidance. We've come to believe that we
12 can rely on a Power greater than ourselves. That power is accessible to us
13 whenever we need it. All we need do is pray for knowledge of our God's will for
14 us and the power to carry it out.

15 Each time we do this, each time we find direction amidst our confusion, our
16 faith grows. The more we rely on our Higher Power, the easier it becomes to ask
17 for direction. We've found the power we were lacking in our addiction, a power
18 that is available to us at all times. To find the direction we need to live fully and
19 grow spiritually, all we have to do is maintain contact with the God of our
20 understanding.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** My Higher Power is a source of spiritual guidance within me
22 that I can always draw upon. When I lack direction today, I will ask for knowledge
23 of my Higher Power's will.

The joy within

"Since the beginning of our recovery, we have found that joy doesn't come from material things, but from within ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 103

Some of us came to Narcotics Anonymous impoverished by our disease. Everything we'd owned had been lost to our addiction. Once we got clean, we put all our energy into recovering our material possessions, only to feel even more dissatisfied with our lives than before.

Other members have sought to ease their emotional pain with material things. A potential date has rejected us? Let's buy something. The dog has died? Let's go to the mall. Problem is, emotional fulfillment can't be bought, not even on an easy installment plan.

There's nothing inherently wrong with material things. They can make life more convenient or more luxurious, but they can't fix us. Where, then, can true joy be found? We know; the answer is within ourselves.

When have we found joy? When we've offered ourselves in service to others, without expectation of reward. We've found true warmth in the fellowship of others--not only in NA, but in our families, our relationships, and our communities. And we've found the surest source of satisfaction in our conscious contact with our God. Inner peace, a sure sense of direction, and emotional security do not come from material things, but from within.

JUST FOR TODAY: True joy can't be bought. I will seek my joy in service, in fellowship, in my Higher Power--I will seek within.

What about the newcomer?

"Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers."

Tradition Five

Our home groups mean a lot to us. After all, where would we be without our favorite NA meeting? Our groups sometimes sponsor picnics or other activities. Often, home group members get together to see a movie or go bowling. We have all made good friendships through our home groups, and we wouldn't trade that warmth for the world.

But sometimes we must take inventory of what our group is doing to fulfill its primary purpose--to carry the message to the still-suffering addict. Sometimes when we go to our meetings, we know almost everyone and get caught up in the laughter and fun. But what about the newcomer? Have we remembered to reach out to the new people who may be sitting by themselves, lonely and frightened? Do we remember to welcome those visiting our groups?

The love found in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous helps us recover from addiction. But once we have gotten clean, we must remember to give to others what was so freely given to us. We need to reach out to the addict who still suffers. After all, the newcomer is the most important person at any meeting.

JUST FOR TODAY: I'm grateful for the warm fellowship I've found in my home group. I will reach out my hand to the still-suffering addict, offering that same fellowship to others.

Identification

"Someone finally knew the crazy thoughts that I had and the crazy things I'd done."

Basic Text, p. 175

Addicts often feel terminally unique. We're sure that no one used drugs like we did or had to do the things that we did to get them. Feeling that no one really understands us can keep us from recovery for many years.

But once we come to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, we begin to lose that feeling of being "the worst" or "the craziest." We listen as members share their experiences. We discover that others have walked the same twisted path that we've walked and still have been able to find recovery. We begin to believe that recovery is available to us, too.

As we progress in our own recovery, sometimes our thinking is still insane. However, we find that when we share the hard time we may be having, others identify, sharing how they dealt with such difficulties. No matter how troubled our thinking seems, we find hope when others relate to us, passing along the solutions they've found. We begin to believe that we can survive whatever we're going through to continue on in our recovery.

The gift of Narcotics Anonymous is that we learn we are not alone. We can get clean and stay clean by sharing our experience, our strength, and even our crazy thinking with other members. When we do, we open ourselves to the solutions others have found to the challenges we face.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am grateful that today I can identify with others. I will listen as they share their experience, and I'll share mine with them.

1

Goodwill

2 *"Goodwill is best exemplified in service; proper service is 'Doing the right thing for*
3 *the right reason.' "*

4

Basic Text, p. ix

5 The spiritual core of our disease is self-centeredness. In dealing with others,
6 the only motive our addiction taught us was selfishness--we wanted what we
7 wanted when we wanted it. Obsession with self was rooted in the very ground of
8 our lives. In recovery, how do we root self-obsession out?

9 We reverse the effects of our disease by applying a few very simple spiritual
10 principles. To counteract the self-centeredness of our addiction, we learn to
11 apply the principle of *goodwill*. Rather than seeking to serve only ourselves, we
12 begin serving others. Rather than thinking only about what we can get out of a
13 situation, we learn to think first of the welfare of others. When faced with a moral
14 choice, we learn to stop, recall spiritual principles, and act appropriately.

15 As we begin "doing the right thing for the right reason," we can detect a
16 change in ourselves. Where once we were ruled by self-will, now we are guided
17 by our goodwill for others. The chronic self-centeredness of addiction is losing its
18 hold on us. We are learning to "practice these principles in all our affairs;" we are
19 living in our recovery, not in our disease.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** Wherever I am, whatever I do, I will seek to serve others, not
21 just myself. When faced with a dilemma, I will try to do the right thing for the right
22 reason.

1

Losing self-will

2 *"Our egos, once so large and dominant, now take a back seat because we are in*
3 *harmony with a loving God. We find that we lead richer, happier, and much fuller*
4 *lives when we lose self-will."*

5

Basic Text, p. 101

6 Addiction and self-will go hand-in-hand. The unmanageability that we
7 admitted to in Step One was as much a product of our self-will as it was of our
8 chronic drug abuse. And today, living on self-will can make our lives just as
9 unmanageable as they were when we were using. When *our* ideas, *our* desires,
10 *our* demands take first place in our lives, we find ourselves in constant conflict
11 with everyone and everything around us.

12 Self-will reflects our reliance on ego. The only thing that will free us from self-
13 will and the conflict it generates in our lives is to break our reliance on ego,
14 coming to rely instead on the guidance and power offered us by a loving God.

15 We are taught to consult spiritual principles, not our selfish desires, in making
16 our decisions. We are taught to seek guidance from a Higher Power, one with a
17 larger vision of things than our own. In doing this, we find our lives meshing more
18 and more easily with the order of things around us. No longer do we exclude
19 ourselves from the flow of life; we become a part of it, and discover the fullness of
20 what recovery has to offer.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I seek freedom from ego and the conflicts generated by self-
22 will. I will try to improve my conscious contact with the God of my understanding,
23 seeking the guidance and power I need to live in harmony with my world.

Quiet time

"Many of us have found that setting aside quiet time for ourselves is helpful in making conscious contact with our Higher Power."

Basic Text, p. 92

Most of us pay lip-service to the value of conscious contact with a Higher Power. Yet how many of us consistently take time to improve that conscious contact? If we've not already established a regular regimen of prayer and meditation, today is the day to start one.

A "quiet time" need not be long. Many of us find that twenty to thirty minutes is enough time to quiet ourselves, focus our attention with a spiritual reading, share our thoughts and concerns in prayer, and take a few moments to listen for an answer in meditation. Our "quiet time" need not be lengthy to be effective, provided it is consistent. Twenty minutes taken once a month to pray will probably do little but frustrate us with the poor quality of our conscious contact. Twenty minutes taken regularly each day, however, renews and reinforces an already lively contact with our Higher Power.

In the hustle and bustle of the recovering addict's day, many of us end up going from morning to night without taking time out to improve our conscious contact with the God we've come to understand. However, if we set aside a particular time of the day, every day, as "quiet time," we can be sure that our conscious contact will improve.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will set aside a few moments, once I finish reading today's entry, to pray and meditate. This will be the beginning of a new pattern for my recovery.

A loving God

"Our understanding of a Higher Power is up to us.... The only suggested guidelines are that this Power be loving, caring, and greater than ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 24

We've been told that we can believe in any kind of Higher Power we want as long as it is loving and, of course, greater than ourselves. Some of us, however, have trouble with these requirements. We either believe in nothing but ourselves, or we believe that anything that could be called "God" could only be cold-hearted and unreasonable, sending us bad luck on a whim.

Believing in a loving Power is quite a leap for some of us, for many reasons. The thought of turning our will and lives over to the care of something we think might hurt us is sure to fill us with reluctance. If we come into the program believing that God is judgmental and unforgiving, we must overcome those beliefs before we can be truly comfortable with the Third Step.

Our positive experiences in recovery can help us come to believe in a loving God of our own understanding. We've been given relief from a disease that has afflicted us for a long time. We've found the guidance and support we need to develop a new way of life. We've begun to experience a fullness of spirit where once there was only emptiness. These aspects of our recovery have their source in a loving God, not a harsh, hateful one. And the more we experience recovery, the more we'll trust that loving Higher Power.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will open my mind and my heart to believe that God is loving, and trust my loving Higher Power to do for me what I cannot do for myself.

Recovery: our first priority

"We have to keep our recovery first and our priorities in order."

Basic Text, p. 79

Before coming to NA, we used many excuses to justify our use of drugs: "He yelled at me." "She said *this*." "My partner left." "I got fired." We used these same excuses for not seeking help for our drug problem. We had to realize that these things kept happening because we kept using drugs. Only when we made recovery our first priority did these situations begin to change.

We may be subject to the same tendency today, using excuses for not attending meetings and being of service. Our current excuses may be of a different nature: "I can't leave my kids." "My vacation wore me out." "I have to finish this project so I can impress my boss." But still, if we don't make recovery our first priority, chances are that we won't have to worry about these excuses anymore. Kids, vacations, and jobs probably won't *be* in our lives if we relapse.

Our recovery must come first. Job or no job, relationship or no relationship, we have to attend meetings, work the steps, call our sponsors, and be of service to God and others. These simple actions are what make it possible for us to have vacations, families, and bosses to worry about. Recovery is the foundation of our lives, making everything else possible.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will keep my priorities in order. Number One on the list is my recovery.

Sharing the real me

"Sharing with others keeps us from feeling isolated and alone."

Basic Text, p. 81

Intimacy is the sharing of our innermost thoughts and feelings with another human being. Many of us long for the warmth and companionship intimacy brings, but those things don't come without effort. In our addiction, we learned to guard ourselves from others lest they threaten our using. In recovery, we learn how to trust in others. Intimacy requires us to lower our defenses. To feel the closeness intimacy brings, we must allow others to get close to us--the *real* us.

If we are to share our innermost selves with others, we must first have an idea of what those innermost selves are truly like. We regularly examine our lives to find out who we really are, what we really want, and how we really feel. Then, based on our regular inventories of ourselves, we must be as completely and consistently honest with our friends as we can be.

Intimacy is a part of life, and therefore a part of living clean--and intimacy, like everything in recovery, has its price. The painstaking self-scrutiny intimacy calls for can be hard work. And the total honesty of intimacy often brings its own complications. But the freedom from isolation and loneliness that intimacy brings is well worth the effort.

JUST FOR TODAY: I seek the freedom from isolation and loneliness that intimacy brings. Today, I will get to know "the real me" by taking a personal inventory, and I will practice being completely honest with another person.

Not hopelessly bad

"We find that we suffer from a disease, not a moral dilemma. We were critically ill, not hopelessly bad."

Basic Text, p. 16

For many of us, Narcotics Anonymous was the answer to a personal puzzle of long standing. Why did we always feel alone, even in a crowd, we wondered? Why did we do so many crazy, self-destructive things? Why did we feel so badly about ourselves so much of the time? And how had our lives gotten so messed up? We thought we were hopelessly bad, or perhaps hopelessly insane.

Given that, it was a great relief to learn we suffered from a disease. Addiction--that was the source of our problems. A disease, we realized, could be treated. And when we treat our disease, we can begin to recover.

Today, when we see symptoms of our disease resurfacing in our lives, we need not despair. After all, it's a treatable disease we have, not a moral dilemma. We can be grateful we can recover from the disease of addiction through the application of the Twelve Steps of NA.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am grateful that I have a treatable disease, not a moral dilemma. I will continue applying the treatment for the disease of addiction by practicing the NA program.

Turning turmoil into peace

"With the world in such a turmoil, I feel I have been blessed to be where I am."

Basic Text, p. 155

Some days it doesn't pay to turn on the news, we hear so many stories about violence and mayhem. When we used, many of us grew accustomed to violence. Through the fog of our addiction, we rarely got too disturbed by the state of the world. When we are clean, however, many of us find we are particularly sensitive to the world around us. As recovering people, what can we do to make it a better place?

When we find ourselves disturbed by the turmoil of our world, we can find comfort in prayer and meditation. When it seems like everything is turned upside down, our contact with our Higher Power can be our calm in the midst of any storm. When we are centered in our spiritual path, we can respond to our fears with peace. And by living peaceably ourselves, we invite a spirit of peace to enter our world. As recovering people, we can affect positive change by doing our best to practice the principles of our program.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will enhance peace in the world by living, speaking, and acting peacefully in my own life.

1 "How does it work?"

2 ***"I used to think that I had all the answers, but today I am glad that I don't."***

3 **Basic Text, p. 272**

4 What are the two favorite words of most addicts? *"I know!"* Unfortunately,
5 many of us arrive in NA thinking we have all the answers. We have a lot of
6 knowledge about what's wrong with us. But in and of itself, knowledge never
7 helped us stay clean for any length of time.

8 Members who have achieved long-term recovery will be the first to admit that
9 the longer they are here, the more they have to learn. But they do know one
10 thing: By following this simple Twelve Step program, they have been able to stay
11 clean. They no longer ask "why;" they ask "how." The value of endless
12 speculation pales in comparison to the experience of addicts who've found a way
13 to stay clean and live clean.

14 This doesn't mean we don't ask "why" when it's appropriate. We don't come
15 to NA and stop thinking! But in the beginning, it's often a very good idea to
16 reword our questions. Instead of asking "why," we ask "how." *How* do I work this
17 step? *How* often should I attend meetings? *How* do I stay clean?

18 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I don't have all the answers, but I know where to find the
19 ones that matter. Today, I will ask another addict, "How does it work?"

Amends without expectations

"Projections about actually making amends can be a major obstacle both in making the list and in becoming willing."

Basic Text, p. 38

The Eighth Step asks us to become willing to make amends to all persons we have harmed. As we approach this step, we may wonder what the outcome of our amends will be. Will we be forgiven? Relieved of any lingering guilt? Or maybe tarred and feathered by the person we've harmed?

Our tendency to seek forgiveness must be surrendered if we expect to receive the spiritual benefits of the Eighth and Ninth Steps. If we approach these steps expecting anything, we're likely to be very disappointed with the results. We want to ask ourselves if we are pinning our hopes on gaining the forgiveness of the person to whom we are making amends. Or maybe we're hoping we'll be excused from our debts by some sympathetic creditor moved to tears by our hard-luck story.

We need to be willing to make our amends regardless of the outcome. We can plan the amends, but we can't plan the results. Although we may not be granted a full pardon by everyone to whom we owe amends, we will learn to forgive ourselves. In the process, we will find that we no longer have to carry the burdens of the past.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will let go of any expectations I have on the people to whom I owe amends.

Recovery doesn't happen overnight

"The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous are a progressive recovery process established in our daily living."

Basic Text, p. 96

After some time in recovery, we may find we are faced with what seem like overwhelming personal problems, angry feelings, and despair. When we realize what's going on, we may wail, "But I've been working so hard. I thought I was..." Recovered, maybe? Not hardly. Over and over, we hear that recovery is an ongoing process and that we are never cured. Yet we sometimes believe that if we just work our steps enough, pray enough, or go to enough meetings, we'll eventually... Well, maybe not be *cured*, but be *something*!

And we are "something." We're recovering--recovering from active addiction. No matter what we've dealt with through the process of the steps, there will always be more. What we didn't remember or didn't think was important in our first inventory will surely present itself later on. Again and again, we'll turn to the process of the steps to deal with what's bothering us. The more we use this process, the more we'll trust it, for we can see the results. We go from anger and resentment to forgiveness, from denial to honesty and acceptance, and from pain to serenity.

Recovery doesn't happen overnight, and ours will never be complete. But each day brings new healing and the hope for more tomorrow.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will do what I can for my recovery today and maintain hope in the ongoing process of recovery.

Feeling good isn't the point

"For us, recovery is more than just pleasure."

Basic Text, p. 42

In our active addiction, most of us knew exactly how we were going to feel from one day to the next. All we had to do was read the label on the bottle or know what was in the bag. We planned our feelings, and our goal for each day was to feel good.

In recovery, we're liable to feel *anything* from one day to the next, even from one minute to the next. We may feel energetic and happy in the morning, and then strangely let down and sad in the afternoon. Because we no longer plan our feelings for the day each morning, we could end up having feelings that are somewhat inconvenient, like feeling tired in the morning and wide-awake at bedtime.

Of course, there's always the possibility we *could* feel good, but that isn't the point. Today, our main concern is not feeling good but learning to understand and deal with our feelings, no matter what they are. We do this by working the steps and sharing our feelings with others.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will accept my feelings, whatever they may be, just as they are. I will practice the program and learn to live with my feelings.

Look who's talking

"Our disease is so cunning that it can get us into impossible situations."

Basic Text, p. 80

Some of us say, "My disease is talking to me." Others say, "My head won't turn off." Still others refer to "the committee in my mind" or the "monkey on my back." Let's face it. We suffer from an incurable malady that continues to affect us, even in recovery. Our disease gives us warped information about what's going on in our lives. It tells us not to look at ourselves because what we'll see is too scary. Sometimes it tells us we're not responsible for ourselves and our actions; other times, it tells us everything wrong with the world is our fault. Our disease tricks us into trusting it.

The NA program provides us with many voices that counter our addiction, voices we can trust. We can call our sponsors for a reality check. We can listen to the voice of an addict trying to get clean. The ultimate solution is to work the steps and draw on the strength of a Higher Power. That will get us through those times when "our disease is talking."

JUST FOR TODAY: I will ignore the "voice" of my addiction. I will listen to the voice of my program and a Power greater than myself.

Humility expressed by anonymity

"Humility is a by-product that allows us to grow and develop in an atmosphere of freedom, and removes the fear of becoming known by our employers, families, or friends as addicts."

Basic Text, pp. 72-73

Many of us may not have understood the idea that "anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions." We wondered how this could be. What does anonymity have to do with our spiritual life?

The answer is, plenty! By guarding and cherishing our anonymity, we earn spiritual rewards beyond comprehension. There is great virtue in doing something nice for someone and not telling anyone about it. By the same token, resisting the impulse to proudly announce our membership in NA to the world--in effect, asking everyone to acknowledge how wonderful we are--makes us value our recovery all the more.

Recovery is a gift that we've received from a Power greater than ourselves. Boasting about our recovery, as if it were our own doing, leads to prideful feelings and grandiosity. But keeping our anonymity leads to humility and feelings of gratitude. Recovery is its own reward; public acclaim can't make it any more valuable than it already is.

JUST FOR TODAY: Recovery is its own reward; I don't need to have mine approved of publicly. I will maintain and cherish my anonymity.

Growing honesty

"On a practical level, changes occur because what's appropriate to one phase of recovery may not be for another."

Basic Text, p. 101

When we first came to Narcotics Anonymous, many of us had no legitimate occupation. Not all of us suddenly decide we're going to become honest and productive model citizens the moment we arrive in NA. But we soon find, in recovery, that we are not so comfortable doing many of the things we did without a second thought when we were using.

As we grow in our recovery, we begin to be honest in matters that probably hadn't bothered us when we used. We start returning extra change a cashier may give us by mistake, or admitting when we hit a parked car. We find that if we can begin to be honest in these small ways, the bigger tests of our honesty become much easier to handle.

Many of us came here with very little capacity to be honest. But we find that as we work the Twelve Steps, our lives begin to change. We are no longer comfortable when we benefit at the expense of others. And we can feel good about our newfound honesty.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will examine the level of honesty in my life and see if I'm comfortable with it.

We need each other

"Anyone may join us, regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion."

Basic Text, p. 9

Addiction closed our minds to anything new or different. We didn't need anyone or anything, we thought. There was nothing of value to be found in anyone from a different neighborhood, a different racial or ethnic background, or a different social or economic class. We may have thought that if it was different, it was bad.

In recovery, we can't afford such attitudes. We came to NA because our very best thinking had gotten us nowhere. We must open our minds to experience that works, no matter where it comes from, if we hope to grow in our recovery.

Regardless of our personal backgrounds, we all have two things in common with one another in NA that we share with no one else: our disease, and our recovery. We depend on one another for our shared experience--and the broader that experience, the better. We need every bit of experience, every different angle on our program we can find, to meet the many challenges of living clean.

Recovery often isn't easy. The strength we need to recover, we draw from our fellow NA members. Today, we are grateful for the diversity of our group's membership, for in that diversity we find our strength.

JUST FOR TODAY: I know that the more diverse my group's experience is, the better able my group will be to offer me support in the different circumstances I find myself facing. Today, I welcome addicts from all backgrounds to my home group.

Thirty-day wonder

"When we first begin to enjoy relief from our addiction, we run the risk of assuming control of our lives again. We forget the agony and pain that we have known."

Basic Text, p. 48

Many of us have been "thirty-day wonders." We were desperate and dying when we showed up at our first NA meeting. We identified with the addicts we met there and the message they shared. With their support, we were finally able to stop using and catch a free breath. For the first time in a long, long time, we felt at home. Overnight, our lives were transformed; we walked, talked, ate, drank, slept, and dreamed Narcotics Anonymous.

Then, Narcotics Anonymous lost its novelty. Meetings that had been a thrill became monotonous. Our wonderful NA friends became bores; their uplifting NA talk, drivel. When our former friends called, inviting us back for some of the old fun, we kissed our recovery goodbye.

Sooner or later, we made our way back to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. Nothing had changed out there, we'd discovered--not us, not our friends, not the drugs, not anything. If anything, it had gotten worse than ever.

True, NA meetings may not be a laugh riot, and our NA friends may not be spiritual giants. But there's a power in the meetings, a common bond among the members, a life to the program that we can't do without. Today, our recovery is more than just a fad--it's a way of life. We're going to practice living our program like our lives depend on it, because *they do*.

JUST FOR TODAY: I'm no "thirty-day wonder." The NA way is my way of life, and I'm here for the duration.

From surrender to acceptance

"We surrender quietly, and let the God of our understanding take care of us."

Basic Text, p. 26

Surrender and acceptance are like infatuation and love. Infatuation begins when we encounter someone special. Infatuation requires nothing but the acknowledgement of the object of our infatuation. For infatuation to become love, however, requires a great deal of effort. That initial connection must be slowly, patiently nurtured into a lasting, durable bond.

It's the same with surrender and acceptance. We *surrender* when we acknowledge our powerlessness. Slowly, we come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can give us the care we need. Surrender turns to *acceptance* when we let this Power into our lives. We examine ourselves, and let our God see us as we are. Having allowed the God of our understanding access to the depths of ourselves, we accept more of God's care. We ask this Power to relieve us of our shortcomings and help us amend the wrongs we've done. Then, we embark on a new way of life, improving our conscious contact and accepting our Higher Power's continuing care, guidance, and strength.

Surrender, like infatuation, can be the beginning of a lifelong relationship. To turn surrender into acceptance, however, we must let the God of our understanding take care of us each day.

JUST FOR TODAY: My recovery is more than infatuation. I have surrendered. Today, I will nurture my conscious contact with my Higher Power and accept that Power's continuing care for me.

Twelfth Step "failure"?

"Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

Step Twelve

There is no such thing as a "failed" Twelfth Step call. Even if our prospect doesn't get clean, we have accomplished two purposes. We have planted the seed of recovery in the mind of the addict with whom we have shared our experience, strength, and hope. And we ourselves have stayed clean another day. Rarely does a recovering addict leave a Twelve Step call with anything but a deep dose of gratitude.

Sometimes we are practicing the Twelfth Step without realizing it. When our co-workers or other acquaintances know some of our history and see what kind of person we are today, they know where to go when they have a friend or loved one in need of our help. We are often the best attraction that NA has to offer!

For many addicts, the Twelfth Step is the cornerstone of recovery. We truly believe that "we can only keep what we have by giving it away." The paradox of the Twelfth Step is evident, for in giving, we receive.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will remember that I am a living example of the Twelfth Step. I cannot "fail" when I try to carry the message to another addict.

1

Foundation first

2 *"As we begin to function in society, our creative freedom helps us sort our*
3 *priorities and do the basic things first."*

4

Basic Text, p. 83

5 No sooner do we get clean than some of us begin putting other priorities
6 ahead of our recovery. Careers, families, relationships--all these are part of the
7 life we find once we've laid the foundation of our recovery. But we can't build a
8 stable life for ourselves before we do the hard, basic work of laying our recovery
9 foundation. Like a house built on sand, such a life will be shaky, at best.

10 Before we begin putting all our attention to rebuilding the detailed framework
11 of our lives, we need to lay our foundation. We acknowledge, first, that we don't
12 yet *have* a foundation, that our addiction has made our lives utterly
13 unmanageable. Then, with the help of our sponsors and our home groups, we
14 find faith in a Power strong enough to help us prepare the ground of our new
15 lives. We clear the wreckage from the site upon which we will build our future.
16 Finally, we develop a deep, working familiarity with the principles we will practice
17 in our continuing affairs: honest self-examination, reliance upon our Higher
18 Power's guidance and strength, and service to others.

19 Once our foundation is prepared, *then* we can go full steam ahead to put our
20 new lives together. We can ask ourselves if our foundation is secure, for without
21 our foundation, nothing we build can stand for long.

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will take care to lay a secure foundation for my recovery.
23 Upon such a foundation, I can build for a lifetime in recovery.

Our greatest need

"We eventually redefine our beliefs and understanding to the point where we see that our greatest need is for knowledge of God's will for us and the strength to carry that out."

Basic Text, p. 46

When we first arrived in NA, we had all kinds of ideas of what we needed. Some of us set our sights on amassing personal possessions. We thought recovery equaled outward success. But recovery does *not* equal success. Today, we believe that our greatest need is for spiritual guidance and strength.

The greatest damage done to us by our addiction was the damage done to our spirituality. Our primary motivation was dictated by our disease: to get, to use, and to find ways and means to get more. Enslaved by our overwhelming need for drugs, our lives lacked purpose and connection. We were spiritually bankrupt.

Sooner or later, we realize that our greatest need in recovery is "for knowledge of God's will for us and the strength to carry that out." There, we find the direction and sense of purpose our addiction had hidden from us. In our God's will we find freedom from self-will. No longer driven only by our own needs, we are free to live with others on an equal footing.

There's nothing wrong with outward success. But without the spiritual connection offered by the NA program, our greatest need in recovery goes unmet, regardless of how "successful" we may be.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will seek the fulfillment of my greatest need: a vital, guiding connection with the God of my understanding.

Real values

"We become able to make wise and loving decisions, based on principles and ideals that have real value in our lives."

Basic Text, p. 101

Addiction gave us a certain set of values, principles we applied in our lives. "You pushed me," one of those values told us, "so I pushed back, *hard*." "It's *mine*" was another value generated by our disease. "Well, okay, maybe it wasn't mine to start with, but I liked it, so I *made* it mine." Those values were hardly values at all--more like rationalizations--and they certainly didn't help us make wise and loving decisions. In fact, they served primarily to dig us deeper and deeper into the grave we'd already dug for ourselves.

The Twelve Steps give us a strong dose of real values, the kind that help us live in harmony with ourselves and those around us. We place our faith not in ourselves, our families, or our communities, but in a Higher Power--and in doing so, we grow secure enough to be able to trust our communities, our families, and even ourselves. We learn to be honest, no matter what--and we learn to refrain from doing things we might want to hide. We learn to accept responsibility for our actions. "It's *mine*" is replaced with a spirit of selflessness. These are the kind of values that help us become a responsible, productive part of the life around us. Rather than digging us deeper into a grave, these values restore us to the world of the living.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am grateful for the values I've developed. I am thankful for the ability they give me to make wise, loving decisions as a responsible, productive member of my community.

Direct and indirect amends

"We make our amends to the best of our ability."

Basic Text, p. 40

The Ninth Step tells us to make direct amends wherever possible. Our experience tells us to follow up those direct amends with long-lasting changes in our attitudes and our behavior--that is, with *indirect* amends.

For example, say we've broken someone's window because we were angry. Looking soulfully into the eyes of the person whose window we've broken and apologizing would not be sufficient. We directly amend the wrong we've done by admitting it and replacing the window--we mend what we have damaged.

Then, we follow up our direct amends with *indirect* amends. If we've acted out on our anger, breaking someone's window, we examine the patterns of our behavior and our attitudes. After we repair the broken window, we seek to repair our broken attitudes as well--we try to "mend our ways." We modify our behavior, and make a daily effort not to act out on our anger.

We make direct amends by repairing the damage we do. We make indirect amends by repairing the attitudes that cause us to do damage in the first place, helping insure we won't cause further damage in the future.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will make direct amends, wherever possible. I will also make indirect amends, "mending my ways," changing my attitudes, and altering my behavior.

From rude awakening to spiritual awakening

"When a need arises for us to admit our powerlessness, we may first look for ways to exert power against it. After exhausting these ways, we begin sharing with others, and we find hope."

Basic Text, p. 79

We've heard it said in our meetings that "rude awakenings lead to spiritual awakenings." What kind of rude awakenings do we have in recovery? Such an awakening might occur when some undesirable bit of our behavior that we thought safely hidden away is suddenly revealed for all the world to see. Or our sponsors might provoke such an awakening by informing us that, just like everyone else, we have to work the steps if we expect to stay clean and recover.

Most of us hate to have our covers pulled; we don't like being laid naked in full view. The experience delivers a strong dose of humility. Our first reaction to such a disclosure is usually shock and anger, yet we recognize the truth when we hear it. What we are having is a rude awakening.

Such awakenings often disclose barriers that block us from making spiritual progress in our recovery. Once those barriers are exposed, we can work the steps to begin removing them from our lives. We can begin experiencing the healing and serenity which are the preludes to a renewed awakening of the spirit.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will recognize the rude awakenings I have as opportunities to grow toward spiritual awakening.

1

No matter what

2 *"We eventually have to stand on our own feet and face life on its own terms, so*
3 *why not from the start."*

4

Basic Text, p. 85

5 Some of us feel that we should protect newcomers by telling them that
6 everything used to be horrible, and now that we're in recovery it's wonderful. We
7 feel that we might scare someone away if we speak of pain or difficulties, broken
8 marriages, being robbed, and the like. In a sincere and well-intentioned desire to
9 carry the message, we tend to talk glowingly only about what's going well in our
10 lives.

11 But most newcomers already suspect the truth, even if they've only been
12 clean for a few days. Chances are that the "life on life's terms" the average
13 newcomer is experiencing is quite a bit more stressful than what the average
14 oldtimer deals with each day. If we do manage to convince a newcomer that
15 everything becomes rosy in recovery, we had better make sure we are there to
16 support that newcomer when something goes wrong in his or her life.

17 Perhaps we simply need to share realistically about how we use the resources
18 of Narcotics Anonymous to accept "life on life's terms," whatever those terms may
19 be on any given day. Recovery, and life itself, contain equal parts of pain and joy.
20 It is important to share both so the newcomer can know that we stay clean no
21 matter what.

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will be honest with the newcomers I share with and let them
23 know that, no matter what life brings, we never have to use drugs again.