



Written BY Addicts FOR Addicts

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How often have you heard the claim at a meeting that our literature is written "by addicts, for addicts?" At one time that was true, but unfortunately it has not been true for many years. Who do you think writes our literature? What process of review and input does our literature go through? Are words important? And maybe most importantly, what's the big deal anyway? You may be able to answer that for yourself...

How many of us became NA members due to the specific words in the first step? "*Powerless over addiction,*" not powerless over drugs, nor powerless over addictions, and certainly not powerless over alcohol.

The choice of "addiction" as OUR word came from group conscience held at Jimmy K's first NA group. What power that word has had for our fellowship since then! It took us from symptom and substance-limited abstinence to a reality-based recovery from the cause of the problem - the free standing disease of addiction. Recovery then became possible in ALL areas of our life. Are words important? What do you think?

Our fellowship-based World Literature Committee once met in open participation, which meant anyone could join and help work on much-needed materials, including the Basic Text. The Lit Committee distributed the "grey book" to all known NA groups for their review and input.

That's right: You and your Home Group members wrote and re-wrote what became our Basic Text. You were an important part of the process, and the process was an important part of you. What developed from that work was then checked for a few important things: Was the message consistent? Did it sound like the way we talk? Did most of the members feel the same way about it? The approval form was developed in this way – by the fellowship, not World Services – and distributed again to all known NA groups. There was a genuine excitement among addicts – could it be merely coincidental that our fellowship tripled in size during that short time?

There it was, a first – a book written for addicts, by addicts. Unfortunately, this was also the last version of our Basic Text written for addicts by addicts.

So who writes our literature now? Mostly paid professionals^(*1) hired to produce a “marketable” product to finance the growth of NAWS and the World Service Office. This compromise of our principles by special workers and a few WSC trusted servants has taken the decision making process away from the fellowship. That compromise has eroded our life-saving message of hope and a promise of freedom: that “no addict need ever die from addiction. We can STOP using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.” How important was that message to you when you got clean?

How about a version of the Basic Text that was fellowship-approved, but underwent “non-substantive” changes (to “fix grammar and spelling errors”) and actually had more than 900 (900!) changes to it...and was on the way to Hazelden by the truckload before anyone in the fellowship had even seen it.

How about another important phrase, changed from “medicine and psychiatry had no answer for us that we could use” to “medicine and psychiatry were insufficient for us?” That one pivotal change (without any fellowship review and input) is critical. Do you think it may have a bearing on today's addicts being told that it's okay to use “drug replacement therapy” and still call him/herself clean? (Have you seen

replacement therapy” and still call him/herself clean?(Have you seen that problem show up in your Home Group?)

A MEMBER SHARES: Last night at a meeting I heard a member share who first said he has 18 months clean, but then spoke about having a few beers at a family get-together. This member has also spoken about being in a local government’s treatment program, bragging that he had stopped using heroin by substituting the program’s prescribed suboxone “medication.” His ‘therapist’ (in the same treatment program) tells him he is clean. A new sponsee of mine was sitting across the table listening to all of this. I watched his face and knew he wasn’t buying the line of denial he was hearing. After the meeting he and I shared about the difference between what people are told by those with a profit motive, and what people are told by those of us whose lives and recoveries are at stake.

To most of us it’s clear, but how about newcomers? Can they afford a “fuzzy” message? Can we ever truly believe that a paid professional knows better than we do how to express the message of recovery? Can we accept that a few select individuals made a change to our literature years ago, and now it’s coming back to haunt us? Can we accept that NAWS would like the fellowship to grant them absolute carte blanche to make “non-substantive” changes to our literature, and then “inform” us AFTER they have done it?

We are grateful that our fellowship worldwide appears to be growing. At the same time, with our US fellowship growth declining yearly and meetings closing all over the country [\(2\)](#), and when drug courts and drug replacement have started dictating what our message is to become, the question to ask is *whoshould* write our literature today, paid professionals and small, closed committees? Or an open participatory process, with leaders who are trusted servants BUT DO NOT GOVERN?