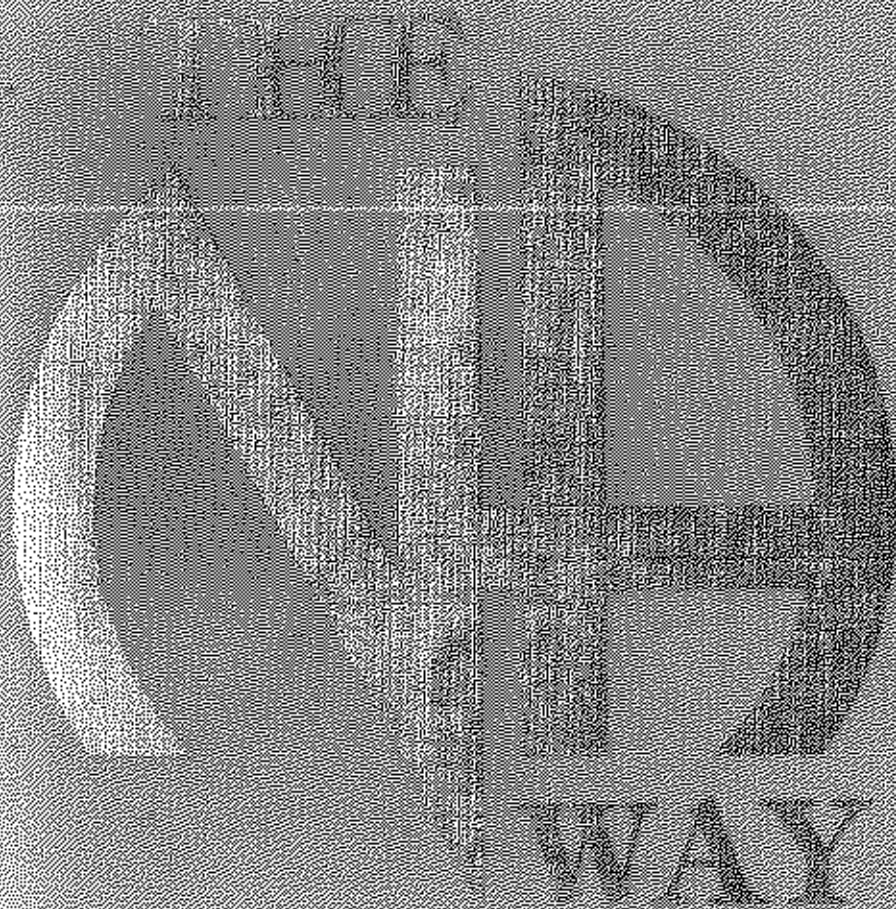


My Country I Love Thee
My Country I Love Thee
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My Country I Love Thee



WAY

NOVEMBER 1961

N.A.

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only "One" requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A., but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles, written so simply, that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that "They Work".

The N.A. Way presents the experiences and opinions of N.A.s. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply any endorsement by either Narcotics Anonymous or The N.A. Way.

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Each of us is free to grow at our own rate,
knowing that we are never alone.

If selfishness is the root of my disease, selflessness
must be the root of my recovery.

Recovery is based on active change.

I am free today to be exactly the person I want to be,
and today I have a choice.

Did you ever notice that a bad day is usually one in
which something didn't go quite your way?

Do it for you you're worth it!

Help is as near as your knees.

Sharing is the best way to show you care.

A sponsor is not one who tells you what path to take,
but who will take your hand and walk with you.



The FIRE

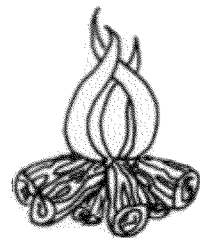
My spiritual beliefs have changed considerably from the time I first came to N.A.. Back then, just the mention of "God" or "Spiritual" brought all the negative images I carried from my strict religious upbringing. That "Holier-than-Thou" attitude, the guilt and fear that had been used to motivate me to pray to God, really turned me off. Then when I heard you say that this was Spiritual, not a Religious program, I felt relieved, though somewhat confused. I'd always thought they were one and the same. Today I've come to see how different they really are.

My first taste of real spirituality was the unconditional love you gave me in those first few meetings I attended... and the honesty that prevailed in these rooms. This kindled a little fire deep down inside of me which brought a warmth and trust I'd never known before. My spirit gradually began to awake, I kept coming back for more, and the fire inside slowly grew and spread all through me. I could tell that others were experiencing that same fire, it was evident in their eyes.

One day I discovered a way to make this feeling last a little longer than the short hour and a half length of the meeting. I went 45 minutes early to help set up chairs and make coffee. It was like being the one who goes out to gather the logs and twigs to prepare for the fire. As other members began to come, that fire inside began to burn brighter and stronger than before, on a solid bed of embers.

As I became more and more involved in service to the program, and surrendered to N.A. as a way of life, the fire became continuous and perpetual. Having come from the cold, barren world of addiction, this new feeling was one I cherished and fed as much and as often as I could. At one point, it seemed that the fire became too strong and was beginning to rage out of control. I felt totally powerless over this. That's when I discovered the steps. Like any good fire, this one needed tending, and the steps were the right tools for the job. They helped bring it back under control, letting it burn at an even rate, without burning out. Like any new tools I've ever used, I didn't really know

what to do with the steps when I first picked them up. That's when I found a sponsor. He'd had experience with these tools. He'd been practicing the steps in his daily life for a while and seemed to have a good feel for them. I wanted to be an expert overnight, but he explained that everything he knew came from hard work and a willingness to learn. He said he hoped he never became an expert, because experts are not very teachable. So, for a brief period my fire burned evenly and brightly as I listened, asked questions, practiced, and learned. I was going to master these tools! Once I made it through my 4th step and shared my 5th step with my god, myself and then my sponsor, I could no longer see what earthly good he was to me. I felt he'd given me everything he had to offer, and now he was just in the way between me and my God, and the rest of the steps! Well, it took me a full year to figure out that I was going around in circles, making little or no real progress in my recovery. I stayed clean though, made a lot of meetings, conventions and conferences, but my little fire inside was in a constant state of extremes; from extremely dim like a candle that's melted down to nearly nothing, to raging blindly out of control like a forest fire. I burned through jobs and relationships like it was all some kind of game. I always seemed to wind up empty-handed. I was still talking a good game when it came to the steps, but my "white knuckles" betrayed the kind of recovery I really had. My god is patient. He waited until I was ready, and in a state of humiliation and despair I found willingness, the key to the 6th step, along with a sponsor. Once again I discovered that deep feeling of serenity and calmness, the products of a slow, steady burning fire.



Today I know that the maintenance of this fire inside of me is my primary responsibility. I've learned that I don't have to do it alone. When I share my progress on the steps with another addict, the fire achieves a certain warmth and glow that cannot be described. And you know what? My knuckles are no longer white! I feel alive and free. This program works -----
IF YOU WORK IT!!

My Third Step: A Spiritual Experience

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

I fought this step long and hard before I surrendered. I have always been ruled by self-will and false pride. I had a Higher Power - a GOD - and felt good about that, but I couldn't-wouldn't take this step. Turning my life over was not what I was fighting. Turning over my will was. I never really read this step as it is written - "Made a decision". I believed it said "you do it". Turn it over. I thought that I must do it perfectly. I started hurting again, really hurting. I prayed and shared. Friends told me that it was time to take a step, but I wouldn't listen. I spent about 2 weeks feeling very confused and living my old ways. During this time I had chosen to push my God away, something that I do quickly when hiding in my disease. For the first time in several months suicide appealed to me. This time it seemed very real and the thoughts wouldn't go away. Constant thoughts of suicide prevented sleep at night. I stopped praying and stopped sharing....I listened to my diseased mind and believed what it said. I planned my death, something that I hadn't done for a while. I was confused and in pain; I'd lost my willingness. My walls were up again and shut out everyone. I chose not to listen, not even to my god. That was my choice but I wouldn't admit it or accept it then. Finally, I began talking to people and listening a little. One night someone caught me with my guard down- I guess I had a moment of sane thinking, it seemed that maybe they were all right. Maybe I was fighting my third step. I didn't want to believe that could be the problem, it seemed too simple.

The next three days were spent doing the things that I should have been doing all along, praying and sharing and listening. On Saturday night I went to a meeting and the topic for discussion was the first step. I shared my feelings. On Sunday afternoon I decided that it was time, believed that I needed to take my third step with someone else in order for it to be real for me. I wanted to experience that humility that went with letting someone see me on my knees praying. False pride had been getting in the way of my recovery.

That night I went to a meeting. The topic for discussion was the second step. It was suggested by someone who had no idea that I planned to take my third step after the meeting. It was beautiful and I shared my feelings with people I didn't even know. It was no coincidence. I feel it was my god's will for me to share my first and second steps with other people before taking my third step. After the meeting I took my third step with a very good friend, the first person that I had learned to trust. It was a stormy night and there was a lot of thunder and lightening in the sky, but the rain held off until I had kneeled in the park at a beautiful big rock with a friend that I love very much and prayed. We prayed together and I got a warm comforting feeling, the same feeling that I used to get as a child when my mother held me and rocked me and told me that it would be O.K. That moment I knew that I was in my god's hands and that everything was O.K. this time. I was so happy walking in the rain not caring what I looked like anymore because nothing could top how I felt. It was like being a little girl again, a happy little girl walking in the rain with my god, and my friend, feeling this very special bond that would always be. That bond is there every day.

I live my first three steps every day. I have to because I need that daily renewal and I want it today. The first thing I do when I wake up in the morning is work my first three steps with my god. It's a beautiful way to start my new clean day, which is my greatest gift.

Serenity



There have been times during my nine months clean when I have experienced little moments of serenity. I believe that every now and then, my god allows me to experience a moment of serenity to make me want more. Most of the time it serves as a great motivator and makes me realize what my life can be like when I work this program of recovery. It is at those times, when I experience that moment of serenity that I am the most grateful for the N.A. program. It's like catching a butterfly!

MIRACLE

Upon opening my eyes it occurred to me that whatever I had done, it was a terrible mistake. Nurses were standing over me. One of them remarked "Thank God you're going to be alright". Those words stayed with me for sometime, yet I asked whether or not I was dead. Although my vision was still out of focus, I could tell they had smiled and continued about their business. My head throbbed as though someone was hitting it with a hammer and I found myself unable to move. Bedstraps around my waist and wrists restrained me. I noticed IV's coming from each forearm. The burning sensation in my throat came from the tube pumping my stomach. I could also feel the catheters. Physically exhausted, it took all my strength just to turn my head. My hospital room had a beautiful view of the cemetery. I slipped back into unconsciousness and stayed that way for some time.

When I awoke, my doctor was bedside. His first question was: did I remember anything from the night before? I didn't understand his question at first, but it soon started to come back to me. I remembered not being able to find my favorite drugs, so I bought some beer on my way home from work. I was deeply depressed and couldn't think of any reason to continue on the way I had been going. When I got home I filled the tub with hot water, got in, slipped a tourniquet around my arm, and deadened an area with rubbing alcohol. Using a razor blade, I sliced a large opening in a main vein on my arm. I bled very fast and soon felt that everything would be alright. I was on my way out, literally.

My higher power has everything to do with my being alive today. Other people carried out his will for me. I was found without a pulse or respiration, but it was not my god's will for me to die that day. I owe great thanks: to my father who found me without a pulse; to the paramedics who were there within minutes; and to the nurses and doctors who stabilized and operated on me. To my higher power, who I call god, I owe my life. Experiencing death in this manner has proven to be a turning point in my life. From what I've been told, had a couple more minutes passed, I'd either be in an oak box somewhere pushing up daisies or committed to an institution of some kind with brain damage due to a lack of oxygen. This whole experience gives me hope.

It was a matter of days before I was in and out of detox and on my way to a rehabilitation center. It was there I received an education about addiction and was given the opportunity to build a foundation for recovery from my disease.

Twelve step recovery programs weren't new to me, but it wasn't until I found N.A. that I felt comfortable in the meetings and around other recovering people.

In N.A. I've found the identification necessary for recovery. The friendships and family I've found in N.A. are beyond anything I've ever encountered in my life. I say family because of the love and understanding I'm given when I get caught up in negativity. Unconditional acceptance by other human beings is something I've never experienced before. For those of us who have escaped from life through drugs, living can be difficult from time to time. This happens to be the first time I've willingly dealt with my emotions and made an attempt to accept life on its own terms without the use of drugs; I'm not alone which makes it worthwhile. Sometimes it's hard to see beyond the pain. With the guidance of my god, the Program and my family in the Fellowship I'm able to hang on to what I've got, through sharing. I need not beat myself any longer. I did enough while using. I also don't have the responsibility of "running the show" anymore although my will tends to get in the way from time to time. The one slogan that has the most impact upon me is "Work the steps or die,....." I also believe from the bottom of my heart that we must uphold the traditions or we all die. It is for this reason that I have become involved in service for our Fellowship, which gives me more out of the program. This has given me the opportunity to travel to N.A. conferences and conventions which for me is addicting.

In closing I have to say that when it's good, it's beautiful, and when it's bad, it's tolerable, but it will inevitably get worse if I get high. Today I choose life.



In N.A. I am loved because of what I am, and because of my defects, not in spite of. This to me is unconditional love.

N.A. Unity?

Last night in my home group I felt almost alien. You see, I've studied our Basic Text on recovery from addiction. My involvement in carrying the N.A. message is renewed daily through awareness of the spiritual principles in our Twelve Steps and Traditions. Living the N.A. Program to the best of my ability has changed my life in many ways. Sharing my recovery strengthens it.

Evidently the words, or the tone of voice I've used to share my beliefs haven't always been the correct ones to convey them clearly.

I've read our sixth tradition, and shared my belief in the separateness of the N.A. Program from all outside enterprises. This has been seen by some as a "sick need to control words in meetings". I once stated that "I'm grateful to be in meetings where there is no drug talk, because I don't struggle with that symptom of my disease today". Someone interpreted that to mean that I don't want anyone to mention drugs in meetings, and shared his interpretation with others outside the meeting. Sharing past experiences with drugs and drug withdrawal is sometimes necessary for identification. I feel however that obsession with these topics feeds our disease.

Controversy arises when members endorse or announce outside enterprises and damages the atmosphere of recovery in our meetings. Some members even miss our meetings to avoid this controversy. Standing firmly for beliefs, yet surrendering self-will to group conscience becomes a valuable recovery experience. This cannot be learned by running away.

Ego, resentment and fear lead to closed mindedness and denial. When personalities clash, and prejudice exists, extra care must be taken to listen, recognize and accept growth in others. The concept of anonymity tells us to listen to the message, not the messenger. In this program of change, a desire for recovery helps us keep principles before personalities.

If my "personal recovery depends on N.A. Unity", I need to do and say what I believe is best for the N.A. Fellowship, promoting N.A. autonomy and fellowship unity. I have obtained valuable information on living from self help support groups outside of N.A. No mat-

ter how grateful I am for this help I've received elsewhere, I cannot pay verbal tribute for it in N.A. meetings. To personally violate the first and sixth traditions weakens my recovery and threatens other members' recovery.

Some addicts cannot identify themselves with chemical labels used elsewhere. We know in our hearts we are addicts and need N.A. to obtain recovery from our addiction.

My prayers tonight are for an end to these controversies. For recovery, for unity, for us all.

DREAMS



I got a chance to share during a recent weekend at the Second Anniversary of an N.A. group in a distant city and state. Over two hundred and fifty members came from around that and a neighboring state to celebrate their clean time and recovery. I remember a World Convention of N.A. a few years back which had a total attendance of about this group's anniversary! The people were wonderful.....

The atmosphere was grand, lots of love and sharing. There was plenty of delicious food and members to make you welcome. I spoke longer than I had planned but there was something in me that needed to come out.

Recovery in N.A. has never been just a daily tally of pluses and minuses to me. The dreams we share and which grow in recovery give me hope. There is a time when reality catches up with dreams. Part of the pain of my active addiction was watching dreams die. Like us, they died a hideous twisting death. By the time I got to the Program of N.A., I had an aversion to dreaming. They always led to pain when they didn't come true. This anniversary showed me that dreams come true. Everybody there was evidence of a miracle.

When reality catches up with dreams today, hope becomes transformed into something you can see, touch or feel. The special brand of hope N.A. has to offer has the power to make dreams come true.

As I struggled with the feeling that there was something more to share, asking my god's help, I stood speechless a few times. It came to me to say, "If you

have a dream and you're clean today, hang on to it!" It was a special gift to me to be able to share that feeling and I am grateful.

The bigger the dream, the longer it will take to come true, but our ultimate authority will show us the way. We are given the dreams, and through N.A., the dreams become possible, then they become real.

It is so easy to retreat into "hurt feelings", disillusionment and anger when I forget where my dreams come from. Dreams are given to us to we can start making arrangements today. Our whole Fellowship is a dream come true. When my God gives me a dream today, I realize it is a glimpse of something to come. If it is a good dream, I can talk about it, see what others have to say about it, get into some prayer and meditation and hopefully find some other members who share the same vision. Together we can make our dreams come true, but sometimes it takes a lot of "we". Dreams of the other sort can head off future difficulties through sharing awareness and looking for things we can do today. These things all take place today but recovery has taught me the power of vision.

My biggest dream today is of N.A. growing to include a quarter of a million members. I am not embarrassed to have this dream or to share it with others. This dream allows me to have a frame of reference so that my actions might contribute to something greater than myself which is a big part of what recovery gives me beyond simple abstinence. I know from having served on several conventions and conferences, the importance of good staging and doing what I can today for the day to come. When I see members pulling together to improve the various systems of communication within the Fellowship, I translate that into an increasingly clear and informed group conscience. When I see members pulling together to improve the vehicles that carry our message to places where addicts seek recovery, I translate that into an increasing number of members who have truly reached their Twelfth Step. Today we have increased unity of Spirit within the Fellowship and increased availability of our message of hope and recovery outside the Fellowship.

Our loving gratitude and patient sharing are overcoming the obstacles to our growth and continuance, one by one.

willing to do what fellow addicts told me to do. After I started to honestly share with other addicts in the Fellowship, I realized that we all have similar feelings when we come into this Program: loneliness, paranoia, anxiety, and fear. In N.A. we find hope.

Today I realize and accept that I am an addict. I know that I didn't need to use the needle or go to prison to qualify me as an addict. I was sick enough without those things. If I had used a needle, I may never have reached N.A. I suffer from a disease called addiction, and it is not caused by any type of drug, but, a compulsion to use a drug no matter what toll it may take on my life is associated with this disease. There are a lot of "not yet's" left for me out there if I choose to use again. With my god and this Program, today, I know I have the choice.

N.A. works for people no matter what the drug history was. If we are honest with ourselves, and don't compare our active addiction with that of other addicts, we can come to understand our addiction. We will then have a chance for recovery, and a drug free life.

We must remember to give ourselves a break!

"We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were.....only in what you want to do about your problem, and how we can help"

Letter to a Doctor

Dear Doctor,

I wish today to share with you my story of "legal" drug addiction.

When I came to you I was a young woman, struggling with marriage and career. I was depressed over difficulties in my life. I shared them with you and you sought to help me with anti-depressants. My intake of these increased, as did my complaints to you of tension and worry. You prescribed a mild tranquilizer. These worked for a time, then I asked for stronger ones. I now complained of headaches, and you prescribed pain pills.

My weight increased, and without a word to you, I sought out another doctor. I complained of my weight gain, and asked for diet pills. I rationalized my un-

easiness by assuring myself if it really mattered, doctor number two would have asked about other medication.

I soon developed a pattern. Diet pills in the morning, tranquilizers in the afternoon. Pain pills and muscle relaxers became norms for me. My tension increased with my tolerance.

Doctors one and two wouldn't increase my dosage. I convinced myself they didn't understand, and sought out doctors three and four.

I functioned in society. Sick days and doctors slips were now a fact of life. No one, including my employer and husband, even considered the possibility of a drug problem. Not me. After all, I accurately handled large amounts of money on my job, and ran my household.

I developed an ulcer, and sought out another doctor to medicate me. This newest doctor asked about my alcohol intake, but not about other drugs. I didn't volunteer any information. I found a P.D.R., and "developed" new symptoms. I actually believed I'd be okay if I could only get enough of the right drugs.

Rationalization, denial and obsession with drugs were my constant companions. Deceit and manipulation became part of my character, yet most who came into contact with me saw me as a good, although troubled person.

I found N.A. literature in a clinic waiting room, and began to realize I suffered from the disease of addiction. This literature contained a phone number, and I used it. I was directed to an N.A. meeting, and found others like me. Some shared my drug pattern, some used different drugs, in varied amounts. Most however, shared patterns of inadequacy, fear, self-will and denial. I found the identification necessary to change my life.

I no longer need to con doctors and abuse insurance companies to obtain drugs. I no longer need mood-changing, mind altering drugs. I've learned to reach out to receive recovery, and reach out again to share it. Time has now shown me the need to reach in new directions.

Addiction becomes more of a problem daily. Social acceptance of more drugs, and our economic situation encourages more frequent use. What starts as an escape can turn into a prison. Freeing addicts from their self-imposed sentences as I was freed becomes more important with time.

The enclosed literature could find its way to a suffering addict with your help. Your waiting room is an excellent place to find our written recovery message.

I'm grateful for your time, I hope this helps in some way.

Respectfully yours,
a clean addict

Dear Doctor,

The attached letter from a clean addict shows the need for awareness of addiction by both doctor and patient.

If you agree that our printed message could be of value to you and your patients, please consider purchasing N.A. literature for your waiting area. The cost is comparable to that of the magazines now found there, and the message it contains is priceless.

As our literature explains, we are self-supporting through members' contributions. Our funds are very limited, but we desire to spread the message of recovery from addiction through N.A.

If you are unable to purchase our literature, yet wish to have it available in your office, please contact us. Our service committee will do its' best to supply you.

If you have patients in your practice that you feel medicine has no answer for, N.A. may be able to help; please contact one of us. N.A. has members who are willing to share with anyone who feels they may have a drug problem, and are willing to seek help for it. These names and numbers are for your use only.

Editorial Comment:

We feel that this letter is an excellent Public Information vehicle. The author gives permission for all or parts of it to be utilized in making contact with physicians. We urge you all to take advantage of this fine piece of literary work.

If you're clean, and haven't seen a miracle for a while, take a look in the mirror.

Once you have recognized that you're in the valley, you are already on your way back uphill.

How do you spell relief?
S-U-R-R-E-N-D-E-R.

When you're on your knees, your back can't be up against the wall.

If we're too busy waiting for that one big miracle to happen, we'll miss all the small ones that happen daily.

Keep both feet in today, it does wonders for your balance.

The answers always come, it is just that I'm not always willing to listen for them.

To the extent that I participated in my disease, let that be the extent to which I participate in my recovery.

Have you hugged an addict today?

NOVEMBER FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Starting Balance \$240.00

Assets

Subscriptions ----- 6 ----- \$ 72.00
Balance \$312.00

Expenses

Printing October Issue \$165.00

Paper Editorial Supplies \$ 23.99

Postage \$ 32.94

Balance \$221.93

Final Balance \$ 90.07

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