

THE NA Way[®]

MAGAZINE

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The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. 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.

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Having had a spiritual awakening

I just had another spiritual awakening! On 1 January 1993 I celebrated nine years clean. I don't usually share the amount of clean time I have; I think just about anyone can accumulate clean time, it's actual recovery that's the challenge. When I celebrate a birthday, I take the opportunity to do a positive/negative inventory of where I'm at today compared to where I was at around my last birthday.

This past year was a great one for growth in my recovery. I mourned the deaths of several addicts who were unable to accept the gift of recovery. Twice, I have had to move away from my secure NA family and re-establish new bonds with other NA members. Needless to say, I have a hard time with change. Several times in the last year, I questioned whether I would make it to my next NA birthday. I didn't have the desire to pick up, it was my sanity I was worried about.

The process of working and applying the principles of this program

guided me through this period of time. I came through it clean. What a miracle!

Now, about this incredible spiritual awakening. On December 26th, I had two different surgeries performed in one day. Because I have a very low tolerance for pain, I tried to prepare myself for the possibility of having to take narcotic painkillers. I talked to a lot of addicts who were able to share their experience, strength, and hope with me; I discussed my disease in great detail with my surgeon; I read the Basic Text and other NA literature. (Thanks for *In Times of Illness*.) I never in my wildest dreams would have believed what was to follow.

As they wheeled my bed into the operating room, I was totally at peace, spending the last few minutes in prayer and meditation. When I awoke from the anesthesia, I breathed a sigh of relief, thanking my HP for bringing me through it alive and well.

I hadn't been out of surgery more than a few minutes when I found out I had a recovering addict in my hospital room. Several hours after that, I had two more recovering addicts at my bedside. The phone calls, visits, hugs, and unconditional love I received were unbelievable! I have always heard of these things happening in meetings but this time, I had the pleasure of being on the receiving end of doing for the addict.

During my first week of recuperation, the phone rang off the hook. Addicts called to give support, express concern, and offered to give aid in any way possible. Addicts dropped by just because they cared. They even brought a meeting to me. It was

incredible! I thought I had experienced the love of this fellowship before, but what was done for me during this time was truly in another realm.

The real miracle of this story is that I didn't have to use any narcotics. What a gift! It was possible only through the miracle of recovery.

Today, I'm grateful for all the meetings I've attended (whether I wanted to be there or not). I'm grateful for the times I trudged through the steps with an attitude, finding an incredible sense of serenity upon completion. I'm grateful for the times when I went five minutes at a time to get through the day. I'm grateful for every minute I spent talking to my

sponsor. I'm grateful for the opportunity to have such caring people in my life. I've tried all of the other "countless remedies." Nowhere else is all this possible except in Narcotics Anonymous.

You know what I've learned in the past year? It doesn't matter how many consecutive days clean you have, it's practicing the basics that really counts. The things I learned the first time I walked through the door kept me clean then, and keep me clean nine years later. Thank you, HP, for giving me NA. It truly is a new way of life, from the first day clean until now.

RJ, Colorado



Aiming for recovery

I recently underwent foot surgery. It has been quite a few sets of twenty-four hours since I came to from having been "out" or otherwise chemically influenced; all my recent mornings have been clear-headed and I've had full awareness of the events preceding sleep.

Because I wanted to continue this way, I asked the surgeon to work without general anesthesia or sedatives unless it was essential to complete the procedure, and he agreed.

The anesthesiologist was a different story. When I refused an IV sedative, he said he would not allow a nerve block in my foot but would give me a spinal instead. I told him "No, that's not what the surgeon and I had agreed upon." He left to consult with the surgeon and came back willing to cooperate.

The procedure went well. I experienced many sensations, but not pain. Other than the needle sticks and pressure as the foot block was inserted intra-muscularly, I experienced no discomfort whatsoever. During the operation I concentrated on deep breathing and was able to lower my blood pressure to below what it had been before the surgery. The relaxation techniques I used kept my pulse virtually normal while the anesthesiologist stood next to the blood pres-

sure monitor. I watched and managed to look quite bored.

Back at a friend's house at noon, before the numbness wore off, I took one prescribed painkiller. I took one more at 6 p.m., and another at 1:30 a.m. At dawn, I woke up almost pain-free, even though my toe joint was still very swollen, so I switched over to regular old Tylenol and tapered off those as the pain decreased. Three days after the operation I was free of all analgesics and glad of it. The prescription medicine made me feel stupid, it made me remember when I used to aim for stupidity daily, and made me glad that I don't aim for stupidity today. Even with the prescribed medicine, I was somewhat uncomfortable, but I was willing to accept some discomfort as a price to pay for my safety and continued recovery from addiction. If I really had needed stronger pain relief, I had some narcotic-type painkillers on hand, but I never seriously considered taking one.

Friends in the program called me every day to check on my progress, which made my recuperation easier. The pain was never really intense, but it was constant and that scared me. Hearing the voices of my friends in recovery made it less frightening. Letting my friends care for me at their homes helped, as did following instructions like keeping my foot elevated the first couple of days.

This operation was an amend to myself. I had caused the injury while motorcycling while using twenty-odd years ago. So I guess I can be grateful to myself, the self I am becoming through recovery in NA.

MB, Vermont

Sharing experience, sharing hope

I am writing this for *The NA Way Magazine*, hoping other addicts who have had similar experiences to mine will know they are not alone and that recovery is possible.

As a child I lived through emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. I now suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder because of that abuse. I have nightmares and memories where I physically feel the pain and relive the horrible things of my past. When I was a practicing addict, I could sometimes suppress those memories and feel good—even euphoric—by using drugs. I've been clean for three years and in that time I have been hospitalized twice because of the horrifying memories.

I want to let addicts with similar stories know that in recovery there is hope. When I was first hospitalized, I felt a lot of shame and anger. I believed that NA didn't work and that my Higher Power had given up on me. I felt that in NA there was no place for someone suffering from mental illness. I was very scared.

I want to let other addicts know what has been helpful to me in my recovery. NA has helped me to stay clean and given me tools for recovery. However, my mental health concerns are something that I need outside help with. Working with mental health professionals has been very helpful to me. I also take medication. For me, it has made the difference between enjoying life and barely functioning, wanting to commit suicide.

My answers are not for everybody but, if my experience helps just one person, I am glad that I shared.

Most helpful in my recovery are the other recovering addicts who truly care about me. They are the ones who stick with me through thick and thin. What a wonderful gift they are in my life. With them by my side I know my Higher Power has not abandoned me.

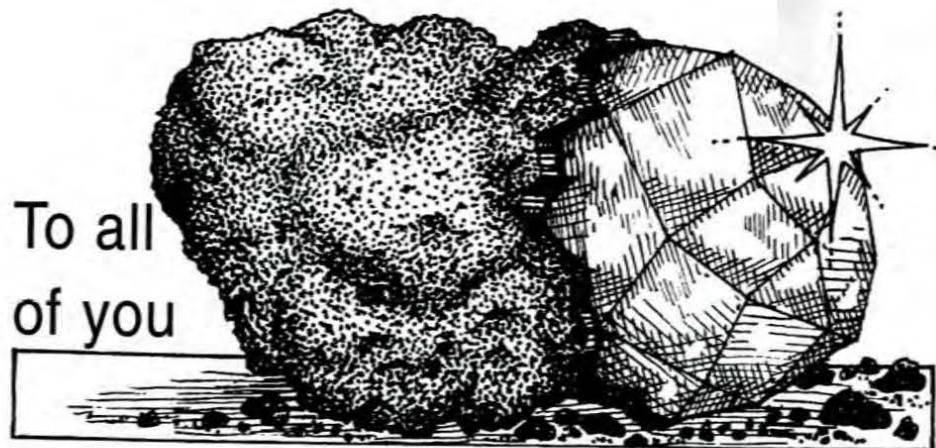
I am afraid that I will be judged and criticized for what I have shared, that others will judge my recovery. But what is more important to me is that suffering addicts who can relate to my story will know they are not alone and have not been forgotten.

Stay clean. The hope for a better life is alive!

Anonymous



To all of you



Thank you Narcotics Anonymous. Because of you I'm celebrating another year clean, another year of growth and new awareness, another year of promises fulfilled and hopes renewed.

My first year in recovery you gave me a place to call home. You gave me identification and an opportunity to finally feel "a part of" instead of "apart from." You gave me a sponsor to help me learn how to work the steps as best I could. You gave me the freedom to choose a God of my understanding, enabling me to do my first Fourth and Fifth Steps. You held my hand when, at nine months clean, I wanted to use to numb the pain of reality.

During my second year in Narcotics Anonymous you trusted me to be secretary/treasurer for my home group. You helped me to understand the "therapeutic value of one addict helping another" by encouraging me to become a sponsor. The love and acceptance you shared enabled me to make amends for breaking anonymity and taking your inventory. When the desire to use returned at eighteen

months, you reminded me that it would pass, and it did.

Three years into the fellowship you gave me the faith to move to a new town with the promise that the love and message would not change—only the faces. You reminded me to be openminded. You taught me that, just as a newcomer has to identify and not compare the experience of addiction, I, too, had to identify and not compare my new group with my old group. You gave me enough trust to ask someone new to be my sponsor and to use that person when the "crazies" hit me at three and a half years clean. You taught me to reach out and build a support system of recovering friends to help me grow and stay clean in a new place.

At four years clean you were my safety net when I plunged into a suicidal depression. You patiently waited as I isolated myself from old friends, too full of false pride to ask for help. As I slid down from Step Twelve to Step One you showed me the bridges that were still there from my previous recovery and friendships and allowed me to go back to them for

help. You kept the light at the end of tunnel glowing bright enough so I wouldn't lose hope and go back out, or worse yet, die. When I finally hit my knees in surrender, your strength, acceptance, and understanding helped me start over again at Step One.

During my fifth year clean you taught me the necessity of sharing all of me—my pain and my fear, as well as my growth. You brought me lots of recovering addicts to sponsor, to love, and to learn from. Your message of hope and freedom grew from one NA meeting a week to four. For the first time I began to work all of Step Eleven and saw my spirituality blossom into patience, love, faith, and serenity. A lot of childhood issues regarding sexual abuse were revealed for the first time in my recovery after working the steps again with yet another new sponsor.

My sixth year clean you saw me through two major surgeries and taught me much about being responsible for the medication I receive in recovery and how much pain I can really tolerate. You reminded me to depend on God to take care of me through illness. You were there for me in full force with phone calls, prayers, visits, and cards. You reminded me to be grateful during my recuperative stays at home when I felt self-pity and frustration constantly. Until I was well enough to go to meetings, you brought your message to me through the Basic Text, *Meeting by Mail*, *NA Way*, and the telephone.

Now I'm getting ready to celebrate seven years clean. When I first met you, all I wanted to do was quit using

drugs. (No wonder you just smiled at me and told me to keep coming back.) What you've since given me I could never repay. You've shared a set of principles with me that have forever changed my life. You've walked me through them over and over with love, humor, and honesty. You've never abandoned me. My life is filled with special recovering friends with whom deep bonds have been forged. You've brought so many precious gifts into my life.

Because of you, Narcotics Anonymous, I didn't give up on my marriage and am getting ready to celebrate my eleventh wedding anniversary with a loving and spiritual person who also found recovery in our fellowship. Because of you, I have a beautiful and healthy daughter to love and nurture as you have done for me.

You've embraced my pain and fear and made them your own so I no longer have to carry them alone. You rejoice in my happiness and good fortune. You encourage me.

Because your message of recovery has never changed, I'm finding new levels of freedom, balance, self-acceptance, and gratitude in my life today. You've given me the chance to unearth the beauty of life that was being buried underneath my disease of addiction.

I still have a long way to go to cut and polish all the diamond-like qualities in me that are in each of us, but I have the tools and courage to do it. You've transformed my life from one of despair to one of hope. Thank you NA. Happy birthday to us.

Anonymous

NA history

These drug addicts cure one another

This month, we are pleased to present a reprint of an article that appeared in the 7 August 1954 issue of The Saturday Evening Post. Titled "These drug addicts cure one another," this article relates the story of NA's infancy in New York City through some of our early members.

You will notice that the tone and language of this article and some of the descriptions of the nature of addiction reflect society's understanding of addiction at that time. The article also addresses topics outside the scope of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Though commonly held views have certainly evolved since 1954, we have printed the article in its entirety so that you, the readers of The NA Way Magazine, might enjoy a bit of historical perspective on addiction, recovery, and Narcotics Anonymous itself. We've come a long way!

A new approach to a tragic social problem—drug addiction—has been found by the ex-addicts of Narcotics Anonymous. Here's how they help users out of their horrible habit—as in the cases of the mining engineer, the hot musician, the minister, and the movie actor.

Tom, a young musician just out of a job on a big-name dance band, was pouring out the story of his heroin addiction to a small gathering in a New York City YMCA. He told how he started three years ago, "fooling around for thrills, never dreaming to get a habit." His band went on the road. One night in Philadelphia he ran out of his drug and became so shaky he couldn't play. It was the first the band management knew of his habit. He was promptly sent home.

"Music business is getting tough with junkies," Tom said.

His audience was sympathetic. It was composed of former drug addicts who had found freedom from addiction. They met twice weekly to make this freedom secure, and worked to help other addicts achieve it. The New York group, founded in 1950 and called Narcotics Anonymous, is one of several which have been piling up evidence that the methods of Alcoholics Anonymous can help release people from drugs other than alcohol—drugs such as opium, heroin, morphine, and the barbiturates.

The groups enter a field where patients are many and cures few. The population addicted to opiates has been placed by competent but incompatible authorities at 60,000 and at 180,000. The Federal Bureau of Narcotics estimates that the traffic in illegal opium derivatives grosses \$275,000,000 a year. About 1,000 people a month are arrested for violations of federal, state, or local laws regulating the opiates. Addiction to the barbiturates, it is believed, involves more people. There are some 1500 known compounds of barbituric acid, some of them having pharmaceutical names and others street names such as yellow jackets, red devils, and goofballs.

Addicts work up to doses sufficient to kill a nonaddicted person or an addict with a lesser tolerance. In New York recently, three young addicts met and took equal portions of heroin. Two felt no unusual reaction: the third went into convulsions and in a few hours was dead. Many barbiturate users daily consume quantities which would be lethal to a nor-

mal person. Others have demonstrated an ability to use barbiturates for years, under medical supervision, without raising their consumption to dangerous levels.

The drug addict, like the alcoholic, has long been an enigma to those who want to help him. Real contact is most likely to be made, on a principle demonstrated with phenomenal success by Alcoholics Anonymous, by another addict. Does the prospect, writhing with shame, confess to pilfering from his wife's purse to buy drugs? His sponsor once took his children's lunch money. Did he steal the black bag of a loyal family doctor? As a ruse to flimflam druggists, his new friend once impersonated a doctor for several months. The NA member first shares his shame with the newcomer. Then he shares his hope, and, finally, sometimes, his recovery.

To date, the AA type of group therapy has been an effective ingredient of "cures"—the word as used here means no drugs for a year or more and an intent of permanent abstinence—in at least 200 cases. Some of these, including Dan, the founder of the New York group, had been pronounced medically hopeless. The "Narco" group in the United States Public Health Service Hospital at Lexington, Kentucky, has a transient membership of about eighty men and women patients. The group mails a monthly newsletter, *The Key*, free to those who want it, currently a list of five hundred names. Many of these are interested but nonaddicted friends. Most are "mail-order members" of the group—addicts who have left the hospital and been without drugs for periods ranging from a few

weeks to several years. The HFD (Habit-Forming Drug) Group is a loosely affiliated fellowship of California ex-addicts who keep "clean"—the addict's term for a state of abstinence—by attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings with volunteer AA sponsors. The federal prison at Lorton, Virginia has a prisoner group which attracts thirty men to its weekly meetings. Narcotics Anonymous in New York is the sole "free world"-outside-of-institution-group which conducts its own weekly open-to-the public meetings in the AA tradition.

Today's groups of former addicts mark the convergence of two historic narratives, one having to do with alcohol, the other with opium. References to the drug of the poppies go back to 4000 B.C. According to Homer, Helen of Troy used it in a beverage guaranteed to abolish care. Opium was employed to quiet noisy children as early as 1552 B.C. De Quincey and Coleridge are among the famous men to whom it brought disaster. In its dual role it appears today, through its derivatives, as the friend of man in surgery and his enemy in addiction.

The alcoholic strand of the story may be taken up in the Zurich office of the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, one day late in 1933. At that time the eminent doctor was obliged to impart an unpleasant bit of news to one of his patients, an American businessman who had come for help with a desperate drinking problem. After months of effort and repeated relapses, the doctor admitted that his treatment had been a failure.

"Is there, then," the patient asked,

"no hope?" Only if a profound religious experience were undergone, he was told. How, he wanted to know, could such an experience be had? It could not be obtained on order, the doctor said, but if one associated with religious-minded people for a while . . .

Narcotics Anonymous- AA's Young Brother

The American interested himself in Frank Buchman's Oxford Group, found sobriety, and told an inebriate friend of his experience. The friend sobered up and took the message to a former drinking partner, a New York stockbroker named Bill. Though he was an agnostic who had never had much use for religion, Bill sobered up. Late in 1935, while on a business trip to Akron, Ohio, he was struck by the thought that he wouldn't be able to keep his sobriety unless he passed on the message. He sought out a heavy-drinking local surgeon named Bob and told him the story to date. They sat down and formulated a program for staying sober—a program featuring twelve suggested steps and called Alcoholics Anonymous. Bill devoted full time to carrying the AA message, and the news spread. The now-famous article by Jack Alexander in *The Saturday Evening Post* of March 1, 1941, made it nationally known, and by 1944 there were AA groups in the major cities.

In June of that year an inebriate mining engineer whom we'll call Houston "hit bottom" with his drinking in Montgomery, Alabama, and the local AA's dried him up. Houston gobbled the AA program and began helping other alcoholics. One of the

drunks he worked with—a sales executive who can be called Harry—was involved not only with alcohol but also morphine. AA took care of the alcoholic factor, but left Harry's drug habit unchanged. Interested and baffled, Houston watched his new friend struggle in this strange self-constructed trap.

The opiate theme of the narrative now reappears. Harry's pattern had been to get roaring drunk, take morphine to avoid a hangover, get drunk again and take morphine again. Thus he became "hooked"—addicted. He drove through a red light one day and was stopped by a policeman. The officer found morphine and turned him over to the federal jurisdiction, with the result that Harry spent twenty-seven months at Lexington, where both voluntary and involuntary patients are accommodated, as a prisoner. After his discharge he met Houston and, through AA, found relief from the booze issue. The drug problem continued to plague him.

During this period, Houston, through one of those coincidences which AA's like to attribute to a Higher Power, was transferred by his employers to Frankfort, Kentucky, just a few miles from Lexington. "Harry's troubles kept jumping through my brain," Houston says. "I was convinced that the twelve suggested steps would work as well for drugs as for alcohol if conscientiously applied. One day I called on Dr. V.H. Vogel, the medical officer then in charge at Lexington. I told him of our work with Harry and offered to assist in starting a group in the hospital. Doctor Vogel accepted the offer and on 16 February 1947 the first meeting was held. Weekly meetings have been going on ever since."

The Phenomenon of "Physical Dependence"

Some months later, in a strangely woven web of coincidence, Harry reappeared at "Narco" as a voluntary patient and began attending meetings. He was discharged, relapsed, and in a short time was back again. "This time," he says, "it clicked." He has now been free from both alcohol and drugs for more than five years. Twice he has returned to tell his story at meetings, in the AA tradition of passing on the good word.

In the fall of 1948 there arrived at Lexington an addict named Dan who had been there before. It was, in fact, his seventh trip; the doctors assumed that he'd continue his periodic visits until he died. This same Dan later founded the small but significant Narcotics Anonymous group in New York. Dan's personal history is the story of an apparently incurable addict apparently cured.

An emotionally unsettled childhood is the rule among addicts, and Dan's childhood follows the pattern. His mother died when he was three years old, his father when he was four. He was adopted by a spinster physician and spent his boyhood with his foster mother, a resident doctor in a Kansas City hospital, and with her relatives in Missouri and Illinois. When he was sixteen he developed an ear ailment and was given opiates to relieve the pain. During and after an operation to correct the condition he received frequent morphine injections. Enjoying the mood of easy, floating forgetfulness the opiates induced, he lingered.

Living in a large hospital gave Dan opportunities to pilfer drugs, and for

six months he managed to keep himself regularly supplied. An addict at the hospital had taught him to inject himself, so for a time he was able to recapture the mood at will. He was embarrassing his foster mother professionally, however, and though not yet acknowledging the fact to himself, was becoming known locally as an addict. Sources of drugs began to close up, and one day there was no morphine to be had. He went into an uncontrollable panic which grew worse each hour.

There followed muscular cramps, diarrhea, a freely running nose, tears gushing from his eyes, and two sleepless, terror-filled days and nights. It was Dan's first experience with the mysterious withdrawal sickness which is experienced sooner or later by every addict.

In one of the strangest phenomena known to medicine, the body adjusts to the invasion of certain drugs, altering its chemistry in a few weeks to a basis—called "physical dependence"—on which it can no longer function properly without the drug. How physical dependence differs from habit may be illustrated by imagining a habitual gum chewer deprived of gum. His unease would be due to the denial of habit. If he were denied gum and also water, on which he is physically dependent, he'd feel an increasingly painful craving called thirst. The drug addict's craving is called the "abstinence syndrome," or withdrawal sickness. In extreme cases it includes everything Dan experienced, plus hallucinations and convulsions. Withdrawal of opiates rarely causes the death of a healthy person; sudden cessation of barbitu-

rates has been known to. The violent phase, which is usually over in two or three days, may under expert care be largely avoided. Physical dependence gradually diminishes and ordinary habit, of the gum-chewing type, asserts itself.

This is the interval of greatest vulnerability, NA members say, to the addict's inevitable good resolutions. He has formed the habit of using his drug when he feels low. If he breaks off medical supervision before he's physically and mentally back to par, the temptation to relapse may be overwhelming. It is in this period, Dan says, that the addict most needs the kind of understanding he finds in NA. If he yields to the call of habit, physical dependence is quickly reestablished and his body calls for ever greater doses as the price of peace.

Dan went through the cycle dozens of times. Besides the half dozen withdrawals at Lexington, there were several at city and state institutions, and numerous attempts at self-withdrawal. He tried sudden and complete abstinence, the "cold-turkey" method. He tried relieving the withdrawal pangs with alcohol, and found it only canceled out his ability to think, so he automatically returned to drugs. When he attempted withdrawal with barbiturates he "just about went goofy."

All this, however, was to come later; in his early twenties he had no intention of giving up the use of drugs. Having been spotted as an addict in the Kansas City area, he sought fresh fields. He found a job as a salesman and traveled several Midwest states. The demands of his habit and his scrapes with the law made it hard to

hold a job long. Drifting from one employment to another, he found himself, in the early 1930's, in Brooklyn.

His attempts at withdrawal resulted in several extended periods of abstinence, the longest of which was three years. When off drugs Dan was an able sales executive and a good provider. He married a Staten Island girl. They had a son. Dan continued to have short relapses, however. Each new one put a further strain on the family tie. For a time, to save money for drugs, he used slugs in the subway turnstiles going to and from work. He was spotted by a subway detective and spent two days in jail. A few months later he was caught passing a forged morphine prescription. As a result, he was among the first prisoner patient at the new Health Service Hospital for addicts at Lexington, when it was opened on 28 May 1935.

After a year there, he made a supreme effort to be rid of drugs for good. To keep away from the temptations offered by New York drug pushers he found a job with a large Midwest dairy. He worked hard, saved his money and sent for his family. By this time, however, it was too late; his wife refused to come, and a divorce action was begun. "Her rebuff gave me what I thought was a good excuse to go back on drugs," Dan reports. After that, his deterioration accelerated. On his seventh trip to Lexington, in 1948, he was in a profound depression.

After a month of sullen silence, he began attending the group meetings, which were a new feature at the hospital since his last trip. "I still wouldn't talk," he reports, "but I did

some listening, I was impressed by what Houston had to say. Harry came back one time and told us his story. For the first time, I began to pray. I was only praying that I would die, but at least it was prayer." He did not die, nor did he recover. Within six months of his discharge he was found in possession of drugs and sent back to Lexington for a year—his eighth and, as it turned out, final trip.

"This time things were different," he says. "Everything Houston and Harry had been saying suddenly made sense. There was a lawyer from a Southern city there at the time, and a Midwestern surgeon. They were in the same mood I was—disgusted with themselves and really ready to change. The three of us used to have long talks with Houston every Saturday morning, besides the regular meetings." All three recently celebrated the fifth anniversary of their emancipation from the drug habit.

Dan, conscious of what seemed to him a miraculous change of attitude, returned to New York full of enthusiasm and hope. The twelfth of the suggested steps was to pass on the message to others who needed help. He proposed to form the first outside-of-institution group and call it Narcotics Anonymous—NA. He contacted other Lexington alumni and suggested they start weekly meetings.

There were certain difficulties. Addicts are not outstandingly gregarious, and when all the excuses were in only three—a house painter named Charlie, a barber named Henry, and a waiter we'll call George—were on hand for the first meeting. There was uncertainty about where this would be; nobody, it

seemed, wanted the addicts around. Besides, missionary, or "Twelfth Step," work of the new group would be hampered by the law. When the AA member is on an errand of mercy he can, if occasion warrants, administer appropriate "medicine" to stave off shakes or delirium long enough to talk a little sense into his prospect. If the NA member did so, he'd risk a long term in Jail. Drug peddlers were not enthusiastic about the new venture. Rumors were circulated discrediting the group.

Out of the gloom, however, came unexpected rays of friendliness and help. The Salvation Army made room for meetings at its 46th street cafeteria. Later the McBurney YMCA, on 23rd street, offered a meeting room. Two doctors backed their oral support by sending patients to meetings. Two other doctors agreed to serve on an advisory board.

There were slips and backsliding. Meetings were sometimes marred by obstinacy and temper. But three of the original four remained faithful and the group slowly grew. Difficult matters of policy were worked out by trial and error. Some members once thought that a satisfactory withdrawal could be made at home. Some hard nights were endured and it was concluded that the doctors were right—for a proper drug withdrawal institutional care is necessary. Addicts are not admitted to meetings while using drugs. Newcomers are advised to make their withdrawal first, then come to NA and learn to live successfully without drugs.

Group statisticians estimate that five thousand inquiries have been answered, constituting a heavy drain

on the group's treasury. Some six hundred addicts have attended one or more meetings, ninety have attained effective living without drugs. One of these is a motion picture celebrity, now doing well on his own. One relapse after the first exposure to NA principles seems to have been about par, though a number have not found this necessary. "A key fact of which few addicts are aware," Dan says, "is that once he's been addicted, a person can never again take even one dose of any habit-forming drug, including alcohol and the barbiturates, without running into trouble."

The weekly "open"—to the public—meetings are attended by ten to thirty persons—addicts, their friends and families, and concerned outsiders. The room is small and, on Friday evenings when more than twenty-five turn up, crowded.

There is an interval of chitchat and visiting, and then, about nine o'clock, the secretary, a Brooklyn housewife, mother, and department-store cashier, opens the meeting. In this ceremony all repeat the well-known prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." The secretary then introduces a leader—a member who presents the speakers and renders interlocutor's comments from his own experience with a drugless life. The speakers—traditionally two in an evening—describe their adventures with drugs and with NA. In two months of meetings I heard a score of these case histories. I also charted the progress of a newcomer, the young musician named Tom, whose first

NA meeting coincided with my own first reportorial visit.

Within the undeviating certainties of addiction, individual histories reveal a wide assortment of personal variations. Harold, an optometrist, is a "medical" addict; he got his habit from the prescription pad of a doctor who was treating him for osteomyelitis. An outspoken advocate of psychotherapy for all, Harold absorbs a certain amount of ribbing as the group's "psychiatry salesman." Florence, the housewife-cashier-secretary, recently celebrated her first anniversary of freedom from morphine, which she first received twenty-five years ago in a prescription for the relief of menstrual cramps. Carl, an electrician, became interested in the effects of opium smoke thirty years ago, and reached a point where he could not function without his daily pipe. He eventually switched to heroin and his troubles multiplied.

Manny, an executive in a high-pressure advertising agency, and Marian, a registered nurse with heavy administrative responsibilities, began using morphine to relieve fatigue. Don, Marian's husband, regards alcohol as his main addictive drug, but had a bad brush with self-prescribed barbiturates before he came to AA and then, with Marian, to NA. Pat, another young advertising man, nearly died of poisoning from the barbiturates to which he had become heavily addicted. Harold and Carl have now been four years without drugs; Manny, three; Marian, Don, and Pat, one.

Perhaps a third of the membership are graduates of the teen-age heroin fad which swept our larger

cities a few years ago, and which still enjoys as much of a vogue as dope peddlers can promote among the present teen-age population. Rita, an attractive daughter of Spanish-American Harlem, was one of the group's first members. Along with a number of her classmates, she began by smoking marijuana cigarettes—a typical introduction to drugs—then took heroin "for thrills." She used the drug four years, became desperately ill, went to Lexington and has now been free of the habit four years. Fred, a war hero, became a heroin addict because he wanted friends. In the teen-age gang to which he aspired, being hooked was a badge of distinction. He sought out the pusher who frequented the vicinity of his high school and got hooked. There followed seven miserable and dangerous years, two of them in combat and one in a veteran's hospital. In December of 1953 he came to NA and, he says, "really found friends."

Lawrence's story is the happiest of all. He came to NA early in his first addiction, just out of high school, just married, thoroughly alarmed at discovering he was addicted, and desperately seeking a way out. NA friends recommended that he get "blue-grassed," an arrangement by which a patient may commit himself under a local statute to remain at Lexington 135 days for what the doctors consider a really adequate treatment. He attended meetings in the hospital and more meetings when he got home. Now happy and grateful, he thanks NA. His boss recently presented him with a promotion; his wife recently presented him with a son.

Besides the Friday open meeting there is a Tuesday closed meeting at the Y for addicts only. As a special dispensation I was permitted to attend a closed meeting, the purpose of which is to discuss the daily application of the Twelve Steps.

The step under discussion the night I was there was number four: "Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." The point was raised as to whether this step might degenerate into self-recrimination and do more harm than good. Old-timers asserted that this was not its proper application. A life of drug addiction, they said, often built up an abnormal load of guilt and fear, which could become so oppressive as to threaten a relapse unless dealt with. When the addict used Step Four honestly to face up to his past, guilt and fear diminished and he could make constructive plans for his future.

The Narco meetings at Lexington have borne other fruit. There was Charlie, the young GI from Washington, DC who once looted first-aid kits in the gun tubs of a Navy transport en route to the Philippines and took his first morphine out of sheer curiosity. After his Army discharge his curiosity led him to heroin and several bad years; then to Lexington, where the Narco Group struck a spark. He heard about Dan's work, went to New York to see him, and on his return to Washington looked around to see what he could do. He discovered that there was a concentration of addicts in the Federal penitentiary at Lorton, Virginia. Working with Alcoholics Anonymous, which already had meetings in the prison, he obtained permission to

start a group like the one at Lexington. Now a year old, these meetings, called the Notrol Group—Lorton backward—attract the regular attendance of about thirty addicts. Washington has no free-world group, but Charlie helps a lot of addicts on an individual basis, steering them to AA meetings for doctrine.

Friendliness of ex-drug addicts with former devotees of alcohol sometimes occurs, though Bill, the same who figured so prominently in AA's founding says a fraternal attitude cannot be depended upon. The average AA he says, would merely look blank if asked about drug addiction, and rightly reply that this specialty is outside his understanding. There are, however, a few AA's who have been addicted both to alcohol and to drugs, and these sometimes function as "bridge members."

"If the addict substitutes the word 'drugs' whenever he hears 'alcohol' in the AA program, he'll be helped," Houston says. Many ex-addicts, in the larger population centers where meetings run to attendances of hundreds, attend AA meetings. The HFD (Habit-Forming Drug) Group, which is activated by an energetic ex-addict and ex-alcoholic of the Los Angeles area named Betty, has dozens of members, but no meetings of its own. Individual ex-addicts who are "making it" the AA way include a minister in a South Eastern state, a politician in the deep South, a motion-picture mogul in California and an eminent surgeon of an Eastern city. The roll call of ex-addict groups is small. There is the parent Narco Group, Addicts Anonymous, in Lexington, Kentucky; Narcotics Anonymous, PO Box 3, Vil-

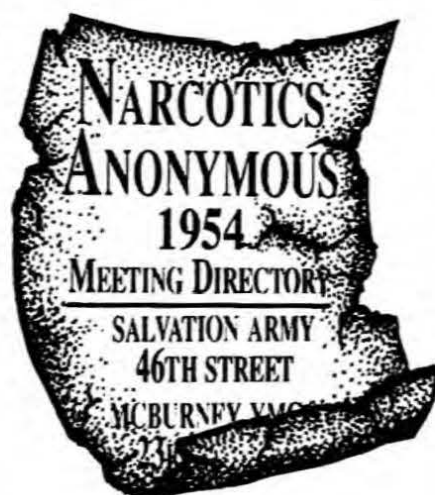
lage Station, New York 14, NY; the Notrol Group at the US Penitentiary in Lorton Virginia; and the HFD Group c/o Secretary, Bay Area Rehabilitation Center, 1458 26th Street, Santa Monica, CA.

A frequent and relevant question asked by the casually interested is, "But I thought habit-forming drugs were illegal—where do they get the stuff?" The answer involves an interesting bit of history explaining how opiates came to be illegal. In the early 1800's doctors used them freely to treat the innumerable ills then lumped under the heading, "nervousness." Hypodermic injection of morphine was introduced in 1856. By 1880, opium and morphine preparations were common drugstore items. A 1882 survey estimated that one percent of the population was addicted, and the public became alarmed. A wave of legislation swept the country, beginning in 1885 with an Ohio statute and culminating in the Federal Harrison Narcotic Law of 1914. Immediately after the passage of this prohibitory law, prices of opium, morphine, and heroin soared. A fantastically profitable black market developed. Today, \$3000 worth of heroin purchased abroad brings \$300,000 when finally cut, packaged, and sold in America.

Among the judges, social workers, and doctors with whom I talked there is a growing feeling that the Harrison Act needs to be reexamined. Dr. Hubert S Howe, a former Columbia professor of neurology and authority on narcotics, says the statute, like the Volstead Act, "removed the traffic in narcotic drugs from lawful hands and gave it to criminals." In an ad-

dress before the New York State Medical Society he asserted that the financial props could be knocked from the illegal industry by minor revisions of present laws and rulings, with no risk of addiction becoming more widespread. Doctor Howe proposes a system of regulation similar to that of the United Kingdom, which reports only 364 addicts.

Meanwhile the lot of those who become involved with what our British cousins rightly call "dangerous drugs" is grim. It is just slightly less grim than it might have been five years ago. Since then a few addicts have found a way back from the nightmare alleys of addiction to a normal life which may seem humdrum enough at times, but which when lost, then regained, is found to be a glory.



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Home Group



HIV and AIDS in NA

Any life-threatening disease causes us to work our program rigorously, whether we're afflicted by it ourselves or are supporting members who suffer from it. HIV and AIDS have become a reality in the NA recovering community. The paradox of this disease, like the disease of addiction itself, is the need to belong while already feeling separated. The strain of having to deal with a potentially fatal disease striking so many addicts, compounded by the disease of addiction itself, can be overwhelming. It is no surprise that, at times like these, we often ask ourselves if continued recovery is worth it. At our potentially weakest moment, we need more than ever the strength found in our fellowship.

HIV and AIDS affect us all in NA. Fear of the virus can allow the defects of self-centeredness, denial, rationalization, and the urge to run to assert themselves. The spiritual principles that made recovery possible and that strengthen our groups must continue to guide us during these times.

HIV and AIDS in NA are considered by some as an outside issue—a subject not to be discussed for fear of

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in April 1993 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It represents the views of the board at the time of writing.

diluting our message of recovery from drug addiction. That point of view has not been stated in any world-level publication, but it has been implied through silence. Our lack of direction coupled with ignorance of the virus and an often inflexible interpretation of the traditions has caused many groups and committees to label HIV and AIDS as outside issues. While there are many issues around HIV and AIDS that may well be outside issues, the experience of recovering addicts with HIV is not.

Committees responsible for conventions, learning days, workshops, etc, have often been directed not to include HIV/AIDS as a topic. Our reasoning for this was based on our lack of experience and our fear. Instead, we have been guided toward having topics on life-threatening diseases in general. This was sometimes done out of concern that participants in a topic meeting on AIDS might choose to discuss the medical treatment or the political ramifications of the disease. While some of those fears might have some basis in reality, open-mindedness keeps us focused on our shared experience, strength, and hope.

There are a range of HIV- and AIDS-related issues that are outside issues; for example, offering medical information, educating using addicts about needle-cleaning or endorsing the availability of clean needles, supporting or opposing AIDS quarantine proposals, encouraging specific methods of safer sex, or commenting on the merits of the "Just Say No" campaign in limiting the spread of AIDS. NA's involvement in any of these activities would undoubtedly

draw the NA name into public controversy. And that would surely compromise our ability to carry the message of recovery from addiction.

However, there is more to HIV and AIDS in NA than outside issues. This virus has put strains on our relationships. Despair is closer to some of us than others, and our "Just for Today" prayers become much more relevant. Anybody who has ever gained a practical understanding of "living in the present" has some incredible experience, strength, and hope to share with all of us. Although we all live with the life-threatening disease of addiction, those of us with HIV and AIDS sometimes have a heightened awareness of living just for today. We may all gain from sharing and being open toward an understanding of new aspects of powerlessness and surrender.

While in active addiction, we all faced a life-threatening disease. In recovery, NA members have historically continued to face other such diseases, but never to the extent being encountered today. Some of our groups in urban areas are experiencing a very high percentage of members with HIV or AIDS. When first faced with these overpowering numbers, some of our groups made mistakes. Fear and ignorance separated groups and members from open-mindedness and the ability to care for all their members. Much worse than that was the isolation felt by members living with the virus. Recovery in this fellowship can be tough enough when we are accepted. When we are rejected, recovery may seem impossible.

The only requirement for mem-

bership, according to our Third Tradition, is the desire to stop using drugs. Nothing more, nothing less. It seems simple enough to remember, but fear and ignorance can be strong influences. Groups which began experiencing large numbers of members who were HIV-positive learned that when there is an "us" and "them," someone is being treated very differently, and our groups suffer. These groups learned that a group's survival depends upon autonomy, anonymity, unity, and our Fifth Tradition. A group's primary purpose must remain constant: to carry the message of recovery to addicts who still suffer. Having learned from these mistakes, these groups may understand this tradition better than most because the meeting topics, though often relating to our struggle with HIV and AIDS, are centered on recovery from addiction.

"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions." We may need to remind ourselves to use caution in relating some of our experience. Some members may feel they need to share about their illness only with their sponsor or a close friend, while others choose to discuss their experience with HIV or AIDS openly at meetings. Ideally, a meeting is a haven where we can all feel and be safe to share. Regardless of how we share—whether one-on-one or in a meeting—it is important that we do share.

Some of us with HIV or AIDS come to NA with weakened immune systems. At times, we may not be able to get to meetings or might be too ill to go out at all. We may be dealing with the necessity of taking medications.

Some of our literature, such as *In Times of Illness* and the Tenth Chapter of our Basic Text, give us experiences with having to deal with doctors and medication in our recovery. For those who are hospitalized or bedridden at home, we have publications like *The NA Way Magazine* and the *Meeting by Mail*.

If we believe that one addict sharing with another is without parallel, then we need to understand that this concept applies not only in times of joy but also in times of sorrow and grieving. In our consideration of the HIV/AIDS issue, let us be honest, open-minded, supportive, and nurturing. Let us learn to unite, unite in our prayers, and unite in the spirit of love so that our ignorance may be replaced with open-mindedness and the willingness to learn.



Newsletters

What are we doing it for?

From *Bottom Line*, the Gold Coast area newsletter: When I first came to the fellowship of NA, I wanted to be separate from others. I didn't feel equal to others; I was either better than or less than you. As I continued to attend meetings, got into service at the group level, and shared my experience, strength, and hope, I saw how much I was like other addicts in the program. I saw that I had many of the same problems and assets they did. I found out that I was a part of the whole. Though much of my life and spiritual outlook has changed since that first day clean, one component has not: participation in recovery.

Every morning I say a prayer consisting of the first three steps. During the day I do mental Tenth Steps to keep my ego in check. When I get home from work, I decide what part

of my program I can work on before the day is over: go to a meeting, write on a step, call my sponsor, do service work, etc. Every day of my life needs to be focused on my recovery. Seriously, with good humor! Because I'm not always so fortunate as to keep my eye on the prize. Reality and life still rolls on. When I don't keep my focus on the recovery part of my life, all the other parts become magnified out of proportion.

I was talking to a friend in the program about working the Third Step. He talked of how it was a process and how the end result was less important than the process. "Trust the process," he said, "and continue to participate in your program."

For him that meant following through on all he did in his program, like staying for the whole meeting, staying up late to work with a new sponsee, staying on the phone an extra minute, keeping his commitments to others, and finishing the step in front of him!

I've made a lot of mistakes in my recovery. I have come to see them as lessons of living. Others I still make and need to work on with my Higher Power's loving help. I find more resistance in myself as I go deeper into my defects of character. Sometimes I don't trust the process because of fear. That's when I pray for the

courage to live through today and the power to carry out the demands of my recovery. My spiritual goal today is to be happy, joyous, and free. I haven't heard that in a while. How about you? May the blessings be.

Anonymous

Changing sponsors

From *The Recoverer*, the Washington/North Idaho regional newsletter: Sponsorship is one of the most beautiful gifts Narcotics Anonymous has to offer. I know that this is a seemingly bold statement, especially to those members who struggle or have struggled in this area of their program.

Fortunately, I have had a wonderful experience thus far in my own recovery with sponsorship.

Recently, my sponsor of three and a half years moved out of town. I was then faced with the decision of either continuing with that sponsor and getting most of my feedback over the phone or seeking someone else in my home area. Luckily, there were several members to choose from in my area.

This decision was still hard for me because I had grown very close to my sponsor and didn't want to change.

So, I had to ask myself if having a long distance sponsor would work for me. I decided to try keeping the same sponsor for a few months and then reevaluate. Well, during this time I only called my sponsor once. I'm sure some of you are wondering why I didn't try harder or call more; all I can say is that I didn't. This was a strong indicator that things probably wouldn't improve in this area and result in the sacrifice of my program and my sanity. During those months I felt strange and somewhat like I was in limbo. I didn't like it at all, so I began to talk about these feelings at meetings.

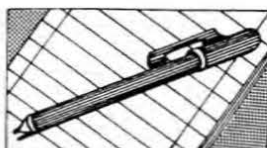
With the love and care of my friends, I made the decision to seek out a sponsor locally so I could have that all-important eye contact with someone when I am in one of those frames of mind. My sponsor can see it and become my eyes and ears and help me talk things out.

This is what works for me. I am not trying to say that long-distance sponsorship doesn't work. I know several members that do use long-distance sponsors and seem happy with the results.

I have now found a person I believe I can learn to trust. And starting at, yes, Step One, is a wonderful way to get to know my new sponsor. I'm excited to begin my steps again. I'm looking forward to developing yet another relationship with someone of the same sex and, of course, living another day clean.

Anonymous

Viewpoint



Sexism: not an outside issue

The NA program has saved my life, yet I feel like an alien in our meetings on occasion. Well, most of the time, actually.

I am noticing some fundamental flaws in our society, which, unfortunately, are well-represented in Narcotics Anonymous. In some cases, these flaws are exacerbated by some of the language we bandy about in our meetings. Buzzwords such as "powerless," "acceptance," "surrender," etc. can do a great deal of damage if we don't clearly define what we mean by those terms.

In my early recovery, my understanding of powerlessness only reinforced my negative self-image. I allowed my "powerlessness" to determine the course my life would take. I lived by default, deferring to the greater wisdom of a male god and the patriarchal structure of the world. My "world," by the way, was 99.9 percent NA at the time. My relationships reflected my understanding of god and my sense of self-worth. As I had abdicated all responsibility for my own life, I chose to attempt part-

nership with a man who noticed every ounce I gained, who thought I should get another sponsor, and who was willing to dictate who I should be.

Given the fact that my experience is hardly unique, I am forced to conclude that encouraging women to revel in their powerlessness is perhaps more damaging to a fledgling spirit than years of prostitution, or, if that's too raw for you, other forms of moral ambiguity.

The same goes for "acceptance." I've heard this term used far, far too many times by individual women to justify denying their own rights and to explain why dishonoring oneself is a desirable thing to do. Worse yet, I've heard sponsors tell their sponsees to "accept" the unacceptable: for instance, an emotionally distant boyfriend or husband. Yes, indeed. Just work your own program and the relationship will take care of itself. Stop complaining and talk to God (another distant male). Just be loving; ask him what he wants for dinner when he walks in at 2 a.m. Is this sound advice? Puleeease!

Is what I am addressing an outside issue? I hardly think so, and my reasoning is this: Sexism keeps our little society (I refuse to call it a *fellowship*) from growing. When a woman newcomer walks into her first meeting believing that all she has to offer anyone is her body, and that belief is reinforced by a few treacherous snakes who make a habit of sexu-

ally exploiting newcomers, her self-esteem plummets. This results in a vicious circle of acting on a false belief (my only worth is in bed, therefore I'll sleep with someone, anyone, just to feel loved), ultimately feeling less than human because the self has been reduced to nothing more than an object, followed by another decrease in self-worth, which she tries to correct by acting on a false belief . . . need I go on?

I've lived this agony and know it well. I can tell you, in detail, what it feels like. I'm not sure you want to listen because my truth may make you squirm. But back to my point: Women are not going to find NA a viable means of recovery unless we start changing. And I mean all of us. The men who prey on newcomers, the women who judge one another's behavior whispering "slut," "whore," and exchanging knowing glances, and, above all, some of our attitudes: our desire to deny the truth, to blame the victim, to call sexism an outside issue.

By the way, I could easily point out other forms of prejudice—racism, ageism, homophobia, etc.—as problems in NA. But since I'm white, straight, and relatively young, my experience with being on the receiving end of other forms of prejudice is limited. I'd like to hear from some of you who have experienced the pain of being rejected in meetings because of your skin color, age, sexual orientation, etc.

Please, let's talk about this. Let's take responsibility as a group to change. I've heard somewhere that this is a "we" program. If we continue to maintain that each individual is solely responsible for his or her own recovery, we rob ourselves of one of our most vital links to sanity: each other.

Anonymous

Too busy to recover?

"...lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

The preceding is, in part, what our Sixth Tradition states. This phrase is one of the keys to my ongoing recovery.

Lately, I've been hearing other addicts in meetings, in one-to-one conversations, and in *The NA Way* stating that because their life is so full they don't have time for meetings or to be involved in service.

One of the gifts I have received from recovery is learning what my priorities are and what happens when I let my drive for material things get out of hand. As I accumulated some clean time, I received some extra gifts. When I had about two years clean I started obsessing on these things so much it drove me into a place that I barely came out of clean. When I hit this bottom I had a choice: get loaded or do what I did when I first came through the doors of NA.

I had decided that I didn't need to work with a sponsor or do service during this compulsive and obsessive period. I was doing the things that all using addicts do, running from my problems. I moved from San Diego, California, to Saint Paul, Minnesota. I was living just like a using addict, thinking that this thing or that thing would make me okay. The only reason I went to meetings was to pick up women. That may not have been the most spiritual thing to do, but it did keep me coming back. Eventually, however, I reached a point where the

quick fixes weren't working.

So I did what I used to do when I first came through the doors of NA. I went to an ASC in Minnesota and took on a service commitment as the alternate ASR. It was real insane, but I owe my life to that service commitment. I also knew I needed an NA sponsor if I wanted to live. I looked around and I couldn't find a sponsor in Minnesota whose program was rooted in NA strongly enough for me. I did the only thing I could think of: I called a man I had met my first day clean. I was okay with the fact that he lived in Southern California. By staying involved and working the steps, things have gotten better than I could have ever imagined.

Because of this experience I get real scared when I hear others list their reasons for not being involved and going to meetings on a regular basis. I understand where these reasons come from and that some addicts don't have people in their lives who care enough to be honest with them.

GM, Minnesota

Near recovery

Hi family. How's everyone doing? There's something going on around here that really has me puzzled, so I need to do what my program has taught me to do: share it with you.

All my life my addiction has done everything in its power to control my life. My addiction was (and still can be) a master of deception. When I was using, the insanity of my life was

completely normal to me. That was all I knew—getting and using and finding ways to get and use more. When my addiction finally beat me down I found my way into the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. When I arrived I was willing to try what thousands of addicts before me had done and follow the suggestions in our Basic Text.

I guess I need to get to the point of this story. What's disturbing me is that certain people are justifying using "near beer" when they share in meetings. It just completely blows me away! I can't believe what I'm hearing! I share my experience, strength, and hope but it doesn't seem to make a difference. You know, I'm almost embarrassed to hear people minimize the power of this disease. I've been told it starts with the first drug. At that moment the disease is back in control and the addict ends up in a state of "near recovery." My addiction is patient. It will wait until my guard is down and then make its move.

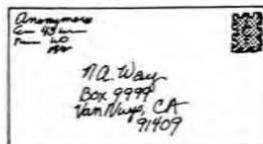
I remember when I first came to NA and I did another of those "harmless" drugs: I smoked some dope. Not too long after, I ended up with a needle in my arm. So I know how deceptive this disease is. Lots of people screw around on the edge of addiction. When I hear the rationalization over using this drug (near beer), I always remind myself that it was my way of thinking that brought me to NA.

I don't know if this situation has popped up in meetings in other areas, but I bet it has. I just wanted to bring it out in the open so that we can see how deceptive and powerful this disease of addiction is.

I have found a new power today, and just for today I never have to use again. Thanks for letting me share.

Anonymous

From our readers



Going after recovery

When I was a newcomer to this fellowship, people told me that it was imperative that I attend meetings on a regular basis; however, I found it necessary to go to meetings on a *daily* basis.

I didn't use drugs only on a regular basis; I used drugs every day. I found it necessary to use the same approach concerning my recovery.

The disease of addiction is an illness that is similar to other chronic illnesses and, like other chronic illnesses, must be treated on a daily basis. I have diabetes and high blood pressure and have to take medication every day. I see my addiction the same way as I do my diabetes and high blood pressure. It is a disease and I must treat it by going to meetings every day in order to live for the rest of my life.

Even though I go to all types of meetings (step and tradition, speaker, literature study) very seldom do I hear newcomers sharing their experience (no matter how limited), strength, and hope for their future recovery.

The reason I found it extremely beneficial to keep coming was the notion that if I kept coming, more would be revealed. I found out that if I didn't use, no matter what happened in my life, more would be revealed. I found out if I continued to

go to meetings on a daily basis, got actively involved in them, and really learned to listen and not merely hear, more would be revealed. I found out that if I allowed myself to remain teachable, if I maintained the willingness to accept my disease and the willingness to change, more would be revealed. I found out that if I followed suggestions such as "make ninety meetings in ninety days," "get and use a sponsor," "get and use phone numbers," and "get actively involved in the NA Fellowship and a home group," more would continually be revealed.

And now I ask myself, "What has been revealed to me?" I have found that if I put my complete faith and trust in my Higher Power and the NA program, then, and only then, can I see a new way of life. But it is imperative that I exercise patience. This is not microwave recovery. It won't be done in ten seconds. I must continue to live by and practice the Twelve Steps and be patient. Like a newborn baby I must learn to crawl before I can walk. As I hear oldtimers share about their experience, strength, and hope and how the program has given them a new outlook and lease on life, I want to keep coming until the miracle happens. I have the willingness to work on my recovery just as hard as I chased drugs.

When I was fresh out of rehab I

really had a problem with surrender. However, once I surrendered I discovered that I don't need to have all the answers. This is a fellowship of recovering addicts who are here to help me. They share their experience in dealing with problems and situations that are similar to ones I am facing. I was always one to stuff feelings and emotions. I could never understand how sharing about my feelings and emotions could help me, but what has been revealed to me is that when I share my feelings and emotions with other recovering addicts, I feel as connected to the fellowship.

What has been revealed to me is that recovery is more than just abstinence from all mind-altering, mood-changing substances. It also involves an active change in ideas, attitudes, and behavior. This gives me a desire to continue coming because when I get a little taste of recovery it makes me greedy for more. It has been

revealed to me that if I have the willingness to be honest with myself and others and get actively involved in my recovery and the program, change will happen. With change, more is revealed.

I would like to say something to all the newcomers, oldtimers, and those in between: If we keep the focus on ourselves, go to meetings, use a sponsor, don't use drugs no matter what, and stay vigilant in our recovery, more will be revealed.

My reason for writing this is because it saddens my heart to see addicts come into the program and leave before the miracle happens. This compilation of one recovering addict's experience has only one purpose: to give the newcomer hope! Please take this suggestion and encouragement from one recovering addict. Keep coming no matter what and don't use because more will *definitely* be revealed!

AG, New Jersey

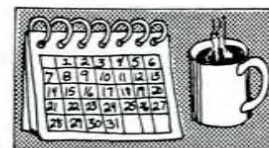
Coming next month

In the August issue of *The NA Way*, we asked you to share your feelings on the issue of whether or not the language that refers to God as "He" in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions should be changed.

Our encouragement of this discussion stems from Motion #39, presented at last year's World Service Conference. The motion suggested that where God is referred to as "He" in our literature, we simply say "God."

We've received quite a few responses and, beginning next month, will print them in a special column, devoted to highlighting the ongoing discussion of issues surrounding a possible change to our steps and traditions.

Comin' up



ALBERTA: Nov. 5-7, 1993; Alask Regional Convention; Red Deer; hotline (403) 342-1444; Alask Reg. Conv, Central Alberta ASC, PO Box 472, Red Deer, Alberta, T4N 5G1

BAHAMAS: Nov. 5-7, 1993; 6th Bahamas Area Convention; Paradise Island, Nassau; info (809) 361-4292 or (809) 326-2819; rsvns. (809) 363-2011; fax (809) 363-3900; Celebration 6, PO Box SS 5934, Nassau, Bahamas

CALIFORNIA: Feb. 11-13, 1994; 3rd San Diego/Imperial Regional Learning Conference; info (619) 469-6490; SDIRLCNA, PO Box 16505, San Diego, CA 92176

2) Feb. 11-13, 1994; 2nd Annual Central California Regional Convention; info (805) 566-1261; CCRCNA 2, 1409 Kuehner Dr #116, Simi Valley, CA 93063

CONNECTICUT: Dec. 31 - Jan. 2, 1994; 9th Annual Connecticut Regional Convention; Forestville, CT; info (203) 585 1704 or (203) 585-7033; CRCNA, PO Box 9615, Forestville, CT 06010-9615

FLORIDA: Nov. 11-14, 1993; 12th Palm Coast Area Convention; West Palm Beach; info (407) 686-6760; rsvns. (407) 689-6400; Palm Coast ASC, PO Box 3151, West Palm Beach, FL 33402

2) Jan. 21-23, 1994; 5th Annual Palm Coast Area Spiritual Retreat; West Palm Beach; info (407) 966-6113; Spiritual Retreat, 2148 Sherwood Forest #3, W. Palm Beach, FL 33415

GEORGIA: Jan. 14-16, 1994; 6th GSRA Anniversary; Augusta, GA; info (800) 282-2419; rsvns. (800) 325-3535; CSRA, PO Box 15863, Augusta, GA 30919

HAWAII: Nov. 4-7, 1993; 2nd Hawaii Regional Convention; info (808) 322-4044; Hawaii Reg. Conv, PO Box 461, Kailua-Kona, HI 96745

INDIA: Jan. 21-23, 1994; 2nd Bombay India Convention; Madh Island; Malad (west), Bombay; BACNA 2, PO Box 16489, Mahim, Bombay India, 400 016

INDIANA: Nov. 13, 1993; 12th Annual Miniconference; Indianapolis, IN; Indiana ASC, PO Box 661, Indianapolis, IN 46206

2) Mar. 4-6, 1994; Indiana State Convention; Indianapolis, IN; ISNAC, PO Box 17106, Indianapolis, IN 46217-0106

KANSAS: Apr. 8-10, 1994; 11th MARCNA; Great Bend, info (316) 343-7740 or (913) 823-3854; MARCNA 11, PO Box 242, Salina, KS 67402-0242

LOUISIANA: May 27-29, 1994; 12th Annual Louisiana Regional Convention; Alexandria, LA; rsvns. (318) 442-9000 (Out of State), (800) 523-9724 (In LA only); LRCNA 12, Program Committee, PO Box 762, Montgomery, LA 71454

MARYLAND: Apr. 8-10, 1994; 8th Annual Chesapeake/Potomac Regional Convention; Ocean City, MD

MASSACHUSETTS: Jan. 7-9, 1994; 2nd Boston Area Convention; Boston, MA; info (617) 424-7868; rsvns. (617) 445-0930; BACNA 2, 398 Columbus Avenue, Suite 278, Boston, MA 02116

2) Mar. 4-6, 1994; Just For Today Group Cape Cod Convention; Hyannis, MA; info (508) 540-4505 or (508) 563-5715; JFTCC, PO Box 590, N Falmouth, MA 02556

MICHIGAN: Mar. 31, - Apr. 3, 1994; 2nd Detroit Area Convention; Detroit; info (313) 361-4214; rsvns. (800) 228-3000; DACNA, Tickets and Registrations, PO Box 241221, Detroit, MI 48224

MISSOURI: Feb. 18-20, 1994; Cabin Fever Prevention Convention; Hosted by Mid-Missouri Area; info (314) 496-3752 or (314) 642-0175; Looking for speaker tapes; Cabin Fever Convention, PO Box 7114, Jefferson City, MO 65109

NEW JERSEY: Dec. 31, - Jan. 2, 1994; 7th Annual New Years Eve Convention; Hasbrouck Heights, NJ; info (201) 340-4238 or (201) 807-1082; Convention, PO Box 918, Garfield, NJ 07026-0918

NORTH CAROLINA: Mar. 18-21, 1994; 7th NCCAFRAN; Raleigh, NC; info (919) 231-8104; rsvns. (919) 872-2323; NCCAFRNA 7, PO Box 818, Carrboro, NC 27510

OHIO: Nov. 26-28, 1993; 3rd Greater Cincinnati Area Convention; Cincinnati, Ohio; info (513) 733-9841; GCACNA 3, PO Box 12720, Cincinnati, OH 45212

2) Jan. 7-9, 1994; 5th Central Ohio Area Convention; Columbus, Ohio; info (614) 888-7615 or (614) 252-2501; rsvns. (800) 405-4329; COACNA 5, PO Box 8013, Columbus, OH 43201

3) May 27-19, 1994; 12th Annual Ohio Convention; The Ohio convention is in Kentucky, five minutes from downtown Cincinnati; info (513) 820-2947; OCNA 12, PO Box 0541, Cincinnati, OH 42501-0541

OKLAHOMA: Jan. 14-16, 1994; 4th Norman Winter Convention; Norman, OK; info (405) 631-8649 or (405) 521-8531; Norman Winter Convention, PO Box 1455, Norman, OK 73070

PENNSYLVANIA: Nov. 12-14, 1993; 11th Tri-State Regional Convention; rsvns. (800) 445-8667; info (412) 391-5276; TSSRO, Inc., PO Box 110217, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

PERU: Nov. 12-14, 1993; 1st Latin American Convention and Conference of NA; Lima, Peru; rsvns. 011-51-14-47-6305; info (Spanish) 011-51-14-73-8566

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov. 18-21, 1993; 11th Serenity Festival; Myrtle Beach; rsvns. (800) 845-0658; info (919) 822-6152; Planning Committee, PO Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

2) Jan. 28-30, 1994; 14th Annual Upper South Carolina Anniversary Convention; info (803) 282-0109; USCANA 14, PO Box 4407, Greenville, SC 29608

TENNESSEE: Nov. 24-28, 1993; 11th Annual Volunteer Regional Convention; Nashville; info (615) 883-7501 or (615) 228-3133; VRC 11, PO Box 121961, Nashville, TN 37212

VERMONT: Nov. 5-7, 1993; 4th Champlain Valley Area Convention; info (802) 863-2620 or (802) 865-3657; CVACNA 4, PO Box 64714, Burlington, VT 05401

VIRGINIA: Jan. 7-9, 1994; 12th Annual AVCNA; Info (804) 385-8774; AVCNA 12, PO Box 28, Lynchburg, VA 24505

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The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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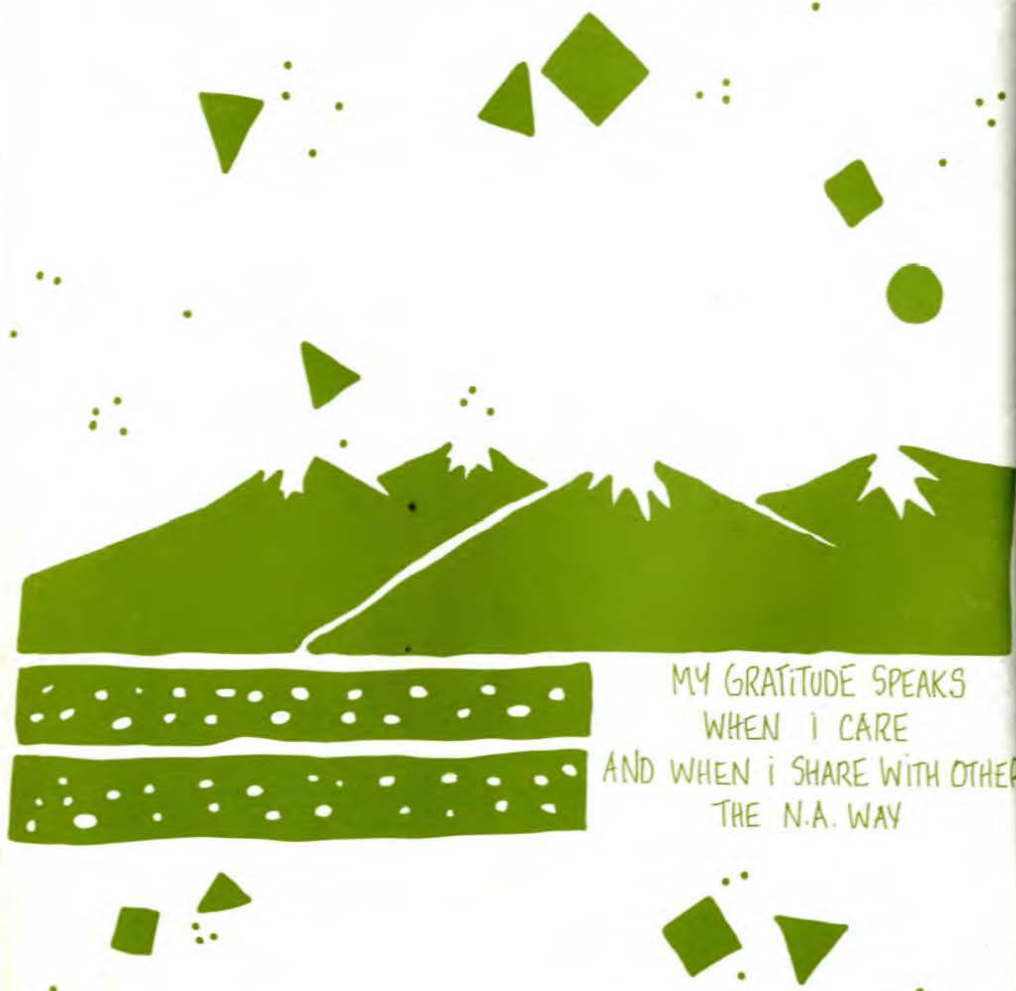
WHAT IS NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS?

N.A. IS A WORLDWIDE FELLOWSHIP OR SOCIETY OF MEN AND WOMEN FOR WHOM DRUGS HAD BECOME A MAJOR PROBLEM. WE ARE RECOVERING ADDICTS WHO MEET REGULARLY TO HELP EACH OTHER STAY CLEAN.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHICH DRUGS YOU USED, OR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE IN THE PAST. WE ARE CONCERNED ONLY WITH HOW WE CAN HELP ADDICTS RECOVER.

IT COSTS NOTHING TO BELONG TO N.A. - THERE ARE NO DUES OR FEES. THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP IS A DESIRE TO STOP USING DRUGS. 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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT N.A., SEE YOUR LOCAL PHONE DIRECTORY, OR WRITE US AT THE ADDRESS INSIDE.



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