
REACHING OUT

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WELCOME

*We would like to welcome all of you to the
WSC Hospitals & Institutions Newsletter.*

*We hope that the contents of this simple newsletter
will assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts throughout
the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.*

FROM THE INSIDE

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is K- - - , I'm an addict. I'm sure my story isn't unique at all, but still I would like very much to briefly touch on the things that brought me to my bottom and how I emerged through Narcotics Anonymous. I was introduced to drugs in the late sixties by some young friends who were obsessed with using long before myself. Since my encounter, I was unable to free myself from active addiction. Never in all my life have I had anything manage my life in the way that drugs controlled me. Jails, institutions, religions, counseling, and near death had no control over this disease that plagued me until my incarceration this time. So after receiving this five-and-a-half-year sentence, I returned to prison for the fifth time in the state of Louisiana, as a result of a drug abuse.

As I awaited transfer to another institution, I began to feel my bottom and utter prayers to my Higher Power, as I may understand Him, to assist me in this great need to be drug-free and more able to manage my own life. After my transfer, I was introduced to someone that was much involved with this program. This member asked me to try something he was giving away. And the first thing came to mind was another religious program. So I said, "Thank you but no thank you, religion don't work for me." He said, "I would like to give you a chance to live the N.A. way." So I thought on the subject and gave it a chance. Following my first introduction, people made me feel very welcome and reminded me to come back, "it works if you work it." I did return and heard my story many times. There I learned that this program was a new beginning for me.

Today I understand things about my disease that I never knew before. I've seen the program working for people that were long loose. The members that visit this institution shared things only an addict would know, feel and understand. These people have years of clean time in a program that works for us. We share how we are able to do it one day at a time. Through the grace of God, the steps are working. Because of the program, N.A., I have a choice to live the only way an addict with this disease can live. Today there is hope for me and the addict who still suffers. So do as others and myself, and give yourselves a break and check us out. Remember, we are thousands and thousands of people who are in recovery from this disease we call addiction. So, if it works for them, it will work for you too.

K. H.
Louisiana

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I recently received a copy of *Reaching Out* through an N.A. H&I member I met at a meeting in jail. They brought in two panels a week and I needed them badly. H&I support was strong, lots of literature and N.A. Basic Texts were available to us. I fortunately got a soft-back copy and was able to bring it to prison with me. I read it daily. I'm currently serving my fifth prison term, yet it's the first time ever clean. Today I've been gifted with six consecutive months—183 days clean, for the first time since 1965!

Raised in orphanages, foster homes, youth facilities, and juvenile hall and subjected to seven years of child abuse once adopted, I was a prime candidate for addiction, was in Haight-Ashbury in the 60's, and became a full blown junkie by 1969. My disease led me everywhere I swore I'd never go. It cost me everything good in life as I lied, stole, conned, manipulated, and used everyone on my self-destructive path. I knew I was unique, no one could understand. I lived in fear and anger, and constantly resented everyone and everything.

Thank God for 12 Step H&I panels who carry a message of hope, experience, strength, and recovery to those of us who can't get to an outside meeting. I'm not new to 12 step recovery and N.A. especially. My surrender was long and hard until I hit bottom in a dive hotel room last year, emotionally, physically, and spiritually bankrupt. I had stolen again and had a felony warrant. I had two choices—to finish self-destruction and die or possibly suicide, which looked attractive to me over facing another day, or literally surrender on all levels.

I detoxed and turned myself in. No plea bargaining with God. I got on my knees and for the first time told God, "Whatever you want, I'm totally powerless over my disease and I believe you can restore me to sanity. Sane thinking, emotions, feelings and actions, I turn my entire will and life over to you. May your will, not mine, be done." I faced up to 43 years in prison—the rest is a miracle to me. I'll serve less than two years and be out in 1990. This is a maximum security prison and I'm in the highest security cell-block, yet I'm freer than I've ever been. I'm a newcomer, and I have a great deal to learn, unlearn and relearn, and to experience. But I am teachable today and willing to go to any lengths to be clean one more day. I'm open-minded and learning how to be honest. "As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well." I feel lonely at times but never alone. I'll be in a meeting the first day I parole. I'll do 90 meetings in 90 days, and I have faith that in spite of myself, I will never have to return to prison unless I'm honored by being of service and carrying the message to other addicts in prison as an H&I member. God bless you all.

C.

California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name can't be disclosed because of where I am. I'll say I'm T- - - and I'm an addict. I've been in and out of the N.A. program for almost five years. I'm now in prison for a crime I did when I relapsed. I would like to share my experience, strength and hope. I had a year clean when I relapsed. This was only because I wasn't working my program.

I know today that in order for me to stay clean, I must work the Twelve Steps of N.A. I enjoy being clean today! I have almost seven months clean! I have gone through giving up a baby, lost friends, almost killed myself, and running all my life. Today I don't need to run. I still go through pain, but I deal with it differently now. I work the program to the best of my ability. I go to meetings every week. If you want this program, all you have to do is surrender and become willing. Whatever you have to do, go to any length, 'cause it's well worth it.

I know it works a day at a time. Trust in a Higher Power, go to meetings, get a sponsor, work the Twelve Steps. Your life will change.

I still go through ups and downs, yet because I do these things my life is better.

Good luck to all you newcomers and hang in there to all others.

Recovering in
Washington

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Howdy! My name is A- - - and I am well and truly an addict. For years I have rationalized my various addictive traits as a sort of legacy of my artistic nature or as part of my search for acceptance in the land of Bohemia. . . . Codswallap, eh? I agree. For years I have rejected the truth; that my mind had turned to poison. My life was Nagasaki one day, Hiroshima the next. Stealing fed my rapidly growing habit. I was a mother feeding the selfish baby. In a matter of weeks, the baby was full grown and overshadowed the life I hardly ever remember being without one complication or another. The fact that stealing had, in my mind, become acceptable is testament to how low my morals had sunk.

This is not my first term of imprisonment. No, this is my third "Tour of Duty," though the first in which I have come to terms with the con-

cepts of truth, honesty and acceptance. Truth in what and who I am and always shall be, an addict. Honesty in respect of my motivations now on a day-to-day principle. Acceptance in my limitations. In fact, I believe when one is aware of his or her limitations, parameters seem to broaden in life...don't ask me how, I can't relate it in words right now—only feel it.

I have been in recovery for nearly fourteen months now. I am grateful to the members of the N.A. fellowship and to the principles which they uphold. I am grateful to all you people in *Reaching Out* for the positive vibes, the love and the constant reminder that success, in terms of positivity, is possible. If there is anything I can do to serve, I am willing and able. Love to everyone!!

A. K.
Australia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My Name is F- - - , and I am an addict. I am writing this letter to let you know how and what Narcotics Anonymous has done for me. I started using when I was fourteen years old. I kept on using for the next eleven years. Living this type of lifestyle has brought me to institutions many times.

I am currently serving an eighteen month sentence for robbery with violence and kidnapping. While incarcerated, I was informed about the N.A. program. I decided I would go to check it out and see what it was all about. There was a sense of feeling that I belonged there, and I liked this feeling I had, so I continued to attend my N.A. meetings. After about five meetings, I started to talk to people and share a bit of my experiences with them. I realized at this point I wasn't alone.

I started to get involved with the program a lot more and gradually became chairman of our group. I also started to realize that I have feelings and emotions for other people. I feel a great love at these meetings, which I have never felt before. I am able to look at myself and other people in a different perspective now. I feel I owe everything to this program, and plan on continuing the N.A. program on the street. I would like to thank you people for reaching out.

F. D.
Canada

Editors Note: This section is dedicated to aiding H&I subcommittees to gain a world-wide perspective of H&I activity. It reflects input received from H&I subcommittees and may address specific issues of interest to members in their H&I efforts, as well as personal experiences obtained through carrying the N.A. message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. Therefore, we are asking members and H&I subcommittees to submit input for this section to the H&I Coordinator at the W.S.O., P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.

FROM THE OUTSIDE

NEWS FROM REGIONAL AND AREA H&I SUBCOMMITTEES

From The Regional H&I Chair, Nebraska Region

My name is J - - - and I'm an addict. One of the best experiences of my recovery has been my involvement in H&I work in Narcotics Anonymous. The Lincoln Area of Narcotics Anonymous began its H&I committee in 1985. At the time, some addicts in our area had started an H&I meeting in a facility without the benefit of an H&I committee. So out of necessity, we began our area H&I committee.

Our first meeting was in a minimum security work release facility. We started with just two or three dedicated members, and eventually came down to one dedicated member who had a lot of frustration at times getting volunteers to go to that meeting. As in many facilities, the staff began requiring inmates to go to the meetings. Our solution to the problem of disruption and people not having any desire to be there was to change our format. We now have the first half of the meeting a speaker to fulfill the program requirements of the inmates, and then we adjourn to a smaller room for those addicts that are seeking recovery. Many times there will only be three or four addicts in that room, but believe me, it's the best meeting in town. We now have ten to twelve committed members of our fellowship, and usually have no problem lining up volunteers to chair or speak at the meeting.

Slowly we began taking on other H&I commitments, always making sure we had members that would commit to supporting an H&I meeting for one year before we would go into an institution. Besides the meeting at the state work release facility every Sunday night, we also have an H&I meeting at the City-County Jail every Monday night, and a once-a-month panel discussion at the State Maximum Security Prison.

Our Nebraska Region developed a regional H&I committee in 1987, mainly to be a source of information and support for the area H&I committees. We held a Learning Day this year and invited a member of the WSC H&I Committee to share his experience, strength and hope. It was a wonderful day for all of us to get together and share what works in the different areas. We also have a weekly regional H&I presentation in a part of the state that is not covered by any of our areas. It is at the Nebraska State Prison for Women at York, and after a few years in H&I work, that meeting is like a breath of fresh air. Many of the women in that facility have been waiting for an N.A. meeting for a long time.

To be a part of carrying the message in institutions has many times given me what I needed to stay clean. We all know how easy it is to become complacent in our programs, and when my self-centered addict self walks into an H&I meeting, I walk out of there with a renewed belief in my H.P., N.A. and me. The only reason I'm not in there, in my mind, is that God wanted me to carry the message in there from out here.

J. D.

From the Regional H&I Chair, Arizona Region

The Arizona Region has four H&I committees that meet once a week. They have just finished writing their new guidelines. Each area prints its own H&I meeting list (separate from regular N.A. meetings) for its committee's use. Each area has decided to hold an area H&I Learning Day and Workshop twice a year. These four area H&I committees serve more than sixty facilities for their region.

The Arizona Regional H&I Committee meets every other month to coordinate (among other things) with area chairs for learning days

and workshops. They recently held an H&I event in early July. At this learning day a group member, area member, a regional member, and a WSC H&I member made up the panel. Instead of asking the panel to do a presentation, they decided to hold an open forum. They felt this was very beneficial to being able to address a wide range of topics and concerns reflecting the interests of a wider range of H&I members and those interested in becoming involved in H&I work.

The regional H&I committee has also developed a folder for H&I committee member's use. It contains: what is a panel member, a list of Do's and Don'ts, volunteer sign-up sheets, panel topics, clean time requirements, as well as phone numbers of the area H&I chairpersons and regional H&I members. The packet also includes N.A. helpline numbers.

H&I work has affected my recovery in several different areas. First of all, it helped me to become a little more responsible by making commitments to be somewhere at a certain time every week. It has allowed me to carry the message of recovery to all kinds of addicts. Seeing people experience freedom from the horrors of addiction even though these people are locked up has been a rewarding experience. I have also seen friends in prison die after months of being clean because they thought they could use one more time. I go to jails and prisons on a regular basis. We have a lot of clean time in institutions in Arizona today and I am grateful for that.

R. M.

Arizona

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I have been involved with the H&I committee in my area since March of 1987, and I just finished reading my first copy of *Reaching Out*. I had heard about the newsletter and had wanted to see one, but we have had such a turnover of H&I chairs, I was never sure our committee was registered with the WSO. I received my copy from our present chairperson, so I hope to be seeing them regularly.

I would like to share some of our growing pains with you. After a couple of us attended an H&I workshop hosted by a larger area in our region in January of 1988, we began to convert to the panel system. We only had five meetings at that time, and three of those we were able to turn into regular groups. We were just going to start our first meeting in a county detention center and we kept one meet-

ing in a treatment center. The purpose for me attending the workshop was to learn a little about a meeting in a correctional facility. I was going to be the panel leader, and although I had been using and selling drugs since 1969, I have never spent a night in jail. I was told at that workshop that I was not carrying the message of how to recover from jail, I was to carry the message of Narcotics Anonymous. Two months ago I started my second year as panel leader of that meeting.

For about two years our committee has had a few dedicated members, but in the last five or six months we have started to grow. We have adopted three Texas Department of Corrections units to furnish with literature, and at our last meeting we discussed starting a meeting at another treatment center. We are also checking into starting men's and women's meetings at another county detention center in our area.

At this time I serve as ASR for my area. I'm involved with a regional convention and I serve as a panel leader for the H&I committee. Service work helps me grow and be a part of the fellowship, but my involvement with H&I gives me a chance to give back what N.A. has so freely given to me.

H&I junkie
Texas

MEMBERS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH H&I WORK

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is M- - - As of today, I have 23 months clean time, which is not important as "one day at a time." Through my sponsor, I have been introduced to H&I work. It started with sharing and caring in a hospital situation with him in order to get me started and prepared for one of the institutions in this area. When he suggested that I go, first fear set in because I have never been locked up longer than fifteen minutes in the police lock-up. I told him I did not want to go. Then he no longer suggested, he demanded it, if I wanted to stay clean.

I still have fear today, because now I have been going for a year and a half. It is a fear of what might happen if I stop going to H&I and N.A. meetings.

Today I am vice chairperson of this area H&I subcommittee. I enjoy carrying the message to those addicts who still suffer. I realize that 90% of the people in the jail are there because of drugs and alcohol. Friday night at the county is my best meeting now. It is "but for the grace of my H.P." that I am not locked away, because it is still one of my yets; jail, institutions and death. Today, because of my addiction and through my Higher Power, I can make a difference in someone else's life.

M. G.
Indiana

Dear *Reaching Out*,

The message of hope is a priceless gift, and the promise of freedom a God-given privilege. Having been blessed with a desire to serve, I have asked myself, "What is commitment?" Through painful experience I would have to say that for me it means selfless service to God's grace, and the love of this fellowship which has made the miracle of recovery a reality in my life.

The message of Narcotics Anonymous, "that an addict, any addict, can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live," was carried to me in an institution. I knew nothing about the disease of addiction, only that I could not stop using and I was dying. Desperate, helpless, and afraid for my life, I was touched by this glimmer of hope.

Principles such as honesty, surrender, and acceptance freed me from the vicious self-destruction of active addiction. They also assisted me in spiritually preparing for the Third Step: "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him." In this step, I consciously chose a new way of life. I made a personal commitment to seek God's will by working the rest of the steps. This decision is the foundation on which my recovery is built. My very life depends upon ME being responsible for this commitment.

Compelled by gratitude, I feel the need to give back what has been so freely given to me. Having been inspired by the love of this fellowship, it has motivated me to serve through hospital and institution work. It is here that I have come to develop an understanding of commitment. That no matter what, above all things, these spiritual principles must be my way of life.

I have been overwhelmed by the joy of being an example of the power in Narcotics Anonymous. I have also shared in the celebra-

tion of life and the freeing of the human spirit. On the other hand, I have experienced the shame and self-disgust of being irresponsible and choosing not to live up to my commitments. The greatest pain of all is knowing that another addict may have died, never having heard the message because of my self-centeredness.

I pray that I never forget that the love of this fellowship has given me life. A debt which I can never fully repay. I also pray to remember that this love was carried to me by addicts committed to caring and sharing with others, the "N.A. way".

S. Mc.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi! I am an addict and my name is R- - - I would just like to share my experience in being able to serve in one of the most rewarding parts of service: yes, that is H&I work.

I was introduced to N.A. in a detox. For the first time in my life, I felt like I finally found a home. There were about six people there sharing, and each one of them shared a piece of me! I got clean in that area and later moved on, but I still see those people who gave me the chance to hear that I didn't have to go on the way I was, and I thank God for them.

I got involved with H&I when I had ninety days clean, and I can still say I'm involved with H&I. I would like to thank God for me being alive today, to be able to plant the seed to let other addicts know that there is a better way to live, that there is something better than jails and institutions and death, if we could get to them before they die. That's the most rewarding gift of being able to serve and give back what's been freely given to me.

It's such a great feeling when the guys respond to the message, and they really want to live a better life no matter where they are. I believe today that I am a miracle and miracles do happen! But I do stress to other addicts that they should get a sponsor, home group, and a good foundation in the first three steps, because if we don't have a strong foundation what do we have to offer?

God has given me the chance to be a part of something so beautiful that it would be selfish of me not to give it back! But we need people to give it back.

R.
Philadelphia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is W- - - and I'm an addict. I never thought I would ever end up in a jail this way. All my life I have feared jails, only because of what I heard about them.

My experience at an H&I meeting is the greatest thing that has happened to me. I get more gratitude being a panel member in jail, than I do anywhere else.

I'll never forget the first time I went to an H&I meeting. I was over a year clean and went with my sponsor. I was so scared and nervous because it was only the second time I ever spoke. After I spoke and we had a discussion period, I couldn't wait to leave and tell my sponsor how great I felt and that I wanted to go back. I have been going back there since.

As I said before, going to this H&I meeting is the best thing that has happened to me. I love going there because it reminds me of where I can end up. It also makes me feel like I'm wanted again and needed again.

I need to feel that way. I don't have to worry about what I wear or how I act, because all they want from me is to learn about recovery. I'm very grateful that they like what I have and want it. To me, that makes me feel good. I love H&I and would encourage anyone to try it at least once. I love you all and thanks for letting me be a part of Narcotics Anonymous and H&I.

W.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I've felt a need to reach out and share how much H&I service work has helped me in my recovery.

I was first exposed to N.A. in an H&I meeting at a treatment center. It was the first time I really understood wanting something someone had. The panel members *looked* serene and happy, and I began to listen to their message of recovery.

After I finished the 25-day program, I chose to go to a halfway house, where I was exposed to more N.A. recovery in an H&I meeting and also some outside meetings, and little by little this "recovery thing" started working. As soon as I was able, I wanted to share my experience, strength and hope in my area's H&I committee, and I've been giving ever since.

H&I has saved my life a few times, because I've invested in my recov-

I didn't have to run from me any longer. I could live through the pain of my past by working the steps.

With about six months clean, I got interested in carrying the message of recovery back inside. I started going back to the treatment program where I had been and ran into problems. I went to our area service committee to get the questions and answers. At ASC, there was no H&I committee, so the trusted servants there suggested that I take the questions that they couldn't answer to the regional H&I committee. Well, guess what? That's right, more confusion. There was an H&I committee, but it was kind of weak and not doing much. Well, that was about a year ago. Since then, our area has gotten an H&I committee. Then our area split, and now we are back to where we were a year ago. But Higher Power willing, things will get better. One good thing, now we have a strong regional H&I committee. So things are not as bad as they seem.

And my recovery has come a long way due to my H&I commitment. I ended up as our area H&I chairman. I'm thankful to my Higher Power for allowing me the privilege of serving in H&I. I'm also grateful for everyone who goes into H&I commitments. I hate to be alone anymore.

While I'm on gratitude, I want to express my gratitude to the different H&I learning and awareness days and functions I have had the privilege to attend, and to the WSC H&I Committee for all their much-needed help and support.

J. R.
Indiana

Dear *Reaching Out*,

This is the first time I have ever taken the action to actually write to a publication, although there have been several times I have wanted to write the *N.A. Way*. I am presently chairperson of the H&I committee for our area service committee and have received several copies of the *Reaching Out*, and felt compelled to write to you to share my own message of hope and recovery to those inside as well as outside the walls.

I am a nurse in a men's prison. I have also served time, so to speak, as a juvenile in Texas between ages 13 and 14. I've seen both sides.

THERE IS A DOOR TO H - - -, RECOVERY. I found that door thru N.A.

I was a victim of physical and sexual abuse from age 5. I learned to deal with that with drugs. I was a runaway at 12-13 and conse-

quently was locked up in a "home for wayward girls." That's what they called it in those days. I was there for a year, then I went home and left again at 15, and lived on my own. Unfortunately, my story is not much different from thousands of others who came from the background that I did. I did finish high school and get married, though. That marriage lasted for 17 years. All the time I was deep into my drug addiction. At age 37, I went to treatment, a total of three times.

When I came to N.A. I fit a description of HOW. I was Hostile, Omnipotent, and Withdrawn—also isolated, lost and alone. I had no more hope for life. I had been off drugs for a year and I lost everything—home, family and career. I went back to treatment and was placed in a halfway house for six months. I was asked to leave after six weeks because of my attitude. There I was in Dallas, Texas, 2,000 miles from home, no money, no place to go, when I found N.A.

Through N.A., the steps that I had been introduced to in another program started to connect with me. Through the steps and other recovering addicts, I started learning how to change my HOW from Hostile, Omnipotent, and Withdrawn, into Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness.

I started learning that FREEDOM means more than abstinence. It means working the program totally. I started experiencing the WE that N.A. offers.

It was a long and painful journey when I chose not to work the steps and stay involved in the fellowship. When I chose to let my Higher Power be in charge and lead me through the steps, I found and do find a freedom and flight of joy for my soul that is indescribable.

As an R.N. in a men's prison, I was at first very frightened to share my recovery experiences for fear of jeopardizing my position or losing my credibility, but my Higher Power has been truly in charge. We now have regularly scheduled meetings for both high security and low security inmates, "inside," and I see things happening for other willing addicts.

There TRULY is another way of life if we choose to pick up the simple tools that N.A. offers us. As I've said, I've seen it from both sides and continue to on a daily basis. I see people, for whatever reason, start going to meetings initially to "con" the parole board, but then start turning their HOW into the HOW of recovery through N.A.

Try it! REACH OUT, whether you're INSIDE or OUTSIDE. IT REALLY DOES WORK.

K. S.
Montana