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THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS



Spirituality means living by spiritual principles and applying/practicing them in my life—every day, good or bad.
Ralph K, Germany

Spirituality is how you treat other people—with dignity—like you would want them to treat you.
Rick, Australia

**When I am living in a spiritually conscious way,
whatever I am going through is a snapshot of
perfection, whether or not it feels good.**

Theresa H, New Mexico

On the spiritual path	1
From the editor	2
Through prayer and meditation	3
Recovery without God	5
Terima kasih banyak banyak Bahasa Melayu for "Thank you very, very much"	6
Am I a human being having a spiritual experience or a spiritual being having a human experience?	7
Seeking understanding	8
Finding the spirit in spirituality	9
Creative action	10
A brief history of "God" in Narcotics Anonymous	11
Toward a more spiritual service	13
Editorial reply	15
It's a matter of life and death Serious about service	16
Our readers write	16
Calendar	18
World Unity Day Telephone Link	20

IN THIS ISSUE

On the spiritual path

"All spiritual awakenings have some things in common," says our Basic Text, but we would be hard-pressed to name something comparable to the sheer variety of our members' personal spiritual experiences. These experiences aren't something we often have the good fortune to hear about in any detail. Many of our members believe that it's inappropriate to talk about specific spiritual or religious beliefs in meetings. Maybe it is; maybe it isn't—we'll leave that one to group autonomy. But we no longer have to remain in the dark about some of the spiritual paths followed by our members. This issue of the *NA Way* is devoted to bringing those experiences into the light of day. The following pages present as broad a scope of experiences as we could gather. Even though it's only a small fraction of the world of beliefs held by our members, it does show that there's ample room for any and all spiritual beliefs in the NA program.

For me, a working definition of spirituality is to call for a taxi and then wait for the taxi I called instead of taking one that might cruise by in the meantime.

Yona P, Israel

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EXECUTIVE CODIRECTORS

Anthony Edmondson
George Hollahan

EDITOR

Cynthia Tooredman

COPY EDITORS

David Fulk
Lee Manchester

TYPOGRAPHY AND DESIGN

David Mizrahi

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Anne Peters

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Bella A, Craig R, Stephan L, Jane N

World Service Office

PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409 USA
Telephone: (818) 773-9999
Fax: (818) 700-0700
Web Site: <http://wso@na.org>

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From the editor

This issue of the *NA Way* has been the most enjoyable of all the issues I've had the privilege of putting together. When the theme of "Spirituality" was originally suggested, I knew it would result in some refreshing and inspiring material, but just how wonderful it would be I had no way of knowing. As the material began to come in, I found myself reading it with awe. It was thought-provoking, deep, and extraordinarily authentic. It represented NA's diversity beyond anything for which I had dared to hope.

Now my only concern is that we may have raised the bar a bit too high with this issue. Can anything we do in the future compare?

I believe it can. Something that really contributed to our success in getting such good material for this issue was the editorial board's careful and detailed planning. This gave us the lead time needed to draw material from more NA communities and to seek out writers who had experience with the topic of spirituality.

The editorial board has created a new process for developing the magazine and has chosen themes for the next year's worth of magazines. In this issue you will find an enclosure that lists (On page 20, you will find) the themes and deadlines for the next four issues and gives some ideas for developing articles. We realize the 2 July deadline for the October issue is going to be a little tight when you receive this magazine at the end of June; nevertheless, we're hoping that some of you will be able to write articles for the October *NA Way*.

Please don't be discouraged from submitting an article just because it doesn't seem to fit in with the upcoming themes. There's always room for all kinds of sharing and opinions. We need every bit of it in order to put together the best possible magazine for you.

As always, we appreciate receiving your ideas, suggestions, comments, and criticism. Even though we can't publish it all, we read every bit of it and act on as many of your ideas as we can. The editorial board asked me to make it very clear that the magazine's goal is continuous improvement and that your input is not only welcome, it is desperately needed. So let us hear from you—we're looking forward to it.

Cindy T, Editor

Letters to the editor
follow on page 16

The NA Way Magazine welcomes letters from all readers. Letters to the editor can respond to any article that has appeared in the *NA Way*, or can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. Letters should be no more than 250 words, and we reserve the right to edit. All letters must include a signature, valid address, and phone number. First names and last initial will be used as the signature line unless the writer requests anonymity.

The NA Way Magazine, published in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish, belongs to the members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission, therefore, is to provide each member with recovery and service information, as well as recovery-related entertainment, which speaks to current issues and events relevant to each of our members worldwide. In keeping with this mission, the editorial staff is dedicated to providing a magazine which is open to articles and features written by members from around the world, as well as current service and convention information. Foremost, the journal is dedicated to the celebration of our message of recovery—"that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live."

Through prayer and meditation

by Jeff Gershoff,

WSO Group Services Coordinator

As a result of my infinite good fortune, I am able to interact with members of the NA Fellowship from all over the world. I try not to let a day go by without reflecting on this and expressing gratitude. With the theme of this issue being spirituality, I saw an opportunity to share my good fortune with NA Way readers.

What follows are four short essays on the Eleventh Step. These essays are directed more toward application in one's life rather than on the step itself. The participants are: a woman originally from the United States who's lived in Europe and currently lives in the northernmost reaches of India; an Indian from Bombay who has studied meditation in many different parts of India; an American of Filipino descent who is well-known in certain areas of NA for his focus on spirituality and humility; and a woman from Argentina who brings a refreshing and enlightening perspective to the Eleventh Step.

From Dharamshala, India

In my experience, the process of prayer and meditation enhances my recovery and makes me a better person by facilitating a process by which I can diminish the negative and practice the positive.

I am moving away from my past, when I believed that I was the exclusive victim in the center of the universe, with all the accompanying resentments which fed into that insatiable role.

I am taking fewer vacations into the future. For me, prayer and meditation act as the ticket out of the fantasy island of "what if" and "if only" into which I can slide like it's quicksand, and get stuck.

I am starting to achieve glimpses of what it's like to dwell in the present. Throughout my recovery, I've lived in situations that cause me to say the Serenity Prayer on a regular basis. My latest is living in a tiny community that is a hotbed of opportunities to practice spiritual principles, where experiences illustrate the necessity of choosing my battles wisely and relinquishing the rest. My present Himalayan environment reminds me to practice restraint of tongue and yet continue to breathe. Sometimes I even succeed in evaporating most of the smoke in my mouth, though there is a flaming fire still roaring in the active volcano of my heart.

Lisa M

From Bombay, India

After bouncing in and out of NA for a few years, in 1990 I went mad—streaking on the streets and doing all sorts of crazy things. The cops put me in a loony-bin where I was caged like a wild animal behind bars, getting electroshock therapy every few days without any anesthesia. Thanks to NA & my meditation, I'm clean for nearly nine years.

I didn't believe in God when I first came into NA, so I meditated but didn't pray through my first five years clean.

In my meditation, I remain aware of my breath and body sensations without reacting to them. This helps my mind, which is tripping along at a supersonic speed into the past or future, to live in the here and now. It has also removed a lot of my anger, fear, and other shortcomings, making me more loving and caring.

*To live a
spiritual life
is to try to
live in the
image of G-d
and to devote
more energy
to doing good
than to
feeling good.*

Meira T, New Jersey

After my sitting I give the benefits I receive from meditating (love and compassion) to all others, especially those with whom I have a problem.

Prayer also helps me a great deal with healing my relationships. After only six months of praying for my sister (whom I resented and with whom I had a twenty-year-long property dispute), we came together again. Also, a fellow addict who had come to hit me at an ASC meeting came a few months later and started crying in my arms. Prayer and meditation are very powerful.

The spirituality that our program and the fellowship offer us is truly awesome.

*With love and gratitude,
Rajiv B*

From San Pedro, California

One of the most indisputable things about recovery in NA is that each individual has the undeniable right to a Higher Power of his or her own understanding.

I didn't get it the first time around. When I heard or read the word "God," I immediately shut down. I became closed-minded, and therefore could not hear the words that came next: "as we understood Him." Not listening caused me a lot of pain and grief over the 3½-year period of using after I relapsed.

The Eleventh Step was difficult for me throughout my first year, and maybe a bit longer. It was due to the lack of practicing meditation. I had already learned about the power of prayer. I needed to learn of the value and benefit of meditation. Something I heard at a meeting (during a time of grief) inspired me to take up the practice of meditating following prayer.

Beginning the practice of meditation has had a profound effect on my life. I once saw some NA artwork on a T-shirt and jacket that had a puzzle with a hand holding the missing piece. Inside the piece of the puzzle was the word "service." Since service has been a big part of my recovery, the word on my missing puzzle would have been "meditation." I can't imagine my life without it now.

I have had some deep and profound experiences during meditation. For the most part, Step Eleven acts as my vehicle for living the principles found in the

steps—when I'm spiritually centered (or God-centered, if you will) when insanity enters my life, I am restored to sanity before I act out. Being spiritually centered opens me up to recognize what my Higher Power wants me to do and where He wants me to go.

My sponsor told me that the depth of my recovery would be contingent upon my spiritual maintenance. I have found that to be true, and I maintain my spirituality through prayer, meditation, and being of service.

I have a beautiful sponsor who has taught me (by example) to keep my recovery basic and simple. After reading a number of books about meditation, I have found that what works best for me is the simplicity of using prayer to communicate with my Higher Power and taking the necessary quiet time so that I have a chance to recognize God's will when it is put before me. Part of God's will for me is to stay clean and recognize the beauty in my surroundings as well as in other human beings.

Prayer and meditation are wonderful tools that will fill your heart with peace, serenity, and love.

*God bless,
Freddie A*

From Buenos Aires, Argentina

Every morning I wake up, get on my knees, and ask my Higher Power to fill me with strength and hope so I can go through my day surrendered to His will. I sit in front of my plants to meditate on the gift of life he has given me and the second chance I have through the NA program.

I do not profess any religion; the kneeling is a physical expression of my surrender. I arch my body as a sign of gratitude.

Meditation is a mental surrender, stopping the thoughts of my head (the mental part of my disease) and allowing a fluid and conscious contact with my heart, its beating, and the vital oxygen that enters my unmanageable, systematic, and wonderfully symmetric body. That is my Higher Power. I share oxygen with other living beings; some, like me, are human; others, like my plants, are of another level of evolution. But we all have life.

Through prayer, I seek calmness and mental silence so that the voice of my Higher Power can appear. Through meditation, I seek to quiet the needs of my body and mind so the true *being* will become manifest—conscious contact, part of the all, a drop of water in the ocean of my spirit. My Higher Power is the ocean in which I am but a drop with all the virtues and characteristics of that ocean in essence and potential to develop.

The will of my Higher Power is that I be happy with my life, with what I do and how I do it. It is to share not only the oxygen but also the *serenity* of knowing that I am part of something, the *courage* to fulfill my part, and *wisdom* to be able to recognize every feeling that runs through my humanity. Through the Eleventh Step my Higher Power breaks through my humanity and gives me the strength to overcome the powerlessness and limitations from which I suffer due to my being an addict.

Today, after experiences and awakenings to consciousness, every time more profound, I don't even care so much what His will for me is. Let Him do what He'll do. What He gives me is much more than I can imagine in my life!

I am a part of humanity. I have a second chance. I belong to a fellowship of men and women who are evolving spiritually toward a better quality of life.

My Higher Power wanted this place where I am now to be my place in the world, doing what I do (which I never have imagined I would do). I am happy, complete, full, alive, and profoundly grateful. I am no longer alone!

Patricia M

It is apparent from reading these essays that the Eleventh Step is one of the keys to spiritual growth. I think it would be generally agreed upon by NA members worldwide that spiritual growth is directed away from the ego-based concerns of self and toward others and a "power greater than ourselves"—whatever our members understand that power to be. Reading these four very distinct statements from four different NA members can't help but make our members feel proud and, as the last essayist said, profoundly grateful to be a part of the NA Fellowship. ♦



Recovery without God

Spirituality
on a personal
level means
to put my
spirit into
everything
I do.

Saul A, Panama

It seems that I've been searching all of my life for something to believe in. Finally, in 1982, after fifteen years of nonstop drug abuse, I crawled into the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. Though I was barely recognizable as a human being, I found in those rooms the hope that had eluded me for so long.

Upon receiving my first hug at my first NA meeting, I knew that I had come home. What I found especially appealing were the choices I had been given—the choice to not use, just for today, and the choice to have a Higher Power of my own understanding. For the most part, not using just for today proved to be much easier than finding a Higher Power.

Over the years in recovery, I tried many different gods: Jesus, Buddha, Saraswati, Vishnu, and countless others. But I found that trying to believe in an intangible and invisible being or force left me empty and longing for more.

What worked for me in early recovery, as well as today, is using the group as a power greater than myself. Actually it is the unconditional love that I get from the group and members of NA that I believe is a Higher Power—certainly greater than anything of which I'm capable alone.

Does this mean that I pray or meditate to the group? Of course not. Prayer is simply a petition, and meditation merely reflecting—it does not have to be directed to anything, anyone, or any deity in particular.

How can I possibly have any purpose or meaning in my life without a god? I believe my purpose in life is to develop into the best *me* that I can be.

Finally, with what do I maintain a conscious contact, and from where do I seek comfort, if not a god? Today I find comfort in knowing that I am living a healthy, good, clean life and that I am not harming others or myself. I can maintain a conscious contact by holding love close to my heart.

I seek to do the right thing for the right reason. I attempt to move my life forward in a good, orderly direction, and I do my best to incorporate the principles of our steps, traditions, and concepts into each day. I stay close to the program by going to meetings and sharing with my sponsor and sponsees. Today I accept my humanity. I know I'm not perfect, just a perfect human being.

My most significant spiritual awakening was when I realized that the power is in me. I cannot rely on a mythical being or force to do for me what I cannot do for myself, nor do I wish to. After a lifetime spent trying to be everything to everyone, I now know that it begins and ends with me. I have to do the footwork, I must make the effort, and I need to seek the solutions.

As it states in *It Works: How and Why*, today I have the ability to "live with dignity, love myself and others, laugh, and find great joy and beauty in my surroundings." I believe that life is an adventure waiting for me to discover all of its intricacies, not something to dread. I embrace the life that NA has given me today, and in spite of all the pain, loss, grief, and fear that I've experienced over the years, I relish every waking moment. I love life today.

I recently read something that, for me, says it all: "The meaning of life is to live a life of meaning." Today, with the help of NA, its principles, the friends I've made, and the people I've met along the way, I'm capable of living such a life.

Anonymous

Spirituality is being myself in all situations.

David C, British Columbia

Terima kasih banyak banyak

Bahasa Melayu for "Thank you very, very much"

My name is Aziz, and I am a member of the Bahasa Group in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Our group has an average of twenty-five to thirty addicts attending each meeting. The clean time ranges from one day to fifteen years. I entered recovery in 1993, and I am very involved in service.

I lived on the street for almost twenty years of my life, when I wasn't in jail. I injected drugs into the veins in my groin and was miserable and confused, but the saddest thing was my father's rejection.

When he realized that I was addicted to drugs, he tried every way he could think of to help me, but I wasn't ready to get clean. Finally, when he couldn't stand it anymore, he rejected me outright. In our Malay culture, for a father to reject his child is a big thing.

I went from bad to worse. My father's rejection gave me an excuse to use more and more.

Just before I came into recovery, I went into a coma for sixteen days. On the seventeenth day I opened my eyes, and the first thing I did was curse God for letting me live. I guess I know now why God didn't take my life: I am clean today.

The fellowship here is mainly from an Islamic background. In Malaysia, if you are a Malay it means that you are automatically Muslim, but our community also has Christians (Chinese, Indian, and other nationalities), Buddhists (mainly Chinese), and Hindus (mainly Indian people). We have NA members from each of these religious backgrounds.

When I speak with newcomers, I explain the difference between spirituality and

religion by saying, for example, that Islam asks us to pray five times a day and has many dos and don'ts. In NA there are no rules and regulations, just the good feeling that I have inside when I attend NA and work the program.

If newcomers start to talk about religion from the floor, I explain that the NA way is working on the problem we all have—ourselves—not religion, family, or drugs.

We have had to deal with many issues related to the differences between spirituality and religion through the process of translating NA literature into our national language, Bahasa Melayu.

Phrases like "conscious contact with God" cannot be translated with a Bahasa Melayu word, and if we translate wrong it will cause real problems. The only Bahasa Melayu word for a "Power greater than ourselves" is the same as the word for God, and this can cause difficulties, too.

NA is a spiritual program where anybody's religion, or lack of one, fits in. My religion goes right along with my NA program. For example, after one month of Ramadan, we celebrate Idd-ul-Fidre. This is a festival when we eat a lot, visit our families and friends, and donate money so the poor can also eat.

In this festival, there are many parallels to the program. We seek forgiveness for any wrongs done to our families and friends, just like making amends in the Ninth Step. For my celebration this year, I did an open house for the drop-in center where I work instead of going back to my hometown.

I've gotten a lot of my spiritual ideas from the program. They are centered on going to meetings, doing service, taking my own inventory instead of other people's, and trying to practice the Twelfth Tradition in my life. I am learning about letting go of things, coming to terms with the early death of my mother, trying to understand life from other, people's point of view, and making amends for my own behavior.

I've learned a lot from my sponsor, who has encouraged me to ask for help and pass on help to others, just as I was helped in early recovery. Being a sponsor myself, helping people anonymously, letting go of what others think of me, and living by my own conscience bring their own rewards. I am able to give without expecting anything back.

I practice spirituality when I do service. I started off with translations, which is where I began to learn about the program. I learned about the steps and traditions. I was involved with translations for three years and worked with two other members. We met every Monday night from 9:00 to 10:30 in my room; then we went out for tea and talked about recovery. I was lucky because these members had more clean time; they helped me a lot. One of them is my sponsor today.

I have been the secretary for the Bahasa Group and the translation committee chairperson. I've attended H&I meetings and been the ASC chairperson.

In 1995, my sponsor suggested that I start sending money to my father as part of my amends. I also started writing letters to him. Then, in 1997, although I was really fearful of further rejection, I finally got the courage to go home and see him.

My sponsor told me to go with an open mind. When my father saw me he cried, and now our relationship is pretty cool thanks to the program. I now understand that if he hadn't rejected me, I might never have reached my bottom and gotten clean.

My life has really changed. I feel good. I love myself. I have a lot of friends with whom I feel really comfortable, even though we might come from different races or religions. In NA we all belong.

Aziz, Malaysia

Am I a human being having a spiritual experience or a spiritual being having a human experience?

(Note: I have often thought about the absolute perfection of the Twelve Steps as a program of spirituality. While the following does not specifically mention NA or a specific step, it was and is a part of my Eleventh Step journey to discover the God of my understanding's will for me.)

I have found myself talking about this concept a couple of times recently. While this appears to be a common topic and I have heard many people talk about it in one way or another, I have yet to hear anyone talk about the essence of this concept and what it means for us individually.

I believe that it all comes down to a foundational or fundamental system of beliefs. For example, if I believe that I am a human being having a spiritual experience, then what that means, to me at least, is that I believe my personality, my mind, my thoughts are primary and that being spiritual becomes a goal toward which I strive on a daily basis. I will expand upon this a bit later on.

On the other hand, if I believe that I am a spiritual being having a human experience, then for me it means that, first and foremost, I am far more than the cells of my body, the thoughts I have, the experiences I've had, the emotions I experience, etc. I am a part of All That Is, however that may be defined. The life of the person I am today is but the current expression of what I am.

As a human being, I have two overriding psychological needs: to be secure and to be significant. In my life I have gone to some extremes to try to fulfill these needs. At times, I have put others' opinions about me so far above my own that I became a human chameleon just to fit in and be accepted in my environment, thus filling these needs.

Or so I thought. Deep down I knew that such was not the case, as I continued to believe that I was living a lie and that truly I was not good enough—for myself or anyone around me.

Through this I learned to judge myself harshly—quite mercilessly, in fact—and arrived at the point where I lived my life based on fear: fear of everything, from fear of how you would perceive me to fear of not ever being good enough. Living this way required that I manifest my life accordingly, constantly providing myself with more people, places, and things to fear, whether secretly or overtly.

You see, on the surface, I rarely if ever appeared afraid. After all, I was a Vietnam veteran and I had seen, felt, and done things that had removed normal fear from my range of emotions. Yeah, right.

I have been on a spiritual quest for many, many years. It began as a journey of discovery about various religions, and ended up being something far more significant: to find answers to those age-old questions "What are we really here for?" "Who and what are we?" "Is there a God?" "In what manner and form?" It has only been in the last few years that I have come to realize that I had been going about things backward, that truly I am a spiritual being having a human experience.

What this means for me today is that my "failings" are impermanent, a part of this existence, and that they truly are a part of a lesson. Lessons are for me to learn from, not to beat myself up about mercilessly. While it is true that as long as I am here in this form I am subject to being fear-based, I have come to know that I truly have a choice and have become love-based far more of the time.

This means that I have been able to soothe those two age-old needs of security and significance. You see, if I am love-based and truly believe that I am a part of All That Is, then I am immensely and totally secure and significant as long as I can remember that. I can learn about higher emotions such as unconditional love and compassion because I no longer have to think about how anything and everything is going to impact me and my life. It is amazing how truly self-centered and self-obsessed so much of my life has been.

I can see myself and come to accept myself without harshly judging that self. It was that harsh self-judgment, after all, that enabled me to continue to mess up, to be a disappointment to myself and everyone else, to do the things for which I could judge myself, and on and on in a vicious, vicious cycle.

Today I can accept that I make mistakes, and lots of them—but that is all they are, mistakes, not symptoms of a deeply diseased, insufficient, incomplete human being. I can learn from my mistakes, exercise compassion toward myself, and continue along my path of discovery toward the ultimate joining with the God of my more and more limited understanding.

My spirituality allows me to refrain from judging others. In fact, I am released from the judiciary altogether, although the only one who ever appointed or elected me to be that judge was me (and always in absentia). Instead of judging, I can love. Instead of trying to find out how you measure up against me (you always measured up way ahead), I can love and accept you for the incredibly beautiful being you are, a part of all that I am.

Today I choose to be a spiritual being having a human experience and all that entails. Which are you?

Stephan L, California

***My Higher Power is the spirit and inner truth that lives within me.
The disease put layers of sickness over it, so it was hard to find.***

Jenny T, Nebraska

Seeking understanding

My name is Margie and I am coming up on sixteen years clean.

Arriving at the spiritual understanding I have today took me a long time. My first introduction to spirituality was as a child. I attended Sunday school at my family's church, but never had any inclination to follow that religious path.

By the time I came to NA I had studied yoga, astrology, numerology, and vegetarianism. I was into New Age philosophy.

When I was doing my second Fourth and Fifth Steps, I had a powerful awakening when I recognized the nature of my Higher Power. I came into contact with a Power greater than myself that manifested itself as love. My experience of this love was that it consisted and still consists of many facets including courage, freedom, and compassion. I intuitively knew the name of my Higher Power: Christ.

It was not like the things you find in churches; it was an experience of never-ending love. I had read about this experience; someone had described it as finding out that his God was "the God of the preachers." I knew exactly what he meant.

I felt morally bound to share my truth with other members of the fellowship. I told them what had happened to me. I wanted to let other people know what was helping me and enhancing my recovery.

I began to have difficulties fitting into the fellowship. When I spoke of my experiences with my God, other people started confusing their experiences with particular religions with my own personal understandings.

Many people have had very negative experiences with organized religion, and they responded to me with anger and hurt, sometimes being mocking or scoffing, sometimes talking behind my back.

If I preached from the floor in an NA meeting, then my fellow NA members were entitled to have some kind of negative reaction. It is common for anyone first learning to walk a spiritual path to express their new understandings in a less-than-gracious way.

One of my biggest fears is rejection. I have a need to be accepted unconditionally, so any form of criticism was frightening to me. However, I stayed in the fellowship and used my faith as I worked the Twelve Steps. Having a belief in Christ made working the steps solid for me.

I knew to Whom I was praying, and the experience of surrender was something that was profound. It is easier to surrender to a Power greater than yourself when you know what it is and have experienced its power before.

My faith and trust in Christ made working the Sixth Step easier for me. I know that some members believe they will never be free of their character defects. However, we used to think that we would never be able to live without drugs, and we're doing that. My faith leads me to believe that I can also live without my character defects.

I know that I experienced unreasonable anger for nine years and now I only experience normal levels of that emotion. I use the example of Christ as a character to imitate. This power of example is the most important aspect of my experience and faith.

We say in NA that the power of example is important; however, I have often been the member with the most clean time and few peers. I have sought inspiration where I could find it, inside and outside the fellowship, but find that my greatest power of example is Christ. I know that I fall short, and I guess that this means that I have to continue working the Sixth and Seventh Steps.

Some time after my awakening experience, I found that some of the beliefs attached to Christianity were difficult for me to embrace. I talked about my faith less and less, which seemed to reduce the strength of my convictions.

I still wrestle with this because I have a very strong contact with the profound experience of my spiritual awakening. I needed to find some way of expressing my own faith that didn't cause distress to other people.

I now accept my own experiences and carry my message in helpful ways. The essence of my spirituality is love and acceptance. I believe that we are all seeking to understand and to be understood.

Margie, Australia

For me, spirituality is a struggle. I have a hard time reconciling the concept of a loving God with addicts still dying on the street. I can't believe that I somehow merit recovery more than they do. Nor can I believe in a capricious God who does some kind of cosmic "eenee meene minee mo" to decide who gets recovery and who doesn't. So what's left? A God I don't understand but with whom I am still willing to have a conscious contact.

Dan B, Ohio

Finding the spirit in spirituality

For some time, I have pondered writing an article for our magazine. The subject that keeps gnawing at my thoughts is spirituality. Then I think about how spirituality is such a touchy subject in NA, one that we seem to tiptoe around a lot in meetings for fear we might offend someone or scare them away.

Enough tiptoeing! It is not my purpose to tell you about my Higher Power and suggest that you get one just like it. On the contrary, I want to share about the "spirit" in spirituality that, I think, we can approach with our feet planted firmly on the ground and face without discomfort.

Think about your spirit. Really, take a moment. What comes to mind? Is your spirit responsible and reasonable? Care-free? Cautious? Adventurous? Calm? Fiery? Excitable? What is your favorite color? Do you have one or several? Do you enjoy the kind of natural surroundings you would find at an NA campout, or would you rather go to huge conventions in high-rise hotels in big cities?

No, this is not a quiz to determine what type of person you are, so relax. I just want to share with others some things that work for me when I explore my spirit.

There are days when the only thing I know about myself is that I'm an addict—but that's just one part of my spirit, and it has been a long time since I accepted that part of myself.

There are many facets to my spirit. I enjoy warm summer days.

I feel great when I accomplish something—and then my spirit always finds more things that need to be done.

My spirit soars when my daughter gives me a hug just for the heck of it or when my husband tells me he thinks I'm beautiful.

I feel most spiritual after a good NA meeting where at least one person cried. Raw emotion is so real and very healthy.

I feel gratified when I share the message with a newcomer. It's so fulfilling to see an addict clean and working a program.

My spirit gets a real kick out of competition. A good verbal sparring match with someone of opposing political views makes me giddy.

My home group is a part of my spirit.

My family is a part of my spirit.

I learn more about my spirit all the time. For instance, I'm trying this writing gig now. It's something I think I might be good at. It's something others have said I do well. It's something that HP has put in my heart to do.

My fears of rejection, failure, and imperfection kept me from taking a stab at it for a long time. After all, if it doesn't work out, I'll no longer be able to claim self-righteously that I would be a really great writer if only I had a really great word processor and a secretary.

I stayed stuck in this diseased thinking for so long that I eventually became miserable. For me, the quickest way to become miserable is to fight against the spirit that my HP has given me.

My HP provides me with the resources I need to let my spirit play. I have a pen, paper, and an old typewriter to process my words with. I have a Basic Text and plenty of fellow addicts to walk me through the fear. And of course I have my HP to whine to when I don't get what I want. HP listens to me and then gives me exactly what I need.

My spirit may not understand your Higher Power, but my spirit completely understands your spirituality and is grateful when you share it with me. Thanks to NA I discovered my spirit, and more is revealed to me daily.

Tabitha I, Missouri

My spiritual practice involves paying attention to my life. Looking deeply, to see clearly and serenely what it is and that this is it—nothing more, nothing less, nothing other. Acceptance. Moment by moment. Practicing means to give up obsession, aversion, and denial. Since I entered this path, understanding the ephemeral nature of all phenomena has come slowly. For me there is no turning back. As the ego begins to fade, I am becoming the path of freedom from dis-ease.

Uschi M, California

Spirituality is the conscious application in my own life of the same values and principles that I believe my Higher Power possesses. My self-respect exists in direct proportion to my willingness to maintain those values in the context of my daily life.

Ross M, Ontario

When I am living a spiritual life, I have a feeling and a knowing that everything is okay, no matter if things seem to be otherwise. This is the feeling that everything is okay, has always been okay, and will always be okay. It is a calm and peaceful place.

Greg I, Oregon

Spirituality is the place I am looking for where my insides and outsides are calm and serene at the same time. I have found this place in recovery.

Dickie D, Louisiana

Creative action

Just as I have developed a relationship with a God of my understanding in NA, I have also developed a spirituality of my understanding. I will share some of it with you, hoping that it may inspire you to nurture your own spirituality in new ways.

My mother's sudden death in April 1998 has forced me to pay greater attention than ever before to my spiritual condition. I have experienced unprecedented loneliness and uncertainty. I've had to rely more on the love of my family and friends; my ongoing recovery is due in no small part to their prayerful support.

However, some of the grief and loss I have to walk through alone. When support from outside can't help, I have to nurture what is valuable inside me. To help build that inside support, I have found a new spiritual tool: creative personal ritual—simple, spontaneous actions that symbolize larger realities.

For example, on one of my beach trips I wrote a letter to my mother while burning a candle I had retrieved from her home. I told her how much I missed her and how she'd love this particular beach. I expressed my fear of facing the future without her. After prayer and reflection, I extinguished the candle, placed it in a clear plastic bag and buried it by the sea, along with a note suggesting that whoever found the candle should re-light it in memory of a lost loved one.

I have no idea if anyone found my candle and followed my lead. All that matters is that the ritual somehow connected me to a universal experience of loss. My solitary act helped me feel less alone.

I'm not advocating that all NA members pack candles and paper and head for the beach. Nor do I wish to imply that I've found a better way to live than the NA way. My personal rituals are simply tools I use to cope with loss.

A phrase from the Basic Text came to mind as I wrote this article: "a creative action of the spirit," which refers to sharing with others in hard times. Even though my rituals are uniquely fitted to my personality, my spirituality can only survive in an atmosphere of recovery. My sponsor and my NA friends give me the strength to be alone with my grief, just as the NA slogans give me strength to stay clean outside of meetings.

Earlier I said that I had developed a relationship with God. Surely I wrote it backwards: God has developed a relationship with me. That realization demonstrates a principle that unites the spirituality of all who seek recovery: humility. May that be one of the many gifts our Higher Power bestows on our restless spirits.

Larry B, North Carolina



SERVICE

Living daily with
peace and love and
the courage to be a
child of God. Seeking
the knowledge of
God's will for me and
the willingness to
carry it out.

Joanna M, Illinois

A brief history of "God" in Narcotics Anonymous

by Cindy T, Editor

Narcotics Anonymous mentions God in five out of twelve of its steps, four times by using the word "God" and once as "Him." Some also believe that the "Power greater than ourselves" mentioned in the Second Step is the same as the "God as we understood Him" in Steps Three and Eleven.

You wouldn't necessarily assume, therefore, that the word "God" occupies a somewhat controversial place in Narcotics Anonymous. But that's been exactly the case ever since NA started to grow and attract different kinds of people as members.

NA's tradition of having no opinion on outside issues doesn't mean that outside forces don't affect NA or that its members aren't shaped by cultural factors. Just the opposite!

When NA as we know it today first started in 1953 in Southern California, it adopted a slightly modified version of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Perhaps without intending to, NA also adopted quite a bit of AA's conventional wisdom of the time. Some insight into AA's philosophy regarding "God" can perhaps be gained by reading the following excerpt from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, written by Bill W, the program's founder:

"Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves.... We are going to talk about God. Here difficulty arises with agnostics. Many times we talk to a new man and watch his hope rise . . . but his face falls when we speak of spiritual matters, especially when we mention God.

"We know how he feels. We have shared his honest doubt and prejudice. Some of us have been violently anti-religious. To others, the word 'God' brought up a particular idea of Him with which someone had tried to impress them during childhood.

"Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient."

Drawing from this, it appears that AA's original idea of a Higher Power, as put forth by Bill W, was not a radical departure from the Judeo-Christian beliefs of the majority culture at the time—that is, America in the 1930s.

Things hadn't changed much by the time NA began forming in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It is interesting to note that a version of "the steps," which was developed in New York about 1950, did not mention the word "God" at all in the first twelve steps, but the thirteenth step read simply "God help me" (quite a difference from what is sneeringly called "the thirteenth step" today).

Just freedom.

Dom, Australia

God's in charge.
When I remember
that, all the worry,
all the stress,
all the deadlines of
life just go away.
Life is very good
when I remember,
and I remember much
sooner today than I
did in the beginning.

Emma W, Oregon

Though it's impossible to know what the original members of Narcotics Anonymous shared about in recovery meetings and how they talked about a Higher Power, the earliest NA literature uses the word "God" only in its adaptation of AA's Twelve Steps and in the Serenity Prayer. There is no mention of "God," a "Power greater than ourselves," or a "Higher Power" in the other parts of the original brownish-beige pamphlet written in 1954. A few sentences from "What Is the NA Program?" appear in that pamphlet almost exactly as they do in the White Booklet today, with a couple of notable exceptions. The assurance that "anyone may join" does not have the final phrase "lack of religion." This was added to the first White Booklet published in the early 1960s. The statement that today reads "Many of us . . . sought help through medicine, religion, and psychiatry. None of these methods was sufficient for us" originally read "Medicine and psychiatry had no answers for us." Religion wasn't mentioned.

From this we can conclude that these ideas were added to NA literature because a majority of the members believed that the "spiritual, not religious" nature of the NA program needed additional emphasis.

Although there were probably dramatic changes taking place in NA's membership throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, especially as NA developed outside the United States in places where the predominant culture was not Judeo-Christian, there weren't any significant changes to NA's written ideas about a Higher Power during that time. When the Basic Text was published in 1983, it was really the first time a wide variety of the fellowship's views about spirituality, God, a Higher Power, etc., were compiled and presented as the collective wisdom and experience of NA as a whole.

The sum and substance of NA's thinking about a Higher Power appears in the following quoted material, which has remained unchanged (except for a minor grammatical correction) through six different editions of the Basic Text:

"At some point, we realized that we needed the help of some Power greater than our addiction. Our understanding of a Higher Power is up to us. No one is going to decide for us. We can call it the group, the pro-

gram, or we can call it God. The only suggested guidelines are that this Power be loving, caring, and greater than ourselves. We don't have to be religious to accept this idea."

"Our concept of God comes not from dogma, but from what we believe and what works for us. Many of us understand God to be simply whatever force keeps us clean. The right to a God of your understanding is total and without any catches."

Looking back at NA's growth over the decades since this was written, only now can we truly appreciate the breadth and depth of spiritual bedrock laid by these statements. It is almost as if the writers of the Basic Text could see into the future and knew that NA's presentation of spirituality would have to be inclusive enough to accommodate members from all over the world with all of their accompanying languages and cultures.

Still, there have been efforts to build even more inclusiveness into NA's program. One of the most significant was embodied in the decision of the World Service Conference Literature Committee to make sure that all new literature created for the fellowship would refer to God in gender-neutral terms and try as often as possible to include the qualifier "of our understanding" along with uses of the word "God."

A few times, this resulted in some amusing comments during the development of *It Works: How and Why*. During committee meetings, committee members reviewed draft material and pointed out places where the text read simply "God" instead of "a God of our understanding." The phrase "naked God" was coined to describe these places. We can only imagine the reaction if someone had walked into a WSCLC meeting without knowing the background and heard a committee member say, "There's a naked God on line four in the third paragraph. Can we do something about that, please?"

Amusement aside, the decision stood. With few exceptions, "God" is usually "of our understanding" in *It Works: How and Why*. The committee also tried to use the phrases "Higher Power" and "a Power greater than ourselves" instead of "God" as often as possible.

Continued on page 16

Spirituality is the process of continuously deepening and enriching my consciousness and my perspective on life through ongoing contact with a Higher Power and a support system of people who love me and who share my commitment to spirit.

Ron H, New Mexico

people confuse unity with uniformity. Even when we disagree about the means for achieving it, we all have the same goal in mind. When we practice the principle of unity, we wish others well even when they are following a different course. Just as there are many ways to work the steps, so are there many ways to be of service. We seek to share our individual gifts for the greater good, acknowledging that NA needs the diversity of talent, understanding, and ideas of our members in order to be effective.

Democracy is a spiritual principle put into positive action. It calls on us to treat everyone with equality and justice. When the votes go against us, we learn to accept the will of the majority that might very well be expressing a **group conscience** rather than trying to manipulate the outcome we want. After all, it's easy to practice principles when things are going our way. It's when things haven't gone our way that we

need most to practice the principle of **surrender**.

In an impassioned moment, we may believe that the very future of NA rides on one decision. But when we regain our **perspective**, we see that God is in charge and continues to be the guiding power for our message and our work.

It is important, while decisions are yet to be made, that we carry the group conscience with the appropriate **advocacy**. A good service representative ought to bring her group's or area's motion with carefully prepared explanations and reasons and faithfully represent the conscience of the group. It is very hard to advocate for a motion with which one does not personally agree, but it must be done. It's a test of our surrender and trust in the process, but when we are trusted with representing the views of others, we have to make a case ably and convincingly regardless of our personal feelings. Of course, nobody should have to present a motion or take an action that she believes is morally wrong, but service motions rarely take on such ethical importance.

In the course of advocating his group's conscience, a trusted servant will sometimes discover that he has reserves of **courage** that he never knew about. Rather than backing down fearfully, he stands up with **confidence**, **gentle firmness**, and **appropriate assertiveness** to support the conscience he carries. Since there is nothing to lose by confidently advocating his group's conscience, but much to lose by failing to, a GSR may feel as if the group is behind him in spirit, backing him up. These experiences can repeat themselves outside of service. We find that where before we were timid, we now have more inner power, determination, and confidence.

A trusted servant needs to pay careful **attention** to the business under discussion. We are in the life-saving business, and while it's always appropriate to be **cheerful** and keep a good sense of humor, it's not right to be careless or flip-pant with the business we're entrusted to take care of.

NA business should be conducted with **alertness** and **thoughtfulness**. A trusted servant should show **responsibility**, **perseverance**, and **commitment**. If we say we'll do something or be somewhere, we

should keep our word. If a meeting's business takes three hours, we need to stay to the end, no matter what sports event is on TV. Complaining to other trusted servants about how much we're sacrificing and missing out on doesn't help. They're making sacrifices also.

In fact, it's quite appropriate to show **appreciation** and **gratitude** to the trusted servants with whom we work and the ones who serve our group. They're not getting paid, and they give so much. A warm hug or a kindly "thank you for being of service" is the least we can do to show our appreciation. One of the most sincere ways to show our appreciation is to pay attention to the talents and skills of trusted servants. Notice when someone does something well, and compliment or thank her specifically for that thing. This can give trusted servants the **encouragement** they need to keep on doing their jobs, even when they get frustrated. NA service is filled with difficult tasks where the personal rewards seem few.

Sociability is a necessary part of working with other people. We're people, not robots, and we need to connect with each other at the human level. Simple friendliness can make that so much easier.

It's also important to try to stretch ourselves to meet others on their level. **Sensitivity** to the feelings and unique circumstances of others is a major part of our **social consciousness**. This allows us to work with people of varying backgrounds and interact with society as a whole.

Patience is more than a virtue in service; it's a survival tool. Some members are slow to understand things we may grasp immediately. Some processes are very confusing to new trusted servants. Some business takes a long time to sort out. Some speakers ramble on or get long-winded. Rather than losing our tempers, it's a good idea to take a few deep breaths, remember that we're all in the same boat, and simply resolve to stay with the business at hand even if it takes all day.

Tolerance can be a tough principle to practice when dealing with harsh or unpleasant characters, self-centered or scheming people who wouldn't know a spiritual principle if it fell on them. However, we wouldn't need to practice tolerance with a loving person, would we? It

Toward a more spiritual service

by David H

Last Sunday, I went to our monthly area service meeting and watched people I love verbally attack one another. It was shocking, but not surprising. I've seen this kind of bad behavior in service committees throughout my recovery, and I've always detested it. It's the sort of thing that drives good people out of service.

It seems to take very little to provoke addicts into forgetting the traditions, forgetting their commitment to unity and group conscience. Around here we used to say, "If you think you don't have any character defects, get into service."

In service, just like in recovery, we grow or we go. If we can't grow up and deal with frustrations maturely, we end up embittered and burnt out before we even get to the rewards of service.

Whether we are serving a group, an area, a committee, or a suffering addict, we need to practice spiritual principles. The following are some that I think are important. I'm sure that more principles could be added to this list, but it should do for starters.

Cordiality is often mistaken for elaborate politeness, but it's really just a willingness to keep things friendly, polite, gentle, and positive. It doesn't mean that we should go along with every suggestion or motion; it just means that we should regard others as human, give them the benefit of the doubt, let them make mistakes without snickering, and indeed lend them a helping hand rather than abuse them for their inexperience.

Respect is an appreciation of others' worthiness, their importance in the sight of God, their intrinsic value. If my respect for you is real, it is for what you are, not who you are. I respect you as a unique individual and a beloved child of God, not because you are or know somebody important.

If we have **compassion** for the new-comer in the very arms of the disease, can't we also have some for the service junkie who has become overwhelmed by the heat of the moment? Even an addict with many years clean and lots of service experience can be suffering, and our compassion for that suffering ought to be no less even if

we find ourselves at odds with the person.

Consideration means that we take others' feelings, problems, and needs into account and refrain from running roughshod over others' lives or schedules.

Self-restraint is essential, especially when we are discussing something about which we care passionately. It's a common error to assume we can't control anything. It's true that we can't control everything, but we can certainly control our tempers, our egos, and our language.

Forbearance means letting it pass. We don't need to "even the score" when someone does something that hurts us; doing so only brings us down to the other guy's level. Giving up your right to answer back an insult doesn't reduce your esteem; it enhances it.

Forgiveness is even more honorable because it shows an understanding of the human frailty of others, and the willingness to let our anger go in order to put love back into our hearts.

Harmlessness is a determination not to cause suffering to another human being. If we would not bring misery on a dumb animal, why would we ever be less concerned about a fellow human? If we practice this principle with grace and willingness, then we will not return a blow or slight, because another person's bad behavior is no excuse for our own.

It's important that our trusted servants share a **common vision**. We often reduce this to our tradition of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. That could more correctly be called our primary purpose, and it informs our common vision. Many of us have dreamed of a worldwide fellowship, a place that exists more in spirit than in space, a bond of friendship and fellowship that could provide support for addicts to stay clean and become responsible, loving, God-centered, and joyous people.

The surest sign of a spiritual awakening is a **generosity of spirit**, the desire to share God's love and bounty with others. We may differ in our ideas about how to achieve our common vision, but if we are generous of spirit we will not begrudge others' right to a different view.

As long as we respect others' rights to have a different view of the same vision, we don't endanger NA **unity**. Too often,

Spirituality is the progressive replacement of love in my heart where before there was only fear. This is happening because I have a connection with a loving God and people in the program.

Dora S, Brazil

Spirituality is feeling the presence of my Higher Power working in my life.

Reuben F, Louisiana

Editorial reply

To "Of Titles and Politics,"
January 1999 NA Way

In her article, Mindy A asked, "Is the importance of service based on the number or nature of positions an individual holds, or is it based on the internal changes an individual experiences while doing any type of service?"

I inferred that this was actually a rhetorical question, and that the author believed the second half of the question held the correct answer.

This perspective reflects an extremely common attitude held by many members of the fellowship. It is indicative of the philosophy that we perform service because it is good for our recovery.

I have heard more times than I can count that the benefit of service work is an unparalleled level of personal growth. This is almost always the reason given to persuade members to join in the work of providing meetings, literature, understanding, and access to the NA message.

After only a short time of serving on my local area service committee, I came to the conclusion that we do not perform service work to help our own recovery; we perform service work to help other people's recovery.

I started out in service work for a variety of reasons. Admittedly, one of the big reasons was that I thought it would make me seem important to my peers. I also thought it was important for my recovery—that it would make me grow as a person.

What I have come to understand is that service is not so important for what it does for me, but what it does for others. Although it is true that I have learned valuable lessons about patience, faith, unity, group conscience, negotiation, compromise, public speaking, typing, and record-keeping, the truth is that, by its very nature, service work cannot be something that is self-serving.

If we look at it from another perspective—that of our primary purpose—it becomes clear that our own spiritual growth is secondary to the fellowship of NA. We must distinguish between the *fellowship* of NA and the *program* of NA.

It is the purpose of the Twelve Steps (the program) to lay out a spiritual way of living that can transform any willing person's lifestyle from selfish and egocentric to selfless and giving.

It is the purpose of our members (the fellowship) to tell others that they, too, can undergo this transformation and to teach them how. Our own personal recovery is based on what we do when we're not at meetings. Meetings are places where we can help facilitate other people's recovery and help NA as a whole grow.

We are, however, interconnected in such a way that we need to ensure NA's survival in order to ensure our own. In this sense, we do perform service work for ourselves, but the spiritual awakening that we experience as a result of the program opens our eyes to the world and the people around us.

We are not the self-important, over-bloated people we once were; instead, we are loving and compassionate beings working as a team to provide a means of relieving the pain and misery of addiction.

Onion P, North Carolina

It's a matter of life and death

Serious about service

"Why should I care about our primary purpose? Service usually isn't much fun, so why should I do it? If it isn't about me feeling good, I don't want anything to do with it."

Nobody would go to a meeting and say any of these things, but how often does our behavior proclaim these very attitudes? Pretty often, I think.

Every time we decide to skip a committee meeting because we found something "better" to do, every time we fail to make the phone calls we promised to make, every time we "forget" we were supposed to be somewhere and do something, we are letting someone down—and it's not who you think!

We don't do service for the addicts who are already clean. We do service for the mothers who bathe their babies in the same bathtub that's used to cook up a batch of crystal meth. We do service for the people whose bodies are ravaged with sores and whose teeth are rotting away. We do service for the teenager who may be infected with HIV when she has sex for a fix. We do service for the father who waits for the connection in a bar while his family worries about what he'll be like when he gets home. We do service so that an addict might hear about this program *before* he injects hepatitis into his veins. We do service for the addict who doesn't have to die tonight.

I, for one, thank God and the NA Fellowship for those addicts who cared enough to show up and do the work that carried the message to me. I am grateful that there were recovering addicts who loved me and cared for me before they even knew I existed. May God have mercy on my miserable soul if I ever forget the gift I've been given or ignore the suffering addict in favor of my own self-centered pleasure-seeking.

For the lonely, hopeless, dying addict, please keep coming back, and give back just a little of what you were so freely given.

Joe C, Missouri

Our readers write

On the challenge of recovering behind the walls:

I'm a counselor in a prison in Texas that has a rehabilitation program for men with substance abuse problems.

In response to a letter that appeared in the January 1999 *NA Way*, you gave several reasons why an NA member serving on an H&I panel was discouraged from giving his personal phone number to an incarcerated addict. Here's another reason:

It is a rule of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice that no visitor is allowed to exchange personal information with our incarcerated men and women. If a visitor is caught passing information, he or she is removed from the visitation list. I'm sorry that an incarcerated addict was hurt by this policy, but it is for the safety of everyone involved.

Sincerely,

Edna Forbes, LCDR, ADC
Texas DOCJ

Spirituality is not about achieving or knowing, but rather about discovering and searching—kind of like the Third Step isn't about attaining perfection in turning our will over to our Higher Power, but about becoming willing.

Laura J, Oregon

Continued from: A brief history of "God" in Narcotics Anonymous, pg. 12

Some input received from a member of the fellowship during the development process pointed out that the committee's efforts were still falling short in one area. There was no material that addressed belief in a higher power that wasn't a supernatural deity, and using various terms—God of our understanding, Higher Power, Power greater than ourselves—to describe the same concept did not promote inclusiveness. In response, the committee included more discussion about non-supernatural higher powers such as the spiritual principles of the program, the NA group, etc.

In 1993, the same year *It Works* was approved by the fellowship, a motion was brought to the World Service Conference to change wording in the steps and traditions that referred to God as "He" or "Him" to language that was completely gender-neutral. Conference participants believed that the issues surrounding the motion went far deeper than the language of the motion and decided to send the motion and some accompanying explanation out to the fellowship for further discussion.

The *NA Way Magazine* (it was a monthly publication at the time) joined in the effort to promote discussion of "Motion 39"—the number the motion was assigned in conference proceedings and by which the motion became widely known. The magazine provided a special forum consisting of three or four pages in each issue for members to express their viewpoints about the language used to describe God in NA.

The discussions and sharing ranged far from the original motion to change the gender reference; many expressed the opinion that it was time to eliminate the word "God" from NA's vocabulary altogether. Their opinions were answered in strongly worded editorials by those who believed just the opposite.

While it was true that much antagonism and disrespect accompanied the discussions, the positive effect of the discussions can't be discounted. Many members got the opportunity to hear about understandings of God that they may never have heard otherwise. English-speaking members had the opportunity to learn that in other languages, not only did the word "God" have a gender, so did regular old nouns and verbs. The designation of a

word as "masculine" or "feminine" had nothing to do with sexism; it was just a point of grammar. Everybody had the opportunity to become more open-minded and more sensitive to other people's viewpoints.

When the issue of changing the steps and traditions returned to the WSC in 1996 for a final decision, it was defeated, but the open-mindedness and sensitivity remained. New literature, including the *Step Working Guides* approved at WSC'98, steadfastly maintained WSC's commitment to using inclusive language and even elaborated on the concept of inclusiveness itself.

Throughout all the changes and discussions, at least one thing hasn't changed a bit: the desire of NA members to carry the message of recovery to as many addicts as possible. As it says in the introduction to the Basic Text, "Everything that occurs in the course of NA service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers." Who could argue with that?! ♦

Spirituality means commitment to recovery and service. It means turning from the old life to the new life, from darkness to the new light of life, a 180-degree turn, and coming close to God.

Ammar A, Bahrain

helps to remember that we're all human, and people who need our tolerance are probably suffering considerably. Compassion for their unhappiness makes it easier to let go of our right to take offense.

Maturity is knowing and accepting limitations. Immature people expect everything and often make unreasonable demands. A mature person doesn't demand more of a situation or others (or himself!) than can be reasonably expected.

It takes **practicality** to schedule no more business into a morning meeting than can be dealt with.

Humility is an especially important spiritual principle in service. Our individual desires and egos are not as important as what's good for NA as a whole and what furthers our primary purpose.

While certain trusted servants exhibit an unusual amount of **wisdom and good judgment**, all of us have access to those principles. Wisdom sees quickly to the heart of the matter, and judgment separates the important from the trivial.

Integrity is both a wholeness of self and a sense of **honor** for one's own values. **Sincerity** is an open-hearted and above-board expression of truth. **Balance** is an intuitive sense of how all the parts are needed in the correct measure to form a healthy whole. It is also the willingness to live in **harmony** with others. **Reciprocity** is an almost automatic balancing response of the universe. We get back what we put out; we reap what we sow; what goes around, comes around, and what we pulled on someone this time will surely be pulled on us next time. The wise addict cuts no corners, but rather reciprocates **love, understanding, and cooperation**.

There's something liberating about acknowledging our **powerlessness**. In service as in recovery, we can only do what we can do, but together we can do more than we thought possible. When we surrender to the will of a loving God, we become empowered. The power we try to grab for ourselves is fleeting and in time will wither; the power that God grants us to do His will is ours by right and will endure.

Trusted servants cannot go wrong if they consistently **act on principle**. If what we want to say or do is not true, loving, and necessary, we should keep

quiet. The surest way of sticking to principles is **working the steps** and staying **mindful of the traditions**. It's been said that the steps keep us from committing suicide, and the traditions keep us from committing homicide. Addicts with a robust program of recovery will serve appropriately, constructively, honestly, and humbly. They will never attempt to use their position or influence to exploit or crush other members. Addicts who practice being **God-centered** and who pursue a **conscious contact** with God will always be conscious of the fact that they're working for God. They will regard **selfless service** as a great opportunity, the very crown of their recovery.

Such addicts become **servants we can trust**. They act courageously and lovingly, honorably, and compassionately, and manage to keep their **serenity** no matter what. In service they discover a new freedom. In surrender they achieve a great victory. When thanked for their faithful service, they reply, "No, thank you for giving me the opportunity to enrich my life through service."

There's a saying in NA that I've always liked: If you don't see an example, then be an example.

If there are no examples of principle-based service in your area, be the first. Expect no support or appreciation for it at first. Even if you are courageous without being demanding, direct without being offensive, and honest without being cruel, certain people will not appreciate your good example—usually those who look the worst in comparison.

Even if acting on principle at first earns you some enemies, remember that God will help you, and very soon other addicts will also. Be true to principles—all of them—and spirit will support you.

The path of addiction is often described as the easier, softer way, but I don't think that's true. It may look easier and softer, but in reality it always leads to cliffs, rocks, and falling to one's death. The real easier, softer way is found in seeking knowledge of God's will and the power to carry it out. So long as we follow that way, we have nothing to fear. ♦

Spirituality is to live in the solution.

Joao V, Brazil



CALENDAR

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales: 15-17 Oct. 1999; Sydney Combined Area Convention; to reach committee, call: +61/2/98821652

BELGIUM

Liege: 6-8 Aug. 1999; Belgium NA Free Convention; to reach committee, call: +32/4/3686678

BRAZIL

Mina Gerais: 21-24 Oct. 1999; 10th Brazil Regional Conv.; Poços de Caldas; to reach committee, call: +55/21/532158

CANADA

British Columbia: 9-11 July 1999; 20th BC Regional Convention; to reach committee, call: (604) 739-7934

3) 26-28 May 2000; 3rd Victoria Convention; to reach committee, call: (250) 744-2050

Nova Scotia: 22-25 July 1999; 10th Annual AVANA Pig Roast and Campout; to reach committee, call: (902) 847-1779

2) 6-8 Aug. 1999; 1st Central Nova Area Convention; Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Truro; to reach committee, call: (902) 463-2605; or fax: (902) 463-3240

3) 5-7 Nov. 1999; 8th Canadian Convention; Lord Nelson Hotel, Halifax; hotel rsvns: (902) 423-6331 or (800) 565-2020; to reach committee, call: (902) 463-2605

Ontario: 30 Dec. 1999 – 2 Jan. 2000; Turn of the Century Convention of NA; Waterloo Motor Inn; hotel rsvns: (800) 361-4708; to reach committee, write: TCCNA, 170 University Ave. West, Suite 12, Box 267, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3E9

Quebec: 3-5 Sept.; 7th Congres du CSLNENA; to reach committee, call: (418) 962-1531 or (418) 961-8588

2) 8-10 Oct. 1999; Quebec Regional Convention; Delta Hotel, Sherbrooke, mention "GPANON" for hotel rsvns: (819) 822-1989, to reach committee, call: (514) 955-5023

DENMARK

North Jutland: 1-3 Oct. 1999; North Jutland Area Convention; to reach committee, call: +45/96904574

ECUADOR

Guayaquil: 30 Oct. – 2 Nov. 1999; 4th Latin American Conference and Convention; to reach committee, call: +593/4/884057 or +593/4/888685

IRELAND

Cork: 16-18 July 1999; 3rd Southern Area Convention; to reach committee, call: +353/21/278411 8-10 pm GMT M-F

MEXICO

Baja California Norte: 8-10 Oct. 1999; 7th Baja California Convention; Grand Hotel, Tijuana; hotel rsvns from USA: (800) 472-6385; from Mexico 91/800/0266007; to reach committee, call in the USA: (619) 277-6438 or in Mexico: 66/802370

PERU

Lima: 28-29 July 1999; 7th Regional Service Conference; to reach committee, call: +51/1/9957841 or 51/1/428-3820

2) 14 Nov. 1999; 14th Anniversary Reunion-Lima; Callao; to reach committee, call: +51/1/9957841 or 51/1/428-3820

SPAIN

Barcelona: 2-4 July 1999; 16th European Convention and Conference; to reach committee, call: +34/972/369910

SWITZERLAND

Vaud: 28-30 July 2000; 17th European Convention and Conference; Lausanne; to reach committee, call: +41/22/7000335; or email: eccna17@hotmail.com

UNITED KINGDOM

Birmingham, England: 13-15 Aug. 1999; 12th UK Regional Convention; Stakies Metropole Hotel; hotel rsvns: +44/121/7804242 M-F 8:30-5:30 GMT; to reach committee, call: +44/171/2154007 or +44/121/6860523

Glasgow, Scotland: 9-11 July 1999; 1st Glasgow Area Convention; to reach committee, call: +44/7071/248710

UNITED STATES

Alaska: 15-17 Oct. 1999; 15th Annual Alaska Regional Conventional; Westin Alyeska Prince Hotel; rsvns: (800) 880-3880; to reach committee, call: (907) 337-6773

Arkansas: 2-4 July 1999; Central Arkansas Area Convention; to reach committee, call: (501) 835-3571

California: 30 July 1999; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169

2) 27 Aug. 1999; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169

3) 3-5 Sept. 1999; Greater Los Angeles Area Convention; Westin Bonaventure Hotel and Suites, Los Angeles; website: <http://members.aol.com/GLAACNAI>

4) 24 Sept. 1999; Lower Desert Area Birthday Bash Meeting and Dance; to reach committee, call: (760) 323-0169

5) 19-21 Nov. 1999; Western Service Learning Days; Burbank Hilton; hotel rsvns: (800) HILTONS or (818) 843-6000; to reach committee, call (626) 791-4235 or (213) 757-9100

6) 9-11 June 2000; California Mid-State Regional Convention, Modesto; to reach committee, call: (209) 578-4417

Colorado: 2-4 July 1999; 14th Western States Unity Convention; website: www.bwn.net/wsuc

Connecticut: 24-26 Sept. 1999; 11th Annual United Shoreline Area Spiritual Weekend; website: www.ctna.org

2) 7-9 Jan. 2000; 15th Annual Connecticut Regional Convention; website: www.ctna.org

Florida: 13-15 Aug. 1999; Dade County Tri-Area Unity Weekend Convention; Radisson Aventura Beach Marco Polo; hotel rsvns: (305) 932-2233, ext. 1274; to reach committee, call: (305) 633-1579 or (305) 443-1629

2) 17-19 Sept. 1999; 7th South Florida Regional Convention; to reach committee, call: (305) 296-9718 or (305) 294-3325

3) 22-24 Oct. 1999; 1st Mid-Coast Area Convention; to reach committee, call: (561) 272-5999

4) 29-31 Oct. 1999; 5th Uncoast Area Convention; Adam's Mark Hotel, Daytona Beach; hotel rsvns: (904) 254-8200; to reach committee, call: (352) 381-2903 or (352) 332-8281

5) 12-14 Nov. 1999; 3rd Annual South Florida Rainbow Weekend; website: www.rainbowweekend.org

6) 18-21 Nov. 1999; 18th Serenity in the Sun; Sheraton West Palm Beach; hotel rsvns: (800) 325-3535; to reach committee, call: (561) 630-6446 or (561) 640-0569

7) 18-20 Feb. 2000; 18th Annual Celebration of Unity Convention; Orlando; to reach committee, call: (407) 977-8623

8) 3-13 July 2000; NA Millennium Cruise to WCNA-28; sponsored by Northside Stroll Group of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Cruise leaves from Ft. Lauderdale; for more info, call: (800) 688-8033

Georgia: 16-18 July 1999; Piedmont Area's 17th Anniversary; to reach committee, email: rucks@mindspring.com

2) 22-25 July 1999; 10th Midtown Atlanta Convention; to reach committee, call: (404) 874-7610

Hawaii: 4-7 Nov. 1999; Hawaii Regional Convention; Maui; to reach committee, call: (808) 573-5835

Illinois: 1-4 July 1999; 11th Chicagoland Regional Convention; to reach committee, call: (773) 921-1644

2) 3-5 Sept. 1999; Chicago-Metro Unity Convention; Oakbrook; to reach committee, call: (708) 423-6099

3) 12-14 Nov. 1999; GIRCNA-3; Holiday Inn; hotel rsvns: (217) 529-7171; to reach committee, call: (217) 522-9906

4) February 2000, exact date TBA; 4th Joliet Area Convention; to reach committee, call: (708) 848-2211

Iowa: 2-4 July 1999; 16th Iowa Regional Convention; Ames; to reach committee, call: (515) 232-5758

Maine: 17-19 Sept. 1999; Southern Maine Area Convention, Alfred; to reach committee, call: (800) 974-0062

Maryland: 5-8 Aug. 1999; 3rd Baltimore Area Convention; Omni Inner Harbor Hotel; hotel rsvns: (410) 752-1100; to reach committee, call: (410) 483-4496

2) 5-7 Nov. 1999; 2nd Ocean Gateway Area Convention; Sheraton Fontainebleau Hotel, Ocean City; hotel rsvns: (800) 638-2100; to reach committee, call: (410) 483-4496

Massachusetts: 23-25 July 1999; 7th Western Massachusetts Area Convention; to reach committee, call: (413) 783-3307

Michigan: 1-4 July 1999; 15th Michigan Regional Convention; to reach committee, call: (248) 545-2179

2) 12-14 Nov. 1999; 8th Kalamazoo Area Convention; Clarion Hotel, Kalamazoo; hotel rsvns: (800) 750-3697; to reach committee, call: (616) 385-2822

Montana: 20-22 Aug. 1999; North West Montana Area Bitterroot Campout; to reach committee, call: (406) 752-6692

Nebraska: 8-10 Oct. 1999; 16th Nebraska Regional Convention; New World Inn, Columbus; hotel rsvns: (800) 433-1492; to reach committee, call: (402) 564-9322

Nevada: 16-18 July 1999; 8th California-Arizona-Nevada Area Convention; to reach committee, call: (520) 763-9621

2) 1-3 Oct. 1999; 7th Sierra Sage Regional Convention; Reno; to reach committee, call: (775) 746-9357

New Jersey: 2-4 July 1999; 3rd "Monkey Ain't No Joke" Convention; to reach committee, call: (973) 636-0513

2) 5-7 Nov. 1999; NENIAC "In The Spirit of Unity V" Convention; to reach committee, call: (732) 236-0204

New York: 3 July 1999; "Cruise to Recovery II" Regional Boat Ride; to reach committee, call: (718) 329-4718

2) 3-6 Sept. 1999; Buffalo Area 13th Recovery in the Woods; to reach committee, call: (716) 876-0288

4) 15-17 Oct. 1999; 4th Western New York Regional Convention; Fallside Resort, Niagara Falls; hotel rsvns: (800) 519-9911; to reach committee, call: (716) 863-9813

5) 19-21 Nov. 1999; 1st Eastern New York Regional Convention; to reach committee, call: (718) 527-5473

North Carolina: 1-5 July 1999; Carolina Regional Convention; to reach committee, call: (336) 273-4204

2) 30 July – 1 Aug. 1999; 6th New Hope Area Convention; Durham Marriott; hotel rsvns: (800) 228-9290; to reach committee, write: Box 25043, Durham, NC 27702

Ohio: 11 July 1999; Trumbull Area Picnic; to reach committee, call: (330) 399-3030

2) 13-15 Aug. 1999; Trumbull Area's Annual Twelve-Step Retreat; to reach committee, call: (330) 399-3030

3) 7-9 January 2000; Central Ohio Area Convention; Radisson North, Columbus; hotel rsvns: (614) 846-0300; to reach committee, call: (614) 338-1713

Oregon: 6-8 Aug. 1999; 7th Annual Newport NA Campout & Fish Fry; to reach committee, call: (541) 336-1834

2) 24-25 Sept. 1999; Pacific Cascade Regional H&I/PI Learning Days; to reach committee, email: sroby@jchw.com

Pennsylvania: 14 Aug. 1999; 6th Pocono Pigs on the Mountain, to reach committee, call: (570) 992-3317

2) 19-21 Nov. 1999; "Start to Live XVII" Tri-State Regional Convention; to reach committee, call: (412) 771-0240

3) 26-28 Nov. 1999; Greater Philadelphia Region's 10th Anniversary; to reach committee, call: (570) 287-0728

Puerto Rico: 13-15 Aug. 1999; 10th Puerto Rico Regional Convention; Hotel Hyatt, Dorado; hotel rsvns (Spanish): (800) 242-9333 or (English) (800) 233-1234; to reach committee, call: (787) 755-8156 or (787) 723-9699

South Carolina: 20-22 Aug. 1999; Central Carolina Area Convention; Adam's Mark Hotel, Columbia; hotel rsvns: (800) 444-2326; to reach committee, call: (803) 782-8657

South Dakota: 17-19 Sept. 1999; 2nd South Dakota Regional Convention; Elk Creek Resort, Piedmont; hotel rsvns: (800) 846-2267; to reach committee, call: (605) 334-6872

Tennessee: 24-28 Nov. 1999; 17th Volunteer Regional Convention; Sheraton Music Center Hotel, Nashville; to reach committee, call: (615) 742-1811

Texas: 27-29 Aug. 1999; Fort Worth Area Convention; Arlington Hilton; hotel rsvns: (800) 445-8667 or (817) 640-3322; to reach committee, call: (817) 625-1358

2) 24-26 Sept. 1999; Miracles and Solutions Group 6th Anniversary; Austin Chariot Resort Inn; mention "#45345" for hotel rsvns: (800) 432-9202; group: (512) 322-9234

3) 25-27 Feb. 2000; 16th Texarkana Area Convention; Four Points Sheraton, Texarkana; hotel rsvns: (903) 792-3222; to reach committee, call: (903) 792-4187 or (870) 773-4604

Utah: 23-25 July 1999; 16th Utah Regional Campvention; to reach committee, call: (801) 372-1815

Vermont: 29-31 Oct. 1999; 10th Champlain Valley Area Convention; Ramada Inn, South Burlington; hotel rsvns: (802) 658-0250; to reach committee, call: (802) 862-4516

Virginia: 6-8 Aug. 1999; 13th Almost Heaven Area Convention; to reach committee, call: (304) 264-2783

Washington: 9-11 July 1999; South West Washington Area's Freedom Retreat; to reach committee, call: (360) 696-8547

2) 15-17 Oct. 1999; 22nd Pacific Northwest Convention; Sheraton Tacoma; hotel rsvns: (253) 572-3200; to reach committee, call: (206) 382-0534

3) 5-6 Nov. 1999; North Puget Sound Area H&I Learning Days; to reach committee, call: (360) 293-9531

Wisconsin: 22-24 Oct. 1999; 16th Wisconsin State Convention; Yacht Club Resort, LaCrosse; hotel rsvns: (608) 785-9400; to reach committee, call: (608) 785-3255

Wyoming: 24-26 Sept. 1999; 8th Annual Convention of Unity; to reach committee, call: (307) 382-8308

Upcoming Magazine Themes and Deadlines

October 1999 NA Way

Deadline (Manuscripts in to WSO): Friday, 2 July 1999

Theme: An Atmosphere of Recovery

- How is an atmosphere of recovery promoted or maintained in your NA meetings?
- NA's Fifth Tradition and an atmosphere of recovery: are they connected?
- Do your service meetings have an atmosphere of recovery? What specific techniques do you employ to promote an atmosphere of recovery?
- Whose responsibility is it to create an atmosphere of recovery? The trusted servants'? Everyone's?
- How does your NA community deal with things that challenge NA's atmosphere of recovery? (violence or disruption of meetings and events; controversies about medication, clarity of the NA message, prejudice of any sort; or anything else)
- Where have all the old-timers gone? Is there something lacking in NA's atmosphere of recovery?
- Which is the best way to preserve the NA program for the future: strict adherence to the exact language of the Basic Text, or by making modifications that reflect current societal conditions?

January 2000 NA Way

Deadline (manuscripts in to WSO): Friday, 1 October 1999

Theme: Selfless Service

- Giving it away in order to keep it. What are we giving and what do we keep?
- Just because we're supposed to serve selflessly, do we have to put up with constant criticism from the people we serve? How does NA treat its trusted servants?
- Personal experience with ego, control, and manipulation; how have you grown in recovery in the area of doing service? How has doing service enhanced your recovery?
- I have lots more clean time than others in my area and at ASC they (a) ignore me and continuously reinvent the wheel, (b) worship me and let me make all the decisions. How do I stay involved in service without losing my mind?
- Our meetings don't have GSRs, H&I panels are unfilled, and phoneline slots are empty. How do we get people involved?
- Who's watching NA's money? How does your group or service committee protect Seventh Tradition funds?
- Electing the right people for the right service positions. What do members need to consider and how should it be handled?



World Unity Day Telephone Link

We invite you to join us *live* as Narcotics Anonymous celebrates World Unity Day on Saturday, 25 September 1999, in Hollywood, Florida, USA. The celebration will begin at 7:30pm Eastern Daylight Time (6:30pm Central, 5:30pm Mountain, 4:30pm Pacific). We will then join together to say the Serenity Prayer at 8pm Eastern Daylight Time.

Individual members, NA groups, area and regional functions, and institutions can join the celebration of World Unity Day on a two-hour, "listen only" telephone hook-up and hear the Unity Day main speaker. To join in the worldwide celebration, please complete the form at the bottom of the page and mail it to World Unity Day, in care of the World Service Office. The cost is \$50.00 for calls within the USA. All registrations **MUST BE RECEIVED** no later than 1 September 1999.

Upon receipt of your registration, we will send you a written confirmation. The confirmation letter will also outline details about the agenda for the call, explain how to phone in the day of the call, and inform you on what to do if you experience problems during the call.

If you have additional questions, feel free to call the World Unity Day helpline at (818) 773-9999 ext. 202. We hope you will be with us for this celebration of recovery.

Telephone Link Registration Form

Enclosed \$50.00US is: (check appropriate boxes and please print clearly)

☐ Cash ☐ US Check ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover Card ☐ Diners Club

Credit Card No. _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

The phone link is for a(n) ☐ Individual ☐ Group ☐ Area ☐ Region ☐ Institution

Your Name _____

Name of Group/Committee/Institution _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Country _____ Postal Code _____

Your Telephone Number () _____

Please fill out form(s) and mail to:

World Unity Day
c/o WSO

PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409

or Fax to (818) 700-0700

