

My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.

THE
NA
WAY

JULY 1983

N.A.

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



JULY
1983

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*Please mail all articles, subscriptions
input, questions and letters to:*

**The N.A. Way Magazine
World Service Office, Inc.
P.O. Box 622
Sun Valley, CA. 91352**

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

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LOVE

This word "Love" has gotten thrown around a lot since I got clean in N.A. The meaning has taken on a new value for me in recovery. This value is based on my experience as a recovering addict myself and the change in my feelings towards other N.A. members who I have been privileged to know.

Love used to be just a feeling I got when I felt close to someone in any way. It still means that to me, yet so much more. Love also means caring for someone even when they are behaving very, very badly. It means forgiveness. It means being willing to seek ways to make things better for someone else with no particular motive beyond the enjoyment of a newfound ability to do so which has to come from a power much greater than this dope fiend.

Alone, scared, confused, that's the way it used to be for me. Today, when I can, I reach out to another and do my puny best to help whenever and wherever possible. In the past, when things would temporarily go better for me, I would become consumed with my petty desires and wants. I would forget the good done to me by others and diminish that good with a sick mental slight of hand. In this way, the good done me by others was reduced to second place, right after the attention I had to give to the plans I was making for other good things to come. Of course, it wouldn't last too long. After a spell of going it alone, I would again be forced to admit my need for others.

Through surrender, belief, release, and amends, I have been freed of much of the pain of my days before N.A. I enjoy this freedom and realize that it goes on as long as I am clean and continue to do a little more than I think is necessary to protect and increase my recovery. I can honestly say though that the greatest blessing the program of N.A. has given

me beyond the peace inside is the gifts I find in other N.A. members.

They are my hope, my teachers, my dreams come true. Who would want to be on an "island of recovery"? It's the people who make it all real. Seeing others, like myself in so many ways, go through all they go through awakens me to the miracle. Their pain, their courage, their faith and never ending desire for a better life sweeten my darkest hours. Whatever I need comes to me through them. I enjoy many pleasant contacts with people who are not members of our Fellowship yet there are so many thoughts and feelings I cannot share with them. I try and sometimes experience a degree of spiritual communication. I never have with them the feeling of complete release and comfort made possible by the feelings shared by others like myself. Love seems a puny word for what I feel.

The love feeling comes on me when I'm in a meeting and a member shares their pain or joy. I feel it whenever someone's especially honest or considerate. This type of sharing demands my respect and obedience, and I cheerfully submit. The joy I feel at those times is almost painful. It is a private and wonderful thing. To be able to be a part of it increases my desire for recovery and hope for the future.

Some loves are sudden, short lived moments of great and memorable joy. For me, these come most often when I can feel that I have been instrumental in helping to change someone's outlook or spiritual condition for the better.

Other loves are long lasting, and for me come in association with some sort of N.A. services to addicts seeking recovery. In N.A. service a lot of things seem too unlikely to become possible, yet a nagging thought that they just might be keeps me going, working toward a greater good. Opportunities to advance or improve our methods of carrying the message present themselves, and are almost always easily accomplished. The flow of love and

spirit connects the individual items and a loving feeling provides guidance. When I feel that, I go ahead: When I don't, I wait and look for other ways to move ahead. I have to remember that miracles come in God's time, not mine. I allow myself to see the good as possible and believe the power of a loving God can make it happen. I am willing to do whatever I can to help. I stay in contact with others who believe the good to be possible. If the feeling of love is present, the good will eventually come to pass.

Long ago, before I joined N.A., someone active in the civil rights movement told me God was love, flowing between people. I never exactly knew what he meant until my eyes were opened through the Steps of N.A. My active addiction in the form of using chemicals or any other things I placed between myself and the feelings of spirit and love, kept me blind with fear, guilt, and worry. Today, I know what that man meant. There is an apparent need in people to be with others who are like themselves. In addition to that, I have a need to be useful. Most of all though, I feel that I need to have an outlet for the love within me. Without it, I feel trapped, useless, and bottled up. Life seems empty, like existing in a void. With an outlet for my love, life wakes up. My fears and preoccupations with self recede, and a sense of wonder and charm lets me see beyond my own little horizons.

Other types of love have come into the picture for me; The love I find in my relationship; The love I feel for my children; Love for my sponsor; Love for those who have gone before; Love for those I get to be close to; Love for those who are to come. In truth, for me there is no love to compare to the feeling I have when I get to help another N.A. member who is working their program and hanging on to one more day clean.

I remember when I literally couldn't talk for two years, not being able to come out of

the fog that chemicals had left me in. I remember being trapped in an existence without hope, with no chance of being able to change. The Program of Narcotics Anonymous has given me that hope. The extension of my love today is to give to others what N.A. has given me and this is the best love of all. I share this with you because I know it is a waste of a special gift for me to cover up my love so much, and yet I do. I want to share it because it has become so real to me. I believe that love has the power to increase existence.



WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO--PRAY.
MORE IMPORTANT--WHEN YOU THINK YOU KNOW EXACTLY
WHAT TO DO---PRAY.



HOW I RELAPSED

I went into a treatment center on my fifteenth birthday. I was scared, alone, full of guilt, and, at the time, thought I was ready to accept that I was powerless over my disease and my life was unmanageable.

I came out of treatment and my father started taking me to meetings. I met a lot of older people. I was young, cute, full of energy and enthusiasm. Immediately I started gaining a whole new family that took me under their wing, protected me, guided me, and cheered me on to my new found way of life. Getting clean was a very big step in my life. In time I became the new child superstar at those meetings. I was speaking, chairing meetings, helping others, and doing public information. I even started a meeting. As time went on I was becoming more popular. My ego was boosted greatly from all the attention. I started to forget about me and where I came from. I was giving so much away I neglected to leave some for myself. So long as I was helping others I didn't have to look at me. People were telling me how good I was doing and how proud they were of me for coming into the program so young, and recovering. As long as they thought I was doing so well I believed I must be. I no longer regularly looked at myself because these people thought I was doing so well, so why should I bother? I was no longer growing on this program. The only thing growing was my ego. I became what I thought these people wanted me to be, and lost sight of who I really was. I no longer worked the steps, or prayed, or talked to my sponsor. I stopped doing all the things they had suggested to do in order to recover.

After two years of clean time, my ego had been boosted so high, I no longer had to grow, talk or work in this program. I supposedly had two years of recovery and I didn't need to work

on me because, remember, I was doing so well and had come so far. I relapsed. I was so full of guilt and shame I wanted desperately for it all to be just a nightmare and I would wake up soon.

I had a rude awakening of how dishonest and manipulative I had been for two years. I realized I had a lot to learn about myself. The things I was doing to recover weren't necessarily wrong, but they weren't right for me. I proved that by relapsing. Through the grace of my God I made it for two years without any mood-altering chemicals yet no longer could I try to fit the square peg in a round hole.

It was time to get honest with myself and to have a little humility. N.A. had been in my hometown for a while. When I left treatment I started to go to more N.A. meetings than I had before. I found people my own age I could relate to who wouldn't enable me. People who would tell me what I needed to hear, not what I wanted to hear. I wasn't unique anymore. This was what I needed in order to grow.

I have a lot of gratitude for everything I've used as my recovery progressed. My life is better than it has ever been.

I learned a lot in my two years abstinence from drugs. Now, through the Fellowship of N.A., my Higher Power, and through working the Steps, I'm truly on the road of recovery. Caring and sharing the N.A. way, by the grace of my God and you people, a day at a time, I have a choice again.



OF ALL THE LIVES THAT I'VE LIVED, RECOVERY IS BY FAR THE NEAREST TO BEING MYSELF.



ON MISSING THE POINT

THE MESSAGE: We do recover, yes, WE ADICTS DO RECOVER FROM ADDICTION IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS. We can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use them, and find a new way to live. We abstain from all drugs just for today. The message is hope, and a promise of freedom. N.A. offers freedom from active addiction, the solution that eluded us for so long. Recovery from addiction, free for the surrender. All that is required to begin is the desire to stop using and admission of powerlessness over addiction. ADDICTION, THE DISEASE THAT CAUSED US TO USE DRUGS, IS WHAT WE ADMIT POWERLESSNESS OVER IN N.A.

THE MISCONCEPTION: A person with this disease who is addicted to one drug is addicted to all mood altering drugs. An addict is an addict. No drug is special or significant. Addiction is addiction. Addiction to alcohol is addiction to heroin. Addiction to marijuana is addiction to barbituates. Addiction to any drug for us equals addiction to all drugs, whether we have used them or not. Our lives have repeatedly proven this true. Therefore, there is no such thing as alcoholism, or sedativism, or cross-addiction, or dual-addiction. There is only ADDICTION.

THE SOLUTION: In N.A., we "treat" the cause of the problem---addiction, not the apparent symptoms --- drugs. We get and stay CLEAN so we may RECOVER from the disease of addiction. Our goal is not just simple abstinence, it is recovery.

....NEWCOMER...."I heard a person with quite a lot of time on the program share at a meeting last night, and they said that sobriety must come first. I didn't really understand what sobriety was, so I looked it up in a dictionary. Must I become somber and serious? I thought you told me I could have a good time clean. Can I work the Steps moderately? Can I

go to meetings moderately? I thought you said that I should work the Steps to the very best of my ability. I thought you suggested that I attend N.A. meetings every night. I thought..."

....N.A. SPONSOR.... "Hold on a minute, I believe he meant recovery. Some members, especially those with time, learned to say sobriety instead of recovery. I think that most of them mean the same thing as we do. Time abstinent does not equal recovery from addiction. One of the things I need to do in recovery is to open my mind and practice anonymity. I try not to cloud the message by placing special expectations or limitations on what I hear based on the messenger's time, sex, color, or my feelings about that particular person. This "God-thing" can work through any of us.

....NEWCOMER.... "That's all well and good, yet, this person said all he had to do was not pick up the first drink or drug, and go to meetings. He said that he lived by "easy does it". He said he worked the first Step, completely by admitting he was an Addict-Alcoholic. He said that he could do anything he wanted to do as long as he didn't drink or use drugs. That all sounded real good to me.

...N.A. SPONSOR.... "Argue for your limitations, and they are yours forever. My mind is not my best friend. My mind told me in the beginning that I was powerless over drugs, the specific drugs I used. I was powerless over MY addiction, and mine was different than yours. I identified myself according to the drugs that I used. I WAS IN DENIAL. The truth of N.A.'s First Step set me free. I surrendered to my powerlessness over ADDICTION, and the on-going unmanagability of my life. My whole life and thinking are no longer controlled by drugs, yet I am still powerless over the disease of addiction. This perception allows me to recover. Unlimited recovery can only come from unlimited surrender. Today, one of the strongest symptoms of my addiction is denial. Denial

tells me I am different from other members. Denial tells other members that they are different from me. Denial even leads some of us to limit our recovery to the most apparent symptoms of addiction. They identify themselves as being something other than just addicts. I know where they are at because I was there once, too. It's easy to do. This disease is very insidious. It tells me the symptoms are the problem. I'm grateful that N.A. has given me a program to "treat" the problem -- addiction, not just the symptom. You see, I never was powerless over the symptoms; I never was powerless over drugs. I was and am still powerless over what caused me to use the drugs: ADDICTION.

I'm clean today. To be clean means to be completely cleared or rid of something. I'm completely cleared and rid of drugs. To be clean means to be without limitation. I am no longer limited by drugs and I surrender to the First Step of N.A. By doing so, I'm no longer limited to abstinence. I'm powerless over addiction and therefore may recover from it.

Recovery means restoration or return to functioning or living condition. Personally I have no use for sobriety, and can only pray that those members who limit their recovery can find the truth that N.A. has given me...free for the surrender. Many members remain abstinent for months and even years without realizing this subtle yet monumental basic truth. Their programs of abstinence and our program of recovery tell me this: The N.A. Program can give us whatever we come here for. If all we want is abstinence, that's all we will get. If we want recovery from addiction we can recover. We may choose recovery or sobriety. We may surrender or continue to deny. The choice is ours."

....NEWCOMER.... "Do you mean all those people who introduce themselves as addict-alcoholics are still in denial? How could that be? Some of them have been clean for years."

....N.A. SPONSOR.... "Not necessarily, some of them just haven't learned about keeping it simple....if you listen you'll hear them talk about no longer having a drinking or drug problem yet still having a thinking problem, no longer having the alcohol or drugs, but still having the "ism". I think they mean the same thing as I do when I say I'm powerless over addiction. It's just that they didn't have a basic text or enough N.A. meetings to explain it to them simply so they could understand what the disease of addiction was. They learned it a different way and it's very difficult for us to learn from someone with less time. I'm grateful to you for asking me to explain. I understand my own disease better when you ask me to share about it. I am truly powerless over addiction: mine, and others.



MY SPIRIT... AS I UNDERSTAND HIM

Our Eleventh Step: "We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out".

I sometimes don't feel as close to my God as I should. I believe I'm at fault, not my Higher Power. It happens when I'm not in harmony with my God's will for me.

Today, I made a decision, a sincere commitment to make direct amends to my grandma. After I made that decision, I felt the strength within me to carry that out.

I feel it is my God's will for me to stay clean today. By working the Twelve Steps to the best of my ability, and by practicing those principles in all my affairs, I can do that. I believe that is the desire of my God -- if it were not, I would still be a suffering addict, making my way to the bitter end in jails, institutions or death.



THE N.A. GARDEN... A GARDEN OF LIFE

I can remember that moment like it was yesterday. I was on the ceiling looking down at a small group of people gathered around a body on the floor. They were talking to the person on the floor, yet there was no reply. The person's legs were jerking about uncontrollably. His face was drained of all life. The eyes were opened, yet they stared blank-faced off into space. Then I heard someone call my name, and it struck me that it was me stretched out on the floor. I tried to tell them I wasn't down there, I was up on the ceiling, yet they couldn't hear me. Then I realized that this was it. I was leaving, my pain was over. They picked up my body and carried it into the bedroom down the hall, yet I remained on the ceiling. I heard a girl crying but it was very distant, like an echo.

Something happened. I felt an energy pulling me into the bedroom. The next thing I knew, I was looking into a pair of eyes, and a stream of strength and calmness was flowing into my body from those eyes. I could still not move or speak, yet I was reunited with my body, and I knew I was going to live. For the first time in years, I felt a desire to live. The eyes belonged to my best friend. He'd been fighting a terminal illness for two years. Somehow he'd transferred his strength and desire to live into my being. I felt love and peace. Five days later my friend died. His disease overcame him, and he left this world. I grieved, yet deep inside I knew that what he had given me was still alive. I continued using for several months after that, yet something had changed. Each time I got high, I remembered that night on that ceiling.

One night, it occurred to me that my friend had suffered from a disease, and that he had done everything he could to stay alive. I realized I too had a disease, and I was slowly

dying from it. In fact, I should have been dead, but for the grace of my God, and my friend's gift. I prayed for the first time that night. I asked my God to help me to stop killing myself, to show me a way out of my living hell. Three weeks later I discovered N.A. That small seed of desire my friend had planted broke through the surface of life in that first meeting, and began to develop roots in the Fellowship of N.A. I shared my grief over the loss of my friend in those first few meetings, and felt a healing and understanding empathy throughout my being. Most of all, I felt love, and an awareness of life all around me. I wasn't breaking through the surface of life alone! I was one of many flowers in this garden of life. It is important for me to remember though that I can only be instrumental in this way by remaining in the garden and growing within this Fellowship. When another seed makes it into the garden, then I can help it to find some roots, and allow the love and empathy of our meetings and the Steps to feed it while it grows into a beautiful flower. Helping in this way is the essence of life for me. Today, I have a purpose in my life, and I belong in our beautiful garden.



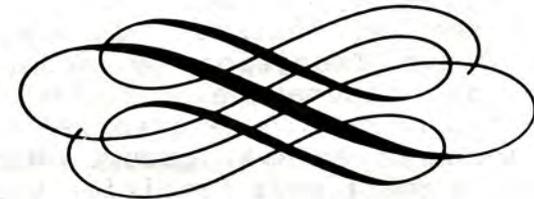
GRATITUDE

Today is one of those days in which gratitude comes very easily. It's funny how my Higher Power puts people and situations in my path to make me appreciate the little things. I need to have gratitude for the small often unnoticed gifts that my God sends my way, for when I don't, I find it hard to feel good about the big, obvious miracles.

For me, gratitude begins with being grateful for another day clean. If nothing else seems to go right in a day, as long as I didn't pick up, I know that it was a day well lived.

Next, I take a look at how I've dealt with different situations that came up in the day. Where did my surrender come in? How well did I allow my God to work in my life? What character defects of mine were very noticeable in my dealings with others today? Did I let them run their course to the point where they injured someone else or myself? If so, did I admit my wrong and make amends? Did I take the time to pray and meditate today? Did I reach out to another recovering addict and share my experience with them? Asking myself these questions at different points along my day, I'm often given moments of gratitude when I realize I've done one, a couple, or all of these things today. Comparing myself to myself, I realize it wasn't too long ago I wouldn't have bothered doing any of these maintenance exercises. Today, I am able to live a full, active life. I am a productive member of society. I feel "human" and my heart beats in step with the rest of humanity. I am not unique. I'm not special. I am ALIVE!!! This is only possible through surrendering my will to that of a power greater than myself, and asking my God to lead me through the day. When I do this sincerely, my day is filled with many little miracles through which my God gives me a deep felt gratitude for being alive.

I learned to ask myself all of the questions I mentioned above in our newly approved pamphlet, "Living the Program". I call it my Tenth Step Inventory Guide. It's a very simple, uncomplicated exercise which takes about ten minutes of my time. The result I've found in using it on a daily basis is twenty-four hours of quality recovery from the disease of addiction. When I don't use it, I may have done all of the things mentioned above, yet, I lose out on the gratitude and awareness of realizing I'm doing the right thing. Or worse, I'll begin to forget to do those things, and slowly lapse into spiritual complacency. I quit seeing the little miracles which make up the day, work becomes a hassle, people get in my way, and I become an addict alone in bad company, real quick. Recovery for me is something which is just for today. It's my choice to either make it special or just another day. Today was special. My gratitude speaks.



RECOVERY IS LIKE A KISS...
IN ORDER TO GET ANY GOOD OUT OF IT YOU HAVE TO
GIVE IT AWAY.

TRADITIONS — A MUST

I love N.A. dearly for it saved me from dying and showed me a new way of life. My gratitude speaks when I share my experience, strength and hope with others.,

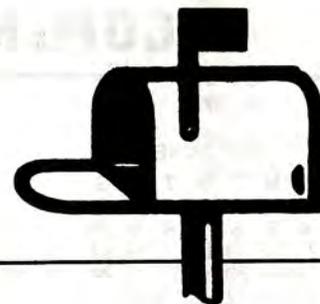
One night, while sharing in a meeting, I was disturbed because of Traditions being broken. Traditions are very important for the group because without them, the group dies or doesn't provide a suitable atmosphere for recovery.

Being a recovering addict, I try to do things my way. The N.A. Program suggests life-saving steps to me which I can work and live, or not work and choose to die. There are no musts for the individual in this Program, but I feel there are musts for the group. Through my service work, I have a better understanding of the importance of the Traditions and why they are a must for the groups.

I have seen groups' opinions contradict the Traditions but I have never seen an informed group conscience contradict the Traditions. Seeing and reading "outside" literature violates our Sixth Tradition by endorsing the source of that literature. I don't believe that endorsing an outside enterprise can be the true conscience of an N.A. group. Many groups have been torn apart over Tradition violations.

The Twelve Traditions allow us to more effectively carry our message of Recovery.

Letters from Our Readers . . .



"IF I DON'T GIVE IT AWAY...

Every time I can get my hands on an "N.A. WAY," I buy it. I have every issue and I expect the next issue to come out. A meeting in print, it keeps me from being, "an addict alone..." I want this magazine to continue carrying the message of.... "Recovery from addiction, the N.A. Way". I do get a clear message from it.

I am responsible for my recovery by participation. In expectation of the next issue, and continuation of "The N.A. WAY, here is an article for the magazine. Maybe I can keep it, and remain NEVER ALONE.

Editorial Note:

Due to numerous delays and other events, the May and June issues were mailed together in a bulk postage mailing. You should have now received your issues. If you are reading this note in anything other than your July issue, please let us know. We want to serve you in the best way possible. It is taking time. Please, bear with us as well. We encourage you all to continue writing and to express your concerns. **IMPORTANT: IF YOU ARE MOVING, OR HAVE RECENTLY MOVED, PLEASE LET US KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. YOUR MAGAZINE WILL BE HELD UP IN THE MAIL IF YOU DON'T...**

Love in Service,
Editorial Staff

Please mail all articles,
subscriptions, input, ideas
questions and letters to...



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W.S.O., Inc.
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COMIN' UP

SEPTEMBER

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SEPTEMBER

Sept. 1 - 4, N.A. World Convention,
New York City, WCNA - 13, P.O. Box 217,
Jackson Heights, NY 11372.
"THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM"

Sept. 23 - 25, Charleston, S.C. Annual
Serenity Festival, P.O. Box 306
Green Pond, S.C., 29446
"1st ANNUAL SERENITY
FESTIVAL"

OCTOBER

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OCTOBER

Oct. 15 - 17, Buena Park, CA. 5th So. CA
Convention. Convention Committee of
N.A., P.O. Box 1944, Redondo Beach, CA
90278
"UNITY OF '83"

Oct. 21 - 23, Pittsburgh, PA 1st Tri-State
Regional Convention, Parkway Center,
Box 25347, Pittsburgh, PA 15242
"START TO LIVE"

Oct. 21 - 23, Cheaha St. Park, Talladega
National Forrest, P.O. Box 11332,
Montgomery, AL 36111
"SURRENDER IN THE MOUNTAINS
'83"

NOVEMBER

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NOVEMBER

Nov. 24 - 27, Nashville, TN Volunteer -
Tennessee Region, Convention '83, P.O.
Box 158326, Nashville, TN 37215
"LIVING THRU GIVING"

JANUARY

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JANUARY '84

Jan. 6 - 8, Hampton, VA 2nd Virginia
Convention, P.O. Box 2131 Newport
News, VA 23602
"A NEW BEGINNING"

If we missed you, we're sorry,
but if we aren't aware of your func-
tions, we can't help the Fellow-
ship become aware. Due to space
limitations, we must limit this
listing to larger events of Regions,
Areas, and States. Sorry, one-day
events cannot be listed here.
Please send your announcements of
group parties, etc. to the nearest
local newsletter.

If you wish to announce an
event that's happening please
provide as much information as you
see listed, or more. Flyers con-
taining the above information are
welcome. These announcements are
made purely for the convenience of
the Fellowship at the request of
our readers. We're here to serve
you. Please make an attempt to
provide your information at least
one month prior to the event so
that we can be sure to list it. The
sooner you supply the information,
the better.

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