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The New/Old NAWay

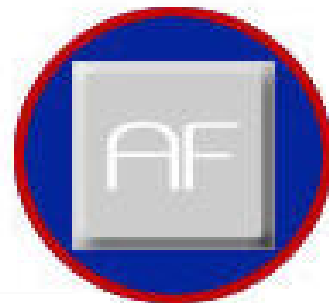
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Mission

Alternate Service Information Structure

for Narcotics Anonymous is a point of collection for the informed group conscience of N.A. While we believe an attempt to reform N.A. service from within the existing structure might be beneficial, what we believe to be a more effective strategy is to provide a steady, reliable, non-political, and non-combative alternative for directly responsible service.

What happened and my estimate of why...

Let's say it started with the "vote of confidence". Some will argue that much went before and I don't really disagree, yet this idea was the confusion that began our acceptance of the structure as government rather than service. The party line went: "... when you can see the big picture, when you learn what we know in world service your idea of what is good for your local fellowship will change - so give your representatives a 'vote of confidence' to speak for and vote in accordance to what would be your

group conscience, if you all knew what we know, viewed the big picture and saw it our way (which of course is the right way for greater NA).

The "vote of confidence" was accepted; group conscience was undermined, no information necessary to base a decision upon needed to be distributed and government began and service pretty much ended.

Next in line was the change from information sharing to propaganda dissemination. The Fellowship Report was started as a genuine method to enhance the quality of group conscience and encourage participation by folks who were accustomed to open participatory service committees. When the know-betters took power and had control of communication the fellowship report (as well as all other world service communication) gradually became a vehicle to shape fellowship opinion to resemble their isolated narrow view. They found excellent writers and used common familiar language just as any good propaganda experts do and covered many of the objections they could anticipate. They were successful – open discussion ended. The party line became NA law. Any glimpse of a loving ultimate authority in our decision making disappeared.

Pivotal service committees and sub-committees and ad-hoc committees were successfully and systematically staffed with hand-picked members of the like-thinking know-betters primarily guided by one sponsorship family and rounded out with approval seeking yes-people. The "Concepts" came from this sort of assembly and were thrust upon the fellowship through 'vote of confidence', published propaganda support and argument, resulting in disregard and eventually disdain for the traditions. Unity is now only compliance, group conscience has disappeared, autonomy no longer exists, our message is garbled with dual diagnosis, there is no requirement for membership, professional writers for hire have abolished self-support, we finance outside enterprise through discounts in literature prices, and we have powerful government control rather than direct responsibility.

Now here's the response to the questions asked by Baltimore ... this response is SPIN – pure and simple ... by a very clever bureaucrat. Is this what we really want? Is this in any way Service?

How long will we stand for it?



Freedom Without Limitations

I was reading my online Gray Book this evening and discovered one of the most sacred gifts the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous offers us today, “freedom to live without the limitations of past ways”. I read those words in Step 7 and it hit me like a brick.

I was reminded that I have a choice today, I have Steps to work, and I have a God of my understanding, a sponsor and some dear friends in NA who love me in spite of me. I am encouraged by these folks to practice principles, to let go of my old ways and to change, not for the sake of change but for the willingness to become that person I have always dreamed about being.

In the past I have struggled with many insecurities, be it fear, doubt, low self-esteem, you name it. Through this program I became willing to change. I prayed and asked God to remove these shortcomings; to reveal to me those things which were holding me back. I recently got out my dictionary and looked up insecurity...a state of mind characterized by self-doubt and vulnerability. Most of what has held me back has been the very state of my mind period. Today, I have changed the state of my mind. I have re-trained my thinking and as a result I do not find myself loathing and feeling as though no one really understands me. You see, only I limit myself...I must take responsibility for my own recovery. So when I have that fight with a family member or a disagreement with my significant other, I have to ask myself what is my part in this and I can I act differently next time. Its no longer about who did what to me, it's about what can I do to change me period.

Some other words from that same chapter in the Gray Book...“*We are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection.*” I am there! I feel adequate today, and while I do strive to make a difference in my life and the life of other addicts, I know that I am not perfect and that I will have my days. Today, I am free to use the knowledge of this program, free of the limitations of my past. What a gift!

Forever Grateful

On Writing

Doing my part to help carry our message of recovery from addiction has been part of my life since I first discovered that I had to give it away to keep it. My god has given me a talent to express myself in writing. I wasn't humble enough at first to realize that I could write. I thought that my talents were part of me. How arrogant. I tried repeatedly to write on my own. My words came out jumbled, unintelligible. Nobody seemed to be able to understand me. My ego told me that I was so very superior that I was destined to be misunderstood. So...I quit writing. I began talking very slowly, in simplistic language flavored with slang, in a false attempt to be humble. Occasionally, however, when I felt very strong about something, a flood of words poured out of me uncontrollably. It seemed that something took hold of my mind and tongue.

The first several times I shared my story were disastrous. I practiced. It all came out so phony.

Finally, I began to surrender. At meetings, I asked my Higher Power to help me before I shared. Again when I felt strongly about what I was sharing on, something took hold of me and my words weren't my own. In the very beginning in my area I was really involved. Eventually, I devoted most of my time to work and money, and increasingly less to service and recovery. I called that balance. For some time I'd heard about "the Book," and how a group of people were writing it. I'd heard that my story was part of it. I'd harassed others to write, but refused to write myself. I was afraid. I had written other things: theoretical pieces, inspired prayers, reports, etc. and sent them in, but never my own story. On the plane to my first literature conference my conscience prodded me into my first honest sharing in the written form. It read real phony. I thought to myself, "I can't write," and wondered why I was going there.

The first day of that conference something happened to me. We went around the table in meeting fashion, introduction ourselves and sharing what we hoped to accomplish during the conference. Each person introduced themselves differently. Some were addict-alcoholics, some were dual addicts, some poly-addicts, others were cross-addicts, chemical dependants, etc. I was SHOCKED. Who were these people? I thought that I was here to compile and write a DEFINITIVE basic text for Narcotics Anonymous. How could WE write that, when we didn't even know who we were? The first step of NA had allowed me to abstain and begin to recovery. I'd almost died from an incomplete surrender. The tired old LIE of powerlessness over substances had very nearly killed me. My recovery, even my very cleanliness was based on the TRUTH that I had heard only in NA—that I am powerless over the addiction—the disease. This reality had allowed me to surrender, to stop using and begin to recover. These people and their chemical identities threatened my recovery, especially considering that they were going to write the book defining the Narcotics Anonymous program. As each of them shared their noble goals from what I considered a position of incomplete surrender, and therefore incomplete recovery. I became increasingly discourage and increasingly angry. Much of what they hoped to accomplish was just the same as what I hoped to see done—basically to have a book of and for NA as soon as possible. Somehow I was given the ability to see through their words to the meaning behind them.

As it came my turn to share, a sense of acceptance and tolerance had come over me. The words poured out of me uncontrollably. My anger was there, my fears of personal and group failure were there, but somehow a feeling of acceptance and hope that was not my own was there too. I shared that I didn't see how WE were going to write something definitive when WE didn't even know who WE were, or at least couldn't seem to express that consistently in words. I shared what I felt about NA. How our First Step had saved my life, and how strongly I felt about sharing what we had. It looked impossible to me. It was going to take a miracle. I was willing to help but I couldn't write. How could WE ever write a book? As I was sharing, the answer came to me. I didn't know it was the answer at that time, it just seemed like a nagging thought—the thought said "Pray." I'm not sure how those people took me. It doesn't matter. I learned, I prayed, we prayed, and the miracle happened. Many of us felt as I did, that we couldn't write, but



each of us felt very strongly about NA. At the end of the conference nearly everyone was simply an addict. Most of us were clean not sober. Most of us had a much better understanding of NA than before we came. Most of us found out that we could write, after we prayed. I found out that I can only keep by sharing.

Words are important to me. My basic, heartfelt understanding of two words has given me new life. Those words are addiction and recovery. Word usage, diction, is also important to me: I want to be happy, joyous, and free. I don't want sobriety, I want recovery from addiction. Narcotics Anonymous is the only Program/Fellowship in the world that offers freedom from addiction with the "right" words. My God has allowed me to be part of that, and I'm so very grateful. Today, I'm not so arrogant as I once was. I write. I know that my God supplies the words, and the talent to express them.

Surrender / and vision for our services

I'm very grateful to be clean and have a decent perspective of what life could be like. I'm glad to have found NA and really feel that here on the front line of life, after over 20 years, that I can really make a difference and help people and arrest the disease that I have - that we have. We are changing history one life at a time, and it's a powerful place to be.

I really love NA and its history. I had heard back in the early 90's (1992?) that there was a group in California that was having NA events where all the speakers had over 20 years clean. A friend gave me recordings. Being from the east coast, we didn't have hardly any body with over 20 years clean that I knew of. I knew a couple people that I heard speak at conventions and that was it.

In 2004 I'd been clean 17 years, my area's special events chairperson had stepped down. Our events had lost money on each one for the year. We hadn't had any events that anyone wanted to attend. Over here, I don't think the mind set is to MAKE money, but it's definitely not to LOSE money. As new chair person, I moved the committee meetings, and at the first meeting we decided to have our own dinosaur days speaker event. We passed out flyers to the region, and at the closest regional convention. I think about 250 people showed up. It was the hottest May 22 for a long time and I think we paid the rent on the facility on the sale of bottled water. We started a nice tradition of having a speaker event where the speakers have a proven record of recovery - in NA. Our 7th annual will be held on May 8, 2010. This is mostly a side bar to the point of this story.

I really love NA and its history. A friend of mine gave me a box of tapes where all the tapes were about NA history. I think one tape was titled NA comes of age and the speaker was Jimmy K and it was dated 1974. Maybe by 1974, there was confidence that it wasn't going to fold again. I was a little kid and was not thinking about addiction or recovery. My view point suggests that having a theoretical service structure and a book about recovery from addiction is when we came of age. I think seeing large conventions convinced me that it wasn't just a few small groups trying to stay clean, like I saw on a regular basis, but we were a small part of something much larger.

In 2005 or maybe 2006 I joined Myspace. I got recruited to join "Decades Clean" group. The originator said he needed it so he could be reunited with his NA friends he has met along the way,

because he lost his memory after being in a coma and a near death motorcycle accident. I believe he may have been run down by a retired police officer. I joined the group and after being in the group, the idea for a key tag that says "Clean and Serene for Decades" was born. I'm not sure who thought of it. I know I drafted a concept key tag on the computer. Hopefully I am not giving you too much back ground information.

I paid a lot of attention when Grateful Dave was sued by WSO over the basic text he was printing. I received an overnight package from WSO's attorney, as I was a registered group officer. I knew Dave. I liked him. I appreciated his passion for carrying the message. If you are passionate about helping the addict who still suffers, we are brothers for life, even if you screw me over, even if you are wrong. That's how I feel about that passion. I have great respect for those who are passionate about NA. Even when people are tearing each other down. Well anyway, as a result of the court battle, the rules for using the NA logo were born. The group is the owner of the 12 steps and 12 traditions of NA, the logos, and the literature. They trust WSO, Inc to protect it. My homegroup voted on this in the early 1990's. I believe that the NAWs thinks they are the owner, as their name is listed on the copyright. This is a complicated matter and its important to understand it.

OK so in 2008, as a result of Day of the Dinosaurs, Decades Clean, conversations with my space originator, and my understanding of the FIPT, we decided at Clean and Serene Dreamers group in Maryland to make "Clean and Serene for Decades" keytags. We're a registered NA group, following the 12 steps and 12 traditions of NA. It stirred up some local controversy, as members who didn't understand the trust, and what is literature were concerned about whether it was ok, and accountability for money matters. I was surprised to be contacted by NAWs (who think they hold the responsibility and power to protect NA trademarks) telling me not to sell them. I told them that they were group produced, per the FIPT. They told me that they viewed it as literature. I told them that we viewed it as use of the NA logo, which we own, and that we don't view it as literature, and neither does the trust. They asked me to please not distribute them beyond the group.

If you understand the trust what I am saying is that they were asking us to not do something that the trust says is ok. I encourage everyone to get an understanding of what it says. I had to avert the arguments by asking questions like "what is the process to get approval for a group to use the na logo on a t-shirt?" The answer is that there isn't, because the group already is NA and already has permission to use the NA logo. Yes, I know the literature committee sells the key tags, but that doesn't make them literature. They are just NA items, sold by the NA store. We don't have any intellectual property tied up in the key tags, just the logo. There is no trade mark associated with "Clean and Serene for..." and at this point, it's too late for that. We did not submit a motion to have them approved through the CAR. Some one else saw them and loved them. That's not what this article is about.



One main problem with NA service is that everyone says "Well, what does NAWs say?" We used to say NA was an inverted pyramid with the group at the top. Tradition 2 says that the ultimate authority is a loving God as shown through our group conscience. But then everyone says "well what does NAWs say." Is NAWs God? One problem is we have a service board or committee who is supposed to be directly responsible to those it

serves and its running the show. It leads the fellowship around by the nose with recommendations. Who cares about those recommendations! We have the internet and vision for NA services. We have passion to help the sick and suffering. Yes, all the good ideas that have come through the fellowship have been gobbled up by World Services and administered to the Fellowship - the key tags, the chips, the reading cards, etc etc.. Probably even the purple decades key tags will be.

Here's the point of the article. We can carry the message better if we take back those things that don't need to be centralized. I suggested to my friend Chris that we should print our white keytags locally with the local hot line number on it. Just For Today / Welcome Free State Region 1-800-317-3222. Maybe the addict would make that one last call before they pick up. I've heard the story about Larry North suggesting that we hit the WSO in the purse strings - that each basic text sold for \$1 is \$8.80 that they don't get at NAWS. I'm not motivated by a resentment, or with an idea for attack. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction and all that jazz. Chris said he thought that all the keytags should be produced locally with their hot line number stamped on the key tag. After having printed a few key tags with my group, I can see that we could do it better & cheaper. Everything that occurs in the course of N.A. service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. (That should sound familiar.)

I think there are consequences we face and have faced as a result of being diverted from our primary purpose - by having corporate mentality at our primary service center. Peoples lives are at stake. They have always been at stake. I like the idea of going back in time and making the basic text \$4 as was promised at the WSC in 1984. NA would be a much different place. We can only theorize what the world would be like if we made the rules, or broke all the rules and just followed Traditions. Is there a limit to the money that can be made off the addict who still suffers? What if we strive to help them all, instead of thinking about the margins? What if we had a vision for NA service and followed it with action?

I really love NA and it's history. I'm very grateful to be clean and have a decent perspective of what life could be like. Having a history doesn't ensure a future. There is a battle going on here. We must work together as a group to ensure that in a storm our ship does not sink and our members do not perish. I just wanted to share about how I have been troubled about NAWS pushing its weight around - about being confronted by NAWS while following the rules of the FIPT. I wanted to share my vision about how we could serve the fellowship and the members yet to come and how we could de-centralize some of these services.

Visit our website at www.anonymi.info

Dedicated to [true trusted service](#) for the NA Member, Group or committee who wants to effectively carry the NA message of total abstinence from all drugs and Recovery from Addiction to the addict who still suffers. We will be steady, reliable, non-political, and non-combative. We are guided by the [12 Traditions](#) of NA and [Directly responsible](#) to those NA Groups we serve.

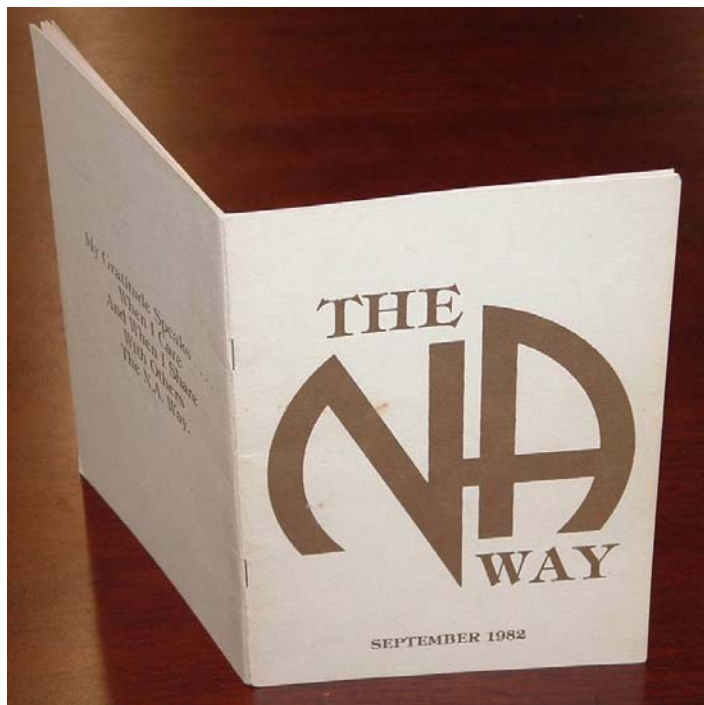
Note: We are currently updating our website and will be posting past issues of The New/Old NA Way!

Your Fellowship Magazine

*Share...
and be shared with...*

*Like it was when NA was new and young and
life-or-death intense:*

*You matter to us so we will tell you the truth as we know it
with nothing held back.*



“...so that no addict seeking recovery need ever die...”

We publish your input—the opinions presented are not necessarily those of the New/Old NA Way or Anonymi Foundation.