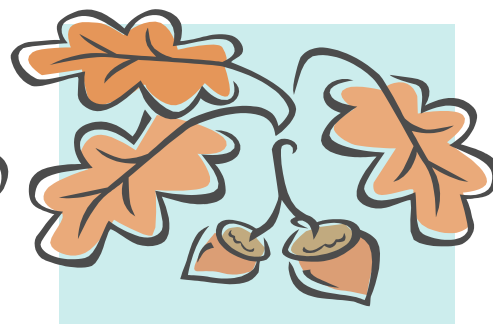
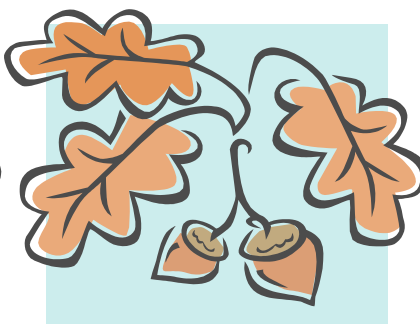
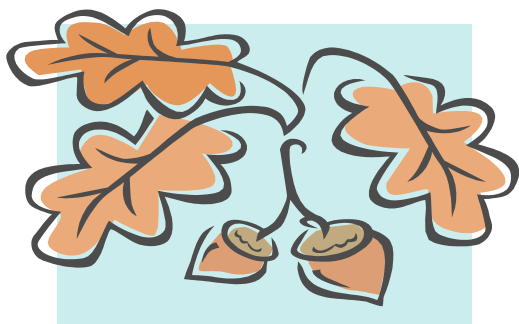




Staying Clean on the Outside from IP #23

Many of us first heard the Narcotics Anonymous message of recovery while in a hospital or institution of some kind. Transition from such places to the outside world is not easy under any circumstances. This is especially true when we are challenged with the changes which recovery brings. For many of us, early recovery was difficult. Facing the prospect of life without drugs can be very frightening. But those of us who made it through the early days found a life worth living.

This pamphlet is offered as a message of hope to those now in a hospital or institution that you, too, can recover and live freely. Many of us have been where you are today. We have tried other ways, and many of us relapsed, some never to have another chance at recovery. We have written this pamphlet to share with you what we have found that works.

If you are able to go to meetings while you are in a hospital or institution, you can start developing good habits now. Come early and stay late at the meetings. Start, as soon as possible, to establish contacts with recovering addicts. If there are NA members from other groups attending your meetings, ask for their phone numbers and use them. Using these phone numbers will feel strange at first, even silly. But, given that isolation is at the core of the disease of addiction, that first phone call is a big stride forward. It isn't necessary to wait for a major problem to develop before calling someone in NA. Most members are more than willing to help in any way they can. This is also a good time to arrange for an NA member to meet you upon your release. If you already know some of the people you will be seeing at meetings when you are released, it will help you feel a part of the NA Fellowship. We cannot afford to be or feel alienated.

Staying clean on the outside means taking action. When you get out, go to a meeting the first day of your release. It is important to establish the habit of regular attendance. The confusion and excitement of "just getting out" has lulled some of us into thinking of taking a vacation from our responsibilities before settling down to the business of day-to-day living. This kind of rationalization has led many of us back to using. Addiction is a disease which takes no time off in its progression. If it is not arrested, it only becomes worse. What we do for our recovery today does not ensure our recovery tomorrow. It is a mistake to assume that the good

intention of getting around to NA after a while will be sufficient. We must back up our intentions with action, the earlier the better.

If you will be living in a different town after your release, ask the NA members for a meeting list and the NA helpline number for your new area. They will be able to help you get in touch with NA groups and members where you will be living.

You can also get information about meetings all over the world by writing to:

World Service Office
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409 USA

Sponsorship is a vital part of the NA program of recovery. It is one of the main channels through which newcomers can take advantage of the experience of NA members who are living the program. Sponsors can combine genuine concern for our well-being and a shared experience of addiction with solid knowledge of recovery in NA. We have found it works best to find a sponsor of your own sex. Choose a sponsor, even a temporary sponsor, as soon as possible. A sponsor helps you work through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. A sponsor can also introduce you to other NA members, take you to meetings, and help you to get more comfortable in recovery. Our pamphlet, *Sponsorship*, contains additional information on the subject.

If we are to receive the benefits of the NA Program, we must work the Twelve Steps. Along with regular meeting attendance, the steps are basic to our program of recovery from addiction. We have found that working the steps in order and continuously reworking them keeps us from relapsing into active addiction and the misery that it brings.

There is a variety of NA recovery literature available. The Little White Booklet and our Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*, contain principles of recovery in our fellowship. Familiarize yourself with the program through our literature. Reading about recovery is a very important part of our program, especially when a meeting or another NA member might not be available.

Staying Clean on the Outside (cont.)

Many of us have found that reading NA literature on a daily basis has helped us maintain a positive attitude and has kept our focus on recovery.

When you begin going to meetings, get involved with the groups you attend. Emptying ashtrays (if smoking is allowed), helping set up, making coffee, cleaning up after the meeting—all these tasks need to be done for the group to function. Let people know you are willing to help, and become a part of your group. Taking on such responsibilities is a necessary part of recovery and helps to counteract the feelings of alienation that can creep up on us. Such commitments, however small they may appear, may help ensure attendance at meetings when the *desire* to attend lags behind the *need* to attend.

It is never too early to establish a personal program of daily action. Taking daily action is our way of taking responsibility for our recovery. Instead of picking up that first drug, we do the following:

- ☐ Don't use, no matter what
- ☐ Go to an NA meeting
- ☐ Ask your Higher Power to keep you clean today
- ☐ Call your sponsor
- ☐ Read NA literature
- ☐ Talk to other recovering addicts
- ☐ Work the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

We've discussed some of the things to do to stay clean; we should also discuss some things to avoid. In NA meetings,

we often hear that we must change our old way of living. This means that we don't use drugs, no matter what! We have also found that we cannot afford to frequent bars and clubs or associate with people who use drugs. When we allow ourselves to hang around old acquaintances and places, we are setting ourselves up for relapse. When it comes to the disease of addiction, we are powerless. These people and these places never helped us stay clean before. It would be foolish to think things will be different now.

For an addict, there is no substitute for the fellowship of others actively engaged in recovery. It is important to give ourselves a break and give our recovery a chance. There are many new friends waiting for us in Narcotics Anonymous, and a new world of experiences lies ahead. Some of us had to adjust our expectations of a completely different world once we were released. Narcotics Anonymous cannot miraculously change the world around us. It does offer us hope, freedom, and a way to live differently in the world by changing ourselves. We may find some situations which are no different than before but, through the program of Narcotics Anonymous, we can change the way we respond to them. Changing ourselves does change our lives. We want you to know that you are welcome in Narcotics Anonymous. NA has helped hundreds of thousands of addicts to live clean, to accept life on its own terms, and to develop a life that is truly worth living.



This is what I get in return when I work the steps T

- 1. Hope instead of desperation.
- 2. Faith instead of despair.
- 3. Courage instead of fear.
- 4. Peace of mind instead of confusion.
- 5. Self-respect instead of self-contempt.
- 6. Self-confidence instead of helplessness.
- 7. The respect of others instead of their pity and contempt.
- 8. A clean conscience instead of a sense of guilt.
- 9. Real friendship instead of loneliness.
- 10. A clean pattern of life instead of a purposeless existence.
- 11. The love and understanding of our families instead of their doubts and fears.
- 12. The freedom of a happy life instead of the bondage of Addiction.

The Twelve Rights in Recovery

- 1. You have a right to a higher power of your own understanding.
- 2. You have a right to work the steps in your own way.
- 3. You have a right to work at your own pace.
- 4. You have a right to your own opinions.
- 5. You cannot say anything wrong in a meeting. You have a right to self-expression.
- 6. You have a right to be free from coercion in any form.
- 7. You have a right to pick any sponsor you think will further your recovery.
- 8. You have a right to attend or join any other fellowship, church, society, or organization.
- 9. You have a right to attend any meeting you want as often as you choose.
- 10. You are a member when you say you are. Your right to your place in recovery is always equal to any other members.
- 11. You have the right to make mistakes.
- 12. You have the right to come back after a relapse without recrimination.

Note from the Newsletter Subcommittee

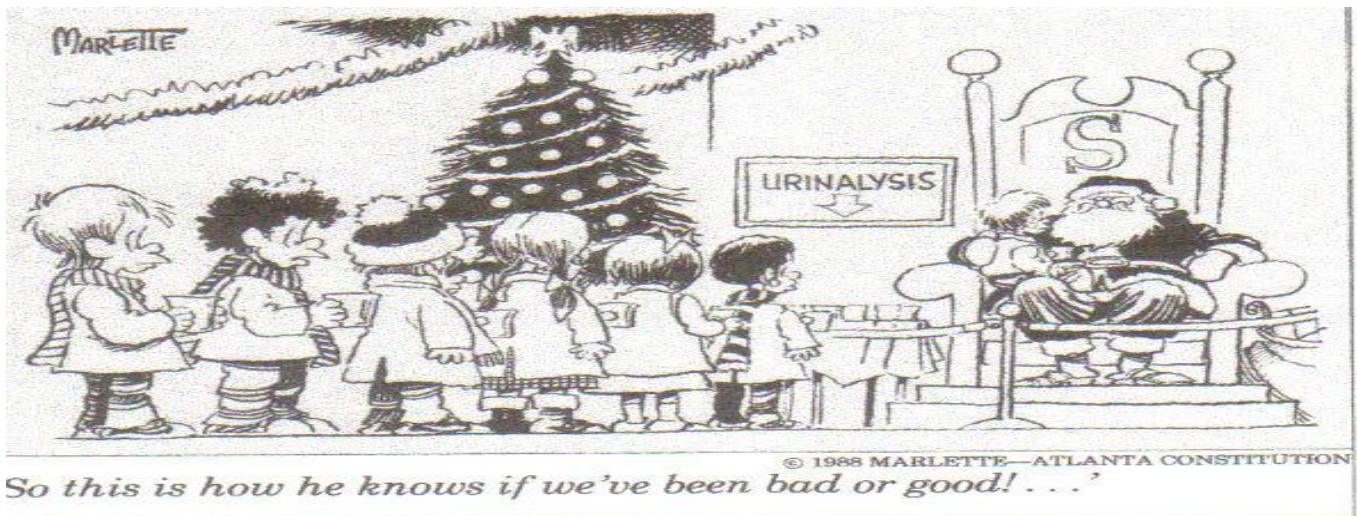
The past couple of months we have held a contest for renaming the newsletter. Hopefully all NA members were informed of this through their groups. You will notice the new name on the heading of the next newsletter. It was chosen by the subcommittee with all ideas coming from recovering addicts. The winner will receive an NA book of their choosing up to a \$20.00 value. We hope you like the change and continue to read and submit your letters, ideas, poems etc... so this newsletter does not become a thing of the past.

Drug-Free Holiday Tips:

- Plan a drug-free holiday party with your child so children learn that they can have fun without drugs. Send out invitations with drug-free messages on them, and make sure the guests know that yours will be a substance-free event.
- For your holiday meal, let your child help you prepare and serve traditional drinks without alcohol. You can make nonalcoholic cider, eggnog, or punch. [Look for recipes for nonalcoholic beverages like the ones found in these party planning tips.](http://store.samhsa.gov/product/PHD833) <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/PHD833>
- Make sure your holiday festivities involve lots of delicious—and drug free—food, which your child can help you make.
- If your older child is going to a holiday event, call ahead to make sure that the event will be drug free. Check in with the party planners to see what measures are in place to keep drugs out.

If you have trouble controlling your own substance use during the holidays, you should seek help.

Explain to your potential gift-givers why you do not wish to receive holiday gifts of wine or other types of drugs. This sets an example for your child. You are showing your child how to enjoy a safe, sober holiday season. The gift of a drug-free lifestyle lasts long after the holidays are over.



GRATITUDE PRAYER

"Our gratitude speaks, when we care and when we share with others the N.A. way, that no addict seeking recovery need ever die from the horrors of addiction."

You say you have nothing to do? You say recovery is getting boring?

Come to the Area meeting. Join a subcommittee and get to know some people who are active in the NA program and who are trying to make a difference.

You might even have some fun!! Try it and see! See what giving back is all about.

ALSO

There is an urgent need for recovering addicts to take meetings into the jails and at the Willmar treatment facility. Volunteers are appreciated by the inmates and patients. For more info and to get contact info call Sharon J @ 320-685-8560

Do it today. You will not regret it.

Work cited

I.P. #23 Staying Clean on the outside

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<http://www.12stepsource.com/sunil/rewards.aspx>

<http://www.12stepsource.com/sunil/rights.aspx>

<http://www.usaprn.org/RecoveryCartoons.htm>

In memory of Shawna B.

We thought of you with love today.

But that is nothing new.

We thought about you yesterday.

And days before that too.

We think of you in silence.

We often speak your name.

Now all we have is memories.

And your picture in a frame.

Your memory is our keepsake.

With which we'll never part.

God has you in his keeping.

We have you in our heart..

—Author unknown



We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

--Albert Einstein

Addict Dialogue

How can I be of help to a recovering addict getting out of treatment or jail?

Stan: Have you heard about the MN. Region's "Bridging the Gap" program.

Alex: No, what is it?

Stan: Any recovering addict with at least 6 months clean can sign up to help a newcomer just coming out of treatment, halfway house, jail or an institution.

Alex: How does it work?

Stan: There are 3 easy different way's to sign up (see colored insert). Then for example a newcomer makes a request for a volunteer contact to a professional, who then contacts our Region. A Regional trusted servant will contact the closest BTG volunteer, giving him or her the newcomer's name and ph. number.

Alex: Do I have to be a sponsor or mentor?

Stan: No, you simply make arrangements to meet at a meeting, try to make the person feel comfortable and welcome, introducing them to people, explaining how the program works.

Alex: Is this a long term commitment?

Stan: No, try to meet with the newcomer 2-3 times anything after that is up to you.

Alex: I remember how afraid I was when I first came to NA, I wish they would've had this program then.

Stan: Well we do now, helping and spreading the message to the addict who still suffers is at the core of our primary purpose!

Alex: Is there someone from our Area I can talk to if I have more questions?

Stan: Yes, the MN. Region volunteer recruiter is Randy P. (320-250-6761), call him anytime.

Content of this newsletter does not in any way represent NA as a whole. It represents the views, opinions and concerns of the CMA Newsletter Sub-committee. Any constructive criticism shall be directed to the CMA Newsletter Sub-committee. Any comments, concerns and submissions for content including but not limited to articles, poems, artwork, personal stories, events, Etc. must be submitted to the CMA Newsletter Sub-committee via mail, e-mail, or in person. All submissions become the exclusive property of the CMA Newsletter Sub-committee with all rights reserved and are subject to change or editing at any time.