

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

FOR REVIEW ONLY
UNPUBLISHED LITERARY WORK

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Memphis, Tennessee
February 15, 1981

Dear Fellow Addicts:

We have collected material from individuals and groups worldwide, sharing our experience of recovery. We have compiled the information in the form of a "review" copy, which is proposed as our definitive work on addiction and recovery.

This work is the product of the three World Literature Conferences which were held between October 1979 and February 1981 at Wichita, Kansas, Lincoln, Nebraska and Memphis, Tennessee. In excess of 4,500 man-hours were expended at Memphis by more than seventy recovering addicts from thirteen states to produce the final work. In addition, the Memphis conference kept nine typewriters, two photocopiers, three cassette recorders, two telephones and a dictaphone in almost continuous use, and used over 20,000 sheets of paper.

We are asking for your corrections or comments. It has been suggested that a group effort may be most effective.

Please return the attached review-input form promptly. The deadline for input is April 15, 1981, received at Atlanta, or at Los Angeles before the World Literature Conference IV begins April 26, 1981.

Review-input forms will be processed at the World Literature Conference IV in Los Angeles during the last week of April 1981. Everybody is encouraged to attend this conference.

Our goal is to have the review copy approved, Fellowship-wide, and to present the finished manuscript to the World Service Conference in May 1981. Following this approval, the book will be ready for publication in hardback.

Let your H.P. be your guide. We remain your trusted servants.

In gratitude and loving service,

Tim T., Cathy T., Cordie A., Jeff B., Robyn C., Deb D., Richard D., Robert J., Jeff K., Gene L., Lee M., Kathy P., Mike P., Duane P., Mike P., Stephen S., Gary S., Morris S., Randy S., Gina H., Kevin B., Cindy H., Danny J., Brenda M., Bill B., Jeanette, Nolan W., Richard, Carol B., Dwayne L., Donna B., Allen C., Hank F., Roland C., Page C., Tina E., Shorty H., Tom M., Bo S., George S., Mary L., Peggy V., Frank I., Laurie S., Mindy M., Mollie P., Linda M., Kirk D., Bob D., Tom L., Doug W., Dan K., Jeff L., Jim M., Terica W., George R., Ted S., Jane B., Beverly B., Terri C., Dennis E., Jack H., Cindy H., Kenny H., Linda L., Bill K., Jan K., Joseph P., Bob S., Roger T.

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE-LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

HARDBACK IN JUNE!

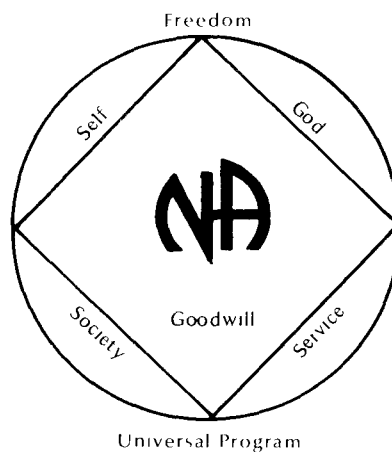
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Simplicity is the keynote of our symbol, it follows the simplicity of our fellowship. We could find all sorts of occult and esoteric connotations in the simple outlines, but foremost in our minds were easily understood meanings and relationships.

The outer circle denotes a universal and total program that has room within for all manifestations of the recovering and wholly recovered person.

The square, whose lines are defined, is easily seen and understood, but there are other unseen parts of the symbol. The square base denotes Goodwill, the ground of both the fellowship and the member of our society. Actually, it is the four pyramid sides which rise from this base in a three dimensional figure that are the Self, Society, Service and God. All rise to the point of Freedom.

All parts thus far are closely related to the needs and aims of the addict seeking recovery and the purpose of the fellowship seeking to make recovery available to all. The greater the base, as we grow in unity in numbers and in fellowship, the broader the sides and the higher the point of freedom. Probably the last to be lost to freedom will be the stigma of being an addict. Goodwill is best exemplified in service and proper service is "Doing the right thing for the right reason." When this supports and motivates both the individual and the fellowship, we are fully whole and wholly free.



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
World Service Conference
Literature Committee

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N.A.W.S.C.-L.C.

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FORWARD

"The full fruit of a labor of love lives in the harvest, and that always comes in its right season..."

The material for this book was drawn from the personal experiences of recovering addicts within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The text is based on an outline derived from the pamphlet (our "white book"), "Narcotics Anonymous." The first eight chapters are based on the topic headings in the "white book" and carry the same title. We have included a ninth chapter, 'Just for Today,' and a tenth chapter, 'More Will Be Revealed.' The remainder of the text is comprised of personal stories and appendices.

Following is a brief history of the book:

Narcotics Anonymous was formed in July 1953 with the first meeting held in Southern California. The Fellowship grew erratically, but quickly spread to various parts of the United States. From the beginning while membership was still very small and the need was seen for a "book on recovery" to help strengthen the Fellowship. The pamphlet, "Narcotics Anonymous," was published in 1962.

However, the Fellowship still had little structure and the 1960's were a period of struggle. Membership grew rapidly for a time, and then began to decline. The need for more specific direction was readily apparent. N.A. demonstrated its maturity in 1972 when a World Service Office was opened in Los Angeles. The W.S.O. has brought the needed unity and sense of purpose to the Fellowship.

The opening of W.S.O. brought stability to the growth of the Fellowship. Today, there are many thousand recovering addicts in hundreds of meetings all across the United States and in many foreign countries. Today, the World Service Office truly serves a worldwide Fellowship.

Narcotics Anonymous has long recognized the need for a complete text on addiction--a book about addicts, by addicts and for addicts, which would serve us much like the A.A. "Big Book" has served that fellowship.

This effort was strengthened shortly after the formation of W.S.O. with the publication of The N.A.

Tree, a pamphlet on service work. This pamphlet is the original "service manual" of the Fellowship. It has been followed by subsequent and more comprehensive volumes, and now the N.A. Service Manual.

The manual outlined a service structure which included a World Service Conference. The W.S.C., in turn, included a Literature Committee. With the encouragement of W.S.O., several members of the Board of Trustees and the Conference, work began.

As the cry for literature, particularly a comprehensive text, became more widespread, the W.S.C. Literature Committee developed. In October, 1979, the first World Literature Conference was held at Wichita, Kansas, followed by conferences at Lincoln, Nebraska and Memphis, Tennessee.

The W.S.C. Literature Committee, working in conference and as individuals, have collected hundreds of pages of material from members and groups throughout the Fellowship. This material has been laboriously catalogued, edited, rewritten, assembled, dismembered and reassembled. Dozens of area and regional representatives working with the Committee have dedicated weeks and thousands of man-hours to produce the work here presented. But more importantly, those members have conscientiously sought to insure a "group-conscious" text.

In keeping with the spirit of anonymity, we, the Literature Committee, feel it appropriate to express our special gratitude and appreciation to the Fellowship as a whole, especially the many of you who contributed material for inclusion in the book. We feel that this book is a synthesis of the collective Group Conscience of the entire Fellowship and that every single idea submitted is included in the work, in some form or another.

This volume is intended as a textbook for every addict seeking recovery. As addicts, we know the pain of addiction, but we also know the joy of recovery we have found in the Fellowship and on the program of Narcotics Anonymous. We believe the time has come to share our recovery in written form with all who desire what we have found.

Appropriately, this book is devoted to informing every addict: JUST FOR TODAY, YOU NEVER HAVE TO USE AGAIN!

Therefore,

"With gratitude in our cleanliness, we dedicate our N.A. book to the loving service of our Higher Power that through the development of conscious contact with God, no addict seeking recovery need die without having had a chance to find a better way of life."

We remain trusted servants.

In gratitude and loving service,

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE-III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE-LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

At Memphis, Tennessee
February 8, 1981

INTRODUCTION

This book is the shared common and personal experience of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We welcome you to read this text, trusting that you will choose to share with us the new life we have found. We have by no means found a "cure" for addiction. We offer only a proven plan for daily recovery.

In N.A., we follow a program adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty-five years, more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are grateful to the A.A. fellowship for showing us the way to a new life.

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, as adapted from A.A., are the basis of our recovery program. We have only broadened the perspective of addiction. We follow the same path with a single exception; our identification as addicts is all-inclusive in respect to any mood-changing, mind-altering substance. "Alcoholism" did not cover the total spectrum as comprehensively as does addiction. We believe that we have been guided by a Greater Consciousness as a Fellowship, and are grateful for the Direction that has enabled us to build upon an already-proven program of recovery.

We have come to Narcotics Anonymous by various means and believe that as our common denominator is that we failed to come to terms with our addictions, however varied. Because of the degree and variety of addictions found within our Fellowship, we have approached the solution contained within this book in general terms. We pray that we have been searching and thorough, so that every addict who reads this volume will find the hope we have found.

Based on our collective experience, we believe that every addict, including the "potential" addict, suffers from an incurable disease of body, mind and spirit. We were in the grip of a hopeless dilemma. The solution of which is spiritual in nature. Therefore, this book will deal in great part with spiritual matters.

We are not a religious organization. Our program is a set of spiritual principles through which we are recovering from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Throughout the compiling of this work, the prevailing theme has been the conscious prayer and meditation:

"GOD, grant us knowledge that we may write according to Your Divine precepts; instill in us a sense of Your purpose, make us servants of Your will and grant us a bond of selflessness that this may truly be Your work, not ours, in order that no addict, anywhere, need die from the horrors of addiction."

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. It was for this reason that we began this work. We must always remember that as individual members, groups, and service committees, we are not, and should never be, in competition with each other. We work separately and together to help the newcomer and for our common good. We have learned, painfully, that internal strife cripples our Fellowship; it prevents us from providing the services necessary for growth.

It is our hope that this book will help the suffering addict find the solution we have found. Our purpose is to remain clean, just for today, and to carry the message of recovery.

Thank you,

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE - LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

CHAPTER ONE
WHO IS AN ADDICT?

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW. Our whole life and thinking is centered in drugs in one form or another, the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We use to live and live to use. Very simply an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions and death.

The user may be unaware that a problem exists until, for 1
example, the drugs run out and they begin to feel the early 2
stages of withdrawal. Or, they keep using but start to notice 3
if they try to stop, that they are unable, or when using they 4
have lost control over the amount. We admitted that we used 5
drugs, but many of us did not think we had a problem. 6

As practicing addicts, we were keenly aware of the dif- 7
ference between right and wrong. Many of us were convinced 8
that we were right and the world was wrong, and used this be- 9
lief to justify our self-destructive behavior. Many of us 10
developed a loser's point of view which enabled us to pursue 11
our addiction without the restraints of concern about our 12
well-being. Simply, the loser's point of view focuses on the 13
negative in all things. 14

We realized that our record had not been good, but that was 15
due to being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or so we 16
thought. We were yet to realize that our "bad luck" was 17
caused by situations we had placed ourselves in, through the 18

1 As practicing addicts, we could really get down and if
2 we experienced a periodic jolt of self-awareness, it seemed
3 as if we were two people instead of one, like Dr. Jekyll and
4 Mr. Hyde. We became capable of depravity--of betrayal to
5 ourselves and to others. Temporarily clean, we ran around
6 trying to get it all squared away before our next spree.
7 Sometimes we could do this very well, but later it seemed less
8 important, and at the same time, more impossible. After years
9 of trying to make ourselves happy with cars, sex and dope, we
10 were unhappy and less satisfied than when it all started.

11 Some of us first saw the effects of addiction in the people
12 we were close to. We became very dependent on people to carry
13 us emotionally through life. We were always left disappointed
14 and hurt when they had other interests, other friends and
15 loved ones. We regretted the past; we feared the future. We
16 were constantly searching for "the answer"--searching for
17 meaninglessness and purposelessness. While using, we lacked
18 the ability to cope with day-to-day affairs. As our addiction
19 caught up to us, we found ourselves in and out of hospitals,
20 jails and institutions more and more. Because of these experi-
21 ences, we began to realize how screwed up our lives really
22 were. Drugs could no longer hide the pain. We just wanted
23 an easy way out. Suicide was on many of our minds. Our sui-
24 cide attempts were often feeble, and only helped to contribute
25 to our feelings of worthlessness. Part of ourselves could see
26 what was happening; another part would not accept it. We were
27 caught in an illusion of "what if," "if only," and "just one
28 more try."

29 We remember going through a lot of pain and despair before
30 considering the possible connection between drugs and our
31 misery. We had used all sorts of drugs over the years and
32 experienced numerous living problems as the result of our
33 using and yet did not consider ourselves addicted. The problem
34 was that most of the information available to us, before coming
35 to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, came to us from
36 misinformed people or others who also used heavily but did not

consider themselves to be addicted. We did not see ourselves as being addicted, as long as we could periodically stop using for a day, a week, or even a month or more. We looked at the stopping, not the using. Of course, as our addiction progressed, we thought of stopping less and less. Many of us had reached the point where we saw ourselves hopelessly deteriorating; by that time we asked ourselves, "Could it be the drugs?"

Things did not get bad for some of us, at least on the outside. We never considered ourselves addicts, although some of us have used, misused and abused drugs for half of our lives or more. The term "drug addict" conjured up visions of street crime, fear of the law, and needles. Our belief was that the drug addict lived in a skid-row environment. We believed we could not be addicts since we could not fit into that picture. We looked at our differences rather than our sameness. Yet the things we had in common put us all in the same dimension, the dimension of addiction.

Did we want to stop using and could we do it alone? What did we use and how did we use it? Did we "con" doctors for prescriptions, telling ourselves that it was O.K. to use these drugs because they were legal? Did we have more than one prescription being filled at the same time by different doctors? Did we need something to help us get going in the morning, or something to slow us down at night? Were we using illegal drugs and thinking there was nothing that could be done to kick the habit? Were we in trouble with friends, family, and/or the law because of drug-related incidents?

Something inside said, "No more." We had begun to have silent thoughts that maybe the dope was killing us. In a rare moment of clarity, we were able to look at the whole scene in all its insanity. We realized that drugs were enslaving us instead of setting us free. We were prisoners in our own mind, condemned to slow execution by our own sense of guilt. We had all but given up on ever getting help. Our previous attempts to stay clean had always failed, causing us many years of pain and misery.

1 Our futures appeared hopeless until we found clean addicts
2 who were willing to share. In the Fellowship of N.A., the
3 desire to stop using was all that we needed in the beginning.
4 Our recovery began with our first admission that we needed
5 help. Denial of our addiction is what kept us sick and honest
6 admission of our addiction enabled us to stop using. We were
7 able to open up and ask for help by attending meetings. We
8 went to meetings and heard people sharing their feelings and
9 realized that we had felt those feelings ourselves. We were
10 no longer alone. People told us they were addicts and that
11 they were recovering. If they could do it, so could we. We
12 feel from our experience that each individual has to answer
13 the question, "Am I an addict?"

14 We began to accept ourselves as addicts when we made the
15 connection between our drug use and our problems. We see many
16 differences between us, but more importantly, we see similarities.
17 The differing definitions of addiction are based on our "research"
18 and personal experience. It is not surprising that there are
19 many areas of honest disagreement in defining addiction. Some
20 definitions seem to fit the facts better than others. We know
21 our own viewpoint, but need to listen to others in the hope
22 that we might come to a better understanding of addiction and
23 the addict.

24 Addiction is a contradiction to living. It is a state of
25 mind which relies on convincing ourselves that drugs are neces-
26 sary to maintain our sense of well-being. For us, an addict is
27 a person who uses drugs, in any form, to the extent that the
28 individual cannot live normally with or without them. On one
29 hand we sought feelings of superiority, and on the other, we
30 accepted the most intolerable existence on earth.

31 Some of the highs felt great, expecially in the beginning,
32 but the things we had to tolerate to support our habits reflect-
33 ed desperation. We sank to the depths of stealing, lying,
34 prostituting ourselves, and cheating our friends. We manipu-
35 lated people and conditions and tried to control all of their
36 actions. We failed to realize that the need for control sprang
37 from the fear of losing control. This fear, based in part on

past failures and disappointments, prevented us from making 1
meaningful choices. 2

Our addiction involved more than drug use. It aggravated 3
our character defects and reinforced personality disorders. 4
Failure and fear of failure began to invade every area of our 5
lives as our addiction progressed. We, in the grip of a com- 6
pulsion, were often forced to survive in any way we could, 7
at all costs. 8

All through our usage we kept telling ourselves, "I can 9
handle it." Maybe this was true in the beginning, but not 10
now. We avoided people and places that did not condone our 11
using. We spent our money on drugs, and if there was noth- 12
ing left, we simply did not eat. We assumed everyone else 13
was crazy, and that we were the only sane ones. The thought 14
of running out of drugs left us with a sense of impending 15
doom. Peace of mind was non-existent. The only relief was 16
a comparatively short-lived "high." We had a distinct de- 17
sire to consume drugs beyond our capacity to control them. 18
Our using defied all rules of common sense. We not only 19
had an abnormal craving for drugs, but we yielded to it at 20
the worst possible times. We did not have sense enough to 21
know when not to begin. We went through stages of dark des- 22
pair and we were sure that there was something wrong with 23
us. Other times, we were under the illusion that we had 24
things under control. We came to hate ourselves for wast- 25
ing the talents with which we had been endowed and for the 26
trouble we were causing our families and others. Frequently, 27
we indulged in self-pity and proclaimed that nothing could 28
help us. When loaded, we had no concern for the rest of the 29
world. 30

The mental aspect of addiction comes with our inability 31
to deal with life on its own terms. We tried drugs and com- 32
binations of drugs in an effort to cope with a seemingly 33
hostile world. We dreamed of finding the right medication 34
or fix, the magic elixir, that would solve our ultimate 35
problem--ourselves. This reliance on drugs had harmed us 36
emotionally. The fact is that we cannot successfully handle 37

1 any mind-changing or mood-altering substance. The addict
2 who only smoked pot or did non-narcotic drugs is in as much
3 danger as the "junkie." Our thrills turned out to be a habit
4 which eventually turned on us, almost killing us. We no longer
5 had an addiction; our addiction had us.

6 Drugs ceased to make us feel good. We could not get the
7 euphoria we craved. When we did seek help, we sought the
8 absence of pain.

9 If you think you might have a drug problem, you probably
10 do. Few of us set out to become addicted, because when we
11 used, we thought we were in our normal state. We sought eu-
12 phoria, the highest state of pleasure, at the outset of our
13 addiction. In the final stages of our disease, we used to
14 keep from getting sick. We used in order to survive because
15 it was the only way of life that we knew.

16 Many of us fall into the old pattern of thinking--remember-
17 ing only our "good" drug experiences; the fact that drugs could
18 make us feel great. Such selective thinking can destroy our
19 lives and our capacity to live.

20 Modern drug technology and media attention have made a
21 social anti-hero of the addict. Since many of us were street
22 addicts, we dealt in illicit drugs and lived criminally. This
23 could have something to do with our being different. Many of
24 us have participated in sub-cultural or bizarre behaviors that
25 may have given us different experiences than those of the non-
26 addict. The fact that those of us who have become addicted
27 come from all levels of society is no guarantee that we will
28 not end our addiction in jail or the graveyard. Miracles are
29 performed everyday when the laws of nature are suspended. The
30 most natural thing for an addict to do is to use. Everyday an
31 addict does not use, a miracle happens. Yet an active addict's
32 prognosis is poor.

33 Ironically, drugs can also drive addicts past normal human
34 limits, often helping them to win great fame or recognition,
35 until their obsession burns them out. The drug-induced state
36 can allow a person to exclude normal background awareness and to
37 focus on a single point. At first, this can be like a handy

magnifying glass used at will. Later, it can become a horrible sequence of all-consuming bits and pieces that rush up continually until we find ourselves powerless to control what is happening. Prescription addicts are usually slow to recognize that they have a problem. Legal doses of prescribed medication can addict a person because of unknown side-effects, combinations with other drugs or an inborn susceptibility to addiction. We could get high to relieve the pain of living, through the use of prescriptions, at school or at work. We found it difficult to face life so we used drugs as a means of escape.

Addiction isolated us from people except for the getting, using, and finding ways and means to get more. Hostile, resentful, self-centered and self-seeking, we cut off all outside interests from our lives. Anything not completely familiar became alien and dangerous. Our world shrank and isolation became our life.

Non-addicts have great trouble understanding our dilemma. It is often nearly impossible to make sense of our behavior and the consuming drive to use, even after repeated and prolonged efforts to stay clean. Identification can guide us in our recovery, since we can see a little of ourselves in every addict. We thought of our addiction as hopeless before finding the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Addiction is a treatable disease: as soon as we begin to "treat" our addiction by working the Twelve Steps that have worked repeatedly, we experience very positive results. When our addiction is treated as a crime or moral deficiency, we become rebellious and are driven deeper into our isolation.

Addicts who would otherwise waste away in institutions very often respond to the love and fellowship offered in N.A. Ours is a proven program of recovery. We have no choice but to help one another, for the assurance and strength of our own recovery lies in the helping of other addicts.

The disease of addiction can also be seen in its social aspects. Addiction in its broadest sense is a disease of

our times. It embraces all our social ills. Drug manufacture and the innovation of new drugs in modern times have created an availability of potentially addictive drugs never before known in the history of man.

One of the ancient dreams of man seems to be coming true; the ability of modern drug technology to combat disease and alleviate human suffering. Hidden in this blessing, however, is a cruel reversal of effect which is our addiction. The innate susceptibility to our disease through genetic factors and complete knowledge of the sources of our behavioral inclinations is of no concern in our recovery through N.A. The "why" is not important; the "what to do" is our chief question.

We feel it is important to share our experience, strength and hope with others who may suffer from our disease, letting them know what they can do, if they desire to recover.

Although some of us have not been street addicts, many of us have, and we consider the street addict the most conspicuous and the most vulnerable to the more severe abuses resulting from the stigma with which addiction is branded. In many locations, street addicts are processed as habitual offenders when treatment of their disease could restore them to productive lives.

We continued to use time and time again, despite the symptoms of withdrawal. There are many different symptoms of withdrawal from drugs. We can't list them all. We have, however, been addicted to thousands of drugs and know first hand how they feel and what the initial abstinence is like. In this, we can reassure each other and the newcomer that it will get better if they don't use. If we do use, in the face of withdrawal, the next time it will be worse.

Addiction is chronic, progressive and fatal. The cycle can be broken by not taking that first fix, pill, drink, or toke.

Like other incurable diseases, addiction can be arrested. We agree that there is nothing shameful about being an addict provided we accept our dilemma and honestly take action. We are willing to admit without reservation that we are "allergic" to drugs. Common sense tells us that it would be insane to go back to the source of our "allergy." We, as recovering addicts,

can tell you that medicine cannot "cure" our illness. We 1
regained good physical health many times only to relapse. 2
Our past records show that it is impossible for us, as addicts, 3
to use with control, no matter how well we may appear to be 4
in control of our feelings. 5

Social adjustments failed to bring about recovery. We 6
thought a suitable job or social relationship could be the 7
answer to our dilemma. Addiction, in its progression, causes 8
us to flounder and fail, consuming us with anger and fear. 9

Higher mental and emotional functions, such as conscience 10
and love, are sharply affected by our use of drugs. Our liv- 11
ing skills may be reduced to the animal level, if we have 12
suffered long enough. The person within is submerged and 13
the capacity to be human is lost. This is an extreme state, 14
but most of us have been there. 15

Learning to live without drugs is complicated by the fact 16
that it is so hard for many of us to accept our disease. 17
Again, susceptibility and availability have combined in the 18
addict to form dependency. Many of the doctors among us 19
came into the Fellowship with an attitude of denial. We 20
have found in the progression of our addictions that we had 21
been devastated by the disease to the point where denial was 22
futile. Part of the risk run by society in keeping the lid 23
on our addiction is the social stigma that keeps the addict 24
who might seek help from seeking it because of a fear of 25
never being able to live it down. 26

Addiction is the disease and Narcotics Anonymous is a 27
proven path of on-going recovery. Our experience shows that 28
those who keep coming to meetings regularly, stay clean. We 29
continue in our recovery until we die. In our addiction, we 30
practiced dying. In our recovery, we practice living today! 31
We can feel, care, love and be loved. We no longer have to 32
be isolated, and in time, can feel free to go anywhere and 33
do almost anything except use. We do not use because we do 34
not want to. Today we have a choice. 35

Many of us sought answers but failed to find any we 36
could use until we found each other. Most of us have become 37

1 very grateful in the course of our recovery. We have a disease
2 that we can recover from. Our lives can return to being useful,
3 in the course of our abstinence and through the working of the
4 Twelve Steps of N.A., explained in this book. The use of any
5 sort of medication may lead us back to active addiction. We
6 must be careful when seeking treatment from any doctor not
7 totally acquainted with our disease. We strongly suggest to
8 one another that we break our anonymity to the doctor admin-
9 istering drugs to us and trust that our medical records will be
10 kept confidential. One of the danger zones in our recovery is
11 that when we get ill and are prescribed legitimate medication,
12 it may lead us back to our drug of choice. We call this relapse.

13 All too many times, doctors who meant well, but did not know
14 of our disease, enabled our addictions. We cannot recover over-
15 night and we cannot expect sincere physicians to review their
16 options or methods of treatment overnight. Our place is to help
17 the addict who still suffers, particularly those who are seeking
18 help.

19 All of the psychological and social commentary ever written
20 on this subject has failed to answer this question thoroughly.
21 Rather than enter the area of medical theory and legalities, we
22 feel that it is more worthwhile to discuss the answers we have
23 found. Instead of concentrating on the problem, let's look at
24 the solution.

25 Narcotics Anonymous concerns itself with recovery. We all
26 know how to use drugs. We know the effect they have had on us.
27 The primary thing we are interested in is how to stay clean, how
28 to cope with life without using, how to handle unpleasant feel-
29 ings and emotions--in other words, how to get better. It was
30 conceivable in our addictive thinking that something would work
31 for us without any work on our part. That was how the drugs
32 worked. How wrong we were. It has been our experience that the
33 program works as long as we work it, just for today, to the best
34 of our ability.

35 The mind begins to accept new ideas which lead to a new
36 way of life as the grip of drugs and our past way of thinking
37 and doing begins to relax. We find ourselves no longer pressed

between those who use and those who don't in this new way of 1
life. Our world constantly expands to include new associa- 2
tions and eventually we become members of society. Problems 3
that had no solutions became transparent and unreal in the 4
light of our new understanding. Old grudges and resentments 5
fade as we loosen our sick point of view. A warm feeling of 6
belonging replaces the hole in our gut left by our addictions. 7
It is no accident--it's the way the program works. A miracle 8
takes place as the drugs are washed from our bodies by daily 9
abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects of 10
our using. We come to understand that our recovery is a 11
gift from a power greater than ourselves. We are made aware 12
of this gift in a thousand ways. This power wants only that 13
we realize ourselves as much as possible. The longer we 14
stay clean, the more we will want to clear away the shame 15
and falseness of our lives. It is a great gift to be a 16
human being. 17

What we have just been describing are some of the bene- 18
fits involved in recovery. There is only one alternative 19
to recovery and that is the progression of our disease. 20
The progression of our addiction has been compared to an 21
elevator that is always going down. We have found that we 22
can get clean at any level we want. Unfortunately, the 23
nature of our disease makes us abnormally susceptible to 24
rationalizing our addiction instead of dealing with the 25
fact. If you are an addict, you can find a new life through 26
the program that would not otherwise be possible. 27

Many drugs require no extended period of use to trigger 28
allergic reactions, although physical and mental tolerance 29
can play a role. It is not how much we use that makes us 30
addicts, but what it does to us. Certain things follow as 31
usage continues. Setting aside the physical effects of 32
addiction, as the regularity of usage increases, we become 33
accustomed to the state of mind common to addicts; we forget 34
what it was like before we started using. We forget the 35
social graces, acquire weird habits and mannerisms, forget 36
how to work, forget how to express ourselves and show con- 37

1 concern for others and we forget how to feel. We, as recover-
2 ing addicts, have to relearn things forgotten and learn what we
3 have missed.

4 We may lose jobs, get divorced, lose friends and find our-
5 selves unable to account for these changes, as our disease pro-
6 gresses. Generally, our use of drugs increases with all these
7 changes or during intervals between changes. We can continue in
8 this condition indefinitely, or as our using increases, progress
9 rapidly in our addiction. If at any point we make the basic con-
10 nection between our use of drugs and the way things have been
11 going for us, we can begin recovery by admitting our need for
12 help.

13 We addicts value personal freedom highly. Perhaps because we
14 want it so much and experience it so seldom in the progression of
15 our illness. Even in periods of abstinence, freedom is curtailed.
16 We are never quite sure that our choice of action is based on a
17 conscious desire for continued clean time or an unconscious wish
18 to return to using.

19 Our addiction developed in us an emotional instability. We
20 became very sluggish or glum without drugs. Some of us felt we
21 had to have drugs to deal with our feelings. We felt, as if our
22 world was hollow, dull, meaningless; that there was no purpose
23 to life but to use and to find ways and means to get more. Some
24 of us eventually landed in the mental hospitals, fearing for our
25 sanity. What we learned behind the walls of the various insti-
26 tutions was that the most sincere and constructive efforts of
27 medicine and psychiatry had few answers for us that we could use
28 in achieving ongoing recovery. We, in the later stages, are
29 usually the very last to recognize our need for help. The prin-
30 ciple of one addict helping another pyramids and the solution to
31 our dilemma has begun.

32 We have also learned that there are few alternatives for the
33 addict. If we continue to use, the problem will become progres-
34 sively worse; we are on the path that leads to skid row, hospitals,
35 jails, institutions or to an early grave.

36 Incarceration and institutionalization sometimes led us to
37 the realization that the drugs were letting us down. Where these

drugs once had given us the feeling that we could handle what- 1
ever situation that might come down, we became aware that these 2
same drugs were largely responsible for our having gotten into 3
our very worst predicaments. Some of us hit many institutions 4
and few or no jails. Some of us may spend the rest of our 5
lives in jail for a drug-related crime or a crime committed 6
under the influence.

Addiction is a disease which manifested in us at an inde- 7
terminable point in our lives. Some recovering addicts believe 8
that the disease was present long before the first pill, fix, 9
drink or toke. Some of us believe that the disease is here- 10
ditary, due to parents, grandparents or other relatives who 11
are addicted. How we got the disease, however, is of no imme- 12
diate importance to us. What concerns us at present is how we 13
can continue our own recovery while helping the addict who 14
still suffers. 15

We have found through our experiences that addiction has 16
three major phases, the first of which is practicing addic- 17
tion. We were using in a manner which seemed to be social or 18
at least controllable with little indication of the disaster 19
which the future held for us. This phase varies in duration 20
from addict to addict. We have found that it is very diffi- 21
cult to help anyone in this phase. 22

At some point, our using became uncontrollable and defi- 23
nitely anti-social. This phase of uncontrollable using is 24
suffering addiction and usually began when things were going 25
well and we were in situations that allowed us to use as fre- 26
quently as we wanted. It is marked by a decline and usually 27
the end of good living as we knew it. We went from a state 28
of drugged success and well-being to complete spiritual, 29
mental and emotional bankruptcy. This state of decline 30
varies in length. We can only say that for some it was a 31
matter of months or even days and for others it was a matter 32
of years. We who are recovering and thus alive today, tried 33
to moderate, substitute or even stop using. Those of us that 34
did that did not seek to change died from the disease, went 35
to prison, or were committed to mental institutions as hope- 36

1 lessly insane. Some of us who sought out changes were graced
2 by the life force of the universe and found the N.A. program.

3 It was when we were suffering that we were willing to stop
4 using. It was much easier to help suffering addicts when we
5 were in the latter part of the suffering stage for it was easier
6 for us to see the destruction, disaster and delusion of our
7 using. Many times when the problems caused by drug usage were
8 staring us in the face we could not see it as a problem, until
9 we reached our bottoms.

10 The third major phase is in our recovery. We, as recover-
11 ing addicts in the N.A. Fellowship, practice living and enjoy-
12 ing life on a day to day basis by living the Twelve Steps. We
13 realize that we are never cured and carry the disease within us
14 to the grave. We addicts, recovering in N.A., are convinced
15 that there is only one way for us to live, and that is the N.A.
16 way. Due to our Fifth Tradition and Twelfth Step, our primary
17 purpose in life is to stay clean by carrying the message to the
18 addict who still suffers.

19 We can die from untreated addiction. But before we die, the
20 disease takes from us our pride, our self-esteem, our families
21 and loved ones. And finally, it takes our very will to live.

22 We of Narcotics Anonymous were raised from hell to find that
23 the program is a way of life. We know that a new life is laid
24 out for us every day if we want it and don't use. A new place
25 awaits us in the society that, during our using, offered only
26 misgivings. We come to know success. We have found all this
27 through dependence on a Power greater than ourselves, a group
28 of our fellow addicts, and spiritual principles.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT IS THE NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS PROGRAM?

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 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."

There are no strings attached to N.A. We are not affiliated with any other organizations, we have no leaders, no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, color, creed, religion or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

The structure of Narcotics Anonymous is quite unlike any health or welfare agency known to us. Although N.A. practices may vary from place to place, all N.A. services are performed voluntarily by the addicts themselves and without

1
2
3
4

1 cost. N.A. does not accept money for its service, is not
2 funded by any public or private sources or agencies and
3 accepts no outside contributions.

4 Addicts respond instinctively to honest sharing. The
5 fact that the addict can feel the unconditional love and judge
6 for themselves the "qualifications" revealed in the stories
7 of recovering addicts, awakens the notion that at last there
8 might be hope. The newcomer loses his fear when he discovers
9 that N.A. members give away the message of cleanliness in
10 order to stay clean. We of Narcotics Anonymous are currently
11 trying to bring about more communication, understanding, re-
12 spect, and cooperation between N.A. and any professional per-
13 son who works with addicts--so that more and more addicts may
14 be able to recover. With local groups in many communities,
15 we are part of an international fellowship.

16 In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we make use of
17 things that have worked for those who have gone before us:
18 the Twelve Steps, the principles and the many positive tools
19 that enable us to make recovery possible. We have one primary
20 purpose--to stay clean and to help others who may turn to us
21 for help. We are united by our common problem, addiction.
22 Meeting, talking with, and helping other addicts, we are some-
23 how able to stay clean and to lose the compulsion to use, once
24 a dominant force in our lives.

25 We are grateful also to see new people coming to meetings
26 from the streets. There is nothing that compares to a new
27 person freely talking about the pain and the endless hustle that
28 goes on out there. As a result, Narcotics Anonymous had had
29 more than twenty-five years of trial-and-error experience,
30 face-to-face, with literally hundreds of thousands of addicts.
31 This mass of intensive firsthand experience with all kinds of
32 problem drug users, in all phases of illness and recovery, is
33 unparalleled in therapeutic value. Narcotics Anonymous is here
34 to share freely with any addict who wants it.

35 Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women for
36 whom drugs in one form or another had become a major problem.

We had become so physically, mentally and spiritually ill that we became crazed, depressed and terrified people. We were sick people. The growing fellowship of N.A. supports us in our efforts of recovery. It gives us new friends who understand where we have been.

Our message of recovery is based on our own experience. Before coming to the Fellowship, we exhausted ourselves trying to use successfully, or trying to find out what was wrong with us. After coming to the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship, we find ourselves among a very special group of people. Many were a great deal worse off than we were. Here we found hope. If the Narcotics Anonymous program worked for them, it might work for us. We began to ask questions and listened a little more closely to the suggestions. After all there's a chance we could get a little relief.

We do not think we are the only people who have alternatives to the problem of addiction, but we know that the N.A. program works for us. We have seen it work for every one who honestly and sincerely wanted to stop using. The main point is that we meet people, addicts like ourselves, yet they are clean for months or years. We watched and listened to them openly and realized that these people had found a way to live and be happy without drugs.

In all honesty the most we can do for the newcomer is to share our experience, strength and hope and be ready to help when asked. If we go beyond this we risk becoming enablers. Most of us can remember doing nothing as long as we could get someone else to take care of us. We don't want the help we can offer to rob the new person of that essential ingredient of living which setting their own house in order can bring. We addicts have no choice but to help one another. In helping others our own recovery is aided. We don't criticize them better we love them better. As several great men have pointed out, there is more to it than a simple love. We are really talking about survival in a world where we have ceased to be functioning members of

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1 society. This program has given us a belief in a loving God
2 that works through people. Never should we claim to have all
3 the answers, but we can share our experience and the things that
4 work for us. N.A. offers alternatives and suggestions that
5 have worked for others.

6 We don't want to settle for the limitations of the past.
7 We want to examine and re-examine all our old ideas, and con-
8 stantly improve on them or replace them with new ones.

9 We, in N.A., are men and women who have discovered and
10 admitted that we are powerless over our addictions. We have
11 learned that we must live without drugs if we are to avoid the
12 disaster we created for ourselves and those close to us.

13 The consequences of our addictive using (and thinking) have
14 also varied. Some of our members had literally become dere-
15 licts before turning to N.A. for help. We had lost families,
16 possessions and self respect. We had committed many offenses--
17 against society, families, and employers. Others among us had
18 never been jailed or hospitalized, nor had we lost jobs because
19 of our using. Even those men and women finally came to the
20 point where they realized that using was interfering with nor-
21 mal living. When they discovered that they could not live with-
22 out drugs, the, too, sought to help themselves through N.A.,
23 rather than prolonging their pain. The program works a miracle
24 in our hearts. We become new people. The Steps and abstinence
25 give us daily reprieves from our self-imposed life sentences.
26 We become free to move about without compulsion or guilt.

27 Communication is a very important part of our program.
28 Without it we would not have the chance to share ideas and new
29 aspects of the program with each other. What one group or area
30 learns can and should be shared with other areas. This is how
31 the Fellowship of N.A. has grown and spread over the past
32 twenty-five years. We need each other.

33 Our meetings contain a certain atmosphere of empathetic and
34 universal feelings which all addicts have in common. In this
35 atmosphere of recovery, we found we were very much at home and
36 were able to start a new way of life with these people who

called themselves addicts. The unconditional love we find 1
at meetings makes it possible to relax and review our assum- 2
ptions about ourselves and reality. Working the Steps will 3
give us a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, 4
correct old defects, right old wrongs, and lead us to help 5
others. As we begin the process of change by honestly lis- 6
tening to the stories of people we meet in an N.A. meeting 7
or in private fellowship, we will want to try out some of 8
the solutions that have worked for others. Maybe their 9
solution is part of our solution. Trying to be all things 10
to all people, we have often forgotten what we really think 11
and feel. As we begin to come out of our fog, the layers of 12
phoniness will peel off like the skin of an onion. When the 13
layers are gone, our real selves will remain. 14

As we attend meetings and hear the experience, strength, 15
and hope of others, we will come to notice that we are not 16
the only ones with problems. We will eventually hear some- 17
one who flat out makes us feel lucky by comparison. We will 18
grow to know gratitude, to see where we came from and how 19
far we have progressed. We have all tried many ways to over- 20
come our addictions, and sometimes temporary recovery was 21
possible but always it was followed by an even deeper in- 22
volvement with addiction than before. 23

Let new ideas flow into you. Ask questions. The prin- 24
ciples of living incorporated in the Twelve Steps may seem 25
strange to you, but they work. This program works for those 26
willing to work it.

We have found that trying to help another addict is good 27
for us whether the addict we try to help uses what we have to 28
offer or not. For this reason, N.A. groups attempt to con- 29
centrate primarily on this person-to-person service, without 30
getting involved in any outside enterprise no matter how 31
worthwhile. 32

We feel loved. More and more we feel we would rather 33
be with each other when we are thinking negatively than by 34
ourselves. Good comes from being with others; loneliness 35
and negativity fall by the wayside. Something memorable, 36

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1 precious, and beneficial stems from clean togetherness. There
2 is a security of being real; of having brothers and sisters on
3 the road to recovery is a comforting feeling. We recover to-
4 gether.

5 The only requirement to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous is
6 a desire to stop using. We don't have to be clean when we get
7 here, but after the first meeting, we suggest that you keep
8 coming back to the meetings and coming clean. We don't have
9 to wait for an overdose, or jail sentence, to get help from
10 N.A.; nor is addiction a hopeless condition from which there is
11 no recovery. It is possible to arrest the need to use with the
12 help of the Twelve Step program of N.A. and the Fellowship of
13 recovering addicts in N.A. We want to reach out to whoever
14 reads this and to lay our lives and our hearts on the line to
15 show what this program and the spirit of N.A. has done for us.
16 In other words, if you think you have a drug problem, it is
17 likely that you do; and our program might have something special
18 to offer.

19 We want desperately for the place where addicts recover to
20 be a safe place, free from outside influences. We feel safe
21 at our closed meetings. Everyone is an addict. We feel totally
22 free to express ourselves because no law enforcement agencies
23 are involved. No one judges, stereotypes, or moralizes us. We
24 are not recruited and it doesn't cost anything. N.A. does not
25 provide counseling or social services. The rooms are filled
26 with men and women from all walks of life and persuasions. We
27 do have one must in N.A.: NO DRUGS OR PARAPHENALIA BE ON YOUR
28 PERSON AT MEETINGS.

29 In a sense, the Program is a way for addicts to find the
30 Higher Power that traditional religions have pointed to. The
31 difficulty here is that we can quickly fall prey to the notion
32 that we were not sick, but merely misinformed, if we stop doing
33 the things that began our recovery. In the days before N.A.
34 began to serve the needs of the growing numbers of addicts in
35 our population, spontaneous recovery through religion was rare
36 and quick to fade. Claim of a spiritual awakening is worthless

if the life of the individual is not changed for the better. 1

Upon entering the Fellowship, some notices a strong spirit- 2
ual glow among members. Then we could see and feel that a 3
Higher Power was at work in N.A. After having a few months 4
in the Fellowship, we see how the spiritual need for a Higher 5
Power keeps us clean.

Our program is in fact a way of life. We learn the value 6
of principles such as humility, surrender, and service. The 7
idea that we have to do it alone is obsolete. It helps things 8
go more smoothly when we find sponsors to confide in and let 9
them help us. We learn the art of helping others appropria- 10
tely, without creating resentments. 11

We, of Narcotics Anonymous, do not promise to have all 12
the answers, but we've found that our lives steadily improved 13
if we didn't use and learned to maintain our spiritual con- 14
dition. In time we met an addict seeking recovery and dis- 15
covered ourselves really able to respond to their needs. 16
We gave others what we found. The truth is that the more 17
we give in this way, the more we have to offer. Our own 18
needs are met when we learn to live for others. Through 19
practicing our honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to 20
try, we develop humility, tolerance, and patience. We are 21
able to love the unlovable and discover self-acceptance. 22
We are not likely to create problems in our daily living. 23
We finally realize we have a choice in the matter of our 24
lives. 25

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, our new friends 26
and our sponsors help us to deal with our feelings. In N.A. 27
our joys are multiplied by sharing our good days with our 28
fellows, and our sorrows are lessened when we share our bad 29
days. For the first time in our lives, we don't have to 30
experience anything alone. Not only do we have the group 31
but hopefully, as time progresses, we will develop a rela- 32
tionship with a God of our own understanding that will 33
always be with us. 34

We learn to experience feelings and realize that the 35
feelings themselves can do us no harm, unless we act on 36

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1 them. We learn to call someone if we have a feeling we can-
2 not handle, and by sharing that feeling with a friend, we
3 learn to work through it. Chances are that our friend has
4 had a similar experience and can relate what worked for him.
5 By close work with a sponsor, we can utilize the Twelve Steps
6 of the program as a guide to dealing with situations we have
7 not dealt with in the past. Sponsorship is a give and take
8 partnership, with both gaining strength from the relation-
9 ship. It was suggested that we look for a sponsor as soon
10 as we became acquainted with members in our area. We look
11 for someone who has been down a path similar to ours, under-
12 stands where we are coming from, and has learned to cope with
13 the same types of situations. We, who are recovering, must
14 share with others. We have to in order to maintain our pro-
15 gress in the N.A. program and our ability to function without
16 drugs. Being asked to sponsor a new member is a privilege,
17 so don't hesitate to ask a person with whom you can identify.
18 Sponsorship is a rewarding experience for both, and we are
19 all here to help and to be helped. Get phone numbers and use
20 them. Ask questions about the program and get acquainted with
21 the people.

22 Many books have been written about the nature of addiction.
23 This book primarily concerns itself with the nature of re-
24 covery. If you are an addict and have found this book, please
25 give yourself a break and read it!

CHAPTER THREE

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we could not manage our own lives, we could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives, husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized, that in our addictions, we were slowly committing suicide, but such cunning enemies of life are narcotics and sedation that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use. All these methods having failed for us, in desperation, we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to N.A. we realized we were sick people who suffered from a disease like Alcoholism, Diabetes or Tuberculosis. There is no known "Cure" for these--all, however, can be arrested at some point and "recovery" is then possible.

In N.A. we follow a program borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty years more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are deeply grateful to the A.A. Fellowship for pointing the way for us to a new way of life.

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we were irre-	1
sponsible with our lives. We used drugs to cover up our	2
humiliation, guilt, inferiority and feelings of inadequacy.	3

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1 Many of us woke up sick, unable to make it to work or went
2 to work loaded. Many of us stole to support our habit. We
3 hurt the ones we loved, whatever it took to get that fix, pill,
4 drink or joint. We denied all these things and told ourselves
5 we could handle it. We were looking for something new in life,
6 possibly a way to be accepted. Eventually we started looking
7 for a way out. We didn't face life on life's terms. In the
8 beginning, using was fun. It became a habit and then it was
9 necessary for survival. The progression of the disease was
10 not apparent to us. We continued on the path of destruction,
11 unaware of where it was leading us. We had the disease and
12 did not know it. We avoided reality through the use of drugs.
13 The pain and misery was postponed. When we came down, our
14 problems came back, and were compounded with additional prob-
15 lems that had built up. We felt the need to use more often as
16 our disease progressed.

17 We knew we needed help, but had nowhere to go. Most of
18 us explored different alternatives. Doctors didn't understand
19 our dilemma. Usually they helped our disease by giving us
20 prescriptions. Our husbands, wives and loved ones gave us
21 anything in hopes that we would stop using. We tried substi-
22 tuting one drug for another and this only created a vicious
23 cycle. We tried limiting our usage to "social" amounts, but
24 our success with this was short-lived or non-existent.

25 Some of us sought spiritual guidance through churches,
26 different religions, meditation and cultism. Some of us
27 sought cure by geographical change, blaming our surroundings
28 and living situations for our problem. This attempt just gave
29 us new people to take advantage of. Some of us sought approval
30 through sexual activities and change of peers. This approval-
31 seeking got us back where we started from, or worse. Some
32 tried marriage, divorce and desertion of our families. Many
33 tried psychiatrists and institutions. All these attempts at
34 controlled usage or abstinence were futile.

35 We had reached a point in our lives where we had become
36 a lost cause to society. Our worth to our jobs, families and

friends was little or none. Some of us became unemployed 1
and unemployable. Success was scary and unfamiliar. We 2
didn't know what to do about it. As the self-loathing grew, 3
we had to use more and more to mask the feeling of hate. 4
We were sick and tired of pain and trouble. We were fright- 5
ened and ran from the fear, but no matter how far we ran, 6
the fear followed us. We were hopeless, useless and lost. 7
Feelings of worthlessness overcame us. Failure had become 8
our way of life and self-esteem was non-existent. The 9
peculiar inertia that keeps a person going the way they are, 10
acted on us. To some of us, our appearance didn't matter. 11
We had no pride in anything we did. We didn't care how we 12
looked. For some, personal hygiene became a thing of the 13
past. For others, it became an obsession. We tried to 14
cover up our inner pain with outside appearances. Any hope 15
of being anything different disappeared. Helplessness, 16
emptiness and fear became a way of life. We were complete 17
failures. Personality change was what we really needed. 18
Change from a self-destructing to a self-affirming pattern 19
of living was imperative. We started experiencing how 20
powerless we really were. Nothing seemed to relieve the 21
paranoia and fear. We hit bottom and became ready to ask 22
for and accept help. 23

We were searching for an answer. We reached out and 24
found the hand of Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first 25
N.A. meeting in utter defeat. We were searching for some- 26
thing, but we did not know what. After sitting in a meet- 27
ing, we felt that people cared and were willing to be 28
patient with us. Although our heads told us we would never 29
make it, the people in the Fellowship gave us hope by 30
insisting we could. We found that no matter what our 31
thoughts or past actions were others had preceded us. 32
Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realized that we were not 33
alone. We were told that if we put things ahead of our 34
clean time, the program would not work. Nothing happens 35
in the room but recovery; everyone's life is at stake. We 36

1 learned old friends, places and ideas were threatening to our
2 recovery. We had to change our playmates, playgrounds and
3 playthings.

4 When we came to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, we
5 faced many disturbing realizations. One: we were powerless
6 over our addictions and our lives were unmanageable; two:
7 we are not responsible for our disease but we are responsible
8 for our recovery; and three: we can no longer blame people,
9 places and things for our addiction. We had to own up to our
10 problems and our feelings.

11 In N.A., we learned that members concentrated on recovery
12 and how they felt, not what they had done in the past. We
13 found that the ultimate weapon for recovery was the recovering
14 addict. Having realized that we were unable to maintain on
15 our own, some of us immediately began experiencing depression,
16 anxiety, hostility and resentment. We began to feel emotional
17 pain that we had always been afraid to feel. We began to grow
18 and open up into our new lives that we had found in N.A. Many
19 of us felt that our lives, due to petty frustrations, minor
20 setbacks and losses, were not getting any better. An honest
21 look was often a grateful one. It was in those times that many
22 of us found out who we were. It allowed us to make important
23 discoveries like "it's O.K. to hurt and feel the pain."

24 Today we have feelings of love, joy, hope, excitement, sad-
25 ness and friendship. Before we were either elated or depressed
26 with very little in between. Our negative sense of self was
27 replaced by a positive concern for others. Our own problems
28 seemed to resolve themselves. It is a great gift to be a human
29 being, and the opportunities we seek are determined by our own
30 sense of self-worth. When we lie, cheat, or steal, we degrade
31 ourselves in our own eyes. We have had enough of self-destruc-
32 tion. We want to learn to do the things that will transform
33 us into self-affirming people.

34 The symptoms of addiction include mental states that aren't
35 normal. When we get clean, these strange habits of mind pass
36 away and we start to learn to live again. Continued abstinence,

belief in a God of our understanding, and participation in 1
the program will restore us to sanity. 2

What a change from how we used to be! That's how we 3
know that the N.A. program works. It's the first thing that 4
ever convinced us that we needed to change ourselves, in- 5
stead of trying to change the people and situations that 6
irritated us. It gave us a Twelve Step blueprint for doing 7
just that. By working the Steps, we came to accept our 8
Higher Power's will and this acceptance led us down the road 9
of recovery. We lost our fear of the unknown through prac- 10
tice of the Twelve Steps. We were freed to live and enjoy 11
life just for today without the old ghosts of our addiction 12
haunting us in the morning of every new day.

We all have our personal stories of recovery, and every- 13
one has their own way of working this program. This is the 14
way the program works. It is available to each addict seek- 15
ing recovery. Our personal natures differ, so our experi- 16
ences of recovery vary. 17

Recovery is a beautiful chance that many addicts thought 18
had passed them by until they found the Fellowship of N.A. 19
It's the chance to live again. Recovery from the disease 20
of addiction encompasses many things: carrying the message 21
to the suffering addict; being with people we really love 22
and care about; spiritual principles; a Higher Power of our 23
own understanding; a sincere desire for ongoing recovery; 24
open-mindedness; loving service and, of course, the vital 25
spiritual experience that results in and perpetuates the 26
expansion of Narcotics Anonymous. 27

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW IT WORKS

If what you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovering possible.

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. 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.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once, we didn't become addicted in one day, so remember --EASY DOES IT.

There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery, this an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Although there are no musts in N.A., there are three things that seem indispensable. These are Honesty, Openmindedness, and Willingness to try. With these we are well on our way.

We feel that our approach to the problem of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical, for one addict can best understand and help another addict. We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible, and productive members of that society.

The only way to keep from getting or continuing a habit is not to take that first fix, pill or drink. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again or create a new one.

The substitution of alcohol has caused a great many addicts to form a new addiction pattern, which in its progression brings as many problems as before. We seem to forget that alcohol is one of the oldest known drugs. It would appear that we are people with addictive personalities who are strongly susceptible to alcoholic addiction.

Are we sure we want to stop using? Do we understand and 1
believe that we have no real control over drugs? Do we recog- 2
nize that in the long run, we don't use drugs--they use us? 3
Do we fully accept the fact that our every attempt to stop 4
using or control our using failed? Do we know that drugs 5
have the power to change us into liars, thieves, and schemers? 6
Do we know in our guts, that as successful drug users, we 7
have failed? We admit to ourselves that everytime we hurt 8
someone, we were loaded, or trying to get loaded. 9

When we came to N.A., we were physically, mentally and 10
spiritually bankrupt. We hurt long enough and badly enough 11
that we were willing to go to any lengths to stay clean. 12
To live by the example of those who had faced our dilemma, 13
and had found a way out, seemed to be our only hope. 14

1 When we first came into the Fellowship of N.A., we were
2 often resentful at the suggestions some of the members made
3 to us. Regardless of who we are, where we have come from, or
4 what we have done, we are accepted in N.A. Our addiction
5 gives us all a common ground for understanding one another.

6 When we were using, reality became so painful that obli-
7 vion was preferable. We had to keep other people from know-
8 ing about our pain. We isolated ourselves, and lived in
9 prisons built out of our own loneliness. Through this des-
10 peration, we sought out Narcotics Anonymous.

11 After attending a few meetings, we began to feel like we
12 finally belonged somewhere. It was in these meetings that we
13 were first introduced to the Twelve Steps of N.A. We work
14 them in the order they were written, and we use them on a daily
15 basis. They are our solutions. They have become our survi-
16 val kit, for addiction is a deadly disease. Our Steps are
17 suggested only, but they are the principles that make our
18 recovering possible.

STEP ONE

We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction,
that our lives had become unmanageable.

19 The bottom line of Narcotics Anonymous is staying clean.
20 We realize that we cannot use drugs and live. When we admit
21 our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives, we
22 open the door to a power greater than ourselves.

23 We have an incurable, progressive, terminal disease called
24 addiction. It doesn't matter whether we just take a few pills,
25 fix eight times a day, suck on a pipe, drink bottles of cough
26 remedy behind drug stores, or have one tranquilizer with our
27 first martini each day--we have certain things in common, no
28 matter to what degree or what kind of addict we are.

29 When we hit bottom, we were searching for an answer--look-
30 ing for a way out. We reached out and there was an answer.
31 Until we took Step One, we were full of reservations. We felt

different. Upon working Step One, we affirmed our surrender to the principles of N.A., and only then did we overcome the alienation of being a drug addict. We became a part of society.

Where is help? How did we get it? What was it? We went to a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. We are inclined to be skeptical. We needed proof. In that N.A. meeting was our proof. There we found people like ourselves with the same, or worse, patterns of drug dependency and failure, yet they were clean. They smiled. Their eyes were clear. They cared for each other. They introduced themselves to the newcomer and made them feel welcome. During the meeting, we heard a little bit about ourselves. We understood and believed that we had no real control over drugs. We accepted the fact that every attempt we had made to control our using had failed. We knew in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something we didn't want to be, and we of all people had surely had enough of self-destruction. We wanted first to learn, then to do the things that would help us become self-affirming people.

We had to take Step One. We had to admit that we are powerless and we had to continue going to meetings to hear other addicts talk about this powerlessness. Do we understand and believe that we have no real, long term control over drugs? Do we fully accept the fact that every attempt on our part to taper off, or stop using, or to control our using had failed? Do we know in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something that we don't want to be: liars, thieves, schemers?

Step One means that we don't have to make excuses for the way we are, and that is a great freedom. Surrender means not having to fight anymore. It took a while, for some of us, to realize how unmanageable our lives had become; for others, this was about the only thing of which we could be sure. In a way, we were like gamblers, and we didn't like the odds against us. This is the way we recover when we

1 hit bottom; it's like the slide has stopped. With the ad-
2 mission of complete defeat, we stopped it right there.

3 After struggling through the daily burden with the monkey
4 on our backs, we reached despair. When we were beaten, we
5 became willing. The pain of working the program did not seem
6 as great as the pain of addiction, so we surrendered. The
7 hole in our gut was filled with a new understanding of our
8 place in the world and love for others. As we got clean and
9 worked this Step, we were released from our chains. We are
10 now free people. None of the Steps work by magic. We do not
11 just say the words of the Steps; we live them.

12 Some of us found getting clean a battle. The program is
13 simple. No one ever said it was easy. Recovery is a contact
14 process. We don't have to hug each other but it helps. We
15 read this book and attend N.A. meetings. We see for ourselves
16 if the Fellowship has something to offer us. It is not where
17 we are that counts, but where we are going!

18 None of us stumbled into this Fellowship brimming with love,
19 honesty or open-minded willingness. We have all reacted the
20 point where it seemed we could not longer continue because of
21 intense pain: physical, mental and spiritual. However, life
22 was not unbearable; it only seemed unbearable because of our
23 old familiar ways and our thinking. We found that we had no
24 choice but to change, or go back to using. All that was re-
25 quired was willingness. When we gave it our best go, it
26 worked for us as it has worked for others. When we could stand
27 our old ways no longer, we began to change. All that was re-
28 quired is that we try. Only under attack by severe and un-
29 yielding pain did the walls begin to crumble.

30 We began to see where we had rationalized the most errant
31 sort of nonsense in order to justify the mess we had made of
32 our lives. We could admit that we were truly powerless over
33 our addiction and that our lives were unmanageable. We could
34 admit complete defeat, and the help came.

35 This was a great paradox for us--we who were so proud of
36 our self-sufficiency and will power. But life had brought us

little happiness. We had used our will power a lot. The more 1
we exerted our will, the worse things got. Often, when things 2
got really bad, we had said, "This time, I have got to get my 3
act together." By sheer will power we had gotten clean, temp- 4
orarily. When we began to see that will power alone wasn't 5
going to pull us through anymore, we tried countless other 6
remedies--counselors, psychiatrists, hospitals, lovers, new 7
towns, new jobs--everything we tried, failed. We quit for a 8
day, a week or a month perhaps, but sooner or later we took 9
that first pill, fix, drink or toke and we were gone again-- 10
worse than ever. None of our best efforts got us anywhere in 11
the long run. Our unaided will was not enough. 12

We had nothing left to lose. We gave up--quit struggling-- 13
surrendered, completely and unconditionally. Then and only 14
then did we begin to recover from the disease of addiction. 15
Recovery begins with the first admission of powerlessness. 16
From that point forward, we can see that every clean day is 17
a successful day, and that any seeming failure is only a temp- 18
orary setback. 19

We quit fighting. We accept our addiction and life the 20
way it is. We became willing to do whatever was necessary to 21
stay clean, even those things we didn't like doing. We had 22
been beaten by our addictions, and left miserable and desper- 23
ate. We were addicts. Drugs would no longer do for us what 24
they had once done. 25

We had been beaten into a corner by our own actions, and 26
we were in the grip of an overwhelming addiction. We had 27
found hope. We began to see that the Steps of the program 28
would be our source of strength and that the obsession for 29
drugs will eventually disappear. We saw that we could learn 30
to function in the world we live in, that we, too could find 31
meaning and purpose in life, and that we could be rescued from 32
insanity, depravity and death. 33

STEP TWO

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

1 We have a disease: progressive, incurable and terminal.
2 The most amazing single fact about the disease is that we went
3 out and bought it on the time plan! That is insane. Think
4 about that--you, me, everyone we meet in N.A.; the junkie
5 snatching purses on the street, and the sweet ladies hitting
6 two or three doctors for their perfectly legal prescriptions.
7 All of us have this one thing in common--we buy the disease
8 that kills us and, one way or another, we usually pay for it,
9 a bag at a time, a few pills at a time, or a bottle at a time
10 until we die. That is at least part of the insanity of addic-
11 tion. The price may seem higher for the girl who prostitutes
12 herself for her fix than it is for the woman who merely lies
13 to her doctor; but ultimately, both pay with their lives. Ask
14 yourself this question: Do I believe it would be insane to
15 walk up to someone and say, "Would you please sell me my own
16 death--on the time plan?" or "May I please have a heart attack
17 or a fatal accident?" If you can agree that this would be an
18 insane thing comparable to giving yourself an injection of
19 deadly poison, only slower, you should have no trouble with
20 the Second Step.

21 The Second Step is the most important thing that must hap-
22 pen for us to achieve any sort of ongoing recovery. The First
23 Step leaves us where we need to come to believe in something
24 that can help us with our powerlessness and sense of helpless-
25 ness. Belief became the most important thing for us to work
26 on. We have some type of belief and unless we examine it and
27 seek to improve it, it may be insufficient to give us recovery.
28 Certainly our belief didn't help us with our active addiction.
29 We now have a workable idea of a Higher Power.

30 You may be one of us who says, "I need help with my drug
31 problem and I can see that N.A. has that alright, but the
32 Second Step says this Power greater than ourselves will restore

us to sanity and I'm not crazy. I just can't handle drugs." 1
Many of us started out with that attitude. Our first instinct 2
is to say "no way." But when we approach it with an open mind, 3
and talk and listen to others, we begin to see evidence of 4
some power that cannot be fully explained. Confronted with 5
this, most of us will at least admit to the possibility of a 6
greater power. Eventually, we will come to some kind of per- 7
sonal understanding we can use.

Belief is the beginning. It is helpful to stop at this 8
point to review our thinking in this respect. We should not 9
take the chance that our understanding of a Power greater than 10
ourselves is sufficient. The Power can be the group itself or 11
it can follow a religious tradition. The only thing we want 12
to emphasize is that you should feel comfortable with your 13
Higher Power and be able to make the statement that your Power 14
cares about you. If you can accept the fact that a large num- 15
ber of addicts like yourself, have found a way, in the program 16
of Narcotics Anonymous, to live clean, then you only have to 17
believe what you see in order to experience Step Two. 18

N.A. has many members. This collective Spiritual Power 19
is certainly greater than that of any individual member. What 20
is impossible for one alone is often light work for many, be- 21
cause the many are a greater power than the one alone. You 22
don't have to be religious to accept the idea of a power 23
greater than yourself! Just look around with an open mind 24
and you will see a positive Power all around N.A. You can 25
call it love, or harmony, or peace, or cleanness, or good, 26
or you can call it God. It doesn't matter, and by looking 27
and listening as openly as you can, you find that N.A. has 28
the Power to help addicts. 29

The Higher Power we use in N.A. is a lot like this: We 30
begin by simply admitting to the possibility of a power greater 31
than ourselves. From the very beginning, we discover that 32
power in our lives, and that Power lives in the Fellowship. 33

We had no trouble admitting that addiction had become a 34
destructive power greater than ourselves. It logically follows 35
that there can also be a constructive power greater than our- 36

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1 selves. When drugs are washed from our bodies through daily
2 abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects, a
3 miracle takes place. Many fortunate things occur mysteriously,
4 but there are no accidents. We come to understand that our
5 recoveries are a gift from a Power greater than ourselves.
6 There is a spirit that is guiding all living things. Call it
7 Higher Power or whatever you like. If you choose, call it
8 nothing at all, but find it, and learn to benefit from its
9 power. You will gain a new life--free from drugs and the pain
10 they have caused.

11 We have begun to see only recently how much a Higher Power
12 has to offer. Clean living is only the beginning of a new life.
13 Life without fear is a gift we receive for the price of accept-
14 ance.

15 We gradually begin to find some order in the universe, and
16 accept that "some power" was supplying us with a conscience we
17 had never had before, and was somehow giving us the power to
18 overcome the compulsion to use. It certainly wasn't us, indi-
19 vidually. Many of us have come to believe that the forces of
20 life know what our real needs are and will take care of us when
21 undisturbed by self-will.

22 We learn to keep a watchful eye on our daily H.A.L.T.S.
23 maintenance: We eat when Hungry; we talk with a recovering
24 addict when Angry or Lonely; we rest when Tired; and when we
25 begin to take ourselves Seriously, we get to an N.A. meeting
26 and share. Sanity is having our priorities in order. We don't
27 use drugs; we go to meetings; and through the N.A. program, we
28 learn to rely on God to provide what we need on a daily basis.
29 We have been restored to sanity as far as the obsession to
30 use is concerned.

31 The important thing to remember as the urge to use occurs
32 is that just because the mind is asking for drugs, doesn't mean
33 the body is. We are so into denial and over-controlling our
34 emotions that the occasional thought of drugs may be the only way
35 our mind knows to get our attention. The mind signals drugs
36 when the body may actually be asking for vitamins, food, rest or

companionship. So we need daily H.A.L.T.S. maintenance. 1

Most addicts have strong feelings about their Higher Power 2
and vigorously defend their right to their own understanding 3
of Higher Power. The strength to move into action comes from 4
our Higher Power. 5

Asking for help in specific terms usually precedes getting 6
that help. By opening the gates of our hearts, we become ready 7
to receive the help we need. 8

We need to accept this step to start our road to recovery. 9
When our belief has grown to some point of comfort, we are 10
ready for Step Three.

STEP THREE

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives
over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

As practicing addicts, our will and our lives we're con- 11
trolled by drugs. Our choices were determined by drugs. We 12
were trapped by our need for connections and cash. Then, when 13
we got the drugs, the search was over for a few hours or maybe 14
a few days. During that time our total being, the mind, body, 15
the soul was dominated by the drug. 16

For a time it was pleasurable, at least in the early stages 17
of addiction. Ultimately, the effect began to wear off and 18
then the drug showed its ugly side. Often we found that the 19
higher our drugs took us, the lower they brought us. When our 20
nerves were jangling like a fire alarm, we faced two choices. 21
Either we suffered withdrawal, or we took more drugs. For all 22
addicts, the day comes when there is no longer a choice. We 23
must have more drugs. Whether we are under the influence or 24
not, our will, our lives and every single action is directly 25
controlled by drugs. 26

Obviously, our way did not work. In utter desperation, 27
we looked for another way. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are 28
told that we can turn our will and our lives over to the care 29
of a God of our own understanding. This is a giant step, 30

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1 anyone can take it. We don't have to be religious. All that
2 is required is a willingness to believe. We had to be will-
3 ing to do anything to get that next fix. What have we got to
4 lose?

5 We have only to believe what we see with our own eyes in
6 the transformed lives of other N.A. members. That's all it
7 takes--an open mind. If the word God bothers you, as it did
8 many of us in the beginning, substitute Recovery, Good, Love,
9 N.A., Peace or anything positive, just so you mean it.

10 None of these STEPS of N.A. work by magic. They work when
11 they are lived. The Steps of N.A. are easier to live by than
12 the law of the needle, bottle, pill or joint. If you want to
13 stay clean and are willing to do a few simple things and are
14 honest with yourself, we guarantee that you can recover.

15 We found that all we needed to do was try. When we gave
16 our best effort to the program, it worked for us as it has
17 worked for countless others. The Third Step does not say "We
18 turned our will and our lives over to the care of God." It
19 says, "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over
20 to the care of God, as we understood Him." We made the de-
21 cision; it was not made for us by the drugs, our families, a
22 probation officer, judge, therapist or doctor. We did. For
23 the first time since that first high, we have made a decision
24 for ourselves. If you understand God to be simply whatever
25 keeps the rest of us clean, that's fine. Ask that Power to
26 take care of you as it takes care of us--even if it makes you
27 feel stupid! Go off by yourself and say silently, "God, I've
28 made a mess of my life. I can't solve my problems and I ask
29 you to take care of me and show me how to live."

30 When you honestly try, it will work. Many of us start our
31 day with that prayer or a similar plea: "Thy will be done."
32 The release by letting go and letting God helps us develop
33 what works here and now. We can experience this release daily
34 by using the N.A. program.

35 In the Third Step, we simply recognize that there is a
36 force for good in the world and we cooperate with that force.

We let good things happen to us. Every action we took in regard to drugs was an effort to get comfortable. It did not work, or we wouldn't be where we are today. When we turn to the God of our own understanding for care and direction and guidance, we learn the real meaning of comfort.

If we have come this far in the N.A. program, we have already noticed some change in our lives. However, the change may not be as fast nor as dramatic as we wish. We turned to drugs because we are people who demand instant gratification and drugs gave us that instant satisfaction. We are impatient people. It is one of life's great problems for us. Just because we stop taking drugs, the problem doesn't immediately go away.

We find that we will continue to have living problems. There are bills to be paid. We still have to function in society. Most of us still have families. We still have many of the same fears, doubts and insecurities. In fact, because we are now facing life without anesthesia, these problems appear to be more difficult and painful than ever. Do not lose heart. At these times in our recovery, the Third Step is our greatest source of strength and courage. We are no longer bogged down by addiction. We have surrendered our will and our lives to the care of a power greater than ourselves. We are now a part of the Ultimate Reality which has brought Order out of Chaos. We are no longer fighting fear, anger, guilt, remorse, self-pity, anxiety, depression and a thousand other ills.

Day by day, we discover the magnitude of the Third Step. This is the Step where we come into contact with sanity we are promised in Step Two. Reliance on a spiritual way of life is now possible for us. Our addiction is no longer a roadblock to God-consciousness. We are slowly beginning to lose those paralyzing feelings of hopelessness. We who have lived in darkness and horror for so long begin to walk freely in the sunlight of reality.

1 We find that our mood-swings are less dramatic. We have
2 natural highs followed by occasional lows. We are beginning
3 to gain balance and harmony. We have learned to stop fight-
4 ing and are learning to live. The only price is to quit
5 fighting, surrender quietly and let the God of our own under-
6 standing take care of us.

7 We have come to enjoy clean living and want more of the
8 good things that the N.A. Fellowship holds for us. We know
9 now that we cannot pause in our spiritual program; we want
10 all we can get. We are now ready for our first honest self-
11 appraisal, and we begin with Step Four.

STEP FOUR

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

12 Step Four helps us see exactly what our problems are and
13 shows us our strengths.

14 Let's face it, when we were using, we weren't very honest
15 with ourselves. We are finally beginning to become honest when
16 we admit our addiction has whipped us and that we need help.
17 It took a long time to get where we could admit we were beaten.
18 We are probably not going to recover--physically, mentally or
19 emotionally--overnight. Step Four is going to help us toward
20 recovery more than we can imagine. Most of us were surprised
21 to find that we had many good points in our inventory. Ask
22 anyone who has some time on the program and who has the kind
23 of life you want for yourself, they will tell you that the
24 Fourth Step was a turning point in their lives.

25 Some people make the mistake of approaching the Fourth Step
26 as if it were a confession of how horrible they are--what a
27 bad person they had been. This is not the purpose of the
28 Fourth Step. We are trying to free ourselves of living in old,
29 useless patterns. We take the Fourth Step to gain the neces-
30 sary strength and insight to enable us to grow in this new way

of life. A binge of emotional sorrow over real or imagined 1
wrongs will not help us. In fact, it can be quite harmful. 2

Our purpose is to be rid of guilt--not wallow in it! 3
We must be done with the past, not cling to it. We want to 4
look our past in the face and see it for what it was--and then 5
to release it so that we can live today. The past, for most 6
of us, has been a ghost in the closet. We have been afraid to 7
open that closet for fear of what that ghost may do to us. 8

You don't have to do this alone. Your will and your life 9
are now in the hands of the Source of all strength--tap into 10
the Source! Writing a thorough and honest inventory looks im- 11
possible to most of us. It is--if we are operating under our 12
own "power." Take a few quiet moments before writing and pray 13
for "the power to carry it out." 14

Don't write the inventory with any particular person in 15
mind. If you do that, you may wind up "slanting" what you 16
write in order to please them. Only time will tell, and the 17
Fifth Step will take care of itself. Stay here in the Now-- 18
you are on Step Four. We cannot do Step Five until we have 19
completed Step Four. 20

You may approach the Fourth Step in a number of ways. It 21
is advisable that before you start, go over the first Three 22
Steps with your sponsor. Be comfortable with your understand- 23
ing of these steps. Allow yourself the privilege of feeling 24
good about what you are doing. Don't be driven as you were 25
so long driven by drugs. We have been trashing about for a 26
long time and have gotten nowhere. Now, we are going to take 27
it easy and not let things frighten us. 28

With pen and paper, we begin the moral inventory. If the 29
word moral bothers us, we call it a positive/negative inven- 30
tory, or a good/bad inventory. The way to write an inventory 31
is to write it! Thinking about an inventory, talking about it, 32
theorizing the inventory will not get it written. Sit down 33
with a notebook, pray, pick up your pen and start writing! 34
All we seek to do is find out which things about ourselves 35
need changing. If we were grocers we would not hesitate to 36

1 separate the rotten fruit from the good and throw out the
2 rotten fruit. The N.A. program has the Fourth Step with which
3 we examine ourselves.

4 It is important to remember where we came from so that we
5 don;t return. We had to go through what we did to get to where
6 we are now.

7 A basic rule of thumb is that we can write too little, but
8 we never write too much. The inventory will fit the indivi-
9 dual, we simply write until the brain is emptied. Anything we
10 we think about is possibly inventory material. We realize how
11 little we have to lose and how much we have to gain. We plunge
12 into this step without reservation.

13 We remove these thorns in the side by listing them on paper.
14 As recovering addicts we sit down with paper and pen and pray
15 for God's help in revealing the defects that are causing pain
16 and suffering. We pray for the courage to be fearless and
17 thorough so that this inventory may help us put our lives in
18 order. When we pray and take action it always goes better for
19 us.

20 As using addicts, we lived under a regime of fear. In
21 attaining our new life, we want it free of unreasonable fear.
22 A lot of times we try to look good in front of other people,
23 but deep down inside we are really afraid of who we are and
24 where we came from.

25 We write down our fears, our resentments and our guilts.
26 We examine in depth our relationships with people, places and
27 situations asking ourselves what we have demanded of these re-
28 lationships. Often the answers will show that we are placing
29 unreasonable demands on reality. We find that we are demanding
30 other people to stop being who they are.

31 Most of us have found that we were neither so terrible nor
32 so wonderful as we supposed. Ultimately, we are just human,
33 with the same fears, longings and troubles as everyone else.
34 One of the greatest benefits of the N.A. program is discovering
35 that we need never be alone again. Others have felt as we feel.
36 Others have failed where we failed. They are here now in the

strength of the Fellowship, ready and eager to help us. 1

This Fourth Step can be a wonderful adventure, reviewing 2
our past performance and our present behavior to see what we 3
want to keep and what we want to be rid of. This Step has 4
the reputation of being difficult. In reality, it's quite 5
simple. 6

As recovering addicts, we now have the right to reach for 7
levels of greater comfort and we can reach them, when we get 8
a handle on what we've been doing wrong. If we want to feel 9
good, we have to stop doing the things that make us feel bad. 10

We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we 11
would not be human. The important thing is that we do our 12
best. We use the tools available to us, and because we do 13
not want to lose any of what we have gained, we will want to 14
continue in the program. It is our experience that no matter 15
how searching and thorough, no inventory is of any lasting 16
effect, unless it is promptly followed by an equally thorough 17
Step Five. 18

STEP FIVE

We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another
human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

After taking a thorough Fourth Step, we have to deal with 19
what we have found in our inventory. We have decided what 20
our defects are, but we still don't know how to deal with them. 21
We are told that if we keep these defects inside us, they could 22
lead us to using again. We have to beware of half-measures 23
on this Step. Holding on to our own "garbage" would even- 24
tually sicken us and hold us back from really taking part in 25
this new way of life. If we take a Fifth Step, but we really 26
don't get honest, we will have the same negative results that 27
dishonesty brought us in the past. 28

Our Higher Power will be with us when we do this, and 29
will help to free the fear of facing ourselves and another 30
human being. Many of us, before we take Step Five, fear that 31

1 God will turn away from us, when we reveal ourselves to Him.
2 It seemed unnecessary to some of us to admit the exact nature
3 of our wrongs to God. "God already knows all that stuff", we
4 rationalized. True, God does already know all that stuff, but
5 until we face God with it, we will never really believe that
6 He does. The admission must come from our own lips to be truly
7 effective for us.

8 For years, we have avoided seeing ourselves as we really
9 are. We were ashamed of ourselves and felt isolated from the
10 rest of the world. Now, we've got this shameful past trapped
11 on paper. We can sweep it out of our lives, if we face it and
12 admit it. It would be tragic mistake to have it all written
13 down and then just shove it into a drawer.

14 We have feared that if we ever revealed ourselves as we
15 really were, we would surely be rejected. Maybe this was be-
16 cause we had already rejected ourselves. We were so self-
17 centered that we didn't realize just how much we had in com-
18 mon with our fellow addicts. Before coming to Narcotics
19 Anonymous, we had felt that no one could ever relate to us
20 or understand the reasons behind the things we had done. We
21 quickly realized that we had been unrealistic in feeling that
22 way. N.A. people did understand us.

23 We must carefully choose the person who is to hear our Fifth
24 Step. Although there is no hard rule about what kind of per-
25 son we should choose, it is important that we trust that per-
26 son. Only complete confidence in the person's integrity and
27 closed mouth can make us willing to be thorough in this Step.

28 Some of us take our Fifth Step with a total stranger, but
29 most of us feel most comfortable choosing a fellow member of
30 N.A. We know that a fellow addict would be less likely to
31 judge us with malice. People often select clergymen, or mem-
32 bers of the medical profession, because these people are
33 accustomed to keeping confidences in their work. Whoever we
34 select, we make certain that they know what we are attempting
35 to do and why we are doing it. We are often amazed at how
36 willing most people are to help us. We never knew that people

actually cared enough about us to want to help in our re- 1
covery. 2

Once we make up our minds and are actually alone with the 3
person we have chosen to accept our confidence, we proceed 4
with enthusiasm. We want to be very definite and thorough. 5
We realize that this is a life and death matter. 6

There is a danger that we will exaggerate our wrongs, and 7
an equal danger that we will minimize or rationalize away our 8
part in situations. If we are anything like we were when we 9
first entered the N.A. Fellowship, we will still tend to want 10
to "sound good". This is a luxury we can't afford. This Step 11
must cut into our character defects and expose our motives and 12
our actions for what they really were. We have no right to 13
expect these things to reveal themselves. It isn't easy, 14
but it is simple. We want to tell the truth, cut and dry, 15
as quickly as possible. We do not procrastinate. 16

We will never be able to name all of our past mistakes, 17
so we need not expect our first spoken inventory to be per- 18
fect. If we choose, we will be continuing the process of 19
self-assessment for the rest of our lives. For now, we will 20
try to get most of the "garbage" out in the first session. 21

For many years, we have covered up our low self-esteem 22
by hiding behind phony images that we hoped would fool people. 23
Unfortunately, we ended up fooling ourselves more than anyone. 24
Although we often appeared attractive and confident on the 25
outside, we were really hiding a shaky, insecure person on 26
the inside. "One thing you can't hide, is when you're 27
crippled inside." The masks have to go. 28

Once we had taken this Step, we felt lightened and re- 29
freshed. We were finally free to be ourselves, because we 30
were not trying to cover anything up. It was a great relief 31
to be rid of all our secrets, to share the burden of past 32
guilts. Usually, as we share this Step, the listener will 33
share some of his story too, and we will find out that the 34
things about ourselves that we thought were so awful or dif- 35
ferent weren't all that unusual. We see, by the acceptance 36

1 in the eyes of our confident, that we can be forgiven, even
2 loved, just the way we are. Even though our examination of
3 ourselves usually reveals some things about ourselves that
4 we don't particularly like, facing these things and bringing
5 them out in the open makes it possible for us to deal with
6 them constructively. And, now that they are out of the closet,
7 ready to be faced and dealt with, we realize that these things
8 about ourselves can be changed. We cannot make these changes
9 alone. We need our Higher Power's help, and the help of the
10 Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

STEP SIX

We were entirely ready to have God remove these
defects of character.

11 Let us go back to the First Step for a minute. Remember
12 that we had to surrender completely to obtain relief. We had
13 to admit we were whipped. In examining ourselves as honestly
14 as possible it is probable that we have discovered some things
15 about ourselves that we don't like. Perhaps we call them de-
16 fects. Whatever we call them, we recognize that we must change
17 if we are to -row. The Sixth Step is the same situation; we
18 can't do it ourselves; but we know that God as we understand
19 Him can do it for us.

20 Do we really want to be rid of our resentments, our angers,
21 our fears? Do we really understand that they are a deadly
22 poison in the heart of an addict? Many of us cling to our
23 fears, doubts, and self-loathing or hatred of others, because
24 there is a certain distorted security in familiar pain. It
25 seems safer to hold on to the old familiar pain than to let go
26 of it for the unknown. Letting go of character defects should
27 be done with love. Fear and hate cannot give us new lives. We
28 should approach old defects with patience and understanding,
29 for they have served us well in days past. They have kept us
30 from situations we couldn't handle before we found the program
31 and a source of power. We should be more grateful that our

defects are not more pronounced or of a more harmful nature. 1
When we see how our defects exist in our lives and accept 2
them, we can let go of them and get on with our new life. 3

We look to the Fellowship for the kind of life we want for 4
ourselves. We ask our friends, "Did you let go?" Without 5
exception the answer is, "Yes, to the best of our ability." 6

When we are working Step Six, it is important to remember 7
that we are human and should not place great expectations on 8
ourselves. We should be serious when we say "entirely ready 9
to have all these defects removed." This is a step of willing- 10
ness. That is the spiritual principle of Step Six. It is 11
as if to say that we are now willing to move along spiritual 12
lines toward a destination we couldn't imagine. Being human 13
we will of course fall short. 14

We will still get mad and still feel hurt, especially if 15
we are too hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or too serious 16
(H.A.L.T.S.). We are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfec- 17
tion. Adequacy can be achieved, but perfection cannot. We 18
can reach and awaken the force of life within ourselves; it 19
can do anything, even give us a new life. The breakdown of 20
old ideas and old ways seems to be beyond our conscious con- 21
trol. The only control of the situation we seem to have is 22
a choice of acceptance. What areas we can change in, how fast 23
we change, and in what order all seem to be predetermined by 24
our very nature. If we accept God's will, we will be able to 25
follow the necessary path to a better life. 26

Willingness is what we strive for in Step Six. The tools 27
we use to maintain our willingness are practice and prayer. 28
How sincerely we work Step Six will be proportionate to our 29
desire for change. We often feel that we will never be ready 30
to have all our defects removed, but we should remember that 31
the main point is that we are on a journey, and the destina- 32
tion isn't what matters. Willingness to serve God is what we 33
strive for. 34

Without these defects, life is ever sensational and deeply 35
wonderful. We learn that we are growing when we make new 36

1 mistakes instead of repeating old ones. Life with these de-
2 fects may cause perpetual frustration, tension, and relapse.

3 We decide what our priorities are and envision life free
4 from defects. We recognize our defects and surrender to the
5 simple suggestions that the program offers us.

6 We feel that the Sixth Step is the honest willingness to
7 let go of those shortcomings about ourselves. We become ready
8 to part with the fears and doubts of that other life.

9 We continue to attempt to manage our lives and will need to
10 go back to Step Six to renew our readiness to have our defects
11 removed.

STEP SEVEN

We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

12 Having decided we want God, as we understood Him, to relieve
13 us of the useless or destructive aspects of our personalities,
14 we have arrived at the Seventh Step.

15 We have all spent much of our lives being anything but
16 humble. We have been humiliated by many of the things that
17 happened to us while using, but most of us avoided true humility
18 until we worked the First Step. Then again, in the Third Step,
19 we asked God to direct our will and our lives. Now, in the
20 Seventh Step, we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

21 The key to this Step is an understanding of the humility.
22 Humility is a part of staying clean, as food and water are to
23 staying alive. As we struggled along in our addiction, we
24 devoted our energy towards satisfying our material needs. We
25 always had to have a satisfaction of our basic desires, such
26 as power and prestige. We never thought of spiritual growth
27 or asking a Higher Power for direction. Drugs were our Higher
28 Power.

29 We couldn't handle the trials and tribulations of life all
30 by ourselves. It wasn't until we made a real mess of our lives
31 that we realized that we couldn't do it alone. By admitting

that we achieved our first glimpse of humility. 1

If the defects we have discovered are real and we have a 2
chance to be rid of them, we would surely experience a sense 3
of well being when we rid ourselves of them. Some will want 4
to get on their knees for this Step. Some will be very quiet 5
or put forth a great mental effort to show intense willingness. 6
The word humble applies because we approach this Power greater 7
than ourselves to ask for the most wonderful gift of the pro- 8
gram; the freedom to live without the limitations of our past 9
ways. However we want to handle it, we go all the way. 10
Think of what we have to lose! As soon as we feel ourselves 11
willing, we should go ahead and ask God to remove our short- 12
comings. 13

When we were using, our spiritual and emotional growth 14
came to a halt. We did not mature and grow like a normal 15
person. Now that we are clean, there are many situations in 16
our daily lives that are difficult to understand. By prac- 17
ticing the virtue of humility and asking for help, we can get 18
through even the toughest times. "I can't, we can!" It is a 19
sign of growth. 20

We have to realize that people can give us direction and 21
that our way of thinking is not the only way. We must punc- 22
ture our egos and realize that we have much more work to do. 23
When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction is 24
one of defensiveness. If we truly want to grow, we will take 25
a good look at what is pointed out. We must realize we are 26
not perfect and there are things we must change. 27

We have noticed that humility plays a big part in this 28
program and our new way of life. We take our inventory; we 29
become ready to let God remove our defects of character; we 30
humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings. This is our road 31
to spiritual growth, to change our character, day by day, to 32
gradually, carefully and simply pull ourselves out of the 33
isolation and loneliness of addiction into this mainstream of 34
useful Fellowship. This comes not from wishing, but from 35
action and prayer. The main objective of Step Seven is to 36

1 get out of ourselves and strive for achieving the will of our
2 Higher Power. Our will didn't work.

3 If we are careless and fail to grasp the spiritual meaning
4 of this Step, it will seem an unbearable chore, impossible to
5 complete and unlikely to do anything but stir up old troubles.
6 Like all the Steps, the point of this one is freedom. None of
7 these Steps work by magic. They work when they are lived. We
8 are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection; for perfection
9 is a divine quality.

STEP EIGHT

We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and
became willing to make amends to them all.

10 The last five Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, the Eighth
11 through the Twelfth, are the "get out and live" Steps. Just
12 as the First, Second, and Third Steps give us the necessary
13 tools to begin a clean life, and the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and
14 Seventh Steps complete the process of self-forgiveness and
15 the beginning of new attitudes. The Eighth Step starts the
16 procedure of forgiving other people, being forgiven by them,
17 and learning how to live in the world as a drug-free human
18 being.

19 The point of the Eighth Step is willingness. Are we will-
20 ing, if it is possible and practical, to make amends; once,
21 and for all, clear away the shadows of fear that our past
22 holds for us?

23 The preceding Seven Steps looked pretty rough until we
24 took the plunge and go into them. This one is no different.
25 It seems hard now, but once we've done it, we'll wonder why
26 we didn't do it long ago.

27 The Eight Step is not easy; it demands a new kind of
28 honesty about our relations with other people. We had to feel
29 better internally before we could even bear to think about
30 whom we had harmed and how we had harmed them, and exactly
31 what was the way we perceived ourselves.

This Step is a good test of our new found humility, we
consult with our sponsors in this matter. Again, as in the
Fourth Step, we do not want to become entangled in useless
and dangerous self-loathing. Our purpose is to achieve free-
dom from the guilt we have carried so far, with so much pain,
so that we can look the world in the eye with neither aggres-
siveness nor fear.

We admit we are at fault regardless of what the other per-
son did to arouse our hostility. We admit that we hurt them,
directly or indirectly, through some action, some lie, some
broken promise, neglect or whatever.

It will not make better persons to judge the faults of
another. The thing that will make us better is to clean up
our lives by relieving ourselves of guilt. The Eighth Step
is a mighty stride away from a lie dominated by guilt and
remorse.

We need some real honesty before we can make an accurate
list. In preparing to make the Eight Step list, it is help-
ful to define harm. One definition of harm is physical or
mental damage. Another definition is inflicting pain, suf-
fering or loss.

The damage may be caused by something that is said or
done, and the harm resulting from these words or actions may
be either intentional or unintentional on the part of the
person who is inflicting the harm. The degrees of harm can
run from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to in-
flicting bodily injury or even death.

We make our list, or take it from our Fourth Step and
add to it any more people we can think of and we face that
list honestly and openly and examine our fault. Are we will-
ing to make amends? In many cases we cannot do it, it is not
possible nor practical in some instances. We may not know
who it was we wronged. In other instances we might run the
risk of involving a third person, some companions of our days
of using who do not wish to be exposed. We do not have the
right nor do we need, for any moral reason, to endanger that
person.

1 Just about anyone that comes into contact with an active
2 addict risks being harmed. Many members mention their parents,
3 spouses, children, boyfriends, girlfriends, other addicts,
4 casual acquaintances, co-workers, employers, teachers, land-
5 lords, and total strangers.

6 A problem many of us seem to have with the Eighth Step and
7 the admission of the harm we did is the belief we were victims,
8 not victimizers in our addiction. Avoiding this rationaliza-
9 tion is crucial to the Eighth Step.

10 We had to think of disassociating what had been done to us
11 and what we had done. We were forced to cut away all our jus-
12 tifications and all our ideas of being a victim.

13 The final difficulty in working the Eighth Step is separat-
14 ing it from the Ninth Step. Projecting about the Ninth Step
15 can be a major obstacle both in making the list and in becoming
16 willing. We do not even think about making amends, but just
17 concentrate on exactly what the Eighth Step says which is to
18 make a list and to become willing.

19 "We try and work this Step as if there were no Ninth Step."
20 The Eighth Step is actually an action Step. And like all the
21 action Steps it offers immediate benefits. "The main thing
22 this Step does for us is to build awareness that, little by
23 little, we are gaining new attitudes about ourselves, and how
24 we deal with other people."

STEP NINE

We made direct amends to such people wherever possible,
except when to do so would injure them or others.

25 We want to get free of our fear, but we don't wish to do so
26 at the price of anyone. It is very important that we take
27 guidance from our sponsors or spiritual advisors in this
28 matter.

29 We recommend turning over our legal problems to lawyers.
30 Professional help is available to help us with our financial
31 and medical problems. Part of learning to live is not to take on
32 problems and responsibilities that we are not equipped to handle.

In some cases we may be beyond our means. If it is, we can
only proceed with direction.

Timing is an essential part of this Step. We should make
amends when the opportunity presents itself, as long as to do
so will not cause more harm. When it gets to the point that
we cannot hold the hurt any longer, amends will be made.

In some old relationships an unresolved conflict exists.
We enter the old conflict and resolve it by making our amends,
and step back from future antagonisms and ongoing resentments.
In many instances of past wrongs we will need to go somewhere
and humbly ask forgiveness. These are the old tapes that
would keep playing back as long as we live. Sometimes, this
will be a joyous occasion when some old friend or relative
proves very willing to let by-gones be by-gones and welcome
us back to the land of the living. However, some people are
not so willing to let go of their bitterness. We can only
make our amends to the best of our ability and they can either
accept it or deny it. We feel relieved, instead of feeling
knocked down and drained in our lives. Our addiction put a
negative attitude about us in others. Step Nine helps us
with our guilt and others with their anger.

This Step should not be avoided. If we avoid this Step
we are simply reserving a place in our program to get loaded.
Pride, fear, and procrastination often seem an impossible
barrier and stand in our way of progress and growth through
the Ninth Step. The important thing is to take action and
be ready to accept the reactions of those persons we have
harmed. We have made amends as best we could.

There are some things we can make direct amends for;
some we can only make partial amends for; and some that we
remember nothing about.

We can make amends by our actions. They don't always
have to be verbal. Staying clean is also an amend because
we're no longer part of the problem. Now we're part of the
solution.

1 When it came to making amends for all the things we did
2 there was a lot to be done. In the progress of our recovery
3 we were restored to sanity and part of sanity is effectively
4 relating to others. We will less often view people as a
5 threat to our security. Real security in our gut and in our
6 recovery will replace the physical ache and mental confusion.
7 We will want to address ourselves to these people with love
8 and patience. Fear of relapse will make many of our most sin-
9 cere well-wishers reluctant to accept our recovery as real.
10 We must remember the pain they have known. In time, many
11 seeming miracles will occur. Many of us that were separated
12 from our children succeed in re-establishing deep emotional
13 bonds. However, estranged mates can be dangerous to our re-
14 covery if they don't learn some of our program. If the re-
15 lationship is real, it will survive. Re-acceptance into the
16 family of our birth, is eventual for most. Clean time speaks
17 for itself. Patience is the great method of the Fellowship.
18 The unconditional love we experience will rejuvenate our will
19 to live and each positive move on our part will be matched by
20 an unexpected opportunity.

21 The benefit of this Step is to be able to face people we
22 have harmed with a clear conscience. By discovering and ad-
23 mitting our faults, we experience a miracle.

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23 mitting our faults, we experience a miracle.

STEP TEN

We continued to take personal inventory, and when
we were wrong promptly admitted it.

24 We as addicts, suffer from a problem deeper than the drugs
25 we took. Because of this, we must live by spiritual principles.
26 Step Ten and all the Steps are to be applied to every area of
27 our lives.

28 There is no area of our lives that the disease does not
29 affect. The truth is that fear is present in every area of
30 our lives. So, in our experience, the program can and must be

worked continuously in every area of our lives. If this were 1
not so, then the disease could not creep into an "unrelated" 2
area of our lives and kill us. 3

Step Ten is a continuation of a fearless and searching 4
look within ourselves in order to repair disorders that fear, 5
pride, jealousy, and other ruinous defects can cause. It helps 6
us avoid the occurrence of relapse due to other areas which 7
we may be reluctant to look. "If you take the drugs away from 8
a drug-crazed maniac, you still have a maniac." Since our 9
problems entail much more than using, we cannot recover until 10
we recognize the need for taking a good look at our attitudes 11
and motives.

Now that we are clean, we have recognized the advantage 12
of getting our own house in order. We can recognize ourselves 13
as the heart of the problem. Negativity has been our way for 14
many years and we are not able to change into complete saints. 15
Any thought that we are going to be perfect has to be smashed. 16
We must remain teachable if we are going to stay clean in this 17
program. The smart ones who argue a lot usually die. The 18
open-minded ones get to live. We do not entertain the thought 19
of ever achieving perfection. However, we must strive for 20
stability in our lives so that we can live happily and be at 21
peace with ourselves. 22

Step Ten helps us to do this. The process of inventory, 23
the good and the bad about ourselves, is essential. As addicts, 24
we are prone to fear, anger, vanity, complacency, and doing 25
the wrong thing at the wrong time. Many forms of the disease 26
manifested in self-centeredness, fear, resentment, and so on 27
can drive us into a place that we feel we cannot get out of 28
clean. 29

Are we doing our best? Are we staying honest? Are we 30
still growing, or are we slipping back into the old fears and 31
resentments? It is the purpose of the Tenth Step to answer 32
these and similar questions. Those defects of character which 33
we found in the Fourth Step are deeply ingrained in us. The 34
thing we do is check for the surfacing of defects early on 35
by working Step Ten daily.

1 How to take inventory that is effective will depend on the
2 severity of the particular trouble we are having. We look at
3 our actions during the day and we practice the art of looking
4 at where we were wrong, considering what we could have done
5 differently, and the amends we need to make. We find it help-
6 ful and humbling to admit to another human being where we were
7 wrong.

8 These are practical applications and theory has no place
9 here. We work it or we will die.

10 There is the inventory we can pause and make when we run
11 into trouble during the course of the day. Stopping, thinking
12 and remembering that by the grace of God we are clean is a
13 basic. Often, when we get home, write out a resentment, ex-
14 plaining how we feel and how we became angry, and the part we
15 played. We find out how to restrain ourselves later so we
16 don't repeat that action.

17 We do, however, remember that God, not us, is responsible
18 for our change. The line between where God does or does not
19 help us is absolutely irrelevant. All glory to God as we
20 understand Him is our attitude here. We find when we have
21 practiced this, we benefit; for pride can creep in and we
22 addicts cannot handle success very well. We usually fall into
23 the mode of the hero, and when this happens, our self-center-
24 edness eats us alive and we can die.

25 In Step Ten we strive for genuine humility. In this
26 humility we can better interact with others. We are not
27 readily angered, frightened, or maddened by greed or lust.
28 We remember our part in the divine partnership with God and
29 we are more tolerant and patient with other people.

30 Step Ten is worked while the day's ups and downs are fresh
31 in our heads. We list wrongs we have done. We do not ration-
32 alize our actions. We honestly chalk up our achievements.
33 Thus, we get our own house in order. We feel more room to
34 grow. The mess is cleaned up. We know ourselves better and
35 there is strength.

REVIEW MATERIAL:
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A warning about rationalization is that it has killed more 1
of us than anything else. At times, our motives will be ob- 2
scured by clouded thinking. We can pray for humility and use 3
it as a light to examine our real motives. Did we act out of 4
negative emotion? If so, then we can work the program on it. 5

If we want to share it at once with another person, we do. 6
Others can help us see our clouded thinking for what it is. 7
Love and pain will keep us in the middle of the road. We have 8
defects, but a willingness to live as our Higher Power would 9
have us is freedom. In life we will be tested in patience and 10
tolerance. We must keep spiritually fit to act in a spirit of 11
love and helpfulness. When we are willing to grow toward 12
these ends, wonderful things are ahead. 13

Continuing to take personal inventory means that we form 14
a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, our attitudes, 15
and our relationships on a regular basis. We try to come up 16
with honest evaluations and to put out more or less energy 17
in certain areas we are concerned with. 18

It is very important to keep sharing with other people so 19
that when we come up with a rationalization for negative be- 20
havior, we can be told about it. This highlights the preven- 21
tative part of the Tenth Step. You ask yourself as you go 22
through the day, "Am I being drawn in by some old pattern of 23
fear or resentment?", "Am I too tired?", "Am I too hungry?", 24
"Is my thinking getting cloudy?" It's a vaccination against 25
insanity on a continuing basis. 26

We have discussed the preventative side of the Tenth Step. 27
The love was there all the time, waiting for us to accept it. 28
Though we still face human pain, life finally begins to get 29
meaningful. Clean living is possible when we rely on a 30
Higher Power daily to provide us with spiritual progress, 31
establishing us in useful living. 32

In the Third Step we made a decision to turn our will 33
and our lives over to God as we understand Him. We renew 34
this effort daily in the Eleventh Step. Most of us rebelled 35
against this in the beginning, as if on a self-willed trip. 36

1 The first time we hear someone say, "Let go and let God," it
2 sound idiotic. "No," we said, "If I let go I'll disappear or
3 get taken advantage of." What happens instead is, the more we
4 improve our conscious contact with God through prayer and medi-
5 tation, the more often we pause when doubtful and say, "God, I
6 don't know what to do. Please teach me." It's a fact. When
7 we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, we begin
8 to find a peace unmatched to a drug-induced high. We begin
9 to experience an awareness and an empathy with other people.

10 The Eleventh Step helps us, in the face of a problem, to
11 be aware of God. The underlying principle of this Step is God-
12 consciousness. We try to avoid asking for specific things. It's
13 hard because we're so sure that we know what's right for us.
14 We now know if we pray to do God's will, we will receive what's
15 best for us. A person who has realized their powerlessness
16 and seen the vision the Higher Power has for them will see why
17 we pray only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to
18 carry it out. Our deepest longings and recurring images of the
19 kind of people we'd like to be are only glimpses of God's will
20 for us. Our outlooks are so limited we can only see our imme-
21 diate wants and needs through a loving God. It is our own real
22 dreams that come true.

23 When we pray a remarkable thing happens; we find the means,
24 the ways, and energies, to perform tasks far beyond our capa-
25 bilities. By the surrender of our own power, we gain a far
26 greater power that will see us through. It is important we
27 keep faith and renew it through daily prayer.

28 It is easy to slip back into our old ways. We have to
29 learn to maintain our new lives on a spiritually sound basis
30 to insure our continued growth and recovery. God will not
31 force his goodness on us, but we will receive it if we ask.
32 This is not cruelty. Enforced morality lacks the force that
33 comes from our own choice.

34 Many times, our efforts have produced in us feelings of
35 peace and serenity that we have never known before. We know
36 that in doing God's will, our lives will be fulfilled.

STEP TWELVE

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we sought to carry the message to addicts and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

The idea of a spiritual awakening takes many different forms in the many different personalities we find the Fellowship. This awakening does have some things in common throughout the Fellowship. Life takes on a new meaning, a new joy, and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile. We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. Our suffering has cleansed us of some of our illusions. In time we have been guided to a new life and place in the world and in our hearts.

This great Step is to be proceeded by the working of Steps One through Eleven. There are those of us who tried to stay clean without the benefit of "having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps," and they are no longer with us. The ones who continue to "practice these principles in all their affairs," tell us that this is the most wonderful thing one can know. The journey is a feeling of gratitude.

Usually, by the time we achieve this state of mind, no one has to tell us to share our new life with the still-suffering addict; we are more than eager to help that person because by this time we recognize that by helping others--giving away that which has been given to us--is our best possible insurance against relapse to the vague, torturous existence of a practicing addict. We call it "carrying the message" and we do it in a number of ways.

The first way in which we carry the message is by staying clean with the help of God and the Fellowship. Our new way of living speaks for itself better than our words ever could. People see us on the street and remember us as furtive, frightened loners. They notice the grayness and fear leaving our faces. They see us gradually come alive. A

1 spring comes into our step and a twinkle into our eyes. The
2 message is meaningless unless we live it. If we do live it,
3 we give it more meaning with our lives than any words can
4 express.

5 Learning the art of helping others when it is appropriate,
6 without creating resentments, is a marvelous benefit of the
7 N.A. program. Remarkably, the Twelve Steps guide us from a
8 state of humiliation and despair to a state wherein we are able
9 to act as instruments of God's will. We receive the gift of
10 being able to help fellow suffering addicts when no one else
11 can. No greater change of personality is possible; it is
12 God's love present in our lives. We see it happening among us
13 every day. This miraculous one hundred and eighty degree
14 change is evidence of spiritual awakening.

15 We attend N.A. meetings and make ourselves visible and
16 available to serve the Fellowship. We give freely and grate-
17 fully of our time, our services and our experiences to our
18 fellow addicts. We do not shirk when called upon to practice
19 these principles. We know that the more eagerly we wade in
20 and work to stay clean, the higher we're going to get and the
21 richer our spiritual awakening will be! Helping others works.
22 We do these things because they are the things that grant the
23 new lives we are enjoying.

24 In the Twelfth Step, we practice the spiritual principle
25 of giving away the N.A. message of recovery in order to keep
26 it. This is like reaping what we sow. The old habit of using
27 drugs is replaced by the new habit of not using, and helping
28 others to get clean. Even a member with one week in the N.A.
29 Fellowship can turn to a newcomer and say, "Live One Day At A
30 Time", or "An Addict Alone Is In Bad Company."

31 When we share with someone, we may say, "Lord make me an
32 instrument of Thy Will." We don't do it alone, and we don't
33 have to. It is just a matter of getting another N.A. member
34 to go with us on the Twelve Step call to carry the message to
35 a suffering addict. We don't set ourselves up as God. That
36 is why it is spiritual. We get to be an instrument of God's

grace in action. It's a privilege and an honor to go on such 1
a call. Those of us who do service work are the luckiest people 2
on God's earth! Those who have been in the pits of despair, 3
now strive to help other people to find a new and better way 4
to live. 5

We help newcomers, whether they are detoxing or just be- 6
ginning to learn the principles of N.A. We do what we can to 7
make them aware of what the program offers and try to make them 8
feel at home. Experience shows the best way to accomplish 9
these ends is to listen carefully to what they want to do about 10
their problem. Next we can share our experience, strength, 11
and hope and then accompany them to their first meeting. 12

The selfless service that comes from this work is the 13
very principle of Step Twelve. It is clearly an awareness of 14
God's grace working that provides so much of what the prac- 15
ticing addict needs. Just as the grace of a loving God was 16
given to us, we now have the opportunity to share this gift 17
with others. One Twelve Step call of this nature can make a 18
life worthwhile. There are plenty of such calls for those of 19
us in N.A. 20

The Twelfth Step also suggests that we practice these 21
principles in all of our affairs. As long as we stay clean 22
and live these Principles, we are doing Twelfth Step work. 23
We are attracting people to us and the N.A. Fellowship by our 24
example of being clean. We no longer wish to participate in 25
the problem. We now serve God. In this manner of service, we 26
renew our vow to turn our will and lives over to the care of 27
God. Even if we have no such understanding, we will acquire 28
it through seeing others recover. Fellow addicts show that 29
God is loving and we will know a life free of drugs that we 30
never dreamed possible. The Steps do not end here, they are 31
a new beginning. 32

All will be well as long as we remain abstinent and trust 33
in a Higher Power of our understanding. Living just for today 34
relieves the burden of the past and alleviates fear of the 35
future. Clean, we learned to take whatever actions were neces- 36

1 sary and to leave the results in our Higher Power's hands.
2 We learned to trust God with our fate and to let Him help us
3 do our best each day. The most important thing we can do is
4 stay clean today, through reliance upon a Higher Power.

5 We want freedom. Clean, we see that the greatest freedom
6 we can achieve is acceptance of God's will. But, we recognize
7 that we are human and subject to mental and spiritual sick-
8 ness. Each day, we ask our Higher Power to help us stay clean,
9 for that day. Each night, we give thanks for the gift of
10 recovery. Thus we begin to practice spirituality.

11 We are clean, but by no means perfect and our lives remain
12 unmanageable. We become egotistical from time to time. It
13 is hard for people in the Fellowship to reach us at these
14 times, but not impossible. Our newly found friends usually
15 call our bluff, and cut through the dishonesties. When things
16 get rough, and spiritual contact is difficult, we learn that
17 it won't last. If we do not use, and continue to maintain
18 spiritual contact within the Fellowship, we can get through
19 these trying times, and grow stronger.

20 Trusting others doesn't come naturally to us, but we must
21 learn to trust because an addict alone is in bad company. The
22 needed strength wasn't there until we found N.A., which showed
23 us how to make faith work for us. We had a lot of energy, but
24 we channelled it into self-destruction. Now, we can put the
25 same energy that we had used to perpetuate our pain into
26 strengthening our faith and becoming healthier, more loving
27 people. We first learn to love our N.A. groups. Later, through
28 service, we learn how to put our energy to work, and the more
29 we serve, the better we get at channelling energy.

30 Remember, we didn't become addicted in one day. We can't
31 possibly solve all our problems at once, no matter how much
32 energy we have. Take it easy! The only way we recover is to
33 apply what we learn from each other, on a daily basis. Our
34 growth is a lifetime process. We never stop learning, and we
35 never stop needing one another's guidance and support. So,
36 we say, "Keep coming back; it works!"

Addiction is physical, mental, and spiritual. Therefore, 1
we believe that we must develop faith in a Higher Power be- 2
fore we can hope to recover from its destruction. When we 3
have a strong faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and 4
use that faith in our daily lives, that Power will be able to 5
reach us and supply us with the strength and guidance that we 6
need to recover. 7

The N.A. program is a spiritual program. Our members who 8
are living a spiritual program have learned enough of their 9
spirit to develop and maintain a conscious contact with a 10
Higher Power. We become more spiritual as we share ourselves 11
with our fellow addicts. We gradually change from being dull 12
and uncaring to feeling clean, and unclouded by earthly con- 13
cerns. Most of us experience steady growth towards serenity 14
and towards God, as we understand God. Some have profound 15
spiritual experiences, dramatic and inspirational in nature. 16
Regardless of which category we fit into, we all go through 17
a profound change in our basic natures, which is much deeper 18
than anything merely physical or mental. After a while it 19
becomes obvious, even to outsiders, that a real and lasting 20
change is taking place in us. The most obvious change is the 21
simple fact that we are staying clean. When we rely on God 22
to guide our thoughts, changes are inevitable in our feelings 23
and actions. 24

As new members, the talk of God we hear in meetings scares 25
many of us. We are suspicious and skeptical because of dis- 26
appointments we have had with religion. We assume that some- 27
one will try to take away our freedom to believe as we choose. 28

That is not the case. Spiritual and religious freedom is 29
one of our most basic principles. Each of us are free to 30
work out our own concept of God, or reject the concept of a 31
God. We each build our relationships with our Higher Power 32
in our own way in our own time. Many of us come into N.A. 33
as atheists or agnostics. Some of us come in as religious 34
fanatics. Nobody is here to correct or change one another. 35
We operate in an atmosphere of complete acceptance and respect 36

1 for one another's beliefs. We try to avoid the arrogance of
2 self-righteousness, because it is one of the deadliest forms
3 of self-deception. Even though we avoid pushing any ideas on
4 anyone, we do suggest, strongly, that each person make an honest
5 attempt to find a Power greater than themselves.

6 From our experience, we have found that addicts who stay
7 clean, find and develop a relationship with a Higher Power.
8 We are taught to "act as if" we believe in God, by applying
9 spiritual principles and practices to our lives. Three "musts"
10 are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try. Agnos-
11 tics and atheists generally start out by just talking to "What-
12 ever's there."

13 There is a spirit or an energy that can be felt in the meet-
14 ings, and it is sometimes the newcomer's first perception of
15 God. This spirit, or whatever it is, relaxes and helps us to
16 get honest with each other. We let go of our egos and learn
17 from our fellow addicts. Honest sharing speeds our recovery
18 and makes us believe that this Power is taking care of us, and
19 working for our good. We no longer blame God and others for
20 our problems, and see that our problems have been of our own
21 making.

22 After we accept that we created our own hell and that there
23 is a God that wants to help us, we begin to make progress in
24 solving our problems. Through open-minded effort, we "act our
25 way into right thinking", letting our Higher Power find us,
26 rather than searching for God with only our minds. We come to
27 rely on a growing daily relationship with a God of our under-
28 standing. One way to develop our conscious contact with God
29 is to make up a "gratitude list", count our blessings and
30 thank our Higher Power for them. Another way is to practice
31 accepting conditions as they are, and trusting that they will
32 improve if they're supposed to. We do these exercises several
33 times a day, until they become a routine part of our lives.
34 In this way, we begin to face life on God's terms, and that
35 gives us the necessary sense of peace for us to live clean
36 successfully.

We must re-evaluate our old ideas, so that we can become acquainted with the new ideas that lead to a new way of life. We cannot throw out old ideas without replacing them. We believe that the old self-destruction and self-centeredness can only be replaced with spiritual principles. The three basic spiritual principles are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try. We say that they are the "HOW" of our program.

Rigorous honesty is the most important tool we have in learning to deal with the past and to live today. Although honesty is a difficult tool to practice, it is a most rewarding one. We practice honesty under all conditions because it is the antidote to our diseased thinking. We lose the fear of being cornered. Our lack of fear and our new found faith serves as a firm foundation for courage in the future.

Being honest is not a natural thing for us to do. We don't expect to practice total honesty in all things overnight. It is a gradual process in our daily living.

The situations that seem hardest to maintain our honesty have produced the most rewarding results. When we are honest in really difficult situations, the feelings of happiness and serenity are overwhelming.

We have never before experienced gut-level honesty because we covered up our feelings by using. We must learn to get to the bottom of each emotion we have, and face it, so we can be our true natures. Our lives become so much simpler, when we get to know ourselves.

"Cash register honesty", is a good beginning in developing self-esteem. Self-esteem is based on facing and living by the truth. When we honestly evaluate what we really have, we can learn to appreciate it. The gifts of recovery are things that we can carry with us everywhere.

Managing our own lives got us to the program of Narcotics Anonymous. What we knew about living when we got here had almost killed us. We came in sick people who knew very little about how to be happy and enjoy life. Complete open-minded-

1 ness is necessary for us to learn a new way of life.

2 Being open-minded allows us to hear something that might
3 save our lives. It allows us to listen to opposing points
4 of view, and come to conclusions of our own. Open-minded-
5 ness leads us to those very insights that have eluded us
6 during our lives. It is this principle, open-mindedness,
7 that allows us to participate in a discussion without jump-
8 ing to conclusions or predetermining who is right and who
9 is wrong. We no longer have to make fools of ourselves by
10 standing up for some non-existent values. We have learned
11 that it is O.K. to be ignorant, for when we are ignorant we
12 are teachable and can learn how to live our new life success-
13 fully.

14 However, open-mindedness without willingness, will get us
15 nowhere. We must be willing to go to any lengths to get our
16 recovery. We never know when the time will come when we must
17 put forth all the effort and strength we have to stay clean.

18 Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try, work
19 hand in hand. The lack of one of these principles in our pro-
20 grams can kill us. Living a personal program without these
21 principles, will make recovery difficult and painful for us when
22 it should be beautifully simple.

23 Remember too that H.O.W. are spiritual principles which
24 mean that they can be relied on to get us out of trouble that
25 dishonesty, closed-mindedness and unwillingness got us into.

26 If it were not for this program we would be dead. This
27 program is a vital part of our everyday living. We go to
28 any lengths to help this Fellowship and it helps us.

29 If you come to Narcotics Anonymous to use people to help
30 you continue your habit, then we cannot help you. We cannot
31 play dishonest games anymore. A closed mind is a barrier
32 against any change. On the other hand, a spirit of open-
33 mindedness, coupled with an admission of powerlessness, seems
34 to produce a positive change when asking for help. If you
35 have a drug problem and are willing to try it our way, we
36 will share with you how we stay clean.

In this Fellowship, the importance of togetherness is 1
expressed by some sayings: "United we stand, divided we 2
fall", and "I can't, we can!" These slogans tell us that if 3
we don't stick together and help each other, then we will 4
surely die. 5

We have a deadly disease, that before coming to the pro- 6
gram we did not know about. We were in the depths of despair, 7
degradation and lost in a destructive chaos. We came in puking, 8
sweating and shaking. Some of us stayed. Was it through our 9
own merit? We think not! Our way got us here. Recovery was 10
done through the help of others, the tools they shared with 11
us, and a Higher Power. 12

From the isolation of our addiction, we were thrust into 13
a fellowship of people with a common bond: addiction, N.A. 14
is like a lifeboat in a sea of isolation, unwillingness and 15
chemicals. We share the good times and the bad, victories 16
and failures, all without defeat as long as we don't pick up 17
the first fix, pill, drink, or joint. We get all our faith, 18
strength and hope from people sharing their recoveries. 19

We usually react angrily as recovering addicts if anyone 20
tells us what to do. In N.A. meetings, we share what it was 21
like in our practicing addiction, our suffering that brought 22
us to the turning point and how we stay clean today. By tell- 23
ing our own story, someone else is bound to be suffering from 24
a similar problem and our experience tells them how to deal 25
with it--what works for one, might work for another. Most 26
addicts are able to accept this type of sharing, even from 27
the very beginning. In time, we have a new source of strength 28
that will guide us in our recoveries. 29

By sharing in regularly scheduled meetings and one-on-one 30
with recovering addicts, we learn that part of our approval- 31
seeking behavior helps to keep us clean. Meetings are an 32
important part of recovery. Those who attend meetings regu- 33
larly and work the steps stay clean. We need the approval 34
of people around us. Attending meetings encourages us to 35
stay clean and reminds us what it was like to be a newcomer 36

1 and re-enforces how progressive the disease of addiction is.
2 This force in the meetings isn't just the people there, but
3 also something within the people. We return to these meetings
4 and use them like medicine in the form of unconditional love.

5 A meeting is like a fence around our clean time. It pro-
6 tects us during all of our recovery. At first, the members in
7 the meetings helped us through our remorse and self-pity by
8 accepting us just the way we were and showing us the necessary
9 care and love to begin to live clean. By returning to meet-
10 ings, we came to believe in a loving God as he expresses Him-
11 self in the group conscience, that continues to save us from our
12 addiction and help us in our daily living.

13 Finally, throughout our lives, we surround ourselves with
14 fellow members who continue to let us know we can count on them.
15 One of the advantages of the N.A. program is that it places us
16 in an intimate, regular contact with recovering addicts who can
17 most understand and help us in our recovery.

18 Our experience is that those who begin sharing innermost
19 feelings, emotions and thoughts with other recovering addicts,
20 rather than giving a drug history, tend to make more rapid
21 growth. When we tell our stories, whether one-on-one or in
22 groups, we can get out of the superficial personalities we
23 thought other people believed us to be. Only another addict
24 can understand and accept us as we are. We recover through
25 this process. The Steps guide and the meetings give us the
26 opportunity to say and hear thoughts and feelings that would
27 otherwise be held in.

28 On the outside world, a lot of the rules that apply will
29 not work with our new life in the Fellowship. Expressing our
30 need for help at the time of crisis seems like a logical thing
31 to do, but we are sometimes illogical. To us, at first, it
32 feels like insanity to give another person knowledge of our
33 pain. As we become more closely involved with others we will
34 learn to share our pain and it will lessen. Part of the horror
35 of addiction is being cut off from this human experience. Our
36 fears and guilt kept us from receiving the benefits afforded

to everyday people. Sharing enables us to return to the 1
realm of human experience, increasing our capacity to feel 2
the problems of another addict. 3

By sharing our experience of recovery with newcomers, 4
both by sponsorship and at meetings, we help ourselves stay 5
clean. We find ourselves being constantly reminded of things 6
that help us want to stay clean. Being able to serve as an 7
instrument of a loving God and participation in the recovery 8
of others keeps a sense of wonder and gratitude in our lives. 9
Giving comfort and encouragement to others encourages and 10
comforts us. Today, we have people in our lives who stand 11
by us when it's rough and help us do what we can do and not 12
worry about what we can't. Getting out of ourselves gives 13
us more perspective on life and makes it easier to live with 14
reality. We no longer feel like we have to run from our- 15
selves. This program has given us a sure way to explore 16
ourselves, rooting out defects and learning to live. 17

If you want to change your life--risk sharing! It is 18
by taking risks we have almost lost our lives, by asking 19
for help in the same way, we can change. 20

If we find ourselves in a bad place or we sense a bad 21
scene coming, we call someone or get to a meeting. We have 22
learned to seek good counsel from qualified people before 23
making difficult decisions. By reaching out and practicing 24
the virtue of humility, and asking for help, we can get through 25
even the toughest of times. I can't, we can! It is not a 26
sign of weakness, it is a sign of growth. In this way, we 27
as recovering addicts find the strength we need when we need 28
it most. It is a way of life for the addicts who want to 29
learn to live clean and have discovered one another. We 30
share our mental and spiritual resources for the good of 31
everyone. 32

Recovering addicts take great pleasure in helping other 33
suffering addicts recover. Recovery as found in Narcotics 34
Anonymous must come from within and no one can get clean for 35
anyone else. 36

1 In the course of carrying the message, each of us comes
2 to our own understanding and if we have difficulties we trust
3 our groups and the Twelve Steps of the program to guide us.
4 These things should be used to help others.

5 The Steps guide us into our place in society. We begin
6 by straightening out our internal disorder and obtaining
7 release from the defects that prevent us from being all we
8 should be. We emerge as individuals reconceived with a new
9 awareness and the ability to take our place in the world.
10 Our viewpoint changes from that of a loner to a participating
11 member. We emphasize setting our own house in order and
12 trying to do more than our part. We trust in our Higher
13 Power to give us strength and to meet our needs. If we feel
14 that we have more than our share of difficulty, we should
15 share more with others and remember to be grateful for the
16 good things we already have. If we're not grateful for the
17 things we've got, we won't be grateful for the things we are
18 yet to receive.

19 Responsibility is a key word here. There are certain
20 situations that demand more than we have to give. We should
21 avoid these or seek help if we find ourselves already in
22 such a situation. We are no longer asked to do the impossible.
23 Most of us are accustomed to getting bored and disinterested
24 when we find ourselves without major problems. We want to
25 change. Serenity not prayed for is likely to appear as bore-
26 dom. In the past we have relied on desperation to give us
27 the strength to periodically re-order our lives. There is
28 another way.

29 When we accept that we are responsible for our problems,
30 we realize that we can be equally responsible for our solu-
31 tions. It simply takes clean time for us to realize who we
32 are and what we want to do. What we can do is remember that
33 we are addicts. Being clean is abnormal to us, and we must
34 learn how to live in an on-going manner. A great magic is
35 found when we help others. As clean addicts in the Fellowship
36 of Narcotics Anonymous, we help ourselves by helping others.

Our attention focuses on the solutions, and our old ideas break 1
up and dissolve like icebergs in the tropics. When the com- 2
pulsion to use is lifted from us, and we begin to think of 3
others before ourselves, a true miracle begins. Working the 4
steps, practicing the principles and using the tools, we begin 5
to see ourselves in a new light. We find ourselves helping 6
others and securing help for our own problems. We redefine 7
ourselves. We become feeling people, capable of responding 8
appropriately to our environment. We put spiritual living 9
first and exercise patience, tolerance and humility in our 10
daily lives. The further we get from the last pill, fix, 11
drink, or toke, the more we see of our past and the more we 12
realize the miracle of the release from our disease of addic- 13
tion. 14

What we have today is the wonderful fact of our recovery 15
and all that it means to us. Each day we live clean, awakens 16
us to the freedom we had all along, but failed to realize. 17
We succeed now where we had known only failure before. Many 18
of our dreams, forgotten and obscured by our addiction, re- 19
turn and help us regain the sense of wonder and excitement 20
at the miracle of living clean. The old compulsions fade 21
and the habits of mind associated with addiction weaken and 22
are broken. A great many things become possible for us. 23
Since we live clean and grow, we are able to take our place in 24
the world. 25

If we want to reap the benefits of staying clean, we find 26
it necessary to take continual inventories of ourselves. 27
Hidden fears and needs are still potential driving forces. 28
Just because we don't recognize fear or anger doesn't mean 29
that it isn't influencing our lives. We found it important 30
to examine places where we grew angry or our beliefs were 31
tested. The areas we didn't want to question were those 32
that most needed to be looked at. 33

We also found it important to examine the other side of 34
the coin, the so called "good" qualities like truth. Truth 35
seems to be something that is impossible to understand until 36

1 it becomes obvious. Truth is something we never suspected
2 until we knew it. There are no exceptions--only incomplete
3 truths. Everything we know is subject to revision, especially
4 what we know about truth.

5 Another desirable quality is love. We love the ambitious
6 for they can inspire us; we love the failures for they can
7 teach us; we love the kings for they are but human; we love
8 the meek for they are divine. We love the poor for they are
9 so many. We love the rich for they are lonely. We love the
10 young for the faith they hold; we love the old for the wisdom
11 they share. We love the beautiful for their eyes of sadness;
12 we love the ugly for their souls of peace.

13 We think of love as a shield against the attacks of other
14 people, and as a weapon to blast through walls of hate, and
15 to open closed hearts and closed minds. We feel protected by
16 our love, through adversity, discouragement, anger, and in-
17 security. We even feel uplifted by love, in the moments of
18 despair that still sometimes come to haunt us. As our love is
19 strengthened, we become stronger, and better able to meet
20 life's trials.

21 In dealing with the other people in our lives, we develop
22 a loving attitude. We forgive more easily, anger more slowly,
23 expect less, and give more to our brothers and sisters. We
24 come to see all people as our brothers and sisters. We have
25 learned this kind of unconditional love from our fellow addicts
26 in Narcotics Anonymous.

27 Through the love we have received in our Fellowship, we
28 begin to feel lovable ourselves. From there, we can truly
29 start to love and respect ourselves. This feeling of self-
30 love is totally alien to the egotism that we used to bolster
31 ourselves with, as practicing addicts. It is one of the things
32 that brings a sense of calmness to us, a feeling of solidarity
33 that comes from knowing the truth about ourselves, and accept-
34 ing it. In the old days, we knew, deep down inside, that we
35 were faking it whenever we indulged in our delusions of grandeur
36 and self-importance. Now, because we are beginning to love

ourselves unashamedly, we can love other people more com- 1
pletely, because we no longer feel like we have anything to 2
hide from anyone. 3

Our egos used to control us in all kinds of subtle ways. 4
For one thing, it seemed important for us to compete with 5
others in almost all of our endeavors. Some of us even refused 6
to try something that we might not be the best at. We watched 7
other people closely, not with any concern for their well- 8
being, but to check and see if we were measuring up to their 9
standards. Some of us had no idea who we were, or who we 10
wanted to be. We only knew we didn't want to be ourselves. 11
Now, we realize that we were unwisely comparing our insides 12
to others' outsides, which could only work to frustrate us in 13
the long run. 14

The Twelve Steps to recovery, that N.A. outlines for us, 15
hold the answer for all of our ego-trips and insecurities. 16
They seem to hold the only answers for us that we can really 17
use. In living these Steps, we first begin to let go of 18
old egotism. We then open up to a Higher Power, so that we 19
will lose all fear of facing ourselves and of facing other 20
people. Eventually, when we sincerely use this program of 21
action in our daily lives, we will be able to face our Higher 22
Power, ourselves, our loved ones, and even the "cold, cruel 23
world." We develop a solid base to work from, which assures 24
us that we can go anywhere and do anything, with complete 25
assurance that we can handle whatever we have at hand. With 26
that kind of attitude, we have a real basis for living happily, 27
and we are able to really be of help to the addict who is 28
still suffering. 29

The Twelve Steps led us to a point of recovery that 30
seemed to make the world change before our eyes, for the 31
better. By practicing the N.A. principles in all our affairs, 32
we attract other addicts to us, addicts we are now capable 33
of helping. 34

Humility is a word that now loses its old negative con- 35
notations for us. In the days of our active addiction, we 36

1 were humbled by the drugs and the behavior patterns of get-
2 ting and using. We learned to place ourselves last, and the
3 addiction first. In a way, how we live now is similar to
4 that. We place our recovery first and our own petty desires
5 and egos last. We begin to actually want to do what is best
6 for all concerned, especially in our N.A. groups. We have
7 found that the best results in staying clean can come, only
8 when we serve to unify our groups by attending meetings, and
9 by serving N.A.

10 In our past, we were usually irresponsible. After we
11 face ourselves in the inventory steps, and make amends to
12 others in our amends steps, we can no longer allow other
13 people to "pay our way" for us. We want to serve.

14 Earlier, we mentioned that it was important that we learn
15 to trust each other in N.A. In our groups, we all need to
16 open up; first, selfishly, for our own recovery, and later
17 candidly, for the inspiration of the newer members. We need
18 to maintain an atmosphere of confidence by not using oppor-
19 tunities to look down on our fellow members, or gossip about
20 them. Speaking up in meetings and on a one-on-one basis with
21 a sponsor are absolutely necessary for our survival, and a
22 break of confidence could cost another addict their life.

23 Those of us who are consciously working and using the
24 Twelve Steps to recovery in our lives are seldom bothered by
25 gossip. Our lives are lived like "open books", and really
26 don't feel like hiding anything, or judging anyone. We no
27 longer feel a need to put up a front, because we are doing
28 the best we can.

29 However far we are in our recovery programs, we each need
30 to draw on the strength of the other people in the group. We
31 bring that strength out with us, into our every-day lives.
32 We apply what we learn in the meetings to all our affairs,
33 using these teachings as a basis for living, but returning,
34 again and again to our groups, both to help and to be helped
35 in our recovery from addictions.

One of the simplest and most important parts of our 1
whole recovery process is the concept of "live a day at a time." 2
Often, we have to extend that idea to "live a moment at a 3
time." In the course of our daily lives, we usually tend to 4
forget to keep things simple, and we build our problems into 5
unmovable mountains.

Patience is not exactly one of our strong points either. 6
We are experts at making ourselves so frustrated that we lose 7
perspective completely. That is why we need our slogans, and 8
our N.A. friends to remind us to face what we can, as we can, 9
and no sooner. We try to avoid setting goals for ourselves 10
that are too high for us to reach. They set us up for defeat. 11
We become willing to lower our goals, allowing ourselves to 12
give our Higher Power credit for all things we accomplish, 13
and to be grateful for them, even when we would rather accom- 14
plish more. Not only are many of us impatient with ourselves 15
about what we expect to accomplish, but we are impatient about 16
what we expect to have. During our active using, we often 17
lived way beyond our means, out of necessity. Unfortunately, 18
not all of us lose our extravagance and greed easily, even 19
after we stop using. 20

It isn't easy, but, if we want to live happily, we have 21
to learn to live ethically, and within our means, facing what 22
we have and what we have not, with honest acceptance and 23
gratitude. 24

In both, the case of accomplishing things and of acquir- 25
ing things, we usually need to develop a habit of lowering 26
our goals, to a more reasonable point, and reaching them in 27
our own time. After a while, our ability to produce and to 28
use what we have improves. As that happens, we gradually 29
start raising the goals again, but only with the guidance of 30
our Higher Power. As we do this, we insure our own success 31
in meeting the goals we have set for ourselves, letting go 32
of fear and impatience and raising our self-esteem. 33

We mentioned humility earlier, as a quality for us to 34
shoot for, particularly in the confines of our Fellowship. 35
For most of us, it is much more than that. It is an attitude 36

1 that must be developed, before we can ever expect to live happily
2 in the world. Humility is an honest self-acceptance, which
3 leads to further acceptance of the conditions around us. It
4 goes hand in hand with the qualities of patience and toler-
5 ance. As we recognize our own humanity, we become much better
6 able to recognize others, to let them make mistakes, and to
7 be themselves. We bring this new humility with us everywhere
8 we go, because each of us touches many lives.

9 One of our greatest enemies is resentment. It has the
10 power to kill. The only way to be rid of resentment is to
11 develop humility, in the form of forgiveness. We can't lose
12 our resentments, by using our own will-power, no matter how
13 hard we may try. Only through earnest prayer, and through
14 dealing with our resentments up front, can we start to forgive
15 the people we have hatred toward.

16 The benefits of forgiving our enemies are many. First, we
17 are able to use our thinking time on more important subjects,
18 instead of plotting our revenge, or writing little scenarios
19 about what we "ought to say or should have said." So, having
20 all this time, we are free to improve ourselves. We even-
21 tually start to see the very same defects that we had found
22 so intolerable in the other people in ourselves. We can do
23 little exercises in tolerance by making up our minds to let
24 people be themselves, and not lifting a finger to change them.
25 Sometimes, the best revenge we can have over a manipulative
26 or unpleasant person is in not allowing them to "pull our
27 strings" by making us react unkindly to them. If we really
28 believe that a person is wrong, we have no business letting
29 that person have control of our emotions. We are not re-
30 sponsible for another person's behavior, but we learn to
31 take responsibility for our reactions. Remember, we can't
32 change other people. We can, through the program of Narcotics
33 Anonymous, change ourselves.

34 We have just been talking about the qualities of patience,
35 tolerance, and humility. We also mentioned acceptance.
36 Actually, all of the first qualities mentioned are mere

aspects of acceptance. Those are the main ways that we use 1
acceptance in our lives. But, acceptance goes forward, to 2
the new member that comes into our Fellowship. 3

Alienation and isolation are symptoms of the mental part 4
of our disease. To the practicing addict, life is just a 5
movement between connections and oblivion. Normal concerns 6
are pushed to the side, as the disease progresses. Our 7
behavior confounds our friends and relatives, so we seek the 8
company of the only people who understand us: our fellow 9
addicts. As the drugs consume our physical reserves, we 10
pass into the desperate state where getting and using is our 11
main activity. 12

CHAPTER FIVE
WHAT CAN I DO?

Begin your own program by taking Step One from the previous chapter "How It Works". When we fully concede to our innermost selves that we are powerless over our addiction, we have taken a big step in our recovery. Many of us have had some reservations at this point, so give yourself a break and be as thorough as possible at the start. Go to Step Two, and so forth and as you go on you will come to an understanding of the program for yourself. If you are in an institution of any kind, you have gone through complete withdrawal and have stopped using for the present. Now, with a clear mind, try this way of life.

Upon release, continue your daily program and contact a member of N.A. Do this by mail, by phone, or in person. Better yet come to our meetings. Here you will find the answers to some of the things that may be disturbing you now.

If you are not in an institution, the same holds true. Stop using for today. Most of us can do for eight or twelve hours what seems impossible for a longer period of time. If the obsession or compulsion becomes too great, put yourself on a five minute basis of not using. Minutes will grow to hours and hours to days and so you will break the habit and gain some peace of mind. The real miracle happens when you realize that the need for drugs has in some way been lifted from you. You have stopped using and have started to live.

1 It all begins with that first admission and surrender. From
2 that point, each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day
3 won. At first we can do little more than attend meetings.
4 Probably we cannot remember even a single name, word or
5 thought from our first meeting. What we do remember is the

feeling we got. That no matter what we have done or what 1
course our addiction had taken, we can relax and enjoy the 2
love that fills the room at every meeting which follows the 3
Twelve Traditions. Meetings strengthened our grip on 4
recovery. 5

Having begun attending meetings regularly, we were 6
introduced to the Twelve Steps. Working the Steps got us 7
out of our old attitudes. When we admitted that our lives 8
had become unmanageable, we didn't have to argue our point 9
of view. We didn't have to be right all of the time. We 10
could relax and allow others to be wrong. We found a new 11
source of energy to put the wreckage of our lives back in 12
working order. Things that we have done to hide our illness 13
no longer seemed worth it; and we were free to open our 14
minds to new ideas. Destructive behavior could be corrected 15
as soon as we loosened our grip on our old ways. We found 16
that the fear of change was replaced by a sense of wonder 17
and adventure. Freedom to change seems to come mainly 18
after our acceptance of ourselves. 19

Freedom from our destructiveness covering up the wreck- 20
age of the past has been the main stumbling block in relat- 21
ing to others. By recognizing the defects in our characters, 22
and letting go of them spiritually, we were ready to have 23
sanity restored to us. In applying these spiritual princi- 24
ples to our lives, we should keep an open mind. Patience, 25
humility and tolerance are well worth any price that we must 26
pay for them. It would seem that the path to spiritual 27
recovery involves spiritual principles. Spiritual indiffer- 28
ence will surely lead to relapse. 29

As we went to meetings regularly, we also learned the 30
basic value of talking to other addicts who shared our 31
problems and goals. As we became responsible for our own 32
recovery, we became responsible for our fellow addicts. We 33
found this responsibility was two-edged. As recovering addicts 34
we must share what we have found with other addicts, because 35
we know how important it is for one addict to talk with 36

1 another. If sharing the pain we have been through helps
2 but one person, it will have been worth the suffering. The
3 other edge is our own need to preserve our recovery. We
4 found from experience that our own recovery is strengthened
5 when we share it with others, who ask for help. If we
6 keep what we have to share, we lose the meaning. Words
7 mean nothing until we put them into action.

8 We often miss what we are looking for because it isn't
9 hidden. Most addicts have great insights and abilities that
10 offset their weaknesses. Gratitude for our assets shouldn't
11 keep us from growing in areas where we are weak. Being
12 grateful begins when we realize that something other than
13 ourselves blessed us with what we have.

14 Facing problems is a necessary ability to stay clean.
15 If we have had problems in the past, it is unlikely that
16 simple abstinence will eliminate the defense mechanisms
17 and emotional walls that enabled us to live in past days.
18 In searching for the end we often miss the journey.

19 These old ways have to go if we are to find new lives.
20 We will successfully face the days to come if we take advan-
21 tage of the help the program of Narcotics Anonymous has to
22 offer. Help from one addict to another; help that says, "I
23 had something like that happen to me and I tried so and so".
24 Not preaching or judging but sharing the experience, strength,
25 and hope that comes to anyone who accepts our way of life.
26 The willingness to try new ideas and possible solutions will
27 help open the door to our recovery. One discovery leads to
28 another, and soon we are established in a new way of life
29 where people, places and things are kept in proper perspec-
30 tive. The old "all or nothing" point of view will no longer
31 seem a useful idea.

32 Now we have learned that we can, and must, go to our
33 Higher Power for help in solving problems. Fortunately,
34 many problems can wait. The program doesn't work when we

adapt it to our life, we have to adapt our life to the 1
program. 2

When you can feel the program beginning to work, don't 3
freak out. Personality change is a natural progression set 4
in motion by our surrender to the program. The slogans 5
are the sayings that seemed to help us most when we first 6
came to the Fellowship. They apply to the little, dangerous 7
daily situations that seemed so heavy at first. Things go 8
smoother if the newcomer finds a sponsor to confide in, 9
someone whose judgement he can trust. We do not think it 10
weak to put a little faith and trust in a person with more 11
experience on the program. 12

We may still, however, feel that we cannot have a 13
happy life without drugs. We may suffer from the fear of 14
insanity and feel we have no escape from using other than 15
an insane and depressed existence. We may fear the re- 16
jection of all our friends if we go cleaning up our act, 17
this is common. We could be suffering from an overly 18
sensitive ego and many of those things within us that we used 19
drugs to escape from. 20

Obsession is the fixed idea that takes us back to a 21
particular drug, trying to regain the ease and comfort we 22
once knew. We know that the comfort we once experienced 23
from using can no longer be obtained. When we accepted 24
that we were addicts, we realized that never again could we 25
use successfully. Try not to think about drugs, old 26
friends or old hang outs. But when the obsession hits us, 27
we improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power 28
through fellowship in N.A. 29

Just as we went to any length to get drugs, so must we 30
go to any lengths to learn to get clean. This involves 31
the honesty to admit our need for the help of others, who 32
have been where we have been, and have learned to live with- 33
out chemicals. The essence of addiction is that it is 34

1 easier to change our perception of reality than the reality
2 we perceive.

3 Cash register honesty, honesty in giving a "fair day's
4 work for a fair day's pay", can help us begin. As the
5 benefits of basic honesty in the world begin to roll in,
6 we are ready to consider honesty at a deeper level. Self-
7 honesty is being in touch with the way we really feel and
8 the way we spend our time.

9 As we began to learn how to change our perception of
10 reality, we, as newcomers, were encouraged to avoid making
11 any major decisions on our own. The ego of the addict
12 must be busted for him to have a chance at recovery.
13 "Terminal hipness" and "fatal cool" are symptoms of the
14 addictive personality. We should be very intent and watch-
15 ful. Old ideas and street practices won't help us stay
16 clean.

17 After establishing our new desire to live clean in
18 the Fellowship and acquainting ourselves with the tools
19 which have helped other suffering addicts to recover, we
20 can then proceed with the business of living.

21 At least one meeting a day for ninety days seems to be
22 a good guide for those who are going to any lengths. There
23 is a special calm that settles over a person with our disease
24 when they find out there are many others who share their
25 difficulties, past and present. We should begin to work the
26 Steps in earnest, going over each Step word by word. Reading
27 our literature and talking over the implication of each Step
28 with our new friends and our sponsors and asking God's help
29 improves our understanding of the program. A meeting a day,
30 getting and using phone numbers, and reading literature each
31 day are good forms of insurance for cleanliness. It has
32 been said that no one who has asked their Higher Power for
33 help in the morning and worked the steps has ever gotten

loaded that day. 1

Guilt and worry keep us from living in the here and 2
now. The denial of our disease, or reservations, keep us 3
sick. We lack humility, clinging to old ways. Not from 4
preaching nor from judgement, but from sharing our exper- 5
ience, strength and hope do we recover. Our willingness 6
to try new ideas and possible solutions to problems will help 7
open the doors to recovery. 8

Let us apply our efforts to the obtainable and let the 9
rest go. As we do the job at hand the balance changes and 10
new opportunities for improvement present themselves. 11
Opportunities now in sight did not even exist until we got 12
the ball rolling. Life then becomes for us what we always 13
wished it to be -- a constant state of awakening. As soon 14
as we became acquainted with the Fellowship and the basic 15
ideas of the program. We began to put these ideas into 16
action. A good tool to remember is to counter our natural 17
tendency to saddle ourselves with concerns that go beyond 18
the twenty-four hours of each day. 19

Living clean each day at a time will reveal to us the 20
things that truly come from within and give us better 21
understanding over things that would interrupt our flow. 22

Recovery will provide for our re-entry into society. 23
We can always find people who have had difficulties similar 24
to our own and do succeed. It is difficult to get rid of 25
the notion that we must be great or do great to be O.K. As 26
we recover we will often find ourselves saying and doing 27
things that suddenly make no sense to us, even if we've 28
been doing them for years. We literally see our mistakes. 29
This is necessary for our recovery. Self-condemnation has 30
little place here. When we see our errors, we should 31
simply correct them. 32

As we go about the task of changing our lives, we are 33

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1 confronted with our character defects. Letting go of
2 character defects should be done with love. It is impor-
3 tant we think, to be gentle with ourselves when putting
4 our ego to rest.

5 In our addiction, we feared change because we had
6 lost control of our lives and most changes were for the
7 worst. Clean, we had to learn to face another enemy -
8 boredom. If we allow ourselves to stagnate and cling to
9 our old ways of desperation and fear, our chances of a
10 real and lasting recovery decrease. We had to reach out
11 and to accept the love and understanding the Fellowship
12 had to offer. Clean, we face the world together. No
13 longer do we feel backed into a corner and at the mercy of
14 events and circumstances. We can expect to succeed in
15 many areas of our lives where we have known only failure
16 and despair. Our new friends and the tools for living in
17 the program of Narcotics Anonymous will enable us to
18 experience these changes. Working the Steps will broaden
19 our horizons and practicing the principles will reduce our
20 commitments to some manageable level. Our new friends and
21 awakened spirits will help us. Our common effort is
22 recovery.

23 Being clean we will eventually have to learn to cope
24 with success. Success scares us because in the past it
25 preceded failure. We could not afford to feel good because
26 we remembered the pain of disappointment. It was better,
27 we concluded, to keep moving on and holding back. Actually
28 this made a great deal of sense when we were using. Now,
29 it makes no sense at all.

30 In time we may become a trusted servant. We can parti-
31 cipate in Twelfth Step work, and try to share the message
32 of recovery, with the addict who still suffers. It has
33 been our experience that personal problems will be resolved

when we are willing to accept responsibility for them. It 1
is good form to allow others in the group to help us with 2
them from time to time. Service will get us out of our- 3
selves, and our concern for others will be reflected in 4
our own ability to accept concern from others. When we 5
find ourselves opening up and facing difficulties that 6
used to have us on the run, we will experience periodic 7
surges of good feeling that can give us the strength to 8
begin seeking God's will for us. 9

Well before we surrender, we have ceased to feel as 10
if we are participating in the human race. Our tenuous 11
grasp on reality is invaded by fears and self-hatred, 12
which leads to paranoia, and away from the rest of human- 13
ity as a whole. 14

When we finally became desperate enough to seek help, 15
we, once again, sought out the company of our fellow 16
addicts. But, this time, the addicts were clean. The 17
acceptance we found in the Fellowship was amazing to us, 18
since we had known only loneliness. N.A. reawakened old 19
memories of what it felt like to be a member of the human 20
family. Slowly, we opened up, reached out, warmed up, and 21
let ourselves love and be loved. The original desire to 22
be clean leads us to a desire to help others. Touching, 23
sharing, and loving are actual tools of recovery for us. 24

The only way we keep from continuing a habit is not to 25
take that first fix, pill, drink or toke. People like us 26
know that one is too many and a thousand are never enough. 27
We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we 28
use drugs in any form, we release our addiction all over 29
again or create a new one. 30

Abstinence is the basis of our program. Any mood or 31
mind-altering chemical, prescription or not, is poison to 32
our bodies. Those who relapse and live to make it back, 33

1 keep us well informed of the fact that there is nothing so
2 bad that a relapse can't make it a whole lot worse.

3 If we clean our bodies by daily abstinence we should
4 clean our minds of preconceptions based on past experien-
5 ces. It is those who stay clean when it seems like it
6 isn't worth it who make it. It means remembering that we
7 are just one fix, pill, drink or toke away from total
8 disaster. It's amazing the power that total abstinence
9 has in changing our life. The bottom line of Narcotics
10 Anonymous is staying clean. When we realize that we can't
11 use drugs in any form and live, we are ready to admit our
12 powerlessness. It takes some of us a while to realize
13 how unmanageable we were and are still. For others this is
14 the only thing that which we can be sure. We as adults are
15 allergic to all drugs, although individual tolerance can
16 play a valuable role. Generally the effects of any amount
17 of usage are immediate and devastating.

18 Some of the most common excuses for using are loneliness,
19 self-pity, and closed-mindedness. Past thinking patterns,
20 known as "stinkin' thinkin'", have proven lethal. Our
21 experience shows that we do recover from these old games.
22 We simply live each day at a time without drugs. We believe
23 the solution for the problem of having drug-fogged minds,
24 sick bodies and tormented emotions is in a spiritual way of
25 life. This is why the Twelve Steps are used as a program
26 of recovery and ultimately a method of trusting in a Higher
27 Power that we can have faith in.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups springs from our Traditions.

As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each Group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Groups, or N.A., as a whole.
5. Each Group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. Group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our Service Centers may employ special workers.

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9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

1 We come to this program from homes and apartments,
2 offices and schools, treatment centers and jails, parks
3 and gutters. We come from many different places, but they
4 all share loneliness, pain, and fear. Somehow addiction
5 draws us together in Narcotics Anonymous.

6 We came to this program for many different reasons.
7 Those of us who stay, do so for the same reasons--to stop
8 using and stay clean. After we've actually stopped, and the
9 fog has cleared a bit, most of us take a look around to see
10 what this program is all about. We start trying to do the
11 things we see those around us doing. Eventually we come to
12 the Twelve Steps and try to work them the best we can. The
13 result is a degree of freedom that we never have known before.
14 We find freedom from drugs and the obsession to use them;
15 and in time a bit of freedom from that part of ourselves
16 that has been destroyed.

17 We're taught that we can only keep what we have by giving
18 it away. So we seek out and give our hand to other addicts
19 who have problems like ours and want help. Usually one of
20 the first things we try to do when we're working with a
21 newcomer is to get them to a meeting. After all, that's
22 what worked for us.

Why is this so? What is it about our meetings that's
so special? Usually, about all we can say is that there is
a feeling there, a feeling of strength and hope and love;
an atmosphere of recovery. Our meetings are very special
to most of us. They're a place where we feel safe; a
place where we fit in. But what keeps it that way? One
would think that any time people like us get together the
results would be chaos. Groups of self-centered, self-
willed, isolated individuals just can't meet together
peacefully and safely; but we do. The reason that we can
is that we have Twelve Traditions that help to keep our
groups "safe" and free.

For most of us, understanding of these Traditions comes
slowly over a period of time. We pick up a little infor-
mation here and there as we talk to members and visit various
groups. It usually isn't until we get involved with service
that someone points out that "personal recovery depends on
N.A. unity", and that unity depends on how well we follow
our traditions. Because we hear about "suggested steps" and
"no musts" so often, some of us make a mistake and assume
that this applies to our groups the way it applies to the
individual. The Twelve Traditions of N.A. are not suggested,
and they are not negotiable. These are the rules that keep
our fellowship alive and free.

By following these principles in our dealings with
others in N.A. and society at large, we avoid many problems.
That isn't to say that our Traditions eliminate all problems.
We still have to face difficulties as they arise: communi-
cation problems, differences of opinion, internal controver-
sies, problems with individuals, groups outside the fellow-
ship. However, when we apply these principles we avoid
some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are much like those our predeces-
sors had to face. Their hard won experience gave birth to

1 the Traditions; and our own experiences have shown that these
2 principles are just as valid today as they were yesterday.
3 Our Traditions are what protect us from the internal and
4 external forces which could destroy us. They are truly
5 the ties that bind us together, but they don't work auto-
6 matically. It is only through understanding and appli-
7 cation that they have power.

TRADITION ONE

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.

8 It makes sense that our First Tradition concerns unity
9 and our common welfare. One of the most important parts of
10 our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts
11 also seeking recovery. Our survival is directly related
12 to the survival of our groups and of our fellowship.

13 Before coming to N.A., most of us tried to clean up or
14 stay clean on our own. Many of us sought treatment or
15 professional help. These efforts were unsuccessful for us;
16 it wasn't until we came to Narcotics Anonymous that recovery
17 seemed possible. This program can do for us what we could
18 not do for ourselves. We came and saw this program work in
19 the lives of other addicts. Their recovery gave us hope
20 for ourselves. We became part of a group and found that we
21 could make it, too. We also learned that those who did not
22 continue being an active part of the Fellowship faced a
23 rough road and often relapsed. Most of us agree that without
24 N.A. we would be in real trouble. We know we can't do it
25 alone, and nothing else ever worked for us. For our own good
26 we try to do what is best for the group.

27 This isn't to say that the group is shoved down the indi-
28 vidual's throat. Most of us had never experienced the kind

of attention and personal care that we found in the program. 1
We are accepted and loved for what we are; instead of "in 2
spite" of what we are. The individual is precious to the 3
group, and the group is precious to the individual. No one 4
can revoke our membership or punish us, or make us do any- 5
thing that we don't choose to do. We are taught this way 6
of life by example rather than direction. We share our 7
experiences and learn from each other. In our addiction we 8
consistently placed our personal welfare before anything 9
else. Here we found that in the long run what's best for 10
the group was usually good for us. We chose to conform to 11
the common good because that's what worked for us. 12

Our personal experiences while using differed from 13
member to member. However, as a group we found many common 14
themes in our addiction. One of these shared symptoms was 15
our need to prove self-sufficiency. We convinced ourselves 16
that we could make it alone and proceeded to live life on 17
that basis. The results were disastrous, and, in the end, 18
each of us had to admit that our self-sufficiency was a 19
lie. We found that we could no longer control our using, 20
nor could we manage our own lives. This surrender was the 21
starting point of our recovery, and is a primary point of 22
unity for the Fellowship. 23

Not only are these common themes in our addiction, but 24
we find that in recovery we also have much in common. We 25
share a common desire to stay clean. Each of us has learned 26
to depend upon a Power greater than ourselves, which is our 27
source of strength. Our purpose is to carry the message 28
to the addict who still suffers. We have our Traditions, 29
the rules that protect us from ourselves. We share many 30
things, and each is a point of unity for us. 31

Unity is a reality in Narcotics Anonymous. This isn't 32
to say that we don't have our disagreements and conflicts; 33
we do. Whenever people get together there are differences 34

1 of opinion and impressions. However, when the chips are
2 down we pull together. Time and time again we've seen
3 this; in times of crisis or trouble we set aside our
4 differences and worked for the common good. How often
5 have we seen two members who usually don't get along very
6 well working together with the newcomers? How often have
7 we seen a group doing menial tasks to pay the rent for their
8 meeting hall? How often have we seen members drive hundreds
9 of miles to help support a new group? These activities and
10 many others are commonplace in our fellowship. They must
11 be, because without these things N.A. could not have sur-
12 vived. Without N.A. few of us would have survived, and
13 fewer still would have found recovery.

TRADITION TWO

For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--
a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group con-
science, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not
govern.

14 In N.A. we have a great concern in protecting ourselves
15 from ourselves. Our Second Tradition is another example of
16 this. By nature we seem to be strong-willed, self-centered
17 people, seeking self-gratification in the realms of money,
18 power, and sex. An important part of our recovery is
19 learning how to live with these drives; how to realign our
20 misguided instincts, how to stop acting out our insanities,
21 how to disarm our self-destruct mechanisms, and how to
22 rechannel our energies toward constructive ends. In other
23 words, we have to replace our "dying program" with a "living
24 program". Early in our recovery we learned that we did a
25 pretty poor job with our lives. One of our sayings is "Our
26 best ideas got us here". This seems apt as we look back
27 and see how many times our schemes and plans got us into

trouble despite their original intent. We were powerless 1
over our addictions and could not manage our own lives. 2
Now we find ourselves thrust together in N.A., mismanagers 3
all, not one of us capable of making consistently good 4
decisions. When we realized this had related to our new 5
group oriented way of life we often experienced a sort of 6
gut-level panicky feeling. 7

At this point our old timers usually come forward to 8
reassure us. "Don't worry. God takes care of fools and 9
addicts. This is a spiritual program and He won't let us 10
screw it up", they say. They go on to explain that in N.A. 11
we rely on a loving God as He expresses Himself in our 12
Group conscience rather than on personal opinion or ego. 13
In working the Steps we need to come to depend on a Power 14
greater than ourselves. We continue this relationship and 15
utilize it for our Group purposes. If we each turned our 16
will and our lives over to His care and seek to do his will, 17
he will express Himself on a group level. When a decision 18
needs to be made for a group, each of the members should 19
take the time to meditate on what is most beneficial to our 20
common welfare. If we do this, then the results will 21
truly be an expression of the spiritual concept of our Group. 22

We know that this is a fact for our Fellowship, but some- 23
times we are confused when it seems our decisions don't work 24
out very well. We forget that we are not perfect, and that 25
we are only experiencing spiritual progress. When personali- 26
ties and self will creep into our efforts then the results 27
suffer. We must be constantly on guard that our decisions 28
are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a 29
vast difference between Group conscience and Group opinion, 30
powerful personalities, or popularity. Some of our most 31
painful growing pains have come as a result of decisions made 32
in the name of "group conscience". Our experience has 33

1 shown that there had been nothing spiritual about some of
2 our decisions.

3 "We took a Group conscience and decided that..."Wait
4 a minute! We don't take Group conscience, we take votes.
5 One group decided that members must be graduates of a
6 specific treatment program, another felt that only heroin
7 addicts should attend, another accepted only Christians.
8 Another decided that residents of a halfway house could
9 attend if they promised not to talk. Another let others
10 sit in on their group only if they would contribute to the
11 collection. Another decided to pay its officers wages.
12 One group promised that anyone who attended their meetings
13 would be able to get a job at a local counseling center
14 and so on and so on. We've made a lot of bad decisions and
15 pawned them off as Group conscience. This worries many of
16 us. How can we really tell if our decisions are really
17 Group conscience or not, and how do we prevent painful
18 mistakes?

19 There is one truth which helps guide us. True spirit-
20 ual principles are never in conflict; they always comple-
21 ment each other. The true spiritual conscience of a group
22 will never contradict any of our other spiritual principles.
23 Whenever we are faced with a group decision, we first try
24 to eliminate personalities, prejudices, and self-centered-
25 ness. Then we review our decisions to make sure they are
26 not in violation of any of our Twelve Traditions. If we
27 take another look at our decision and try to resolve it.
28 This approach isn't foolproof, but it has helped to prevent
29 problems many times.

30 The Second Tradition also concerns the nature of leader-
31 ship in N.A. We have seen that we try to rest authority in
32 the spiritual conscience of the group. In keeping with this,
33 we make a special point of trying to prevent authoritarian
34 leadership. We have learned that for our Fellowship,

leadership by example and by selfless service works, and 1
that direction and manipulation fails. The way we design- 2
nate our trusted servants insures this. We choose not to 3
have presidents, masters, chairmen or directors. Instead 4
we have secretaries, treasurers, and representatives. 5
These titles in themselves imply service rather than 6
control. Our experience shows that if a group becomes 7
an extension of the personality of a leader or a certain 8
member, then it loses its effectiveness. Newcomers don't 9
stay, and members stop coming. The group must then change 10
or die. This is sometimes a difficult and agonizing 11
process. Those who stay grow through the experience; but 12
what happens to those who leave? An atmosphere of recovery 13
in our groups is one of our most precious assets; and we 14
must guard it carefully lest we lose it to politics and 15
personalities. 16

Those of us who have been involved in service for a long 17
time or in getting a group started and keeping the doors 18
open through the hard early days sometimes have a hard time 19
letting go of the reins. Sometimes our egos get in the way, 20
sometimes ungrounded fears get in the way, and sometimes 21
the group gets in the way. Most of us come with a poor 22
self-image and low self-worth. With time and some successes, 23
we begin to recover somewhat and develop healthier egos. 24
We enjoy these feelings for they are healthy for us. We 25
like recognition and attention and we often deserve them. 26
However this sometimes gets out of hand. We begin to pursue 27
these things as ends in themselves and find ourselves in 28
trouble. With more time and maturity we grow in humility 29
and learn to deal with these new feelings in a more realis- 30
tic and spiritual way. Another situation which often causes 31
us problems is fear. We sometimes fear that there is no 32
one else who can serve the group as well as we. We are 33

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1 afraid that if we turn over the responsibility to new
2 members, something terrible is going to happen. We may
3 even have tried to get others involved before without
4 success. It doesn't matter, whenever we are unwilling
5 to take a chance to let the group grow on its own, or when
6 we become afraid of change, we are playing God. Our friends
7 may tell us to let go and work the Third Step, but some-
8 times we are deaf to their love. In these cases it is our-
9 selves who must go and grow. But again, what about those
10 we lose in the process? Still another situation which
11 causes leadership problems is when senior members are
12 thrust into positions of power. Sometimes a group or part
13 of a group will be afraid to let their leaders step down
14 gracefully. The members time and time again draft the same
15 leaders; demanding that they perform, demanding that they
16 rule the roost. In these cases change is especially hard
17 because it seems that only a crisis will do the job.
18 Usually, the leader himself must refuse to serve. This goes
19 against the grain because we've been told never to refuse
20 an N.A. request, and this has been a valuable part of our
21 program. To refuse to lead because it's not what's best
22 for the group requires a lot of maturity and humility.

23 Most of those involved with service sooner or later
24 have to deal with these problems. At first they are unaware.
25 They run on good feelings, the notoriety, and the attention.
26 After a while, they may begin having mixed feelings. Part
27 of them revels in the spotlight, while another part is very
28 uncomfortable because they know they are just another member.
29 This period is often followed by a period in which they deny
30 their leadership and value to the group. Eventually and
31 gratefully they find a degree of humility which allows them
32 to accept themselves and their places in the Fellowship.
33 They accept that they are truly just a part of a greater

whole, that they in themselves are not indispensable or dis- 1
pensible. Along with this they also accept that they do have 2
special and valuable experiences which can benefit the group. 3
They become a resource for the group; seeking neither to 4
control the group not to set themselves apart. It is at this 5
time that their long service truly contributes the most. 6
They encourage us, inspire us, and teach us by example. 7
Even though their services are less dramatic than when their 8
group was struggling to survive, they provide a foundation 9
of stability, strength, and experience upon which our Fellow- 10
ship can grow. 11

TRADITION THREE

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop
using.

This Tradition is very important for both the individual 12
and the group. It relates directly to many of the basic 13
ideas of our program. Desire is the key word in this 14
Tradition and desire is the basis of our recovery. In 15
our story and in our experience of trying to carry the 16
message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, one 17
painful fact of life has emerged again and again. An addict 18
who does not want to stop using will not stop using. They 19
can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, 20
threatened, beaten, locked up or whatever; but they won't 21
stop using until they want to. The only thing we ask of 22
our members is that they have this desire. Without it, they 23
are doomed, but with it miracles have happened. 24

This is our only requirement, and rightfully so. Addiction 25
does not discriminate, why should recovery? Our disease 26
does not recognize race, religion, sex, age, occupation, 27
economics, or any of the other lines people draw to separate 28
themselves. "An addict is a man or woman whose life is con- 29
trolled by drugs." The newcomer is the lifeblood of N.A. and 30

1 when one comes to us seeking help we welcome them with open
2 arms. We don't care who or what they are or even what they
3 used. As long as they want to stop using there's a place
4 for them in N.A., and this Tradition guarantees them that
5 place. Every clean member of N.A. could have been rejected
6 by some kind of membership requirement or another. Many
7 of us would not be alive today if we hadn't found a program
8 which accepted us when we wanted help. We originally came
9 to this program for many reasons, but those of us who have
10 stayed have done so for the same reason--the desire to stop
11 using. Many of us didn't even know that addiction was a
12 problem. Many of us could not visualize a life without
13 drugs, let alone want it. Many of us had reached the point
14 in our addiction where we felt there was no hope for us, we
15 only wanted a little relief. It wasn't until after we came
16 to N.A. that we found out that we had a disease and that
17 recovery was possible for us. Membership in N.A. isn't
18 automatic when someone walks in the door; it isn't every auto-
19 matic when the newcomer has a desire to stop using. The
20 decision to become a part of our fellowship rests with the
21 individual. Any addict who has a desire to stop using can
22 become a member of N.A.

23 We are Narcotics Anonymous and our problem is addiction,
24 other fellowships deal with other problems. Most newcomers
25 are led to the fellowship which best suits their needs.
26 Individuals come with problems that express themselves in
27 various ways. They don't clearly fit into our fellowship.
28 Many of these people become valuable and active members of
29 several fellowships while others single out the fellowship
30 with which they are the most comfortable. Our primary pur-
31 pose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers;
32 where they find recovery is not our basic concern. We know
33 of members with a history of drug abuse who have found
34 recovery in other fellowships. We support these members and

rejoice in their recovery, and addict who has found freedom 1
and recovery anywhere is a friend of ours. Although we 2
would welcome them in our groups, we do not seek them out 3
or force them to join N.A. This would not be in keeping 4
with our spiritual aims. 5

The twelve step fellowships do not compete. We are mutually 6
supportive and cooperate for the common good. For us re- 7
covery is more important than membership. However, some 8
newcomers seem to have trouble finding a fellowship or 9
fellowships in which they fit. We encourage them to shop 10
around, to attend various meetings and find out where they 11
most fully identify. They might ask themselves: "Where do 12
I hear about problems most like my problems? Where are there 13
members who are living the kind of life I would like to live? 14
and Where am I most comfortable?" We have also met members 15
who are uncertain about where they really belong. We suggest 16
that they ask themselves three questions: 17

1.-What message do you carry? (What is the nature of your 18
recovery and what have you recovered from?) 19

2.-Who are you trying to carry this message to? 20

3.-Where are you trying to carry this message? 21

We suggest that the answers to these three questions should 22
not be in conflict; we cannot give away anything we haven't 23
got. We cannot carry any message that is not our own. 24

The choice of membership rests with the individual. We 25
feel the ideal state for our fellowship exists when an addict 26
can openly and freely come to an N.A. meeting; wherever and 27
whenever they choose and leave just as freely if they want to. 28
We realize that there is nothing we can do to make an addict 29
stop using. However, we have learned that recovery is a 30
reality and that life without drugs is better than we ever 31
imagined. We open our doors to addicts hoping that they can 32
find what we have found; but knowing that only those who 33
have a desire to stop using and want what we have to offer 34

1 will join us in our new way of life.

TRADITION FOUR

Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A. as a whole.

2 The autonomy of our groups is one of our most precious
3 possessions. This sounds great but what does it mean? What
4 is it to be autonomous? Websters defines autonomous as
5 "having the right or power of self government", "undertaken
6 or carried on without outside control", "existing or capable
7 of existing independently", "responding, reacting or developing
8 independently of the whole". Autonomy is all these
9 things to us and more. Our groups are truly self-governing
10 and are not subject to outside control. Each group can
11 exist on it's own if it must. Each group has had to grow
12 on its own and stand on its own two feet. One might ask:
13 Is this really true, are we truly autonomous, what about
14 our service committees, our offices, our activities, our
15 hotlines, and all the other things that go on in N.A.? The
16 answer, of course, is that these things are not N.A. They
17 are services that we can utilize to help us in our recovery
18 and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics
19 Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women, addicts, meeting
20 together in groups, and using a given set of spiritual principles
21 to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live.
22 All else is not N.A. Those other things we mentioned are the
23 result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their
24 help and experience so that our road may be easier. Whether
25 or not we choose to utilize these services for the benefit
26 of a group is up to us, they are not thrust down our throats.
27 Some have taken offense to this, they say that when they
28 started out they were told they had to register their group.
29 This may be true, but many groups exist that have never registered.
30 We ask groups to register because we can't recognize
31 them unless we know that they exist. Once a group registers

they are sent a starter kit. This contains many suggestions 1
and is one of the ways we share our experience to help the 2
group. Whether or not they take our suggestion is their 3
decision. In this starter kit it says that we must abide 4
by the Twelve Traditions in order to call ourselves Narcotics 5
Anonymous. This is also true, but these Traditions are part 6
of the set of spiritual principles that are N.A. Without 7
the Traditions, N.A. does not exist. It really is up to 8
the group, in the end they must choose for themselves.. 9
They are autonomous. 10

But we said that for N.A. autonomy was more than this, 11
and it is. For us in Narcotics Anonymous autonomy is also 12
creative freedom. It gives our groups the freedom to act on 13
their own to establish their atmosphere of recovery, to 14
serve their members, and to fulfill their primary purpose. 15
It is this aspect of autonomy that makes it one of our most 16
precious principles. It is for this reason that we guard 17
our autonomy so carefully. 18

We are autonomous; and from what we have said it would 19
seem that we, in our groups, can do whatever we decide to 20
do, regardless of what anybody says. Well, yes and no. 21
Each group does have complete freedom except when their 22
actions become a threat to other groups and the rest of N.A. 23
This is the other half of Tradition Four and the way we 24
use our autonomy is just as important as autonomy itself. 25
Like group conscience, autonomy can be a two-edged sword. 26
In the past group autonomy has been used to justify the 27
violation of other Traditions. This should never be allowed 28
to happen because as we have said spiritual principles are 29
never in conflict with other spiritual principles. If a con- 30
flict or contradiction does exist that means that somewhere 31
along the line we have somehow slipped away from the true 32
principles. 33

When we use our autonomy for the good of our group we 34

1 must be careful that our actions do not hurt other groups
2 or N.A. as a whole. Again we are given a simple rule of
3 thumb. If we check to make sure that our actions are
4 clearly within the bounds of our Traditions, if we don't
5 represent anyone but ourselves, if we don't dictate to
6 other groups or force anything upon them, and if we take
7 the time to consider the consequences of our actions ahead
8 of time, then all will be well.

9
TRADITION FIVE

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict
who still suffers.

10 "You mean to say that our primary purpose is to carry the
11 message? I thought we were here to clean up? I thought our
12 primary purpose was to recover from drug addiction?" For
13 the individual this is certainly true, our members are here
14 to find freedom from addiction, and a new way of life. How-
15 ever, groups aren't addicted and don't recover. All our
16 groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts
17 together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring,
18 sharing, and service can do its thing. The purpose of this
19 Tradition is to insure that this atmosphere of recovery is
20 maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups
21 newcomer and service oriented. The fact that we require
22 each and every group to focus on carrying the message pro-
23 vides consistency. An addict can count on us if they want
24 help. Unity of action and unity of purpose make possible
25 what seemed impossible for us--recovery.

26 The Twelfth Step of our personal program also says that
27 we should carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
28 This is no coincidence. Working with others is one of our
29 most powerful tools. "The therapeutic value of one addict
30 helping another is unparalleled." For the newcomer this is
31 how they find out about N.A. and how they stay clean; and for

the members this reaffirms and clarifies what they have 1
learned. The group is the most perfect vehicle we have for 2
carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. When 3
a member carries the message, he is somewhat bound by his 4
interpretation and personality. The problem with litera- 5
ture is language; the feelings, the intensity, and the 6
strengths are sometimes lost. In our groups, with all per- 7
sonalities, the message is a recurring theme; an underlying 8
reality. 9

What would happen if our groups had other primary pur- 10
poses? We feel our message would be diluted and then lost. 11
If we concentrated on making money many might get rich. If 12
we were a social club we'd find many friends and lovers. 13
If we specialized in education we'd end up with many smart 14
addicts. If our specialty was medical help many would get 15
healthy. If our group purpose was anything other than carry- 16
ing the message, many would die and few would find recovery. 17

What is our message? We hear this question answered 18
many ways. In our groups we share our experience, strength 19
and hope and this is our message - that an addict, any addict, 20
can stop using drugs; lose the desire to use again; and find 21
a new way to live. Their message is hope and the promise of 22
freedom. When it's all said and done, our primary group 23
purpose can only be to carry this message to the addict who 24
still suffers because this is all we have to give. 25

TRADITION SIX

An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A.
name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest
problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our
primary purpose.

Our Fifth Tradition defines our primary purpose and our 26
Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to 27
preserve and protect this spiritual aim. This Tradition tells 28

1 us that we ought never endorse, finance or lend the N.A.
2 name to any outside enterprise. And then we are warned
3 exactly what can happen if we ignore this advice. This
4 Tradition is the basis for our policy of nonaffiliation
5 and is extremely important to the continuation and growth
6 of N.A. Unfortunately, this Tradition has also been a point
7 of controversy within our Fellowship.

8 Let's take a closer look at what this Tradition really
9 says. First thing a group ought never to endorse. To en-
10 dorse is to sanction, approve, or recommend. Endorsements
11 can either be direct or implied. We see direct endorsements
12 everyday in T.V. commercials. Direct endorsements can also
13 be in writing and often appear in proposals and promotional
14 sales material. A direct endorsement is often used to try
15 and persuade someone to do something. An implied endorse-
16 ment is one that is not stated. Although we don't usually
17 recognize it as such, implied endorsements occur in our
18 stories. We say, "The big kids used it and if they used it,
19 it had to be good." The next thing we ought never do is
20 finance. This is more obvious; to finance means to supply
21 funds or to help support financially. The third thing
22 warned against is lending the N.A. name. This means letting
23 someone use the name, Narcotics Anonymous, for something
24 that is not Narcotics Anonymous. It also means letting an
25 outsider mention or utilize our name for their own purposes.
26 Several times other programs have tried to use Narcotics
27 Anonymous as part of their "services offered" to help justify
28 a finding proposal. Had we allowed this, we would have been
29 letting them use our name. These are the "ought nevers" in
30 the Sixth Tradition.

31 This tradition also tells us "who". A related facility
32 is any other facility or place that involves N.A. members.
33 It might be a halfway house, a detox center, a counseling
34 center, a clubhouse, or anyone of a number of such places.

Oftentimes, people are easily confused by what is N.A. and what are the related facilities. Recovery houses which have been started or staffed by N.A. members have to take special care that the differentiation is clear. Perhaps the most confusion exists when it involves a clubhouse situation. Newcomers and even older members often identify the clubhouse with N.A. and N.A. with the clubhouse. We should make a special effort to let these people know that there is a difference. The second "who" outside enterprises. An outside enterprise is any agency, any business venture, any religion, any society, any organization, any unrelated activity, or any fellowship. Most of these are pretty straight forward, except for other fellowships. Most of us would not confuse N.A. with something like a specific religious fellowship, but when it comes to other twelve-step fellowships, we sometimes have problems. Let's face it; Narcotics Anonymous is not Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Emotional Health Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Parents Anonymous or any other anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous is a separate and distinct fellowship in its own right. Our problem is addiction, the other twelve-step fellowships specialize in other problems, and our relationship with them is one of "cooperation not affiliation". The use of the literature of another fellowship in our meetings constitutes an implied endorsement of an outside enterprise.

The Sixth Tradition goes on to warn us what may happen if we do what we ought never do: "...lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose". If you say this quickly it almost sounds like "money, power and sex;" our old enemies. If you say it real quickly, it might sound like "people, places and things;" our old resentments and fantasies. Even if you don't say it quickly, they have much in common. The often become obsessions and shut us off from our spiritual aim. They are the sort of

1 things we get involved with and run with until we are con-
2 sumed. For the individual, this type of abuse can be
3 devastating, but for the group, even the slightest touch
4 can be disasterous. When we as a group waver from our
5 primary purpose, addicts die who might have found recovery.

6 The Sixth Tradition has been one of those just sort
7 of read and let it go at that. It's hard to understand.
8 But when we really take a look, when we really try to
9 understand, it's simplicity amazes us. We can see the danger
10 of endorsement, financial support and letting others use our
11 name; we can see how easily things can lead to abuse of money,
12 property and prestige; and we can foresee the results of this
13 abuse and the heartache it can bring.

TRADITION SEVEN

Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining
outside contributions.

14 Being self-supporting is an important part of our new way
15 of life. For the individual, this is usually quite a change.
16 In our addictions, we were dependent on people, places and
17 things. We looked to them to support us and to supply the
18 things we found lacking in ourselves. As recovering addicts,
19 we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has
20 shifted from the things around us to a loving God and the
21 inner strength we get in our relationship with Him. We who
22 were unable to function as human beings now find anything is
23 possible for us. Those dreams we gave up long ago can now
24 become realities with God's help. Addicts as a group have
25 been and still are, millstones around society's neck. In
26 N.A., our groups of addicts not only try to stand on their
27 own two feet, but demand the right to do so.

28 Money has always been a problem for us. We could never
29 find enough to support ourselves, our habits and our self-
30 gratification. We worked, stole, conned, begged and sold

ourselves; there was never enough money to fill the empti- 1
ness inside. In our recovery, money is often still a problem; 2
we stopped trying to support our habits; we got to work and 3
often find unexpected success. We clean up the wreckage 4
of our past and things seem to be going our way for a change. 5
However, financial security can still seem to run like water 6
through our fingers. We've got a lot of growing up to do 7
and this takes time. Common sense and responsibility are 8
things most of us usually have to learn from scratch. 9
Learning how to live can hurt a lot, but for most of us it's 10
a great adventure. 11

N.A. needs money to run the group; there is rent to pay, 12
supplies to buy and literature to pay for. We pass the hat 13
to cover these expenses and whatever is left over goes to 14
support our services and to further our primary purpose. 15
Unfortunately, there's usually pitifully little left over 16
after a group pays its way. Sometimes members who can afford 17
it kick a little extra in to help. Sometimes a few get 18
together and put on some activity to help raise funds. These 19
efforts help a lot and without them, much that we have been 20
given to do would have had to be left undone. N.A. remains 21
a shoe-string operation, and even though it's sometimes 22
frustrating, we really wouldn't have it any other way; we 23
know the price would be too high to bear. 24

Our poverty enables us to be much closer to our Fellow- 25
ship. We all have to pull together, and in pulling together 26
we learn that we really are a part of something greater than 27
ourselves. 28

Our policy concerning money is clearly stated: We decline 29
outside contributions, our Fellowship is completely self- 30
supporting. We accept no funding, no endowments, no loans, 31
no gifts, and no handouts because we know that there's no 32
such thing as a free ride. Everything has its price, regard- 33
less of intent. Whether the price is money, promises, 34

1 concessions, special recognition, endorsement, favors or
2 anything else; it's just too high for us. Even if those
3 who would help us could guarantee no strings, we still
4 would not accept their aid. The price would still be
5 too high. Nor will we charge for our services for to do
6 so would distract from our spiritual purpose. We cannot
7 even afford to let our members contribute more than their
8 fair share. Because for us the price is paid within our
9 groups: disunity, controversy, insanity and death. We
10 will not put our freedom on the line again; not for "an
11 easier, softer way", not for anything; never again!

TRADITION EIGHT

Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional,
but our Service Centers may employ special workers.

12 Some have described N.A. as a fellowship made up of the
13 failures from other programs. To a great extent this is
14 true; many of our members have unsuccessfully sought re-
15 covery in many other programs, in many other ways. "Jail
16 did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry
17 seemed to have no answers for us that we could use." We
18 ourselves have said, "Give us the ones you can't do any-
19 thing with; give us your hardest cases. We'll welcome them
20 with open arms." Somehow N.A. works when other programs
21 and methods have failed. What is it about us that makes
22 this so? We don't have any secret or special methods. We
23 don't have any cure-all remedies. We don't really have
24 many of the things that others offer addicts. What is it
25 about N.A. that makes us the most widespread and success-
26 ful program for addicts in the world? Perhaps it's some-
27 thing simple. Perhaps it's because we don't have these
28 things, that it is possible for us to succeed where others
29 have failed. What do we have? We have our steps; we have
30 mobility; we understand and care; and we are motivated; we
31 have each other.

The basis of our program is the Twelve Steps. We got these Steps from Alcoholics Anonymous, who thought enough of them to give them freely. A.A. got the Steps from various sources. The Steps are based on spiritual principles that have been known and followed for centuries. Most religious or spiritual orders utilize these same principles in some way. These principles are certainly not unique to us, but they are spiritual principles and that makes them special. Spiritual principles are basic truths that do not change with time or place; they simply work in all cases.

This program has been called a "hip pocket program". We don't require any equipment or special facilities. It doesn't take special training to make this program work. We carry this program with us wherever we go. We carry our message to the addict wherever he is and whenever he's ready. This program fits every addict because the addict learns to apply our Steps to his life in his own way. Our ability to reach addicts anytime, anywhere has certainly been a great advantage for us.

Perhaps our greatest asset is empathy, our ability to understand and identify with the newcomer. We know what it's really like to kick the habit; we've been there. We know what it's like to face life without drugs, each of us has had to do this. We know the prices of addiction; we've all had to pay them. We can't look down on the addict who comes to us; we've all been newcomers. We can't con each other; we've played all the games. We understand the addict and addiction perhaps better than anyone else can, after all, this is the life we lived. We care for and love the addict as if he were ourselves, because the addict really is ourself.

Our motivation is simple; this program was given freely to us by addicts who cared. We only do the same. We have

1 learned that "we can only keep what we have by giving it
2 away". We know that recovery is a matter of life and
3 death for the newcomer and for ourselves.

4 These are the things we are and how our program works.
5 They are a reality for us. We have our Steps; we have
6 mobility; we really understand and care; and we are moti-
7 vated by survival. All these things are a contradiction to
8 traditional recovery approaches and to professionalism.
9 The professional has no place in our Fellowship; our very
10 nature prohibits this. Professionalism as such is not the
11 problem. We recognize and admire the professional and his
12 sphere. Many of our members in the endeavors outside the
13 Fellowship have become professionals in their own right.
14 It's just that there's no place for professionalism in N.A.;
15 for our purpose we have learned the therapeutic value of one
16 addict helping another is truly without parallel.

17 Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the
18 addict who still suffers. We do the best we can and some-
19 times we need a little help. Volunteer work is the back-
20 bone of our service, but volunteers work only to the best
21 of their abilities, only at their convenience. Some of our
22 services require skills or abilities we are unable to supply
23 as volunteers. Most of us do not have the training necessary
24 or the extra time required to fulfill these functions. Our
25 Eighth Tradition also recognizes this and tells us that we
26 may employ special workers in our service centers. Without
27 their help, we might be unable to respond to many of those
28 who reach out to us for help.

TRADITION NINE

N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create
service boards or committees directly responsible to those
they serve.

This Tradition defines the way we run our Fellowship. A lot of confusion has occurred because of misinterpretations of our Ninth Tradition. Our members are addicts who have the desire to stop using, who want what we have to offer, and who have chosen to join us. Our meetings are a gathering of members for the purpose of staying clean. Our principles are the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions.

Another point of confusion is the term organized, which has several meanings. Our Steps and Traditions are uniform and set in a specific order. They are numbered; they are not random and unstructured. Certainly they are organized, but this is not the organization of our Ninth Tradition. For the purpose of this Tradition, organized means having an administrative structure, and this implies management and control. On this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine is clear. N.A. should never be run by bureaucracy or management nor controlled by individuals within an administrative structure. If we were to allow this, N.A. would surely lose the best it has to offer and choke to death on our insanities.

Even without this Tradition, organization such as this would be in opposition to our spiritual principles. A loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience would find no place within an administrative structure. How could a trusted servant manage and control? Service and management are contradictory. Government implies control, but our leaders do not govern. How could autonomy exist in an administrative structure? Specialization and professionalism are the basis of any management scheme. Any administrative structure, by its very nature, eliminated the possibility of autonomy. An organized N.A. is a contradiction in terms and any attempt to force organization on us would destroy us.

The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the

1 things that we can do, outside N.A., to help N.A. It says
2 that we may create service boards or committees directly
3 responsible to those they serve. This is the basis of our
4 service structure, but keep in mind that although these en-
5 tities are created to serve our Fellowship they are not, in
6 fact, a part of Narcotics Anonymous. Our service structure
7 consists of our groups and their business sense: our area
8 service committees, regional service committees, World
9 Service Conference, World Service Board of Trustees, and
10 World Service Office. Each of these is directly responsi-
11 ble through the service structure, to the members of N.A.
12 and to be loving God as He may express Himself in our group
13 conscience.

TRADITION TEN

N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name
ought never be drawn into public controversy.

14 In order to achieve our spiritual aim, Narcotics Anony-
15 mouse must be known and respected. Nowhere is this more
16 obvious than in our history. N.A. was founded in 1953.
17 For twenty years our Fellowship remained small and obscure.
18 In the 1970's, society realized that addiction had become
19 a worldwide condition and began to look for answers. Along
20 with this came a change in the way people conceived the
21 addict. This change allowed addicts to seek help more
22 openly. N.A. groups sprang up in many places where we were
23 never tolerated before. Recovering addicts pave the way
24 for more groups and more recoveries. Today, N.A. is a
25 worldwide Fellowship; we are known and respected everywhere.

26 If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us
27 out. If those who work with addicts are unaware of our
28 existence, they cannot refer them to us. One of the most
29 important things we can do to help in our primary purpose
30 is to let people know who, what and where we are. If we do

this, and if our reputation is good, we will surely grow. 1
We were led to addicts so we could give to them what 2
others gave us. 3

Our recovery speaks for itself. Our Traditions protect 4
us. Our Tenth Tradition specifically helps protect our 5
reputation. This Tradition says that N.A. has no opinion on 6
outside issues. We don't take sides. We don't endorse any 7
causes. We don't have any recommendations. N.A., as a 8
Fellowship, does not participate in the politics of society. 9
To do so would be to invite controversy; it would jeopard- 10
dize our reputation. Those who agree with our opinions 11
might commend us for taking a stand, but some would always 12
disagree. This would effect the way they see us. 13

With a price this high, is it any wonder that we choose 14
not to take sides in society's problems? For our own sur- 15
vival we have no opinion on outside issues; we keep our- 16
selves apart so that we will never forget why we are here, 17
and so that others will not mistake our purpose. 18

TRADITION ELEVEN

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather
than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity
at the level of press, radio and films.

This Tradition also deals with our relationship to those 19
outside the Fellowship. It tells us how we should relate to 20
the addict who still suffers, and it tells us how to conduct 21
our effort at the public level. This has meaning for deal- 22
ing with both potential members and the general public. We 23
have learned the value of teaching by example rather than 24
direction. This has worked for us and we utilize this prin- 25
ciple when we work with other addicts. Our message is most 26
obvious in our lives. In this sense we are the message. 27
When working with a newcomer, we try to tell them where we 28

1 came from and what has happened to us. If they can identify
2 with us and if they want what we have to offer them, they
3 may join us. This is attraction. We never promise anything
4 other than a chance to stop using if they want to. This is
5 all we really have to offer and to make any other promise
6 would be to distract from our primary purpose.

7 We should never misrepresent what we offer even if by
8 doing so we might be able to get a few more addicts to attend
9 our meetings. It is easy to make promises. We can tell an
10 addict that we offer all kinds of things other than recovery.
11 Addicts would flock to our doors; they would come for a
12 free meal, or housing, or money, or a job, or a lover, or
13 any kind of free ride. But how many would have a desire to
14 stop using, and how many would leave as soon as they found
15 out we wouldn't keep our promise? How many would never
16 come back? How many would die without ever having a chance
17 to find recovery? Promotion is representing ourselves as
18 something we are not. In order to accomplish something we
19 want, we don't use promotion to encourage addicts to come
20 to us and we don't use promotions to make ourselves more
21 acceptable. Our successes speak for themselves.

22 Our Eleventh Tradition also tells us we need also main-
23 tain anonymity at the level of press, radio and films. Most
24 of us interpret this to mean that we don't give our names or
25 show our faces publicly as members of N.A. What would
26 happen if a member publicly declared that he was a member of
27 Narcotics Anonymous and let everyone know the wonderful
28 things that N.A. can do for addicts, and later he was found
29 dead of an overdose? What would people who had heard his
30 declaration and also knew about his death think about the
31 value of N.A.?

32 Personal anonymity is really much more. It is a point
33 of freedom, and personal recovery. No member of N.A. should
34 ever place themselves in a position where they have to make

a statement for N.A. as a whole. No one member is N.A. and 1
no one member can speak for us. We have no elite class nor 2
special members. Each of us has our story, and our own 3
recovery. Individually, we are powerless but as a Fellow- 4
ship we can achieve great things. 5

TRADITION TWELVE

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions,
ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are even 6
more inter-related than our Steps. They compliment each 7
other and are bound together by the principle of anonymity. 8
We've heard "principles before personalities" so often it 9
has become a cliché like "Take it Easy" or "First Things 10
First". But what does it mean? What is the principle of 11
anonymity? 12

Anonymity is the whole basis of the program; it is 13
truly the foundation. In order to survive, we must set 14
aside the differences we live by and become a part of a 15
greater whole. The awakening of anonymity in each of us 16
occurs when we finally give up trying to manage our lives 17
and begin to depend on a power greater than ourselves. 18

Let us examine anonymity. It is the spiritual founda- 19
tion of our Traditions. The First Tradition talks about 20
common welfare and N.A. unity. The placing of common wel- 21
fare before personal welfare in the group setting is a 22
direct application of anonymity. The "I wants, I wills and 23
I shoulds" are replaced by "we"-oriented thinking for the 24
common good; the result is unity. Unity is the direct 25
result of the application of the principle of anonymity 26
within the group and the fellowship. 27

The Second Tradition talks about having but one ultimate 28

1 authority. No single person (no personality) has authority.
2 This is vested in a loving God to whom we have turned over
3 our will and is vested in a loving God to whom we have
4 turned over our will and lives. The anonymity of the ser-
5 vant should be typical of our leaders. They themselves are
6 not important; it is only the service which counts.

7 The Third Tradition is a statement of anonymity. We do
8 not define our members. We only insist that they have a
9 desire to stop using. Nothing else should matter. This
10 desire is the one crucial must of our program. We must
11 either come with it or develop it before this program will
12 work for us.

13 Anonymity makes possible the autonomy of our Fourth
14 Tradition. Without the principle of anonymity, each group
15 would set itself up as something different from the rest--
16 something special. Our groups would begin competing with
17 each other for members and for recognition. The resulting
18 loss of unity would eventually destroy N.A.

19 Our Fifth Tradition says that each group has but one
20 primary purpose. This unity of purpose is the tie that
21 binds our groups together. Our groups are not truly differ-
22 ent; each has the same spiritual aim and orientation. This
23 anonymity, and the anonymity of the groups, make it possible
24 for an addict to depend on us for help.

25 Tradition Six tells us that we ought never finance,
26 endorse, or lend the N.A. name to any facility or outside
27 enterprise. To violate this rule would be to lose our anony-
28 mity. With anonymity gone, personalities would take over
29 and problems of money, property and prestige would surely
30 divert us from our primary purpose.

31 Our Seventh Tradition guarantees each member the right
32 and privilege to share in the financial support of Narcotics
33 Anonymous. Each of us is given the equal opportunity to help
34 anonymously. We uniformly reject outside contributions

regardless of their source. We also do not allow a member to
contribute more than his fair share; to do so would be to
encourage the loss of their anonymity.

In regards to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out
our members as "professionals"; we try to maintain their
chance to experience personal recovery and grow. Not forcing
power and status on our members is yet another form of anony-
mity.

The service board and committees of our Ninth Tradition
are directly responsible to a loving God as expressed in a
group conscience. They are not responsible to any particu-
lar personality or set of personalities.

In our Tenth Tradition, we strive to limit the growth
of powerful personalities and safeguard anonymity by having
no opinion on outside issues. When controversy exists,
people take sides, personalities come forward, and as this
happens anonymity fades. Here again we find consistency of
action, and in its own way this is also anonymity.

In our Eleventh Tradition, we find that the way we
relate to the outside world is in fact using personal anony-
mity. None of us are singled out, no one of us represents
N.A.; to do so would be to place our personalities ahead of
others and this would be a violation of our anonymity. In
attraction rather than promotion, we give the addict the
right to join in our anonymity and find recovery.

Anonymity is everywhere in our Traditions and in our
Fellowship. It is one of the basics of recovery. The prin-
ciple of anonymity protects us from our defects of personality
and character. Where anonymity exists, personalities and
differences have no power. Anonymity in action makes it im-
possible for personalities to come before principles.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RECOVERY AND RELAPSE

Many consider continuous abstinence and recovery as noteworthy and therefore synonymous, while relapsers are sort of pushed aside or worse yet, used as statistics that in no way give a true picture of the entire addiction pattern. We in the recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous have noted with some satisfaction that many of the relapsers, when again active in their prime or substitute addiction, have dropped many of the parallel behaviors that characterized them in the past. This change alone is significant to us. Honesty of a kind has penetrated their character. Yet there are others completely abstinent, whose dishonesties and self-deceits still prevent them from enjoying complete recovery and acceptance within society. Complete and continuous abstinence, however, is still the best ground for growth. In close association and identification with others in N.A. groups, our chances for recovery and complete freedom in a changing and creative form are enhanced a hundred fold.

Although all addicts are basically the same in kind, we do, as individuals, differ in degree of sickness and rate of recovery. There may be times when a relapse lays the ground work for complete freedom. At other times only by grim and obstinate willfulness to hang on to abstinence come hell or high water until a crisis passes, can that freedom be achieved. An addict, who by any means can lose even for a time the need or desire to use, and has free choice over impulsive thinking and compulsive action, has reached a turning point that may be the decisive factor in his recovery. The feeling of true independence and freedom hangs here at times in the balance. To step out alone and run our own lives again draws us, yet we seem to know that what we have has come from dependence on a Power greater than ourselves and the

giving and receiving of help from others in acts of empathy. Many times in our recovery the old bugaboos will haunt us. Life may again become meaningless, monotonous and boring. We may tire mentally in repeating our new ideas and tire physically in our new activities, yet we know that if we fail to repeat them we will surely take up our old practices. We suspect that if we do not use what we have, we will lose what we have. These times are often the periods of our greatest growth. Our minds and bodies seem tired of it all, yet the dynamic forces of change or true conversion, deep within, may be working to give us the answers that alter our inner motivations and change our lives.

Quality and not quantity is the most important aspect of abstinence. Emotional sobriety in reality is our goal, not mere physical abstinence. To improve ourselves takes effort and since there is no way in the world to graft a new idea on a closed mind, an opening must be made somehow. Since we can do this only for ourselves, we need to recognize two of our seemingly inherent enemies, apathy and procrastination. Our resistance to change seems built in and only a nuclear blast of some kind will bring about any alteration or initiate another course of action. A relapse may prove the charge for the demolition process. A relapse can do the job of awakening us to the necessity for vigorous personal action.

For us, to use is to die. We have seen addicts come to our Fellowship, try our program, stay clean for a period of time, only to drift gradually away. They lose contact with other recovering addicts and eventually return to active addiction. We have learned that to try is not enough; we must live the program. Although we know nothing about prevention of addiction, we have seen that through the determination to stay clean, working the Twelve Steps, reading this book and attending meetings on a regular basis, we can and will prevent relapse thus promoting recovery.

Many of us would have nowhere else to go if we could not trust our N.A. groups and members. We were no longer afraid to ask for help. How then did we lose our fear? At first we were both captivated and intimidated by the Fellowship. No longer comfortable with our using friends, we were not yet

1 at home in meetings. Basically, we lost our fear through the
2 experience of sharing. We share our fears with other addicts.
3 The more we do this, the more our fear slips away. We accus-
4 tom ourselves to sharing our problems no matter how angry, scared
5 or hopeless we feel. It surprises us how often another addict
6 has had a similar experience. Helping each other is a two-way
7 street.

8 An important part of our recovery is the development of
9 self-esteem. We had turned our lives and wills over to so
10 many Powers greater than ourselves that it was hard to see how
11 one more time would help anything. Many of us did not come to
12 our Fellowship with a sincere desire to stay clean. That came
13 after the fog had lifted and after we realized that staying
14 clean was possible. The first thing in recovery for which we
15 felt gratitude was this clear state-of-mind. We encourage members
16 to tell the truth to the best of their ability and recollection.
17 We have been told that our primary aim should be to tell the
18 truth about our recoveries. Then, no matter what, we cannot be
19 disputed. Our recovery began when we accepted the truth another
20 recovering addict shared with us. Even if we did not like it,
21 we could trust it.

22 Trusting our feelings and trusting our fellow addicts in
23 recovery are learning to live processes. It is worth the effort
24 when many people-haters who come here can tell us that they now
25 see the point in being nice to someone, of showing compassion for
26 someone other than themselves. When we found out that we all
27 hurt at times we became aware that it is O.K. to hurt and to
28 make mistakes while clean. We become trusting of people with
29 whom we are only mildly acquainted if we sense their sincere
30 desire not to use--a desire found in N.A. Fellowship.

31 Addicts must patiently re-learn things forgotten and learn
32 how to live. This is what Narcotics Anonymous is about. It is
33 about people who can care about a desperate, dying addict and
34 who can, in time, teach him how to care and love also. It is
35 beautiful!

In recovery it is perfectly all right for us to get in touch with our emotions. We will not flip out or make our fellow N.A.'s mad at us. We eventually make a one hundred eighty degree turn in growth and in dealing with our emotions. Addiction is a feeling disease.

Recovery is more than just staying clean. Living by spiritual principles outlined in the Steps, many clean addicts become useful and productive citizens. At meetings we are repeatedly convinced that recovering addicts are among the most sensitive, responsive and loving people in society. On-going recovery demands more. We must change radically. If we are to continue abstinence we must be responsible and productive, not necessarily in terms of normal definitions, but in terms of spiritual principles. We must grow. Most of us recover physically, reasonably soon. We feel better, look better and act better. Time required for mental recovery varies. Some of us have done extensive damage to ourselves. Others procrastinate on the Fourth through Ninth Steps which help us change our thinking and personalities. Many have found that our sick mental processes change very slowly through repeated practice of new unfamiliar principles. Some of us seem to return to nearly normal mental activity soon after adopting a Twelve Step program of daily living. Spiritual growth is more difficult for most of us. Just the fact that we of all people strive for it is so radical a change that many call it miraculous. Spirituality as a way of life for an addict seems a total contradiction. Many feel that they have found what they were searching for in drugs through spirituality. By working the Steps we are relieved of our obsession to use and many gratefully serve the Fellowship for this reason. Growth means change and we feel we must live on a spiritual basis in order to change. Spiritual maintenance usually means ongoing recovery. Spirituality is to isolation as recovery is to addiction.

From self-centered, angry, frightened isolated people, we become loving, sharing, self-assured spiritual parts of a

1 greater whole. We changed from hopelessly helpless to hope-
2 fully helping. From liars, thieves and wards of the state
3 to responsible productive members of society; these are the
4 themes of character changes that take place in Narcotics Anony-
5 mous.

6 We remain honest to free ourselves from guilt. As we begin
7 to function in society, our creative freedom helps us sort out
8 priorities and do the most basic things first. Daily practice
9 of the Twelve Step program enables us to change from what we
10 were to what our Higher Power would have us become. Gradually,
11 we learn to trust and depend on our Higher Power, however we
12 understand it, and get to meetings so that other clean addicts
13 can give us spiritual guidance. At first, we are overwhelmed
14 by the miracles around us. We cry easily and find it safe to
15 cry and express love and share all our emotions in the atmos-
16 phere of recovery found at N.A. meetings. The steps become
17 our framework of daily change. Continuous abstinence requires
18 spiritual growth which leads to emotional recovery in our lives.

19 Each day we stay clean by practicing the Steps in our
20 lives, our chances of relapse decrease. Each of us is only one
21 drug away from a painful active addiction, but living our pro-
22 gram through regular honest sharing in the Fellowship of Nar-
23 cotics Anonymous increases our chances for uninterrupted clean
24 time. Eventually, we become grateful for problems as well as
25 rewards. Learning to live through changes by practicing the
26 principles of the program helps insure our ongoing recovery.
27 Often we find that when the pain of growing is the strongest,
28 we must give ourselves time and remember that it won't last.
29 Complacency is the enemy of members with substantial clean
30 time. We never fully recover. Guilt, remorse, fear, lust and
31 pride may all become unbearable if we fail to invest ourselves
32 totally in the program, no matter how much clean time we have.
33 Many of us get clean in a protected atmosphere such as a re-
34 habilitation center or recovery house. When re-entering the
35 outside world we feel lost, confused and vulnerable. Going to
36 meetings daily, or more often if possible, will reduce the

shock of change. Meetings provide a safe place to share with 1
others during this time. Many members whose recoveries have 2
blessed them tell us that they continue to attend meetings on 3
a daily basis even after several years of clean time. 4

Living clean for a period of time provides valuable experi- 5
ence working the program through many life changes. What we 6
do repeatedly we find easier to do in times of stress. We 7
respond and react differently to situations after a period of 8
time in the program. It is suggested to us not to make any 9
unnecessary major decisions in the early part of our recovery. 10

When we work the program, we are living the Steps daily. 11
This gives us experience in applying spiritual principles. 12
The experience gained with time insures our ongoing recovery. 13
We must use what we learn or we will lose it and probably re- 14
lapse, no matter how long we have been clean. 15

We seek solutions rather than dilemmas. Productive means 16
being clean, creative and loving today. 17

We wanted to be accepted and loved. As a newcomer, some 18
of us traveled the same desperate road of loneliness and lack 19
of recognition, and of hope. We understand newcomers talk 20
about drugs and the things that brought them to the Fellowship, 21
because we have been there. Most addicts are able to accept 22
this type of sharing even in the beginning. In time we have 23
a new sense of strength that will give us the guidance we 24
need in our own recoveries. The group we choose to be our 25
home group will be like a spiritual savings account. The 26
more we can invest in it through our care and sharing, the 27
greater the dividends it will pay. 28

All of us who find the Fellowship and at least begin to 29
work the Steps develop some kind of relationship with others. 30
As we grow, we learn to overcome our tendency to run and hide 31
our feelings. Learning to be totally honest about our feelings 32
helps other people take us seriously. We find that when we 33
come across honestly it seems to reach others better. Honesty 34
takes practice and none of us profess to be perfect in this 35
area. Whenever we feel trapped or pressured, it takes great 36

1 spiritual and emotional strength to be honest. Sharing our
2 lives with others seems to keep us from feeling lonely. The
3 Steps lead to the kind of honesty that can help us let others
4 know and accept us.

5 We seek creativity through the spirit. The spirit dwells
6 within all of us. We need to understand that the spirit with-
7 in each individual is the same. The action being that we tap
8 the available resources of the spirit within ourselves. Some
9 have tapped more than others. We need to create more soul
10 searching within one another. This process is the creative
11 action of the spirit. We listen to ourselves and others in
12 order to recover and to stay on that path.

13 Lack of spiritual quality within our lives leads us down
14 the path to relapse. This part of our recovery is the essence
15 of the program. Spiritual maintenance is indispensable if re-
16 covery is what we are after. Diverting from the spirit in our-
17 selves we utilize the negative consciousness that comes from
18 within. Our life is the constant efforts of progressing in
19 our spiritual consciousness. Stagnation or just plain old
20 character defects which we re-cultivate rather than let go of
21 sends us back to where these defects were conceived. The
22 illness began sending us down for the last count. Unless
23 spirituality is reunited with action in our lives, relapse is
24 inevitable. Recovery may not again be possible, as this time
25 we may die, many have. We must continue our spiritual main-
26 tenance or die.

27 In our daily lives, we are subject to emotional, environ-
28 mental, intellectual, mental and spiritual relapses, causing
29 us to become defenseless against the physical relapse of ad-
30 diction.

31 As a disease, addiction is subject to relapse. Reverting
32 to using is a physical relapse. Physical relapse is only a
33 symptom. We are never forced into relapse. We are given a
34 choice. Relapse is never an accident. Our knowledge of ad-
35 diction is not enough to stop us from using.

When we were told in meetings we were flirting with relapse, we had to make a decision. We had reservations about anything which did not describe us to a tee and built these up until we thought we could use again.

Relapse is a sign we have had reservations in our program. We slighted our program and left loopholes in our daily lives. Aware of the pitfalls ahead, we trod blindly on in the belief we could make it on our own. If we continue to fall back into the illusion that drugs would make life easier, we must not be ready yet. We believed that drugs would change us and forgot the changes would be fatal. Unless the illusion is shattered that we, in any way, can stop using on our own, we will use again.

We took the opportunity to avoid several of our responsibilities, missing meetings, skipping work, neglecting Twelve Step work, and most important, we stopped asking for help. Growth in the program stopped. We could sense a change coming over us. Our ability to remain slightly open-minded was gone. We became angry and resentful toward anyone and everyone. We began to reject those who were close to us. We became genuinely sick of ourselves in a short time.

When a resentment or any other emotional relapse occurs, failure to practice the Steps can result in physical relapse. Many of our newcomers have difficulty coming into the Fellowship because they do not understand we have a disease called "addiction". We are deemed to see our past behavior as part of ourselves and not part of our disease.

As long as we preserve our clean time we enjoy the greatest possible advantage over our disease. For this we are grateful. The first thing to do is get clean. This makes the other stages of recovery possible. Learn that addiction is a disease. Try to forgive past behavior and realize it was caused by our disease. Go to meetings and study the program for your own personal growth.

Obsessiveness is really common to all the addicts we have met or heard of. Our ego tells us we can do it on our own,

1 then loneliness and paranoia return. We find out we cannot do
2 it on our own and things get worse. We really take the First
3 Step, this time internally. There will be times, however, when
4 we really feel like getting off. We want to run, we feel lousy,
5 we need to be reminded of where we came from and that it will
6 be worse this time. That is when we need the Fellowship most.
7 We must then call our sponsor or make a meeting. Through such
8 support we will find hope. Others have felt the way we do and
9 every drug addict is a prisoner in his or her own mind, con-
10 demned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt.

11 We hate to be wrong. It is hard to believe that now in our
12 recovery somehow self-will leads us to make decisions based on
13 manipulation, ego, lust or false pride but it happens . . .
14 often. Remember we don't recover overnight. When we realize
15 that we have made a bad decision or bad judgment, we make an
16 attempt to rationalize it. We become extreme in our self-
17 righteous attempts to cover our tracks. We see all the places
18 others go wrong and think that they caused the problem. As we
19 prolong our admission of being wrong, we feel increasingly
20 guilty. Living with guilt makes us more self-willed. We get
21 sicker progressively. Eventually, we are shown that we must
22 get honest or we will use again. By this time, it is hard to
23 know why we feel bad. We make a list of feelings and people
24 and events--an inventory. Maybe we can see what's gone wrong
25 in our recovery. We share this list with our sponsor or a
26 spiritual advisor or an addict whose recovery we respect. We
27 are counseled through shared experiences. We pray for willing-
28 ness and humility and finally get honest about our mistaken
29 judgment or bad decision. We tell those who were hurt that we
30 were to blame, ask them to forgive us and make whatever amends
31 necessary. Now we are in the solution again. We are working
32 the program. It comes easier to work the program now. We think
33 that the Tenth Step helps prevent relapse.

34 There is something in our self-destructive personalities
35 that cries for failure. It permeates our total being--"You
36 do not deserve to succeed." We have all experienced this and

without the knowledge that we finally have earned the right to 1
be responsible, respectable members of society. The manner 2
in which we returned to our addiction is not important. What 3
is essential to each of us is that we have the choice not to 4
continue. In fact the knowledge that we learn in N.A. plagues 5
us as we try to continue in our self-annihilation. God has been 6
gracious to many of us who have relapsed by allowing us to 7
return to the program and the people who truly love us as we 8
are. 9

Those of us who have relapsed found the true progression 10
of the disease that plagues us. To know and come to under- 11
stand that there is a Power greater than ourselves desiring 12
to have a relationship with us, in spite of our faults, com- 13
forts us all. We all have one common factor, the disease 14
of addiction. When we look at this concept closely, we can 15
see that using was just a symptom of our disease. 16

In N.A. spiritual principles, along with the Twelve Step 17
blueprint of our program, and sharing with recovering addicts, 18
first check our disease and with practice, develop our vir- 19
tues. The disease will go with us to our graves, we are never 20
cured. 21

Some of us reach a point of complacency in recovery. If 22
we stay at this level for long, the recovery process ceases 23
and we begin to backslide. Clean time in the program acts as 24
insurance. If complacency is not acted upon the disease be- 25
gins to manifest apparent symptoms in us. Denial returns 26
along with obsession and compulsion. Soon we reach a point 27
where we stand on the border line. Denial and the First Step 28
conflict in our minds. If we let the obsession of using over- 29
come us we are doomed to relapse. Only a complete and total 30
acceptance of the First Step can save us. 31

One of our biggest stumbling blocks seems to be in un- 32
realized expectations of ourselves and others. Relationships 33
are a terribly painful area. We tend to fantasize and project 34
images of what should happen. We pick ourselves apart and 35
decide we are to blame if our fantasies are not fulfilled. 36

1 It seems the farthest thing from our minds is that we are power-
2 less over other people. The old thinking and feelings of lone-
3 liness, despair, and helplessness and self-pity creep in.

4 Thoughts of sponsors, meetings, literature and all other
5 positive input then leave the consciousness. We can stay clean
6 by going to a meeting when we feel we do not want one or need
7 one. Meetings are a healing source. Writing about what we
8 want, what we are asking for and what we get and sharing this with
9 our sponsor or another trusted person helps to work through those
10 feelings, and letting others share with us about their experi-
11 ence gives us hope that it does get better. It seems that being
12 powerless is a huge stumbling block. Whenever a situation arises
13 for us to admit our powerlessness, we first look for ways to
14 exert power against it. Exhausting these ways, we begin shar-
15 ing with others and find hope. Attending meetings daily, living
16 a day at a time, and reading the literature seems to send our
17 mental attitude toward the positive. Willingness to try what
18 has worked for others is vital.

19 Another stumbling block we should safeguard against is com-
20 paring ourselves to others who seem to have gone farther down
21 the road of addiction. For example, one member found himself
22 locked behind the doors of a state mental institution. His
23 earlier comparison to the other addicts was a failure on his
24 part to see the progressive nature of his illness. Forms
25 of this example and countless others support the fact that no
26 matter how long we stay clean, whether it be one month or one
27 year, once we begin to use again our illness picks up exactly
28 as if we had never stopped. We are thrown right back into the
29 old pattern of addiction.

30 Progression of recovery is a continuous journey uphill with
31 loving effort. Without love or effort we start the downhill
32 run. The progression of the disease is an ongoing process,
33 even during abstinence, no matter how long.

34 When we forget this or the effort and tenacity it took us
35 to get a period of time in our lives when we experienced free-
36 dom from within; ungratefulness sinks in and self-destructive

behavior begins again. Unless recognition and action is 1
taken immediately that fall will encompass our existence and 2
then we are along for the ride. Our life needs an immediate 3
upswing. Spirituality and sharing is the essence of our re- 4
covery. Keeping our illusion of reality rather than using 5
the tools of the program and the people in the Fellowship will 6
return us to isolation. This loneliness will kill us inside 7
and the drugs which always come next, may do the job comple- 8
tely. The symptoms and the feelings at the end of our using 9
come back three fold. This impact is sure to drown us if we 10
don't surrender ourselves to the program. Relapse can be the 11
destructive force that kills us or leads us to the realization 12
of who and what we are. The eventual misery of using is not 13
worth the escape it might give us. To live is to use the 14
necessities to attain life. To use is to die, often in more 15
ways than one. We have found this program at the right time 16
or we would not have found it at all. N.A. and its principles 17
are here to help us achieve quality in our lives. If we were 18
worthless we wouldn't be alive. 19

Failure to accept the N.A. program and the full implica- 20
tions of our powerlessness has proven for many of us to be a 21
fatal stumbling block in our recovery. Left with a shadow of 22
doubt, the mind of a newcomer and even the old timer can prove 23
to be the spark needed to set off the return of insanity and 24
that first pill, fix, drink or toke. To safeguard against 25
this fatal stumbling block we should develop a good under- 26
standing of the basic principles set down in the Steps of 27
our recovery and apply them in our daily lives. 28

A young man picked up a white chip. Eager to learn of 29
this new life, he very quickly became willing to do anything 30
he could. He went to meetings, emptied ashtrays, made coffee, 31
talked to people, all the things that help us to recover. 32

Afraid, unable to let go of old ideas, still working to 33
"run the show" he found no answer to what he saw as his prob- 34
lem. Blinded by what he saw as important, unwilling to let 35
go of the old familiar ways, he used again. He took with him 36

1 some of what he had learned and seen. The seed of recovery
2 had been planted in him.

3 Although using for the next three years, he continued to
4 stay in touch with a member, though not on a regular basis.
5 This contact was enough to see that the member was leading a
6 happy and contented life. As he looked at the member's life,
7 then his own, he found his own life lacking what the member's
8 had: peace, serenity, joy and love; all of the things that
9 he thought would make a truly happy, enjoyable life.

10 After seven more years of misery, the young man came back.
11 Six months in the program he leads a happy, enjoyable life.
12 He has some of all the things that, to him, make a good life.

13 Life's flow takes place in this manner; we come here
14 powerless and the power we seek comes to us through other
15 people in the Fellowship if we can only reach out for it.
16 Now in the Fellowship with clean time, we will want to keep
17 ourselves surrounded by Fellow members who know us well and
18 who we can count on in a pinch. N.A. is a fellowship of sur-
19 vival and one of the advantages of the Fellowship is that
20 it places us in intimate regular contact with the very
21 people who can most understand and help us in our quest for
22 recovery. All the good ideas and intentions will not help
23 us at all if we fail to put them into action. Reaching out
24 is the beginning of the struggle that will make us free. It
25 will break down the walls that imprison us. Our disease is
26 one of isolation and honest sharing will free us to recover.
27 Maybe there was a time when our defense mechanisms actually
28 helped us survive, but who needs a raincoat when the sun
29 has come out?

30 Slow down and live life. A cynic is someone who has been
31 very disappointed. He does not hear until the heart decides
32 to listen, then he can accept help. It is not shameful to
33 relapse. The real shame is in not coming back. Being thus
34 humbled, we must express our need to those who are able to
35 help.

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We are grateful to have stayed clean long enough for the mes- 1
sage of total abstinence to take hold. We are grateful that 2
we were made so welcome at meetings that we felt comfortable 3
going to one meeting a day for ninety days. Without staying 4
clean and coming to all those meetings, we would surely have 5
had a rougher time working the Steps. Just one fix, pill, 6
drink or toke would have interrupted the process of recovery 7
and cut us off from the Fellowship. 8

When someone returns to the Fellowship after a relapse, 9
we stress the importance of living just for today. The past 10
is past. We can not change what has happened. What is im- 11
portant is to stay clean today. As long as we live today to 12
the best of our ability and pursue adequacy not perfection, 13
we can take pride in ourselves. We are doing the best we can 14
for today and not living in the past. We can begin to live 15
at peace with ourselves. We can stop being so hard on our- 16
selves. This we have found to be the case; that we have been 17
our own worst enemy, and fault for our failures was not in 18
the stars but in ourselves. 19

We all find that the feeling we get from helping others 20
motivates us to do better in our own lives. If we are hurt- 21
ing, and most of us do from time to time, we learn to ask for 22
help. We find that pain shared is pain lessened. Members of 23
the Fellowship take great pleasure in helping a relapser re- 24
cover and have great insight and many useful suggestions to 25
offer when asked. Recovery found in Narcotics Anonymous must 26
come from within and no one gets clean for anyone but them- 27
selves. 28

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CHAPTER EIGHT

WE DO RECOVER

Although "Politics makes strange bedfellows", as the old saying goes, addiction makes us one of a kind. Our personal stories may vary in individual pattern but in the end we all have the same thing in common. This common illness or disorder is addiction. We know well the two things that make up true addiction. Obsession and compulsion. Obsession--that fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Compulsion--that once having started the process with one "fix", one pill, or one drink, we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs we are completely in the grip of a destructive power stronger than ourselves.

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be these alternatives: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends--jails, institutions, or death; or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today, are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual--not religious--program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.

When my addictions brought me to the point of complete powerlessness, uselessness, and surrender some twenty-six years ago, there was no N.A. I found A.A. and in that Fellowship met addicts who had also found the program to be the answer to their

problem. However, we knew that many were still going down the road to disillusion, degradation and death, because they were unable to identify with the alcoholic in A.A. Their identification was at the level of apparent symptoms and not at the deeper level of emotions or feelings, where empathy becomes a healing therapy for all addicted people. With several other addicts and some members of A.A. who had great faith in us and the program, we formed, in July of 1953, what we now know as Narcotics Anonymous. We felt that now the addict would find from the start as much identification as each needed to convince himself that he could stay clean, by the example of others who had recovered for many years.

That this was what was principally needed, has proved itself in these passing years. That wordless language of recognition, belief and faith, which we call empathy, created the atmosphere in which we could feel time, touch reality and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us. In our program of recovery we are growing in numbers and in strength. Never before have so many clean addicts, of their own choice and in free society, been able to meet where they please, to maintain their recovery in complete creative freedom.

Even addicts said it couldn't be done the way we had it planned. We believed in openly scheduled meetings, no more hiding as other groups had tried before by those who advocated long withdrawal from society. We felt that the sooner the addict could face his problem of everyday living, just that much faster would he become a real productive citizen. We eventually have to stand on our own feet and face life on its own terms, so why not from the start. Because of this, of course, many stayed and some came back after their setback. The brighter part, is the fact that those who are now our members, many have long terms of complete abstinence and are better able to help the newcomer. Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of our Steps, and Traditions, is the dynamic force that is bringing increase and unity to our program. Now we know that the time has come when the tired old lie, "Once an addict, always an addict", will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover

As long as there have been people, addiction has	1
existed. Addiction is the obsession and to use compulsion.	2
Modern technology has made available not only the drugs	3

1 themselves, but also the stresses and demands that bring
2 out the potential for addiction. In the past, there
3 was no hope for an addict. Clean today, we come to see
4 life in a new light. We confess to an addictive nature
5 and we are no longer set apart by marked obsession, com-
6 pulsion, and physical discomfort.

7 In sharing our past with others it seems that we
8 all reached a point when we said to ourselves, "I'm lost,
9 I just don't know what to do". We have all experienced
10 that terrifying overwhelming urge, that need for some-
11 thing outside ourselves. In addiction we share a bond
12 of fear, anxiety, and anger that we are unable to control.

13 What we have in common is what we have all felt: the
14 loneliness, the self-centeredness, the misery, the despair,
15 the pain within and the empty numbness that sets us apart
16 from others. We all felt that we were unique, different,
17 better than, or worse than, but always separate. We felt
18 alone. Our pain surrounded us. We could not fill the
19 empty place inside.

20 Earlier patterns are what got us into trouble. How-
21 ever anything that "works" to help us make it through a
22 new day clean is considered a new pattern. Complete ab-
23 stinence is the foundation for our new way of life.
24 Vigilance, integrity, honesty, open-mindedness and will-
25 ingness to try, are all associated with strange new pat-
26 terns to the newcomer and to clean addicts as well.

27 It all begins with that first surrender and admis-
28 sion. From that point forward, each addict is reminded
29 that a day clean is a day won, and any failure is only a
30 temporary set-back rather than a link in an unbreakable
31 chain. Every addict is a prisoner in their own mind,
32 condemned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt.
33 This compells a person to act against their true inner

nature and keep doing things they don't really want to do. 1

We weren't focused on the fulfillment of life, but 2
on the emptiness and worthlessness of it all. We could 3
not deal with success, so failure became a way of life. 4
The fear of loss of control had set in and we were 5
afraid to try anything different. 6

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are more concerned with 7
recovery than the mysteries of addiction. We seek to 8
change our personalities and our lives for the better. 9
We realize that we are a part of the universe. In 10
recovery, we change our reactions, thoughts, and atti- 11
tudes. We begin to understand and accept who we are. 12
This gives us a sense of security. We become less com- 13
pulsive in our thoughts and actions. 14

The dishonesty in our actions has led to a large 15
amount of guilt inside all of us. This guilt could drive 16
us to use, and the using could keep us from going back 17
and making amends. All these things together would cause 18
misery. Being clean, we are able to take our inventor- 19
ies honestly. We can admit our faults and are able to 20
ask for help. 21

We realize that an addict is going to resist recovery. 22
Things we have shared with them interfere with their using. 23
We put our trust in the group. If a person tells us that 24
they can smoke pot and suffer no ill side effects, there 25
are two ways we can look at it. The first possibility is 26
that they are not an addict. The other is that the dis- 27
ease hasn't become apparent to them. 28

We always try to be careful because we don't want to 29
say or do anything that might prevent them from seeking 30
help when drugs turn on them. 31

We have found from our group experience that honesty 32
is essential for the new member to surrender completely 33

1 to the program. We have also found that complete surrender
2 is the only way to recover. No addict has ever failed to
3 recover who has surrendered completely to our program.
4 This has proven itself time and time again by the phenom-
5 enal growth of Narcotics Anonymous throughout the world.

6 We have noticed as our program has grown that new-
7 comers seem to come in with a false impression that needs
8 to be corrected. In the instances that we are talking
9 about, they seem to believe that they can barter non-usage
10 for group acceptance. When the group fails to behave in
11 accordance with the newcomer's expectations, they seem
12 to feel it's O.K. to use. The sad thing about this is
13 that it may take them a while to get the real message of
14 our program. If they happen to be addicts, they can die
15 never realizing that recovery is possible.

16 Some of us had thought of ourselves as outgoing,
17 happy-go-lucky people, but we were wrong, and after years
18 of depending on drugs and other people to make our decis-
19 ions, we lost almost all ability to socialize and be
20 comfortable with ourselves.

21 At the end of our using we were consumed with terror
22 and despair. We knew for sure that we were dying and
23 many of our friends were already dead. No one can explain
24 the incredible fact that addicts, hopeless in their addict-
25 ion, can reach for and receive help in Narcotics Anonymous.

26 Over a period of years, old habit patterns become
27 familiar, and many times the comfortable mode of exist-
28 ence. Our egos were blown out of proportion. We became
29 uncomfortable due to the obsessive nature of our disease.
30 The old comfort associated with using was lost. Life was
31 addiction-a lonely, miserable prison.

32 The way we understand insanity is poisoning one's
33 self for no apparent reason. Compulsion or obsession

drives addicts to the point that there were few things we 1
would not do to obtain our drug. Insanity for us seems 2
to occur in tragic cycles, much like Russian roulette. 3
We are forced to play because we have tried and can't 4
stop. 5

We know that we are powerless over an illness which 6
is chronic, progressive and fatal. We cannot deal with 7
the obsession and compulsion that comes with the disease. 8
The only alternative is to stop using. When we are 9
willing to follow this course and take advantage of the 10
help available to us, a whole new life opens up. 11

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual, not a religious, 12
program. The spiritual basis of the program is strong 13
enough to support a person with the disease. As we re- 14
enter society, the Twelve Steps are the roadmap to a 15
successful recovery. Every addict who is clean and with- 16
out a compulsion to use is a miracle. To keep that 17
miracle alive is an ongoing process of awareness. It is 18
important for us to remember that not using is an abnormal 19
state for us. We have to learn to live clean. We need to 20
be honest with ourselves and think of both the negative 21
and positive sides of things. Decision making is a little 22
rough at first. Sticking to and seeing that you have made 23
the decision is the reward. Before we got clean, all our 24
actions were guided by impulse. We seldom thought con- 25
structively, and even if we did, we would say, "the hell 26
with it" and carry through with the negative anyway. It 27
is better for us with practice and the help of our spon- 28
sors and N.A. friends. 29

We realize that we are responsible for the way we 30
feel. We are no longer able to shift the blame, and we 31
are aware that we create the world in which we live. We 32
are products of our own thoughts. 33

1 We have found it essential to accept reality. Since
2 that time we have not found it necessary to use.

3 Reality, as it is, is just fine with us. Without
4 drugs we can function like normal human beings, which
5 means accepting ourselves and the world around us,
6 exactly as it is. We learn that conflicts are a part of
7 reality and learn to be grateful for them. We learn new
8 ways to resolve conflicts instead of running from them.
9 We begin to simplify them and we actually look upon them
10 with gratitude as opportunities for progress. They are a
11 part of the real world. We learn to handle problems, not
12 to solve them. Everyone has situations; we have tended
13 to make them problems, like making a mountain out of a
14 mole hill. We really don't have any brilliant answers
15 or solutions, but we can honestly say that this program
16 works! We can stay clean and even enjoy life, remember-
17 ing, "just for today" and not picking up that first fix,
18 pill, drink, or joint.

19 The rewards of staying clean are endless. We used to
20 think life would be boring without drugs. We were really
21 screwed up in our addictions and our concept of what life
22 was really all about. Now that everything is changing
23 and getting better, we give thanks to God and the N.A.
24 program. One member shares that reality is the biggest
25 trip of all.

26 We become aware that many of our feelings were im-
27 mature and based upon pride and ego. As we become more
28 comfortable with ourselves, we appreciate more fully the
29 meaning of living just for today. We get over the guilt
30 of the past and the worries of the future. We enjoy the
31 now: we learn to endure both pain and pleasure. We
32 endure frustration for we know that it will pass. We
33 rid ourselves of absolutes, such as success or failure,

and begin to enjoy doing things for the fun of it, rather 1
than shying away because we are not perfect. 2

Interpersonal relationships improve and we become 3
less sensitive and suspicious. Understanding the meaning 4
of love, recognizing that we are growing from an immature 5
"need for love" to a mature "giving of love", allows us 6
to care about others. 7

We are not responsible for our disease. We are 8
responsible for our recovery. We can seek help from 9
others who are enjoying lives free from having to use. 10
In time, we find that more is possible in recovery than 11
we could conceive. Our teachability hinges on our 12
ability to admit our need for help. This surrender is 13
the beginning of the basic learning experience that 14
gives us information on our disease and recovery. Life 15
is a learning experience. As we begin to apply what we 16
have learned, our lives begin to change for the better. 17
No one completely understands this process, but thank God 18
we do not have to understand it for it to work. We learn 19
not to question the ways of God. Instead we look into 20
our actions. Writing down our belief has always helped 21
many of us examine our feelings. If we have trouble ex- 22
pressing our belief or writing it down, it is helpful 23
to make sure we have worked Step One. The ego deflation 24
of Step One generally opens minds. Faith is the key. 25
It takes a firm belief in a loving God before we can pos- 26
sibly begin to turn our wills and lives over to His care. 27

In Narcotics Anonymous, we have found that a spiritual 28
experience is necessary to arrest our addiction. This 29
occurs as we rely on God as we understand Him. The Twelve 30
Steps chart the course to individual recovery; from the 31
hazy days of initial surrender to the various levels of 32
spiritual awakening. 33

1 We get relief through the Twelve Steps, and sharing
2 with trusted friends. We love them and believe in the
3 promise and hope that they offer. Following the Steps,
4 living just for today, we can maintain an attitude that
5 is essential for us to grow. We move forward in the
6 program, and we are comforted by the Steps. They are
7 suggested only, but they are the principles that made
8 our recovery possible. All of the Twelve Steps are essen-
9 tial to the recovery process, simply because they help us
10 to participate in our own recovery. By the grace of God,
11 our actual participation in recovery provides the health
12 we need to respond to life and to arrest the disease of
13 addiction. We are grateful that God provided the steps
14 and that they have been proven as a means to arrest our
15 disease.

16 If we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery
17 after some time clean, we usually have stopped doing one
18 or more of the things that helped us in the earlier
19 stages of our recovery. This can show up as an unexplain-
20 able depression or disorientation. It is really related
21 to a poor spiritual condition and can be remedied by an
22 ongoing application of the Twelve Steps of recovery.

23 From "day one", the Twelve Steps started becoming
24 a part of our lives. At first, we were filled with nega-
25 tivity, and we only allowed the First Step to take hold.
26 Today, we have less fear of going insane or using, than
27 we once did. We realize that those old feelings and
28 fears were a product of our disease, and that real freedom
29 is possible for us now. In time, we lost most of the fear
30 that had us completely within its grasp and we learned to
31 let go of guilt.

32 Our old ways were so self-destructive and egocentric,
33 we hurt ourselves and those we loved. Learning a new way

of living is a blessing from our Higher Power, giving us 1
the ability to explore and discover through feelings. 2
We thank our Higher Power for the love that we receive. 3
We find the road sometimes long and weary, but we keep 4
on finding miracles as we go. 5

The program recommends that we lower the demands on 6
ourselves so that we can achieve our daily goals. It is 7
also recommended that we don't go overboard and swamp our- 8
selves with a bunch of new responsibilities just because 9
we succeeded in handling a few basics. That way, we 10
experience success at a basic and acceptable level. 11

Now that we are in N.A. we have a new outlook on 12
being clean. We enjoy a feeling of release and freedom 13
from the desire to use. We find that everyone we meet 14
has something to offer. We are free to receive as well 15
as to give. Opening these doors and entering them be- 16
comes a new adventure in living. Letting go of old 17
ideas and entertaining the new ones brings us to this new 18
way of life. We will know happiness, joy, and freedom. 19
Life is not just a glum lot. 20

An attitude of gratitude permeates us. With grati- 21
tude, clean time is happy and joyous. We remain grateful 22
for all the beautiful things this program has revealed to 23
us. 24

Our experience revealed that the things we are not 25
grateful for could be taken from us. As long as we didn't 26
have something, it would seem wonderful and we would 27
often think if we just had so and so we would be happy. 28
Occasionally, we would have our prayers answered only to 29
find the rich feelings of satisfaction and comfort beyond 30
our grasp. We can see today that in reality we were 31
taking a lot for granted by failing to be consciously 32
thankful for that which God and life had already provided 33
for us. 34

1 There exists no model of the recovered addict.
.2 When the drugs go and the addict works the program,
3 wonderful things happen. Lost dreams awaken and new
4 possibilities spring.

5 How many times have we heard something over and
6 over again, until it finally takes root and blossoms.
7 With each meeting we attend, seeds planted in earlier
8 meetings are watered until we can see them grow to harvest.
9 This harvest is a form of spiritual growth. Through
10 listening to the experiences of others and putting the
11 program into action, life becomes beautiful, pleasant, and
12 very exciting! Laughter is a common part of our day.
13 Smiling doesn't hurt anymore, and we can finally look
14 others in the eye and be grateful who we are.

15 Being willing to grow spiritually is the direction
16 that keeps us bouyant today. When we take the action indi-
17 cated in the steps, the result is a healing of our distorted
18 personalities. It is the action that is important, not the
19 result. We leave all results to God. God presents the op-
20 portunity that heals our disease spiritually. After
21 clearing up the superficial wreckage, it is necessary to
22 continue applying the principles in order to get to the
23 roots of our disorder.

CHAPTER NINE
JUST FOR TODAY

Tell yourself-
JUST FOR TODAY my thoughts will be on my recovery,
living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.
JUST FOR TODAY I will have faith in someone in N.A.
who believes in me and wants to help me in my
recovery.
JUST FOR TODAY I have a program. I will try to
follow it to the best of my ability.
JUST FOR TODAY through N.A. I will try to get a
better perspective on my life.
JUST FOR TODAY I will be unafraid, my thoughts
will be on my new associations, people who are
not using and who have found a new way of life.
So long as I follow that way, I have nothing
to fear.

We knew our lives had become unmanageable, but some 1
of us had a problem admitting the powerlessness over our 2
addiction. When we came to our first meeting it was as 3
though a big weight was lifted from our shoulders, guilt 4
feelings rolled off and a feeling of peace came over us, 5
as we realized that with our surrender to our Higher 6
Power, would come the help we so desperately needed. We 7
also felt the great feeling of warmth and love that came 8
from the group. For the first time in many months, we 9
were able to relax when we heard that we couldn't control 10
our addictions. 11

The principles of surrender, admission of responsibil- 12
ities, improving faith, and prayer and meditation, guide 13

1 us into a way of life in which all our resources center in
2 God, become available to us.

3 A great many addicts have a hard time with acceptance
4 in recovery. For so long, we have wanted and demanded
5 that things go our way. When we came into the program of
6 Narcotics Anonymous we were asked to learn to be patient
7 and accepting. This is a critical point in our recovery.
8 Not learning to accept is to continue to manage and con-
9 trol. We know from our past experiences that our way of
10 doing things did not work. When we refuse to practice
11 acceptance we are, in effect, denying our faith in a
12 Higher Power. This can lead to many problems and fail-
13 ures.

14 Any addict clean, without the compulsion to use, is
15 a miracle. We keep this miracle alive in ongoing recovery
16 with positive attitudes and awareness involving personal
17 growth. If after a period of time we find ourselves in
18 trouble with our recovery, we have probably stopped doing
19 one or more of the things which helped us in the earlier
20 stages of recovery.

21 This lack of daily maintenance can show up in many
22 ways. As our lives become more comfortable, many of us
23 lapse into spiritual complacency, and we find ourselves
24 in the same horror and loss of purpose from which we came.
25 We forget we are given only a daily reprieve. We must ask
26 for help each morning and remember to thank God at night.
27 If we do not maintain our spiritual condition daily, some
28 of us find the resulting pain and confusion lead to a
29 return to drugs and our old way of life. Some have made
30 it back from relapses...many have not.

31 What are you going to do when you have to face your
32 first crisis? When the time comes we hope you will be well
33 equipped with the tolls and the principles of the program
34 of Narcotics Anonymous. The enemy we have to fight is our

own self-destructiveness. When we begin to work the
program, we will like ourselves better. Much of the
loneliness and fear will have been replaced by the love
of the Fellowship and the security of being a part of a
new way of life. It is important for us to remember to
take it easy.

We have found through experience that you can not be
too dumb for this program, but you can be too smart for it--
too smart to allow it to work for you in your life. Sur-
render is brought about by suffering. Having been beaten
by drugs we are powerless, not powerful. As powerless
people, we should realize that we cannot stay clean on our
own resources. Have we not tried before? We need to tap
into the group's resources and surrender our way to their
way.

As a result of working the Twelve Steps, regularly
attending meetings, and practicing these principles in all
our affairs, a spiritual awakening happens in our lives.
God consciousness fills the empty place inside that nothing
ever could before. We know a true peace. Circumstances
which used to baffle us no longer do. We come to dwell in
the fullness and abundance of life as a direct result of
having worked the Steps and maintaining our spiritual
condition. We find it necessary to continue to do so on a
daily basis.

These are guidelines and suggestions. We have found
they work for us. This is how we maintain our spiritual
condition. We never have to be lonely again. Our Higher
Power is accessible to us at all times. In the Fellowship
of Narcotics Anonymous we have more friends than we ever
believed possible. Finally, we are fulfilled and have come
to know a real peace and a true sense of self-worth.

We have stressed that going to meetings, working the
Twelve Steps, practicing these principles in all our affairs

1 and remembering to ask God for help in the morning and to
2 thank Him at night, only worked for one day. On those
3 days that we don't continue our daily maintenance we don't
4 have a good day. Sometimes, after a few days of neglect-
5 ing spiritual maintenance, things begin to really get out
6 of hand in our lives. This is, hopefully, when our pain
7 motivates us to renew our daily spiritual maintenance.

8 We need to be aware that although the spiritual life
9 is the answer to all our problems, we live in today's
10 world. If our spirituality cannot help us today, then we
11 need to re-evaluate what we term spiritual. We need not
12 immobilize ourselves with constant concern over our spirit-
13 ual pride in this manner and it keeps us humble. We be-
14 lieve that if it's not practical, it's not spiritual.

15 We believe, that as recovering addicts, we have a lot
16 to be grateful for. When things don't work for us, it is
17 a direct result of our own self will.

18 Our new found way of life may have its problems.
19 When we ask for help, the road ahead won't be so rocky.
20 Sometimes, after turning over our will and life to our
21 Higher Power, we choose to take it back and begin managing
22 our lives again. The principle of surrender, is admission
23 of responsibility when we are at fault, and practicing
24 faith.

25 Even though, by the grace of God, we have been given
26 an answer to our problems, we often take things back into
27 our hands. Again and again, we must ask God to do for us
28 what we cannot do for ourselves. How many times had we
29 looked at a job well done, and said, "See what a good job
30 I've done?"...forgetting where the ability really came
31 from.

32 We begin to see how only our Higher Power can restore
33 us to sanity when the obsession to use surfaces and self
34 will runs riot. We gradually turn our will and life over

to the care of God as we understand Him. We no longer feel 1
alone; we have found a partner in our Higher Power, who is 2
with us all the time. We cease trying to control, and 3
surrender. Gradually, as we become more and more God- 4
centered than self centered, our despair turns to hope. 5
Self-pity and resentments are replaced by tolerance and 6
faith. 7

If our surrender to our disease is complete, the rest 8
of our recovery is dependent upon our belief in a loving 9
God of our own understanding. Remember, as recovering 10
addicts, our fellow members love us and will not fail to 11
respond to our sincere desire for help. We believe God 12
works the same way. 13

We find that we receive guidance when we ask for 14
knowledge of God's will for us. This is the emotional 15
stability we so badly need. We are given the freedom, 16
serenity, and happiness we had so desperately sought. 17
Before going to sleep, we take a few moments out of our 18
routine to thank God for keeping us clean that day and 19
for helping us with our living problems. 20

With our Higher Power guiding us, we may never again 21
have to deal with using, but we will always have to deal 22
with staying clean. 23

A lot happens in one day, both negative and positive, 24
and if we don't take the time to appreciate both, chances 25
are we will miss something that will help us grow. As we 26
begin to live in the present, burdens of the past and the 27
anxieties of the future slip away. We are granted the 28
serenity to accept the things we cannot change, and thus 29
lose our quickness to anger and sensitivity to criticism. 30

Normal living is possible. The Twelve Steps of 31
Narcotics Anonymous are a progressive recovery process 32
established in our normal living. Our recovery is depend- 33
ent on our belief in a loving God who cares for us, and will 34

1 do for us whatever we found impossible to do ourselves.

2 Resentments are one of the biggest road blocks to
3 recovery. They deaden our spiritual growth. Resentments
4 are a direct result of our self will acting out its most
5 extreme nature--violence. We must let go, with love, and
6 ask God to relieve us of the burden of self will. Anger
7 and fear will fall by the wayside.

8 Change involves the unknown, the great source of fear.
9 The same Power that has helped us deal with our obsession
10 will be the guide and source of courage when we ask for it.
11 The wisdom to know the difference involves growth in the
12 program. Regular attendance at meetings is our best baro-
13 meter in this respect.

14 The Fellowship, after a meeting, is a good opportunity
15 to share things we didn't get to discuss at the meeting.
16 It is also a good time to talk one-on-one with our sponsors.
17 When we talk about our questions and answers, many parts of
18 the message surface for the first time and become clearer
19 to us. These initial ventures into the realm of sharing
20 freely are the beginnings of honesty, open mindedness, and
21 willingness as a way of life.

22 These principles for living will guide us in recovery
23 when we learn how to use them. We succeed in life each time
24 we practice them. We no longer need to make excuses for
25 who we are. New ideas are available to us.

26 Honesty, the search for the truth, is our most diffi-
27 cult and yet most challenging objective. We may not be able
28 to maintain rigorous honesty, but we must always strive for
29 it. Honesty must start at home. If we are not first honest
30 with ourselves, we can't be honest with others. The best
31 way to practice honesty is by taking a daily inventory.

32 Our life is a diary wherein we mean to write one story,
33 and quite often write another. It is when we compare the
34 two that we have our most humble hour.

It is important while doing our daily inventory that 1
we remember to look at our assets as well as our defects. 2
So often, we get caught up in striving for growth and 3
eliminating our defects, that we forget about our assets. 4
We have found when we focus on our assets our defects 5
will also change. Our inventory allows us to realize our 6
daily growth. 7

Rigorously practicing the few simple guidelines for 8
living in this chapter, we succeed daily. Although daily 9
inventory may have a fair share of red ink, these guide- 10
lines, when practiced, give us sufficient black ink to 11
balance the day's ledger. 12

JUST FOR TODAY, WE WILL LIVE!!!! 13

CHAPTER TEN
MORE WILL BE REVEALED

1 As our recoveries progressed, we became increasingly
2 more aware of ourselves and our world. Our needs and wants,
3 our assets and liabilities were revealed to us. We came to
4 realize that we had no power to change the outside world;
5 we could only change ourselves. As recovering addicts, we
6 found that without our drugs, we hurt. The program of
7 Narcotics Anonymous provided an opportunity for us to relieve
8 our pain by applying spiritual principles.

9 The N.A. program provides a healthy environment for
10 growth. As a Fellowship, we love and cherish one another,
11 supporting our new way of life together. We do this because
12 of our common desire to stay clean.

13 We are encouraged to work the Twelve Steps, practice
14 the Twelve Traditions, go to meetings, get a sponsor, find
15 a home group and ask for help. We place principles before
16 personalities. We work our own program and we do it for our-
17 selves. The Steps are there for us to work and the people
18 are there to help us. We use the tools of the program to
19 shape our inner being. The slogans: Just For Today; An
20 Addict Alone Is In Bad Company; If It Works, Don't Fix It;
21 The Lie Is Dead; Clean and Serene; are simple reminders we
22 use to help keep us on the right track.

23 While using, we didn't know who we were, or where we
24 were going. We were constantly being deceitful, lying to

others and ourselves, and closing people off. We came in knowing only what we didn't want. By coming to our first meeting, we admitted our ways of dealing with life didn't work. Chemicals always had the last word. In other words, we were unable to deal with life on its own terms. Through working the program, we are rebuilding our disordered and fractured personalities.

Any addict is welcome regardless of their drug of choice. We cannot afford the luxury of arrogance in any form. Within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, there is no caste system relating to drug of choice. We believe that chemical dependency in any form is addiction and we encourage the addict to seek whatever recovery works best for them.

We found that forming sweeping opinions and generalizations with limited insight was dangerous. We found our own place in the world and took it. The ability to accept our place and be grateful for it is very special. Many of us have had great opportunities in our lives but were faced with a baffling inability to accept them or make the most of them. We have found a safe and certain usefulness in our new way of life. The old rules no longer apply and we can live in peace and harmony.

Often it means simply listening to those hunches and intuitive feelings that we think would benefit others or ourselves and acting on them spontaneously. We are then able to make decisions based on principles that have real value to ourselves.

In N.A. we begin new lives, and we discovered a need for balance. Where we were excessive, we learned moderation; where we were weak, we grew strong. Balance comes to us gradually in ways we can accept. Sometimes these ways appear to be coincidental and we recognize them as the grace of God only in time. Coincidences are miracles in which God

1 chooses to remain anonymous.

2 When we pray for something, we have spiritually pre-
3 pared ourselves for the realization of our prayers. Know-
4 ledge of God's will for us guides us to make wise choices
5 when we pray. If our Higher Power forced his goodness on
6 us, we could never learn to distinguish good from bad, and
7 enjoy the happiness of being a spiritual person.

8 As we grow, we become more aware of the key to willing-
9 ness. Willingness lets us relax and do what we can, just
10 for today, to improve our lives in any area. When we are
11 unwilling, we have to fight and constantly deny the need for
12 improvement. This attitude leads to even greater problems.
13 Today we have learned with God's help, to face each problem
14 as it arises. God never gives us too much to handle in any
15 twenty-four period.

16 We are grateful for open-mindedness. Open-mindedness
17 opens the door for new ideas, from all areas in our lives.
18 Through active listening we can hear things that will stay
19 with us for the future. This ability is God-given and grows
20 with us. Life takes on new meaning when we leave ourselves
21 open to experience this gift. To be able to receive we
22 must give and more importantly we have to receive in order
23 to have something to give. Open-mindedness becomes an
24 admirable quality for which we strive.

25 In recovery, we strive for an attitude of gratitude.
26 We feel grateful for ongoing God-consciousness. Whenever
27 we confront a difficulty that we do not think we can handle,
28 we have learned to pray that God will do for us what we
29 cannot do for ourselves.

30 Remember, we are all in this together. None of us are
31 too good or too bad to improve. We are not here to get good;
32 we are here to recover. Help is there only if we reach for
33 it. We had only to get clean, open our minds and hearts to
34 be free to live. Humility is a fact of ongoing recovery.

Watching others grow in recovery increases our capacity for 1
tolerance towards members who seem to need growth in many 2
areas. We learn that the principle of personality change 3
will transform them from catapillars to butterflies or 4
allow us to see that they were butterflies all along. 5
We have seen many areas of personal and seemingly perma- 6
nent difficulties yield to the ongoing practice of doing 7
what we can. When we do what we can, God takes care of the 8
rest. 9

Surrender to the program of Narcotics Anonymous is an 10
ongoing thing. In a sense the newcomer surrenders to the 11
wisdom of those who have gone before and those with time 12
clean surrender to the spirit and vitality of the new. 13

The opportunity to witness recovery of a suffering addict 14
is one of the greatest experiences this life has to offer 15
us. We are always willing to help. We are willing to go 16
anywhere at anytime to help the suffering addict. Having 17
been down the road, we understand the problems of a recover- 18
ing addict. As we look back, we are grateful for the events 19
in our lives that have brought us here. 20

We want constantly to remind the newcomer and our- 21
selves that there are plenty of people ready and able to 22
help. What recovering addicts want most if to feel good 23
about themselves. If we become self-destructive, we die. 24
Today we have real feelings of love, joy, hope, excitement, 25
sadness and friendship--not the old drug induced feelings. 26
We heard a man say, "Everytime he lost faith in another 27
human being, he died a little bit". The program is giving 28
us so much belief that we want to live again. We have to 29
surrender at each stage of recovery in this program. The 30
only way to win a losing battle is to surrender. 31

For most of us, N.A. was our last hope. We were so 32
afraid of being rejected here that we were reluctant to 33
open up. We were all shocked to hear others speak openly 34

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1 of things we had done in our own past that were shameful,
2 embarrassing and humiliating. In the beginning, we were all
3 frightened to speak freely about ourselves. There is nothing
4 between us but that first pill, fix, drink or toke. At one
5 time we were not willing to seek help and were so close-
6 minded. Living in a world of insanity is difficult to
7 understand for those who haven't experienced it. The old
8 ideas and our addiction kept us from obtaining a new way
9 of life and kept us deep in our addiction.

10 In time, we may find ourselves with old ideas on the
11 program. Our roots of recovery are important, but in on-
12 going recovery we need to constantly review our feelings
13 and thinking if we are to stay fresh and in touch with the
14 growth of N.A. as a whole. This freshness may well be the
15 key to ongoing recovery. We are each others eyes and ears;
16 when we do something wrong, our fellow recovering addicts
17 help us help ourselves by showing us what we cannot see.

18 When a newcomer admits his powerlessness, he opens
19 himself up to the Fellowship. We are responsible for making
20 him feel loved and supported. We all remember the painful
21 feelings of guilt, remorse, shame and self-loathing. We
22 can share our experience that these feelings were gradually
23 removed by working the program.

24 We realize that we cannot do it alone. We begin to
25 look at our brothers and sisters and become willing to do
26 whatever is in our power to give them what we have. We have
27 hope for we know that a better day is coming and we have
28 love. Our Fellowship grows and keeps on growing like our
29 belief in our Higher Power, we cherish this experience.

30 Life has many brick walls for us even though we are
31 clean. If we can see these dead-end paths, we won't feel
32 the need to pursue them. Some of our hopes and dreams made
33 us self-destructive. We fell short of our goals. We
34 figured we were bad people if bad things happened to us.

Other roadblocks in our path included our reluctance to pray, 1
our laxiness, and unworked Steps. There were a lot of 2
people we did not see eye to eye with, especially when 3
our character defects and personality differences got in 4
the way. Some of us used this rationalization to stay away 5
from the Fellowship and use. We were dying and could not 6
stand being around people we thought were full of hypocrisy. 7
The people in the Fellowship were staying clean and had a 8
chance to change and grow. What chance did we have? How 9
could we grow if we couldn't even stay clean? Some of these 10
roadblocks led some of our fellow addicts to relapse. Un- 11
fortunately, some of them never returned. They were destined 12
to die using. 13

In N.A. we have feelings we never dreamed of having. We 14
are able to entertain ourselves today. We do things beyond 15
our wildest imagining. Some of us take on new hobbies, join 16
sports teams, become adventurous and do things we always 17
wanted to do but couldn't because of drugs. Free from drugs, 18
we can have good clean fun. 19

When we came into the Fellowship, one of our biggest 20
reservations or fears was the thought of how boring life 21
would be without drugs. Our fears were short-lived. We 22
soon found that living clean was not only fun, but that it 23
was excitingly simple. 24

Talking and sharing experiences with our fellow addicts 25
was a pleasurable experience. The simple games and pleas- 26
ures that life offers, which had been lost in our using days 27
were rediscovered. Playing ball, going to parks, hiking, 28
things we just didn't have time for when we were using. 29
Being clean is anything but dull and boring. 30

By living clean we are giving up using. We are giving 31
up the right to be close-minded, selfish, dishonest, hateful 32
and generally unhappy. And what are we giving up all these 33
precious things for? Simple, unconditional happiness. 34

1 Having fun and being happy doesn't have to be searched
2 for; it surrounds us. It is all there. So just do it. Be
3 clean, have fun and be happy.

4 In N.A. we do not mope around crying because we're
5 addicts. As a matter of fact, it is seldom that we mope
6 because there is always a friend around to lift our spirits.
7 God has restored us to sanity but that does not mean we are
8 boring or prudish. We are a group of life lovers and we
9 used to try too hard to have fun. We exhausted ourselves
10 trying to figure out what to do. Now it's very natural
11 and spontaneous. We used to be afraid of going insane---
12 now we enjoy ourselves. This is a big change from the wild
13 parties we used to attend while we were using and the "fun"
14 we used to have. It is important for us to have fun in our
15 recovery without the dying. Many of us would not have con-
16 tinued in Narcotics Anonymous had we not been able to enjoy
17 it.

18 Many newcomers are amazed by their first dance or party
19 to find members laughing and dancing like high school kids.
20 It helps break the ice of isolation. Many newcomers have
21 the problem of their faces hurting from the unaccustomed
22 smiling. A sense of renewal pervades conventions and get-
23 togethers which draw together members and old friends from
24 different areas.

25 Complacency does not go with recovery. The deadly and
26 insidious nature of our disease can disguise itself as
27 boredom or superiority and generate the old "apart from"
28 feelings. Separation from the atmosphere of recovery and
29 the spirit of service to others slows our spiritual growth
30 and can threaten relapse. This book is not the final
31 answer to addiction. The Spirit of our Fellowship is
32 constantly leading us into new awareness. Recovery is a
33 journey, not a goal. This is a life time school; our
34 graduates get loaded. We have attempted to record a way of

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life which includes many addicts from many areas. Our 1
program could not encompass so many types of addicts from 2
differing backgrounds if not for the spiritual nature of 3
our groups. The spiritual truths at the heart of our 4
program do not change but the edges are constantly growing. 5
On the practical level, adjustment occurs because what is 6
appropriate to one phase of our growth may not fit another. 7
Vigilance is required to maintain the atmosphere of recovery 8
as a small group grows in size from three members at the 9
weekly meeting to three hundred. Concern and attention on 10
the part of trusted servants is required at every meeting, 11
group and service committee. Spiritual vigilance is re- 12
quired to apply our Twelve Traditions and to bring up at 13
times the ties which bind us together. Complacency has no 14
place in all this; openness, freedom, and spirit are the 15
marks of recovery. It is this spirit which will guide our 16
ongoing process as members and as a Fellowship. Ours is a 17
message of the Spirit, not of words. Words can describe 18
the process but not explain it completely. Experience alone 19
can make it real to us. Surrender to the disease begins our 20
recovery, surrender to the basic mystery of recovery sustains 21
it. No one we know understands the program totally and the 22
program has defied reduction to formula by the most deter- 23
mined efforts of some of the most skilled rationalizers in the 24
world. No sooner we make a breakthrough in terms of personal 25
growth than we realize how much more we need to grow so that 26
we may remain clean. 27

Our conceptions of fun have changed drastically since 28
we surrendered to N.A. as a whole. We can enjoy simple 29
things in life, like fellowship with other addicts, whereas 30
we once isolated ourselves. This was especially true after 31
we received help through N.A. and fellow addicts. 32

We enjoy sharing experiences, strength, and hope for 33
we know that we can't keep what we have unless we give it 34

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1 away. Through N.A. and the Twelve Steps, we are able to
2 grasp a new understanding of fun. We realize we don't
3 have to create fun--we just live it. It happens to us
4 as a result of complete abstinence from all drugs. As
5 we look back, we are grateful to enjoy life, because
6 it's so unlike the events in our lives that brought us
7 here. When we used, we thought we had fun and straight
8 people were deprived of it. God helps us to live to the
9 fullest, without forgetting who we are, and what our pur-
10 pose is. We have learned how to love ourselves and others
11 and not to be so afraid. We find that God usually grants
12 us the ability to see the obvious. Since we've been
13 clean, we have found joy doesn't come from material things
14 but is within ourselves if sought. We find when we lose
15 self-will we lead richer, happier and much more fun lives.
16 When there are no longer conditions put on our lives,
17 everything that we need is given to us in order to live
18 today. We do not forget to live each day to its fullest,
19 as a gift from our Higher Power, and just share, care, love,
20 and live the N.A. way.

21 A day at a time we have no way of knowing what will
22 happen to us. This is why we live in today. However, it
23 has been very funny how things have worked out for us!
24 We find that if we would have written a list of things
25 that we wanted upon entering the program we would have been
26 cheating ourselves.

27 It has been our experience that by clean living and
28 working the Steps, our dreams have come true. We do not
29 mean we became great leaders, champion race drivers or rock
30 stars, though some of us may have. What we mean it that
31 our deep inner dreams come true for us in recovery.

32 Things that we had given up hope on a long time ago
33 come true. Like being happy most of the time or seeing our-
34 selves succeed in some areas where we had failed miserably

before. 1

In our experience, the Twelve Steps give us a way of 2
life which does more than keep us off drugs. Not only is 3
this way of life superior to the old using life, it is 4
superior to any life that we can conceive. So, when we 5
say that clean in the program is our dreams come true, we 6
can speak from our experience. Before 1953, addicts did 7
not recover except in special cases. They did not dream 8
that recovery was even possible. We died, went insane 9
and were locked up. Unfortunately, too many of us are 10
being locked up still, and being killed by a disease. 11
Our small population today numbers twenty thousand. 12

We have a much loved member who says to newcomers 13
with a twinkle in his eye, "Just stick around and watch 14
the miracles happen". And they will. 15

Deepening ties are even now being forged so that no 16
addict need ever die seeking help. To us this is truly 17
exciting. The possibility of being used as an instrument 18
to save lives is exhilarating to us. 19

When times are hard for us in the Fellowship, we can 20
ask our Higher Power, as we understand Him, to guide us as 21
to what to do. He reveals Himself to us a little at a time. 22

In our recoveries we have witnessed God's healing 23
powers take a dying addict and turn them into a new person 24
with a new, totally different life. 25

Things we never dreamed of become true. We find our- 26
selves daring to care and love and with love, all things 27
are possible. We find ourselves advancing as human beings 28
along spiritual lines and doing a great service. 29

We get the very finest friends. These are some things 30
many of us could not conceive of. Before, we thought in 31
terms of self-centered materialism that could not possibly 32
bring us happiness. Now we live with a new outlook, that 33
of caring and sharing the N.A. way. 34

REVIEW MATERIAL:
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1 We are surrounded by like-minded addicts, who once were
2 at the depths of misery and despair, and now serious about
3 their own recovery and helping the suffering addict.

4 We are living and enjoying life without drugs. At
5 times we look in the mirror and find it all so hard to
6 believe. The great fact is that it's O.K. It does get
7 better and we never have to be alone again.

8 We have, in recovery, experienced difficult times when
9 we could not decide our next move. The truth has been re-
10 vealed to us. In meditation we may concentrate on a dream
11 of service for our fellow man and find that the rest is
12 just willingness and foot work. More will be revealed.
13 It takes work to uncover it but it is, we believe, the one
14 thing worth working for--Twelve Steps of recovery.

15 Today we are free from the obsession to use compul-
16 sively even when we are beaten. We are free to live as we
17 see fit without drugs. The ability to accept God's will
18 and feeling serene inside is freedom for us. Faith has
19 replaced our fear and has given us a freedom from our-
20 selves. Today we have the freedom of choice.

21 The program of N.A. is truly a program of freedom.
22 N.A. has given us back the freedom that we lost when we
23 turned to drugs in our search for freedom. We had believed
24 that drugs were the answer. When we were under the control
25 of our addictions we had given up all of our freedom to
26 choose--the only choice left to us were jails, institutions
27 or death. At last, with the help of the Fellowship and
28 our Higher Power, we have regained our freedom.

29 When we first came to the program, many of us felt
30 defeated, beaten and ashamed. As a newcomer it is some-
31 times hard to see that through our defeat and surrender
32 we had regained some control of our lives once more.
33 Through our freedom we begin taking responsibility for our
34 lives again. In our freedom we have found that our dreams

come true, if we choose to make them happen. 1
Through the freedom in our new lives we are finally 2
able to see the special qualities that we possess as indi- 3
viduals--qualities that we used to envy in others--never 4
realizing the potential within ourselves. 5