

May/June 2020

BAY area News

Narcotics Anonymous

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:

This is one way to carry the message of recovery and to reach sick and suffering addicts. On some days that is me. Please share your stories. Share your experience strength and hope or share your art. This is your newsletter. This is your area. All you have to do is email us at: lit@bascna.org to submit something! *Thank You!*

The Third Step

Now is the best time to practice the Third Step. Even during a world pandemic, it is possible to feel a sense of peace, even if just at times. As a recovering addict, I personally already struggle with handling life on life's terms, and now the struggle has deepened. With the help of my Higher Power, and my support group I can find a new normal. I can really apply the concept of "Just for Today." Most importantly, I can stay clean. I only imagine what it would feel like going through this alone, using, without the love and support of my fellow members of Narcotics Anonymous. I am grateful for my program and my journey. My new source of meeting attendance online has helped me communicate with recovering addicts from all over the world. As the basic text states, "the broader the base, the higher the point of freedom." I never imagined such a varied source of experience, strength, and hope would be so accessible and normalized. I have hope that NA as whole, will be guided through this by a Higher Power, and so will I.

Sarah W.



Bay Area website: bascna.org

24-Hour Helpline 888-779-7117 Call before you use!

The Opposite of Addiction is Connection

I've always been an academic.
Even while using, I studied my drugs
I established routines that helped me feel in control
If I knew everything about them, about you, about anything... then it couldn't control me
Then I believed I had the upper hand
In recovery, I've found some acceptance
I've learned about things like powerlessness
Other addicts help me to identify areas in which I experience it
How uncomfortable
Must mean growth is coming
So back to studying...
When I got clean, I read literature
I asked questions
I took (some/most/many) suggestions
I listened to Ted Talks about addiction and speaker tapes
One day I heard a line that resonated with me: "The opposite of addiction is connection"
The speaker explained that isolation is the silent killer of addicts
(Drugs are the loud one)
Sending people like me to jail, to prison, just...away
That doesn't cure us
It puts us out of sight and out of mind
When (if) we return, we are often pariahs
Can't find jobs
No one wants to associate with us
For many, this is motivating.. uncomfortable we seek fellowship
The fellowship is the part of NA (I believe) that gets us here. It helps us stay
As much as I didn't want you to touch me and I didn't believe that you loved me, I grew to appreciate the hugs. They became like medicine to me. Heart to heart.
The accountability of familiar faces.
The belief that I would be missed if not seen at my homegroup
As they say, feeling "a part of"
That opened a door for me and allowed me to find the connection that I had craved for so many years.
The little girl that I left behind smiled as a forever family took her hand. She felt the comfort of your embraces.
This connection built upon itself. It blossomed into trust. As the layers of me fell away like petals from a flower, I met myself through step work.
I found solutions as I identified patterns in my past. I exposed my fears so that they could be acknowledged. I didn't need to conquer them. When I acknowledged them, they revealed their solutions ... the ink had merely been invisible before. Like lemon juice writing ... held close to a flame.
I established a new routine.
Built a foundation, built a life, lost dreams awakened
...And then the world got unplugged...
A virus. Uncontainable. Invisible. Unpredictable. Non-discriminatory. Much like our disease: There is no known cure.
Only, it cannot be arrested.
This induced panic.
This took away the connection that so many addicts need.



COVID19 took away my heart to heart hugs.
It removed some levels of accountability.
It closed my homegroup.
I hear about rogue meetings where I might still get a hug “fix” if I really needed it
But my sponsor taught me to begin each day with the conscious decision that I will DO NO HARM
Could this harm me?
Could it harm someone else?
I answered yes.
I get anxiety going to the grocery store.
I worry that I don’t have enough rolls of toilet paper to make it through until I find more.
I’m suddenly afraid again
I’m fearful of something so infinitesimal that it lives only in the news
The news I obsessively thought about
The news I compulsively turned on
The news that removed me from the step work I suddenly had time to do
Until I found myself in a deep, dark, hopeless place: A hole where all I could see were tiny glowing
screens full of speculation.
I had forgotten the solution.
How amazing addicts are
Resourceful folks
What a blessing to be alive in this age of technology
We found a way to connect instantly
A way to have meetings with miles of virus-free WiFi between us
Suddenly I can see faces again
Find accountability again
My gratitude speaks again
Sharing and caring
The NA way
Once again, other addicts have held me up
I’ve also been a part of the bridge of people, holding up others
Helping them cross the chasm between fear and faith
When I stare reality in the face, she becomes quite beautiful
Not nearly as frightening as I anticipated
My higher power gave her a makeover
She’s the faces of loved ones
She’s a positive spin
She’s sunshine on my face
She’s the earth taking a breath and reminding me to do the same
She’s optimism
She’s telling me that I will get to hug you all again someday
When I stopped studying, I learned
I don’t know much
it’s been proven to me, however,
That
Just for today
I don’t have to use
Not for any reason
And neither do you
Tish P.



ANNIVERSARIES

May

Lisa T., Resurrender, May 1st, 18 yrs
Dave P., Morning Serenity, May 1st, 7 yrs
Andrew H., Real Talk, May 1st, 5 yrs
Connie B., Morning Serenity, May 3rd, 5 yrs
Randy B., Morning Serenity, May 3rd, 5 yrs
Brooke L., May 5th, 23 yrs
Bo B., We Do Recover, May 5th, 1 yr
Dana, Women & Recovery, May 6th, 4 yrs
Tori H., It Works, May 7th, 24 yrs
Cathy W., May 7th, 9 yrs
Jackie G., YFC, May 7th, 4 yrs
Bill S., Underground Recovery, May 7th, 1 yr
Susan A., Be a Part Of, May 7th, 1 yr
Brad L., Fire up the Principles, May 8th, 6 yrs
Stephanie B., Ladies to the Core, May 10th, 2yrs
Erica S., Spiritual Solutions, May 13th, 3 yrs
Mitti F., We Do Recover, May 14th, 1 yr
Brian H., Just for Today, May 15th, 9 yrs
Cat P., Change Starts Here, May 17th, 8 yrs
Danita K., May 19th, 12 yrs
Ruth B., Women on Wednesday, May 21st, 25 yrs
Steve G., Come as You Are, May 22nd, 10 yrs
Jenna DR., What Can I Do, May 25th, 5 yrs
Brent K., Change Starts Here, May 27th, 7 yrs
Maria E., May 27th, 2 yrs
Daryl H., Morning Serenity, May 29th, 27 yrs
Joe D., Resurrender, May 29th, 6 yrs
Regina N., Change Starts Here, May 30th, 1 yr



June

Danette R., Ladies to the Core, June 2nd, 8 yrs
Tia M., It Works, June 5th, 3 yrs
Elizabeth C., BAYNA, June 6th, 1 yr
Jackie O., DYRWTK, June 8th, 19 yrs
Kaylee R., Change Starts Here, June 10th, 1 yr
Richard N., Just for Today, June 18th, 3 yrs
Jay B., BAYNA, June 30th, 12 yrs

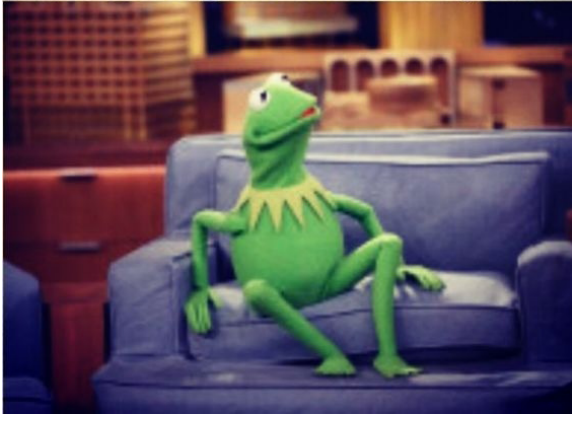
July

Cory R., Finally Free, July 7th, 4 yrs
Maura C., Soul Sistas, July 7th, 18 months
Alli R., DYRWTK, July 15th, 18 months
Janet D., SYA, July 11th, 6 yrs



LOL

**The look you get when a
rehab commercial comes on
and everyone stares at you.**

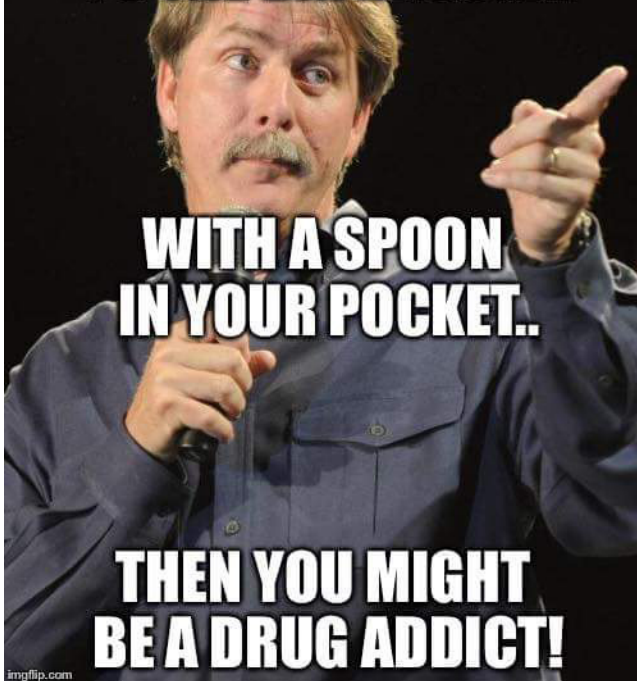


**WHEN YOU SHOW UP FOR
THAT JOB INTERVIEW..**



**AND THEY ASK IF YOU'VE
EVER BEEN ARRESTED!?**

**IF YOU'VE EVER WENT
TO THE BATHROOM...**



**WITH A SPOON
IN YOUR POCKET..**

**THEN YOU MIGHT
BE A DRUG ADDICT!**

ACTIVE RECOVERY



**SEEMS LIKE A FANCIER
WAY TO SAY CARDIO**



When I got clean they said "change everything," they meant it! I always have to be willing to change. I used to get dressed up for a meeting. Then I would spend anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour and a half getting to the meeting location.



Now, I find a quiet place. I grab my device and Bam! Instant NA meeting by phone or internet.

Pros	Cons
attend from anywhere	no coffee
no commute time	difficult for technically challenged addict
avoid sharing germs	easier addict to hide
parents can care for their children	no hugs
meet addicts from all	



It is a big change! I am so grateful to still be able to attend NA meetings!

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF RECOVERY

1. I will put my recovery first no matter what.

COMMANDS: faith, hope, love, and worship of staying clean; reverence for recovery; prayer.

FORBIDS: romancing using drugs: false worship.

2. I shall not put down the fellowship.

COMMANDS: reverence in speaking about how we adapted the 12 steps.

FORBIDS: blasphemy; the irreverent use of their name; speaking disrespectfully of the program.

3. My home group is sacred.

COMMANDS: going to my home group every time it meets out of obligation for my recovery.

FORBIDS: missing meeting through one's own fault; necessary servile work in home group day and days of obligation.

4. I will follow the suggestions from my sponsor.

COMMANDS: love; respect; obedience on the part of being a sponsee; care for my spiritual growth and respect for my predecessors.

FORBIDS: hatred and disrespect of others

5. I will not character assassinate my fellow members.

COMMANDS: safeguarding of one's own integrity and that of others.

FORBIDS: unjust hurting of others...

6. I will keep it in my pants and give the newcomer a chance.

COMMANDS: chastity in word and deed.

FORBIDS: obscene speech; impure actions alone or with others.

7. I will never steal the money from the fellowship.

COMMANDS: respect for the property and the rights of others; the ability to be a trust servant.

FORBIDS: theft; damage to the property of others.

8. I will never put down other 12 step fellowships.

COMMANDS: truthfulness; respect for the good name of others; the observance of secrecy when required.

FORBIDS: lying; injury to the good name of others; slander; tale bearing; rash judgment

9. I will not feed my dark side.

COMMANDS: purity in thought.

FORBIDS: willful impure thought and desires.

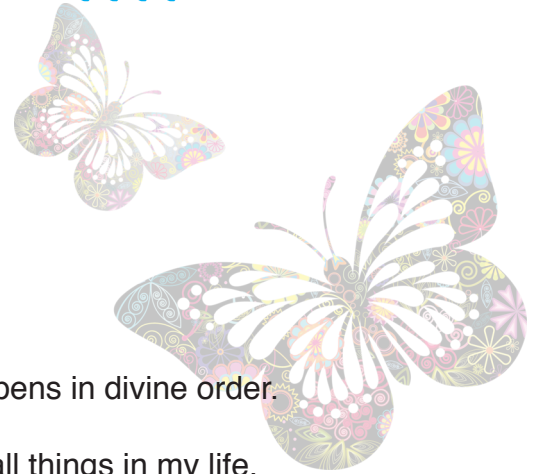
10. I will not be jealous of others in the fellowship.

COMMANDS: respect for the rights of others.

FORBIDS: the desire to take, to keep, or damage the property of others.

Jimmy S.

Grateful For....



Great friends.

Kevin G.

I have a job that is in high demand right now.

Kyle H.

The serenity of living in God's will and trusting everything happens in divine order.

Colleen G.

I'm grateful that I have the awareness that I have a choice in all things in my life.

Ernest E.

Getting to spend this quarantine alone with my son; for NA; that I have a support group that teaches me what real family is; my awesome sponsor; that I can support myself and my child to keep us fed and provided for amidst all this plague chaos.

Angela W.

I'm grateful for my health, my family, a home, and comfortability.

Karly W.

My sponsor.

John H.

Today I'm grateful for my health and time spent with my dad.

Melissa D.

I'm grateful that me and others stayed after the meeting today to help an addict not use, after he found the drug of his choice on the ground in his home, that was left by his girlfriend that had relapsed, and that he lived in a rural place.

Joanna B.

My health and family.

Tara L.

A program of recovery that handles all situations.

Drew F.

I'm grateful for having that special person in my life to be able to go through these uncertain times together.

Pete C.

Perspective.

Kimberly S.

My brother, the fire burning on the stove, air and my grand sponsor with her patience and tolerance.

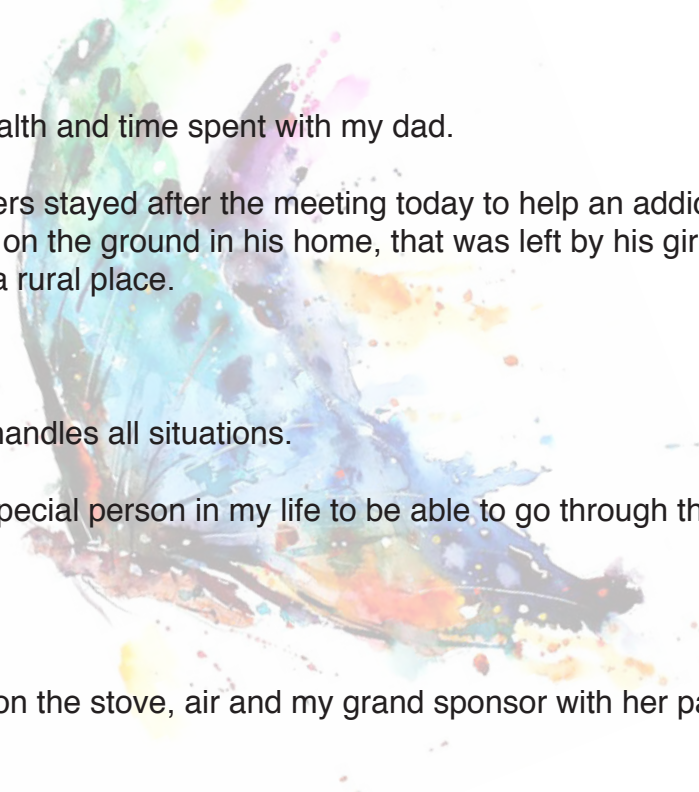
Ramona K.

My puppies.

Cindy L.

I am grateful to find peace in a storm.

Betsey B.



Life, a roof over my head, a job, being clean another day. Grateful for pain through which I can grow.
Tony B.

To be alive, my children's safety, to wake up and not be dope sick, for an amazing doctor, for being a productive citizen, my kitties, my relationships being renewed with my family, for compassion, honesty, and self-awareness.

Lori A.

Shortcomings. To be able to talk freely, openly and honestly when they occur. Doing so is my key to freedom.

Bobby H.

I'm grateful that I hit the bottom that I did. I'm grateful for the people in my life and especially for my friend for taking me under his wing and teaching me to respect myself. I'm also grateful for my family.

Joe P.

I'm grateful that my family and friends are safe and relatively healthy during these tough times.

Brent S.

Gods grace, my kids doing so well, my friends I call family, NA and my new clean time.

Nellee H.

Being clean, my family, my beautiful son, my loving partner, my sponsor, and my friends.

Clarence H.

Grateful for a Higher Power working in my life and for the courage to follow through with outside help.

Kim R.

Everything.

Eric N.

I'm grateful for everything I have, I know and everything I am.

Maria E.

Grateful for today.

Tishian P.

My God, my family, and my recovery, which has taught me to be grateful and to face each day, each moment, each struggle with a positive mindset.

Sherry A.

Grateful for understanding instead of being understood.

Doreena G.

Grateful for the foundation I have built in recovery, for the fellowship and for my relationship with my higher power.

Sara S.

My health, family, friends and my recovery.

Amber H.

I'm grateful for my overall health and to have another day clean!

Lamar A.

Grateful for my new perspective on life.

Kendra N.

Grateful for my ability to adjust to daily changes we are experiencing with confidence to help others.

Jeffrey J.

Grateful for this new way of life! Goodspeed.

Lenny P.

My Life.

Chrissy A.

Grateful to be clean, to have found this new way that I live today and for all the people I have in my life.

Janet D.

To have lost the desire to use, and no matter what life throws at me, I will get through it with the



guidance of my Higher Power.

Danny K.

The ability to make healthy choices.

Sara W.

Grateful to celebrate another belly button birthday clean. Happy 55 to me.

Joe D.

I am grateful for my family.

Kimmie P.

I'm grateful I'm willing to adapt to going to meetings on Zoom and for the normalcy the routine of meetings gives my life.

Liz M.

Thank You!

Another Part of the Journey

Imagine a world where people can't gather,
Imagine a world where getting high is what matters,
Imagine the pain that one soul could experience,
Lonely and cold, without love... only fear in it.
Imagine gaining the courage to ask for help,
Imagine understanding you don't have to do it yourself.
Never alone, never again they say, and it lessens the pain
But now you are stuck inside, and drugs aren't to blame
Now open your eyes and you're alone in a room.
All by yourself, but the phone dings... it's a meeting on Zoom.
For a moment you feel hopeless, People can't even touch, or hug right now
Then you realize the bond is stronger, some may ask but how?
You should know that no matter how near or far, when one hurts, we all cry
We have created a community of hope and bonds that won't die.
Lifting each other up, and waking every day grateful
Never alone, Never again, and certainly never hateful.
Assured that we can survive this just as the other battles we have
Holding onto each other emotionally is not that bad.
We will come out of this changed, and more beautiful than ever,
Just as caterpillars to butterflies, only we are in this together.
Never alone, never again, we can fight and be heard,
Next to brothers and sisters, we get wiser and learn.
It's one step at time, but we are the fortunate ones,
Hold on tight to your faith, the journey has just begun.

Karly W.

BASIC TEXT QUOTES

"It is important to remember
that the desire to use will
pass. We never have to use again,
no matter how we feel.
All feelings will eventually pass."

Recovery and Relapse



"Complacency is the enemy of members
with substantial clean time.
If we remain complacent for long,
the recovery process ceases."

Basic Text, p. 84

SOURCE:

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS (6TH EDITION). (2008).
CHATSORTH, CA: NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICES, INC.
ISBN-13: 978-1557767349

"Our first tradition concerns unity
and our common welfare. One of the most
important things about our new
way of life is being part of a group
of addicts seeking recovery. Our survival
is directly related to the survival
of the group and the Fellowship."

Tradition One Chp.6

**"THE ABILITY TO FACE PROBLEMS IS
NECESSARY TO STAY CLEAN.
IF WE HAD PROBLEMS IN THE PAST,
IT IS UNLIKELY THAT SIMPLE ABSTINANCE
WILL SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS."**

What Can I Do Chp.5



"We dreamed of finding a magic formula that
would solve our ultimate problem- ourselves."

Real Me

Where does the real me reside?
Somewhere past the tears I've cried,
Beyond the WASTED TIME!
To who can I confide?
As most are full of lies,
What will decide?
What am I looking to find?
Maybe just a sense of self and peace
of mind!

Jackie N.

Illusion

It will pretend-
to be your friend,
Deeper and deeper you will descend-
Till on it you depend,
Leaving you empty in the end,
And Wondering why you let it in-
How did it begin?
But that is not the right question--
For it's already in,
But remember your life isn't pre written-
So, u can still win,
No matter how far down u been.

Jackie N.

The Disease

NO matter the name,
The ending is always the
same!
It will drain you and leave
you chained,
A slave to its game-
Dictates how you behave
and slowly drives you
insane-
Pushing you toward an
early grave!
HOPE however does
remain,
If you are ready to let go
of the pain-
Admit what's to blame,
To another you must
explain,
The inner workings of
your brain-
it will need to be re-
trained,
For the DOC has been
engraved-
Lying and saying you
can't be saved!
But you must refrain,
Letting go of past guilt
and shame.

Jackie N.



Isolation and Solitude

I spent the first 18 months of recovery in isolation. The only thing I was doing was going to my home group once a week and working steps with a sponsor. I did not socialize with others, nor did I want too. I probably had a total of 3 other addicts' numbers in my phone. I look back at that and it's no surprise that I was a very miserable person during that time.

To me, isolation is not wanting to go to meetings, not calling people, not writing, losing all interests in any activities that feed my soul or make me happy. As I look back, there was some intense and vulnerable feelings that I haven't come to terms with myself just yet; But as I continued to do the work and continued to grow by taking more honest assessments of myself, I started to feel free from everything in my past that still had a hold of me. Not only the past, but things that happen to me while in recovery.

Today, I have the ability and want to sit by myself and be ok no matter what I'm doing. I actually need and want time to myself, for myself. I choose solitude today and the difference for me is, solitude is always based off my spiritual condition. If I can't sit by myself, I need to ask why? I need to look inside and see what's bothering me. Any given day, I can slip back into isolation because it's in my nature to do so, but with continued contact with my Higher Power and the ability to share openly, honestly and freely with others, today I choose solitude. And with that, I'll keep coming back.

Bobby H.

Loneliness, Relapse, Pandemic. I'm 15 days clean, again...

It happened again, another relapse. It happened right before this pandemic started and then it got worse when I was temporarily sent home to work from home. Maybe it was the isolation and loneliness that helped me to start and stay stuck in this relapse. The relapse was short lived, but I almost couldn't get out of it. I was physically sick for days trying to just get one more day of not using, desperate to be just one more day farther from the last time I used. I kept thinking: how did I get here again? In just three days, I was already physically addicted, and I could barely last a couple days without needing another one. I want to say that I used again after a couple of days in between because I was only getting physically sick. While that was also true, the most self-centered part of me was that I wanted to feel high. That feeling alone keeps me from feeling lonely. However, I hate the guilt and shame the next morning after every time I used. I would spiral even more in my loneliness. What I realized most this time is my impulsive behavior too. Right before my relapse, even a month prior to the actual relapse, I had this deep desire to get attention from anyone or anything. I acted out as much as I could. Nothing felt like it was enough. Nothing fulfilled me. You would think I wouldn't experience this loneliness and acting out being given the family I currently have -- husband and children and all.

Let me tell you this. Loneliness itself has horribly impacted my mental state throughout most of my life. I hate talking about it because I feel like I sound like a cry baby every time I open my mouth about it. It's embarrassing. But it's the most painful feeling ever. Everyone tells me to just reach out; However, sometimes it's hard for me to even fathom the idea that I'm even able to have a relationship with someone without the possibility of being rejected. This in itself leads to more loneliness. I've always had the challenge of making friends and let alone maintain the friendship. I don't know the magic spell to get rid of loneliness, but I do know that it's not something that can be instantly gone. However, it requires purposeful investing, and yes... the chance of being rejected. Now, more than ever, it's so important to reach out. Join a Zoom chat, keep checking in with someone. What I want to say is: if you are feeling this loneliness too, know that you are not alone. Be brave and reach out -- all in its bliss and pain. Yes, I'm saying to roll the dice and give trusting someone else a chance.

Anonymous

Reflections

Hello Bay Area! Since the Coronavirus arrived and I've been spending a lot of time at home by myself, I've had the opportunity to slow down. This has given me the time to sit and reflect on my past and where I am now. I can tell you; it has been one hell of a journey. Just because we get clean doesn't mean life doesn't still happen! But a day that's not necessarily the way I'd like it to be when I'm clean, is still better than my best day using.

I surrendered to the Narcotics Anonymous way of life at the age of 41, although it wasn't my first shot at getting clean. The following is my story of how God worked in my life.

I had been in every detox in the tri city area of Louisville, which is where I lived during this period of time; but I always left on the third day, because I couldn't deal with the withdrawals. It became apparent to me at some point that I was going to die from my addiction. The only thing that mattered to me was finding the ways and means to get and use more; it was my goal all day, every day. I gave away everything that mattered to me, used and hurt all the people I loved, and risked being locked up daily. I tried church, psychiatry, rehabilitation, moving all over the place, and stopped just short of dying on multiple occasions, but none of these methods worked. I realized at some point, I did not want to stop using, I just wanted the consequences of my using to stop. In spite of this, in 1988, I went to a 28-day rehab in order to hopefully lose the desire to use. It worked! The withdrawals sucked and I didn't like being told what to do, but I had promised my family if they got me out of the current mess I was in, I would get clean. Unfortunately, I didn't understand that abstinence was not going to cut it and I didn't take all of the suggestions we're given in N.A. I took the suggestions that suited me and ignored the rest. I got a sponsor who I rarely called or met with, I went to the only N.A. meeting in town once a week, I didn't work the steps, nor did I develop a support system. I had a close friend and a boyfriend... all you need, right? That's a big fat no. As it happened, they both relapsed within a few days of each other. I was tremendously jealous and began romanticizing "one more time". I do not recommend this to anyone ever. I thought about it long enough (a few hours), that I threw in the towel and bought the lie that my disease had been arrested, and I could use just one more time. Looking back, I honestly believed that I thought it was possible to do just one. This was insane thinking and was impossible. As a result of the relapse I used another nine and a half years. One day the boyfriend looked at me and said, "if we don't get out of here, we're going to die". So ultimately, God pointed me towards the Bay Area, where I eventually made my way into the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. This was one of many miracles I've experienced since then.

Narcotics Anonymous taught me that drugs are the symptom of my disease, the way I think is the problem. So, abstinence will never be the answer to a disease that is about me; however, abstinence is the starting place. The Narcotics Anonymous program is the solution to the problem. I was taught to get a homegroup and attend it every week, get a sponsor, work the steps, practice the principles in all my affairs, do service work, and take personal responsibility. These were many of the suggestions I was given in 1988 and opted not to take. Not taking them afforded me the opportunity to go back out and if I could live that period again, I would gladly do the work instead. It makes me really happy to see how many young people are living clean and applying the Narcotics Anonymous program and spiritual principles in their lives. They are the future of NA.

I feel extraordinarily blessed to have made it back to NA and if I continue taking all the suggestions, I won't have to go back out. I wrote this because it has been on my mind and with any luck, it will give someone the hope they may need. I learned my way doesn't work, but the NA way does.

I hope everyone stays safe and we will meet again for hugs in the near future! In the meantime, I'll see you on Zoom.

I am grateful! ILS,

Liz M.

WHY DON'T WE MENTION SPECIFIC DRUGS WHEN SHARING IN MEETINGS?

The reason we don't mention specific drugs has nothing to do with causing another person, new or old, to have an obsession or compulsion to use. Chances are, if we have the obsession and compulsion to use, we've had it long before someone in a meeting said something about a specific drug. We can't fool ourselves. Our obsession is internal, and not caused by other people.

The reason we don't mention specific drugs in NA is because we don't care what drugs a person used, and we focus on the disease of addiction. By mentioning specific drugs, it opens the doors to addicts separating themselves from the group, and thinking that maybe, they don't belong. NA is all inclusive to any mind- or mood-altering drugs, so there's really no need to identify as a "heroin addict" or an "alcoholic" or a "pot head". We are "addicts". We qualify as addicts who suffer from the disease of addiction.

Here is how several Traditions are violated by mentioning specific drugs:

- When we qualify our membership by mentioning certain drugs, we violate the First Tradition by disregarding our unity as a Fellowship. To focus on any specific drug rather than the disease of addiction is divisive.
- When we qualify our membership by mentioning certain drugs, we violate the Second Tradition by asserting ourselves as superior in some way, or more authentic addicts because of our specific experiences, therefore an authority in the meetings.
- When we qualify our membership by mentioning certain drugs, we violate the Third Tradition by implying that a desire to stop using ANY mood- or mind-altering drug is not enough to be a member.
- When we qualify our membership by mentioning certain drugs, we violate the Fifth Tradition by blurring the message that ANY addict can stop using and find a new way to live; possibly implying that a lower bottom must be met before a member is a "real" addict
- When we qualify our membership by mentioning certain drugs, we violate the Twelfth Tradition by giving up our anonymity. Anonymity relieves us of the need to compete with each other, out-do each other, judge each other, and decide who is worthy of membership, because anonymity levels the playing field. We are addicts, and what and how much we used is irrelevant.

Mentioning specific drugs happens when people do not apply the knowledge, they have of the Traditions that hold the group together.

Every group is autonomous and can make decisions about how this type of thing is handled. In regards to each homegroup making decisions about how that specific meeting operates, a chair person might, for example, remind the meeting guests of the 5th Tradition, which is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who is still suffering, and to keep that in mind when they share. A chairperson can also pause the meeting after a specifically graphic share, and remind the group a second time, if needed.

NA members can start a conversation about why it isn't appropriate, and base the conversation in NA literature, using the books rather than placing blame or using shame tactics. Sponsors also have a responsibility to address this with their sponsees and teach them, using NA literature, why it violates Traditions. We must remember that new members don't know any better, and they're just waiting for someone to show them.

We are naturally inclined to separate ourselves by describing specific experiences. But we can learn about the Traditions from other members and learn how to apply them to our lives with practice and awareness. One addict helping another is without parallel.

Dani C.

Pandemic: Fear or Faith?

We are all feeling the impact of the current pandemic in all areas of our lives, and as recovering addicts this has been a fight for our lives that goes beyond the threat of the virus itself. In recovery I have come to rely on meetings, fellowship, service and routine to stay a step (or twelve) ahead of my disease, and I view all of these as lifelines for staying clean one day at a time. Since COVID-19 has brought the world to a standstill, the lifelines I have depended on have been turned upside down, and I have had to find the strength and the willingness to adapt.

Like the stages of grief, it began with denial, anger, and depression. I was not willing to accept the current reality. Face to face meetings were replaced with virtual meetings, and I resisted. My disease had taken back the reins, and I was angry, resentful, rebellious, and consumed with fear. Isolation terrified me, and I predicted every worst-case scenario. Then, I remembered Step One; admission of powerlessness. I am powerless over this pandemic, but I do have power over how I choose to react to it. Recovery has taught me to replace fear with faith, and once I made the decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of the God of my understanding it wasn't long before I found my way through the darkness and came to a place of acceptance.

Narcotics Anonymous has taught me that the pain is in the resistance, and as soon as I began applying the principle of acceptance, I experienced a complete psychic change. Acceptance then opened the door to other essential principles, such as gratitude, perseverance, faith and hope. Practicing the spiritual principles of this program allowed me to close the door on fear, because fear cannot exist where there is faith.

This crisis isn't over, and the future is uncertain, but the 12-Steps of NA teach us that we need not be afraid. In life, change is imminent and often uncomfortable. Our literature refers to this as "life on life's terms". Fortunately, a simple shift in perspective can alter the nature of any situation. With the help of Narcotics Anonymous and our Higher Power, challenges can become opportunities for growth, and I believe that personal growth is the crux of this program.

Remember that while "I" can't, "WE" certainly can; personal recovery depends on NA unity. We are all in this together.

Kimberly S.



Hope

I love this Spiritual Principle, not only because it is something given on a daily basis, but it's also something I receive. When I got to NA, I had no hope. I was afraid, insecure, and felt as if I wasn't going to belong here, like I felt in almost every other situation in my life. Boy was I wrong!! Not only did I find confidence and a sense of purpose here, but I also found what keeps me going today, almost 5 years later...HOPE!!

Hope that I can continue to stay clean by doing the things that were suggested of me in the beginning. Hope that I too, can get better and continue to become the man that my Higher Power always intended for me to be. Hope that I can not only help myself, but that I can help others the way I was helped. Hope that, even when the days are dark, and the feelings are hard to handle, I can stay clean and be a beacon of Hope for someone else who struggles with the same things.

I believe Hope isn't just what's needed in NA to stay clean, but it's what we need more of in the world today...PERIOD!!

Clarence H.

Living the Lessons of NA

Life is pretty chaotic right now, with the world shut down, as we try to heal from the coronavirus. The government is urging us to isolate, which goes against everything I have learned in my program. Some days I am okay with it, while other days I feel completely alone. The beauty of the lessons I have learned in my program, is that we are never alone, if we don't want to be.

I think about all the lessons I have learned by doing step work and attending meetings, as well as the many things I learned outside of my program. Since my phone still works, I reach out, texting and calling my sponsor, my sponsees, my family and my friends. I talk to them about how I feel, ask them how they are feeling.

I attend online meetings to continue enjoying the fellowship and I limit my exposure to the negativity, by not watching the news and only visiting news sites once a day, keeping up-to-date with the important information I need to know and how it affects me.

I continue doing step work with my sponsor and my sponsees. I am limiting my exposure to outside elements. I am taking some much-needed time to focus on the things that make me happy. I am writing poetry, blogging, journaling and painting. I am cooking and cleaning and practicing self-care. I am praying and meditating and looking beyond my own selfishness to do my part.

I have faith that my Higher Power is working behind the scenes, as He always has done for me in the past and I practice the principles to the best of my ability. I hope and pray that all my friends and family, heck the whole world, is connecting with their Higher Power and getting the guidance they need.

Robyn



What Unity Means to Me...

My name is Chrissy and I am a thankful, grateful recovering Addict, since March 14, 2016. In these times, I have to be grounded. A huge part of staying this way is with Unity. What's this mean? "Unity is the key to our survival and the beginning of our miracle. Practicing unity can be as simple as a smile—but it can also be one of the most difficult things we do ~ Guiding Principles, Tradition 1" My Narcotics Anonymous Sponsor, who I call at least 3 times/weekly, reminded me that in our literature, fellowship is often capitalized the "F" to signify unity. Unity requires that I learn to hold back my own ideas. I found out we don't always see the same truth(s) or do we have to fit in. We are all Addicts with the DISEASE of addictions, that's what it takes for me to be a part of/to fit into NA groups. My Predecessors taught me to have HOPE. As I share my experience, hope as well as strength I keep practicing unity. Offering a hug, making eye contact, offering my number and/or giving NA Literature to a member. I practice the 12 Traditions & Principles in all my affairs, remembering I don't have to be perfect.

* If you're a Newcomer, a Still Struggling Addict, back from a Relapse I am so glad you're here, Breathe & please JUST STAY!

Chrissy A.