



Behind the Walls

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Editor's note: *The paragraphs in bold type are personal experiences of members of our fellowship. These excerpts from personal stories were edited in some cases for clarity, but not content or language. We would like to thank the NA members who wrote to us from prison, for without their words, this booklet would not have been possible.*

Introduction

This simple booklet, written by addicts recovering in Narcotics Anonymous, is designed specifically for individuals who are currently incarcerated and who may have a drug problem.

The following pages are reflective of the experience of recovery, both in and out of institutions, from the disease of addiction.

We urge you to give yourself a break and read *Behind the Walls* with an open mind. It may help you to stay clean and change your life. There is hope.

Behind the walls

Those of us recovering in Narcotics Anonymous know that our life of using drugs was a maximum security prison in its own right. We share our thoughts, our feelings, and our experiences, because through recovery in NA we have found freedom behind the walls. Our experiences may differ, but if we look hard enough, we may find that our feelings are similar. We may begin to understand each other's experience with recovery.

My story differs not much from most. Growing up, I always harbored feelings of inadequacy. I used drugs as a confidence booster, and it suppressed any bad feelings I had. Everything I said I'd never do, I usually did. I lied, I cheated, and I stole. I was being arrested fairly regularly, and I finally ended up doing time.

Our drug use can begin at any age. For us, the progression of using ends in jails, institutions, or death. When we took a closer look, we found what addiction had done in our lives.

I am forty-one years old, and have a long record of jails and institutions. I started at age ten in reform school and graduated through the system, missing nothing. I started using drugs at age fifteen on release from reform school, and dedicated my life to drugs and crime. My biggest claim to fame was that I could handle it, and it kept me using for twenty-five years.

Our drug use gave us the illusions of self-respect and the respect of others. We depended on the feelings of courage, self-acceptance, and self-worth that drugs gave us, only to find later that we felt as empty as we felt before using. Just as it has affected every aspect of our lives, we in NA know that the disease of addiction affects people from all walks of life. Admitting that using is causing us problems is the beginning of recovery.

As a direct result of active addiction, I found myself in prison with no way out. I say "found" because, despite numerous arrests and convictions, I felt immune from the law. It applied to others and not me. I was different, special, as I am an educated woman, white, and from an upper-middle-class family.

Between solitary confinement and the criminally insane ward, in shackles and chains, I was in pain from an active addiction I did not want to live through. I came to believe that addiction does not discriminate. I am no different.

From the beginning, many of us were running. Some of us had experienced extreme physical or mental abuse. Some of us had existed through cruel or violent situations that never seemed to end. We couldn't cope with the feelings of despair and misery. We tried to escape the hopelessness that we felt in our lives. We ran to find relief, and thought we had found it in drugs and the life that went with using.

When I first came to prison, I was at the point all addicts come to, that is, living for drugs. I had lost my children to welfare, and I am in prison for the shooting death of my husband. Although I was in a state of shock, my first and only thought was how to get drugs in prison.

For some of us, life in prison was no different. Most of us suffered in one way or another from the disease of addiction throughout our lives. We used drugs to cope with life because we thought it was the only way we could survive. For those of us now recovering in NA, our drug use had stopped being a solution and had become a major problem in itself. Drugs stopped working. We put drugs ahead of everything else. This was part of the insanity of our addiction.

Insanity of addiction

Most of us could not see the insanity in our lives for a long time. As the disease of addiction progressed, the things we did for drugs became more and more insane. We hurt and destroyed anything we loved, and we had to use more to hide from our feelings.

You see, if I am strung out, I don't care about you or your things. I am going to take them, and I am going to hurt you, and I am not going to care if you suffer, because I need my drugs. I don't care if I get caught. I am insane, and there is nothing anyone can say or do to stop me, because, after all, what I am doing to myself is far worse than what you can do to me.

The levels of insanity were different for each of us, from the insanity that lost us our families and freedom, to the even deeper insanity of not caring whether we lived or died.

I have overdosed and been pronounced dead, only to wake up and call the man who saved my life names. I have hurt countless people in many ways. I have endangered the lives of my family; I have hated and planned to kill cops for trying to protect me from society. I have been in various institutions, and I am still in one.

I know how it feels to wake up sick and be controlled by the next urge to use. I saw how it feels to wish you were dead. I have been there. I have seen it, looking dead and wishing I was, hurting and sick and so powerless.

Once in prison, we found that drugs weren't as easy to obtain as on the outside. Some of us were able, or were forced by circumstances, to stay away from drugs, sometimes for long periods of time. The end result was always the same: when we started using again, sooner or later, we were back in the vicious cycle of addiction all over again. We in NA know that it did not matter what drugs we used, or how much. What matters is what happened when we used.

We told ourselves drugs made life better, made the time pass faster, and gave us the extra edge to handle situations. However, we have learned that the disease of addiction goes deeper than drug use. Addiction is a physical, spiritual, and emotional disease that touches every area of our lives. When we weren't using drugs, we were thinking about using drugs, where to get drugs, and what the price would be.

Each of us fell to our own depth of insanity, but whatever our lowest point, it was always painful. We found that no matter what feelings we had experienced, or what we had lived through, we had to take a closer look at ourselves. These were some of the common questions we found helpful when seeking answers:

1. Does the thought of running out of drugs leave me with the feeling of impending doom—fear?
2. How long has it been since drugs worked the way I wanted them to?
3. When I couldn't get drugs, did I ever get sick?
4. Has using or getting drugs ever been more important than my health, safety, or well-being?
5. Have I ever disregarded my own or someone else's life because I had to get and use drugs?
6. Was I using drugs, or needing to get drugs, on the day I was arrested?
7. If I don't have a drug problem, why can't I stop using drugs or stop thinking about using drugs?
8. Have I ever questioned my own sanity?

As we answered yes to some of these questions—and many of us answered yes to still more questions—the evidence of our addiction was hard to deny and we began to change our attitude. We know where active addiction will lead us. Maybe we could find a new way of life through NA.

Relief

Although we sought to find relief with drugs, it never worked. When the drugs wore off, the pain was still there and the problems were not solved. Addiction is a progressive disease. While addiction cannot be cured, through the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous recovery is possible, and we can learn how to live drug free.

Sometimes, while lying on my bunk in my cell, once again for what I now know as my addiction, I swore using just once would not take me back down again, but it did. I have been in treatment before, and I have been in prison before. For excitement, I committed crimes I would never do if I was straight. I can no longer ignore the fact that I have a problem. There is life without drugs, and I want it.

Once we admit we have a drug problem, we open the door to recovery. If meetings are available, we see and hear other addicts who are living clean and recovering in Narcotics Anonymous. Freedom from active addiction is available to all addicts, through the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

Some days, my head tells me that it's okay to use, especially if I am hurting emotionally. Feelings like shame, guilt, inadequacy, or fear were always enough to start the whole mad cycle all over again. But today my heart and friends in the program tell me that all pain will pass, and to use again would be my destruction. The miracle is that, if I don't use drugs, the problem I am facing gets easier. The sad thing in my life is that I never learned that, because I got high rather than face life on life's terms.

Today I have my own keys to my life, and one of the keys is the program and the Fellowship of NA. This is the main key in my life, because I am learning how to live, to feel, and to accept me for being me. Today I have the freedom to make my own mistakes and profit from them. I am gaining a freedom that is better than what any drug could do for me.

We can't tell anyone whether or not he or she is an addict. This is a decision each of us has to reach on our own. We can tell you, however, that we are addicts. We find recovery and relief through the program of Narcotics Anonymous.

Is Narcotics Anonymous for you?

Narcotics Anonymous is a program of recovery for anyone who has the desire to stop using drugs. We find that the value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We meet regularly to help each other stay clean, and to share our message of recovery. Our message is that any addict can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life. Our message is one of hope, and the promise of freedom from active addiction.

I was sure I would die using. I had tried to quit for a long time, but I couldn't make it. My only advice to fellow addicts is to try recovery. It is sure a lot more productive and successful than anything I have ever tried on my own.

When I was new in the program, I used to hear phrases from people who had been in NA for a while, like "jails, institutions, and death." When I thought about the addicts I knew, they had all ended up either dead, in prison, or in institutions. This term has sure given me a chance to think back on how out of control my life has become, and how powerless I was over my addiction.

We are not related to any other organizations, including other twelve-step fellowships, programs, treatment or correctional facilities. We employ no professional counselors or therapists. Our membership is free, and we share what works for us in day-to-day living. The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous are the foundation of our program of recovery from the disease of addiction.

This program gives me a blow-by-blow description of what I have to be willing to do, and it shows me proof that it works. I can have what I want. I can live a clean life today. Today, I have a choice, and that choice can set me free of the bondage of drugs.

Addicts turn to Narcotics Anonymous in desperation, when all else has failed. Our individual ways do not work. We may not even have a clear desire to stop using, but we know something has to change. Hearing what other recovering addicts have to say often helps us think more clearly. We give ourselves and recovery a chance.

The spiritual principles of NA help us to deal with the compulsion to use and the obsession with using. Obsession is the overwhelming desire to use drugs in spite of possible consequences. Once our using starts, compulsion is using without the ability to stop. The self-centeredness of our active addiction has us place using as our first priority.

The process of working the Twelve Steps allows us to change. We become able to make the choice to stay clean. The obsession to use is usually removed. We gain the ability to consider other people, rather than thinking only of ourselves.

I am not stupid and I am not tough. I suffer like many from the disease of addiction. I don't want to be an addict, and I don't want to be a convict. I want to live and love and share the things I earn and learn with people who care. I want what this program has to offer me. I can't go back and live my life over, and that hurts. As I sit here in my cell, I know there are people out there following in my footsteps, and it brings tears to my eyes, because I know the pain they are feeling.

Through practicing the principles of the NA Program, we learn about ourselves. Some of us have difficulty accepting that we have the disease of addiction. We feel like we don't belong anywhere. One thought we hear over and over again in meetings is that addicts may feel unique and different. At times, we may feel insecure and apart from everyone. We learn that no matter how we feel, we are not alone. We find strength and support in Narcotics Anonymous.

Meetings

There are a variety of reasons that bring us to Narcotics Anonymous. Whatever the reasons are, many of us hear the NA message of recovery in meetings. We share our experience, strength, and hope for a better way of life, drug free. Receiving support from recovering addicts, our attitudes begin to change.

I saw and heard those beautiful words from the *Narcotics Anonymous* Basic Text that night. I had feelings come over me in that meeting that I've never experienced before in my life. Someone had written a book about me without me even knowing it. Other people had the same problems as me, but I was too self-centered to see it. NA told me that night that I had a chance to be happy and live a drug-free life, and actually enjoy myself. NA told me that there was a way to repair the damage I did to myself and others. It told me that I could learn to love myself by helping other people stay clean.

The support and strength gained through attendance at meetings may not always be available to us. Regardless of meeting availability, we practice the principles contained in the Twelve Steps of NA to the best of our ability. Many of us try recovery and immediately find relief from the disease of addiction. Others try and may relapse, but we have one thing in common: we keep coming back.

I joined the ranks of recovery in quite a bit of pain. I would like to say I wanted recovery at first, but I did not. It was just another scam I tried to run. I felt welcome at the NA meetings, and I also knew I belonged. I had always fit in with others, but I always felt apart from them. I could fit in like a chameleon, changing my colors with my surroundings. But at NA, I found no need to do this. Another thing that attracted me to the meetings was that people invited me back. This did not occur very often in my active addiction. The people in NA loved me until I could love myself.

Our membership in Narcotics Anonymous is unconditional. For the first time, we are accepted simply because we are addicts, not in spite of the fact that we are addicts. We feel love and acceptance in the meetings. After attending a meeting we leave feeling better. We gain hope and practical information from other members to help us live clean.

For three months in my incarceration, I went to all the meetings. They had what I wanted—peace. I wanted to enjoy my life, not waste away in some jail cell. When I was released, I figured I was cured, but all that changed before I ever knew it. I was caught up in the web of addiction once again, not caring about myself or others. In one month, I violated my probation and was back in jail. Upon sentencing, I received a three-year bid. That was eight months ago.

Relapse

We may find many of our old ways returning. Our attitudes may be influenced by isolation, loneliness, resentment, and discontentment. We may tell ourselves we can handle it. All thoughts of powerlessness are forgotten. Some die trying to prove that they can handle using drugs.

After I ran away from the meeting, I got loaded. I didn't want to think about the consequences of my actions; I just didn't want to feel. I wanted to escape my surroundings, my misery, my loneliness, and it didn't work for me. I came down to find myself still in my cell, feeling more alone and hating myself more.

Relapse is a return to using drugs after a period of abstinence. This is a serious issue for all addicts. Some die, and others never make it back to recovery, continuing to use in pain and hopelessness. The longer using continues, the worse addiction becomes. When we choose to

return to using, we do not start over or even continue from where we left off. Not only does the disease of addiction get worse, but we lose the ability to use in ignorance, because NA has shown us a better way to live.

The insanity started all over again. I was telling lies, stealing from anybody and everybody, including my family, because they were the easiest ones to lie to. I had no respect for anyone, including myself. I had no feelings, thoughts, or cares for anyone. I hated myself, and others, unless I could use them for parties or drugs.

NA is a program of action. It is what we do that counts, not what we say or think or mean to do. With the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, meeting attendance, contact with other recovering addicts, and not using, we can stay clean and begin to recover.

One inmate and I would sneak into each other's cells and talk after meetings, even after I used. We talked about what we would have to do not to come back to prison, because we both knew we would return to prison with using and committing crimes. We didn't know if NA was the answer, yet we both knew our ways would get us back. My friend used and died the day of release. I was fortunate, as I am recovering in NA today.

Addicts who relapse are as welcome at NA meetings as any other newcomer. Addiction is a disease, not a moral problem. With a return to abstinence from drugs, the disease of addiction is arrested, and recovery is possible through working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

Recovery

We need a guide to help us change our lives. We realize that nothing could change the fact that we were in prison, but we can begin to change ourselves by beginning to break down the walls inside of us.

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous are the guides we use to change ourselves. We believe that change requires us to be willing to work the steps, to be open to new ideas, and to be as honest as we are capable of being at the time. It is our experience that when we begin to work the steps, we usually develop new attitudes. Without drugs in our lives, our thoughts become clearer, and we realize that we are beginning to build a new way of life.

I have done anything and everything to get the drugs I needed. But today, it's different for me. Today, I am not using. In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, I was able to find some purpose for existing without the use of drugs, and, most importantly, a new way to exist without drugs—the Twelve Steps. I find, in this program, that if I try to the best of my ability to apply the Twelve Steps in my daily life, things will happen for the best—maybe not exactly when I want it, but in God's time. A lot of times, I don't even know why they happen, they just do. I don't try to figure it out; I just know it works for me, and I am grateful.

As we work the steps, our reactions and feelings change. We begin to attract others into our lives. We start to allow people to get close to us, rather than drive them away. We learn to trust, and to be trusted. We no longer have to hide who we are for fear of being rejected. The sense of emptiness all addicts know begins to leave us.

I had about nine months clean, and was asked to talk at a meeting and I was terrified. I knew that I had to take a stand for what I was doing and becoming, or I might risk it if I didn't. God once again carried me on that night, and I was very surprised at the reaction of my fellow inmates. I realized that things were happening like they were supposed to, and in God's time, not mine.

My wife turned up pregnant by my neighbor and quit coming to visit me. I got a letter from the parole board telling me that I would be given no parole during my entire sentence due to my previous record.

All those things happened to me in a very short space of time and I was about to explode inside. I know now that it was the grace of God, my friends, my sponsor,¹ and those NA meetings that carried me through those times. I wanted to use very much. But I kept remembering a line in the Basic Text that said, "No matter what, don't use and you will have the advantage over your disease."

Those terrible feelings of fear, hopelessness, anger, and resentment slowly were being replaced within me by hope, faith in my Higher Power, understanding, and acceptance.

Many of us believe that we rely on a Power greater than ourselves to help us live clean. When we realize we have found a Power which can free us from using and from the obsession to use, we become more willing to trust this Higher Power. We may choose to call this Power "God," but it is our choice.

I have to believe in a Power greater than myself, and trust that Power to restore me to sanity. I can't run my life, I am powerless, so I have to turn my will over to this Higher Power. I have to apply all Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous in my life, and God has to help me. I can't do it on my own. I can walk the yard of this institution, but it takes more heart to ask God to help me take these Twelve Steps.

The Twelve Steps are a program for living. Our experience shows that the steps will help us to work through any situation. Our ability to apply the Twelve Steps, daily, comes slowly. We find that as we are developing the strength necessary to live life on life's terms, the principles we use in our daily lives allow us to face times of fear or pain.

I did five years and stayed clean. Living in the general population was hard. I had a lot of faith that God would carry me. I read what NA literature I could get. I went to NA meetings when they were held. Letting other people know what I was feeling, and letting them know how I was working the steps, was real difficult for me. I was in jail for a long time, and there were meetings that were closed down for lack of support. I worked the steps the best way I could.

I admitted I was powerless over my addiction, that my life had become unmanageable. That was real evident to me: all I had to do was look around me and see the locked gates. At that point, I came to believe that there was a Power greater than myself that could restore me to sanity. I knew I didn't want to use. I knew there was a better life for me, and that was enough a lot of the days.

If I could share one message with newcomers, it would be that your life doesn't have to be the way it was before. We all have the disease of addiction, we all do things we are not proud of, but we have the chance to work through that.

Experiences in recovery are often new, strange, and frightening. Sometimes the pull of old friends and old ways is strong. It seems as if it would be easier to go back to using, but using is not the answer for addicts. We have found a new way to live which is better than anything we have ever known. Even though we experience hardships, we are not willing to go back to the life we had before we got clean.

Looking at my possible death from a terminal disease was hard. There were times when nothing anyone said to me helped. In the end, I realized that I only have today anyway. Today, I am healthy. Regardless of life's disillusionments, I prefer to believe in life. All human beings are given only one day, or one moment at a time, to live. I am no different from other people.

¹ For more discussion on this important topic, please refer to IP #11, *Sponsorship*.

By getting to know myself and who I really am, I began to work on those areas of myself I didn't like, such as my jealousy, envy, pride, hatred, and revenge. It's not as though I was a bad person wanting to get good; I realized those emotions made me feel bad, and that I was wasting a great deal of energy I could not afford.

When such emotions came up inside me, I realized something was wrong. My Higher Power that I had begun to talk to in my early days of recovery was the one I turned to. When these emotions came up, I recognized what was happening, and admitted it. Usually, the feelings inside went away. Sometimes they didn't, but as time went on, I learned about discipline and using my assets. I have come to believe that discipline, responsibility, and creativity are also a means to freedom for me.

As long as we don't use, we have a chance to live a new way of life, in or out of jail. The NA program does not promise us that living will become easy, and that everything will go our way. We learn that there is a difference between needs and wants. Our Higher Power always meets our spiritual needs. Even though we are still behind the walls, we need to develop new friendships, relating to others who are clean and who are learning about recovery through the principles of Narcotics Anonymous. Through working the Twelve Steps we gain serenity in spite of any living situation.

One by one, I brought back the people in my life I had loved so much. Later, when it came that time in my recovery, I started making amends, and felt more relief. I have happiness and peace like I never felt before. I have a purpose; I know God has a plan for me. I know as long as I have faith in a loving God, and I apply the steps in my NA life, I am on the road to recovery. My dreams are different today; they are reality.

Feelings of joy, peace, and contentment are gifts of recovery, as we grow and change with working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. We are able to accept the disappointments and frustrations as parts of daily living. Even though recovery may not be easy for us, it is a worthwhile journey. Whatever we have done in the past, we don't have to do it again. Most importantly, we never have to use again.

Release

Those of us who have found recovery in prison know that, upon release, we are vulnerable. Faced with the feelings of insecurity and fear our release from prison often brings, the temptation to return to using may be overwhelming. This is a time when we need the support of the fellowship.

The first time I went for parole, I turned release down. I felt I was not ready to face the outside and stay clean. Later, the parole board decided they were going to give me a chance, and I was petrified. Now that I didn't have those walls around me and people staring at me, I had built walls inside of me. I was faced with going out there and being on my own. Those were real scary feelings for me.

Our experience shows that, whether we are in prison or on the outside, wherever we go, we are not cured from the disease of addiction. The actions taken to begin recovery while incarcerated are the same actions recovering addicts practice on the outside. Our first priority is staying clean.

I used after I went to a few meetings while still in jail, but I learned. The NA program began working for me while I was still locked up, and it has continued to work for me on the streets.

The first days after release are critical for our continuing recovery. We cannot afford to be around people who are using drugs. We need to go to meetings and surround ourselves with recovering addicts.

Because of addiction, I had lost custody of my son. My family had abandoned me, and I felt completely alone. Two days out on work release, I used. I used for fifteen days, committed new crimes, and found myself in a park with a knife at my throat. I hadn't lived through all that, including prison, to die. For ninety days in work release, I had never been offered so many drugs. There were times when I thought I was losing my mind. On blind faith, I followed the suggestions.

I got on my knees; I had done worse things for drugs, so I was willing to do this in order to live. Finally, after sixty days, I used the phone to call outside NA members. I was scared to death. I would be vulnerable. I would have to speak to someone I didn't know. Before, I had only used the phone to find out who had money or where the drugs were.

In many meetings those first ninety days, I screamed about wanting to get loaded. At one meeting, I literally held on to the table for dear life so I wouldn't run out and use. "Stay here, it gets better," kept running through my head. NA members kept telling me to come back. Inside me, I longed to be able to carry on a conversation, smile, and laugh. It had been years, if ever. I shared how I felt, and hung on to the members of this fellowship. I had to completely change. I had no idea how to change, and it scared me. Change is in our Twelve Steps, so at sixty days clean, I made a step meeting my home group.

The meetings are a source of hope, support, guidance, and fellowship. Any addict is welcome at an NA meeting. We sense the acceptance and concern in a meeting room. Regular attendance needs to begin as soon as possible. We need to let members get to know us, and to let them know we need help. No one can help if they don't know that there is a problem.

That first week, I went to work and isolated in my apartment. I was talking on the phone with some people in the program back home. I shared with them how desperate and scared I felt. I couldn't understand all these feelings I was having, and I was clean. They told me I needed a meeting. I needed recovering people in my life. I needed to be in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous again.

Many of us had no idea what to expect, living without the use of drugs. As we share with recovering addicts, our problems and fears lessen. Our hope, freedom from the disease of addiction, grew as we worked the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. We found a life worth living which far exceeded anything we had ever imagined for ourselves.

Sometimes I thought it would take a stick of dynamite to break down the walls I had built up inside. It has taken me some time, but I believe I have knocked down a whole lot of them. I started by not using drugs, going to meetings, and by getting a sponsor to help me take the steps and apply them to my new life on the outside.

Some actions we have found helpful in making the transition from prison to the outside are:

- Don't use, no matter what.
- Go to an NA meeting on the first day out; attend meetings regularly.
- Get and call a sponsor; talk to other recovering addicts.
- Read NA literature.
- Get phone numbers of other NA members.
- Work the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.
- Again, don't use no matter what.

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as human beings, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative:

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 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.²

Other NA literature you may wish to read

Narcotics Anonymous

Originally published in 1983, this publication is commonly referred to as the Basic Text for recovery from addiction. In its pages, many addicts share their experience, strength, and hope about the disease of addiction and their recovery through the NA program. It encompasses and expands on the chapters from the NA White Booklet, and includes an additional chapter, “More Will Be Revealed.” The personal experiences of many recovering addicts from around the world are also included in order to assist new members in finding identification and hope for a better life.

NA White Booklet

The NA White Booklet was the first piece of literature written by the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. It contains a concise description of the NA program, including all the information in pamphlets No. 1 and No. 6.

Recovery and Relapse (IP #6)

An excerpt from the White Booklet, this pamphlet discusses the early warning signs of relapse, as well as actions that addicts can take to avoid relapse.

Am I an Addict? (IP #7)

The questions are listed to assist individuals in making this personal decision. The questions range from focusing on obvious behavioral symptoms, to more subtle personality changes that accompany the disease of addiction. Reading this pamphlet may help you to face addiction honestly. It may give you hope, because it offers the solution of the NA program.

Just for Today (IP #8)

There are five positive thoughts presented in this pamphlet to help recovering addicts each day. Ideal for reading on a daily basis, these thoughts provide addicts with the perspective of clean living to face each new day. The remainder of the pamphlet develops the principle of living “just for today,” encouraging addicts to trust in a Higher Power and to work the NA program on a daily basis.

Sponsorship, Revised (IP #11)

Sponsorship is a vital tool for recovery. This introductory pamphlet helps provide an understanding of sponsorship, especially for new members. The pamphlet addresses some questions, including, What is a sponsor? How do you get a sponsor? Also included is a closing section, “How to Be a Sponsor.”

By Young Addicts, For Young Addicts (IP #13)

The message of this pamphlet is that recovery is possible for all addicts, regardless of their age or period of drug use. It emphasizes that all addicts eventually end up at the same point of total despair, but this is not necessary—we can begin recovery right away! Included are sections on hitting bottom, making a decision, peer pressure and family problems, living for today, and a message of hope.

² Excerpts taken from the White Booklet, *Narcotics Anonymous*.

For the Newcomer (IP #16)

This informational pamphlet describes how Narcotics Anonymous deals with the disease of addiction that is shared by all NA members. It sets forth the Twelve Steps, the blueprint for recovery. Information about recognizing and experiencing feelings is included, as well as suggestions to utilize a sponsor and new friends in the NA Fellowship. All of these tools help addicts to begin and maintain their recovery.

Self-Acceptance (IP #19)

The first half of this pamphlet, "The Problem," discusses aspects of an unmanageable life, including not accepting ourselves or others. The second half of the pamphlet, "The Twelve Steps Are The Solution," outlines the process that allows recovering addicts to apply the Twelve Steps in every area of their lives in order to gain acceptance of themselves and others.

Welcome to Narcotics Anonymous (IP #22)

This pamphlet was written to answer questions often asked by people attending their first NA meeting. Its message is simple: "We have found a way to live without using drugs, and we are happy to share it with anyone for whom drugs are a problem."

Staying Clean on the Outside (IP #23)

This pamphlet is directed toward those recovering addicts who are reentering society from an institutional setting, treatment or correctional. It outlines the basics necessary to continue recovery while in transition. It addresses such issues as how to get involved in recovery in NA while institutionalized, how to make the first contacts with NA members, how to find and choose a sponsor, and how to get involved in personal service. A highly valuable tool for those in a hospital or institutional setting interested in developing a personal program of daily action.

For the Parents or Guardians of Young People in NA (IP #27)

This pamphlet is meant to provide information about what NA is and how NA works. It is particularly relevant for the caregivers of young people involved in Narcotics Anonymous.

Reaching Out

Reaching Out is a newsletter that is published by NA World Services. It is designed to meet the needs of institutionalized addicts, as well as H&I committees throughout the fellowship. If you are interested in being placed on the mailing list for this publication, or would like to write to us about your experience in recovery through the Narcotics Anonymous program, the address is: *Reaching Out*, c/o World Service Office, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409 USA

The NA Way Magazine

The NA Way Magazine is the NA Fellowship's quarterly international journal. It is published in English, Farsi, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish. The magazine contains articles about recovery, service experience, humor, opinions, and editorials. To subscribe, go to www.na.org or write to NA World Services.

SERENITY PRAYER

*God,
grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change,
the courage to change
the things I can,*

*and the wisdom to know
the difference.*

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

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 these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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