



The Loner—Staying Clean in Isolation

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“Receiving a letter makes my day! It seems the letters I receive from my loner friends are always perfectly timed. It reminds me that someone far away is getting to know me and cares enough to write. I matter in someone else’s recovery and they matter in mine.”

Introduction

For the purpose of this pamphlet, we identify “the loner” as a geographically isolated addict who wants to recover from addiction. If you are unable to come to NA meetings, we hope that this pamphlet will reach you and offer workable solutions for living a happy, joyous, and free life.

Although this pamphlet is directed specifically to addicts recovering in remote areas, unable to attend regular NA meetings, any addict who reads this pamphlet will gain some valuable insights on how to recover from the disease of addiction. Most of us, at some point in our recovery, have experienced feelings of loneliness or isolation. There are also addicts who feel isolated from others because of hearing or visual impairment or some other physical disability. So, whether we are isolated emotionally, physically, or geographically, we believe the suggestions offered in this pamphlet will help any addict stay clean and find a new way of life.

“Being a loner at times can be frustrating, but I have to make an effort in every area of my new life. Being a part of NA is special to me. I know I have friends whom I haven’t met yet, but to know they are there gives me hope to go on.”

Reaching out for help

Narcotics Anonymous is a program of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions designed to help addicts find recovery, regardless of where they may be. By practicing these spiritual principles, we achieve freedom from active addiction. We suggest you read all the NA literature you can get, and if at all possible, attend an NA meeting or function. If there are no NA meetings in your area, go ahead and start one. Even though you may start it by yourself, you never know when another suffering addict will walk through the door. Fill out the form in the back of this pamphlet for a free starter kit and send it to the World Service Office.

There are many NA services available which were designed to reach out to isolated addicts. Some of these are coordinated through special committees. In many areas, there are local NA phonelines, meeting directories, and newsletters. You can also get NA literature and other information about NA from the nearest area or regional office.

The World Service Office also provides a variety of services to addicts who are geographically isolated. It produces a phoneline directory that lists all of the known NA phoneline numbers in the world. The WSO also sends out free group starter kits and informational packages upon request. You can write or call to find out where the nearest NA meeting or office is. You can also get answers to a lot of other questions through the shared experience, strength, and hope of NA groups around the world channeled through the World Service Office.

You might also find the Narcotics Anonymous Loner Group helpful. It is a means by which geographically isolated addicts communicate with one another through the mail. This unconventional meeting allows recovering addicts to share their experience, strength, and hope through regular correspondence. The Loner Group publishes a bimonthly newsletter, entitled *Meeting by Mail*. If you wish to become involved with the Loner Group, write to the World Service Office, attn: Loner Group.

There is another publication that is very helpful for addicts in remote areas: *The NA Way Magazine*. It is published quarterly in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish, and subscriptions are provided without charge upon request. You can have your name added to the mailing list just by writing to the WSO. You will then begin receiving *The NA Way* on a regular basis. It contains notices of upcoming NA conventions, as well as other items recovery sharing, and articles and features that are of interest to NA members. This publication is very helpful in encouraging communication and unity by keeping you informed of developments in the worldwide Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

The most important service NA offers is the recovering addict. Remember, *the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel**. So if it is possible, contact some other recovering addicts either by phone or by mail. If you contact the NA World Service Office, they will assist you in reaching the nearest recovering addicts. Remember that you don't have to be lonely, even though you might be alone.

"It is so easy for me to forget about the importance of sharing, especially when my pride and arrogance prevent me from sharing feelings and thoughts I don't like or don't want to have. When I write things about myself, it helps."

The value of sharing

There is no easy solution for recovering addicts who have no local NA community for fellowship and support, but recovery is possible if we truly want to stay clean. Although we may be the only recovering addict for miles around, we need not be afraid to reach out for help. There are many ways of contacting other recovering addicts, and any initial contact can be used as a link to new ones. Many isolated addicts have regular pen pals with whom they communicate to share their recovery. It is also important to have a sponsor or someone to help you learn and practice the Twelve Steps. If there is no one near you to ask to be your sponsor, don't be afraid to ask someone in another area. You can write letters to each other, send tapes back and forth, and make long-distance phone calls whenever necessary. The action of sharing with another addict, whether it is in person, by phone, or on paper, can alleviate problems even without immediate feedback.

One member shared about getting clean in a country where she didn't speak the language. Her sponsor was in a different country, many miles away. She had to use the phone and call other women in the NA Fellowship in another country to get direction on working the Twelve Steps. But she wanted to recover from her addiction, and so she was willing to take that action. She found that by making the phone calls, she was creating a bond with those other recovering women. Pretty soon, she didn't call just her sponsor, she also called other members whose telephone numbers her sponsor had shared with her. And she shared those numbers with other women who wanted to recover from addiction. That way they could all rely on and help each other. All of a sudden, they had some unity, a feeling of belonging to a worldwide fellowship, and not being alone anymore. For someone who was alone in a strange country, our member felt that she was no longer alone. She was a member of NA, she stayed clean, and she practiced the Twelve Steps. She found another way, a way to recover and live a new life.

We have all found that after sharing with another recovering addict, we feel better. There is someone who understands our disease and can help us take the steps which are necessary for our recovery. So, whether it is by telephone, on paper, or through cassette tapes, the value of sharing is paramount to our recovery.

"I'm an addict. I started the first meeting of NA in this town four weeks ago. The first meeting only had two people and I was on my own the last two. But I have a few more people coming next week. Even sitting by myself in that room for an hour and a half, I don't feel lonely. I just pray that one day I might help someone. I'm really very grateful and I know by giving it away, I keep it. I need NA so much."

Starting an NA meeting

How do you start an NA meeting? It's really quite simple. All you really need to start an NA meeting is a desire to stop using and an NA Basic Text, and maybe a pot of coffee. You can find more information about locating a facility and electing officers in *The Group Booklet*. The most important thing, though, is to

* This sentence is a quote from our Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*. Reading the Basic Text is a very important part of our recovery from addiction. If you don't have a Basic Text, write to the WSO. They will send you an order form which you can use to order the Basic Text and other NA literature. The address is printed in the back of this pamphlet.

maintain consistency and perseverance. Whenever an NA meeting is started, even if it is by only one person, that person must make a commitment to be there. If no one else shows up, read from the Basic Text. We have learned this lesson through repeated experiences and it still holds true today. Many NA meetings have started this way, and thousands of addicts are alive and clean today because just one or two addicts made and kept the commitment to have the NA door open when others reached out for help.

In some cases, when a meeting is first started, the attendance is small. Sometimes no one shows up except the member who started the meeting. In situations like these, it is helpful to do some basic public information work such as putting up notices or announcements about your meeting in places where addicts might see them. Newspapers and bulletin boards are common places to use for such notices, but above all, keep the NA door open, make some coffee and study from the NA Basic Text. Do not be discouraged if your new meeting seems to have a rocky start. Put up some more notices and come back the next week. Do it over and over again until other addicts begin coming to the meeting. And they will come. There have been many examples cited by members of NA where meetings have been kept open for up to a year with only one or two regular members. Then, for no apparent reason, the rooms suddenly filled with people seeking recovery. Many of these groups now report quite a few years experience with successfully carrying the message of recovery.

In all your efforts, remember that even doing the basic footwork will help keep you clean and grateful for your recovery. Be direct with all people to whom you speak, whether it is the pastor of a church, an administrator of a hospital, or the local police. They probably will be interested in what you have to say. If you have a piece of NA literature to leave with them, that will serve as a reminder to them of your own efforts to stay clean and may plant the seed for them referring an addict to the meeting. When they see that you are not there to evangelize or to encroach on their programs, they will not feel threatened and so may offer to help support a meeting in your area. Perhaps they will ask you questions about the NA program. You can share your personal experience with addiction and recovery, or give them some NA literature, and so carry the NA message that way. Your efforts are bound to pay off. You do the footwork, and leave the results to God. At the very least, you will stay clean. You surely will come to a better understanding of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. And you may well be God's instrument for helping plant NA's seed of recovery in your community.

"All of the NA materials have been important to me, but especially my NA book which gives me continuous hope. Writing to other addicts who have been loners at one time also helps me through daily living. In my personal recovery the most important thing is my spiritual contact with God, which I obtain through the book, literature, my sponsor, and letters to loners and other addicts I have met across the country."

Crises

Crises come in many forms to all addicts. Without other recovering addicts or meetings to help us keep a balanced perspective, routine problems can become magnified in our minds. We may start to think that staying clean isn't paying off, and arouse feelings of self-pity, resentment, and anger. We must keep foremost in mind that whatever pain we experience will pass.

Problems are realities of life and do not disappear just because we stay clean. In recovery, however, we find that we grow through pain and often feel that a crisis brings a gift by allowing us the opportunity to experience growth through living clean. No matter how painful life's tragedies may be for us, one thing is clear: *we must not use, no matter what*. Our experience has shown that if we put forth even half the effort to stay clean that we did to use, we have an excellent chance of maintaining our recovery. When we reach out for help, we begin to grow.

"Some of the special things I like to do when no one is home and I'm not at a meeting are to read my NA Way Magazine, my Basic Text, and write to other loners. Anything that talks to me about recovery, love, and fellowship the NA way adds direction to my thoughts. My most dependable source of comfort and enlightenment is my Higher Power. I'm very grateful to have come to believe."

Living the program

The Twelve Steps are our blueprint for recovery from the disease of addiction. As we continually practice these steps, we come to live the program. Through the direct application of these principles in all of our affairs, we find acceptance, faith, and humility. We learn to live life on its own terms.

As we recover, we come to depend on a Power greater than ourselves. We learn that by asking for God's will for us, and the power to carry that out, we can do things we never believed possible. Our lives become worthwhile, and we lose the obsession to use, just for today.

We cannot afford to become complacent because the disease of addiction is with us twenty-four hours a day. Daily vigilance towards defective attitudes is essential for ongoing recovery. By living the steps, we begin to find relief from our self-obsession. We learn that attitudes, thoughts, and reactions change. In time we realize that we are not alone, and begin to understand and accept who and what we are.

The NA Basic Text contains many suggestions that are the basis of our recovery. By using these tools, our despair and active addiction can turn into hope and new life. By living the Twelve Steps of NA we are part of the worldwide NA Fellowship, no matter where we are.

"I feel very lonely sometimes being a loner, but I have faith today that I will not use just for today. I'm very grateful to be a part of NA. I love you all and can never begin to give back as much as I have received from all my NA friends."

Our gratitude speaks
when we care and
when we share
with others the NA way

INFORMATION REQUEST FORM

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

Date _____

Country _____

Language _____

I request the following information:

- Nearest NA meeting
- Local NA phone number (helpline number)
- Literature sample
- Group Starter Kit (booklet and literature to start an NA group)
Not for institutional use.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Country _____