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"Illness or injury is stressful, and stress can place us at risk of relapse. Often, we need the NA program even more when we are faced with illness. We can prepare ourselves for these stressful times by doing our best each day to lay a strong foundation in recovery. The steps we take today will serve us well when we need them."

In Times of Illness, page 1

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Facing our humanity

Illness in recovery

One of the most controversial topics in the NA Fellowship is how we, as recovering addicts, address illness or injury and the treatment that may be necessary for them. "Narcotics Anonymous has no opinions on outside issues," our traditions say, and medication or other forms of treatment for the myriad illnesses and injuries that can occur are completely outside the realm of NA's expertise.

Our personal experience is just that—our personal experience. We want to remind readers that the stories presented here are from our members and do not, in any way, reflect the opinion of Narcotics Anonymous.

When we got clean and joined the program of NA, we were not automatically exempted from the difficulties that can arise from being active participants in life. We cannot escape the fact that we are vulnerable beings, as well as recovering addicts, who are susceptible to the realities of nature. Our recovery is our responsibility, plain and simple.

Chapter Ten in our Basic Text reminds us that, in times of illness, we need to keep the fundamentals of the NA program close at hand: Pray to our Higher Power, meditate, talk with our sponsors or other NA members in our support network, go to meetings whenever possible, and practice the principles of the steps to the best of our ability.

This issue of *The NA Way Magazine* is filled with a variety of personal experiences from our membership worldwide. Regardless of your opinions, we hope you will reflect on and enjoy reading the honest and heartfelt sharing presented on the following pages. ❖



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From the editor

I want to thank all of the members who submitted an article for this issue's theme, "Facing Illness in Recovery." I was overwhelmed with the amount of articles I received and had great difficulty choosing which ones to include. In the two years during which I have served as editor of your magazine, I have never seen such a response to a topic.

I found this issue particularly moving to work on. I wish we could publish every article submitted, and I wish I could meet all the writers face-to-face. The strength and courage you all shared, with such raw honesty, filled me with gratitude and respect. Your stories have reinforced for me, once again, the power of this loving program.

One of the goals *The NA Way* strives to fulfill with each issue is to present the full spectrum of our members' experiences. While it may appear that only experiences with medication were presented in this issue, I want to point out that there were no articles received from members who did *not* take any medication for pain, surgery, or illness.

Please continue to send in your thoughts and ideas. *The NA Way* is a team effort, and we cannot do it without your interest and support. The theme for the April issue is "Our Seventh Tradition," so break out your pen and paper, or typewriter, or computer, and tell us what you think or how you feel about this topic.

Nancy S, Editor

The NA Way Magazine welcomes letters from all readers. Letters to the editor can respond to any article that has appeared in *The NA Way*, or can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. Letters should be no more than 250 words, and we reserve the right to edit. All letters must include a signature, valid address, and phone number. First name and last initial will be used as the signature line unless the writer requests anonymity.

The *NA Way Magazine*, published in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish, belongs to the members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission, therefore, is to provide each member with recovery and service information, as well as recovery-related entertainment, which speaks to current issues and events relevant to each of our members worldwide. In keeping with this mission, the editorial staff is dedicated to providing a magazine which is open to articles and features written by members from around the world, as well as providing current service and convention information. Foremost, the journal is dedicated to the celebration of our message of recovery—"that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live."



In times like this

Once, early in my recovery, an important *something* happened, and I could not reach my sponsor to help guide me in my decision-making process. We had a close relationship, and I hardly did anything without first consulting her. This was not because of my inability to make decisions on my own—I could and did all my life. However, those decisions were not particularly good ones.

When I finally spoke with my sponsor and explained what happened, she told me this was one of those moments that showed I was ready to consider and make decisions based on trust in my Higher Power and my recovery. She said there would come a time when it would be only my Higher Power and me—and no one else—in making some decisions.

This was one of the reasons she was so emphatic about working the Twelve Steps and developing some concept of a Higher Power. She knew the specter of using drugs again versus facing life comes to nearly all of us. We do stand alone, and all that we have is our foundation. She wanted to be sure I could squarely face whatever it might be and not waver whenever that time or that moment or that day came. She wanted to be sure that I would choose recovery over relapse.

Then, one day, that time and that moment came.

It seemed like such an ordinary day, an ordinary morning on an ordinary day. I was concerned and a little worried about my husband, who had not been feeling well for a few weeks. Two and a half years later I am emerging from the most profound and powerful depths of loneliness, despair, and isolation I have ever experienced.

On that day my life changed from one of partnership to full-time caregiver. I walked my husband into the hospital emergency room, and five weeks later he came home in a wheelchair with the ability to perform only the bare basics of daily living. This meant he was able to brush his teeth, comb his hair, and dress himself correctly.

On that ordinary day he had a terrible stroke. One year later he had open-heart surgery to replace a valve damaged by the condition that precipitated the stroke.

In 2002 he fell and broke his hip. He needed hip replacement surgery. Our cozy home of relaxation, gardening, and all-around comfort became a house of rehabilitation.

All internal doors were removed in order to accommodate a wheelchair. Our bed had to be lowered. Hospital equipment and all sorts of medical supplies gradually took up residence, slowly edging out all our familiar furnishings.

Ramps were installed for entry to the house and to get from one room to another. Cabinets filled up with medications of every sort. Now, instead of visiting plant nurseries and plotting landscape designs, I was visiting pharmacies and medical supply stores, plotting out a course of physical rehabilitation.

I researched on the computer every night for hours. I collected reams of information. I became adept at sorting through websites, and I learned to decipher a whole new language of disability.

Coming from a medical background, I had knowledge about and experience with medications. Now I became experienced with terminal illness, mental illness, chronic pain, and surgery.

These experiences have been brutally frightening and lonely. They have been an endless drain on all of my personal resources—faith, hope, love, humor, recovery, finances, and emotions.

During this time I also suffered the loss of my youngest sibling to a long battle with AIDS. I lost my beloved grandmother to old age, and within two weeks of my husband's heart surgery I had to deal with the anxiety of my father's emergency open-heart surgery.

My family lives in another state, so traveling there meant short, intense trips with carefully made, detailed plans for my husband's complex care. I managed to see my brother before his death, and I endured long periods of waiting to hear that he had finally taken his last breath.

While attending my brother's funeral I visited my grandmother, who died several weeks later. I could not attend her funeral, nor could I go to my father's side when he had his surgery. I needed to have faith in my siblings. I had to trust their judgments and decisions. I was powerless, and though I did not fight that powerlessness, I did struggle with acceptance.

While these experiences were painful and overwhelming, I also experienced great resolve, love, and acceptance from family and friends. Our NA family and each of our personal families gave us unimaginable gifts of time, support, comfort, financial help, and thousands of prayers.

No, I really did not want to use, but sometimes I sure wanted to die. No, I did not go to a lot of meetings to share. In fact, I hardly went to meetings at all. When I did go, I would sit there, numb, in my pain and desperation.

I did not read *Just for Today*. I did not work any steps. I did speak to my sponsor every day, but I have no real memory of our conversations. I talked with a lot of people, and I do not remember much of that, either. There were no words of comfort to be had. I could not share. Words seem so cheap in trying to convey what happens when you see a loved one die or when you have to watch a perfectly able-bodied person become disabled.

What I remember is this: I slept with the light on; I slept to the exact same music every night; I slept on my husband's side of the bed. I smelled his clothes. I listened to his voice on old phone messages. I cried every single day for the loss of the man he used to be. I cried for weeks, mourning the loss of my

brother and grandmother. I was not sure I would ever have the joy of living that I had grown so accustomed to. I had no experience with this kind of pain.

Going to meetings did not help to ease my pain, but it did fill my need to just *be*. Most NA members respected that—no one tried to play therapist or get me to "talk." They respected my privacy and need to be superficial because I could not bear to talk about my reality.

I wish I could say that I faced all this with great courage and calm fortitude, but I did not. I became overwrought. Chronic pain of any sort grinds you down and makes you edgy.

By this time I was very tense and anxious. Although it was mostly temporary, I alienated friends, family, and co-workers. I became more self-centered than ever. I had to take a leave from work, even though I had insisted earlier that I could fulfill all my demanding job responsibilities and also deal with my family crises at home. The reality was that I could not. I wore everyone out—including myself.

During this time of utter powerlessness and unmanageability, I began to find solace in the simplicity of our steps. I developed newfound appreciation for the oldtimers in my area and the message of hope they shared.

While I learned about many of my defects during this time, I also became aware that some of these "defects" were not all bad. One of my most glaring defects, stubbornness, became my strength. I would not and did not give up hope. I had to study, ask questions, not give up, and hang on for just five more minutes, over and over again.

I did.

Facing illness in recovery does not sound particularly portentous, at least not in regard to me. In fact, one could say I had a *laissez-faire* attitude toward most health-related matters. Previous employment in the medical field left me mostly contemptuous of the system.

Without a doubt I would never fall prey to it because I was healthy, my husband was healthy, and basically I denied the vulnerability of good health. Taking one's health for granted is not a very good idea. Again, I had to return to those early recovery lessons my sponsor taught me.

She had asked me to compose a daily

gratitude list—not long, just a few items. We spoke frequently, and I would share this list with her. We would explore one or more of them in depth because she was teaching me about humility and getting me ready for the Sixth Step.

It was during this step when I learned that many of my defects were inside-out versions of my assets—my weaknesses in many ways were my strengths. These last few years my innate stubbornness became perseverance. My contemptuousness became advocacy.

This became a time to give evidence of having become the kind of person I had been aspiring to be throughout my entire recovery—a person who does the right thing for the right reason in the right way.

I was able to use what I had been taught about applying the spiritual principles found in our steps. I had to stand by.

I was able to stand by because I had listened to what others shared in meetings about facing illness and tough times. I had witnessed great courage and knew I could have that same courage. Sometimes that is all that is called for.

I try to do some of the other basics I was taught. Each morning I begin with a gratitude list. I have a mental tick-sheet, and each day I go through it and express gratitude for hot water, the electricity, and other "luxuries" of life. I am grateful for my job, my health insurance, my health, and being fit. I am grateful for my bed and the clothes I wear.

I also have learned about my own limitations. I consult with those I trust, and I accept advice. I could not do this alone.

I have been clean for over 22 years, and although I do not like the road my journey is on now, I have never wavered in my appreciation for the help that NA can give—and my awareness of the help that NA cannot, and ought not, give.

I know today that one can never predict what will happen and that sometimes the "worst" can and *does* happen. I know today that my foundation must be solid in Narcotics Anonymous so that I can stand strong and not crumble with adversity. I know that it is in the simplicity of this beautiful program that I find my strength and courage and the will I need to continue for just one more day.

Anonymous, California



Help me in my recovery

In September 1998 I had open-heart surgery—a triple bypass. Fortunately for me, the need for this surgery gave me some advanced warning. I had been experiencing severe chest pain since May 1998 and was seeing a heart specialist about it. I also talked about it at meetings and with my sponsor.

In my local NA community there were two recovering medical professionals, one of whom had had this sort of operation already. These members, along with the rest of my NA family, helped me to become spiritually ready for this surgery.

They also talked with me about medications. Doctors who are not in recovery do not really understand this disease of addiction we addicts share. But I knew that I had to try to explain the best I could to my personal physician.

When I told him I did not want any narcotic pain relievers, he said that I would not get enough to become addicted. He could not understand that I was already an addict and that, for me, even one dose would start the problem all over again. My medical friends told me of an alternative to suggest to my doctor: a nonnarcotic, nonsteroidal, anti-inflammatory pain reliever. Whatever the reason, my surgeon and cardiologist accepted my suggestion.

The suggested medication did the job of relieving my post-surgery pain better than any narcotic I had ever used. My recuperation went quickly and easily, and I left the hospital needing only ibuprofen and acetaminophen.

This surgery took place in a hospital far from my hometown and my NA community. However, the NA Fellowship is far-flung, and one of my home group members knew a recovering addict in the city where the hospital was located. I had a number of visitors, and we could talk about recovery. I got cards from meetings I never even attended.

No wonder I got better so quickly! I do not wish this painful surgical experience on anyone, but if it has to happen, members of NA know how to help you in your recovery—in more ways than one.

JR, Pennsylvania

Confronting my disease

I recently had a cancer scare, and the thought of the possibility of needing medication that could trigger my disease of addiction rocked my serenity more than the thought of the Big C. I have been free of all medication for over two years—including the basic painkillers—because I have such an abnormal reaction to chemicals.

I learned to use a pill, alcohol, and other drugs as emotional painkillers very early in my life. At age 14 I had my stomach pumped. I continued to combine alcohol with prescription drugs for another 30 years until, once again, I overdosed, bottomed out, and got into recovery.

The intervening unmanageable years were characterized by depression, psychosis, manic euphoria, anxiety, and insanely sleepless nights. I made endless trips to counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and doctors' offices. I somehow managed to sidestep the institutions, relying instead on a rural mental health service.

I was registered as bipolar with schizophrenia and placed on a prescription cocktail of mood stabilizers, sleeping tablets, painkillers, and sedatives. I washed it all down with alcohol.

I made it to a treatment center so that I could avoid shock treatment. I wondered what I was doing there with all of "those alcoholics and addicts." I was well into the program when it finally clicked, and I realized what was wrong with me.

Strangely enough, a few years prior to going into treatment I had stopped drinking for over a year. I stayed on antidepressants, and my untreated disease progressed until I was drinking once again.

Today I have a very clear understanding that I will rely on *anything* that affects me from the neck up. Today I know that anything that stops me from living life on life's terms is going to kill me.

I had to deal with my disease of addiction at the root. I work my Twelve Steps to the best of my ability on a daily basis and live by the principles of my

program. I do not have manic depression anymore. I am not psychotic. Today I know the odd sleepless night or headache is only my disease wanting a pill or drink. I ignore it. I ask my God for help, and I get it every time.

The last two years of my life have not been the easiest, but they have certainly been the best.

Lynn R, New Zealand

Surgery and obsession

In 1997, with six years of clean time, I had a very serious surgical procedure that involved my digestive system. The surgery was a complete success, and I went home two days ahead of my scheduled departure from the hospital. However, I did so with the presence of an extremely "evil" enemy: obsession.

I had a diet that consisted of fluids for three weeks, then some baby food and soft foods, and finally I was able to go back to my normal diet.

The obsession for food showed up from the very first day I arrived home from the hospital. My first breakfast was chicken, fried eggs, bread, and coffee. Exactly the *opposite* of what the doctor had prescribed for me to eat.

The consequences were disastrous. I spent two weeks eating in the mornings, hiding from my wife until she would go to work, and then I would suffer from indescribable agony in the afternoons from the pain and discomfort of my obsessive eating until I would vomit, immediately feeling relief.

Food obsession became a daily torture. In desperation I called a relative who is a psychiatrist. I explained the situation, and I asked him to prescribe a "tranquilizer or something." He prescribed 12 tablets of a rather common sedative. I took one. The following day my sponsor came to visit me, and when I told him about the prescription to fight my food obsession, he took the tablets and flushed them down the toilet.

I never had the desire or the idea to use my drugs of choice, and after my sponsor's visit I did not get another prescription. I started to become irritable and hypersensitive. My physical disability kept me from moving and going out. It made me feel useless. I became annoyed with the whole world—especially with people who wanted to help me.

I had to go away to my in-laws' country house for a week. I needed to take an inventory of my life. There I was able to enjoy the tranquility. I read for several hours each day and took early morning sunbaths. I was able to get away from my family obligations (wife and son), my creditors, and the worries of my abandoned job (I had my own business).

I was able to break the vicious circle of eating and vomiting and rapid weight loss, and I was able to maintain a more reasonable diet. I slowly returned to my daily routine, and I asked for help more than anything else.

My sponsor and some fellow members took turns for several days giving me rides to my recovery meetings. This gave me the strength and hope I needed to come out of the abyss I was in and also allowed me to free myself of the obsession. Then, and only then, was I able to begin my physical recovery.

Today, I continue to be a grateful member of NA, trying to be responsible for myself. I try to give away what was freely given to me, and to serve as an example for newcomers.

Habib S, Costa Rica

When bad things happen

Hi, my name is Tommye, and I am an addict. I had major surgery, and I want to share my story with you.

I was doing the bar scene when I finally "got tired of being tired." I prayed to God one night to give me a better life. I could not stand the way I was living any longer.

A week later I met a guy, and we hit it off. He needed a ride and a place to stay. I needed someone to take away my loneliness. It was like the sick leading the sick.

We decided to get clean together, so we stopped using. He went to treatment and I stopped smoking my pot on 25 December 1997.

Two months after stopping the pot, I was taking a shower one night and found a small lump in my right breast. Even though I had been doing self-exams since I was 15 years old, I did not give it much thought.

Three months later I noticed the small lump was larger. I got sick to my stomach and panicked. I started to call my friends and asked them what I should do.

I made an appointment with a local doctor. He said I needed to get a mammogram. They took ten biopsies of my breast and told me to call back in the morning.

I was at my parents' home when I called the hospital to find out the results: I had cancer, and I needed to have surgery as soon as possible.

When I got off the phone I started to cry. I turned to my mom and she said, "Oh, my God, I thought I would die before my kids."

I told her that I was not dead yet.

I talked to the doctor, who told me that I would need to have chemotherapy before surgery since the tumor was growing so fast.

I cannot fully describe the process of chemotherapy other than to say that they give you radioactive material and it slowly kills your insides. Your hair starts to fall out. You wake up to see your pillow full of what used to be your beautiful hair. You sit and try to eat, and it falls

in your plate. You get very, very sick and think you are dying.

One day I was at the hospital, waiting for my next treatment, and a woman came out from an exam room. She was bald except for a few strands of hair on her head. She reminded me of something in a horror film. I broke down and started crying. I did not want to look like that.

The next week I had a special tube inserted in my shoulder for the chemo treatments. It all felt like a bad dream. I prayed that I would wake up.

Before going to surgery, all I could think about was not losing my clean time. I heard in meetings that getting keytags is nothing to brag about, but during that time in my life those keytags kept me going. Those little keytags showed me I was clean.

I had not heard from my sponsor through all this, so I asked my husband's sponsor (yes, I married the "sick leading the sick" guy) about my clean time if I took pain medicine that was prescribed. He gave me the pamphlet *In Times of Illness*. I was so afraid I would lose my clean time. By this time I had eight months.

In September 1998 they removed both of my breasts. I woke up to the most horrible sight—my breasts that I had carried around for 44 years were gone. The features that made me look like a woman were gone; it felt like my womanhood itself was gone. Why had this happened to me?

Then the nurse gave me an injection of pain medicine, and I forgot all about losing my womanhood. I could have cared less. Two days later, as I was preparing to go home, I found out I had developed pneumonia.

The next two weeks were a blur. By the time I finally walked out of the hospital I had lost several things: my husband, my breasts, and my desire to smoke cigarettes.

I needed to get more chemo, and I lost all of my hair again. I needed to go for another 23 weeks of radiation treatment. Boy, talk about fun! You are placed on a table and roasted like a chicken. You come out with a permanent suntan.

Two months after I came out of the hospital, my pain had eased up enough to where I could take ibuprofen. I threw away the prescribed pain pills that were

sent home with me from the hospital. With the grace of my Higher Power, Narcotics Anonymous, and the friends I met there, I have not had to use to this day. I work my program to the best of my ability and try to help my sponsees do the same.

Today I am cancer-free, and I will celebrate five years clean in December 2002. I believe my God has a plan for me. I believe today that I am doing His will for me by being in this program. Each day I wake up and thank Him for giving me another day. I do as much service work as I possibly can, and I try to maintain a balance in my life.

They say that you should not use even if you think your ass is going to fall off. I wonder if "they" were talking about me.

I have learned from all this that you can have really bad things happen to you and still not have to use. I had to take pain medications. I took them as prescribed, but when they were no longer needed I pushed them away.

If I can do it, then so can you. You just need to have faith in NA and in your Higher Power.

Tommye R, Oklahoma

Facing fear

It had finally happened! After five illness-free years of recovery in NA, I was faced with a serious medical situation. A series of events landed me in the emergency room of a local hospital, face-to-face with total strangers: the medical staff.

I have a long history of illness, and this was something I had worried about many times. I was in shock from the pain but scared to death that they would medicate me. The decisions facing me weighed heavily on my shoulders.

Fortunately, I shared my life with my NA friends on a daily basis, and they all knew where I was. When I looked up from my hospital bed I saw my sponsor and a close friend. The doctor told me that he would have to give me something because my body's response to the shock was putting me in danger.

I told him my medical and personal history, and that I was a recovering

addict. I told him I did not want any medication under *any* circumstance. My concern was not just NA "purity"; I was truly afraid that my disease of addiction would take over and consume me.

My sponsor helped me to climb out of my inner turmoil and ask for God's help in surrendering. With my sponsor's help and support over the next hour, I told the doctor to use the information I had given him, along with his training and knowledge, and do whatever was necessary.

The decisions were not in my hands anymore. I was medicated, treated, and discharged. Upon release, I wanted to get back into my daily life, since I felt fine.

However, my sponsor took me to his house for a couple of days. We spent time together and worked through the aftermath of feelings, like impurity, shame, and weakness. Close daily contact with my sponsor, my Higher Power, and other NA members had become critical during those days.

I was worried about still being a member, staying clean, being turned away by other members, etc. Had I been left to my own devices, I could easily have succumbed to the shame and guilt I felt. This could have led me to using drugs, covering up, and dying.

Meditation and the Twelve Steps helped me resolve all of the feelings and questions I had. Did I take drugs to manage feelings and emotions? Did I deceive or manipulate anyone or anything to get drugs? "No" to both!

I enlisted help to be honest and obtained treatment from informed professionals. They knew that, once medicated, I was likely to ask for more, whether or not I needed it.

My friends knew that I could not wrestle with all of this alone. My Higher Power was involved all the way. I reaffirmed the first three steps and then wrote about my feelings and fears. I identified the character defects that generated those feelings and fears, and I did a Fifth Step. My Higher Power helped me to become ready to humbly ask to have my shortcomings removed and to follow through with the other steps.

The spiritual awakening I had as a result of working the steps in these circumstances was clear. I did not have to go through any part of life alone because

the NA Fellowship had the tools I needed in order to stay in recovery, no matter what the circumstances.

I gained a new awareness that, under those extreme conditions, I had nothing much to offer my service obligations. I had been scheduled to attend a service meeting and also to speak at an NA meeting during the next couple of days. God gave me the strength and courage to realize that, on a temporary basis, I could not give anything toward carrying the message of recovery. I surrendered and declined.

An even deeper awakening was that, having had this experience, I was still not in a position to judge the medical situation of another NA member. What I can do is help others to use the Twelve Steps, my (our) experiences, sound medical care, and their Higher Power so that they will have the necessary tools to maintain their recovery on a daily basis.

Anonymous, California

Mental illness and recovery

Granted, if any of us were healthy, happy, and well-adjusted people we probably would not be in NA after losing the battle with drugs. There is, however, a vast difference between having some emotional problems and having mental illness.

I find my disabilities to be a source of misunderstanding, alienation, judgment, and relapse rumors. Hopefully this issue of *The NA Way* will help dispel some of these.

It is hard to know where to draw the line between what is my addiction (issues for my sponsor and me) and what needs to be addressed with my therapist. My sponsor is not trained to handle serious mental problems. She does not diagnose me or regulate my medications.

Psychotropic drugs are of great concern in this area. Meetings are inundated with advice and opinions for us regarding our meds—not to take them, discussions of who is on the wrong prescription or dosage, that the use of these medications constitutes using, that we are not really clean, and on and on.

The first thing that usually happens to me when I hear these conversations is that I stand with what I know to be true: that if I am completely honest with my doctors and take what medicine is prescribed, when it is prescribed, I *am not using*.

The second thing that happens to me is that I start to doubt my doctors and myself. I cannot really talk with my fellow NA members, and I stop taking my meds. Then comes the isolation, the self-mutilation, the allure of razor blades, the crazy thoughts and equally crazy behavior.

If you are not a licensed physician familiar with my personal history (or someone else's), if you do not have malpractice insurance, and if you will not feel guilty when your advice contributes to the desperate end of a human life, then please keep your personal opinions to yourself.

As for my responsibilities dealing with mental illness and recovery, I have to remain honest with the doctors, with my sponsor, and with others in the program so that no one will feel alone with this.

I try not to use my illness as an excuse. I do the best I can with what I have. I try not to complain about my situation; God knows there are so many people who suffer more than I do.

I have to continue to work the NA program. The steps can and do work for me too. Most importantly, I have to stay involved and keep coming back, no matter what anyone says or thinks about me.

Lisa D, Kansas

A whole new disease

"Fifteen years on the 15th." This is the motto I carried this year. It is one of those special days because, if you stick around, it will come only once. Every day I am clean is special, but this one was unique.

I was at the world convention in Atlanta in July 2002 when I saw the notice in *The NA Way* announcing this topic. I knew I would have to share my story with you.

I went into the hospital two years ago with pancreatitis. Two months later I left that hospital 50 pounds thinner and a newly diagnosed diabetic. It was a

The next day I started to get better. I still had the central line in a major artery, and all the tubes were still in me, but I felt the drugs leaving my body, and that was all I wanted.

When I left the hospital I had to deal with a whole new disease. Diabetes has been a lot tougher on my spiritual program than the drugs ever were. It is a whole lifestyle change that many members do not understand.

Most of my life I never had discipline or patience, and it shows when dealing with this illness. I need the discipline in order to eat regularly and regulate my insulin and blood sugar. I have to carefully watch what I eat.

I need patience whenever I have to deal with the medical profession. It is incredible how badly you can be treated

My Higher Power has a plan for me, and I pray for knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out. I owe my life to Narcotics Anonymous. If it were not for the principles I learned through the steps and traditions, I would never have found the discipline and patience I need to survive today.

Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous.

Ed S, Florida

Faith and acceptance

1 December 2001 marked the beginning of this addict's 19th year of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. As I celebrated that day with family and friends, I was completely unaware that 2002 would be one of the most difficult years of my life. The past six months have been filled with tremendous medical challenges for both my loved ones and me.

As an active addict, health issues and doctor's visits were never a priority. Part of my recovery process through the Twelve Steps has been learning to physically take care of myself.

In March 2002 the time had come to practice the principle of self-care, so I went to the doctor for a routine physical examination. After undergoing a series of tests, I was diagnosed with a serious heart condition that only can be treated with medication. This medication does not alter my mood or my state of mind.

Had I not gone to the doctor, my life would have been in jeopardy. Adjusting to taking daily medication has been trying. Through sharing with other addicts and praying a lot, however, I have reached acceptance of this situation.

One of my recovery gifts is a loving marriage with another recovering addict. Shortly after my diagnosis, the doctor found a suspicious mole on my husband's back. The biopsy came back as a malignant melanoma, a potentially lethal form of skin cancer.

Needlessly to say, fear encompassed every thought. It was hard to "stay in the

If it were not for the principles I learned through the steps and traditions, I would never have found the discipline and patience I need to survive today.

tough two months, and I really learned about powerlessness.

I was taken off all foods and liquids. The only thing they allowed in my mouth was medication and ice chips. This was the cleanest time I ever had! Imagine no cigarettes, caffeine, food, soda, or sex.

I was in a coma the first couple of weeks. They gave me injections of pain medication to keep the devastating pain away. I was never into needles or heroin when I was in my active addiction. I now know where I would go if I wanted to suffer and die. After a while I was so toxic from the drugs in my system that I wanted to die.

I pleaded with my doctors and told them I could handle the pain, but the drugs were killing my spirit and draining my life source. They took me off the pain meds. It was a horrible detox. I finally turned to my God and asked for help with the obsession and craving.

sometimes. I needed to learn all about patients' rights. I needed to try to practice patience and humility in dealing with all the mean, cold-hearted people I encountered along the way.

By no means is it all bad. I have met some great, caring, and loving doctors who saved my ass from the fire. My God sent me nurses who were in the program to help get me through the dark times.

Using needles is now a necessity, and my cupboard has more pills in it than when I was out there in active addiction. My sponsor and his support are vital to me today. I have to network with other addicts who are dealing with illness and recovery like I am.

It is sometimes torturous when I take out a newcomer and he orders a bacon cheeseburger and fries while I order a salad and broiled chicken breast. I do more weighing and measuring now than when I was dealing drugs back in the dark days.

now” and not project the worst possible outcome. Through working daily Tenth and Eleventh steps, I was able to stay centered and not fall apart.

Also during this time, my father-in-law—who is like a second father to me—was hospitalized with severe heart failure. It was an emotional roller coaster, not knowing if he was going to live or die.

Life has been very stressful. Without the love and support of other NA members, things would have been even more difficult. Fortunately, I have had a 16-year relationship with a loving sponsor. Her direction provided me with the ability to put these medical challenges into the hands of a loving God.

The inner strength and gratitude I receive from working the steps give me all the tools I need to get through each day. The miracle here is that despite all the stress and fear, the thought of using or going on a path of destruction never occurred to me.

Thank you, NA, for saving my sanity and giving me such hope during a time of great personal distress.

Anonymous, California

I am still okay

I got clean in 1984. My wife and I wanted to have children, so we got tested to make sure we were both healthy enough. This was in 1992, and I was diagnosed with HIV, hepatitis C, and a damaged liver.

When I got the results I went numb, which is my usual reaction when faced with difficulties. Only when I saw my wife crying was I finally able to cry and show my emotions. Feelings of despair, sadness, fear, and gratitude—yes, gratitude—exploded inside me.

I felt that my life was over and that all my dreams were destroyed. I felt gratitude that at least I was blessed with eight years of a beautiful life in recovery. I felt sorry for the pain I caused my wife (who is HIV-negative) and that we would be unable to have children. But I also felt a newfound strength and faith and knew that it would be okay.

After I found out about the results, it seemed like every day it was the first

thing that came to my mind. The moment I opened my eyes every morning, fear and despair would overtake everything else. I felt I had nothing to look forward to and that I should not have any dreams or plans.

Sadness colored everything in my life. A number of dilemmas started to crop up, like: Do I live my life as if I am running out of time, or do I carry on as normal? Do I continue paying for a pension, or do I take a trip around the world? I even thought that the best thing I could do for my wife was to separate from her and set her free. My sponsor suggested that it was my wife’s decision and that I should not play God with other people’s lives.

I was very fortunate to know other members who were experiencing the same situation. They were very supportive, and I really felt “carried” by them. They said things like “Keep it in the day,” “One day this will not be the most important thing in your life,” and “You are still you, not the virus.”

I remember visiting my ex-roommate, and she asked me to hold “her baby.” I nearly cried because she could accept my illness when I was feeling so ashamed and infectious with it. When we told my wife’s family about my disease, I encountered the same reaction.

I baby-sat my nephew regularly, and at no point did I encounter prejudice. In the beginning, I was expecting separate cutlery and crockery! Sometimes people broke my confidentiality, and I have learned to share about my condition only on a “need-to-know” basis now.

It is now ten years later, and I am still okay. I have not had to spend time in a hospital or being sick, although I have found that my liver has gotten worse. When I got that news I experienced the same feelings of despair that I did before, but this time I had some experience to draw from.

I feel okay today; “keeping it in the day” has become my mantra. My wife decided to separate from me after 15 years together because she found it very difficult to accept my illnesses. However, today I am grateful that at least she tried.

I try to take responsibility for my recovery. I know that if my spirit is strong, I will be okay. I have to say that some-

times I do get shaky, but by going to meetings I get a better perspective on my life.

My sponsor has been a tremendous help in encouraging me not to give up. I have met a beautiful woman who makes me feel wanted and reassures me. I try not to let my health problems be my whole life, just part of it.

I love NA and what it has brought into my life. The gifts of recovery keep being revealed to me. I love life—difficulties and all—because it is a never-ending adventure.

Anonymous, United Kingdom

My recovery, my responsibility

The results of my clinical analysis showed that I had abnormal levels in my blood and my prostate was slightly enlarged. The urologist suggested that I could control the condition on a monthly basis, or I could have a biopsy. I chose to have the biopsy.

I had to set a specific date at the hospital since they were going to do the procedure with general anesthesia. That is when my anxiety began. I had the idea that the anesthesia was made from a narcotic-derived product, so at first I said “no.”

Two people helped me through this: my sponsor and a fellow NA member who was also a doctor.

My sponsor listened to all of my anxious sharing and followed each step I took, while my doctor friend helped me to follow all of the surgeon’s instructions.

My sponsor told me that I had done everything I could and to put the results in the hands of my Higher Power. He said I should not be afraid to express my feelings in meetings after the procedure was completed. He told me to have faith and to allow my fellow members to support me.

My doctor friend also suggested that I have some NA members at my bedside when I woke up from the anesthesia, and talk to both the surgeon and the anesthesiologist before the surgery began.



COME CELEBRATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF NA! **World Unity Day** Saturday, 5 July 2003 LIVE FROM SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

We have come an incredibly long way since our inception...but "just for today," we are still not at the "end of our road." Our hope is that World Unity Day will not only help bring us all together in this historic celebration of our recovery, but also will remind us that only together can we ensure that our message is available to any addict seeking a new way of life. This event is a demonstration of our unity and the common bond we share globally as members in recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

This year's Unity Day will take place during the **30th World Convention** in San Diego, California, USA. While the exact start time for Unity Day has not been determined, for planning purposes please expect the call to begin in the early evening hours, Pacific Daylight Time. Once the exact start time has been established, we will notify the fellowship. Check our website at www.na.org for more information as it becomes available.

Please Provide the Following Contact Information

Individual members, NA groups, area/regional functions, and institutions can join in the celebration of World Unity Day on a two-hour, "listen only" telephone hookup to hear the Unity Day main speaker. Simply complete the telephone link registration form below and fax or mail it to the World Service Office with your payment. The cost is \$50.00 for calls within the United States/Canada. For calls outside the US/Canada, there will be an additional charge depending upon the telephone rate of the country.

Contact Name _____ Group (Region/Area/Institution) _____

Phone Number _____ Email Address _____

Street Address _____

City/State _____ Country _____ Postal Code _____

Outside US/Canada? Number where we can reach you on day of call: _____

Form of Payment (Check One): AMEX VISA M/C Discover Diners Club

Credit Card Number _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____ Print Name _____

Check/Money Order OR **Free Regional Link** NA World Services is offering one free regional hookup to each region located outside the US and Canada. To use the free regional hookup, you must have the approval of your region. Please include the name and phone number of your regional chairperson below. We will contact the chairperson of your region upon receipt of your registration for verification.

Regional Contact _____ Phone Number _____

Upon completing this application, please mail the application with your check or money order to **NAWS, c/o Unity Day, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409** or fax it to **818.700.0700** with your credit card information. Registrations will not be processed without payment or regional approval for the free link. After 1 June 2003, you will receive a confirmation via email or mail, which will include the call-in number and password you need on the day of the call. The confirmation will outline the exact time and agenda for the call, explain how to phone in on the day of the call, and inform you about what to do if you experience problems during the call.

Questions? Call the World Service Office at (818) 773-9999 and dial extension 204.

All registrations MUST BE RECEIVED no later than 1 June 2003.



So you want to speak at WCNA-30...

We are looking forward to celebrating the 50th anniversary of Narcotics Anonymous in July 2003! It promises to be an awesome experience, and we are asking for your help with finding workshop speakers for this special celebration.

Names and/or tapes of members wishing to speak at a world convention workshop.

Clean time requirements are: ten years clean for main meeting and five years clean for workshops. Workshop speakers will be selected from the convention's preregistration list.

Members wishing to evaluate speaker tapes.

Should have a willingness to serve; adequate time to evaluate the tapes (you will have approximately 100 tapes to evaluate); ability to keep deadlines; a minimum of five years clean; and a completed World Pool Information Form.

Simply complete the form below and send it to the WSO via mail, fax, or email. Recommendations for workshop speakers and/or submissions for tape evaluations should be sent as soon as possible and no later than 31 January 2003. You may also send a tape to the WSO.

Name of person to be considered as a workshop speaker: _____

I'm willing to be a tape evaluator: _____

Street Address _____ Apt# _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Country _____ Postal Code _____

Daytime Telephone () _____ Evening Telephone () _____

Clean Date ____/____/____ (Ten years/main meeting and five years/workshops required.)

I am currently planning to attend WCNA-30. Circle one: Yes / No / Not Sure

Please fax or email completed application to (818) 700-0700 or WCNASpeaker@na.org.

Mail to: NA World Services
 Attn: WCNA-30 Speakers
 PO Box 9999
 Van Nuys, CA 91409

I asked a fellow member to accompany me to the hospital.

I was placed in the surgical room, and the hospital staff told me that once I was in the room I could speak to both doctors.

I talked to the anesthesiologist and told him I had problems with drugs. I asked him to not give me any anesthesia derived from narcotics. He told me not to worry, that he would not.

Later, when I woke up, there were some NA members by my bedside. It was comforting to see them. And then I got the results of the biopsy—which, thankfully, were negative.

It is my responsibility to inform doctors about my condition as an addict and to request alternative medication.

On a previous occasion I underwent another procedure, and I informed the neurologist that I was an addict. He gave an alternative medicine that was different from the one usually given to patients. Coincidentally, the usual medicine was one of my drugs of choice.

It is my responsibility to consult with fellow NA members who are doctors, if appropriate.

It is my responsibility to follow the practical suggestions offered by my fellow-member physician.

It is my responsibility to surround myself with other NA members during those moments when I am not sure of how I am going to react or if I know I might receive some upsetting news.

It is my responsibility to let things happen according to what my Higher Power considers to be the best for me and to be grateful for things turning out the way they do.

Jose Maria, Argentina



Holding steady

The program of Narcotics Anonymous has helped me gain many new perspectives. Oftentimes those perspectives deal with my thoughts, situations, and ideas about living life without the use of drugs. The intentionally dedicated focus on recovery seeps into my daily thought process, both consciously and unconsciously, so that reading and relaxing in my reclining chair by the window may be not only a welcome change from the once-persistent frantic pace in my mind, it could just as well be a convenient spot for a spiritual experience.

Perhaps it was a recent NA meeting I attended that made me think of yet another analogy on recovery. A member with no less than 18 years in NA remarked about the insidious disappearance of a core group of members in her region. These members had given her comfort and hope. I related to what she shared. I thought about recovery and relapse and the other decisions members have made to move out of our fellowship.

While laying my book down to take a break, I glanced out my window. I noticed a group of pigeons sitting in a row on an electric wire. The group seemed to be large, but I did not count it. A storm appeared to be moving in, causing the wire to be buffeted about by the accompanying wind.

The pigeons sensed this and spread their tail feathers and wings to remain steady on the wire. The value of this action was negated, however, when one pigeon decided to fly off. As it flew away the wire recoiled, making it even more difficult for the other pigeons to remain balanced. They looked frightened.

A few moments later another pigeon took flight, then another, until there was just one lone bird left perched precariously on the wire.

I waited in anticipation for it to fly away as well. It did not follow suit. Instead, for a period of time that seemed like an eternity, the pigeon remained vigilant and patient as the wire slowly began to cease swaying. To my delight, other birds began arriving to take up residence on the wire. This, in fact, steadied the wire.

I could not see where the other pigeons had flown off to, only their general direction. I did not know exactly why they'd fled; I could only assume it was the forceful wind. This seemed odd, knowing that the force contained in the electric line was much greater in power than the force of that wind. It is amazing how it does not harm the pigeons.

Before the wind had arisen, they had felt secure on the power line. Now I was left with the spectacle of the lone pigeon being surrounded by the newcomers. Things began to calm down, and the birds regained their comfort level as they courageously settled down onto the powerful electric wire—until the next wind blows, as it always has and always will.

This reminded me of how I need to be steadfast with the power of the NA program when members decide to relapse or leave the fellowship. I need not judge individuals for their flight or become alarmed at how vulnerable we may feel during those periods. The Twelve Traditions of NA bind us together with unity of purpose.

I now realize my greatest service to others and the group is to remain steady and focused on my own personal recovery. This change in perspective is one of the many gifts I have received and one that I believe is a result of my spiritual growth within the NA program.

David C, West Virginia

Primary Purpose

"There are many ways of doing things in Narcotics Anonymous. And just as all of us have our own individual personalities, so will your group develop its own identity, its own way of doing things, and its own special knack for carrying the NA message. That's the way it should be. In NA we encourage unity, not uniformity."

The Group Booklet, pg. 1

This is a column for you, about you, and by you. We invite you to share any challenges your group may have faced, how your group reached a solution, or its "special knack" that keeps you coming back!

The group "Światło" (the Light) meets on Sunday mornings and came into being on 12 April 1998. It is the second oldest group in Warsaw, the capital of Poland. When it originated in Warsaw, there were only four people who had abstained from drugs for longer than three months and were regularly attending meetings.

There were three people who attended the first meeting, which took place in one of the members' flats. Later, the meetings took place in a rented room in the Parish House "Betania" in Warsaw. During the first year there were few people participating in the meetings; sometimes only the chairperson was at the meeting.

In the beginning, the group was not stable—people were constantly coming and leaving. However, after some time, the group started having regular meeting-goers attend. The group has matured slowly over the years and is now more stable.

Nowadays there are about 20 regular participants. I myself have over four years clean, and I am the coffee person. I also take care of the literature.

The group is still faced with some problems, mainly financial ones.

I would also like to mention that the money from the basket is used for the purchase of various utensils, like an electric kettle, which have helped the group unite. Some things, which were given to the group by different people, remind us of them. The metal chandelier in our meeting room, for example, reminds us of a member who is in prison at the moment.

Every first Sunday of January a special meeting is held during which all of our organizational matters are discussed and all service positions elected. The service positions are held for one year; only a delegate is chosen every two years.

All of our meetings are closed. During the first part of each meeting we read the meditation for that day, and afterward we share our experience from the last week. During the second part of the meeting, an extract from the NA Basic Text is discussed. There is also a collecting-box for contributions for literature.

For me, this meeting is a place where I can feel the invisible world of true friendship. To be sure, the meeting is not the center of the universe, but it is the place where a new human being is born within me—the human being who is free from the obsession to use.

Losiu D, Poland

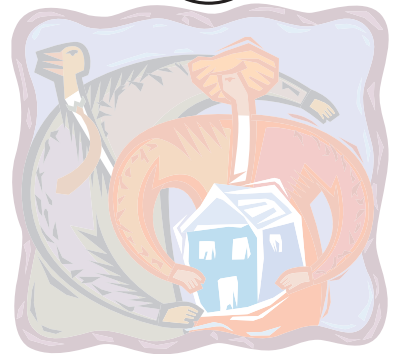
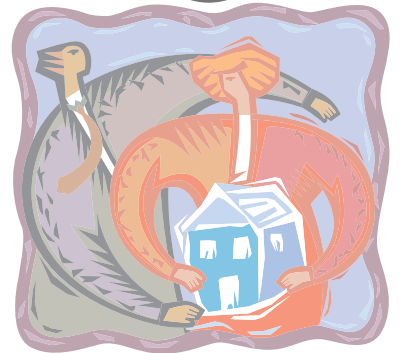
And the winner is...

The NA Way Magazine Editorial Board has selected the name of **Primary Purpose** for the new column our magazine has started for and about home groups. The winning submission was sent in by Sonny G from the Off the Wall Area in Colorado.

Sonny will receive a specially made gift honoring the 20th anniversary of *The NA Way Magazine*.

Congratulations, Sonny, and thanks to all the members who sent in suggestions for the column's name. We appreciate your interest and your enthusiasm.

Please continue to check our website for upcoming themes and topics at www.na.org/naway-toc.htm.





Who am I to judge?

Hi. I am JC, an addict from Peru.

This topic makes me reflect upon the damage drugs did to a lot of us. I am not only referring to those who, in spite of their willingness to recover, take medication prescribed by physicians who are aware of their addiction; I am also referring to the prejudice that this causes within the fellowship.

If we base our belief on the premise that NA has no opinion on outside issues, then we should try to understand that some of us arrived here more affected than others. Some members may need medication to improve their quality of life. Do we have the capacity to judge the legitimacy of that prescription? I feel that doing so flagrantly violates our Tenth Tradition.

I find it very unpleasant to ask a member who is taking medication prescribed by a physician to abstain from service work that is connected with the public. I find it equally distasteful to then have to explain to them why they must withstand criticism from prejudiced members. To avoid the issue altogether, I encourage them to do service in other areas such as literature and their home group.

I personally know some members who need to take their medication, and there are a number of us who consider them clean. We believe they have every right to celebrate their clean birthdays in a normal way. But what do we do with those who are intolerant of these addicts?

I have witnessed how cruel we addicts can be when we judge unmercifully. We have no right to make a fellow addict feel bad. They perhaps deserve more understanding and affection than the rest.

Experience tells us that grave problems may arise when members taking prescribed medication decide to stop doing so on their own, without medical assistance or supervision.

In our local NA community we also have the case of individuals who self-prescribe or deceive their doctors so they can prescribe them medication. How do we judge them?

In any case, I thank my Higher Power for having been accepted in NA and for having found recovery despite all my defects of character. If we are able to accept individuals who attend meetings under the influence of drugs all the time, why is it so difficult for us to accept the fact that we have fellow members who legitimately need to take prescribed medication?

On the other hand, have we guaranteed ourselves good health for the rest of our lives just because we have gotten clean? Who can guarantee that tomorrow we will *not* require a medical prescription to improve our health? Will we fight tooth and nail to maintain our abstinence when a disease hits us?

I am a member of NA, and I have close to twelve years of clean time. What I have seen and lived has taught me that the pain of living without drugs is temporary—if I work the program—but the pain comes back when I judge other addicts because I have not accepted myself as an addict.

“It will not make us better people to judge the faults of another.” (Basic Text, p. 37) Who do we think we are to judge the clean time of another addict? Did anyone judge us when we first came to NA?

I understand that doctors do not give opinions about other doctors' prescriptions due to professional ethics. Who are we, then, to give such an opinion?

I would like to send a hug to all our members who require medication for medical reasons. I want to tell you that I consider you my brothers and sisters. I want to encourage you to forgive us and to continue attending meetings because I need you.

JC, Peru

Abstinence is...

During my 15 years of recovery in NA, my 26 years of psychiatric treatment, and working with my sponsees and other members, I have observed that many people have diplomas out of a Cracker Jack box or from some kind of New Age spiritual inspiration.

These people believe that physical and mental illnesses can be treated "cold turkey" as in the days of the Inquisition, or as in the 150 countries that still consider torture to be an art form.

Since I live in the year 2002, when we have doctors practicing modern medicine, I need have no diploma as an addict helping another addict, or any responsibility other than to offer unconditionally to those addicts the NA message that it is possible to live without drugs.

Abstinence is a matter between the patient, his physician, his sponsor, and his God. NA should acknowledge the medical authority of physicians if we want them to continue to refer patients with drug problems to us.

In reference to World Service Board of Trustees Bulletin #29, "Regarding Methadone and Other Drug Replacement Programs," the members of the World Board should be prepared to justify why they are competent to make a pronouncement on medical treatments, as well as be prepared to support patients who may suffer because of their pronouncement. When a physician prescribes medication to a patient, no one should alter the treatment except another physician.

In NA, a patient who plays with his life without any medical qualifications can be a bad example who leads others to suffering, danger, and death.

Rodolphe Z, Quebec



H&I Slim

For those of you who haven't had the pleasure of meeting him, H&I Slim is "the ultimate H&I kinda guy." He hangs out in hospitals and jails all over the world. You might say he's always in the know and always on the go. Got a question about H&I? Need some help? Write H&I Slim in care of the WSO.

Dear NA Way,

I would like to say that the October 2002 issue is another great one—some real gut-level sharing going on! Thanks to you and your staff. Second, I really feel for the guy in Louisiana (H&I Slim section) who is searching for a sponsor. I spoke with my sponsees about it and we would like to see if there is any way we could contact him and invite him to correspond with us. I know you cannot give out his contact info, but I was wondering if you could pass mine on to him. I have attached a letter. If you cannot for some reason, I understand.

Scott W, Tennessee

Dear Scott,

Thank you for writing to *The NA Way Magazine* editor with your expression of compassion for the Louisiana inmate who wrote about his inability to find a sponsor through our service structure. I know that you and some of the men you sponsor want to write to this man. Unfortunately, if you look back at the H&I Slim column in the last issue of the magazine, you will see that there was not a name associated with the article—the letter was mailed anonymously.

Nonetheless, I am excited about the possibilities for you, your sponsees, and the still-suffering addict "behind the walls." As you recall, in my response to the inmate in Louisiana, I mentioned that a number of "sponsorship by mail" committees have been created over the years. Considering the eagerness you have shown, I thought you and your sponsees might want to create such a committee, to engage in either general recovery correspondence or sponsorship with incarcerated addicts.

Should you decide that you may want to give this avenue of service a try, and if you receive the go-ahead from your area or regional service committee, staff at the World Service Office has a few sample pen-pal letters, as well as sponsorship committee guidelines. They would be more than willing to send copies to you.

How would you get started? The World Service Office receives piles of letters from addicts looking for pen pals or sponsors. If you decide to proceed, give the mailing address for your subcommittee to the WSO. Office staff will either send that address to one of the addicts seeking correspondence or they will send the addict's letter directly to you.

Whatever you decide to do, I wish you the best. I pray that in the near future someone at the office will say to me, "Hey, Slim, you remember those members from Tennessee who wanted to write to that addict in Louisiana? Well, they formed a committee, and we just sent them their first request for sponsorship!"

Thank you for all that you do for the addict who still suffers.

In loving service,
H&I Slim

Our readers write...

Dear NA Way:

At the time I first came to NA in 1981, I was in college studying psychology. The use of drugs as a therapeutic tool was as hot a topic in NA then as it is today. Some NA members had the mistaken notion that neuroleptic drugs for schizophrenia were addictive tranquilizers and urged psychotic members of the fellowship to discontinue their use. The result was predictable: Addicts suffering from psychosis quickly relapsed into delusions and hallucinations, becoming a danger to themselves and others.

One such member began to carry a pistol to meetings and was eventually hospitalized for threatening to shoot his employer. Another jumped from the top of a building in a suicide attempt and crushed his legs. Much as I tried to educate other members of NA that the use of some drugs was necessary to the well-being and safety of some of our members, I was told by many recovering addicts that neuroleptic drugs were addictive and their use was contrary to the principles of our program of recovery.

Eight years into my own recovery I had to undergo a painful surgical procedure. The doctor prescribed an oral narcotic, but I had the common sense to give the medication to my landlady with directions to give them to me according to the physician's orders—no matter how much I whined about pain. I succeeded in my recovery from surgery, and it taught me a valuable lesson about the power of my addiction: I cannot be trusted with possession of such drugs when I am in pain.

Though I worked in psychiatric hospitals with access to many addictive drugs, I never felt the compulsion to use them because I regularly went to meetings, worked the Twelve Steps with my sponsor, and remained in service to other addicts. In time, I specialized in the psychiatric treatment of dual-diagnosis patients and came to understand their special circumstances.

The climate of intolerance toward therapeutic drugs has improved very slowly in NA but still remains strong. Members who get prescriptions for antidepressants are still viewed with suspicion. Members using a prescription drug for chronic pain are told they are not in recovery by those ignorant of the awful predicament of the sufferer. It is a tightrope they must walk between a life made bearable by the drugs and the possibility of falling back into the hell of addiction. Hardly an easy choice!

One such sufferer was a member whose spine was crushed in an accident caused by a drunk driver. For years this member lived in excruciating pain that made it impossible to sit at meetings. Eventually the neurosurgeon had no choice but to put this member on a strong narcotic for pain maintenance in an effort to make the pain bearable. This member felt shunned at meetings and eventually quit going.

Is this the welcome we in Narcotics Anonymous want to extend to people who have a legitimate need for medications? Are we still sitting in the seat of judgment that made our own lives so miserable? How many of you feel so confident of your medical knowledge that you can decide who is clean and who is not? Who among us is competent to interfere with a member's relationship with a physician?

Yes, there are those who claim to be clean when they are obviously exhibiting all the signs of active addiction. Nonetheless, it is not our right to condemn or shun them in their denial because this is a program of love rather than judgment. Instead of avoiding those on medications, extend the hand of love and compassion. Please do not exclude those who may not fit your notion of recovery. Rather, learn to embrace them as fellow sufferers of this cruel disease of addiction. It may make all the difference between life and death.

Anonymous, Oregon

Picture this

NA communities are invited to send photographs of their meeting places. We especially welcome photos that include meeting formats, recovery literature, posters, dirty coffee cups, and anything else that makes the meeting place look "lived in." Sorry, we cannot use photos that identify NA members. Please tell us about your meeting, its name, the location and city, how long it has been in existence, and what your format consists of (speaker, participation, etc.).



Forca Lousada Group, Portugal

Our group was founded in 1996 with the help of several addicts from Porto. The group meets four days a week at 9:30 pm in the community hall of the Church of Senhor dos Aflitos in Lousada. We have about twelve members who regularly attend this meeting. This is a picture of the room where we meet.



WCNA-30...

closer than you think

The 50th anniversary of Narcotics Anonymous and WCNA-30 are just a short seven months away! This mega-celebration will take place from 3 July to 6 July 2003 in San Diego, California. Because of the enormity and historical significance of this event, we are asking for your help!

Help Our WCNA team...

- Gather both visual and written information about NA history throughout the world.
- By recommending workshop speakers and/or submitting tapes for consideration.
- Identify members willing to help evaluate speaker tapes submitted.

Written History And Tapes...

- We hope to capture a tapestry that will represent our colorful history at WCNA-30. NA struggled through many hard times—and almost vanished—over the years since its humble beginning in 1953 to become the worldwide fellowship we know today as Narcotics Anonymous.
- Does your group have any items of interest that we can display at this special celebration? If you, your area, or your region has anything you would be willing to share with the world, please send it to the World Service Office as soon as possible or contact the WSO for additional information. Sometimes flyers, pictures, and other memorabilia can speak to us in a powerful and unique way.
- We would also like to collect written histories about the beginnings of Narcotics Anonymous in your community, and we ask that you consider developing this information for distribution at WCNA-30.
- If you have a tape or you are interested in evaluating speaker tapes, please fill out the form on page 12. If you do not have a tape, you can submit your name and personal information on the form as well. We will use the preregistration list to try to determine who will be attending the convention when choosing workshop speakers. You can also contact WCNAspeaker@na.org for more information.

Here is your opportunity to take part in this once-in-a-lifetime event
and truly give meaning to the phrase *together we can!*

We look forward to seeing you in July 2003!



CALENDAR

We encourage you to publicize your event by having it published on our website and in *The NA Way Magazine*. You can inform the WSO about your event by fax, phone, or regular post, or through our website. We encourage using the website because you can check to see if we already have a listing on your convention and, if not, you can enter your own convention information. It is then reviewed, formatted, and added to the online convention calendar on our website in approximately four days. Just go to www.na.org, click on "NA Events," and follow the instructions.

Convention announcements entered through the website and those received by other means are also given to *The NA Way*. *The NA Way* is published four times a year in January, April, July, and October. Each issue goes into production long before its distribution date, so we need a minimum of three months' notice to ensure your event will be published in the magazine—that's three months before our publication date. For instance, if you want your event published in the October issue, we need to know by 1 July.

Australia

Victoria: 17-19 Jan; 2nd Combined Tasmanian & Victorian Area Convention 2003; St Hilda's College, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne; event info: +61.395.92.2345; write: Australian Region, Box 2470V, Melbourne, VIC 3000; home.vicnet.net.au/~navic/

Bermuda

Southampton: 28-30 Mar; 3rd Bermuda Islands Area Convention; Sonesta Resort Hotel, Hamilton; hotel rsvns: 441.238.8122; event info: 441.296.2492; speaker tape submission deadline: 1 Mar 2003; write: Bermuda Islands Area, Box DV690, Devonshire, DVBX, Bermuda

Canada

Nova Scotia: 25-27 Jul; Spiritual in Nature; Keddy's Hotel, Halifax; event info: 902.430.7300; speaker tape submission deadline: 1 Apr 2003; write: Central Nova Area-Halifax, Box 65 Central, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2L4; www.nearna.com

Ontario: 7-9 Feb; TACNAIII; Celebrating 20 Years of Recovery; Carrying the Message; Crowne Plaza Hotel, Toronto; hotel rsvns: 800.422.7969; write: Toronto Area, Box 5700, Depot A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1N8; www.torontona.ca

2) 28 Feb-2 Mar; Ontario Regional Convention of NA XVI; Sheraton Hamilton Hotel, Hamilton; hotel rsvns: 800.325.3535; event info: 905.529.5515; write: ORSCNA, Box 5939 Depot A, Toronto, Ontario, M3W 1P3, Canada; www.orscna.org/o.r.c.n.a.xvi.html

Greece

Athens: 11-13 Oct 2003; ECCNA; Let Your Spirit Fly; Hotel Athos Palace, Kalithea; hotel rsvns: +30.37.4022100; write: European Convention, Box 75064, Post Code 17610, Kalithea, Athens, Greece; www.eccna2003.com

India

Bombay: 16-18 Jan; BACNA X; Widening Horizons; Hotel Riviera Matheran, Bombay; event info: +98.212.09510; speaker tape submission deadline: 31 Dec 2002; write: Bombay Area, Box 1953, GPO, Bombay 400001

Perú

Lambayeque: 1-3 May; IX Convención Regional de NA Perú; Chiclayo; event info: 511.970.6609; www.na.org/links-main.htm#Peru

Portugal

Lisboa: 7-9 Feb; VI Convenção de Narcóticos Anónimos da Área de Lisboa; Fórum Lisboa, Lisboa; event registration: registos@vicnalx.org; event info: informacao@vicnalx.org; speaker tape information: programa@vicnalx.org

Sweden

Göteborg: 28 Feb-2 Mar; En Ny Chans (A New Chance); Folkets hus, Göteborg; event registration: +460707235862; www.nasverige.a.se

United States

Alabama: 7-9 Feb; Out of the Darkness into the Light VII; Holiday Inn, Decatur; hotel rsvns: 256.355.3150; event info: 256.852.2308

Arkansas: 7-9 Mar; ARVANA 10th Annual Hangin' in the Fort Convention; Fifth Season's Inn, Fort Smith; hotel rsvns: 479.452.4880; event info: 479.484.0254; speaker tape submission deadline: 10 Jan 2003; write: Arkansas River Valley Area, Box 5631, Fort Smith, AR 72913

California: 10-12 Jan; Tri Area Convention III; Red Lion Inn, Redding; hotel rsvns: 530.221.8700; event info: 530.321.8069; www.triareaconventionregistration.com

2) 21-23 Feb; Central California Regional Convention XI; Keep It Simple; Marriott, Ventura; hotel rsvns: 877.983.6887; event info: 805.937.5870; write: CCRCA, Box 2170, Santa Maria, CA 93457-2170; ccrcna-registration@excite.com; www.ccrna.org

3) 17-20 Apr; Northern California Convention of NA XXV; A Silver Celebration; Hilton Hotel, San Jose; event info: 650.642.1117; write: Northern California Region, Box 248, Mountain View, CA 94042-0248

4) 3-6 Jul; 50th Anniversary of NA; WCNA-30; San Diego Convention Center, San Diego; write: NA World Services, 19737 Nordhoff Pl, Chatsworth, CA 91311; www.na.org

Florida: 23-26 Jan; 14th Annual Palm Coast Area Spiritual Retreat; Gold Coast Christian Camp, Lantana; event info: 561.630.6446; write: Palm Coast Area, Box 20984, West Palm Beach, FL 33416

2) 17-20 Apr; FRCNA XXII; Into the Light; Orlando Airport Marriott Hotel/Resort, Orlando; hotel rsvns: 800.765.6752; Marriott Local #: 407.851.9000; event info: 863.413.9892; speaker tape submission deadline: 15 Feb 2003; write: FRCNA, 6152 S Congress Ave, Lantana, FL 33462; www.floridarso.org

3) 1-4 May; 27th Annual Fun in the Sun Weekend; The Boardwalk Beach Resort, Panama City Beach; hotel rsvns: 800.224.4853; event info: 404.452.1731; speaker tape submission deadline: 31 Jan 2003; write: North Atlanta Area, PC Weekend, Box 95270, Atlanta, GA 30347

Georgia: 10-12 Jan; Peace in Recovery XV; Wingate Hotel, Augusta; hotel rsvns: 800.993.7232; event info: 706.793.5454; write: CSRA, Box 133, Augusta, GA 30901

2) 6-9 Feb; GRCNA XXII; Guide Me in My Recovery; Jekyll Inn, Jekyll Island; hotel rsvns: 800.736.1046; event info: 770.471.5847; www.grcna.org

Hawaii: 9-11 May; Kauai Gathering in Paradise; YMCA Boy Scout Camp, Naue, Haene, Kauai; event registration: 808.634.5795; speaker tape submission deadline: 1 Apr 2003; talitom@alo.com

2) 1-4 Sep 2005; 31st World Convention of NA; WCNA-31; to be determined, Honolulu; write: NA World Services, 19737 Nordhoff Pl, Chatsworth, CA 91311; www.na.org

Illinois: 2-5 Jan; Chicagoland Regional Convention XV; Hyatt Regency Chicago, Chicago; hotel rsvns: 800.233.1234; write: Chicagoland Region, 212 S Marion, Ste 27, Oak Park, IL 60302; www.chicagona.org

2) 4-6 Apr; RRCNA 12; Clock Tower Resort, Rockford; hotel rsvns: 815.398.6000; event info: 815.964.5959; speaker tape submission deadline: 31 Dec 2003; write: Rock River Area, Box 8544, Rockford, IL 61126

Indiana: 28 Feb-2 Mar; 10th Annual Indiana State Convention; Hilton Hotel, Fort Wayne; hotel rsvns: 260.420.1100; write: North East Area, Box 12737, Fort Wayne, IN 46864; www.naindiana.org

Kentucky: 18-20 Apr; Kentuckiana Regional Convention of NA; Executive Inn Rivermont, Owensboro; hotel rsvns: 800.626.1936; event info: 270.683.0681; write: Kentuckiana Region, 2626 W Parrish Ave #211, Owensboro, KY 42301-2664; KRCNA17@yahoo.com

Maryland: 11-13 Apr; Chesapeake & Potomac Regional Convention XVII; Ocean City Convention Center, Ocean City; event info: 301.839.4425; write: CPRCNA Host Committee, Box PMB 480, 1429 G St NW, Washington, DC 20005-2009; www.cprcna.org/17

Massachusetts: 10-12 Jan; BACNA VIII; Weathering the Storm; Sheraton Braintree, Braintree; hotel rsvns: 781.848.0600; event info: 508.653.2342; write: Boston Area, 398 Columbus Ave, Boston, MA 02116

2) 7-9 Mar; NERC X; The Journey Continues; Sheraton Hotel, Hyannis; hotel rsvns: 800.325.3535; write: New England Region, Box 437, Quincy, MA 02169; www.newenglandna.org

Michigan: 24-26 Jan; KACNA XI; Radisson Hotel Plaza, Kalamazoo; hotel rsvns: 269.343.3333; event info: 269.344.1705; write: Kalamazoo Area, Box 50822, Kalamazoo, MI 49005

2) 17-20 Apr; DACNA XI; Living the Dream; Detroit Marriott Hotel, Detroit; hotel rsvns: 800.352.0831; event info: 734.955.1306; write: Detroit Area, Box 32603, Detroit, MI 48232-0603

Minnesota: 28 Feb-2 Mar; Circle of Sisters 6th Annual Women's Convention; Doubletree Grand, Bloomington; hotel rsvns: 952.854.2244; charity.marra@starwoodhotels.com; event info: 612.879.8203; write: Circle of Sisters 6, Industrial Station, Box 4580, St Paul, MN 55104

2) 11-13 Apr; MN Region Annual Convention X: A Decade of Miracles; Kahler Grand Hotel, Rochester; hotel rsvns: 800.533.1655; event info: 507.281.2446; write: Open Door Area, Box 6794, Rochester, MN 55903

Nebraska: 21-23 Feb; Close Encounters of the Clean Kind; Best Western Redick Hotel, Omaha; hotel rsvns: 888.342.5339; event info: 402.551.5199; speaker tape submission deadline: 31 Dec 2002; write: Eastern Nebraska, Box 3937, Omaha, NE 68102; www.close-encounters-na.com

Nevada: 14-16 Feb; ELVCNA IV; It Works Convention; Texas Station Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas; hotel rsvns: 800.654.8888; event info: 702.457.5595; write: East Las Vegas Area, Box 12717, Las Vegas, NV 89112-1717; www.elvcna.org

2) 17-20 Apr; The Joy Is in the Recovery; Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas; hotel rsvns: 800.634.6753; event info: 702.227.6322; speaker tape submission deadline: 2 Jan 2003; www.snasc.org

New Jersey: 21-23 Feb; Celebrating Recovery II: The Process Continues; Wyndham Hotel/Newark Airport, Newark; hotel rsvns: 800.996.3426; event info: 973.623.8526; write: Greater Newark Area, Box 3412, Newark, NJ 07103

2) 28 Feb-2 Mar; CAACNA XIII; Pearl of Recovery; Tuscany House Hotel, Egg Harbor/Galloway; hotel rsvns: 609.965.2111; event info: 609.652.8218; write: Cape Atlantic Area, Box 1514, Pleasantville, NJ 08232

3) 23-25 May; New Jersey Regional Convention XVIII; East Brunswick Hilton, East Brunswick; hotel rsvns: 732.828.2000; event info: 732.422.0250; write: New Jersey Region, Box 134, Fords, NJ 08863

New Mexico: 14-16 Mar; Rio Grande Regional Convention XIV; Best Western Inn & Suites, Farmington; hotel rsvns: 800.528.1234; event info: 505.327.5221; www.riograndena.org

New York: 7-9 Mar; Bronx Area Convention II; Workin' The Steps, From Trippin' to Steppin'; Hudson Valley Resort & Spa, Kerhonkson; hotel rsvns: 888.948.3766; event info: 718.863.3506; write: Bronx Area, 976 Mclean Ave, Box 168, Yonkers, NY 10704; www.compusolv.net/bxacna

North Carolina: 3-5 Jan; WNCA XVIII; Spiritually High in the Land of the Sky; Ramada Plaza Hotel, Asheville; hotel rsvns: 800.678.2161; event info: 828.683.6144; write: Western North Carolina, Box 16238, Asheville, NC 28816

2) 21-23 Feb; Freedom by the Sea II; Holiday Inn Sun Spree Resort, Wrightville Beach; hotel rsvns: 877.330.5050; event info: 910.342.0693; write: Coastal Carolina Area, Box 561, Wilmington, NC 28401

3) 7-9 Mar; Capital Area Family Reunion; Hilton North Raleigh, Raleigh; hotel rsvns: 800.HILTON HOUSING, Code: RFA; event info: 919.832.5204; write: Capital Area, 1910 Summerdale Dr, Raleigh, NC 27604

4) 25-27 Apr; Bound for Freedom XVIII; Adams Mark Hotel, Charlotte; hotel rsvns: 800.444.2326; event info: 704.597.9413; write: Greater Charlotte Area, Box 33306, Charlotte, NC 28202

Ohio: 3-5 Jan; Central Ohio Area Convention XIV; Columbus Marriott North, Columbus; hotel rsvns: 800.228.3429; event info: 614.257.0407; write: COACNA XIV, Box 32351, Columbus, OH 43232-0351

2) 21-23 Feb; TACNA VI; Through the Steps, Our Dreams Are Awakened; Clarion Hotel, Toledo; hotel rsvns: 419.535.7070; event info: 419.474.3952

Oklahoma: 21-23 Mar; OKRCNA XVII; Adam's Mark Hotel, Tulsa; hotel rsvns: 918.582.9000, 800.444.2326; event info: 918.438.3046; www.okna.org/okrcna/

Oregon: 14-16 Feb; Mid-Willamette Valley Area Convention V; The Journey Is Spiritual; Spirit Mountain Lodge & Casino, Grande Ronde; hotel rsvns: 888.668.7366; event info: 503.391.4614; write: Mid-Willamette Valley Area, Box 17525, Salem, OR 97305

Pennsylvania: 14-16 Feb; Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference of NA XIX; Lancaster Host Resort, Lancaster; write: MARLCNA, Box 14862, Reading, PA 19612; loribna@hotmail.com

2) 18-20 Apr; Greater Philadelphia Region Convention XVIII; Recovery: God's Message for Change; Radisson Hotel Valley Forge Hotel, King of Prussia; hotel rsvns: 888.267.1500; event info: 215.227.5936; www.naworks.org

Texas: 3-5 Jan; Texas Tri-County Area of NA; Nassau Bay Hilton, Nassau Bay; hotel rsvns: 800.HILTONS; event info: 409.739.1856; www.ttcana.org

2) 10-12 Jan; NAWS Worldwide Workshop; Making the Connection: NA Members & NAWS; Lakeway Inn and Resort, Austin; hotel rsvns: 512.261.7300; event info: 818.773.9999 x1116; write: NAWS, 19737 Nordhoff Pl, Chatsworth, CA 91311; www.na.org

3) 31 Jan-2 Feb; I Becomes We in 2003; Tejas Bluebonnet Region of NA IV; Sheraton North Houston, Houston; hotel rsvns: 281.442.5100, 877.550.2939; event info: 832.715.6637; write: Houston Area Service Committee, Box 37247, Houston, TX 77237; www.tejas-na.org

4) 17-20 Apr; LSRCA XVIII; Celebrate the Magic; Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center, Carrollton; hotel rsvns: 800.245.3105; event info: 800.747.8972; write: Lone Star Region, 1510 Randolph, Ste 205, Carrollton, TX 75006; www.lsrna.com

Utah: 14-16 Mar 2003; Northern Utah Area Convention X; Comfort Suites Hotel, Ogden; hotel rsvns: 801.621.2545; event info: 801.317.4328; write: Northern Utah Area, Box 242, Ogden, UT 84402; www.nuana.org

Virginia: 10-12 Jan; 21st Areas of Virginia Convention; Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center-Doubletree, Roanoke; hotel rsvns: 866.594.4722; event info: 540.772.1088; write: Roanoke Valley Area, Box 5934, Roanoke, VA 24012; www.rvana.com

2) 14-16 Mar; TACNA III; Ramada Resort, Virginia Beach; hotel rsvns: 800.365.3032; event info: 757.686.9527; write: TACNA III, Box 1567, Norfolk, VA 23501

Wisconsin: 17-19 Jan; Greater Milwaukee Unity Convention of NA; Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield Hotel, Milwaukee; hotel rsvns: 800.325.3535 (outside WI) or 800.221.6671 (WI); event info: 414.546.3449; write: GMUCNA, Box 511001, Milwaukee, WI 53203

2) 30 Apr-1 May; Inncity Area Convention I of NA; Best Western Midway Hotel, Milwaukee; hotel rsvns: 414.769.2100; event info: 414.967.8979

Wyoming: 23-25 May; URMRCNA IV; One Requirement, One Purpose; Holiday Inn, Rock Springs; hotel rsvns: 307.382.9200; event info: 307.875.5867; write: URMRCNA IV, Box 445, Evanston, WY 82931; www.wyomingna.org

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Certified, correct, complete

Nancy Schenck

WSO PRODUCT UPDATE

French

It Works: How and Why

Ça marche : comment et pourquoi

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