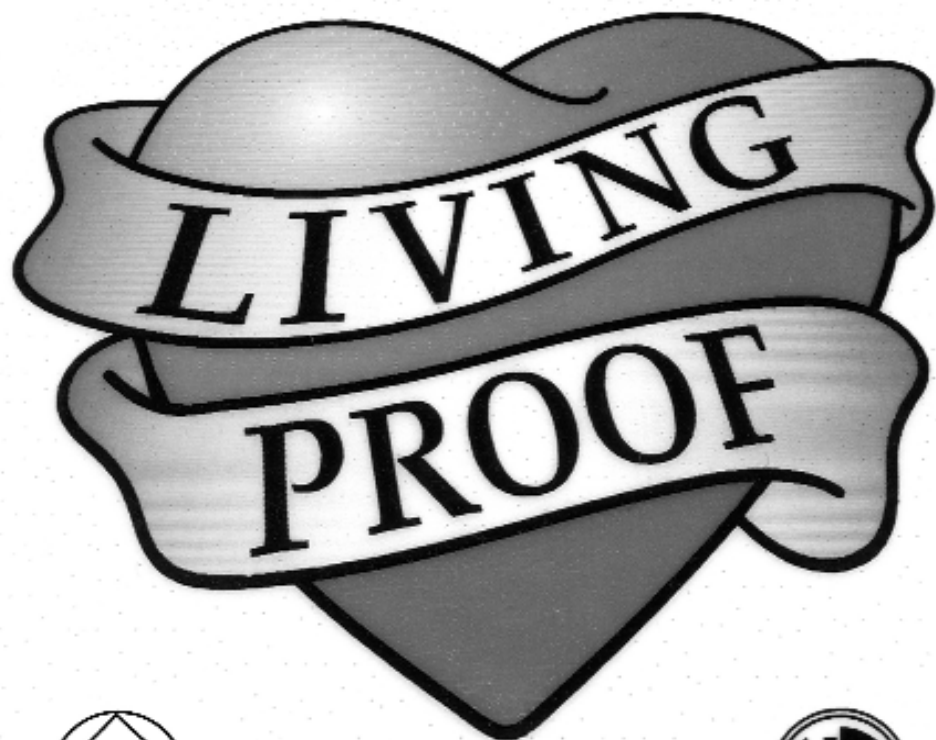


NA TODAY

OCTOBER 2005



FREEDOM FROM ACTIVE ADDICTION

Editors Notes

We the NA TODAY subcommittee have given considerable thought to this issue of our Australian magazine. We invite your comments and suggestions and hope that you enjoy this edition.

We have focussed this edition in part on the topic of " The Home Group ". We intend to include one major theme in each issue. We hope that you enjoy the shares included here on this theme, one of the most important areas of focus of support for us as NA members, be we newcomers or not.

Anything that we can do to help support each other to maintain recovery and lead a happier healthier life is a worthy objective. We invite your responses and ideas for future themes and shares on how your experiences with giving or receiving support from fellow members and your Home Group have helped you in your journey of recovery.

We wish you well in your endeavours and look forward to your contributions. We leave you with the all important thought that we all have witnessed in

reality : Don't give up before the Miracle happens, for the Miracle will happen if we wait and work for it !

Many thanks for allowing us to be of service.

Rosie R

Editor NATODAY Subcommittee



NA Today has been published for twenty three years. It is a free publication and can be downloaded from na.org.au website. NA Today presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The opinions expressed herein should not be attributed to NA as a whole, nor does the publication of any article imply endorsement by NA or the NA Today Magazine. Permission to reprint from this publication is granted to all other service boards and committees of the fellowship of NA providing they cite the source.

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Home Group

Recently I moved to the city from a small country fellowship. I struggled with the impersonal nature of the big city fellowship and I am pretty shy at the best of times. My natural demeanour is retiring and isolated and because I didn't know anyone, I just didn't feel like going to meetings. I went to one a week, then one a fortnight and then I hadn't been to one for nearly three weeks. I had been meaning to go to the Thursday night meeting and I started thinking I might give it a miss. The thought popped into my head "if I don't go tonight, it means I'm not going". The thought rang loud like a warning bell. "My god I'm not going to meetings". I hopped on the bus and went to the Thursday night meeting where there were a couple of people who recognised me from a few weeks earlier. They said their speaker hadn't turned up and would I like to do it. I gave it a go and people seemed to enjoy my share. I was very nervous but those members

were so welcoming to me that I kept wanting to come back.

They encouraged me to join the group and I did. I went back the next week and since then I have become a regular member of that group. It became my home group. Since then I have been back to my normal behaviour of about 4 meetings per week. I run well on that amount. I am grateful to those members because they caught me just before I fell. And perhaps the home group is one of those things that is just good to have, to make sure you have at least one meeting a week where you feel welcome and responsible for turning up.

Michael G.



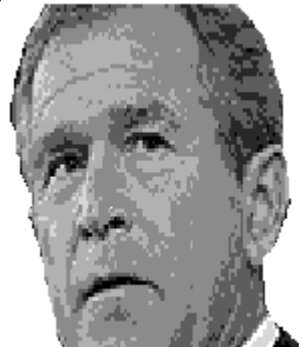
Room Check

The next time you are at a meeting during the break or talking to friends, take a look around. Do a room check. Is there an addict sitting by themselves talking to no one? That is your suffering addict. Sometimes it is a newcomer that didn't raise their hand. Other times it is a visitor from out of town looking for a friendly face. Or maybe it is an old timer who is feeling really bad. Regardless of who it is "An addict alone is in bad company". Suggest to your friends that you go over and include them in your conversation.













They may or may not be grateful at that moment, but I can guarantee you that by this simple selfless act requiring less than ten minutes of your life that you have helped that addict. They will be less likely to slink into isolation thinking no one cares. They will be less likely to use and more likely to **KEEP COMINGBACK!**

And if you are that addict sitting alone at a meeting, do a room check your self. By sharing with another isolated addict miracles begin to happen. **I CAN'T WE CAN.**

I was left alone at a meeting and I felt alienated and terrorised



You're A

| | | |
|---|-------------|---|
|  | Aries | Don't worry about the madness of the last few weeks. It's all a part of the spiritual journey. We think we are all spiritual one minute, then the next we're not. About it, everyone fucks up, defects are reticent spirituality. |
|  | Taurus | Just because you are the bull doesn't mean you talk to the bull. You are for the newcomer, that's the reason they are the newcomers in the room, before you decide what to say. Spontaneity is not your friend. |
|  | Gemini | Twin set and pearls. There is more to life than the shallow beauty of nature. Feed it with the beauty of nature. Leave behind the shallow and make awkward advances towards the opposite sex – |
|  | Cancer | You are virtually a psychic. Cancers are the best. Ever. Contributing? I hope so, otherwise you wouldn't have come back. |
|  | Leo | DiCaprio is a fine name sake, though Arnie Grape is more your sponsor's analysis of how you are going. Your confidence are a lion. Destiny, its yours take it. |
|  | Virgo | Loosen up mate. You are so tightly wrapped in the pressure of perfection or put away just to look right,. Leave your pressure away. |
|  | Libra | Make a fucking decision will you. Your inability to come to a take responsibility, but that's not true. The bed is made for God, not another human being. Do not be controlled by |
|  | Scorpio | Your poisonous tongue will not make you any friends. A little some amends. Tell them you are sorry and try to really change once you can achieve that you've got it made. |
|  | Sagittarius | Cupid only misses sometimes. Just because it doesn't mean we think about an outcome is irrelevant. So jump in, but remember the conditions we all seem to share. |
|  | Capricorn | The physical beckons but the spiritual demands to be heard. The feel is not only important but it is the real life. The outer world |
|  | Aquarius | Being slapped with a wet fish is not always a bad thing in your life. Sometimes these characteristics keep the rain in the beautiful world. Your inherent value is the same as everyone else's. |
|  | Pisces | To live under the water is a metaphor of living within your own world. You will be washed away. Sometimes you can just ride that wave through the long night that follows the flood. Wait for dawn and you will see the light. |



All Stars

. Everyone does that stuff sometimes. The important thing is to realise we all contain a dual-
next thing you know, you are doing things you thought you had nailed long ago – Don't worry
ual cycles - stop judging them so harshly, you are a human.

swang all the time. Stop and think about what you are saying, especially in your shares. They
most important person, so you can speak and they can listen, so think wisely about who is in
is fine but mindfulness is fine to.

allow goings on of the material world. Your soul is screaming out to be recognised for its jour-
endles unsatisfying chase for money and follow your passionate dreams. Move to paradise,
go on!

everyone wants the gift of sensitive insight and community building. Are you doing your fair share.
been given these wonderful gifts. Don't waste your time on this planet, or you may have to

more like how you feel at the moment. Confused by your own behaviour and not convinced by
ourageous ability to persevere will see you through the hardest of times. You are a warrior you

rogram you might pick up just to breathe. Everything does not have to be timetabled, flush to
pants on the floor, don't worry about where your wallet is today – there's no money in it any-

hmit is driving us all crazy. If we make the decision for you, you think that you won't have to
le – you have to lie in it, whether you made the decision or not. It's okay to hand over, but to
by others today.

A soft answer turns away wrath. Reconciliation is the name of the game and you need to make
y mean it. Sincerity is the key to success – once you can fake that you've got it made. I mean

t make any sense, doesn't mean it isn't Gods will. Gods ways are mysterious and often what
boots and all. Take the time to stop however and be honest with yourself about the contradic-

seen. The inner life for you capricornians has to dominate over the next little while. How you
r life will look after itself if you look after your feelings. So go on – Feel!!! – NOW!!! – HURRY!.

ng. At the moment you are worried about a few particular defects that seem to return to ruin
right people attracted and the wrong people away. Life is fucked up sometimes but it's still a
everyone else.

our emotions. From time to time a tsunami will appear but does not necessarily mean you will
ave all the way to the hill tops. All gifts come wrapped in darkness so don't worry about the
ur direction will be clear.



Controversy Corner

I have an issue which I think is important to the future of NA and I would like people to discuss. Perhaps it is not as important in the medium term as it may be for the next generation.

With all organizations it is vital to plan for the future, to employ forethought and envisage potential problems. It is equally vital to keep inventory and rectify things when we have made a mistake. I believe we may have made a mistake in some of our literature and it is causing a conceptual shift within the fellowship. I think this is being addressed informally or coped with at present, but may grow and become detrimental in the future.

The problem I am referring to is having a contradiction in our literature which leads to an inelegant theoretical base. For example, the basic text states that, "we know well the two things that make up our disease, obsession and compulsion to use drugs etc..." It goes on to say that "through abstinence, our disease can be arrested and recovery is then possible". In the new Steps Working Guide (SWG) however, it asks the question "how is your disease operating today?", as well as numerous other examples that imply we are always acting in our disease some-

how. Has the disease been arrested or is it still operating?

I believe this is a clear and simple contradiction, not just in theory but mostly for the newcomers perception of what it means to have the disease and how to work the steps. I think it leads people to believe that all manner of normal human behaviour is now within the confines of the disease.

Perhaps it doesn't seem very important but I believe these different theoretical approaches lead the newcomer to different understandings of themselves within the program and very different focuses regarding self. The basic text states that "self obsession is the core of the disease" and I was always told that the antidote to our self obsession was that "we keep what we have by giving it away". We pay it forward so to speak, that by helping others, by passing it on, we stay clean.

I think the SWG adds a couple of unnecessary burdens onto the newcomer which may not pay significant dividends. Firstly the focus on self during the working of that guide becomes extraordinary. Subsequently, because there is a negative experience from doing this,

a serious resistance to the process arises, which in turn has a shaming effect when “step work” is not done. How many times in the last few years have I heard newcomers severely admonishing themselves for not doing the steps, and saying they hate working them because they are so boring, when in my opinion they are working the steps by not using, being at a meeting, sharing with a sponsor and others, etc. Since the SWG has been published my experience of working with sponsees has qualitatively changed, particularly the expectations they have of themselves and what it means to work the program. They can turn up with reams of paper filled with detailed analytical notes, chronicles of self. I know what my sponsor would have said. “What have you done for someone else lately”.

I think the assumptive base of the SWG has created a religious moral paradigm where all behaviour is subject to the label of disease rather than the original bio-medical

assumption that the disease is made of physical compulsion and mental obsession to use drugs. The rest of our behaviour is then seen as an opportunity to live life on its own terms, defects and all. Are they defects of character or are they the disease operating?

It may well be that people are of the consensus that the disease does encompass our whole life and all our behaviours, that all distractions are distance from God, but if this is the case, then we should be explicit about it in our literature, and we should refrain from saying we are a spiritual not religious program, because I believe that is the very definition of religious in that sense.

On a practical level, I don't think we should have contradictory approaches as part of the same theoretical base within our literature. It represents a fundamental flaw in our theo-



retical underpinnings making us seem inelegant and unprofessional. Also I think it has created an old school new school division which often leads to miscommunication. I do not know many old timers who like this book unless they are using it piece meal. Many of the people I have asked definitely think it is either not the most effective way of working the steps, or "not for everyone", or just simply "a sponsors nightmare". It encourages people into writing endless notes about themselves, expecting sponsors to sit there and listen to it. It is highly repetitive, making many steps into what seem like step 4s. I read that the "recovery was an ongoing process of surrender awareness and growth", an active change in our attitudes and our actions. I think newcomers should be told that working the steps is about making actual changes in their character, changing what we say and what we do, not just answering the questions in the green and gold book. "Formal" step work is a new conceptual phenomenon defined by sitting and writing.

I think at present we are dealing with this problem informally. Sponsors tell their sponsees that this book is "just an option", or "not for everyone" or "a bloody nightmare" or in some cases much worse. I have heard many people share and insist that answering the questions in this book is not "the working of the step". My point is this. As time goes by, the informal mes-

sage is being diluted by the assumptive message of the literature. These questions are present and available and therefore they must need to be worked, therefore they are the working of the step. I have had a few sponsees tell me I am doing it wrong, looking at me suspiciously when I say I haven't worked through the whole guide myself from start to finish. "So what you're telling me is that you haven't worked the steps?" they say. Well if that were true, no one prior to 1998 ever worked the steps because that book didn't exist. What were all those members for the last forty something years doing then?

My motion for discussion is whether to undertake a qualitative research project investigating certain questions regarding people's use of the SWG. To find out whether people are expending effort to overcome it, or using it as an effective tool. If it turned out to be the former, I would hope we were big enough to recall all step working guides, or amend the basic text to include a larger theoretical base to NA, though to my mind that would make us religious. I think it is an important for the long term future of NA.

Tim B.

Beenleigh Qld Group

Let me introduce you to the Beenleigh group in Queensland. Beenleigh is a small town located at the very northern tip of the Gold Coast and a half an hour or so's drive from Brisbane. We are a small and diverse group that has our meetings in an old local neighbourhood centre. We are one group that has three meetings a week (Monday; Wednesday and Friday nights). A group conscience is held monthly - on the Friday night before our Area meeting and the Monday night after, which allows for our GSR to communicate between our small group and the area.

Our members consist of a "young woman and her husband, who manage to juggle the responsibilities of home with 3 small children; work; service and maintaining their recovery, while offering support and love with generous hearts, "two indigenous brothers whose spirituality continues to touch our hearts, "a New Zealand expatriate, who moved into the Logan area nearly a year ago with his wife and child, "a single mum, with two small boys, who has returned to NA after a 17 year relapse, "a committed gay woman who struggled and struggled and blossomed in recovery as her life turned around, "a young single man who is a relative newcomer and not sure at all what it's all about but keeps coming back, "a big sweet Maori guy who came from getting to know NA in jail and doesn't ever want to go back there, "an older mem-

ber who is a grandmother and been involved in NA for many years

WE make up our home group.

As well as usual business such as donations to our area we have tackled all sorts of issues in our group consciences relating to:

- > Members children being noisy or disruptive at meetings
- > Someone sniffing petrol and outside and wanting to share
- > Jail boys just being sent by the drug courts and not really wanting to be there
- > Someone who seems to be dealing at meetings
- > AA members attending our meetings and identifying only as alcoholics
- > Can we have 10 -15 minutes of meditation before our Monday night spirituality meeting and how will we handle this so as to not put off newcomers?

Our opinions on these issues are as diverse as our group members and in between meetings we communicate with each other and often things are touched on that eventually end up being discussed as a group. We try to work on consensus and so far it seems to be working okay.

Recently we had a BBQ together to celebrate the anniversary of our group (although none of us are really sure how long it has been going and I was a

celebrate the anniversary of our group (although none of us are really sure how long it has been going and I was a founding member). Our day of celebration started out with clear blue skies and developed into a warm, sunny day. The BBQ had a mexican/hawaiiin theme and we all met at one of the members houses and enjoyed a fine day of food, fun and fellowship. The children swam and romped in the pool - after all it is October in Queensland! The women had leys around their necks or hibiscus flowers in their hair and the guys were in Mexican hats; flowery shirts or board shorts and we sat around eating and drinking straight fruit punch and enjoying each other's company.

Whenever I travel and go to conventions; service meetings or workshops in other areas I am always look forward to get back to my home group and when I think of the members I feel warm and fuzzy and happy to be home...

Kris A

More Homegroups

I find it hard to get to my new home group every week. I only seem to be at every second one lately. Commitments outside NA and trouble finding time for socializing make me skip my Tuesday night meeting. It's an issue because staunch attendance to my home group

kept me clean for four years. So now near five years in recovery I am looking at this important part of my recovery.

I got a home group almost five years ago with the same attitude as I got everything else in recovery; no idea which to choose, worried that I'd make a mistake and I just picked one to see how it went. I did that, my choice surprised me, the Thursday night men's group, I got a service position, tea and coffee for a year, got a sponsor from another group, and after a year he said I should sponsor someone and I got a sponsee Nat, and we built a relationship while he was at rehab . He joined my home group. I picked him up on Thursday nights from the rehab. I would pick him up alone so we could have private NA chats away from his rehab mates. We went in my shitbox to a café near the meeting and Nat shared his story and about his challenges at the treatment centre. He was doing steps at the rehab so we just shared our recoveries and built a lasting friendship. Thursday nights were the focus of our week. Nat has been clean almost four years now.

I got the position of secretary at this time. This was because a member shared that being secretary in early recovery was a good foundation. Opening up, setting the room, introducing the chair and closing the meeting helped me get to know people in NA. I was a part of the recovery of a whole wave of addicts from the rehab. They joined Thursday night men's meeting and were mates with Nat. Most of

They joined Thursday night men's meeting and were mates with Nat. Most of these guys have become friends and are doing recovery today. All these things were gifts that I received by doing service and I stayed clean. Because an older cleaner member said attendance at his home group was non-negotiable I missed my Thursday night home group about twice in three years.

I've got a new home group on Tuesday night now. This is the second time I have left Thursday night. Thursday is a really casual meeting. It rarely starts on time, there's no tea and coffee, guys fart and there's a blokey vibe. The group conscience is a bit "how's it going." In short, that meeting is me. I didn't take any shit at that meeting about it being rough (I was secretary for more than two years on and off) but I felt partly responsible for that meetings easy going character. There's a strong message and it's exactly what some guys need, but I realized that it was a comfort zone for me so went for a meeting that had a stronger service structure. Since I made that change my life has become so busy, with work and study etc, I am not able or willing to commit to my home group like I did in my early years.

A strong foundation and faith in the benefits of being a solid home group member is still in me. When I cannot attend I let one of my group know.

Mic S

Please Consider

I would like to say a couple of things about a subject that I think at the very least saved me from picking up but also saved my life

I am a typical stubborn style addict that can not ask for help to save his own life, I choke when the words "can you help me?" enter my mind.

I was fortunate enough to be in the same home group for about 3 years, in the first year, My sponsor who was also in the group asked me to keep the other group members in touch with social movements (like coffee or dinner) which we did once a week. I was told because I was not working it would be easier for me to find the time.

A year and a half later I found out another unexpected reason that could have saved my life. It was at this time that my closest family member died in a sudden 8 hour ordeal. It was over very fast. She was very young and my closest friend.

This was the single most terrible thing that has happened in my life, ever in memory, including recovery, and that includes the death of a partner and close friends and other family members

To keep the story short, I had been recovering in one state and had to go back to my home state to be with the rest of the family for the funeral.

back to my home state to be with the rest of the family for the funeral.

Nobody knew me as non user, most people still dived for their wallets and car keys when they saw me. I was so distressed that even my mother (who begged me to stop using at one stage in my using), offered me beer at the funeral.

The whole month I was there, a different member including my sponsor took it in turn to call me once a day or every second day.

My usual addict mind would be suspicious at this sort of behavior, but part of my spiritual awakening was the love I was given that group, and my willingness to accept their help at that stage.

You see, any body could have organized those meals I was organizing the year prior, but each time I called a group member to organize a meal, I was getting familiar with that voice on the end of the phone. When the rubber hit the road, my own mother wanted to medicate my pain. There was a group of people helping me to stay clean. I did not have to ask for that help, as I have already told you I choke when I think of the words help me!

I had constant contact with God all that time but I think he spoke to me a lot through the voices that came from my home group that month. Those conversations kept my head together.

I will always remember that kindness I

received. I have never experienced it before and nor had my parents, who have been good "churchie" people all my life.

I can't promote the home group enough!

Please consider...
Michael H

A New Life in NA

Working the program
has set me free
from the fear that had frozen
inside of me
From the shame and the guilt
that had crippled me
from the brink of despair
from insanity

Its a passion for living
this NA way
As long as I keep it
in the day
just by turning my will and life
over to him
and allowing the love of the fellowship
in.

As I write on these beautiful wonderful
steps
and I learn of my assets and my
defects,
I continue admitting my powerless-
ness and gain self estemm through
abstinence

I can say how I feel now with honesty
because by honouring you
I am honouring me
With the tools of this program
and a loving HP
I can touch the fine silk of serenity

Sonia D 14 July 2005

Nobody Calls Me Junkie

Nobody calls me a junkie anymore,
It wasn't always that way of course,
For hard at work inside my head,
Was a formidable force...

It sought for things outside of me,
For what I couldn't give myself,
For acceptance, hope, integrity,
For happiness and wealth.

I have battled many demons,
Suffered many crushing blows,
Until it consumed my dreaming,
And I had nowhere to go.

It all started out as social,
Cutting class and smoking cones,
But it's ends were almost fatal,
Nothing left but skin and bones.

I always said that I was different,
The rules don't apply to me,
This consumed me in resentment,
Drowning in a violent sea.

It tore everything away from me,
Nothing left but pain inside,
Consumed my world with misery,

Then simply cast my corpse aside.

I was left a beaten broken man,
Nothing but an empty shell,
Tried to end it all with my own hand,
Life was just a living hell.

Then a person came into my life,
To me his hand he did extend,
Said you can end this right here with
your knife,
Or together we can mend.

See I was once where you are now,
Where I no longer wished to live,
Take my hand I'll show you how,
So that you in turn can give.

With tooth and nail we made a stand,
To recover what we'd lost,
The sword of friendship in our hands,
We'd survive at any cost.

We battle with our daemons,
And united we'll prevail,
Hope has filled our dreaming,
Wind has filled our sails.

Where i once was filled with sorrow,
Suicide my waking thought,
Now i'm living for tomorrow,
The world's beauty i now sought.

So now here i stand beside you,
No more a shadow of a man,
In the hope that i can show you,
What we're holding in our hands.

David Franco

Growth Thru Unity

The NAKL Story

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS Kuala Lumpur [NAKL] began informally in 1987 when a small handful of recovering addicts, who used to attend AA meetings and also conduct informal NA meetings at residential locations here, decided to form an 'official' NA group.

These pioneers managed to rent a regular meeting room and began conducting meetings every Wednesday and Friday - the schedule and location remains the same till today.

The Raja Chulan Group as it was known then, registered itself with the WSO in 1994. Their commitment, unity and enthusiasm in carrying the message saw its membership growing steadily, with regular visits conducted to Hospitals and Institutions in and around Kuala Lumpur.

During the next three years, two other groups sprouted up in the Chow Kit district of Kuala Lumpur. The three groups then formed an Area Service Committee.

In 1995, NAKL Area successfully hosted the 3rd APF meeting. Although the two Chow Kit groups initially experienced steady growth in membership,

it could not be sustained, and by the end of 1999, the two groups no longer

existed. The new millennium saw the original Raja Chulan group alive and active with the meeting room regularly packed with members. Some of the members from the defunct Chow Kit groups made Raja Chulan their home group. However, during the next two years, membership began to slowly dwindle, and by 2002, the group only consisted of, as in the early days, another small handful of dedicated members who nonetheless kept the flame alive. Through their united efforts in carrying the message and encouraging members to 'keep coming back', membership once again began to slowly rise once again. Residents from a few treatment facilities also began to attend and the group had newcomers joining in almost every week, right up to this day.

By the end of 2003, the Chulan meeting rooms were once again packed. In 2004, a H&I/PI sub-committee was formed. Since its formation, it has conducted various PI and H&I presentations to doctors, rehab personnel and residents of treatment facilities in Kuala Lumpur, Johor and Kuantan.

It also organised a workshop/learning day for NA members with the collaboration of members from NA South Australia.

In mid-2004, the Chow Kit group was re-established and began to hold its

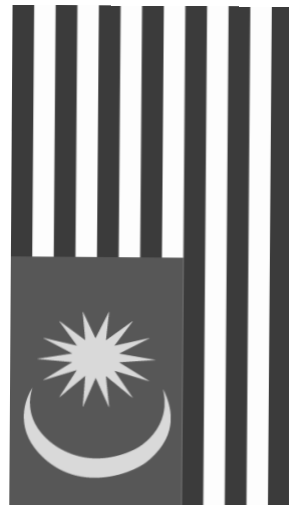
regular Monday night Bahasa Melayu meetings. Around the same time, the first NA group outside Kuala Lumpur was initiated in Johor Baharu [JB], Johor state, the southernmost tip of Peninsula Malaysia. NA Chow Kit and NAJB became autonomous groups the following year. In late 2004, another new group started in Kuantan, Pahang, on the east coast of Peninsula Malaysia. In February 2005, the NAKL Area Service Committee was re-established, comprising of four groups: Chulan [NACH], Chow Kit [NACK], Johor Bahru [NAJB] and Kuantan [NAKt].

Recently, another group began in Penang, an island off the north-west coast of Peninsula Malaysia, bringing the current total of groups in the NAKL Area to five, conducting seven weekly meetings in all. Today, it is most encouraging to note that more members - relative newcomers and long-time members alike - are showing unity, commitment and willingness, involving themselves in service work and NA-related activities. It is hoped that these members shall be the future trusted servants of NA in Malaysia.

It is our shared vision that in the near future, there will be at least one meeting every day of the week in Kuala Lumpur. Our long-term vision is that there would be at least one NA group in each of the 13 states of Malaysia. It is hoped, through our H&I/ PI efforts and each member's commitment to carrying the message, that one day, every addict in Malaysia will come to

know about NA - that NA works and that there is an NA meeting nearby. We believe that with the help of our loving Higher Power, this vision will, one day at a time, become a reality.

The members of NA in Malaysia also share a common belief that our common welfare: the growth of the fellowship, like personal recovery, depends on NA unity.



What is Outreach?

The purpose of Regional Outreach is:

- a) To foster the growth of new groups in places that have restricted access to the existing NA service structure.
- b) To provide support for individual members in isolated places until the formation of a group is practical. This is done in co-operation with other appropriate branches of the service structure.
- c) To encourage the creation and growth of Area service committees in newly established areas.
- d) To provide support to Area Outreach activities
- e) To provide support for individual isolated members.

To fulfill its primary purpose, the Regional Outreach committee needs people who are willing to do the footwork. "Many hands make light work" and its such an important part of carrying the message of NA that we are asking anybody willing to get on board and give a hand. There are different projects you can get involved in, if one takes your interest more than another. As it has been a while since Outreach was functional, we are in the process of starting over again. When you register it might be some time before you

are called to follow through with your commitment. That call will come and your contribution is appreciated. Once we have the list of willing members, we will then be busy creating opportunities to carry the message to the isolated addict and groups. There are contact details at the bottom of this page, please feel free to ask any questions or give feedback or ideas. Together, we can.

LONERS

Loners are addicts in isolation. It is one of the purposes of Outreach to support isolated addicts. Isolation isn't just about geography, it might be from culture, due to the addict being in a hospital or institution not serviced by H&I, a bad experience with NA, or they could simply work mostly away from mainstream NA meetings.

Recovering in isolation can be tough and the Regional Outreach committee would like to offer their support to the Loners of Australia. If you are an isolated addict and would like to register for Loners support please visit the website www.na.org.au and follow the links to the Outreach Page where you will find a registration form for Loners.

REGIONAL OUTREACH COMMITTEE

There are a growing number of addicts who are recovering or getting clean in isolation. This could be for a number of reasons such as; geographical, cultural, social and other reasons. The Regional Outreach Committee (and Area Outreach Committees) is designed to support these people. These are our current projects to assist the isolated addicts throughout Australia.

LONERS "BUDDY" SYSTEM

"Pen Pal" type system, linking isolated addicts to other recovering addicts.

OUTREACH TO OTHER CULTURES AND INDIGENOUS ADDICTS

Includes the possibility of creating new literature for other cultures and Indigenous addicts.

MEETINGS BY REQUEST

Supporting isolated groups and individuals by traveling addicts contacting those on the Meetings by Request list.

MAIL OUT LIST

A mail out that happens after each RSC containing the recent copy of the NA Today Magazine, flyers for upcoming events and Regional meetings lists.

It is the aim of the Regional Outreach Committee to develop more ways of assisting isolated addicts in the near future.

WANT TO OFFER YOUR SUPPORT?

Join the Regional Outreach Committee It's easy! All you need to do is go to the Australian NA website www.na.org.au and follow the links to the Outreach page where you will find a registration form for the Outreach Committee. Your help is needed and appreciated.

REGIONAL OUTREACH CONTACT DETAILS

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Belinda D

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If Pain Persists Don't Bother Seeing A Doctor - They Can't Help

I will be four years clean tomorrow and a couple weeks ago I was sure I wasn't going to make it. For the first time in my recovery, I had to deal with intense emotional pain. I started to believe I was going to have to use to make it go away.

I have been known to share that I never had a honeymoon period in my recovery. That I always knew that it was going to be hard and painful getting clean, doing life on life's terms. Now I see that my whole recovery up until two months ago was one long honeymoon and I had no idea how pain the human heart is capable of feeling.

Besides being naturally a bit disconnected or something, I have always been able to anaesthetise myself when I've gone through any kind of change or pain in my life – until now. I hadn't actually realized how much I had depended on drugs to get me thru life's yucky bits.

So there I was cruising through recovery, having a fine old time. I was content. I had a few close friends, a great family, a nice caring partner, a job I don't hate too much, nice place to live, not enough money but that's normal...and suddenly my life spontaneously turned to shit.

In the space of a few weeks my support network moved interstate, my family was decimated by death and injury, my workplace became a reminder of that loss and my nice caring partner turned out to be a cheating immature prick. And to top it all off, I couldn't put my feeling back in their box anymore.

Never in my life have I felt so bad. Pain in recovery is special. At least when you're using you have the option of a nice pink drug cloud between you and reality and when it gets too bad you just have more. And although I know that the cloud doesn't last forever and that when it wears off you are left in the same terrible mess, often

worse, I wanted it anyway, that oblivion that belongs to the using addict.

All the platitudes and clichés that were meant to help only made me want to punch the people saying them, meetings drove me to distraction because no one could possibly understand how I was feeling. I just wanted it all to go away, to be numb again. And I kept waiting for it to go away and it didn't. Eventually I found myself with a bottle in my hand trying to decide whether or not to drink it or tip it down the sink.

It sounds melodramatic in hindsight, but we all know those are the moments that count. Somehow at that moment I was able to choose to be clean and stay in recovery and see if all the shit would really pass like everyone kept telling me.

It hasn't passed yet and probably won't for a bit longer. I am still having trouble letting go of certain things in my life. The relationship break up has a life of its own and I cannot believe the lengths I have been willing to

go to and the pain I have put myself through just trying to hold on in the face of incredible betrayal and hurt.

But I am slowly starting to value myself again, set boundaries to protect my sanity and trying to remember that that change happens all the time in life and we can't control it. We just deal with it the best we can, and like everything else, it will pass. Usually "in 2 to 3 years you'll look back..." is mentioned there as well but I try and ignore that, it's too depressing.

I have done some of my "yets" in recovery. I have got down on my knees and prayed, I have cried in front of my sponsor, I've meditated, I wrote copiously till it started to make things worse and I have let myself babble on to people I don't really know but who care about me anyway.

I think the first time you experience great pain in recovery it's like being hit over the head with a brick from behind and there's not really much you can do to prepare for it. The shock and impact are just so overwhelming

after feeling nothing for so long. But this is where all the past effort of recovery pays off.

Sure you may go a bit crazy, do some wild and whacky stuff and not sleep for a couple of months but I have also had moments of great friendship, of connecting with others and being part of that I have never had before. Now that the box has been opened, I don't think I will ever be able to stuff my feeling back in the same way.

It's a bugger of a thing but it's been worth it so far to not pick up, to share my life with others and accept their support and finally believe, two months down the track, that I will live and (as much as I hate to say it because it drives me nuts) it will make me stronger for next time I get blindsided by life at 6 o'clock some tuesday afternoon.

Caroline M Canberra

In Search of Abandonment

Recently, I saw a movie called 'What the bleep would you know?' It was a documentary about carved out neuro-nets (brain waves) from early trauma and the way the components attract to each other through the triggering of the same feelings over and over again. We call them 'the old tapes' in meetings and acting the same way and expecting a different result. In order to change the course of our lives beyond our internal mapping a concerted effort needs to be applied.

To cut a long story short I was abandoned by my father on and off for my whole childhood. When he was around he touched me like a sexual object not a significant human being.

In my relationships today no matter who I manage to lure into the 'princess trap' the need for me to play out the net is stronger than anything else going on inside me. If my companion shows signs of abandoning me

or being repulsed by me the die is cast and the net is in play. Not once in my 36 years in relationships with others have I managed to pry these neurons apart.

Just recently, against the sound advice of the fellowship I been seeing someone at 6 months clean. I say this like it's a special event but that's because it's part of the charm of the neuro-net. It's always original. It's always the one and it's always completely unique to me and my special quest to turn the trauma of the past into a problem that I was clever enough to find the solution to.

I started out being myself, barely interested in fact. Over time you could clearly see that this was something he saw needed to be conquered while I sat back and enjoyed the show. After all, peacocks are quite beautiful. Then just like that, in a moment of doubt in my current intrigue (which had been playing itself out quite unsuccessfully for 3 months – unsuccessful because he was trying to have a real relationship, not interesting, no net). One night I jumped ship. Just

like that. From navy to pirate in a single leap and it was warm and gooey and home.

Now this second individual had been casting his own net for months at arms length and was enjoying the control he felt he had but had no idea what lay ahead, my net. We went on one of those holidays where you get to play it out. I managed to control my anxiety to return to abuse and abandonment for about 5 days. I guess that's your credit level at 6 months clean but as always the temptation to go home far outweighing anything else.

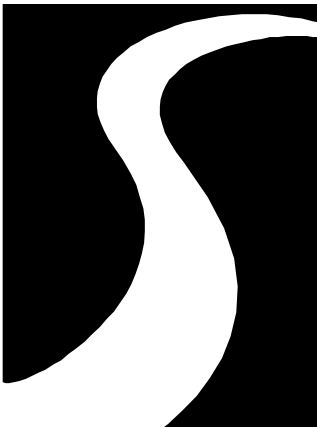
His dialogue went from "I want you to meet my mum" to "you scare me I think you're too much" all in the space of a week. Perfect - fear, self-loathing and total abandonment. No hunter wants the prey to lie dead at the door. What's the fun in that?

So here I sit, on a strict program diet of a meeting a day. A sponsor who is closely supervising me and guiding me away from the old result, step work daily and a muscular effort to discon-

nect the neurons. He's resting in bed wondering why it doesn't feel like it did. My addiction to abandonment hasn't quite won the battle yet. There is only one thing that can counteract this. Love, God's love, my love, your love. The question is am I willing to have that instead?

P.S. Read him the article later and he wasn't thinking that at all. A neuro-net in play.

Andrea W. Sydney



Thank God It's Thursday

My home group is the Thursday night gratitude meeting. I was part of the group conscience when it was decided to make the meeting a single topic meeting and that the topic should be "gratitude". At the time I wasn't sure if a single topic meeting was such a good idea but as part of the group I agreed that it was worth a try. It has been over 6 months that our meeting has been on gratitude and it has not yet become boring for me and is definitely not stale.

Our meeting is not one of the largest in our area, but I have found that I always enjoy attending the meeting and I am proud to be a part of this group. So many times I have heard people share that the first time they have thought about gratitude during the week was on the way to the Thursday night meeting. I

think that gratitude is such an important factor in enjoying life and it is wonderful that when people think about the Thursday night meeting,

they start to think about being grateful.

Because it is a small meeting, I am quite often asked to share. I find it amazing how the same topic can mean something different to me each week. I am actually very grateful to be a part of the group and to have the opportunity to be reminded of my gratitude each Thursday. Even if I am not feeling terribly grateful at the start of the meeting, I always leave the meeting with more gratitude than I started.

A recurring theme in our meeting is that gratitude is shown through action and that action is what we refer to in NA as “service”. In my experience, gratitude and service work both ways. When I am grateful I want to do service and when I do service my gratitude increases dramatically. From the first time I had a service position, I began to receive the rewards. I remember when I became tea-person at my first home group I felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility, because I was afraid there might be a riot if the meeting ran out of coffee. However, once I came to terms with this

responsibility, I felt proud that I was able to do something to help other members. I was excited to be actively involved in the service structure of Narcotics Anonymous. The support of my home group was also a reward in itself. I had somewhere to go each week where I was glad to see other members and they were glad to see me and somewhere where I would be missed if I didn't show up.

Throughout my time in NA, I have had a variety of service positions at a range of levels, but I have always tried to be giving something back to the fellowship. Being a member of the Thursday night gratitude meeting not only makes me feel that I am contributing to the fellowship, but it also gives me an opportunity to reflect on why I do service and how grateful I am to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous.

Andrew H. South Coast

From The Belly Of The Beast

Hello to the NA Today crew and all readers. My name is David and I am presently incarcerated in a Queensland correctional facility. I have been incarcerated (this time) for 2½ years, yet I have served in total nearly five years of a nine year accumulative sentence for trafficking heroin. The details of my sentence are quite complicated so I will not try to explain. The point of the letter is not to discuss my sentence but how the NA program has kept me clean – this time around! I am now three years six months clean due to the opportunity I had of returning to the fold of NA whilst on bail for a year before my sentence date.

When I was granted bail after a year on remand, I happened to journey to Byron Bay where I had completed a rehab program a few years before, and happened to meet a friend and member of NA who told me that a convention was happening that very weekend. I had not picked up heroin upon my release as I knew exactly where that would lead, yet I was having a few drinks (and a puff!) thinking that I was doing okay (but feeling that I wasn't). I happened along to the NA convention on the Friday night and met up with many of my peers that I was in rehab with and members of the Byron fellowship all looking really quite radiant. The next day was my 40th birthday and I attended meetings all day and the

dance that night – yet even so the next morning I had one small joint left and I thought 'I can throw this away or smoke it' – of course I smoked it! The next day I traveled back to Brisbane and attended a meeting where I identified as one day clean and it was t that moment when the miracle happened – I have stayed clean since that day.

I returned to Byron Bay and over the following year I attended meetings nearly on a daily basis, moved in with friends from the fellowship, got a sponsor and started to do step work, involved myself with the coming convention committee and even did an H&I visit to a detox centre – and I loved every moment of it – I was getting a life!

Unfortunately, when my court case finally came up one month after my 41st and 1st birthdays, I was then to face the consequences of my past behaviour whilst an active addict. Although what I can say now is, armed with my clean time, the support of the fellowship, in particular the love and support of my sponsor, I was able to accept the resulting sentence, knowing that I had changed as a person and could now face life on life's terms – which is exactly what I have done for the past 2½ years. I feel that the acceptance, tolerance and patience that I have developed is due to the fact that I am clean and have the program

of NA in my life everyday.

In the centre where I am currently 'housed', we have an NA meeting every Saturday night for about an hour, with H&I visitors from the local fellowship visiting 2 to 3 times a month. As part of my 'service', I have facilitated the meetings in the manner of 'outside' meetings for the past 18 months, and endeavour to 'carry the message' to the best of my ability – sometimes I feel like saying the “no thanks, I'll just listen tonight” deal, but I find that I am compelled to share something (and usually rattle on for quite a while anyway)! I have also completed step two and three while I have been here and I speak to my sponsor nearly every weekend. I am also doing external university studies whilst here, in preparation for my eventual release (hopefully at the end of this year?) and to complement my new way of life.

I am extremely grateful that I found my way to NA before this current term of incarceration, for it has undoubtedly given me both the courage and the serenity to face each day as it comes in here, with a knowing that this will eventually all pass and that my life will be returned to me in the form of loving family, friends and fellowship.

David D
Borallon Correctional Centre QLD.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA
AREA CONVENTION
2006
FEB 10,11,12.**

The South Australia Area Service Committee wishes to advise the Australian Fellowship that our next Area Convention will be held from Friday 10th February 2006 until Sunday 12th February 2006.

The venue will be the same as the Regional Convention held in October 2004, the Fullarton Community Centre, Fullarton Road, Fullarton.

All welcome. More news later when more will be revealed!



Perspective

**NSW Far North Coast Area
CONVENTION
Byron Bay
2006
FEB 10,11,12.**

The NSW Far North Coast Area Service Committee also wishes to advise the Australian Fellowship that our next Area Convention will be held the long weekend following Australia Day, 27, 28, 29 January 2006.

The venue will be the same as previous years, The A & I Hall in Bangalow, just west of Byron Bay.

There will be posters and flyers circulating shortly.



If you find yourself stuck in traffic, don't despair. There are people in this world for whom driving is an unheard of privilege.

Should you have had a bad day at work, think of the person who has been out of work for years.

Should you despair over a relationship gone bad, think of the person who has never known what it is like to love and be loved in return.

Should you grieve the passing of another weekend, think of the woman in dire straits who is working 12 hours a day, 7 days a week to feed her children.

Should your car break down leaving you miles from assistance, think of the paraplegic who would love the opportunity to take that walk.

Should you notice a new grey hair in the mirror think of the cancer patient on chemotherapy who wishes she had hair to examine.

Should you find yourself at a loss and pondering what life is all about, asking what is my purpose? Be thankful. There are those who did not live long enough to get that opportunity.

Should you find yourself the victim of other people's bitterness, ignorance smallness or insecurities remember - things could be worse. You could be them

This page could have contained your story, article, cartoon, thoughts etc. Be controversial, be boring, be anything you like, but make your contribution to The NA Today – Australia’s cutting edge opportunity for NA thinking – Please Turn to the back page for more specific information





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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

CERTIFICATE OF CURRENCY

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <u>Insured</u> | FELLOWSHIP SERVICE OFFICE INC. ON BEHALF OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS |
| <u>Address</u> | AT & FROM NEWTOWN NSW 2042 |
| <u>Territorial Limits</u> | As defined in the Policy |
| <u>Class of Business</u> | Public & Products Liability |
| <u>Underwriters</u> | QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited ABN 78 003 191 036 100.00% 82 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000 |
| <u>Period Insured</u> | From 28 Feb 2005 to 28 Feb 2006 From Start Date until 4pm on the End Date |
| <u>Occupation</u> | SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR EX SUBSTANCE ABUSERS |
| <u>Limits of Indemnity</u> | PUBLIC LIABILITY LIMIT \$10,000,000 PRODUCTS LIABILITY LIMIT \$10,000,000 |

It is declared that the above numbered policy is current to the date shown unless cancelled subsequent to the issue of this certificate.

Authorised By,

Geoff Matthew





I WANT YOU
FOR NA TODAY

Rivetting stories of how NA changed your life. Send your positive messages of recovery to — timb8@hotmail.com.