



**NARCOTICS**

**ANONYMOUS**

**PRODUCTIONS**

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# NA TODAY

free publication of the australian region



**Disease -  
you're under  
arrest**

# THE EDITOR

The NA Today Magazine welcomes letters from all readers. Letters can be your own story, experience strength and hope, or just respond to any article that has appeared in the NA Today, or can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. Letters should be no more than 800 words, and we



reserve the right to edit. All letters must include a name address, and phone number. First names and last initial will be used as the signature line unless the writer request anonymity. The NA Today Magazine belongs to all members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission, therefore, is to provide

recovery and service information, as well as recovery-related entertainment. In keeping with this mission, the editorial staff are dedicated to providing a magazine which is open to articles and features written by members from around Australia, as well as current service and conven-



-ion info. Foremost, we're dedicated to the celebration of our message



"that a addict, can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live"



The NA Today presents the experiences & opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. Opinions expressed are not to be attributed to NA as a whole, nor does



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The NA Today Magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on NA matters, cartoons, ideas etc to:  
 rsc\_natodayworks\_chair@yahoo.com.au  
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 1st Floor 204 King Street  
 New town 2042



## ***Miracle on the Mountain***

At 22 months clean I found myself fighting against the world and everything in it - all of a sudden I had found myself slipping into that all too familiar dark hole. I found injustice in all of my circumstances and I was becoming insane trying to mentally fight my way through, chanting the serenity prayer in my mind and just holding on. I rang my uncle with 20 years clean – “I haven’t got it in me to get through this one” I said. “I feel so heavy and small and lonely, it all seems too dark and so hard and I definitely don’t want to go to that camp” I said. “I am so scared”.

I was scared that someone was going to upset me and I wouldn’t be able to handle it. My mind went through all the scenarios and each one gave me the cold shivers. I knew it was in my head but I just couldn’t shake it. I felt mentally unstable. He came over as soon as he could and hugged me, brought me back to those simple affirmations that I held on too in those first couple of days, weeks and months of being clean – I am alive, my son is alive, I am clean today, I am ok! As his message of experience, strength and hope sank in, my white flag went up and I surrendered my fight.

24 hours later I was at that camp on that mountain fulfilling the service position I had made a genuine and honest commitment to. I had been on the committee for a couple of months and it was my first service position outside of my home group and I wanted to run from it many times but I held on. I turned up. I participated and put in the action.

As a result I was given a gift that I find difficult to put into words, a gift that filled that hole in my soul a little bit more, and as a result another new and improved version of me emerged from that mountain.

The stars out there away from the city lights were also amazing; so bright and so many. The landscape, the birds, the water holes, trees and rocks like I had never seen them before - so rich with life, colour and character. The most beautiful part of nature for me today is experiencing it with people who can see it and feel it and

love it with appreciation and gratitude. And I find these people in this fellowship.

To be a part of the miracle, to see the miracle, to feel the miracle of what we are capable of and what we can achieve - that each one of us pushes through that social anxiety, the self doubt and the discomfort. And we stay, we get strong, we get spiritually fed, we have fun, we laugh, and we love each other. We share how we are feeling, and we don't run – we are brave.

I watched God's miracle unfold before my eyes on that beautiful mountain. The miracle that not only are we clean but that each one of us has been to hell and made it out alive with the ability to come together and share in such an amazing weekend of fun, friendship, love and fellowship has left me in awe – I cannot find the words to express just how grateful I truly am.

As the committee members were asked to stand and gratitude was shown to us by our fellows, all I could do was cry from the overwhelming gratitude that ran through my soul. It would be nothing without each of you who made the effort to come and to stay.

As I experience the rich intensity that a life without drugs has to offer I get further and further away from the last time I used and further and further away from any idea that using could offer me anything better than what I have in my life today.

Each time I surrender a fight and lay down my guns I am given a gift, and I thank God that I am able to receive that gift and enjoy this beautiful life a bit more each time. To be me and love me, to love you and let you love me also. Thank God for Narcotics Anonymous on this earth today and I thank anyone who is, was or will be a part of it.

Cassandra  
Gold Coast

## ***Don't Phunk with my Heart***

*The most important recovery is mine*

*And I am responsible for it*

*The NA program provides everything I need to stay clean*

I was introduced to NA long before I finally hit my rock bottom. I had attended a few meetings on and off but felt it was not for me and that maybe when I was older I would reconsider. I had tried to live in complete abstinence and tried periods of manageable using, yet none of these worked for me.

I continued the life of addiction for a few more years adding more hurt, pain and doing more damage to myself and others until, out of desperation, the only alternative to sticking a needle in my arm was going to a meeting and giving it another go.

I had spent the last 7 years in the worst depression, heart ache and pain. I had knocked on death's door a couple of times and for some reason not known to me, I was still here.

This was my last chance. It was death, psychosis and psychiatric wards or surrender to the program of NA and hope what I heard the older cleaner members sharing was true. That life without drugs could be good, that I could have a meaningful life, and that with the help of God and NA I could be restored to sanity.

I was told to do lots of meetings, get a sponsor and read the literature. This all took time but I knew it was my only option. I was a young female in a small fellowship suffering from low self esteem and self worth (which I now know is common) in early recovery. Members advised me of a few things such as; don't get into relationships in your first year and hang around members whose recovery you would like.

This got pushed out of the window when I fell in love with another member. Coming from a past of rejection and hurt, being shown affection and attention being straight was over whelming.

I recently celebrated a milestone birthday and was faced with thinking about how the last few years have really been. I thought to myself they have been the best and the worst years of my life; I definitely would not swap them for the world though. I started the steps and picked up my meetings which I had let drop, I talk with my sponsor on an almost daily basis and today I realise how beneficial they are wishing I had started them earlier.

In the last 18 months I became mother of a daughter who is the light of my life, been married and separated, and found the strength, self esteem and confidence I always had within me with the help of NA. Today I am a single mum in recovery to the most beautiful little girl in the world.

Sometimes I think about the advice older cleaner members gave me in my first year and it's only now that I start to understand. It wasn't because they didn't want me to have fun or enjoy life. It was because they had been around long enough and seen enough people make the same decisions and sometimes end up with the same results. This I can now see and have experienced myself being an older cleaner member.

Today I know "that I am deserving of my Higher Power's love.... and that I am a worthy human being". I have struggled with resentments regarding my relationship and other NA members who broke my trust and disrespected me in the process. Today I try my best to remember the acceptance I have found through the principles of this program that not only aid my recovery, but also all of my relationships with other people (including members).

"Today I will strive to accept others as they are. I will try to not judge others". I am by no means an enlightened NA member who has reached a place of total acceptance or a state of Nirvana. There are times when I envisage round-house kicking other members in the face or spray painting derogatory titles on their cars; but I know these thoughts only do me harm and cause me stress.

"Today I accept responsibility for myself and my recovery" and realise that "the principles in my program have given me are sufficient to guide me through any situation". Life has its ups and downs - this I now know also applies to people who aren't addicts.

Today I am grateful that I have a program in my life which helps me to work on every area of my life and allows me to, as I said at the beginning, have A MEANINGFUL LIFE free from drugs and the life of addiction!

Anonymous



## ***The state of our Fellowship***

If you're like me and hear 'in NSW there's 30,000 people on methadone, why aren't they at meetings?' or, 'the fellowship's getting smaller', you worry a little. Or, we see those members that seem to spend all the working day at the gym and get new \$60,000 cars, and worry more. Are we OK?

During my experience at meetings, I don't think much has changed. Always some clown or other in the fellowship has sold dope, risking jail and bringing the fellowship into disrepute, and I suspect there are a lot more than 30,000 drunks in NSW, and AA is not a failure. It's just hard to get clean. And as for the numbers at meetings going down (of which I'm not certain), we are the victim of fashion.

My time in the Canberra fellowship showed me that when the top health professionals were in favor of NA, we could get people out of detox units and into meetings, and when different people with different opinions about NA got the jobs, we couldn't. Our numbers went up and down with the fashion of the times. One year at our peak, Narcotics Anonymous even made the 'Top 10 of Cool' in Rolling Stone Magazine. Thank AA for the Traditions; if we were affiliated in any way with a government body, we wouldn't make it through the down times. But we are independent, and we endure, while health professionals and politicians come and go.

My experience with the fellowship is one of nothing but life saving and loving help - one or two of the abovementioned bozos excepted. I had nowhere to go but NA. From playing in the Opera House when I was 14 (of which all I remember was smoking a joint in back stage toilets with the tuba player) my career in music was over at 18, and after 9 more years of hell was living at a bus stop drinking meths. Me, a supposedly class act drug addict! No hospital did it for me, no rehab, no doctor, no psychiatrist, no nothing, except coming to meetings and having a go at the program.

The heart of our program is one addict helping another. An addict in recovery once saw me at what turned out to be the end of

a three year relapse, and stopped to say hi and ask how I was. The fact that I told her might have saved my life. When I turned 90 days clean I saw her for the first time since that day, and went up to say thanks. She said 'don't worry about it Alan, you did the same for me when I was new and you had time up'. Actually, that's a thing I've never remembered.

If we give each other just a little of our time, and work our 12th step no matter what the results may seem to be at times, we will all be OK.

Alan P.  
Blue Mountains



## ***The Twelfth Step***

*Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps we tried to carry this message to addicts and practice these principles in all our affairs*

I have heard an old timer write and talk about this new jargon - 'formally' working the Steps, meaning that you have written down answers to questions about the Steps, especially answers to the questions in the Steps Working Guide. While I worked my way all the way through the Steps the first time using this tool, and am currently 'doing' my Fourth Step by answering questions from this book, I totally agree with him with regards how this type of talk has taken over and how it doesn't represent the whole story as far as working the Steps goes.

In my opinion the Steps are "a set of principles written so simply we can follow them in our daily lives" as it says in How It Works. They are not a set of questions to be answered. Again, in my humble opinion, and I haven't been around that long, I believe the Steps are principles and the words of the Steps and the activities contained in them, and the words of questions in things like the Steps Working Guide are just tools to help me get in touch with the principles of the Steps, which are to be lived, not just written about.

I believe I have had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, I believe I had a spiritual awakening near the beginning of my recovery and I continue to have a spiritual awakening now. I believe that before I found this path I was asleep and dreaming bad dreams. Even before I was using drugs to activate my addiction, I was in that groggy dream land, nothing was quite real, and I felt like I moved around in a fog, disconnected from those around me.

I was having nightmares and was not living in reality. I made poor connections between things that happened and their causes. I blamed myself for things that could not possibly be my fault and were out of my control and I blamed others for my actions and their consequences.

Finally after years and years of this half-life I WOKE THE F\*\*\* UP. I woke up to reality. One way I would describe recovery is as being waking up to life on life's terms, with all its pain and loss and all its love and gratitude.

So, I have had spiritual awakenings, I had an awakening my last day using when I was led to a cage truck in cuffs, past the old lady whose home I had just burgled and felt grateful. I had an awakening the first time I was offered drugs in gaol and knocked them back, realizing that drugs weren't the whole of the problem but I definitely wasn't going anywhere until they were out of the picture. I had a further awakening when I prayed in a way I read about in a book in gaol

“Let this suffering pass from me, yet your will not mine be done”  
When I look back at that bloke it seems like he was still mostly asleep, but that's when I began to wake up. I am a lot more awake now I think, although in other ways my recovery seemed a lot more simple then and when I left gaol and went to rehab. Through 'working' these Steps, I got in touch with the principles that are the foundations of this program on a deep and personal level. I came to realize that honesty is not just about telling lies or about not stealing razor blades from the supermarket, it's about telling the truth, not manipulating the truth to suit my needs. Before I came to recovery I was good at telling lies where everything I said was true. I still catch myself at it today. Honesty is about dropping the manipulation.

I came to realize that open-mindedness and willingness was about more than just going to a meeting when I didn't feel like it. I came to realize I had to genuinely practice principles like gratitude, compassion, humility and acceptance in all my affairs, with anyone I came in contact with, not just people I liked or not just people in recovery, but people I don't like too, people I don't even know, and I need to practice principles even when no one is around to 'catch you'. As my friend John says, “practicing principles is like going to the toilet by yourself, only you know whether you washed your hands.”

It seems to me one thing more than anything else that people struggle with that leads to relapse is this, not practicing principles no matter what. I have heard many people say “I don’t know what went wrong; I was doing service, working the Steps, going to meetings, calling my sponsor, why did I pick up? What can I do differently?” And I think it’s this, if our program is the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Steps are a way of life, this is how they are, through practicing these principles in all our affairs and as the Twelfth Tradition says “practicing principles before personalities”. This is why the ‘suggested things’ are the ‘suggested things’ they are generally practiced examples of how a principle can be put into place in daily life, not rules, not some old timer being bossy.

The Twelfth Step mentions one principle in action in particular, carrying the message to addicts. This is the point of the fellowship, to carry the message, this, as groups and as a fellowship, is our Primary Purpose, to carry the message that an addict, any addict can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. I still get goose bumps every time I read, hear, say or write these words. What a miracle.

So this is our job, to carry the message, we might not ‘save’ anyone or get anyone ‘clean’ but we can carry the message and thereby stay clean ourselves.

For me, and this is just what I need to do to practice principles in all my affairs, it means I have to put out my hand to the newcomer, even if they’ve turned up in a bus from a treatment centre and are all full of attitude. Some people did that for me. It means that I keep going to my home group even though the ratio is something like 10:1 or more of members from treatment centres to those who aren’t, in a meeting of about 20 people. It means that I don’t avoid these guys and don’t stop coming to meetings because I got what I needed. It means I sponsor and do other service, it means, to the best of my ability and to the best of my limited time and energy, I try to make myself available to other addicts, to be there when they need me.

I find this all really hard, I have struggles talking to people I don't know well and even with those I do. But I know it's the right thing so I just ask for help and do it to the best of my ability. I really love the Twelfth Step and felt like I needed to share with you all what it means to me.

Thank you for the opportunity.

David K.  
Central Coast



## ***Can you Feel the Resentment?***

Think of people you know who've left the rooms. Often there's a common theme and that's resentments, resentments, resentments. It's an early sign of trouble brewing. So to see how you're going with handling your resentments - just take our handy little quiz.

- 1. You find out your friend said something mean about you to another friend. You...**
  - a. Workshop it with three friends, your partner and your sponsor before approaching them for an explanation.
  - b. Threaten to punch them out.
  - c. Get your own back by spreading a rumour about them.
  - d. Ask to speak to them and tell them how hurt you feel.
  
- 2. You find out something about someone in the firm who has a lot of clean time and who you look up to. Not something good. You...**
  - a. Decide NA is screwed, they're all hypocrites and you're off.
  - b. Figure recovery is a process and no one's perfect.
  - c. Who gives a rat's arse?
  - d. Have a chat to your sponsor because you feel a bit disappointed.
  
- 3. Try to remember something from your childhood that really pissed you off at the time. Maybe you were bullied, maybe your mother painted your room pink while you were at school. Thinking back, how do you feel now?**
  - a. I've learnt to let this stuff go. I'm OK. More or less...
  - b. Even now I start to feel really, really annoyed when I think about it.
  - c. These days I laugh about stuff like that.
  - d. It makes me CRAZY!!! CRAZY I tell you!!!

- 4. Someone at your work makes a joke at your expense and everyone laughs. Do you...**
- a. Join in. It was funny.
  - b. Threaten to punch them out.
  - c. Suck it up baby! You make your fair share of jokes.
  - d. Obsess about it for weeks and weeks.
- 5. Do you find the idea of working through the steps and letting go of your resentments...**
- a. Liberating!
  - b. Like hard work (doh!)
  - c. Almost impossible.
  - d. 100% impossible.
- 6. A friend you had a blue with (maybe they stole your lunch money) comes to you and wants to make peace with you. You...**
- a. Say no out of hand.
  - b. Threaten to punch them out.
  - c. Agree to have a coffee/chat. It's worth trying to sort out.
  - d. Say you'll get back to them...when you've calmed down.
- 7. Are you the kind of person who**
- a. Can recite a list of current resentments at the drop of a hat.
  - b. Can recite a list of both old and current resentments at the drop of a hat.
  - c. Have a few resentments you're trying to work through ☺
  - d. Try and deal with stuff as it happens whenever possible.

**8. How long do you usually hang on to a resentment?**

- a. As long as it takes to get even!
- b. I try to work through things ASAP.
- c. Ummm...are you saying that hanging to something for years isn't normal?
- d. For a bit, but when it starts to get in the way I do some thing about it.

**9. You've just shared at a meeting. The next person "cross-shares" about what you've said. Do you...**

- a. Listen closely – they may say something you haven't thought of
- b. Threaten to punch them out
- c. Sigh and roll your eyes – this just happens
- d. Stomp out of the meeting vowing never to return

**10. How much time do you spend thinking about "how you've been done wrong"?**

- a. What are you talking about?
- b. Occasionally
- c. More than I'd like to admit
- d. Every minute of every hour or every day...

**How to score**

Q1 a. 3 b. 1 c. 2 d. 4 Q2 a. 1 b. 4 c. 2 d. 3 Q3 a. 3 b. 2 c. 4 d. 1  
Q4 a. 4 b. 1 c. 3 d. 2 Q5 a. 4 b. 3 c. 2 d. 1 Q6 a. 2 b. 1 c. 4 d. 3  
Q7 a. 2 b. 1 c. 3 d. 4 Q8 a. 1 b. 4 c. 2 d. 3 Q9 a. 4 b. 1 c. 3 d. 2  
Q10 a. 4 b.3 c 2. d. 1

**0 -10** Resentments happen to everyone but they're toxic dude. You need to do something. Fast.

**10 – 20** Um...I think you have some work to do on the whole letting go thing. Really.

**20 – 30** You're pretty chilled. But you could be more chilled-er...

**30 – 40** Yay for you! You rock. I wish I was as spiritually advanced as you 😊

## ***The Sadness of Being***

It's a strange life, this NA. Being clean all the time, people coming and going, staying clean, using, relapsing, dying. I guess these things are all part of the deal, but sometimes they are really upsetting.

Recently a friend began drinking again. He swore he had it under control - he was just going to have a few beers. During the first week, he lost his job. He somehow lost a lot of money as well, he doesn't quite remember what happened. His closest friends got abused when they tried to help so started putting some distance in their friendship. He got pretty isolated despite people's attempt to keep him connected.

It was a sad demise to watch on the tail end of another friend dying of an overdose, everything in our community began to seem so flimsy and unstable.

You want me to say he stopped again and everything is OK now, but he didn't and it's not. He is still claiming to be socially drinking but his girlfriend left him and now I don't even know where he is. It was like an alien took over his mind and body the moment a drug entered it.

It's just that I'm really sad. I'm really sad that people cross back over sometimes and leave this amazing life. This life that to me has everything other than drugs.

I guess that's the choice in the end – drugs or everything else. It seems an easy choice for me now, but it wasn't always. I remember clearly not being able to say “NO”. It was a nightmare. It was THE nightmare, the one that ruled my life for so long and wouldn't end.

Thank God for NA – thank God. While it may be the thing that saved my life and made me the person I was supposed to be, it's still very sad sometimes. Anon

## ***Two Lives, One Recovery***

I work in what a lot of people in recovery call 'the industry' or 'the field'. What I mean by this is that in my working life I am paid to work with and hopefully help people in our society who have problems with using substances. Even worse I work in a 'rehab', places that these days have become more and more important as so many of our recoveries begin there.

Before I go on I would like to make clear that the following is only my report of what I see and what I do, it is definitely not a judgment of what other people do, nor am I saying what I do is right, it's just what I do.

I am certainly not the only recovering addict working in 'treatment', half the people I work with are people I could see in meetings. If I go to a work conference I see many many people I also know from the rooms and many many of my friends and other people I know in the rooms are also in jobs like mine.

It seems to me that many addicts who chose to make the principles of the Twelve Steps their way of life end up in the helping professions in general and in working with addicts in particular. I know for myself and for people I know they could be making a lot more money doing something else, perhaps have made a lot more money doing other things before their disease brought them unstuck, or even in earlier recovery. Again, I know for myself that it is just not in me to return to a job where the only principle was to worship the almighty dollar. Nothing else was important, and pursuit of money for self or employer justified any behaviour.

What I do think about a lot though is the relationship between what I do for work and my own recovery. I don't think they can be totally separated but I don't think they are one and the same thing either.

A friend of mine in the rooms who is a real OCM, edging towards 25 years clean, tells me there used to be a meeting in the Sydney

fellowship they called the 'two hats' meeting which was basically for people like me that both work with addicts and are an addict practicing recovery.

This friend never actually went to one of these meetings that I know of, although he did used to work with addicts at one point in his life, so that's all I know about them, however, it made me think, would I have gone to one of these meetings? Probably not.

I am not a big fan of special interest meetings. I have no problem with their existence and I have very good friends who really need their Men's meeting or Women's meeting or GLBT meeting. I don't think I would go to a 'two hats' meeting though, in the rooms I am just a recovering addict, this is part of my understanding of the Twelfth Tradition.

I know many other people who virtually stop going to meetings when they start working in the addiction field. I know some of these people do this because they feel they don't need to go to meetings any more. Whether consciously or unconsciously they believe that all that exposure to recovery talk, especially in centres where NA and 'Step' talk is encouraged is enough to keep them clean. Many of these people may not consciously or verbally say this, but they are voting with their feet, they stop coming to meetings.

For others it's slightly different, they get tired of recovery talk all day long, they get tired of speaking to newcomers at work all day so they choose not to go to meetings as they do not wish to experience more of the same.

Still others stop going to meetings or change their pattern of meeting attendance for the very reason (or one of the reasons I assume) they started a two hats meeting, because if you have worked in the industry long enough you are bound to see past, present, and future clients in the rooms of meetings you have to go to for your own personal recovery. This is a big issue.

So this is what I do. I am certainly not making any suggestion about what other people should do. I have many close friends

who do things differently from the way I do. Many now mostly go to the 'other fellowship' Alcoholics Anonymous for example and I think the choices they make are good choices for them, but not for me, this is what I do. I am also open to the fact that as time goes on, if I changed my job for example, or perhaps as I get further along in my recovery, I may change what I do, but for now, this is what I do.

My Area is not massive and the treatment centre I work at goes to a lot of meetings and go most days of the week. The meetings that are close to my place will often be attended by the treatment centre I work at or the one my partner works at or one of the ones I used to work at or whatever.

So you know what I do? I go anyway. I generally don't spill my guts on the floor of a meeting anyway; I share a message of recovery no matter who's in the room. My Fourth Step is for my sponsor and my personal problems are for him and my friends. So I go, I share, if my clients want to talk to me about recovery, no problem, about work, no way. And most clients are respectful of my boundaries and can tell the difference between the treatment centre and a meeting. At a meeting, to me they are newcomers and fellow members of NA and that's it.

The other side of the two lives is of course, how I am at work as a recovering addict, and especially in a work environment where the clients know I am a recovering addict.

I believe that in my work environment it is my responsibility to role model being a recovering human being, being a principled man, being honest about who I am and how I am, and I don't necessarily even need to be a recovering addict to do that. But as a recovering addict working with clients who identify as recovering addicts and who know I am a recovering addict, I do feel a special sense of responsibility not to talk about my recovery, but "to practice these principles in all our affairs".

I feel lucky in a way to not have to hide my 'recovering addict' status at work, this is a luxury many people I know in the rooms do not have. There is a down side to this though, it is difficult to just go to a meeting and be just another recovering addict and it is difficult to go to work without your personal life following you there.

Instead of reverting to my default mechanism of self pity I have chosen instead to be grateful for my life and to keep walking towards newcomers wherever I may find them.

Anonymous



## ***Fear is the mind-killer***

I was sitting in a meeting the other night and I realized how often people share about fear. All kinds of fear get mentioned but for each person who spoke, fear was a pivotal part of using and why they kept using. I once heard someone in the rooms say “fear is the river that runs through my life.” And I had one of those moments of complete identification that you get every so often in these meetings.

One of the reasons it was a relief for me when I started using was that it stopped the fear. You can't be full of fear and anxiety when you're smashed. If fear is the mind-killer then using is the fear-killer. “Fear is the mind-killer” is a line from a book I read when I was a teenager and it's stuck around the edges of my mind ever since. Because for me, fear is a paralyzing agent that stops me from acting, from living my life. It quite literally makes my brain freeze. I get stuck and I can't think, can't breathe, and can't act.

Fear is a normal human response to danger but I saw the whole world as dangerous. When I was younger I found the idea of the future so overwhelming and so hard to take in, that in many ways using was an easier alternative. I felt worthless and as if I was destined to fail. If you only ever feel good or feel like you get relief when you have a mind or mood altering chemical in your system, then of course you're going to keep on using.

The cycle of using, feeling bad and then more using is an easy one to get into and very hard to stop. Eventually you get scared of what will happen when (if) you do ever stop. How will you handle all the shame, the reality of what your life has been? Fear has crept back in and in desperation you feel like you have no alternative but to keep using.

In my using I was isolated and mad. The longer I stay clean it is clearer to me just how mad and miserable I was. Because I

got clean in the place I used, I often found that driving around town I would get flash-backs from my using. For a long time I would feel intense flashes of shame and embarrassment. But through understanding how fear ruled my life I have started to feel compassion for the person I was. From a distance (and from years of 'growing up' in recovery) I can have those flashes and instead of thinking what a stupid f\*#&%ing idiot I was, I can see how I had no clue and how tragic it all was.

Getting clean was difficult. The minute I stopped using a lot of the fear came back with new fears – mostly how was I going to manage life without using. How was I supposed to live without that buffer between me and brain and my fears? And the truth is that it wasn't easy. I had a very hard time. Like most people. I slowly learnt to just do it anyway - one step at a time, one minute at a time, one day at a time. And thankfully I had this program and the people in the rooms to show me that life can get better and that I could be capable of so much more.

Which is not to say I've reached a point of perfect mental health (if such a thing exists). Since I stopped smoking cigarettes I have had a bit of a resurgence of the old-school fear. The gut-churning, stay-awake all night fear. And I can't make a decision to save my life because I'm so scared that I'll make the wrong choice. But the difference today is that I can see it. And recovery has given me a choice.

I can make a choice today to do something different and go down a different path to the one I went down years ago. Being in recovery has shown me that if I talk about my fears they are lessened in the sharing and then I become capable of change.

Anonymous



# The Stars



Aries (the ram)

You know that old song? Goes something like "you've come a long way baby!" Or maybe it's an old cigarette ad...from when you could advertise such deadly yet legal activities. My memory's not what it used to be. \*Sigh\* Anyway, you've come a long way baby ☐ I'm so proud. You're doing good. Just keep up the good work, the listening to other people stuff and the doing the meetings thing. Rock on!

Cliché for the day: Stick with the strength



Taurus (the bull)

How's the year going for you? It's getting better and better yeah? I knew that it would ☐ That's why I write the stars and you...you probably just get on with your life. But I feel that this is a period of consolidation for you. It's a time when you can take stock, reflect on what you've been through and see how far you've come in the past 12 months. Good on you for hanging in, sticking it out and for general fabulousness.

Cliché for the day: Everything passes



Gemini (the twins)

It has been a hard year so far – oh yes indeedly. Not fun for anyone. But, you're still here. Sometimes we have to go back to basics to keep our feet on the ground and our heads out of the clouds. Not easy for anyone but even harder for gem-gem-Gem-inis. But I can see you trying and that's what you have to keep doing. Don't worry – you'll be able to take off again soon.

Cliché for the day: Living life on life's terms



Cancer (the crab)

Last time we talked about crabs learning to be a bit tough...to not take things on and to be...resilient. And I think you've been listening and I think you deserve a gold star for good work. And I don't give those to just anyone you know! More than that, you've been out and about helping others and doing good works. Two gold stars!!!

Cliché for the day: It works if you work it



Leo (the lion)

In the village the mighty village the lion sleeps tonight...or does he? I think our lion is an insomniac. Our lions like things to be perfect and to be out there basking in the glory. Good luck with that. I say our lions have to remember the words of the cliché for the day. Generosity of your experience, strength and hope is what we're after. Now go forth and conquer.

Cliché for the day: You keep what you have by giving it away



Virgo (the virgin)

A Virgo I know just had their birthday. So... happy birthday! Yay! She's such a typical Virgo too, very efficient. Almost Swiss-like. Sorry Swiss people, no offence. My bad. But it is a thing for you guys, being a bit up-tight, a bit critical. So I say chill. Relax. Meditate and swim in the universe. Failing that eat lots and lots and lots of chocolate.

Cliché for the day: Let go let god/goddess/Krishna/whatever



Libra (the scales)

Oh my goodness. Things, well, they move on don't they. They move on and all over the place. Up, then down then, before you know it, it's up again. And now, well now it's a little down again isn't it? Well, don't despair, You just have to put in practice everything you know and you'll be sweet. You have the tools and you know how to use them!!! It's so A-Team\*.

Cliché for the day: Pity the fool!

\*The A-Team is an old show for old people with Mr T in it. Mr T rocks.



Scorpio (the scorpion)

You guys are so complex I have to keep giving you the simple clichés. The ones that say slow down, take it easy, stop and smell the roses. The beautiful recovery roses that line the recovery path to recovery cottage where a little old lady makes gingerbread and puts naughty little children in cages and...oops.

Cliché for the day: Hand it over



### Sagittarius (the archer)

Shoot that poison arrow through my heart...and other great 80's hits for people with star signs with bows. And arrows. I appear to be on a trip down memory lane this edition of the stars. The 80's are back and it's making me craaaazy. But what can you do. You can do what any good Sagittarius would do and get in the groove. Put on your fluoros and your pink jeans and...

Cliché of the day: God's will not my will



### Capricorn (the sea-goat)

Sea-goats. I just can't get over it. What the hell is a sea-goat? I cannot rest until I find out. Until then...your stars. Well let's see...something that was really cool and exciting has turned out not to be so cool and not so exciting. So what do you do? It's hard. I know. You want to be miserable. You want to have the shits. But you know what? You don't have to. It goes something like this...pain is inevitable but misery is optional. You decide.

Cliché of the day: Feelings aren't facts



### Aquarius (the water-carrier)

Last time I suggested some step-work for you guys. How's that working out for you? You've gone off on a tangent haven't you? I know you guys. You got distracted saving the world, or reading Baudelaire, or visiting the Great Wall or something didn't you? Let's agree to compromise shall we? I'll try really hard to forgive you for being awesome and you can agree that everyone needs to do a little recovery from time to time.

Cliché for the day: Service keeps you clean



### Pisces (the fishes)

Never let "stuff" keep you out of the rooms. Never let other people stop you getting your recovery on track. No one is worth it. No body. Oops I was about to sing again. Miami Sound Machine I think. Count your lucky stars I pulled up because sadly I'm tone deaf. It's never pretty. So...you just remember that as we move forward back into the 80's and finally...hammer pants for all!!! Peace out.

Cliché for the day: Resentments will...screw you up. Not a classic saying I know but it's a goody.



# FREEDOM 2010

FAR NORTH COAST NA CONVENTION - BYRON BAY  
5th, 6th & 7th March 2010

***NSW South Coast Convention***

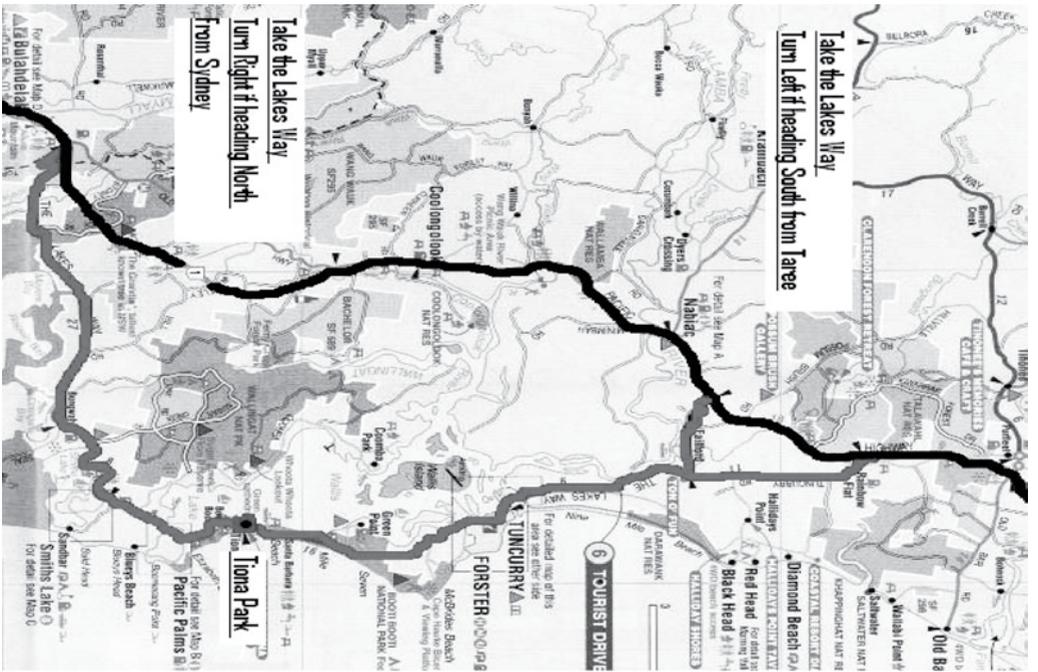
Where: Woonona Surf Club, Woonona,  
Woolongong

When: Saturday 31 October 2009 -  
Sunday 1 November 2009

***South Australian Convention***

“Tune in to the Recovery Channel”

8, 9 & 10 January 2010  
Fullerton Community Centre  
(same venue as last year)  
for info contact Dave - 0412249897



Contacts: Helen C. 0412 048 233 and Bill R. 0428 299 916

**“Spirit of Unity” Week-end 2009”**  
**Celebrates Its 23rd Year**

**13th, 14th & 15th November, 2009**

**Tiona Park**

**The Lakes Way, Forster, NSW**

Be surrounded by beaches & lakes, enjoy the much-loved Green Cathedral, serenity, trivia & entertainment, the great outdoors, great food and of course; meetings, meetings, meetings...we look forward to seeing you there.

Most accommodation will still need to be shared, as there are a limited number of Spa/Ensuite Cabins, which will enable families and groups to have their own cabins. They will move fast so don't delay with your bookings (also do bring bedding, sheets, towels etc, as these may not be provided). If you have prepaid for accommodation please call Helen ASAP. Deposits are non-refundable

\* Prices in 2009 may vary depending on Tiona Park's pricing policy

**Note:** By attending, you agree to adhere to all the usual park rules, including departure times & personal security, insurance issues and Occupational Health & Safety, etc.

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# Fellowship Service Office Vital Information

New FSO hours are;  
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Saturday 10am till 4pm

Also the leatherbound special edition of the basic text is sold out world wide except at the FSO in Australia, so get in quick, final sales. They are a bargain at just \$50



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