

NA Today

July 2012



The NA Today Magazine belongs to all members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission 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 convention information.

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 Magazine welcomes articles from all readers. Articles can be your own story, experience, strength and hope, a response to any article that has appeared in the NA Today, or simply a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship.

Articles should be no more than 800 words, and we reserve the right to edit. All articles must include a name, address, and phone number. First names and last initial will be used as the signature line unless the writer requests anonymity.

Send us your experience in recovery, your views on NA matters, cartoons, ideas etc to:

natoday@na.org.au

or to the

NA Today
c/- Fellowship Service Office
1st Floor, 204 King St
Newtown NSW 2042

The NA Today presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. Opinions expressed are not to be attributed to NA as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by Narcotics Anonymous, The NA Today, or the Narcotics Anonymous Regional Service Committee.

Editor: Caroline M Vettors: Gina C & Sue K

Same, same but different...

When I was in Vietnam on holiday a few years ago you would hear this phrase everywhere – “same same but different” – as vendors would try and get you to come look at their t-shirts (for example) as opposed to those you were currently looking at. You could even buy a t-shirt that had it printed on it, presumably from the person who said it to you in the first place!

It was the phrase that came to mind when I was talking to a fellow recovering addict about their story. I was trying to get them to write it down (which they wouldn't because that person is a slack b@*!?\$d) but instead they gave me the edited highlights. Which went something like this...

Them: “I was always an awkward / lonely kid”

Me: “Same”

Them: “I found relief in drugs early on”

Me: “Same”

Them: “I started using (insert drug) first”

Me: “Different – I used (insert other drug)”

Them: “Then I found (insert other drug)”

Me: “Same”

Them: “This went on for a bit”

Me: “Same”

Them: “Then I ended up in detox”

Me: “Same”

Them: “Then I ended up in (insert name) rehab”

Me: “Same”

Them: “Then I got clean”

Me: “Same”

Them: “And then I relapsed”

And this is where things diverged a bit...

So actually it was mostly same, same, and same again with only a few small differences. And I was reminded once again just how similar we all are, despite appearances or how

much we might wish ourselves different. Not everyone would have had the same level of identification with the same drugs or with which rehab you went to, but in my experience any two addicts can find something in common, be it a drug, an experience or a feeling.

And yet some addicts still resist that feeling of commonality. And after extensive observation it is my considered opinion that wanting or believing oneself to be special or unique or different, in the context of NA, can really f@*k people up.

Not a great revelation I know and people say it all the time in the fellowship – “look for the similarities not the differences”. But there are still people who persist, even after lengthy periods of time around the rooms, in believing that they are special enough to still drink alcohol, or not do meetings or whatever... And generally it does not end well.

For me a huge part of fellowship is about that feeling I get in the rooms when someone else is sharing and I identify. In fact, I believe it is what keeps me clean. Because even though I haven't used for a while, when someone I identify with emotionally, tells me how horrible it still is to use drugs I believe them and I remember what it was like for me. And it reaffirms my choice not to use. And so I continue on. And it's a gift.

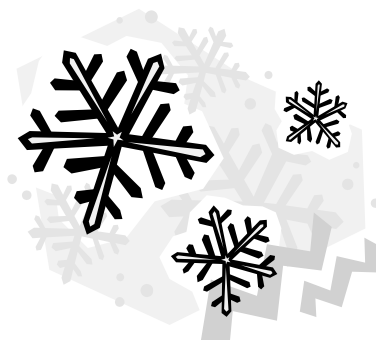
It's a gift because for those of us who allow ourselves to become part of, or who find relief in being part of, or even who resign ourselves to being part of, we get to fully participate in the NA program. It is beyond my comprehension to imagine how someone could go to NA for any length of time not believing themselves to be the same as everyone else. And the fact is that they don't. They drift off, they relapse, and sometimes they can never come back to try again.

So for you newcomers out there – focus on the similarities. Things have changed a lot over the years. There are people

who used drugs I'd never come across and there are people who used drugs that weren't dreamed up until after I got clean. It doesn't matter what or how much you used. What matters is that we all know how it feels to be emotionally, spiritually and physically bankrupt. We all know what it means to be desperate to change our lives. This is how our fellowship is built – one addict helping another, one day at a time.

(And don't worry – you're still a unique snowflake! Just a snowflake with some things in common with some other snowflakes...)

Caroline M.



18 and found recovery!

I had my first smoke of cannabis at 8 years old and fell in love. When I was young I always said I would never smoke, it was a bad thing in my eyes and anyone who took drugs was a bad person with no self-respect. I went into the care of the Minister at the age of 10 because my parents were not capable of looking after me. By this time I was smoking pot everyday and loving it. I had no worries when I smoked because I could not feel any emotions.

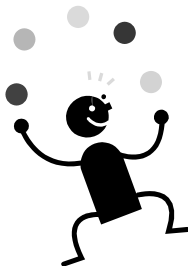
Later down the track I became so lazy my day consisted of going out to break into houses to get money, then going to get cannabis from my dealer and going home to smoke. This happened for about two years then I was finally told by the courts that I had to attend a rehab.

Seeing that I was under- 18 they sent me to a rehab that did not have the Narcotics Anonymous program at hand. I got out of the rehab and stayed clean for a whole three months. I went back to the same things, day in day out, until I was 18 and was told that D.O.C.S. would no longer support me.

I then moved to my own Dept of Housing house and still the same pattern continued. One and a half months later I was arrested for a number of break and enters and was refused bail and sent to gaol. I spent seven months there until I was granted Drug Court and sent to a rehab near Coffs Harbour on the NSW mid-North Coast. I am there now and am three months into the N.A way of recovery.

I have found so much. I still have really bad days and can become extremely depressed because I now feel my emotions, but I have now learned that if I surrender my will there is the chance that I may stay clean. It's not only about staying clean for me it's about finding myself and loving myself for who I am. It is still early for me in recovery but already I see a glimmer of hope that I can find a new way to live and for that hope I am grateful to have N.A. in my life today.

David. B, NSW



World Wide Service

I thank God that I was able to carry the conscience of my region to the 31st WSC in 2012. I'm furthermore ecstatic and extremely pleased that my region entrusted this fantastic opportunity to me. I studied in USA between 1975 and 1980. My active addiction took shape in those very same years. After I finished my studies, feeling completely overwhelmed and languid I left USA a full-fledged addict. The only thing that I could do for myself was to take some marijuana seeds back to Iran with me so that I could grow my own supply upon my return. I never imagined that after 32 years I would return to USA again, this time with a huge difference. When I left the conference I no longer needed to carry marijuana seeds with me. Instead I was carrying conference reports and the results of the various resolutions and motions that had been put to vote at the conference. This time I carried in my heart, the regards and good will of fellow sufferers from all over the world, for the Iran region. This time I returned with eyes full of hope and a heart full of warmth. Have you noticed similar changes in your own recovery too?

At the conference when the serenity prayer was read out in 25 different languages, I felt as though I was high in the sky. Light headed, happy and smiling...maybe the feeling that I had been looking to experience in active addiction. In my using days, I was trying to inject happiness into myself from outside of me. But in the conference joy would be generated from within and then overflow outwards to be shared with others.

It's some time since I've been back home from the conference but I still feel the warm embrace of my fellow delegates. At times we hugged each other two or three times a day. Sometimes I am surprised to realise that when such a simple program i.e. the fellowship of the NA was available to me, why did I spend so many years being a slave to my addiction? At the conference race, gender, sexuality, skin colour,

age and wealth had all stepped aside and made way for the best kind of love, that is selfless love. I felt God's presence in the conference. The delegates felt so close to one another, as though they had known each other for years, despite the fact that some of them were seeing each other for the first time.

"The links that bind us together", "we can't live without each other", "NA is love without borders"....all of these slogans were proven to be true at the WSC2012.

The round the clock work of the conference as well as the delegates' attention to detail and commitment were highly noticeable. All of us delegates knew that we each represented an NA region and had arrived at the conference carrying the conscience of our members back home. Our expenses were met by the World Services via each member's dollar by dollar contribution to the 7th tradition baskets. To this end the conference was not a place to lounge around and take it easy. It was a place for being active, taking part in discussions and to exchange experiences with others. Everyone worked their hardest to achieve the best outcome from the conference. When service efforts are based on recovery the results are predictable.

So during the conference we were all serious in our objectives, paid attention to detail and were committed in our efforts. During rest times of course we were full of joy, laughter and made the best of fellowship activities that were made available to us. And of course at the end when we had to say good bye, there were lots of hugs, loads of tears and a great deal of sadness.

One of the delegates was a respectable looking lady who happened to be pregnant. Despite her condition she did not leave the conference for even one minute and even during the one evening when the proceedings lasted till 1 am, she was there taking care of business for our fellowship. I'm sure

these future mothers will one day tell their children that they had attended WSC012 even before being born.

The delegates promised each other to convey one another's regards and sentiments to their respective regions. I have kept my promise and hereby pass on the gratitude of all NA members who attended WSC012 as well as the trusted servants who gave service at the conference and finally that of the world service office, to all of you in Iran region and APF. Looking forward to WSC014!

Javad M

Iranian delegate to WSC 2012



The Top Ten...

Meeting Formats

10. Non-English speaking. The power of the NA message crosses all barriers of language. Try it and be amazed.
9. Monster Mash. A crowded room where the group members are hard to spot.
8. Country Style. Strangers are the most important person in the room.
7. City All Stars. Lost in the crowd. Chances are you won't get a share and those that do often go for the cheap laugh.
6. Tag. You're it! More than half the time the person sharing forgets they have to pick the next person 'coz they're so caught up in their own story.
5. Steps. No this is not a dancing lesson but yes, just like dancing practice and repetition are a key aspect of recovery and you'll get it here.
4. Speaker. Settle in for tales tall and true every week. It's a rare privilege to hear the long version, so kick back and enjoy.
3. Men's. Tales of woe about women lost.
2. Women's. Tales of woe about men gained, lost, gained again, lost again...
1. Traditional. Readings, sharing and hugs all 'round. Newcomers may be forgiven for wondering whether these people are for real.

Depression in Recovery

I have been depressed in my life a few times. A couple of times a little bit and a couple of times a lot. I spent most of the last year pretty depressed triggered by adverse life circumstances and I am just now coming out of it.

In that time I read a lot about depression. I read a lot about depression medication and overall I thought a lot about why I was unmotivated and jaded and what life is all about.

My commitment to NA has always come first since I got clean because without it I would almost certainly be dead or in prison – best case scenario I would be on drug replacement and living a half life in a govie flat or something, nothing like the rich tapestry I weave now.

I guess the point I am trying to make is that depression is part of life. Everyone gets down from time to time and apparently 1 in 5 people suffer a severe depression during their life. I happen to be one of those 1 in 5.

Perhaps what I am about to say is controversial, but I don't mean it to be. They are all just choices I made that I have to live with and I suppose my experiences are as valid as anyone else's.

I took no medication – I believe in a drug free solution. NA gave me that gift. During my last year I learned about myself and my spiritual journey. I learned about the power of my expectations and how painful it can be when they are not met. I found the only place that gave me any solace was "living in the moment". A constant reminder from Tom C on Facebook saw to that lesson being omnipresent (no pun intended). The odd meeting was a nice respite as well but even some of them I found myself grinding out rather than enjoying.

As a good little addict, I also tried hard to be “not depressed”. I watched a TED talk everyday. I listened to music and watched films that I thought might inspire me even though I didn’t feel like it and all these things were ideas I gleaned from the program about making positive choices and not succumbing to self pity or being morose.

I was severely depressed one other time when I was young and using drugs. I went to hell at that time. I was in so much pain that none of the drugs anaesthetised it. I starved my self almost to death and overdosed on drugs as often as I could. I went to the far reaches of the dark side and only returned when I got clean in NA and was taught to live a better way.

Having recovered from drug addiction and depression in NA has given me a depth of skill about myself that I am proud to brandish. This year being severely depressed was made a lot easier by deeply knowing “it will pass” by deeply knowing “be kind to yourself” by deeply knowing “feeling bad is OK, don’t resist it”. All the wisdom given to me over the years cradled me through those dark months and now you would never even know I had such a crap year. I am happy again. Thank GOD for the program and thank GOD for the people who make it work by turning up week in week out, year in year out. They are our anonymous heroes. Do not take them for granted. Do not let your old timers slip away. Ask them back, make them share, value them, for as the newcomer is the lifeblood of the fellowship, they are the backbone and without that structure the organism is flimsy. Now I am raving...

Anonymous



REMEMBER...



NA TODAY NEEDS YOU!!!!

**SEND YOUR ARTICLES, LETTERS, CARTOONS
AND GRAPHICS TO:**

**NATODAY@NA.ORG.AU
OR**

**NA TODAY
c/- FSO
1ST FLOOR, 204 KING ST
NEWTOWN NSW 2042**

NA Archetypes

NA is full of unique individuals. But how individual are we really? Having met people from a few different areas in this wide brown land and talked about the different people we know, it comes back to this - there is one in every area!

The hot young thing

She comes in but never really gets that bit about trying to stay away from the blokes and sticking with the women. Slowly, or quickly, works her way through the eligible bachelor list.

Motto: I've always just got on better with men!

The player

He's always giving newcomer women that extra attention they need. Innocently - of course! And then whoops! What's that? It's not his fault women want to sleep with him....

Motto: Always willing to take one for the team!

The snarky prick

Sometimes rides a motorbike, might have a ponytail, is possibly also a conspiracy theorist. Has the kind of sense of humour that makes you want to punch them. There are many variations but the main question is – how do they have such nice partners? Some mysteries will never be solved.

Motto: It's not my fault you can't take a joke

The slightly incoherent, mumbling OCM

A unique individual – this one knows how many spelling mistakes there are in the step working guide. Can be relied upon

to quote you anything you ever needed to know from the Basic Text. Can be problematic (and time consuming) in service bodies however...

Motto: I believe you'll see that on page 345 of the service guide for everything it quite clearly states that when it comes to the tradition of NA that...

The super control freak

Can be easily confused with the service junkie but the two aren't mutually exclusive. Is the type of person who freaks when something changes at a meeting and they didn't know about it.

Motto: It's just that at this meeting we always put the red chairs on the left and the white ones on the right and there should be 10 rows of 8 chairs each approximately 35 cm apart...oh and you can't put that there, that goes up the back of the room on the green table...

The person whose life never gets better

Has been clean forever but never stops moaning. It could be about anything and everything but often there's a theme. They start to share and everyone else in the room moves into the brace position while silently chanting "kill me now" over and over...

Motto: I have been having a rough time for a while (17 years) and now I'm going to tell you all about it...

The transcendental

This person has been on more retreats than you've had hot breakfasts. They could out-yogi the yogis. Make you feel bad for ever having eaten sugar. Or for drinking coffee. Or for doing something as crass as watch TV. What about your

chakras!?! And OMG is that leather!?! Now you're a murderer...

Motto: I could do Vipassana FOR EVER!

The earth mother

Never has a bad word to say about anyone...grows vegetables...takes care of injured animals etc. She is so freakin' lovely that you feel bad for ever having had a bad thought IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE!

Motto: So I just found that if I sit quietly the mother goddess speaks to my soul...don't you?

The service junkie (Type A)

This service junkie is the control freak type. Does it because once they get a taste of power they can't stop... understanding that service is purely voluntary of course. Knows that the way they do it is the right way and anyone with other ideas is going against the traditions goddam it! Can usually be counted on to end up at region (smiley face).

Motto: Well in my meeting / area we do it this way....

The service junkie (Type B)

Is actually more of a co-dependent people-pleaser than a control freak. Originally only had one service position but kept picking them up as others dropped out and no one replaced them.

Motto: OK then, well, if no one else is going to do it I guess I could continue being the secretary and treasurer and GSR for this meeting even though I have been doing it for the last 7 years and I really want my life back...

The service junkie (Type C)

Type A + Type B = Type C

Motto: I'm so sick of no one else doing service what do you mean the meeting might close ok I'll do it until someone else agrees to do it you guys all suck but I'm going to stay clean so there...put that back that doesn't go there...

Disclaimer: Any resemblance to any persons living and in a meeting near you is completely coincidental!

The Solution Is Blowing In the Wind

I'm going to entertain you with a metaphorical fictitious story, so go and get yourself a cup of your favourite beverage of choice, as long as it doesn't affect your clean time. Any similarities in this story are purely coincidental.

A guilt ridden member phones their sponsor and confesses to them that they have participated in malicious gossip which could drive that person away from our fellowship or even to their death.

The guilt ridden member desperately pleads with their sponsor, "what can I do to fix this"? The sponsor who is very wise gives that member the following suggestion. "I want you to take a sharp knife along with a feathered pillow then drive to the mountains and climb the highest lookout tower and call me when you get to the top".

The member drives to the mountains, climbs the highest tower armed only with their sword, jumps off plummeting to their death; no sorry that was an old Monty Python sketch although I did state that this is a fictitious story. Ok getting back on track; the aforementioned member who is at this stage of our story at the top of the lookout tower experienc-

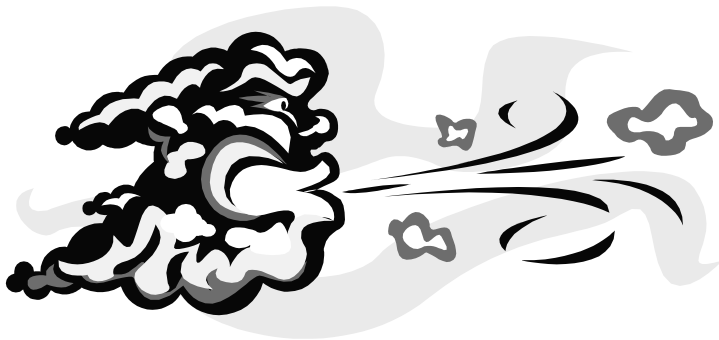
ing strong gale force winds.

Clutching the tower to brace them the member calls their sponsor and asks what to do next. The sponsor instructs them to cut open the pillow case and shake it releasing all the feathers into the wind then call them back once the task is complete.

After shaking all the feathers to the four winds once again the member calls their sponsor and says “ok I’ve done as you asked, so what do I do now?” their sponsor says “ I want you to gather up all the feathers and place them back in the pillow case”. The member exclaims; “but that’s impossible! They’ve spread all over town.”

The wise sponsor, who always has the final word, says in a stern reaffirming almost self righteous voice “**exactly!**”

Kelvin R. Belgrave Group Melbourne



Badly drawn cartoons presents...



*People learnt pretty quickly not to go into resentment time
if the Alien was chairing the meeting...*

One view from one member

The following short article is one view of one member of the fellowship and in no way represents any other aspects, explanations, interpretations or views of any other member. The following article is a personal view of one member and is not NA policy or nor does the article articulate NA principles or policy.

- The 12 steps of NA provide guidance to those practicing their personal recovery.
- The 12 Traditions of NA provide guidance to the groups of NA formed at NA meetings from members for members.
- The 12 Concepts provide guidance to the service structure.
- NA meetings cater for our primary purpose- "To carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers."
- The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using (Tradition 3).
- NA is an anonymous society of men and women for whom drug addiction has become a major problem.
- NA's only promise is "freedom from active addiction." (Basic Text). Freedom from the rigours of active addiction invites a host of other freedoms. Personal freedom, freedom of beliefs, freedom to be, freedom to live and let live, freedom to love, freedom to practice compassion and understanding.....the list is endless and will differ from individual to individual.

- NA has no opinion on outside issues lest we lose focus on our primary purpose as stated above.
- NA members meet to foster personal recovery and to carry the message of recovery.
- As an NA member I didn't join NA to find friends, to socialize, to find my "life partner" or to dictate to others what is right for them.
- As an NA member I live with the consequences of my decisions and actions.

I could tell you my choice of employment, choice of partner, choice of religion, choice of politics. The relevant factor is not the content of my choices it is my freedom to choose.

Many years ago I had a conversation with a member from another country. We discussed "special interest groups." He related a tale that has stayed with me over the years. He said "we had a good look at that, as we all wanted to foster our primary purpose. We also discussed the inclusiveness of our fellowship as it stood at that time." He went on and said "we wondered what we would do if we formed NA groups that by their special interest not only excluded some members (the exceptions being gender and sexuality) and were composed of members with abhorrent political minorities or along ethnicity ." This issue was not settled then and it remains open to further discussion.

The groups are the primary facilitators of ongoing recovery from active addiction but their actions and motives are predicated on adhering to the 12 traditions. These are then subject to interpretation and questions of ethics and probity. At the end of the day - it is not what sets us apart that counts but rather what binds us together as our first tradition states.

Anonymous

The new NA web site needs you!

I have a dream.

One day the Australian NA web site will be a hive of activity where events Australia wide are being organised, venues details recorded and rated, meetings information is available that gives useful map links and notes on the meetings, discussion forums are moderated by dedicated NA members, online meetings are a regular part of the fabric of our fellowship, service information is available to anyone who wants it, articles funny and serious are contributed regularly and some really passionate people in recovery begin writing blogs that gain a popular readership, great recovery speakers are invited to events, meetings and conventions, artists and musicians can make themselves known and available for events...

All that needs to happen for all this to become a reality is for five or six people to commit a modest amount of time, probably less than a couple of hours each week to bring the site to life and give the fellowship a chance to connect with each other more directly.

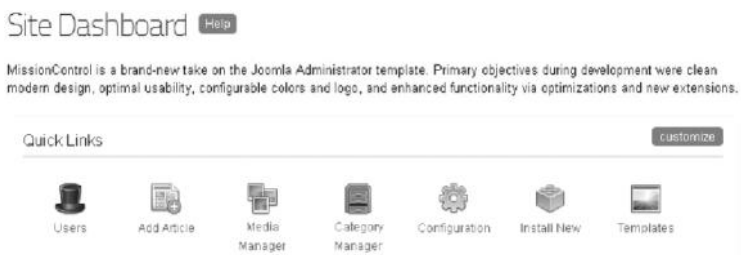
If you have ever wondered how big web sites work and think you might enjoy being part of something much larger than you could ever achieve alone, get in touch.

All you need is a computer, a small investment of time and some willingness. Higher power, please get this message to those folks in the fellowship who, when they read this, will respond enthusiastically to this heart-felt plea!

Here are a few images of the kinds of stuff ordinary web site users don't normally get to see. If this perks up your interest, get in touch!

Here is a management panel where one starts to add events,

create articles, update forum information and so on.



Here is the new article editor interface.



Remember all of this is done through a web browser, no new software to learn just some new concepts. If you can use a basic word processor you already know enough to do this.

Please, take a chance, have a go, find some willingness to learn something new. It will be my sincerest pleasure to support and guide anyone who wants to get involved in making the new web site a reality.

I cannot do this alone, and isn't that also the essence of the NA message? There's plenty of work to be done yet and the great thing is that it's never, ever really finished...So If you already have some skillz, or are willing to learn (with some expert training and assistance) please contact webservant@na.org.au

dex (webservant)

Acronym of the day...

K.I.S.S.

(Keep it simple stupid!)



October 12-14 2012

GRATITUDE SPEAKS

at

Newcastle / Hunter Valley Area Convention

Myuna Bay Sports and Recreational Centre
Wangi Rd Myuna Bay

Limited places - bookings are essential
\$55 adult \$35 kids

Please contact Michelle 0400446164 or
Donna 0404318827 for details

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Saturday 27th October - Sunday 28th October 2012

Woonona Surf Lifesaving Club, Kurraba Rd, Woonona (Wollongong)

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Full brochure is available on the NA website at
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"Stepping it up"**

Greenmount Resort, Coolangatta

Friday 21st September - 23rd September

Full program coming soon

For further info please contact Keir M 0450020406

Camp Serenity 2012

Friday 27/07/2012 to Sunday 29/07/2012

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3360 Nerang-Murwillumbah Road,
Natural Bridge QLD 4211

For more information please contact
Bindi: 0422 211 693;
Luke: 0432 432 633 and
Cassandra: 0416 386 703

More details will be available on **na.org.au** including
registration costs and payment options



FELLOWSHIP SERVICE OFFICE

FSO HOURS:

TUES 10AM TO 3PM

SAT 10AM TO 2PM

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TUES 10AM TO 2PM

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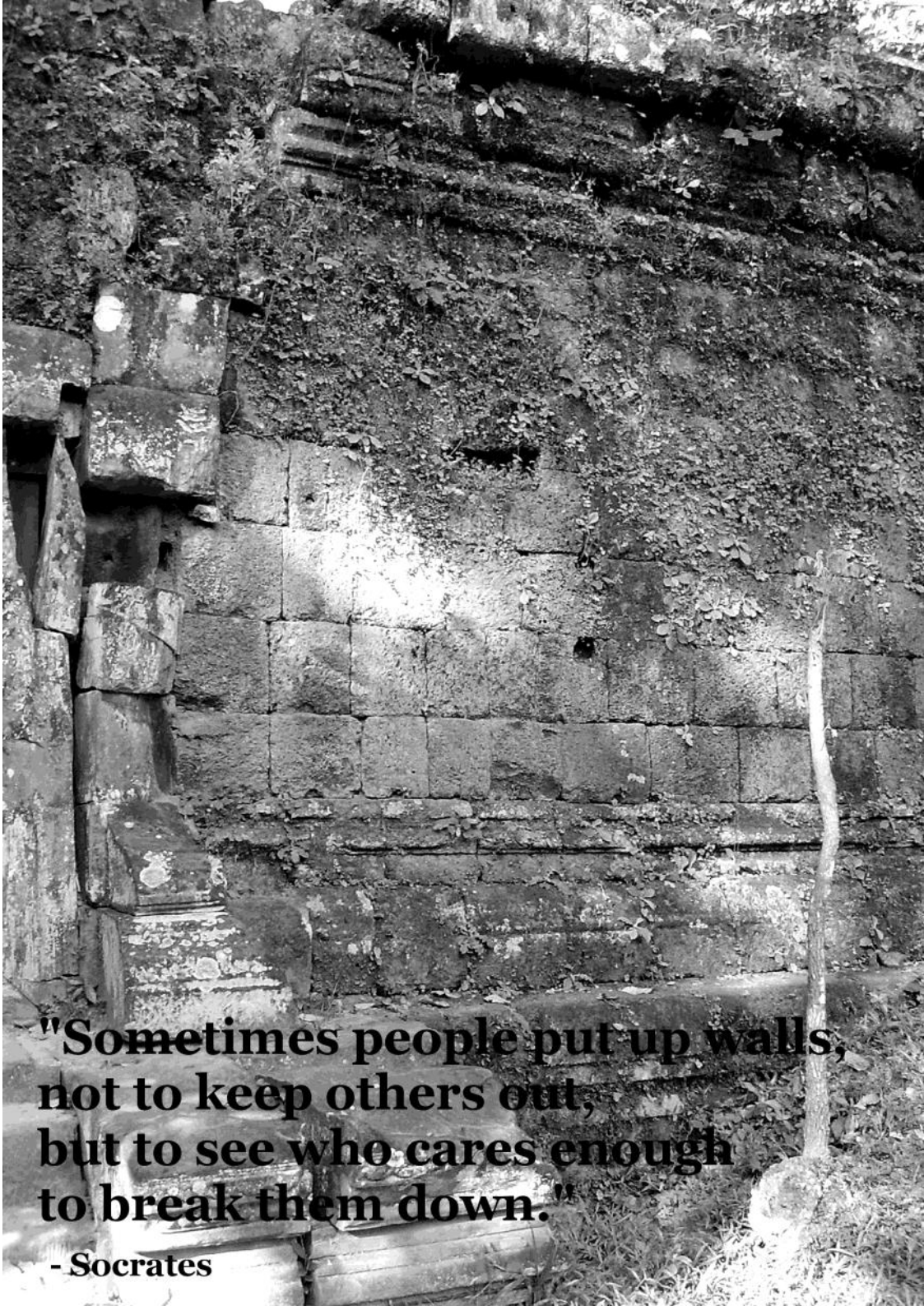
SAT 10AM TO 2PM

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**"Sometimes people put up walls,
not to keep others out,
but to see who cares enough
to break them down."**

- Socrates



na

**National Hotline
1 300 652 820**

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www.na.org.au**