

NA Today

November 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 and contact details e.g. email address. 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.

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STEP 1

My name is Mitch. I am an addict.

I have been using drugs since I was 16. I am now 39. Heroin, speed, cannabis were all abused.

I had abstained from the age of 35 until last Saturday. I had some ice on that day.

Feelings on the Friday led me to search for speed or ice. I left my sponsor's and I remember thinking "just one shot would not do any harm".

I had nothing on that day, then picked up the next day.

Insane.

My disease is progressive. As soon as I had it I instantly went back to my last days of using.

I have got 4 days up again, and I have just started Step 1.

Just for today I will not use.

Mitch, Ballarat.



My story so far...

Hi Everyone. My name is Sam and I am an addict. I am from Melbourne. I am 20 years old and I got clean in rehab in Byron Bay about 5 months ago when I was still 19.

About a year ago I woke up in a stairwell in the inner city. There were paramedics there and they had just injected me with Narcan. I survived but only just. They sent the bill for the ambulance to my parent's house and it began a process that led me to where I am now.

My sponsor says I am a great example to other young people, that it is possible to stop using when you are young and still have a full life. I don't know about that yet, I am just living a day at a time, trying to stay positive and soak up what Byron has to offer while I am here.

Every day I go to the gym, the beach and make myself some healthy food then hit a meeting. I have been doing a meeting a day at least which I credit for the fact I am still clean.

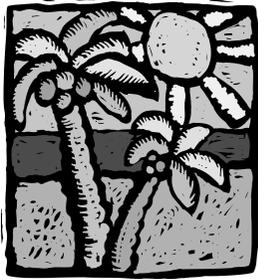
I have put on 15 kilos since I got clean which is good because I was malnourished and emaciated. I am healthy and strong and I am already planning some things, which never would have happened if I stayed using. I am thinking about studying even though I thought I was stupid, I wasn't. I am thinking about travelling, because I didn't get clean for nothing, I want to really live.

My sponsor says "hold your horses" that I should stay in the cocoon a little longer before I fly off. But I can hardly wait. I am so excited to be free. I spent everyday before this lying stealing and using. Now I can do pretty much whatever I want.

There's a guy here who says "you can have drugs – or everything else". Well I guess I want everything else, because

drugs didn't really have that much to offer. Have a good one.
I know I will.

Samy D, Melbourne



Help me please get through this day

Help me please get through this day,
With drugs and fear out of the way.
Please guide me to a better place,
Where Peace and Love are commonplace.

Help me please when I'm in bother,
Help me help myself & others.
When I'm in my darkest hour,
Please be there, my higher power.

"I'm no addict" I used to say,
I can stop using any day.
Just tell me when you want it to be,
What no answer?
Then let me see, I'll keep using indefinitely.

Powerless over my addiction?
Don't be stupid, that's just fiction.
I told you that I can quit,
It's too, too easy I can do it.

A decade passes and I'm still using,
My heart is dead, it's so confusing.
I've tried to stop; I just can't do it,
I can't find a safe way through it.

Sadness and tears are all that wait,
Nobody cares, they just hate.
My soul is dying, my mind is twisted,
I've had enough. I want to end it.

I once was happy and carefree,
My friends and family believed in me.
Now there's nothing, nowhere to turn,
My life is over, watch me burn.

I walk the streets, I am in danger,
Until a chance meeting with a stranger.
"What does this man want from me then"?
He says, "You never have to use again"

I get the strangest feeling deep inside,
I don't know why, I want to hide,
My mind is screaming but I can't tell
Is this real, or is this hell?

The stranger says
"Come with me, I can help you. Just trust and see"

My heart tells me I have nothing to lose,
No-one can force me, I have to choose.
Have some faith, there's nothing wrong,
Just face my fear and go along.

A crowded hall is what I see,
Full of people just like me.
They greet me warmly, their faces say,
"Welcome friend, this is NA"

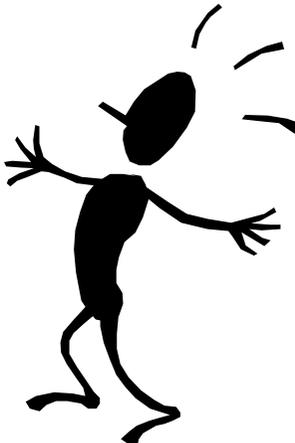
To start with I am confused,
How could all these people have used,
I thought I was the only one,
To shy away or be shunned.

Then gradually with each clean day,
I see the hope, the light, the way.
For me to live as God intended,
Truly clean, not fake as I pretended.

Many days since then have passed,
I never believed that I would last.
But for the fellowship inside these rooms,
My life was surely, definitely doomed.

As I wake for each new day,
Not on my knees but I will pray.
I say thank you for every clean hour,
Especially to you, my Higher Power.

Rob A., Sunshine Coast





Gratitude

There is a meeting in Sydney, (Darlinghurst 12pm Thursday) that I used to go to...'Attitude of Gratitude'. I went there every week when I was reducing off methadone and then for a long time in early recovery before I started to develop a life. At least once in the 90 minutes I sat there each week I would hear the phrase "a grateful addict will not use". It became one of the lines you hear that I chose to hang on to; I needed to hang onto something.

13 years ago I was 36 years old and had been using since the age of 12 when I picked up my first drink. I tried all the drugs there were over the years and at age 29 I got on the methadone program. I thought regular S8 drugs dispensed by a nurse and funded by the government would fix me for sure. Like every other idea I had that I thought would fix me it was doomed to fail. I had been using for so long I had lost the ability to make a decision not to. Every plan I made went away. In my twenties I remember thinking I would get clean by staying in bed, drinking rum and pulling cones until I was better. I thought this would take a few days, tops. That was one of my better ideas; I had plenty of worse ideas.

In September of '99 I found myself in an NA meeting (Glebe 8pm Friday). A mate (my only mate) was in a rehab and they sent him there. I thought he was mad to want to get off 'done. He sold me his excess 'done as I always needed more. His getting clean was going to seriously interfere with my using so I thought I would set him straight. Something strange happened at that meeting. Garth P told me to 'keep coming back'. It had been many years since anyone suggested they wanted more of my company. I had no teeth, hair down to my waist and would shoot up my 'done between my toes because my veins were gone. I was a mess.

I went back the next few weeks feeling very out of place. Frank M was sharing. He said..."if you are on methadone,

get off it." I thought he was talking to me. I had never considered not using before, ever. I thought I would give it a try. I sat in rooms of NA for the next 11 months reducing off 'done. When the ID happened I would say "I'm Damien, I'm an addict and I'm reducing off methadone". It felt very uncomfortable doing that in rooms full of clean people. I joined a few groups, Glebe Friday and Newtown Saturday 1.30pm. At Newtown I became the tea person. At Glebe I stacked chairs. I felt less uncomfortable. Andrew G told me I needed a sponsor so I asked him to sponsor me. He sponsored me for the next 3 years.

I never really thought I would get clean but I reduced my dose from 90mg of 'done a day to 2.5mg a day. 2.5 is the lowest. Only then, after nearly a year of reducing and faking it till I make did I believe. I have never been so scared in my life. On 25 August 2000 I was one day clean. All the fear I had about getting clean left me. I did 3 meetings that day, Friday Woollahra 12pm, Newtown 5.30pm and Glebe 8pm. I was desperate to not use that day. I was desperate to not use the next day and the day after that.

I started writing on the steps and I began to get some clarity and some gratitude. Tonight I am the guest speaker at Anandale Friday 8pm (the old Glebe meeting). It is no longer my home group as I have moved to the 'burbs but every year they ask me to celebrate my milestone there so I do. It is my spiritual home.

Much has happened in 12 years. I got a haircut. I got some teeth. I got some friends and through working the steps I have been given a capacity to love. I have been cured of Hep C and become a father twice over. My second son Henry was born just over 3 years ago and died the same day. My wife and I were shattered but I didn't even think of using. That is a miracle. Tom C from Hawaii wrote to me at the time, I re read his email the other night. He said that Henry was a messenger of love and that I should just em-

brace my feelings. I no longer try and figure out why bad stuff happens, it was a horrible thing to go through but through the NA programme I have found that I got through it and that I am ok. A piece of me will always belong to that child and yet out of that I discovered so much more love from people everywhere. I found myself full of love for others. The steps take away the crap from our lives and if we want, it can be replaced by love.

Damien R

Keeping what you have

It has been an unfortunate experience of mine over the years to see a steady stream of people go by the wayside. Many friends, sponsees, other members' slip from their grasp of the programme with one comment... "I think I might have a drink".

About 18 months ago I was sponsoring three people, who for a time, seemed very committed to staying clean. I went away for an extended period and when I got back they were drinking. None of them are OK today, but that is not what I wanted to write about. I wanted to write about the process once someone has decided to use.

Having decided to use, it is difficult for an ensconced member to divest themselves of their social connections and their geographical and intellectual positions. I mean all their friends were in NA. They had been claiming for years that they wanted to be clean and that they believed in the programme. If they used, they would be doing so in the same town they were clean in. All these things had to shift for them to use comfortably.

The first thing I notice is the lies. They used to be so open and honest. They shared nearly everything. At the point where someone says "I think I might have a drink" in my ex-

perience, nearly all of them have already had one. The lies have already begun. They just get more regular after that. They say they are not getting anything out of the meetings, even though they used to believe that they were there to contribute rather than receive. They become very judgemental as if they are better than all the people they used to love and fellowship with, and by the end of it they are generally no longer friends with any of us.

Oh, and how about this one, "if I have any trouble, I'll just come back". This is the mental part of the illness speaking, because just months before they were sharing about their inability to control their using once they started. It's the old adage "the only one they're fooling is themselves".

It is a very sad process watching someone you love leave recovery and return to the misery of using. It is watching someone you love go from being honest and positive, enthusiastic, healthy and emotionally warm become negative and spiteful. Lying for any old reason and blaming all of us for things that have nothing to do with NA. One of them rang me to said bitterly "you never come and see me anymore". The truth was I only ever saw him at meetings, NA cafes and visits to my house to work the steps and it was he who left that process. I was still doing all the things I had always done.

Plus, who wants to hang around with someone who is using. It is really awful. I mean I am happy to help anyone wants to stay clean but if someone is in the righteous process of using, I don't want to be friends with them sorry. It's an appalling social space to share. In the end I am happy with my little world. I don't take drugs, I don't drink and I haven't for a long time. This used to be an unfamiliar way to live but now it sits so well with me I can't imagine a life without clarity or fellowship. I am so grateful for the life I have been given and I will not give it away for "a drink".

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**

The Top Ten... ...JFT Moments

10. You're supposed to be working on a specific Step and every JFT reading at every meeting just happens to be on that exact step or procrastination or something, until you actually start writing on it.
9. A difficult person gives you grief because you've been selfish (again) or a defect of character has reared it's ugly head (again) and the JFT reading at the very next meeting you attend talks about the 10th Step inventory.
8. Anxious about family or work etc. and too distracted to really pay attention properly at the start of the meeting and a line about prayer in the reading jumps out at you. You try it and the anxiety blows away like steam in a stiff breeze.
7. I didn't hear any of that reading. Was it about listening?
6. You're asked to do the JFT and as you read it out the darn thing is all

about your most pressing current problem and what to do about it.

5. Doing the JFT reading in the morning and later that same day something happens and you realise you managed a situation better simply because the right idea had been planted in your brain at just the right time.
4. Desperate for some inspiration and picking a page at random from the JFT. Reading a couple of times to appreciate it properly and finding a little peace of mind for a few minutes.
3. Hearing a reading you've heard several times before, but this time it's meaning actually strikes home and you realise you've never really heard it properly.
2. Reading the JFT first thing in the morning and 30 seconds after closing the book, the words have already disappeared from your memory, but a hint of the flavour lingers on.
1. Receiving a text from another person in recovery that's a quote from the JFT and feeling the connection because the words are so familiar.

Thoughts on Service

I've been reading through archival material lately, old NA Way mags, Area minutes etc. to try and get some inspiration about what to write for this article. As usual I was stumped for ideas because it doesn't feel like there is anything 'new' or 'interesting' to write about. What I found in the archives tended to confirm this, as many of the issues that vex us today were being written about years ago.

Funny thing is that as I read those old articles written by NA members trying so hard to express their understanding, experience and commitment to the fellowship my feelings shifted, just a little.

Thinking about it afterward I realised that even now, years later, their words were reaching someone and having an impact. My connection to the fellowship was being improved just by the simple act of reading. I started to get yet another hint of the amazing power of NA and the strength we gain from reaching out to each other, be it in a meeting, at a café in the 'second half', on the phonedlines, or any of the dozen other ways the message is carried.

The articles that reached my heart are those that are written from people's own experiences, just like in a meeting. So I gained some inspiration and confidence that if I simply write from my heart, my words will probably reach someone else's.

When I became a GSR and went along to my first Area meeting I have to admit to being pretty cynical about the ability of a bunch of addicts to organise themselves. What I found is that yes, it can get a bit out of hand sometimes, personalities getting in the way of principles, feelings being hurt when the chairperson steps in and tries to settle differences of opinion etc.

Overwhelmingly though the process worked, issues got

sorted out, groups received information and support, the Area achieved most of the stated goals.

Recently I've become an Area chairperson myself. It's quite a challenging role. Our Area was suffering from a lack of volunteers to take on administrative roles, just like a lot of others.

Quite a while back we had tried to reduce the time taken at Area, thinking that if we did folks wouldn't find it so boring and be more willing to step up. One of the things we did to reduce the time was try to get GSRs to submit reports by email and only verbally discuss things that were problems for their groups at the Area meeting. This process eventually broke down as GSRs changed, email account names got forgotten and Area didn't focus on the education aspect.

There was another aspect to this shift to 'efficiency' that hadn't been considered but I feel has been rather profound and it's related to this connectedness that I referred to earlier.

At our Area meeting two months ago, I raised the suggestion that we do a round the room report/discussion/question for each GSR and how folks felt about that. The response was passionate and very clear, people were feeling the need to hear what's going on in the other groups and the minutes/email reports weren't achieving that. This need for connecting with other people's experience, to hear the stories and share your own are one of the most powerful aspects of Area service, one that we hadn't appreciated fully until we started feeling the effects of its absence.

So we had a vote and it was unanimous that we try doing the round the room report again. We tried it and the result was impressive, everyone had their say, we all heard how things are going and the 'business' part of the meeting got done too, all within the allotted time. The mood was really positive throughout and many people commented on how much

better the meeting felt.

So what I've learned is that if I feel that things aren't working properly, I have to speak up because other people probably feel the same thing but maybe haven't really acknowledged it yet. When I do this, either at Area, in my group and even at work, usually my instincts are right and with the support of other people we can try to do something about it. If I keep my mouth shut and just put up with it, thinking that it's out of my control or "that's just the way it is", I get frustrated and even resentful and service becomes a painful experience rather than the life affirming choice it can be.

Dex, Sydney



Twenty Seven Seventy

Twenty seven seventy...
Doesn't mean that much to me,
Took thirty plus years for me to break free,
You'd think by now it would let me be.

Granddad enlisted with the First Light Horse,
The old man worked hard all his life of course,
A street level junkie I had,
No remorse...

Housing estate full of feral wildlife,
Crime and violence present and rife,
What ever happen to a simple life?
Nothing for me but trouble and strife!

Genetic disposition,
Product of environment,
Peer pressure? The "Social Norm"
It really makes no difference...

All around conditioned unemployed,
Hope for a future became null and void,
The apathy was something that really annoyed;
All dreams and aspirations finally destroyed!

Everyone I knew had some type of addiction,
No one recognised any form of affliction...
Alcohol, Drugs, Sex, Blood or the Gamble
The social fabric out west was a fuckin shamble!

Love contorted, lives aborted,
Helped to twist and warp my thinking
Living under the cloak of denial,
Couldn't see my life was sinking...

Every decision was made out of fear,
Turned into a target if you shed a tear
Confusion reigned, the lies and the games
Who knew the truth? That was never clear...

I soon got used to this kind of street living,
Always taking, never giving,

The shame and the guilt needed forgiving,
Lost all hope, with nothing to believe in...

Some Druitt boys, had no toys,
They played with dope and needles,
Something that started as a lark,
Had turned into pure Evil!

Once I had gone it continued to follow,
Many years gone by; couldn't fill the hollow,
False esteem, false pride; found life hard to swallow,
In shit and in misery I liked to wallow...

Feeling crucified, empty inside,
Overwhelmed by grief and loss,
Tried to escape but without knowing,
Nailed myself to a cross!

Back down or run, nobody dared,
Stand ya ground maybe die,
Too afraid to be scared!
If worst came to worse would anyone have cared?

No need to lie, it's not about deception,
Just one kid's twisted perception...
Twenty seven seventy,
A new way of life, what a conception...

I didn't know that I had a choice,
Until one day I found a voice.
A voice of reason inside of me,
And when I listened it set me free.

It told me of a better way,
To live my life the NA way,
Wasn't sure whether to run or stay,
I'll give it a go, just for today!

When I look back there is some regret,
I had to forgive but never forget,
Lose some people I would never have met;
Put down the drugs and took off like a jet.

I'm welcomed in here without any condition,
From within myself I sought permission;
The shame from the past is now in remission.
Wrong choices I made... I should have gone fishin!

Childhood stolen as if by a thief,
Never did learn to deal with my grief,
A higher power, I now have this belief;
The way I live today is such a relief.

Whatever the crowd I fitted the scene,
Chameleon like if you know what I mean;
I can't remember half the places I've been...
I Love my life now that I'm clean!

I once lived a life of dishonesty,
Fuelled by ridicule and negativity,
Had to learn how to do it honestly;
Walking the walk, brimming with integrity!

Twenty Seven Seventy, I'll always be,
Whatever I do, wherever I go, it's a part of me.
2, 7, 7, 0,
Helped shape me into the person you know...

2770 will always be me... But now I can hold my head up
because I am free!

Andrew G



Annie V.

Hi family!

I recently went overseas to visit family in the US. I had been there before but last time I was there I didn't do any meetings. It was a busy trip and I'm at a point where I can go a couple of weeks without and be OK. But it has always annoyed me that I didn't make the effort and I was 100% going this time.

After I arrived, with a sinus infection and serious jet lag, I was feeling a little low. I also felt a little intimidated. New York is massive and I was on my own. I'm not a big one for travelling by myself. Strangely while I can spend days at home without seeing another soul, when it comes to travelling the world – I like company! So yeah, I felt a little overwhelmed to start.

The first day I went into Manhattan I knew I had to have a plan. The lessons learned in rehab die hard. So I figured I would do what comes easiest to me and that meant shopping and a meeting. I found a lunchtime meeting in midtown, oddly close to some of the best shopping in the world, and off I went.

I was worried I wouldn't find it. Silly me – there was a door with an NA symbol on it! In I went, up the stairs and there it was. It was an upstairs room in a church with big windows and a guy setting up the chairs and the literature. Just like at home. I sat down and people started filtering in, just like at home. The secretary started reading the preamble, also just like at home and then everyone started sharing. It was a round robin meeting where everyone shares in turn. Not like at home but pretty good. I had been told that to share in meetings in the US you had to basically ask so I had actually been looking forward to not sharing!

In the end I was glad to be able to share because I wanted to tell these people how much it helped me that they were there. When I went into that room and sat down and heard

people speak I was reminded that we are all the same and that I am at home in any meeting of Narcotics Anonymous in the world.

So I said that, and said where I was from and that was about it. One guy said that he didn't know until then that he had brothers and sisters in recovery in Australia. It was bizarrely moving. After the meeting I got hugs from members. This was after the end when they hug as they say the serenity prayer! I went up to a girl who was one day clean and gave her a hug and told her to keep coming back. So much hugging! It was mental!

The second week I was there I went back to the same meeting. People came up to me and welcomed me back with what were some pretty terrible attempts at Australian accents but they were really nice! When I shared this time I talked about some stuff that was bothering me and had people nodding their heads the whole way through. No where else do you get that stuff. It's like going somewhere cold and being wrapped in a blanket. More hugs!

Two things I really noticed – first people said “If you don't pick up, you can't get high” like a mantra and everyone would join in regardless of who was sharing. So true. And best said with an American accent. The second was some people, when they open their share, would say “Hi family, I'm blah blah and I'm an addict” which I have never heard before. But I loved it; because that's how I felt. There's a feeling of security that I now get from being with my family, and I got the same feeling walking into a meeting of NA, even though I knew no one in the room.

Everyone in that room reminded me of someone I knew. The conversations and the difficulties are the same. The joys and the triumphs are the same. And I realised that in many ways that I view NA as my family too. I could get up at my home group and say “Hi family”...if I wasn't so self-obsessed.

This next bit is a bit embarrassing but the third Friday I was there I had every intention of going back again but I got “stuck” in a rather nice shop and lost track of time a bit. And on reflection, that just means to me that those meetings did the job of settling me down and feeling comfortable wherever I was.

So thank you to the Friday Midtown Matinee meeting of Narcotics Anonymous—I hope to be back some day!

Caroline M., Canberra



One day at a time

There are two days in every week about which we should not worry, two days which should be kept free from fear and apprehension.

One of these days is Yesterday with all its mistakes and cares, its faults and blunders, its aches and pains.

Yesterday has passed forever beyond our control. All the money in the world cannot bring back Yesterday.

We cannot undo a single act we performed; we cannot erase a single word we said. Yesterday is gone forever.

The other day we should not worry about is Tomorrow with all its possible adversities, its burdens, its large promise and its poor performance; Tomorrow is also beyond our immediate control.

Tomorrow's sun will rise, either in splendour or behind a mask of clouds, but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in Tomorrow, for it is yet to be born.

This leaves only one day, Today. Any person can fight the battle of just one day. It is when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities Yesterday and Tomorrow that we break down.

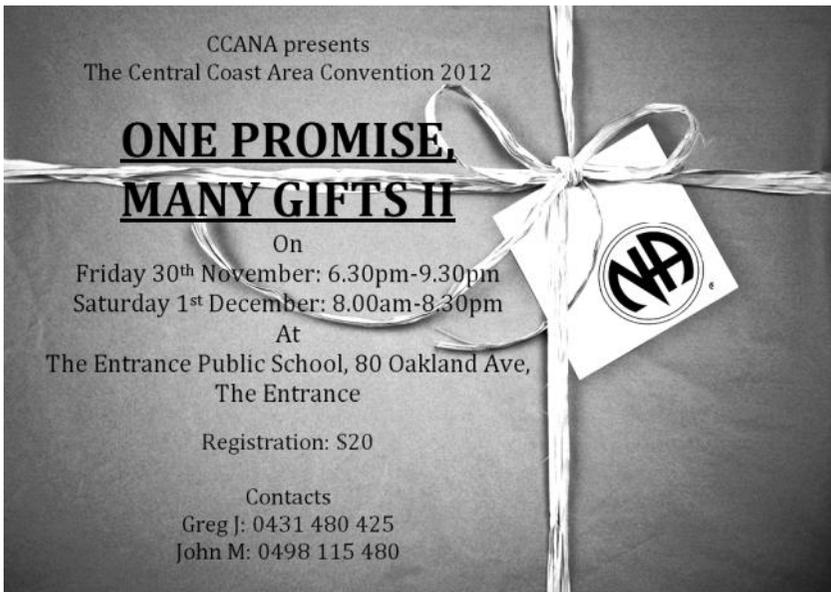
It is not the experience of Today that drives a person mad, it is the remorse or bitterness of something which happened Yesterday and the dread of what Tomorrow may bring. Let us, therefore, Live but one day at a time.

Author Unknown

Thought of the day...

Never do something
permanently stupid because
you're temporarily upset

Unknown



CCANA presents
The Central Coast Area Convention 2012

ONE PROMISE,
MANY GIFTS II

On
Friday 30th November: 6.30pm-9.30pm
Saturday 1st December: 8.00am-8.30pm

At
The Entrance Public School, 80 Oakland Ave,
The Entrance

Registration: \$20

Contacts
Greg J: 0431 480 425
John M: 0498 115 480



Freedom

*Right Here Right Now
Narcotics Anonymous
Far North Coast Convention
Bangalow A & I Hall
March 1st - 3rd 2013*



EVANS HEAD MENS RETREAT
8th – 10th March 2013 at Camp Koinonia

This NA Men's Retreat is being held to create a weekend of fellowship, unity and meetings for men in recovery from addiction. Camp Koinonia is located 50m from the beach and provides a relaxing environment where we can get to know each other better.

Arrival time is from 4pm onwards on Friday evening. Please remember that only supper will be served on this day, so ensure you make your own arrangements for dinner. The last meeting will finish at 12:30pm on Sunday, with check-out time being 2pm



Concession \$110 & Full \$120

Please contact Joe B or Phil L as pre-paid registration is required—Joe 0407 065 849 or Phil L 0421 936 320

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