

NA Today

March 2013



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.

Editor: Caroline M Vectors: Gina C & Sue K

A holiday state of mind...

By which I mean, a relaxed, positive state of mind. One I did not have when I went away on holiday recently. Instead what I had was grumpy, complaining, pain-in-the-ass state of mind. Not exactly a fabulous place to start.

And I had my reasons. Mostly to do with stress and being a stress-head and being stressed out. And with the way my work's been lately goddamn it – it's valid enough! Sure, yes it was valid and real and all that shit but not where I wanted to be... although it took me a little while to figure that out.

My friend and I arrived at the hotel we were staying at, hot and tired and me with a splitting headache, and my first thought was that the photos on their website were quite creative/deceptive. Ten minutes after that I decided the travel agents had made a mistake. 5 minutes after that I was on the phone to the aforementioned travel agent. Not much longer after that I started to wonder if we were in some kind of old people's home. The Pacific arm of the great exotic Marigold Hotel perhaps...

It wasn't until I was floating in the wondrously tepid waters of the Pacific Ocean having taken something for my headache, sorted out the room and my friend said "isn't this amazing?" that I started to realise that "yes it was amazing" and I was being EXTRAORDINARILY negative.

No one has ever accused me of being an optimist. Even though I am generally happy enough I still retain the last bits of what I like to think is pragmatism but possibly I am kidding myself. I have a tendency to negativity that I have to guard against. And mostly these days I manage to do that. But in my weakened state (stress overload) I hadn't guarded against shit. Instead I was in full blown negativity lock-down. I had forgotten that 'feelings aren't facts' and other assorted relevant clichés. Mainly the one about misery being op-

tional...

Thank god I have done enough recovery that in that moment I realised I could wreck my own holiday if I didn't snap out of it and adjust my head. And what's amazing is that I can do that these days - because I have learned those skills in recovery. And so I decided to stop the pity party, get a grip and have a good time.

And I cannot tell you how hard it was to get on the plane home! Turns out I had a great time, totally relaxed, did lots of cool things, ate great food and had a blast. Me at the end of the week's holiday thought that me at the beginning of the week was a complete lunatic but really I am just grateful that recovery has shown me that I don't have to sit in a crap state of mind.

Recovery has given me choices in so many areas of my life. I choose not to use on a daily basis and then I get to choose all other kinds of cool things in my life. It's a trip.

Jenny, Canberra



It works...

Hi all of NA. I'm John T. and clean today and I love being clean and I've been clean for 6 years 5 months and 3 days - thanks to NA which first gave me a suspicion that it's possible to live a life drug free.

I constantly wrote to my parents when I was in youth training centres and prison that I was going to get a job, license, partner, kids and settle down. When I was introduced to NA I had no desire to stop using, but had a desire to not return to prison. I'd had enough of prison, having been in and out of institutions for many years.

I had heard at meetings that it was possible to live drug free. I stayed clean for just under 2 years twice and in that period I obtained a car, a license, had a rehab romance, had 2 sons, had service in NA and stayed out of prison. I went through experiences that I heard people in NA went through, sometimes I used, sometimes I never, and then I became a single parent of two baby boys – the rehab romance didn't work out.

I stayed clean for my sons, not for myself and used again. The last time I used was awful within myself, I felt terrible using but couldn't stop and reached out for help and into another rehab which was 12 step based. I was desperate not to use anymore and I begged them to tell me what to do as I really needed to do it and I left that rehab with an 8th step list. On that list was to clear up something from my criminal past which meant coming back to prison.

I'd been out of prison for 18 years and thanks to NA I have a life worth living, having my sons still at the ages of 13 and 14 years and having my own business and then I got a knock on the door and I'm now back in prison, clearing up the wreckage of my past, and still clean.

I'm in prison but I have freedom within myself and I do one 12-step meeting here a week, I phone my sponsor once a week, and I ring a couple of other members at home in Victoria, being in prison in WA. But most important, I talk with my higher power that gets me to sanity of my thinking.

I go up for parole in 3 weeks and if I'm set free I'll be going to a meeting instead of my dealer as I've run out of excuses to use. NA gave me a suspicion, now it's a reality that no matter what, don't use.

I received NA literature in the mail today - so grateful. I guess I have a meeting here every day in prison, expressing my experience, strength and hope. My higher power gives me purpose no matter what situation I'm in.

Instead of using drugs, I pray and it doesn't cost me anything. Thanks NA, it works.

John T.

Cool thing I heard at a meeting once...

*“Finding and defining
God is the responsibility
of every individual
addict”*



Alex C.

Love at a Meeting

I have been turning up at meetings as a clean member of NA now for just over 26 years, and I never fail to be impressed by the impact of a greeting hug and the generosity of fellow travellers in recovery when we are least able to love ourselves. It has been a little over 24 years since it has been about me, and I was recently present at the 1st birthday of a young sponsee who had truly turned unlovable self into an art form.

As his sponsor, clearly, we have been doing a lot of work on this untruth, but no better than the occasion of a birthday, a cake adorned with a single candle, the group signed card/s, a rousing (off key) birthday chorus, the congratulatory personal shares of a mutually shared journey, and a second half where unloved self is the centre of attention to turn that around.

This youngster was still using when I first met him at a lunch time meeting, and early intros to recovery were just about chasing him back into the meeting rooms, many crisis phone calls, and coffee shop hook ups clean or not.

Since then, he has completed the whole 12 Steps, is proactive in service roles, and as a clean addict in recovery with program ordnance, he is now experiencing the many empowering gifts of our program.

The “We not me” of our group meetings remain as the most powerful influence in every addict’s “right of passage” to this very uncomfortable crossing. As with self, to get all of this, all we had to do **was keep turning up at our beloved meetings.**

Alan W., Melbourne

‘What do you mean the meeting is %\$#@’ing closed?’

Does anyone find it confusing when they see a meeting listed and it has something like this - Tuesday 7PM (Closed)

What the...

Why are they listing the name and details of a meeting that is closed?

Well there is a reason for it and the some of us thought that you would like to know why!

Closed meetings are meetings just for addicts. They can be put in place by a new group or an existing group. Closed meetings are there for groups to provide an atmosphere in which addicts can feel more certain that those attending the meeting will be able to identify with them.

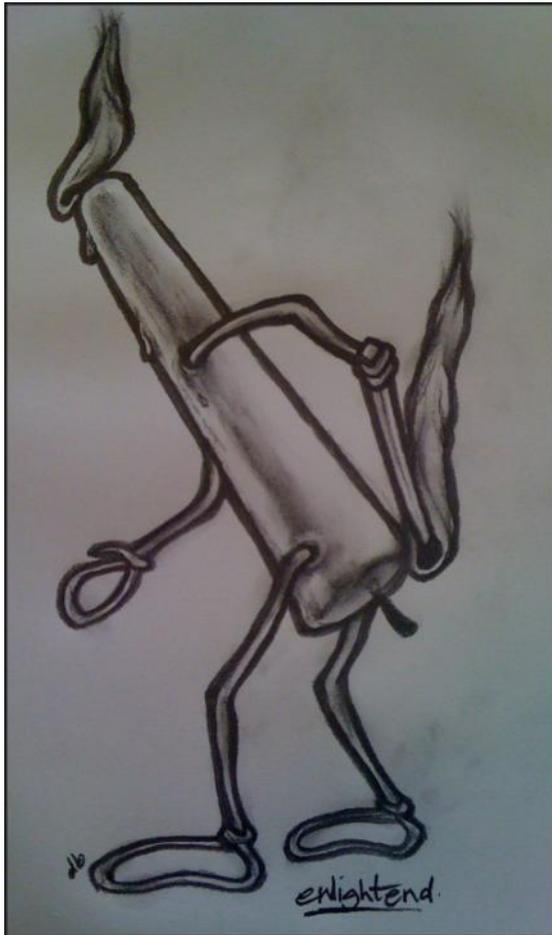
These meetings may also allow the newcomer to feel more comfortable as they will be amongst addicts and not outsiders from the general community. At the start of the meeting it is usually explained in the preamble why the meeting is a ‘closed’ meeting and how this relates to its primary purpose.

‘Open’ meetings are just that - open to anyone who wants to attend. This can be a good way of inviting friends and families into meetings to help celebrate milestones in recovery. ‘Open’ meetings can also be used to invite key members of the community, so they can gain an understanding of how Narcotics Anonymous works. (It should also be noted that that NA groups do not accept monetary contributions from non-addicts.)

In both cases we should always be reminded that the focus of the group is to facilitate a meeting where recovery is being shared one addict to another.

We hope this helps in your discovery of new meetings while on your path of recovery.

Regional Outreach Committee



David B.

In praise of one hour meetings

A while back there was a guy who moved down here from another fellowship and who tried to introduce some stuff that had worked there in the meetings where he was from. One of those things was one hour meetings in the evening. Shock! Horror! Did he get anywhere – no. Because in the group conscience he kept being told “that’s not how we do it”, “we’ve never done it like that” and my personal favourite...”it’s always been this way”. This was despite the fact that the meeting in question was struggling and needed ‘something’ to help it keep going.

And now, several years later, that meeting does now only go for an hour and it’s well attended and everyone’s happy. Or as happy as a bunch of sensitive, self-obsessed addicts can be. And just to be clear – I can be as guilty as of not wanting things to change as much as the next OCM. I have said those words... “but it’s always been like this”. More specifically... “but the meeting’s always been here”. I didn’t want to change the venue of a meeting even though we were having trouble making the rent. Because it had always been there.

But now I understand two things. First, that a meeting is not a venue or a format, it’s one addict helping another addict. And that can happen anywhere, anytime. Second, that everything changes. In the end that meeting is still where it’s always been but others in my area have had to move. Venues change and close and put up their prices and there’s nothing we can do about that. Sometimes, to stay relevant meetings have to change too.

We are all used to one hour meetings at lunchtime but it turns out they can be great in the evenings as well. Here’s why...

1. Good for working families – I know this sounds like a political slogan but it’s true. Adding on travel time and chatting

time, a one and a half hour meeting can go on for quite a long time. A one hour meeting means more time with the family. Yay.

2. Shorter shares – to get more people to share in a hour meeting generally means limiting shares to 5 mins. Speed sharing! No more over-sharers hogging valuable sharing time.

3. Cheaper rent – this one is pretty pragmatic but not without merit. When a group is struggling to make rent this could mean the difference between staying open and closing.

So my message is to keep an open mind about what's possible with meetings and don't be scared to change times, formats, venues, whatever you need to keep carrying the message to the addict who still suffers and the ones who need to be reminded that they did indeed, once suffer too. (I'm talking about all you OCMs who don't do meetings anymore OK).



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...
...shared about topics?

1. How much better my life is
2. How much harder my life is
3. How great my new relationship is
4. How f*%\$ked up my ex is
5. How exciting my life is
6. How bored I am
7. How much I love meetings
8. How much I hate everyone in the rooms
9. How amazing personal growth is
10. How painful change is

We're only human...

Giving it away

For the purpose of this article, we identify 'the loner' as a geographically, or institutionally, isolated addict who wants to recover from addiction. Those unable to attend NA meetings.

The following are typical of the letters received at our NA service office.

Dear NA,

I don't know who else to write to, I went to a detox in the city a few times & there were some people there who talked about NA.

I live in the country & there are no meetings here. I've been trying to get clean for years, but keep failing. I've just gotten out of detox yet again, but am really scared that I will start using.

All my friends use, but I don't really see them very much & I'm even finding it hard to leave the house. I feel so alone & like no one understands. Can you please help me? What can I do? I'm sick of this & am really struggling.

Is there anybody out there??

I've now been in prison for just over 2 yrs, I found an NA book that reads like my life story.

It's been difficult to talk to others here, who really don't want to stop using the drugs. I'm trying to get a meeting set up, but would like to talk to other people who have been on this same path. I heard an addict 'alone' is in bad company & connection with others gives me hope to know I'm not doing this alone. Please put me on the list for the NA Pen Pal Program.

Hello to my NA,

I live outside of any of the major cities, when I get to travel for work I try & go to as many meetings as I can. It's been really hard lately after having an accident, not being able to drive. Am desperately seeking NA members to write to, so I can stay in touch with my recovery, to also help me stay out of me head. I would like to be of service to anyone else who feels alone or isolated in our NA fellowship..

The below excerpts are from IP 21 'The Loner' Staying Clean in Isolation..

“Receiving a letter makes my day! It seems the letters I receive from my loner friends are always perfectly timed. It reminds me that someone far away is getting to know me and cares enough to write. I matter in someone else's recovery and they matter in mine.”

“It is so easy for me to forget about the importance of sharing, especially when my pride and arrogance prevent me from sharing feelings and thoughts I don't like or don't want to have. When I write things about myself, it helps.”

“Being a loner at times can be frustrating, but I have to make an effort in every area of my new life. Being a part of NA is special to me. I know I have friends whom I haven't met yet, but to know they are there gives me hope to go on.”

“Some of the special things I like to do when no one is home and I'm not at a meeting are to read my NA Way & NA Today magazines, my Basic Text and write to other loners in NA. Anything that talks to me about recovery, love, and fellowship the NA way adds direction to my thoughts. My most dependable source of comfort and enlightenment is my Higher Power. I'm very grateful to have come to believe.”



OUTREACH PEN PAL PROGRAM

Being an addict in recovery is hard work! Doing it in isolation is doubly hard.

When there are few or no meetings nearby for you to go to, there is no coffee shop just around the corner, how do you stay in touch?

The primary purpose of the Pen Pal Program is to provide a contact to correspond with remote members and those in institutions, who are not able to meet other members or to get support from our traditional meetings.

NA Outreach is linking isolated addicts to other recovering addicts. If you are willing and have 2 year+ clean, **WE NEED YOU....**

What can YOU do...

- Discuss the program with your Group and Area so others are aware of it.
- Take all information to your H&I meetings.
- BE a pen pal to someone in isolation.
- Join the Outreach committee – we're always welcoming new members.

Please contact Outreach to become a pen pal to those in isolation at [**outreach@na.org.au**](mailto:outreach@na.org.au)

If you are an addict in isolation and you would like to receive letters from an NA member, write to...

Outreach-Pen Pal Program
c/- Fellowship Service Office
1st Floor, 204 King St
Newtown 2042 NSW

***OUR GRATITUDE SPEAKS
WHEN WE CARE AND WHEN
WE SHARE WITH OTHERS
THE NA WAY***



The Primary Purpose

When I walked into recovery this time around I walked in with a black plastic bag of clothes and a soul full of shame. They told me in the meetings that I wasn't a bad person, I was a sick person trying to get well and there was a way to do this.

I didn't want to hear their solution, I just wanted to whinge and dump all my problems on people and in the meetings. The problem with that was I was getting sicker and the people that were listening were getting sick of hearing my shit. I meet this member who told me I was full of shit and that I needed to work the program. He told me that he would sit down with me and take me through it.

What a blessing that I was a humble enough to accept this mans help. Going to meetings is not enough to recover, the founding members of all 12 steps fellowships understood this. They worked the steps in the first few days of being clean, this a different message than we hear today.

Today we hear “wait until you feel better” and most of the time this is being told by the people who haven't worked the program, just go to meetings. This message is killing people. I just hope the message gets through, after all this is the groups' primary purpose.

Blake R.

Another cool thing I heard at a meeting...

*“NA Unity depends on
personal recovery”*

FROM THE VAULT

The most important person at any meeting

I've often heard that the newcomer is the most important person at any meeting. While I agree with the statement, I don't always agree with the way it is interpreted.

I've been to meetings of 20-35 addicts where there has been only a couple with more than a year clean, and neither was asked to share! The room was full of newcomers and many of them shared their stories, but I have to wonder at the quality of the message they took away.

When we share at meetings, we share our experience,

strength and hope of recovery. The newcomer has these things in limited amounts. I'm not suggesting that newcomers should not be asked to share from the floor, just that we remember that they also need to share by listening.

The second part of the quote actually says "The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away." This clearly suggests that meetings are supposed to be places where the newcomer listens to the old timers to learn how it works.

On a personal level, we often relate best to others whose clean time is close to our own. We sometimes suffer similar anxieties and problems at similar stages of recovery. While it is comforting to know that we are not unusual, or alone in whatever state we are in, the hope that our situation will improve comes from listening to others share that have come through similar situations.

When chairing a meeting, I think that we need to try and get a diverse range of addicts to share. It's always good to open and close meetings with a couple of speakers on either end of the meeting that have a powerful, positive message of recovery.

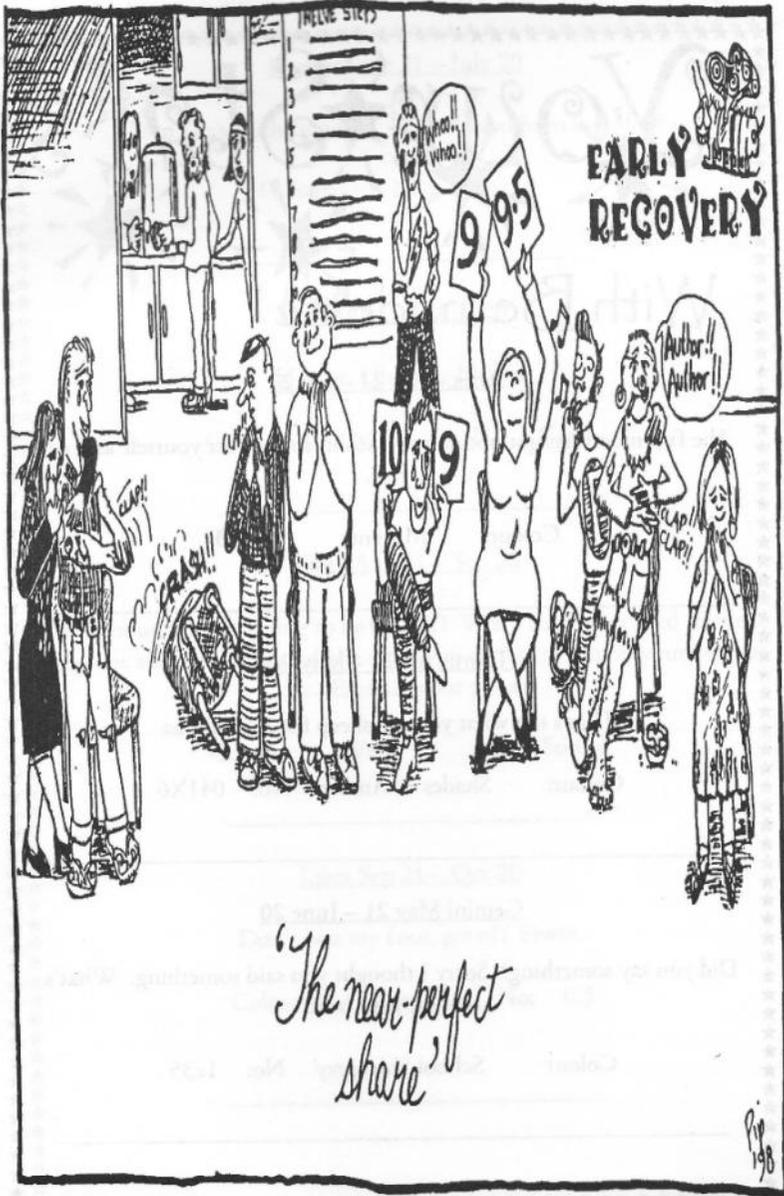
Throughout the meeting, we can aim to have a mix of different types of stories from speakers of different ages, cultures, sexuality, clean time and of course gender. One of the ways to ensure this happens is to choose a chair person with sufficient clean time and skills to have a fair idea of who's who. After that it's in the hands of our Higher Power.

The newcomer sharing allows them to participate in the meeting and reminds us where we have come from, which we cannot afford to forget. But, "we can only keep what we have by giving it away", so the older cleaner member needs to be sharing from the floor so that the newcomer (the most important person) hears that 'it will pass', and "it gets better".

These are the messages that encourage the newcomer to "keep coming back".

Kathy Y. Sydney
(reprinted from NA Today, Issue No.2, Autumn 1999)





Sacking your sponsor for dummies – a ‘how to’ guide

Sometimes it doesn't work out. That relationship you had so much hope for? Well, it just wasn't what you thought. Or they weren't who you thought they were. Or even, they weren't who you needed them to be. So what do you do?

Yes, the sponsor / sponsee relationship is just like any other relationship. Sometimes it just doesn't work. What do you do when that super-together, awesome person you thought would be your mentor and guide turns out to be more of a control freak than your mother? Or alternatively when that super-together, awesome person you thought would be your mentor and guide turns out to have more issues than you do? Or weirder issues than you do? Or an on-going gambling problem? Or a problem with 13th stepping newcomers? Or just turns out to not be on the same wavelength as you?

You sack them.

Easier said than done I hear you say. Many of us don't come in to recovery brimming with functional social skills and tact. Some of us may not even want those things. Some of us immediately put our sponsors into a position of 'power over' or 'authority figure' in our minds and then don't know what the hell to do! Two simple phrases may help.

1. It's not you, it's me

We all know this one! Most popular, yet most hated breakup line ever. All-purpose tool for those of us who are bit scared about this whole sacking thing. Make it about you. **You** need someone tougher - someone who'll make you knuckle down and do all the steps in 48 hours! Alternatively, you need someone more laidback – someone who'll let you go at your own pace. It doesn't matter, pick one that suits and go for it!

Still not sure you can say it to their face? Then text / facebook / smoke signal it!

2. It's not me, it's you

If getting upfront is not your problem then this one's for you. Tell them what you really think. I'm sure they'll take it on-board in the spirit in which it was intended. Tell them you've been doing their inventory and they've come up lacking and you deserve/need/want more from your sponsor.

But seriously folks... it happens all the time and as both a sponsee and a sponsor of others myself, what really matters is that you find the right sponsor for you. I have been sacked. And it was cool. Mostly we are trying to be grown-ups so this stuff is just more practice – in the end it's all valuable life skills (smiley face).

p.s. I would like to note that I was sacked because my ex-sponsee found someone else they felt was better suited to them..not any other reason OK...for reals...



Recovering without god

A few months ago I was sharing in a large meeting about using the group as a power greater than myself. An addict approached me after the meeting and asked me, "So you don't believe in god?" I replied that I didn't. She then went on to tell me that she was sure there was a god and that I must have been going to the wrong churches all my life. All I could do was chuckle inside and thank her for her observation.

While this type of occurrence is not mean-spirited, I can assure you that it is common and unwanted. When I came to the rooms of NA I was told that I could have any higher power I wanted as long as it was loving, caring, and greater than me. The NA group met all those requirements. I have used the group since I found NA, and here I am, more than eight years later, still clean and serene.

Atheists in recovery are either few and far between or just a very quiet bunch. We tend to keep our non-beliefs to ourselves because there is a stigma attached to not believing in god. But every so often, one of us will make it known that we have been recovering without god. I felt alone for a very long time because my non-beliefs were in direct opposition to what most people felt was the only way to get clean: with god. Even our literature stresses belief in a god, albeit a liberal interpretation so as to not offend us nonbelievers.

I struggled for a long time over whether or not I should "come out of the closet" with my atheism. When I finally did, I was surprised at the support I received, not only from friends in recovery but from non-addicts as well. What I have discovered is that I do not need to believe as everyone else does to recover. I have discovered that I do not need to pray to something I do not believe in to work the steps. Do not get me wrong; there were many people both inside and outside the rooms who made it very clear that they feared for my soul and that they believed I was wrong, but that was a mi-

nority. I have realized through working the Twelve Steps that I do not have to prove myself to anyone but myself. I am a living example that an atheist can recover.

One thing I hope to see in the future of Narcotics Anonymous would be for the rooms to be more accessible to those who do not believe in any supernatural higher powers. I know that progress takes time. When I meet other atheists in recovery, I encourage them to share with others that it is okay to not believe. Anyone, whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jew, atheist, or of any other faith, can recover from the disease of addiction using the Twelve Steps. I do not and will not use the term “god” when sharing because I believe it denotes certain ideas about a supreme being, which I don’t believe in, but I do appreciate and respect those who do.

Part of what makes me keep coming back is the love and tolerance we share within the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. I encourage others to think about what they are sharing in meetings. Does it make everyone in the room feel welcome, or does it marginalize someone? We as members have to stay vigilant to make sure EVERY addict who wants recovery can get it and feel welcomed. Thanks for letting me share.

Rip W, Missouri, USA
(re-printed from the NA Way Magazine – October 2012 at www.na.org)



NA Women's Retreat NSW

Date: Fri. 25 Oct, 2013 - Sun. 27 Oct, 2013

Location: Camp Koinona Evan's Head

This is the 4th North Coast NA Women's Retreat. The past two years have been amazing weekends of meetings, fellowship and unity for women in recovery from addiction. Many of those who have attended agree that this retreat is "*a heart opening experience*" and no doubt this year will be just as incredible.

The schedule includes lots of meetings, early morning beach walks, free time on Saturday afternoon, a recreational evening on Saturday and a meditation session on Sunday morning. The Registration Form and Attendee Information are available on the NA website at www.na.org.au.



KEEP CLEAN

AND

PASS IT ON

**GREATER QUEENSLAND AREA
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS CONENTION
MAY 3 - 5 2013**

VACNA Events for 2013

Victoria Anniversary - 6:30 pm Saturday
1st June 2013, Elwood Sailing Club, 9
Ormond Esplanade Elwood VIC 3184

Convention - 16th-18th August 2013,
Cnr Graham & Pickles Street, Albert Park
VIC 3206

Spiritual Retreat - 8th-10th November
2013, 24 Mc Dougall road, Anglesea VIC
3230

For Updates and other events visit us on
the web at [http://www.navic.net.au/
news/](http://www.navic.net.au/news/) or on Facebook at [http://
www.facebook.com/?sk=welcome#!/
cac.victoria?fref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/?sk=welcome#!/cac.victoria?fref=ts)

**GOLD COAST AREA
CONVENTION**

20, 21 & 22 SEPTEMBER, 2013

Contact:

Johno L – 0402 669 224
johnoleighton@gmail.com

(Convention Chair)

Andrew D – 0405 976 605

singularism@gmail.com

(Convention Information Chair)

WATCH THIS SPACE !!!!!

**CAMP SERENITY
GOLD COAST**

26, 27 & 28

JULY, 2013

THE LOG CABIN

**3360 Nerang-Murwillumbah
Rd,**

Natural Bridge QLD 4211

Contact

Paul S: 0438 176 098

FLYER OUT SOON

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NEWTOWN NSW 2042
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E SHOP@FSO.COM.AU

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TUESDAY 10.00AM - 4.00PM
WEDNESDAY 10.00AM - 3.00PM

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How's the serenity?



NA

National Hotline

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For all other info @

www.na.org.au