

NA TODAY

March 2014



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 contributions by members from around Australia, as well as current service and event information.

Foremost, we're dedicated to the celebration of our message:

An 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 may be your own story, experience, strength and hope or 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, drawings, top tens, ideas etc to:

natoday@na.org.au or to NA Today
c/- Fellowship Service Office
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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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Greetings from the (new) editor

First I want to apologise sincerely for the lack of a November 2013 issue. Many people sent articles in and I am sure they were disappointed not to see them in print. Rest assured, all of those contributions and more are to be found here in this issue.

There are couple of articles inside about loss and grief. The depression I slipped into was related to the death of my mother and I hesitate to talk about this stuff in such a public forum but thankfully I've learned that keeping even these most private feelings a secret can lead to isolation, impatience, intolerance and sickness. Reading those submissions touched me deeply and I am very grateful to the authors for taking the time to write down their innermost feelings and share them.

My mother's funeral was the first I had ever attended straight and also the first where I was asked to speak. Thanks to NA, I have become comfortable with public speaking. Nevertheless, I came very close to losing it on the last sentence and I can fully understand why my father felt unable to address the crowd. My mum was a very popular woman in the retirement village, so there was a quite massive turn out; standing room only.

It has been several months since she died and whenever I think about her, which is still quite often, the pain wells up and I have to practice many of the same techniques I have learned throughout my recovery, to shift my thinking to the good stuff. I'm deeply grateful I had a chance to make amends to her years ago and that I was able to spend time with her just prior to her death.

Sorry for drifting into such maudlin territory. That's what is going on for me and I couldn't pass up the opportunity for a share. I pretty much never do... :-)

I've taken to reading back issues of NA Way to see whether anything jumps out that is worth reprinting. I have picked out something from a decade ago and may continue with that idea for the coming issues. If any of you know of other even more ancient NA material that might serve well as a reminder that the process of recovery in NA has been a consistent phenomenon for a long long time, please send it in.

Please enjoy your fellow members' contributions and if **you** have an idea, anecdote, axe to grind, opinion, artistic creation, image or best of all your own story; write it down and send it in. Who knows, you may discover a whole new talent!

NAToday@na.org.au received a wide range of material as always; please enjoy.

Yours in service
dex

Candle Meditations

Satisfaction

*As my breathing steadies.
I notice the flickering
of the flame.
There is a strong desire
to have the flame
burn steadily
to match my thoughts
and breath.
This does not happen though,
and the tension remains
between desire
and reality.
Then it becomes clear
that this dissatisfaction
with "that which is"
pervades my life
and has ruined
my enjoyment of many good
and simple things.
To let the flame sputter
and perhaps die
is not a crime,
and certainly no reflection
upon me personally.
To accept this reality
for what it is,
and expect nothing more,
constitutes my personal
challenge, to find happiness
and satisfaction
in the smallest acts,
or non-acts.*



Change

*A
candle
freshly
lit without
time to have
formed those
protective
walls is
blown out
immediately by
a chance gust
of wind. The
next candle
with its flame
hidden inside
a deep well is
unmoved by the
wind and drowns
in melted wax. The
last with modest walls
around its flame flickers but
does not fail.*

Moving and reflecting ...

I have been back in my home town of Melbourne for about eight months now and I am only just starting to really feel a part of my new/old home fellowship. I left Melbourne in 2006 after many unsuccessful attempts to stop using drugs in the city where I was born.

I reached a point in my active addiction where, for the first time in a long time, the fear of staying the same became greater than my fear of the unknown.

When I left Melbourne, I had no plan other than to stay at a friend's house on the Gold Coast in Queensland. After five years rotting in a high rise public housing unit anything seemed more attractive than continuing down that path of painful self destruction, so I handed in my keys and bought a one way ticket out with my fortnightly DSP payment.

I moved into a house full of using addicts and continued to use drugs in Queensland. The only difference was that I was using drugs that I really didn't like and had hardly used for years.

Within six months it became painfully obvious to me that I still had the same problem, just in another state. It was also obvious that it was not about using my drug (or drugs) of choice.

For me, it was about using drugs in general, and I would use drugs that I didn't enjoy rather than not use anything.

At that point, the only experience I had of not using drugs (since I was fifteen) was when I attended a seven day residential detoxification facility in 1999. Even though I had bought and used drugs the same day that I left, I knew that I could stop while I was in there so I booked myself into the one public AOD detox service on the Gold Coast which as it turned out, was staffed by NA members.

It was from that point that my life really started to change. I was ready to do whatever it took and I had nothing left to put in front of my recovery. That was the beginning of the end of my using and Just For Today, I intend to keep it that way.

I successfully stopped using drugs at thirty three years old and I am now thirty nine. I recently celebrated my sixth year of continuous abstinence from most drugs including alcohol and nicotine. No luck so far with the caffeine!!

Like many others, my recovery rolled out in stages, detox(seven days), rehab(ten months), transitional housing(two months) and then NA. I had attended a few NA meetings in Melbourne and it was the only place I knew where people with stories like mine had managed to stay stopped.

Previously, I had been unwilling to do anything that was suggested; now I was willing to do whatever it took.

I asked a man who used to bring members and literature into the rehab if he could sponsor me and he said yes. I still consider him my sponsor today although the

formal side of our relationship is harder to maintain now that we are in different cities.

After rehab, I worked the steps, attended regular meetings, got a home group and took other service positions. I moved into an apartment with another member that I thought was taking the program as seriously as I was and my life quickly started to change. I got a part time job, started to study and practiced self nurturing which was something I had virtually no experience of.

That included swimming daily, and experimenting with cooking healthy food. I got into a casual relationship with a beautiful girl in the rooms and I tried to be as honest with her as possible. In the end, she wanted more than me and it ended. I hope she doesn't regret it. I don't.

So now I find myself back in Melbourne where it all began. I have returned to finish my degree and be of service to my family and my community, both in and out of NA.

Other things I hope to do include:

- break into the property market;
- write a book;
- do some more acting;
- and if I am really lucky, fall in love too.

I have a local home group and I have met some great people. I also joined the cabaret/play for the convention and it was amazing. We did an NA version of The Wizard of OZ which many people said they loved. We had a great team made up of lots of newcomers, people that work in entertainment, and some exceptional actors.

When I got out of rehab I was in the convention play and that choice served me well too. We did an NA version of The Simpsons and I played Ned Flanders. My line was "Hidely-ho, neighbourly waste-er-eeenos" and to my relief, everyone laughed. I was really nervous however I learnt through that experience that it was just about having a go and that the audience loved seeing us do exactly that.

I am now doing the same things in Melbourne that worked for me when I first started taking NA seriously in Queensland and I am getting the same results.

Just For Today, I have no reason to change the game plan. I have come to understand through my own experience that what is suggested is what works.

If I want to feel a part of, then I need to participate, in NA and wherever else I choose to be.

I don't want to be a victim anymore and I have learnt in NA that I don't have to be. I may be powerless over my addiction, but when I don't use drugs one day at a time, my life is full of choices and opportunities. Lucky me!

anonymous

Top Ten Excuses for avoiding your Sponsor

1. I went back into rehab and they took away my phone.
2. I was only able to get the weekend classes for my TAFE course and the home work is immense.
3. I've been overseas on a "spiritual journey".
4. There was a family emergency that I had to go interstate to take care of.
5. Last time we spoke, that question you asked made me feel something...
6. Didn't think you could handle hearing about my latest bust.
7. Things have been really hectic and I haven't done any step work for ages, so there didn't seem to be any point in calling, or visiting, or emailing, or posting on your wall, or coming to the meeting we're both group members of.
8. Someone told me you'd sacked me and I hate myself so much I believed them.
9. I haven't done any step work, couldn't handle the guilt, so I just stopped calling.
10. My grandmother died, the dog got really sick and had to be put down, my ex-partner started hassling me (again), then I lost my job, my sponsees sacked me, got arrested again on yet another outstanding warrant, got bail and skipped interstate for 3 months, joined a cult, escaped and so I started having using thoughts. It was all so full on, I didn't think to call you.

The gift of hope

Christmas day has Finally come. I awoke this morning with a feeling of gratitude. This is my 13th Xmas clean. What a reason to be grateful if for nothing else. That wasn't the case 14 years ago when I was being released on bail for a crime I did in black out.

To this day I still don't remember what I did. It all started with that belief that I could take the first drup and be ok. That's insanity to believe that this time I could control despite all evidence to the contrary.

What I have learned through taking the step one is that the obsession with using that's the idea that supplants all others. In other words I believe a lie.

The other factor to the first part of the step one is that once I take the 1st drug I set off a physical allergy, the compulsion to use, a craving that no matter how much I put in myself I cannot satisfy it; I always want more.

These two parts were in full flight that night, I took that 1st drug and that led to a blackout.

The insanity for me was saying no to a group of people who wanted to go, because I knew once I have that 1st one I couldn't control how much I was going to take and I knew I couldn't guarantee my behaviour, so I said no.

But hours later I was at the pub taking that 1st drug, that triggers off the physical allergy which I have no control over.

I came out that blackout being charged and put in a cell. I was feeling self pity and absolute hopelessness that was all encompassing.

What was I going to do? Where was I going to go?

This was all a result of my addiction; All a result of the 1st one.

Zoom to 14 years later. My life has completely changed. That feeling of uselessness has disappeared.

I just woke up to give my beautiful partner her present, see my gorgeous daughter on her 1st Christmas.

See the joy on my step-daughter's face when she received here presents.

This is a gift of recovery; a result working the steps; To change from completely hopeless, to a person who now has hope in his life.

The miracle of this is that any addict can find a spiritual experience and stay clean a day at a time.

Batboy,
Wollongong

In Praise of "Shoplifting"

I believe it is not up to me to tell people how to share, for me it is enough that people say their name and identify as an addict. I have heard many things said from the floor of a meeting that I disagreed with over the years. That is OK, we are a big fellowship and are individuals but I once heard a phrase that stuck with me. I sat in a meeting 5 or 6 years ago and listened to a member share. It was a meeting in a detox, chock full of newcomers. The member dropped the phrase 'shoplifter' when talking about members who do not do service.

Let me say here I believe service is an integral part of my recovery. I came to NA and was taught that I needed to be part of NA to stay clean. I found that if I wanted to feel part of I needed to involve myself in the fellowship. I have always done service and as a result have met the most wonderful people. The principle of joining in the things I want in my life is a valuable one I try and practice, in all my affairs. I get involved with things at work, in my family, in my community. My sponsor once said if you get passionate about recovery you will be given a passion for life. He was right. I have a passion for life that comes from the program of Narcotics Anonymous.

At the time I heard 'shoplifter' I thought, wtf? How does calling someone a thief help me stay clean? The answer is, it does not. Shoplifting is theft. I know, I did plenty of real thieving in my active addiction. I did plenty of worse things too.

I have no moral high ground from which to judge anyone but the name shoplifter for someone in recovery sticks in my craw. It separates us as a fellowship and goes against some of our basic tenets. If we can only keep what we have by 'giving' it away how can people be stealing recovery by not doing service. My recovery is a 'gift' from you, the fellowship. We are told to 'take' what we like and leave the rest. We 'share' with each other. There are no thieves in the rooms of NA stealing your recovery. On the contrary there are people whom you can show love to by telling them they are welcome. We say 'keep coming back' not so you can earn your keep but so we can 'give to you what was freely given to us'.

You may not agree with me, that's ok but I think my job is to share recovery with anyone who wants it. Ask me what I think you should do to stay clean and I will probably mention service at some point. If you choose not to do any that is fine by me. I will never call you a thief. There is nothing to steal in NA. My recovery is your gift you gave me. Thank you.

Damien R

Wentworthville Tuesday

unconditional Love

After being around the rooms for almost 17 years I have had my fair share of adversity. This year has been no different. Each time I have been presented with one of my previous major reservations, I have decided that using was not the answer. The answer has been to find a new level of courage. Try and find a deeper level of acceptance. Try and find more love and compassion for myself and for those around me. I have been given many gifts in recovery, not the least, the gift of being a mother and a wife.

That I chose to end my marriage didn't mean the end of the relationship I had with my husband. It changed as everything always has, sometimes it got better, sometimes worse.

We got together when I was 50 days clean and we stayed together for 13 years. For two so very broken people to stay together that long is a miracle. Luckily I believe in miracles, NA has shown me that they truly exist.

5 months ago my ex-husband was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. He called me from hospital and at that stage the Doctors were still unsure of his exact diagnosis. My daughter and I arrived at the hospital, all three of us were in shock, there was not a lot to say. We sat and held hands and hugged. We promised to visit the next day. As I left the room my ex said to me "I love you", in that moment I made one of the best decisions I have made in my recovery, I chose to say "I love you" back to him.

From that day on I was able to love him unconditionally. All the baggage of the past slipped away. Love and forgiveness took its place. The love I felt for him was so strong and so deep it was like an energy that propelled me through the next three months of hell.

Through the 18 days in ICU, through the Oncology ward, through watching him die before my very eyes, love was the force that held me together. I still had to live my life. I still had to front up to everything else.

Get up, dress up, front up. This is what recovery has taught me. Love just makes it a whole lot easier to do. Life on life's terms is sometimes brutal. Lessons are sometimes not wrapped in pretty paper and bows, sometimes they are wrapped in shit.

It doesn't matter, the gift is still there to be found, to be learned from and to be passed on. I prayed a lot in those three months. I had a small group of other recovering addicts that carried me when I needed. As always the fellowship looks after our own. He died with me holding one hand and his daughter the other. He died peacefully, clean and knowing that he was loved. I don't think you can ask for more than that.

Gina C

Dearest Greg

*I can't believe forever you're going away,
so my father my final words I say.*

*Never again will I see your smile or your face,
it hurts to let you go to your special place.*

*You can once again see Gary your son,
which I'm sure you two will be as one.*

*I can't describe how much you mean to me,
finally now from addiction & pain you're free.*

*You will forever and ever stay in my heart,
my love for you will never ever part.*

*My aching tears for you I cry,
as I know this is goodbye.*

*I love you Greg I hope you will always know,
I wish I didn't have to let you go.*

*I'm sure one day we will meet again,
my father and always my friend.*

Love always

Alicia
Orange NSW

B.

10.12.2013

OUT OF ISOLATION



Hangin' in is better than hanging out!

I am a 29 year old Australian. I have struggled with a progressive disease of addiction since the age of 14. I was first introduced to the concepts of twelve step fellowships and of positive affirmation in a rehabilitation centre in Byron Bay mid-2009. I spent my first year of clean living in this rehab. There I learned the importance of repetition and journaling from attending 12 Step Fellowship Meetings. By using these techniques was able to relieve any compulsion to use the substances I found myself otherwise powerless to resist for multiple years of recovery.

Sometime later some significant changes and hardship occurred in my life. I suffered through the tragic loss of several close friends and the loss of faith in a higher power. I relapsed; I left Australia and went to New Zealand.

There I tried again I attended meetings where I met a newcomer named Ben. Ben had come from England fighting similar demons, looking as I had for a geographical change to solve a living problem. Something we both realised was futile.

From the outset it was clear that Ben had his life together in ways that were utterly amazing to me. He had arrived in a foreign country 3 months earlier with nothing.

After getting to know him Ben would often come and pick me up from my home. He was always wearing a suit, had a job and had purchased an expensive Japanese sports car. I asked Ben what he was doing differently than I. The answer became obvious. Often times when we would be in his car he would have on a motivational CD. Ben suggested to me and I felt it would work as it seemed just by proxy I was already noticing positive changes in my thinking.

I worked the steps and program religiously to fill up my day. Boredom is a huge trigger for me. I have been given a lot of great advice from my various sponsors and found that constantly listening to motivational speaker recordings on my ipod helped change negativity directed inward. This is where the next miracle happened. I keep affirming and journaling and have accomplished some very rewarding goals in a very short period of time through commitment to myself and the program.

I returned to Australia after a short period and lost myself in a relationship. I spent little to no time with the other men in recovery and spent more time with my beautiful girlfriend who is also in recovery with multiple years. The amazing relationship and feelings of love I felt became like a drug to me.

We were hardly ever apart, we even attended meetings together and our lives became enmeshed in an unhealthy way. By this stage I was several months clean and sober again I let my program slip and replaced meetings with co-dependency. I relapsed on and off on over the counter pain medication and didn't get more than 90 days. Things got really bad when I made the decision to use heroin again. I lost so much in such a short period, I cannot begin to tell you the feelings and circumstances I suffered through in this period.

I knew I wanted to be clean again, I knew that there was a better life to be had. A life with a future that often doesn't end in Gaols, Intuitions and Death.

I got into this Clinic with the support of my girlfriend whom loved me unconditionally back to life and paid my health insurance fees even when I spent all of our money on my habit.

Today I am 64 days clean. I have just gotten a new sponsor and whilst in treatment have negotiated leave to attend 3 meetings daily. This motivation comes from the understanding and acceptance that I cannot live any other way.

At my first detox someone had written on the wall "Hanging in is better than hanging out!" I will never forget those words and the solace I found in reading it daily when I wanted to leave and use. Thank you anonymous person, you will never know the profound positive impact that had on my life.

What is working for me today is listening and just doing what I am told. I have a strong desire to quickly clear the wreckage of the past and get on living. In the past I have diverted myself from the spiritual path by money, prestige, ego or lust. The consequences lead me back here.

Being told regularly by older cleaner member's experience "Anything you put before recovery you will lose!" helps me. I attribute all of my relapses to taking my own self will back. Achieving several milestones I thought I could run the show again and that I had learnt enough to stay clean.

The best aftercare plan for me is to attend regular meetings I cannot wait to see what events can and surely will transpire over as short a period of 90 days. "It's the journey that is important not the destination!" Membership and lots more clichés like that wait for anyone who wants it and is prepared to do whatever it takes. I am just so grateful that I want it a day at a time.

I owe all I have to the program of Narcotics Anonymous and the spiritual concepts of The 12 Steps.

Anon

Rethinking the horrible “w” word

You get to the convention and look over the program. You start to decide which meetings you want to attend and which ones you want to avoid. Perhaps you whinge with your mates about how they are running two meetings at the same time, both of which you want to attend. And then you see that hideous word “workshop”! You groan out loud. Could there be anything worse than sitting in a room of “service junkies” and “control freaks” talking about service? How boring!

The South Australian Area Convention in January 2014, decided to hold a workshop, only we didn't call it a workshop because then no one would attend! When I, as the RCM, suggested to the Area that we request a Regional Workshop, I must admit that I did fear sitting in an almost empty room as the poor RD attempted to give us the ‘workshop’ we had requested.

So as a committee we decided we would call it a ‘Regional Delegate Presentation’ instead of using the ‘w’ word. I met with our RD and our AD before the presentation to discuss the finer points of business, which basically meant we discussed how many tables to put out. When asked how many would attend, I tried to sound confident as I suggested 20, when in my head I thought as many as 20 would be a small miracle.

People started filing in and finding seats, soon we had to set up more tables to accommodate. By the time we were into it, there were about 50 people in the room, all attentive and participating. Our RD and AD gave a comprehensive overview of the NA service structure, we saw some videos from APF and World, and then we broke off into small groups to discuss some questions about service.

At the end of the presentation we sat in a big circle and did a quick recap/summary/feelings check. I am getting used to doing these at ARSC, and I was blown away by what members in attendance had to say. So many of our members before sitting in the presentation did not understand the service structure, or how things worked at a Regional or Zonal or World level; so many had little understanding of the ‘big picture’ of NA; so many had also thought workshops and service were ‘boring’, ‘not for them’ or ‘full of control freaks’. A few people were even brave enough to admit that if we had have called it a workshop they wouldn't have attended!

I am so incredibly proud of how the SA fellowship supported the RD and AD. I was blown away by members ranging from only a few days clean to counting decades who came to be ‘a part of’. I was equally in awe of the newcomer who was inspired to become a part of service, and the OCM who was re-energised to engage in different levels of service again. The overall feeling was one of passion. We have a great program on offer in NA, for which we are grateful. In the words of the ARSC Chair ‘Don't tell me you're grateful, show me’. One great way to show gratitude for the new way of life we have been given in NA is by doing service; after all ‘we only keep what we have, by giving it away’.

I am proud and humbled and honoured to be the RCM of an Area that is hungry to learn more, keen to see the 'big picture' and who have been inspired, re-energised and educated by the 'workshop that wasn't a workshop'.

It has given me a new energy, to evaluate how I act in the role of RCM, and consider how I am serving my fellowship. I hope to take what was identified as needs and wants of our fellowship and do my best to deliver that. I hope that I can harness the Area's enthusiasm and even perhaps run another workshop where we can call it for what it is and people will still attend because they learned something from the Regional Presentation, but more importantly because the presentation was fun.

Next time you see the 'w' word on a flier or a convention programme, I urge you to rethink your objections. Maybe just attend with an open mind, who knows, you may experience something like what those who attended the SA convention did!

Y I L S ,
RCM SOUTH AUSTRALIA



"The people of the rooms"

(TERROR AUSTRALIS)

USING...

Halcyon days – let's go back, way back...13 years old. Summertime. I'm sitting cross-legged (like a skinny Buddha Cat) with a group of other teenagers on a beach. Sounds of Zeppelin, Bowie and the Stones reverberate through the sonic mind sphere... My friend and I patiently wait for a toke on the joint that's going interminably around the circle, only to get one drag on the roach end and I hardly feel a thing. However at that moment it was almost pre- written in my destiny that I was determined to follow this one right on down- to World's End if need be, and that's exactly what happened.

16- first experience of acid- love at first clear light, I saw rainbows zap laser style out of my fingernails like peacock fans, heard echoes coming 'round the bend, tripped the light fantastic, astral voyaged to Pluto and beyond and saw the back of my own head in 4D. Wow. OK, we flyin', we flyin'. Flash forward... the usual jaded junkie scenes in underworld Kings Cross, the requisite drawn out methadone terms of imprisonment, doctors waiting rooms, morphine, codeine hold- me's, round the world trip to Final Destination planet Suboxonia. Hallelujah, blessed respite. That was ok for a while; I was actually able to stop using heroin on a daily basis... Cut to Loony Toons cartoon- "Not so fast yer low- down skunk," growls Yosemite Sam. "Yer goin' to have a drink with me unless yew wannabe spittin' bullets". Welcome to Dipsomania!!! Wildest West Town Ever situated World's End, sheriff by the name of Adolph Hitler. You got it, a bottle of dirty rotgut vodka and that's just for starters; pure liquid insanity- ain't nothing like it. Never will.

I've really got it made now. Proud owner of two brain cells, both co-incidentally locked in Mortal Combat. Semi- homeless, living out of a plastic bag, Top of the World Ma, living the dream...sure does stink around here, can almost smell the burnt flesh...

At one point I realize that I have actually been having sex with a Russian double agent for some time and she's going to sell me out to the CIA and send me to Guantanamo Bay (you can't trust anyone these days).

JUMP START: -

After a phone call from my brother I drag myself comatose out of the gutter and allow myself to be deposited into a rehab (Twelve Step thankfully). Have you ever woken up out of a strange dream and wondered if you were still dreaming? Have you ever moved into a domicile full of apes and simians of various sizes and dispositions only to be told "This here's your family?" Or have you ever started to tell a lie and been pulled up on it even before you THOUGHT IT??? Things that keep you up late at night a'thinkin'... Have you ever been dragged to a meeting a couple of days clean and felt like you were sitting on death row at Alcatraz? Well, rehab was nothing like that...or to be truthful EXACTLY LIKE THAT YET SO MUCH MORE. Oh, indescribable experience so slippery in nuance and tone, wherefore art thou? Now is the time of reckoning bellows the Mad King! Sounds like it's Time for a Step One Experience:

90 meetings 90 days. Leave rehab. Relapse- totally Blindsided- RAPED IN THE EAR BY A MONKEY ON THE RUN FROM A CIRCUS

Back To Rehab. Pray. After rehab 180+ meetings in 90 days. Pray. Average of two meetings a day over next two years. Pray. Don't ask why, just go with it. Pray some more, deeper this time. GET DOWN, BABY. Keep it simple, dig, the CAT is COMPLICATED.

After I leave rehab I go into halfway house for about 3 months then after that support accommodation for the next year or so. Over that next year my daily routine is meetings, music, meditation and yoga and sponsor, steps, service.

12 months clean...as I get up to share my milestone the applause and love breaks over me like a Hawaii Five-0 tidal wave, total rush- pure, real and above all, true.

I choose to take things slowly having heard someone say "what we put ahead of our recovery we will lose."

After two years of unemployment plus being on medical certificate, I start part time work and then move into private rental (with other members). At this stage I slowly start to wean myself off the dole and begin making a living out of music....

Today- 6 years clean. So much to say, words fail me... I have returned from the abyss. I am clean. My cup overfloweth. All thanks to you-"The People of The Rooms."

David M.

Dharma's story

For me, it doesn't seem that I was with [her] for long, and I am sure she would say that it was no where near close to long enough but I know the reason was very simple yet very specific, [she] needed me.

I came to them in 2005. I knew from that very first day I was in the right place. [Her] life, for the most part, was sort of manageable in those early days. Their marriage was reasonably new, they had blended their families together, [her] boy was 10 at the time, [his] daughter was 7 and [his] young bloke was 3, they were still adapting to building their new life together.

The crux of any story about addiction, is that after [she] had that first drink (or joint) on any day she could not stop, and once [she] had started just about anything was possible. [Her] behavior was often reckless and inconsiderate, [she] was driven by her selfishness and although she didn't realize it, her fear, the worst part of it all was that so much of what [she] said and did was driven by anger.

It became easy to see why my job and position in the house was so important, I was needed to provide her with the unconditional love that many others struggled to give. For me, there was no room to take sides, it was my duty of care to stay free of judgment, to be always forgiving and allowing, to offer a shoulder for [her] to cry on or an ear to vent to, no matter what. I admit, there were a lot of times that it was difficult to make the choice of where to be in the house, I would hold my breath with the others through times of [her] explosive rage, or erratic blackout antics. I would comfort and support the kids when necessary, or stay to console her during times when the rest of the family would need to leave. Sometimes I would just sit and watch, listen and wait, and wait, and wait for [her] to go safely to bed when everyone else had given up. Not only was [her] disease powerful, it was exhausting, relentless and heart-breaking.

In our time together, not once did [she] neglect me or treat me badly, it was quite the opposite. The kids often said that [she] treated me better than she did them at times. Of course, I felt bad for them but I believe it was partly because of her affinity with animals and her connection with me that helped to keep her here.

It was in late 2009 whilst [the 2 of them] were away on holidays that the little white fluffy dog [she] had owned for about 12 years was killed. It was when [she] got back from that trip that [she] started to really lose her shit. If I had thought there had been bad times before, things started to get so much worse. The combination of alcohol and other drugs that [she] was using, was bringing her undone really quickly.

[He] was trying [his] best to do everything [he] could to support [her] at the same time working to keep the family functioning. I could see how close to the edge [he] was. There had been so many times [he] would pack a bag and take off for a

little while, but [he] always came back, unfortunately for [him] [he] always came back to false promises.

It was a waiting game for awhile then, watching everything deteriorate, [her looks], both [her] mental and physical health, [her] marriage, [her] relationships and friendships with other people. By that stage, it had already been quite awhile since [she] had wanted to go out to see people, and very very rarely would [she] want or allow people to visit them. The only things that appeared to have any importance to [her] was me and her alcohol and drugs.

I heard [them] saying at sometime later that one of [her] bosses at work had pulled [her] aside and asked about what was going on for [her] at home. The boss must have suggested that [he] was beating into [her], I know that [she] hated that particular woman at work and no doubt wouldn't have shared a thing with her, but it was possibly, at least partly, the catalyst that made [her] finally start to have a look at parts of her behavior.

[Her] first marriage had ended quite a number of years earlier because of drugs and alcohol abuse, unfortunately there had also been a lot of domestic violence involved that [she] still carried the trauma from.

I know that [he] had tried prompting her to open up a few times over the years which only ever resulted with arguing, screaming and abuse. [She] absolutely wasn't prepared to have anyone think that [he] was in any way that same sort of person, husband or father as the bloke from her first marriage. [He] is a good man and I know [they] love each other with absolute sincerity. [She] knew that a large amount of what was going on for them was something that [she] needed to take ownership of.

It was April 2010, a week before her 42nd birthday that the most unexpected thing happened to all of us, [she] admitted herself to re-hab, thank God. Those 28 days were filled with uncertainty for everyone. There were people that were encouraging [him] to pack up house and leave whilst [she] wasn't around. [He], rather we, were very lucky that [he] held onto two of the most powerful qualities he needed during that particular time; love and hope.

[She] had been close to a physical death at the point of entering the re-hab. Like everyone else, [she] was to start a journey into recovery a very sick, broken, frightened, insecure, very angry woman; uncertain about how to move forward with [her] life and where to find the answers.

Like everyone else, the only way for [her] to recover was going to be 'one day at a time', it was all that [she] was actually capable of anyway.

It was a lot quieter after [she] came home from re-hab. Every night [she] would go out to meetings of either AA or NA, [she] would go on the week-ends, her days off. [She] would go when [she] didn't want to go and [she] would go when [he] didn't want her to go. Sometimes, [she] would even go twice in a day. [She] got books about recovery and read sections of them every morning. [She] wasn't screaming at people so often anymore, [she] was definitely starting to physically look a lot

better, [she] was eating food regularly, the most important thing was that [she] wasn't drinking or taking any kind of drug a day at a time, things started to slowly change and slowly started to get just that little bit better for everyone.

After about 3 months into [her] recovery, [they] brought home a whole new lot of lessons for [her] to learn, he came in the form of a young male Rottweiler. From the day he arrived, Kaiser resembled a whirlwind, turning the house upside down. Kaiser is pushy, dominating, stubborn, strong-willed, challenging and needy, it's funny because even though he is a dog he has a lot of similar character defects as [she] does. Kaiser is great for [her] recovery, every day she is learning to practice patience, tolerance, to take a breath and put a pause in before action and another gets shown another perspective on unconditional love. These are attributes that [she] has always struggled with in [her] relationships with other people, teachers can come in the most unexpected forms.

[She] is now closer to 4 years clean. Most days, [she] has acceptance that her powerlessness extends to all of 'those' people, places and things, that [her] powerlessness over drugs will ensure that they forever remain [her] problem.

So, when I got sick, I knew I would need to keep it a secret for as long as I could. I know how easily [her] thinking can become out of control and completely unrealistic. [Her] emotions have always been her worst enemy, I was concerned that she would worry [herself] to a potential relapse.

I know the end was a huge shock, for [her] no doubt it would all have seemed to happen so quickly.

I have watched [her] recovery grow enough to know that she is gradually building a relationship with [her] God.

I would have preferred longer with [her] too, unfortunately life on life's terms is just that and sometimes it doesn't seem fair.

[She] now has the experience of feeling what it is to 'let go', to act from a place that is absolutely selfless, to know that it's OK to feel emotions and that it is OK to cry. Grief is a big part of life, [her] faith will help [her] find the way out of the pain she is experiencing, everything good and bad eventually passes.

Dharma

02.02.2005 – 09.12.2013

Lovely days

*Places you can stay for the night,
spark up a light stay forever.*

*Faces I relate to the names they take forgotten so many I
don't mean to make, these mistakes.*

*Spark it up now feeling fine, illness walks away.
God I'm sick of this addiction I found.*

Tomorrow's another day.

*Images and memories live in the back of my mind.
Holding onto something you said, Nothing lasts forever,
but you said your love for me would.*

Oh bringing back the light.

It's been dark now for so long.

Oh you are my light come back now.

*Waking up on lovely days with your face and your taste.
But that was just a dream. Only had myself to depend on.*

Now it's all over and done. I see things different ways.

No more cloudy state of mind. Just clearin up the haze.

Realise there's plenty of time. Nothing lasts forever.

But I think your love for me will.

Here, my story

Hi my name is Zsolt and I have a disease, the name of which is addiction.

I first heard about the program on a rehab 8 years ago. I was there for just two months and was sent away later because I drank alcohol.

After the rehab I tried the social drinking, but it didn't work for me. First I just drank, but later my past started to haunt on me, things got back to my life, first the speed and then heroin. I always came up with a lot of different excuses for using drugs.

Two years later when I almost used them again every day, I went to my first meeting. There was a member who I had been with at the rehab and it was enough proof for me that the program could work for me as well.

Then the events sped up. I was clean for a month when I told my former wife I wanted to divorce because I had fallen in love with another young girl. This romance wasn't long but it gave me enough strength to change things in my life.

One month later I had to receive an interferon treatment because I had a hepatitis C and the following one year could have been described as madness. Two months later I asked for some drugs from my friends but they didn't give me so thanks to a divine miracle I stayed clean.

I had been at several international conventions and they were really spiritual for me.

During this time I was browsing through dating websites looking for love compulsively hence jeopardizing my soberness. Many times I ran to the meetings crying and I think what kept me sober was my honesty. I got the hang of it and I used it as a kind of drug as well. At least I was somebody among the clean addicts... a crazy addict, longing for recovery.

I had services and a sponsor and I went to the meetings but I was missing something very much. I wasn't humble enough. I was honest but for openness and willingness I badly needed humility. Today I know honesty is not enough to recover. I went through a lot of madness and I've lived through a lot of hard feelings but I wanted to show how strong I was and I stayed clean.

It would take too long to describe the lot of ups and the lot of downs. I wrote the first step four times because it was very difficult to put my hands up and surrender.

I was about 2 years clean when I met with my current wife. We moved in together, renovated our house but later we decided to move to Australia.

It was a big dream...very big. A lot of fear worked in me. I put forward my dream and back my recovery. And after this time, the horror story started. At a low point which taught me humility.

It was the fear of H.I.V. I had been with a lot of women and with prostitutes so I thought it was on the card... I searched on the internet to prove my disease. I dreaded and I did not see a way out of my head. I was afraid to be outcast and everyone turning away from me.

My life has become meaningless. I lost my faith and I wanted to kill myself. I got closed and completely isolated from everything and everyone in spirit. I was afraid of myself and my thoughts. I went to the meetings but I didn't speak about my real fears.

One day when I was thinking that I'll kill myself and my wife, I decided to use something because I was afraid of myself. Next morning I called a dealer and picked up but soon I realized that this was already not my way. The solution is not the drugs because I got it in the NA.

Next day, still driven by fear, I took some medicine. On this day I called my sponsor and began my recovery with humility. Then I went to an AIDS test with some fellows and it revealed there was nothing wrong with me just my addiction wanted to kill me.

What did I learn about it? I must always be alert. My disease never sleeps. The antidotes are God, the program and the fellowship. This program does not work without God but God can not help me without you...

After the horror story we didn't give up our dream and I was 6 months clean when we moved to Australia. This is my hardest time in my recovery. I left my comfort zone and it is very difficult to find the balance in my life.

I'm learning a lot about myself who I am and who I am not. I'm not a hero and not a glory. I have some fault and I trying to change these. Since then I got to the eighth step with the help of my sponsor. I'm clean, not always peaceful and the life is sometimes hard but full of miracles and why it is worth doing it.

In this program, all in what I wanted, understanding and attention, that is love. And spirituality what I always have been looking for in drugs. Thank you for the direction and the lot of help from my fellows and friends and the greatest gift of my recovery, the high power.

Eternal gratitude

Zsolt (Perth)

Sponsoring by txt

I have noticed lately that the way I interact with several of my sponsees is now quite different to how it used to be. Where before it was always about trying to get them to call you, and more often than not failing, these days texting changes all that.

Clearly mobile phones are not new. And I know that either way I am showing my age here... but I've never had a critical mass of sponsees of a particular age group before whose main method of communication is texting.

And it makes things both easier... and harder. As with work emails, which mean that you're instantly contactable, texting means that wherever you are, you pick up your phone and you're 'on the job'. Sometimes that's fine, beneficial even. Often if I'm at work I don't have time for extended conversations about whatever is going on for someone but I can certainly fit in a few texts on a topic that doesn't need a huge amount of brain power.

Also we all remember how hard it was to get on the phone and talk to your sponsor every day for the first bit not knowing what to say. Instead of that I've said to some people that they can just text to say they're doing ok that day. That can be a lot easier.

But on the other hand...

My first pet hate is the multiple extended text(s) where someone exerts a huge amount of energy in sending a really, really long message about whatever is going on for them that is almost impossible to read and would really be much easier to understand if spoken. Like on a phone. Or in person.

The other is that people are quite happy to send text messages when they wouldn't call because, for example, it's really late! But you're awake and you see it and, depending on your co-dependency levels, may feel obliged to text back. Or not.

So what's the answer – boundaries of course! And working out what works for you and what's appropriate. I have said to sponsees that I would rather talk in person sometimes and I have not responded to texts until the next day. I'm ok with that.

But having said that, it can be an incredibly easy way to stay in touch with people, and for them to get in touch with you when they might otherwise feel that it's too hard to get on the phone and actually talk.

Like everything in recovery it's all about balance...

Andrew
Sydney

First Australasian Regional Convention 1984

Fri:

6.00 - 7.30pm Welcome and Registration
8.00 - 9.30pm ID Meeting

Sat:

9.00 - 10.00am	ROOM 1	ROOM 2
11.00 - 12.30pm	Fellowship Sexuality	Transition (Rehab/NA) Mystery Meeting
12.30 - 1.30pm	Lunch	
1.30 - 3.00pm	Nar Anon	Addiction - the disease
3.30 - 5.00pm	Sponsorship	Live and let live
8.00pm	Dance	

Sun:

11.00 - 12.30pm Spiritual concept
2.30 - 4.00pm Living Proof - Open Meeting

Living
Proof
1984

Here's another little bit of NA Australia history. This was sent in by Bill R.

Watch for the announcements around the next Sydney Convention.

This year marks 30 years of NA Australia conventions.

Relationships

“What one person or thing has to do with another; kind of correspondence or contrast of feelings that prevails between persons or things;”

As my disease progressed so did my relationships with people. There had to be something in it for me to make it worthwhile i.e. drugs, sex, or any other Easing God Out feeding feeling that made me think I was better than I really was. And because of this self-centred nature I ended up very alone and with a great fear of people.

It was a terribly frightening experience coming into the fellowship and being confronted with just how inadequate I was at communicating with people, although I may have felt it before I could now no longer hide or run. I learned a lot about myself listening to others talking about themselves. This listening made me realise the importance of giving if I was to get well.

The first relationship I developed was with the program and the fellowship i.e. joining a group. This for me meant commitment - going every week, being on time, helping - this was the beginning of being able to trust me. It also gave me a connection with people that went a little deeper than any relationship I'd had before. I also learned that by working on and contributing to my new found relationships both with the program and with the fellowship, I received new feelings unlike any I had experienced in the past.

They say that ongoing recovery is dependant on a relationship with a loving God and being aware and grateful for what has been returned to me so far i.e. self esteem grown out of humility and confidence - the ability to move forward with faith. I feel that I have a responsibility to develop this relationship daily with the Power that has returned to me what was once lost. Now aimed with honesty, open-mindedness and a willingness to try to practise these same principles on a daily basis, I see no reason for them not to work in any type of relationship.

Sounds easy and it is as easy and as hard as sobriety but remember

-FIRST THINGS FIRST!

Sexuality

“The quality of being sexual or having sex or the attribute of being either male or female; possession of sexual powers capability of sexual feelings; recognition of or preoccupation with what is sexual.”

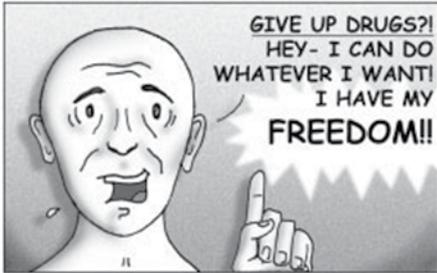
When I was using drugs, sex was not satisfying; it often didn't happen as I was too preoccupied with scoring or too stoned. It was an area that had caused great pain in the past and drugs were my shield and yet I had always associated 'physical congress' with health and life - something to be enjoyed when I 'got straight'.

When I finally stopped using drugs through Narcotics Anonymous I was somewhat disturbed to hear other members of the fellowship talking of resisting lust like not picking up. My body was coming back to life and at times physical desire became almost overpowering. My fantasies in the area were rampant. As I went to more meetings and shared I became aware that I was learning to discriminate as I had never done before - like seeing the crucial difference between reasonable hopes and unrealistic expectations and like the difference between the need for sexual contact and simple affection.

Just as our disease affects us at every level, as recovering addicts it seems that we are incapable of isolating sex to the level of gymnastics (three screws and it's love).

So in retrospect I can see that it is advisable to pause and have a look before rushing in where angels fear to tread. Like most addicts I only learn by harsh experience and I find that the pattern of my chemical addiction was repeated at the physical and emotional level and that this is not a secure foundation on which one can build a relationship. Rather, now I can begin to see that sexual communication is what seals a bond that already exists.

10 Years Ago in the NA Way Magazine



Beyond Boredom

Does being productive and responsible mean that I have to be boring?

No!

My name is Andrés. I am an addict, and I have been clean for fifteen years.

In my early recovery, when I read these lines from our Basic Text for the first time, I felt joy: "The sooner the addict could face his problem in everyday living, just that much faster would he become a real productive citizen." (Narcotics Anonymous, page 85)

I really wanted to become a productive member of society. Before I came to NA I was responsible for my performance at school, vocational training, and university.

Unfortunately, my performance was always mediocre, just good enough to get through exams and be admitted to the next grade. I did not know how to make it better or why I sometimes had good marks and sometimes not.

I always wished to have good marks because I believed my mother loved me only when I made good marks. Therefore my self-esteem was just like my marks: bad.

I was doing very well at sports, and I tried to help with the housework at home, but all this could not compensate for being unable to achieve my main task, which was to learn.

As a result, I always felt that I was a loser, and I was afraid to fail again tomorrow because I did not know how to make it better. At one point I quit school so I would not be faced with this failing any longer. Going to work and bringing money home gave me a certain sense of satisfaction for some time. But I found no fulfillment in being an unskilled worker. I still had this inner urge to study, so I went back to school.

For me, two fundamental symptoms of hitting rock bottom with drugs were that I no longer was able to memorize anything, and I was full of fear of people. Naturally, as a consequence, it was impossible to go to university or even to accomplish the simplest of jobs. Through the experience, strength, and hope I found in NA, I was given the power to start my life anew.

I decided not to accept any jobs outside of what I wanted to pursue as my career. I realized I wanted to receive some acknowledgment of my work, as well as more money. My idea of a career took place in the excitement of the publicity scene. Since I did not change overnight, I lost several jobs during the first four years of my recovery and, from time to time, I even had to return to jobs not within my career field. But I managed to finish university and finally to be successful on the job. I was a "productive, responsible member of society," and it felt great!

The amount of money I was making made me feel good. My bosses' acknowledgment made me feel good, and the company car and all the additional benefits made me look good. My spirits rose. For the first time in my life I could fulfil the tasks given to me in a reliable and successful manner. My self-esteem rose. I felt attractive. All of a sudden I gained the girls' attention.

I had more money than I needed, and the girls were seeking my company. Does this sound boring? Granted, social acceptability does not equal recovery, but thank God the one does not exclude the other.

My life has been good for several years now, and I have often been at ease with the usual challenges of daily life. Since I have reached most of my goals and my recovery has also grown, my self esteem no longer depends so much on external things. The main ambitions of my past—sex and money—are stepping into the background.

I like my inner independence. On the other hand, I am aimless. What a change! I have often asked myself in the last few years, “Where do I have to go?” And I did indeed receive an answer. It seemed like a fleeting vision, as though an airplane were drawing a banner in the sky that read: “Help other people!” This was really beyond my experience.

I can be supportive, but only when I get something out of it. I have done a lot of service work, but mainly in order to strengthen my self-esteem and my sense of belonging.

It looks like our program does not result in an option to choose, but rather in a consequence that makes sense. I am surprised.

My idea of a good life has always been that of a twenty-four-hour party, every day.

Now it seems to me that it also contains a real option for reaching out to other people.

I, personally, have never been very quick at realizing new ideas. But my Higher Power, with his immeasurable humor, has been quick at finding something for me.

Because of my family’s background, I speak Hungarian. Our World Service Office had requests from Hungary, and I was involved in the communication. I am happy to participate in the development of NA in Hungary, and I decided to visit the second Hungarian NA convention. It was held near Pécs, in southern Hungary, in August.

Rarely have so many addicts allowed me to participate in their recovery. Since this NA community is much younger than my home region, they had many questions about personal recovery and the service structure.

It is a remarkable experience to answer the same questions that I asked years ago. I came out of this Hungarian experience with two sponsees, after not sponsoring anyone for nearly ten years—but that is another story. In love for the worldwide fellowship,

András Z,
Munich, Germany

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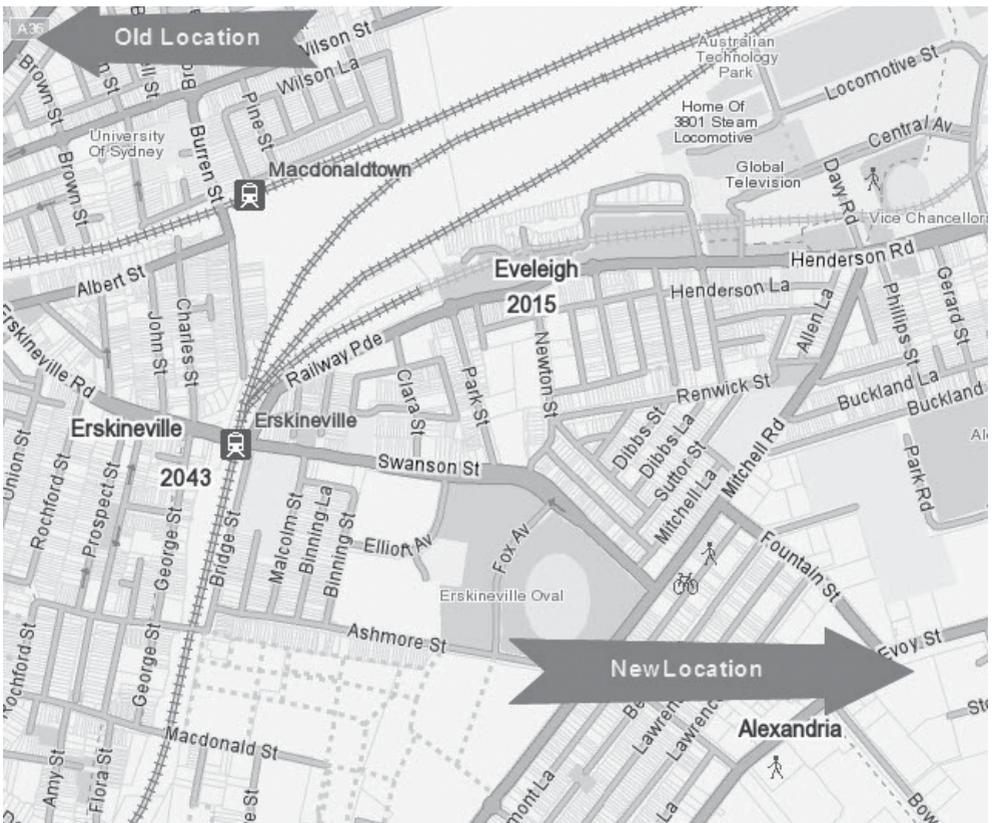
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