



NA TODAY

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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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Why am I still here?

Why am I still here? Good question. And a fair one for any addict. After all, we are the people who embody the “it’s good to be here; it’s good to be anywhere!” theory of being. Many of us at some stage or another have come perilously close to going where we might not necessarily return from, then haven’t given a second thought to repeating that same mistake. (If you are now wondering what I’m gibbering about, go to page 23 of the Basic Text, have a read, then come back later.)

Fortunately, it’s a question I don’t ask that often. Anymore. But I used to. Particularly in early recovery. I’m one of those addicts who, in my own head, laid out a grand plan for recovery which would allow me to control my destiny, and it was 100% idiot-proof. It was going to involve a little bit of surrender, a smidgen of acceptance, a few slices of the steps, and a ton of ego and arrogance. And being smarter than the average bear, I cunningly put it on hold ‘til I had a year up.

So, what happened? I, er, um, I kept coming to meetings and, um, got a sponsor, and er, did service, and, ummm ... ulp ... well, I, er ... I forgot. In reality, for me it was still business as usual. Just because I’d stopped using didn’t automatically mean I would not stop screwing things up.

After a few years of recovery I began to ask myself “why am I still here?” I’d reached the top at my job, was on a fantastic wage, had the cutest daughter in the universe, bought a house, had a gorgeous girlfriend, didn’t think twice about jumping on a plane to Paris or New York, my friends (both in and out of the rooms) were great people. In short, my life was charmed. So why waste an hour every couple of days listening to other addicts?

Then disaster struck. It was more horrifying than 9/11, more brutal than Dunkirk, and uglier than a zoo burning down. The girl dropped me. After eight years of recovery, the best solution my head could come up with was “USE!” And despite my affliction/disease/dark passenger/whatever-ya-wanna-call-it telling me to have just one shot, I reached out and called Dennis, my brother in recovery. I got honest, we talked for a while, then he made me promise not to pick up for the rest of that day, and we’d talk on the phone the following morning. But instead of going back to what he was doing, he immediately drove from Byron Bay to my place in Sydney.

At three am, while we talked through what was going on for me, he reminded me that if I was to use again, not only would I be putting some heroin into the spoon, but I would also be adding the aforementioned gifts of recovery I'd attained. And despite the pain I was feeling, most of all I didn't want to lose him as a friend.

Within time, I recalibrated my outlook on what recovery meant to me. I began to listen that little more closely to newcomers sharing, and talk to them in the "second half." I reminded myself that I was never really that happy living in a squat while trying to function in the grips of addiction. I'd ask myself things like, "Did you really enjoy that three months in an infectious diseases hospital, battling a habit and septicemia?" Of course the answer was no. But tell that to my affliction. It wanted me right back there in the grips of using.

And you know what? It still does. Every now and then the old propaganda machine in my head fires up and goes into full flight. Leaflet drops, loudspeaker announcements, radio frequency jamming; every trick it can use. But nothing can cut its power like the voice of another addict, be it on the other end of a phone or from the floor of a meeting.

Today I work with addicts, helping them get that chance we all deserve. But we don't always get it this time. There's an old Hindu saying: fall down six times, get up seven. I truly subscribe to that. As addicts, we know all about being ostracised and rejected. So if the best I can offer any addict is a bit of support and respect – be they shining from the front of a meeting or plaintively asking for some spare change on the street – then I know exactly why I am still here. To carry the message of recovery.

Henry E.



Rooms

There is comfort in this calmness

A blessing written in purpose

No longer standing all alone

I'm reaching out.

There is unity amongst us

Linked by our common pain

Always chase the similarities

Remember the sunshine after the rain.

There is no shame in drowning

For we can always learn to swim

Waves may come crashing down

And it doesn't mean we still can't win.

There is serenity in our life

Every step is a healing movement

Helping hands can heal our hearts

Even if it's just for today.

Free Dom – or Why I Am Still Here

So if life is an ocean and NA is a boat after about nine years sitting on a recovery deckchair, I decided to test the water and jump overboard and see if I couldn't make my preferred destination a little faster on my own.

My thinking was this: I have been clean almost a decade. I look, sound and live like the 'normal' people I work and socialise with. But I am probably as unhappy as when I arrived. So maybe I am not an addict. Maybe I am just a man, with some emotional issues and maybe a little trauma stuff, and focusing on my addict past is a mistake. Maybe I should resolve these personal emotional and mental issues in therapy. And move house. And change jobs.

Besides, I have earned this choice. I have attended the meetings, not taken drugs a day at a time. It is my recovery and my life to do with as I see fit. Surely that is what a man does: consider options, take control of his life and chart his own course. Besides the biscuits suck.

One year later: I'm standing in a pub in Melbourne, drunk and bored, sacked, broke and alone. Same as it ever was. Three years later: I awake in Canberra Hospital unable to speak, hypoxic with liver and kidneys failing as my shoulder muscle dissolved. Five years later: Derelict in my own housing flat, unable or uninterested to wash or shave, paranoid, violent, living on Hungry Jack Stunner Meals every two days to balance the ice, heroin, pills and alcohol. I spent as much time hanging out and shitting water as I did stoned.

I'm not much into relapse tourism or the recovery porn of busting. You have a lot to lose after 10 years clean and I lost the lot. If you need a newcomer to remind you what powerlessness looks like you might want to grab a pen rather than a remote one evening and review your own Step One before you have to update it.

But I spent much of the five years drowning in a sea of disgust, fear, violence, criminality, self-pity, deceit, and misery. My denial about what I was doing meant I remained surprised at how pitiful my life was becoming. Though to be fair in hindsight, I was overlooking the obvious impediment of being

delusional. Either way, a trapdoor opened in every rock bottom, and just sank further and further down, without trace and hope of rescue or return.

I was fucked. Finally, accepted into an unmedicated detox, hiding from police and 'associates', I was so putrid that I had to wash my clothes three times, throw my shoes out and be kept separated because of the smell.

The relapse revealed some information: I knew I would use anything any cost and not stop without the intervention of hospitals, institutions or death. Alcohol and prescribed medication always led to heroin and ice.

Also I knew that what I had, I would have for life. There is no shame in relapsing to a lifelong condition but there is a price and its pain I cannot put a sound to, let alone words. It the silent scream of your soul being burned inside you.

So I couldn't use but was I going to kill myself?

I read some 12 step literature that suggested an option of rather than suicide why not just kill off the false self I had become. This confection of poses, narratives, melodramas and affectations that reduced me from a man to a dependent, attention seeking fraud. This child-self was MY creation, cobbled together through need, fear, and ego. Perhaps all I needed to do was stop being this bullshit version of myself and start again from scratch.

The idea that every part of me could be open for renegotiation was overwhelming. The liberation of not having to act like I knew everything, the freedom to be quiet, to not be someone with time up who fucked out, but just me, trying to live honestly. I certainly wouldn't have thought of it.

So I didn't want to use, I didn't want to end my life, I wanted to be who I was in my heart but how? Faulkner wrote that if you want to experience new horizons you need to lose sight of the safety of the shore. Did I have the willingness, the courage to do NA? Of course not. I was still full of fear.

But I also saw the consequences of not doing it. Seven peers died in my first year back, and two more this year. My will power wasn't worth the breath to express it and I couldn't endlessly sit listening to my head like I'm tuned to Bullshit FM. My mind is where good ideas go to die, loudly. And if I'm by

myself then I'm hanging out with the last person I used with and he was fucking clown.

So if I came back out of desperation, I initially stayed because when I heard people say recovery isn't for people who want it or even need it, it's for those who DO it I felt they were talking to me. This time I don't get to pick and choose what applies to me ahead of time because I don't have a fucking clue what is good for me.

After all, my insanity was joining a 12 step Fellowship for 10 years and only doing 2 steps. I would nod along in identification as people talked about their actions from the floor, and leaving into the streets somehow thinking I'd achieved their change simply through hearing it. They'd done the work, I'd done the square root of fuck all. Going to meetings and coffee and playing golf with a sponsor wasn't working a program either. It was abstinence with a credit card and an expiry date.

I can get information from personal experience but it only becomes knowledge if I learn from it. That knowledge only becomes wisdom if it is expressed in such a way that others can learn from it rather than go through it. This is the key reasons I am still here: the many examples, insights, and expressions of loving wisdom from others in the rooms.

Some have been from the floor certainly: I've averaged 10 meetings a week for 22 months and conservatively at least 30 times a member has offered a piece of gold, experience and insight – hard won and shared for free – that has kept me clean that day.

At least as many times, a single interaction with another member has kept me safe for the day. When I went to a meeting and shared about my fear of self-harming that night, one member with over 30 years found me afterwards and shared how during a difficult period in his recovery he would sit each night, with warm milk and read Step Three of the basic text. I did it for a week, it worked.

So that is 60 times in less than two years that I would have, as an addict alone, relapsed. Where I turned over my ego, my fear of being judged as a loser, my 'strategies' or answers, to a power greater than me: to the We of another addict, the Fellowship or the program as a whole AND WAS HELPED.

I've also begun to accept and then embrace this is a spiritual program. I have cut away enough caked on atheistic obstinacy and intellect to reveal my own higher power. Still not a supernatural God who intervenes on my behalf and creates great parking opportunities but a connection of my own soul, inner child, creative madness to peace and freedom through kind thoughts and loving actions.

Material 'success' never equalled contentment and it certainly never quieted the whirling circus of my mind. My solution just isn't in the big house, the fuck off car, the job title or someone else's bed: like Canberra, it's a great place to visit but you just can't live there.

Plus I also realised that while I have worked with media, public servants and the private and community sectors the wisest, funniest, weirdest, most off tap, most interesting, unique and courageous people I have ever met are in these rooms.

When I turned three in my last recovery, I read a poem called Late Fragment by Raymond Carver. I remember thinking how I hoped it would be true for me one day and how far from it I felt in addiction:

*“And did you get what
you wanted from this life, even so?
I did.
And what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel myself
beloved on the earth.”*

Nothing else has ever offered me a way to experience and appreciate that sentiment in my life than the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, and the recovery I have today. I thank you for that. I thank you for keeping the boat sailing and throwing out a line when I was drowning out there. And saving a chair. And the biscuits.

Dom Q.

Growing up together

My son just sang a made up bedtime song “I’m with you, your with me, goodnight, I love you” he went on singing for another couple of minutes and I was hugging him and listening carefully cause I knew this was one of those moments you want to commit to the memory banks. I feel pretty lucky right now, rescued from the depths of despair. I swear I felt like Gollum, and now I’m living a normal life. I’m breaking the chain of inherited destruction, and I thought I was the last person to deserve it and that there was something so wrong with me I could never be fixed.

It’s a relief to have found out I’m just your garden variety addict, and not only that but also that I’m a good person, which is a relief cause I wasn’t very good at being bad. I was spiritually bankrupt so I scraped and clawed at things to fill the hole. Thanks to Narcotics Anonymous I’m “under new management” and most of the time I have more faith than fear. Being a single mum in recovery has been up and down like anyone, the difference is I’ve got a little person along for the ride, and having a tantrum while he is having one doesn’t pay!

I’m learning my emotion regulation while he is learning his, I’m growing up while he is growing up, sometimes that’s great like going to fun parks or stomping in leaves and looking at ants an tiny stuff an doing all the things I missed when I was a kid. But it’s a tough gig, my son is awesome I’m lucky he’s a happy kid and good company (...most of the time) but it gets lonely, real lonely, I’m isolated, it’s all about Jake a lot of the time, I don’t get much of a break, its 24/7, Huge responsibility!! Which used to scare the shit out of me but I’m getting used to it. Theres not much social life, I used to go out all hours an loved the second half of the meeting, not much of that this time round! Heaps of abc for kids and G rated TV.

There’s heaps of people I talk to everyday that aren’t in NA, this has done wonders for my social phobia, I have good friends that aren’t in the rooms, other mums mostly, I keep my anonymity with them cause my recovery is important to me and I’m a different person today, it’s tricky when I’ve got meeting or some other na commitment to go to and I make up an excuse on the spot, sometimes that feels like I have a double life or am in some secret society. They don’t need to know im in NA. My uni friends don’t know either, it’s not that I don’t want people to know my past it’s just that I bared the victim

cross for so long that if I said I used to be a junkie and now I'm not I might be inclined to go back to default.

I used to think I was the next kind of messiah, my brain was messy, talk about self obsession to the max. Nothing like having a kid to bring me to earth, though in all honesty I'm still landing. Now I try to aim for spiritual progress not perfection, sometimes I smash the serenity prayer just to not yell at him or be mean, and I have to forgive myself for even having the thought or feeling and when I act on them too. I'm learning to put the whip away, it only causes more harm, the best advice I've been given is "forgive them and forgive yourself". He's just a kid and hes still learning and I'm teaching him to the best of my ability but I'm still human.

When he was newborn it was easy to take him to meetings, he was asleep most of the time or breastfeeding, I find it funny that breast feeding is so taboo still when we have naked miley Cyrus gyrating on a wrecking ball, go figure, the western world is weird like that. It was great when another member would offer to look after him so I could listen, I always loved that, any help was welcome for this sleep deprived mum.

He's growing up so quick and when he started to talk and understand I debated with myself about keeping him away from meetings, but I came to some acceptance that sometimes he comes along and that's ok, hes pretty good on the iPad 'thank god for iPads' and he loves all the attention he gets from the other members.

My recovery is number one and without it I don't get to have a life or be a mum who can be present enough to remember stuff and think about how I can best help my little one grow up. The fellowship and all the love there helps me to be the best person I can be, there are people who have done whatever im going through before me and who can support me, sometimes in person but most of the time on the phone. My son gets the benefits of that cause as the saying goes "happy mum happy kids" and I'm a happy member.

Jen F

We Pose a Question...

This rant has been put together from a couple of “service” (giving back; giving of self), dinosaurs whose combined service experience is 46 years.

In a geographical area of over one million square kilometres, the Queensland NA fellowship consists of what is known as two “areas”, the Greater Queensland Area and the Gold Coast Area. This submission will focus on the Greater Queensland Area of NA, which holds 60 groups – 66 meetings- a week throughout the larger part of Queensland.

As we learn early in our involvement in the NA fellowship, our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the still suffering addict? Sounds good so far! Basically, we want to let addicts know there is an alternative to living a life centred around the getting and using of drugs and the shit that encompasses that lifestyle, as ever present as our shadow. We do this with “service”.

So, what is “service?” It’s giving of our time; utilising our resources; our experience that we used to use and now we don’t! It’s everything from opening up a meeting regularly, to providing a phone helpline service. Service is also personified in the NA groups, via a structure created by members to develop, make happen, and maintain the various resources on behalf of NA. These are things such as the production and distribution of NA literature, including meeting lists; phone lines; meetings in the community and meetings in jails and rehabs - that is hundreds of NA members doing lots of different tasks to help NA to grow and be available to people seeking a reprieve from active addiction.

From the current groups, a structure was formed back in the eighties, and is now known as the Greater Queensland Area Service Committee (ASC). Ideally, each of the 60 groups would have a representative at the committee meeting each month, to represent their group and decide on what resources are needed to carry out our primary purpose and the best uses of our resources. (Blah, blah, blaaaahhhh...)

But, this is where the interesting (and some say, disillusioning) part comes in. Traditionally, about 8-10 group representatives (known as Group Service Representatives or GSR’s) turn up at this meeting. And, that’s on a good day!

That is, to participate in the committee meeting that exists to serve all the groups. That then leaves around 50 groups having no voice at this service meeting.

That means simply, that we have 8 people (NA members thankfully) with a handful of other trusted servants making decisions for the whole of the Greater Queensland Area, (Remember the one million square miles with 66 meetings?) and 60 groups unrepresented.

Is that how we want it to be? 60 groups consisting of 2-15 members each, with an attendance at their meetings of up to 50 or 60 people - are being served by such a small body of decision makers. Totally 10 to 15 people in all. And, these 10 -15 people are mainly from the Brisbane groups with a few from outlying suburbs.

Our meeting lists show our meetings are in major cities all over Queensland. How can we, as an area, as trusted servants on the ASC, best support and serve groups in outlying suburbs like Caboolture; Logan; Inala; Sunshine Coast and even further afield, such as Townsville and Cairns.

Just as we examine our personal shortcomings - surely this representation and service is a shortcoming of our structure? We need to apply the principles of our personal recovery to our service structure. We put forward these comments to initiate some contemplation and discussion in the groups we are elected to serve.

The rest is up to you.... PT & Krissy A



IF YOU WANT TO USE DRUGS
WELL THEN, THAT'S YOUR BUSINESS!
IF YOU WANT TO STOP USING DRUGS
THEN, THAT'S OUR BUSINESS!

spirit knows no colour!
spirit knows no shame!



DONT BE SHAME!
PUT YOUR HANDS UP & ASK FOR HELP!



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS - 1300 652 820
na.org.au

White Man's Time

Born out in the bush
That's where I belong
Learning all the stories
To keep my culture strong
Living by the lore
Living for the land
Not this white man system
I'll never understand

They chuck me in this hole
They try to make me climb
I'm not doin' nothin' but the white man's time

A spear into the side
A spear into the thigh
The warrior will take it
And either live or die
Hide away in here
Lose your self-respect
Some correction centre
Nothing here correct

They chuck me in this hole
They try to make me climb
I'm not doin' nothin' but the white man's time

This is not my home
Let me tell you this
Lore is not some fairytale
the white man can dismiss
You got to pay your debt
You got to pay the price

Then this white man system
Will make you pay it twice

**They chuck me in this hole and try to make me climb
I'm not doin' nothin' but the white man's time
They're tellin' me I'm wrong, I'm tellin' you that I'm
Not doin' nothin' but the white man's time
No I'm not doin' nothin' but the white man's time.**

Cornelius M.
Port Keats, NT

Cornelius was imprisoned for a serious crime committed in blackout and was released after serving 6 years of a 9 year sentence. He is now on parole with an anklet on his leg for another 3 years. He will have to go back to his community and face blackfella lore (payback - spearing).

Malcolm S., our Indigenous Workgroup Chair, met him at an Indigenous Rehab and bumped into him the next day at CAAPS (Council Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services). The Indigenous workgroup, along with PR are now conducting H & I meetings via Skype every second Tuesday into CAAPS.



Top Ten

things I want to say to my sponsees...

1. You asked me to be your sponsor, I didn't ask you to be my sponsee
2. I am not a qualified life coach, I am your NA sponsor
3. If you want to use, call me before you pick up
4. If you don't call me, eventually I will assume I am not your sponsor anymore
5. But if you do call, I will listen
6. If you hate 'talking on the phone' then I'm happy to text :-)
7. I am your sponsor but many people in the rooms have valuable advice, you just need to listen
8. If it doesn't work out, you can change sponsors, I'll be ok
9. Do the steps, do the steps, do the steps
10. Recovery talk is ALWAYS better over coffee!

The Recovery Quiz - a 5 minute assessment of your spiritual well-being

For each question, select the option that best describes you.

1. You decided to stop using because you were
 - a) afraid your parents were going to cut you out of their will.
 - b) sick and tired of using.
 - c) tortured by the emotional and spiritual vacuum in your soul.

2. You haven't been to a meeting for a week and now you have the option the of going to a meeting or to the movies to see a new flick about full-on drug users. Do you
 - a) go to the meeting because as we all know, "without my Recovery I have nothing".
 - b) actually I don't really need meetings to stay clean.
 - c) go to the movies and justify that it's OK because the movie will remind you of just how bad using was.

3. A friend who you got clean with has just busted and is having trouble stopping using. You
 - a) Try really hard NOT to invite her/him to stay with you (you know they need all the support they can get, but really it's time for me to look after me)
 - b) happen to mention that "yeah, I've been thinking that maybe NA's not for me either and hey, why don't we hang out together tomorrow?".
 - c) whenever you see them, remind them that they have a choice, that they don't have to use and that their Higher Power still loves them.

4. You've been doing meetings for a while now and you're getting a bit bored of hearing the same shares over and over again. Do you
 - a) decide to stop going to meetings until you get your enthusiasm back.
 - b) still go to meetings and use the time to catch up on your sleep until you get your enthusiasm back.
 - c) decide to do more meetings until you get your enthusiasm back.

5. Which idea seems most reasonable

- a) that soon people will be able to clone themselves.
- b) that love is a physical force in the universe.
- c) that Justin Beiber is really a robot.

6. You're having problems getting on with your sponsor. You

- a) decide it's cool because you just won't talk to them ever again.
- b) try to talk it through because obviously you've got some inner child issues coming up.
- c) What's a sponsor?

7. You're in town and you run into an ex-partner who's still using. What do you do?

- a) you run in the opposite direction as fast as your little legs can carry you.
- b) tell them how much you've missed them and how lonely you've been since you split up.
- c) try to 12th Step them.

8. Someone in the fellowship is driving you intensely crazy. What do you do?

- a) You pray for them to grow in their recovery.
- b) You pray for them to bust or switch to another fellowship.
- c) You pretend that they're not really there and if you don't acknowledge them then they might just disappear.

9. The problem with newcomers is...

- a) some of them are so damn cute, you can't help but 13th step them!
- b) they just don't have a full grasp of the traditions.
- c) you never know when someone from your past will blow in and destroy your carefully constructed NA image.

10. Do you wish that

- a) you could travel all over the world seeking spirituality and going to different NA meetings .
- b) you could use recreationally.
- c) you could just for once win something over \$2 on a scratchie!

How you scored:

1. a) 1 b) 2 c) 3 2. a) 3 b) 1 c) 2 3. a) 2 b) 1 c) 3 4. a) 1 b) 2 c) 3
5. a) 2 b) 3 c) 1 6. a) 2 b) 3 c) 1 7. a) 2 b) 1 c) 3 8. a) 1 b) 3 c) 2
9. a) 3 b) 1 c) 2 10. a) 3 b) 1 c) 2

What does it all mean?

Less than 10 - You are not playing properly, go back and start again.

10 - 15 Uh-oh .you seem to be sliding down the spiritual slippery-dip of life and if you're not careful you're going to land at the dealer's house.

15 - 20 Mostly you want recovery and you try to be "spiritually aware" but it just gets a bit too hard sometimes. Stuff that, using's harder!

20 - 25 You're doing well, just try to avoid the "I'm so good I'm going to disappear up my own arse" trap and you'll be fine.

25 - 30 The Dalai Lama has nothing on you babe! As you speed off into inter-galactic nirvana-dom, spare a thought for the rest of us.



Surrender

What a strange thought
It is to hand it over
Give my will and trust
To something foreign and unknown.
Swimming against the current
Always losing the battle
Never understanding
Where the casualties came from.
There is peace in this surrender
Acknowledging the truth
Powerless am I
To a life become unmanageable.
Hope springs from turmoil
The wreckage of this life
I'm no longer in the tornado
Now guided to what is right.

Fear is the mind-killer

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

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

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

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

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

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

Which is not to say I've reached a point of perfect mental health (if such a thing exists). Since I stopped smoking cigarettes I have had a bit of a resurgence of the old-school fear. The gut-churning, stay-awake all night fear. And I can't make a decision to save my life because I'm so scared that I'll make the wrong choice. But the difference today is that I can see it. And recovery has given me a choice. I can make a choice today to do something different and go down a different path to the one I went down years ago. Being in recovery has shown me that if I talk about my fears they are lessened in the sharing and then I become capable of change.

Anonymous

(reprinted from the October 2009 NA Today)

Far North Coast Narcotics Anonymous Convention
4th, 5th and 6th March 2016

Freedom - to be happy



More will be revealed...



SERENITY UNDER THE SAPPHIRE STARS 2016



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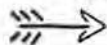


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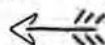
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→ * Please bring all necessary bed linen * ←



* No Pets Allowed *



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