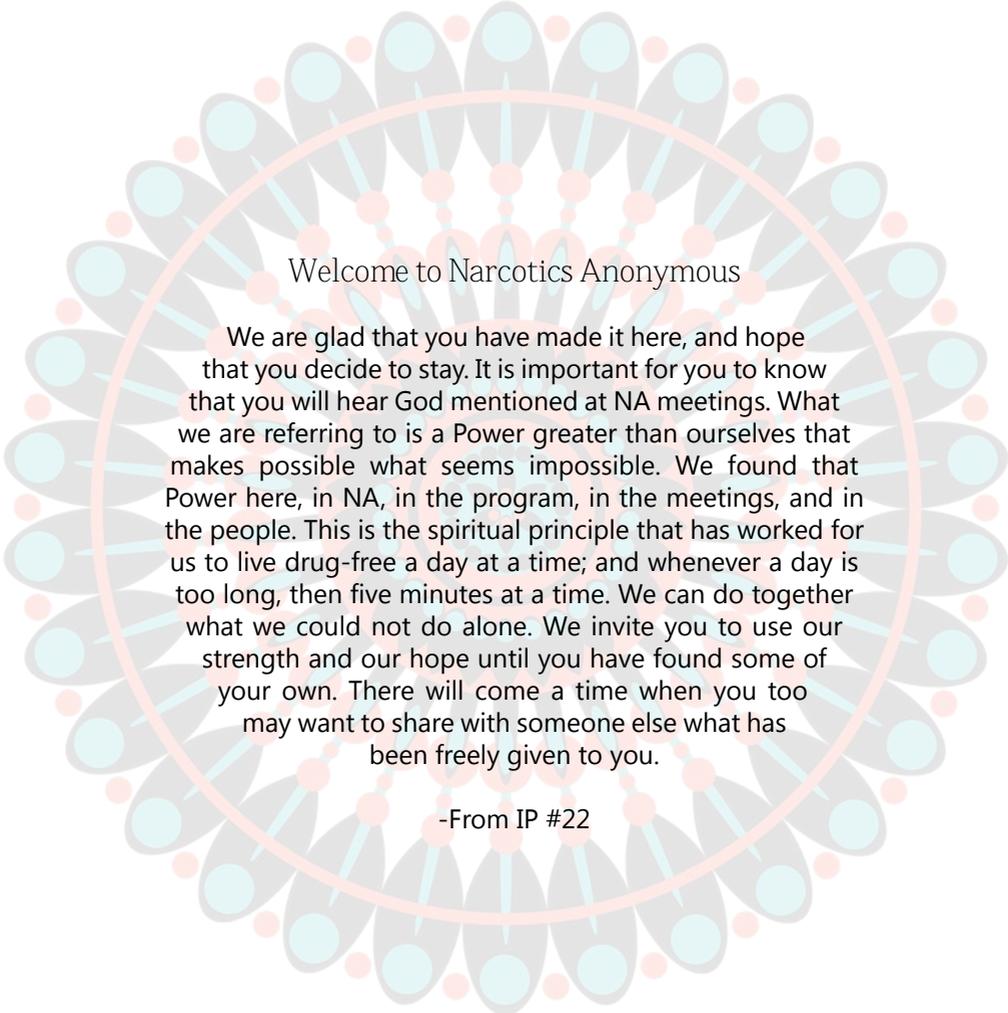
A vibrant, surreal painting of a landscape. In the foreground, a woman with long black hair is sitting on the ground, looking down. A large, gnarled tree trunk dominates the left side of the frame. A winding path of yellow and blue leads through the scene. In the background, there are more trees and a large, colorful sun or moon. The overall style is expressive and colorful.

# NA TODAY

Free Publication

Of The Australian Region

March 2018



## Welcome to Narcotics Anonymous

We are glad that you have made it here, and hope that you decide to stay. It is important for you to know that you will hear God mentioned at NA meetings. What we are referring to is a Power greater than ourselves that makes possible what seems impossible. We found that Power here, in NA, in the program, in the meetings, and in the people. This is the spiritual principle that has worked for us to live drug-free a day at a time; and whenever a day is too long, then five minutes at a time. We can do together what we could not do alone. We invite you to use our strength and our hope until you have found some of your own. There will come a time when you too may want to share with someone else what has been freely given to you.

-From IP #22

# *INSIDE THIS ISSUE*

<i>International Events</i>	4
<i>Reflections On Service</i>	5
<i>Get Clean, Clean House, Help Other Addicts</i>	6
<i>Indigenous Subcommittee - Yabun 2018</i>	8
<i>Short Thoughts</i>	10
<i>Justin's Story</i>	11
<i>Forever Grateful In NA</i>	13
<i>Member Interview</i>	14
<i>One Meeting, Two Addicts and Some Pamphlets</i>	16
<i>Hanging Out with My Mates</i>	19
<i>An Addict's Mind</i>	20
<i>A New Life with NA on the Inside</i>	22
<i>Helping Me Change Every Day</i>	22
<i>Fellowship of the Lawn</i>	25
<i>The Storm</i>	26
<i>A Vision for NA Service</i>	28

**The NA Today Magazine belongs to all members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission is to provide recovery and service information, as well as recovery-related entertainment.**

In keeping with this mission, the editorial staff are dedicated to providing a magazine which is open to articles and features written by members from around Australia, as well as current service and convention information.

Foremost, we're dedicated to the celebration of our message "any addict can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live."

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

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

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

**natoday@na.org.au**

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**NA NATIONAL HELPLINE**  
**1300 652 820**

**FOR MEETINGS IN AUSTRALIA  
AND OTHER INFO**

**WWW.NA.ORG.AU**

# Dear Readers

Another quarter has come and gone, and I hope you all had a safe and happy time over the silly season. This issue of the NA Today has been centred around the theme:

## EXPERIENCES OF SERVICE

We've had some amazing submissions from members all over the country, and we are making a few changes to help you all stay informed about's happening with your Regional Service body, which is very exciting. Region is doing some fantastic stuff, and members are always welcome to come to the ARSC and sit in on their meetings, and get involved themselves. We have five subcommittees fellowship members can come and be a part of:

### PR - Public relations

This subcommittee handles our fellowship's interaction with outside enterprises - talks to governments, hospitals and institutions among other things.

### Outreach

This mob is instrumental in bringing meetings to rural/stay at home members, and help start new meetings.

### Indigenous

The Indigenous committee is focussed on bringing the message of recovery to our indigenous communities.

### IT

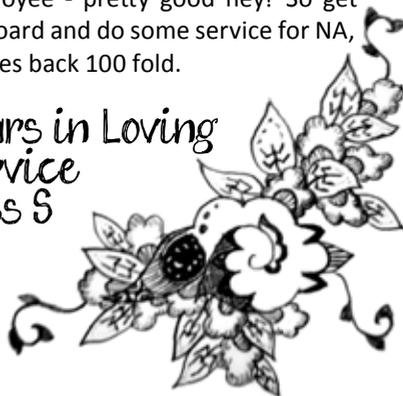
Who are responsible for our online presence and the ARSC communication infrastructure.

## NA Today

We are responsible for generating content, and vetting and printing the wonderful magazine you are currently reading. We are also expanding into online, so we could use some help!

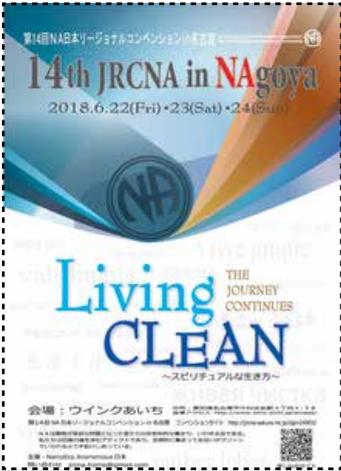
My personal experience of service has been very rewarding. I started at my homegroup as GSR, which meant I was involved in area service straight away. A lot of conflict can happen at area, but it helped me to find my voice and stay true to my values, as well as to practice having compassion and understanding for members who I found personally challenging. This is an important life skill. I then opened the meeting as secretary, which made sure I did at least one meeting every week, and then as treasurer I found out that I *can* count, after all. All of these positions helped me to feel responsible for the wellbeing of my fellowship, and put me right in the centre, which is, of course, the best place for any addict. Now I get to hone my graphic chops and networking hustle in the NA Today Committee, which makes me better at my chosen career path and a fairly skilled potential employee - pretty good hey? So get on board and do some service for NA, it gives back 100 fold.

Yours in Loving  
Service  
Tess S



# International Events

Australia is a remote place, surrounded by sea. It can seem like the rest of the world is very far away. This section is to let our members know that no matter where you are in the world, NA is always there. Some of our members report deep spiritual growth from seeing what it's like to be an addict in another country. Others may be leaving the country for the first time, and still others enjoy the ability to travel clean, where they never could before. No matter how experienced with travel our members may be, we are never alone, worldwide.



## JAPAN - Nagoya

Japan Region Convention 2018  
22-24 June 2018

Venue:

Venue "WINC AICHI"

4-4-38 Meieki Nakamura-ku  
Nagoya-city, Aichi 450-0002

Event Info: jrcna.home@gmail.com



## DENMARK- Skanderborg

Convention and Camp  
3-5 August 2018  
Located at Audonicon  
Groennedalsvej 14  
8660 Skanderborg  
Denmark

Event Info: konventogcamp@gmail.com

More info:

[www.namidtjylland.dk](http://www.namidtjylland.dk)



## KENYA- Mombasa

Free At Last E. African Convention

4th-6th May 2018

Venue: Baobab Beach Resort

Diani, Kenya

Contact: baziad76@gmail.com

<http://www.ea-na.com/>



# Reflections on Service

When I came into the rooms I was a broken mess with no life skills or any sense of purpose. Truth be told, I never had any skills before using because I was raised in the drug world, so self preservation, manipulation and aggression were all I knew and they were only good for survival. The idea of being a part of the community seemed insane to me. I couldn't sit with my self or deal with human interaction, so whatever service I could do was a great relief-washing dishes and drying them was the first way I gave service to NA. It helped me hang around and people would talk to me and invite me to coffee, where I'd sit in so much anxiety, until it became easier.



My next service was chairing a lunchtime meeting, someone was needed and I like being needed! I wanted to give back to the place that had made me feel safe for the first time ever. Chairing the meeting helped me learn who people were and being part of group gave my sense of belonging a stronger tie. Being responsible for opening the meeting gave me a reason to get up a purpose and kept me accountable.

As my recovery grew in clean time so did my service experience. I was a part of the Activities Committee, where we put on camps and cricket matches, footy games and bbqs. This was so much fun for me and my children.

I've been a part of the convention committee, which was both stressful but so rewarding, especially when you see everybody having fun, and for me being able to dance is the greatest! I've also been a member of the ASC in different roles.

What has service given me its given me a way to connect with different people and make long term friends. It has taught me job skills and shown me my talents and also what I'm not good at. When I've made mistakes my fellow members have loved me and supported me. Most of all when I've had tragic life-changing things happen, my service is what has kept me close to the Fellowship. It's my commitment to these roles that has been the reason I didn't pick up, because unfortunately sometimes I can't just do it for myself.

Service to NA the fellowship that brought me to life and saved my family is the least I can do and in the end has been so rewarding to my life.

- Cynthia R

# Get clean, Clean house, Help other addicts

Hi, I'm Che. I'm an addict.

This is my story.

I moved to Australia from England when I was 3 just after my dad died. I think my mum was not coping. We moved here with her violent boyfriend whom we had to later run away from to a women's refuge, where we stayed for about a year. After that, my mum met my step dad. She drank heavily and partied a lot, and my step dad was an addict. People who know me growing up thought I had no chance, and neither did I. I didn't know any different.

I started using at 11 and it lit me up, gave me the confidence that I had never had. I was a shell of a person, and drugs made me feel I could be whoever I wanted. By the time I was 16 I started using I.V. drugs. I hear people share in meetings about their "drug of choice". I always think what lucky people they are to have a choice over what drugs they used, 'cause for me I had no choice. I used anything that was on offer or easier to get. They had an absolute hold of me.

By the time I was 19 I was fully homeless. I had never paid a bill or had a job that lasted longer than 2 weeks. My life was completely unmanageable. By the time I got clean in 2010 when I was 24, and due to have a baby. I had no idea how to live; all I knew was how to hustle, manipulate, steal or lie to get by. So, I started going to NA.

For the first few months I hated it. That 1 hour sitting in the chair was the longest hour of my life. I was so sick, all my disease kept telling me was to listen to the differences. But I was determined. I wasn't going to put my child through what I had been through as a kid growing up. And I had enough. So I just kept coming back.

One day I walked out of a meeting feeling amazing. I related. I was finally getting well and it got me. It took about 4 months but it got me. They say if you don't get it, keep coming back, 'cause it'll get you. And for me it did thank god. So I picked up a sponsor started doing the steps. Got a service

position as a GSR (group service representative). This is me, someone who has never held a job or didn't finish school.

Doing service helped me learn life skills that I had never known. Like how to conduct a proper meeting (group conscience), taking minutes, report writing, presenting my report at the ASC. All things that now I use in my work field day to day.

The 12 step fellowships were first created by the discovery that, if we help others to get clean, then we can stay clean. So, by doing service not only do we gain life skills for ourselves, but we get to stay clean by getting out of ourselves, and we get to help other addicts.



Whether your service is simply picking up a newcomer from the train station on the way to your meeting, or representing NA world-wide, it is all as important as one another. Without service, without one addict helping another, we die; we don't have anywhere to go and we die. Simple as that.

Our purpose:

- Get clean
- Clean house
- Help other addicts

*Yours in loving service,  
Che*

# YABUN 2018

Our Indigenous Subcommittee is a fairly new regional committee that



came about, initially as a work group. Our purpose, as it is with the entire fellowship, is to carry the message to the still suffering addict, and in particular, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mob.

After running it by the Australian Regional Service Committee in November 2017 and a few of our koori members in Sydney, we decided to have a stand at Yabun 2018 to carry the message of recovery on this special cultural event.

The following is taken from the Yabun facebook page:

“Yabun celebrates Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander art, culture, dance, music, politics and heritage at the largest one day gathering of our First Nations cultures in Australia, held on 26th of January upon the traditional lands of the Gadigal people in Sydney. Established in 2001, Yabun (meaning ‘music to a beat’ in Gadigal language) is

a free event that features live music, a bustling stalls market, panel discussions and community forums on Aboriginal issues, children’s activities, and traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural performances. Yabun Festival welcomes everyone to join in this one of a kind event which honours the survival of the world’s oldest living culture.”

Our Yabun stall is the first NA Indigenous stall held at this event and as such we had nothing to guide us except our passion for recovery and our combined experience, strength and hope. We arrived early to set up our stall with flyers, welcome packs, a stand with IP’s, heaps of water and a desire to carry the message.

The entire day was very emotional for me, not only as an aboriginal woman but as a member of such an amazing fellowship. I feel privileged to be of service. I cried many times. The first was when Ivan (an aboriginal member from Sydney) came to our stall where we gathered and he said an Acknowledgement to Country that recognised the resilience of the Gadigal people, past and present. We then held hands and said the Serenity Prayer together, again bringing tears of gratitude and respect. It was still only 8am!

Before the crowds came, or even all the stalls were set up, we had an elder come to say hello. She told us that her

son was in prison (I presume drugs had something to do with his incarceration) and she felt she could share that with us. We chatted and gave her the booklet "Behind The Walls" together with a couple of other IP's. She was grateful to connect with understanding and compassion. One of our koori members with me at that time had been telling me about his time in jail while I shared of my experience visiting my husband in jail. We knew her pain. I believe we gave her something by being aboriginal people living a life of recovery, doing service and being an example of hope. I cried again when I thought that moment could change someone else's life, maybe our literature could reach someone in need by us being there on the day.

We took turns at manning the stand so that we could all go walkabout and check out the traditional dance at the corroboree ground, the musical

performances, the stalls and other information stands as well as the myriad of people, from all cultures, there to celebrate this event. Our stand was also a meeting place for NA members who were attending Yabun to gather and connect (and a safe place to leave their handbags while checking out the festival).

While talking with another member of our Yabun organising group about her experience on the day, she told me there were many parents that came to speak with her while she was on the stand. That made sense to me as I probably wouldn't be walking around in the heat, drinking water and enjoying a cultural event if I was using. I guess we carried the message by example and letting families know that there is always hope for their addict sons and daughters, we just leave the rest to a loving higher power who will put that literature in the hands



of those that need it and are open to receiving it.

Yabun 2018 was an amazing day of hope and connection. Thank you to our indigenous subcommittee members who helped with the idea, sharing their passion and doing service at the stand itself. Thanks also to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous and the ARSC for your unwavering support of our need to carry the message to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters. Finally thanks to the ARSC PR Chair and Outreach Chair for your experience and guidance.

Thank you all for the privilege of being the Indigenous Subcommittee Chair.

Karen A

*If you would like to know more about the Indigenous Subcommittee or become a member, please contact Karen A at [indigenous@na.org.au](mailto:indigenous@na.org.au)*



# SHORTTHOUGHTS

## EXPERIENCES OF SERVICE

*What have I learned from doing service in NA? Humility.*  
- Frank G

*When I give back I get so much more. I never knew I could get self esteem by helping others.*  
- Tina C

*For me it's all about giving back, and in return getting so much more. The Thursday night NA meeting at the prison I attend for H+I, where most of the guys are lifers, is my favorite meeting. It's amazing to see the program work in us.* - Tom M

*From doing service I have learned patience, tolerance and how to remain teachable.* - Kandice H

*Don't forget the milk.* - Richard G

*From doing service I've learned to love myself again!* - Analiza S

# Justin's story in early recovery

Hi, my name's Justin, and I'm in early recovery. I am going to give you a very brief I.D., share my experience of my recent detox, discovery of NA, reason to believe in success through this program, and how I've recently achieved my 30 days.

So, like a lot of us, I got into drugs at a fairly young age, thinking it was all going to be fun and games, and I did have a lot of good times. I guess this led to me using as an escape from the real world and all the problems of the abuse I got in my apprenticeship. I thought it was cool.

*All the people I was around were doing drugs so I just felt that it was the norm.*

I guess as I got a bit older I started to realise I was leaving a lot of my mates that were my age behind when it came to using. So, I began socialising with people older than me because we had more things in common. Everyone was cool with just drugs and drinking but I wanted more. I had fantasies of taking over what I had learnt to be my world, I was prepared to do whatever it took.

However, a series of really bad events and networking led to me being scared for my life. Every day was a mission, and I was at a point where in my head it was kill or be killed.

*The paranoia was unbearable.*

My painting business was failing, I lost control and felt like killing myself, or every one around me that did wrong by me. Fortunately, I found a treatment centre that began my road to recovery, but those same fantasies of successful using, and poor aftercare, led me to another relapse. I would get 6 months and relapse, 9 months and relapse.

*But I found this experience different. I had changed. I couldn't enjoy any of it anymore.*

It led me into a greater depression, which caused me to use just as much if not more than my prior poly habit, for about 1 year. I felt alone and fucking miserable. I began trying to get help from my doctor, which just led to more guilt and added medications.

One day I went to my chemist and one of the ladies there told me about a detox here in Perth. I decided to give it a go. I mean, what's the worst that



could happen, you know? A couple of days passed in detox and memories of rehab came back, so I tried my best to apply my knowledge of past recovery to my detox, thinking I could rehash 1 year's worth of rehab in 2 weeks. I talked to those amazing staff members about 5 times a day, just rattling off the shit in my head.

*Talking is what I know works in times of distress.*

Towards the end of my stay there some NA members came in and gave a H & I presentation. I shared my feelings of fear about going back into the real world again with these members, and one said 'give me your number and I'll message you, and you just call me if you start to struggle'.

That next morning I left detox, and within 8 hours I found drugs back at home and fucked up. I felt like this is too hard, what the fuck have I done. I was so disappointed in myself and was thinking 'how am I going to be able to do this. There is no hope'.

*Looking at my phone I saw the message from that NA member I met the previous night.*

I thought 'I'll just try to call him, I'm desperate right now and really don't want this life anymore'. He answered. I was crying on the phone telling him what I had done and how I felt. He managed to talk me through it, and said I should go to meetings.

So the next day I just went to the luncheon. They asked if there were any

newcomers. My new NA friend glanced at me, so I put my hand up, and Wow it felt like the room lit up with applause! A member I had met in detox was there chairing the meeting. He gave me a big hug and gave me my just for today tag.

*I felt so happy, like nothing else mattered right now. At that moment I made a decision that this time I'm going to give this program my all.*

I kept going to meetings and as I did my clean time increased; I kept finding the strength in the rooms and networking with it.

*Even in times of struggle I remember what my now sponsor said to me that first day—'pick up the phone before you pick up'. So I did.*

I called people, they answered and listened. Even if I couldn't get a hold of someone, I was quickly to learn from my great grand sponsor some tools that did and will help me in times when I can't get a hold of some one.

*This program and people involved are amazing and have potentially saved my life. I'm going to keep doing the suggested things and I'm not looking back.*

I love this program, I love my life, and I love my recovery. On the 18th of January I got my 30 day tag I feel really proud and blessed looking forward, to multiple years tag—but one day at a

time. I feel free, with this new found faith, and I hope to achieve my full potential.

Its time to live life instead of just trying to survive.

YIS, Justin G.



## Forever grateful in NA

This last 2 months have been some of the most distressing days in my recovery.

*My eldest daughter was incarcerated and I was powerless.*

This isn't exactly the first time I've felt like this in my role as a parent, but

it was by far one of the hardest. I've reached out, I've gone to meetings and I've cried many tears wondering how it would play out.

*And once again I've been held by this fellowship, my fellowship.*

Yesterday I sat in court with my mum and her dad. We sat together united by our love for this young woman who has her whole life ahead of her and waited as she was sentenced. The outcome was a positive one. We smiled, hugged and went to pick her up.

Today I am exhausted, the weight of my scared heart has finally caught up with me. I cried myself to sleep and I've cried this morning. And then facebook reminded me of a post last year, and my gratitude for my steps 8 & 9, and I knew in the moment that this is what its all about.

*Getting clean has given me the opportunity to hope for a better life, the steps have given me the vehicle in which to get it.*

The magistrate spoke of my daughters hard upbringing as a result of my using, yesterday I sat and listened as her mother, the same woman but a different person.

Recovery has given me this and has given my children a mother that can be there.

*I'm forever grateful..*

-Anonymous

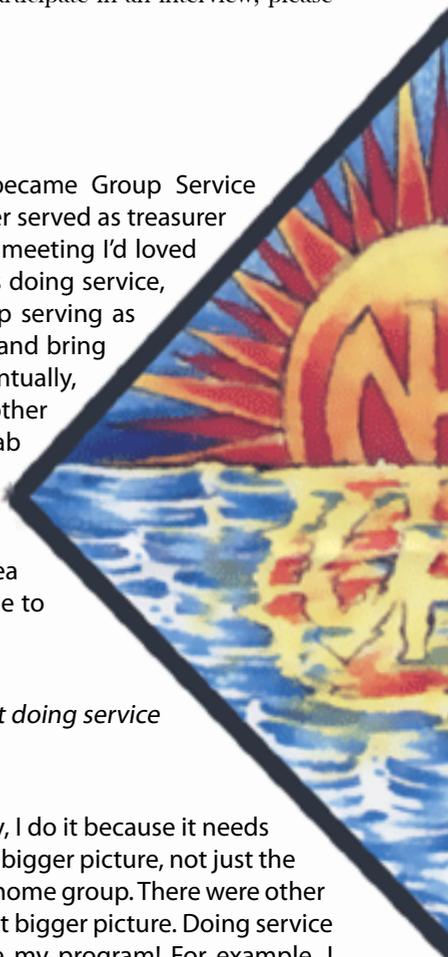
This month, your editor (ED) caught up online with Rebekah S (RS) to have a quick chat about her experience doing service, in line with the theme of this issue. If you would like to do some service for NA Today and participate in an interview, please email [natoday@na.org.au](mailto:natoday@na.org.au) for more details!

*ED: What service have you done/are doing in NA?*

RS: When I was in the last stage of rehab I became Group Service Representative (GSR) for my first homegroup. I later served as treasurer for this group. Down the track there was another meeting I'd loved in rehab, and they were struggling with members doing service, and so I made this my homegroup and ended up serving as treasurer, GSR, and assisted to open the meeting and bring milk, depending on who could go that day. Eventually, when work started full time, it was hard to get to other meetings, so with another member I'd done rehab with, who had a young child as I did, we set up a new meeting for a Sunday morning. I've been the treasurer and secretary there, and represented it a number of times at the area. I wanted to do area level service for a long time, but I've held back due to having work and single parenting commitments.

*ED: What has been the most beneficial thing about doing service for you?*

RS: Service has its challenges. At the end of the day, I do it because it needs to be done. It gave me the chance to see NA as the bigger picture, not just the meetings I went to. There was more there than my home group. There were other services to be part of and I wanted to be part of that bigger picture. Doing service has given me plenty of opportunities to practice my program! For example, I would never speak up about what I thought or wanted in my using. But I learnt in a group conscience and at the ASC, that I was safe to, and that my hp wanted me to.



*ED: Have you ever done Hospitals & Institutions/Public Information service? If so, what was that like?*

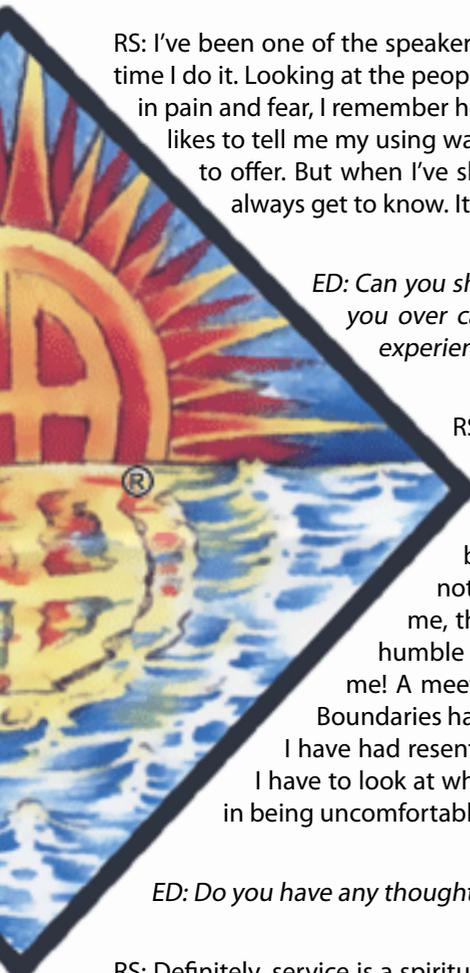
RS: I've been one of the speakers at two detox centres, which is awesome every time I do it. Looking at the people sitting there, not knowing what they're doing, in pain and fear, I remember how I was at the end of my using. My head always likes to tell me my using wasn't bad enough, I don't have anything valuable to offer. But when I've shared my truth, someone hears me- I just don't always get to know. It is such a spiritually rewarding gift.

*ED: Can you share a significant challenge you have faced, how you over came it, and what did you take away from that experience?*

RS: Challenges come in the form of different people and opinions. Sometimes I do more than what I wanted to, and i.e. had to learn how to say no. Have faith that what will be, will be. I have to keep my ego in check and remember not everyone has the same skills and abilities as me, that we all bring something different. Remaining humble is so important. No, NA will not fall apart without me! A meeting might close, but that's not for me to carry. Boundaries have been really important to follow through with. I have had resentments about people I've done service with and I have to look at what my part is, and become comfortable enough in being uncomfortable when dealing with difficult people and topics.

*ED: Do you have any thoughts about step 3 and doing service?*

RS: Definitely, service is a spiritual action, one that requires me to hand over my will. I can see it also keeps me at it when I would rather give up.



# *One meeting, two addicts and some pamphlets*

I stumbled across Narcotics Anonymous in 2013 as a battered and broken 31-year-old 'boy' with a pregnant partner, serious criminal record and very little hope for a bright future.

Having been gifted opportunities most people could dream of, only to spectacularly squander them in a 'cloudy' haze of self-destruction, I was convinced I had 'blown it' and that there was no coming back from the rockiest or rock bottoms I had been languishing in for what felt like an eternity.

I went to my first NA meeting (Sunday Night Newcomers, Northbridge, WA) on March 24 of that year and three things happened that evening that I firmly believe saved my life.

Firstly, as a newcomer I was handed a welcome pack of NA pamphlets, secondly, I was asked to share and, thirdly, someone spoke to me.

I scanned through the humble but powerful pieces of NA literature and related to every word of every pamphlet. Tears welled in my eyes when reading 'Am I an Addict' and the 'Triangle of Self-Obsession', for it was in those light-bulb moments I came to believe that NA could be the solution I was desperately longing for.

When I shared, I dumped my whole story on the group. Having lived a double-life in active addiction, through necessity, I had become an intensely secretive individual regarding my life, struggles and feelings. However, for some reason, that night, once I started to share 'what was going on for me' I couldn't stop. The words kept coming out, I couldn't stop, and the relief I felt once my share (eventually) ended, is something I hadn't felt before.

After the meeting, a more experienced member of the Fellowship, who happened to be the chair person that evening, approached



me after the meeting, introduced himself and said: "Welcome to NA. Thanks for sharing, you just told my story".

That simple gesture would have a monumental impact. Finally there was someone that understood, someone that had walked a mile in my shoes, someone that shared my pain and suffering, someone just like me ... I was no longer alone.

Having walked in 'off the street' without experiencing a rehab or detox centre, and not knowing anyone in the Fellowship, that brief connection with another member was vital. It made me feel 'a part of' and I left that meeting with something I hadn't had for many, many years ... hope.

I often think to myself, what would've happened to me if I didn't cross paths with that guy? What if he hadn't have said what he said? Would I have come back the following week? Would I still be alive?

A couple of months down the track that guy and another more experienced member would start a new meeting, Saturday morning Living Clean in Subiaco. I tagged along and soon I had my first home group.

A few months later I would ask that guy to be my sponsor. He said yes and suggested taking on a service position, and at the next group business meeting I was elected as the Literature Representative for Saturday morning Living Clean.

In my first six months of recovery, I had a sponsor, a home group and a service position, and what an amazing foundation that proved to be.

For me, the importance of all three of those 'suggested things' cannot be underestimated. My sponsor was my guide, my recovery mentor, the person I could tell the stuff I couldn't share at meetings. After years of knowing it all and running my own show, finally I had someone to bounce ideas off, listen to and learn from. I learned to be honest, open-minded and willing. Most importantly, my sponsor helped me stay clean.

My home group gave me a sense of family within the Fellowship and a safe place. For me, that meeting was loving, caring and something greater than myself. Most importantly, my home group helped me stay clean.

Being the Literature Representative gave me a purpose. As an awkward newcomer, filled with fear and anxiety, going to meetings was often a traumatic experience, walking in, sitting down and not talking to anyone. Old, hard-wired feelings of not being good enough, rejection and being 'less than' would bubble away internally, creating a wave of negative thoughts sweeping through my overwhelmingly self-obsessed mind. However, having a service position within my home group, gave me what I couldn't give myself, a sense of belonging, responsibility and worthiness. Most importantly, my service position helped me stay clean.

Fast forward to January 2018 and I am now over four years/nine months clean. The power of this program has given me the wings to fly and I am now unrecognisable to the 'battered and broken boy' that walked in to that first meeting. Having been showered with gifts of recovery, I am enjoying a life worth living, free from the obsession to use and self-destruct. I believe I am a good person, not the sick and twisted monster I had convinced myself I was in active addiction. I am a good partner, father, son, brother and friend these days, slowly becoming the principled 'man' I was always supposed to be.

After years of powerlessness, I am now higher powered.

I still attend regular meetings. I have a new home group, the Maylands Mens on Thursday nights. I have the same sponsor, regularly expressing my gratitude for everything he has done for me and passing on his teachings to my handful of sponsees.

I have experienced a range of service positions available at group, area and committee level within the Fellowship, grabbing every role as an invaluable learning experience and practicing applying the lessons to 'all my affairs'.

And to this day and to the best of my ability, I encourage the newcomer to share, ensure they are provided with the same NA pamphlets I was, approach them after the meeting and say: "Welcome to NA".

Most importantly, doing these simply things helps me stay clean.

-BJ R.

## Hanging out with my mates

Fading light on my horizon....Wanting to perspire.  
For others about to brighten....Offering wood for fire.  
Voices echo in my room....Everybody with accent.  
Nobody in costume....focus on recovery.....100 percent.

Deluded, deceiving, distorted, dishonest, diverting.....despicable.  
The road in, quite a blast..... Happening so fast.  
Melancholy, measly, moody, mumpish, mournful.....miserable.  
Some become criminal...Others critical...Many pitiful, searching for a miracle.

A slave to our disease....consumed by slow decay.  
Bringing us to our knees....Living in Groundhog Day.  
Many of us stuck for years....Why can't I be a weekender?  
Always ending in tears.....Ready to surrender.

Just working on the steps....We realize the effects.  
For memory's, we don't remember....No longer a pretender.  
Today the turbulence....is giving me white knuckles.  
I share today by listening....To other member's struggles.

Powerless and unmanageable, we admitted.....disconnected .....from using.  
Willingness to be committed.....staying clean our choosing.  
Now we can hear ourselves again....No more ball and chain.  
Our will and lives handed in....We are grateful to be clean.

Narcotics, nascent, naked, national, nutritional, nervous, newcomer.....Nirvana  
My Higher Power speaks through you....Grateful for the service crew.  
Anonymous, admirer, appreciative, awakening, awareness, accepting.....  
Attending,  
You are all precious and unique...a gift to me...I must go asleep.

Andrew. L

# An Addict's Mind

I think that I was born an addict. I got told early on in recovery that the disease of addiction lives in the mind, and when I look back on how I used to think when I was a kid, I know I must have had this disease even then. It's funny, when I look back on my childhood, I was very much loved and encouraged, but for some reason I always kind of took it the wrong way.

"You are so clever and talented!" I got told a lot. That's nice to hear, but in my twisted mind that meant that if I didn't get it straight away, if something wasn't easy for me, then I must not be clever after all. There was something wrong with me and I was somehow not good enough, because everyone thinks I can do this stuff but I can't!

It also motivated me to give up or not even try if something was too hard. This seems to be a hallmark of the unhelpful way that addicts think and it's been so destructive in my life.

Another thing I did when I was a child was to compare myself to people who were much older than me and despair when I couldn't measure up. I didn't understand why I couldn't throw as high as my dad, and it made me really upset, even though I was like eight years old.

My understanding of reality was kind of skewed in favour of me always being crap compared to everyone else. From listening to people share in meetings, I've noticed that addicts tend to

compare themselves with others and usually always find themselves wanting.

Of course I never said anything about my secret pain out loud; another classic trait of addicts: internalising everything, no matter how crazy it might be.

I was so full of shame about my "shortcomings" but I had to make sure no one ever found out I was feeling that way. In fact, I was even ashamed of feeling ashamed! If I had been able to say what I was feeling and thinking, maybe someone would have said "Of course you can't do that as well as your dad, you're only young and your body isn't big enough or strong enough yet, but one day it will be!"

I still do the comparing thing sometimes. One thing I heard in the rooms was: "Don't compare your insides with other people's outsides". As in, don't compare how I feel about my life circumstances "inside" (I feel bad because I don't have the car, the girlfriend, the rock star lifestyle or whatever) with how people look or what they've got on the "outside" (the car and the girlfriend and the rockstar lifestyle, for instance). Who knows how they are actually feeling about their life too?

They might be struggling to make those car payments, or constantly fighting with their girlfriend, or unable to stay clean because they are around drugs all the time being a rockstar. I don't know what that's like for the other person, it

might be completely shit for them, and they might be looking at me thinking “Jeez I wish I could just get a year clean, I wish I was single and free, I wish I could ride my bike everywhere...”

Who knows how they feel about their life? NA has taught me to be grateful for what I’ve got, and that’s a big help when I’m stuck feeling miserable because I missed out on life because of using or I haven’t got to where I think I’m supposed to be.

What’s also important for me to remember, and something I often repeat to myself, is: “There will always be someone better at this than you, and someone worse, and that doesn’t mean you are not good enough.”

This thought helps me stay right-sized and humble and not get sucked in to feeling shame because I can't do something the "best".

It also reminds me not to judge people, because I can just as easily think I’m better than someone and place myself above them, as be intimidated by them because I feel so less than.

Neither of those things are good for my mental state, and I don't want to give my disease an "in" to making me feel bad. The serenity prayer helps with that too.

I think the final thing that NA has taught me that helps with those unhelpful childhood patterns is remembering to tell people what’s going on for me and

share the crazy thoughts with people who understand.

People in the rooms of NA help me get perspective by telling me when my thinking is a bit skewiff, and help me identify when I’m being too hard on myself or when I have unrealistic expectations of someone else.

I’m lucky that older cleaner members have been there and done that, and we all share parts of the same story. I see myself in them and they see themselves in me and we can all help each other out to be happier and better people, by sharing our experience.

So yeah, my “childhood” addict thinking patterns still haunt me sometimes. I don’t stop thinking like an addict just because I’ve “grown up” (yeah right!), but I can catch it out more often than not, thanks to the wisdom in this program.

It was a relief when I heard someone say that I don't have to believe everything that my brain tells me. I can fight off the mental dis-ease. I’m a clean addict today, so I get opportunities to keep learning new ways, and UN-learning old ways, and RE-learning the stuff I forget if I just continue to walk the NA way.

-A grateful addict

# A new life with NA on the inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is AC and I'm currently incarcerated on my fourth probation violation for using drugs. I have been to some NA meetings on the "street," which I found extremely helpful and welcoming. Unfortunately, I wasn't ready to give up all of my reservations in order to recover.

Now, I have been to the bottom of every bottle, and I have been homeless and institutionalized; I even attempted suicide as a means of escape from my complete and utter misery.

*In all of those places, all of those ways of running, I have found there is no way to run from myself and my problems.*

I guess now I really understand the saying "Wherever I go, there I am." So, here I am, serving a six-year sentence in a DOC behavior modification program. I have the ability to "earn" an early release if I complete two years of their 24/7 therapeutic community. This could be my ticket to freedom.

When I first entered the program in May of 2011, I was basically just doing it to get out. Over a period of months, I have begun to really discover myself. I have talents and abilities that I never knew I possessed. My Higher Power

has literally brought me back from the depths of despair.

*I feel like I have a new life, and while I used to run from my fears, I now face and conquer them.*

I no longer wish to be dead. I have wishes, dreams, and ambitions to help others who are lost like I was.

I'm not saying I'm perfect; I still have a lot to work out inside myself. The difference in me today is that I am willing and I believe!

I know with the help of my Higher Power and Narcotics Anonymous, recovery IS possible. "A good life awaits."

-AC

# Helping me change every day

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is WB and I am a 21-year-old addict. I'm currently serving a three-year prison sentence. I found NA on the inside, after struggling with drug addiction since the age of 14.

Over the years, my disease progressed. I have been in and out of jails and hospitals, and now I'm in prison.

My addiction has caused me to lose everything I have ever loved, including my son. He is nearly six years old, and I have missed out on a lot of memories with him because of my drug addiction.

Now, because I am clean and working on myself, I'm able to talk to him on the phone. I have been incarcerated for six months. I missed his preschool graduation; now he is headed to kindergarten.

*NA has helped give me hope. It has shown me that addicts can recover.*

No matter what your circumstances may be, the NA program can restore you to sanity. Drug addiction used to control every part of my life. When I got to prison and got clean, I realized that no prison was worse than the prison in my own mind! I am now learning to live a better life without drugs.

NA has helped me change in so many ways! I have a better outlook and a From the Inside higher tolerance for those around me. I am so grateful for what NA has done for me that I try to encourage others.

*Being an NA member means that I am free to be myself and I won't be judged by the things I have done in the past.*

It feels great to know that there are others just like me who have gone through similar experiences. NA lets us share our stories and give each other hope. I owe much respect and appreciation to the NA program.

Thank you.

Your friend, WB

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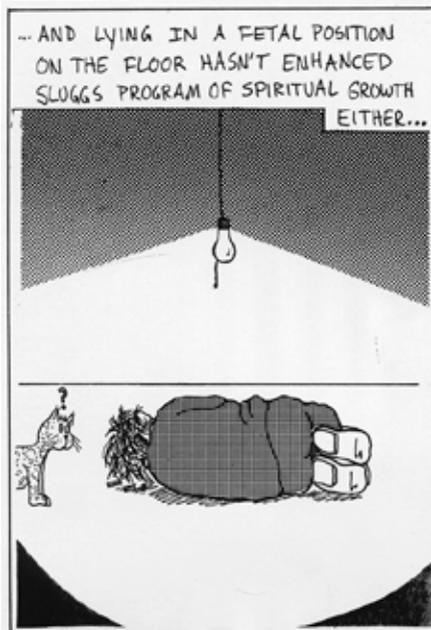


**Reaching Out**

"Reaching Out [is a publication that] helps incarcerated addicts connect to the NA program of recovery, enhances H&I efforts and offers experience from members who successfully transitioned from the 'inside' to be productive members of society... H&I committees may find this booklet beneficial for their efforts in the jail system and interaction with professionals who work with inmates."

Paper copies of reaching out are free for addicts who will be incarcerated for more than 6 months and can be ordered through the NA World Service Website. Back issues are also available to download.

<https://www.na.org/?ID=reaching-out-index>



Reprinted from the NA Calendar from 1994

# FELLOWSHIP OF THE LAWN

Standing like a folded blade,  
Of grass within the lawn - I was -  
a'like all other blades, yet would,  
stand lonely, self-absorbed, and brood.

On what I thought I 'really' needed,  
tunnel visioned, all else unheeded.  
Could, would, only see considered,  
The truth, far as I'd created.

Before NA, it was just me -  
alone!  
I played n talked, to no-one.  
In truth, I grew and stayed un-met -  
by others, everywhere I went.

It was just me and my thoughts,  
Thoughts that had, in the thinking,  
Excluded others, and isolation brought !

A world, where I felt entitled,  
to just self-see, regardless of,  
interests of others,  
or their lack,  
To only take, not to give back.

But how can such self-taking be,  
In my interests, because She -  
Our world can only pro-vide, if,  
Live to sustain - to share the lack.  
If...

All who need, are giving back.  
And not just me self-seeking-taking.

What 'we all' need,  
Or...am I yet mistaken ?

Mistaken beliefs are common yet,  
In isolation I still get -  
Ideas - of isolated me - and in that  
isolation see,  
That all that matters is just me.

Yet in fellowship - in each step -  
each tradition, principle and concept,  
I See...  
altered insights, of others needs,  
of other's value and  
I See...  
In fellowship, We can be isolation free.

So, giving back, not only taking,  
I see how fellowship's creating,  
and end to my, isolation making.

By my own actions now -  
I See...  
A blade, me, sustained by 'the' progie,  
A blade, a member, like all others -  
I See...  
Isolation's end, starts with...

Steps 1, 2, 3 -  
An NA meeting - you and me!

- Edward R

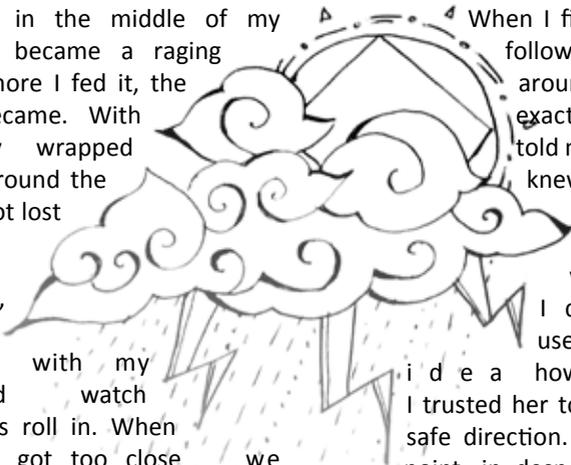


I don't remember the sun. I don't remember blizzards or power outages. Sunburn and frostbite never crossed my empty mind as I scurried along the streets looking for the next high. For days, I stayed behind closed blinds and windows, unaware of the world outside. I remember knowing that I should have been thirsty. Some days I was so high I couldn't remember if I had drunk any fluids or not.

Recovery is like a radar system. It signals me to change direction so that I don't have to sail back into that familiar storm. Addiction's ugly face becomes clearer the longer I stay clean. I see its entry points, its tactics, and its paths. The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous remove the power from addiction. They bring this storm into the sunlight where it is exposed and rendered helpless.

Once I was in the middle of my addiction, it became a raging storm. The more I fed it, the bigger it became. With my identity wrapped completely around the next high, I got lost in the storm.

As a child, I loved to sit with my dad and watch thunderclouds roll in. When the lightning got too close we would go inside. Unlike the thunderclouds, I didn't see addiction creeping up on me. There was no warning that I can remember. One day, I woke up and realized that I had to have drugs in order to function. Using provided a feel-good façade that I wanted desperately. There was no alarm or warning label telling me that one day I would wake up with my face in the toilet, or on the floor in the fetal position, waiting for the dealer to call back so I could begin my day.



When I first got clean, I followed my sponsor around and did exactly what she told me I should do. I knew I had no radar; I couldn't see what was coming. I didn't want to use, but I had no idea how to stay clean. I trusted her to steer me in a safe direction. At such a low point, in desperation, I went into survival mode. She became my rescuer.

I changed people, places, and things... slowly. It was not easy for me to make friends. I had not had any in my life, besides family, until I found recovery. Having no higher power at the time, I considered my sponsor and the people of NA a shield, protecting me from the storm.

I learned that all I need to do, if all else fails, is go to a meeting. There is always

someone there who says something I can relate to. Throughout my life I always felt like a spectator, as if I were sitting on the sidelines watching life go by, watching others succeed. I felt different and useless. Something magical happens in NA. By the end of a meeting, I always feel better. I don't feel so alone. My problems and defects of character become manageable after I've been there for that hour or so.

NA brought the seasons back to my life. I feel the sunshine and it makes me smile. I feel the cold wind on a snowy day. I can open the window blinds and not be paranoid. I can be grateful for the life I've lived, mistakes and all. Recovery is not all sunshine, but today my problems are rain showers rather than an unending hurricane. I know that the bad weather I go through will end. As long as I don't pick up, it will end well. The worst thing that could happen is picking up a drug again.

I am grateful for the rooms, the Twelve Steps, and my first sponsor who guided me out of the biggest storm of my life. Without them, addiction would have surely taken me six feet under.

-April P

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<https://www.na.org/?ID=naway-toc>



## REMEMBER...

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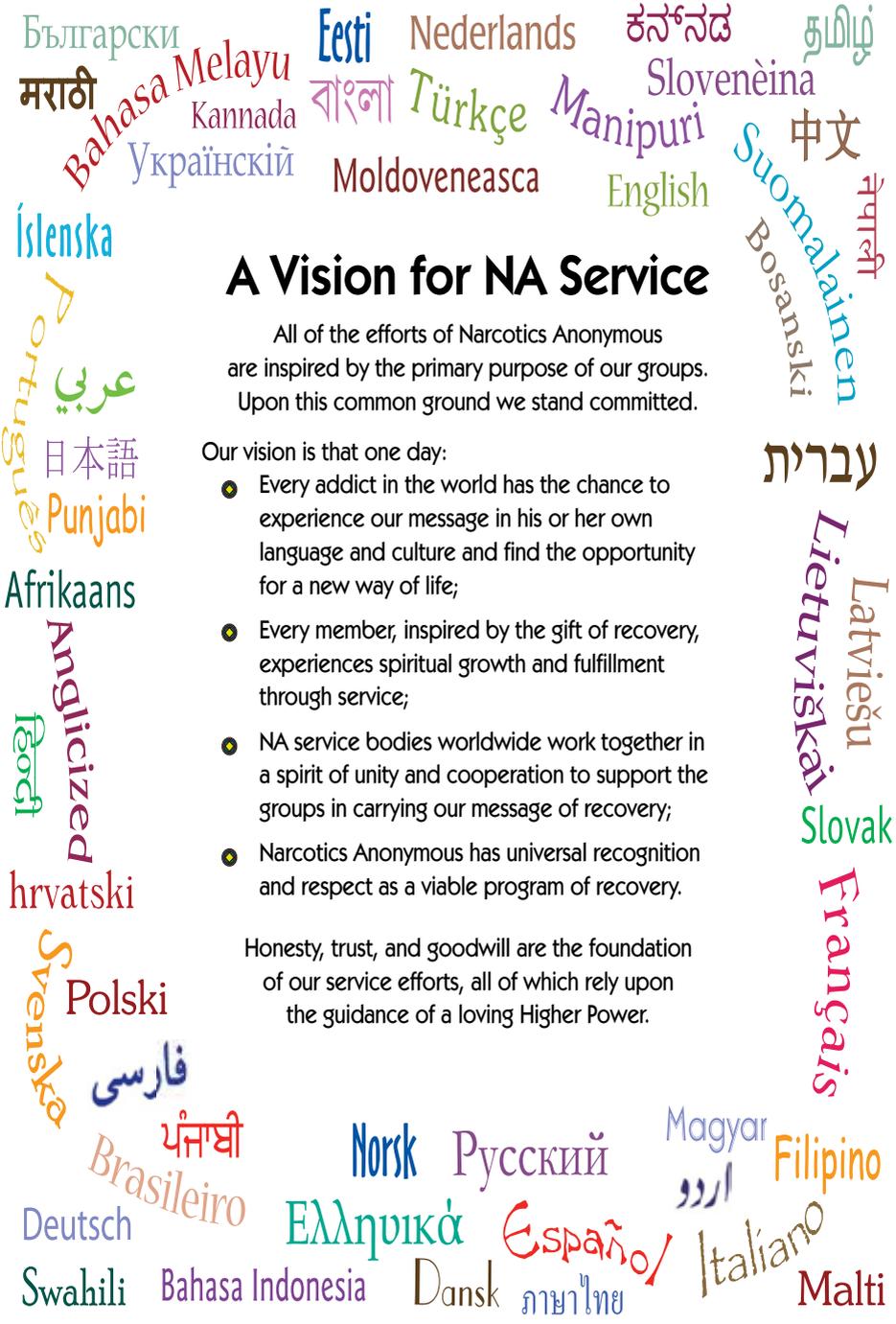
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**BE LIKE SUPER GIVING POTATO.**

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR SUBMISSIONS.**



# A Vision for NA Service

All of the efforts of Narcotics Anonymous are inspired by the primary purpose of our groups. Upon this common ground we stand committed.

Our vision is that one day:

- Every addict in the world has the chance to experience our message in his or her own language and culture and find the opportunity for a new way of life;
- Every member, inspired by the gift of recovery, experiences spiritual growth and fulfillment through service;
- NA service bodies worldwide work together in a spirit of unity and cooperation to support the groups in carrying our message of recovery;
- Narcotics Anonymous has universal recognition and respect as a viable program of recovery.

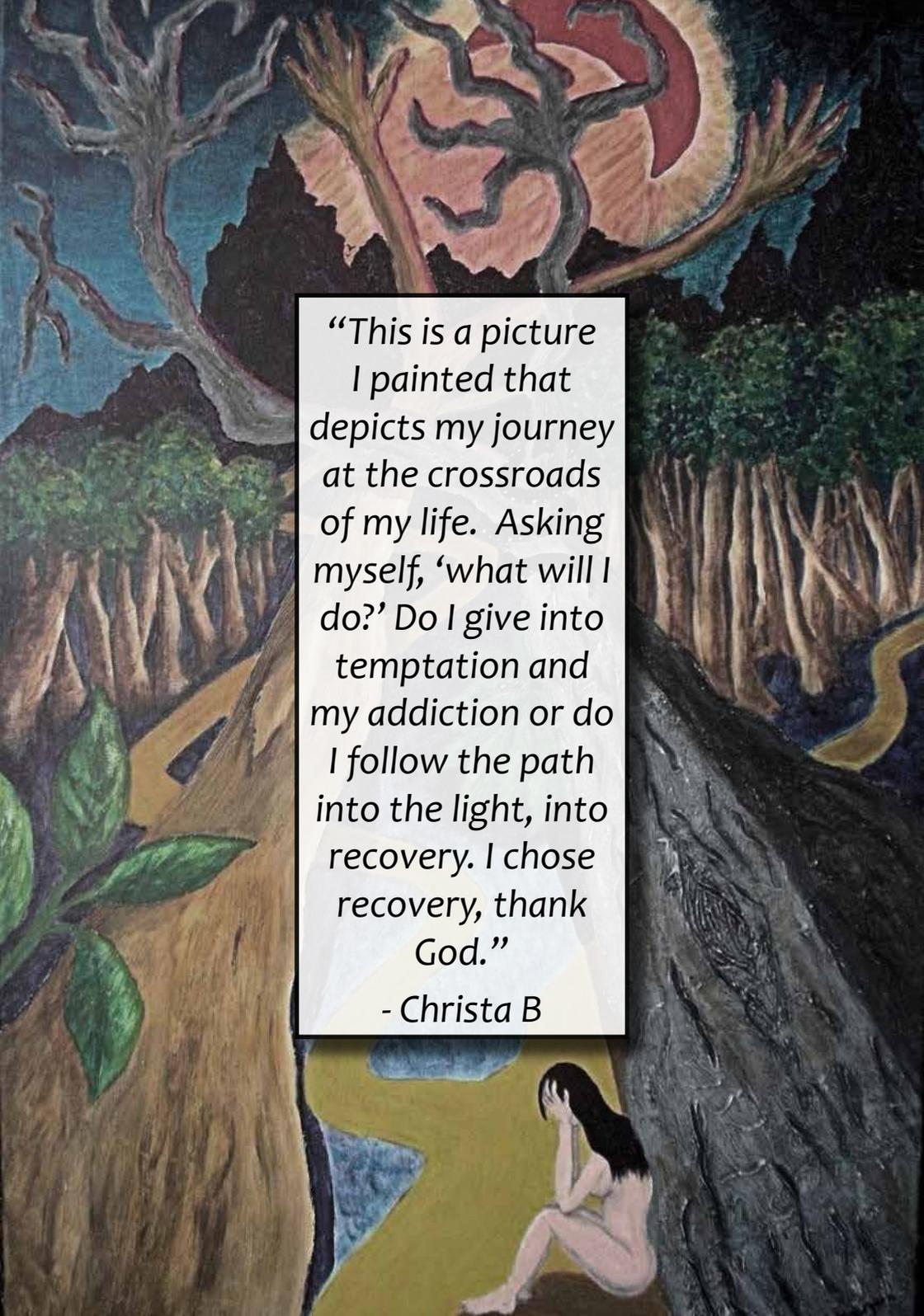
Honesty, trust, and goodwill are the foundation of our service efforts, all of which rely upon the guidance of a loving Higher Power.

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR  
ARTWORK ON THE COVER OF  
NA TODAY?**

**PLEASE SEND THROUGH AT YOUR HIGHEST  
RESOLUTION FOR  
CONSIDERATION TO:**

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“This is a picture  
I painted that  
depicts my journey  
at the crossroads  
of my life. Asking  
myself, ‘what will I  
do?’ Do I give into  
temptation and  
my addiction or do  
I follow the path  
into the light, into  
recovery. I chose  
recovery, thank  
God.”

- Christa B