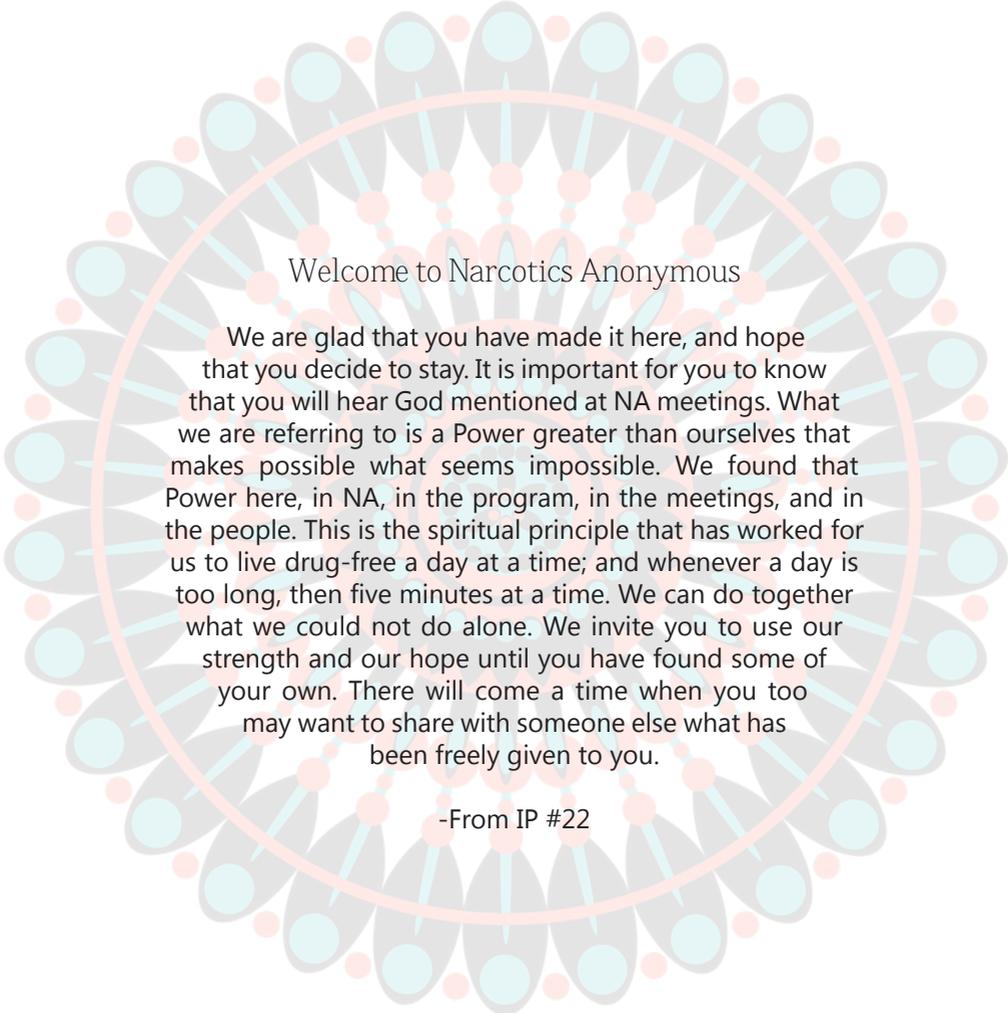


# NA TODAY

Free Publication

Of The Australian Region

July 2018



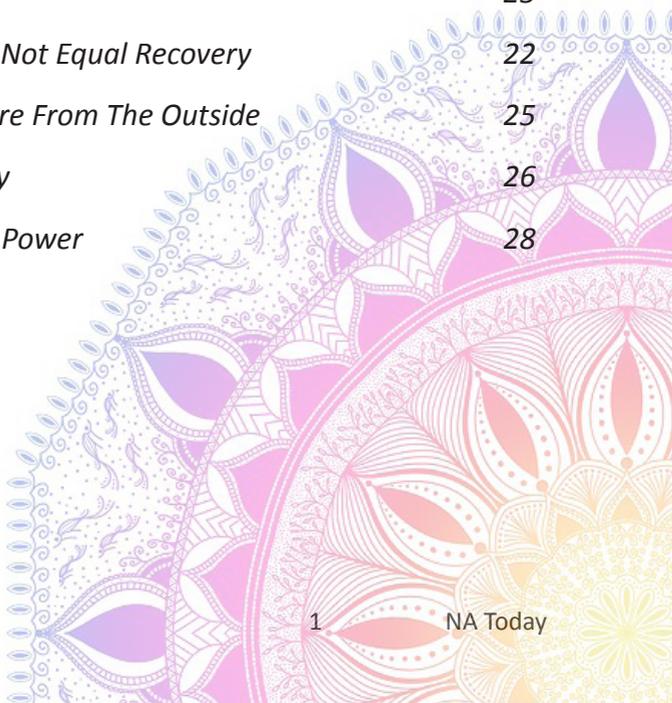
## Welcome to Narcotics Anonymous

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

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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 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

Mid-way through the year already! Thank you all as always for sending in such excellent submissions. This issue of the NA Today has been centred around the theme:

## THE BODY IN RECOVERY

Our literature states that our disease is three-fold: Physical, Mental and Spiritual. It follows that our recovery must also address these three areas or we may not be able to maintain a good quality of life. This issue concentrates on the physical side of recovery, with stories about illness, aging, food and exercise and how they fit into our program.

I don't very clearly remember my first thirty days of recovery, short of picking up my thirty day tag at the Tuesday Night Victoria Park meeting in WA. I remember that my emotions used to manifest bodily; if I got too sad or angry, I would go into shut down mode- my eyes would droop and I would fall asleep where I was sitting!

At about sixty days, I suddenly discovered that I had some coordination. It was though my left and right side had finally met and were talking to each other. I wasn't stumbling or knocking things over as much, and I found I could play instruments way better than I ever could when I was using.

Eventually I began to learn to feel my emotions without becoming overwhelmed, and began to truly come alive in my body, when I allowed myself to become vulnerable. Feelings were

scary at first, but now I recognise and cherish them as guides and gifts that my recovery has granted to me.

I began to take an interest in exercise for the first time ever in my life coming into recovery. I always found it too hard, or I felt silly or I was too competitive and didn't have the patience to learn how. The lessening of my ego's stranglehold over my decisions in recovery have made it possible for me to try new things. I have discovered it's really important for my mental health and I feel great when I do something good for my body. I'd rather watch sport on TV than play it, but I do like taking dancing classes and swimming. I would never do these things in using. It's wonderful to recognise all of the new beginnings that being in recovery allows.

All good things must come to an end, as well. This will be my last editorial as Chair of the NA Today Subcommittee. It's been a privilege to serve the Australian Region, and I absolutely encourage every member to give it a go. I've been inspired and moved by the activity of the amazing subcommittees at Region and hope that we can continue to pass that along to the wider fellowship. I have learned so much about service in NA and developed job-transferable skills, and made some wonderful friends along the way. This won't be the last time you hear from me though! Look for my tagline in the upcoming issues of NA Today, I won't be very far away.

 Yours in Grateful  
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.



## **NEW ZEALAND - Waitangi**

New Zealand Regional Convention 2018

19-21 October 2018

Venue:

Copthorne Hotel and Resort

1 Tau Henare Dr, Waitangi 0293

Event Info: <https://www.inallouraffairs.nz/>



## **GERMANY- Berlin**

Berlin BCVK Convention

7-9 September 2018

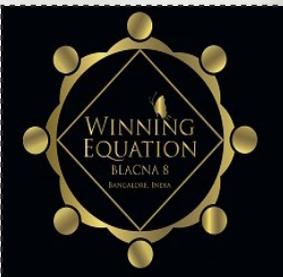
Venue:

Statthaus Böcklerpark

Prinzenstraße 1

10969 Berlin

Event Info: <http://na-berlin.de/de/service/bcvk/>



## **INDIA-Goa**

BLACNA Convention

27th-29th September 2018

Venue: Bykes Old Anchor Beach Resort

Cavelossim Beach, Mobor, Salcette, Goa 403731

Contact: [blacna.convention@gmail.com](mailto:blacna.convention@gmail.com)

<http://blacna8.org/>

Hello NA Today,

I was asked by Elliot B to submit a post I made on NA Service Solutions to you..

After 27 years of doing service in the NA fellowship, I can honestly say, I was getting tired.

I no longer had that excited feeling when approaching service at a higher level. The stress needed in participating in a service meeting & having heard newer members say "I don't want to be a part of that hierarchy stuff, it's bullshit", was, in my mind, wearing me down.

It worried me that service was no longer looking 'attractive' to our newest members. Service was originally a concept to help our fellowship grow, stay current & up to date with what society called from us and above all, to help another addict stay clean. Our traditions guided us & our concepts reassured us.

In all my years, I never ever expected a change in the way our fellowship could be delivered.

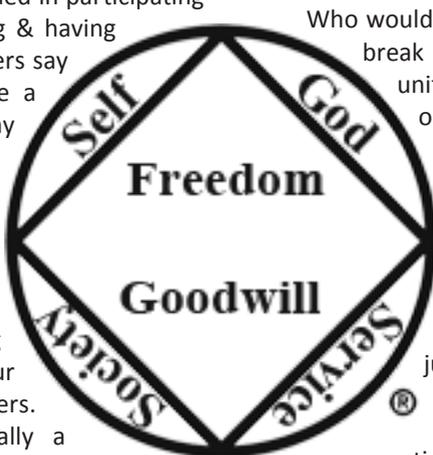
Who likes change?? I balked!

I had opinions..especially the one, why fix something that isn't broken? I have had to question everything I had experienced in service over the years. I thought, only the tough & extremely

willing would learn how to negotiate a service meeting.

But..

What I have just experienced over the course of the last two days, has instilled hope in the deepest part of my heart. I would never ever have thought service on the next levels can be enjoyable & educational.



Who would've thought we could break down the barriers by unity? When we let go of old ideas, we open the door for change.

Change, as I mentioned, can be very scary, but I assure you, from what I have just experienced, it is incredibly safe.. safe, nurturing, supportive, creative, boundary-less, open minded, unifying & with a common purpose.

No one yelled there (although someone barked) & no one is better than anyone else because they have more clean time. Even the youngest of our members felt included & supported. I walked away grateful, with tears in my eyes.

Just thought I'd share how the Greater Queensland Group Service Board meeting in Brisbane, Australia, affected me.

YILS  
Becci C

# THE GIFT OF DESPERATION

*“Our physical, emotional, and spiritual lives are interwoven: We can think of them separately, but we cannot experience them separately.”*

My physical health brought me into recovery. I had managed to reach a precarious equilibrium in some of the other areas of life as an addict; I paid my rent and I got used to being socially isolated. So, I could really focus on my using without distractions. I was in it for the long slow painful haul.

But I kept getting physically sick. Really sick.

I developed a strange illness called cyclical hyperemesis, which is caused by using too much of my drug of choice. Basically, I would develop uncontrollable nausea for days on end, and I would guzzle fluids and then make myself throw up every 5 minutes. I would have to be hospitalised, where they would put me on the same IV antiemetic drugs they give cancer patients. It started out about a year in between episodes, but then they started getting closer and closer together. The last time I was got sick I had to be hospitalised three times in about 5 days, and had only been sick a few months before. I hated being in hospital. I knew I was there because I couldn't stop using drugs, and so did the staff.

When I was using I used to think “if only I could get rid of this illness, I'd be ok to use.”

I felt betrayed by my body, which was out of my control. Now I'm clean I think, “man, thank God I got sick, or else I might have kept using”. It was when I was in hospital the last time I hit rock bottom and got given the Gift Of Desperation. I proved remarkably resilient to my higher power's attempts to help me, and so God put something in my path that literally stopped me in my tracks. Even then I lived with this illness and attempted to manage it for years.

I've been clean now for three and a half years, thanks to the program of Narcotics Anonymous. Once I stopped using, I never suffered an episode of nausea again. But I'm only just beginning to learn how to have a relationship with my body. I've only recently taken up exercise and fitness, and started to eat better. Like many addicts, I became totally obsessed with exercise once I found it. But exercise has bought me many physical and mental benefits. I've done some things I never imagined I could, including just having completed my first ultra-marathon. I've learnt to be open minded to new experiences in recovery, and hiking, running, swimming and biking have been some activities that I'd never done before that now bring me a lot of enjoyment. The exercise activities have kind of gone hand in hand with me getting in touch with the Great Out Doors - another new experience for me.

Some days I can be quite vain, but I don't really have a very good body image. I never have, actually. When I was young I got the message that I was fat. Even though I eat well and am quite fit now, I don't like the way I look often, and struggle to accept myself. I relate a lot to the Living Clean text when it says that *"Feeling at home in our bodies can seem to be beyond our wildest dreams. We feel too fat or too thin, too tall or too short, too old or too young."* I can also relate to our literature when it states that *"Sometimes we confuse what we look like with who or how we are, and think that changing our outsides will fix the void we feel inside"*.

In the first few years of my recovery, I largely neglected my body. I ate what I wanted, smoked, and drank too much coffee, and didn't exercise. I'm ok with that. One of the things I emphasise is to do 'first things first', and worry only about staying clean, and have faith that the rest will take care of itself. The best thing about recovery is that, because I feel all too well the consequences of my choices, I have the chance to change what doesn't work for me. Like many things in recovery, when it was time, action needed to be taken.

It is hard to know when that time is, and what to do, and for me it has taken (will take still) many attempts to balance my physical well-being. I have been obsessed and controlling with my body, and tried to force my will onto it. I totally relate to this—"We go back

and forth between indulging ourselves in ways that feel selfish or excessive and punishing ourselves or piling on restrictions in an effort to control patterns that feel like symptoms of our addiction. After long struggles with ways and means to drive ourselves back into healthy behavior, we find that what we really need to do is surrender!"

A member shared recently something I'll never forget—"Discipline is a gift of the spirit". I have really found that to be the case with my physical life. If I look after my spirit, maintain a strong connection with my HP, keep being of service and doing the suggested things, then I'm happy, and I find it easy to choose to be disciplined around things like food and exercise. I fall into a natural rhythm. I may never have the beach bod my ego wants, but I'm ok with who I am. I enjoy having a life that involves being healthy and being in a healthy relationship with a body that gives me new experiences, and that I can use to explore my world. But once I become controlling and excessive, train obsessively, or focus on 'being ripped', or 'being the best', then I might see short term gains, but it is never sustainable, and I'm never happy. My sponsor shared with me 'balance is sanity, and I need to balance this new relationship with my body with the new spiritual way of life NA has shown me.

Heath W

*(all quotes are from "Living Clean", Our Physical Selves)*

# My Experience of Illness In Recovery

25th May 2018

My name is Peter and I am an addict. I am 6 months, 5 days clean today. This is my experience with Interferon. In the context of NA it could be more broadly called illness and medication in recovery.

I contracted Hep C in 1977 aged 22, well before safe injection programs were available. I was on one of my using geographicals, fleeing from myself and Perth, "city of losers" so I thought, away from all those people who were wrecking my life. Melbourne, St Kilda, I got into the drug scene in big way.

I shared needles in squalid places with working girls, pimps and American sailors who had done RnR in Bangkok Thailand. I left Melbourne with Hep B, C, glandular fever and malnutrition. I looked so sick I was refused entry in several desert cafes driving back over the Nullarbor. I was 22, 10ft tall and bullet proof. Also gravely deluded. I contracted Hep A in summer, had blood tests, which indicated Hep A, Hep B anti-bodies and a type of yet undefined non A non B Hep, later called Hep C. Continued using to age 33 when the life changing experience of recovery began.

*Fast forwards to 24th Oct 1991, I got clean for the first time. I stayed clean for 22 years.*

Due to the miracle of recovery I gained freedom from active using, sanity, serenity, spirituality, friends, and the

ability to work and hold down a job. I met Suzy, my soul mate, best friend, lover, companion, the woman of my dreams, also in recovery in 1995, and we married in April 1997.

More fast forwards. November 2010. Suzy and I returned from a European NA convention in Israel. I noticed a dramatic drop in my energy levels. I had been continuously monitoring my Hep C condition. Yearly blood tests. I was by 2010 under the care of a leading WA heptologist.

The heptologist informed me I had cirrhosis of the liver and strongly recommended I start Interferon treatment, the only available treatment in 2011. It was strongly advised for me to start taking lexapro anti-depressant 2 weeks prior to Interferon. 'Not me', says Mr Gung ho.

*I thought 20 yrs clean, fit, healthy, good diet, good sleeping patterns-all the benefits of clean living-would help me in treatment. WRONG!*

Interferon is chemohhtherapy, a bit like using battery acid. My overconfident attitude was pretty swiftly crushed by the terrible harsh side effects of Interferon. It took away a lot of my energy and life force. I could barely walk, lost huge amount of weight, hair stopped growing, wrecked sleep, high anxiety. I was covered in ulcers at times,

had to do several courses of antibiotics to deal with them. The worst depression I had ever experienced sent me running for anti-depressants. I did a whole years treatment to ensure eradication of Hep C virus. In the final 3 months I was bed ridden. My red and white blood cell count dropped to critical levels, so I had to take further chemo treatment to raise those levels.

All through this time my head went completely off. I was too sick to attend meetings, not my regular practice. I had been attending minimum 3 meetings per week, sponsored, had sponsees, and involved in H&I service. My gung ho attitude in entering treatment left me with no plan to deal with the consequences of such a serious treatment.

*If I had read the illness and medication pamphlet and followed its instructions, I would not have relapsed.*

In my isolated state of illness, sick in the mind, I decided that NA and addiction were just a phase of my life that I had finished with now.

Interferon is aptly named; it interferes with everything, especially my thinking. I went back to the way of thinking prior to recovery, i.e., I could use!

Finished treatment September 2012. The effects of interferon in treatment are well known, it's when you finish, that's where medical knowledge ends

also. From a medical perspective, I feel like I was put it a rudderless boat with no oars, pushed out to sea and the words "Good luck" spoken to me.

*I was devastated physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.*

To add to my injuries, 2 weeks after treatment my specialist let me know the treatment had failed. Hep C was back. Suzy and I were devastated.

I pinched a nerve in my spine shortly afterwards. I had stabbing pain and numbness down my left side leg. My Dr prescribed me strong opiod painkillers. I took 2 initially, which lit me up like a candle. Suzy had developed a bipolar mental condition and went into a full blown episode. I couldn't cope. There began my 5 year relapse.

*I went from 21yrs clean to using again, not from where I started but from where I finished.*

Doctor shopping, stealing meds then money from my mum, Suzy and students, I taught music in people's homes, rifled through their medicine cabinets for pain killers. Swapped to another replacement drug, met someone in the queue at the chemist who could get on for me and I was back using IV drugs at the age 60. I couldn't stop using, tried NA, collected many 30 day tags. In the end I gave up hope of ever getting clean again. I couldn't

make the entrance back into recovery because of pride.

*I've been 20 years clean, I've heard every cliché a thousand times, I've sponsored people, I know it all, blah, blah, blah. Except I couldn't stay clean!*

I started the detox, rehab merry-go-round. 4 detoxes, 2 months in rehab, came home prematurely. Suzy had gone off her medication and was full blown bipolar again. I went back to using within 3 days of leaving rehab. She went missing several times, but was found within 2 days. This time she took off in the car and a week later still no sign of her. Police searches, family appeals on TV. I went into detox again so I could be the husband she might want to come home too. On the last day of detox my daughter rang to say the police had found her dead.

*A bomb of hurt went off inside me, I was destroyed.*

I didn't want to live. My using continued and to everybody, family, friends, NA friends, it looked like I would full fill my death wish.

*In the midst of that I cried out to God to help me, just to want to stay alive.*

Of course life and being clean go together. Using is death. This tragedy smashed my pride and ego, brought me to my knees, gave me the gift of despair and a willingness to do whatever it

takes to stay clean. The entry price to recovery, oh yes I have paid it.

Detox, rehab, meetings, hanging out with other recovering addicts, service, sponsor, steps and God.

*I have come back from the dead. I want to live. I'm grabbing hold of recovery and life with both hands.*

If you're struggling, despairing, can't get it, chronic relapser, hopeless, I want you to know there is hope. It lies in the rooms of NA with the other recovering addicts. Come to a meeting and drink the power you need to overcome addiction and the adversities of life.

*If I can do it so can you.*

Yours in service

Peter G



# *A Deeper Freedom*

I've spent a long time fighting my body. Eating food was my very first addiction, that I picked up when I was 10 years old. After my parents got divorced, I put on about 30 kilos in about 6 weeks. I went from being a skinny, energetic kid to a lethargic moper who couldn't be trusted around a kitchen area.

Smashing carb-rich foods and sugar would erase uncomfortable feelings and sometimes even make me pass out. It's no wonder I loved drugs so much when I finally tried them at 16. I would steal and lie about food, just like I did when I picked up drugs – it goes to show that addicts can, and will, get addicted to anything!

It took me 8 years in NA recovery to finally accept I am truly powerless over this aspect of my addiction. I was overweight, I had developed allergies that made me sick after every meal, and I was careening down the hill to inevitable diabetes like a car with no handbrake. But I had hope. If the 12 steps of NA could turn around my life from crippling drug addiction, abusive relationship addiction and addiction to harming myself, surely it could help me make a friend of my own body once again.

I got 12-step program around it just like every other substance, but it wasn't easy to ask for God's help. I just didn't want to believe that I couldn't control it. When I realised how irritable it made me, and how much shame I had around my behaviour, I finally became willing to take direction. I saw a good friend doing

a very structured recovery eating plan centred around chemical addiction, the 12 Steps and God, and it worked so well for them that I came to believe that it could restore me to sanity too.

It was like letting go of an old friend - food has been my comfort for over 20 years, and it didn't happen straight away. I got freedom, then relapsed into eating obsessively, then free again, then relapsed into it again. Now I have good days, good weeks and then backslide a little here and there, but I don't give up, because I've experienced what it's like to have a deeper freedom in recovery, and I want to keep recovering.

It helps to focus on what I can have instead of the things I've had to give up (it also helps that I get really sick if I deviate too – just like drugs!). I'm doing so much better in my every day recovery than I ever have. I've willingly picked up an NA program again of my own volition. I have time for people in my life because I'm no longer obsessing over myself and how I look. The mental chatter is minimal these days. I often share about it in meetings, because for me it's an addiction, and Narcotics Anonymous makes no distinction between types of drugs – food has been mind-altering and mood-changing just like anything else in my life.

I'm so grateful to be clean and on my own side for once, just for today. I owe it all to NA and my Higher Power. One day at a time though, one day at a time.

Anonymous

# Maintaining Recovery

My name is Paul and I am an addict. I last used on 12 April 2016 and I am very grateful to the NA at Home online meeting and the Adelaide NA fellowship for helping me to get clean, maintain my recovery and become a better man and a better father. It took me a good 7 years of constant relapse to stabilize within NA.

Aside from addiction, I suffer from complex PTSD, depression & anxiety and I wanted to share my experience strength and hope around maintaining recovery with a mental health dual diagnosis.

*The most important thing for me is to stay clean 'no matter what'.*

To me recovery must come first, like all of us, if I relapse then my life becomes instantly unmanageable and I can only focus on using.

For my recovery I attend regular face to face meetings as well as skype meetings, I do step work, read NA literature, have regular contact with my sponsor and the Adelaide fellowship and also work with other men seeking recovery.

Recovering from mental illness is a hard battle too. For my PTSD I have had to do 3 courses at an outside facility so as to be able to handle basic everyday tasks

and when I feel my PTSD symptoms coming on I have to do things to stay in the moment and remind myself I am



Artwork by Chrissy K

safe.

For my depression I need to take medication. I experienced suicidal thinking a little after my 2nd year in recovery and my doctor recommended I start taking a small dose of an antidepressant. I was terrified this would lead me to using so I asked my sponsor and my psychologist to be involved in my decision and made sure the medicine that was being proposed was not addictive.

*I also review my symptoms with my doctor regularly and I have a safety plan in place.*

This involves me reaching out if I start self harming. The secret ingredients that I need to make part of my daily routine

are exercise along with a balanced diet and on the days I manage to get all of these things right, I experience feelings of well being and freedom unlike anything I have ever experienced in my life.

*I have a real sense of hope for the future.*

As I am writing this, I think how simple this sounds, but living this is not simple at all. On the days when my head is screaming that I am already dead or not real or an animal and that I should neck myself the hardest thing to do is to put one step in front of the other.

*Thankfully NA teaches me I don't have the answers and I need to ask for help and the truth is some days just staying clean is another day won.*

The other day my daughter whispered in my ear. "Dad I love you and you are the best Dad in the whole world". That is a gift that I would never have been able to experience it weren't for the amazing love that is in the rooms of NA.

- Paul T



## REMEMBER...

**YOU CAN ONLY KEEP WHAT YOU HAVE BY GIVING IT AWAY...**



Send your articles, letters, cartoons and graphics to [natoday@na.org.au](mailto:natoday@na.org.au)

or

NA Today

c/- FSO

Unit 34, 112 - 122 McEvoy St  
Alexandria NSW 2015

**BE LIKE SUPER GIVING POTATO.**

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

# RECOVERY IRONMAN

*In recovery we can achieve things we never dreamed possible. One member shares his experience in competing his first Ironman event.*

**RACE MORNING:** I woke up a little earlier than my alarm on Saturday morning, I'd had roughly 4 hrs sleep. I felt good and ready, it was the first time I'd felt this level of confidence since before I arrived in New Zealand, doubts and nerves had been building up in the preceding days. I got everything together and headed down to the race venue with Dad, who was my #1 supporter throughout the whole trip.

I headed to get ready where I caught up with another fellow recovering addict and a good friend. We had a bit of a chat. He was so calm about it all and it was comforting to know he was tackling the mammoth task too. After heading down the shore of the beautiful lake Taupo, I met back up with some of my Kiwi family who had travelled to watch me race. Before I knew it, bang! The cannon went off and the swim leg was on.

**SWIM:** Imagine swimming in a washing machine, on spin cycle, full of arms and legs, that's the closest thing I can assimilate to this experience, it was mayhem. When I came out of the water, a nice volunteer gave me my cycling shoes and a towel. "Good luck bro," he said. I knew I'd need it; I still had 180 km of cycling to cover and then a full marathon.

**BIKE:** Getting on my trusty steed and starting the ride in the town of Taupo was amazing. The supporters were everywhere, the whole town showed up cheering you on and giving you well wishes. That never

happened in my active addiction. The sun was out, the scenery was beautiful. Before I knew it I was 45 km in, and at the Reporoa turn around and heading back into Taupo.

Once on the main road and on my way out to the 3/4 mark I felt good, I was determined to get this ride done! At about 100km I noticed that a nasty headwind had developed, a sneaky one you don't really feel but wonder why your speed is down and your heart rate high. This headwind started to chip away at my mentality at about the same rate. I tried to push harder and push through it in order to hold onto the goal I had set for myself, but it just wasn't happening. I decided I had to put the ego away and surrender to the situation if I wanted to have enough legs to run a marathon after this.

It's funny where that process pops up in life. I feel as though I am often given situations where I can apply the principles our program has to offer, scenarios where I yet again can fall back on the steps for guidance. "C'mon man, you got this! You're a beast!" I was telling myself, but I was entering a pain cave on that second lap, I was beginning to get mentally delusional due to the relentless headwind. It was brutal.

Positive affirmation has been a big part of my life over the past few years, and I utilise it wherever I can. I'm often talking to myself saying stuff like "C'mon, you can do it!" It might sound crazy, but it has really contributed to the person I am today and helped me overcome a lot of habits and unhelpful thinking patterns. Belief is one of the biggest tools I've attained from NA, first

in others, then a Higher Power, and finally in myself.

Coming back into Taupo was resurrecting, there were crowds everywhere, literally thousands of people. It was at this stage that it dawned on me that I still had a marathon to go. A marathon. Normally, when I get off the bike, I can find some solace in knowing that I'm nearly there. Not today junior, not today.

RUN: The run was 3x14 km loops which went into some surrounding suburbs of Taupo. On leaving I saw my family there cheering me on. I could see my Dad looking at me, cheering, he was proud! I was beginning to get a bit emotional! "Save it for the end," I kept telling myself, trying to postpone the feelings welling up.

Breaking the run down into easier more achievable little tasks certainly helped- it takes the enormity out of it. This is another tool I apply in my life also, it has served me well. Eventually I came in for my last lap. By this stage I was determined. I still had a 14km run ahead of me though. "You've got this, brother," I told myself. Weird how I refer to myself like that, I know, but it works. I think the stronger more, courageous side of me is talking to the little boy within, my inner child, who's scared and wants to quit, in those moments. I also thought about my Higher Power in these moments. I knew he was with me.

The human mind is a funny thing, it can push the body so damn far and work wonders for you when you are in control, but when it controls you, it's a totally different story.

Believe me, I've been on both sides of that fence.

When I heard my watch click over 38kms I knew I was coming home. As I ran past the turn around point and into the finishers chute I heard cheering and that classic Mike Reilly IRONMAN voice. He was calling out to me, "Shane, you are an IRONMAN!" I did it, in 10 hrs 35 mins, I crossed the line. I sat down, and called my mum. She was in Perth and had been following me online all day, she was crying, I was crying! It was the first time I'd cried since before I got clean about 2 and a half years ago. I had done it. What an amazing feeling!!

A few years ago I couldn't walk to my letterbox or go to the supermarket because of anxiety/paranoia due to heavy drug addiction. And here I am, having completed an Ironman. It is a great feeling. Nothing that I have done in my recovery to date would have been possible without those rooms full of recovering addicts and those steps written on the wall. I truly believe anything is possible if you put your mind to it. I'm not advising everyone to go and do an Ironman (although that would be cool) but I am suggesting that whatever it is that you want to tackle, do it! I crossed that finished line clean, vegan, healthy, and content with family, and friends supporting me at the location and all around the world. I'm very grateful for that and attribute it all to the program of Narcotics Anonymous, and my Higher Power.

Shane G.



# Recovery School

Today I was at a parent teacher night for my youngest daughter. She is in the last year at the school that my 3 youngest kids have gone through since kindy. Over the last few years one of the head teachers has often warmly said please tell me the secret to what you have done to produce such amazing young women. We tend to smile and say something like "just lucky I guess".

Today I saw him in his office and felt the need to just go in and tell him the truth. I sat down with my partner and told him what really made the difference is that we are both addicts in long term recovery. We spent 20 minutes talking about 12 step programs and leaning how to love. I explained that the role models they have had have always been the men and women of NA and thats where they learnt what mattered in this world.

At the end he hugged us and said he wanted to cry and was so happy to hear our stories. So proud of my 4 daughters and so thankful to the people of recovery for helping them on their journey.

- Gary G



**'IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS'**  
**REGIONAL CONVENTION**  
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND  
19 - 21 OCTOBER 2018  
WAITANGI, BAY OF ISLANDS

## 'In All Our Affairs' 2018

The Northern Area and the RSC invites you to the 2018 Narcotics Anonymous Regional Convention to be held at the Copthorne Hotel, Waitangi, in the beautiful Bay of Islands Aotearoa New Zealand.

Powhiri 5.30pm Friday 19th October Labour Weekend,  
Waitangi Treaty Grounds  
Followed by a hangi. Be there!

While our focus is always recovery from drug addiction, our members often share how this disease affects many other areas of their lives. Food, work, sex, money, screen addiction, to name a few. This theme offers an opportunity to reflect on addiction in all our affairs.

Waitangi is a place of spiritual, cultural and political significance for all New Zealanders. The location gives us all an opportunity to contemplate the significant place NA has forged in the cultural landscape of Aotearoa and acknowledge the role the Treaty of Waitangi has played in the development of a modern New Zealand.

**REGISTER NOW**  
[www.inallouraffairs.nz](http://www.inallouraffairs.nz)

### REGISTER NOW

Earlybird	\$140
Earlybird unwaged	\$80
Latecomers	\$170
Latecomers unwaged	\$110

### REGISTRATION INCLUDES

Powhiri and Hangi on Friday  
Lunch on Saturday and Sunday

### EXTRAS

Gala Dinner \$65  
At the hotel (please pay when you register as numbers are limited.)

### ACCOMMODATION

The Copthorne Hotel. From \$190 per night (book now as availability is limited.)  
Campground across the river  
Motels and backpackers in Pahiia  
More details on website

### TRANSPORT

The transport committee will be coordinating bus transport and carpooling.  
And flights to Kerikeri are available.



**REGISTER NOW**  
[www.inallouraffairs.nz](http://www.inallouraffairs.nz)

# Women's APF Fellowship Development (FD) Group - Sponsorship

The purpose of the Sponsorship initiative is to provide an opportunity for women from the Asia Pacific zone, who are members of Narcotics Anonymous and, living in places where there is limited access to other women members, access to potential sponsors from other parts of the Asia Pacific zone.

Nominated members from the Women's APF FD Group will facilitate a list of women who have offered to sponsor and women who would like a sponsor and connection between the two. Once we have a list of potential sponsors we will get information out to women who may need a sponsor and get back to you when there is a match. If there is a woman who needs a sponsee the facilitators of this service will seek permission from both you and her before we share any contact details.

This connection for sponsors and sponsees will include women from diverse backgrounds. When you are communicating with your sponsee remember that there may be different expectations/needs about what is comfortable when this communication occurs (for example a video connection may not be appropriate in some circumstances).

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, or for more information, please contact Sue K or Jacqui P at [womensapfsponsorship@apfna.org](mailto:womensapfsponsorship@apfna.org) and forward the following information:

- Your name
- What is your clean time?
- Where do you live?
- What languages do you speak?
- What communication options can you offer? eg wifi for skype, viber etc, international telephone
- Are you willing to support women in NA communities with few or no other women members?

The next APF Convention will be held in Bali, in February 2019. For more information please visit:

<https://www.apfna.org/convention>



BEYOND  
YOUR  
WILDEST  
DREAMS



NA Vic Convention 2018  
August 17, 18 & 19  
Alex Theatre, St Kilda

# FOOD - EXERCISE - ADDICTION

As I'm sharing this, I'm on the brink of turning 30 and I'm 3 years and 8 months clean. My disordered thinking around food and exercise developed at the age of 13. It was my first true love. My journaling prior to finding the rooms refers to an eating disorder as 'a fiercely jealous ex-boyfriend' that pains at my happiness, drills holes through the centre of my mastery, will go to lengths unimaginable to tear my life down, to own me and to have me back.

*Pain to the core.*

*Excruciating vulnerability.*

*Emotional fracturing.*

*Shattered.*

*Losing my grip on life.*

*It's slipping through my fingers.*

*Like dissolving water, evaporating by the light  
before my stained glass eyes.*

*A shrinking shadow, disappearing through  
dusty walls.*

*I'll live through you so no one can feel me.*

*I can't stop it.*

*Giving in to your complex and seductive ways is comforting,  
and holds me in ways no one understands.*

*I can't live without you.*

*I like you.*

*I'm infatuated with you.*

*I'm obsessed with you.*

*Your pain gives me pleasure, inflicting punishment beyond control.*

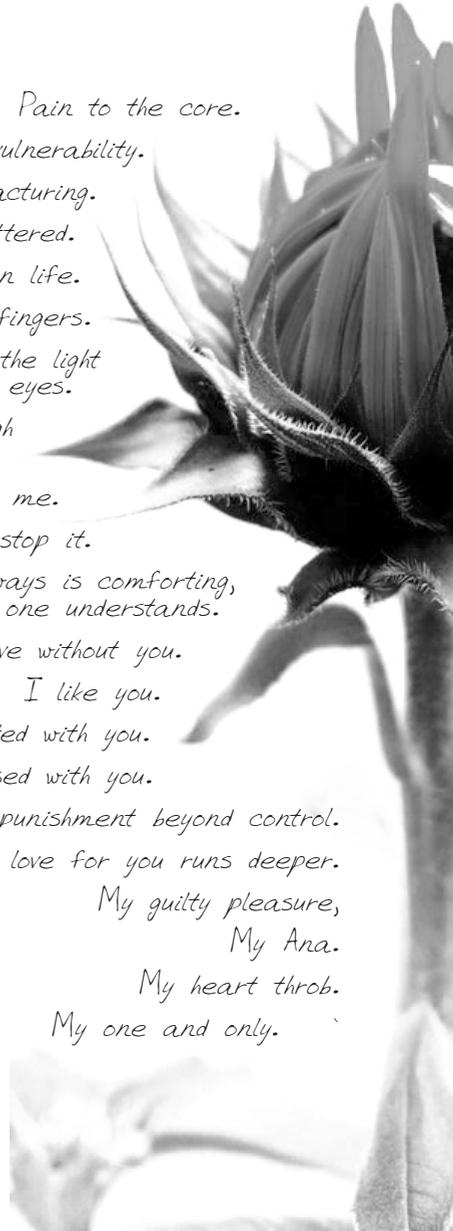
*Your ways slice me deeply but my love for you runs deeper.*

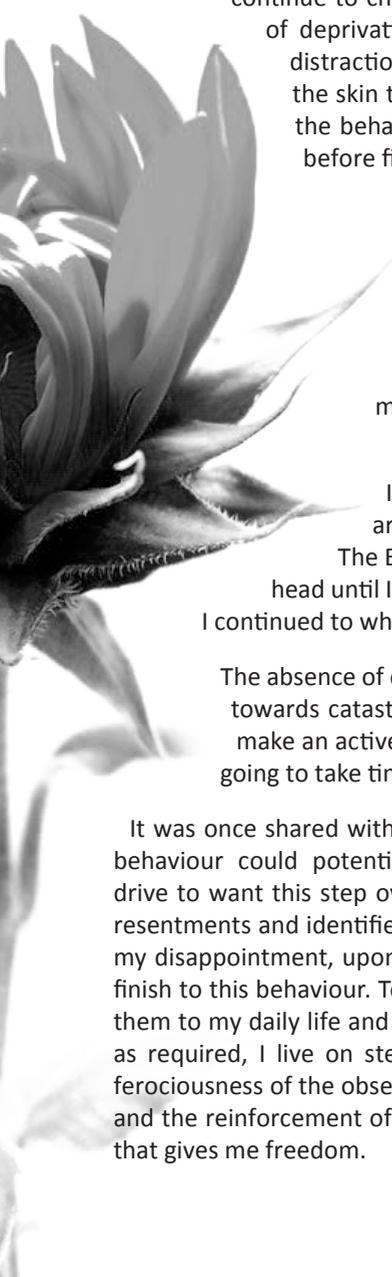
*My guilty pleasure,*

*My Ana.*

*My heart throb.*

*My one and only.*





My first love, my first manifestation of addiction, the first strong hold over me mentally, physically and spiritually and furthermore, it is the last onion layer of this multi-faceted, shape shifting, soul sucking chameleon of a disease that I continue to challenge. My life once revolved around dangerous levels of deprivation and hours upon hours of exercise as a means of distraction and a preferred alternative to sitting with and tolerating the skin that I'm in. I learnt these behaviours at an early age and the behaviours and thought patterns were so heavily engrained before finding my drug of choice.

During the grips of active addiction, my sense and perception of self was heavily warped. Every time I looked down at my body or looked at a picture or a reflection of myself my physical body would appear to grow and shrink before my eyes and forever play games with me. The torment in my head would constantly make me question my understanding of reality. Without a word of a lie, this still affects me today.

I rationalised my drug use by convincing myself and those around me that I couldn't consume food without the drugs. The ED (eating disorder) voice would be blaring full pelt in my head until I would use and in the absence of my substance of choice I continued to whittle away with the ED channel raging.

The absence of control over food and obsessive exercise still has the pull towards catastrophic thinking and feelings which fuel my behaviour. I make an active choice each day to work on this. I surrender that this is going to take time and I am completely powerless.

It was once shared with me that after completing a step 4, the eating disorder behaviour could potentially disappear which gave me great motivation and drive to want this step over and done with. I truly believed that if I laid out my resentments and identified my part in things that the ED would quieten. Much to my disappointment, upon the completion of my step 4 there was no miraculous finish to this behaviour. Today after working the 12 steps and continuing to apply them to my daily life and revisiting specific steps and applying them to situations as required, I live on step 11. It is what gives me the strength to disarm the ferociousness of the obsessive eating and exercise behaviours. Prayer, meditation and the reinforcement of mindfulness, connecting to the breath is the only thing that gives me freedom.

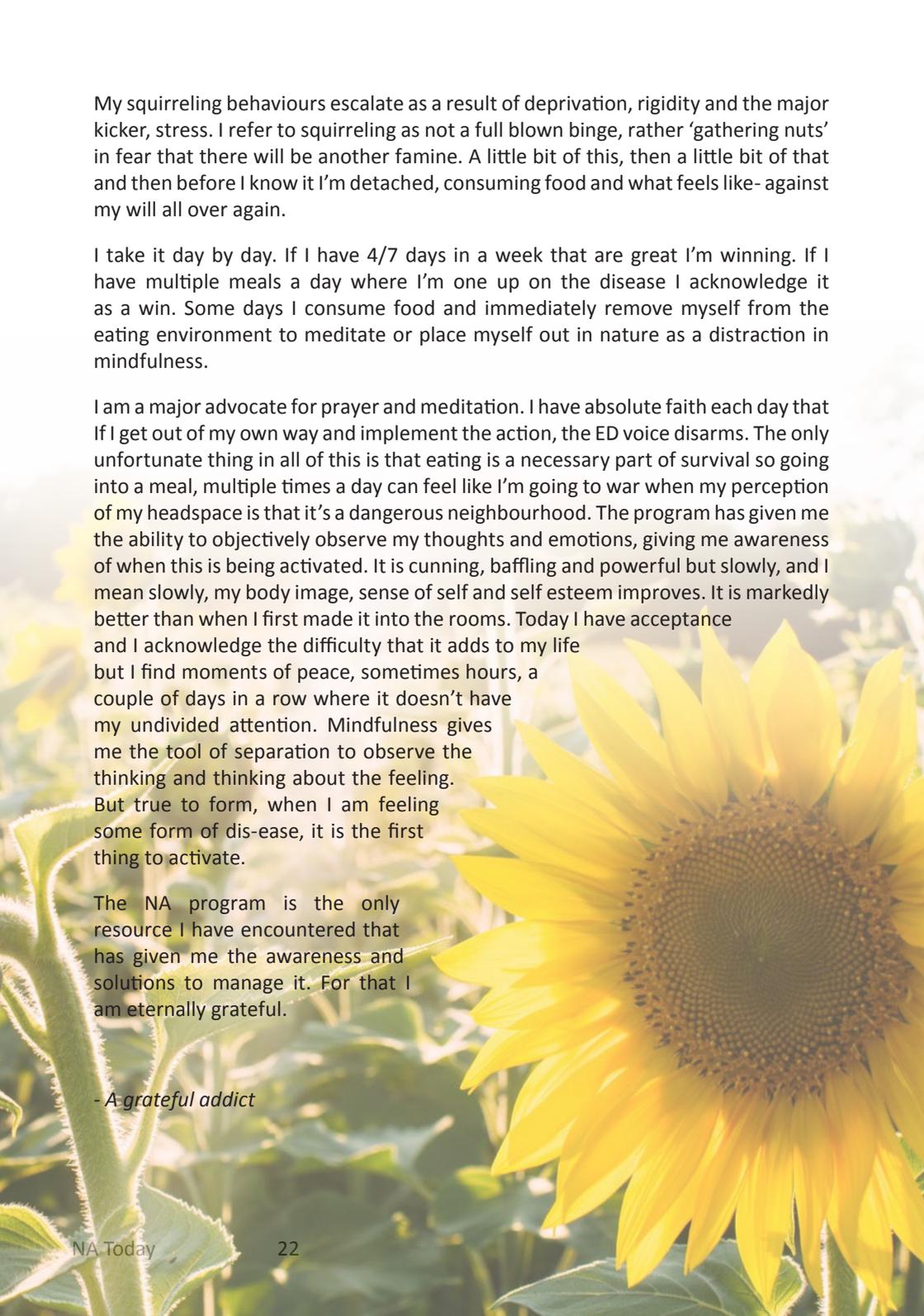
My squirreling behaviours escalate as a result of deprivation, rigidity and the major kicker, stress. I refer to squirreling as not a full blown binge, rather 'gathering nuts' in fear that there will be another famine. A little bit of this, then a little bit of that and then before I know it I'm detached, consuming food and what feels like- against my will all over again.

I take it day by day. If I have 4/7 days in a week that are great I'm winning. If I have multiple meals a day where I'm one up on the disease I acknowledge it as a win. Some days I consume food and immediately remove myself from the eating environment to meditate or place myself out in nature as a distraction in mindfulness.

I am a major advocate for prayer and meditation. I have absolute faith each day that if I get out of my own way and implement the action, the ED voice disarms. The only unfortunate thing in all of this is that eating is a necessary part of survival so going into a meal, multiple times a day can feel like I'm going to war when my perception of my headspace is that it's a dangerous neighbourhood. The program has given me the ability to objectively observe my thoughts and emotions, giving me awareness of when this is being activated. It is cunning, baffling and powerful but slowly, and I mean slowly, my body image, sense of self and self esteem improves. It is markedly better than when I first made it into the rooms. Today I have acceptance and I acknowledge the difficulty that it adds to my life but I find moments of peace, sometimes hours, a couple of days in a row where it doesn't have my undivided attention. Mindfulness gives me the tool of separation to observe the thinking and thinking about the feeling. But true to form, when I am feeling some form of dis-ease, it is the first thing to activate.

The NA program is the only resource I have encountered that has given me the awareness and solutions to manage it. For that I am eternally grateful.

*- A grateful addict*



there is a bridge

take my hand she says take my number let's walk  
across together into the light

i'm scared i say i'm too tired too long i've been in  
the dark i don't know how to walk i've forgotten  
all i once knew

call me she says call me every morning at 8.30

she answers

every time i call her she answers

are you sleeping still? are you lying down? sit up  
she says your voice is so soft speak up she says

come into the light

i will meet you on the bridge take my hand take  
my number i'm here i'm listening just breathe  
she says

walk with me out across the bridge into the light

walk with me out of the dark

you are not alone, I am here

you can do this

i believe in you

- Caris M

# Clean time does not equal recovery

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is MW, and I'm an addict. I have been clean since 9-17-07 and locked up since 4-22-10. By the grace of God I am still clean today. NA is a one-day-at-a-time program, carrying the message that any addict can lose the desire to use.

*If it worked for me, then it can work for anyone.*

I have used for twenty-something years and have managed to put together seven years clean. It has not been easy. I have been given a sentence of eleven years for making bad choices. But today I have the desire to stay clean. I make sure that when the meetings come to us, I attend. I have a sponsor, and I sponsor several others here. No matter what happens to me in here, I still manage to carry the message to others.

*I try to keep my head up and share a strong message of recovery to those who are with me.*

I got locked up with almost three years of being clean, but have learned how cleantime does not equal recovery. I don't forget where I came from or what got me here. If I do, I will surely relapse. Not in my wildest dreams did I think I would have seven years clean. I thought I would die using and never recover.

*I found a Higher Power that I use to keep me in touch with reality.*

I have five years left to serve, and it gets hard. We don't always have meetings because we get locked down frequently, but I have my NA literature to keep me going when that occurs.

I have learned to read my NA books and to do steps when this happens. In the rooms, if you are an addict like I am, give yourself a break. I was told whenever I don't think I need a meeting is when I need a meeting. Please stay, because you have earned your seat. I am grateful for the rooms for showing me how to live again. I am a grateful recovering addict.

-MW

*Reprinted with permission from the April 2016 issues of Reaching Out*



# A gift of literature from outside in

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is RA, and I'm a happily recovering addict. I want to thank you for sending me a Basic Text. It has been my constant companion as I work my program here in prison.

*The Twelve Steps, Concepts, and Traditions of NA are a part of my life and my future.*

It has opened my eyes and mind to the underlying causes of my addiction as well as giving me the tools to combat my character defects and my habits. It has also shown me there is a way to live happily and have a productive, clean existence, free of the pain and destructive self-sabotage that were part of my everyday living.

Through this simple spiritual program, I am allowed to accumulate another day of freedom from active addiction.

*I am eternally grateful my Higher Power has allowed me to experience this program of recovery.*

Thank you for all your hard work. Your brother in the fellowship,

-RA

*Reprinted with permission from the July 2012  
issues of Reaching Out*

The logo for "Reaching Out" features the words "Reaching Out" in a blue, sans-serif font. The "O" in "Out" is a diamond shape with a blue outline and a white center. Two orange hands are shown holding the diamond shape from the left and right sides.

"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."

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

# Aging in Recovery

I stood on her doorstep with my bouquet. I knocked one last time, knowing she would never answer. I left the bouquet leaning against her door so that it would fall inside, rather than into the bushes, if she chose not to touch them. I tucked my card deeply into the roses. In it, I thanked her for all she had done to save/enhance my life: all the Steps we worked, the times she drove to my house when I couldn't reach out, the holidays we spent together, the financial support we gave each other when it hit the fan. Eighteen years, and it was over.

She no longer answered the door, her phone, notes on her car... I was

beginning to feel like a stalker.

I called a woman with more cleantime than me, and she said I should stop "inserting myself into someone's life who did not want my presence." I asked this new mentor to be my sponsor. I felt like a traitor, but I needed to stop reading my inventories into an unresponsive voicemail account.

I learned that the reason I had not seen my old sponsor in meetings was that she

was only attending "Illness in Recovery" meetings. Now, having only attended one of these meetings, I considered myself an expert. In my infinite wisdom and judgment, I decided that these meetings were for those who were dependent on medication.

Quite a switcheroo for my old sponsor, who had come from the "Don't take nothin' no matter what" club; this was someone who had once admonished me for sharing after using my asthma inhaler.

Years passed, and I had moved on with my new sponsor, who was active in meetings, service, and Steps. Every few years, I would see my old sponsor taking a medallion at our monthly birthday meeting, and it was painfully obvious that she was in serious decline.

Hunched over a walker, with her head proudly jutting forward, she'd haltingly propel herself up to the podium to announce her cleantime. The room would stand, stomping and whistling as she slowly shuffled back to her seat. She was the portrait of physical pain and no-matter-whatness. It was blatantly obvious that she was pushing through insurmountable physical odds—clean. So much for my judging "Illness in Recovery" meetings. I am now ten years older, and the simple act of moving is painful. I have a number of chronic conditions I won't bore you

with, but suffice it to say, two patients of a doctor made famous by offering euthanasia services had what I have and couldn't bear it anymore. I am not the Lone Ranger; many of us oldtimers are aging in recovery and living with irreconcilable pain.

There are many schools of thought about what is appropriate when aging in recovery. Some folks "don't take nothin' no matter what." Some folks follow doctors' orders. Some smoke or vape "medical marijuana." Here are some of the methods I use or have used: NA literature, service, inventories; ibuprofen, hot and cold packs, acupuncture, massage, a wheelchair (for a year), nerve block injections, and steroid injections; fibromyalgia medications; hypnosis, mindfulness, TENS units, and chiropractic; Eastern medicine, teas and supplements, physical therapy, water therapy, gym attendance, stationary bike, recumbent bike, elliptical trainer, and yoga; casts on my leg, two hip surgeries (and prescribed medication during and briefly post- surgery), daily stretching, and mobility scooter; praying, meditation, writing, crying, complaining, crawling, and begging; working with others, making art, animal therapy, anti-inflammatory diet, more rest, and more meetings; knee, ankle, and back braces; crutches, canes, razor scooter, golf cart...and probably more. My point is that I live my life rigorously searching for relief. And, yes, it is insane. But it is my life.

It is what I do to feel as safe as I can from the horrors of addiction.

It is my path, not yours. It doesn't make me any more right than you. You have your path, and it may not be anything like mine.

It used to be convenient to say and think that Narcotics Anonymous had no real cleantime, and that all the members were young. Today, this is a total falsehood. We now proudly boast innumerable members with over 20 years clean, many over 30, and even a respectable number over 40. A population of seniors in recovery is blooming in NA. And it hurts. It hurts in a number of ways.

We sit in meetings (those of us who drive or ask for a ride), sharing only when called on, some of us struggling to stay awake while hearing basically what we have heard for 365 days x 40 years. The most profound part of our share is the fact that we still occupy a chair. Members expect us to have all the answers, be gracious and wise, be nonjudgmental of the circus around us, and do all of this with the peace of Buddha. If we are grouchy, then we are assured by newer members that when they have our length of cleantime, they will have a much better program than we have. Possible. Very possible.

Karin B

*Reprinted with permission from the January 2018 edition of the NA Way. You can download or subscribe at this following link:*

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



I was with you when you were conceived  
And stayed by you for your birth  
I love you more than you believe  
And know exactly what you're worth  
never think your life too small  
I'll never leave your side  
I'll be there with you when you fall  
Self slander I won't abide  
I'll always build you up in life  
And give you strength and power  
I'll guide you to avoid the strife  
And with blessings I will shower  
To be the you you're meant to be  
Your path I'll always steer  
I'm by your side though you won't see  
You'll never need to fear  
Just close your eyes and speak to me  
I'll be your faithful guide  
Just believe in me and let me lead  
From me you can not hide  
So know that I am with you  
Every moment of your day  
And know I see right through you  
I'll not let you fall away I love you more than anyone  
Even in your darkest hour  
You need no other to depend upon  
I am your Higher Power

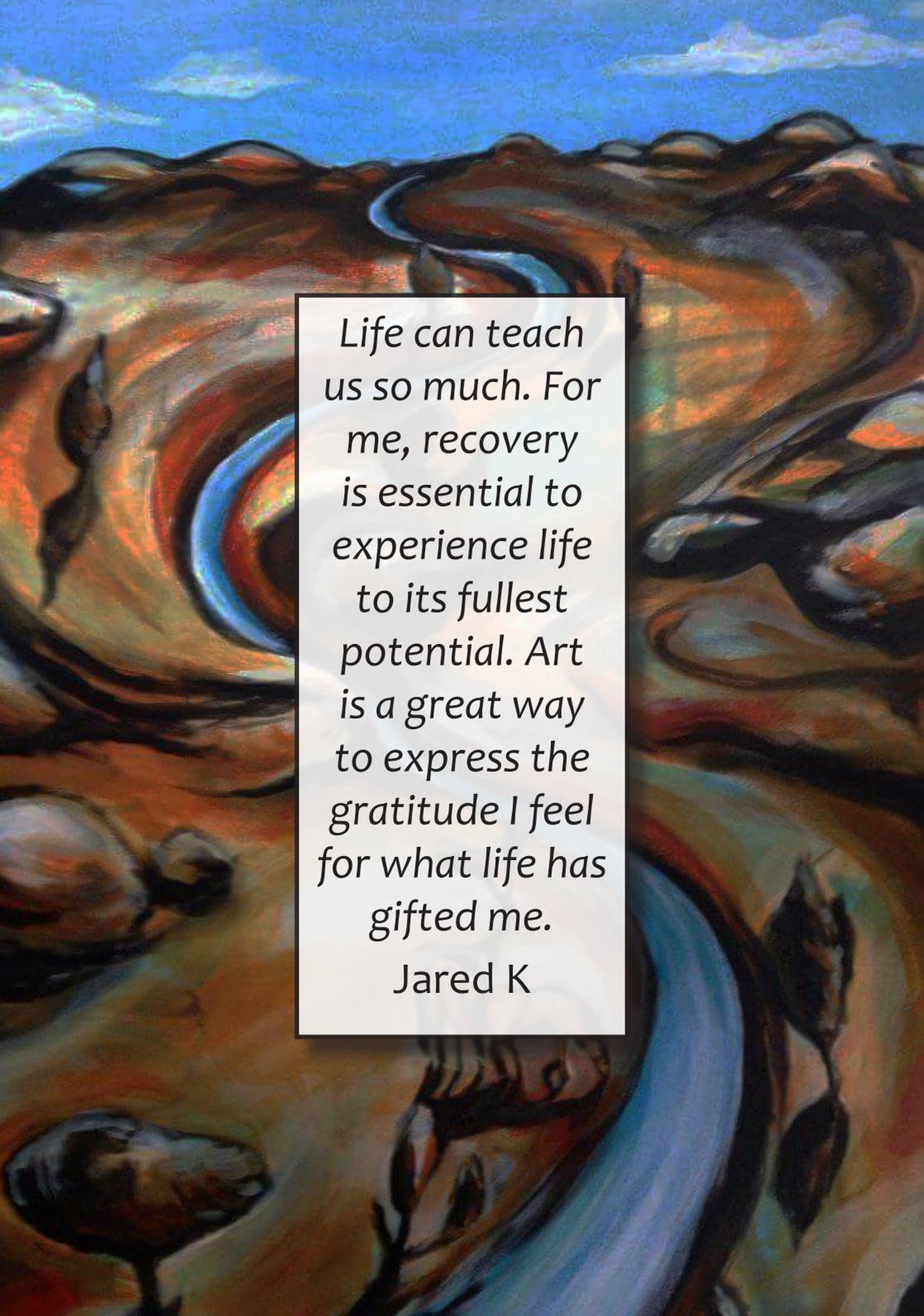
- Danny B

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

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

**NATODAY@NA.ORG.AU**



The background is a complex, abstract painting. It features a rich palette of colors including deep blues, earthy browns, and shimmering golds. The composition is dominated by fluid, swirling patterns that create a sense of movement and depth. In the center, there is a white rectangular box containing text. The overall style is expressive and textured, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of organic, flowing forms. The top of the image shows a lighter blue sky with soft, white clouds, suggesting a horizon or a transition from a natural scene into the abstract. The bottom part of the image shows darker, more defined shapes that could be interpreted as stylized plants or figures, adding to the layered and symbolic nature of the artwork.

Life can teach us so much. For me, recovery is essential to experience life to its fullest potential. Art is a great way to express the gratitude I feel for what life has gifted me.

Jared K