

A newsletter of the Autonomous Region of Narcotics Anonymous.

someone in NA who believes in me

and wants to help me in my recovery

The Autonomous Region of Narcotics Anonymous is comprised of groups & individual members who have come together to support each other in carrying the message in their local communities. Regardless of literature preferences, location or meeting formats.

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Our members speak

One Addicts Experience

In November 2021 I continued my service commitment by participating in the subcommittee of Hospitals and Institutions. I enjoy the service responsibility because I get to communicate with others how I stay clean. I have the confidence to share with those who want it because I've attended many of the subcommittee's workshops. There trusted servants give us a guideline to be consistent in how we carry the message.

I have learned how sharing in an H&I Presentation is different than sharing in a regularly scheduled NA meeting. In the presentation we are "inviting" the listeners to our regularly scheduled meetings. If they have, or even do not have, an end release date from the institution, we also supply the facility with literature for the attendees to read outside of the presentation time. It's an additional opportunity for our message to be available to those who want it. I am proud to be a member of NA that has a committee that carries the mes-

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This is our Tenth issue of this monthly newsletter. Our intention is for this newsletter to serve as a vehicle to communicate experience, strength and hope in recovery among the members and groups of ARNA. We welcome your input into this newsletter. Please contact us at newsletter@arna.world.

Please send anything you would like to share with other members and groups of ARNA, including - personal experience, strength and hope in recovery; what becoming a part of ARNA has meant for you and your group; challenges and successes you have experienced in becoming a member of ARNA; anything else you would like to communicate with other members and groups of ARNA.

This is your newsletter. We will do our best to serve you by delivering an updated issue regularly, editing your input into an easily readable format, to facilitate effective communication between the groups and members of ARNA. We will also welcome any ideas you may have to improve the quality and effectiveness of this newsletter.

Our members speak

Hospitals and Institutions

This article outlines what inspired two NA groups from different continents, into coming together and collectively carrying the NA message of hope. This was delivered in accordance with the dictates of the 12 traditions of Narcotics Anonymous, by embracing both the authority granted by the 2nd tradition and exercising the autonomous rights granted to the groups within our 4th tradition. These principles paved the way for the establishment of a weekly H&I presentation, both amid the onset of a global pandemic lockdown and beyond (continuing today as we speak).

I am an addict called Paul from Liverpool in the United Kingdom. My clean date is 29/11/2011, and my home group is 'The Written by Addicts for Addicts' of Narcotics Anonymous. The onset of the Covid_19 global lockdown in March 2020 represented an extremely difficult period fellowship-wide, but also cast some exceptional challenges to my own personal recovery. At that time, I was grief stricken from the recent loss of my best friend in January 2020. Being thrust into a lawfully enforced period of isolation just seemed completely overbearing to me.


I vividly remember the distress and pain of this period, which motivated me to approach recovery work again from a different angle with a new sponsor. It seems so surreal how I intuitively knew that further immersing myself into the NA way of life was the answer to my troubles, to gain a new perspective of myself, God, the steps, the traditions, in service, the fellowship, and continue carrying those principles into all my affairs.

On reflection, this was a momentous decision that totally altered the course of my recovery, my life, my career, and my spiritual condition. It enabled me to carry on working throughout the pandemic as a frontline worker, put in crucial footwork that would later lead to me securing a prestigious PhD scholarship (which I am currently studying), but mostly it completely modified my spiritual activities and reintroduced me to H&I service again.

For a number of years prior to the pandemic I had developed some beautiful and meaningful relationships with fellow addicts in the US. These relationships strengthened significantly during lockdown. I was

invited to do some H&I service at a Californian jail by one of those addicts in the fall of 2020. During a conversation after the presentation my friend mentioned that the institution was desperate to start a weekly NA meeting @1.00pm PST. He also explained how difficult it was getting local members to commit, due to it being the middle of their day. This appeared to be a God-given opportunity for me to be of service. The meeting would occur at 9.00pm UK time, which I found doable.

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sage into institutions From time-to-time NA doesn't have access to the facility's population. We learn to be patient and not plan the outcome to our service hour. Our trusted servants get the chance to catch up with each other. After that happened a few time I am glad to have learned how to carry that principle in the service area because on April 11, 2022, after not having access to carry the message to those in prison, our presentation process resumed. I missed the commitment more than I ever knew. I was so excited when we got the information on that Monday that I was up bright and early for Tuesday's presentation possibility! I am grateful to my Higher Power for giving me the opportunity to live the society and service spiritual principles in our Symbol!

Our members speak

Ouroboros, the monster that eats himself

The symbol of a snake that circles about to eat its own tail is seen in many parts of our society. Ouroboros, the monster that eats itself, comes from Greek mythology, but the Hindus and Buddhists talked of a creature called Kirtimukha. In Asia it is called Batara Kala, and the Chinese have a creature known as Taotie. Often these mythical creatures were created by the gods or are considered gods themselves and resulted from tales of pride, greed or other vices.

Many people are consumed by their own thought processes and manners of living. This is the monster that eats itself. I have seen this pattern of complacency in my own life many times. Sometimes I find myself looking for validation of behaviors or feelings outside of my own thoughts, from like-minded people. Life becomes a closed loop with little to no input from complete strangers. I'll repeat the same patterns over and over, rationalizing that I am content.

In Narcotics Anonymous I learned that I had a disease that caused me to be obsessed with myself, with little regard for others. Hitting bottom began the process of recovery because I was able to break that circle of self-obsession. For the first time I was able to examine my emotions and my behaviors with intentions that are not completely self-absorbed. I joined and attended a home group meeting regularly because they asked me to keep coming back. I found help because Narcotics Anonymous members meet regularly to help each other, regardless of their feelings for each other.

Narcotics Anonymous is described as a 'help others' program, not a 'self-help' program. I did not fully embrace that idea early on which caused me to struggle. I resolved to practice spiritual principles in all my affairs without a clear understanding of who I was or how principles would affect my life. I worked to carry a message of recovery to other addicts even if all I was able to do was show up regularly. When people want you to keep coming back, and you do, it is a service to them. I saw that this simple program called Narcotics Anonymous was changing the lives of other addicts.

I thought I might be an addict and I might find help here, but it did not make sense to me that I could get help by helping others. "We only keep what we have by giving it away" was a foreign concept, but something I often heard shared by others. I learned the beauty of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous shines as we work together to attract new addicts and support members who attend regularly. There is a flow that happens when everything comes together. You can feel this electricity in the room from members who share a common bond of unity.

Being a part of a group holds a special place in my heart. Each group acts autonomously and collectively. The members work together to fulfill the primary purpose. What one group does might not work for another. Regardless of the groups I was a member of, I have seen people arrive that were broken beyond repair but accepted exactly as they were, with unconditional love, and have seen the miracle of recovery take hold.

When I work the steps in my life, I come to understand why I am worthy of that love. I learn the Twelve Traditions slowly and start to trust the group ahead of my own desires. Groups that ignore the traditions stagnate or die. I've witnessed this happening over the years. Healthy fellowships ensure membership grows and new groups form. Groups do not need to be governed to be successful and they can not be managed by outside forces to prevent failure. I've actually learned as much from the failures as the successes of the groups I've been a part of. I can leave a group, start a group or choose to join another group. (Narcotics Anonymous, Basic Text, Page 15, chapter two 'What is the Narcotics Anonymous Program?', review approval form, published in 1981, C.A.R.E.N.A Publishing)

"NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean."

The word in the above statement 'recovered' was changed to 'recovering' during the iterative process of editing the original draft review form, also known as the Gray Book, into what would become the Basic Text, with input from the fellow-

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ship. If we accept the premise that addiction is an incurable disease, then the term 'recovering' might hold true. In Chapter 8 of the Basic Text, it uses the term 'recovered addict' which means to me that NA offers the promise of living life free from addictive behaviors. To say that we have gotten to a place where we are free of problems is a seductive lure. Tradition 3 says the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. This ensures I keep awareness of what I am using. Long time members will sometimes share how grateful they are for their lives today. Ouroboros is a warning to those members.

I am quick to adopt a manner of living that allows me to be content regardless of the condition of my life or the lives of those around me. Self-obsession is never far away. It was a big step to acknowledge I have problems in the beginning of recovery. As I have matured in my recovery, my problem becomes more focused on carrying the message and asking for help with that. Awareness of the problems that exist for me can be difficult to communicate. The 12 steps of Narcotics Anonymous helped me adopt a manner of living so I am vigilant about my recovery and asking for help of others in the Fellowship. This process of seeking help should never end, or I put myself in jeopardy. By living with spiritual principles in all my affairs, by carrying a message to the newcomers, I ensure I have struggles and make sacrifices as a part of my recovery. The Buddha warned that life is difficult, and it would be foolish to assume I am clean and somehow blessed with a life free of strife. Struggle can be a blessing from my higher power and break the cycle of self-obsession.

A powerful message of Narcotics Anonymous is in the last part of the statement where we accept that we 'meet regularly to help each other stay clean.' It is a simple statement that clearly defines what Narcotics Anonymous offers as a solution. Very simply, we help each other stay clean. The next logical question is how? (Narcotics Anonymous, Basic Text, Page 15, chapter two 'What is the Narcotics Anonymous Program?', review approval form, published in 1981, C.A.R.E.N.A Publishing).

"We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away."

People who are outside the cycle of active addiction will look at an addict's life and see the insanity of repeated behaviors. It is very easy to understand how hopeless our friends and family can feel about us. It is difficult to try to see those same patterns in my life. By coming regularly and hearing other people share their experiences, I can help myself. A daily commitment can and will break the cycle. The monster is always present. I am very careful of the people I surround myself with today. Relying on shared experiences and healthy boundaries help me maintain an atmosphere of recovery in my life. I am more committed today than ever to being a part of, and to carrying a message of hope to the still suffering addicts.

Bad behavior can get worse when we act in groups. I hated being bullied in school but eagerly participated in joining with others in making someone else suffer. No sane person looks back on this fondly, or with pride, but for those who were there, caught in the cyclical thinking of the time, it made perfect sense. Lies are repeated by those who are addicted to power and consumed with control. It may be impossible to stop this, but taking personal responsibility for my choices rather than joining the group is sometimes the best option. It can be difficult to adapt a manner of living that allows us to step out of the cycle, look honestly at our lives and make choices that will take us in a new direction, particularly if we are at odds with our peers. The same destructive behaviors that effect our lives can happen in any group. Toxic cliques form, and we support each other in active addiction to things that are not related to drugs, with the same result - stagnation and death.

A contentious idea has split Narcotics Anonymous for many decades. Are Groups truly autonomous or are we a global fellowship with ties that bind us together? Who decides what is best for a group and what services are needed? As a member, I have taken responsibility for my recovery. I make choices on what I feel is best for my life. Basic Text, Chapter 3, 'Why are we here?'

"Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems."

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We agreed to go back to our respective groups and propose this H&I collaboration, between both the 'STS group of San Jose' and the Written by Addicts for Addicts groups. Our continued communication with the facility resulted in NA being provisionally offered a weekly one-hour Tuesday slot to deliver our presentations (which now also include a Thursday slot). We were overjoyed that we could take this proposal back to our groups and formally discuss it collectively in group conscience.

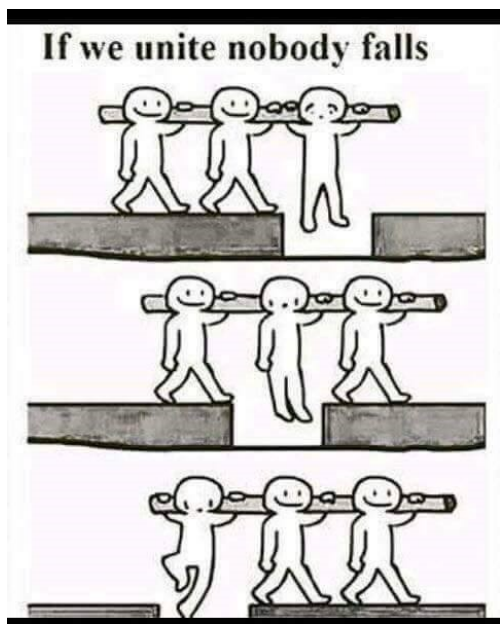
To remain transparent whilst ensuring complete adherence to the 12 traditions of NA, it was agreed that I also attend the STS group conscience, since the jail was situated in California. Eventually both group consciences agreed to this collaborative service effort. My Tuesday H&I commitment has since flourished with 50-60+ addicts in attendance at every meeting. The inmates are very receptive to hearing the NA message of hope. The addicts willingly engage with the meeting by reading cards, sharing back to panel members (both male and female), and even translating for each other and the panel when Spanish speakers wish to speak.

The overall behaviour, respect, and attentiveness of the inmates during the meeting is astonishing, prompting our institutional liaisons Reilly and Craig to report positively back to their managers. This is due to the inmates getting exposed to the full depth and breadth of what NA makes available to addicts globally.

To hear the experience of addicts from faraway places makes them realise how diverse we are as a fellowship. To have an ability to move around the laborious protocols encountered by most addicts who seek to serve H&I, this method allows the H&I servants to search the globe and invite NA members, regardless of gender, to share their ESH (such as; Russia, Ireland, Netherlands, Thailand, Australia, Canada, Scotland, Italy, Bahrain, and England). This international element enhances the power of the life-saving message, that we as NA members can transmit to the inmates.

Our respect for institutions' policies is also very evident, through NA's agreement to the facility being the overall administrator.

I feel privileged to serve this new ground-breaking H&I service, and to witness how it captures the attention of some very damaged and hard to reach individuals. To see how the inmates respond to us when they see us is something to behold, hearing them speak of getting to meetings upon their release, talking about their desire to find this new way to live, and even thanking us for the literature we provide freely to them. This humble demonstration of service has not only evaporated the overwhelming self-centredness and depression I was going through, it completely dispersed the curtain of grief, darkness, and despair that was degrading my spirit in Spring 2020.



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Some members shirk responsibility and the Basic Text refers to them as 'Self Seekers.' Some members 'remain abstinent but dishonesty and self-deception prevent them from fully recovering'. Ouroboros is a warning that any member or group of members can quickly adopt a manner of living which feeds upon itself with little regard for the truth. Critical self-examination of our lives and our group unity is critical to our personal recovery. The monster waits patiently so vigilance is critical to our survival.