

CHAPTER THREE

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we could not manage our own lives, we could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives, husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized, that in our addictions, we were slowly committing suicide, but such cunning enemies of life are narcotics and sedation that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use. All these methods having failed for us, in desperation, we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to N.A. we realized we were sick people who suffered from a disease like Alcoholism, Diabetes or Tuberculosis. There is no known "Cure" for these--all, however, can be arrested at some point and "recovery" is then possible.

In N.A. we follow a program borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty years more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are deeply grateful to the A.A. Fellowship for pointing the way for us to a new way of life.

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we were irre- 1
sponsible with our lives. We used drugs to cover up our 2
humiliation, guilt, inferiority and feelings of inadequacy. 3

1 Many of us woke up sick, unable to make it to work or went
2 to work loaded. Many of us stole to support our habit. We
3 hurt the ones we loved, whatever it took to get that fix, pill,
4 drink or joint. We denied all these things and told ourselves
5 we could handle it. We were looking for something new in life,
6 possibly a way to be accepted. Eventually we started looking
7 for a way out. We didn't face life on life's terms. In the
8 beginning, using was fun. It became a habit and then it was
9 necessary for survival. The progression of the disease was
10 not apparent to us. We continued on the path of destruction,
11 unaware of where it was leading us. We had the disease and
12 did not know it. We avoided reality through the use of drugs.
13 The pain and misery was postponed. When we came down, our
14 problems came back, and were compounded with additional prob-
15 lems that had built up. We felt the need to use more often as
16 our disease progressed.

17 We knew we needed help, but had nowhere to go. Most of
18 us explored different alternatives. Doctors didn't understand
19 our dilemma. Usually they helped our disease by giving us
20 prescriptions. Our husbands, wives and loved ones gave us
21 anything in hopes that we would stop using. We tried substi-
22 tuting one drug for another and this only created a vicious
23 cycle. We tried limiting our usage to "social" amounts, but
24 our success with this was short-lived or non-existent.

25 Some of us sought spiritual guidance through churches,
26 different religions, meditation and cultism. Some of us
27 sought cure by geographical change, blaming our surroundings
28 and living situations for our problem. This attempt just gave
29 us new people to take advantage of. Some of us sought approval
30 through sexual activities and change of peers. This approval-
31 seeking got us back where we started from, or worse. Some
32 tried marriage, divorce and desertion of our families. Many
33 tried psychiatrists and institutions. All these attempts at
34 controlled usage or abstinence were futile.

35 We had reached a point in our lives where we had become
36 a lost cause to society. Our worth to our jobs, families and

friends was little or none. Some of us became unemployed 1
and unemployable. Success was scary and unfamiliar. We 2
didn't know what to do about it. As the self-loathing grew, 3
we had to use more and more to mask the feeling of hate. 4
We were sick and tired of pain and trouble. We were fright- 5
ened and ran from the fear, but no matter how far we ran, 6
the fear followed us. We were hopeless, useless and lost. 7
Feelings of worthlessness overcame us. Failure had become 8
our way of life and self-esteem was non-existent. The 9
peculiar inertia that keeps a person going the way they are, 10
acted on us. To some of us, our appearance didn't matter. 11
We had no pride in anything we did. We didn't care how we 12
looked. For some, personal hygiene became a thing of the 13
past. For others, it became an obsession. We tried to 14
cover up our inner pain with outside appearances. Any hope 15
of being anything different disappeared. Helplessness, 16
emptiness and fear became a way of life. We were complete 17
failures. Personality change was what we really needed. 18
Change from a self-destructing to a self-affirming pattern 19
of living was imperative. We started experiencing how 20
powerless we really were. Nothing seemed to relieve the 21
paranoia and fear. We hit bottom and became ready to ask 22
for and accept help. 23

We were searching for an answer. We reached out and 24
found the hand of Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first 25
N.A. meeting in utter defeat. We were searching for some- 26
thing, but we did not know what. After sitting in a meet- 27
ing, we felt that people cared and were willing to be 28
patient with us. Although our heads told us we would never 29
make it, the people in the Fellowship gave us hope by 30
insisting we could. We found that no matter what our 31
thoughts or past actions were others had preceded us. 32
Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realized that we were not 33
alone. We were told that if we put things ahead of our 34
clean time, the program would not work. Nothing happens 35
in the room but recovery; everyone's life is at stake. We 36

1 learned old friends, places and ideas were threatening to our
2 recovery. We had to change our playmates, playgrounds and
3 playthings.

4 When we came to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, we
5 faced many disturbing realizations. One: we were powerless
6 over our addictions and our lives were unmanageable; two:
7 we are not responsible for our disease but we are responsible
8 for our recovery; and three: we can no longer blame people,
9 places and things for our addiction. We had to own up to our
10 problems and our feelings.

11 In N.A., we learned that members concentrated on recovery
12 and how they felt, not what they had done in the past. We
13 found that the ultimate weapon for recovery was the recovering
14 addict. Having realized that we were unable to maintain on
15 our own, some of us immediately began experiencing depression,
16 anxiety, hostility and resentment. We began to feel emotional
17 pain that we had always been afraid to feel. We began to grow
18 and open up into our new lives that we had found in N.A. Many
19 of us felt that our lives, due to petty frustrations, minor
20 setbacks and losses, were not getting any better. An honest
21 look was often a grateful one. It was in those times that many
22 of us found out who we were. It allowed us to make important
23 discoveries like "it's O.K. to hurt and feel the pain."

24 Today we have feelings of love, joy, hope, excitement, sad-
25 ness and friendship. Before we were either elated or depressed
26 with very little in between. Our negative sense of self was
27 replaced by a positive concern for others. Our own problems
28 seemed to resolve themselves. It is a great gift to be a human
29 being, and the opportunities we seek are determined by our own
30 sense of self-worth. When we lie, cheat, or steal, we degrade
31 ourselves in our own eyes. We have had enough of self-destruc-
32 tion. We want to learn to do the things that will transform
33 us into self-affirming people.

34 The symptoms of addiction include mental states that aren't
35 normal. When we get clean, these strange habits of mind pass
36 away and we start to learn to live again. Continued abstinence,

belief in a God of our understanding, and participation in the program will restore us to sanity. 1 2

What a change from how we used to be! That's how we know that the N.A. program works. It's the first thing that ever convinced us that we needed to change ourselves, instead of trying to change the people and situations that irritated us. It gave us a Twelve Step blueprint for doing just that. By working the Steps, we came to accept our Higher Power's will and this acceptance led us down the road of recovery. We lost our fear of the unknown through practice of the Twelve Steps. We were freed to live and enjoy life just for today without the old ghosts of our addiction haunting us in the morning of every new day. 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

We all have our personal stories of recovery, and everyone has their own way of working this program. This is the way the program works. It is available to each addict seeking recovery. Our personal natures differ, so our experiences of recovery vary. 13 14 15 16 17

Recovery is a beautiful chance that many addicts thought had passed them by until they found the Fellowship of N.A. It's the chance to live again. Recovery from the disease of addiction encompasses many things: carrying the message to the suffering addict; being with people we really love and care about; spiritual principles; a Higher Power of our own understanding; a sincere desire for ongoing recovery; open-mindedness; loving service and, of course, the vital spiritual experience that results in and perpetuates the expansion of Narcotics Anonymous. 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27