

We are grateful to have stayed clean long enough for the mes- 1  
sage of total abstinence to take hold. We are grateful that 2  
we were made so welcome at meetings that we felt comfortable 3  
going to one meeting a day for ninety days. Without staying 4  
clean and coming to all those meetings, we would surely have 5  
had a rougher time working the Steps. Just one fix, pill, 6  
drink or toke would have interrupted the process of recovery 7  
and cut us off from the Fellowship. 8

When someone returns to the Fellowship after a relapse, 9  
we stress the importance of living just for today. The past 10  
is past. We can not change what has happened. What is im- 11  
portant is to stay clean today. As long as we live today to 12  
the best of our ability and pursue adequacy not perfection, 13  
we can take pride in ourselves. We are doing the best we can 14  
for today and not living in the past. We can begin to live 15  
at peace with ourselves. We can stop being so hard on our- 16  
selves. This we have found to be the case; that we have been 17  
our own worst enemy, and fault for our failures was not in 18  
the stars but in ourselves. 19

We all find that the feeling we get from helping others 20  
motivates us to do better in our own lives. If we are hurt- 21  
ing, and most of us do from time to time, we learn to ask for 22  
help. We find that pain shared is pain lessened. Members of 23  
the Fellowship take great pleasure in helping a relapser re- 24  
cover and have great insight and many useful suggestions to 25  
offer when asked. Recovery found in Narcotics Anonymous must 26  
come from within and no one gets clean for anyone but them- 27  
selves. 28

CHAPTER EIGHT

WE DO RECOVER

Although "Politics makes strange bedfellows", as the old saying goes, addiction makes us one of a kind. Our personal stories may vary in individual pattern but in the end we all have the same thing in common. This common illness or disorder is addiction. We know well the two things that make up true addiction. Obsession and compulsion. Obsession--that fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Compulsion--that once having started the process with one "fix", one pill, or one drink, we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs we are completely in the grip of a destructive power stronger than ourselves.

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be these alternatives: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends--jails, institutions, or death; or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today, are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual--not religious--program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.

When my addictions brought me to the point of complete powerlessness, uselessness, and surrender some twenty-six years ago, there was no N.A. I found A.A. and in that Fellowship met addicts who had also found the program to be the answer to their

problem. However, we knew that many were still going down the road to disillusion, degradation and death, because they were unable to identify with the alcoholic in A.A. Their identification was at the level of apparent symptoms and not at the deeper level of emotions or feelings, where empathy becomes a healing therapy for all addicted people. With several other addicts and some members of A.A. who had great faith in us and the program, we formed, in July of 1953, what we now know as Narcotics Anonymous. We felt that now the addict would find from the start as much identification as each needed to convince himself that he could stay clean, by the example of others who had recovered for many years.

That this was what was principally needed, has proved itself in these passing years. That wordless language of recognition, belief and faith, which we call empathy, created the atmosphere in which we could feel time, touch reality and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us. In our program of recovery we are growing in numbers and in strength. Never before have so many clean addicts, of their own choice and in free society, been able to meet where they please, to maintain their recovery in complete creative freedom.

Even addicts said it couldn't be done the way we had it planned. We believed in openly scheduled meetings, no more hiding as other groups had tried before by those who advocated long withdrawal from society. We felt that the sooner the addict could face his problem of everyday living, just that much faster would he become a real productive citizen. We eventually have to stand on our own feet and face life on its own terms, so why not from the start. Because of this, of course, many stayed and some came back after their setback. The brighter part, is the fact that those who are now our members, many have long terms of complete abstinence and are better able to help the newcomer. Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of our Steps, and Traditions, is the dynamic force that is bringing increase and unity to our program. Now we know that the time has come when the tired old lie, "Once an addict, always an addict", will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover

As long as there have been people, addiction has 1  
existed. Addiction is the obsession and to use compulsion. 2  
Modern technology has made available not only the drugs 3

1 themselves, but also the stresses and demands that bring  
2 out the potential for addiction. In the past, there  
3 was no hope for an addict. Clean today, we come to see  
4 life in a new light. We confess to an addictive nature  
5 and we are no longer set apart by marked obsession, com-  
6 pulsion, and physical discomfort.

7 In sharing our past with others it seems that we  
8 all reached a point when we said to ourselves, "I'm lost,  
9 I just don't know what to do". We have all experienced  
10 that terrifying overwhelming urge, that need for some-  
11 thing outside ourselves. In addiction we share a bond  
12 of fear, anxiety, and anger that we are unable to control.

13 What we have in common is what we have all felt: the  
14 loneliness, the self-centeredness, the misery, the despair,  
15 the pain within and the empty numbness that sets us apart  
16 from others. We all felt that we were unique, different,  
17 better than, or worse than, but always separate. We felt  
18 alone. Our pain surrounded us. We could not fill the  
19 empty place inside.

20 Earlier patterns are what got us into trouble. How-  
21 ever anything that "works" to help us make it through a  
22 new day clean is considered a new pattern. Complete ab-  
23 stinence is the foundation for our new way of life.  
24 Vigilance, integrity, honesty, open-mindedness and will-  
25 ingness to try, are all associated with strange new pat-  
26 terns to the newcomer and to clean addicts as well.

27 It all begins with that first surrender and admis-  
28 sion. From that point forward, each addict is reminded  
29 that a day clean is a day won, and any failure is only a  
30 temporary set-back rather than a link in an unbreakable  
31 chain. Every addict is a prisoner in their own mind,  
32 condemned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt.  
33 This compels a person to act against their true inner

nature and keep doing things they don't really want to do. 1

We weren't focused on the fulfillment of life, but 2  
on the emptiness and worthlessness of it all. We could 3  
not deal with success, so failure became a way of life. 4  
The fear of loss of control had set in and we were 5  
afraid to try anything different. 6

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are more concerned with 7  
recovery than the mysteries of addiction. We seek to 8  
change our personalities and our lives for the better. 9  
We realize that we are a part of the universe. In 10  
recovery, we change our reactions, thoughts, and atti- 11  
tudes. We begin to understand and accept who we are. 12  
This gives us a sense of security. We become less com- 13  
pulsive in our thoughts and actions. 14

The dishonesty in our actions has led to a large 15  
amount of guilt inside all of us. This guilt could drive 16  
us to use, and the using could keep us from going back 17  
and making amends. All these things together would cause 18  
misery. Being clean, we are able to take our inventor- 19  
ies honestly. We can admit our faults and are able to 20  
ask for help. 21

We realize that an addict is going to resist recovery. 22  
Things we have shared with them interfere with their using. 23  
We put our trust in the group. If a person tells us that 24  
they can smoke pot and suffer no ill side effects, there 25  
are two ways we can look at it. The first possibility is 26  
that they are not an addict. The other is that the dis- 27  
ease hasn't become apparent to them. 28

We always try to be careful because we don't want to 29  
say or do anything that might prevent them from seeking 30  
help when drugs turn on them. 31

We have found from our group experience that honesty 32  
is essential for the new member to surrender completely 33

1 to the program. We have also found that complete surrender  
2 is the only way to recover. No addict has ever failed to  
3 recover who has surrendered completely to our program.  
4 This has proven itself time and time again by the phenom-  
5 enal growth of Narcotics Anonymous throughout the world.

6 We have noticed as our program has grown that new-  
7 comers seem to come in with a false impression that needs  
8 to be corrected. In the instances that we are talking  
9 about, they seem to believe that they can barter non-usage  
10 for group acceptance. When the group fails to behave in  
11 accordance with the newcomer's expectations, they seem  
12 to feel it's O.K. to use. The sad thing about this is  
13 that it may take them a while to get the real message of  
14 our program. If they happen to be addicts, they can die  
15 never realizing that recovery is possible.

16 Some of us had thought of ourselves as outgoing,  
17 happy-go-lucky people, but we were wrong, and after years  
18 of depending on drugs and other people to make our decis-  
19 ions, we lost almost all ability to socialize and be  
20 comfortable with ourselves.

21 At the end of our using we were consumed with terror  
22 and despair. We knew for sure that we were dying and  
23 many of our friends were already dead. No one can explain  
24 the incredible fact that addicts, hopeless in their addict-  
25 ion, can reach for and receive help in Narcotics Anonymous.

26 Over a period of years, old habit patterns become  
27 familiar, and many times the comfortable mode of exist-  
28 ence. Our egos were blown out of proportion. We became  
29 uncomfortable due to the obsessive nature of our disease.  
30 The old comfort associated with using was lost. Life was  
31 addiction-a lonely, miserable prison.

32 The way we understand insanity is poisoning one's  
33 self for no apparent reason. Compulsion or obsession

drives addicts to the point that there were few things we 1  
would not do to obtain our drug. Insanity for us seems 2  
to occur in tragic cycles, much like Russian roulette. 3  
We are forced to play because we have tried and can't 4  
stop. 5

We know that we are powerless over an illness which 6  
is chronic, progressive and fatal. We cannot deal with 7  
the obsession and compulsion that comes with the disease. 8  
The only alternative is to stop using. When we are 9  
willing to follow this course and take advantage of the 10  
help available to us, a whole new life opens up. 11

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual, not a religious, 12  
program. The spiritual basis of the program is strong 13  
enough to support a person with the disease. As we re- 14  
enter society, the Twelve Steps are the roadmap to a 15  
successful recovery. Every addict who is clean and with- 16  
out a compulsion to use is a miracle. To keep that 17  
miracle alive is an ongoing process of awareness. It is 18  
important for us to remember that not using is an abnormal 19  
state for us. We have to learn to live clean. We need to 20  
be honest with ourselves and think of both the negative 21  
and positive sides of things. Decision making is a little 22  
rough at first. Sticking to and seeing that you have made 23  
the decision is the reward. Before we got clean, all our 24  
actions were guided by impulse. We seldom thought con- 25  
structively, and even if we did, we would say, "the hell 26  
with it" and carry through with the negative anyway. It 27  
is better for us with practice and the help of our spon- 28  
sors and N.A. friends. 29

We realize that we are responsible for the way we 30  
feel. We are no longer able to shift the blame, and we 31  
are aware that we create the world in which we live. We 32  
are products of our own thoughts. 33

1           We have found it essential to accept reality. Since  
2 that time we have not found it necessary to use.

3           Reality, as it is, is just fine with us. Without  
4 drugs we can function like normal human beings, which  
5 means accepting ourselves and the world around us,  
6 exactly as it is. We learn that conflicts are a part of  
7 reality and learn to be grateful for them. We learn new  
8 ways to resolve conflicts instead of running from them.  
9 We begin to simplify them and we actually look upon them  
10 with gratitude as opportunities for progress. They are a  
11 part of the real world. We learn to handle problems, not  
12 to solve them. Everyone has situations; we have tended  
13 to make them problems, like making a mountain out of a  
14 mole hill. We really don't have any brilliant answers  
15 or solutions, but we can honestly say that this program  
16 works! We can stay clean and even enjoy life, remember-  
17 ing, "just for today" and not picking up that first fix,  
18 pill, drink, or joint.

19           The rewards of staying clean are endless. We used to  
20 think life would be boring without drugs. We were really  
21 screwed up in our addictions and our concept of what life  
22 was really all about. Now that everything is changing  
23 and getting better, we give thanks to God and the N.A.  
24 program. One member shares that reality is the biggest  
25 trip of all.

26           We become aware that many of our feelings were im-  
27 mature and based upon pride and ego. As we become more  
28 comfortable with ourselves, we appreciate more fully the  
29 meaning of living just for today. We get over the guilt  
30 of the past and the worries of the future. We enjoy the  
31 now: we learn to endure both pain and pleasure. We  
32 endure frustration for we know that it will pass. We  
33 rid ourselves of absolutes, such as success or failure,

and begin to enjoy doing things for the fun of it, rather 1  
than shying away because we are not perfect. 2

Interpersonal relationships improve and we become 3  
less sensitive and suspicious. Understanding the meaning 4  
of love, recognizing that we are growing from an immature 5  
"need for love" to a mature "giving of love", allows us 6  
to care about others. 7

We are not responsible for our disease. We are 8  
responsible for our recovery. We can seek help from 9  
others who are enjoying lives free from having to use. 10  
In time, we find that more is possible in recovery than 11  
we could conceive. Our teachability hinges on our 12  
ability to admit our need for help. This surrender is 13  
the beginning of the basic learning experience that 14  
gives us information on our disease and recovery. Life 15  
is a learning experience. As we begin to apply what we 16  
have learned, our lives begin to change for the better. 17  
No one completely understands this process, but thank God 18  
we do not have to understand it for it to work. We learn 19  
not to question the ways of God. Instead we look into 20  
our actions. Writing down our belief has always helped 21  
many of us examine our feelings. If we have trouble ex- 22  
pressing our belief or writing it down, it is helpful 23  
to make sure we have worked Step One. The ego deflation 24  
of Step One generally opens minds. Faith is the key. 25  
It takes a firm belief in a loving God before we can pos- 26  
sibly begin to turn our wills and lives over to His care. 27

In Narcotics Anonymous, we have found that a spiritual 28  
experience is necessary to arrest our addiction. This 29  
occurs as we rely on God as we understand Him. The Twelve 30  
Steps chart the course to individual recovery; from the 31  
hazy days of initial surrender to the various levels of 32  
spiritual awakening. 33

1       We get relief through the Twelve Steps, and sharing  
2 with trusted friends. We love them and believe in the  
3 promise and hope that they offer. Following the Steps,  
4 living just for today, we can maintain an attitude that  
5 is essential for us to grow. We move forward in the  
6 program, and we are comforted by the Steps. They are  
7 suggested only, but they are the principles that made  
8 our recovery possible. All of the Twelve Steps are essen-  
9 tial to the recovery process, simply because they help us  
10 to participate in our own recovery. By the grace of God,  
11 our actual participation in recovery provides the health  
12 we need to respond to life and to arrest the disease of  
13 addiction. We are grateful that God provided the steps  
14 and that they have been proven as a means to arrest our  
15 disease.

16       If we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery  
17 after some time clean, we usually have stopped doing one  
18 or more of the things that helped us in the earlier  
19 stages of our recovery. This can show up as an unexplain-  
20 able depression or disorientation. It is really related  
21 to a poor spiritual condition and can be remedied by an  
22 ongoing application of the Twelve Steps of recovery.

23       From "day one", the Twelve Steps started becoming  
24 a part of our lives. At first, we were filled with nega-  
25 tivity, and we only allowed the First Step to take hold.  
26 Today, we have less fear of going insane or using, than  
27 we once did. We realize that those old feelings and  
28 fears were a product of our disease, and that real freedom  
29 is possible for us now. In time, we lost most of the fear  
30 that had us completely within its grasp and we learned to  
31 let go of guilt.

32       Our old ways were so self-destructive and egocentric,  
33 we hurt ourselves and those we loved. Learning a new way

of living is a blessing from our Higher Power, giving us 1  
the ability to explore and discover through feelings. 2  
We thank our Higher Power for the love that we receive. 3  
We find the road sometimes long and weary, but we keep 4  
on finding miracles as we go. 5

The program recommends that we lower the demands on 6  
ourselves so that we can achieve our daily goals. It is 7  
also recommended that we don't go overboard and swamp our- 8  
selves with a bunch of new responsibilities just because 9  
we succeeded in handling a few basics. That way, we 10  
experience success at a basic and acceptable level. 11

Now that we are in N.A. we have a new outlook on 12  
being clean. We enjoy a feeling of release and freedom 13  
from the desire to use. We find that everyone we meet 14  
has something to offer. We are free to receive as well 15  
as to give. Opening these doors and entering them be- 16  
comes a new adventure in living. Letting go of old 17  
ideas and entertaining the new ones brings us to this new 18  
way of life. We will know happiness, joy, and freedom. 19  
Life is not just a glum lot. 20

An attitude of gratitude permeates us. With grati- 21  
tude, clean time is happy and joyous. We remain grateful 22  
for all the beautiful things this program has revealed to 23  
us. 24

Our experience revealed that the things we are not 25  
grateful for could be taken from us. As long as we didn't 26  
have something, it would seem wonderful and we would 27  
often think if we just had so and so we would be happy. 28  
Occasionally, we would have our prayers answered only to 29  
find the rich feelings of satisfaction and comfort beyond 30  
our grasp. We can see today that in reality we were 31  
taking a lot for granted by failing to be consciously 32  
thankful for that which God and life had already provided 33  
for us. 34

1           There exists no model of the recovered addict.  
.2       When the drugs go and the addict works the program,  
3       wonderful things happen. Lost dreams awaken and new  
4       possibilities spring.

5           How many times have we heard something over and  
6       over again, until it finally takes root and blossoms.  
7       With each meeting we attend, seeds planted in earlier  
8       meetings are watered until we can see them grow to harvest.  
9       This harvest is a form of spiritual growth. Through  
10      listening to the experiences of others and putting the  
11      program into action, life becomes beautiful, pleasant, and  
12      very exciting! Laughter is a common part of our day.  
13      Smiling doesn't hurt anymore, and we can finally look  
14      others in the eye and be grateful who we are.

15          Being willing to grow spiritually is the direction  
16      that keeps us bouyant today. When we take the action indi-  
17      cated in the steps, the result is a healing of our distorted  
18      personalities. It is the action that is important, not the  
19      result. We leave all results to God. God presents the op-  
20      portunity that heals our disease spiritually. After  
21      clearing up the superficial wreckage, it is necessary to  
22      continue applying the principles in order to get to the  
23      roots of our disorder.