

The New/Old
NA Way



Volume 48 - March 2022



The New/Old NA WAY Magazine
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This magazine was written in open participation by
members of the Groups of The Anonymi Foundation and
members of the Groups who participate in the
Fellowship Service Conference and the
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The New/Old NA Way

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My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The NA Way

Always be Joyful.

Always be joyful. Keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is what God wants for us yet too often we carry our personalities not spiritual principles with us into the rooms of the fellowship of N.A. I've seen meetings completely break up and newcomers completely go away and back out into active addiction because of personalities but as we truly learn spiritual principles such as surrender, acceptance, and honesty confront us we must learn to be joyful, thankful no matter what happens—our natural response is, "That's impossible!" We tend to feel inadequate and unable to please God. How can we rejoice in tragedy, pray when we are otherwise occupied, or be thankful in times of adversity? "Do not stifle the Spirit of recovery."

The purpose of our existence is not simply to be "good" people. God has laid hold of and redeemed us for the purpose of forming us into new people that have found freedom with each step as we walk through the experiences of this life with him. We are to become a dwelling place for the Spirit of recovery that is showing newcomers spiritual principles of unity. Our challenge is learning to let God do the impossible through us! He is using everything in our lives to teach us that apart from him we can do nothing but through the Spirit of unity we can do all things, even

rejoice always, pray for one another, and give thanks in everything.

God, help us to understand that you are truly causing all things to work together for our good this very day. Let us be the example of spiritual principles as we work each step. we cannot do this on our own. But in the power of recovery,

In This Moment: we will live with principles and leave our personalities behind as we walk the N.A. way of life with the help of God and spiritual principles of the 12 steps and 12 traditions as our guiding light

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: North Carolina, USA

Total Abstinence & Our Primary Purpose

What is our primary purpose? To carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Although this sounds very simplistic, many times we hear addicts misinterpret this belief.

Very often do we hear people tell others to go to treatment, take medications for their symptoms of addiction, or their Groups are affiliated with the local probation offices.

Our message is very simple. We get a sponsor and work the steps. We carry this message to the addicts who still suffer; we tell them we do these things such as having a sponsor and allowing that sponsor to guide

us through the steps, learning how to apply the principles found in our Steps and Traditions, reading, writing, praying, meditating, and going to meetings. We don't tell them to find a doctor or go to treatment.

There are many things that are happening outside of Narcotics Anonymous and many of those things find their way to creep into our atmosphere of recovery, this starts the effect of the atmosphere starts to diminish.

Recently I heard of an addict starting a treatment facility over here in New Jersey.

I met this addict in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. The treatment facility has been one of the first to take a different approach on things, rather than use psychotropic drugs and drug replacements such as methadone or suboxone, they're using medical marijuana.

Every addict in there is toking up. Although this remains an outside issue, it can be a potential inside issue. When these facilities start to take these addicts to meetings, or house them in a "halfway house" and mandate them to go to Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

Our philosophy is very simple, Total Abstinence from all mind altering & mood changing substances and chemicals.

The use of marijuana or drugs used to treat the disease of addiction would not be considered to be clean or being completely abstinent

in Narcotics Anonymous.

Now that we have heard of potential inside issues that remain currently outside issues, let's take a look at what has become an inside issue.

Recently, the local jails have developed a way to "deal" with addicts becoming reoccurring offenders, they have introduced drug court to the inside of their jails.

Now addicts who come into jail have a choice they can make, either take drug court and get put in a "cell block" or subdivision where they can take methadone, and get out with an attendance verification paper, or serve their time in jail.

Although what the jail does is none of our business what is our business is when addicts are being forced into Narcotics Anonymous.

We should not verify attendance documents because it is a violation of our Twelve Traditions, and any addicts on drugs whether they're prescription or not are not being totally abstinent.

We need to be aware of the pitfalls we may face if we were to verify their attendance.

For an example, if a Group verifies the attendance of an addict or even non addict before the meeting starts and the person goes and commits a crime, we become the alibi for this person. If we do it even after the meeting, they can say they were there afterwards cleaning up and with others.

If that were to be the case every-

one who was recognized of being in attendance at that meeting would be a witness to the alibi and would have to be in court; regardless of if the chairperson wrote a fake name or the Groups name, there would be consequences everyone would have to face.

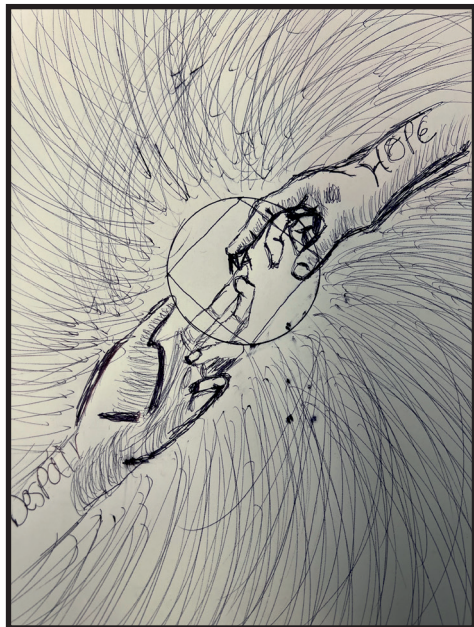
Another example and happens more often than the first example are; when addicts actually get honest that they may have relapsed. Maybe their Parole Officer, Probation Officer, or Drug Court Judge has not found out, maybe they didn't drug test them and by the time they do the drugs are out of their system. Another person under the control of the courts may hear this and go tell on them or "rat them out", for a lesser sentence.

The addict who got honest would go back to jail and we would then be less attractive to the addict who still suffers.

Mandating and force are not a part of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers, in fact they're complete opposites of each other.

We should not allow outside agencies and government offices tell us what we can and can't do. We would then be wavering our primary purpose.

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: Nebraska, USA



A New Normal

In Narcotics Anonymous we often hear about letting go of our old live, the old places we used to go, the old people we hang with or the things we did. At some point in our recovery, we can get into that thinking that we miss something, that Narcotics Anonymous taking away some things I think are no danger to my recovery. I am clean now am I not? SO why should I not be able to do these things. Why can I not be like the normal people?

In my experience I immediately start acting out in the same behaviors and attitudes that got me here in the first place, the moment I give in to this type of thinking. It's never the

case that I when I conclude that I am indeed normal, I have no more problems dealing with reality. The insanity is not gone simply because I stopped using and started thinking I can think again.

“Normal living is possible. The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous are a progressive recovery process established in our normal living. Our recovery is dependent on our belief in a loving God who cares for us and will do for us whatever we found impossible to do ourselves.”

Grey Book page 147 line 31 – page 148 line 1

In my experience it's a form of denial to start telling myself I should be able to do these things, or hang with these people, and be oke while doing it. I have not been oke out there. I can rationalize all I want to convince myself that's it's what I need to do, but what actually is taking place is that I am not willing to let go of something that keeps me connected to my past. I want something, maybe a relationship, sex, attention, power, whatever. It is me keeping a door open that leads me back. Fact is I have the disease of addiction that will bring me to my knees, with or without drugs. And whenever I return to my old way of life, I always let go of certain things I need to do to maintain my recovery. And I see it happen with other members, not being able to let go of certain things that stand in the

way like roadblocks. Without a firm daily basis in recovery, the Steps and our relationships with our sponsor and NA friends, I do not believe I can live the life that has been given to me through NA. Without all those things, I am perfectly able to live the live I was already living, which got me here.

Holding on to my old way of life prevents me from growing and finding the change I need within. And I believe that with this change taking place during my recovery, I can live a normal life.

“Eventually, when we sincerely use this program of action in our daily lives, we will be able to face our Higher Power, ourselves, our loved ones, and even the “cold, cruel world.” We develop a solid base to work from, which assures us that we can go anywhere and do anything, with complete assurance that we can handle whatever we have at hand.”

Grey Book page 73 lines 21-26

Coming into Narcotics Anonymous I compared myself with the “normal” people and their “normal” lives. And felt like a failure in many ways. Now clean and living the NA way I am experiencing more and more that this program and way of life offers so much more that what I was able to conceive. Yes, it taught me to deal with the basic daily affairs, it taught me to be responsible and self-sufficient. But the most beautiful thing is that is gives me a way of life

that offers continues growth, and like the Grey Book states: all is possible. Even a “normal” live if you want it.

I found a New Normal in Narcotics Anonymous that is so much more than just a way to stay clean. A spiritual path filled with friends, support, freedom, creativity, new experiences, and joy. If I surrender to it and open up to it. I can let go of my own normal, my old way of dealing with reality and find a new way to life.

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: The Netherlands



Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Recovery

“Whether the vase falls on the anvil, or the anvil falls on the vase -- Either way, it's going to go badly for the vase.”

This is a nice way of saying that fine things are fragile, whether they are on bottom or top. In a very similar way, spirituality -- and recovery -- are fragile, and can be quite easily cracked or smashed by unexpected blows.

Similarly, consider the great magician, Harry Houdini. He was an adept of physical training and could brace his stomach muscles to withstand strong punches. He demonstrated this feat, on October 22, 1926, in Montreal at the Princess Theater. He was relaxing after a show on a couch backstage, when some utter moron, a young athlete from McGill University, decided to test him without giving him a chance to tense his muscles. The fool punched him hard and unexpectedly, rupturing his appendix; he died in Detroit on October 31, 1926, Halloween, of peritonitis.

Having escaped from every known confinement, Houdini was trapped and done in by aggressive stupidity. His greatness was destroyed by a momentary lapse of vigilance. (As a native Montrealer, it grieves and embarrasses me to relate the tale.)

We often point out that no addict, however long clean, becomes immune to the possibility of relapse;

we have but a daily reprieve. We are sometimes shocked at how quickly the disease arises when provoked by anger, negativity, self-will, ill health, isolation, and of course, drugs. It seems as though the sheer weight of low and heavy things can drag us down easily if we are not strongly vigilant and God-centered. And just as it is easier to stay clean than to get clean, so it is easier to stay serene than to get serene; to be wise than to become wise.

Similarly, innocence and trust, once lost, are not regained easily or automatically. This is especially worth considering by those in service. Over the years, addicts in all levels of service, (from first-time sponsor to grand-lord-high-muckily-muck,) have acted out as addicts do. Having made a mistake, and having been called on it, they tried to cover it up -- or justify it -- or paint those who criticized them as "traitors" trying to "tear NA apart." Then, rather than humbly making amends, they struck back defensively. For once they had created this false structure of pretense, they not only had to defend it, but they also had to attack those who were trying to expose it.

Then they had to make wrong into right in their own minds, to justify themselves internally. And when others, whether sponsees or opponents, saw this ugly transformation and drew back, or tried to tell the emperor to cover his nakedness, they were called appeasers and worse.

Those who tried to make peace and heal divisions, were called sellouts and worse. It is always painful to watch someone we love to develop a blind spot of insanity; we are less apt to trust their judgment afterward.

Sadly, the blind spot tends to grow; it can consume our whole mind and recovery, like a moral cancer. Of course, this stuff goes on in families, in politics, in various organizations, even in religious bodies. But it is particularly vicious when addicts do it, because we're so good at it; and it's particularly dangerous for us, because it endangers the whole structure of our recovery and spirituality. And once knocked down and smashed, spirit-centeredness and conscious contact don't just re-coalesce or reassemble; they must be rebuilt.

And yes, all this has happened on both sides of every issue; though those who possess the gavel, the treasury, the press and the phone lines are inherently capable of more mischief and denial in a "service war" than those who stand by powerlessly.

Yet what addict, busy both in service and in service warfare, has time to reconstruct the edifice of spiritual self-awareness? What addict living a lie can afford to admit it -- especially when their sponsors and others they love have been living the same lie? Rage, deceit, pretense, plotting and scheming, name-calling and character-assassination, political intrigue, and hardball -- all these are

so much a part of the addictive nature, that we easily may slip into these acts like a foot into a well-worn shoe. We usually don't even see it happening. The ones who do see it are often the ones we think are "enemies." So "obviously" they must have biased and wicked motives for offering us correction. If you're in service long enough, you'll see it all, including the display of addicts in full-circle denial, calling their vicious schemes "spiritual," and calling the efforts of others to talk them out of it "sick." Never underestimate the "lower power" of the disease of addiction.

Even many years into recovery, even having done everything in service, even having worked AND taught the Steps and Traditions, we recovering addicts are all still vulnerable to the sneaky influence of our disease, and to the denial that we are sliding into its clutches. Addicts can slip in and out of the disease seamlessly, ten times in five minutes; Sibyl has nothing on us.

Though working a rigorous, vigorous, vigilant program helps to forearm us against the disease's influence, none of us attain perfect immunity. The delicate structure, the still small voice, the inner poise and the humble grace -- all can be smashed like a vase on an anvil against the insistence of the disease: "I am right; they are wrong. And I can justify any bad behavior for the sake of truth and justice!"

There is a way out of this, of course.

(No, it's not "Never get into service!" <g> That's like saying "Don't get involved in life.") It's called "Working the Steps." Especially admitting our wrongs and making amends. Whenever we see ourselves getting bent out of shape, losing our serenity and reviling others for their folly, we need to know and remember that such loss of balance can't be God's will. When we find ourselves hating others or telling stories about them; when we are ready to say or do things that damage or poison others' reputations, plot against them or falsely accuse them of plots; when we feel like all our problems are due to someone else, and if they'd only disappear we'd be free of our problems -- we need to know and remember the principle of anonymity, and the urgent need to place principles before personalities, lest we destroy ourselves in aiming to destroy others.

Occasionally others try to draw me into litanies of complaint about others and their wrongdoings. A few times I've gotten sucked in, to my great remorse; but rather than join in a chorus of "Isn't it awful," I usually point out that there has been enough addiction to go around. I know what others have done or been accused of doing; having to live with their anger and misery is already a great punishment; what's more important is what we have done to each other. All of us, on all sides of every issue, who have injected cruelty, thoughtlessness, meanness, and vengeance into our

structure, have done a great wrong -- not just to their opponents, but to the fellowship and to themselves. All

of us need to make a collective amends and participate in a collective cleansing. If we don't, the venom will just keep circulating until the whole body of NA is poisonous and weakened.

All of us must come to pledge to ourselves, to God and to each other, "This vicious cycle ends here, with me." I propose an annual day of prayer and fasting. (It could be New Year's Day, in commemoration of past blow-outs!) We need to atone for the "sins of service" that all of us have, at one time or another, slid into and never had the courage and wisdom to admit and rise above. Even the mean-spirited and snotty posts online, designed not to illuminate but to embarrass and humiliate, have been service sins. Even inferring indirectly that those who hold peculiar views are hopeless orons, rather than simply saying "I respectfully disagree," has helped to lower the immune-response and raise the blood pressure of our recovering community. Even my angered and outraged replies to angry and unnecessary put-downs, has contributed to the general level of anger, which I greatly regret and for which I apologize.

In spreading disease, we all get a little sicker. Likewise, in spreading recovery, we all get a little healthier. If we can only restrain ourselves from

attacking others, or even just replying angrily, we might arouse more - light and less heat. Even when we know we are right and another is wrong, we need to put ourselves in their shoes, and correct them as gently as if our own feelings and public respect were on the line. And until we have true God-understanding, total command of the power of miracles and 12 guys following us everywhere, we ought never be so doggone sure that we know the whole truth, anyway! A little humility goes a long way in keeping things peaceful.

It is important for us to remember that our spirituality is fragile. A little denial, a little dishonesty, a little thoughtless cruelty, are often all it takes to switch off the connection and hide our souls from the light. Before we know it, we can be in a world of trouble and pain, and afraid to admit that we've lost it. But service need not lead to moral or spiritual collapse. If we admit ahead of time that we are mortal, vulnerable and susceptible, we may brace ourselves spiritually, arm ourselves with love, humility, and the support of others, and become entirely ready to deal with the inevitable friction of daily reality with humor and with God's help. Since ALL have fallen short of divine wisdom and perfect grace, perhaps the best place to make our mutual amends is in the circle of recovery. It won't be easy to be restored to sanity, especially when we've been pretending to be sane! But if we all come together,

asking each other's pardon and God's assistance,

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: South Miami FL, USA

So, I Can Breathe Again.

So, I Can Breathe Again.

*I remember when would pray like I had
somewhere to be*

All that I had was insanity.

Eventually the time came,

where I just wanted to shout out in pain.

I had no clue,

I didn't know what to do.

I took some time,

and made up this rhyme.

*To remind me to invite God in, so I can
breathe again.*

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: Nebraska

Recovery Is a Process

Recovery Is a Process the cornerstone of our recovery, we must always remember that we are much like that blade of grass we too can only grow as much as we can in a 24-hour period of time. We can enhance that by using our sponsor in living in with the principles of Narcotics Anonymous. The NA way of life will show us how to live and within each of our principles, lays a spiritual truth that will guide us on our journey. With hope and freedom, we get to live this journey today not just exist. Yes, we will fall short, we will have to face life on life's terms. We allow ourselves to be human, as we will face our fears. We will even become disappointed at times even thinking that this is way too much. Remember we cannot resolve our difficulties with the same thinking that produced them, what I cannot do alone we can do together. NA is a We program trust in sponsorship it works. We must lay down those old tools that we learn from our using days, and those old ideas and attitudes must go, we must pick up our principles and that attitude of gratitude while practicing the NA way of life in all our affairs.

We allow ourselves to experience life, as today, we have the tools in which we will need to continue our journey. When faced with our trials we allow ourselves the opportunity to feel what they will bring, we may find ourselves angry or even scared,

we are allowed to have these feelings, we may even allow ourselves to cry but we must always watch our reactions to our feelings. Always remember that what I feel right now will not be what I feel an hour from now. Never base your decisions on your feelings for what you feel right now will change. We must never give up five minutes before the miracle of recovery happens to us after all, we are lovable, worthy, and deserving of lives most wonderful and beautiful treasures, along with all of those that await our arrival as more will be revealed as our spirit continues to grow and mature in the light.

You may not see it today or tomorrow, but you will look back in a few years and absolutely be amazed at how every little thing added up and brought you to this time and place. Recovery has blessed us with hope and freedom, no longer are we left in the darkness of our addiction. The path that we have been walking has allowed us to experience that in which we could have never believed to be possible for today we are walking in the light, no longer blinded by our fears as we are being set free. I am not always sure where I am going on this journey, but I know it is somewhere wonderful or where I always wanted to be, far from the darkness of my past for what was, is no more. I am convinced that you like me will be grateful that things did not work out the way we once wanted them to, on that path of self-righteousness and

self-will. For this, I know that God's plans for me truly are better than anything that I could ever come up with.

Just for today, I will continue to live the NA way of life, believing in that in which I cannot see but I get to experience it every day. For today, I am living in that state of freedom. I get to see it in others as they grow and mature, yes, our principles do work but like always, the benefits are based upon our willingness to practice and to incorporate them as our way of life.

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: Michigan, USA

God Showed Up

A couple of months ago two members of our Home Group and a close friend were asked to speak at an event about an hour away from our town. I had to work that day, so I met them all there as soon as I was off. I remember on my way there feeling relieved that I wasn't asked to speak. I would have done it if I was asked, but I didn't feel too good about the last time I shared. I struggle a lot with talking in general. It took me two years of coming to NA meetings to start sharing in meetings regularly. The last time I was asked to speak, fear really got in the way. I tried my best not to think about it until the day of the event and to trust God

but when it was time to speak, I felt frozen. I spoke for about 15 minutes and just kind of froze up. So, when I say that I was relieved to not speak at the next event I'm saying that my will wanted to not experience that fear and feeling of failure all over again. I felt that I was doomed to repeat it.

The event that my fellow Home Group members were speaking at started at 6PM and ended at 9. I left from work and got there at 7:30. When I got there, I was pleased to see that there was a good turnout and also that I hadn't missed much. They started the speakers late, so I caught half of one share and all of another. The last speaker was a member that I am very close to, and I know that she had a lot of fear going into it. It was her first time speaking at an event like that and I knew that it was something that was way outside of her comfort zone. We have struggled a lot in dealing with other members and groups in our locality because of being a closed meeting, using historical literature and carrying the message of complete and total abstinence from all drugs. It can be very intimidating and risky to put ourselves out there and speak at events like this but when NA asks something of us, we say yes. Not only did she do it, but she also knocked it out of the park. I was so happy and grateful to be there and to be a part of our Home Group. I could feel the spirit of God in the room and all of the sudden the impossible became possible. It was

as if all negative thought left my mind, and I was energized by the experience. I had to work the next morning at 6:30AM and didn't get to sleep until 2. I didn't care I felt great.

Before we left the facility that night a friend of ours that I've known my whole time in NA came up to me and asked if I would speak at his Home Group in a couple of weeks. I immediately said yes, even though my instinct was to try to get out of doing it. I looked at a copy of my work schedule that I keep in my wallet, and I had the day off, so I had no excuse. Of course, it would work out that I got asked to speak right after I was just thinking how grateful I felt that I wasn't asked that time. I believe that was God working because if it was up to me, I never would have spoken again.

The next say at work it dawned on me that I looked at my schedule from 2021 and they date that I was asked to speak was actually 2022. I looked at the new 2022 schedule and I was scheduled to work. I figured I would call him on my break and see if I could reschedule but I really didn't want to do that. I told him yes so, I wanted to do whatever I could to show up. Since it was a new year coming up, I had new personal days that I could use so I decided to just take the day off of work. I remember thinking to myself that not so long ago I would have used that for an excuse to not go. This must be a sign of growth.

I had a couple of weeks until the

meeting and did not think about what I was going to share much. The first time I was asked I obsessed about it until the day of. I was trying to plan out what I was going to share and the minute I opened up my mouth it all went out the window. I did not want to do that again. This time I looked at it as an act of faith. I wouldn't plan what I was going to say, I would just show up and try my best to trust God to give me the words. I didn't want to live with fear and anxiety and drive myself crazy over something I had no control over.

The day finally came that I had to speak, and that day is when the fear kicked in. I remember struggling to write that day or focus on anything because I was so preoccupied with the fact that in a few short hours I would be at an open meeting that doesn't read historical literature sharing my experience strength and hope on NA recovery. I was terrified of what could happen based on bad experiences I have had at those meetings, and I didn't want to be in conflict. That day there was something in the Gray Book Reflection for Jan 2 that said: The Power we are now asking for is the Power to walk the walk, to attract others to recovery and to keep us growing. This is not the first time that our literature has said what I was hoping for but failed to find the words. I was asked to carry the message and that was what I was planning on doing.

We got to the facility about a half

hour early and no one was there. We sat in the car and waited for a while. My mind was obsessing over the details of what would happen. How many people would be there? Hopefully it would be a small meeting. This was what I wanted. My will wanted no one to show up or for it to be a small meeting because I live in self-centered fear by default. Finally, a car pulled in about ten minutes before the meeting started and we went inside. There was actually already someone in the facility that had the meeting set up so already, but we didn't know. I remember people talking to me, but I was so nervous that I really couldn't pay attention. Suddenly, the room started to fill up with addicts and the room was full. The meeting started and I couldn't listen to any of the readings. I felt like what I was being asked to do was impossible. Then, the chairperson introduced me, and it was time for was I had been fearing. I started off by stating that I was really nervous and asked everyone to join me in a moment of silence to I could pray to get out of the way and hopeful God would take over.

I don't really remember much after that. I started to speak but it was if I was blacked out. All of the sudden it was if I came to and my mind was blank. I tried to talk some more but I had nothing else to say so at that point I ended it. I felt very strange after that. Vulnerable and doubting myself. I couldn't remember what I said so I was worried that I left certain things

out that needed said to carry a clear message. I was sure that I pissed everyone in the room off with what I said so I was preparing for backlash, but then the unthinkable happened. The chairperson opened the floor for sharing and one by one addicts started sharing about how much they could relate to what I was sharing. They shared about their experiences with taking prescribed drugs and how it didn't work for them. They said all of these positive and nice things about how grateful they were to be there that night and heard what they needed to hear. I felt the spirit of God enter the room and could feel extreme empathy. I felt hope. How could this be? I thought for sure that this situation would be a disaster based on my past experiences.

After the meeting several addicts came up to me and hugged me and thanked me for sharing, I could see the smiles on their faces and the sincerity in their eyes. Everything

went so much better than I ever could have planned. I can't fully describe the feeling of freedom that I felt on our way home. I felt peace and hope. The impossible felt possible. I felt that there was hope for the fellowship if we can just get out of the way and trust God. We made better bonds with addicts we had known for a while and new bonds with addicts we had just met. We had some come to experience our meeting firsthand last night and it was a great experience. This whole situation shows me how screwed and defective my thinking is. It showed me the insanity of my disease and how it only sees destruction and negativity because it can build on that and overwhelm me until I use to try and escape the pain. We have to put ourselves out there and take that leap of faith and God will show up.

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: Ohio

"For people who claim membership of a Fellowship based on complete abstinence, I've never met so many people that get so offended by the mere mention of it."

Written by an anonymous addicts from Ohio

Clean and Serene

Clean and Serene

*Calm and quiet in the head.
long lasting peace in the heart.
Empathy for the like-minded.
Asking for help when needed.
Never alone.*

*Always looking at the positive.
No resentments anymore.
Dreams becoming reality.*

*Surrender to the path
of recovery.*

End of the struggle.

Respect for others.

Experiencing love.

Nourishment of the body.

End of pain.

Clean and Serene.

**Written: By an Anonymous
Addict From: THE
Netherlands**

We Travel a Journey, Perhaps Life on Life's Terms

We travel a journey, perhaps life on life's terms will have extreme effects upon us at some point. We must always realize that we must never walk in the darkness of addiction, and it is the choices that we make during these most difficult times and even in those times of our greatest success that these choices will make a difference and what our future will look like. We must always continue to practice our twelve steps and twelve traditions in all of our affairs not just when it's convenient, not just when we're in pain but in all of our affairs. We must live the NA way of life not the modified version of our self-will, but the version in which are basic text talks about. We must always look for gratitude like our gratitude slogan states, not to mention our third step prayer, after all, did not we say, take my will and my life guide me in my recovery and show me how to live.

This I know and have heard it said that you cannot see yourself when you are the person in the frame, we must step back and let go of our pride and let others help us see the truth. Beware of the stories that you tell yourself. Remember life is everything that happens to us from the time we awaken until the time we go to bed. It is filled with beauty and so much love, our will is our reaction to

everything that happens to us. Let not will interfere with that of God's for truly this is a recipe for misery. A wonderful man has told me many times that God's plans for me truly are better than anything that I could ever come up with. He also shared that pain is not from changes that happened in my life journey, rather my pain is a result of my resistance and the stories that I tell myself. We must continue to practice acceptance, surrender, and make it the Cornerstone of our walk in this journey.

For this, I know that in the times to come none of this will matter it will not matter what kind of car I drove. What kind of house I lived in. How much I had in the bank, but what will matter are the stories that will be told about me by my great-grandchildren and the impact that I brought to the family. Not to mention the stories that my sponsee's along with the impact I have on them and their families. We can learn to become content with or without many of the materialistic things that I place way too much value on. Perhaps I place too much value even on what life brings my way, maybe it just is not all that important, maybe what is important is that I continue to find acceptance and surrender. That I continue to believe in that in which I cannot see but yet I have gratitude for all the gifts and all the beauty that it is brought into my life. Perhaps it is the stories I am telling myself today versus those that I told when I came into this program. Perhaps it is the

smiles I see on people's faces, you know the light in your eyes, your smile tells others that you are a caring and sharing person.

Just for today, Always know that you are appreciated and cared for, always move forward never settling for good enough when we know that there is more to be gained for the best is still waiting for your arrival. There are far more gifts than you could ever imagine have a peaceful day and may God of your understanding continue to bless you and your families, may he continue to bless your recovery and continue to provide you with your needs keeping you safe and secure always giving you the courage and the perseverance to keep moving forward in your recovery.

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: Michigan

FROM SELF CONSCIOUS TO GOD CONSCIENCE

We came into NA totally self-absorbed. We were so full of ourselves there was not room for anything else. This kept us isolated and apart from the rest of society and even the human race. Many of us constantly thought that others were talking about us or we went to the other extreme and felt no one cared. We created our own self-made prison that was impossible for us to escape from on our own will.

Time and time again many of us tried. We thought the key could be found in medicine, religion or psychiatry but found there were no answers for us that we could use. So, we sought out others like us that said they had found a way to dig out of the hole of despair we had placed ourselves in. First, we had to get past the idea that the world revolved around us. We had to come to an understanding that we have a disease and that we needed to quit living the way we were if we ever wanted to find any relief. Once we could see our disease exactly for what it is we were ready for Surrender to something greater than ourselves that could restore us to sanity. We started to see it may be possible for us to recover. Many of us got frustrated as it wasn't happening overnight. We wanted our fix and we wanted it now. That is how the drugs worked for us for a while before the quit working. Some questioned why our lives were not fixed just like that. Eventually after time we began to see this program worked for others that faced the same issues we were dealing with. They did not sugar coat things by telling us everything was going to be better. Instead, they shared honestly that life has its ups and downs but recovery helps them to be able to live. Accepting life as it is changed much for many of us as we grew to understand that the insanity, we were living in does not have to continue if we took action. Once we became willing and started taking

action we started to live. For some of us this may have been the first time we ever felt alive. We could feel pain, joy, excitement, etc. and it was real. We had covered up our feelings with drugs for so long this was a new experience for many of us. We continued, on a road with the rest of the Steps and Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous leading us up a path to a spiritual experience we did not expect when we came to NA. We started to care for our fellow humans like we had not before. We were able to feel empathy for others as we could feel their pain when they hurt. We could also feel their pain when they were joyful. We became a part of rather than apart from like we had been for so many years. As time goes by if we stay on the right path, we begin to see how living for ourselves only caused us grief and sorrow. It caused us to hold onto resentments, anger, and self-pity rather than actually living. Letting go and giving our pain to a GP changed all of that. We may not understand how not living for self is what we needed, but we can see it in our lives. The more we try to satisfy ourselves with ego building things such as money, property and prestige the more we hurt. We learn to live for something bigger than ourselves and this consciousness sets us free from our self-made prison. It is the key. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those Steps we then sought to carry OUR message to addicts and to practice these prin-

principles in all our affairs. These principles meaning our Traditions. We learn how to have a conscience that is not based on our own self will but is based in principles that have been tried and true. By doing this we form a bond with other addicts that truly understand WE care for one another. We help each other through difficult times and celebrate the happy times together also. We seek to know what God's will for us in all our affairs rather than what we want. We found our spiritual solution for our spiritual dilemma!!

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: Nebraska, USA

Our Pain Has a Greater Purpose

When we first come to NA, we have lived for so long on the side of suffering it is the pain that led us to the 12 steps and to surrender to God our pain has a greater purpose we no longer are able to cover up our emotions we are at the end of the road our diseases causes more and more pain. If we can see the purpose behind the pain, we can find the way out of this lie. If we can see the purpose beyond the pain, we will understand God's ability to leverage the suffering in our lives for greater things as we learn to live each of the 12 steps and the NA way of life. If we are suffering it will not just go away if

we are not willing to walk the journey we are on, this does not mean that we will not have trouble and bumps on our journey. Hard times have the capacity to deepen our faith and the faith of those around you we are not alone in the Fellowship of NA. Addiction humbles us and forces us to pay attention to it. We have reached that the last place we wanted to surrender is new and we fought to the end. The world we live in does not work any longer. Greed and violence and the war inside of us and deception are everywhere, and we no longer get away from the constant cycle of the sickness of our soul, poverty, and death. these evil forces that surround our world of addiction must be broken. And how God does that is found in the 12 steps and in the Fellowship of NA God comforts us in all our troubles When we are going through pain, we can choose to focus on us or on other people. When we choose to focus on serving other hurting people, it is our pain. No matter what pain we have gone through, God wants to redeem our suffering. He does not want it to be wasted! He wants to use it to help other people when they are in pain. Who is better qualified to help a struggling Addict than another struggling Addict? Who could better help someone who is suffering from a chronic illness than someone who has also suffered in the same way? our greatest form of service will come out of our deepest pain we have been there and

understand. Sharing your strengths does not make you feel any closer to someone. But when you share the experiences that have led you to surrender to God and rely on his strength, then you will be connected to others more deeply than you can imagine. As broken person we share with other broken people how God has restored us, sharing your pain helps us and the people around us to grow. Using your pain to serve others is a form of surrender. We cannot waste our pain. We have to let God use it simply meaning that billions of addicts can accomplish unimaginable good in this world for the glory of God when we understand that God wants to use us in his plan. When it comes to suffering, sometimes the way we overcome is to endure simply, humbly, and faithfully. When we have come to the end of the road we need to cry out to God in confusion, pain, and anger, while maintaining the faith to keep calling, to keep weeping, to keep reaching out in hope and trust.

In This Moment: we will walk through the pain that life has, as we grow with the 12 steps and the help of our God

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: North Carolina, USA

Carrying a Load

Since I have been clean, I have gone through a few sponsors. When I first gotten clean, I had asked a man to sponsor me, and I believe he knew the only reason he could not have done it because his expiration in life was coming close. I met him in June of 2016, and he passed away clean 6 Months later; he had 52 years clean at that time.

He would share stories with me about how Jimmy K told him his two years in prison didn't count. I told him he had 54 years, but he kept telling me, "No I have 52 years, yes I was abstinent for 54 years, but I didn't surrender to the program of NA while in prison, it wasn't until I had gotten out of prison when Jimmy took me to a meeting is when I surrendered."

In a way he sponsored me for those six months. He taught me what total abstinence means but he never took me through the steps.

I eventually found a new sponsor, and this lasted for a few weeks maybe, I don't really count it as anything.

I ended up moving to Ohio after my short stay in California, and revisiting home in NJ.

When I got to Ohio, I went to a town called Middletown Oh. I started regularly attending every meeting there was in town. We had six meetings in that town.

I attended a meeting on a Wednesday night where many members

there seemed to have been around the program for a while.

One addict was someone who I was told by a friend that would make a good sponsor. I asked him and he looked me up and down and said sorry he's kind of full.

A woman walked down the stairs after that, I had just seen her tricking on the block earlier that week. He must of known her.

She approached him and said she wanted to get clean and asked him to sponsor her. He immediately didn't hesitate to say yes.

It felt wrong after I saw that. I kept thinking to myself she's about to get 13th stepped, because his motives just seemed wrong.

I asked another addict and he said he would.

He asked me if I had a SWG and a Sixth Edition Basic Text. He told me to go home read step one and answer the questions out of the book.

The following Wednesday I came up to him with my writings. He said let's go over it tomorrow on the way to another meeting. We sat in a parking lot and went over, Step One.

Inside that guide it asked if I had ever harmed another human being. I wrote pages on how I had hurt people physically. The whole time I was sharing this stuff with this addict he kept saying "He's a bad kid." I felt embarrassed, ashamed, guilty. I wanted to turn myself in, I felt like I belonged in prison after that.

He shared minimum of his own

experience with me. He told me to move on with Step Two.

Once again, I finished my writings, and we were sitting in a parking lot looking at all the insane stuff I did in my active addiction.

I always felt like a piece of shit after we were done. Like I had been violated.

This went on to the Fourth Step. I had finished my writing, but I had planned on going over it after I had gotten home from my first FSC.

About a week before the FSC I was told I was being harmful to other members and that my network that I associated with was destroying the Fellowship.

I was told I could not print literature by this addict, that I couldn't even print a meeting list.



I was told that total abstinence only meant street drugs and I shouldn't share about my experience with coming off of all drugs. He told me that Suboxone was a useful tool for an addict's detox. He told me that signing verification papers was a service we provided. He told me that all NA meetings should be open meetings and that conventions were great places to go, hang out, and carry the message.

I had just finished being the co-programming chair for the Ohio Regional Traditions Retreat where I met my new friends.

I was told by the local areas that I had caused disunity there by asking those "Baby Blue" addicts to come out.

Many people were trying to back me into a corner and just be submissive to the NAWS inc ways.

I attended the conference and on the way home I texted my sponsor at that time. I didn't like the idea of texting and I believe I even asked another addict to send the text to him. I was "dumping" him. I told the three addicts in that car on the way home, someone here is going to sponsor me.

When I got home the whole area turned their backs on me. Many people didn't want to talk to me before the meetings, after the meetings, and they would talk over me during the meetings. I knew if I stayed, I was going to eventually die.

Our plan was to start a meeting

in Lebanon Ohio (at the library) on Wednesday nights. It was going to be a closed meeting that didn't verify attendance documents and we were going to study the Grey Book for two hours long.

When I got home from the conference, I found out that the man that I had asked me to sponsor when I first got there was trying to take the girl, I was seeing at the time out on a date. He had asked her every time I had left our apartment to go do service work.

She eventually went back to using that weekend and we parted ways. I was living in a hotel when I picked up the phone and called one of the addicts from that trip to Hamburg.

I told him change of plans I can't survive out here, but Maysville Kentucky seems like a nice place to get my spirit back together.

I stayed in the hotel for about a week and called this addict multiple times a day, sometimes for hours.

From my first thought when I entered that hotel I wanted to jump in front of a truck, I felt defeated, but this addict made sure that I was going to have a second chance.

I went to Maysville and went to every meeting there. They were all Baby Blue and Grey Book meetings. My first job that God provided me was to help this newcomer detox and we did this in his home. The boy was coming off of a lot of drugs, and his mother had asked me to "baby sit". She provided the food and the bed

for me as I hung out with her addict son for the next few weeks.

I eventually landed in a place that I called home for the next few months. The addict that had helped me get out of Ohio was going to sponsor me for the next few years.

This addict taught me about Public Information. He elected me to be Public Information chair for the Unity Area in Maysville Ky where I served the area for a few months.

I finally felt a part of something. I found a Home Group that studied the Grey Book. I started working in a small restaurant where I found my passion for cooking.

Each day I would go to work, and when I got done, I would make sure all the literature racks around town were nice and tidy.

From the jail to the court houses I would make my round trips.

Eventually I had made my way home back to NJ. I found a man that was traveling for work in Pittsburgh PA. I took a ride with this stranger to Pittsburgh then I hopped on a bus to NJ. My sponsor and I stayed in touch every day and I was still writing on steps.

Eventually we started to grow distant. I ended up getting in a relationship, having children, and life just started becoming full.

It seemed more practical to have a sponsor that was closer to me. An addict was regularly attending our meeting here in NJ. He had been traveling from PA to NJ every Tues-

day.

Most of the time it was him and I in the room, talking about recovery.

I asked him to sponsor me one day, as I had seem to grow apart through distance of my former sponsor. The problem was my former sponsor wasn't aware of what was happening.

I felt guilty & ashamed for how he was going to handle this. He was one of the only addicts that had helped me get to where I was in a hard period of my recovery.

I always remain grateful for that addict, and it hurt me to let go of that.

I didn't want to text him or call him about the situation so most of our calls were remaining short.

It always felt like a ton of bricks on my shoulders. I finally this weekend was able to sit down with this addict. I approached him slowly as I wasn't sure how I was going to say it. I didn't want to offend him because I love this addict very much.

I just came out and said it. Gave him a hug and he told me he's just happy to see that I'm still engaged with the program. Many addicts he had sponsored came and went, show up only on their "celebrations" and just take everything but do not give back. We can only keep what we have by giving it away.

At the end of the day, I'm convinced that sometimes we end up sponsoring each other. We show each other how the program works, how to apply principles.

I never really liked the labels of sponsor & sponsee; although I have a sponsor today and he is showing me how to apply principles in my life.

This addict is my friend, no different than my former sponsor is my friend.

We are equals. As I treat them equally. I love my friends and they show me how to live.

I am grateful that God provided me that time to sit down with my friend and share with him about this weight I had been carrying. I am grateful that he still believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery.

I am learning that we can get much more out of relationships when we are honest. When we care and when we share with others. Not through a text but sitting down face to face and with a loving hug. Being there for our fellow addicts and being in their lives.

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: South New Jersey, USA

My trip to the Baltics and Russia

This article reprinted from the December 1993 Cambridge NA New Attitudes. Portions in bold relate to translations and were conspicuously absent in a version printed by The NA Way, April 1994. The NA Way is an official organ of the World Service Office, Inc

My trip to the Baltics and Russia was wonderful, intense, emotional, sometimes upsetting, and full of growth. Before leaving the USA, I wrote to Daiva G. in Vilnius, and Sergey K. in Riga - these are both contacts that I got from WSO - and got letters back from them both. My first NA stop was in Cambridge, England to see my old sponsor there, and to hit a more-or-less familiar meeting before going into new territory. Next stop was in Vilnius, Lithuania, to see Daiva and any other NA members there. I spent many hours talking with Daiva about all sorts of things, program-related and otherwise, it was really a pretty intense interaction. I also ended up doing two H&I presentations, with Daiva translating, first at the Daytop treatment center, which recently opened in Vilnius, and then where Daiva works, in a detox ward for addicts in a hospital. (A few days ago, I was talking at a treatment center here, in Seattle on the monthly panel that I lead, and it was really nice to say that the month before I had been doing the same thing in Lithuania!) Daiva was a great translator-I could be looking at the person with whom I was talking, seeing and hearing the expressions and emotions - and language didn't feel like a big barrier. She was also really good about translating questions for the other person and then translating their reply, even when she knew the answer herself and could have left the other person out.

It turns out I was the first NA visitor there, although they've had a number of AA visitors previously. They were really glad to have the contact. There is one NA meeting a week in Vilnius, at Daytop. Daiva was unsure whether to register it as a regular NA meeting since it was at Daytop, but I told her that at least by my understanding it certainly was a regular NA meeting, since it is open to all addicts. We also talked about making it clear that it is not being affiliated with the Center. The fellowship there is small - 3 to 4 members in Vilnius, plus the group in Kaunas. (I didn't go to Kaunas, and

don't have info on that group, but Daiva says it's still going.) I also met another of the members, Sniezana R. She doesn't speak English, but I was told her Russian is excellent. Besides NA there is also AA and Al-Anon in Vilnius. Daiva is a regular at the AA meetings, she said. In addition to exporting the twelve step programs, the US has unfortunately also exported all the hassles about alcohol vs. other drugs. Daiva told me that for a while she was wondering about whether she was an alcoholic and could go to AA too, or whether she was just an addict. In this case,



an American AA member there told her about the only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. In places like Seattle, newcomers are often given the advice to stick with one program but in a place like Vilnius that would probably be bad advice, since Daiva would really be without much support. The way she got introduced to NA is that maybe 5 years ago an American who ran a chain of treatment centers in Florida took a bunch of Lithuanians over there and put them through his center. Daiva has translated some NA literature into Lithuanian, including a translation of the White Book. She said she sent a copy to WSO two years ago and got a reply saying "thanks, we'll get back to you" but didn't hear anything further. She also had 800 copies printed up! One thing that gives me some confidence in the translation is how good Daiva was as a translator when I was doing the H&I work. She also translated IP7, and the Basic Text (the latter by treating it as a job, working 8 hours a day over a summer). She has a printed copy of the Basic Text in Lithuanian-it was also on a computer disk, but when she left the job that had the computer, she didn't have enough money to buy the disk, and so they erased it!!! Next stop was Riga in Latvia. This visit was brief and with less interaction, although the fellowship seems to be doing OK there. I visited the Riga edition of Day top. There was one resident who showed me around the

place, I talked for a little with some other people there and left some more copies of the Russian literature. They started a weekly NA meeting a month ago, somewhere else in the city, which gets addicts both from Daytop and elsewhere. I didn't hear of any NA activity in Estonia. (Daiva said that she heard a doctor in Estonia say that Estonians didn't have a drug problem - it was a Russian problem, and the only problems in Estonia were due to Russians living there. Hmmmmm. Estonia certainly didn't seem immune to the problems of Western countries - I got hassled by skinheads there, for example.) I almost made contact with NA hi Helsinki - I made a quick trip over there to see a doctor about an eye infection (another story) - but the clinic gave me the wrong address for the meeting, and I couldn't find it. My last NA stop was in St. Petersburg, Russia. I met Lena S. at Pushkinskaya, the subway stops nearest the meeting (as in Pushkin the author - I got a kick out of going to subway stops named after Pushkin and Dostoevski), to go to an NA meeting the first night. There were three NA meetings a week at that time, but it will go down to two a week shortly because they are having trouble with the rent (at least I think that was the reason). There were about 8 addicts at the meeting - pretty much like a regular US meeting, except for being hi Russian (Lena quietly translated for me.) They had one of the new Russian translations, of the

“how to run a meeting” guide but had not received the other two. Also, they have a very poor-quality photocopy of New A Awakening -5- August-September 1 994 f£ from previous page a translation of the Basic Text. The next night we were maybe going to go to a hospital to do an H&I presentation, but it turned out the hospital was being emptied of addicts due to a diphtheria epidemic, and so we went to an AA meeting instead (maybe half the people at that meeting also go to NA). Lena said that NA got a big boost in St. Petersburg a couple of years ago when somebody in an AA meeting asked all the addicts to raise their hands; then the meeting voted to kick them out. (Addicts talked about drugs and other weird stuff,

they smoked too many cigarettes, they wanted their black tea too strong etc). This has since changed, and the addicts are back at the AA meetings as well [sic], particularly at one daily meeting (the one we went to). Nevertheless, NA is definitely alive as an independent fellowship. Lena said there were about 30 NA members in St. Petersburg. During the next two days I spent many hours with Lena, Vera T., another addict named Viktor, other addicts, various kids, it was definitely an immersion in Russian daily life. I ate at Viktor’s apartment, and at Vera’s house the next day, we did some sightseeing at the Hermitage and St. Isaac’s Cathedral, we talked and talked... again it was really pretty intense and emotional for me. Mostly really positive, although there were many sad things as well. (All three of them have huge financial and other difficulties, and just daily life in Russia is difficult. Despite all this, the three of them seemed reasonably happy, taking things one day at a time). The transitions were disorienting. One day I was in St. Petersburg in the rain, in a house with a leaky roof, almost in the countryside, playing with a 3-year-old named Alexi and listening to people talking in Russian in the next room, then I was sitting on a train eating black bread and drinking goat’s milk out of a jar, and then the next day I was back in Seattle.

Written: By an Anonymous Addict From: Unknow USA



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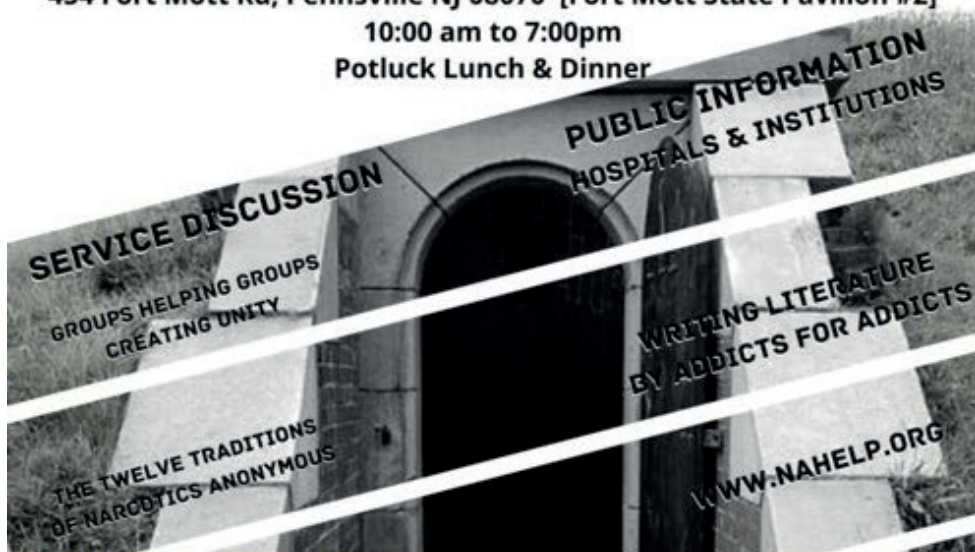
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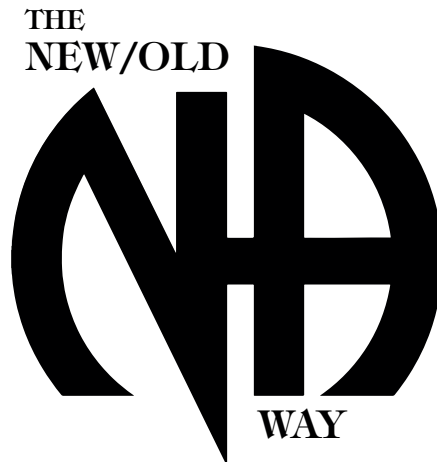
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