

In Times of Illness

Additional preparations/materials: Copies of *In Times of Illness, Revised*, and *SP NA Groups and Medication* for all participants. Note sheets and small group scenarios on tables.

Set-up	10 minutes
Part 1 – large group: working with our healthcare providers	20 minutes
Part 2 – small group: scenarios	40 minutes
Part 3 – large group: supporting members	15 minutes
Conclusion	5 minutes

Session set-up	10 minutes
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Purpose of session – to give attendees a basic understanding of what’s included in the newly revised *In Times of Illness* booklet and generate ideas for discussing *ITOI* locally and provide members with a resource to assist them with their decisions about medication.

Discuss the reasons for revising <i>ITOI</i>. Include these points:
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[Slide 2]

- *In Times of Illness* has been a resource for members experiencing illness and being prescribed medication since 1992.
- Our collective experience with illness and medication has broadened; members found that *ITOI* no longer met their needs.
- *ITOI* is not meant to be a substitute for professional medical advice or cover all possible medication-related scenarios.
- The piece is based on members’ experience, strength, and hope related to illness, injury, and medication in NA.

Describe the format of the booklet.
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The revised *In Times of Illness* booklet is a compilation of members’ experience, offering individual sections for the various situations members may face. Basic concepts are repetitive through the piece so members can get all they need from the section that is relevant for them.

[Slide 3] Table of Contents:

- Informing Our Healthcare Providers
- Medication in Recovery
- Mental Health Issues
- Emergency Care
- Chronic Illness
- Chronic Pain
- Terminal Illness
- Supporting Members with Illness

During the session we will discuss ideas and principles from a few of the sections above. The intended outcome is for everyone to have a basic understanding of what is contained in the booklet and to discuss some ideas about how we face various medical issues clean.

Part One – Informing Healthcare Providers	20 minutes
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Introduce Points from section in <i>ITOI</i>	5 minutes
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We are responsible for our recovery, but healthcare providers may administer our medical care. It is helpful to keep these roles clear when we interact with medical professionals.

[Slide 4] *ITOI* offers the following points that we may wish to tell our healthcare providers:

- Explain that abstinence from mind- or mood-altering medication is our goal in recovery.
- Consider and discuss alternative treatments and smaller doses when a prescription for mind-changing and mood-altering medication is offered.
- Take our sponsor or a trusted NA friend with us when we are going to the doctor.

Doctors vary in their knowledge of addiction, so we may offer more information and strive to be our own advocates.

Large Group Discussion	15 minutes
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[Slide 5] Ask the following questions, allowing various members around the room to offer their thoughts in response.

- What steps have we taken with healthcare providers?
- What kinds of questions can we ask of our doctors? (e.g., What do you know about twelve-step programs? Do you have experience treating recovering addicts? etc.)

Part Two – Small Group Discussions: Medication Scenarios	40 minutes
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Small group discussions	20 minutes
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[Slide 6] Divide the room into three small group sections; give members 20 minutes to discuss a scenario on a specific topic addressed by a section from *In Times of Illness*.

Scenario One: Medication and Recovery

A friend in my recovery support network is taking medication because of a sports injury. He is being very secretive with his pain medications and I have seen him nod off in meetings. I am worried. I do not know how I can help him. In fact the one time I asked him about having an addict help him monitor his medication he told me to mind my own business. This friend is also the H&I chair and has demonstrated a mood change – becomes angry easily and has no patience for discussions. I am worried.

1. What types of questions should members ask themselves in an inventory with medication?

2. What types of questions are helpful for sponsors/friends to ask of members taking medications?
3. What does our literature have to say that would apply to this type of situation and NA service?

Scenario Two: Mental Health Issues

I am aware that NA has no opinion on outside issues including medication, but I do feel that the integrity of the NA message of recovery is at stake in meetings and service committees. We have a home group member who is taking medication for a mental health diagnosis (by her admission bipolar). How do we, as her fellow home group members, help her to share how NA helped her without disclosing her medication in meetings and in her service commitment as a panel leader for an H&I meeting.

1. How can we support members with mental illness even if we have no experience?
2. How do we help members maintain the clarity of the NA message of recovery?
3. What does our literature have to say that would apply to this type of situation and NA service?

Scenario Three: Chronic Illness/Chronic Pain

I am an addict with over 20 years clean; a friend of mine is undergoing treatments for a chronic debilitating illness. This friend is taking pain medication as prescribed, and his friends and his sponsor are helping him with medication management. However, some home group members do not think he should share in meetings because the pain medication he is on is Methadone.

1. How is medication prescribed for chronic pain different from medication prescribed as drug replacement even though they are the same medication?
2. What can we do to help support members with chronic pain/chronic illness?

Small group feedback	20 minutes
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[Slide 7] Hear responses from each of the small groups. Encourage members to point to specific language from *In Times of Illness* when answering the questions, or to offer personal experiences where applicable.

Part Three – Supporting Members	15 minutes
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Introduce sections not discussed in small groups	5 minutes
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Some of the other sections in this booklet, on emergency care and terminal illness, offer some helpful information for members in other specific types of situations. These points are just a snapshot; there is additional information available in the sections found in the booklet.

[Slide 8] Emergency Care

- The foundation we have in recovery can be an asset during an acute event.
- Relying on others alleviates the fear and irrational thinking that come with isolation.

- The spiritual connection we have developed with a Higher Power helps guide our decisions and provides a source of strength.

[Slide 9] Terminal Illness

- We are living with a terminal illness in recovery. We accept the love of our NA friends in the here and now, without fear of tomorrow.
- Prayer and meditation are powerful tools. We prepare ourselves to handle the reality of our illness with all the spiritual strength and hope our recovery can provide.
- We avoid the tendency to judge ourselves harshly and don't allow ourselves to be isolated by feelings of fear and inadequacy. Judgment is not therapeutic, but empathy is.

Large Group Discussion	15 minutes
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[Slide 10] The final section from the booklet offers thoughts on Supporting Members with Illness.

- What can we do to support members dealing with illness or injury?

Conclusion	10 minutes
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Suggestions and further reading
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[Slide 11] Direct attention to the list of "Suggestions to Follow with Illness and Injury" and "Additional NA Material You May Wish to Read" in the back of *In Times of Illness*.

Encourage participants to let others know about the information available in this booklet, and thank everyone for their participation.