Contributing to our recovery

When we were in the depths of our active addiction, many of us gave little thought to how we could be responsible and self-supporting members of society. All we cared about was “getting and using and finding ways and means to get more.”

The only thing we had any desire to support was our addiction, and, more often than not, we went to great lengths to support it. We took whatever we could from our loved ones and society as a whole, just as our disease took whatever it could from us.

Eventually, after years of this exhausting tug-of-war, we ran out of the desire to take and had nothing left to give.

Today, as we grow in our recovery, we are beginning to learn the importance of self-support, not only as individuals, but also as members of the NA Fellowship. We start to understand that self-support goes much deeper than just dropping some money into the basket at a meeting.

We learn that when we give back what was so freely given to us, we gain more than we ever hoped. Whatever our contributions are, be they service as a trusted servant, as a sponsor, as a speaker, or as a member of our home group, we are given the opportunity to express our gratitude through action.

Our contributions to the group, and to NA, help to carry the message that recovery from addiction is possible and that “no addict seeking recovery need ever die.”

We hope you enjoy reading the stories in this issue. They are from members sharing their experience and strength as they find the hope our program offers through their own contributions.
The NA Way Magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. You are invited to share with the NA Fellowship in our quarterly international journal. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on NA matters, and feature items. All manuscripts submitted become the property of Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Subscription, editorial, and business services: PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099.

The NA Way Magazine presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The opinions expressed are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by Narcotics Anonymous, The NA Way, or Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

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Here’s your opportunity to give back what was so freely given to you!!! Help build the World Pool by sending in your service resume. Trusted servants for World Service projects and elections will come from this pool. Visit our website at www.na.org to access our interactive form. You can also reach us by letter, phone, or email.

The NA Way Magazine welcomes letters from all readers. Letters to the editor can respond to any article that has appeared in The NA Way, or can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. Letters should be no more than 250 words, and we reserve the right to edit. All letters must include a signature, valid address, and phone number. First name and last initial will be used as the signature line unless the writer requests anonymity.

The NA Way Magazine, published in English, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish, belongs to the members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission, therefore, is to provide each member with recovery and service information, as well as recovery-related entertainment, which speaks to current issues and events relevant to each of our members worldwide. In keeping with this mission, the editorial staff is dedicated to providing a magazine which is open to articles and features written by members from around the world, as well as providing current service and convention information. Foremost, the journal is dedicated to the celebration of our message of recovery—“that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.”
The money tradition?

To research this article I started out by looking in our Basic Text. However, after finishing the one short page devoted to this particular tradition, I was not satisfied that I received the whole picture. So, just as I have been encouraged to do in my personal recovery, as I write and apply the steps in my life, I dug deeper. I opened up If Works: How and Why to find out, for myself, the why of this tradition. I was astounded to find eleven pages on this tradition—the longest entry on any of the traditions.

Here is just some of what I have learned.

The Seventh Tradition states that “Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” The first few pages relate the reasons why we should decline funding from anything outside our NA membership—even so much as to depend on one particular member to fund a group. This is to give us freedom to carry our own message as a group, not as an extension of one individual.

In the beginning, meetings do not always start out independently capable of paying their own way. Sometimes these meetings get help from established NA groups or their local area committee.

Some people refer to this tradition as the “money tradition,” as stated on page 175 of If Works: How and Why. Maybe that is why so few people have taken the time to actually read about it. It seems money is a touchy area for some of us. This might be because, before we got here, some of us had a hard time keeping any.

Some of us associate this tradition of self-support with the funds we contribute individually into the basket. However, I believe the spirit of this tradition goes much further than that. Please bear with me a moment as I try to summarize the other eleven pages.

If Works states that the group should provide whatever its own needs are to fulfill its primary purpose. Every group starts with this basic need or purpose: to “carry the message to the addict who still suffers.” Without this, the group has no reason to exist.

Once this need is established, there are other needs which do cost money, such as rent and literature, and if the group so chooses, maybe coffee to offer a more relaxed atmosphere. After these things are in place, do we have any more needs?

Well, I have heard lots of controversy over the next few lines I have to write. Some of us even quote other traditions to back up our defiance. So many times I have heard that “each group should be autonomous,” and while this is valid and true, we cannot forget the rest of that quote: “except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.”

Yes, I am talking about supporting our own areas. Do you put a dollar in that basket when it is passed around? Does your dollar matter, and where does it go? It does not matter whether your group is new or whether it has been around for years. We hear it said at these meetings that the dollar goes to pay for rent, coffee, and literature, and the rest goes to the area, to the region, and on to the world, and then back around to us. So how does it come back to us?
Well, unlike the groups, our area is not self-supporting. It funds many committees that are vital for supporting the continuing influx of newcomers by helping the groups fulfill their primary purpose more effectively. Area service committees depend on group contributions for the money to fund these committees. We donate to the area, and in turn the area sends money on to the region and the region sends money on to the world.

The “trickle-down” theory we hear so often goes all the way back to the first thing I mentioned in this article. The area supports new meetings when they first start up by giving them needed materials and literature to get started, which in turn helps to fulfill the primary purpose of carrying the message to the addicts in that area. Also, the activities we attend and committees that serve our community—like Public Information and H&I—are funded by the money given to the area.

This is also true with the region and world. The money the area donates to the region pays for new literature, conventions, public information, and more. This money also greatly affects and improves public opinion, gives awareness to suffering addicts, gives us a voice and a vote, and directly affects the increasing number of members we have today in our individual and autonomous groups.

Think back to when you first heard of Narcotics Anonymous. Was it while in jail or an institution, or as an individual? We all got here from different sources, but someone helped us along the way by carrying that message to us.

So, before we are quick to say that the area or region or whoever does not deserve our money, or that the area or region is dictating to us, or whatever reason we may have for being afraid to put a dollar in the basket every once in a while, we should ask ourselves, “Do I really want to do this alone?” If it were not for the efforts of all of the above, in essence, that is where we would be.

The group is an essential part of this “trickle-down” thing. It starts and ends with each of us. To survive and grow, do we not need each other? I like the saying “Need a penny, take a penny; got a penny, leave a penny.” It sounds like good advice to me.

Lastly, It Works: How and Why discusses applying spiritual principles to strengthen our appreciation of this tradition. Here are some of those principles mentioned—anonymity, by giving without asking for recognition; our integrity, to do what is right; faith in a Higher Power to provide for us, individually and as groups; our sense of simplicity; acceptance of our responsibility to carry the message to newcomers that was so graciously given to us; and gratitude for what we have today. Together, all of these principles spell freedom for the group.

I learned so much from my research on this tradition. I hope you got something out of it as well. I feel that we often hear people share in a meeting about a certain tradition, and then, after a while, we believe whatever we hear. Before I came to NA, I did not believe anyone but me. Today, I have learned to listen to others, be open-minded, and take suggestions.

I still have a responsibility to read the literature given to me. It was created for a reason: to teach me. I cannot let others do all of the work for me. So I say, research what people say; do not take for granted that the Seventh Tradition is the “money tradition” until you read what the books have to say on the subject—or on any of the other traditions, either, for that matter. They all go hand in hand, and while reading them I have learned a lot more about spiritual principles, since each of the traditions is based on more than just one principle.

It has given me a lot of insight about why we read these at every meeting. I am a firm believer that you cannot grow spiritually unless you work the Twelve Steps. I have come to see how the same thing is true for groups regarding the traditions. The groups’ growth, survival, and spiritual atmosphere depend upon these traditions.

But, hey, don’t take my word for it. Pick up a Basic Text or a copy of It Works: How and Why today and find out for yourself!

Dana S, Tennessee
Self-support comes in so many forms.

I sometimes miss my old home group, which meets on Monday nights at 7:00 pm. Whenever I meet people in NA in all the places I go, I proudly tell them that the name of my old home group was “Grateful Heads,” and that it was the only Basic Text study in my hometown.

I remember when this meeting used to be in a church, and how it was struggling. When I went to other people and said it was dying, they told me, “Some meetings are supposed to die.” I did not think that was such a good idea, especially since the meeting had been around for some time before me.

So I went to other people and said, “We have to bring it back! We have to make it work again,” and I went to meetings announcing that my little home group needed support. I even went around to other meetings and asked people to come lead it. Then I asked them to get another member to come lead the meeting the next week.

Before we knew it, the meeting became a regular stop for many people who had some time in the program. They soon became the backbone of service in the meeting. These people had lots of time and did not have time to go to as many meetings as they once did.

I live in Colorado now, and I just found a meeting the other night outside Denver that is almost dead. I told another addict about the best home group in the world, the group I had once, which was almost dead at one time—just like this new meeting. Of course, since he was a product of the sixties, he loved the name “Grateful Heads,” and he was excited about the idea of a Basic Text study.

What I learned from this many years later is that NA meetings are exactly what we put into them. It does not take very much effort, and we get out exactly what we put in.

A few months ago I was in my old hometown, and I could not wait to get to the “Grateful Heads” group. I eagerly rushed over, only to find a room full of people I did not know. I terribly missed my old home group and all the people who attended when I left in 1996.

My hope is that the next time you or anyone you know walks into a meeting and finds that there are not enough people even to read all the readings, you pick up that barely smoldering torch and run with it. Please do not just walk away in frustration and think, “I have wasted my valuable time and gas coming here.” How quickly we forget all the times we searched the town for that next fix, and how we went to great lengths to get it.
Anyway, hello, hometown, the place where I got clean. I hope all is well. I will never forget any of you. You are my high-school graduating class, since I never had one. You are all my fellow alumni. You are my family, no matter how many differences we may have. I miss you all very much, and you will always be with me, wherever I go.

Now, carry the message, and whatever it takes, make sure it continues to be carried!

Robbie G, Colorado

Finding support in any language

Not too long ago a member from Wisconsin was visiting Lima, Peru, on a business trip. For three weeks, this member was unable to attend an NA meeting due to his workload. However, his need to stay in touch with addicts in recovery soon became overwhelming for him.

Even though he could not speak Spanish well, he was able to communicate with a local NA member through the NA helpline in Lima and learned about a meeting close to where he was staying. He left his apartment to catch a taxi to go to that meeting.

Lima has a population of approximately eight million people, a high percentage of whom work as taxi drivers. In spite of this, he had to wait a few minutes until he caught a taxi. Many of the taxicabs were occupied, and some simply did not stop. At last one stopped. He then showed the driver a piece of paper with the address of the meeting's location.

The driver was not familiar with this address, since it did not specify much. He actually did not have the slightest idea where this address was located, but he decided to try to find it. The driver did not want to miss the opportunity of making a run, and the NA member did not want to miss the opportunity to attend a meeting. He simply had to trust the driver.

On the way there, the driver asked for some type of location reference for the address, but the member did not know anything. He did not know the city very well, except for the route he took from his apartment to work and back every day.

The driver noticed the member's foreign accent and asked where he was from, why he was in Lima, if he liked the food, and how he liked the Peruvian women. The member began to feel more comfortable. The driver was somewhat loud but funny.

After a few quick turns, the driver concluded that these directions would not take them anywhere, so he decided to contact some friends who could possibly help him find this address. They arrived at the place where the taxi driver's friends were. The driver asked some questions. The address was very strange, and the language written on the paper was very confusing.

The driver went upstairs to look for someone who could give him better directions. Instead of waiting in the taxi, the member decided to go with the driver. They went upstairs and found a room full of people.

Suddenly the member felt his heart skip a beat. He smiled in disbelief. On the back wall, he noticed a big board with the NA logo. He realized that he had finally arrived at an NA meeting. After the meeting ended, they all laughed a lot about how the taxi driver, who had brought him to the meeting, was also an NA member.

Without a doubt, a loving and kind Higher Power drove that member to the place he loved. That loving and kind Higher Power used the driver to accomplish this task—especially if we consider that this driver, who is also an NA member, had not attended a meeting in a while.

We can find the support we all need as long as we do the footwork.

Once again, I have the chance to see that when it comes to recovery, we all speak the same language!

Fernando, Peru

Because of others

“An addict alone is in poor company.”

I remember this phrase from my first few meetings, but actually I have spent most of my recovery alone, physically isolated from other recovering addicts.

My name is George, and I am an addict. I thought there was no hope for me. While my journey of recovery has been different from many others, it has only been possible because of the help of other addicts.

I am an Anglophone Canadian working on a ship in Quebec. At times I can get to an English-speaking meeting in Montreal, but it is difficult with my schedule. I go to French-speaking meetings whenever I can, and even though I understand very little of what is said, it gives me incredible feelings of serenity, hope, and freedom. I cannot really explain it, but then again, I really do not have an explanation for my recovery.

I find the generosity of people in the program so overwhelming at times. One person has twice driven over 200 kilometers (approximately 125 miles) in order to take me to a meeting. Once, when I was working in a remote area of Ohio, a member offered to bring some people from Cleveland and have a meeting with me.

However, most of the time I cannot go to a meeting in any language. Sometimes, the feeling of anxiety can consume me. This new craving for the fellowship seems foreign to me, but I know I need the fellowship as I need oxygen or nourishment. Today I know it is the fellowship that has given me a chance at life.

I find my new life can often be strange. I feel as if I have just woken up from a coma, and I do not know where I am.

In those first few months of recovery, people would surround me and help to guide me through the confusion I had. I had a simple schedule: eight hours of work, four hours of sleep, and twelve hours spent with recovering addicts.

Today I have nine months clean, and I have not seen a recovering addict in two weeks. I am really craving a meet-
NA communities are invited to send photographs of their meeting places. We especially welcome photos that include meeting formats, recovery literature, posters, dirty coffee cups, and anything else that makes the meeting place look “lived in.” Sorry, we cannot use photos that identify NA members. Please tell us about your meeting, its name, the location and city, how long it has been in existence, and what your format consists of (speaker, participation, etc.).

This is the room where the group La Playa meets in Cartagena, Colombia. The name of the group means “the beach.” Meetings are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The group celebrated its first anniversary on 30 January 2003.
Primary Purpose

“There are many ways of doing things in Narcotics Anonymous. And just as all of us have our own individual personalities, so will your group develop its own identity, its own way of doing things, and its own special knack for carrying the NA message. That’s the way it should be. In NA we encourage unity, not uniformity.”

The Group Booklet, pg. 1

This is a column for you, about you, and by you. We invite you to share any challenges your group may have faced, how your group reached a solution, or its "special knack" that keeps you coming back!

The Seventh Tradition

This year, my sponsor and I have been studying the traditions. It is no coincidence that while we were working on the Seventh Tradition, two other members and I started a new meeting in our hometown. I saw, firsthand, the active spirit of this tradition from other members in our local NA community.

When we started this meeting, we had nothing. However, the word spread, and on the night of the first meeting we received literature along with a coffeepot from another meeting. Believe it or not, there were 34 people in attendance. The support we received was overwhelming. By the end of the month we had enough money to pay rent, purchase literature, donate money to the area that supports us, and set aside a prudent reserve.

Without the spirit of the Seventh Tradition, we would be struggling.

What I learned about the spirit of the Seventh Tradition—as I studied with my sponsor, and as I witnessed it in action—is that this tradition is not about money, but rather about the willingness to carry the message to other addicts. Supporting our new meeting, showing up on a weekly basis, and having financial responsibility reinforces for me that this program works. Our home group members have pitched in to help with setup, chairing the meeting, purchasing literature, and helping to clean up after the meeting.

We currently have twelve to fifteen members attending the meeting weekly, and we have six home group members. Last month, our area had a theme-basket auction for our holiday activity. We did a movie basket. Our home group members donated various items such as movies, candy, soda, snack food, and, of course, the basket. Our basket brought in 31 dollars for the area. I felt a sense of pride seeing this new group become part of our NA community and give back to the area that serves us.

Having the group fulfill its primary purpose is a collective effort from all the members, not just one individual. Seeing other members reach out and help us become self-supporting made me feel very grateful to this area and to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. It also increased my faith in my Higher Power.

I believe that, through self-support, the group has more freedom to carry the message of recovery to other addicts.

Diane P, Washington

A basketful

Several years ago, with a recent relapse and a horrible attitude on board, I threw a crumpled lotto ticket into the Seventh Tradition basket. These people were not about to get the last of my $7.55 in hard cash, but they could take the trash from the bottom of my purse.

Needless to say, my Higher Power has some sense of humor! I watched in complete surprise as the chairperson scratched the card and handed the ten-dollar winning ticket to the treasurer.

I sure hope that some day this will all come back around!

Amy K, Off the Wall Recovery Group, Colorado
During the weekend of 31 October through 2 November 2003, a group of addicts from North America will meet in Arizona to attend the Western Service Learning Days XVII. These addicts, referred to by some as "service junkies," will demonstrate a form of the Seventh Tradition that takes place so often we tend to take it for granted. They will take time out of their lives and leave the comforts of their home groups, areas, and families to support the NA service structure. These trusted servants’ primary purpose will be to learn, share, and pass along information as each discovers new ways of dealing with the daily struggles faced within the committees they serve.

Some of these addicts will pay their own way to attend, and others who attend will be directed and funded by their areas, their regions, or both. Regardless of how they come to this workshop, they will be striving to learn how to become more effective as trusted servants to the fellowship they serve.

Each will be dispatched to gather information to be shared with their respective committees when they return. Some will try to find out how committees in other regions perform their jobs. Others, perhaps, will try to find a renewed motivation to continue to serve in an area in which they have been doing service for a long time.

Still other trusted servants may want to get involved in a different field of service, or maybe they are new to the service structure and want to take this opportunity to learn from the experience of those who will be there. Whatever the reason these trusted servants attend, everyone will hopefully leave this workshop with a wealth of information and experiences to take back to their local NA communities.

The funding of trusted servants from the western regions and surrounding areas has been growing as the WSLD has matured over the last 16 years. Many members who have attended these events share about the enjoyable times spent with new friends who have, over the years, become long-term contacts not only for service work but for sharing rich experiences in recovery as well.

Everyone with whom I spoke about the WSLD thought that getting together with trusted servants from other regions was very important because these members have become or will become indispensable contacts in the future.

One of the ways NA is self-supporting is through members teaching other members about service. Another way is by the collective funding of our areas and regions for the cost of such teaching and learning opportunities. It is wonderful how an event like the WSLD can bring us together in this endeavor to be self-supporting in all areas of our lives—both in recovery and in service.

If you or someone you know would like more information regarding WSLD XVII in Phoenix, Arizona, USA, please visit our website at www.wsld.org.

Thank you for letting me be of service.

Rich B, Arizona
**Dear H&I Slim,**

I need some help with what I perceive to be a problem with H&I in an area within our region.

There are two institutions—one for men and one for women—that hold their own NA meetings. Inmates run the meetings, and they are not connected with H&I in any way.

In order to enter the institution you need to have a background check completed. The H&I chairperson from this area is going inside one of the institutions alone and under the name of Narcotics Anonymous. The member states that since the meeting is an independent institutional NA meeting, the policies found in the *Hospitals and Institutions Handbook*, i.e., “never go in alone and men with men, women with women,” are not applicable.

The Department of Corrections, for which the member works, has asked the member to no longer act in the capacity of a volunteer at the facility where they are employed.

I have been around long enough to know there is no magic wand. However, is there anything we should do when members choose to follow the handbook only when it suits their needs?

Thanks.

*A concerned member, Idaho*

**Dear Friend from Idaho,**

Your concerns seem to be those that are being voiced more often now that there are so many independent institutional NA groups/meetings. As you may know, there is a document, the *Institutional Group Guide*, that was created to serve as a group booklet for independent institutional NA groups/meetings.

There is a lot of background information that goes along with the creation of the *Group Guide*, but I do not have the time or space to share all of the details. Nonetheless, I do believe that during the development stages of the *Group Guide*, the issue of opposite-sex members attending independent meetings in a correctional setting was not taken into consideration.

Therefore, the person you spoke of is correct when they state that these groups are not a part of H&I, and hence they are not bound by H&I policies. However, whether it is an H&I meeting or an independent meeting, it is in a correctional setting, and I think the following would still apply, even more so if you are going into an opposite-sex facility alone.

Some facilities house only men or only women. Other facilities house both men and women, but keep them separate. In these facilities, where meetings consist of only men or only women, we feel strongly that only same-sex Narcotics Anonymous members should participate.

Remember our primary purpose is to carry a clear and consistent message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. Our purpose is not to make our meetings more popular with the addicts we are trying to help. Problems that arise in this area have the potential to seriously damage the credibility of Narcotics Anonymous. Experience has taught us that we can avoid these problems if we follow this simple guideline.

The other part of your concerns has left me somewhat confused. Is the other meeting you spoke of an H&I meeting, and the member attending a member of the H&I subcommittee, or is it another independent NA meeting? Of course, if it is an H&I meeting and the member is a member of the subcommittee, H&I policies should be followed consistently. If the meeting is similar to the other one, once again, H&I policies are not applicable.

Although there are no rules or guidelines that govern outside members attending independent institutional NA groups, I do believe the principles involved with H&I service are applicable, i.e., clearances, adhering to facility rules, not passing or taking contraband from inmates, and, I would think, the men-with-men, women-with-women principle as well.

In addition, attendance at those meetings is simply by an NA member’s choice, not the choice of Narcotics Anonymous. Nonetheless, if something happens, the facility may look at the individual NA member, but they will think of NA as a whole.

I know this is not a hard and fast answer, but if we allow the principles involved to guide us, things will happen the way they are supposed to happen.

*In loving service,*

H&I Slim
COME CELEBRATE THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF NA!

WORLD UNITY DAY
Saturday, 5 July 2003
Live From San Diego, California

We have come an incredibly long way since our inception...but “just for today,” we are still not at the “end of our road.” Our hope is that World Unity Day will not only help bring us all together in this historic celebration of our recovery, but also will remind us that only together can we ensure that our message is available to any addict seeking a new way of life. This event is a demonstration of our unity and the common bond we share globally as members in recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

This year’s Unity Day will take place during the 30th World Convention in San Diego, California, USA. While the exact start time for Unity Day has not been determined, for planning purposes please expect the call to begin in the early evening hours, Pacific Daylight Time. Once the exact start time has been established, we will notify the fellowship. Check our website at www.na.org for more information as it becomes available.

Please Provide the Following Contact Information

Individual members, NA groups, area/regional functions, and institutions can join in the celebration of World Unity Day on a two-hour, “listen only” telephone hookup to hear the Unity Day main speaker. Simply complete the telephone link registration form below and fax or mail it to the World Service Office with your payment. The cost is $50.00 for calls within the United States/Canada. For calls outside the US/Canada, there will be an additional charge depending upon the telephone rate of the country.

Contact Name _______________________________ Group (Region/Area/Institution) ______________________________
Phone Number _______________________________ Email Address ____________________________________________
Street Address _____________________________________________________________________________________________
City/State ______________________________________ Country ___________________ Postal Code ____________________
Outside US/Canada? Number where we can reach you on day of call: ___________________________________________

Form of Payment (Check One):
☐ AMEX ☐ VISA ☐ M/C ☐ Discover ☐ Diners Club
☐ Credit Card Number __________________________________________ Expiration Date ____________________

Signature __________________________________________ Print Name ______________________________
☐ Check/Money Order OR ☐ Free Regional Link NA World Services is offering one free regional hookup to each region located outside the US and Canada. To use the free regional hookup, you must have the approval of your region. Please include the name and phone number of your regional chairperson below. We will contact the chairperson of your region upon receipt of your registration for verification.

Regional Contact ______________________________ Phone Number ______________________________

Upon completing this application, please mail the application with your check or money order to NAWS, c/o Unity Day, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409 or fax it to 818.700.0700 with your credit card information. Registrations will not be processed without payment or regional approval for the free link. After 1 June 2003, you will receive a confirmation via email or mail, which will include the call-in number and password you need on the day of the call. The confirmation will outline the exact time and agenda for the call, explain how to phone in on the day of the call, and inform you about what to do if you experience problems during the call.

Questions? Call the World Service Office at (818) 773-9999 and dial extension 204.

All registrations MUST BE RECEIVED no later than 1 June 2003.
WCNA-30 VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SHEET

Thank you for your willingness to serve. Please volunteer to work at the world convention by completing this form. Beginning April 2003 members of the Support Committee will contact you to discuss your availability and confirm your assignment. This historic event will not be possible without your help!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Print First Name ____________________________  Full Last Name ____________________________  
Street Address ________________________________________________________________________  
City _______________________________________  State_____________________________________
Country ___________________________________  Zip Code _________________________________
Email Address ________________________________________________________________________  
Phone Numbers (Please include area/country code.)
Home____________________________________  Cell _____________________________________  
Work _____________________________________  Pager ____________________________________

AREAS OF INTEREST AND EXPERIENCE

☐ Willing to Serve Where Most Needed

Or I would prefer to work in the following area(s), please check all that apply:
☐ Program
☐ Convention Information
☐ Merchandise
☐ Entertainment / Events
☐ Registration
☐ Ability to Translate English Fluently Into ___________________________________________

Please note that for certain job assignments convention registration might be required and certain clean
time requirements may apply. Please provide us with the following information:

Clean Date          Month _____________  Day ________  Year ______________

Computer Experience ☐ Yes ☐ No  Cash Register Experience ☐ Yes ☐ No

AVAILABILITY

Most volunteers will be assigned to a minimum of a two-hour slot. We encourage you to volunteer for as
many slots as you like. Please check all slots you are probably available.

☐ Willing to Serve When Most Needed

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This form can be completed online at www.na.org. Or mail the completed form to WCNA-30 Support
Committee, 4735 Clairemont Square #366, San Diego, CA 92117 or fax to 818.700.0700.

For more information about the 30th World Convention of NA
Go to www.na.org or call 818.773.9999, extension 200.

“1953 to 2003…One Addict Helping Another”
What is the message?

I was reading an article on compassion recently on a Narcotics Anonymous-oriented website and found myself struggling through a bog of syrupy platitudes designed only, I believe, to create a false sense of security in the writer himself. His complacent (and lengthy) spiel concerning his "slow growth" to the now-enlightened state of emotional sensitivity he has attained in his years of being clean frankly made me want to regurgitate my supper.

I hesitate as I write these words for a couple of reasons: one, because they sound so, well, crass; but also because I, too, like the writer, have grown up with the indoctrination of that killing compassion defined by many as "feeling with."

In an NA meeting a few weeks ago, I sat and watched a member returning from a relapse "confess" to feelings of shame and worthlessness and, more to the point, hopelessness. Many people shared during the meeting and a few reiterated our message of recovery from addiction: get a sponsor, work the steps, attend meetings regularly, and work toward honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness.

The member seemed to hear some of this; the sobs were quieter at times, and the eyes flickered occasionally as someone’s words sank in. Other members, though, shared only of similar experiences in relapse, relating feelings and expressing "compassion" for the wounded one. In other words, many members limited their responses to "feeling with" the member.

After we had closed, many went to offer hugs and phone numbers, and countless times I heard variations on the theme of "good Lord, how you have suffered." This may not seem like a striking example of abuse to many, but to me, who had seen this same story replayed on at least three earlier occasions in as many years by the same member, with very little variation, it seemed a glaring example of "fallout compassion."

How many times will an addict have the opportunity to hear the message that if we don’t stop using drugs, we will die? Once? Three times?

Is it "compassion" to hide that truth from a using addict who is steeped in denial, the most tragic symptom of our disease?

Here’s a list of my "truths" (read "denial") when I first started coming to Narcotics Anonymous:

- My lousy childhood was responsible for my drug use.
- If I could get hold of a good therapist, then I would not want to use drugs to escape anymore.
- If I had enough money, I wouldn’t have the life problems I had and thus would no longer need to use.

Having had very little sympathy given for my puzzling and self-destructive behavior over the years, getting a little bit of proffered sympathy was like eating a piece of blueberry cheesecake. Heaven!
When something feels good, I tend to do it again. Repeatedly. A lot.

My meanderings have taken me to this thought: Real compassion for an addict means caring enough for their survival to support and help them on their path of recovery. How can I offer this kind of compassion? With a ride to a meeting. By chairing a meeting. By making sure my message in a meeting reiterates the solution rather than relating only to the problem. By telling new-comers that they don’t have to die, but that if they continue to use they most probably will. By sharing about how “just visiting” a dealer is a really bad idea, just as bad as refusing to work the steps or call a sponsor before using.

And, if I have any experience in these things (and I do!), I can also share about the effects of these decisions.

Compassion doesn’t simply mean “to feel with.” It means to care enough to be honest—so that we don’t have to die.

Debra B. Missouri

Whose responsibility?

I want to write about a sensitive subject, and I need to do it anonymously because of repercussions. I would like to know what other addicts really think about this subject when they are being true to themselves, without fear of what others might think.

The subject is children—children in meetings and children at NA events.

Please do not get me wrong. I would rather have the screaming baby of a new-comer in a meeting than have that baby crying at a dealer’s place. Better a toddler running around at a meeting than trailing after its parent who is trying to score.

But why, when the parent has been clean quite a while—in some cases over three years—do they insist on taking their children to meetings?

I have seen men in tears, sharing their deepest feelings, only to have the meeting break out in laughter at the antics of a child.

I have seen women leave meetings because their children were taken from them during active addiction, and they could not face two hours in a room with kids running around.

I have seen children running in and out of meetings, playing in the street outside with no supervision.

And then there are the parents who leave their children in a meeting while they go out to chat.

I have seen parents turning up at venues that have signs stating “No children due to insurance,” dragging their kids in, saying, “How dare they ban children? So what if we lose the venue?” Yet, there are eight open meetings a week in the area.

Personally, I have had things about myself repeated outside a meeting by an addict’s teenage child who attended a closed meeting. Other people have had their anonymity broken by children saying, “I saw your mom at an NA meeting last week.”

Why would anyone want to take a teenager to a meeting?

I have heard, “My son seems to be displaying addict tendencies, that is why I take him.”

Apart from the fact that addicts and teenagers share many of the same traits, I believe Tradition Three is at risk of being violated here: “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.” It is obvious the child has no desire.

Another reply I hear is: “My children are also in recovery.”

Well, my children are not. My children are recovering from my addiction. I am the one in recovery.

I think the children of addicts have been through enough and have seen and heard enough of addiction and suffering. They do not need to attend meetings to know their parents are working a program. They can see it in their daily lives.

When I see a parent who is not a new-comer bringing their children to a meeting, I see a person still living as selfishly as when they were using. I took my children with me when I went to a dealer. I would have my kids sit down with a toy or something and tell them to be quiet. I wanted drugs, and if that meant dragging my kids with me to see and hear things they had no business seeing or hearing, then so be it.

Taking responsibility is part of recovery—and that should also include being responsible for our children.

Surely a closed meeting is closed to everyone who is not an addict, including children. If I took my mother to a closed meeting, that would soon be pointed out, but no one would dare point out that a child should not be in a closed meeting.

“Should this meeting be child-friendly?” “Yes” is the vote, with raised hands for all to see. Yet I hear many members say, “I would not dare vote no.” What do we call it when we are confronted by angry parents? Bullying? Intimidation?

And then there are the NA dances. Members come through the doors; parents go one way, and their children go another way—children of all ages, bored and with nothing to do, so they create their own entertainment, which often includes breaking windows, smashing furniture, flooding toilets, setting fire to things, running around outside in the dark, damaging cars, and stealing prizes meant for the raffle. Granted, these are extreme cases, but I have seen them happen.

NA World Services would like to thank all of those members who participated in the Basic Text Evaluation survey. The World Board is using the results of that survey to help inform their recommendations to the conference regarding our Basic Text. Their report will be published in upcoming issues of NAWS News, which is available online at www.na.org, and their recommendations will be presented in the 2004 Conference Agenda Report.
Where are the parents? Dancing and having fun.

At the end of the evening, when it is time to clean up, the parents have vanished, suddenly responsible ten minutes before the event is over and rushing off to put their children to bed. There are no offers to help with tidying up—and besides, their little angels would never damage anything! Only other addicts’ children do that kind of thing.

Another venue lost! Oh, well, we’ll just get another one.

Whatever you do, do not even consider stopping children from going to these events. That is when parents get together and angrily discuss how selfish people can be by not welcoming their children. Talk, talk, talk—but these parents offer no solution or compromise.

“Maybe half of the events could be ‘child-friendly’ and half not?”

“No good,” the parents shout. “We want to have the freedom to come to all events. Banning children is discriminating. It means that parents cannot attend.”

But why does it mean only that?

Banning smoking does not mean smokers cannot come. No one would think that even for a second.

When an events committee tries to set things up for children in order to keep them occupied while their parents are at a dance, where is the support? “Maybe parents could help each other by taking turns in half-hour shifts to entertain the children,” the committee suggests. No one steps forward. They leave it to someone else—but then no one else will do it, either.

Okay, well, how about a committee created specifically to help parents in recovery? But again, no one wants to be part of it. “Entertain me, entertain my child,” seems to be the cry.

“Will you help out?” the events committee asks.

“Oh, no. I have enough with my own children,” is the reply. “I come to dances to get away from all that.”

So why bring children to a dance at all? It is not to spend time with them. Very rarely do I see parents spending time with their children at these events. They are too busy chatting and dancing. The rest of us carry the burden. I know of members who stay away from meet-

ings and events because of children attending.

There are solutions. Parents could take turns looking after each other’s children while one of the parents goes to a meeting, or work with the events committee to set up excursions, picnics, swimming, or whatever, either for fun or as part of an activity. Parents do not have to wait for other people to organize the entertainment. They can do it for themselves, and they can do it for their own children.

Before you sit in judgment of me, thinking I am heartless for not wanting children at meetings or dances, ask yourself how much you do to help entertain and safeguard the children of addicts. What do you do to ensure that they do not damage property, jeopardize a meeting, wreck a facility, disrupt other addicts’ enjoyment, or hurt themselves?

If you are one of those people who loves seeing children at meetings and dances and does not find them a bother, then I am sure you would be welcome at an events committee meeting, volunteering to look after those children.

Meanwhile, I will continue to work on my program and include the names of all those whom I consider to be selfish, self-centered parents in my Fourth Step!

Anonymous
We encourage you to publicize your event by having it published on our website and in The NA Way Magazine. You can inform the WSO about your event by fax, phone, or regular post, or through our website. We encourage using the website because you can check to see if we already have a listing on your convention and, if not, you can enter your own convention information. It is then reviewed, formatted, and added to the online convention calendar on our website in approximately four days. Just go to www.na.org, click on "NA Events," and follow the instructions.

Convention announcements entered through the website and those received by other means are also given to The NA Way. The NA Way is published four times a year in January, April, July, and October. Each issue goes into production long before its distribution date, so we need a minimum of three months’ notice to ensure your event will be published in the magazine—that’s three months before our publication date. For instance, if you want your event published in the October issue, we need to know by 1 July.

Canada

British Columbia: 15-17 Aug; British Columbia Regional Convention XXIV; Hilton Vancouver Metrotown, Vancouver; hotel rsvns: 800.HILTONS; event info: 604.879.1677; speaker tape info: 604.946.7071; event registration: 604.940.2033; write: BCRCNA XXIV, Ladner Postal Outlet, Box 18603, Delta, BC V4K 4V7; www.bcrcna.bc.ca

Nova Scotia: 25-27 Jul; Spiritual in Nature; Keddy’s Hotel, Halifax; event info: 902.430.7300, 902.443.2948; speaker tape submission deadline: 1 April 2003; write: Central Nova Area Halifax, Box 65 Central, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2L4

Ontario: 2-4 May, Ontario Regional Convention XVI; Ramada Plaza Hotel, Hamilton; hotel rsvns: 905.528.3451; write: Ontario Region, Hamilton Area, Ste 140, 256 Locke St South, Hamilton, Ontario Canada L8P 4B6; www.orcana.org

Colombia

Antioquia: 10-13 Oct; XII Convención Regional de NA De Colombia; CSA Sur de Antioquia, Medellín; hotel rsvns: +57 4.2511665; event info: +57 1.2252095; +57 03.310.2311666; +57 4.2312016; speaker tape submission deadline: 31 August 2003; write: Colombia/Bogotá, OSR Colombia Calle 48 # 48-14 Of 806 Edificio Nuevo Mundo-Medellín; www.na-colombia.org

Peru

Lambayeque: 1-3 May; IX Convención Regional de NA Perú; Chiclayo; event info: 511.970.6609; write: Regional Services Committee of Peru, RSC Peru, Group Nueva Vida de Chiclayo; www.na.org/links-main.htm#Peru

Portugal

Setúbal: 10-11 May; XIII Conferência e Convenção Portuguesa de Narcóticos Anónimos; Tróia, Setúbal; www.na-pt.org/xxiii.aspx

República Dominicana

Distrito Nacional: 11-13 Apr; Convención de NA II; Santo Domingo; Aprendiendo a Vivir; Intercontinental Hotel, Santo Domingo; write: Santo Domingo Area, Ave.27 de Febrero esq. Ave. Abraham Lincoln, Parroquia Santísima Trinidad, Santo Domingo, República Dominicana

Sweden

Skane: 25-27 Apr; Ouer Symbol; Ungdomens hus, Malmo; event info: +46.709568980

United States

Arizona: 23-25 May; Arizona Regional Convention XVII; Doubletree Paradise Valley Resort, Scottsdale; hotel rsvns: 800.222.8733; event info: 480.921.2318, 480.785.7081, 480.614.8425; write: Arizona Region, Box 1351, Phoenix, AZ

California: 17-20 Apr, Northern California Convention XXV, A Silver Celebration; Hilton Hotel, San Jose; event info: 650.642.1117; speaker tape info: 925.671.7684; write: Northern California Region, Box 248, Mountain View, CA 94042-0248; www.norcalna.org/


Connecticut: 17 May, 20th Annual Pigs in Space Pig Roast; Quassy Amusement Park, Middletown; event info: 203.624.3237; write: nickm1800@aol.com; www.pigsinspace.org


Florida: 17-20 Apr, FRQNA XXII; Into the Light; Orlando Airport Marriott Hotel/Resort, Orlando; hotel rsvns: 800.765.6752, 407.851.9000; event info: 407.433.9892, 561.649.3540; write: Florida Region, c/o FRQNA, 6152 S Congress Ave, Lantana, FL 33462; www.florida.org

Hawaii: 4-6 Apr; 19th Annual Oahu Gathering; Camp Mokuleia, Waialua; hotel rsvns: 808.637.6241; event registration: 808.294.0493; event info: 808.685.5409, 808.291.3461; write: Oahu Gathering Committee; 92-877 Wainohia St, Kapolei, HI 96707; www.na-hawaii.org/HRSC/convention.htm#OAHU

2) 9-11 May; Kauai Gathering in Paradise; YMCA Boys Scout Camp, Haena/Kauai; event registration: 808.634.5795; speaker tape info: 808.823.0276; speaker tape submission deadline: 1 April 2003; write: Kauai Area, Kauai Gathering 2003, Box 1206, Kalaeo, HI 96741; www.na-hawaii.org/HRSC/convention.htm#KAULAI
WSO PRODUCT UPDATE

English
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Revised version based on WSC 2002 changes
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Price US $6.10

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Guía de los servicios locales de NA
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