

Reaching Out

April 2015



Welcome.....2

From the Inside.....3

From the Outside.....8

Order Form.....16

Narcotics Anonymous offers only one promise and that is freedom from active addiction, the solution that eluded us for so long. We will be freed from our self-made prisons.

Basic Text, "More Will Be Revealed"

From the Editor

Welcome to *Reaching Out!* Whether you are experiencing recovery on the inside or on the outside, this NA World Services newsletter is for you. As our literature says, “The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel.” *Reaching Out* is designed to help incarcerated addicts connect to the NA program and enhance H&I efforts.

There are two sections; “From the Inside” is filled with letters from incarcerated addicts sharing their experience, strength, and hope as they find and maintain recovery from addiction through NA. In the second section, “From the Outside,” NA members on the outside and Hospitals & Institutions subcommittees have a chance to offer their experience, strength, and hope. Many of these letters come from members who are deeply committed to carrying the NA message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. You may also find personal experience from those members who heard the NA message on the inside and are now living and enjoying life on the outside.

We encourage submissions for *Reaching Out* from members and H&I subcommittees. Please consider that we are more likely to publish articles that focus on how NA has helped an individual to recover while incarcerated, rather than those that concentrate on the horrors of addiction. Thank you for helping us carry our message of hope!

Send all submissions to *Reaching Out*; NAWS, PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999; USA, or to HandI@na.org.

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
July 2015	15 April 2015
October 2015	15 July 2015
January 2016	15 October 2015
April 2016	15 January 2016



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is DJ and I am an addict. I am at the tail end of my 13-year sentence, with just over a year to go to my release. I will celebrate twelve years clean in December. Unfortunately, it took me getting locked up to realize that I had to do something about my addiction. I didn't wait. Once I got into prison, I made a decision to learn about my addiction and what I needed to do to stay clean. I've been going to NA meetings regularly. I've read everything that I could get my hands on about addiction. I've just recently even gotten an NA sponsor who I will have when I get out.

I've been working the steps for years and have built a strong personal relationship with my higher power. A loving and supportive family has stuck with me all these years, and I can't wait to get out and start a clean way of living. NA will always be a part of my life, and for me it stands not only for Narcotics Anonymous but for Never Again as well.

I hope you all find your freedom, not just from prison, but from your addiction as well. Thanks for all of you who write to *Reaching Out*. I look forward to your stories in each quarterly newsletter.

We Do Recover,

DJ, MI

Dear Reaching Out,

I want to start this letter by telling you a little about myself. I'm 45 years old, from the west side of Buffalo, and I have been an addict for most of my life. My drug of choice was heroin, crack cocaine, or whatever else I could get my hands on. I'm currently doing a twelve-years-to-life term, and I've been in prison on this sentence for eleven years now.

I've been in and out of the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous since 1991, after doing four years in prison. Every time I've ever been in prison, my addiction has been a key factor for me being there. I have spent over 20 years in prison as a result of my addiction.

While I was using I didn't have any morals or values and would do anything to support my addiction. I put the drug use ahead of everything and everyone. I was selfish, and it was all about me and my instant gratification.

While I was going to NA over the years I never really tried to reach out to anyone or work the steps sincerely to try to stay clean. Today, I am an active member of the weekly NA meetings here. I've been drug-free since 26 July 2010. I still haven't worked the steps, but I am going to the meetings and sharing, and have a sincere desire for change. I'm now reaching out to NA and asking for help. I don't want to live like that anymore. I'm reaching out to others and learning that I can't do recovery on my own. I am trying to establish a good support system with people in the NA program upon my release and also with someone who can help me with my recovery and working the Twelve Steps while I'm still incarcerated. I hope to connect with someone in NA, and I'm looking forward to finding someone who is willing to share their experience, strength, and hope with me and help me in my recovery. I realize that I can't do it on my own.

AF, NY

Dear Reaching Out,

I am an addict and my name is A. My clean date this time around is 31 December 2008. This year I will celebrate six years clean with the help of my Higher Power and the program of Narcotics Anonymous. First I was incarcerated in South Carolina, and then I was released. After eight months I did a crime in North Carolina, so here I sit. At the particular prison I am in, there is only one NA meeting a week. We are sectioned off by north, central, and south, so it is difficult for me in particular to get with someone other than at the meeting. Unfortunately, H&I does not come to us, so the meeting is autonomous, running itself

with about 10–15 members. I usually chair the meeting, set up the chairs, place the books on the chairs, and so on. Of the few of us who come, about five or six have had cleantime on the outside.

I love service work; my sponsor highly recommends it as long as it does not come before my recovery. I enjoy giving my experience, strength, and hope to others, especially here. This particular prison is basically a bus stop. It houses about 560 inmates and most are going home shortly; this is a minimum-security camp. The more I evaluate my life, the more hopeful, positive, and loving I become. Truly, God does grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Yes ... my attitude cares and shares to all in every aspect of my life, the NA way.

There was a man, a very wise man, who was my grand-sponsor. He shared something with me once that I have remembered every day. He said, “What other people say and think about you is none of your business.” The meaning of that was that what you and your Higher Power know is the truth, and others’ opinions don’t amount to a hill of beans. This grand-sponsor was named Barney B from the Carolina Region of Narcotics Anonymous. He was a very wise, near and dear man with an infinite knowledge of recovery. I learned a lot from this humble, wise man. May he rest in peace.

AE, the Carolinas

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is DB. I’m an addict; I’ve been in and out of recovery since I was 14 years old. A classic two-stepper, I admitted that I am an addict and then I carried the message to the addict who still suffered. Before long, I became a one-stepper: I admitted that I am an addict and that to use is to die.

I could not read very well in the beginning, and I had to memorize the readings until I had learned better how to read. I went to many, many meetings, as many as I found necessary.

I came to prison with nine years clean, and I figured that I was the only one. I have been in prison clean for 20 years. During my

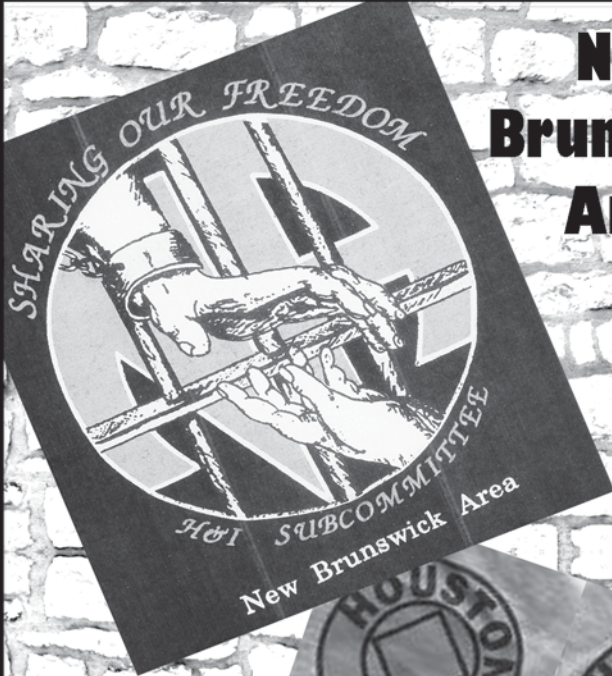
first few years I had NA meetings to go to, but then for the next nine years I had no meetings to attend, nor did I find anyone who wanted to get clean. When I was transferred to where I am now, I went to an anniversary meeting as the guest speaker. Despite conflict and call-outs, I still carried the NA message, and I extended a hand to anyone who asked for help.

Today I am the facilitator of our institutional group, and our outside sponsor has said that our meeting is his favorite meeting of the week! There are many members who can't wait to attend our meetings here. I was so glad to get a copy of *Reaching Out*. Seeing that I am not the only one with years of being clean who has come to prison has helped to relieve me of my "terminal uniqueness." It has not been easy, though, and I wouldn't suggest it to anyone; you really need a higher power to help. Our meetings are very important, our program works, and the newcomer keeps it green. In the spirit of the Serenity Prayer, "It works if you work it." Keep coming back.

DB, NY

H&I T-Shirts

**New
Brunswick
Area**



**Houston
Area**



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is NW, and the day I was sentenced to the Florida Department of Corrections was actually the first day of my amazing life. When I first began my sentence I thought I needed to change a few things but I could learn to use successfully when I got out, not realizing just how powerful the disease of addiction is. I was placed in a drug treatment program and started to attend NA meetings “behind the walls.” Some of the women in the meetings had been to prison a few times. I was curious as to why they came back to prison, what happened when they got out that caused them not to care about coming back. How can someone know that coming back to prison is a consequence of using, but it is not enough to do the right thing?

I know now just how silly that question is. All of their answers were the same; they all said they started getting high again. I realized then that this disease is serious. If I wanted to stay out of prison and keep my freedom, I had to have freedom from active addiction too. I started to get serious about my recovery by working steps and reading the literature. It was not always easy working a program of recovery in a place full of raw disease. However, I kept a close relationship with other addicts seeking recovery and we drew strength from each other. It was in the meetings behind the walls that I learned about NA and what I needed to do when I got out in order to stay clean: do 90 meetings in 90 days, get phone numbers, get a sponsor, and do service work.

When I was released, I hit a meeting the next day and immediately got a sponsor. I was welcomed to the Fellowship of NA with open arms, and I felt like I belonged instantly. I got a job, got my license and a car, and enrolled in college. I am now in my third year of college with a 4.0 GPA! All of these things were possible because I have stayed clean.

My husband is still incarcerated, and I struggle with being lonely. However, I have been able to remain faithful and be the wife he deserves, all because of the program of Narcotics Anonymous. I am finally able to be an active part of my family, and they no longer worry about getting a phone call that I am dead. The journey of recovery is not always easy, but it is worth it.

I learn every day just how deep this disease runs. Service work is what helps to keep me clean. I love the program of Narcotics Anonymous and have a deep passion to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. *You are not alone*—those words are powerful, especially when you feel like no one understands. I am never alone in NA, and neither are you. I would have never guessed I would find freedom in prison, but I am so grateful I did.

NW, FL

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is M and I am an addict. My clean date is 18 July 2003. First, let me thank my higher power for allowing me to be clean and working this program of recovery. It's good being clean after several attempts of trying to get clean through ten rehabs, four detoxes, three psych wards, and six times in jail. I finally surrendered in 2003 to this disease and to a recovery support program.

I did get clean between 1994 and 1997 and then relapsed from not working the program. In the six years after my relapse, I experienced being penniless, homeless, and jobless. I was living in a dark place.

On 5 June 2000, I contracted bacterial meningitis and almost died. I stayed in the hospital for 20 days and had to attend speech therapy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy for six months. I got my health and strength back, and guess what? I used again! Total insanity!

I've hurt so many people in my addiction—including myself. I moved into a clean living house after treatment and have never looked back. I continue to be of service to others as well as to myself through the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Life

couldn't be better. All my challenges have solutions today without the use of drugs and with NA!

M, GA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is JM and I am an addict. I live in California. I have spent 30 years of my life using, and I have been arrested 33 times. I heard the NA message of hope at Pelican Bay State Prison. I had been arrested one more time, and I found myself asking the same question: "How did I get here again?" I heard about NA meetings, and I decided to sign up for an "unlock" to attend. I don't remember much about my first meeting, but I kept coming back until the miracle happened and I heard my story.

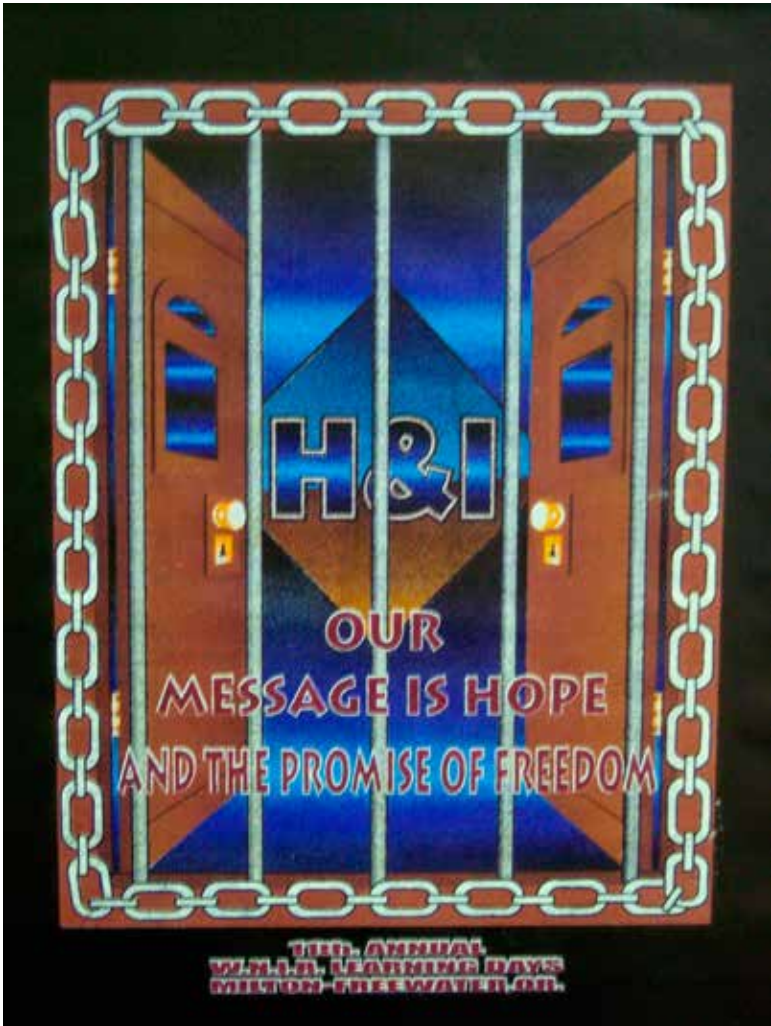
After serving 40 months I was released, and within the first 24 hours I was attending a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous on the outside. I was finally home. So many people welcomed me at that first outside meeting, so I kept coming back. It wasn't long after that I attended my first NA convention. Wow, I could never have imagined such an event—thousands of addicts celebrating the miracle of recovery. I continued to do what was suggested and attended as many meetings as I could, found a higher power, got a sponsor, began working steps, attended outside functions, and started doing H&I service work.

At first the process was slow. It seemed like every facility that I applied to go into would deny me, but finally, after two years, the doors began to open. I currently go into a juvenile hall, a county jail, and several state prisons, and last year my journey came full circle. I was cleared to go back into Pelican Bay State Prison, where the journey started. I get to pay forward what was so freely given to me. In February of 2015 I will celebrate ten years clean. Now that's a miracle! I will forever be indebted to Narcotics Anonymous for the life I have today. It is truly a life beyond my wildest dreams.

JM, CA

ART FROM THE INSIDE

Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented H&I T-shirts. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act and art. Please share your H&I T-shirt pictures with us! We would like to showcase your art. HandI@na.org





H&I T-Shirts



CALLING ALL H&I MEMBERS!

Please submit your story to the quarterly NA newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We are looking for recovering addicts, like you, to share their experience of finding recovery behind the walls and maintaining it on the outside. Your story carries a powerful message of hope for the incarcerated addict! Thank you.

Please send your story to:
Narcotics Anonymous World Services;
PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409,
or to HandI@na.org.



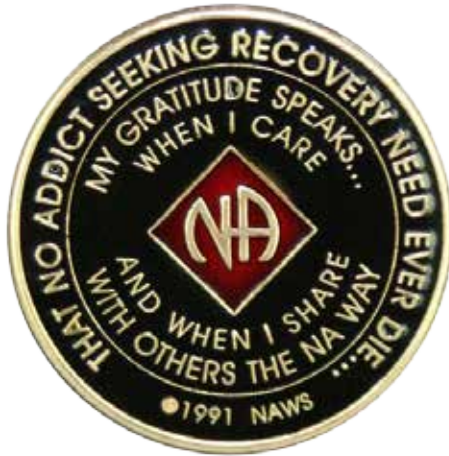
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left from a treatment center, jail, hospital, or institution, you are moved from the “inside” to the “outside” to be drug-free, productive members of society. We think your experience may be invaluable to others as they embark upon their transition.

We are offering questions to help stimulate your thinking so that you may want to share your experience with us; we will publish your article in *Reaching Out* to help others.

1. What did you do on your first day of your release?
2. What steps did you take to help your recovery in the community? Do you think the transition steps are the same for addicts who are being released after 30 days or ten years?
3. What are some of the challenges you encountered when you reentered the community?
4. How did NA help you with information so that you were able to attend a meeting upon release?
5. How do you think that NA may have been better able to help you in your transition, and do you have any suggestions to offer so NA may be better able to help others as they transition?

We look forward to reading your experience and providing this information to others. Thank you for helping us assist others in their transition.



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

Narcotics Anonymous, “We Do Recover”

Order Form

Reaching Out is a quarterly, recovery-oriented newsletter made available free of charge to incarcerated addicts through Narcotics Anonymous World Services. If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months and would like a free subscription to *Reaching Out*, complete and return the following form.

Reaching Out is also available by a 20-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$35.90 annually. If you are interested in purchasing a bulk subscription, please complete the following form and return it along with a check or money order.

- I am an incarcerated addict (and will be for at least six more months) and want a free subscription to *Reaching Out*.
- I want to purchase _____ 20-copy bulk subscriptions of *Reaching Out* @ \$35.90 each, total \$ _____.

Name _____

Identification Number _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Country _____

Reaching Out

c/o NA World Services, Inc. ☉ PO Box 9999 ☉ Van Nuys, CA 91409 ☉ USA