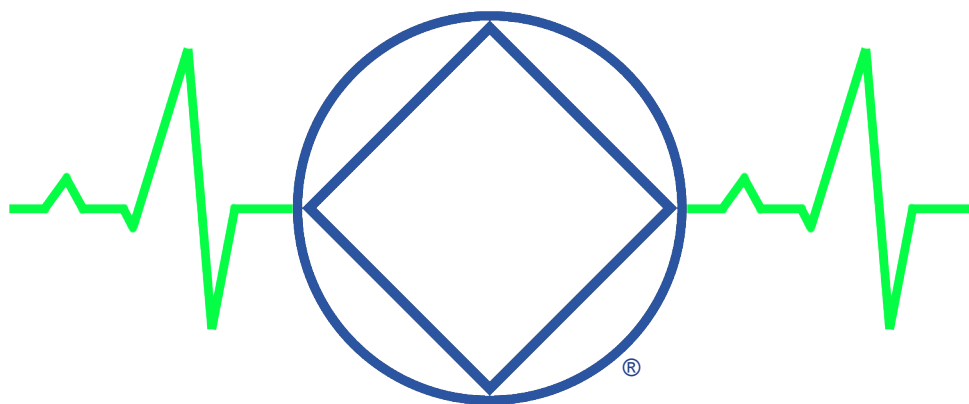


Volume 31, Number 2

Reaching Out

April 2016



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"The heart of NA beats when two addicts share their recovery."

Basic Text

From the Editor

We would like to welcome all of you to the NA World Services newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We hope that the contents of this newsletter will assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts. There are three sections to *Reaching Out*. The first section, "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.

The second section, "From the Outside," is an opportunity for Hospitals & Institutions subcommittees to offer their experiences obtained through 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.

The third and newest section, "Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside," features members sharing about successfully transitioning from treatment, a hospital, or an institution to living 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 drug use. Send all submissions to *Reaching Out*; NAWs, PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999; USA, or to fsmail@na.org.

GET INVOLVED AND HELP US CARRY OUT OUR
FELLOWSHIP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE!!

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
October 2016	15 July 2016
January 2017	15 October 2016

And finally, did you know that electronic subscriptions to *Reaching Out* are free? New issues will be emailed to you four times a year. To sign up, visit <http://www.na.org/reachingout>.



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is MW, and I'm an addict. I have been clean since 9-17-07 and locked up since 4-22-10. By the grace of God I am still clean today. NA is a one-day-at-a-time program, carrying the message that any addict can lose the desire to use. If it worked for me, then it can work for anyone.

I have used for twenty-something years and have managed to put together seven years clean. It has not been easy. I have been given a sentence of eleven years for making bad choices. But today I have the desire to stay clean. I make sure that when the meetings come to us, I attend. I have a sponsor, and I sponsor several others here. No matter what happens to me in here, I still manage to carry the message to others. I try to keep my head up and share a strong message of recovery to those who are with me.

I got locked up with almost three years of being clean, but have learned how cleantime does not equal recovery. I don't forget where I came from or what got me here. If I do, I will surely relapse. Not in my wildest dreams did I think I would have seven years clean. I thought I would die using and never recover. I found a Higher Power that I use to keep me in touch with reality. I have five years left to serve, and it gets hard. We don't always have meetings because we get locked down frequently, but I have my NA literature to keep me going when that occurs. I have learned to read my NA books and to do steps when this happens.

In the rooms, if you are an addict like I am, give yourself a break. I was told whenever I don't think I need a meeting is when I need a meeting. Please stay, because you have earned your seat. I am grateful for the rooms for showing me how to live again. I am a grateful recovering addict.

MW, FL

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is MK, and I'm a 31-year-old addict. I am addicted to anything that makes me feel different or better. My purpose for writing this is to share my story in hopes it will help someone else see the destruction that addiction can cause.

Here is my story in a nutshell. My mother was an alcoholic and my father a drug user. That made for plenty of dysfunction and chaos. They were completely split up by the time I was four years old. My mother got custody; however, she chose to continue with her addiction and spiraled downward. I ended up with my grandmother, a wonderful woman who did the best she could raising me. She worked nights at the local ER. It was around the age of twelve that I started my first experiment with painkillers. Grandma gave me half of one when I was injured from an accident at the local skating rink. I noticed it made me feel different, more comfortably numb. At the time it made things more fun. Yeah, that was the beginning. From then on I made every excuse to get more. I paid attention to what was in the medicine cabinet to steal extras.

I changed my friends and lost all interest in everything I once enjoyed. I guess around the age of 15 is when the scale shifted. I was no longer getting high to enhance my mood. My mood depended solely on whether or not I was high. It was around that same time that moral degeneration began. I quit respecting myself and my family. I continued to deteriorate until the arrests started. I have been arrested 24 times and have had eight prison trips. This is where I am now, on my eighth trip. It has taken me several tries to get to the point where I am now.

A major change began with this eighth time in prison. I had been ordered to complete a nine-month therapy program that helped me open my eyes. I began to look at things differently. Upon my release from therapy, I was missing two key factors that I believe would have kept me clean: I lacked trust in my Higher Power, and I lacked confidence in the program of NA. I have since come to believe that a power greater than myself can

restore me to sanity. I have turned my will and my life over to my Higher Power. I have begun working the Twelve Steps and shared my searching and fearless inventory with my Higher Power and another individual. I am ready to have my defects of character removed. I do Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve on a daily basis. I am making a list of amends as they arise. To wrap this up, I am using NA literature to better understand myself and work on my recovery.

MK, IN

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is RA, and I'm a happily recovering addict. I want to thank you for sending me a Basic Text. It has been my constant companion as I work my program here in the pen. The Twelve Steps, Concepts, and Traditions of NA are a part of my life and my future. It has opened my eyes and mind to the underlying causes of my addiction as well as giving me the tools to combat my character defects and my habits. It has also shown me there is a way to live happily and have a productive, clean existence, free of the pain and destructive self-sabotage that were part of my everyday living. Through this simple spiritual program, I am allowed to accumulate another day of freedom from active addiction. I am eternally grateful my Higher Power has allowed me to experience this program of recovery. Thank you for all your hard work.

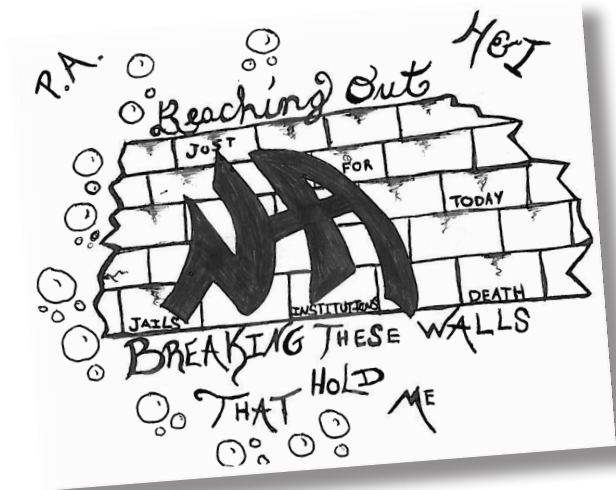
Your brother in the fellowship,

RA, WA

ART FROM THE ZSIDE

Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented art. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act, and images provide a powerful message of the freedom we can find in NA.

If you would like to see your art printed here, please send jpeg or pdf files to Handl@na.org, or mail to Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409.





From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is CW from GA, and I'm an addict. Here is my story. Self-discipline has never been a strong suit in my life. I have always taken pride in doing what I wanted, when I wanted to do it. So as you can imagine, my life was full of actions and consequences from an early age. As I grew older, my addiction manifested with me putting poison in my body. My decision-making skills became more situational and the consequences much more intense. Having moved from a larger city to a smaller one, it was not so easy for me to become lost in the crowd. Contrary to my belief, my behavior brought so much attention to me. There were many days and nights when all eyes were definitely on me. Going back and forth to jail was very tiresome. And then it dawned on me that if all the law enforcement officers knew me by my first and last name, perhaps it was time for some things to change.

During all of my jail stays there were always twelve-step meetings. I had been exposed to a twelve-step program when my nursing career was on the line, and chose using as a career instead. The ladies who brought the meetings were all nicely dressed and very kind. It was hard to believe that someone could care for someone else they didn't even know. But after attending these meetings regularly, I began to feel that their concern was in fact genuine. Being locked up that last time, I unwittingly began to have some structure in my life. And with having to obey rules, I could not get around the discipline.

It's funny how all these things came together for me simply by listening to these ladies whose lives did not necessarily resemble mine but whose pain, loss, and devastation mirrored my very own. That is why it is crucial for me to give back what was freely given to me. Doing the jail meetings brings me such a sense of gratitude that is really hard to explain. I would like to thank the ladies for taking time out of their busy schedules. Now I understand it wasn't a chore for them. It was a privilege. Thank you.

CW, GA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is KT. I am an addict who has spent some time in and out of jail for several years. Here is my story; I hope it reaches someone who needs to hear how it has changed my life and countless others'.

My using started back in 1974 when I was nine years old. It started out in elementary school when a group of my friends went over to someone's house. His older brother was getting high, and he said we could try some. That was the beginning of a 33-year relationship with drugs.

I was first introduced to the rooms of NA in the 1980s. I was caught using at work and I was sent to treatment. But I refused to go and ended up getting fired from a job working for a well-known health organization. If I had understood the program of NA, then I could have retired at the age of 46. Every good job that I lost was a direct result of my using.

In 1997 I got married to a girl I had known for only 30 days. Soon after we married we had our first child together. Then she started cheating on me, but I reluctantly took her back. We had several kids after that. The cheating still happened, and my using got more intense as time went on. At that point I was in full-blown addiction and not caring about anything. Jails were becoming more frequent, and I used to think that going wasn't so bad because it gave me a chance to take a break from my wife and kids. Kind of a little state-paid vacation. In the years 2005 and 2006, I was in and out seven times for the same offense: being under the influence or in possession of a controlled substance. I always managed to get short stays that were becoming more and more frequent. It was so frequent that the judge and local police and I were on a first-name basis. Well, at least the judge would call me by my first name.

In 2006 I was offered a choice to do a one-year deferred entry of judgment or 180 days in jail. Being so used to going in and out, I figured I would do the jail time, thinking I was only going to do 10 percent of the time. When I told the judge I was going to

take the jail time, he quickly said to me that if and when I came back in front of him, I would be going to prison. I agreed to his terms. After spending 36 of those 180 days, I had a dream that my wife had left me for someone else again. Upon my release from the county jail I found out it was true. She had found someone else who would supply her with whatever and however much she wanted. The day I got out from county jail, she was getting ready to see him at her mom's house. She had my daughter with her; she was just one year old. My daughter was playing in the backyard when she dropped a ball and it went under the fence where my in-laws' Rottweiler was, and the dog liked my daughter's hand more than the ball.

When I was released later that night, my wife told me I needed to take my daughter to the hospital. Then she told me she was leaving me and had a boyfriend. My daughter stayed in the hospital for three months. Three days later we were raided, and the rest of my kids were taken from me. My wife would come by to see me and tell me how she never loved me and wished I was dead. I did the unthinkable: I went into the garage and threw a rope over the rafters and tried to hang myself. Just as I kicked the chair out from under me, someone came in and caught me. My wife had left for good, and I decided I was going to continue to use again until I either died or was caught again by the judge. Well, the judge got his wish and I ended up in prison.

I had spent a year and a half in prison and stayed clean the whole time I was locked up. When I was released from the same courthouse, the judge reminded me that if I was caught again I would be spending five years in prison. You would think that would have stopped me, but it didn't. Soon after my release I was arrested again. The only thing different this time was that I was sick and tired of not having my kids around and it was no longer fun in jail. I told the arresting officer I had a drug problem and needed help. He in turn told my parole officer to give me a chance, and I took it. I was offered another chance at treatment. What got me to the rooms was the miracle I had needed.

Since 5-23-08 I have managed to stay clean thanks to the rooms of NA. I have done a lot of work on myself since being released.

I went back to college and got a degree in addiction studies and became a counselor. I have my kids back in my life today. I owe my life to NA for showing me how to love myself again when I couldn't. Today I am working on my relationship with my kids while showing them the love and respect I didn't show them while using. I have commitments at several meetings and several positions in NA. If you have not gotten anything out of my story yet, trust and believe that if an addict like me who used for 33 years can get clean and stay clean for over seven years, then this program must work. As a matter of fact I believe it does, because so many others before me have shown that it does work. Thank you, NA, for my newfound freedom.

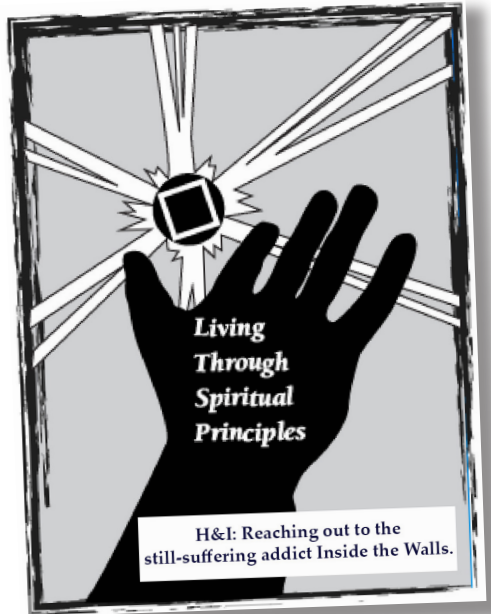
In fellowship,

KT, 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 Japan



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is ML, and I'm an addict. During my last incarceration in 1994 I did something different: I attended an H&I meeting on the inside. I was facing a life sentence and figured I did not have much more to lose. I was ordered to go, and I went. That is where I got my shot of hope, from a woman I had walked to the gate when I was 22. She had returned with NA on an H&I panel. She was the speaker. I knew she had been to the same places I had been, the same hangouts of horror and despair. I started to attend NA meetings regularly behind the walls. I want to give a shout-out to the H&I sisters who showed up faithfully every Friday night and took us through the Twelve Steps. I "came to" in a drunk tank after my last overdose, and I "came to believe" in a Narcotics Anonymous meeting.

By the grace of God, I got the key to freedom. I ended up getting 42 years and 4 months suspended by that grace. Upon my release, I went into another protected environment and stayed there for over two years, and I took suggestions. The suggestion was for me to not live alone and to find other like-minded people who had a desire to learn how to live on the outside without putting something in my body or committing a crime to survive. So I moved in with another NA member. Then I moved in with two other NA members, and I stayed, moving in and living with others who were in the program. When I was released, I did what I knew how to do already, and that was to fit in and to act as if. And then one day I became. This is the same suggestion I give to others when I go behind the walls. I suggest that they parole to a transitional house or stay with other members until they can trust themselves to make some right decisions.

When I transitioned, I got a sponsor. That lady carried the message to me. She was my ray of light, and she is still my sponsor today, over 21 years later. She said to get a service commitment,

and so I did. She said to work the steps, and so I do. I followed her suggestions, and here I am today, another addict clean by the grace of a loving God and the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

Now that I am on the outside, I am involved with H&I. We took the first H&I meeting into a women's prison in East Africa. I also do H&I service work at women's correctional facilities in California. I have been in many prisons, both as a consumer and now as an H&I volunteer. There is a team of us that goes into these facilities. I feel it is my responsibility after being raised by the state from the time I was 13 years old.

I just took a 21-year inventory, and what an amazing journey it has been. I never want to forget where I came from, and I always want to remember that freedom is a choice. Today I choose to live clean and give back. And as long as I do that, the journey continues.

ML, CA



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.



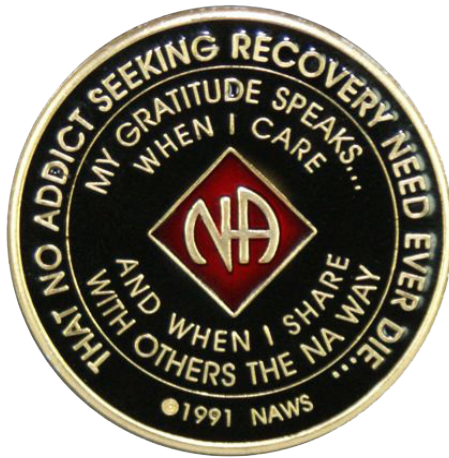
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left from a treatment center, jail, prison, 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/discharge?
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/discharge?
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.

You may also receive *Reaching Out* via email. Electronic subscriptions are free—the new issue of *Reaching Out* will be emailed to you four times a year. To sign up, visit <http://www.na.org/reachingout>.

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

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