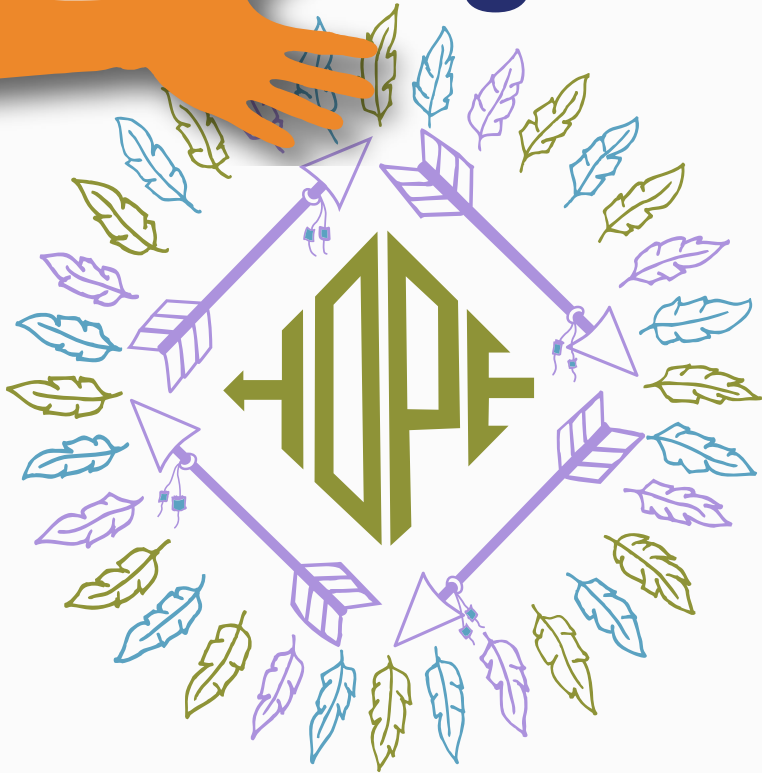


Reaching Out



April 2017



Yavapai Area, Arizona Region

Welcome.....	2
From the Inside.....	3
From the Outside.....	9
Transitioning.....	12
Order Form.....	16

*“Yes, we are a **vision of hope.**
 We are examples of the program working.
 The joy that we have in **living clean**
 is an attraction to the addict
 who still suffers.”*

Basic Text, “How It Works”

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
July 2017	15 April 2017
October 2017	15 July 2017
January 2018	15 October 2017

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 www.na.org/reachingout.



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

“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.”

That paragraph in “We Do Recover” from the Basic Text hits me the hardest of all. There I am at the bitter end, and it’s painful. This is my second time in prison. The first time I was 18 years old and did almost five and a half years for a crime I committed while high on drugs. While in prison I had my first introduction to NA through H&I, and it was very helpful to me on my journey to recovery once I was free. A man who had done some time and his wife came in and brought meetings to us and talked about staying clean. He talked about how it had changed his life. I got involved and eventually paroled. I still struggled with my addiction, but one day I checked myself into a recovery home and started attending meetings.

I struggled to stay clean at first. I found a meeting at a coffee-house in a neighborhood I knew. I saw the man there who had brought the meetings to me when I was locked up. He had taken me under his wing and twelve-stepped me. He had moved me out of the apartment I shared with my girlfriend, who I was using for drugs and living. He gave me a part-time job serving espresso to what had become the hub of the NA community, which provided me with a small amount of money, a small room in the back of his apartment complex, and, eventually, a job serving hot dogs in the park at the weekly picnic.

Eventually I got 30 days, then 60 days. I got into another relationship with a newcomer. We both eventually got a year clean. She relapsed, and soon after I had 18 months I relapsed. I struggled again for many years. I got a sponsor and worked the

Steps, but it wasn't enough. They say you need to change everything, but I didn't. I still lived the old lifestyle, which eventually landed me here again. I now get what it means to go to the bitter ends or find a new way to live.

I am grateful to my Higher Power for letting me be humbled. I am six and a half years into my sentence and hopefully halfway done with this incarceration. I now have four years clean. I have lost a lot coming back to prison. All I had to do is not pick up. H&I is not very strong out here; there is only one NA meeting weekly, with only 25 slots for 1,800 inmates. We have a volunteer for AA meetings who let us turn it into an NA meeting, and he even went out and found us an NA volunteer. We have to let the addict recover and become a new man.

My message to you is that if you are reading this and are in prison, there is hope. The truth is, you have to change everything. The one thing I remembered that was said at the first H&I meeting is that the only person you are beating up is yourself. Read "What Can I Do?" in the Basic Text if you get a chance to stay clean. I thought I could do it one more time, and it cost me 15 more years in prison. If you are in recovery, please don't forget about the ones in prison. Carrying the message to the addict in here gives us a shot of hope. It's a breath of fresh air to hear the message from outside.

JG, OR

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is MS and I am a grateful recovering addict. Through the grace of God and the NA program I have been clean since 28 June 2014, which happens to be my 44th birthday. I have been in and out of the system since I was 14 years old. I am currently serving a four-and-a-half-to-nine-year prison term stemming from my drug addiction. Drugs came first over family, friends, work, and my freedom.

For years I thought I had hit my bottom countless times, but it wasn't until I stopped digging that I did. Once I started coming

to the meetings and doing what was suggested to me, like getting a sponsor, working the steps, and going to as many meetings as I could, it started working for me. I haven't used.

I am fortunate to be on the recovery block here where there are meetings every day. I have been privileged to be asked by a few guys to sponsor them. To be a trusted servant in this program is an honor and a blessing, and I am truly grateful. Before coming to NA I didn't even trust myself. Now I have guys doing their Fifth Step with me. Truly a miracle.

Through my working the Steps, my relationship with my Higher Power has grown exceptionally. I am finally feeling a sense of peace, whereas before I felt in opposition to the rest of the world. My gratitude list keeps growing, as does my list of assets. The newcomers remind me of how bad it was, but I also see the hope in their eyes. When they reach out I see the same miracles of recovery that I had when I first came in. I am one of them, and I am not alone anymore. Thanks to NA, you have loved me into loving myself.

MS, PA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is WC and I come to share a bit about my disease which is addiction. I come to show there is hope. To begin my story we will have to go back to the 1980s, which was when drugs came into my life. It seemed like a dream—it gave me the sensation of being the most hip, articulate, and smartest, and also the shiest, guy alive.

This was, however, just the beginning of my moral and spiritual defeat. Day by day I was getting deeper and deeper into the abyss. I experienced stronger and stronger sensations. I became a dealer, and the more I sold, the more I used. My wife asked me several times to stop, and I always gave her the same response: I could quit anytime I wanted to. I didn't know the drugs had a hold on me and gave me a false feeling of control.

In 2004 I suffered my first loss from drugs. After my many nights living the crazy life, my wife got tired of sleeping alone and decided to leave me because I did not stop using. Later that same year, my mother got sick and by year's end had died. I now saw myself alone. It was just me and my addiction. At this time I wanted to stop, as my children needed a father. This is the point where I realized that the drugs were controlling my life.

I lost everything—my mother; my wife and kids; my house, car and motorcycle; even my professional stereo system. This was still not enough to make me stop. My addiction was too strong, and the drugs kept me going. It took everything from me, including my character, self-respect, and dignity. I wanted to end my life. I continued to sell day and night, never getting a good night's rest as my house was always filled with addicts who were only there to use me and my drugs. I would have done anything to have my kids back in my life.

Fast-track to the year 2010. After almost two decades of using and selling and the cops giving me no peace, I got raided and was caught. The judge sent me to rehab. I stayed only a few days and ran away from it only to continue using and selling. In 2011 I got caught again and was convicted and sentenced to eleven years and eight months. I continued to use even in jail. I believed there was no way out for me. I was doomed to die using.

In 2015 I found the hope I was missing. I was invited to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. I went to the meeting, as I had nothing else to do, and thought to myself, I need help and can't stop so I might as well try. I started to pay attention to what was being said and to the Steps. They first taught me I was sick and had a problem called addiction. While incarcerated I have always heard that my salvation will only be through conversion, and although I respect religion, it was not what I wanted.

I was told to do Step Two and found out that I need a higher power, something greater than myself that could restore my sanity through the God of my understanding. Even more than that, they told me I was the most important person at the meeting. My whole life I had always thought to myself, "Today I will use and

I will quit tomorrow.” However, NA showed me I was wrong. Today is the most important day, and today my Higher Power will restore me to sanity in order for me to not use. On this path of just for today, I am now eight months clean without using any drugs, being one more in the thousands of witnesses proving that NA works and that there is hope for the addict who still suffers from the disease of addiction. Thank you for hearing my story.

WC, Brazil

Dear Reaching Out,

I am an inmate at a state penitentiary and am an addict. My name is JO and an addict since I was 16 years old. I have been in the other fellowship before but never identified there. It was only when I was introduced to NA that I could relate. I am getting out of prison in May of 2017 and have been here since 2013. Drugs were my downfall and what led me to prison. I live day to day and know the past is just that. Tomorrow might not come. All I have is the now.

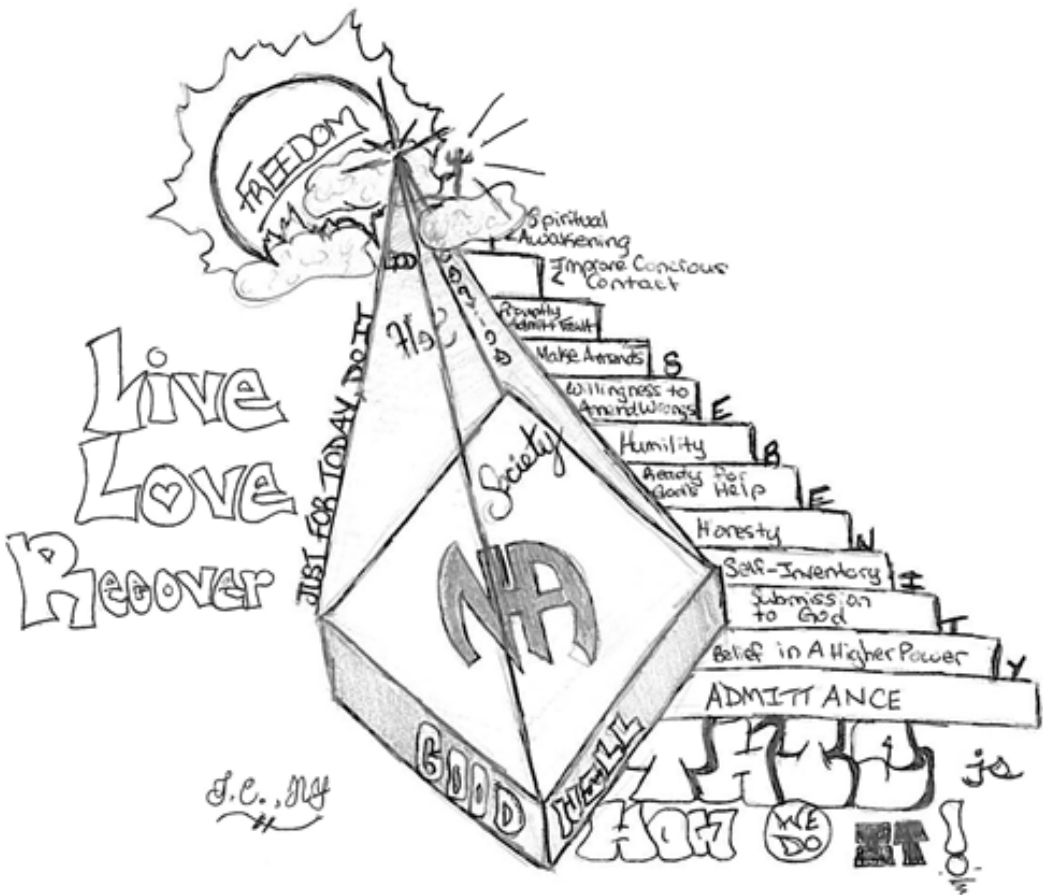
Today I write and pray. I write my feelings down in poetic form and that is what keeps me alive and going. I have found that by writing I am expressing what I have kept inside me for many years, and now it needs to be released for my own personal growth. Thank you to Narcotics Anonymous for helping me to realize my faults.

JO, UT

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 jpegs or pdf files to Hand@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,

A memory from my early recovery: sitting in an Australian jail in 2004 and my life was a mess. I was arrested on my way to the dealer's house. I had some dope in my pocket and some outstanding warrants and knew I was going to jail. After arriving in jail I went through a horrendous detox in the police cell and yet again was on the inside wishing somehow I was having a bad dream, wishing I would wake up and it would be different. In my mind I begged for freedom, but I could not find a way out. I had been introduced to the rooms a few years earlier in a detox center, but it all went straight over my head. I couldn't make sense of the program and thought it was some religious group of which I wanted no part. I didn't believe, but knew I was truly powerless and unmanageable. I think if you use long enough, that becomes undeniable.

I remember looking through some books in a TV room in the prison and finding a copy of the Basic Text. I have a vague memory of reading a few pages and being intrigued but not grasping what I was reading. Looking back, I think I felt the message in the literature but found the concept hard to grasp. I remember talking to my ex-girlfriend on the phone and she said she had started to attend NA meetings. I remember her telling me how I needed to do the same thing. I remember her telling me to do the Steps in order for it to work. I had read them and thought that was enough. Was I wrong? She continued to try to educate me about the program, but unfortunately I wouldn't hear the message from her. Somehow the seed was planted, though.

It took several years for me to get clean and come to believe, to hand my life over to the program, but I finally made it. I went to rehab, went to meetings, and surrendered to the program. My life changed dramatically as a result. I sit here today and write this story with nine years clean. I can't believe it. I have to pinch myself sometimes. My head told me I would never get clean, then I got

clean one day. It kept telling me I would not get 30 days. Pretty soon I had 90 days, and so on and so on. I ignored my head and was inspired by those who came before me. I came to believe if they could do it, so could I.

One day at a time, with the help of my sponsor and the Fellowship, my life began to get back to normal. I became sane again. After I got 90 days clean I said I would give the program a try for a year, and if I didn't like it I would go back to what I was doing before. Well, I may have had some rough times but I never went back, and for this I am truly grateful to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. I want what the program has to offer. I am forever in your debt.

PN, Australia

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is WR from VA. I have served on the H&I Subcommittee for nine years of my recovery. I got my first taste of dope in 1969 and had my last drink on 9 March 1997. My trouble with the law began in 1972 and I got out of prison for the last time in 1997. For most of that time it was cruel and unusual punishment, and I did it to myself. I went to my first NA meeting in prison in 1994.

During this incarceration I went through a long-term treatment program. When I was released I was ordered to attend NA meetings as a condition of my release and parole. When I started attending meetings on the outside, I disqualified myself because I still wanted to get high, but I kept coming back. Somewhere between the literature and the changes I saw in a few addicts I had known from the streets, I found the hope I needed to start to believe in the NA program and follow this way of life.

As a result of an understanding and application of the twelve-step process, a career criminal has become an acceptable, responsible, and productive member of society. Thank God for NA. I owe you one.

WR, VA

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

ART FROM THE INSIDE

H&I T-Shirts



Mexico
Region H&I

South Africa
Region H&I





Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

I have to be completely honest about transitioning from the inside to the outside. I had every intention of going to have a drink when I got out. After all, alcohol was never really my problem, and I figured I could safely go have a couple of margaritas or wine coolers. I didn't have any intention of using other drugs at that time, but surely a drink or two couldn't hurt.

I was released from an institution in a small corner of Wisconsin on 1 November 2006. I was at that mental health facility for three years exactly. Before that I was in jail for a year and a half. I began my time incarcerated on 11 July 2002. I had at least one serious felony and another smaller felony that I fought for quite some time. Finally, the courts and I came to an understanding and I was sentenced to a mental health commitment for 20 years and 10 years probation, to be served concurrently.

I did not jump into recovery with both feet. I was, rather reluctantly, dragged along by the current. I never actively sought out drugs when I was incarcerated, and have been told I could've found them if I'd really wanted to, but I didn't look for them when I was locked up.

In Wisconsin they have a program called conditional release for people who are forensically committed to an institution. I kept seeking that, and after I had spent eleven months in the AODA unit at the institution it was granted to me. So I was released from the institution into less restrictive supervision. By this time I had accepted I needed recovery, although I still thought I would sneak off and get that drink sooner or later. The first day out was interesting. I didn't get much time to myself off the grounds of the group home. I spent most of it adjusting to my new environment.

Shortly after, I was signed up for Women's Way, which is a program for women in recovery—mostly early recovery. I wasn't

really reluctant anymore. I had learned to live without the drugs now. I hadn't done the Steps in order when locked up, but I began to work on them in order. I worked my way out of the group home and graduated to an ankle bracelet in a house owned by the organization that supervised conditional release candidates.

I began going to NA meetings regularly as well. They talked about not drinking in the literature that was read at the beginning of the meetings. Eventually it began to sink in that I should not go experiment with alcohol. On Valentine's Day, 2007, I fell and broke a bone (or three) for the first time in my life. As it turned out, surgery was a necessity. They put me on painkillers. My supervisor put me in another group home after surgery, and they doled out my medication to me as prescribed. I was grateful the medication was supervised. Finally I was released from the ankle bracelet and found a place of my own in September 2007.

There have been many challenges since I got out of the institution—one failed relationship, the broken ankle, the exhaustion of my financial aid for school, poverty, etc. I was released from my mental health commitment in 2010, and was completely released from all supervision on Halloween, 2012. I was really scared I would go back out after completely getting off, but I didn't. I have not relapsed since I made a commitment to recovery all those years ago.

NA has been a huge help to me since I was released, although I think I could have been helped more if there were more women who have experience, strength, and hope in the program. Here where I am, there aren't many women in NA at all. Many of the women who have a long, sordid history with substances are in another fellowship. I, of course, am not knocking that other program, but it would have helped me more if I could have found a sponsor sooner, and an NA sponsor here.

The Twelve Steps have saved my life. I think if we give our Higher Power the reins, nothing terrible will happen in that department. It certainly helped me!

TL, WI

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.



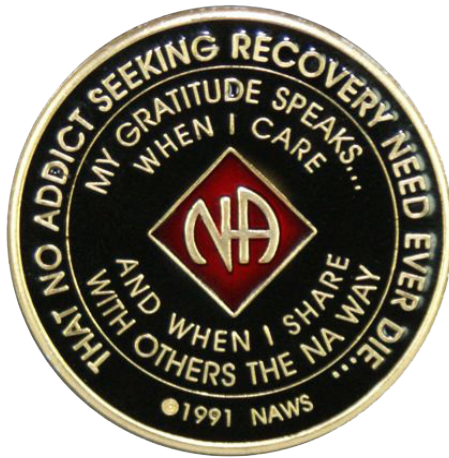
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

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 the 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 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

www.na.org/reachingout

ATTENTION INMATES

If you are relocating and your mailing address changes while you are incarcerated, please update your new address with us so that we can maintain your subscription to *Reaching Out*.