

# Reaching Out



April 2019



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*“We come to realize  
that we are not alien  
and begin to understand  
and accept who we are”*

*Narcotics Anonymous, “We Do Recover”*

# 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](mailto: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 2019	15 April 2019
October 2019	15 July 2019
January 2020	15 October 2019

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](http://www.na.org/reachingout).



# From the Inside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is BH and I am a fretful recovering addict. I have been clean since 31 May 2012. I am serving a seven-year sentence for a crime committed while using drugs. I worked in law enforcement for most of my life. I am proof that addiction has no boundaries and does not discriminate. I went to meetings on the outside but was afraid to share or to be known by other addicts. My fears blocked me from hearing the wonderful message of recovery.

After taking an intense drug treatment program, I was able to learn more about Narcotics Anonymous. I continued to go to meetings weekly, and I have been coming back to them for over two years. NA has taught me how to live again. Prison life is a struggle, but I know I do not have to do it alone. I always thought NA was simply about not using drugs. It is much more than I could ever imagine or dream. With NA and my Higher Power, I can achieve anything. I am truly grateful to Narcotics Anonymous.

BH, Ohio, USA

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is DH and I am an addict incarcerated in a New York state prison. I have been an addict since the age of 14. I first started with the “easy stuff” and soon progressed to the “harder stuff” by the age of 19.

My first prison sentence followed at the age of 22. This sentence was for a crime I committed while on drugs. I received two to seven years for this crime in 2008, only to be arrested on new charges in 2009 for a four-year sentence for drug sales. This crime was also due to my addiction. I was released once more in 2013.

During my time outside, I attended Narcotics Anonymous meetings and stayed drug-free. Once I felt I had it under control, I again thought I could handle life myself. I was arrested for a parole violation. I returned to society only to be incarcerated again in 2014 for my third time. All of my negative behaviors were a direct result of my addiction.

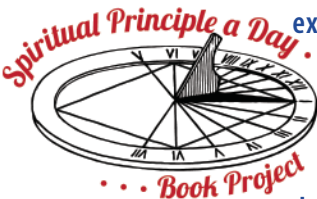
During this incarceration, I dealt with death of loved ones and dissolution of an eight-year marriage. Again, I turned to drugs and received a positive urine test. I was sent to a new facility, where I found my savior, Narcotics Anonymous. I now attend three meetings a week and have five months clean. It is a start. I continue to get through each day clean. I attend all the meetings the facility has to offer and constantly read all my NA literature. I have brought friends to the meetings in the hope that they will receive the blessings I have received. Being clean gives me something to look forward to in the future. Thank you, NA. I owe it not only to you, but also to myself.

DH, New York, USA

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## HOW DO YOU PRACTICE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES?

We're collecting and weaving together members' experience for NA's next book. Capture your experience in a couple of paragraphs and send it in. We will weave together members' experience to create a new book – written by addicts, for addicts – with each day focused on the application of a spiritual principle.



### Be a part of this new book in the making!

Pick a principle and get writing. Send your work to SPAD, c/o NAWs, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA. Those with internet access can learn more at [www.na.org/spad](http://www.na.org/spad) and can email input to [spad@na.org](mailto:spad@na.org).

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

I am an addict named TM. I started using at a young age. I never had the willpower to say no and made bad decisions continually. When my friends were doing drugs, so would I. Most of my days were spent trying to get high. When I was 17 years old, I had progressed to the harder stuff. That is when my life got out of control. I had given up everything to get high. I thought the drugs gave me power and excitement, an escape from life. In the end, all I got was loneliness and despair. I isolated myself and destroyed my life, and my addiction controlled me. I did not know everything would begin to fall apart. All my hopes and dreams would be shattered. All of my friends and family would have nothing to do with me. I ended up homeless and friendless. I became a criminal.

After years of going through the vicious cycle—in and out of jails, prisons, and rehab after rehab, and continual using—I could not figure out what was wrong with me. I could not stop. Why did I keep telling myself I was done? The only thing I kept doing was go right back to using. No matter what the consequences were, I always chose drugs over everything else.

The last time was my worst. I was using whatever I could. I ended up with another arrest. When arrested, I was saved from killing myself. At least that is how I saw it. I received a twelve-year sentence for stealing to support my habit. When I got to prison, I heard they had Narcotics Anonymous meetings, so I went. I was familiar with NA before and went because I had to. This time I went for me, because something had to change. I did not like who I had become and was tired of the same old results.

I decided to honestly try the program and keep an open mind. As I was clean longer and longer, I started to realize just how bad I was. I was self-centered and hurt many people along the way. I had some messed-up thinking due to my addiction. I began to bury myself in the NA literature and go to meetings. Through NA and my higher power, I was given hope that I never thought possible. I realized I could put the past behind me and not use anymore. Most importantly, I can make things right with those I have wronged.

I never want to be the person I used to be, and today I am okay with myself. One day at a time, I learn more on how to repair the wreckage of my past. Today I live the spiritual principles and work the Steps. I carry the message to others in hopes of giving them what they need to overcome their addictions. When other recovering addicts surround me, I am surrounded by those who love, care, and support me. That is where I need to be.

TM, Illinois, USA

*Dear Reaching Out,*

Hello, my name is LM and I am an addict in recovery. I am 50 years old; my clean date is 24 July 2012. The same day I got clean, I turned myself in on a warrant in connection with arson and drug charges. I can see now how my use and abuse contributed to my arrest.

I was hanging with young people who wanted drugs. I knew where to get them. They were in an arson ring. I was lonely and wanted friends, so I started hanging out with them. One thing led to another, and I started living a double life. I was attending Narcotics Anonymous and using. I was saying I was clean and being a fraud.

Now, five years later, I see how my negative thoughts and actions led me to being locked up. I have grown in my recovery. It could be worse. I am in a state psychiatric hospital and received a 37-year sentence. I pled not guilty due to a mental disorder. Using drugs, in my opinion, is the worst thing that brought me down. It took me to the bottom of a pit so low I almost could not climb out.

I now have a therapist, wonderful doctors, and a staff who are helping me. They have showed me I need not fight this battle alone. You do not have to hit rock bottom like the one I did to climb out of the hole. I hope someone gets to read this in the spirit of helping another addict out. Thank you for letting me tell my story.

LM, Connecticut, USA

# 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 [Handl@na.org](mailto:Handl@na.org), or mail to Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.*



Inmate, California, USA





# From the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is LG and I am an addict. My clean date is 6 March 2007. Right now, I am taking a break from work to write this letter. I am working at the same treatment center where I got clean. I love being clean and I love Narcotics Anonymous. As far back as I can remember, I was always a frightened, insecure, obsessive, and compulsive person. Drugs had taken over my entire life, and I could not stand the feelings of uselessness, emptiness, and complete and utter despair that I lived with.

The first day of my release from treatment I went to at least two meetings a day, and I continued that for my first 90 days. I remember feeling so lost, desperate, and afraid. I did not want to use anymore because I was convinced I would die if I went back to using again. I always had a tendency to go after everything in my life with everything I had.

It wasn't until I asked someone to be my sponsor, read the literature with him, and worked the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts that I really experienced the gift of recovery and the miracle in my life. Before I did that, I had lost everything I had pursued. I am grateful for Narcotics Anonymous coming into the treatment center. Those members who were committed to telling newcomers about NA led me to be convinced that the most important thing I needed to do was get connected to the NA program and the people living it.

I am grateful for my sponsor. I love my sponsor. Through sponsorship, I have experienced a relationship like no other that has taught me so much about being effective in every relationship in my life. That daily support has been so vital to my process. I have been through job losses, injuries, getting an education, the birth of my son and raising him as a single father, divorce, relapse of those I love, and patient struggles in reaching for a better life. I



have come so far from where I was and sometimes feel as though I am in a desert. Today, I have bigger hopes and dreams. The NA program has taught me that I can find happiness again.

LG, Indiana, USA

### *Dear Reaching Out,*

I am a recovering addict who learned about H&I from a correctional facility back in 1992. I remember hearing this woman sharing and thinking, “Who told her all my business?” But it was not my business; it was her story, and I could relate because I had done many of the same things she had done, although I thought up until that moment I was the only one. She gave some suggestions for us before she closed: go to a meeting the first day you get out, introduce yourself and ask for numbers, and keep going even if your butt falls off. Pick it up and keep coming back. After discharge, I did exactly that. For almost 15 years as an H&I member, I went back into that same facility to carry this life-saving message of recovery. However, a few months before my 17th year of recovery, I chose to use again, and it took me almost seven years to make it back to the rooms. When I called the hotline, a woman who had heard my message in that facility came to pick me up and bring me back to NA. It was amazing; the person I gave hope to was now in a position to return the gift. She has been my sponsor for almost three years, and I am so grateful for H&I. I served, and now she is serving me.

DL, USA

### *Dear Reaching Out,*

Staying clean on the outside: The miracle of staying clean one day at a time is our goal. If, at the end of the day, you have not used, breathing a clean breath of air is a miracle. The keys are the literature, meeting attendance, another clean addict, the desire not to use, and the Basic Text—and maybe a coffeepot.

REACHING OUT

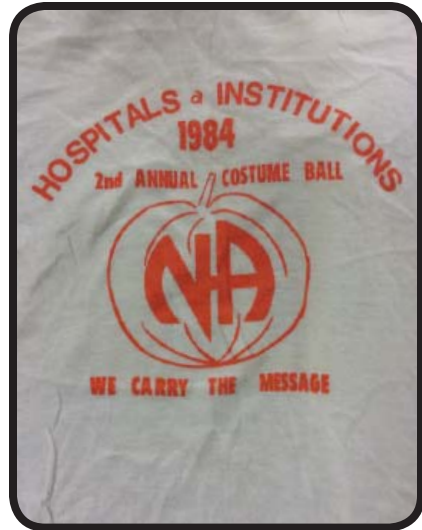
Recovery takes no time off; it begins immediately, as the disease is progressive. Our thinking, which brought us to such pain, is being transformed by simple new ideas from the Steps and from others recovering from this disease. Our literature tells us that transition from a facility to the outside world is difficult regardless of the circumstances. You are welcome in NA. Keep coming back. A Higher Power has given you the tools to get through the day clean. The miracle works in my life, and you can carry the message of hope. The miracle is alive, which is our primary purpose. Please try to give back what has been freely given to you. Surrender one hundred percent to the spiritual principles found in the Steps. It is the key that will set you free! Recovery is possible if we do not use.

A fellow member and grateful recovering addict in NA,

AM, USA



DANMARK



An early H&I Shirt—New York, USA



# Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is KM. I was incarcerated in a women's California state prison for eight years. I have been addicted to one thing or another since I was 15, and I am now 34. I served two prison terms and did not decide to get clean until I was facing multiple life sentences for my choices to feed my addiction. There were many challenging times behind the walls, but through them all, I found and established a solid recovery. I began to lay the groundwork for my transition long before I was granted a release. I stayed clean, attended weekly meetings on the inside, communicated with my sponsor, wrote gratitude lists, and did my best to be an honest, positive member of my community behind the walls.

I was released a little over two weeks ago, and I have chosen to follow the suggestions of those who came before me. I go to meetings even when it feels super-uncomfortable because being around that many people makes me nervous. I share at the meetings honestly and openly about my experience. I trust my Higher Power to show me the best path to take. When I wake up in the morning, I read *Just for Today* and I say the Third Step prayer. Most of all, I know that so long as I do not pick up, and I reach out to my fellow addicts in recovery and stay in conscious contact with my Higher Power, I will make it. I will not just make it, but I will get to live.

As an addict, I prefer instant gratification, but one thing I can say about transition back into the free world is that I have to be willing to be uncomfortable for a little while—the discomfort that comes with living life on life's terms. I am not talking about the physical or material discomfort that might come with starting over out here, but that inner discomfort that I did my best to run from and numb with the use of drugs in the past — the moments of anxiety, depression, and feeling like a misfit. My Higher

Power showed me on the inside that there was a way to live not feeling that way. That way is remaining honest, open-minded, and willing on the outside. My Higher Power is showing me that—one step at a time, one day at a time—I get to have a new lease on life, clean.

One last thing about coming from the inside to the outside is that the availability of technology, social media, and the amount of options for everything has been very overwhelming for me. As an addict, I can be quick to look for comfort in something outside of myself, and with the way the world is today, vigilance is key because there are countless ways to do that. I had no frame of reference for how much the world had truly changed in that way. I followed a suggestion to take it slow and keep it simple. I have had to embrace the spiritual principle of humility when approaching how different this world has become.

Thank you. I am an addict, and I choose not to use today with the help of my Higher Power, those I have met in NA, and my new way of living. I am transitioning with success.

KM, California, USA

### *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is FS and as of 12 January 2019, I will celebrate my 31st year clean in NA. NA has been my life ever since my first meeting back in 1988. A couple of the suggestions that I was told were 90 meetings in 90 days and to start working the Twelve Steps right away with your sponsor. Back in 1988, all we had was a handful of meetings, so we all were able to know each other very well. I had an old man help me shortly after I got out of rehab when I was still pretty crazy, and I thought I could go into bars and just hang. He told me, "If you go to the barber shop enough, eventually you will get a haircut." Another wise man once answered a question for me when I was new. I was having trouble with the word *spirituality*. Therefore, I asked an old person what the difference was between spirituality and religion. Growing up Catholic, I figured I was as good as dead.

What he said was simple: “Religion is for people who are trying to stay out of hell, and spirituality is for people who have been to hell and back.” That fit, and I told that story to many newcomers with the same question.

Finally, when I was still in rehab and attending NA meetings inside, I was a chatterbox whenever the floor opened up — sharing just to hear myself share because I thought I was an awesome newcomer and you had to hear what I was sharing. This oldtimer came up to me after a meeting and said very quickly, “If you want to stay clean, go to as many meetings as you can, sit on your hands, take the cotton out of your ears, and stick it in your mouth until you have something to share.” I do not think I said anything in a meeting for the first 90 days, and that oldtimer is someone who to this day I owe a large part of my cleantime to.

FS, Arizona, USA

### *Dear Reaching Out,*

I am an addict named AC. I was in and out of facilities for many years. I always went when they called NA out. At first, I did not have a clue what it was all about, but over the years curiosity set in, and then I took an interest in it unknowingly. I listened long enough to follow what was being asked of newer members. Little did I know, the program and the principles I was hearing about took hold of me, and I bought into the program. I then became a member of H&I and saw the desperation in addicts and potential addicts. It got me in a way that touched my spirit. There is nothing like looking at members and seeing myself. It works! Thank you for listening to me.

AC, USA

PS: I love NA. I thought I would never be saying this, but I love saying it!

## 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](mailto:HandI@na.org).



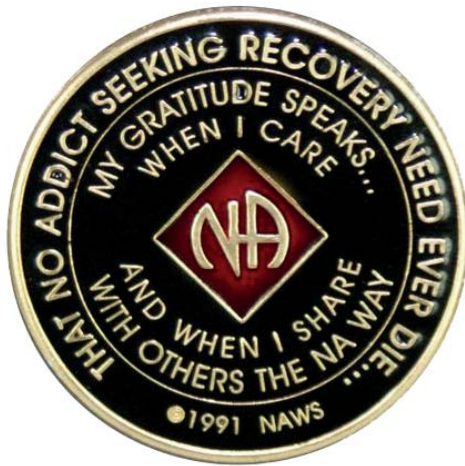
### Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left 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 released after 30 days as for those who are released after 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 that 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 \$38.05 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* @ \$38.05 each, total \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

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[www.na.org/reachingout](http://www.na.org/reachingout)

## ATTENTION INMATES

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