

# Reaching Out

April 2020



Dear NA world  
in RE:

Collecting and "weaving together" experiences for NA's next book

SAN BERNARDINO CA 924  
03 DEC 2019 PM 4 L



SPAD c/o NANS  
Po. Box 9999  
Van Nuys, CA 91409

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Inmate Art Northern CA

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*“We learn that service to others will get us out of ourselves. Our work can begin with simple actions.”*

*Basic Text, Narcotics Anonymous*

## 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 newer 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:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
July 2020	15 April 2020
October 2020	15 July 2020

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 KH. I first came to the Narcotics Anonymous program in November 2009, for the purpose of satisfying the parole board. I received life in prison because I took the life of two innocent people in a car accident while I was under the influence of alcohol and other drugs. I have been in prison for almost 26 years now and have tried every self-help program under the sun. But for me the most impactful program has been the Twelve Steps of NA. I have been abstinent since December 1998, but I never actually knew the true meaning of recovery until I found NA.

I am writing to you about spiritual principles, and I first have to say that the NA program is an experience. At first I went to meetings to fill a seat, but after a while I found myself actually listening to what people were sharing and relating to them. As time went by I also started sharing my



Salinas Valley State Prison, CA

struggles with my addiction, and before I knew it, I began to look forward to the meetings. We worked out of the Basic Text and *It Works: How and Why*. This is how I learned about my defects of character and how to replace them with spiritual principles. Although Step Six helps us become ready to have our higher power remove our defects of character, for me all the Steps remain connected. I use all of them to understand who I was, why I became an addict, and how I have become the person I was meant to be.

My favorite is Step Eight; working this Step I found the true meaning of compassion for others, honesty about who I really am as a person, and the humility for all the harm I have caused in my

life. It is normal to feel guilt, but mine was overwhelming. If it were not for Step Nine, I do not think I could have gotten past the weight of that guilt. I learned how to let go of most of my guilt and shame through forgiveness—not just from those I owed amends to, but to those who harmed me as well, so that I could let go of my resentments. I learned that it is okay to forgive myself and that I do not have to let the negative images of my past tell me who I am today.

KH, California, USA

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

Good morning, my name is M, and I am an addict. I have been clean for four years and fourteen days today. I would like to share my happiness of being clean today with you. I am currently in a closed-regime prison, and I am serving a 24-year sentence. Today I know the meaning of the saying, “The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.” I am not happy to be here, but I am happy and feel well



for being clean. I know I am in a better place and in a better condition to help the newcomers here in the Institutional Group Libertacao of Narcotics Anonymous. We are not many, but we are all clean, and we are changing the stigma of “once an addict,

always an addict” or “once a prisoner, always a prisoner.” As I temporarily serve my sentence, I know that I came in here one way, and I will come out a very different way.

I want to give thanks to my Higher Power, NA, and H&I for the enormous help and support they gave me. They rescued me from the bottom of a cold and dark cell, and carried the message of strength, faith, and hope. We are a vision of hope, we are NA, we are far away, but we are close together. (We are together, “estamos juntos,” is a common saying in Brazil.)

M, Brazil

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

Aloha, my name is BAE. I am 40 years old and currently incarcerated in beautiful, picturesque Maui, Hawaii. This jail is anything but beautiful, but it has literally saved my life. One of the sayings in Narcotics Anonymous is “jails, institutions, and death,” and coincidentally, there is a cemetery right next door to the correction center, and I just thank my higher power I did not end up there.

I am not new to the NA program, but I am new to jail. I was active in NA at the end of my first rodeo in 2001, attending conventions, chairing meetings, and even chairing jail meetings just prior to my relapse.

I got complacent and started drinking, which eventually led me back to other drugs. My second rodeo was a hellish whirlwind that sent me in a downward spiral. I was arrested on several very serious drug charges, for which I am currently incarcerated and awaiting sentencing. NAH&I was not available to the medium-security women inmates until recently, but now we get to go once a month, which I am so grateful for. The same two women dedicate every Friday of theirs to coming into the jail and offering their experience, strength, and hope to the female inmates. Their devotion and their message are inspiring and encouraging; they give me so much hope for my future and have reignited my fiery passion for NA and the desire to reach out and help others.

I have a confident expectancy that this new season of my life will exhibit long-term recovery, as I have accepted my higher power over my life and built a foundation upon it. Centering our recovery on our higher power is absolutely necessary to stay clean and live a happy, healthy, and productive life.

BAE, Hawaii, USA

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

I started using drugs when I was eleven years old. My father had passed away when I was ten years old, and my mother and I started drinking and getting high together, until we chose different drugs. My choice took me to places I never would imagine. I was so bad off at times that I sold my body for as low as three dollars. Life was

rough. After having my first child at the age of 18, I thought that I would slow down, but instead I got worse.

I tried rehab and meetings on the outside, but I was just not ready to stop. Finally, my higher power put me in prison. I am currently doing ten years in a women's facility. The best decision I ever made was attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings and celebrating recovery. I never knew how many people were in the same boat as I was.

I have now been clean for five years and my life is amazingly better. I still fear the day I walk out of this place, but I know that with a good sponsor, my higher power, NA, and my family, everything will be alright.

CT, Virginia, USA

### *Dear Reaching Out,*

Since I have been incarcerated in a New York state correctional facility, I have thought about my past. The amount of time that I have done does not compare to the amount time that I have spent chasing my addictions. I was in complete denial until I started attending meetings in prison. What I did to a woman that I love was an accident but could have been avoided. The night of the accident was a tragedy that I will live with the rest of my life. I pray for her and hope she recovers from this accident. We are both blessed to be alive.

Before I was put in prison, I was living a very unhealthy lifestyle. I was not aware of my thoughts and decisions on a daily basis. Today, I make it a priority to attend a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous each week. This program has guided me in the correct direction to recovery. When I began my journey in prison ten months ago, I was not clean. The NA program, along with other addicts, made me realize that there are other individuals with similar addictions as my own. I no longer live in denial.

Due to my poor choices of driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, a victim suffers and cannot live a normal life now. This has caused both our families and friends stress that addicts do not understand until it is too late. I want other addicts to know that you are not alone. Make it to a meeting. Meetings help, and it all starts with being honest with yourself.

PC, New York, USA



# ART FROM THE ZSIDE



SPAD keyfob from an Inmate, California, USA

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



Anonymous



# From the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is RM, and I am an addict. I am excited to be able to write and share some of my experience, strength, and hope. I was in active addiction between the ages of 15 and 31. During that time I was in and out of rehabs two times and the penitentiary a total of three times. I was the type of addict who would lie, cheat, and steal from his own family. When I used, absolutely nothing else mattered. It was during my last run that I found myself homeless in the streets of Phoenix, Arizona, sleeping in stairwells and stealing from gas stations just to be able to eat. Any money I could round up went straight into the pipe. Eventually, in May 2013, I was arrested for burglary and sent to prison for my third time. It was at this time that I was blessed with the gift of desperation. I was finally able to see that every time I chose to get loaded, I found myself going back to prison.

Luckily for me, my mother had come to Narcotics Anonymous in 1989, and as a kid I would attend the meetings with her, so I was no stranger to the meetings or our readings. As I sat in jail awaiting sentencing, our literature began to come alive in this addict's mind. I was finally able to see that through my inability to accept personal responsibility, I had been creating my own problems. All I understood at that time was that I was ready to do whatever it would take to stay out of prison—even if it meant not getting high anymore.

The judge sentenced me to three years and four months, and I vowed to use that time to go to meetings if they were made available to me. While I was in prison, I met an inmate who had a passion for NA. I knew he had taken more drugs than I had taken, committed more crimes than I had committed, and served more time than I had served, and because of that I asked him to sponsor me. He put me in contact with NAWS, who sent me a Basic Text and the information for my regional H&I. Eventually, that inmate was moved to another yard, but in his absence regional H&I stepped in through Sponsorship Behind the Walls. I was assigned a sponsor and thoroughly worked



Steps with him for the remainder of my sentence. It was because of his commitment to service and his faith in the program of Narcotics Anonymous that this addict was given the gift of hope and, upon release, a new life.

Today, I stay active in my NA community by regularly attending meetings, working the Steps with an NA sponsor, going to my home group, and being of service. Today, I give back to the program that gave me a new way of life by serving as a sponsor in the same committee that carried the message to me while I was locked up. I am also privileged to be able to take a meeting into an ADOC facility that works with parole violators. My life is nothing like it once was; NA's promise has become true in my life. I have lost the desire to use and have found a new way of life, a life that does not involve hurting the ones I love and does not involve me going back to prison. Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous.

RM, Arizona, USA

### *Dear Reaching Out,*

I am grateful to Narcotics Anonymous for teaching me a spiritual principle. The one I practice the most is honesty — honesty in knowing that I am an addict. This means to live in active addiction, I put drugs above everything else in my life. Honesty in knowing that anything I put in my body that changes the way I feel is catastrophic to my recovery. Honesty in knowing that the outcomes of my drug use will always be jails, institutions, or death.

I wake up every morning and practice honesty in all of my affairs, especially how I see myself. The Basic Text tells me there are only two things I have power over, the way I see myself and how I respond.

Honesty gives me the ability to see myself as I truly am. It helps me practice humility, and through this I am able to have a more abundant, manageable life.

TR, Georgia, USA

# ART FROM THE H&I SIDE

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](mailto:HandI@na.org)



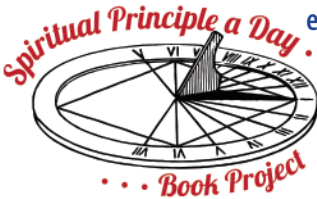


*Anonymous*

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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).

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# Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

I am an addict, and I have been in recovery for one year. Narcotics Anonymous gave me a mirror; for this I am thankful. When I was released from prison, I decided to be honest with myself. I am on a forward stride. I am not holding myself back anymore. I realize that taking an honest inventory is very important. Honesty is a priority at all times; when you are not honest you are only fooling yourself. Today I am 100 percent honest with myself, so I can move on.

Everything I ever prayed for I got by the grace of my Higher Power. I also destroyed everything it has given me. I allowed being a people pleaser to consume me. I never wanted to face the pain from others, but mostly from myself. At first I did not realize it, but I had been at it for years. I was deeply hurt by things that were not true and things that were not me, yet they became true and I consisted of them. I was called a liar a lot, but I was not lying to them, I was lying to myself.

I realize that those times I cried, saying, “I did this, I did that,” and thought I deserved something different in return, I deserved exactly what I was dealt. I did not know how selfish, self-absorbed, and self-centered I was on the inside; I dressed it well. I was a woman who had unwholesome thinking fed by corruption and dressed with delusion. Suddenly, I realized all this, and I was not clean, I was filthy. Wrong intention, wrong view, wrong action—just wrong, all wrong. I thought my heart was at least right, but it was not.

My Higher Power never left me. Sure, a lot of bad things happened to me; I felt and hurt plenty, but the truth was that I ruined myself. I thought I was different, better off, until I became the very person I said I would not be. The more I learn from NA about being honest with myself, the more I can be completely free.

Today, I am here writing this because I am being honest and completely free. I realize that the pain I felt belongs to me. Although I thought I was a good woman, I was not—and not any different or

better off than anyone else. The fact is, today I am every bit of that magnificent woman, and I am just being honest. Thanks, NA.

CA, New York, USA



# 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*.