

Reaching Out



Volume 28, Number 1

January 2013

Welcome	PAGE 2
From the Inside	PAGE 3
From the Outside	PAGE 10
Order Form	PAGE 16

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.

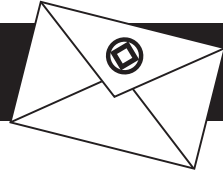
Share your gratitude in *Reaching Out*! We need letters from members who found NA on the inside and are now maintaining their recovery on the outside. If this is you, or you have a heart-warming H&I story, please share your experience, strength, and hope. This issue features a worksheet on page 14 designed to help our members contribute. Additional *Reaching Out* tools are available on our website:

http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching_out-index

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
April 2013	15 January 2013
July 2013	15 April 2013
October 2013	15 July 2013
January 2014	15 October 2013

FROM THE INSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is AJ and I am an addict. Oh, what a powerful statement that is. I am extremely grateful to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous for providing a vessel on which I can climb aboard and sail onward in my personal journey of life. I have been incarcerated for the last 13 years and will be returning to society in the early part of 2013. I decided to check out a Tuesday night meeting in May of 2008. Well, the emotions, the support, the love, and the overall feeling of not being alone any longer totally overcame my entire being. How do I describe it? I truly don't think I can do that. From the inside, I have participated in numerous rehabilitative programs, well over 80, and I am currently involved in an intensive inpatient block program for dealing with the exact elements of my crime. These programs have prepared me with the courage that I needed to actually attend an NA meeting. But the Fellowship of NA has taken my recovery totally to another level. I have struggled with self-esteem, abandonment, neglect, low self-worth, and many other very serious emotional issues. But none of that mattered the second I was hugged by the man who has volunteered his time to actually oversee our meeting. Wow!! How do I describe that?

I started to share, and it felt so good. I was nominated to become the literature person and eventually was elected the secretary. Oh my god! What was happening here? The feelings of unconditional acceptance totally possessed my spirit, and I wholeheartedly became a trusted servant of our group. This experience was so new to me because all those other emotional issues and my sexual orientation have caused me to feel that I could never be part of something that was healthy and included me, J the person, not J the gay guy, the outcast, the loser.

Soon, I embraced the help, the support, and the message of NA. I sent a letter to NA World Services, and with the help of a great corrections officer, I inquired about sending our group some books. Well, the day the books arrived was like Christmas to me! Just look

at the power of recovery, of helping each other, of *Reaching Out* to each other; it is just so powerful. Our group now has a dedicated recovery room and it is being filled with posters, some even sent by NA World Services. Yes, I made another request, and they answered. I have come to gain so much confidence, peace, and self-esteem that it scares me, but I know that as long as I keep working my recovery, I will continue to become a stronger, more compassionate, more peaceful human being. And you know what? That's exactly what I want to be.

Thank you to NA World Services, thank you to all the guys at the Tuesday night group, and a very special thanks to our two volunteers for coming each week and being the captains of our vessel of recovery from port to port.

I have been truly blessed to have entered the halls of Narcotics Anonymous, and I will continue my recovery throughout the rest of my life. I do plan on joining another group upon my release and becoming an active member of that group. Who truly knows where my journey of recovery will take me? I do know that I am grateful for your services and all that the NA program provides throughout the world in spreading the passion of recovery, of hope, of living a good, peaceful, healthy life. Thank you, oh so much!!

Sincerely,
AJ, NC

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is JH and I am an addict. I am currently in jail and I'm trying to work the NA program. I'm going to meetings when they are available, but there are only a few here. It is hard to try to work a program inside because not everybody in here really wants recovery. Some of those who do go to meetings just do it to pass time. I feel alone and would love to be there for another addict seeking recovery.

My story is not simple, but whose is? I spent most of my life behind these walls, hiding from myself and running from ghosts. It's been said to me, "Wherever you go, there you are." It's true. I am 35 years old; hiding from myself is no longer acceptable. I have a lovely wife and four children. I try extra-hard to rid myself of any ghosts, not for them, but for myself. I want to be a father. I know I can. I am not new to NA. When I was only months away from three years clean, I relapsed.

Once again, I found myself in this place, only now I'm looking at a life sentence. My relapse story started almost a year ago. I was in an accident and my back was badly hurt. The doctors put me on medication because of my pain. I told them I was an addict, but the pain was so severe it kept me paralyzed. I tried to go without meds for about one day, but my doctor said he was scared of me having a heart attack because my blood pressure was too high.

I gave in after some serious thought. I told myself I was honest enough to work my program and the Twelve Steps. I forgot that this disease is a power greater than me. I immediately noticed my addictive personality starting to take over. I would sit there for long periods, in pain, staring at my pills. My wife could see that I was in pain, and begged me to take them.

I knew what was happening to me. I kept thinking, "How do I tell my wife that the man she thought was perfect is nothing but an addict?" I didn't want to tell her that the pills were changing me into the person I was trying so hard not to be. I should have been honest. I should have called my sponsor. I was so embarrassed that I was on the pills after all this time clean.

Instead, I tried different things to fight the behaviors and still be pain-free. I talked to the doctors, who tried other kinds of medication, but nothing worked. I gave the pills to my mom to hide from me, but I found them. None of these attempts to control the disease worked; I was hooked again.

Now I am clean once again and trying to make amends. I am working my steps and trying to keep my head up. I haven't been this honest in years. Losing everything I love to addiction made me see how powerful this disease is. I have to stay vigilant. I have only two choices: stay in my addiction or dust myself off and try again. I've already given this disease too much of my life. I choose to live.

JH, CA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello, my name is EP and I am an addict. I have been in the program for over two years. I wrote to *Reaching Out* for the first time in 2009 and my letter was published. I thought I would give you an update.

In the last year, I went through all the steps in *The NA Step Working Guides* with two sponsees. Both have since gone home and are

doing well on the outside. I may be doing life in prison, but to be able to carry the message to these two guys was amazing. I hope I helped them learn a better way so that they do not return to prison. Two down, and I pray for more to come.

My personal program is great. I have my first outside sponsor and he is leading me through all the steps again. I just can't get enough step work! Our "Inside Hope" group meets every Thursday night. Our two meeting sponsors have been coming for over ten years, and this carries a powerful message. They are cool guys who have a wealth of knowledge and experience that has a profound effect on our group conscience. They are always here and ready, even on holidays.

I believe this year in the program will be full of humility, open-mindedness, willingness, honesty, and service work. I wish to issue a challenge to everyone who has written to *Reaching Out* before to write again and let us all know how you're doing. If I am still here and my program is getting stronger, others must be doing the same. Sound out, my brothers and sisters of the fellowship!

EP, FL

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm an addict named B. I first got clean in 1982. I say clean because I was only clean (abstinent) and I was not serious about recovery. I remained clean for two years because I was put in rehab by a county judge. In other words, I did it for them and not me.

Then, after losing another job and getting locked up again, I finally surrendered to my addiction and got help again; however, this time was for me. This time I was willing to do anything to stay clean and did everything that was suggested to me. Back then it was "old school" — you were told what to do and you did it without asking why! I was in a recovery house and was told to get a sponsor now, go to 90 meetings in 90 days, and stay out of a relationship. I was open-minded this time. I worked the steps and stayed in recovery for 14 years. This was the best 14 years of my life. I had the same job for nine years and they closed the plant where I was working. I had a new truck, boat, motorcycle, and even a bank account. I say this not to brag, but for me this was an accomplishment. Now, the hard part is what came next.

I can say it in one word: relapses. All that I worked to achieve was out the door; I sold everything I owned to use drugs. My point is that all that “stuff” didn’t keep me clean and in recovery. The NA meetings and my recovering addict friends, my sponsor and working the steps, and my conscious contact with my Higher Power are what kept me clean and in recovery.

Currently, I am incarcerated for my fifth DUI and doing 3½ to 7 years. I am 55 and will be 62 when I am off parole, and I have two sons who are addicts. I know with help recovery is possible! Right now, I have one year clean and am attending NA meetings on the inside. I know that if I surrender daily, go to my meetings, talk when I feel like using, and keep a conscious contact with my Higher Power, recovery is possible.

I would like to show some gratitude to everyone who makes it possible for inmates to get a *Just for Today* meditation and everything else that we receive in the mail. I personally start my day with the reading in *Just for Today*. I know with help, “We Do Recover.” Again, thank you to everyone for supporting inmates.

Just 4 Today,
BK, PA

THE INSIDE

ART FROM



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 HandI@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*,

Hi, my name is D and I am an addict. Early in life, I thought I needed something. It wasn't Mom and it wasn't Dad; it was drugs. My first drug was at eleven years old, and many juvenile homes followed. I started injecting drugs at 16, which lasted for ten years. I attended my first NA meeting in a minimum-security prison in Nebraska. After being released, I hit the road as a nomad, traveling from city to city, winding up locked up in either psychiatric wards or county jails. Finally I got some GOD (good orderly direction) in a mental hospital where I spent seven months.

It was there that I got to know my future NA family, thanks to Hospitals & Institutions for bringing in a panel. I soon buckled down and hit the Basic Text, started working steps, and amazingly stayed clean after release from the hospital. I went to a men's recovery house and learned some spiritual principles—mostly the hard way—and even had to pick up the pieces a few times, but thanks to NA and my God, I am clean today. As of today, I am employable and I have a beautiful wife, thanks to NA. My NA family helps me through day-to-day living issues and I don't have to use drugs anymore. I'm on my way to learning more about service and I can't wait to carry the message, not the mess. To anyone who reads this, just remember, right now you don't have to get high anymore. This program is love and unity. Finally, I, my wife, my mama, and my God are happy.

D, Ohio

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I first got involved with NA Hospitals & Institutions (H&I) when a panel came into the Los Angeles County Jail system while I was incarcerated. I was 51 years old. I always detoxed in the county jail. Thirteen clean years later, it occurred to me that H&I had found me locked up.

H&I has changed my life. I have not been locked up in jail since that time. I have not had to detox in jail or anyplace else since that time.

Once, an addict involved in H&I asked me to speak on a panel on Christmas Eve in a detox unit. I became a panel leader a year later. Since that time, I have always tried to find a panel on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

To those addicts reading this on the inside, my message is that you never have to go to jail again.

Anonymous, CA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is EM, and I'm an addict. I was first introduced to Narcotics Anonymous during a prison term. Before I got locked up, my life was controlled by drugs. Just as our literature says, I "lived to use and used to live." I never understood this saying until a few years ago. Now, I want to share my story. I want any convict who thinks they can't live without drugs to know that that's a lie.

I was told my whole life that I would never amount to anything because I was a drug addict. I heard this so much, I started to believe it. Prison became my lifestyle. Today, I think back and I am so grateful for the H&I member who took the time to come to prisons and share the message of hope this person had found through NA. I'm not going to lie; I didn't decide to stay clean while I was in prison. I went to meetings for coffee and donuts. Once I got out, I used.

When I tested dirty, I was faced with a choice. I could either go back to prison for a year or go to 30 meetings in 30 days. I took the court card and went to my first outside meeting. I still didn't want recovery. I figured I could go to meetings for a while to keep the courts happy, then go back to using drugs. I showed up to meetings high, didn't say much, and never made eye contact. I could not believe that so many addicts could really be clean. My way of thinking was so clouded by the disease that I don't remember what people were sharing about.

During those 30 days, something happened. I started hearing "keep coming back" and "we will love you until you can love yourself." After 30 meetings, I left NA and kept using. All the little NA sayings and slogans kept running through my mind and ruining my high. I stayed out there for six years and caught a new case. I ended up back in jail again. This time, I recognized the NA members who came in with the H&I panel to carry the message. I finally heard their

stories. I had my first spiritual awakening. I realized that if I did not stop using, I would die.

I'm grateful to say that I have been clean since 5 December 2006. I truly surrendered that day in jail. After six years of coming to the rooms, my mind finally opened. Now, due to the program of NA, I have an amazing life. I have a job, a dog, and a home. I used to have a hard time imagining that a person could have all these things without stealing, but I have worked hard for all of it. Most of all, I have an amazing, worldwide family because of the fellowship of NA. Today, I have freedom from active addiction. My gratitude goes out to all my predecessors who have shown me how to live *The NA Way*. I am forever grateful.

EM, CA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak at a women's jail in Nebraska as a panel member of H&I. The experience I had was one I probably will not forget. I have never been in jail, so I was not prepared for the restrictions and the sense of freedom lost. This experience helped me to be more grateful for the freedom I now have because of recovery in NA.

Once it was time for me to share on the H&I panel, I realized that the message of recovery needed to come from my heart and not from my ego. Following the meeting, there were many questions and a few tears as inmates shared their similar experiences with me.

I must say that when I stepped out of the facility with my jewelry back on my body, my cell phone in my hand, and the freedom to go home to my family, I felt that this was a rewarding experience and one that I wouldn't forget. Thanks, NA, for letting me be of service.

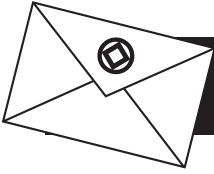
LF, NE

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.

*The Old Me
is
Dead and Gone*

ART FROM THE OUTSIDE





INSIDE / OUTSIDE

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!

What was your first contact with NA behind the walls? _____

How did you work the NA program while incarcerated? _____

Do you have a particular H&I experience you would like to share?

Describe your transition from incarceration to your NA community on the outside. _____

Tell us about your first NA meeting on the outside. _____

What benefits of recovery have you experienced? _____

Thank you for sharing! Your experience with the NA program can inspire other addicts seeking fellowship and recovery.

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

To download a pdf of this worksheet, go to
http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching_out-index.



“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”

SUBSCRIPTION 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 \$32.60 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* @ \$32.60 each, total \$ _____.

Name _____
(PLEASE type or print clearly)

Identification Number _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Country _____

Please enclose check or money order with your bulk subscription order.

Mail to:
Reaching Out
c/o NA World Services
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409
USA