

# Reaching Out

January 2014



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*Reaching Out is the beginning of the struggle that will set us free. It will break down the walls that imprison us. A symptom of our disease is alienation, and honest sharing will free us to recover.*

Basic Text, "Recovery and Relapse"

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

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
April 2014	15 February 2014
July 2014	15 April 2014
October 2014	15 July 2014
January 2015	15 October 2014



# From the Inside

*Dear Reaching Out,*

I'm back in prison again. This is my second time. The first time I was initially getting high in prison, but then I started going to meetings and helped start the first NA meeting at my prison. I worked on myself and helped others and really thought I had this disease of addiction licked. I went to meetings and stayed clean for several months after I got out, but once I got a job and made money, I went to less and less meetings and didn't get a sponsor. I slipped and tried to get clean again on my own, without seeking help in NA. It didn't work. I was back to the insanity again, losing my girlfriend, job, home, and trust of family and friends. Insanity, again. So I'm back in prison and almost grateful to be here, if that's what it took for me to work the steps again. I get out in less than two years, and this time I'll have more humility and persistence in NA. I don't have to do it alone. I'm inspired by the stories outside NA members bring into prison, and also by the resolve and commitment of my fellow NA members. I can't stay clean on my own, but with the help of NA and my higher power I have HOPE again, and that makes life worth living.

Thanx!

DM, FL

*Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is KM and I'm an addict incarcerated in Arizona. First of all, I would like to thank you so much for sending me the *Reaching Out* newsletters for all these years. I love reading the letters from other incarcerated addicts like me, sharing their experience, strength, and hope! I also like the letters from the outside; it feels great knowing that I have a family out there waiting for me and that I too can maintain my recovery once I'm released.

I was recently transferred from the yard I was on for over five years to a reentry-to-society yard (going-home yard). I do miss my home group and everyone there. But I know this is a good thing. I go home this Saturday!! Yes, I'm a little nervous and excited, but NA has taught me that I have nothing to fear and that this too will pass, as long as I don't pick up and make it to a meeting as soon as I'm released.

I've been clean now for five years and seven months, thanks to NA and my higher power—and I don't want to lose this! So I plan on getting involved, working the steps, and taking the suggestions. I do look forward to going to a meeting on the outside. I never want to come to prison again, and through NA, I won't have to!

I still have a lot of work to do, and this is a new phase in my journey of recovery. The big difference today is that I'm willing to do whatever it takes!

I thank you again for all the help, support, and love you have given me these past years.

Your friend always,

KM, AZ

*Dear Reaching Out,*

Thank you! Yes, thank you, NA. I got a *Just for Today* book. It came at the right time for me. I also need to thank the fellowship for helping me stay clean. In a place that is supposed to be a punishment, it comes to me (a day at a time) as a blessing to find myself and to give me hope in such a hopeless place. Thank you, H&I. Thank you, NA. Thank you, Higher Power, for getting me through this day. I am truly blessed and grateful. I never have to feel the pain and despair of addiction, as long as I continue to live the NA way, just for today. Thank you.

Gratefully yours,

PB, CT

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is T; I am 35 years old. I spent most of my teenage years incarcerated in juvenile facilities, and then, from age 18 until I was 22, in prison. At that time I found NA, and I haven't been back to prison in almost ten years.

After five years of being clean, my marriage began to fall apart. I started drinking with my wife to have something in common with her. I was lying to myself about every aspect of my life. For three years I hid my using from the people who cared about me to save a bad marriage. I undid all the recovery work I had done and put my literature in dresser drawers for good. Now I'm in jail one more time.

Unmanageability. I had stopped going to meetings and stopped calling my recovery friends. I'm disappointed not so much about what happened, but more that I know better. I had put personalities before principles. I lost my home and my kids. I was overwhelmed with defeat and powerlessness. I am grateful to have the program of NA. I'm allowed to go to meetings weekly in county jail. I read the NA literature, and when I feel the pressure coming on, I take notes. These guys who write to you—it takes courage to stand up and admit our wrongs and to ask for help. I felt so alone. I don't ever want to feel the feelings I've gone through in the past four months. I'm eternally grateful that I went through them and that I turned to NA.

Thank you; thanks for NA.

T, WI

## WCNA 35 Unity Day Call – Shout Out!

HMP Durham

Greetings and welcome to you all.

We, the fellowship of I Wing Recovery Centre, Her Majesty's Prison, Durham, England, are honoured to be a part of history and this convention in uniting together to send a message to the world.

You are not alone. Say NO to addiction.

Say NO to living a life that ends in prisons, institutions, or death.

Say YES to the Twelve Steps, spirituality, and recovery.

Remember: "It works if you work it. If you don't,  
GAME OVER, YOU LOSE!"

UK

*Editor's Note: HMP Durham UK was to be a participant on the Unity Day call. However, due to connection difficulties, we did not hear from them during the call. They sent us their "shout out" and wanted to share with you in this Reaching Out.*

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

I'm TS from Florida. I am 35 years old and I have been using since age twelve, never realizing I had a problem. I just thought I liked to party. I was using until I was blacked out, passed out, having a heart attack, dying from withdrawal—some party. Been married and divorced twice; both wives used with me. When wife #1 couldn't handle my craziness anymore, she left for another man. So I binged for two months until I met wife #2. We both used a lot and got deep into the club rave scene. We were a party couple. It lasted eleven crazy, sad, weird years, and then she, too, left me for another man. So it was off to the races again. Bigger binges and more drugs, dealing heavy just to feel needed, I just had to be the man everyone needed.

Well, it all caught up to me, and in one year I went from married weekend user to drug trafficking and full-blown addict. I'm doing three years now for trafficking, and I feel that I'm one of the lucky ones. I found my first NA meeting in the county jail, and at first I did it just to get out of the cell. Then it happened; I wasn't alone. This is where I find people like me—addicted, hurt, broken. NA has changed the way I look at life and the way I look at myself. I've been in here for eight months now; I go to meetings every week and I'm working my steps slowly. I don't yet have a sponsor. It's hard for me to trust, and I still have my hard days when I think, "Why me, why so much pain, why even try?" and then I just close my eyes and say a prayer, and it helps. Through NA I have turned my life and will over to a God of my understanding, and slowly my attitude and fears toward life have started to change. I now know my next 35 years are going to be clean, spiritual, and spectacular.

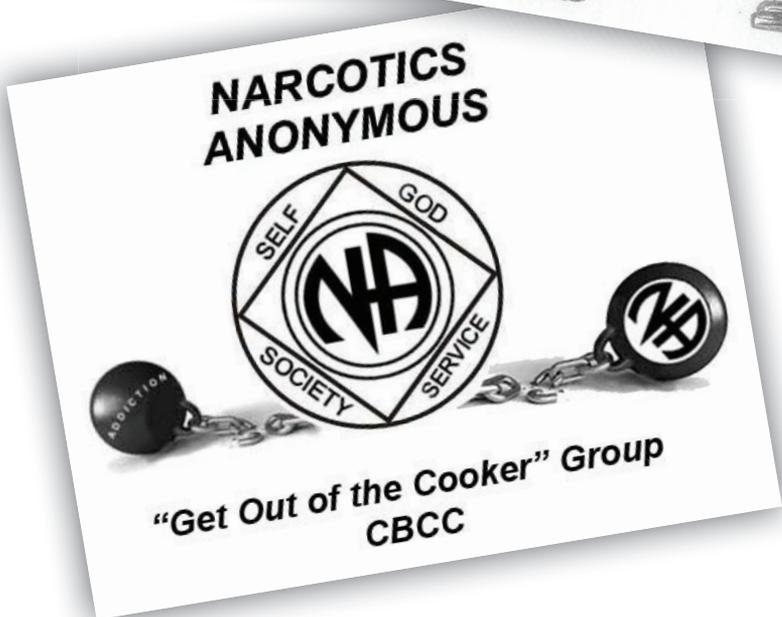
Thank you, NA

TS, FL

# 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.





# From the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

I am JP and I am an addict. When I had three months clean I started ordering literature for the H&I subcommittee. Through that commitment, I learned about our IPs by reading them and learning from the other members which IPs were best for each type of facility. I continued on and became a secretary for different facilities and worked my way into the position of liaison to a local jail. This position taught me how my H&I work was also public relations and how doing good volunteer work in that capacity improved NA's relations with the jail, and how it helped our members get cleared to help us carry the message to more addicts. Once I became a rep to our region, I found my tribe. My favorite service work is to do a jail/prison meeting. My involvement with our region brought many rewarding moments to my recovery. I currently serve on two different jail panels, I go into three fire camps and one state prison, and I'm a liaison to CDCR. I participate with the WSO H&I web meeting and I help a tiny bit with this publication.

My sponsor's sponsor had been doing H&I for twelve years when my sponsor, who had also been doing H&I for eight years, suggested that I become the H&I literature person for our area. I did what was suggested. It is a family tradition.

Helping inmates has improved my communication skills in NA, in business, and in life. I learned how to speak in front of people by doing H&I service. It taught me how to answer questions about our program, both the steps and the traditions. It taught me to continue to learn more and to be a better sponsor. It has also allowed me to meet some awesome people throughout the world, both in NA and working with those who we come in contact with. There is the selfish part that it keeps me clean one more day, and early on I made it part of my Ninth Step. There

was no way I could make amends for 27 armed robberies. I would never be able to find the people or the businesses. So by doing H&I, if it keeps fellas or gals from committing crimes because they now are clean, I have given back to society and had some kind of positive effect to counter all those negatives. It is a gift to do H&I service.

Besides being allowed to be part of the Unity Day call in 2011, and now the call in 2013 as well, the best experience I have received over and over is when I see a person who has been in a meeting at a facility where I did an H&I panel, and then they come up to me at an outside meeting, introduce themselves, and let me know that they are still clean. That gives you goose bumps. To see they have made the long journey from incarceration to an NA meeting makes you feel good. The fact that they look good and are not killing themselves or getting locked up again is very powerful. The one thing I would like to say to the addicts on the inside is: Start working the NA program to the best of your ability.

Thank you, *Reaching Out*.

JP, CA

*Dear Reaching Out,*

### **The Adventure of a Lifetime**

This story begins with a prayer: Please help me to write your story without getting in the way.

While loaded to the point of blackout, an 18-year-old aspiring addict beat a man to death in 1965.

I was convicted and mandated to serve a sentence of five years to life in perhaps the most notorious maximum-security penitentiary in the state of California. While there, I grew into manhood as my addiction progressed. I continued the same old story of addiction and crime after being granted parole in 1972. From that time until April 29, 1976, it was full speed ahead. The wheels fell off and I found myself in my first NA meeting. I quickly became hopeful and became an avid student of recovery. Teachers appeared with the toolbox of recovery. In it I found the

gift of giving. Very helpful in learning to use this tool was H&I. Over the next 15 years I went to every jail, nuthouse, or prison that I could. I dreamed of one day going back to carry the message into the prison where I had done time—in other words, the neighborhood I grew up in. A change in policy came up and locked me out. Convicted murderers were excluded from going into locked facilities with H&I panels.

As the years passed, the hope of carrying the message at the prison where I had been incarcerated began to dim. Twenty-odd years later, I was invited to go to New Mexico on a panel in the prison there. There was an NA convention in Albuquerque that weekend. At dinner I met a man from California, and the conversation eventually got around to the fact that I went to New Mexico to speak in the prison. After I explained why I went all the way to New Mexico to the prison, he told me he might well be able to help me get cleared to go into the prison where I had once served time. He told me that he sponsored the chairman of H&I panels in that prison and had been going there for a very long time. Within a brief period of time, an associate warden at that prison came to learn about me and my desire to go back inside to carry the NA message. An exception was made, and I was cleared to go in on a panel.

I could tell a whole other tale about my experience walking in the front gate 40 years later. However, this story is about walking into the meeting room. I had dreamed of this for over three decades, and was totally unprepared for the experience. The buzz of recovery in the room was like going to a convention; that tense prison atmosphere of the yard stopped at the doorway to the meeting room. It seemed as if it could not penetrate this sanctuary of recovery. There were about 150 men of all ages and races mixing and talking, filling the room with that energy that I have only experienced where large groups of recovering people are gathered. NA was alive and bustling beyond, way beyond, what I could have imagined or would have believed.

The six new men who came in off the yard for their first time were given an enthusiastic welcome. What we have come to know

## REACHING OUT

as the atmosphere of recovery was clearly there in that room. I saw no one distracted or disinterested among them. They seemed hungry for recovery. It was over the top! After the meeting the men were warm and friendly. I felt more at home that night than I may ever have felt in an NA meeting. I am one of them. I was most touched by a man I talked with after the meeting. He is doing all day. He has no hope of getting out. I asked him to explain to me what he was doing in NA. Unlike many others, his hope is not about a better life outside the walls; it is about a better life now, inside the walls. Wow!

I am overjoyed to pass the message on to you, the fellowship. Narcotics Anonymous and recovery from addiction are alive and thriving inside the walls of the Bastille by the Bay. My love and gratitude for NA were significantly deepened by sharing with the fellas in my old neighborhood. Don't cheat yourself; help out in H&I!

MS, CA

# ART FROM THE TO THE 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)



## 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? \_\_\_\_\_

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How did you work the NA program while incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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Tell us about your first NA meeting on the outside. \_\_\_\_\_

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What benefits of recovery have you experienced? \_\_\_\_\_

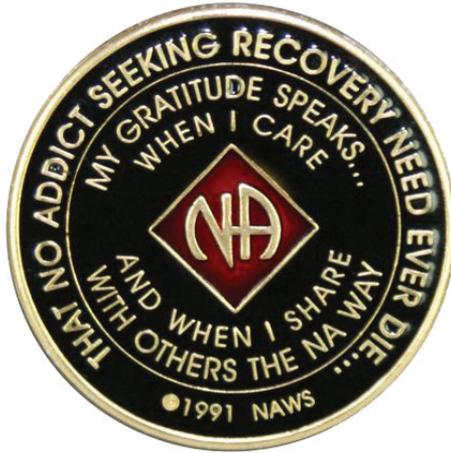
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**Thank you for sharing!** Your experience with the NA program can inspire other addicts seeking fellowship and recovery.

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

To download a pdf of this worksheet, go to  
[http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching\\_out-index](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”*

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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