

Reaching Out



January 2017



MINNESOTA SPONSORSHIP BEHIND THE WALLS

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“Reaching out is the way we break out of our self-obsession. Service opens us to transformation and to love. The more we practice selflessness, the easier it becomes, and the more rewarding we find it to be.”

Living Clean, “Relationships”

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
April 2017	15 January 2017
July 2017	15 April 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,

My name is TB and I am an addict. I started this journey four years ago, sitting in a jail cell, once again set to lose much of what I cared about as a direct result of my addiction and character defects. My life had become a constant struggle with drugs and troubles resulting from my using. I was speaking to someone I loved and cared for very much one night. I was informed that I was the most selfish person they had ever met.

After seven months of using and being in jail, I came to realize just how right she was. Everyone involved with or associated with me was affected by my using. It was one night lying alone in my bed, feeling completely empty, that I made a conscious decision to give this program an honest try. I got a sponsor, attended as many meetings as I could, and here I am, three years, two months, and thirteen days clean.

I am living clean and working my steps. I have lost loved ones and even dealt with other tragedies. I lived inside prison and watched as my sponsor was diagnosed with multiple Stage IV cancer, and still managed to stay clean through it all due to the Fellowship and the program of Narcotics Anonymous. I have been involved in the Unity Day call and felt the love of the worldwide Fellowship. With just over 100 days left in prison, I look forward to a clean life outside of here. My journey is just beginning. I would like to thank the World Service Office, *Reaching Out*, and everyone in the NA Fellowship for helping me to stay clean. One day at a time.

TB, NY

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is BKS and I am an addict. I have been clean this time since 30 November 2013. I still have over a year left on a five-year term and I am looking forward to getting out and being a part of the NA program. This was not always the case.

I had been using since 1999. I had been in and out of jail, prisons, and institutions. I even courted death a time or two. Even with all of that, it wasn't until my third time in prison that I knew I had to do something about my problem and my disease or this would be my life. I have been in and out of the rooms of NA since 2001. I always flirted with the NA program, never wanting to commit fully. I loved the way NA looked and the benefits it had for staying clean, but I didn't want to do the footwork to get them.

I always thought I could get over my addiction my own way. Yet here I sit. Since coming to prison, I have joined the rooms of NA. Here I have finally found the solutions to my problems that have eluded me for so long. My favorite part of the Basic Text is the chapter on "More Will Be Revealed" because NA has granted me the freedom from active addiction and my self-made prison. Today I have a new outlook on life and it is beautiful. Thank you, NA.

I hope those who read this will know and find your own way out of the prisons that keep you locked up in your own minds. Give NA a chance. I did it my way and it never worked out. I always ended up locked up. Now I am doing it the NA way. Even in prison you can find freedom from your addictions. I am an addict and at the end of my rope. I can and will recover.

BKS, FL

Dear Reaching Out,

Hello. I am an addict and my name is TC. I am writing this letter from my cell in a New York state correctional facility. I am here for crimes I committed during the end of my active addiction. I am proud to say I am a member of this facility's group of Narcotics Anonymous.

In 2001 I was ordered to rehab and was first introduced to NA. I would like to say I stayed but I didn't, and I continued to suffer. For the next eleven years I kept using until 2012. I was on a crime spree to support my addiction. When I was arrested for the first time on this spree, I was released to another treatment facility and was kicked out. I knew that I needed to stop using or I was going to face a lot of jail time. I went to a few meetings, and for the first time I had a moment of clarity. I listened to members share, and I shared about my inability to stop using. I was given a list of phone numbers and was told to call these numbers before I used.

On 11 April 2012 I decided to call someone after I used, and the next day people I had just met were calling me and offering me help. They were concerned for my well-being. One of the members told me about detoxing without saying that I needed it, but I knew I did. I called a detox facility and was told to be there by 6 pm and they would have a bed for me. I have not used since.

After I had been in that program for a week, I got kicked out for fighting. I waited in the emergency room with a broken eye socket and wanted nothing more than to get high. I used the phone in the waiting room, and for some reason I called another member and told them I wanted to get high. Their response to me was that I really didn't want to use or I would not have called them. I started to cry for 30 minutes while talking to this man. I lost all the feeling of wanting to get high. I am not going to say the thought doesn't come to me every now and then, but when it does I know what I need to do.

I immersed myself in Narcotics Anonymous and have left my legal problems to my Higher Power. I had ten months clean when I was given a nine-year sentence. When I got to prison I asked about NA. I attended meetings every chance I got, I started working my steps, and I found a sponsor.

I am writing this in hopes that someone who is in here knows that NA is also here and can help you in prison. I encourage you to reach out and ask for help. I did and today I am clean. This is a twelve-step program; why not work the Twelve Steps? This is truly the best relationship in life.

TC, NY

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is R. I have to admit I had a rocky start with the NA program on the street. I was a drug addict who lived in a very rural area. The only twelve-step meeting I could find was AA, but I figured a drug is a drug and addiction is addiction. I sat through the meeting. I knew I was supposed to ask for a sponsor, so when the meeting was over I saw a group of guys talking and went over to them. When I asked them about sponsorship they asked me if I drank any alcohol. I replied with no, I use drugs. They said they couldn't help me. I asked them about a temporary sponsor or if they knew where I could get some help. Their answer was no.

It took me about six months to find a meeting, but I didn't have much luck there either. I had recently had my leg amputated and was prescribed pain medication. I knew I was addicted to pain meds and was trying to correct my behavior. A drug/alcohol counselor was running the meeting and asked if I was taking pain medication; I replied with a yes. I was told I could not stay because I was actively using. I reminded him of a story we had just read at group where a recovering addict had a dilemma of taking prescribed pills during a terminal illness and did not have a choice in the matter. I didn't have a choice either, having just had my leg amputated. He did not agree with me, and

I had to leave. I realize these two stories are unique to me and the meetings in my area, and they did not shed a good light on the program for me.

After those two attempts on the streets I gave up on meetings. I don't blame the NA program. I realize that my addiction ran much deeper than I thought, even after my leg healed. I never went back to a meeting and blamed it on them kicking me out, but the problem was I still wanted to get high. The pills weren't enough, and I turned to harder drugs that led to more dangerous things and crimes.

So here I am on a four- to eight-year sentence. When I got to jail I was reintroduced to NA meetings but wasn't interested until another inmate told me how it looked good for the parole board. I decided to go. At first I found the meetings repetitious and found myself getting bored during the readings. I had a cynical attitude toward them because of what had happened on the streets. I attended 90 meetings in 90 days and just wanted my certificate of completion. After a few weeks of listening to guys tell their stories, hearing the readings from the books, and letting everything sink in, I found myself beginning to like it. It struck a chord with me. I thought, these people in the program whom I misjudged really do know what they are talking about. There is hope for me. I completed another 90 meetings in 90 days. I was proud of myself.

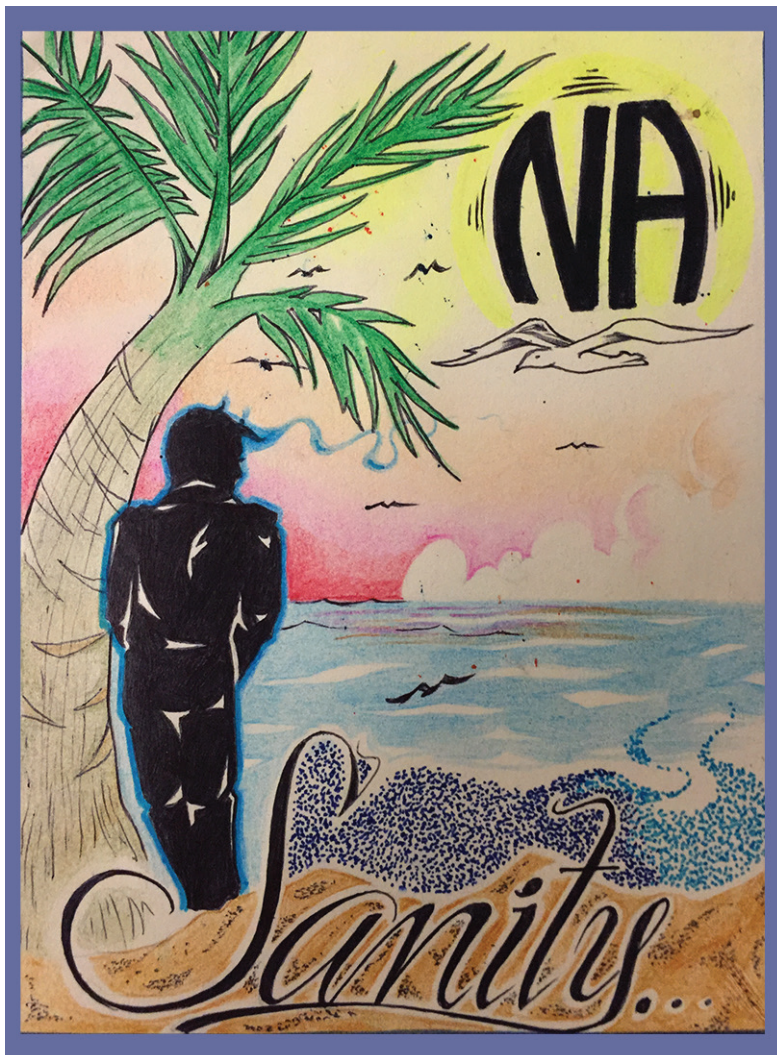
I was depressed about being in jail, but through the Fellowship of NA I met good people. My spirituality has reached a new level of peace and understanding that I have never known. My family is amazed at the transformation. They asked how this could be, and I replied, because I'm clean. I have become the most active member in my cell block. I now co-chair the meetings on a different block and am helping others earn their certificates. NA has become an intimate part of my life. I feel foolish for not giving it a chance on the streets. I know if I had I would not be sitting here. Thank you for letting me see again.

R, PA

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 jpeg or pdf files to 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,

My name is SF and I am an addict. When I landed in Narcotics Anonymous I had no idea how it worked or why it worked. All I knew was I wanted in; I saw what I wanted in Narcotics Anonymous. It all started when I was hanging around the meetings and one of my predecessors told me that I should come to an H&I meeting when I had a couple of months clean. I was told when I got six months clean to start speaking on panels. For the previous years of my attempts to get clean I had taken on numerous commitments and never fulfilled them. It was when I attended H&I meetings regularly that my journey began.

When I arrived in Narcotics Anonymous I heard somebody say that I need Narcotics Anonymous but Narcotics Anonymous doesn't need me. I found that not to be true. After staying around here for a little while I have come to understand that service is a major part of my recovery, and without it and others like me it will not flourish. It is vital that we do some service to allow the newcomers a chance to see a new way of life. It gives hope to them knowing that you no longer have to live a life behind bars and can enjoy a life free from active addiction.

I say I love this program and what it has given me back. The Fellowship has taught me how to become a better person for my family and friends again. It has shown me how to become responsible and accountable for my actions. I am proud to say I have been clean for over eight years and still do H&I service. The gift is that I get to give back what was so freely given to me, and this program has saved my life and countless others'. It will continue to do so.

I have been fortunate enough to go through some experiences and find out just how strong my foundation is. My foundation is built on service, and through that I have found peace. If I give

100 percent of my time for 100 years, I could never repay what I have been given. Thank you, NA.

SF, CA

Dear Reaching Out,

Greetings! My name is SJ and I have been clean since 1 July 1992 and gratefully have been involved in H&I inside treatment centers, county jails, and prisons since I had 90 days clean.

Every time I go inside these facilities I leave with an abundance of gratitude and hope. I truly believe that I am still clean today because of this piece of service work, and I thank the thousands of addicts I have been in contact with through H&I for giving me hope. I have witnessed addicts completing treatment and jail sentences and encouraged them to stay clean and get involved in H&I, and some were even able to return to the prisons and share from the "other side." Each one of these opportunities has brought tears to my eyes and warmed my soul and has kept me coming back no matter what comes up in my life.

There have been times when my day was long and I was very tired, but I was never too tired to give back what was so freely given to me. Although I do not have the experience of being incarcerated, I do have the experience of being in treatment, and I will never forget how I felt when I connected with the members who took time out of their day to come into the facility to share their experience, strength, and hope with me. I recall the identification that occurred when a member of a panel shared some of my same experiences and how I knew then that when I got out of treatment I wanted to be on a panel and give back.

SJ, IL

ART FROM THE INSIDE

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. Hand@na.org



CIRCNA XVIII





Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

TRANSITIONING FROM THE INSIDE TO THE OUTSIDE

Dear Reaching Out,

On 10 September 2016 I completed a prison sentence of 17 years. While in the DOC I discovered the program of Narcotics Anonymous. I learned how the program works and the steps I needed to take to have freedom from my addiction. I spent the last few years of my sentence in recovery and found the solution I had been looking for through Narcotics Anonymous.

While I was incarcerated I began to read the literature and listen to other recovering addicts share. I heard so much hope and joy with these women who were just like me, struggling with their addiction, dealing with the consequences of their actions, and willing to give their life one more chance. So I began doing what they were doing, and things started happening in my life. The many gifts that NA promises us were coming in abundantly, and my life started to really change and good things started to happen because I was allowing them to happen. I got a sponsor and began working the steps and applying them in my life. My sponsor introduced me to the spiritual principles, and those became the street signs that directed my life and still do. Our Behind the Walls group started to really take off; we have two meetings a week and a Basic Text book study. We even had a lot of sponsor-sponsee meetings that happen daily so that one addict can help another and continue to work the Twelve Steps.

When I was released I went to a meeting the first day I was out; I went to two meetings, really. While at the facility I was elected GSR and was able to attend our area's business meeting the day after I was released, and I represented our home group. The weekend after I was released I went to the Florida Region

Service Convention and saw many recovering addicts who had many years clean. I was in prison for twelve years before I got clean and then began the road to my recovery, but being at the facility was my only exposure to Narcotics Anonymous, so going to meetings outside prison was a totally new experience for me.

I have been out only 30 days and I am attending meetings daily, sharing my experience and listening to others share theirs. I have two sponsees and I am helping them work their steps and learn the literature. I took part in an H&I panel at a treatment center, and I share my experience, strength, and hope at various meetings. I have attended meetings in two other states as well as meetings in the local area. I was blessed with the Narcotics Anonymous program and the gifts it offers, so my difficulties are very minimal. I still struggle with the need for instant gratification and not having patience, but I have a good sponsor who guides me through it. Coming out of prison with a good sponsor who has a sponsor who has a sponsor, I was well directed to the program of recovery. It is because of the NA program that I have found a new way of life, that I no longer live within my own insanity, and that I am not alone.

Many people think that because we are incarcerated we have no choice but to stay clean, but there is a choice, and I make that choice daily. I ask my Higher Power for strength and guidance. I have learned the meaning and importance of gratitude, and I have learned how to make amends. It is because of the program of NA that I am working toward building a relationship with my family. Without NA I would have never had the courage to do so. Because of the meetings that are held behind the walls, addicts like me are given a new lease on life because, no matter what, no matter where, we do recover.

BS, FL

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