

Reaching Out



January 2020



Inmate Art Northern CA

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“Today we have the freedom of choice.”

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 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 2020	15 January 2020
July 2020	15 April 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.



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is SW. I am a grateful recovering addict. My negative way and lifestyle have brought me to an all-time low. I am doing 15 years with half of my time in the Los Angeles County Jail. I had a chance to find my higher power while going to the meetings here. With the help of the Twelve Steps and my Basic Text, I have found the real me. I still have two and a half years left before I can go home. I take each day to get closer to my higher power and the Narcotics Anonymous program. I want to have a good, strong foundation for when I do get out.

How I work my recovery in here is by sharing the message with other addicts. Having the job I have in here has given me a chance to work with others. I keep the Twelve Steps close to my heart and do my best to practice all the principles in all of my affairs. With the grace of my higher power I have been enlightened. I am able to help myself and others recover from their addiction. We are instructed to turn away from our addiction. When we turn, we need to have NA there to have our back.

SW, California, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

I am MD, and I have been incarcerated for six months now. I am fighting federal charges, and I attribute it 99 percent to my using. I honestly feel as though I was rescued and not arrested, because if the drugs did not kill me, my abusive boyfriend would have.

I attend Narcotics Anonymous meetings weekly and have even started my own smaller NA meeting during the week in the cell block I am housed in. I took my six-month chip and I am very proud to help plant the seed of recovery in people who are just getting clean. There is a huge difference between being clean and being in recovery.

It was only after my third trip to solitary confinement that I received the gift of desperation. I asked my higher power to show me a better way to live. I was not using, but I still had old addict behavior.

Through prayer and meditation I have accepted my circumstance and realized I have nothing without being in recovery. I have made it the focus of my life, with my higher power guiding me. I now believe my purpose is to help other addicts suffering from domestic violence and addiction. I hope my story can show them before it is too late. I know my higher power has bigger plans for me, and it all started with me opening up my heart to the Steps and principles of Narcotics Anonymous.

MD, Wisconsin, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is RB. I am a 30-year-old addict. I started using in 2017 when my mom passed away from an overdose. Six months or so after I started using, I picked up three drug charges. I managed to stay clean 43 days, 23 of which were in the county jail. I didn't even make it 60 days before I relapsed. My sponsor tried getting me into treatment, but I had endless excuses.

I sit here serving a two-and-a-half-year sentence with nine months clean. Today, instead of endless excuses, I have endless possibilities. Prison and Narcotics Anonymous saved my life and made me realize my life is not over, it is just beginning. I now have hopes and dreams. I have goals and ambitions. I hope to open my own recovery center and to share my experience, strength, and hope with those who are still suffering. I may still be in prison, but with the love and support of Narcotics Anonymous, I am no longer in chains.

RB, Arizona, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is MD. I am a grateful recovering addict. I have been incarcerated since 2000 when I was 15 years old. I am serving a life sentence. I now understand that drugs and alcohol just lead to harming oneself and others. This led to the decision to change my

life and be honest with myself. I understood that the choice that I made to use drugs and alcohol led me to a destructive path. When I was under the influence, I felt strong and not afraid, but when I was clean, I could not believe what I had done and wondered why I did not stop it. Even after entering prison, I continued to use even though that was the reason for my life sentence in the first place.

While in here, I used drugs to escape and to hide the pain for what I had done and what landed me in prison, until I finally realized and learned what I had been doing was wrong. My negative behavior and lifestyle hurt many people, including myself. With that understanding, I started attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

I know that as human beings we all make mistakes; we just have to learn from them so we can be better human beings.

MD, California, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

I am an addict in recovery, and my name is JS. I am currently incarcerated and at the end of an 18-year sentence. On 26 August 2019, I will have three years clean. I am 37 years old, and the last three years have been the best years of my life. I owe it all to Narcotics Anonymous and the volunteers who bring the meetings to the hospitals and institutions. I know that for me, if I continue to be active in my recovery, keep going to meetings, and listen to my sponsor, I can handle anything. Life is not easy, and as I get closer to my release date I am not fearful, but excited to live life on life's terms.

I never had a drug problem; my problem was life. Now, with NA and a higher power, there is not anything I cannot handle. So I want to say thank you to all of the trusted servants, and I hope to someday have the opportunity to return to these institutions to give back.

JS, Washington, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is TE, currently incarcerated in Connecticut, and I have been clean for 18 months. Back in May 2018, I relapsed after almost three years of cleantime. Within two weeks of using again, a tragic accident occurred, and I lost everything. I was arrested, and it brought me back to prison for the second time.

During the three-month investigation before I was arrested, I stayed clean and went to Narcotics Anonymous meetings, an intensive outpatient program, and weekly counseling. I had been to plenty of NA meetings before but always felt like an outsider. This time around, I felt accepted and at home. I realized it was not anyone else making me feel uncomfortable, it was me. I knew I was really ready for change. I started getting to know other members and shared more of myself and my feelings.

When I got to prison, I had three months under my belt and immediately requested to attend the one meeting per week they had at the facility. It took seven months to get my pass to attend. In the meantime, I had no NA materials, but I somehow managed not to use and to stay away from people who were using.

At the first meeting, the H&I volunteers were great. I took each of the pamphlets and an address for writing Steps by mail in my area. I got started the very next day. I have since acquired a *Just for Today* book and a Basic Text, which I read faithfully.

Lately, when volunteers cannot make it, I step up to chair the meetings. Currently I am finishing my Second Step with an anonymous member outside the walls. I communicate frequently with my higher power. I practice spiritual principles regularly and find myself with increased patience, tolerance, and compassion toward the other 800-plus women on the compound.

Recently, I have been approached by three or four women asking me how I do it or how to get started with NA. Imagine that — others want what I have. I share the *Just for Today* reading each morning and pass on the materials I am finished with, like the *Reaching Out*. I encourage them to write to NA and Sponsorship behind the Walls, and I listen when they feel the need to share.

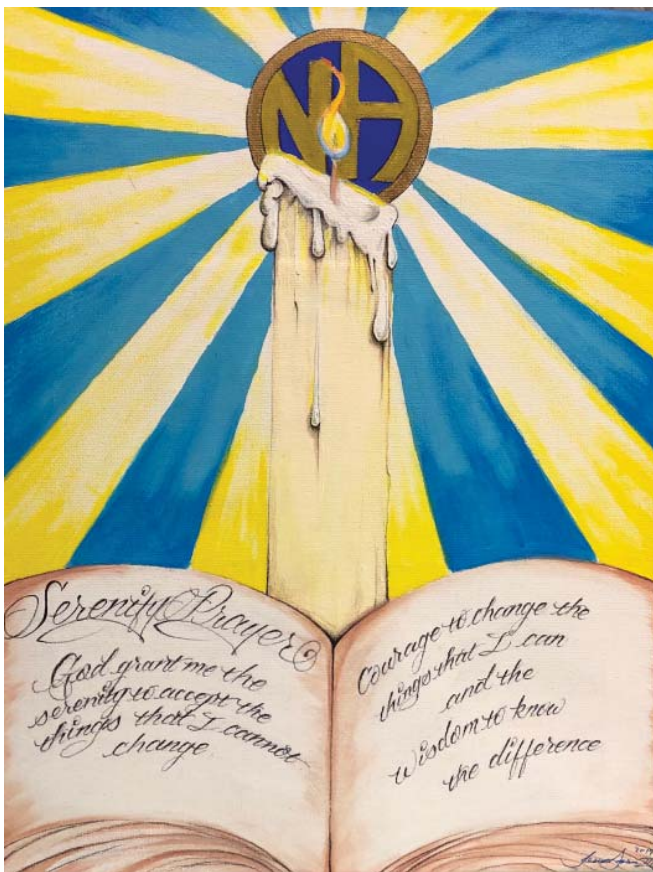
I plan on attending a meeting the day of my release and continuing my recovery on the outside. My family deserves the best of me, and thanks to NA and my higher power, I have found a way to be my best self.

TE, Connecticut, 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 jpegs or pdf files to Handl@na.org, or mail to Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

ART FROM THE ZSIDE



Inmate, California, USA



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

I am an addict named AS. I cannot tell you how long I used; however, I can tell you my behaviors have always been bizarre. It took a very long time for them to publicly wreck my life to the point that I was in ruins. The authorities had also taken notice. Personal efforts to stop using were not successful. I had no idea that a solution existed. My first attempt at getting clean did not stick, but it did introduce me to meetings. When I finally made it to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, I was given an opportunity to hear the message of recovery.

The presence of NA in my life changed me. Hope made me excited to learn to live again. Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous.

AS, Georgia, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

I had been in treatment for about two weeks when a panel was brought in. They shared their experience, strength, and hope with me, and by the time they left, I was dead-set that I was never going to use again. When I left treatment, I did everything I wasn't supposed to do and ended up relapsing. After 31 days in a psychiatric setting, I was sent to the same treatment center as before. It just so happened that I got there the same week that the H&I panel was due to return.

On the day they came, I was feeling embarrassed, guilty, and hopeless. I didn't want those same people to see me back there, defeated once again. They soon came in, and I made eye contact with the same people who had seen me there before. I tried to disappear into the background, scared of what they would say to me or what they thought of me. Instead they came over, and one-by-one, hugged me and welcomed me back. It was at that moment that I felt hope again. I immediately decided I wanted what they had, so I took charge of my life and changed my people, places, and things. I was urged to get a sponsor, which I promptly did. I started working Steps and kept coming back.

That panel taught me to accept that I had a problem, but that there is a solution. I have now been clean six months, all because those same people welcomed me back, told me it was going to be okay, and supported my recovery. I am forever grateful to NA and the people who helped save my life.

Anonymous, Nebraska, USA

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 and can email input to spad@na.org.

ART FROM THE H&I INSIDE

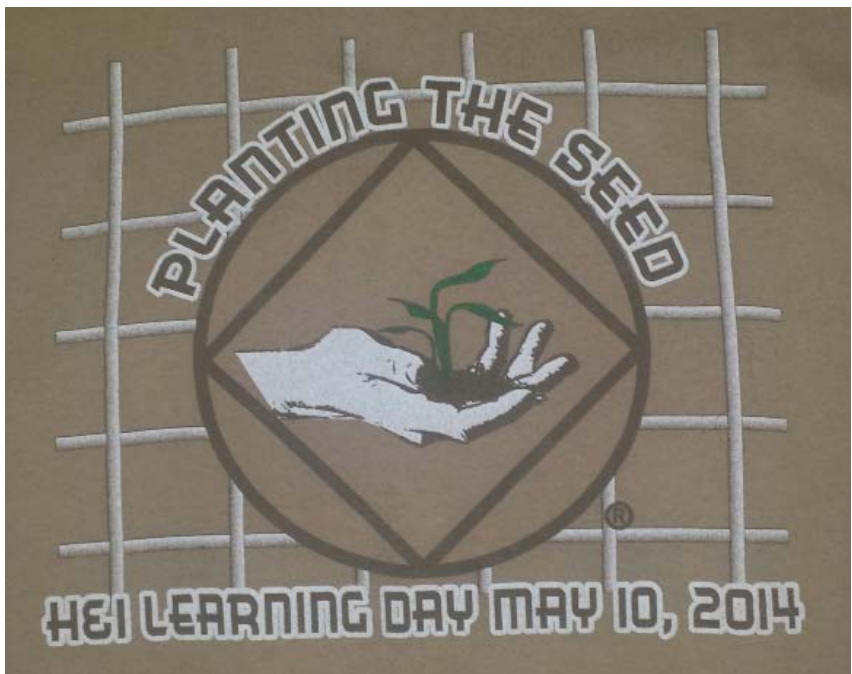
Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented H&I T-shirts. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act and art. Please share your H&I T-shirt pictures with us! We would like to showcase your art. HandI@na.org



H&I, Peru



H&I, USA



H&I, USA



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is GJ, and I am an addict. My story is like those of countless souls before me. I just got released from being incarcerated at a federal correctional facility in Oklahoma. I served 87 months and was very involved in making preparations for my release and continued recovery. I have been working the Steps and attending meetings at the facilities. I attended every Saturday morning.

The poor choices I made throughout my adult life are the reasons for my addictions. If I wasn't arrested and imprisoned for my crimes, I would have killed myself or someone else eventually. My life was a constant cycle of poisonous adventures.

After turning my life over to my higher power, I have come to realize all the wrongs I have done. I am so fortunate to have a family who waited for my release. My mom helped me to find a meeting upon my release that was close to my house, and I have been going ever since. It really does work, as I am ready to accept the help I desperately needed. Thank you, NA.

GJ, Oklahoma, USA



Anonymous

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.



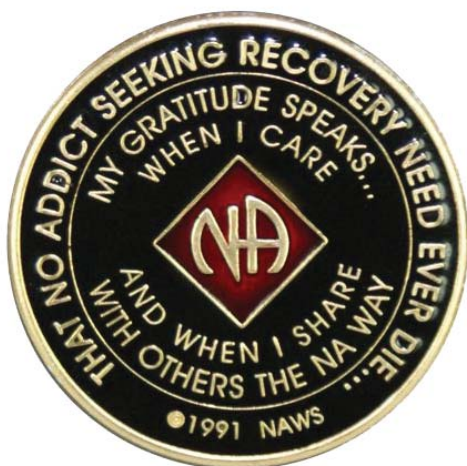
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left 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 \$ _____.

Name _____

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, Inc. ☉ PO Box 9999 ☉ Van Nuys, CA 91409 ☉ USA

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*.