

Reaching Out

January 2024



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The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom."

Basic Text, "Tradition Five"

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 handi@na.org

**GET INVOLVED AND HELP US CARRY OUT OUR
FELLOWSHIP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE!!**

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
April 2024	15 January 2024
July 2024	15 April 2024
October 2024	15 July 2024

Sign up for any NAWS subscription to receive notice when Reaching Out is published via a NAWS Update email www.na.org/subscribe



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is RS and I'm an addict. It took me hitting rock bottom before admitting complete defeat in addiction. It was that moment of surrender (while in a cell) that I was humbled to the point of reaching out to a higher power and asking for help. I didn't want to hurt anymore and I couldn't stand the pain I was causing others. I knew the only way I could start to change was by getting clean.

About two years into my sentence, I found myself in an area of the prison where there weren't any meetings. Another NA member and myself got one started and I've been involved in service behind the walls ever since. Thanks to examples set by the NA members who shared their experience, strength, and hope, I've learned how to live life on life's terms, and I will be celebrating ten years clean! Don't let anyone tell you differently, but every day clean is a day won, even behind the walls.

RS, Wyoming

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is TR from South Bend, Indiana and I am an addict. I've been incarcerated for nine years with four more to go. Today, I am clean because the day I walked in was the first day of my new life. I no longer must lie to make people feel sorry for me. I no longer need to steal to support my habit.

Through the support of my family, friends, and NA, I can smile and walk with my head held high, knowing "Just for Today" I can do anything I set my mind on and be free. I danced with the devil, but my angels wanted to crawl, crawl to a new beginning and a fresh start.

Thank you, NA, for teaching and believing in me, and for making me a better person. I owe my life to NA; today, I am surviving and I'm alive.

TR, Indiana

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is JJ, and I am an addict. Many months after my arrest, I started to think with a clear mind and the seed of NA was planted. I found an *NA Step Working Guides* while in lockdown. I learned that drugs were not my only problem. I blamed all my problems on everyone else, and my life had become completely unmanageable. I always did things “my way.”

I received more NA literature, and it helped me complete Steps Three and Four while I was down. I have been working the Steps alone due to the pandemic lockdowns and have learned a lot, but most of all I have stayed clean. The Twelve Steps are the key to my future. I hope my words reach other addicts and offer them hope that the Steps can help them too. Getting arrested was the only way this addict could get clean.

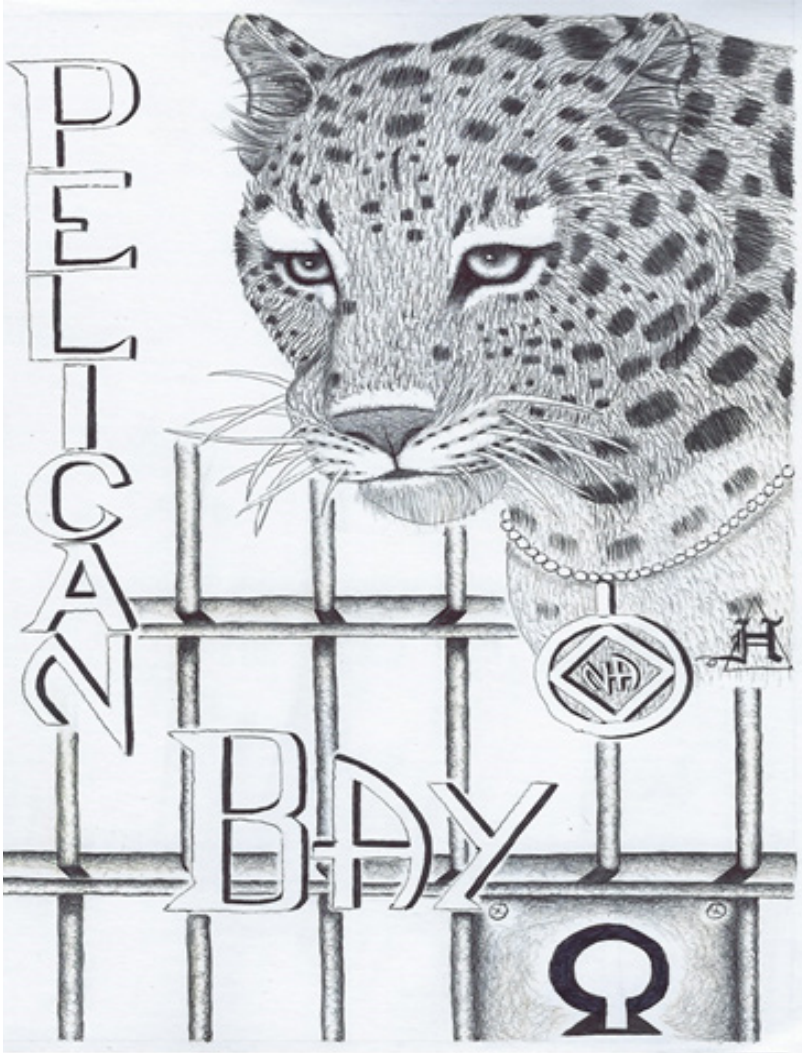
JJ, Arizona



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, or mail to Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409.



California Inmate



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

Addiction led me down a dark and narrow path, which ultimately led to my prison sentence. It was difficult to see light at the end of the tunnel. I was drowning in self-pity, shame, and guilt. During my time, I decided to use it wisely and open myself up to opportunities that would help me become the bravest and highest version of myself. Instead of focusing on the past or the future, I shifted my focus to making the best decisions in the moment. It was the first time I could focus on myself and the areas of my life that needed improvement. I wanted nothing more than to recover from the pain and grief I had experienced so I wouldn't turn back to drugs.

A prison environment creates its own challenges, as it's not typically a place to be honest and vulnerable. This is exactly where I found the program of Narcotics Anonymous. During Covid, all programs, services, and incoming volunteers stopped. Literature was scarce. We did the best we could with what we had. I worked the Steps with a sponsor, which was my first experience with honesty and identification. Through working the Steps the best I could, I started my path of recovery.

As I began planning my release, there were choices I had to make. In my mind, I wanted something different. I wanted to do whatever was required to make sure I didn't slip back into the old behaviors and drug use that brought me to prison. Before I packed up, I consciously made the decision to attend NA meetings, find a sponsor, and work the Steps. I was fortunate enough to be assigned a mentor whose recovery was just as important to her as mine was to me. She picked me up and took me to my first NA meeting, "A Way Out." I was pleased to find women there who I did time with, so there was comfort in the familiar faces. This meeting eventually became my home group.

Over the next few months after my release, I reached out to a sister in recovery on Facebook to connect with other women in recovery. This was way out of my comfort zone. But if you want something you've never had, then you have to do things you've

never done. I was grateful to get numbers. I started reaching out one by one. Little did I know one of those women would become my sponsor. From the first time we talked there was a connection, and it just felt right. Finding a sponsor didn't happen overnight, and it took time to find the right one, but it was well worth the wait. Have you ever had someone in your life who can change your perspective with just one simple question? That is what she does for me. She also happens to be really involved in Hospitals & Institutions (H&I), which I'm grateful for because she is teaching me all the great work that happens behind the scenes to share the message with those inside a facility. My sponsor goes into a women's prison and a couple of other institutions. She is cleared at every level to step inside the gates. That is amazing!

I had no idea what I was missing until I came home and started to work a full program on the outside. I've been home for seven months, and my life looks much different now. I attend meetings regularly, have a home group and a sponsor, work the Steps, and am involved in service. In the meetings I get to hear the experience, strength, and hope from other addicts, which is instrumental to the hope I have today. Their stories touch my heart in a way I've never experienced before. There is so much of me in each one. There is absolutely no doubt I belong to the NA program. One of the biggest gifts I have from the NA program is the amount of love and support from others. I'm no longer under the illusion that I must do everything alone. I have so many people in my life who want to be there for the good, bad, and ugly. My hope would be to return one day to prison to give hope to those who are exactly where I once was, but this time be able to walk right out of those gates.

CT, Arizona



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

I am a recovering addict on the outside who participates in H&I service. When I first got clean, I didn't participate in much of anything. I'm not quite sure how I stayed clean at first, but by some miracle, I did. I always say to people in the rooms of NA, "Don't do what I did," because I was miserable during that time!

As I continued to stay clean and continued to attend NA meetings, I started to listen and do some of the things that were suggested. I went to 90 meetings in 90 days, and my desire to use drugs was lifted. Then I worked through some fears, and asked someone to sponsor me. We started working the Steps together, and my sponsor told me if I wanted to stay clean, I had to start "giving it away." I decided to start being of service at meetings on the outside (like making coffee and cleaning up chairs afterwards). Then, a miracle happened. I was arrested while I was clean, and I realized I still had a lot of work to do on myself. I also realized I needed to bring the message to those who couldn't get to meetings on the outside.

The gift that we have to be able to choose to go to a meeting on the outside is often not recognized. I became keenly aware of that gift and decided to start participating in H&I service. It has been so good for me (and for others)! I love bringing meetings to women in the jails, and I also love our inmate writing program. I get to sponsor women who are incarcerated and have no other way of working Steps while they are in prison. I even had the opportunity to meet one of my sponsees in person, once she was released. I am always amazed at how good H&I work makes me feel. It also makes me feel very grateful for all I have, and being clean and in gratitude is the only way I want to live my life. My wish for everyone in recovery is that they find the gift of service in their lives. "The heart of NA beats when two addicts share their recovery." —Basic Text

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

ART FROM THE INSIDE



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.



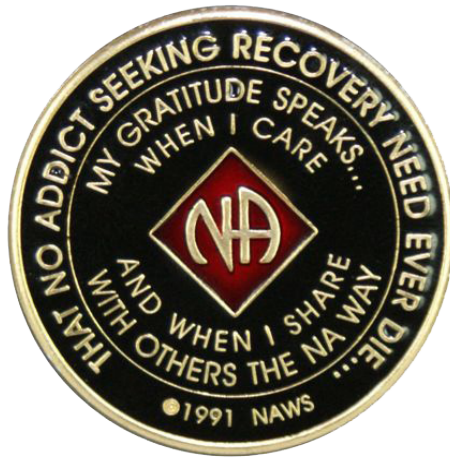
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

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 in a printer-ready format, for free download at www.na.org/reachingout

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 _____

Facility Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Country _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

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 new address with us so that we can maintain your subscription to *Reaching Out*.