

# Reaching Out



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## 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 two 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 H&I 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.*

*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 c/o NAWS, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999, USA.*

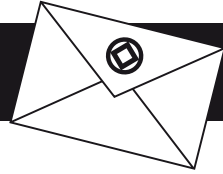
GET INVOLVED AND HELP US CARRY OUT OUR  
FELLOWSHIP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE!!



Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
October 2008	15 July 2008
January 2009	15 October 2008
April 2009	15 January 2009
July 2009	15 April 2009

# FROM THE INSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is J, and I am a recovering addict. First and foremost I would like to thank NA for showing me a new way of life, and for offering a newsletter such as *Reaching Out*. I find that many of us on the inside have very few, if any, meetings to attend, and *Reaching Out* gives us a way to share and receive the message of recovery and hope.

I have been coming to the rooms since I was nineteen, but not all of that has been in prison. A year and a half of that was cleantime in a recovery house. That was the best year and half of my life. I recently relapsed, and unfortunately that brought me back to prison. I have come to accept my time in prison, of which I have about ten months left to do. I am very glad I can still work on my recovery in here. I still talk to my sponsor and attend all the meetings I can here, and there are also some guys who are serious about their recovery. Today I wake up and don't have to get high; I pray for God to lead me through the day. I am not perfect; none of us are. We do make mistakes.

I am working on my Fourth Step now with my sponsor. I think that will help me with a lot of my fears and actions that caused me to use. I am looking forward to getting to some meetings on the outside, but I still take it one day a time. Thank you, *Reaching Out*, for the message, and who knows? Maybe mine will help a newcomer who picks up this newsletter for the first time or an oldtimer who just needs to keep it green. It helps me to get this out. I look forward to the next issue of *Reaching Out*. Until then I have the NA Basic Text, a few meetings, and my Higher Power.

Sincerely,  
JS, Pennsylvania

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is M and I'm due to get out 19 March 2008, which is not far away. I am an addict. We always say we heard this, or did that, and we try to make our story number one, but it's not. If that were

the case, we would have no need for the program. I do need the program, the helping hand out there with my addiction.

I found my home with NA. Here at NA meetings I receive tough love and at the same time a helping hand. I've been going nonstop to these meetings and hearing about other people's missions, what they went through before saying "enough is enough." I always put my higher power first and let him know how thankful I am for just today and only today; tomorrow isn't a promise.

I'm scared of being back out because of the fact that I will have to start all over, but with good faith and the NA family I will be fine. I came in contact with five positive people to hang out with when I get out. My friend K always tells me to deal with it by writing, or by laughing about it sometimes. I thank NA for finding me, and now I have all the hope in the world.

Thanks, NA Family  
& *Reaching Out*,  
MM, Virginia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm writing to thank you and all of the people who have had something to do with my getting here. My name is T and I'm not just an addict. I'm a recovering addict who has now found a different way to live, and without you this would not have been possible. My Higher Power has seen fit to answer my prayer. I have been in and out of my addiction for over twenty-five years, and I am now fifty-one years old. It is really a blessing to be here and to fellowship with Narcotics Anonymous. I'm incarcerated at this time. However, it's not the first time. Please pray for me that it will be the last time. I have hope today and hope says I can stay clean by doing one day at a time, whatever tomorrow brings.

God bless this family,  
TF, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello, my fellow members. My name is TS, and I'm an addict. I came across, *Reaching Out* a publication of members sharing. Bringing NA to those who cannot attend meetings, to spread the truth that in NA you can "achieve freedom from active addiction," (Basic

Text, "More Will be Revealed") can and will enable us to turn our life around. I sold my soul to drugs twenty-two years ago, twenty-two years of emptiness and suffering, years wasted. Since 12 May 2007, I have been free from active addiction, as promised by NA. I chose to attend and work the program. Today is not a waste of life anymore; today is great. It's not always a picnic, but because I am free from active daily addiction, I have a chance to make tomorrow a better day than today.

Thank you,  
TS, New York

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Spring has sprung. I will be very soon, too, for time is passing quickly and my sentence is near the end, so release from prison is imminent.

I like this time of year when the new growth naturally blooms in all living things. It gets me thinking of tending and maintaining my own spiritual garden that is my personal recovery program. I nurture it for the precious gift it is, hoping and expecting new growth if I put in the work. "Our spiritual condition is the basis for a successful recovery that offers unlimited growth." (Basic Text, "Step Eleven").

I realize that "Narcotics Anonymous offers only one promise and that is freedom from active addiction, the solution that has eluded us for so long. We will be freed from our self-made prisons". (Basic Text, "More Will Be Revealed"). I like to review daily how I have acted regarding real-time, real-life situations, by asking things such as: Am I living in the here and now? When we stop living in the here and now, our problems become magnified unreasonably. Have I been honestly working my program on a daily basis, knowing what I know about my addiction? Have I acted impulsively, said or done things that may have hurt someone else? Have I been patient in trying situations? Have I taken time for my Higher Power? Do I have a Good Orderly Direction and balance in my life that did not exist when I was using? Have I harbored resentments and failed to recognize them as such and not simply tossed them out?

As long as I attend meetings regularly, work the steps, do service work, talk with my sponsor, and make myself available to new people, and if I remain positive with an optimistic outlook, everything will

be all right. "Lack of daily maintenance can show up in many ways." (Basic Text, "Just For Today — Living the Program"). Our choices are what determine our lives. However, "words mean nothing until we put them into action." (Basic Text, "What Can I Do?")

A Grateful Recovering Addict,  
RR, Oregon

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello, my name is EG and I am an addict. I have used for most of my life and I am in jail doing seven years behind my addiction. Through my use of drugs I contracted HIV. I have been positive for something like nineteen years. I just wanted to say that nobody has to live this way. I am praying to be released sometime this year, in 2008. I came to prison with ninety days clean, and by the Grace of God I am still clean. I truly understand that my HP has a meaning for me in life. I don't quite understand it just yet, but I do know that as long as I stay clean and share my experience, strength, and hope with other addicts, one day my HP will make it clear to me.

One day at a time,  
EG, New York

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Greetings from your brothers in recovery behind the great wall! We take this opportunity to say how grateful we are for a program that has been ongoing here once a week since November 2001, the Narcotics Anonymous Prisoners for Recovery Group. We currently have an average of eleven recovering addicts who meet each week to share their hopes and experiences and to give encouragement. Please keep us in your prayers, and we thank all our brothers and sisters for their support.

Sincerely,  
RM, Indiana

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is M and I am currently serving a twenty-one year sentence in prison for drug- and alcohol-related crime. I recently celebrated my three-year anniversary of being totally clean. Shortly after entering a program of recovery here, I wrote to the World Service

Office requesting any literature you might have that might help me. Your office responded immediately by sending me a copy of *The NA Way Magazine* and some other literature regarding recovery while incarcerated. I have been receiving my subscription each quarter for three years now. Every year on my anniversary, I can't help but think of everyone and everything that has helped me to make it this far. The NA program is second only to God on that list. In saying that, I just want to take this moment to thank all of you at the World Service Office once again.

I would also like to take a moment to let everyone know that recovery is possible in prison. I have read from time to time that some people think that it's not possible to be a "true" member of Narcotics Anonymous until a person is released from prison. That couldn't be further from the truth. There are more than a few of us here who have sponsors and actively work the steps. We also have four recovery meetings here a week. I just wanted to show my appreciation and gratitude for all those involved. It is true what they say: We Do Recover!!

A grateful  
and recovering addict,  
MR, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

The Hole in the Wall Group twentieth anniversary is in June. This is a really big deal for us. We have a speaker coming in from World Services to share in this enormous twentieth anniversary.

I hope these first few months of 2008 have brought joy and happiness through the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. If you haven't felt the true joy of this program yet, don't give up hope! If you stick with it and participate in the steps and the traditions, and listen and share in meetings even just a little, I realized that NA is a program that won't let me down. Here there is hope and strength, with one addict helping another addict. The meeting places have truly helped me become a success story, not a statistic.

I believe this program lives and breathes in addicts when their lives have become unmanageable and life seems unfair. Admitting powerlessness over our addiction is the key to recovery. Once we search fearlessly and turn our will over to the care of God as we

understand Him, then we are truly on our way to recovery. In recovery, the addict becomes an upright, spiritual success story, which is now that loving father or mother, husband or wife, son, daughter, baseball coach, and so on. This is what it is all about; this is living. Once unmanageable, now managing quite well, showing up for things once always missed, family events like picnics—now there in attendance, bright-eyed and happy. This is the important stuff, when for so long that just did not seem possible. It is possible! So, fellow NA brothers and sisters, young and old, don't give up hope; don't give up before the miracle happens.

Grateful to Be of Service,  
CJ, Oregon

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am forty-three years old and have just received my first copy of *Reaching Out*. I never took NA seriously until about a year ago when I was sent back to prison. I always pictured NA meetings as a bunch of old men gathering together to drink coffee and eat cookies. Thanks to this second incarceration I have had an eye-opener like I have never had before. Even though I'm in prison, I am finally free. Although I'm not where I want to be physically, mentally and spiritually, I'm better than where I was.

We have an outstanding Narcotics Anonymous program here. We have people who come in two days a week for NA meetings. I am learning about addiction as well as other issues. I have a sponsor and I am working the steps with him on a bimonthly basis. I no longer hang out with those who use because I can't do any more time, and besides that, I know if I do hang out with those who still use, it's only a matter of time before I am back in the game. I have about twenty-one months clean, and I am making my way toward eventual freedom once again. This disease made me hurt myself and others, and that is totally selfish and self-centered. I want to be a respectful, productive member of society once again, and with the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous and my Higher Power whom I choose to call God, it is possible, and for this I am very grateful. My gratitude speaks when I care and share the NA way!

RB, New York



# FROM THE OUTSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is M, and I am an addict. In 1995, I was in prison. Narcotics Anonymous H&I came there to carry a message of hope to the still-suffering addict who didn't even know it. I was still in denial that I had a problem. My problem was the police, society, my parents, anything but me. I wasted twenty-two years of my life using drugs. The people I thought were my friends when I had it going on were nowhere to be found when my disease took me to the gutter. For nine years I was incapable of holding a regular job; for the last three years of active addiction I was homeless, living in the street. I made a living collecting cans, bottles, copper, brass, and aluminum. I caught numerous cases. I found myself in and out of county jail nine times and finally made it to the big time, prison.

Meetings were mandatory because I was part of a boot camp program. I honestly didn't want to hear the message that the dedicated members of NA were there to carry. I looked at all the differences, not the similarities; I judged them and took their inventory. I talked trash about them from the back row, full of arrogance that I know today was a lack of self-esteem and self-worth. I felt the need to put others down in an attempt to make me look good or feel better about myself.

It didn't matter if I wanted to hear the message or not, or if I had a desire to stop using; something happened to me in those meetings anyway. A seed of hope was planted. Even though I had a conscious wall up, they still slipped me some hope, like it or not. When I was leaving on the bus from prison, of course I had the voice that I always had, the one that told me it was time to party, celebrate, and so on. Completely against my will, there was this other voice telling me that I never had to use again and go back to the way I was living.

Today I thank god for those people from Narcotics Anonymous who took the time out of their super-busy lives to come and carry a message to the addict who was still suffering. On 2 January, I celebrated twelve years clean, even without the desire to stop using. There is a message of hope in that alone. I got out and didn't start

applying the NA program at first; I relapsed with eighteen months of abstinence. I had begun to achieve a lot of materialistic goals I had set for myself while in the boot camp. I found out after getting a sponsor, reading the literature, and working the steps that I was trying to fix with outside things what was an inside problem. Having the disease of addiction had made it difficult for me to ever be satisfied with anything. Once I began working the steps, my life began to change. I realized that I had a disease, and the things I did in the past were not the real me. I realized the thing that started me using, and I realized the things that kept me using once I started. I had many issues and different circumstances that caused my issues with my esteem, self-hatred, self-worth. I thought of myself as a loser and had proven it to myself over and over, even with the best of intentions.

When I began writing, all the justifications, rationalizations, and minimization went out the window. It was evident to me that every time I picked up the first anything, I never stopped until I was right back in a jail cell again. I got rid of any reservations I had in Step One. While writing I came to believe that I actually had a power greater than me that kept me alive through the horrors of active addiction. Many near-death experiences that I thought I had survived by luck became evident to me as instances where my higher power had spared me and brought me to NA to be a messenger of hope.

In Step Four I got to take a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself, and in Step Five I shared every detail of my life with my sponsor. I got to free my spirit and get rid of the garbage that had been cluttering it up. I found out the origin of my issues and was able to discard a lot of the guilt for things I was powerless over. In Steps Six and Seven I looked at my defects of character and the reasons that I had been acting out in shortcomings all my life, causing pain and destruction to anyone who ever cared about me. I realized that all my life I was pretending to be someone I wasn't. I had an image that I hid behind in order to cover up my real feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, jealousy, and envy.

In Steps Eight and Nine I got to become willing to make amends to all the people I had harmed, taking responsibly for my actions. In this process I was able to ask for forgiveness from others, and most importantly of all, change the behaviors that had caused the harm in the first place. I realized that it was important to make amends

with my actions, not my words. In Step Ten I took a look at myself, my actions and motives, to see if I owed any amends to people I possibly had harmed during the day, and promptly admitted it. In Step Eleven I found that when I start my day off right in the morning with a prayer of gratitude, meditate on being a positive person, and ask for the power to carry that out, I have a better attitude.

In Step Twelve I have the opportunity to carry the message of hope to the addict who still suffers. I try to practice the spiritual principles that are in the steps in my daily life. I no longer have to live in fear, because I trust in a higher power. I have true freedom today. I keep my spirit uncluttered with garbage like guilt, shame, remorse, and envy.

I feel today I am blessed because I dedicate my life to helping other people in NA. I have a life today that is beyond my wildest dreams. It is rewarding, fulfilling, and full of purpose. Instead of living in alleys, I have a home, a beautiful woman, and the best friends in the world. I have been able to travel around the world. Most important of all, I feel good about myself, my perception has changed, I no longer carry hatred and anger for myself and others, and I am able to roll with the punches of life and live without the desire to use drugs. I know today that I never have to use again as long as I continue to live the Narcotics Anonymous program. I am a proud member of the H&I subcommittee, and I have been recently cleared to go into the county jails and the prison where I did time.

I dedicate my life to carrying the message of Narcotics Anonymous. It is a lifestyle for me; I love it and can't wait to see you follow the path.

See you on the outs,  
MD, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is GV and the story starts with how GOD rescued me in a fashion that was well deserved. I got ten years in jail. I had tried dozens of rehabs, etc.; nothing worked until I went to jail. See, in jail you have to look at you, and your life, and where you're heading. A very rude awakening occurred—looking at where I was and having ME to thank for it. Scared does not describe the feeling I had. I was not afraid because that takes thinking away, and I needed it. I

argued with myself and posed this question to me: “Do I want the same life here that I had out there?” No! is what rang out in my head. I belong to a loners’ group but I thought, more people read this magazine, and so just maybe it will save a life. That is why my sharing is taking place here.

In my life, like in others, a lot happened, and my GOD was always there and he or she saved me from me. I had a blood clot in my leg for three years in jail, and they said what I had had was water—mind you, just in one leg. Do you think I was saved so I could spread our message of hope? Yes! See, I, like others, did not deserve a second chance, but my God said I did, and I intend not to waste it. I will reach out to anybody who needs help. I helped a guy a while ago, not over drugs but to help his wife. She was forever falling. He knew I needed money and asked how much he owed me, and I said, “Nothing.” See, I got paid when I got the second chance; that’s how I look at it, and always will. I guess he was surprised. He and I had both learned before that nobody does anything for nothing; but now I and he learned that people do care!

I was surprised when I got in the leadership group for NA. This was not my aim; they just poured me into it, and the prison, I guess, recognized I meant it. After getting out I got my place, took care of myself the right way, and believe me, I am scared every day. I still get horrible nightmares, but maybe my God is reminding me of the horrible times. As God is my witness I never, ever want that horrible life again.

Have a clean  
and prosperous day,  
GV, Pennsylvania

Dear *Reaching Out*,

“My name is C\*, I’m currently a resident of Correctional Institution. I’ve been involved in (the institution’s) drug and alcohol program for two months now. It is a six-month program. I’m looking for a sponsor. I really need one. I’m serious about my recovery. If you could help me—which I hope you could—please write back to me. I really appreciate it. Thank you very much.” And so it began. After receiving this cry for help from an addict serving time in one of our state prisons, the Connecticut Region (USA) decided to discover a

way within our service structure to help incarcerated addicts find the same relief from addiction we have found. That was in June 1993. "Sponsorship Behind the Walls" started functioning as a working group of our regional H&I subcommittee in the fall of 1994. In December 1995, the WSO Board of Trustees (the name at the time for one of the elements of our current World Board) pointed out that since we used pen names and were offering step direction through NA service, not traditional sponsorship, the name "Sponsorship Behind the Walls" was perhaps not the best name for this service. As result of this input, the group's name was changed to "Writing Steps for Recovery," or WSR for short. At that same time, the regional conscience called for the committee to become a standing subcommittee of the Connecticut Region, rather than a workgroup of H&I, since the service is quite different from that of taking presentations into institutions. In the beginning, we worked with the Connecticut Department of Corrections to come up with guidelines that would make it possible for us to follow the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts while adhering to the rules and regulations of DOC facilities. As of the summer of 2007, WSR had been approved to serve addicts in all eighteen Connecticut DOC institutions. This accomplishment has taken time and consistent, responsible service. Because of what we have been able to accomplish, we feel grateful to share our experience, strength, and hope with anyone interested in doing the same. I began my involvement with WSR in early 1996. Working with this committee has been a wonderful part of how I stay clean. Over the years I've had step writers in prison who have been so eager to change their lives that they diligently worked all Twelve Steps before their release. Recently, one of the girls I guided through her steps showed up at our subcommittee meeting, was trained to become a new WSR step guide, and took on a subcommittee commitment. In January, when we held our workshop at the Connecticut Convention, another former inmate who had worked her steps through WSR qualified to become a new step guide. We've received word that there are now some addicts in Connecticut's prisons who have been working with WSR step guides and have enough clean-time and step-writing experience to offer true sponsorship to fellow inmate addicts! It's so incredibly rewarding to see this process come full circle, to see the living, breathing, recovering proof that what we

are doing is working! Through this service, addicts with experience in working the steps have an anonymous avenue for sharing that experience with incarcerated addicts.

My WSR commitments have been instrumental in my own recovery. It's been incredibly rewarding knowing that my service contributed to at least one addict being released from jail with the knowledge and experience she needed in order to live differently. She carried that knowledge into her recovery on the outside, and is now giving back what she freely received. I've also benefited in much the same way as I do when I sponsor women. Working the steps with other addicts reinforces my understanding of how the steps work for me. I'm also grateful that this service is convenient and time-friendly. It's the closest thing to sponsorship that we can give these addicts—and for me, it has the extra benefit of not further complicating my sometimes chaotic daily life. I've loved the times when I've had a commitment on the subcommittee level, too. As the corresponding secretary, I've grown more accustomed to picking up the phone and asking for help. Never before in my recovery have I ever had this much practice in that simple, life-saving skill. This commitment, more than any other I've had in the seventeen years I've been clean, assures me that I will stick with the winners. When I receive that initial letter from an inmate who pours out his or her heart about how far down into degradation and despair the disease of addiction has taken them, and then they ask for our help in learning a new way to live, I am sometimes moved to tears. I have absolutely no doubt that, for me, this is the best service commitment in NA!

KA, Connecticut



*“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.”*

## 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 twenty-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$31.00, 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.

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