

Reaching Out



Volume 26, Number 3

July 2011

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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.

Reaching Out needs more letters from the outside!

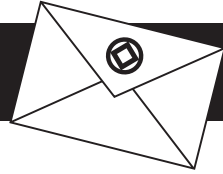
On page 13, this issue features a worksheet designed to help our readers contribute to *Reaching Out*. This tool was created especially for H&I members who found NA on the inside and are now maintaining their recovery on the outside. If this is you, please share your experience, strength, and hope. Your story can help many addicts find hope for their future! Additional *Reaching Out* tools are available on our website:

http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching_out-index

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
October 2011	15 July 2011
January 2012	15 October 2011
April 2012	15 January 2012
July 2012	15 April 2012

FROM THE INSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm an addict in recovery, just halfway through a set in the state pen for doing drug crimes. No surprise there, right? We all know the way active addiction can wreak havoc on our lives.

My first NA meeting was in the county jail, a bimonthly H&I meeting. I was doing a few months because my probation had been revoked. Though I promptly relapsed when I got out, something I heard in that meeting resonated. The NA message that any addict can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life is powerful. I have yet to attend an outside meeting, but I am sure looking forward to it.

I'm lucky; the prison I'm in has a weekly H&I meeting, brought in by some very dedicated volunteers. One of them even did time in this institution. There is a lot of wisdom, empathy, understanding, fellowship, and, yes, love in this meeting. For me, it's the hour and a half each week where I can relax. I feel welcomed and safe with others who are like me.

When you stay clean, things do get better, even in prison. I'm getting regular letters and visits from family, most of whom had basically written me off. My sister, who is one of my best friends, is even making plans to come visit me from out of state. This will be the first time I get to see her in about four years.

I just got my one-year chip a couple of weeks ago. I have a Basic Text, graciously donated by the meeting. NA has given me some peace, even in the middle of the chaos and drama of penitentiary life. Most importantly, NA has given me hope and allowed me to survive a life nobody would choose willingly. I'm eternally grateful for NA and to all who make the program what it is!

SS, OR

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am a 41-year-old addict from Indiana. This is my eighth time in prison due to my addiction. My disease had such a hold on me. I couldn't stop using in spite of the consequences. Even when I was on parole and probation, with returning to prison hanging over my head, I could not stay clean.

Now I know that each trip to prison brought me closer to surrendering. Thanks to my Higher Power and NA, this is my last time in prison! Each day, I am learning to face my fears and finding out who I really am through the Twelve Steps. NA is definitely a way of life; I strive every day to understand more. Nobody ever told me it would be easy, but they said it was possible. Now I know it is possible for an addict like me to stay clean and begin to recover.

Each day, I grow closer to loving myself and understanding how I can give back what was freely given to me. Thank you, NA, for the hope you give me, just for today.

AJ, IN

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm TR and I am an addict. I want to share my story because I found NA by looking in the newspaper. Now, does somebody who doesn't have a drug problem notice an ad for Narcotics Anonymous in the newspaper? Part of me wanted to go, but I laughed, thinking maybe tomorrow. Now, a bunch of tomorrows have come and gone. I have been down the road of active addiction a couple more times and I am now trying to start an NA meeting where there is none. How odd is that?

When I went to prison, the counselor told me to go to NA meetings. At first, I refused. After going to prison three times behind my addiction, I was finally ready. I finally attended my first meeting my third time in prison. I woke up on a Tuesday morning in my cell and for the first time I said to myself, "I surrender!" I was tired and sick, separated from the people who cared about me, and merely weeks away from being a father. That night, I went to a meeting and enjoyed it. It was full of experience, strength, and hope.

Now I have three years clean. I chair a meeting on the inside and am working hard to start another. NA has changed my life by giving me a better perspective. I have a Higher Power today, thanks

to the steps. Being a member is everything to me; I live for the day when I get to go to a meeting in the free world outside these walls. I realize I will be an addict for life, but today I make the choice not to be an active one.

TR, NC

Dear *Reaching Out*,

This is my second attempt to have my story printed. I am an avid reader of *Reaching Out*; I look forward to every issue and enjoy all the stories! It helps me to hear about others who are recovering on the inside.

My name is CD; I'm an addict. This is the story of how I discovered NA, a fellowship that has saved my life. I came from a family with lots of cheaters, thieves, adulterers, and addicts. This is what I learned from watching, and it became who I was. I wanted so badly to be normal when I was a teenager. I felt different and wrong all the time. Today, I know that is when my disease of addiction started.

At the age of 15, I started using. Obsessive and compulsive behavior controlled my life immediately. I used any substances I could. I was first introduced to NA when I was 21 and did not take it seriously. I thought I knew better. I wound up making many trips to rehabs and detox centers, and went to prison seven times.

So, throughout the years, I would show up at an NA meeting beaten down and worn out from using. I was like a dressed-up garbage can, looking okay on the outside but full of trash, all the while destroying my life on the installment plan. I kept feeling drawn to NA. Every time I went to a meeting, members would say, "We love you, man!" and "Keep coming back." Sometimes I pretended I was clean and played the game. It was always for the sake of my family, or for the court system. I was never really in recovery, and this kept getting me in never-ending trouble with the law. Back then, I went to meetings for all the wrong reasons.

In the NA Basic Text, on page 77, it talks about a "jarring experience that brings about a more rigorous application of the program." That's what it took for me; I finally lost everything. Even family members turned away from me. I was homeless and felt useless, with no desire to live at all. However, NA planted a seed years ago that I always remembered: that I have an incurable disease and it is

life-threatening! I kept remembering the words I heard in meetings. The only way to arrest the disease of addiction is by having honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness.

So now I'm 40 years old and back in prison. Even though I'm locked up, I'm free. I now have peace of mind and clarity, with a new lease on life. On 28 May 2011, I will have two years honest cleantime! My recovery consists of daily meditations, reading NA literature, weekly NA meetings, and step work with my sponsor. Now my purpose in life is to trust in God, work the steps to the best of my ability, and help other addicts. NA loved me until I learned how to love myself.

CD, NC

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello, my name is JB and I'm a recovering addict. When I first got sent to prison, I felt like I lived two lives. I abused the life my mother gave me until I was sentenced to another life by the judge.

Before getting incarcerated, I used to live in a state of extreme denial. I would get high without a care in the world. My disease controlled me to the point where it impaired my judgment and led me to my incarceration. I have ten years left until I can go before the parole board, and the only way I can make it is one day at a time.

I didn't get clean just because I was locked up. The disease followed me for five more years after my incarceration before I realized that I was destroying myself. I was tired of being disciplined and confined because I got high. Finally, I had to stop.

I have not used for ten years, but only five years ago I discovered NA. NA has helped me to stay strong and persevere by staying clean no matter what. I have learned that I still am a recovering addict because my past actions led me to get sentenced to all this time in prison. I am making it through, just for today.

Through NA I am starting to live my third life, as a recovering addict. I'm living three lives: one that my mother gave me, another that the judge sentenced me to, and my newest life, given to me by Narcotics Anonymous.

JB, NY

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm a problem named JJ. I was my own solution for 29 years and now I have over two years clean, thanks to NA. I remember coming into the program, fresh off the streets, introducing myself as a newcomer and getting a chip. They gave me a phone list with people to call in case I wanted to get loaded and needed to talk to someone. The list always went into my pocket and got lost before I could call anybody.

As a newcomer on the streets, I didn't realize how huge my emotions would be after I got clean. Nobody warned me that living life can be painful, but the pain will pass if I don't use. I was raised on a fairy-tale fantasy that I saw on TV, where life always turned out okay. It didn't go that way for me. Now I am locked up, but I can still be free, through NA.

Sponsorship may have saved me. My sponsor taught me that even a knucklehead like me can learn how to work the NA program. Reading the NA Basic Text gave me an important realization. Living in a concrete box, I can't change the rest of the world. I can only change myself. Recovery has taught me that I want to be happy and share that happiness with others.

JJ, UT

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am a recovering addict named JM. As early as I can remember, I was a gypsy. I was raised in "small town USA" and always wanted out. At age 19, I joined the military to get away from my life. This became my pattern; I ran away and I used drugs. I just wanted to escape my life.

I knew about NA because when I was growing up, my parents were in recovery. I didn't buy it, but it surrounded me. Slogans hung on the wall, along with the Serenity Prayer and even the Twelve Steps. I should have known that I was susceptible to the disease of addiction. I thought I could outrun it.

I don't remember my first meeting or my first sexual experience, but I remember my first high. By the age of 13, my disease was progressing fast. Eventually, it cost me everything. I am now 30 years old, serving a six-year sentence because of my drug use.

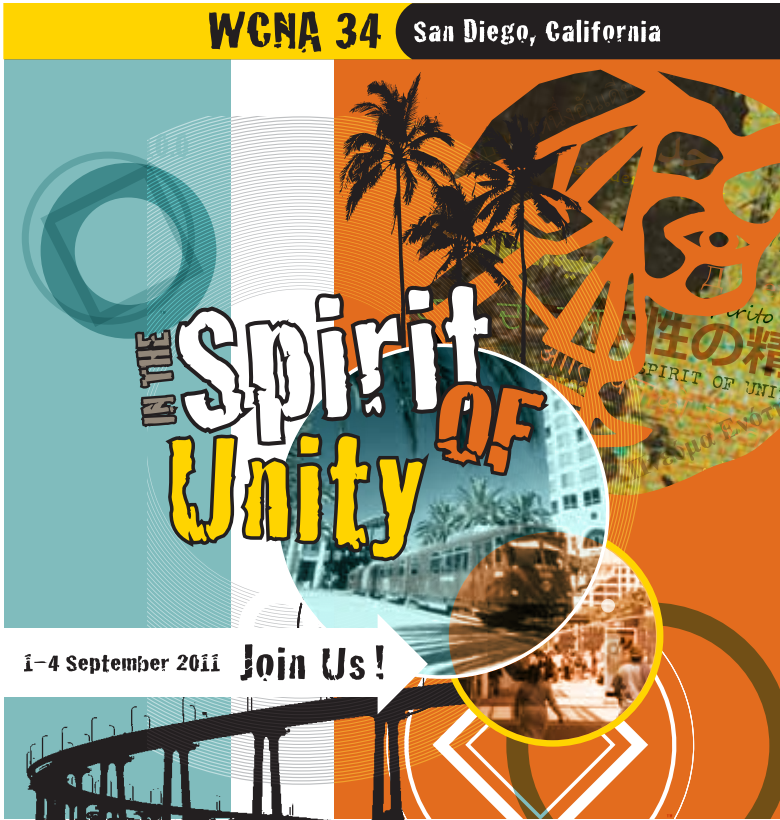
This is not the first time I have been locked up. I have given the department of corrections years of my life already. My addiction took me to the “bitter ends” our literature talks about. Before I went to prison, I lost my children and their mother. The reality of this loss nearly killed me. This was my bottom, not being locked up. Today I understand that I can’t run away anymore. The using lifestyle has nothing for me, just jails, institutions, and death.

Just for today, I am taking charge of my life again. I have been clean since 14 January 2010. I have a relationship with a power greater than myself that I found through the steps. NA Behind the Walls* has given me back my life by allowing me to work a program while I’m locked up.

I’m anxious to go to meetings on the outside again. Until then, I can continue to learn from my NA brothers and try to do the next right thing. NA in prison taught me that, just for today, I can live clean as long as I follow the NA way.

JM, SD

**Editor’s note: Inmate step-writing committees (sometimes called Sponsorship Behind the Walls) are becoming more common in the NA Fellowship. If you are interested, contact your local H&I subcommittee or prison addiction services department to find out if this resource is available in your state/province!*



We invite all institutions to join, via phone link, in the celebration of recovery at the World Convention of NA, Sunday, 4 September 2011. This is a free service to institutions; the call will last two hours (10 am–12 pm PST). Inmates will be able hear the readings and speakers at the main convention meeting.

This is an opportunity to make a connection to the worldwide NA Fellowship and hear the powerful message of recovery. All that is required is a standard telephone line. If you are a large institutional group, we suggest that a speaker system be connected to the phone. We look forward to you all joining us!

If an institution is interesting in participating, please contact Johnny 818.773.9999 ext 149 or johnny@na.org Cut-off date for registration is 1 August.

April 12, 2011

NAWS,

Thanks so much for your reply
Thank you very much. Having a
disease is so helpful during my

Considering my outdated is due
appreciate a subscription &
and the NA way. I'm trying
a solid foundation. I
pay. I'm not sure if you
NA book on my own, and
look to me. Which book's
A WIND NA WIND. TM RE.

You're invited to submit your story to the quarterly NA
newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We are always grateful to hear recovering
addicts like you share their experience, strength, and hope from
behind the walls.

FROM THE INSIDE



Tell us who you are, where you came from, and how you found NA.
Acquainted
July 19th 1996 in my home town N.Y.C. Through H.I.

Tell us about your first NA meeting.
My first N.A. Meeting was at a state Park in Bronx N.Y.
Call Roberto Clement Park I had 3 weeks clean 1996

What is your experience carrying the message of NA and being of
service on the inside?
I'm currently in a Federal Detention Center in Brooklyn
N.Y. There is no program here for me except my 14 years in NA

How has NA changed you?
It's humbled me to the degree of Total Surrender and
Totally Acceptance in my life. Hear Say Never Persistence.

What does being an NA member mean to you?
Pride to be a Member, Pride to be of service any way
I can This is my first time Inside I'm a 55 year old woman

Thank you for sharing! Your experience with the NA program
can inspire other incarcerated addicts seeking fellowship and re-
covery.

Please send your story to *Reaching Out*; NAWS, PO Box 9999,
Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999; USA, or to Handlma.org.

You're invited to submit your
newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We are al
addicts like you share their exp
behind the walls.

FROM THE I

Tell us who you are, where y
Aurigela from
Atlanta, Georgia

Tell us about your first NA meeting.
I honestly don't remember my first NA Mtg
it was probably Atlanta (GA) in 1999

What is your experience carrying the message of NA and be
service on the inside?
People love hearing from those of us with exper
more than those who aren't aware. Service = Help

How has NA changed you?
Made desire stronger for recovery/change. Encourag
to strive to do all I can to help myself and others

What does being an NA member mean to you?
It means the end of excuses. That I REALLY
WONT have to use again, unless I choose to.

Thank you for sharing! Your experience with the NA program
can inspire other incarcerated addicts seeking fellowship and re-
covery.

Please send your story to *Reaching Out*; NAWS, PO Box 9999,
Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999; USA, or to Handlma.org.



Thank you
AT, IA

FROM THE OUTSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

I started doing H&I work with 90 days clean. I served on a panel at a treatment center. At six months clean, I went to a halfway house for men recently released from prison. That was the first time I spoke about my experience, strength, and hope. It felt really good to share. In August 2002 I got department of corrections approval, and have been going behind the walls three or four times a month ever since. I started at a state jail and went on to carry the NA message to every level of inmate, from the first-time offender to death row convicts. After trying every kind of H&I, I found a unit that was a perfect fit for me. This is a substance-abuse felony punishment unit, and I still volunteer there today.

H&I has had an impact on my recovery by allowing me to witness the miracle of NA in the lives of many other addicts. There is no way to describe how I feel when I meet a guy who is at the bottom, afraid to look at me or speak in a meeting. After a period of time, I get to see that guy change. He may come up to me and say thank you with a smile on his face, ready to be released and go to a meeting on the outside. I don't do service work for the thanks; I do it to remind myself every day that this is a better way to live. It makes me grateful to help people turn their lives around the way somebody once helped me. It has made me a stronger person to be able to appreciate life and do my part to help others on the path to becoming productive members of society.

I keep in contact with a guy I met on a panel who was released a little over two years ago. I was at a service workshop near his town and I told him I would be there. We met and had lunch that day. Later, he took me to a Spanish-speaking NA meeting that he helped start! It was such an amazing experience; I could hardly understand a word that they said, but I felt at home. Everybody in the meeting gave me a hug, and I could just feel the love in the room. Later, he told me that that meeting elected him to be the GSR, and he was interested in getting involved in H&I as well. There is no way to describe how it makes me feel to see a guy I met behind the walls doing service for NA.

I know in my heart that H&I is a valuable resource and the service we do saves lives! We are addicts; we suffer from the disease of addiction. We are not bad people; we just made some bad choices. The only difference between me and you is the color of our clothes. Getting arrested is like getting rescued from the disease. If you are reading this, you are one of the fortunate ones! Make the most of your time on the inside by working on your problems. When you want to use, think about where you are and where you can be if you stay clean, just for today.

Keep coming back!

MC, TX

Dear *Reaching Out*,

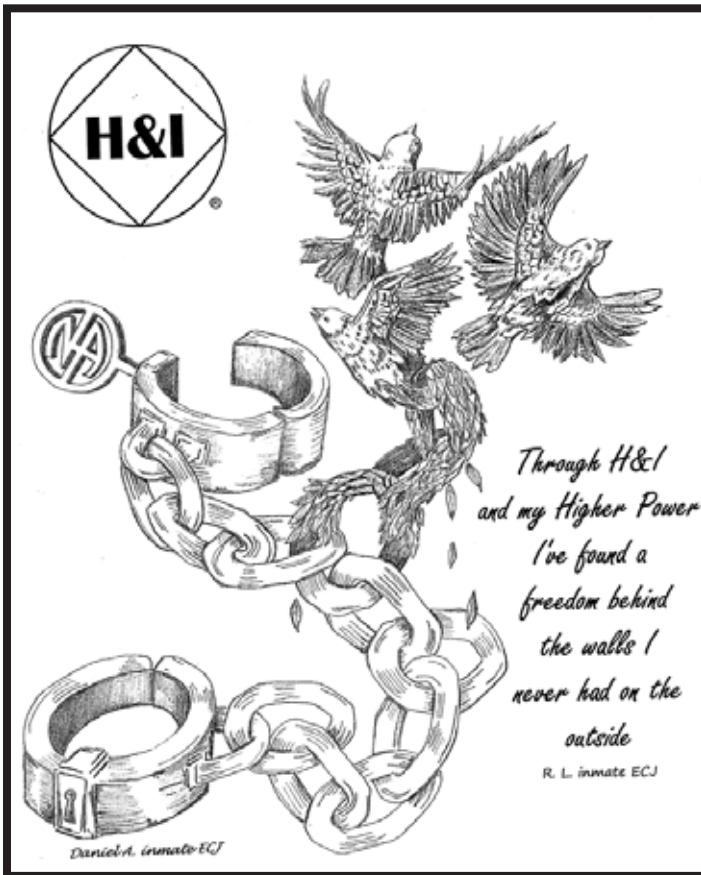
My name is M; I'm an addict. In 1995 I was in prison. Narcotics Anonymous H&I came in to carry a message of hope to the still-suffering addict. I was still in denial. My problem was the police, society, my parents, anything but me. The people I thought were my friends when I had it going on were nowhere to be found when my disease took me to the gutter.

Today I thank goodness for those people from NA 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. 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. Thanks, NA!

MD, CA

ART FROM THE INSIDE

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.



This art was created by members of the "Inside Job Group" of NA that meets every Thursday at 8pm at the Eagle County Jail Facility in Eagle, Colorado.

If you would like to see your art printed here, please send jpegs or pdf files to HandI@na.org or mail to: *Reaching Out*; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409.

INSIDE OUT

CALLING ALL H&I MEMBERS!

You're invited to submit your story to the quarterly NA newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We are looking for the experience of NA members whose recovery has been enhanced by working with addicts who are seeking recovery behind the walls. Tell us about your H&I service experience, past and present. If you are an incarcerated addict whose life has been touched by an H&I volunteer, please give them this form and tell them we need their story for *Reaching Out!*

Why did you get involved with H&I? _____

How has H&I had an impact on your recovery? _____

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

What is one thing you would say to the addicts on the inside? ____

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 HandI@na.org

To download a pdf of this worksheet, go to
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”

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 20-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$32.60 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* @ \$32.60 each, total \$ _____.

Name _____
(PLEASE type or print clearly)

Identification Number _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Country _____

Please enclose check or money order with your bulk subscription order.

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c/o NA World Services
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USA