

# Reaching Out



Volume 27, Number 3

July 2012

## Welcome

PAGE 2

## From the Inside

PAGE 3

## From the Outside

PAGE 8

## Order Form

PAGE 16

## 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](mailto:HandI@na.org).

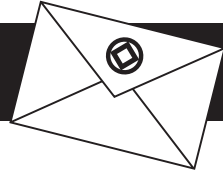
Share your gratitude in *Reaching Out*! We need letters from members who found NA on the inside and are now maintaining their recovery on the outside. If this is you, or you have a heart-warming H&I story, please share your experience, strength, and hope. This issue features a worksheet on page 14 designed to help our members contribute. Additional *Reaching Out* tools are available on our website:

**[http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching\\_out-index](http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching_out-index)**

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
October 2012	15 July 2012
January 2013	15 October 2012
April 2013	15 January 2013
July 2013	15 April 2013

# FROM THE INSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

Two years ago, I wrote to you about walking the yard like a zombie. I shared that I didn't know my next move until I happened upon an NA Basic Text in the library. I was an oldtimer in trouble, lost in a world of self-imposed isolation.

Well, I'm here to tell you what a difference living "just for today" can make. I started by renewing my faith in a Higher Power and beginning to work the steps again. I started a regular meeting to give back to the men on the yard who needed it most. What I figured out along the way was that I was the one in need. But the only way to get what I needed was to pay it forward. I had to start giving back to the newcomer and being open-minded; I had become stagnant in my recovery.

When we receive the simplest spiritual awakenings, they cascade into more and more love from our Higher Power. But we have to be careful not to allow our ego to get in the way of our recovery. Two years ago, the DOC changed their policy in my state, allowing inmates to order cleantime medallions. So I placed a literature order that included my 25-year medallion. Obviously, it was a momentous occasion in my recovery. That order was lost, and I never got that medallion.

I have come to realize that receiving a medallion is a proud accomplishment, but it should also be a humble reminder. It should not be displayed around our necks as a badge of courage, but as a symbol of humility and a reminder where we have been. Over these past two years, my Higher Power has taught me humility, peace, serenity, love, patience, selflessness, and understanding. Today, I'm back, baby, teaching and giving back to my NA community.

My Higher Power must have thought I was finally ready. Maybe he saw that my actions, not just intentions, were sincere, because that lost literature order finally showed up! It came just in time for my cleantime anniversary, along with a 27-year medallion! It sits on the shelf as a reminder of the gratitude that speaks through me as I care and share the NA way!

JZ, AZ

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is AC and I'm currently incarcerated on my fourth probation violation for using drugs. I have been to some NA meetings on the "street," which I found extremely helpful and welcoming. Unfortunately, I wasn't ready to give up all of my reservations in order to recover. Now, I have been to the bottom of every bottle, and I have been homeless and institutionalized; I even attempted suicide as a means of escape from my complete and utter misery.

In all of those places, all of those ways of running, I have found there is no way to run from myself and my problems. I guess now I really understand the saying "Wherever I go, there I am." So, here I am, serving a six-year sentence in a DOC behavior modification program. I have the ability to "earn" an early release if I complete two years of their 24/7 therapeutic community. This could be my ticket to freedom.

When I first entered the program in May of 2011, I was basically just doing it to get out. Over a period of months, I have begun to really discover myself. I have talents and abilities that I never knew I possessed. My Higher Power has literally brought me back from the depths of despair. I feel like I have a new life, and while I used to run from my fears, I now face and conquer them. I no longer wish to be dead.

I have wishes, dreams, and ambitions to help others who are lost like I was. I'm not saying I'm perfect; I still have a lot to work out inside myself. The difference in me today is that I am willing and I believe! I know with the help of my Higher Power and Narcotics Anonymous, recovery IS possible. "A good life awaits."

AC, VA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is TF and I am an addict who is currently incarcerated in Florida. I have been struggling with this disease for a long time. In my active addiction I would cause pain to everybody around me, just so I didn't have to feel any pain. I did things I would have never done clean. I sold myself and stole from everyone I cared about. I used anybody around me to get what I wanted.

I know my story sounds similar to many. I have been locked up for two years and I am just realizing how sick I really am. It took

me messing up at work release and getting sent back here to finally see how much help I need. When I get out I don't know where I'm going to live, and that scares me to death.

I'm trying to use all my resources to find help. I recently read the NA booklet *Behind the Walls* for the first time. I thought it was me telling my story! I felt so close to every one of the people who shared their stories in that pamphlet. I know that I need a sponsor to work the NA program, and I am ready. I want to change, and I know the steps can help me.

I go to all the meetings and I try my best. I know that I am one of the lucky ones, because I am still alive. I've lost a lot of friends to this disease. I don't want to be buried six feet under; I want to live clean!

TF, FL

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is JC from Virginia. I have read the personal stories in the Basic Text many times. I feel like some of the stories are talking about me. So, here is my story: From a very young age, I always wanted to be the center of attention. I lied and stole just so people would notice me. It worked at first—then life got real for me.

In three years, three of my grandparents died. One was my best friend and one died right in front of me. Then I found out my parents were getting divorced. I bounced back and forth every couple of years. I started acting out and getting in trouble. Those behaviors opened the door to my drug addiction.

I started playing with fire. I smoked cigarettes, then weed. Pretty soon I was hanging around the kids with the drugs and failing my classes. I wanted to finish school, but I kept messing up. I got caught stealing liquor from a store and was sentenced to meetings. My dad would drop me off, watch me walk in, and then leave. I would take off as soon as he left. I lied to the court and told them I finished my meetings.

I got the charges dismissed and went out to celebrate. One of my friends asked me if I wanted to rob a store. We got caught and went to jail. When I got out, I didn't stay clean. Finally, my dad kicked me out. I went from place to place getting high. I eventually ended up at a shelter where they made me go to meetings. I felt like I fit right in.

I was sentenced to one year in jail and I'm currently serving my sentence. I have learned a lot about myself. I can be honest today; I have emotions. Most of all, I have a choice. I feel pain now because the drugs are gone, but at least I feel! I'm going to stay clean, just for today, because I believe this is God's will for me. Thank you, NA.

JC, VA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am 53 years old and have spent most of my life in jails and institutions. I started using drugs when I was 17 and graduated from high school. I didn't know what I wanted from life, so I dedicated my life to drugs and crime. My "claim to fame" was that I could handle it.

I kept using for 36 years. As a victim of incest, I felt ashamed and dirty. Drugs were the only answer, until now. This program has given me a simple description of what I need to do in order to recover and has shown me proof that it works. Today, I want to live a clean life. I want to be free of the bondage of drugs.

JCA, NJ

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is WB and I am a 21-year-old addict. I'm currently serving a three-year prison sentence. I found NA on the inside, after struggling with drug addiction since the age of 14. Over the years, my disease progressed. I have been in and out of jails and hospitals, and now I'm in prison.

My addiction has caused me to lose everything I have ever loved, including my son. He is nearly six years old, and I have missed out on a lot of memories with him because of my drug addiction. Now, because I am clean and working on myself, I'm able to talk to him on the phone. I have been incarcerated for six months. I missed his preschool graduation; now he is headed to kindergarten.

NA has helped give me hope. It has shown me that addicts can recover. No matter what your circumstances may be, the NA program can restore you to sanity. Drug addiction used to control every part of my life. When I got to prison and got clean, I realized that no prison was worse than the prison in my own mind!

I am now learning to live a better life without drugs. NA has helped me change in so many ways! I have a better outlook and a

higher tolerance for those around me. I am so grateful for what NA has done for me that I try to encourage others. Being an NA member means that I am free to be myself and I won't be judged by the things I have done in the past. It feels great to know that there are others just like me who have gone through similar experiences. NA lets us share our stories and give each other hope. I owe much respect and appreciation to the NA program. Thank you.

Your friend, WB, GA

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm a recovering addict named MP. I'm incarcerated in Pennsylvania, but am originally from Maryland. I was involved in NA before I got locked up, but I didn't stay clean. I enjoyed service work and was very active in my home group, but I didn't work the steps. I had a sponsor, but in name only. Now, I've been here three months. As fate would have it, they have a drug-and-alcohol block here. You actually have to apply to get a spot, as they are few and the need is great. With so much time on my hands, I'm actually working the steps. Now I see the need for service, sponsorship, and step work in order to work an honest program. In closing, I would like to say that the cliché "keep coming back" really worked for me. Today, I am grateful and hopeful!

MP, PA

# FROM THE OUTSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

I needed something extra in my recovery program. I felt empty and unfulfilled just going to regular meetings. I went to the H&I committee to see if I could give back. It has saved me from isolation and self-seeking. H&I added to my recovery positive reminders that, while I have the disease of addiction, I am no longer suffering. Through H&I, I am able to get out of self and carry a message of recovery. I can give of my time freely. I have found compassion I never thought I had.

My service experience with H&I started when I was the H&I literature person in my area for two years, followed by several other commitments, including secretary of a meeting at the local women's jail. Presently, I have a small commitment to speak at Fire Camp at least four times a year.

One experience I would like to share happened at the end of a meeting. I was approached by some inmates. One woman wanted to know how she was supposed to stay clean the day she gets out. She was scared. She reminded me that staying clean is easier than getting clean. I was very touched and suddenly felt compassion for the still-suffering addict.

My message for those on the inside: Recovery is waiting for you right now. It may not hit you on the head. You may need to seek it, like you used to seek drugs. Go to any lengths to make this program work. Seek it every day and keep it fresh. There's no insurance that, in NA, you will never use again. It is up to you, one day at a time.

In loving service, SM

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My introduction to Narcotics Anonymous came through an H&I panel that came into the county jail. I was 51 years old and I always went to jail, detoxed, and went back out. That H&I panel showed me there was another way to live. Now, I have 13 years clean. H&I has changed my life. Thanks to NA, that was my last detox, in jail or anywhere else.



One Christmas, a fellow addict asked me to speak on an H&I panel in a detox unit. The experience reminded me how it felt to be sick and alone on the holidays. Later, I became the H&I panel leader for that facility. I still try to find a panel every year on Christmas or New Year's Eve. It is my way of giving back this miracle of recovery.

If I could say one thing to the addicts who are locked up, it would be this: Stay clean and change your life; you never have to go back to where you came from!

Anonymous

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Nearly 34 years ago, on June 16, 1978, I got picked up at the county jail and dropped off at a treatment center with everything I owned in one small brown paper bag. My daughter had been "rescued" and placed in foster care, my car/residence was on its side in a drainage ditch, and no one, not even the local judge who had declared me a "pathetic human being," wanted anything more to do with me. To say that I was feeling hopeless when I arrived at the treatment center, with stitches in both wrists, would be an understatement.

But, little by little, things began to change. The people there really seemed to care about helping me get my life back on track. It was as if they saw something in me that I'd lost touch with years ago. Unlike in other places I'd been in my life, they really seemed to want me to stay. The trust they had in me blew my mind. They helped me get my driver's license reinstated and let me drive their cars. They arranged visits with my kids, and sent me to parenting classes. They even gave me a job working overnight shifts in the residential program and answering phones in the outpatient program. I started making restitution payments and going to school. I got a sponsor and started working the steps.

Eighteen months later, I was able to bring my daughter back "home" to live with me. I set out to turn my faith into practice by becoming the mother that my little girl deserved. When my daughter was born in 1970, she, her dad, and I were all addicted to heroin. Today my daughter is happily married. She has lived and traveled all over the world. She was the first person on both sides of her family to graduate from college and was my personal inspiration to become the second. This summer, she will be bringing my three beautiful grandchildren to their grandma's house for a visit; all of us can hardly wait!

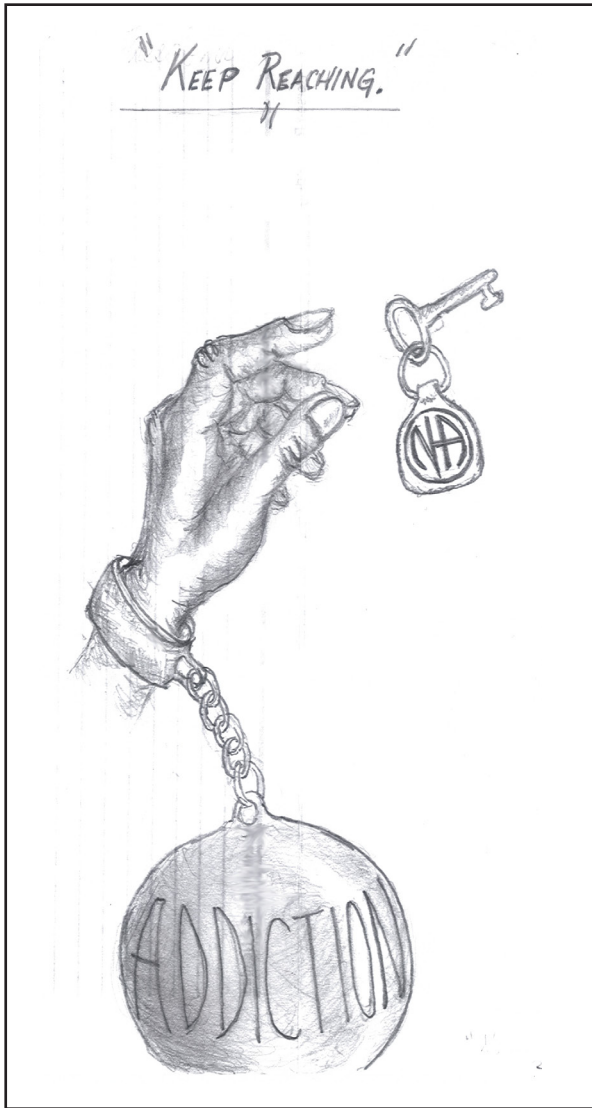
My heart is filled with love and gratitude that these three beautiful children have been able to grow up in an environment that all children deserve, where they are nurtured and loved and allowed to be children. Their environment is free from the pain of watching the people they love most wither away and die right before their trusting little eyes. Neither my mother nor my grandmother ever had an opportunity to experience that type of environment.

I owe all our lives to the treatment and care I received in that treatment center all those years ago, and to Narcotics Anonymous for the ongoing support I have received in all the years since. My prayer is that this message will give one person who didn't think it was possible to turn their life around the courage to reach out and contact someone who knows it is.

JF, CA

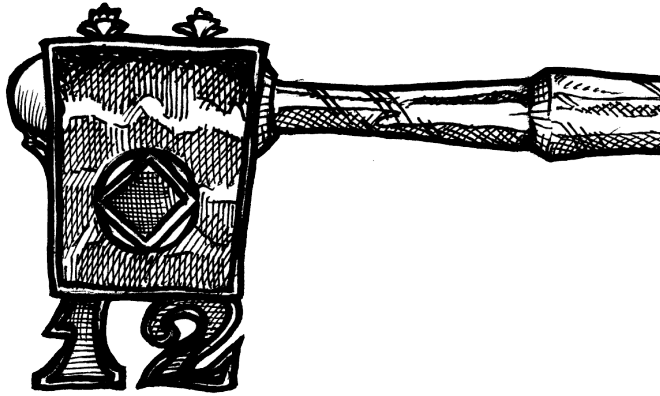
Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented art. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act, and images provide a powerful message of the freedom we can find in NA.

ART FROM THE OUTSIDE

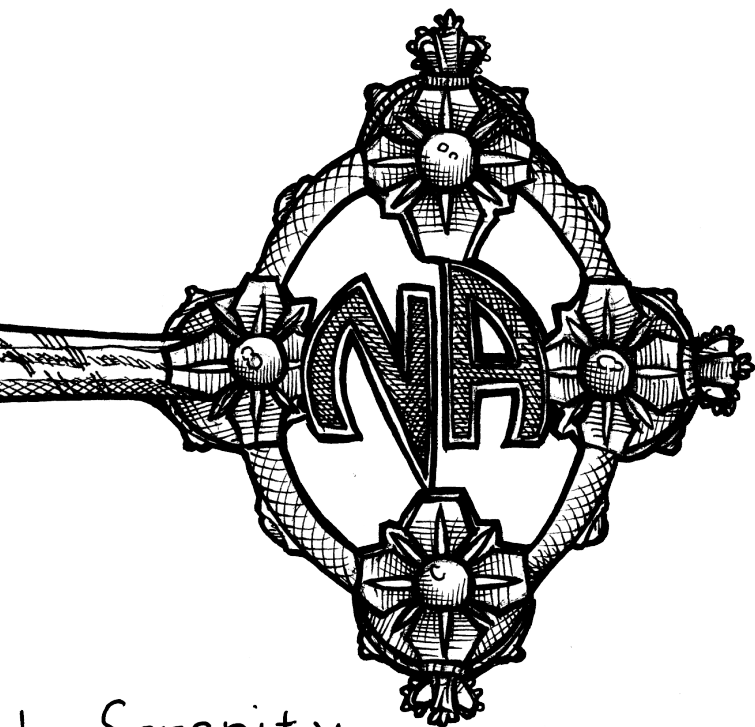


THE INSIDE

ART FROM



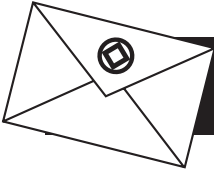
NA: the key



to Serenity

BK, NE

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



# INSIDE / OUTSIDE

## 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](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.

**Mail to:**  
*Reaching Out*  
c/o NA World Services  
PO Box 9999  
Van Nuys, CA 91409  
USA