

# Reaching Out

July 2015



Welcome.....2

From the Inside.....3

From the Outside.....9

Transitioning.....12

Order Form.....16

*Narcotics Anonymous offers only one promise and that is freedom from active addiction, the solution that eluded us for so long. We will be freed from our self-made prisons.*

Basic Text, "More Will Be Revealed"

# 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.

*Reaching Out* is introducing a new section, "Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside." We are featuring our first submission in this issue. We look forward to members sharing with others members' their experience with successful transition.

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](mailto:fsmail@na.org).

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
October 2015	15 July 2015
January 2016	15 October 2015



# From the Inside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is CW and I am an addict. I am 57 years old and I am currently serving a life term in the Florida Department of Corrections which began 23 August 1994. I was born in New York in 1957 and started using regularly at eight years old. At 13 I moved with my family to South Florida where my disease of addiction matured and flourished.

I was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous in 1982 when my wife and my friend's wife "blackmailed" my friend and me into going to an NA meeting they heard about. We went, and even bought and brought dope with us to that first meeting. I thank God every day for that introduction to NA.

From then until 1994 when I entered the prison system, I had a sponsor who, by the grace of my higher power, stayed with me the whole time. And I managed to stay clean a lot of the time, but never managed to put together more than two years clean. When it came to the program, I was a really slow learner. It's a miracle that I survived all the relapses until now. And I relapsed numerous times.

When I came to prison I immediately jumped into the drug scene because it's what I knew best. It was that old drug addict's adaptability. I used regularly for the first few years to help me get over the shock of catching a "life" sentence and to get acclimated to prison life. Let's be real—I was 36 years old, overweight, white, with a little bit of money, and I was scared silly with all the preconceived images of what prison was all about.

Remember that I also had twelve years of NA under my belt when I arrived. So, after a few years of numbing my fears, my program started to reassert itself and I came to see the powerlessness and unmanageability of the using lifestyle, even in prison.

I started to put together three years clean when I got my first transfer to a new facility, and immediately upon my hitting the new compound the old fears kicked in, and I relapsed for six months.

After all the years in Narcotics Anonymous, my cleantimes have gotten longer and longer and my relapses have gotten shorter and further apart. Now I have ten years and eight months clean (2 May 2004) and am very involved in the program of recovery with NA.

I am kind of an elder at our facility's meetings, like a group sponsor. We have very few people here who have experienced the love and learning of NA out there. I try my best to be an example for them by living the program. I also sponsor individuals whenever asked, and always reach out to the newcomers.

I have more peace and serenity now and a close relationship with my higher power. All I have today is thanks to God and Narcotics Anonymous. Continue to hope; I do.

CW, FL

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is JT and I am currently incarcerated for my second time in the prison system. I did a six-year set my first time and was a faithful attendant of our NA group. Due to anonymity, I will not mention the name. Upon my release I never went to a meeting or remained faithful to my Higher Power (God). I was working at a real job the day after I paroled. I thought, "Hey, I'm cured. I've got this."

Well, guess what? I was very sadly mistaken. I had nothing besides an addiction waiting to come back worse than ever, and that it did. I got loaded that first time. I got a parole violation but managed to keep my job and get clean again for a month or so.

I thought, "Oops, a little hiccup, but no big deal. I don't need help. I've got this." It never ceases to amaze me, looking back on how I could have thought my problems and addiction were over. Today I can be honest. I'm an addict and honest with the fact that I do not have this on my own. To forget either of those,

I'm in serious trouble. Thinking I've got this is a sign I'm about to use and throw everything away.

So I was clean for a month or maybe two; had my job, two horses to take care of, and a place to live; and life appeared good. Now I see my downfall was not being involved with anything besides work. Had I been going to NA meetings, becoming involved, I would have never gone back to the dope, which I did worse than ever.

This time I did not just go on a week run; it was a few months. I trashed my mom's house while she was at my grandparents' for Christmas, which was where I was supposed to be but stood them up because I was too high on dope. I went from being a healthy 265 to about 180 pounds and in jail once more for new charges.

My stay in jail was short. I was released to drug court, which I ran from because I was high once again. This did not last long, because I was arrested in a small coastal town and given a year to do. I was given the option to go to inpatient treatment, but due to county detainer problems and the fact that by the time I would have been able to go to treatment, going to treatment would have meant being away longer, I decided to not go. Another big mistake.

Upon my release from county jail, I was right back to work logging, making decent money, and thinking that I had life handled. I had met this girl before I went to jail who was a user, but I really liked her. We hung out and I once more convinced myself to do what I knew I should not be doing or be around. She was not the one to use with me or make me use. I did that all on my own.

I eventually was using all the time. I quit going to work because I was too high. I was now at the height of where my addiction had ever been. I was worse than ever and did not care. Wow, I was miserable, and had fooled myself that there was no other way for me.

I will never forget the relief of being arrested. It was euphoric, because there was no other way of stopping me except death, and that was not far off. Finally, I had a chance to get clean. I was

arrested for possession and a parole violation. No big deal, but a huge relief, because I could finally sleep. Just sleep and eat. No more running or having to shove that needle in my arm.

My parole officer gave me the option either to do 30 days or he could go ahead and give me 90 days so that I could go through the inpatient treatment program offered by my county. I knew I did not want to use ever again and that I needed help. I took the 90 days so I could go through the treatment dorm. This was one of the best decisions that I've ever made. I've been clean ever since.

I did complete treatment before coming to prison. While I was in treatment, a detective came and told me he would be pressing charges and rearresting me at some point. By the grace of God, he allowed me to go until my last day of treatment before the secret indictment came out.

Treatment was a life saver for many reasons, but the main one I am going to be adamant about sharing is NA. With NA I do not have to be alone, by myself, taking on the world. Now the support network and family of clean friends will keep me clean, and I look forward so very much to getting out and being involved. With my will and sincere desire to be clean and the unity, help, and support of programs such as NA, these will be the backbone of a productive, clean future. I cannot wait to be released and share my recovery.

Sincerely,  
JT, OR

*Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is BN. I am currently serving 57 months. This is a brief story of my life, and I hope my story helps another addict. I have been incarcerated 31 of my 47 years of life. I have been through so much pain and misery that I could never have enough paper and pen to tell it. I started using at a very early age and just progressed more and more. My drug addiction along with mental health issues was not a very good combination.

Until I was released in 2012 I had never been to a meeting. My girlfriend at the time suggested that I hit a meeting. At first I

did not think I could benefit and that I would not like meetings. Man, was I ever wrong. I stopped at a meeting and heard a story similar to mine. I fell in love with NA.

I was clean but still held on to my old ideas by hustling drugs and doing other criminal activity. I knew I was not being honest with my friends or myself. Also, the convict attitude that I carried just kept me in trouble. I never thought about how others felt, how I said things, or what people thought. It was all about me. I always introduced myself at meetings by saying, "Hi, I'm B. I'm an addict with an attitude." With that kind of thinking, I ended back inside.

I have been clean only two times in my life, once for six months and once for two months. But as of 7 February 2015 I have been clean for one year. Some people say it is easy to stay clean in here. But if I wanted to use, I could. I take my recovery seriously now. I start my day reading daily devotional books, reading books about recovery, and doing step work. Today I practice the Twelve Steps, traditions, meditation, and giving thanks to the man upstairs whom I choose to call God. I attend the meetings every Saturday, and if I can I pass what was given to me to another addict.

There have been so many good things that have happened to me inside and out that I owe it to NA for loving, caring, and showing me how to live a drug-free life. I still deal with mental health issues, but I know that just for today, I don't have to use and I can recover. As long as I continue to do all the things this program suggests, all will be well.

Thank you, CH, for referring me to NA. And thank you, NA, for accepting me for how I was and how I am now. I really miss all the hugs that I received at the beginning and end of the meetings. Hugs are better than drugs.

Sincerely,  
BN, WA

# 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 jpeg or pdf files to [Handl@na.org](mailto:Handl@na.org), or mail to Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409.







# From the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

Good afternoon; I am PA and I've been clean for nine years, eleven months, and ten days. During my active addiction, I went through several criminal institutions and a mixture of anger, confusion, and skepticism. Today it is impossible to dissociate my compulsive drug use from the situations I allowed myself to go through. In a moment of desperation in 1997, I went to a group of Narcotics Anonymous in my town with my mother's help.

Although I did not understand absolutely anything, I managed to keep myself clean for three months. At the time I was very judgmental and skeptical, even given the evidence that the program worked, and I returned to using drugs, however with a different feeling, and even though I was very frustrated, the drug use was not the same. I thought, "Damn time I met this program."

The time I lived clean was essential to understanding better the benefits of staying clean, even in a distorted way. After 17 years in active addiction I returned to that meeting in 2005 with a lot of pain and fear, yet with a feeling that there was something different, spiritual, something that every meeting could give me, just for today—a new opportunity to change.

That time it was too hard for me. The people I loved, in this case my mother and my brother, got away from me to protect themselves. They were people who were affected by my imbalance and dishonesty, but they always believed that I could be free and find a new way to live. I owe them eternal amends, and through the love of this fellowship I learned the true form of love, a love based on respect and loyalty, a feeling that I've never had for someone.

I see that NA is changing me. Today I am a better son, brother, and father. I have been serving this fellowship since I got clean, and as a leader of an H&I panel I go to a prison and I understand the degree of identification, sharing honestly and sincerely, with

what I was and what I've been becoming. This stimulates me to keep coming back, and I've gone from being skeptical to today feeling the presence of a HP always in my life.

In a few days I'll turn ten years clean. Situations have happened that I need to review, and that's only possible through working the steps. Today I am happy, and when crying in a room for something that's difficult for me, I look back and see the path I walked, and see that in this path God's will prevailed. It's not just about staying clean, it is about finding a new way to live, and with the help of my fellows I'm not alone, and I have nothing to fear.

PA, Belém, Brazil

### *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is JH and I'm composing this letter en route to school. Just a few 24 hours ago, school was not an option due to some dishonest choices I made years ago. I subsequently had to go through another episode of dealing with the disease of addiction. We have a saying in recovery that "if drugs don't kill you, the lifestyle will." A few years ago I came up with a bright idea, and I probably could have ended it right there. However, after some individuals tried to rob me, I thought it would be a good idea to use that situation to file a phony police report for a "get-rich-quick scheme."

First, let me back up and say I started practicing many dishonest behaviors, including cheating in my relationship, and the rest is history repeating itself. Now, fast-forwarding back to the story, I ended up using. Thank God for some friends in recovery. Thank God for Narcotics Anonymous, because through prayer and meditation I was able to make it back into the rooms. Unfortunately, yet fortunately, the story doesn't end there because the bright idea that I had come up with months prior cost me, and I went to prison clean. However, once again, thanks to God, Narcotics Anonymous, H&I, and a dear friend (the wife of my best friend), I got all the literature I needed and a meeting once a week for the next 25 months. The moral of the story is that if

we don't continue to change, our clean date will! Life is good now—my wife stood by me despite my character defects, my friends stood by me despite my shortcomings, and NA never left me. Thanks to God, a Tenth Step coach, and a strong sponsor family known as the Dream Team, I'm approaching six years clean again. None of this would have been possible without my friends in Narcotics Anonymous and World Services' *Reaching Out*. Thanks again, Narcotics Anonymous, for saving my life!

JH, IL



# Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

I did not want to return to the horrors of active addiction, so I took suggestions from the staff at the treatment center, who are also NA members. The treatment staff took us to NA meetings on the outside. They suggested that we listen when NA members share their experience, strength, and hope at a meeting so we could get an idea who we wanted to sponsor us. I followed their suggestions and I had a potential sponsor before I left the treatment center. I walked up to my potential sponsor and asked for her phone number. I also told her that I was in a treatment center. I asked her what other meetings she attended. She told me where her home group was located.

When I got out of treatment, I went to a halfway house so I could surround myself with recovering addicts and feel safe where I lived. I went to her home group and asked her if she could sponsor me, and she said yes. I followed her suggestions. She suggested that I make meetings every day and get involved with service work at the home group level and at the H&I level. I did just that. She also suggested that I get to every meeting early so I could read one of the readings, and stay late after every meeting. She also suggested that I do step work. I was not from the state where I went to treatment, and I wanted to go back home. She suggested that I work and live the first three steps before I went back home, because the first three steps are the foundation steps. That was in 2005. I am still clean today thanks to NA.

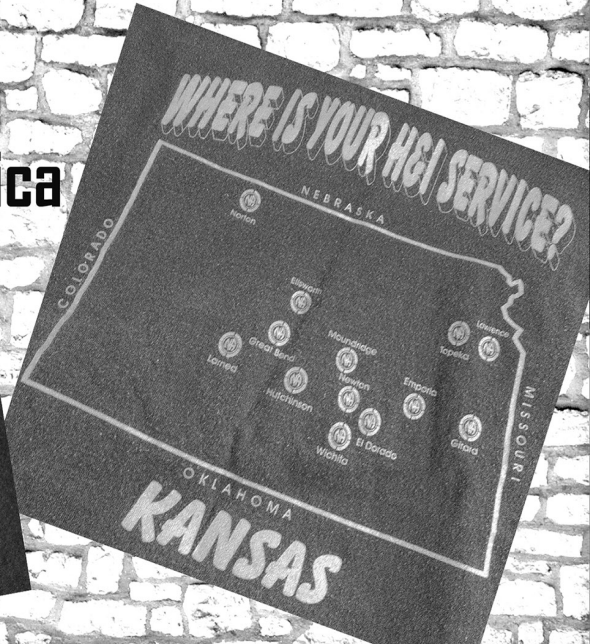
DS, CA

# H&I T-Shirts



South Africa  
Region

Mid-America  
Region



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



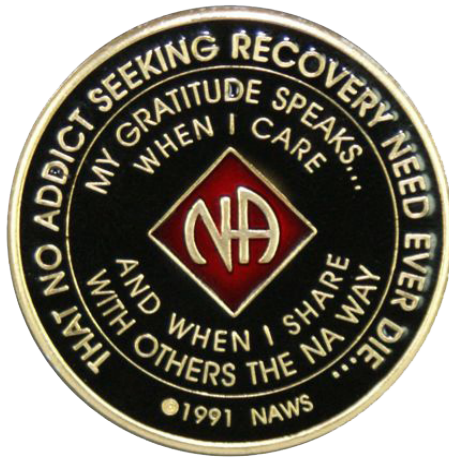
### Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left from a treatment center, jail, 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 your first day of your release?
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?
5. How do you think that 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 by a 20-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$35.90 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* @ \$35.90 each, total \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Identification Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

***Reaching Out***

c/o NA World Services, Inc. ☉ PO Box 9999 ☉ Van Nuys, CA 91409 ☉ USA