

Reaching Out

July 2016



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“When we are in crisis, it doesn’t matter if we trust someone or not; we reach out and are grateful that anyone is there to grab our hand and pull us back from the edge.”

Living Clean

From the Editor

We would like to welcome all of you to the NA World Services newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We hope that the contents of this newsletter will assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts. There are three sections to *Reaching Out*. The first section, "From the Inside," is filled with letters from incarcerated addicts, sharing their experience, strength, and hope as they find and maintain recovery from addiction through NA.

The second section, "From the Outside," is an opportunity for Hospitals & Institutions subcommittees to offer their experiences obtained through carrying the NA message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. You may also find personal experience from those members who heard the NA message on the inside and are now living and enjoying life on the outside.

The third and newest section, "Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside," features members sharing about successfully transitioning from treatment, a hospital, or an institution to living on the outside. We encourage submissions for *Reaching Out* from members and H&I subcommittees. Please consider that we are more likely to publish articles that focus on how NA has helped an individual to recover while incarcerated rather than those that concentrate on the horrors of drug use. Send all submissions to *Reaching Out*; NAWS, PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999; USA, or to fsmail@na.org.

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

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
October 2016	15 July 2016
January 2017	15 October 2016

And finally, did you know that electronic subscriptions to *Reaching Out* are free? New issues will be emailed to you four times a year. To sign up, visit <http://www.na.org/reachingout>.



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

Hello, my name is JK and I am an addict. This is my third time in prison, and by the grace of God and NA it can be my last. I don't ever have to go back to the misery of active addiction and committing felonies again. That in itself is a miracle and only a small part of my testimony. Let me take you back to 8 December 2012. At that time I was out on parole and I was on a good one. My wife of twelve years, who is my ex now, and who I pray is in recovery, was bouncing back and forth between another guy and me. Our four beautiful children were in foster care. I had an ankle monitor on and I was driving around in a stolen truck, out scrapping to support my habit. Can you imagine the insanity?

The night of 7 December, my ex and I were out trinket shopping in an old, abandoned farm house. At about 3 am we were heading back to our apartment when a cop car got behind us and turned on his lights. I looked at my ex and we both said, "Run." We ran for some 20 miles, or maybe more. I hadn't slept for about three days due to using. I was mentally fried. When the chase came to an end, I was being pulled out of the river because I had made a wrong turn and tried to run. I must have looked pathetic. I remember telling the cop who had handcuffed me that I was using and I needed help. That was the first time in 38 years that I had ever admitted I had a problem out loud. They put me in the county jail and I spent the next six days in a cell by myself. Then they transferred me to the general population, which meant I could get a book from the library.

My Higher Power did something that day that I couldn't do for myself. I picked up a Fifth Edition of the Basic Text, and that was the start of my living a new way. I got about three pages into the book when something happened to me that I had never felt before, which was hope. I also knew that I wasn't alone. I ended

up getting sent back to prison. I played the treatment card and asked for help. They obliged and sent me to a medium-security prison. On 5 July of this year I celebrated two years clean without the use of any mind-altering substances. Over the last two years my Higher Power has guided me through a storm of total chaos and destruction. In fact, I have been the best I have ever been spiritually and mentally due to finding a Higher Power to guide me. I have been through countless court dates, gotten divorced, and signed my rights away for my children, but have not found any reason to pick up again.

I was sentenced to 13 to 27 years. I consider myself blessed. I am a mentor in the substance abuse unit and a GSR of our NA group, and I have completed many classes. I have peace and serenity in my life today that I thought I could never have. My past no longer defines me. My heart is no longer filled with hate and anger or guilt and shame. Thank you, NA, for helping me get back to the person I was before the chaos started.

Sincerely and humbly, your fellow brother in recovery,

JK, NE

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is JH and I am a grateful recovering addict. I am currently incarcerated and serving a six-and-a-half-year sentence. I am truly sorry to my family whom I neglected and abandoned, and to all the countless others I have victimized through the years of my active addiction. I am grateful to my Higher Power for my arrest and rescue, and to NA for being there for me.

I was first introduced to NA in 1987 at the age of 15. The fellowship was good but not for me at the time, or so I thought. I was young and did things my way and spent years trying to figure it out on my own. I have been in several institutions with the same results. I thought I had all the answers. What a fool I was. Needless to say, at the end of my using I was completely lost. I was defeated and willing to do whatever I had to do to begin my life in recovery. At that time I began an honest and

sincere relationship with my Higher Power and the Fellowship of NA and the Twelve Steps.

I took my last drug on 15 April 2011 and reached out to NA for help. I asked for literature, and you sent it. I asked for contacts, and you sent them through H&I. For the first few years I read the Basic Text and *Just for Today*. I read them daily and began to work on my steps through the use of the book *It Works: How and Why*. I have subscribed to the *Reaching Out* and *NA Way* periodicals which have been a blessing. I have written to numerous addressees from the H&I list that was sent to me, though not all of them responded. I never gave up hope and faith like I had so many times in the past.

In 2013 I made contact with another addict who was willing to sponsor me and help me work my steps again. He is a huge inspiration to me, and I have much love and respect for him. The Twelve Steps are the difference this time; they are what I neglected to do last time. They show me what and who I really am and that I can live life without the use of drugs and self-destruction. What an awesome revelation.

To all those who will read this, I say my life is better—not always easy, but better. No matter what I do, I do not use drugs. I stay active in step work and work with others in recovery on a regular basis. As long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear. Just for today.

JH, NY

Dear Reaching Out,

Sometimes looking back in life, trying to figure out that aha! moment can be difficult, yet there are those moments of clarity when everything is apparent. This time it did not come back to me until I had a few years clean under my belt. It pains me every time I think back to my sentencing date when the judge administered a life sentence to me. I reflect back now and can recall the thought of me being only 24 years old. How could he expect me to serve a 33-year-to-life sentence? It never dawned

on me that I was like most: In order to appreciate life and respect it, I had to first have it taken away from me.

See, even in prison, complacency comes at times. You get that look-down-the-nose syndrome, thinking you are better or wiser than those around you. Truth be told, whether you are incarcerated or free, we all have the same struggle. I have learned that just because I don't use drugs doesn't mean I can't pick up other crutches that are just as unhealthy. My Higher Power has helped me to realize this.

The steps are in place for a reason. I slowly progress through redoing the steps upon completion of all twelve. Each time through the steps, I pay even more attention to the details of each one. I have learned that each time I do, I heal just a little bit more. Even if no one else sees it, I know it, and that's really what matters.

Since my freedom was given back to me, I have been living free from the vices and demons that have imprisoned me for so long. I feel as if I have been reborn. This is a gift that no money can buy.

HG, CA



ART FROM THE ZSIDE

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

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





From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

I can still remember my first NA meeting. There was a guy named Dave and he started to speak. He said something that has always made my ears perk up like an old basset hound when he hears a wrapper opening. He said, "I'm here to share my experience, strength, and hope." He talked about the life he had led and how he had let so many down, and now he was living a life of giving back and being of service, making a living amends.

I wondered how a convicted murderer could do that while still behind the walls. After the meeting I tracked him down on the yard and we talked for what seemed like hours. I got my first taste of freedom that night and put a plan into action. I too could give back, make a living amends, and feel good about myself instead of wallowing in self-pity. At that point my life had begun to move in a new direction, and I found a God of my understanding.

Prior to that night I had five years clean, alone and struggling to maintain it and having to justify why I wasn't using, because my environment and associates had not changed. I thought I had an obligation to the guys in my neighborhood who were there when I was growing up. I later found out my loyalty was shown by delivering the message back to them that recovery does work and is possible.

As a result of NA I learned to be honest with myself and others. I sought out good, orderly direction, and I became a teacher's aide and tutor. I have gained principles and was transformed into a caring, giving human being. That is a long way from the addicted murderer, liar, and thief who was sent to prison 26 years ago. I was released last year and live by those same principles that I learned: honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. I have a commitment at my home meeting, and a volunteer posi-

tion working with a nun who is helping the lifers I left behind to gain the tools I learned, not only to survive on the outside, but to become caring, giving human beings as well.

Today my life is not perfect or necessarily easy, but my needs are met. I have almost nineteen years clean since April of 1997. I remember where I came from, and through the help of NA nothing holds me back. My life is only going to get better. If a convicted murderer, liar, and thief can make it without using, so can you. There is still hope for everyone. Keep coming to meetings until you want to; then you will keep coming anyway.

In the spirit of the fellowship,

DL, CA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is SF and I am an addict. When I landed in Narcotics Anonymous I had no idea how it worked or why it worked. All I knew was I wanted in; I saw what I wanted in Narcotics Anonymous. It all started when I was hanging around the meetings and one of my predecessors told me that I should come to an H&I meeting when I had a couple of months clean. I was told when I got six months clean to start speaking on panels. In the previous years of my attempts to get clean I had taken numerous commitments and never fulfilled them. It was when I attended H&I meetings regularly that my journey began.

When I arrived in Narcotics Anonymous I heard somebody say, "I need Narcotics Anonymous but Narcotics Anonymous doesn't need me." I found that not to be true. After staying around here for a little while I have come to understand that service is a major part of my recovery, and without it and others like me, NA will not flourish. It is vital that we do some service to allow the newcomers a chance to see a new way of life. It gives hope to them knowing that you no longer have to live a life behind bars and can enjoy a life free from active addiction.

I say I love this program and what it has given me back. The NA Fellowship has taught me how to become a better person for

my family and friends again. It has shown me how to become responsible and accountable for my actions. I am proud to say I have been clean for over eight years and still do H&I service. The gift is that I get to give back what was so freely given to me, and this program has saved my life and countless others'. It will continue to do so.

I have been fortunate enough to go through some experiences and find out just how strong my foundation is. My foundation is built on service, and through that I have found peace. If I gave 100 percent of my time for 100 years I could never repay what I have been given. Thank you, NA.

SF, CA



ART FROM THE TO THE SIDE

Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented H&I T-shirts. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act and art. Please share your H&I T-shirt pictures with us! We would like to showcase your art. **HandI@na.org**

Japan H&I





Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My experience with transitioning to the outside the last time was quite different. In prior times, I could not conceive of the idea that total surrender was necessary or possible for me. Needless to say, I had numerous unsuccessful attempts at reintegrating and maintaining complete abstinence. I decided to do something different this time prior to leaving the correctional facility.

While incarcerated, I was very mindful of everything that I had voluntarily introduced to my spirit. I refused to read novels that involved or promoted criminal activity or drug use. I had surrendered inside the institution. I made requests to the inmate services unit to have my name placed on the call-out list for NA. In addition to this, I wrote inmate services and requested any twelve-step-recovery-based literature they had. When I went to the library inside the facility, the books I checked out were taken from the self-help section only. I was petrified that if I didn't work the program to the best of my ability and do something right away, I would surely go back to active use.

I decided that I would not just do my time; instead, I would just do me. I had enough evidence to clearly indicate that everything that I had done repeatedly would only lead me back to a dark place spiritually and ultimately back to using drugs.

I stayed away from all the drama while inside. I minded my own business and refused to allow myself to get caught up in the noise. I changed my perspective on why I was locked up. My perspective was no longer one that exonerated me from any responsibility. This change of perspective made it very clear that my addiction to drugs ruled my life and all of my decisions were centered on getting, using, and finding ways and means to use more.

I accepted the First Step, that my life was completely and unquestionably out of control and controlled by drugs. I knew that I continued to engage in criminal activity and behavior in order to finance my drug habit. Again, it was clearer that I could thank my addiction to drugs for my many periods of incarceration by

way of one bad decision after another. I honestly assessed my life and discovered that most of it was a blur. I knew that my behaviors were shameful and lacking direction and that any connection to values I had been brought up with was missing. My life was a mess. Despite being told how bright I was, I could no longer keep up the masquerade. My secret was out. I was insane, broke, jobless, homeless, husbandless, and directionless thanks to my addiction.

Once I got the memo “Addiction Defies All Logic,” I was able to stop trying to reinvent the wheel intellectually. I knew it was time for a change in my life. I needed help and lots of it. The problem was that I had no experience cleaning up from the inside out. I had no clue how to rid myself of the self-hatred that plagued me. I hated myself for being a criminal and an addict whose life was controlled by drugs. I had become a bum. Once I made the decision to completely surrender, found a Higher Power, and developed a plan of action, it all became clear. I utilized my resources within the facility and begged for help. I made it really clear that I never wanted to return to jail again. I wanted my freedom and wanted to be free from the obsessive, never-ending thoughts of using drugs as a spiritual suicide. I took suggestions that had been given to me years ago.

When I was released I left with an NA meeting directory; I had obtained one from one of the members who had done H&I. I went to a meeting before going anywhere else. I called another recovering addict, as instructed, when I got out. I then made a commitment to avoid all the people, places, and things that were involved with my using lifestyle. I was petrified of anything that resembled my old life before going inside. I went to three meetings a day. I got phone numbers and used them. Eventually I got a sponsor, and I am still here. My clean date is 6 August 2007. Not only have I not used any drugs, including alcohol and prescription drugs; I can honestly say that I am recovering from the disease of addiction. Today I am happy, joyous, and free. I have a relationship with a Higher Power, I have a sponsor, and I am a responsible member of society. Just for today, I am free.

MG, NY

CALLING ALL H&I MEMBERS!

Please submit your story to the quarterly NA newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We are looking for recovering addicts, like you, to share their experience of finding recovery behind the walls and maintaining it on the outside. Your story carries a powerful message of hope for the incarcerated addict! Thank you.

Please send your story to:
Narcotics Anonymous World Services;
PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409,
or to HandI@na.org.



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left from a treatment center, jail, prison, hospital, or institution, you are moved from the “inside” to the “outside” to be drug-free, productive members of society. We think your experience may be invaluable to others as they embark upon their transition.

We are offering questions to help stimulate your thinking so that you may want to share your experience with us; we will publish your article in *Reaching Out* to help others.

1. What did you do on the first day of your release/discharge?
2. What steps did you take to help your recovery in the community? Do you think the transition steps are the same for addicts who are being released after 30 days or ten years?
3. What are some of the challenges you encountered when you reentered the community?
4. How did NA help you with information so that you were able to attend a meeting upon release/discharge?
5. How do you think NA may have been better able to help you in your transition, and do you have any suggestions to offer so NA may be better able to help others as they transition?

We look forward to reading your experience and providing this information to others. Thank you for helping us assist others in their transition.



“When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man’s entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.”

Narcotics Anonymous, “We Do Recover”

Order Form

Reaching Out is a quarterly, recovery-oriented newsletter made available free of charge to incarcerated addicts through Narcotics Anonymous World Services. If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months and would like a free subscription to *Reaching Out*, complete and return the following form.

Reaching Out is also available 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

www.na.org/reachingout