

Reaching Out



July 2019



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“Recovery becomes a contact process; we lose the fear of touching and of being touched.”

Narcotics Anonymous, “We Do Recover”

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 2019	15 July 2019
January 2020	15 October 2019

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 www.na.org/reachingout.



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My initials are DO, an addict writing to you from British Columbia, Canada. I am writing about my experience this time around to help me get a better grasp on my addiction. I deserted the Fellowship a year ago when I had six years clean. I am imprisoned now due to my own stupidity.

I guess I lost touch when I moved away and stopped talking to others in the program. I became more of a loner and started seeking attention from someone I knew who used. Before I knew it, I was doing drugs and began to get worse. I never stuck a needle in my arm, but came close. My habit was serious.

I hate to admit it, but I was enjoying myself a bit. I knew it was a major problem, but I didn't know how to come off it at that point. Now I am looking to reenter the program. I have a major problem and am on the verge of healing. I vary from day to day but have a continuous urge to get better and stop using completely. I now do daily meditations. I hope to share my willingness to stay clean and to better myself and others in Narcotics Anonymous.

I hope to improve my chances by opening channels abroad instead of keeping silent in my 23-hour lockdown scenario. Hopefully this letter reaches someone, and my message can help another addict seeking recovery.

DO, British Columbia, Canada

Dear Reaching Out,

Well, here I am, an addict, KM, at the age of 47 and incarcerated for the first time. I was a professional magician since the age of twelve, and my work revolved around parties, bars, restaurants, etc. I got paid to party. When I was in my twenties, I thought, What a life I have! How wrong I was. We all know how substance abuse is progressive, and I progressed right into jail, losing everything.

I'm a chronic relapser. I would go one or two years clean, and then I would use to celebrate, or something would happen in my life to give me an excuse to use. My last relapse wound up with me in here. Since my arrest a little over three months ago, I have stayed clean thanks to my Higher Power and the NA Basic Text. I know eventually the door will open and I can leave. I pray I will be able to totally change my life, stay clean, and help others. I know it is possible by using the program of NA.

KM, Connecticut, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is KH, and I am an addict. I am writing this from inside my prison cell. I've battled with addiction for over 15 years, and I'm only 30. I've done over 1,000 days in county jails and have been arrested over 50 times. This time it's different, because now I want to stay clean. I've never really wanted to stay clean before; in the back of my mind, I was always thinking of ways to sneak in drugs. My wife has stuck by my side with our children. She has been drug-free her whole life. She stayed with me because she knew one day something would change inside me.

I always felt like as soon as I woke up, I had to use. Whether it was drinking or smoking something, anything, it didn't matter. I could not function properly without some type of mind-altering substance. I didn't like myself. I wanted to get clean but was scared of how boring my life would become.

I got locked up this time with my wife pregnant, and we lost our baby in a premature birth at 23 weeks. Our daughter lived for three weeks and four days. But before this, I found my Higher Power and asked for help. I go to meetings in here and take it day by day. I read and study all the literature. The jail took all my books except for a *Reaching Out* booklet I obtained from a meeting. I was upset by that; how are we supposed to better ourselves if you strip everything from us, including literature? I believe it was a test for me. I accepted that it happened and read my *Reaching Out*. I told myself: Whatever they put me through, it is no reason to pick up and use. I can and will stay clean with the help of Narcotics Anonymous.

KH, Kansas, USA

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, USA.

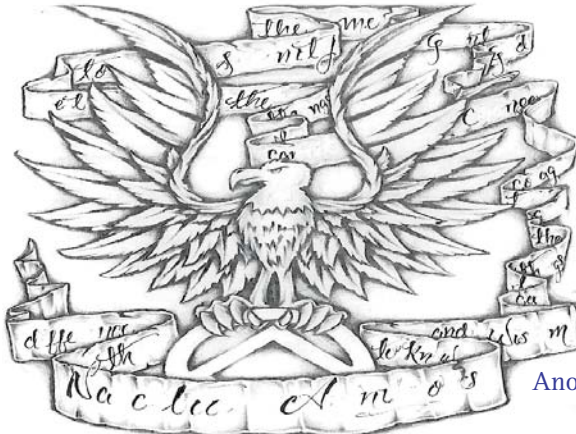
ART FROM THE ZSIDE



Inmate, California, USA



Inmate, California, USA



Anonymous



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is DB, an addict. In my 30 years of abuse, I could have written a lengthy dissertation on my powerlessness and unmanageability, but seeing as your articles are shorter, I kept in mind your premise to discuss what brought me to Narcotics Anonymous and recovery.

The following is my experience: When I fell and broke my cheekbone after a night of drinking, I received a written reprimand from the Marine Corps. They didn't have AA or NA for me, so I had no motivation to quit. I ended up in Leavenworth from a night of drinking and poor judgment. I still had neither AA nor NA; there was only a place of worship. I ended up getting work release. I finally hit rock bottom and had a blackout.

I had a new significant other, and I was mandated by the court to Narcotics Anonymous. I didn't show up to get clean; I only wanted time with my girl. Yet I related to the stories. The fact that alcohol is a drug became more apparent to me, and I made a decision to quit. With six months clean, I did relapse, but I got back on the horse and went to a meeting. I got a sponsor and made meetings my new life. I worked Steps, but not with complete honesty. After I was three years clean, my character defects came out and brought me back to prison.

At first I had no meetings, only church and my NA book. I joined a character development course. When I was moved to another facility, they took my NA book, and I floundered around. While in a new program I attended, I got the "honesty bug," and being in my last year, I joined the program where substance abuse addictions are talked about daily and we learn to deal with them. There are various meetings including one for NA. In February, I attended 123 meetings, and in the following month 126. That was my 90-in-90 attitude.

In the program, we get to pick a sponsor. With mine, I have done a thorough working of the Steps, writing page after page about myself. I have found a Higher Power and, now that I am out, I have 17 years clean. Thank you, NA, for the spiritual and mental growth you have shown me.

DB, Indiana, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is JM. My clean date is 20 July 1993, and I got involved in H&I service in 1998. I am from one of the boroughs of New York City. After attending six months of subcommittee meetings, I was given my first H&I commitment as a panel leader; I continued as panel leader for several facilities for a few years. After that, I accepted a position as panel coordinator and continued to serve in that capacity for several years. In 2010, I was nominated to and accepted the responsibility of an area H&I chairperson. Following that two-year term, I served as presentation coordinator. Simultaneously with that position, I served the region as H&I vice chairperson. Currently, I am serving my region as H&I chairperson.

My involvement with H&I began with my detox in July 1993, when an H&I member came into the facility to share his experience, strength, and hope. I was so moved by his message, which brought tears to my eyes. I said to myself, if I can take his suggestions and stay clean, one day I want to be able to carry the NA message into a facility and hopefully do for another sick and suffering addict what has been done for me.

H&I has influenced my recovery in many ways. For one, it epitomizes our belief that you can't keep it unless you give it away. It is a wonderful way for me to practice the Twelfth Step. H&I service is a constant reminder that if I don't practice this program to the best of my ability, I, too, can relapse. Serving in H&I has helped me practice many spiritual principles, such as humility, patience, tolerance, benevolence, and unconditional love. I have learned so much about commitment through doing H&I service. This service has also helped in building my esteem to a point where I have developed the courage to become a leader

in doing selfless service. These principles continue to help me tremendously in my personal and professional life experiences.

I think the H&I experience that stands out the most was when I was at my regional convention and saw the recovering addict who had brought the message to me in detox. This was about three years later, and I approached him and let him know who I was and where I had met him, and I was able to say thank you, letting him know that I was still clean.

I would like to say to my brothers and sisters on the inside that there is hope after drugs and the lifestyle that goes along with it. Recovery is the best choice I ever made in my life, and you can do it. I suggest the same thing that was suggested to me 19 years ago: give yourself a break and go to meetings. "Meeting makers make it" and "You can't keep it unless you give it away" are still my favorite slogans. Don't worry; many of our members have been incarcerated and they have come home and stayed clean to become productive members of society. Now they are able to share their own miracle stories and give hope to other addicts. Our literature states that "lost dreams awaken and new possibilities arise." Mine continue to do so, and so can yours.

JM, New York, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

I'm an addict and my name is LA. Today and by the grace of my Higher Power and the program of Narcotics Anonymous, I have 18 years and 10 months clean, and I have been doing H&I service ever since I had one year clean. I currently serve as vice chair for my regional H&I committee, and I also serve as a panel leader for my area H&I committee.

My reason for getting involved in H&I service is to just give back what was so freely given to me. When at the end of my road, when I could no longer function with or without the drugs, I ended up in detox. An H&I presentation was held there, and I was able to raise my hand and admit for the first time in my life, after 30 years of active addiction, that I was an addict. My journey started then, and I got some hope that just maybe I could stay clean a day at a time.

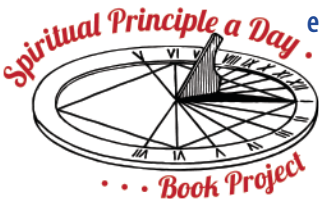
I told myself after coming home and making meetings that maybe one day I could carry the message that was carried to me. After staying clean for one year, I got that opportunity, and the impact on my recovery of doing H&I service has been amazing. Going into various facilities and sharing with addicts that any addict can lose the desire to use and find a new way to live has taken my recovery to another place.

One of the most memorable experiences I've had while carrying the message was sharing my story at an all-male facility. Prior to getting clean, I worked as a corrections officer for ten years. In the end, after using all day and night and having to get to work at 6:00 am, I wanted to sell my off-duty revolver for one more high. I got to work only to be suspended because I refused to take a drug test. Not long after my suspension, I got arrested and was sent to jail and was processed by people I had trained. At that same facility where I shared the message of recovery, there was a man who was also a corrections officer, and I identified with his pain. Today, he is clean eight years and doing H&I service as well. I'm so grateful to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous and glad to be of service.

LA, New York, USA

HOW DO YOU PRACTICE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES?

We're collecting and weaving together members' experience for NA's next book. Capture your experience in a couple of paragraphs and send it in. We will weave together members' experience to create a new book—written by addicts, for addicts—with each day focused on the application of a spiritual principle.



Be a part of this new book in the making!

Pick a principle and get writing. Send your work to SPAD, c/o NAWS, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA. Those with internet access can learn more at www.na.org/spad and can email input to spad@na.org.

ART FROM THE H&I 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. Handl@na.org



H&I, South Africa



H&I, South Africa

*The Old Me
is
Dead and Gone*



Anonymous



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 a 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 that we can get an idea who we want to sponsor us. I followed their suggestions, and I soon had a potential sponsor. I walked up to her 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 was in treatment, and I wanted to go back home. She suggested that I work and live the first three Steps before going back home because the first three Steps are the foundation Steps. That was in 2005. I am still clean today thanks to NA.

DS, California, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

During my last incarceration, in 1994 I did something different: I attended an H&I meeting on the inside. I was facing a life sentence and figured I did not have to much more to lose. I was ordered to go, and I went. That is where I got my "hope shot"

from a woman I had walked to the gate when I was 22. She had returned with NA on an H&I panel. She was the speaker. I knew she had been to the same places I had been—the same hangouts of horror and despair. I started to attend NA meetings regularly behind the walls. I want to give a shout-out to the H&I sisters who showed up faithfully every Friday night and took us through the Twelve Steps. I “came to” in a drunk tank after my last overdose, and I “came to believe” in a Narcotics Anonymous meeting.

By the grace of my Higher Power, I got the key to freedom. I ended up getting 42 years and 4 months suspended by that grace. Upon my release, I went into another protected environment and stayed there for over two years, and I took suggestions. The suggestion was for me not to live alone and to find other like-minded people who had a desire to learn how to live on the outside, without putting something in my body or committing a crime to survive. So I moved in with another NA member. Then, I moved in with two other NA members, and I kept on moving in and living with others who were in the program. When I was released, I did what I knew how to do already, which was to fit in and act as if. And then one day I became. This is the suggestion I give to others when I go behind the walls—that they parole to a transitional house or move in with other members until they can trust themselves to make some right decisions.

Now that I am on the outside, I am involved with H&I. We took the first H&I meeting into a women’s prison in East Africa. I also do H&I work at women’s correctional facilities in California. I have been in many prisons, both as a “consumer” and now as an H&I volunteer. We go into these facilities as a team. I feel it is my responsibility after being raised by the state from the time I was 13 years old.

I just took a 21-year inventory, and what an amazing journey it has been. I never want to forget where I came from, and I always want to remember that freedom is a choice. Today, I choose to live clean and give back. As long as I do that, the journey continues.

ML, California, USA

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.



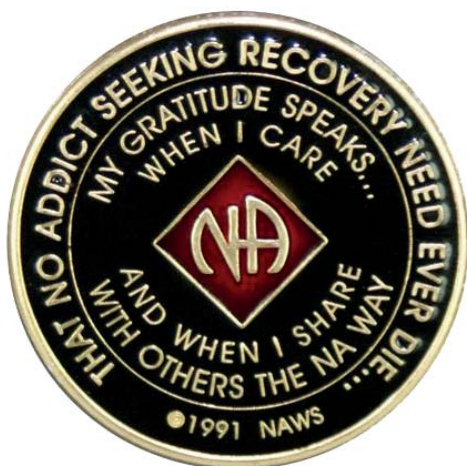
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left 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 released after 30 days as for those who are released after 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 that 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 \$38.05 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* @ \$38.05 each, total \$ _____.

Name _____

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, Inc. ☉ PO Box 9999 ☉ Van Nuys, CA 91409 ☉ USA

www.na.org/reachingout

ATTENTION INMATES

If you are relocating and your mailing address changes while you are incarcerated, please update your address with us so that we can maintain your subscription to *Reaching Out*.