

Reaching Out

October 2014



Welcome.....2

From the Inside.....3

From the Outside.....9

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

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.

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
January 2015	15 October 2014
April 2015	15 January 2015
July 2015	15 April 2015
October 2015	15 July 2015



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is J and I am a recovering addict. I am currently serving a five-year prison term. My situation was different, or so I thought. In less than one month, on 3 August, I will celebrate five years clean in the program of Narcotics Anonymous. Almost of all my cleantime was on the outside. I have truly learned that recovery is a lot more than just not using drugs.

Prior to being incarcerated, I was the chairperson for my area's H&I subcommittee. Right before I caught my case, I was trying to get a meeting started in the local county jail. A short time afterward, I was an inmate in that very same county jail. I was embarrassed and humiliated, and I started to doubt my recovery.

Little did I know that the program of Narcotics Anonymous and help were on the way! When I got to prison, I met another guy at an NA meeting in there who had also caught a prison sentence clean and in recovery. Almost immediately, I did not feel so different. He began to share with me that "you are not the only one to go to jail clean!" and encouraged me to not feel so unique and different. He then went on to tell me that I can learn from my mistakes and that with the help of Narcotics Anonymous, we get better. After that, my whole attitude and outlook changed.

In prison, I love to share with other inmates that with the help of NA and step work, it is also possible for them to stay clean through anything, *no matter what*. NA is helping me to carry the message to the addict who still suffers while I am on the inside, just as much as it was while I was on the outside. Now I do not doubt my recovery; I am looking forward to my recovery. Thanks, NA.

JR, IL

Dear Reaching Out,

I am an addict and my name is DT. After eleven years of living clean, I was given a prescription for painkillers due to a back injury. My attempt at detoxing from the pills with Methadone landed me a ten-year prison sentence and ten years of drug probation for DUI manslaughter.

Needless to say, my entire life is controlled “behind the walls.” This includes recovery, thanks to the grace of God, NA meetings, and a selfless individual devoted to H&I. Our fellowship practices the message of recovery and keeps me grounded spiritually. Prisoners especially strive to cope and to find the strength, will, and blessings of our Higher Power, as each day is like a war zone. I am especially thankful that we all got to share in FRCNA’s 30th anniversary via telephone conference. Our H&I representative helped fellow addicts “behind the walls” and beyond to intertwine in unity, hope, spirituality, and recovery, one day at a time. During that call, I experienced total freedom and was grateful for the serenity that I felt with Narcotics Anonymous. Celebrate Life.

Thank you,
DT, FL

Dear Reaching Out,

My life started out like any other, I thought! I was a shy kid who felt alone even in a group of kids. School was very hard, and I struggled with dyslexia and learning disabilities. My biggest embarrassment was when I couldn’t pass kindergarten and was held back before I could start the first grade. The ridicule and teasing I received from the other kids was the worst thing I thought could ever happen in my life. I was never able to really make friends, so I was a loner who got picked on a lot. I was called dumb because I wasn’t very smart with my schoolwork. All of this is what was going on from five to ten years old.

My mom and dad were loving and supportive. They tried to encourage me, but I received poor grades and fell behind in

school. I started to act out to get acceptance, but knew there was something missing in my life. The other kids were all part of a group and I was on the outside looking in, trying to figure out my place in the schoolyard.

When I was twelve years old, some older kids introduced me to marijuana. When I smoked it, my sense of aloneness went away. I no longer felt defective or that I didn't fit in. Smoking and drinking became a bigger part of my life, and I gravitated toward the stoner crowd. I felt for the first time I had found my group that I fit in with. I was part of a crowd and no longer looking in.

At 15, I fell in love with a girl and thought we would be together forever. We broke up and I went off the deep end, carried out of my house by police, kicking and screaming. I don't remember a lot of that night. When I came to, I was in five-point restraints and didn't know how I had gotten there. My parents had checked me into a mental/drug hospital for troubled kids, and I hated them for that. All my anger and bitterness came out in that place. I was angry at the world. While I was in the hospital, the parents of one of the kids I went to school with saw me in there. They told their son, and he told our friends, and then they all started calling me crazy. We all used to party together, but I never felt the same after that. I became bitter toward life and used more to try to stop those feelings.

In 1987, a friend introduced me to freebasing. With my first hit, I thought I had found my happiness in life, and when I was high the world was mine. I had started selling to support my drug habit when I caught a murder case. A friend thought I had burned him and had threatened me on several occasions. After I tried to avoid him, he found me in a motel room, knocked on the door, and told me to come outside. At that time, I was carrying a gun for protection. I went outside, and as he was pulling out a knife (which I thought was a gun), I shot him six times.

I confessed to the crime and was given a 25-to-life sentence for murder. All the violence and drug use so I could fit in and not be victimized was a big lie I had told myself to survive. I would not wish prison on anyone. I attended NA on and off for over 17

years while in prison, but I still continued using. Finally, I hit my bottom on 13 March 2007 and was able to get clean. I have now attended NA consistently since then, and I sponsor other inmates in my current group. I now have a sponsor on the outside and he has kept me on the right path. This *Reaching Out* newsletter was my meeting in a cell when I was on lockdown. I am writing this letter and sharing my story because I want to give back all that the NA program has given me.

Being free from using and having a personal relationship with God are more than I ever thought they would be. I plan on doing the same things when I get out of prison, and will continue to go to NA for the rest of my life so I never go back to using. My calling in life is to help others. My life didn't start out the best, but I know it will have a happy ending thanks to NA.

Sincerely,
RH, CA

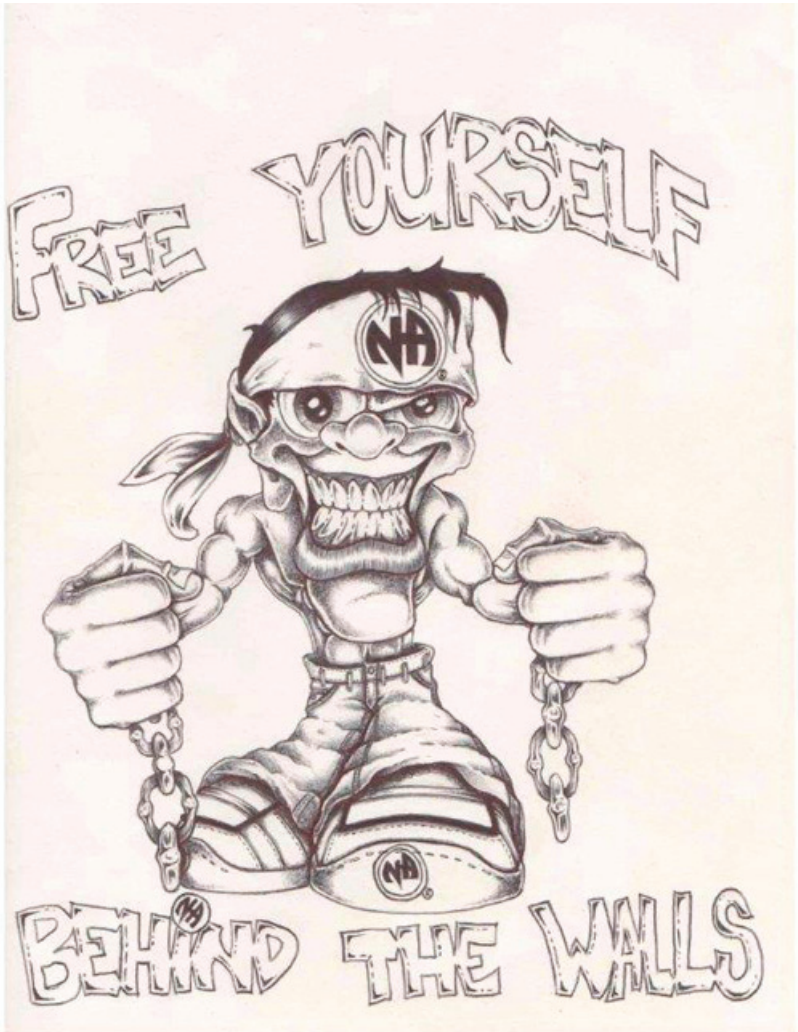


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ART FROM THE ZSIDE

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.





JL - CA



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is JC and I am an addict. My clean date is 16 May 2006. Although I had heard of Narcotics Anonymous as far back as 1997 when H&I had carried the message into the Los Angeles County Jail, it wasn't until my last (of a few) prison term that my younger brother told me that his life was changing and that he was about to celebrate one year clean, and that it was NA that gave him this opportunity. I truly believe in my heart of hearts that it had to be my brother who carried the message to me for me to actually hear it. I knew that he had been to the places I had been, did the things I had done, and paid the same consequences I had paid. I understand today that this is what we in NA call identification, and this is an essential part of how this works.

Like so many of us, from a very early age I felt like an outsider. Broken home, violence, and constantly moving around had made me the "new kid on the block" for what seemed like every other year. I finally ended up living in Hollywood, California, heading into my teen years, and drugs were a great equalizer for me. They changed the way I felt and made me feel like I belonged with the people I sought to be a part of. The drugs were my solution to the awkwardness and low self-esteem I suffered from; the problem was that this solution would ultimately end up being the thing that was trying to kill me. I do believe that my disease was manifesting at a much earlier age, when I would shove a hose into the gas tank of my dad's Harley-Davidson and suck on the fumes, because it changed the way I felt. I believe that was around the age of eight.

Over the next 24 years I continued to use substances to change my feelings. If I felt "bad," I'd want to feel "better"; if I felt "good," I'd want to feel "great." It was never enough, no matter what "it" was. Our literature states, "One is too many and a thousand is never enough." I identify with this truth.

My desire to change and the willingness to do what it takes to have that change finally lined up for me in 2006, in a California state prison. Although it was not my first time in prison, it has turned out to be my last. It is all a direct result of working the program of Narcotics Anonymous. When I got released from prison in 2008, I did what was suggested and immediately attended an NA meeting, went to 90 meetings in 90 days, and got a sponsor to work the steps of this program.

Now I have a life dominated by peace, not violence; serenity, not chaos; and a daily reprieve from a disease that had stripped me of all dignity, and self-respect and was going to kill me. Today, I am a reliable employee who is counted on by my employer, I go to school where my professors know I address my assignments with integrity, and I am an asset to a family that at one time viewed me as a liability. I do not pick up *no matter what*, I work the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, and my life continues to change.

I could go on for pages talking about the freedom I have gotten as a direct result of the NA program, but I will just try to sum it up by saying, it works. I am a different man today. I love NA and this new way of life I have.

JC, CA

Dear Reaching Out,

Hello from Joe! Thank you for allowing me to share! Is there anybody here today who feels grateful to be clean? I can never repay NA, but I will try until my last breath. I am a grateful recovering addict and a responsible member of Narcotics Anonymous! Thank you all for helping NA grow in your communities.

NA is not only in America; we are now in 132 nations, with over 63,000 meetings a week. NA literature is now in 77 languages! It is equal for everyone, worldwide. Jimmy K was very helpful for the start of NA in July 1953, in Sun Valley, California. Jimmy was born on 5 April 1911, got clean on 2 February 1950, and died clean on 9 July 1985. He was from Paisley, Scotland. He wrote what we read at the beginning of our meetings. Jimmy K said,

“When you realize what and who you truly are inside of you, the battle will be over.”

What I have learned in NA is that we are not the disease or the defects. We are a spiritual light, deep in our hearts. We are complete and enough just as we are, but we have to see it. The Twelve Steps of NA have revealed this to me. It is important to have good friends to talk to and to trust in NA. It is important to forgive ourselves for our past. It is important to live the NA program one day at a time, and to not do it all alone. We are never alone in NA! Though we may feel unique, we are not! We all have talents to respect and use in NA and in our regular life outside of NA. Self-pity is very bad for recovery. Making a gratitude list is a very good way to start my day, no matter what. When I was a child, I was sexually abused by my older sister and brother. I have tried to commit suicide, and I have used so much that I overdosed, but today I am free of the shame. Thank you, NA!

NA gave me a new vision and new attitude for my life. I have graduated from university and traveled to many countries to serve NA. In my past, I was homeless and hopeless. Now I see what NA has given me! So many gifts, but number one is my dignity and self-respect. I have been through many things clean, and I did not use *no matter what* happened in my life. I was beaten with a hammer by a using addict in a bad neighborhood when I was 35 days clean. I was trying to save *her* from a drug den! My mother died when I was 40 days clean. Several of my friends died from overdoses, my woman left me, I was in the hospital for medical issues, and I lost a job. I was put back in jail twice while clean, for my past bad actions while I was using. I was jobless, had no money, and was homeless, all while clean in NA. I never used, even with all these things happening in my life! Many of my family and friends are addicts who never got clean. I am the only one who made it. I am blessed! It takes great desire to stay clean. I have to keep it fresh daily, just like I did the drugs.

What do you want to have and do and feel in your lives? Choose! If you stay clean, many gifts will come, guaranteed! For recovery, I had to become a man, not be a boy anymore. Do you

REACHING OUT

know how many days are in an average human life? 25,550! That is all! Each day is a precious gift. All we ever wanted to feel is already within our hearts! We do not have to look outside or be obsessed to feel good inside. It has always been right inside us. The Eleventh Step showed me that! So, please stay close to NA and your brothers and sisters in NA. We need each one of you, no matter where you are or what your situation is. Addiction is the most horrific thing on the planet Earth! We need you in NA to help save miserable human lives. It is the highest honor to be of service in NA. We love you, need you, and want you, every single one of you! Keep in Unity. Have a sponsor. Be a sponsor. Be a humble leader. All will be well, on the inside, in our hearts. That is guaranteed by the NA program if you work the steps.

Love, Hopes, Health, and Hugs!

“Indiana Joe,” Pacific Cascade Region of NA, USA

ART FROM THE OUTSIDE

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



H&I T-Shirts

Central California Region
H&I Subcommittee



Sierra Sage Region
H&I Subcommittee





“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 \$ _____.

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