

Reaching Out

October 2015



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“We feel that our approach to the disease of addiction is completely realistic for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel.”

Basic Text, “How It Works”

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 other 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.

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
January 2016	15 October 2015
April 2016	15 February 2016



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

I am writing to you to share a little bit of my story. I am currently incarcerated while awaiting sentencing at a facility in Virginia. I don't expect to get out on time served when I go for sentencing, even though I have been here for a year already. Anything is possible; I used to have a lot of anxiety about what the outcome was going to be. I kept trying to control my release by pushing for all these possibilities that I was devising, like going to a long-term rehab in lieu of jail time. I thought I was being proactive but was really just driving myself crazy. I finally came to realize that I am powerless over my release. The only thing I can, or should, do is continue doing what I can to work on myself—work on my recovery today and leave the rest up to my Higher Power. Once I turned my life over, it was like a huge weight was lifted off me. I stopped stressing, and I was no longer lying awake at night obsessed with thoughts of what could be. I know the outcome probably won't be what I expected, but I have faith in my Higher Power's will for me. I have just decided to make the best of it.

The facility I am at does not have many options or resources for rehabilitation, but I have taken advantage of every opportunity available through the jail. I was able to obtain a temporary sponsor from the outside to do my step work with me. I am fortunate to get this because they do not have this set up here at this facility. Luck was on my side, as I have a friend on the outside who arranged for me to obtain a sponsor. I have started my steps and have a Basic Text as well as *It Works: How and Why*. I read them and pray every day, and I also meditate. I do positive affirmations and gratitude lists daily to improve my spirits. I go to every NA meeting that comes through here, and I am about to graduate from the substance abuse program offered here. I am doing this by my own choice and not because it was court ordered

or because I thought it would help my sentence. I am doing it because I don't want to go back to the lifestyle I used to have.

My addiction has taken everything away from me. I lost my job, car, home, and kids, not to mention my sanity. I believe I was put here for a reason and not because I got caught. I believe my God tried to save me many times before, but I was too blind to see. I am grateful and give thanks for this opportunity even though I am sitting here in jail. I consider myself one of the lucky ones because some of us never get this chance, and die. Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous, for giving the help I need in my recovery.

JM, VA

Dear Reaching Out,

It was no wonder I ended up in the position I am in now. Very early in life I began to feel like I did not fit in. By the time I got into school, I knew if I was going to make it I would have to do it on my own. That was the beginning of a pattern of choices that always focused on my selfish desires. I began to see other people as things to be used for my needs. If you had what I wanted, I was going to do whatever it took to get it from you.

By the time I reached the fifth grade I was already drinking and smoking. This allowed me to hang out with a whole new group of people who did not judge me. When I reached junior high school, I elevated my thieving skills by breaking into a house while the family was still there. I ended up getting caught, which started my regular visits with the police. I needed to keep up my image now. At the age of 14 I started using my dad's guns as if they were my new toys, and after having a couple of drinks I accidentally shot one of my friends, causing his death. I was convicted of manslaughter in his death. After that I felt like there was no way to make up for what I had done, so why should I try? It's no surprise that I was kicked out of one school and then dropped out of another.

During this time I tried many different drugs, looking for the answer. I ended up getting a job as a mechanic and did not make that much money at it. I decided that since everyone was

spending their money on drugs, I should just deal marijuana and everything would be okay. I decided I needed to protect my investment and purchased a semiautomatic handgun. Even though I had it all, it still wasn't enough, and I began using and drinking more and more each day.

The end of that life came after an evening of drinking and using in which I blacked out and shot someone in my house. That night I made a decision to never drink or use again. I was convicted of murder, and now I am serving a 47-year sentence.

Since being incarcerated I have found NA through the people who bring meetings to us. I did not have much hope after going to my first meeting, but I received more from the meetings than I could ever imagine. For the first time in my life I had found a group of people who were trying to make a difference in their lives. That is when I decided if it worked for them, then it should work for me. Being in prison, it was hard to find a sponsor, so I used the meetings to keep me going. It was not ideal, but it worked.

I turned my will and my life over to my Higher Power. I found a sponsor and began working steps. After I worked my Ninth Step and made amends with my mom, a fellow inmate asked me to sponsor him. I have had a number of sponsees and have managed to put together 16 years clean, and I have met a lot of people working the program. I have never heard anyone say their lives are more screwed up now that they have worked these steps. If you believe in your Higher Power, your life will get better. The kicker is that even though I'm in prison I have more freedom now than I ever did. Thank you to the people who bring us the meetings and hope.

SG, WA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is TC and I am an addict. I believe I was born an addict. I remember the selfish, self-centered addictive traits from the very beginning. I first used at around the age of ten and continued to use at virtually every opportunity for over 30 years. During those years there were many arrests as well as extended

incarcerations. I am currently in my 20th year of a 30-year-to-life sentence. All of my arrests and incarcerations have been a direct result of my addiction. Being locked up only slowed down my using. My life was unmanageable not just on the outside, but on the inside as well.

About eight years into this life sentence, I finally reached the point where I couldn't live with the drugs, and I couldn't imagine living without them. I took the only option I knew that was left and tried to kill myself. I should have easily succeeded, but for some reason I survived. I believed it was my Higher Power that saved me (the Higher Power I didn't believe in at the time). I ended up in a rubber room on suicide watch.

During the three days in which I was in the hospital, I had a couple of awakenings. First was that I was hurting all the people I loved and who cared about me. I could no longer continue the lie. I was only hurting myself. Second was that all the bad things that happened to me are and were caused by myself. I can't say why it took me 30 years to figure this out. The depths of my denial were amazing.

A few months after this incident I used again, only this time it was different. I could not get high enough. A few days later I was invited to an NA meeting. I saw others from the yard who were participating and staying clean. I saw NA members come in from the outside and share their experience, and they found some hope. I thought, if these people could do it, then why couldn't I do it too? I began to participate in these meetings. I'm not a good speaker. I probably made no sense, but no one judged me. They kept encouraging me to keep coming back. I did, and started hanging around with them more often. I got a sponsor and started working the steps.

It's now almost eleven years later, and I still work the steps. I carry the message wherever I go and try to help others through the steps. I share when I can and think I should. I can never fully explain how much my life has improved. I could never come close to repaying those who loved and helped me along the way. Some of my greatest teachers never knew they taught

me. They showed me by example of the way they lived. Actions speak louder than words.

I am still serving that life sentence, but it does not define me or control me. As corny as it sounds, I do it one day at a time. I am freer now, more than I ever was on the street. Most days I am happy and enjoying that freedom from my addiction. I try to remember the misery that I came from and do not want to go back to; it keeps me grateful. Today I have a close and loving relationship with my family. I understand it's not about me anymore; it's about giving them the love they never got from me. That's a wonderful feeling. I feel so fortunate for the life I have today. Thank you, NA.

TC, CA

Dear Reaching Out,

I am a grateful recovering addict writing from the inside. I am currently awaiting a trial date for my release. I am serving a sentence and I am hoping to be released in 2018. I was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous through an H&I panel that I found myself liking very much. I currently have six months clean, and I am proud to be working on my recovery. This is a program for people who want to stay clean. Narcotics Anonymous has so much to offer. It is not just meetings, it is the people you meet there and the friendships you develop. There is also the way your life changes and how it affects the people around you. Miracles are plenty. One of the sayings is "Don't leave five minutes before the miracle happens." It is one of my favorites. It's about one addict helping another through life's challenges, getting through it one day at a time. My name is KB, I am an addict, and I thank you for letting me share.

KB, CA

Live from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil!

World Unity Day

14 June 2015



During every NA World Convention we facilitate a Unity Day call wherein institutionalized members are able to take part in the convention by listening to the closing speaker share his or her experience, strength, and hope in living a productive and responsible life without the use of drugs. The following are notes that we received from some of those who were able to take part in the Unity Day call.

New York State Department of Corrections

Over 100 inmates from eight different correctional facilities recently participated in Narcotics Anonymous's World Unity Day. The inmates took part in a conference call that was hosted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the host city for this year's Narcotics Anonymous biennial World Convention. The call, which was the last event of the four-day convention, was hosted by group fellowship members and a keynote speaker who shared experiences, strength, and hope of living a productive and responsible life without the use of drugs. Inmates from Altona, Bare Hill, Bedford Hills, Coxsackie, Groveland, Hale Creek, Queensboro, and Wallkill were all part of the call.

Thank You Letter from the Florida State Prison

Thank you for allowing Florida State Prison to participate in the call yesterday. The inmates absolutely loved the fact that they were represented in the shout-out, and enjoyed hearing from the speakers of other languages and phone contacts around the world. This demonstrated to them that they are not alone, and will have the opportunity to seek positive support while incarcerated and following release. Several of the inmates who

attended the meeting experienced the call as their first contact with NA, and were encouraged by the event. Again, thank you for including us.

A Letter from a Treatment Center in Hungary

Today in a small town of a small country, in a less-frequented part of Europe, some thirty addicts had a chance to celebrate recovery knowing that thousands of miles away thousands of addicts do the same on a much larger scale. The day has been beautiful: nice summer sunshine with a loving and carefree atmosphere among friends. And there was one marvelous moment, when those thousands of addicts turned their eyes and hearts on that tiny group on the other side of the world. It deeply moves me even to write about it. It really is a great honor to belong to this community. Thank you for making this possible.

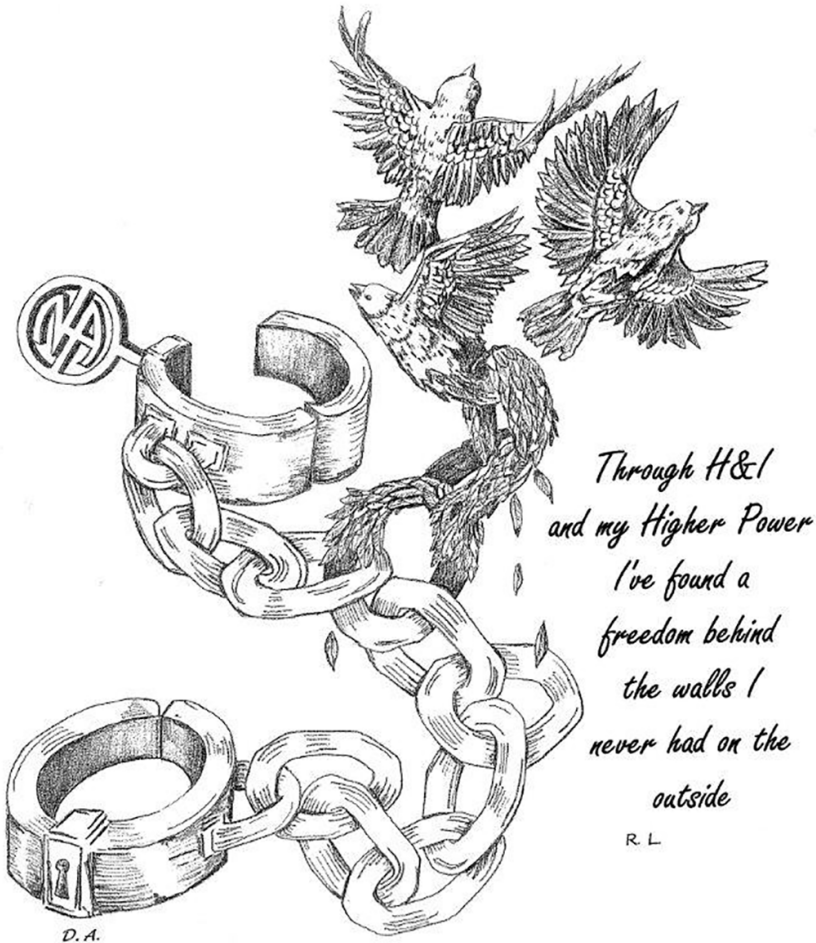


Above is a poster from the first treatment facility in the state of Kentucky to listen in to the Unity Day call. NA members roasted Brazilian coffee beans and had cupcakes and cookies. The meeting room was full, and there were addicts in the hallway. It was a COMPLETE SUCCESS!

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 got out of prison in June 2000. I never lasted more than three or four months outside before I got picked up again by the police. I was rescued, basically. But the last time I went directly to a treatment center. I got introduced to NA and I met people like me who were staying out of prison. I kept close to these people and never ventured away for too long. I went to a lot of meetings, got a lot of phone numbers, and went to all the events that I could. I stayed in the rooms and have become a proud member of Narcotics Anonymous.

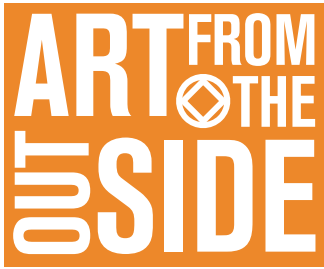
I got a sponsor, I became part of a sponsee family, and I worked steps. I went to school, got a career as an X-ray tech, and now work in the medical field. I have become the person I never thought of ever being. I'm a loving, caring, compassionate, responsible, honest, and hardworking man with integrity, values, morals, and a passion for Narcotics Anonymous.

I speak on panels, have commitments at meetings, have a home group, have sponsees who are doing the work, and have many valuable friends and a great relationship today. And I haven't looked back. I've never returned to jail since, and am now coming up on 17 years clean in Narcotics Anonymous. I owe everything good in my life to NA, and I can never thank NA enough. I can only give back what was so freely given to me. I work at a recovery house outside of my regular job and try to give guys who are released from jail a chance at getting what I found in the rooms of NA.

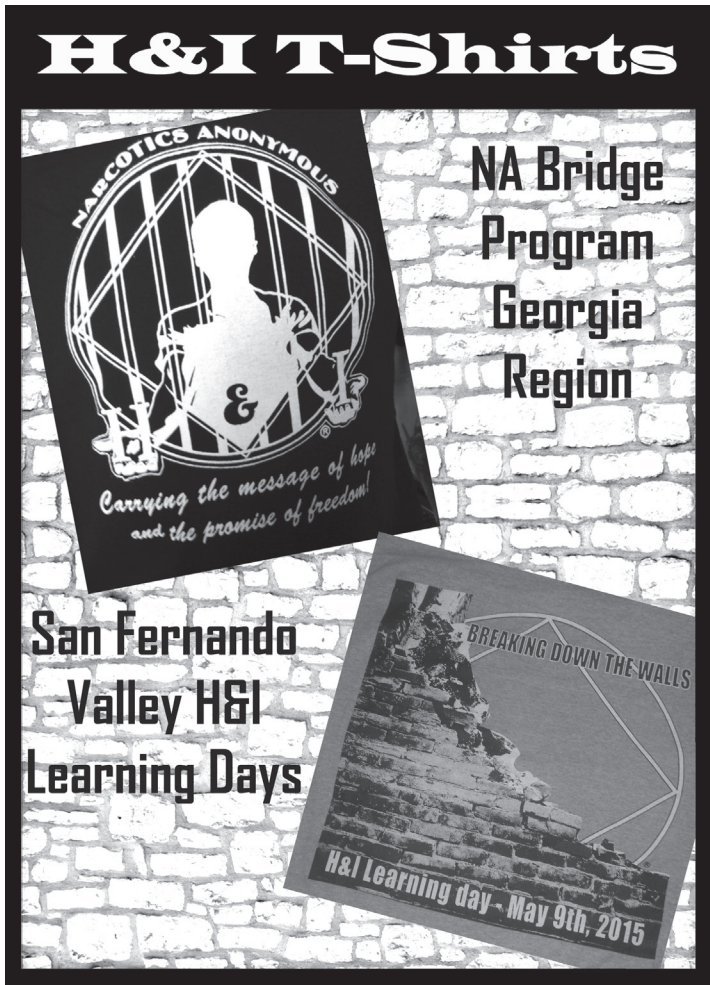
If I can suggest anything it would be to grab onto someone and don't let go until that someone decides to grab onto you, and don't let them go.

Thanks for listening,

GS



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**





Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

I am thoroughly grateful for the change the NA program has made to my life and to me. When I was close to my exit date, I went to a meeting on a Saturday night that I first attended when I became a patient at this site. Drugs were not a big problem in the sense of narcotics. However, alcohol was plentiful and there was some pressure to fit in. Like a good addict I found the drinker who was too medicated to go for himself. I would run to get his drink, which helped me to keep my cigarettes flowing. It was at this time I realized that if I bought the \$3 roll-your-own I could afford cigarettes and I would never run out. Of course, this new idea was just my disease looking for ways and means to get more.

I continued to do my hustle in the face of an uncomfortable awareness that this was using behavior. I had to stop or I would drink, and then, who knows? I got honest with my friends at the meeting. They loved me enough to tell me that they could not make me stop and that it was not their job. Subsequently, they loved me and allowed me to vent my reservations which were rooted in the very self-centered nature of the disease of addiction. The fear was overwhelming, yet I pushed on with making meetings. I met a man who would become my sponsor. This man was a chronic relapser who was celebrating six years clean. I knew that if he could get clean and stay stopped, I was in the right place.

It is exit day, one year later. I have a home group, a sponsor, a meeting list, a room, a phone, and a desire to stop using. Oh yeah, I just celebrated my first year clean. It was the reintroduction to the program that gave me the tools to transition. I can now deinstitutionalize myself with the help of my NA friends. The tools were what helped me the most. I was okay with being weak because the fellowship gave me strength by allowing me to believe that they believed. God was in on this intervention from the start. He put all the people, places, and things in action that could help me take another look. We can do together what I cannot do alone: recovery.

LA

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.



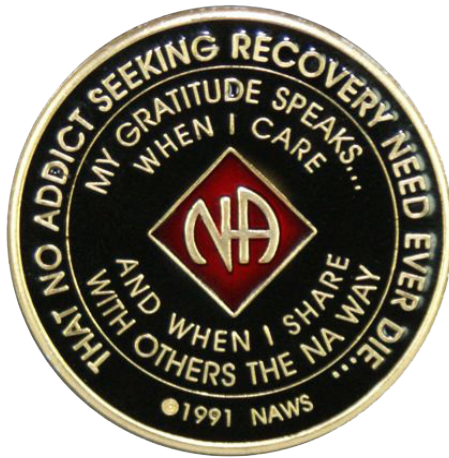
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

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 your 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 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

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