

Reaching Out

October 2016



Region 51 – Sponsorship Behind the Walls

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The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom."

Basic Text, "Tradition Five"

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
January 2017	15 October 2016
April 2017	15 January 2017

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,

One Sunday in June of 1988, some recovering addicts at an Oregon state penitentiary founded an NA meeting. The first meeting took place in the chapel. The members of the group had nothing more than a copy of the Basic Text and a desire to stay clean.

We came to believe that recovery is an inside job. With the help of our outside sponsor, we formed a book study meeting. It was in this meeting that many of us came to know what the NA program was all about, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We got a Group Starter Kit from the World Service Office when we registered our group in September of 1992. Since that time the group has expanded to include five specific NA-based recovery groups that meet regularly.



Our Saturday meeting is the one where all are welcomed to this new way of life. We are an activities recovery club. We are an all-volunteer club of addicts helping addicts. We are a self-help group and are here to help one another. We find that the value of one addict helping another is without parallel. Countless numbers of addicts have changed their lives in the big house through working with like minds and attending our services. Many of our members have regained the impossible—their sanity, hope, and change. Oh, and yes: their freedom, both literally and figuratively.

Our meeting is an open meeting that many new to prison and recovery experience for the first time. The raw emotion, truth,

and strength as well as the devastation of our disease are ever present at these groups. It is here that we learn to not be selfish, to ask for help, to give, to receive, to be honest, and to sacrifice. We learn to be open, honest, and willing with others and ourselves, and to trust, to have faith, and to change everything.

We learn to love ourselves and others as we evolve and grow through the Steps and Traditions. We learn through the revolution that was started by a few addicts and through the hopes and ideas started many years ago. Our gratitude speaks louder when we help one another.

SH, OR

Dear Reaching Out,

My story is not much different from that of most people I know. Growing up, I always hid my feelings. I started using drugs at the age of 13. Using was my way of boosting my confidence. As long as I was high, I felt I could do anything. Everything I said I would never do, I did when I was high. I lied, cheated, and stole from those I cared for most. I was being arrested regularly, and the patterns were getting bigger. By the age of 15 I was jumped into a gang, started using harder drugs, and dedicated my life to crime. My biggest claim was that I could handle anything that came my way as long as I was high.

I am 35 years old, and as a direct result of my active addiction I find myself locked up again. I found myself hurting a lot of people I really cared for. I couldn't keep a real relationship. I have six kids with three different women. I lost my two daughters due to my addiction and almost lost my four boys. You see, when I am on drugs I don't care about anything or anybody. I end up hurting you or taking whatever you have. I would do whatever I had to do to get my drugs, even if I got caught. There was nothing anyone could do or say because I became insane. After all, what I was doing to me was easier than what you could do.

I know what it feels like to wake up dope sick and be controlled by the next urge to use. I know how it feels to wish you were dead. I was hurting, sick, and powerless. By me being that

way, the insanity started all over again. I began to steal from my family because they were the easiest to manipulate. I could no longer go on and ignore the problem I had. I have a problem, and there is life without the use of drugs, and I want it. Some days my head tells me it's okay to use, especially if I am hurting. Feelings of guilt and shame or fear were always enough to start me off and running. Today my Higher Power and my support group tell me the pain and suffering will pass. To use again would be self-destruction.

The miracle is that if I don't use drugs, the problems I face will get easier to handle. Today I face life on life's terms. Today I am clean and coming up on two years. Today I have a program and a loving God of my understanding. They told me I have a chance to be happy and live a life without drugs and actually enjoy myself. They also told me there is a way to repair the damages I have done in my past. They told me I can learn to love myself and others again. I can help others to stay clean.

I would like to end this by saying to all those addicts who are still in active addiction and suffering, you can be restored to sanity. There is a program that we can follow and that can help us in recovery. That program is Narcotics Anonymous.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my story, and remember, we are not alone. Just a thought: If you try and fail, it is better than not trying at all.

MC, CA

Dear Reaching Out,

Thank God that I found the NA program. I have done it all, and it never occurred to me how I had lost my mind. I ended up doing a life sentence, and the bottom of my addiction was recognized. A pal of mine invited me to an NA meeting, and it all made sense after that. I had lost total control of my life. Going through the Twelve Steps really opened my eyes to common sense. It had come to me that I could not handle this myself. If I had not taken seriously my addiction and the life-or-death situation, I would be physically dead. Again, I thank God for NA.

I, like millions of others, was a mess. I have been clean now for ten years and three months. I highly recommend this program for all who suffer from the many forms of substance abuse and addiction. This is my hope and my prayer for 2016 for all of us. Peace and recovery.

GW, MI

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is BG. I am in a prison in Australia. I have a drug problem that has played a big part in me ending up here. I used to drink but turned to using another substance that became my drug of choice. Since I have been here in prison I have started attending the weekly NA presentation in my unit. I enjoy seeing the blokes from NA each week. They help me to better understand my problem. It helps me and the other men who also come in each week. NA has been the best thing for us guys who are here struggling with addiction. When I get out, I hope to keep attending meetings and make friends with others who will be able to help me to stay clean. Thank you for being here.

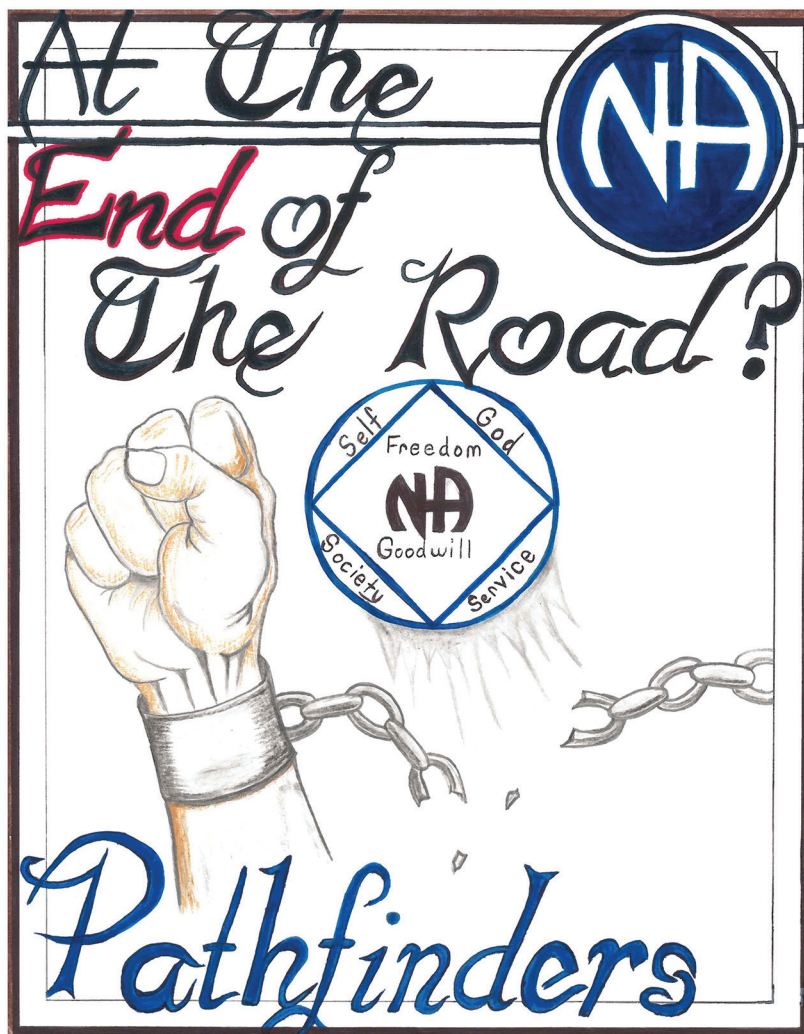
BG, Australia

ART FROM THE Z SIDE

FROM THE INSIDE

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 am an addict named MC and I have been doing the meetings at Lowell Prison for approximately five years now. We currently have four different meetings going on, three on the main unit and one on the reception side.

Having the privilege of going into the prison and joining the women in their NA meetings has given me the best high I have ever had in my life and the best tools for my recovery to be a good, productive member of society. To be able to see firsthand that an addict, any addict, can lose the desire to use and find a new way of life, and can apply the spiritual principles to their lives, even in prison, has given me total proof that this program works.

I keep in touch with many recovering addicts who have gotten out of Prison, and I am totally amazed at how they came to believe that they need this program in order to continue their recovery even when they get out of prison. The only real problem I have is that I am in great need of help to continue the meetings in Lowell Prison. I need other recovering addicts to plant that seed and show that they are not forgotten and they are not alone in their recovery process. Most of us addicts have pushed our lives right to the edge of sheer death; we are so beaten that the only place left to go is to recover and find a new way to live. One of the inmates recently said, "What else is there to do? I can't die. That didn't work for me. I am here now in prison. When I gave up the fight and started changing, I think I won, even in prison. This is the happiest I have ever been in my life."

This addict is one of the many recovering inmates who have worked the steps of recovery. Come into Lowell and show them what gratitude is really about. Coming into the prison is a win-win situation for all women and men in the NA program. Please—the inmates cannot have a meeting without you, and you cannot truly have the most humbling recovery without them.

MC, FL

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is MB and I am an addict from an island on the west coast of Norway. I wanted to share my story here because the combination of H&I work in prison and being presented with the NA program while I was incarcerated saved my life and gave me a life I never had the tools or capability to achieve on my own and without a program.

My life was a story that started good on paper, then took some unfortunate twists and turns that were nobody's fault. Then my addiction was activated, fueled first by drugs from an operation, then by adrenaline, crime, money, and a false sense of power and influence. Increasing amounts of drugs were allowed to take more and more control of my life.

The first time I tried to get clean was while doing my first prison sentence in 2003, with no NA and no surrender to the fact that I was an addict and needed help.

A man I was doing time with, who was also experiencing his first attempt at recovery, was allowed to go out of the prison and attend NA meetings. These were the beginning of what is now today's only NA meeting in this little city in Norway. So for me it was maybe one and a half years before I realized that I couldn't manage to live with or without drugs, but for him it was the beginning of our NA Fellowship here, and a beginning of them learning how to stay clean and do H&I and public information service work to start carrying the message in this area.

Five years later, I was back in the very same prison to do a little longer stretch, with a lot more consequences. Now I was experiencing fear and desperation on all levels of my awareness, wanting to stop but not knowing how. In the meantime, my old friend and other NA members had gotten the trust from the prison to start having NA meetings there once a month. This was the divine, perfect timing that found me finally ready to surrender and open the door to recovery by asking for help for the first time in my life, by admitting that I was powerless for the first time in my life. I had become willing to do anything to

stop the horrifying chaos that was eating me up from the inside and was controlling my every thought and move.

Shortly thereafter, I asked this old friend to be my sponsor. He gave me the *Step Working Guides* and some of our other literature, and at first I started, unwillingly, to work the Steps. For the next year I did this routine every day, more or less. I read the *Just for Today* in the morning and I read more literature and answered at least one question every night. Twice a week I was allowed to call him, a total of 20 minutes. I just skipped the questions I was not sure about and wrote a list and asked him about those. There were many questions I needed help with, and I can't see how I could have done this without a sponsor and a slowly developing relation with a loving Higher Power. My sponsor came and visited me to share the Steps when he could, and one time I sent my Steps to him in the mail so he could read them and give me feedback on the phone. After six months, I was incredibly fortunate to be allowed to go out from this high-security prison twice a week to attend the first half of the local NA meeting, and then later I applied and got a transfer to a lower-security prison where I got to go out and attend one full meeting a week.

I needed every second of the next twelve months as I stayed locked up and worked the Steps and slowly started reprogramming my notoriously crime- and drug-infested mind and personality. When I got out, divine timing again took effect: The very first NA meeting ever held on the island I come from was started three days before my final release and homecoming. This was the beginning of me finally being able to start doing service myself and to begin living my new life in freedom—freedom from active addiction, taking one day at a time, with the invaluable support of my brothers and sisters in NA who were there to love me when I was not capable of loving myself, and to have faith in me when I was not able to have faith in myself. They showed me the amazing gifts of growth, freedom, and spiritual rewards that come from attending the meetings, working the Steps, doing selfless service, and carrying the message to others like me in many different ways.

Today I celebrated five years clean. I am the panel coordinator for the very prison I used to live in myself. We still have one meeting a month there, and now I have sponsees and grand-sponsees who are doing this most important service together with me. We have gotten the full trust of the prison staff and administration there, as they have seen over the years that what we do really works, and that previous, seemingly hopeless cases like me and other brothers keep coming back clean years later, eager to share the message of hope with other inmates.

Today I have a most exciting and incredible life, traveling the world to visit our Fellowship in other countries and doing lots of NA meetings and service. I recently got to do a small H&I NA meeting inside a Peruvian prison with 2,100 inmates. I am engaged to a most beautiful and, to me, special woman with three amazing children and one precious granddaughter. They are from Oklahoma, and I am waiting and hoping to be issued a pardon and visa to get in and live with them there. I am co-owner of an exciting and promising small company, and I have many good friends, who are clean thanks to NA, all over the world who love me, and I love them on completely new levels. I have sponsees who I have formed amazing bonds with and love very much, and my sponsor has become my best friend and brother of love. Soon I am going to the world convention in Rio de Janeiro to celebrate my five years clean.

But most of all, I am grateful that today I am no longer filled with guilt and shame. Today I love myself, today I accept myself, and I no longer identify myself with the madness and crazy behavior that were my destructive reality for many years. I no longer have the need to run away and to medicate myself with drugs in an attempt to cope and survive; I AM FREE.

Much sympathy, strength, and love go out to everyone who is clean or wanting to get clean inside prisons around the world. There is hope; YOU can do it one day at a time, and it is possible to get a mail sponsor for those who want that.

Thank you, NA. I am forever grateful and of service to our wonderful Fellowship.

MB, Norway

ART FROM THE INSIDE

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

“Welcome to Freedom” 2016 Portuguese Convention of NA



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

Hi, my name is AL and I'm an addict living in New Zealand. My clean date is 17 January 2013, the day I arrived in rehab.

I did a 16-week program, and after I graduated I got a house with two of the others from my group. We had a few rules like no less than three meetings a week and some others. I did six meetings a week and only mixed with others from the NA Fellowship or from my church. I kept in regular contact with the treatment centre and went to the fortnightly aftercare meetings regularly. Today I am 32 months clean and I work in the treatment centre as a night supervisor and love it. I have awesome relationships with my adult children and my grandchildren, and my life is different from before as black is from white. I have nothing but love.

AL, New Zealand



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