

# Reaching Out

October 2017



## MIRACLES IN THE MAKING

OK Regional Convention 2017

Welcome ..... 2

From the Inside ..... 3

From the Outside ..... 10

Transitioning ..... 12

Order Form ..... 16

*“We don’t recover overnight.”*

Basic Text, “Recovery and Relapse”

# 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](mailto:fsmail@na.org).

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

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
January 2018	15 October 2017
April 2018	15 January 2018
July 2018	15 April 2018

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](http://www.na.org/reachingout).



# From the Inside

*Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is KM and I am a recovering addict incarcerated in Arizona. First of all, I would like to thank you so much for sending me the *Reaching Out* newsletter for all these years. I love reading all the stories from other incarcerated addicts like me, sharing their experience, strength, and hope. I also like the letters from the outside. Those letters make me feel great, knowing that I have a family out there waiting for me and that I can maintain my recovery once I am released.

I have recently been transferred to a reentry yard to society. It is known as the “going home yard.” I do miss my home group and everyone there, but I know this is a good thing. Yes, I’m a little nervous and excited, but Narcotics Anonymous has taught me that I have nothing to fear and that this, too, will pass as long as I don’t pick up and I make it to a meeting when I am released.

I have been clean now for five years and seven months thanks to Narcotics Anonymous and my Higher Power. I don’t want to lose this! I plan on getting involved in working the Steps and taking suggestions by others who are solid in the Fellowship. I look forward to going to a meeting on the outside and getting a sponsor. I never want to come to prison again, and through Narcotics Anonymous, I don’t have to.

There is still a lot of work to do, and this is a new phase on my journey of recovery. The difference today is that I am willing to do whatever it takes. I thank you for all the love and support you have given me for these past years.

In the spirit of the Fellowship,

KM, AZ

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is DR and I am an addict incarcerated for 3 ½ years now. I have 16 months remaining. I recently changed prisons and have been here for nearly six months. I originally got clean in 1992 and was on the ground floor for a newly established area. That area had just five meetings per week in the beginning. When I was arrested in 2013, after 22 years of being clean and hard work, that area boasted nearly 40 meetings per week.

This was my third relapse, with only four hours in society, and I picked up a case. Where I am now is a place of humility. I came to prison judging my peers for not being able to stay clean in a locked-up environment but was given a new set of eyes to view through this past weekend. There is only one H&I meeting here a month. The same people come every month, and there are some people who hear their message for the first time ever.

Only two units out of six have weekly meetings with inmates. I listen instead of preparing ahead of time what I will share. I mean I really listen. I heard a woman share how she would manipulate the parole board into letting her stay because she thought she couldn't stay clean on the outside. She felt like she needed more time. I heard another say that everything was in its place and she was looking forward to release. After ten years in prison, she was going to a two-year program.

I will never understand how you can stay in this circle of buildings and not use. It is as if my higher power has given me another chance to go home and get it right this time. Maybe this time I will listen and spend less time sharing. After 24 years in this program, I am no longer a baby. I have so very much to learn.

DR, CA

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

Greetings and blessings! I am an incarcerated addict. My name is RT and I am locked up for my bad choices and criminal

lifestyle as a direct result of my addiction. I am awaiting a transfer to a facility here in Texas so I can write about my experience in recovery behind bars. God is not finished with me yet. Drugs had become my life and replaced all the things that were a part of the life I once lived, even down to my spouse and kids. As long as I had drugs and a way to ensure more drugs, I didn't care for much else. No one knew the mother and woman I was before the addiction.

Things in my life had come to an all-time low in the months preceding this incarceration. My eyes began to swell each morning after a night of using. My body was shutting down, and I cared not. I was going to get high or die trying. What happened 7 May 2015 made no sense, but it was a rescue ordained by my higher power. Since being here I have graduated from my recovery program. I acquired some coping and life-development skills, the tools to staying clean. The shadow I had become was in the making for many years before the heavy addiction had so many layers to be repaired. Through the process of reflection, I learned why I used and that using drugs was not my problem. I was self-medicating with the drugs to numb years of pain and confusion coupled with fear and anger.

RT, OK

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is SF and I am an addict. First and foremost, I would like to thank my higher power and my wonderful sponsor. She is an amazing woman. I have been incarcerated three times now', and this time has set me down and I have definitely learned my lesson. My life in addiction was a one-way ticket to nowhere. I am so lucky to be alive today. I have been down three years this time and still have three more to go. I never pictured myself being here again, but I believe everything happens for a reason. I believe that this is my final chance at recovery. If I was still out there getting high, I would not be alive today. I am surrounded

daily by the temptations. I pray and know that I no longer need drugs to be happy.

I am no longer looking over my shoulder today. Narcotics Anonymous is the reason why! I am grateful for all the knowledge I get from my sponsor and from the literature she sends me. We write back and forth and I do my Step work and send it to her. Narcotics Anonymous has helped me make amends to my mother who I haven't seen but once in ten years. It gave me hope that I could fix my life.

I believe deeply that every person has a past and every person has a future. I know that thanks to NA I will have a promising future free of drugs, as long as I keep doing the footwork and keep grounded. I am so grateful that when I walk out of these gates I will have six years clean and be happy to say the struggle was real but worth every step of the journey. I know it works when you work it, and I remember to take it one day at a time. Just pray. Thank you, NA, for helping me to rediscover who I really am—a mother, daughter, and the woman I will be.

Loving thoughts,

SF, NC

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

I'm an addict named JR. Do you know how it feels to look dead and really wish you were? I do! I know how it feels to be controlled by my next high. I did a lot of things that I am very ashamed of to get that next high. I have hated myself for doing it for many years. Many times I stuck a needle in my arm with tears in my eyes, wishing it would end, only to wake up the next day and do it all over again. Day after day.

My addiction has taken everything that I held dear to my heart away from me more than once. I always remember the second time I went to prison, when I found myself being sent to the hole. All I had was a blanket and a magazine. I hadn't gotten a letter from anyone in months—not even my own mother. I hadn't touched the phone or even gotten a visit. My heart was

shattered. Nobody wanted anything to do with me. I didn't even love myself. I will never forget that feeling. Feeling lonely to me is the ugliest, most heartbreaking feeling there is. It really humbles you, and now I understand why I was the way I was.

My higher power has a purpose for me. I am an example and I must carry the message to those who suffer like I do. The message is hope to the newcomer. This is what is going to keep me clean one day at a time. Narcotics Anonymous is the best thing that could have ever happened to me. NA welcomed me and loved me until I could love myself. That showed me that I was worthy of living and just made some bad choices. I was not a bad person. Through my higher power and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, I have learned to live without drugs. Today and every day I wake up and give thanks to my higher power that I am alive. I have been in here for two months again and am getting out soon. I hope that what I wrote will help someone. You don't have to be alone anymore. We will love you until you can love yourself.

JR, NM



# 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.*

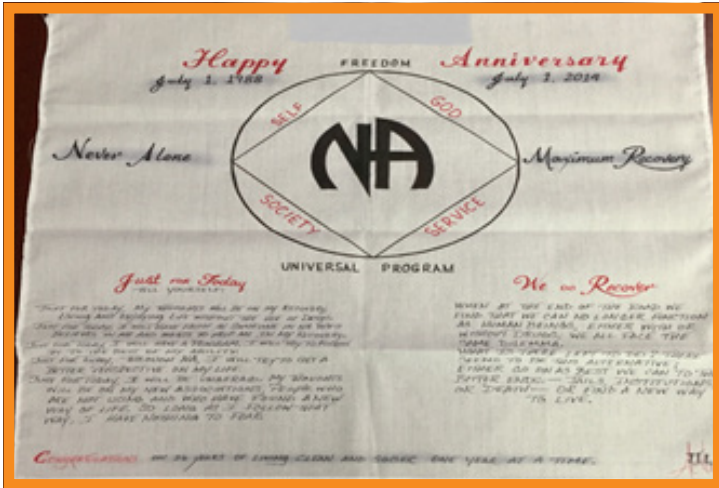
*If you would like to see your art printed here, please send jpegs or pdf files to [Handl@na.org](mailto:Handl@na.org), or mail to Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409.*



H&I T-shirt, UK



An inmate celebrating one year of recovery



Banner from Leukop Prison



# From the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is CC and I am an addict in recovery. Here is my story for those who may need hope. Last night I was at a meeting that I mostly attend every Monday night. We were sharing about the section on complacency. As part of my share I was expressing one of the reasons why I keep coming back to meetings. There are many, but one is to be the person who is still here.

I was sharing about the newcomer I saw on Sunday who was coming back after being gone for some time. He smiled so big when he saw me. I was sharing how important it was for me that people stayed around.

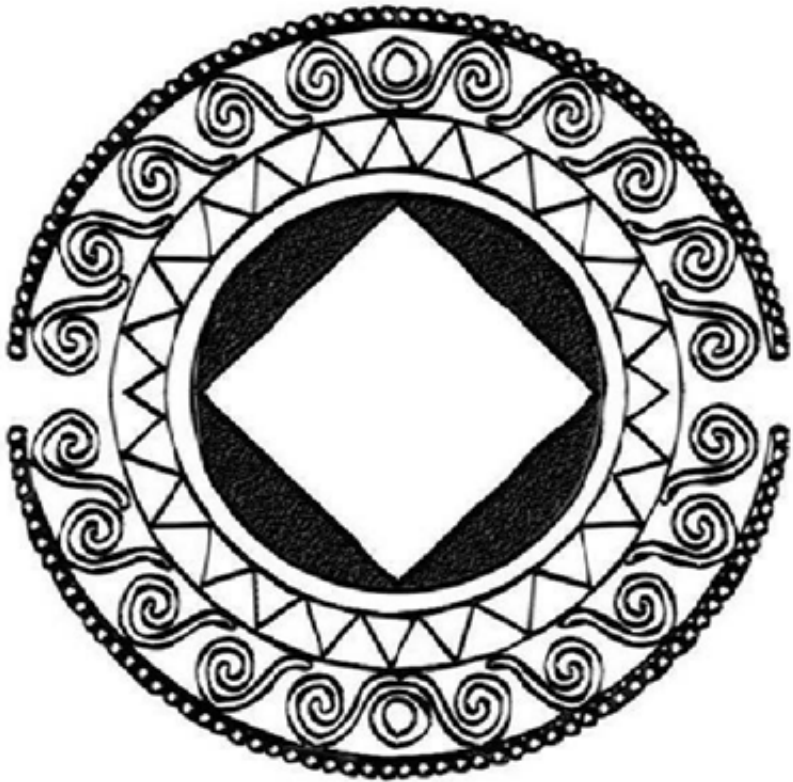
After the meeting I went downstairs. There is another meeting that starts right after ours ends, so there were people downstairs. This guy came running up to me and threw his arms around me. I barely got a glimpse of his face, but I knew I must have known him, the way he was holding on. Finally, I said, "Let me take a look at you." So he stopped holding on to me and showed me his face.

As I teared up, he teared up also. I haven't seen this kid in, like, twelve years! We were close. Super close. The memory was there for both of us. He told me he had heard someone say that I must be getting done with my meeting now and rushed over to see me. He said, "You still here?" Yep, I'm still here, and that is the reason I keep coming back. I can never pay back what Narcotics Anonymous has given to me, my freedom from active addiction and the countless friends along the way who remind me that I am still an addict. The only thing that has changed is that today I am a RECOVERING addict. Thank you for letting me keep coming back.

CC, CA

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](mailto:HandI@na.org)

# ART FROM THE INSIDE



Lima, Peru



# Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

## *Dear Reaching Out,*

My name is C and I am an addict! On 17 March 2015 I was arrested for a breach of my bail conditions and possession of identification that was not mine, all because I refused to leave an elevator of a building, and I did not even live in that building. This happened three days after I had been released on a thousand dollars, no-cash bail.

In 1994 I was introduced to my first drug. By the summer of 1995, I was smart enough to realize that things were starting to become unmanageable and I was able to quit cold turkey, no problem. If only that had been the end of my story. Alas, that was not the case; in 2001, I was once again introduced to that same drug and chose to use again. I had no idea that the demon I had suppressed was about to be awakened again.

Within three months I lost my dream job, moved, and ended up homeless and alone for the first time, but certainly not the last time, in the years to follow. I also began my first attempts at detox and treatment and was introduced to the Twelve Steps, recovery, and relapse as well as becoming a criminal in order to finance my new addiction . . . whatever that was.

I couldn't accept the phrase *once an addict, always an addict*, or the fact that I was going to need to work a program for the rest of my life. I now know that I don't have to think like that, because it's a JUST FOR TODAY program. Ending up in jail for a second time, three days after being released, was a wake-up call for me. Although there was no NA meeting in my unit, there was an AA meeting, and my sponsor said as long as there was a meeting with an A in it, it will save your butt.

On 3 April I was released with a thousand-dollar fine and time served, with numerous court dates still to attend. I attempted to attend a meeting only to find the room was closed, and so I white-knuckled it until I could attend an evening meeting of Narcotics Anonymous that I almost missed but knew I couldn't afford to—my freedom was a gift I didn't want to lose.

My life and my freedom are gifts, and I can only keep them through NA and working the program, just for today. I have two copies of *Reaching Out* that help remind me of where I have come from and don't want to return to. I figured I should share my journey so far. Thanks for reading it. Today I choose freedom.

CS, Canada

## 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](mailto:HandI@na.org).



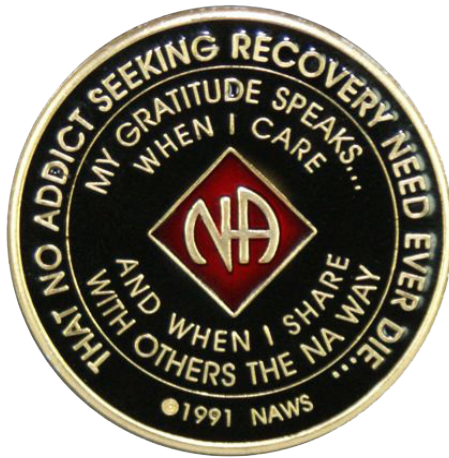
### Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

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](http://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*.