

Freedom From Prejudice, Part 3

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More frequently than ever, the World Service Board of Trustees is being asked to comment on the issue of prejudice within NA. It would be easy for us to write a paper which simply says: Prejudice is wrong. Cut it out! However, we believe that there is no imposed solution. Only we, as individual members of Narcotics Anonymous, can resolve this problem. It presents each of us with the challenge to practice more fully those principles which make our recovery possible--the spiritual principles found in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Each of us is responsible for carrying the NA message without regard to age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion.

Most of us have felt the pain of prejudice at different times during our lives. Even so, we often delude ourselves into believing that we are personally free from all prejudice. This type of denial allows us to pass judgment on the quality of another member's recovery or sponsor, tune out when certain members share, or avoid particular people or groups of people. We may make snide or "humorous" remarks about someone's race, sexual preference, age, gender, body shape, culture, or spiritual beliefs. We may avoid members who are physically ill or are taking prescribed medication. Whether subtle or blatant, all forms of prejudice harm our unity and prevent us from fulfilling our primary purpose.

We do not and cannot recover alone. Some members can remember being unwelcome in other fellowships. Some of us recall sitting alone with a White Booklet waiting for another addict to show up at a meeting so that we could have our own NA group. Another addict, *any addict*, was exceedingly welcome. As we have become prosperous, laden with choices of where to recover and with whom, we have allowed the defect of prejudice to assert itself and, more sadly, to live in our hearts.

While it is possible for us to walk through the doors of NA with the defects of character which promote attitudes of hostility toward others, over time these defects make recovery difficult if not impossible. As a defect, prejudice shares some of

the same characteristics as our disease. It is based in fear, self-centeredness, suspicion, and intolerance. These qualities represent our disease rather than the spiritual process of recovery in NA. Our program is carried from one addict to another without regard to anything but the desire to recover from our disease.

Although the spirit of Narcotics Anonymous is without concrete definition, it seems to encompass tolerance, acceptance, love, gratitude, and giving. If we can achieve and maintain this spirit, we will flourish. Our literature states that there are three things essential to our recovery. One of these is open-mindedness. We can have no reservations about maintaining the character defect of prejudice which separates, divides, isolates and can eventually destroy us as a fellowship. We cannot be fooled by the subtleness of our disease that closes our minds and causes us to think of one addict as different from another. We must surrender to this aspect of our disease and allow a loving God to heal us as a fellowship, allowing us to continue to focus our efforts on our primary purpose.

Our message says that any addict seeking recovery can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life. Ours is a message of hope and freedom. Let this message be our common bond. It is to this NA way of recovery that we direct our attention and effort toward the changes that need to occur within ourselves to produce the miracles of recovery.

We need to look at our diversity as the strength that allows each of us to truly say "any addict seeking recovery." Because we see this diversity as a wealth of color, race, gender, culture, and belief, we wholeheartedly welcome all addicts. It is not enough to tolerate; we welcome with open arms. It is not enough to accept; we give. We do not need to fear each other; we love. With these principles, we may stop the destruction of our disease, have our intolerance, fear, and self-centeredness removed, and do together that which we cannot do alone.