

Reaching Out

July 2025



Anonymous

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“If you are wondering whether drugs or booze, or both are screwing up your life, find out where an NA meeting is in your facility and check it out. You might be saving your own life and learning a better way.”

— Basic Text

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 handi@na.org

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

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
October 2025	15 July 2025
January 2026	15 October 2025
April 2026	15 January 2026

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,

My name is KW and I'm an addict who celebrated four years on 1 April. I could not do it if it was not for the love and support that I receive every time I walk into these rooms, which makes me believe I'm worth having a higher power. I'm worth taking the First Step, then the Second, and just maybe a Third. Second by second, minute by minute, and day by day, I am learning a new way of life. I am no longer a victim of my addiction which held me in bondage to a lifestyle that destroyed me, my family, and everything that was in my path.

I was 19 years old when I lost my son and took that first hit. Now, I finally see a way out. I see a new way of life that brings hope, and all I had to do was surrender my will. That surrender is and was always more than worth it.

Thank you to my higher power, and thank you to the ladies of H&I who come to share their experience, strength, and hope with us. You have changed my life for the better.

KW, Georgia, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is AH, and I am an addict. I have been a part of the NA community for 20 years but have never stayed clean for more than 60 days outside of prison. While reading the Basic Text, in the section about Tradition Three I came across the phrase, "An addict who does not want to stop using will not stop using." This led me to realize that I was never actually a member of Narcotics Anonymous, as "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." I never truly had this desire. I had the desire to end the consequences of my use, but not the use itself.

What finally changed this for me was when I humbled myself enough to have a real spiritual experience and invite God into

my life to take over for me, when my best efforts up to then had failed. My stubborn agnosticism and intellectualization of the “higher power” concept was my roadblock to staying clean.

I feel a peaceful light in my soul now and see my higher power as an ally who can rescue me from the pitfalls that have ensnared me in the past. I now have an opportunity to get out and go to rehab, and I know now that as a true member of NA, with God on my side, I finally have hope of a life that is free and clean. I no longer have to suffer from the horrors of addiction, and neither do you.

AH, Unknown location

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is JY, and I believe in experience, strength, and hope, as well as carrying the message. We all need to hear the message and the truth, me included. I want others to know that there must be a way to overcome addiction. There is a solution: believe in God/higher power, live by spiritual principles, give back, and help others recover. Save addicts!

I want all addicts to believe that drugs will only lead to jails, institutions, and death. Addiction harms us and others, while recovery and a higher power are hope. Find it! Find God, recovery, and hope. Give back, share, and give others hope. That’s why recovery exists—it’s how it grows, it’s why it works. That’s my message to you.

I’m 41 and have been an addict forever. My addictions have stolen my freedom, my family, and my love. Ask yourself: Is there something better out there for me? Do I want it? Can a higher power and recovery help me get it? Just know that the answer is yes. May you find it too.

I hope to see you at a meeting someday soon. I might need your message of recovery to help me maintain. You know it’s worth it, and so do I!

JY, Idaho, USA

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.



Please note! These are older images from previous Reaching Out issues. We are in need of new artwork. It is a great way to be of service from the inside. If you like to draw, please consider creating something for future issues! Thank you



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

TRANSITIONING FROM THE INSIDE ...

Dear Reaching Out,

During my last incarceration in 1994 I did something different: I attended an H&I meeting inside. I was facing a life sentence and figured I did not have too much more to lose. I was ordered to go, and I went. I got my hope shot from a woman I had walked to the gate when I was 22. She had returned with NA on an H&I panel. She was the speaker. I knew she had been to the same places I had been, the same hangouts of horror and despair. I started to attend NA meetings regularly behind the walls. I want to give a shout-out to the H&I sisters who showed up faithfully every Friday night and took us through the Twelve Steps. I “came to” in a drunk tank after my last overdose, and I “came to believe” in a Narcotics Anonymous meeting.

By the grace of God, I got the key to freedom. I ended up getting 42 years and 4 months suspended by that grace. Upon my release, I went into another protected environment and stayed there for over two years, and I took suggestions. One suggestion was for me not to live alone and to find other like-minded people who had a desire to learn how to live on the outside without putting something in my body or committing a crime to survive. I took that suggestion, and I moved in with another NA member. Then I moved in with two other NA members. I kept moving in and living with others who were in the program. When I was released, I did what I knew how to do already: fit in and act as if. One day, I “became.” This is the same suggestion I give to others when I go behind the walls. I suggest that they parole to a transitional house or with other members until they can trust themselves to make some right decisions.

When I transitioned, I got a sponsor. That lady carried the message to me. She was my ray of light, and she is still my sponsor today, over 21 years later. She said to get a service commitment, and so I did. She said to work the Steps, and so I do. I followed

her suggestions, and here I am today, another addict clean by the grace of a loving God and the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

Now that I’m on the outside, I am involved with H&I. We took the first H&I meeting into a women’s prison in East Africa. I also do H&I work at women’s correctional facilities in California. I have been in many prisons, both as a consumer and now as an H&I volunteer. There is a team of us that go into these facilities. I feel it is my responsibility after being raised by the state from the time I was 13 years old.

I just took a 21-year inventory, and what an amazing journey it has been. I never want to forget where I came from, and I always want to remember that freedom is a choice. Today, I choose to live clean and give back. And if I do that, the journey continues.

ML, California, USA

INCARCERATED MEMBERS

Does your facility allow the use of tablets?
Did you know that NA has been adding free NA literature to many tablets across the prison system?
Check and see if it is available where you are located, and if not, ask your warden/social director to make a request to get it added!



From the Outside

FROM THE OUTSIDE

Dear Reaching Out,

While loaded to the point of blackout, an 18-year-old aspiring addict beat a man to death in 1965.

I was convicted and mandated to serve a sentence of five years to life in perhaps the most notorious maximum-security penitentiary in the state of California. While there, I grew into manhood as my addiction progressed. I continued the same old story of addiction and crime after being granted parole in 1972. From that time until 29 April 1976, it was full speed ahead. The wheels fell off and I found myself in my first NA meeting. I quickly became hopeful and became an avid student of recovery. Teachers appeared with the tool bag of recovery. In it I found the gift of giving. Very helpful in learning to use this tool was H&I. Over the next 15 years I went to every jail, nuthouse, or prison that I could. I dreamed of one day going back to carry the message into the prison where I had done time—in other words, the neighborhood I grew up in. A change in policy came up and locked me out. Convicted murderers were excluded from going into locked facilities with H&I panels.

As the years passed, the hope of carrying the message at the prison where I had been incarcerated began to dim. Twenty-odd years later, I was invited to go to New Mexico on a panel in the prison there. There was an NA convention in Albuquerque that weekend. At dinner I met a man from California, and the conversation eventually got around to the fact that I had come to New Mexico to speak in the prison. After I explained why I came all the way to New Mexico to the prison, he told me he might be able to help me get cleared to go into the prison where I had once served time. He told me that he sponsored the chairman of H&I panels in that prison and had been going there for a very long time. Within a brief period, an associate warden at that prison came to learn about me and my desire to go back inside to carry

the NA message. An exception was made, and I was cleared to go in on a panel.

I could tell a whole other tale about my experience walking in the front gate 40 years later. However, this story is about walking into the meeting room. I had dreamed of this for over three decades and was totally unprepared for the experience. The buzz of recovery in the room was like going to a convention—that tense prison atmosphere of the yard stopped at the doorway to the meeting room. It seemed as if it could not penetrate this sanctuary of recovery. There were about 150 men of all ages and races mixing and talking, filling the room with that energy that I have only experienced where large groups of recovering people are gathered. NA was alive and bustling beyond, way beyond, what I could have imagined or would have believed. The six new men who came in off the yard for their first time were given an enthusiastic welcome. What we have come to know as the atmosphere of recovery was clearly there in that room. I saw no one distracted or disinterested in these men. They seemed hungry for recovery. It was over the top! After the meeting the men were warm and friendly. I felt more at home that night than I may ever have felt in an NA meeting. I was one of them. I was most touched by a man I talked with after the meeting. He is doing it all day. He has no hope of getting out. I asked him to explain to me what he was doing in NA. Unlike many others, his hope is not about a better life outside the walls, it is about a better life now, inside the walls. Wow!

I am overjoyed to pass the message on to you, the Fellowship. Narcotics Anonymous and recovery from addiction are alive and thriving inside the walls of the Bastille by the Bay. My love and gratitude for NA were significantly deepened by sharing with the fellas in my old neighborhood. Don't cheat yourself; help in H&I!

MS, California, USA

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 in a printer-ready format, for free download at www.na.org/reachingout

Reaching Out is also available by a 20-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$38.05 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* @ \$38.05 each, total \$ _____.

Name _____

Identification Number _____

Facility Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Country _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Reaching Out

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www.na.org/reachingout

ATTENTION INMATES

If you are relocating and your mailing address changes while you are incarcerated, please update your new address with us so that we can maintain your subscription to *Reaching Out*.