

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL PUBLIC

This resource can be used when interacting with the general public in the local community (such as at a community meeting, local event, or local conference). These frequently asked questions are meant to help trusted servants provide clear, consistent, and informative responses. In an effort to gain an understanding of the information here, trusted servants can discuss and rehearse the questions and answers below.

Trusted servants can consider the following points when preparing for interactions with the public:

- ◆ Responding to questions in your own words often works best – the responses listed below can be used as a guide.
- ◆ Short, simple, direct responses work best. Audience members or those who stop by an exhibit booth usually have limited time and will appreciate a brief response.
- ◆ When we use NA specific language such as “home group”, please explain the meaning for the audience.
- ◆ Try to keep responses focused on the questions asked. Remember, the goal is to inform members of the public about Narcotics Anonymous – personal disclosure is usually not appropriate or helpful. (For example, sharing about the step you are working, how many members you sponsor, and your service commitments is not necessarily relevant.)

What follows are possible answers to questions frequently asked by the public:

Q&A
1

What is the difference between AA and NA?

AA helped start NA in 1953 by giving NA's founding members permission to adapt their traditions and steps. The primary difference between the two programs is that AA's focus is alcohol and alcoholism, whereas NA's focus is recovery from addiction. In NA we believe that use of drugs, including alcohol, is but a symptom of the disease of addiction.

Q&A
2

How can I find NA meetings in my neighborhood or in various countries around the world?

The easiest way to find NA meetings is by visiting NA World Services website, www.na.org. Since our members provide the data for the meeting locator, we cannot guarantee the information is completely accurate (some meetings may have changed locations, for example). Contacting local area and regional helplines or websites (also listed at www.na.org) will often provide more accurate meeting information. (Have a local meeting directory with you during the presentation.)

Q&A 3

Are most of your members heroin addicts?

When NA first started, it is possible that the majority of our members used heroin. Today, as indicated in our *Membership Survey*, our members use a variety of drugs, including alcohol. Interestingly, 89% of those surveyed list alcohol as one of the drugs used on a regular basis. This survey also provides information about employment status, occupation, gender, and age. Our basic tenet about addiction is that it is a disease and not related to a specific substance.

Q&A 4

What support does NA have for adolescents?

Adolescents are welcome at all NA meetings. If there are meetings in a local NA community specifically designated for young people, the meeting schedule will identify those meetings as such. Although any NA member is welcome at any NA meeting, specially designated youth meetings can help younger addicts find their peers.

Q&A 5

It was briefly mentioned that NA has a variety of recovery literature. What kinds of literature and recovery materials do you have, and how can I obtain these?

NA has five book-length pieces:

- ▶▶ *Narcotics Anonymous, Basic Text*
- ▶▶ *It Works: How and Why*, which contains essays about the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- ▶▶ *Just for Today: Daily Meditations for Recovering Addicts*
- ▶▶ *Sponsorship*
- ▶▶ *The NA Step Working Guides*, a companion piece to *It Works: How and Why*.

We also have a host of informational pamphlets, booklets, and a quarterly journal called *The NA Way Magazine*. All of our literature and recovery materials can be obtained directly from www.na.org or by contacting the local NA area or region.

Q&A 6

How can we schedule an NA presentation?

At the end of this presentation, please provide us with your contact information and we will arrange for a presentation with you.

Q&A 7

Is someone who is still using drugs welcome to attend NA meetings?

Yes, they are more than welcome to attend meetings. Many of our members actually came to meetings while still using drugs and are now drug-free and recovering today. Often, if a member is still using, he or she will be asked to refrain from speaking during a meeting. Instead, these addicts are encouraged to speak with members during break or before or after the meeting.

Q&A

8

What resources do you have for single parents? Are children welcome at meetings?

Most groups welcome children who are behaved and under the supervision of a parent. Sometimes a group will offer babysitting services for its members. Contact the local NA helpline for additional information or look for meetings in the local NA meeting directory that indicate childcare or that the group is children-friendly.

Q&A

9

I referred someone to NA who was taking medication, and NA members said they were not clean. Would you explain what you mean?

NA is a program of complete abstinence, and members refer to time (days, weeks, months, years) without using drugs as “cleantime.”

Since Narcotics Anonymous is an abstinence-based recovery program, persons who are taking drug replacement medication are not considered drug-free. These persons are encouraged and welcome to attend NA meetings; however, they are asked to listen rather than speak at meetings, and it is suggested they talk to members on a break, or before or after a meeting. Meetings that follow this format do so to preserve the atmosphere of recovery.

For members who have a need to take prescribed medication for medical or mental health issues, we suggest reading the booklet *In Times of Illness*. This piece provides helpful, experience-based information regarding medication and illness, and outlines the idea that the decision to take medication is left to the member, physician, and sponsor. This pamphlet was written to help members who have achieved total abstinence from drugs and are faced with a need to take medication.

Unfortunately, our members often voice their own opinions about the use of medication even though NA has no opinion. Although this may be a disconcerting issue for professionals, it can be equally as confusing to many members. Typically, members of NA make a distinction between drug replacement medication and medication that a person needs to take once they are completely abstinent from drugs.

Q&A

10

What happens at an NA meeting?

An NA meeting is where two or more addicts gather for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction. Members offer each other peer support by sharing experiences about how they manage life situations without returning to using drugs. Some meetings have speakers who share their experience with getting and staying clean, while others have structured formats that focus on NA literature (our Basic Text, informational pamphlets, or our *Just for Today* daily meditation book). All meetings focus on recovery and supporting each other in recovery.

Here are some other things that can occur at an NA meeting:

- ▶ During the course of a meeting, a basket is passed for our members to contribute money to support the cost of the meeting facility and other NA

services. One of our traditions speaks to our self-support through our own contributions.

- » Meetings often open and close with the Serenity Prayer or some quote from NA literature. [In some communities this may require some explanation. The word “prayer” could be troublesome.]
- » Some meetings also provide keytags to recognize days, months, and years of continuous abstinence from drugs.

Q&A 11

Is NA connected with any religious organizations?

No. The NA program is based on a set of spiritual principles that are not associated with a particular religion. Although our steps call for finding and believing in a “power greater than oneself,” this is a personal decision for each and every member to make. Members choose their own “power greater than themselves.” Members’ beliefs range from nature to organized religion, from no belief that a power exists, to belief in the power of inanimate objects such as rocks. Members are free to choose a belief that works for them personally, and there is no opposition to anyone’s choice within the fellowship. We perceive this to be a strength of our program – the unconditional freedom members have with choosing their own personal belief – and in NA meetings one can hear members state that this was an attractive and safe aspect of the fellowship. NA doesn’t oppose or endorse any religion. Experience of our members has shown that the spiritual principles work for all members, from the devoutly religious to the atheist and agnostic.