

# The future begins here

My name is Faik and I come from Macedonia, but I have been living in London for a long time now. Many times since I got clean I have been awestruck seeing a Higher Power at work, and this is one of those times.

I go back to Macedonia to visit family and friends on a regular basis, and I always wanted to carry the NA message there. NA had not been established there yet, but it seemed I never had a suitable opportunity. Last year I was going through a bit of a difficult period in recovery, so I took some time to travel in the former Yugoslavia. I started from the top, visiting friends from the fellowship in Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro. These are all very young NA communities, and I've been involved in their development in some capacity all along.

Traveling along the Adriatic coast, I arrived in Montenegro and went to their meeting. The group here started with one addict, just out of detox, who had a book that explained how NA works. Armed with that, he told other addicts about NA and that they could get clean. Their first meetings were held in their bedrooms or living rooms, and this lasted for a while until they found their current meeting place.

While there, I stayed with a family of a using addict whose parents know about NA. His mother, with the help of some NA members, started a parents' group, using the twelve-step program to deal with their sons' and daughters' using. It is so humbling listening to her explain how she understands Step One and how she was going mad until she came across concepts such as powerlessness and a Higher Power.

After about a month of travel I got to Macedonia, settled in, and went to visit addicts in three needle-exchange locations. One is used by Macedonians, one by Albanians, and one by the Roma Gypsies. The picture is all too familiar and very bleak in those places. The addicts look like they just came from the front lines, and there are ten- to eleven-year-old kids who are full-blown addicts.

I kept showing up at these places, carrying our message, not being sure what would come out of it. Some were receptive and had never heard about NA, but they could see I was one of them. They couldn't believe they could get clean just by having the desire to stop using, and that NA was free. I kept doing what we do—being myself, allowing HP to carry me on and do my best.

I had about seven days left there, and we agreed to have a meeting. On Tuesday, 12 October 2009 at 11:00 am, we had our first meeting. Only one addict turned up. "Oh, what a failure," I thought. I still went on to do the meeting, knowing it was what it was—part of NA history. Later on that day we arranged another meeting for Thursday, and six people came. Although the country is divided along religious lines left over from the civil war, it was a mixed meeting, Macedonians and Albanians sitting together, sharing the desperation of being using addicts. It went really well; they could see there was something happening in that room.

Then I had three days left, and we arranged another meeting for the next day, on Friday evening. I had exhausted my own story, and I wanted them to see there were other clean addicts in NA. We held the meeting in the office of this needle-exchange place and I noticed they were using a voice-over Internet protocol (VoIP) on their computers. I figured I might be able to get one of my NA friends from London to speak



at the meeting using this videoconferencing technology. I made some phone calls and sent a few emails, and we were set to have our first VoIP meeting. That evening, there were eight of us in the meeting in Skopje—three addicts joining from London, two from Belgrade, two from Croatia, and one from Montenegro. It was just amazing, and the hair on my neck still rises as I write this.

We agreed to have meetings Tuesdays and Fridays. We would do it via the Internet and see how it went. A couple of days later I was back in London. I started to find speakers for the meetings, and many friends joined the group to support us. Since then it has been an incredible journey. I really was not sure if they were going to keep it going. They kept turning up, and for addicts struggling to stop using, they've done really well. Now addicts from the UK, Amsterdam, Denmark, the US, Moscow, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro tune in to take part in carrying a message of recovery. Some are isolated, so it is their only means of making a meeting.

We are all getting ready to go to a convention in Sarajevo (Bosnia) this weekend (15 January 2010), and three addicts from the Macedonian fellowship are coming there as well. They can't wait to get there. There is such a great energy building up to this. Addicts from all the different former Yugoslav republics are converging to celebrate and share NA recovery in this town that was so devastated by war. There are many of our British friends coming over, some Hungarians, and even two great guys from New York. We also organized a fund for newcomers who could not afford it and raised enough for ten more addicts to attend the convention. All of this is thanks to this beautiful fellowship we call Narcotics Anonymous. It gives us back so much more than just our lives.

*Faik G, England, United Kingdom*

## Postscript

When I first went to a recovery meeting in beautiful Trogir, Croatia, the NA Fellowship had been going for a few years, but it was a shock to them to hear some of us share about the concept of complete abstinence. Three and a half years later, quite a few of them are clean and the fellowship keeps growing. Last August, the NA community in Belgrade, Serbia, had its first convention and many of us went. They are also developing and are practicing the program based on complete abstinence, having learned from the experience of their fellow addicts in Croatia.



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