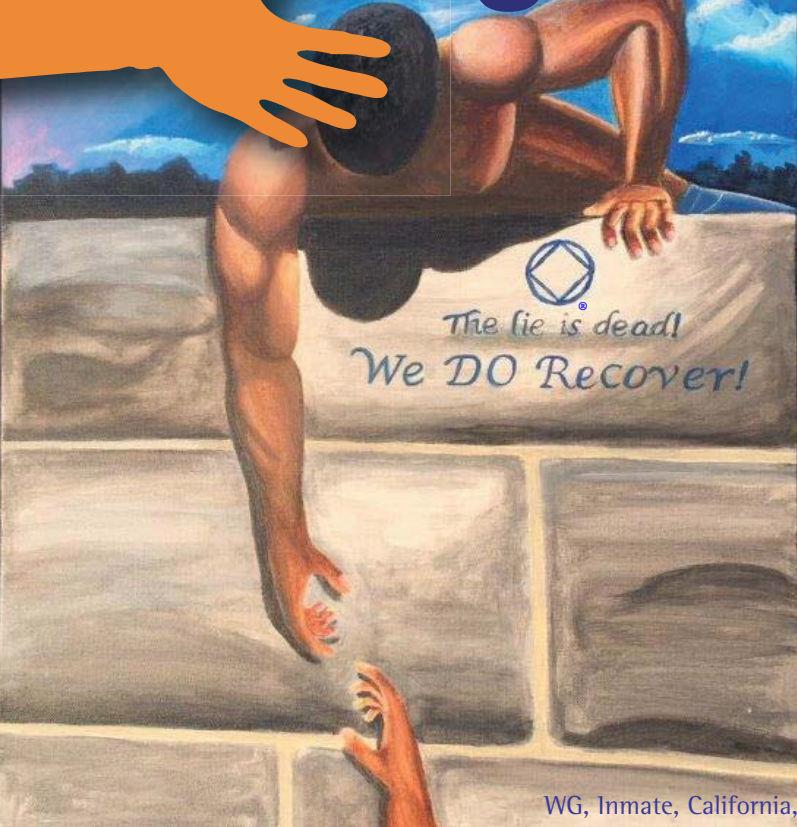


Reaching Out

October 2018



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*“Each group has but **one** primary purpose—to CARRY THE MESSAGE to the addict who still suffers.”*

Basic Text, Narcotics Anonymous

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.

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

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
April 2019	15 January 2019
July 2019	15 April 2019

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 JY. I was born 1984 and have been genetically an addict since birth. I started using between the sixth and seventh grade. I've been in and out of jails and institutions since eighth grade. Today was my first Narcotics Anonymous meeting. I was given an NA welcome chip for attending. My clean date is 24 August 2015. Today somebody said, "When you start working the Steps, that's when you start working toward freedom." I am writing to you to say that I belong in NA.

In the last 19 months, I've worked with a sponsor to list a moral inventory (written) and I gave it to the chairman at the last prison I was in. I have shared with God, myself, and another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. I am now working daily on my Steps Six through Twelve.

My release date is scheduled for fall of 2018, and I do plan on staying clean. My plans are to not break any laws or use any mind-altering substances. I am doing this because I no longer want a life of prison and want to work toward the promise of freedom from active addiction. I want to build relationships with my family and with the ones I love.

I am writing this to say thank you for forming this program, and thank you for inspiring hope within me. I have been provided a book from NA, the Sixth Edition Basic Text, which I am reading and praying about in a prison in Oregon. They have a huge program in here, and I am eternally grateful. They showed me that someone actually cares about others and me as well.

I owe to you and others the same love I have been shown. I owe it to others as well as myself to stay clean in order to contribute to this program as well as be free from addiction. Jails,

institutions, and death scare me. This is my fifth time in prison, and enough is enough. I plan on going back to the area where I started my active addiction to help others to stay clean and build a life worth living outside these prison walls. Thank you, NA.

JY, Oregon, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is JB, and I am an addict. I'm cleaning up my life late at the age of 54. Better late than never, right? I didn't ever really feel normal, as I was born epileptic and as a youth woke up several times in the hospital after grand mal seizures. I never felt as though I fit in with others, because I was afraid I would have a seizure in front of them and be cast out as a friend.

My addiction started when I was in high school at the age of 15 as a freshman. My drug use increased after my release from the service in 1986. That's when my youngest brother and I used together. Our addiction progressed so much that our mother put us in treatment. He was sent to a local hospital while I was sent to a state hospital. My addiction escalated in 1996 when I was introduced to the latest drugs. That addiction spiral lasted off and on for 20 years. I stopped while I was either on probation or in jail. I've been arrested ten times including my current incarceration in county jail.

On a Friday in October of 2014, my wife and I had an argument and I left. Upon my return, she had moved another man in over the weekend. That led me to being homeless for the next year and nine months up until my arrest in 2016. When I was in court in September, my lawyer said I needed to qualify for a program called the Jail Diversion Program to get probation. Since then, four people have told me that I would be accepted. The best thing to come out of the program is that they are supplying me with an apartment that is cost-free, and I never have to pay them back.

They have numerous other things they are going to do for me. I'm thankful for it all, and I look forward to growing stronger

in my journey in being clean and enjoying the gifts of recovery. Going to meetings and meeting other addicts and establishing new relationships is something else that I am looking forward to. I have over 90 days clean now and feel a lot better and more positive about myself with my outlook on things. That's my story and I am sticking to it. Thank you for the *Introductory Guide to Narcotics Anonymous*. Thank you for NA.

JB, Texas, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My initials are DO, and I am an addict writing to you from British Columbia. I am writing out my experience this time around to better grasp my addiction. I deserted the Fellowship a year ago when I had six years clean. I am imprisoned now due to my own stupidity.

I guess I lost touch with others when I moved away and stopped talking to others in the program. I became more of a loner and was seeking attention from someone I knew who used. Before I knew it, I was doing drugs and began to get worse. I never stuck a needle in my arm, but came close. My habit was hefty.

I hate to admit it, but I was enjoying myself a bit. I knew it was a major problem, but didn't know how to come off it at that point. Now I am looking to reenter the program with my clean date of 2 February 2017. I have a major problem on the verge of healing. I vary day to day but have a continuous urge to get better and stop using completely. I now do daily meditations. I hope to share my willingness to stay clean and better myself and others in Narcotics Anonymous.

I hope to better my chances by opening channels abroad instead of keeping silent in my 23-hour lockdown scenario. I hope that this letter reaches someone and that my message goes toward helping another addict seeking recovery.

DO, British Columbia, Canada

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is GT, and I am an addict. I am currently incarcerated. I would like to open this letter with what I wrote. One day I woke up in the middle of nowhere, not knowing how I got there, wondering how it came to be that I crashed into a tree. Then I woke up all alone, lost in a world of the unknown. With no more drugs to lead the way, I returned to the life I had before I was led astray. With God to guide the way, in freedom is where I want to stay. I will find it the NA way.

I first attended an NA meeting some years ago because my probation officer said, "Jail or meetings." That was an easy choice to make. Unfortunately, I did not have my heart in it. I did not work the program and relapsed again and again. Finally, my addiction led me to prison. Even in prison, I continued to get high. Eventually I was sent home and again violated my parole, ending up in prison again. Then I had a spiritual awakening and a moment of clarity and realized if I didn't stop using, I would spend the rest of my life in prison or die.

I have destroyed relationships, lost loved ones, and burnt about every bridge I have ever crossed. Thanks to the tools and the Fellowship of NA, I feel better about myself. The way I felt about myself is the root of my use. After working Step Eight and Nine, I released all this built-up guilt and pain that I had been harboring for so many years.

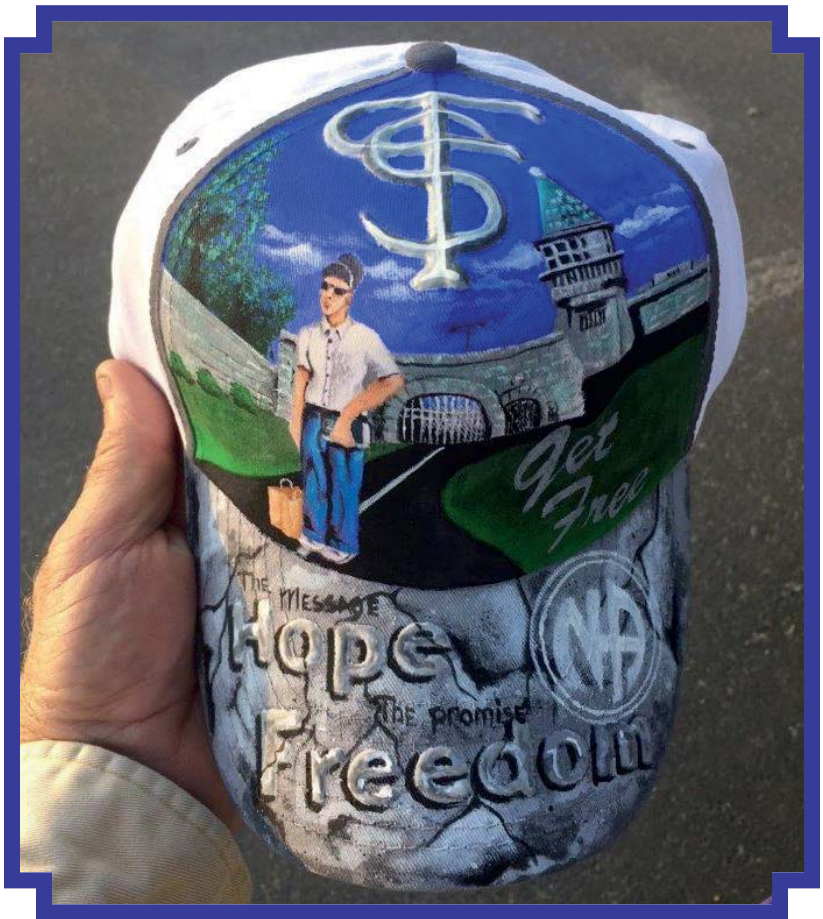
Thank you, NA, for your wonderful service. It works if I work it.

GT, Mississippi, USA

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, USA.

ART FROM THE ZSIDE



DR, California, USA



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is CF, and I am an addict seeking recovery. Here is my story in hopes of reaching someone who can relate to the disease and try to get clean. I was living with my drug dealer because I had given up everything. I did her bidding just for her to throw me scraps. I was reduced to an animalistic level of life, but I couldn't stay with her any longer.

My choice of drugs was *more*, and it didn't matter what it was or how much, as long as it was more. I had lost all hope. In 2004, somehow I got into a residential rehab where I was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous. At my first meeting, I felt better. I could breathe. I belonged somewhere. I fit in. These were my people. I was hooked. I lived and breathed NA for years. I started working the Steps with a sponsor, went to meetings, and even started sponsoring others. I went to conventions and even started meetings. I did all kinds of service and even got a job at the rehab from where I had graduated. But I was still missing something, the surrender to a Higher Power. I had reservations.

You see, I am gay and gave up the whole lifestyle, but I wanted bits and pieces of it back, so I made up excuses. I wanted to go to the clubs to watch the drag shows. I wanted to meet people. How else was I going to get into a relationship? Needless to say, I relapsed in December of 2011, after almost seven years of being drug-free. I was back lying flat on my face again. I was a slave again to the lies and to the behavior, to the drugs, but because I wasn't using like I did before, I thought I could control it. I forgot that the disease is a cunning enemy of life, and I soon found myself looking at 48 months of prison.

Sure, I had been to jail many times before, but this was prison now. I gave up my chance of parole after twelve months due to the disease. Because it had such a grip on me, I found myself on a level five yard, the highest security level in Michigan. I am not allowed out of my cell except for yard. I have one hour a day there, five days a week, and 15 minutes to shower three days a week. So I can't go to meetings, but finally, after 30 months with my back against the wall, I remembered there is a better way of life.

I reached out to the Fellowship of NA. With my Higher Power and the program, I surrender each day to the God of my understanding. I gave up the fighting. *Reaching Out* is a light in my life because it reminds me that we can do this. Even though I am alone in my cell, I am not alone in life because I have NA and the support it gives me on this road to recovery.

I got out in November 2017, and I am full of FEAR. Instead of saying "F— Everything and Run," today I am "Facing Everything and Recovering." You see, I can do this—we can do this—one step at a time and one day at a time. Today I have control of my life. Thank you, NA, for your path to recovery for me and countless others.

CF, Michigan, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

Staying clean on the outside. The miracle of staying clean one day at a time is our goal. If at the end of the day I have not used, breathing a breath of clean air is a miracle. It's all about the literature, meeting attendance, and another clean addict, along with the desire not to use, the Basic Text, and maybe a coffeepot. Recovery takes no time off; it begins immediately, as the disease is progressive, so recovery can be accomplished moment by moment by repetition of the Steps and not using no matter what.

My thinking is what brought me to such pain, and it is being transformed by new ideas from the Steps and from others recovering from this disease. Our literature tells us that

transitioning from a facility to the outside world is difficult regardless of the circumstances. You're welcome in NA; keep coming back. Our Higher Power has given me the tools to get through the day clean. The miracle works in my life and I can carry the message of hope, which is our primary purpose. I read from the informational pamphlets and the Basic Text and ask God to help me to stay clean one day at a time. I listen with an open mind, help the newcomer learn to work the Steps and the Traditions we follow, pray when I wake up, and don't forget to thank God for giving me the ability to cope with the day. I try to give back what has been freely given to me. Surrender 100 percent to the spiritual principles found in the Steps, which are the keys that will set you free! Recovery is possible if we don't use.

A fellow member and grateful recovering addict in NA,

AM, California, USA



"Freedom behind the walls" Venezuela

ART FROM THE INSIDE

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



"Show me how to live" Nordeste Region Brazil



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is CH, and I am an addict. My disease was arrested on 10 November 2012. My addiction, coupled with mental illness, was a recipe for disaster. I was disillusioned with toxic behaviors like lies, violence, and greed. I was sucked into a negative vortex that landed me in state prison. The pain and turmoil were uncontrollable. I was plagued by problems, a poverty mentality, codependency, domestic violence, and low self-esteem.

I made many feeble attempts at getting well with treatment centers and meetings; however, my shame and guilt coupled with anger perpetuated the madness. I was broken and in despair, and failure became a new way of life. Doing time allowed me to take a better view of my life in a safe place. I got to make a clean break from the moral decay that was all around me. I had fears that gripped me and kept me in bondage. Even when I would get some cleantime, I was still unsure of myself.

Today I realize that I had a toxic life. Emotional wholeness would require me to detox from the negative lifestyle I was used to. I reached out to my old sponsor; she sent me a Basic Text and *It Works: How and Why*. I began to work the Twelve Steps. I cried a storm of tears. I kept going to meetings and kept calling my sponsor. I felt an avalanche of feelings, except now I was writing about them. I began to pray and talk about them as well. I was told my feelings would not kill me, but the drugs would. I went from crawling to walking, to now a full sprint. I love my recovery! If you are new to the program, know this: you are where you are supposed to be, and having faith will help you on the way to a happier life. It is a slow process and not always easy, but it is well worth it. I have 33 months clean today, and it has been an exciting ride. You can recover. Onward and Free.

CH, Alaska, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is JW, an addict transitioning out. Here is my story in a nutshell. I was raised in an alcohol-addicted family. I'm the oldest of four children, so I had a lot of responsibility growing up. I started using at the age of twelve, and by fourteen it had progressed to heavier drugs. This is my third prison bid. I have lost nearly half of my immediate family to the disease of addiction. By the time you read this I will be sent home, as I am being released today.

I have served 102 months of a sentence handed down by the judge. I was given the opportunity to go through treatment while I was locked up. Sure, I had been in treatment before, so what was different this time? I really wanted it this time. I was doing it for me this time and not because the judge or my parole/probation officer made me.

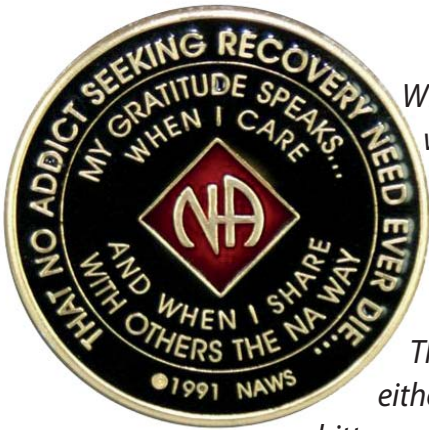
I was introduced to the Narcotics Anonymous program while incarcerated. They have an excellent program here. I have almost four years clean today. It took me over 18 months to complete my Steps with my sponsor. They really changed my whole life. I have a future to look forward to today. I am attending meetings every week with my sponsor. My whole outlook on life has changed, thanks to Narcotics Anonymous.

I am so grateful for Narcotics Anonymous and the Fellowship because they cared enough to help this addict break a 25-year cycle of addiction. I still have the Basic Text they sent me for free while I was incarcerated. It has helped me more than I ever thought possible. I have tools in my life today to help me through anything I may face. My Higher Power knows I'm not perfect, and I've been accepted for whom I am.

I have taken many programs while incarcerated here. I have over 24 certificates and am currently over three-quarters through an apprentice program, in which I am working toward a good career as a dental lab tech. I am building a safety net, and I know the free world is ready for me. I stay grounded and follow my program to the best of my ability. I feel I will stay out

and become that responsible, productive member of society I have always wanted to be. My Serenity Prayer says it all: accept what I cannot change, and have the courage to change what I can and the wisdom to know the difference. Thanks to Narcotics Anonymous, I have my life and my freedom. Humbly yours.

JAW, Ohio, USA



*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"

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 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 released after 30 days as for those who are released after 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 that 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.

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 \$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 _____

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

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*.