

Reaching Out



April 2018



Image Source Unknown

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Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

Basic Text, Chapter Six “Tradition Five”

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
July 2018	15 April 2018
October 2018	15 July 2018

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 JG, and I am an addict trying to recover from inside my cell. I am doing a four-year sentence as a direct result of my addiction. I have always been around the drug scene. Every person in my family is a drug addict, so growing up I thought that was what people did. As I got older, my addiction became stronger. Soon I was manipulating people to feed my habit and get whatever I wanted.

When I was over the age of 21, I lost my three children to the system. My life from there went downhill fast. I started to be in and out of jail. The loss of my children and the pain from that made me want to use more and more to hide my suffering. I felt broken inside, and drugs were the answer for me. I was out of control. By the time I was 24 years old, I was using whatever I could get my hands on. My mother, who was an addict, had seen what I had become, and she had given up. I broke her heart, and she decided to get clean.

My mother had begun to go to meetings and even tried to drag me along to every meeting she went to. I would attend them with her and be high. I started to feel guilty when I was around her, so I would leave so I could get high. Soon after that, she began to use with me and ended up in jail. As for me, I ignored my problem and continued to use. All I wanted was to get high. My life was unmanageable. Soon I was in a police chase and ended up in jail with serious charges.

My mother got into a rehab, and that's when I thought it was time to take a stand for my actions. I was mad at myself for letting my addiction get so far out of hand. Today, I have over a year clean. I was not aware of how powerless I was until I started going to meetings every day in jail. My experience with NA is wonderful. I felt as if a dark cloud had been lifted from my shoulders and I could see the light. I could be myself again.

Through NA I learned pain and suffering is no longer an option. I work with my higher power and work the NA program every day. I pray I make it, just for today.

When I return home from this prison stay, I hope to continue with my recovery process. I hope to go to an NA meeting with my mother. I know we can do this on the outside because we are both strong women in recovery. We can have a life on the outside without using drugs. I hope this story can help addicts who are just as twisted as I was in the beginning, and I hope they can find peace and recover from active addiction.

JG, Tennessee, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

Hello, my name is EE, and I am a grateful recovering addict. I am an inmate at a state prison where I am serving a 42- to 84-month sentence. That sentence started out as a six-month county sentence, but due to multiple violations I got resentenced to state prison. I am 36 years old and came to NA around three years ago for one purpose—to get clean. Through NA I not only got clean, but I have found a higher power, which I choose to call GOD.

For the past 21 years of my life, I have gone through life in a blur, hurting anything and anyone I came into contact with. I used to live and lived to use. I thank God for my lengthy incarceration, as I have since found a sponsor and am working on my Twelve Steps. This time has allowed me to clear my head and reevaluate my past behaviors.

This prison does not offer any NA meetings, but it does have three other meetings, which I attend. I have since started an NA meeting on Wednesday nights in my housing unit. We read from the Basic Text, *Just for Today*, and *It Works: How and Why*, and every now and then we break out the *Step Working Guides* for some of the more serious members.

During my active addiction, I burned all my bridges with my family and friends. I lost my mother while I was incarcerated.

I share this not to look for pity, but to use it as a tool for other recovering addicts. I also use it as a reminder of the amount of emotional pain and suffering I have caused my family and myself. It took what it took to get me here today. I look at my life in a more spiritual way.

Today, I am an active member of the Narcotics Anonymous program. I have weekly contacts through visits and phone conversations with my sponsor and a few members from the outside. I do know one thing—my life is so much better today. Currently, I am at a peer facility in the prison, which has counselors in the drug and alcohol community. I am truly blessed to have found a program, and no words can ever pay back what has been freely given to me.

EE, Pennsylvania, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is LNS, and I am an addict incarcerated in a prison in Connecticut. Prison was never in my vocabulary; it was only on TV shows where criminals go. Now I am among those who are the so-called “criminals,” stemming from a crime that took place when I was high on drugs mixed with prescribed medications used for my anxiety. I am now serving a 15-year sentence, with five years already served for that offense.

In brief, before my offense and incarceration, my use started after my mother began to suffer from Alzheimer’s disease. Drugs became my crutch to make it through the day. It got to the point where I needed drugs in the morning to function.

Now for the learning experience. I had two commercial cleaning companies doing over a million dollars a year in business. I drove a Cadillac as my company car, had a Corvette in the garage, and owned a 27-foot powerboat, which I kept in the marina. I had a beautiful fiancée and a stepdaughter, as well as my own 17-year-old daughter. She is my strength to make it through the day. She has been here to visit me three times in the last five years of my incarceration. I feel like a failure to her. Drugs ruined my

life, and they are pure evil. I call it the devil in disguise. White lines are only white lies. I couldn't control my use of drugs even though I thought I could. I kept telling myself that I could walk away from it tomorrow, only to fail every time.

One of the first things I learned in prison is that not all inmates are hardened criminals. Some are regular people who made poor decisions while under the influence of drugs, including alcohol. One phrase here is "Poor Decisions, Good Intentions."

While here in prison, I met a fellow inmate at a meeting I attend every Friday night. In that meeting, we go over a twelve-step program focusing on drug or alcohol abuse. Well, this other inmate became a good friend who told me to write to "Writing Steps for Recovery," which I did. He said he found great hope in receiving a sponsor from the outside. That night when I went back to my cell, I did just that. I now have a sponsor and a grand-sponsor, who is helping me to work the Steps. I must admit that I no longer feel alone. I am on my new journey toward recovery. During my time left in prison and when I get released, the one thing I do have control over now is the decision to stay clean. I do believe that decision is possible with the help of Narcotics Anonymous meetings and my sponsor's directions, which are helping me through my journey to a simpler life.

LNS, Connecticut, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

Hello, my name is DW, and I am an addict. I am 26 years old and currently in jail for some probation violations as well as being accused of a friend's overdose. I started using around the age of 18. My using started out as a party thing, but after a while drugs were no longer a way to escape. It was a matter of using just to stay "well" and not feel sick. Then I began to do whatever I could or had to do to get drugs. I began to lie, cheat, and steal from everyone and anyone I could to support my habit. All of this tore my life apart from my family and friends. I have lost those I truly cared about. Trust was lost between me and everyone around me. I knew my life was going downhill from there. I began to see

a pattern of going in and out of jail, being on and off probation. I went to another state to try to fix my problems.

I found myself in a treatment facility doing an inpatient program. I started working all the Steps. They kept pushing me to do more and more. They suggested going to NA meetings, but I never did. I kept telling myself I could do this and managed to say clean for a year and a half. I soon began going back to my old ways of living. Honestly, I never gave NA a chance because I was scared and nervous. I thought it was a way to get more hookups. I thought it would bring me down. One night, lying in bed, I was thinking about NA and the treatment program I had completed. I started remembering the Steps and decided then that I had had enough and was done. I knew I had a problem and could no longer live that way. I started going to meetings when they offered them in jail. It feels wonderful, like a huge weight has been lifted.

To those who are locked up, NA may seem scary at first, but it really is not. It is a huge stress reliever. My best suggestion to those who are going through recovery is to be honest and open up and share. The more I share, the better I feel about it. The best thing is that I get experience, strength, and hope from those who have been where I am and have been in my shoes. I never thought the groups would work, but soon found out how wrong I was. Thanks to NA I am on a better path for my recovery. I could not do recovery without help and guidance. The hardest step was admitting. Today, we should take time to pray real hard so we wake up before it is too late. May you all live free. It is time to spread your wings.

DW, SW, USA



Front & back T-Shirt, Unknown Source



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.



In Desperation... California, USA



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

I'm an addict named SW, and I am not in jail or prison but heard the message in a detox. I was 47 years old and lived in a self-made prison in my head for 29 years. I owe Narcotics Anonymous a debt that I'll never be able to repay. When H&I came into the detox it wasn't my first NA meeting, but it was the first time I heard the message of recovery. What I heard was "any addict can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live." I was detoxing so hard I didn't hear everything. I heard that I had a choice. Until that time, I thought I was going to die with a needle in my arm or an empty bottle of cheap wine next to me in an alley. I went from detox to a residential treatment for 115 days, and then I went to a secondary residence for ten months. I went to meetings while in detox. I was tired of living the way I was living. I might have not heard everything for that one hour and a half, but at least I was in a safe place.

Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous. I went to a lot of meetings while in treatment. At the secondary facility, I went to a meeting every day because I had nothing else to do. I got kicked out of the second place and that night I went straight to a meeting. I need to let people know that you do not have to be in some kind of treatment to stay clean. The gift I received was a sponsor at three days in treatment. Twenty-two years later, I still have a sponsor and continue to work the Twelve Steps. I work the Traditions and study them as well. I do service in NA. I have received so many gifts since I have surrendered to the disease. I am no longer locked up in a self-made prison. I'm free, thanks to the God of my understanding and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. I have not been unemployed since I got out of treatment. Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous—I am forever grateful.

SW, California, USA

ART FROM THE H&I 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. Handl@na.org



South Africa



Texas, USA



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is RB, and I am an addict in recovery. I was told when I got to prison that I would never have a minimum-custody facility. Well, I can say my Higher Power was working in my life. I got to prison in 2002. I was looking at doing hard time. I received 195 months and 152 months, one sentence for second-degree murder and another sentence for three aggravated batteries. I stabbed my son to death in a drug-induced rage and blackout. Then I got three aggravated batteries for wrecking my car with my children in the vehicle.

I went to prison and found recovery again. I still used three times in prison, and for that I received 17 write-ups in six months. I landed in a super max facility. That was 25 July 2002—the day I decided I could never use again. I started reading the Narcotics Anonymous literature after sending for a Basic Text. I started working the Steps with a sponsor. My old sponsor died of brain cancer while I was in super max, so when I got sent back to the general population again, I found a new sponsor—not an outside one, but a convict who later got released after serving 29 years.

I had the privilege of sharing my Fifth Step with him, and we went over my character defects and my amends list together. We also prayed together before he went home. I got another sponsor and mentor when I went to a minimum-security facility. I started a journal and worked the Steps every day. I was asked in the new facility to chair the meetings. These are the gifts from working the Steps. The administration asked me to speak to the general population. Today, I am thankful for the life I have without the use of drugs, and that was given to me by NA and the steps, going to meetings, and taking the cotton out of my ears and putting it in my mouth. I was released 9 February 2017 to a work-release program after 14 ½ years locked up

RB, Kansas, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

Hi, my name is D and I am a grateful recovering addict. I am lucky to be alive and to find recovery after a 24-month prison sentence where I was able to find a message of hope in recovery with God's help and NA.

Maybe I should start at the beginning. My first memory in life, from age three, was that of being molested by my father. I can still remember the cheap cologne he wore and the clothes I had on. I was asleep when he did this to me and woke up afterward—strangely, I knew to pretend to be asleep, as even at three I knew this was wrong. Years and years of this abuse went on, until I was able to fight back at 14. I finally stood up for myself and said no more, but by then the damage was done. After that, I picked man after man who abused me either physically, sexually, mentally, or all three. I kept focused and worked hard, as I wanted a nursing degree; in 2004 I achieved it, as I never wanted to have to depend on a man.

After two amazing children with men who were not ready to be fathers (to say the least), I caught a patient from falling at work and injured my back. I herniated the two lower discs in my back, and was off from work on disability. My husband at the time wasn't working, and the bills were piling up, so using my addict mentality I went back to work, didn't tell the insurance company that was making my car payment, and signed a few forms and broke the law. I had become dependent on my pain pills just to function, and six to eight a day at that. I had to quit the pills to work, but felt like I needed the pills to live.

I made the worst mistake of my life and broke the law. Never in my right mind would I have done such a thing. I was always driven, focused, and all about my kids. Now look at me—a criminal who has become dependent on drugs. I felt so low. The law catches up, and to be honest, I'm so thankful it did because God did it to save my life. I was so far gone and spiraling out of control. Having overdosed at least three times, I was lucky to be alive. I know I got that harsh sentence for a

reason. It took me a year of sitting still to attend the recovery dorm and commit to NA.

After I was released, I got another sponsor and reworked the Twelve Steps with her. Today, I am so thankful for my recovery and for NA. I even made amends with the judge and thanked him for saving my life. I know without NA, my children would be without a mother right now, and you can't put a price on that.

DK, KT

Dear Reaching Out,

I am an addict named MS. It is with beautiful irony that I write from an outside perspective. State and federal penitentiaries became a safe haven because of my inability to live life on life's terms. Lying and stealing, in one form or another, were the backbone of my existence for many years. These defects of character progressed, along with my disease. I never found what I was looking for. I was attracted to the lifestyle of addiction long before a chemical substance became my crutch. This honest realization allows me to truly see that drug use is only a symptom of a disease that can manifest itself in all areas of my life. I never went back to prison after my third visit. I was unemployable, was shot twice, totaled multiple vehicles, was self-declared homeless, lived in a drug house, used daily, and was still allowed to live through it all.

After ten years of this insanity, I found NA, and I have not used any mood-changing, mind-altering substances since then. I remain active in H&I while living the message to the best of my ability. Carrying the message of Narcotics Anonymous into the prison is a privilege granted only through grace and mercy. I enjoy being a trusted servant in the attempt to share hope with those incarcerated and those physically free. Some days I do not feel worthy of this new way to live, but just for today, I know that I am. I deeply love the program, the Fellowship, and NA as a whole.

MS, Georgia, 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.



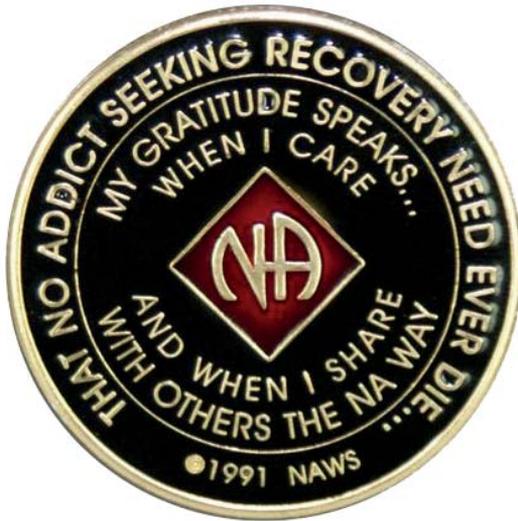
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left 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.



“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 by a 20-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$35.90 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* @ \$35.90 each, total \$ _____.

Name _____

Identification Number _____

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City _____

State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Country _____

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 address with us so that we can maintain your subscription to *Reaching Out*.