

Reaching Out



January 2018



Mid Willamette Valley Convention 2017

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We all find that the feeling we get from helping others motivates us to do better in our own lives.

Basic Text, "Recovery and Relapse"

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 2018	15 January 2018
July 2018	15 April 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](http://www.na.org/reachingout).



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is PR and I am an addict, originally from California. I am currently incarcerated in Bangkok, Thailand, at a central correctional facility. This is the main drug prison that holds over 10,000 offenders in twelve separate buildings. So far I have served one year, two months on a seven-year, two-month sentence for possession and selling a variety of drugs in small amounts. This is my first time behind bars, but I thank my Higher Power for having me arrested. The life I had ended up living was very dark and an extreme expression of the disease of addiction that I have been familiar with most of my life. Even with so much to live for, I had let my using take me to the point of no return. It took me to a place where it seemed like a much more logical choice was to just go all the way with the downward spiral until I did die, versus going through the challenge of owning up to the truth and facing the wreckage of my past and present. In other words, coming to prison has ended up being the best thing that could have happened to me, and it truly saved my life.

Fortunately, there are zero illegal narcotics here, so I have used the time so far to revolutionize my relationship with God and take on a serious new beginning in my quest of recovery through the literature of NA with another member of the Fellowship in my building. He is from Iran, with limited English skills, so our daily meetings revolve around language study while we pick apart wisdom, stories, and principles found in such books as the Sixth Edition Basic Text, *Living Clean*, and, of course—this newfound *Reaching Out* newsletter that my mom prints out and sends to me periodically. Being able to read about other firsthand experiences that are similar to mine really makes us feel connected to the NA reality. Of course, those who are going through much heavier sentences provide me with a dose of gratitude for the mercy that God did show me around my own case. It could have

and should have been so much worse. So I have been taking on this whole experience as an undeserved second shot at life that I likely would not get again if I ever returned to the using life. Finally, I have reached that point where my life truly depends on the program, a level that I have heard about so many times throughout my previous participation in NA meetings all around the world. It's a simple equation that I have surrendered to: NO NA = NO LIFE. There's much more that I have to share, so hopefully this can be the first submission of more to come. Until then, I look forward to more recovery inspiration from this great forum of *Reaching Out*. Thank you, NA.

PR, Bangkok, Thailand

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is JS. I am a client here at a recovery center in the mountains of Kentucky. The center is between a jail and a cemetery. Ironic—jails, institutions, and death. I was at the end of my road when I made it through the doors. I had been on drugs for nearly two weeks. Four months prior to my arrival here at the recovery center, I had a five-week-old baby pass away from SIDS. Unfortunately, with all my history for the past 15 years of drug addiction and the name I had made for myself, I was blamed for my child's death. I was unable to attend the funeral and attempted suicide the day after she passed and was placed in a psych ward for 72 hours. A month prior to my coming to treatment, her autopsy came back as SIDS, and I lost my mind.

Like every addict who has been to the depths of despair and degradation, just as I have been, I had lost everything when I made it through the doors. I was no longer able to have contact with my five-year-old son, and my family had washed their hands of me. Thank God there are facilities that will still take addicts like me. I didn't know if I was coming or going the first few months I was here. I brought some NA literature from home and began to read it. For the first time in my life, I took suggestions. I suited up and showed up and did whatever it took and I had to do.

I was resentful toward God at first. I got a sponsor who I still have after four years when I started going to meetings. She never gave up on me. I now have contact with my son, and my family supports me again.

I am very grateful that the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using, as that is all I had for years. Today, I am grateful to have ten months clean, and I am building a life worth living through the Twelve Steps and God.

JS, Kentucky, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is TH and I am a grateful recovering addict. I am currently incarcerated and serving an eight-year sentence. I may be going to a federal prison after I am released from the state facility. I pray to my Higher Power that my incarceration will be over for good when I am released.

I am truly sorry to my family, whom I neglected and victimized through the years. I am grateful to my Higher Power for my arrest and rescue and for the chance to complete a drug program. I was first introduced to NA in 2008. I was introduced to the program at the age of 18. The Fellowship was good, but not for me at the time—or so I thought. I was young and thought I knew all the answers to the questions. I did things my way and spent years trying to figure it out. I had been in several institutions with the same results. The questions still were unanswered. What a fool I was. Needless to say, at the end of my using I was completely lost. I was defeated and willing to do whatever I had to do to begin my life in recovery.

The judge issued a 28-year sentence, but we went to trial. It never dawned on me that I was like most. In order to appreciate life and respect it, I had to first have it taken away from me. I live my life today just for today and put my recovery first. I am looking forward to finding others to help me in my recovery. Grateful in recovery.

TH, Illinois, 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.



H&I T-shirt, South Africa



RS, California, USA



Tattoo artwork
from inmate in Illinois



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is S and I am an addict. I always liked to behave in ways to get attention. I liked to look great, my friends were always older than I was, and their habits were against the law every time. There was a strange feeling inside me that made me unhappy about what I had. Everything was trying to make me an addict.

I began to use drugs for enjoyment at first, but after years, because of my addiction sickness, I became a dangerous addict who tried to find drugs at all costs. I was a professional thief and a perfect parasite who stole his girlfriend's property. I went to prison for using and keeping drugs several times. I decided to give up using, but I couldn't. I decided to marry, thinking perhaps this would help me, but it was a wrong dream, too. Everybody left me! My parents, my friends, and my lovely wife. I was deeply alone. At last, I received the message of NA from one of my dear friends. I didn't believe that an addict could be clean, because I had tried all of the possible actions and I became disappointed every time. I went to an NA meeting anyway.

I don't know what happened, but that was a beautiful night—the best that I had ever seen. In my past life, my girlfriends wished for my death. Here, a miracle happened, and for an addict like me whose wish was for just one night of calm sleep, the dreams were changing into reality. That night someone hugged me, someone who didn't know me! A kind hand squeezed my hand, and bestowed on me a pure love, without any request. I did what the other members told me. I went to meetings regularly. I chose a sponsor and did my Steps. I could change my behavior after working the Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. Nothing is as precious as an addict's recovery and helping another addict. And in this case I began to help others, too. I decided to make amends, with my sponsor's help. The prettiest day in my

life was the day I decided to make amends to my sister, and I'll never forget that for the rest of my life. My family forgave me and after four and half years, my wife came back home. And after one year of living with her, on my six years clean birthday, my son was born, and it was the best gift that God granted us. Days from now, my son will be 6 years old and I will be twelve years clean.

I appreciate NA. I owe my life to Narcotics Anonymous, and the best time of my life is when I share my recovery with another addict. To be a servant, an addict's servant, will be my warranty for life.

S, Tehran, Iran



“If you change the way you see things, the things you see change...”

Portugal Region, West Area

ART FROM THE H&I T-SHIRT SIDE

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



From Russia



Pray, Love, change, learn, appreciate, encourage, respect, live, hug, share, feel, create, trust, believe, grow, discover, experiment...support.

Portugal Region, West Area



“One Addict Helping Another”



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is AI. I am an addict. I feel my experience can help one addict behind the walls, either serving time or in treatment. I am 24 years old and can proudly say out loud that I am a grateful recovering addict in Narcotics Anonymous. It is only by giving it away that I am able to be clean today.

I was born and raised in Bangladesh. My parents separated when I was eight. I started using at the age of 13. I always felt inadequate about my surroundings. I always loved to stay in my own little world. Shy, with poor self-esteem, was how one could define me at that time. I started drinking to fit in with the people around me who were also experimenting at that point. I couldn't drink like a gentleman and always believed I had to black out to escape reality. By the age of 14 I began to use amphetamines, and my whole world changed from there. I was no longer the shy boy that I was before.

I became a loud-mouthed kid; everyone noticed me and addressed my leadership skills. Eventually I became more aggressive and caused violence in school. I eventually got expelled from school. All those nights partying caught up with my head. I soon changed to using heroin in order to sleep at night. I would use heroin at night and amphetamines during the day. I was skinny and my family and friends were shocked to see the way I had turned out. By now I was on my way to the top, thanks to the new connections I had made. I had it all, power and money. I thought I was on top of the world.

At the age of 16, I went to a detox center and stayed for three weeks. I had fixed myself enough, and again went back to using. This pattern continued in my life for some time.

I was in and out of jail for the next two years. The doctors tried everything on me, but I kept going back to using. I couldn't stay clean. I soon became involved with the cartel, and that's when staying home got scary. Even my family wasn't safe now. The doctors planned to send me to Mumbai for treatment to do a seven-month program. I completed it and again went back to using. The nightmare of relapsing, with the shame and guilt, couldn't help me to stay clean.

One day, I saw that the drugs were no longer helping me and tried to overdose, and even that didn't work. I remember my father and the police tried to get me to help them, and they gave me drugs to do this. They wanted me to answer questions and tell them everything. I refused to do this and was blindfolded and led away. I thought they were going to kill me because that is what they usually did to those in my position. They would have shot us in the middle of nowhere in Bangladesh.

When the blindfold was taken off, I found myself in another treatment facility. This time I wasn't given any medication to help with the withdrawals. It was more like a correctional facility. I was delirious for the first four days. It took me three weeks to get into shape. I remember around the second week, I did something that I had never done before. I got down and prayed for the first time in my life. I prayed, "Dear God, whoever you are, please take these withdrawals away and I will find a new way to live. No false promises."

As each day passed, I felt better and better. I didn't know anything about the Twelve Steps, but I knew my way wasn't working. I saw the Steps written on the wall and paid no attention to them. Only in my third month there did a miracle happen. The treatment facility manager asked if I wanted to go to a convention. It was the first one in Bangladesh. I agreed to go with eleven men from that facility.

On day one at the convention, I saw people happy and eating. On day two, I saw them embracing each other with

hugs and being cheerful. I thought these people were definitely on something. It wasn't until the third day when they did the cleantime countdown that I realized people with 25 years were celebrating, and when the countdown got to me with three months, that this was the miracle. I had celebrated with them, and for the first time I didn't need anything. People hugged me like no one ever had before. They said to keep coming back. No one had ever told me that before, either. Those words gave me the hope and sense of belonging.

I said goodbye to everyone, and out of gratitude, was willing to go back to the treatment facility. I was given a new responsibility. I asked the manager for any NA literature. I read *It Works: How and Why*, as that was the only book we had available. Now it was time for action. I found an NA meeting outside in the community when I was released in Dhaka. I became an active member, got a sponsor, and got involved with service. I did meetings, Steps, and service. These are the steps I took in becoming a new me. I am proud today to say I have three years and eleven months. For those who are inside the walls, I have one thing to say: Your higher power has a plan for you. Trust and believe, and good things will happen. Work the Steps and the miracles will happen. Still living the dream, one day at a time.

AI, Bangladesh

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.



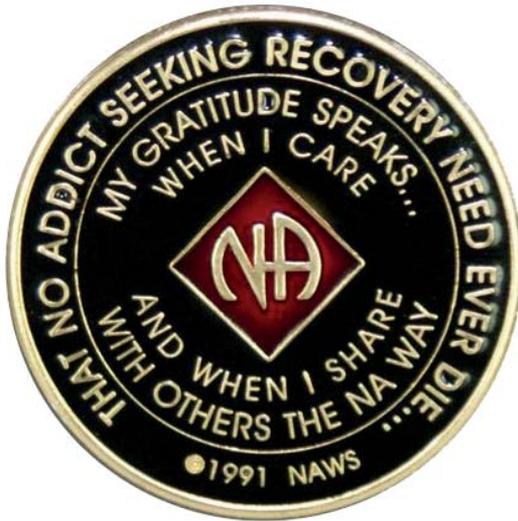
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

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 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 _____

Address _____

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*.