

Reaching Out



July 2018



Taken from Peru's First Conference and Convention 1992

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*“Recovery begins
with surrender.”*

Basic Text, Chapter Six, “We Do Recover”

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
October 2018	15 July 2018
January 2019	15 October 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 RC, and I am an addict. As a process of recovery for me, I thought Narcotics Anonymous was not something that I was interested in. I found myself incarcerated for my drug use and criminal behavior. I knew I was at my lowest point. I knew I had to change for me. I was sentenced to seven years for my crime, for my sixth trip to the penitentiary. I decided to challenge myself and make a difference.

I signed up for a substance abuse treatment program offered by the Department of Corrections with three and a half years left on my sentence. I was tired and needed to do my time differently. I went through the process and agreed to a program of abstinence. I thought to myself, "What have I gotten myself into?" getting up at 7:00 am, seven days a week. The only thing I usually got up for at that time was the dope man who was on his way to pass it out when I needed more.

I got up to go to this meeting, and in the room there were people just like me with similar situations. At the end of the meeting, a person said to keep coming back and more will be revealed to you. I found an NA packet on the table and took it back to my cell.

At first I just glanced at it, and then I set it down on my box. As it sat there, it was as if the pamphlet spoke to me, telling me to pick it up and read it. It was about acceptance and admitting that there was a problem. I was in denial even when I didn't know I was. I gave myself a chance. Things about being in active addiction became clearer to me. I stepped out on faith and started believing in a Higher Power greater than myself to restore me to sanity. It was all because of NA. I got a sponsor and joined the Fellowship.

Their stories have made me into the person I am today, and helped me realize that my view of addiction was a problem in my life. I have never stayed clean when I was not incarcerated. I always found something to get high on. Now I only get “high” on reading NA literature and other substance abuse recovery information. That is what keeps me going, one day at a time. I take my recovery seriously today because I have a chance to share my story. I have a chance to live again, because in my addiction I was dead. I just wanted to lie down and die.

I know that I am always going to be an addict, but I also know that it is just a title. Today I am a son, father, brother, and grandfather. Those are titles that classify me and make me feel accepted by those whom I have hurt in my addiction. Change is good. I believe and trust in my Higher Power, myself, and Narcotics Anonymous. The rest will follow.

RC, Illinois, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is GM, an addict incarcerated in the California prison system. I am relatively new to recovery, with a little over a year and a half of attending meetings so far. I have been clean over five years now. For years, being clean gave me the illusion that I didn't need Narcotics Anonymous. Like many addicts not yet in recovery, I thought I didn't need help and I had it under control. The first few weeks of attending meetings, I didn't participate or read the literature.

I've been down already 20 years, and I already knew this group therapy thing was not going to help me with anything. Boy, was I wrong. As I sat and listened to people share their personal experience, I began to see myself in them. I started seeing parts of me and why I started using. I started seeing the destructive patterns I had settled into reflected in the stories others would tell, and added my thoughts out loud to the conversation.

My whole world began to change. I started to read the Basic Text. I really contemplated the Steps and how to work them. Through my exposure to NA, I came to realize that recovery is far more than simple abstinence. This is a real life path that can bring peace and healing to the tortured soul. NA has given me a positive, supportive Fellowship where I was once alone. It has replaced my hopelessness and fear with the hope and courage to change.

I now know that I can stay clean, and it's not simply because there aren't any drugs in here but because I have a Higher Power and a worldwide Fellowship of addicts in recovery as a support system. I now share openly in meetings and help all I can with those who are just as lost as I was before finding the meetings of NA. Before, I was an addict mistaking a dry streak for the ability to control my disease. Now, thanks to NA and the sense of community I get from a Fellowship of addicts and the Twelve Steps, I am living my recovery one day at a time. I am becoming the man I was meant to be.

GM, California, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

Hello, my name is AF, and I am an addict. I am also a member of Narcotics Anonymous. At one point in my recovery, I had 18 months clean. It was the best year and a half of my entire life. I made friends who still stick with me to this day, and whom I love very much. As I sit here writing this, I am in the recovery program in a Florida jail by choice. It has been a life changer for me.

I got clean in 2013, and I went to a homeless shelter right out of jail. I went to a meeting every day for eight months straight. I shared at the meetings and eventually moved in with another recovering addict. I got a home group and a commitment. I got a sponsor and started working the Steps. I started to get my license back and even bought a car. I even stayed clean when my mom died when I had thirteen months clean. The friends I made in the

rooms and in the program were there for me. I started my own business — the guys in NA showed me how, and it was great. I had two guys who asked me to sponsor them.

I could not believe that a high school dropout with six felonies, who had been told his entire life that he was a loser and would never amount to anything, could be doing the great things I was doing. Then a woman broke up with me. Instead of sharing about thinking I wanted to get high, I let my pride and ego get in the way. I was so worried about what people would say about me that I ended up using. I lost everything in three months. I pushed away all the people who cared about me. I went to jail for stealing to support my habit. I did a year. When I got out, I kept comparing the last time I was clean to now, and so I was in and out of the rooms. At the end of this last run, I remember sleeping in my car, crying so bad and hoping for it all to end.

When I was arrested this time, I tried hard to get into a program. I took a look in the mirror in my cell and realized I was done. I signed for 18 months in prison and have four months left. I have this little charge I am waiting to take care of, and then I will go to prison. My court date got pushed back almost two months.

At first I was upset, but now I think it's the best thing that has happened to me. I'm not sure if it's a spiritual awakening, because I've never had one. I am beginning to see that maybe I was put here for a reason. I've been doing my Steps all over again and going over them with a friend in NA on the phone. We have all the books here to do my Steps, and for that I am grateful. I am focusing on me now, and wish all jails had this program. I am helping others who had no idea about this program. I plan to do service when I get out. I am not sure why I wrote this, but it was probably only to say thank you, and I hope this will help others to see that the program really does work. I am looking forward to being of service and helping others in and out of the jail system.

AF, Florida, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

I am an addict named MO. I am 47 years old and incarcerated for the first time. I was supposed to have court today, but it was canceled. I really enjoy reading the *Reaching Out* stories, so I thought I would write you and tell you mine. My main drug of choice was alcohol; however, that did not stop my addicted brain from using other things.

I get more out of Narcotics Anonymous than I do from any other program because I associate more with addicts. I was a magician since age twelve, so my work revolved around parties, bars, and restaurants. I got paid to party. "What a life!" I thought when I was in my twenties. How wrong I was. We all know how progressive addiction is, and I progressed right into jail, losing everything.

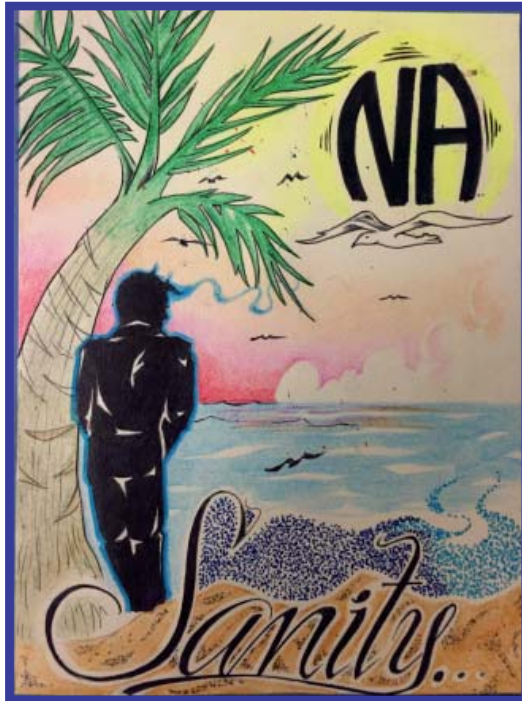
I suffer from chronic relapse. I would go one or two years clean, and then I would celebrate or something would happen in my life to give me an excuse to use. My last relapse wound up with me here in jail. I don't recommend it to anyone. Hopefully I will get time served and a rehab program. More should be done to help suffering addicts instead of sending them to prison, where more than likely they will get worse before better. Since my arrest a little over three months ago, I have stayed clean thanks to my Higher Power and the Basic Text. I know eventually the door will open and I can leave. I pray I will be able to change my life and stay clean. I want to help others. I know it is possible by using the program of Narcotics Anonymous and not drugs.

MO, Connecticut, 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.



Source Unknown



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

I am an addict named Oscar. I came to NA in 2009 after serving time since 2006. I knew I couldn't use without going back to prison. I was scared and didn't know how to live normally. All I knew was how to use. I had two strikes, and I already knew it felt scary fighting life. Not knowing if I would ever get out was the lowest part of my life.

I joined NA because a friend told me about it. Due to his recovery, I believed him very much and I wanted what he had. After my first meeting, I was confused. However, I was convinced enough that I stayed. It's been nine years, and my recovery isn't perfect. I couldn't get a job, and I went to college. I thought one day, "When am I going to mess up and go to jail?" I had so much child support I owed. I had lost contact with my daughter because of my addiction and time in jail.

I started college in December of 2009 and finished my BA in human development and am currently working on my master's, then will go for my PhD. Once we recover, the sky's the limit. We regenerate that dedication, that loyalty, that passion, and that insanity to something positive. We become accepted in society with extras that make us employable now. Today, I am not afraid to go to interviews or try for jobs I thought I could never get. I can quit a job I am not comfortable with and get a new one. If I am not able to get employed, I can go to school and educate myself. NA is my foundation. Staying in meetings is a must for me; without them, I can't do it myself. I have a sponsor and work the Steps. If I move or relocate, I stay in meetings and find a new sponsor when I feel comfortable with someone. I read literature and apply the program in my life. The NA program can save

your life. It saved mine, and it helped me stay out of prison. Today, the struggles are overcome with just attending meetings and practicing my Eleventh and Twelfth Steps. Today, I let God guide me and I let God's will be done, not mine.

OC, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

Hi, my brothers and sisters. What a topic to share experience, strength, and hope. I'm an addict and my name is TB. I've been in and out of the system, as we call it, since 1994. I never thought my life was going to bring me back to jails, institutions, and possibly death, but it did as a result of this disease we call addiction. I thought I only had a drug problem, but it says in the Basic Text that our disease goes much deeper than the level of drugs we took. It also says that our inability to control our drug using was a symptom, but not the problem. Until the day came that I had to do another sentence, I had to make a hard choice: whether to live or to die as an addict.

On 18 July 2011, I made the choice that changed my life. I surrendered, not knowing what life had planned for me. A Higher Power I choose to call God knew. My sentence was handed to me: one year and two months in a work-release facility, then find a job, pay fees, and live by rules and regulations again. One thing we have in our favor, brothers and sisters, is that NA provides us with an H&I panel of two people who come every Wednesday. That was my strength to keep stepping forward. As a result, my life would get better. That's not to say that a year and two months wasn't going to be a challenge; it was.

The day was getting closer when I was going to have to assume responsibility for my life again. That was the most feared day of my life. Well, that day came in September 2012. I had a hard time reaching out to turn the knob on the door that day. No probation, no parole, and no authority figure to answer to that was going to keep me in the system again. So I walked out of that facility,

praying the whole time, asking God to walk with me. I needed a strength other than the human strength I could muster up. I went to an NA meeting that day and have been going ever since. The Basic Text says we must smash the illusion that we can do this alone. If we could do this alone, I wouldn't be sitting here right now sharing my experience, strength, and hope. What we do together, we find impossible to do alone. Today, I keep my recovery as my top priority. Without recovery, we don't stand a chance to transition back into the real world. Today, we have a choice. Today, I choose to live another day clean. I choose to be of service to my brothers and sisters. Thank you, NA, for giving me another chance at life with God and the Twelve Steps. NA, I owe you one.

In Selfless Service, TB, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

It's been nearly 30 years since my fifth, and last DUI. I spent twentytwo and a half years of a life sentence in the penitentiary as a result of that DUI. I've been out for nearly eight years now and have continued to maintain my original clean date of 21 May 1988. Mostly easy, sometimes not so much. I'm just another flawed human trying to get by the best way I can.

All of the Steps, Traditions, sponsors, service, etc., in and of themselves have not kept me clean for one second. However, they have been the "signposts," pointing the way for me to develop the necessary relationship with a Higher Power that has freed me from the addictions of my past.

PD, 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. HandI@na.org





Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

This is my experience with transitioning from four years in a federal prison. I spent four months in a halfway house, and then I went to transitional housing. What I did was go to meetings immediately after my 72-hour lockdown in the halfway house. During the day, while looking for a job, I would go to a meeting once I let my case manager know what I wanted to do.

I got a network of friends who helped me and who let me know I didn't have to use, even if I wanted to. I learned how to pray. I was given a sponsor. I was told to stay away from people, places, and things that could and would set me back if I allowed them to do so. My bottom told me I just didn't want to come home and live the way I was before going in. I asked for help to get into a transitional house once my time in the halfway house was up; a day at a time works for me. My clean date is 26 August 2004, the last day I used any mind- or mood-altering substances. I was released from prison to the halfway house on 17 September 2007 and released from the halfway house to transitional housing on 28 January 2008. I had five years of probation and was released from it in four years—all due to the God of my understanding and this awesome program of NA. On 26 August 2018, I will have 14 years of clean time. This has been the best 14 years of my life, living and enjoying life without the use of drugs. I know now that if I don't use, I won't sell drugs and I won't go to jail. Thank you for letting me share how I continue to stay on the outside, free and clean.

PR, 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.



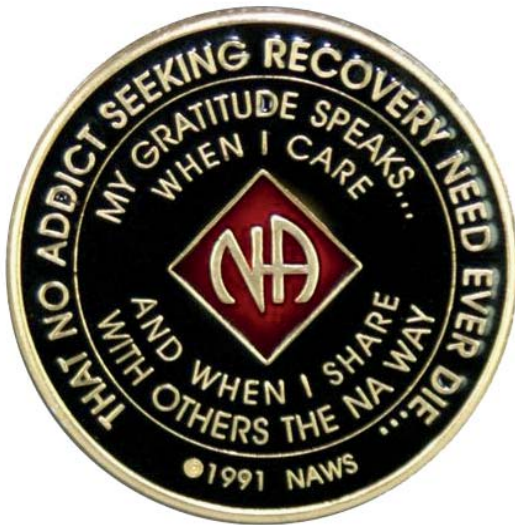
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

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* @ \$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*.