

Self-support, Entry #1 of 3

When we see that we can meet our own needs, we start to feel like we have a future (*Guiding Principles*, Tradition Seven, Opening Meditation).

Active addiction was a dead-end circuit of dependence: our reliance on dope, on the lifestyle, on that person to front us some cash one last time so we could get on our feet. We took without giving. We talked without listening. We made a lot of promises but came through on very few, if any, of them. We couldn't see a way out or a future for ourselves—until we got clean and began our journey toward self-support in recovery.

When we consider self-support as a spiritual principle of Tradition Seven, we think mostly of giving money—or contributing our time—to make sure a group can survive. But an NA group exists because it's made up of members who are practicing self-support in their own lives. In recovery, we learn to invest in ourselves and take care of our own needs. Instead of utter dependence on others, we look inside to find a well of strength and resources. We take personal responsibility in situations where before it seemed that we were incapable of doing so. In fact, making our contributions to NA demonstrates our capacity and willingness to engage in self-support. We are investing in ourselves through our recovery community, participating in keeping the doors open for those who come after. This support of others keeps us aloft, keeps us going.

Self-support isn't something we practice alone. When we talk about taking care of our own needs, that doesn't mean we're self-sufficient. It means that we're engaging the support we need. We can turn to our friends, a sponsor, our Higher Power—all of which are elements of self-support. We are an integral part of that system, too. Because we're meeting our own needs, others can finally rely on us.

I will practice self-support today by giving and receiving. If I stay on this path, I'll sustain the hope for a future I thought I'd never have.

Self-support, Entry #2 of 3

When we are willing to stand for our own dreams and beliefs, we are practicing a deeper kind of self-support (*Living Clean*, Chapter 6, “Finding Our Place in the World”).

Addicts are often viewed or portrayed as loners and rebels, which is an image many of us were (or still are) quite comfortable with. Even so, many of us have a difficult time genuinely standing up for what we believe or following our aspirations, no matter how ambitious.

“My whole family used, and I let that stop me from getting clean more than once,” a member wrote. “I didn’t want them to think I was abandoning them or that I thought I was better than them. But I couldn’t live that way anymore.”

Changing our lives is scary enough already, even without the additional burden of having loved ones who don’t share our interests or goals. Not everyone we used with wants recovery, but many people still respect our needs and boundaries when we get clean. We may grow apart from some people, but those who care about us want us to follow our own path.

We may feel a similar sense of hesitation about pursuing interests in recovery. We don’t want to abandon our friends. “When I had a couple years clean,” one member shared, “I was the youngest person in my NA crew. I wanted to take college classes, but I thought I’d be ditching my people. My sponsor told me it was okay—he got the prison experience for me, now I could go get the college experience for him.”

We don’t have all of the time, energy, or money to do anything and everything we want. We can’t be in two (or more!) places at once. Practicing self-support means taking responsibility for the choice of how we use our limited resources.

People who truly love me want me to follow my dreams. I will honor my loving relationships by choosing to stand tall in my own choices.

Self-support, Entry #3 of 3

Belief in self-support is a massive leap of faith. We commit to the idea that we will be enough (*Guiding Principles*, Tradition Seven, Opening Meditation).

For many of us, a belief in our own inadequacy was a constant undercurrent in our lives before NA. We did our best to keep it hidden by putting on a brave front. Behind our masks, thoughts that we were not enough still plagued us. This idea that we lacked sufficient ability, power, or means follows a lot of us into recovery. Although we'd stopped using, we still felt incapable of dealing with life.

We can start to rebuild our self-image by embracing a practical application of humility; we commit to seeing ourselves as part of humanity, no better or worse than the rest of it. With time and effort put into Stepwork, we get a more accurate picture of who we are. We warm up to the idea that we will *have* and will *do* enough, and even that we *are* enough.

When self-support seems like too big of a stretch, we entrust our support system to help us make that leap. We pay attention to the experience of our fellows and emulate their commitment to self-determination. We lean into acceptance and faith as we figure out what the next right thing might look like. Our collective experience tells us that action is the key to moving an idea from our heads to our hearts. So, what actions align with self-support?

When we are present, plugged in, and ready, we can step through doors as they open, find the right words to match the situation, and otherwise take leaps of faith that we weren't sure we had in us. One member's experience speaks to such a moment: "My mom was paying my rent for my first year clean, but she would also always come around and tell me I wasn't keeping the place clean enough, or that I needed to do something different with my hair. The idea of saying 'no' to her support was scary; the freedom that came with it was a big step toward believing in myself... maybe for the first time in my life."

How can I stretch towards self-support today? What conversations might inspire me to take that leap of faith or prepare me for opportunities on my horizon?