Consistency, Entry 1 of 3

. . . [A] group needs the consistent commitment of its members to show up and take part in its meetings. Upon that commitment rests the group’s stability; without it, no group can survive long.

— It Works, Tradition Seven

Consistency is a key part of the messages we first receive in NA. Keep coming back. 90 meetings in 90 days. Meeting makers make it. It’s suggested that we find a home group—and join that group, not merely visit it. We’re encouraged to get a service commitment there—and to show up for that commitment.

When we lack consistency in our groups, when we’re not kept informed by our service body reps, when we don’t provide the human or financial resources needed to carry out our requests, our groups and services aren’t as strong. NA suffers as a result, and opportunities to help newcomers potentially are missed.

The direct impact of our consistency may occur beyond the walls of a meeting. Many of us live in densely populated areas with plenty of groups to participate in. Many other NA communities are limited: only a few meetings, sometimes days and considerable distance apart—and perhaps too few members to fill service positions. Many groups thrive for decades, never dark for any reason; others burn bright, then falter; others struggle to stay afloat week by week. At times, it’s a real misfortune to lose a group. Other times, a loss blooms into a new opportunity.

There are way too many home-group scenarios to describe here, but one thing we know is true: it takes reliable and committed NA members to turn and keep the lights on at any meeting, service committee, or NA event. And it’s no exaggeration to say that being consistent saves addicts’ lives, including our own. To carry the message of recovery and to conduct necessary NA business, we need to show up with our time, funds, skills, and willingness. We take on tasks of all sizes and shapes, and, in the spirit of rotation, we mentor others to step up.

How willing am I to take more responsibility to keep my group more stable? In the spirit of rotation, can I also guide others to step up, creating opportunities for them to practice consistency?
Consistency, Entry 2 of 3

In the Tenth Step, we use all the principles and actions we learned in the previous steps, applying them to our lives on a consistent basis.

—It Works, Step Ten

Left unexamined, fear and resentment can bring out the worst in us. Character defects we’d once honed into survival skills stand ready to “help.” It’s no surprise that they spring to mind first when we’re faced with a challenge. We’ve relied on manipulation, self-pity, intolerance, dishonesty, perfectionism, arrogance, and the rest for as long as we can remember. But now that we’re in recovery, it seems increasingly clear that they’re not such a good fit for our new lives.

The lessons of Steps Four through Nine help us see those crusty old tools in a new light. We’ve become deeply familiar with the damage we caused in the past, have surrendered aspects of our character that shaped hurtful words and actions, and have humbly gone about owning our messes and cleaning them up. Understanding how we’ve operated in the past sets us up for a better way, but it will take consistent effort for our new ways to become second nature.

Step Ten gets us in the habit of viewing our lives through the lens of the Steps. Consistent practice helps us integrate their principles into our lives. Here’s one member’s experience with doing just that: “My regular inventories read like letters to my Higher Power. They begin with ‘Dear HP’—my reminder that I’m not alone in this process. Then I jot down the fears and resentments that are popping off, the defects that are calling me, and the spiritual principles I need to keep handy instead. I end with ‘I am ready for you to remove my shortcomings and clear the way for my loving service.’”

There are many ways to practice Step Ten, of course. How we go about it is far less important than the fact that we do! Reflecting on our progress helps us integrate the principles into our lives and live consistently by our values.

Does my habit of self-reflection encourage consistency between my beliefs and behavior? How can I integrate the Steps and their principles into my practice of Step Ten?
Consistency, Entry 3 of 3

When we attend meetings regularly, people get to know us and see us over time.
—Living Clean, Chapter 2, “Connection to Others”

The principle of consistency offers great benefits at any phase in our recovery, even though how it might look in practice evolves over time. Early on, consistency tends to mean a meeting a day for the first 90 days, as our Basic Text suggests. A likely outcome of completing a “90 in 90” challenge is knowing and being known by quite a few other NA members. Making ourselves visible in this way exposes our disease to people who see it for what it is. The compassion, concern, and care we receive from other members is a vital part of knowing that we are not alone, especially in early recovery. Consistency allows people to know and care for us, and it can save our lives.

The value of practicing consistency changes the longer we’re around. Our lives improve, and we are able to practice consistency in other areas: NA service, family relationships, friendships, and any other place we go. Those of us who were able to show up physically for our family and friends find, over time, that we are able to be more fully present in the spaces we inhabit. “I used to just send someone who looked like me,” one speaker recalled. “My family got a person with my face, my eyes, my smile. But behind all that was empty. Showing up for real in NA taught me how to bring the real me to other places I go. I’m not sending the imposter anymore.”

The magic of consistency in NA goes beyond just showing up. Simply dragging our body to meetings on a regular basis, whether that’s daily or slightly less regular, wouldn’t be enough on its own. Something special happens in our meetings, though—we see and recognize each other beyond the surface level. We hear others share and we relate; we share with others and tell on our disease. Consistency helps keep us from going back into hiding, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Our recovery depends on it.

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Simply having my butt in a seat at a meeting won’t keep me clean or magically make me recover. But it’s a damn good place to start!