Reliability, Entry #1 of 3

We make a commitment to our home group, and if we are absent for some reason, we will be missed.

—IP #2: The Group, “Home Group”

When we were using, reliability was as rare as hens’ teeth. We showed up when it was convenient, and only if we were getting something out of it. We might have made it home for the holidays but stayed just long enough to get gifts that we could return for cash. We might reliably show up to work, but mostly to swipe cash from the till or take our patients’ meds. The gratification of spending time with family or giving an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay was lost on us.

It didn’t take much cleantime to figure out that this way of doing things wouldn’t serve us well in recovery. The idea that we could live clean and enjoy stable, happy lives inspired us. We understood that reliability would be an important part of becoming a responsible, productive member of society.

For many of us, becoming reliable starts with finding a home group, accepting our first commitment, and then doing our best—as one member put it—“to live up to the trust placed in me. My sponsor told me that reliability precedes trust. As suggested, I learned to show up and do what I said I’d do.” By keeping our word, we practiced the essence of reliability and built a foundation for integrity.

Our reliability makes us a real asset as home group members. Beyond any particular duties we perform, home group members steady the atmosphere of recovery. We think of some members as “fixtures” at particular meetings—the same people, often in the same seats, week after week—and, in time, we become them. “It’s okay to take us for granted—that’s what we’re here for,” one home group member explained. “We’re like candles you keep on hand just in case. We’re here to produce some light if needed or to set the mood.”

I will be true to my word today. I will show up and do what’s expected of me at home, at work, in the community, and in meetings.
Reliability, Entry 2 of 3

We grow to be steady, reliable, loving people who can be a force for change in the lives of other addicts and beyond.

—Living Clean, Chapter 5: Relationships

For active addicts, unreliability is likely a near-universal character defect. When we did manage to be physically present for the family, for work, or for other commitments, we reliably brought chaos. With our lack of follow-through, our dishonesty, our untrustworthiness, and our instability, who really wanted us around when we did show up?

Recovery in NA is a reliability game-changer. We show up to meetings regularly—and participate. We take on service commitments—and fulfill them. We communicate with our sponsor and other addicts—and we pick up the phone or return a message when someone reaches out to us. Through our stepwork, we gain some reliability skills that help us go beyond being consistent and doing our part. Others can depend on us emotionally. We’re more reflective and self-aware, apt to practice gratitude, and quicker to forgive. We’re more available in terms of time and our spirit, bringing our whole selves to our relationships. We listen. “I have started to feel, even at my age—which is not young!—finally like one of the adults in the room,” a member commented. “People rely on me for the first time in my life. Members seek my help, and I’ll willingly give it.”

Put simply, when reliability shapes our actions, our relationships transform. When we’re present and available in our encounters with NA members and others in our lives, people begin to trust us. They take our expressions of love and kindness with more than a grain of salt, because we take actions now to back them up. We are works in progress, and we reliably allow others to be, too. Leading a spiritual life has ceased to be a theory we hear about in meetings; it is now becoming our own tangible reality—and we may even inspire others in the process.

Learning to be reliable has helped me become a force for change. I will honor the person I’m becoming by showing up wholly and humbly. I’m here today for others.
Reliability, Entry 3 of 3

*We keep our commitments, and that matters to the people around us.*

— *Guiding Principles*, Tradition One, “For Groups”

For some of us, being a member of an NA group gives us our first taste of what it feels like to be reliable. When we are new, members urge us to come to the next meeting and come back clean. Group members remember us, seem happy to see us, ask us to share or take a commitment. We keep coming back—and whether we like it or not, people begin to rely on us. “I was excited to be trusted by group members to carry on the work,” a member shared. “My end of the bargain was to do the work and serve the entire term.”

Even when we don’t complete our service as reliably as we would expect of ourselves, serving in NA helps us get better, especially because we start to see the value of our contributions. “Our group created some service positions for newer members to get them involved,” a group wrote. “When people miss the meeting, it’s not a big deal. All the tasks get done. But the meeting feels so much more complete when everyone is there, doing their part. It’s like music...you might not notice one or two voices missing from a choir, but when they’re all there, it just sounds so much better.”

Our families and friends might feel a little skeptical or surprised about our developing reliability. It’s discouraging when people don’t believe in us the way our fellow members do, but it’s our actions that matter. One member wrote, “I heard someone say that 90% of recovery is showing up—bring the body and the mind will follow. That helped me show up for my commitment, and I used it to help me be there for my family and my job, too. People started to count on me. I began to feel like I mattered.” Keeping our commitments changes the way people see us, but more importantly, it changes the way we see ourselves.

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*Reliability begins with showing up. I will show up for my life today, secure in the knowledge that I matter, to others and to myself.*