Solidarity, Entry 1 of 3

The safe environment of NA gave me the chance to face my own fear. ...The security and solidarity that I get from the program gave me room to breathe.

—Basic Text, “Coming Home”

We aren’t all strangers to experiences of solidarity before getting clean. Frequently, however, our safety was tied to keeping our mouths shut, a code of conduct that valued secrecy over good judgment. We’d have your back, alright, as long as that kept us safe and our behavior under wraps. We were constantly looking over our shoulders, barely breathing for fear of getting caught.

Coming to NA is, on some level, a rejection of our previous sense of security, an admission that we need help. Many of us are holding our breath when we enter the room of our first NA meeting. We fear we’ll see people we had used with, people we’d wronged, people that might out us as addicts outside the meeting. Immediately we see there’s the appearance of solidarity in meetings, but can we trust it? We are encouraged to share about our past, what’s going on with us today, and what we envision a new life to be. But when we are used to solidarity having so many variables, how do we know it’s stable and secure now?

In time, we breathe a sigh of relief, realizing we’ve made it home. A renewed consideration of solidarity may be to view NA as a group of survivors collectively fighting our disease, bonded by our recovery. We’re told that we don’t have to go through anything alone, and, as we witness that very thing happening among members, eventually we allow ourselves to become a part of it. We strive to overcome our fears of not fitting in, of being vulnerable and intimate with others, of being honest and open and still. Sometimes we’re successful in these attempts; other times not. But, make no mistake, we are in this together, striving to make NA a safer place for every addict seeking a place to belong.

As I continue to face my own fears, now in solidarity with my fellow NA members, I will make every effort to give others the same chance to breathe that I was given.
Solidarity, Entry 2 of 3

_There is a special feeling for addicts when they discover that there are other people who share their difficulties, past and present._

—Basic Text, Chapter 5: What Can I Do?

Many of us experienced a sense of solidarity with our druggy buddies early in our using careers. We found camaraderie as we conspired on our next score, caper, or conquest. We entrusted at least some of our secrets with a select few, and they counted on us to hold our mud. There were limits to our loyalty, however. In time, we’d betray them, or they’d betray us.

The romanticized version of our stories often focus on those magic moments of solidarity with our running partners. If we follow the storyline of these relationships through to their collapse, we might mistakenly conclude that those kinds of bonds are a thing of the past or that we’re still incapable of sustaining solidarity with our mates. This adds to our sense of isolation and alienation, making us vulnerable to unhelpful self-talk that can create a wedge between us and our clean new friends. Once we recognize that recovery changes everything about our capacity for connection, we’re able to take a stand against that negative chatter. Our previous sense of solidarity centered around drug use. Now, solidarity springs from honest sharing and empathy, and the occasional caper, conquest, or war story.

In one member’s experience, “I came in feeling like I didn’t belong, that I was so uniquely troubled. Then I heard the stories and realized I’d found my people.” Solidarity is the spiritual opposite of isolation and self-centeredness. Although our circumstances, interests, and ambitions vary wildly, we connect emotionally and spiritually and stand by one another. We all have dreams and struggles, experience joy and sorrow, want to be happy and forgiven, to love and be loved. And we don’t have to experience any of it alone. Over the years, countless sponsors have offered this assurance: “I can’t fix your problems, but you won’t have to face them alone.” And, really, what more could we ask for?

_To build solidarity with my fellow members, I will share my struggles with someone who can help or someone who might need help._
Solidarity, Entry 3 of 3

An NA group reinforces the solidarity of its members and the foundation of their continued recovery by declining outside contributions.

—It Works, Tradition Seven

One way to define solidarity is standing together with others. The Seventh Tradition explains that one of the ways we do this is by taking care of NA together, in our own way. Declining outside contributions is bold—it means that we rely on each other to step up and take responsibility for NA. The vitality of our groups and service bodies fully depends on the resources we contribute.

The bonds we share with other recovering addicts are unique; we have addiction and recovery in common, and yet sometimes we have very little else that connects us. Still, we are joined together in solidarity through the NA program. We don’t recover alone, and every one of us received the message of recovery as a result of what other addicts gave to NA before we showed up. Practicing solidarity in NA is not just a feeling of commitment to our own group or local services. We stand in solidarity with those who aren’t here yet—we stand for still-suffering addicts everywhere—when we take action to make sure they have a chance to experience our message in their own language and culture, just as we have.

In our groups, that means doing what we can to ensure the meetings remain open to anyone with a desire to stop using. Solidarity with our local service bodies means we support the efforts to ensure that local addicts can find NA. We practice solidarity with NA beyond our community by paying attention to the services that make our message more widely available, and by contributing what we can to help fulfill the needs of all our services.

NA is here to ensure that the message is available to anyone seeking recovery, around the corner or around the world. I will practice solidarity with still-suffering addicts by sharing what I can.