

# WEST VALLEY NA MESSENGER

The “No Matter What” Edition

July 2020

## An Announcement About the West Valley NA Messenger

This will be almost the last edition of the *West Valley NA Messenger*. Starting in August or September, the tri-city areas, Phoenix, East Valley and West Valley, will team up to write a newsletter that covers the entire valley.

We feel this is a better use of our service resources. I’ve enjoyed this commitment and will continue to be involved; however, there will be a new editor and a new look.

You can still contribute and view the new editions on the NA regional website. To those of you who wrote, read and supported this endeavor, thank you! It’s been a blast, like all my service in NA.

Watch the regional website for the new publication in August or September.

Yours in service, Nancy G.

## The Twelve Steps of NA

### Step Seven: We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

I don’t know how your sponsor worked Step Seven with you, but my first sponsor left me in a bit of a lurch. “Old school,” our sponsors would often do Steps Six and Seven immediately after we did our Fifth Step. They would write down our revelations from our Fifth step as the guide to define our character defects. It would offer some relief and a guide to move forward to Step Eight.

After I’d done my fifth step with her (long before the *Step Working Guide*), we parted ways and I didn’t hear from her much after that. She had gone off to the other Fellowship and I was stuck with myself after Step Five.

When my sponsor didn’t offer a path forward after my first Fifth Step, I was lost. I soon found another sponsor (who incidentally had only six months more time than me) who helped me restart my steps and guided me in my first two years of recovery.

With the emergence of several written step guides, which members circulated before NA World Services published the *Step Working Guide*, we began to take time between Steps Five and Six and Seven.

Today we are fortunate to have an abundance of written literature on the steps and a *Step Working Guide*, as well.

How do we work Step Seven? Before asking to have these defects removed that we discovered in Step Six, we may want to imagine what our lives would look like without them. If we’re acting out in anger, how would our lives improve if we could begin *responding* instead of *reacting*?

Some sponsors insist we make a list of our character defects. One gal, now gone to that big meeting in the sky, used to make her sponsees list 100 defects, and wouldn’t accept a shorter list. That would not have worked well for me. My rebellious nature would have said, “Oh, hell, no!”

I keep it simple. I know that fear is the root of my defects. When I get angry, I’m usually afraid of something – losing money, fear for my physical safety, or any number of ways that fear manifests itself in my actions. If I can uncover and manage my fears, usually I can manage my reactions.

What if we’re still struggling with our belief in a Higher Power? What if we are atheist? Where do we turn to ask for help? Step Seven can be problematic for atheists and agnostics. Groups that offer insight to agnostics and atheists suggest we work on developing our assets. Our assets are often the opposite of our character defects.

For example, what is the opposite of fear? Faith, perhaps? The opposite of anger may be serenity. So if, when we struggle with our defects, we can begin to act contrary to that defect, we can work Step Seven with the humility it requires. (Did your sponsor ever tell you in early recovery to “do the opposite of what you’re thinking?” If so, you get the idea.)

I’m certainly no genius, but I am a person who overanalyzes things. When I behave badly, I’ve stopped asking myself “why am I wrapped that way?” I simply resolve to do better tomorrow. (And make amends when I owe them as Step Eight recommends.)

Step Seven allows me to reset to actions that improve my self-esteem, not tear it down. I came here beating myself up for what a terrible person I was. I was told, “Put down the stick.”

Today, I try to build myself up by taking positive actions in the face of negative feelings.

Nancy G.

## Guiding Principles

### The Spirit of Our Traditions

#### **Tradition Seven: Every NA group should be self-supporting, declining outside contributions.**

*This month, I'm pleased to print this piece from Tom M. of Hawaii. He discusses a historical view of NA finances and the importance of supporting NA World Services in this difficult time.*

Hello everyone, this pandemic and the effect on our economy has got me thinking. As some of us are aware our fellowship services has been hit hard. With no face to face meetings and the switch to virtual meetings there has been very little income to support our services structure.

Back in 1985 I wrote a piece about our seventh tradition when I was on the board of trustees. That's when the trustees were supposed to be the custodians of our traditions. Each of us were supposed to write articles on the traditions, in some cases they became Trustee bulletins. My piece never reached that level. But some of the things I wrote about are pertinent today. It was a sort of a dire warning of our future if we continued down the path we were on.

Most of us know our history and its humble beginnings, our slow growth from the 50's to the late 70's. A time when no one believed in us or trusted us, a time we had no money to do anything. There was so much to do to help grow our fellowship, but no money and no organized structure to plan or deliver the services that were so needed.

As we started to grow, money started to trickle in through the basket and we had what we called a fund flow that was supposed to work its way through the service structure. Of course, our needs were greater than what was being contributed in the basket.

Then the *Basic Text* was published, and we started to see real money coming in. We had conventions that generated huge profits and all sorts of fundraisers at the area and regional levels. All this was in timing with society opening to the fact that there was a big drug problem. Addiction was now seen as a treatable disease and as a result insurance companies began paying for treatment and treatment centers were opening all over the world. Our small fellowship was being flooded with newcomers. It was a great and exciting time.

We had developed from a North American fellowship to a worldwide fellowship in record time. Fellowship development and translations were a top priority. The

need for more recovery material and fellowship services was being met. Our humble beginnings and the service commitments of thousands of members from around the world created what we have today.

The piece I wrote was a warning that we were heading down a perilous path. We had become dependent on funds generated by our literature sales and our events. It was a natural development and no doubt it had offered us the ability to expand as fast as we did. But the price was our dependence and our move away from our responsibility to be self-supporting through our own contributions. The concept of the seventh tradition is simple: We reach in our pockets and pay for what we want. We support what we created to serve our fellowship and carry the message to the still suffering addict.

One of the biggest thorns in the side of our fellowship has been the affordability of our literature. We created services at the WSC and the WSO that are dependent on literature sales. We voted on projects and essential services with budgets that only the literature sale can meet.

Within our own fellowship we fight over protecting our fellowships intellectual property. I believe in part this is one of the side effects of this dependence. There might be a bright side to this worldwide pandemic, to quote: "Sometimes God will do for us what cannot do for ourselves."

The world is changing in ways we have yet to see, and that includes our NA world and it includes our World Services and our World Service office. Literature orders are barely trickling in, half the staff has been furloughed and more cuts will be coming as the funds are depleted. This means the many translation projects will be put on hold indefinitely.

Hundreds of H&I correspondence emails and letters pile up unanswered. (I know of one staff member who is being paid half time that put in 12 straight hours answering them) I could go on and on the impact it is having on our fellowship.

So, what is my point? I think this is an opportunity to take back and fulfill our responsibility to be truly self-supporting through our own contributions. To take control of the purse strings of our fellowship, produce our literature at cost and do what we are capable of doing. To date our direct contributions have ranged from 9 to 11 percent of our budgets, and most of that has come from the profits from large regional conventions.

I did some simple math. If I have \$20.00 USD taken out of my checking account, credit card or PayPal each

month, \$240.00 a year and if 50,000 members were to do the same that would generate \$12 million, or whatever one felt they could contribute on a monthly basis, it would be enough money to fund our world services and produce our literature at cost.

The reason I think it is important to do this as an automatic contribution each month rather than one-time contribution is it will help to give stability to our world services.

After all has been said and done, there is usually more said than done. This is what I am doing, and I hope others will follow. Please feel free to share this if you believe what I am saying is true.

Tom M., Hawaii

Interested in contributing to NA World Services? Visit the following link.

<https://www.na.org/?ID=contribute-now>

### The Concepts for NA Service

**Seventh Concept:** *All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in the decision-making process.*

We work together in Narcotics Anonymous. Decisions are not made by a single individual, but rather we function as a whole through group conscience. All service positions are created so that they function as a democracy rather than a dictatorship. It is by upholding the standard set forth by the 7th Concept in "*The 12 Concepts for NA Service*" that our organization has survived for so long. If you haven't read this part of our literature yet, I would strongly suggest it.

Narcotics Anonymous is a unified front because it makes sense. In my addiction I worked alone because my addiction wanted it that way. I would make decisions alone, never asking for help because I thought I always had the right answer, just ask my addiction duh...wrong!

Letting my addiction guide my thoughts and actions was an ill-informed choice, and I suffered the consequences for my isolation of thought. Now in Narcotics Anonymous, I listen to others, and I no longer suffer. It is with our voices all together that we keep addiction at bay. I believe other addicts would find honesty in those words. Alone we flail. Together we flourish.

It is imperative that we stick together in Narcotics Anonymous, and that we take part in service because all our voices do matter in our decisions. I know from personal experience that if I disregard those voices of love, like those we find in Narcotics Anonymous, I will slide easily and disastrously back into my addiction.

It is our duty as NA members to speak up when the group conscience is not being followed because we work together to continue to help the sick and suffering addict. We have found a group of individuals in NA that only wants the best for us in recovery, so we must all work together to ensure that we continue to support all addicts. We do this by being of service and speaking up when we are worried that group conscience is being lost.

Remember, together we flourish. Alone our only options are jails, institutions and death.

Stephanie B.

**Want to be of service? In this difficult time, the NA helpline is a simple yet effective way of one addict helping another.**

**Just a reminder: Our phonenumber is a "helpline," not a "hotline." A hotline would be a suicide or domestic violence hotline, for example, where you can call for immediate help. Our helpline is different. We simply offer phone support, tell people where to find meetings, or simply help a suffering addict by sharing our experience, strength and hope.**

**It's important that we use the correct words when we describe our helpline.**

**Call the Helpline and join today!**

**602.325.4702**

### Clean-Time Chronicles

"Honesty is the most vulnerable man I have ever met. He is simple and loving." – J Ruth Gendler

Our *Basic Text* suggests, "There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery." I've heard this refrain read in our meetings ever since I was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous in 1988. That phrase struck me over 25 years ago and has been cause for reflection ever since. What exactly is, that "One thing more that will defeat us in our recovery"? Immediately following that phrase is a list of what I call the indispensables, commonly known as H.O.W. or honesty,

open-mindedness and willingness. After meditating on that question for years, I would like to suggest one of those things as dishonesty.

If you're reading this, I suspect I don't have to convince you concerning "dishonesty" as one of the significant tools of active addiction. I was, as the phrase goes, constitutionally incapable of being honest with myself. Being honest with others was virtually impossible. Being clean isn't an antidote for self-deception. Being clean only opens the door, making recovery possible. Clean time doesn't magically relieve us from our character flaws. Suffering from a spiritual disease can cause one to underestimate how deep the root of the problem can be.

Early in recovery, I was incredibly excited about this new way of life. I had a sponsor, attended meetings, worked steps and was faithful to my service commitments. Because I was clean, I felt I was doing okay. Being clean just for today is a successful day, right? Little did I realize my disease, or maybe it was just me, began to manifest in other areas of life. Back in the late '80s, before the age of political correctness, people would say things like, "Don't take my inventory."

So, you could understand how pissed off I was when another addict called my then-wife, telling her I was unfaithful with another woman. How dare her to take my "personal inventory!" It wasn't until my (righteous but ruthless friend) Mickey B. said, "No one can take your inventory if you're not wearing it all over your sleeve."

The truth of the matter was, had I not been living my life foul, there would be nothing to be said that could harm me. My inventory taker was only giving voice to what she saw me do. She was telling the truth (honesty) I was living a lie (dishonesty) by hiding from my then-wife what I was doing. Of course, I was devastated when I was presented with divorce. This is what I believe, in part, the phrase means concerning being "defeated in our recovery." There's a straight line between my not being honest and my feelings of defeat in recovery without the use of drugs. I was using diseased tactics while trying to maintain fundamental recovery.

I've seen it repeatedly, members executing dishonest means while trying to maintain a spirit of recovery. Then becoming thoroughly baffled, being dislocated from anything that resembles recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. This is what I call a blatant violation of, or being on the wrong side of the indispensables, the first of which is honesty. It's as if the following two indispensables need not be considered before the proper application of the first one, honesty.

There must be a distinction made between "using" and "being defeated in recovery without the use of drugs." One must be in recovery to apply the latter. Using, however, disqualifies most from any application of the

principles, especially honesty. In my case, using was akin to living a lie. Lying, deceit, manipulation and the like, are all a manifestation of my diseased thinking and behavior. When behaving this way, stretching the fabric of reality, usually reality snaps back with dire consequences. On the other hand, I'm learning when I live authentically, being transparent, vulnerable, and honest, I confirm the principles of honesty, and I have reality as an ally.

Honesty is a form of vulnerability that has allowed me to be my authentic self. Being married to the principle of honesty has created opportunities for me to be known. Consequently, others feel safe to be known by me. My relationship with my current wife, Cindy, is an example.

Being completely open, vulnerable and honest with her has created great depth in our relationship. It's easy when it is easy, and it is hard when it is hard.

Nevertheless, we have created great trust between us. We are confident that we really know each other, our real selves, not our fake representatives. Being honest has also created the freedom of not being concerned to be found out. It's like what you see is what you get, with all its flaws and imperfections.

The questions becomes, what does recovery in Narcotics Anonymous look like? Do I really believe in the principle of honesty? What does that mean? Is it a cash-register honesty or a profound abiding principle that liberates me from the bondage of my diseased thinking?

Are you feeling defeated in your recovery? The most likely culprit is the absence of living the principle of honesty. Honesty is the most vulnerable man I have ever met. He says, when you're truly vulnerable, you cannot be hurt.

Grace 2 U

Anthony C.

## Fellowship Events

**The ARCNA Committee has canceled the onsite ARCNA XXXIV for 2020.**

**We are resilient and resourceful, as we've shown by our rapid shift to online meetings.**

**Together, we'll get through these tough times. Here's to a better 2021**