

WEST VALLEY NA MESSENGER

The “No Matter What” Edition

June 2020

A General Announcement About Meetings



As we enter another month of quarantine, we are beginning to return, cautiously, to our lives. We should thank the regional public relations effort that quickly adapted many of our meetings to an online format. Our phonline volunteers stepped up to increased call and we owe our trusted servants who made our Zoom account and website redesign happen a big thank you.

Watch the NA Arizona Narcotics Anonymous Facebook page and the regional website for updates about committee meetings and other events. Online meetings are available, and each home group will decide what to do moving forward.

This is a time of a lot of stress in both our personal lives and in our nation. It's possible that these stressors can affect our meetings.

When negative events occur in meetings, something rarely experienced by our groups, our trusted servants may have never faced a similar situation and may be unsure how to handle it. Your area's leaders can assist. Here's is another resource published by NAWS that can also supply some clear direction.

Titled *Disruptive & Violent Behavior*, this is not conference approved. Therefore, this pamphlet should not be in your literature racks. It's a great resource, however, for your meeting's trusted servants should you experience disruptive behaviors.

https://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/servicemat/2012Jun_Disruptive&Violent_Behavior.pdf

Remember that members who have been around awhile often have a lot of experience and can offer insight and guidance, as can NA World Services. Reach out to your area representatives, and your sponsor, if your group needs help.

The Twelve Steps of NA

Step Six: We were entirely ready to have God remove all of these character defects.

This month, we have an entry from Australia. One of the many benefits of online meetings.

Hi Arizona! My name is Tony, and I am definitely an addict. I live in the seaside village of Portarlington about an hour outside of Melbourne in Australia. I have been around recovery for 35 years but clean for 27, and I've been asked to talk about step 6 for y'all. Reverting to spiritual principles: in Step 4 I had to find the honesty to make a catalogue of the people places and things that had caused me grief.

With Step 5, I needed the open-mindedness to hear my sponsor mirror to me the exact nature of my wrongs, and the enormous contribution I had made to the things that I had found difficulty with; what the green and gold book calls “basic human traits that have been distorted out of proportion by our self-centeredness, causing enormous pain to us and those around us.”

And now: Step Six, the AHA! process where I needed the willingness to be ready to let go of the defects of character that Step Five had showed me. I have five kids by four different women, three of whom I was married to (so, a common or garden addict), I was present at all of their births and the walking-on-air feeling I got at those five miracles was equaled by the liberation I felt at the conjunction of steps five and six – for three days I was so excited to at last know *what made Tony run* and where I needed God's help to *change my ways*.

Was I entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character? You bloody betcha! And now I knew where I needed to change my behaviours. In step three I had surrendered to God my will and my life -where I lived, where I worked, who was in my life (though it took me about 10 years to get this one right, to experience the true freedom that having God at your back all the time confers) and now in step six, I now surrender to God all my defects of character. It's that simple in theory, just a little harder in practice.

It's really important at this stage to remember that progress not perfection is a Narcotics Anonymous foundation motto. It would be a self-sabotaging perfectionism to expect *all* these defects to be removed, it's the *readiness* this Step is about. Step seven is about removal, and God provided me with opportunities to *practice the opposite* of my defects, one at a time, almost miraculously when I transitioned to that step.

I rather glibly referred to the AHA! process earlier, but truly for me, step six was all about this wake up experience - by gosh! that's why I did that. Revealed in step five, now internalised as a gentle self-understanding in six, and kinda knowing which direction to take to leave that particular quirk of character behind when God assists their removal in seven.

Page 63 of *It Works: How and Why* says, "As we work step six, bridging the vast gulf that lies between fear and courage requires a great deal of willingness and trust on our part." I know my HP (that I call Hughie) blessed me with those step five insights to my humanity, and the weird coping strategies my inner child and incipient addict had fashioned so that ordinary instincts had not manifested too well! It truly was a process as those understandings settled into my new reality, my conscious and subconscious minds finding a new accommodation over a few days, and it felt good.

As I've already said, my steps five and six Conjunction Experience was really a brilliant one for me. Not everybody gets this I know, but I was a lucky one. You can be too. Do a good fifth step with your sponsor and God, and you will come face to face with yourself; and in step six embrace that self-knowledge happily and be ready to change.

In conclusion, I love this program. It makes life so worth living; my proudest achievement is that those five kids know Dad loves them, and he knows that they love him.

Guiding Principles The Spirit of Our Traditions

Tradition Six: An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

The 6th Tradition is very much about setting boundaries to protect groups from problems that commonly arise when organizations collaborate. As a member of NA who happens to work in treatment, I can most definitely see the validity of this Tradition. If we attach the NA name to any other organization, anything that happens in the realm of that organization can directly impact the way NA is viewed in the public eye. While NA does not lend its name or finance any other organization, it is important to note that NA does work in cooperation with other organizations in order to best fulfill our primary purpose and carry the message.

One thing I was taught years ago is the Steps teach us how to work through our own struggles; the Traditions teach us how to play nice with others. My elders taught me that, just as with the Steps, we can apply the Traditions to many areas of life. In the context of Tradition Six, it teaches me that while money, property, and prestige is great and all, I must be vigilant to know when I might be getting carried away. One is too many and a thousand never enough and this applies to many areas of life, not limited to just drugs. While we strive to achieve an improved quality of life and most certainly, the aforementioned can be a byproduct of the work we do on ourselves.

That said, accumulating "stuff" and social acceptability does not equal recovery. My primary purpose is to keep the focus within and continue working to better myself from a spiritual standpoint. It is important to remember if it is not practical, it is not spiritual. Self-discipline is key.

There are several spiritual principles relevant to the Sixth Tradition. Humility is remembering that NA has

one promise: freedom from active addiction. It also means by not giving into the temptation to gain prestige or reputation, we keep our egos in check and are able to keep the focus on fulfilling our primary purpose. Our message is also our identity. Therefore, integrity means we ought not to confuse it with other beliefs or literature.

Our Higher Power guides us in all aspects of recovery, so we demonstrate faith by relying on the power of the NA program. If we approach things straightforward and by setting and upholding boundaries with other organizations, we cultivate harmony. Anonymity and selfless service helps to keep the focus on carrying the message and avoids blurring our message. When we are able to stay within the limits established by Tradition Six, we are able to not only establish bonds with organizations in the community, but also enhance our ability to carry the message to the still sick and suffering addict.

In Loving Service, Jeremy U.

The Concepts for NA Service

Sixth Concept: Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.

Group conscience is an important concept that binds us together. We use group conscience not only in determining how to hold our meetings; we also use group conscience to work together in our service commitments. As recovering addicts (or maybe it's just human nature), we tend to be self-centered. We may think we know what is best not only for us, but for our groups and service committees. The Sixth Concept allows us to stop and consider not only ourselves, but also others.

Here's an example. A few months ago as I edited that month's newsletter, we began a new feature, Clean-Time Chronicles. This is the experience, strength and hope of one addict. As you can see, our first story was a bit of a war story once we split it into two parts. In the interview, our reporter used the names of several treatment centers. Once we edited the article, we sent it to some of our public relations committee members who provided input to ensure we were in keeping with our Traditions and singleness of purpose. This is group conscience in action.

In group conscience, we seek "unanimity," which means every person involved agrees. Because we often hold strong opinions, we can't always achieve unanimity. Therefore, we often settle for "consensus," which means "a general agreement." In other words, we strive for unanimity (one voice) and often settle for consensus (a general voice). The closer we come to unanimity, the better we feel because we try hard to ensure no one feels left out of the process.

Practically, this means even a simple decision may take a lot of dialogue. We are sometimes people who want to handle things quickly – "Make a decision and move on." Achieving unanimity is a slower process than settling for consensus.

Achieving unanimity requires patience, flexibility and a level of maturity. Our group conscience is a critical component in ensuring NA functions smoothly and with one voice. As it says in our 12 Concepts for NA Service, "We apply the Sixth Concept when we seek to do God's will, not our own, and to serve others, not ourselves, in our service decisions."

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

An Addict Veteran Speaks

I sit in this small dark room quietly. It is early morning and I just got home from work, riding my

bike ten miles each way. Not because I don't have a car, but because it is the right thing to do. It is one less car on the road, a few grams less carbon monoxide and other noxious gases, a little bit less fossil fuel consumed, and it is good for my health and wellbeing. Asleep on the bed we share is the sweetest ten-year-old kid, so big for his age. He would be the terror of his school if he only realized just how intimidating he could be... but he is one of the bullied kids. It is only in this last year that I have shared with him that he could change the bullying by just pushing back a little. Not only could he stop being bullied, but he could protect other bullied kids as well. He was starting to get some street cred, just as the pandemic hit.

I spent the weekend sweating my ass off in the heat so I could build a wooden playhouse for my little punkinbutt. Since I work nights, she spends those nights with a family that adores her, and then I bring her back here with me. I have been the one constant in her life since the day she was born, when my son and I drove 1,400 miles to the gulf coast to pick her up when she was a day old. She is not mine, and I know I will be reminded of that during the many teenage girl hormonal crisis that are in our future, and I can already laugh to myself. She is blond and blue eyed, with a little cherubic face and full of mischief and attitude.

These days have become a challenge for us in recovery. This pandemic has changed our world and it will likely never be the same. I get to count myself as one of the younger members of the older people in the fellowship. When I came to the rooms, the meeting list for the entire valley was just a single sheet of regular paper. The Fellowship had just approved the first edition of the *Basic Text*, but it was only beginning to get distributed in meetings.

We were mouthy, arrogant, simmering in our promiscuity, at times fighting brutally over the direction of the Fellowship, but fiercely protective of each other and our message. We confronted challenges we never imagined, yet through the traditions managed to keep ourselves focused on our primary purpose – to carry the message that an addict, any addict, can quit using, lose the desire to use, and find a joyful life in recovery. When we fucked up, we learned, and always benefited from the experience.

It was a few years ago now, but still seems like yesterday, I was in the mountains of Afghanistan with

my team, two of them wounded, trying to evade capture while making our way to an evac site that would not compromise our mission and our presence. At each stop I would bed my guys down to sleep and would write of the moments. To pass the time I transcribed all eight stanzas that I knew of Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah,' trying to remember how it sounded when it was sung by this incredibly talented young female opera singer, the rise and fall of intensity in her voice at its crescendo with its lyrical timing. Thirty-six hours later we were all back to safety, and all but one still alive.

"I've seen your flag on the marble arch, love is not a victory march, it's a cold and it's a broken hallelujah."

At 20 years clean I did not think I would find myself called back into war. I did not see my sponsor weeping as I left to go back to the life that broke me before. By 21 years clean, that was where my journey went. At 30 years clean I did not see me living in a studio apartment with two beautiful kids waking up every day to kiss me good morning as I lay down to sleep. But to be honest, I really had no freaking idea of anything about how my life would turn out. I did learn that if I stayed connected with my Fellowship, if I worked the steps and made the effort to apply the principles I learned, that as long as I kept showing up, things would turn out okay. And when that little girl shakes me awake after only 45 minutes of sleep and says "Daddy, wake up, it's morning time!" I wrap her in my arms and hold her close... so close and so tight, because there will come a day when I won't be able to anymore.

And just like when I can't talk to Jeffery, I will miss it in the worst way. Because recovery is change. Because things change. And we must change with it.

Mike R.

Fellowship Events

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

We are resilient and resourceful, as we've shown by our quick switch to online meetings. Together, we'll get through these tough times.

Here's the a brighter 2021, one day at a time.