

WEST VALLEY NA MESSENGER

The “No Matter What” Edition

May 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. The regional PR committee has obtained a Zoom account so we can facilitate online meetings. Stay tuned to the regional website for updated info.

The Twelve Steps of NA

Step Five: We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

This month, one of our newer members who has waded into service with both feet talks about a common fear – the fear of what we’ll uncover as we prepare to write and share our fourth and fifth steps.

This is an honest program, so it behooves me to tell you that I am currently working on Step Three, and I

have not yet completed all 12 steps. The words that I write lack experience with living in and writing on Step Five. Instead, what I offer here is the fear that I have as I work through my steps.

I am working my steps diligently, have accepted my powerlessness, stayed clean through my newcomer hardships, have hope and faith in my life now in NA, and have found my Higher Power, but I am freaked out about uncovering my wrongs. I know that they exist, but I have spent a lifetime ignoring their presence.

The first part of my life was driven by the idea that “failure” was not allowed. I did everything “perfectly,” and would never admit my true limitations with anyone else. I saw myself in terms of whether I was doing a good job, “using” something to reduce my personal suffering. I would fling about hurting others and myself, ironically quantifying my life in terms of how much of my own suffering I could reduce. This allowed me to ignore my character defects.

This isn’t to say that I won’t easily acknowledge that I am a terrible person. Nope, my self-esteem makes that easy for me. What scares me are the truths of my hurtful behaviors that lie even deeper in my spirit. I have spent a lifetime practicing how to avoid acknowledging these “wrongs” (with my addiction at the helm of course), so I have self-protective defenses that are damn good, to say the least. There are still aspects to my life in addiction that I am hiding from full self-awareness now in recovery.

I am still frightened of admitting I am not perfect. In Step Four, I know that I will take a deeper look and find out my authentic self, defects and all. It is truly scary. It is going to take courage to move forward, but with the program behind me and my sponsor as my guide, I am going to push on.

I am going to willingly share these “wrongs” with my sponsor. From there, I hope to find a strength in myself and deeper connection with other addicts. All of these are hopes for when I live the fifth step, and I know the truth is that I will probably learn something different, deeper, and purer than I can even imagine.

Right now, what I do know with certainty is that I'm scared shitless of these steps, but I am going to do them.

I want the peace I have seen on the faces of experienced members who keep sharing that they have completed the steps. I know that if I want what they have, then I must do what they do. So, "Screw you, fear!" I am going to walk through these steps honestly and thoroughly with NA at my side.

Stephanie B.

Fellowship Events

At this time, our areas and our region have cancelled most face-to-face meetings and events, including ARCNA's onsite event.

Watch the regional website for more information going forward.

Guiding Principles The Spirit of Our Traditions

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

Narcotics Anonymous 5th Tradition:

Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

Tradition Five helps our groups fulfill the fundamental reason for their existence: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We may do many things in our meetings, but we must never lose sight of our one "primary purpose," which is to carry the message. The group's focus on carrying the message is so important to the survival of NA that we call it our primary purpose. That means it is the most important thing we do.

And what is our message? Our message is "that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live." Our message is hope and the promise of freedom. We often see and hear members preaching and teaching, doing comedy routines, dazzling us with their smooth NA talk, pontificating, lecturing, or bragging. As entertaining as

that is, we must never lose sight of the fact that "when all is said and done, our primary purpose can only be to carry the message to the addict who still suffers because that is all we have to give." We try to lead by example, sharing experience, strength and hope instead of advice.

Our challenge is to create an atmosphere of recovery in our meetings. This includes extending a welcome to *every* addict who attends, no matter race, religion, lack of religion, drug of choice, sexual preference, age, socio-economic status, etc. Just remember what it was like when you were a newcomer, and the whole program seemed foreign to you. I imagine you were in some pain, and you probably did not know the language or etiquette of the fellowship. Maybe you were not accustomed to talking about your pain and suffering. How did the group help you to feel safe and comfortable, and how was our message communicated to you? I suggest you think about what worked and what didn't work for you and use that as a guide.

"Many meetings are structured to carry the message to our newest members. These new members often need more encouragement to stay, more answers to their questions, more of our love and care. But the newest members are not the only addicts who need the message of recovery. The still-suffering addict with whom we share our hope may be any one of us, regardless of clean time. Tradition Five is not limited to helping newcomers. The message of recovery is for all of us". (*It Works How and Why*, p. 163)

I am approaching 34 years of continuous clean time and I can tell you that on many occasions I was the addict in the room that was still suffering. I am so grateful for this program and this Tradition because in every case that I opened up and shared that I was suffering, members of the fellowship showed up and gave me the love, support and hope that I needed.

When I hear a member share that they are still suffering, or see a member who seems to be suffering, I make a point to reach out after the meeting, I do not do cross talk in the meeting, but I will offer a hug, an ear and/or my phone number after the meeting.

There are many distracting influences that can divert us from our primary purpose. For instance, our groups may be tempted to use meeting time to discuss their business and finances or talk about some controversy. As individual members, we can get caught up in socializing with our friends, ignoring another addict who may be in pain and needs our encouragement. Each time our focus is diverted from our primary

purpose, the addict seeking recovery loses out. (*It Works How and Why*, p. 161)

The literature suggests that groups would benefit from examining how well they are carrying the message of recovery. Are there addicts our groups are not reaching? How can we make our meetings more accessible? What can we do to make new members feel more at home? Has the atmosphere of recovery diminished? Would a change in our meeting format strengthen that atmosphere?

I love the connection between the 12th Step and the 5th Tradition. In my own journey I realize that I was trying to carry the message before I even had the message, and many times I was carrying the “mess” instead of the message. I remember the first time I shared my story at a meeting I had a hot 90 days. It was an hour-long meeting. I must have shared for 50 minutes – what I used, how much I used and who my connections were – you see, I didn’t know enough about recovery; my life in addiction was all I knew.

But as stated in our 12th Step, “Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, *we tried to carry this message to addicts*, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” I thank my HP that I kept coming back, and finally can share a clear message of hope to the addict that still suffers. As I progressed in my Step work, my message changed. It has become more consistent with our primary purpose, and focused on the fact “that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.”

A grateful recovering addict, Roland W.

The Concepts for NA Service

Fifth Concept: For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.

The key to applying the Fifth Concept is in defining the task that needs to be done, and the easiest way to apply it is right from the start. When we first create a service task, we should consider what kind of authority we must delegate in order for that task to be accomplished, and what kind of accountability we should require of those to whom we are giving that task. Then, one particular trusted servant, service

board, or committee should be designated as the single point of decision and accountability for that assignment. This simple principle applies to all the services provided in Narcotics Anonymous, from the group to our world services.

When we decide a certain service task should be done, and clearly say which trusted servant, service board, or committee has the authority to accomplish the task, we avoid unnecessary confusion. We don’t have two committees trying to do the same job, duplicating efforts or squabbling over authority. Project reports come straight from the single point of decision for the project, offering the best information available. An assigned service responsibility can be fulfilled swiftly and directly, because there is no question of whose responsibility it is. And if problems in a project arise, we know exactly where to go in order to correct them. We do well when we clearly specify to whom authority is being given for each service responsibility.

The single point of decision we define for each service responsibility is also a single point of accountability. As we’ve already seen in the Fourth Concept, and as we shall see further in Concept Eight, accountability is a central feature of the NA way of service. When we give our trusted servants responsibility for a particular service task, we hold them accountable for the authority we’ve delegated them. We expect them to remain accessible, consistently providing us with reports of their progress and consulting with us about their responsibilities.

Accountability does not mean that we delegate authority only to take it right back. It simply means that we want to be informed of decisions our trusted servants are considering as they go about the tasks we’ve assigned them. We want to have the opportunity to impact those decisions, especially if they directly affect us. And we want to be kept up to date on each responsibility we’ve assigned to the service structure so that, if something goes wrong, we can take part in making it right.

The Fifth Concept helps us responsibly delegate our authority for NA services. In exercising the Fifth Concept, we make a simple, straightforward contract with our trusted servants. Right from the start, they know what we are asking of them, what decisions they are expected to make themselves, and to what degree we will hold them accountable for the service work they do on our behalf. Exercise of Concept Five is not a task to be taken lightly. It calls for us to carefully

consider the service work we want done; to clearly designate who should do that work; to delegate the authority to do it; and to maintain accountability for those duties. It takes effort to conscientiously apply Concept Five, but the results are worth the effort.

From *Twelve Concepts for NA Service*

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, for example, a suicide or domestic violence hotline, where you can call for immediate help. Our helpline is different. We simply offer phone support, tell people where meetings are located, 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

Finding Freedom

Where does freedom come from? If you ask my grandson, he will say Abraham Lincoln gave freedom when he abolished slavery. The freedom I refer to is the freedom from active addiction, freedom from self and freedom from our defects of character.

We achieve freedom from active addiction once we surrender, get clean and stay clean. How beautiful

it is to receive the gift by coming to Narcotics Anonymous. By going to meetings, it changes our lives. When we are new, others give us the formula to stay clean. That formula is 90 meetings in 90 days, find a sponsor and start working the steps with that sponsor, find a God of your own understanding, and be of service to the fellowship. This is what I still do at 38 years clean, I may not go to 90 meetings in 90 days but I do have a sponsor, I still work steps with my sponsor, I have a God of my understanding which I have a relationship with, I have a home group, and I am of service to that homegroup and to the fellowship.

It can be hard at times to continue to practice this formula, and it can be a challenge to walk through life on life’s terms. When we do walk through the hard times, we start to find more freedom. This comes from practicing blind faith and by doing this in return we gain experience, strength and hope. When I look back at my experiences, I am always amazed at how I grew and changed through practicing faith and gaining experience, strength and more hope.

Gaining freedom from self and our character defects is our life’s work as recovering addicts. Consistency is the key to remain engaged in our process of working the steps with our sponsor. Having a relationship with a higher power is also important to find freedom. We can rob ourselves by believing that working the steps once, halfway, or being complacent can sustain us. It cannot! I am a firm believer that working the steps is on-going, and we never graduate from this process called recovery. Every-time an addict sits down and writes on his or her step there is a deeper understanding of ourselves, the disease, and our character defects.

For an addict to find freedom, it comes from the work within the steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Going to meetings is important to help us remember where we come from, and to maintain a sense of community while being of service to the fellowship. I am that addict that continues to peel the layers through the steps and I am eternally grateful to the person I am becoming even at 38 years clean. The freedom is in the steps, God and the process of discovery. I am grateful.

Diana M (Addict)
Clean date 4/23/1982