

# WEST VALLEY NA MESSENGER

The “No Matter What” Edition

December 2019

## Groups in Need of Support

**Room to Grow** 255 N Litchfield Road. Goodyear, Vineyard Church **Monday 7pm**

**Solutions** 10485 S Estella Pkwy. Goodyear, Estrella Mt. Church **Wednesday 7pm**

**La Connecta** 3948 W Thomas. Phoenix, W. Thomas Baptist Church **Monday and Thursday 7pm**

**Miracles in Action (MIA)** 7702 N 35<sup>th</sup> Ave. Rm 7. Phoenix, Bethany Presb. Church **Sunday 4pm**

**Journey thru Recovery** 9059 W Lake Pleasant Pkwy. (behind CVS) Peoria, **Thursday 7pm**

**Addicts in Recovery (AIR)** Alleluia Lutheran Church 8444 W Encanto Rd. Phoenix, 85037 **Tues Wed Fri & Sun 8:00pm**

**The Journey Begins** 2517 N 107<sup>th</sup> Ave First Baptist Church, Avondale **Mon 7-8pm**

**Sanity is Possible** 12313 Northwest Grand Avenue, El Mirage **Sunday, Thursday and Saturday at 7 pm**

## It Works How and Why: The Twelve Steps of NA

**Step Twelve: “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.”**

When I first read the step (I mean literally off the wall, not in any NA literature), I interpreted it to say, “After working some steps, I will have a burning bush moment and I should tell everyone.” I thought, how cool! What I learned over time and by working the steps changed my perspective a bit.

By the time I officially worked Step 12, I had experienced an awakening of my spirit – although I did not realize it until I read the literature and began to see that my awakening was gradual, subtle (at least to me) and it included neither a bush nor a fire. According to the *Basic Text*, a spiritual awakening “...is evidenced through changes in our lives” (page 48). I contemplated what changes I had experienced: I no longer felt lonely all the time, I began to feel that I had a purpose, that I

mattered. I cared about others, my heart was beginning to open, and I occasionally had a sense of peace. I was taking responsibility for my actions and my life. I was even noticing that I did not react with a temper tantrum to *every* little thing that did not go exactly as I wanted. I mean *huge* changes had been occurring! All that was a result of working the steps.

After I was able to see how I had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, it was time to try to carry this message to addicts. Perfect! Only problem I had – I was not 100 percent certain what “this message” was. I heard repeatedly that we need to share a clear message, but if I was not sure what the message was, I was in trouble. Here is what I learned: Any addict can stay clean, lose the desire to use and find a new way of life. (I must have heard this 100 times but had not realized *this* was the message). It was so simple. Our message is that it is possible to change. We no longer need to believe that we are stuck in the same destructive patterns that we have been stuck in for years. The message is that there is hope.

The obvious way to carry the message was to share my experience, but I learned that there are so many other ways. Showing up to my homegroup each week, talking to my friends in recovery—laughing, smiling, hugging, and showing joy and love. That is also carrying the message. When others see first-hand the changes that occur in the rooms, it is the best way to prove this program can change lives without having to say a word. I don’t have to become a circuit speaker to carry the message, I just must walk the walk. I also had to learn the hard way that I could not force a message onto others by preaching, nagging, or giving advice. The message is carried by example, not by force.

The step concludes with practicing these principles in all our affairs, which to me means that all the spiritual principles that I have learned and practiced in the rooms, must be practiced everywhere else, too. I knew at the conclusion of Step One the true meaning of honesty and acceptance. Step Two added hope and trust to my arsenal. Three: faith and surrender. Four: courage...and so on. Practicing principles in the rooms became the start of a new habit, again, as a result of these steps. I found it easy to show up and be responsible in the program – to make commitments, be open, honest and caring. It was a little more challenging in the ‘real world’. Now I know why it says “practice” – because it takes trying, making

mistakes and trying repeatedly to make principled actions a habit in all areas of my life.

Through working the steps, I was able to see how my spirit was coming to life and how the changes that were happening were a result of the steps and the principles in the steps. This change is available to us all if we are willing to make the effort to get it. That is hope. That is our message. Deb D.

## Fellowship Event

*West Valley Speaker Meeting/Event, Jan 11, 2020*

*7:30 Speaker meeting and event to follow  
3104 W. Glendale Avenue, Phoenix*

*For more info on events in the Valley  
<http://www.arizona-na.org> calendar*

## Guiding Principles The Spirit of Our Traditions

**Tradition 12: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**

I've struggled with Anonymity -- being nameless, selfless. I feel like I'm not alone in that struggle. The whole world seems to be screaming at us to claim our unique individuality and get what's ours. My disease seems to drive me that way, too. It doesn't seem too far of a leap that standing in opposition of the disease requires living this principle.

Yet, to me, this principle of anonymity seems harder to grasp than the other principles we talk so much about.

I can figure out humility, courage, responsibility. They seem easier to me to see because I can at least see their opposites.

For me, the effects of not having humility is to feel either like I am better than you all or so much worse than you all, and that separates me from you. The effect of that is that I'm alone.

The effect of not having courage is that I live in fear and I never open up about my struggle, and again, I'm alone.

The effects of being irresponsible is that basic tasks aren't done. For instance, when no one pays the rent for the meeting or when we trash the meeting place -- the

effect is that the meeting is no longer available, and again, I'm alone.

Just as the 12th step rolls up and summarizes all the steps, the 12th tradition rolls up and summarizes all the traditions. Anonymity is the foundation, and what is a foundation? It is what holds up everything else. Everything else is based on anonymity. But anonymity can feel so ghostly almost, hard to hold.

I try to find the opposite of anonymity by looking at all the other traditions. As I study tradition 10, I learn that in public relations we practice anonymity by carrying only the message and not endorsing other organizations. I learn in the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition that having one or two addicts carry a whole meeting with their donations is not anonymity. And so forth -- each tradition seems to show a different picture of what anonymity is not.

For me, looking at the plethora of examples, makes it harder to look to the opposite of anonymity to learn what it means. It gets complicated.

Yet, as I learn more and more about anonymity, I start feeling a deeper truth about what anonymity might mean, shining just under the surface.

When I first learned to do service, I chose to do it out of what they call "enlightened self-interest". I need NA to stay clean, and to keep NA going I needed to do service. The longer I stayed clean and did service work, the more blessings I got in my life, blessings born of the all the spiritual principles. At some point, my service work became an act of love. I was giving back not just out of the need to stay clean, but also out of gratitude.

I found it within me the ability -- at times -- to provide service with no need for praise or thanks. We talk about selfless service and doing service for the right reasons. Like many of us who have performed service in NA, I've other times when I was caught up in more selfish reasons. I have many examples of my personal failings in service, but the point I am getting at is that anonymity is the foundation of all the traditions, because anonymity is another word for love.

I believe even the "enlightened self-interest" that prompted my earlier service work was based in love. I came in here, unable to love myself, and the group taught me HOW to love myself. And from that I loved myself enough to take the action of doing service.

Anonymity is simple, but difficult. It simply means that I don't put myself first. I'm in there somewhere -- it's

not that I'm not important. It simply means in some situations something else is more important.

I just had my first grandchild and I love him dearly, but babies, as you know, do not know about anonymity or selflessness. A baby cannot realize that other things might be more important than his or her needs. Neither do using addicts.

The reason that anonymity is the foundation is because there is no other way a group of addicts could even exist.

The opposite of anonymity is simple and horrifying. Without anonymity, there would be no meetings, no fellowship, nothing. Most of us would be in the grips – in jails, institutes, and death – no way out.

I love you, NA. Thanks for my life and thanks for the opportunity to continually get better at anonymity – at love. Rosie W.

## Committee Announcements

### Activities Subcommittee

Needs a Treasurer and your support. Only one day clean to get involved in the Activities Subcommittee. If your home group or committee would like to sponsor the monthly speaker meeting and dance, please contact the Activities chair.

### H&I Subcommittee

Have a few new facilities that *need volunteers*, 6 months clean requirement. If interested attend H&I meeting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month at 8:30am before Area meeting. For info: attend meeting or contact *Mary Lou*, H&I Chair.

### Literature Subcommittee

We can always use help at area to bag literature for home groups. Area meets at 10:45 am the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month.

### Outreach Subcommittee – The Outreach

Subcommittee attends meetings that need support. It serves as the “outstretched hand of an established NA community to isolated groups and addicts...” (From A Guide to Local Services in NA.) We currently have no chair for this position. Interested? Attend the ASC meeting. It's a great way to get out to groups you don't normally attend.

### Public Relations Subcommittee

We are always looking for new members who can help with phone outreach to facilities, give presentations to various organizations and help us carry the message to

the professional community. We especially need people available during the day for an occasional speaking engagement with a social service or other community organization. We'll train you!

We meet at 9:30 before the West Valley Area Meeting on the third Saturday of each month. There are many ways to serve.

Join us there or at the PR meeting in your area.

## The Twelfth Concept for NA Service

**Twelfth Concept: “In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never government.”**

When we evaluate what a concept or tradition means, it's often helpful to review dictionary definitions of keywords in that concept or tradition.

Two keywords in the 12th Concept are “service” and “government.” Let's look at dictionary definitions of those two words.

Merriam-Webster defines “service” as “the occupation or function of serving; employment as a servant; contribution to the welfare of others; disposal for use.” To be safe, let's define “servant.” Merriam-Webster defines “servant” as “one that serves others.”

Merriam-Webster in part defines “government” very differently. “The act or process of governing, specifically authoritative direction or control.” It also defines government as “the continuous exercise of authority over and the performance of functions for a political unit: rule.”

Clearly, our service structure should be one of service, not government, right? But sometimes it's easier said than done.

Our information pamphlet, *Principles & Leadership in NA Service*, discusses the need to choose trusted servants who have leadership abilities. This doesn't mean newer members cannot serve effectively; they *can*. However, older service body members can't just throw them in the pond; they have to mentor and guide them through some of the challenges they'll face in leadership.

The pamphlet also says, “Our success in reaching the still-suffering addict depends completely on members who step up and get involved.” Often, the same people volunteer to serve. While we value their expertise, we

have a principle of rotation in service for a few reasons which help us abide by the 12<sup>th</sup> Concept.

When we don't rotate out of service, we can stray into governance. This can occur because with our experience, we may start to think our way is the best way. We may stray into a bit of a "big fish in a little pond" mentality. When this happens, we can become more of a ruler than a servant.

Our Fellowship is growing, and many younger members now fill our ranks. They bring new ideas and new enthusiasm. We must allow them space to serve with guidance, not governance.

The pamphlet describes the following attributes we should seek in leaders.

- Integrity and accountability
- Humility, with an ability to follow the direction of a group conscience
- Facilitating discussions, not dominating them or excluding certain viewpoints we may not agree with
- Communicating between different audiences (because isn't our diversity also our strength?)
- Informing the Fellowship through effective reporting
- Encouraging other members

These are lofty goals for our leaders, right? However, if we select and then guide our leaders – because sometimes they go astray and we, as part of the group conscience must guide them – we can accomplish service, not government.

These are just a few of the ways the 12<sup>th</sup> Concept can guide our service efforts.

## Clean-Time Chronicles

### A Labor of Love Lies in the Harvest

In 1993, I tried to attend a NA meeting on the yard in prison, Arizona Center for Women. The dis-ease was very alive and well in my head, as a result I told the facilitator I couldn't relate to her. She suggested I take a little white book with me when I was leaving. A few evenings later, alone and empty inside, missing my kids and full of shame, I read a bit out of the little white book. It was enough to help me get some sleep that night.

It would not be 'til three years later – I lost parental rights of my 5th kid, new felonies pending and more pain and shame – I would find the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. The end of the road and another nudge

from another judge, finally I saw I needed something different and had the gift of desperation. Through a multiple of powers greater than myself (Probation Department and the system), I was heavily encouraged to keep coming back to NA to get my paper signed.

In that process, I began to see the hope shining from others. I started to do the suggestions like getting a sponsor and calling other females in the program. It all was so new to me and I was so afraid of anything new. Because I didn't have anything else to lose, I did it anyway until it wasn't so hard, and I came to an understanding of the program for myself. Part of that understanding was, I hadn't been honest with myself since I was a young kid and through our literature (*Basic Text & It Works How & Why*), I knew I had to become totally abstinent from all mood-altering and mind-changing substances. That next evening, I got honest at my homegroup and my recovery began.

Many things have happened over the last few decades that are beyond words, stuff I never thought possible for me. Like reuniting with children, getting my rights back, learning self-care, deep invaluable relationships with my sponsor and others in my tree. As I've been living on life's terms, I've walked through difficult times I never imagine possible and clean. The end of relationships, the death of parents and child, various losses, etc.

You see, when I came in off the streets, I thought I was tough and not strong. Turns out through the steps, I've come to know myself and I'm not tough, though I have found my strength. I know for sure, when life shows up again and the dis-ease tells me: "Don't share with others, they don't want to hear it, just stay home, no one understands, etc.," I have a whole fellowship to help me walk through it.

The predecessors I've had in my life and our literature taught me, if I'm to have a complete program, I need to practice actively all the parts of our universal program explained by our *Basic Text* symbol. I have done this to the best of my ability throughout this journey and in this process, I've not been let down.

Just the other night, when I got to chair an H&I meeting, a young woman said she wasn't an addict and turned to leave. I remembered that evening back in 1993 on the prison yard, my younger self. I handed the young woman a little white book and mentioned it may come in handy some evening back in her cell.

The *Basic Text* Preface reminds me: "The full fruit of a labor of love lies in the harvest and that always comes in its right season..." Thank you, NA, for carrying the message to me! Linda W.