



THE NA TIMES

Phoenix – West Valley – East Valley

October 2022

From Behind the Walls: Through My Looking Glass

I am an addict name Todd O. Some of you know me personally, some of you may have read one of my articles I have written for this publication over the past few years. I have written about the mask I wear, seeing through the eyes of my daughters, love, relapse, the possibility and now actualization of my incarceration. Some of you may not know me at all and my ego wants to ask you, "Why not?" I am still learning I need not be driven by pride, no longer needing to prove my merits to actualize who I am.

I came into this program around two and a half years ago. My drug of choice brought upon a vile entity who sought complete control over my life. There came a depravity of the morals I had built throughout my life. My inner light was but the wick of a candle after it has been snuffed out. The pieces which once were me crumbled under my use, my want to get and use more consumed me. Things that would sicken me now appealed to me. Places I thought only the lowest of addicts would use is where I found myself using.

I bought more to congratulate myself for not using for a day or two. My mask of self-deception went from being held on with glue to being welded on with iron and steel. I hid away from those I loved most dearly: my daughters, Elaina and Sloan. They brought upon me the two happiest memories of my life. I was a loving father, ever present in their lives. My favorite part of coming home from work was my oldest daughter running into the garage to sit in my car with me. I got up every morning to make them breakfast, keeping the TV off, but putting on music. I would dance and sing with them. My oldest would do The Twist while my youngest would hold onto my leg with her little toes upon my feet, looking up at her hero: me. A huge smile on both our faces.

In time as drugs took over my life, I did not want to come home. I'd stop my car a few blocks away and use before pulling into my driveway. When I got home I'd rush off to use in my bathroom. In the mornings, if I had even slept at all, the TV would be turned on so I would not be bothered. I would still make breakfast, but the music stopped and inside me the hero died. My daughters are now four and seven: it has been over two years since I have seen them.

When I close my eyes I can still see their faces, hear their laughter and feel their hands upon mine.
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**THERE ARE
OPPORTUNITIES
TO BE OF
SERVICE IN
ALL AREAS!!!!**

“Service gives us opportunities to grow in ways that touch all parts of our lives” (Basic Text, Chapter 9).

“We learn who we are precisely when we forget ourselves in service to others”(Living Clean, Chapter 2).

“When we engage in selfless service, we find that all of the principles we have come to love and learn are called upon. It isn't easy to get out of our own way, but that is precisely what frees us from our self-made prisons” (Living Clean, Chapter).

“Service changes our relationship to our own lives. We learn to put love & gratitude into action, and when we mobilize our good feelings they have a way of spreading through all our affairs” (Living Clean, Chapter 7).

Ask your GSR about open positions!

Working step ten is a welcomed challenge and an opportunity to build a spiritual foundation for humble and spiritual character. In previous steps, I learned to develop an objective and loving attitude towards myself. This new attitude allows me to grow and develop my own spiritual connection to a Higher Power.

Step ten through 12 are sometimes called the maintenance steps. I have noticed that the steps are interdependent, and present work is laying the foundation for future work. My personal experience with the tenth step comes from working the previous 9 steps with a sponsor and establishing a preliminary relationship with a Higher Power. I learn in the ninth step that making amends is a life-long process. It becomes clear the importance of a daily maintenance procedure or ritual.

I look at the tenth step as a ritual development process that includes spot checks throughout the day. I took a look at the five major religions, and I noticed that they all had daily rituals performed at certain times. I just picked a reasonable number between seven and one and decided that three may be the magic number to practice working a formal tenth step. It seemed rational to use morning noon and evening as my three times. In the morning I ask myself what it is I want to accomplish that day physically and spiritually. I take a look at how I am feeling. Am I anxious, nervous, or fearful? Am I open-minded, honest, and willing? I do what is necessary to get myself mentally, physically, and spiritually ready to meet the day. (Segway to 11th step here). At noon right before the NA meeting I do my second formal tenth step and ask myself: How am I feeling? What am I thinking about? Am I still focused on recovery? Am I emotionally and spiritually centered? I do what is necessary to correct myself and gently guide myself back to the spiritual path. (11th step). In the evening, after supper, I do the third and final tenth step ritual and review my day. Do I owe any amends? Did I lie cheat or steal anything? How do I feel physically, spiritually, mentally? I gently guide myself back to the spiritual path. (11 step).

I have only been practicing this way for going on 19 days and I have noticed a big difference in my moods. I am more tolerant of myself and others. I seem to be able to ruminate on negative thought patterns less. I have more hope and energy for the future. I am able to get myself back on the spiritual path without beating myself up with “should haves” and “ought tos” less regret more freedom. I’m so glad I have NA.
-Max

Hope – to cherish with anticipation; to want something to happen and think that it is possible.

Faith – complete trust or confidence in someone or something.

I was asked if I’d like to write an article for this newsletter on the topic of a spiritual principle, concept ten or tradition 10. I’m not even sure what the tenth concept is. No clue what the tenth tradition is. Is it the anonymity one? I’ve only been here 9 years and 3 months or 111 months (as of September 15) and I’ve only heard the Twelve Traditions read 200,000 times.

I said I’d love to give it a shot. I was asked which spiritual principle it would be. I said hope or faith, maybe both. I feel like I should know a lot about them by now. But right now my mind is on my dog Claude. He’s the sweetest most loving dog I’ve ever known. Everybody who sees him loves him and he loves everybody right back. We love to say that Claude would get in anybody’s car – he loves car rides and when he sees someone getting in a car on our daily walks, he heads straight for them. He’d get in any stranger’s car and giddily ride away, and we’d never see him again. Turns out, after tomorrow, that’s going to be the case. He’s got a gall bladder issue that can’t be solved by a surgery that we can afford or one that he’d likely survive. We’re having a mobile euthanasia service come to our home tomorrow afternoon and put him to sleep.

Nonetheless, this is an article about hope and faith. Sometimes it easier to describe a thing by what it’s not. But since I could use some hope and faith at the moment, I’d rather try to find out what they are by describing how they’re going to carry me through this moment.

I was given the gift of recovery 9 years and 3 months ago at a time when I had no hope of ever getting clean. I had zero faith that a loving God was there to save me. But here I am. I’m 9 years 3 months in and I’ve got a giant hole in my chest because I’ve got to put my dog to sleep tomorrow, and I’ve got complete faith in the belief that I won’t fill that hole with drugs. My undeniable hope is that my sweet Claude is going to do his famous bull rush gallop across that rainbow bridge to cheers of thousands and with the fanfare of a million trumpets. He’ll have a mighty blue cape on. He’s a superhero of happiness and joy. They’ll roll out the red carpet. I truly believe these things.

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When I was arrested in a detox center I fell to the ground, knowing my life would never be the same. I knew in that moment the two people in this world I held most dearly may never see their father again. No more dancing, playing, no trips to the park, tumble classes, laughter, hugs and no more being their hero. A piece of me died that day and it would not be the last time I would lose a piece of myself. I was bonded out of jail, completely unraveled, lost in such self-centeredness. I could not see what I had done but only what had been done to me.

Then I found Narcotics Anonymous and let's be honest, for those who have been around awhile, my Higher Power brought me to this program. She wanted me to live and not just in a physical sense, but the spiritual as well. In time I got a sponsor, started working the steps, and this person buried under self-deception, years of use and broken morals started to emerge. The wick was now lit, and the candle began to burn brightly. I picked up my love of reading and writing, and found people who would not judge me on my past misdeeds and who loved the man who was unfolding before their very eyes and what he wanted to accomplish.

Dreams. I began to understand how to love myself and in time I was given the gift of the most loving, honest and caring relationship I have ever experienced. How was I so blessed to be given these gifts yet so cursed to lose my daughters from my life? This is something I still struggle with today and something I share deeply with my Higher Power, my sponsor--now my dearest friend. I had found true love, one we worked on, together. She is in recovery and even though people might want to judge (go talk to your sponsor), we did not care. We worked our recovery both together and separate. We relied on honesty and trust which brought us to discussing our future. I was no longer alone, I listened and prayed to my Higher Power and She showed me this gift.

On my belly button birthday I had to go into court and learned I had 48 hours before I would spend the next eight and a half years in prison. My Higher Power got me home that day through rush hour traffic and heavy tears. Another piece of me died that day. I would go home to my partner, whom we talked about being a family, bringing my daughter's back into my life and giving them a baby brother or sister. On May 12, 2022 as I surrendered myself I told my love I just want her to be happy. I have lost two families. Even though I have suffered such loss I still consider her family and I no longer live by the "me" and instead try to live by "we."

I do not fear prison. There are plenty of good men here. Many of us have been subjected to the "system": a dollar sign kept in cages and herded around for food, recreation, and classes. Some want to better themselves and others will never change. The system wants to keep us in and continue to collect on us like livestock. The judicial system does not care about rehabilitation as long as the money continues to roll in. But not this inmate. Like NA has taught me, I find myself drawn to those who want to better themselves, who do not want to return. But even the hopeless here can help me find solace. Sure, there is plenty of deception here and those who keep to themselves, which is fine for them but not for me. I crave socialization and cannot fall into isolation. Not everyone I talk with is a great person, but I learned I cannot judge them because I do not know their story, their abuse or neglect, nor the man who hides behind his own mask. Do I want prison to be normal to me? No. Will I make my time here about becoming a better person, even helping my fellow inmates obtain a greater sense of self? Yes. I will continue in my recovery. I am a member of NA, a father, a lover, a best friend, a writer, a comedian, a person of faith, and a hero.

-Inmate Todd O.

Sponsorship

Our Sponsorship IP states, "We can share things with our sponsor that we might not be comfortable sharing in a meeting." There is something so special and comforting about having someone in your life who shows you unconditional support, no matter what. It's even more amazing when that same someone is also someone you know you can trust to have your best interests at heart.

When I first walked into the door of NA, I was not prepared to have friendships with women, nor did I think I could trust almost anyone. The trust that I have built through sponsorship is something that I never imagined. Through the sponsorship and fellowship of NA, I have

found so much more than trust; I have found people who care, people who show up, and people who will love you no matter what.

Early in my recovery, one of my predecessors welcomed me to the 'No Matter What' club. What he meant by this was, 'Don't pick up no matter what', and this still rings true. But what I have come to know about the 'No Matter What Club' is this: Show up, be apart, share honestly, love, and forgive, no matter what. When you start doing these things, the fellowship and the friendships you build will start doing them for you too.

Kindest regards,
Marcy

The fact is, I'm not putting him to sleep: I'm freeing him from his pain. And it's the very least I can do. It's his pain that's important here, not mine. My grief is the exquisite price for my love for him and his sweet love for me. I've heard it said that the meaning of death is the release of love. Well, we've learned to love him like he loved us, with a tenderness we didn't know we had. This coming from an ex-dope fiend who didn't believe in anyone or anything 9 years and 3 months ago. Hope and faith are practiced, not seen, and only felt. Tomorrow at this time senior Claude will not be feeling pain anymore. I can already see his smile, that smile that's as big as the Grand Canyon and his jaunty wide gallop, racing toward me – on a bright sunny day on that rainbow bridge when we'll meet again.
-Aaron S.

Breaking Free of Self

For this addict, self-obsession or what I like to call the “me-zone,” is something that I’m used to. It’s effortless. I don’t have to try to do anything while I’m there. It’s the place in my head where I can play the victim. It is also a place of spiritual and emotional suffering that feels endless. The “me-zone” is where I go when I’m using, but I can still get there when I’m clean. My ego does not like this admission. “You are over three years clean!” it shouts in my head. “Everything should be easy by now, no effort needed.” “How can you get to that place of suffering after all that you have learned?” Easy answer: I AM AN ADDICT.

There are so many lies that my head will tell me. According to them I am no longer an addict and it’s okay to fall into the thinking of the past, “If I have to be me, what is the point?” With these thoughts come the feelings and actions of an addict in their addiction. I don’t take that phone call, go to meetings, do my steps, and will even call out of work because “woe is this poor addict.” “Shouldn’t someone come and save me? Why do I have to do things differently?” Around this time, the pain of spiritual death becomes so great, something needs to change. I’m sure all addicts understand that pain of hopelessness. This suffering I got to experience clean because during this time, I wasn’t ready to surrender or willing to make a change.

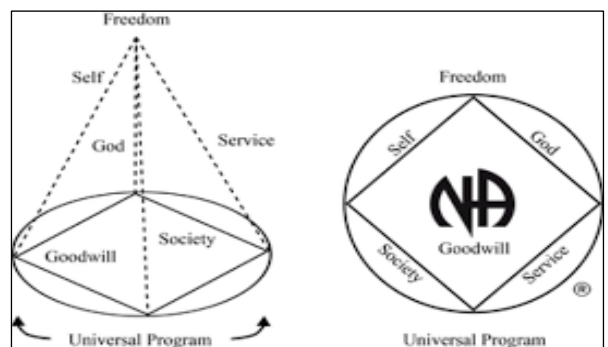
Gratefully, the program has shown me a new way of life. I can find gratitude in the pain I felt because when it became so unbearable, I had a place to go and I became willing to do the work. Since I have been going to Narcotics Anonymous, I have been given tools to get out of the “me-zone.” This part of my recovery has been very difficult because of my fear. I have been so frightened that getting out of my self-obsession would lead to a life of suffering. This is why I have found it so easy to go into the “me-zone.” I was scared to care for others or acknowledge the world around me because I did not want to relinquish control of my life and surrender and accept the world as it is with me in it. What would happen if I let go?

“The steps are written in order for a reason.” When I heard this initially, I wanted to call BS. Recently, this addict discovered, they are absolutely written in the right order, DUH! Steps one through eleven are all about getting myself together: acknowledging I can’t do it alone and that my

Higher Power can, letting go of control, recognizing my part, finding my character defects, cleaning up my side of the street, beginning to work on myself daily, and practicing surrender. The very last step is about service, and this is the step that I am almost on, and this is why selflessness has become a theme for me these last few months. My Higher Power is letting me know that I am ready to change. My Higher Power is letting me know that my self-obsession can be removed as long as I do the work.

What I have discovered is that when I focus on the newcomer, share in meetings, be of service within NA, and call other members to ask how they are doing, I have a good day. Whenever I find myself slipping into the “me-zone.” I ask myself what I have done for someone else today. Then, I work to make the next part of my day about service in some way. It is easy to forget this process, but I have been working to make it a habit. As long as I am trying, I find that my connection with my Higher Power and love for others and myself continues to grow. I can be frustrated with myself at times because I have over 3 years clean, and it feels like it has taken me forever to get to this place in my recovery. However, I can remind myself that if it wasn’t for NA I never would have been given this gift and can again find gratitude when I start to sink back towards that victim mode. This is the power of this program. I felt like a hopeless sociopath who would suffer for the rest of her life, but now I am finding peace, love for others, and accepting love from others.

-Stephanie B.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out *Arizona-NA.ORG* for more Details

Hedgehog Campout	October 6th - 9th
Fire Side Meeting (Square Peg, Round Hole)	October 15 th 6—10pm
EV Skyline Serenity Hike	October 22 nd 9:45—2pm
H&I Fun Day	October 23 rd 11am—4pm
NACONA II	October 28th – 30th
Recovery in Queen Creek BBQ	October 29 th – 3pm
NAlloween	October 29 th – 7pm (Not yet on the website)

The NA Way – January 2002
(Volume 19 Number 1)

Home GROUP



Sponsorship Behind the Walls

Sponsorship in Arizona for inmates is 100% voluntary and can begin with just a letter of willingness to participate. Once your message of interest has been received, your initial projects to be completed will be sent to you. After completion, a sponsor is then assigned to work with you as long as the communication remains open. Your Sponsor will send you an initial welcome letter letting you know who they are and how to further reach them with "Step Work" and other correspondence. This method of sponsorship is useful for those who are serving six months or longer than six months from their release date.

Where to mail your letter:

Arizona Region of Narcotics Anonymous – H&I
PO Box 1351
Phoenix, AZ 85001

While you wait to hear from us, search out your unit for existing NA meetings and begin attending. In the meantime, let us welcome you to Narcotics Anonymous, **Arizona Sponsorship behind the walls.**



A. Write to us about:

1. What did using cause you to lose or give up/away?
2. Where did you first hear about Narcotics Anonymous?
3. What have you gained from working a program of recovery?
4. If you are working with a sponsor:
 - a. Is he an inmate?
 - b. Someone from before?
 - c. Or from writing to "Sponsorship behind the walls"?
5. What keeps your interest in NA alive?
6. How long will you remain incarcerated before release and your concerns for that eventful day.

B. Guidelines for writing:

1. Keep your story concise and fit it on one page or less.
2. No need to over emphasize with cussing.
3. Please don't write with excessive details about the drugs or drug class which you used.

C. Once completed send your story to:

East Valley Prison Coordinator
PO Box 5264
Mesa, AZ, 85221



Inmates! *Show your creativity*

We would like to publish your artwork. **The NA Times** - Phoenix, West Valley, East Valley – is looking to involve the members of the fellowship **Behind the Walls**. Send your artwork and a piece of your recovery story to us for publication (Keep the artwork clean and recovery related).

Send to:

Narcotics Anonymous Prison Coordinator
PO Box 5264
Mesa, AZ 85221



WEDNESDAY
7:00 PM TO 8:15

4140 N MILLER RD
SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85251

