



THE NA TIMES

Phoenix – West Valley – East Valley

December 2022

Particles of Me

Last night I was told by my best friend I could not be there for her as she needs or wants me to be. Last week my sponsor told me I am alone, that no one can possibly understand what I am going through. I have been feeling bare, parts of my armor stripped away revealing my skin—shorn away by a winter's chill and left to wither into dust being absorbed into the vast forgotten.

You see, I am an inmate in the Department of Corrections. I am a number, my name left meaningless like the envelope discarded from a Christmas letter. I once felt like I had meaning—I was a father and in time, I found my equal, my partner, someone I thought I could share my life with. Today, I feel as if I am almost nothing. I see the masks we wear in the fellowship. Those who told me they'd be there and six months pass, not a word. There are those who have tried to stay in touch, but as time progresses their correspondence lessens much like leaves near winter fall less from the trees, the ground feeling barren and grey.

I am not angry; life goes on outside these walls and an understanding breaks into this addict's mind. It is both isolation and acceptance. The prison system will isolate you, it is what they want. Pull away what can make us good and keep us like carrots in a rotting stew and hope we conform, to stay here as cattle on their ranch. A turning profit for shareholders and media fodder for politicians. They put up the facade of classes and programs to keep the public and families of those men and women at bay, but the reality is much more sinister.

It is not rehabilitation but a form of subordination. Make me as what you want me to be so I can either never leave or return here and churn your perpetual money machine. I had another article I had just about finished writing for this month—it was about love. But when I woke up this morning my Higher Power gave me this. She is not cruel, She gifts me with words and meaning and She loves me as I have grown to respect Her and listen for moments of clarity, reason and surrender. I am having a hard time loving myself these days. I am struggling with loss, depression and actualization. The inmate's world stands still while the world beyond these walls moves at lightning speed. What will happen to those who reach out to me? Where will they be in another six months? Another year? Or what about in eight years when I am released

from here, my shackles loosened but not broken? Will you be there to welcome me or will my isolation be complete? Will I be deleted from your lives like dust wiped from furniture, brushed away and left to the dust bin? What are we but passing particles, trying to form a bond—once broken we drift apart, just memories of the past? Do we reach out? Reform our alliances and friendships? Feel warmth again from lives of our past or do we hesitate, find excuses and eventually drift away into a remembrance of those bonds we once were?

I am not looking for your sympathy. I do not wish you to feel sorry for me, I do not feel sorry for myself. I write this as a warning to you who might read this and decide to take in what I am trying to say. I was not given a chance. I went into detox only to be torn away from my life with my daughters. Taken by men in blue and thrown into a system that does not believe in rehabilitation but one of servitude. Upon receiving bond I found a new life, an opportunity to change the very fabric of my being, except the seams were already being sewn. No matter what I did, my destination was these concrete walls and razor wire fences. I found recovery, I found love and I found myself like a Phoenix rising up from his ashes only to be brought down by a net of a society that does not believe in second chances but wants to punish, tear apart, divide and isolate me from everything good. I wish I was weak, I wish I didn't wear this armor of resilience. To numb away the pain I feel would be the nectar from a poison which would surely kill me in the end. No, I will serve my time, I will leave here and form new bonds perhaps leaving the old ones behind. My old fellowship might still be around but I know I will need to seek out new friendships. Hopefully I can leave the pain of what could have been with those I hoped to be a part of behind. My best friend told me I could not be there for her like she needs—I am not a phone call away, nor a door she can walk through and be comforted by the man she thought she'd spend the rest of her life with. She needs people, needs her fellowship, something I cannot provide.

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“Most of us learn that we can only carry our message to someone who is asking for help.”

“The temptation to give advice is great, but when we do so we lose the respect of newcomers”

Basic Text page 51

Newly clean, I was living in a house with five other guys who were also new as members of our fellowship. Often we would get calls to go on twelfth step visits with qualified recovering members. I was able to learn quickly that an addict not asking for help was not ready to hear our message. These type calls were often made in frustration by family members or friends who were desperate for relief from the negative behaviors of the addict they were associated with. In these cases we would leave literature and phone numbers. I also learned that a toxic addict was sometimes eager to agree to every suggestion offered in what seemed like a ploy to get this over with as painlessly as possible. We left literature and the hot line number with them as well. These days with all the options available to suffering addicts I personally don't encounter these examples as often.

As a using addict, I had strong resentments toward authority figures and pretty much anyone telling me how to live my life. I have often heard others speak of this as well. These same issues were still with me in early recovery. The story of the drug addicted horse thief who went to rehab and came back home as a clean horse thief was relatable for sure.

I was not at all responsive or attracted to members giving me advice. I was far more inclined to gravitate to the men who shared their own experience, strength and hope and formed suggestions rather than demands as to how to attempt positive changes in my life. I admit that on occasion, a suggestion from a trusted source came across like a smack upside my head. The trusted source, or sponsor, was the difference in these instances.

The twelfth step tells us that we experience a spiritual awakening as a result of earnestly working the first eleven and we tried to help the still suffering addict and practice these principles in all our affairs. For me, two words that resonate are “try” and “practice” because they imply that there is always going to be room to improve and our fellowship is all about the journey, one day at a time.

Twelfth step action I engage in helps me to remember where I came from and the fellow members of Narcotics Anonymous I get to associate with everywhere I go are instrumental in keeping me on the correct path, the road to recovery!

Happy Holiday season to all and thanks for allowing me to be of service to the fellowship that saved and changed my life for better.

—Dave S.

But, the acceptance of it doesn't make the pain any less. The knowing of me being a better person today does not lessen the fact I feel empty not having those girls I came home to every day, held in my arms and felt their first breathes. I am alone and you cannot comprehend my pain even as you might try to understand it. I will never give up though, even if you aren't there with open arms, even if I choose to find new meetings, new addicts and a new way of life. I will never turn my back on those who were there for me before, even if you did not reach out to me while I was kept locked away for how ever many years.

Those who know me know me as love, know me as caring and know me as open arms—a hug in the cold, the shoulder for you to cry upon and the pillar if you need to be held up. No anger runs through these veins for those who have not and will not reach out to me. I will always love my best friend, she has shown me I do not need to be lonely even though I am alone. My daughters will know and feel my love even if they are angry and decide they don't want me in their lives when the laws of our nation decide to give me my God-given rights bestowed upon me by nature and regulated my the atrocities of men and woman who care less about being human and more about their personal gains self-centeredness hidden behind the

facade of morals and protection of "their" society which is meant for isolation and division so they can maintain their power and the illusion of control. I may be an inmate, a felon, a dreg of society, but I am still a human. I have dreams, goals, feelings and a passion to be better than I was yesterday.

have hopes for when I leave here, I will to find a place for myself in society, people I can call friends, a meeting I can call my home group and the love of a woman I can share my life with and she will want to share hers with me. I am an addict and even though I often write of hope and love, today my Higher Power spoke through me to write this as somber as it may seem. It is me, where I am at and like so many things, this too shall pass. These words, they are written to remember, or catch your eye like a refraction of light... life goes on no matter where you are. The hands of time stop for no man. You may choose to fall through the cracks or you can have the desire to connect and form bonds, find love and find somewhere you belong—a particle of dust laying upon a field of trees whose beauty nourishes the world around with oxygen and life.

My name is Todd O. I am an addict.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and practice these principles in all our affairs. **3**

The joy of living is the theme of the 12th step. Something we have all wanted our entire lives. Something, that probably for all of us, at some point seemed unobtainable, has finally become our existence. Through hard work and commitment, we have managed somehow to create a life full of self-worth, productivity, fulfillment and joy. The Narcotics Anonymous Program has not only changed our lives and showed us a new way of living, it has also provided us, through the fellowship and working the steps, a Spiritual Awakening that leads us to endless possibilities and a peaceful life.

Being able to accept life on life's terms, our attitude about everything has changed. We find ourselves in awe of this free gift. Now, we must practice these principles that we have acquired in all of our affairs if we are to keep our sobriety. When I came to the Narcotics Anonymous Program, I made a promise to myself that I would listen to every suggestion given to me by anyone in the program that had a significant amount of clean time and that I would follow every suggestion outlined in the 12 steps.

I am amazed at what I have come to find out about who I am. I have gone from being a completely hopeless drug addict to a peaceful, confident, fun, successful woman. I am an amazing mother, daughter, and friend to many people. I am a law-abiding functioning member of society today. I am full of hope and have enough to share with other people. I am clear-minded. And the best thing that has happened to me, which is the 12th step, is that I have found my destiny. I am now a Certified Peer Support Recovery Specialist and I work as a facilitator, teaching other addicts how to find the same gift I was given. By surrendering to this program, and to my Higher Power, I have found the joy of living. I pray that every addict still suffering allows this program and someone in it to help them find it too.

Sincerely,
Danica Z.

Spiritual Principle of the Day: *December 1st*

Unconditional Love and Sponsorship

I think that the most valuable lesson sponsorship gives me is the opportunity to practice unconditional love. It deepens my appreciation for what has been given to me.

—*Sponsorship*, Chapter 1, “The Twelfth Step in action”

It takes a lot of courage to ask someone to be your sponsor. It takes even more courage to *be* a sponsor, and more patience with ourselves and our sponsees as well. Whether we admit it or not, some of us avoid newcomers because we see ourselves in them. We know we drive ourselves nuts, so how can we deal with more than one of us? Also, what happens if we mess them up worse? And years later, when we have time and a reasonable amount of experience, someone we respect asks for our guidance through the Steps. Those feelings of fear resurface. *What if I'm not good enough?*

Our sponsor's steadfast support plays a huge role in our recovery, especially when we are the knuckleheads we can sometimes be. At times, we are also aware that our sponsor is just another human being—an addict with character defects like ours, who can offend us or come up short. The mutual love, respect, and acceptance that flow back and forth within that relationship are instructive in our decision to sponsor others.

“Yes, of course, I'm so honored you asked.” And we won't do it perfectly. For some of us, even with experience, our patience might wear thin when a sponsee doesn't take our suggestions. We have to confront our powerlessness when someone we sponsor relapses or acts out. There are times when our own lives are unmanageable and we have to dig deep to be able to show our sponsees the unconditional love they need.

Sometimes we make mistakes. But just as in the relationship with our own sponsor, we make it work because we need each other to stay clean. Or, we can't make it work.

Sometimes going our separate ways is itself an act of love.

Today I will give back some of the unconditional love I received—to a sponsee, my sponsor, or any addict who needs it.

My first introduction to service came when I had about ten days clean. I was lovingly dragged into an east valley H&I committee meeting. It felt super uncomfortable and I had no understanding of how a committee operated. In the beginning, I didn't have the clean time for most service commitments. However, I was unknowingly included in and introduced to service by being shown how to chair meetings at my home group, clean up after myself (and others), sit through business meetings, and show up for other people's lives when they need it.

Early on I realized that I really enjoyed listening to speaker tapes and decided to join the ARCNA programming committee with about 6 months clean. Being a part of a convention committee has been extremely rewarding in ways I hadn't originally imagined. Being able to watch other people laugh and hug and catch up with old friends, genuinely enjoying life with one another for a weekend has brought indescribable joy to my heart. The Spiritual Principle A Day entry from November 10th says "We continue showing up and find that why we stay committed is different from what brought us to that commitment in the first place." I came for the speaker tapes, but stayed for the atmosphere of recovery. The entry goes on to say, "Freedom springs from the newfound passion when we find our niche in service." The programming committee has become my special little corner in recovery service. It is a position that I truly enjoy and fills my spirit in numerous ways. One of the most impactful and unforeseen benefits I've experienced in service has come by way of the relationships I have since developed. I've built a strong bond and friendships with so many of the people I've served alongside during the course of ARCNA planning.

Just after I got five years clean, I decided to attend my first Phoenix Area Service Committee meeting. In all honesty here, I had heard plenty of horror stories about Area and figured I should go to find out the truth for myself. In that same month my home group decided to start up in-person meetings again. I stepped up to be GSR so I could continue going to Area and be of service in a whole new way. I'm about six months into that commitment and have learned a lot about the service structure and the importance of the group. There've been several instances where I've had to lean on some more experienced members to explain to me what was going on. I have to move through fear and be able to ask questions when I don't understand something. I've found that my predecessors are always willing to take the time to explain the process. Being young in recovery, I'm part of the future of NA. I feel like I have a personal responsibility to learn all I can about different aspects of service in order to continue carrying the message when I inevitably become a "predecessor." Recently, me and two other women have joined together and started a tradition study using the Guiding Principles book. It's been a great experience thus far. I've been able to get a whole new perspective on others' use of the traditions in their own lives and in service. It's given me an opportunity to look at and work on my own behaviors in the context of a group and my place within service.

I don't know where my future will go when it comes to service. I'm just along for my Higher Power's ride. I've come to have great appreciation for service itself as well as those who are a part of NA service on any level. It takes a lot of people to keep the doors open and the coffee hot. I want others to experience the freedom Narcotics Anonymous has given me and I can't keep that unless I give it away. I have no idea when the message will be carried or who it may touch. All I have to do is show up, do my best, and let the miracles happen.

Thank you for letting me be of service.

Morgan T.

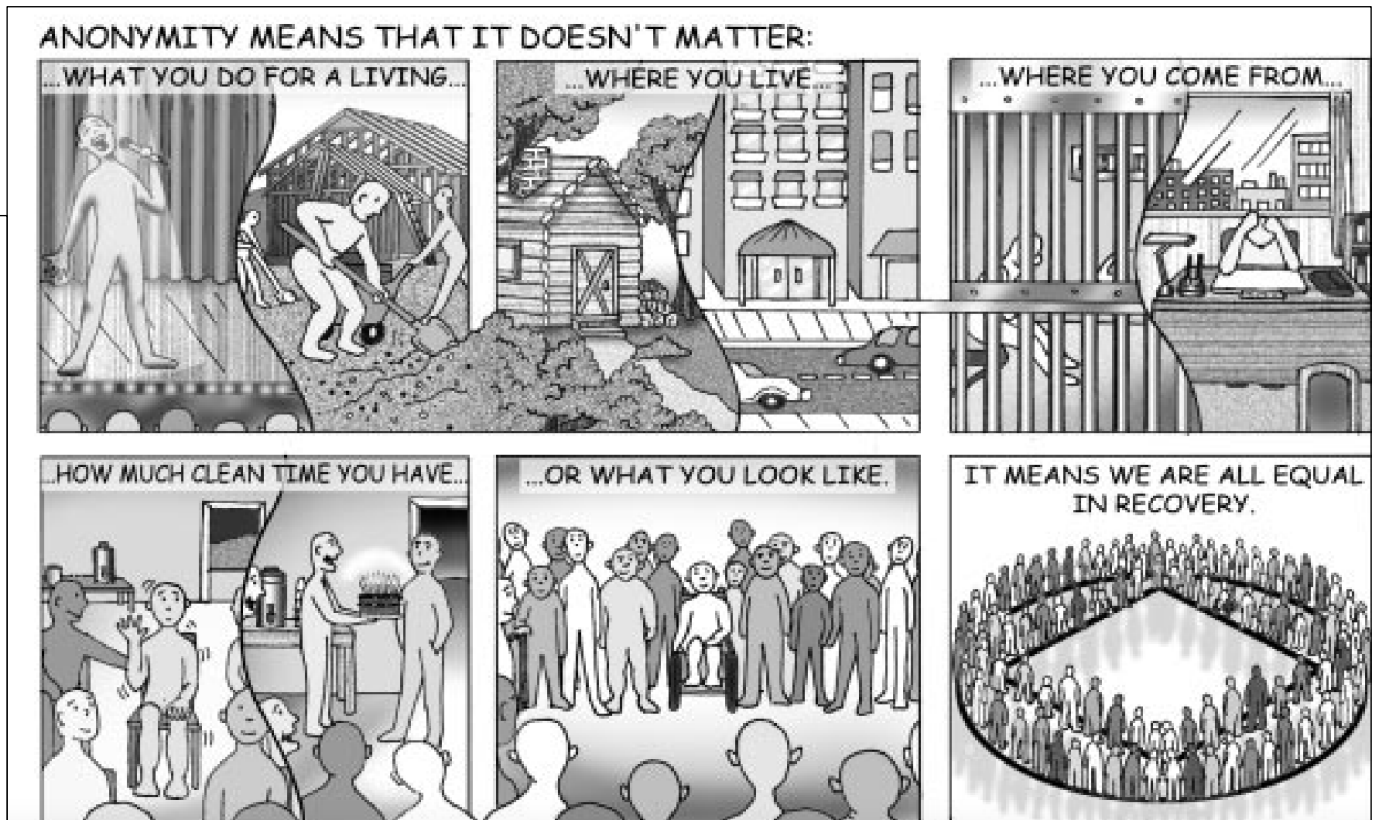


UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Mt. Lemmon Bash Logo Contect	December 10 th (11:00am)
Fire Side Meeting	December 13 th (6:00pm)
EV Skyline Serenity Hike	December 24 th (8:00am)
PAAC Holiday Narathon	December 24 th -25 th (All day)
PASC NYE Ball	December 31 st (7:00pm)

The NA Way – July 2002
(Volume 19 Number 3)



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

EAST VALLEY ACTIVITIES PRESENTS



Javelina-Ridgeline-Beverly

December 24th, 2022 (4th Saturday)

This is a 4 mile
Hike with
panoramic views
of South
Mountain Park,
and the City of
Phoenix.

WE MEET:

**WE Meet at
trailhead at 9:00
to start HIKE at
9:15 AM**

Directions:

From I-10 &
Baseline Road, travel
west on Baseline for
0.9 miles.
Turn south on 46th
Street and travel
0.3 miles to
trailhead parking



Bring: Newcomer, Water (1 Quart), Lunch, & P.M.A.

Contact:
Chuck H. (480) 236-4859

**NA Meeting
Included**