



THE NA TIMES

Phoenix – West Valley – East Valley

July 2023

Dear NA Community;

I am GH. I am about to be 30 years old. I have spent four and half years on the streets, and another four behind bars. When I was arrested that final time, I sat looking at my torn apart face in the cell mirror and thought "my life is over." I had realized my using days were over, I had finally gone to far, but I also thought my life was over as well. I scorched my whole life to use, and now I could no longer use.

My first year locked up, I was depressed beyond belief, just realizing the damage I had done to myself. The damage I did to myself physically, the damage I did to my life, and the damage I had done to all the ones left in my wake. All the pain and awareness I had been running from had finally reached me. And boy did it make itself known. That first year, I was caught between denial and suicidal.

My second year, I discovered two of the most important aspects to my recovery: Exercise and Narcotics Anonymous. Until I discovered these, I thought any purpose I once had was destroyed by my own hand. Although I torched a lot of what I had or who I had, I realized there was a way to gain NEW purpose. NEW people. NEW love. I realized my mistakes and my disease didn't define me for the rest of my life. Not if I didn't let it.

For my last two years, I became a work out fiend, and known as the "NA Guy" on the yard. I developed a healthy routine. For the first time in my life really. I watched people's recovery and read about how others had accomplished their clean time, and just copied them. I used the "fake it till I made it" motto in the beginning. Although I was 28 years old, I was a clean slate. I had no idea who I was, what I wanted to be, or even how to get there. So I tried to the best of my ability to live by the words of the literature and the words of fellow members. As literal as I could. Faked it until I made it. Next thing you know, I was a clean for over 3 years, sponsoring people, chairing meetings, and actually working on my issues inside myself. Embracing the awareness finally.

After being released, I struggled to keep my same routine from inside. I thought that routine was the only routine that would work. But I remembered, I have done this before. Nothing defines me but what I allow to. I applied the same concept I did in prison, to being out. One day at a time. Asked for help. Got a sponsor, attended meetings. Still looking for guidance on how to live and stay clean, and actually FOLLOWING that guidance. My life is moving along. And I gaining instead of losing. For once. I'm still plagued by pain of the soul, and probably will be for a time. But now I'm not alone. And never will be. And neither will you. Ever again.

Garry

Clean-Time Chronicles

As I reflect on being interviewed for the newsletter, the things that come to mind (and make me smile) are the slogans and sayings that were, and sometimes still are, popular. I list some of my favorites below.

“Think, Think, Think” was a sign that hung on the wall at almost every clubhouse meeting I went to. It made me excited to think that after all the years of believing I had no brain left, and having been diagnosed with early onset “wet brain syndrome,” I was finally going to be allowed to use the brain

that God had given me for serious problem solving/thinking and chaos creation.

However, I remember some of the older members explaining to me that my brain was like a bad neighborhood and I shouldn't go in there alone. They suggested (a subtle command) that I always take another member of the fellowship with me – preferably my sponsor. This turned out to be most helpful in my recovery, as it gave me some basic beginnings in allowing other people close enough to help me.

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The Seventh Tradition seems like an easy one. It states that we are self-supporting through our own contributions. This means we don't accept money or other items of monetary value from treatment centers, doctors, hospitals, governments, or any person or organization, no matter how well-meaning or how badly they want to see us succeed. Since the early days of 12-Step programs, groups saw that allowing outside contributions could influence us and prevent us from being accountable only to our membership

To honor the Seventh Tradition, we pass the basket and hold fundraisers designed to help us carry the message. That seems simple enough. What about being self-supporting in our own lives? How do we practice the Seventh Tradition in our lives?

Our *Basic Text* tells us we become "productive members of society," and to many of us, that entails working for a living. (I have probably made the mistake of pushing my sponsees too hard in this area.) There are several reasons we often urge newcomers to become self-supporting early in their recovery. When we used, we were takers. Perhaps we took from our families and certainly from society if we caused harm and experienced legal and medical interventions.

In NA, members urge us to "give back," and having a job and contributing to society may be a large part of our recovery.

There are some in our fellowship, however, who simply cannot contribute monetarily. Not every member is fortunate in the career arena. Some of have disabilities and cannot work more than a few hours a week, if at all. Some of us have a criminal past, which may preclude us from returning to a career we had before we became addicted. Others have no job skills and must learn a trade or go to school to forge a career. Going to school today is not cheap and students are often broke.

At times in our recovery, we may be able to contribute financially more than at others. What about when we find ourselves unable to contribute financially? We can contribute in other ways – by taking a phone-line shift, by being of service in other ways, or simply by admitting that, once we can, we will contribute again.

It is not our job to judge who contributes and who doesn't, although sometimes we do. If we see you stroll in with a \$5 Starbucks and skip the basket, we may judge (just being real). The Seventh Tradition is a powerful statement in our rooms. We are self-supporting so that outside influences cannot corrupt or cause us to sway from our primary purpose. In our own lives, self-support is critical to self-esteem.

Seventh Concept: *All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in the decision-making process.*

As we learned last month in the Sixth Concept, 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. One of the beautiful things about NA is our diversity. That diversity should be present and respected in our service efforts.

For example, bringing newer members into our service structure ensures that they help us recall that those with fewer months or years in the fellowship can't always afford events and trips that those with older members, more established in careers, can.

Our literature tells us, "NA service is a team effort." Only by allowing the full participation of all members in the service structure can we be sure that we are following the Seventh Concept. This means that we may have to take more time to discuss issues, especially when we see that not all members have participated in the decision-making discussions. We may need to draw out quieter or less experienced members, or even "put up" with annoying or repeated questioning from those who may not understand the issue or who disagree with decisions we make.

Each person on the committee or the planning event should have "relative weight," according to our literature. It's easy to remember if we remember that old axiom, "There's no Big I's and Little U's in NA." We all have a voice, no matter how long we have been here and how deep our service experience.

The Seventh Concept tells us that all members of the service body "bear substantial responsibility" for the group's decision; therefore, each member of the team should have a substantial voice.

Nancy G

Is it Time to Put a Leash on Bringing Dogs to Meetings and NA Functions?

Everyone who knows me knows I love dogs. Those who have known me over the years will remember my Belgian Malinois, Dallas, who attended many meetings and never missed a West Valley Area dance, complete with her flashing disco collar. That, my friends, was decades ago when dog bites did not cost thousands of dollars to settle. We attended a meeting a few weeks ago and a pit bull puppy nipped me on the forearm. Puppy teeth are incredibly sharp and two weeks later I was still healing. Imagine if this puppy bit a child or someone’s face. The puppy ran around the meeting most of the time, which distracted speakers and while amusing to some, was not so much to others.

Unless your dog is a service dog trained to perform some function, home groups should have a healthy discussion about bringing dogs or other non-service animals to meetings, including events. \

But “Each Group is Autonomous!”

Yes, each group is autonomous, according to our Fourth Tradition, “... **except when affecting other groups or NA as a whole.**” In 2019, the average cost to settle a dog bite claim was over \$43,000. Can NA’s insurance policy be affected if a dog bites someone at a meeting or at a campout? What about vet bills if a dog fight occurs? Many bites occur when breaking up dog fights.

A dog bite can affect NA in several ways. An insurance claim will affect group members if it increases our premiums, causes our insurance to non-renew due to our claim history, or in the case of a serious injury, causes bad publicity for NA.

Another issue arises when a meeting attendee is afraid of dogs, has dog allergies, or who a dog bite history. This person might not attend a meeting or may leave a meeting due to a dog’s presence. **NA meetings are for addicts, and the needs of every addict should come before our desire to have our non-service dog accompany us.**

I rarely comment on a problem in a home group unless asked. In the case of my dog bite, I approached a home group member after the meeting, who said group members were concerned but did not want to address the issue directly with the member. It is not always easy to discuss uncomfortable topics, but we can best find solutions through dialogue.

What is a Service Dog?

Here is the definition of a service dog according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

“Under the ADA, a service animal is defined as **a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.** The task(s) performed by the dog must be directly related to the person's disability.” In addition, under Arizona law, your service dogs can be removed from as facility for the following reasons.

- If the animal poses a direct threat to health and safety (barking or snapping at others).
- It pees or poops in the meeting or in an inappropriate place on the premises.
- If the owner is unwilling or unable to control it.
- It poses an “undue burden” on the meeting or event.

Emotional support dogs or “comfort dogs” are not considered service dogs under the ADA. This link https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm provides good insight into the ADA laws, which we always want to comply with. I believe we see the most misuse of the word “service dog” with emotional support or comfort dogs. Whether your group wants to enforce this with comfort dogs or not, this is the law according to Americans with Disabilities Act.

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Step Seven: *We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*

By the time we get to Step 7, we are at least aware of what character defects are. If we can't identify our own defects, we can probably make lists of everyone else’s. One thing that was apparent to me when I first arrived at this step is that I cannot fix myself.

I heard it shared in meetings that if I could fix myself, I wouldn't have ended up in Narcotics Anonymous. This is so true. When I first admitted that I cannot, on my own, change myself, my initial feeling was, “I am hopeless.” Then with the help of the fellowship and our message, I realized I needed help.

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How Can We Discuss This Respectfully and Legally If Someone Brings an Animal?

According to the ADA, here is dialogue group leaders can have with those bringing dogs into meetings. “In situations where it is not obvious that the dog is a service animal, staff [group leaders] may ask only two specific questions: (1) Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability? and (2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform? Staff are not allowed to request any documentation for the dog, require that the dog demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person's disability.” The dog does not have to wear a service dog vest, harness, or patch.

Another factor to consider is how your meeting’s facility managers would feel if they knew members were bringing animals. We do not want to lose a facility and perhaps damage the reputation of NA by having animals if the facility does not welcome them.

“Our Leaders Are but Trusted Servants ...”

It’s not easy to approach someone with an animal. However, as group leaders, it is our responsibility to protect the safety of all at our meetings to the best of our ability, even when it may be uncomfortable to do so.

Most of us love dogs. However, home groups and subcommittees should reconsider allowing members to bring pets to meetings and events. Bring this up at your home group or at subcommittees that sponsor events. If needed, you can make an announcement at your meeting saying service dogs are always welcome; non-service animals are not. The needs of the addict seeking recovery must come first.

Nancy G.

That I need help is such a simple concept. I did start to notice that unless a defect really had me in the corner and embarrassed me, I would call it a “survival skill.” Those were not easy to let go. I thought they made me who I was.

Members taught me early on that the way to practice this step is not to work on my defects, but to put my assets and strengths into action. This is how I started living this step. Over time, I have realized that the main thing that was missing in my first 7th step was humility.

The *Basic Text* says that, “To be truly humble is to accept and honestly try to be ourselves.” This did not happen overnight for me. It took multiple rounds of the full 12 steps for me to know honestly, who I was, so that I could be that person. When I got a glimpse of who Patte T. was, using my “survival skills” started to cause me spiritual and emotional pain.

I shared in meetings, I exposed my defects, and I trusted that people in the program would still accept me. Most importantly, I trusted the God of my understanding and I asked for help. Today I understand humility to be “Not thinking less of myself but thinking of myself less.”

This thought process turns me to service and toward others, and draws me into a deeper relationship with my Higher Power. Character defects do not sit well with my spirit anymore. The miracle of recovery has taken hold. Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous.

Patte T

Clean-Time Chronicles

“There is a God, and you are NOT it.” Pretty much self-explanatory – which is pretty funny considering I was a charter member of the “I don’t believe in anything” club when I got here.

“I have come to believe in a Power so great – if I turn right, HP has a RIGHT plan. If I turn LEFT, HP has a left plan.” As true today as the first time I ever heard it.

“The only way out is through.” This has gotten me through the good and the bad times. Jeff T used to tell me – “just lean into it.” Feel the feelings, do the next right thing, and stay the course. Invaluable advice for someone who couldn’t tell a feeling from a wall!

“The steps, the steps, the steps”

Theresa K

11-3-1982



UPCOMING EVENTS

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

ARCNA	Friday - Sunday July 7 th – July 9 th
Salt River Run	8:00am July 16 th
Kickball	Saturday July 22 @ 6:30pm
EV Skyline Serenity Hike	Saturday July 22 @ 10:15am

The NA Way – April 2004
(Volume 21 Number 2)



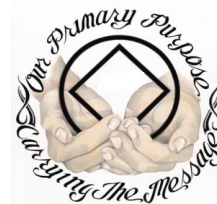
Sponsorship Behind the Walls

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



NA HIKE 4th SATURDAY
July 22nd, 2023
RAILROAD TUNNEL

From the 260 / 87 intersection in Payson go north on 87 a couple miles to the Houston Mesa turnoff on the right. Follow Houston Mesa 10.3 miles to Whispering Pines and turn left onto Control Road [FR64]. In 0.7 miles turn right onto FR32 and bear right at 3.3 miles to FR32A and travel 0.5 miles to the trailhead parking lot.

Drive slow on FR32 to minimize dust for the residents.
We will hike Col. Devin Trail #290 to the RR tunnel

Parking is \$0.- the hike is priceless.

Meet us There at the Trailhead @ 10:45 AM
Hike Starts at 11:00
It is suggested to leave Mesa by 8:30

Call to let us know you are coming:
Chuck H 480-236-4859

BRING:
Newcomer, Water, Snack, & PMA



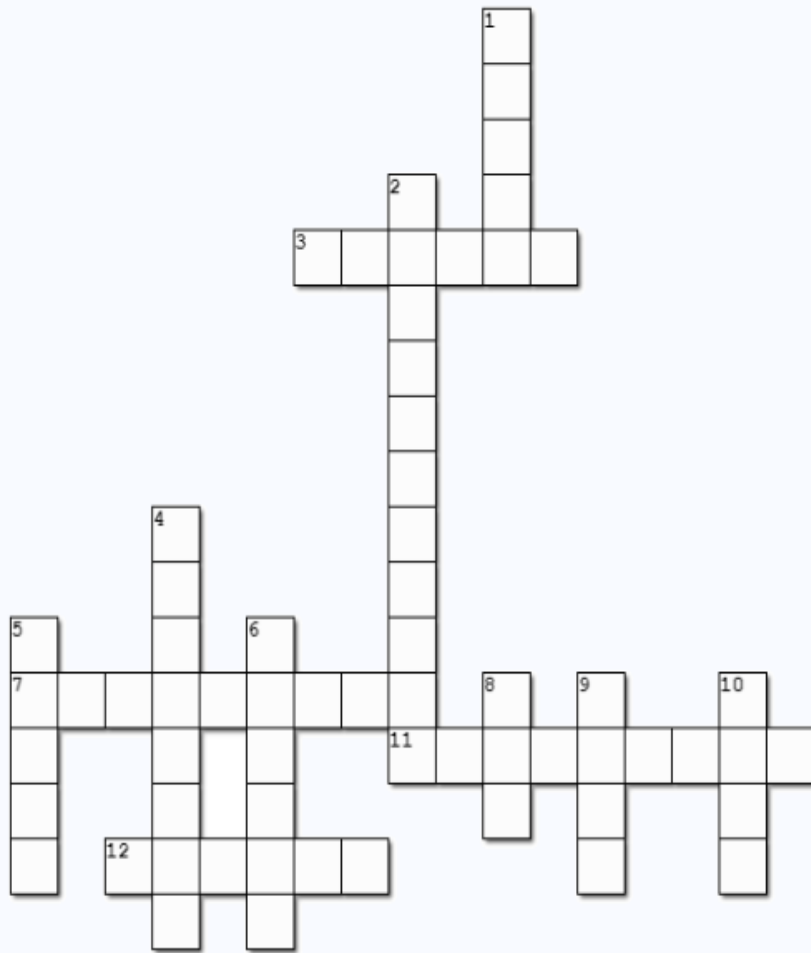
We Will Find A Cozy Spot To Have an NA Meeting

www.arizona-na.org



STEP THREE

All clues and words derived from the Third Step in the Basic Text.



Across

3. What the program does for us if we allow it.
7. What we DON'T have to be to take the Third Step.
11. Gets easier with daily practice.
12. What sort of self-appraisal are we ready for now?

Down

1. We cannot ____ in our spiritual program; we want all that we can get.
2. All that is required.
4. The word ____ implies action.
5. What controlled our will and our lives.
6. The ____ our drugs took us, the lower they brought us.
8. All that we needed to do is ____.
9. God's ____ is our greatest source of strength.
10. Open-mindedness, willingness, and surrender.