



For Those in Treatment

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This pamphlet is designed to introduce you to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. It represents the shared experience of addicts who are recovering today in NA. While you are in treatment, you may learn something about the disease of addiction and about the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Treatment can help you start to live life drug-free. The support of other recovering addicts and an ongoing recovery program that includes the Twelve Steps of NA can help you continue living without the use of drugs. In this pamphlet, we offer some suggestions to help you in your transition from treatment to continuing recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

What is the Narcotics Anonymous Program?

Narcotics Anonymous is a program of recovery from the disease of addiction. This program is for any addict who wants to stop using drugs. In Narcotics Anonymous, we believe that we can help each other to stay clean by using simple guidelines. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA are our guidelines; they contain the principles on which we base our recovery.

Because we believe that addicts can best help other addicts, Narcotics Anonymous has no professional counselors or therapists. Membership costs nothing. NA meetings—where addicts share their experience, strength, and hope—are usually held on a regular basis. This is one of the ways in which we support one another in recovery.

Recovery in Narcotics Anonymous

Narcotics Anonymous is for any addict who wants to recover from the disease of addiction. If you are currently in treatment, you may have entered for some reason other than a desire to stop using drugs. No matter what your initial motivation for entering treatment may have been, if you want to stop using drugs and continue your recovery, Narcotics Anonymous may be for you.

Once we stopped using drugs, many of us started comparing ourselves to other addicts. We focused on our differences rather than our similarities. Seeing only the differences made it easy to think that maybe we didn't belong in NA.

Denial is a prominent aspect of the disease of addiction. Denial keeps us from seeing the whole truth about ourselves and our disease. Feeling that we are different from other addicts is a manifestation of this denial. It helps to take an honest look at the unmanageability of our lives that resulted from our drug use. We look especially at our relationships, our employment, our living conditions, and our financial obligations. Instead of thinking about the good times we had using drugs, we try to remember when we may have said, "What am I doing here? Why do I feel this way? How long has it been since drugs worked the way I wanted them to?"

Eventually, we all face a basic question: "Do I want to stop using drugs?" Many of us could not answer this question immediately. However, when we willingly and honestly looked at our past, we found many reasons to stop using drugs. Your answer to this question can set the course for your future recovery.

The disease of addiction is progressive. Our experience during active addiction proved that to us. Continued drug use destroys us in body, mind, and spirit. We believe that, for addicts, continued

use of drugs leads to jails, institutions, or death. Breaking through denial gives us a clear picture of the destruction in our lives. With this in mind, we can look for solutions to our problems.

We learn that we are powerless over our addiction. The use of drugs is one aspect of the disease of addiction, although this disease affects all areas of our lives. We begin to recover when we abstain from all drugs. Admitting our powerlessness is a surrender, an admission that we don't know the solution to our problems. Surrender begins as we become willing to consider new ideas. We can ask for help and accept it when it's offered.

"I had a difficult time surrendering that I was powerless over my addiction. With surrender, I became responsible for my actions. I was one to blame outside things for my problems. I learned that I needed to take responsibility if I wanted to stay clean and recover. Because I had admitted I was powerless, I knew that I needed the help NA members had to offer. I needed to be willing to do the things necessary to recover."

We are taught that we are responsible for our recovery. This means that we must act. No one else will do it for us. We need to learn how to take care of ourselves.

We suggest, if possible, that you attend Narcotics Anonymous meetings while you are in treatment. Talk to other addicts in meetings and ask them questions. The friends you make now will be part of your support when you leave treatment. We also suggest that you take the time while you are in treatment to read available Narcotics Anonymous literature. During treatment, you may be given the opportunity to attend outside NA meetings. Exchange phone numbers with members that you meet at those meetings. You will develop a network of support with other recovering addicts. Becoming familiar with NA and meeting some members will help make the transition from treatment a little easier.

After Treatment

When the time comes to leave treatment, many addicts feel overwhelmed by conflicting emotions. Fear of returning to active addiction may be foremost. The return to family, job, and friends may prompt feelings of uncertainty, guilt, or inadequacy. Without the buffer zone of drugs, meeting life on its own terms is a new and sometimes intimidating experience. You may feel self-doubt when faced with new situations in recovery. We encourage you to ask questions and share your feelings with members of Narcotics Anonymous. Most of us have experienced similar feelings and situations in our early recovery.

"When the time came for me to leave treatment, I felt scared and alone. I was leaving a safe place. How was I going to stay clean? A member of Narcotics Anonymous suggested that I attend an NA meeting as soon as I left treatment. He told me I never had to be alone if I did not want to be. He suggested I talk about my feelings at the meeting and get phone numbers. He shared with me how he had felt the same way when he left treatment. Talking with him, I didn't feel so alone. Some of my fears about leaving treatment subsided after sharing with this addict."

Some addicts leaving treatment feel overconfident of their ability to stay clean on their own. It's not unusual for addicts to develop a false sense of security in the structured environment of treatment. An overconfident attitude can be dangerous, however. Thinking that "I don't need anyone's help" often leads to a relapse, a return to active addiction. Acknowledging our vulnerability helps us become willing to prepare for our discharge. We encourage you to have a plan of action before leaving treatment. Here are some suggestions that have worked for us:

- Decide that no matter what happens today, you will not use drugs.

- Contact a few Narcotics Anonymous members and let them know when you will be leaving treatment.
- Plan to attend a meeting that day. Share at the meeting that you are a newcomer.
- Introduce yourself and talk with NA members before and after the meeting.

“I remember going to my first NA meeting in the hospital. I was too paranoid to talk at the meeting, so I only listened. I heard addicts share about their using and their recovery. A few had used like I had. I began to believe what they said about their recovery. When I left the treatment center, I went to a meeting immediately. Today, I still follow the program of recovery outlined in the White Booklet. This program of recovery works for me, and I like the results. This is the way I always wanted to feel. The relief I could no longer get from drugs is here for me in the program of Narcotics Anonymous.”

Continuing the Transition

If you've followed some of the suggestions above, you've made a good beginning at building a support system. Now you can make plans for your continued recovery. First, attend as many NA meetings as you can, and choose those meetings that you will attend regularly. Some members go to a meeting every day for their first ninety days following treatment. Use the telephone numbers you have collected and call members of the NA Fellowship. These are some of the things that have helped us to stay clean.

Sponsorship is a practice that reflects our belief that addicts can best help each other recover. A sponsor is another recovering addict who can help us learn about the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Often our sponsors give us the sort of individual care and attention we need to learn about staying clean and living life without drugs. You can find a sponsor by listening carefully to addicts in meetings and asking yourself who has the kind of recovery you want. If you do not have a sponsor yet, we recommend that you choose one as soon as possible.

“Sponsorship is important. I made a commitment with an addict that I would call her every day. I would tell her my thoughts and try to be honest about them. She helped me work the Twelve Steps. Because of this relationship with my sponsor, I received far more than I expected. She was there for the joyous times of my discovering a whole new me. She was there for me when my emotional pain took my breath away. She always seemed to be saying, ‘Just live in today; things do get better.’ At the meetings we attended together, she would sit next to me.”

If you have a sponsor, call him or her often and make plans to get together face-to-face. While your sponsor may give you a great deal of support and guidance in your recovery, a sponsor will not keep you clean. We are still responsible for our own personal recovery.

Early Recovery Experiences

Experiences vary in early recovery. Some members enjoyed this time. Others recall it as painful and confusing, with unpredictable changes from one extreme to the other. No matter what happens in our recovery or how we feel, we know that using drugs will not make anything better for us.

While talking about ourselves and sharing our feelings, we find an identification with other recovering addicts. It's important for us to share our feelings and our experience. Unless we tell others how we are feeling, no one will be able to help us. We invite the sharing of experience when we ask questions of other NA members. The program of Narcotics Anonymous helps us help ourselves in recovery.

“After the meeting, NA members shared their experiences with me. I made friends at that meeting that I still have today. I’m learning a new way of living life without using drugs. I’ve learned that I do have a disease called addiction and I am powerless over my addiction. For this moment, I don’t have to use drugs. I’ve learned that members of NA will be there for me to help me get through any situation. I’ve learned that if I don’t use drugs, my life improves. Most importantly, I learned through working the Twelve Steps of NA how to practice spiritual principles. Today I know that we can recover together.”

Once we have stopped using drugs, we need to learn how to live life clean. We need to learn how to recover in all areas of our lives. We can become comfortable with ourselves, without drugs, by applying the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous in our recovery program. We can have freedom from active addiction by consistently practicing what has worked for other recovering addicts. By working the steps, we change and grow. Recovery from active addiction can continue as long as we are willing to practice what we have learned.

“While in a treatment center, I had my introduction to the Narcotics Anonymous program of recovery. I had to start at Step One by admitting my powerlessness. As the drugs left my system, I saw how unmanageable my life had become. I found that I could no longer blame others for my difficulties. Although I am still an infant in the NA program, there have been remarkable changes in my thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behavior. I started helping others. I found, even just out of treatment, that I could share my recovery with someone still in treatment. I learned to give it away to keep it, to serve others. As I worked the steps, I started giving instead of taking. I felt relief as my fears and resentments diminished. I began to share who I really was with other addicts. This program saved my life.”

Freedom

Hundreds of thousands of addicts are staying clean in Narcotics Anonymous worldwide. You can recover in NA, too. We want you to know that you are welcome in NA. We hope that you find the freedom from active addiction that we have found. We do recover to live a life filled with purpose, direction, and joy.

Tell yourself:

JUST FOR TODAY, my thoughts will be on my recovery, living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will have faith in someone in NA who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will have a program. I will try to follow it to the best of my ability.

JUST FOR TODAY, through NA, I will try to get a better perspective on my life.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will be unafraid. My thoughts will be on my new associations, people who are not using and who have found a new way of life. So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear.

OTHER NA LITERATURE YOU MAY WISH TO READ

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS—Originally published in 1983, this publication is commonly referred to as the Basic Text for recovery from addiction. In its pages, many addicts share their experience, strength, and hope about the disease of addiction and their recovery through the NA program. The personal stories of many recovering addicts are also included in order to assist new members in finding identification and hope for a better life.

NA WHITE BOOKLET—The NA White Booklet was the first piece of literature written by the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. It contains a concise description of the NA program.

AM I AN ADDICT? (IP #7)—This pamphlet has a list of questions that may assist individuals in making this personal decision. Reading this pamphlet may help you to face addiction honestly and give you hope, because it offers the solution of the NA program.

JUST FOR TODAY (IP #8)—Five positive thoughts to help recovering addicts are presented in this pamphlet. Ideal for reading on a daily basis, these thoughts provide addicts with the perspective of clean living to face each new day. The remainder of the pamphlet develops the principle of living just for today, encouraging addicts to trust in a Higher Power and work the NA program on a daily basis.

SPONSORSHIP (IP #11)—Sponsorship is a vital tool for recovery. This introductory pamphlet helps provide an understanding of sponsorship, especially for new members. The pamphlet addresses some questions, including “What is a sponsor?” and “How do you get a sponsor?”

YOUTH AND RECOVERY (IP #13)—The message of this pamphlet is that recovery is possible for all addicts, regardless of their age or length of drug use. It emphasizes that all addicts eventually end up at the same point of total despair, but this is not necessary—we can begin recovery right away!