

# **UWANA OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE NEW MEETING BINDER TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**TAB 1 p4- THE GROUP BOOKLET**

**TAB 2 p23- GSR BASICS AND TWELVE CONCEPTS  
OF NA**

**TAB 3 p51- UWANA AREA GUIDELINES**

**TAB 4 p70- READINGS FOR NA MEETINGS**

**TAB 5 p81- BUSINESS MEETING BASICS, NA DECISION  
MAKING PAMPHLET**

**TAB 6 p91- GROUP SERVICE POSITION DESCRIPTIONS,  
PRINCIPLES AND LEADERSHIP IN NA**

**TAB 7 p107- TREASURER'S WORKBOOK**

**TAB 8 p144- INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO NA**

**TAB 9 p189- WHITE BOOKLET**

**TAB 10 - GUIDE TO LOCAL SERVICE**

**YOU BUY THIS BOOK FROM AREA LITERATURE 😊**

**THE INTENT OF THIS BINDER IS NOT TO TELL GROUPS IN UWANA WHAT TO DO OR HOW TO DO IT. IT IS MEANT TO PROVIDE SOME SUGGESTIONS AND OFFER ASSISTANCE. THESE MATERIALS ARE ALL EITHER PUBLISHED BY THE NA WORLD SERVICE OR THEY ARE AVAILABLE AT UWANA.ORG**

**“4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.”**

**-- NA Twelve Traditions**

**“7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”**

**-- NA Twelve Traditions**

**“4: Encourage groups to view themselves as part of the NA service structure; remind them that they are never alone. Help overcome apathy, lack of participation and lack of knowledge of the NA service structure by sharing about the importance of area level service.”**

**-- UWANA Outreach Subcommittee Guidelines**

**“7: Once a group has chosen a GSR or alternate GSR it is responsible for providing these members with continued support and guidance so that these trusted servants can carry out their duties in the spirit and atmosphere of recovery. Outreach will educate group trusted servants such as GRS's by providing a training packet to GSR's and instructing them in the purpose and importance of their position, as well as other group trusted servants' positions.”**

**-- UWANA Outreach Subcommittee Guidelines**

**Tab 1**  
**The Group Booklet**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**

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**The Group Booklet**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**



THE  
**GROU**P  
BOOKLET

## The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. 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.

Twelve Steps reprinted for adaptation by permission of AA World Services, Inc.

## Contents

Introduction .....	1
What is an NA group? .....	2
What is a “home group”? .....	4
Who can be a member? .....	4
What are “open” and “closed” meetings? .....	5
Where can we hold NA meetings? .....	5
What kind of meeting format can we use? .....	7
Participation meetings .....	7
Topic discussion meetings .....	7
Study meetings .....	7
Speaker meetings .....	7
Newcomer meetings .....	8
Question-and-answer meetings .....	8
Developing your format .....	8
What kinds of literature should we use? .....	9
What is a group business meeting? .....	9
How does the work get done? .....	10
How do we choose group officers? .....	11
What officers does a group need? .....	12
Rotation and continuity .....	16
What responsibilities does an NA group have? .....	16
How can our group support other NA services? .....	17
How can our group better serve our community? .....	18
How can our group solve its problems? .....	19
Sample meeting format .....	21
Starting a new group—A checklist .....	24



# The NA Group

## Introduction

Narcotics Anonymous groups are self-governing (the Twelve Traditions use the word *autonomous*). The group may conduct its own affairs in whatever way seems fit to its members, provided the group's actions do not adversely affect other groups or the entire NA Fellowship. So what we offer here is not a “rule book” but the shared experience of how many of our groups have met with success in conducting meetings and tending to business. Newer members may find this booklet helps them understand who does what to keep the group going and how to help. For more experienced members, it may lend some perspective to their group involvement. But no matter how much information we pack into this booklet, you're still going to find that the best source of guidance for your group is in your group itself.

There are many ways of doing things in Narcotics Anonymous. And just as all of us have our own individual personalities, so will your group develop its own identity, its own way of doing things, and its own special knack for carrying the NA message. That's the way it should be. In NA we encourage unity, not uniformity.

This booklet does not even attempt to say everything that could be said about operating an NA group. What you'll find here are some brief answers to a few very basic questions: What is an NA group? How does the work get done? What kinds of meetings can a group have? When problems arise, how are they solved? We hope this booklet proves useful as your group seeks to fulfill its primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

## What is an NA group?

When two or more addicts come together to help each other stay clean, they may form a Narcotics Anonymous group. Here are six points<sup>1</sup> based on our traditions which describe an NA group:

1. All members of a group are drug addicts, and all drug addicts are eligible for membership.
2. As a group, they are self-supporting.
3. As a group, their single goal is to help drug addicts recover through application of the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.
4. As a group, they have no affiliation outside Narcotics Anonymous.
5. As a group, they express no opinion on outside issues.
6. As a group, their public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion.

In stating the six points that differentiate an NA group from other kinds of groups, we place greater emphasis on *drug* addiction than almost anywhere else in our service literature. This is because Narcotics Anonymous groups cannot be all things to all people and still provide the initial identification drug addicts need to find their way to recovery. By clarifying our groups' sole membership requirement and primary purpose in this way, once and for all, we free ourselves to focus on freedom from the disease of addiction in the bulk of our service literature, certain that our groups are providing adequate grounds for identification to those seeking recovery.

NA groups are formed by addicts who wish to support one another in recovery, in carrying the message directly to other addicts, and in participating in the activities and services of NA as a whole. One of the primary means an NA group uses to fulfill these ends is to conduct NA meetings where addicts can share their recovery experience, thus supporting one another and at the same time carrying the message to others. Some groups host a single weekly meeting; others host a number of meetings each week. The quality of an NA meeting is directly dependent on the strength and solidarity of the NA group which sponsors it.

<sup>1</sup> The six points describing a group have been adapted from "The AA Group," published by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Reprinted by permission.

NA groups—not NA meetings—are the foundation of the NA service structure. Together, the NA groups are responsible for making service decisions that directly affect them and what they do in their meetings as well as those that fundamentally affect the identity of Narcotics Anonymous. For instance, new NA literature is approved by regional delegates at the World Service Conference only after they have received direction from the groups they represent. Likewise, "proposals to change NA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, name, nature, or purpose should be approved directly by the groups" before they can become effective, in accordance with our Second Concept.

Groups maintain contact with the rest of Narcotics Anonymous through representatives selected to participate on the groups' behalf in the NA service structure. Mailings from the World Service Office, including the quarterly *NA Way Magazine*,<sup>2</sup> keep NA groups informed on issues affecting the fellowship worldwide. If your group is not receiving *The NA Way Magazine*, ask your secretary to contact the World Service Office.

The primary purpose of an NA group is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. The group provides each member with the opportunity to share and to hear the experience of other addicts who are learning to live a better way of life without the use of drugs. The group is the primary vehicle by which our message is carried. It provides a setting in which a newcomer can identify with recovering addicts and find an atmosphere of recovery.

Sometimes specialized NA groups form to provide additional identification for addicts with particular needs in common. For example, many men's, women's, gay, and lesbian groups exist today. But the focus of any NA meeting—even if it's conducted by a specialized group—is on recovery from addiction, and any addict is welcome to attend.

NA meetings are events at which addicts share with one another their experience in recovery and in the application of the Twelve Steps. While many—if not most—NA meetings are in fact hosted by an NA group, other NA meetings occur all the time: informally among friends, at large area or regional speaker meetings, at conventions, in schools, institutions, and so forth. The NA group is an entity; the NA meeting is an event; and NA meetings may be held without the sponsorship of an NA group.

<sup>2</sup> *The NA Way Magazine* is not currently being distributed.

## What is a “home group”?

In some NA communities, it has become customary for members of the fellowship to make a personal commitment to support one particular group—their “home group.” Though this custom is not universal, many believe its practice can benefit the individual member as well as the group. For the individual member, it can provide a stable recovery base, a place to call “home,” a place to know and be known by other recovering addicts. For the group, it ensures the support of a core of regular, committed members. A strong home group can also foster a spirit of camaraderie among its members that makes the group more attractive to and more supportive of newcomers.

The home group provides many opportunities for us to involve ourselves in the NA Fellowship, making it a great place for us to start giving back what Narcotics Anonymous has so freely given us. In committing to our home group, we make a personal commitment to NA unity. That commitment not only enhances our own recovery, it helps ensure recovery is available for others. Our home group also gives us a place in which to participate in NA’s decision-making processes.

While the home group concept is the accepted norm in some NA communities, it’s unknown in others. There are many, many ways of talking and thinking about the bond established among addicts in their groups. Do what seems most suitable in your own NA community.



## Who can be a member?

If an addict wants to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous, all that addict needs is a desire to stop using. Our Third Tradition ensures that. Whether an individual NA member chooses to be a member of a particular group as well is entirely up to that individual. Access to the meetings of some NA groups is restricted by factors beyond the control of these groups—national border-crossing laws, for instance, or prison security regulations. However, these groups themselves do not bar any NA member from joining them.

## What are “open” and “closed” meetings?

“Closed” NA meetings are only for addicts or those who think they might have a drug problem. Closed meetings provide an atmosphere in which addicts can feel more certain that those attending will be able to identify with them. Newcomers may feel more comfortable at a closed meeting for the same reason. At the beginning of a closed meeting, the leader or chairperson often reads a statement explaining why the meeting is closed and offering to direct nonaddicts who may be attending to an open meeting.

“Open” NA meetings are just that—open to anyone who wants to attend. Some groups have open meetings once a month to allow nonaddict friends and relatives of NA members to celebrate recovery anniversaries with them. Groups that have open meetings may structure their format in such a way that opportunities for participation by nonaddicts are limited only to short birthday or anniversary presentations. Such a format allows the meeting to retain its focus on recovery shared one addict to another. It should be made clear during the meeting that NA groups do not accept monetary contributions from nonaddicts.

Some groups use carefully planned open meetings, particularly open speaker meetings, as an opportunity to let members of the community-at-large see for themselves what Narcotics Anonymous is all about and ask questions. At such public meetings, a statement regarding our tradition of anonymity is often read, asking visitors not to use full-face photographs, last names, or personal details when they describe the meeting to others. For more information on public meetings, see *Public Relations Handbook*, available through your group service representative or by writing the World Service Office.

## Where can we hold NA meetings?<sup>3</sup>

NA meetings can be held almost anywhere. Groups usually want to find an easily accessible public place where they can hold their meetings on a weekly basis. Facilities run by public agencies and religious and civic organizations often have rooms for rent at moderate rates that will meet a group’s needs. Others in your NA community may already be aware of appropriate space available for your meeting; speak with them.

<sup>3</sup> Virtual NA meetings that meet regularly can choose to be an NA group if they meet the criteria described in this booklet. *Virtual Meeting Basics* may be a useful resource for virtual meetings. It is posted on [www.na.org/basics](http://www.na.org/basics).



Most meeting facilities will be very cooperative and generous. Even though such facilities may want to donate meeting space to us, our Seventh Tradition encourages our groups to be self-supporting by

paying all our own expenses, including our rent. Some facilities may prefer their rent to be paid in literature or other services.

Before securing a location, it may be well to consider whether or not the room will be accessible to addicts with physical limitations. Does the building have ramps, elevators with wide doors, and bathroom facilities able to accommodate someone in a wheelchair? Is adequate parking and unloading space available? There are other similar considerations your group may wish to make itself aware of. For more information on reaching out and serving addicts with additional needs, write to the World Service Office.

It's generally recommended that group meetings not be held in members' homes. Most groups find it desirable to hold their meetings in public facilities for a variety of reasons. Stable meetings held in public places tend to enhance NA's credibility in the community. Because of varying work and vacation schedules, it is often difficult to maintain consistent times for meetings held in individuals' homes. Holding a meeting in an individual's home may affect the willingness of some members to attend. Although some groups may hold their first few meetings in a member's home, it's generally recommended that they relocate their meetings to public facilities as soon as possible.

Holding regular NA group meetings in some types of facilities—addiction treatment centers, clubhouses, or political party headquarters, for instance—can compromise the independent identity of the group. Before deciding to locate your meeting in such a facility, your group may wish to consider a few questions: Is the facility open to any addict wishing to attend the meeting? Does the facility administration place any restrictions on your use of the room that could challenge any of our traditions? Is it clear to all concerned that your NA group, not the facility, is sponsoring the meeting? Do you have a clear rental

agreement with the facility management, and is the rent you're being charged moderate enough to allow your group to contribute funds to the rest of the NA service structure? Are so many of your community's NA meetings already located in this particular facility that, if it were to fold, your NA community as a whole would be crippled? These are some of the questions a group should carefully consider before deciding where to hold an NA meeting.

### What kind of meeting format can we use?

Groups use a variety of formats to enhance the atmosphere of recovery in their meetings. Most meetings last an hour or an hour and a half. Some groups have a single format for their meetings. Other groups have a schedule of rotating formats: one week a step study, the next week a speaker meeting, and so forth. Still others divide their large meetings into several sessions after the meeting has opened, each with its own format. Here are a few basic descriptions of some of the meeting formats that, with variations, seem to be among the most common. For reference, we've also included a sample meeting format at the end of this booklet.

#### ***Participation meetings***

The leader opens the meeting up for members to share on any subject related to recovery.

#### ***Topic discussion meetings***

The leader selects a particular recovery-related topic for discussion or asks someone else to provide a topic.

#### ***Study meetings***

There are a number of different types of study meetings. Some read a portion of an NA-approved book or pamphlet each week and discuss it—for example, a Basic Text study. Others have discussions focusing on the Twelve Steps or the Twelve Traditions.

#### ***Speaker meetings***

Some meetings ask a single speaker to share his or her recovery story or experience in a particular aspect of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Others ask two or three speakers to talk for shorter periods of time. Still others use a combination format with a speaker sharing first and a topic discussion afterward.

### **Newcomer meetings**

These meetings are often conducted by two or three of the group's more experienced members. These members share their experience with addiction and with recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. If time allows, the meeting is then opened for questions from the newer members.

Newcomer meetings are sometimes held a half hour before or after the group's regular meeting. Other groups conduct them as smaller sections of a large meeting. Still others hold a newcomer meeting one day of the week, their regular meeting another. Whatever the format, newcomer meetings provide a means for your group to give addicts new to NA an introduction to the basics of recovery.

### **Question-and-answer meetings**

At Q&A meetings, people are asked to think of questions related to recovery and the fellowship, write those questions down, and place them in "the ask-it basket." The leader of the meeting pulls a slip of paper from the basket, reads the question, and asks for someone to share their experience related to it. After one or two members have shared, the leader selects another question from the basket, and so forth, until the meeting is over.

## **Developing your format**

These are basic descriptions of just a few of the many different types of formats used in NA meetings; the variations on even these few format types can be endless. Feel free to innovate. Vary the format in whatever way seems to best suit the "personality" of your group and the needs of addicts in your community.

Often, a meeting will grow far larger than the group originally anticipated. A meeting format that worked well for a small meeting may not work as well for a larger one. When one of your group's meetings experiences that kind of growth, you may want to consider making some adjustments in your format, perhaps even replacing it altogether. Some groups experiencing such growth break their larger meetings down into a number of small meetings held simultaneously in different rooms. Doing this gives each member a better chance to participate in whatever meeting he or she attends. Many groups use a different type of format in each of these smaller meetings.

## **What kinds of literature should we use?**

NA World Services produces a number of different kinds of publications. However, only NA-approved literature is appropriate for reading in Narcotics Anonymous meetings. Selections from NA-approved books and pamphlets are usually read at the beginning of an NA meeting, and some meetings use them as the core of their format. NA-approved literature represents the widest range of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

Groups often make other kinds of NA publications available on the literature tables at their meetings: various NA service bulletins and handbooks, *The NA Way Magazine*, and local NA newsletters. However, literature of any sort produced by other twelve-step fellowships or other organizations outside NA is inappropriate for display on our literature tables or reading at our meetings. To do either implies an endorsement of an outside enterprise, directly contradicting NA's Sixth Tradition.

## **What is a group business meeting?**

The purpose of the group business meeting is fairly self-explanatory: to conduct the business of the group in such a way that the group remains effective in carrying the recovery message. Some groups hold business meetings on a regular basis; others only call them when something specific comes up that needs the group's attention. Some of the questions a typical group business meeting addresses are:

- Is the group effective in carrying the NA message?
- Are newcomers and visitors being made welcome?
- Do solutions for problems at recent meetings need to be sought?
- Is the meeting format providing sufficient direction?
- Is attendance steady or growing?
- Are there good relations between the group and the facility in which the meeting is held? Between the group and the community?
- Are the group's funds being used wisely?
- Is there enough money being donated at meetings to meet the group's needs and also provide for contributions to the rest of the service structure?

- Are literature and refreshment supplies holding up?
- Is there a service vacancy in the group?
- Has the area, the region, or world services asked the group for advice, support, or direction?

Group business meetings are usually held before or after a regular recovery meeting so that the recovery meeting remains focused on its primary purpose. Group members are encouraged to attend, raise questions, and participate in discussions related to the group's work. The group selects someone to lead the business meeting. Group officers give reports on their areas of responsibility, and subjects of importance to the group are raised for discussion.

The group, as the foundation of the NA service structure, is guided by both the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for NA Service. A good understanding of both will help a group business meeting stay on course. NA's step and tradition book, *It Works: How and Why*, provides a wealth of information about the Twelve Traditions. Interested members can read essays on the Twelve Concepts in *A Guide to Local Services*.

### How does the work get done?

Setting up chairs, buying literature, arranging for speakers, cleaning up after the meeting, paying the bills, preparing refreshments—most of the things an NA group does to host its meetings are pretty simple. But if one person had to do them all, those simple things would quickly become overwhelming. That's why a group elects officers (or, in the language of the Second Tradition, *trusted servants*): to help divide the work among the group's members.

Electing officers is one way the group practices NA's tradition of self-support: "Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting..." Sometimes it seems that groups run all by themselves, but the fact is that someone has to do the work needed to support the group. By dividing the work, the group ensures that the group as a whole is self-supporting and that the group's burdens don't settle unevenly on the shoulders of just one or two individuals.

Electing officers provides the group with an opportunity to strengthen its members' recovery. When group members agree to serve as secretary or treasurer or tea- or coffee-maker, that acceptance

of responsibility often helps advance their personal growth. It also gives them a chance to help enhance the group's ability to carry the recovery message.

You don't have to be a group officer to be of service to the group. Every week, there's work to be done: helping set up the meeting, greeting newcomers, cleaning up, bringing refreshments, and other things of that sort. Asking new members to help with these kinds of jobs can make them feel a part of the group more quickly.

### How do we choose group officers?

When a vacancy occurs in a group office, the group holds a business meeting to consider how to fill it. Groups should arrange their elections in such a way that they don't have all their trusted servants leaving office at the same time.

There are a couple of things to think about when looking for a group officer.

One is maturity in recovery. When those new in recovery are elected to a position, they may find themselves deprived of time and energy they need for their early recovery. Group members with a year or two clean are probably already well-established in their personal recovery. They are also more likely than new members to be familiar with NA's traditions and service concepts as well as group procedures.

A second thing to consider is consistent participation in your group. Do the nominees attend your group's recovery meetings regularly? Do they take an active part in your group's business meetings? Have they lived up to previous service commitments they've made? Further questions may occur to you as you read the essay in *A Guide to Local Services* on NA's Fourth Concept for Service, which squarely addresses the importance of NA leadership and the qualities to consider in selecting trusted servants.

Finally, we encourage you to remember that you're selecting group officers, first, to benefit the common welfare of your group. While service commitments often benefit those who accept them, that should not be the primary reason for selecting one individual or another to serve as an officer of your group. As the First Tradition says, in part, "Our common welfare should come first."





### What officers does a group need?

In different areas the work is divided differently, and the particular jobs are sometimes called by different names. What's important is not who does the job or what the job is called, but that the job gets done. What follows are general descriptions of some of the most common sorts of

jobs NA groups have. For each of these positions, your group should establish realistic terms of service and clean-time requirements.

#### **Secretary**

The secretary (sometimes called the chairperson) arranges the affairs of the group, often by asking other group members to help out. One of the first jobs for a new secretary is registering the group's current mailing address and meeting information with the area service committee secretary and the World Service Office. When a new group secretary or GSR takes office or there is a change in the group's mailing address or the time or location of a group meeting, both the area committee and World Service Office should be informed. Other things a group secretary is responsible for may include:

- Opening the meeting room well before the meeting is scheduled to begin, setting up chairs and tables (if necessary), and cleaning and locking the room after the meeting is over.
- Arranging a table with NA books and pamphlets, local meeting lists, NA activity fliers, service bulletins, *The NA Way Magazine*, and NA newsletters.
- Making tea or coffee.
- Buying refreshments and other supplies.
- Selecting meeting leaders and speakers.
- Keeping a list of group members' recovery anniversaries, if the group wishes.

- Organizing group business meetings.
- And doing whatever else needs to be done.

Many groups break all these jobs down separately: someone to open and close the room, another person responsible for refreshments, a third to take care of the literature table, and so forth. Groups that host more than one meeting will often have a different person responsible for all these jobs at each of their meetings.

#### **Treasurer**

All groups, even those that host more than one meeting, elect one group treasurer. When the group consolidates responsibility for all its funds under a single treasurer, the group makes it easier to account for the contributions it receives and expenses it pays than if it gives a number of individuals responsibility for its money. Groups that host two or more weekly meetings should make arrangements for contributions to be passed to the group treasurer shortly after each meeting.

Because of the added responsibility of handling money associated with service as a group treasurer, it's important that groups look carefully at those they elect as treasurers. If the group elects someone who is not capable of handling the responsibilities of the job, then the group is at least partly responsible if money is stolen, supplies aren't purchased, or funds aren't properly accounted for. It's recommended that groups elect treasurers who are financially secure and are good at managing their personal finances. Because of the need to keep consistent records, it's also strongly recommended that groups elect treasurers to serve for a full year.

What do group treasurers do? They count the money that members have contributed at each meeting, always asking another member to confirm their count. They take special care not to confuse the group's money with their own personal funds. They pay expenses, keep good, simple records, and regularly provide financial reports to their groups. The group treasurer's job requires close attention to details. To help the treasurer in managing those details, a *Treasurer's Handbook* is available from your area committee or from the World Service Office.

## **Group service representative (GSR)**

Each group elects one group service representative; even those groups hosting more than one recovery meeting elect just one GSR. These GSRs form the foundation of our service structure. GSRs provide constant, active influence over the discussions being carried on within the service structure. They do this by participating in area service committee meetings, attending forums and assemblies at both the area and regional levels, and sometimes joining in the work of an ASC subcommittee. If we are vigilant in choosing stable, qualified leaders at this level of service, the remainder of the structure will almost certainly be sound. From this strong foundation, a service structure can be built that will nourish, inform, and support the groups in the same way that the groups nourish and support the structure.

Group service representatives bear great responsibility. While GSRs are elected by and accountable to the group, they are not mere group messengers. They are selected by their groups to serve as active members of the area service committee. As such, they are responsible to act in the best interests of NA as a whole, not solely as advocates of their own groups' priorities.

As participants in the area committee, GSRs need to be as well informed as they can be concerning the affairs of the committee. They study the reports of the committee's officers and subcommittee chairpersons. They read the various handbooks published by the World Service Office on each area of service. After carefully considering their own conscience and what they know about how their group members feel, they take active, critical parts in the discussions which form the group conscience of the entire committee.

Group service representatives link their groups with the rest of the NA service structure, particularly through the information conveyed in their reports to and from the area committee. At group business meetings, the GSR report provides a summary of area committee activities, often sparking discussions among group members that provide the GSR with a feel for how the area can better serve the group's needs. In group recovery meetings, GSRs make available fliers announcing area and regional activities.

At area committee meetings, GSR reports provide perspectives on group growth vital to the committee's work. If a group is having problems, its GSR can share those problems with the committee in his or her reports. And if the group hasn't found solutions to those problems, the area chairperson will open a slot on the committee's "sharing session"<sup>4</sup> agenda so that the GSR can gather the experience others have had in similar situations. If any helpful solutions arise from the sharing session, the GSR can report those back to the group.

## **Alternate GSR**

Groups also elect a second representative called an alternate GSR. Alternate GSRs attend all the area service committee meetings (as nonvoting participants) with their GSRs so that they can see for themselves how the committee works. If a GSR cannot attend an area committee meeting, that group's alternate GSR participates in the GSR's place.

Alternate GSRs, along with other members, may also serve on area subcommittees. Subcommittee experience gives alternate GSRs added perspective on how area services are actually delivered. That perspective helps make them more effective area committee participants if their groups later elect them to serve as GSRs.



<sup>4</sup> In *A Guide to Local Services'* chapter on the area service committee, see the section titled "The Sharing Session."



## Rotation and continuity

*Rotation* is the practice many groups have of electing new people to service positions at set intervals rather than having the same person serve in the same position year after year. Rotation offers very definite benefits for the groups who practice it. By providing diversity in leadership, it

helps a group stay fresh and energetic. It provides assurance that no one individual exercises so much influence that the group becomes a mere extension of his or her personality. The practice of rotation also reinforces the NA emphasis on service rather than the servant, consistent with our belief in the value of spiritual anonymity—what’s important is the job being done, not the particular person doing it.

Some groups allow their members to serve more than one term in any given position so that the group can take advantage of its trusted servants’ experience. Once group officers have completed their terms, rotation allows them to step aside for a time or accept responsibilities elsewhere in the NA service structure, giving other members the chance to serve the group.

The impact of rotation on the stability of the group is balanced by the continuing presence of its long-term group members. Those who have served in the past as group officers and continue to maintain an active role in the life of the group can provide much-needed continuity and maturity of perspective to a growing group’s discussions. They can serve as the group’s memory, ensuring that the group never has to “reinvent the wheel.” They can also lend a hand to new officers and temporarily pitch in to relieve overloaded trusted servants.

## What responsibilities does an NA group have?

The first and most important responsibility of any NA group—its “primary purpose,” according to the Fifth Tradition—is “to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.” And the single most important thing a group can do to fulfill that primary purpose is to conduct meetings that provide a welcoming atmosphere in which NA recovery can be effectively shared between addicts. Groups conduct the de-

tails of their meetings in very different ways, but all of them seek the same end: to make recovery from addiction available to any addict in the community who seeks it.

As the foundation of the worldwide NA service structure, groups have another responsibility: to help their members develop an understanding of the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts for NA Service. By doing so, groups take part in the continuing evolution of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as well as providing for themselves an understanding of how the highest ideals of our fellowship can be applied in their activities.



## How can our group support other NA services?

The Second Concept for NA Service says that the NA groups bear the final responsibility and authority for all the services of the extended NA Fellowship. Each group should send stable, active GSRs to participate in the work of the service structure on the group’s

behalf. And each group should consider how best to provide the funds the NA service structure needs to do its work.

After paying the bills, most groups set a small amount of money aside to use in case an emergency arises. But, oddly enough, groups usually find that too much money in the till causes far more trouble than too little money. For this reason, we encourage your group never to hold large sums of money in reserve.

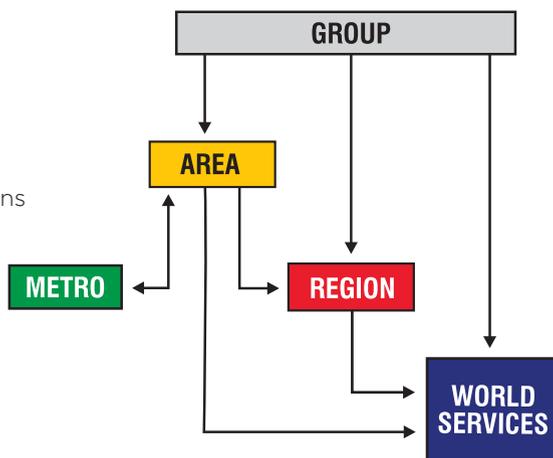
At least once a year, the group service representative attends the regional assembly. Each group is encouraged, if at all possible, to take the necessary steps to cover the expenses associated with its GSR’s attendance at the regional assembly. Some groups will choose to set aside money each month toward this expense.

After paying expenses and setting aside a small emergency reserve, most groups contribute their surplus funds directly to the area committee, the regional committee, and NA World Services. For more discussion of the principles underlying group contributions to the rest of the service structure, see the essay on our fellowship’s Eleventh Concept for NA Service in *A Guide to Local Services*. For assis-

tance in managing the details of direct contributions, see the *Treasurer's Handbook*, available from your area committee or by writing our World Service Office.

### Fund Flow

1. Groups donate directly to each level except metro.
2. Areas serve as funnels for all group contributions for metro services; MSCs return excess funds to areas.
3. Areas may donate excess funds to region or world.
4. Region may donate excess funds to world.



### How can our group better serve our community?

By its very existence, the group is already providing a substantial service to the community. It's providing the support addicts in the community need to reenter the mainstream of society. But how can a group become more effective in reaching out to addicts who've not yet found NA? There are two general ways in which a group can better serve its community: through the area service committee and through activities coordinated by the group itself.

Most NA groups are served by an area committee.<sup>5</sup> Area service committees coordinate efforts to carry the NA message on behalf of all the groups they serve. Community public information services, telephone contact lines, and panel presentations to addicts in treatment centers and jails are three ways in which most area committees carry the message either directly to the addict who still suffers or to those who may refer an addict to an NA meeting. Your group service

<sup>5</sup> If you don't know how to contact the nearest area service committee, contact the World Service Office. They'll be happy to put you in touch.

representative can tell you more about how you and your group can more effectively join in the work of your area service committee. For further information, see *A Guide to Local Services'* chapters on the Area Service Committee, pages 45 to 77.

Some NA groups reach out to their communities themselves, coordinating their activities with those of other groups either through their ASCs or through local cooperative councils (see the "Area Committees in Rural Communities" section toward the end of the *Guide's* chapter on the Area Service Committee). This is particularly the case in small communities and in areas where Narcotics Anonymous is very new. An NA group in a rural town obviously does not have as many people or as much money available as an area service committee in a large city, but opportunities exist nonetheless for carrying the recovery message effectively to others who may be seeking the solution we've found. If your group needs help in reaching out to the community, write to the World Service Office.

### How can our group solve its problems?

NA groups encounter a wide variety of problems: meetings are disrupted; treatment centers bus in large numbers of clients when the group is ill-prepared to receive them; the format goes stale; the clarity of our message becomes an issue; the coffee tastes like industrial-strength cleanser; the readings at the beginning of the meeting go on, and on, and on. These are just a few of the problems the average NA group must deal with from time to time. This guide doesn't "lay down the law" on how to deal with these problems. It does point out some effective tools group members can use in solving their own problems.

The best source of solutions for the group's problems, in most cases, is the group itself. "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps," our Twelfth Step says, "we tried... to practice these principles in all our affairs." When we collectively apply the insight received from that spiritual awakening to our group's problems, we call that *group conscience*. Common sense, open minds, calm discussion, accurate information, mutual respect, and healthy personal recovery enable a group to deal effectively with almost anything that comes its way.

There are a number of printed resources the group may choose to use in gathering the information it needs to reach sound decisions. The Basic Text and our step and tradition book, *It Works: How and Why*, both provide a great deal of information about how NA's Twelve Traditions can be applied to given situations. The chapter in *A Guide to Local Services* on the Twelve Concepts for NA Service gives in-depth explanations of the essential ideals underlying service activities in Narcotics Anonymous. *The NA Way Magazine* often has articles addressing problems the group might face. And bulletins available from the World Service Office deal in detail with a variety of subjects relating to the group's work.

Another source of information the group might tap is the experience of other groups in its area or region. If the group has a problem and can't come up with its own solution, it might want to ask its group service representative to share that problem at the next area service committee meeting. Area committees set aside a portion of every meeting for exactly that purpose. And while the area committee can't tell a group what to do, it does provide a forum in which groups can share with one another what's worked for them. Workshops conducted by the regional service committee provide the same kind of opportunity on a larger scale. For details on how the area or regional committee can help with group problems, see the chapters on those committees in *A Guide to Local Services*.



## Sample meeting format

This sample meeting format is just that—a sample. It's designed so that, if your group chooses, you can use it exactly as it is. However, you're encouraged to change it and rearrange it according to the needs of your group.

### LEADER:

*Welcome members to the meeting and introduce yourself.*

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am an addict. Welcome to this meeting of the \_\_\_\_\_ Group of Narcotics Anonymous. I'd like to open this meeting with a moment of silence (*15 to 20 seconds*) for the addict who still suffers, followed by the Serenity Prayer.

We like to extend a special welcome to newcomers. If anyone here is attending their first NA meeting, would you care to introduce yourself? We ask this not to embarrass you, but to get to know you better.

- Is anyone here in their first thirty days of recovery?  
*Introductions.*
- Do we have any out-of-town visitors? *Introductions.*
- Is there anyone attending this meeting for the first time?  
*Introductions.*

*If this is a closed meeting:*

This is a “closed” Narcotics Anonymous meeting. Closed NA meetings are only for addicts or those who think they might have a drug problem. If there are any nonaddicts visiting, we'd like to thank you for your interest in Narcotics Anonymous. Our local NA meeting list on the literature table will direct you to an NA meeting in our community that is open to nonaddicts.

*If this is an open meeting:*

This is an “open” Narcotics Anonymous meeting. We'd like to welcome any nonaddict visitors and thank you for your interest in Narcotics Anonymous. We ask that you respect the primary purpose of this meeting, which is to provide a place where addicts can share their recovery with one another.

LEADER:

For the protection of our group as well as the meeting facility, we ask that you have no drugs or paraphernalia on your person at the meeting. If you have any now, please leave, dispose of them, and return as quickly as possible.

LEADER:

*Recognize those with various periods of clean time—thirty, sixty, ninety days, six months, nine months, one year, eighteen months, and multiple years. Keytags, chips, or medallions may be given out.*

LEADER:

*Select people before the meeting to read one or more of the following short pieces. These readings can be found in our White Booklet, the Basic Text, IP No. 1, or the group reading cards.*

- a) *Who Is an Addict?*
- b) *What Is the NA Program?*
- c) *Why Are We Here?*
- d) *How it Works*
- e) *The Twelve Traditions*
- f) *Just for Today*
- g) *We Do Recover*

LEADER:

*Announce the type of meeting (participation, topic discussion, step study, speaker, etc.). Ask for topic or step and open the meeting for discussion, or introduce the speaker.*

LEADER:

*About ten minutes before the meeting is scheduled to close, announce:*

That's all the time we have. I'd like to thank you for attending.

LEADER:

*Begin passing the basket around, announcing:*

The basket being passed around is one way of practicing our Seventh Tradition, which says, "Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." The money we collect pays for rent, literature, and refreshments. Through contributions from this group to various NA service committees, it also helps carry the NA message of recovery in our area and around the world.

*If this is an "open" meeting:*

I'd like once again to thank our nonaddict guests for the interest they've shown in Narcotics Anonymous. Because of NA's tradition of self-support, this group asks that you not contribute any money when the basket passes your way.

LEADER:

Do we have any NA-related announcements?

*(The GSR will make announcements of upcoming group activities and NA events in the area.)*

LEADER:

*After the basket has come back around:*

Again, thanks for coming tonight. Would all those who care to, join in a circle to close?

*Various groups close in different ways: with prayers, brief recitations from NA literature, etc. When closing their meetings, some groups ask those attending to respect the anonymity of others they've seen and heard there.*

Keep coming back. It works!



## Starting a new group—A checklist

So, you're starting a new group? This checklist, derived from the collective experience of NA groups, contains matters to address when starting a new group.

- Get in touch with the nearest service committee.** An area service committee meeting is the ideal place for announcing your intention to start a new group. There, you can gather experience from representatives of other groups in the area, and learn of the services available to your group when you need them.

- Obtain a meeting place.** Here are some details to know when opening a new meeting:

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

When? Day, time, and duration of the meeting.  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much? What is the facility charging for rent?  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Is that realistic, keeping in mind the number of people you can expect to attend the meeting? \_\_\_\_\_
- When is the rent due? \_\_\_\_\_

What does the facility require? No smoking? *Absolutely* no litter? Sweep, mop after the meeting? Close windows, lock doors?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you rather have your group's mail sent to a group trusted servant or your Area Service Committee? Or, would you like your group's mail sent to the facility address? Will they set up a box where you can pick up newsletters and announcements mailed to your group?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Name your group.** A few things you may want to consider are: Is the name recovery oriented? Does the name create the impression that the group is affiliated with the facility in which it holds its meetings? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- What group trusted servants are needed? What does the group expect those people to do?** This booklet gives descriptions of various group officer positions. Make sure all group members agree on what they want *their* officers to do.

- What kind of meeting format will you use?** This booklet describes a number of format variations commonly used in our fellowship. Which format—or combination of formats—does your group want to use?  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Will this be a “closed” NA meeting? Or an “open” meeting?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

- What kinds of NA literature does your group want to stock?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- What kinds of refreshments should be purchased?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Have you registered your group with the World Service Office and with the secretary of your area service committee?** You can obtain a group registration form from the World Service Office at the address listed below or on our website [www.na.org](http://www.na.org). By filling it out directly online or mailing it in, you'll ensure that your group's meeting information is available via the NAWS website, [www.na.org](http://www.na.org).



**Also available from WSO:**

*Narcotics Anonymous, the Basic Text of Recovery*

*A Guide to Local Services in NA*

*Public Relations Handbook*

*PR Basics*

*Hospitals and Institutions Handbook*

*H&I Basics*

*Handbook for NA Literature Committees*

*Treasurer's Handbook, Revised*

*Group Treasurer's Workbook, Revised*

*Money Matters: Self-Support in NA and Funding NA Services,*  
two pamphlets on NA's tradition of self-support.

*For more information contact:*

***Fellowship Services***

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Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099 USA

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Website: [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)

**The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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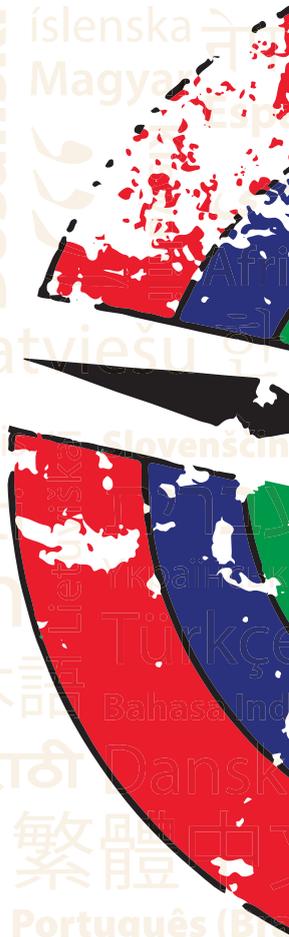


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**Tab 2**  
**GSR Basics and**  
**12 Concepts of NA**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**

**Tab 2**  
**GSR Basics and**  
**12 Concepts of NA**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**



This tool is intended to help NA members better understand the group service representative (GSR) commitment and to more effectively participate in the work of a local service body. NA communities have the ability to organize their services in the way that best serves them locally, and the responsibilities of the GSR may vary accordingly. This tool tries to capture some of our common experience and outline the basic tasks of the GSR position. It does not contain specifics about the policies adopted in individual service bodies as it is intended to be used in any NA community.

## What is a GSR?

The GSR is an active member of an NA group and its representative at local service meetings. Groups and their members rely on their GSRs to stay connected with other groups in an NA community and to the rest of NA. As one member put it: “For most newcomers in a meeting, NA will be as big or as small as the information the GSR provides to the group.”

The Second Concept states that NA groups have “final responsibility and authority” for the service bodies they create. An active and prepared GSR makes it possible for this principle to be a reality.

## Why be a GSR?

A Vision for NA Service reminds us that our commitments should offer “spiritual growth and fulfillment.” A GSR commitment is where many of us first begin to learn how NA services are structured outside of our groups. We come to understand how spiritual principles guide our service work and support our primary purpose. We may learn skills and discover abilities during the course of our service, and we learn to use those abilities in other areas of our lives. This is part of the reason why some of us talk about the privilege of being of service. Being a GSR is one way to express the gratitude we have for NA and the life that it has given us.

As with all NA service positions, a wide range of spiritual principles can be applied when serving as a GSR. Four that appear most important for success are:

**Humility**—Knowing who we are, when to ask questions, and that we do not have all the answers can help us to stay “right-sized” when serving as a GSR. This principle supports our ability to remain patient and teachable, and encourages active listening when working with others.

**Commitment**—The GSR is a critical connection between a group and the rest of NA. Without a GSR’s commitment to participate fully in both the group’s business meetings and the local service body, this connection is broken.

**Accountability**—Trusted servants in NA are accountable to the groups we all serve. One way to practice accountability is to communicate fully with our group, and share our group’s experience and concerns in service meetings. The Third Concept essay advises that the authority delegated to service boards and committees “. . . is not a blank check. . . the groups still bear final authority.”

**Anonymity**—Placing principles before personalities allows us to create a solid spiritual foundation for NA service. Anonymity also guides us to serve selflessly rather than by our own opinions, and without expectation of a reward.

Some of us come into recovery with no sense of personal responsibility, as if it was someone else’s job to take care of us. Others of us experience self-obsession as a belief that we are responsible for everything around us. The reality is usually somewhere in between. We find peace of mind when we are able to trust others to carry out responsibilities without constantly looking over their shoulders, and they show the same courtesy to us.

*Guiding Principles: The Spirit of Our Traditions, Tradition Nine*



## Who can be a GSR?

It is common practice to have a cleantime requirement for the GSR position, although this may vary depending on the maturity of the NA community. *The Group Booklet* offers this guidance:

There are a couple of things to think about when looking for a group officer. One is maturity in recovery. When those new in recovery are elected to a position, they may find themselves deprived of the time and energy they need for their early recovery. Group members with a year or two clean are probably already well-established in their personal recovery. They are also more likely than new members to be familiar with NA's traditions and service concepts as well as group procedures.

A year or two may seem like an acceptable cleantime requirement where NA has existed for many years, but this may be an unreasonable requirement if the local NA community is newly formed. Groups are encouraged to consider a member's personal qualities and abilities when selecting their GSR, as well as their cleantime. For example, *The Group Booklet* also discusses the importance of commitment:

A second thing to consider is consistent participation in your group. Do the nominees attend your group's recovery meetings regularly? Do they take an active part in your group's business meetings? Have they lived up to previous service commitments they've made?

In communities where the GSR is expected to handle the group's funds by bringing its contribution to a service meeting, or purchasing its literature, particular care when electing a GSR may be needed to ensure those funds are managed responsibly. Serving in the alternate GSR position before becoming GSR can offer the benefit of mentorship and knowledge from an experienced member. Attending service meetings consistently in this position will help to prepare a new GSR for their roles and responsibilities. Many experienced GSRs view mentoring an alternate as an important part of their commitment.

## What does a GSR need to know?

Members with local service experience can often be a good resource to find out more about the local service body. Locally developed guidelines and policy, as well as minutes and agendas from previous service meetings, may also be helpful. Many of these are posted on local websites, along with information about local events and service workshops.

These are some questions that new GSRs are encouraged to ask about their local service body:

- ✦ The basics: When and where is it, how long does it last, and what do I need to bring?
- ✦ Who are the trusted servants at the local service body, and what do they do?
- ✦ What subcommittees or workgroups are there at the local service body?
- ✦ Where can local guidelines and resources be found?
- ✦ What decision-making and discussion procedures does the local service body use?
- ✦ How are Seventh Tradition contributions and literature orders handled?

### Helpful resources

Our personal recovery resources—Step work, sponsorship, friends in recovery—are as much a part of success in service as anything else. It is not unusual to encounter some challenges during a service meeting, and many members look to friends and experienced members for support and advice. Attendance at workshops, learning days, and other service events can help us connect with other members involved in service, and become better informed about relevant issues.

In some communities, private social media groups, email, or text lists are used to communicate with other trusted servants.

Some helpful printed resources include *The Group Booklet*, the Traditions essays from NA literature (especially *It Works: How and Why* and *Guiding Principles: The Spirit of Our Traditions*), *Twelve Concepts for NA Service*, *A Guide to Local Services in NA*, and other service material such as service pamphlets, handbooks, service basics, and bulletins. Many of these are posted on [www.na.org/ips](http://www.na.org/ips) and [www.na.org/servicemat](http://www.na.org/servicemat).

*NAWS News* provides a report of the services provided by NA World Services and may be of interest to GSRs wanting to know more about NA as a whole: [www.na.org/nawsnews](http://www.na.org/nawsnews).



## What does the GSR do?

*The Group Booklet* states that GSRs “form the foundation of our service structure.” The basic function of a GSR is to participate in service meetings on behalf of their group. At one time, this only meant attending area service committee (ASC) meetings. As NA has grown, different communities have adapted the GSR’s role and the service system to better suit their needs. Serving as a GSR may involve participation at an ASC, a local service conference (LSC), a group support forum (GSF), or a regional assembly. In newer communities, the service structure may consist of just a regional service committee (RSC) and GSRs. Whatever the local structure consists of, the main roles and responsibilities of a GSR are the same. As *The Group Booklet* tells us, the role of the GSR is far more than a “mere group messenger,” and the responsibilities are more than just attending committee meetings.

In the Eighth Concept, we are reminded that “Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.” At the local service meeting, the GSR serves as the communication link between the group and the rest of the NA service system, and “...they take active, critical parts in the discussions which form the group conscience of the entire committee” (*The Group Booklet*). Most local service meetings also provide the opportunity to ask for help with group problems if needed.

The Second Tradition offers a process for groups to gather any concerns and questions for the local service body, and to provide input regarding any questions the service body may have for the group. The GSR is often asked to provide relevant information in these discussions. This involves the GSR consistently attending the group’s business meeting, and possibly also leading it. The GSR also usually provides a written or verbal report on the activities of the local service body during the group’s recovery or business meeting. Many GSRs create a short list of bullet points to capture the highlights from service meetings they attend to help with this.

Discernment is an important quality for a GSR. It can help in deciding what information to report, and in making decisions at service meetings on the group’s behalf. We take care to discern the short- and long-term impact of our decisions—what they mean for NA services today and how they can help us to reach more addicts. Considering carefully how our decisions might move us toward the goals in A Vision for NA Service is a key part of the GSR service position.

Some other common tasks for GSRs may include:

- ✦ Delivering the group’s financial contribution
- ✦ Purchasing literature at the service meeting on behalf of the group
- ✦ Collecting event flyers and meeting directories
- ✦ Ensuring the group’s meeting information is up to date on the local meeting list or website
- ✦ Providing a report about the group to the area
- ✦ Participating in local subcommittees and workgroups according to their skills and interests



Service is not a position in a committee; it is a posture in the heart. It’s a way of life we can practice in all our affairs.

*Living Clean: The Journey Continues*, Chapter Seven

### Helpful hints

Ask for help from the group. Seeking support and direction from the group can increase the resources available to a GSR.

Many service bodies offer a new GSR orientation session prior to the meeting. Attending this to better understand the procedures at a local service body is highly recommended.

Don’t expect to understand everything at your first meeting. Begin where you are and don’t be afraid to ask questions.



## NA Acronyms

The list of acronyms used locally and in NA as a whole can be confusing for members new to service. Here are some of those that are most commonly used.

- ASC** Area service committee: Local service body consisting of GSRs and other elected trusted servants.
- CAR** *Conference Agenda Report*: A publication that consists of business and issues that will be considered during the WSC.
- CAT** Conference Approval Track: A collection of additional material for discussion and decision at the WSC.
- CBDM** Consensus-based decision making: Decision-making process where members work together to find or create solutions.
- FD** Fellowship development: NA service devoted to starting and nurturing new NA communities and helping existing communities to continue growing.
- FIPT** *Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust*: A legal trust that serves as custodian for NA's literature and logos.
- GLS** *A Guide to Local Services in NA*: A service handbook intended to serve as a resource for NA groups, areas, and regions.
- GSF** Group support forum: A discussion-oriented body focused on the needs of the groups.
- GSR** Group service representative: Trusted servant elected by an NA group to participate on its behalf at the ASC or other local service body.
- H&I** Hospitals and institutions: NA service devoted to carrying the NA message primarily to correctional inmates and treatment facility patients.
- IDT** Issue Discussion Topic: Specific topics selected for discussion that concern the Fellowship as a whole.
- IP** Informational pamphlet: Short piece of recovery literature.
- LSB** Local service board: Administrative body of the LSC.
- LSC** Local service conference: A strategic, planning-oriented local service body.
- NAWS** Narcotics Anonymous World Services: Service body that deals with the problems and needs of NA as a whole.
- PI** Public information: NA service devoted to sharing information about NA to government and private agencies, the public media, community leaders, those in the helping professions, and the community-at-large. (In many communities, this work is now done by a PR workgroup or committee.)
- PR** Public relations: NA service devoted to creating and maintaining relationships with members, potential members, and the general public.
- RCM** Regional committee member: Trusted servant elected by an ASC to participate on its behalf at the RSC.
- RD** Regional delegate: Trusted servant elected by an NA region as a voting participant at the WSC.
- RSC** Regional service committee: Service body consisting of ASCs and/or other types of local service bodies.
- RSO** Regional service office: Local NA service center or literature distribution point.
- SP** Service pamphlet intended for use as a resource for groups and service bodies.
- WB** World Board: The service board of the WSC, dedicated to the continuation and growth of Narcotics Anonymous by providing support to the Fellowship and oversight of the WSO.
- WCNA** The World Convention of NA: Celebration of recovery and unity held every three years in a different part of the world.
- WSC** World Service Conference: Service meeting that brings all elements of NA World Services together.
- WSO** World Service Office: The main service center for the NA Fellowship.
- ZD** Zonal delegate: Trusted servant elected by a zonal forum that is eligible for seating at the WSC as a voting participant. (Note: A zonal forum is a service body consisting of multiple regions.)

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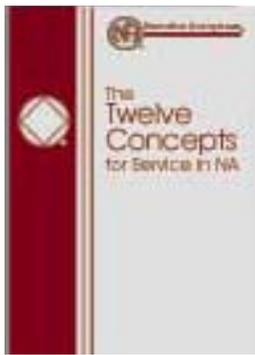
Mississauga, Ontario



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## Twelve Concepts for NA Service

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### Introduction

Narcotics Anonymous, as a fellowship, is defined by its principles. Our Twelve Steps detail our program for personal recovery. Our Twelve Traditions relate experience that can help NA groups maintain their unity. And our Twelve Concepts are guiding principles for our service structure. The concepts summarize the hard-won experience of our fellowship's first forty years with such things as responsibility, authority, delegation, leadership, accountability, spiritual guidance, participation, communication, open-mindedness, fairness, and finances. The Twelve Concepts, together, help ensure that our fellowship's service structure remains forever devoted to *service, not government*.

The Twelve Concepts for NA Service are a relatively recent addition to our fellowship's body of guiding principles. Since NA's inception in the early 1950s, we have used the Twelve Steps as guidance in our personal recovery and the Twelve Traditions to steer our groups. The traditions empower the groups to create a service structure, directly responsible to them. The traditions also offer fundamental ideals to guide all our collective efforts. Our common welfare and unity, the ultimate authority of a loving God, leadership as service instead of government, group autonomy, our fellowship's primary purpose, cooperation without affiliation, self-support, the employment of special workers, attraction rather than promotion, public anonymity—without a doubt, the principles of our Twelve Traditions offer guidance for everything we do as a fellowship. Yet the Twelve Traditions themselves were designed especially to guide the NA *groups*; they were never intended to provide our *service structure* with the specific direction it needs to serve by. The Twelve Concepts for NA Service were created to meet that need.

Beginning with Concept One, they describe the creation of the service structure by the groups, the groups' final responsibility and authority for NA services, and the practical authority delegated by the groups to our fellowship's boards and committees for the development and maintenance of services on behalf of NA as a whole. The concepts recognize that service authority must be delegated with care, highlighting the qualities to be considered in selecting responsible NA leaders and emphasizing the importance of regular, open communication throughout our service structure in maintaining service accountability. To minimize confusion in assigning, fulfilling, and answering for NA services, the concepts recommend that each service responsibility be clearly defined right from the start. In addressing the decision-making processes used in our services, the concepts recall our spiritual foundation as well as the practical and ethical wisdom of inclusiveness and open-mindedness. To guard against the misuse of delegated authority, individual trusted servants are provided with a grievance process. The responsible management of NA funds, often a sore spot in service discussions, is dealt with directly. And finally, just as the traditions conclude by summarizing all twelve in a single word, *anonymity*, so the Twelfth Concept offers a fundamental ideal that underlies all the concepts: "our structure should always be one of service, never of government."

Now, the Twelve Concepts for NA Service are *yours*, the NA Fellowship's. The concepts offer practical guidance for the conduct of our services, from the group all the way to world level. How "valid" are the Twelve Concepts? Your experience in applying them will determine their validity. They are *valid* only to the extent that they prove *helpful*. However, just as the steps

relate our collective experience in recovery, and the traditions our experience in group unity, the Twelve Concepts summarize a vast amount of experience in NA service, experience we would all do well to consider and apply wherever appropriate.

## **Twelve Concepts for NA Service**

The Twelve Traditions of NA have guided our groups well in the conduct of their individual affairs, and they are the foundation for NA services. They have steered us away from many pitfalls that could have meant our collapse. Our various service units *serve*, for example, they do not govern; we stay out of public debate; we neither endorse nor oppose any of the many causes that our members may feel strongly about; our approach to addiction is a non-professional one; we are fully self-supporting. The traditions have provided our fellowship with essential guidance throughout its development, and they continue to be indispensable.

The Twelve Concepts for NA Service described here are intended to be practically applied to our service structure at every level. The spiritual ideals of our steps and traditions provide the basis for these concepts, which are tailored to the specific needs of our fellowship's service structure. The concepts encourage our groups to more readily achieve our traditions' ideals, and our service structure to function effectively and responsibly.

These concepts have been crafted from our experience. They are not intended to be taken as the "law" for NA service, but simply as guiding principles. We find that our services are stabilized when we conscientiously apply these concepts, much as our steps have stabilized our lives and our traditions have stabilized and unified our groups. The Twelve Concepts guide our services and help ensure that the message of Narcotics Anonymous is available to all addicts who have a desire to stop using and begin practicing our way of life.

1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.
2. The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.
3. The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.
4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
5. For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.
6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.
7. All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.
8. Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.
9. All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.
11. NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.
12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.

## **First Concept**

*To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.*

Our fellowship's primary purpose is to carry the message "that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live." One of the primary means by which that message is carried, addict to addict, is in our meetings. These recovery meetings, conducted thousands of times each day by NA groups around the world, are the most important service offered by our fellowship.

However, while recovery meetings are NA's most important service, they are not the only means we have of fulfilling our fellowship's primary purpose. Other NA services attract the still-suffering addict to our meetings, carry our message to addicts in institutions, make recovery literature available, and provide opportunities for groups to share their experience with one another. No one of these services, by itself, comes close to matching the value of group recovery meetings in carrying our message; each, however, plays its own indispensable part in the overall program devised by the NA Fellowship to fulfill its primary purpose.

We can do together what we cannot accomplish separately. This is true in our personal recovery, and is equally true in our services. In new NA communities, groups often perform basic services in addition to their meetings. But fulfillment of the full range of NA services—phonelines, H&I panels, public information work, outreach, and the rest—usually requires more people and more money than a single group can muster on its own. The degree of organization necessary to carry out such responsibilities would divert most groups from carrying the NA message in their meetings. And the lack of coordination among groups delivering various services on their own could result in duplication, confusion, and wasted resources. For these reasons, most groups do not take such responsibilities on themselves.

How, then, can NA's groups ensure the fulfillment of these services? They do so by combining their resources, joining together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains those services for them, leaving the groups free to carry out their own primary responsibility.

## **Second Concept**

*The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.*

The NA service structure has been created by the groups to serve the common needs of the groups. Our fellowship's service boards and committees exist to help groups share their experience with one another, provide tools which help groups function better, attract new members to group recovery meetings, and carry the NA message further than any single group could carry it alone. Because the groups have created the service structure, they have final authority over all its affairs. By the same token, the groups also have the final responsibility for the support of all its activities. The two go hand in hand.

Ideally, responsibility and authority are flip sides of the same coin; the exercise of one is also an exercise of the other. When our groups provide the resources—conscience and ideas, people, money—needed to fulfill NA services, they also provide direction to the service structure. Let's take a look at a few examples of how this principle works.

The most important resource contributed to the service structure by an NA group is almost exclusively spiritual: its ideas and its conscience. Without the voice of the groups, the service structure may not know what kinds of services are needed, or whether the services it provides are ones the groups want. The groups provide the ideas and direction needed to guide the service structure in fulfilling its responsibilities. By voicing their needs and concerns, the groups also exercise their authority for the service structure they have created.

The people who give their time to service work are a vital resource; without them, our service boards and committees would not exist, much less be able to serve. The group's responsibility to the service structure is to elect a group service representative who will serve the best interests of the group and the entire NA Fellowship. By carefully selecting its GSR, then providing that person with regular support and guidance, the group exercises its ability to impact NA services, both directly and indirectly. In choosing a qualified GSR, then sending him or her out to serve on the group's behalf, the group fulfills a large part of both its responsibility and authority for NA services.

Money is required to fulfill NA services. Without it, our phonedlines would be closed down, our meeting lists would not be printed, there would be no NA literature to distribute, our H&I panels would go without pamphlets, and our public information workers would be unable to provide printed materials about our fellowship to the community. In the Eleventh Concept, more will be said of the use of money in fulfilling our primary purpose. The message of the Second Concept in regard to money, however, is simple: Since the groups have created the service structure to perform certain tasks, the groups are also responsible to provide the necessary funds.

So far, we've looked at what the Second Concept says to the NA group. This concept also speaks to the service structure. The groups have, directly or indirectly, created every one of our service boards and committees. The NA groups have, directly or indirectly, provided the resources used by those service boards and committees. The groups have established the service structure as a medium through which, together, they can better fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose. Therefore, in all the affairs of all its elements, the service structure must carefully consider the needs and desires of the groups. The Second Concept can be seen as the groups' way of saying to the NA service structure, "Be responsible with the spiritual, personal, and financial resources we have provided you. Seek our advice; do not ignore our direction."

The NA groups bear the final authority in all our fellowship's service affairs, and should be routinely consulted in all matters directly affecting them. For example, proposals to change NA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, name, nature, or purpose should be approved directly by the groups. Conversely, if something goes wrong in the service structure, NA groups are responsible to take constructive steps to help correct the problem. Our experience shows that radical action, taken in haste, serves neither the groups nor our services well. Since change rarely occurs overnight, patience and acceptance may be called for. Nonetheless, the exercise of final authority for NA services, a vital part of the system of service established by our fellowship, is both the right and the responsibility of the groups.

### **Third Concept**

*The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.*

The NA groups maintain final responsibility and authority for the service structure they have created. Yet if they must involve themselves directly in making decisions for all of our service boards and committees, the groups will have little time or energy left to carry the recovery message in their meetings. For this reason, the groups entrust the service structure with the authority to make necessary decisions in carrying out the tasks assigned to it.

The delegation of authority can do much to free up both our groups and our services. Service decisions not directly affecting the groups can be made expeditiously; our phonedlines, H&I panels, public information efforts, and literature development projects can move forward at full speed to serve NA's primary purpose. And our groups, not required to ratify every decision made on their behalf at every level of service, are freed to devote their full attention to carrying the NA message in their meetings.

We often use motions and guidelines to help us apply the Third Concept. We clearly describe each task we want accomplished, and the kind of authority we are delegating to those who will fulfill the task. However, even the most exhaustive set of guidelines cannot account for every eventuality. Our trusted servants will serve us best when we grant them the freedom to exercise their best judgment in fulfilling the responsibilities we've assigned them. Our services must remain directly accountable to those they serve, yet they must also be given a reasonable degree of discretion in fulfilling their duties. A group, service board, or committee should consult its collective conscience in arriving at its own understanding of the best way to apply this concept.

Sometimes we fear that delegation will mean a loss of control over our services. Together, Concepts One, Two, and Three have been designed to help us maintain responsibility for our service structure without tying our trusted servants' hands. The Third Concept encourages our groups to focus on their own responsibilities, while assuring that the service structure is given the authority it needs to fulfill other necessary NA services. Our Twelve Concepts do not ask our groups to abdicate their authority, allowing the service structure to do whatever it pleases. The groups, after all, have established the service structure to act on their behalf, at their direction. And when the groups need to exercise final authority in service matters, they are encouraged to do so. However, in day-to-day matters, the groups have given our service boards and committees the practical authority necessary to do the jobs assigned them.

Delegating authority can be a risky business unless we do so responsibly. To make Concept Three work, other concepts must also be applied consistently. Most importantly, we must give careful attention to the selection of trustworthy trusted servants. We cannot responsibly delegate authority either to those who are fundamentally incapable of administering that authority or to those who are not willing to account fully for their actions. However, if we select our leaders carefully, choosing those who can be trusted to responsibly exercise delegated authority in fulfilling the tasks we've given them, we can feel much more comfortable with the concept of delegation.

When we give our trusted servants a job, we must adequately describe to them the job we want done, and we must provide them with the support they need to complete their job. Then, once we've given them instructions and support, we must delegate to them the authority necessary to make decisions related to the task they've been assigned. When our groups delegate sufficient authority to our service structure, our groups need not be overcome with the demands of making every service decision at every level of service, and our fellowship's primary purpose can be served to the fullest. With the Third Concept squarely in place, our groups are free to conduct recovery meetings and carry the NA message directly to the addict who still suffers, confident that the service structure they have created has the authority it needs to make the decisions involved in fulfilling its responsibilities.

## **Fourth Concept**

*Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.*

The trust necessary to confidently delegate service authority is founded on the careful selection of trusted servants. In the following paragraphs, we highlight a number of the qualities to be considered when choosing our trusted servants. No leader will exemplify all these qualities; they are the ideals of effective leadership to which every trusted servant aspires. The more we consider these qualities when selecting NA leaders, the better our services will be.

Personal background and professional or educational qualifications, though helpful, do not necessarily make for effective leadership. When selecting trusted servants, after all, it is the whole person we trust, not just their skills. And one of the first things we look for when selecting trusted servants is humility. Being asked to lead, to serve, to accept responsibility, is a humbling experience for a recovering addict. Through continuing to work the Twelve Steps,

our trusted servants have come to know not only their assets but their defects and their limitations. Knowing that, they have agreed to serve our fellowship to the best of their ability, with God's help. Good NA leaders do not think they have to do everything themselves; they ask for help, advice, and direction on a regular basis. Our fellowship's leaders ought not be dictators or order-givers; they are our servants. Able leadership in the spirit of service does not drive by arrogant mandate, demanding conformity; it leads by example, inviting respect. And nothing invites us to respect our trusted servants more than clear evidence of their humility.

Capable NA leadership exhibits the full range of personal characteristics associated with a spiritual awakening. We depend on those who serve us to report on their activities completely and truthfully. Our leaders must have the integrity needed to hear others well, yet still be able to stand fast on sound principle; to compromise, and to disagree without being disagreeable; to demonstrate the courage of their convictions, and to surrender. We seek trusted servants who are willing to expend their time and energy in the diligent service of others, studying available resource materials, consulting those with greater experience in their field of responsibility, and carefully fulfilling the tasks we've given them as completely as possible. Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness, indispensable in recovery, are also essential to leadership.

Any NA member can be a leader, and every NA member has the right to serve the fellowship. Effective NA leadership knows not only how to serve, but when it will serve best to step aside and allow others to take over. An entrenched bureaucracy inhibits our fellowship's growth, while a regular influx of new leadership, balanced by continuity, inspires NA growth. The effective leader also knows that, in order to maintain the distinction in service between principles and personalities, it is important to observe the practice of rotation.

In some positions, trusted servants need specific skills in order to act as effective leaders. The ability to communicate well can help our trusted servants share information and ideas, both in committee work and in reporting to those they serve. Organizational skills help trusted servants keep small service responsibilities simple, and make straightforward even the fulfillment of complex tasks. Leaders capable of discerning where today's actions will take us, and of offering us the guidance we need to prepare for the demands of tomorrow, serve Narcotics Anonymous well. Certain educational, business, personal, and service experiences may suit a recovering addict more to one type of service commitment than another. We do ourselves, our fellowship, and our trusted servants a disservice when we ask our members to perform tasks they are incapable of fulfilling.

When we carefully consider the leadership qualities of those we ask to serve, we can confidently give them the room they need to exercise those qualities on our behalf. We can allow effective leaders freedom to serve, especially when they demonstrate their accountability to us, reporting regularly on their work and asking, when necessary, for additional direction. True, our leaders are but trusted servants, not governors; yet we also expect our trusted servants to lead us. If we select them carefully, we can confidently allow them to do so.

Effective leadership is highly valued in NA, and the Fourth Concept speaks of the qualities we should consider when selecting leaders for ourselves. However, we should remember that the fulfillment of many service responsibilities requires nothing more than the willingness to serve. Other responsibilities, while requiring certain specific skills, depend for their fulfillment far more heavily on the trusted servant's spiritual maturity and personal integrity. Willingness, spiritual depth, and trustworthiness are strong demonstrations of the kind of leadership valued most highly in Narcotics Anonymous.

We should also remember that NA's leaders are not only those we vote into office. Opportunities for selfless service arise wherever we turn in Narcotics Anonymous. NA members exercise personal leadership by helping clean up after a meeting, taking extra care to welcome newcomers to our fellowship, and in countless other ways. As recovering addicts, any of us can fulfill a leadership role, providing a sound example, by serving our fellowship. This

modest spirit of service to others forms the foundation of our Fourth Concept, and of NA leadership itself.

## **Fifth Concept**

*For each responsibility assigned to the service structure,  
a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.*

The key to applying the Fifth Concept is in defining the task that needs to be done, and the easiest way to apply it is right from the start. When we first create a service task, we should consider what kind of authority we must delegate in order for that task to be accomplished, and what kind of accountability we should require of those to whom we are giving that task. Then, one particular trusted servant, service board, or committee should be designated as the single point of decision and accountability for that assignment. This simple principle applies to all the services provided in Narcotics Anonymous, from the group to our world services.

When we decide a certain service task should be done, and clearly say which trusted servant, service board, or committee has the authority to accomplish the task, we avoid unnecessary confusion. We don't have two committees trying to do the same job, duplicating efforts or squabbling over authority. Project reports come straight from the single point of decision for the project, offering the best information available. An assigned service responsibility can be fulfilled swiftly and directly, because there is no question of whose responsibility it is. And if problems in a project arise, we know exactly where to go in order to correct them. We do well when we clearly specify to whom authority is being given for each service responsibility.

The single point of decision we define for each service responsibility is also a single point of accountability. As we've already seen in the Fourth Concept, and as we shall see further in Concept Eight, accountability is a central feature of the NA way of service. When we give our trusted servants responsibility for a particular service task, we hold them accountable for the authority we've delegated them. We expect them to remain accessible, consistently providing us with reports of their progress and consulting with us about their responsibilities.

*Accountability* does not mean that we delegate authority only to take it right back. It simply means that we want to be informed of decisions our trusted servants are considering as they go about the tasks we've assigned them. We want to have the opportunity to impact those decisions, especially if they directly affect us. And we want to be kept up-to-date on each responsibility we've assigned to the service structure so that, if something goes wrong, we can take part in making it right.

The Fifth Concept helps us responsibly delegate our authority for NA services. In exercising the Fifth Concept, we make a simple, straightforward contract with our trusted servants. Right from the start, they know what we are asking of them, what decisions they are expected to make themselves, and to what degree we will hold them accountable for the service work they do on our behalf. Exercise of Concept Five is not a task to be taken lightly. It calls for us to carefully consider the service work we want done; to clearly designate who should do that work; to delegate the authority to do it; and to maintain accountability for those duties. It takes effort to conscientiously apply Concept Five, but the results are worth the effort.

## **Sixth Concept**

*Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite  
a loving God to influence our decisions.*

Conscience is an essentially spiritual faculty. It is our innate sense of right and wrong, an internal compass that each of us may consult in our personal reflections about the best course to take. Our Basic Text refers to conscience as one of those "higher mental and emotional functions" which was "sharply affected by our use of drugs." By applying our steps, we seek to

revive it and learn how to exercise it. As we steadily apply spiritual principles in our lives, our decisions and actions increasingly become less motivated by self-interest, and more motivated by what our conscience tells us is good and right.

When addicts whose individual consciences have been awakened in the course of working the steps come together to consider service-related questions, either in their NA group or in a service committee meeting, they are prepared to take part in the development of a group conscience. The exercise of group conscience is the act by which our members bring the spiritual awakening of our Twelve Steps directly to bear in resolving issues affecting NA. As such, it is a subject which must command our most intent consideration.

The development of a group conscience is an indispensable part of the decision-making process in Narcotics Anonymous; however, group conscience is not *itself* a decision-making mechanism. To clarify the difference between the two, let's look at our personal lives. People living spiritually oriented lives usually pray and meditate before making major decisions. First, we look to our source of spiritual strength and wisdom; then, we look forward and chart our course. If we automatically claim that God has guided us every time we make a decision, whether or not we've actually invited God to influence us prior to making that decision, we fool only ourselves. The same applies to group conscience and collective decision making.

Developing a collective conscience provides us with the spiritual guidance we need for making service decisions. We pray or meditate together, we share with one another, we consider our traditions, and we seek direction from a Higher Power. Our groups, service boards, and committees often use the vote as a rough tool for translating that spiritual guidance into clear, decisive terms. Sometimes, however, no vote is needed; following thoughtful, attentive discussion, it is perfectly apparent what our collective conscience would have us do in a given service situation. Just as we seek the strongest possible spiritual unity in Narcotics Anonymous, so in our decision making we seek unanimity, not merely a majority vote. The more care we take in our considerations, the more likely we are to arrive at unanimity, and no vote will be needed to help us translate our group conscience into a collective decision.

When making specific service decisions, voting or consensus may be the measure of our group conscience. However, group conscience can be seen in all our fellowship's affairs, not merely in our decision-making process. The group inventory process is a good example of this. When members of an NA group gather together to examine their group's effectiveness in fulfilling its primary purpose, they each consult their own conscience concerning their individual role in the life of the group. They consider the concerns of the group as a whole in the same light. Such a group inventory session might produce no specific service decisions whatsoever. It will, however, produce among group members a heightened spiritual sensitivity, both to the needs of the still-suffering addict and to the needs of fellow group members.

Another example of group conscience being developed without producing a service-related decision, one each of us can identify with, can be found every day of the week in our recovery meetings. Many are the times when we go to an NA meeting with a personal problem, seeking comfort, support, and guidance in the experience of other recovering addicts. Our members, each with their individual personalities, backgrounds, and needs, speak to one another—and to us—of the spiritual awakening they've found in applying the Twelve Steps in their lives. From the diversity of the group a common message arises, a message we can apply to our own lives: the message of recovery. In this message we find "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another." We also find in this message the group conscience, applied not to a service issue but to our own spiritual growth.

Group conscience is the means by which we collectively invite the ongoing guidance of a Higher Power in making decisions. We apply the Sixth Concept when we pursue our own personal recovery with vigor, seeking that ongoing spiritual awakening which makes it possible for us to apply the principles of the program in all our affairs, including our service affairs. We apply the Sixth Concept when we listen not just to the words our fellow members speak, but to

the spirit behind their words. We apply the Sixth Concept when we seek to do God's will, not our own, and to serve others, not ourselves, in our service decisions. We apply the Sixth Concept in our groups, service boards, and committees when we invite a loving God to influence us before making service-related decisions.

## **Seventh Concept**

*All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.*

The Seventh Concept is one way of putting the principle of group conscience to work in the service environment. This concept suggests that each service body should encourage all its members to participate in its decision-making process. By bringing their different perspectives together, we give our service bodies the opportunity to develop a fully informed, balanced group conscience leading to sound, sensitive service decisions.

Our service boards and committees represent a cross-section of NA perspective and experience. Each participant's contribution to the decision-making process is important. Determining participation at the group level is fairly simple: if you're a group member, you may fully participate in the group's decision-making process. Determining participation in the decision-making processes of most service boards and committees is a little more involved, yet the same basic principles still apply. Freely expressed individual conscience is the essential element in group conscience at any level.

NA service is a team effort. Our service representatives are responsible to the NA Fellowship as a whole rather than any special constituency; so are all the other trusted servants on the team. The full participation of each member of the team is of great value as we seek to express the collective conscience of the whole.

There is no firm rule about how to apply the concept of participation to every situation. In an atmosphere of love, mutual respect, and frank, open discussion, each service body decides these things for itself. In significant matters affecting the groups, a service body will want to ask for guidance directly from the groups. In the vast majority of cases, however, the service body will exercise its delegated authority in fulfilling the responsibilities the groups have assigned to it, disposing of the matters in the normal course of its service meetings.

NA's principle of spiritual anonymity is the foundation for the Seventh Concept. This principle points our fellowship toward a leveling of the individual's relative importance as a participant in NA service. The Seventh Concept, with its emphasis on equalizing the relative weight of each voice on the team, puts the spiritual principle of anonymity into practice. Though we may not all participate in every decision made in our fellowship, we all have the right to participate fully and equally in the decision-making processes in the service bodies in which we are members.

## **Eighth Concept**

*Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.*

Our fellowship's service structure is founded on the unity of our groups; to maintain that union, we must have regular communications throughout Narcotics Anonymous. Together, our groups have created a service structure to meet their common needs and to help them fulfill their common purpose. The effectiveness of the service structure depends on the continued unity of the NA groups, and on their continued support and direction. These things can only be maintained in an atmosphere of honest, open, and straightforward communication among all parties concerned.

Regular communication plays a large part in the fulfillment of our groups' final responsibility and authority for NA services. Through their GSRs, the groups regularly report their strengths, needs, ideas, and conscience to the service structure. Taken together, these group reports give our service boards and committees clear guidance in their efforts to serve NA as a whole. When the groups are regularly given full and accurate information from all elements of the service structure, they become familiar with the structure's normal patterns of activity. The groups are then able to recognize when something goes wrong with one of our service boards and committees, and are in a better position to know how to help correct the problem. And, knowing what kinds of resources are needed to fulfill service tasks, our groups are also more likely to provide the service structure with adequate support.

Clear, frequent two-way communication is an important prerequisite for delegation. When our groups ask the service structure to fulfill certain responsibilities on our behalf, we delegate to the structure the authority needed to make decisions related to those responsibilities. We need to be able to trust our trusted servants before we can confidently delegate them that degree of authority. That kind of trust depends in large part on continuing communication. So long as our service boards and committees regularly issue complete, candid reports of their activities, we can be confident that we have delegated our authority wisely.

Open and frank communication is a critical ingredient of effective leadership. To better know the ideas, wishes, needs, and conscience of those they serve, trusted servants must listen carefully to their fellowship. To give the NA groups the information they need to guide and support our services, NA leaders regularly distribute full, unequivocal reports. We do not want our trusted servants to constantly inundate us with every fact and figure possible, though we do expect them to provide us with complete information on all their activities and discussions if we ask for it. In communicating with those they serve, trusted servants demonstrate an open attitude, one that is inclusive, inviting, and clearly influenceable. Such openness and forthrightness may be uncomfortable, but is essential in maintaining the integrity of our services.

Finally, full and frequent communication is essential in the development of group conscience, the spiritual means by which we invite the influence of a loving God in making our collective decisions. To develop group conscience, communications must be honest and direct. Without the full picture, seen from all sides, our groups, service boards, and committees cannot develop an informed group conscience. When we gather together to consider service issues, we openly share ideas and information with one another, frankly speaking our minds and hearts on the matter at hand. We listen closely to one another, considering carefully the information and insights we've heard; we consult our individual consciences on the matter; then, we make a decision. A conscience fed on ignorance is an ineffective conscience, incapable of providing reliable guidance. An effective conscience can develop only in an atmosphere of regular, open communication among all parties concerned.

The purpose of our services is to help our fellowship fulfill its primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Honest, open, straightforward communication is essential to both the integrity and the effectiveness of the NA service structure. Unity, group responsibility and authority, delegation, leadership, accountability, group conscience, participation—all depend on good communication among the various elements of the NA Fellowship. With regular two-way communication, our groups and our services are well positioned to uphold the ideals and fulfill the responsibilities described in our Twelve Concepts.

## **Ninth Concept**

*All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.*

It's easy to discuss things with those who agree with us. But in recovery we've learned that our own best thinking may not necessarily offer us the best possible guidance. We have been taught that, before making significant decisions, we should check our judgment against the ideas of others. Our experience has shown us that the ideas of those who disagree with us are often the ones we need most to hear. The Ninth Concept puts this aspect of our recovery experience to work in the service environment. When making a decision, our groups, service boards, and committees should actively seek out all available viewpoints.

An effective group conscience is a fully informed group conscience. The Ninth Concept is one tool we use to help ensure that our group conscience is as well-informed as it can possibly be. In any discussion, it is tempting to ignore dissenting members, especially if the vast majority of members think alike. Yet it is often the lone voice, offering new information or a unique perspective on things, that saves us from hasty or misinformed decisions. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are encouraged to respect that lone voice, to protect it, even to seek it out, for without it our service decisions would undoubtedly suffer.

Concept Nine also encourages us, individually, to frankly speak our minds in discussions of service issues, even when most other members think differently. No, this concept is not telling us to become perpetual nay-sayers, objecting to anything agreed to by the majority. It does say, however, that we are responsible to share our thoughts and our conscience with our fellow members, carefully explaining our position and listening with equal care to the positions of others. When we show the courage necessary to speak our mind, while also showing respect for one another, we can be confident that we act in the best interests of the NA Fellowship. By insisting on thorough discussion of important issues, the worst we can do is take a little of each other's time; at best, we protect the fellowship from the consequences of a hasty or misinformed decision.

When a service body is in the process of making a decision, the Ninth Concept can be exercised in a variety of ways. If you are a member of that service body, all you need do is raise your hand and speak. If the point you wish to make is complex, you may wish to put it in writing, so that other members of the board or committee can study it more carefully.

If you are not a member of the service body in question but, as an NA member, still have something to say about a service matter, there are a variety of avenues you can take to express your position. By sharing your views at your group's business meeting, you ensure that your ideas will be included in the mix of group conscience that guides your GSR when she or he participates in service discussions. Many service boards or committees set aside a portion of their agenda for open forums, when you can speak your own mind on issues before the body. Fellowship newsletters and journals, from the local to the world level, often offer space where NA members can share their viewpoints on service matters at hand. Whether or not you are a member of a service body, there are a variety of ways in which you can personally exercise the Ninth Concept.

Our decision-making process is not perfect. Many groups, service boards, and committees acknowledge this, and the value of the minority's position, with every decision they make. Whenever a motion is approved by something less than unanimous consent, these service bodies often ask those who voted against the measure to state their reasons for doing so, either out loud or in writing. If the decision needs to be revised at a later date, such minority opinions may prove invaluable in helping chart a new service course.

Concept Nine encourages us to continue to consult group conscience, even after a decision has already been made. If discussions are raised about a question already decided, the body is bound to hear those discussions. It may be that, based on such discussion, a service body will alter its earlier decision. However, if a past decision is questioned, discussion is well heard, and the decision still stands, the time comes for everyone to accept that decision and to cooperate wholeheartedly in its implementation. Half-hearted support of, or outright resistance to, such a decision runs contrary to our principles of surrender and acceptance. Once a decision has been

made, reconsidered, and confirmed, we need to respect it, and go on about the business of serving our fellowship.

The expression of the individual conscience to the group is the foundation of group conscience. Without it, we block the guidance of a loving God, our ultimate authority. When a position supported by many of us is challenged by a few of us, our service boards and committees should always treat such input with great respect and careful consideration. The information and insights offered by the few may save us from dangerous mistakes; they may even lead us to new, previously undreamt-of horizons of service, where we might fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose more effectively than ever. For the sake of our fellowship, and for the sake of our members yet to come, our groups, service boards, and committees must always carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.

## **Tenth Concept**

*Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.*

The Tenth Concept is our fellowship's guarantee of respect for the individual trusted servant. This concept may seem self-evident, but our belief in the principle involved is so strong that we want to say it loudly and clearly. Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual society, with high ideals for how we treat each other. Our members, however, are only human, and we sometimes mistreat one another. The Tenth Concept is our spiritual society's promise that if one of us is wronged in the service environment, the aggrieved trusted servant may ask that the wrong be made right.

A variety of circumstances may require application of the Tenth Concept. In one case we know of, a member was nominated for office on his area service committee. The member left the room, allowing the committee to discuss his qualifications. During that discussion, certain ASC members groundlessly slandered the candidate's personal reputation; as a result, the member was defeated. This man found out about the discussion of his personal life, and its effect on the election, a few days later. Feeling hurt and angry, he decided to talk with his sponsor, inventory his own part in the matter, and pray for guidance. After taking these steps, he felt confident that he was entitled to petition the ASC for redress. He wrote a letter stating that he believed he had been wronged by the ASC, asking for a new ballot. The following month, his letter was read and discussed during the committee's sharing session. After having a chance to examine their consciences, the ASC members admitted that what they'd done had been wrong and agreed to conduct the discredited election over again.

The Tenth Concept's guarantee of the right to appeal for redress of a personal grievance is designed, in part, to protect those who exercise their Ninth Concept responsibility to speak their mind in service discussions. Together, the Ninth and Tenth Concepts support an atmosphere in which our members feel free to express themselves frankly on matters at hand. This open atmosphere is essential in developing an effective group conscience. If, after having demonstrated the courage of their convictions, individuals become the subject of reprisals initiated by those who have disagreed with them, the Tenth Concept allows them to petition the appropriate service body for redress of their grievance. Thus, the respect of our service structure for the rights of the individual NA member is guaranteed. In a fellowship such as ours, whose success is based upon mutual support and cooperation, that kind of respect for the individual is indispensable.

One such case involved a subcommittee member who exercised the responsibilities described in Concept Nine, speaking against a project proposed by the subcommittee chairperson. In the following months, the subcommittee chairperson stopped sending committee minutes and bulletins to the member, even neglecting to inform the member of the times and locations of future subcommittee meetings. The member contacted the subcommittee chairperson, asking

that the problem be corrected. The chairperson refused. The subcommittee member decided to appeal to the area service committee for redress of a personal grievance against the chairperson.

The Tenth Concept is our fellowship's guarantee of respect for the individual trusted servant. If you think you've been wronged in the course of your participation in an NA service body and wish to apply Concept Ten, talk to your sponsor about it, inventory your own involvement in the matter, pray, and meditate. If, upon reflection, you still believe you have been personally aggrieved and that you should petition for redress, write a letter explaining the situation to your service body, or share your problem in the body's sharing session. The service body then needs to address the matter and, if it agrees that you have been wronged, how to make amends. Hopefully, the Tenth Concept will need to be applied only rarely in NA service. Should the need arise, however, it is here, ready to put our spiritual fellowship's ideals into action.

## **Eleventh Concept**

*NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.*

NA members around the world contribute money to help our fellowship fulfill its primary purpose. It is incumbent upon every element of our service structure to use those funds to carry the NA recovery message as far as possible. To do that, our service bodies must manage those funds responsibly, accounting fully and accurately for its use to those who have provided it.

Narcotics Anonymous funds should always be used to further our primary purpose. Money is used to pay the expenses involved in running NA recovery meetings, to inform the public about NA, and to reach addicts who can't get to meetings. It is used to develop, produce, translate, and distribute our message in written form, and to bring our members together in a service community committed to the vision of spreading our message around the world to those in need. All of this is done in support of NA's spiritual aim: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

Service funds aren't easy to come by. To fulfill our primary purpose, we need all of the financial resources at our fellowship's disposal. Our groups, service boards, and committees must make prudent use of the money we give them, refusing to spend money frivolously or self-indulgently. With NA's primary purpose in mind, our services will avoid wasting money, using the funds they've been given to carry our message as effectively as possible.

One way we apply Concept Eleven is by establishing clear spending priorities and measuring each proposed expenditure against that priority list. Many groups, service boards, and committees have more items on their priority lists than their budgets will allow. In such cases, only the highest priorities can be funded.

Money is only one of the resources we must responsibly prioritize. While the Eleventh Concept applies directly to the management of funds, it also has implications for the management of all our service resources. Most projects depend as much on ideas, information, conscience, and members' time and willingness as they do on money. If we have the funds needed to carry out a project but lack the time or the ideas, we'd best wait until we've gathered *all* the needed resources before proceeding. If we don't, we will have wasted NA service funds. In responsibly planning and prioritizing our service efforts, we must consider the total resource picture, not just our finances.

In setting priorities, we may be tempted to look only at our own needs, tightly holding on to funds, spending money only on our own projects, and neglecting our role in providing needed funds to all levels of service. That kind of thinking is contrary to the Eleventh Concept. High on our list of priorities should be a commitment to further the goals of NA as a whole. For NA to deliver the services necessary to keep growing and fulfilling our primary purpose around the world, the flow of funds must not bottleneck at any point in our structure.

While groups are responsible to fund our services, they are also responsible to carefully manage their service contributions. When contributing money, groups should ask themselves

what that money will do once it leaves their hands. Will it aid in the delivery of useful services to the groups? Will it help carry our message to the addict who still suffers? Will the service board or committee use it wisely? Our groups are free to decide for themselves how much they will contribute to the different levels of our service structure. We encourage them to do so, and to do so responsibly.

This is not to suggest that groups earmark contributions for any particular subcommittees. The groups have created the service structure not only to deliver services on their behalf, but to *coordinate* those services. In delegating to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill its responsibilities, the groups have also delegated the authority to coordinate the allocation of service resources at each level of service. That way, the needs and goals of all fields of service can be effectively balanced against the total resources of the coordinating service body.

Clear, frank communication from our service structure is the best way to help our groups contribute their funds in a responsible way. When the groups receive full, regular reports on the activities of their service boards and committees, they begin to see the total service picture. The groups should also receive information on how much those activities cost. That kind of communication helps assure our groups that their contributions are being handled responsibly.

Direct group contributions to our service structure encourage responsible management of service funds and help our services maintain their focus on NA's primary purpose. It is our experience that, when we make a commitment to fund the work of each level of the service structure exclusively through group contributions, we find it easier to maintain a strong link between our groups and our other service units. Our groups tend to be more aware of the work being done on their behalf and of their responsibility to provide their boards and committees with the necessary financial resources. When all levels of our service structure receive direct financial support from the groups, the bonds of mutual responsibility are strengthened between them. Additionally, by freeing our service boards and committees from the need to engage in fundraising activities, we make it possible for those service units to devote their full energies to the fulfillment of NA's primary purpose.

Accountability is an essential aspect of responsible NA financial management. When the members of Narcotics Anonymous provide groups, committees, offices, and conventions with funds, our service structure is responsible to account for how those funds are used. Regular financial reports, open books, and periodic audits of NA accounts, as described in the various guides developed for NA treasurers, help our members be sure their contributions are being used well, and help our services remain financially accountable to those they serve. Treasurers' reports help us see how well our actual service spending matches up with the priorities we've established. Consistent financial records help us make realistic spending plans for future service activities. Regular financial reporting and auditing also help deter the theft of NA service funds; and if funds are stolen, regular audits ensure that such thefts cannot go long unnoticed.

When NA members contribute service funds, they expect their money to be used carefully, and to be used for the sole purpose of furthering our primary purpose. By accepting those contributions, our groups, service boards, and committees make a commitment to use those funds to carry the NA message, and to manage them responsibly.

## **Twelfth Concept**

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

Selfless service is an essentially spiritual endeavor. Our Twelfth Step says, in part, that "having had a spiritual awakening," we individually "tried to carry this message to addicts." Our collective service efforts arise from that same spiritual foundation. Having experienced the results of this program in our own lives, we join together to carry the recovery message farther

than we could individually. NA service is not about forcing our will or our ideas on others; rather, it is about humbly serving them, without expectation of reward.

This principle underlies all we do in our groups, service boards, and committees. The Twelfth Concept reminds us that we ourselves have experienced recovery only because others put this selfless principle into action before us, taking the time and the care to carry the NA message to us when we were still suffering from active addiction. In service, we express our gratitude for the recovery others have shared with us by carrying ours to others. Nothing could be further from the drive to rule or direct than this spirit of selfless service.

Our groups were created because we found that, alone, we could not “stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.” In the same way, our groups have joined together to create a service structure, a cooperative effort designed to help them carry the message further than they could carry it separately. The service structure has not been created as a way for some groups to force others to do their bidding. Rather, it has been developed to combine the strength of our groups to better fulfill necessary services which usually cannot be fulfilled well, if at all, by individual groups: developing and distributing materials that share our message in print, providing information about NA to the general public, transmitting our message to addicts who cannot attend meetings, and supporting new groups and new NA communities. NA service is the cooperative effort of trusted servants receiving guidance from the groups, not a rule enforced by a governing body.

The process of joining together to create the service structure is an expression of our groups’ humility. Separately, they can do far, far less to fulfill our fellowship’s primary purpose than they can do together. In the same way, the various elements of our service structure each play their own particular role in the broader Narcotics Anonymous service plan. All the elements depend on all the others for their effectiveness; when any one element attempts to act as an agency of government, rather than a vehicle for service, it strains the ties that bind us all together, threatening our fellowship’s overall effectiveness in fulfilling its primary purpose. Humility is an essential attribute of nongoverning service in Narcotics Anonymous.

In order to serve well, each element of our service structure must make an earnest effort at effective communication. As groups, as trusted servants, as service boards and committees, we must share fully with others, and listen carefully and respectfully to their words to us. Others may use language to divide the strength of their opponents, so that they may rule them; in NA service, we share with one another so that we may combine our strength, the better to fulfill our fellowship’s primary purpose. To maintain our accountability to those we serve, we are bound to inform them in a complete, accurate, and concise fashion of our activities. The nongoverning nature of our service structure dictates that we seek others’ advice in our own decisions, their consent in decisions affecting them, and their cooperation in decisions affecting us all. Open, honest, and straightforward communication nurtures the spirit of service in our fellowship, and poisons the impulse to govern.

The kind of authority that our groups have delegated to our boards and committees is the authority to serve, not to govern. Each element of our service structure, from the group to the world, has its own role to play; all, however, serve together as a team, striving toward a common goal, “that no addict seeking recovery need die without having the chance to find a new way of life.” It is our sometimes hard-won experience that quality service, just like quality recovery, can only be accomplished in an atmosphere of mutual respect, mutual support, and mutual trust. Together, we recover, and together, we serve—this is the spiritual core of our program, the foundation of our fellowship. A structure based on that foundation could only be one of service, never of government.

## Study Materials

These notes and questions have been put together to help individuals and study groups review the Twelve Concepts. Under each section are brief summary notes touching the major points of each concept. You or your study group may wish to use the note questions, among others, to ask yourselves about how NA services work and how the Twelve Concepts might be applied in your locale.

### First Concept

*To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.*

The primary responsibility of an NA group is to conduct its recovery meetings, carrying the message directly to the addict who still suffers. Groups join their strength in the service structure, ensuring that other services—H&I, PI, literature development, for example—are fulfilled effectively and without distracting the groups from their own primary responsibility.

#### Study and discussion questions

1. Does your group hold regular business meetings? (See *The Group Booklet*, pp. 9-10.)
2. Does your group regularly talk about how it can better fulfill its primary purpose?
3. After paying the expenses for literature, refreshments, and meeting-hall rent, does your group have enough money to conduct other services on its own?
4. Can your group perform a variety of organized services like PI work, H&I panels, phonenumber management, and literature development while still attending to its recovery meetings?
5. Does your group send a representative to your local area service committee? Do you contribute money to your ASC on a regular basis?

### Second Concept

*The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.*

The groups have final responsibility for and authority over the service structure they have created. By fulfilling their responsibility to provide their service structure with the conscience, ideas, people, and money it needs, the groups also exercise their authority. Conversely, the service structure must always look to the groups for support and direction.

#### Study and discussion questions

1. Does your group have any way of letting your area committee know whether it's meeting your needs? How?
2. Does your group's GSR regularly take part in ASC meetings? Do you regularly contribute to the ASC? Do these things give your group any say about the way NA services are administered? How?
3. How frequently is your group consulted on service matters by the ASC? The RSC? The WSC? Do you want to be consulted more often? Less often?
4. What does the Second Concept say to our service boards and committees? Does your group believe that message is heard and understood by our service structure? If not, what can your group do about it?

### Third Concept

*The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.*

In day-to-day matters, the groups have given our service boards and committees the practical authority necessary to do the jobs assigned them. This is not a blank check issued to the service

structure; the group's final responsibility and authority, spoken of in the Second Concept, still apply. To make Concept Three work, we must carefully select trusted servants.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. In general, what does your group think about the concept of delegated authority?
2. If your group were consulted on every decision that had to be made by every service board, committee, or subcommittee at the area, regional, and world level, would you still have enough time and energy to address your own group's business? Would your group have enough information to be able to offer intelligent advice on such matters?
3. If the service boards and committees serving your group could act only after consulting your group, would they be able to act swiftly enough in performing the duties your group has given them?
4. In the essay on the Second Tradition in our Basic Text (p. 60), it says "We are mismanagers and not one of us is capable of consistently making good decisions." If this is true, how can we responsibly delegate to our trusted servants the kind of authority called for in the Third Concept?

## **Fourth Concept**

*Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.*

The trust necessary to confidently delegate authority is founded on the careful selection of trusted servants. Leadership is very important to the welfare of our fellowship. True, our leaders are but trusted servants, not governors; yet we also expect our trusted servants to lead us. If we select them carefully, we can confidently allow them to do so. The essay on this concept describes an array of leadership qualities to be considered when selecting trusted servants.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. Read NA's Second Tradition. Does NA have leaders? If so, what kind of leaders? Does a fellowship that makes collective decisions need leaders?
2. Does your group have leaders? If so, who are they? In what sense can they be called "leaders"? Could your group do without leaders? Could a service board or committee do without leaders?
3. According to this essay, what are some of the skills and personal traits we seek when selecting trusted servants? What is the real foundation of NA leadership?
4. "Effective NA leadership knows not only how to serve, but when it will serve best to step aside and allow others to take over." Discuss rotation of leadership.
5. What does NA leadership have to do with recovery? With selfless service?

## **Fifth Concept**

*For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.*

In defining a single point of decision for each service assignment, we eliminate confusion about who has authority to do what. We also clarify accountability for our services: whoever is given the authority for a particular task will be held accountable for the fulfillment of that task.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. Does your group assign particular tasks to particular people? Does this help ensure that important jobs actually get done?
2. Does anyone in your group know of a situation, either in the group or in a service board or committee, where more than one person or subcommittee were given responsibility for the same task? What happened?

3. If three different people are all given equal authority in a particular service matter and the work is not done, who can be held accountable?

## **Sixth Concept**

*Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.*

Group conscience is the means by which we bring the spiritual awakening of the Twelve Steps to bear in making service-related decisions. It is fundamental to our fellowship's decision-making process. It is not, however, merely a euphemism for "voting" and is not itself the NA decision-making process.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. What do we mean when we say that NA is a spiritual society? Does a spiritual society approach the decision-making process differently than other organizations?
2. Is "group conscience" just NA's way of saying "voting"? (As in, "Let's take a group conscience on that.") In what way is group conscience distinct from our decision-making process? In what way is group conscience a fundamental *part* of that process?
3. Read NA's Second Tradition. Does the Sixth Concept conflict with the Second Tradition, or help clarify it?
4. Read NA's Twelfth Tradition. How does the practice of the Sixth Concept help us focus on "principles, not personalities" when we make service decisions?
5. Besides decision making, in what other areas of our fellowship's life can we see group conscience at work?

## **Seventh Concept**

*All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.*

Who should take part in our decision-making processes? The participation of all members of a service body provides the broadest group conscience and the soundest foundation for service decisions.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. Right now, who participates in your ASC meetings? Why?
2. Who participates in your group's business meetings? Why?
3. Do all the members of your ASC bear substantial responsibility for the NA services delivered in your area? Do all the members of a particular subcommittee bear substantial responsibility for that subcommittee's work? Are there any differences in the way members participate in area committee meetings and in a subcommittee meeting? Why, or why not?

## **Eighth Concept**

*Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.*

Regular communication is essential to the fulfillment of all these concepts, and to the integrity and effectiveness of our services themselves.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. How does regular communication support the Second Concept? The Third Concept? The Fourth Concept? The Sixth Concept?
2. How could a lack of regular communication undermine those concepts, and the integrity and effectiveness of our service structure?
3. Does your group receive regular communication from the trusted servants, service boards, and committees that serve it? Does your group regularly communicate with those trusted

servants, service boards, and committees? How has this communication—or lack of communication—affected your group? The service structure?

## **Ninth Concept**

*All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.*

To check judgment, to guard against hasty or misinformed decisions, and to invite the sharing of new ideas, our services must consider all viewpoints when making plans. This is essential to the development of a fair, wise, balanced group conscience.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. “An effective group conscience is a fully informed group conscience.” Why is it important to make sure all viewpoints are considered when making service decisions?
2. In your group, area, or region, how can an individual member voice his or her viewpoint on a service decision at hand?
3. Do NA services make the effort they should to seek out new, different viewpoints? Do NA services stifle opposing viewpoints?
4. How do you know when it’s time to speak up against a decision of the majority? When it’s time to accept a decision and surrender to group conscience?

## **Tenth Concept**

*Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.*

The Tenth Concept encourages us to treat each other with respect in the service environment, and provides us with a means of making amends when we wrong others. The essay describes ways in which an individual who feels he or she has been wronged can go about seeking redress of his or her grievance.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. Do you know of anyone who has been wronged in service? Has that wrong been made right?
2. “Together, the Ninth and Tenth Concepts support an atmosphere in which our members feel free to express themselves frankly on matters at hand.” Have you ever been afraid to speak your conscience in service meetings? Do you know of anyone, in your area or elsewhere, who has been afraid to speak freely? If so, why? Would the Tenth Concept ease such fears?
3. When is it appropriate to apply the Tenth Concept? When is it not appropriate?

## **Eleventh Concept**

*NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.*

The Eleventh Concept establishes the sole absolute priority for the use of NA funds: to carry the message. The importance of that priority calls for total fiscal accountability. Direct contributions to each level of service help us focus on our primary purpose and enhance accountability.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. What is money used for in your group? Your area? Your region? Your world services?
2. Rank the following group budget priorities:
  - NA literature
  - refreshments
  - meeting-hall rent

- group reserve
- service donations

Why did you rank them in the order you did? Does your group have standing budget priorities, or does it handle such questions from month-to-month?

3. Do you know of instances where NA money has been spent frivolously at the group level? In an area or regional committee? In world services? What was “frivolous” about the way that money was spent? How should it have been spent instead?
4. Are NA funds well-accounted for in your group? Your area and region? In world services? If not, what kinds of financial reports would you like to see instead?
5. “Direct group contributions to our service structure encourage responsible management of service funds and help our services maintain their focus on NA’s primary purpose.” Does your area or region depend on NA fundraisers for a significant portion of its income? Is that wise? How does it affect the relationship of the ASC or RSC to your group? Would that relationship be any different if groups contributed directly to each level of service? Would our service boards and committees be able to operate solely on income from direct group contributions?

## **Twelfth Concept**

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

Within the context of the Twelve Concepts, as a body, this concept serves much the same function as Tradition Twelve does in the context of the other traditions. The Twelfth Concept brings our consideration of concepts for NA service back to the spiritual root of selfless service. A structure based on that foundation could only be one of service, never of government.

### **Study and discussion questions**

1. What is the difference between service and government?
2. The difference between a governing organization and a service organization is often not of structure but of spiritual foundation and purpose. What is it about NA’s primary purpose and its spiritual identity that says “our structure should always be one of service, never of government”?
3. The essay on the Twelfth Concept talks about how gratitude, humility, communication, and selflessness help our structure remain “one of service, never of government.” Discuss these things.
4. Discuss how the Twelfth Concept applies to each of the eleven other concepts.

## Twelve Steps

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. 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.

## Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reprinted for adaptation by permission of AA World Services, Inc.

## Twelve Concepts

1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.
2. The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.
3. The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.
4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
5. For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.
6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.
7. All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.
8. Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.
9. All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.
11. NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.
12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.

The Twelve Concepts for NA Service were modeled on AA's Twelve Concepts for World Service, published by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., and have evolved specific to the needs of Narcotics Anonymous.

**Tab 3**

**UWANA Area Guidelines**

**Available at [UWANA.org](http://UWANA.org)**

**Tab 3**

**UWANA Area Guidelines**

**Available at [UWANA.org](http://UWANA.org)**

**GUIDELINES OF THE UNITED WASATCH  
AREA SERVICE COMMITTEE OF  
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS**

**ARTICLE I**

Section 1. The name of this committee shall be the United Wasatch Area Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous (UWASCNA)<sup>1</sup>.

**ARTICLE II  
PURPOSES**

Section 1. Our purpose is to unify and support the groups in the following ways:

- a. To provide a forum to voice concerns and to share experience.
- b. To establish standing sub-committees and create ad-hoc committees.
- c. To act as a liaison between UWASCNA and the regional, zonal and world service bodies.

Section 2. We will uphold the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts and will also find guidance in the Guide to Local Services.

**ARTICLE III  
PARTICIPANTS**

Section 1. Members and Participants

- a. Any Narcotics Anonymous group expressing a desire to join the area and not belonging to another area may do so.
- b. This committee consists of two categories of participants: (1) voting and (2) non-voting.
  - i. Voting participants of the UWASCNA are the Group Service Representatives (GSRs), or in their absence, the alternate Group Service Representative (Alternate-GSR).
  - ii. Non-voting members include officers of the ASC and other NA members in attendance.
- c. No member may hold more than one area position at a time.
- d. A voting participant may represent only one group at a single ASC meeting.
- e. Any member of Narcotics Anonymous may participate in debate and discussion.
- f. It is the responsibility of all voting participants to attend all regular and special

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, the UWASCNA body is sometimes referred to as “The ASC” or “ASC” (both of which mean “Area Service Committee”).

meetings of UWASCNA.

#### **ARTICLE IV Proposals and Voting**

##### **Section 1. UWANA Make a Decision (Procedure)**

- a. Officers and voting members may bring proposals to the ASC.
- b. The chairperson reads the proposal to the ASC.
  - i. Proposals must have a second by a GSR
  - ii. Proposals may be submitted to the ASC at any point before or during the regular ASC meeting, though it's suggested that motions be submitted before the start of business.
- c. The maker of the proposal speaks to the intent of the proposal.
- d. The chair opens the floor for clarifying questions about the proposal.
- e. The chair opens the floor for concerns about the proposal. The proposal may be changed with a friendly amendment (agreed to by the originator of the proposal). The chair ensures that all concerns are heard and addressed.
- f. Any voting member can ask that the ASC table the proposal. *A request to table a proposal triggers an immediate vote requiring a simple majority to pass.*
- g. After concerns have been heard, the chair or a voting member may request a vote. The service body makes a decision on the proposal by a show of hands.
  - i. Favoring
  - ii. Opposed
  - iii. Abstaining
- h. For a proposal to pass:
  - i. Guideline-changing proposals require a three-quarter majority.
  - ii. Non-guideline-changing proposals require a simple majority.

##### **Section 2. Proposal Withdrawals, Calls for Votes, and Referrals to Subcommittees**

- a. The maker of the proposal has the ability to withdraw the proposal at any time during the decision-making procedure. At any time during the decision-making procedure, any GSR or the Chairperson can suggest that the ASC come to a vote. At such a time, the chair will determine if all concerns have been heard and addressed. Following this determination, the ASC will come to a vote according to (IV.1.G).
- b. At any time during the decision-making procedure, any voting member or ASC committee member can suggest that we “refer the proposal to committee.” At such a time, the ASC will conduct a vote according to (IV.1.G) to determine whether or not a subcommittee should revise and/or decide the proposal.

##### **Section 3. UWASCNA Voting Definitions**

- a. Quorum – Defined as at least 50% of the total number of active groups on the roll. Quorum is established during roll call. During the ASC meeting, if the chair deems it appropriate or if a group requests reconsideration, the chairperson may initiate another roll call to establish (or revise) the quorum determination.

- b. In the event that quorum is not established:
  - i. New- business motions affecting guidelines, regional, and world motions will be tabled for one month.
  - ii. Groups in attendance will decide other motions.
  - iii. Monthly area bills, including but not limited to subcommittees, earmarks, rent, etc. will be handled by groups present at the ASC.
- c. Group Inactivity: A group is deemed inactive if it does not have GSR or Alternate-GSR representation for two consecutive UWASCNA meetings. Groups re-acquire active status once it has GSR or Alternate-GSR representation at roll call again. A group deemed inactive is not necessarily removed from the meeting list or removed from roll call.
- d. Favoring – A participant supports the proposal, all things considered.
- e. Opposed – A participant does not support the proposal, all things considered.
- f. Abstaining – A participant is choosing not to vote. An abstention does not count in the tallying of favoring/opposing votes.
- g. Table a proposal – when a proposal is tabled, the GSRs take the proposal back to their groups and the proposal is added to the following month’s agenda under “old business.”
- h. Simple Majority – 50%+1 of the in favor of / opposed to votes
- i. Three-quarter Majority – at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority of members present at the time of the vote

## **ARTICLE V**

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS & SUB-COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

#### Section 1. Officers and Sub-Committee Chairs in UWASCNA:

- a. Officers of the ASC: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Vice-Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-Treasurer, Region Committee Member (RCM), Alternate-RCM.
- b. Sub-committee chairs: Hospitals & Institutions (H&I), Public Relations (PR), Activities, Outreach, Literature, Area Convention Chair, and New Year’s Event Chair.
- c. Note that the Area Convention Chair and the New Year’s Event Chair can be the same member, and the election to these positions is contingent upon a yearly vote as described in See Article XIII-C-1.

#### Section 2. Elections:

- a. Elections of officers and sub-committee chairpersons are held every year in December. Those elected to service will begin their terms in January of the following year.
  - i. Sub-committees with guidelines may elect their own chairs; such elections need to be confirmed by a majority vote at the ASC.
- b. A term of service is one year.
- c. No officer or sub-committee chair may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office. Following a one-year absence from that position, a member is eligible again to run for that position.

- d. No ASC member may hold more than one position simultaneously. “Position” here includes voting and non-voting member roles.
- e. After any ASC vacancy occurs, an announcement of the vacancy should be taken back to the groups and the vacancy will be added to old business.
- f. A proposal to waive a clean-time suggestion is a proposal to suspend guidelines. A passing  $\frac{3}{4}$ -majority vote will be required to waive the clean-time suggestion.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **REMOVAL/RESIGNATION OF OFFICERS**

#### **Section 1. Removal**

- a. A UWASCNA officer will be removed from their position under the following circumstances (note that circumstance *i* does not require a vote):
  - i. Relapse
  - ii. Negligence of duties
  - iii. Discussion and vote by the ASC
  - iv. Absence from two regular UWASCNA meetings without prior notification to an area officer.

#### **Section 2. Resignation**

- a. It is suggested that any officer or subcommittee chairperson with intent to resign their position provide written notice as soon as possible to the ASC chairperson.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **REQUIREMENTS AND DUTIES OF OFFICERS AND SUB-COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

#### **Section 1. Chairperson:**

##### **a. REQUIREMENTS**

- i. Willingness to serve.
- ii. Suggested minimum of 3 years clean time.
- iii. Service experience at the Group, Area or Regional level.
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 steps, 12 Traditions and the 12 concepts of NA service.
- v. Time and commitment to fulfill the duties of this service position.

##### **b. DUTIES:**

- i. To attend all regular and special UWASCNA meetings.
- ii. To open and facilitate the meeting at the appointed time.
- iii. To expedite business in accordance with the 12 Traditions, 12 Concepts, and ASC guidelines.
- iv. To appoint all UWASCNA ad-hoc committees and ad-hoc committee chairs.
- v. To sign all contracts entered into by the UWASCNA or subcommittees.

- vi. On the occasion of a 50/50 tie in an ASC vote, the chairperson may:
  - 1. Cast a tie-breaking vote.
  - 2. Send the proposal back to the groups and add it to old business for the following month's ASC agenda.

Section 2. Vice Chairperson:

a. REQUIREMENTS:

- i. Willingness to serve.
- ii. Suggested minimum of two (2) years clean time.
- iii. Service experience at the Group, Area or Regional levels.
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and the 12 Concepts of Service.
- v. Time and commitment to fulfill the duties of this service position.

b. DUTIES:

- i. To attend all regular and special UWASCNA meetings and to assist the chairperson as needed.
- ii. To serve as chairperson in the absence of the ASC chairperson.
- iii. Liaison between all sub-committees to assure proper cooperation of responsibilities.
- iv. To be a co-signer of the UWASCNA bank account.
- v. To be familiar with and to communicate the message of the ASC guidelines at all ASC meetings.
- vi. To maintain ASC guidelines, ensuring that they contain all amendments.
- vii. To serve as temporary Sub-Committee Chair of Sub-Committees(s) without a chairperson until such time as the ASC body fills the vacancy.

Section 3. Secretary:

a. REQUIREMENTS:

- i. Willingness to serve.
- ii. Suggested minimum of 2 years clean time.
- iii. Service experience at the group, Area or Regional level.
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts of Service.
- v. Time and commitment to fulfill duties of this service position.

b. DUTIES:

- i. To attend all regular and special UWASCNA meetings.
- ii. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson or the RCMs, to call the meeting to order and preside until immediate election of a temporary chairperson.

- iii. To keep minutes of all proceedings of the ASC.
- iv. To keep on file all ASC reports, guidelines, files, and archives.
- v. To maintain the ASC member list.
- vi. To read the minutes of the previous ASC meeting at each ASC.
- vii. To make minutes and records available to NA members upon request.
- viii. To furnish committees and sub-committees with whatever documents are required for the performance of their duties.
- ix. To notify the participants of each special meeting, utilizing such notification as is agreed upon by the ASC.
- x. To type and mail/e-mail the correspondence of the ASC as required.
- xi. To prepare and distribute the agenda for each upcoming ASC meeting.
- xii. To email monthly meetings to area officers, subcommittee chairs, GSRs, and GSR Alternates an electronic copy of minutes no less than one week prior to monthly UWANA Area Service Committee. Only five (5) paper copies of the monthly minutes will be provided at the Area Service committee meeting each month.

#### Section 4. Treasurer

##### a. REQUIREMENTS:

- i. Willingness to serve.
- ii. Suggested minimum of 3 years clean
- iii. Service experience at the Group, Area or Regional levels.
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts of Service.
- v. Time and commitment to fulfill duties of this service position.

##### b. DUTIES:

- i. To attend all regular and special ASC meetings.
- ii. To be the custodian of the ASC funds.
- iii. To distribute ASC funds as necessary, in accordance with approved ASC decisions, when the funds are available.
- iv. To make a monthly report to the ASC:
  - A. The monthly treasurer's report should consist of an itemized accounting of monthly bills, special bills, earmarks, income, and reserve accounts both of the area and of all subcommittees.
- vi. To make financial records available to NA members upon request.
- vii. To make a full financial report at the end of an ASC term. (see Article XIII, Section 15)
- viii. To be a co-signer of the UWASCNA bank account.

#### Section 5. Vice Treasurer

##### a. REQUIREMENTS:

- i. Willingness to serve.

- ii. Suggested minimum of 2 years clean time.
- iii. Service experience at the Group, Area, and/or Regional levels.
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and the 12 Concepts of Service.
- v. Time and commitment to fulfill duties of this service position.
- vi. Willingness to take over the Treasurer chair position the following year.

b. DUTIES:

- i. To attend all regular and special UWASCNA meetings.
- ii. To learn the Treasurer position.
- iii. To assist the current Treasurer on all Treasurer duties (see Treasurer duties in previous section: Article VII, Section 4, Subsection b).
- iii. In the absence of the Treasurer at the UWASCNA meeting, perform duties of the Treasurer.
- iv. To be a co-signer on the UWASCNA bank account.

Section 6. Regional Committee Member (RCM):

a. REQUIREMENTS:

- i. Willingness to serve.
- ii. Suggested minimum of 3 years clean time.
- iii. Service experience at the Group, Area or Regional levels
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts of Service.
- v. Time and commitment to fulfill duties of this service position.

b. DUTIES:

- i. To attend all regular and special ASC meetings.
- ii. To serve as the chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.
- iii. To attend all Regional Service Committee meetings and to represent the ASC each of those meetings.
- iv. To make a written report to the assembly at the regular ASC meetings that
- v. To follow each RSC meeting; such reports will (a) cover the business of the previous RSC meeting and (b) communicate all regional and world motions to the groups.
- vi. To facilitate registration of groups with World Service Office (WSO).

Section 7. Alternate Regional Committee Member (Alt-RCM):

a. REQUIREMENTS:

- i. Willingness to serve.

- ii. Suggested minimum of 2 years clean time.
- iii. Service experience at the Group, Area or Regional levels.
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts of Service.
- v. Time and commitment to fulfill duties of this service position.

b. DUTIES:

- i. To attend all regular and special UWASCNA meetings.
- ii. To attend all Regional Service Committee meetings and to represent the ASC each of those meetings.
- iii. In the absence of the RCM, to perform the duties of the RCM.

Section 8. Literature Chair

a. REQUIREMENTS:

- i. Willingness to serve.
- ii. Suggested minimum of 2 years clean time.
- iii. Service experience at the Group, Area, or Regional levels.
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts of Service.
- v. Time and commitment to fulfill duties of this service position.

b. DUTIES:

- i. To attend all regular and special UWASCNA meetings.
- ii. To attend all regular and special meetings of sub-committee that they chair.
- iii. To give a monthly report, to the ASC, of the proceedings of the sub-committee that they chair.
- iv. To submit records for an audit of the sub-committee in which they chair, as requested by the ASC.
- v. To submit budget and suggested guidelines to be approved by the ASC.
- vi. To order and maintain a supply of literature to meet the area needs.
- vii. To be a co-signer of the UWASCNA bank account.

Section 9. Literature Vice Chair

a. REQUIREMENTS:

- i. Willingness to serve.
- ii. Suggested minimum of 1 year clean time.
- iii. Service experience at the Group, Area, or Regional levels.
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts of

Service.

- v. Time and commitment to fulfill duties of this service position.
- vi. Willingness to take over the Literature chair position the following year.

b. DUTIES:

- i. To attend all regular and special UWASCNA meetings.
- ii. To attend all regular and special meetings of Literature sub-committee.
- iii. In the absence of the Literature Chair at the UWASCNA meeting, perform duties of the Literature Chair.

Section 10. Sub-committee Chairs

a. REQUIREMENTS:

- i. Willingness to serve.
- ii. Suggested minimum of 1 year clean time.
- iii. Service experience at the Group, Area or Regional level.
- iv. Working knowledge of the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts of Service.
- v. Time and commitment to fulfill duties of this service position.

b. DUTIES:

- i. To attend all regular and special UWASCNA meetings.
- ii. To attend all regular and special meetings of sub-committee that they chair.
- iii. To give a monthly report, to the ASC, of the proceedings of the sub-committee that they chair.
- iv. To submit records for an audit of the sub-committee in which they chair, as requested by the ASC.
- v. To submit budget and suggested guidelines to be approved by the ASC.

**ARTICLE VIII  
MEETINGS**

Section 1. Regular meetings of the UWASCNA will be held on the third Sunday of every month at 5pm.

Section 2. Special meetings of the UWASCNA may be called by the Chairperson of the UWASC, and should be called upon written request of any member of the ASC. The purpose of special meetings requested by members of the UWASCNA shall be stated in writing. No business other than that which is stated will be conducted at the special meeting. The special meeting of the UWASCNA should be held within 30 days of the written request.

### **Article IX ASC Agenda**

Section 1. Agenda will follow attached Schedule A. Changes to agenda must be agreed upon by the officers of the UWASC.

### **ARTICLE X**

#### **STANDING SUB-COMMITTEES**

Section 1. Standing sub-committees may include, but are not limited to: Public Information, Hospitals & Institutions, Literature, Activities Committee, and other standing sub-committees that are deemed necessary to perform the work of the ASC. Sub-committees will be formed upon the approval of the member- groups of the ASC. At the inception of these standing sub-committees, the voting members of the ASC will elect a chairperson. Subsequent officers of each standing sub-committee will be elected by the sub-committee membership, in accordance with their guidelines.

Section 2. All standing sub-committees of the UWASC should create and adopt guidelines that are consistent with the *Guide to Local Service*, the *Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous* and the best information available from the World Service Conference in the form of WSC approved handbooks and guidelines.

Section 3. The guidelines of each sub-committee are subject to review and approval by the UWASC as a whole.

### **ARTICLE XI**

#### **AD-HOC COMMITTEES**

Section 1. The Chairperson of the UWASC has the responsibility to appoint Ad-Hoc Committees and/or Chairpersons. Ad-Hoc committees are created only to fulfill specific and special functions that arise from time to time. The Chairperson of the ASC will designate specifically the purpose and duration of existence.

### **ARTICLE XII**

#### **AMENDMENT OF GUIDELINES**

Section 1. Excluding the chairperson, any UWASCNA member may propose amendments and additions to the UWASCNA guidelines. The proposals must be submitted in writing (exact wording) to the ASC Chairperson at the regular UWASCNA meeting. Any such proposals should be heard and clarified in accordance with Article IV, and sent to the groups for review, in order for the UWASC to hold a vote at the following month's meeting.

Section 2. The amendment will go into effect immediately upon its adoption unless otherwise specified in the amendment.

### **ARTICLE XIII SPECIAL EVENTS**

#### Section 1. New Years Event and Area Convention

- a. The New Years and Convention events are yearly services the ASC may facilitate at the direction of the groups.
- b. The two events are not automatic events in that their occurrence or non-occurrence is to be determined each year in January or February based on the availability of willing trusted servants and the financial condition of the ASC. Prior to the yearly vote, the events' taking place is to be presumed for the purposes of budgeting.
  - i. Sub-Committee Arrangement: At the time of the annual vote, if the ASC determines to facilitate one or both of these events, and contingent upon willing trusted servants' availability, the ASC may determine that a single committee whose members share accountability and responsibility for facilitating the pair of events will facilitate both events. It may alternatively elect two separate committees, each assigned its own event. This matter is to be determined yearly concurrently with the yearly vote on the occurrence of the two events.
  - ii. The one or two committees that facilitate these events should be run in accordance with Article X ("Standing Sub-Committees").
  - iii. With regard to electing trusted servants to facilitate the temporarily-standing committee(s) that handle these two events, refer to Article VII Section 9 of these guidelines ("Requirements and Duties of Officers and Subcommittee Chairs").

### **ARTICLE XIV FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Section 1. Sources of income and holdings: any funds accumulated from group donations and other sources of income (i.e. literature, New Years Event, etc.) will be maintained in the UWASCNA checking account.

Section 2. Rent: Rent will be paid in the amount negotiated with the facility at which our meetings are held on a monthly basis to that facility.

Section 3. All UWASCNA expenditures shall be paid by a check/debit card tied to the UWASCNA checking account

Section 4. In the event a check is made payable to one of the authorized signers of the UWASCNA bank account, the payee is not authorized to sign the check.

Section 5. No expenditure should be made from the UWASCNA bank account without receipts or itemized listing of accountability.

Section 6. For Subcommittee's to use their reserve account funds they will need to provide a written itemized list of projected spending in their monthly report. Receipts need to be turned in for all funding.

Section 7. The UWASCNA will maintain a prudent reserve of \$500.00

Section 8. Regular Bills:

a. All regularly occurring bills will be paid with monthly income before earmarks are met or any other dispersal of funds occurs. Regular bills are as follows:

- i. Phonenumber
- ii. Bank charges
- iii. Rent
- iv. Web Page (i.e., Web Domain and Hosting Fees)
- v. P.O. Box
- vi. Storage Unit (See Article XIV, Section 15)
- vii. Regional Donation (See Article XIV, Section 9)
- viii. Supplies, as needed

Section 9. Every month, the UWASCNA will make a donation to the Utah Regional Service Body in an amount equal to 10% of group donations.

Section 10. Earmarks: An earmark is defined as a designated amount of funds given regularly to the following subcommittees:

- a. Hospitals and Institutions Subcommittee
  - i. Monthly earmark for H&I is \$125.
  - ii. Earmark will not be paid if the H&I reserve is at or exceeds \$300.
- b. Public Relations Subcommittee
  - i. Monthly earmark for PR is \$70.
  - ii. Earmark will not be paid if the PR reserve is at or exceeds \$300.
- c. Outreach Subcommittee
  - i. Monthly earmark for Outreach is \$25.
  - ii. Earmark will not be paid if the Outreach reserve is at or exceeds \$100.
- d. Campvention/URICNA Subcommittee's
  - i. Monthly earmark for Campvention/URICNA Subcommittee's is \$30.
  - ii. Earmark will not be paid if the Campvention /URICNA Subcommittee reserve is at or exceeds \$360.

Section 11. Literature.

- a. The literature reserve is funded by group, subcommittee, or individual member literature orders.
- b. Literature orders from NAWS will be funded by the literature reserve.
- c. Literature orders from NAWS will not exceed the literature reserve without approval from the ASC body (as the extra funds would have to be drawn from the UWASCNA budget).

## Section 12. New Years and Convention Events

- a. Funding of the New Years and Convention events:
  - i. Financially, the goal of the two annual events (New Year's Event and Convention) is to be self-supporting. Funds from the ASC not raised through the events themselves are to be a resource of last resort and should be considered carefully.
  - ii. The prudent reserve for these two events, should they not be built immediately from the funds from the previous year's events, shall be built and maintained throughout the year from the ASC's income.
  - iii. The budgeting for the two events will be calculated together with each event able to utilize the overall combined budget as determined by the New Years and Convention Committee.
  - iv. The Convention & NYE prudent reserve will be \$4500.
  - vi. In the event that the two events generate income beyond their prudent reserve ("excess income"), such monies will be directed as follows:
    - Excess income will be used to fund the two events, and
    - Excess income not needed to meet the two events' prudent reserve will be considered income for the ASC (see Section 1 in Article XIII for the definition of income and other sections in Article XIII for the dispersal of income).

## Section 13. Activities Subcommittee.

- a. The activities subcommittee is intended to be self-supporting.
- b. The activities reserve will be funded by the subcommittee's events.
- c. The reserve will not exceed \$300, except with approval from ASC.

## Section 14. The UWASCNA Notebook Computer

- a. The UWASCNA may purchase one notebook computer for use by an officer of the ASC.
- b. The UWASCNA will provide up to \$200 for this purchase. The source of the funding will be the Prudent Reserve.
- c. The Notebook computer is the property of the ASC, and the UWASCNA will only maintain one computer at a time.
- d. When deemed necessary, replacement of the notebook computer will require a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -majority vote by voting members of the ASC.

## Section 15. Storage Unit

- a. The UWASCNA may contract the use of a storage unit, to be reviewed yearly when a lease is up, or in the case of no storage shed currently being used, when the need arises.
- b. The UWASCNA will provide up to \$360 yearly for this purchase. The source of the funding will be added to the Regular Bills (see Article XIV Section 8).

- c. The storage unit the property of the UWASCNA, and the UWASCNA will only maintain one storage at a time, if at all.
- d. The storage unit shall only be used for items owned by the UWASCNA or its subcommittees.
- e. At least two keys to the unit should be available, with one being held by a UWASCNA Officer (i.e., ASC Chairperson, ASC Vice Chairperson, ASC Secretary, ASC Treasurer, or RCM). The second key must be in the possession of either another UWASCNA Officer or a UWASCNA Subcommittee Chairperson.

Section 16. Dispersal of All Funds:

- a. Pay Bills (see Article XIII, Section 8 and 9).
- b. Fulfill Area prudent reserve (See Article XIII, Section 7).
- c. Meet earmarks (See Article XIII, Section 10).
  - i. If all earmarks cannot be met, a proposal should be made to decide what earmarks will be fulfilled – and which, if any, are to be left unmet.
- d. All remaining funds:
  - ii. A proposal can be made to decide where the remaining funds will be applied (i.e. ad-hoc committees, additional regional donations, subcommittee reserves, special events, or special needs of subcommittees beyond their reserves, etc.).
- e. Working balance will be at \$0 at the end of every area meeting.

Section 17. Auditing Procedure.

- a. Financial records will be audited on a yearly basis. This will take place during the first of the year and will be reported at the February ASC meeting. The audit will regard the previous year's records (January through December including New Year's Eve and convention income). The UWASCNA incoming chairperson, the RCM, and the incoming treasurer in this case will perform the audit.
- b. The audit shall examine the following:
  - i. Receipts
  - ii. bank statements/deposit slips
  - iii. Treasurer's reports
  - iv. Checkbook
- c. An audit can be requested by any area member and will be performed if the request is approved by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority vote. The chair will appoint an ad hoc committee to preform the audit.

Motion # \_\_\_\_\_

# UWANA MOTION FORM

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Motion Made By \_\_\_\_\_ Position or Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Second By \_\_\_\_\_ Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Motion Reads: \_\_\_\_\_

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Intent of Motion: \_\_\_\_\_

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Financial Impact on Area: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Motion Status == For Secretary's use only</b>						
<b>1</b>	<b>Motion Withdrawn</b>					
<b>2</b>	<b>Motion to Table --</b>	Made by _____	Second by _____			
	Yes _____	No _____	Abstain _____	Motion to table =	Pass    Fail	
<b>3</b>	<b>Motion to Amend --</b>	Made by _____	Second by _____			
	Yes _____	No _____	Abstain _____	Motion to amend =	Pass    Fail	
<b>4</b>	<b>Main Motion --</b>	Yes _____	No _____	Abstain _____		
		Main Motion =	Pass	Fail		

**UWANA LITERATURE ORDER FORM - STOCK ITEMS**

\*Updated September 2023\*

	PRICE	QTY	SUBTOTAL	
<b>Books</b>	6th Edition Basic Text, Hardcover	\$13.60		
	6th Edition Basic Text, Softcover	\$13.60		
	6th Edition Basic Text, Pocket-sized	\$13.60		
	6th Edition Basic Text, Audio CD (Book 1 only)	\$10.96		
	The NA Step Working Guides	\$10.10		
	It Works: How and Why, Hardcover	\$10.70		
	It Works: How and Why, Softcover	\$10.70		
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DATE
GROUP NAME
GSR NAME

	PRICE	QTY	SUBTOTAL
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	10 Years	\$3.80	
	11 Years	\$3.80	
	12 Years	\$3.80	
	13 Years	\$3.80	
	14 Years	\$3.80	
	15 Years	\$3.80	
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	26 Years	\$3.80	
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	41 Years	\$3.45		
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# **Tab 4**

## **Readings For NA Meetings**

**Who is an addict**

**Why Are We Here**

**What is the NA Program**

**How it Works**

**The Twelve Traditions**

**We Do Recover**

**Just For Today**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**

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## Who Is an Addict?

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. *We know!* Our whole life and thinking was centered in drugs in one form or another—the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We lived to use and used to live. Very simply, an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions, and death.

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## Why Are We Here?

Before coming to the Fellowship of NA, we could not manage our own lives. We could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives, husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized that in our addiction we were slowly committing suicide, but addiction is such a cunning enemy of life that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Many of us ended up in jail or sought help through medicine, religion, and psychiatry. None of these methods was sufficient for us. Our disease always resurfaced or continued to progress until in desperation we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to NA, we realized we were sick people. We suffered from a disease from which there is no known cure. It can, however, be arrested at some point and recovery is then possible.

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# What Is the Narcotics Anonymous Program?

NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work.

There are no strings attached to NA. We are not affiliated with any other organizations. We have no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

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# How It Works

If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are the principles that made our recovery possible:

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. 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.

(over)

This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once. We didn't become addicted in one day, so remember—*easy does it.*

There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery; this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Three of these that are indispensable are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. With these we are well on our way.

We feel that our approach to the disease of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical, for one addict can best understand and help another addict. We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible, and productive members of that society.

The only way to keep from returning to active addiction is not to take that first drug. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this, for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again.

Thinking of alcohol as different from other drugs has caused a great many addicts to relapse. Before we came to NA, many of us viewed alcohol separately, but we cannot afford to be confused about this. Alcohol is a drug. We are people with the disease of addiction who must abstain from all drugs in order to recover.

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# The Twelve Traditions of NA

We keep what we have only with vigilance, and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps, so freedom for the group springs from our Traditions.

As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

(over)

Understanding these Traditions comes slowly over a period of time. We pick up information as we talk to members and visit various groups. It usually isn't until we get involved with service that someone points out that "personal recovery depends on NA unity," and that unity depends on how well we follow our Traditions. The Twelve Traditions of NA are not negotiable. They are the guidelines that keep our Fellowship alive and free.

By following these guidelines in our dealings with others, and society at large, we avoid many problems. That is not to say that our Traditions eliminate all problems. We still have to face difficulties as they arise: communication problems, differences of opinion, internal controversies, and troubles with individuals and groups outside the Fellowship. However, when we apply these principles, we avoid some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are like those that our predecessors had to face. Their hard won experience gave birth to the Traditions, and our own experience has shown that these principles are just as valid today as they were when these Traditions were formulated. Our Traditions protect us from the internal and external forces that could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together. It is only through understanding and application that they work.

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# We Do Recover

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.

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# Just for Today

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.

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**Tab 5**  
**Group Business Meetings**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**

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**Group Business Meetings**

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# GROUP BUSINESS MEETINGS

## PURPOSE

Carrying the NA message of recovery is a group's greatest responsibility. Groups that take time to have discussions are often better able to create an atmosphere in which this message can be shared. Meeting together allows members to address group problems, connect with one another, and get a sense of the group as a whole. Group business meetings (sometimes called group conscience meetings) also allow groups to discuss business in a way that keeps the recovery meeting focused on effectively carrying the NA message.

## SAMPLE GROUP BUSINESS MEETING FORMAT

Group business meetings are usually held before or after the recovery meeting, so the recovery meeting remains focused on its primary purpose. Group members are encouraged to attend, raise questions, and participate in discussion. This sample agenda is meant to give groups a sense of how a typical group business meeting is run. There are many ways to conduct a group business meeting. The size and personality of a group usually dictate how structured the business meeting will be.

1. The member leading the group (usually the secretary) opens the business meeting with a prayer.
2. Group problems and solutions are discussed. These discussions typically involve topics such as the group's relationship with the meeting facility, how well the group is carrying the NA message, or any other issues of concern.
3. The treasurer gives a report about the group's financial state and makes a recommendation about contributing to the area, region, and world services.
4. The GSR gives a report about any area, regional, zonal, or world service items of importance to the group.

5. Other group trusted servants report on their areas of responsibility.
6. The group addresses any open positions or tasks that need to be accomplished.
7. The meeting is closed with a prayer.

Some groups hold business meetings on a regular basis (coinciding with the area service committee [ASC] meeting), while others conduct them when there is a specific issue that needs the group's attention. Group business meetings are meant to give members an opportunity to discuss subjects of importance to the group.

*Group conscience can be thought of in much the same way as personal conscience. Group conscience reflects a collective awareness of, understanding of, and surrender to spiritual principles. The conscience of the group takes shape and is revealed when its members take the time to talk with each other about their personal needs, the needs of the group, and the needs of NA as a whole.*

*It Works: How and Why*

## GROUP CONSCIENCE

Group conscience is the means by which we collectively invite the ongoing guidance of a Higher Power into our decision-making process. A group conscience is when addicts whose individual consciences have been awakened come together to consider service-related questions. This conscience is demonstrated when group members listen to one another and make compromises. Calm discussion, mutual respect, and a reliance on the group's conscience helps groups fulfill their primary purpose.

We sometimes use the vote as a rough tool for translating that spiritual guidance into clear, decisive terms. Many times a vote is not needed after a thoughtful and attentive discussion because the group's conscience becomes perfectly apparent, with the group leader asking if there are any objections to the group's consensus. No matter how a group decides to conduct business—either with or with-

out voting—taking time to openly discuss group matters is essential.

One of the best ways a group can solve the various issues that may arise is to remain focused on our primary purpose of carrying the NA message of recovery to addicts who still suffer. Practicing the spiritual principles contained in the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Steps can solve most groups' problems. In other cases, the group may seek suggestions from neighboring groups or through its group service representative (GSR) at the area service committee.

## MAINTAINING STRONG HOME GROUPS

There are many ways for groups to talk about important issues outside of a business meeting. What's important is that groups make the time to develop a group conscience, either during a regular business meeting or during a separately scheduled meeting. Some groups take a regular inventory of the group's effort to carry the NA message, while others address situations as they arise. The *Building Strong Home Groups Worksheet* is one resource members can use to strengthen their home groups. Groups can also answer some of the following questions in their discussions about how to build stronger home groups:

- ◆ How effectively is the group carrying the NA message of recovery?
- ◆ How can the group become more welcoming and accessible to more addicts in the community?
- ◆ How is the group striving to create a safe environment for newcomers? Are newcomers subjected to sexually or financially inappropriate advances?
- ◆ Is the meeting format suitable for the group?
- ◆ Does the leader, chairperson, or secretary set a tone of recovery at the meeting?
- ◆ Do group members live NA's principles and share about them in the group?

# GROUP BUSINESS MEETINGS

- ◆ Is attendance steady or growing?
- ◆ How is the group maintaining strong public relations with the meeting facility?
- ◆ How is the group considering its public image within the larger community?
- ◆ Is the group practicing the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts of Narcotics Anonymous?
- ◆ Are the group's funds being used wisely? How is the group using its funds to further the NA message?
- ◆ Has the area, region, zone, or world services asked the group for input?
- ◆ Does the group introduce new members to group service?
- ◆ How does the group prepare trusted servants for other service positions?

*As our trust in a Higher Power grows, it gets easier to let go of our personal desires and stop fighting for what we want. With an attitude of surrender, working together in a group becomes easier.*

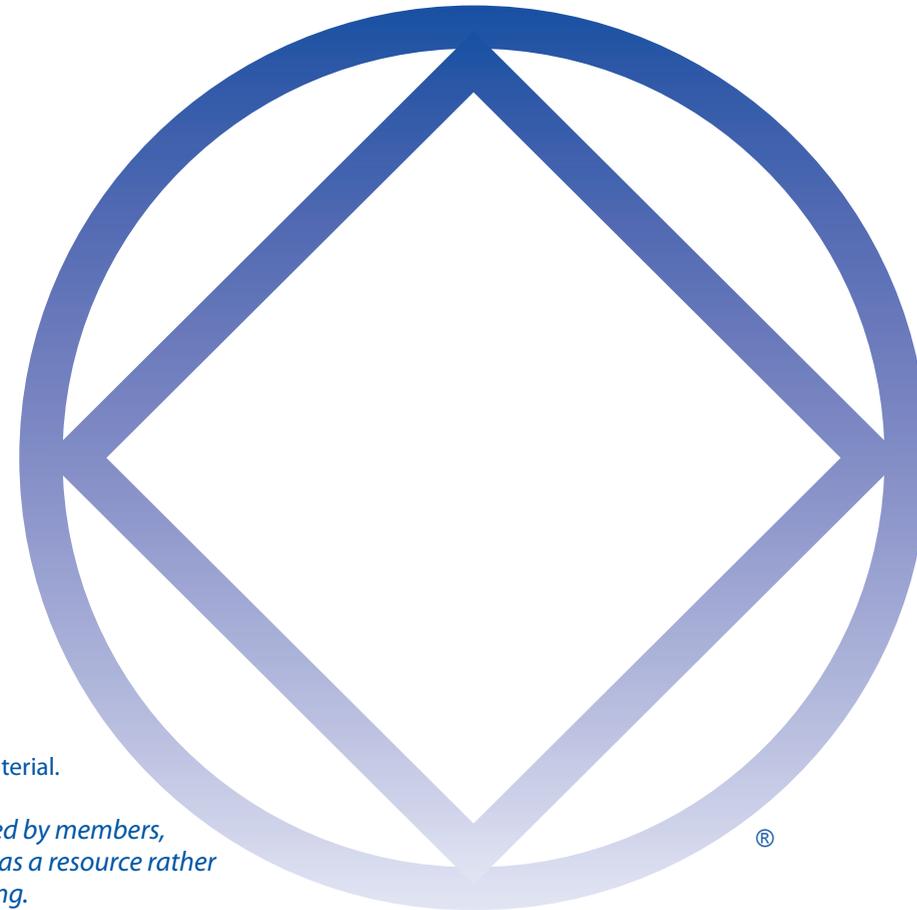
*It Works: How and Why*



This is Board-approved service material.

*Service pamphlets should be used by members, groups, and service committees as a resource rather than being read in an NA meeting.*

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## What is consensus-based decision making?

In Narcotics Anonymous, we make decisions by seeking direction from a loving Higher Power as it expresses itself in our group conscience. The principle of anonymity in NA means we serve as equals, and consensus-based decision making (CBDM) is one method for a service body, as a team of equals, to hear that group conscience. The heart of consensus is a cooperative intent, where members are willing to work together to find or create the solution that meets the needs of the group. The cooperative nature of consensus building is a different mindset from pro/con debate.

**Tradition 2:** For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

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

CBDM rests on the fundamental belief that each member of the body holds a piece of the larger truth. In this spirit, we strive for consensus to affirm the principles inherent in both the Seventh and Ninth Concepts. A decision reached by a consensus-based process may not mean total unanimity, but in CBDM, consensus can exist when each member of the service body is able to say:

- ✓ I had the opportunity to voice my opinions.
- ✓ I believe the team has heard me.
- ✓ I can accept the team's decision, even if it is not what I would choose as an individual.

**Concept 7:** All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.

**Concept 9:** All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.

## Why consensus-based decision making?

CBDM isn't just about particular policies or rules, or one or two specific Concepts or Traditions. It's about a group conscience process that connects us with a Higher Power and offers a potentially more inclusive process than parliamentary procedure. Our service bodies' meetings should be forums where trusted servants can be heard, and CBDM is about listening. With its emphasis on inclusion, collaboration, and consensus building, CBDM is in harmony with our spiritual principles. The consensus process is how we manifest the idea "together we can do what we cannot do alone" in a service setting.

## What types of decisions can we make with CBDM?

CBDM can be used to reach agreement on the types of decisions that are also made using parliamentary procedure. It can also be used to hold broader discussions that may not result in a specific decision. Each community is free to determine when a CBDM process will be most effective for them. Elections are one type of decision where it is common to simply seek a majority or a two-thirds vote rather than utilize a consensus-based decision making process.

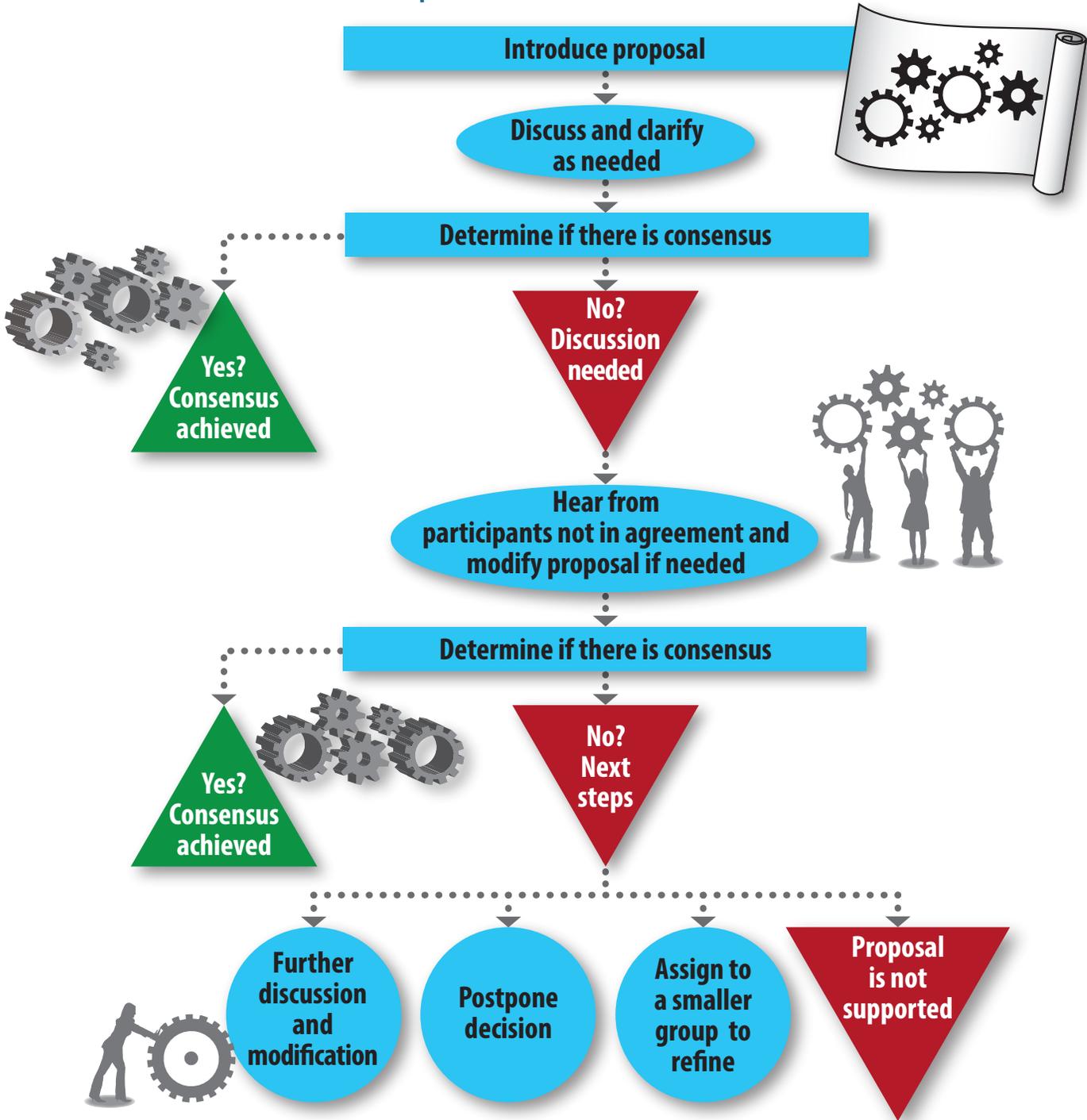
## How does CBDM work?

There are different variations of CBDM, but the basic steps are fairly consistent and simple to follow. Within those basic steps there is a great deal of variety depending on the individual service body's process and the type of decision being made. The material in this section is intended to help service bodies understand how the basics of a consensus-based process work, and can be adapted to fit local needs. Each NA community is free to create a process that works for them.

Using CBDM doesn't have to mean a service body has to change the order of the agenda it is accustomed to using. What it does mean is that instead of making a decision by first making a motion, proposals are introduced and can be adapted to include ideas and concerns offered by participants in the course of the discussion.



Here are some details of a CBDM process.



**Introduce proposal**

- Provide relevant details including:
- ✳ Where did the proposal come from?
  - ✳ Why is the proposal necessary?
  - ✳ What are the specific objectives of the proposal?
  - ✳ What human and financial resources are required?

**Community decision:** Who can introduce an idea or proposal?

- ✳ Most bodies allow only trusted servants (including delegates) to make proposals.
- ✳ In some bodies, only delegates (GSRs, RCMs, and RDs) can make proposals.
- ✳ Other bodies will allow anyone present to make a proposal.



**Discuss and clarify as needed**

Asking questions, sharing resources, and offering experience and ideas are all parts of this phase of the process. Newer members may need extra time to catch up with previous discussions on the topic.

**Community decision:** Who can speak to an idea or proposal? It's common for consensus-based bodies to allow anyone present to speak, though some recognize trusted servants before hearing from interested members.

**Determine if there is consensus**

A simple way to do this is to ask the room, "Is everyone comfortable moving forward with this proposal?" If everyone is not in agreement, then a show of hands (a straw poll) can be used to determine the level of support.

**Community decision:** Who can participate in a straw poll? It's common for any interested member to have a voice, but less common for everyone to participate in polls.

Some communities take a simple "for" and "against" vote to determine if consensus exists and a decision can be made.

Others include options such as:

- ✦ "Agree with reservation" for members who accept the proposal even if it is not what they would choose as an individual.
- ✦ "Stand aside" for members who do not agree with the proposal but will not stand in the way of it moving forward.

**Community decision:** What is the threshold for achieving consensus? Some options include:

- ✦ Two-thirds majority
- ✦ 80%
- ✦ More?

If consensus isn't achieved in the straw poll, then further discussion may be required. A very low level of support may indicate that no further discussion is needed, although care should be taken to ensure that the minority voice has been heard.

**Hear from participants not in agreement and modify proposal if needed**

This phase allows those not in agreement to share their concerns. All participants are encouraged to listen and offer ideas for modifying the proposal. Not all concerns will lead to changes. Compromise is an essential part of the process.

In strict consensus, everyone agrees or gives their consent; a single dissenter can block a decision. Most NA service bodies, however, use some form of consensus-*based* decision making rather than strict consensus. Any participant that believes a decision is in conflict with NA's guiding principles should have the opportunity to explain the details of their objection so the body can carefully consider whether it is appropriate to move forward.

**No? Next steps**

The role of the facilitator is to suggest possible next steps in the process and to help the body determine which are appropriate.

**Assign to a smaller group to refine**

This may be a workgroup or an ad-hoc committee, a number of the service body's trusted servants, or any other group that has the experience to suggest a way forward. Providing clear guidance to this group is particularly important.

**Further discussion and modification**

An effective facilitator can help the body determine when to continue discussion and when to try something else.

**Proposal is not supported**

Not every idea or proposal is supported, but CBDM allows all participants to be heard and to work together rather than argue opposing sides of a decision.

**Postpone decision**

A simple option is to take a short break or to postpone the decision until the next service meeting.



## Facilitating a CBDM body

CBDM requires a skilled facilitator who can guide the body in its decision-making process. A good facilitator can prevent a discussion from turning into an open sharing session and help everyone reach a decision they can all agree with in a timely manner. Facilitators may lead discussions, but they do not govern them.

### What does the facilitator do?

The role of the facilitator is to help a group or service body reach consensus on an issue. Certain actions are recommended to accomplish this:

- ✦ Invite a loving Higher Power into the process, often by opening the meeting with an NA prayer or a short excerpt from NA literature.
- ✦ Ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of the process being used and the issue being discussed. This may include distributing relevant materials in advance of the discussion or making information available at the meeting.
- ✦ Help everyone to participate, including the quieter members in the room, and discourage domination of the discussion by one or two members.
- ✦ Listen for common ground and points of agreement, and share these with the body.
- ✦ Repeat ideas that are shared to be sure everyone has a common understanding of them.
- ✦ Suggest ways to combine ideas to build consensus.
- ✦ Manage the time available and ensure enough is allocated for the proposal.
- ✦ Keep the conversation focused and move it forward toward a decision when needed.
- ✦ Confirm that everyone has a clear understanding of decisions made and further actions required, and that these are recorded.

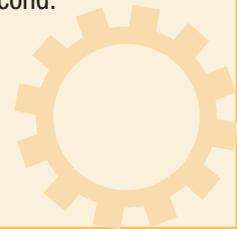
Different communities will expect different levels of participation from their facilitator. Some require them simply to facilitate the meeting, while others encourage the facilitator to share information relevant to the discussion. Many facilitators find it easier to maintain the respect of the entire body by remaining neutral and providing information but not opinions.

#### Tips for Facilitators:

- Make eye contact, smile, and be enthusiastic.
- Be who you are – let your own style come through.
- Remember that communication isn't just the spoken word; for example, try to avoid "closed" body language such as crossing your arms or turning your back on your audience.
- Remember that listening is a key part of successful facilitation—listen first and speak second.
- Speak clearly so that everyone can hear, use a positive tone, and remember to breathe!

#### Useful questions for facilitators include:

- What have we tried before that works?
- If we tried this, what would happen next?
- Can anyone add anything to these ideas?



### What qualities does a facilitator need?

CBDM bodies need to think carefully when electing a facilitator and may find the Fourth Concept a useful resource. A good facilitator can feel the sense of the body and earn the trust needed to guide discussion toward a decision. Some of the qualities to look for include:

- ✦ Familiarity with the group or service body and an understanding of the experience level of those attending.
- ✦ Some experience with CBDM and a clear understanding of the details of the process being used locally.
- ✦ Being prepared with information about the issues to be discussed and any relevant resources, such as guidelines, handbooks, and Traditions and Concepts materials.
- ✦ Commitment to the CBDM process and a willingness to focus on more than just their own ideas.
- ✦ The ability to earn the trust of a body by guiding rather than controlling discussions.
- ✦ Flexibility, patience, and the understanding that some participants may need more time to reach a decision than others do.



## What spiritual principles can facilitators apply?

As with all NA service, applying spiritual principles helps a CBDM body to be more successful. Some of the principles that we can focus on when facilitating are:

- ✦ **Integrity**—Honesty, consistency, and trustworthiness are all elements of this principle and are essential for successful facilitation.
- ✦ **Humility**—An attitude of service rather than government allows a facilitator to focus on helping the body reach consensus.
- ✦ **Open-mindedness**—Being open to new ideas is essential in helping to build consensus.
- ✦ **Accountability**—A CBDM facilitator is a trusted servant and is accountable to the body they serve.
- ✦ **Cooperation**—The facilitator helps create an environment in which everyone can work together to understand and consider the proposal.
- ✦ **Trust**—A CBDM facilitator needs to both trust the process and the body they are serving.

Developing a collective conscience provides us with the spiritual guidance we need for making service decisions. We pray or meditate together, we share with one another, we consider our traditions, and we seek direction from a Higher Power. Our groups, service boards, and committees often use the vote as a rough tool for translating that spiritual guidance into clear, decisive terms. Sometimes, however, no vote is needed; following thoughtful, attentive discussion, it is perfectly apparent what our collective conscience would have us do in a given service situation.



*Twelve Concepts for NA Service,  
Sixth Concept*

## Participating in a CBDM body

The Seventh Concept essay reminds us, “NA service is a team effort. Our service representatives are responsible to the NA Fellowship as a whole rather than any special constituency; so are all the other trusted servants on the team. The full participation of each member of the team is of great value as we seek to express the collective conscience of the whole.”

Being an effective participant in a CBDM body is, in some respects, easier than being an effective participant in a parliamentary procedure-based body as there is no need to be proficient at Robert’s Rules of Order or some other set of parliamentary guidelines. However, CBDM also requires some skills that parliamentary procedure does not.

## What do participants do?

Members of a CBDM body are required to work together to make decisions that can be supported by the entire body. To be successful in this, certain actions are required:

- ✦ Contribute toward a positive and respectful meeting environment where everyone feels comfortable contributing.
- ✦ Be prepared with the necessary information in advance of the discussion.
- ✦ Participate in the entire discussion process so that a clear understanding of all viewpoints can be gained.
- ✦ Ask questions when more information is needed.
- ✦ Consider what best serves our primary purpose rather than our personal preferences.
- ✦ Commit to the process and actively support the consensus of the body.

## What qualities do participants need?

Participating in CBDM should help evolve a proposal, so it is important to be flexible and to be a good listener. Some qualities that will help participants fulfill their roles are:

- ✦ A focus on creating solutions rather than on finding fault with ideas.
- ✦ The willingness to share ideas and let go of the outcome. Remember that compromise may be required and decisions can be revisited if needed.
- ✦ The ability to pass on speaking when someone else has already made the same point.
- ✦ An awareness of personal characteristics and circumstances, and how these may affect participation in the CBDM process. Examples of these include irritability when tired or hungry, impatience with a slower decision-making process, or intolerance of certain ideas.





**Tab 6**  
**Job Descriptions and**  
**Selection**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**

**Tab 6**  
**Job Descriptions and**  
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## HOW DO WE CHOOSE GROUP OFFICERS?

When a vacancy occurs in a group office, the group holds a business meeting to consider how to fill it. Groups should arrange their elections in such a way that they don't have all their trusted servants leaving office at the same time.

There are a couple of things to think about when looking for a group officer. One is maturity in recovery. When those new in recovery are elected to a position, they may find themselves deprived of time and energy they need for their early recovery. Group members with a year or two clean are probably already well established in their personal recovery. They are also more likely than new members to be familiar with NA's traditions and service concepts as well as group procedures.

A second thing to consider is consistent participation in your group. Do the nominees attend your group's recovery meetings regularly? Do they take an active part in your group's business meetings? Have they lived up to previous service commitments they've made? Further questions may occur to you as you read the earlier essay in this guide on NA's Fourth Concept for Service, which squarely addresses the importance of NA leadership and the qualities to consider in selecting trusted servants.

Finally, we encourage you to remember that you're selecting group officers, first, to benefit the common welfare of your group. While service commitments often benefit those who accept them, that should not be the primary reason for selecting one individual or another to serve as an officer of your group. As the First Tradition says, in part, "...our common welfare should come first."

## WHAT OFFICERS DOES A GROUP NEED?

In different areas the work is divided differently, and the particular jobs are sometimes called by different names. What's important is not who does the job or what the job is called, but that the job gets done. What follows are general descriptions of some of the most common sorts of jobs NA groups have. For each of these positions, your group should establish realistic terms of service and clean-time requirements.

### **Secretary**

The secretary (sometimes called the chairperson) arranges the affairs of the group, often by asking other group members to help out. One of the first jobs for a new secretary is registering the group's current mailing address and meeting information with the area service committee secretary and the World Service Office. When a new group secretary or GSR takes office or there is a change in the group's mailing address or the time or location of a group meeting, both the area committee and World Service Office should be informed. Other things a group secretary is responsible for may include:

- Opening the meeting room well before the meeting is scheduled to begin, setting up chairs and tables (if necessary), and cleaning and locking the room after the meeting is over.
- Arranging a table with NA books and pamphlets, local meeting lists, NA activity fliers, service bulletins, *The NA Way Magazine*, and NA newsletters.
- Making tea or coffee.
- Buying refreshments and other supplies.
- Selecting meeting leaders and speakers.
- Keeping a list of group members' recovery anniversaries, if the group wishes.
- Organizing group business meetings.
- And doing whatever else needs to be done.

Many groups break all these jobs down separately: someone to open and close the room, another person responsible for refreshments, a third to take care of the literature table, and so forth. Groups that host more than one meeting will often have a different person responsible for all these jobs at each of their meetings.

### **Treasurer**

All groups, even those that host more than one meeting, elect one group treasurer. When the group consolidates responsibility for all its funds under a single treasurer, the group makes it easier to account for the contributions it receives and expenses it pays than if it gives a number of individuals responsibility for its money. Groups that host two or more weekly meetings should make arrangements for contributions to be passed to the group treasurer shortly after each meeting.

Because of the added responsibility of handling money associated with service as a group treasurer, it's important that groups look carefully at those they elect as treasurers. If the group elects someone who is not capable of handling the responsibilities of the job, then the group is at least partly responsible if money is stolen, supplies aren't purchased, or funds aren't properly accounted for. It's recommended that groups elect treasurers who are financially secure and are good at managing their personal finances. Because of the need to keep consistent records, it's also strongly recommended that groups elect treasurers to serve for a full year.

What do group treasurers do? They count the money that members have contributed at each meeting, always asking another member to confirm their count. They take special care not to confuse the group's money with their own personal funds. They pay expenses, keep good, simple records, and regularly provide financial reports to their groups. The group treasurer's job requires close attention to details. To help the treasurer in managing those details, a

*Treasurer's Handbook* is available from your area committee or from the World Service Office.

### **Group Service Representative (GSR)**

Each group elects one group service representative; even those groups hosting more than one recovery meeting elect just one GSR. These GSRs form the foundation of our service structure. GSRs provide constant, active influence over the discussions being carried on within the service structure. They do this by participating in area service committee meetings, attending forums and assemblies at both the area and regional levels, and sometimes joining in the work of an ASC subcommittee. If we are vigilant in choosing stable, qualified leaders at this level of service, the remainder of the structure will almost certainly be sound. From this strong foundation, a service structure can be built that will nourish, inform, and support the groups in the same way that the groups nourish and support the structure.

Group service representatives bear great responsibility. While GSRs are elected by and accountable to the group, they are not mere group messengers. They are selected by their groups to serve as active members of the area service committee. As such, they are responsible to act in the best interests of NA as a whole, not solely as advocates of their own groups' priorities.

As participants in the area committee, GSRs need to be as well informed as they can be concerning the affairs of the committee. They study the reports of the committee's officers and subcommittee chairpersons. They read the various handbooks published by the World Service Office on each area of service. After carefully considering their own conscience and what they know about how their group members feel, they take active, critical parts in the discussions, which form the group conscience of the entire committee.

Group service representatives link their groups with the rest of the NA service structure, particularly through the information conveyed in their reports to and from the area committee. At group business meetings, the GSR report provides a summary of area committee activities, often sparking discussions among group members that provide the GSR with a feel for how the area can better serve the group's needs. In group recovery meetings, GSRs make available fliers announcing area and regional activities.

At area committee meetings, GSR reports provide perspectives on group growth vital to the committee's work. If a group is having problems, its GSR can share those problems with the committee in his or her reports. And if the group hasn't found solutions to those problems, the area chairperson will open a slot on the committee's "sharing session"<sup>2</sup> agenda so that the GSR can gather the experience others have had in similar situations. If any helpful solutions arise from the sharing session, the GSR can report those back to the group.

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<sup>2</sup> In the chapter on the area service committee, see the section entitled "The Sharing Session."

### **Alternate GSR**

Groups also elect a second representative called an alternate GSR. Alternate GSRs attend all the area service committee meetings (as nonvoting participants) with their GSRs so that they can see for themselves how the committee works. If a GSR cannot attend an area committee meeting, that group's alternate GSR participates in the GSR's place.

Alternate GSRs, along with other members, may also serve on area subcommittees. Subcommittee experience gives alternate GSRs added perspective on how area services are actually delivered. That perspective helps make them more effective area committee participants if their groups later elect them to serve as GSRs.

### **ROTATION AND CONTINUITY**

*Rotation* is the practice many groups have of electing new people to service positions at set intervals rather than having the same person serve in the same position year after year. Rotation offers very definite benefits for the groups who practice it. By providing diversity in leadership, it helps a group stay fresh and energetic. It provides assurance that no one individual exercises so much influence that the group becomes a mere extension of his or her personality. The practice of rotation also reinforces the NA emphasis on service rather than the servant, consistent with our belief in the value of spiritual anonymity—what's important is the job being done, not the particular person doing it.

Some groups allow their members to serve more than one term in any given position so that the group can take advantage of its trusted servants' experience. Once group officers have completed their terms, rotation allows them to step aside for a time or accept responsibilities elsewhere in the NA service structure, giving other members the chance to serve the group.

The impact of rotation on the stability of the group is balanced by the continuing presence of its long-term group members. Those who have served in the past as group officers and continue to maintain an active role in the life of the group can provide much-needed continuity and maturity of perspective to a growing group's discussions. They can serve as the group's memory, ensuring that the group never has to "reinvent the wheel." They can also lend a hand to new officers and temporarily pitch in to relieve overloaded trusted servants.

### **WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DOES AN NA GROUP HAVE?**

The first and most important responsibility of any NA group—its "primary purpose," according to the Fifth Tradition—is "to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." And the single most important thing a group can do to fulfill that primary purpose is to conduct meetings that provide a welcoming atmosphere in which NA recovery can be effectively shared between addicts. Groups conduct the details of their meetings in very different ways, but all of them seek the same

## GROUP TRUSTED SERVANTS: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Service is an essential part of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Most of us would never have found recovery if not for the work of members who came before us. Now free from active addiction, we too can serve the fellowship. NA service begins in the groups, which carry the message directly to still-suffering addicts. This piece describes a few basic group service positions. *The Group Booklet* is another helpful resource for NA groups.

The main function of NA groups is to hold meetings where addicts can share the message of recovery with each other. The strength of each group depends on its trusted servants and regular members. The trusted servants lay the groundwork for a strong atmosphere of recovery. Members who attend regularly and share a strong message of recovery build on that foundation. The work necessary to make our meetings happen varies from one group to another, but the trusted servant positions are similar in many places.

### FUNCTION, NOT FORM

These descriptions are suggestions based on common practice and existing service materials. Groups often do things differently. Every group is free to create other positions to share the workload or to accomplish tasks that aren't covered in this piece. Groups often choose members for specific duties, such as setup or cleanup person, speaker coordinator, literature person, coffee person, or greeter. These depend on the size and needs of the group. Some positions are ideal ways for newcomers to get involved. Each group can look for creative ways to establish a warm and attractive atmosphere. When we focus on our primary purpose, group service has profound effects on the lives of many addicts.

### GROUP SECRETARY

The group secretary plays a key role in making meetings happen. The secretary is usually the liaison between the group and the meeting facility. That means ensuring that the facility is opened and closed at the proper times before and after each meeting, and working with the group treasurer to make sure that rent is paid in a timely manner. The secretary usually also ensures that the group has any necessary literature and supplies. This might involve working with the group service representative (GSR) or treasurer to buy literature from the area service committee (ASC) or an NA service office.

The atmosphere of recovery in a meeting often depends on the meeting format and on the members chosen to lead, chair, or speak. In some places, the secretary arranges for a leader, speaker, or chairperson for the group's meetings. In addition, the secretary and GSR often work together to plan or conduct group business meetings. The secretary can either take notes or lead group discussion in these cases.

### GROUP TREASURER

The group treasurer handles the money that members contribute to the group. This involves keeping records, paying for group expenses (literature, rent, etc.), reporting group financial activity at group business meetings, and sending or delivering group contributions to other levels of service. The treasurer can play an important role in raising group awareness about the importance of self-support. When selecting a treasurer, the group should look for members who are trustworthy, are financially responsible, and have good basic math skills. The group may also want to consider a treasurer who is willing and able to help members understand our shared responsibility for funding NA services.

The treasurer provides accurate information to the group in business meetings to help members make good financial decisions. This trusted servant ensures that all group funds are used in line with our traditions and concepts, and ac-

ording to the group conscience. The *Group Treasurer's Workbook* can help simplify record-keeping. Some groups have lost funds as a result of carelessness, misuse, and theft. This can often be avoided by selecting members with good organizational skills and a strong program of recovery.

### LEADER/CHAIRPERSON

The leader (or chairperson) is the NA member who guides the recovery meeting according to the meeting format. The leader, often a different person each week or each month, often sets the tone for the rest of the meeting. Some groups invite members from other groups to lead their meetings. The leader's tone helps establish a positive atmosphere of recovery. This might include keeping order in the meeting. Kindness and calmness go a long way in preserving the atmosphere of recovery. A leader who can be both loving and firm can keep the meeting focused on carrying the message of recovery.

### GROUP SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (GSR)

The GSR represents the group in area service committee (ASC) meetings. This trusted servant should attend the ASC regularly to report on the status of the group, including challenges the group faces or successes they experience. This helps the group develop a relationship of mutual support with other NA groups in the area. The GSR is the group liaison to the rest of the service community, carrying ideas and concerns from the group to local service bodies and helping keep the group informed about business at the area, region, and world services levels. The GSR carries the voice of the group to NA as a whole.

### MENTORSHIP AND CONTINUITY, ALTERNATE POSITIONS

To remain fresh and vibrant, groups typically rotate trusted servant positions on a regular basis. Trusted servants generally move on to different roles or other levels of service when their terms end. Alternate positions for these

service positions help members learn the roles before they take on responsibilities. Alternates work with their counterparts to better understand the position. They also fill in for their counterparts in the event of absence. This helps the group cultivate leadership skills in members who might otherwise not have service positions, and it allows members to learn their positions in advance.

## **AS OUR MEMBERS GROW, SO GROWS THE GROUP**

The NA group is responsible for sustaining one of the front lines in our effort to carry the message to the addict who still suffers: the NA meeting. Being a member and serving a group are important roles in the growth and stability of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. When we make a commitment to our group, we take personal responsibility for the primary purpose of NA. The newcomer we welcome to NA today could go on to help countless other addicts. We carry a message and help addicts find a home in NA, and our service reaches much further than we can imagine. As we serve and grow together, we begin to make our groups feel like home. That feeling can be the attraction that brings newcomers back.

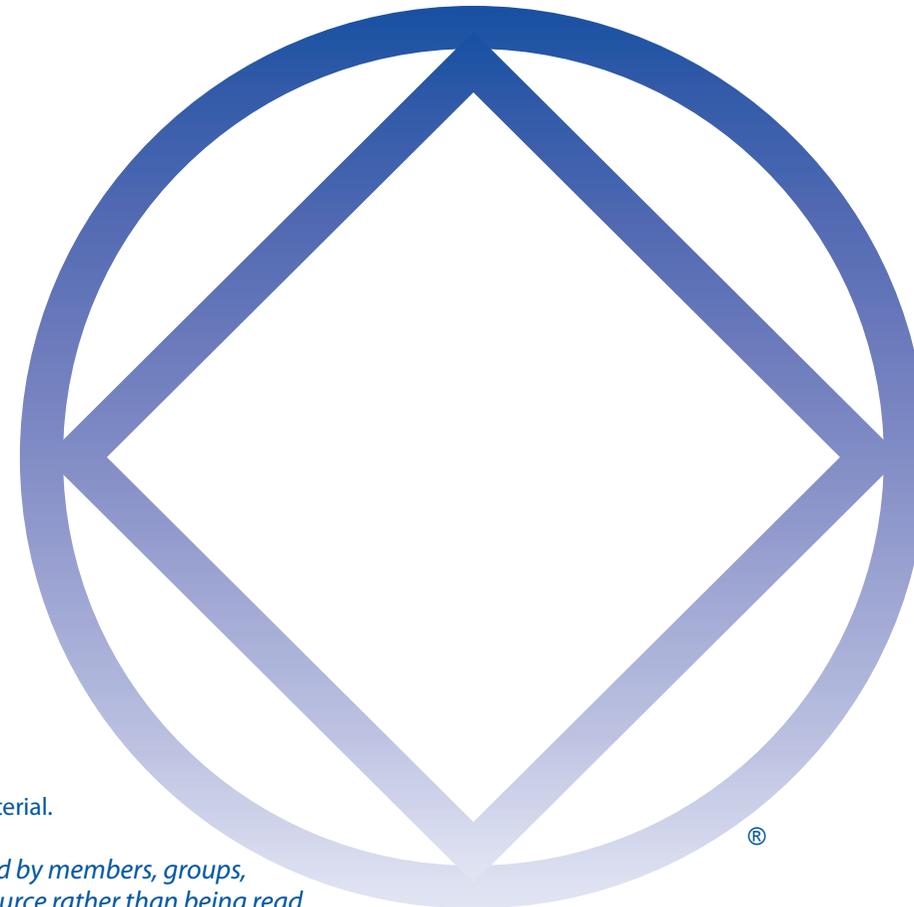


This is Board-approved service material.

*Service pamphlets should be used by members, groups, and service committees as a resource rather than being read in an NA meeting.*

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# GROUP TRUSTED SERVANTS **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**



SERVICE-RELATED MATERIAL  
NOT INTENDED TO BE READ DURING RECOVERY MEETINGS

# PRINCIPLES & LEADERSHIP IN NA SERVICE



SERVICE-RELATED MATERIAL  
NOT INTENDED TO BE READ DURING RECOVERY MEETINGS

# PRINCIPLES AND LEADERSHIP IN NA SERVICE

Our Fourth Concept reminds us that we need to have effective leaders in our service system in order to best support our groups. Because we have seen so much success in our growth as a fellowship, it can sometimes seem that most of the work of NA has already been accomplished. When the doors to our meetings are open, it isn't always clear what more should be done to further our primary purpose. The truth of the matter is that all of our services need a constant influx of talent, creativity, and willingness from our members in order to continue helping our groups carry the NA message. Public relations campaigns, panels in institutions, phonedlines, meeting schedules, and websites are just a few of the many services that support our groups. To accomplish these tasks, we need leaders and systems that support others' efforts and offer them guidance. The most effective leaders in NA service both encourage other members to get involved and look for ways to improve existing services and to find new and innovative methods to help spread the NA message.

*Working with others is only the beginning of service work. NA service allows us to spend much of our time directly helping suffering addicts, as well as ensuring that Narcotics Anonymous itself survives. This way we keep what we have by giving it away.*

Basic Text, "What Can I Do?"

## ATTRACTING AND ENCOURAGING LEADERS

Our success in reaching still-suffering addicts depends completely on the members who step up and get involved. It has been said that ten percent of the people do ninety percent of the work in NA, but we believe we can do better to attract more members to get involved. Our recovery program calls upon all of us to carry our message to still-suffering addicts. Inspired by an awakening of the spirit and

the gift of recovery we have been given, we are able to see the opportunity to serve as both a privilege and a responsibility. Members come into NA service with a variety of skills and backgrounds that can be useful to our efforts. With that in mind, when we choose leaders we should pay special attention to leadership qualities based on our principles, such as integrity and humility, as well as communication and organizational skills. While there are many styles of leadership, the type that is most useful in NA service is based on the spiritual principles found in our steps, traditions, and concepts.

When we serve—and lead—with these principles in mind, we make service more attractive for all members. At times our service bodies can be disorganized and stressful. Members who take positions or just attend a committee meeting to see what it is about can leave frustrated and dispirited. We have a collective responsibility to infuse our service bodies with an atmosphere of recovery where people feel welcome and encouraged to grow. In such an atmosphere, our trusted servants are more likely to feel effective and productive, and our service bodies grow stronger. When we put aside our personality differences and work together to develop the best qualities in our members who are willing to serve, our areas, regions, and subcommittees become fertile ground for cultivation.

Having skilled leaders who embody our principles will go a long way to help us better cultivate leadership among other trusted servants. Such cultivation will benefit not only those who demonstrate natural leadership qualities, but any members who are willing to serve. All too often, members who would otherwise be willing to get involved in service can be put off by overwhelmingly extensive policies and procedures or tiresome debates and parliamentary gymnastics. Simple solutions such as having a tradition-and-concept-study meeting before business meetings or conducting service learning days can help raise knowledge and awareness of our guiding principles. By discussing these principles together, our trusted servants can work toward common understandings of how to apply them in service environments. This will help us avoid many common

challenges in our service efforts. An inviting atmosphere encourages members to contribute what they can, rather than to feel overwhelmed or under-qualified. When trusted servants who are well-versed in our guiding principles hold positions of leadership, we often find that we can move from a culture of rigid guidelines and debate to one with more open discussion, inclusion, cooperation, and consensus-building.

## **QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS**

Effective leadership can help to ensure a higher quality of NA services. Perhaps the most important role of an effective leader is to be an example of our principles in action. Our leaders demonstrate humility, for example, by following the direction of group conscience as called for in the Second Tradition. They embody the integrity and accountability called for in the Fifth and Eighth Concepts when they keep us informed about the tasks assigned to them. They demonstrate the integrity and anonymity called for in the Twelfth Tradition when they are consistent in their application of our principles, no matter what the circumstances.

In addition to being examples of our principles, our leaders need to be able to adequately perform some very specific tasks; for instance, facilitating discussions and business meetings. With skilled facilitation, our service bodies can hold open and frank discussions that allow everyone to participate and all viewpoints to be heard, as called for in Concepts Seven and Nine. Our facilitators need to be able to encourage all participants to express their concerns, as well as keep the body focused and moving forward. The decisions of the body can then better reflect true group conscience as called for in the Second Tradition and the Sixth Concept.

Another essential leadership quality is the ability to communicate information effectively between different audiences. As our Eighth Concept states, "Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications." GSRs, RCMs, and RDs all play very important roles in our service system's communication network. They best demonstrate this by providing

clear and candid reports about their work. These positions each involve interaction in at least two different levels of service, and knowledge and experience varies from one level to another. For that reason, it is important that we select members to serve who are able to explain things clearly and listen well. A good delegate, for example, will be able to distill the essential points from a lengthy discussion and relay them to the region so that everyone understands. Another important communication skill is the ability to gauge the awareness and experience of the audience and to convey information accordingly.

Other leadership skills should be taken into consideration as well: accountability; integrity; honesty; and the abilities to educate and encourage other members, to make decisions, and to take action. The qualities of an effective leader are based both on the principles of our program and on the tasks relevant to the specific service position. All of these should be carefully considered when we choose the members who will take on leadership roles in NA service.

*Leadership in NA is a service, not a class of membership.*

*It Works: How and Why, "Tradition Two"*

## **SELECTING TRUSTED SERVANTS**

The task of selecting leaders in our service bodies can be difficult at times. It might seem unkind to subject a member to intense scrutiny simply because that member has expressed a willingness to serve. In keeping with our Twelfth Tradition, our Fourth Concept calls upon us to consider leadership qualities carefully even if it feels uncomfortable to do so. We need to keep in mind that we are not judging our fellow recovering addicts' value as NA members or as people; we are simply evaluating their potential to be effective in a given trusted servant position. Many members in our fellowship are wonderful living examples of the principles of our program and have a variety of leadership qualities. If their particular skills and experience do not match those necessary for an open position, we should strive to help them find other ways to serve. To put a member in a position for which

he or she is not well-suited does a disservice both to that member and to our service efforts.

To put principles before personalities, we match talent to task and leave our feelings out of it. That might mean making ourselves available for a position, even when we fear rejection. Or it could mean electing someone we don't like because we know he or she can do the job well. Even more challenging for most of us, putting principles before personalities may mean not electing someone who is our friend because we know he or she is unsuited for a position. We practice anonymity by focusing solely on the job at hand and the qualifications of each candidate, and choosing the person who fits best to do the job. These sometimes challenging acts of conscience by each of us as individuals are the very building blocks of true group conscience.

## **SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SERVE**

When we choose trusted servants, we share in the responsibility for the job those trusted servants perform. As a service body, we must be willing to honestly assess members we select for leadership positions, and equip them with the tools and support they need to be successful in their roles. An ideal way to begin this is through proper orientation and mentoring. Wherever possible, we should strive to guide members into learning positions, such as vice or alternate roles, to allow for on-the-job training. Sometimes we overlook this opportunity and simply ask alternates to be willing to show up in the absence of their counterparts, missing the chance to provide them with valuable knowledge and guidance.

There are many ways we can help alternates make more productive use of their time. We can provide them with relevant service handbooks and guidelines or policies, as well as any locally-developed resources, and encourage them to study those resources. The current trusted servant can provide guidance for the alternate the way a sponsor works with a sponsee. They may choose to meet together between committee meetings to share experience, strength, and hope. However it is done, the task of mentorship is as

much a part of any given position as any other aspect of the work. It is important that we select leaders who can commit to helping those who follow them, and that we remember that leadership development is an organic process and cannot necessarily be forced. In time, these efforts will become our system for encouraging the spirit of leadership in trusted servants, rather than relying solely on the “natural leaders” among us.

Cultivating leadership in NA is not limited to those who hold formal service positions. In some cases, sponsors who are unable to take positions themselves work hard to guide sponsees into service. In other cases, members with abundant knowledge or experience make themselves available as resources to trusted servants. Even for those who currently hold a title, leadership is not about position, it is about action. We must choose leaders who look beyond the tasks at hand to see a bigger picture. Effective leaders can help us not only to carry out our services effectively, but also to make lasting improvements so that we can better carry our message of hope to still-suffering addicts.



This is Board-approved service material.

*Service pamphlets should be used by members, groups,  
and service committees as a resource rather than being read  
in an NA meeting.*

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**Tab 7**  
**Treasurer's Workbook**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**

**Tab 7**  
**Treasurer's Workbook**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**



**Narcotics Anonymous**<sup>®</sup>

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**Treasurer's  
Handbook**

*Revised*

# Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. 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.

# Treasurer's Handbook

Revised

Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc.  
Chatsworth, California, USA

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions  
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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Self-Support: Our Common Responsibility</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Guidelines for the Member</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Guidelines for the Group Treasurer</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Procedures for Accurate Record Keeping—The Group .....	2
Filling in the Group Check Register Form .....	3
Procedure for Reconciling the Group Check Register Form to the Bank Statement .....	3
Record Keeping Without a Checking Account .....	3
Group Financial Reporting .....	3
Bank Statement Reconciliation Form .....	4
Group Check Register Form .....	5
Group Treasurer's Report .....	7
<b>Guidelines for the Area or Region Service Committee Treasurer</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Procedures for Accurate Record Keeping Area/Region .....	13
Filling in the Check Register .....	14
Procedure for Reconciling the Check Register to the Bank Statement .....	15
Suggested Procedures for Auditing .....	15
Area/Region Check Register Form .....	16
Group/Area Contribution Form .....	17
<b>NA World Services Bulletin 30: Theft of NA Funds</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>NA World Services Bulletin 22: Direct Contributions</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>NA World Services Bulletin 21: The Generation of Funds and the Seventh Tradition in NA</b> .....	<b>25</b>

# Twelve Concepts for NA Service

1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.
2. The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.
3. The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.
4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
5. For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.
6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.
7. All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.
8. Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.
9. All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.
11. NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.
12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.

## Introduction

The *Treasurer's Handbook* is meant to help us use NA's money responsibly, at all levels of service. We know that local communities around the world face different circumstances, so we encourage you to adapt these guidelines, using common sense, to meet your local needs.

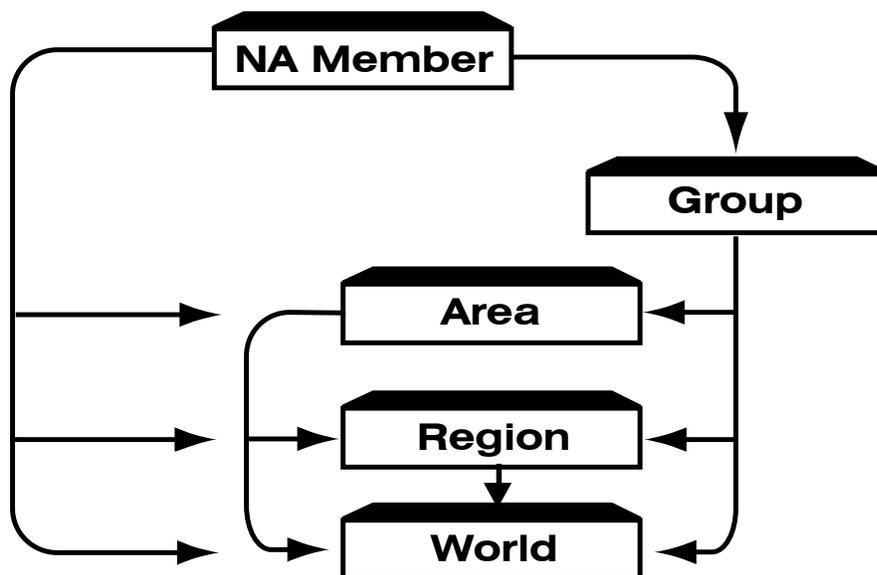
Our Eleventh Concept tells us that "NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly." The Eleventh Concept essay from the *Twelve Concepts for NA Service* booklet tells us a little more:

***Narcotics Anonymous funds should always be used to further our primary purpose. Money is used to pay the expenses involved in running NA recovery meetings, to inform the public about NA, and to reach addicts who can't get to meetings. It is used to develop, produce, translate, and distribute our message in written form, and to bring our members together in a service community committed to the vision of spreading our message around the world to those in need. All of this is done in support of NA's spiritual aim: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.***

### Self-Support: Our Common Responsibility

In today's world, it is impossible to carry the message of Narcotics Anonymous without the availability of sufficient funds. It costs money to print literature and distribute it, to have phonelines and other services that connect the newcomer to us, and to staff service centers.

The moment the member's hard-earned money is dropped in the basket at a meeting, our responsibility for that money as trusted servants begins. It is incumbent upon us to do everything possible to see that the money is used wisely and cared for judiciously, and this includes providing not only for the individual group's needs but for the needs of NA services as well. A *Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous* suggests direct group and area donations to all levels of service: "Narcotics Anonymous groups directly support area, regional, and world services from money left over after covering their own expenses. Area committees ... are encouraged to do the same with their surplus funds, sending them on to other levels of the service structure." Here is a chart that demonstrates how funds can flow through our service structure:



## Guidelines for the Member

As a member of Narcotics Anonymous, there are two things you can do to help make sure your group's money is handled right:

1. You can ask your group treasurer to bring his or her records to every group business meeting, and
2. You can ask that the group hold business meetings at least once a month.

## Guidelines for the Group Treasurer

1. *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous* says that clean time counts when we choose group officers:

***There are a couple of things to think about when looking for a group officer. One is maturity in recovery. When those new in recovery are elected to a position, they may find themselves deprived of time and energy they need for their early recovery. Group members with a year or two clean are probably already established in their personal recovery. They are also more likely than new members to be familiar with NA's traditions and service concepts as well as group procedures.***

Of course, clean time "standards" will vary from one NA community to another. As the Guide says, it is important to "establish *realistic* terms of service and clean time requirements" that work in your community.

2. It is a good idea to have two people count the Seventh Tradition collection, not just the group treasurer or someone else.
3. Do not "borrow" the group's money. Our experience tells us that treasurers and others who make this a practice tend to not return to the fellowship, nor do they return the funds.
4. Do not spend the group's money without asking the group first at a business meeting.
5. If it is practical, open a bank account for your group, and have more than one signature on the account. This will protect your group's money and make it easier to keep track of it.

It is important to remember our Fifth Tradition: "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." When your group has more money than it needs, make sure you pass the extra money along to the area, region, and world levels of NA service. Extra money hoarded in your group treasury will not help NA carry its recovery message.

7. There should be only one person handling the funds in your group, preferably the treasurer.
8. It is very important that every treasurer hand over his or her records to the next treasurer. Doing this will help the group figure out in the future what has been done with its money in the past.
9. All funds in excess of the prudent reserve (i.e., all money in excess of monthly expenses) should be sent on to other levels of service according to your committee's practice as discussed in the information pamphlet, *Money Matters: Self-Support in NA*.

## Procedures for Accurate Group Record Keeping

When practical, each group should have its own checking account. Groups that choose not to have a checking account can do two things to help keep track of their money:

1. Make receipts every time cash comes into or goes out of the group treasury, and
2. Use money orders, not cash, for paying bills and making donations to area, region, or world services.

Every time a check is written or a deposit is made, a record should be made in the group's check register. (The same applies if a group uses cash and money orders. Such groups can just call the form a "cash record" instead of a check register.) If this isn't done, it can take a long time to straighten out the group's money records and match them up with bank statements for the group's account.

The figures in the check register and the bank statement for the account should be matched up every month. If good, easy-to-read records are kept, this will only take a few minutes each month.

### **Filling in the Group Check Register Form**

The following procedure for preparing a check register should be repeated each month.

- A. *Beginning balance (Line 1)*: This will be the beginning balance for the first day of the month. Enter the date, then go over to the "Balance" column and enter the amount of the beginning balance. The ending balance for one month becomes the beginning balance for the following month.
- B. *Procedure for entering checks*: When entering the check, enter the date of the check in the "Date" column, the payee and the purpose of the check in the "Description and Purpose" column, and the check number and the amount of the check under the "Amount" column. Subtract the amount of the check from the previous balance to arrive at the current balance.
- C. *Procedure for entering deposits*: Enter the date of the deposit in the "Date" column, state where the money came from under the "Description and Purpose" column, and enter the amount of the deposit under the "Deposit" column. Add the amount of the deposit to the previous balance, and enter the total under "Balance."

### **Procedure for Reconciling the Group Check Register Form to the Bank Statement**

*This must be done each month.* When the treasurer receives the bank statement, he or she should "reconcile" it with the check register (in other words, match up the entries in the group's check register with the figures shown on the bank statement) as soon as possible. Doing this each month will make sure that the group's records are right and that any math errors in them are found. The attached Bank Statement Reconciliation Form provides simple, step-by-step instructions.

### **Record Keeping Without a Checking Account**

Groups that choose not to use checking accounts can use the same record system and form included in this handbook; the form can be adapted and copied as needed. Such groups can use money orders instead of checks to pay bills and make donations to area, region, or world services.

### **Group Financial Reporting**

The group treasurer should make a financial report every month. This responsibility is too often overlooked. A written report based upon the Group Treasurer's Report Form included in these guidelines is recommended. Information contained in this report should be taken from the Group Check Register Form.

## Bank Statement Reconciliation Form

Each month the checkbook balance as shown on the Check Register Form should be reconciled with the bank statement received from the bank. The following format may be used:

Checking account reconciliation for the month ending \_\_\_\_\_

- A. **Bank statement balance** ..... \_\_\_\_\_  
(ending balance on your current bank statement)
- B. **Deposits "in transit"** ..... \_\_\_\_\_  
(Total of all deposits made which have **not** yet cleared the bank—that is, deposits made by the treasurer that do **not** show up in the bank statement. A checkmark should be made on the Check Register Form next to deposits that **have** cleared the bank to aid in locating these each month.)
- C. **Add the answers to steps A and B above**..... \_\_\_\_\_
- D. **Checks "outstanding"** ..... \_\_\_\_\_  
(Total of all checks written that have not yet cleared the bank. These will be the checks in the Check Register Form that do not appear on the bank statement. Place a checkmark by checks that cleared this month, as in step B above.)
- E. **Ending balance**..... \_\_\_\_\_  
Subtract D from C above. This should equal the balance in your Register as of the date listed above.)

If those figures don't match exactly, one of the following mistakes may have occurred:

1. A mathematical error somewhere in the Check Register Form.
2. A mistake in entering (or failure to enter) a check or deposit in your Check Register Form.
3. A math error in steps A through E above.
4. Entering the wrong figure in step A above.
5. Failure to subtract service charges or add interest in your Check Register Form.

# Group Check Register Form

Name of Group \_\_\_\_\_ Dates Covered \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Date		Description and Purpose	Check No.	Amount	Deposit	Balance
1		Beginning Balance				
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
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39						
40						

# Group Check Register Form

Name of Group \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Covered \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Description and Purpose	Check No.	Amount		Deposit		Balance	
1	Beginning Balance							1
2								2
3								3
4								4
5								5
6								6
7								7
8								8
9								9
10								10
11								11
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36								36
37								37
38								38
39								39
40								40

## Group Treasurer's Report

**Meeting Record for:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Prudent Reserve:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Previous Balance:** \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_ GSR \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

### Meeting Records

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

Leader/Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_

Old balance \_\_\_\_\_ **Income** Collection \_\_\_\_\_

Plus total income \_\_\_\_\_ Plus other income \_\_\_\_\_

Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_ Equals total income \_\_\_\_\_

Minus total expenses \_\_\_\_\_ **Expenses** Rent \_\_\_\_\_

Equals new balance \_\_\_\_\_ Plus literature \_\_\_\_\_

Plus refreshments \_\_\_\_\_

Equals total expenses \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

Leader/Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_

Old balance \_\_\_\_\_ **Income** Collection \_\_\_\_\_

Plus total income \_\_\_\_\_ Plus other income \_\_\_\_\_

Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_ Equals total income \_\_\_\_\_

Minus total expenses \_\_\_\_\_ **Expenses** Rent \_\_\_\_\_

Equals new balance \_\_\_\_\_ Plus literature \_\_\_\_\_

Plus refreshments \_\_\_\_\_

Equals total expenses \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

Leader/Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_

Old balance \_\_\_\_\_ **Income** Collection \_\_\_\_\_

Plus total income \_\_\_\_\_ Plus other income \_\_\_\_\_

Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_ Equals total income \_\_\_\_\_

Minus total expenses \_\_\_\_\_ **Expenses** Rent \_\_\_\_\_

Equals new balance \_\_\_\_\_ Plus literature \_\_\_\_\_

Plus refreshments \_\_\_\_\_

Equals total expenses \_\_\_\_\_

*This report should be available at all group meetings.*  
**Additional forms may be ordered from NA World Services—Item No. 9001**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

Leader/Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_

Old balance _____	<b>Income</b>	Collection _____
Plus total income _____		Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____		Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b>	Rent _____
Equals new balance _____		Plus literature _____
		Plus refreshments _____
		Equals total expenses _____

---

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

Leader/Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_

Old balance _____	<b>Income</b>	Collection _____
Plus total income _____		Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____		Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b>	Rent _____
Equals new balance _____		Plus literature _____
		Plus refreshments _____
		Equals total expenses _____

---

**Financial Records**

**for the period from:** \_\_\_\_\_ **to:** \_\_\_\_\_

*This information should be included with your GSR report to the area*

Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

**Beginning Balance (Previous Balance):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Income:**

Collection: \_\_\_\_\_

Literature: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Income:** + \_\_\_\_\_

**Expenses:**

Rent: \_\_\_\_\_

Literature: \_\_\_\_\_

Supplies: \_\_\_\_\_

ASC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

RSC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

NA World Services Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Expenses:** - \_\_\_\_\_

**Ending Balance:** = \_\_\_\_\_

**Prudent Reserve:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Meeting Records**

Date _____	Newcomers _____
Leader/Chairperson _____	Attendance (Total) _____
Old balance _____	<b>Income</b> Collection _____
Plus total income _____	Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____	Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b> Rent _____
Equals new balance _____	Plus literature _____
	Plus refreshments _____
	Equals total expenses _____

---

Date _____	Newcomers _____
Leader/Chairperson _____	Attendance (Total) _____
Old balance _____	<b>Income</b> Collection _____
Plus total income _____	Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____	Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b> Rent _____
Equals new balance _____	Plus literature _____
	Plus refreshments _____
	Equals total expenses _____

---

Date _____	Newcomers _____
Leader/Chairperson _____	Attendance (Total) _____
Old balance _____	<b>Income</b> Collection _____
Plus total income _____	Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____	Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b> Rent _____
Equals new balance _____	Plus literature _____
	Plus refreshments _____
	Equals total expenses _____

---

Date _____	Newcomers _____
Leader/Chairperson _____	Attendance (Total) _____
Old balance _____	<b>Income</b> Collection _____
Plus total income _____	Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____	Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b> Rent _____
Equals new balance _____	Plus literature _____
	Plus refreshments _____
	Equals total expenses _____

---

## Additional Meeting Records

Date _____	Newcomers _____
Leader/Chairperson _____	Attendance (Total) _____
Old balance _____	<b>Income</b> Collection _____
Plus total income _____	Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____	Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b> Rent _____
Equals new balance _____	Plus literature _____
	Plus refreshments _____
	Equals total expenses _____

---

Date _____	Newcomers _____
Leader/Chairperson _____	Attendance (Total) _____
Old balance _____	<b>Income</b> Collection _____
Plus total income _____	Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____	Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b> Rent _____
Equals new balance _____	Plus literature _____
	Plus refreshments _____
	Equals total expenses _____

---

Date _____	Newcomers _____
Leader/Chairperson _____	Attendance (Total) _____
Old balance _____	<b>Income</b> Collection _____
Plus total income _____	Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____	Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b> Rent _____
Equals new balance _____	Plus literature _____
	Plus refreshments _____
	Equals total expenses _____

---

Date _____	Newcomers _____
Leader/Chairperson _____	Attendance (Total) _____
Old balance _____	<b>Income</b> Collection _____
Plus total income _____	Plus other income _____
Subtotal _____	Equals total income _____
Minus total expenses _____	<b>Expenses</b> Rent _____
Equals new balance _____	Plus literature _____
	Plus refreshments _____
	Equals total expenses _____

---

Additional Financial Records

for the period from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_

This information should be included with your GSR report to the area

Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning Balance (Previous Balance): \_\_\_\_\_

Income: Collection: \_\_\_\_\_
Literature: \_\_\_\_\_
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Income: + \_\_\_\_\_

Expenses: Rent: \_\_\_\_\_
Literature: \_\_\_\_\_
Supplies: \_\_\_\_\_
ASC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_
RSC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_
NA World Services Donation: \_\_\_\_\_
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Expenses: - \_\_\_\_\_

Ending Balance: = \_\_\_\_\_

Prudent Reserve: \_\_\_\_\_

For the period from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_

This information should be included with your GSR report to the area

Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning Balance (Previous Balance): \_\_\_\_\_

Income: Collection: \_\_\_\_\_
Literature: \_\_\_\_\_
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Income: + \_\_\_\_\_

Expenses: Rent: \_\_\_\_\_
Literature: \_\_\_\_\_
Supplies: \_\_\_\_\_
ASC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_
RSC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_
NA World Services Donation: \_\_\_\_\_
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Expenses: - \_\_\_\_\_

Ending Balance: = \_\_\_\_\_

Prudent Reserve: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Financial Records**

for the period from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_

*This information should be included with your GSR report to the area*

Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

**Beginning Balance (Previous Balance):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Income:** Collection: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Literature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total Income:** + \_\_\_\_\_

**Expenses:** Rent: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Literature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supplies: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ASC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RSC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 NA World Services Donation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total Expenses:** - \_\_\_\_\_

**Ending Balance:** = \_\_\_\_\_

**Prudent Reserve:** \_\_\_\_\_

For the period from: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_

*This information should be included with your GSR report to the area*

Attendance (Total) \_\_\_\_\_ Newcomers \_\_\_\_\_

**Beginning Balance (Previous Balance):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Income:** Collection: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Literature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total Income:** + \_\_\_\_\_

**Expenses:** Rent: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Literature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supplies: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ASC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 RSC Donation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 NA World Services Donation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total Expenses:** - \_\_\_\_\_

**Ending Balance:** = \_\_\_\_\_

**Prudent Reserve:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Guidelines for the Area or Regional Service Committee Treasurer**

1. A *Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous* suggests that when electing area or regional service committee officers, "a substantial amount of clean time and personal maturity should be the first consideration, along with experience in the steps, traditions, and concepts of service.... The specific amount of clean time required for each office will vary from area to area according to how long the local NA community has been in existence."
2. An ASC or RSC treasurer should issue a receipt to all groups for donations made to the ASC or RSC. This will create a written history of financial activity and facilitate the bookkeeping of both the group or area and the ASC or RSC.
3. Do not borrow funds from the ASC or RSC treasury. Our experience tells us that treasurers and others who make this a practice tend to not return to the fellowship, nor do they return the funds.
4. Do not spend ASC or RSC funds without the approval of the GSRs or RCMs, and/or the ASC or RSC as a whole.
5. ASC and RSC funds should be deposited in a bank account. Make sure that you have more than one signator on your bank account. We recommend that the ASC or RSC treasurer and either the chairperson, the vice chairperson, or the secretary be the co-signers on the checks. Setting up your account this way will protect ASC or RSC funds. It will also help the treasurer keep track of fellowship money by providing him or her with financial records from an outside source—in this case, the bank's records.
6. The ASC or RSC treasurer should make a written financial report of contributions and expenditures at each regularly scheduled meeting of the ASC or RSC, as well as an annual report at the end of each calendar year. The treasurer can also be made responsible for bulk purchases of literature for the groups.
7. All funds in excess of the prudent reserve (i.e., all money in excess of monthly expenses) should be sent on to other levels of service according to your committee's practice as discussed in the information pamphlet, *Money Matters: Self-Support in NA*. It is our experience that prudent reserves established for subcommittees have a tendency to stagnate, thus keeping the fellowship from fulfilling its primary purpose. Therefore, we recommend that subcommittees turn to their ASCs (or RSCs, where applicable) for money.
8. At the ASC or RSC level of service, there should be only *one* person handling the funds: the treasurer.
9. An ASC or RSC should audit all its financial records at least once a year, and whenever there is a change in treasurers.
10. It is vital that every treasurer hand over his or her records to the next treasurer. Doing this will preserve much-needed continuity and history.

### **Procedures for Accurate Record Keeping**

Each area/regional service committee should have a checking account. Donations from groups/areas, funds from literature sales, funds from events, and all other ASC/RSC funds should be kept in this account. The funds are allocated to the subcommittees of the ASC/RSC and are recorded as outlined below. Excess funds are usually sent to the next levels of service (regional and/or world services).

## Filling in the Check Register

- A. *Beginning balance* — This will be the beginning balance for the first day of the month. Enter the date and go over to the "Balance" category and enter the beginning balance for each subcommittee.\* Under the "Total" column, enter the total for all the balances added together. If you do not know the beginning balance for each subcommittee, you should calculate what the current bank balance is. Then the area/region should decide what amount of money should be given to each subcommittee. These amounts, when added together, should equal the current bank balance. The ending balance for the month becomes the beginning balance for the following month.
- \* **NOTE:** If there are more subcommittees than shown on the form, add additional columns in the appropriate categories.
- B. *Procedure for entering deposits:*
1. Enter the date of the deposit in the "Date" column.
  2. Enter the source of the money under "Description" (for example, from literature sales or contributions from groups, etc.).
  3. Enter the amount of the deposit under the appropriate subcommittee under the "Deposit" category.
  4. For contributions or donations from groups, enter the total amount of the deposit on the "Check Register." A record of the amounts contributed from each group can be kept on a separate page entitled "Contributions from Groups." On this record, a separate column is used for different dates. The amount on the "Check Register" and the total for the date on "Contributions from Groups" should always be equal. In this way, anytime you need to know how much money a particular group has donated, you can make a total column on the "Contributions from Groups" record and add across for each group.
  5. On the "Check Register", add the amount of the deposit to the previous figure in the "Total Deposits" column to arrive at a total deposit figure for the month.
  6. Under the "Balance" category, the deposit is added to the previous balance for the appropriate subcommittee and to the "Total" column to arrive at the current balance.
- C. *Procedure for entering checks:*
1. When entering the check, enter the date of the check in the "Date" column, the payee and the purpose of the check in the "Description" column, the check number in the "Check #" column, and the amount of the check under the appropriate subcommittee. All check numbers should be accounted for.
  2. Add the amount of each check to the "Total Expenses" under the category "Expenditures."
  3. Under the "Balance" category, subtract the amount of the check from the appropriate subcommittee and the "Total" column. When the balances for the subcommittees are added together, they equal the "Total" balance. This is a double check for mathematical accuracy.
- D. *Procedure for transfer of funds* — If a transfer of funds is made between subcommittees; this should be indicated on the "Check Register." These are indicated with a "T" (for transfer) and checked so they will not be included when balancing the "Check Register." These entries offset each other and do not appear on the bank statement. Again, the total for each category and the balances should be brought current.

## **Procedure for Reconciling the Check Register to the Bank Statement**

This must be done monthly. When the treasurer receives the bank statement, he or she should reconcile it to the check register as soon as possible. Doing this each month will assure a correct balance for the account, and any mathematical errors will be found. Simple step-by-step instructions for this can be found on the Bank Statement Reconciliation Form earlier in these guidelines.

## **Suggested Procedures for Auditing**

ASC or RSC level of service

- A. The ASC or RSC administrative committee (chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary) should determine when an audit is to take place.
- B. We recommend that no more than 24 hours notice be given before the audit.
- C. Those conducting the audit *must* take physical possession of all records, statements, inventories, and petty cash.
- D. The treasurer should be available to the audit committee in order to assist and answer questions, if necessary.
- E. An audit should be seen as a tool that can keep a minor error from becoming a major one. *It is not intended to be an inquisition.*
- F. Audits should not be predictable, but should be varied as to time and place.

## **Conclusion**

These guidelines are intended to serve as an aid to all members of Narcotics Anonymous, particularly those charged with the responsibility of handling funds. If followed as closely as possible, our experience tells us that they will help avoid financial chaos and lessen the chance of financial disaster. It is our hope that, together, we have helped our fellowship achieve a smoother flow of funds, which will, in the long run, maximize our effort to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.









## #30 Theft of NA Funds

*The following paper was written in 1996 and revised in 2002 in response to a number of letters indicating that theft of NA funds is a recurring issue in our fellowship. In preparing this paper, we have relied on the experience of many groups, area and regional service committees, convention corporations, and service offices as shared with us in correspondence and at workshops on the issue. We encourage you to make use of this valuable and often painfully learned experience in your management of NA funds.*

Substantial donations are contributed by the NA Fellowship every year. These funds are given by NA members who trust that they will somehow help other addicts get clean. While this money is precious, the member's trust is even more so. We need to keep the image of that one member and that one donation in mind whenever we make decisions about handling NA's money.

Most of NA's money gets where it is supposed to go. NA members serving in positions of financial responsibility for the fellowship volunteer countless hours to make sure everything adds up. Services such as local phonelines are paid for; literature is purchased and available to members at meetings; tens of thousands of meetings take place every week in rooms that NA pays rent for. Many individual trusted servants follow guidelines and pass on funds that are used to further our primary purpose. All of these things happen because NA communities utilize responsible accounting practices.

### **Safeguarding funds**

Theft can be avoided by consistently and diligently following responsible financial principles and practices. The pain and conflict caused when one of our members steals from us, as well as the loss of funds that might have gone to help the still-suffering addict, points to our responsibility to prevent theft from happening in the first place.

Most theft of fellowship funds occurs when precautionary measures are not in place, or are in place but not used. Some of us have hesitated to either institute or use these measures because it makes us uncomfortable—we believe that they are somehow insulting to the people we ask to serve or they seem too troublesome to follow.

However, the very best safeguard against theft is to remove the opportunity to steal. It is far more uncomfortable and troublesome to deal with a theft after it has taken place than to take measures to prevent it from happening in the first place.

### **Selecting trusted servants**

Our Fourth Concept tells us how to select our trusted servants. "Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants."

So what exactly are these "leadership qualities" the Fourth Concept tells us to look for? Honesty, integrity, maturity, and stability, both in recovery and in personal finances, are but a few. We often avoid asking questions regarding the financial stability of those we are considering for these types of positions, because those questions may be uncomfortable for us, or we somehow feel they are inappropriate, given the spiritual nature of our program. We sometimes ignore evidence that a person is having a difficult time with his or her personal finances and should not have the additional burden of responsibility for NA's money. Not only is it okay to ask members standing for election about their qualifications in these areas, it is irresponsible not to.

Substantial clean time *and* financial stability should be required for positions where money is handled. Many NA communities have found it helpful to develop a list of questions regarding employment, service experience, experience with handling funds, and financial stability. These questions are then asked of all nominees as a matter of course, so that people do not feel singled out based on personalities.

### **Responsible management**

*"NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly."* Our Eleventh Concept points out how very important NA funds are. In keeping with the spiritual principles of this concept, guidelines regarding the handling of funds should be developed and adhered to. The guidelines should include both recognized accounting practices and procedures that ensure the accountability of our trusted servants.

The *Treasurer's Handbook* is an excellent resource for groups and service committees to use in instituting accounting procedures. All guidelines should include appropriate safeguards, such as monthly reporting, regular audits, two-signature checking accounts, and monthly reconciliation of original bank statements. For groups without checking accounts, many of these practices can still be incorporated into the handling of NA funds.

To paraphrase one of our sayings, an addict alone with NA money is in bad company. It is critically important that all processes be monitored by another person: two people count receipts; two people make the bank deposit (and this should be done immediately, not the following day); two people reconcile the original bank statements; and most importantly, two people are always present when any funds are disbursed. Financial records should be readily available to other trusted servants. It is important to note that other assets, such as convention merchandise, literature, and office equipment, should be treated as carefully as money.

Financial procedures need to be written into guidelines that require a review and signature of those responsible for handling funds before they are put into positions of responsibility. Members who know they will be held to standardized accounting and auditing procedures will most likely behave in a responsible manner. Include a statement that theft will not be tolerated, and outline the process that will be followed if a theft occurs. If you are unsure about how to write adequate financial guidelines, please contact the World Service Office for assistance.

### **When safeguards fail**

If we develop and follow these procedures, we will make it almost impossible for anyone to misappropriate or steal NA funds. If someone does steal from us, the first question we should ask is one of ourselves: Did we adhere to all of our accounting procedures and safeguards? If the answer is no, we as a service committee also bear substantial responsibility for the theft. We will want to review our procedures to ensure that they are complete and resolve to adhere to them in the future.

But suppose the answer is yes, we followed our guidelines to the letter. We did everything in

our power to prevent a theft, and someone stole from us anyway. When this happens, there is often a mixture of reactions, ranging from, "Let's forgive and forget; after all, we're addicts who are prone to acting out on our disease. We don't want to run the individual out of meetings and into a possible relapse," to "Let's throw the thief in jail!" But whatever it is, we don't want our initial emotional reaction to dictate the outcome of the situation.

Our program of recovery provides every member with an opportunity to behave responsibly in difficult situations and make amends. We are closest to the spiritual principles of our program when we begin to deal with a theft by encouraging the member who has stolen funds to make amends, which can then provide healing for all involved.

This is not to say that the disappearance of NA funds should be taken lightly or that a service committee should sit and passively wait for a member who has stolen funds to be moved to make amends. We instead encourage a process that is both responsible and spiritual, taking steps of increasing severity should they prove necessary.

First of all, a thorough review of all books and financial records should be conducted to make sure the funds were actually misappropriated. How much? By whom? What failing in the accounting procedures and safeguards allowed this to happen?

If it becomes clear that money has indeed been taken, the group or service committee should then schedule a meeting, making absolutely sure the individual(s) who took the money is informed of the meeting and given the opportunity to present his or her point of view. At this meeting, there should be a format that allows time for everyone involved to express their feelings and concerns. This allows everyone to give their input and may also allow a "defusing process" to occur. After all sides have been heard, a break in the meeting format is encouraged to allow all present enough time to get in touch with their own Higher Power and focus on spiritual principles, before coming back to decide the best course of action.

If the individual admits to the theft and agrees to pay back the missing funds, a restitution agreement can be developed. Such an agreement can include regular payments at any interval

acceptable to all involved, though it is best not to drag out the process unnecessarily. Most agreements specify regular weekly or monthly payments until the full amount is repaid. We strongly suggest drafting a legally binding document, utilizing legal advice if possible, and having it signed and witnessed. Let the individual know that if the restitution agreement is not adhered to, you intend to take legal action based on the signed and witnessed restitution agreement.

A report about the situation should be published, and regular reports on the status of the restitution agreement should be published until the agreement is satisfied. Protecting the identity of the person involved is secondary to being accountable to the fellowship for its funds and ensuring that the person is not put in a position where he or she may do further harm.

Again balancing spirituality with responsibility, we have found that it is best to remove the individual from his or her service position, and not consider the person for another position until he or she has dealt with the issue through the process of the steps.

If the individual does not appear at the special meeting, you will need to ensure that every effort to contact the person has been made. Use registered mail and send a letter explaining that an audit of financial records has been performed, that facts show the individual is responsible for missing money, that repayment is expected, and what the consequences will be if the individual does not respond to the letter. Copies of the letter should be put in a safe place for further reference. This may seem severe, but if the previous steps have been taken without result, sometimes something this harsh is the impetus that encourages the individual to make restitution.

If the individual refuses to repay the money, or agrees to a plan but does not follow through with the agreement, or if the person has disappeared, it may be appropriate to take legal action. The decision to take legal action is an option that does not compromise traditions or spiritual principles, but it should be our last resort, opted for only when everything else has been tried. We strongly suggest that the decision to prosecute be thoroughly explored before going ahead, using area and regional service committees, and world services as resources.

### **Resolution and recovery**

Even if a successful resolution is reached, many of us will still be angry and hurt, and may want to shun the person involved. Although this is understandable, we have to remind ourselves that NA's primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We also need to remember that our disease will surface if we are not diligently working a program of recovery. As NA members practicing spiritual principles, we should all support the individual in continuing his or her recovery, utilizing meetings, a sponsor, and the Twelve Steps. We should offer the same love and support we would to someone who has relapsed by using drugs.

The misappropriation of NA funds affects groups, service committees, and world services in their efforts to carry the message to the still-suffering addict. The process necessary to deal with such incidents typically has long-term effects—conflict between members, disunity, disillusioned members—on any NA community, directly affecting the newcomer. The safeguards recommended in this bulletin not only protect our funds, but also protect us from our disease. We implore NA communities worldwide to develop and follow procedures that protect NA funds; doing so will keep our future secure.





## #22 Direct Contributions

The following essay was written in 1991 and revised in 1996 and 2002 in response to the issues at that time. Direct group contributions were first accepted as part of A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous, which was adopted in 1997 and further supported in the IP #25 Self-Support: Principle and Practice, adopted in 1998. [Note: At WSC 2010, the conference voted on IP #24, Money Matters: Self-Support in NA to replace IP #25.]

We believe that direct group contributions stand a better chance than the “fund flow” plan of providing adequate funds to each level of our service structure, while at the same time maintaining group autonomy, reinforcing the responsibility and authority of the NA group in service matters, providing motivation for regular fellowship-wide communication and service accountability, and promoting NA unity. However, we do not believe that earmarking direct contributions for specific purposes—whether for H&I, PI, Literature, or translations—allows the service structure sufficient flexibility to effectively coordinate the responsibilities assigned to it.

The earliest editions of our fellowship’s service manual (*The NA Tree* adopted in 1976) recommended direct group contributions to each level of service. Those manuals suggested that, after a group had paid its bills and set aside a little extra money for emergency use, “excess funds should be diverted to help NA as a whole. A group can do this by contributing to the area or regional committees that serve the group or through contributions directly to the World Service Office of Narcotics Anonymous.”

It wasn’t until 1982, when the World Service Conference approved a revision of the service manual sections on the group, area, and region, that groups were encouraged to donate all their excess funds to the area committee. Area committees were then to donate their excess funds to the region, and the region’s excess was to flow on to the world. This was the “fund flow” plan for funding NA services.

Various problems have been noted over the years with the “fund flow” plan. First, the funds often don’t flow; they are frequently used up at the area or regional levels, leaving little or nothing to fund regional or world service

operations. At the regional level, this has led to increasing dependence on profits from fundraising activities such as conventions, dances, memorabilia sales, and NA literature markups, and to decreasing reliance on group support. At the world level, this has produced a situation where we have a budget that can’t be accurately projected, in order to meet the needs of an ever-growing worldwide fellowship.

Direct group contributions to all levels of service can provide a more stable financial base for our service structure. Each group decides what proportion of its excess funds to contribute to its area committee, its regional committee, and world services. Each level of service can be assured a source of income as stable as the NA Fellowship itself. With this stability, service committees might be able to reduce their reliance on fundraising activities for operating income, thereby increasing their ties directly to the NA groups they serve.

Certainly, if an area committee found in any given month that it had surplus funds, it would be encouraged to directly donate them to other levels of service. The same would apply to contributions of regional surpluses. However, if an area or regional committee experienced surpluses month after month, it would probably want to inform the groups it served of the situation so that those groups could adjust their contributions accordingly. This would maintain the integrity of the direct contribution system while making allowance for periodic cash flow fluctuations.

Direct group contributions reinforce the autonomy of the NA group. Each group determines for itself how much it gives to each element of the service structure, based on its own evaluation of how well those elements are meeting the group’s needs and the needs of NA as a whole. Our groups have created a service structure to serve their collective needs in better carrying the message, and should have responsibility for and authority over that structure. Direct group contributions put the groups in a better position to carry out their responsibilities and provide them with a better opportunity to financially impact the service structure.

If the groups were funding each level of service directly, all service bodies would thereby be encouraged to communicate effectively and directly with the groups. This would allow groups the most flexibility in deciding where their money goes. If groups were not aware of the work or needs of a particular service body, the chances would be great that they would choose not to participate in funding that body. Direct funding would also provide a way for each level of service to determine the level of support they had from the groups. If funds were not coming in, service committees would be able to infer one of three things: either the groups didn't have the money available, the groups didn't understand or know about what services had been requested, or the groups didn't support the work that was being done. As you can see, direct funding would also give the groups a greater opportunity to make their voice heard in service matters.

This is not to suggest that groups earmark contributions for special purposes. The groups have created the service structure not only to deliver services on their behalf, but also to coordinate those services. In delegating to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill its responsibilities, the groups have also delegated the authority to coordinate the

allocation of service resources at each level of service.

In studying the financial condition and means of funding employed by several other fellowships, it has become obvious that we are not alone in facing a money crunch at all levels of service. Direct contributions are not a magic answer that will relieve us of all our financial concerns. Our responsibility as members to fund the services we request is an issue that needs broad discussion. If we truly believe that the solution to our financial difficulties rests with our membership, then it makes sense to put the responsibility and ability to impact finances directly in the hands of our groups.

Fully implementing direct group contributions should be a part of the discussion that we must continue to have as a fellowship concerning the funding of our services. Direct contributions can play a part in helping us to provide greater financial stability through enhanced group autonomy, responsibility, and authority. It encourages better communication between the service structure and the groups, provides more direct means of service accountability, and better promotes the NA unity upon which our personal recovery depends.



## #21 The Generation of Funds (fundraising) and the Seventh Tradition in NA

*This article was generated in December 1991 and revised in 2002 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It represents the views at the time of its writing.*

Questions about fundraising and how fundraising relates to the traditions, especially Tradition Seven, have been asked on numerous occasions in the past few years. As groups, areas, and regions grow, the perceived need for finances to help fulfill the Fifth Tradition may also grow. When the cost of ancillary services—such as helplines, meeting lists, and literature for use in H&I meetings, among others—is considered, many groups, areas, and regions find themselves in the position of needing or wanting more funds than are provided by members' donations to the "basket" at the group level. It is at these times that questions arise as to how to fund the services that help carry our message to the still-suffering addict. This article will attempt to answer some of these questions as well as offer some simple guidelines about raising funds. We will try to provide a brief historical perspective on fundraising in NA, look at some of the problems that may result from various efforts, and strive to show the relationship of Tradition Seven to this issue.

In looking at this topic, it is helpful to understand how fundraising started in our fellowship. Many early groups held a variety of activities such as dinners, picnics, and other social events to promote recovery, unity, and a sense of belonging. While these activities were not specifically intended to raise funds, a number of them turned out to be financially successful, allowing the host group to purchase additional literature or other supplies for their meetings. As the fellowship grew and the need or want for additional services became greater, the purpose of some of these activities changed; instead of celebrating recovery, they were designed to raise funds.

As the fellowship continued to grow and more area and regional service committees were formed, the focus continued to change—in some instances, to make up for the perceived lack of funds being donated from the groups'

Seventh Tradition collections. As time went on, more and more service committees began relying on this form of funding, reaching the point, at times, where the success or failure of an event such as a convention determined the area or region's ability to provide services and participate in the fund-flow. In other instances, groups, areas, and regions had such success with their social events that they began to put an extraordinary amount of time and effort into these activities, becoming invested in having a "successful" convention, dance, or campout.

A considerable number of problems arose from such practices. The accountability of service committees to their groups was affected as the committees began to rely upon these events instead of on contributions from the groups' Seventh Tradition collections for their funding. In some cases, the various service bodies began to get diverted from their original purpose by "money, property, and prestige." Some groups and service committees began to amass huge "prudent reserves," in some cases amounting to many thousands of dollars. For some groups and committees, this "prudent reserve" grew so large that the body holding it did not have to rely upon contributions for upwards of six months or more, despite the fact that in various fellowship service publications the recommended amount for a prudent reserve is one month's expenses. Merchandising efforts became a "business" in some cases, leading us away from the spiritual focus of our program. It became harder and harder to insure that donations to our fellowship came only from our members at various social events. And some members began to raise concerns that we could be perceived by those outside our program as a fellowship that is more involved with social functions and merchandising efforts than with helping addicts recover from the disease of addiction. As these problems became apparent, members began to share their concerns and started questioning the need for such practices. Some of the questions focused on the relationship between Tradition Seven and fundraising.

While this tradition specifically talks about self-support—declining donations from outside sources—some of the principles underlying the tradition, such as simplicity and faith, may prove to be of assistance in answering questions about funding our services. Our experience has shown that, as recovering addicts, all of our needs add up to the need for ongoing freedom from active addiction. To attain this freedom, we need the principles contained in the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of NA, recovery meetings where we can share our experience, strength, and hope, and other recovering addicts to help us apply these spiritual principles in our lives. These three things are simple; they do not require us to obtain college degrees or expend vast sums of money.

In our active addiction, most of us seemed to have one thing in common: self-centeredness. As we begin the recovery process, we learn that we “keep what we have by giving it away.” We start to learn the value of being a contributing member of our fellowship and of society as a whole. We begin to learn the simple truth that if we want to keep attending NA meetings and help carry the message, we need to contribute our fair share financially as well as with our time and energy. Self-support, within the context of Tradition Seven, goes far beyond mere financial support. Along the way, we learn that contributing our fair share is one way in which we can express our gratitude for what has been freely given to us. Over time, we develop faith that as long we are doing what we’re supposed to—practicing the principles of our program—the God of our understanding will take care of us and show us a new way to live.

When looking at the needs of the group, simplicity once again comes to mind. Our needs are simple: a place where we can hold our meetings, literature to help carry our message, and, in most cases, simple refreshments. We do not need spacious, luxurious meeting facilities, excessive quantities of literature, or refreshments of every type to attract addicts to our meetings. The simplicity of our message and the effectiveness of our program are sufficient. We do not need large financial reserves if we have faith that the God of our understanding will take care of our needs. Our experience has shown that when a group’s financial needs are not met, and that fact is communicated to the members, those needs are generally taken care of. The

simplicity of our needs is reinforced by the simplicity of our primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Our experience has shown that we must carry out this simple task to the very best of our ability, for it is the very essence of who we are and what we do in NA. We have discovered that if everything we do is done to fulfill that purpose, generally, we will find the funds necessary to do what we must.

Many groups and service committees have decided to avoid controversy by simply seeking to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. In this manner, they rely solely on attracting new members to their groups by striving to strengthen their personal recovery, working and living NA’s Twelve Steps. As new members are attracted, groups grow, Seventh Tradition collections increase, and more money is available for group needs. Accordingly, funds are donated to the area, the region, and world services. (For further information on this topic, please refer to IP No. 24, *Money Matters: Self-Support in NA*) As services are funded more efficiently, the NA message of recovery is carried farther and better than ever before. The result is that more addicts seek recovery through Narcotics Anonymous and more NA meetings begin. This approach is seen as practical and realistic by many members of our fellowship. These members have reported that frustration over lack of funds and the sense of urgency to raise money can be counterbalanced by the spiritual unity which results from this focus on our primary purpose.

One of the things that has become evident over the past few years, however, is that large segments of the fellowship want activities and merchandise. If we don’t assist in these efforts, members may end up conducting them on their own. Whenever this has occurred, the resulting problems have had considerable impact on all elements of NA, affecting our fellowship’s overall success in achieving its primary purpose. We strongly believe that fundraising activities which divert us from the spiritual nature of our program are inappropriate and should not be encouraged within the fellowship. Social activities designed to enhance recovery and further unity and members’ sense of belonging, however, are not only acceptable but should be encouraged.

We believe that fundraising for the sake of fundraising is questionable, at best. There may be times, however, when a group or service

committee finds itself in extraordinary financial constraints and begins to consider holding a fundraiser. At such times, we suggest that careful attention be given to the following questions: Are the funds collected from ordinary Seventh Tradition contributions enough to support the group or service committee's actual needs? Are wants supplanting needs? Is the need for the fundraiser of such a nature that not holding it will result in our primary purpose going unfulfilled? In addition to these questions, we recommend that all aspects of sponsoring a fundraising event be carefully considered.

When these events are held, members of the hosting group or service committee should examine the event with respect to all our traditions, lending their collective experience, strength, and hope to these examinations. One of the major points to consider is the motivation for holding such an event. An examination such as this helps keep us in tune with our principles. The following general concepts have arisen from the experience of our fellowship, and we present them here as starting points for your consideration:

1. Fundraising activities at an NA meeting are not usually appropriate because they may detract from our primary purpose and can present an inaccurate impression of the NA message, especially in the eyes of the newcomer or the non-addict visitor.
2. In order to follow the guidance of our traditions, a fundraising event should be planned and held by and for Narcotics Anonymous members.
3. In order to conform to the ideals of the Seventh Tradition, *donations* from nonmembers should not be accepted.
4. Since there are often times when we sponsor activities where there is a fixed charge for full participation, the term

"*donation*" should not be associated with these types of fees. In this way, we are not confusing contributions with assessed charges for activities.

5. It must be determined whether the local NA community is willing and large enough to support the event.
6. All aspects of the fundraising event should be consistent with our goal of encouraging recovery from addiction. We should avoid hosting events which might encourage gambling, appear to offer "something for nothing," or award prizes that are either not recovery-oriented or that otherwise may be seen as being inappropriate. For example, a raffle prize such as a car or a television might make someone's living circumstances more comfortable, but at the same time may not be directly related to his or her recovery, whereas a prize of NA literature or tickets to an NA workshop or convention would be recovery-oriented. It should also be noted that, in many USA states and in some other countries, raffles are illegal. It may also be helpful to consider whether raffles—and especially cash raffles or lotteries—appeal more to the spirit of self-interest than the spirit of voluntary support implicit in our Seventh Tradition.

All of the solutions we see to the problems addressed in this article involve communication. We believe that improved communication about the needs of our service bodies results in increased support from NA groups and members. Improved communication improves the accountability of the service structure to our groups and members. Finally, improved communication helps us maintain our focus on spiritual principles like faith and trust, leading us away from fear, distrust, and self-centeredness.



# Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

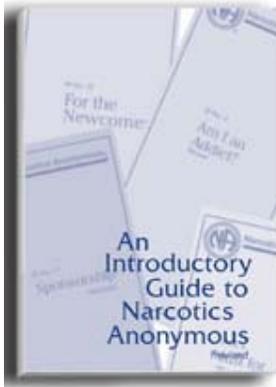
1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

**Tab 8**  
**An Introductory**  
**Guide to NA**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**

**Tab 8**  
**An Introductory Guide to**  
**NA**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**



## **An Introductory Guide to Narcotics Anonymous, Revised**

This is NA Fellowship-approved literature.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

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## **Table of Contents**

[Am I an Addict?](#)

[Welcome to Narcotics Anonymous](#)

[For the Newcomer](#)

[Another Look](#)

[How it Works](#)

[Self-Acceptance](#)

[Sponsorship, Revised](#)

[One Addict's Experience with Acceptance, Faith, and Commitment](#)

[Just for Today](#)

[Staying Clean on the Outside](#)

[Recovery and relapse](#)

## Am I an Addict?

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*Only you can answer this question.*

This may not be an easy thing to do. All through our usage, we told ourselves, "I can handle it." Even if this was true in the beginning, it is not so now. The drugs handled us. We lived to use and used to live. Very simply, an addict is a person whose life is controlled by drugs.

Perhaps you admit you have a problem with drugs, but you don't consider yourself an addict. All of us have preconceived ideas about what an addict is. There is nothing shameful about being an addict once you begin to take positive action. If you can identify with our problems, you may be able to identify with our solution. The following questions were written by recovering addicts in Narcotics Anonymous. If you have doubts about whether or not you're an addict, take a few moments to read the questions below and answer them as honestly as you can.

1. Do you ever use alone? Yes  No
2. Have you ever substituted one drug for another, thinking that one particular drug was the problem? Yes  No
3. Have you ever manipulated or lied to a doctor to obtain prescription drugs? Yes  No
4. Have you ever stolen drugs or stolen to obtain drugs? Yes  No
5. Do you regularly use a drug when you wake up or when you go to bed? Yes  No
6. Have you ever taken one drug to overcome the effects of another? Yes  No
7. Do you avoid people or places that do not approve of you using drugs? Yes  No
8. Have you ever used a drug without knowing what it was or what it would do to you? Yes  No
9. Has your job or school performance ever suffered from the effects of your drug use? Yes  No
10. Have you ever been arrested as a result of using drugs? Yes  No
11. Have you ever lied about what or how much you use? Yes  No
12. Do you put the purchase of drugs ahead of your financial responsibilities? Yes  No
13. Have you ever tried to stop or control your using? Yes  No
14. Have you ever been in a jail, hospital, or drug rehabilitation center because of your using? Yes  No
15. Does using interfere with your sleeping or eating? Yes  No
16. Does the thought of running out of drugs terrify you? Yes  No
17. Do you feel it is impossible for you to live without drugs? Yes  No
18. Do you ever question your own sanity? Yes  No
19. Is your drug use making life at home unhappy? Yes  No
20. Have you ever thought you couldn't fit in or have a good time without drugs? Yes  No

- |                                                                        |                              |                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 21. Have you ever felt defensive, guilty, or ashamed about your using? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Do you think a lot about drugs?                                    | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. Have you had irrational or indefinable fears?                      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. Has using affected your sexual relationships?                      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. Have you ever taken drugs you didn't prefer?                       | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. Have you ever used drugs because of emotional pain or stress?      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. Have you ever overdosed on any drugs?                              | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. Do you continue to use despite negative consequences?              | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. Do you think you might have a drug problem?                        | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

"Am I an addict?" This is a question only you can answer. We found that we all answered different numbers of these questions "Yes." The actual number of "Yes" responses wasn't as important as how we felt inside and how addiction had affected our lives.

Some of these questions don't even mention drugs. This is because addiction is an insidious disease that affects all areas of our lives—even those areas which seem at first to have little to do with drugs. The different drugs we used were not as important as why we used them and what they did to us.

When we first read these questions, it was frightening for us to think we might be addicts. Some of us tried to dismiss these thoughts by saying:

"Oh, those questions don't make sense;"

Or,

"I'm different. I know I take drugs, but I'm not an addict. I have real emotional/family/job problems;"

Or,

"I'm just having a tough time getting it together right now;"

Or,

"I'll be able to stop when I find the right person/get the right job, etc."

If you are an addict, you must first admit that you have a problem with drugs before any progress can be made toward recovery. These questions, when honestly approached, may help to show you how using drugs has made your life unmanageable. Addiction is a disease which, without recovery, ends in jails, institutions, and death. Many of us came to Narcotics Anonymous because drugs had stopped doing what we needed them to do. Addiction takes our pride, self-esteem, family, loved ones, and even our desire to live. If you have not reached this point in your addiction, you don't have to. We have found that our own private hell was within us. If you want help, you can find it in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

"We were searching for an answer when we reached out and found Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first NA meeting in defeat and didn't know what to expect. After sitting in a meeting, or several meetings, we began to feel that people cared and were willing to help. Although our minds told us that we would never make it, the people in the fellowship gave us hope by insisting that we could recover. [...] Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realized that we were not alone anymore. Recovery is what happens in our meetings. Our lives are at stake. We found that by putting recovery first, the program works. We faced three disturbing realizations:

1. We are powerless over addiction and our lives are unmanageable;
2. Although we are not responsible for our disease, we are responsible for our recovery;

3. We can no longer blame people, places, and things for our addiction. We must face our problems and our feelings.

The ultimate weapon for recovery is the recovering addict.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*

# Welcome to Narcotics Anonymous

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*This pamphlet was written to answer some of your questions concerning the program of Narcotics Anonymous. Our message is very simple: We have found a way to live without using drugs, and we are happy to share it with anyone for whom drugs are a problem.*

Welcome to your first NA meeting. NA offers addicts a way to live drug-free. If you are not sure you're an addict, don't worry about it; just keep coming to our meetings. You will have all the time you need to make up your own mind.

If you are like many of us when we attended our first NA meeting, you may be feeling pretty nervous and think that everyone at the meeting is focusing on you. If so, you are not the only one. Many of us have felt the same way. It has been said, "If your stomach's all tied up in knots, you're probably in the right place." We often say that no one comes through the doors of NA by mistake. Nonaddicted people don't spend their time wondering if they're addicts. They don't even think about it. If you're wondering whether or not you're an addict, you might be one. Just allow yourself the time to listen to us share about what it has been like for us. Perhaps you will hear something that sounds familiar to you. It doesn't matter whether or not you have used the same drugs others mention. It is not important which drugs you used; you're welcome here if you want to stop using. Most addicts experience very similar feelings, and it is in focusing on our similarities, rather than our differences, that we are helpful to one another.

You may be feeling hopeless and afraid. You may think that this program, like other things you have tried, will not work. Or you may think that it will work for someone else but not for you because you feel you are different than us. Most of us felt like that when we first came to NA. Somehow we knew that we couldn't go on using drugs, but we didn't know how to stop or stay clean. We were all afraid to let go of something that had become so important to us. It is a relief to discover that the only requirement for membership in NA is a *desire* to stop using.

At first, most of us were mistrustful and fearful of trying a new way of doing things. About the only thing we were sure of was that our old ways were not working at all. Even after getting clean, things didn't change right away. Often, even our usual activities, such as driving a car or using the telephone, seemed frightening and strange, as if we had become someone we didn't recognize. This is where the fellowship and support of other clean addicts really helps, and we begin to rely on others for the reassurance we so desperately need.

You may already be thinking: "Yes, but" or "What if?" However, even if you have doubts, you can use these simple suggestions for starters: Attend as many NA meetings as you can and collect a list of NA phone numbers to use regularly, especially when the urge for drugs is strong. The temptation is not restricted to the days and hours where meetings occur. We are clean today because we reached out for help. What helped us can help you. So don't be afraid to call another recovering addict.

The only way to keep from returning to active addiction is not to take that first drug. The most natural thing for an addict to do is to use drugs. In order for most of us to abstain from using mood-altering, mind-changing chemicals, we have had to undergo drastic changes physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The Twelve Steps of NA offer us a way to change. As someone said: "You can probably get clean by just coming to meetings. However, if you want to stay clean and experience recovery, you will need to practice the Twelve Steps." This is more than we can do alone. In the NA Fellowship, we support one another in our efforts to learn and practice a new way of living that keeps us healthy and drug-free.

At your first meeting, you will meet people with various lengths of clean time. You may wonder how they could remain clean for that period of time. If you keep coming to NA meetings and stay clean, you will come to understand how it works. There is a mutual respect and caring among clean addicts because we've all had to overcome the misery of addiction. We love and support each other in our recovery. The program of NA is comprised of spiritual principles that we have found help us to remain clean. Nothing will be demanded of you, but you will receive many suggestions. This fellowship provides the opportunity for us to give you what we have found: a clean way of living. We know that we have to "give it away in order to keep it."

So, welcome! We are glad that you have made it here, and hope that you decide to stay. It is important for you to know that you will hear God mentioned at NA meetings. What we are referring to is a Power greater than ourselves that makes possible what seems impossible. We found that Power here, in NA, in the program, in the meetings, and in the people. This is the spiritual principle that has worked for us to live drug-free a day at a time; and whenever a day is too long, then five minutes at a time. We can do together what we could not do alone. We invite you to use our strength and our hope until you have found some of your own. There will come a time when you too may want to share with someone else what has been freely given to you.

**KEEP COMING BACK—IT WORKS!**

## For the Newcomer

---

NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. There are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using.

You don't have to be clean when you get here, but after your first meeting we suggest that you keep coming back and come clean. You don't have to wait for an overdose or jail sentence to get help from NA, nor is addiction a hopeless condition from which there is no recovery. It is possible to overcome the desire to use drugs with the help of the Twelve Step program of Narcotics Anonymous and the fellowship of recovering addicts.

Addiction is a disease that can happen to anyone. Some of us used drugs because we enjoyed them, while others used to suppress the feelings we already had. Still others suffered from physical or mental ailments and became addicted to the medication prescribed during our illnesses. Some of us joined the crowd using drugs a few times just to be cool and later found that we could not stop.

Many of us tried to overcome addiction, and sometimes temporary relief was possible, but it was usually followed by an even deeper involvement than before.

Whatever the circumstances, it really doesn't matter. Addiction is a progressive disease such as diabetes. We are allergic to drugs. Our ends are always the same: jails, institutions, or death. If life has become unmanageable and you want to live without it being necessary to use drugs, we have found a way. Here are the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous that we use on a daily basis to help us overcome our disease.

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. 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.

Recovery doesn't stop with just being clean. As we abstain from all drugs (and, yes this means alcohol and marijuana, too) we come face-to-face with feelings that we have never coped

with successfully. We even experience feelings we were not capable of having in the past. We must become willing to meet old and new feelings as they come.

We learn to experience feelings and realize they can do us no harm unless we act on them. Rather than acting on them, we call an NA member if we have feelings we cannot handle. By sharing, we learn to work through it. Chances are they've had a similar experience and can relate what worked for them. Remember, an addict alone is in bad company.

The Twelve Steps, new friends, and sponsors all help us deal with these feelings. In NA, our joys are multiplied by sharing good days; our sorrows are lessened by sharing the bad. For the first time in our lives, we don't have to experience anything alone. Now that we have a group, we are able to develop a relationship with a Higher Power that can always be with us.

We suggest that you look for a sponsor as soon as you become acquainted with the members in your area. Being asked to sponsor a new member is a privilege so don't hesitate to ask someone. Sponsorship is a rewarding experience for both; we are all here to help and be helped. We who are recovering must share with you what we have learned in order to maintain our growth in the NA program and our ability to function without drugs.

This program offers hope. All you have to bring with you is the desire to stop using and the willingness to try this new way of life.

Come to meetings, listen with an open mind, ask questions, get phone numbers and use them. Stay clean just for today.

May we also remind you that this is an *anonymous* program and your anonymity will be held in the strictest of confidence. "We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help."

## Another Look

---

There are probably as many definitions of addiction as there are ways of thinking, based on both research and personal experience. It is not surprising that there are many areas of honest disagreement in the definitions that we hear. Some seem to fit the observed and known facts for some groups better than for others. If we can accept this as a fact, then perhaps another viewpoint ought to be examined, in the hope that we can discover a way more basic to all addictions and more valid in establishing communication among all of us. If we can find greater agreement on *what addiction is not*, then perhaps *what it is* may appear with greater clarity.

Maybe we can agree on some prime points.

### **1. Addiction is not freedom.**

The very nature of our disease and its observed symptoms point up this fact. We addicts value personal freedom highly, perhaps because we want it so much and experience it so seldom in the progression of our illness. Even in periods of abstinence, freedom is curtailed. We are never quite sure if any action is based in a conscious desire for continued recovery or an unconscious wish to return to using. We seek to manipulate people and conditions and control all our actions; thus we destroy spontaneity, an integral mark of freedom. We fail to realize that the need for control springs from a fear of losing control. This fear, based in part on past failures and disappointments in solving life's difficulties, prevents us from making meaningful choices; choices which, if acted upon, would remove the very fear which blocks us.

### **2. Addiction is not personal growth.**

The monotonous, imitative, ritualistic, compulsive, and obsessive routines of active addiction render us incapable of responsive or meaningful thought and action. Personal growth is creative effort and purposeful behavior; it presupposes choice, change, and the capacity to face life on its own terms.

### **3. Addiction is not goodwill.**

Addiction insulates us from people, places, and things outside of our own world of getting, using, and finding ways and means to continue the process. Hostile, resentful, self-centered, and self-concerned, we cut off all outside interests as our illness progresses. We live in fear and suspicion of the very people we have to depend on for our needs. This touches every area of our lives and anything not completely familiar becomes alien and dangerous. Our world shrinks and isolation is its goal. This might well be the true nature of our disorder.

All that has been said above could be summed up in...

### **4. Addiction is not a way of life.**

The sick, self-seeking, self-centered, and self-enclosed world of the addict hardly qualifies as a way of life; at best, perhaps it is a way to survive for awhile. Even in this limited existence it is a way of despair, destruction, and death.

Any lifestyle seeking spiritual fulfillment seems to demand the very things missing in addiction: *freedom, goodwill, creative action, and personal growth.*

With freedom, life is a meaningful, changing, and advancing process. It looks forward with a reasonable expectancy to a better and richer realization of our desires and a greater fulfillment of our personal selves. These are, of course, some of the manifestations of the spiritual progress that results from the daily practice of the Twelve Steps of NA.

Goodwill is an action that includes others besides ourselves—a way that considers others as important in their own lives as we are in ours. It is hard to tell whether goodwill is the key to empathy or vice versa. If we accept empathy as the capacity to see ourselves in others knowingly, without losing our own identity, then we recognize a sameness in both. If we have accepted ourselves, how can we reject another? Affection comes from seeing similarities. Intolerance results from differences we will not accept.

In personal growth, we use both freedom and goodwill in cooperation with others. We realize we cannot live alone, that personal growth is also interpersonal growth. In order to find better balance, we examine personal, social, and spiritual values as well as material values. Maturity seems to demand this kind of evaluation.

In active addiction, insanity, institutions, and death are the only ends. In recovery, through the help of a Higher Power and the steps of NA, anything is possible.

Creative action is not a mysterious procedure, although it is an inside job in rebuilding or reintegrating our disordered and fractured personalities. Often, it means simply listening to those hunches and intuitive feelings that we think would benefit others or ourselves, and acting on them spontaneously. Here is where many basic principles of action become apparent. We are then able to make decisions based on principles that have real value to ourselves.

The purpose of the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous becomes clear as we find that dependence on a Higher Power, as we each understand It, brings self-respect and self-reliance. We know that we are neither superior nor inferior to anyone; our real value lies in being ourselves. Freedom, with responsibility for ourselves and our actions, appears to be foremost in our lives. We keep and expand freedom through daily practice; this is the creative action that never ends. Goodwill, of course, is the beginning of all spiritual growth. It leads to affection and love in all our actions. These three goals, *freedom*, *creative action*, and *goodwill* when shown in service in the fellowship, without seeking personal rewards, bring about changes whose ends we cannot predict or control. Therefore, service is also a Power greater than we, and has significant meaning for all.

**My gratitude speaks  
when I care and  
when I share  
with others the NA way**

## How it Works

---

*If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are the principles that made our recovery possible.*

- 1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.*
- 2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
- 3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
- 4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
- 5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
- 6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
- 7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
- 8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
- 9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
- 10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
- 11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*
- 12. 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.*

*This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once. We didn't become addicted in one day, so remember—easy does it.*

*There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery; this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Three of these that are indispensable are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. With these we are well on our way.*

*We feel that our approach to the disease of addiction is completely realistic for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical, for one addict can best understand and help another addict. We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible, and productive members of that society.*

*The only way to keep from returning to active addiction is not to take that first drug. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this, for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again.*

*Thinking of alcohol as different from other drugs has caused a great many addicts to relapse. Before we came to NA, many of us viewed alcohol separately, but we cannot afford to be confused about this. Alcohol is a drug. We are people with the disease of addiction who must abstain from all drugs in order to recover.*

**T**hese are some of the questions we have asked ourselves: Are we sure we want to stop using? Do we understand that we have no real control over drugs? Do we recognize that, in the long run, we didn't use drugs—they used us? Did jails and institutions take over the management of our lives at different times? Do we fully accept the fact that our every attempt to stop using or to control our using failed? Do we know that our addiction changed us into someone we didn't want to be: dishonest, deceitful, self-willed people at odds with ourselves and our fellow man? Do we really believe that we have failed as drug users?

When we were using, reality became so painful that oblivion was preferable. We tried to keep other people from knowing about our pain. We isolated ourselves, and lived in prisons that we built with loneliness. Through this desperation, we sought help in Narcotics Anonymous. When we come to NA we are physically, mentally, and spiritually bankrupt. We have hurt so long that we are willing to go to any length to stay clean.

Our only hope is to live by the example of those who have faced our dilemma and have found a way out. Regardless of who we are, where we came from, or what we have done, we are accepted in NA. Our addiction gives us a common ground for understanding one another.

As a result of attending a few meetings, we begin to feel like we finally belong somewhere. It is in these meetings that we are introduced to the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. We learn to work the steps in the order that they are written and to use them on a daily basis. The steps are our solution. They are our survival kit. They are our defense against addiction, which is a deadly disease. Our steps are the principles that make our recovery possible.

## Step One

*"We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable."*

It doesn't matter what or how much we used. In Narcotics Anonymous, staying clean has to come first. We realize that we cannot use drugs and live. When we admit our powerlessness and our inability to manage our own lives, we open the door to recovery. No one could convince us that we were addicts. It is an admission that we have to make for ourselves. When some of us have doubts, we ask ourselves this question: "Can I control my use of any form of mind or mood-altering chemicals?"

Most addicts will see that control is impossible the moment it is suggested. Whatever the outcome, we find that we cannot control our using for any length of time.

This would clearly suggest that an addict has no control over drugs. Powerlessness means using drugs against our will. If we can't stop using, how can we tell ourselves we are in control? The inability to stop using, even with the greatest willpower and the most sincere desire, is what we mean when we say, "We have absolutely no choice." However, we do have a choice after we stop trying to justify our using.

We didn't stumble into this fellowship brimming with love, honesty, open-mindedness, or willingness. We reached a point where we could no longer continue using because of physical, mental, and spiritual pain. When we were beaten, we became willing.

Our inability to control our usage of drugs is a symptom of the disease of addiction. We are powerless not only over drugs, but over our addiction as well. We need to admit this fact in order to recover. Addiction is a physical, mental, and spiritual disease that affects every area of our lives.

The physical aspect of our disease is the compulsive use of drugs: the inability to stop using once we have started. The mental aspect of our disease is the obsession, or overpowering desire to use, even when we are destroying our lives. The spiritual part of our disease is our total self-centeredness. We felt that we could stop whenever we wanted to, despite all evidence to the contrary. Denial, substitution, rationalization, justification, distrust of others, guilt, embarrassment, dereliction, degradation, isolation, and loss of control are all results of our disease. Our disease is progressive, incurable, and fatal. Most of us are relieved to find out we have a disease instead of a moral deficiency.

We are not responsible for our disease, but we are responsible for our recovery. Most of us tried to stop using on our own, but we were unable to live with or without drugs. Eventually, we realized that we were powerless over our addiction.

Many of us tried to stop using on sheer willpower. This action was a temporary solution. We saw that willpower alone would not work for any length of time. We tried countless other remedies—psychiatrists, hospitals, recovery houses, lovers, new towns, new jobs. Everything that we tried, failed. We began to see that we had rationalized the most outrageous sort of nonsense to justify the mess that we made of our lives with drugs.

Until we let go of our reservations, no matter what they are, the foundation of our recovery is in danger. Reservations rob us of the benefits that this program has to offer. In ridding ourselves of all reservations, we surrender. Then, and only then, can we be helped to recover from the disease of addiction.

Now, the question is: “If we are powerless, how can Narcotics Anonymous help?” We begin by asking for help. The foundation of our program is the admission that we, of ourselves, do not have power over addiction. When we can accept this fact, we have completed the first part of Step One.

A second admission must be made before our foundation is complete. If we stop here, we will know only half the truth. We are great ones for manipulating the truth. We say on one hand, “Yes, I am powerless over my addiction,” and on the other hand, “When I get my life together, I can handle drugs.” Such thoughts and actions led us back to active addiction. It never occurred to us to ask, “If we can’t control our addiction, how can we control our lives?” We felt miserable without drugs, and our lives were unmanageable.

Unemployability, dereliction, and destruction are easily seen as characteristics of an unmanageable life. Our families generally are disappointed, baffled, and confused by our actions and often desert or disown us. Becoming employed, socially acceptable, and reunited with our families does not make our lives manageable. Social acceptability does not equal recovery.

We have found that we had no choice except to completely change our old ways of thinking or go back to using. When we give our best, it works for us as it has worked for others. When we could no longer stand our old ways, we began to change. From that point forward, we began to see that every clean day is a successful day, no matter what happens. Surrender means not having to fight anymore. We accept our addiction and life the way it is. We become willing to do whatever is necessary to stay clean, even the things we don’t like doing.

Until we took Step One, we were full of fear and doubt. At this point, many of us felt lost and confused. We felt different. Upon working this step, we affirmed our surrender to the principles of NA. Only after surrender are we able to overcome the alienation of addiction. Help for addicts begins only when we are able to admit complete defeat. This can be frightening, but it is the foundation on which we built our lives.

Step One means that we do not have to use, and this is a great freedom. It took a while for some of us to realize that our lives had become unmanageable. For others, the unmanageability of their lives was the only thing that was clear. We knew in our hearts that drugs had the power to change us into someone that we didn’t want to be.

Being clean and working this step, we are released from our chains. However, none of the steps work by magic. We do not just say the words of this step; we learn to live them. We see for ourselves that the program has something to offer us.

We have found hope. We can learn to function in the world in which we live. We can find meaning and purpose in life and be rescued from insanity, depravity, and death.

When we admit our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives, we open the door for a Power greater than ourselves to help us. It is not where we were that counts, but where we are going.

## Step Two

*"We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."*

The Second Step is necessary if we expect to achieve ongoing recovery. The First Step leaves us with a need to believe in something that can help us with our powerlessness, uselessness, and helplessness.

The First Step has left a vacuum in our lives. We need to find something to fill that void. This is the purpose of the Second Step.

Some of us didn't take this step seriously at first; we passed over it with a minimum of concern, only to find the next steps would not work until we worked Step Two. Even when we admitted that we needed help with our drug problem, many of us would not admit to the need for faith and sanity.

We have a disease: progressive, incurable, and fatal. One way or another we went out and bought our destruction on the time payment plan! All of us, from the junkie snatching purses to the sweet little old lady hitting two or three doctors for legal prescriptions, have one thing in common: we seek our destruction a bag at a time, a few pills at a time, or a bottle at a time until we die. This is at least part of the insanity of addiction. The price may seem higher for the addict who prostitutes for a fix than it is for the addict who merely lies to a doctor. Ultimately, both pay for their disease with their lives. Insanity is repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results.

Many of us realize when we get to the program that we have gone back time and again to using, even though we knew that we were destroying our lives. Insanity is using drugs, day after day, knowing that only physical and mental destruction comes when we use. The most obvious insanity of the disease of addiction is the obsession to use drugs.

Ask yourself this question, Do I believe it would be insane to walk up to someone and say, "May I please have a heart attack or a fatal accident?" If you can agree that this would be an insane thing, you should have no problem with the Second Step.

In this program, the first thing we do is stop using drugs. At this point, we begin to feel the pain of living without drugs or anything to replace them. The pain forces us to seek a Power greater than ourselves that can relieve our obsession to use.

The process of coming to believe is similar for most addicts. Most of us lacked a working relationship with a Higher Power. We begin to develop this relationship by simply admitting to the possibility of a Power greater than ourselves. Most of us have no trouble admitting that addiction had become a destructive force in our lives. Our best efforts resulted in ever greater destruction and despair. At some point, we realized that we needed the help of some Power greater than our addiction. Our understanding of a Higher Power is up to us. No one is going to decide for us. We can call it the group, the program, or we can call it God. The only suggested guidelines are that this Power be loving, caring, and greater than ourselves. We don't have to be religious to accept this idea. The point is that we open our minds to believe. We may have difficulty with this, but by keeping an open mind, sooner or later, we find the help we need.

We talked and listened to others. We saw other people recovering, and they told us what was working for them. We began to see evidence of some Power that could not be fully explained.

Confronted with this evidence, we began to accept the existence of a Power greater than ourselves. We can use this Power long before we understand it.

As we see coincidences and miracles happening in our lives, acceptance becomes trust. We grow to feel comfortable with our Higher Power as a source of strength. As we learn to trust this Power, we begin to overcome our fear of life.

The process of coming to believe restores us to sanity. The strength to move into action comes from this belief. We need to accept this step to start on the road to recovery. When our belief has grown, we are ready for Step Three.

## Step Three

*"We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."*

As addicts, we turned our will and our lives over many times to a destructive power. Our will and our lives were controlled by drugs. We were trapped by our need for instant gratification that drugs gave us. During that time, our total being—body, mind, and spirit—was dominated by drugs. For a time, it was pleasurable, then the euphoria began to wear off and we saw the ugly side of addiction. We found that the higher our drugs took us, the lower they brought us. We faced two choices: either we suffered the pain of withdrawal or took more drugs.

For all of us, the day came when there was no longer a choice; we had to use. Having given our will and lives to our addiction, in utter desperation, we looked for another way. In Narcotics Anonymous, we decide to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him. This is a giant step. We don't have to be religious; anyone can take this step. All that is required is willingness. All that is essential is that we open the door to a Power greater than ourselves.

Our concept of God comes not from dogma but from what we believe and from what works for us. Many of us understand God to be simply whatever force keeps us clean. The right to a God of your understanding is total and without any catches. Because we have this right, it is necessary to be honest about our belief if we are to grow spiritually.

We found that all we needed to do was try. When we gave our best effort, the program worked for us as it has worked for countless others. The Third Step does not say, "We turned our will and our lives over to the care of God." It says, *"We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."* We made the decision; it was not made for us by the drugs, our families, a probation officer, judge, therapist, or doctor. We made it! For the first time since that first high, we have made a decision for ourselves.

The word decision implies action. This decision is based on faith. We have only to believe that the miracle that we see working in the lives of clean addicts can happen to any addict with the desire to change. We simply realize there is a force for spiritual growth that can help us become more tolerant, patient, and useful in helping others. Many of us have said, "Take my will and my life. Guide me in my recovery. Show me how to live." The relief of "letting go and letting God" helps us develop a life that is worth living.

Surrendering to the will of our Higher Power gets easier with daily practice. When we honestly try, it works. Many of us start our day with a simple request for guidance from our Higher Power.

Although we know that "turning it over" works, we may still take our will and life back. We may even get angry because God permits it. At times during our recovery, the decision to ask

for God's help is our greatest source of strength and courage. We cannot make this decision often enough. We surrender quietly, and let the God of our understanding take care of us.

At first, our heads reeled with the questions: "What will happen when I turn my life over? Will I become 'perfect'?" We may have been more realistic than this. Some of us had to turn to an experienced NA member and ask, "What was it like for you?" The answer will vary from member to member. Most of us feel open-mindedness, willingness, and surrender are the keys to this step.

We have surrendered our will and our lives to the care of a Power greater than ourselves. If we are thorough and sincere, we will notice a change for the better. Our fears are lessened, and faith begins to grow as we learn the true meaning of surrender. We are no longer fighting fear, anger, guilt, self-pity, or depression. We realize that the Power that brought us to this program is still with us and will continue to guide us if we allow It. We are slowly beginning to lose the paralyzing fear of hopelessness. The proof of this step is shown in the way we live.

We have come to enjoy living clean and want more of the good things that the NA Fellowship holds for us. We know now that we cannot pause in our spiritual program; we want all that we can get.

We are now ready for our first honest self-appraisal, and we begin with Step Four.

## **Step Four**

*"We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."*

The purpose of a searching and fearless moral inventory is to sort through the confusion and the contradiction of our lives, so that we can find out who we really are. We are starting a new way of life and need to be rid of the burdens and traps that controlled us and prevented our growth.

As we approach this step, most of us are afraid that there is a monster inside of us that, if released, will destroy us. This fear can cause us to put off our inventory or may even prevent us from taking this crucial step at all. We have found that fear is a lack of faith, and we have found a loving, personal God to whom we can turn. We no longer need to be afraid.

We have been experts at self-deception and rationalization. By writing our inventory, we can overcome these obstacles. A written inventory will unlock parts of our subconscious that remain hidden when we simply think about or talk about who we are. Once it is all down on paper, it is much easier to see, and much harder to deny our true nature. Honest self-assessment is one of the keys to our new way of life.

Let's face it; when we were using, we were not honest with ourselves. We are becoming honest with ourselves when we admit that addiction has defeated us and that we need help. It took a long time to admit that we were beaten. We found that we do not recover physically, mentally, or spiritually overnight. Step Four will help us toward our recovery. Most of us find that we were neither as terrible, nor as wonderful, as we supposed. We are surprised to find that we have good points in our inventory. Anyone who has some time in the program and has worked this step will tell you that the Fourth Step was a turning point in their life.

Some of us make the mistake of approaching the Fourth Step as if it were a confession of how horrible we are—what a bad person we have been. In this new way of life, a binge of emotional sorrow can be dangerous. This is not the purpose of the Fourth Step. We are trying to free ourselves of living in old, useless patterns. We take the Fourth Step to grow and to gain strength and insight. We may approach the Fourth Step in a number of ways.

To have the faith and courage to write a fearless inventory, Steps One, Two, and Three are the necessary preparation. It is advisable that before we start, we go over the first three steps with a sponsor. We get comfortable with our understanding of these steps. We allow ourselves the privilege of feeling good about what we are doing. We have been thrashing about for a long time and have gotten nowhere. Now we start the Fourth Step and let go of fear. We simply put it on paper, to the best of our present ability.

We must be done with the past, not cling to it. We want to look our past in the face, see it for what it really was, and release it so we can live today. The past, for most of us, has been a ghost in the closet. We have been afraid to open that closet for fear of what that ghost may do to us. We do not have to look at the past alone. Our wills and our lives are now in the hands of our Higher Power.

Writing a thorough and honest inventory seemed impossible. It was, as long as we were operating under our own power. We take a few quiet moments before writing and ask for the strength to be fearless and thorough.

In Step Four, we begin to get in touch with ourselves. We write about our liabilities such as guilt, shame, remorse, self-pity, resentment, anger, depression, frustration, confusion, loneliness, anxiety, betrayal, hopelessness, failure, fear, and denial.

We write about the things that bother us here and now. We have a tendency to think negatively, so putting it on paper gives us a chance to look more positively at what is happening.

Assets must also be considered, if we are to get an accurate and complete picture of ourselves. This is very difficult for most of us, because it is hard to accept that we have good qualities. However, we all have assets, many of them newly found in the program, such as being clean, open-mindedness, God-awareness, honesty with others, acceptance, positive action, sharing, willingness, courage, faith, caring, gratitude, kindness, and generosity. Also, our inventories usually include material on relationships.

We review our past performance and our present behavior to see what we want to keep and what we want to discard. No one is forcing us to give up our misery. This step has the reputation of being difficult; in reality, it is quite simple.

We write our inventory without considering the Fifth Step. We work Step Four as if there were no Step Five. We can write alone or near other people; whatever is more comfortable to the writer is fine. We can write as long or as short as needed. Someone with experience can help. The important thing is to write a moral inventory. If the word moral bothers us, we may call it a positive/negative inventory.

The way to write an inventory is to write it! Thinking about an inventory, talking about it, theorizing about the inventory will not get it written. We sit down with a notebook, ask for guidance, pick up our pen and start writing. Anything we think about is inventory material. When we realize how little we have to lose, and how much we have to gain, we begin this step.

A basic rule of thumb is that we can write too little, yet we can never write too much. The inventory will fit the individual. Perhaps this seems difficult or painful. It may appear impossible. We may fear that being in touch with our feelings will trigger an overwhelming chain reaction of pain and panic. We may feel like avoiding an inventory because of a fear of failure. When we ignore our feelings, the tension becomes too much for us. The fear of impending doom is so great that it overrides our fear of failure.

An inventory becomes a relief, because the pain of doing it is less than the pain of not doing it. We learn that pain can be a motivating factor in recovery. Thus, facing it becomes unavoidable.

Every topic of step meetings seems to be on the Fourth Step or doing a daily inventory. Through the inventory process, we are able to deal with all the things that can build up. The more we live our program, the more God seems to put us in positions where issues surface. When issues surface, we write about them. We begin enjoying our recovery, because we have a way to resolve shame, guilt, or resentment.

The stress once trapped inside of us is released. Writing will lift the lid off of our pressure cooker. We decide whether we want to serve it up, put the lid back on it, or throw it out. We no longer have to stew in it.

We sit down with paper and pen and ask for our God's help in revealing the defects that are causing pain and suffering. We pray for the courage to be fearless and thorough and that this inventory may help us to put our lives in order. When we pray and take action, it always goes better for us.

We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we would not be human. The important thing is that we do our best. We use the tools available to us, and we develop the ability to survive our emotions. We do not want to lose any of what we have gained; we want to continue in the program. It is our experience that no matter how searching and thorough, no inventory is of any lasting effect unless it is promptly followed by an equally thorough Fifth Step.

## Step Five

*"We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."*

The Fifth Step is the key to freedom. It allows us to live clean in the present. Sharing the exact nature of our wrongs sets us free to live. After taking a thorough Fourth Step, we deal with the contents of our inventory. We are told that if we keep these defects inside us, they will lead us back to using. Holding on to our past would eventually sicken us and keep us from taking part in our new way of life. If we are not honest when we take a Fifth Step, we will have the same negative results that dishonesty brought us in the past.

Step Five suggests that we admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. We looked at our wrongs, examined our behavior patterns, and started to see the deeper aspects of our disease. Now we sit with another person and share our inventory out loud.

Our Higher Power will be with us during our Fifth Step. We will receive help and be free to face ourselves and another human being. It seemed unnecessary to admit the exact nature of our wrongs to our Higher Power. "God already knows that stuff," we rationalized. Although He already knows, the admission must come from our own lips to be truly effective. Step Five is not simply a reading of Step Four.

For years, we avoided seeing ourselves as we really were. We were ashamed of ourselves and felt isolated from the rest of the world. Now that we have the shameful part of our past trapped, we can sweep it out of our lives if we face and admit it. It would be tragic to write it all down and then shove it in a drawer. These defects grow in the dark, and die in the light of exposure.

Before coming to Narcotics Anonymous, we felt that no one could understand the things that we had done. We feared that if we ever revealed ourselves as we were, we would surely be rejected. Most addicts are uncomfortable about this. We recognize that we have been unrealistic in feeling this way. Our fellow members do understand us.

We must carefully choose the person who is to hear our Fifth Step. We must make sure that they know what we are doing and why we are doing it. Although there is no hard rule about

the person of our choice, it is important that we trust the person. Only complete confidence in the person's integrity and discretion can make us willing to be thorough in this step. Some of us take our Fifth Step with a total stranger, although some of us feel more comfortable choosing a member of Narcotics Anonymous. We know that another addict would be less likely to judge us with malice or misunderstanding.

Once we make a choice and are actually alone with that person, we proceed with their encouragement. We want to be definite, honest, and thorough, realizing that this is a life and death matter.

Some of us tried to hide part of our past in an attempt to find an easier way of dealing with our inner feelings. We may think that we have done enough by writing about our past. We cannot afford this mistake. This step will expose our motives and our actions. We cannot expect these things to reveal themselves. Our embarrassment is eventually overcome, and we can avoid future guilt.

We do not procrastinate. We must be exact. We want to tell the simple truth, cut and dried, as quickly as possible. There is always a danger that we will exaggerate our wrongs. It is equally dangerous to minimize or rationalize our part in past situations. After all, we still want to sound good.

Addicts tend to live secret lives. For many years, we covered low self-esteem by hiding behind phony images that we hoped would fool people. Unfortunately, we fooled ourselves more than anyone. Although we often appeared attractive and confident on the outside, we were really hiding a shaky, insecure person on the inside. The masks have to go. We share our inventory as it is written, skipping nothing. We continue to approach this step with honesty and thoroughness until we finish. It is a great relief to get rid of all our secrets and to share the burden of our past.

Usually, as we share this step, the listener will share some of his or her story too. We find that we are not unique. We see, by the acceptance of our confidant, that we can be accepted just the way we are.

We may never be able to remember all of our past mistakes. We do, however, give it our best and most complete effort. We begin to experience real personal feelings of a spiritual nature. Where once we had spiritual theories, we now begin to awaken to spiritual reality. This initial examination of ourselves usually reveals some behavior patterns that we don't particularly like. However, facing these patterns and bringing them out in the open makes it possible for us to deal with them constructively. We cannot make these changes alone. We will need the help of God, as we understand Him, and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

## **Step Six**

*"We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."*

Why ask for something before we are ready for it? This would be asking for trouble. So many times addicts have sought the rewards of hard work without the labor. Willingness is what we strive for in Step Six. How sincerely we work this step will be proportionate to our desire for change.

Do we really want to be rid of our resentments, our anger, our fear? Many of us cling to our fears, doubts, self-loathing, or hatred because there is a certain distorted security in familiar pain. It seems safer to embrace what we know than to let go of it for the unknown.

Letting go of character defects should be done decisively. We suffer because their demands weaken us. Where we were proud, we now find that we cannot get away with arrogance. If we are not humble, we are humiliated. If we are greedy, we find that we are never satisfied. Before taking Steps Four and Five, we could indulge in fear, anger, dishonesty, or self-pity. Now indulgence in these character defects clouds our ability to think logically. Selfishness becomes an intolerable, destructive chain that ties us to our bad habits. Our defects drain us of all our time and energy.

We examine the Fourth Step inventory and get a good look at what these defects are doing to our lives. We begin to long for freedom from these defects. We pray or otherwise become willing, ready, and able to let God remove these destructive traits. We need a personality change, if we are to stay clean. We want to change.

We should approach old defects with an open mind. We are aware of them and yet we still make the same mistakes and are unable to break the bad habits. We look to the fellowship for the kind of life that we want for ourselves. We ask our friends, "Did you let go?" Almost without exception the answer is, "Yes, to the best of my ability." When we see how our defects exist in our lives and accept them, we can let go of them and get on with our new life. We learn that we are growing when we make new mistakes instead of repeating old ones.

When we are working Step Six, it is important to remember that we are human and should not place unrealistic expectations on ourselves. This is a step of willingness. Willingness is the spiritual principle of Step Six. Step Six helps us move in a spiritual direction. Being human we will wander off course.

Rebellion is a character defect that spoils us here. We need not lose faith when we become rebellious. Rebellion can produce indifference or intolerance which can be overcome by persistent effort. We keep asking for willingness. We may be doubtful that God will see fit to relieve us or that something will go wrong. We ask another member who says, "You're right where you're supposed to be." We renew our readiness to have our defects removed. We surrender to the simple suggestions that the program offers us. Even though we are not entirely ready, we are headed in the right direction.

Eventually faith, humility, and acceptance replace pride and rebellion. We come to know ourselves. We find ourselves growing into mature consciousness. We begin to feel better, as willingness grows into hope. Perhaps for the first time, we see a vision of our new life. With this in sight, we put our willingness into action by moving on to Step Seven.

## **Step Seven**

*"We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."*

Character defects or shortcomings are those things that cause pain and misery all of our lives. If they contributed to our health and happiness, we would not have come to such a state of desperation. We had to become ready to have God, as we understood Him, remove these defects.

Having decided that we want God to relieve us of the useless or destructive aspects of our personalities, we have arrived at the Seventh Step. We couldn't handle the ordeal of life all by ourselves. It wasn't until we made a real mess of our lives that we realized we couldn't do it alone. By admitting this, we achieved a glimpse of humility. This is the main ingredient of Step Seven. Humility is a result of getting honest with ourselves. We have practiced being honest since Step One. We accepted our addiction and powerlessness. We found a strength beyond ourselves and learned to rely on it. We examined our lives and discovered who we really are.

To be truly humble is to accept and honestly try to be ourselves. None of us is perfectly good or perfectly bad. We are people who have assets and liabilities. Most importantly, we are human.

Humility is as much a part of staying clean as food and water are to staying alive. As our addiction progressed, we devoted our energy toward satisfying our material desires. All other needs were beyond our reach. We always wanted gratification of our basic desires.

The Seventh Step is an action step, and it is time to ask God for help and relief. We have to understand that our way of thinking is not the only way; other people can give us direction. When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction may be defensive. We must realize that we are not perfect. There will always be room for growth. If we truly want to be free, we will take a good look at input from fellow addicts. If the shortcomings we discover are real, and we have a chance to be rid of them, we will surely experience a sense of well-being.

Some will want to get on their knees for this step. Some will be very quiet, and others will put forth a great emotional effort to show intense willingness. The word humble applies because we approach this Power greater than ourselves to ask for the freedom to live without the limitations of our past ways. Many of us are willing to work this step without reservations, on pure blind faith, because we are sick of what we have been doing and how we are feeling. Whatever works, we go all the way.

This is our road to spiritual growth. We change every day. We gradually and carefully pull ourselves out of the isolation and loneliness of addiction and into the mainstream of life. This growth is not the result of wishing, but of action and prayer. The main objective of Step Seven is to get out of ourselves and strive to achieve the will of our Higher Power.

If we are careless and fail to grasp the spiritual meaning of this step, we may have difficulties and stir up old troubles. One danger is in being too hard on ourselves.

Sharing with other recovering addicts will help us to avoid becoming morbidly serious about ourselves. Accepting the defects of others can help us become humble and pave the way for our own defects to be relieved. God often works through those who care enough about recovery to help make us aware of our shortcomings.

We have noticed that humility plays a big part in this program and our new way of life. We take our inventory; we become ready to let God remove our defects of character; we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings. This is our road to spiritual growth, and we will want to continue. We are ready for Step Eight.

## **Step Eight**

*"We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."*

Step Eight is the test of our newfound humility. Our purpose is to achieve freedom from the guilt that we have carried. We want to look the world in the eye with neither aggressiveness nor fear.

Are we willing to make a list of all persons we had harmed to clear away the fear and guilt that our past holds for us? Our experience tells us that we must become willing before this step will have any effect.

The Eighth Step is not easy; it demands a new kind of honesty about our relations with other people. The Eighth Step starts the process of forgiveness: We forgive others; possibly we are forgiven; and finally we forgive ourselves and learn how to live in the world. By the time we reach this step, we have become ready to understand rather than to be understood. We can live

and let live easier when we know the areas in which we owe amends. It seems hard now, but once we have done it, we will wonder why we did not do it long ago.

We need some real honesty before we can make an accurate list. In preparing to make the Eighth Step list, it is helpful to define harm. One definition of harm is physical or mental damage. Another definition of harm is inflicting pain, suffering, or loss. The damage may be caused by something that is said, done, or left undone. Harm can result from words or actions, either intentional or unintentional. The degree of harm can range from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to inflicting bodily injury or even death.

The Eighth Step presents us with a problem. Many of us have difficulty admitting that we caused harm for others, because we thought we were victims of our addiction. Avoiding this rationalization is crucial to the Eighth Step. We must separate what was done to us from what we did to others. We cut away our justifications and our ideas of being a victim. We often feel that we only harmed ourselves, yet we usually list ourselves last, if at all. This step is doing the legwork to repair the wreckage of our lives.

It will not make us better people to judge the faults of another. It will make us feel better to cleanup our lives by relieving ourselves of guilt. By writing our list, we can no longer deny that we caused harm. We admit that we hurt others, directly or indirectly, through some action, lie, broken promise, or neglect.

We make our list, or take it from our Fourth Step, and add additional people as we think of them. We face this list honestly, and openly examine our faults so we can become willing to make amends.

In some cases, we may not know the persons that we have wronged. While using, anyone that we contacted was at risk. Many members mention their parents, spouses, children, friends, lovers, other addicts, casual acquaintances, co-workers, employers, teachers, landlords, and total strangers. We may also place ourselves on the list, because while practicing our addiction, we have slowly been killing ourselves. We may find it beneficial to make a separate list of people to whom we owe financial amends.

As with each step, we must be thorough. Most of us fall short of our goals more often than we exceed them. At the same time, we cannot put off completion of this step just because we are not sure that our list is complete. We are never finished.

The final difficulty in working the Eighth Step is separating it from the Ninth Step. Projections about actually making amends can be a major obstacle both in making the list and in becoming willing. We do this step as if there were no Ninth Step. We do not even think about making the amends, but just concentrate on exactly what the Eighth Step says: make a list and become willing. The main thing this step does for us is to help build awareness that, little by little, we are gaining new attitudes about ourselves and how we deal with other people.

Listening carefully to other members share their experience regarding this step can relieve any confusion that we may have about writing our list. Also, our sponsors may share with us how Step Eight worked for them. Asking a question during a meeting can give us the benefit of group conscience.

The Eighth Step offers a big change from a life dominated by guilt and remorse. Our futures are changed, because we don't have to avoid those who we have harmed. As a result of this step, we receive a new freedom that can end isolation. As we realize our need to be forgiven, we tend to be more forgiving. At least, we know that we are no longer intentionally making life miserable for people.

The Eighth Step is an action step. Like all the steps, it offers immediate benefits. We are now free to begin our amends in Step Nine.

## Step Nine

*"We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."*

This step should not be avoided. If we do, we are reserving a place in our program for relapse. Pride, fear and procrastination often seem an impossible barrier; they stand in the way of progress and growth. The important thing is to take action and to be ready to accept the reactions of those persons we have harmed. We make amends to the best of our ability.

Timing is an essential part of this step. We should make amends when the opportunity presents itself, except when to do so will cause more harm. Sometimes we cannot actually make the amends; it is neither possible nor practical. In some cases, amends may be beyond our means. We find that willingness can serve in the place of action where we are unable to contact the person that we have harmed. However, we should never fail to contact anyone because of embarrassment, fear, or procrastination.

We want to be free of our guilt, but we don't wish to do so at the expense of anyone else. We might run the risk of involving a third person or some companion from our using days who does not wish to be exposed. We do not have the right or the need to endanger another person. It is often necessary to take guidance from others in these matters.

We recommend turning our legal problems over to lawyers and our financial or medical problems to professionals. Part of learning how to live successfully is learning when we need help.

In some old relationships, an unresolved conflict may still exist. We do our part to resolve old conflicts by making our amends. We want to step away from further antagonisms and ongoing resentments. In many instances, we can only go to the person and humbly ask for understanding of past wrongs. Sometimes this will be a joyous occasion when old friends or relatives prove willing to let go of their bitterness. Contacting someone who is still hurting from the burn of our misdeeds can be dangerous. Indirect amends may be necessary where direct ones would be unsafe or endanger other people. We make our amends to the best of our ability. We try to remember that when we make amends, we are doing it for ourselves. Instead of feeling guilty and remorseful, we feel relieved about our past.

We accept that it was our actions that caused our negative attitude. Step Nine helps us with our guilt and helps others with their anger. Sometimes, the only amend we can make is to stay clean. We owe it to ourselves and to our loved ones. We are no longer making a mess in society as a result of our using. Sometimes the only way we can make amends is to contribute to society. Now, we are helping ourselves and other addicts to recover. This is a tremendous amend to the whole community.

In the process of our recovery, we are restored to sanity and part of sanity is effectively relating to others. We less often view people as a threat to our security. Real security will replace the physical ache and mental confusion that we have experienced in the past. We approach those we have harmed with humility and patience. Many of our sincere well-wishers may be reluctant to accept our recovery as real. We must remember the pain that they have known. In time, many miracles will occur. Many of us who were separated from our families succeed in establishing relationships with them. Eventually it becomes easier for them to accept the change in us. Clean time speaks for itself. Patience is an important part of our recovery. The

unconditional love we experience will rejuvenate our will to live, and each positive move on our part will be matched by an unexpected opportunity. A lot of courage and faith goes into making an amend, and a lot of spiritual growth results.

We are achieving freedom from the wreckage of our past. We will want to keep our house in order by practicing a continuous personal inventory in Step Ten.

## Step Ten

*"We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."*

Step Ten frees us from the wreckage of our present. If we do not stay aware of our defects, they can drive us into a corner that we can't get out of clean.

One of the first things we learn in Narcotics Anonymous is that if we use, we lose. By the same token, we won't experience as much pain if we can avoid the things that cause us pain. Continuing to take a personal inventory means that we form a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, attitudes, and relationships on a regular basis.

We are creatures of habit and are vulnerable to our old ways of thinking and reacting. At times it seems easier to continue in the old rut of self-destruction than to attempt a new and seemingly dangerous route. We don't have to be trapped by our old patterns. Today, we have a choice.

The Tenth Step can help us correct our living problems and prevent their recurrence. We examine our actions during the day. Some of us write about our feelings, explaining how we felt and what part we might have played in any problems which occurred. Did we cause someone harm? Do we need to admit that we were wrong? If we find difficulties, we make an effort to take care of them. When these things are left undone, they have away of festering.

This step can be a defense against the old insanity. We can ask ourselves if we are being drawn into old patterns of anger, resentment, or fear. Do we feel trapped? Are we setting ourselves up for trouble? Are we too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired? Are we taking ourselves too seriously? Are we judging our insides by the outside appearances of others? Do we suffer from some physical problem? The answers to these questions can help us deal with the difficulties of the moment. We no longer have to live with the feeling that we have a "hole in the gut." A lot of our chief concerns and major difficulties come from our inexperience with living without drugs. Often when we ask an oldtimer what to do, we are amazed at the simplicity of the answer.

The Tenth Step can be a pressure relief valve. We work this step while the day's ups and downs are still fresh in our minds. We list what we have done and try not to rationalize our actions. This may be done in writing at the end of the day. The first thing we do is stop! Then we take the time to allow ourselves the privilege of thinking. We examine our actions, reactions, and motives. We often find that we've been doing better than we've been feeling. This allows us to examine our actions and admit fault, before things get any worse. We need to avoid rationalizing. We promptly admit our faults, not explain them.

We work this step continuously. This is a preventive action. The more we work this step the less we will need the corrective part of this step. This step is a great tool for avoiding grief before we bring it on ourselves. We monitor our feelings, emotions, fantasies, and actions. By constantly looking at ourselves, we are able to avoid repeating the actions that make us feel bad.

We need this step even when we're feeling good and when things are going well. Good feelings are new to us, and we need to nurture them. In times of trouble, we can try the things

that worked during the good times. We have the right to feel good. We have a choice. The good times can also be a trap; the danger is that we may forget that our first priority is to stay clean. For us, recovery is more than just pleasure.

We need to remember that everyone makes mistakes. We will never be perfect. However, we can accept ourselves by using Step Ten. By continuing a personal inventory, we are set free, in the here and now, from ourselves and the past. We no longer justify our existence. This step allows us to be ourselves.

## Step Eleven

*"We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."*

The first ten steps have set the stage for us to improve our conscious contact with the God of our understanding. They give us the foundation to achieve our long-sought, positive goals. Having entered this phase of our spiritual program through practicing the previous ten steps, most of us welcome the exercise of prayer and meditation. Our spiritual condition is the basis for a successful recovery that offers unlimited growth.

Many of us really begin to appreciate our recovery when we get to the Eleventh Step. In the Eleventh Step, our lives take on a deeper meaning. By surrendering control, we gain a far greater power.

The nature of our belief will determine the manner of our prayers and meditations. We need only make sure that we have a system of belief that works for us. Results count in recovery. As has been noted elsewhere, our prayers seemed to work as soon as we entered the program of Narcotics Anonymous and we surrendered to our disease. The conscious contact described in this step is the direct result of living the steps. We use this step to improve and maintain our spiritual condition.

When we first came into the program, we received help from a Power greater than ourselves. This was set in motion by our surrender to the program. The purpose of the Eleventh Step is to increase our awareness of that Power and to improve our ability to use it as a source of strength in our new lives.

The more we improve our conscious contact with our God through prayer and meditation, the easier it is to say, "Your will, not mine, be done." We can ask for God's help when we need it, and our lives get better. The experiences that some people talk about regarding meditation and individual religious beliefs don't always apply to us. Ours is a spiritual, not a religious program. By the time we get to the Eleventh Step, character defects that caused problems in the past have been addressed by working the preceding ten steps. The image of the kind of person that we would like to be is a fleeting glimpse of God's will for us. Often, our outlook is so limited that we can only see our immediate wants and needs.

It is easy to slip back into our old ways. To ensure our continued growth and recovery, we have to learn to maintain our lives on a spiritually sound basis. God will not force His goodness on us, but we will receive it if we ask. We usually feel something is different in the moment, but don't see the change in our lives till later. When we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, we begin to find a peace that we never imagined possible. Enforced morality lacks the power that comes to us when we choose to live a spiritual life. Most of us pray when we are hurting. We learn that if we pray regularly, we won't be hurting as often or as intensely.

Outside of Narcotics Anonymous, there are any number of different groups practicing meditation. Nearly all of these groups are connected with a particular religion or philosophy.

An endorsement of any one of these methods would be a violation of our traditions and a restriction on the individual's right to have a God of his understanding. Meditation allows us to develop spiritually in our own way. Some of the things that didn't work for us in the past, might work today. We take a fresh look at each day with an open mind. We know that if we pray for God's will, we will receive what is best for us, regardless of what we think. This knowledge is based on our belief and experience as recovering addicts.

Prayer is communicating our concerns to a Power greater than ourselves. Sometimes when we pray, a remarkable thing happens; we find the means, ways, and energies to perform tasks far beyond our capacities. We grasp the limitless strength provided for us through our daily prayer and surrender, as long as we keep faith and renew it.

For some, prayer is asking for God's help; meditation is listening for God's answer. We learn to be careful of praying for specific things. We pray that God will show us His will, and that He will help us carry that out. In some cases, he makes His will so obvious to us that we have little difficulty seeing it. In others, our egos are so self-centered that we won't accept God's will for us without another struggle and surrender. If we pray for God to remove any distracting influences, the quality of our prayers usually improves and we feel the difference. Prayer takes practice, and we should remind ourselves that skilled people were not born with their skills. It took lots of effort on their part to develop them. Through prayer, we seek conscious contact with our God. In meditation, we achieve this contact, and the Eleventh Step helps us to maintain it.

We may have been exposed to many religions and meditative disciplines before coming to Narcotics Anonymous. Some of us were devastated and completely confused by these practices. We were sure that it was God's will for us to use drugs to reach higher consciousness. Many of us found ourselves in very strange states as a result of these practices. We never suspected the damaging effects of our addiction as the root of our difficulty and pursued to the end whatever path offered hope.

In quiet moments of meditation, God's will can become evident to us. Quieting the mind through meditation brings an inner peace that brings us into contact with the God within us. A basic premise of meditation is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain conscious contact unless our mind is still. The usual, never-ending succession of thoughts has to cease for progress to be made. So our preliminary practice is aimed at stilling the mind, and letting the thoughts that arise die a natural death. We leave our thoughts behind as the meditation part of the Eleventh Step becomes a reality for us.

Emotional balance is one of the first results of meditation, and our experience bears this out. Some of us came into the program broken, and hung around for awhile, only to find God or salvation in one kind of religious cult or another. It is easy to float back out the door on a cloud of religious zeal and forget that we are addicts with an incurable disease.

It is said that for meditation to be of value, the results must show in our daily lives. This fact is implicit in the Eleventh Step: "... His will for us and the power to carry it out." For those of us who do not pray, meditation is our only way of working this step.

We find ourselves praying, because it brings us peace and restores our confidence and courage. It helps us to live a life that is free of fear and distrust. When we remove our selfish motives and pray for guidance, we find feelings of peace and serenity. We begin to experience an awareness and an empathy with other people that was not possible before working this step.

As we seek our personal contact with God, we begin to open up as a flower in the sun. We begin to see that God's love has been present all the time, just waiting for us to accept it. We do

the footwork and accept what's being given to us freely on a daily basis. We find relying on God becomes more comfortable for us.

When we first come to the program, we usually ask for a lot of things that seem to be important wants and needs. As we grow spiritually and find a Power greater than ourselves, we begin to realize that as long as our spiritual needs are met, our living problems are reduced to a point of comfort. When we forget where our real strength lies, we quickly become subject to the same patterns of thinking and action that got us to the program in the first place. We eventually redefine our beliefs and understanding to the point where we see that our greatest need is for knowledge of God's will for us and the strength to carry that out. We are able to set aside some of our personal preference, because we learn that God's will for us consists of the very things we most value. God's will for us becomes our own true will for ourselves. This happens in an intuitive manner that cannot be adequately explained in words.

We become willing to let other people be who they are without having to pass judgment on them. The urgency to take care of things isn't there anymore. We couldn't comprehend acceptance in the beginning; today, we can.

We know that whatever the day brings, God has given us everything we need for our spiritual well-being. It is all right for us to admit powerlessness, because God is powerful enough to help us stay clean and to enjoy spiritual progress. God is helping us to get our house in order.

We begin to see more clearly what is real. Through constant contact with our Higher Power, the answers that we seek come to us. We gain the ability to do what we once could not. We respect the beliefs of others. We encourage you to seek strength and guidance according to your belief.

We are thankful for this step, because we begin to get what is best for us. Sometimes, we prayed for our wants and got trapped once we got them. We could pray and get something, then have to pray for its removal, because we couldn't handle it.

Hopefully, having learned the power of prayer and the responsibility prayer brings with it, we can use the Eleventh Step as a guideline for our daily program.

We begin to pray only for God's will for us. This way, we are getting only what we are capable of handling. We are able to respond to it and handle it, because God helps us prepare for it. Some of us simply use our words to give thanks for God's grace.

In an attitude of surrender and humility, we approach this step again and again to receive the gift of knowledge and strength from the God of our understanding. The Tenth Step clears away the errors of the present so we may work the Eleventh Step. Without this step, it is unlikely that we could experience a spiritual awakening, practice spiritual principles in our lives, or carry a sufficient message to attract others to recovery. There is a spiritual principle of giving away what we have been given in Narcotics Anonymous in order to keep it. By helping others to stay clean, we enjoy the benefit of the spiritual wealth that we have found. We must give freely and gratefully that which has been freely and gratefully given to us.

## **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."*

We came to Narcotics Anonymous as the result of the wreckage of our past. The last thing we expected was an awakening of the spirit. We just wanted to stop hurting.

The steps lead to an awakening of a spiritual nature. This awakening is evidenced by changes in our lives. These changes make us better able to live by spiritual principles and to carry our message of recovery and hope to the addict who still suffers. The message, however, is meaningless unless we LIVE it. As we live it, our lives and actions give it more meaning than our words and literature ever could.

The idea of a spiritual awakening takes many different forms in the different personalities that we find in the fellowship. However, all spiritual awakenings have some things in common. Common elements include an end to loneliness and a sense of direction in our lives. Many of us believe that a spiritual awakening is meaningless unless accompanied by an increase in peace of mind and a concern for others. In order to maintain peace of mind, we strive to live in the here and now.

Those of us who have worked these steps to the best of our ability received many benefits. We believe that these benefits are a direct result of living this program.

When we first begin to enjoy relief from our addiction, we run the risk of assuming control of our lives again. We forget the agony and pain that we have known. Our disease controlled our lives when we were using. It is ready and waiting to take over again. We quickly forget that all our past efforts at controlling our lives failed.

By this time, most of us realize that the only way that we can keep what was given to us is by sharing this new gift of life with the still-suffering addict. This is our best insurance against relapse to the torturous existence of using. We call it carrying the message, and we do it in a number of ways.

In the Twelfth Step, we practice the spiritual principles of giving the NA message of recovery in order to keep it. Even a member with one day in the NA Fellowship can carry the message that this program works.

When we share with someone new, we may ask to be used as a spiritual instrument of our Higher Power. We don't set ourselves up as gods. We often ask for the help of another recovering addict when sharing with a new person. It is a privilege to respond to a cry for help. We, who have been in the pits of despair, feel fortunate to help others find recovery.

We help new people learn the principles of Narcotics Anonymous. We try to make them feel welcome and help them learn what the program has to offer. We share our experience, strength, and hope. Whenever possible, we accompany newcomers to a meeting.

The selfless service of this work is the very principle of Step Twelve. We received our recovery from the God of our understanding. We now make ourselves available as His tool to share recovery with those who seek it. Most of us learn that we can only carry our message to someone who is asking for help. Sometimes, the only message necessary to make the suffering addict reach out is the power of example. An addict may be suffering but unwilling to ask for help. We can make ourselves available to these people, so when they ask, someone will be there.

Learning to help others is a benefit of the Narcotics Anonymous program. Remarkably, working the Twelve Steps guides us from humiliation and despair to acting as instruments of our Higher Power. We are given the ability to help a fellow addict when no one else can. We see it happening among us every day. This miraculous turnabout is evidence of spiritual awakening. We share from our own personal experience what it has been like for us. The temptation to give advice is great, but when we do so we lose the respect of newcomers. This clouds our message. A simple, honest message of recovery from addiction rings true.

We attend meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the fellowship. We give freely and gratefully of our time, service, and what we have found here. The service we

speak of in Narcotics Anonymous is the primary purpose of our groups. Service work is carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. The more eagerly we wade in and work, the richer our spiritual awakening will be.

The first way that we carry the message speaks for itself. People see us on the street and remember us as devious, frightened loners. They notice the fear leaving our faces. They see us gradually come alive.

Once we find the NA way, boredom and complacency have no place in our new life. By staying clean, we begin to practice spiritual principles such as hope, surrender, acceptance, honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, faith, tolerance, patience, humility, unconditional love, sharing, and caring. As our recovery progresses, spiritual principles touch every area of our lives, because we simply try to live this program in the here and now.

We find joy as we start to learn how to live by the principles of recovery. It is the joy of watching as a person two days clean says to a person with one day clean, "An addict alone is in bad company." It is the joy of watching a person who was struggling to make it suddenly, in the middle of helping another addict to stay clean, become able to find the words needed to carry the message of recovery.

We feel that our lives have become worthwhile. Spiritually refreshed, we are glad to be alive. When we were using, our lives became an exercise in survival. Now we are doing much more living than surviving. Realizing that the bottom line is staying clean, we can enjoy life. We like being clean and enjoy carrying the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. Going to meetings really works.

Practicing spiritual principles in our daily lives leads us to a new image of ourselves. Honesty, humility, and open-mindedness help us to treat our associates fairly. Our decisions become tempered with tolerance. We learn to respect ourselves.

The lessons we learn in our recovery are sometimes bitter and painful. By helping others we find the reward of self-respect, as we are able to share these lessons with other members of Narcotics Anonymous. We cannot deny other addicts their pain, but we can carry the message of hope that was given to us by fellow addicts in recovery. We share the principles of recovery, as they have worked in our lives. God helps us as we help each other. Life takes on a new meaning, a new joy, and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile. We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. One aspect of our spiritual awakening comes through the new understanding of our Higher Power that we develop by sharing another addict's recovery.

Yes, we are a vision of hope. We are examples of the program working. The joy that we have in living clean is an attraction to the addict who still suffers.

We do recover to live clean and happy lives. Welcome to NA. The steps do not end here. The steps are a new beginning!

# Self-Acceptance

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## The problem

The lack of self-acceptance is a problem for many recovering addicts. This subtle defect is difficult to identify and often goes unrecognized. Many of us believed that using drugs was our only problem, denying the fact that our lives had become unmanageable. Even after we stop using, this denial can continue to plague us. Many of the problems we experience in ongoing recovery stem from an inability to accept ourselves on a deep level. We may not even realize that this discomfort is the source of our problem, because it is often manifested in other ways. We may find ourselves becoming irritable or judgmental, discontent, depressed, or confused. We may find ourselves trying to change environmental factors in an attempt to satisfy the inner gnawing we feel. In situations such as these our experience has shown that it is best to look inward for the source of our discontent. Very often, we discover that we are harsh critics of ourselves, wallowing in self-loathing and self-rejection.

Before coming to NA, most of us spent our entire lives in self-rejection. We hated ourselves and tried every way we could to become someone different. We wanted to be anyone but who we were. Unable to accept ourselves, we tried to gain the acceptance of others. We wanted other people to give us the love and acceptance we could not give ourselves, but our love and friendship were always conditional. We would do anything for anyone just to gain their acceptance and approval, and then would resent those who wouldn't respond the way we wanted them to.

Because we could not accept ourselves, we expected to be rejected by others. We would not allow anyone to get close to us for fear that if they really knew us, they would also hate us. To protect ourselves from vulnerability, we would reject others before they had a chance to reject us.

## The Twelve Steps are the solution

Today, the first step toward self-acceptance is acceptance of our addiction. We must accept our disease and all the troubles that it brings us before we can accept ourselves as human beings.

The next thing we need to help us toward self-acceptance is belief in a Power greater than ourselves who can restore us to sanity. We do not need to believe in any particular person's concept of that Higher Power, but we do need to believe in a concept that works for us. A spiritual understanding of self-acceptance is knowing that it is all right to find ourselves in pain, to have made mistakes, and to know that we are not perfect.

The most effective means of achieving self-acceptance is through applying the Twelve Steps of recovery. Now that we have come to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we can depend upon His strength to give us the courage to honestly examine our defects and our assets. Although it is sometimes painful and may not seem to lead to self-acceptance, it is necessary to get in touch with our feelings. We wish to build a solid foundation of recovery, and therefore need to examine our actions and motivations and begin changing those things that are unacceptable.

Our defects are part of us and will only be removed when we practice living the NA program. Our assets are gifts from our Higher Power, and as we learn to utilize them fully, our self-acceptance grows and our lives improve.

Sometimes we slip into the melodrama of wishing we could be what we think we should be. We may feel overpowered by our self-pity and pride, but by renewing our faith in a Higher Power we are given the hope, courage, and strength to grow.

Self-acceptance permits balance in our recovery. We no longer have to look for the approval of others because we are satisfied with being ourselves. We are free to gratefully emphasize our assets, to humbly move away from our defects, and to become the best recovering addicts we can be. Accepting ourselves as we are means that we are all right, that we are not perfect, but we can improve.

We remember that we have the disease of addiction, and that it takes a long time to achieve self-acceptance on a deep level. No matter how bad our lives have become, we are always accepted in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Accepting ourselves as we are resolves the problem of expecting human perfection. When we accept ourselves, we can accept others into our lives, unconditionally, probably for the first time. Our friendships become deep and we experience the warmth and caring which results from addicts sharing recovery and a new life.

**God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.**

## Sponsorship, Revised

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One of the first suggestions many of us hear when we begin attending NA meetings is to get a sponsor. As newcomers, we may not understand what this means. What is a sponsor? How do we get and use one? Where do we find one? This pamphlet is intended to serve as a brief introduction to sponsorship.

Our Basic Text tells us that “the heart of NA beats when two addicts share their recovery,” and sponsorship is simply one addict helping another. The two-way street of sponsorship is a loving, spiritual, and compassionate relationship that helps both the sponsor and sponsee.

### WHO is a sponsor?

Sponsorship is a personal and private relationship that can mean different things to different people. For the purposes of this pamphlet, an NA sponsor is a member of Narcotics Anonymous, living our program of recovery, who is willing to build a special, supportive, one-on-one relationship with us. Most members think of a sponsor, first and foremost, as someone who can help us work the Twelve Steps of NA, and sometimes the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts. A sponsor is not necessarily a friend, but may be someone in whom we confide. We can share things with our sponsor that we might not be comfortable sharing in a meeting.

My relationship with my sponsor has been the key to gaining trust in other people and working the steps. I shared the total mess that was my life with my sponsor, and he shared that he had been in the same place. He began to teach me how to live without the use of drugs.

### WHAT does a sponsor do?

Sponsors share their experience, strength, and hope with their sponsees. Some describe their sponsor as loving and compassionate, someone they can count on to listen and support them no matter what. Others value the objectivity and detachment a sponsor can offer, relying on their direct and honest input even when it may be difficult to accept. Still others turn to a sponsor mainly for guidance through the Twelve Steps.

Someone once asked, “Why do I need a sponsor?” The sponsor replied, “Well it’s pretty hard to spot self deception...by yourself.”

Sponsorship works for the same reason that NA works—because recovering members share common bonds of addiction and recovery and, in many cases, can empathize with each other. A sponsor’s role is not that of a legal advisor, a banker, a parent, a marriage counselor, or a social worker. Nor is a sponsor a therapist offering some sort of professional advice. A sponsor is simply another addict in recovery who is willing to share his or her journey through the Twelve Steps.

As we share our concerns and questions with our sponsors, sometimes they will share their own experiences. At other times they may suggest reading or writing assignments, or try to answer our questions about the program. When we are new to NA, a sponsor can help us understand things that may confuse us about the program, from NA language, meeting formats, and the service structure, to the meaning of NA principles and the nature of spiritual awakening.

## WHAT does a sponsee do?

One suggestion is to have regular contact with our sponsor. In addition to phoning our sponsor, we can arrange to meet up at meetings. Some sponsors will tell us how often they expect us to contact them, while others don't set those kinds of requirements. If we cannot find a sponsor who lives close to us, we can look to technology or mail to keep in touch. Regardless of how we communicate with our sponsor, it is important that we be honest and that we listen with an open mind.

I rely on my sponsor to give me general direction and a new perspective. If nothing else, she's an important sounding board. Sometimes all it takes is saying something out loud to someone else for me to see things differently.

We may worry that we are a burden to our sponsors and hesitate to contact them, or we may believe our sponsors will want something in return from us. But the truth is our sponsors benefit as much as we do from the relationship. In our program, we believe that we can only keep what we have by giving it away; by using our sponsors, we are actually helping them to stay clean and recover.

## HOW do we get a sponsor?

To get a sponsor, all we need to do is ask. While this is simple, it may not be easy. Many of us are afraid to ask someone to be our sponsor. In active addiction, we may have learned not to trust anyone, and the idea of asking someone to listen to us and help us may feel alien and frightening. Nonetheless, most of our members describe sponsorship as a crucial part of their recovery. Sometimes we finally gather our courage, only to have someone say no. If that happens, we need to be persistent, have faith, and try not to take his or her decision personally. The reasons people may decline probably have nothing to do with us: they may have busy lives or many sponsees, or they may be going through difficult times. We need to reaffirm our faith and ask someone else.

When I picked my sponsor, I looked at it like an interview. Are we a match? What are your expectations and what are mine? I looked for someone open-minded who I felt comfortable talking to.

The best place to look for a sponsor is at an NA meeting. Other places to seek a sponsor are NA events, such as service meetings and conventions. In seeking a sponsor, most members look for someone they feel they can learn to trust, someone who seems compassionate and who is active in the program. Most members, particularly those who are new to NA, consider it important to find a sponsor with more clean time than they have.

A good rule of thumb is to look for someone with similar experiences who can relate to our struggles and accomplishments. For most, finding a sponsor of the same sex makes this empathy easier and helps us feel safe in the relationship. Some feel gender need not be a deciding factor. We are free to choose our own sponsor. It is, however, strongly suggested that we avoid getting into a sponsorship relationship that may lead to sexual attraction. Such attraction can distract us from the nature of sponsorship and interfere with our ability to share honestly with each other.

When I got clean, I was insecure, lonely, and willing to do anything for some comfort and company. My natural tendency was to satisfy those desires and not have to focus on what was necessary to build a foundation for my recovery. Thank God for the integrity of those members who supported me and didn't take advantage of me in the early days of my recovery.

Sometimes members wonder whether it would be okay to have more than one sponsor. While some addicts do choose this route, most caution against it, explaining that having more than one sponsor might tempt them to be manipulative in order to get the answers or guidance they are looking for.

### **WHEN should we get a sponsor?**

Most members consider it important to get a sponsor as soon as possible, while others explain that it is just as crucial to take a little time to look around and make an informed decision. Going to a lot of meetings helps us to determine who we are comfortable with and who we can learn to trust. While we are looking for a sponsor, if someone offers, we do not have to say yes. One thing to remember is that, if we get a sponsor to help us in our early recovery, we are free to change sponsors later if that person isn't meeting our needs.

I compared the timing of when to get a sponsor to drowning. I needed that life-saver/sponsor immediately!

When we are new to the program, we need to reach out to other addicts for help and support. It is never too early to get and use phone numbers and begin sharing with other recovering addicts. Our program works because of the help we can offer each other. We no longer need to live in isolation, and we begin to feel part of something larger than ourselves. Sponsorship helps us to see that, in coming to NA, we have finally come home.

You may have questions about sponsorship that this IP did not answer for you. While there may not be "right" or "wrong" answers to your questions—the experience of our fellowship varies from community to community and member to member—we do have a book on sponsorship that addresses many issues related to sponsorship in greater depth.

## One Addict's Experience with Acceptance, Faith, and Commitment

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When I came on the NA program, I had identified my problem—I had the desire to stop using, but couldn't see how. Due to the nature of addiction my whole personality was geared toward getting, using, and finding ways and means to get more. All of my personality traits reinforced this obsession with self. Totally self-centered, I tried to manage my life by manipulating people and circumstances to my advantage. I had lost all control. Obsession forced me to use drugs repeatedly, against my will, knowing that it was self-destructive, and against my basic instinct for survival. Insane, and feeling hopelessly helpless, I gave up fighting, and accepted that I was an addict—that my life was totally unmanageable, and that I was powerless over the disease. My willpower could not change my diseased body that craved drugs compulsively. My self-control could not change my diseased mind, obsessed with the idea of using mood changers to escape reality. Nor could my highest ideals change my diseased spirit—cunning, insidious, and totally self-centered. As soon as I was able to accept the reality of my powerlessness, I no longer needed to use drugs. This acceptance of my condition—my powerlessness over addiction and the unmanageability of my life was the key to my recovery.

With the help of the recovering addicts at NA meetings, I abstained—a minute, an hour, a day at a time. I still wanted to get high. Life felt intolerable without drugs. Giving up left me feeling even more hopeless than before, and, to cope, my mind told me to use drugs again. Acceptance of my powerlessness and the unmanageability of my life left me needing a power stronger than my disease to change my self-destructive nature. The people I met at meetings told me they had found a power greater than their addiction in the NA program. These people had been clean for months or years and didn't even want to use any more. They told me that I could lose the desire to use drugs by living the NA program. I had no choice but to believe them. I had tried doctors, psychiatrists, hospitals, mental institutions, job changes, marriages, divorces; all had failed. It seemed hopeless, but in NA I saw hope. I met addicts recovering from their disease. I came to believe I could learn how to live without drugs. In NA, I found the faith I needed to begin to change.

At that point, I had stopped using drugs and reluctantly believed that I could continue to abstain. I still thought and felt like an addict, I just didn't use drugs. My personality and character were the same as they had always been. Everything about me reinforced my self-destructiveness. I needed to change or I would start to use again. I had accepted my condition and believed that I could recover. In order to do so, I had to make a total commitment to the spiritual principles of the NA program.

With the help of my sponsor, I decided to turn my life and my will over to God, as I understood God. For me, this was a turning point. This decision demanded continued acceptance, ever-increasing faith, and a daily commitment to recovery. The decision to turn my life and will over to God required that I find out about myself and actively try to change my ways of coping with reality. This commitment brought honesty into my life. This is how the NA program works for me: I accept my disease, develop a faith that the program can change me, and make a commitment to the spiritual principles of recovery.

Action is now required. If I don't change, I will be miserable and return to using drugs. The actions suggested by the NA program can change my personality and character. I honestly examine myself, writing down what I have done and how I have felt. I reveal myself completely to my God and to another human being, telling all of my most secret fears, angers, and

resentments. By doing these things, the past no longer has control over my life, and I am freed to live up to my ideals today. I begin to behave differently and become ready to be changed by my God into the sort of person He wants me to be.

I have begun to develop a reasonable self-image, based in reality, by asking to be relieved of my shortcomings.

By amending the wrongs I have done to other people, I have learned how to forgive myself and others.

I review my behavior regularly and correct my mistakes as soon as possible. I am continually developing and expanding trust and faith in spiritual principles. I give to others, sharing myself, and our program, and try to live the principles that I learned. These Twelve Steps have allowed me to stop using, have taken away the desire to use, and have given me a new way of life.

## Just for Today

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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.

When we came into the program of Narcotics Anonymous, we made a decision to turn our lives over to the care of a Higher Power. This surrender relieves the burden of the past and fear of the future. The gift of today is now in proper perspective. We accept and enjoy life as it is right now. When we refuse to accept the reality of today, we are denying our faith in our Higher Power. This can only bring more suffering.

We learn that today is a gift with no guarantees. With this in mind, the insignificance of the past and future, and the importance of our actions today, become real for us. This simplifies our lives.

When we focus our thoughts on today, the nightmare of drugs fades away overshadowed by the dawn of a new reality. We find that, when we are troubled, we can trust our feelings to another recovering addict. In sharing our past with other addicts we discover we are not unique, that we share common bonds. Talking to other NA members, whether to share the trials and tribulations of our day with them, or allowing them to share theirs with us, is a way our Higher Power works through us.

We have no need to fear if today we stay clean, close to our Higher Power and our NA friends. God has forgiven us for our past mistakes, and tomorrow is not yet here. Meditation and a personal inventory will help us to gain serenity and guidance throughout this day. We take a few moments out of our daily routine to thank God, as we understand God, for giving us the ability to cope with today.

“Just for today” applies to all areas of our lives, not just abstinence from drugs. Reality has to be dealt with on a daily basis. Many of us feel that God expects no more of us than to do the things that we are able to do today.

Working the program, the Twelve Steps of NA, has given us a new outlook on our lives. Today, we no longer need to make excuses for who we are. Our daily contact with a Higher Power fills the empty places inside that could never be filled before. We find fulfillment in living today. With our Higher Power guiding us, we lose the desire to use. Perfection is no longer a goal today; we can achieve adequacy.

It is important to remember that any addict who can stay clean for one day is a miracle. Going to meetings, working the steps, daily meditation, and talking with people in the program are things we do to stay spiritually healthy. Responsible living is possible.

We can replace loneliness and fear with the love of the fellowship and the security of a new way of life. We never have to be alone again. In the fellowship, we have made more true friends

than we ever believed possible. Self-pity and resentments are replaced by tolerance and faith. We are given the freedom, serenity, and happiness we so desperately sought.

A lot happens in one day, both negative and positive. If we do not take time to appreciate both, perhaps we will miss something that will help us grow. Our principles for living will guide us in recovery when we use them. We find it necessary to continue to do so on a daily basis.

## Staying Clean on the Outside

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Many of us first heard the Narcotics Anonymous message of recovery while in a hospital or institution of some kind. Transition from such places to the outside world is not easy under any circumstances. This is especially true when we are challenged with the changes which recovery brings. For many of us, early recovery was difficult. Facing the prospect of life without drugs can be very frightening. But those of us who made it through the early days found a life worth living. This pamphlet is offered as a message of hope to those now in a hospital or institution that you, too, can recover and live freely. Many of us have been where you are today. We have tried other ways, and many of us relapsed, some never to have another chance at recovery. We have written this pamphlet to share with you what we have found that works.

If you are able to go to meetings while you are in a hospital or institution, you can start developing good habits now. Come early and stay late at the meetings. Start, as soon as possible, to establish contacts with recovering addicts. If there are NA members from other groups attending your meetings, ask for their phone numbers and use them. Using these phone numbers will feel strange at first, even silly. But, given that isolation is at the core of the disease of addiction, that first phone call is a big stride forward. It isn't necessary to wait for a major problem to develop before calling someone in NA. Most members are more than willing to help in any way they can. This is also a good time to arrange for an NA member to meet you upon your release. If you already know some of the people you will be seeing at meetings when you are released, it will help you feel a part of the NA Fellowship. We cannot afford to be or feel alienated.

Staying clean on the outside means taking action. When you get out, go to a meeting the first day of your release. It is important to establish the habit of regular attendance. The confusion and excitement of "just getting out" has lulled some of us into thinking of taking a vacation from our responsibilities before settling down to the business of day-to-day living. This kind of rationalization has led many of us back to using. Addiction is a disease which takes no time off in its progression. If it is not arrested, it only becomes worse. What we do for our recovery today does not ensure our recovery tomorrow. It is a mistake to assume that the good intention of getting around to NA after a while will be sufficient. We must back up our intentions with action, the earlier the better.

If you will be living in a different town after your release, ask the NA members for a meeting list and the NA helpline number for your new area. They will be able to help you get in touch with NA groups and members where you will be living. You can also get information about meetings all over the world by writing to:

World Service Office  
PO Box 9999  
Van Nuys, CA 91409 USA

Sponsorship is a vital part of the NA program of recovery. It is one of the main channels through which newcomers can take advantage of the experience of NA members who are living the program. Sponsors can combine genuine concern for our well-being and a shared experience of addiction with solid knowledge of recovery in NA. We have found it works best to find a sponsor of your own sex. Choose a sponsor, even a temporary sponsor, as soon as possible. A sponsor helps you work through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. A sponsor can also introduce you to other NA members, take you to

meetings, and help you to get more comfortable in recovery. Our pamphlet, *Sponsorship*, contains additional information on the subject.

If we are to receive the benefits of the NA program, we must work the Twelve Steps. Along with regular meeting attendance, the steps are basic to our program of recovery from addiction. We have found that working the steps in order and continuously reworking them keeps us from relapsing into active addiction and the misery that it brings.

There is a variety of NA recovery literature available. The Little White Booklet and our Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*, contain principles of recovery in our fellowship. Familiarize yourself with the program through our literature. Reading about recovery is a very important part of our program, especially when a meeting or another NA member might not be available. Many of us have found that reading NA literature on a daily basis has helped us maintain a positive attitude and has kept our focus on recovery.

When you begin going to meetings, get involved with the groups you attend. Emptying ashtrays, helping set up, making coffee, cleaning up after the meeting—all these tasks need to be done for the group to function. Let people know you are willing to help, and become a part of your group. Taking on such responsibilities is a necessary part of recovery and helps to counteract the feelings of alienation that can creep up on us. Such commitments, however small they may appear, may help ensure attendance at meetings when the *desire* to attend lags behind the *need* to attend.

It is never too early to establish a personal program of daily action. Taking daily action is our way of taking responsibility for our recovery. Instead of picking up that first drug, we do the following:

- Don't use, no matter what
- Go to an NA meeting
- Ask your Higher Power to keep you clean today
- Call your sponsor
- Read NA literature
- Talk to other recovering addicts
- Work the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

We've discussed some of the things to do to stay clean; we should also discuss some things to avoid. In NA meetings, we often hear that we must change our old way of living. This means that we don't use drugs, no matter what! We have also found that we cannot afford to frequent bars and clubs or associate with people who use drugs. When we allow ourselves to hang around old acquaintances and places, we are setting ourselves up for relapse. When it comes to the disease of addiction, we are powerless. These people and these places never helped us stay clean before. It would be foolish to think things will be different now.

For an addict, there is no substitute for the fellowship of others actively engaged in recovery. It is important to give ourselves a break and give our recovery a chance. There are many new friends waiting for us in Narcotics Anonymous, and a new world of experiences lies ahead.

Some of us had to adjust our expectations of a completely different world once we were released. Narcotics Anonymous cannot miraculously change the world around us. It does offer us hope, freedom, and a way to live differently in the world by changing ourselves. We may find some situations which are no different than before, but, through the program of Narcotics Anonymous, we can change the way we respond to them. Changing ourselves does change our lives.

We want you to know that you are welcome in Narcotics Anonymous. NA has helped hundreds of thousands of addicts to live clean, to accept life on its own terms, and to develop a life that is truly worth living.

## Recovery and Relapse

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Many people think that recovery is simply a matter of not using drugs. They consider a relapse a sign of complete failure, and long periods of abstinence a sign of complete success. We in the recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous have found that this perception is too simplistic. After a member has had some involvement in our fellowship, a relapse may be the jarring experience that brings about a more rigorous application of the program. By the same token, we have observed some members who remain abstinent for long periods of time whose dishonesty and self-deceit still prevent them from enjoying complete recovery and acceptance within society. Complete and continuous abstinence, however, in close association and identification with others in NA groups, is still the best ground for growth.

Although all addicts are basically the same in kind, we do, as individuals, differ in degree of sickness and rate of recovery. There may be times when a relapse lays the groundwork for complete freedom. At other times that freedom can only be achieved by a grim and obstinate willfulness to hang on to abstinence, come hell or high water, until a crisis passes. An addict who by any means can lose, even for a time, the need or desire to use, and has free choice over impulsive thinking and compulsive action, has reached a turning point that may be the decisive factor in his recovery. The feeling of true independence and freedom hangs here, at times, in the balance. To step out alone and run our own lives again draws us, yet we seem to know that what we have has come from dependence on a Power greater than ourselves and from the giving and receiving of help from others in acts of empathy. Many times in our recovery the old bugaboos will haunt us. Life may again become meaningless, monotonous, and boring. We may tire mentally in repeating our new ideas and tire physically in our new activities, yet we know that if we fail to repeat them we will surely take up our old practices. We suspect that if we do not use what we have, we will lose what we have. These times are often the periods of our greatest growth. Our minds and bodies seem tired of it all, yet the dynamic forces of change or true conversion, deep within, may be working to give us the answers that alter our inner motivations and change our lives.

Recovery as experienced through our Twelve Steps is our goal, not mere physical abstinence. To improve ourselves takes effort, and since there is no way in the world to graft a new idea on a closed mind, an opening must be made somehow. Since we can do this only for ourselves, we need to recognize two of our seemingly inherent enemies, apathy and procrastination. Our resistance to change seems built in, and only a nuclear blast of some kind will bring about any alteration or initiate another course of action. A relapse, if we survive it, may provide the charge for the demolition process. A relapse and sometimes subsequent death of someone close to us can do the job of awakening us to the necessity for vigorous personal action.

### Personal stories

*Narcotics Anonymous has grown a great deal since 1953. The people who started this fellowship, for whom we have a deep and lasting affection, have taught us much about addiction and recovery. In the following pages, we offer you our beginnings. The first section was written in 1965 by one of our earliest members. More recent stories of NA members' recovery can be found in our Basic Text, Narcotics Anonymous.*

### We do recover

Although "Politics make strange bedfellows," as the old saying goes, addiction makes us one of a kind. Our personal stories may vary in individual pattern but, in the end, we all have the

same thing in common. This common illness or disorder is addiction. We know well the two things that make up true addiction: obsession and compulsion. Obsession—that fixed idea that takes us back, time and time again, to our particular drug, or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Compulsion—once having started the process with one fix, one pill, or one drink we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs, we are completely in the grip of a destructive power greater than ourselves.

When, at the end of the road, we find that we can no longer function as human beings, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual, not religious, program known as Narcotics Anonymous.

When my addiction brought me to the point of complete powerlessness, uselessness, and surrender some fifteen years ago<sup>2</sup>, there was no NA. I found AA, and in that fellowship met addicts who had also found that program to be the answer to their problem. However, we knew that many were still going down the road of disillusion, degradation, and death because they were unable to identify with the alcoholic in AA. Their identification was at the level of apparent symptoms and not at the deeper level of emotions or feelings, where empathy becomes a healing therapy for all addicted people. With several other addicts and some members of AA who had great faith in us and the program, we formed, in July of 1953, what we now know as Narcotics Anonymous. We felt that, now, the addict would find, from the start, as much identification as each needed to convince himself that he could stay clean by the example of others who had recovered for many years.

That this was what was principally needed has proved itself in these passing years. That wordless language of recognition, belief, and faith which we call empathy created the atmosphere in which we could feel time, touch reality, and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us. In our program of recovery, we are growing in numbers and strength. Never before have so many clean addicts, of their own choice and in free society, been able to meet where they please, to maintain their recovery in complete creative freedom.

Even addicts said it could not be done the way we had it planned. We believed in openly scheduled meetings—no more hiding as other groups had tried. We believed this differed from all other methods tried before by those who advocated long withdrawal from society. We felt that the sooner the addict could face his problem in everyday living, just that much faster would he become a real, productive citizen. We eventually have to stand on our own feet and face life on its own terms, so why not from the start?

Because of this, of course, many relapsed, and many were lost completely. However, many stayed, and some came back after their setback. The brighter part is the fact that, of those who are now our members, many have long terms of complete abstinence and are better able to help the newcomer. Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of our steps and traditions, is the dynamic force that is bringing increase and unity to our program. Now, we know that the time has come when that tired old lie, "Once an addict, always an addict," will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover.

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<sup>2</sup> Written in 1965.

**Tab 9**  
**NA White Booklet**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**

**Tab 9**  
**NA White Booklet**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**



## **NA White Booklet, *Narcotics Anonymous***

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### **Foreword**

This booklet is an introduction to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. It is written for those men and women who, like ourselves, suffer from a seemingly hopeless addiction to drugs. There is no cure for addiction, but recovery is possible by a program of simple spiritual principles. This booklet is not meant to be comprehensive, but it contains the essentials that in our personal and group experience we know to be necessary for recovery.

### **Serenity Prayer**

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.

### **Who is an addict?**

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. *We know!* Our whole life and thinking was centered in drugs in one form or another—the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We lived to use and used to live. Very simply, an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions, and death.

### **What is the Narcotics Anonymous program?**

NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work.

There are no strings attached to NA. We are not affiliated with any other organizations. We have no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us, regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

### **Why are we here?**

Before coming to the Fellowship of NA, we could not manage our own lives. We could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives,

husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm, but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized that in our addiction we were slowly committing suicide, but addiction is such a cunning enemy of life that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Many of us ended up in jail, or sought help through medicine, religion, and psychiatry. None of these methods was sufficient for us. Our disease always resurfaced or continued to progress until, in desperation, we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to NA we realized we were sick people. We suffered from a disease from which there is no known cure. It can, however, be arrested at some point, and recovery is then possible.

## **How it works**

If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are the principles that made our recovery possible.

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. 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.

This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once. We didn't become addicted in one day, so remember—*easy does it*.

There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery; this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Three of these that are indispensable are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. With these we are well on our way.

We feel that our approach to the disease of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical, for one addict can best understand and help another addict. We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible, and productive members of that society.

The only way to keep from returning to active addiction is not to take that first drug. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this, for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again.

Thinking of alcohol as different from other drugs has caused a great many addicts to relapse. Before we came to NA, many of us viewed alcohol separately, but we cannot afford to be confused about this. Alcohol is a drug. We are people with the disease of addiction who must abstain from all drugs in order to recover.

### **What can I do?**

Begin your own program by taking Step One from the previous chapter, "How It Works." When we fully concede to our innermost selves that we are powerless over our addiction, we have taken a big step in our recovery. Many of us have had some reservations at this point, so give yourself a break and be as thorough as possible from the start. Go on to Step Two, and so forth, and as you go on you will come to an understanding of the program for yourself. If you are in an institution of any kind and have stopped using for the present, you can, with a clear mind, try this way of life.

Upon release, continue your daily program and contact a member of NA. Do this by mail, by phone, or in person. Better yet, come to our meetings. Here you will find answers to some of the things that may be disturbing you now.

If you are not in an institution, the same holds true. Stop using for today. Most of us can do for eight or twelve hours what seems impossible for a longer period of time. If the obsession or compulsion becomes too great, put yourself on a five-minute basis of not using. Minutes will grow to hours, and hours to days, so you will break the habit and gain some peace of mind. The real miracle happens when you realize that the need for drugs has in some way been lifted from you. You have stopped using and started to live.

### **The Twelve Traditions of NA**

We keep what we have only with vigilance, and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps, so freedom for the group springs from our traditions.

As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

## **Recovery and relapse**

Many people think that recovery is simply a matter of not using drugs. They consider a relapse a sign of complete failure, and long periods of abstinence a sign of complete success. We in the recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous have found that this perception is too simplistic. After a member has had some involvement in our fellowship, a relapse may be the jarring experience that brings about a more rigorous application of the program. By the same token we have observed some members who remain abstinent for long periods of time whose dishonesty and self-deceit still prevent them from enjoying complete recovery and acceptance within society. Complete and continuous abstinence, however, in close association and identification with others in NA groups, is still the best ground for growth.

Although all addicts are basically the same in kind, we do, as individuals, differ in degree of sickness and rate of recovery. There may be times when a relapse lays the groundwork for complete freedom. At other times that freedom can only be achieved by a grim and obstinate willfulness to hang on to abstinence, come hell or high water, until a crisis passes. An addict who by any means can lose, even for a time, the need or desire to use, and has free choice over impulsive thinking and compulsive action, has reached a turning point that may be the decisive factor in his recovery. The feeling of true independence and freedom hangs here at times in the balance. To step out alone and run our own lives again draws us, yet we seem to know that what we have has come from dependence on a Power greater than ourselves and from the giving and receiving of help from others in acts of empathy. Many times in our recovery the old bugaboos will haunt us. Life may again become meaningless, monotonous, and boring. We may tire mentally in repeating our new ideas and tire physically in our new activities, yet we know that if we fail to repeat them we will surely take up our old practices. We suspect that if we do not use what we have, we will lose what we have. These times are often the periods of our greatest growth. Our minds and bodies seem tired of it all, yet the dynamic forces of change or true conversion, deep within, may be working to give us the answers that alter our inner motivations and change our lives.

Recovery as experienced through our Twelve Steps is our goal, not mere physical abstinence. To improve ourselves takes effort, and since there is no way in the world to graft a new idea on a closed mind, an opening must be made somehow. Since we can do this only for ourselves, we need to recognize two of our seemingly inherent enemies, apathy and procrastination. Our resistance to change seems built in, and only a nuclear blast of some kind will bring about any alteration or initiate another course of action. A relapse, if we survive it, may provide the charge for the demolition process. A relapse and sometimes subsequent death of someone close to us can do the job of awakening us to the necessity for vigorous personal action.

## **Just for today**

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.

## **Personal stories**

*Narcotics Anonymous has grown a great deal since 1953. The people who started this fellowship and for whom we have a deep and lasting affection have taught us much about addiction and recovery. In the following pages we offer you our beginnings. The first section was written in 1965 by one of our earliest members. More recent stories of NA members' recovery can be found in our Basic Text, Narcotics Anonymous.*

## **We do recover**

Although "Politics makes strange bedfellows," as the old saying goes, addiction makes us one of a kind. Our personal stories may vary in individual pattern but in the end we all have the same thing in common. This common illness or disorder is addiction. We know well the two things that make up true addiction: obsession and compulsion. Obsession—that fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug, or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Compulsion—once having started the process with one fix, one pill, or one drink we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs, we are completely in the grip of a destructive power greater than ourselves.

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as human beings, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.

When my addiction brought me to the point of complete powerlessness, uselessness, and surrender some fifteen years ago, there was no NA. I found AA, and in that fellowship met addicts who had also found that program to be the answer to their problem. However, we knew that many were still going down the road of disillusion, degradation, and death, because they were unable to identify with the alcoholic in AA. Their identification was at the level of apparent symptoms and not at the deeper level of emotions or feelings, where empathy becomes a healing therapy for all addicted people. With several other addicts and some members of AA who had great faith in us and the program, we formed, in July of 1953, what we now know as Narcotics Anonymous. We felt that now the addict would find from the start as much identification as each needed to convince himself that he could stay clean by the example of others who had recovered for many years.

That this was what was principally needed has proved itself in these passing years. That wordless language of recognition, belief, and faith, which we call empathy, created the atmosphere in which we could feel time, touch reality, and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us. In our program of recovery we are growing in numbers and in strength. Never before have so many clean addicts, of their own choice and in free society, been able to meet where they please, to maintain their recovery in complete creative freedom.

Even addicts said it could not be done the way we had it planned. We believed in openly scheduled meetings—no more hiding as other groups had tried. We believed this differed from all other methods tried before by those who advocated long withdrawal from society. We felt that the sooner the addict could face his problem in everyday living, just that much faster

would he become a real, productive citizen. We eventually have to stand on our own feet and face life on its own terms, so why not from the start.

Because of this, of course, many relapsed and many were lost completely. However, many stayed and some came back after their setback. The brighter part is the fact that of those who are now our members, many have long terms of complete abstinence and are better able to help the newcomer. Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of our steps and traditions, is the dynamic force that is bringing increase and unity to our program. Now we know that the time has come when that tired old lie, "Once an addict, always an addict," will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover.

### **One third of my life**

Today has been one of those days. It was Friday and Monday all together. Trying to get something done was like trying to make a connection when the heat was on. It was a panic all day, but when I got home and lay down for an hour, it felt good. I can go on a natural nod, because I have nothing up here now but a clear conscience. The old hassle is gone. I can lie down, take it easy, and be comfortable. The longer I stay clean, the better it gets for me. It's real groovy to get up in the morning and not care whether it's foggy or the sun's shining, just so long as I'm clean. No cramps and no sweats now. I remember the times when I'd be afraid to go to sleep, because I had a "git up" there on the dresser; but if I took my "git up" I'd have nothing when I got up and then I'd be sick again.

I never thought I'd feel good being out here with the squares, but now I think sometimes I feel the same things they do. I don't have all those petty little things going through my mind now, like I did when I thought I was hip—so slick. The only one I was being hip and slick with was me. Everybody else could see right through me. I don't have a running nose anymore and no itchiness unless it's an allergy or something. I can go home now at night to clean sheets and blankets, say my little prayers, and go to sleep. It's real good for me.

Yesterday was pay day. I went out and bought myself a few presents—not Christmas shoplifting you know. Now, I can go through these stores without even a temptation to steal. This is my third Christmas on the bricks and I can't think of anything I've stolen since I've been out of the joint. I feel that I was basically honest from childhood. I stole to keep up my habit, to get my stuff, to keep my head on my chest, to keep my stomach from grinding, and to keep my nose from running. That nose! It was always running whether I was sick or not.

My story is similar to many others. I hit one nuthouse when I was thirteen—I really don't remember much about it. That was on an OD of amphetamines, they thought I was a manic-depressive till I cleaned up off the pills, and then they figured I was just a neurotic.

It progressed though. I started to make the joints. I'm thirty now and there's twelve-and-a-half years gone out of my life like this. Man, I sure don't want anymore of it. Since I've been out of the joint about three years I can't say I haven't had the temptation; I can't say I haven't had some obsession; I can't say I haven't had the passing thought of wanting to use, because I have at times. Now, however, it's like the passing thought of "There is a real nice car there. I'd like one like that," and then it's gone, and so is the thought. I notice that the times and the periods are getting farther apart when they happen.

I haven't had a driving obsession to get my head on my chest for over two years now, and this is really something. I now try to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him. Sometimes I like to try to play God and run everything but it doesn't work that way. The longer I stay around and stay clean, the groovier it gets. The last time I came out, I was a scared, sniveling little snot, double hip, double slick, still walking that walk and talking that talk. Now, I go back to the institutions every week I can make it. I went back to my home group a while back and it was greater than my birthday. You know those guys accepted me back and were glad to see me.

I gave a lot of them a hard time with the attitudes I used to have. At that time nothing was any good; everything was rotten, except dope. Sure, I had a craving for drugs, but at that time I was ready for anything that would get my feet off the ground. Now, however, I know that anything that would get my feet off the ground (that isn't an airplane) will head me for real trouble. I sincerely believe this. I don't know if I work the Twelve Steps to the best of my ability or not, but I do know I've been clean about three years by practicing them the best I can.

When things start buggin' me now, I know where most of the trouble lies: me. Now I find I have a greater tolerance for people and a lot more patience all around; this is a big change for me. Practicing the principles of this program the way I understand them, staying clean a day at a time, sharing experiences with other addicts who are new to the program—these actions have changed my whole outlook on life. It's a good way to live.

### **I can't do any more time**

I came to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as an addict, out of an institution for women. I came the first night I got out and it's been here that I've learned how to live, so that it hasn't been necessary for me to use any kind of drugs in my daily life. It has been here that I've learned a lot about myself, because we addicts are so very much alike. I've always seen another side of myself whenever problems and suggested solutions have been discussed at our meetings. I have learned, from those who are following the program of recovery to the best of their ability, how I can do the same if I am willing to make the effort. I have also learned from those who have made mistakes. I feel bad when I see that some leave this fellowship to try the old way again, but I know that I don't have to do that if I don't want to. Also, it has not been necessary for me to steal or to write any bad checks.

My addiction goes way back. I was drinking abusively, when I first started at sixteen, and I realize today that the reason for that was I was sick to begin with. I had this emotional illness and it was very deep. I don't think that, if I hadn't been emotionally ill to begin with, I would have gotten carried away with using. When it became noticeable that I was using alcohol more and more, being in the nursing profession, I tried experimenting with other drugs. It grew and grew and became a horrible problem.

Although this is certainly a suicidal path in itself, when I was aware and in a lucid moment, I did realize I was hopelessly addicted. I did not know that there was any answer. There really wasn't at that time. I was in San Francisco, not knowing which way to turn, when I tried suicide and was unsuccessful. I was twenty-six years old at that time. I now think that if it had been possible for me, I would have come to this program at that same age as a lot who are here today.

My pattern, however, continued. I had lost not only my self-respect but the respect and love of my family, my children, and my husband. I had lost my home and my profession. Somehow or other, I hadn't reached the point where I wanted to try this way of life or to try it all the way. I just had to go on and try in my own way. I tried drugs again and was finally committed to another institution three times. The last time I went there I just felt that I couldn't do any more time. I didn't immediately connect it with my addiction. I just couldn't do any more time. It wasn't the thought, "I can't use drugs," just, "I can't do any more time." I just felt completely hopeless and helpless and I didn't have any answers. All of my emotional and spiritual pride had gone.

I'm sure that when I was in the institution they doubted my sincerity in ever wanting to do anything about my problem. However, I did want to do something about it, and I know that this program doesn't work until we really do want it for ourselves. It's not for people who need it but for people who want it. I finally wanted it so bad I knocked on doors of psychiatrists, psychologists, chaplains, and anywhere I could.

I think one of my counselors, who just naturally loves all people, gave me a lot of encouragement, for I thoroughly took my first three steps. I admitted I was powerless over my

addiction, that my life was unmanageable. I had tried so many other things, so I decided a Power greater than myself could restore my sanity. To the best of my ability I turned my life and my will over to the care of God as I understood Him, and I tried in my daily life to understand God.

I had read all kinds of metaphysical books. I agreed with them and thought they were great, but I never took any action on them. I never tried any faith in my daily living. It's amazing how after I had gotten just this far, I began to get a little honesty and could see myself as I was. I doubted that I could get honest, but I became aware of myself by looking outside myself at the addicts around me, by getting to know them and understand them, by being friendly with them.

I would like to give credit where credit is due, and I do believe that my daily attendance at psychotherapy groups with very understanding psychologists helped me become aware of myself so that I might do something about my problem; but when I came out, I thought, "Oh! Can I make it outside?" So many times institutions took so many years out of my life that I wondered if I could stay clean and do ordinary things. I doubted whether I could go ahead with just normal living, but God has seen fit to see that I have been provided for in this last year and a half. I've been able to work regularly; I didn't have steady jobs at first, but there was never any long period in between them.

Although for a time I threw out the idea of going back to my profession, which is nursing, I have since reconsidered this and am now in the process of perhaps returning to full-time nursing. With the help of some very understanding people I have met, the future here looks very bright. In the meantime, I give myself to my job every day, as best I can, and have been doing it successfully, despite the fact that when I left the institution for the last time everyone thought I was unemployable.

To me this is a spiritual program and the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience. Without the kind of help and the therapy of one addict talking to and helping another, I know that it wouldn't have been possible for me. The obsession to use drugs has been completely removed from me during this period, and I know that it's only by the grace of God. I now give my attention to my daily problems. It's amazing, having had a pattern of fear, anxiety, resentment, and self-pity, how much of this, too, has been removed. No longer do these sway my life. I ask for help every morning, and I count my blessings every night. I'm real grateful that I don't have to go through the sickness that accompanies the taking of drugs of any kind.

I think one of the biggest things that helped me here was that this is a program of complete abstinence. I got over the idea that I had a "dual problem." I don't have a problem with this drug or that drug; I have a living problem, and this is all I need to think about today.

I got a lot of help from my sponsor when it seemed that everyone had let me down, both family and friends. I don't know what I would have done had it not been for the doors that she opened in her letters. She shared her experience, her strength, and her hope with me, and it was very beneficial. She continues to be my very good friend. Here in NA I have found a family, friends, and a way of life. My own family has also been restored to me through working these steps, and not through directly working on the problem. A lot of wonderful things have happened to me. I can't conceive of anything ever happening that would make me want to forget this way of life.

## **The vicious cycle**

I am Gene and I am an addict. In writing this I hope that I can help other addicts like myself, who are trying to overcome their addiction by substituting one thing for another. That was my pattern. I started drinking, whenever possible, at the age of fourteen. With this I added weed so that I could feel at ease and be comfortable with my surroundings in the social activities in high school.

At seventeen, I started on heroin and quickly became addicted. After using heroin for one-and-a-half years, I decided to admit myself to an institution. When they accepted my application, I got scared and joined the Army after kicking at home. I thought that by being away from my environment I would be able to solve my problem.

Even here I found myself going AWOL to get more heroin. I was then shipped to Europe and thought that if I just drank, that would be the answer, but again I found nothing but trouble. Upon my release I came back home to the same environment. Again I was using heroin and various other drugs. This lasted about two years.

The rat race really began when I tried to clean up—cough syrup, bennies, fixes, etc. By now, I didn't know where one addiction left off and the other started. A year before I came to Narcotics Anonymous I found myself hopelessly addicted to cough syrup, drinking five or six four-ounce bottles a day. I needed help so I went to a doctor; he prescribed dexedrine and would give me a shot that made me feel good. I found myself going to him practically every day.

This continued for about eight months, and I was very happy with my new found legal addiction. I was also getting codeine from a different doctor. I now became insanely afraid and began drinking too. This went on around the clock for a month and I ended up in a mental institution. After being released from the hospital, I thought I was free from narcotics and now I could drink socially. I soon found out I could not. It was then that I sought help from NA.

Here I learned that my real problem did not lie in the drugs that I had been using, but in a distorted personality that had developed over the years of my using and even before that. In NA I was able to help myself with the help of others in the fellowship. I find I am making progress in facing reality and I'm growing a day at a time. I find new interests now that mean something, and realize that that was one of the things which I was looking for in drugs.

Sometimes I still find it difficult to face things, but I'm no longer alone and can always find someone to help me over the rough and confused spots. I have finally found people like myself who understand how I feel. I'm now able to help others to find what I have, if they really want it. I thank God, as I understand Him, for this way of life.

## **Something meaningful**

I know now I am not the great leader or philosopher that I tried to make people believe I was. After fifteen years of trying to live this illusion, I now find that I am being accepted for just what I really am. All my life before this, I did things my way. If anyone else ever offered advice or suggestions, I rebuffed them with a closed mind without ever trying what they had to offer to see whether it would succeed or fail. It seems that though my way always failed, I had to use again, until repeated trips to jail began to convince me that something was wrong.

I reached the point of desperately wanting to do something with my life that would be meaningful. I had to try something else that would work. I had found NA several years previous to this decision, but then I was not ready to change. And although I closed the door on NA on many occasions, I have always been welcomed back.

Since I have become willing to do something about my life with the NA program, life has been fuller and more meaningful. I could not experience life before on a daily basis without drugs. I needed these just to face each day. I know I have to alter this pattern of thinking and living if I am to stay completely clean. This I am doing through the principles of our program.

Although I do not now desire or need drugs, I have to fill the void that's left with something worthwhile. I have found this in the Fellowship of NA. I have to stick with the winners and go in the same direction that they go. As long as I follow the steps of the program, I know I can make it, too. Although I don't find the program easy, it is simple enough for a complicated person like me to follow.

## **I was different**

My story may differ from the others you have heard, in that I was never arrested or hospitalized. I did, however, reach the point of utter despair which so many of us have experienced. It is not my track record that shows my addiction but rather my feelings and my life. Addiction was my way of life—the only way of life I knew for many years.

Thinking back, I must have taken one look at life and decided I didn't want any part of it. I came from a "good old-fashioned," upper-middle-class broken home. I can't remember a time when I haven't been strung out. As a small child, I found out I could ease the pain with food, and here my drug addiction began.

I became part of the pill mania of the 1950's. Even at this time I found it hard to take medication as directed. I figured that two pills would do twice as much good as one. I remember hoarding pills, stealing from my mother's prescriptions, having a hard time making the pills last until the next refill.

I continued to use in this way throughout my early years. When I was in high school and the drug craze hit, the transition between drug store dope and street dope was a natural. I had already been using drugs on a daily basis for nearly ten years; these drugs had virtually stopped working. I was plagued with adolescent feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. The only answer I had was that, if I took something, I either was, felt, or acted better.

The story of my street using is pretty normal. I used anything and everything available every day. It didn't matter what I took so long as I got high. Drugs seemed good to me in those years. I was a crusader; I was an observer; I was afraid; and I was alone. Sometimes I felt all-powerful and sometimes I prayed for the comfort of idiocy—if only I didn't have to think. I remember feeling different—not quite human—and I couldn't stand it. I stayed in my natural state: loaded.

In 1966, I think, I got turned on to heroin. After that, like so many of us, nothing else would do the thing for me. At first I joy-popped occasionally, and then used only on weekends; but a year later I had a habit, and two years later I flunked out of college and started working where my connection worked. I used stuff and dealt, and ran for another year-and-a-half before I got sick and tired of being sick and tired.

I found myself strung out and no longer able to function as a human being. During this last year of my using, I started looking for help. Nothing worked! Nothing helped!

Somewhere along the line I had gotten the telephone number of a man in NA. Against my better judgment and without hope, I made what may well be the most important phone call of my life.

No one came to save me; I wasn't instantly cured. The man simply said that if I had a drug problem, I might benefit from the meetings. He gave me the address of a meeting for that night. It was too far to drive, and besides I was kicking. He also gave me the address of another meeting a couple of days later and closer to home. I promised him I'd go and have a look. When the night came, I was deathly afraid of getting busted, and afraid of the dope fiends I would find there. I knew I wasn't like the addict you read about in books or newspapers. Despite these fears I made my first meeting. I was dressed in a three piece black suit, black tie, and eighty-four hours off a two-and-a-half-year run. I didn't want you to know what and who I was. I don't think I fooled anybody. I was screaming for help, and everybody knew it. I really don't remember much of that first meeting, but I must have heard something that brought me back. The first feeling I do remember on this program was the gnawing fear that because I'd never been busted or hospitalized for drugs, I might not qualify and might not be accepted.

I used twice during my first two weeks around the program, and finally gave up. I no longer cared whether or not I qualified. I didn't care if I was accepted. I didn't even care what the people thought of me. I was too tired to care.

I don't remember exactly when, but shortly after I gave up, I began to get some hope that this program might work for me. I started to imitate some of the things the winners were doing. I got caught up in NA. I felt good, it was great to be clean for the first time in years.

After I'd been around for about six months, the novelty of being clean wore off, and I fell off that rosy cloud I'd been riding. It got hard. Somehow I survived that first dose of reality. I think the only things I had going for me then were the desire to stay clean, no matter what; faith that things would work out okay so long as I didn't use; and people who were willing to help when I asked for help. Since then, it's been an uphill fight; I've had to work to stay clean. I've found it necessary to go to many meetings, to work with newcomers, to participate in NA, to get involved. I've had to work the Twelve Steps the best I could, and I've had to learn to live.

Today my life is much simpler. I have a job I like, I'm comfortable in my marriage, I have real friends, and I'm active in NA. This type of life seems to suit me fine. I used to spend my time looking for the magic—those people, places, and things that would make my life ideal. I no longer have time for magic. I'm too busy learning how to live. It's a long, slow process. Sometimes I think I'm going crazy. Sometimes I think, "What's the use?" Sometimes I back myself into that corner of self-obsession and think there's no way out. Sometimes I think I can't stand life's problems anymore, but then this program provides an answer and the bad times pass.

Most of the time life's pretty good. And sometimes life is great, greater than I can ever remember. I learned to like myself and found friendship. I came to know myself a little bit and found understanding. I found a little faith, and from it, freedom. And I found service and learned that this provides the fulfillment I need for happiness.

## **Fearful mother**

I thought an addict was a person who was using hard drugs, someone who was on the streets or in jail. My pattern was different—I got my drugs from a doctor or friends. I knew something was wrong yet I tried to do right—at work, in my marriage, and in raising my children. I really tried hard. I would be doing well and then I'd fail. It went on like this and each time it seemed like forever; it seemed like nothing would ever change. I wanted to be a good mother. I wanted to be a good wife. I wanted to be involved in society yet never felt a part of it.

I went through years of telling my children "I'm sorry but this time it will be different." I went from one doctor to another asking for help. I went for counseling feeling everything will be all right now, but the inside was still saying, "What is wrong?" I was changing jobs, changing doctors, changing drugs, trying different books, religions, and hair colors. I moved from one area to another, changed friends, and moved furniture. I went on vacations and also remained hidden in my home—so many things through the years—constantly feeling, I'm wrong, I'm different, I'm a failure.

When I had my first child I liked it when they knocked me out; I liked the feeling of the drugs they gave me. It was a feeling that whatever is going on around me, I don't know and I don't care, really. Through the years the tranquilizers gave me the feeling that nothing is really that important. Toward the end, things became so mixed up I was not sure what was and what was not important. I was shaking inside and out. Drugs would not help.

I was still trying, but very little. I had quit work and was trying to go back but I couldn't. I would be on the couch afraid of everything. I was 103 pounds and had sores on my lips and in my nose. I had diabetes and shook so that I had a hard time putting a spoon to my mouth. I felt I was out to kill myself and people around me were out to hurt me. Physically and mentally I had a breakdown. I had just become a grandmother and I could not even communicate with a small child. I was almost a vegetable. I wanted to be a part of living but did not know how. Part of me said I'd be better off dead and part of me said there has to be a better way of living.

When I started on the program of NA, there were a lot of people who suggested just everyday things for me to do, like eating, taking a bath, getting dressed, going for a walk, going to meetings. They told me, "Don't be afraid, we have all gone through this." I went to a lot of meetings through the years. One thing has stuck with me, one thing they said from the beginning, "Betty, you can stop running and you can be whatever you want to be and do whatever you want to do."

Since being on the program I have listened and watched many people and have seen them go through many ups and downs. I have used the teachings I felt were best for me. My work area has had to change and I have been going to school. I have had to relearn all the way back to the grammar school level. It has been slow for me but very rewarding.

I also decided that I need to know me better before I can have a meaningful relationship with a man. I am learning to communicate with my daughters. I am trying many things which I wanted to do for years. I am able to remember many things that I had pushed out of my mind. I have found that Betty is not that big pile of nothing but is someone and something that I never really stopped to look at or listen to. April 1 will be my fifth NA birthday. How's that for April Fool's Day!

## **Fat addict**

I am an addict. I used at least fifty different types of drugs on an ongoing basis for a period of eighteen years. I didn't know it when I started using, but I used drugs for only one reason—because I didn't like the way I felt. I wanted to feel better. I spent eighteen years trying to feel different. I couldn't face the everyday realities of life. Being a fat kid, fat all my life, I felt rejected.

I was born in Arizona in 1935 and I moved to California in the early 1940's. My family moved around from state to state and my father was married several times. He was a binge drinker; either he was in a state of self-righteousness or a state of complete degradation. This is one of the many reasons we moved so often.

As I moved from school to school, I would relate various experiences that I had and I would talk about my various stepmothers. For some reason, I was thought to be a liar. It seemed the only company that accepted me, no matter where I went, was the so-called lower-level people, and I never felt I was a lower-level person. It made me feel like I had some self-worth by being able to look down on them.

My family life was confused and painful, but a lot of sound moral values were passed on to me in my upbringing. I always made the attempt to stay employed. As a matter of fact, on most occasions I managed to be self-employed in some type of business. I was even able to maintain some civic status by belonging to fraternal organizations.

I was five feet, five inches tall, and weighed 282 pounds. I ate compulsively to try and handle my feelings and emotions and to make me feel better. As a matter of fact, this is how I originally got into using heavy drugs. I wanted to lose weight so desperately that I became willing to use heroin. I thought I would be smart enough not to get hooked, that I could use and lose my appetite, feel good and outsmart the game. I bounced around the country and ended up in penitentiaries and jails. This was the beginning of the end; not only was I a compulsive overeater and remained fat, but I was also addicted to the drugs I was using.

Somebody told me about the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous when I was in the complete stage of degradation and desperation. Having no place to go, I walked into this fellowship feeling as low as a person can feel, like there was no way out. I was completely and totally morally bankrupt. I knew nothing about spiritual values. I knew nothing about living. Life ultimately was nothing but pain on a daily basis. All I knew was to put something in me—

food or drugs—or to abuse sex to feel good, which just didn't do it for me anymore. I just couldn't get enough of anything.

When I came to this program, I found something that I had never experienced before—total acceptance for who and what I was. I was invited to keep coming back to a fellowship that told me there were no fees or dues—that I had already paid my dues via my past life—and that if I kept coming back, I would find total freedom and a new way of life.

Today, many years later, I find that I am free from addiction and compulsive overeating, and I have status in the community. I have a nice home and family, an executive position, and most of all I have a personal relationship with my God, which has made all these things possible. I am able to feel good, to feel joyful and blissful, to feel serenity, even when things are not as good as they might be.

There is no question about it, I owe my life to the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship and God. I can only extend my hope that if you too are suffering as I once was, you will practice the principles of Narcotics Anonymous, and find freedom from pain and a meaningful, prosperous life.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions  
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**Tab 10**  
**NA Guide to Local Service**

**Available at [NA.org](http://NA.org)**

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