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JANUARY 2017

RECOVERY

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WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES BULLETIN #13

Some thoughts regarding our relationship to Alcoholics Anonymous

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in November 1985 in response to the needs of the fellowship. This bulletin was revised during the 1995-1996 conference year.

The question of just how Narcotics Anonymous relates to all other fellowships and organizations is one which may generate controversy within our fellowship. In spite of the fact that we have a stated policy of "cooperation, not affiliation" with outside organizations confusion remains. One such sensitive issue involves our relationship to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Letters have been received by the World Service Board of Trustees asking a variety of questions about this relationship.

Narcotics Anonymous is modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous. Nearly every NA community in existence has leaned to some degree on AA in its formative stages. Our relationship with that fellowship over the years has been very real and dynamic. Our fellowship itself sprang from the turmoil within AA over what to do with the addicts knocking on its doors. We will look at our roots for some perspective on our current relationship to AA. Bill W, one of AA's co-founders, often said that one of AA's greatest strengths is its single-minded focus on one thing and one thing only. By limiting its primary purpose to carrying the message to alcoholics, and avoiding all other activities, AA is able to do that one thing supremely well. The atmosphere of identification is preserved by that purity of focus, and alcoholics get help.

From very early on, AA was confronted by a perplexing problem: "What do we do with drug addicts? We want to keep our focus on alcohol so the alcoholic hears the message, but these addicts come in here talking about drugs, inadvertently weakening our atmosphere of identification." The steps were written, the Big Book was written—what were they supposed to do, rewrite it all? Allow the atmosphere of identification to get blurry so that no one got a clear sense of belonging? Kick these dying people back out into the streets? The problem must have been a tremendous one for them.

When they finally studied the problem carefully and took a stand in their literature, the solution they outlined possessed their characteristic common sense and wisdom. They pledged their support in a spirit of "cooperation, not affiliation." This farsighted solution to a difficult concern paved the way for the development of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. But still, the problem that they wished to avoid would have to be addressed by any group that tried to adapt AA's program of recovery to drug addicts. How do you achieve the atmosphere of identification so necessary for surrender and recovery if you let all different kinds of addicts in? Can someone with a heroin problem relate to someone with an alcohol or marijuana or Valium

problem? How will you ever achieve the unity that the First Tradition says is necessary for recovery? Our fellowship inherited a tough dilemma.

For some perspective on how we handled that dilemma, one more look at AA history is helpful. Another thing Bill W. frequently wrote and spoke about was what he called the "tenstrike" of AA —the wording of the Third and Eleventh Steps. The whole area of spirituality versus religion was as perplexing for them as unity was for us. Bill liked to recount that the simple addition of the words "as we understood Him" after the word "God" killed that con-

trov­er­sy in one chop. An issue that had the po­ten­tial to di­vide and de­stroy AA was con­verted into the cor­ner­stone of the pro­gram by that sim­ple turn of phrase.

As the found­ers of Nar­cotics Anon­y­mous adapted our steps, they came up with a "ten­strike" of per­haps equal im­por­tance. Rather than con­verting the First Step in a nat­ural, log­ical way ("we ad­mitted that we were power­less over drugs..."), they made a rad­ical change in that step. They wrote, "We ad­mitted that we were power­less over our ad­dic­tion..." Drugs are a varied group of sub­stances, the use of any of which is but a sym­ptom of our disease. When ad­dicts gather and focus on drugs, they are usu­ally fo­cus­ing on their dif­fer­ences, be­cause each of us used a dif­fer­ent drug or com­bi­na­tion of drugs. The one thing that we all share is the disease of ad­dic­tion. With that single turn of a phrase, the founda­tion of the Nar­cotics Anon­y­mous Fel­low­ship was laid.

Our First Step gives us one focus: our ad­dic­tion. The word­ing of Step One also takes the focus of our power­lessness off the sym­ptom and places it on the disease itself. The phrase "power­less over a drug" does not go far enough for most of us in re­cov­ery—the desire to use has been re­moved—but "power­less over our ad­dic­tion" is as re­levant to the old­timer as it is to the new­comer. Our ad­dic­tion be­gins to re­sur­face and cause un­man­age­abil­ity in our thoughts and feel­ings whenever we be­come com­placent in our pro­gram of re­cov­ery. This process has nothing to do with "drug of choice." We guard against the re­cur­rence of our drug use by ap­ply­ing our spir­it­ual prin­ciples, before a re­lapse. Our First Step ap­plies re­gard­less of drug of choice and length of clean time. With this "ten­strike" as its founda­tion, NA has be­gun to flourish as a major world­wide or­gan­iza­tion, clearly fo­cus­ing on ad­dic­tion..

As any NA com­mu­nity ma­tures in its un­der­stand­ing of its own prin­ciples (par­ticu­larly Step One), an in­ter­est­ing fact emerges. The AA per­spec­tive, with its al­cohol­ori­ented lan­guage, and the NA ap­proach, with its clear need to shift the focus away from specific drugs, don't mix well. When we try to mix them, we find that we have the same prob­lem as AA had with us all along! When our mem­bers iden­tify as "ad­dicts and al­cohol­ics" or talk about "sobriety" and living "clean and sober," the clarity of the NA mes­sage is blurred. The im­pli­ca­tion in this lan­guage is that there are two diseases, that one drug is se­parate from another, so a se­parate set of terms is needed when dis­cussing ad­dic­tion. At first glance this seems minor, but our ex­pe­ri­ence clearly shows that the full im­pact of the NA mes­sage is crippled by this sub­tle se­man­tic con­fu­sion.

It has be­come clear that our com­mon iden­ti­fi­ca­tion, our unity, and our full sur­ren­der as ad­dicts de­pends on a clear un­der­stand­ing of our most fun­damental prin­ciples:

We are power­less over a disease that gets pro­gres­sively worse when we use any drug. It does not matter what drug was at the center for us when we arrived. Any drug we use will re­lease our disease all over again. We re­cov­er from the disease of ad­dic­tion by ap­ply­ing our Twelve Steps. Our steps are uniquely worded to carry this mes­sage clearly, so the rest of our lan­guage of re­cov­ery must be con­sistent with our steps. We cannot mix these fun­damental prin­ciples with those of our parent fel­low­ship without crippling our own mes­sage. Both fel­low­ships have a Sixth Tradition for a reason: to keep each one from being di­verted from its own primary purpose. Be­cause of the in­herent need of a Twelve Step fel­low­ship to fo­cus on one thing and one thing only, so that it can do that one thing supremely well, each Twelve Step fel­low­ship must stand alone, un­af­fil­iated with every­thing else. It is in our nature to be se­parate, to feel se­parate, and use a se­parate set of re­cov­ery terms, be­cause we each have a se­parate, unique primary purpose. The focus of AA is on the al­cohol­ic, and we ought to re­spect that fel­low­ship's per­fect right to adhere to its own tra­di­tions and protect its focus. If we cannot use lan­guage con­sistent with that, we ought not go to their meet­ings and un­der­mine that at­mos­phere. In the same way, we NA mem­bers ought to re­spect our own primary purpose and iden­tify our­selves at NA meet­ings simply as ad­dicts, and share in a way that keeps our mes­sage clear. A casual, cursory glance at AA's suc­cess in deliv­er­ing re­cov­ery to al­cohol­ics over the years makes it abun­dantly clear that theirs is a suc­cessful pro­gram. Their liter­ature, their service structure, the quality of their mem­bers' re­cov­ery, their sheer num­bers, the re­spect they enjoy from society—these things speak for them­selves. Our mem­bers ought not em­bar­rass us by adopt­ing a "we're better than them" posture. That can only be counter­pro­duc­tive.

As a fel­low­ship, we must con­tinue to strive to move forward by not stub­bornly cling­ing to one rad­ical extreme or the other. Our mem­bers who have been un­in­ten­tionally blurring the NA mes­sage by using drug-specific lan­guage such as "sobriety," "al­cohol­ic," "clean and sober," "dope fiend," etc., could help by iden­tifying simply and clearly as ad­dicts, and using the words "clean," "clean time," and "re­cov­ery," which im­ply no par­ticu­lar sub­stance. We all could help by re­fer­ring to only our own liter­ature at meet­ings, thereby avoid­ing any im­plied en­dorsement or af­fil­ia­tion. Our prin­ciples stand on their own. For the sake of our de­vel­op­ment as a fel­low­ship and the per­sonal re­cov­ery of our mem­bers, our ap­proach to the prob­lem of ad­dic­tion must shine through clearly in what we say and do at meet­ings.

Our members who have used these arguments to rationalize an anti-AA stand, thereby alienating many sorely needed stable members, would do well to re-evaluate and reconsider the effects of that kind of behavior. Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual fellowship. Love, tolerance, patience, and cooperation are essential if we are to live our principles. Let's devote our energies to our personal spiritual development through our own Twelve Steps. Let's carry our own message clearly. There's a lot of work to be done, and we need each other if we are to be effective. Let's move forward in a spirit of NA unity.

(Reprinted from Newline Vol. 2, No. 6.)

Happy Birthday!

Proof that the program works!

Sean B.	12/13/1998
Anthony G.	12/21/2009
Chris W.	01/01/1987
David B.	01/03/1986
Leah J.	01/03/1993
Joseph R.	01/05/2013
Chris M.	01/08/2014
John B.	01/10/1987
Danny W.	01/13/2013
Monica B.	01/25/1987
Amy K.	01/26/2014
Connie W.	02/02/1990
Steph E.	02/07/2010
Kati M.	02/12/2013
Lisa S.	02/19/2010
Scott P.	02/26/2008

If you have a clean date birthday of one or more years, please email it to Newsletter@natucson.org

NEXT MONTH'S TOPIC!

Last month's topic was powerlessness, which was extremely fitting since we were powerless over the number of submissions we received. Leslea J. sent in this memo on the clarity statement that we decided to print. Next month's topic will be;

ACCEPTANCE AND POSITIVE ACTION

Accepting the things we cannot change and using positive action to change the things we can!

We look forward to your submissions!

-Jesse A.

Subcommittee Service

SEAZNA Area Service Committee

2 p.m. on 2nd Sunday of each Month
Streams in the Desert Lutheran Church
5360 E. Pima St. (west of Craycroft)

Activities Subcommittee

Contact activities@natucson.org

Hospitals & Institutions Subcommittee

12:30 p.m., Second Sunday of the month
Streams in the Desert Lutheran Church
5360 E. Pima St. (west of Craycroft)

Mt. Lemmon Bash Subcommittee

Contact contactbash@natucson.org

Newsletter Subcommittee

Contact newsletter@natucson.org

Outreach Subcommittee

Contact outreach@natucson.org for more information.

Phoneline Subcommittee

Contact phoneline@natucson.org

Public Relations Subcommittee

Meeting held on line, contact pr@natucson.org for details

Phoneline is looking for Spanish-Speaking volunteers to be of service! (phoneline@natucson.org)

AREA EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Please check the website www.natucson.org for updates and more information



Activities Goes Bowling: 1st Sunday of the month, 4:30pm @ Golden Pins Lanes, 1010 W. Miracle Mile. \$1/game & \$1/shoes.



Medallion Night and Potluck: Last Monday of the month @ First United Methodist Church (915 E. 4th street). Show up at 7 if you are getting a medallion (1 year or more) meeting starts @ 7:30pm.



Underground Speaker Meeting: 3rd Monday each month.

Meeting Changes, Support, Service Opportunities

If your homegroup is in need of support or has open service positions, let us know! Send an email to newsletter@natucson.org!

Want to share your Experience, Strength, and Hope?

Submit your recovery related stories, poems, jokes, etc. to:

RECOVERY IN ACTION

(newsletter@natucson.org)

Don't know what to submit?

Ask your Sponsor for ideas!

~ AREA EVENTS ~

- **Deep South Camp Out Lunch, Speaker Mtg, Logo Contest, Jan 21st, 11am-2pm, 800 Taylor Dr, Sierra Vista, AZ**
- **Mt. Lemmon Bash Committee mtg, Jan 29th, noonish following Duck Pond mtg, Ft. Lowell Park,**
- **SEAZNA H&I Learning Day, March 26th, 11am-3pm, La Madera Park, 2700 E. La Madera Dr,**
- **Mt Lemmon Bash, Sep 29—Oct 1 2017**
- **MACCNA Presents Mama Mia! Spaghetti Dinner & Talent Show, Christ Luthern Church 2555 S. Engler Ave., Yuma Az Jan. 14, 2017**
- **SDICRCNA XXXII:** Save the date and speaker, registration form & call for speakers available at sandiegonaconvention.org
- **MACCNA VIII:** "Recovery Never Stops" Yuma, AZ, March 10, 11, &12, 2017 www.maccna.org
- **URMRCNA XVIII, No Matte What..., Cheyenne, WY, May 26-28, 2017 contact: Haley G. (307) 275-5725 cleananfree@gmail.com**

Submission Disclaimer: All material submitted becomes property of the Newsletter Sub-Committee and will be edited for content, length, and clarity of the NA message.