

Clean Times

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Help The Newcomer - Help Yourself

We say to help the newcomer. We should talk to them at the end of a meeting. We should actively pursue our primary purpose and show love when we observe an old or new member isolating, having trouble, struggling or appearing out of the norm whether we know them or not.

My observation is that most people (and I swear it feels like 99% but, feelings aren't facts) ignore the newcomer, seem afraid to talk to the newcomer, and are too busy being self-centered to notice the newcomer. Even sometimes, simply talking shit about the newcomer's looks, hygiene, dirty clothing, or their antisocial behavior. The list goes on. First, it's similarities not differences. Secondly, and the most important, it's carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

Most of the time, I go and talk to the newcomers. I genuinely try to do this as often as possible. Maybe, it's because I'm still very much a newcomer myself. I had an incident recently where I almost cussed out a group of addicts with mul-

iple years clean for talking shit outside after a meeting about a newcomer that shared a pretty hefty burning desire. With apparent fix, manage, and control issues; I talked to the newcomer after the scolding I gave my fellow members. The newcomer and I exchanged numbers and he's called several times since.

Coincidentally, I've had 3 new comers that I've given my number to call in the past week and a half. Each one of them wanted to go out and add to their story. Each one of them explained how they called 6, 8, and in one case, 11 other addicts and that I was the only one to answer. Really? For what it's worth, this isn't intended as a "look at me being perfect" rant. It's just something I want to get off my chest and hopefully create some awareness through experience.

From what I've seen, women are the worst offenders when it comes to women reaching out to women. It might be a good thing for the women that have been around a while to share with the female newcomer things like: many guys are quick to help a female newcomer for the wrong reasons; e.g., they'll talk some good recovery, get your number and use recovery as a tool to manipulate their way into your pants knowing damn well the newcomer is vulnerable and easily manipulated. Not all guys do this but from what I've seen and heard being bragged about, there's definitely more guys

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Special Edition - Letters from our Youth

From the Editor...

To me there is no coincidence. A quick question, a few entries, an entire issue when offered the opportunity for their voices to be heard. Courage to be vulnerable and honest are gifts our next generation has shown me are attainable. Recovery affords me the chance to be a part of something bigger and I am in awe of the beauty I see and hear when I allow my HP to speak through those around me. I am forever grateful. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of.

Deborah N.

From the Counselor...

On July 11, 2013 I was contacted by a dear friend of mine that had an amazing idea and opportunity; the newsletter wanted to feature my kids in the next issue. I was so excited and couldn't wait to tell them. I sat them all down and explained to them this offer. I wish you could have seen their faces. It was as if I just told them, "Pack your bags, we are going to Disney World." Their excitement and enthusiasm overwhelmed me and made my heart smile. For the past two months they have been working diligently. Writing, re-writing, taking things out, putting things in, asking questions, and helping one another. I sat back and just watched them all work on their life stories and suddenly realized what an enormous impact this experience was having in their lives. I am honored to have been a part of this process for them. Thank you NA for giving them this opportunity to shine like bright stars. Here are my kids and these are their stories.....

Jennifer F.

Inside...

-Special Edition-

Letters from Our Youth

Young in recovery Change for the Better

It had to be the best and worst day of my life. My name is Jeremy. I'm currently 16 years old and I am in recovery. I never really wanted to change my life, what I did with my life, or my lifestyle. My lifestyle seemed to fit my personality. I am an addict and I was insane.

I never had any trauma or parents who did drugs in the house as I was growing up; I never figured I would grow up doing drugs. It all started with one of my good friends influencing me to take my first hit. At the time, I wanted to fin in the crowd. After the first hit, I wanted more. I started using occasionally and then it led to every other day and then every day. Eventually, I didn't feel the high I wanted so I started to do more intense drugs that would satisfy my high. I wasn't expecting to pick up any other drugs, but I had expected wrong. When it turned 15 I overdosed for the first time because I wanted to have a higher high. I ended up in the hospital for 6 hours, my parents made such a bid deal out of it but I didn't think it was, I was scared, I honestly started to feel and believe that I wanted to stop and drop the drugs but I just couldn't. I let the disease get into my head. My parents didn't want to see their youngest son mess his life up anymore so my parents sent me to my first rehab in Orlando to get help. I stayed there for a month, I didn't want to change and I thought nobody could change me, so I did what I had to do to get out of the program and go back to my old ways. When I was discharged, I went back home to the same places that I got high. I knew I would end up relapsing because I was hanging out with the same crowd I chose to get high with and decided to stay with my druggie girlfriend. My parents had enrolled me back into school and I went right back to skipping and getting high. When they started noticing that I was getting high again, they made the decision to take me to detox. While being in detox my parents put me into another program. When I arrived at the program, I felt like I didn't belong there so I just ran away. I was found off of CR 579 and Hwy 92. I was taken back to detox and then right back to the program, I wanted to stick around and finish my time here but

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I had one of the best childhoods that parents could offer. Growing up I was spoiled by family members and shown enormous amounts of love. At the age of 5, my Mom and Dad got divorced and my Dad moved out. Even so, I was more close and attached to him. I saw him every weekend and he was always the exciting one. Taking me to Disney World, Busch Gardens, the movies, etc.... I was young at the time so I didn't understand my Mom's struggle and looked at it as "she cared less." When I was 7, my Dad was deported to Peru because of false allegations, which resulted in him receiving a charge years back. I was DEVASTATED!!! No more "fun and exciting" weekends, no more Dad there to tell me, "I'm beautiful", or making me laugh and smile all the time. It was one of the worst things that ever happened to me. I adjusted to my "new life". My Mom was always working while my older sister would babysit me. My Mom went through a few boyfriends, one of whom would hit her and had family over that would take care of me sometimes. I am glad I was never raped however I have been tortured. One of her boyfriends' nephews took a pillow while I was lying down, turned me over, and pressed it down on my head, pushing it down against the mattress. I could not breathe and felt like I was going to die. It happened several times before my Mom believed me. Even so, I kept up with school, making A's and B's my whole life and received a full scholarship only if I was to keep it up until I graduate. I didn't really have a positive male figure in my life; my Father was still thousands of miles away in another country and my Mom switching boyfriends all the time just didn't cut it. When I reached middle school I also reached out for attention. I was a people pleaser, liked to make others laugh and feel good and I received that attention from boys and I ran with it. At age 13, I fell in love with a boy only a year and a half older than me. He had a mile long rap sheet as a juvenile, he did drugs, he was a gang member with both parents involved in the gang and he was constantly on the run. My sisters, who were older,

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Making It Through The Struggles

I am praying and waiting on my recovery. I was about 11 years old when I was watching all of my brothers and sisters being beaten. Mom and Dad were fighting all the time. This went on for quite a while and I thought it was normal, until we were all removed from our home. We weren't taken away because of all the fighting and hitting; we were taken away because my Dad raped my older sister.

I was disgusted, afraid, and scared. I thought that I was never going to see my Mom again. We were all placed in the same group home and three of my siblings were in a different section. My foster mother was nice and she helped me through a lot of my sleepless nights. She taught me how to pray and have God in my life.

After about 5 months in this group home, each of us were placed into separate foster homes and each night I thought that I would never see my Mom again. I lived there for the next 4 months and I did get to see my Mom during supervised visits but I was not allowed to see my Dad. I was hopping from school to school and meeting all kinds of different people. My Grandmother stepped in and received custody of all of us and we were together again and stayed with her for a while.

My Mom had gone through counseling for an entire year to help her and we finally were all together again in her new apartment. Things were ok for a while but then we had to move again. When I changed schools, that's when things began to change for me.

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Addicted Rapper

My first drink was when I was 13 and I was living with my Grandmother at the time. She was a great woman. She would do anything for me and I took advantage of that. I started taking money from her and I used to get what I wanted. I would flourish the money to other kids my age to fit in. Even then that wasn't good enough, I still felt like an outcast. I felt like I needed to do something so great that no one would deny me. One day, I took my dog out without the leash and she got away from me. She ran across traffic and on her way back a car hit her. I ran to pick her up and I carried her home. There was blood everywhere. All over the couch and me. When my Grandma took her to the vet, I felt like I was the reason for my dog to die. The pain was deep and I decided to grab my Grandmother's large bottle of alcohol and drink the entire thing. The pain didn't go away and only got worse so I decided to take a walk across the same street that my dog got hit on and I can vaguely recall the rest. I know I was at my house surrounded in my own vomit and my Grandmother giving me mouth-to-mouth and rattling sounds of a stretcher. I woke up in the hospital with a tube in my genitals to a doctor telling me that I had severe alcohol poisoning.

After the incident I remember being 14 and smelling drugs on my Mother. I asked her when I would be able to use and she told me, "in February". I then found out that two of my good friends were using drugs and they began to use with my Mom. I was persistent with my Mom about allowing me to get high but she always said, "No", but that just didn't matter to me. I proceeded to go on top of my roof and get high with my friends anyway. We got off the roof and went to the park at dusk and we started destroying and vandalizing public and private property. When I turned 15 I moved out of the city I was in and continued using. My addiction escalated after I found multiple sources to get drugs simply in my neighborhood. I developed a relationship with a drug dealer. We would hang out and get high together. After that we began to steal, sell, and use together. We would roam the streets late at night and early in the morning. He started throwing parties at his house and I would always sneak out to attend them. My parents found out that I had been sneaking out and called the police and filed a missing persons report on me. When I went home and realized what they had done; I ran away. I was on the run for a month and when I returned I watched my Mom and my girlfriend cry as I was arrested and placed into detox. I went to court 5 days later and was ordered to attend outpatient. I complied for a little while, but then stopped going. I found out that my girlfriend had cheated on me so I decided to let my disease progress and began to use drugs excessively and a variety of them. I became frustrated with my family and situation so I packed up my bags and moved out. Being 16 and on the streets was harsh. I found a job in a trailer park and the owner let me live there. I called my Mom to let her know how I was doing and she told me I had a court date. I tried to get emancipated but I was immediately taken into custody and then put into the program that I am in now. In the seven months that I have been here I have realized that I don't have to be controlled by drugs and that I can work through problems being clean. I realized that the life I was living wasn't what it seemed and I was slowly dying. I was being a coward instead of facing my problems. I have made a choice to live.... Just For Today.

Ruben P.

Chains to Chances

I am 17 years old and I am an addict. My parents were never really together and haven't been for most of my life. I remember being 6 years old and wanting to be a veterinarian, but all that changed when my Dad molested me. He would abuse me physically, mentally, and emotionally. He had custody of my sister and I. I felt trapped. He would often get drunk and hit me. He would then talk to all of his friends about the sexual things he did to me. He would pimp me out to all his friends for alcohol and money; never once taking care of my basic living needs.

We didn't have food, hygiene products, or even clean clothes to wear, but there was plenty of alcohol for him. I learned from my Dad how to get what I needed by selling my body, so that's what I did. For over a year this worked for me until I found my love, the drugs. The very first time I got high I was 16 and I was hooked.

After that day I found someone who was into the same things I was and we decided to move in together. Our drug use had become so bad that we had to start making the drugs ourselves to support our habits. Our relationship was on and then off again and although everyone around me knew that I had a drug problem, I still could not see it for myself.

To feed my habit I had to steal. This worked for a while but then I got caught. I was charged with petty theft, possession of drugs, and possession of paraphernalia. Being a minor I had to be released to a family member and so my Mom came and got me. I appeared in court and from there ordered to drug court. I was living with my Mom at the time, however, the court sentenced me to detox and a residential program.

On July 3, 2013, I began to serve my time in detox and then transferred here to my current program. I have been trying this new way of life and have over 60 days clean! It has not been easy for me. I have been learning how to deal with all of my emotions and my scars without hiding behind the drugs and that's been very difficult for me. But you know what, I am doing it. Some days are easier for me than others and I know that I am in the process. My self-esteem is coming alive here. I'm learning how to do the right things for the right reasons and it feels good. Soon, I will start attending outside NA meetings and I have been looking forward to it.

I know now that if I continued doing the things I was doing and living the way I was living, I would have ended up in either prison or a coffin. Instead I have been given an opportunity to do something different for myself and for my life.

I have a long road ahead of me but I now believe I have a chance. Sometimes all a girl needs is a second chance.

Nikiya F.

Living A Lie...

It all started when I was 14 and it was the beginning of the summer when my Dad let me hang out with some friends. I was always the girl saying that I would never do drugs and that was all about to change. That summer I met a boy and we started dating and we also started using together occasionally. After being together for almost a year, I became pregnant. When my Dad found out he was not having that and began to threaten my boyfriend and me. On December 21, 2011 I was 6 weeks and 5 days pregnant and decided to have an abortion. It hurt me so much to do that but I felt like I had no choice. My boyfriend and I eventually broke up and between the breakup and the abortion I just felt like I could not take it anymore. He was my first love and now the baby was gone also so I decided to run away. I was gone for about 3 weeks and staying with a friend. Her sister came over one night and asked me if I wanted to get high. On the run, feeling unloved, I figured "Sure why not". What I didn't know was the kind of drugs she wanted me to do. I had never done these kinds of drugs before but I lied and said I did so that I could fit in with them. As soon as I got high I fell in love with it and wanted more. My friend's sister told me that she knew a guy who would like to meet me and supply me with all the free drugs that I wanted and that sounded great to me. I took her up on her offer and later on that night I was waiting outside when a car pulled up. They told me to get in the back and I gladly did. We went back to this mans house and began to get high. As I was sitting there getting high my friends sister and this man began to do sexual things together in front of mean I became very uncomfortable. I decided to walk outside and he quickly followed me. He asked me what was wrong and I told him that I felt uncomfortable around him after we spent the entire night getting high and talking. We became friends quickly and hung around one another 24/7. I was a runaway and had nowhere else to go and I felt like a queen getting all this attention and getting high for free. He started to buy me clothes and food and let me stay with him and I began to feel loved. I did this for the next 4 months until I received a call from my Dad telling me to turn myself in or I wasn't going to like what was about to happen. I decided to listen to my Dad and I turned myself in. I got placed into detox and now I'm in a program. The "fog" has begun to lift and now I realize now that everyone that I used with didn't care about me regardless of what they said or did for me. I am close to having 90 days cleans and I am so grateful that my Dad didn't give up on me. Being in recovery isn't always easy; it has its ups and downs. I am dealing with emotions that before I would always use over and I'm learning how to cope with them all. Recovery is a great thing and it has saved my life. I no longer have to lie.

Mindy P.

Life Isn't Fair...

The first time I ever got high I was 11 years old, there really was no reason, just for fun. As I was getting older, more problems started occurring in my life. I got arrested for the first time at age 12 for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. Because of that, a lot of stress was put on me, which caused me to want to use more. I had a great childhood without a bunch of problems but as I became a teenager I turned to drugs and alcohol to solve my problems and frustrations. I would use anything as an excuse to get high or drunk. Once I hit the 8th grade, I was going out every weekend to parties and bonfires, getting plastered every night. I felt like I was living in a lie because almost everything that came out of my mouth was a lie. I put myself in the position where I had no one to go to therefore I turned to drugs and alcohol. By my freshman year in high school, I was what I considered an addict. I couldn't live through to use. I was only getting worse; my family and close friends tried to help me, but I was so caught up in my addiction that I didn't pay attention. I started to use different things and experiment with other drugs. I started to become very careless with where I was using and whom I was doing it around. I started taking drugs to school and smoking at school. One day I decided to buy drugs from someone at school and I got snitched on and caught with the drugs on me. I got arrested for possession and for paraphernalia. I got set a court date for a month from then. To deal with all of my stress I stayed getting high. I was going through a lot of anger and depression. In that month I used more than I had ever before. I was drunk and high 24/7. I just couldn't stop. I got extremely lucky in court because I was put in JDC so that way I had the opportunity to have these charges dropped from my record. My judge ordered me to outpatient and after a few months I was drinking on the weekends. I thought that as long as I drank a lot of water and worked out that I would be okay, but I was wrong and I began to fail my drug tests. I ended up failing around 10 drug tests and had to go back to court. I was nervous because I didn't know what was going to happen. When I went to court I was ordered to detox until placed in a facility. I spent 10 days in detox until I was transported to a residential program. I spent all of my time thinking about how bad I screwed up and realizing that my family and friends were actually right the whole time. When I first got to residential I really didn't know what to expect. All that was going through my mind was that I have to live here for the next 6 months with all these other kids. I was quiet my first day but got to know people here real quick. I am still in my program, my clean date is 6.9.2013 and I plan on keeping it that way. My life has changed a lot since I have been here and so have I personally. I have learned a lot and realize that I really need this help. These 2 months have been very hard on me; I'm not used to all these rules. I get told when I can sleep; when I can eat; when I can use the restroom, it's all just very different for me. I don't like being in here but it has and definitely is a big help for me. I don't feel like this place is fair, al, but heck, life isn't fair.

Austin P.

Finding Freedom

I started drinking and using at 12 years old. I got to the point where my life was no longer in my control. I grew up in a lower income neighborhood and my Dad sold drugs to help support our family. When I was 2 or 3 years old my parents split up and I lived with my Mom. She would leave me a lot, sometimes for months at a time, abandoned and with nothing.

When my Uncle got out of prison he saw my struggles and he began to help support me. I always wondered and get stressed out pondering when my Mom would return. I also stopped talking to my Dad, there was just too much negativity for me and that stressed me out a lot also.

Eventually my Mom came back for good and I began to live with her again. We lived in a one bedroom apartment with 5 people and money was tight. We lived in the ghetto. It was always loud and full of violence.

By age 12, I was molested and my Mom's boyfriend, also, started to make sexual gestures to me. The pain was too much and I couldn't take it and I started questioning my life. I wondered what I did to deserve all of this. This is when I started therapy.

That therapy lasted for more than a year and from there I was transferred to outpatient rehab for another year. When I finished both therapies started getting high again. However, this time I just couldn't stop. I started engaging in criminal activity. I would skip school every day and would altogether just stopped going to school. I no longer had any motivation for myself unless it involved getting high.

No one knew the battles I went through every day inside myself. I was never home. I was always out using.

When I did finally go home, I found all my things packed up. I got kicked out and never went back. I was always stressed out about having a safe place to stay at night or if I was even going to get to eat that night. I started getting into a lot more trouble and ended up getting arrested. I was put into an outpatient program, but I always failed my drug test because I still couldn't stop using. When I returned to court they ordered me to an inpatient program. I was angry and didn't want to go. I decided to turn my negative situation into a positive life. I now realize this was for the best and now I am ready to take my GED and graduate. I plan on attending beauty school after my graduation.

I can see clear now and my family is back in my life. I feel like I have been blessed because the path that I was walking could have resulted in me dead. I have learned to turn my life over to God. I pray every night for another day and another chance at life. I am so much happier and without the stress of always looking over my shoulder I have found hope for my future and freedom from my addiction.

-Elisa B.

Out with the Old, In with the New

Growing up I always had the love and support of my family, but drugs were always there. I began using at the tender age of 10, when my older brother couldn't hide his drug usage from me anymore and he decided to let me experiment. I was off to the races from that very moment and I couldn't stop and didn't want to, I just wanted more and more. As I began to grow up my desire to use began to grow stronger and as my desire grew so did my actions to do whatever it took for me to be able to get high. I started taking dangerous measures to get a hold of my drugs. I was breaking into houses, cars, and whatever had a lock on it that had valuables that I could sell or trade for drugs. I began skipping school and received horrible grades as a result of it. I also became a part of the legal system with a variety of charges and in a very short period of time had acquired an extensive wrap sheet along with a bad reputation to my family and the Hillsborough county sheriff's department. I never really understand why my using took my anger and turned it into rage and made the people around me dislike me, until my addiction even forced my Dad to not like me and want to give up on me. He watched as I would leave, sometimes for weeks at a time, only to return looking homeless and broken. It was too much for him, I could tell it was hurting him when I would see him cry. My dad has always wanted the best for me, to be a good man within society. I've always looked up to my Dad and I wanted to make him proud, yet here I was only letting him down. I was watching myself screw up my future adult life by my actions as a teenager. Funny thing about the law is that you are only given so many chances juvenile or not. I was on the verge of going to juvenile jail when I was given the option of treatment. When I first came into treatment I was very skeptical that even I could, "Drop the dope and pick up some hope". However, as time began to pass and I wasn't around any drugs or even thinking about them, that phrase that I had been so skeptical about became clear and made sense to me. I finally felt like I actually could stop using and become a stronger person physically, mentally, and spiritually. I was then introduced to the fellowship of NA and I found a blessing within the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. Being in the atmosphere of other recovering addicts gave me the hope that if they could do it, well maybe I could too!! I have realized that I am not a bad person, just a sick person that is trying to get well and I am so grateful that I was given the option to go to treatment and learn how to live. "Just for today" without the use of drugs. I have a long road ahead of me; however, my focus stays in this 24 hour period. My recovery started with me getting honest about my addiction, learning to change my actions, and how to repair my relationships. Every day that I am clean I am thankful for my recovery, it is the best thing that has ever happened to me..... From where I began to where I am now really is Out with the Old and In with the New.

Sebastian H.

Grateful and Recovering Normal Day

Growing up I was one of the kids that always wanted play outside until it was dark. I loved school and received straight A's. My parents and family were always proud of me and would tell me that I was going to be something great. This all began to change when I turned aged 13 and got high for the first time.

It wasn't persistent peer pressure, but I did want to fit in with my cousins who were using. It got worse after that summer for I was getting high every day. I would hang out with my friends and we would all get high together and then go play basketball. My Mom would always ask me if I was high and I would lie to her by saying it was the effects of sleeping in my contacts. I was able to use that excuse for a long time.

In the middle of my 8th grade year, my brother and I went to live with our Dad. He didn't care about us. He only cared about the money that he was receiving for us so that he could get high. He would hit me all the time and I lived in chaos for that entire year. Honestly, the only time I felt happy was when I played basketball.

We finally moved back to our Mom's and that's when my drug use hit its peak. I managed to maintain my grades and still play ball, but I also would sneak out all hours of the night. I would not answer my phone when my Mom called me because all I wanted to do was get high. I had so much anger and hate inside of me. It seemed to me that only the drugs would take away all of those feelings. I started doing illegal stuff, caught my first charge and was ordered to rehab.

It's been hard for me to regain my Mom's trust and faith in me but I am working on it. Since I have been here it has been a hard journey of recovery. I have learned so much and I know I have so much more to learn. I am learning how to love myself again. I am learning how to love others and appreciate the little things. The biggest thing I have learned so far is that every clean day is a successful day and that's a great start for me and my road to recovery. I have become an appreciative, grateful recovering addict.

—Jeremiah S.

What is a normal day? I never knew the answer to that. Looking around at every one here, I wonder what it was like for them on the "outs". Anger issues usually come from angry parents. Kindness usually comes from kind parents. And so on... One thing connects every person in this room—drugs.

Maybe not the same ones, but still, the feeling of being out of body or mind. We have all made bad choices, some worse than others, but at least we are still here, right? Not running from our problems, knowing that the door is wide open, or that the window is not bolted, so we have the choice to be here. After everything we have been through, we are still trying. Some of us might just smile for the judge and just get it over with, but I am actually choosing to stay clean. It is ironic in a way how everybody sets up the chairs like cribs, enjoys snacks, and watch movies. It's like everything is in place; like they are content.

Sometimes I feel like I don't belong here. There's a sense of insecurity likened to when you sleep at a friend's house and you're unfamiliar with the place because you are accustomed to your own cozy home. Then again, I remember the constant jumping from hotel to hotel, friend's house to friend's house, boyfriend's house to boyfriend's house and then, I realize I am exactly where I need to be. Getting my act together, and not digging a deeper hole for myself but filling it in. In about 6 months I will be home and with my daughter.

So, for now, I will wake up and do chores, get snacks, participate in groups, make cribs, and watch movies. Each step of the way and each minute of the day, I know that I am closer to a normal life. So, as to a "normal day", this is as normal as it gets and I am actually at peace with myself.

Christine C.

Help the Newcomer, Help Yourself (cont from pg. 1)

"helping" for the wrong reasons than for the right reasons (depending on the meeting). Don't get it twisted; some women do the same thing to men and even other women. Some men also do it to other men. I personally can't wait for that "predatory behavior" IP to come out.

From my experience, I found out early it's difficult to remove the ego, pride, inadequacy, and other masks which inhibited me from being able to comfortably talk to a newcomer and be genuinely concerned. F.E.A.R—Face Everything And Recover. Those times I don't talk to the newcomer are usually when I'm wearing the masks. The more I force myself to get out of myself and talk to the newcomer, the less I seem to use those masks. Again, I'm not claiming perfection. I'm simply sharing my experience and hope that we can reach out more often as a whole.

Lastly, my concerns regarding this matter stem from my experience getting phone numbers and calling them to build a network of relationships. I rarely get calls back. The solution to not getting a return call seem to stem from an observation of the cliques in the rooms that seem unwilling to let newcomers in because they may not look the same, dress the same, act the same, be of the same age and simply not fitting the mold they've established for their inner circle. Again, these are things I see and hear. It's highly possible that some people aren't even aware they're in a clique. If you don't know if you're in a clique I suggest looking up the definition.

To each their own. Those that understand what I'm trying to say and are actively trying to better themselves in the program will be the ones I hope to see reminding each other and also reminding me to talk to that newcomer and make him/her feel welcomed. I hope 3 things came out of this to the ones that know how to listen (or in this case, read.) and see the message. Experience, strength and hope. If this bothered you in anyway, call your sponsor. If you don't have a sponsor, get one. If you need help getting one, I'd be more than happy to share what was shared with me to help acquire a sponsor. Just know I'm fully aware I don't work this program perfectly but I am actively working it to the best of my ability."

Chad K.

Making It Through The Struggles

(cont from pg.2)

I started becoming stubborn and had to have things done my way. I would never wear the uniforms and my grades in school were horrible. I began fighting and getting suspended. I started hanging out with kids that were using. It never mattered to me until one night when I ran away with a friend and I got high for the first time. I felt like I didn't have to think or deal with any problems and I didn't feel the stress. After this night, I ran away from home often because all I wanted was to abuse drugs.

It became easy for me to run from everything instead of face them. I started to hang out with kids much older than me and I would do things for their attention. I liked the attention because I never received it at home. Once I turned 13 things started to get harder for me and all the things I had been running from started to catch up with me. I began to get bullied on Facebook and at school. I didn't know what to do or how to handle it so I began to cut myself and tried to kill myself. I began cutting myself repeatedly to get rid the pain I thought no one understood.

I was still running away from home and one night on Valentine's Day, I was hanging out. That's the last thing that I remember. I woke up in my bed and I thought it was time to go to school. I walked into my living room and everyone was watching a movie. I was confused and I went to the bathroom and realized that my pants were on inside out and my underwear was gone. Tears started to run down my face and I cried out for my Mom. When she realized what was going on she called the police. They brought me to a place to check me out and they asked me a lot of questions. I had been drugged and raped. I felt like I was worthless, what other reason would someone do this to me! I couldn't get these thoughts out of my head nor could I stop feeling how I was feeling. So, once again, I decided once again to run away and to get high. This time when I returned home I discovered my Dad stepped in and placed me under a Marchman Act.

I was sent to detox for 5 days and soon thereafter, I was able to again to do what I did best—I ran away. This time was different. It wasn't fun like before; I was beaten and ended up in a trap house. I decided it was time to turn myself in because I just couldn't go on like this anymore. I was placed into detox again, but this time for over 4 weeks instead of 5 days.

I watched as people came and went while I stayed. I went from detox into a treatment program and after everything that I had been through, I still wanted to do things my way and still use. I didn't want to face the reality that I had a drug problem. After quite a bit of nonconformance on my part I started to hear the things that people in here were telling me. I started to see how drugs were destroying my life and the places they had taken me. Places like being beaten and raped, and feeling lost and confused. I started seeing how much I was hurting my Mom, my siblings, and myself. I wanted something different.

I have found a bit of hope here and now I am facing my issues instead of running from them. I realize that I have an addiction and I'm ready to start turning my life around. I am still praying about my recovery, however, I'm not waiting on it any longer, I am living it.

—Kiara B.

It Didn't Have To Be This Way

I'm out listening to nature now,
it's such a beautiful thing,
hearing the frogs croak in the morning
and hearing the birds sing.
Waiting for the sun to rise
for it will be here soon.
I get more out of my day now
a lot accomplished, even by noon.
I feel I have more energy now
up and eager for each day.
And I give thanks to my Higher Power,
it didn't have to be this way.
When I saw the sun come up before,
I was on my way home
from partying with people that I called friends
then end up all alone.
My days are so much brighter now,
but there's one thing thing I must say
It's the work of my Higher Power,
and I thank Him every day.
So-try to find some meaning in life
there's so much you can do.
It's rise and shine in the morning now,
if I can do it, so can you.
I get myself to a meeting now
as early as can be
waiting for Mr. Sunshine to rise
such a beautiful thing to see.
I'm back home before the others awake
I can do this because I'm able.
Not laying in bed, dope sick
there is breakfast on the table.
Yes-I'm feeling so much better now,
I get the most out out of each day.
And I thank my Higher Power,
it didn't have to be this way.

—Jim L.

Young in Recovery
(cont from Page 2)

my emotions over-powered my actions and I couldn't take it, I missed not caring about a thing. I needed to get high, to not care. I ran again and I went to my best friends house and he hid me at his place for a couple of days. When he went to school, I went to get high again and that's when it all happened. I had my second overdose. I started out with a small dosage and as I sat there high I had so much going through my head. I didn't want to be a runaway anymore; I was tired of running from my parents and the cops. Later after I took another dose not to feel, I ended up falling asleep and then I woke up in the hospital. I was scared and still high. I stayed in the hospital for 3 days and when I got out, I wanted to go back to rehab. I wanted to make a change in my life I wanted to do it for me and for my family because I know they're tired of it. I wanted to complete the program and become a successful person. I didn't want to end up overdosing or even killing myself. When I had arrived back at the program again, I had a lot of urges to go use again but I had motivation to change, to change my ways. I learned how to copy with my problems and to change my people, places, and things. I got a new girlfriend, new friends, and a new place to just chill at. I am grateful to see the things I have now. I am happy that my Higher Power was with me and woke me up from my overdose. I have 21 days left in my 6 month program and when I get out I want to make myself and my parents proud of my decision making. I want to do the right thing and become a doctor. I see that if I can do it, anyone can do it. Just have hope, faith, and trust.

-Jeremy J

Change for the Better (Continued from Pg. 2)

always liked the "bad boys" and I guess I was following in my older sisters footsteps. Ultimately it was my choice to start using, but he also had a big influence on my life. I started smoking cigarettes, skipping school, running away, doing drugs, and became a person that my parents didn't raise me to be. I used to travel to Peru every summer to visit with my Dad and once I started using I haven't seen that beautiful country since. My innocence was quickly devoured by my addiction. When my Mom would tell me that my boyfriend could not stay with us, I would just runaway. After a few times of this she just gave up and gave in. We would stay up and use all night so the only time I got some sleep was while I was in school. On my 14th birthday, while he was serving a 10-month juvenile program, I joined the gang under his Father and as my boyfriend's right hand. I was lost in a world of violence, hatred, and crimes. Drugs had consumed me. They made me feel happier and care less. I had stolen from my family, I was on the runaway list and I lived with 13 other gang members. All we did was use and sell drugs and had endless streams of parties. I just didn't care, I wasn't trying to hide it and my life had turned into a nightmare. My family was scared for me. Wondering where I was, if I would overdose or even die. I had begun to burn all my bridges with them also. I would skip all of my family functions and tell them I would be there and just never bother to show up. In 8th grade I received my very first "F" and lost my scholarship, closing the door on my educational future and honestly it was all a blur. The fast lane is what I loved now, always being high, doing things that most people wouldn't. Fighting had become a fun sport and feeling the adrenaline of doing what I wanted, when I wanted became mandatory. When my boyfriends Dad got out of federal prison that's when things really began to skyrocket for me and I just turned 15. I began to get involved in shootouts, jumping people into the gang, movement of drugs, and some other serious crimes. Any one of these things could have sent me to prison for the rest of my natural life instead I became pregnant. At that moment I stopped using but continued to be in the gang. My Mom had become very scared for me considering I was pregnant and still in a gang addicted to that lifestyle. After my daughter was born I began to use again. I was using more than ever before and taking care of my beautiful daughter. Drugs kept me emotionally bottled up so I dropped out of high school in the 10th grade, constantly lost jobs, and eventually dropped out of Charter school as well. My life and myself were a wreck, I just didn't care anymore, and I gave up on the real me. My mom never really gave up on me and found out that there was help for me, whether I wanted it or not, through a Marchman Act. My first rehab facility was a joke and I didn't take it seriously. I skipped all the classes however my drug screens were clean. The judge decided to place me in detox anyway and ordered me to a longer outpatient program and several other conditions. I didn't care and I ran. I finally got caught in Orlando except this time I added two federal charges and now I am almost 18. I have been ordered to a long-term treatment facility except the difference now is that I care. Being here has changed my life. Having H&I come in every week and talk with us has been an amazing experience for me and has helped to begin to change and it shows me that I am not alone and gives me hope. In about two weeks I will be able to attend my first real meeting and I am looking forward to it. I realize how much of an influence drugs had on me and my life and I'm grateful that my Mom took action, I have a daughter to take care of and if I didn't deal with this now, who knows what would of happened to me. My attitude and outlook on life has changed. Everyone has responsibilities and struggles they may endure, but using does not make them disappear. Drugs nearly ruined my life and recovery is what has saved it. I am taking my life back. I am a young woman, I am an addict, and I am in recovery.

Christine C.

Growing up from what I know

See, I always had a different mentality,
I had a tendency to contradict things.
Before 13 I was smoking dreams, at 17 I wanted to
switch things.
I had possession of a gun at 12 yrs old then I shot
at somebody over the drugs I sold.
I convey with other people through the music I write
despite from all evil I was blinded by the light.
My father figure died before my birth date, then my
friend died of cancer that was the worst way.
Adopted at the day of 4 I felt like my life was full of
lies.
Growing up in a house full of woman I became the
man that led the tribe.
That's how I grew up from what I know by coming
out of my own disguise.
By keeping my plans ahead of me and the things
that I devise.

Tasen E.

The Affliction of Addiction.

At the beginning it was unknown,
Something cloaked in the curtain of young age.
Everything at bay.
Peace.
But not reality. Just the illusion of tranquil neutrality.
For when the curtain pulls,
The marquee reads, "Real Life."
Hate. War. Destruction. Shock.
For it was inside of me too.
Pity, I didn't know then that I was lead role in the cast of a play.
Only because of the blindness that works so well.
The ire of addiction.
Of course it wasn't detected until too late.
My itinerary death.
The motive irate.
No longer a knight.
Forever a knave.
A trapped piece of wood.
On addiction's unforgiving lathe.
-Abraham D.

Sick and tired of being sick and tired

All about me is how I lived my life'
only caring about me, not so much my wife.
A selfish addict I'd become
I know this this fact for sure,
never thinking about my problem,
let alone if there's a cure.
I'd get out of bed early
and start working on a plan
to get more money to get more dope
any way I can.
Then one morning, feeling dope sick
not knowing where to turn,
I had nothing left to shoot or snort,
and nothing left to burn.
I remembered seeing a flier
on the window of some store,
and being sick and tired of being sick and tired,
I knew I needed something more.
knew I had to change my life,
I had become such a disgrace,
so I picked up the phone, called the "Hotline"
and got the address of the "Meeting Place".
That was almost 4 years ago,
when I first walked through that door,
where I sat in the corner and cried,
tears falling on the floor.
Now, my life has changed dramatically,
this I know for sure.
I'm a happier, healthier person,
my life is better than before.
So, give yourself a break,
yes, you deserve this too.
If this program will work for an addict like me
it will surely work for you.

Jim L.

A Closing Poem

With an addict to my left
And an addict to my right
The disease of addiction
I'll continue to fight
A moment of silence
For the still sick and suffering
For the addict that will die
Having never know recovery
For the babies being born
Into this way of life without a choice
For the addicts that know we're here
But think that they don't have a voice
For those using for the first time
On a whim or a dare
Followed by the We version
Of the Serenity Prayer

-Anonymous

Anniversaries - September & October

A New Way

Shannon H 9/24/2008 5
Johanna S 10/5/2010 3

Addict Salvation

McArther C 9/11/2006 7

Brandon At Noon

Josh M 9/28/2009 4
Wes C 10/15/2010 3

Breakfast Club

Al M 9/5/2010 3

Choices

Wes C 10/15/2010 3

Daily Recovery

Jackie C 9/26/2006 7
John J 9/24/2009 4
Molly C 10/28/2010 3

Robert W 10/20/2000 13

Scott 9/29/2009 4

Stephanie J 10/19/2004 9

Vicky P 9/11/2006 7

Emergency Room

Marina E.K. 10/3/2009 4
John A 10/30/2012 1

Freedom From Pain

Ashley 9/19/2011 2
Kelly B 9/13/1975 38

Happy Hour

Jerry T 10/31/2008 5
Robin S 10/5/1997 16
Kimbra S 9/28/2005 8

High Lie

Bobby B 10/31/2009 4
Brad W 10/7/2009 4
Brian B 9/2/2005 8
Bruce M 9/28/2007 6

Hope In Lutz

Eric K 9/9/2006 7
Bob R 9/15/1995 18

Hope In Recovery

Ira J 9/7/2010 3
Zimmie J 9/23/1996 17

Hyde Park NA

Jan B 9/2/2010 3
Philip G 10/10/2004 9

In The Middle

Malin 9/11/2012 1
Kelly C 9/25/2006 7
Paulie B 10/24/2007 6
Ralph F 10/24/2006 7

Keep The Faith I & II

Willie M 10/3/2007 6

Live Or Die

Dominick M 9/7/2007 6

Midday Meds

Terence B 9/12/2008 5

Monday Meditation

T.J. S 9/4/2012 1

More Hope I & II

Clayton F 10/22/2003 10
Cleo M 10/31/1997 16
Shana D 10/29/1999 14

More Will Be Revealed

Tara M 10/26/2010 3

NA 180

Monty B 10/4/2007 6
Norman P 10/24/1996 17

NA At The Apex

Hank M 9/6/1992 21
Luis M 10/21/1998 15

NA Speaker Meeting

Cooper T 9/5/1996 17

New Beginnings

Fred S 10/15/2008 5

New Bite Of Serenity

Joshua S 10/17/2011 2

New Life

Connie W 10/6/2001 12

New Tampa NA

Gin 10/19/2008 5

Quest For Serenity

Tonda M 9/6/1991 22
Dave S 10/16/2010 3

Radical Recovery

Albert S 10/31/2007 6
Don D 10/31/2007 6

Joe D 10/5/2000 13

Nate M 10/11/1996 17

Recovery Central

Valerie B 9/15/1989 24
Matt K 9/24/2009 4
Lisa C 10/4/1986 27

Renegade Recovery

Kurt K 9/5/2006 7
Tommy K 9/14/2007 6
Roy T 10/5/2011 2
Kim C 10/25/2010 3

Rise For Recovery

Michelle L 9/6/2008 5

Squeaky Clean

Dave H 10/20/1994 19
Gary K 10/20/1983 30
Jimmy F 10/22/2010 3

Sunset Solutions

Judy N 10/17/1984 29
Marina W 9/5/1991 22

The Heights Of NA

Matt M 9/1/2011 2

The Message

Kurt K 9/5/2006 7

The War Is Over

Derek T 9/8/2008 5
Bob M 9/29/1983 30
Karen D 10/2/2010 3

Creighton R 10/12/2005 8

Kerri M 10/21/2009 4

Maggie S 10/21/2008 5

Wes C 10/15/2010 3

Together We Can

Fernando S 9/20/2006 7

Triple M

Felix C 9/1/1997 16

TTNA

Gilbert O 9/21/2001 12
Jim S 10/6/2011 2

John S 10/20/2008 5

Mary F 10/18/2011 2

Uptown Tue & Fri

Gary C 10/31/2010 3
Women Do Recover
Lydia B 9/18/1988 25

Women Of Serenity

Dawn D 9/24/2009 4
Helene A 10/18/2011 2
Tammy W 9/20/1993 20
Yvette D 9/17/2007 6

Women's Hope

Deb C 9/1/1984 29
Chastity F 9/5/2005 8
Beth D 9/6/2012 1
Amanda K 9/11/2012 1
Heather B 9/29/2010 3

Allison M 10/2/2008 5

Lisa H 10/2/2009 4

Kim H 10/20/2010 3

CORRECTIONS:

NA 180

Channing L 8/31/2011 2

NA At The Apex

Mark M 8/13/1997 16

Recovery Central

Mikell F 7/4/2010 3

Amanda W.M. 7/15/2008 5

RC H 8/20/2011 2

Alejandro A 8/22/2000 13

Sunday Serenity

Kim 8/23/2011 2

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