

Clean Times

Nov/Dec 2013

www.tampa-na.org

Marathon Meetings

My name is John and I am an addict. I want to share the importance of our holiday marathon meetings that happen in our area. Last year, the Christmas marathon saved my life. I have never really talked to anyone about it, but that time of year is almost upon us. I was very early in my recovery last year, it was around fifty four days clean for me. Besides the crazy emotions that come with getting clean and the struggle to just make it through another day clean I was dealing with a large amount of emotions. During my first thirty days clean, I lost my Grandmother on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas was her favorite holiday. The few weeks previous to the holiday, I had numerous people share about the marathon meetings and how they were there as a place for people to go when they were having a hard time with the holidays or just to fellowship. I went to church with my sister and her family, two of my nephews were in their church's Christmas play. I was okay during the play and it was afterwards that I started feeling sketchy.

I left and went straight to meetings. I was welcomed with open arms, but I still felt completely ...

out of place. I put it out on social media that I needed to get to a church service because I just didn't feel that I could identify with the people in the program. I went to the next church service at 10 P.M. that evening. I remember crying my eyes out during the service because I could remember how much my Grandma loved Christmas. After the service, I tried talking to people at the Church and I could see

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From the Editor...

Have a recovery related question and not sure who to ask? Send any questions or comments you may have to funcoast@tampa-na.org.

We are are pleased to introduce the step sensei. The step sensei will read, review, and express their opinion of based upon question or commentary. Welcome step sensei!

Deborah

Curtains

My step-mother was a fanatic when it came to customizing her house according to the Holidays. Growing up I lived with her for a short period of time at the start of my addiction and distinctly remember her changing the curtains for each holiday.

Thinking this was odd at the time, it never occurred to me what it meant for her. But I would ask her each holiday, "What curtains are you putting up this time?" Holidays for me meant being forced into unwanted family social gatherings in my younger years and later on being high was necessary to even deal with the insanity that comes with family. Even though I was at these family gatherings, I always isolated and kept to myself; never wanting to be involved or catch up with other family members. Eventually my using hindered me in being involved with my family and once again I was an outcast. I was the one no one mentioned in fear of ruining the conversation. My step-mother, on the other hand, always called, always checked in with me and always told me about her curtains. These curtains seemed at the time the only real thing we were able to talk about for the few minutes we

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Ask the Step Sensei

As a female who is new I am not comfortable with females. I don't trust them. Can I have a male sponsor who is gay or married to somebody?

Answer:

The first step gives you the power of choice! You can do whatever you want as long as you're willing to pay the price. There are some areas where NA is not well established and to have an "NA sponsor" a sponsor of the opposite sex may be necessary. However, in the Tampa Funcoast area of Narcotics Anonymous, I know there are plenty of women with phenomenal recovery and years of cleantime, who are more than willing to help any female newcomer who asks for help to stay clean.

Hopefully the man that you ask, gay or married, will have enough recovery and sense to tell you "No". But, if he does say "Yes", your first assignment should be to find a woman sponsor!

The collective experience of NA for the last 60 years is - women work best with women, and men work best with men. There is an important level of identification that only the same gender can provide. Our literature states that identification must come first in order for recovery to happen.

My observation is that most women come to NA not trusting other women - you are not unique. Ironically, it's a woman that can best understand and help you apply the spiritual principle of trust with other women.

This is a program of new ideas based on spiritual principles. Principles such as COURAGE to change old behaviors, OPEN-MINDEDNESS to try new ways of thinking, WILLINGNESS to follow directions, and probably most importantly the HUMILITY to level your pride and ask a woman for help.

If none of this makes sense, there is one last option. Ask yourself if you would want your husband to sponsor and establish the intimate relationship as required, to work the steps, with a female newcomer who doesn't trust YOU.

-Step Sensei

I was talking with a buddy, who has several years clean. He was telling me about "Man-Up" a sex pill you can buy at convenient stores. If I use them is that me using? I have no prescription and it only enhances the sexual feeling.

- This cannot be answered by a yes or a No...

1). Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues. Our opinion on whether this is a mind or mood altering chemical or not is none of our business.

2). There is the matter of intent. A) Was the intent to use or to enhance body function? Determining someone's intention is much like measuring someone's desire to stop using. The member is the only one who can honestly answer that question.

3). cough medicine, cigarettes and coffee etc. are mind and mood altering chemicals.

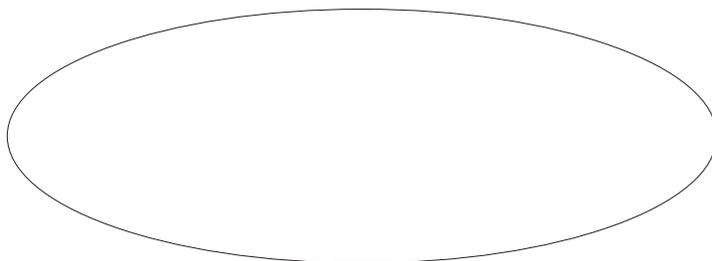
What is the intent for using it?

Please refer to Narcotics Anonymous World Service Bulletin #29 it addresses issues of methadone and other drugs. Someone that is using a mind or mood altering chemical is encouraged to participate only in listening during the meeting and talking to members after the meeting and during the break. Not to hold a service position, share or chair at a meeting. This is meant only to preserve the atmosphere of recovery, not to alienate or embarrass the member.

FYI..Definition of mood: a temporary or state of mind

Definition of altering: change or cause of change in character

-Step Sensei



Marathon (cont'd)

that they just could not relate to the emotions I was going through. I remembered that the marathon was still going on, so I went back to the old meeting place for the next marathon. There was only a few of us there and I sat in silence for the first meeting. Then there was only two of us remaining, we sat outside for hours. I poured my heart out to this person as did that person to me. It was the first time I really connected with a fellow addict. I could feel the presence of my Higher Power there in that persons words of wisdom, empathy and passion for recovery. The point of my story is that if it was not for the marathon meetings going on there was a good chance that I would have gone back out that night to try and numb out the pain I felt in my heart. The following marathons for New Years, I made it a point to be there for a portion of them. It was then that I really felt that I started to feel like I belonged in NA. I met many people that evening, some I still see on a regular basis.

For the newcomer or the old timer, the marathon meetings are a valuable resource for us during the holidays. It is an awesome place to meet people from other parts of our area that you normally never cross paths with. The fellowship is amazing. The atmosphere of love and compassion is amazing. It is because of the marathon meetings that I really started to feel a part of the program. The marathon meetings will always hold a special place in my heart because of the love I received from my fellow addicts in the program. Hope to see you there!!

Marathon of Meetings Schedule:

Thanksgiving

11/27 6 PM through 11/29 6 AM

Christmas

12/24 6 PM through 12/26 6 AM

New Years

12/31 6 PM through 1/02/14 6 AM

DONATIONS ARE WELCOME AND APPRECIATED!
LOOK FOR THE SIGN-UP SHEET TO HELP BY CHAIRING A MEETING!!! IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE OR HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE SEE A MEMBER OF THE EMERGENCY ROOM HOMEGROUP.

Curtains (cont'd)

would be on the phone. With each passing year the decorations and décor got more extravagant. And with each passing year I went farther and farther into the grips of addiction towing all of the insanity that comes with it behind me. Eventually, this changing of the curtains became a running joke for me and slowly over time on each holiday I started to be the one calling her, and as always ask, "What curtains do you have up this time?" For a very long time I would ask this question knowing deep down inside that I was mocking her for something that in my opinion was a stupid tradition. I never understood why she would go through all the trouble to change curtains multiple times a year.

In March of last year I finally broke down and asked, "Why do you change your curtains according to the holiday?" Her putting up green curtains for St. Patrick's Day had been the final straw. By this time she had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and needed the help of my father to change the curtains, but the changing of the curtains still went on. After I finally asked her what had been bothering me for quite some time, she simple replied, "Because it is the one thing you would smile at when you were living with me and the one thing that kept you calling every holiday. You calling me let me know that you were still alive and gave me hope that you would find your way."

Tragically in May of this year she passed away, but her tradition will live on. Starting this year and from now on, I will be changing my curtains for the holidays because it means that I am still alive and there is still hope for me. Through the grace of my Higher Power and the patience of a loving woman I am alive and clean to share my story. I hope that this holiday season you will change your curtains for another addict that is still alive and will hopefully hear the message of Narcotics Anonymous.

C.L.

And all I can say is....

Long nights wide-awake,
rolling around and feeling the pain,
Still deep in my bones,
I can feel it will rain,
And all I can say is...I've earned that
My heart bares scars of trust,
confusing many times love for lust,
My reality of what was real,
was a lie for both of us,
And all I can say is...I've learned that
Learning to love myself from within,
by being comfortable in my own skin,
It's taken a long time,
but I'm believing this,
And all I can say is...I've changed that
I'm a victim,
I'm a miracle,
it's a reflection that I see,
No longer will I live in the past,
today I'm avenging me,
And all I can say is...I am that
Perception is and always will be...my reality
- Gary M.



It Didn't Have To Be This Way

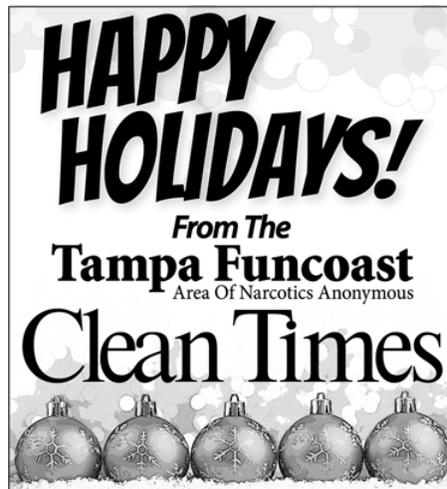
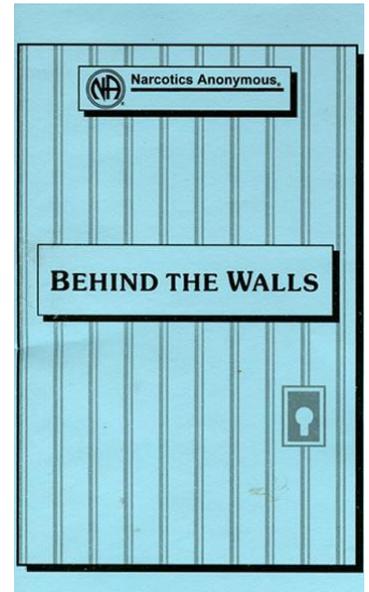
I'm out listening to nature now,
it's such a beautiful thing,
hearing the frogs croak in the morning
and hearing the birds sing.
Waiting for the sun to rise
for it will be here soon.
I get more out of my day now
a lot accomplished, even by noon.
I feel I have more energy now
up and eager for each day.
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.

Our vision is to carry the message that any addict can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life. The Florida Region of Narcotics Anonymous has helped introduce 15 self-sufficient NA meetings in state and federal prisons within Florida. The process began 6 years ago with the 'Pen Pal' project and developed into free-standing meetings; for inmates and by inmates. Many of these men and women are eager to work the steps and become involved in Narcotics Anonymous prior to release. The Florida Region of Narcotics Anonymous is working to realize our primary purpose by implementing the "Writing Steps for Recovery (Behind the Walls)" initiative.

How can I help? Join the "Writing The Steps for Recovery (Behind the Walls)" project. This can be your next step in further carrying the message. Through "Writing The Steps for Recovery (Behind the Walls)", you have another opportunity to share your experience, strength, and hope; give back to an addict seeking recovery what NA has given to you.

For more information and guidelines, contact Gilbert O. at 813.245.5399



Whether you are an NA member, a professional who works with recovering addicts, an incarcerated member or a member who provides Hospital and Institution service, this NA World Services newsletter may be a resource for you. Reaching Out in its design helps incarcerated addicts connect to the NA program of recovery, enhances H&I efforts and offers experience from members who successfully transitioned from the 'inside' to be productive members of society. All are invited to share their experience, strength, and hope in the Reaching Out newsletter.

Contact Gilbert O. at 813.245.5399 or visit <http://www.na.org/?ID=reaching-out-index>

Anniversaries - November/December

Brandon At Noon

Adrena P 11/1/1984 29
Brandon C 11/12/2008 5
Chris D 12/4/2011 2
Chrissy H 11/15/2009 4
John L 11/28/2011 2
Susan M 11/21/2011 2

Breakfast Club

Steve A 12/26/2009 4

Daily Recovery

Craig J 12/15/2005 8
Denise C 12/10/2000 13
Donna W 11/15/1988 25
John C 12/31/2004 9
Leslie B 12/4/1987 26
Monique 12/8/1998 15
Sam 12/1/2003 10
Tanya R 11/28/2007 6
Taryn T 11/21/2004 9

Emergency Room

Jennifer S 11/23/2007 6
David L 11/9/2008 5

Free To Be Me

Jennie G 12/18/2010 3

Freedom From Pain

Craig F 11/27/2007 6
Regina D 11/10/2011 2

Grow or Go

Scott K 11/25/1984 29
Steve P 11/11/1987 26

Happy Hour

Craig M 12/28/1996 17
Rick S 12/11/2008 5
Shawn B 12/18/2007 6

High Lie

Charlie S 12/12/2004 9
Kevin G 11/16/2010 3
Sarah B 12/6/2006 7
Steve M 12/19/2001 12

Hope In Lutz

Jamie M 12/9/2007 6
John R 11/15/1999 14
Richard B 12/21/2003 10
Ron S 11/16/1994 19

Hope In Recovery

Tanya R 11/28/2007 6

How It Works

Robert C 11/23/2012 1
Denise V 11/10/2012 1

Hyde Park NA

Sam M 11/13/2008 5

In The Middle

John T 11/8/1993 20

Keep The Faith I & II

Tina S 12/5/2009 4

Live Or Die

Johnie W 11/6/2008 5
Mike B 12/15/2009 4
Rob W 12/10/2005 8
Rose B 12/19/2000 13

Midday Meds

Lisa S 12/22/2007 6

Monday Meditation

Rachal B 11/23/2005 8

More Hope I & II

Rudy H 11/21/2003 10

More Will Be Revealed

Smitty S 11/1/2002 11

NA 180

Manny G 12/10/2011 2
Matt M 11/1/2009 4
Rick F 12/14/2011 2

NA At The Apex

Kathy M 12/26/2006 7

NA Speaker Meeting

Justin 11/4/1992 21
Nathaniel C 12/17/2008 5
Tony N 12/2/2001 12

Never Too Young To Recover

Shannon H 11/3/1997 16
Liz M 11/19/2011 2
Kristan W 12/31/2011 2

New Bite Of Serenity

Barbara A 12/11/1986 27
Tony W 12/26/1993 20

New Tampa NA

CJ 11/25/1987 26
Jeff S 12/26/2003 10

Old-Timers

Collette 11/25/2010 3
Gilda S 11/5/1995 18
James W 11/29/1997 16
Ray R 11/6/1991 22

Our Primary Purpose

David G 12/24/2008 5
Humberto P 12/27/2010 3

Parrot Pirates In Paradise Group Of NA

Chris H 11/4/2011 2

Radical Recovery

Liz M 11/22/2000 13

Recovery Central

David J 11/17/2006 7
Eric S 11/13/1986 27

Recovery In The Hood

Eugene M 11/18/1996 17

Renegade Recovery

Dan N 11/1/2010 3

Rise For Recovery

Jerome M 12/9/2009 4
John C 12/31/2004 9
Kelvin M 11/15/2005 8

Squeaky Clean

Jim F 12/3/1984 29

Stepping Up

Donna A 11/15/1988 25
Ralph W 11/4/2008 5

Sunset Solutions

Lori G 11/3/1988 25

The War Is Over

A W 11/27/2008 5
Alan H 11/27/2008 5
Brandi 11/29/2011 2
Cy K 11/19/2006 7
Justin 11/1/1992 21
Kevin B 11/7/2001 12
Nancy H 11/21/2003 10
T. C. 11/9/1992 21

TTNA

Lisa S 12/22/2007 6

Welcome Home

Mike N 12/15/2009 4

Women Do Recover

Millie D 11/27/2009 4
Chovonne W 12/10/1993 20

Women Of Serenity

Angela P 12/2/2005 8
Gilda S 11/5/1995 18

Women's Hope

Ashley A 11/8/2009 4
Deana R 11/2/2009 4
Diana M 12/25/2008 5
Linda W 12/27/2006 7
Phoebe B 12/7/2005 8
Sharon A 12/17/2009 4
Sheri S 12/26/2008 5
Taryn T 11/21/2004 9

CORRECTIONS:

Hope In Lutz

Bob F 9/15/1995 18

The Tampa Funcoast Area of Narcotics Anonymous Newsletter Committee welcomes your comments, ideas, announcements, and articles. Your submissions must adhere to the spiritual principles of The 12 Traditions of NA and cannot be copyrighted material from 3rd party persons or publications. Submissions may be subject to editing in order to adhere to the spiritual principles of The 12 Traditions of NA and/or the space constraints or the group's conscience of the Clean Times Newsletter.
