

# Clean Times

September/October 2014

www.tampa-na.org

## Sufficient Grace For My Life

I was in a meeting a few days ago and I heard a lady share “It’s only by God’s grace that I did not contract HIV in my addiction”. I raised my hand to share... We ran out of time so here is my chance.

As a person who lives with HIV, I would like to share with the newcomer you can have a life beyond your wildest dreams. I do not believe God loves me any less or that He ran out of grace when it came to me.

I have HIV as a result of my risky behavior. Yet it does not hinder my quality of life. In fact, God has used it in many ways to open doors for me; to make provisions.

I have prayed, begging God to heal me. He chose not to.

Four years ago, He used my HIV status to assist me with housing. In this era of the Affordable Health Care Act, my

status enables me to receive healthcare.

During my four years of recovery I have been unemployed many times. During those times God has asked, “Are you not glad I choose not to heal you”. Yes, I am grateful for my circumstance, for I would have been homeless.

Often you will hear a member of the Funcoast say, “It’s just life”. Being HIV positive is just life. The steps teach me to live life on life’s terms. There is no need to “over-think it”, “over spiritualize it”, or “read more into it”. It just is.

Life is not over for me, a member of Narcotics Anonymous living with HIV! Anyone can live with this disease.

I am open about my status in our fellowship. Why? So that the newcomer may hear a voice of hope; to give a voice to what the newcomer may be struggling with.

We do find a way to live. And there is Grace that is sufficient for my life.

- Ira B.

## Inside...

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## Powerless? Me? No.

I’m powerless over people, places, and things. Nah, I don’t think so. This statement often irks me. You’ll hear it said in the meetings, but to my knowledge, you won’t find it in the Basic Text or the How It Works and Why. I couldn’t imagine my parents saying that if my siblings and I were to stare at an empty cupboard. I would have to wonder if an employer (even if he’s in our fellowship) would accept such a decree from an employee.

Sure, I was powerless. The keyword in this statement is was. I don’t see that word in the remaining 11 steps. If by surrendering, thereby, becoming empowered, then I can’t possibly be powerless. The application of the 12 Steps give me freedom and direction: freedom to make choices; direction in which to take action. My choices, good or bad (and I often make really bad choices), are mine and I freely make these. A powerless person cannot make decisions and neither can he act upon the decisions made.

I make the decision not to use today and suddenly a world of possibilities opens for me.

It’s been told to me that the first three steps are decision steps and the remainder are action steps.

Now, I ask you, can a powerless person make decisions or take action?

-Terence B.

Editor’s note: This article was originally printed in Funcoast Clean Times April-May 2010 Issue.



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 now helped introduce 23 self-sufficient NA meetings in FL and beyond; including, Coleman Federal Penn, Alabama, NW FL, Georgia, and South Carolina. 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 further 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.

If you are interested in gaining a State or Federal clearance or for more information and guidelines on the program, contact

<<<<<< Gilber O.

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## My name is M and I am an addict.

My name is M and I am an addict.

Never did I think, in even my most philosophical introvert moments, that I would one day be in a fellowship such as ours and practicing a program that encourages me to not only do a daily inventory, but to make amends, to look at my part, and be of service to others.

I would have scoffed at the idea and had a clever put-down ready for anyone who suggested such a way of life might even be my key to sanity today.

Probably because I hadn't figured on being clean and - emotionally or otherwise from mind-altering substances.

But there it is, I am no longer a suicidal knot of self-hatred, fears and insecurities; and when I am, I know what to do.

Today I am mostly willing, occasionally grateful, but always in awe of this 12 step program.

I may have to drag myself to work a step, begrudgingly, or I rush right into it looking for immediate consolation and relief.

I reached out to some friends at World Services after having met at a convention in East Africa for some ideas on how to be of service in a remote area and in a country where no fellowship exists at all, and where addiction is a social taboo (albeit rife) and I have to safeguard my anonymity very carefully.

I have been a "loner" for almost 10 years of my time in recovery, and without this fellowship reaching out in the most incredible ways, would never have stayed clean.

I was asked by my spon-

sor, "How free do you want to be?" - and I have taken that quite literally, and experienced some spiritual moments I never thought possible, and always by connecting with others - never alone, never on my own - because I simply can't do it solo.

I've been amazed by the kindness of those who have reached out to me simply via a word from World Services, and amazed all over again that we are just the same, no matter where or what.

I have my literature and skype meetings (when my connection allows it!!), to keep me going, my sponsor in Tanzania is just an email away, and you all give me hope and faith that just for today, I can stay clean. Today there are no more reasons to use, only excuses...

M,

DR Congo



Whether you are an NA member, a professional who works with recovering addicts, an incarcerated member, or a member who carries the message via service with Hospital and Institutions; the Reaching Out newsletter curated by NA World Services 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 have 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. The Reaching Out publication is seeking paidsubscribers to assist in supporting our continued efforts to distribute the magazine to our members housed in state and federal facilities. Ask your home group to subscribe and help us carry the message.

Contact Gilber O. at 813.245.5399 or via email at gbs92101@hotmail.com.

# The Companion

How exactly am I supposed to feel as the wind bites at my face and the rain blinds me? My limbs are numb and the pain in my legs reminds me of every next step ahead. Should I endure it or maybe find shelter down in a deep dark cave where oblivion is my only companion? Blood trickles from the wounds on my body and I feel my life slowly ebbing away. My vision becomes blurred and my head spins with an unrelenting confusion. Will I survive this time or will this burden become too heavy for me to press on? I am so weary. The seconds feel like days and there is no time to rest. I hear the echoes of familiar voices in the darkness. Hurtful words stab at my mind continuously as I seek a means to silence them. Light peers through the clouds only for an instant, giving me hope that there might be an end to this madness. Perhaps the end is not what awaits me, but a new beginning. Should I strike out on my own trying to find myself or stay here and protect what I've already built with my own two hands?

Wait. What do I see in the distance? I can barely make out the figure as it is shrouded in darkness, and my eyes close with every step as I wince with pain. They look familiar but are still too far away. I can hardly stand but I will surely slit their throat if they get in my way. Too many times before has someone tried to rob me of my sanity and this time they will not defeat me. As the figure gets closer I can see that they are also carrying a burden just like mine. They are almost upon me and yet

they are still just a blur. This familiar shape keeps a steady pace and it looks as if they might just trample me to the ground. Finally we meet face to face and I become truly disoriented. Their face looks like everyone I have ever met, their hair is every color imaginable, and their clothing consists of every type of garment ever made. They begin to reach out for me.

My first instinct is to protect myself by curling up into a ball on the muddy ground. I feel powerful arms lift me up again and this being takes me in a strong embrace. Their skin is warm and their clothing is strangely dry.

I breathe a sigh of relief as the embrace becomes even tighter. A familiar tranquility washes over me and I start to wonder at who this person could be. Suddenly, their form becomes less tangible and my arms start to pass through their shoulders. A brilliant effervescent light begins to emanate from this being as they become pure thought and spirit. Now only energy, our spirits begin to merge together. I feel their strength become my own. My wounds start to mend and the blood is washed away by the gently falling rain. My burden has become lighter and I feel like I can soar through the air. As I look up, the sun begins to emerge fully from behind the clouds and the rain ceases to fall.

My journey can now continue, thanks to that kindred traveler. Their spirit will always be with me, as long as I meet them with open arms - and remember.

-Rick S.

I'm talking to her but she can't hear a thing I say

I keep apologizing and trying to pray

I guess I'm in purgatory for my choices that day?

Wtf happened man? I had a good heart.

I didn't deserve to die, God, I need a fresh start. Two men place me on a metal cart

I can hear a zipper as the light fades to dark

They wheel me to a van that needs a little art

On the side it says morgue, I don't wanna see this part

From above I see the examiner remove the stitches while I rest

My organs are placed back in my body, then he closes my chest

The sheet covers me again, did I fail another test?

As they put me in the freezer, I realize I was blessed

If I had a second chance, God, I would do my best

And not give up on undoing my mess

EMT's deliver me to a hospital bed

The doctor announces my time of death

My chest rises and I take a deep breath

The nurse is quick ....to remove the IV

I bet it was tough to find a vein to put fluids inside-me

I'm rushed right back to that ambulance

The EMTs are beating on my chest as if I had a chance

In and out of consciousness, I see the devil at a glance

What a way to die, vomit on my shirt, vomit on my pants

The trucks moving quick, man they're hauling ass

Weaving in and out of traffic the sirens on blast

I can hear him yelling, "We're losing him fast!"

My life is flashing, I'm regretting my past

We pull up to a house, I remember this place

They take me inside and lay me down on my face

A puddle of vomit under my chin, I feel disgraced

I'm shaking and trembling, in my mouth, an acidic taste

This chick hangs up the phone and says, "He OD'd! He's gonna die soon!"

Then she pulls the rig out and squirts it back in the spoon

Out of the solution, a pill forms

I inhale my vomit, my body becomes warm

One more time, I had no clue what I was in for

My body launches up on the couch from the floor

I pull that point back- straight outta my vein

Squirt it back in the bottle cap I feel so much pain

Why am I an addict? Someone trade me a brain

I just wanna get lost, like that Malaysia plane

Where did it really start? Was it a problem I saw?

A voice says, "Keep watching. Prepare to be in awe..."

I exhaled the smoke, the cherry burns stronger,

then it gets dim quick, and absorbs back into this Bic,

My tears roll up my cheek and hide in my eyes

The pains unbearable, It came as a surprise

I didn't wanna cope, I wanted the easy way out

After seeing this shit? there wasn't a doubt

That a little bit of Patience, can save my ass

I won't have a face to save, if I don't get in gear fast

One decision, one choice,

One mission, one voice,

One life to live

Its time to rejoice

Music is my outlet and the steps

bring me peace

So why am I delaying caging

this beast?

I have a lot to give and a big ol'

heart

I'm not dying today,

going back to

the start....

-Chad K.

## Back from the start:

They said play the tape all the way thru before it gets worse  
So I did, But I played it in reverse  
The tears of my loved ones come out the dirt & un-quench its thirst  
I'm lifted out the ground and put back in the hearse  
The convoy rolls back to a service that's cursed  
My caskets closed, friends and family walk backwards out the church  
My body is taken to a cold dense place  
Where a woman uses make up to bring life to my face  
She tells me about her daughter that died the same way

## *I Can't Pick*

I can't  
pick my frame  
Of the  
weight I gained  
From all  
the hearts I ate  
Pulpy and tart

I binged on romance in youth  
Got sick and Puked  
Now I just starve

And I

Can't pick my nails of all the  
blood  
I spilt  
And sipped  
That flowed from every wound  
Created by some Freudian slip

I  
Messed  
It  
Up  
So  
Many  
Times  
Then took it away

...brought it back

Cocooned in gauze, swaddled  
in band aids  
And swore  
It was  
Okay..

I can't pick my bones of their  
heritage  
Pale skin pretends like I started  
in the 1900s  
But I didn't come from Colum-  
bus  
I got mixed up  
There's old wars inside me  
A combat between the differ-  
ent bloods that comprise me...  
so  
I can't  
Pick my bones  
Of their heritage  
The Native American mysti-  
cism and warrior in the marrow,  
the Eastern European guilt, or  
the traveling gypsy cartilage

I can't pick my brain of its  
strange  
Its free verse courage  
Or its manic-expressive re-  
frain

A mind against its own  
An ill temper  
A madness, a brilliance  
Both at once sharing a single  
ember  
In my temporal lobe

I messed it up so bad  
Said time was trash  
And threw yours away  
I could materialize my worth  
I could make my purpose  
happen  
(Almost on cue)  
For my audience I grew  
But once alone, I couldn't help  
but decay

So friends, lovers, family,  
strangers, could save me  
But only for the duration of  
their stay

I can't pick a gut of its im-  
pulses  
The kind that lead to heart-  
beats  
Pacing toward frantic regret  
There isn't a logic that  
I'd let  
Override a mystery that's led  
to pure misery that I've come  
across yet.

And I've been around baby  
I've made....quite a mess.

I can't pick these eyes of their  
sleep  
The dreams they wear like  
amorous cataracts  
Or the sincere way they can  
look  
When they're not looking sin-  
cerely  
At that with which they've  
made direct contact

I can't stop these things from  
going right above and thru me  
A porous little whore of a  
heart  
I soak it all in then I expel  
As I've often done before  
And I can tell you everything  
about me (or everything I can  
remember about myself on the  
spot)  
But you'll still struggle to fit it  
to sense

If even I can't seem to align  
my own puzzle bits

All I can offer is these 11 uni-  
fied confessions  
And anatomical securities to  
float on  
Touch and go intimacy  
A pen a hand and a heartbeat  
A woman's secrets of girlhood  
And a gathering of ears to  
dote on  
Revealing poems, a micro-  
phone and volume levels to  
match the true apex of my 'done  
wrong'

And so on  
And....  
I...  
can't...

pick my imagination  
Of a boredom wide awake  
Where everything around me  
becomes  
Something to undulate

But sometimes seeking to  
fully understand  
Is to overcompensate  
All the things I previously tried  
to pluck  
I now give up

So I pick faith  
And for that faith  
I dilate.  
I open wide  
With no how's or why's  
And I honor with a ritual  
I urge all to try on for size  
I follow suit, dear divinity  
After all it was you whom  
recruited  
Me into your infinity

And I write.  
I create.  
I pick faith.  
Thru better or worse

Cuz it took me this damn long  
To figure out  
That shit picked me first.

-Kristan W.

## **Embrace Darkness**

Your words linger and cause  
pain like the unseen bruises I  
beg for  
The twitch of the internal  
scars ache like a compressed  
collarbone  
The yearning to feel the  
breath evade me to uncon-  
sciousness is an escape of the  
torment I feel inside  
I use you and beg you to hurt  
me to ease my conscience  
The physical pains dull the  
spiritual emptiness  
At least for a little while  
I think penance is needed to  
forgive my sins  
The darkness cannot be  
avoided and in truth I don't find  
my needs to be sinful  
But you say they are  
Others tell me the darkness  
is wrong  
But I like it. I crave it. I need  
it.  
I dream of desertion and  
death  
A new beginning is what I  
seek  
Eternal escape from the pain  
The pain of who I really am  
and what I have done that has  
felt so right  
I embrace the darkness to  
bring it to light  
I meditate to feel the warmth  
of the light

I feel so sick but I like it.

-Anonymous

**B** Calling all speakers! orcna xxviii is looking for dynamic speakers

A/60

**A**

- 1. Reward?  
Ability to change someone's world!
- 2. Sneak Peak:  
Speaker Jam in the fall
- 3. Stay tuned  
for more details at [www.orcna.ca](http://www.orcna.ca)

**B**

Submit your digital mp3 to:  
[prog.orcnaxxviii@gmail.com](mailto:prog.orcnaxxviii@gmail.com)  
or by mail to:  
**ORCNA XXVIII**  
PO box 91057,  
Kanata, ON K2T 0A3

**Cleantime Requirements**  
Main Speaker 10yrs  
Workshop Speakers 5yrs

# Anniversaries - September & October

<b>A New Way</b>			<b>Monday Meditation</b>			<b>TTNA</b>		
Alex L	9/7/1998	16	Shaun B	9/12/2013	1	John S	10/20/2008	6
Beth D	9/6/2012	2	TJ	9/4/2012	2			
<b>Brandon At Noon</b>			<b>NA 180</b>			<b>Women's Hope</b>		
Josh M	9/28/2009	5	Norman P	10/24/1996	18	Deb C	9/1/1984	30
Wes C	10/15/2010	4				Tabitha M	9/23/1989	25
Ben S	9/30/2012	2	<b>Never Too Young</b>			Amanda K	9/11/2012	2
Elizabeth T	9/19/2013	1	<b>To Recover</b>					
Matt L	10/3/2013	1	Jereme B	9/25/2009	5			
Jason V	10/9/2009	5	Mark N	9/5/2012	2	<i>Note from the Clean Times: Keep the updated anniversary lists coming in. Here at the Clean Times, we prefer not to have empty columns of space yearning to showcase miraculous anniversaries ..... Thanks for your Help!</i>		
Nicole S	9/19/2013	1	John M	10/15/2012	2			
Luis G	10/29/2013	1	Amber D	9/10/2013	1			
<b>Emergency Room</b>			<b>Quest For Serenity</b>					
Marina E-K	10/3/2009	5	Dave S	10/16/2010	4			
<b>Grow or Go</b>			<b>Radical Recovery</b>					
Buck B	9/10/1986	28	Nate M	10/11/1996	18			
David G	10/4/2013	1	Joe D	10/5/2000	14			
			Don D	10/31/2007	7			
<b>Hope In Lutz</b>			<b>Recovery Central</b>					
Bob F	9/15/1995	19	Lisa C	10/4/1986	28			
Ed Mc	9/13/2012	2	Valerie B	9/15/1989	25			
Erik K	9/9/2006	8						
Talia B	9/7/2013	1	<b>Squeaky Clean</b>					
<b>Hope In Recovery</b>			Gary K	10/20/1983	31			
Zemmie J	9/23/1996	18	Dave H	10/20/1994	20			
Ira J	9/7/2010	4	Fernando S	9/20/2006	8			
			Jimmy F	10/27/2010	4			
<b>How It Works</b>			Lorraine J	10/14/2013	1			
Alan A	10/11/1988	26	John A	10/30/2012	2			
Norman P	10/24/1996	18						
<b>Hyde Park NA</b>			<b>Sunset Solutions</b>					
Jan B	9/3/2010	4	Deb C	9/1/1984	30			
			Judy N	10/17/1984	30			
<b>In The Middle</b>			Lydia B	9/18/1988	26			
Kelly C	9/25/2006	8	Marina W	9/5/1991	23			
Paul B	10/24/2007	7	<b>The Truth</b>					
			Gill G	9/5/2013	1			
<b>Keep The Faith</b>			<b>Triple M</b>					
Willie M	10/3/2007	7	Felix C	9/1/1997	17			

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.