

Clean Times

November/December 2014

www.tampa-na.org

Clear Message

First, I would like to thank the Clean Times Sub Committee for asking me to write this article. The request was to share my experience as a sponsor. I need to first share that my sponsorship started when I was not qualified. During that time I had not completed the Twelve Steps. My thinking at the time was that with the experience of being 12th stepped and my time working with Helpline had to make me qualified.

I was very wrong! I did not possess the experience and the spiritual values needed that would allow me to carry a clear message of Narcotics Anonymous. I had not developed the humbleness, compassion and the understanding of a God that would direct me and give me the spiritual fitness to carry that message. In short I was trying to manipulate the outcome. As with all lessons I have experienced during the process of recovery, I learned I could only be an instrument of the process; not the procurator of the outcome. A very difficult lesson, but one that prepared me for sponsorship as it was intend to be.

Although NA's pamphlet about Sponsorship suggests that a

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sponsor should have at least one year, for me it was almost three years before I could "qualify" honestly as a sponsor. I would have to have had the "awakening". As a sponsee I have seen seven sponsors. All I "fired" for one reason or another. There were two of those I had a substantial reason to let go. One had not worked the steps all the way through, the other committed an act that was not acceptable to anyone's understanding of a spiritual program. I learned from this experience a very important lesson that would apply not only to that of a sponsor, but people in general.

The lesson was that of trust. I can only trust people to be humans! I try to remember this as I work with my sponsor and sponsees alike. There has been quite a few sponsees. Too many to recall all. Some did what so many do, go back out and not return. I pray those are still alive and have found their recovery. Some have "fired" me, for whatever reason, not that that is important. What is important is that they have found a person they are willing to work the Steps with.

Mind you this addict didn't take the first few "firings" with grace. I internalized the experience, beat myself up for being a "bad" sponsor. The sponsor I had at the time along with the close friends in the rooms helped me to realize that I am only an instrument of the process. The outcome and results are that of God, not mine to determine. Some were very willing to work with me, the Steps. Others just never got around to it. I,

Sponsor, Godfather, Uncle

I may never look into the eyes of a child and see mine looking back at me. Yet God has given me other relationships to which I would like to believe I have influence.

As a sponsor, it's my responsibility to guide one through the 12 Steps; to teach one what I was taught, pass on a legacy. As a Godfather, I made a commitment to nurture this child spiritually. I pray for her daily. We have traditions; we color Easter eggs, paint pumpkins for Halloween, and it's my responsibility to buy her a Christmas dress every year. I set a standard of men for her.

myself, had slacked off on my own responsibilities, to my commitment to them. The results varied. Some of the sponsees moved on to other sponsors, some, I was told, really wanted what I have, and was willing to wait until I could be available. Really, I had to make myself available. This was a lesson in commitment! The problem with sponsorship is that as you work with the sponsees, things like personal character defects emerge. Things like, maybe I just don't have such a clear understanding of the issue. Maybe I need to slow down, take a deep breath, LISTEN to the sponsee or have a meeting with my Sponsor. (Damn I thought I

As an uncle, I get to have the most fun. We wrestle on the couch or in the pool. Watch movies together and for the scary ones I even get to hold their stuffed animal. In these times I am just one of the boys. I feel joy as their love is returned to me. With a friend's kiddos, I am the cool uncle. The one who lets them drive, eat quarter pounders, and helps them do your homework. We play on the tire swing and I answer 101 questions. In recovery I have learned to change my perception. With the steps and application of the principles in my life "Old dreams awaken and new hopes arise".

- Ira Lee Baker

had could do this perfectly!) OK, OK here I go again... God not me. Working with sponsees have a way of letting me know what I need to work on about myself.

There is nothing more ego busting than a sponsee who calls you on your own stuff! I pause for a moment to ask God to give me strength to write this next paragraph. Some of my previous sponsees have died while in recovery. I don't think I will ever quite truly accept that. I have over the years developed such a love for the recovering addict; to lose one to this disease or complications to the disease is very difficult for me to accept.

Continued on page 4.

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

E U E S S H T C I E S S H W I
C T S S E N G N I L L I W P D
L O V E S I N T E G R I T Y I
C E R L O D I N G E T B C H S
Y P Y F S E D S F S E N O S C
F F I L E D N S U E M P U T I
I T S E C N A R E V E S R E P
U U T S I I T H H I I D A P L
I I P S I M S U U O N C G L I
A G R N S N R Y G M N L E B N
E G H E R E E F H P I E E V E
U S I S D P D A T I O L S G F
I R E S P O N S I B I L I T Y
N E N R U I U F A E S G E T Y
N F S E R R E T F I S O U E Y

BELIEF
COURAGE
DISCIPLINE
FAITH
HONESTY
HOPE
HUMILITY
INTEGRITY
LOVE
OPEN MINDED
PERSEVERANCE
RESPONSIBILITY
SELFLESSNESS
TRUST
UNDERSTANDING
WILLINGNESS

Writing Steps for Recovery (Behind the Walls)

Dear Reaching Out,

I am an addict and my name is DT. After eleven years of living clean, I was given a prescription for painkillers due to a back injury. My attempt at detoxing from the pills with Methadone landed me a ten-year prison sentence and ten years of drug probation for DUI manslaughter.

Needless to say, my entire life is controlled "behind the walls". This includes recovery; thanks to the grace of God, NA meetings, and a selfless individual devoted to H&I. Our fellowship practices the message of recovery and keeps me grounded spiritually. Prisoners especially strive to cope and to find strength, will, and blessings

of our Higher Power, as each day is like a war zone.

I am especially thankful that we got to share in FRC-NA's 30th anniversary via telephone conference. Our H&I representative helped fellow addicts "behind the walls" and beyond to intertwine in unity, hope, spirituality, and recovery, one day at a time. During that call, I experienced total freedom and was grateful for the serenity that I felt with Narcotics Anonymous. Celebrate Life.

Thank you,

DT, FL



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 paid subscribers 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.

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.

I Know I'm Not An Addict!!

I can handle it! I know I can! Just last month I quit using three whole weeks, no problem!

I know my relationships are screwed up, but that's just because no one understands me. I mean, just because sometimes I accidentally use more than I set out to use, that doesn't make me an addict! Yeah, I know I just lost my job, but my boss is an asshole, he couldn't understand why I was absent so often, as if other people aren't too sick to work sometimes!

Besides I'll get another job soon. Meantime Morn will send me the rent money again, I'll be OK.

I know I'm not an addict. I mean, addicts steal things. I've never stolen anything in my life!

Taking money from my parents isn't stealing; after all, I'll inherit it eventually anyway so it's really my money, right? And turning on the utilities after they've been shut off isn't stealing, I mean it's not like it's taking from a person. Just because they arrested me for it, doesn't mean it's stealing. The cops just like to hassle people who don't live like they do. I wish everyone would mind their own business. It's my business if I like to get high once in a while.

I'm not an addict, addicts are dirty. They share dirty needles. I don't even USE needles.

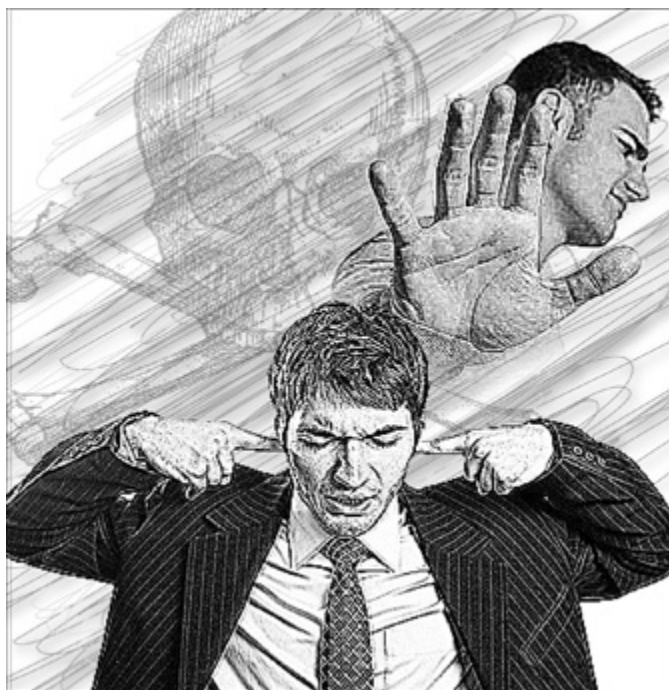
I'm not an addict, I mean, yeah, I sleep with a dope dealer, but that's love, not drugs. I can get my own drugs!

My life's OK, the suicide didn't mean anything, I was just feeling bad because I was coming down. Everyone feels like that when they run out of dope.

My life may sound pretty f***ed up, but it's not the drugs, it couldn't be. I can handle it!

I'm - not - an -- addict!?! Am I?

-Anonymous
(Reprinted from The Clean Times November 1994 Issue)



Clear Message.. Continued.

At times when I recall those sponsees, I'm angered, greatly disappointed and at times feel abandoned. I know deep down that God has control of the outcome, but never the less, I hurt from the loss. The sponsee, who took their own life or lost their life to the disease died for me, you, all of us in recovery. Knowing this doesn't ease the pain, but it does help keep me clean! Those were powerful examples of just how deadly the disease of addiction is and how powerless I am over the disease! Yes there have been some very sad and difficult times as a sponsor.

What Do I Owe You?

What do I owe you? I keep drawing shapes to try to figure it out. A circle for a spine grow weak and curved back into a cycle I deny. Every strait line was a lie. Every line was a lie. The triangle is your throat from which you spoke, every goodbye and every quote, every promise broke. Always cornered into that voice, I myself remain a prisoner to that pyramids echo and inflection. Soaked with sun rejection. As your moon, my

posture had to be circular, my skin had to be a mirror. I was expected to hold (the warriors) fever as you slept. I am expected to make up for your temper, your bad behavior, by always remaining calm, even as I am trampled on, crowded by stars or probes, disrobed by your illumination, or have grown impatient with my own celebrity. What do I owe you, simply because we share a sky, a celestial body, must I be your other side? Must I be YOUR other side? You think its a gift, your light, but you seek reimbursement and praise, when I'd

Just prefer
To be left to my greys
But I'm the weaker one
Your the sun
So we do things your way.

Although friendship is not a requirement to sponsor or to be sponsored, these recovering addicts have become the most dearest of my friends. They have in ways become family. As each becomes more willing to open up and as myself do the same, a bond of strength second to none has developed. Truly some of the "ties that binds us together". We all have our problems, our concerns and our disagreements yet the growing process of sponsorship prevails. Growth as individuals, as friends and as recovering addicts continue. We learn from each other as we learn to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps. We have experienced the hope, the freedom from self, the joy of living and the personal happiness as we experience the process of recovery together. Together we learn to live and experience life clean of the drugs that would have surely denied us our recovery.

- In Loving Service,
Lynn D.

(Reprinted from the Mar-Apr 1999 issue of the Clean Times)

But there have been some wonderful and rewarding times also. I have experienced the full gambit from pulling a needle out of the arm of a relapsed addict and rushing them to the emergency room to giving a sponsee his first year medallion. I have witness the transformation of an angered, hating-addict to a loving and compassionate giving, caring person. I have experienced hearing the sound of a gun going off triggered by the addict who could no longer withstand the pain of not being able to stay clean to holding the hand of an addict until he let go of his last breath, leaving us clean.

At the present I have three active sponsees who each sponsor.

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



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

B

Submit your digital mp3 to:
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 - November & December

Grow or Go

Scott K 11/25/1984 30
 Stephen P 11/11/1987 27
 Craig F 11/27/2007 7
 Kyle M 12/8/2009 5

Quest For Serenity

Aoife O 11/11/2012 2
 Phoebe B 12/7/2005 9
 Amy R 12/5/2012 2
 Angie H 12/1/2013 1

Hope In Lutz

Ron S 11/16/1993 21
 John R 11/15/1999 15
 Betty Ann 11/9/2007 7
 Carrie L 11/2/2012 2
 Melinda G 11/10/2013 1
 Richard B 12/21/2003 11

Radical Recovery

Ron T 12/14/2011 3

Recovery Central

David J 11/17/2006 8
 Nick S 12/6/2013 1
 Nicole C 12/13/2013 1

How It Works

Denise V 11/10/2012 2
 Robert C 11/23/2012 2

Squeaky Clean

Jim F 12/3/1984 30

Hyde Park NA

Michael B 11/2/2010 4

Sunday Morning NA

Steve C 11/20/2001 13

In The Middle

John T 11/8/1993 21

Sunset Solutions

Lori G 11/3/1988 26
 Bob J 12/12/1986 28

NA 180

Dan N 11/1/2010 4
 Daniel 11/15/2012 2
 Jill S 11/13/2013 1
 Matthew L 11/21/2013 1
 Linda R 12/27/2006 8
 Manny G 12/10/2011 3

The Truth

Jonathan C 11/17/2013 1
 Dane S 12/10/2013 1

Together We Can

Jennifer P 12/21/1990 24

Never Too Young To Recover

Michael M 11/10/2013 1
 Kristan W 12/31/2011 3
 Dane S 12/10/2013 1

Women's Hope

Pauline G. 11/4/1985 29
 Marcy L. 11/16/2004 10
 Taryn T. 11/21/2004 10
 Jennifer G. 11/23/2007 7
 Meghan S. 11/1/2012 2
 Lucy L. 12/25/2006 8
 Linda R. 12/27/2006 8

New Life

Jennifer P 12/1/1990 24
 Andrew S 12/28/2012 2

New Tampa NA

Jeff S 12/24/2003 11
 Leah E 12/16/2013 1

CORRECTIONS:

New Life
 Connie W 10/6/2001 13
 Valeria J 10/9/1992 22

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!

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.