

Tampa Funcoast
Area Of Narcotics Anonymous

Clean Times




813-879-HELP
(813-879-4357)
FUNCOAST HELPLINE

January/February 2016

How It Works (a Funcoast series on the steps and traditions)

Step 1. "We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable."

Surrendering to the fact that I had a disease and not just some moral corruption was a defining moment for me. It's been a little over two years since I finally gave in to this truth. Understanding that I didn't have to do anything alone was another concept I didn't comprehend right away. I struggled to believe that there was a higher power out there. Even today, I couldn't tell you much about it. All I know is that It listens when I pray to It. I don't believe It takes action in my life. I don't believe It chooses who lives and who dies. This is why I never thank my higher power for grace and mercy.

I refuse to believe I was chosen. I don't believe I deserved to live any more than any of the many close friends I've lost to this disease. I was lucky. That's what it comes down to for me today.

Step 2. "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

It's not only the drugs that I am powerless over. I've come to realize that I have very little power at all. I have to admit the truth about my life, how it really is. I can't focus on what I think it could or should be. I've spent so much time lately projecting the future that I end up seeing nothing at all. I become overwhelmed with sadness and frustration. Am I wasting my time here? What will truly make me happy in this life? What am I supposed to do? Nobody can help me with these questions. I have to turn it over to something greater: something that knows me and pays attention to my life. I repeatedly accept the fact that to change something, I have to change something,

otherwise everything stays the same. I accept that my disease wants to keep me feeling stuck and miserable, even if it can't get me to use. I must remind myself that I have to do whatever it takes to recover. I want to have a profound change in my life. I have had many since I have come around, but now it is more about the real world and growing up. It's about making big decisions and finding a path to follow. My obsessive thinking and compulsions are my enemy because they can keep me stuck doing nothing. When I choose to take suggestions that were given to me since the very beginning, I push my disease further away and I'm that much closer to a better recovery. When nothing seems to be helping, I pray and pray. I ask for my higher power to take it all away. And I know that's all I can do most of the time. The first two steps apply to my everyday life. It is up to me to acknowledge the fact that if I don't pursue my recovery diligently, my disease will pursue me.

-Jill S.

Tradition 1: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity."

"Unity is the spirit that joins thousands of members around the world in a spiritual fellowship that has the power to change lives." It's difficult to read or hear this statement without deep emotions rising up in each of us who has experienced the miracle of recovery, or is feeling that glimmer of hope for the first time because we finally found a home where we can identify with others who are just like us. While we often say "this is a selfish program," our common welfare comes first. Our lives depend on it. There is synergy in these thoughts, because by making our common welfare the top priority, we ensure that we sustain the program for everyone, and that enables our personal recovery to flourish. We keep the doors open to ANY addict seeking recovery, because those doors were open for us. Today we live the miracle of recovery because of this.

Continued on Page 4....

Inside...

From The Inside p.2

Stepping into The Light p.3

How It Works, cont. p.4

Traditions Project Update p. 5

Anniversaries p. 6

Meeting schedules, event calendar, area service links, & more at www.tampa-na.org

From The Inside

Dear Reaching Out,
Tuesday, 13 March 2012, I cleared customs at the airport in Mexico for the first time. As soon as I walked through the doors, an NA member from Arizona, EW, was waiting to greet me. My flight had been delayed, so I understood when he said, "Come on. We are late for the meeting. You have to change your pants." Then he led me over to a group of NA members, friends I had not met yet. I pulled some clothes out of my bag and rushed into the bathroom to change, leaving my laptop and a bunch of NA memorabilia to be watched by five people I had never met before. (ONLY IN NA!!!!)

My new friend EV, a woman of incredible strength, courage, and integrity, took Ed and me to the prison. My pants were not right so I had to go to a truck and rent a pair of pantalonos with a broken zipper and raggedy cuffs for 20 pesos. I went through all the rituals of entering a prison as a volunteer one more time. There were a number of guards carrying automatic weapons. EW and I had to carry EV up several short flights of stairs in her wheelchair. I was trying to take it all in, the guards' uniforms, the security procedures, the colors, the sounds, the smells. Yes, even in Mexico a prison smells like prisons in other countries.

Then when we got to the meeting room, the meeting had already started. It was in Spanish and I do not speak Spanish very well, but I understood the language of the heart that was pouring out in the voices of these men. Initially, I declined to share, but after EW spoke up with an eloquent message that the men in that meeting were an important and essential part of NA, I was reminded that I had come to share too.

Speaking slowly so that it would be easy to translate, I began to share my simple message. I asked the men how they liked their pillows, whether their mattress was comfortable, if they liked the clothes they were wearing and a

few more things like that. Then I asked them, "Don't you deserve better than this?" Most nodded, "¡Sí!"

As I looked at their faces a realization on a gut level spread through my body. An intrinsic understanding became evident. When I entered the prison, I had looked in the faces of the visitors who were leaving. What was etched in their faces was pain, despair, shame, degradation, resignation, and a host of negative emotions. I remembered causing this pain and shame to my loved ones as I reminded these men that they were the reason their wives did not have husbands to hold them and their children did not have fathers to teach them; and that their behavior inflicted the pain on those whom they love. Then I shared about how we were all in that room because of choices we had made, and that some of our choices would allow us to go home in an hour or two while others were living with consequences that kept them locked up longer than others. We all had the same choice at this moment: to stay clean right now. We all heard me say, "It is always right now. If we don't take anything to change the way we feel right now, we will stay clean." Leaving that prison with EW and EV, I was overwhelmed once more by the gratitude I experience being clean and free, no longer a slave to active addiction and its results and consequences. That evening we went to a meeting in the city. The next morning we drove to the NA convention, which was great fun. My dear friend A and I presented a workshop, Servicio con Amor ("Service with Love"). It was so gratifying to lock eyes with an addict who was hearing a new point of view that was changing her perspective, to see attitudes being affected as my words were translated, to speak of ideals and see where I was falling short of living up to them, and to expose myself to people in a place where I did not speak the language while finding a way to discuss the

common points of identification in explaining how to make service fun and attractive.

Over the next few days I made many new friends and learned the proper way to greet friends in the NA way a la Mexicana which is a handshake followed by a heart-to-heart left-sided hug followed by another handshake. My last day in Mexico was rather exciting since we were on the floor of a mall when an earthquake started undulating the building. My friend EV said, "We are having an earthquake. What should we do?" EV, a woman of great courage, was in her wheelchair so I knew we weren't getting down the stairs immediately. Practicing the spiritual principle of equanimity I responded, "Is the building falling down?" She said, "No." So I said, "Let's finish our lunch then." It was a true moment of faith and surrender.

When I returned home, I received a phone call reminding me that I had been invited to share at a US prison the following evening. While I was there I read an article from a recovery newsletter to those men. Then I shared about going to an NA meeting in a prison in Mexico. It was heartwarming to share that experience while explaining the unlimited possibilities those men will have in front of them if they stay clean when they are released.

There are no challenges that we cannot overcome in recovery. We may not get the results we want or expect, but we can fulfill God's will for us. Once more I left feeling right in my heart and in my soul and spent time counting my blessings, one of which was my ability to be grateful. The next day I saw my oncologist. He reminded me of how fortunate I am to be free of a rare and aggressive form of cancer. Thus I counted one more blessing that had come from turning the results over to my HP.

"THANK YOU, NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

JR, CA

Writing Steps for Recovery (Behind the Walls)

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 7 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 Gilbert O. at 813.245.5399.

Experience, Strength, and, Hope

If your best thinking has gotten you here,
You're in the right place.
Please get comfortable being uncomfortable.
Grab a cup of coffee, and a good seat,
popcorn is optional.
Tonight's show is Experience, Strength, and Hope----
SPOILER ALERT!

It's about coming into contact with a higher power,
-----so come up out of that foxhole, and
STOP praying to the police so they won't make an arrest,
STOP praying for a worthy lawyer,
STOP praying to that judge to have leniency, and
START praying for the serenity to accept whatever outcome.
Pray for restoration of sanity.
Pray for others in your prayers.

Newcomers, we know that sitting in that chair
feels like being stranded on a deserted beach at first.
Then you see the N.A. banner on the horizon,
Sailing ever close, closer,
Alas, help and hope are coming.
We are that ship!
We feel that our approach to the shores
Of the disease of addiction is completely realistic.
The comedic value of one addict helping another is without parallel.
We practically feel that our way is hilarious,
for one con can best understand and con another con.
We mostly shoot straight though—
Like we did in our veins and up our noses.

Our program is also eco-friendly.
We have recyclable buckets of filth that we share.
The more one is poured empty,
the more experience and hope we all gain,
strengthening the lot.
Coming clean is quite the labor of love.

Irony can be found in the fact that
Experience, strength, and hope can be
Compared to cleaning solutions.
See, it builds resolve when we shout it out, although,
There are some of us that need to wash our mouths out
with Ajax.
Some of us have a lot to Gain---and—
All Purpose is poured into the program.
Some have given A-L-L literally,
life and liberty in the struggle.
Others just ride the Tide,
getting clean briefly, then pulled back out
into an ocean of insanity.
It's hard to forget the "Oh so," Fabuloso's,
The good looking, good dressing mofos,
Whose every word, wet jets slicker than a Swiffer,
becoming an oasis to our dried up existence.
---Dead set on giving newcomer infants,
toddlers, and tikes, the rights and the keys
to the business of recovery.

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT

For so long I thought I walked alone
Never knowing you were by my side
Couldn't find a place to call my home
Thought it was enough to
just survive

But then the darkness
Brought me to my knees
That's where I found the faith
You had in me

Stepping into the light
You were always there beside me
Your loving voice to guide me
It's time I gave up on the fight
And let this spirit take to flight
Stepping into the light
Stepping into the light

Every day He's with me everywhere
I can see Him in my child's face
I can hear Him calling out to me
I can feel His love and tender grace

And all these blessings
Bring me to my knees
I'm grateful for each day
You've given me

Stepping into the light
You were always there beside me
Your loving voice to guide me
To "Just let go" without a fight
And let my spirit take to flight
Stepping into the light
Even though the road is long
He gives me strength to carry on
And now I see it burning bright
I'm stepping into the light

Continued from Page 1...

Some of the principles we get to practice with Tradition 1 are surrender, acceptance, commitment, selflessness, love and anonymity.

Anonymity can be applied to how we act and interact with respect to people with many years clean. When I was very new in the program, I used to judge people with years clean, expecting them to be flawless. As time went on, and I tried to keep an open mind while accumulating some clean time myself, I came to understand that we are all the same, regardless of history or clean time. Once I accumulated some time, I noticed how uncomfortable it feels to think I might be judged by others, and this helped me in Step 7 to work on not judging or placing expectations on others.

On the flip side, people with considerable clean time must be careful not to get sucked into basking in the accolades of other, newer members. At any time in our recovery, EGO can result in “easing God out,” and it can literally be deadly. We are all the same, and I must always remember to share honestly about where I am in my recovery, participate on equal footing with every member, be of service, and remember that no member’s opinion or experience is more important than anyone else’s.

Another point stressed in Tradition 1 is that “unity” is not “uniformity.” When I first moved to Tampa, I

had a hard time relaxing and accepting the different meeting formats. I had to practice acceptance and embrace the diversity and the beauty of hearing the same amazing NA message through different meeting formats.

I also had to come to accept that different addicts have different ways of sharing the NA message. My style may be more calm and nurturing, while another’s may be very raw and piercing. I came to accept that diversity in our how we share enables us to really get through to any addict who walks through the door. If they can’t identify with one person, they will soon identify with somebody in the room. Unity also allows our members to learn that fun in recovery is possible and give opportunities to include or reunite with family and friends through attending NA functions and activities. Underlying and solidifying the concept of unity is each member’s responsibility to be of service. This sustains both the common welfare and enhances our personal recovery.

Tradition 2: “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

Tradition Two gives us an opportunity to practice faith, humility, open

mindedness, integrity and anonymity.

It helps us to understand the importance of group conscience in NA, and of leaders being “trusted servants” rather than “governors.”

With group conscience, it is important to remember that it starts with the individual member surrendering and asking for guidance from a Higher Power. We then come together and surrender to that guidance for the group, as trusted servants and group/committee members. It Works How and Why says “The conscience of a group is most clearly expressed when every member is considered equal. A Higher Power works through all of us, regardless of clean time or experience” (page 138). This reinforces the importance of surrender, faith, humility, open-mindedness, integrity and anonymity.

Through this process of respecting EACH group/committee member as equal (anonymity) regardless of clean time or experience, listening with an open mind, sharing with humility, carrying out our roles with integrity, surrendering our will through group conscience, and having faith in the process, we best serve the needs of the NA, the group and our members.

Ideally, the group/committee comes to consensus through discussion, or to a majority decision by voting. Sometimes we thrash

in groups/committees because we are sure our opinion is the right one, or that one or more members may be overshadowing others because of their demeanor, reputation or other issues which seem in conflict with group conscience. At these times, we as individual members connect with our Higher Power and work steps 1, 2 and 3. Someone once told me in early recovery, “If it’s not spiritual, it won’t last.” It Works How and Why also tells us “Leadership in NA is a service, not a class of membership. For this reason, we call our leaders trusted servants” (page 139).

When we combine these ideas, we can see that our collective (or group) conscience, guided by a loving Higher Power, places trust in individuals to carry out the roles for which they have been selected. In turn, those trusted servants should also be able to trust: that group and committee members will provide the support required to meet the needs of the group or committee, and NA as a whole.

In loving service,
Leslie B, Tampa



Why I serve

To grow and try
I was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous when I was 16 years old. The progression of my disease was swift, and I finally became willing to do what was necessary to stay clean when I was 20. I felt alone, frightened, and broken, but during the last four years of my active addiction (going to meetings loaded, and generally acting like an active addict), members within the Fellowship consistently welcomed me, invited me into their lives, told me that they loved me, and demonstrated through compassion and loving action that they did love me.

At the suggestion of my sponsor, I became involved with service my first month clean and have been involved in various positions since. I didn't drink coffee at the time, but I made it anyway. I believe that service work provided a foundation that made it possible for me to stay clean during some incredibly painful periods of my life. Many of the relationships developed while serving Narcotics Anonymous have provided me with the strength, support, and love that have allowed me to grow in ways I did not imagine possible. My higher power has presented me with the opportunity to sponsor others, and I now sponsor a wonderfully brave young man whom I am privileged to watch grow and change in ways that consistently amaze me—and he is just beginning to experience the miracles that service work provides.

My mother has a son whom she trusts, and no longer fears. My only sibling, my little brother,

has a brother that he respects. My community has a citizen who positively contributes to our society. I did not dance before I got clean—ever—but I learned how to dance freely in NA and now look forward to the dances at NA events I once dreaded. I have love for myself and am now capable of actively loving others. Without Narcotics Anonymous and service work, I do not believe these things would have ever happened, or even been possible.

I serve Narcotics Anonymous because I desperately want to continue to grow and try, to the best of my ability, to love and be there for my fellow addicts as our Fellowship was there for me. I know of no other way to repay a debt that has given me life.

Eli I, Illinois, USA

Traditions Project Update

The Traditions Project covered a lot of ground in the past two years, and we appreciate all who participated in the process. Review and input periods for the final two batches of material ended with input for Traditions Seven through Ten on 31 August 2015, and Traditions Eleven and Twelve and the closing section on 30 September 2015. The workgroup had its final meeting in mid-September, and will continue making revisions to incorporate Fellowship input into the approval-form draft, which will be mailed with the Conference Agenda Report in November.

There has been an ongoing evolution to the structure of the chapters and the overall workbook since the beginning of the project. We are striving diligently to create a piece that will meet the many diverse needs and wishes of our members. Based on ideas and suggestions from the Fellowship, there will be some further modifications to both content and structure as we progress toward the approval-form version. The biggest changes include simplifications of the chapter structure and an effort to reduce the overall length as much as possible. We've had to make some difficult decisions along the way, such as taking suggestions from some input rather than other input when multiple pieces of feedback contradicted each other. For each of these decisions, we were always guided by the question, "What will make this workbook the best piece of literature possible?"

The level of participation was impressive, with groups from many places sending input on a regular basis. Some had workshops at regular intervals, while others sent what they could when they could. We are very grateful for the hard work and support that have come from members, home groups, literature committees, and ad hoc review workgroups that participated in the development of this book. Your efforts shaped and improved the work immeasurably. As we all know... It takes an entire Fellowship to create the best NA literature possible.

Reaching Out

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

Participate on the Traditions Project discussion board:

<http://disc.na.org/trads>

Anniversaries - January & February

A New Way

Taryn T. 11/21/2004 11

Circle of Friends

Naomi W. 12/30/2013 2

Pat S. 2/6/1996 20

Naomi S. 2/26/1991 25

Grow or Go

CJ 1/10/2011 5

Eddie B. 2/20/1987 29

Hank T. 2/21/1987 29

The Height of NA

Billy W. 1/21/1987 29

Hyde Park NA

Mike D. 11/29/2014 1

John G. 2/28/2012 4

Just For Today

Mindy B. 12/10/2014 1

Carl H. 10/17/2014 1

Sam R. 11/1/2013 2

Monday Meditation

Adam Z. 1/5/2015 1

New Bite of

Serenity

Dan W. 2/22/1988 28

Dee C. 1/28/2010 6

Oscar H. 2/5/2005 11

Tracy J. 3/13/2006 10

Colin B. 3/25/2008 8

Jonathon C. 1/11/2014 2

Linc B. 1/10/2015 1

Vickie P. 12/1/2014 2

Tony W. 12/26/1993 23

Barbara A. 12/11/1986 30

Radical Recovery

Ron T. 12/14/2011 4

Karl B. 12/27/2013 2

Women's Hope

Jill O. 1/12/2014 2

Shelby O. 1/11/2007 9

HG Not Submitted

Robert B. 2/12/2005 11

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