

Tampa Funcoast
Area Of Narcotics Anonymous

Clean Times


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

MAY/JUNE 2016

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

Step 5. "We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

Step 6. "We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

The principles of Steps Five and Six are open mindedness and willingness. The principles of these two were the first that I put into play when I surrender on December 10, 1993. My introduction to NA was in 1990 via the EPA program from my mothers job. She reached out to them and told of my situation, then they provided her with information on what I should and where I should go.

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When I started working the steps my comprehension of powerless was Im weak, and having no control. Then to believe in God, how he was the one punishing me so why would I believe in him, not being mindful that it is because of him is why I'm still here. You guys suggested that I make a decision to turn my life over to this same God who had punished me. Make a searching and fearless moral in inventory about me. Once done with the inventory, admit to God who already knows, myself and another human being the exact nature of my wrongs and be entirely ready for God to remove ALL my character defeats..

As I stated the open mindedness was there this time to do what you guys were doing and suggesting for me to stay clean. Knowing that God knew it all held me back from telling him. I had learned throughout the growth of my spirituality that telling him and someone would be more freedom I would gain from my past, and that I was not alone in my thoughts and actions. I never understood the

cliché "we are sick as our secrets" how could not telling someone about the things I did in my life be considered a secret and keep me sick.

So as time and recovery goes on more willingness to stay cleans is my goal. But then some behaviors that I recognized and others recognized in me starting to become more obvious to me which are called defects. And this was not just in my addiction. I always tried to use my attitude as a defense mechanism to keep people away. But I later learned that is turned out to be a defect of rebellion. As I look over in the past and within the last eight years. I was very rebellious toward allowing only a few people to know me, but as my spirit grows and I grow the mask must go. The writing of this article is a beginning to a deeper level in this process.

Love and respect, in loving service.

-Chovonne Williams

Traditions Five and Six

A recollection of experiences involving Traditions Five and Six. Written by Rick S.

Tradition 5. "Each group has but one primary purpose— to carry the message to the addict who still suffers."

When I got clean, I really didn't know or even care about the primary purpose of NA. I just knew that I was in pain and found a place where I felt safe, could interact with people who were seemingly happy, and walk the same path they were walking as clean people. I noticed that there was such a variety of people talking to each other and I had some hope that I would fit in somewhere. As I continued to stay clean, my perspective began to change and I got to look into the lives of other members to see that some of what they talked about they were actually living. The groups I attended had successfully carried the message of recovery: hope and freedom from active addiction.

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Medication: A conscious decision My Higher Power

I have come to realize that my psychiatric condition is not a character defect, nor does taking my prescribed medication constitute using or relapse. My psychiatric physician is well aware that I am a recovering addict, and knows my history of drug abuse. I have come to understand through my support network in NA that taking my medication does not mean that I am weak in character. I am not only an addict, but I have a psychiatric disorder that requires me to take medication. I have faced—and overcome—difficulties in our program as an NA member who takes medication.

When I first started attending NA meetings, I was told I needed to be honest, so I was. When I shared, I “put my life out on the tables.” At that time I did not think this was a big deal, so I shared about my recovery situations that at times involved my medications and my psychiatric issues. Since then, I have been more discerning on what should be shared with my sponsor and what should be shared “in the rooms.” Initially, no one said anything negative. In fact, I was welcomed with support and felt accepted and loved. However, after a short period of time members commented in meetings about how taking medications while in recovery conflicts with the principles of the program and that depression and anxiety are character defects and choices. As these members spoke out, some other members began to comment in support of their opinions. The issue of medication was discussed, and a few quite vocally insisted that psychiatric medication should not be taken. I began to feel the weight of a stigma, and I began to believe they were right.

I had discussions with different NA members about how and why I should get off my medications. I felt weak and guilty for taking

medication, and I soon gave in to their seemingly logical information and guidance. Therefore, I stopped taking my medications. Nothing good came of this. As my mood elevated, I began to experience psychotic symptoms and suicidal ideations. After getting regulated once again on my medicine, I sought out more experienced members in NA.

Once again, I feel the support and love NA has to offer. I do not believe this is an isolated issue; there are other NA members who are on medication and struggle with these same problems in NA. This article was not written to lay blame on anyone, but rather to shed light on my experience with psychiatric medication in NA. My hope is that by my sharing my experience, others who are struggling with this issue will be helped and know that they are not alone.

Joel M, Illinois, USA



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There are many theories that try to define what a Higher Power is. I don't think it would be worthwhile to decipher what that power is or is not. What I believe is important in the recovery process is simply to accept, just as it's indicated in the Second Step: that it is something that loves me, takes care of me, and is more powerful than I am.

That it loves me means that it allows me to accept myself, people, and circumstances and situations as they are, without judging them or trying to change them or adapt them to my personal wishes.

That it takes care of me means that it instills in me the desire to do better things for myself, to become interested in other people (in spite of them having different ways of acting, thinking, and living than my own ways), and to use my time to leave a better world to live in for my loved ones.

That it is superior to me means that a Higher Power is vast enough to take me to a level of thinking and acting such that, although it goes against my own nature, I am moved to act in ways that are based on decisions inspired by sane judgment. Although I have not defined it, the Higher Power works through me to act in ways that lead to my long-lasting well-being and to the well-being of those around me and the world as a whole. Consequently, my Higher Power operates without me thinking about it when I act in a spontaneous, authentic, and selfless manner.

Jesus G, Coahuila, Mexico

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.

Ask An Addict

“What is the importance of a home group?”

It Works How and Why

The unity underlying our common welfare requires personal commitment and responsible action. For example, when we accept personal responsibility for supporting our home group, we further NA unity and enhance the common welfare of the whole fellowship. Our commitment to unity strengthens our groups, allowing us to carry a message of hope. Meetings flourish in this atmosphere of hope.

P. 93

Basic Text

NA helped this Israeli addict rediscover his love of life. He had always felt like an outsider before he got clean. Now he has a home group and understands fellowshiping to be a spiritual principle. P 198

Attending our home group provides encouragement from the people that we get to know. This sustains our recovery and helps us in our daily living. P 98

I had a sponsor, a home group, and a service position waiting for me. Most importantly, I had admitted that I was powerless over addiction and had come to believe that only a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. I didn't realize it at the time, but by choosing to keep coming back, by listening, by learning, and by following the example of other NA members, I had made a decision to turn my will and my life over to a power greater than myself. By the grace of that power, I am still clean today, twenty-one years later. P 186

Today, I am still a part of that same home group. It is a place where people can find me, and I know that I can find my friends there too. P 201

Living Clean

One of our earliest connections in recovery is usually with a home group (whether we call it that or not)—a meeting we connect with and attend regularly. We look at members of the group who share a bond with one another, and we want what they have. We get to know others who are new and struggling, and we care about whether they make it back the next week. We start to hope for other members, and we find hope for ourselves as well. P 69

Some of us use the word “family” to describe this closeness, and sometimes it really can feel that way—when we have holidays together, share celebrations and mourning, watch the big game together, and so on. One member suggested that a home group was like a family not only in its closeness, but also because we don't get to preselect its members: “Some of them are really difficult,” she said, “but they're ours, and we love them.” P 72

For some of us, stability begins when we are willing to commit to a fixed address. We may begin with regular attendance at a home group and work our way up from there. P 96

A member shared about a woman in her home group whose laugh would fill the room: “Her laughter gave me hope. It had so much love and self-acceptance in it. You could hear the joy.” P 116

Something special happens when we first get clean. Our desperation and the total commitment we make in the beginning combine to create a very precious and important time in our lives. It's never the same as our first home group, our first real connection to a sponsor, or that initial group of friends we ran with in early recovery. P 122

“Why is meeting attendance important?”

Basic Text

We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean. P 9

Our meetings are a process of identification, hope and sharing. The heart of NA beats when two addicts share their recovery. What we do becomes real for us when we share it. This happens on a larger scale in our regular meetings. P 38

Meetings provide a place to be with fellow addicts. P 39

As a result of attending a few meetings, we begin to feel like we finally belong somewhere. It is in these meetings that we are introduced to the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. P 46

After sitting in a meeting, or several meetings, we began to feel that people cared and were willing to help. Although our minds told us that we would never make it, the people in the Fellowship gave us hope by insisting that we could recover. P 42

Recovery is what happens in our meetings. Our lives are at stake. We found that by putting recovery first, the program works. P 42

We attend meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the Fellowship. P 78

Better yet, come to our meetings. Here, you will find answers to some of the things that may be disturbing you now. P 81

If we begin to avoid our new responsibilities by missing meetings, neglecting Twelfth Step work, or not getting involved, our program stops. These are the kinds of things that lead to relapse. P 106

We may be scared at first because we don't know anyone. Some of us think that we don't

need meetings. However, when we hurt, we go to a meeting and find relief. Meetings keep us in touch with where we've been, but more importantly with where we could go in our recovery. As we go to meetings regularly, we learn the value of talking with other addicts who share our problems and goals. We have to open up and accept the love and understanding that we need in order to change. P 83

Even when we feel that we don't want to attend, meetings are a source of strength and hope for us. P 109

We are grateful that we were made so welcome at meetings that we felt comfortable. Without staying clean and coming to those meetings, we would surely have a rougher time with the steps. Any use of drugs will interrupt the process of recovery. P 110

When we re-enter the world, we feel lost, confused and vulnerable. Going to meetings as often as possible will reduce the shock of change. Meetings provide a safe place to share with others. We begin to live the program; we learn to apply spiritual principles in our lives. We must use what we learn or we will lose it in a relapse. P 111

Attending meetings reminds us of what it is like to be new and of the progressive nature of our disease. Attending our home group provides encouragement from the people that we get to know. P 125

I came to meetings of Narcotics Anonymous in order to take care of the responsibilities that have been given to me. P 154

Although in those first meetings I did not see NA as a solution to my craziness, I did hear some things I could relate to. So, I kept going back. I heard the people in NA say that they didn't take drugs anymore, not even grass. I listened. Sure I wanted to stop all the insane

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Sometime last year my home group wanted to find out how successfully we were carrying the NA message and seek ways to possibly improve it, so we decided to use the Group Inventory Form (available for download at NA.org) to answer questions like "Does your group make newcomers feel welcome?" We were able to make some slight changes to our format and to the service positions in our group so that our group might better fulfill our primary purpose and be a more effective vehicle for carrying the NA message.

As I continue to walk the path of the recovering addict, I see groups change, people leave and come back, some groups close and others open. In my first year clean I built a strong foundation, attending three or four meetings a day. I was blessed to have a life situation where I could do that and I notice now that other people getting clean sometimes aren't afforded that ability. I was greeted by many with a smile and given a hug by other members. In the spirit of reciprocity I try my best to notice when there is someone new that comes to a meeting. Instead of going to talk with my friends, I seek out that one person who is standing alone, perhaps wondering if NA will work for them. I offer my phone number and give it out without hesitation. My hope is always that those new people will

hear the same message I heard, and that they will buy into the program that continues to save my life every day.

Tradition Six

"An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

A few years into my recovery, I was grateful to be selected as a trusted servant who would be the Public Relations Chairperson for the Tampa Funcoast. Tradition Six, I found, was one of the most important traditions that I would learn about and practice. I got to see the involvement of NA as it pertains to the greater community outside of the meeting space. Our fellowship was once restricted by laws such as the Rockefeller Drug Laws, which prevented addicts from congregating for any purpose. Now that NA has a loosely measured rate of success in the greater recovery community, I found that we had to connect with the public. We were reaching out to other people and organizations to rent meeting and activity spaces, provide places for our literature, and let others know what services Narcotics Anonymous can and cannot offer. These relationships allow us the ability to more effectively carry the message of hope,

but if the principles and boundaries of the Sixth Tradition are not upheld, we run the risk of diverting from our primary purpose.

In one specific case, a non-NA member who was a member of the facility where we were renting asked if he could be the speaker at one of our meetings and not carry the NA message, but another message that would further that particular facility's beliefs. We were able to politely deny such involvement and avoid diverting from carrying the NA message.

In another case, an NA member wanted to announce an outside event at a fairly well-known treatment center. Even though that particular treatment center shares a membership base with ours, we could not uphold the Sixth Tradition and allow them to announce their event at one of our meetings.

I was also surprised that even mentioning the name of an outside facility within the meeting space, both in the sharing portion or announcements portion, was an indirect endorsement of that facility and should be avoided if possible. It would be akin to the placement of a product in a movie scene. While nobody said the product was great and it works, the placement of the product logo meant that money was given to that

movie for the placement of their brand or logo in the scene. This is a slightly less-known way to apply the Sixth Tradition. Many people are unaware of this, so you might hear them mention the name of a treatment center because they honestly don't know why we should avoid mentioning it.

Occasionally, there were some places and organizations that wanted to advertise that our fellowship met at their facility as a way to increase their own membership, thus lending the NA name. The Public Relations Handbook suggests that we act in the spirit of cooperation, not affiliation with other organizations and outside facilities (PRHB pg. 14). Making this separation clear to those outside enterprises is what allows us to remain free to carry our message of hope.



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situations in my life, but I didn't think I had to give up drugs altogether to do it. I thought that I needed to learn how to handle drugs better.

Some of the NA members, who came into the prison to share at these meetings, had been inmates themselves. They attributed the change in their lives to the support of Narcotics Anonymous; P 174

It Works How and Why

As we attend meetings regularly, we can find great comfort in the experiences of those traveling this path with us. P 14

Listening to our sponsor's experience and applying it to our own lives is how we take advantage of one of the most beautiful and practical aspects of recovery: the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. We hear in our meetings that "I can't, but we can." P 15

We go to meetings rather than isolating. P 19

As we get ready to make this decision, we talk with our sponsor, go to step meetings, and take the opportunity to share about it with other NA members. We gather as much knowledge, insight, and experience as we can from these sources, and then we make our own decision. Step 3 P 27

Narcotics Anonymous is more than just the first meeting we attend or the other NA meetings in our neighborhood. We are part of a much greater whole. P 96

In meetings, we find a new place to belong, new friends, and a hope for a better life. A feeling of care and concern grows between us and the group. P 97

The unity we see in our meetings is an expression not only of our reliance on each other but our mutual reliance on spiritual principles and a Higher Power. P 97

Living Clean

Attending meetings regularly doesn't have to mean every night of the week, but meetings continue to matter for our own well-being and for our ability to carry the message. Keeping that lifeline strong and ready is a matter of continuing maintenance. It gets easier when we let go of the idea that it ought to be hard. P 9

"I often hear newcomers say that they can't imagine going to NA meetings for the rest of their lives. I had the same reservation, but today I can't imagine my life without NA." We learn to do what we have to do, as well as what we want to do. We don't always want to work our program, but we know the rewards we get when we take responsibility for our recovery—and the consequences when we do not. P 11

Early in recovery we were told that if we kept coming to meetings, sooner or later we would hear our story. It would be a mistake to think that our using story is the only one we need to listen for. Our recovery story is no less dramatic, and there are times when we need just as much to go to meetings and listen for that. We hear it when we learn to listen with our heart as well as our ears. Sometimes we have to go looking for it, seeking new meetings, asking around, and sharing about what's going on. We find people who have been through what we're going through, and got through it clean. We need other people to walk us through hard times, and we need to reach out and help others as we heal. P 13

There is magic and a healing grace in meetings, but we cannot see it when our attitude blinds us. Coming back to meetings after we have been gone for a while can be awkward and difficult, or it can be like coming home. P 16

When we attend meetings regularly, people get to know

us and see us over time. When a fellow member can point out to us, "You know, you always get depressed at this time of year," we can take action to address a pattern we could not see ourselves. When someone we don't know that well points out our generosity or loving kindness, we learn that people see goodness in us that perhaps we don't see in ourselves. Our fellows reflect us back to ourselves and show us how we have changed. P 26

The time we sit in meetings may be the only time our racing thoughts slow down at all. P 60

Some of us find the support we need by bringing our children to meetings, and raising them immersed in the fellowship; others of us have children who have no idea we are in recovery at all. Whatever choices we make about how our families and fellowship intersect, we know that the skills we learn in recovery make us better parents, partners, and children to our parents at any stage of our lives. P 77

When we keep coming to meetings even with our attitude, we hear the message in spite of ourselves. P 100

I remember the people who were here when I got here and how they bared their souls in meetings, and I follow suit. It's a benefit to my recovery and a responsibility to those who follow." We learn from each other's experience. Sharing our journey with others is how we teach and learn at the same time. Honest sharing is always attractive, even when we are sharing some really unattractive stuff. When we are honest and open, it resonates with people. When we are humble, they feel it—and so do we. P 120

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

ANNIVERSARIES UPCOMING MAY & JUNE EVENTS

A New Way

Art B. 5/12/1997	19
Glen G. 5/14/1989	27
Mike H. 4/21/2003	13
Gary M. 4/10/2012	4
Mike S. 4/22/2001	15

Circle of Friends

Cassie H. 4/14/2013	3
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Grow or Go

Amy M. 6/4/2013	3
Robert A. 6/8/2005	11
Kirk K. 6/14/1988	28
Andy C. 6/25/2012	4

New Life

Bertha B. 4/27/2007	9
Carole K. 5/20/1986	30
Marlon R. 5/22/2006	10

Quest For Serenity

Scotty D. 4/5/1995	21
Aida S. 5/7/1995	21

Stepping Up

Calvin A. 4/1/2010	6
Mike J. 5/1/1999	17
Renee C. 5/1/1988	28

Ties That Bind Us

Brett P. 6/22/2001	15
Craig M. 6/19/2015	1
Zeke B. 6/30/2015	1

Triple "M" Group

Frederick "Boe" L.	
6/3/2008	8

MAY 14TH SATURDAY - FRCNA 35
PRE-REGISTRATION DRIVE. SPAGHETTI
DINNER AND DANCE. 6PM AT THE SHERATON
TAMPA EAST. 10221 PRINCESS PALM AVE TAMPA
FL 33610. DINNER AND DANCE-\$20 DANCE-\$5
(FREE WITH REGISTRATION)

MAY 22ND SUNDAY - FACNA FISH FRY AND
POOL PARTY FUNDRAISER. AT 6400 E. CHELSEA,
LAKESIDE PAVILION. \$10 IN ADVANCE \$15 AT THE
DOOR. FROM 12-5. (KIDS UNDER 12 EAT FREE)

MAY 28TH SATURDAY - FACNA SPEAKER JAM. 2202 E
BUSCH BLVD. FREE ADMISSION. 1PM-8PM.

JUNE 5TH SUNDAY - FRCNA 35 SUPPORT COMMITTEE
MEETING. 10AM-12PM. ROSEN SHINGLE CREEK. 9939
UNIVERSAL BLVD, ORLANDO FL 32819.

JUNE 11TH SATURDAY - FACNA FISHING EVENT. 7874
BAY VIEW ST. NEW PORT RICHEY FL 34668. 7AM. \$75
NON REFUNDABLE TICKET. IF INTERESTED CONTACT
STEVE AT 813-629- 3532.

JUNE 24TH FRIDAY IS THE 30 TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION MEETING FOR RADICAL RECOVERY.
MEETING STARTS AT 8:30 PM AT BETHEL CHURCH ON
ROME AND HILLSBOROUGH.

WCNA 36 MERCHANDISE

SOON TO BE AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHOOSE FROM A VARIETY OF FLIP-FLOPS,

BEACH TOWELS, MUGS, SNEAKERS ...

WWW.NA.ORG/WCNA

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.