

Tampa Funcoast Area Of Narcotics Anonymous Clean Times


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

January/February 2018

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

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

Powerlessness and acceptance. The First Step's admission of being powerless over my addiction inspires me to assign new sponsees the task of composing a list of 100 things over which they are powerless. There are three reasons for this request. First, it helps the newcomer grasp the extent of her/his powerlessness—which extends far beyond addiction. Second, it gives me a chance to get to know the sponsee, what's valuable and important to her/ him. Third, because this isn't a test but a learning exercise, it gives us a chance to begin working together right away. When a sponsee gets stuck, I ask questions that help add to the list, sorting through what they do and don't have power over. The idea of powerlessness invites me to think more deeply about the Serenity Prayer. The prayer asks me to accept the things I cannot change, to change the things I can,

and to have the wisdom to know the difference. Through working with sponsees, I've gained insight into a common block they and I share. Too often I practice the Serenity Prayer backward, accepting the things it's appropriately within my power to change while wasting my time and energy trying to change the people, places, and things over which I'm powerless. When I look at powerlessness that way, a deeper understanding of First Step powerlessness becomes immeasurably empowering for me. Why? Because once I focus on the things I can appropriately change (as opposed to manipulating or bullying), I'm given the power to do so. Early in my recovery, for example, I wanted more opportunities in my life, so I went back to school to get a college degree. That degree opened the door to joining the new business development program in a grass roots organization that provides volunteer services around the world. At 40 years old, I quit my job and moved to Krakow, Poland, where I played a role in helping the people there move to a market-driven economy. Living abroad began my life of travel adventures: backpacking in Russia and north of the Arctic Circle in Finland, for example. I've been inside the burial chamber of the Great Pyramid in Giza, Egypt. I've walked on the Great Wall of China and visited the Taj Mahal at sunrise. Casablanca, Kathmandu, Ulaanbaatar, Dublin,

Istanbul, Reykjavik, Marrakesh...

I've been to 30 countries in all.

When the bottom fell out of the economy, I found myself unemployed for nearly three years. As I accepted that I can't change the economy, First Step powerlessness helped me ask myself, "What CAN I do to earn a living?" At 60 years old, I repackaged myself and am happily working once again. Similarly, realizing my ongoing good health can't be taken for granted, I decided to change my physical condition: I lost 80 pounds, I'm eating better, and I am making exercise a part of my daily life. I brought this understanding of powerlessness to NA service, as a member of the team that moved the Minnesota Region from a committee structure to a project-based structure. We consolidated the many area meeting lists, paving the way for merging our phone lines. We deployed our Bridging the Gap program, followed closely by establishing our collaboration with the Santa Cruz (California) Area's Sponsorship Behind the Walls Committee. The First Step draws my attention to what I'm powerless over and what I'm not. With a clear appreciation of what I'm NOT powerless over, I'm free to get up each morning and ask myself what I have the power to do to make my life and the lives of others incrementally better, just for today.

-Kit E, Minnesota, Reprinted from NA Way Magazine, January 2015

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

Our common welfare depends on NA and group unity.

So often when people let personalities and opinions get in the way we stray away from our primary purpose. Many say, "It hurts when I see people attend their home groups and not have the commitment to fill trusted servant positions." It is very important that the groups stick together and stay focused on our primary purpose. We cannot keep what we have unless we give it away.

When a newcomer walks into a meeting, it is confusing enough as it is. Recovery is not an option to be found elsewhere for addicts who qualify for NA! It is of the utmost importance that the group maintain an atmosphere of recovery. We need to be committed to the program that saved our life and continues to help us live clean. It is imperative that the newcomers see this. We all need to remember that we are the same and our common welfare comes first. We cannot carry the mess, but we can carry the message. No addict need suffer any longer and a newcomer should feel welcome at their very first meeting.

Generally, compliance or noncompliance with any principle in NA is left to the conscience of the individual, as influenced by his or her understanding of God's Will.

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(Continued from Page 1) Major disruption or causing harm to fellow members is not allowed. With this in mind, we are free to practice acceptance, patience, and tolerance towards one another. The unity called for in our First Tradition can be threatened when our principles are compromised by fear of diversity. Our diversity is our strength, the broader our base, the higher our point of freedom. Because of the nature of our disease, we are vigilant to keep our meetings safe for addicts seeking recovery. Each group has its own conscience. Many times it will seem like all the members in the world stand on two or more clearly separate sides. If you're aware of something like this happening, you can serve by seeking out the third and fourth sides to the argument. Coming from isolation imposed by addiction, we may not realize that many people get steam rolled by powerful personalities, even if they have knowledge and experience that would help in a given situation. They may never get to share and hold back from sheer politeness. There are always more than two sides to a question and if internal tension and strife is too much for the member, he or she may have to find other members with common interests to work their Twelfth Step. We learn to look for the alternative viewpoints when seeking a solution or resolution of a group problem. The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, as implemented in the lives of each of our members, are often viewed as his or her personal recovery. Our spiritual connection with each other's personal recovery creates one of the strongest ties that binds us together as a spiritual fellowship. Eventually, every member who has suffered the horrors of addiction understands the need for and importance of finding and developing a spiritual way of life. As this awakening of the spirit occurs and flourishes, it is reflected in our unity. As we apply the Twelve

Steps in our lives as a design for living, we open the doorway to humility. Our need for false pride and ego is replaced by skill and ability. The concept of group unity plays an important role in the 1st Tradition. The value of strength in numbers is evident throughout NA. Support among addicts helps us to better understand that some individuality can be detrimental to our recovery. Although we may be destructive independently, we are able to gather strength and healing from cooperation. Isolation for addicts leads to dissension, as we separate ourselves from our group, we are actually weakening the group and hurting ourselves at the same time. Each member of our fellowship has something to offer; as he/she separates, one less offering has been eliminated. This cannot destroy the group effort, but it does nothing to add strength. From strength in group unity, we gain momentum, building stronger foundation to lean on in times of need. For newcomers, this is important. Becoming a part of a group effort brings addicts out of their shell, while at the same time, raising the possibility of adding positive support to the fellowship of NA. Surrendering to our false belief of self-sufficiency, we begin to recognize that we need people. We need each other in order to grow. After a period, we see that "dueling egos" and disunity damages us emotionally and spiritually. Surrendering to the WE of group conscience enables us to become more unified. Unity not only assists the group to become more functional, it assists the member to grow. If personal recovery depends on NA unity, then NA unity must depend on personal recovery. This is why members feel, "I am hopeless every time my disease drives me into self-centeredness. I suffer alone in my own mind. The awareness of the need for my efforts to be based on the common welfare always brings

me out of self and out of pain." Surrendering me to NA is a process that underlies all my work in the steps and traditions. - Reprinted from the Narcotics Anonymous Way of Life, Traditions War: a pathway to peace, The Spirit of NA or NA Twenty Plus **Step 2: We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity** When this addict first worked Step Two it was all about the insanity of using drugs. We've heard that insanity is "repeating the same things expecting different results." If I believed that, I was insane when I came into the rooms of NA. When my sponsor asked me to write on "powers greater than myself while using," I became sad, confused, and angry. I felt no hope. Then she asked me about the "powers greater than myself in recovery." WOW!! The God of my understanding, another recovering addict, an NA meeting, a sponsor, the literature and service work. This is where the "came to believe" became apparent to this addict. The process of change had truly begun. There is now hope replacing despair. The inner awareness that comes with this Step allows you to look at your thoughts and behaviors through the eyes of reality. When the pain cause by the insanity gets great enough I can use that power greater than ourselves to help me change. We've often heard "trust the process;" for this addict it was a beginning. Truly Grateful, Anne D., Reprinted from Clean Times February 1996 **Tradition Two: 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. This is what Tradition Two means to me: the welfare of supporting a meeting, sharing with other addicts, sponsorship, and any way I can reach out to another addict.

But the way it came to me was a practical foundation to Tradition One, which is unity, and this starts with the groups to know what my purpose was. And that is to serve and carry the message of NA that is related to that purpose. Then I needed direction. To seek that direction to guide me and then I found a power greater than myself, which I call God. This started me to really understand Tradition Two once I put God first and let Him guide me. Only then is when I understood what serving others really meant. When I was put into service, I could really serve my group and NA as a whole. My Higher Power, which I choose to call God, gives me loving feelings to guide me into the right direction to serve. I am just a trusted servant and do not wish to govern anyone or anything. I just know God will take care of all things. All I can do is allow God to allow me to do so for myself, the groups, and NA as a whole. In loving service, David T., Reprinted from Clean Times February 1996

In Memoriam
The Clean Times would like to take a moment to honor and remember our members lost over this past year. As a fellowship, we mourn these losses together. Give your fellow members a hug and a smile, remember that we all serve that no member need die from the horrors of addiction, and we show up for each other so that no member of our fellowship need suffer alone under any other circumstance. We send out love and light to our grieving members.

**Kimbra G.,
We shall be with you in
the fellowship of the spirit.**



Ask An Addict

**How can I contribute to
NA Unity?**

Just for Today:

"Unity springs from the fact that we have unity of purpose - to recover, and to help others stay clean...A group that has unity which springs from the loving hearts of its members allows each addict to carry the message in his or her own unique way" January 21, p. 21

"Our personal recovery and the growth of NA is contingent upon maintaining an atmosphere of recovery in our meetings. Are we willing to help our group deal constructively with conflict? As group members, do we strive to work out difficulties openly, honestly, and fairly? Do we seek to promote the common welfare of all our members rather than our own agenda? And, as trusted servants, do we take into consideration the effect our actions might have on newcomers?" February 13, p. 45

Basic Text:

"To maintain unity within Narcotics Anonymous, it is imperative that the group remain stable" (p. 59)

"We share our experience and learn from each other" (p. 59)

"...we can disagree without being disagreeable. Time and time again, in crises we have set aside our differences and worked for the common good. We have seen two members, who usually do not get along, work together with a newcomer. We have seen a group doing menial tasks to pay rent for their meeting hall. We have seen members drive hundreds of miles to help support a new group." (p. 60)

"If we employed professionals in NA groups, we would destroy our unity" (p. 69)

"...of those who are now our members, many have long terms of complete abstinence and are better able to help the newcomer. Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of our steps and traditions, is the dynamic force that is bringing increase and unity to our program (p. 86)

"A Voice from the Inside"

Hello. My name is Rodney

P. I am an inmate here within the Florida Prison System. I'm currently stationed at Hamilton Correctional Institute Annex located in Jasper, FL. I'm writing to let all of you know that even in the midst of utter depression, misery and destruction, there remains hope and a reason to change.

I began this incarceration 15 years ago after a weekend of partying and drug-ging. To support that weekend's habit (crack was my drug of choice), I turned to breaking the law and stealing some poor soul's car.

This decision would end up costing me three decades of my life and freedom. In this world (prison) I now call home, I am constantly surrounded by violence, gangs and drugs. Yes, even in a place like this it is so easy to score, probably more so than on the streets. Instead of seeking out the drug dealers on the local street corner, one simply has to roll out of bed and walk no further than a few steps.

One might ask: "How is it there are drugs in a secure place like this?" As the old saying goes, where there is a will, there is a way. Most drugs are brought in by the very people (officers) who are in charge of our care, custody and control. Yes, it's true, money will buy you anything. From there, the drugs are dispensed to the gangs who run a very lucrative business, even behind bars.

In this life that I lead today it is so very easy to become depressed and to find misery and despair around each corner. To find

an excuse, any excuse, to use, one doesn't have to look far to "justify" a reason.

Simply taking a look around is reason enough. However, among all this misery and destruction, there remains hope and a reason to change. I'm not going to sit here and lie; it took me nearly seven years into my incarceration to stop the madness of addiction. It seemed every day I could find an excuse to use and use I did. I was able to score anything from crack to K2 in order to take me away from the reality of this "new life". After countless beatings (for failure to pay off my dope tab), overdoses and nearly dying on several occasions, I finally woke up one day and said to myself "enough is enough".

Beginning in 2010, I started attending NA meetings (behind the walls) and reading the Basic Text. I stumbled upon the greatest sponsor one could hope to have, (and who I still have today), and started working the steps. Through the Basic Text and help from my sponsor I found hope and a reason to change. Today I have been clean for nearly eight years. I couldn't have done it if it wasn't for the belief my sponsor instilled in me! He transformed my mindset and his steadfast belief in me taught me to believe in myself and to remain clean just for today.

My hope is to help other people the way my sponsor has helped me, to believe it's never too late to change. Even in the midst of depression, misery and destruction, my hope remains.

Respectfully submitted,

Rodney P.

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 Gilber O. at 813.245.5399.



Anniversaries

January/February

A New Way

Rich V. 1/4/16 2 years
Beth G. 1/13/16 2 years
Danielle S. 2/8/96 22 years
Amy M. 3/13/09 9 years

Brandon at Noon

Bill G. 1/31/87 31 years
Noel J. 2/11/12 6 years
Vicki J. 2/12/99 19 years
Brian M. 2/4/07 11 years
Michael M. 2/7/14 4 years
Pam J. 2/15/16 2 years
Christopher E. 2/25/14 4 years
Jenna B. 3/15/11 7 years

Grow or Go

Jim C 1/4/2016 2 years
Eddie B 2/20/1987 31 years
Hank T 2/21/1987 31 years

Hope in Lutz

Bill V. 3/9/06 12 years
Susan F. 3/19/88 30 years

Hyde Park NA

Timothy P. 12/14/12 5 years
Willy M. 1/20/98 20 years
Maggie V. 2/6/88 30 years
John G. 2/17/12 6 years
Chris K. 2/18/03 15 years
Nathaniel W. 2/28/17 1 year

Monday Meditation

Scott K. 12/21/09 8 years
Adam Z. 1/6/15 3 years
Juan L. 1/16/17 1 year
Adam D. 1/30/16 2 years

New Bite of Serenity

Dee C. 1/28/10 8 years
Dan W. 2/22/88 30 years
Jamila H. 3/3/08 10 years
Tracy K. 3/16/06 12 years
Colin C. 3/25/08 10 years
Sharon 3/29/08 10 years
Julius L. 3/30/00 18 years
Melissa J. 4/23/16 2 years

New Life

Jonathan C. 11/17/13 4 years
Jennifer P. 12/21/90 27 years
Andrew S. 12/28/12 5 years
Chevelle T. 1/22/98 20 years
Alicia E. 2/5/96 22 years
Carlton W. 2/14/91 27 years
Vivian M. 2/21/98 20 years
Sara M. 2/22/94 24 years
Abbey 2/26/16 2 years

Radical Recovery

Martin P. 1/20/87 31 years
Lynn D. 2/2/88 30 years

Recovery Central

Cory B. 1/1/17 1 year
Chelsea P. 1/1/04 14 years
Ken T. 1/3/88 30 years
Alex S. 1/10/13 5 years
Eddie M. 1/19/15 3 years
Grant M. 1/21/13 5 years
Bernie M. 2/1/16 2 years
Todd F. 2/4/11 7 years
Heather K. 2/10/11 7 years
Lamont J. 2/29/09 9 years
Chris 2/19/13 8 years

Renegade Recovery

Tom M. 1/7/05 13 years
Brad W. 2/2/17 1 year
Ray R. 2/12/16 2 years
David K. 2/17/13 5 years

Steppin Up Up Up

George J. 1/20/92 26 years
Brenda B. 2/24/05 13 years

Sunset Solutions

Mark S. 1/1/85 33 years
Caroline 2/8/89 29 years

Tampa Unity Group

Charlie L. 1/14/08 10 years

The Heights of NA

Derek E. 12/23/07 10 years
Billy W. 1/21/87 31 years
John G. 1/3/06 12 years

Together We Can

Bridgitte W. 2/29/12 6 years
Pat B. 3/2/04 14 years

Triple M Group

Reggie A. 8/22/98 19 years
Felix C. 9/1/97 20 years
Oliver L. 9/4/05 13 years
Leroy H. 12/22/08 10 years
Wendell J. 1/6/99 19 years
Luther R. 1/26/89 29 years
Jerry R. 2/17/96 22 years

Women of Serenity

Penne G. 1/13/15 3 years
Marilyn G. 1/1/16 2 years
Paula B. 4/2/09 9 years
Andrea B. 4/10/16 2 years
Shayla S. 7/13/12 6 years
Wanda L. 8/8/05 13 years

Upcoming

Events & Info

The Bridge Group of Narcotics Anonymous:

<http://www.thebridgena.org>

The Bridge Group was formed in December of 2008. Meetings are now registered with World Services, and we are now offering 7 meetings a week on this same phone number ((712) 832-8320, 387870#) to addicts in need. All it requires is a phone and the ability to dial long distance. Due to the prohibitively high cost of toll-free numbers, and limited 7th tradition funds, we have not been able to offer a toll-free option.

Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast

Sunday, February 25th from 9am-12pm

***Golden Corral, 6942 W Hillsborough Avenue, Tampa**

***NA is not affiliated with this place of business, cost around \$9.00 per person**

A Decade of Hope - 10 Years in the Making: 10th Annual Men's Spiritual Retreat

March 2-4 at Cedarkirk Camp 1920 Streetman Dr., Lithia

Sponsored by the Triple M Group of Narcotics Anonymous

Registration: \$160 per person, includes lodging, meals, bedding and shirt.

Space is limited, so reserve today. Deadline is Feb. 12, 2018.

Cash or Money Order only:

c/o Everette M. 727-216-5096

re: Men's Spiritual Retreat

12101 77th St., Largo, FL 33773

2018 Florida Regional GSR Assembly

Sat, March 17, 9am - 5pm

Tampa Sheraton East 10221 Princess Palm Ave., Tampa, FL

The annual GSR Assembly is a meeting of all GSR's and RCM's in the Florida Region. We come together to meet, grow in unity and arrive at a regional conscience on a variety of issues locally and globally in NA. It is a key ingredient in the maintenance of the NA groups' final responsibility and authority for our fellowship's services, spoken of in our Second Concept.

Choices Presents Spring Speaker Dance

March 17, 6pm - 12 am

6111 N. Central Ave

Cost \$3.00 (no addict turned away), Food and Drinks for Sale

Join us for a night of dancing, unity and feeding your program. The proceeds will benefit our annual free event. So bring yourself, bring your kids, bring a newcomer & show them why we are the Funcoast!

Women Stand United With Hope - 13th Annual Women's Spiritual Retreat

March 23, 9am - March 25, 1pm

Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center, 1920 Streetman Dr., Lithia,

Registration \$160 includes lodging, meals and retreat souvenir gift

Deadline to register is March 2, 2018

Contact:

Chovonne W. 864-275-0637

Lisa D 813-557-4199

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.