

## July/August 2018

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

#### Step Seven: "We humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings."

Step seven. Well, it sounds simple enough, right? I mean, it says it all in one sentence. Easy cheesy. So why is all of this writing even necessary? My sponsor has "suggested" (we know what that means) for 2 months now, that working this step is vital to me staying clean - just as much as steps 1-6 are. He has been clean for so long, I honestly am beginning to wonder if he even remembers what this step is actually about? ...Sighs loudly.. and thinks to herself...  
"Cool. All I need to do is sit down in a meditative position, maybe have a pillow close by (just to make sure that I am comfortable, you know, in case things get weird). Then, I will close my eyes, and silently make the official request in my head (or wait, do I ask out loud?) 'Dear higher power, green light to take away these imperfections and alleged (unpopular) patterns of mine. I know what to do now. Thanks for your

help here. I got this now."  
That's a negative, GhostRider. If you have been around long enough to watch someone you love and care about go back out, then you know that two of the most lethal statements any addict seeking recovery believes, are as follows:

1. "I know"
2. "I got this.."

When I was working steps 1 - 6, it was so important for me to thoroughly work each step, and not leave anything out. After completing a step, I then went over the writing I did for each question with my sponsor. This is where the seeds of growth and awareness were planted for me.

In active addiction, I truly believed that every thought and every feeling I had, was the mother of all truth. So, naturally, I acted out on these thoughts through self-destructive behaviors and patterns. The thoughts and feelings I thought were so real and too painful for me to live each day - so I numbed the endless void I felt in myself through using outside influences to change how I felt. I used drugs, I used people, I used sex, I bought material things I did NOT need - plus anything and everything I could act on or change my state of mind - in order for me to *\*\*momentarily\*\** change how I felt.

What I didn't realize then, nor did I realize until I had about 2 years clean, was that drugs were merely a

symptom of a much larger problem.

I have a disease that wants me to die. And I do not need to "throw any dope on it" to still act out today in unhealthy and behaviors that leave me filled with shame and worthlessness.

So, if drugs aren't the problem, then my thinking is and will always be the root of my disease of addiction. My name is Meredith, and I am an addict.

Because my thinking is the real problem, and the drugs were merely a symptom (one that was quickly killing me), there had to be a solution or a way for me to STOP these patterns that continue (without throwing dope on it) to make my life unmanageable and cause me to get the same result, because I was doing the same thing - just without altering my mood. Gee. I can remember how scared and humiliated I was when I first realized how much I showed my ass during my first year of recovery, more than just seeing how much I was f\*\*\*\*\* up my life, people places and things.

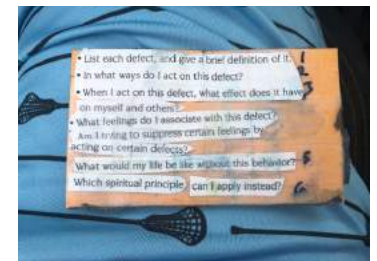
Working the steps and going over them with a sponsor, I could then internalize what I was uncovering about myself. A consistent trust in the process, continuously keeping an open mind, and being honest were essential in working my seventh step. Step 7 for me was and still is, every day, about humility. With that, every day I must consciously surrender, which

is an action for this addict - action precedes humility.

I wanted to share this card that I carry with me to remind me of the seventh step, the text reads:

- List each defect, and give a brief definition of it.
- In what ways do I act on this defect?
- When I act on this defect, what effect does it have on myself and others?
- What feelings do I associate with this defect?
- Am I trying to suppress certain feelings by acting on certain defects?
- What would my life be like without this behavior?
- Which spiritual principle can I apply instead?

-Meredith, Funcoast Area



#### Step Eight: "We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."

The 8th step has always held an element of terror; we actually commit to paper all the damage we caused in our addiction, all the havoc and chaos, all the hurt we caused others - this is scary stuff, at least for me. As an addict, I

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know that I wanted, at all costs to justify my behavior so as to look (if not feel) free of any guilt or responsibility. I didn't want to face the wreckage of my past, and I certainly did not want to deal with the fear and shame I felt at the idea of facing the people I had hurt. What if they didn't forgive me? What if they didn't LIKE me anymore? I forget to take in account that there were a number of people who already didn't like me, due to my horrific behavior in the past... and I survived anyway. My sponsor told me in no uncertain terms, that the 8th step was not about others forgiving me, it was about being WILLING. I was reminded of a Biblical story in which a father is asked to sacrifice his only son to prove faithfulness in God. Just at the moment the father was about to strike the fatal blow to his beloved child, God said; (and I'm paraphrasing here) "you don't have to kill him, I just wanted to see if you were willing." I know; in order to progress in recovery, that I must have faith that the actions called for in the Steps, difficult though they may be, are for a purpose that I often cannot see until I am looking back at them. "...a list of all persons we had harmed;" it is difficult to envision having enough paper on which to write such a LONG list, but that reality threatens to be overwhelming. No one apparently escaped unscathed from my all-consuming self-centeredness. This addict can sink into self pity until a loving sponsor reminds me to see the other part of this step (...and became willing to make amends to them all"). I do not, at least not yet, have to speak of any wrong-doing to anyone's face – I simply have to "become willing."

I see the evidence of this step working in the lives of other recovering addicts, and I continue to want what they have. Once again, I pray to my Higher Power

to see me through and I say out loud "I am willing to do whatever it takes to recover;" I am willing to face the excruciating truth, and I am willing to finally give those I damaged the long overdue opportunity to say how they feel. I am willing to continue my journey down the lovely, terrifying, and exhilarating road of recovery. In Love and Light Meredith D. (Reprinted from Clean Times August 1996)

**Tradition Seven: "Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."**

A story has been told about the early days of Narcotics Anonymous, when one of our founding members was seen going through the trash outside the NA service office. When asked what he was doing, he answered that he was looking for bottles to return for deposit so he could afford postage to respond to a letter from an NA member in Alaska. Every NA service committee has surely faced this simple truth at some point: The individual efforts of our members can go a long way, but willingness alone will not get a letter from California to Alaska, Brussels to St. Petersburg, or Tehran to Dubai. This story illustrates two kinds of contributions as described by our Seventh Tradition. On one hand, we contribute our time and energy: showing up to meetings regularly, participating, and sharing with newcomers whenever we can. Our hopes and intentions are important, but it's what we do that matters. We get involved in sponsorship and service. We give of ourselves freely without the expectation of receiving anything in return. Putting our gratitude into action by supporting Narcotics Anonymous gives real meaning to our belief that "we keep what we have only by giving it away." On the other hand, we give money to help pay for the services that

keep NA alive and growing. Both of these types of contributions are important...Our groups pass a basket, hat, box, or tray at some point during each meeting so members can give money. The money we put in the basket allows our groups to keep the doors open, and to create a welcoming atmosphere of recovery for that shaky newcomer in the parking lot debating whether or not to come into the meeting. The money that reaches our service system helps support services that let other addicts, in our own communities and around the world, know that hope is available. Just as the cost of our own personal expenses—rent, food, and so on—go up from year to year, the amount of money needed to fund these basic services rises continually, especially as NA grows and as we seek additional ways to reach addicts.

We may notice some members giving a little more or a little less than others and wonder whether we're giving the "right" amount. Giving our fair share doesn't mean that everyone donates the same amount; it means each of us gives what we can based on what we have. When our lives improve as a result of our recovery, we often find that we can afford to give more. Maybe we feel uncomfortable when we realize that the beverage or snack we bought on our way to the meeting cost two or three times the amount we put in the basket. After considering what is most valuable to us, we usually decide to put more in the basket when we can. Whether we have a lot or a little, giving to our service system is an act of faith that helps us let go of some of our fears. Doing so can remind us that so long as our spiritual needs are taken care of, living problems are reduced to a point of comfort. We have faith that helps us let go of some of our fears. Doing so can remind us that so long as our spiritual needs are taken care of, living

problems are reduced to a point of comfort. We have faith that a power greater than ourselves will be expressed through our collective conscience. (IP 24, Money Matters Self Support in NA)

**Tradition Eight: "Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers."**

For many of us, we read the 8th Tradition at every meeting but pass over with minimal concern because many of us feel that our recovery, as individuals, is not affected by professionalism or by special workers. After all, most of us do not consider our profession in the context of our home group, and most of us have not ever personally known a special worker. It is not often that we run into an 8th tradition issue at our home group business meeting. But if we take a closer look, this tradition has a vast impact on our fellowship, and none of us (thankfully) experience anything akin to individual recovery in the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We do not recover alone but in a worldwide fellowship that has the power to save and change lives.

Let's take a moment to consider the idea of professionalism in Narcotics Anonymous. If, as our Third Tradition states, our sole requirement for membership is a desire to stop using, professionalism has no role in our personal recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. We find the therapeutic value of one addict helping another beyond parallel, not one doctor helping one cashier, or one mechanic helping one teacher. And yet, as many of us have experienced in some part of our journey to recovery, there is a profession surrounding recovery from addiction. We must take great care to never confuse that profession with recovery in Narcotics

Anonymous; "addiction professionals" do not adhere to our traditions or even our fundamental beliefs about the nature of addiction. As recovering addicts, we do not derive money, property, or prestige from our service in Narcotics Anonymous, nor is any addict more or less professionally qualified to help another addict.

This tradition also speaks to the professional services our fellowship sometimes requires. If we attend a Zonal Forum or visit a World Service Office, it is easy to see where the affairs of the fellowship have become too complex to reasonably expect volunteers to maintain. For this reason, our fellowship sometimes hires special workers, who have professional expertise in performing the specific tasks that are too demanding or specialized for our trusted servants to perform. It is only in these workers' capacity to perform such tasks that their professional credentials are considered. These special workers should never be confused with recovery professionals. While in some cases, they may be addicts in recovery, their employment in, for example, a Regional Service Office, does not qualify them as experts in Narcotics Anonymous. The spirit of anonymity implies that we view these workers as people with a job, just like most other addicts in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. The distinct advantage of hiring special workers is that as a fellowship, we can require that they adhere to our traditions in the performance of their duties.

The 8th tradition is founded on spiritual principles that help to keep our fellowship alive and free. These include humility, anonymity, integrity, and prudence. As How It Works and Why tell us, we must remain humble in recognizing tasks we are not qualified to perform, practice anonymity in our interactions with other recovering addicts from all walks of life, exercise

integrity maintaining our primary purpose, and act with prudence in considering whether our fellowship's needs merit hiring special workers.

We take care to live by these principles in all of our affairs in order to protect both our personal recovery and our fellowship's existence. It is nothing short of a miracle that our fellowship, which only half a decade ago consisted of a few scattered groups of addicts, has become a worldwide organization. But with our growth comes the added responsibility of ensuring financial responsibility, international outreach, the availability of literature, and other services that we sometimes hire professionals to maintain. This is not a far cry from our personal experiences in Narcotics Anonymous; as individuals we must remember that we are not experts in our own or anyone else's recovery. By remaining forever non-professional, we ensure both our freedom to come to the rooms as equals in recovery and our ability to recover.

In loving service, with a special thanks to Karyn S.

Liz K.

(Reprinted from Goldcoast Area NA Newsletter, February 2010)

### Poetry

**Your sweet aroma  
will be missed  
Our talks at sunrise and  
dances at sunset will be an  
ever fixed mark.  
Together we hijacked  
my senses.  
False life filled my lungs.  
Touching a mere tip of the  
flame that burns eternal  
at its deepest core.  
I will miss you dearly but  
there is far more for me.  
I must press on alone.  
Trading your death for  
true resurrection.  
DocDali, Funcoast Area**

## Ask An Addict I have never meditated before. How do I find out more about how to do it?

### Basic Text

"The nature of our belief will determine the manner of our prayers and meditations. We need only make sure that we have a system of belief that works for us." (p. 44)

"Outside of Narcotics Anonymous, there are any number of different groups practicing meditation. Nearly all of these groups are connected with a particular religion or philosophy. An endorsement of any one of these methods would be a violation of our traditions and a restriction on the individual's right to have a God of his understanding." (p. 45)

"In quiet moments of meditation, God's will can become evident to us. Quieting the mind through meditation brings an inner peace that brings us into contact with the God within us. A basic premise of meditation is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain conscious contact unless our mind is still. The usual, never-ending succession of thoughts has to cease for progress to be made. So our preliminary practice is aimed at stilling the mind, and letting the thoughts that arise die a natural death. We leave our thoughts behind as the meditation part of the Eleventh Step becomes a reality for us." (p. 46-47)

"Many of us have found that setting aside quiet time for ourselves is helpful in making conscious contact with our Higher Power. By quieting the mind, meditation can lead us to calmness and serenity. This quieting of the mind can be done in any place, time, or manner, according to the individual." (p. 95)

### How it Works

"We may have a basic understanding of what prayer and meditation are, prayer being the times we talk to a Higher Power and meditation the times we listen for a Higher Power's answers. We may not be aware of the many options that are open to us...We may experiment with a whole assortment of practices until we find something that doesn't feel foreign or contrived. If we have found that everything feels strange, then we practice a form of prayer and meditation until it no longer seems unnatural. Many of us have adopted an eclectic approach, borrowing our practices from a variety of sources and combining those which provide us the greatest comfort and enlightenment." (p. 109)

### Just for Today

"Be patient when you're learning to meditate,' many of us were told. 'It takes practice to know what to "listen" for.' We're glad someone told us that, or many of us would have quit after a week or two of meditating. For the first few weeks, we may have sat each morning, stilled our thoughts, and 'listened'...Meditation was new, and it took time and practice. But, like all the steps, it worked - when we worked it." (June 20th, p. 178)

# 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

## July/August

# Upcoming Events & Info

### A New Way

Alex L. 9/7/98 20 years  
Fernando S. 9/20/06 12 years  
Amy C. 9/10/10 8 years

### Aging in Recovery

Eric O. 8/18/84 34 years  
Mary P. 8/18/11 7 years

### Free To Be Me

Jeff D. 6/3/17 1 year  
Charles C. 6/21/93 25 years  
Pam A. 6/22/15 3 years  
Ryan M. 6/23/16 2 years  
Aloha B. 7/3/05 13 years

### Grow or Go

Nicole P. 7/7/17 1 year  
Joe S. 7/7/17 1 year  
Brie H. 7/14/15 3 years  
Deborah A-N 8/23/10 8 years

### High Lie

Andy C. 6/25/12 6 years  
Chris M. 7/18/10 8 years  
Craig C. 7/23/03 15 years  
Mary S. 7/31/08 10 years

### Hyde Park NA

Angel P. 7/17/16 2 years  
Raj M. 7/21/13 5 years  
Reggie R. 8/19/11 7 years  
Jan B. 9/3/10 8 years  
Erik N. 9/23/13 5 years  
Tommy K. 9/4/07 11 years  
Rolando S. 9/11/08 10 years

### In the Middle

Mike G. 7/23/09 9 years

### Monday Meditation

Shawn L. 8/12/17 1 year  
Melissa M. 3/8/17 18 months

### Recovery Central

Eddie R. 7/5/05 13 years  
Janice B. 7/7/05 13 years  
Bruce M. 7/29/86 32 years

Alejandro A. 8/22/00 18 years

Recovery in Riverview  
Cheryl C. 8/10/90 28 years

### Renegade Recovery

Nicole T. 7/3/16 2 years  
Tony L. 7/4/17 1 year  
Murray B. 7/16/16 2 years  
Charles T. 8/5/03 15 years  
Enrique R. 8/13/99 19 years

### Stepping Up

Larry W. 7/13/92 26 years  
Gerald W. 7/14/05 13 years  
Mildred M. 7/8/07 11 years

### Tampa Unity Group

Lenora M. 6/10/02 16 years  
Roxanne D. 6/1/15 3 years

### The Workshop

Jeff S. 6/12/16 2 years  
Pam 6/22/15 3 years  
Crystal B. 7/7/95 23 years

### Triple M Group

Frederick "Boe" L. 6/3/08  
10 years

### Women's Hope

Lisa F. 4/28/15 3 years  
Cat M. 5/17/12 6 years  
Kristy S. 5/21/87 31 years  
Liz C. 7/19/14 4 years

No Group Name Submitted

Leo T. 6/7/16 2 years  
Bruce T. 6/23/17 1 year  
Angel P. 7/17/16 2 years  
Nikki T. 7/26/96 22 years

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.

### New Tampa Group 17th Anniversary

When: Sat, August 18, 6:30pm - 10:30pm

Where: St. James United Methodist Church - 16202 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Description

A night of food, fun and recovery!

Barbecue begins at 6:30 pm - \$5/plate, \$1 drinks.

Speaker meeting begins at 8 pm.

Celebrate 17 years with the New Tampa Group of Narcotics Anonymous.

### FACNA 2019 Fundraiser

When: Sun, August 19, 12pm - 6pm

Where: Cypress Point Park, 5620 W. Cypress St., Tampa, FL 33607

Description: Picnic

Chicken & Fries - \$5/plate

Soda & Water - \$1

Corn-Hole Tournament

\$2 Entry Fee - First, Second & Third Place Trophies

50/50 Raffle

NA Meeting

Proceeds benefit the 2019

Funcoast Area Convention of Narcotics Anonymous

### WCNA 37 - The Magic Is Still Real

30 August through 2 September 2018

Orlando, FL, USA

Register online at [www.na.org/wcna](http://www.na.org/wcna)

For more information,

call +1.818.773.9999 x771

Monday - Friday: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm (PT).

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.