



March/April 2017

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

Step 3. "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of the God as we understood him."

Faith Is Not Hostage to My Outcome

In my active addiction, I held the belief that I was in control of my destiny, that my higher power was the holy trinity of me, myself, and I. There was a comfort in denying the true reality that drugs had become my higher power. I devoutly exercised principles that we so closely associate with Step 3 such as surrender, willingness, faith, trust, and commitment. I always had faith that using could stop the pain and fix the problem. I had the willingness to go to any means to get more. I had completely surrendered to whatever the disease of addiction wanted from me.

Step 2's limited definition of a higher power—that it is loving, caring, and greater than ourselves opened the door for the willingness to further explore who and what my higher

power is through working Step 3. As I have progressed in my recovery my understanding of my higher power has clarified, but it still meets the foundation of loving, caring, and greater than me. The ability to turn my will and life over to my higher power is a still often a struggle requiring prayer for surrendering it many times some days. My ego is the biggest impediment to faith and surrender because it somehow remains appealing to take my will back despite the long history of the pain and wreckage that my comes with my will.

Some things are easier to turn over to God than others. For example, my finances are usually easy to give to God whereas my romantic relationship still frequently fall into self-governance. For me, serenity is found by quieting my mind and stating the 3rd Step Prayer, "Take my will and my life, guide me in my recovery, and show me how to live." Letting go and having faith is a process that challenges our ego. It is no surprise that the survival of our personality and self-image feels very challenged when we surrender and have faith and trust God. Faith in God's will cannot be conditioned on what we want or expect the result to be. My higher power's will for me is more magnificent than anything I can imagine, provided that I follow the directions set forth in our basic text, by doing the footwork, and leaving the results to God.

-Anonymous

Step 4. "We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Digging Just a Little Deeper into Step Four

I remember clearly the feeling of fear in approaching the fourth step. Usually when I'm afraid I want to flee a situation; needless to say I was running for a while. However, with the help of some wonderful sponsors throughout the years and a loving Higher Power, I found the courage to face me. For the first time in my life I had to look a little deeper into that place that always made me choke up and burst into tears. I realized pretty quickly that I had some messed up ways about me, but I was about to look at why. I am an incest survivor, so I had learned some pretty strange coping mechanisms along the way. For instance, I was always so hyper-vigilant in my surroundings, always felt full of fear to the point of having stomach ulcers, and would constantly stay busy to avoid life, and started using at a very young age to avoid feelings. At first glance of the 4th step, it felt like if I started crying I would never stop. I did cry a lot, but I did not crumble into a million pieces and blow away in the wind. By walking through this step I found out that the opposite happened. I started to open my heart to the world around me and let people in to share the hurt. Through looking at my

resentments, my relationships, and the wreckage of my past, I started to heal from this disease. Just like It Works How and Why says, I started to find serenity when I started altering my self-defeating patterns. I alone am responsible for the negative impact that addiction had on my life. Through this personal inventory, I have been able to look at the good, the bad, and the ugly. I found out that I AM a beautiful woman, with a kind and loving heart. Thank God and Narcotics Anonymous for my life.

-Maggie R.

Tradition 3. "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using."

The first time I heard these words was in June 1988, in the first NA meeting I attended while in a treatment center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and they were as meaningless as the rest of the words I listened to with disdain. "These people don't know anything," I thought as I sat, a thousand miles away from my home in New York City, cursing under my breath. "How did I end up HERE?"

I attended many meetings while in my first "treatment episode," which lasted almost a year, and I heard the steps and traditions read aloud at each one; well, the words were read aloud, but I refused to hear them. "I don't have a problem," I told myself, not realizing what a hard and painful road lay ahead of me before Continued on page 2...

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I would be ready to listen, and hear, what was offered in NA.

In March 1991, with no place left to run, I staggered back to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. The same posters were on the walls of every church basement and hospital cafeteria, and the same words were being read at the start of every meeting. The only thing that had changed was me. In place of the spoiled, contemptuous girl who judged everyone and everything, there was a broken and defeated woman, finally able to grasp the depths to which her life had descended.

I uttered out loud, "I'm an addict, and my name is Meredith." People clapped, but I still felt out of place and conspicuous; I thought, "These people don't know me - if they did, they would throw me out."

People were reading aloud, but the noise in my head did not allow me to hear what was being said.

Then a voice said, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." The words struck me with a physical force, and I thought, "I HAVE that!" I had little left in my life, and I finally had a desire to stop - to stop bleeding, to stop hurting, to stop destroying everything I touched.

I had no idea how much my life was going to change, all because I heard those words at last. There have been many times in my recovery that I have felt inadequate, foolish, confused, but never once have I felt unwelcome.

Today my "desire to stop using" is just as strong as those early days in recovery. It involves many things, not just substances; I strive to stop using selfishness, stop using impatience, stop using judgment... stop using all the ways my disease works to separate me from joy and peace.

I love to watch people, as broken and defeated as once I was, come into meetings and hear that they are included, that they belong, that they

are...home.

"The only requirement..." Beautiful. In loving service~
Meredith D.

Tradition 4. "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole."

The definition of autonomy is freedom from external control or influence; independence. I have visited many groups around the United States and have found that what they all had in common is the welfare of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. Most groups follow a meeting format that can be customized to suit the unique culture of the group. Groups are always intended to be vehicles for the message of recovery. In creating unique groups with a common goal, recovery, we become responsible for the addict who still suffers. For example one group may have read the daily Just For Today meditation book, another may open the meeting then pick a topic from NA literature for discussion. A group may be open to the public or closed for addicts only, but whatever the format or type of meeting the message should always be the same. Carrying the message to addicts who need us as a whole. Maintaining meetings, for example, my homegroup, is a big responsibility. Homegroup members are responsible for opening the doors for the meeting, making coffee, going to Area Service, paying the rent, and greeting the newcomer. Also, someone has to chair the meeting to ensure that the format is followed. As long as a group observes the Twelve Traditions and supports the Twelve Steps of Na, it is considered a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. In order to maintain our autonomy, we must remember that this is a we program not an I program. Together we CAN recover. It is important to keep an open mind for new ways to reach addicts. With the help of a loving Higher Power, we hold meetings for everyone who has a desire to stop using.
-Anonymous

Ask An Addict

What do I do about medication if I have to have surgery?

Basic text

"This is a program of total abstinence. There are times, however, such as in cases of health problems involving surgery and/or extreme physical injury, when medication may be valid. This does not constitute a license to use. There is no safe use of drugs for us. Our bodies don't know the difference between the drugs prescribed by a physician for pain and the drugs prescribed by ourselves to get high.

As addicts, our skill at self-deception will be at its peak in such a situation. Often our minds will manufacture additional pain as an excuse to use. Turning it over to our Higher Power and getting the support of our sponsor and other members can prevent us from becoming our own worst enemies. Being along during such times would give our disease an opportunity to take over. Honest sharing can dispel our fears of relapse. Serious illness or injury can present particular problems for us. Physicians should have specific knowledge of our addiction. Remember that we, not our doctors, are ultimately responsible for our recovery and our decisions. To minimize the danger, there are a few specific options that we may consider. Using local anesthesia, avoiding our drug of choice, stopping drug use while we are still hurting, and spending extra days in the hospital in case withdrawal occurs are some of our options.

It is imperative to keep NA members close to us at all times, if possible [...] You'd be surprised how much pain we can handle without medication. In this program of total abstinence, however, we need to feel no guilt after having taken a minimum amount of medication prescribed by an informed professional for extreme physical pain" (103)

Just for Today

"Most of us will face choices that challenge our recovery. If we find ourselves in extreme physical pain, for example, we will have to decide whether or not we will take medication. We will have to be very honest with ourselves about the severity of our pain, honest with our doctor about our addiction and our recovery, and honest with our sponsor. In the end, however, the decision is ours, for we are the ones who must live with the consequences." (98)

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

#KickFacebook

Or As a Famous Song & Dance Man Once Said: "I Do Believe I've Had Enough"
by Dan W.

I was never comfortable with Facebook - too much skeezy gossip and attention-seeking content. I was a little too self-conscious for it. So after a few years, I converted my Facebook page to a page for my dogs. They deserved a little recognition, having shown me unconditional love and steadfast loyalty. And dogs don't call lawyers.

The Trigger & Molly page had pictures and videos, top-10 lists, tips on training humans - fun stuff.

But here's where it slipped its orbit. Most of Trigger and Molly's Facebook friends were in Narcotics Anonymous since they were holdovers from my Facebook page. Too many of these friends showed an indifference to anonymity, posting NA anniversaries and mistaking a public social media site for a recovery forum. Some showed a reckless disregard for intellectual property. NA logo for a profile picture? WTF?

By February 2014, I was sick of it and I shut it down. The dogs didn't complain.

Since then, I've heard nothing to change my mind. Facebook creator and billionaire skankopotamus Mark Zuckerberg called members of his international network "dumb f*%^\$%" for trusting him with their personal information. He actually said that. On. The. Record. And no one in a white lab coat approached him and said, "You'll have to come with us now."

The platform is a magnet for scams, a haven for sexual predators and the natural habitat of trolls. And here's the whipped cream on top of this butt truffle: the Facebook Addiction Scale. What's worse: that we might get hooked on social media crack or that someone's already come up with a system to quantify it?

Developed by the University

of Bergen in Norway, the scale measures some of the basics of addiction - stop me if you've heard this a thousand times - obsession and compulsion, progressive nature of use, destructive behavior, denial and unsuccessful attempts to stop.

Further research indicates that the more time people spend on Facebook the more likely they are to sink into fear and loathing about their own lives, along with - and this is the cherry on top of the whipped cream on top of this butt truffle - increased feelings of loneliness and isolation. Julius H. Caesar - it's supposed to be social media.

I'm not trying to convince you to quit. Or that Facebook will turn your look-at-me sweet tooth into a fang. Or that it will stunt your growth.

Just this: If you find yourself in a meeting checking your time-line while someone is pouring out their heart after life left them for roadkill, show a little respect. Put the phone down. P-Please.

In conclusion, purple unicorn spokes-pony, Twilight Sparkle, issued this statement: "The best thing to do is stay true to yourself."

Try Recovery

That moment when you realize that everything they said was true. There will come a time when life on life's terms becomes a saying that you actually use! Ewe. When did my life get reduced to specific daily events and how I handle them? When did I start to care so damn much about my behavior? Seriously, why does it matter how I answered you or the way I looked at that girl at the checkout line. At what point over the course of my recovery did I become the nice one? The one who cares? The responsible one? It's almost disgusting how reliable I am.

Well I'll let you in on a little secret. That stuff happened against my better judgment and without my freaking permission

too for that matter. I care about what I say because I care about what is said to me. I enjoy being reliable because I am fulfilled when I am giving. That same place within my soul that cries out for destruction is healed and whole when I am giving of myself. That pure moment when someone genuinely appreciates the time I gave. Or the best ones?? The times that I do for others and they don't have a clue who I am or why I did it. Those moments; the anonymous little pieces of kindness I leave for strangers have healed the bleeding cracks in my spirit better than any high ever could. Remember that terrified, angry, defiance I wore like a coat of armour when I got here? That coat of destruction no longer fits properly. The once smooth edges of "keep you at an arm's length" attitude, now has a dangerous jagged edge that hurts my feelings when I donn it. How was I surviving wearing that thing? How did it not tear me raw?

It did.

I was.

My nerves were shot and my social skills had been reduced to calculating the amount of time it would take to get one over on you before you got one over on me. No longer are my desires in line with self inflicted despair. No longer can I function without thanking a caring Power for my life. No longer can I remember what it's like to hate myself. No longer is getting high the solution.

No longer do I want to die.

Why did I change? And why was I blessed with the gift of this second life?

I changed because I had nothing to lose. I changed because I wanted the pain to stop. I changed because why not?

I was blessed so I can help others. There will always be those in need and those of us who understand the special hell that is addiction are the ones best suited to pave the way.

Life on Life's terms?

Try Recovery

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 March & April

Upcoming Events & Info

A New Way

Steve F. 4/23/06 11
Art B. 5/12/97 20
Glen G. 5/14/89 28

Brandon at Noon

Jamie P. 3/10/14 3
Jerry S. 3/9/11 6
Eric D. 3/12/95 22
Danielle G. 3/19/14 3
Cassie H. 4/14/13 4
Dodie A. 4/16/13 4
Lori L. 4/16/16

Circle of Friends

Pat S. 2/6/96 11

Grow or Go

Rob P. 3/9/2016 1
Saesha N. 3/26/2009 8
Steph H. 4/9/2005 12
Ray F. 4/11/2014 3
Starr B. 4/11/1987 30

Heights of NA

Jonathan G. 4/13/14 3
Louis G. 4/18/85 32

High Lie

Amy A. 3/8/06 11
Lexi K. 3/9/15 2
Dan A. 3/18/85 32
Tim B. 3/18/13 4
Steve T. 3/20/09 8
Jeff J. 04/14/13 4

Mandal Redalation

Nicole P. 2/22/15 2

NA 180

Corey C. 3/14/11 6

New Bite of Serenity

Dan W. 2/22/88 29
Jamila H. 3/3/08 9
Julius L. 3/12/00 17
Tracey K. 3/13/06 11
Colin C. 3/25/08 9 Sharon
J. 3/29/08 9
Melissa J. 4/23/16 1
Lisa I. 4/23/12 5
Joyce J. 5/16/12 5 Valen-
cia N. 6/24/12 5

New Tampa NA

Marc L. 4/19/08 9

Quest for Serenity

Scotty D. 4/5/95 22
Tara A. 4/23/16 1
Aida S. 5/7/95 22

Radical Recovery

Willie M. 4/5/95 22
Wendy J. 5/1/05 22
Kelvin B. 4/8/08 9

Recovery Central

Damian S. 3/9/08 9
Gordon N. 4/11/83 34
Stan M. 4/11/86 31
Bobby R. 4/22/02 15
William C 5/26/89 28
Pito (RIP 2/1/16) 4/17/84
Infinity

Recovery in Riverview

Megan L. 3/28/10 7
Sharon Mc. 2/29/09 8

The NA Speaker Meeting

Pete M. 3/9/03 14
Audrey C. 4/9/94 23

Together We Can

Patricia B. 3/2/04 13
Mario F. 4/27/10 7

Triple 'M' Group

Frederick "BOE" L.
6/03/08 9

Women of Serenity

Tammy A. 3/11/02 15
Marilyn G. 4/1/16 1
Paula B. 4/2/09 8
Andrea B. 4/10/16 1

No Group

Name Provided

Tony G. 4/7/85 32
Ramerkia E. 3/11/03 14

6th Annual Unity Picnic hosted by

Brandon at Noon & The War is Over NA groups.

April 15, 2017 @ 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Edward Medard Park, 6140 Turkey Creek Rd.,

Plant City, FL 33567

BBQ - Free Food & Fellowship.

\$2 per car park entrance fee.

Rain or shine.

Tampa Funcoast Women's Convention Fundraiser

April 15, 2017 @ 7:00 PM - 11:00 PM

Club YANA, 209 S. Tampania Ave.,

Tampa, FL 33609

Destiny Awaits - Prom Night 2017

A fundraiser for the 2019 Women's Convention

Admission: \$3 advance or \$5 at the door per person; \$7 advance
or \$10 at the door per couple

Spring Fling Fashion Parade

April 22, 2017 @ 7:00 PM - 11:00 PM

Seminole Heights United Methodist Church 6111 N. Cen-
tral Ave., Tampa FL 33604

Dress to Impress: Fashions - After 5, Casual & Children.

Prizes awarded for 1st & 2nd places.

Dinner includes spaghetti, salad, bread, dessert & drink.

\$3 admission, \$8 includes dinner. Sponsored by Tampa
Funcoast Area NA Activities Subcommittee.

NAByPhone.com

Originally started in 2008 as outreach to carry an NA meeting to a hospital-
ized member in FL, teleconference meetings have grown to meet the needs of
many members. The diversity of our membership is represented by hospital-
ized and home-bound members including older members who can no longer
get out, professional drivers on the road, geographically challenged members,
parents who stay home with children, victims of really bad storms who swell
our meetings for a few days until the weather clears, members of smaller com-
munities who are seeking more anonymity for gut level sharing and those who
are simply seeking multiple flavors of recovery. NA teleconference meetings
are a wonderful addition to a well-rounded recovery platform and can serve
as life-saving outreach and are a great way to expand your support network
nationally or even internationally. However, they are not a replacement for
face-to-face meeting attendance. Attend your local NA. Share some hugs.

For more information, visit NAByPhone.com

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.