The Clean Times

Website: [www.na-org.org](http://www.na-org.org)

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**What Happened, What It Was Like, What It Is Like Today**

**BY:**

**Will T.**

**Lunch Bunch**

*"God grant me the serenity..."*

I am an addict FOR CERTAIN. No longer is there a notion that supports quibbling over or questioning that identification. For me, it rings true that there is no reason to think twice about it. I am a **slowly recovering addict** whose name is Will.

I am grateful to be clean and am grateful to be alive having been granted an OPPORTUNITY to get clean and stay clean for almost 18 years. I believe that it is only by God's Grace and His Tender Mercy that I am still here. Alive, rather than having died an unimportant death in some San Francisco alleyeway. Today I choose Life and accept responsibility for how I want to live it. I am no longer plagued by omnipresent hopelessness or dread. I got my smile back. I am convinced that I don't have to use NO MATTER WHAT! There is power in knowing that.

Astoundingly, for me, a new way to live has become possible. It has not been one that has materialized overnight. It has taken putting in the effort to get it. Living clean has taken a great deal of practice. I've learned that this is a "one-day-at-a-time" program. Thank God I can rely on the experience of others who've been willing to share with me how the program has worked for them. *"This is a simple spiritual--not religious--program*, *known as Narcotics Anonymous."*

This new way of Life has not always been easy, but it has definitely been different. A little Filipino guy named Jesse C., who was my first sponsor, taught me about the spiritual progression which involved hope, faith, and trust---commitment. Jesse guided me through the Twelve Steps. After completing Step Four, I saw a pattern of behavior that was unkind and uconscionabable. He helped me to understand that what I did during my active addiction was what I did and not who I am. He shared pieces of his own story. I learned from him that he had done some of the same things I had done but, more importantly, I learned from his sharing that he had felt the same kinds of emotions that I had felt. I know now that as addicts we all are of the same stripe. It was my thinking and my inability to deal with my feelings that almost snuffed me. It was excellent to find that I was not alone. I was suffering from the disease of addiction and I was not the only one.

The disease of addiction is a grimy one. It is rife with self-centeredness, self-loathing, hopelessness and despair. Thank God for Step Five; thank God that Jesse was on the other end of the phone during those tenuous early days. He was exactly the right human being with whom I could share the exact nature of my wrongs and expose my disease. Thank God for the first three steps which prepared me for what was to come next. Thank God for the reinforced surrender I began to experience then and still experience regularly today. Thank God for the willingness to continue. **Narcotics Anonymous is a 12 Step program**. Thank God for God.

I grew up during the 50's and 60's amidst a lot of social upheaval. The chaos of the times was exacerbated by the upheaval in my nuclear family. My brain was filled with noise. The constant messaging from inside and outside my house was that I was not good enough or that there was something wrong with me. I found myself incessantly "performing" in an effort to disprove that narrative while always trying to elicit the approval of the important people in my life, particularly, the approval of my mother. I figured that if I was the dutiful eldest son then she would acknowledge me; if I was the the most studious kid in school the teachers would praise me; if I was a good athlete the coaches would recognize me; if I excelled in extracurricular activities, was creative and had a great sense of humor, I would be popular; if I sang in the church choir I would go to Heaven. It seems now that I was always seeking something outside myself so that I might feel better on the inside; always trying to **control** what others thought of me or how they treated me. It was hard work trying to manipulate everything around me while concurrently being weighed down by my own expectations. It was hard work trying to measure up. It seemed that I was NEVER ENOUGH.

*"*Just For Today *through NA I will try to get a better perspective on my life."*

I joined the military thinking that, wearing the well-pressed uniform with shiny buttons, I’d be appreciated and, conversely, I'd feel worthwhile. Besides, I thought that having those colorful ribbons on my chest would make the girls adore me. I was eighteen. In 1969, I ended up in Vietnam despite the recruiter’s proclamation that I'd never go. I came back from that experience traumatized; I'd seen too much, I had done things that I still regret. I thought I would be fighting the "red menace." Fighting for "truth and justice for all." I came back angry, disillusioned AND HOOKED. I was not a hero. I felt like a discarded cog from a broken machine.

*"God grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change"*

At a rapid pace I digressed. The disease of addiction is maddeningly progressive. The malignancy of my own ailment metastasized into abnormal manifestations that included high speed chases, low speed crawls and frozen paralysis. *"Higher mental and emotional functions, such as conscience and the ability to love were sharply affected by [my] use of drugs. Living skills were reduced to animal level."* The internal and external unmanageability in my life was painfully obvious.

Our literature described me accurately---engaging **in bizarre behaviors and strange mannerisms**. My own thinking, my own insanity spun me into dire situations and circumstances where suicide seemed like a good idea. Mine was a "parody of life." IP No. 12, The Triangle of Self Obsession, written by addicts like me, explained that it was anger, fear and resentment that stalked me while darkening my days insidiously forming my defects of character. Denial kept me trapped. My perspective on the past provided me with an alibi for using. I rationalized that I was entitled to use. It was hard to move on from the excuses. I wallowed in them, instead. My explanation was: If what happened to me happened to you, then you would use too. I blamed **the system** for putting me into a cage and taking my name. Convicted by my best thinking, I became a number. I know now that I was a volunteer not a victim. Eventually, 31 years later, I found myself barefoot in the bushes holding a butcher knife. The bottom of the bottom. June 19, 2000 is my clean date.

*"God grant me the serenity, [to find] the courage to change things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference."*

In 2013 I packed up my recovery, left San Francisco and moved to Memphis. I had been disconnected from my family for over 40 years. I have one sister and a brother who weren't even born when I left. I am divorced without children, but I am the best uncle in the land! It feels good to fit in. I'm 66 years old. I got clean when I was 49. That was the same year that I began to pay rent in MY OWN apartment. Today I am responsible, I am grateful that I've had a career. I heard in a noon meeting on Guerrero Street that dreams need not die. I had been trying to graduate from college since I was six years old. I went back to school and was actually older than the professors. I managed two degrees and a professional certification. I’m not sharing about these accomplishments to sound arrogant, grandiose or braggadocios. I share it because those addicts in the noon meeting and many more that I've met since inspired me.

Through Narcotics Anonymous, I've recovered the ability to be inspired. Maybe someone reading this will be able to identify, be encouraged and feel hopeful while considering their own possibilities. I'm talking about esteem-building; I'm talking about a personality change; I'm talking about going from *desperation to passion.* Miracles happen in Narcotics Anonymous. Today I am a productive member of society. Today I know that I can LIVE with the disease of addiction, I don't have to die from it. Living clean, the journey does continue.

"Just For Today *I will be unafraid, my thoughts will be on my new associations, people who are not using and who have found a new way of life.* *So long as I follow that way I have nothing to fear."*

**Step 11**

**By:**

**Terry F.**

**Living Clean**

**We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**

  The eleventh step is seriously one of my favorites.  Early in recovery I thought that it was probably the silliest step, maybe the easiest.  But I just didn’t think about it too much since I was taking a long time to work through the steps.  What made me finally start moving through the steps was that I finally hurt so badly from not changing that I had to do something.  I had been going to meetings and hanging out for several years, working 1, 2 and 3, and had done 4th and 5th steps, but I was too afraid to go on (fear that this would work for me and/or fear that it would change me too much). At that point with over 6 years clean it was use or go forward… I was more afraid to use than to change.

After doing the best I could with the steps through step 10, I hit 11.  My sponsor at the time had not done Step 11 and there was no one in NA in Memphis that I knew that had.  So, I let my current sponsor know I would like to go over it with her and set about finding out about this step.  I read the literature, went to several conventions and talked to people (there was no workbook at the time).  What I got from most addicts was “just do it” and find what works for me.  I investigated meditation, I had been praying (which for me is talking to the god of my understanding) but I had not been listening which is meditation.

I tried several types of meditation, but most felt contrived and forced so I kept trying.  Finally, I found something simple that I could do…. Being able to do my meditation and prayer anywhere was important to me, if I need to meditate at work or in my car it needed to fit my life.  When I started I could only clear my mind for about 30 seconds if that long.  The more I practiced, the longer I was able to keep it clear.  This was the start of my pursuit to improve my conscience contact with my higher power.  This practice continues today.

The second part of this step I take very seriously, I am praying only for the knowledge of my god’s will and the power to carry it out.  Today that is what I pray for, not anything else, I truly believe that god will give me whatever I need to deal with whatever happens in my life.  What I have found from practicing this step has been some very unexpected results.  I have no idea how it works but I started feeling that I was on the right path, I had direction.  I had never even known that I needed to feel that way until I did.

When I am able to meditate and clear my mind, I get a clarity that enables me to make better decisions and evaluate situations with a better perspective. It sounds funny for me to say but I feel it calms my spirit… I have never been able to stop my crazy mind but when I was ready, prayer and meditation enabled me to grow and change.

**TRADITION 11**

**By:**

**Carl H.**

**Something Different**

‘’OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICY IS BASED ON

ATTRACTION RATHER THENPROMOTION; WE NEED

ALWAYS MAINTAIN PERSONAL ANONYMITY AT THE LEVEL OF PRESS, RADIO AND FILMS.’’

Public awareness of our existence will help carry the fellowship primary purpose. Public relations are important when we follow the policies and the work is done properly. We are not promoting but trying to make the narcotics anonymous message attractive to those who might need it. This helps us to better carry the message to addicts who might otherwise never know narcotics anonymous exist. After all we are not a secret society. Personal anonymity is not the fellowships anonymity. This would defeat our ability to help suffering addicts find a program of recovery.

           For me I never knew that narcotics anonymous existed until about a year of my early recovery. It was not until I got upset with the actions of a few members behaviors and voiced it, that another addict that was going to both fellowships shared the information about our existence. This is why I believe public relations are a vital part of our service work and program.

When we speak to the public it should never be done alone.  We just speak simply and directly about what a narcotic anonymous is, and what we do with no exaggeration. Thus making our program more inviting not promotional, and protecting our members and program. Informing the still suffering addicts and society at large, “if you want what we have to offer, this is what we are and how we work. If we can be of service, please let us know.” This helps us to fulfill our primary purpose.

 We do not want celebrities or any one individual to become a spokesperson. This is to protect the integrity of our fellowship and eliminates personal agendas.  For our message can be greatly affected by NA messengers. Personal anonymity is so fragile that it can affect both the individual and our fellowship.

For instance if one person or a celebrity was to become a spokesperson, then relapse. It could be taken that our program does not work. However in our basic text; (page 79) says ’’ we have never seen a person who lives the narcotics anonymous program relapse” and (page 90)” In our experience, no addict who has completely surrendered to this program has ever failed to find recovery”

            Public anonymity will keep the focus on the message and not the PI workers. Always remember a team or a pair will better display NA as a fellowship to the public. After all we want to ensure that NA and NOT the individual addict is what we present to the public. Keeping in mind “that an addict alone is in bad company”. Along with, “not one of us is capable of making good decisions on a regular basis”.

            For me it is most important when a member wears NA apparel, to remember they are breaking their anonymity. And that is purely a personal decision but remember you are also representing our program. So if you are out in public, cursing or being disruptive you are not being a great representative, of what we are about. Therefore realizing that as a member I represent narcotics anonymous to some degree. On page 207 in the IT WORKS HOW AND WHY “what we say and what we do reflects on our NA recovery and the fellowship. As responsible NA members, we want that reflection to be a source of attraction rather than a source of embarrassment.

               So at the end of meetings you will hear people quote the twelfth tradition and define it incorrectly. The personal anonymity being that is talked about means to leave the messages you hear in our meeting, need to be nameless along with faceless. That way we can carry our messages to the still suffering addicts, regardless of their clean time. This keeps personal anonymity which is not the same as the fellowships anonymity.

**Concept 11**

**By:**

**Dave K.**

**Something Different**

Concept 11 states that “NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.”   Every element of the service structure has a responsibility to manage funds responsibly. These elements of the service structure include home groups, Area, subcommittees, Region, and World.  These elements of the service structure have a responsibility to be accountable, which includes keeping complete and accurate financial records, and being able to provide these records when/if requested to do so.

In NA there is a flow of funds, from the individual addict, to the group, to Area, to Region, and then to World.  At each level funds should be spent as well as they can to further the primary purpose. Left over funds are usually donated to the next level up.  Area allocates funds to subcommittees, but sometimes an individual group donates directly to a subcommittee. Anyone, or any body, that contributes to a service element either directly or indirectly has a right and a responsibility to hold the service element accountable for how it spends its funds.

It is important that we do not waste funds.  If we have financial funds, but lack the other resources to carry on a project, such as ideas, information, and/or member’s time, we should consider that maybe funds are being wasted by allocating them to this project.  It is important to not spend funds without thought.

It is important that there be a flow of communication, in the form of reports, from service elements, such as Area, Region, World, home groups, and subcommittees, to the contributors of funds. Communication should flow in the other direction as well, from the contributors to the service elements.  The contributors of funds should ask questions, and let the service elements know what would be helpful to be included in reports.

**Integrity**

**By:**

**Shannon T.**

**Thursday Nighters**

Before I got into recovery if you had asked me what the word integrity meant, I would probably have said something like being honest or trustworthy or maybe following the rules. It’s a concept that I hadn’t really thought about much. Certainly not one I practiced.

After being in recovery a while, I know It’s one of those ideas like humility - I try to live it but can’t spend too much time thinking about how much of it I have or I might end up on the other end of the defect scale, prideful and arrogant. Integrity has a balance to it but it’s not easy to describe.

So when Juan asked me to write about integrity my first though was oh lord that is hard, give me something else please. But being challenged is good for me, especially with some years in the program, so here goes.

Integrity for me today means doing the right thing, it means trying to live the other principals I’ve learned in the steps to the best of my ability every day. I also know, as they say, it’s a process. On the days when I feel judgy or tired, frustrated, angry or hurt, integrity tends to fly out the window.

Let’s take, for example, traffic. I remember one afternoon a number of years ago, I was minding my business, driving down Evergreen. I was between Poplar and Madison, heading north, in that section where cars park on either side of the road, and the lanes are pretty narrow. I looked in my rear view mirror and saw a white two door Chevrolet coupe barreling towards me, way too fast. My first thought was, “Dear Lord, let her stop in time.” Then my second thought was what the heck, but less nice than that. As we got half way between the two main cross streets it became clear she needed to get around me. She was right on my bumper, and the next thing I knew she was passing me. Double yellow line, cars coming toward us and here she comes around my left side and there’s nowhere for her to go. I slam on my brakes; she swerves in front of me, narrowly missing both me and the oncoming traffic. I honk, other people swerve and honk and nobody dies that day.

I’m going to pause right here to tell you what happens next in this story is the opposite of living with integrity, but sometimes it takes becoming aware of defects in order to learn the right thing to do. The right thing to do would probably have been to thank God that I was ok and to say a prayer for her and pull over until I calmed down, but that’s not what happened.

I made a decision to follow her, at a high rate of speed to the next traffic light. I did this all while tailing her and laying on my horn constantly. I did not stop honking my horn at the red light where we both were then stopped by other cars - the whole time, with her gesticulating and giving me the one finger salute over and over again. I then pulled out my phone while honking and by this time driving again through the intersection and I started snapping pictures of her and her tag and I’m sure yelling expletives through the windows. I followed her into the Baskin Robbins parking lot where, to my surprise she stopped and proceeded to get out of her car, yelling at me, the whole time with me taking pictures and yelling back. At some point I came to my senses and told her I was calling 911 and as I started to dial, she jumped in her car and pealed out of the parking lot, apparently not getting her ice cream, which I’m sure was the emergency.

Looking back on that situation and writing about it now makes me uncomfortable. I probably had 8 years clean and had worked the steps a couple of times, but that day something wasn’t right. I felt wronged and justified and that feeling led to an impulsively bad decision on my part.

As I continued to grow in my recovery over the years I slowly learned the concept of seeing myself in other people. I’m certain there have been many times before and since that I have cut people off in traffic. Actually just the other day I was driving to my office and watched someone cut in front of me, and then they realized they were in the turn only lane, and had to get right back over. I thought to myself, “come on people.” As I turned left, I realized I actually needed to be in the right lane myself and had to put on my blinker and a kind person let me over. I’ve been on both sides of many situations in my life, for the good and for the worst. Integrity reminds me to take a breath, give myself, and others, a break and try to do the right thing. Integrity takes practice, and the practice is worth it.

**Humility**

**By:**

**Jamie M.**

**High On Life**

Step 7: *We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings*

Through the steps and spiritual principles of NA, I can accept both my assets and my shortcomings. I can only change with help from my Higher Power. I attempted to hold on to old ideas and behaviors, when I realized I had to let pride and ego go. This painful and uncomfortable process has given me peace and freedom from the misery and insanity, by becoming vulnerable and open-minded I no longer fear life on life’s terms. I am not alone and never have to be.

I now have to ask for help when issues and situations arrive! By asking others for their experience, strength, and hope I now humble myself. Instead of getting rid of my shortcomings I try to replace them with things that are positive.

I always saw material satisfaction was needed to live a purposeful life instead character building and spiritual values are needed. I thought good character was needed to be self-satisfied! Instead honesty, tolerance, and true love of man and my Higher Power was the basis of daily living.

Placing self-reliance first my conscious contact with my Higher Power was lost. For humility a desire to do Gods will was needed. It caused me great pain to look at this. Knowing and admitting powerlessness is the first step to humbling yourself.

I have peace of mind and can enjoy moments in life today!

My eyes were open to values which come from painful situations. Until now my life consisted of me running from pain. I never wanted to deal with my suffering. Humility brings strength out of weakness. Seeing that no man is either more than or less than the next.

My connection with my Higher Power has grown stronger. I realize he can do for me what I can’t do for myself. I now make reasonable demands upon myself, others, and my Higher Power. I have made a change to move out of myself into others and my Higher Power.

**Announcements:**

**July:**

2nd Ruth H (Kay Kay), 1 yr. @ High on Life

6th Mandy R., 3 yrs. @ Keep It Green

20th Haley H., 2 yrs. @ Clarity

23rd Chris D., 21 yrs. @ High on Life

30th Paula H., 2 yrs. @ High on Life

**September:**

7th Megan M., 1 yr. @ Clarity

10th Miki M., 4 yrs. @ High on Life

Thomas B., 2 yrs. @ Harmony

14th Jamie E., 31 yrs. @ One is Too Many

24th Jessica J., 1 yr. @ High on Life

**Chairpersons Note:**

I would like to thank all of those that contributed to this issue: Will T, Terry F, Carl H, Dave K, Shannon T, Jamie M, and Juan S.

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