The Clean Times

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

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**Cover Story**

**BY: Dave K.**

**Something Different**

I’m Dave and I am an addict. I would like to thank the newsletter committee for asking me to write my story.

I first started using when I was around 15. I remember being in High School and not feeling like I fit in. I felt less than, and apart from everyone else. When I first started using it felt great. We would buy beer and drink it in the woods. It was very cold in upstate New York, but this was fun and an exciting thing to be doing. The kids I drank with accepted me and I felt like I fit in.

At some point I graduated high school and went off to college. In college I started using on my own. Using was becoming more of a habit, rather than a fun way to socialize. At some point I graduated from college and started working.

I would work, and then spend a lot of time drinking, without much more going on in my life. At some point I was in a bar and got introduced to other drugs besides just alcohol. In the beginning discovering new drugs was fun and exciting, but the good times with these new drugs would always fade, and I would find myself in a state of more and more misery. To deal with the misery I would use more and more, which created a downhill spiral.

At some point around 2004, I was living in Memphis, and decided to get clean and start managing my life better. I was able to stay clean for several years. I had an apartment downtown, had a girlfriend, and was back in school. I did all of this on my own with some help from a therapist.

I stayed clean for several years, but never learned to live life clean. My girlfriend broke up with me which caused a lot of depression and I did not know how to deal with it, so I started using again. At the same time, I developed shingles in my head which was extremely painful, which introduced me to yet another drug. I started using more and more. And it eventually reached a point, back in 2008, when I was using just to survive.

And then a miracle happened. On June 15, 2008, some of the friends I had made in Memphis did a surprise intervention on me, and got me into a treatment facility. This was God working through these friends, but I did not know it at the time. At the time I did not believe in God or any higher power.

At the treatment center, they diagnosed me with dual disorders, addiction and depression, and I began treatment for these. At first, I hated being stuck at this facility. But I grew to like it, and how I was starting to learn about recovery.

The treatment facility would take us to outside NA meetings. We would go to other fellowships as well. But I always felt attracted to NA, because my disease was not about any one drug. At some point I finished treatment, and I immediately started to go to NA meetings.

I did not believe in a higher power, or God, when I first got into recovery. But I remember feeling so much at home, when I first went to NA, without it logically making any sense. Although the addicts gave me hugs and welcomed me, I believe very much that the God of my understanding not only saved my life and got me into treatment, but guided me towards NA as well.

When I first came to NA, I tried the best I could to follow the suggestions given to me. I kept coming back, put recovery first, avoided triggers (people, places, and things), purchased literature, and found a sponsor. If I had not done any one of these things, I would not have stayed clean and made it to where I am today.

God put some addicts with very good recovery in my life, and I asked one of them to be my sponsor. I started going through the steps, with the guidance of my sponsor.

Steps 1 to 3 were a challenge to me. I was so use to trying to control things. I thought the solution to any problem I had was to be stronger, have more willpower, and never give up. But the approach of our program and the steps is the opposite of this. Acceptance is an option! Eventually, I was able to not only accept my addiction, but things like my mother’s decisions, that were not in my control.

I was very scared to work step 4 and 5. I did not want to review my entire life searching for things I did wrong. But my sponsor had me break it into pieces, and not only focus on the “bad”, but on the things I did that were “good”. When I finished the 4rth step, I felt a relief. Working this step helped me accept the past and identify my destructive patterns of behavior. And I was also able to see that I was not as horrible a person as I thought I was, by working this step.

In step 6 and 7, I looked at all of my character defects. In particular, I looked at how I could grow up and be less self-centered. To this day, I still have character defects. But one thing I have learned in recovery is that I am not perfect, or I would be God.

I remember that around the time I finished step 7, my father passed away suddenly and unexpectantly. This caused me a lot of shock and sadness. But I remember that the thoughts going through my mind at the time were spiritual in nature. There is no question that the spiritual growth from this program and the steps up until this time, helped me deal with the loss of my father, and this motivated me to keep working and living the remainder of the steps.

I remember making amends to my family, as part of step 8 and 9. My relationship is not necessarily that close with them, but it is no longer a bad relationship. I am very grateful that my father was able to see me clean. Perhaps most importantly, I made amends to myself as part of step 8 and 9.

I try to work step 10 every day. I not only want to identify what I did wrong, but by doing step 10 I can see how much I have grown in recovery. I also try to work step 11 and 12 every day. I have my own prayer which I have written out that thanks God, and asks him to do what is best, in particular with my friends and family who are sick or suffering. All day long I meditate, and listen to God speaking to me through others, and in many different ways.

I went through all the steps very thoroughly by studying the literature with my sponsor, answering questions out of the work book, and most importantly trying to live the steps as best I can. Maybe I went through the steps too slowly because I am a perfectionist and wanted to live and do each step perfectly before moving on to the next one. But today, overall, I am very grateful for how I have worked and lived the steps. In addition to working through the steps, I have also worked through the traditions and concepts with my sponsor.

I am very, very grateful for this program, the addicts who have been part of my recovery, for my sponsor, my homegroup, those who have written our literature, and those who have done service work for our fellowship. Today I still have problems and challenges, but I have a very strong spiritual awakening, and I am much, much happier and healthier than I have ever been.

**What NA Means to Me**

**BY: Sarah T.**

**Cordova Hope**

Hello, my name is Sarah, and I’m an addict. Saying that for the first time requires tremendous courage. Admitting that we are in the grips of a deadly disease can be scary, but it can also be liberating. Before I attended my first meeting, I knew something had to change in my life. They say everyone has their own bottom – the catalyst to change. For me, it wasn’t just one thing, it was an accumulation of losses brought about by bad decisions I had made.

I stole from my handicapped brother and from my mother, with whom I have always had a close, loving relationship. I made many other bad choices, too, but when I woke up in jail after breaking into another family member’s house, it was in the truest sense, a rude awakening. I had never felt so bad about myself. My life was at a dead end. I didn’t want to die a junkie. I knew something had to change.

When I attended my first NA meeting, I was nervous and scared of what of what people would think of me. I didn’t open my mouth. I tried to be open minded and I listened to what others had to say. At the end of the meeting, everyone formed a circle and we all locked arms before a closing prayer.

“Keep coming back,” everyone said. They told me they would love me until I loved myself. I was ready to start over. I was told to let go of all the people I had used with or met during my addiction. That seemed impossible. I wasn’t sure I was ready. It wasn’t easy, but it was completely necessary. I threw away my phone, with all my old contacts. I had officially cut ties to the past.

I was determined to start on this journey to a clean and happy live. At first I didn’t understand everything I was advised to do, or even what people said during the meetings. With time, thing began to make sense and become clearer to me. Along the way, I began to discover who I am and to understand that I have choices. The NA program has given me that. I choose to stay clean today. I chose to listen to my higher power and do the next indicated thing. I choose to forgive myself and move forward.

I have so many things to be grateful for thanks to the NA program. My family is beginning to trust me again. I have caring friends and people I know I can count on. I have a sponsor, who also has a sponsor and I get wonderful advice from them. I am beginning to love and respect myself. I am proud of the woman I am becoming, and for the first time, I am excited about the future.

I am so grateful to have a fellowship of people I care for and who care about me. I am not alone. You never have to be alone again either. If you are just starting out, try to open up to people, get a phone list and go to as many meetings as you can. Don’t be hard on yourself. Get a basic text and read it. Most important of all, remember, you have the choice not to use.

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**What NA Means to Me**

**BY: Jennifer B.**

**Thursday Nighters**

Ever since I first stepped foot into a Narcotics Anonymous meeting at the ripe age of

at a time when I didn’t feel I belonged

anywhere or with anyone. I was a ward of the state of Kansas. I had sat in a juvenile

detention center for months waiting for someone, anyone to bail me out. My dad had

just gotten clean and had about two weeks clean and he took me to my first meeting

at the Mid America Regional Convention. Narcotics Anonymous was the first place

that asked me to keep coming back, even if I acted on character defects. And I did. I

acted out. A lot. Addicts loved me in spite of myself.

As I grew in my recovery and learned how to channel my assets rather than act

impulsively on my defects (at least some of the time anyway), I began to understand

that wherever I went in life, Narcotics Anonymous would provide a refuge. I’ll never

forget the time I attend the World Convention in St. Louis and met people from all

over the globe. We had all convened upon a few square blocks in a city unknown to

most of us. Even though we were only there for the moment, it felt like home. I have

traveled many times to conventions and have made lifelong companions in

Narcotics Anonymous.

When I was the first person in my family to graduate with a Bachelor’s degree, I

uprooted my recovery and moved east to Memphis, TN. Once again, I was shown

repeatedly, that no matter where I go, I have a home in Narcotics Anonymous. As

long as I would show up to meetings, go for coffee afterward, and get involved in

service, I could make this town my new recovery home. Now, I’ve lived in Memphis

longer than I was alive when I got clean. I have the longest standing friendships I’ve

ever had with people here in Narcotics Anonymous. I’ve spent half my life here in

the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, and there is no other place I would rather be.

On occasion, I still travel home and attend meetings in my old home group.

Whenever I do, I am always welcomed with big hugs and lots of love. I’ve even been

invited to be the Sunday morning speaker at the regional convention where I first

got clean! It’s comforting to know there are people who are still clean that saw me at

my very worst when I walked in the doors. My life today is almost unrecognizable

compared to the scared little girl I was when I walked in the doors twenty-four

years ago. No matter where I go or what I endure, there is always a chair waiting for

me.

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| |  | | --- | | **What NA Means to Me**  **BY: Michael H.**  **Saturday Night Alive** | |  |

Seven years and three months ago, I found myself in the lowest point of my life - rock bottom.  I had lost my career, I did not have a home of my own, and I was facing significant legal trouble.  Hopelessness and despair were the only emotions I could feel.  I truly had no idea that there would ever be anything different.

I remember my last night using.  I had driven into Memphis for the weekend and was able to hustle some dope.  I found myself in some dangerous and humiliating situations.  That Sunday night, I drove back out to my parents, exhausted and high.  I was embarrassed to walk into their house, so I just sat in my truck around the corner until past 10pm, hoping they would be in bed.  When I walked in, there was my mom - worried and wanting to see me.

The funny thing is - I had been accepted to rehab and I wanted to show up to rehab clean.  So I planned this particular Sunday night as my last night to use so that I could achieve this goal.  I wanted my recovery to be perfect and on my terms.

My parents drove me to rehab in February 2012, for a year-long stay.  It was an experience that changed me.  I was introduced to NA and the 12 steps and slowly began the process of becoming a new man.  Up to this point, I had this illusion that I was in control of my life and my destiny, but it became clear that I had done a terrible job of running my life.  Maybe it was time to find a new boss.

After rehab, I found a regular routine of NA meetings along with a sponsor and a healthy group of friends.  I had been using for so long that I had forgotten how to live, so it was important for me to be around people who could show me what it meant to be normal.

I began to see that the longer I stayed clean, the more small miracles began to happen in my life.  I got my career back, I moved out of the halfway house, my family began to trust me again and I had a full life with people who love me.

Most important of all, I have hope.  NA has changed me and given me my life back.  I will be forever grateful.

**What NA Means to Me**

**BY: Sara S.**

**Spiritual Awakenings**

My name is Sara S. and I am grateful recovering addict. My clean date is

5/10/15. When David asked me to write an article about what NA

means to me so many things went through my head. I really didn’t even

know where to start. So many life altering things have happened since I

got clean. Good and bad. When David said it could only be 400 words,

my first thought was I won’t be able to say everything that I want to

say, but here it goes….

When I first came into the rooms, I was a mess. I did not think that I

belonged. I remember looking around the room at a meeting and

thinking to myself these people are nothing like me. At the time, I had

felony conviction and I was on probation and but still in my egotistical

brain, I believed I was better than everyone in that room. I had NO idea

what humility was. I was living in half-way house and going to meetings

because I had to. I knew I wanted something different in my life but not

this. Not living in a house with 10 women who if it wasn’t for my drug

use our paths would have never crossed. Every other week someone

was getting kicked out for relapsing or going to jail if they were on drug

court. I thought to myself, If I ever get kicked out where would I go? My

family had not abandoned me, but they certainly didn’t trust me and

they were not going to let me come live with them if I screwed up. So I

decided it was up to me to change the way I thought. I started actually

listening in meetings. Instead of seeing the differences I listened for the

similarities. I actually started sharing and eventually I got to chair a few

meetings. I felt a part of instead of better than…and I finally found

some humility.

I always believed humility meant humiliation. That I had to lower

myself to achieve it. But what it really was about was my pride. I had to

let that go and the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous taught me how to

do that. It’s not always about the drugs. I knew that I had to change.

Yes, when you first come in, it’s all about the drugs and getting and

staying clean. But if you decide to stick around, your whole life changes,

doors start opening, living life on life’s terms gets easier and if you

struggle , the people in the rooms will show up at your door and love

you until you can love yourself. NA has taught me a new way to live. NA

has given some of the best friends in the world whom I can always

count on. But most of all it has taught me to be humble. To think about

others, to give back and most of all to love myself again.

**Chairpersons Note**

This is my last official newsletter and I wanted to take the time to write a little something. First, I want to thank the two people who have been with me for the last three and a half years, Juan S. and Mary N. they were the ones I bounced ideas off of and made suggestions to make those ideas better. That’s not to say we didn’t argue over things we are only human, but in the end we came together. I think for the most part we put together a darn good product. Second, I want to thank all of those that have helped with ideas along the way that weren’t always able to be there in person but I was able to call and ask for help or suggestions with an idea. Third and last, I want to thank all of you that wrote articles, some of you more than one. There are too many names to list individually, but you all know who you are. That being said I could not have done this without any of you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you to all of you. Thank you for allowing me to be of service. ILS, David T.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**April:**

**23rd Kelly R. 16 years @ Harmony**

**May:**

**3rd-5th NA In May**

**8th Christine J. 32 years @ Desire**

**10th Sara S. 4 years @ Spiritual Awakenings**

**TBA Kacey C. 3 years @ Harmony**

**Poll Results:**

**Favorite Tradition**

First Place- Tradition 3

Second Place- Tradition 12

Third Place- Tradition 5

**June:**

**17th Dave K. 11 years @ Something Different**

The review draft of the *Mental Health in Recovery* informational pamphlet (IP) is posted on the NAWS website! [www.na.org/mhmi](https://www.na.org/mhmi).  This IP is intended to support members in recovery who face mental health challenges. Input will be received until May 15, 2019.

Spiritual Principle A Day: We’re compiling a new book! The 2018 World Service Conference approved a project plan for a book that explores a spiritual principle on each day of the year. According to a 2017 survey, members want…

* to hear the voices of fellow members,
* to learn how others apply principles in their daily lives, and
* to read about how living by spiritual principles shapes our experience.

Like *Just for Today*, these daily meditations will start with a short excerpt from NA literature, a couple of paragraphs that expand on the quotation, and a sentence or two to reflect on. Beyond that, we need to generate material that reflects our shared experience. The more material we gather on each principle, the better the book will be. With that in mind, we’ve created some tools to support a Fellowship-wide writing effort.

You can write on a principle and submit your writing online at [www.na.org/spad](http://www.na.org/spad).  How cool would it be to see something you wrote in our new book?!

Recovery

Don’t feel disillusioned by where you are now

your progress is good enough

it’s meaningful

it’s on time

though everything may go unacknowledged

every silent step is movement

In the right direction

when it feels as though

everyone is going forward

and you are being pulled back by

your own demons or your past

remember that every moment in this journey

will play its part in the greater narrative

what a beautiful story to share one day

written just by living your life.

I am strong

I am resilient

I try my best

I value my life

I am not perfect

I am the perfect me

I never give up

I am empathetic

I am a warrior

Ready to conquer

I am not broken

I am loving

I take things one day at a time

I am independent

I am human

**I am a survivor**