The Clean Times

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

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Give Yourself A Break By: Andy W.

Simplicity Is The Key

The best suggestion I received from NA was to give myself a break and DON’T USE! After many years as a clean addict in recovery I found myself at a point that I was backed into a corner with nothing left to do but use. I always thought that if I were to go back out it would be dirty needles and street drugs. This was not so. I somehow justified the use of legal substances such as alcohol and legal prescriptions from the doctor to fuel my addiction while working a professional career. To my dismay, I found out the hard way, once again, that it does not matter the substance used and that I am an addict. In a very short period I was bad off and finding myself in and out of the room of narcotics anonymous. After remembering that using was a

symptom of my problem I realized that I relapsed way before the actual physical use of taking drugs into my body. At twelve years clean I was miserable and my life was so overwhelming and unmanageable. I attempted to control the things that in early recovery I would have turned over and left alone but I was too far-gone without a real solution and relapse happened. I came in and out of the rooms for the wrong reasons for three years, which I believe saved me from dying from this disease.

I had been immersed in a toxic relationship with children involved for the last few years.

Finding myself not able let go of control or accepting the truth I was unable to change.

Attempting to fix thing drove me to the edge of full mental health break down and total insanity. At the first of this year I knew that something bad was going to happen if I didn’t get recovery for myself for the right reasons but I was still stuck. My wife at the time attempted suicide, which was very severe in nature. I was very traumatized by this! I was flooded with so many emotions and fears that it was unbearable. I was sick too. Justification set in and I set-up an appointment with a psychiatrist to “deal” with this situation. Well that indeed DIDN’T happen in the sense I thought it would. What this did for me was to bring me down to my knees all the way where I was able to come in and surrender to the program on narcotics anonymous once again. I am in recovery today and I am most grateful for the opportunities to work on me. I have an awesome sponsorship family today along with a home group and many people I can call on. Today I am allowed to be me without having to use. Today I am free to choose and it started with giving myself a break.

Step Four By: Elaine L. Something Different

Hmm. We don’t stop being addicts do we? Now let’s see… not wanting to write for fear of being exposed that I am weak. Well, if it smells like an addict, looks like an addict, and sounds like an addict, then it must be an addict. Yup, I’m still an addict. But I do have hope. In working these steps I ensure my future in that I don’t have to pick up.

Now, let’s look at step four. “We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

After Admitting that I was powerless and my life was unmanageable, coming to believe in a power greater than myself really did want me sane and not only could but would restore me to sanity, and making a decision to turn my will and my life over to care of a God as I could understand Him.

After working these three steps with my sponsor, I began to trust her and after continually reminding me that I wasn’t the only one who has been afraid, dwelt in denial, and just plain procrastinated, plus the fact that she has heard it all before, I called my sponsor like she asked…daily. My trust began to grow. But let me say here that I tried to tackle this step all at once and bottomed out. I became overwhelmed. I didn’t want to write anymore. Then my sponsor told me to breathe and take one question at a time. So, I did just that. Slowly, by taking my time but being consistent was the key. With her help, I could list my resentments. I came to understand that feelings are just feelings, they do not have to define who I am. It was easier to list the times I felt resentment and have feelings of guilt and shame. I got a glimpse of the different kinds of relationships, what healthy ones look like and unhealthy ones look like.

By the time I got to sex and abuse, I could actually see the light at the end of the tunnel. I began to see that all this garbage was actually keeping the real me hidden. I began to see positive and healthy qualities showing up in my life. It was the secrets that kept me bound. So, at the end I realized that I had already finished my inventory, just by answering with willingness, honesty, and open mindedness. Remember, that these three things are indispensable.

Tradition Four

By: Vera Lunch Bunch

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups of NA as a whole.

For us to understand Tradition Four, we must first define the word, autonomy. The

Oxford dictionary defines autonomy as: a self- governing entity, having freedom from external control or influence, independence. Although, each group is autonomous; the group must always keep in mind that our primary purpose (carrying the message of recovery to the addict that still suffers) must always be adhered to in our meetings. For example, each of us is very careful not to stump our big toe because the whole body feels the pain. Likewise, each group must think of itself as the big toe; thereby, not bringing reproaches or negative light to the whole body

(Narcotics Anonymous.)

The most common way that NA groups express autonomy, is in the choice of what format they will be using to carry the message of recovery. This allows each group to find its niche and offer diversity to a diverse group of people. Some groups find that speakers meeting work better for them; other groups find that offering step studies, topic discussions, Tradition study, and etc. work better for them. No matter what format the group selects to incorporate into its meetings, recovery oriented meetings are imperative to NA’s survival.

Even though each group is a self-governing entity; every group should identify as an NA group by having the same readings; focusing on working the 12-steps, the 12 Traditions, and the 12 Concepts. Members should be encouraged to share their own experience, strength and hope in a meeting. Also, in selecting the group’s name; the group must remember to choose a name that reflexes NA in a positive light. Silly names for groups should be avoided at all cost, because lives are at stake!

Just as an individual practices spiritual principles to grow in recover so should NA groups. Tradition Four gives a clear understanding on how spiritual principles should be applied within groups. Furthermore, **autonomy** gives groups certain freedoms, yet groups must exercise responsibility by considering the welfare of the fellowship. **Open-mindedness** is essential to use autonomy to help NA grow. Groups open their minds to explore new ways in reaching addicts. **Love** is the principle that guides groups to see NA as a greater whole.

Without our autonomous groups, groups would be unable to fulfill NA’s primary purpose. For this to happen, groups must seek direction and guidance from a loving higher power.

Concept Four By: Dave K. Something Different

I have been studying the concepts with my sponsor using the “Twelve Concepts for NA

Service” booklet. The fourth concept states that “Effective Leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.”

The concept makes clear that it is important that we carefully select addicts for service positions. It is helpful if the candidates are known long before there is a vote on them. This way we have the time necessary to carefully consider the leadership and other qualities of candidates, and ask questions if necessary.

It is important to consider the whole person, and not just certain abilities or traits. For example, it is tempting to think that someone who is an accountant would make a great treasurer, but it is important that we consider a candidate’s character traits. Certainly someone who is good with numbers, but dishonest, would not make a good treasurer, for example.

In the literature, humility is listed as a very important trait. It is very important that we select addicts for service positions who are willing and able to be accountable, and answer questions about what they have been responsible for. It is important that addicts have a good attitude towards service. It is important to consider the integrity of those we select for service positions.

Every NA member has a right to serve the fellowship, however this concept makes clear that not every NA member has a right to have a certain service position. Some addicts are better suited to certain positions, and not to others.

It is important to realize that service work includes more than service positions that are voted on. Service work includes welcoming newcomers to our meeting, cleaning up after meetings, chairing meetings, and doing 12th step work. It is important that we represent NA well. Spiritual principles such as open-mindedness, honesty, willingness, positive thinking, and integrity are important in carrying out service work, including that which we do not vote on.

Why I Do Service Work By: Chris M.

GHOD

What is service work? Why is it necessary? How does it help? Why do I need to do it?

These are questions many addicts ask. First of all, service work in the most general sense can include being of service in any capacity and can include serving in civic, social, or religious capacities. But for our purposes here, we will focus on service to Narcotics Anonymous. Even this covers a broad spectrum of activities including opening the doors and setting up for a home group meeting, sponsorship, serving the group as GSR or other trusted servant, any position of area, regional, or world service, and much, much more. Each of these opportunities to serve is valuable, none more important than another, and all of these are always needed and desired.

Service work by members of NA is necessary because we as a fellowship do not have paid officers to conduct our business for us we have to do it ourselves. Yes, there are paid special workers at NAWS and several regional service offices who perform administrative tasks but, ideally, they do not conduct the business of the NA fellowship itself. NA members do that, and it is done on a volunteer basis. Without NA members acting as trusted servants, groups would not have literature, meetings would not be opened or closed, there would be no NA functions or activities, just to name a few.

So service is the backbone of NA functioning to help the still suffering addict. Yes, I know sometimes we tire of the perceived bureaucracy of some levels of service. If that's the case with you, simply don't participate at those levels right now, but please don't give up on service altogether. You are needed, you ALL are needed. Could NA exist without an area or regional service committee? Probably, but could it carry the message of recovery as effectively? I'm thinking not.

There are many opportunities to serve our fellowship in so many different ways. It is generally true that a small percentage of addicts continually do a large percentage of the service that needs to be done. It's also generally true that those willing to serve are among those who tend to stick around the longest. And it doesn't have to be the case that so few are of service. Sure, world or regional service may not be for everyone, but there are ways to serve that any addict in the fellowship can participate in. There are service opportunities that don't require any clean time, and many others that only require minimal time. There are opportunities to serve that don't require any special skills. One of the most rewarding service opportunities for me has been doing H & I. All it takes is 6 months clean and the willingness to talk for 10 or 15 minutes about what recovery has done for me. I always leave an H & I meeting feeling I got much more out of it than I gave.

Why do I participate in service? The answer is not an altruistic one at all. I continue to serve because of how it helps me, how it boosts my recovery. The saying that we can't keep what we have unless we give it away is true, and it is very applicable to service work. I can't speak for anyone else, but Narcotics Anonymous saved my life. I have absolutely no doubt that I wouldn't be breathing without it. I feels really good to give back just a little of what was so freely given to me. I had been a taker all my life, never giving back. I didn't want to continue to be a taker in recovery. Being of service enhances my recovery. It allows me to get more out of recovery and to grow in ways I couldn't otherwise. So I challenge the reader: Find a way to be of service today. Don't be a taker. Service will enhance your recovery too!

Why Is Sponsorship Important By: Tayler D.

Simplicity Is The Key

My name is Tayler & I am a grateful recovering addict. My home group is Simplicity is the Key. Sponsorship is important to me because I truly believe in the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. When I first got clean on Jan 6, 2011, I came into the rooms of NA broken, scared & alone. I felt that no one would understand me or be able to help me. The last thing I wanted to do was be vulnerable in a room full of people & tell them about my checkered past. All the meetings I attended were full of people who were “clean & serene” & that intimidated me. I truly did not believe that there was any way to live life without the use of drugs. I was told to find a sponsor & have that sponsor take me through the steps. I chose my sponsor based on her share in a few meetings. She was sharing about losing a loved one. I thought to myself who is this woman & what secret does she have? Here she was in a meeting being vulnerable & staying clean through the process. I wanted to have what she had. The relationship I developed with my sponsor was the first time I was able to be truly honest with another person. My sponsor never judged me. She surrounded me with love & hope. I could confide in her & know I truly was not alone. She guided me through the steps & helped me realize that trusting others is practicing courage. Talking with my sponsor gave me the push to talk more openly in meetings about what was really going on in my life. Since she didn’t judge me, maybe these people wouldn’t either. I am so grateful for my sponsor since she paved the way for all my future relationship in recovery. She taught me what it was like to have a true genuine connection with another human being with no strings attached. The best part is that sponsorship is a two-way street. Like it says in our literature “It helps both the newcomer & the sponsor”. Without sponsorship I feel that I would have never been able to grow spiritually or develop into the woman I am today. Today I sponsor other women because I want to give back what was freely given to me. We can count on our sponsor to answer the phone. We can count on our sponsors to listen & understand exactly how we feel. Even though we may come from different places & may not look the same, we all can identify with the feelings that we experience at different times throughout our recovery. We realize there are people who do want to love us until we can love ourselves. For me that was definitely a foreign concept in my active addiction. I was told that the only requirement of a sponsor is to take another addict through the steps, but to me it can grow into something much more than that… a connection that can last a lifetime with someone who truly does know you better than you know yourself. In loving service, Tayler D.

Never Imagined By: Jonathan M.

Simplicity Is The Key

Ten years ago, I was in a dark place with my addiction. A feeble attempt at suicide left me hospitalized and committed by the state. I got another trip to treatment. In treatment, I experienced H&I for the first time. I saw these strange groups of people speak about what I felt and experienced. They seemed content and happy to not have drugs.

When I left, I found the rooms of recovery in another fellowship. It didn’t last long, not even a month. I began getting high and attending meetings. I met a young girl whom I allowed take my attention elsewhere. I was back where I left off. The old people, places, and things were another norm. I started stealing from my job to feed my disease, and meetings and fellowship were no longer on my mind.

It took another year before I wanted to die again. This time I got honest with my job. My boss gave me two options…treatment or fired. I chose treatment. That day was March 12, 2008. My clean date is March 13, 2008. After treatment, my job fired me. My family was ready to be done with me. Then I remembered the H&I panels I had seen. I found Narcotics Anonymous.

I started attending meetings. Hell, that’s all I could do. Everything triggered me. I cut out old people, place, and things. I’m a quiet reserved guy. It made meetings really tough. However, men in the rooms reached out to me.

Early on, I took all the suggestions: sponsor, meetings, reading literature, step work, prayers, etc. I started to feel better. Then another female took my attention. Recovery did not come first. I started to not be honest with my sponsor. My meeting attendance lacked. Step work stopped. When I had four months clean, this woman told me she was pregnant, but that the kid could be mine or this other’s guy. I was devastated. I didn’t know what to do, so I went back to meetings. My recovery started all over again.

As time went on, life got better. The child wasn’t mine. I got married to a woman I met in the rooms. I moved up in the world at my job. My wife and I were able to afford our first house.

We then began to try to start a family of our own. I thought it would be easy, but we hit a wall. For whatever reason, we could not get pregnant. I saw my wife obsess with getting pregnant. Her disease wrapped its ugly head around her. She hurt. Women were hurt and pushed away. There was very little I could do. I had no control.

After doctor appointments, surgeries, and treatments, we had exhausted nearly all options to get pregnant. Our last hope was IVF. My wife took shot after shot in the same region. Sometimes I gave it. My wife was in much pain. I carried the guilt. On our second date, I had told her I wouldn’t date her if she didn’t want kids. Here we were trying to have a kid and she was the one making the sacrifices. At times, I wished I had never said those words. I wish I were the reason we couldn’t get pregnant. I felt as if I had caused all this pain and hardship. She was doing so much to give us what we wanted most.

Well, IVF was a success. We now have two beautiful children…twins Jack and Lily. Our twins are now three weeks old. These weeks have been some of the best and hardest yet. Never have I cried so many tears of joy and sadness. I now have everything I ever wanted. I never imagined my life would turn out this way, and I owe it all to NA.

Letter

By: Anonymous

Dear Addiction,

You know who I am and you know what you have done to me. It's been a long time since we last talked. So, let me refresh your memory. You tore me down and beat me up, but like the song says "I get knocked down but I get up again".

You took my life. You had me lying, cheating, and manipulating. Doing whatever it took to whomever I could do it to. I thought I had you under control but I didn't. I was working, but I was doing it high. I had a roof over my head, but it was a motel room with two other adults. You made me think I was functioning, but I wasn't.

I was the rain that was flowing toward the gutter that was going into the sewage system. I was the odor that garbage left behind. You had me down, but I got up.

I stopped the lying, stealing, manipulating, etc. Slowly, I became the person I always knew I could be. I have my family back. I have a real roof over my head, food in the fridge, a bed to sleep in, and I'm paying back my debts. I am that person that helps others when possible. I am a published author, not a very successful one but one nonetheless. Now, I'm not perfect but I am much better than I was sixteen years ago. That's right, I said sixteen years. That's how long I've got clean and been able to beat you. You may be in the corner doing pushups and you can do them all you want I'm not letting you back on my back. Good bye.

From,

Me

# Announcements

**October**:

TACNA Serenity Under The Stars, Sept 30-Oct. 2 2016, Lake of the Pines-Johnson Creek Campgrounds, Marion City, TX, arscna.org

Ozark Mountain High Campout, Sept. 30-Oct 2 2016, Morrilton, Ark, arscna.org

Fall Festival, Oct 22, 2016, Laclede, MO, primarypurposearea.org

1st Annual Hope Group Speaker Jam, Oct 8, 2016, 11am-9pm, Nashville, TN, nanashville.org

**November**:

True Colors XXX, Nov 4-6, 2016, Cedar Lakes Ripley, WV, barcna.com

High On Life Anniversary, Nov 14, 7:30pm

Ben E. 10 yrs., Nov 21, High On Life,

VRC, Nov 23-27, 2016, Chattanooga, TN, vrc34.org

**December**:

Holiday Marathon Meeting, Dec 25 2016, 2pm-10pm and Dec 31 2016, 2pm-10pm

Freedom To Change XXIII, Dec 30-Jan1 2016-17, Kansas City, MO, kansascityna.org

# Chairpersons Note

I would like to thank Elaine L, Chris M, Jonathan M, Tayler D, Vera, Dave K, and Andy W for writing the articles in this issue of the newsletter. We are always looking for writers and ideas if you want to contribute please get in touch with me on the Facebook page The Clean Times or email thecleantimes@gmail.com. One last thing if you want your event or clean time announced here you have to get it to me by the deadline. I can’t put in what I don’t have. I don’t exact dates for clean time celebrations. I will also put events in but again I can’t put in what I don’t have.

