**My Story**

The Clean Times

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**By:**

**Jamie E.**

**High On Life**

I was asked to tell "my story" so here goes.  With the Grace of God I'll have 30 years clean on the 9th of September.  30 years ago, on the 8th of September I walked into drug treatment at the VA.  I had gotten high just after midnight so I didn't count that day.  My using isn't much different from anyone else.  I stared when I was about 13 or so.  I know that I had obsessive and compulsive behavior long before, when I was at least 5 or 6 I did anything I could to emotionally hide from the crap going on around me. My parents constantly argued and yelled at me and I got frequently chased with a cut short ridding crop.  I turned to my imagination, then music, then food, but when I was 13 I tried my first drug and it was off to the races.  I found a quick and easy way to totally hide from my feelings. Drugs would play a major role in my life from then on, getting me kicked out of a prestigious military school 2 months

before graduation, getting me almost kicked out of the USAF, and constantly dragging me down bringing me close to losing the best job I had ever gotten.  It's funny but when I got that job I thought I'd FINALLY

have enough money to get high all the time and not worry about it.  Never enough seems to be a theme we all had. I got pretty sick about a year later, in 1986.  Ended up in the hospital for a few days with a bad infection.  When I got home I decided I'd destroy my water pipe and that would help me stop using.  I took it down to the garbage can to smash it and saw next door a gal named Kathleen playing with her new baby.  She used to get high with me and my friends but stopped.  I told her what I had just done and all she said was "That's great.  I've been going to a group called HALTS that's a part of Narcotics Anonymous."  She said no more than that. I called my EAP program and mentioned NA and the silly woman on the line said "We don't like people going to NA - they learn about other drugs there.  We send them to AA".  All I needed was an excuse like that to go back to using.  A year later and in

trouble with work I finally used a combination of several drugs and still couldn't get that numbness I used to crave - so I sought help again.  I got a better councilor and ended up going into the VA for about 4 weeks.  While there they allowed us after a week to go to outside meetings.  I called and found out where HALTS was and about 7 of us piled into my old car and went.  It was a book study, Chapter 8.  "We know well the two things that make up true addiction: obsession and compulsion."  For the first time in my life someone really knew my problem.  In treatment they were big on talking about your drug of choice, but here in NA it was all about the disease.  These people knew me, knew what my problem is and has been since I was a little child.  I was finally home!

**Step Eight**

**By:**

**Wendy O.**

“Made a list of all persons we have harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

Definition of “harm”… one might call it the result of instincts in collision, which cause physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual damage to people.  I had to look at even the more subtle ways like was I cold, irritable, humorless?  I had to know exactly what personality traits in me injured others.

I can remember the days when I was so out of control.  I was so obsessed with drugs than developing relationships with other people.  I really didn’t realize how much I had isolated myself.  I thought that once my drug problem was solved, everything would be grand.  What happened with me was defective ways of dealing with others was a real source of pain for me. Many times I thought to myself it would just go away when I quit the drugs. That was not the case.

All of my twisted and broken relationships had put me on the defensive.  I told my sponsor after reviewing my list of people I had harmed that there was some I just was not willing to say I am sorry to without taking their inventory.  I want to be like I am sorry for… But because you did this to me.  She told me to pray for the willingness to be willing every day and to pray good things for those people. As a matter a fact she asked me to pray all those things I pray for myself to pray that for them.  It did not take long for me to feel willing to make amends with them.  I learned that I had aggravated a lot of people with my sick emotions.

So my sponsor pointed out to me that she notice I was not on my own amends list.  She asked me why.  I was taken back by this. I realized I owed myself an amends and I needed to be the first on the list. I hurt, lied, and manipulated myself.  I thought back on the ways I had been harmed over my life and saw where I did the same things to other people. I swore up and down as a little girl I would never abandon my children the way I had been. I abandoned my boys. That is the hardest on my list of amends by the way.

**Tradition Eight**

**By:**

**Mark V-B**

**Clean AIR**

Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

*It Works:  How and Why* tells us that the spiritual principles underlying this Tradition “are eminently practical ones:  humility, prudence, anonymity, and integrity.”  Our program, when worked conscientiously, allows any addict to stay clean, lose the desire to use drugs, and find a new way to live through the power of one addict helping another.  There may be a place in the health care or other needs of an addict for professional services, but we addicts must remember that what we offer is the experience, strength, and hope gained from obtaining a state of recovery from our disease.  That doesn’t come from having a professional degree, proclaiming we are experts, or telling fellow addicts what they “should” do — a reason we don’t cross-talk in meetings.  Such a lack of humility runs the risk of “turning off” newcomers, and unintentionally steering a fellow addict into relapse.  None of us need the extra challenge of the shame that would come from that.

It would be highly imprudent to turn our program into a professional treatment service and do our recovery work according to the dictates of professional leaders.  Indeed, Tradition Two reminds us that we don’t have leaders who govern, only “trusted servants.”  It is prudent, on the other hand, to recognize that there is nothing wrong with using special workers in our service centers that have helpful professional knowledge.  It is to our benefit to focus on our recovery work, and not be distracted with the minutiae of running offices, such as NA World Services.  The drama and mania that can go on inside any office is not something we need to opt into or enable.  Most professionals also have requirements for credentialing and governance by outside organizations.  Our essential anonymity would quickly be lost if information about our members and activities had to be shared with such organizations.

The Traditions illuminate the spiritual principles that keep us clean and enrich our lives so much when we keep them foremost in our hearts and actions.  We observe the principle of integrity by never forgetting or forsaking what Tradition Eight expresses for us.  In the words of *How and Why,* the proven success of one addict helping another “is the heart of our program; so long as that heart beats strongly, our fellowship and our recovery shall remain vital.”

**Concept Eight**

**By:**

**Dave K.**

**Something Different**

I have been studying the concepts with my sponsor using the “Twelve Concepts for NA Service” booklet.  The 8th concept states that “Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications”.

There are several different types of communication.  These include communication between groups, communication between the groups and service structure, and communication between different parts of the service structure.  There is also communication between addicts, and between addicts and the groups and service structure.

In particular, effective communication is essential, in order for the groups to support and direct the activities of Area and the service structure.  Without effective communication, it is not possible for Area and the service structure to be accountable to the groups and addicts.

There are ways to determine the effectiveness of communication.  Elements of the service structure can do an audit of themselves at the requests of groups.  These audits can include answering questions such as how effectively are we communicating with groups, and how effectively are we listening to them.

It is a problem when the groups or an element of the service structure do not know what is going on with other elements of the service structure.  Doing an audit and answering questions may help in pinpointing the source of problems.  All addicts should have available to them information about what it going on in the area, region, and world.

It is not necessary for the service structure to provide every detail of their activity continuously, however, if asked they should be able and willing to provide this information.  When we consider who to put in service positions, we should consider how well they communicate.  Once we put someone in a service position, we should realize that they are human and not beat them up for every mistake, or others will not want to volunteer.

Effective communication is very important to the formation of group conscience.   It is important that group members be honest in their communication.  This applies to service groups, as well as regular NA meetings.  It is important to listen carefully, as well as to speak.

In summary, it is important that we stay focused on our primary purpose.  Honest, straightforward communication is essential.  It is important that communication be 2 way, going in both directions.

**Spirituality**

**By:**

**Summerville C.**

**Lunch Bunch**

 First off, when I look up the word spirituality, okay who am I fooling but myself, I mean when I Google the word spirituality, I get a few favorable definitions. The two I’ll focus on are Spirituality:  A) The quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things and Spirituality:  B) Those who speak of spirituality outside of religion often define themselves as spiritual but not religious and generally believe in the existence of different “spiritual paths,” emphasizing the importance of finding one’s own individual path to spirituality.

Being in the fellowship of NA I’ll share on example B first. Our literature actually states in Chapter Eight ‘We Do Recover’ in our Basic Text that this is a simple spiritual not religious program known as Narcotics Anonymous. What does that mean to me? Simply, as I always say I’m not religious by the strength of anyone’s imagination but I am a very spiritual individual. I’m also not here to say what religion is or isn’t to you but I assure you I do know what religion is AND isn’t. Once again the literature does say our program is spiritual not religious. Spirituality for me is an inside job of body, mind, spirit and soul. I’m careful about what goes in my mouth just as I am equally careful about what comes OUT of my mouth. Spirituality aims at making you strong by mind. It aims at the elimination of what is vexation and negative to one’s soul. Spirituality is a mind building concept that shapes the mind of the individual centered towards enlightenment and individually orientated. Being selective about the foods, people and things that I let surround me is as important as those I choose to be around. I’ve been accused of having a quiet spirit with an easy demeanor. I quietly smile knowing that I’m just not easy to anger all the while knowing I can surely anger someone else a lot faster.

That brings me back to definition A. Being in recovery is slightly different than just being in the fellowship. I like example A since I myself am more into the true essence of the human spirit and things such as energy, love, empathy, being one with nature along with the prayer and meditation the eleventh step helps explain.  I do strive for peace, serenity and tranquility preferring to gravitate towards others on a similar plane drawing closer to those like-minded or spirited people. People with a smile in their hearts as well as on their face instead of constantly having a pocket full of grumps on a daily basis. Of course not personally knowing anyone like Ghandi or Mother Theresa, I do today have a choice of the people that I do put in my spiritual circle. That doesn’t mean I don’t associate with the loud spirited and profane Sam Kinisons of the world, it just means I’m more selective of who enters my circle. Spirituality is infinite consciousness that is divine and gives me inner peace.

**Expectations**

**By:**

**Terry F.**

**Living Clean**

“Expectations are premeditated resentments”.  I heard this many years ago and of course I laughed how true it is.  Whether it is in recovery, in business or in love setting expectations whether they be realistic or not is a setup for disaster.  Many times I have unknowingly set expectations, such as in relationships both romantic and friendships I have set expectations on the other person that were according to how I thought they should act.  This typically ended in them not living up to my expectations.   Say I am in the hospital or home sick should I expect my friends to come see me?  Well, it would be nice if they did but if I set that expectation then I would be disappointed in some of them.  Reflecting on it might show me that I don’t go and see all my friends if /when they go to the hospital because I don’t really like hospitals not because I don’t like my friend.  So if I feel that way maybe my friend has their own reason for not coming.

Maybe my friends are having a get together and I have not been invited.  Do I expect my friends not to go because I am not invited?  Am I really friends with the people having the party?  Probably not and I would probably not invite them to my party but I want to feel bad and blame them for not inviting me.  The lesson that I learn from this has always been to look at myself, did I expect something from someone?  If so my resentment/disappointment is my fault.  If it is my fault then I can do something about it and deal with it.

Love is giving without expectations… until recently I thought I did not set expectations on my partners but I always did.  I would find this out as soon as they did not live up to them.  He has no communication skills, he does pay enough attention to me, he doesn’t ever want to go where I want to….. etc.  This last relationship I have been in has been as unconditional as I am capable of today.  I understand that to be in a healthy relationship it is not 50/50 but 100/100.  I must give all I have all the time and not expect to get anything in return.  When I do this, I find that I get what I need.

When we release expectations we are free to enjoy life as it is instead of how we think it should be.

**Birthdays:**

**October**

27th Sydney S. and Justin F. 1 year @ Keep It Green.

**November**

27th Carol B 3 years @ High On Life

**December**

6th John M. 12 years and Angela M. 10 years @ Desire

9th Summer H. 3 years @ Saturday Night Alive

15th Penny B. 4 years @ Keep It Green

18th Ben E. 11 years @ High On Life

**Events:**

**October**

8th Newsletter Committee Meeting @ 3pm @ 5150 Poplar Ave.

**November**

TBA Anniversary Potluck @ High On Life

12th Newsletter Committee Meeting @ 3pm @ 5150 Poplar Ave.

23-26th Volunteer Regional Convention, Memphis, TN

**December**

10th Newsletter Committee Meeting @ 3pm @ 5150 Poplar Ave.

**Chairpersons Note:**

I want to thank the following people for contributing to this issue of the Clean Times: Juan S, Jamie E, Wendy O, Mark V-B, Dave K, Summerville C, and Terry F. We are always looking for topics and people to write on topics, if you want to write or have a topic let me know. ILS, David T.

**Humor and Inspiration**

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