

Reaching Out



April 2024



NA Helping Hands in Recovery

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*Clean,
we face the world
together.*

Basic Text, "What Can I Do?"

From the Editor

We would like to welcome all of you to the NA World Services newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We hope that the contents of this newsletter will assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts. There are three sections to *Reaching Out*. The first section, "From the Inside," is filled with letters from incarcerated addicts, sharing their experience, strength, and hope as they find and maintain recovery from addiction through NA.

The second section, "From the Outside," is an opportunity for Hospitals & Institutions subcommittees to offer their experiences obtained through carrying the NA message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. You may also find personal experience from those members who heard the NA message on the inside and are now living and enjoying life on the outside.

The third and newest section, "Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside," features members sharing about successfully transitioning from treatment, a hospital, or an institution to living on the outside. We encourage submissions for *Reaching Out* from members and H&I subcommittees. Please consider that we are more likely to publish articles that focus on how NA has helped an individual to recover while incarcerated rather than those that concentrate on the horrors of drug use. Send all submissions to *Reaching Out*; NAWS, PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999; USA, or to handi@na.org

GET INVOLVED AND HELP US CARRY OUT OUR FELLOWSHIP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE!!

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
July 2024	15 April 2024
October 2024	15 July 2024
January 2024	15 October 2024

Sign up for any NAWS subscription to receive notice when Reaching Out is published via a NAWS Update email www.na.org/subscribe



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

When I think of my recovery; I think of my relationship with my Higher Power. Once I was able to humble myself and accept the unmanageability of my life, I could begin to forgive myself and the condition I was in. I was not alone.

My experience of learned behavior and addiction wasn't a weakness, but a character defect that made me throw away common sense and reason.

Today, because of the program, I can see the damage caused to myself and my relationships. I can accept who I am and have accepted my progress in recovery. I'm becoming a mentor to help others in recovery. I'm beginning to love myself again.

EZ, Arizona, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is currently a number and I'm an addict. I'm still on the inside. I used drugs all my life and drugs ruined everything around me.

In here, I found NA and have worked it. I have found peace within myself and no longer need to have drugs in my life. I have begun to help others with addiction and plan to do so when I get out. The "NA way" has given me a new life and lifestyle. I am spiritually awake.

NA has "reached out" to me along with millions of others just like me. I plan on "reaching out" to others like me. Recovery can be done and kept; each day is easier than the last. Don't lose hope: "We Do Recover!"

MF, Mississippi, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is MM and I'm an addict. I've been incarcerated for 22 years. I struggled with addiction and mental illness since I was a young teenager. I didn't even want to wake up in the world I lived in. Mind altering substances and mental illness do not mix well.

After decades in prison, I was left anti-social. I was unable to open up, and unable to trust anyone. I was lost in a dark lonely mental prison of my own making.

It was at NA meetings that I found people I believed were genuine human beings; I realized I wasn't alone, and my struggles were not unique. These were men who wanted more than a case study; men who wanted to be more than our past mistakes.

NA has helped me walk through decades of guilt and shame. For me, the only way to say "sorry" for my crime is to be of service to my fellow human beings. This program works, we are onto something beyond mere human comprehension. Keep marching!

MM, Illinois, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is TL and I'm an addict. After serving two and a half years from 2018 to 2021, I swore I'd never be back here. I had what I thought was a solid recovery plan, network, goals, employment, and stable housing. An unexpected breast cancer diagnosis threw me for a loop.

I hear members say that it is possible to NEVER use again, NO matter what; but that's not my story. It began with drinking and, as usual, progressed until I overdosed on opiates several times and ended up back in prison.

I've been incarcerated since 2023 and began a long-term addiction services program on the minimum side of the facility. We have many resources including groups, fellowship meetings, a recovery coach, job opportunities, and reentry support. Hope-

fully, this time around I'll discover what I may have missed the last time that led to relapse.

I hope I can re-discover my Higher Power and be able to share my experience, strength, and hope with others who find themselves in similar seemingly impossible situations.

TL, Connecticut, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My Name is JH, and I am a recovering addict. I spent 23 years in active addiction, two trips to prison, ten treatment programs, and 2 1/2 years on the streets, before I finally accepted my powerlessness over my addiction. I have been clean since March 2017, have a sponsor and have worked the steps. I am currently incarcerated as a result of my past.

I have never lost faith in the NA program, but began to become very depressed. Then, I got a new sponsor from the outside and worked the steps again. I began to see how I contributed to my circumstances and my resentments.

I now see that everything that has happened was necessary to achieve the level of humility, acceptance, and serenity that I have today. I know my Higher Power will use me for the benefit of others and I trust in my journey. This Program Works!

JH, North Carolina, USA

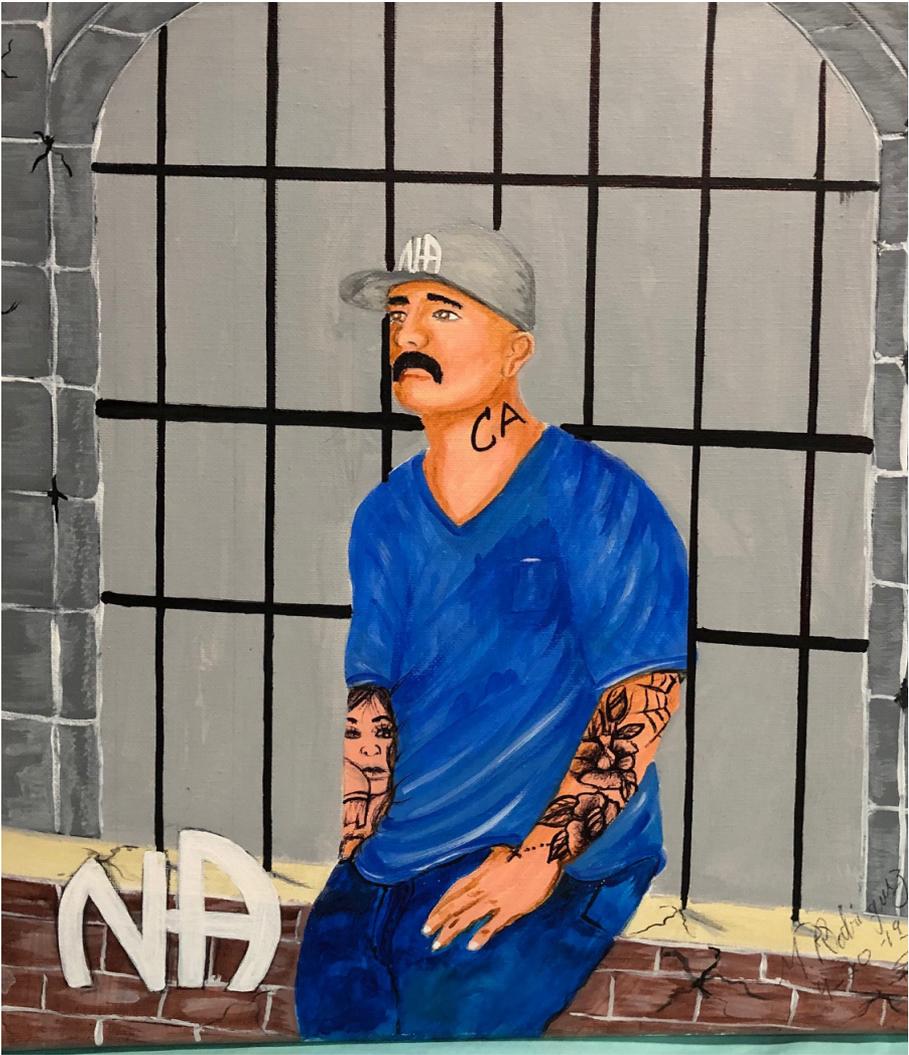


Anonymous, Oregon, USA

ART FROM THE ZSIDE

Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented art. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act, and images provide a powerful message of the freedom we can find in NA.

If you would like to see your art printed here, please send jpegs or pdf files to Handl@na.org, or mail to Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409.



Folsom, California, USA



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My recovery story is one of relapse. This time around, I learned that every time I use, something horrific happens. The night I last used was Thanksgiving in county jail. I stayed up all night drinking homemade wine and party favors. Things got out of hand quickly and I woke up the next day in my cell beat up and bloodied.

My celly came back from the kitchen and handed me a Little White Book and said, “I think you need this.” I was familiar with it from several trips to rehab. I read the booklet from cover to cover; it was in that moment I decided to fully surrender—23 November 2023.

I began to reach out to friends on the outside. My old sponsor began to work with me again. He suggested to me to read *It Works: How and Why*. It’s not about using, it’s about living your life with spiritual principles. I learned the inherent principles of “How It Works” in my head, and it has helped me.

Once on the outside I could attend meetings. I make it a priority to read that section of the Little White Book. I remain humble and grateful now, living on the outside.

Anonymous,



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

I'm 37, a husband, and a father of two young boys. Two years ago, if you looked at my wife's social media, holiday cards, or my LinkedIn, you'd think I had a happy life. That wasn't the case. For years, I struggled with drug addiction. I was a slave to my addiction, devoid of self-worth, self-trust, and hope. I had a long history of back pain and used it as an excuse for drug abuse and massage parlors.

I tried everything: books, retreats, podcasts, therapy, exercise, church, vitamin supplements, psychics, and antidepressants. Nothing worked. It was clear my addiction would destroy everything I loved, strip me of my family, and eventually kill me. It wasn't until my second back surgery and the pandemic that I really wanted to get clean. I was lying to everyone. Every night I'd go to sleep wondering if my wife and kids would wake up to me dead. I knew I needed to get clean but didn't know where to start. I heard of NA but didn't know how to connect.

In desperation, I emailed a church and asked for help. They put me in touch with a man from NA, who I later worked up the courage to call. I cried my eyes out to this stranger who showed me unconditional love and told me things like, "Just do the next right thing." After, he invited me to the Saturday morning Early Serenity meeting. At the time, everything was remote, which provided a sense of safety. I was terrified of meeting strangers and potentially having to hug other men. I'm not sure I would've gotten clean if it wasn't for remote meetings. I have social anxiety, a history of isolation, and a deep mistrust of men stemming from childhood. I kept my camera off and just listened. I never experienced that sort of kindness, acceptance, and unity.

I came back hoping a weekly meeting would keep me clean. Yet my cravings were so strong, that old lie popped back up,

"I can use just one more time." I remember I was filling out a prescription, and someone from NA called. I answered and then did what I always did: ignore my conscience and use.

I showed up the next Saturday with great reluctance, admitted I relapsed and cried like a baby. I was met with a loving response beyond anything I could've imagined. These men showed me a radical form of love and acceptance. After a couple of months, I relapsed again and was overwhelmed by guilt and shame. I thought, "Maybe if I do this 90 in 90, I can stay clean." At that time, I couldn't even brush my teeth two days in a row.

Someone told me about virtual NA and I filled my calendar with meetings from around the world. I heard my story and the message every time. I found my sponsor and started talking to him daily. I was still cynical, but I saw others' success and thought maybe it could work for me. I got involved with service and finally started to feel a part of NA. I've long been a procrastinator, so I joined a weekly step-writing meeting. Because of this Fellowship, I'm becoming the man and father I never thought possible. I'm coaching my sons' sports teams, volunteering at school, serving youth groups at church, taking my wife on dates, and going camping. My Higher Power is giving me the desires of my heart. I have a purpose, integrity, and a place to turn when life gets hard. Being clean isn't always easy, but I have the tools to get through anything. Through NA, I've gained freedom from active addiction, realized my values, gained a connection with my higher power, and a purpose. I'm grateful for this new way of life and hopeful for my future.

Anonymous

CALLING ALL H&I MEMBERS!

Please submit your story to the quarterly NA newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We are looking for recovering addicts, like you, to share their experience of finding recovery behind the walls and maintaining it on the outside. Your story carries a powerful message of hope for the incarcerated addict! Thank you.

Please send your story to:
Narcotics Anonymous World Services;
PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409,
or to HandI@na.org.



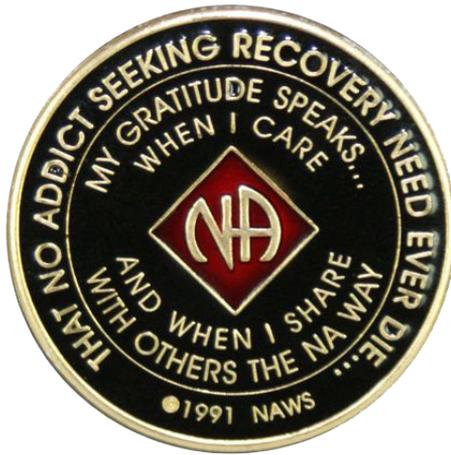
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left from a treatment center, jail, prison, hospital, or institution, you are moved from the “inside” to the “outside” to be drug-free, productive members of society. We think your experience may be invaluable to others as they embark upon their transition.

We are offering questions to help stimulate your thinking so that you may want to share your experience with us; we will publish your article in *Reaching Out* to help others.

1. What did you do on the first day of your release/discharge?
2. What steps did you take to help your recovery in the community? Do you think the transition steps are the same for addicts who are being released after 30 days or ten years?
3. What are some of the challenges you encountered when you reentered the community?
4. How did NA help you with information so that you were able to attend a meeting upon release/discharge?
5. How do you think NA may have been better able to help you in your transition, and do you have any suggestions to offer so NA may be better able to help others as they transition?

We look forward to reading your experience and providing this information to others. Thank you for helping us assist others in their transition.



“When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man’s entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.”

Narcotics Anonymous, “We Do Recover”

Order Form

Reaching Out is a quarterly, recovery-oriented newsletter made available free of charge to incarcerated addicts through Narcotics Anonymous World Services. If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months and would like a free subscription to *Reaching Out*, complete and return the following form.

Reaching Out is also available in a printer-ready format, for free download at www.na.org/reachingout

Reaching Out is also available by a 20-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$38.05 annually. If you are interested in purchasing a bulk subscription, please complete the following form and return it along with a check or money order.

- I am an incarcerated addict (and will be for at least six more months) and want a free subscription to *Reaching Out*.
- I want to purchase _____ 20-copy bulk subscriptions of *Reaching Out* @ \$38.05 each, total \$ _____.

Name _____

Identification Number _____

Facility Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Country _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Reaching Out

c/o NA World Services, Inc. ☉ PO Box 9999 ☉ Van Nuys, CA 91409 ☉ USA
www.na.org/reachingout

ATTENTION INMATES

If you are relocating and your mailing address changes while you are incarcerated, please update your new address with us so that we can maintain your subscription to *Reaching Out*.