

# OUR WAY of LIFE

## *An Introduction to N. A.*

*The Department of Correction wishes to express its appreciation to the National Advisory Council on Narcotics, Inc. (Narcotics Anonymous) and Brigadier Dorothy Berry, Director of the Correctional Services Bureau for Women of the Salvation Army for permission to reprint this pamphlet and make it available for distribution to the inmates of our department.*



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**NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS**

## Our Way of Life

(Compiled by NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS with guidance and suggestions of the material contained in the A.A. pamphlet A WAY OF LIFE).

Addiction to alcohol, sedatives (phenobarbital, seconal, nembutal, luminal, chloral hydrate, amytal—the barbituric acid derivatives) and addiction to narcotics (morphine, codeine, heroin—any and all poppy derivatives) or the synthetics, such as demerol, methadon, etc., indicates that the victim has been unable or unwilling to adjust properly his personality in terms of the problems of living in a comfortable state of mind.

Before addiction, we were in a state of anxiety and pain we did not understand. The use of narcotics or sedatives SEEMED to remove these discomforts and give us some enjoyment of life.

After withdrawal of either, we have found the program of Narcotics Anonymous to be helpful to the eventual solution of the addict's basic problems.

Changes have been made in A. A.'s A WAY OF LIFE to suit the needs of narcotic addicts.

Narcotics Anonymous is an informal society of former addicts who aim to help fellow sufferers recover their health.

The purpose of this booklet is to show how many of us, who were once helpless addicts, have recovered from our malady. We have found a way of life which no longer compels us to use drugs. Narcotics Anonymous is the great reality which has expelled our obsession.

Banded together in groups, or sometimes alone, we aim to help fellow users recover health. Not being reformers, we offer our experience only to those who want it. There are no fees—N. A. is an avocation. Each member squares his debt of gratitude by helping other addicts to recover. In so doing he maintains his own freedom from the habit.

Narcotics Anonymous is patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous. We believe that alcoholism and addiction are *basically*

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

the same and have found that the AA program can be applied to our problem. However, because there *are* differences in the two problems (alcoholism and addiction) we have had to modify the AA program to meet our own needs. Just as a member of the AA will tell you, "*Only an ex-alcoholic can truly help the sick alcoholic*" so we have learned that *only an ex-addict can fully help the addict*.

This approach to addiction is based upon our own experience, upon what we have learned from medicine and psychiatry, and upon spiritual dependency. It is a shattering sickness—physical, emotional and spiritual. How to expel the obsession that compels us to use narcotics against our will is the problem of every addict.

The only requirement for N. A. membership is an honest desire to stay free of narcotics and sedatives. Experience has taught us that a return to *any* habit-forming drug after withdrawal has been accomplished, will be followed, just as surely as night follows day by a return to habit-forming drugs. We feel that each member's religious views, if any, are his own affair. While every shade of opinion is found among us, we take no position as a group upon controversial questions. No particular point of view is required of any member save his desire to stay free of narcotics. Our sole aim, is to show sick addicts who want to get well how they may do so.

These are really groups and not organizations. We have no constitution, no by-laws, no officers, no dues or assessments. Our groups are not chartered for profits or otherwise.

This treatment is primarily a DIRECTED way of life by which many have profited by, and we devote much of our spare time to passing our idea on recovery to others.

There is a symptom common to all who suffer from addiction to habit-forming drugs: We cannot start self-administration of drugs without developing physical dependence and a phenomenal craving; and once we take any habit-forming drug into our systems, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for us to stop.

We, more than most people, lead a double life. A marked personality change takes place when we take drugs into our systems. We adopt characteristics and do things that would ordinarily revolt us. We vaguely remember certain episodes, are remorseful and, as fast as we can, push these memories far inside ourselves in the faint hope we never will see the light of day.

We understand that our real goal is a contented, efficient and useful life. Abstinence then will almost automatically follow.

We realize that many persons with addiction problems are above average in intellectual endowment, and that while indulging means failure, abstinence is likely to mean success.

We recognize that giving up habit-forming drugs is our own personal problem which PRIMARILY CONCERNS OURSELVES ALONE.

In giving up addiction they do not regard themselves as heroes or martyrs entitled to make unreasonable demands on their families and friends.

We appreciate the seriousness of our new way of life and regard it as the most important thing in our lives.

We carefully follow a daily, self-imposed schedule which, conscientiously carried through, aids in organizing a disciplined personality by developing new habits for old and bringing out a new rhythm of living.

The National Advisory Council on Narcotics, Inc., a group of civic minded citizens, sincerely interested in this problem, functions as the Board of Directors for Narcotics Anonymous. The function of the Board is to direct, guide, and coordinate Narcotic Anonymous groups.

### Membership of N. A. Groups

Membership of our groups consists entirely of former addicts, whose self-administration of addicting drugs has

brought us to disaster. We learn from experience that after withdrawal any further indulgence constitutes a totally undesirable and hopeless way of life.

We are completely sincere in our desire to stay free of addicting drugs for once and for all.

They recognize that the uses of narcotics or sedatives is a real problem for them; not merely a problem of dissipation, but a reaction to a dangerous and progressive illness.

We clearly understand that once we have been addicted, we can never again learn to control the use of drugs. We will forever remain sensitive to drugs and will never again be able to take them. We must learn to accept this fact if we are to conquer addiction.

We have come to believe that we have been trying to substitute our addiction phantasy for real achievements in life, and that our effort has been hopeless and absurd.

We have progressed so far that at all times and under all conditions drugs produce for us not happiness but unhappiness.

We agree with medical science that we are in the grip of a progressive illness. We have lost the power of choice in drugs. We have lost control. Our will power with regard to drugs is practically non-existent. We have reached the state where the most powerful desire to stop using drugs is of absolutely no avail, alone.

We were, and in many cases still are people to whom stark reality and life as it actually is are unacceptable. To face life comfortably we require relief of our chronic emotional tension, and this relief was found in drugs. However, we have come to realize the futility, the danger and the destruction of this method. We understand that we must find another way properly to adjust ourselves to life if we are to survive.

We have learned to rid ourselves of fears, resentments, false prides, jealousies and emotional disturbances that have formerly been our enemies.

We have learned to be tolerant; we are beginning to live honestly and truthfully.

We believe that EASY DOES IT.

We believe in LIVE AND LET LIVE.

We feel that we are living on borrowed time—24 hours a day, one day at a time; but that, by means of this program, we may continue happily to do so.

We know that we have returned from a region where, each year, thousands of people go through suffering, torment and death. Others, in the prime of life, commit suicide, knowing of no other way out.

We are not reformers, for we laugh at legislating morals or cravings; we are not crusaders; we believe in Divine aid, yet we are not a religious group.

Ours is A NEW WAY OF LIFE; we have had a spiritual experience, yet we are by no means sanctimonious.

Many of us had tried the treatments of medicine and psychiatry but were not cured of the disease.

We have been prayed over by our ministers, priests, families, loved ones and friends, yet we continue to use drugs.

Many of us have been jailed innumerable times, but were soon out of hand again.

We had been warned by our employers, had been threatened, had been fired from job after job—yet we did not part company with drugs.

Many had gone or had been sent to institution after institution, with the hope that at each new trial the cure would take place.

Many had been to so many institutions and had completed so many "cures" without any change for the better that we had finally been considered incurable and hopeless cases.

## Yet

What we did not clearly understand was that we were in the grip of an underlying illness that expressed itself in distorted thinking and drug addiction.

That before we could recover we must experience a **PERSONALITY CHANGE**: One that would give us a new outlook on life, enable us to meet the demands of each day, and to adjust ourselves to each situation as it arises.

One in which we experience *NO FEELING OF SELF PITY, NO RESENTMENT, NO REMORSE, NO FEAR.*

To attain and to maintain this personality is the goal and also the experience of many members of **NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS.**

We are convinced that this marked personality change is possible only through a spiritual experience, usually brought about by the belief and faith in **A HIGHER POWER.**

### **To Recovery**

The first and most essential step is **HONESTY.** (Personal honesty, intellectual honesty.)

When we get to the place where we are ready to honestly admit that we are powerless to control our drug habits, we have taken one of the hardest yet one of the longest steps toward our recovery.

Many of us are reluctant to make this admission, feeling that it is the acknowledgement of a personal weakness. We attempt to substitute alcoholic beverages for our addiction, or we change to some compensatory occupation, feeling that our former jobs might have induced addiction, or we change our environment. Some of us never get through trying other and old ways that all lead to the same place—*FAILURE.*

Most of us do not like to admit that we are emotionally and mentally different from any of our fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove that we could administer drugs to ourselves without becoming addicted. The idea that somehow, some day, should we do this or that, we will be able to control and enjoy our drug-taking is the great obsession. (Narcotic Anonymous calls "needling ourselves.")

The persistence of this delusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into and through the gates of insanity and death.

There is no known hope of recovery until we are willing to concede to our innermost self that we are powerless in the face of habit-forming drugs.

This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

We must realize that we are in the grip of a progressive **EMOTIONAL** and **PHYSICAL** illness which, unless active treatment such as is afforded by the NA program is undertaken, steadily grows worse, never better.

We must realize that it is not the fourth or the tenth shot that brings our addiction back to life, but **THE FIRST SHOT**, or "joy pop," **AFTER WITHDRAWAL**; that does the damage.

It is of the utmost importance that we **KNOW** that the "joy pop"—the **FIRST SHOT, CAPSULE** or **TABLET** is the one to avoid if we wish to follow the path of abstinence.

Having achieved this state of intellectual humility, we are ready for the next step to recovery, we come to believe in a power greater than ourselves, or keep an open mind on the subject while we go on with the rest of the program. Any concept of this higher power is acceptable. The addict labeled as a skeptic or agnostic may choose to think of his inner self; others will have different conceptions. Whatever form is visualized, we must rely on it and, in our own way, pray to that power for strength.

The core of the technique by which **NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS** has worked, what often seems a miracle in the lives of men and women, is spiritual.

*We repeat: It is not religious, but spiritual.*

The membership embraces agnostic, Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic; all creeds, all denominations, all faiths. We all make spiritual progress by translating this universal

and central truth of our release from drugs into their own faith.

This belief is universal because it depends for its effectiveness—and depends absolutely—upon the recognition of a power higher than man; the Creator, the Creative Spirit over all.

After the acknowledgment of a belief in a Power higher than man, the next step is the making of a decision to relate ourselves personally to this Power.

We make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him. When this is sincerely done, and the further suggested steps carried out, we undergo a profound mental and emotional change common to religious experience.

Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps we try to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

We believe that faith without works is dead.

We believe that our permanent abstinence depends on our willingness to remain *spiritually alive*.

We believe that sincere prayer and meditation, mighty channels of spiritual vitality, lead us to the next great step, which is effective living.

We believe that spirituality itself is the reflection of Godliness into channels of human living.

None of us claims perfect adherence to these principles or guides to progress and we claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Following are the "Twelve Steps" we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery.

### The Twelve Steps

1. *We admit we are powerless over drugs—that our lives have become unmanageable.*

2. *Come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can return us to sanity.*
3. *Make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the Care of God AS WE UNDERSTAND HIM.*
4. *Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *Admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *Are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *Humbly ask him to remove our shortcomings.*
8. *Make a list of all persons we have harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *Make direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so will injure them or others.*
10. *Continue to take personal inventory and when we are wrong, promptly admit it.*
11. *Seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with GOD AS WE UNDERSTAND HIM, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*
12. *Having a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to narcotic addicts, and practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Drug addiction is a serious problem. If you honestly want to be rid of your addiction and are willing to let some who have had this problem explain to you their way out, attend a N. A. meeting—Open meeting Wednesday evening 8:30 P.M. and closed meeting Friday at the same time.

Non-addicts only invited for Wednesday meeting. Friday for former addicts ONLY.

All meetings are held at the McBurney Branch Y.M.C.A. at 215 West 23rd St., N. Y. C. or write or phone to 546 6th Ave., N. Y. C. (11)—WA 4-5303.