

FRONTLINE

Narcotics Anonymous Western Queens Area
November/December 2013 Vol. 1, Issue 1



Holiday Alert

The holiday season can be fraught with potential for using or relapse if I don't make meetings, talk about how I feel, check in with my sponsor, and reach out to newcomers at my homegroup. If I'm away from home for the holidays, I need to find a meeting online or call and make one out of town.

When I first started coming around, I put false pressures on myself to make amends to family and loved ones for the damage I had caused when using . It was really difficult to keep the focus on myself and my first priority – my recovery. The best way I could make an

amends to my family and myself when I was counting days was to stay clean, focus on people who are not using ,and surround myself with addicts who are living in the solution and upbeat about their own recovery, so I could stay out of my own head and away from negative thinking.

Dealing with family members during the holidays – especially if they're active – is a situation that could result in magnifying experiences of anxiety, anger and pain for me if I didn't put some tools of recovery into my program.

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Western Queens Convention Convention Chair Interview Danny H. First Stop To Freedom IV May 9,10 & 20114

The theme is of the Fourth Western Queens Convention is entitled "Released from Our Chains" a phrase that comes from the First Step of the Basic Text (p.18). The Western Queens Convention logo depicts the NA symbol being released from chains with Queens and New York City in the background.

The Convention Committee used a group conscience process to determine this theme.

The way we arrive at group conscience is that we take everybody's opinion into serious consideration. We make sure that everybody feels heard and satisfied before making a decision. We compromise on all matters and it's really a

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First Stop To Freedom IV :Western Queens Convention Chair Discusses the Subcommittee Service Process

What first motivated me to become involved on the convention level was the desire to help carry the message and to have the privilege of continuing the joy and enthusiasm for recovery created by the previous co-chairs. The convention committee is similar to other levels of NA service - it ebbs and flows with the number of people who are interested - sometimes you'll have six members; sometimes you'll have 20 at a subcommittee meeting. Planning is very important - you get out what you put in. Some months there are hours of planning, other times you can take it on the fly. Just like H&I Service that can involve hours calling facilities and setting up the visits and then other times you can just show up and do the commitment.

It's different from other commitments because there are other subcommittees that need communication and networking between them. They require direction and management and a chairperson has to anticipate what eight subcommittees need to be doing based on a certain time line. I let them know how they need to sync with one and other. There's a lot of administrative work - close to ten hours every month. One of the biggest challenges was when the hotel

raised the price on us - we went through another bidding process and found a hotel that was thousands of dollars cheaper and simultaneously let us move our date from March to May which was a plus as far as weather and timing with respect to other conventions. That was a big victory where the added work really paid off.

When I first came to NA I didn't have skills as far as commitments - for example it didn't occur to me that if I was going to give my word I actually needed to show up - I never showed up on time, or at all. I didn't realize the importance of planning or communication. I didn't know the benefits of hard work. These are all the benefits of NA service and I've become an asset in the business world from the experiences and the skills I've gleaned during service in NA. I've been able to start my own business from the skills and the principles I've picked up doing service in NA.

One way I've learned to deal with conflict on the subcommittee level is that I pick a leader who has the ability to speak to people encouragingly and patiently, who will help people understand how to do things better without giving up. Paying attention to detail is im-

portant and allotting the time to do that is required.

Newcomers can expect that this convention is going to be focused strictly on recovery as opposed to being based on made up "designer topics" or outdated overpriced banquets. Our theme of Freedom and Being Released from the Chains That Bind Us will be in evidence through our speakers, workshops and a well-rounded collection of experience, strength and hope from addicts from all around the world on that subject.

First Stop To Freedom IV

May 9,10,11 2014

Hyatt Regency, Long Island

1717 Motor Parkway

Hauppauge, NY 11788

www.westernqueensna.org

Pondering Self-Discovery and Application in Recovery

by Curtis W.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we believe strongly in personal freedom, as it states in Tradition Ten. We can become members of NA simply by saying so. (We're down when we say we're down!) We have no dues or fees, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone, ever.

Because our program is spiritual in nature, we encourage our members to develop their own understanding of a Higher Power. The program also encourages NA members to think for themselves, to develop their own opinions, plus to express those opinions as they see fit.

Even our leaders are only trusted servants, with no power to tell individual members what to do, think or say.

For this reason, when we as members or trusted servants make mistakes, or wonder off course, we can allow the freedom of this program offers to express itself by allowing each person to discover or learn something for themselves through this heuristic process of understanding and application.

So for those of us who sponsor or who are "experienced members", and who actively participate in step/tradition groups, we can take heed from this 10th Step message: "To take our own inventory, look for those times when we fall short of our spiritual ideals, and renew our efforts to live a principle-centered life." (p.97-98, G&G). There is so much work I need to do. As a loving Sponsee and Sponsor, I am often torn in this area of development. But I believe that as I do my own steps work and manage my own life, my answers will become

Holiday Alert

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There were times I made the decision to avoid a family get together, or I took another recovering addict with me, or I used the phone. I needed help and practice at removing myself from an emotional situation that I might not get out of clean if I didn't remember to "Easy Does It" and to "Give Myself a Break". It became easier for me to say, "I have another party/event where I'm expected, I'm going to leave now" when uncomfortable feelings got too intense.

If I couldn't leave, reading NA literature or writing about my feelings away from everyone else did help me. One option that I always have if I can't find a meeting or I have a burning desire is to call the NA Helpline 718-962-6244.

After I returned to work, those holiday office parties created additional challenges. Watching co-workers get loaded

and witnessing bizarre acting out can underscore the fact that we can not use, while other that while I can't use successfully, others can and I'm powerless over the first one.

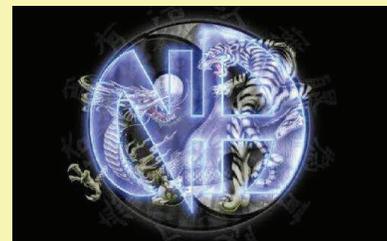
Finally, money is a mood changer—at holiday time especially—money we plan to get or money we don't have. An important lesson for me was that my kids were more excited to have me with them clean and fully aware than blasted or not there mentally, emotionally or physically than Working steps allowed me let go of guilt and to put spending money on gifts into proper perspective. It turns out my kids wanting my time was at the top of the list and we spent the holidays watching tv movie marathons together.

Oh and speaking of marathons, **holiday marathons** were critical to my recovery where I was able to sit in the meetings all day, eat food .is a great way to stay connected!

much clearer relying more on the principles of our steps and traditions. My decision making may move beyond fears, defects and self-centeredness. It is important to distinguish that fear is not a defect of character. If we were deprived of our capacity for fear we would be robots, not heroes.

The goal of the 12 steps is not to destroy our human capacity for fear, but rather to transform our responses to fear and eventually change the nature of them.my own

life, my answers will become much clearer relying more on the principles of our steps and traditions. My decision making may move beyond fears, defects and self-centeredness. I just hope not all at once, because the joy is truly in the journey.



Locker 32 Open/Shut

by Devorah,

Back in the early eighties, I worked in the garment district and coke was rampant. In fact there was a UPS guy who supplied our building with more than just packages. At that time my best friend was studying upstate to be a lawyer. For those few years I'd occasionally head up there on a weekend, especially since both the Law and Med schools partied together. I always brought a "housewarming gift" for us to share, a gram or so, and we were fine.

But one time, I came up with this triple size vial and hooray for us! We decided to plant it in a locker and each of us dipped in as needed, returning it to the locker when we were done. As the night wore on I noticed that my friend had latched on to a blond guy. At about midnight I went to the locker and the stuff was gone. I waited and waited but no show for the blow. My blood was boiling.

Here I had this friendship that had been perfect~ and this devil drug caused this otherwise sensible, responsible and caring friend of many years to resort to this horrendous behavior: deception, greed, theft. What I chose to focus on then was that my friend seemed to put drugs ahead of me and that realization had changed my feelings about our friendship. Had I not been so completely self-obsessed about the disregard she had shown me that night, I might have seen the progression of my disease and the consequences of my own addiction coming

straight at me.!

After reflecting on the wreckage of my past before the cocaine took hold, I recognized that I had been acting out rebelliously, by smoking pot, out of my frustration at being born into a restrictive lifestyle. But even before then, as a child I had secretly broken those rules, finding other friends who like me who felt a need to break these boundaries.

As the progression of my disease forced me to press even harder against broken boundaries, the drugs and the impurities of the lifestyle continued to seep through the cracks and into my spirit.

Crack cocaine had me in a barbaric grip beyond logic or reason. I lost my kids, my home, and was in tremendous pain. The week I lost my kids I detoxed in a facility where NA brought the message almost nightly. I was there for three weeks. I continued to use for 3 1/2 years. I was unwilling to shake my connection to people, places things and surrender. .

When I stopped taking calls from using friends, and I made 90 meetings in 90 days I did I get clean and in fact now have just over 3 years. Best of all, all my kids and family are back in my life and thank God I have a lovely sponsor as well. It's a simple program. Easy does it. Let go and let God~ to me that was big for me. If I can't deal with something on my own, I take a deep breath, and get a better perspective on my live through the program. NA continues to saved my life.

Interview E&A Chair

John F.

My name is John F. and I'm an addict. I have four years and four months and I've been E&A (Events & Activities) Chair since Jan. 2013. Before that time, Western Queens Area was without an E&A chair for two years.

When I think about some of the challenges I faced in taking the position, my own ego was among them. I needed to keep up front that the primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery so I realized that what newer members see when considering service might be the opposite of attractive if I didn't take a look at effectively relating to members of our own and the other subcommittees.

Part of my learning curve in as Area subcommittee chair was to understand more about the NA Service Structure, Traditions and Concepts before I decided to step up for the position. In picking up information and visiting other E&A Chairs, I met with the Queens E&A chair and discussed plans for a 96 hour marathon - but I was given a better perspective by that more experienced member that it might be too ambitious for a first project.

To date, the E&A Committee has steadily been providing activities for members to enjoy recovery and raise funds. the E&A has Coed Softball, from April

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Nicotine Is A Drug!

By Vinny R.

Standing outside after a meeting I was amazed to see so many people still smoking. As former smoker I know how hard it is to quit.; nicotine is one of the most addictive substances known.

Some 20 years ago when I first came to NA, a member named Jose C. asked me, “Why did you first come to NA?” I responded that I had a drug problem, that I was an addict. He then told me straight out that, “If you’re here because you have a drug problem, then you must know that nicotine is, as far as drugs go, is probably the most addictive drug of all?”

This hit me like a lightening bolt. While the threat of instantaneous death is always looming with narcotic overdose, death by nicotine is just as insidious, progressive, and deadly—just at a much slower, unseen rate, - for some of us.

Soon after I managed to quit. However, **it is disheartening to hear members, especially those with double digit clean time in the program wax eloquently on the subject of recovery, only to see them after a meeting lighting up.** To those to of us who consider our restoration physical and mental health an integral part of the program, I’m sure I’m not the only

member who finds the dichotomy between “walking the walk” and “smoking the talk” in recovery striking.

Recently I heard a member justify that his return to smoking was due to a personal crisis and was stressed out, so he picked up cigs, since after all, it’s not like shoot dope or smoking crack! It sounds like arguments people use for other drug replacements therapy—like it’s harm reduction since it’s not their drug of choice and that detoxing is too hard and painful. Ironically, smokers have no problem understanding that quitting nicotine actually means complete abstinence, but that’s another story!

Too often, the thinking behind the reluctance to quit smoking accompanies the thinking of the little boy who responds to the priest’s warnings about masturbation blindness with the question, “Well can I just do it until I need glasses?” And just like the upside down thinking that follows the rest of addiction, those members in recovery who think that continuing to harm themselves until some devastating consequence occurs are just as self-centered, in total disregard of their families, loved ones and of any amends to themselves by not putting restoration to health on an

equal footing with the rest of their recovery.

What’s equally cunning about this kind of self-deluded thinking is members’ refusal to acknowledge that the addiction concept and smoking actually applies to them—since they are unique and have time clean away from narcotics.

Just as baffling are those members who continue to smoke with cancer, Hep C HIV, obesity, lung disease, skin and heart problems. Indifference and intolerance—a defect defined as rebelliousness in our Sixth Step—can be overcome by persistent effort and willingness—and a healthy dose of fear and pain.

I am NOT about to claim that I am a saint who has overcome every defect of character. But I am a parent, I do love my self more and as part of my amends process and I am no longer confused or in an insidious cycle of hurting myself, and my love ones, no matter how slowly I may do it.

Smoking is one drug that I am no longer confused about!
Recovery Works!

The Truth: Complete & Total Abstinence / The Lie: Clean on Suboxone

My name is Boston Mike and I'm an addict. I'd like to give people who are still on suboxone right now the hope that complete abstinence from all drugs and a new way of life is possible.

I'm an addict who straddles two generations of opiate replacement therapy participants – I am an addict in my fifties who has been on methadone maintenance for 13 years and I switched over to and then off suboxone in the last two years. Today I'm clean over two hundred days and I want to share my experience about how the NA program has given me the chance to live free of all drugs, embrace my single parenthood and raise my teenage daughter.

Like most heroin addicts, I was chained hostage to daily visits to the methadone program. For five years straight I traveled from East New York to the Bronx, in all kinds of weather by train, bus, sometimes by bike. And in my vain attempts to tolerate the lower doses, trying to detox I could never get past a certain threshold before crashing back to full blown addiction and I started to believe I was in a hopelessly vicious cycle.

I remember the moment when the idea was planted that complete abstinence needed to be reached at all costs. I was sitting in the methadone clinic and the Director of the program was giving me a speech, letting me know that my attendance lately was a problem and that in his opinion, "Being a single parent is not a viable job". In that second, I responded, "Neither

is sitting on your ass all day giving out methadone biscuits to people" and I left there with the conviction to get off that program and find a way to get clean and stay clean for good.

I had been on 120 milligrams of methadone a day for the past three years and like most methadonians, I used all kinds of drugs in between too. I finally got weaned down to 30 milligrams over 8 months, went to the needle exchange program and then got on the suboxone program. As it was explained to me, because suboxone is a combination of two drugs – buprenorphine and nalc, it binds to the brain's opiate receptors but stimulates them only up to 50 percent, so no matter how much you take, you won't get the full impact of feeling loaded, unlike methadone that makes you fully whacked – a day a time.

For this reason, part of the appeal of suboxone as drug replacement lies in the ability of addicts to forgo the clinic entirely and to limit visits to doses given once a month, since it's believed the potential for overdose is eliminated. Participants can go to a doctor's office, instead of looking like a junkie low-life on a clinic line. Doctor's office visits helped me lie to myself that I had graduated from street junkie to treated "patient".

I found from personal experience that just like methadone, suboxone has the illusion of making opiate withdrawal easier to take, however, in the long run I was still addicted to the suboxone. Actually,

Live clean or die



the term "drug replacement" is a misnomer – the opiate is not being replaced with a non-narcotic substance – it should be called drug swapping therapy – cause one opiate substance is being switched for another one. And the real kicker is that while the physical withdrawal from suboxone is a less jarring experience to decrease from, over time ***suboxone detox*** takes much longer, it's more tedious, and the discomfort when not taking it can extend into for months. ***It helps to fuel the illusion that I need to stay on it forever since there is no way to escape from drug detox without experiencing feelings I may not like. The other illusion with suboxone is that I can be fully functioning with no relapse risk even if it had me walking around zombified, inarticulate and feeling exhausted.*** Moreover, just like with methadone, I could still mix suboxone with Percocet, Xanax or alcohol and still wind up in the emergency room. Bottom line – I needed to get off the merry go round of using.

It was then that I weaned down over two years altogether down to a 1/4 milligrams of suboxone over 198 days ago. I found

The Truth: Complete & Total Abstinence

The Lie: Clean on Suboxone



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out through making night NA meetings in Astoria that the Day By Day group met a few block from where I live in Woodside. It was at that meeting that a more experienced member from the group showed me in **Tradition Ten, "NA's views on total abstinence, the possibility of recovering in society without long-term institutionalization, NA's views on the disease concept of addiction and even NA's broad views of spirituality are not met with universal acceptance. Others who deal with addiction and recovery may view these matters very differently than we do. We cannot deny those aspects of our program that others take exception to"** (p197 G&G). I began to understand that I was not clean as I had suspected and came to terms with my new resolve to visualize a way to get off the sliver of suboxone I was still taking to become entirely free of any substances.

The treatment center had warned me that if I got off suboxone altogether, I was in jeopardy of relapse. Ironically enough, fellow addicts in recovery and the NA program literature cleared up that misconception for me – How could I risk relapse if I'm already using an opiate – replacement or not! It's impossible for me to be clean if I'm ingesting pharmaceuticals to manage feelings of anxiety, fear, and

depression that are the normal part of the detox process.

I was able to read this for myself in the ***"We Do Recover" and the "Why Are We Here?" chapters of the Basic Text*** (p.86-87, p.14-15) during the book study meetings at Day by Day ***"Complete abstinence is the foundation for our new way of life" and "complete surrender is the key to recovery, and total abstinence is the only thing that has ever worked for us."*** ***"Often doctors didn't understand our dilemma. They tried to help us by giving us medication. We tried substituting one drug for another but this only prolonged our pain"***.

Medical management of my feelings had never worked in the past and when ***I thought about how my brain's dopamine receptors and my body's nervous system had been hijacked and had not operated without drugs for years***, it became easier to understand that by continuing to keep them stimulated is like continuing to walk with leg braces after my broken leg has healed!

Of course it's going to feel awkward and painful until the drugs leave my system, but fellow addicts encourage me.

Making what became my homegroup meetings at Day by Day and getting a commitment was an important part of the process of rewiring my brain from the habitual practice and belief that I needed to be on something if I felt uncomfortable or in fearful situations. I did my 90 and 90. I got an NA sponsor, listened to the suggestions.

I believe it was the gift of desperation that put a fire under me. I always talk and try to help other addicts, I don't gossip and slander and I do service work. ***Even if I don't have a commitment I come early and help set the meeting up and service is vital.***

While NA as a whole has no opinion on drug replacement therapy, I do – ***suboxone is a big lie! I can enjoy life completely abstinent from all drugs and it's the most important thing I have done for myself and my daughter in my entire life.*** The program of NA is my bridge back to life, not outpatient, not doctors or clinics. The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel and I will take the lifestyle of NA where I can continually improve through the steps than to be a continual zombie on another low dose opiate.

Interview E&A Chair John F.

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Of the events the E&A has Coed Softball, from April until the middle of July; we sponsored a 15 passenger van to the World Convention and then we put together the 60th Anniversary of NA event September 28, 2013.

My personal expectations for my service are high and although I feel the events could have been better, the feedback from Western Queens' members for this fundraiser was enthusiastic and appreciative. We were able to raise nearly \$2000 for the Western Queens Area. The event that gave me the most gratification was the Area Sponsored Ride to the World Convention because I was able to help people who wouldn't otherwise get to the World Convention.

The event for NA 60 years was determined by group conscience of our committee. We motioned and conscience the 3 speakers - History, Hope and Service. Our committee designed a shirt and we've been designing and selling shirts for all our events. Our

next event is our **Thanksgiving Marathon** which opens 9am to 8pm meetings every hour on the hour, starting at 10 am.

41 Street and Ditmars Blvd.

Our committee used the existing format that had been in place from previous marathons and group slots were selected by contacting our committee.

Our committee has a proposed schedule of events that we're asking the groups/gsr's help us select the top five out of eleven for the upcoming year

Our New Year's Eve Extraganza is using a format similar to the speaker 60th Anniversary. The three critical pieces to making an event successful in my view are the message of the speakers, the food and the music.

Doors open at 6pm -

Meeting from 7-8:30 pm,

Dinner at 9pm,

Clean time countdown, hats, noise makers, lays, music until 1am.

St. Patrick's Church

3938 29th Street Long Island City NY

entrance on 40th Avenue





From the Editor

We are truly a worldwide fellowship. NA is ever evolving and adapting to meet the needs of newcomers of the 21st Century, younger more technosavvy, more diverse and still the most important persons in our meetings!

What values guide us in supporting our fellowship? What issues concern us in preserving the stability of our fellowship? Does the use of technology play a role in attraction rather than promotion of our message? Does adoption of the Service System Project encourage our fellowship to become more excited about local service or does its language in its present form confuse, alienate and frighten our members? Communication and discussion of new ideas aids in our personal understanding and ultimately our recovery. Practicing open mindedness, as it states in the 12 Traditions, often comes slowly over a period of time. We invite you to pick up this newsletter, bring us new information, talk to members and take it to various groups.!

We Need to Hear From You

These questions, your feedback, ideas and valuable insight is needed to make this publication relevant to each of our members. *Frontline* welcomes letters from all readers. Letters to the editor can respond to any article that has appeared or can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. We are also looking artists who can draw cartoon strips.

Next Deadline for article submission
is Jan. 15th, 2014

[http://
www.westernqueensna.org/](http://www.westernqueensna.org/)

Submission Guidelines
Send in your experience in recovery, your views on NA matters. The opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to NA as a whole, nor does the publication of any article imply endorsement by Narcotics

Anonymous. All manuscripts are subject to a review and editing process. We look for tone that reflects a spirit of unity and enthusiasm for recovery .

Any article that slanders another NA member is automatically rejected. Explicit sexual references and all obscene and vulgar language will be deleted from published articles.

Edits are made in keeping with NA's understanding of the Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts, and language such as "clean" "recovery" and "addict" .

Author's first names and last initial are printed , unless the author submits as "Anonymous" . 1000 word maximum.

To submit articles contact Wilvena G.
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You can submit articles about anything NA related!

Text, Call, Leave message after sending article

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