



Clean Times Newsletter



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Siouxland Area of Narcotics Anonymous

What Should Be Shared?

Volume 2010 Issue I

May 2010

What should be shared in meetings is a subject regularly debated in my area. I would like to put in writing my view and experience and ask the opinions of other addicts around the world.

The sharing of problems and anxieties about housing, money, relationships, etc., can be beneficial. Someone may hear and have enough experience to offer some helpful suggestions and/or solutions. What I do not understand is the need to share about these subjects in a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. Surely a meeting in which this type of sharing is done would be called a "self-help" group, which NA is not.

A Narcotics Anonymous meeting is a group of addicts who come together to help each other recover from their addiction to drugs. The way we have found that works for us is through the Twelve Steps, which, when worked, bring us closer to God and help us recover.

This is the message the newcomer needs to hear—how we recover, our experience of how we did it, how we work the steps, and how we get in touch with a Higher Power. The message is not about listening to endless moaning and complaints about life, about how our relation-

ships are working out or not, about how hard it is to make a living, or about how the boiler is not working. None of these things will cause us to relapse if we are working the steps and have faith in God.

The newcomer needs to hear how the obsession to use drugs can be lifted and how he or she can recover.

Would any of us walk up to a stranger in the street and start telling them all about our problems? Why is it expected that this is all right to do in an NA meeting?

So often I hear the same people sharing the next installment of their lives in a meeting. I have also shared this way in a meeting because I thought that was the way to share. I have sat there, not really listening to anyone else's troubles because I have been too wrapped up in my own, planning in my head how I can identify with the main "share" and smoothly link it to what is going on with me. For a while the pain is lifted, but the situations are still the same. The problems are still there. In the end, nothing is gained by stealing sharing time just so I can bore my fellow addicts.

Many times I have shared painful things in a meeting, only to have someone say to me after the meeting, "So how's

things?" They were not even listening to me, too busy in their own head—but then, I did not listen to them either! I became so involved with my own problems that I felt I had nothing to give, so I gave nothing except my self-pity.

It was a downward spiral.

I kept what I had by giving it away. It was only then when a few good friends of mine pointed out that the steps and God may just help me with my self-centeredness. I was without hope, and I am convinced that, without their help, my future would have seen me using or taking my own life. On the outside, I had everything to be happy about; on the inside, I was dying.

What I shared and heard (when I bothered to listen) in meetings was not helping me. Thank God for the friends who cared enough and were honest enough to tell me that it was not my difficulties that were hurting me—it was my lack of a program.

I changed my sponsor to someone who actively encouraged working the steps, and I worked them, regaining my faith in a Higher Power, as well as my passion for life.

Cont... Page 2

The Color of Recovery

Every group has its own personality, and at some groups, this is expressed in part through key tag descriptions during clean-time celebrations. Have you been to a meeting where key tags are described like this?

Welcome-White The international sign of surrender. You never have to use again, just for today! If you want to use, put this key tag in your mouth; when it dissolves, you can use!

Thirty Days-Orange The color for caution. You should be cautious at thirty days; avoid old playmates, playgrounds, and playthings. "Orange" you glad you made it, or "orange" you glad you're here and not wearing an orange (county jail) jumpsuit?

Sixty Days-Green The grass is always greener on the NA side of the street. Green for "go." Go to a lot of meetings!

Ninety Days-Red or Maroon Red means stop. Stop and take a look at your program. You are no longer "marooned" on that island of isolation.

Six Months-Basic Blue The color of the sky, because the sky's the limit for you in NA! The color of our Basic Text (hopefully you've read it by now).

Nine Months-Yellow The color of the sun, which you can see when you get up in the morning instead of using into the night. The color of urine—as in, "you're in" the right place, and you should be able to pass a urine test with nine months clean.

One Year-Iridescent, Moon Glow, or Glow in the Dark It glows in the dark so you don't have to. It glows in the dark, like the glow in our hearts.

Eighteen Months-Gray Every gray cloud has a silver lining—and the key tag is gray with silver lettering. The color of duct tape—we stuck to the program. Battleship gray—the war is over!

Multiples of Years-Black The color of coal, which turns into diamonds when it's compressed—and we are all diamonds in the rough. Black and gold, because you listened to what you were told. Gold and black, because you kept coming back.

Thanks to Mike H, Indiana, USA, and others who shared their local key tag words of wisdom. Featured on the NA Way Magazine Jan 2008 Vol125 Num1.





Cont from Page 1.... On the outside, nothing has changed—not my partner, my job, where I live—but on the inside, I am at peace most of the time. No longer is there the need to bitch, gossip, or put others down. Whenever I find myself doing those things, I look at what part of the program I am not working. I usually find that seeking out a newcomer and making them feel welcome helps me.

This is what I share in meetings: how I am recovering. And guess what? I keep what I have by giving it away. Where before I dreaded talking to newcomers because I felt I had nothing to say, it has now become easier. I do have something worth saying, and I can now listen, too.

Some addicts share in meetings that only the program, God, the steps, and sponsorship should be shared. I think perhaps this is equally damaging to our fellowship. How can anyone dictate what others are allowed to share in a meeting? Tradition Three clearly states, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." It does not say we have to share in a certain way. We can only guide through our own experience.

Recently someone gave me tapes of various conventions, including the world

convention and smaller UK ones. I was both amazed and disappointed by what I heard. Some of the speakers did not even mention a Higher Power, never mind the steps, service commitments, sponsorship, or helping others—although there was plenty mentioned about relationships, pets dying, and a message of "don't use no matter what." But they did not tell me how they stayed clean.

If it was possible for me to just "not use no matter what," there would be no need for me to work the steps and to have faith—but that was not possible. Without either the program or drugs, I would crack up. "No matter what" is not enough for me!

Do not keep it a secret. Please do not be scared to share the message. It is really so simple: Work the steps, find a Higher Power of your choice, and help others. Tell everyone how you got clean and how you stay clean through everything life throws at you.

I also became concerned when people shared about other addictions like food, gambling, and sex. There are other fellowships for these addictions. If there is no meeting of such a fellowship nearby, it is easy to start one, but please

do not bring these outside issues into a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. Not all addicts suffer with other addictions, and it can be very confusing to newcomers. Sharing about these other addictions is usually justified by the speaker saying, "NA is about all addictions." If they really believe this, then why not count their clean time from the last time they acted out on their other addictions?

The message is being watered down, people are relapsing, and many may die. They do not need to.

Do not drive addicts out of the doors of Narcotics Anonymous by sharing about your childhood traumas, partner troubles, or the dog dying.

Our Basic Text was created in the hope "that through the development of a conscious contact with God, no addict seeking recovery need die without a chance to find a better way of life." (Narcotics Anonymous, pg. xiii)

The way to develop a conscious contact with God is through working the Twelve Steps. This, I believe, is the message that was given to us, and the one that newcomers need to hear.

Sally H, Dorset, England. Taken from The NA Way Mag. Jan 2005 Vol22 Num 1.

What Narcotics Anonymous has to say? And how's that working for you

NA "Work The Steps"

This Phrase appears 4 times in the NA basic text
Page 12 Paragraph 2

"We find that our lives steadily improve, if we maintain abstinence from mind-altering, mood-changing chemicals and work the Twelve Steps to sustain our recovery."

Page 19 Paragraph 4

"It is in these meetings that we are introduced to the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. We learn to work them in the order they are written and to use them on a daily basis"

Page 48 Paragraph 4

"Those of us who have made the effort to work these steps to the best of our ability received many benefits. We believe that these benefits are a direct result of living this Program."

Page 55 Paragraph 3

"Our sponsors and friends can advise us regarding how to work the steps. We can talk over what the steps mean with them."

NA "Addiction is a disease"

Page 87 Paragraph 1

"This common illness or disorder is addiction."

(However the term "Disease of addiction" appears 6 times)

Page 18 Paragraph 3

"We feel that our approach to the disease of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel."

Page 18 Paragraph 5

"Alcohol is a drug. We are people with the disease of addiction who must abstain from all drugs in order to recover."

Page 20 Paragraph 4

"Our inability to control our usage of drugs is a symptom of the disease of addiction"

Page 21 Paragraph 2

"In ridding ourselves of all reservations, we surrender. Then, and only then, can we be helped to recover from the disease of addiction."

Page 23 Paragraph 3

"The most obvious insanity of the disease of addiction is the obsession to use drugs".

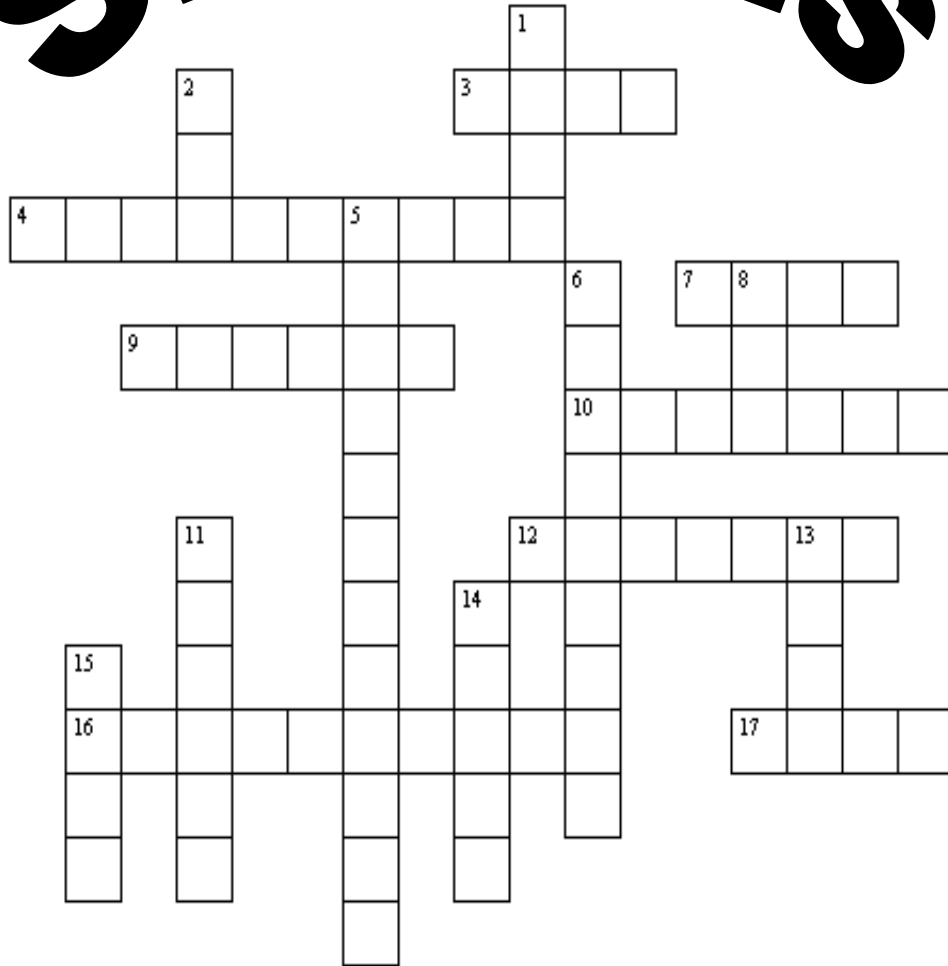
Page 78 Paragraph 1

Many of us had difficulty coming into the fellowship because we did not understand that we have the disease of addiction.





Slogans



ACROSS

- 3 _____ it over
- 4 _____ are not negotiable
- 7 _____ coming back
- 9 HOW
- 10 _____ is a drug
- 12 HOW
- 16 HOW
- 17 Always Say A Prayer

DOWN

- 1 _____ not drugs
- 2 Good Orderly Direction
- 5 Jails, _____, and death
- 6 Attitude of _____
- 8 Easing God Out
- 11 Meeting _____ make it
- 13 Not Using The Steps
- 14 Just for _____
- 15 It works, if you _____ it



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The Clean Times Newsletter is a Quarterly Publication produced and distributed within the NA community by the Siouxland Area of Narcotics Anonymous.

Would you like to contribute? Why not write up an article that describes your experiences in recovery to share with others who might not otherwise hear your story or attend the same meetings that you do?

Where to Start: Type or write your article, fill out a transfer form (available online or at your group) and turn them in to your current newsletter chair, your GSR or another trusted servant.

Do you know the purpose of Area?

The SANA ASC (Area Service Committee) is made up of local NA members who meet monthly to handle the business of the area. The committee consists of a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, RCM (regional committee member) and Alt RCM. GSRs (Group Service Representatives) also attend ASC meetings and represent their groups. They provide communications between the NA groups and the ASC. There are also several sub committees, each with its own chairperson.

Do you know your Area Officers?

Chair: Rennie L.
Vice Chair: Open for Nominations
Secretary: Carol A.
Treasurer: Roger H.
Hospitals and Institutions: David B
Public Information: Amanda D.
Newsletter: Open for Nominations
Literature: Ross W.
Activities: Sarah T.
Webmaster: Rob H.

Do you know when area meets?

2nd Sunday of the Month at 1:30pm
Sub-committees meet 1 hour before
Locations vary

Do you know who is welcome?

Anyone, regardless of clean time, is welcome.

Do you know where you can always find our local NA information?

WWW.siouxlandna.org

Do you know when H&I meetings are currently?

Synergy Treatment Facility 2nd & 4th
Monday of each month
Dakota County Jail (Men) 1st & 3rd
Monday of each month
Dakota County Jail (Women)
Every Friday evening
Jackson Adolescent (Boys)
Every Friday evening
Jackson Adolescent (Girls) 1st & 3rd
Wednesday of Each Month

Do you know what the upcoming activities are?

SANA-Mania June 4th-6th (LeMars, IA)
Iowa Regional Meeting June 5th
(LeMars, IA)
LANA Fishing for Recovery Campout
June 4th-6th (Milford, IA)
20th Annual Mid Summer Campout June
18th (Elm Creek, NE)
SWINA Annual 4th Step Retreat
June 25th-27th (Dunlap, IA)
IRCNA XXVII July 2nd-4th (Dubuque, IA)
SWINA Luau July 17th (Shenandoah, IA)
Iowa State Fair PI Training Day July 17th
(Shenandoah, IA)
CAFANA Basic NA Campout/Basic NA
Poker Run August 6th-8th (La Porte
City, IA)