NOV/DEC 2008

TRAPPED BEHIND A WALL OF COMPLACENCY

"If, after a period of time, we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery, we have probably stopped doing one or more of the things that helped us in the earlier stages of our recovery." Basic Text, p. 92

Thank God it's not my job to make sure Narcotics Anonymous keeps going because no one would get and stay clean.

For the first year of my recovery, I was on the pink cloud. I did everything my sponsor told me to do. I went to 90 meetings in 90 days, I got commitments, and I was of service to our area. After I took that cake for 1 year, I thought I had arrived. I thought it was time to take care of business and make up for the time that was lost during my using years. I wanted to get that good job, lose that weight, find that meaningful relationship, and clear up the financial wreckage of my past. "Surely, if I use the tools I've learned, I will be able to accomplish these goals." I told myself. So, I went at it full throttle. I filled my schedule with work, the gym, and the relationship. I didn't know it at first, but I was putting everything before my recovery. All of a sudden, I have a life that I need to live right away. After so many excuses made for why I wasn't at a meeting, I started to resent the meetings - they were getting in the way of what I needed to do with my life and it was my denial that told me, "I am practicing living the program, so I am still in recovery."

The color in the cloud started to change. It was no longer light, fluffy and pink; it was thick, heavy and gray. Being consumed with "my life" and the plans I had made to better it, I began to feel overwhelmed. I sought my refuge in my cubicle at work, or at the gym, or in the relationship. I would soon find out that none of them produced the peace and relief I sought. Why didn't I just go back to meetings? Because I had already developed a habit of not going and, one more time, depending on self. As a result of this rationalization, I isolated myself. I started to resent my job, I stopped going to the gym and I made a mess of my relationship. I was so busy pointing the finger at these things outside of me that I refused to see the three pointing right back at me.

There is a pattern that I've developed. I surrender completely and dive head first into recovery. Once I find the serenity, courage and self-esteem I'm seeking, I take it and run, thinking that I can handle life on my own. I get into the pool of life, and in the shallow end, I see that I can stand up on my own two feet, so I keep moving. As I move toward the deep end, I notice that I'm standing on the tips of my toes and I rationalize, "I'm a good swimmer," so I keep moving. Once I get to the deep end, I realize the foundation I once had to stand on is behind me where I've left it. It is at that point I find myself with my back against the wall: will I swim back to the shallow end where there's a solid foundation, or will I try and tread the waters of the deep end until I'm tired and eventually drown?

Daily surrender has to be a part of my life. No longer do I want to continue with this pattern of behavior of complacency that only weaves a very dangerous web of self-willed choices, and results in the ultimate denial of my unmanageable life. Life is too big to face on my own, and it will always be the deep end of the pool unless I first establish a solid foundation on which to stand. All thanks to God and the program of Narcotics Anonymous for being much greater than my will.

Damian C.

ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance seems to play a major part in my recovery and lack of acceptance a major part in my pain. Admission, the first part of acceptance is not so difficult for me. In Step One, I admitted my powerlessness and admitted my life was unmanageable. Acceptance is an ongoing process. I still have trouble accepting powerlessness and attempt to control situations in my life. Admitting I was an addict wasn't so difficult after taking a long look at what drug use had done to my life. It is hard to accept this disease, especially when I realize it affects every area of my life. To accept my addiction is to accept change for me. Denial was a much safer place where I could count on the same pain day in and day out.

Today I have different pain. My pain today comes from my resistance to accept situations as they are. As I live day by day and situations arise I can accept and look for my Higher Power's lesson or I can try to force my will and get crazy. The longer I stay clean, the more I look for what I can learn from others and situations, the more I accept. And when I am in pain and life is crazy, I don't pick up, I get up and get to a meeting or call someone if there's not a meeting. I know that one day, if I continue to stay clean and work this program acceptance will become habit and the crazies a thing of the past.

Anonymous

OBSESSION

For as long as I can remember I have been obsessive in my behavior. Even as a child I did not play like the other kids, I played to win. Winning meant the world to me at any cost. I grew to expect that behavior for myself as well as those around me, I took nothing less.

All through my school years I strived to be the best that I could be in all areas. As a result, my ego grew and so did my expectations. The more I achieved the more I wanted to achieve. I began to feed on more, always more.

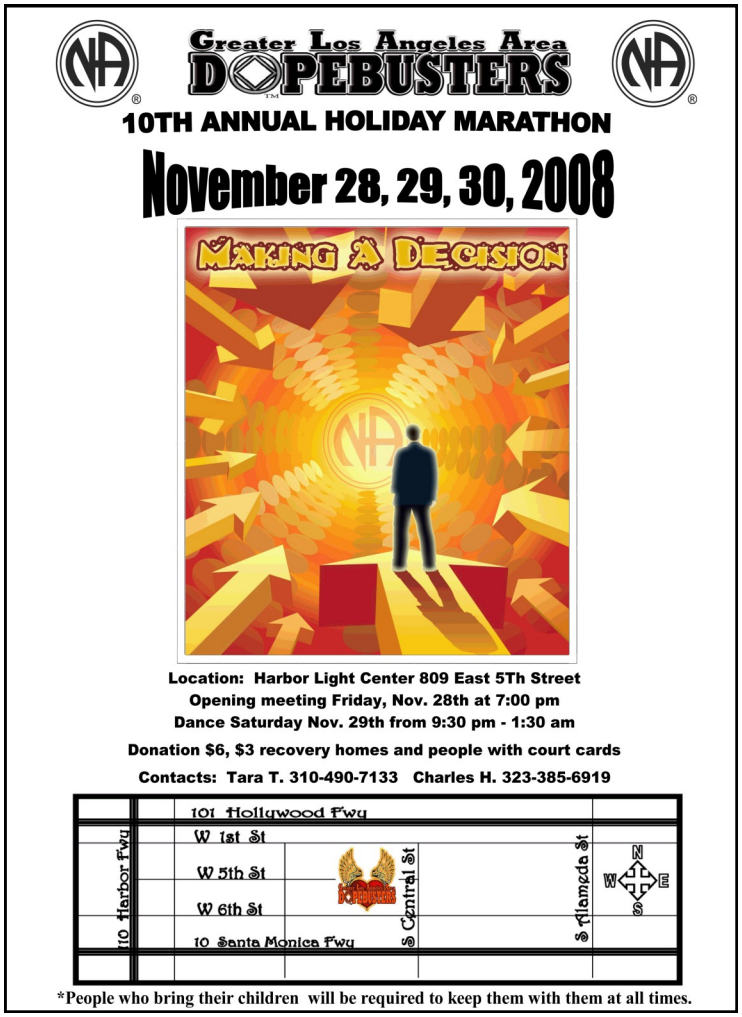
As I look back over my using career, I have come to the conclusion that my drug of choice was more. More drugs, more money, more clothes, more women, more gambling, more power.

Today I am still faced with the more syndrome. Each day I want more of what I have found in the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. More giving, more caring, more sharing, more loving, more changing, more growing, more service, more recovery, more God, more God, more God.

As long as the obsession is of the positive nature I feel that it's an asset for me and I can continue to grow as a person. Although things are somewhat different for me today, in that I do from time to time find some balance.

I love this fellowship, and I have grown to love the people that I have met here. I know that as long as I do the right things, for the right reasons, my life is going to be alright. Today I can live with my new obsessions.

Anonymous



My Three-Foot-Tall, 27-Pound Higher Power

If our Higher Powers speak to us through other people, those both in and out of the rooms, then mine must have a sense of humor, since it so often chooses as a messenger my two year old daughter. When you think about it, learning about recovery from a two year old isn't quite as crazy as it seems.

First off, when it comes to living "just for today," she's an excellent teacher. When you're two, yesterday is a vague concept, and tomorrow might as well be next year. Unlike me, my daughter doesn't waste any time feeling guilty over yesterday's temper tantrums (or shortcomings, for us recovering grownups) or broken toys. And she certainly doesn't lose any sleep worrying over tomorrow's play date. All that matters to her is what's real here and now, right wherever her little feet happen to be startling. I jokingly call her my "little Zen Master." When I take time out of my busy day to relate to her on that level, it reminds me that staying in the moment is what I'm supposed to be doing all along.

When she throws a fit over things that don't go her way, I am quite strongly reminded that my first instinct is often the same. When she puts her head up against the wall and cries because "Daddy said no" or lies on the floor flailing her arms and legs because Rugrats just ended, I sometimes feel like joining her. But she's two, and she doesn't have a program; I'm 33 and I do, at least on most days. Or so my sponsor tells me. It wasn't all that long ago that I too punched walls when things didn't go my way. I'm grateful that this program has taught me a different way to deal with life on life's terms. And when my daughter's old enough, I'll teach her the same.

One of the biggest ways my HP speaks through my daughter is by reminding me of what's really important. I got clean, put some time together, got some outside things together, and all of a sudden, my program had to compete with all these things—my job, relationship, even my daughter—for top priority in my life.

Fortunately, I listened and learned early on, and became convinced that anything I put in front of my recovery will be the first thing I lose. When I spend time with my daughter, I remember that it is only through NA that this relationship is possible, and that the most important things I can do for her are to stay clean, go to meetings, and apply the steps to my life. Knowing that makes it easier to make the time for meetings and everything else I do on a daily basis to maintain my recovery.

But the most important way my Higher Power taught me through my daughter was by putting her in my life in the first place. Three years ago, I was a confused addict with a pregnant wife, mixed feelings about parenthood, and no Third Step. I had said that I had made a decision to turn my will and my life over to my HP, but until my daughter arrived, I don't believe I really meant it.

Today I'm convinced that everything is exactly how it is supposed to be, and my daughter is in my life for me to learn from her as much as she is for me to teach her. Powerlessness, open-mindedness, willingness, patience—I can learn all of these things from her on a practical, daily basis, if I just focus on the joy instead of the responsibility. Like recovery, being a parent is sometimes difficult but always worth it. This is the path that I'm supposed to be on. Thank you HP for letting me see this.

Anonymous

1 YEAR
Rita C 12/28/07
Gregory E 12/13/07
Clausel N 12/12/07
Kibby W 12/12/07
M & M 12/07/07
Tim R 12/06/07
Silvia S 11/27/07
Cari D 11/21/07
Terry M 11/07/07
Marisol C 11/05/07
Olanda W 11/01/07

2 YEARS
Show-Nuff 12/14/06
Motique A 12/12/06
Patricia H 12/04/06
Corbette L 12/02/06
Tony B 11/13/06
Eddie V 11/12/06

3 YEARS
Dale H 12/31/05
Tyrone D 12/28/05
Ricky T 12/20/05
Oregena T 12/20/05
Guy C 12/15/05
Angela M 12/14/05
Starla M 12/12/05
Elaine R 12/11/05
Pelar T 12/10/05
Jacqueline R 12/05/05
Patricia L 12/05/05
Delison C 12/05/05
Steven J 11/29/05
LaToya G 11/28/05
Orlando Y 11/28/05
Clifford D 11/23/05
Charmaine C 11/21/05
Beatrice M 11/21/05
Kimberly N 11/20/05
Clarence B 11/17/05
Randy N 11/05/05

4 YEARS
Louis M 12/28/04
Chandra F 12/28/04
Forrestine G 12/23/04
Flora B 12/18/04
Gregory W 12/12/04
Sherman W 12/05/04
Kisha H 11/24/04
Leo T 11/24/04
Kimberly N 11/20/04
Marcus B 11/17/04
Darrell L 11/06/04

5 YEAR
Dee R 12/28/03
Melody S 12/24/03
George J 12/17/03
Carlton E 12/07/03
Brenda W 12/16/03
Vanessa S 12/15/03
Maurice C 12/14/03
Rasheeda W 12/13/03
Bob D 12/10/03
Candice Y 12/09/03
Timothy R 12/09/03
Bridgett G 12/05/03
Laura R 12/05/03
Shannon S 12/03/03
Andre L 11/28/03
Allen T 11/22/03
Jay B 11/17/03
Tony P 11/17/03
Carlton E 11/16/03
Toney H 11/14/03
Mama H 11/13/03
Terrence P 11/13/03
Antoine S 11/11/03

6 YEAR
Arthur G 12/31/02
Mark L. 12/30/02
Richard F 12/29/02
Gary W 12/27/02
Derwin O 12/21/02
Treacia S 12/18/02
Kim W 12/17/02
Herbert G 12/15/02
Suzette R 12/13/02
Marvin M 12/13/02
Michele T 12/12/02
Barbara Mc 12/11/02
Precilla 12/07/02
E.J. 12/07/02
Romeo M 12/05/02
Ronald R 12/05/02
Roosevelt W 11/27/02
Gene M 11/25/02
Howard A 11/25/02
Terence P 11/14/02
Ernest W 11/12/02
Anthony T 11/07/02
Guillermina M 11/07/02
Roosevelt Y 11/06/02
Kevin M 11/06/02
Herschel C 11/02/02
Alyson P 11/01/02
Angie M 11/01/02

7 YEARS
Mark W 12/30/01
Alex M 12/25/01
William H 12/21/01
Olivia R 12/17/01
David P 12/12/01
Joe J 12/10/01
Martin V 12/05/01
Michael Y 12/03/01
Squeak T 11/29/01
Taylor A 11/29/01
Big Dre 11/28/01
Andre' T 11/28/01
Joyce K 11/27/01
Lisa S 11/27/01
Demarest D 11/24/01
Lisa S 11/21/01
Elsa R 11/15/01
James B 11/11/01
Darrell B 11/09/01
Felix P 11/07/01
Kevin M 11/06/01
Robia S 11/01/01

8 YEAR
Norene N 12/29/00
Karen L 12/22/00
Margarita R 12/12/00
Johnny T 12/11/00
Rosie S 12/10/00
Eric P 12/04/00
Major W 12/01/00
Sharee A 11/22/00
Paulette T 11/21/00
Patricia N 11/18/00
Beverly G 11/15/00
Denise J 11/04/00
Sherry S 11/03/00
Tony B 11/01/00

9 YEARS
April S 12/25/99
Sheryell P 12/23/99
Linda A 12/18/99
Johnny R 12/16/99
Benson R 12/16/99
Wanda L 12/16/99
Felicia B 12/14/99
Ruben M 12/13/99
Demetric M 12/11/99
Mark M 12/06/99
Eugene H 12/04/99
Monty R 12/03/99
Jenine K. 11/30/99
Squire M 11/26/99
Angela L 11/26/99
Stacy D 11/20/99
Jerry L 11/16/99

10 YEARS
Charles G 12/30/98
Marquitta M 12/28/98
Donna D 12/24/98
Brenda C 12/23/98
Sherlanda M 12/10/98
Sarah T 12/10/98
Greg A 11/26/98
Thurman G 11/23/98
Clarence C 11/22/98
Samuel B 11/18/98
Jeff W 11/16/98
Deborah G 11/15/98
Tyrone R 11/12/98
Roxann S 11/08/98
Barbara P 11/05/98
Rene W 11/05/98
Calvert S 11/03/98

11 YEARS
Redd M 12/28/97
James J 12/25/97
Keisha J 12/22/97
Gloria Mc 12/18/97
Paul H 12/16/97
Tanya C 12/13/97
Terry W 12/12/97
Darrell M 11/10/97
Wanda R 11/10/97
Tracy L 11/06/97
Yolanda W 11/03/97

12 YEARS
Nathan K 12/17/96
Robert F 12/16/96
Linda B 12/12/96
Bennie H 12/04/96
Leslie L 11/11/96
Sandy P 11/12/96
Lester R 11/11/96
Marvin W 11/05/96
Marvin H 11/04/96
Michelle H 11/04/96
Mylinda P 11/02/96

13 YEARS
Richard M 12/27/95
Terrell W 12/16/95
Jimmy J 12/12/95
Beverly Mc 12/05/95
Richard M 11/27/95
Tony H 11/15/95
Clarence M 11/12/95
Yolanda H 11/09/95
Danny H 11/02/95

14 YEARS
Vivian J 12/27/94
Raymond M 12/27/94
Karin L 12/03/94
Wolf E 11/21/94 (RIP)
Olga T 11/10/94
Roosevelt W 11/04/94

15 YEARS
Renee G 12/29/93
Cornella S 12/20/93
Iris L 12/19/93
Elijah B 12/18/93
Pam S 12/14/93
Peggy P 12/10/93
Nat H 12/09/93
Jesse W 12/07/93
Mario C 12/07/93
Kathy J 12/03/93
Pam N 11/30/93
Belinda B 11/23/93
Jerry J 11/20/93
Dana 11/16/93
Nikki C 11/11/93
Deborah J 11/03/93
Cheryl E 11/03/93

16 YEARS
Sidney L 12/24/92
Robin D 11/23/92
Marvette A 11/16/92
Mylinda O 11/06/92
Kevin M 11/05/92
Sherri M 11/04/92
Cheryl E 11/02/92

17 YEARS
Alex M 12/25/91
Volanda P 12/09/91
Sonia O 12/02/91
Daniel G 11/20/91

18 YEARS
Bobby C 12/25/90
Dwayne H 11/26/90
Catherine W 11/15/90
Darryl S 11/05/90

19 YEARS
Bruce S 12/21/89
Zelda E 12/18/89
Jerome S 12/18/89
Vanessa W 12/18/89
Dwayne H 11/26/89
Yvonne A. 11/20/89
Terry Mc 11/07/89

20 YEARS
Sepi B 11/28/88
Percy H 11/23/88
Raheem M 11/16/88
Pam H 11/14/88

21 YEARS
Dan S 12/27/87
James J 12/25/87
Elijah W 12/24/87
Jose G 12/20/87
Kim B 12/17/87

22 YEARS
Jennifer B 12/26/86
Chester W 11/06/86
Earl G 11/06/86
Joyce F 11/02/86
Anderia M 11/01/86

23 YEARS
Dwayne J 12/27/85
Kevin H 12/15/85
James A 12/11/85

24 YEARS
Raymond M 12/27/84
Rita H 11/24/84
Wallace R 11/16/84
Cornish H 11/03/84

30 YEARS
Bill W 11/30/78

Share the Wealth

the heartbeat presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The articles you see in this newsletter are written by NA members like yourself. You need not consider yourself a skilled writer. You don't have to know all the rules of grammar. We have an editorial team whose job it is to take care of those details. What we need is your unique perspective on the NA program. Without it, we don't have a message to carry. The articles and letters do not necessarily express the philosophy of NA as a whole nor does publication imply endorsement by NA, **the heartbeat**, or the Greater Los Angeles Area of Narcotics Anonymous. **the heartbeat** assumes no responsibility to return submitted material and does not guarantee that submissions will be published. **the heartbeat** reserves the right to edit any material submitted in accordance with our review policy. The policy includes but not limited to:

- Articles should be no longer than one page handwritten or typed.
- Use of NA language of recovery.
- No profanity
- No personal attacks directed towards NA members or NA as a whole.

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