



the heartbeat

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"The heart of NA beats when two addicts share their recovery"

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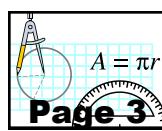
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The Gift of Sponsorship

My name is Diana and I am an addict. I spent my first year in NA self sponsoring. I have always had a sponsor but I felt that she was busy and that I shouldn't bother her. I only called when things were going on or if I needed to do step work. I began sponsoring people 3 years ago and I learned so much about the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. I find that when one of my sponsees call me, not only does it take me out of my own head, but I've developed true and lasting friendships with these women. I learned that the message I want to carry is that as a sponsor I am grateful for the women God has put in my life. There is nothing I do that is more important. I have to work and I have a family, but my giving back to NA make that possible. So I learned that the Sponsor needs the Sponsee just as much. and it opened me up to not being afraid to call or deciding that I can do this alone. The cool thing about NA is I don't have to do things alone. Today my sponsor is one of the most important people in my life. There is nothing I'd be afraid to tell her and I know that she is busy person. My relationship with her is not less than any of the other things in her life. I'm important to her and she always makes time for me.

So if you're in a sponsor/sponsee relationship in name only, or if your head tells you that you don't matter or that you aren't important or that he or she is too busy and your life is not that big of a deal. Please remember that reaching out is only hard until you do it and you deserve a sponsor who will care and listen and make time for you. If we addicts raise our hand and say we are willing to be sponsors it means that just that. I'm willing to be there if you need to talk and if you call me when life is good and you don't need me then we establish a close relationship and when life happens it's so much easier to call. There are times in life when we truly are busy, but in recovery as the big deals become less big we learn that there is always time to look at how we feel and walk through things together.

Diana G

STEP TEN: The Door to Forgiveness

 As I have taken my own path along serenity, the steps have sometimes been unsteady and difficult. As I have walked (and worked) the first nine steps, there was definitely scenery along the way that has been both ugly and beautiful. Yet with each step I take, I am brought to a new place of understanding and experience in having a clean, more content life.

I believe one of the most difficult of all things I am learning to do is be self-analytical; to honestly figure out how to examine myself. So many times before, I actually shied away from taking even just a few private moments for the purpose of self-analysis. I was too busy for such foolishness. But along a clean way, I've come to understand that these "self -checks" need to be done honestly thoroughly and often.

Sometime ago, after having time to analyze a past situation (one that caused me much regret and much unhappiness to myself and to others). I had an opportunity to openly admit person that I had been wrong. I made the admission to this person face-to face. Much to my surprise, the admission was received graciously and the old matter was, at last, put to rest. Admitting when you're wrong opens the door to forgiveness.

Because of frequent "self -checks" I have become more aware of my emotions with the help of my Higher Power. I will eventually become less likely to justify and negative emotions, more capable of controlling an urge to criticize and blame outside influences for my shortcomings.

In a recent incident in solving minor driving incident, the officer ticketed me concerning a traffic sign in a rather remote area. He contended that this particular route which exited from a parking lot (stretching no more than about 75 feet) was a one-way. My argument was that it was not a one way, since had taken this way many times. He pointed out the sign which, for some reason I had never seen, and made his point! I pulled away with a ticket in my pocket and a few choice words on my lips. In reflecting on the situation later in the day, during a time of "self-checking" I discovered and realized my need to accept that the fault was not the officer's but mine.

If my own personal growth progresses as I hope that it will I will use my moments of " self-checking" to help me rise above those old hills of hurt prides and unwillingness to accept the imperfections of my own and those of other people. Hopefully, I am arriving at a point on this road of serenity where I can forgive when someone else is a fault. I place where I can admit when the fault is mine. And that my life is more about taking Steps toward progress rather than perfection.

Fred M.

STEP ONE: Power Through Powerlessness



I come from a long line of he-men—farmers, miners and war veterans. That, and nine years in prison, made the concept of *powerlessness* impossible to grasp. I thought it meant *weakness*. We are, after all, what we make of ourselves. Right? You know. When the going gets tough... And so on. People who succeed in this life do so through strength, wisdom and maturity. Succumbing to powerlessness and unmanageability meant giving up.

Strangely, as confused as I was back then, I was right. Yet, I couldn't have been more wrong. One of the things we finally learn here is that the concepts recovering people live by ripple with meaning, like undulating rings sliding across the surface of a glassy lake. The word powerlessness - nothing more than a word - is the rock.

Early on in my recovery, I'd sit in meetings and hear people lament about powerless-this and unmanageable-that. Sometimes they'd laugh at how having these undesirable traits caused them to behave in weak ways, using powerlessness as an excuse to be less than perfect. It seemed sick to me. The only thing that kept me coming back was that they weren't using any more (And, of course, the slender brunette in the corner. There was something oddly enticing about her powerlessness.)

Thank God for the people who came before me. Through them, time and experience at living life clean, I slowly came to understand that when I got here I was weak. Like it or not. Addiction made me powerless at its basest form. I was unable to take care of myself. All things, my fiendish, reptilian behavior stemmed from my addiction. It controlled my life. Ah, that's what it meant.

Yes, that and much more. It meant that I had to be torn down before I could be built back up. It meant freedom-freedom from active addiction, from having to be impossibly perfect, unfeasibly strong. Through powerlessness I could give myself a break, something I had never done. It gave me a reprieve. It allowed me to rest. Yes, rest, take a deep breath, relax, kick back, let the guilt out, like draining the pus from an infected wound.

But we can't stay at that level of powerlessness for too long. Prolonged powerlessness without action can become as detrimental as active addiction. I found myself sitting in meetings lamenting about powerless-this and unmanageable-that. It became an excuse, a reason for getting nowhere, for getting nothing done.

"After all," I'd share, "I'm just an addict." Isn't that the same as saying, "I'm incapable of doing any better, so why should I try?" There are some powerful contradicting concepts in our fellowship. At first glance, two that butt head on are "becoming responsible, productive members of society" and "powerlessness." How can the two coincide?

Through action I learned and grew. The steps are just that, steps. I take one and then the other, incorporating them as I go. They become part of my life, who I am. I am torn down and renewed. In the beginning I was powerless not only over my addiction, but also my life. It was indeed unmanageable. The process, though, of taking one step after another, gives me strength, power, if you will. You don't have to take my word for it. It's right there in the steps. Check out Step Eleven. What do we pray for? God's will and what else? Power! The power to do God's will. What is the power to do God's will? Nothing short of strength, wisdom and maturity. How could we achieve such a lofty goal without it?

Bill H

TRADITION 5: Simple Formula For Serenity

"Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry the message to the addict who still suffers."

Let me start by saying that I write this from the only perspective I know — that of a basically myopic, selfish S.O.B. who rarely thinks of anyone but myself until I am so deep in a jackpot that I once again remember, as if by some miracle, that I can only keep what I have by giving it away.

"GADZOOKS!" I think. How could I have forgotten this simple formula for serenity?!? It's too bad that NOWHERE is it suggested that I keep as my primary goal carrying the message to the addict who still suffers! Why doesn't someone write these things down?!? Only after holding my hand over an open flame and repeatedly screaming this idea, tattooing "Give it away to keep it" backwards on my forehead and having this slogan laser—etched on my left cornea did someone inform me (may he rest in peace) that all I had to do was read the Fifth Tradition.

The point is, addicts have trouble focusing on anything but "me" (themselves). Our founders knew this. They saw how self-centered we all could be (what with leaving toothpaste caps off and drinking the last Snapple without asking) so they made a suggestion and advised that it be foremost in our thoughts: "When a hunch of you gets together, think about someone worse off than yourself for a change. Okay? In fact, make it the main reason for being together. Well don't just sit there! Do something to help them!" "But why?" we asked, "We're fine. We made it. They missed the boat. Forget 'em." Okay. WE didn't I did. After an explanation I didn't understand and I was told to just try it and more would be revealed. Here's what I've found.

The higher and further we go in our recovery, the more we must look to our roots to keep ourselves grounded. Our roots lie with the addict who still suffers, the very soil from which we ourselves have come. By making our primary purpose to carry the message to the addict who still suffers, we are constantly reminded of who we were and how far we've come — both humbling and uplifting simultaneously.

Just as regions look to areas, areas to groups and groups to members in order to get direction and find out how they are responding to each other's needs, so must we look to the next level to find out how we are meeting their needs and get direction. We must reach out constantly to the addict who still suffers and surmise if we are responding adequately to his or her needs. By making "carrying the message" our primary purpose, we are inviting a response which can be viewed as a critique of how well we have carried that message. By the suffering addict's reaction we can tell how effective we are, just as by the group's response is the area told what to do and so on.

"All our groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring, sharing, and service can do their work. The purpose of this tradition is to ensure that this atmosphere of recovery is maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups recovery—oriented." Basic Text, p. 64

The Fifth Tradition is written in the present tense. It should be thought of as something we must do today, not something we used to do. It is phrased so that we must do it NOW.

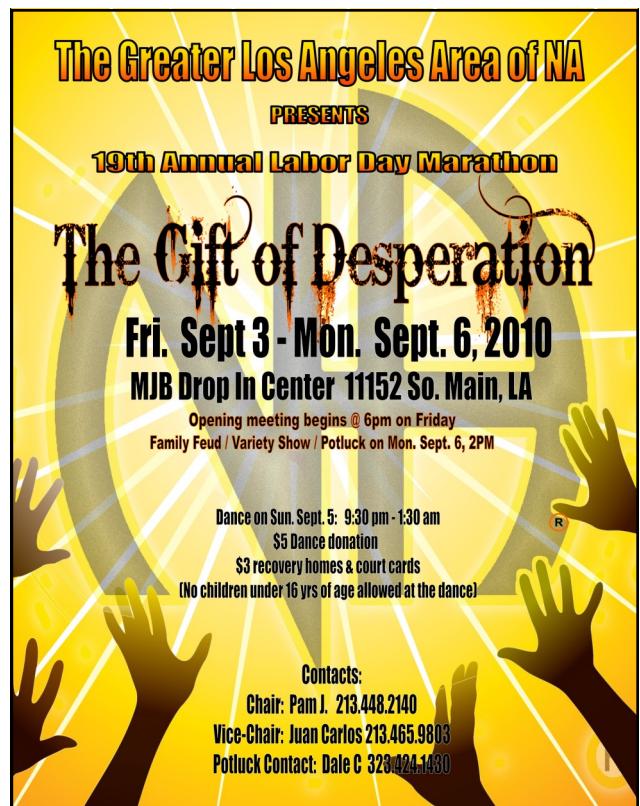
We send signals and are sent signals the same way that our body's nerves send us signals. The great thing about NA is that it is alive, just like a human body. It may grow or shrink depending on what we put into it but the framework or skeleton (steps/traditions) is a constant core of strength upon which we rest the body of our recovery. Tradition Five directs us toward constant growth by causing us to see new input. Only an open hand is ready to receive and thus by putting out our hand to the newcomer do we receive that which helps us grow: our sustenance.

As a species, we addicts are like any other species, our primary purpose is to propagate that species — to make sure that our code of info is passed on, like DNA — to make NA babies! Ha! I can't tell you how many times in my first year I told some old—timer my clean time and they responded with, "Oh, why, you're just a baby!"

We don't need to have sex to breed. (Remember this, all you potential 13th steppers!) We, through NA and a power greater than ourselves, need only an exchange of IDEAS, SPIRITUAL intercourse, a mixture of need and love to create new life.

How many of us, in our personal lives, have looked at a child, possibly our own, and thought that we would like to have or experiences and knowledge passed on to another generation? To make sum that what we have learned, all the important insights we have accrued in our own life are not lost or forgotten? We are given the chance to live on through another every time we reach out to the addict who still suffers and offer them a new life. This, in all things, is our primary purpose.

Anonymous





1 YEAR
Kenneth B. 9/21/09

2 YEARS
Mary L 10/29/08
Gonzalo R 10/27/08

Andrew R 10/25/08
Tammy C 10/22/08

Edythe F 10/17/08
Talia S 10/17/08

Michael B 10/17/08
Rick m 10/15/08

Juan Z 10/13/08
James E 10/13/08

Barbara W 10/11/08
Maricela S 10/07/08

Calvin C 10/05/08
Anthony V 10/05/08

Simone S 10/04/08
Charles J 10/04/08

Wanda Mc 10/03/08
Rene R 10/03/08

Mike K 10/02/08
Nathan H 9/24/08

Emma L 9/23/08
Verdia E 9/20/08

Gloria F 9/14/08
Brent H 9/09/08

Robert M 9/02/08

3 YEARS
Antoinette K 10/31/07

Lorraine T 10/31/07
Ricky C 10/22/07

Angela G 10/18/07
Toni M 10/24/07

Darlene W 10/12/07
Raquel M 10/11/07

Lorraine H 9/26/07
Keith W 9/26/07

Jeffrey S 9/26/07
Ulysses Mc 9/25/07

Kemia G 9/19/07
Kevin P 9/18/07

Jabril M 9/16/07
Joy W 9/14/07

Yolanda G 9/12/07
Stephanie G 9/11/07

Lorena M 9/11/07
Peter S 9/11/07

4 YEARS
Wayne W 10/28/06

Betty H 10/18/06
Patricia R 10/17/06

Debbie S 10/09/06
Marvin W 10/08/06

Tatia G 10/07/06
Sherree K 10/02/06

Lennie W 10/02/06
Johnny P 9/26/06

Forrestine G 9/23/06
Tony J 9/20/06

Theodore P 9/19/06
Ruthie W 9/16/06

Laura G 9/13/06
Shawn M 9/11/06

Jay C 9/10/06
Courtney W 9/09/06

Delano D 9/07/06
Kim M 9/06/06

Tommy W 9/03/06
Thalese T 9/01/06

5 YEARS
Michele S 10/17/05

Kimberly H 10/17/05
Trina N 10/16/05

Leslie S 9/29/05
Leslie S 9/25/05

Ray S 9/24/05
Angela T 9/14/05

Margarita S 9/01/05

6 YEARS
Ruel G 10/26/04
Athena T 10/12/04
Yolanda M 10/09/04
Gwendolyn J 9/21/04
Gwen D 9/21/04
Mark H 9/16/04
John T 9/16/04
Paule V 9/11/04

7 YEARS
Georgia A 10/20/03
Nina M 10/10/03
Alsandori B 10/08/03
Roosevelt Y 10/06/03
Ronnie B 10/04/03
WB (I luv NA) 10/03/03 (Yeah Yeah Yeah)

Patricia M 10/03/03
Donny S 10/02/03
Trevan L 9/25/03
LaShawn Mc 9/22/03
James R 9/20/03
Sonia D 9/15/03
Sara C 9/05/03

8 YEARS
Gary C 10/12/02
Leslie S 10/11/02
Kahlid A 10/11/02
Vance D 10/10/02
Robert R 10/07/02
Roosevelt Y 10/06/02
Angelus W 10/05/02
Khisas J 10/04/02
Lance I 10/03/02
Debra J 9/30/02
Adrian D 9/29/02
Cynthia B 9/28/02
Franco S 9/27/02
Charles D 9/26/02
Rachel P 9/23/02
Treavor S 9/21/02
Laura G 9/20/02
Mechelle A 9/20/02
Elizabeth M 9/04/02
Elizabth P 9/04/02
Deandre T 9/04/02

9 YEARS
Angelo M 10/04/01
Denise H 10/02/01
Treavor S 9/21/01
Dana M 9/19/01
Kofi S 9/17/01
Wendell M 9/11/01

10 YEARS
Victor B 10/29/00
Micacha S 10/29/00
Sandy M 10/28/00
Steve S 10/27/00
Diana W 10/25/00
Timothy J 10/25/00
Viola P 10/25/00
Wilford K 10/22/00
Jacqueline J 10/19/00
Leroy M 10/18/00
Joi R. 10/15/00
Walter B 10/12/00
Jesse P 10/07/00
Carlos R 10/05/00
Audry H 10/04/00
Hugh B 10/03/00
Ida P 10/01/00
Darryl C 9/26/00
Dana W 9/25/00
Karen L 9/18/00
Nicholas C 9/17/00
Connie S 9/13/00
Willie C 9/13/00
Pamela R 9/10/00
Rocky W 9/08/00
Robert H 9/07/00
Kim M 9/06/00
Jennie A 9/06/00
Byron C 9/04/00

Alfi P 9/03/00
Rosalind F 9/03/00
Thomas P 9/03/00
Duane B 9/01/00
Kasey H 9/01/00

11 YEARS
Milton B 10/30/99
Sandra W 10/30/99
Zina L 10/23/99
Mando A 10/21/99
Sonia G 10/17/99
Kevin L 10/15/99
James AC 10/13/99
Kelly W 10/11/99
Rosetta T 10/03/99
Todd Z 9/13/99
Clarence B 9/12/99
Yvette Q 9/09/99
Jim Y 9/07/99
Patrice S 9/02/99

12 YEARS
Johnnie W 10/31/98
Pamela Jo 10/30/98
Shelia M 10/28/98
Mike W 10/28/98
Michael B 10/23/98
Wanda T 10/20/98
Yolanda B 10/19/98
Karen B 10/19/98
Wayne T 10/15/98
Leta H 10/13/98
Vera P 10/11/98
Sharon P 10/10/98
Willie B 10/08/98
Kimberly P 10/06/98
Victor M 10/05/98
Richard B 10/4/98
Ramon L 10/02/98
Sonia C. 10/01/98
Rhonda J 9/21/98
Debra 0 9/25/98
Lucretia G 9/15/98
Wesley W 9/15/98
Bianca L 9/03/98

13 YEARS
Teresa W. 10/31/97
Grace F 10/29/97
Clinton 10/23/97
Addie W 10/20/97
Ronald W 10/16/97
Andrew T 10/15/97
Sheila B 10/10/97
Hasan B 10/09/97
Cheryl D 10/08/97
Michelle W 10/07/97
Kim P 10/06/97
Seawillia A 9/27/97
Richard O 9/23/97
Willie C 9/18/97
Kenneth H 9/16/97
Ricky L 9/09/97
Johnny K 9/01/97

14 YEARS
James E.G. 10/30/96
Marlise H 10/28/96
Myrtle W 10/25/96
Delenia Z 10/21/96
Katherine W 10/21/96
Jas K 10/17/96
Julie R 10/17/96
Sandra S 10/11/96
Gus A 10/10/96
Diane K 10/09/96
Lem W 10/09/96
Elisio G 10/04/96
Ella H 9/28/96
Curtis T 9/27/96
William O 9/23/96
Adolphus M 9/23/96

15 YEARS
Kathryn H 10/26/95
Michelle C 10/26/95
Jeffery S 10/11/95
Jackie W 9/21/95
Jerone M 9/08/95
Wali 9/01/95

16 YEARS
Shonda W 10/31/94
Brenda T 10/22/94
Tunysha S 10/13/94
Silvia F 10/12/94
Tommy D 10/12/94
David M 10/11/94
Kathryn A. 9/26/94
Ruth S 9/24/94
Marcella "Div" Mc 9/23/94
Margie P 9/22/94
Gloria B 9/12/94
Brenda S 9/08/94

17 YEARS
Jackie J 10/14/93
Pauline G 10/04/93
Stan J 10/03/93
Tracy H 9/06/93
Raymond M 9/04/93
Overstreet 9/01/93

18 YEARS
Andrea A 10/19/92
Steve S 10/13/92
Richard T 10/03/92
Janette H 9/23/92
Nate S 9/19/92
Sherene A. 9/09/92
William E 9/01/92

19 YEARS
Earl F 10/07/91
Kirby S 9/25/91

20 YEARS
Daphnie B 10/25/90
Paula L 10/16/90
Maurice R 10/15/90
Helen S 10/07/90
Phyllis W 10/07/90
Azell M 10/02/90
Tinka M 9/14/90
Wesley R 9/12/90
Darryl B 9/03/90

21 YEARS
Doc J 10/23/89
Gregory G 10/09/89
Beth S 10/05/89
Julia S 9/06/89
Anita S 9/05/89

22 YEARS
Tommie P 10/15/88
Johnnie D 9/19/88
John K 9/19/88
Erskine W 9/06/88

23 YEARS
Sheila B 10/10/87
Irene V.M. 9/22/87
Michael S 9/12/87

24 YEARS
Ted S 10/23/86
Stephanie S 10/13/86
Yo Steve 9/16/86
West 9/10/86
Patricia P 9/04/86

25 YEARS
Earl D 9/09/85
Cheryl Mc 9/08/85

26 YEARS
Luis H 9/21/96
Kenneth H 9/16/96
Robert A 9/04/96

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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