

# Reaching Out



**Volume 22, Number 2**

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## From the Editor

*We would like to welcome all of you to the NA World Services newsletter, Reaching Out. We hope that the contents of this newsletter will assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts. There are two sections to Reaching Out. The first section, "From the Inside," is filled with letters from incarcerated addicts sharing their experience, strength, and hope as they find and maintain recovery from addiction through NA.*

*The second section, "From the Outside," is an opportunity for H&I subcommittees to offer their experiences obtained through carrying the NA message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. You may also find personal experience from those members who heard the NA message on the inside and are now living and enjoying life on the outside.*

*We encourage submissions for Reaching Out from members and H&I subcommittees. Please consider that we are more likely to publish articles that focus on how NA has helped an individual to recover while incarcerated rather than those that concentrate on the horrors of drug use. Send all submissions to Reaching Out c/o NAWs, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999, USA.*

## GET INVOLVED AND HELP US CARRY OUT OUR FELLOWSHIP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE!!



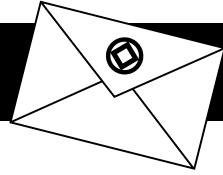
Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
July 2007	15 April 2007
October 2007	15 July 2007
January 2008	15 October 2007
April 2008	15 January 2008



**You may notice that we have made few changes to the look of *Reaching Out*. As part of that, we are trying out new cover art. We are interested in your thoughts, so please send your input to let us know what you think.**

# FROM THE INSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is D. I'm a forty-one-year-old mother of five and a grandmother of three. I am also an incarcerated addict currently serving a thirteen-month sentence. I was arrested some time back.

At the time of my arrest I had four outstanding warrants in three different jurisdictions. Drugs played a major role in my downfall and my extensive criminal history.

I have been busted for the same thing over and over for the same old reason, my drug habit. I've allowed drugs to destroy my family and me time and time again.

I've been clean a few times only because of the many legal issues I had going on in my life, only to return to using more times than I care to mention.

I always tried to justify my using one way or another. I had a son who died in my arms. That led me deeper into active addiction. Another excuse, another reason for me to use because I wanted to medicate the pain.

Through the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, I now know that I never have to use drugs again, no matter what goes on in my life.

I personally thank God for NA and the H&I committee that comes out here to the facility every Monday evening. I actually wake up on Monday all excited and chipper because I know it's NA meeting day. I go to that meeting faithfully week after week. I look forward to seeing the familiar faces as well as being grateful for the opportunity to hear and read the literature. I get to share and receive some experience, strength, and hope. It's the message of hope and the promise of freedom.

In the past I would attend meetings and never share. Now I share weekly, as I have no shame or false pride. I want to save my life today, not my face.

I have a plan, and I'm willing to accept the simple suggestions; I will do ninety meetings in ninety days, and I plan on going to NA meetings ASAP the same day I'm discharged.

Attending the H&I meetings at this facility has given my life a purpose again. Today I love me and I want to live and enjoy my life without the use of drugs. I truly hope that this letter is worthy to get printed. I have seven months clean.

Still pressing on,  
DR, New York

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I recently found an old copy of *Reaching Out*, and I enjoyed it very much. It's great to hear other addicts share their recovery while down. I am an addict who just came back to the program after a relapse.

I had seventy-one days clean when faced with coming back to prison. I could have run, but working a program of honesty and responsibility, I stepped up to the plate and faced my problem head-on. When I was alone in a holding cell and being processed into the prison, all of my self-centeredness was crashing down and I could see the holes I had in the half-assed program I had been working. The most apparent part was that I still held onto behaviors I had in active addiction. It was a lot of dishonesty and self-deceit, and just like it says in *Relapse and Recovery*, it kept me from gaining complete recovery and acceptance within society. Thankfully I am able to attend meetings daily and keep moving forward; without that it would be easy to slip into self-deceit.

Sincerely,  
JKE, Pennsylvania

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is G and I'm an addict. Today is 20 April 2006. I remain in custody in a county jail, locked up simply because I could not get this program right.

Needless to say, I am truly happy for incarceration; it has given me a chance to get back in touch with NA in a different state. I tried a geographical change because I'm originally from Illinois. I ran to Wisconsin, running from a relapse, or so I thought. NA helped me stay clean for 4½ years, and now I have a chance at life once again.

I will do everything the program suggests—that I make ninety meetings in ninety days, get a sponsor, do service work, remain teachable and open-minded, and be willing to do whatever is necessary to stay clean one day at a time.

Through the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, I will be able to eventually give away what was freely given to me. "If we don't use what we have, we will lose what we have."

GT, Wisconsin

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is S and I am a recovering addict currently incarcerated in Texas. This is not my first incarceration. I have fifty-two convictions ranging from misdemeanors to felonies. I have been in prison twice and in several treatment centers, never using the suggestions that were given to me. I slowly began my journey of suicide.

It wasn't until 3 November 2005, when a loved one died in his addiction, that I came to realize the true meaning of "one really is too many."

That night in my cell, I fell to my knees in tears, and within that moment I had a spiritual awakening.

Today, by working my steps, reading the literature, and doing what is suggested to me, I know that I too can become a productive member of society like everyone else.

I can only thank my Higher Power, the fellowship of NA, and the ladies of NA who come up here to this institution every Saturday carrying the message to other addicts, that I know "just for today" I will stay clean.

With love,  
SS, Texas

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is M, and I am an addict. I am thirty-one years old and eighty days clean today. I am in jail. My story is very similar to my brothers and sisters in NA. However, I have found the program works! I thank my Higher Power!

I've spent the past ten years in and out of jails, prison, active addiction, and recovery. But I never quite got it—not until January 2006. Last year I married my three-year-long love. We struggled with our relationship—on again, off again. We met in prison. Finally, in January 2005, we made it exclusive and committed. In April 2005 we shared a relapse—but barely managed to pull through it. She actually had to pack up and leave me for it to sink in.

We worked things out and moved forward. In August of 2005 we got approval from our parole officers to move in together and put together our “fairy tale” life. It wasn’t long, though, before we became weekend warriors.

We both had jobs, so it was only an every-other-weekend thing at first. My birthday drew near, and although it wasn’t “the weekend to use,” I wanted to. That’s how we celebrated my thirty-first birthday: a diamond ring and drugs.

This hurts so deeply for me because I had never been married prior to this, nor loved by anyone or anything so deeply in my life. I thank my Higher Power that all is well today. We used for my birthday weekend and never really stopped, just for the seventy-two hours required to clean up for a UA for our parole officers.

Our once “fairy tale” and loving and devoted marriage began to deteriorate right before our eyes. We fought constantly; the words “I hate you” were given away freely. We became two people who didn’t know each other at all.

The life crumbled, and the drugs took over. It got so bad that not a day went by when I didn’t cry or wish I were dead. I wanted my wife back—I wanted my life back.

I managed to somehow terminate my parole successfully in November of 2005. How, I’m not sure. But we went on the run from her parole officer during Thanksgiving of 2005.

Gone was security, stability, the fairy tale. It seemed to have happened so quickly! The details of those next two months are typical of addicts on the run, and I prefer not to detail the war stories.

I’ll jump to the night before our arrest. We were in a hotel room getting high when my wife, who has Graves’ disease, fell fast asleep. I thought I was going to lose her. I cried as I prayed to God to please show us how to get clean, to please take us back to our fairy tale life! Please!

The next day came and brought with it the police. My grandma has always told me that things happen for a reason. Back to jail we both went; she’d be taken back to prison. We went to court together, and I was released on my own recognizance. I went north to live with her parents, who live one hundred miles away in a tiny town. Her parents welcomed me with open arms and treated me as one of their blood children.

I sat on the front steps, beside myself with grief and feeling the separation from my wife all the way to my soul. I knew right then that I stood at a crossroads. I am an addict, and I use drugs to numb pain. An addict is an addict no matter where you are. I either needed to get to a meeting or I'd meet active addicts. Those were the only two choices. I found an NA meeting that night and it felt good, oh so wonderful, to be back in the rooms of NA. I'd come home. I shared that night and cried the cleansing tears of recovery! I got a phone list and a sponsor; this program saved my life.

I'd known about NA for years — who doesn't? — but never really got involved. My wife and I used to despise the "twelve-step warriors." I realize now that it's only because we were in relapse, even though we weren't yet using; we were working up to that.

I went to six meetings a week the first month and worked my Step One with my sponsor. NA became the blood that pumps through my veins. I spent two solid months awaiting sentencing for the charges for which my wife and I were arrested in January and living a new way of life.

I took all necessary steps to ensure I'd stay clean and met an abundance of real, true, clean friends in the process. My sponsor and new friends held my hand through the time while I awaited sentencing and packed into the courtroom with me on 6 March 2006. Many had much to say on my behalf to the judge; he patiently listened. When they were done I also spoke on my behalf and shared with the judge my newfound life. "I have direction in my life today, your honor," I began. "I'm not going to stand before you and make excuses for the crimes I have committed; I did them and I regret them. But I cannot go backwards, nor do I want to. I accept any punishment you see as fair and will welcome it, as I want to begin making my amends to society. I just want you to know I have found a better way, the NA way. I serve as the chairperson of my hometown's NA meeting, and hold service positions on the PI panel for my area. This is the direction my life has taken, and although drugs will always and forever be a choice I have daily, they are not an option." With that I thanked him and prepared for the worst.

The recommendation by the prosecuting attorney and adult probation and parole officer was that I serve two zero-to-five-year prison sentences consecutively because of my prior prison history. The judge sat silently for a few moments and then said, "Miss Addict,

you realize the recommendations and your past history are severe.” “Yes, your honor.” “But I must say you are sincere. Two months have passed since your release, and every urinalysis has been clean; none have been missed, not a one. You’ve spent your time out finding clean associations and working on a better way of life. However, you must serve time for your crimes. I’m sentencing you to zero to five years in the state penitentiary. However, I am suspending that sentence and committing you to twelve months in the county jail, where you will go through treatment. Upon successful completion of this program, you will be released early.”

I knew I was going into custody and was okay with that. I have one more sentencing next week, and I know that whatever happens is God’s will for me. My days of using are over! I have a beautiful wife who loves and adores me. A brand new life awaits me when I get out with all my clean time!

I have countless blessings, all thanks to NA. I am forever grateful to this program for saving my life, my wife’s life, our sanity, and our marriage. I am dedicating my life to service in NA! I can give back today what has so freely been given me. I get a chance to work my Twelfth Step every day. Thanks, NA, and all my fellow addicts who make every day count!

MH, Utah

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is S and I am an addict. I’ve been in jail since October 2004. I actually made it in here clean, running only on defects and shortcomings.

Recovery can take us to strange places. I don’t want to explain the mistakes that got me a thirty-four-month sentence. I made a mistake and lost control over certain areas of my life, which was an illusion anyway because I never had control, and now I am paying the consequences, in jail, behind bars.

What I would like to share with you is that I’m still clean, and that is a gift, especially under the circumstances in prison.

I’ve been locked up in a cell with using addicts, and this prison is full of drugs, more or less. So, when I’ve been asked if I would like to trade for some drugs, I’ve told them, “No thanks, my drug is God.” That worked. Maybe it worked because it is my true personal message. In Step Two I found my Higher Power as I understand God.



Later on, another inmate wanted to start an NA meeting in the jail. He had experience with NA. It didn't work because of the rules and orders, so I turned to an H&I meeting of another twelve-step fellowship, and I read a lot of NA literature. I am lucky having two copies of the Basic Text with me and receiving *Reaching Out* and *The NA Way*.

My sponsor came to visit me a few times, and that was a blessing. My sponsor introduced me to the method of numbering the Basic Text, sentence by sentence. That enables us to share parts of the Basic Text by writing down numbers of each chapter of the book that belong to sentences which have a certain meaning to us.

That is the way I am working the program, and it works. I read the chapter "More Will Be Revealed" and number each sentence in that chapter, beginning with 1 for the headline, until the last sentence, "Each day, more will be revealed," which is number 159. Now we can correspond like that: Sentences 26, 10, 66, and 103 mean a lot to me because they encourage me to stay clean and work the program no matter what.

Now my sponsor can read that in a letter from me, and can read the sentences in his copy of the book and can relate and respond to my input.

We share over and about the Basic Text via letters and are able to point out specific passages in an easy and efficient way. With simple numbers we don't need to write each sentence down; we can concentrate on our personal sharing about them.

In prison, phone calls and stamps are rare. Besides that, I also write about the steps and hope and pray to my Higher Power to remove all shortcomings that led me here. And I had a chance to start therapy behind bars, so thank God I am in a therapy center in a prison today, and in here there are no drugs—that is progress. Strange ways. Thanks for letting me share.

Anonymous, Germany

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is G and I'm a recovering addict incarcerated at a federal institution here in West Virginia. I have been in and out of NA for a few years, but not taking suggestions from the sponsor I had or the group.

I'm on a thirty-six-month sentence due to too many dirty urinalysis tests. I just couldn't stop using. Now I have, and am in the treatment program here.

I went to an NA meeting and couldn't believe that I felt at home, and was able to share exactly where I am. Coming to jail has saved my life, because every waking moment was centered on drugs, the using and getting more.

I truly thank the judge for this time, and I thank the God of my understanding for still loving me. I've been taught that I have another relapse in me, but I don't know if I have another recovery in me. I don't believe that I do.

I'm glad to be home in NA. Thanks for leaving the light on.

One day at a time,  
GV, West Virginia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I guess I will start off my letter with a hello to all and ask how you are doing? My name is B and I'm twenty-eight years old. I recently arrived at this correctional facility on a parole violation and a new case, all due to drugs. I have been doing drugs for the past sixteen years and really never got into trouble until the year 2003.

It was then that I picked up three felony charges within six months. I was sent to prison 7 July 2004 after failing probation. That is when I did eighteen months and was released on parole. During my whole term I thought I could get back out to my four beautiful children and my wife and stay clean, but I was wrong.

It wasn't until seventy-four days later, when I caught another case and was sent back to prison, that I realized that I am an addict and I need help. Luckily I was celled up in the fish tank with a recovering addict who had introduced me to NA and *Reaching Out*. One of the reasons for writing was to get on the mailing list.

I have thirty-nine days clean, and I want to stay clean forever. That's why I'm going to keep NA in my life forever.

I want to get back out into society and provide for my wife and children as a real man is supposed to do.

Sincerely,  
B, Nevada

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is C and I am an addict. I am what society would call a ten-time loser, because this is my tenth time in prison. That says how much I was in denial.

In 1987 I found out that I was HIV-positive, but that was not enough to stop me. After looking over my crimes I see the progression in the crimes as well as my using.

On 6 March 1997 I fell into the rooms, and it is by the grace of a power greater than myself that I have not looked back, other than to help a newcomer.

The God of my understanding has blessed me in so many ways. I am doing great health-wise and am growing spiritually daily. I thank the God of my understanding daily for the experience, strength, and hope of others in recovery.

I do my best to be the best living Basic Text that I can be, because I might be the only Basic Text that a person might read. I do my best to apply the Twelve Steps as well as live them to the fullest. I am far from perfect; the program just asks that I do the best I can, and that is what I live for today. I remain teachable and open-minded. The program saved my life; the program taught and still teaches me that I can live without the use of drugs.

If I can be of any service, please feel free to contact me. I want to give back as much as possible what was freely given to me—a new way of life through NA.

Sincerely,  
GE, North Carolina

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is G and I am currently incarcerated at a corrections center for women. I have been incarcerated for a little over a year now. I never thought that I was an addict. I always thought that I could stop using whenever I wanted to.

Well, I did not want to stop. I couldn't. I did not realize that I was an addict until coming to prison a month after my eighteenth birthday. I went to my first NA meeting in prison. It worked; I now realize that I am an addict and need help. With NA, I will never be alone and can handle everything "just for today." I am actually happy that I am in prison and not dead. This was definitely a wake-up call. I am now a positive, drug-free woman. I get out this year and I just wanted to reach out and share my experience.

GP, Washington

## FROM THE OUTSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am an addict and my name is K. My sponsor introduced me to H&I in 1994, and it's still my primary service commitment today. I was reading *Reaching Out* the other day and was surprised to see that there were no submissions from panel members at this time, so I wanted to tell you about my special day.

I first met L and D around 1995, when they were carrying the message to addicts who were still incarcerated. I was twenty-five years old, with no prior prison history, and wasn't sure what I had to offer.

These men welcomed me every time and greeted me with a smile and shared their recovery with me. I would like to say that I carried the message, but most times I left feeling like they were helping me stay clean another day. They had more time and experience with the steps. I wish I could explain how it felt to be accepted by these men and how grateful they made me feel to have addicts like this in my life sharing their recovery. I was accepted as an addict regardless of my history.

I could go on for pages, but that is not the real story. After being locked up for twenty-five years, L was released from the California prison system and paroled to my area.

I was at his first meeting on the streets as a free man and watched the fellowship help him celebrate his twenty-first NA birthday. The feeling of seeing my friend free and continuing to live the program outside on the streets was a miracle that still makes me cry today.

We both attend a step study and just finished writing and sharing our Fourth Step. D was released nine months ago after being locked up for thirty-one years in California and another two years in a Colorado state prison.

I heard from D his first week out, and it was to tell me that he made it to a meeting in his first twenty-four hours and asked the fellowship for help, and they welcomed him with open arms. I traveled to see D and met his new friends in recovery and quickly realized that he was in good hands and that the fellowship would

take care of him. I was just another member being of service who was able to see another miracle in recovery. I use the word “I” to explain my feelings, but the “we” of the program is why the three of us are alive and free.

L and I will travel over 500 miles round-trip tomorrow, because D is celebrating twenty-one years clean and it is his first birthday outside of an institution. I will bring a medallion and the love and support from the other recovering addicts in the institution that was his home group for so long.

Today they have hope because they know that their brothers are free and working the program of Narcotics Anonymous. I can only say that the unity of the fellowship has worked many miracles in the lives of addicts in and out of institutions. I hope that this special story will give you some hope and remind everyone that “the lie is dead—we do recover!”

KS, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am an addict and my name is S. Previously I’ve written two articles for the *Reaching Out* newsletter. Those letters were written from within the walls of prison.

Today I write this letter for the end of the newsletter. I am out and still have a strong desire to practice recovery. I say this not because prison recovery doesn’t count, because it does. It’s just that a lot of addicts get lost in the transition. From my experience and from what I’ve witnessed, it’s because not enough change was worked on inside “the walls.”

I had a counselor tell me that addicts would love to be in my position in jail, meaning having twenty-four hours a day to work on myself. So I took that and ran with it. I changed everything about me in prison. To be honest, this was very hard to do because it went against the mainstream of prison life. This was my first indication I was on the right path. I went to meetings and did step work like so many of us do. I also took the next step and practiced spiritual principles in jail.

This is where I became unpopular. Jail is a negative place, and I was becoming a positive. I stayed away from all things negative—conversation, people, and activities. I had few people in my life other than H&I members and the occasional positive passer-by. This only

made me work harder; I kept my eye on the prize, freedom from active addiction.

You see, prison is a perfect place to see how not to do things, so I did the opposite. I did this for thirty-seven months. The gift is the ride is over, and today I am a different person. I live by spiritual principles, not character defects, and I do this by choice. While it's true I am not perfect, I am a whole lot better, and it's directly related to living the NA life.

So, to any addict attempting to find recovery in jail, I learned I had to find it myself. It was a journey of eighteen inches from my brain to my heart. With pride, ego, and image gone, I worked on humility. I got to know me and changed what I did not like. Because of this, other people's expectations no longer matter. I am a new man today, and I make my own choices. I am responsible for my actions and behaviors, and most importantly, I could not have done it alone. If not for NA meetings, step work, my sponsor, and the spiritual principles of this program I would never have known there was another way to live.

Also, thank you to Reaching Out and NA World Services for not giving up on the addict within the walls. We can make it.

SH, Connecticut



*“When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man’s entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.”*

## SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

*Reaching Out* is a quarterly, recovery-oriented newsletter made available free of charge to incarcerated addicts through Narcotics Anonymous World Services. If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months and would like a free subscription to *Reaching Out*, complete and return the following form.

*Reaching Out* is also available by a twenty-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$31.00, annually. If you are interested in purchasing a bulk subscription, please complete the following form and return it along with a check or money order.

*Reaching Out* is also available free of charge as an e-subscription. Those interested in this electronic version of the publication can subscribe on our website at [www.na.org](http://www.na.org).

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