

Reaching Out



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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, titled "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, titled "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!!



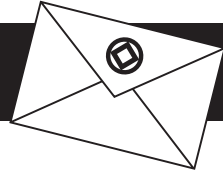
Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
April 2007	15 January 2007
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 since the last issue 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 of the covers of the next few issues.

FROM THE INSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am a thirty-four-year-old female who has just received *Reaching Out*. I never took NA seriously until about two years ago after I got out of rehab. I always pictured NA meetings as a bunch of old men who lived under bridges or in doorways doing whatever kind of drug they were doing.

Thanks to being incarcerated, I have had an eye-opener like I have never experienced in my life. Though I'm in prison, I am finally free. Although I'm not where I want to be physically, mentally, and spiritually, I'm better than where I was.

We have outstanding drug counselors here. NA meetings are held at various times Monday through Friday, and we have great leads come in. I am in what is equivalent to intensive outpatient, a four-month program, and I'm learning the root of addiction as well as other core issues.

I don't have a sponsor yet, but have been working my program. I do not hang out with those who use because I never want to do time again. This is too much for me.

I have nineteen months clean and am moving onward. This disease had made me hurt myself and others, and that is totally selfish and self-centered. I want to be a respectful, productive member of society, and with the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous and my Higher Power it is possible.

Thank you,
TS, Ohio

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is E and I'm a recovering addict serving time in Oregon. I've been clean since 17 June 2004. That is also the day I was incarcerated. I received seventy months for a crime I committed while under the influence.

I was introduced to this program back in 1999 by a family member, and I've been in and out ever since. This is the longest I've been clean

in my life, and I owe all thanks to the NA way of life.

I have been doing everything I can to stay clean this time—going to meetings, reading my Basic Text—and I got my hands on one of the *Reaching Out* newsletters, and it really hit home.

I'm twenty-five years old and have been in and out of jails and institutions my whole life. I've been out on the streets and I've had good jobs, but dope has always been there. This is the first time that I can honestly say that I have no reservations to go back to that old way of life. It's not because I'm doing time, because you can get anything you want in here.

Even though I'm on the inside and on the yard, I truly feel free on the inside. I get out in 2010, and I'm going to use this time to build a good NA foundation. I give thanks to NA every day and to H&I for the meetings they bring in to us. Thank you.

EW, Oregon

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is J and I am an inmate at a county jail in Pennsylvania. I'm writing to share my experience with others. I'm twenty-seven years old and doing time for my third offense. Anyway, I've always known that I have a problem with drugs, the problem being I just couldn't stop.

I was introduced to NA through a rehab center and I've never looked back. I had to turn myself in to jail and I knew I had to do it. About nine months prior to turning myself in, I decided to try and get clean, and I've had such a great experience with NA that NA is almost like a drug for me; it's my medication.

I managed to put together four months clean before coming to jail, and I was worried about keeping my program strong without meetings and my support group. I've done time here before and as soon as I got out I was doing the same things that I had been doing before that had put me in here.

However, today the awareness of everything is amazing, and my thanks to the fellowship as I have learned so much about myself, and that drugs are just as symptom, and I have lots of character defects and shortcomings.

So, now that I'm doing time again I have the experience to keep working a program even though I'm locked up. There aren't any NA meetings here, but I received permission from the warden to start

my own meetings. Now we meet three times a week and there are a lot of guys here for drug-related offenses that would love to learn a new way of life. With my previous experience with NA and my NA Basic Text, I can give them what was and still is so freely given to me. It helps to keep me clean, just for today, and it also gives me a sense of purpose and worth.

I am very grateful for NA and what it stands for. I'm also grateful for the life it has given me. Life is very precious and I will never take what I now have for granted. Thank you, so much and I'll keep coming back.

JC, Pennsylvania

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi! My name is T and I am a recovering addict. I was a practicing addict for fifteen years. Every time I thought it was over, the rollercoaster ride started all over again. In reality I guess I really never wanted to stop.

Now I have been in prison for four years for committing crimes related to getting what I needed to get so that I could use drugs. Never in my life have I ever been in prison or even thought my addiction would put me here. NA was always offered, but I was not ready for that type of commitment until I was clean long enough to see the reality of life.

While I've been incarcerated I have lost both parents to cancer, lost four years of my three children's lives. I have lost my relationship and everything I owned, as well as my self-respect.

However, today with NA I can stay clean, and I know where the disease has brought me, and I haven't forgotten where I came from.

If it wasn't for NA, I most likely would be dead, but today I have the greatest gift of all, freedom from active addiction. And I am so grateful to be able to share this with others.

You don't have to make all of the same mistakes that I have made over the past fifteen years as it may become too late to discover we have another way of living—the NA way. Having the freedom to break away from the vicious cycle that we lived in. The freedom to live life on life's terms. Best wishes and thanks.

TF, Pennsylvania

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is R and I am an addict. I have, for the first time read, the letters in *Reaching Out*. They have inspired me to the sense that I finally realize and have admitted to myself that I am an addict.

I am incarcerated and, as of today, have forty-nine days clean. I know that God helped me to see what I was doing to myself and my family. I can finally say that I hit bottom and have finally lost the desire to use.

I thank God and my family for not turning away from me. I have done all the usual things. I lied, I stole, prostituted, used my family for everything that I could, and now I'm incarcerated.

Even though I'm in jail, that's not what made me want to change. It was seeing the hurt in the eyes of my family that hurt me to my soul. God made me realize there are people out there who are like me, who really want to recover, not just saying it because they are in jail. Please keep sending me *Reaching Out*. I know it will help me in my recovery.

RD, Texas

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is M. I am an addict and in a federal prison. It's not my first time in prison. In fact, I spent twenty years in the state system before I made it into the federal system.

I got here clean and it didn't take more than two months to find myself strung out, once again. I had tried meetings on the streets but I never worked a step, and never in thirty-five years of using had I put more than five months clean together.

So there I sat, in a cell, strung out, owing a bunch of money and I had hit my bottom as the dope didn't work anymore. I can't live loaded, and I sure as hell didn't know how to live and stay clean, so I hit my knees and, as weird as it felt, I asked God to remove the junkie living and to take the obsession and compulsion out of my life.

There wasn't any bright light or angels descending from heaven, at least none that I could see, but something changed that night.

I started to go to meetings here at this prison — every meeting they had. I began to read the literature. I was fortunate to find a sponsor and did what he suggested. I started working the Twelve Steps of NA, and along the way I became able to help others.

I gave this program a chance and it gave me back a sense of freedom that I've never known before. It gave me hope.

I love this program. Where else can a bunch of junkies get together, laugh, enjoy themselves and then speak from their hearts and have a bond like we do in Narcotics Anonymous.

I only have eleven months clean today. I can't live with the idea of never using again. I can, however, live with the idea of not using just for today, and just for today I'm clean and free.

Be the Grace of my God and NA, I've found freedom. If it works for an old convict and junkie like me, it will work for anyone who works it.

I'll get out of prison one day, but I'll keep coming back to NA. It works!

Free on the inside,
MD, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello again from Canada! My name is S and I am an addict. I have been transferred to a new jail that has regular NA meetings on Tuesday nights.

For this, I am very grateful. I have just finished reading the Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*, again, and I am going to start going through the steps, again. It's amazing—every time I read NA literature more things are revealed to me.

The toolbox I have is getting very full, but I am very aware that I must use these tools in everyday life and not just leave them in my toolbox.

This program is a program of action with help from clean recovering addicts. I was just very fortunate to get only one year for all of the charges I'm incarcerated for. I am also very blessed to serve my time here at this particular institution. I am way up in the northern part of Ontario, Canada, and it feels really good to see NA, a familiar face here.

I am going to take suggestions given to me and be more open-minded. This is a program of honesty, and I can honestly say thank you, NA.

SS, Ontario
Canada

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm an addict currently twenty-eight months into a one- to five-year sentence gratefully recovering through the help of NA and the Twelve Steps.

I recently wrote the NA World Services fellowship services team. They sent me some really great NA literature, some H&I addresses and this great newsletter, *Reaching Out*. I've been able to share this stuff with other inmates, and it has really helped my spirituality to see another addict take interest.

"Jails, Institutions, and Recovery," and "I Can't Do Any More Time" out of the Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous* are two of my favorite stories, but now I have a whole newsletter full of stories that I can relate to, so I look forward to the next issue very much.

You see, I've been in and out of jail and recovery programs my whole life, since I was eleven or twelve years old. I'm thirty-nine now, and "I Can't Do Any More Time" either, and most of all I can't and don't want to go back to active addiction. The saying, "Sick and tired of being sick and tired," that's me.

My recovery programs and jail sentences were always court ordered and never for very long periods of time. I always walked away from the programs I was sent to only to go to jail later for leaving. Whenever I was released from jail, my distorted thinking would always take me back to active addiction.

Now that I've been clean and actively involved with NA during this prison sentence I've had the time to start thinking clearly and even though I don't care to be in prison, I thank God and my Higher Power for this time they willed for me. I want to explain why I referred to time, God, and my Higher Power (two different powers).

When I was sent to prison, NA was one of my many recommendations in order for me to receive a parole. So I was going and listening, but not applying myself or working the steps. About ten months into my sentence I was told that I was being sent to boot camp, ninety days and I would be out. Thoughts started going through my head. Ninety days and I can go back to old friends and start partying.

Two days into boot camp, powerless over my addiction and due to the stress of program, I ended up in some friendly fisticuffs and was kicked out of boot camp and sent back behind the walls.

On the long bus ride back to prison I started mulling over how just thinking about drugs caused me to lose control of my emotions, and just how powerless I am over the disease of addiction.

In my mind I had realized I had relapsed without even getting high. I came to the conclusion on that bus that God, of my understanding, had willed me back to prison because he knew I would destroy myself, and that all the stuff I had listened to in NA can work for me if I apply myself.

I've never really had a big understanding of God, just that I believe he has a will for everyone, but when I got back to prison and started getting active in NA and the Twelve Steps that I started to feel a sense of hope. I started having a better understanding of God and it's through NA and my friends in the program that I'm able to stay clean and not think about using.

Without NA I wouldn't have an understanding of God, and I'm sure I would think of using instead of thinking about how I can stay clean.

Therefore, for me at this time, I look to NA as my Higher Power. When I read NA literature and remain active with fellows NA members, that's what truly keeps me clean and thinking clearly. I'm very grateful to the fellowship for all the gifts of recovery it has given to me and for giving me a better understanding of God.

My gratitude speaks when I
care, and when I share,
the NA way,
PE, Michigan

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I was standing at the bars waiting for a late Valentine's Day card from my wife, who is also in recovery, when mail was passed out. Instead, I got a brand new copy of *Reaching Out* addressed to a place I have not been an inmate at since 23 July 1999.

I used to be the inside chairperson for NA there for about three years beginning about a week after I arrived. It was stressful at times because sometimes the outside sponsorship was not as regular as I would have liked, but it taught me to be more patient over time. I even learned to share my coffee that I made for the meeting, forty cups worth, with people that I normally would not stop and take the time to meet, otherwise.

In any event, I got out in September 2003 after nine years of prison, from April 1995 following an eight-year term in Oregon where I had found NA in 1990 (after being strung out for 5½ years while in prison there). I left there in 1992 and never got out to the streets. I was turned over to the State of Washington to finish the sentence I had started while on escape from prison in Oregon, back in 1988–89.

As I stated earlier, I first learned about NA in Oregon. I had been drug-free for about twenty days and almost dislocated my shoulder patting myself on the back. I knew nothing about recovery, but after a while I knew it all, right? Sure I did!

I was walkin' and talkin' on the yard, still telling war stories with the fellas when all of a sudden, for the first time, I heard an announcement for NA over the loud speakers in the yard.

I asked someone when they started having that here? He just laughed, and said, "Since before you even got here". The smart-guy mouth in me asked him how he knew that. His reply was that he was the inside chairperson for the meeting. Now we're talking about a guy who used to be my connection on the outside, and now here he was doing life without parole.

We went to the meeting and I clicked with a few outsiders, and from that point on never missed a meeting until I left there in 1992. I got out in 1994 and I did real well for what I thought was quite some time.

Five and a half months later mister know-it-all stopped going to a meeting three or four times a week and only went when I needed it. Well, that number soon turned to zero meetings for about three weeks and I was ass-deep back into the disease.

I almost made it back to a meeting but I guess something more important came up. I think we ended up in a phone booth for like three hours waiting for you-know-who, when I could have been at a meeting and maybe not ended up back in prison again.

When I was released, this time in 2003, I moved back in with my significant other, three of our children ages twelve, fourteen, and sixteen with a twenty two year old in LA with our grandchild. Anyway, on Valentine's Day 2004, me and my significant other become more significant as we tied the knot. I was a very happy, scared-to-death man with an H&I guy at my side at the altar.

Soon after, we moved, thinking it would help us rid some of the stress that was building up, having to be responsible after so long

with really none to speak of. I was getting up three or four times a week to drop off our youngest at school, and then catch a breakfast meeting downtown. I thought I was really doing good considering everything, and everyone I met told me to watch out that I was in for some big trouble if I didn't watch myself.

Well, I'm now sitting here writing to you from yet another prison cell, this time never getting out unless I happen to live to be 135 years old. I picked up a real doozy this time.

I'm here for a reason, although I'm not sure what it is, but grandfather will let me know when I need to know. Until then, your *Reaching Out* is my meeting for now. I live in a unit that does not have access to the meetings here.

At times all I have are my letters to my wife to cheer me up, and now I have *Reaching Out* as well. By the way, why is it after all this time I just out of the blue started getting it?

I would really like to know. My sponsor says don't leave before the miracle happens, and I always say, "If you keep doing what you've been doing, you'll keep getting what you've been getting."

Anyway, I'll be sitting right here waiting on the next issue of *Reaching Out*. With a big smile on my face, one more time you H&I people are too much. You are the only ones, other than my wife, that did not give up on me (including myself at times). Thank you H&I for caring and sharing the NA way.

Your brother in recovery,
BC, Washington

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is D. I'm a prisoner at a Pennsylvania female prison. Thank you so much for the literature packet you sent to me, because this prison houses approximately 750 women, and everyone doesn't have the good fortune to get to the H&I meetings.

I guess there just isn't enough staff or maybe volunteers. However, I'm truly grateful that you were nice enough to send me the information that you did. Now when the disease surfaces, I can turn to my literature to remind me that it's the disease and not all me.

I was beginning to think I was crazy. I've always felt different. Thanks to the God of my understanding and NA, today I think a little differently. I don't make decisions as fast as I used to. Especially bad decisions.

A man explained it to me like this. He said, "Once you take that first one, D, everything that was once beautiful to you won't be beautiful to you anymore." That is so true; once I surrender to the drug, I feel so dirty and cheap.

Thanks to NA I've found other people like me who show me, by mail, how to live. Thank you. I'm in prison, but I'm not imprisoned of the mind. I do feel free thanks to God and my good friend NA.

Respectfully submitted,
DW, Pennsylvania

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm currently incarcerated in a county facility in California. I would like to send a message to anyone who's new, and that's to keep coming back because it works if you work it.

I'm a perfect example of thinking I had it all figured out. Just when you think you have it, it falls apart without NA. If you're an addict your best bet is to stick around.

My home group is settled in a harbor, morning meetings seven days a week. I miss my home group more than I can explain in words. I fell in love with being clean. Those were the best days of my life.

I'm looking at seven years with eighty percent, and it hurts to think that I had it all and it slipped through my fingers overnight. I can still smell the ocean and hear the sound of the bell on the pilgrim ship across the water from my group. That's how much I miss it

My sponsor always told me that when you share you should talk about the problem you're facing, then explain your solution. That's what it's all about, how we get something out of it. Don't be afraid to share. It gets easier, just like one day at a time.

So now it's one day at a time until I meet my group again, so I hope I've set an example that life is too short to be a victim of your addiction. There's so much out there for us. We just need to humble ourselves, surrender, and find the awakening inside that's in all of us.

So let go of the ego and give yourself a chance. I'll bet you find someone you like. So to all of you out there who drink your coffee and smoke your cigarettes and share at your meetings; those are things you take for granted. What I'd do was share my story. I took it for granted, and now I get to share my story through the *Reaching*

Out newsletter. I hope you see where leaving recovery and NA got me—one step behind the walls and a long way to move forward to be free.

I would like to send my love to my wife. She is a part of NA and a strong link to NA as well. Keep up the good work, Mrs. T, and I love all. You are all what NA is made of. Without it it's jails, institutions, and death.

Sincerely to
NA World Services,
JT, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello! My name is M and I'm an addict. I'm forty years old and I am currently serving a seven-year sentence in one of California's finest. It's my second term.

I had been living in the dark world of addiction that has consumed more than half of my life, twenty four years.

It's a cruel and heartless world we all know about. In 2005 October I came to a point in my life where I realized I can't quit on my own. It was the day I surrendered to my Higher Power and I've been clean since then. I've done some footwork and was blessed to find a sponsor that I correspond with. Of course it's my first sponsor. In his first letter he told me how grateful he was to be my sponsor, and he also told me how powerful NA really is if you work the steps.

At first I really didn't understand what he was saying to me. But as each day goes by, I understand more and more and I am very grateful to have him, NA, and also H&I. I am finally starting to see some light in this world, and now I honestly believe that my children and I will have the life we have been wanting for so long.

Thank you,
MES, California

FROM THE OUTSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*:

I've just been reading the October 2006 issue of *Reaching Out* and I can't believe my eyes. There is not one letter "From the Outside." I have almost twenty years clean in this fellowship, and I first received the word about NA from an NA panel that was nice enough to give of their time and come into the institution where I was housed to tell me that "I didn't ever have to use again." I believed them and am clean to this very day.

Nowadays it seems that addicts no longer feel like they have to give back. They take recovery with a hand full of "gimme" and a mouth full of "much obliged," and think that they're getting over. That's not really how it works. NA has a cost, and the cost is giving some back of what was so freely given to us. Part of that obligation takes the form of writing a letter to the "From the Outside" section of *Reaching Out* if you got the word of recovery while you were locked up. I challenge every single one of the thousands and thousands of you out there reading this magazine who heard about NA while locked up and are clean now and haven't written back to pick up your pencil and get busy. Don't you realize how many tens of thousands of addicts are locked up today whose life might be saved from reading the words that you write? Wake up, my lazy recovering friends, and give a little back. With humility and gratitude.

A recovering addict,
JG, California



“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.

- I am an incarcerated addict (and will be for at least six more months) and want a free subscription to *Reaching Out*.
- I want to purchase _____twenty-copy bulk subscriptions of *Reaching Out* @ \$31.00 each, total \$ _____.

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