

# Reaching Out



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**Welcome**

PAGE 2

**From the Inside**

PAGE 3

**From the Outside**

PAGE 12

**Order Form**

PAGE 16

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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!!**



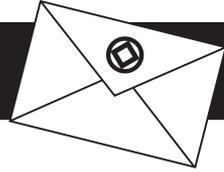
Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
January 2008	15 October 2007
April 2008	15 January 2008
July 2008	15 April 2008
October 2008	15 July 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 J. I've got sixty-five days clean. I've been reading the past few issues of *Reaching Out*. What a blessing to be able to hear the message of NA from prisons and jails. I am thirty-four years old and I am currently working the program. Addiction has taken its toll on my life, and on my wife and kids. Just for today, I'm facing seven years to life in prison. *Reaching Out* and NA have given me a new outlook on the future, and for that I am grateful. I realize I'm powerless and my life has become unmanageable; I am ready for what the future may hold for me. Thank you, *Reaching Out* and Narcotics Anonymous.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is R, I am a very grateful recovering addict. I enjoy all the benefits of being involved in NA, having a home group, going to see friends celebrate birthdays, and a beautiful fiancée who taught me how to live this thing called recovery. We went to campouts, conventions, dances, and everything as a family, in and outside our area. She walked through hell with me to say the least.

One day, I took all that NA had offered me for granted, big mistake, that's about the time hell itself opened.

After everything, turning my back on NA and my friends, as I sit here, my true friends in NA are still here for me and have been from the jump, walking through this with me. I just finished my Fourth Step, just what the sponsor ordered and it was the most loving thing I've ever done for me. God has blessed me with an excellent H&I group that supplies us with those tools. I have also taken on the responsibility for our group inside, as the former leader got transferred. This new responsibility has given me gratitude. I thought eighty-four months was a long time until I heard another member share at the age of eighteen that he had forty-eight years left to do. So if you are reading this and feeling that life is unfair, think about the fact that there are those who will never know the joy of their first campout, NA

dance, convention or cleantime countdown, or their first NA related anything, because they are serving life. We are the lucky ones. We have another shot at this thing, and I won't take anything for granted now. Life is too precious, it's not about showing anybody how good you look. It's about getting to a meeting and sharing what you did to stay clean, and someone will be glad to hear it and they will care as well. I thank God for NA today, and the support it provides and it is number one in my life. Thanks NA!! I will be home soon!! Hope to see you at the next World Convention!!

Yours in Recovery  
RK, Washington

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is LB, and I'm an addict seriously seeking recovery. I'm forty-one years old, gratefully with five months clean. I was in active addiction for about twenty years. My drug abuse brought me to prison. I am finally free and am grateful for the NA program that comes into this facility every week faithfully. The program of NA has taught me not only how to get clean, but how to remain clean. I now have hope and faith that working this program and applying the spiritual principles through the Twelve Steps I will have a daily reprieve to stay clean. I want to say, thank you God for bringing me to NA, and thank you NA, for bringing me to God.

Forever Grateful,  
LB, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is J and I am an addict. My story of recovery and miracles that have happened to me while incarcerated is a gift I'll hold close to me the rest of my life.

I was in and out of NA, a chronic relapser, before ending up in jail. I can remember when they put the cuffs on me, the feeling of relief that I got. I had had enough. I called my old sponsor from jail and asked for help; he suggested I ask the prison chaplain if he could get me a Basic Text, and he did. I read it from front to back, again and again. I called my sponsor once every two weeks, and we have been working on step work ever since. My sponsor even came to visit me once a month.

There was no NA meeting to attend, so after I kept writing and bugging the warden at my prison, another miracle happened. I had a meeting with the warden and explained about what NA was. He got us a care package from the WSO, with a Basic Text, some IPs, and White Booklets, and we were in business! We made fliers, and our first meeting was on 20 February 2007. It was awesome. There were guys here who were doing their own recovery, and we didn't even know each other until everyone showed up at the meeting and shared. Now we are all united and have that special NA bond; we aren't alone anymore.

I contacted the local H&I regional chair and asked for outside support and speakers, and they responded that help was on the way. We have named our group "Free on the Inside" and have joined a local area. We registered our meeting with the WSO and offer our written stories as a way to support our local area. NA is awesome, and it lives and breathes here. I only have nine months left, and guess who's going to be at the gates to pick me up? NA, my sponsor, and my support group.

Just for today I use my time wisely to build a strong foundation for my transition back into free society. With my God, NA, and my sponsor and support group, nothing is impossible for me. I love me again. We do recover. Today I want to live and serve others in the fellowship. I have two years and two months clean and counting. Today I am the miracle. If you are in a jail or prison with no NA meetings, start one and start living free.

Sincerely,  
JS, Virginia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is B, and I am an addict. I am now forty-five years old. My addiction started in my early teens. In 2004, after many years in and out of prisons, I finally went into residential rehab, met my sponsor who does H&I meetings, and became active in NA.

Unfortunately, I relapsed and am back in prison. Still, I haven't given up; I am now working the Twelve Steps with my sponsor and I have completed Step Four. NA has become a way of life for me now, with people who understand and who really care. Since I have been working the steps, my relationship with my family members has

strengthened, especially with my beautiful mother who has stayed by my side and supported me in my recovery. If it were not for NA, I would be lost.

It works if you work it,  
BF, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is J, and I am an addict. I am currently incarcerated, into my fourth year with nineteen more to go. After coming to jail I started attending NA, and I finally realized I had hit rock bottom. I got a great sponsee and we correspond with each other constantly. Even though I am in prison, there are still drugs here, and it is only with the help of my higher power, meetings, the *Reaching Out* publication, and a group of clean inmates that I stay clean.

I have worked the steps vigorously and have begun to work on my defects. I am now the co-chair of our meetings here and I am currently sponsoring two members. It is an honor and a privilege to try to help others. I have learned to listen to my sponsor's suggestions and stay out of all the games in here. I do try my best to talk to those who are still using and tell them there is a better way to live. When I am asked if I would like to get high, I simply reply, "No thanks, I'm high on God." I have decided to dedicate my life to the NA way. I can give back today what was so freely given to me. I know with God's help and NA that I will stay clean just for today.

Thank you,  
JS, New Jersey

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is M, and I am doing a twelve-year sentence for being stupid. I just went to my first NA meeting tonight because I want to change. I am twenty-four and so sick and tired of how my life has gone. I've made excuses and blamed everyone else for my problems, even for my addiction. I can no longer stand the lifestyle and the behaviors and denial that, at twenty-five months clean, I finally realized I was still acting out. I need help, and I will go to absolutely any lengths to have a life and stay clean. I need NA and the support in it. I need the wisdom of this magazine as well as experienced addicts who have been here. I cannot do this alone, and swallowing my pride and ego is necessary.

I have now been clean for twenty-eight months, and through the ups and downs, it has still been 500 times better than being free and being high. I want this. I want to have a normal life and to be there for those who depend on me, through NA. I can be a better person, and maybe I can find happiness, and maybe get my fiancée back. Thank you for this forum of sharing and encouragement. It is what I too hope to do, to help youth see that this is not the way.

Stay Strong,  
MV, Washington

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'd like to thank my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God, for another day clean and the strength I was given just for today. I just celebrated five years clean. I did it self-willingly. I want to give thanks to the chairperson in charge of the NA meeting here who invited me to the meeting and who also gave me the Basic Text. Starting at that first meeting, I realized I couldn't stay clean alone, self-willingly. I needed to apply the Twelve Steps and Traditions, and have a sponsor and fellowship to make it and stay clean. I feel absolutely great today because the NA program is doing for me what I could not do for myself. Thank you, NA. I will keep coming back to NA because I don't want to come back here to prison.

Thank you,  
EO, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

After reading your newsletter for the first time I realize how lucky I am. My name is D and I am serving fifteen years in Iowa. Today, with the help of NA, I am clean and will reach my five-year anniversary in a few short weeks. Thanks to the fellowship here I have discovered a new way to live.

I have been going to a meeting that is the longest-running NA meeting in the Iowa corrections system. We have outside guests who come in and share their stories and success with us. For years I was willing to admit that I was a mess, but never an addict, even though I could feel the monkey on my back. I tried, lied, and tried to hide, but fooled no one but myself. When I started coming to NA I heard about fear, frustration, and the other effects of our disease of addiction, but I also heard hope and saw other men making serious

changes in their thinking and behavior. We are a tight-knit group and help each other when the need arises.

I started reading as much material as I could get my hands on and was soon elected the liaison between staff and inmates. My ego soon came to the surface and I realized that I was starting to influence the group in the direction that I wanted it to go. I think that it is important to realize that being clean is fun and to not dwell on the negative, but it is devastating to the group conscience when a single individual has an agenda. I had to learn to humble myself and seek advice and help from those around me, and soon began to see the big picture—just for today, one addict at a time, with help from God and from members in NA whom I can truly call my friends—that I can stay clean.

Sincerely,  
DS, Iowa

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is J, an inmate in West Virginia. I recently picked up your literature *Behind the Walls* at our weekly NA meeting. I am twenty-nine years old and definitely desperate for a new start. I feel jail has saved me from addiction that would have been my demise. I lost custody of my daughter, and then my life soon revolved around drugs. I am grateful to be incarcerated and still living and breathing. I have no friends or family, nowhere to turn but NA. I never took NA seriously until reading this literature, and I feel I should reach out for more help. I just want to read as much NA literature as I can, and I am also glad that NA members are here each week to share with us.

JW, West Virginia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is T. I have been in and out of jails and institutions all my teenage life, and now I am in my thirties. I am very familiar with NA and I know it will work if you work it. I really feel like expressing my feelings in this magazine, so I am, but I don't just want to take up too much space. Stealing, lying, just to get high, you know the pattern. I know I don't want to do any more time; I have maybe nine more months to do before I get released. I really plan to get into the NA program when I hit the streets. I know from experience that if I get out and decide to use drugs again, I will get so caught up and

depressed that I will not even remember that I told myself I don't want to do any more jail or prison time.

I read my *Reaching Out* magazine and I really feel comfortable with you all. It seems as though we are all just sitting around in a meeting, helping each other and sharing what really needs to be done to stay clean in here and out there. I am now ten months clean and I really feel good spiritually, drug-free. While locked up we usually tend to think of our families, but really what we don't know is that we can't hurt them in here as much as we did while we were out in the streets using. I plan to share a lot more information, praying it will help someone else who reads the magazine. Thanks for reading. Keep it real.

Love  
T, Virginia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Thank you for your incredible format, and thank God for your support, as I know from experience how important your job is and how you help so many addicts in prison throughout the world.

I am in prison in Australia. I am back here because of a lack of spiritual principles. I stopped working the steps, and ran on defects of character to enable myself to go back to the criminal world I came from at sixteen years clean. I have twenty years clean now.

NA is the only place I ever felt like I belonged and the only time I have ever had true friends. Since coming back to prison I have had to fight to start an NA meeting and have had very little support from the local H&I subcommittee until this past year. The first couple of years I did my program alone and through my sponsor. I have also worked with my sponsees, both of whom I call once a week on the phone. I write my step work and send it to my sponsor, and my sponsees do the same to me, so I guess the moral of the story is that if you want to stay clean, sometimes you have to fight for it and go to any lengths to get to it.

So, from someone who took recovery for granted, I now cherish every second of every day and thank my higher power for the gift I have been given. So I would like to thank you for your publication and great work. We now have a weekly meeting and have around six members, so every cloud has a silver lining. Even in prison, the miracle still happens.

RI, Australia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am seventeen years old and I am going to prison. I am currently in a long-term rehab facility. I came here because my parents had no idea what to do with me. I had been arrested twice and totaled two cars in the last four months. Initially I fought it, letting my defects get the best of me, but I soon came around. They introduced me to the Twelve Steps of NA, which has shown me how to stop the insanity of my disease and avoid the bitter ends of addiction. I got a sponsor and began to work the steps. My life has become tolerable, just for today. I have reestablished my relationship with my family, found a Higher Power, and am learning how to live life on life's terms. Although my past has caught up with me while I am clean, when I get out of prison I can continue to work the steps and spread the message that has saved my life. I know that if I hadn't found this program of NA, I wouldn't be alive today to write this letter.

RH, Indiana

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is E and I am eighteen years old and currently in a juvenile system. I had already done four months, and when I was released, in four days I relapsed, and now I am back again. The reason I am writing this is because I am so thankful for the things I have got, including NA, because when I attend a meeting or I read the *Reaching Out* newsletter it helps me remember that I can stay clean. No matter how I have been using or what I have been using, I can do it. I also realized how lucky I am to know this now instead of realizing it in another ten years. I want to say thank you to everyone who has the courage to reach out, and most of all, to those who continue to let NA help them in recovery.

Thank you again,  
ES, Utah

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is R and I am an a grateful recovering addict. My story is no different from anyone else's, except I thought I would never come to jail. Today I am serving a four-year sentence. I've been with NA for ten years and could never get more than six months clean, but they told me no matter what, keep coming, and I did because I

know the program works. I never surrendered, but in March 2006 I did. Today I have seventeen months clean, and jail saved my life. In our readings, the end results are jails, institutions, and death, but they told me they don't always come in that order. I thank my Higher Power every day for the gift of life and the gift of recovery. Any addict can lose the desire to use and find a new way of life, and I am one of them.

RH, Rhode Island

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Thank you for all the material you offer, and thank you, H&I, too! I am an addict named R. I've been doing time for a while and am back on several violations. What I have learned is that if a person stays plugged into the program, they'll succeed. Another thing I have learned is that the way a man enters society from prison is the way a man chooses to live. Currently I am a long way from home, but God has given me another chance. I plan to enter back into society right with NA and my Higher Power.

Thank you,  
RO, California

## FROM THE OUTSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

I first became involved in H&I work upon achieving three months clean, which made me eligible to attend NA panels to observe. After observing several panel presentations, I achieved six months clean time and was allowed to tell my story in order to share my experience, strength, and hope with addicts. I strayed a little toward making my story entertaining in order to keep the attention of those I was speaking to, and then that changed. I worked toward doing my best to change the message into one of hope to avert what I thought may have been a budding ego trip on my part. What I stress is the realization that even though I hit my bottom at age fifty, recovery was still achievable and well worth doing. Also, in spite of relapses, I kept coming back and now have quality clean time and periods of true serenity.

The greatest benefit that I received was one day at work when a temporary worker whom I didn't recognize approached me and thanked me for having been on a panel some time before. As he walked away I was so overwhelmed that I could only stand there until the foreman demanded that I return to work. The feelings were all good.

Yours in Service,  
PW, Canada

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is K, and I am an addict. I came back into recovery after an eleven-year relapse. Two years ago I woke up with a moment of clarity: I saw that I was at death's door again and realized my addiction was killing me. I reached out to the fellowship, and one day at a time I have been living the program—that is, meetings daily, talking with my HP daily, reading literature, doing service, going through the steps with my sponsor, and spending time with people in NA. At first I did not understand the steps, and at around a year I started playing with them and told myself I was working them.

Then, when my dad died in December of last year, I started using the steps in my daily life. What that means is that I started working the steps with my sponsor and putting them into action in my life, and this process continues for me.

Today I am happy to be comfortable in my own skin and, through my HP, have found love and compassion for myself. Because of that I can now see everything more clearly and have a perspective that continues to broaden and continues to amaze me. I no longer live in fear. I have many friends and am content with everything just as it is. Of course I am not perfect, but I am progressing. I did not do this alone. All I do is continue to do the footwork, as I said above, and hand the rest over. My HP, the fellowship, and all of you do the rest. On my own I would be dead or very lost, but together, just for today, I get to realize myself and therefore everything else. These days, instead of being locked up in prisons, I do service in a local prison and feel right at home talking with the addicts there.

Thank you all. You have my love and support through time.

KB, Australia





*“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*.
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