

# 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, "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 Hospitals & Institutions 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; NAWS; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999; USA.*

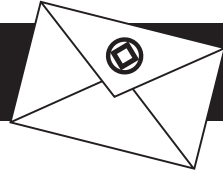
GET INVOLVED AND HELP US CARRY OUT OUR  
FELLOWSHIP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE!



Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
January 2009	15 October 2008
April 2009	15 January 2009
July 2009	15 April 2009
October 2009	15 July 2009

# FROM THE INSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hey, family. I'm WW, and at seventeen years old I committed a crime that sent me to prison for double life. Two years into the madness of prison life I found NA. It was in NA that I discovered my problem isn't my prison term, but this spiritual, mental, and emotional disease that's destroyed my life. NA has saved me from death. I also discovered through sponsorship how to live the principles of this program. You know, "hurt people" hurt people, and when I started to heal, I stopped hurting others. I still have rough days in life, sometimes simple mistakes, and sometimes simple selfishness. Reaffirming my commitment to the first three steps and slowing down to actually hear myself say the Serenity Prayer offer me the chance to rediscover the miracle of recovery, not only from active addiction but also from that self-made prison. I've been clean almost nine years, and each day has been a miracle brought about by NA and the God of my understanding. There's healing and solution in working the steps.

WW, North Carolina

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello, my name is J and I am an addict. Fourteen months ago I was in the twenty-seventh year of a great professional career. I was a "functional addict". I had a good job and I showed up in my suit and shiny shoes almost every day to work. My absenteeism and tardiness were on the rise shortly before my arrest. Upon reflection, I can compare myself to a bridge that collapsed. From outward appearances everything was in working condition. The problem was that I was decaying from the inside. The infrastructure of my life, like the decaying bridge, became too brittle to handle things. As the bridge collapsed, so did I. My arrest and subsequent sentence to state prison disrupted every facet of my life and the lives of my friends and loved ones.

Fortunately I was offered a program; I enrolled and began my road to recovery. For eight months I learned about addiction, but more importantly I learned about myself. Drugs, you see, are not my problem. I am my problem. So even when I am in a place where there are no drugs, I still have my character defects to contend with. Some people do not include jail time as cleantime. I do! I have learned through Narcotics Anonymous that recovery is more than not doing drugs. I work every day to regain my ability to practice spiritual principles in all my affairs. The first thing I do every morning is thank the God of my understanding that I am not using and ask him to help relieve me of the bondage of self, so that I may better do his will.

I attend meetings whenever they are held at my facility and I keep in touch with a sponsor via mail. Since meetings have become sporadic here lately, I welcome the sharing in *Reaching Out*. I thank NA and all the members who take the time to share their experience, strength, and hope with those of us who cannot attend meetings on the outside.

JA, Pennsylvania

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I've used drugs for over forty years now. I am in a facility for seven months. They have no NA groups here. I get *Reaching Out* and I have *Behind the Walls*. Honestly, I hope I go to prison so I can't go out there and use again. I am thinking of going to some type of rehabilitation program. Where I want to live they have NA. I reread the publications from NA. There is a lot I don't remember of what I read, so I have to read it over and over again. It really helps right now. I'm not planning to do any drugs. I have the thought of years in the future being clean, but I know it's one minute at a time, or one day at a time, and then I can make it a year at a time. Pray for me to stay clean and strong when I get out. Thank you for letting me share.

AR, New York

Dear *Reaching Out*,

All your stories help keep my recovery fresh and in focus. I've been clean since 1985. In 1986 I went to my first meeting. They say we are headed for jails, institutions, and death if we remain dirty.

Well, after twenty straight years I was paroled, and then, due to a medication change, I got into another altercation and was violated. Since that time I have memorized and internalized the Twelve Steps of NA and I say them every day, so when thoughts enter my head, I meditate on a step that applies.

Life is hard. The parole board hit me with two more years. I've lost so much and my folks may not make it that long. My belief in God has taken a turn. One day at a time is too much currently, so I deal with the morning, then the afternoon, and then the evening. I'm almost forty-five years old and too young to give up. I can't take on life alone, but if I'm clean at least I can articulate to others in NA the help I need. My sponsor says to keep on keeping on.

RW, New York

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I send greetings from behind the walls. I have been moved around so much lately that I haven't received any copies of *Reaching Out* or *The NA Way Magazine*. INSANITY!

As an active addict in the past, I remember my own insanity. Today I am very grateful to this program of recovery, the fellowship, my sponsor, my support group, and my family that I have back in my life by the grace of God. I am coming up on twelve years clean and sane today, and I am in my thirteenth year being locked up. My brother twelve-stepped me, and that got me in the rooms of NA. I grew up in prison, and when I get out I'll be close to fifty-eight years old and my entire adult life will have been spent behind the walls due to my addiction.

Today I have blind faith in a higher power that's walked with me through this journey with the help of recovering addicts in here and out there who love me "for me." I have a sponsor who loves me and believes in me no matter what, and he knows all my old garbage that was stuffed inside me for so long. I have seen the walls I've built up for so long crumble. I've been able to see some of my character defects removed over the years. I've been able to do a Ninth Step with my daughter who I left for drugs. I have her back in my life, with grandchildren I get to see growing up in photos. It has been hard for my daughter to visit, so we haven't had a physical reunion in twenty-two years. She was three years old when I last saw her, but she loves me and forgives me, and that's all that matters.

See, these are the spiritual gifts I've received because of being clean, working the steps, and being of service even while I'm locked up. I have my NA meetings here at this facility, and I don't get out until 2014, so I'm all right with who I am today thanks to this program and those of you who came before me.

Well, I'm going to close for now; and to those of you who don't know me, I know you because I see you in meetings. We all have the same living problems. Remember, there is only one thing you have to change: everything. And if no one has told you they love you lately, I love you.

A brother behind the walls,  
SM, Oklahoma

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is V; I am presently incarnated in North Carolina. I have been a recovering addict since 1994. My first introduction to Narcotics Anonymous was in New York, where I was born and raised. After four and one-half years clean, I moved to North Carolina to start a new life. Eventually I made a selfish choice to use again. Many white keytags later, I added many chapters to my story.

In 2001, on New Year's Eve, I was working for another recovering addict in construction. I was having a hard time living in a recovery house and staying clean. That day I fell off a roof, fifty feet. I broke both my ankles, shattered my right heel, shifted my left heel, and dislocated my right shoulder. Hours later I told the doctor I was a recovering addict and narcotics weren't necessary, but the severity of my injuries made narcotics necessary anyway. After more than ten months in a wheelchair, I learned that my God wanted me to crawl before I could walk. The accident allowed a door to open in my addiction, and I have had a constant battle trying to stay clean. Since that accident, I've been able to remain sane by working steps, going to meetings, and using my sponsor. All of my service commitments have helped me maintain the saying "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another." As a GSR, chairperson, and H&I member, I truly and honestly believe NA means never alone, never again.

Today I sit in prison for my first time due to another selfish choice. God saved me. I couldn't stop using. Three days before I was arrested I cried and prayed to God to take me home; I just wanted to go home. It's been six months since that day, and I am thankful God

didn't walk away from me. I am currently the chairperson for the NA meeting here at this facility, and I am so grateful to NA World Services for sending me this package so others incarcerated like me can share their experience, strength, and hope.

My sponsor always told me, "Honesty without compassion is brutality." In order for me to continue recovering, I must stop living in the past and share my experience, strength, and hope, as I have before. Even though my relapse was my choice, I couldn't do for myself. Today I have serenity to accept things I cannot change, courage to change, and wisdom to know the difference. NA is the way. The promise is that I never have to use again. I believe that.

DV, North Carolina

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am a female awaiting trial in a few days. I've been clean eight months now. I am in a New York holding center. I've read the two booklets I got from NA over and over again. It really helps me to see other people like me. I think I'm okay to be released, but I'm not 100 percent sure I can stay clean. I'm going to attend NA meetings in my area and really try hard. I've been out there for forty years and I hurt myself and I have a lot of problems. One day at a time, drugs aren't going to be one of those problems. I hope you all keep going to NA and reading NA literature.

AP, New York

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Thank you for your April 2008 issue. I've really been enjoying my new-member NA package that teaches me about the experiences of others (of course, there are many similarities to mine) and the loving fellowship and positive association shared amongst my newfound brothers and sisters who've shared their positive life in the Twelve Steps.

I used from the time I was ten years old, living the life of institutions, and I even considered them family. I am turning thirty-four this October in prison. I've been in and out since I was twenty-one. I currently have a release date of 6 January 2009, but I gave up that release date voluntarily. Why? Because I am not prepared. I want to learn to live without drugs! It's important for me to grasp the



principles of NA and live the Twelve Steps before I leave. I want to live the reality you're describing. I don't put myself in the path of drugs here inside, so giving up my parole for a termination is my way of staying clean.

Therefore, I conclude this letter with this: I haven't used drugs, alcohol, or tobacco since 1 January 2007 when I was arrested after a New Year's Eve party I attended while on parole. I'll have eighteen months clean on 1 July 2008. Who knows how long I'll get, but being clean longer will be worth it. When I'm released, I know I'll also be coming out to my sponsor and a new family in NA so I can remain free. I know I'll always crave. I don't claim perfection, but being free of this place, I want to work to stay clean without being brought behind the walls of prison, and to be clean and work each day to live free.

JLH, Utah

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is MM and I'm currently in a drug program while I'm incarcerated. I feel this is helping me through my addiction, showing me what I've been doing to myself, others, and my children and family. I want to also tell you, I feel my Higher Power is a big part of my NA books, meetings, and my desire to be clean. I receive your newsletter every time one comes out. Thank you, and I want to thank the people who write in as well. As soon as I receive the newsletter, I read it right away. I get out in six months and three weeks, and I feel I'm going to be all right. I will continue to go to meetings and work the Twelve Steps. As long as I am willing and I've got my Higher Power and NA to back me up, it will be all right.

Thank you and God bless,  
MM, Florida

Dear *Reaching Out*,

First let me introduce myself. My name is DK; I am a woman in recovery. Thanks to my Higher Power, NA, and the love of a friend and sister addict in recovery, I am now in recovery.

A little about my life. I began at a very young age, about eleven, with feelings of rejection and loneliness. I felt unloved and looked for comfort for those feelings in what I now know were all the wrong



ways. I began to use at about age twelve. I have been married twice and have three wonderful children, but it was only after having four grandchildren that I realized I need to be clean. That is when I realized I need more than a cover-up for my feelings. I was taken to NA meetings four to five years ago for the first time—even before I truly realized I had a problem. My friend and sister in recovery told me that “it will work if you work it,” but being the hardhead I am, I had to hit rock bottom before I decided to change my life.

I decided in about June 2007 that I wanted to change my life, so I moved back home to Florida from North Carolina after seventeen years. That September I was arrested on an old 2001 charge. I got an NA book and now I work the steps daily and give thanks to my friend, NA, and most of all, my Higher Power. To my fellow sister out there who still suffers, please take the time to check it out. Even if you’re like me and you don’t use every day and you think you don’t have a problem, you might. Take the time to try recovery. It will work if you work it. I am living proof. I now feel complete for the first time in years, and I am working out relationships with my family that I destroyed. Thanks for letting me share my story. I am to be released in July and I plan to attend many meetings and work the rest of my life on my recovery with my Higher Power, friends, and family, and go with NA for life.

DK, North Carolina

Dear *Reaching Out*,

First I would like to say hello to all fellow addicts in correctional centers everywhere. I’ve been an addict for twenty-seven years; in and out of jails and prisons since I was thirteen, and always because of my drug use. This last time, I believe, was my true rock bottom. I’ve lost everything, including my health. I have tried recovery before and I never got it, but I just keep coming back.

Well, I fell again, this time in November 2007, and since then I’ve taken on a whole new outlook on life and my recovery. I don’t want to be like I was ever again. To say the least, I am not a nice person on drugs, so I started to reach out, starting in county jail. NA was not available to me there, so I wrote NA World Services and they sent me a Basic Text. From then on I knew what I wanted and needed to do. I wanted to carry the message to other addicts, to show another way of life, a life in recovery.

I am now in an Idaho prison and there was next to no NA here, so I took on what looked impossible. I started to work on getting meetings going. We now have two meetings here. This has been a long road, but it's been worth doing. This has given me hope, and I know it's worth it. The meetings are growing every week. NA World Services has helped us so much, and we all would like to say thank you for not forgetting about us addicts behind bars. I would also like to thank *Reaching Out* for helping me share my experience, strength, and hope. And to all my fellow addicts in prison and out, keep coming back until it works; you are worth it.

MR, Idaho

# FROM THE OUTSIDE



Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm an addict named Bob. In 1981 my federal parole officer sent me to my first NA meeting. Like we do, I went high. I was late, and as I walked through the doorway I heard a woman going on and on about how much she loved a drug that was killing me. I turned and left.

At that time I had been using for half of my thirty years. Fifteen years later, in 1996, I was homeless, unemployed, and unemployable; but you could trust me to cop. After all, I rode my beefs to the tune of ten years at that point.

I met a woman with three little girls and got my first introduction to unconditional love: one more time, someone to fix me. I was about as clean as I'd ever been with no programs, maybe one or two days. I get it: Love's been missing all my life.

A big deal came along—trouble again. I ended up with a sentence of thirteen years and nine months, and I was sent to a federal prison in Minnesota. I began my appeal. Jail and court appearances lasted eighteen months, and during the whole time I said the Serenity Prayer, because in my past incarceration experiences I would always get into trouble and I didn't want to this time. By the time I'd been praying the prayer for over two years I was given a "God shot." I heard a voice in my head saying, "Look it up!" I have to say that although I was physically at school all those years, I was never really there, if you know what I mean. I learned a lot when I looked up "serenity," "courage," "wisdom," and "the God of my understanding." Looking up those words would be the first of many uses of the dictionary to come!

My appeal was heard and I was successful in having the sentencing court's decision deemed a plain error. When I went back for re-sentencing, they cut off 104 months. I paroled in May 2000, after six months of halfway house time. I wound up with the same parole officer, the one who had sent me to my first NA meeting in 1981.

She sent me to a treatment program for counseling. I did the counseling, but skipped the treatment. The counselor said if I wasn't going

to do the treatment, he prayed I'd go back to NA. The first meeting he sent me to turned out to be a women's meeting in a clubhouse. They nicely told me there was another meeting in two hours, but after my years in prison all those women in the room got me interested! I stuck around for the next meeting and my counselor was chairing that meeting! He has been clean for twenty-six years, and is now my sponsor. He has given me the gift of love, service, compassion, and the greatest gift of all — taking me through the Twelve Steps. From the beginning, service work in all areas of our program was a key part of my foundation. Today, balance in my life is another gift. Because of NA I found my niche for service — H&I. In all those years locked up I never heard our message, so today I live by this quote: "From CONFidence to GODfidence!"

In loving service,  
BS, Washington

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is J, and I am an addict. I am fifty-six years old with a little over ten years clean today. The God of my understanding and Narcotics Anonymous have become my way of life today, and I'm so grateful for this. After reading the articles in the April 2005 *Reaching Out* (Volume 20, Number 2), I was touched by the way addicts who are locked down are recovering. I was that addict who was locked down in January 1976, and I wish I could have seen this newsletter at that time. I was locked down for three years, eight months, and three days, and I didn't change a thing. I did get my first introduction to NA, but I went to the meetings for the wrong reasons. I was told by other inmates that if I went to the NA meetings I could get early parole, and this was the only reason I got involved in the NA program. I didn't change anything in my life at that time, so when I got out of lockdown I went right back to the same things I was doing before I got locked up. Since nothing had changed, my disease and using got really bad fast, and I was on a journey to hell and death for the next sixteen years and four months. I would like to share with the inmates who are locked down today that taking the time to get involved with recovery and changing the way life is going are very important because you may not get the second chance like I did.

Today I go into the penal system to share my experience with inmates in the hope that they may take a look at their lives now and

want to make some changes for the good. I am very grateful that I went to the NA H&I meetings while locked down, because they let me know that there was a way out of active addiction when I was ready. When I arrived at the end of the road of my active addiction, I walked into the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, and my life changed. From that day in 1996 on, I have done things in my life that I never thought could be possible. I went back to school, was the owner of my own business (I am now retired because of many medical problems), and got to see three of my kids walk into college. I am grateful to say that through all of this I have found no reason to use any mind-altering or mood-changing substances. And I know that if I can do this, anyone can.

Thank you, Narcotics Anonymous, for the new way of life.

J, North Carolina

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: If you are a recovering addict who is housed in a correction or treatment setting, let us hear how Narcotics Anonymous has helped you in your life, whether through working the Twelve Steps, how you have applied spiritual principles in a difficult situation, or how you came to find NA. Send us a letter addressed "Dear *Reaching Out*." Many times the articles that we receive cannot be used because they concentrate on using and not on how NA has helped addicts to recover. Please keep this in mind when you write to us.

If you are a member of an H&I subcommittee, let others hear how you or your subcommittee have carried the NA message of recovery. If you have been released into the community and are doing well in the program, please write to the newsletter to share your experience, strength, and hope from the outside, and help another addict to stay clean for another day.

We would like to thank all of the members who have sent in articles and other written contributions to the newsletter. We all have a responsibility to the suffering addict and to ourselves as recovering addicts to do our best in carrying the Narcotics Anonymous message of recovery—to participate by sharing with others what we have been freely given.

*Reaching Out* Editor





*“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.”*

From chapter eight of the *Narcotics Anonymous* (Basic Text)—  
“We Do Recover”



## 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.

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