



September/October 2017

How It Works (a Funcoast series on the steps and traditions)

Step 9: "We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

When I first heard about Step 9, I was completely ready to make amends. I wanted everyone to know that I was in NA, and that I had changed. I wanted everyone to know that I was clean and I wanted people to know that I was sorry. That's what I wanted from Step 9. But that's not what Step 9 is about for me today. After working Steps 1 through 8 with my sponsor I learned the principles by the steps and have made a profound change in my behavior. Step 9 is about being truly sorry for the harm I have done to others, and wanted to correct that harm to the best of my ability. It's about Honesty, Courage, and Humility. It's about change.

At six months clean, I was more than ready to say I'm sorry to all those people I had harmed. I had said I was sorry before, but this time I would really mean it. But at six months clean, I didn't know who or what I was sorry for, and the only change in

my behavior was that I wasn't using drugs. I was still acting out in other ways and causing harm to others as well as to myself. Before I would be ready to make direct or indirect amends to anyone, I first needed to work the steps before Step 9. Then and only then would I be ready and willing to work Step 9 for the right reasons.

Working Step 8 with my sponsor, I made a list of those people I had harmed, and exactly what I had done to them. Honesty, Willingness and Forgiveness are a part of Step 9. Forgiveness was very important, because I needed to forgive myself, so that I could forgive others. And I needed to forgive them first as part of my willingness to make amends. I needed to be Humble, something I learned in Step 7. It was important to go over each name on my list with my sponsor. We discussed the nature of the wrong – physical, emotional, or financial, and the different ways to make amends. Where making direct amends would be impossible, I could show my willingness through a prayer or through indirect amends. I learned from my sponsor that in some cases, I had already begun the process of making amends when I surrendered to the Twelve Steps and stopped using. I was no longer causing harm to others, to society, or to myself. As long as I try to live the NA way, I will continue making amends.

The purpose of working Step 9 was so that I could make direct amends to the people I had harmed. I could admit my part, and ask for forgiveness,

without any expectations. Making the amends is for me. It's about freeing myself of guilt. By working the previous 8 steps with my sponsor, I was now ready and willing to make direct amends whenever possible. Now it was about timing. I just couldn't go up to someone and make amends. What I have learned is that the God of my understanding puts me in the right place at the right time. I just need to be patient and willing to wait on his time.

-Lowell T.

Excerpt reprinted from Clean Times September 1997

Step 10: "We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

Self-examination on a daily basis for this addict is very important. However, working, practicing, incorporating, and living the previous nine steps are just as important for preparation of the Tenth Step. As certain as I believe in a Higher Power and exercise Higher Principles in my life on a daily basis, I will grow spiritually. Just as the program tells me, self-examination, by taking inventory on a personal level daily, allowing me to own up to my wrongs, is a vital and critical element of living and conducting my life on a spiritual basis. As I work, live, and incorporate the Tenth Step, I become more aware of my mental state, emotions, feelings, and a spiritual condition as a result of the gift of recovery. However, for this addict, if I fall short in the daily

maintenance of applying this step, I will not prosper or be successful on improving the quality of my life.

Doing preventative maintenance, such as going to meetings, sharing openly and honestly, getting involved in service work, being aware of my defects of character, shortcomings, and being open-minded, will help me maintain peace and serenity. If I continue to use these tools, I may prosper and continue to grow and be successful in improving the quality of my life, through the recovery process.

I must admit that the Tenth Step, for me, in forming a habit of working and living it, was difficult. It was hard for this addict to admit that I was wrong or could be wrong. I most certainly need to develop self-discipline in this area and all other areas of my life. The Tenth Step of Narcotics Anonymous has my name written all over it. This Tenth Step, as well as all of the other steps, has helped addicts seeking recovery, including this addict, to practice humility by promptly admitting wrongs. It takes a tremendous amount of awareness to humbly acknowledge the part that I must play in my own life.

In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, it talks about the point of the Tenth Step. The willingness to pay attention to our thoughts, behaviors, and values, then work on what we need to change. We see ourselves as we really are, accepting our good qualities along with our defects, knowing we can change with the help of a Higher Power and believe

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in Higher Principles. As I continue to take my personal inventory and when wrong promptly admit it, I will become what my Higher Power meant for me to be all along: a whole human being. I must continue to take healthy risks and be aware of my defects and assets.

-Herman E.

reprinted from Clean Times October 1995

Tradition 9: "NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

In order to better understand this tradition, I first had to think about how typical service boards or committees function. In a business setting there is a boss or someone in charge, but in NA, one person is not in charge. The authority lies within the group. Everyone has a voice, from the newcomer picking up 30 days to the oldtimer picking up 30 years. This is why groups ought never be organized. Sometimes, service boards or committees have to be created by a group in order to make new and different ways to carry the message from one addict to another. The "leaders" of these service boards and committees have no real authority, but serve for the greater good of those they serve. For this reason, it is important to have a rotating structure in these boards and committees. I personally have found this tradition to be pretty complex, so I laughed when I read from It Works How and Why, "Many of us think of Tradition Nine as being very complex. In reality the spiritual principles underlying this tradition are very simple." For me, looking at the spiritual principles is the best way to keep things simple. The principles behind this tradition are anonymity, humility, prudence, and fidelity. This tradition focuses on NA, as such. "We are a fellowship of recovering addicts who help one another stay clean, nothing more." Throughout my recovery, I have served several

different homegroups, H&I, the helpline, and Public Relations. It is really amazing to see the layers of NA and how it can be so organized for something that is not organized! No matter where I have lived, or what committees I have served, the primary purpose is always the same-to carry the message.

Tradition 10: "Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

This tradition says that NA has no opinion whatsoever on anything... except the NA program itself. By having no opinion, the focus can always remain to offer help to any addict seeking recovery. Our literature says "So long as we focus as groups and as a fellowship, on our recovery experience rather than our opinions of why or how NA works, we will stay far as possible from public controversy. (It Works, How and Why)." There are things about NA that may be controversial for some, like complete abstinence and the disease concept of addiction. It is impossible to avoid all controversy all the time. "However, we absolutely can avoid controversies which might arise from groups or the fellowship taking positions on issues entirely outside of the scope of our program." The literature goes on to talk about how this does not extend to individual members of NA. As a member of NA, I am entitled to my own opinion. It is just important that I do not speak on behalf of NA as a whole. I can discuss anything in a meeting that is having an impact on my recovery and spiritual growth. Outside issues are not outside issues if they are impacting my recovery. So for example, my experience was that staying out of a relationship for my first year helped me stay clean and work on myself- but this is not necessarily the position of Narcotics Anonymous. It is important that I clarify that this is my experience. Care must also be taken in service committees that NA's message is

being shared, not our personal opinions. The spiritual principles behind the tenth tradition are unity, responsibility, and humility. "We speak simply about our program, knowing that our effectiveness will attract more goodwill than any amount of promotion."
-Meredith F.

Hospitals and Institutions Book Drive

We are collecting Basic Texts, How it Works and Why, Living Clean: The Journey Continues and the Just for Today Daily Meditation books for the institutions we carry our message to. We accept new and used books. Please help us continue to carry our message and the literature to these facilities. You can give these books to any H&I member or bring them to our Subcommittee before Area Service. "We only keep what we have by giving it away."

Updates from NAWS

We are writing with news about updates to the NA Meeting Search app that have just been made. The latest version has a number of improvements. You can set preferences to save your favorite meetings, send meeting info to others by text in addition to email, and set distances by kilometers as well as miles. You can also search separately for phone or internet meetings. A couple of new features have been added to the app, including a clean date component and a link to NAWS News. The app is available on iTunes for all iOS devices and Google Play for Android. We are very grateful to everyone who suggested changes and improvements. Your input has made a very big difference.

Thank you!

Reaching Out

Whether you are an NA member, a professional who works with recovering addicts, an incarcerated member, or a member who carries the message via service with Hospital and Institutions; the Reaching Out newsletter curated by NA World Services may be a resource for you. Reaching Out in its design helps incarcerated addicts connect to the NA program of recovery, enhances H&I efforts, and offers experience from members who have successfully transitioned from the 'inside' to be productive members of society. All are invited to share their experience, strength, and hope in the Reaching Out newsletter. The Reaching Out publication is seeking paid subscribers to assist in supporting our continued efforts to distribute the magazine to our members housed in state and federal facilities. Ask your home group to subscribe and help us carry the message.

Contact Gilber O.
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or via email at
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Poetry

Break Me

Penny J.

It's all fun and games,
till it all ends
Nobody knows what's
around the bend
Do you know the
struggle?
Warmth ain't nowhere
gotta huddle
It's all good I'm still
strong
Homelessness I don't
belong
Free me from all the
pain
Got nothing to lose
and all of it to gain
Break me free from
these strings
Your words do nothing,
not even sting
Lies being thrown all
around
Love knows no
bounds
Break me free from
my ego
All about me but it's
about you though
Your my number one
You give me joy and
fun
Our story has only
just begun
Break me free from
what tethers me to this
place
I'll no longer be your
puppet gotta leave with
no trace

Ask

An Addict

“Why does everyone keep telling me to write a gratitude list?”

Just for Today

“When things don't go our way in recovery, our sponsor may direct us to make a ‘gratitude list.’ “ (January 10th, p. 10)

“It's easy to be grateful when everything runs smoothly...But if we get fired, divorced, or disappointed, gratitude flies out the window. We find ourselves becoming obsessed with the things that are wrong, even though everything else may be wonderful. This is where we can use a gratitude list. We sit down with a pen and paper and list the people for whom we are grateful... Last, but not least, we list our recovery itself. Whatever we have that we are grateful for goes on the list. We're sure to find that we have literally hundreds of things in our lives that inspire our gratitude” (August 7th, p. 229)

Basic Text

“As our lives become more comfortable, many of us lapse into spiritual complacency, and risking relapse, we find ourselves in the same horror and loss of purpose from which we have been given only a daily reprieve. This is, hopefully, when our pain motivates us to renew our daily spiritual maintenance. One way that we can continue a conscious contact, especially in hard times, is to list the things for which we are grateful.” (p. 95)

Living Clean

“Gratitude is not just a mood. It is a course of action, a way of setting ourselves in relation to the world. Sometimes it's a discipline: It can take work to hold ourselves in that attitude, especially when we are used to seeing the world through our filters of entitlement and resentment. Humility and gratitude walk hand in hand. We practice saying what we are grateful for whether or not we feel it.” (p. 63)

Writing Steps for Recovery

(Behind the Walls)

Our vision is to carry the message that any addict can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life.

The Florida Region of Narcotics Anonymous has now helped introduce 23 self-sufficient NA meetings in FL and beyond; including, Coleman Federal Penn, Alabama, NW FL, Georgia, and South Carolina. The process began 7 years ago with the ‘Pen Pal’ project and developed into free-standing meetings; for inmates and by inmates. Many of these men and women are eager to work the steps and become involved in Narcotics Anonymous prior to release. The Florida Region of Narcotics Anonymous is working to realize our primary purpose by further implementing the “Writing Steps for Recovery (Behind the Walls)” initiative.

How can I help? Join the “Writing The Steps for Recovery (Behind the Walls)” project. This can be your next step in further carrying the message. Through “Writing The Steps for Recovery (Behind the Walls)”, you have another opportunity to share your experience, strength, and hope; give back to an addict seeking recovery what NA has given to you.

If you are interested in gaining a State or Federal clearance or for more information and guidelines on the program, contact Gilber O. at 813.245.5399.



Anniversaries

September & October

Upcoming Events & Info

Grow or Go

Elvin S. 9/2/2014 3 years
Buck B. 9/10/1986 31 years
Sarah C. 10/11/2014 3 years
Summer B. 10/15/2016 1 year

Hyde Park NA

Phillip G. 10/4/03 14 years
Robin S. 10/5/97 20 years
Mike D. 11/29/14 3 years

New Bite of Serenity

Andrea P. 9/34/15 2 years
Jonee A. 9/29/16 1 year
Aubrey C. 10/4/14 3 years
Bryan G. 10/11/14 3 years
Joshua S. 10/15/11 6 years
Petra S. 10/15/11 6 years

Recovery Central

Valerie B. 9/5/89 28 years
Lisa C. 10/4/86 31 years

The Heights of NA

Hank 9/6/92 25 years

Women of Serenity

Angela J. 9/3/08 9 years
Tammy 9/20/93 26 years
Liz K. 9/24/01 16 years
Elizabeth R. 9/24/01 16 years
Marilyn G. 4/3/16 18 months
Andrea B. 4/9/16 18 months

If your Group had anniversaries in September and October that did not make it into this edition, we will be more than happy to print them in our next newsletter. We apologize for anniversaries that did not make it in during the chaos of the last few months and wish all of our area's celebrants a warm and hearty "Congratulations!"

The Bridge Group of Narcotics Anonymous:

<http://www.thebridgena.org>

The Bridge Group was formed in December of 2008. Meetings are now registered with World Services, and we are now offering 7 meetings a week on this same phone number ((712) 832-8320, 387870#) to addicts in need. All it requires is a phone and the ability to dial long distance. Due to the prohibitively high cost of toll-free numbers, and limited 7th tradition funds, we have not been able to offer a toll-free option.

Women's Hope 28th Anniversary Spaghetti Dinner

October 17, 6pm-9pm

MCC Church

408 E. Cayuga

Dinner: \$5.00, Soda and Water \$1.00

New Bite of Serenity 27 Year Anniversary

October 28th, 12pm-6pm

St. Paul's Church

5103 N. Central Avenue

Free Food Fun and Fellowship

Funcoast Area Activities presents: Halloween Dance

October 28th, 7pm-11pm

Seminole Heights UMC

6111 N. Central Avenue

Tickets \$3.00 in advance, \$5.00 at the door

Women's Spiritual Retreat will be selling food at the event.

Grow or Go Annual Picnic

November 12th, 1pm-7pm

Cypress Point Park, Shelters 2 & 3

5620 W Cypress St., Tampa, FL 33607

Food, Fellowship, Meeting at 5:30!

FREE FOOD AND DRINKS!

Picnic table space limited, Bring Chairs!

Unity Group Annual Picnic

November 18th, 11am-5pm

Lowry Park, Pavilion 120

7525 North Blvd., Tampa, FL 33604

NAByPhone.com

Originally started in 2008 as outreach to carry an NA meeting to a hospitalized member in FL, teleconference meetings have grown to meet the needs of many members. The diversity of our membership is represented by hospitalized and home-bound members including older members who can no longer get out, professional drivers on the road, geographically challenged members, parents who stay home with children, victims of really bad storms who swell our meetings for a few days until the weather clears, members of smaller communities who are seeking more anonymity for gut level sharing and those who are simply seeking multiple flavors of recovery. NA teleconference meetings are a wonderful addition to a well-rounded recovery platform and can serve as life-saving outreach and are a great way to expand your support network nationally or even internationally. However, they are not a replacement for face-to-face meeting attendance. Attend your local NA. Share some hugs.

For more information, visit NAByPhone.com

The Tampa Funcoast Area of Narcotics Anonymous Newsletter Committee welcomes your comments, ideas, announcements, and articles. Your submissions must adhere to the spiritual principles of The 12 Traditions of NA and cannot be copyrighted material from 3rd party persons or publications. Submissions may be subject to editing in order to adhere to the spiritual principles of The 12 Traditions of NA and/or the space constraints or the group's conscience of the Clean Times Newsletter.