



March/April 2018

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

Step Three: "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over the care of God as we understood Him."

This step is considered the first action step where we have to actually do something, albeit "make a decision." This step has also been equated to being a key to opening a door to freedom and serenity. It means to me simply that I am incapable of making good decisions on a consistent basis so I will let the power I found in Step Two guide me. Usually I hear that guidance from my sponsor and network and as my journey continues, through prayer and meditation. I also understand that I am powerless to control or fix most things so I set goals and carry out the action to accomplish them (footwork) and I leave the results to the GOD of my understanding (Outcome). This is the care I still sometimes struggle with. Coming to accept that sometimes my GOD's will for me is "no" or "not yet!"

Step Four: "We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

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My experience is I made this step way more difficult than it needed to be. This step however is a crucial step in my recovery process as a journey of self-awareness and self-discovery. I somehow focused all my attention on what was wrong with me and forgot to include and embrace what was right with me. Searching and fearless meant I needed to be courageous to uncover and discover the "real me." Step Four is "a means of getting beneath the self-deceptions we have used up to now to hide the truth about ourselves from ourselves." I found out that we can't get better with defects we are unaware we have. The word moral also gave me misgivings until I understood that my morality is the set of values I choose to live by especially in my recovery. The bad feelings associated with bad behaviors usually meant I was compromising my values, causing a disturbance in my spirit. In certain areas, my basic sense of right and wrong had to be re-examined. I came to understand some of my values were influenced by the intolerant and hypocritical world around me. Like all the steps and particularly this one, it is not an event rather a process. I continue to become more self-aware and can see myself coming through identified patterns of behavior revealed in my numerous fourth step inventories.

-Kenny B.
Tradition Three: "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using."

Narcotics Anonymous offers freedom from active addiction. Our sole interest is in being available for new members who have a desire to stop using and how we can help. Since the only requirement for members is the desire to stop using, age, race, sexual identity, religion or lack of religion and social class are unimportant. No one in our fellowship is given the authority to deny membership. Your desire is not measured. You are a member when you say you are. As members of Narcotics Anonymous, we are responsible to be available when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help. We are asked to give back what has been so freely given to us. We do this by being sure meetings are open to any addict who wishes to join and by extending the same care and concern that keep us coming back. Although membership is a personal decision, we can help members feel comfortable by encouraging every addict to keep coming back. Additionally, we can greet members at the door, share before and after the meeting, exchange telephone numbers, and choose meeting locations which are accessible to everyone. There is no guarantee that every addict exposed to Narcotics Anonymous will stay clean. External factors such as drugs used, age of the addict, or length of active addiction cannot determine why one addict stays clean while another chooses to use. The honest desire of the individual

to stay clean is what ultimately keeps them coming back. What we offer as experienced members is a welcome rather than a judgment. Even members who remain in active addiction but continue to attend meetings are welcome. This is based on the fact that their level of willingness, although slight, cannot be discounted. A strong desire to stop using is sometimes a process. Hearing other addicts' experience of staying clean can be the fuel to ignite the desire, and begin the process of recovery. The wording of Tradition Three allows any addict recovery, regardless of how much or how little they used, who their connections were or where they come from. This tradition allows every addict to decide if NA is the answer for her or himself. We cannot make this decision for anyone but ourselves. Even though this tradition is written simply – "a desire to stop using" – we need not take it lightly. Their desire is focused on abstinence from drugs. We realize that addiction manifests itself in many areas of our lives, but it is important that we keep the focus on not using drugs for the sake of the newcomer. In regard to spiritual principles, Tradition Three leads us on our journey to helpfulness, acceptance and unconditional love. Mostly though, it encourages freedom from judgment. The disease of addiction does not exclude anyone and tolerance of the disease reminds us that judgment is not our job. Practicing patience with

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addicts that don't look like us, act like us, or share like us is teaching by example. Once again, we have no right to judge. In closing, we must remember that addiction is a deadly disease. Those who do not find recovery can't expect anything more than jails, institutions, and death. Denying membership to any addict, regardless of the circumstance, may be a death sentence. Tradition Three helps to keep our fellowship alive and free. "As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

-Reprinted from Clean Times, Funcoast Area March 1997

Tradition Four: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups of NA as a whole."

For us to understand Tradition Four, we must first define the word, autonomy.

The Oxford dictionary defines autonomy as: a self-governing entity, having freedom from external control or influence, independence.

Although, each group is autonomous; the group must always keep in mind that our primary purpose (carrying the message of recovery to the addict that still suffers) must always be adhered to in our meetings. For example, each of us is very careful not to stomp our big toe because the whole body feels the pain. Likewise, each group must think of itself as the big toe, thereby, not bringing reproaches or negative light to the whole body (Narcotics Anonymous).

The most common way that NA groups express autonomy is in the choice of what format they will be using to carry the message of recovery. This allows each group to find its niche and offer diversity to a diverse group of people. Some groups find that speakers meeting work better for them; other groups find that offering step studies, topic discussions, Tradition study,

and etc. work better for them. No matter what format the group selects to incorporate into its meetings, recovery oriented meetings are imperative to NA's survival.

Even though each group is a self-governing entity, every group should identify as an NA group by having the same readings; focusing on working the 12-steps, the 12 Traditions, and the 12 Concepts. Members should be encouraged to share their own experience, strength and hope in a meeting. Also, in selecting the group's name, the group must remember to choose a name that reflects NA in a positive light. Silly names for groups should be avoided at all cost, because lives are at stake!

Just as an individual practices spiritual principles to grow in recover so should NA groups. Tradition Four gives a clear understanding on how spiritual principles should be applied within groups. Furthermore, autonomy gives groups certain freedoms, yet groups must exercise responsibility by considering the welfare of the fellowship. Open-mindedness is essential to use autonomy to help NA grow. Groups open their minds to explore new ways in reaching addicts. Love is the principle that guides groups to see NA as a greater whole.

Without our autonomous groups, groups would be unable to fulfill NA's primary purpose. For this to happen, groups must seek direction and guidance from a loving higher power. -Reprinted from The Clean Times, West Tennessee Area of Narcotics Anonymous

Takes a day to sit still but really he can't take it

You're at the clinic I just tell you to keep me updated

My phone dies While I'm picking up antibiotics I'm pretty sick It's 5 minutes of dial tone I lose all credibility as best friend

and there are so many things we have to forget to have this conversation how we're having it

there are so many 'shoulds' we have to append to my role the one I've stayed side-lined with

"Sigh. I cannot count on anyone"

I've gone and let you down I cannot make up for the past 5 minutes when you needed me most just by calling now

soon as I'm home I plug in the phone I'm dialing you

telling you to stay at your appointment I try to stress the importance but you needed a scapegoat ... I slip so easy into that coat

now instead of getting picked up by me afterward you can go get loaded calling the edge of the blade by my name

Saying if only I if only I picked up if only I didn't make you wait

I don't argue I know it's not me you hate.

And it's the saddest thing when I think I'm close enough to reach you that your finally responding you tuck all your corners in and refuse to open

and it's the saddest thing I don't mind the eggshells stuck in my feet the nerve endings couldn't compete with the scene of your miserable yoke and how it broke all your insides are all on your outsides laying in the filth of our history you refuse to move so I can sweep

you refuse to let anything or anyone try to help you get clean

But it's only you I'm trying to help, man. I know I only come when called but I'm not an enemy for my distance I'm just bent on keeping myself apart from the sickness that's how I've survived that's how your shitty best friend is alive at all.

But the love is not enough it's not enough and, in this way, it won't ever be

It has nothing to do with me.

You are a frustrated child to your feelings and I cannot solve or redeem you if you will not settle the fit of your limbs against mine if your still in the phase where you just want to FIGHT that's alright. I'll let it be

It's got nothing to do with me.

-Kristan W. RIP

We shall be with you in the fellowship of the spirit.

Ask An Addict

Do I really need to do a 5th step with a sponsor?

Basic Text:

“Someone with experience can help.” (p. 30)

“Step five suggests that we admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs... we sit with another person and share our inventory out loud.” (p. 31)

“We must carefully choose the person who is to hear our Fifth Step. We must make sure that they know what we are doing and why we are doing it. Although there is no hard rule about the person of our choice, it is important that we trust the person... Some of us take our Fifth Step with a total stranger, although some of us feel more comfortable choosing a member of Narcotics Anonymous. We know that another addict would be less likely to judge us with malice or misunderstanding.” (p. 31)

Usually, as we share this step, the listener will share some of his or her story too.” (p. 33)

“I never in my wildest dreams imagined that I could share so honestly all of myself with another human being, my sponsor, in the Fifth Step. By sharing about myself, I found love and acceptance in the eyes of another” (p. 226)

It Works:

“Working this step with the support of our sponsor and a loving God is a way of putting into practice our decision to allow God to care for our will and our lives.” (p. 35)

“many of us have looked up and seen unconditional love in the eyes of the person hearing our Fifth Step. The feelings of acceptance and belonging we experienced at that moment helped us to feel a part of the program.” (p. 37)

“Although there is no requirement that the listener must be our sponsor, most of us choose to share our inventory with him or her. By doing so, we are most likely to benefit from the full range of experience

another recovering addict has to share. After all, who can better understand what we are attempting than those who have done it for themselves? Addicts more experienced in recovery than we are

will already have dealt with the matters we are just beginning to face. Such people can share with us their experience and the solutions they have found through working this step.” (p. 37)

“The person who listens to our Fifth Step should be someone who understands the process of recovery we are involved in and someone who is willing to help us through it.” (p. 37)

“As we share our inventory, our sponsor will sometimes share some of his or her own experience with us. Our sponsor may cry with us or smile in recognition at some of the struggles we are now sharing. We may laugh together as we share some of the more comical aspects of our addiction and the ridiculous lies we told ourselves so that we could continue to live as we were living. As we see how similar our feelings are to our sponsor’s

feelings, we realize that there are other people like us.” (p. 39)

Just for Today:

“When we share out secret selves in confidence with at least one human being – our sponsor, perhaps, or a close friend – this person usually doesn’t reject us.” (p. 250)

“What is a sponsor?... The one who keeps reminding you to finish your Fourth Step, who listens to your Fifth Step, and you doesn’t tell anyone how weird you are.” (p. 40)

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

March/April

A New Way

Mike S. 4/22/01 17 years
Steve F. 4/23/06 12 years
Humberto P. 4/29/17 1 year

Free To Be Me

Ron B. 1/4/93 25 years
Barbara D. 1/26/98 20 years
Landon L. 2/26/17 1 year
Chanta S. 3/2/17 1 year
Victor C. 3/21/98 20 years
Stan M. 3/29/89 29 years
Breq Z. 4/1/15 3 years
Margaret A. 4/4/15 3 years
Nelson V. 4/18/17 1 year
Robert R. 4/28/14 4 years
Meredith B. 4/29/11 7 years
Barry H. 5/1/14 4 years
Deborah N. 5/2/06 12 years

Grow or Go

Elise B. 3/11/17 1 year
Saesha N. 3/26/09 9 years
Justine R. 4/7/16 2 years
Steph H. 4/9/05 13 years
Ray F. 4/11/14 4 years
Starr B. 4/11/87 31 years

Heights of NA

Louis G. 4/18/85 33 years
Renee C. 5/5/88 30 years
Frank M. 6/1/11 7 years
Robert A. 6/8/05 13 years

High Lie

Tom E. 4/11/92 26 years
Jeffrey J. 4/14/13 5 years
Jen M. 4/18/14 4 years
Pete M. 5/2/95 23 years
Jill M. 5/13/11 7 years
Carl C. 5/22/11 7 years
Heather L. 5/23/13 5 years

Hyde Park NA

Meredith D. 3/5/91 27 years
Bob H. 4/26/96 22 years
Lauren C. 5/23/14 4 years
Bruce T. 6/23/17 1 year
Kera C. 6/16/17 1 year
Javier G. 5/9/93 25 years

Keep the Faith

Robert Y. 2/1/98 20 years
Gus C. 3/2/01 17 years

Living the Program

Danielle G. 3/9/14 4 years
Simone C. 3/18/17 1 year

Monday Meditation

Tricia N. 4/1/16 2 years
Melissa M. 3/8/17 1 year
Dustin N. 3/20/10 8 years

New Tampa NA

Marc L. 4/19/08 10 years
Ailin S. 4/19/17 1 year

Quest for Serenity

Scotty D. 4/5/95 23 years

Radical Recovery

Willie M. 4/5/95 23 years
Kelvin B. 4/8/08 10 years

Renegade Recovery

Bob R. 4/19/91 27 years

Steppin Up

Calvin A. 4/11/10 8 years
Michael J. 5/1/99 19 years

Together We Can

Mario F. 4/26/10 8 years

Triple M Group

Frederick "Boo" L. 6/3/08
10 years

Upcoming Events & Info

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.

B@NG Annual Picnic

When: Sat, April 21, 10:00am - 3:30pm

**Where: Edward Medard Conservation Park, 6140 Turkey Creek Road,
Plant City, FL 33567**

Description:

**Park entry fee is \$2 per car.
Free food, sodas and water for sale.**

Kayaking, fishing, spades tournament, 50-50 raffle, cornhole.

**Pets and children are welcome and are the responsibility of the person
who brought them. Caution: gators are in the water.**

Sponsored by Brandon @ Noon Group of Narcotics Anonymous

3rd Annual Spiritual Campout:

Unearth Your Potential

When: May 25 - 27, 2018

**Where: Cedarkirk Camp & Conference, 1920 Street-
man Dr, Lithia, FL 33547 (map)**

**Description: Registration is \$25 per person; space
is limited to 50 people; deadline to register is May 15,
2018 (Adults Only).**

Rocking Climbing \$5

Zipline \$5

**Sponsored by Monday Meditation Group of Narcotics
Anonymous**

Contact:

Rachel B 1-813-764-4907

Scott K 1-727-276-0573

Savannah D 1-813-279-3642

Mike H 1-706-304-9258

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.