



The Group Conscience

Dulles Corridor Area
Narcotics Anonymous

Inside This Issue

- Events (1)
- The Fourth Step (1)
- The 4th Step: The Turning Point in My Recovery (1)
- My Father's Son: Part III (2)
- The Fourth Tradition (3)
- Running in Recovery (4)
- 31 Spiritual Principles (4)
- The Beginning of the Recovery Process (5)
- The Journey (6)
- Anniversaries (6)

Events

CPRCNA XXI
April 13-15, 2007
Ocean City, MD

REGIONAL SERVICE
Sat, April 21, 2007
St. Luke's
Washington, DC

AREA SERVICE
Sun, April 29, 2007
St. Timothy's
Herndon, VA

The Fourth Step

By Eric D.

The fourth step is the most overrated step. It's not that the 4th step isn't important...it's just that it's no more or less important than any other step. The only wrong way to write the 4th step is to simply not do it. Parking on your 4th step creates heightened drama during an already intense period of recovery. As the saying goes, "when in hell...keep moving"

I was 90 days clean when I wrote my 4th step (and have written 3 since). My first 4th step was more of a confusing, rambling story about myself. Reading this during my 5th step quickly became

embarrassing with a lot of "WTF was I thinking" pauses throughout. Nevertheless, what do you expect from someone at 90 days! As screwed up as it was, at least it was.

In hindsight, I believe I hoped that I could unravel the insanity of my past...somehow making sense of it all. If you can make sense of it, then we wouldn't call it insanity. Still, that didn't stop me. I jumped into the fire of my past and started writing down random events as they came to me..relevant or not. Again, this is consistent with a recovering addict at 90

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

The 4th Step: The Turning Point in My Recovery

By Ellie N.

When I first came into recovery, I never dreamed how much my life would change. I used drugs so I wouldn't feel the pain of my problems and to enhance my good feelings (I wanted to feel even better)! The life lesson I learned from escaping my feelings caused me severe emotional agony, and as a result, I couldn't and didn't grow up. It was a never-ending cycle – control and manipulate life according to "Ellie", that way I could deny what was really happening, create more wreckage, and then run from it. I lived in a warped fantasy world.

Desperate and broken in spirit I embraced NA, got a sponsor, and worked steps 1-3 to the best of my ability. When I got the opportunity to work 4th step, I had no choice but to surrender to my Higher

Power to help me in this time of need. I learned from my sponsor that fear is a lack of faith and that my Higher Power didn't bring me this far to let me fall. So, I stepped up to the plate and began a journey of a lifetime.

The definition of moral taken from the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary: 1a : of or relating to principles of right and wrong in conforming to a standard of right behavior b : conforming to a standard of right behavior c : sanctioned by or operative on one's conscience or ethical judgment. I wanted to become a person of integrity, someone who is respectable and ethical. So with my newfound faith, I prepared myself by creating a quiet, safe place within my home, in which I would be able to fearlessly confront my inner demons. I prepared a notebook in which to write, I

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

"The Fourth Step" (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

days clean. There is nothing wrong with doing your 4th step wrong. Just do it. After completing my 5th step, my sponsor promptly told me "I heard the word 'I' alot and now go back and identify the nature of your wrongs".

The nature of my wrongs...WTF is that? How am I supposed to identify the nature of my wrongs? My first 4th step was more-or-less a list of my wrongs, or maybe a list of things I felt stupid about doing, or maybe just a list of impulsive, unresolved memories. The nature of my wrongs seemed like a pretty deep request..certainly beyond the capacity of a 90 day hyperactive, recovering addict. Like a good addict, I isolated myself in the depth of my room

with pen and paper and began again to peel the onion a little more...but did I get to the nature of my wrongs? Probably not.

Delving into my addiction is always the start of my confusion. The deeper I go, the more confused I get. After being clean a few 24 hours, this still hasn't changed. While I want to be like that agony-of-defeat skier tumbling down the mountain only to stand up at the end with a big "Ta-Da"...my addiction is still a blur of confusion. In fact, I have pretty much given up on the idea that somehow I will make sense out of the behavior, thoughts, and feelings that result after taking an obscene amount of drugs.

Instead, the 4th step is a necessary passage on this spiritual journey. If you miss something, trust that there is a 7th and 10th step to catch those things we've mentally blocked out...or in my case, 3 more full passes through all 12 steps..just to make sure that I am in fact "clean". In the end, I have no more clarity nor reasons for my past addictive lifestyle and no one to blame it on. I did a lot of drugs, got wreckless, became consumed by self-centered fear, and obsessively and compulsively hid by using more drugs...there...that's the nature of my wrongs...finally 8-)

My Father's Son: Part III

By Kevin E.

This article in continued from last month's issue of The Group Conscience.

One night I called my father and he told me he was in a lot of pain from drinking; that his legs were swollen from the knees down, and he couldn't get out of the house. I told him to go to a hospital and after some persuading he agreed to go after the weekend. The following Monday he did not answer the phone all day; I called the police. They busted through the door and found him dead, sitting in a chair with three full beers and a half empty one next to him on the table. I called my friends in Narcotics Anonymous. The one whom I was closest to had no encouraging words; he simply asked me a question, "Where are you?" He was there in five minutes. His death hurt. I knew exactly how he felt while killing himself, but I was granted a reprieve from all that pain. I knew it did not have to be that way.

We went up to Ohio one last time to witness the most horrible thing I hope we will ever face. We walked through the broken door of my

grandparents' house into a permeating stench of rot, piss, and shit. Trash was everywhere. The water was not working and my father had continued to use the toilet for what must have been a week or two. He had given that up towards the end though, and if he did not fill the diapers that he crumpled and threw in the bathtub, then he simply shit or pissed on the floor, couch, chairs or bed. We collected and dumped seven hundred pounds of empty beer cans, liquor bottles, and boxes. There was an entire room filled, wall to wall, past my knees with card board boxes sporting the brand name Natural Ice. That week my father gave me, with his life, the absolute certainty that I will die if I ever use again. If I am lucky I will die quick, but if I, as all evidence suggests, am like him, it will take nine long miserable years.

Another thing my father gave me was my family back. They asked me to be the one to speak at his memorial service, and that week I got gifts greater than anything I could have dreamed for or imagined possible. My mother called

me "Her Rock," my sister-in-law said how impressed she was with me, my brother who was finished with me, told me "The money wasn't what was important, it was that you were doing well. You are, I am proud of you." I was given back the love and respect of my family. It still brings tears to my eyes and joy to my heart. I had been through what I can only imagine hell would be like, and was given pure and unconditional love.

"THE 4TH STEP: THE TURNING POINT IN MY RECOVERY" (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

even used my computer, however, I personally find that the act of writing produces the best results. My handwriting changed from even to difficult to read, because I poured all of my emotions into answering the questions.

Honesty is the spiritual essence of this step, and I discovered that it was painful to sort out my conflicted, confusing life, but not even close to the pain I felt before I came into the fellowship. By exposing my character defects, I learned that many of the negative things I did was a direct result of never having a relationship with a loving Higher Power. The mere act of fearlessly moving forward in this step, was the defining moment for me in recovery. It allowed me to get to really trust and have faith in the God of my understanding. The roller coaster of

emotions had me reciting our Serenity Prayer over and over. I finally got in touch with all the anger and resentment that was keeping me from growing. I finally started to understand that I was responsible for my actions, and no longer a victim of circumstances, which was a belief I held on to and came into the program with (and still sometimes fall back on if I am not spiritually fit). This enormous realization was the turning point for me. I started to look at my part in things and now find that I still practice this exercise. Whether it's repeating the same pattern in a relationship, or being arrogant or judgmental, towards others'. I look to see my part in it. It was totally freeing to go from victim to one who stands up for herself.

Some other obstacles I faced were to overcome my feelings of having to write this inventory perfectly. I learned

that it is "progress not perfection" when it comes to working this step. I admit, it took me a lot longer to complete it because of my feelings of having to work it perfectly, something I don't ever recommend to anyone.

Recovery, for me, will always be a lifelong process. This is a program of action, and for me, the most profound experience of my life. Having walked through fear and come out the other side, has deepened my bond with my Higher Power as well as learning how to be intimate with a sponsor when it came time to work on step 5. I feel blessed and grateful that I have been given an opportunity to develop spiritual principals of which to grow by, thus hoping to make my world a better place to live.

The Fourth Tradition

By Rick R.

Definitions of the word autonomy:

- 1 : of, relating to, or marked by autonomy
- 2 a : having the right or power of self-government b : undertaken or carried on without outside control : SELF-CONTAINED <an autonomous school system> existing or capable of existing independently <an autonomous zoid> b : responding, reacting, or developing independently of the whole <an autonomous growth>
- 3 a : existing or capable of existing independently <an autonomous zoid> b : responding, reacting, or developing independently of the whole <an autonomous growth>

Through the Narcotics Anonymous program a recovering addict is offered a path to freedom; freedom from active addiction, freedom from self will run riot; a general freedom that was never experienced or felt until the weight was lifted off our shoulder when we surrendered to a power greater than ourselves and learned to live one day at a time.

Like the individual, the NA group also has a great deal of freedom. That is what tradition four reminds us of. The NA group is allowed to be individual and unique from other groups by maintaining different formats, while carrying the message and helping the addict who still suffers, stay clean one day at a time.

The one word that comes to my mind with this tradition is diversity. When I was new to recovery I was looking for meetings and groups that appealed to me personally. If all the groups were the same, well I might not have found what I needed to find. Thankfully that is not the case. Through a variety of different formats and special interests there aren't too many meetings, particularly in the Dulles Corridor area, that are identical. This is a blessing as some addicts will receive the message better in one type of group format than the other. This tradition implies that each group respect the autonomy of the other groups, in their differences, as they each should carry the message of recovery in whatever format they choose to.

Different groups in different

areas are in fact very diverse. Travelling the country has allowed me the opportunity to experience NA in different geographies and to receive the message of recovery in different ways. The way meetings are conducted, the way the message is conveyed; I have experienced dramatically different NA meetings and received the message so many different ways! However for this recovering addict I do always end up with a strong sense of gratitude for the strength and way that the message of recovery is conveyed in the meetings of the Dulles Corridor Area and am always happy to return back to our area when my travels are complete.

With the freedom availed to the group in the fourth tradition also comes a great deal of responsibility. The groups are still required to convey the spiritual principles as outlined in the twelve traditions. We are responsible for how we conduct the meetings, in every sense, so as not to impact other groups or NA as a whole. Our groups are responsible when as a group we consider how our

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

"THE FOURTH TRADITION" (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

actions will impact the fellowship of NA when we determine how we will conduct meetings, behave as a group, and carry the message of NA.

Our literature indicates that there is a strong parallel revealed in this tradition between the balance of independence and responsibility in the group as well as in the individual recovering addict. I am grateful that our groups love NA. It is that love which in a positive way forces our groups to adhere to responsibly carrying the message and promoting spiritual principals such as open-mindedness, anonymity and unity. This way no addict seeking recovery is ever turned away from a meeting and no

addict seeking recovery needs die from this disease.

Thank God that our groups are united for the common cause of helping the addict who still suffers (hey this may be me on any given day!)

Thank God that we have a choice in which meetings to attend and how to receive the message of recovery. It is a great thing that women have women only meetings to attend if they choose and that men have the same. Some days, I just want to go and hear a leader share their own message of experience, strength and hope. Other days I want to go to an open discussion meeting that has no leader and share

what is happening with me that day in my own recovery. Then there are days that I want to go to a meeting that I know will be full of newcomers so that I can hear, feel and remember how I felt when I first came into the rooms of NA.

When asked to write about the fourth tradition I immediately thought: "well I could write better on the third tradition, the seventh, the tenth or a whole bunch of other topics, more familiar to me than the fourth tradition". I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn more about this tradition and hopefully my fellow recovering addicts were able to gain something from this piece.

Running in Recovery

By Kathy H.

Each day around noon I take my daily run. This is a special time for me. I pray, enjoy watching the seasons change and just being outdoors away from the office. While running the other day I thought about how much recovery and running were alike. They both require consistent work. If I don't run at least three times a week, it becomes much more of a challenge and I enjoy it less. It is the same with meetings and step work, they need my attention on a regular basis; skipping meetings and not

calling my sponsor or doing my step work make my recovery much harder.

Just as I can not recover in a day I also can't train for a race in one day. Step by step I must apply simple work principles to achieve my goals. I didn't become addicted in one day, and the same goes for being a runner. It takes some time to become physically fit. Just keep showing up and doing the next right thing, no matter if its running or recovery, and the results will take care of themselves.

There are going to be injuries and days I can't run, because of weather or work,

and my recovery will have tough times too. I will be tempted to give up, drop out of the race, and/or quit. Even though I have friends in NA and family cheering me on, ultimately the strength must come from within me and you and my faith in a Higher Power. Friends and family can't run a race for me and they can't recover for me either. I love running and I love recovery, and I thank my Higher Power each day for both.

31 Spiritual Principles

By Ellie N.

1. Honesty
2. Acceptance
3. Surrender
4. Hope
5. Commitment
- 6.. Faith
7. Courage
8. Willingness
9. Humility
10. Unconditional love
11. Perseverance
12. Open-mindedness
13. God-Centeredness
14. Awareness
15. Vigilance
16. Self-discipline
17. Sharing and caring
18. Patience
19. Forgiveness
20. Optimism
21. Selflessness
22. Compassion
23. Consideration
24. Kindness
25. Positive thinking
26. Responsibility
27. Tolerance
28. Trust
29. Unity
30. Gratitude
31. Service

The Beginning of the Recovery Process

By Erica B.

Another day is approaching, behind the curtains I can see the sun begin to shine. I have no concern about the world around me I just need to get another bag and I'll be fine.

My heart is pounding fast, my body is so weak and just needs some rest, I've tried to just lay down but I can't because my heart feels as if it's going to pop out of my chest.

I sit in my isolation staring coldly out into space; all my feelings and thoughts are numb except for one I'm not ready to face. I just can't admit it, but I know it's true, that my life has become a disgrace.

Before my thoughts and feelings have a chance to affect me, I unknowingly take back my will. I drink, I smoke, I snort anything placed in front of me likes its medicine prescribed by a doctor for a patient that is ill.

I have no knowledge of what I'm doing, all I know is that the drugs and the people I'm with make me feel like I belong, I pretend everything is okay but what is left of my heart is telling me it's wrong.

Bottom line is I've lost my real lifetime friends, my family, my life but most importantly I've lost me... What the hell happened? My life was meant for so much more, this isn't the way it was supposed to be.

The days continue to pass, inside I'm broken and my drug intake becomes more and more. My pain has become so great I question what I'm living for.

With every moment spent awake more things begin to lack. I am losing everything and some of what I'm losing I can't ever get back.

The pain is becoming unbearable, life has changed from being a gift into a real definition of hell... I ask myself over and over if I'm really alive, because I can no longer really tell.

I think suicidal thoughts, I cry secret tears, I want and need some help but I am just too afraid to face my fears.

Then one day it happens... I

finally hit the bottom, I finally lost what I considered to be my all. But when this happens reality kicks in and I realize I have no one left in the world to call.

Through my using I burned all my bridges, I told too many lies, I made it abundantly clear to my loved ones I hated them and sealed the deal by constantly saying "I don't need you guys."

I build up the courage to go back home, I try to explain that I'm sorry, I need help and that I am literally broken in two, only to hear something I never thought possible in response, "We are threw with you!"

I spend a week homeless, still using and drowning in my sorrow... for the first time in forever I pray, only to ask God to not let me be alive tomorrow.

During that week I develop more of a hatred for myself and for all the horrible things I had done, and for the first time in my life I was ready to admit that in my battle with drugs, drugs had won.

I had no where left to turn, no where left to run, no one left to lean on that I wanted to know... So I swallowed hard again, went back home and cried. I begged and pleaded for help and one last chance, I knew I had no where else to go.

By the grace of God I realize now, I was granted one last try, only it came with conditions and rules that I wanted and needed but wasn't sure I could live by.

As a condition and goal for myself to change I walked into a meeting and sat in a seat. I remember being so nervous, scared and depressed that I only looked down at my feet.

I listened closely to people share about their problems and their struggles to get and stay clean, and for the first time in my life I felt completely serene.

I was overwhelmed by the honesty and the fact that I had found people who relate, from that moment forward I was convinced this was my fate.

I soon chose a sponsor who I

never thought would end up being my all, I love her so much and if I've ever needed her she's stuck by her word and answered my call.

At first I was full of fear of failure, and thought the program was just too hard so I went back out again twice to use, but as my fellow addicts suggested I kept coming back only to find out NA is a program I cant afford to lose.

With time and hard work things have begun to fall into place. I feel as if my mask has been removed and now I am wearing my real face.

Times do get hard, and addiction still runs deep in me, but with recovery I've been given a choice that if I don't want to be using I do not have to be.

I've learned its essential to live "JUST FOR TODAY," and when I feel like using all I need to do is surrender in my will and pray.

See there is light at the end of the tunnel, if you just surrender your will, do the work and whenever angry or upset just sit back and take a deep breath... For its true what they say, recovery isn't just important it is LIFE or DEATH.

Dulles Corridor Area NA

Our area is located in Northern Virginia and holds about 20 meetings per week in Oakton, Reston, Chantilly, Centreville, Sterling, Leesburg and Round Hill.

Anniversaries

JIM R. CELEBRATES 9 YRS
Third Tradition
Sun, April 1, 2007

MELODIE B. CELEBRATES 1 YR
Free to Live
Mon, April 2, 2007

JOE G. CELEBRATES 1 YR
New Attitudes
Thurs, April 12, 2007

MARY F. CELEBRATES 1 YR
New Hopefuls
Wed, April 25, 2007

Poet's Corner

The Journey

By Red

Your journey back to bed is haunting you

Every thing lives and dreams, aware of the day and of the majesty of the night. The only difference between the stone and you, consists in the pulse of your heart. It is true that your heart beats a little more quickly, my friend, but it is never as calm."

Our original state is one of perfect health. All illness originates from the illusion of separation,

all real healing involves a change of consciousness, a return to our centre.

Live your daily life like a ritual. Each action, each gesture, each word you ever speak let it be an offering to the Divine.

But what I really have to say is:

It IS within you power right now

to solve whatever problems you think you have, to be happy and at peace with yourself and your world

to love and to be loved infinitely

although perhaps not always

according to your old expectations...

are you READY for it?



Narcotics Anonymous

is a nonprofit fellowship of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We meet regularly to help each other stay clean. We are not interested in what or how much you used, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help.

Want to see your work in print?

E-mail groupconscience@hotmail.com
or log on to www.dcana.org

