



The Group Conscience

Dulles Corridor Area
Narcotics Anonymous

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Events

UNITY DAY FUNDRAISER DANCE
Sat, March 24, 2007
10 p.m. - 11 p.m.
Independence Club
Springfield, VA

AREA SERVICE
Sun, March 25, 2007
2 p.m. - 5 p.m.
St. Timothy's
Herndon, VA

SPEAKER JAM
Sat, March 31, 2007
Baltimore, MD

Living The Third Step

By Chris P.

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of GOD as we understood him.

This was one I had to think about. HOW do I turn my will and my life over to something I can't see, touch or hear? I've been in control most of my life, right? I have made my own decisions and own choices for as long as I can remember. I did what I wanted when I wanted with whom I wanted, and if you didn't like it then you didn't have to hang out with me.

After a little contemplation I had some realizations. I realized that with HIS help I had found a treatment center that saved my life.

And that treatment center taught me how to

begin to trust again, both myself and others. That treatment center also showed me the rooms of NA and found me an extraordinary outpatient group and a women's group, which I still attend weekly.

With HIS help I made life long friends in treatment. With HIS help I've made good friends in the fellowship of NA. I've made a lot of progress since I've been home. I have much more control over my anger, I'm better with my communication, and I've learned to reach out for help. Realizing all of the above I was able to make the decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of GOD as I understood HIM.

Step Three makes my life easier. More

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My Father's Son: Part II

By Kevin E.

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

In the meantime, I needed something to take the edge off. I drank mostly, buying half gallons of Aristocrat vodka and taking shots until I could not remember how horrible I felt.

Then one day I came up with the ingenious idea of canceling the life insurance that had been paid for the past twenty years by my recently deceased grandmother. Five hundred big ones. I was going to be set, but the check did not come fast enough. I already owed my dealer two-hundred dollars and he was getting tired of my excuses.

Of all the people I let down, my dealer was never one of them. So I wrote myself a check from my mother's checkbook. I then would deposit that amount when the insurance check

came (with thirteen dollars and forty-six cents interest) into her account. I got very little enjoyment out of that eight ball of cocaine and much more pain and sorrow when my mother checked her online bank statement that evening.

The next day my grandfather died. It was not a surprise. My grandmother, his wife of seventy-two years, had died only six weeks earlier. They were only holding on to life for one another at that point anyway. My mother dragged me to Ohio.

At the funeral I took a good long look at my father. He looked awful. He was once such a strong man. He had overcome his drinking, raised three boys, obtained a degree from NVCC while working as a night watchman and excelled to chief consultant for financial database management at F.D.I.C. during the year 2000 conversion.

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"STEP 3" (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)
manageable. Because I chose to turn my will and my life over I don't have as many worries or stresses today. I don't carry the weight of the world on my shoulders anymore. I turn my will and my life over to GOD regularly because it's not something I could do just one time and that was it. It is a constant, vigilant effort on my part to remember that I am no

longer in charge. It is my responsibility today to take action and that is it. The rest is up to GOD. What a GIFT that's been given to me.

I pray daily and live on faith and hope today. I am a recovering addict who will never fully recover. I have a daily reprieve and that's all. I nurse my dis-ease everyday by either reading my meditation books, step work or reaching out to others. I have been

promised freedom from active addiction in this program, what a blessing, and by turning over my will and my life and asking for HIS will and the power to carry that out I have a lot of hope that I'll never be where I was before I came into these rooms.

Thanks for letting me share.

Living A Life Beyond My Wildest Dreams

By Yolanda R.

I woke up in a sick sweat.

I felt down the length of my arms and hugged myself close. Last night's dream poisoned the perspiration beading on my forehead and made the space between my shoulder blades a slick, dark valley. I pulled myself up and out, over the coursing tremors of my terrors, pulled myself upright - then bundled over in a heap and hid my head in the covers.

Morning. It seemed so sudden. I felt violated, dirty, as if my dreams had punctured something soft inside me, wounding it, infecting it.

I wasn't used to high summer in Virginia, and I could feel the morning heat gathering strength, crouching until noon when it would explode into roaring humidity. New York summers were punctuated by crisp exclamations, as if the sun was surprising the earth with its ability to give life. In upstate New York, summer was a chance meeting of friends, a happy reunion. Summer in Virginia felt like a battle I was destined to lose.

I yanked myself free from the bed as it creaked and bowed beneath me. I ran a hand across the stubble blossoming on my bald head and tried to breathe.

The dreams had been becoming increasingly worse. Over and over again in the gloaming I would be chased, dropped, fighting for my life until I thought I would go crazy in my waking hours as well.

I'd had a series of dreams like this in high

school: for nine days my nightly terrors tormented me, reaching a screaming crescendo, turning my daylight hours into an unbearable waiting game. I was, again, afraid to sleep. But this time ...

This time was different. This time the dreams had snuck through the cracks in the walls and seeped into the dead garden of my waking life. This time, I was seeing things. For real.

In my last year of college something had changed, at first imperceptible, but steadily it became noticeable. Like staring at a carpet pattern, the fabric of my reality, so defined at first glance, would blur, then shift. Worse, I'm not sure I cared.

My drug use had become a long slow purge, an eternity of pain that completely divorced me from my own feelings. But consequences being what they are, my days were filled with waking uncertainty. Eyes would peek from the bushes on my way home and spiders lurked in the corners of my room even in my sober moments. So I drank more and told myself I preferred the spinning, training myself on trying to change the direction of the spin as a passtime. My life was filled with ghosts, so I worked harder, penciled in more meetings and activities and told myself they weren't there.

When I packed my bag and left New York, I thought I would leave that behind. I would salt the ground in my passing and be done -- finally. So, I traveled through Canada and huge

swatches of the Northeast and South after college, criss-crossing my way through towns I barely remember. Most of the time I was dry, but as soon as I was settled I picked up where I had left off with gusto.

After several months of wandering, I had found my way to Northern Virginia and decided to take a chance and stay. My friends were going back home, but my boyfriend and I had refused the offer and stayed behind. We moved in to a small three-bedroom apartment occupied by four other people -- immigrants from El Salvador that worked in the kitchen of the restaurant downstairs where I waitressed.

That job was the perfect vehicle for my addiction. I would waitress during the day, bartend at night, and bring my nightcap, poured into the biggest glass I could find, upstairs with me at the end of my shift (as if I wasn't drinking on the job). It hadn't even taken a full day. By the end of my first shift at the restaurant I was blowing lines off the employee table with my boss and drinking the bar. And the spiders came back, and worse, the dreams.

I stood. My hot, cramped little room was practically bare. What few possessions I had could fit neatly into the back seat of an economy car. The largest item I owned was my Djembe, standing in one corner next to a window I left perpetually open. The sound of traffic helped me to sleep. Pictures of Koi rendered in watercolor made a laughable attempt to cover the holes in our dingy walls.

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"MY FATHER" (CONT'D FROM PG. 1)

He was in horrible shape. He lost everything as a result of his return to drinking. His wife, his children, his freedom (the reason he moved in with his parents was to evade jail time in Northern Virginia for his second D.U.I. in a year) and his passions were all laid to waste as a result of his alcoholism. He disappeared for a few minutes before the service to duck into the bar a block away. He reeked of feces and liquor.

His skin was pale, his eyes hollow and his once jet black hair graying. He had lost forty or so pounds. More than that, he looked defeated, lost. I started to see in him all I saw in myself. The worthlessness, the shame, the desperation, the degradation and the pain all showed in the glimpse of his heart that I caught, looking at him weeping before his father's casket. I cried too. Not because I lost my grandpa, but because I knew I was not the only one who knew this loneliness, because I am my father's son.

Again, I wish I could tell you we all lived happily ever after. That day my father gave me a hundred dollar bill to give the minister who

presided over the service. I only had one thing I was faithful to ... my addiction. That night, in spite of the pain alcohol caused my father, I went to the hotel bar. I spent every last dollar.

Every drink brought me closer to the reality of my addiction. There had to be something else, but I could not fathom a life without drugs and alcohol. I could not live with just me.

The next week at home I somehow managed to string together a few days without alcohol or drugs.

The night before I was to enter Edge Hill Recovery Retreat Center, my mother called me upstairs to talk again. The collection of silver dollars my grandfather had put together was missing. What could I say? I had not taken it, but who in their right mind would believe a word that came out of my mouth? After a lot of searching she found them and begged for my forgiveness of her false accusation. I was disgusted. How could she ask me to forgive her for something she had every right to believe? I told her to go to bed and be thankful that, for once, I had not stolen anything.

The next day I checked into Edge Hill.

My second day there I decided, as a result of a group session, that I should try to pray. I started by saying thank you for the few things I did have. The more I said thanks the more I realized I had to be thankful for and I found myself saying "Thank you," over and over again. I started to cry and say "I'm sorry" with the same sincerity and frequency as I had expressed my gratitude. I only said "I'm sorry," two or three times and the burden I had been carrying for so long was lifted. Then, back to the thank you's I went. My tears were joined with laughter and the most incredible feeling I have ever felt in my life.

I called my brother on his birthday from rehab to say I was sorry and wish him well. He had nothing to say... I had taken more than eight thousand dollars from him, and broken his heart. My mom was faithful. She stuck by me, but at a distance. My father was still drinking. We talked often, and I had hopes he might be able to stop and join me in recovery.

I left Edge Hill after 30 days and continued to grow through Narcotics Anonymous while

(READ PART III IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE.)

The Third Tradition: Desire Vs. Judgement

By Kilo S.

"The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using," is my favorite tradition, second only to the 5th, "Our primary purpose tradition." The third is the "welcome" tradition because you are. Anyone who enters the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous is free and welcomed to join this wonderful fellowship of recovery!

I am grateful that since I've been here I've had many experiences relating to this tradition. Unfortunately, before I was able to appreciate and embrace this tradition into my life, I had to endure quite a few negative experiences. As a result of these experiences, I believe that I am in much better touch with my humanity. To paint a picture of how this tradition has worked in my life I first need to

share a little about me and the negativity.

Outside of recovery I'm a slimy addict who has this overwhelming desire to control everything around me: I'm the smartest person in any room and I have all of the solutions to every problem. I have an ego the size of Mount Rushmore, practically born self-righteous and prideful, self-centered to the core and for the most part don't really give a damn about anybody unless it benefits me! Those are just a few of my defects of character, any combination of which I can act upon when I am feeling lonely, fearful, insecure, and unworthy.

The fruit that is borne from these defects of character is "judgment" and ultimately condemnation toward others. Regrettably, this has been my modus operandi. I

predominately operate in fear and judgment when I am not working a program of recovery. Judgment is a powerful tool that allows me to pick at you (even if I don't know you or anything about you). This happens involuntarily for the most part. I use judgment as a built-in measuring stick so that I don't have to focus on me and this deceptively allows me to feel better about myself. Nasty isn't it? I'm pretty sure that I am the only one in the whole wide world who thinks and feels this way too, so in addition to the aforementioned I'm also unique!

Seriously though, at the potential risk of "steppin' on somebody's toes," I apologize in advance as I share with you a few of the

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"DESIRE" (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

glaring negative thoughts (judgments) that have crept into this "recovering" mind since I've been around. Perhaps if you open your mind and become honest with yourselves you may be able to identify as well - or perhaps not:

- He's sick as shit; She's toxic as hell.
- He'll never get this thing - he's going to die.
- She's a fucking slut.
- That asshole's 13th steppin' the newcomer.
- She thinks she's so damned cute.
- Y'all ain't workin' no damn program.
- She's always tryin' to fuck somebody's boyfriend.
- Man, I wish she'd shut the fuck up about that stupid bullshit that she's sharing.
- That motherfucker needs to take a bath. He smells like shit.
- If that bitch looks at me like that again, I'm going to pull her hair out.
- I'm sick of that son of a bitch takin' the meetin' hostage.
- I wish that he shut the fuck up. He's always talking that drunk shit. Hey asshole, you're clean now, not clean and sober.
- I think she's been drinking. I smell alcohol on her breath.
- I think that bitch is still usin' I ain't fuckin' with her.

And so on and so forth. Anyway, I know that sounds disturbingly funny, but it is so true and pathetic. A sadder truth is that most times, others can sense (if not see and hear) when we have ill feeling or uneasiness towards them. Can anybody identify? Who am I to try and judge someone? Who am I to try and determine if they should occupy a seat? Who am I to try and determine if anyone is "fit" for recovery?

Now inside of recovery, my experience today is that the 3rd tradition frees me from this kind of destructive thinking and the muffled character assassinations just long enough so that recovery can occur in the rooms for you and for me. I am ever so grateful that having a "desire" is the only requirement for membership in NA. You

don't have to pay anybody; there are no applications to fill out; health is not a concern; financial statements are not required; no need for insurance; no background credit or criminal checks; looks or personal hygiene aren't important; and there's little to no censorship. Desire is all that you need!

That sounds so simplistic, and it is. It's so powerful that it completely negates judgment because desire is an "immeasurable commodity" - which means nobody can tell if you have it or not. No one can determine whether you have a spark or a flame or even if you'll ever have it or not. Desire is a condition that comes from within each individual's heart and therefore can not be judged. Therefore, ALL ARE WELCOMED!

"It Works How And Why" goes on to tell us that there are any number of reasons that we come to NA and they don't have to be tied to any kind of particular desire ... including to stop using drugs. In fact a lot of us come in here with all kinds of desires, some of which are: trying to save a relationship; trying to keep the job; trying to get a job; trying to get the family back; trying to stay out of jail; trying to moderate using; trying to get a grip on life; trying to ease the pain of life; trying to get some information; or whatever the bottom line is, whatever reason you come here in the beginning, in order to stay here you will ultimately get the desire to stop using or you will leave.

The third tradition is designed to give you the opportunity, freedom and time so that you can come to this desire in your own time.

Look, I'm not trying to say that I observe this thing perfectly every day (tradition 3). As a matter of fact, I still fall short more often than I'd like to admit. I, however, would hate to think about where my recovery would be today without this tradition in my life. In spite of my humanness, I can get in touch with the primary spiritual principles behind this tradition from time to time; tolerance, compassion, humility and anonymity.

When I'm practicing tolerance, I can

accept you just as you are. You don't have to look, talk, share, or act like me. I can freely allow you to recover at your own pace and in turn give myself a chance to recover by taking the focus off of you and putting it back on me. If I'm sitting in a meeting and I'm practicing intolerance and impatience toward you, how much am I really getting out of the meeting?

When I'm practicing compassion, I'm really trying to understand, relate and offer kindness and support to an addict who is sharing what they're going through. I have a choice today to offer loving acceptance rather than condemning judgment.

When I'm practicing humility, I'm not feeling the shame from judging another because I am in touch with my own story prior to coming into the rooms and my own shortcomings. This changes my perspective and helps me to get a better attitude toward you instead of "measuring you up" like I can do in a cocaine-minute.

When I'm practicing anonymity, I'm experiencing the equality afforded to anyone entering the rooms of recovery. We all have the same priority seating in NA. We don't have any social classes here! Think about the dilemma that this would cause (misfits managing misfits (who wants to be king of the addicts?). We are all free to come and be who we are without being concerned with hierarchy in recovery.

In summary, I want to reiterate that as simple as the third tradition may seem, it packs a mean wallop and is one of most powerful traditions to me. Sweetly and simply, by practicing this tradition, it allows me get out of your way and my own damned way so that we ALL have the opportunity and freedom to recover. When this happens, I get the freedom to do God's Will and for me this is to offer love, acceptance, and support to any addict walking through these doors seeking recovery.

ILS, Kilo S.

"DREAMS" (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

I'd found an old calendar from a Chinese restaurant and had torn out the pictures.

The heat was intense, uncomfortable.

I had dreamed I'd been dropped into an endless abyss of dirty rags. I kept falling and grasping at the wall only to pull filthy tatters away in my hands. I was lodged in them, suffocating under the smell of grime and oil and gasoline. I tried to fight my way out, clawing in claustrophobic semi-darkness. Underneath me I could feel something pulling me down. From above me I could hear laughter as someone dropped a match into the hole where I would be burned alive.

Every night the dream was different, but the spiders were a constant. Spiders in the corners, on the ceiling. I would have to will them away before I closed my eyes and slept. I knew they weren't there, so escaping my lying eyes was grimly manageable, but the dreams ... I was

hanging from the the CN Tower in Toronto by the tips of my fingers and someone pulled them loose one by one ... I was being attacked by a mob ... everything I owned was being sold off piece by piece while I was forced to watch ... people I loved would die, leave, beat me.

At the time I made no connection between my drug use and my slow slide into insanity. It took another six months for me to seek recovery, six months of sweat and pain, paranoia, fear and loathing. Like a dream, my first 30 days were a blur of tears and wild laughter of which I remember pieces.

Some time after, when I finally woke up, my nightmares in large part disappeared. There are no more spiders in the corners of my psyche or lunging shadows underfoot. I'm free.

It's been four years.

Once upon a time I was confronted with myself and could only cringe and cackle wildly. A lot of work still has to be done, but today I

can participate in "reality," luckily without medication. More importantly I can accept reality. I can atone. I can rebuild. But I have to choose my foundation wisely. I have to dig past the sludge to the bedrock. I have to be vigilant and precise in my assessments and in my measurements.

I understand now that I choose freedom in direct correlation with my acceptance of the tools recovery so freely provides. It's simple logic: without the program I am susceptible to use, and when I use I am insane. My disease seeks my lowest common denominator in its never-ending quest to keep me sick, insane, and using. It uses my worst thinking. But as one in this great, indivisible many, with therapy and the love of my fellow addicts, I can keep the world at right size. Through the program, I have moved past that dark place into a life beyond my wildest dreams.

I wish you the same.

It's Not Your Business: Turning It Over

By Joanna J.

I was walking downstairs as I heard my phone buzz. "Wow, it's early," I thought. Of course, I was already awake to change my first smelly diaper of the day.

The phone keeps buzzing. *I'm coming, I'm coming*, I thought, as I muttered under my breath. "Damn impatient addicts." I look at my phone. "One new text message," it reads. I open it up. "I feel sorry for Ashley" reads across the screen. I scroll down, but I don't recognize the phone number it came from. That's an odd message, I thought. My brain starts working. Ashley is my daughter. Why would anybody feel sorry for her? And even if they did, why send me a text message? Ashley seems to be healthy enough. Ten fingers, ten toes, not drug addicted, no physical or mental abnormalities. Hmm, I thought; and so my day begun.

"It's not your business what other people think about you." Words of wisdom from my sponsor. Spoke long ago when I was going

through some crisis, (which at the time I'm sure was the biggest deal of the universe, but today who knows what I was whining about). Imagine that, working with a sponsor! Not just in name, but actually taking to her before I act out in one of my brilliant ideas, like calling people to scream at them or text messaging someone something nasty or hitting someone with my car or sleeping with your boyfriend. "It's not your business what other people think about you." Those words ring just as true now in this situation as ever.

I remember the first time I heard that from my sponsor. Is she nuts, I thought? Of course it's my business. I want to know what other people are thinking, feeling, judging or hoping about me. I NEED TO KNOW what others think about me! Me, me, me! I mean, if you think things about me that I do not like, I have to change your mind, right? I have to PROVE that YOU ARE WRONG!

Or maybe not.

If I spend all of my time in paranoia about

what others think about me, I am clearly forgetting that there is a First Step. The Step that says I am powerless over others; their feelings, thoughts, actions. Ouch.

Moving on, the Second Step also applies here, that it is pure insanity for me to try to control or manipulate anyone into doing anything. Of course I can try, but I'll probably be so busy that I will not have time to brush my teeth, take a shower, go to work, pay bills, or go to meetings. (Sounds like my drug usage!) Hmm. Maybe worrying about what others think about me isn't such a good idea after all.

I later found out who the text message was from. My sponsor said to say a prayer for her. The reality is, however, that it doesn't matter who the text message was from, because it's not my business. When I lay my head down at night, I want to feel good with the person that I am, and I hope that God does too, and that is all that matters. What anybody else thinks is not my business.

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

ELLIE N. CELEBRATES 5 YRS
To Tell the Truth
Sun, March 18, 2007

SAM S. CELEBRATES 2 YRS
Third Tradition
Sun, March 25, 2007

PAUL C. CELEBRATES 3 YRS
Free Yourself
Sat, March 31, 2007

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



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 grouppconscience@hotmail.com
or log on to www.dcana.org

Poet's Corner

Not Without A Fight

By Juniper G.

You sit there wanting just one more,
Your face is white as you fall to the floor,
You're out of town -- you're out of sight,
You won't put down without a fight.

Death is knocking at the door,
You look in the mirror, you see a whore,
You won't put down without a fight.
Life no longer brings you joy,
You forget your name -- it might be Roy,
Just then you see mystic light,
Its blue and red-not glowing white,
Still -- you won't put down without a fight.

You spend the night getting beaten down,
Every look you get is with a frown,
You get the chills and begin to shake,
Is this the decision you want to make?

It seems like forever-it's just been days,
You think for just a moment, "Are these my ways?"
You shake it off, "I'll be alright."
You won't put down without a fight.

Months go by ... the fog turns clear,
But still you're filled with impending fear.
But then -- you're allowed to sit in a room,
Not by yourself, but with people who say they're from "the rooms,"
They speak of hope ...
You still want dope ...
You won't put down without a fight.

You go back to this room just to not stare at bars,
Who are these people? Are they from mars?
You start to actually use your ears,
You begin to have less and less fears.
You even feel real love,
Hey, you fit this group just like a glove.
You start another life long fight.
You won't pick up without a fight.