

CARRYING THE MESSAGE

Two Dulles Corridor Members Offer their Experience with the Steps and Traditions of N.A.

The Twelve Steps By John R.

In writing this I was reflecting on my step process and what I believed I knew it would be versus what it has become in my life today. I attended a lot of step study groups and step meetings early in recovery and I remember thinking how easy - not simple - the whole process seemed on paper and how I had “decided” which steps and which actions were going to be difficult or painful or scary and exactly what the results would be for each one. This belief was based on my experience in life attempting to intellectualize everything and rely completely on my thinking while at the same time trying desperately not to feel anything. This way of living led me abandon all sense of value and perspective and self worth based on anything real or true and ultimately damaged my relationships with those around me and most importantly with myself. So having fully surrendered to the program of Narcotics Anonymous, which to me is the principles embodied in the steps, I set out on my own personal step journey based on the experience, love and support of those around me in the program. At first, I simply did the work suggested to me because I was so fearful of returning to the way I had been living and because I was desperate to stay clean and try something different. Over time, and after months, and then years of dedication to my own process, I truly began to internalize in my heart, and in my spirit, the principles we speak about in our program. I began to feel good about who I was becoming and the decisions I was making and my new ability to survive the same emotions and feelings that used to control me before recovery. In doing so, I began to rely more and more on the God of my understanding and found that I was truly beginning to trust in the people around me and have faith in myself. I began to reach out to the very people who I had hurt so deeply and profoundly during my using. My desire to repair those relationships was not based on relieving myself of any shame I carried but was about healing the wounds I had created. Alone there was no way I possessed the courage to do what I found myself doing and so once again I relied on other addicts and on the God of my understanding to hold me up when I felt afraid or unsure. Over time I began to think of others before myself and I have glimpses and even days where I experience a sense of selflessness and real empathy and compassion for others. These experiences began to impact all my relationships and in the process my ability to be understanding of others and patient with others grew. I don't always want to stay in that truth but the steps offer me an opportunity each day to reconnect to my process and return to very same actions that keep me clean and that allow me to do my best to live with integrity.

The Twelve Traditions By Karen G.

When I got clean, I could hardly be convinced that I needed to work the 12 Steps of Narcotics Anonymous; I certainly wasn't open to the idea that the traditions could be helpful to my recovery. However, as I continued to stay clean, I slowly started to understand the importance of applying the traditions in my life. I began to realize that without unity among our fellowship, I would have no place to go for my personal recovery. Early on, I compared myself to other addicts, trying to justify why I didn't really belong in N.A. I thought I didn't do the right drugs, I hadn't used hard enough, and I hadn't suffered enough consequences to “really” belong. I was close to convincing myself that I should go out and try shooting heroin, just enough to get a habit, so that I could come back to N.A. and be a full-fledged member. Through other addicts sharing their experience with me, I learned an important lesson from the 3rd Tradition: We belong to NA when we say we do. It didn't matter that I'd never had a dope habit; I wanted to stay clean, so that made me as much a member as anyone. Though I feel as though I've assimilated a fair understanding of the traditions just by being present in NA for a few years, I'm interested in “working” them in a more formal way. I'd like to study them one-by-one, in a fashion similar to my experience working through the 12 Steps: guided by my sponsor, learning how to apply the principles of each tradition to my life. In other words, I'd like to learn how to more consciously live the traditions in my day-to-day life. The spiritual principles of our traditions are the underpinnings of our personal recovery as well as that of our fellowship; I'm eager to grow in my understanding of them as I progress in my journey as a recovering addict.

Christmas Craziness

My obsessing mind was thrown off by a simple text-message from my mother. It read simply, "Want to help cook Thanksgiving dinner? Are you eating with us?" My complete immersion in the beautiful process of recovery, coupled with my self-centeredness, gave me pause. Is it the holiday season already? When did it stop being September? And furthermore, when was the last time that I was a part of any family gathering? I have a blurred memory of eating Thanksgiving food in detox last year, and not being able to hold it down. I solemnly recall receiving a coffee mug from my rehab counselor on Christmas. I remember a Christmas presentation thing at a Juvenile Detention Center. I still feel worthless as I think about being unable to help my little sisters with an Easter egg hunt—I was on house arrest. I think of earnestly deciding to buy Christmas presents for my family, but wasting the money on drugs, and the remorse thereafter. For me, and I suppose for other recovering addicts, the holidays and family in general stir up unpleasant emotions. I believe this approaching holiday season, at least for me, is not a frustration, but an opportunity. It is a chance for personal growth and a meaningful time to show up for the innocent bystanders of my neglect; their only fault was to love me. Narcotics Anonymous has taught me to accept the past for what it is, but not to let it govern my present or future. The coming holidays and approaching hours with my family are gifts I have been given and I am grateful to have the ability show up. -Anonymous

Identifying In with the Disease of Addiction

A few weeks ago I was at a meeting listening to everyone's stories about their isolation, hopelessness, degradation, and despair. Borrowing money against this addict's house, losing his job, and not eating for weeks was the summary of the first man's story. The second man shared his experience about hiding in his closet to get high, while his son was in the living room playing. Following those shares, everyone else shared similar stories. But the funny thing is that the addicts' drugs of choice were all different, but the results of the using were all the same. My experience has shown that when I am so closed minded that I cannot, in my mind, get past the drugs used I cannot hear a message of recovery. Also my friendships in recovery have been pulled apart because of using and fallings out. All because in early recovery we liked to figure out who was worse than whom. I have found, that when I can't find the similarities between me and everyone else around me, my disease is taking over my brain, and I'm not letting other recovering addicts get close to me and help me. So as long as I stay open minded enough to hear everyone's experience then, for me, it is guaranteed that I hear a message of recovery at every meeting. -Anonymous

Bulletin Board

Tri-State Narcotics Anonymous Convention, Baltimore, Maryland- November 27, 28, 29

Dulles Corridor Marathon Meetings at Loudoun Club 12, 10pm November 25- 10pm November 26

To Tell the Truth Meeting has moved locations and now meets at the Reston Community Center

H.O.W. Meeting in need of support

New Women's Meeting, Serenity Sisters, in need of support

Third Tradition Meeting in need of support, struggling to afford literature

Robin's 1 year celebration, Just for Today Meeting, November 27

Andy B.'s 1 year celebration, Bedrock Meeting, November 27

Dave 12's 1 year celebration, Ultimate Weapon Meeting, December 18

Nate F.'s 20 year celebration, To Tell the Truth Meeting, November 22

Jason L.'s 6 year celebration, To Tell the Truth Meeting, November 29

Linda K.'s 24 year & Railroad Bob's 30 year celebration, Bottom of the Mountain Meeting, December 1

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS • DULLES CORRIDOR

To learn how to be of service to the Dulles Corridor Newsletter contact Andy B. at 571.527.7788