

NEW ATTITUDES, The NORVANA Newsletter

April 2010

No Monthly Quiz this month.

A reminder that Together We Can weekend is next month, May 7-9 at Prince William Forest Park. For more information, email norvanaspecialevents@hotmail.com, or see <http://www.cprna.org/events/documents/twc2010.pdf> for details. I had hoped to include a piece on campouts of Norvana past, but it did not arrive by press time; perhaps next month.

Also, the C&P Regional Convention is in Ocean City April 16-18, for details see <http://cprcna.org/24/>

COMPETENCE

“The sooner we face our problems within ourselves and society, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible and productive members of that society”.

Does this quote sound familiar? It should, it's part of one of our basic readings, “How it Works”, you probably hear it at almost every meeting you attend. What it tells me is that I can't use my addiction as a cover to avoid facing my problems and issues.

One of the biggest problems I have faced in my many years of NA service is this: people in recovery are generally less reliable when it comes to completing tasks than people in the rest of the world. I believe that this is part of our disease. When we are not working a good program (or not working a program at all), we are self-centered, unreliable jerks. Who wants to grow up? I certainly didn't, but I slowly learned that life on life's terms required me to grow up, and face things, and work at them.

It seems to me like a lot of people in recovery think that just staying clean is all they need to do, and that they can continue in their old habits. Well, that's their right, but they are not facing their problems, and they are not becoming contributing members of society. And honestly, in my opinion, they are not adding much to the fellowship either, except perhaps making me grateful that I am not them when they share at meetings (because they don't seem that happy very often either).

I believe we are here not only to get clean and stay clean, but to get better at facing life. The 12th Step doesn't just ask us to carry the message or to stay clean, but to “practice these principles in all our affairs”. Being responsible, in service or in life, can be just as important to recovery as going to meetings and calling your sponsor.

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH BEING COMPETENT. If you've never experienced it before, work at it and try it; you might actually enjoy it. I know I do when I achieve it.

Jim S.

**Recovery Haiku: A warm afternoon
Sweating as I mow the lawn
Clean again today**

REMINDER: SEND SUBMISSIONS TO norvananewsletter@cprna.org

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DON'T TELL AN ADDICT WHAT TO DO

During the past year I've listened to addicts in meetings explain how they dislike being told what to do. I've also been informed that we *should not* tell addicts what to do. Believe it or not, this has come not from just newcomers, but from some members with time. Sometimes I find myself listening in a meeting and wondering if I'm actually in a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous.

Where does this stuff come from? Don't tell an addict what to do?! Excuse me?!

When I arrived at NA over twenty years ago, I brought an enormous amount of arrogance with me, and I didn't think I needed anyone to tell me what to do either. But my first sponsor told me something (early on, thank God) that really scared me. He said he came to Narcotics Anonymous and he couldn't get clean because he didn't want anybody to tell him what to do. He told me that he came to NA and continued to use and to suffer for quite some time. He said he was finally able to get clean (and stay clean) when he shut up and did what he was told. As I said, this scared me. It conjured up a nightmarish vision of me coming to meetings, not being able to get clean, continuing to live in the misery that was my life at that time. So guess what I did. . . . I shut up and did what I was told. And I got clean, and stayed clean. Go figure. Now some of you may be thinking that the literature talks about not giving advice. This is true. But who said anything about advice. Some of our members need to learn to distinguish between advice and directions. Yes: directions! You know. We read some of them at the beginning of most of our meetings.

I came to NA paranoid and filled with self-loathing. I couldn't take responsibility for anything (how I managed to keep the job I had then is beyond me). Oh, and did I mention I wanted to stop using and couldn't? I didn't know much, but it was quite clear to me that I didn't know what I needed to do. So I shut up and took some direction from many of the addicts who were already here. Quite a few of us did this. We shut up, we learned to listen and did what we were told. And we got clean and began to recover. Interestingly, I don't hear any of those people saying "don't tell an addict what to do." I usually hear it from relatively new folks, or from members who took an extremely long time getting clean (because when they were told what to do, they didn't do it). And if you ask even those folks just when it was that they were finally able to get clean, the answer is invariably when they became willing to take direction from someone. This is not meant to be a snipe at anyone. I'm simply tired of sitting in meetings and hearing bullshit like "don't tell an addict what to do" passed off as our message. And if you don't believe it's bullshit, try getting clean without taking direction from anyone. Let me know how that works out for you.

If all else fails, **don't use no matter what!** (Those are directions). All you people who told this addict what to do: thanks; you saved my life.

William