



NEW ATTITUDES

The NORVANA Newsletter August 2009

Message from the Editor

Greetings, fellow addicts. After a 5 month hiatus, the NORVANA newsletter, "New Attitudes", returns to publication with this edition. (To show my age, I still thought it was called "A Little Good News", but upon checking the archives I see that it has been "New Attitudes" for at least 10 years. The name is as old as our current policy ☺). I am looking forward to serving you for the next year or two.

This newsletter will be printed on real paper as all past NORVANA newsletters have been, but it will also be posted on the web, at

<http://www.cprna.org/norvana/>
Submissions can be emailed to norvananewsletter@cprna.org

You can also send old-fashioned hardcopy submissions through the US Post Office at PO Box 7113, Falls Church, VA 22046, but there will be a delay of at least a month before these get to the newsletter.

We have an interesting submission from our ASC chair of the last 2 years, William C., about special interest meetings. I pretty much agree with what he says, and I am grateful to him for having the courage to bring up a topic which will probably cause a stir. I will weigh in on the subject next month, and

it would not surprise me if his piece inspires a submission or two. We also have what I hope will be a regular quiz on NA facts and history (both local and global) and the issue is filled out with a nice quote from the Basic Text, Sixth Edition.

I believe that it is important to remember our principle of unity. United we stand, divided we fall. I couldn't stay clean on my own, and my guess is that neither could you, or you wouldn't be in NA and reading this. We need each other, and I believe it is part of our recovery to reach out to others.

Jim S.

"As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well."

Upcoming Events:

NORVANA hosts the C&P Regional Service Committee on August 8 at Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Rd, Springfield VA 22310. Subcommittee meetings (Special Events, H&I, PI, Phonline) run from 10-12am, lunch is 12-1, and the main meeting is 1-4pm.

The 33rd NA World Convention will be held in Barcelona, Spain on August 20-23. The theme is "Amor sin Fronteras" ("Love without Borders" in English).

NEW ATTITUDES, page 2, August 2009

A little quiz for you

Test your knowledge of NA facts and history with the following questions. Answers are on page 4.

1. In what year was NA officially founded?
 - a. 1853
 - b. 1944
 - c. 1935
 - d. 1953
2. What fellowship did NA split off from when it was founded?
 - a. Addicts Anonymous
 - b. Heroin Anonymous
 - c. Alcoholics Anonymous
 - d. Percocet Anonymous
3. Who is the most famous “founding person” of NA?
 - a. Bill W.
 - b. Doctor Bob
 - c. Junkie Joe J.
 - d. Jimmy K.
4. What is RSC, and when does it meet?
 - a. Ritalin and Speed Council, every day
 - b. Revolutionary Soldiers Camp, once a year on July 4.
 - c. Regional Service Committee, every two months on (usually) the second Saturday.
 - d. River and Stream Control, every Sunday morning to check area water supplies and quality.
5. How many areas are there in our region?
 - a. 8
 - b. 9
 - c. 10
 - d. 11

Our First Tradition teaches us to look past our differences for our common welfare. The concept of unity described in this tradition is not the same thing as uniformity. Over time we find that those differences are precisely the things that enrich us. In the particulars of our stories the truth of our message comes through and we see how alike we really are. This can seem like a contradiction in NA: our development as individuals and as a fellowship is about fostering our common bonds and common identity; at the same time, we cultivate and cherish the things that make each of us who we are. To stay strong and grow, we need both of these points of view... You may not relate to everything you read here-just as you might not identify with everyone who shares in an NA meeting-but we hope that at least some of these voices will touch and inspire you. In NA we learn that as addicts we are not unique, but as people we are individuals, and our experience matters. Collectively we are so much more than the sum of our parts. Each of us, regardless of our clean time or where we came from, has something to contribute by sharing openly and honestly, and something to gain when we listen with an open heart.

Basic Text, Sixth Edition, pp. 111 and 113

NEW ATTITUDES, page 3, August 2009

SPECIAL INTEREST MEETINGS

What's up with all the special interest meetings? How is it that (at most meetings) we read something that states we don't care who you are and that anyone is welcome, yet some of our members find it necessary to separate themselves into little enclaves based on specific characteristics. It seems that over the past couple of years, a new women's meeting has sprung up every two or three months. And now, recently, some of our men have found the need to start their own meetings. What's up?!

I don't attend men's meetings, or any other special interest meetings. I attend NA meetings, because I'm a member of NA. During my first year in recovery we had a men's group in our area. When I told my sponsor (at that time) I was planning on attending he pointed out that a large part of my problem was the fact that I needed to learn to accept people—all people—as they are; that I'd been separating myself from people all my life—to my own detriment—and that NA was about us learning to accept and love each other, to treat each other with dignity and respect regardless of who we are or where we come from. He also said it was extremely important for me to learn to deal with men and to allow some of them into my life, and that I had a much better chance of accomplishing this via sponsorship and the 12 steps and by extending my hand to other men (allowing friendships the chance to develop) than by sitting in a men's meeting. My experience has proven he was right. Somehow, over the years, by practicing the principles of our program, I've learned to accept people as they are.

I have spoken with many members about this issue—a number of women in particular. I do understand that we have sexual predators in our rooms and some of the women don't feel safe in mainstream meetings. But, interestingly enough, I see all the newer women in the mainstream meetings while women with time are absent. And I know a number of the women I got clean with are sitting in the women's meetings. (Surely those women have developed enough self-esteem and self-respect at this point to be able to tell someone to step off?). In any case, I have some questions. Women, instead of separating yourselves, why are you not in our meetings taking a stand against this problem? Why are you not sharing your experience, strength and hope? Why are you not teaching? That's right—I said it—teaching! Our program is taught—we don't get it by osmosis. If you recall, we were all taught. Men, same questions. Why are you not taking a stand? Why are you not suggesting to your sponsees that when these women arrive at our rooms seeking help, they be left alone—at least long enough to start recovering?! Folks, when we got here, there were people here who were willing to take a stand on this. There are still a few of us who are willing to do so. Make no mistake; this is not about me attempting to be better than others. I am better than no one. This is about my concern for the well-being of the fellowship that saved my life.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

NEW ATTITUDES, page 4, August 2009

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

I find it disturbing that we keep starting special interest meetings while other meetings suffer. I find it disturbing that we have almost no step, tradition, or literature study groups in our area. Perhaps if we had more of these meetings, people would grow enough to not feel the need to separate themselves from the rest of us. We have some problems within our area and our fellowship as a whole. We are not going to be able to solve them if we are all separated into little enclaves.

I expect to be rebutted. I hope this is the case. Debate is healthy; it spurs growth. But if someone plans to approach me quoting traditions: don't waste your time. I'm pretty well read on those principles, and there is nothing in any of them that says we should separate ourselves in order to carry our message. The fourth tradition does tell us that groups are autonomous, but if you don't see how this issue affects "other groups or NA as a whole" you're in denial. May the god of your understanding bestow his or her blessings upon you. I will keep coming back.

William C

Answers to NA quiz:

1. d, 1953. Some early versions of Addicts Anonymous began as early as 1944, but did not last. Alcoholics Anonymous was founded in 1935 by Bill W. and Doctor Bob. Addicts in 1853 had to suffer with their disease to the bitter end. I'm very grateful to be here today when NA is alive and strong.

2. c, Alcoholics Anonymous. AA did not know how to incorporate people with narcotics addictions into their framework, so NA was formed with the blessing (and adapted steps and traditions) of AA. By changing Step One to "...powerless over OUR ADDICTION..." NA opened itself to recovery from addiction to any and all mind-altering substances, which I think is an improvement over the original AA version of the step.

3. d, Jimmy K. For many years, the World Service Office inventory was kept in his car or basement. He also designed the diamond/circle NA logo.

4. c, Regional Service Committee. It's the regional version of ASC, with RCMs from the areas playing the roles of the GSR at the ASC, a chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer and the subcommittee chairs. There are also reports by the members of the regional convention board of directors. If you're reading this shortly after publication: the next RSC is on 8 August at Franconia UM Church, hosted by your own NORVANA; check it out if you want to learn more.

5. d, 11. They are: Battlefield (southwest Virginia suburbs), Central Maryland, DC, Dulles Corridor (western Fairfax and Loudoun counties), East of the River (eastern DC), Frederick, Montgomery, NORVANA, Rock Creek (northwest DC), South Potomac, and Tri-County (Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert counties in southern Maryland).

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