

# NEW ATTITUDES, The NORVANA Newsletter

October 2009

**Editor: Totally squeezed for space this month! Monthly Quiz:**

1. What is the oldest continuous meeting in Norvana?
2. What is the second oldest meeting? (answers on bottom of page 4)

## **Dating, Sex and Making major decisions.**

Let's talk about an often-avoided topic. Sex and dating. Often the war cry has been, "Don't get into a relationship in the first year" and we say little else. Most people new to recovery take that suggestion to an extreme (big surprise) and assume they are not to date or have sex in their first year and then when they fall short they feel as if they are shit heels or failures. Let's put a light on this one. The reading says "not to make any major decisions in the first year". Dating either with or without a sexual component simply does not constitute a major decision. That said, dating ultimately has a purpose and that's to find someone with whom to have a relationship, so when (as new people to recovery) we approach dating it would no doubt be fairly important to ask ourselves if we think we are capable of dating without getting into a relationship (which does constitute a major decision). I would recommend double-checking our assets and liabilities specifically on this topic with a sponsor. I think it's important to spell this out for addicts who are *not* new to recovery as well. If you have over a year and you seek or embark on a dating experience with someone who has less than a year you are behaving in a predatory street mentality manner. Dating someone with less than a year means you are taking advantage of that person, as they are ill equipped to make decisions based on a solid foundation of recovery. In addition you are setting yourself up for disappointment and most likely a de-focusing of your own recovery. Everyone confused so far? I'll bet. I was too.

Look, we all have needs both sexual and needs for simple companionship, but we do need to act with integrity. Mood follows action. Act with integrity, and you regain dignity.

This is how I see it. Within a year of recovery it's ok to date other people who have less than a year (or people outside of recovery) so long as you and your sponsor think you can date without getting into a relationship (thereby de-focusing your recovery). Over a year of recovery, stay with dating people who also have over a year of recovery. To **not** do so does the new person *and* yourself a disservice.

And for goodness sake everyone...use a f##kin condom. We're in one of the highest classifications for HIV transmittal on the planet. Wouldn't it suck to get clean just to die because you dated someone who was HIV positive and you hadn't used a condom? The fog has lifted but you still won't see if your eyes are closed. (Anonymous)

## **Sex and Dating**

Would you seek guidance from someone who is giving you a suggestion but did not follow that suggestion themselves. I have heard it said so many times it is ridiculous, "Don't get in a relationship until you have a year." I wish people would stop giving bullshit suggestions that they themselves didn't follow. How about this for a suggestion: share your experience, strength, and hope. Since when did addicts become experts at relationships anyway. I was given that suggestion, not to get in a relationship in the first year of recovery and I did not follow it. I am happily married to that woman I met in my first year and we just celebrated our 7<sup>th</sup> year wedding anniversary. Love one of the strongest of emotions I have experienced is a blessing and is meant to be felt at any point in recovery. The suggestion I did follow was "Don't get high no matter what." Recovery is all about relationships: with my HP, myself, and others. I encourage my sponsees to live their lives, after all isn't that how you learned your lessons. Or did you read about it, write about it, or just hear about it. If you do chose to get into a relationship remember your tools: your sponsor, meetings, the steps, your network, your HP. If we use our tools, together we can stay clean through anything. (Anonymous)

RECOVERY HAIKU:

bird sings song outside /pull robe tight from morning chill/ clean again today (Jim S)

REMINDER: SEND SUBMISSIONS TO

[norvananewsletter@cprna.org](mailto:norvananewsletter@cprna.org)

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## **Special Interest Meetings – Some Thought**

I remember in early recovery going to a woman's meeting, crying my eyes out and sharing my pain. – relationship pain, of course. Only in this meeting, did I break down. Only here could I really get honest about how much pain I was in and share the very personal details of the situation. Only in this meeting, could I feel safe enough. Only in a woman's meeting could I feel a special type of support, feel even embraced as no other meeting would make me feel. It was a life-saver and in some ways kicked off my recovery. Perhaps "some" were more comfortable when they came in, quickly beginning to share everything with a sponsor and comfortably sharing in the rooms. Perhaps some didn't bring so much dysfunction to the table. Perhaps some did all the right things to recover from day one. Not me. (Have we forgotten how it was?) It was a gradual process and in the meantime, I had the woman's meetings in addition to other meetings.

The issue of sexual predators in co-ed meetings is not the main issue. The issue for some is where can we share detailed, personal information about certain unique problems from a gut honest level? Yes, I said "unique." "Unique" meaning not the usual problems of all of the rest of the fellowship. The answer is special interest meetings. They are not only the appropriate place; they provide the feeling of safety that is needed. Think, people. (Have we old-timers forgotten?) Think, for example, of the experiences and emotions related to incest, rape for both men and women, the decline of health and sexual performance, dating when having a sexually-transmitted disease, terminal illness...imagine for a moment -- terminal illness. And the full-scale fear, self-esteem, shame, guilt, etc. that can be related to these issues. And on top of that we may be new in recovery???? Perhaps if we cannot relate to these devastating issues and we have no experience with them, we will not understand the vital need for these meetings. But we shouldn't negate the need just because our life has fortunately taken a smooth road and we personally are not experiencing any of these problems. (Isn't it better to understand than to be understood?) Yes, we should share with our sponsors. And even though I do so, being able to share my issues, in more detail in a more personal meeting helps me to stay humble and reduces ego. Simultaneously, I am hopefully helping others to feel safe enough to begin to open up. If we are recovering, we may or may not eventually move away from these meetings, but then there are always those that are coming in behind us and behind them... and behind them.... Lastly, the most important question is, "What would God have us to do?" "Why not have these meetings?" Why not meet the newcomer halfway and facilitate his getting in the door and getting comfortable. Why not have a place where people can come together and share the more personal issues that only some have experienced? WHY NOT??? Special interest meetings are not diluting the attendance at open meetings? No, I think not. Reduced attendance (and weak recovery) is another problem in this area. In fact, not having special interest meeting may even add to this problem. Attendance is a separate issue and needs to be addressed from the top down and at the top first But that is a separate article in itself. The special interest meetings should not suffer because our other meetings do not have the strong attendance of yesterday. (Yvonne M.)

## **Another thought**

In September's Newsletter, I read a lot of very interesting and engaging entries. I'd like to continue some of the conversations that have been ongoing, and add my two cents' worth to the pot. First, a fellow addict expressed that one of his major disappointments was not being able to attend anniversary meetings at women's meetings. I only have a few years living in this area, and I thought it was common knowledge that men are ALWAYS welcome (actually, not in word only) at anniversary meetings in women's meetings, and women are ALWAYS welcome at anniversary meetings in men's meetings. Having said that, I do understand the general concerns regarding special interest meetings in non-anniversary times. The thing is, since the 60's every level of society has been opening up more and more to issues of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic or "racial," cultural, and religious tolerance and acceptance. The problem is: we're not completely "there" yet. It's still a work in progress. There is a historical and actual trend, still, of violence and discrimination against women and homosexual men. Way more often than straight men, women are targets of sexual predators. I am not a woman. I don't know what it feels like to be the gender that has to think twice about going places alone, and what time of night it is, even in a "safe" neighborhood. I don't know what it feels like to be the recipient of socially-encouraged attention from men who desire me

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sexually, considering that given the game of numbers, a lot of those advances will be unwanted. I don't know what it's like to have to work against the stigma of "whore," for which there really isn't a society-wide equivalent for men. And although the term "deadbeat dad" is widely known, one can argue that society is still less forgiving of "bad mothers" than it is of "bad fathers." If women feel like they need an extra safe haven to meet, then who the hell am I to tell them different? The same thing goes for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered), and all the other variations of internal and external sexual identities. We are not one of the civilized nations that allows openly LGBT people in the military, nor is same-sex marriage widely permitted. If once in while, they want to feel free to express themselves without editing in a setting where they know they won't be discriminated against, who the hell am I to tell them they can't? So what's the rationale for men's meetings? Who do they need a safe haven from? Well, as a man, I don't really know that men do need a safe haven. What I do know, is that male addicts, like females, didn't always have a lot of true friends of their own gender out there in the using life. People were a means to an end--getting high, and men were often of less use than females. So like the ladies, I think once a while it could be good to go to meetings without the distraction of the opposite sex and to express oneself freely regarding sexual issues. Sure, we ALL have (or SHOULD have, if you wanna live) sponsors. We can tell sponsors anything that we don't feel comfortable sharing in a meeting. However, there is something especially liberating about telling a whole group of people something that's been bothering us, and feeling them accept us anyway. Many brave souls, male, female, and LGBT people know the sweet joy of being yourself no matter WHAT meeting and with WHOM. To those brave souls, thank you for enriching the diversity of our meetings and sharing bravely and openly at general meetings. That level of freedom and acceptance is ultimately far greater than what one can get in "special" meetings. Acceptance from the entire NA community at large: that is the NA way and the NA ideal. However, I think that if one participates in these special meetings in moderation, that is, they are not the bulk of our recovery time, then there is no harm that can come from them. I am not prejudiced against African Americans, and yet, I do not regularly attend large meetings that are predominantly (like 90% or more) African-American. Why? I've heard great messages of recovery and been made to feel welcome at those meetings, so why aren't they a regular part of my schedule? I am also not prejudiced against people who are LGBT. However, one time I accidentally stumbled into a non-labeled meeting that was predominantly populated by gay men (not in Norvana). I heard NA's message of recovery there. I was made to feel welcome. Hell, they had the cuuutest little cupcakes to snack on! Why haven't I returned? Maybe my experiences with these meetings is a small clue as to why sometimes the girls wanna hang with the girls, and the gay guys wanna hang with the gay guys. My ideal meetings are like my ideal world: mixed up to the max. I do yearn for the day where we can all just live together and recover together ALL of the time. But until that day, I am going to choose to respect women, LGBT folks, straight men, and anyone else who choose special meetings sometimes. In addition, although dual-diagnosis meetings are not an issue in Norvana, I have seen them in other areas. People wanna discuss, in detail, their meds, depressive episodes, psychotic episodes, and other mental health-specific issues. Well, are those "outside issues"? Many of them have been told that at regular meetings. Isn't there some other fellowship for that? Why call it NA? Maybe because the drug addicts with mental health issues scare the mental health people that aren't addicts. And aren't some alcoholics still, to this day, "turned off" by junkie talk? Sometimes we just wanna be in a surrounding where we relate the most. Who among us has not heard someone say, or felt ourselves, that a certain meeting is too "yuppie," or too "ghetto," or too "white," or too "black," or too "old," or too "young," or too "country," or too "boring," or too damn "ignorant," or "I don't speak Spanish" or "No hablo ingles." In these luxurious days of many many NA meetings available, we've just gotten choosy. That's what happens when people have choices: they choose. Special interest meetings have been around for decades in many areas, and NA, as well as America, for that matter, have not been torn asunder. I say live and let live, man. Like an addict wrote last month, we got bigger issues in Norvana. (Anonymous)

**“...the 12 Traditions, the principles of unity that bind us together and keep us from stepping in the piles of doo-doo that are in front of us...are little signs...that say ‘just don’t step in that one’ . They help us stay unified and weave our way through there...”**  
**World Service Forum on the Twelve Concepts, WCNA 29, Atlanta GA, 2002.**

# NEW ATTITUDES, page 4, October 2009

## 19%

Cracker Box, 1981  
I'm Somebody, 1982  
Womens Choice  
Was Women's Network 1985  
Late But Straight 1985  
Sunday Sanity 1986  
Better Here than There 1986  
Circle of Hope  
Died and came back 1986  
Plan B was Unity Club 1987  
Came to Believe 1987  
Another Look 1988  
Rose Hill Recovery 1988  
Na Pavilion was NA Café 1988  
One Route to Recovery 1987  
Recovery on the Southside 1989  
NA in LA 1990  
In the Heart of 1991  
Comfort Zone 1991  
Who Wants to Live 1991  
Edsall Park 1993  
Just for Today – Unity 1994  
Just for Today Meditation 2003  
Was Southern Towers 1994  
Stepping Out of the Hole 1994  
NA for Life 1995  
Church Basement Recovery 1997  
NA Back Room 1998  
Over the Hump 1998  
NA at Walter Reed 2002

Between 1982, when NORVANA was first formed, and 2002 when I stopped keeping track, there were 194 meetings started. Of those meetings, 1 was dropped due to Traditions and 1 became an H&I meeting. In the summer / fall of 1987, 20 NORVANA meetings in the Prince William area became the current Battlefield Area – 4 of those meetings still exist. In the fall / winter of 1991, 10 meetings in the western Fairfax – Loudoun County area became the current

Dulles Area – 6 of those meeting still exist. So of the original 194 meetings, 2 were removed from the meeting list and 30 meetings broke off and formed new areas, that leaves 162 meeting that were started in the first 20 years NORVANA existed. The above list reflects the 31 that are still around. That's about a 19% survival rate. (Anonymous)

**[EDITOR: Circle of Hope, an open meeting at Alexandria Hospital, began in 1986 and folded in 1999. Circle of Hope, a women's meeting in Springfield, began in 2008. Youth In Recovery, established in 1987, became Monday Night Freedom in 2004 and is still active. Still Around was established in 2000 and is still active. Women's Choice in Alexandria began in 1990, as Women's Network in Vienna closed. ]**

## MEETINGS STARTED SINCE 2002 AND STILL ACTIVE:

Simplicity is the Key, May 2003  
We Do Recover, June 2003  
Women Need Women (women), Dec 2003  
Glad to Be Back, March 2005  
Youth N Recovery, April 2006  
Step Over the Hump, May 2006  
At the Top of the Hill, August 2006  
Free Yourself, August 2006  
NA at G Street, November 2006  
Mens Step (men), April 2007  
Saturday Serenity, October 2007  
Port in the Storm, May 2008  
Circle of Hope (women), August 2008  
Solo Por Hoy (Saturday), October 2008  
Come as You Are, December 2008  
Sisters in Recovery (women), June 2009  
Keep Stepping Mens Rap (men), July 2009  
Steps to Serenity, August 2009  
Jim S.

## Answers to quiz:

1. Crackerbox, listed since the fall of 1981
2. I'm Somebody, listed since the fall of 1982