



# Straight Hope

Montgomery Area Narcotics Anonymous Newsletter

July 2017

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### What's Happening & Stuff You Don't want to miss!

**Ice cream & Pizza Bingo July 15<sup>th</sup> 6:00-9:00**

**\$5 Trinity Lutheran Church Bowie, MD**

**Orioles Game & Fireworks Aug 18<sup>th</sup> \$15**

**Crab Feast Sept 9<sup>th</sup> 12-4:00**

**Riverfront Park Laurel, MD**

**Orioles game Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> \$15**

**Free hoodie giveaway to all fans over 15**

**For Tickets & Event Info**

**Contact Terri 240-498-5242**



Fireworks

**A Little Recovery Humor by Ben C**

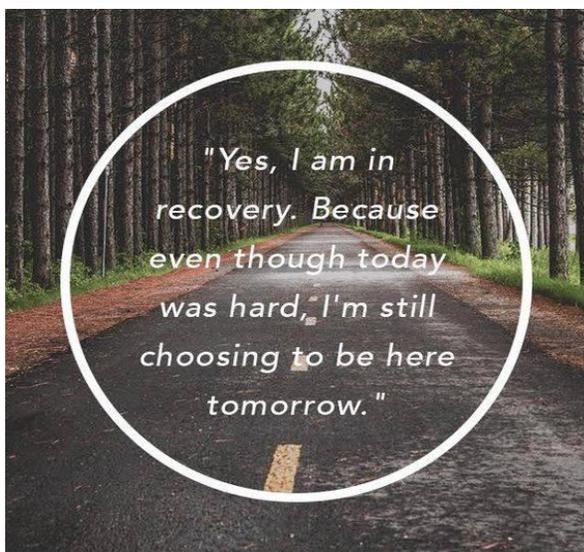
[www.recoverycartoons.com/favs/favtoons.shtml](http://www.recoverycartoons.com/favs/favtoons.shtml)

### June Anniversaries/Celebrations

James P	3	Serenity in the Park	7/6
Mike M	31	Speak Easy	7/8
Betty H	34	It works How & Why	7/10
Pauline S	31	It works How & Why	7/10
Alpha J	35	Steps to Life	7/13
Christine H	3	Share On Saturday	7/15
Scott P	30	Fresh Start	7/15
Gregory W	25	Speak Easy	7/15
Bobby G	11	Fresh Start	7/22
Rob R	27	Progress In NA	7/16
Chris M	1	Stepping Free	7/20
Bill E	27	The Alternative	7/23
Rita S	2	Meetin' in Wheaton	7/25
Up County NA	29	Group Anniversary	8/4
Karla J	8	Share On Saturday	8/5
Jimmy F & Bob B	30	Get Down Group	8/25

Send us an email when & where you will celebrate:

[moco.news@cprna.org](mailto:moco.news@cprna.org)



## Step Six

*"We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."*

Surrender is the initial part of working each Step. Surrender prepares us to ask God to remove our defects. Respect and honest humility are keys that open doors to powers that are so great that they dare not approach us when we are exerting our wills. The loving higher powers do not want to hurt us, and going against our un-surrendered will would definitely hurt! We have a blessed tendency to not violate certain basics of humanity. If we betray, exploit or manipulate others without their knowledge or permission, the shame and guilt can exact a high price. The Sixth Step gives us a chance to actualize our disapproval of the way we have been living our lives. The danger here is that our illness of addiction tries to make us forget that we are tapping into a greater power that enables us to work our way back to health through the Twelve Steps. We find that submission calms us and allows us to do our part by being willing and open to change rather than letting us be hurt. But we have to keep going with the Steps! By the time we get to this Step, we have begun to see that addiction only feeds us contradictions. Some experienced NA members have said that we need to clearly define what is bothering us. We want to make sure we really are suffering from a defect and not merely confused by our disease.

Step 6 introduces the phrase “defects of character”, which requires some comment. In the old days these character defects were seen as the underlying psychodynamics that caused the addiction. Remember that as recently as DSM-II, alcoholism and addiction were listed as personality disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1968). This is the psychological model of addiction that is indeed implicit in some of Bill Wilson’s writings. However, more recent conceptualizations of addiction suggest that these well-known addictive character traits are more likely the results of addiction than its cause. In either event, the kind of thinking, scheming, denial, defense mechanisms, and such that usually accompany the addiction are genuine impediments to recovery and are an appropriate target for change.

Our character defects are indicators of our basic nature. We are likely to find that we have the same basic nature as anyone else. We have needs, and we try to get them met. For instance, we need love. How we go about getting love is where our defects come into play. If we lie, cheat, or harm others and degrade ourselves to get love, we are acting on defects. As defined in *It Works; How and Why*, our defects are basic human traits that have been distorted by our self-centeredness. With our sponsor’s help, we need to list each defect we have, describe the ways in which we act on it, look at how it affects our lives, and, very importantly, find out what we’re feeling when we practice it. Imagining what our life would be like without each defect will help us see that we can live without it. Some of us take practical action by finding out what the opposite spiritual principle would be for each character defect.

### **Meeting Announcements & Request for Historical Data**

- Share on Saturday – Trusted Servants Needed & Coffee Position Open
- Progress in NA – All Positions Open
- New Way of NA Group needs support Monday’s at Rockville Metro Club
- Making a Difference – In need of literature person
- Never Alone – Meeting time has extended 15 minutes now 7:30 pm – 8:45pm
- Hugs Not Drugs – New meeting time 12:30 – 1:30 pm
- SYA–Need help locating what month in 1986 this meeting switched from an AA meeting to NA meeting. Please contact Jeff B (jab1964jab@gmail.com) or Charlie B (cmbucklin@gmail.com)

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## The Recovering Brain

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Studies have identified specific brain changes caused by substance abuse and damages for example:

- Inhalants produce a variety of deleterious effects lowering cognitive ability, to the point of dementia by stripping the protective myelin sheath from brain fibers;
- Cocaine causes repeated microscopic strokes in the brain, leading to dead spots in the brain's nerve circuitry;
- Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA or otherwise known as Ecstasy) damages serotonin producing neurons, which regulate aggression, mood, sexual activity, sleep, and sensitivity to pain

Dr. Budzynski developed brain exercises designed to increase cerebral blood flow. There are many exercises, such as the process of adding verbs to several nouns. There's also serial subtracting. That involves beginning with a number such as 900, and then subtracting any number from it— say seven. So you get 893, and then you subtract seven from that to get 886... and so forth. "It's like lifting weights in the gym: it doesn't always feel good, but it's awfully good for your brain," Dr. Budzynski says. The exercises include visualizing, which stimulates a different part of the brain. Dr. Budzynski asks listeners to simply visualize a schoolroom from childhood as another example.

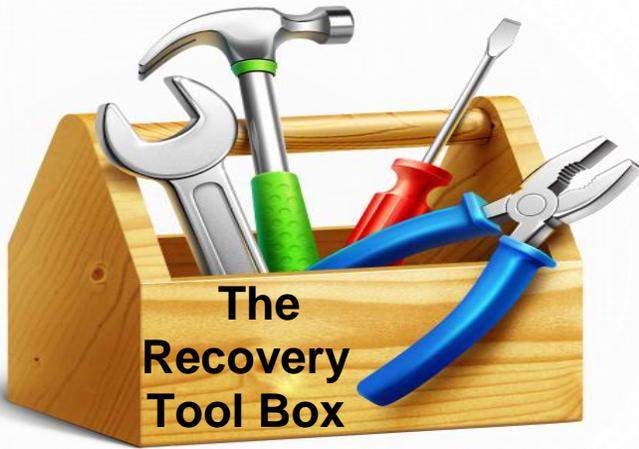
The chemistry of the brain is complex, and does not necessarily improve with age. Over the years, stress produces cortisol, which damages the cells that provide nutrients to the neurons in your hippocampus, a part of the brain. Your hippocampus helps handle, among other things, short-term memory.

Research has found it is wrong to assume that we can't compensate for those physical changes. There is evidence from studies in other countries that some memory deficits in older Americans may be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Our culture expects older people to have short-term memory loss, and so they do. In China, older individuals are respected, and do not show the same memory problems.

Research by a Harvard scientist showed that presenting older people with subliminal positive words and phrases regarding effective memory actually increased their scores on memory tests, Budzynski says. So older folks can keep their minds sharp, even if they can't do everything they could when they were 17.

"It's also important for older people to have lots of activities, including frequent socializing with others," Dr. Budzynski says. Consider taking up hobbies, or a challenging volunteer position. Interact with others in various ways like attending your next NA meeting.

<http://portal.bhsonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Wellness-Bulletin-March-2017.pdf>



### Create a Recovery Tool Box

The goal of having a recovery toolbox is to have various options of coping skills so that when you are in distress, you have something to choose from to keep you grounded and on the right track. Too often, when we are in distress, we run out of ideas resorting to unhealthy habits compromising our recovery.

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### Keep Your Noggin Fit with Brain Exercise

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The dog ran. The dog barked. The dog raced. What else did the dog do? That many seem like a silly question. But the act of thinking up verbs to go with nouns pumps extra blood into your brain, according to brain scans.

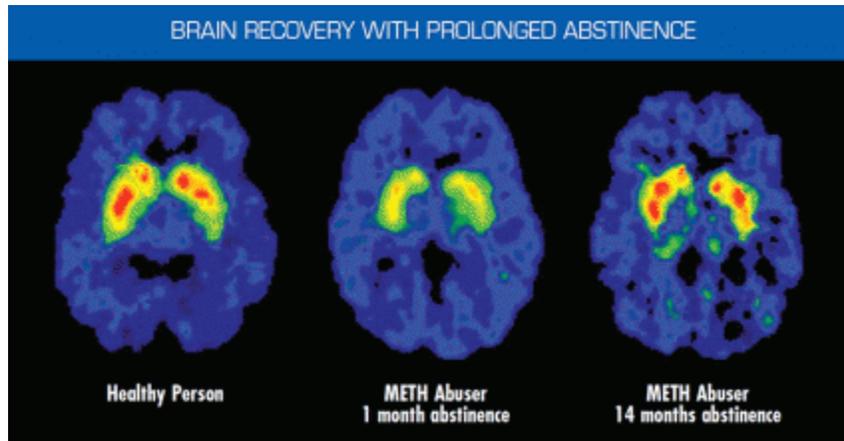
The challenge posed by drugs' effects on the brain is how to achieve restoration of cognitive & motor capabilities. Having burned so many brain cells I always wonder what, if anything, can be done to help my brain in the recovery process. Science has been researching just that.

Did you know that we can still create new dendrites, which are the connections between the neurons? They grow from neurons, like branches grow from a tree, when you do brain exercises, think or see new things. The dendritic networks make a model to comprehend those things. So though we may not be able to wipe out our past drug abuse or stop aging we can do some simple things to help.

The key is to make more dendrites. They are as vital to mental dexterity as phone lines are to phone networks research has found. Getting physical exercise and eating a low-fat diet are also important, because their benefits to the rest of the body certainly apply to the brain.

Getting more blood to the brain is a way to counteract the effects of drug abuse or aging on the brain, says Thomas Budzynski, Ph.D., an affiliate professor of psychosocial at University of Washington. "If there's one general thing that happens as anyone ages, it's that they show decreased cerebral blood flow in certain areas. If you can increase the blood flow, then the neurons will be better nourished," Dr. Budzynski explains.

# The Recovery Tool Box



First and foremost, abstinence is the most important thing we can do for our brains in recovery – It's just that simple, don't use! The images here show the density of dopamine transporters in a brain area called the striatum. This illustrates the brain's remarkable potential to recover, at least partially, after a long abstinence from drugs. The brain in the middle is 30 days out from last drug use to 14 months later in the same brain to the right comparing it to a brain on the left from someone who has never abused drugs or alcohol. Further proof that what we hear in the rooms of NA and the slogans we remind ourselves of every day really do work.

*Source: The Journal of Neuroscience, 21(23):9414-9418. 2001*



## Growing

I recently discovered something that led me to grow in an unexpected way.

With three years clean, I discovered that some members contribute to my growth while others cause me to grow. I shared this with my sponsor; he only smiled. I also shared it with some other old-timers; they thought it was very good.

There was a member in my local fellowship who was elected to be the chairperson of a subcommittee assigned to set up an event. I attended a couple of the subcommittee meetings, returning home after each one devoured by resentment toward this guy. In my estimation, he was the most incompetent person I had ever known to fulfill such a mandate.

The event took place anyway. Not once during the event did the coordinator place himself in the limelight. He left this to the people who, unlike me, had assisted him during the many months of planning and hard work. He kept busy during the event, running left and right to patch whatever holes needed patching.

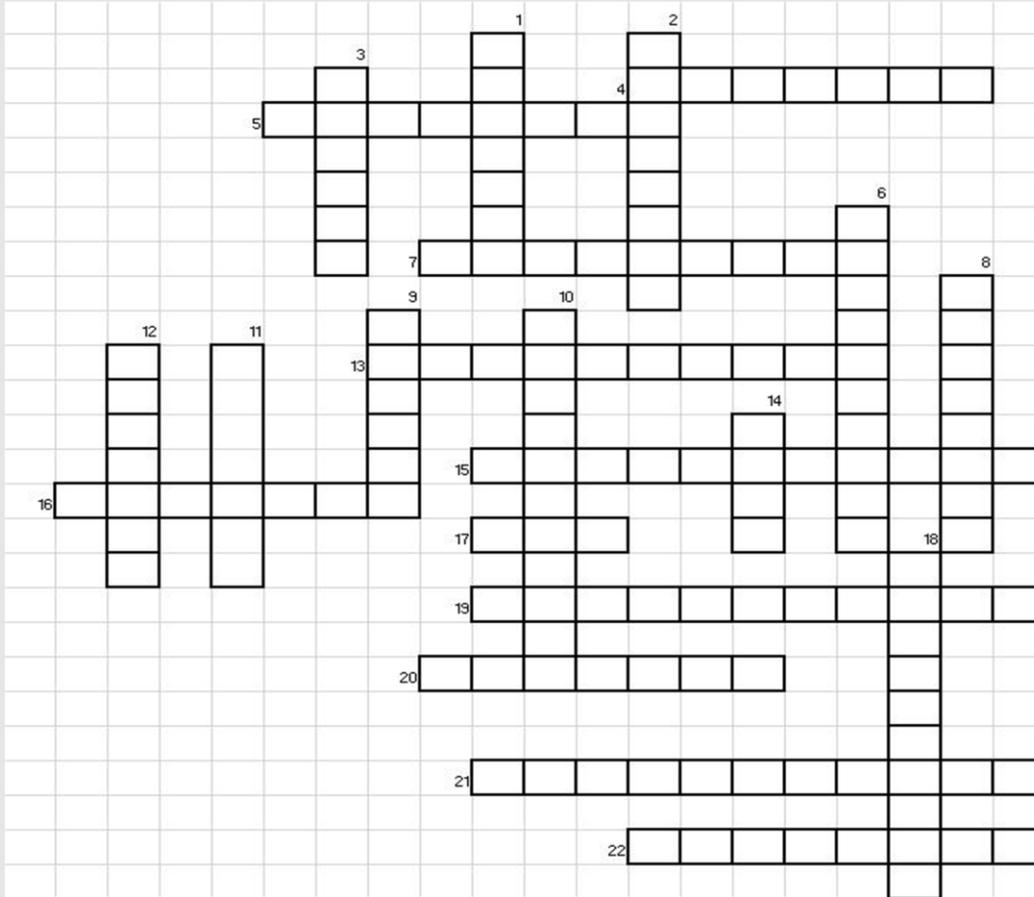
Two weeks after the event, the coordinator presented the ASC with his final report, which showed beyond any doubt that the event had been an unprecedented success in our area. I'm a GSR, so I was present. I caved in. I publicly congratulated and thanked him for the lesson in humility he taught me during the event. From then on, I gained ground in an unexpected direction.

First, I realized more than ever that pride is no problem for me, but humility is. I came to the conclusion that people will *cause me to grow* when I resist learning the lesson that my loving God wants to teach me. Finally, whatever my loving God chooses to put on will happen the way He wants it to happen.

What's truly wonderful about the lesson I learned is that this coordinator and I got close and are now great friends. I never miss an opportunity to let him know that I love him.

Michel B, Quebec ♦

# Puzzle Fun for the Brain



Across		Down	
4	Facility	1	Grubstaker
5	Neophyte	2	Deadening
7	Wisdom	3	Need
13	Prayer	6	Innominate
15	Divinity	8	Regeneration
16	Habituate	9	Reparation
17	Haughty	10	Attitude
19	Necessity	11	Liberation
20	Malady	12	Duty
21	Forbear	14	Poison
22	Altruism	18	Sodality

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## Addicts Sharing Experience, Strength & Hope

No matter what

I feel like I barely remember being a mother. My loss includes two sons. The word loss understates the void in my life caused by their deaths. My sons died three months apart. Traumatized, I found myself operating on pure gut instinct. I had no previous experience with death in my immediate family, but I did know the role of victim/survivor, and I felt defeated. When that gut instinct kicked in, I knew what I had to do. My reactions were based on the tools my recovery in NA had given me. Step One: "I can't." Step Two: "We can." Step Three: "I need help." I asked for help. Over and over, I meditated on a simple prayer for help as well as the Serenity Prayer. I felt that my Higher Power was carrying me, and I came to believe that I could stay clean no matter what.

My family, friends, and local community were in disbelief. The loss was difficult to comprehend – not just for me, but also for them. Often I just needed someone to be with me so I was not alone. NA placed many people in my life, sense of belonging somewhere. My trust issues, abandonment issues, and grief issues took a toll on my family, as well as on those relationships I had built in NA. Naturally, being the good addict that I am, feelings of uniqueness, shame, insecurity, and self-centeredness were created. All I could think about was, why me? You see, my sons committed suicide. Up until that happened, my understanding of how to deal with grief was basically a Band-Aid solution. You know, cry at least one time; write a goodbye letter; say whatever you want; read it out loud to someone; and then let it go! Today I know it's not that simple. It's difficult & sometimes overwhelming to be around people, places, things, or events that trigger memories of my sons.

The action plan I use today to get through those times includes planning around dates, events, and whatever else may arise in the day. My feelings change rapidly, and sometimes I can't deal with life on life's terms; hence, my need to have some sort of a plan. My sponsor, friends, Higher Power, and family support me on those days. I have revised the Band-Aid approach. Here's what works for me now: crying as often as needed. Writing. Talking. Sharing whatever I need to share, as often as I need to share it. And letting go the best that I can. I often let go of things by practicing a ritual of reflection. I burn letters, personal items, or duplicated pictures along with some sage or sweet grass. This ritual helps me feel like I'm offering a gift of love. As the smoke rises, I visualize a thought of placing my sons into God's hands. This energy can feel nurturing, even though I know nothing can bring back the dead. Taking a silent moment makes me feel as if I can do something. I send my love and energy to them every day. I may think about my HP in many ways and engage in a number of comforting rituals. I do know, however, that what's truly important is staying clean, living just for today, and sharing and caring the NA way.

Debbie N, Minnesota

[https://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/NAWay\\_October\\_2008.pdf](https://www.na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/NAWay_October_2008.pdf)

**Area Service Positions Still Open – Need Trusted Servants For:**

Chair                      Vice-Secretary                      Meetings Chair                      DC Liaison  
 Dulles Corridor Liaison                      East of the River Liaison                      NORVANA Liaison  
 S. Potomac Liaison                      Tri-County Liaison                      Battlefield Liaison                      Babysitter

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**This form must be filled out and submitted with any and all articles sent in for publication. Failure to do so may result in your article not being considered for publication.**

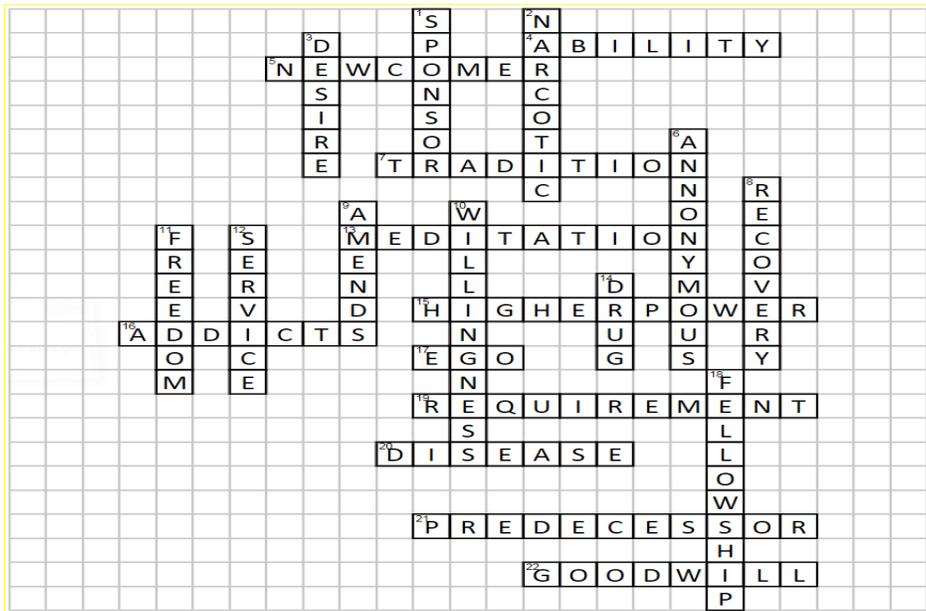
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer Key**



**Share your story, poetry, experience art, drawings or how recovery works for you.**

**Articles are edited for clarity, punctuation and grammar.**

Email submissions to [moco.news@cprna.org](mailto:moco.news@cprna.org)

**STRAIGHT HOPE EDITOR  
 CHRISTINE H.**