

June 2009

Volume 3

*The* New/Old  
NAWay



## *Mission Statement*

*Alternate Service Information Structure for Narcotics Anonymous  
is a point of collection for the informed group conscience of N.A. While we believe an attempt to reform  
N.A. service from within the existing structure might be beneficial, what we believe to be a more effective  
strategy is to provide a steady, reliable, non-political, and non-combative alternative  
for directly responsible service.*

## *Commitment*

I am an addict. I have been clean just under 7 years now. The very first NA meeting I attended was a grey book study meeting. We read the readings, who, what, how, why, and the traditions... we read from the grey book, shared our experience, strength, and hope, and we closed. I felt better after the meeting. Since I was a newcomer and was attending meetings everyday, the next day I attended a meeting that used a different book. It had a hard cover and it said 5th edition on it. There were a lot of people at the meeting, not like the meeting I attended the night before, with only 8 or 9 of us. Either way, I was just here to do what newcomers do and get to a meeting everyday. That's what I was directed to do from the halfway house I was living in. The people at the Grey book meeting had directed me to certain meetings to attend on Wednesday's and Saturday's. At these meetings they used yet another book. This one said 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition revised. And it had a light blue color. Either way we read and shared our experience strength and hope... I kept attending the grey book meeting, and because it was the first meeting I ever attended, and had no prior experience with NA. I made this my home group... I realized that the same people who came to this meeting also attended the two 3rd edition revised meetings on Wednesday and Saturday.

After about 6 months of making daily meetings, I started to wonder why the meetings all had different books. Someone at a 5<sup>th</sup> edition meeting with 9 years clean told me that the people who are having the grey book meeting and the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition revised meeting are breaking traditions, and they aren't really NA. I couldn't understand why because I was still clean, and I had attended them regularly. I was also told that these same people didn't participate with the service structure, and they were renegade meetings. Wow, I was just happy to be clean, and I started to notice some real changes in my life. I always had felt a much stronger spirit of recovery in those "renegade meetings. I stayed around long enough to slowly learn the history of how this came about, and how the service structure evolved from a service structure to a governing body. And in the meantime, I saw many people who subscribe to that system and only attended the 5th edition meetings, which are now the 6th edition meetings, and complain about that governing body. But they would always go back, out of fear of what would happen if they left. This always puzzled me. That service structure really has nothing to do with opening the meeting with the serenity prayer, people reading the opening readings, reading from the text, and sharing, and then closing the meeting. That's what kept me clean.



Anyway I'm still here and still a part of the same home group I joined. We have 4 meetings a week, and study the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition revised, and every Friday we still study the grey book. We print our own IP's from a home computer and printer, and when we need books we go to the local office depot. It seems very simple to me, and it is a simple program.

## *An Essay on the Eighth Tradition*

“Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.” Let's take a look at what this tradition is telling us. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Revised it says, “Service centers may employ special workers.” This statement means that service centers may employ workers for special skills such as phone answering, clerical work, or printing.” Our lowest level service committee, NAW\$, has gone far beyond our fellowship's understanding of special workers. By utilizing staff writers to create our literature, NAW\$ stands in clear violation of the spirit of the 8<sup>th</sup> Tradition. I have often heard addicts say that “they only edit and compile our ideas”. In response to that, let me quote from Lee Manchester's resume. He was a staff writer for the WSO from October 1987 thru December 1996 (I am not breaching any confidence here; his resume is on the internet for all to see).

Manchester states: “Nearly three quarters of a million copies of my books for Narcotics Anonymous are in print. I co-authored and edited most of the new membership and organizational literature adopted by Narcotics Anonymous during my tenure at the World Service Office, including three full-length books and a revamped service manual for every level of the organization”. ***Notice the term co-authored.***

“Just for Today: Daily Meditations for Recovering Addicts” (1992). I wrote a little over a quarter of the entries myself and was editorial supervisor for the 3 other writers on the project. Completed in 5 months. ***“I wrote a little over a quarter of the entries myself”?***

“It Works: How and Why” (1993). After watching four unsuccessful attempts over a period of 10 years to develop a book on NA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, I created an editorial process that produced copy quickly and inexpensively and that the organization could feel comfortable with. I wrote more than a quarter of the text myself, editing the rest. ***“I wrote more than a quarter of the text myself”?***

Also, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Rev. it says, “In this Tradition we say we have no professionals. By this, we mean we have no staff psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers, counselors, etc. Our program works by one addict helping another.” I don't know about you but I have been counseled by our literature many times. Here are several other quotes from the resume:

“My [“African Drug and Alcohol Bibliography”](http://www.ccsa.ca/atod/atod.htm) (<http://www.ccsa.ca/atod/atod.htm>) is published among the full-text documents on the Virtual Clearinghouse site of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. This listing of 307 bibliographic references and 70 abstracts was first presented at an August 1995 symposium on addiction research in developing countries conducted by the Kettil Bruun Society for Alcohol Research.”

“Twelve-Step Program” (1995). I was commissioned to write this 500-word article on the 12-step movement for Collier’s Encyclopedia.”

***I would say these qualify Manchester as an addiction professional.***

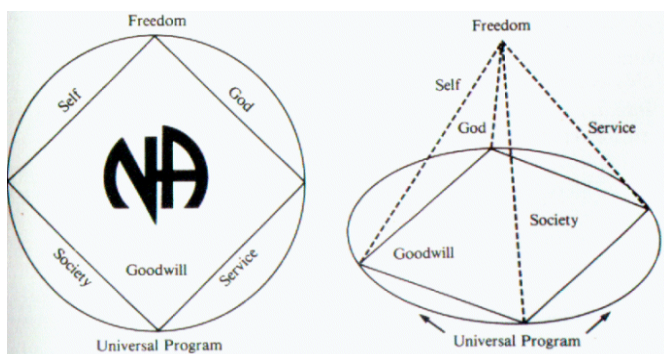
Our text says, “Many of our problems are like those our predecessors had to face. Their hard-won experience gave birth to the Traditions...” so let’s see what our predecessors say. AA has a long version of the traditions as well as a short one, which we’ve adapted. The last line in the long version of the 8<sup>th</sup> Tradition says, “But our usual A.A. “12th Step” work is never to be paid for.” If you look at how our text was written, that was 12<sup>th</sup> step work at it’s finest. Did you know that NAW\$ employees travel the world assisting in the development of NA in other countries, doing PI work and promoting NA? In the Grey Form, the original review and input version of the text, it says, “The professional has no place in our Fellowship; our very nature prohibits this.” and “It’s just that there’s no place for professionalism in N.A.; for our purpose we have learned the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is truly without parallel.” True service in NA arises from a 12<sup>th</sup> step.

This brings us to the question of motivation. I don’t care how spiritual a person might be, there are always days when the only reason you work is because it is your job and you have to. Here is an excerpt from the NA Way of Life on the 8<sup>th</sup> Tradition:

“... but what about editing and writing literature? Doing Public Information, Hospital and Institution work, etc? Should paid workers travel and assist in the development of NA in other areas? These are questions that have arisen in regard to the Eighth Tradition. We need to look at the concept of “special workers” in light of our Steps and Traditions. While we may employ people to do day to day tasks in our service centers, 12th Step work or “carrying the message” should result from our gratitude and spiritual awakening, not from desire for personal gain. Our motivations are important. We only keep what we have by giving it away. The strength of our message is as much in the giver as the message itself. It is spiritual and this tradition helps us to divide the spiritual from the material. The Eighth Tradition can keep us from sacrificing our spiritual principles for the sake of material efficiency.”

Material efficiency, corporations strive for material efficiency. But Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual fellowship and our service used to reflect our spiritual principles and values at all levels. For the last 12 years or so a corporate mentality has been flourishing in NA service. With this new emphasis on “leadership”, espoused by the 12 concepts, we are in a situation where in order to do “volunteer” service at the world level, a resume must be submitted and pass a “Human Resources

Panel”. If this sounds unbelievable, go to [www.na.org](http://www.na.org) and click on the World Pool links. I believe we are all faced with a decision. Are we OK with the corporate direction of our service or do we want to return to a spiritual, group conscience driven service structure? Ignoring the issue is the same as agreeing with the way things are being done. When the 12 concepts were being introduced did anyone really think about what they



meant or what the consequences might be? It's time for all of us, on a grass roots level, to educate ourselves and weigh all our decisions in light of our spiritual values.

*Editor's note: we will be happy to provide copies of Manchester's full resume to any who requests them as well as documentation to all claims above.*

## *Court Slips And Our Traditions*

Due to the prevalence of Court Mandated attendance to Narcotics Anonymous meetings, questions arise as to where this practice stands in light of our Traditions and values. The 6<sup>th</sup> Tradition says, "An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose." and in the Basic Text essay, "Our Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to preserve and protect our primary purpose. This Tradition is the basis for our policy of non-affiliation and is extremely important to the continuation and growth of Narcotics Anonymous" (all quotes from text are taken from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Revised).

According to The American Heritage dictionary the word "affiliate" means: To associate (oneself) as a subordinate, subsidiary, employee, or member. The courts need to verify attendance of those addicts mandated to attend meetings so they rely upon us to verify attendance. Many addicts feel that NA is being employed (employed as "used", not "hired") to provide a service to the courts. With today's technology it is possible to verify location down to the street address with a handheld GPS unit. Another alternative is to have a monitor attend an open meeting and have all clients attend that meeting.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Tradition says "The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using." In the essay it says, "We feel the ideal state for our fellowship exists when addicts can come freely and openly to an N.A. meeting, whenever and wherever they choose, and leave just as freely if they want." Court mandated attendees are welcome at Narcotics Anonymous meetings. No one is saying that the courts shouldn't send us addicts. The issue is attendance verification. Anonymity is one of the core values of our fellowship and all members are entitled to anonymity in NA meetings. How can we reconcile that with providing a written record of someone's attendance at a meeting? In "What Is The NA Program?" it says, "We are not connected with any Political, religious or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time." Later it states, "We feel totally free to express ourselves within the fellowship, because no law enforcement agencies are involved." By signing attendance records we can give the perception that we are connected with the Justice system.



The autonomy guaranteed in the 4<sup>th</sup> Tradition gives each group the right to decide for themselves whether or not to

sign court cards. Even “mighty” NAW\$ says, “Ultimately, this is the group’s choice to make.” If a group decides not to sign them, what about the addict who has to go back to Drug Court or their Probation Officer with a blank card? That’s why, on a regional level, we need to inform the authorities that we cannot guarantee attendance verification. Personally, I feel that this should have been done along time ago, when we first saw court slips.

*Editor’s note: this seems to us a hollow controversy. We simply, as a fellowship, need to renew a broad understanding of what an open meeting is and what a closed meeting is. We should probably refuse to sign slips at closed meetings. And we should make appropriate provision for them to be signed at open meetings so we stay in accord with our Traditions.*

## ***A Controversy in NA that should end soon...***

Each of us has his or her own unique story. This is one member’s personal experience – it is presented in this publication as just that. I have had several relationships with people who have gone off so-called “meds” to live happy health lives, able to work 12 steps – including my personal experience ...

This member has a different experience: we have shared his and we encourage you to share yours. Many who agree with the viewpoint *in the following article* seem to imply their experience is some sort of universal truth. The only pertinent universal truth is that NA is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. We probably do harm when we imply that there is any “safe” use of a mind-affecting drug of any type for an addict. We always do harm when we arbitrate that our personal experience somehow negates someone else’s. As NA we kill addicts when we compromise principles and try to be everything for everyone, NA is for those with a (honest) desire to stop using. I hope all those who believe they must use drugs find the help they need: NA is, however, a program of complete abstinence from all drugs and may not be the help they seek.

Use of ‘prescribed’ medication is an outside issue to Narcotics Anonymous. Professional counseling and therapy are outside issues to NA. We have no opinion on those issues as a fellowship and they are not mentioned in our program. While members can choose to be passionate about whatever they want outside of NA, to associate either of these things with NA in any manner, either at a meeting, during a speaker’s talk or through our sponsorship is a violation of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> tradition and potentially damaging to addicts seeking recovery as well as the fellowship and program.

NA is about getting clean, losing the desire to use, and recovering from addiction. No matter how thoughtful or humanitarian all other issues are outside of NA and we have no opinion on them. We do know how to get clean, lose the desire to use, and recover from addiction: that is ALL. We can never be all things to all people.

## *To the Editor: a member's different opinion*

The April issue article on “Attaining Total Abstinence” implies to me that people should go off medication so they can be clean. It is *in my opinion* a very short-sighted article.

When I had a couple of years clean in 1990 the women and men in the fellowship in the area convinced my girlfriend at the time to go off lithium, she was diagnosed by the medical world as bipolar. She lost it. It took her literally years to regain some sense of balance. I am still saddened by this because there may be other people who have left NA because of being told they were not clean because they took lithium, etc...

***Although Lithium is generally treated as a non-habit forming, or non-mood changing drug, please consider this excerpt from the discussion of Lithium on Drug.com: “...Lithium can cause side effects that may impair your thinking or reactions. Be careful if you drive or do anything that requires you to be awake and alert.***

At that time, in the late eighties to early nineties, another way of thinking in our area was that we get everything we needed from NA; counseling or therapy wasn't needed, just the Steps and NA. This *in my opinion* set back my recovery years. Sometimes *in my opinion* the best thing a sponsor can do is to say “You need professional help, I am not a professional”. to comprehend how mentally ill some people are in our rooms.

Last year one of the men I sponsored was going through a supervised detox off psychiatric medication. I have never seen anything like this before. He was insane. He almost killed someone *in my opinion*. He ended back in a mental health facility for a period of time.

At the same time, another man I sponsor has put down his medication with medical supervision and is doing fine. This is not a black and white issue, one size **(does not)** fits all. Sometimes people need more than prayer and meditation. We have a Home Group member who takes pain medication to make it to a meeting because of the pain of arthritis. Without meetings this man could end up abusing the medication. Doesn't he have the right to be a member of NA.

Recently some members in our area are taking a meeting to a methadone clinic. Addicts on methadone at the meeting say they are of the understanding they can't go to NA because they are taking methadone. These people should be welcomed, perhaps this will inspire them to detox off the methadone. We have a Home Group member presently in that space of attending NA and detoxing off the methadone. These people should be welcomed.

Does anyone really know what their life will be like in five or 10 years. What happens if someone gets cancer or some type of debilitating physical or mental disease where they have to be on medication? Do we shun them because they are not “clean”? What gives someone the right to pass judgment on others concerning medication? I know from experience when having to take medication for pain that I have felt “dirty” and compromised. This is a difficult space to be in because of the years of drug free programming.

As people in our fellowship age, more and more members will be confronted with these dilemmas. People who are passing judgment on medication may very well end up having to confront these same issues. There are so many people in NA who *in my opinion* are devastated from past abuse and trauma who struggle to be somewhat functional. Many people in NA cannot *in my opinion* begin to understand.

*Editor's note: Please see page 6 - “A controversy that should end soon”*

## *To the Editor:*

I want to thank you for a great newsletter. It enlightens me with such a great story of recovery through hard times. It was a message of hope that I have not heard in a long time. It is the old message of total abstinence from all mood changing substances and mind altering chemicals. It took me back to the early eighties after I was thrown out of a half-way house on a one way street for not taking my medication from the doctor because he told me I had done brain damage through my drug use that was beyond repair. I went to a meeting that night, it was were I heard that while the doctor may have been right, however I was right for choosing recovery over drug replacement. What the doctor did not realize was that we have the twelve steps of recovery that could restore us to sanity if we choose to allow the second step to work. That came from a new-comer telling me about the insanity that addition causes and what the program talks about in the steps. Share about it brother because we can help. Just surrender and live the steps, miracles happen. I am working on my 30th Year clean this year.

I got involved in the writing of our Basic Text and met my first real NA sponsor from Memphis Tenn. He also told me to work the steps and that I also could find recovery through total abstinence from all mood changing substances and mind altering chemicals. This was the second time someone in the program was delivering this message to me. I started to believe. He also gave me a fourth step inventory guide & Gray Book and told me to work the steps or die M---R F---R You can spell the words, however I took it to the bank and followed his direction. He also pointed me to the book and showed me were it said the last to return was our emotional stability as it says in the Basic Text today {it does not matter what revision of the book you read it stills says the same quote}. It also tells us that we quit fighting anger, depression and self pity so what the doctor said was right, however using medication was wrong if I was to recover from my problem. The steps are the solution for recovery from addiction not medication. NA and my sponsor help keep me in the solution. Thank you for the New/Old NA Way newsletter it is a miracle in itself. Keep up the great work.

In loving service, A Recovery Addict From PA

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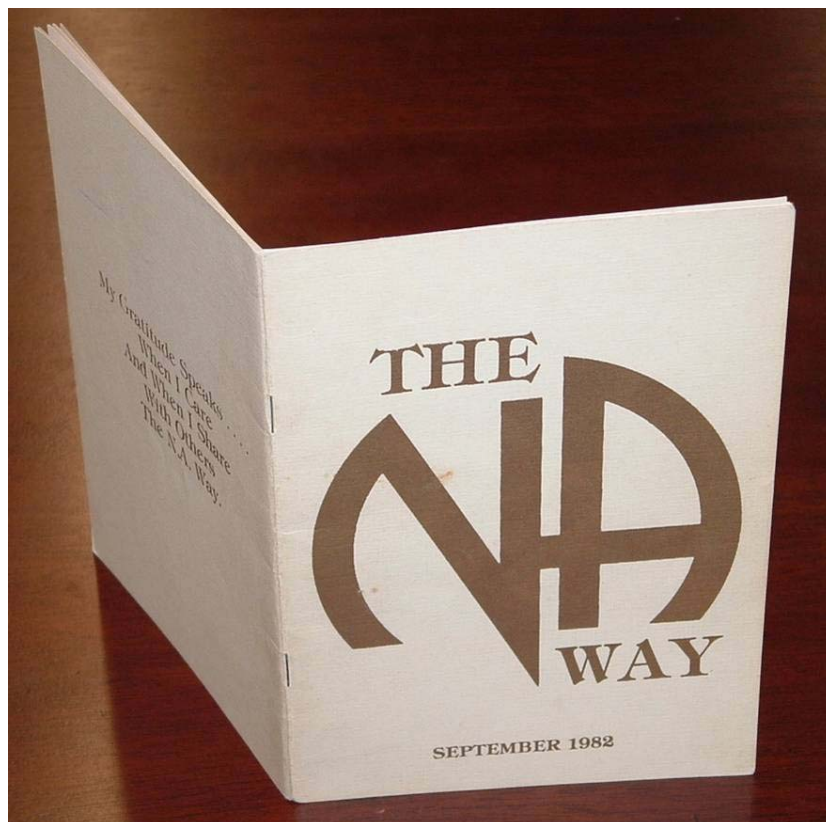
This website is dedicated to [true trusted service](#) for the NA Member, Group or committee who wants to effectively carry the NA message of total abstinence from all drugs and Recovery from Addiction to the addict who still suffers. We will be will be steady, reliable, non-political, and non-combative. We are guided by the [12 Traditions](#) of NA and [Directly responsible](#) to those NA Groups we serve.

*Your Fellowship Magazine*

*Share...  
and be shared with...*

*Like it was when NA was new and young and  
life-or-death intense:*

*You matter to us so we will tell you the truth as we know it  
with nothing held back.*



*“...so that no addict seeking recovery need ever die...”*