

the best of

SEP OCT 2004

heartbeat IV

SPECIAL EDITION

RAINBOW OF HOPE

A person in a blue suit is shown from the waist up, holding a large, multi-colored rainbow banner. The person's arms are raised, and they appear to be in a state of joy or triumph. The background is a light blue, textured surface.

I've been up and down most of my life, like a roller coaster ride. I was a master at backsliding. I would work like hell for a month or so and set myself up in a nice single apartment. I would stash away a few thousand dollars in the bank and then it was show time once again. I would then lose everything I had. I reduced myself to a lost street urchin that most people avoided.

My self-esteem was completely blown due to my prostitution and homelessness. Most of the time, I literally hated myself. I was trapped within a cycle of shame that no mortal power could free me from. By all human standards my situation was hopeless. It was just a matter of time before I would end up completely lost. My desperation was heightened with paranoid delusions that the world around me was closing in on me. I was convinced that no one understood me when I told them I was alone and afraid.

When I was reduced to eating out of a garbage can it was a turning point for me. So with tears in my eyes I remember pleading with God for another chance to live and almost immediately He gave it to me. That night I had a roof over my head, food to eat and the telephone number to a drug treatment center. God placed me right where I needed to be. I was finally ready for a change.

My understanding of a Higher Power is a God that directs his people on paths of healing and nurturing. My God has taught me how to live with my addiction through the process of recovery. I put my trust in God and we are now walking through this process as he gives me new insights and a better perspective on life.

When I reflect upon the time I've been here, I am overwhelmed at the simple changes that have occurred in me, changes that I believe were made by God to fulfill His purpose for my life.

What I realize more and more about this great Fellowship is that we each have something very unique to contribute to the group. We each possess and radiate our own beautiful color and when we come together we become a rainbow of hope that is so strong it could lend its strength to whoever needs it. My belief is that Narcotics Anonymous is God's great gift to us.

Edward R

(Reprinted from HB issue May-June 1996 Originally title "It's Okay For A Man to Be Clean")

"The heart of NA beats when two addicts share their recovery"

Time Means Nothing!!! Says Who?



I was sitting in a meeting one night, listening to this dynamic speaker share her experience, strength, and hope. It was a great message, until she said one thing that kind of disturbed me. She stated, "Time means nothing. We all just have today." Oh no, here we go again with the "We just only have today" message, or "If you woke up at 5:55 a.m. and I woke up 6:00 a.m., you have more time than me" message. What a bunch of bull!!

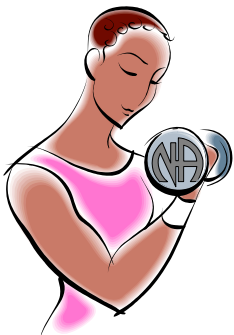
I would do anything to have her time years (6 years). As a chronic relapser, I found this saying very offensive. How dare her. Would she honestly like to trade clean time with me (60 days), one more time going through the humiliation, the degradation, the unmanageable emotions, and the low self-esteem?

I believe the message should be that clean time is earned, a gift and a blessing from God. Those who have a lot of clean time went through some "No matter what's" and still remain abstinent. To me, clean time means *everything*. It gives me hope that one day I can have clean time experiences.

Yours truly,
Kenney R.



My Struggle



Anyone out there struggling with weight gain? I am an addict who is struggling with all the weight that I have gained since I got clean. I have reached a place in this journey where I am now willing to do something about my weight gain. For so long through the self-centered nature of my disease, I have eaten what I wanted, when I wanted and how I wanted. Low fat sounds like a curse, diet starts with the same letter as denial, and words like "self-control", "focus", and "discipline" are real scary when it comes to eating. You see, I gave up drugs (hard), I gave up cigarettes (harder), but I will always be in a relationship with food. Soul food, comfort food, I gotta get it into my head that food is not my friend. Food has been my buddy for a long, long time. I am the addict who starts eating healthier and exercising (which I hate) and as soon as I start seeing some results I reward myself with a Big Mac. I am the addict who was in a Weight Watchers meeting dreaming of a milk shake and when I left the meeting ran straight to a burger stand. I am the addict, who walks by the big juicy bowl of fruit (that I buy), straight to the refrigerator looking for anything with plenty of fat, and then ends up throwing the fruit away.

As I turn towards change, it becomes clear that all I really need to do is face my weakness and ask God to do for me what I can't do for myself.

On this journey as I have started seeking a working solution, I have started to face my issues. I understand that my size has always been my protection (a serious illusion). It has protected me against rejection and intimacy. Through living the NA program and applying the steps in all areas of my life I am now ready to turn to God for help. As I turn towards change, it becomes clear that all I really need to do is face my weakness and ask God to do for me what I can't do for myself. It's a process and it takes practice, and yes change is slow. What I do know is that I don't have to beat myself up for eating the Big Mac, I just need to keep going. Eating healthier one meal at a time, one day at a time, I will get healthier.



What About God?

To say that I did not have a conscious contact with God when I came into the program would be a gross understatement! I felt and thought, "What could you guys offer an old druggie like me, who has been there and done that?" I had tried to find a way out for decades and thought that my way worked best. Nothing had worked before, so this "N.A." thing will probably not work either." But you notice I said, "probably", and I was willing to try something else, though I did not think this would work either. The first thing I did right was go to a meeting, but I thought you guys were full of crap, so I **READ THE BOOK!** Thank God!!

My actual First Step was taken many years before I got "clean " (needless to say I have taken many more First Steps on my **ADDICTION**, now with a sponsor). I knew I was powerless and that my life was unmanageable for many years, but I had nothing with which to follow that. I read "Who is an Addict" and the "First Step". I thought they were talking about me personally! I felt a chill go through my body when I read it. They were talking to me, the addict, but I still wasn't at any solution steps. Then I started reading the Second Step in the Basic Text. I swore I had found something real that I could use for a solution to my problems. It says in the last line of the second paragraph, page 24, "*We can use this Power long before we understand it.*" After a while, you too, will develop a voice from within that you will recognize as a conscious contact with a God with whom you can do business.

A complete understanding of a Higher Power has nothing whatsoever to do with a conscious contact with it.

I say this to the newcomers or anyone having this problem: Don't get all wrapped up in a complete understanding of a Higher Power. If you're like me, you want a place for everything and everything in its place. It will never happen with a Higher Power because **you** aren't God. A complete understanding of a Higher Power has nothing whatsoever to do with a conscious contact with it. My concept of my H.P. changes with each passing second and that change is good. I know for a fact that the absolute nature of my God doesn't change. He is loving, caring, greater, and knows more than me. This is what the book tells me and I believe what the Basic Text says. Your Higher Power can be anyone or anything that you want and I suppose it should meet with the guidelines suggested above, although it may take a while for you to see it like that. It should be a voice you can trust and that will lead you in the right direction, if you pay attention. It will improve your odds at staying clean! Work and live the Twelve Steps. Please trust the N.A. program. After 22 years on the methadone program, and a lot more than that in active addiction, I have found a way out. It is called Narcotics Anonymous. Give yourself a break!

Your humble servant in N.A.,

Richie K.

(Reprinted from HB Jan Feb 2000)

Hearing the Solution



In my recovery, I have come to learn that once I have shared an issue in my life with another addict or at an N.A. meeting, then it is time to work the Steps and turn it over to my Higher Power. I let it go by not continuing with ego and the self-centeredness of hearing myself share about the same thing at every N.A. meeting. When I repeat the issue over and over, I may be unconsciously isolating myself from hearing the solution especially when I don't stay for the entire meeting. Until I let go, I can't hear the message of recovery from another addict who shares their experience, strength and hope.

The disease of addiction is without a doubt very cunning, baffling, and powerful. We need to be more open-minded, willing and honest to see the disease as it truly is, a disease that does not care if we are happy, joyous or free, or whether we live or die. It cares only about what it wants, what it needs. The disease will do whatever it takes to get what it needs.

Why do you think there are so few recovering addicts with over ten years of clean time that keep coming back to N.A. meetings? Maybe because no one thinks they have anything to share that people can relate to. Maybe they feel they can't share what is really going on because others who are not where they are will say they are not working a program, or that they should not have any problems with life anymore because they have been clean for so many years. It could also be the disease of addiction. The rationalization aspect of this disease telling them to "Get on with life, you know all there is to know. You can start substituting meetings with life now!!" Most of this is from my own experience and from what I have heard and observed happening in and around meetings. Much of this frightens me, for it is the newcomer who will be hurt most by it and probably will not keep coming back, because they don't see it working by all who share at a meeting.

Dana F.

(Reprinted from HB July Aug 2002)

As I sit here
looking out my window
Listening to
the soothing sound of jazz
Coming from my radio,
the peace and tranquility
that I feel is indescribable.

I reflect on the many
different windows
in different places
I have gazed out of
in my lifetime,
thinking I was home.
But as always
soon the discontentment,
Uneasiness and restlessness
would set in and
once again

I could be on the move.
from L.A. to Ohio,
to Fresno, Calif.
Back to L.A.
always searching for home,
somewhere I could
feel at peace.
My years of addiction
kept me running
and not until

I came into the rooms of
Narcotics Anonymous
did I realize I was running
from myself.

But most importantly
I learned that home is truly
where my heart is
in my spirit and
personal connection with
God.

Yes, its so good to finally
Be home

-Althea-

Share the Wealth
the heartbeat presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The articles you see in this newsletter are written by NA members like yourself. You need not consider yourself a skilled writer. You don't have to know all the rules of grammar. We have an editorial team whose job it is to take care of those details. What we need is your unique perspective on the NA program. Without it, we don't have a message to carry. The articles and letters do not necessarily express the philosophy of NA as a whole nor does publication imply endorsement by NA, **the heartbeat**, or the Greater Los Angeles Area of Narcotics Anonymous. **the heartbeat** assumes no responsibility to return submitted material and does not guarantee that submissions will be published. **the heartbeat** reserves the right to edit any material submitted in accordance with our review policy. The policy includes but not limited to:

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- No personal attacks directed towards NA members or NA as a whole.

Submit articles to:
the heartbeat
P.O. Box 512431
Los Angeles, CA 90051



CHAIRPERSON
Vivian Q
323-737-2341
SECRETARY
Zina L.
213-250-7353

ALT-SECRETARY
Cass Q.

323-737-2341

EDITORS

Pam H.
323-292-5575
Cheryl Mc-R
323-299-3023
Lester L.
323-751-5490

Ron A

323-373-1529

Susan G

323-290-3697

Faith A.

661-949-0455

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Tony Mc
323-936-7313



1 YEAR

Typhany W 10/22/03
 Georgia A 10/20/03
 Nina M 10/10/03
 Warren M 10/03/03
 Donny S 10/02/03
 Ratika B 10/01/03
 Vicki K 9/27/03
 Trevan L. 9/25/03
 LaShawn Mc 9/22/03
 Sonia D 9/15/03
 Sara C 9/05/03

2 YEAR

Marlon Y 10/23/02
 Sheila C 10/18/02
 Camilla W 10/15/02
 Issac G 10/13/02
 Freddie T 10/11/02
 Kahlid A 10/11/02
 Vance D 10/10/02
 Robert R 10/07/02
 Angelus W 10/05/02
 Khisas J 10/04/02
 Lance I 10/03/02
 Debra J 9/30/02
 Cynthia B 9/28/02
 Franco S 9/27/02
 Charles D 9/27/02
 Rachel P 9/23/02
 Treavor S 9/21/02
 Laura G 9/20/02
 Mechelle A 9/20/02
 Danny T 9/15/02
 Elizabeth M 9/04/02
 Nicole G 9/04/02
 Deandre T 9/04/02

3 YEARS

Angelo M 10/04/01
 Denise H 10/02/01
 Dana M 9/19/01
 Wendell M 9/11/01

4 YEARS

Victor B 10/29/00
 Micacha S 10/29/00
 Sandy M 10/28/00
 Steve S 10/27/00
 Timothy J 10/25/00
 Viola P 10/25/00
 Wiford K 10/22/00
 Jacqueline J 10/19/00
 Leroy M 10/18/00
 Joi R. 10/15/00
 Walter B 10/12/00
 Jesse P 10/07/00
 Carlos R 10/05/00
 Audry H 10/04/00
 Hugh B 10/03/00
 Ida P 10/01/00
 Darryl C 9/26/00
 Karen M 9/18/00
 Nicholas C 9/17/00
 Willie C 9/13/00
 Pamela R 9/10/00
 Rocky W 9/08/00
 Robert H 9/07/00
 Kim M 9/06/00
 Jennie A 9/06/00
 Byron C 9/04/00
 Alfi P 9/03/00
 Rosalind F 9/03/00
 Thomas P 9/03/00
 Duane B 9/01/00
 Lamont W 9/01/00
 Kasey H 9/01/00

5 YEAR

Milton B 10/30/99
 Zina L 10/23/99
 Mando A 10/21/99
 Kevin L 10/15/99
 James AC 10/13/99
 Kelly 10/04/99
 Rosetta T 10/03/99
 Todd Z 9/13/99
 Clarence B 9/12/99
 Yvette Q 9/09/99
 Jim Y 9/07/99

6 YEARS

Johannie W 10/31/98
 Pamela Jo 10/30/98
 Shelia M 10/28/98
 Mike W 10/28/98
 Michael B 10/23/98
 Wanda T 10/20/98
 Yolanda B 10/19/98
 Karen B 10/19/98
 Wayne T 10/15/98
 Leta H 10/13/98
 Vera P 10/11/98
 Sharon P 10/10/98
 Willie B 10/08/98
 Kimberly P 10/06/98
 Victor M 10/05/98
 Richard B 10/4/98
 Ramon L 10/02/98
 Sonia C. 10/01/98
 Rhonda J 9/21/98
 Debra O 9/25/98
 Lucretia G 9/15/98
 Wesley W 9/15/98
 Bianca L 9/03/98

7 YEARS

Teresa W. 10/31/97
 Grace F 10/29/97
 Clinton 10/23/97
 Addie W 10/20/97
 Ronald W 10/16/97
 Andrew T 10/15/97
 Sheila B 10/10/97
 Hasan B 10/09/97
 Cheryl D 10/08/97
 Michelle W 10/07/97
 Kim P 10/06/97
 Seawillia A 9/27/97
 Richard O 9/23/97
 Willie C 9/18/97
 Kenneth H 9/16/97
 Ricky L 9/09/97

8 YEARS

James E.G. 10/30/96
 Marlise H 10/28/96
 Myrtle A 10/25/96
 Delena Z 10/21/96
 Katherine W 10/21/96
 Julie R 10/17/96
 Jas 10/17/96
 Sandra S 10/11/96
 Gus A 10/10/96
 Diane K 10/09/96
 Lem W 10/09/96
 Elisio G 10/04/96
 Ella H 9/28/96
 Curtis T 9/27/96
 William O 9/23/96
 Adolphus M 9/23/96
 Luis H 9/21/96
 Kenneth H 9/16/96
 Robert A 9/04/96

9 YEARS

Kathryn H 10/26/95
 Michelle C 10/26/95
 Jeffery S 10/11/95
 Jackie W 9/21/95
 Jerone M 9/08/95
 Wali 9/01/95

10 YEARS

Shonda W 10/31/94
 Brenda T 10/22/94
 Tunyshia S 10/13/94
 Silvia F 10/12/94
 Tommy D 10/12/94
 David M 10/11/94
 Kathryn H. 9/26/94
 Ruth S 9/24/94
 Marcella Mc 9/23/94
 Margie P 9/22/94
 Brenda S 9/08/94
 R. Overstreet 9/01/94

11 YEARS

Jackie J 10/14/93
 Stan J 10/03/93
 Pauline G 10/04/93
 Tracy H 9/06/93
 Raymond M 9/04/93

12 YEARS

Andrea A 10/19/92
 Steve S 10/13/92
 Janette H 9/23/92
 Sherene B. 9/09/92
 William E 9/01/92

13 YEARS

Earl F 10/07/91
 Kirby S 9/25/91

14 YEARS

Daphnie B 10/25/90
 Maurice R 10/15/90
 Helen S 10/07/90
 Phyllis W 10/07/90
 Paula L 10/16/90
 Tinka M 9/14/90
 Wesley R 9/12/90
 Darryl B 9/03/90

15 YEARS

Russell 10/10/89
 Gregory G 10/09/89
 Beth S 10/05/89
 Julia S 9/06/89
 Anita S 9/05/89

16 YEARS

Tommie P 10/15/88
 Johnnie D 9/19/88
 John K 9/19/88
 Erskine W 9/06/88

17 YEARS

Sheila B 10/10/87
 Michael S 9/12/87

18 YEARS

Stephanie S 10/13/86
 Yo Steve 9/16/86
 West 9/10/86
 Patricia P 9/04/86

19 YEARS

Earl D 9/09/85
 Cheryl Mc 9/08/85

20 YEARS

Jay A 10/28/84
 Pam J 9/24/84

25 YEARS

Bob S 9/28/79

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E-Mail:

naheartbeat@pacbell.net

Visit our Website :

www.glaana.org



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 323-737-2341

SECRETARY

Zina L.
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EDITORS

Pam H. 323-292-5575
Cheryl Mc-R 323-299-3023
Lester L. 323-751-5490
Ronald A. 310 903-3536
Susan G. 323 571-1047
Faith A. 661 949-0455
Ratika B. 661-949-0455

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Tony Mc 323-936-7313

(Newsletter Committee meets every 3rd Wed at 8pm)
 Call Alt Secretary for location.