

Newsletter of the Greater Los Angeles Area of NA

# the best of heartbeat VI

SPECIAL EDITION

our message

**HOPE**

our promise

**FREEDOM**

JULY/AUG 2007

## N.A. - A Newcomer's Hope

My name is Anthony and I am an addict. When I tell you this, I'm telling you that I'm a liar, cheat, manipulator, and a thief. I enjoyed getting high on mind-altering substances. Whatever I liked, I wanted more. These behaviors sent me back and forth to jail. Finally, the consequences became more serious: I was looking at six years prison time. But by the grace of God, I received the blessing of being offered a 18-month program. I chose the obvious one. I wanted help. I was out of control, I couldn't stop using and I wasn't trying to.

I made the decision that if I was going to try and get clean from drugs, then I needed to take an honest look at myself. I finally admitted and surrendered the fact that I'm truly an addict, not only with drugs but with everything in my life.

Through the NA program, I've learned that I can be restored to sanity. I also learn from my sponsor and other addict's stories about the Twelve Steps of NA, spiritual principles, God's will, and anything positive that can help me stay clean for just one more day. I've also made a choice to stick with this process.

I'm new in this fellowship. I have 5 <sup>1/2</sup> months clean but I'm willing and open-minded; I really want to change my life. Today I have a God of my understanding that I pray to. I pray for guidance and help to practice His will, not mine. Because of the way I react to situations, I work on my character defects and shortcomings—I work on patience. I need to have courage and faith to take this stand in life or I'm headed for destruction. I believe in myself, my God and N.A. I want recovery, and I want to learn how to live and enjoy life. For this, I am totally grateful.

(Reprinted from: The HB May/June 2001 issue)

**G.L.A.A. HELPLINE 323 933-5395**

# Step One : The Awakening

I have constantly been told that when I have fully surrendered, to the process of recovery, and become willing to turn my life and my will over to a God of my own understanding, then and only then will my life begin to progressively get better. Since I have stepped aside and allowed God to rightfully do for me what has been proven that I could not do for myself, I have begun to feel, as well as see a change in myself and my recovery.



I thank God for leading me back to the rooms of NA and showering me with the strength to stay still and focus on my recovery. I have just completed Step One. Step One was a freedom step. It freed me from the emotional guilt and shame I had held on to for so many years. Step One allowed me to feel and walk through my feelings by introducing me to the spiritual principle of surrender. This made working the step a little less challenging because I prayed that God would grant me the courage to stay willing, honest and open-minded in my writing about emotional memories, and the feelings those memories brought to the surface. For me, the most important thing about Step One was that while allowing myself to remember and feel those hurtful and haunting memories, I did not run away. Nor did I pick up and use again to smother the guilt and shame I felt. I really hung on to the belief that in time God would heal all my suffering.

Hey, there is sunshine after the rain. I feel as if a heavy load has been lifted off my back. I can now move on. This is only due to a caring God who loves me so. One who stands by me and guides me when I seem to lose my way. Throughout it all, surrender and asking God for help is what has saved my life. Today I know working the steps is what's going to keep me alive, one day at a time.

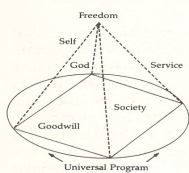
Shirley T.

(Reprinted from: The HB Jan/Feb 2004 issue)



## Our Symbol

My name is Patsy, and I'm an addict. Before I began working the Twelve Steps of NA my sponsor didn't suggest, she told me I needed to write on what our symbol meant to me. This was my understanding of our symbol.



First of all, simplicity is the key to our symbol: meaning we must live by spiritual principles for me and you to stay clean. The Circle serves or stands for all manifestations of a recovering addict, whatever problems or issues I may have. I must be willing to accept that an addict must have an open mind and be honest to achieve the goals within the symbol. Goodwill to me means that being apart

of this Fellowship I'm coming in with willingness to do whatever necessary; realizing that my disease I can't shake off myself. Self means that my addiction was not drugs. It goes deeper than I could imagine because of inner feelings, etc. We must find the truth. No longer am I filled with shame, guilt, or disgrace about who I am. Society means I must be a productive member of society. Step up to the plate, carry my own weight today. Service to me is the giving back, it shows my gratitude to self and the Fellowship of NA. God, my Higher Power must be in my new life to rise to Freedom. The more we grow in our recovery together, which is unity, the higher our freedom.

Grateful Recovering Addict,  
Patsy W.

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# Having Faith And Courage The NA Way

I am a blessed recovering addict who's been clean since February 13, 1996. I thank my predecessors for being there for me, giving me the right information so as to better my recovery. I was told in my first year that in order to grow in my program, I needed to follow some simple suggestions:

First of all, I needed to surrender & allow others to do for me what I've tried to do all my life & failed to do.

Secondly, I needed to find a sponsor who would take me thru the 12 steps of recovery, which is outlined in the Basic Text.

Thirdly, I needed to believe in NA and it's members until I could establish some information within me that would bring about a spiritual awakening; that would give me some hope, faith & courage--enough to allow me to be able to establish a spiritual foundation in my life, which would help me when the time arrived.

Well, I did choose to believe. That foundation is sustaining me now that the very trying time has arrived: Nine years after walking in the door, I find myself almost helpless and in such depth, that my disease is trying to manipulate my situation into having me become either suicidal or homicidal, by all means necessary. I am presently disabled, have been out of work for the past year and lately without any income (you figure it out). This is not about saving face it's about saving my life by any means necessary.

Thank God for the fellowship telling me that no matter what, I do not need to pick up. Or, for that matter, just give up in desperation and say those famous words ...F\_\_\_ It! If not for my foundation of self awareness, dealing with life issues, breaking down this false image I grew up with-- my ego, I would have given up on life & acted out on my thoughts of basic survival, and past learned behaviors.

Thank God for meetings & unconditional love from the fellowship, because at times such as this, my disease has enough firepower to create an army of it's own & destroy all that I worked so hard for in these past 9 years clean.

I am well suited with this armor of a Power Greater than my disease. And as the 3rd step goes: "I turned my will & life over to that Power", so I need not fear. But I must say that the truth is, I still fall short in this area at times-- given idle time alone. Stress can also become a big factor. Just knowing that all this shall pass in time, and having faith in my Higher Power, I'm able to surpass this fear and continue to hope for the best, knowing that in time, all will be well as long as I don't pick up, no matter what....!!

For just for today, I'm not willing to pay that spiritual price that will be exacted for my actions should I choose to go backwards. I'm a true believer that the program works, if you work it.

I can honestly say that in spite of what I'm going thru, it can never be as bad as what I went thru when I was using-- feeling like I was living a life of illusion, delusion and self-destruction. My insides were so empty and hallow that it hurt to breathe. I felt so degraded and miserable, so full of shame, anger and pain that all I could do was use. And, the more I used, the more I became faithless, hopeless and so fearful that I couldn't find the courage to change until I started living the NA way.

Thanks to all of you...to my predecessors and to the newcomer.

So, "just for today", you too can overcome any obstacles in your life as long as you keep coming back & work this program to the best of your ability. Your Higher Power will do the rest.

Luis S. 2-13-96

(Reprinted from: The HB Nov/Dec 2005 issue)



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## The Process In Action

I keep hearing about "The Process of Recovery". I read in the Basic Text about the "Process of Recovery" or "the Recovery Process". Sometimes when I come to meetings I'll hear an addict share about their "process" and some things they "had to do in order to recover".

Now I'm only writing about this because sometimes I get confused about what the "process" is. Like, I'll hear an addict say "It's a process, when it comes to changing behaviors", or "I have to take a look at it", or "I'm not there yet".

I get confused because it sounds like an excuse to me. And I want to be real clear on this. I'm not judging but trying to identify. So I talked with my sponsor and asked about the "Process of Recovery". Here's what I came away with: Recovery is an inside/outside job. Meaning-- the work that I do inside me. Basically learning to live the steps and spiritual principles is a process. Becoming is a process. Believing in the program, trusting my Higher Power, and being open-minded are all a process for me because they happen gradually on the inside.

Not using a day at a time, making a meeting, getting and using phone numbers, calling my sponsor, and taking direction from my sponsor are all actions that I can take daily. They're not a process for me. Hugging the newcomer is action. Showing up for my recovery is action. Taking the steps is action. Learning to live them is a process. The process is on the inside: the action is what shows up on the outside.

I find that I can no longer make excuses or blame the process for why I haven't taken action in my recovery. So now, I feel like I'm not as confused about the process in action.

Anonymous

## 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:

- Articles should be no longer than one page handwritten or typed.
- Use of NA language of recovery.
- No profanity
- No personal attacks directed towards NA members or NA as a whole.

### Submit articles to:

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