



CARRYING THE MESSAGE

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LOUISVILLE AREA NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS NEWSLETTER SUBCOMMITTEE

April Topic of the Month: What part do I play in the Unity that the First Tradition calls for?

"Unity is a must." (page 60, Basic Text) What is this unity in NA? Is it that we are all exactly alike? Or is it something different?

"Our common welfare should come first." (page 59, Basic Text) Common, or "shared by all" is a key word. What is it that is shared by all? "Men and Women for whom drugs had become a major problem." (page 9, Basic Text) "Our identification as addicts is all-inclusive with respect to any mood-changing, mind-altering substance." (page XV, Basic Text) "Although the 3rd Tradition is written simply, we know that when it talks about 'a desire to stop using' it means using *drugs*. We understand that NA is a program of recovery for drug addicts." (page 147, It Works How and Why) "The other Twelve Step Fellowships specialize in other problems, and our relationship with them is one of cooperation, not affiliation." (page 67, Basic Text) If we obscure our primary purpose by including problems other than drug addiction then the NA program will not work. Ours is "a program of complete abstinence from all drugs." (page 9, Basic Text)

If food is a drug then you will starve to death. Or shopping? Some would starve. I would relapse for sure! Of course our 6th step makes quite clear that we must own complete responsibility for our actions. (page 61, It Works How and Why)

Now I ask myself is this my manipulation of the literature, or are those the words as written? There really is some controversy about "our interpretation" or is it manipulation to avoid being responsible for our Unity of Purpose? We cannot carry a message of recovery if our disease is not arrested. We must remain drug free to carry a message of hope to the still suffering drug addict. Our ability to deal with life comes from practicing principles in our daily lives. Society will hold us responsible for our actions.

"That tired old lie 'once an addict, always an addict' will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover." (page 86, Basic Text)

- anonymous

Experience, Strength, and Hope on Step Four and Tradition Four

STEP FOUR: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

"Clean time does not equal recovery!" That's just *one* of the lessons that became CLEAR when I worked the fourth step. For a given time, as a newcomer, I enjoyed the early path that presents itself to all of us upon arrival to NA. Where I went about life blaming everybody, and everything for all the problems I was having. I was still under the impression that now that the drugs are gone, "*I'm fine*", it must be something *WRONG* with *the world!* This belief held up despite the evidence of how mismanaged my life *still* was.

(cont. on page 2)

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Experience, Strength, and Hope on Step Four

(cont. from page 1) I was switching jobs (avoiding the AX!), jumping in and out of personal relationships (paranoid of commitment), doing as little work as possible at good jobs, and stealing things that I did not even need, just because somebody was dumb enough to leave it available for the event. I had NO PROBLEM lying to friends/family for money and things with no real intention of paying them back. Personal relationships were ideal ways to boost my low self-esteem through my self-assessment of how clever I was to get all that I got (I still wonder what that was) and gave little to nothing back. The pain I put in their lives was their fault for being so dumb. An experienced addict told me "work the steps, or the steps will work you!". He was so right. As my clean time progressed, though in little "bits" the very feelings I avoided during my using years began to HAUNT me. My inventory caught up with me, and I began to reflect, is this all there is to a life without drugs. Why is everyone else REALLY happy, and I'm frontin'? With the first three steps under "my belt" (or so I thought!) I was miserable. I heard it shared in a meeting that addicts who don't work a fourth step will USE!! That's what I felt like inside...using. I asked why and was informed that what I truly suffer from is the DISEASE of addiction. Drugs are the symptom, but the real problem lies inside.

The fourth step is a rigorous, courageous, honest effort to get beyond those behaviors which was bringing me so much stress, and identify what sponsors those decisions/actions.... i.e. the exact nature! To work this step I needed certain things: A sponsor (NA sponsor), an understanding AND application of the principles that came out of steps 1-3, (Surrender, Honesty, Trust, Acceptance), a beginning relationship with a Higher Power, and willingness. Part of the delay in working this step comes from "mis" information touted about in NA meetings about how "messed up" you will be while you are doing it. That is NOT my experience. The steps ARE the solution, and the program is GOD given, not man given. The one ultimate authority NEVER invites an addict with the desire to something that would "mess" them up. Step four was one of the greatest gifts I have received in my recovery. The bottom line is, if I am practicing the steps as I work them, I will look forward to the next step, not fear it! What a relief TO KNOW what was really "messing" up my new way of life. No longer do I need to walk around in ignorance. The weight off my shoulders knowing why I did some of the hurtful things of the past that I carried in guilt. Freedom from the resentments that kept me bitter, and the hope that I now have to go about making HEALTHY relationships, staying employed, and an attitude to be of service to the fellowship. The fourth step proved to be a cornerstone in my recovery. Time and space won't allow me to go into detail, but I will say this: having a sponsor, a Higher Power, proved to be very helpful during points that were very emotional, not "messed up". The belief that I had built in my sponsor since I came, and in my chosen HP (found in my second step) was helpful to me become "fearless" and honest working this step.

-an addict.... with a desire



Hello Louisville,

Just wanted to share a little about the scary fourth step. First let me apologize to any addict who has a sponsor who hasn't worked a fourth step. This is not meant to be harmful, but how can one assist another-Oh lets be frank. How can you tell the people your blessed to sponsor how to change their lives if you don't know which one of your personalities is in charge? There is nothing terrible about taking a fearless and moral inventory. The blessing behind taking this crucial step is that you get to know that person in the mirror a little better. "We are trying to free ourselves of living in old, useless patterns " pg.28 Basic Text. Taking an inventory allows you to see some of your healthy and unhealthy patterns. You do not have the right to call foul after your fourth step. You humbly accept who you are and roll with it.

The fourth step reminds you of mentally escaped memories. This is not to serve you a platter of pain and a side order of misery. This is so that you can find your part in your past. The hardest thing to do is to keep your commitment to writing. Some have said that their writing got brutal and they took a break that ended up being years of lost time. Not knowing who your are is painful enough, you have a spiritual solution that cannot be ignored. You get to know your strengths as well. You realize that you are a wonderful person and you grow away from the defective person you were in active addiction-plus your first few years of clean time (ha ha). Remember we take steps to grow and there are no bad addicts. Has anyone told you that It gets better? The It is you and we are all special!

-Thanks NA
Chris D.
Cincinnati, OH

TRADITION FOUR: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.

With over 30,300 registered meetings with the WSO, hosted by 19,246 NA groups, in 106 countries, with literature in 48 different languages, the fourth tradition is gaining more status as we move forward in carrying out the primary purpose of Narcotics Anonymous. The fourth tradition enhances our diversity by allowing NA groups to practice autonomy (self governing). This gives us the greatest opportunity to reach out to the growing population of addicts who are now coming to the rooms to find a new way of life. This tradition is vital now that recovery is reaching other countries that have different cultures, and environments than the North American area. NA groups can set different formats that will be more adaptable, and where other addicts will be able to "identify".

NA groups do have a responsibility...to not let autonomy become a license to practice self will. Self governing does not mean that groups can do whatever they want. The tradition states that we must not do something that will effect "NA as a whole!". Each group must be guided by the twelve traditions and advocate the twelve steps of NA. Autonomy allows for open and closed meetings, and speaker/open discussion formats. As of late, a growing trend intended to reach deeper to addicts are what we label as "special interest groups", that have a more identifiable format to addicts who traveled down a path of active addiction that varied from the more common path that some have. Autonomy goes even further. It is important that NA home groups respect the place that we host our meetings. Meaning that the majority of churches, community centers, hospitals that we meet at are non profit places. In their by-laws solicitation is prohibited. A violation of their by laws could possibly effect the funding they receive, or the right to remain in their realty location. Even though we are NOT AFFILIATED we do practice principles like respect, integrity, and trust. It would not send a positive message if we caused our meeting place harm by practicing solicitation without the permission of the facility. Our message is one of honesty. If we are a non-profit fellowship, practicing recovery in a non-profit location, what principle supports selling goods and services for profit?? The practice of integrity is vital in the fourth tradition. We are also responsible for what occurs outside the meeting area. When addicts have the "meeting after the meeting". Are we carrying the message, or having a shout and clout, yelling and screaming, using profanity, brawling or even fighting! Autonomy advocates that how we appear has A LOT to do regarding what effects NA as a whole. Is using profanity, brawling and fighting the way to carry the message? Does this behavior effect NA as a whole? Is this the behavior that we promised to maintain when we asked for permission to open the meeting? What about our bathrooms? Do bathrooms that reek of odor effect NA as a whole. Bathrooms without proper plumbing, and toilet paper. Is this our message that we do recover? The fourth traditions encourages us to watch the meeting in its entirety. The business meetings are the best opportunity to cover how well we are practicing this tradition. If a group is going to REALLY fulfill the primary purpose, then the practice of the fourth tradition is a must!

- anonymous

ANNIVERSARIES

NA CONVENTION CALENDAR

April 9-11 KRCNA XVIII
 Kentuckiana Regional Convention
 Executive Inn , 600 W Walnut
 Evansville, IN (877) 424-0888
 Event Registration: (812) 491-3045
 Event Information: (812) 437-5086

April 8-11 DACNA XII
 Renaissance Center Marriott
 Detroit, Michigan
 contact Carmen J. (313) 865-5203

Martin H.	April 1	1 year	Live or Die
Michelle D.	April 1	2 years	Out of Control
Bernie N.	April 2	1 year	Caring Thru Sharing
Semiko L.	April 3	1 year	Lose the Desire
Logan G.	April 5	1 year	Serenity Group
Luanne T.	April 6	1 year	Sweet Surrender
Bob T.	April 6	12 years	Sweet Surrender
Tonya B.	April 7	9 years	Unity of Hope
Michael E.	April 9	2 years	Out of Control
Kay T.	April 9	8 years	Another Chance
Lawrence	April 12	1 year	Caring Thru Sharing
Tim K.	April 13	4 years	Home Sweet Home
Tina M.	April 15	1 year	Enough is Enough
Kenny B.	April 15	1 year	Day by Day
Debi	April 18	15 years	The NA Meeting
Nelle C.	April 17	9 years	Lose the Desire
Donna C.	April 20	4 years	Gratefully Dedicated
Jack B.	April 22	6 years	Another Chance
Regina W.	April 22	1 year	Out of Control
Paul H.	April 27	2 years	Sweet Surrender