

H + I INPUT



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"...one of the most important functions of the ASC is to encourage new membership. For this reason, each ASC should maintain...contact with local authorities and referral agencies...! Most ASC's have found that a sub-committee system is necessary to provide these services. A sub-committee does the actual work necessary to implement ASC programs. These sub-committees normally deal with a single service...and may meet or do the work as needed during the months between regular ASC meetings. (A word to the wise: sub-committees are notorious for getting lost in their own dust as they stumble down the road of uncertain destiny; therefore, the Vice-Chairperson's job of coordinating these sub-committees is indeed an important one.)"

pages 12&13 of the "blue book" service manual

There are three basic responsibilities of an H. & I. sub-committee. These are: 1.) making the staffs of hospitals, institutions, and related facilities aware of the Fellowship and Program of recovery of Narcotics Anonymous 2.) making the patients/clients/inmates aware of the Fellowship and Program of recovery of Narcotics Anonymous 3.) providing an atmosphere of and opportunity for recovery for addicts-both inside an institution and upon release/parole/probation.

1.) Making staffs aware of the N.A. Fellowship and Program is probably the simplest of the three responsibilities. It is also the easiest to screw up with our typical addict ability to make mountains out of molehills.

First, contact the head of the appropriate department of the facility or agency. In the case of a rehab or probation dept. or the like, the head of the facility or agency is the contact. If the first contact is by phone, keep it simple. It is easy to get carried away by enthusiasm and try to make N.A. sound like a guaranteed cure for every junkie that needs it. Say as little as possible so that you don't have to back out of any statements later on. Just let them know that there is a Fellowship of recovering addicts in New Jersey and you would like to tell them more about it if they are interested. If they are, set up an appointment to see them and get off the phone.

When you go to make the appointment, or if your first contact is in person, there are two things you must have and a few more that you should have. The musts are: 1.) at least one copy of "Who, What How and Why" and a meeting list and 2.) a darned good knowledge of what those pieces of literature include and do not include. The things you should have are: 1.) at least one other person (total 2), no more than two other people (total 3). Try to get boy/girl combinations if possible, and appropriate to the institution. 2.) At least ten copies of "Who, What, How and Why" and at least thirty copies of our meeting list. Even if you never get the chance to see the patients/inmates/clients, if you bring at least that much literature, chances are that some addict will get the message of recovery. Some copies of the little white book don't hurt either.

Some other hints - Try not to compare N.A. with anything else, such as t.c.'s, A.A., religious groups, etc. When you start comparing, the listener will always end up hearing you putting the knock on somebody else, or putting the knock on the N.A. Fellowship. That may not be what you're trying to say, but invariably that will be what the person hears. And if they think you're making an unfavorable comparison to their efforts to help addicts, you end up doing worse than if you never did anything. Just describing N.A. may seem too short and blah, but, again, it's better to keep it simple than to say something that you'll regret later.

Try to make your appearance look like a recovering addict. This doesn't

mean you have to take your gold earring out and leave it at home, or buy a new wardrobe at Orbach's - just try to take a shower first if you just did a five-mile run or spent a day working at the docks and get a set of clean clothes. If the time of the appointment makes this impossible, don't worry about it. Then forget about your appearance, or go in thinking that you're showing the person that you've been clean long enough to do something besides nod. **DON'T GET HUNG UP ON THIS - IF THE PERSON YOU'RE TALKING TO IS INTERESTED AND YOU TRY TO SHARE HONESTLY ABOUT YOURSELF, YOUR RECOVERY, AND THE FELLOWSHIP, YOU COULD GO IN LOOKING LIKE HITLER AND IT WOULD WORK OUT FINE.**

Try to stick as much as possible to your story. Emphasize that you want to talk to other addicts to help yourself - you are not a crusader. When you speak about the Fellowship, try not to color it with your opinion. Quote the literature (or paraphrase it) as much as you can, even when you start boring yourself with "party line" and want to stick your own two cents in. Especially then. Point out that you are not an "official ambassador" of Narcotics Anonymous. This can be a good time to briefly bring up our traditions of "no leaders", "no outside money", "no dues", "no affiliation", "anonymity", etc.. Again, remember to keep it simple, so that you don't have to reverse anything you say later on.

Try not to push N.A.. Remember that we claim only to be a "way out" of addiction, not the only way. If the person you're talking to is not interested, ask if you can leave the literature and would they like if you stopped back sometime in the future, like six to twelve months later. If they are antagonistic, love 'em anyhow. Don't burn your bridges behind you and leave an addict on the other shore.

Ask if you can make an appointment to see some of the inmates/clients/patients along with some others in the Fellowship. Don't set something up like a permanent meeting, you may find later that there is not enough strength in the Fellowship to support it. Let the person you're talking with know this. Do not be afraid to give them an honest assessment of the help that the Fellowship can give. They, and the addicts, will appreciate that a lot more than a broken promise of things that we cannot give.

Again, keep it simple. Better to do a little and do it right, than to do a lot and do it wrong.

2.) When you get the chance to see and talk with the addicts, repeat all the hints from 1.), including the number of people to bring. Bring copies of the little white book and meeting list, rather than "Who, What, How and Why". Try and find out how many addicts you'll be sharing with, then bring enough copies for all, plus 25%. Try to leave the literature there so that an addict who doesn't get the chance to see you can still get the message.

Try to find out or figure out whether it would be best to set up a meeting or just stay in informal contact with the addicts.

And, again, keep it simple.

3.) Sometimes you will find the need, desire, and opportunity to start a meeting in the institution, immediately. If so, start a meeting immediately. The best type of meeting seems to be speaker/discussion. This will give the addicts the most chance to identify (or compare) with a clean addict, along with the chance to ask questions about their own recovery. Too much opportunity for discussion tends to be a discussion about addiction rather than recovery; too little opportunity for discussion tends to limit the addict's ability to grow beyond the first step. Usually two speakers with $\frac{1}{2}$ hour discussion or one

speaker with 1/2 hour discussion works out best. Of course, this depends in part on how much time the institution allows you. After a while (if it is a long-term institution), you will probably find that the patients/clients/inmates aren't acting like patients/clients/inmates anymore. Rather they're dropping the jive and being recovering addicts instead. Then it's time to see how the meeting can grow along with them. Possibilities are: dropping one speaker if you have two; lengthening a one speaker meeting from one hour to 1 1/2 hours; bringing more people in from the outside for each meeting (WARNING: this can be hazardous to your own recovery when others in the Fellowship don't seem to give a damn. Don't worry about them, just keep looking until you find the people that are willing to come in.); helping the addicts on the inside to form their own group; and whatever else God gives you in answer to your prayers. Don't be afraid to ask the addicts in the institution for suggestions - it's easy to have an unconscious prejudice about their imagination and/or spirituality because they're "inside". Remember, nowhere does it say that you must be a free person to have a spiritual awakening.

If you find that circumstances at the institution, or antagonism among the addicts there, makes a meeting undesirable - or if you check around your area and find that there isn't enough time or people or interest to support a meeting, there are still things you can do to get the message to the addict who wants to get it. Just make arrangements to stop by informally every two, or three, or four weeks. Bring literature when you do. Try to find the one or two addicts who are interested and share with them. Give them your phone number, maybe (if they can call out). If not that, give them your address and a book of stamps. Make arrangements with the institution so that you know when an addict is being released, and offer to get the person started in N.A. - or get another member to help them. If you can bring another member with you when you stop by. And praying doesn't seem to hurt either.

Some other general hints and suggestions are - Make a decision to make this your only avocation in the Fellowship for at least nine months - this is a lot of work and time and love. Be prepared to grow dramatically - telling someone who sees only you and a few others how to take a Fourth-Step inventory or a Seventh-Step surrender, when you haven't done it yourself, gets old (and creepy) feeling pretty fast. Listen as much as you talk and talk as much as you listen. Remember that you are only carrying a message to other addicts, not cleaning up other addicts. Remember that others in the Fellowship on the "outside" don't have to feel the way you do about carrying that message. Try not to take yourself so seriously. Keep it simple. And, don't use and go to meetings.

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re: page 2, "I".....six to twelve months is not a rule. play it by ear. maybe one or two months might be better.

re: page 2, "II".....when going to talk with addicts "inside" for the first time, bring a minimum of two, including yourself.