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# NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

## THE LONER: Staying Clean in Isolation

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## THE LONER: Staying Clean in Isolation

### Introduction

Most of us, at some point in our recovery, experience feelings of loneliness or isolation. For the purpose of this pamphlet, we identify "the loner" as a geographically isolated addict who desires recovery from addiction. If you are unable to come to N.A. meetings, we pray that this pamphlet will reach you and offer workable solutions toward living a happy, joyous and free life.

### Where Do We Find Loners?

The most obvious place to find loners is in an area where there are no N.A. meetings. Sometimes they can be found in hospitals who treat people for addiction, and institutions whose inmates arrive there largely due to the lifestyle of active addiction. These addicts may be aware of the existence of Narcotics Anonymous, but have no means of attending meetings. Other loners may be struggling in schools and colleges, while still more might be identified through social service agencies. Some addicts have jobs which either prevent them from attending meetings, or take them to areas where there are no N.A. meetings.

We cannot overemphasize the need to reach isolated addicts. One way we do this is by distributing N.A. literature in such hospitals and institutions as mentioned above. We also inform the general public and other Twelve Step Fellowships of our existence. Through the attraction of our program, we find other addicts who identify with the disease of addiction.

### Reaching Out For Help

Narcotics Anonymous is a program of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions designed to help addicts find recovery, regardless of where they may be. By practicing these spiritual principles, we achieve freedom from active addiction. We sug-

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Source: Danny M.

gest you read all the N.A. literature you can get, and if at all possible, attend an N.A. meeting or function. Try to start an N.A. meeting – it only takes two recovering addicts. There are starter kits available from the World Service Office (WSO).

The most important service N.A. offers is the recovering addict. Remember, "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel." (*Narcotics Anonymous*, 1984, p. 16). So, if it is possible, contact some other recovering addicts either by phone or by mail, or just share your feelings with anyone who is willing to listen. Remember that you don't have to be lonely, even though you might be alone.

The N.A. service structure is designed to reach out to isolated addicts. There are service boards and committees who provide a variety of services to help addicts find recovery. Most area service committees offer telephone hotlines, newsletters, N.A. literature, and other forms of communication. If you contact the N.A. World Service Office at the address printed on the front of this pamphlet, they will assist you in reaching the nearest recovering addict. You can write to WSO, or to the nearest area or regional office, as directed to them by WSO. In return, you can keep informed of any N.A. functions you might choose to attend. You can also acquire cassette tapes of N.A. meetings, speakers and conventions which often provide insight on problems we cannot solve alone.

### The Value of Sharing

There is no easy solution for recovering addicts who have no local fellowship for support. Although we may be the only recovering addict for miles around, we need not be afraid to reach out for help. Any initial contact can be used as a link to new ones. Many isolated addicts have regular pen pals with whom they communicate to share their recovery. The action of writing to another addict can alleviate problems even without immediate feedback. We find that after sharing, even on paper, we feel better.

### Crises

Crises come in many forms to all addicts. Without other recovering addicts or meetings to help us keep a balanced perspective, routine problems can become magnified in our minds. We may entertain the thought that staying clean isn't paying off, and arouse feelings of self-pity, resentment and anger. We must keep foremost in mind that whatever pain we experience will pass.

Problems are realities of life and do not disappear just because we stay clean. In recovery, however, we find that we grow through pain and often feel that a crisis brings a gift by allowing us the opportunity to experience growth through living clean. No matter how painful life's tragedies may be for us, one thing is clear – *we must not use, no matter what*. Our experience has shown that if we put forth even half the effort to stay clean that we did to use, we have an excellent chance of maintaining our recovery. When we reach out for help, we begin to grow.

### Living the Program

The Twelve Steps are our blueprint for gaining and maintaining abstinence – for recovery from the disease of addiction. After taking the steps, comes living the program. Through the direct application of these principles in all of our affairs, we find acceptance, faith and humility. We learn to live life on its own terms.

As we recover, we come to depend on a Power greater than ourselves. We learn that by asking for God's will for us, and the power to carry that out, we can do things we never believed possible. Our lives become worthwhile, and we lose the obsession to use, just for today.

We cannot afford to become complacent because the disease of addiction is with us 24 hours a day. Daily vigilance towards defective attitudes is essential for ongoing recovery. By living the steps, we begin to find relief from our self-obsession. We learn that attitudes, thoughts and reactions change. In time we realize that we are not alone, and begin to understand and accept who

and what we are.

The N.A. basic text contains many suggestions that may be used as guidelines in our recovery. By using these tools, our despair and active addiction can turn into hope and new life. By living the Twelve Steps of N.A., we are part of the Fellowship, no matter where we are.

*God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.*