

Sierra Foothills Area of Narcotics Anonymous Newsletter - June 2016



This month's SFANA Newsletter's theme is Six. The Sixth Step and the Sixth Tradition. Also, some news about additions to the Newsletter and an exciting new addition to the SFANA Website!! Enjoy.

Step Six

"We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

Submitted by Jeannie C.

The first time I worked this step I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Yes, I had already worked steps one through five to the best of my ability. The best of my ability at the time was completely different from what it is today.

In step one, I had acknowledged that I was powerless over my addiction and that my life had become unmanageable; to the best of my ability. In step two, I made a half-hearted attempt to believe that the God of my understanding could restore me to sanity. It was half-hearted for two reasons: 1) I Did not particularly like or trust the God of my understanding at the time, 2) I didn't think I needed to be restored to sanity. It was everyone else around me who was insane.

In step three, I had made a decision to turn my will and my life over the care of a higher power as I understood him; to the best of my ability. In step four, I made a searching

and fearless inventory of myself. It just so happened that the inventory was more about all the insane people who surrounded me, than it was about myself. Then in step five I admitted to God, myself and another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. Naturally, I included all the wrongs that I had perceived to have been done to me by all the people in my life.

So, by the time I got to step six, my perception of my character defects was still completely off. So, once again, I proceeded to the best of my ability. However, my anger, resentments and fear had served me well. Those defects of character had kept me safely hidden away from the hard cold world. They acted as a protective barrier until I felt safe enough to see them and release them. And believe me, I needed to be protected from the places I put myself in while in the grip of active addiction.

However, as our literature states; the demands of those character defects can and do become too much to live with and remain clean. I suffer as a result of hanging onto them. The veil of denial lifts slowly for me, but it does lift as my faith in my Higher Power increases. As my faith increases, I relax into the fact that my Higher Power has my back and I really don't need to protect myself with anger, fear and resentments.

This is a process. The fact that I don't have to do it perfectly, provides

me a lot of comfort. Sometimes the expectations I put on myself can be unrealistic. I am learning to accept myself and my process as it unfolds organically.

What I have learned through the years though, is that, I made a contract with my Higher Power in step three. My Higher Power has never back-tracked on that contract. But, I still do from time-to-time. But in step six, it's a lot easier if I let go of character defect decisively, as our literature mentions. If not, I can find myself with my back up against a wall as the result of my choices are made manifest in my life. Willingness is the principal behind step six and rebellion can stop me in my tracks. As is mentioned in our basic text, rebellion can produce indifference or intolerance. Rebellion can be overcome with persistent effort.

"We keep asking for willingness. We may be doubtful that God will see fit to relieve us, or that something will go wrong. We ask another member who say, 'You're right where you're supposed to be.' We renew our readiness to have our defects removed. We surrender to the simple suggestions that the program has to offer us. Even though we are not entirely ready, we are headed in the right direction."

"Eventually faith, humility and acceptance replace pride and rebellion. We come to know ourselves. We find ourselves growing into mature consciousness. We begin to

feel better, as willingness grows into hope. Perhaps for the first time, we see a vision of a new life. With this in sight, we put our willingness into action by moving on to step seven.” Fifth addition, basic text, page 34.
Love to all! - Jeannie C.

Why Ask?

Why ask for something before we are ready for it? This would be asking for trouble. So many times addicts have sought the rewards of hard work without the labor. Willingness is what we strive for in Step Six. How sincerely we work this step will be proportionate to our desire for change.

Do we really want to be rid of our resentments, our anger, our fear? Many of us cling to our fears, doubts, self-loathing, or hatred because there is a certain distorted security in familiar pain. It seems safer to embrace what we know than to let go of it for the unknown.

Letting go of character defects should be done decisively. We suffer because their demands weaken us. Where we were proud, we now find that we cannot get away with arrogance. If we are not humble, we are humiliated. If we are greedy, we find that we are never satisfied. Before taking Steps Four and Five, we could indulge in fear, anger, dishonesty, or self-pity. Now indulgence in these character defects clouds our ability to think logically. Selfishness becomes an intolerable, destructive chain that ties us to our bad habits. Our defects drain us of all our time and energy.

We examine the Fourth Step inventory and get a good look at what these defects are doing to our lives. We begin to long for freedom from these defects. We

pray or otherwise become willing, ready, and able to let God remove these destructive traits. We need a personality change, if we are to stay clean. We want to change.

We should approach old defects with an open mind. We are aware of them and yet we still make the same mistakes and are unable to break the bad habits. We look to the fellowship for the kind of life that we want for ourselves. We ask our friends, “Did you let go?” Almost without exception the answer is, “Yes, to the best of my ability.” When we see how our defects exist in our lives and accept them, we can let go of them and get on with our new life. We learn that we are growing when we make new mistakes instead of repeating old ones.

When we are working Step Six, it is important to remember that we are human and should not place unrealistic expectations on ourselves. This is a step of willingness. Willingness is the spiritual principle of Step Six. Step Six helps us move in a spiritual direction. Being human we will wander off course.

Rebellion is a character defect that spoils us here. We need not lose faith when we become rebellious. Rebellion can produce indifference or intolerance which can be overcome by persistent effort. We keep asking for willingness. We may be doubtful that God will see fit to relieve us or that something will go wrong. We ask another member who says, “You’re right where you’re supposed to be.” We renew our readiness to have our defects removed. We surrender to the simple suggestions that the program offers us. Even though we are not entirely ready, we are headed in the right direction.

Eventually faith, humility, and acceptance replace pride and rebellion. We come to know ourselves. We find ourselves growing into mature consciousness. We begin to feel better, as willingness grows into hope. Perhaps for the first time, we see a vision of our new life. With this in sight, we put our willingness into action by moving on to Step Seven.

Anonymous

CALL FOR ARTICLES

The area staff at SFANA will be publishing a monthly newsletter and would like two things from you:

1. Sign in by filling out the form on the web-site so that you receive the SFANA Newsletter in your email the moment it is published.
2. Submit articles and stories to be published in the SFANA Newsletter to inspire others to stay clean and keep coming back.

Some topics that would be useful in the SFANA Newsletter are:

- What is your favorite recovery quote and why?
- What is your favorite spiritual principle and why?
- What does working the steps mean to you?
- Online meetings?
- How do you handle disruptions at your home group?
- What is your experience with children at meetings?
- How do you know it is God’s will?
- Does being productive and responsible mean being boring?

- How do you develop healthy intimate relationships?
- What does it mean to be responsible and productive in NA and in society?
- How does your gratitude speak?
- How do you continue to make amends? Are you ever finished making amends?
- Are there any other requirements for membership?
- Rigidity: How did you learn to lighten up?

LOGO CONTEST

We are having a logo contest for the Sierra Foothills Area of Narcotics Anonymous! Get your creative hat on and submit a logo. To enter just fill out the comment field below – explain your logo and its meaning. Then upload your logo artwork using the file upload button. The winner will receive two tickets to the next activities event.

If you look at the home page you will notice the NA logo in the upper left of each picture in the slider. That is where the winning logo will be featured in the website. If you have what you think is a really good idea for a logo, but don't have the graphics ability, or the equipment, to create it, ask for help. That's what it is all about, one addict helping another.

Your logo artwork needs to be one of the following formats: PNG, GIF, JPG, and JPEG

If your group or area has an activity that you would like to have listed on the SFANA website, just send an email to "webmaster@sfana.org" letting us know about your event, and include any flyer you might have for the event.

Tradition Six

"An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

Our principles help us avoid certain problems by giving us guidance where we may not see the possibility of error. We addicts are so good at getting caught up in our undertakings; we can glide right past the barriers normal folk would be able to see. The reason we don't allow conflict of interest to enter into the picture is because we can justify anything. We can put the making of money beyond the feelings and emotional needs of our Fellowship to be involved and feel the weight of responsibility that keeps us spiritually fit as a fellowship. Without this reality, we would weaken into flabby complacency. Our responses would wane into ineffectuality.

The insidious nature of our disease makes us abnormally susceptible to distraction. We can slip out of a prearranged direction of effort into a justified detour with the best of excuses. Diversion from our primary purpose is similar to what we as members go through in our daily fight for recovery. We all know about drifting into concerns, worries and preoccupations that threaten our recovery. This leaves no time for meetings, Twelve Step work or interactive recovery with other addicts. Our desire keeps us focused on recovery.

It is hard to move in two directions at once. A spiritual fellowship sets spiritual goals. If we were to set worldly goals, we would quickly become worldly and the spiritual would seem inconsequential and impractical. Anyone who has been around the

Fellowship will sooner or later come up against a situation that throws apparent competence into direct conflict with spiritual reality. We learn to choose the spiritual as the eternal, lasting reality over the transient apparent reality that looks so good to begin with and caves in under pressure.

The insidious nature of our disease makes us very vulnerable to the disasters that can occur when we stray from the Sixth Tradition. We are addicts and therefore suffer from low self-esteem and have fragile egos to being with. Therefore, we are easily corrupted by the temptations of property and prestige and can soon forget about the danger of placing personalities before principles. The insidious disease of addiction allows us to rationalize all sorts of behavior, such as endorsements of outside enterprises. Since some of these enterprises will help us reach the still suffering addict, they are sometimes considered in line with the 12th step of carrying the NA message to the still suffer addict. But this is a trap. If people were rescued by a military group, part of the rescue is letting them return to their homes and not in a prison camp. Doctors can help identify other problems we may have. One doctor has spoken, "Addicts do not necessarily have any other primary illness requiring treatment of any sort." We don't take drugs just because doctors tell us to do so. It is our life at stake and many doctors are not informed about addiction. Be careful! Our inherent self-centeredness can make us easy prey for the notoriety that comes with doing endorsements. This is why the 6th tradition was written and is so very important. It protects us and NA as a whole from ourselves.

After finding recovery and practicing a spiritual way of life, we

begin to search out fellow addicts who are like us. It is a sense of trust that is allowed to transform us into productive members of society. The world would be loving and caring if the population was made up solely of recovering addicts. There would be more honesty and compassion in making, but unfortunately, that is not reality. Recovery is about dealing with reality. Many would prey on the spiritual principles that addicts develop after working the Steps. This is not to have a cynical view of humanity, but a simple fact. For instance, people would not remember the positives NA might have had with outside enterprises. These accounts would be insignificant to a non-addict, but a negative account of an affiliation with an outside enterprise would destroy years of the kind of credibility we strive to achieve. Much of society still thinks of addiction as a moral delinquency instead of a moral disease.

The clear, pure message of NA is an anecdote to addiction. The disease tries to dilute this message. When a group endorses another 12 Step fellowship or treatment center, it is giving praise to the disease. It is saying that NA alone cannot work, that we must also go somewhere else. It keeps many addicts from making that final commitment to work the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of NA. This can be deadly to some suffering addicts. NA is the only program of recovery that works for us. If we are curious or have an opportunity, we can take our program with us into any area of life or learning.

The disease of addiction is progressive. As our recovery progresses, so does our dormant disease. When we compromise our Sixth Tradition "one time," we lose our integrity as a Fellowship. When we become involved with selling

our name, we must begin to pay the price for selling our souls. We are all capable of living in our active disease. We must not allow money, property or prestige to enable us to take the focus off our primary purpose. Service work is a privilege and an honor. We must not allow ourselves to become involved in service work for profit. It may be more desirable to collect money than to sit up with a newcomer, but when the newcomers are ignored, we die. Nothing is NA except NA. We carry our message, not force our opinion. We surrender to our purpose knowing that we respect our Fellowship and that we respect ourselves. Compromises extract a toll from our lives we might not be willing to pay if we could see how much - and how often - we are charged for little or no gain.

NEWS

If you would like to have your clean date featured in the next newsletter just get the information to the editor and you will become part of the new "Milestones of Recovery" column that will be included in each and every future newsletter.

There are actually two ways to get your birthday included in the newsletter. The first was mentioned above, and that is to send the newsletter editor your clean date by shooting him an email at newsletter@sfana.org, or you can - wait for it - sign up to BasicBook, the SFANA FaceBook like social area of our website.

Yes, we have our very own social site as part of our website. Our BasicBook has most all of the features of FaceBook, but it is ours and private.

You shouldn't have any trouble using the site, as it is very similar to FaceBook. You need to have an email address to sign up as we are using a email verify system of registration, but that should not be a problem. If you are having trouble with the site, ask somebody, send the webmaster@sfana.org and email, or use the contact form on the website to let us know you are having issues. We are here to help. It is important to give this new socoal site a chance to be successful as it could become our hub of information and an easy way to communicate with each other.

There is a group for each meeting so you should join your home group and encourage other members of your home group to do the same. Group level announcements can be sent to each member very easily.

When you sign up for the BasicBook you will be asked to enter your clean date. That date will be used for the new "Milestones of Recovery" column in the newsletter. It is part of your profile and you can edit it at any time.

When you sign in it would be good to use your first name and last initial as your name so others in the program will know who you are in the case there is someone else with the same first name.

Have fun with the new site and let us know what you think.