



# Newsletter - July 2016

This month's SFANA Newsletter's theme is seven. The Seventh Step and the Seventh Tradition plus a special story submitted from behind the walls, a new member that got clean in prison. Enjoy.

## **Step Seven**

**Submitted by Jeannie C.**

"We humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings."

*dj. hum·bler, hum·blest*

- 1.** Marked by meekness or modesty in behavior, attitude, or spirit; not arrogant or prideful.
- 2.** Showing deferential or submissive respect: a humble apology.
- 3.** Low in rank, quality, or station; unpretentious or lowly: a humble cottage

I have always felt kind of weird when I talk about humility, because as soon as I do, I feel like I have lost all humility. But humility is the spiritual principal behind step seven and when I am in true humility I have an appropriate viewpoint of my place.

Hopefully, once we have worked steps one through six, a few seeds of humility have been taking root in our spirit.

For me, it took several years to become aware of my character defects. Yes, after working this step the first time, I did see that I had become selfish and self-centered. I did see that fear ran

my life to some degree. However, most the justifications were still there. I still blamed people, places and things for a lot of my unhealthy choices.

I am grateful that the steps and the spiritual awakening which accompanies working them, comes in as my Higher Power deems I am ready to receive the information. If I had received all the information of how defective my whole personality had become, I think I would have given up on recovery. It would have appeared as a mountain too high to climb. And, I knew how to deal with feelings that were overwhelming; change them with a substance.

So, with a basic awareness of the reality that my life had become unmanageable behind active addiction, I was able to see that I had, at least some part in all the things that had happened in my life. I saw that I had been selfish and self-seeking and that fear was the emotion which caused most of my decisions. I had no idea that life could be lived without fear. I did see that I was sarcastic, but it took quite a bit longer to see how reactive I had become. I thought I had been caring for others, but I actually had no idea of how to truly care for others without having some agenda of my own attached to the outcome.

In step six, I had become entirely ready to have God remove all these character defects. The depth of these defects would be revealed over the next two decades and still continue to be revealed today. So, I said a seventh step prayer for 30 days. I was as ready as I

could be at that time to have my defects of character removed. I prayed from my heart to have my Higher Power remove these defects. When I prayed from my heart, I recognized that I needed my Higher Power's help to become the person I was intended to become.

My Higher Power loves me and knows me. My Higher Power made a contract with me that day when I prayed from my heart to have my character defects removed. The spiritual principal of humility comes in when I have to get out of the way and accept my Higher Power's guidance and will. If I am in ego, which is where my disease lives, then I won't be able to see the influence of my Higher Power working through others to help me change my life for the better.

My Higher Power wants me to be free and happy, living in the light of recovery. So, He (put in whatever you like for the word "He") brings about situations and people to help me become more aware of the depth of my defects of character. Again, I truly had no idea of the depth of some of these defects. But I had heard you all say that it had worked for you; that you had put your faith in a power greater than yourself, had prayed and that over time, your defects were being removed.

The way I thought was typical of most addicts. I wanted instant gratification. I thought that once I had prayed that prayer, that I would be all well and wonderful. I thought that I would instantly see my defects, recognize the insanity they were causing in my life and with the awareness, I would simply stop using them. Haha! I can laugh about it now because I see how long it has taken me to let go of some of them and how much work I still have to do on many more.

But I also have enough experience with how my process works, to accept that I will let go of some of them quickly, some of them slowly and some of them I still have no awareness of. I trust my Higher Power to raise my awareness as I am ready.

Step seven is a very good example of why I need to work the steps over and over again. The steps are a teacher, a guide to my awakening of a spiritual nature. Each time I work them, I work them a little deeper. Each time my spiritual condition deepens. With my spiritual condition deepening, my humility, or acceptance of my place is deepened. I become more and more aware of my "right size". With that humility deepening, I become more readily able to accept the depth of some deeper entrenched defects of character.

I realize I am no better or worse than anyone. I am just me, an addict in recovery doing her best to live a life of gratitude.

*"Humility is as much a part of staying clean as food and water are to staying alive. As our addiction progressed, we devoted our energy toward satisfying our material desires. All other needs were beyond our reach. We always wanted gratification of our basic desires."*

*"The seventh Step is an action step, and it is time to ask God for help and relief. We have to understand our way of thinking is not the only way; other people can give us direction. When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction may be defensive. We must realize we are not perfect. There will always be room for growth. If we truly want to be free, we will take a good look at input from fellow addicts. If the shortcomings we discover are real, and we have a chance to be rid of them, we*

*will surly experience a sense of well-being."*

*"Some will want to get on their knees for this step. Some will be very quiet, and others will put forth a great emotional effort to show intense willingness. The word humbly applies because we approach this Power greater than ourselves to ask for the freedom to live without the limitations of our past ways. Many of us are willing to work this step without reservations, on pure blind faith, because we are sick of what we have been doing and how we are feeling. Whatever works, we go all the way."*

*"This is our road to spiritual growth. We change every day. We gradually and carefully pull ourselves out of the isolation and loneliness of addiction and into the mainstream of life. This growth is not the result of wishing, but of action and prayer. The main goal of Step seven is get out of ourselves and strive to achieve the will of our Higher Power."* Basic text, sixth addition, pages 36 & 37.

Love to all!  
Jeannie C.

## ***I Am Your Disease***

### ***Submitted by Charlie A. from behind the walls***

I hate meetings. I hate higher power. I hate anyone who has a program. To you who came in contact with me, I wish you death and I wish you suffering.

Allow me to introduce myself: I am the disease of addiction. Cunning, Baffling and Powerful, that's me. I have killed millions and I am pleased. I love to trick you with the element of surprise. I love pretending I am your friend and

lover. I have given you comfort have I not? Wasn't I there when you were lonely? When you wanted to die, didn't you call me? I was there. I love to make you hurt. I love to make you cry. Better yet, I love when I make you numb and you can neither hurt nor cry. You can't feel anything at all. This is true glory. I will give you instant gratification and all I ask of you is long-term suffering. I have been there for you always. When things were going right in your life, you invited me in.

You said you didn't deserve these good things, and I was the only one who would agree with you. Together we were able to destroy all the good things in your life. People don't take me seriously and I love it. They take strokes seriously, heart attacks seriously, even diabetes they take seriously. Fools that they are, they don't realize that without my help many of these things would not be made possible. I am such a hated disease and yet I do not come uninvited. You choose to have me. So many have chosen me over reality and peace.

But more than you hate me, I hate all of you who have a Twelve-Step Program. Your program, your meetings, your Higher Power all weaken me and I cannot function in the manner I accustomed to. Now I must lie here quietly. You don't see me, but I am growing bigger than ever. When you only exist, I may live. When you live, I exist. But I am here...and until we meet again, I wish you death and suffering.

## ***Tradition Seven***

*"Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."*

Our program is grounded in spiritual principles. To drift away from

the honest caring and sharing of our tremendous growth period is to betray the spirit of NA. After all, it is the promise of freedom from active addiction that attracted addicts to our program in the first place. The vast number of incoming members assures us that our members who know about recovery and principled living will be outnumbered. It takes principles and courage to interact with the newcomers and help them keep pace with the demands placed upon them. Yeah, we know this is a big job and we run a severe risk of developing teams of followers, but we just have to pray and do the best we can.

Our need from prayer and meditation is greater when we have the support of a great number of people - because they may, on occasion, be wrong! Listening to the inner voice may be our only chance. This doesn't mean we act against the majority; we just bring our higher power into the picture. If our inner voice says something worth hearing, it should be interesting to others.

To let our focus drift into fundraising and excessive markup of our literature and justify it in the name of helping others fools no one. We are not a business. We are a spiritual Fellowship. In those instances, where we must collect or disburse funds, we have to minimize the cost to the Fellowship.

Our service bodies are nothing more than holding companies for what we have given. It is hard in some of the committees to remember that while the illusion of power can come with a title, service positions are nothing except opportunities to help those who may otherwise die or suffer needlessly. It is easy to see ourselves as more than we are because of this. Nevertheless, we surrender and pray for a loving God to

help us remember our contribution to what we have been given only allows us to increase ourselves by more giving. This is how we fill the hole in the gut.

The Seventh Tradition speaks about being fully self-supporting. In this Tradition, fully means completely. We decline all outside contributions. If we compromise this principle, we open the doors to outside influences. Many places would like to give us free meeting rooms. We insist on paying rent. This helps to insure our autonomous groups. We also refuse donations of money, materials and services from outside our Fellowship. We send back the money with a note of thanks and a polite explanation. We cannot afford to be obligated or to even feel obligated. Our sense of obligation may affect our actions and decisions as groups.

We also need to look at the less obvious effects of this Tradition on NA as a whole. If our service boards and committees become dependent on sales of NA materials to outside enterprises for income, how does this affect our motivations and the development of NA materials? Our Fifth and Sixth Traditions become interrelated here. Our primary group purpose comes first. These are issues we have faced in the past and continue to face today.

In our addiction, we were never able to be self-supporting. We were always dependent on others. That is why it is so important for us to be self-supporting in our recovery. By being completely self-supporting we owe nothing to anyone other than our group and the fellowship, no one can say you owe me. We begin to stand on our own two feet and we take pride in our independence.

We just experience the concept of responsibility through our group. Our

group teaches us that we need to take care of our own. We refuse money or anything else from outside of NA. Our members donate at the group level. The group, in respect to the fund flow and their autonomy has the choice to donate to the area, or to provide services to the addict who suffers. If a group decides to follow the fund flow, they may donate their excess money to the area. If they choose to surrender to the fifth tradition, they may make books free to newcomers or various other things to carry a message. Addicts can choose to donate in their home group or in many groups. Many addicts get confused and believe the seventh tradition applies to service boards or committees. Service boards or committees are not NA thus the seventh tradition does not apply. Donating in a committee does not carry our message, it funds the service board. The service board is not a business and is not self-supporting. Groups are self-supporting and money after bills goes to support the service effort. We may on occasion throw a fund-raiser to meet additional needs if they occur. Service boards and committees carry our group conscience with money from the groups. As we begin to respect our seventh tradition and begin to make healthy decisions in our lives and be self-supporting members of society.

As addicts, we have always been dependent on others - either our families, spouses or social agencies. We have never felt secure enough in ourselves to stand on our own two feet. Dependency has become a way of life. In order to begin to recover we must break that chain and a way to begin is by contributing our fair share to our NA group. In doing this, we become responsible for our own recovery.

Much of recovery has to do with awakening to the interrelationships that were invisible to us in active addiction or early recovery. We demand respect when someone intrudes on us yet express amazement when others accuse us of intruding on them. The Seventh Tradition helps us maintain some separation from other groups and purposes to preserve our focus on recovery. In gratitude, we seek strength and guidance to carry on in the Spirit of NA in many ways. Direct contact with addicts who are learning to live clean places special demands on us to keep faith with the confidence and trust they place in us. This requires distance and separation from groups and the purposes those organizations would have. We dare not alter our identification as addicts recovering in Narcotics Anonymous. Other purposes would creep in and while most would seem to have little impact, they would accumulate until we were applying for funds and preoccupied with the concerns of bureaucracy rather than meeting the service needs of groups.

Getting our support from our members gives us a solid base in recovery. We have no other goals to take into account or people whose aims we must satisfy. Our sincerity protects us when things could go wrong. An addict shares, "Giving of 'myself' is a new concept in my life. In the past, I would always try to buy your attention, friendship, etc. The self-support that this tradition talks about has a lot more to do with home group members giving of themselves in service than it has to do with the money we put in the basket. The commitment of sharing 'myself,' 'my being' with you is one of the most effective antidotes to self-centeredness and egocentricity that I have found.

"I have had confused feelings when it comes to giving. Am I giving enough? I would spend much more than this if I were using. Should I make up the difference when I think the basket is short? After all this fellowship has given me so much and I contribute so little. The amount must be an individual decision. Contribution through service and monetary means are necessary for our fellowship to survive. Once I decided on an amount and made a commitment to it I try to donate it regularly not just here and there. Part of the change for me is consistency and willingness to stay consistent."

It would be easy for us to accept free rent from centers that would like to promote themselves as having our services available to their clients. We must not allow this so as not to become dependent upon them for meeting halls and to allow them to possibly bend our message to better suit their needs. They would commit our services to their clients and that would be a lie. We in NA respect the treatment community and want the respect from them needed for us to function. Our spiritual integrity is at stake here.

## ***NEWSLETTER CALL FOR ARTICLES***

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

1. Sign in by filling out the form on the website 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 is your experience with children at meetings?
- Does being productive and responsible mean being boring?
- How do you develop healthy intimate relationships?
- How does your gratitude speak?
- How do you continue to make amends? Are you ever finished making amends?

## ***ENTER THE 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 you, or someone you know, has a problem with addiction please call the helpline at: **(530) 645-1635**