

# Sierra Foothills Area of Narcotics Anonymous

## Newsletter - August 2016



This month's SFANA Newsletter's theme is eight. The Eighth Step and the Eighth Tradition. Enjoy.

### **Step Eight**

Submitted by Jeannie C.

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.”

“In the Eight Step, we will focus on honesty, courage, willingness and compassion. To practice the principal of honesty in the Eighth Step, we need to draw on our experience in the previous steps. We've admitted the nature of our problem-addiction, and affirmed the solution to that problem. This was an act of honesty. We've taken a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves; doing so exercised a newfound honesty. Exacting the nature of our wrongs within the fabric of our personalities took our honesty to an even deeper level. So we have some experience separating our part in things from what others have done. That's the level of honesty we'll need to call on in Step Eight. We have to forget about resentments, blaming others, believing we were innocent victims, and any other justification for the harm we caused. We simply need to *put it on the list.*” NA Step working guide page 76.

I don't know about anyone else who has the disease of addiction, but I had every excuse in the world to NOT work this step, or to only include certain people or institutions in my Eight Step Amends list. I felt victimized by certain people, a few situations and certainly by an institution or two. I was fearful of how some people may react to my amends. I was lazy, broke, selfish, rebellious and had some anxiety about admitting my wrongs. My ego wanted me to pretend some harms I had inflicted, simple never happened.

I was forgetting an important point. Step Eight says we became WILLING to make amends. I was not willing.

I remember the first time I worked this step, my sponsor suggested I pray for willingness. I didn't want to become willing. I wasn't willing to become willing. Ha-ha! But it's true. I didn't want to pray for willingness because I knew my Higher Power would answer that prayer. I wanted to hang onto my closely protected denial and my ego attachment to having been “victimized.” I wore victimization like an old, worn-out favorite coat. It protected me from the self-examination, so necessary for a spiritual awakening.

I certainly didn't want to make amends to all those men who had taken advantage of me; like I'd had no part in inviting all of that nonsense into my life. Ha-ha!

I wanted to hold onto my anger toward certain institutions. I justified

not making financial amends to them by telling myself that they had been ripping me off all along. And don't you know, "They deserved it." So, I didn't want to put them of the list.

I used laziness to not make a direct amends to a Police Officer from my past. He had gone to court for me, stood-up in my behalf, twice and I yet, I looked him in the eye and lied to him. I really didn't want to put him on the list. He was conveniently located in another state anyway. Ha-ha!

I used fear to keep from admitting that I had stolen a TV. I really didn't want to make amends to the owner of the TV because I was afraid he would see me for who I had been at the time. I used anxiety to keep from calling my ex landlord and asking her how I could pay her back for the rent I'd never paid.

Needless to say, these are just a few examples of the amends I needed to put on my list. There were so many ways in which I had harmed others. It seemed overwhelming at best and certainly endless. But, I was projecting all these emotions onto the amends process before I had even begun. I was conflicted because I wanted freedom from the wreckage of my past, but I didn't want to pay the price of having my ego diminished. My disease wanted me to remain miserable and sadly tied to the past.

My sponsor was smart. She recommended that I pray to become willing, to become willing. She reminded me that all I was doing was making a list, for now. I actually listened to her for a change. I began to pray for the willingness to become willing.

And, what do know? I became willing. I found myself in so much pain from holding onto sick secrets that I didn't want to hold onto them any

longer. I just didn't want to be miserable anymore.

So, I made the list. Simple. The Police Officer, the institutions, the exes, the family, society, myself, and many others were on the list.

It was simply a list. But something had happened in me. I had changed. By openly admitting the harms I had caused, I had gained some more self-acceptance. With that, came self-love and an unwillingness to hurt myself or others.

"A Higher Power is working in our lives, preparing us to be of service to others. The changes brought about by that Power are evidenced by our changing attitudes and actions. We are developing the ability to choose spiritual principals over character defects and recovery over addiction. We have a fresh outlook on life, and we know that we are responsible for what we do. We no longer feel constant regret over the harm we caused in the past. Simply understanding how badly we've hurt people, being truly sorry for the pain we've caused, and becoming willing to let them know of our desire to make things right are the keys to freedom from our past. Though we have yet to make peace with others, we've come a long way toward making peace with ourselves. With our new perspective, our trust in the God of our understanding, and our willingness, we go to Step Nine."

"It Works, How and Why", page 81

## ***Moving from Hell to Heaven***

Submitted by Jeannie C.

There are moments in life when the dichotomy between the darkness

lived while in active addiction, and life lived in the light of recovery, are in such sharp contrast that it takes my breath away.

I remember feeling like I was swirling in darkness, the air around me stagnant and limited. The very air I breathed felt like it was killing me. All I could see was the darkness.

All I could see was a life of misery, lived day-in and day-out without any hope. I had cut myself off from all loving support and left myself open to all forms of negative energy. By expecting negative outcomes, I invited them in.

I felt sorry for myself and lived on the pity-pot constantly. I had no idea I was creating my miserable life. All my thoughts were based on fear. All my decisions were based on those fearful thoughts. I had no awareness that decisions based on fear, would lead me around and around in circles of pain.

I felt responsible for helping others when I was still in need of so much help myself. I looked for ways to escape the self-loathing that accompanied the knowledge that I was not being true to myself. So, I sought out people, places and things to take me out of myself and quiet that voice of self-love that whispered in my heart, "You deserve better than this."

But, being true to the voice of self-love takes a lot of work and some serious change for some of us. It seemed easier to keep accepting a life a pain than to make the internal changes necessary. It WAS easier. I would have rather shut up the voice of self-love with a dozen cookies, a drug, a drink, an unhealthy relationship, a ton of work, business, sex; all the while keeping the mask on. The mask was made up of an image I had built through the years. The image was exactly what I wanted you all to see,

nothing more, and the dishonesty of it, was killing me through all forms of addiction. My spirit was dying a slow and painful death. I felt like I was living in hell.

Now, here I am. I find myself living in the light of recovery. The air is different here. The air is a bright white and there is more air available than I could ever breathe in. It is clean and fresh and it revitalizes me rather than sucks the life from me.

I look around my life and see the beauty I have let in. I see amazing people who love each other; who reach out their hands to help one another. I see laughter, joy, fun and growth. I see acceptance and a safe place to become who I was meant to become. I see people who want to grow and learn who they are, and realize a higher purpose.

I see clean parents playing with babies. I see parents reuniting with children lost to the effects of addiction. I see people living life, working, playing, growing, loving, all while remaining clean and free of drugs. I see the spirit awoken in people who for so long, had no light in their eyes.

I see all of creation and am stunned that this small life could change so much. I see the light playing off the leaves on a summer day and I am present to take it all in. I see dogs grinning and bounding across the field and my heart soars with their playfulness. I see the sky full of stars at night and tears corners my eyes at the wonder of creation.

I feel the strength of my body as I work out and I thank the creator for another day of life.

I see the effects my thoughts have on my life. I see myself making decisions based on health and self-love and words elude me as to the gratitude I feel.

To have moved from a life lived in desperation, fear and anxiety, to a life lived in joy, wonder, laughter and love is astounding...it is a miracle. I am eternally grateful.

### ***Tradition Eight***

“Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.”

Keeping our services non-professional helps us prevent conflicts between paid and unpaid workers. Without clearly understanding the conflicts we build into our service effort if we allow our special workers to control portions of our group conscience process, we will unwittingly subject our fellowship to misleading and unreliable information. Our ability to think clearly, discuss fully and collect enough general information to make an informed decision through spiritual deliberation can be defeated. A spiritual person does not put a bag over their head.

The Eighth Tradition as it applies to our groups very simple. Our groups are non-professional, PERIOD. Ideally, service in our groups should result from the spiritual awakening our Steps bring us. Our Text says, "Proper service is doing the right thing for the right reason." Personal motivation is a factor in why we have an Eighth Tradition.

Applying this tradition to our service boards and committees has been more difficult. We agree that special workers being used to answer phones, maintain correspondence, do clerical

work, print, warehouse and ship literature is within the terms of the Eighth Tradition and must be paid for our Seventh Tradition to be working, but what about editing and writing literature? Doing Public Information, Hospital and Institution work, etc? Should paid workers travel and assist in the development of NA in other areas? These are questions that have arisen in regard to the Eighth Tradition. We need to look at the concept of "special workers" in light of our Steps and Traditions. While we may employ people to do day to day tasks in our service centers, 12th Step work or "carrying the message" should result from our gratitude and spiritual awakening, not from desire for personal gain. Our motivations are important. We only keep what we have by giving it away. The strength of our message is as much in the giver as the message itself. It is spiritual and this tradition helps us to divide the spiritual from the material. The Eighth Tradition can keep us from sacrificing our spiritual principles for the sake of material efficiency.

Keeping the NA groups non-professional allows all members to recover as equals. Many addicts have become fed up with dealing with professionals and are drawn to NA simply because it is a strictly non-professional organization where addicts recover on an equal basis. There is no one person better than another. It is one addict helping another. Many of us are intimidated by or are resentful of professionals and are unwilling to deal with them. They do not want to feel as if they are being told what to do. In NA, no one can tell anyone else what to do. We deal in suggestions only. It is up to the individual addict whether they take it or leave any specific suggestions. Too many

addicts equate professionals with authority figures. In NA groups there must be no figures of authority. If there is one thing more than anything else that may drive newcomers away, it is the thought of dealing with authority.

Special workers are employed by NA service centers to provide a service. Service centers are directly responsible to NA but they are not NA. Therefore, our special workers should not be members of NA. When this occurs, a conflict of interest may put a member in a compromising position. We respect our members and we would not want to add further difficulty to anyone's personal program. Our service centers employ people to answer phones, file, fill orders and other tasks to enable our centers to be more efficient. We need to keep in mind that these people, not being NA members, should not be volunteers. NA members are free to volunteer possibly as part of their Seventh Tradition. Also, being non NA members, we need to define the special worker's role as specifically working in our service centers, not writing or editing literature, not doing PI work and not becoming involved in carrying a message to institutions. These are responsibilities of NA members who are willing to serve the fellowship. When we hire professionals outside of NA to become involved with our literature, our public information or H&I work, we are cheating ourselves out of carrying the message. This creates problems with the possibility of service work for hire that we will never condone. Things like this damage the integrity of NA as a whole.

We trust that group conscience will direct us, rather than any individual member with a good voice. We must trust in this group conscience while each share our experience, strength and

hope, and let our higher power's will be done. It is important for each individual to be honest when sharing their feelings in order for the group conscience to be accurate.

Care must be taken to keep our spiritual integrity by maintaining a close focus on recovery and carrying our message. Many other activities that might have some bearing on the goals of NA and be in some way related to our message fall outside the perimeter of our competence. We are good at getting clean, staying clean and helping others directly and through some group efforts at putting members in position to directly carry our message while maintaining anonymity. Beyond this, we do not go. Other people will own and run hospitals. Others will run the governments and administer and enforce its laws. Others will conduct the media and do the many things possible in a complex society of individuals like ours.

As a spiritual fellowship, we maintain our proper position so that our time and attention is available to do what no one else can: help addicts seeking recovery. In this way, we keep faith with those who helped us and make way for those who will in their turn help others. If those who helped us had been distracted, many of us would not have made it. If we are distracted, we will not notice those who die at our doorstep.

Addicts seem to have an innate fear and hatred of conflicts of interest. We probably carry this to unfair extremes. It is for the protection of our new people that we hold ourselves so far back from even giving the appearance of exploiting our members need for help by overcharging for our events, our literature or anything else pertaining to

recovery. NA is not in the publishing business. We grant limited rights to our world service components to retail our literature under control of the Fellowship to insure our purposes never become exploitative.

Responsibility calls for us to remind our special workers that NA is run by a Loving God as expressed in group conscience. This means the bills are paid on time. If our unity is strong and our members are focused on recovery, they can usually provide additional help and support if needed. We are careful to keep other goals out of the picture. Being sensitive to members needs and attentive to their instruction is more than simply keeping faith with spiritual law; it is also the law of the land.

Committee officers frequently forget that their terms don't last forever and that recovery is the more important thing. Substitutes for recovery are always sought by addicts in recovery and we always try to cover this up through denial because we think we are the only ones. Go ahead, have a good laugh. You've earned it - or you will someday.

## ***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**