

# Sierra Foothills Area of Narcotics Anonymous

## Newsletter - September 2016



This month's SFANA Newsletter's theme is Nine. The Ninth Step and the Ninth Tradition. Enjoy.

### **Step Nine**

Submitted by Jeannie C.

“We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

Step nine should not be avoided. If we do, we are reserving a place in our program for relapse. Fear, pride and procrastination often seem to be an impossible barrier; they stand in the way of progress and growth. The important thing is to take action and to be ready to accept the reactions of those persons we had harmed. We make amends to the best of our ability.” Basic text, page 40.

I needed courage, willingness, honesty and humility to work step nine. But my ego was truly afraid of admitting what I had done. Fortunately, the steps are written and worked in order for many good reasons.

Letting go of ego enough to take this step was essential for me. By the by this point I had developed a relationship with a Higher Power as a result of working the previous steps. And my ego was slowing letting go of its hold on its determination to keep me miserable. The relationship with my Higher Power was very important to me and I knew that if I wanted to stay clean and retain this

relationship, then I had to own up to the harm I had caused. The freedom I craved was becoming more of a reality with each step.

I have been working step nine again for about three years. Some of my amends will be on-going for many years, some will take a lifetime and some I can complete in one face-to-face-visit.

A couple of my amends had to be attempted through letters. After consulting with my sponsor, we determined that some of the people I needed to make amends to, were actually not safe for me to be around, so to these people, I wrote letters. I owned what I had done and asked what I could do to correct the wrong. Most people freely forgive.

There was a police officer I owned amends to for lying to him. He lived in another state and I had no idea of how to get in contact with him. I contacted my Higher Power and waited for an answer. Through a series of very stranger “coincidences” I was able to get in contact with his nephew. I explained my situation to the nephew and he told me that his uncle had passed on several years prior. So, with circumstances like that, I get to make a living amends, by showing respect for officers and telling them the truth.

In the instance where I really didn't want to amends to the corporation, I finally realized that it didn't matter if I felt like they were ripping me off. I owed them the money so I have been paying them.

Many family and friendship amends are living amends. As I amend my behavior I receive the freedom from the bondage of the past and get to allow the joy of healed relationships to flourish in my life. I get to be present as a mom and a grandmother in ways I never would have imagined. Very recently, I was able to be present for my kids and grandkids at the passing of my ex-husband, their father. I get to show up and be present and clean and enjoy life with them, free of a foggy mind and diminished spirit.

I get to be responsible and accountable to my friendships, as I support and love them and I allow their support and love in my life. The friendships I have been blessed with in recovery have been amazing! I still have many friends from twenty-five years ago. We teach each other, forgive each other and love each other through our process. We hold each other up and support each other through some very tough times. We celebrate each other's accomplishments and want the best for each other. What a gift!

Making amends to myself has been very rewarding. Some of the behaviors I engaged in while in active addiction were dangerous and harmful to my spirit, my body and my self-esteem. In the process of the steps, especially step nine, I get to recover my sense of self-worth through changing the way I treat myself. I no longer feel the need to hurt myself by ingesting toxic chemicals through drugs, certain foods or cigarettes. I no longer allow toxic, harmful people to have a place in my life. I take care of body through regular exercise and healthy foods. I take care of my spirit through daily meditation, working the steps with others and sharing openly with my

sponsor. I get to take care my intellect by writing and improving my craft. I get to take care of my emotions by allowing them and accepting them, no matter how painful, without changing them with a substance. I get to experience joy in the present moment because, as a result of working the steps, I have come home to myself. My life is balanced and full, well rounded and I am eternally grateful for the steps and especially step nine for the freedom it has brought me.

So, all that fear was just my ego trying to hold on to a miserable life I no longer wanted. Insanity! I get to Face Everything And Recover. I don't have to do it perfectly, but I need to be willing.

"In the process of our recovery, we are restored to sanity and part of sanity is effectively relating to others. We less often view people as a threat to our security. Real security will replace the physical ache and mental confusion that we have experienced in the past. We approach those we have harmed with humility and patience. Many of our sincere well-wishers may be reluctant to accept our recovery as real. We must remember the pain that they have known. In time, many miracles will occur. Many of us who were separated from our families succeed in establishing relationships with them. Eventually it becomes easier for them to accept the change in us. Clean time speaks for itself. Patience is an important part of our recovery. The unconditional love we experience will rejuvenate our will to live, and each positive move on our part will be matched by an unexpected opportunity. A lot of courage and faith goes into making an amend, and a lot of spiritual growth results.

We are achieving freedom from the wreckage of our past. We will want

to keep our house in order by practicing a continuous personal inventory in Step Ten.”

Basic text, pages 14 and 42.

## ***Tradition Nine***

*"NA, as such, ought never to be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."*

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual program and we put our spiritual purposes first. It is important that we don't get so caught up in the business side of our group directed functions. Those boards and committees we create are admonished to maintain directly responsibility to the general membership: those we serve. We get two sorts of direction from the Fellowship. First, what we do in the way of providing a service. For instance, we may decide to start a help line or a service project at the world level. Second, how we proceed in setting up or maintaining a routine service. What we do it is decided once, how we do it may be updated from time to time. Or we may decide we can no longer provide a given service. In the past members have often had trouble separating what we do from how we do it. Both are policy items but they require different considerations. What we do depends largely on the strengths and weaknesses in a given service area. No sense in committing to H&I panels if you don't have members who can service them. Also, if we commit to put out meeting schedules and flyers at probation offices or other places where addicts can get them, it requires a certain amount of money and has to be done on a regular basis.

No service boards or committee should be allowed to govern the Fellowship. In selfless service, members may choose to become involved with committees our service boards. But since they are not NA, opinion and manipulation has no place, just group conscience as explained in our Second Tradition. Members may trust specific members to carry their collective conscience but this does not make this member a leader, governor or an organizer. It simply makes that person a trusted servant. No one has the power or authority to make decisions for NA. NA as a whole makes decisions for NA as a whole.

Our sanctioned events and service efforts are done by trusted servants. All are addicts seeking recovery at times and all are members who act as resources to those who suffer at other times. Surely, we will all fall short at times. But if enough of us are mindful of Tradition Nine, we can offset any harm done. The basic problem seems to be when the business aspect of an event makes our members uncomfortable. Our policy of openness and service is conducive to good feelings about service and trusting our trusted servants. If our servants can't trust us, who are we to trust them?

Special words require our attention. It can be a mistake to assume we know why these terms are special. Like many 'addict words,' ordinary definitions may or may not apply. This can prevent our going that one extra step that could lead to much more useful knowledge and understanding. Organizations are functional systems and they work to preserve these functions. An organization is built around beliefs held in common. The means to enforce adherence to its rules

and goals is generally inclusion or exclusion. Businesses are organized from the inside out. NA is organized from the outside in. We invert the structural pyramid, with Members at the top and service positions at the bottom. Our group conscience processes blend ideas and suggestions from many sources so that we include a maximum number of viewpoints and people. We don't submit well to authority figures. We can surrender as part of our programs and our service yet it is entirely voluntary. If we are not given trust and respect, we know something has gone wrong.

In NA, we deal exclusively with the disease of addiction. NA "as such" referred to in this Tradition applies to our meetings where recovery is shared. This may include two members sharing on the phone in the middle of the night, a regular meeting or a convention meeting. All else is "not" NA. NA is not a business where business practices can take precedence over spiritual values. Many times, business concerns and issues have been used as an excuse to be secretive, manipulative and deceptive. Through the years, this has been a matter of some debate. It will always be a matter of debate because we will always have people moving from a rational, worldly viewpoint to a spiritual. It takes some time to realize that the worldly takes care of day-to-day functions but the spiritual takes care of every moment. All our luck and good feeling depends on the spirit. Ideally, there should be no conflict but it takes time and experience to learn to live the NA way without conflict. New people or people in new situations will always need our love and understanding if they fall into some trap or area where they can't see what to do clearly. We all need patience and tolerance.

The Fellowship creates its service boards and committees. This is important to understand because in the course of things it may seem to us that our service efforts 'create' the Fellowship. It works one way and not the other. This keeps our committees and boards oriented to serve members and groups. It helps them to not get so caught up in what they are doing that they forget their allegiance to the Fellowship. If they do not, they may begin to govern. Power, like anger, is a potent drug. We create these and they are our creations but it takes care and training to serve NA without falling into well known traps! They didn't create us, our desire for recovery did. We recovering addicts are not their creatures.

Direct responsibility does not have to concern us with what other service boards and committees think. If we serve well those who benefit from our efforts and generally support others working to do the same, all will be well. Addicts make poor legislators. We may hate to admit this fact. We are frequently tied into our own viewpoint so totally, that others exist only in our peripheral vision. Keeping our service simple and just doing our job takes a lot of surrender and sincerity on our part.

Structurally, this Tradition is a warning to keep faith with the members of NA at large. It is the nature of bureaucracies that much can be made of little. Interactive service boards can pat each other on the back and drift away from being directly responsible without ever noticing it. Like a bullfrog in a pan of water on the stove, they can boil to death without noticing the water getting hotter. They surely think all the feels warm is good for them. All service positions require knowledge of the Steps

and Traditions. This is because we need to have surrender, faith, morals, and the ability to say we're sorry if we're going to function well with other addicts in service.

What is trusted service? Trusted service may be commitments that we may take on unconditionally on a group, area or regional level. These commitments may vary, but one thing does not change: The unselfish desire to give back what was so freely given to you. For many of us, this act of unconditional love may take the form of something simple on a group level. That something that allows us to show our gratitude and feel a part of the greater whole. As our understanding of the principle of NA becomes more apparent and our spirituality increases, we may get involved in the committees that are directly responsible to its members. Not all addicts in recovery choose to get involved in trusted service. Many are content with what they seem to have. Others complain of principles being violated or personalities in conflict. For us, trusted service implies action.

It can be so easy to sit back and complain about how poorly another member may be fulfilling their commitment. It can take the focus off ourselves. Why not get involved and either take on a commitment or help with others. No one commitment is more important than another. If service were a management system or a corporate effort, this might not be as true as it is with us. Service is part of our general giving or a part of our twelfth step. In either case, it is important for us to give and to keep faith within the Fellowship's trust. Performing our task well or poorly is almost another matter. If we're clumsy or awkward, someone will notice and find a way to help us, if we are sincere.

One purpose of our Ninth Tradition is to separate and distinguish NA as such from our service boards and committees. 'NA as such' is groups of addicts holding meetings for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction. Their primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Service boards and committees are created by these groups and are not NA as such. They have many other purposes and may become besieged with rivalry or competitiveness. This is an important distinction as many members confuse our service structure with NA. Our structure does not speak for NA but should allow NA to speak through it. Our boards and committees should not lead NA as such, but should be led as outlined in our second tradition.

Separating our service structure and NA is vital to our spiritual growth. When we blur the distinction, service disputes and controversies enter into our recovery meetings and affect our personal recovery. No member should be isolated or feel isolated from the fellowship because of service issues. This Tradition talks about direct responsibility. It is up to NA groups to insist on this. Although our structure is separate from NA as such, we expect it to work within the principles established by our Steps and Traditions.

Somehow, over the years, our service boards and committees changed direction. They changed from being "not a part of Narcotics Anonymous" to being "solely to serve the fellowship." This cheats the newcomer members from the concept of the Ninth Tradition. This may not be a direct change but indirectly an implication of service boards or committees being NA can confuse people and bring conflict upon ourselves.

Service boards or committees serve the Fellowship not direct the Fellowship.

We can trust NA service boards and committees where they are guided by a loving God in their choices. Individuals may become obsessed and view dissenting members as the enemy, but surely, our combined love and determined effort for the common good will prevail. It is not the job of our service boards and committees to provide things we don't need. We don't need people to tell us what to think or approve what information becomes available to us. Responsiveness is the hallmark of genuine service. When members ask questions, they really want to know. Responding to their needs allows them to get past problems others have successfully faced. They go on to break new recovery ground for NA.

## ***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**