

Sierra Foothills Area of Narcotics Anonymous

Newsletter - November 2016



This month's SFANA Newsletter's theme is Eleven. The Eleventh Step and the new Traditions workbook. Also, we have an article entitled Newcomer from Phillip G. Enjoy.

Step Eleven

Submitted by Jeannie C.

"We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the ability to carry that out."

"In Step Eleven we will focus on the spiritual principals of commitment, humility, courage and faith. We need to make a commitment to the regular practice of regular prayer and meditation." Step Working Guide, page 113

If I had to choose a favorite step, number eleven would be it. Throughout my years in recovery, this step has been my anchor. One of the things I love most about Narcotics anonymous, is that we get to choose our Higher Power. That freedom to choose my own Higher Power creates an environment of safety for me. I don't have to even consider if I am being judged because I don't believe in the same HP as you. I get to grow and develop a relationship with my HP based on the work I did in steps two and three.

"Throughout our recovery, one of the things which stands out as a result of our working the steps is our success in building a relationship with the God of our understanding. Our initial efforts

resulted in the working of the following steps, each one of which were designed to clear away whatever barriers might stand between our Higher Power and ourselves. As a result, we are open to receive our Higher Power's love and guidance directly into our lives." It Works How and Why, page 105

Like many of us recovering from the disease of addiction, I was separated from my spirit and my spiritual connection was completely severed while engaged in active addiction. For a long time, I didn't even feel it. I was numb with drugs and denial. Then there were times when I would pray and ask my HP to help me stop using, only to find myself loaded by noon the next day. I prayed that prayer more times than I can possibly remember. The inability to be true to that prayer by reliance on my HP, perpetuated a vicious cycle of guilt, remorse, self-loathing and despair. Then I'd use to relieve the feelings of shame for the way I was treating myself and everyone around me. Then, I'd pray again, only to repeat the cycle. It was insanity. I was sad, lonely, hopeless and suicidal at some points. My denial was so deep at some points that I blamed my sad life on the relationship, the job, the finances. I thought I was the unluckiest being in the universe. I had no idea that the choices I was making in the present moment were creating my reality for the next day, the next week, the next month and sometimes for years to come. As I type this right now and remember how hopelessly lost I was, tears sting my eyes for the sad way I treated myself and for

gratitude that I no longer treat myself with disrespect.

“For instance, at some time in our lives, we may feel unhappy but not know exactly what is causing such unhappiness. After spending a few minutes in prayer, seeking a specific solution to our unhappiness, we may suddenly get an idea that all our problems are caused by our boring job and demanding boss. We may even go to great lengths to convince ourselves that our idea was divinely inspired. We, as addicts, are subject to take such random thoughts and run with them, impulsively quitting our jobs. This scenario may seem extreme. Its point is that, by praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry that out, we can avoid our former tendency to allow fleeting whims and superstition to dictate the course of our lives. Knowledge of our Higher Power’s will usually does not come in a momentary blinding flash, but in a gradual awakening brought about by the continued practice of prayer and meditation.” *It Works, How and Why*, page 111.

My conscious contact with my HP has morphed and changed throughout the years. My Higher has remained the same, but my perceptions of and my understanding of my Higher Power has evolved with my deepening awareness. My determination to self-destruct has slowly been replaced by a growing awareness of my patterns and a willingness to let those patterns go through active self-love. That self-love is fed directly by my conscious contact. I was taught early on, to make connect first thing in the morning with my HP. That method has evolved through the years, but a couple of things have remained constant. The first constant, is

that I open my eyes and say good morning to my HP. Then I read the “Just for Today.” Then I pray and ask for my Higher Power’s will to be in my life for that day. Then I say, “Okay. Here we go! Another day of life. How do I want to live it? Clean. Let’s go God.”

Meditation has become increasingly important throughout the years. Though my method of meditation has changed countless times, the goal has always been to quiet my mind, hear my higher voice and listen for direction. It’s in these quiet moments, when my mind is still, that my awareness and my serenity increase.

My intuitive voice has taken some training. To recognize it for the gift it is and then make decisions accordingly has been and continues to be a work in progress.

“We get better at hearing our own voice, our own conscious, and listening to our instincts, but we’ve taught ourselves over time, not to trust them. Learning the difference between the voice of our intuition and the voice of our disease is not something that can be explained; we figure it out in meditation, when we practice listening to ourselves and our Higher Power.” *Living Clean*, page 171.

As my conscious awareness of my Higher Power increases, my choices tend to change. I find myself making healthier, holistic choices in my life; not always, but most of time. My Higher Power wants me to be healthy physically, emotionally and spiritually. And as I rely on my Higher Power to provide for me and I see even a miniscule amount of willingness repaid with abundance, my faith grows and my willingness increases. Now, I find myself on a new cycle. The old cycle of using, sadness, loneliness, desperation,

remorse and guilt is being replaced with a new cycle of prayer, meditation, contact, letting go, making healthier choices, all resulting in an increase of self-love and a deeper willingness to rely ever more on my Higher Power.

To carry out my Higher Power's will for me, I need to let go of my expectations on how I think things should go. What I need to remember, is that my HP is loving and wants only the best for me. Once I remember this, it becomes easier to let go of the outcome and simply do the footwork.

"There are many different qualities we may need to carry out our Higher Power's will: humility, a sense of compassion, honesty, integrity, or an ability to persevere and the patience to wait for results over a long period. A strong sense of justice and an ability to be assertive might be what's called for in a certain situation. Sometimes eagerness is required, and other times only a sense of caution will do. Courage and fortitude are qualities that we are often called upon to display. Sometimes, the best quality to promote God's will is a sense of humor." Step Working Guide, page 113.

"We are thankful for this step, because we begin to see what is best for us. Sometimes we prayed for our wants and got trapped once we got them. We could pray and get something, then have to pray for its removal, because we couldn't handle it. Hopefully, having learned the power of prayer and the responsibility prayer brings with it, we can use the Eleventh Step as a guidance for our daily program. "We begin to pray only for God's will for us. This way we are getting only what we are capable of handling. We are able to respond to it and handle it, because God helps us prepare for it. Some of us simply use our words to give thanks for god's grace."

"In an attitude of surrender and humility, we approach this step again and again to receive the gift of knowledge and strength from the God of our understanding." Basic text, pages 48 and 49.

Recovery has become fun and rewarding for me. As I live in this moment and do the footwork I get excited for the journey. The journey is happening right now; not tomorrow or next week, but right now. And all these moments, right now, lead to the daily revealing of God's will, right now. The joy that comes with constant contact is beyond measure. The journey becomes its own reward.

Thank you for letting me be of service!

Jeannie C.

Newcomer

Submitted by Phillip G.

I can remember it like it was yesterday. It was that moment when I was the most important person in the meeting. It was a defining moment of my life when the course of my destiny took a phenomenal turn from what I felt was an inevitable disintegration of a human life to what my reality is today, which can be justifiably called a "miracle."

It was my third meeting of Narcotics Anonymous and I was in a place in my life that today I understand as having the "gift of desperation", a desperate state which shifted over the course of one meeting from hopeless desperation to hopeful desperation. 90 minutes, unbelievable, miraculous! I walked into the room filled with resentment, depression and a level of exhaustion that was telling me on a biological level that all of my life force

couldn't hold back what was coming my way yet my pathologically rebellious nature was going to keep me fighting to the end, my death....

So I thought...

...and oh my my was I wrong about that, because I walked out of that room a strangely different person. I felt lighter, more connected and with a glimmer of hope in my consciousness. A group of people had shattered my deception of self importance by showing me my true value. It was not the wisecrack catch phrases or quirky soliloquies (although those did seem to open my heart with a bit of spiritual foreplay). It wasn't the moment when another member introduced himself to me at break (although that probably did break down the last shot-out wall of my defenses). No the crux and defining moment was what occurred when after what seemed like an eternity of tortuous, maddening silence. I sheepishly raised my hand and said,

“My name is ((-*-)) and I am an addict.”

-for the first time in my life.

I meant it and they felt it.

And reality... well let's just say it became surreal. It was like some sort of movie or dream I had dreamt before, something deep inside, some old ancient, genetically deep longing had been satisfied. I felt my face flush with warmth to the tips of my ears and my heart beating violently in my chest like I was skydiving and had just leaped out of the plane. I don't remember what I said after my admission, I wouldn't have been able to recall it if you were to have asked me immediately after. The feeling of empathy and unconditional love was radiating from this strange group of people, pulsing so strongly through the room that I thought the windows were

about to burst. There wasn't room for my emotional being to experience anything else.

The other phenomenon that occurred at that moment was the relief I felt. A huge weight was dissipated from around the area of my neck and shoulders. This gigantic gorilla type heaviness had been cruel and relentless in its gravitational force to drive me downward into the ground. I was at the tail end of my detox, where I was just starting to feel physically better yet the waves of long neglected emotions were crashing over and through me, overwhelming and constant. I was not familiar with the feelings as it had been a long time since I had felt anything at all. This warmth coming from a group of people was a momentary relief from the floods, as if they had receded. I noticed the member who talked to me at the break shuffling around in the back of the room near the tables and whispering to another member nearby. With kindness he looked over and said quietly, “We are getting you a phone list, buddy”, behind the Charlie brown trumpet teacher sound coming from the person who was sharing. I felt a sense of comfort yet mixed with fear at the thought of calling anybody. I had been isolated from the world for so long, shut out from reality. People, even worse, interaction with people was unnerving and I was deeply intimidated by what I knew I had to do. Make new friends.

The person who got me the list (the same one who talked to me at break) approached me at the end of the meeting. I must have looked like a deer in the headlights because he did most of the talking. He was an older fella, confident and comfortably relaxed, nothing like any “addict” I've known to be. I think he may have seen some sort

of resemblance in me now, but at that moment I felt as if I was being targeted for some sort of hustle. He debunked the myth when he told me, “What you said takes a lot of courage. I know this because I’ve been exactly where you are. You are truly the most important person in the room tonight.”

It was peculiar how when he said that to me I somehow believed him against all my natural inclinations of distrust. It was like I registered his message to me from a different place inside myself. A place that doesn’t question what is true nor over complicate every simple thing. It was that flickering candle of truth deep inside the cabin of my being. And as he looked into my eyes it was like he could see past all the broken glass and grimy smudge of my eyeballs and the dilapidated structure which was my emaciated body and I knew it. Strangely I wasn’t afraid or creeped out by it, but instead I asked him, “Wow you remember that? How long has it been?”

He replied quietly yet with a deafening sincerity, “It’s been decades, but thanks to you and many, many others who came before you, *I can remember it like it was yesterday.*”

Guiding Principles:

The Spirit of Our Traditions

In the years since our Basic Text was written, we have grown from a small, primarily English-speaking Fellowship concentrated in North America to a truly worldwide Fellowship, with literature published in 49

languages. Technological advances have made it possible and much more practical for members in countless NA groups around the world to provide input to help shape our literature. In the July 2016 NA Way Magazine, we discussed some of the ways in which the development of Guiding Principles: The Spirit of Our Traditions was groundbreaking. We received input from members speaking half a dozen languages from more than 13 countries, made possible in part due to the simplicity of jotting down some thoughts on a page, snapping a photo with a mobile phone, and emailing the information to the World Board. We certainly look forward to more exciting uses of technology and a more inclusive literature-development process in the years to come.

The process and participation for this project were not the only groundbreaking aspects, however. While many other twelve-step fellowships also use the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and many others have created step-working guides, NA seems to be the very first to create a guide for studying and working with the Twelve Traditions. Our goal as a Fellowship is not to be unique and different, but being the first organization to take on a particular type of project means we were forced to pave the road we wished to drive on. Some of our members had a very clear idea in 2010 regarding what a Traditions workbook would consist of, but many other members had other views. Together, as a Fellowship, we envisioned something new that took shape in review drafts and was refined by input to become Guiding Principles.

Our new book on the Twelve Traditions can be described as a “modular” text, meaning that it has

parts and pieces that can be used in a variety of ways. Every chapter starts and ends with a reading that can be used as a personal meditation, as a topic for a recovery meeting, or to discuss in a service setting. The chapters include exercises called “Word by Word” and “Spiritual Principles,” which would work well as personal writing exercises or as a discussion in a group business meeting or service committee meeting. Finally, each chapter includes sections for members, for groups, and for use in service. These sections offer thoughts about what we have learned and experienced as a Fellowship related to each Tradition, as well as questions for writing, discussion, and workshops.

We are very excited to hear about your experiences using our Fellowship’s newest book. In the review and input process, we received a great deal of helpful feedback regarding how the exercises and questions worked for personal use, for group inventory, and in workshops. We’re hopeful that the book will be helpful as a way to further explore, understand, and practice our Twelve Traditions. One of the Fellowship Issue Discussion Topics (IDTs) for this Conference cycle is devoted to how to make use of Guiding Principles, so we hope members who want to know more about the book will participate in these workshops. We strongly encourage all who use it to pass along your experiences, along with any suggestions you have for others about ways they can make the most of their work in this book. To share your feedback, please email us at worldboard@na.org.

For more information about the Guiding Principles IDT (and the other IDTs), please visit www.na.org/IDT where we’ll be posting

workshop/discussion outlines and other resource materials.

The previous article first appeared in The NA Way Magazine – October 2016 – Volume Thirty-Three * Number Four.

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?

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