

Sierra Foothills Area of Narcotics Anonymous

Newsletter - April 2017



This month's SFANA Newsletter's theme is Four. The Fourth Step and the Fourth Tradition. You will also find an article explaining the new feature on the website to help meeting secretaries find speakers and chair people. In addition, a new section has been added to the newsletter – Events around the Area. Enjoy.

Events Around the Area

The events calendar for the area is blank for this month so far. If there are any group activities, get the information to: newsletter@sfana.org so we can have the website updated. Also, if your group is having some sort of activity, shoot the PDF flyer and information to webmaster@sfana.org and they will put it on the website event calendar, and add an event comment on the front page of the newsletter.

Chair Finder – A New Website Feature

Ok, so you are the secretary of a Wednesday evening meeting that is a speaker/discussion meeting. You have the people to chair the meeting for you lined up for the next three weeks. Life is good – and then on Tuesday evening you get a call from the person you have assigned to chair tomorrow night. He

can't make it. Now what? Maybe get the old guy to fill in again like you did 3 months ago when this same thing happened? Try to find someone meeting night before the meeting starts to fill in? Or....

Now we have a new way to find chair people for meeting all over the area. If you are willing to share your experience, strength and hope you need to sign up on the website to be included in the Chair Finder database. Once signed up, a meeting secretary that needs someone to share at their meeting can find you, get in touch and invite you to chair at their meeting.

This new system will not work if people don't sign up, so go to the website, mouse over to the information tab and click on the Chair Sign Up Page. Once you fill out the information on the sign up form and click the Sign Up button at the bottom, you will receive an email with a link to a form you can fill out additional information if you choose to. It is not necessary to fill out additional information, but if you don't put in your phone number as an example, the only way meeting secretaries can get in touch with you is via email.

If you are a meeting secretary you can click on the Chair List Page and see a list of the people who have signed up to speak. Clicking on a name will bring you to a page with the contact information for that person. No links are provided in an effort to keep the information secure as possible so you

will need to copy down the phone number or email address to contact the person you choose to invite to your meeting.

Everybody should sign up – let's make this work. If it does work there are areas all over the world that could use this feature! Let's lead the way.

Step Four

“We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

The thought of writing a moral inventory in my first fourth step, didn't hold a lot of fear for me. I was too self-centered to consider that I had a responsibility in everything that had happened in my life. I was still the victim. It was “his” fault that I had started using “the hard drugs” in the first place. It the fault of society my life was miserable. It was the fault of my parents that I liked to get blistered drunk and walk around in a blackout. It was the fault of my Grandmother that the disease of addiction ran in our family. It was the fault of my peers that I started getting and staying loaded at school. It was just what we did back then.

That first Fourth Step was done to the best of my ability. At least I was willing to write, even if I pointed the finger at everything and everyone but me. Once I began to change and incorporate some of the principles of recovery into my life, the common

fear of this step did settle over me. I was very apprehensive about taking a hard look at myself. To change my perspective from one of victimization, to one of self-awareness, caused me confusion, anxiety, and fear. To look at my behaviors, attitudes, and way of life, meant I would have to trust someone (my sponsor) with the darkest parts of myself. I really didn't to look at that stuff, admit it and let someone else know about a lot of it. But, I was miserable and in pain and I wanted out of misery and pain.

“As we approach this step, most of us are afraid that there is a monster inside of us, that if released, will destroy us. This fear can cause us to put off our inventory, or may even prevent us from taking this critical step at all. We have found that fear is a lack of faith, and we have found a loving, personal God to whom we can turn. We no longer need to be afraid. We have been experts at self-deception and rationalization.” Basic Text pages 27 and 28.

My sponsor recommended I write an asset list. I had this huge over-inflated ego and no concept of my strong points and my abilities. My self-perception was based on what I thought others thought about me. I had lost almost all concept of who I was. I didn't even know what colors or food I liked. “The purpose of a searching and fearless inventory is to sort through the confusion and the contradiction of our lives, so that we can find out who we really are. We are starting a new way of life and

need to be rid of the burdens and traps that controlled us and prevented our growth. “Basic Text, page 27. “Assets must also be considered, if we are to get an accurate and complete picture of ourselves. This is very difficult for most of us because but is hard to accept that we have good qualities. However, we all have assets, many of them found in the program, such as being clean, open-mindedness, God awareness, honesty with others, acceptance, positive action, sharing, willingness, courage, faith, caring, gratitude, kindness, and generosity.” Basic Text, page 29. So, each time now, before I begin a fourth step I write an asset list. I usually go through the dictionary, and for each letter of the alphabet, I try and find a few positives I can attribute to me. This reminds of who I am and how I am changing my life for the better. I don't know about anyone else, but I used to tend to focus on my faults, beat myself up and judge myself as a slow learner. This asset list has helped me many times to accept who I am, completely. “What is meant by a ‘searching and fearless moral inventory?’ We take stock of our assets and liabilities. We try to get to the bottom of who we are, to expose the lies we have told ourselves about ourselves. For years, we became whoever we needed to be to survive our addiction. After living a lifetime of lies, we began to believe those lies. Although, we did discover some valuable truths in the First Step, the Fourth Step further separates

fantasy from reality. We begin to stop being the person we have invented and find the freedom to be who we are. “It Works How and Why’ page 38.

I love the NA Step Working Guide. It is the most comprehensive set of steps I have seen and I have worked the steps in many 12 Step Programs. It takes us deep into the pain and denial of active addiction and replaces the pain with hope. It doesn't let us escape from our denial. I love how each step has numerous ways of asking the same question. In Step Four, the Step Working Guide helps us identify our motivation for working the step and clear up any questions we may have in our minds regarding what “Searching and fearless” may mean to us. We look at our resentments, our feelings, our guilt and shame, our fear, relationships, sex, abuse, assets, and our secrets. It helps us drop the guilt and shame that may have held us prisoner. It helps us uncover, discover, and recover as we gain more self-acceptance.

Ultimately, the more honest I am in each Fourth Step, the more freedom from fear I will experience. I lived in constant fear. Every decision I made was undercut with the emotion of fear. Whether I was doing something I had promised myself I would never do, or seeking the approval of others, under it all was my ego, in fear, needing validation and recognition. I had no idea that my unhealthy ego was killing me. I thought I had a little bit of a drug problem. Every now and then the fear

of seeing my life headed in a downward spiral would surface. I would, for just a minute, see that I hated myself and everyone else. I hated life. I isolated and became afraid of people, places, things, life. But to keep the fear away, I simply took more drugs. The addiction, my ego wanted me to stay in denial, so the disease would live on. Those moments of clarity became less and less as I slowly tried to kill off all the healthy parts of myself. My spirit was being crushed with the weight of fear, anxiety, denial, and repressed anger. "If we could look at the disease of addiction stripped of its primary symptoms-that is apart from drug use or other compulsive behavior and without its most obvious characteristics, we would find a swamp of self-centered fear. We're afraid of being hurt, or maybe of just having to feel too intensely, so we live a sort of half-life, going through the motions of living but never being fully alive. We're afraid of everything that might make us feel, so we isolate and withdraw. We're afraid that people won't like us, so we use drugs to become more comfortable with ourselves. We're afraid we'll get caught at something and have to pay a price, so we use and exploit others to avoid feeling lonely or rejected or abandoned. We're afraid we won't have enough-of anything, so we selfishly pursue what we want, not caring about the harm we cause in the process. Sometimes, if we've gained things we care about in recovery, we're afraid we'll lose what

we have, and so we begin compromising our principals to protect it. Self-centered, self-seeking fear- we need to uproot it so it no longer has the power to destroy." The Narcotics Anonymous Step Working Guide, page 36.

So, for me. It came down to living in misery with a deep-seated fear as my only companion, or praying for the courage to work a Fourth Step. Spiritual principals such as honesty, courage, willingness, humility, faith, and hope were principals I had long discarded from my life. Integrity was a word I didn't use and an idea I didn't believe in. I was living in constant conflict with my morals and values and had accepted that this was my lot in life. I was disconnected from my spirit. I had no idea I needed to become aware of my thinking, my emotions, and my actions which led to the unhealthy patterns I continued to repeat in my life. The Fourth Step provides a starting place for growth back to my true, authentic self; back to the self I had intended to be and embrace.

"The Fourth step provides us with the initial insight we need to grow. Whether we are writing our first Fourth Step or our twentieth, we are starting a process that takes us from confusion to clarity, from resentment to forgiveness, from spiritual confinement to spiritual freedom. We can turn to this process again and again. When we are confused, when we are angry, when we have problems that don't seem to

disappear, an inventory is a good way to take stock of just where we stand on the path to recovery. After we have written number of inventories, we may discover that our first Fourth Step merely scratched the surface. As different attitudes and behaviors become apparent to us in later recovery, we'll want to renew the process of change by working the Fourth Step again."

"The steps are tools we use over and over again on our spiritual path. In the process of our recovery, God will reveal more to us as we have the maturity and the spiritual strength to understand it. Over time, the nature of the work we have to do is disclosed to us. As we continue in recovery, we begin to resolve some of the basic conflicts contributing to our addiction. As the pain of old wounds begin to fade, we begin to live more fully in the present."

"The fourth Step allows us to identify the patterns, behaviors and beliefs that show us the exact nature of our wrongs. We have written an inventory of ourselves which had revealed what we can change with God's help." "It Works How and Why" page 48.

I am forever grateful for the Fourth Step!

Thank you allowing me to be of service. It my honor,

Jeannie C.

Tradition Four

By: Vera

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups of NA as a whole. For us to understand Tradition Four, we must first define the word, autonomy. The Oxford dictionary defines autonomy as: a self-governing entity, having freedom from external control or influence, independence. Although, each group is autonomous; the group must always keep in mind that our primary purpose (carrying the message of recovery to the addict that still suffers) must always be adhered to in our meetings. For example, each of us is very careful not to stump our big toe because the whole body feels the pain. Likewise, each group must think of itself as the big toe; thereby, not bringing reproaches or negative light to the whole body (Narcotics Anonymous.) The most common way that NA groups express autonomy, is in the choice of what format they will be using to carry the message of recovery. This allows each group to find its niche and offer diversity to a diverse group of people. Some groups find that speakers meeting work better for them; other groups find that offering step studies, topic discussions, Tradition study, and etc. work better for them. No matter what format the group selects to incorporate into its meetings, recovery oriented meetings are imperative to NA's survival. Even though each group is a self-governing entity; every group should identify as an NA group by having the same readings; focusing on working the 12-steps, the 12 Traditions, and the 12 Concepts. Members should be encouraged to share their own experience, strength and hope

in a meeting. Also, in selecting the group's name; the group must remember to choose a name that reflects NA in a positive light. Silly names for groups should be avoided at all cost, because lives are at stake! Just as an individual practices spiritual principles to grow in recovery so should NA groups. Tradition Four gives a clear understanding on how spiritual principles should be applied within groups. Furthermore, autonomy gives groups certain freedoms, yet groups must exercise responsibility by considering the welfare of the fellowship. Open-mindedness is essential to use autonomy to help NA grow. Groups open their minds to explore new ways in reaching addicts. Love is the principle that guides groups to see NA as a greater whole. Without our autonomous groups, groups would be unable to fulfill NA's primary purpose. For this to happen, groups must seek direction and guidance from a loving higher power.

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. Simply write an article and send it to newsletter@sfana.org.

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