

Sierra Foothills Area of Narcotics Anonymous

Newsletter - May 2017



This month's SFANA Newsletter's theme is Five. The Fifth Step and the Fifth 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 Five

“We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.”

“The Fifth Step is the key to freedom. It allows us to live clean in the present. Sharing the exact nature of our wrongs sets us free to live. After taking a thorough Fourth Step, we deal with the contents of our inventory. We are told that if we keep these defects, inside us, they will lead us back to using. Holding onto our past will eventually sicken us and keep us from taking part in our new way of life. If we are not honest when we take a Fifth Step, we will have the same negative results that dishonesty brought us in the past.” Basic Text, page 31.

Like many addicts, I experienced more fear behind Step Five than I did Step Four. Though it wasn’t easy to look at the wrongs I had committed, when I wrote them down on paper, it was between me God and the paper. Sharing all these wrong-doings with another human was frightening. The shame I carried caused me to worry that I would be judged as harshly by the other, as I judged myself. Naturally, I didn’t know I was judging myself. The constant fear

and deep-seated self-loathing had become a huge part of my psyche. It was automatic to think of myself as unworthy, unlovable, and rotten to the core. But, I did not want to be miserable any longer, so I wrote and I admitted to God all I had done. “In NA, we experience a way of life, where the spiritual meets the everyday, where the ordinary meets the extraordinary. When we admit the exact nature of our wrongs to the God of our understanding our admission becomes more meaningful.” Step Working Guide, page 47.

I love the part in the above reading that says, “where the spiritual meets the everyday and the ordinary meets the extraordinary.” Once I had worked this step a few times I began to experience the spiritual meeting the everyday. My life changed as my relationship with my HP changed. I began to see evidence of a loving and humorous Creator in my life. Just the fact that I had stepped into a new way of life was mind blowing enough. But then, as my spiritual awakening began to expand I began to experience joy and appreciation for the things I used to consider mundane and boring. My love and luster for life began to return. I became aware of all the times my HP had saved my life and had loved me, when I could not love myself. I began to appreciate all the people who had displayed love for me in ways I had not been aware enough to see. I began to love deep in my spirit, the God of my understanding. The initial fear I had experienced at the thought of sharing my fifth step with another person, left me, as I began to get honest and see that my sponsor would not judge me or talk about me behind my back. I didn’t need to protect myself from the very people who wanted to help me. My fear of

trusting my Creator and others began to dissipate as I slowly realized I was safe. I felt safe, for the first time in a very long time.

The magic and curiosity for life began to return. As I let this sense of safety sink down into my bones, life took on a sense of magic and humor that had been there all along, but I was too blind to see it. Fear had covered my awareness. My relationship with my HP improved exponentially with each new healthy decision I made based in truth, self-awareness, integrity, and intuition.

“Our relationships began to change after this step, including the one we have with the God of our understanding. Throughout the process of the Fifth Step, we turned to that power when we were fearful, and we received the courage we needed to complete the step. Our belief and our faith grew as a result. Because of this, we’re willing to put more of ourselves into building a relationship with God. Just like any other relationship, the one we develop with our Higher Power calls for openness and trust on our part. When we share our most personal thoughts and feelings with our Higher Power, letting down our walls and admitting we are less than perfect, intimacy develops. We develop a certainty that our Higher Power is always with us and that we are being cared for.” *It Works How and Why*, page 57.

Indeed, I began to realize that my Higher truly had my back. Either I trusted God, or I didn’t. There became no middle ground. The evidence was clear. The God of my understanding, was for me, always had been for me and always would be for me. Period. The Creator wanted me to be happy, healthy, free and joyous. To achieve the level of freedom from active addiction that my

HP wanted for me, and the joy and serenity which accompanies this new of life, I had to get honest about what I had done. I had to look at my assets as well as my shortcomings and character defects. Without honest appraisal, I was incapable of making decisions based on the truth. It was essential to my ongoing recovery to stop making decisions based on lies. I have heard it said in the rooms that if insanity is repeating the same mistakes and expecting a different outcome, then sanity is making decisions based on the truth. And, I desperately wanted to be restored to sanity. So, I got honest.

My sponsor recommended I do an asset list before each Fourth Step and present to her. So, I went through the dictionary and, for each letter of the alphabet, I found three or four positive attributes I possessed. She recommended that each time I get stuck in my head thinking that I am worthless or unworthy, that I read the list. It was very helpful.

“The process we have undertaken so far has made us aware of the *exact nature* of our wrongs. The exact nature of our wrongs is our character defects. We now know the pattern of our lives were rooted in dishonesty, fear, selfishness, and many other defects of character and are ready for something new. With this readiness, we move onto Step Six.” *It Works How and Why*, page 58.

Self-acceptance and self-love expands each time I work another fifth step. There is something so freeing about admitting the exact nature of my wrongs. Once I see them, admit them, and have another person and my HP continue to love me, despite all the wrongs I have done, then I am on my way to ever increasing self-honesty and

ever deepening recovery. It becomes this wonderful circle of expanding self-love. I get to experience a deep psychic change and I am become less and less willing to participate in my own demise and increasingly willing to love myself in every area of my life.

“Practicing the principal of self-honesty is essential when we admit to ourselves the exact nature of our wrongs. Just as we mustn’t disassociate ourselves from our emotions simply because we’re afraid of our listener’s response, so we can’t afford to shut own our own reactions. We must allow ourselves to experience the natural and human reaction to the subject under discussion: our lives as addicts. Our lives have been sad. We’ve missed out on a lot because of our addiction. We’ve hurt people we love because of our addiction. These realizations are painful. However, if we pay close attention, we’ll probably recognize another feeling that’s beginning to form in the wake of the pain: hope.”

“We’ve finally stopped using over our feelings, running away from our feelings, and shutting down because of our feelings; now for the first time, we have a chance to walk through our feelings, even the painful ones with courage. Doing so will, in the long run, make us feel better about ourselves. This is one of the paradoxes that we often find in recovery. What begins in pain ends in joy and serenity.” The Step Working Guide, page 49.

Thank you for letting me be of service. I remain forever grateful,
Jeannie C.

TRADITION FIVE

“Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.”

Our primary purpose is at the heart of our service. With guidance from a loving Higher Power and a clear focus on this purpose, NA groups become a channel for the healing power of recovery. Narcotics Anonymous exists to help addicts find freedom from active addiction. If we were to espouse other ideas or pursue other goals, our focus would be blurred and our energies diminished. The Fifth Tradition asks us to practice integrity by keeping our purpose foremost.

Tradition Five helps our groups fulfill the fundamental reason for their existence: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. As we learned in the Fourth Tradition, NA groups are free to find new and different ways of presenting meetings. This freedom is important; it protects and encourages diversity, letting us reach addicts by many means. In this autonomy, each group develops a character of its own. The character of the group is not its purpose, however. The message we carry is not our group personality but the message of Narcotics Anonymous—the principles of recovery.

What is the message that we are asked to carry? Groups carry the message of NA: hope and freedom from active addiction. This message may be voiced in many ways. Sometimes we simply share that if we don’t use any drugs, we won’t get loaded. Other members share that they have found

satisfying, productive lives in recovery. Sometimes the message we share is that, even though life may be painful, we can stay clean. The spiritual awakening we experience when we work the steps is also our message. When addicts experience the message of recovery, we find healing from our suffering, no matter what the cause. We can live drug-free and establish new lives. That is our message: that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live.

The groups' focus on carrying the message is so important to the survival of NA that it is called our primary purpose. That means it is the most important thing we do. Nothing ought to take precedence over it. This is the most basic guideline by which groups may examine their motives and their actions.

There are many ways in which groups can further our primary purpose. Generally speaking, group members start by creating an atmosphere of recovery in their meetings. This includes extending a welcome to every addict who attends. Stable meetings that start on time carry a message of recovery. Effective meeting formats keep the primary purpose in focus and encourage members to participate in a way that expresses recovery. We lead by example, sharing experience instead of advice. Group members help further our purpose when they take personal responsibility for keeping the meeting recovery-oriented. All of our actions convey a message, and Tradition Five reminds us to make it a message of recovery.

There are many distracting influences that can divert us from our primary purpose. For instance, our groups may be tempted to use meeting time to discuss their business and

finances or talk about some controversy. As individual members, we can get caught up in socializing with our friends, ignoring another addict who may be in pain and needs our encouragement. But each time our focus is diverted from our primary purpose, the addict seeking recovery loses out.

Other influences can distort our group's focus on its primary purpose. From the money members contribute, our groups pay rent on their meeting space, buy literature and supplies, conduct activities, and support NA services. All of these can either help further our primary purpose or distract us from our focus. Some groups seek to outdo others with luxurious meeting spaces, extravagant refreshments, huge supplies of literature, and elaborate activities. When we do this, our focus is distracted away from our primary purpose and onto money, property, and prestige. We should try to establish a reputation for carrying the message—nothing more, nothing less. Money, literature, and meeting space are tools we can use to help us carry the message; however, they should serve us, not rule us.

The groups can provide many services to carry the message. Our primary service is the NA meeting, where addicts share their recovery directly with one another. Additional services like phonelines, public information work, and H&I panels also help carry the message. In rural areas and newer NA communities, groups are sometimes the only source of such services. However, most groups find they cannot maintain their focus on their recovery meetings and also carry out other services. For this reason, groups usually assign responsibility for such services to their area committees. That way, groups

reserve their time and energy for carrying the message directly to the addict who still suffers.

Because carrying the message is so important, many groups take inventory periodically to help ensure that our primary purpose is still in focus. The Twelve Traditions may be used as an outline for a group inventory. Some groups use a specific set of inventory questions, such as: How well are we carrying the message of recovery? Are there addicts our group isn't reaching? How can we make our meetings more accessible? What can we do to make new members feel more at home? Has the atmosphere of recovery diminished? Would a change in our meeting format strengthen that atmosphere?

Considering the needs of the larger NA community may lead to other changes. For instance, if there are no step meetings in one town, a group may consider having meetings that focus on the steps. There are many ways to carry the message and meet the needs of both the group and the NA community.

There is a power that works through this program. We tap this power when we practice the Twelfth Step as individuals, carrying the message to other addicts. When groups carry the message, the impact of the Twelfth Step is greatly multiplied. Even more impressive than sheer numbers of recovering addicts is the unity of purpose and the atmosphere of recovery found in meetings—a spiritual power. The evidence of that power in the group is hard to deny. It is a power we can draw on between meetings to stay clean.

Tradition Five focuses the group's priority on carrying the message. Members can do many things to further our primary purpose. For example, we

show our care and our willingness to help by taking turns greeting people at the door, preparing lists of telephone numbers to distribute, or offering packets of literature to newcomers. When members come together as a group to undertake the task of carrying the message, they offer an attractive picture of recovery in action.

Many meetings are structured to carry the message to our newest members. These new members often need more encouragement to stay, more answers to their questions, more of our love and care. But the newest members are not the only addicts who need the message of recovery. The still-suffering addict with whom we share our hope may be any one of us, regardless of clean time. Tradition Five is not limited to helping newcomers. The message of recovery is for all of us.

Applying spiritual principles

The Fifth Tradition complements the Twelfth Step: It asks groups to carry the message to addicts. As individuals, we are asked in the steps to apply principles in all our affairs; this is also important in our actions as groups. Some of the principles we have applied to help us observe the Fifth Tradition include integrity, responsibility, unity, and anonymity.

Integrity, or fidelity to the principles embodied in the Twelve Traditions, is demonstrated when groups carry the NA message of recovery. Many of our members have much to offer on a variety of subjects, but our fellowship has its own special message: freedom from active addiction through practice of NA's Twelve Steps and the support of the fellowship of recovering addicts. Groups demonstrate this when they offer vigorous, conscious

support for addicts seeking to work the NA program. When groups conscientiously cultivate this kind of integrity, their meetings further our primary purpose.

The Fifth Tradition gives our groups a great responsibility: to maintain our fellowship's primary purpose. Each group is responsible to become as effective a vehicle for carrying the NA message as it can be. Allowing our groups to lose sight of our primary purpose may deprive an addict of a chance to hear our message of hope. Each member is responsible to help the group keep our primary purpose in focus.

Unity is one of our greatest strengths in carrying the message. Unity of purpose keeps our focus on carrying the message. As groups, we work together to ensure not only our own personal recovery but the recovery of every NA member. The evidence of many addicts staying clean and seeking our common good is very persuasive. We don't recover alone.

In anonymity, our personal differences are insignificant compared to our primary purpose. When we come together as a group, our first task is to carry the message; all else ought to be set aside. Groups can practice the Fifth Tradition by reminding their members that the recovery message, not individual personalities, is primary in Narcotics Anonymous.

Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship with meetings around the world. Our primary purpose is a common thread that unites us. Tradition Five defines the focus of Narcotics Anonymous. This focus also helps to ensure our survival as a fellowship. The Fifth Tradition asks us to serve other addicts by carrying the message that

recovery is possible in Narcotics Anonymous. This concentrated focus protects the integrity of our fellowship.

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**