

Newsletter of the Nar-Anon Family Groups'



THE SERENITY CONNECTION



Service Opportunity

Help make www.nar-anon.org a truly international website!

The World Service Website Committee in cooperation with the World Service Translation Committee is pleased to announce that soon members from around the world will be able to go to www.nar-anon.org and find international landing pages in multiple languages. How exciting is that!

If your country has bilingual members or a translation committee that can translate the provided wording, please contact translations@nar-anon.org to help serve Nar-Anon around the world.

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Turning it Over

“Turn it over” and “Let Go and Let God” are great sayings. This was very hard for me to actually do. Growing up, I learned to take charge, stand up, and take care of my family. This had worked pretty well for me until addiction struck.

Then everything came unglued. Nothing I did worked to even keep the addict in the house, much less clean. Coming to Nar-Anon, I heard these phrases, but knew they didn’t apply to me.

My life didn’t get much better. Finally, a friend told me that I’d better start “turning it over.” Nope. Wasn’t going to work. Then he shared his story with me and suggested I try turning over small things. Start by turning over half an hour. Next week, an hour. I did. I felt better but it felt weird, like I wasn’t being a man.

He told me to practice more, to turn over two hours, then longer. This worked until a big crisis happened, and I had to take charge. My solution was brilliant. It didn’t work, but it was brilliant!

After this fiasco, he asked me if I said the Serenity Prayer. “Every day,” I replied. Then, he suggested that I wasn’t praying, I was just saying. Oh, oh. Now I was in trouble. To pray, I had to do my part.

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Our
Members
Share

The Roller Coaster Ride

Living with an addict is like being on a roller coaster every single day of my life. I don't know which person I'm coming home to. I don't know how to plan for anything other than the moment.

The addict in my life is my husband. My roller coaster ride has lasted a little over 5 years. I've been thinking about how people respond differently to riding roller coasters. Some are excited and find it as an adrenaline rush. They SINCERELY love it; they thrive off the thrill and nothing else matters in that moment but the rush! They may even love the feeling of being out of control. Others suffer far more anxiety. The ride is far more intense for them because they are not sure what to expect. They worry about how bad it's going to be, even

though they can't control it. In my situation, I was the one causing my own anxiety and making the ride far worse on MYSELF than it needed to be. My stress and worry were not helping anything.

I was already in line for this roller coaster the day I was married. The ride was going to happen; my husband had chosen to ride the roller coaster whether I wanted him to or not. At first, I stayed in line and waited and endured. I worried, I stressed, I caused the ride to be worse than it had to be. My fear did not have any effect on my husband; he was doing what he wanted to do.

Now I'm learning that I can take care of MYSELF and I can make MY OWN choices. I can let him ride that

roller coaster without me getting in, buckling up, and holding on for dear life while rolling with the ups and downs. I can't control his choice to get on, but I can control mine. I can stand off to the side and avoid all of my fear, worry, and stress. I can stand on flat ground and keep myself happy and free of self-inflicted anxiety while supporting him. I can be there at the end of his ride, or I can walk away from the amusement park completely to avoid any further lines, waiting, and rides. This is my decision and my decision alone to make.



How Important Is It?

Tradition Four states: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other Nar-Anon Family Groups, or N.A. as a whole."

While all of my groups follow common guidelines, the group conscience allows each group to develop a unique personalized feeling. Our traditions represent a lot more than is obvious at first glance. The fact that members are sitting in chairs in a room and sharing their experience, strength, and hope is the result of the miracle of practicing our traditions. They are good practice in ALL of our affairs. Don't ever think the fine print isn't important.

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Turning it Over

It was HARD. Keeping my mouth shut, not trying to control her life, not jumping in to fix things. Wow! My life got better, I felt more serenity, and she did okay. I'm still far from perfect, but I am improving.

And my definition of being a man? Today I believe it means taking full responsibility for the things under my control. I've stopped blaming others for my actions and thoughts.



Our
Members
Share



The Solution Lies with Me

I have heard that whenever I am upset, no matter the cause, the solution lies with me. Even though I have been actively participating in recovery for a number of years, I am constantly reminded that I am on a never-ending journey of self-exploration. This past year I had an experience that brought this issue to the forefront of my recovery.

It all started a couple of years ago, the last time I saw my son before we were estranged. I took him to dinner for his birthday. I had high hopes for our time together, but my expectations were not met. He was not engaged and I felt he did not want to be with me. He would answer my questions with single words. He seemed agitated and distant.

I was aware I was feeling very uncomfortable and that something or someone needed to be changed immediately. I cut dinner short so I could get to my men's meeting and share on this emerging issue. I discussed the situation with my sponsor but didn't really process it fully. In a way, I was mowing the grass to get rid of the weeds of my negative reaction, and I was not rooting out the problem at its source.

I blamed my son for rejecting me and for our estrangement. For two years I sat in the rooms of Nar-Anon expounding the hands-off approach I had learned to help detach from the addicts in my life. I was doing nothing and waiting for my son to reach out. Following a recent warming of my relationship with my daughter, I decided to reach out to my son. I asked if he would be open to sharing coffee or a meal. He indicated he was.

I had fear and anxiety around our first meeting. It was awkward. He asked if our meeting was some sort of twelve-step thing, because if it was he was not open to it. I told him honestly that it was not. He shared with me he was tired of waiting for me to reach out. He had always waited for me to reach out while he was growing up, and I never did. He

was "over it." He said he would only be open to a relationship with me if I was willing to participate as an equal member. I had to face the truth and accept that I was not participating because I was afraid that if I reached out he would reject me.

My son's actions years ago had triggered my fear of abandonment. I thought I had worked through these issues, but now I was being called to address this wound at a deeper level. In the past, it had always been better for me to not reach out or to not ask the question lest I be disappointed by the answer. It was better not to know than to be told what I didn't want to hear. In essence, I was hiding out in the rooms and expounding the hands-off principle as a rationalization for not contacting my son. I was hiding my fear behind spiritual principles. All the time I thought it was something he did to me, when in actuality the solution was to be found within me. I needed to address my inventory and work to accept my fear of abandonment and rejection. Once I fully accepted myself, exactly as I am, I could then move forward and take some productive action.



The action I have taken is to ask my Higher Power for help with this relationship. I do not have a model for a healthy and loving relationship between a parent and adult child. My hope is to model this renewed relationship on the healthy, loving, intimate relationships I have found in the rooms of Nar-Anon. Today, I seek and accept the direction from a Higher Power to help me heal the wounds of abandonment, and to deepen my relationships with my son and all my fellows.

My Seventh Step prayer around relationships is, "*Higher Power, please take away my fear of abandonment so that I may be available to participate in relationships with my family, friends, and all your children in a loving, kind, and compassionate manner.*"



Our Members Share

Cycles of Recovery

I recently lost my desire to continue in this recovery process. My son's addiction escalated to the point that either he stopped using or he would die. During this time, a lot of insanity returned to my life. I began to worry obsessively; I was overwhelmed with anxiety. I was full of resentment and judgment. I couldn't turn my focus away from him and what he was doing to himself, and what was going to happen if he didn't stop. During this time, I felt like I was "failing" in my recovery; I was backsliding into old behaviors.

At first, I was really discouraged by this. But as I considered my recent behaviors, I was reminded of when I first started this recovery process. As I reflected back, I discovered there were at least eight behaviors I was not

doing this time around: feeling guilty, using controlling behavior, manipulating others, blaming, giving unwanted advice, doing for the addict, reacting, and lecturing. I wasn't perfect in applying all of Nar-Anon's tools but I had applied some. I was also reminded of a saying my son's kindergarten teacher used to repeatedly tell him, "It's OK to make mistakes."

This is when I came up with the idea of "cycles of recovery." The cycle starts with going to a meeting or reading literature and is followed by:

- learning a tool
- having a situation happen
- learning how to apply this tool
- succeeding or failing in the application of the tool
- finally learning from the success or failure (learning what works or doesn't work).

This cycle happens many times a week, sometimes daily.

Our recovery is not just a matter of mere knowledge but of practically applying tools to very difficult situations. Because of the nature of our disease, I believe I will have many cycles of recovery with all of its failures.

I have decided that worrying obsessively, having overwhelming anxiety, and focusing on the addict is not necessarily bad; it is an opportunity for growth in this cycle of recovery. I can learn through my failures. I may never get everything right, but as long as I'm making forward progress, failures are OK. I'm no longer concerned with failure or making mistakes; it is all part of the process. It is only through repeated cycles of recovery that I can continue to grow.

Appeal

The night was dark, the rain was pouring down, and all I wanted to do was hide from the world. I was alone in my misery; I had nothing left to give. Every ounce of my strength had gone to the daughter I adored but nothing I did had made a difference in her troubled life.

As I lay there, the phone rang. I didn't know it at the time, but that phone call would change my life. There was only one person who knew about my life with addiction. I was too riddled with guilt and shame to invite anyone else into my struggle. But that one person was enough. When I saw her name pop up on my phone, I knew I had to answer it.

That was the night of my first Nar-Anon meeting. It was the first time I had admitted that I needed help. Over the years since that fateful night, Nar-Anon has given me more gifts than I can count. I now have peace and serenity, a circle of close friends that I can share anything with, a sponsor who really cares, and a wealth of tools I use on a daily basis.



I have reaped the rewards of service to my group, and am now contributing at the regional and world service levels.

It has taken me a long time to really appreciate what keeps the Nar-Anon fellowship alive and well. It's people giving generously of their time, and it's contributions from individuals, groups, and regions around the world; members like you and me who give when and what we can. Each dollar or euro or yen helps ensure that meetings are available when and where we need them, that we have literature, and that the Nar-Anon message continues to spread.

Please join me in contributing to Nar-Anon World Service. It really makes a difference.

Our Members Share



Trusting in My Higher Power

Step Three, Question 11: *“Do I trust a Higher Power can help the addict or do I still think I can save him/her.”**

Throughout this process, I always believed my Higher Power could save the addict, the problem was whether he would. Just because my Higher Power can do something, doesn't mean he will or he will do it according to my timeline. I always felt he could help, but for his reasons, he was choosing not to. So, I decided if he wasn't going to help, then I had to. This decision is what led to my insane

controlling behavior.

I first thought that something I did caused my son to use. As a result, I tried to become a totally different person. Then I thought I needed to find a way to cure him, so I tried to get him all the help he needed. I started to read books, looking for solutions because I thought I could control the addiction. This is when I created a whole lot of rules and regulations, which of course he broke, every one of them.

Coming to Nar-Anon and learning that I didn't cause it, I can't control it,

and I can't cure it has helped me to see I can't do anything to change what is happening to my son. Even if my Higher Power chooses to help my addict according to his timeline and not mine, it doesn't mean I should take over. Step Three has helped me to realize I do trust my son's Higher Power to help him and I no longer think I can save him. There are times when I'm afraid to let go and let God but I just remind myself, I didn't cause it, I can't control it, and I can't cure it.

** Nar-Anon 36*

The Twelve Steps that Changed My Life

I'm a 67-year old physician who has enjoyed all the benefits of a wonderful life. I am strong and healthy, emotionally and intellectually fulfilled, and financially secure. I've been married to the woman of my dreams for 32 years; a woman so exceptional that I would propose to her again today. Together we raised a son and daughter who were exceeding our expectations. In short, I was living the American dream.

Unfortunately, that dream turned into a seemingly interminable nightmare when my only son started using drugs at 14 years of age. I watched in helplessness and horror as he slowly destroyed himself physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually until he finally died of an overdose just before his 24th birthday. No matter what I did, no matter how hard I tried,

I could not stop his agonizing demise.

I felt I was failing at what I considered to be my most important job – raising my children. Consequently, it was much easier to stuff that feeling and convince myself that the mother, not the father, should be responsible for fixing a son's problem. My defense mechanisms quickly emerged. I shifted the burden of guilt to my wife. After all, I was the man. I bring home the money. I am the warrior who provides my family with the bounty of the hunt. It is my wife's responsibility to raise the kids – it is her job. If my son goes off the rails, it is her fault, not mine. It's your problem, I said to her. Go fix it!

My wife finally dragged me into the rooms of Nar-Anon. I got a sponsor,



worked the steps, and provided service to the program. But it just wasn't working.

One day, out of frustration, I told my sponsor the truth. I remember saying, “all this sympathetic listening, sharing of feelings, and working the steps is not helping. I am getting nowhere and need a quick and permanent cure.” His response was immediate, curt, and strong. He said that no such quick fix existed; he was sorry for my pain and the program would gladly refund my misery. He got up from his chair, bowed his head, patted me on the shoulders, and slowly walked out of the room. I then felt alone in the ring,

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Narateen Committee



We are excited to announce that the World Service Narateen Committee has two new committee members. It is so exciting to see growth of the Narateen Program. Two new regions are actively working to develop local safety policy and guidelines in order to start Narateen groups. Our committee is working with other regions to update their policies and guidelines to meet the requirements of the new World Service Narateen Safety Policy and Guidelines as well as the guidelines set out in section 7 of the new *Guide to Local Services (GLS)* approved at WSC 2018.

Narateen committee members were grateful to have participated in the recent Nar-Anon World Convention in Orlando. Four Florida Narateen members attended along with two facilitators. The teens hosted a fund-raising photo booth, which raised \$70.00 dollars. A closed Narateen meeting was held on Saturday that was attended by Florida teens and a Narateen member from Moscow, Russia. We are indeed an international fellowship! The Narateen Forum was well attended and provided an opportunity for attendees to ask questions about the Narateen program.

Committee members continue to work on a draft *Narateen Handbook* as well as provide support and feedback for those looking to start Narateen.

Please reach out to us if you are interesting in joining our committee or starting Narateen where you live. We can be reached at narateen@nar-anon.org

Human Resource Committee



DID YOU KNOW... the World Service World Pool Committee has a new name? With the approval of Motion 32 at the 2018 World Service Conference our new name has become the World Service Human Resource Committee. This name more accurately reflects the duties and responsibilities of the committee and is easily understandable and translatable all over the world.

At this time, we are accepting applications for the Board of Trustees (BOT) and Conference Facilitator. Qualifications to serve in these positions can be found in the *Guide to World Services (GWS)*. There are currently 7 open positions on the Board which can have as many as 15 members. There is one candidate currently in the World Pool. If you are interested in applying for one of these open seats, please visit the website and complete the application that can be found there. Please encourage any members you feel would be good candidates for the BOT to apply as well.

We currently have a facilitator for the 2020 conference but, in accordance with our guidelines, we need additional applicants for this position so that a facilitator for the 2022 conference can be elected by the conference in 2020.

If you or anyone you know might be interested in the position of Conference Secretary, please send a resume to the Human Resource Committee at wshrcmminttee@nar-anon.org. We also welcome any questions you might have with regard to any of these positions.

Outreach Committee



Outreach Roundtable: Ready to Launch!

In an effort to strengthen support for regional outreach efforts, the World Service Outreach Committee will be hosting a quarterly roundtable. The first roundtable is scheduled for Sunday, January 27, 2019, at 4 p.m. EST (3 p.m. CST, 2 p.m. MST, 1 p.m. PST). Sessions will be limited to an hour and subsequent dates for 2019 include April 28, July 28 and October 27.

The roundtable will be facilitated by members of the WS Outreach Committee and held via internet conferencing. The sessions will offer a time to:

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Committee Corner



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Outreach Committee

- share a recent outreach activity;
- highlight a best practice or success story;
- raise any questions you have related to outreach;
- brainstorm along with the Committee and the other participants about future projects.

If you are interested and would like to sign up for the roundtable, please email outreach@nar-anon.org with your first name and area or region, and the committee will contact you with details.

If you already have questions or a topic to bring to the roundtable, please include that information in your email. Looking forward to a successful launch and strong participation on January 27th. Let us hear from you!
outreach@nar-anon.org.

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The Twelve Steps that Changed My Life

with all my male arrogance, facing the 300 lb. gorilla of addiction. I was in so far over my head that I had to find a better way. My first step was to discard my arrogance and open my mind to the possibility that a better way did exist.

Over the next decade, my wife and I learned to embrace the program; we learned how to function together as a team. We found a better way to live our lives in spite of the fact that we could not stop the insidious, stealth-like progression of our son's disease. Now that he has been gone over six

years, we live in peace with the confidence we did everything for him that was humanly possible. We followed the program and benefitted from the experience of thousands of people who had walked in our shoes or were still on similar journeys. We are able to put our heads down on our pillows each night without any guilt whatsoever.



Our 27-year old daughter emphatically states that she witnessed a slow but miraculous transformation in her dad-

dy. Several times she has mentioned to us that she hit the lottery when it comes to parents. My wife says similar things about our marriage.

I have no idea where I would be without Nar-Anon, except it would be a much darker place, filled with guilt and self-recrimination. My marriage would have suffered and my relationship with my beloved daughter would not have been nearly as joyous. Each day I thank the many people in Nar-Anon who have shared their experiences, empathy, and wisdom for enriching my life.

Literature Committee



The World Service Literature Committee is pleased to present a *Traditions Booklet* for fellowship review and input. The deadline for input is May 31st, 2019. This booklet is for review and input only and should not be used in meetings. We hope this booklet can be a catalyst for more writings to help complete the Twelve Traditions portion of the Nar-Anon 36.

Please note: Fellowship review or draft materials should not be posted on websites. Please focus on the content of the text. Grammar, punctuation, and formatting will be done by the committee on the final version. Send input to LitCom@nar-anon.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

World Service Literature Committee

Newsletter Submissions

Next Issue Submission Deadline: **January 20, 2019**

Newsletter eSubscriptions

FREE e-subscription to [The Serenity Connection](#).



Coming Events

Click on event titles for details or go to the [Events page](#) on the World Service website.

5th Annual Nar Anon Marathon

January 18-20, 2019

(in the spirit of cooperation, not affiliation, with Esperanza NA Convention)
El Tropicano Riverwalk Hotel
110 Lexington Avenue
San Antonio, TX 78025
Save the date!

Central and Southern California Convention

February 16, 2019

(in the spirit of cooperation, not affiliation with CCRCNA XXVII)
Nar-Anon Traditions—

Our Spiritual Foundation

Bakersfield Marriott
801 Truxton Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93301
Save the date!

Bridge to Serenity XIV - 14th Annual Eastern PA Region Convention

March 8-10, 2019

Tools for Survival
Wyndham Hotel
Trevose, PA 19053
Watch for details at:
www.naranonepa.org

Georgia Region Nar-Anon Convention VIII

March 22-23, 2019

Macon, GA
Save the date!

New England Region Convention

April 5-7, 2019

A Light in the Storm
Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center
366 Main St
Sturbridge, MA 01566
www.naranonctma.org

Please fix my group!

When I joined Nar-Anon, I wanted advice on how to fix my loved one. After a while, I got into service and began talking with members beyond my group. Soon I was asking for advice about how to fix my group.

Eventually I found the answer to questions about fixing people, places, and things in the Twelve Steps and by focusing on myself. As it says in the *Nar-Anon Blue Booklet*: "Yourself, you can change. Others you can only love."



When the addict got loud and demanding, I learned to set boundaries, say no, and detach from the insanity. When a member demands we run our meeting "their way," I can set boundaries, say no, and detach from the insanity. With help from my Higher Power, I can watch the insanity of people trying to control others without going insane myself.

My sponsor reminds me to focus on the solution, not the problem. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Complaining, gossip, and expecting someone else to fix things keeps me focused on the problem. When I use opportunities to practice setting boundaries, I live in the solution.



Nar-Anon Family Groups'

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