

# Newsletter of the Nar-Anon Family Groups™



THE SERENITY CONNECTION

## Serenity Poem

They gather that night,  
Coming with their diverse, varied lives,  
Yet all share a willingness to accept the notion  
That life is made up as much of pain and uncertainty  
as it is of joy and contentment.

They gather that night  
And sit, sometimes in silence  
Each thinking the thoughts that came from  
that day  
that week  
that year  
lost in thoughts,  
yet connected.



They gather that night  
And sit, as if circling the warm glow of a campfire.  
Shares in the darkness are like fuel placed  
in the fire, it's flickering flames keeping  
the wolves of doubt, despair, and pain at bay,  
While offering respite from life,  
even if just for that night.  
And with it, possibilities of great things,  
not yet realized or even imagined.

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## On Sharing

Our program practices attraction rather than promotion. Sometimes during that awkward silence between shares, the group leader may try to encourage members to participate. Is this when we should instead let our Higher Power take over; “Let go and let God”?

The silence gives members a chance to think and listen for that still small voice guiding them to share. It is in this silence that our Higher Power moves us.

## Who Pays the Bills?

When my meeting location closed because of social distancing, I adapted and plunged into virtual meetings. Instead of putting money in the basket each week, I go online and contribute to Nar-Anon World Service. Instead of paying rent, I pay for an online meeting service. But am I following our Concept Eleven: “Nar-Anon funds are used to further our primary purpose to carry the message, and must be managed responsibly”?

When we use group funds for group purposes, we build unity. When I use my money to help, I am close to enabling. Right now, I do not have all the answers, but somehow I think paying for teleconference services needs to be a group activity. After all, how could the group meet if I could not attend? I plan to enlist support from other members, pool our money to buy a teleconference license in the name of our group, and share access to that account with another member. It’s not my group, it’s a Nar-Anon group I attend.





## Our Members Share

### Am I Ready for Sobriety?

Like many other members, I first came to Nar-Anon to find sobriety and recovery for my loved ones. My mother-in-law once told me there were lessons for me to learn before that might happen. Of course my reaction to that was anger, resentment, irritation. What did she know? Why should I need to learn lessons; what kind of lessons? I didn't have any issues, was not an addict, did not lie, cheat or steal, and I considered myself a very responsible person. I was the normal one in the house. I had family members all around me and a special friend who had problems with addiction. I was busy trying to help them all see how much they needed sobriety and recovery. I had no time for lessons! How long, I wondered, will this take? How long will I need these meetings?

Now that many years in the program have passed, I can look back and see that at the beginning of my recovery, I was not in any small way ready for sobriety or recovery in my life. Coming into the program, many of us are anxious for our addicts to get clean immediately, and for us to get our lives back to normal and live happily ever after. If life had happened the way I planned it, I would still be the same resentful, angry, and irritated person trying to fix them all, and instructing them how to live in

recovery. When a loved one starts attending meetings and working on their own recovery, do we instantly find that we no longer worry, mistrust, or stop enabling? For me it was just the opposite. I worried more, mistrusted, and kept enabling.

So, what do we do while we get ready for their sobriety? Do we think we can stop attending meetings if they are clean and sober? Is this the end, or a new beginning? I found that working the steps, studying the traditions, and



performing service work began to teach me this is a lifelong program of recovery. I needed the Nar-Anon tools to live with sobriety in the same way I lived with active addiction. Just because someone goes into recovery, doesn't mean they change overnight; do we recover overnight? What does our reading say – “slowly new persons emerge”?\* How would I have handled sobriety if I had not stayed in Nar-Anon? Would I have been ready for it? I'm grateful I kept coming back.

*\*Nar-Anon Blue Booklet*

### Strengths: A to Z

At a recent Nar-Anon meeting, a member shared an idea she uses on her meditative walks, her 'quiet half hour by herself.' She goes through the alphabet, from A to Z, listing a strength for each letter. Immediately I thought “what a great idea”!

Many of us have been beaten down by the disease of addiction, and we sometimes get down on ourselves. It is time to look at our strengths and learn to build upon them. Right now, it is particularly important to focus on our strengths.

I tried it and enjoyed the process. Some letters were easier than others. Some were just plain hard. I learned that this idea is even better than it seemed at first thought. It helped me focus; it quieted my mind. It helped me balance.

Try it. List the alphabet down the side of a paper and start thinking of your strengths. One word, or at most a short phrase. Amazing. Beautiful. Caring. You can do it! Jump around the alphabet and have fun with some of the words you come up with.

Then, ask a loved one or friend to prepare a list of your strengths, and offer to make a list for them. Pass it along.

I'm going to do this regularly, and with others. Strengths, A to Z!

#### Things I have Learned

- I have learned that just because someone says “help me” it does not mean they want help.
- I have learned that when friends and family tell me I must “help,” I am still able to determine whether I should.

## Our Members Share



### Freedom

I used to take freedom for granted. It was invisible and pervasive. Thus, I didn't even notice it!

Then, trauma and chaos hit. I felt discombobulated, having lost my grounding. I was confused and untethered from connection to any previously-known reality. At the same time, I became frozen, as if in a trance. I entrenched myself into old habits and unhealthy so-called coping skills. The most frequent “go-to's” that came to mind were unbearable sadness if not outright depression, enormous rage, and relentless shame leading to lonely isolation. I ate with abandon, popped pain pills, and didn't sleep or exercise. Basically, I was a mess.

All of that changed once I found Nar-Anon. Of course, lifelong behaviors didn't disappear overnight. But from my first meeting, I knew I'd found “my people.” They were welcoming

and open to hearing my story, even when I wasn't ready to fully accept the truths of my life.

Now, five years into the fellowship, I realize the many freedoms I had ignored and discounted:

- I am free to release the hold negativity had on me. Yes, I have many character defects, but I don't have to dwell on them. I can acknowledge them, pray about them, and gradually let them go, so I am not immobilized by resentment, impatience, obsession, perfectionism, etc., ad nauseum! I can take appropriate action given the circumstance, then move on.
- I am free not only to listen and learn, but also to discover my own voice and be truly heard by folks who understand. I do not have to hammer my point or convince anyone else of what is right for me. I do not have to agree to do

things I do not want to or even to explain my reasons for the decisions I make. I have the right to choose to “be me,” aware of and vigilant in thought and action, without trying to live up to someone else's expectations.

- I am free to live with a lighter spirit! I can be unburdened of unnecessary worry or regret if I so choose. I can make amends when called for, and be accountable in all matters. I can serve others. I can love and laugh and have fun in this one life I have. In other words, I can do the things that bring me joy!

Essentially, experience has taught me I have the freedom to be the best person I can be, one with hope, faith, and compassion. I can change, facing the future with excitement, curiosity, and discovery. I relish and cherish this spiritual journey!

### Who Brought You Here?

I have visited meetings that start by asking everyone to state their first name and how they are related to the person who brought them there. My loved one was court-ordered into treatment. When we got there the admissions person asked “who brought you here?” They needed my contact information. Later that day I drove to a Nar-Anon group and as I entered the room, someone asked me “who brought you here?” I explained that I drove myself. Yes, I drove the

car. I also was in the driver's seat when my mind was swirling in insanity. Who brought me here? I bring myself to Nar-Anon because this is where I need to be. Are we keeping the focus on our recovery when we ask members to share about their addicted loved one? In Nar-Anon I have learned that my addicted loved one's recovery is not up to me. I do not need to know the relationship, drug of choice, or recovery status of someone else's loved one.

#### Newsletter Submissions

Articles are welcomed from all Nar-Anon members. Please focus on the Nar-Anon program and share your experience, strength, and hope from the perspective of a Nar-Anon member. Submit articles to [newsletters@nar-anon.org](mailto:newsletters@nar-anon.org). Each submission must be accompanied by a signed [Copyright Release Form](#) before it can be published.

**\*\* Next Issue Submission  
Deadline: October 20, 2020 \*\***



Our  
Members  
Share

## Choices

Each step of my son's addiction brought with it new fears and worries. When he was living on the street, I was afraid he would die. When he went to detox, I worried he wouldn't go to rehab. When he went to rehab, I worried he would leave. And when he finished treatment, I worried that he would relapse. It seemed no matter what he did, I worried. I felt like a hamster running on a wheel of despair, doomed to a life of perpetual fear, worry, and anxiety. The more I worried, the faster the wheel went. The faster the wheel went, the more I worried.

I was new to the program at the time, but I soon realized something had to change or I would spend the rest of my life running on the wheel of unmanageability. I attended as many meetings as possible. I listened and learned. I read daily from the SESH

book. I took on commitments. I worked the steps and found a sponsor to help me. With the working of the steps came a new understanding and a relationship with my Higher Power.

As I admitted and accepted my powerlessness over my son's addiction, a sense of trust and hope in my Higher Power began to grow. As I surrendered and ceased trying to change the addict, the fear in me began to lessen. Eventually, the hamster wheel slowed down enough for me to get off. The fear that had once ruled my heart turned to faith in my Higher Power. Slowly change was taking place and a new person was emerging. My "false hope, self-centered" became "real hope, God centered."

I understood. I had a choice!

I could have allowed my son's

recovery to fill me with worry, fear, and anxiety. But, through the working of the Nar-Anon program and faith in my Higher Power, I was able to choose serenity instead. I became willing to accept life on life's terms, regardless of the choices my son would or would not make.

Sometimes now people ask me why I still go to meetings. After all, my son has found long term recovery and there would appear to be no reason for my continued attendance. But I know that addiction is forever and I will forever be the mother of an addict. There is nothing I can do to change that. The hamster wheel will forever be in my cage. I know now that I have choices. I am not a victim. I can either accept living in fear, or I can choose to stay off the wheel and live in serenity.

I choose serenity!

## Victims or Volunteers?

"There are no victims in the family disease of addiction, only volunteers." The first time I heard that in a meeting, I pondered it and began to realize I was volunteering for a lot of the pain and let downs that come with loving an addict. This was a destructive pattern for my relationships. It was also destructive to my self-esteem. For example, even though nobody asked me for help, I tried to get my addicts into recovery. I would research rehabilitation programs and call them to see if they had a place for my addict. If the facility wouldn't

speaking with me because I was not the potential client, I would call when my addicted loved one was with me and hand the phone to them once I got the right person on the line.

After their release from rehab, I researched meeting locations and told them which meetings to go to. I would even say, "let's go out for some ice cream, a burger, a bite" and after we were there I would say "We just so happen to be near this meeting. Why don't I drop you off there..."

I had the expectation that the rehab would 'fix them.' When all my efforts

failed (of course!), I was angry and upset that the addicted loved one was not grateful for me and did not get better. "After all I've done for them!" "Don't they have the nerve!" "They don't appreciate me at all!" But, in fact, I had volunteered my participation in the family disease of addiction yet saw myself as a 'victim'.

Always after talking with my sponsor, who helps guide me, I realize I am the only one who can stop myself from volunteering, I've finally learned to stop and think before volunteering for the heartbreak.



## The Sponsorship Page



This new section is designed to offer insight into that special relationship we call sponsorship. It is an opportunity for you to share your sponsorship experiences and to gain insight into the experiences of other sponsors and sponsees. Please send your writings to [newsletters@nar-anon.org](mailto:newsletters@nar-anon.org) and visit this page in each new issue of *The Serenity Connection*!

## The Magic of Sponsorship

Freedom is the result of working Steps Four through Nine. Step Four uncovers the information necessary to work the other steps. When we write a thorough Fourth Step, we discover our defects of character, the harms we have done, and receive the willingness to repair our past. After writing our inventories, we have a list of shortcomings we

will use for Steps Six and Seven. We also have a list of people we have harmed. Step Four is the substance of the action steps. By doing it we gather the necessary information to work the rest of the steps. Below is one example of a way of working these steps.

### Step Work Application ... *continued from Step Three (June 2020 issue)*

#### **Step Four:**

*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

Step Four is our opportunity to own and clean up our past. With the help of our Higher Power and Sponsor, we face those things that have been blocking us from God, ourselves, and others.

Fourth steps come in many forms: resentments, fears, relationships, beliefs, and a cleansing inventory, to name a few. The following suggestions are but a beginning.

#### **ACTION:**

- **Slogans** - “More Will Be Revealed” and “Keep an Open Mind.”
- **Prayer** - Begin Step Four by writing a personal prayer or a letter of commitment to finish the steps. Read the prayer or letter each time I sit down to write my inventory. Remember, God can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
- **Relationships Inventory** - Start by making a list of our closest relationships. For each relationship, answer the following questions, writing one page on each question:
  - \* What do I dislike about the relationship?

- \* What do I like?
- \* What would I change?
- \* What can I do to improve the relationship?

After writing the inventory, we ask God to help us be the change we want to see in the relationship. We remind ourselves it only takes one person to change a relationship. We ask God to let us be the one who changes.

- **Cleansing Inventory**—A Cleansing Inventory is one that frees us from the burdens, shame, guilt, and experiences of the past. We are not holding a grudge about these events. These are things that have stuck with us through the years.
  - \* Write a list of secrets I am keeping, memories that burden me, shame I feel, remorse I have, and my regrets.

#### **Step Five:**

*Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

If we have been searching and fearless, we have much to share with God, another human being, and ourselves. Step Five continues our journey of humility. Admitting our faults and mistakes is a step toward freedom.

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### Newsletter eSubscriptions

Click here for your **FREE** e-subscription to *The Serenity Connection*. Subscriptions to date: **>5000!**



The Sponsorship Page

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**The Magic of Sponsorship: Step Work Application**

**ACTION:**

- Set a time to meet with our sponsor. Be prepared for a long talk.
- Start with a prayer inviting God to join the fifth step. Leave an empty chair visible to remind us God is with us.
- Have a pen and paper available to list our shortcomings when we admit them.
- Forgive ourselves and others if necessary.
- Keep a list of people to whom we owe amends.

By taking Step Five, we clean up our past. We identify what stands in our way of joy, peace, trust, faith, love, healthy relationships, and self-respect. We begin to see that another way of living is possible.

**Step Six:**

*Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

Admitting to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs prepares us for Step Six. Writing our inventory and sharing it with another person opens our eyes to exactly how our character defects harm others and ourselves. If we cling to our defects as shields, protection, or enjoyment, or out of fear of letting go, there is additional action necessary to complete Step Six.

**ACTION:**

- **Slogan** - Willingness without action is not willingness.
- **Prayer** – God ultimately will be the one to remove our defects. If we aren’t ready, we ask God to help us. We pray something like this until we have the willingness to move to Step Seven: “Higher Power, I lack the desire to let go of (name the defect). Reveal whatever is blocking me from being entirely ready.”
- **Daily Awareness** - In addition to prayer if we are unwilling, we keep a tally sheet and share it with our sponsors each week until we are willing.
  - \* How many times today did I (name the defect)?
  - \* What was the result?
  - \* Did someone get hurt? How?
  - \* Am I now ready, or do I need more convincing?

**Step Seven:**

*Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*

At first glance, Step Seven looks simple. Ask the Higher Power of our understanding to remove our shortcomings. Got it! As with all the steps, Step Seven is a daily practice. Continually asking God to remove our defects builds our character. As we change, our habits, beliefs, ideas, and the way we perceive life change too.

**Step Seven Prayer Example**

“God, I humbly seek Your Power to remove from me every single defect of character that hinders my usefulness to You. I know I cannot do this myself. I sincerely want to be a different person, the person You intend me to be. I am ready and willing to change. I pray that You now remove from me every one of my shortcomings that blocks me from serving you. Grant me the power to live each day in your will.”

**ACTION:**

- Write a seventh step prayer.
- Get quiet and start reciting a Step Seven prayer. Repeat the prayer until it is sincere and felt in the heart. The shift from reciting a prayer to meaning it can only be known by the person praying. Keep praying until it comes.
- List my shortcomings and the contrary action. Practice the slogan “Do God’s Work, Not God’s Job.” Our work in Step Seven is to practice the contrary action. God’s job is to remove the shortcoming.

Shortcoming	Contrary Action
Trying to stop bad things from happening	Acceptance, Trust, Faith, “Let Go and Let God”
Being critical	Finding the good in all things, Encouragement
Self-righteousness or arrogance	Humility, Unity, Equality, Modesty
Being in control	Tolerance, Autonomy, Humility, Trust
Dishonesty	Honesty, Intimacy, Vulnerability

## World Service Committee Corner



### Policy & Guidelines Committee



### Twelve Traditions Roundtable

The World Service P&G Committee is presenting a roundtable discussion on the importance of applying Nar-Anon's Twelve Traditions to the group and how the traditions can be applied in our personal lives.

**Sunday October 18, 2020**  
12 to 2 pm EDT 9 to 11 am PDT

Join us for a 2-hour online discussion on ZOOM (ZOOM ID to be sent at a later date).

- Your input is a vital part of making this interchange productive and the outcome valuable to all attendees.
- Please submit your questions regarding the traditions to [pandg\\_roundtable@gmail.com](mailto:pandg_roundtable@gmail.com) by October 1, 2020.

Roundtable is limited to 100 participants. Please have your Guide to Local Services and Guide to World Services available during the roundtable.

### Outreach Committee



### Increase Outreach Efforts Beyond Your Backyard

Oftentimes we think of outreach in our geographic area only. We reach out to doctors, treatment centers, schools, etc. within our town or neighboring area. Outreach does not have to stop there! In this current climate, many local groups have been conducting online meetings so members can stay in touch and can keep working on their recovery even though face-to-face meetings may have been suspended.

Use this opportunity to increase outreach efforts to your surrounding area. Be sure your message contains contact information where the potential attendee can learn the meeting details. Always adhere to Tradition Eleven and maintain the anonymity of all members by utilizing an

email address that does not identify any individual member. Consider creating a group email.

Visit the Outreach landing page at [www.nar-anon.org/outreach](http://www.nar-anon.org/outreach) for downloadable cover letters, pamphlets, and other print resources to support your outreach efforts to schools and universities in your community.

### Website Committee



### More ways to connect!

The world service website now has two new ways to connect with other Nar-Anon members, through:

- websites for virtual groups
- meeting listings for virtual groups.

Website links can be found on the Nar-Anon world service website, [www.nar-anon.org](http://www.nar-anon.org), under "Newcomers," on the webpage called "[Other Nar-Anon Sites](#)." There is a new section called "Virtual Sites." This section is reserved for groups, areas, and regions that have a website dedicated to helping members find online Nar-Anon meetings. If you have such a website, first download the Website Handbook and verify your site follows the Nar-Anon Principles. Then use the "[Register Your Website](#)" form to make a request to the world service website committee.

Meeting listings can be added to the "Virtual Meeting" page, which can be found under "Newcomers" in the website menu. This new page is reserved for groups that plan to permanently and only meet online. Groups that are online temporarily and groups that simply add a teleconference option to their in-person meeting should continue to use the "Find a Meeting" page for their in-person listing, and work with their region to post information about their online connection. Entries on the "Virtual Meeting" page need to list a city and time zone to help members in other locations know the time of your meeting in their local time zone.

Entries on this page should provide an email address so other members can ask for the connection information for

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## Coming Events

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

### New York Region Video/Telecon

*In the Spirit of Co-operation*

**September 8, 2020**

5 pm PDT, 8 pm EDT

Zoom 929-205-6099; ID 842 5964 2067

### 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Southern California

Region Virtual Narathon

**September 12, 2020**

*Fear to Faith*

For details, visit [socal@nar-anon.org](mailto:socal@nar-anon.org)

### Nar-Anon Central California Region

2020 Narathon

**September 12, 2020**

St. Williams Catholic Church

6410 Santa Lucia Rd,

Atascadero, CA 93422

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## More ways to connect!

your group. Please respect our Principles: do not imply affiliation with outside organizations in your group name and do not reveal your full identity in the email address. Many groups are creating email addresses belonging to their group. Some of the virtual groups have set up automated replies on their emails so newcomers can get consistently quick responses.

Groups wanting to be added to the "Virtual Meeting" page should use the

### Quarterly Virtual Website

Roundtable

**October 3, 2020**

6 am PDT, 9 am EDT, 2 pm GMT,

4 pm Moscow, 5:30 pm Tehran

Email [WebCommittee@Nar-Anon.org](mailto:WebCommittee@Nar-Anon.org)

### The New York-New England 2020

Nar-Anon Virtual Convention

**October 10, 2020**

Watch websites for updates:

[www.naranonctma.org](http://www.naranonctma.org)

[www.nynaranon.org](http://www.nynaranon.org) or

Email [neregionnaranon@gmail.com](mailto:neregionnaranon@gmail.com)

### NorCal Region Virtual Workshop

on Detachment

*You asked 4 it!*

**October 24, 2020**

10 am PDT, 11 am MDT, 12 pm CDT,

1 pm EDT, 6:pm/18:00 GMT

**By Zoom video teleconference**

Email [ConvCoord@naranonnorcal.org](mailto:ConvCoord@naranonnorcal.org)

"Fill out a new group form" or the "Let us know what to change" form on the Find a Meeting page. Please use an email address instead of a street address if your group is a virtual group. Note, however, that the World Service Office is only posting email contacts, not other connection information, and only making updates for groups that are going to be permanently online.

## Share Your Events

Did you know there is a page on the Nar-Anon website where you can share information about upcoming events? Go to <http://www.nar-anon.org/events> to see a list of upcoming events. Or send a PDF to [events@nar-anon.org](mailto:events@nar-anon.org) if you have a flyer you would like to share.

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## Appeal!

Nar-Anon members may contribute to Nar-Anon World Service online. To do so, use the "Support Nar-Anon" button on the bottom of every page on the Nar-Anon website. You may also go directly to the Nar-Anon webstore and pick the option to "Contribute." Or, you can try out the new "Contribute" icon on the home page of [Nar-Anon.org](http://Nar-Anon.org).

Please remember, however, contributions are only accepted from Nar-Anon members.



**Nar-Anon Family Groups**

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