# THE SERENITY CONNECTION

#### NEWSLETTER OF THE NAR-ANON FAMILY GROUPS



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Well, another year has passed and WSO remains open. Even though the world has faced challenges, thanks to the continued support from the Nar-Anon fellowship, we are able to carry the message of hope.

The World Service Conference of 2021 was an experience where technology and members' willingness helped the conference to achieve its goals, and showed us how we were able to work together in unity for the good of the whole across all borders!

I am in awe of how supportive the Nar-Anon members are during the phases of Covid. During the ups and downs, this "we" program is willing to serve, whether at group, area, region, NSO, and world levels. I see the love of the program through those wanting to help Nar-Anon continue. We still need to move forward and for all those creative members donating their skills and time to help Nar-Anon continue - I am grateful.

Service has been instrumental in Nar-Anon being able to continue at the world level. Our worldwide fellowship has overcome the many closings of face-to-face meetings. Members stepped up to enter the technology world. The virtual, teleconference and other venues have become another tool for meetings to have members from all over the world attend. What an experience! The stories I hear, especially from newcomers - they are so grateful.

Thank you dear Nar-Anon members for allowing me to be of service.

In Gratitude,

Cathy K., Nar-Anon WSO

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## MEMBER SHARE | THE VORTEX

When I came to Nar-Anon I was desperate and confused. I had spent so many years trying to fix my addicted loved ones, walking on eggshells around them, defending myself against angry outbursts, feeling unloved, ashamed, and desperately afraid. I worried constantly, wanted my addicts to come home, afraid they would come home and be nasty (I seemed rarely, if ever, to see their good sides). I was filled with contradictions, confusions, anxieties, and valiant attempts to overcome these.

As I attended the fellowship, I gradually began to discern that there was a cycle involved... a vicious circle of addiction and co-addiction, a crazy repeating never-ending series of highs and lows, hopes and hopesdashed, promises and failures. It was like a whirlpool, and I was as caught up in it as my addicted loved ones. The cycle followed my addicted loved ones' using patterns, but I was deeply enmeshed in it.

I needed a lifeline so I could climb out of the vortex. At first, I was not even aware that there was a rope I could grab on to. Indeed, I was not even really aware of the vortex. I thought I was facing this all alone. I had spent much of my life being "the strong one" who tried to help everyone else, who always had time for someone else's problems, but never my own. I was busy throwing life-preservers to everyone else, while I seemed to be drowning.

As I look back, I realize that those attempts to help others never really

seemed to solve their problems. They just made me feel a little bit better about myself; and to those I was trying to help, I seemed to just be feeding into their inabilities. At a certain point it became clear I was drowning; I had no life to speak of, except a big amorphous ball of uncertainties.

Nar-Anon changed all this. Not immediately, of course. It took me a while to understand that the lifeline I was looking for consisted of meetings, telephone calls with other members, reading recovery literature, working the steps, looking at myself honestly, and understanding addiction as a disease. Gradually I grabbed hold of the lifeline offered and found my way to shore.

Now what was interesting was that I realized I was no longer adding energy to the addictive cycle. And to my surprise, this change had an impact on that cycle. The addicts were still using, but I was no longer in the whirlpool with them. I had found a safe perch some distance from their insanity, where I could reasonably monitor the situation to see that they were okay, but no longer participate. This changed the situation. In fact, my addicts noticed the change in energy, and began to realize that I was no longer participating. This changed our interactions for the better.

My addicted loved ones continue with their struggles, but I am much better at seeing where I can help and where I cannot help. I mind my own business, and make decisions based

upon my best judgment and healthy guidance using a spiritual program. I know thoroughly that getting trapped in the vortex is not a way to help others. It only adds fuel to the problem. I am grateful for the lifeline my Nar-Anon family has given me. I try to be there for others, not to save them, but to help them discover that they too can find solid ground again.

It's a simple and beautiful program, people helping each other using spiritual principles, each of us working on our own selves and not inserting ourselves into others' problems, having compassion and love for all who struggle, and letting that love into our own lives. Thanks to Nar-Anon, I began to move forward again, rather than in circles; I rediscovered the things I truly love and enjoy; I have a life again.



THE ADDICTS WERE STILL USING, BUT I WAS NO LONGER IN THE WHIRLPOOL WITH THEM



## MEMBER SHARE

## **RUNNING ON EMPTY**

I grew up in a rather dysfunctional household. There was addiction, violence, and abuse. My family had a lot of secrets, and it was very important to pretend that all was well, especially when anyone else was watching. From this, I learned that appearances matter more than substance, that lies are a way of coping with life. These ways of acting were not imparted in any formal way. They simply were the rules we followed. I think of this now as the "unspoken lesson plan" of my childhood.

Such examples went far deeper than any maxims or platitudes spoken about openly. So I became rather distrustful of words. It should come as no surprise, then, that all my life I have felt stretched and pulled this way and that, exhausted with trying to help others, giving advice, figuring out the best course for them, proving to the world that I was caring, smart, and capable. I thought that if I learned enough, dared enough, experienced enough, I could fix just about anything. But the secretkeeping was built into me. I felt I couldn't be who I was, so I needed to be the hero in other people's lives. Mostly I felt unappreciated, unloved, and resentful.

By the time I came to Nar-Anon, after having tried so hard to save my addicted partner, I was frankly out of gas. I had been running on empty for so long, I didn't know how to take care of myself or fix my own problems (let alone anyone else's!). I simply had no energy. It is no exaggeration to say that I was scattered, afraid, and anxious all the time.

Furthermore, I was humiliated. The addict had done and said things to me that I never thought were possible to do or say to another person. I tried to justify and explain myself, arguing back from a place of hurt and woundedness. I was trying so hard to prove myself to the whole world but I never really believed my opinion of myself was important. Since that opinion was negative, I lived in a great deal of denial. And the addict found my buttons and learned which ones to push.

Something had to give. Although I felt empty and alone, I had so much bottled up inside me that I'm surprised I didn't burst. My Nar-Anon group became my weekly ninety minutes of sanity. From the moment I entered the room, I found a place where there was no judgment and even more surprising, no demands made upon me. What I had thought would be just one more obligation, became a place to refill my empty tank.

Of course old habits die hard, and I at first tried to take on Nar-Anon as if it were a project I needed to fix. But the gentleness of the group soon made me realize it was I who needed them more than the other way around. And what they asked of me was so simple and so startling that at first I could not comprehend it. They offered a way to release all my pent-up frustration and hurt, and become truly empty, not out of gas, but ready to be filled with messages of love and compassion and hope.

The steps, the meetings, the phone

## NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Please share your experience, strength, and hope with the fellowship.

Submit articles to <a href="mailto:newsletters@nar-anon.org">newsletters@nar-anon.org</a>.

Each submission must be accompanied by a signed Copyright Release Form found on nar-anon.org.

calls with other members, and the service, rather than being draining and frustrating, became a way to grow. In doing these simple things that helped me, it turned out I was also giving back. I still sometimes get harried by life, and I do fall into old patterns now and again. But today I have a family who understands me and is happy to hear my reality, without any expectations beyond acceptance.

There is nothing quite like human beings helping each other. It is an essential action, but it must be done with wisdom and spiritual guidance. Nar-Anon has given me both of these. Now when I'm exhausted, I take a gentle look at what I'm expecting of the world and of myself, and see if it aligns with that guidance. I remember that self-knowledge is not enough, for I can easily misunderstand myself. But if I take a moment, my Higher Power will show me the path and there are many rest stops along the way.

## JUST FOR TODAY

I will let the addict be. I will love and not judge.

# THE CHARACTER DEFECT OF MARTYRDOM

"We taught our children to deny their needs, ideas, wants, feelings, and their souls for others. We were training martyrs." <u>SESH</u>, April 14, p. 105, Generations of Martyrs

Martyrdom is a character defect that can be so pervasive that we don't even see it in our lives. The rooms of Nar-Anon offer a safe place to take a clear look at it, and to make changes in our behavior. When working on it as part of my fourth step, I looked for a definition of martyrdom as a character defect, and found that martyrdom is using our pain, or resurrecting our past pain, to manipulate others.

#### **MY EXPERIENCE**

In martyrdom, I'm looking for a reward for being poor, poor pitiful me. I put everyone else first, I'm so hardworking, I work my fingers to the bone, fix everything or everyone, grab credit where it is due and where it is not. Hero and saint and martyr me! In a state of martyrdom, I want control, I want to get attention for my sacrifice, I want to look like the innocent victim. I want to look like Mother Theresa, when in reality I am being manipulative, dramatic, and self-centered.

Martyrdom can make me feel sick to my stomach. I can get very worked up when I see it in my family members and in others. I get so worked up because the pattern of martyrdom is in me. The fact that I unwittingly marinated my kids in it too doesn't help. When I am a martyr, it is hard for anyone to address me because I am so good at looking like a victim. I was infuriating and an unbelievable drag to be around.

Even so, I still get confused about martyrdom because in the rooms, and in my life, I hear a lot of stories of being traumatized, victimized, and emotionally abused. When I hear these stories, I distort my behavior to try to get the love I need to fix my trauma and pain. I need to work those things out, in my life and in the rooms, with the help of my sponsor and the Twelve Steps. But martyrdom adds another dimension to those traumatic experiences. I can use them as a weapon against others to get

what I want.

The boundaries between being a martyr and being mistreated can be tough ones for me to see. Some clarity came when I realized martyrdom encompasses a lot of my character Control, manip`ulation, defects. dishonesty, passive aggressive behavior, to name just a few. I was schooled by at least three generations of my family in being a martyr. I got pretty good at it. I employed it against my addicted loved ones pretty well. It enabled me to make sure I looked innocent and like the victim, sacrificing myself with the purpose of polishing my own halo.

My sponsor told me that it's not always what you do but WHY YOU DO IT that's important. With enabling, my "why" was often fear or grief. With martyrdom, my "why" was often self-interest and the desire to make myself look good.

Some of the words that came out of my mouth or were in my thoughts when I was playing the martyr, include:

- "Look at all I have done for you. Look at how much I do."
- "I never get any credit."
- "I can't believe you did that, when I have given you so much."
- "You don't appreciate me, or all I have done."
- · "Only I can do it."

Martyrdom robs my addicted loved ones of a lot: their own control, understanding their own emotions, owning their decisions, mistakes, and consequences. Martyrdom wrongly spotlights me at the center of their struggle. It is their struggle, not mine. I am busy enough with my own.

#### **MY STRENGTHS**

Ways I have found to address martyrdom.

- 1. Do the work, do the work. The Twelve Steps give us a spiritual solution for our character defects and our own individual ways of being twisted by the disease of addiction in our loved ones.
- 2. Turn it over to my Higher Power,

- again and again. This measure correctly takes the focus off of me, and looks outside me for guidance and wisdom. It is a relief.
- 3. Identify the rewards. My sponsor advised me to find the rewards I was getting from this character defect. I listed drama, being at the center, attention on me, I'm a victim, I'm a savior and a saint. I'm tricky and slick. My sponsor said I had to be willing to give up those rewards, in order to give up the character defect. She was correct!
- 4. Laughter. I had a lovely friend who was a rapper and a comic. He did great voices. He was one of those rare friends who would ask how I was really doing, so I would tell him. He would always say with a twang, "Girl, your life is like a country song!" And we would laugh and laugh. If I can stop taking myself so seriously, the martyr in me can melt away.
- 5. Practice directness, since martyrdom is so indirect. I try to channel my little kid self because she was pretty direct. In first grade, I stopped a sixth grade bully in his tracks. He emotionally and physically punished my brother and other kids on the bus daily and with relish. He wouldn't listen to words, or yelling, or the bus driver, so one day I lost it and took my metal lunch box and WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! hit him in the

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## MEMBER SHARE

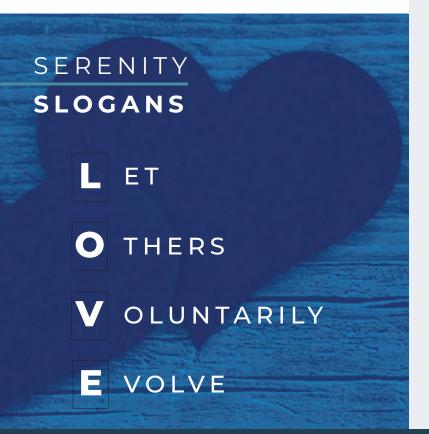
## **FORGIVENESS POEM**

I continue to share my experience, strength, & hope at my Nar-Anon home group. I wrote My Acrostic Poem on Forgiveness for my son and it happens to fall on the 12th anniversary of his passing. It is meant to share a message to anyone who has the desire to "Live and Let Live" through a loved one's disease of addiction.

#### Dear Danny Boy,

Yesterday was a day of peace and serenity for me because even though you're not by my side, I often feel your presence. I am sharing this poem to inspire how I continue to persevere through the practice of forgiveness & hope as I journey through the family disease of addiction.

I love and miss you.



- ... allows me the **FREEDOM** to forgive and set myself free of blame
- ... allows me to **OVERCOME** my obstacles to continue onward
- ... gave me the wisdom to **RECOGNIZE** and **RELEASE** my fears which I continue to work on in my Nar-Anon family group with the gift of a sponsor I chose
- ... has made me **GRATEFUL** for my ability to trust in **GOD** and a Higher Power, and seek the **GUIDANCE** and **GIFTS** the program offers
- ... gave me the **INSPIRATION** on the inside to find **INNER STRENGTH** instead of isolation and insanity
- ... has allowed me to **VENT** my venom with my friends in the program and the gift of a sponsor
- ... allowed me to **ENHANCE** my understanding of how my ego and emotions are affected by this exhausting & exhilarating disease
- ... is for **NAVIGATING NAR-ANON** groups that remind me I am no longer alone
- ... has **ENCOURAGED** me to extinguish expectations and **ENLIGHTEN** my own **ENERGY** to find new **ENDEAVORS** to be **EXCITED** about!
- S ... has allowed me to SURRENDER myself with SERENITY in my daily life
- ... has allowed me to share my **SURVIVAL STORY** of **SELF-AWARENESS** & **SELF-CARE**.

  I have begun the process of forgiveness for myself and all family members that I love by practicing... **SLOGANS**, **SPONSORSHIP**, **STEP WORK**, and **SERVICE**

Forgiveness will secure and restore my sanity to start a new journey. After all, that's how forgiveness seeks serenity!

## WSC OUTREACH

# CELEBRATE RECOVERY ACROSS THE GLOBE

Annually across the globe, many countries set aside a time to share about and celebrate recovery. In the United States, it is the month of September. It serves as another reminder and opportunity to "carry the message". Whether the effort is big or small, there are numerous ways to participate.

Go to <u>nar-anon.org/outreach</u> to find the step-by-step guides for Outreach Opportunities that can serve as a starting point. Has your country set aside a time to celebrate the gifts of recovery? If yes, we encourage you to join in and make plans to "carry the message".

## WSC CONFERENCE

## **LEARNING SEMINAR**

WSC Committee invites you to a learning seminar!

This seminar will present the in's, outs, how-to's, whys, and wherefores of writing motions. We will answer questions and provide information. If you are not able to attend, the event will be recorded and there will be a power point presentation available. To receive these materials, reach out to wscconference@nar-anon.org.

Motions communicate ideas for growing Nar-Anon, supporting recovery and improving services to effectively carry our message of hope throughout the world.

<u>Join us</u>: Saturday, April 23, 2022 at 7 am PT ⋅ 10 am ET

Zoom ID: 842 8968 1668 · Password: serenity



## WSC LITERATURE

## WORKBOOK REVIEW

Fellowship review due dates for comments and responses to recovery literature can now be found on the World Service website under Recovery Literature Fellowship Review. The recovery items currently available for fellowship review are Fourth Step Workbook Part 1, and Tradition Four. The deadline for both is March 31st, 2022.

Recovery literature must never be posted on websites or made available through social media. If you want to be part of the fellowship review process for recovery literature, send and email to <a href="mailto:litcom@nar-anon.org">litcom@nar-anon.org</a> and say you want to join the <a href="mailto:recovery literature">recovery literature</a> review process.

## WSC OUTREACH

# ATTRACTION, RATHER THAN PROMOTION - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Outreach service members look to Tradition Eleven to guide their efforts. In part, the tradition reads "our public relations policy is based on attraction, rather than promotion". That sounds pretty straight forward, but members often ask, "What does this mean?"

To gain some understanding, we can look to two sources – definitions of the terms and excerpts of a <u>SESH</u> reading on Tradition Eleven.

- · Attraction something that is appealing or inviting
- Promotion action that supports endorsement or persuasion for the advancement of a specific cause.

<u>SESH</u> November 22: "At a public level ... I should not preach or recruit... When I demonstrate a positive change and set a good example by handling my own problems in new ways... it is this behavior that others will notice. When others see the positive changes happening in my life, they may be attracted to the program."

The distinction that makes the difference is the quality of the presentation. No hard sell, no push, just setting a tone that sparks interest and lets the listener, viewer take the lead in asking for more. When we carry the message in this manner, Tradition Eleven is leading us in our service.

Have a question about outreach? Interested in learning more about the WS Outreach Committee?

Email: outreach@nar-anon.org



## WSC POLICY & GUIDELINES

## WHOSE MESSAGE IS IT ANYWAY?

What is a Nar-Anon group? The Preamble describes our groups as a whole in this way: "The Nar-Anon Family Groups are a worldwide fellowship for those affected by someone else's addiction." This is the simple basis, "affected by someone else's addiction". It doesn't limit what the group does, so long as it is formed for the stated purpose. And in fact, further in the Guide to Local Services (GLS), there is more to define who can be a member: "Anyone who feels their life is or has been affected by close contact with an addict is eligible for membership in Nar-Anon."

Nar-Anon groups are registered as such "...with the understanding that it will abide by the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service and meetings will be open to any Nar-Anon or Narateen member." Our traditions support and quide us to adhere to these principles in providing groups with the ability to accomplish what our Preamble statement says.

Tradition 4. "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other Nar-Anon Family Groups, or NA as a whole." Unfortunately, this Tradition has been used as an excuse in some groups so they can act without adhering to the Nar-Anon message of recovery. Our recovery message is each of us sharing the Nar-Anon program, not the message of other recovery programs which may be very good, but "At Nar-Anon meetings we learn by sharing our own experience; therefore, many interesting programs can be planned in which all members participate."

What message is being supported? Groups are reminded in Tradition 7: "Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." "When we bring outside literature, information from other programs, or professional support to our groups, we are sending the message that our program is not enough."

To those who are interested in where the above quotes came from, we encourage you to read the **Guide to Local Services** (GLS) which can be downloaded free from nar-anon.org/service-literature and our new Traditions book which can be purchased from the Webstore. Your questions may find their answers in the service literature.

# THE CHARACTER DEFECT OF MARTYRDOM CONTINUED



head with it. Pretty direct, though not the best approach. The bus driver, who had pulled over to let someone out, looked at me in her big overhead mirror and clapped silently, then just kept driving. Thankfully, that 6th grader left us alone after that. It was my seven-year-old version of being direct, and it showed me that I could get to the point. Not very martyrlike. So try not to be that indirect person. And try not to hit people in the head with your lunch box! It's not the best way, and you might break your Beatles thermos. As an adult, I aim for directness with kindness, and only when it is my business.

## MY HOPE

Since coming to the rooms of Nar-Anon, and working the steps with my sponsor, I have become much better at seeing martyrdom in myself, stopping and thinking, turning it over to my Higher Power, and moving on to do the next best thing. I don't feel as sick to my stomach when I do see it because I know I have a plan. I don't unconsciously model it to my kids. Instead, we talk openly about it. Martyrdom is getting rarer and rarer in my life. And I am very grateful.

- · When it comes to martyrdom, what is your experience, strength and hope?
- EXPERIENCE: In what ways have you been a martyr or seen martyrdom in your life?
- STRENGTH: What has helped you to address this character defect?
- HOPE: How has your life become better since working on your character defects, such as martyrdom?

# APPFALL WSO NEEDS YOUR HELP

Our fellowship is struggling financially through this unprecedented worldwide pandemic.

Tradition Seven states "Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

Please send your donations in one of two ways:

- 1. Go to nar-anon.org, select "Contribute"
- 2. Mail a check to Nar-Anon FGH,

Nar-Anon FGH, Inc. 23110 Crenshaw Blvd. Suite A Torrance, CA 90505 USA

Thank you for your help. We are all in this together.

# UPCOMING EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

## MARCH - MAY 2022

Visit <u>nar-anon.org/events</u> to see a list of upcoming events and activities.

## 26 27 28 29 30

## WSC EVENTS

#### Website Roundtable | Virtual

Sunday, April 2

6am PT · 9am ET / 8am CT / 7am MT / 6am PT / 5:30pm Iran / 4pm Moscow / 3pm Central EU Zoom ID: 832 7524 4099 (no password) webcommittee@nar-anon.org

#### WSC Policy & Guidelines | Virtual

The Twelve Concepts of Nar-Anon Service
Part I · Saturday, April 9
12 - 2 pm ET · 11am CT/10am MT/9am PT
Zoom ID: 882 22301 4618

#### **WSC Conference Learning Seminar**

Virtual | Saturday, April 23 7am PT · 10am ET / 9am CT / 8am MT Zoom ID: 842 8968 1668 Password: serenity

## WS Outreach Roundtable | Virtual

Sunday, May 1 · Information to follow nar-anon.org/events

## CONVENTIONS

#### Mini-Convention, Poland | Virtual

Sunday, May 21 · 10am-14:30 pm Central EU 4am ET/3am CT/2am MT/1am PT grn.wlasniedzis@gmail.com join.skype.com/JqNSTt7WLDix

#### NCR Spring Convention | TBD

Northern California Region "Taking Back My Life" Saturday, April 16 · 9 am PT naranonnorcal.org

#### East Coast Convention | Virtual

Sunday, April 24 · Time TBD ECC7chairs@gmail.com

## Georgia Regional Convention | In-Person

Friday, April 29 through Saturday, April 30 Crown Plaza- Peachtree City, Georgia nar-anonga.com

#### Fun in the Sun Convention | In-Person

Edgewater Beach and Golf Resort Panama City Beach, Florida Friday, April 15 through Sunday, April 17 (850) 235-4044 moultonprincess@yahoo.com

# REGIONAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

## **Carolina Regional Assembly/Workshop**

Virtual

Saturday, March 26 · 1:30-4pm Registration required www.naranonnorcal.org

#### **Carry the Message** | Virtual

Nar-Anon & NA · Rocky Mountain Region Saturday, March 26 · April 30 · May 28 6pm MT · 8pm ET/7pm CT/5pm PT naranonrm.org carrythemessageNFG@gmail.com

#### Piecing Together Sponsorship | Virtual

Rocky Mountain Region Sunday, March 6 11 am MT · 1pm ET/12pm CT/10am PT naranonrm.org itstartswithus365@gmail.com

#### In the Spirit of Cooperation | Virtual

Nar-Anon & NA
New York Region
Tuesday, March 8 · April 5 · May 10
8pm ET · 7pm CT / 6pm MT / 5pm PT
nynaranon.org · nynfgevents@gmail.com

### **Day of Sharing** | In-Person

Golden, CO · Rocky Mountain Region Saturday, April 23 · 1-5pm MT <u>naranonrm.org</u> · <u>btdt@aol.com</u>

## Nuts & Bolts of Sponsorship | Virtual

Rocky Mountain Region · Every Tuesday 5 pm MT · 7pm ET / 6pm CT / 5pm MT / 4pm PT naranonrm.org itstartswithus365@gmail.com

### Sunday SESH | Virtual

NY Region • Sunday, March 27 • Time TBD nynaranon.org • nynfgevents@gmail.com

#### **12-step workshop** | Virtual

GA, TN, CO, NY, CT Regions Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday 8pm ET · 7pm CT / 6pm MT / 5pm PT Zoom ID: 898 9074 1661 Password: 363636 nynfgevents@gmail.com

## 12-step workshop | Virtual

Simi Valley, CA · Every Saturday 6:30pm PT · 9:30pm ET / 8:30pm CT / 7:30pm MT Zoom ID: 884 0262 1415 · Password: 832671 jcm16huskie@gmail.com

### Sunday NFG Step Study | Virtual

Central CA · Every Sunday Steps 6-12: 12pm PT · 3pm ET/2pm CT/1pm MT Steps 1-5: 1pm PT · 4pm ET/3pm CT/2pm MT Zoom ID: 745 977 7458 robertp27march@gmail.com

#### Saturday Speaker | Virtual

It Starts With Us · Rocky Mountain Region Every Saturday 7pm MT · 9pm ET / 8pm CT / 6pm PT naranonrm.org itstartswithus365@gmail.com

# SHARE YOUR EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Have an event, workshop or activity to share? Send your event flyer (PDF) with event information to events@nar-anon.org.

NAR-ANON FGH, INC. Nar-Anon World Service Office 23110 Crenshaw Blvd #A Torrance, CA 90505 USA



nar-anon.org wso@nar-anon.org (310) 534-8188 (800) 477-6291