

# Newsletter of the Nar-Anon Family Groups'

## Message from our Executive Director

### 2019 in Reflection

With the new year upon us, it is a time to reflect. WSO has experienced several personnel changes over the past year. We were sorry to lose some long-time staff as they were instrumental in helping Nar-Anon establish the inner workings of production and the website. Our new staff members have had a smooth transition and I am pleased with their contribution to Nar-Anon's needs. In today's world, being a non-profit with a modest pay-scale means we struggle to attract potential candidates.

Last year, meetings closed and new meetings began. WSO tries to maintain worldwide group information but we often find out after the fact that meetings have been disbanded. Many of these groups did not notify their local area, region, or WSO. Sadly, we learn about newcomers who have gone to a meeting location (some go long distances) only to find out the group is no longer active. WSO has a webpage where groups can input important changes to meeting information and send them to WSO to

keep the database updated. Sometimes this has worked, but for the most part, it has not had the results WSO was hoping for. It is a daunting challenge to maintain the most up-to-date group information and we hope to close the gap this year. Please go to <https://www.nar-anon.org/edit-group> and help us to help others.



Last July, I had an opportunity to connect with members of our international fellowship at a meeting in Zurich, Switzerland. Nar-Anon members from Germany, Ukraine, Russia, Sweden, Spain, Turkey, and the United States attended in person while others, from Finland, Iran Region, and Jonob Region of Iran, joined in by Skype. What stood out for all of us was the importance of regular and ongoing communications within the entire world fellowship, particularly for those unable to attend world service conferences in the United States. We coined the term "Euronarathon" for the event and ended with the hope of meeting in Cairo, Egypt later this year. More information to come.

I am pleased to watch our Nar-Anon fellowship grow as addiction still affects our loved ones and friends. I continue to believe our primary purpose will be fulfilled through our members. Being of service is as important as sharing our experience. This carries the message to the newcomer. To be continued...

In gratitude, Cathy K.

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THE SERENITY CONNECTION



## How Nar-Anon has changed ME

I remember the first time I walked into a Nar-Anon meeting. I shed a lot of tears and couldn't share for the first several meetings. I could listen, though, and learn what the Nar-Anon program was meant to do for me; not for my addict, but for me. Slowly I began to change. I put effort into working the program by doing a step study, having a sponsor, reading the literature, using a Higher Power to guide me, and focusing on me. After years of attending Nar-Anon, I contin-

ue to work my program. If I start to feel anxious or troubled, I turn to my program and all the tools that help me get through.



I have changed my life because of Nar-Anon. I can attend meetings and not gossip or focus on my addict, but on me. I am capable of allowing my addicts to live their own lives, make their own choices, and I have gratefully accepted that I am powerless over anyone but myself. I have freedom to live a life that is now more complete and free from others' issues. I am in a place of peace. What a gift to give myself!

## Light in the tunnel

Diseases that rob, steal, and destroy make me feel like I have walked into a dark tunnel full of fear, unknowns, and destruction about to strike. When I am in a really dark place, I feel responsible and overwhelmed. Those who are truly sick would love to have me be their savior but I simply cannot be.

Recovery draws me into a connected relationship with the God of my understanding who I uniquely encounter when walking and through working the steps of hope and recovery. I learn I am human and often powerless as life happens. I learn that I always have help and choices. I am grateful that my Higher Power is loving and caring. It gives me hope and a different perspective on the circumstances in life that I cannot control. My Higher Power lightens me as I let go, for-

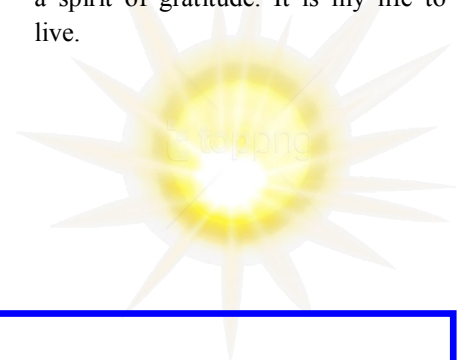
give, and release my hurts, fears, and concerns into his care.

Asking my Higher Power and other dear recovery friends for help changes my perspective so I am no longer desperately searching for that light at the end of the tunnel. Instead, I am given the light I need to live today. I have gratitude for today and an appreciation for whatever is good and true in spite of the hard stuff. I have hope that in my Higher Power's hands, even the hard stuff can be resolved, and in time I will be at peace. I am confident that in my Higher Power's care I will be given the wisdom to do my part with serenity, trusting him to do what I cannot.

In Step Three, I gave my life and will into the care of my Higher Power. I am best when I remember he will al-

ways be with me. "I am never alone" is my focus when experiencing feelings that are shaky and shifting like sand. Step Eleven tells me he will give me the knowledge I need and the power to do my part.

Today when I find myself in that tunnel peering into the darkness, I know I am not alone and there is always light for the next step. I choose to pray and invite my Higher Power to walk with me so I have the clarity to see each step of the way. He gives me the light to see the beauty in each moment with a spirit of gratitude. It is my life to live.



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Our  
Members  
Share

## Surrender to Win

### How surrendering to powerlessness frees me and opens me to change

Powerlessness and helplessness are not synonyms. To be powerless means having no power. To be helpless means to be without help. Helplessness promotes feelings of hopelessness, of desperation, of being the victim, of needing to blame and shame.

In recovery we learn to recognize powerlessness and discover that we always have help. Empowerment in the face of our powerlessness is about having the help we need to be mindful (aware of what is going on for me emotionally and physically) and to choose wisely. I have learned that accepting is not necessarily liking, it is rather knowing what is not mine and what is beyond my ability to change through the strength of my own will.

As an often-powerless soul, I do not need to drown in the violent waves that sometimes crash into my life and the lives of others. I can learn to surf along with the circumstances that touch me and move safely through them. I can reach out for help from a loving, caring power greater than myself and from others who understand. We are not without help. We are not without choices. In my life and my loved ones' lives there are sometimes struggles and suffering that are painful to my heart. I have learned that I no longer need to wallow in the despair of powerlessness. My Higher Power meets me there, leads me through, and shows me how to love others and myself without adding to the hurt. He soothes my soul as I let go in shaky trust and experience serenity and hope. Each of us has a Higher Power



to help us live and choose within the reality of our own lives. He works in others' lives as he does in mine.

Prayer is nothing more and nothing less than communication with the God of my understanding. Every time I earnestly choose to seek my Higher Power, I am opening myself to a source of wisdom, strength, and power that I do not have on my own. Every time I put my powerlessness or another's into his care, I invite him to do in his way what I can't do. I ask my Higher Power for the clarity, wisdom, and courage to do his will for me. Sometimes it is quietly waiting and praying, not doing. Going with the flow of life along with others in the recovery process has changed me and truly helped me love those I have been given to love.

## Next time you're in town...

I live about three hour's drive from Los Angeles. I had been thinking about visiting the World Service Office (WSO) in Torrance, a suburb of Los Angeles, when one day I saw a Serenity Connection article asking for volunteers, so I did. I sent an email to [WSO@Nar-Anon.org](mailto:WSO@Nar-Anon.org) and said I was going to be traveling near Torrance in the future and asked if they could use my assistance. I received a wonderfully welcoming reply and we arranged a date and time.

When I got there I was introduced to WSO staff and volunteers, had a tour

of the office, and found out how to do my first task for the day. I counted pamphlets and booklets, banding them into bundles of ten. I put blue reading cards into laminating sheets. I pulled books off the bookshelves and stacked them on top of unruly booklets to flatten them.

During my time there, I had a chance to talk with some of the WSO staff and volunteers. I also observed their commitment to being there for all the phone calls their small number can handle.



If you get a chance to visit Southern California, I hope you find the time to spend a few hours volunteering at the WSO. The amusement parks are open till late. The restaurants serve dinner all evening. So think about helping out at the WSO some morning or afternoon. Send them an email and plan a visit. Even a small contribution of time means a lot to the fellowship.



Our  
Members  
Share

## Traditionally Speaking

Like many others who come into the rooms of Nar-Anon, I had no idea what I was doing there. I didn't think it would work for me. Now, as I look back over what my precious Nar-Anon has taught me, I see how much more was yet to be revealed. Even before finally accepting Nar-Anon's way of dealing with addiction (which was like nothing I had in mind), I was experiencing the traditions of the program.

From the moment I stepped in the door, I witnessed everyone receiving the same welcome. There was a quiet but firm structure, but there was no hierarchy. Everyone's participation was valuable, from the chairperson to the coffee maker to the member sitting distraught in their chair willing to heal Nar-Anon style.

The meeting format that was read strongly discouraged crosstalk. I had experienced crosstalk in full measure with well-meaning friends and family, but to no avail. It only increased my frustration and reduced my self-confidence. Crosstalk implies I have advice (we don't give advice). Crosstalk also implies I have experienced

life exactly as you have and that you have the same life triggers I discovered in my fourth step. We are all anonymous and no two of us are exactly alike.

It took quite a while for me to realize I had been experiencing the traditions

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experience in Nar-Anon  
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long before I started working the steps, getting my first sponsor, and setting up my network. My first treasured experience in Nar-Anon was the feeling of safety; a great feeling of collaborative hope as we were all being guided in the same direction by honoring the traditions.

Rotation of service kept it clear that there is no "authority," only effective leaders. Our aim remained spiritual and the ultimate authority was the Higher Power of our individual choice.

There were no politics, no religion, no sexual preferences, or favored charities. Those issues were left at the door so as not to divert our primary spiritual aim - healing from the traumatic and lasting effects of a loved one's addiction. The traditions kept me safe from well-meaning individuals who believed they knew best how I should go forward in any given situation, even before I realized I needed them.

We in Nar-Anon share many of the same life experiences as the result of addiction. We are anonymous members who come into Nar-Anon with a wealth of life experience. Before addiction, our experiences both good and bad helped shape our character. Through working the steps, we discover the strengths and weaknesses of our character. Then, going forward, we do our best to apply the principles of Nar-Anon in our new lives. We are not professionals. We do not give advice or have group therapy chats.

Let's keep it humble – Nar-Anon style.

## Reminder! Newsletter Mailing List

In adherence to Nar-Anon Concept 11, "Nar-Anon funds are used to further our primary purpose to carry the message, and must be managed responsibly," the World Service Newsletter Committee will remove recipients from the mailing list if they have not opened the notification email for 5 consecutive issues. **This policy will begin in January, 2020.** Recipients will be removed without notice and will need to re-enroll if they wish to continue receiving email notifications. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the World Service Newsletter Committee at [newsletters@nar-anon.org](mailto:newsletters@nar-anon.org).



## Our Members Share



### Taking My Toys

I often wonder how we can better retain service members. I believe it is through the practice of the Nar-Anon traditions and concepts in all that we do. We will certainly make mistakes and we will certainly have disagreements. It is how we handle these that determines whether we retain trusted servants.

- Are we able listen to those we disagree with and can we hear what they are really saying?
- Can we slow down and ask questions to get a better understanding of their point of view? Or do we immediately stop listening, waiting to make our rebuttal?
- Listening is not waiting to share.
- Can we use the literature to solve our problems?
- Can we really put principles above personalities? Do we think we are always right and know what is best for our group, region, committee, family members, coworkers, and any stranger that walks by?
- Are we willing to become a “we” and stop being an “I”? Do we use discussion and group conscience?
- When we see another trusted servant being treated poorly by the group, area, or region do we stand by and say nothing, avoiding controversy because it’s easier than speaking out?
- Have we been on a committee, not gotten our way, and decided to walk away, taking our toys and going home?
- Did we not understand why the vote didn’t go in our favor?
- Were we willing to see that maybe our idea was not as

good as we thought it was?

- Could we see the cons that others could see?
- Did we refer to the Nar-Anon principles in creating our proposal?

Suggestions for retaining service members:

- Offer orientation to new service members to explain how meetings are facilitated and where to find information.
- Offer study groups to review the Nar-Anon guides that describe the service positions and committees.
- Offer study groups outside the weekly meeting for traditions and concepts. The better we understand the deeper meaning of these principles, the better we are at building unity in our service boards.
- Hold a round table discussion when topics are controversial; never go straight to a vote without a well-informed discussion.
- Be willing to listen to the lone voice. The majority isn’t always right.
- Develop internal guidelines where policy doesn’t exist. Solicit input from the service body to ensure decisions are made by group conscience rather than by “governing.” When new members join the service body, remember to share the internal guidelines.
- Invite potential service members to a session/meeting to better understand whether it’s a good fit for them.
- Recognize and avoid cliques.
- Strive for unity even in disagreement. Remember, unity is not the same as unanimous.

### Encouraging new groups

I remember the struggle I went through when I started the group that is now my home group. At first it was hard for newcomers to understand that Nar-Anon is a real, world-wide organization when all they could see was me sitting in an empty room. It took time for the right newcomers to keep coming back. So, when I heard that a member had started a new Nar-Anon group, I volunteered to visit the new group once a month. An extra member or two sitting in the room helps newcomers see the potential. Sometimes the greatest service we can do for a new group is to show up for their meetings.

#### 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.



## The Sponsorship Page

- *Has someone asked you to be their sponsor but you didn't think you were qualified?*
- *Have you put off finding a sponsor because you were afraid to ask? Well you're not alone!*

This new section is designed to offer insight into that special relationship we call sponsorship. It will be an opportunity for you to share your sponsorship experiences and gain insights 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

I have heard members say that even after they have finished working the steps, they could never be a sponsor. Then someone asks them and they say "yes"! They didn't realize they could do it.

Sometimes we don't know we are prepared to be a sponsor until we are asked. A relationship flourishes with another member and it becomes an easy transition from friend to sponsor.

How we sponsor depends on the sponsee and their current circumstances. Sometimes it is a new mem-

ber who is in chaos. Sometimes it is a seasoned member who has never studied the steps. Some sponsees do not like to write; some sponsees are timid; some don't like to share; some need more time than others; some have trouble with the concept of a Higher Power.

Each sponsor approaches sponsorship in their own way. Some require service; some require phone calls; some require daily or weekly contact; some leave it up to the sponsee; some ask the sponsee how they see the relation-

ship working; some set the boundaries that worked for them; some require their sponsees to study the traditions and concepts after finishing the steps.

Sponsors certainly don't have to have all the answers, so a big part of sponsorship is listening and sharing our own experiences. Each sponsor-sponsee relationship is unique and each provides a growth opportunity for both the sponsor and the sponsee. This is the magic of sponsorship - recovery at its best!

## My Approach to Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a huge responsibility and it is not about me. It is about helping someone work their steps and their program. Hopefully, when they finish working their steps, they have found acceptance, peace, serenity, forgiveness, and understanding within the chaos of addiction.

When I am asked to become someone's sponsor, I take many things into consideration after our

initial conversation. Most important to me is establishing where they are in their program whether they are new or not. This helps me determine how to proceed. Some of the questions I ask are:

- Do you have or believe in a Higher Power?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- Are you ready to start?
- Are you willing to take direction from me?
- When are you available to meet?

It's important to me that my sponsee has confidence and trust in me. I have no rules and make no demands of my sponsees. Each works their steps at their own pace. I have the privilege of following along. I facilitate the process. I'm on board with whatever works, however it works for my sponsee.

There is no time limit, no wrong answers, and no tests.

### 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: April 20, 2020 \*\***

## World Service Committee Corner



### Outreach Committee



#### Outreach Roundtable Returns for 2020

The WS Outreach Committee quarterly roundtable was launched in January 2019. These sessions have been well attended by both U.S. and international participants. They have proven to be a great forum for strengthening connections, sharing concerns and questions, and learning from each other about outreach issues and, at times, other topics that affect the fellowship.

The roundtable is held online via a free telecommunication service. Underlying all discussion of any topic is the fostering of understanding and application of the Nar-Anon principles as they relate to that topic.

The Outreach Roundtables are continuing into 2020 and the first session was held on February 2 with a focus on Social Media. The second quarter roundtable will be held on Sunday, April 26 at 12 noon Eastern Standard Time (EST) time. Roundtable space is limited and available on a first-come basis.

Have a concern or a question? A topic to suggest? Want to join in? To sign up for the next roundtable, please email [outreach@nar-anon.org](mailto:outreach@nar-anon.org).

#### Outreach Handbook

We are pleased to present the Outreach Handbook for fellowship review and input. Per the Development and Approval Process for New Service and Outreach Literature/Materials, the Board of Trustees (BOT) will accept suggestions and comments from the fellowship for a minimum of twelve months. Please send your input to [BOT@nar-anon.org](mailto:BOT@nar-anon.org). This piece will be available for purchase in the web store and as a free download on the Service Literature page.

*Please note:* Fellowship Review or draft materials should not be posted on websites. These pieces are for review and input and have NOT received conference approval. As the first page, we have included some suggestions to help you review the document.

### Literature Committee



#### Recovery Literature Priority List

We need your experience, strength, and hope in using the tools of the Nar-Anon Program. The Recovery Literature Priority List includes a **book of miscellaneous writings**. Once enough writings are received we can create another reader similar to SESH. To contribute to this book your submission should be between 350 and 500 words, something that would fit on one page. Your writing should include text and member shares. Please do not include quotes in your submission. Send your original recovery writings along with a signed Copyright Release Form found at [www.nar-anon.org/literature-submissions](http://www.nar-anon.org/literature-submissions) to [Litcom@nar-anon.org](mailto:Litcom@nar-anon.org). Please share our request with your groups, areas, and regions. We look forward to receiving your submissions.

### Website Committee



#### Website Roundtable

The World Service Website Committee plans to host a quarterly phone call for Nar-Anon members who want to discuss the administration of Nar-Anon websites. We plan the first phone call for Saturday, April 4th, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. Eastern Time (6:00 a.m. Pacific Time). Thereafter, we propose to host a phone call on the first Saturday of each quarter (July, October, January, and April). Sessions will be limited to 60 minutes.

If you are involved with a Nar-Anon website or want to be, and you would like to join this phone call, please send an email to [WebCommittee@Nar-Anon.org](mailto:WebCommittee@Nar-Anon.org) with your name, email address, and the URL for the Nar-Anon website(s) you work with.



## Coming Events

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

### [ECC7 Nar-Anon East Coast Convention 7](#)

*On the Road to Recovery*

**March 20-22, 2020**

Wyndam Philadelphia—Bucks County

4700 Street Road

Feasterville, PA 19053

[ecc7register@gmail.com](mailto:ecc7register@gmail.com)

### [Nar-Anon World Service Conference 2020](#)

*Growth Through Service*

**May 1-4, 2020**

DoubleTree Torrance – South Bay

21333 Hawthorne Boulevard

Torrance, CA 90503

### [Nar-Anon Central California Region](#)

*2020 Narathon*

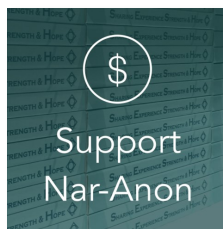
**September 20, 2020**

St. Williams Catholic Church

6410 Santa Lucia Rd,

Atascadero, CA 93422

*Save the date!*



## Appeal

Did you know *The Serenity Connection* comes to you online thanks to the generous contributions of readers like you? Each time a new issue is delivered to your inbox, the Nar-Anon World Service Office (WSO) has to pay a small amount for the service. With a subscription base of over 5000 members, these small amounts soon add up. Please help WSO keep *The Serenity Connection* coming to you by making a personal or group contribution today. Donate now by clicking on: <https://nar-anon-webstore.myshopify.com/products/donate-to-nar-anon>. Every little bit helps!

## Just for Today

Just for today, I accept that I am only able to find my own answers; it is OK.  
 Just for today, I will thank my Higher Power for the wisdom to change myself.  
 Just for today, I will remember who has the power and it's not me.  
 Just for today, I will work my steps, do my part, and experience my Higher Power's peace, presence, and strength.  
 Just for today, I will accept that it is ok for me to be at peace even if those I love are not.  
 Just for today, I will keep it humble Nar-Anon style.



**Nar-Anon Family Groups**

**Nar-Anon World Service  
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**Email: [wso@nar-anon.org](mailto:wso@nar-anon.org)**

**Phone: (310) 534-8188  
or (800) 477-6291**

### 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.

