

USSC of Narcotics Anonymous Newcomer Orientation Workshop

Approved USSCNA 3 – October 2014

Hi everyone. I would like to welcome you all to the Narcotic Anonymous Orientation Workshop presented by the _____. I'm _____, and I am an addict.

I would like to introduce the presentation panel. (Let each member announce themselves)

We will only be able to cover the most basic levels of understanding Narcotics Anonymous. At the end of this presentation we will have a question and answer period, Remember, the only dumb question, is the one not asked.

To start out with the most basic question: *“What is the Narcotics Anonymous program?”*

NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work.

There are no strings attached to NA. We are not affiliated with any other organizations. We have no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

This statement is the beginning of chapter 2 in our Basic Text. ***(Hold up the Basic Text)***

The 12 STEPS AND 12 TRADITIONS are the program of Narcotics Anonymous. As members, we have opinions and personal interpretations. Ultimately, this is the answer. We will try to present our best interpretation, primarily referencing from the fellowship approved literature of Narcotics Anonymous.

What is our message? The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom. When all is said and done, our primary purpose can only be to carry the message to the addict who still suffers because that is all we have to give. ***(Basic Text)***

How many people know what an NA meeting is? (Let participants state answers)

Statement: NA meetings are not group therapy sessions. It is where two or more addicts gather for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction. Members offer each other peer support by sharing experiences about how they manage life situations without returning to using drugs.

The following three statements are from the world service board of trustees' bulletin # 15 (1995-1996); we have copies on the back table with more details on this subject for those interested.

1. A Narcotics Anonymous meeting, whether it is open or closed is a refuge for addicts. It is intended to be a safe and beneficial place where an addict can hear about and participate in recovery from the disease of drug addiction. As much as we might like to, we cannot be all things to all people.

2. A closed meeting of Narcotics Anonymous is for those individuals who identify themselves as addicts or for those who are uncertain and think they might have a drug problem. A closed Narcotics Anonymous meeting provides a freedom that is necessary for more personal and intimate sharing by Narcotics Anonymous members. It does so by providing an atmosphere in which addicts can feel more certain that those attending will be able to identify with them, and share their own experience, strength, and hope.

3. An open meeting is an NA meeting that may be attended by anyone (i.e., judges, probation officers, professionals, family members) interested in how we have found recovery from the disease of addiction. Verbal participation, however, is limited to NA members only. An open meeting of Narcotics Anonymous allows people from outside of the fellowship to observe what Narcotics Anonymous is and how it functions. This can be very helpful to those individuals who are striving to reach a decision regarding their personal status as an addict. An open meeting of Narcotics Anonymous is one method our groups use to achieve their primary purpose of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. Some groups also have open meetings as a way of allowing non-addict friends and relatives of NA members to celebrate recovery anniversaries with them.

Home Groups:

As far as the format of a meeting, the home group members decide what that will be based on the 4th Tradition *"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole,"* and the 5th Tradition *"Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry the message to the addict who still suffers."* Some examples of meeting types are but not limited to speaker, discussion, and literature study, etc. Each meeting or home group decides this at its internal business meetings. This leads to why members join a home group – to have a voice.

The selection of a home group is strongly recommended; it is a personal choice and is usually the meeting that an addict may feel the most comfortable and safe when they are there. This is critical in feeling a "part of".

Membership in Narcotics Anonymous:

This is answered in Tradition 3 *“The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.”* This can have many different views and opinions; here is a view from the Basic Text. Membership in Narcotics Anonymous is not automatic when someone walks in the door or when the newcomer decides to stop using. The decision to become a part of our Fellowship rests with the individual. Any addict who has a desire to stop using can become a member of NA. We are addicts, and our problem is addiction.

The choice of membership rests with the individual. We feel that the ideal state for our Fellowship exists when addicts can come freely and openly to an NA meeting, whenever and wherever they choose, and leave just as freely. We realize that recovery is a reality and that life without drugs is better than we ever imagined. We open our doors to other addicts, hoping that they can find what we have found. But we know that only those who have a desire to stop using and want what we have to offer will join us in our way of life. A second view from *“It Works How and Why” (hold it up)* says *“Tradition Three spells freedom for the members of NA. It sets the sole requirement for membership in the heart of each individual member. We don’t have to expend time and energy on deciding who should stay or who we should help. Instead, we are free to extend loving assistance to anyone who walks into a meeting desiring freedom from addiction.*

Group readings:

They are read at the meetings depending on how the home group members set up their meeting format. We read *“What is the NA Program”* earlier. The other standard readings are: *“Who Is an Addict”, “Why Are We Here”, “How It Works”, “The Twelve Traditions of NA”, “Just for Today”,* and *“We Do Recover”*. These are read at the meetings to help produce an atmosphere of recovery and help find the similarities between us as addicts seeking recovery from the chaos that was our lives before we came to NA.

Complete abstinence:

NA is a program of complete abstinence, and members refer to time (days, weeks, months, years) without using drugs as “clean time.” Since Narcotics Anonymous is an abstinence-based recovery program, addicts who are taking drug replacement medication are not considered clean. These addicts are encouraged and welcome to attend NA meetings; however, they are asked to listen rather than share at meetings, and it is suggested they talk to members on a break, before or after a meeting. Meetings that follow this format do so to preserve the atmosphere of recovery. For members who have a need to take prescribed medication for medical or mental health issues, we suggest reading the booklet *“In Times of Illness”*. **(Hold it up)** This piece provides helpful, experience-based information regarding medication and illness, and outlines the idea that the decision to take medication is left to the member, physician, and sponsor. This pamphlet was written to help members who have achieved total abstinence from drugs and are faced with a need to take medication. Unfortunately, our members often voice their own opinions about the use of medication even though NA has no opinion. Although this

may be a disconcerting issue for professionals, it can be equally as confusing to many members. Typically, members of NA make a distinction between drug replacement medication and medication that a person needs to take once they are completely abstinent from drugs. **The world service board of trustees bulletin #29 (1996), has more details on this subject, we have supplied copies of the bulletin on the literature table for those interested.**

Clarity statement – Member introduction:

At NA meetings we introduce ourselves as addicts. When our members identify themselves as “addicts and alcoholics” or talk about living “clean and sober” the clarity of the NA message is blurred. To speak in this manner suggests that there are two diseases, that somehow one drug is separate from the rest, requiring special recognition. Our identification as “addicts” is all inclusive referring to the disease of addiction, allowing us to concentrate on our similarities not our differences.

Newcomers:

NA meetings will ask if there are any newcomers in their first thirty days of clean time or attending their first NA meeting. The primary purpose of meetings is to carry the message of recovery, the identification of newcomers help the members know who to reach out to. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. *(Basic Text)* Another view as a newcomer; we came to our first NA meeting in defeat and didn't know what to expect. After sitting in a meeting, or several meetings, we began to feel that people cared and were willing to help. Although our minds told us that we would never make it, the people in the fellowship gave us hope by insisting that we could recover. We found that no matter what our past thoughts or actions were, others had felt and done the same. Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realized that we were not alone anymore. Recovery is what happens in our meetings. Our lives are at stake. We found that by putting recovery first, the program works. We faced three disturbing realizations:

1. We are powerless over addiction and our lives are unmanageable:
2. Although we are not responsible for our disease, we are responsible for our recovery:
3. We can no longer blame people, places and things for our addiction. We must face our problems and our feelings.

7th Tradition:

“Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions”

Many of us think of the Seventh Tradition as the money tradition. While we have come to associate this tradition of self-support with the funds we contribute, the spirit of the Seventh Tradition goes much farther than that. Whatever a group needs to fulfill its primary purpose should be provided by the group itself. The question then is what does a group need? First and foremost, it needs a message to carry—and that, it already has. In the course of its evolution, the group has attracted members who've proven to one another that an addict, any addict, can

stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Without that message, the group has no reason to exist; with it, an NA group needs little more. Beyond that, the needs of the group are simple. Groups need to rent meeting places where their members can gather and where newcomers can find them. Most groups find it important to buy NA literature which they make available at their meetings. The expenses associated with these things may be substantial, yet most groups can meet such expenses by passing the basket.

To fulfill its purpose, the group also needs some things that don't cost a penny. A group needs someone to open its meeting room, set up the chairs, and prepare the literature table. In some groups, a member offers to prepare refreshments, helping establish a hospitable environment for the newcomer. Most importantly, a group needs the consistent commitment of its members to show up and take part in its meetings. Upon that commitment rests the group's stability; without it, no group can survive long. From the commitment of its members, the group also draws its ability to carry our recovery message. Group service and active group membership are two vital contributions to group self-support, contributions that don't cost any money at all.

NA related announcements:

When a meeting has announcements they are generally done by the GSR (Group Service Representative). Sometimes other members might announce an activity or event that they have information about. The key point is that the only type of announcements that are allowed as per the traditions are NA based only; public or private events are not permitted.

Behavior Statement:

Since most groups are not directly connected with each other, we might think that whatever happens in our meetings has no effect on anyone else. When we consider who is affected by our group, we have to look at other groups, the addict yet to come, the newcomer, and the neighborhood in which we hold our meetings. We have an effect on other groups or NA as a whole if we're not recognizable as an NA meeting. It helps to remember what we needed to hear when we were new: hope for recovery from drug addiction. Addicts first coming to NA often look closely for differences, hoping that somehow they won't fit in. It's not difficult to alienate an addict. It's important to think about the message we send to newcomers in our meetings. Thoughtful consideration of our primary purpose may help ensure that meetings will be available for those addicts yet to come. It's also important to consider how we're viewed by society. When NA meetings first began in many places, it was illegal for addicts to meet under any circumstances. Even where meetings are legal, the public often views groups of addicts with alarm. Until NA has established a good public reputation, it may be difficult for addicts to find meeting places. If our behavior as NA members is still destructive and selfish, we will once again have difficulty meeting openly. We help protect our reputation as a fellowship when we use our meeting facilities with respect, keeping them clean and in good repair. We should take care to act like good neighbors, conducting ourselves respectfully. Even something as simple as the name a group chooses may reflect on NA as a whole. If the public reputation of Narcotics Anonymous is somehow impaired, addicts may die. *(It Works How and Why)*

Anonymity:

Defined as, the act of remaining anonymous or nameless outside the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. We ask that you protect our individual right to remain nameless outside the rooms. *Ask the group if they all understand this principle* – answer any questions.

Remember what you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.

Sharing:

Clear message - sharing the specific details (false pride) has no place in the spiritual program of Narcotics Anonymous, in NA meetings we share in a general way our life experience of being clean in recovery. We deal with every aspect of our addiction, not just its most obvious symptom: our uncontrollable drug use. The aspects of our disease are numerous. By practicing this program, we each discover the ways in which our addiction affects us personally. Regardless of the individual effects of addiction on our lives, all of us share some common characteristics although we may have used different substances. Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the still suffering addict. That one purpose, clear and powerful, stands alone in our collective consciousness as the only thing that really matters. With that, all is possible, and miracles happen.

Staying on topic – The chairperson will introduce a basic topic; however they may include an open topic type statement. You can always talk to the chairperson before and ask them to cover a specific topic (remember asking doesn't mean that they will) or better yet chair the meeting if allowed (home group rules). If you don't have the opportunity to share for whatever reason, feel free to get with another addict after the meeting.

Experience, Strength and Hope –share your experience strength and hope.

Don't tell people what you think they should do, share your own experiences and how you got through it without using. This shows by example that an addict can walk through lives ups and down without the need to use, by example we teach.

Things not to do in an NA meeting;

- Crosstalk – Direct conversation (one to one during meeting)
Whispering continuously with your neighbor (shows disrespect for who is sharing)
- Getting up while someone is sharing (sends the message they don't matter)
Wait till there done if you need to get up
- Disruptive behavior/violence, both verbal and physical, will not be tolerated.
If you are the cause of the disruption, learn from the experience and keep coming back
- Unattended children – the ultimate responsibility rests with the parent (program teaches us to be responsible)
- Cell phones – The job of the disease of addiction is to make everything else a priority and minimize the art or gift of listening. Turning your phone completely off before

coming to the meeting and not touching it until the meeting is over demonstrates respect for recovery, the meeting, and the other people in the meeting and for yourself.

- Not sharing if you have arrived too late to hear the topic. If you have a burning desire to share, please, get with someone after the meeting. Arrive early or on time.
- Don't disrespect the home group. If it is suggested that a person share for 3 to 5 minutes, please limit yourself. – EGO (edging god out) we do not have all the answers.
- Pets – Service animals (YES), others as home group decides (respect group conscience), local laws
- Late arrival (hugs during meeting) – don't showcase the meeting by hugging the important people all over the room. Sneak in we all know how to be quiet and sneaking
- Don't share twice – If you think of something from someone else sharing, go talk to who you think would benefit from your Strength Experience & Hope after the meeting (it might just be what their Higher Power needs them to hear)

How It Works:

WORK THE STEPS

Recovery is ultimately found in each member's personal experience with working the steps... In fact, in our fellowship, a sponsor is considered, first and foremost, a guide through the Twelve Steps. If you haven't yet asked someone to sponsor you, please do so before beginning these steps.

Merely reading all the available information about any of the Twelve Steps will never be sufficient to bring about a true change in our lives and freedom from our disease. It's our goal to make the steps part of who we are. To do that, we have to work them.

SPONSORSHIP

Though we are sure to be helped by the sharing we hear at meetings, we need to find a sponsor to help us in our recovery. Beginning with the first step, a sponsor can share with us his or her own experience with the steps. Listening to our sponsor's experience and applying it to our own lives is how we take advantage of one of the most beautiful and practical aspects of recovery: the therapeutic value of one addict helping another. We hear in our meetings that "I can't, but we can." Actively working with a sponsor will give us some first-hand experience with this. Through our developing relationship with our sponsor, we learn about the principle of trust. By following the suggestions of our sponsor instead of only our own ideas, we learn the principles of open-mindedness and willingness. Our sponsor will help us work the steps of recovery.

SUPPORT GROUP

We are united by our common problem of addiction. By meeting, talking and helping other addicts, we are able to stay clean.

After coming to NA, we found ourselves among a very special group of people who have suffered like us and found recovery. In their experiences, freely shared, we found hope for ourselves. If the program worked for them, it would work for us.

SERVICE

Another tool for the newcomer is involvement with the fellowship. As we become involved we learn to keep the program first and take it easy in other matters. We begin by asking for help and trying out the recommendations of people at the meetings. It is beneficial to allow others in the group to help us. In time, we will be able to pass on what we have been given. We learn that service to others will get us out of ourselves. Our work can begin with simple actions: emptying ashtrays, making coffee, cleaning up, setting up for a meeting, opening the door, chairing a meeting, and passing out literature. Doing these things helps us feel a part of the Fellowship.

Higher Power;

We come from various walks of life and experiences, so it is natural that we bring with us different concepts of spirituality. In NA, no one is forced to believe any set ideas. Each of us can believe in anything in which we want to believe. This is a spiritual program, not a religion. Individually, we cultivate our own beliefs about a power greater than we are. No matter what we understand this power to be, help is available to us all.

NA Literature; (have all four books on the podium, to hold up)

- Basic Text – This is the program
- Step Working Guide – Where we learn who we are, who we want to be & how we can get there
- It Works: How and Why – This program works, here's how it works and why it works
- Just For Today –Daily Meditations – daily meditation to give us a positive aspect for the day!
- Information Pamphlets – we have them on the literature table (point at the literature)
- Little White Book – in front of you

Closing Comments and Suggestions:

What NA is not: NA is not a religious movement, unemployment agency or a social service organization. We have no paid social workers. NA does not prescribe or pay for treatment for addicts, does not run hospitals, recovery houses, or any other outside enterprises. Narcotics Anonymous is here to help any addict who wants to stop using.

Here are some of the tools that have worked for us:

- Attend meetings regularly (1 meeting a day for the first 90 days)
- Announce yourself as a newcomer the first thirty days when you attend meetings
- Read NA literature every day
- Get a sponsor
- Work the 12 steps (in written form-not in your mind)
- Get phone numbers of addicts with clean time and use them (before you use). Most meetings will provide a meeting schedule with the phone numbers of members willing to accept your call to talk, remember if the first number doesn't answer go down the list (we wouldn't stop at the first number looking for a fix) Also it is strongly suggested that women call women and men call men.
- Find a place to be of service to Narcotics Anonymous
- Remember to announce yourself as an addict *only*
- Most importantly: Keep Coming Back!

Question and Answer Period

A good way to start the Q&A is to explain why we introduce ourselves as addict

Close with the Serenity Prayer;

Most meeting close with the serenity prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.