

Newsletter of the Nar-Anon Family Groups'



THE SERENITY CONNECTION



News from Poland!

Nar-Anon groups grow in Poland. Participants began their work steps and have great enthusiasm for the program. One of the difficulties is that there are no members who know how to work on steps in Polish. We are translating literature into Polish. If you want to know more about Nar-Anon in Poland, please e-mail naranonntp1@gmail.com.

Kaśka

Nar-Anon International Websites*



- [Argentina Region](#)
- [Australia Region](#)
- [Brazil Region](#)
- Canada
 - [BC Region](#)
 - [Ontario Region](#)
- [Colombia Region](#)
- [Denmark Region](#)
- [France Region](#)
- [Germany Region](#)
- [Israel Region](#)
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- [Netherlands Region](#)
- [Russia National](#)
- [Moscow Region](#)
- [South Africa Region](#)
- [Sweden Region](#)
- [Switzerland Region](#)
- [UK Region](#)
- [Uruguay Region](#)

* Nar-Anon World Service Office does not maintain these sites, and is not responsible for any errors or omissions on their part.

Where did you get that picture?*

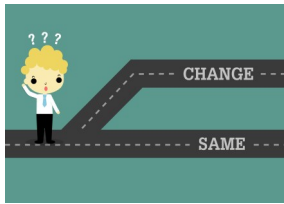
Many groups, areas, regions, nations, and our world organization have websites. We want them to be bright and attractive. What better way to get people's attention than adding a few beautiful pictures. However, do you know where that picture came from? Do you have the right to use that picture on your website? Copying pictures from others, including websites, is no different than copying words from famous people - both raise questions about copyright and plagiarism. Our websites should be consistent with Traditions Seven and Ten.

* This also applies to all print media including event fliers, meeting announcements, local brochures, newsletters, etc.

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Relinquishing the Steering Wheel

When my brilliant third son stood in front of me and asked me to love him despite what he was about to tell me, never did I think he would tell me he was an addict. My world as I knew it seconds before ceased to exist. I could not even comprehend what he was saying.

As I stood there completely numb and in disbelief, my mind tried to piece together the puzzle that I had tried unsuccessfully to force into place for over two years. He never wanted to come home anymore; he pulled away from his brothers; he hid his grades from college; he rarely answered when I called; he slept all the time; he never had enough money. And then, as the puzzle pieces slid into place, I thought, "Where was I? How did I NOT see this?"

I immediately took control. You are going to rehab tomorrow. You will get help. You will be fine. You will go back to school next semester. No one needs to know any of this. I can handle this; I WILL handle this. The counsellors suggested I go to a sup-

port group. Why, I thought? I'm not the one who needs help. He is. Just fix him and we will be fine.

Seven months later, while still in rehab, he relapsed, and I was so angry - angry at the rehab for letting it happen, angry at him for not loving me enough to not use, angry at God for not following the plan I laid out for Him to fix this. Relapse was NOT in the plan!



It wasn't until 6 weeks after the relapse that I could even bring myself to speak to my son again. And when I did, he told me something I never thought I needed to hear: "You need to get help, Mom; I can't fix both of us." Still not believing I was broken,

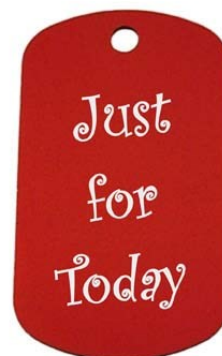
but willing to do anything for my son, I drove to the closest Nar-Anon meeting I could find.- one hour and 15 minutes away. I thought I'd go just long enough to see what others had done that worked for their addict. Slowly, I realized I wasn't there to fix my addicted son, I was there to fix myself. It took a few meetings before I was able to share my story and when I did, the tears didn't stop. What I found was unconditional love. No judgement. No blame. This group offered their hearts and their phone numbers for me to call at will.

I learned through Nar-Anon that I control N-O-T-H-I-N-G! Never have; never will. What peace I felt when I finally gave the steering wheel over to God and asked Him to take control, and to do it HIS way this time! Now, I rest in the passenger seat while He drives.

I have taken the lessons I learned from Nar-Anon into all aspects of my life. My son told me he was proud of me and that I had changed. I guess not being responsible for everything will do that for you.

Just for Today

- Just for today*, I will sit quietly and read a good book.
- Just for today*, I will mind my own business.
- Just for today*, I will take a walk and enjoy the scenery.
- Just for today*, when I am feeling sad and lonely, I will pick up the phone, call my sponsor, read my literature, and go to a meeting.
- Just for today*, I will take care of me! This day is all mine.



Just for today I will not criticize one bit, not find fault with anything (including myself), and not try to improve or regulate anyone, but myself.

SESH, February 5

Our Members Share

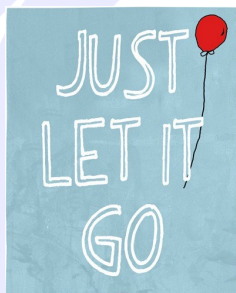


Turn it over

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

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

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



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

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

It was HARD. Keeping my mouth shut, not trying to control her life, not jumping in to fix things. Wow! My life got better, I felt more serenity, and she did okay. I’m still far from perfect, but I am improving. And my definition of being a man? Today I believe it means taking full responsibility for the things under my control. I’ve stopped blaming others for my actions and thoughts.

Today, I am grateful for things I used to take for granted: food, a home to live in, a car to drive, and friends. I have learned I can take something I am responsible for and turn it over to my Higher Power

SESH, April 5

The truth hurts ... and heals

I hate being lied to, and when I found out my son was an addict, I was crushed. He had lied to me. But I also realized I had been lying to myself for a long time. I knew about his previous drug issues but never addressed them.

I came to Nar-Anon clueless about the program. As I read the twelve steps, I arrogantly thought I was way ahead of everyone else. I saw no problem with Steps One to Three. Then Step Four reared its ugly head.

In learning to be honest with myself, about myself, I realized I had a number of things I could list in my moral inventory - some good, some not so good. One of them was while I may hate being lied to, I am pretty good at lying to myself.

Admitting the truth hurt. It also started a healing process for me. In Nar-Anon I found an amazing group of friends who would listen and not judge. They allowed me to find my way. No lies are needed in a Nar-Anon room. It’s time to heal. I hope my son is healing too; I know I am.



Thought for Today: Step Four is the first of the Twelve Steps that asks us to take action. We are asked to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. We may find ourselves adding to this list over time, especially as we open ourselves up to the truth. Lies hurt. Truth heals.

Some of what I need is to believe in and practice determination, honesty with myself, and open-mindedness. Other tools will follow in due time.

SESH, February 19



Our Members Share

My Glass is Half Full

The disease of addiction had changed my life's narrative abruptly, leaving me disoriented and anxious. I desperately needed help and my options were to see a therapist or join a support group or both. I decided to visit one of the many Nar-Anon gatherings for families of addicts in my new town.

Knowing my dislike of meetings with more than one person, I sat facing the door the first time I attended in case I had to negotiate an early exit. But there was something compelling about the experience and I sat riveted through the entire hour. Everyone spoke with such trust and candor, as if no one doubted that this was a true meeting of hearts where empathy and compassion reigned.

But my anxiety turned to fear nevertheless, for what the members shared either pointed to chronic disease, inevitable relapse, or even death of their loved ones. All I could hear at the time was everyone else's drama and problems, nothing that addressed what I considered my immediate issues.



My initial impression was that my support group unburdened itself, gave me hugs and told me to keep coming back. I did not get the advice I expected to receive, nor the answers to the questions I thought I could ask on the spot.

However, I felt better, comforted by the welcoming and warm embrace of those present. I needed love, affection, and understanding. But something was missing, and I left puzzled by the procedure, feeling that my glass was half empty. It was empty of specifics, empty of all the cross-talk that was not allowed, of all the useful and lively discussions I thought these brave members were capable of, empty of the missed opportunities for a more direct and normal discussion. How were formal rules of conversation, traditions, and principles going to restore my life and make me whole again?

I am glad I went back. I was frustrated, but fortunate to have found a place for fellowship. And I guess my glass had empty space for a reason. Space was what I really needed at that point, I just didn't know it yet. There was room left in my glass for me to acquire the knowledge accumulated by Nar-Anon members over the years. I had the chance to discover on my own the common thread of our collective situation, to let the wisdom of "keep-coming-back" and the passage of time to work their magic. I needed the time to learn by listening with heart and mind, and to appreciate the value of real experience contained in every individual share, time to witness and

be inspired by the courage and gains of others confronting the same insanity, and how to be transformed by the pain that comes from loving the addict(s) in our lives.

Before I knew it, my glass was half full. It was full of a network of new dependable companions for regular face to face sitting in a circle, praying together, blessing one another, becoming part of each other's journey. I soon started to fill the other half of my glass with a new narrative controlled by me, to entertain a new hunger to enjoy the plenty that already existed in my life once I redirected my focus away from what I couldn't change.

A year later, my glass still has lots of space, space for more growth, for continuous and conscious evolution. I know the value of looking inward with honesty and fearlessness. I am just getting acquainted with newly exposed aspects of myself that are hard to accept. My glass may never be truly full. Such are the vagaries of living with a disease that can be arrested but not cured.

Perhaps my glass should remain half full as a reminder, every time I recognize my old fearful self in newcomers, to resist the urge to fill the void in their glass with my own knowledge and lessons. Just as I did, they deserve the chance to make their own choices, discover the truth behind their own behavior, go from a sense of loss to a sense of abundance. And they need to keep coming back. Because it works if you work it. Don't be alone...

Our Members Share



There is Someone in Nar-Anon I Don't Like

There is a member in my home group I don't like. They seem to be the representative for Nar-Anon. Nobody's pain is as great as theirs and they know everything. The member can answer every question off the top of their head without going to the principles to help show where their opinion comes from. They can get the entire room to vote in their favor without giving much thought to how this affects the group or the fellowship. They tweak the literature, changing the gender of the readings and interpret the principles to fit their opinion. I am sad for that person, sad that their pain is so great.

After a searching and fearless moral inventory, I learned to accept this member. They were wherever they were at the time. I learned to detest them a little less and less, and as time

went on, I learned that I could lay the preverbal bat down and stop the mental beatings.

Slowly the person began to change. They got quiet and did more listening than talking. They no longer had all the immediate answers. They learned that pain is every bit as important to each and every one of us. They could accept when someone else's addict was a child, spouse, friend, or grandchild and no longer had to start the justification argument. They didn't have to change the gender of the readings. They no longer wanted to change Nar-Anon to make it better, and they discovered why Twelve Step fellowships are successful for so many addicts, alcoholics, family members, gamblers, and overeaters around the world. The programs are for those who want them, not for those who need them. Many may need a Twelve

Step program but it only works for those who want it just as it is, not those trying to change it to measure up to something else.

That member sits in my chair and lives between my ears. Looking back, I didn't like myself, but at that time I used a lot of justification and rationalization for my feelings, just as I did to "save" the addict. I did some things I am not proud of. My first sponsor reminded me that I did what I did at the time, but now that I know better, I can do better. Today I can forgive the old me and look back and remember where I came from. By continuing to work the steps, apply the traditions, study the concepts, and meet with my sponsor, I can keep that member I don't like from coming back to the meeting. That person is still in the room but I don't need to slip back into my old ways.

Appeal

Do you know Nar-Anon has bills and expenses? Groups have expenses and so do the areas, regions, and services at the world level.

Concept Two: The final responsibility and authority for Nar-Anon services rests with the Nar-Anon Family Groups.

Each level of service is dependent on group contributions. No level of service should exist by supporting itself through fundraising efforts. If the groups choose not to provide support,

then they have expressed their authority and responsibility. The survival of Nar-Anon as a whole is dependent upon the groups' responsibility to purchase literature, make donations, and serve beyond the group level.

Often the desires of our members exceed our resources. Service members volunteer time and writings for our literature, and groups provide financial support through their donations. All of these are important resources. If our fellowship wants a new piece of literature, they must be willing to con-

tribute to the project.

If the fellowship wants a new service, they must be willing to financially support it and contribute service members to carry out the tasks. We cannot assume there is an endless source of money and members. Nar-Anon members cannot take money and donated items from outside entities to fulfill our needs as it contradicts our Third Tradition.



[Continued on Page 6...](#)



Our Members Share

Did I Forget Where I Came From?

At conferences and other service events, I have heard members say “Did you forget where you came from?” when changes are proposed to help address group issues. Even if the sentiment is not directed at me, I find this offensive and inventory taking. It would be like me saying “Are you stuck where you came from?” Every group has issues to deal with and by defining the problems and using the group conscience we can come to solutions. We don’t come to solutions when we are unwilling to listen to each other and choose to stay right where we are. Just because our group always did something a particular way doesn’t mean we should continue the practice.

Allowing our meeting topic to focus on the newcomer every week doesn’t allow members to grow. Newcomers can learn from all of our topics. When we stop and allow them to take up the entire meeting telling us all about their situation and what the addict in their lives has done, we do a disservice to everyone in the room. Are we so eager to get the newcomer to stay and have our meeting grow that we can’t see how this practice changes the focus of the group? If our meeting isn’t growing and we don’t retain a portion of newcomers, then we might want to look at our group practices.

I went to a meeting that put the spotlight on the newcomer every time there was one in the meeting. More often than



not, they didn’t come back. I often wonder if it was because we allowed them to dump all their troubles and they were later embarrassed. When I first attended this meeting, the topic that night was detachment. I listened carefully, not fully understanding how to do this detaching thing. There were only eight people at that meeting. They didn’t put the focus on me because I was new, they kept to the original topic. After the meeting I spoke to a seasoned member and she offered me more on the topic and told me to keep coming back.

Somewhere along the way the meeting grew but the focus changed to retaining the newcomer. All the meetings became about their stories. “Tell us why you’re here.” “Do you want to share?” Next thing you know we were listening to a new person share for 15 minutes or more every week. We heard about the addict’s drug of choice, dope dealer, how much the bond was, what university he was failing out of, the grandchildren were being taken away, and many more details including the names of the addicts. Did I forget where I came from? No, because I came from a healthy meeting. When things start to stray off course we should evaluate and be willing to listen. We all come from different meetings with different group issues. Not every meeting is just like mine, yours, or ours. By applying Tradition One, keeping an open mind, and working for solutions, we never forget where we came from.

...continued from page 5.

Appeal

The use of group funds can be a sore spot. Does your group have excessive funds? Does your group understand the need to move those funds to the next levels of service? Is your group willing to prioritize its wants and needs? Does your group use funds for things that are not related to Nar-Anon? Some groups have used funds to provide care packages for addicts. How does this conflict with Concept Eleven: “Nar-Anon funds are used to further our primary purpose to carry the message, and must be managed re-

sponsibly”? Has your group ever discussed the use of the funds within Nar-Anon principles? If not, please encourage a discussion about how funds should and should not be used during your next business meeting. The more we share, the more we all benefit.



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

Committee Corner

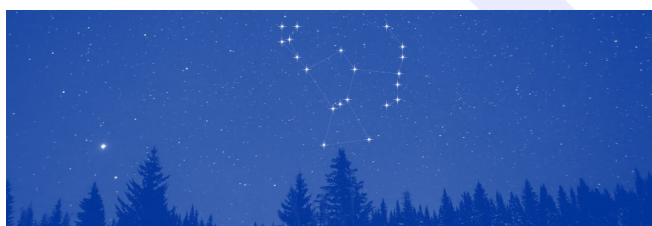


Website Committee



Does your group, area, or region have a website? Would your service committee like to start a website, or do you already have a website that you want added to the Other Sites page on the Nar-Anon World Service website (<https://www.nar-anon.org/other-sites>)? If so, here's what you can do to get started:

1. Download a copy of the *World Service Website Handbook* from the Service Literature page: <https://www.nar-anon.org/service-literature/>. This handbook has suggestions for starting a website.
2. Make changes to your website as suggested by the *Handbook*. In order to be added to the Other Sites page, websites need to be especially careful with CAL or other copyrighted or trademarked property, members' anonymity, and references to outside organizations, so that they adhere to the principles of our program.
3. When all of your updates are complete, go to the Site Registration page on the World Service Website and send a request to the World Service Website Committee (WSWC) <https://www.nar-anon.org/site-registration>.
4. Then patiently wait for a response from the WSWC!



Members' Wisdom...

Nar-Anon gives me the tools to deal with whatever lies ahead. It is a crazy ride but there is laughter, joy, and hope. I am not afraid of facing tomorrow, whether or not the addict in my life is in recovery.

SESH, December 26

To receive a smile, a hug, a shared laugh "just because" is a gift, truly a gift from the heart with no price tag attached.

SESH, January 26

Outreach Committee



Public Outreach PowerPoint Presentation Available for Download!

A Nar-Anon Public Outreach PowerPoint presentation is now available on the Outreach page of the Nar-Anon Family Groups website <https://www.nar-anon.org/outreach/>. The presentation is designed to provide an overview of our program and to explore the following questions:

- What is Nar-Anon?
- Do you need Nar-Anon?
- How can Nar-Anon help me?
- I'm not the addict, why do I need Nar-Anon?
- What will I find at Nar-Anon?
- What can I expect if I keep going to meetings?
- Is there a program for my children?
- How do I find a meeting?

Two versions of the presentation are available for download. Each version includes the Twenty Questions and differs only in how the Twenty Questions are presented. Version 1 includes the full text and is suggested for continuous-loop presentation (e.g., on a laptop or other device in an outreach booth). Version 2 includes an image of the Twenty Questions and is suggested for use at member-led presentations to groups (e.g., treatment center family day, gatherings of mental health professionals, law enforcement community, and/or the clergy). Copies of Twenty Questions can be distributed and read/reviewed with attendees.

The presentation was well received in previews at the 2017 East Coast Convention in Dedham, MA, the 2018 Georgia Region Convention in Jekyll Island, GA, and the 2018 World Convention in Orlando. We are very happy to announce its availability for use by the fellowship. If you have feedback, questions, or need help with how to use it, please email outreach@nar-anon.org.

Newsletter Submissions

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



Coming Events

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

Bridge to Serenity XIV
14th Annual Eastern PA Region
Convention

March 8-10, 2019
Tools for Survival
 Wyndham Philadelphia
 4700 E Street Road
 Feasterville-Treose, PA 19053
 Lynn lynnizzi727@gmail.com
www.naranonepa.org/convention

Speaker Night / The Simi Valley
Nar-Anon Family Groups 12 Step
Workshop

March 16, 2019
 United Methodist Church
 2394 Erringer Road
 Simi Valley, CA 93065
 John 805-630-0779 or
jcm16huskie@gmail.com

4to. Aniversario del Grupo de
Familia Nar-Anon

16 de Marzo
 John S. Simms Park
 16614 S. Clark Avenue
 Bellflower CA 90706

Georgia Region Nar-Anon
Convention VIII

March 22-23, 2019
 Macon Marriott City Centre
 240 Coliseum Drive
 Macon, GA 31217
 Bonnie 706-713-0054 or
wsbs1989@comcast.net
www.naranonga.com

2019 New England Region
Nar-Anon Convention

April 5-7, 2019
A Light in the Storm
 Sturbridge Host Hotel & Confer-
 ence Center
 366 Main Street
 Sturbridge, MA 01566
 Eileen 860-919-3150 or
exbrooklyn@comcast.net
www.naranonctma.org

Nar-Anon @ FRCNA
July 6-7, 2019

Rosen Center
 Orlando, FL
Save the Date!

Hope exists even in the deepest valleys and caverns of despair. Its light guides me to higher ground. When I keep myself open to change, change happens. Slowly, a new person emerges and change is taking place.

SESH, June 8



Tips for Maintaining and Growing Your Group*

- Inform doctors, social workers, clergy, and others in your community - who have occasion to counsel families of drug abusers.
- Read through the *Suggested Meeting Format* for general tips, including covering group expenses and gathering contributions.
- If you ever have any problems or questions within the group, you can always reach out to Nar-Anon WSO, by emailing them at wso@nar-anon.org, or calling 800.477.6291.

* from "Starting a Group" <https://www.nar-anon.org/starting-a-group>

Nar-Anon Family Groups'

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