

sonoma county



presents

VOICE OF RECOVERY

Spiritual not Religious

WINTER 2022

I'm an addict, and a retread. What the predecessors used to call a "Come Backer," a term no longer popular for obvious reasons. I was clean for over a decade as a young person. I relapsed, innocently enough, on cannabis. After all, it's non-addictive-- right? Regardless, after 21 years of drug and alcohol abuse, with another brief period of abstinence in the midst, I found myself again, desperate to get clean. However, at consideration of Steps 2 & 3, I became bitter, hostile and intolerant. My belief in any kind of GOD figure was sorely strained. "Trust" that I would be cared for by such figure was nonexistent. I remain grateful for the patience of my Sponsor. With their guidance, and my willingness, I found within the pages of our NA literature a passage that reads, "Many of us use spiritual principles as a power greater than ourselves." No capital letters. No deification. And, quite significantly, it read "MANY OF US." Clearly, I was Not Alone. I continued step-work with my sponsor and frequent meeting attendance and was willing to be of service at meeting level, usually.

Often still struggling with open mindedness, I was able to overcome a great deal of my resistance to some of the common terminology I hear used within our Fellowship. Words like God, Faith, Blessed, Moral, Forgiveness, etc... All the while, thankful for my continued willingness to stay clean. Finally, after more than 24 consecutive months between me and my last drug use, I admitted to myself that I couldn't have done that alone. Nor could I have done it solely with the support of my peers. That there must be Something Greater. I continued to be of service to others. Most importantly, I was welcoming to the newcomer while trying to be conscious of the addict that, like myself, was here seeking recovery. I began to Trust and Believe that the Devine is in that which I provide. Willingness and opportunity allowed me to expand my service to others outside of NA, into the community of which I am also a part. Blessedly, in a way helpful to many that also suffer drug addiction, some of whom I am familiar with. I am never there to promote my beliefs or represent NA. Only to set an example, to be willing to share my experience if asked, and ALWAYS to be compassionate, non-judgmental and welcoming.

It's been well over 7 years, at the writing of this summary, since my sincere admission of powerlessness. I still don't have a deep understanding of "God", or a set of religious beliefs. I believe in a Devine Intelligence and I believe in physicists. I've come to trust that, if I look to my own Heart, with Humility and Patience, awaiting Clarity, this Devine Intelligence will allow me a useful, meaningful, and even a happy life. And I have no doubt that others in NA will always be there, willing and ready to grow alongside me.

***I'm thankful for the sorrow,
that brought me to my knee
For the beauty of the moral,
within would never be
Without the truth of yesterday,
made plain for me to see
I could never find the way,
myself may be set free***

-Anonymous

Start out in any way you like.
And then having removed the veil from your eyes.
See how far your vision truly stretches.
We measure eternity with such sight.
Peel back the night and catch the dawn still sleeping.
Then steal a kiss to keep our souls from drowning in Aegis cloth
And less you grow slipshod bolting in terror.
Pray such judgment holds as freedoms glue.
And let last breath be gone.
As infant eyes open.

Brandon G.



SERVICE:

AS I HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH MEN AND WOMEN IN TREATMENT, IN RECOVERY, AND IN FACILITIES OF INCARCERATION, ONE THING I HAVE LEARNED IS WE CAN ONLY GIVE OUR BEST IF WE HAVE A FOUNDATION OF PERSONAL RECOVERY AND A HEALTHY WHOLESOME LIFESTYLE TO DRAW FROM..

IT'S ALL ABOUT HAVING A BALANCE AND A SOURCE OF HEALTHY ENERGY, ESPECIALLY IN EARLY RECOVERY..

WE HAVE TO HAVE A FUNDAMENTAL BLUEPRINT OF SELF-CARE..

THIS IS IT:

from "The Path of Spiritual Boxing and Recovery" program

The Fundamental Blueprint of Self Care

The Fundamental Blueprint of Self Care:

Proper hydration, proper nutrition, regular exercise, good sleep, healthy relationships, and sense of purpose.

When all these elements are in place it gives us the ability to be self-resourced, self-regulating and when needed, self-soothing.

Without this fundamental blueprint in place, we are often depleted and without reserve and it decreases our bandwidth for healthy interaction.

When the energy is off, the mind and the spirit are impacted and sometimes we don't even notice it except we feel exhausted.

[especially in this modern digital world]

If this cycle of depletion is not examined and corrected it creates a condition called "submerged trauma" and exhaustion.

This is due to the central nervous system never relaxing and the chi never getting a full recharge. It can turn into depression and a feeling of hopelessness because one doesn't see it outright as it is a long-term slow depletion

Exercise, nutrition, and meditation are key elements in our emotional health and spiritual wellness.

Healthy, nurturing relationships are essential for deep heart connections.

A sense of purpose is crucial for feeling valuable, creating self-confidence, and having a substantial impact in the world.

When the Inner Universe is well, the Outer Universe receives the blessings.

**STAY BLESSED,
SIFU ROBERT**

The Mother's Nurture

In looking to my Father, I've come to realize,
without the Mother's nurture, the Child does not survive. From
safe within the Womb, through the dark of night
Till standing in the Cradle reaching for the light
Sunlight feeds the soil, as soil feeds the Rain
As Prey does feed the Predator, while feeding on the Plain Each
Child has a purpose, the Flower and the Beast
Be true to your own nature, life is but a feast
In my Father's Image is reflection of my pride
That which is Divine is in that which I provide

Dan W.

*Another day working in SF .
Another day working in SF .
I had to ask a guy to move his work truck .
He was really cool about it.
He asked me how it's going and I said I'm a little sore,
took 2 of the grandkids camping this week end.
He responded with grandchildren are such a blessing
and that he was raising one of his.
Seems his daughter is a drug addict and couldn't take
care of herself, let alone a child.
That it got nasty and he had to fight in court to get her
to give up the little girl.
I told him that I understood .
That he is a hero for giving that granddaughter of his a
chance at a good life. A real future.
I told him people can change, and that I am an addict
with 32 years clean.
He smiled, but didn't say anything.....*

*I told him that, he is a hero and a blessing in his
daughter's life.
To hang on, to be patient and one day his daughter will
thank him and tell him how much she loves him.
Loves him for taking her daughter when she wasn't
able to do the right thing.
That's when I saw the tears running down his face and
felt my own eyes welling up .
A few moments passed , as two grown up men cried
together in broad day light.
Finally, chocking back the tears, I took a deep breath
and said,
"Now move your truck."
We both smiled .*

Only by the grace of God and the 12 steps.

-David H.



'NA: Spiritual, But Not Religious'

By Houston H.

NA is a spiritual, not a religious, tradition. What's the difference one might ask, and aren't they equally undefined? In this segment I will attempt to define my own personal understanding of spirituality. My main intent is to give some definition to the concepts, and to make some distinctions which are both abstract and concrete. It is only implied how spirituality is of use in recovery, but I think it should be fairly evident that I myself endorse the use of spiritual principles in recovery, and that this is in part a condensed justification of its use for that purpose.

Spirituality has its connotations. One might think of a saint, or of enlightenment in this respect. In some ways these are quite appropriate examples. In others, they are not, for spirituality is not concerned with perfection or completion. It is concerned with peace and well being, certainly, but not with transcending the conditions of strife or pain. In an important way, it is concerned rather with being able to incorporate the good and the bad into a comprehensive and meaningful whole. One way this is done is by putting things into context as belonging to a whole of which we are only a part. The way I conceive of spirit is as the deep need for making one's experiences one's own, and of striving to do so by working towards the higher aspects of human nature.

As I choose to think of it, in a second function, spirituality has to do with certain human ideals. We all feel emotions and have the capacity for thought, and we all feel or aspire to feel a certain sense of purpose in our lives. These ideals encompass the self, the collective, and the universe. On the personal level, we aspire to realize our best self. On the collective level we aspire to do what is right. On the universal level we seek some sense of comprehension and belonging. These ideals translate to certain values and attitudes, for instance to be more compassionate, to be more at peace, to be less impelled by gratification.

Although spiritual and religious matters can overlap, they are distinct, at least as we practice in NA. Religion hinges more upon objective authority and tradition than on subjective realization or expression. The form of religion is frequently one of command, whereas the form of spirituality is more one of the possible or hypothetical. Religious commands aim to guide us to the right answers or conducts. Spiritual possibilities invite us to imagine better alternatives and inspire us to find concrete means to realizing them on our own, by our own means.

Many of the more vague concepts and statements found in NA are what we would classify as spiritual. Vagueness typifies spiritual concepts because their conditions are not concrete or objective, but are subjective and intangible. They are intangible precisely because they do not correspond to existing conditions. They are bound up with the future, they are bound up with one's own aspirations. They are limits to be approached, but not determinable ends. One could become, perhaps, a saint by following spiritual practice, but one cannot transcend the finitude of being a human.

There are good reasons why sainthood and enlightenment are associated with spirituality: not only are they paragons of virtue, they are also examples of the effects of spiritual practice. Over the process of realizing spiritual intents, and internalizing the values of reflection, conscientiousness, and dignity, one may be apt to experience epiphanies and to find oneself being more charitable, in the broadest sense.

There is one major part of spirituality yet to be considered, and that is its pragmatic character. We need not have complete certainty or knowledge in order to act on the potential within us. We need not know how or why things happen, and indeed, we can do right and good without knowing much of anything. All one needs is certain principles in mind, and these will be enough to regulate one's behavior and attitude toward the positive. The principles are aimed at producing effects, not at stating states of affairs and their causes. That is, the principles are not explanations or descriptions, but instruments of change and inspiration. How they function, if I were to conjecture, is as concepts that implement what they say, rather than as concepts that simply communicate what already is.

For those who are more concrete-minded, the NA tradition is spiritual in this sense. It uses occasionally vague concepts to change one's attitude toward the world. Attitude is a matter of sentiment, and concepts are a matter of reason. How do the two meet? For one, they meet because in each person there is a unity and integrity from which both rational decision and understanding, and emotion and desire, stem. This does not need to be interpreted in an abstract, metaphysical or supernatural sense. If we were to be reductive about it, the person could be conceived as a system of beliefs upon which they act to realize their preferences. If this is so, at its most basic level, then to be spiritual is simply the practice of harmonizing one's own beliefs and preferences to maximize or to *actualize* oneself.

For those who are really reductive and skeptical in temperament, as I am myself, this may not be as basic a formulation as can be given. What is the nature of self-actualization? It is not, I am at pains to emphasize, to realize perfection, as though the human condition and all the imperfections of the material world could be ignored or transcended. It is not salvation. One will not be assured immortality. Similarly, it is not the goal to escape one's ego: self-abnegation, asceticism, and impersonal knowledge are not the means to find spiritual meaning. Self-actualization is also assuredly not conditional on satisfaction of material priorities, as though one can only find purpose once one owns a spacious house or has eaten a rich meal.

For the very most skeptical, the spiritual ideals of which I have spoken are narrative devices we use to make sense of our own experiences. Falling short of that, they are the conscious choice to interpret events in a positive manner, to better harmonize one's own inner world of beliefs and desires, and to better handle situations by fostering a sense of self-control. These tasks can be assuredly translated into more scientific terms, but for the purpose of framing it in a mundane and not in an extravagant way, I think this description will suffice. NA is a spiritual and not a religious tradition. I hope this brief account will appeal to those who are more skeptical, and be recognizable by those who are better versed than myself.

!Invitation to Submit to Iran's Newsletter!

Dear members of Narcotics Anonymous,

You can write to us right now and share your experience about addiction and recovery. Your letter will be translated into Farsi and published in Iran Region 1's recovery magazine which is called "One Promise, a Thousand Rewards". This quarterly periodical is published both electronically and in print and is read by thousands of Farsi-speaking addicts in Iran and around the world.

We look forward to hearing from you via WhatsApp (<https://wa.me/989129576648>) or Telegram (https://t.me/vaadeh_ir). We can only keep what we have by giving it away!

You can start right away and should you decide to do so, follow these guidelines:

Start the letter by introducing yourself.
Talk about turning points in your life and any significant changes.
How did you find NA and how has your life changed now?
You can also write about your feelings and the story behind them.
Please mention any service experience that you might have had.

Your shares can be in any form that suits you such as emails, photos of your handwritten letters, texts and even audio recordings.

website: <https://vaadeh.ir>

H&I needs your support now!
Email:
hospitalsandinstitutions@sonomacountyana.org
and become a secretary!

Now accepting Spring edition submissions...

Email
newsletter@sonomacountyana.org
to submit!

Subscribe online at
www.sonomacountyana.org/voice-of-recovery

The Voice of Recovery Newsletter



Subscription Form

- One Year / 4 Issues - \$5.00 (Hard copy)
- E-mail digital version - Free

Name _____

Phone _____

- I would like a copy of VOR mailed to :

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

- I would like a digital copy of VOR :

E-mail : _____

Mail this subscription form to:

SCFNA Newsletter

PO Box 5552 Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Make checks payable to: SCFNA

Or give to your GSR

Subscribe online at: newslettersubscriptions@sonomacountyana.org

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Max K	2/2/2022	1 year	Michael H	2/22/2014	9 years
Tara	12/23/2021	1 year	Andy O	2/13/2013	10 years
Maryam K	6/24/2021	18 months	Chantel S	1/28/2013	10 years
Jennifer B	2/24/2021	2 years	Cory R	12/01/2012	10 years
Marina V	12/23/2020	2 years	Chris B	12/4/2011	11 years
Matthew D	1/14/2021	2 years	Meagan G	12/4/2011	11 years
Rachael C	1/25/2021	2 years	Nate A	12/24/11	11 years
Alan B	3/31/2019	3 years	Sam S	1/19/2012	11 years
Brandon G	2/17/2020	3 years	Erik with a K	11/12/2010	12 years
Kathy R	12/7/2019	3 years	Kaitlyn B	2/25/2011	12 years
Meg S	12/2/2019	3 years	Tom K	12/30/2009	13 years
Sarah M	1/2/2020	3 years	Rauchelle M	2/21/2009	14 years
Twillia S	1/15/2020	3 years	Chelie C	12/5/2007	15 years
Katie S	2/25/2019	4 years	Gabe L	1/5/2007	16 years
Mae S	1/17/2019	4 years	Jim J	1/3/2007	16 years
William E	2/18/2019	4 years	Dale F	12/7/2005	17 years
Aaron S	12/28/2017	5 years	Linda B	12/1/2005	17 years
Chris B	2/9/2018	5 years	Dwight B	1/18/2005	18 years
David L	12/11/2017	5 years	Joe J	2/13/2003	20 years
Kenny H	12/28/2017	5 years	Pete F	12/27/2002	20 years
Naomi	12/25/2017	5 years	Brian A	12/17/2001	21 years
Steve C	2/10/2018	5 years	Betsy F	12/27/1997	26 years
Adrienne G	01/12/2017	6 years	Bill C	2/1/1996	27 years
Jessica F	12/24/2015	7 years	Steve S	1/2/1996	27 years
Audra M	1/27/2015	8 years	James C	2/24/1994	29 years
Christina W	1/31/2015	8 years	Manuel O	2/9/1990	33 years
Doreen B	1/9/2015	8 years	Jamie H	1/17/1985	38 years
Brion P	2/5/2014	9 years	Ursula	2/7/1985	38 years
Joanna H	2/1/2014	9 years	Kenny S	1/18/1977	46 years