

Editor's Notes

- In this issue we are exploring IP #5
- Please leave a copies of the newsletters lay out with IP's or where a newcomer may have access to it.

Inside this issue:

ANOTHER LOOK	cover
ANOTHER LOOK (cont.)	2
Poetry Corner / Personal Story	3
Back page	4
Events Calendar May	Insert
Events Calendar June	Insert



ANOTHER LOOK

FROM I.P #5

There are probably as many definitions of addiction as there are ways of thinking, based on both research and personal experience. It is not surprising that there are many areas of honest disagreement in the definitions that we hear. Some seem to fit the observed and known facts for some groups better than for others. If we can accept this as a fact, then perhaps another viewpoint ought to be examined, in the hope that we can discover a way more basic to all addictions and more valid in establishing communication among all of us. If we can find greater agreement on *what addiction is not*, then perhaps *what it is* may appear with greater clarity.

Maybe we can agree on some prime points.

1. Addiction is not freedom.

The very nature of our disease and its observed

symptoms point up this fact. We addicts value personal freedom highly, perhaps because we want it so much and experience it so seldom in the progression of our illness. Even in periods of abstinence, freedom is curtailed. We are never quite sure if any action is based in a conscious desire for continued recovery or an unconscious wish to return to using. We seek to manipulate people and conditions and control all our actions; thus we destroy spontaneity, an integral mark of freedom. We fail to realize that the need for control springs from a fear of losing control. This fear, based in part on past failures and disappointments in solving life's difficulties, prevents us from making meaningful choices; choices which, if acted upon, would remove the very fear which blocks us.

2. Addiction is not personal growth.

The monotonous, imita-

tive, ritualistic, compulsive, and obsessive routines of active addiction render us incapable of responsive or meaningful thought and action.

Personal growth is creative effort and purposeful behavior; it presupposes choice, change, and the capacity to face life on its own terms.

3. Addiction is not goodwill.

Addiction insulates us from people, places, and things outside of our own world of getting, using, and finding ways and means to continue the process. Hostile, resentful, self-centered, and self-concerned, we cut off all outside interests as our illness progresses. We live in fear and suspicion of the very people we have to depend on for our needs. This touches every area of our lives and anything not completely familiar becomes alien and dangerous. Our world shrinks and

isolation is its goal. This might well be the true nature of our disorder.

All that has been said above could be summed up in...

Cont. on pg. 2

4. Addiction is not a way of life.

The sick, self-seeking, self-centered, and self-enclosed world of the addict hardly qualifies as a way of life; at best, perhaps it is a way to survive for a while. Even in this limited existence it is a way of despair, destruction, and death. Any lifestyle seeking spiritual fulfillment

seems to demand the very things missing in addiction: *freedom, goodwill, creative action, and personal growth.*

With freedom, life is a meaningful, changing, and advancing process. It looks forward with a reasonable expectancy to a better and richer realization of our desires and a greater fulfillment of our personal selves. These are, of course, some of

the manifestations of the spiritual progress that results from the daily practice of the Twelve Steps of NA.

Goodwill is an action that includes others besides ourselves—a way that considers others as important in their own lives as we are in ours. It is hard to tell whether goodwill is the key to empathy or vice versa. If we accept empathy as the capacity to see ourselves in others knowingly, without losing our own identity, then we recognize a sameness in both. If we have accepted ourselves, how can we reject another?

Affection comes from seeing similarities. Intolerance results from differences we will not accept.

In personal growth, we use both freedom and goodwill in cooperation with others. We realize we cannot live alone; that personal growth is also interpersonal growth. In order to find better balance, we examine personal,

In active addiction, insanity, institutions, and death are the only ends. In recovery, through the help of a Higher Power and the steps of NA, anything is possible.

Creative action is not a mysterious procedure, although it is an inside job in rebuilding or reintegrating our disordered and fractured personalities. Often, it means simply listening to those hunches and intuitive feelings that we think would benefit others or ourselves, and acting on them spontaneously. Here is where many basic principles of action become apparent. We are then able to make decisions based on principles that have real value to ourselves.



The purpose of the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous becomes clear as we find that dependence on a Higher Power, as we each understand it, brings self-respect and self-reliance. We know that we are neither superior nor inferior to anyone; our real value lies in being ourselves. Freedom, with responsibility for ourselves and our

actions, appears to be foremost in our lives. We keep and expand freedom through daily practice; this is the creative action that never ends.

Goodwill, of course, is the beginning of all spiritual growth. It leads to affection and love in all our actions. These three goals, *freedom, creative action, and goodwill*, when shown in service in the fellowship, without seeking personal rewards, bring about changes whose ends we cannot predict or control. Therefore, service is also a Power greater than we, and has significant meaning for all.

I GET SO ANGRY I KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT

In my own personal recovery, I do not make the mistake of taking person's, places, and things for granted. I find many of my friends and I have been reducing our meeting attendance for the simple reason that if there is any amount of recovery in the rooms at all, it is dismal.

It was just a few weeks back that it was brought to my attention the attitude that because everyone seems to be acting out with addictive behaviors, that must make it all right. "It is not." For example, looking back on the few days that I have been in the rooms, I can recall at least three versions of houses of ill repute. I have witnessed people playing the game truth or dare, kissing or performing acts of confection with people they would not otherwise have given the time of day, in order to stay in the game. We have men who metaphorically camp outside the female halfway houses in order to prey on vulnerable females. I also see members that think they are Mormon's or something. Basically men who think they are void of responsibility for their sexual behaviors, and believe that it is the women's responsibility to be taking the necessary precautions to keep from getting pregnant. As men (women) we are not entitled to any such privileges. We do not stop and think about Sexually Transmitted Disease, We must be entertaining the idea that we are super-human, or immortal. I have gotten it from a higher source that we are not going to live forever.

How are you doing that? The general consensus is that you are not. From predecessors who have come before you, who have tried to maintain their addictive mentalities the results are nil until we let go absolutely. We are only here for a short time. Our white knuckling mentalities would suggest that we are short-timers.

People immediately involved in what some people would refer to as old behaviors are not the only people who suffer from these behaviors. Old behaviors are behaviors we have addressed, and that have been successfully dealt with for a period of time, but for a lack of a good example and positive direction have reoccurred once again. When the behaviors have not been addresses at all, they are addictive behaviors. We all seem to suffer at the others expense. I get so angry, but I keep my mouth shut. I do not get up and blow unwarranted smoke up anybody's backside during key tag, and medallion presentations. My feelings are that the unsaid message speaks loud and clear. People who are working their program usually know who they are; without having twenty people get up to say absolutely nothing in order to hear themselves speak. There is no humility in any of this behavior. Many times I get so angry that I cannot even speak.

When we go out for fellowship after the meetings we display some of the worst behaviors. The waitress smiles at us and treats us with respect because it is her job. She brings no hidden agenda that would tell us she is all right with sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is not in anybody's job description. Note, I do not get the meaning of why during our meetings we tend to glorify certain words such as suicide, or pit-falls. We are addicts; we are not dupes, so we should stop treating each other as if we are.

As a recovering fellowship, we should not be concerned about what the local treatment centers or halfway houses are going to think when they read certain article in our newsletter. We should be focusing on why this article is being generated to begin with. We cannot save our ass and our face at the same time. We try to put up a smoke screen to project that we are so wonderful, when in fact we are falling short. Are we seeing the world through rose colored glasses, or are we recovering "Continuing to take a personal inventory means that we form a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, attitudes, and relationships on a regular basis (Basic Text, 41)." Taking a regular inventory is a key element in our new pattern of living. In our addiction, we examined ourselves as little as possible. We weren't happy with how we were living our lives, but we didn't feel that we could change the way we were living. Self-examination we felt, would have been a painful exercise in futility.

Today, all that is changed. Where we were powerless over our addiction, we found a Power greater than ourselves that has helped us stop using. Where we once felt lost in life's maze, we have found guidance in the experience of our fellow recovering addicts and our ever-improving contact with our Higher Power. We need not feel trapped by our old destructive patterns. We can live differently if we choose.

By establishing a regular pattern of taking our own inventory, we give ourselves the opportunity to change anything in our lives that does not work. If we have started doing something that causes problems, we can start changing our behavior before it gets completely out of hand. If we are doing something that prevents problems from occurring, we can take note of that, too, and encourage ourselves to keep doing what works (Just for Today, 220).

In my personal recovery I have had my character defamed at least one million times over. If I find myself defaming personalities, I immediately apologize. If anyone came up to me and apologized for defaming my character it would give me a feeling of comfort. I would attend more meetings just to support this individual. This is someone I would want for a friend, for the simple reason that to make amends is to do your very best not to let the behavior crop up again. A fearless and thorough moral inventory seems very rare.

I have witnessed addictive behaviors in all fellowships. It appears to me that we have much work to do in order to promote attraction to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The only question I have is "when do we begin?"

By:

Andy B.

**Central Minnesota Area
Narcotics Anonymous**

- ◆ Points of interest from IP #7
- ◆ Poetry Corner
- ◆ Editor's Choice
- ◆ Upcoming Events Calendar

Works Cited.

- * I.P. # 5
- * Personal Story by Andy B.

GRATITUDE PRAYER

"Our gratitude speaks, when we care and when we share with others the N.A. way, that no addict seeking recovery need ever die from the horrors of addiction. without finding a better way to live."

St. Cloud "REVVED UP IN RECOVERY" meets at 3PM every Sunday @ Place of Hope (downstairs)

511 9th Ave N. The second Sunday is Potluck and business mtg.

ALSO:

"KEEP IT SIMPLE" meets Wednesdays 1PM @ Unity Church- 327 9th Ave. S St. Cloud

Please come and help support them.

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LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO DO ? ACTIVITIES COULD USE YOUR HELP.

THEY MEET AT 11:30 ON THE SECOND SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT THE MCDONALD'S ON HWY. 10 YOUR IDEAS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.

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