



Narcotics Anonymous®

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS IN YOUR COMMUNITY GETTING IT STARTED, KEEPING IT GOING

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in Narcotics Anonymous. This presentation has been designed to introduce you to some of the aspects of the NA program and Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as well as provide an aid to beginning and maintaining a Narcotics Anonymous meeting in a treatment setting, in particular within the Asian Pacific Region.

In brief, I will be covering the following in this presentation paper:

- Who and what is Narcotics Anonymous
- Membership in NA
- What is a NA meeting
- Conducting NA meetings within a treatment facility
- Setting up a NA meeting
- NA meeting guidelines
- Demonstration of a NA meeting in action (role play)
- Various formats/types of NA meetings
- Resources for Disabled/physically challenged NA members
- Barriers/challenges in establishing and maintaining NA meetings as experienced by some Asian Pacific NA communities/meetings over the past decade.

Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women for whom drugs have become a major problem. By following the program of recovery offered in Narcotics Anonymous, our members have found a way to live clean (i.e. our terminology for drug free), as responsible, productive members of society. The program of Narcotics Anonymous consists of 36 core principles, namely the

Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts. Please refer to our NA literature to get a more detailed perspective of our core principles.

Spiritual in nature, they are written so simply that our NA members and potential members can follow them in their daily lives. Our Twelve Steps detail our program of personal recovery. Our Twelve Traditions relate experience that can help NA meetings maintain their unity. And our Twelve Concepts are guiding principles for our organizational structure.

Narcotics Anonymous is a program of recovery for anyone who has desire to stop using drugs. NA is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. NA is not related or affiliated to other organizations, including other Twelve Step Fellowships programs (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous , Alanon, Naranon etc.), treatment or correctional facilities. We do not employ professional counselors or therapists. NA is a non-profit fellowship (i.e. organization) and our membership is free. The only requirement for NA membership is the desire to stop using drugs. You are a member when you say you are, and membership in Narcotics Anonymous is unconditional.

It is our hope that this presentation paper will prove to be a simple, easy guide to your efforts in establishing an NA meeting in your facility/community. It is our experience that NA is culturally adaptable. We are millions of recovering addicts who have found a vision of hope and a promise of freedom from active drug addiction.

MEMBERSHIP IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Membership in Narcotics Anonymous is a personal decision reached by each individual. It is hoped that every drug addict will be allowed to decide if Narcotics Anonymous is the answer for him or herself. The only requirement is the desire to stop using drugs. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion. You are a member when you say you are.

Narcotics Anonymous has no dues or fees. Each recovering addict (as opposed to an ex-addict) has paid the price of membership through the pain of active drug addiction. Our message is that any addict can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life. Our message is one of hope and the promise of freedom from active addiction. Most of us had no idea what to expect living without the use of drugs. It is in NA meetings that many of us first heard the message of recovery, found acceptance and support from other NA members and learned practical information to help each other stay clean (i.e. our terminology for not using drugs today).

WHAT IS AN NA MEETING?

A Narcotics Anonymous meeting is any two or more recovering addicts who meet together for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction. All Narcotics Anonymous meetings are bound by the principles of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of NA. NA meetings are conducted by recovering addicts for addicts. It is important that the addicts, (who may be your clients) be empowered to conduct their own meetings. Guidance in how to do that e.g. helping them with the format of a NA meetings , supplying them with a room or safe setting to hold their meeting, guidance with the supply of NA literature to use (until such time they can acquire/purchase their own) and helping with procedures is very useful. NA is a personal and spiritual program, therefore, our personal recovery experiences, NA principles, and NA general information are the topics of our meetings.

The primary purpose of a NA meeting is to provide experience, strength and hope for it's members and carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. The meeting provides each NA member with the opportunity to share and to hear the experience of other addicts who are learning to live a better way without the use of drugs. The NA meeting, in essence, is a vehicle by which our message is carried. It provides a setting in which a newcomer (your client or a new NA member with little drug free life experience) can identify with recovering addicts and find an atmosphere of recovery. It is worth mentioning here that "recovery" is not just being drug free. Recovery is being drug free and working the basic NA principles that eventuates in a contentment in maintaining this new way of life.

GUIDELINES WE HAVE FOUND USEFUL WHEN CONDUCTING NA MEETINGS IN TREATMENT FACILITIES

- The meeting place should be accessible to the most number of people as possible. Keep in mind that providing an atmosphere of recovery is desired, such as room size and as few distractions as possible. Note: It is recommended that NA group meetings not be held in an individual's living quarters/house.
- Ramps, wide doors, elevators and bathroom facilities may be required for some members who are physically challenged. (e.g. Wheelchairs etc.)
- Generally, NA meetings are held at a time when the most people can attend, e.g. after dinner.

SETTING UP FOR AN NA MEETING

Once the meeting space and time have been approved by the facility, early arrival by NA members will allow time to set up chairs in a circle for a small group or theater style for a large meeting. NA members may like to make tea, coffee or

refreshments, to enhance a friendly atmosphere, if the facility allows it, and set out NA literature. Depending on the economic situation at hand, literature may be purchased, borrowed on a loan basis or given away. Setting up chairs, supplying refreshments, setting out literature, and cleaning up after the meeting--these are simple things that NA members do to host their meetings. But if one person had to do them all, these simple things would quickly become overwhelming. By sharing the work, it ensures that the NA meeting as a whole is self-supporting and that the meeting's responsibilities don't settle unevenly on the shoulders on just one or two individuals.

FORMAT FOR AN NA MEETING

Narcotics Anonymous meetings follow a consistent format and often center around a topic of recovery called open discussion meetings. Other NA meetings might include a literature discussion, speaker meeting, or the Twelve Step/Twelve Tradition study. Only Narcotics Anonymous conference-approved literature (includes translated literature) and tapes are used in NA meetings. This is to ensure a clear, consistent and focused message of recovery. Meetings usually last about one hour (1 hour) to one and a half hours (1 ½ hours), and it is important to start and end them on time.

DEMONSTRATION OF A NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETING IN ACTION (role play)

With the support of other NA members here with me today, we will demonstrate how to conduct an NA meeting. We have included the basics guidelines in this paper should you wish to pursue a NA meeting with your clients upon returning to your facility.

MEETING FORMAT/PROCEDURE

Chairperson: Welcome members to the meeting and introduce yourself. Hello, my name is (FIRST NAME not FAMILY NAME), and I am an addict/or recovering addict. Welcome to this meeting of the (e.g. Jakarta Group) of Narcotics Anonymous. I'd like to open this meeting with a moment of silence (15 to 20 seconds) for the addict who still suffers from this disease of drug addiction, followed by the Just For Today Reading (a short reading from the NA book titled Narcotics Anonymous) "We like to extend a special welcome to newcomers. Is there anyone attending their first NA meeting? Would you like to introduce yourself? Is there anyone attending this meeting for the first time? For the protection of the NA members of this group/meeting, who you see here and what you hear in this meeting, stays in this meeting. (This is our Confidentiality Request) For the protection of our NA meeting being held in this facility/treatment facility, we ask that no drugs, weapons or paraphernalia be on your person at the meeting. It costs you nothing to belong to Narcotics Anonymous. "You are a member when you say you are."

Chairperson: At the beginning of the meeting select people to read one or more of the routine readings, to help get the meeting centered. These readings can be found in our Little White Booklet, the book Narcotics Anonymous, IP #1 (Informational Pamphlet No. 1), or the group reading cards, all available from your nearest NA Service office (See last page for details). The usual readings are listed below. These can be read out at the beginning or at various stages of the meeting.

- Who is an addict?
- What is the NA Program?
- Why are we here?
- How it works.
- The Twelve Traditions.

Meetings use a variety of formats to enhance the atmosphere of recovery in their meetings. Some examples are speaker meetings, open discussion, literature and step study.

Chairperson: About five minutes before the meeting is scheduled to close, announce: "That's all the time we have. I'd like to thank you for attending." Begin passing the basket around for collection of money contributions, (note: only applicable outside treatment facilities), announcing: The basket being passed around is one way of practicing our Seventh Tradition, which says, "Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." The money our NA members contribute goes to purchase NA literature, refreshments(usually tea/coffee) and helps to fulfill our primary purpose of carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. This is an empowering exercise, so NA members can take some responsibility for their own recovery, rather than depending on some external entity to take responsibility for them. Note: Open meetings: Open to anyone, regardless if they are recovering addicts or observers. Closed meetings: For recovering addicts only or people who feel they may have a drug/drug addiction problem. If this is an "open" meeting: "I'd like, once again, to thank our non-addict guests for the interest they've shown in Narcotics Anonymous. Because of NA's tradition of self-support, this group asks that you not contribute any money when the basket passes your way."

Chairperson: Will make any NA related announcements such as the next meeting, up and coming NA activities (e.g. Fellowship events, such as outings, picnics, conventions), and any other issues pertaining to the NA meeting. Chairperson makes the following announcement: "NA's Eleventh Tradition reads, our public relation policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films. We ask everyone attending to respect our members anonymity by not using anyone's name, or personal details when describing this meeting to others. The spiritual principle of anonymity makes us all equal as members of the group/meeting.

NA's Twelfth Tradition reads, "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

Chairperson: "Again, thank you all for coming. I would like to close this meeting with the following reading/and or third step prayer."

Third Step Prayer: "Take my will and my life. Guide me in my recovery. Show me how to live." Note: Some groups also read "Just for Today" again prior to the closing prayer.

Chairpersons usually request from NA members that we share responsibilities such as cleaning up the meeting room afterwards. We try to leave the room better than we found it. This helps protect the atmosphere of recovery and reputation of Narcotics Anonymous.

DIFFERENT FORMATS FOR NA MEETINGS

Speaker Meeting: A speaker meeting usually includes the personal sharing of recovery experience, strength, and hope by one or two NA members who relate how the NA program brought about recovery by sharing feelings, self-image, turning points, new awareness and gratitude for a new way of life. The speaker may share for approximately 20-30 minutes. The time left is usually open for the rest of the NA members to share briefly.

Open Discussion Meeting: Topics should be chosen carefully with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in mind. There is a multitude of topics that relate our personal recovery in NA. It is important to remember that recovery from drug addiction is our purpose for attending meetings and choose topics accordingly. Because NA is not a treatment program, it is also important we do not select Treatment Topics. The following list is only a beginning point. Many other recovery-based topics come to mind as the group develops and meets the needs of its members.

- Any IP (Informational Pamphlet) or selection from the NA book *Narcotics Anonymous*
- H.O.W. (honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness)
- Surrender (i.e. breaking through the denial that there is a drug problem)
- Acceptance
- The basics (don't use drugs today, go to meetings, communicating with other NA members, NA literature, sponsor, and the Steps)
- H.A.L.T.S. (don't get too hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or serious)
- Responsible for our own recovery
- Freedom from active addiction
- Identify with the similarities of the NA program rather than comparing the differences
- NA, a spiritual not religious program
- Going to any productive lengths to find recovery

- Transition from the facility to the local fellowship/community (if applicable)
- Tools/guidelines suggested by NA
- Letting go of the old unproductive ways of doing things
- Feelings
- Anonymity, and its importance

Literature Discussion: For a literature discussion meeting, parts of the NA book *Narcotics Anonymous* or other NA conference-approved literature are read and discussed. This format may include study of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Passing the literature around and allowing everyone a chance to read can be an easy way for everyone to get involved. If you follow that format, be sure to include a statement such as, "Feel free to pass the literature along if you'd rather not read." Not everyone is willing or able to read aloud.

Additional needs for disabled/physically challenged members: Please find out what NA materials are available through the World Service Office of NA to assist addicts with additional needs. Update your current stockpile of Narcotics Anonymous materials to include the items for addicts with additional needs, e.g. sight and hearing impaired (English speaking and ASL only at present).

BARRIERS/CHALLENGES IN ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING NA MEETINGS (as experienced by some Asian Pacific NA communities/meetings over the past decade)

Over past decade I have witnessed various reasons why NA has not grown in the Asia Pacific region. Once upon a time NA was perceived as a Western concept. NA is a universal program which does not belong to any one or group of cultures. It is maintained by recovering addicts world wide. Cultures may vary, but addiction is addiction. Spiritual principles transcend cultural differences. In the past, NA literature was only available in English. As NA's growth expands all over the world, local translation committees are proceeding to translate the principles and concepts of NA into their respective languages and culture.

Government policy makers were not aware of the vast network of NA world wide and its adaptability to local cultures. They were also not aware it was a self supporting organization of recovering addicts. They were not aware of its effectiveness, even in the Asia Pacific Region. Some professionals thought NA was a Western treatment program, rather than a self help group of recovering addicts, which could enhance their local treatment strategies. Because NA Traditions do not allow funding from outside its own NA membership, it was never drawn into the political arena where funding issues are discussed. While this is good for NA's long term survival, it never received any real serious attention in government referral networks due to its low profile.

Legal registration of NA in some countries was difficult due to small NA community members lacking the knowledge of how to deal with local laws and restrictions of addicts being in the company of other addicts. In some countries this is forbidden, thus making NA meetings difficult to hold outside registered institutions. There was and in some cases still is a certain amount of fear around breaking their anonymity that they were once a drug user. This problem is gradually disappearing as NA gains more credibility in the Asian Pacific.

It appears where NA has not got the support of local treatment services, and referral to NA is minimal, NA remains small. In these situations NA usually carries on with a small dedicated group of members who can only do so much, as they also have to work, look after families etc. More members make the network stronger and as a result provide a more reliable service to addicts who are still trying to stop using drugs. The NA steps and Traditions have proven extremely adaptable to local Religious values such as Muslim, Christian and Buddhists cultures. Recovering addicts, as well as new NA members have been reluctant to voluntarily come forward and join NA meetings outside registered treatment facilities, due to the fear and stigma that has stemmed from mass media campaigns towards drug addicts in general. Some of our members believe this has contributed to the slow growth in some NA communities.

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