



Youth and Recovery

This is NA Fellowship-approved literature.

Copyright © 1983 by
Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
All rights reserved

Part 1: Hitting bottom

The nature of our addiction is such that we will inevitably hit bottom or a series of bottoms. Our bottom can be wherever we allow it to be. We don't need to fail school, lose everything important to us, land in jail, or reach the brink of death. Many of us did come to these ends before making the decision to seek recovery, but others among us were more fortunate. We got off of the road which led to those inevitable bottoms before we encountered worse ones than we had already experienced.

As our addiction progressed, our lives became increasingly chaotic and unmanageable. We began to deteriorate in every area; at school, at work, and at home. We began to lie and make excuses to cover up our using and the problems that it caused. Denying that we had a problem and rationalizing our using was also symptomatic of hitting bottom. In the course of our self-destruction we also hurt many of the people around us, especially our families and close friends. Before coming to NA, many of us felt lonely, hurt, afraid, and angry. We were tired of being controlled by our emotions and our need for drugs, and of hiding our feelings behind the facade of "being OK."

In spite of all this, we could not quit using. Our addictive personalities would not permit us to let go of our destructive behavior. We were slowly committing suicide. We were sick of feeling like nobody, and being disgusted with ourselves and our lives. We knew deep down that we were worth a lot more, and that there was more to life than just drugs. The turning point came when we had hurt bad enough, and couldn't live in that misery any longer. This gave us the incentive to do something about our problem. We asked for help.

Part 2: Made a decision

We realized that our lives were going downhill as a result of our addiction. We had to accept that fact before any relief could come. We finally realized that we could never truly be happy the way we were living. Using drugs had become a way of life for us, and we became sick and tired of hurting inside. We used to live and lived to use. Our using and everything connected with it was slowly killing us, and pain was growing. We had to make a difficult decision, even though we were young and had a whole life ahead of us.

Once we reached this point, the first thing we had to overcome was the denial of the fact that we were addicts, which was often based on the myth that we were too young to be addicted. We had to make a choice. We could either live by admitting that we had a problem and needed help, or we could die by our old ways. We sought help and found it in Narcotics Anonymous. Once having made this decision, our lives began to get better.

In recovery, we adapted to a new way of living by working the steps. As our heads cleared, we saw how sick we really were, and we became grateful that we had the chance to recover at our young age.

Part 3: Peer pressure

Times can be hard for people making the change from using drugs to living clean. People, places, ways, and habits from our active addiction will attempt to persuade us to return to them. They can lead us to feeling uncomfortable with our newfound and hard-won cleanliness. Having a need for acceptance, we found it hard not to be drawn into the syndrome of role playing and people pleasing. Those people who continue to pressure us into returning to the old ways show their true colors. They never were true friends.

Until we established a foundation in the program, firmly anchored in the Twelve Steps, most of us felt isolated, uncomfortable, and scared as hell. We established this foundation through the understanding, compassion, and support of the other addicts we found in NA. Those who are successful with the program are almost always involved with the Fellowship of NA. Returning to old people, places, and lifestyles has been the downfall of many clean addicts, and some of them never got a second chance at recovery. Those who did make it back to the program found that all of the old miseries of active addiction only worsened for them. Eventually, we had to make a decision to let go of our old ways in order to survive.

Part 4: Family problems

Our addiction affected all persons who were close to us, especially our families. Addiction is a family disease, but we could only change ourselves. For some of us, this was a tough thing to accept. We found that just because we changed, that didn't mean our families had to change. We had to take responsibility for our part in the family disease of addiction. Although we had stopped using, it took time to heal the wounds that our disease had inflicted on our families. We had to give them time to adjust to the change in us. Many of us had lost the trust of our families, and found that time and patience were required of both ourselves and our families to reestablish that trust. We found that we could help our families to trust us by being more responsible and considerate. By letting them see the change in us through actions, as well as our words, we eventually regained their trust.

Part 5: Just for today

We have seen young addicts who are clean for many years. A question often asked is, "How did they do it?" Since most addicts rebel against the idea of making a commitment to stay clean forever, we suggest staying clean just for today. It is our experience that by making a decision to stay clean just for today, or even just for this moment, we find the necessary strength to gain recovery. Just for today, we deal with today's problems. Just for today, we accept where we are. Just for today, we work our program, we go to meetings, we share, we care, and we hug. We begin to live the steps and experience the NA way of life. We learn to live and live to love. We try to keep life simple, just for today.

We have come to realize that we can't live in yesterday, and we don't know what tomorrow brings. However, we do know that we can stay clean, just for today.

Part 6: Message of hope

"NA offers only one promise and that is freedom from active addiction." There is a spiritual program of recovery available today for all addicts. We no longer have to suffer and die without hope.

After coming to NA, we have found that our problems haven't disappeared, but we have learned how to deal with them. We have seen our lives change for the better. We have learned to accept those things which we could not change. Through total acceptance of the fact of our addiction, we have found a true freedom in Narcotics Anonymous.