

HOLLYWOODNA

My experience as a newcomer in NA has been unexpectedly beautiful, but it hasn't been easy. Some of the difficulties have been what one might expect, like learning to deal with cravings and compulsions to use. Most of them, however, have taken me by surprise as I learn to stay clean day by day. No matter how many times someone in the rooms told me that my problem was bigger and ran deeper than my addiction to drugs, the message didn't truly sink in until I became conscious enough to see my disease manifest in ways that had nothing to do with substances. I came to realize, slowly, that my problem has less to do with drugs and more to do with my behavior and thinking. Removing substances from the equation seemed to make my condition worse, not better. I believe this is because, at least in my life, I was using mostly to mask my problems. Using was the solution. My problems begin and end with myself. And if that is the case, then what hope do I have of recovering without help?

Thankfully, I don't have to. Narcotics Anonymous stepped in and helped to bridge that impossible divide, between the life I was living and the life I desperately wanted, between myself and others, between myself and God. Perhaps most miraculously, it removed the distance in myself. It began to bring the scattered pieces of who I am back into a cohesive whole. Being a newcomer in NA provides me with a glimpse of something beyond my wildest dreams, and provides me with a road map to achieving it. The program works 100% of the time. It is only ever me that fails to work it. As I write this, I have seven months and 24 days clean. Before coming to the fellowship, I couldn't stay clean for a single day. I have truly been brought back to life, and I owe it all to my Higher Power and Narcotics Anonymous. If you're reading this and you're newer than me, or if you're struggling and wondering if it's worth it, hang in there. You are not alone, we all struggle, but if you reach out you'll find the open arms of NA waiting to catch you. Don't give up, just for today. The miracle is coming for us all.

An addict named Daisy

I have a good friend in the program named Paul. He and I share at least two meetings per week. We joke that we have each other's backs. There is a picture of Paul on the back of my shirt and vice versa.

One of the reasons I like Paul is that he is direct and tells it like it is. He doesn't pull any punches and is never disrespectful nor pompous. He can go from anger to tears in a heartbeat. So many of his sayings resonate with me.

One of my favorites is: "Each day when I walk into the rooms I'm a newcomer."

At first I didn't get it. But over time I came to realize that he is spot on. Those of us with multiple years rise each day and remind ourselves that we have just today. Each meeting we attend is a new experience. Thus, we begin each day as a newcomer of sorts. This perspective allows me to keep a fresh outlook on my program and life. I share often of my recollections of being new to the program.

Sometimes it is just that simple. Sometime it is my truth because that is what Paul said.

Brian M.



Drawing by Elvis C

First 10 minutes of day 87

Oh no I'm awake again. Go back to sleep. Don't. What time is it? 5:44. You still have time to go running. You said you were going to start running. God please help me. Go back to sleep. You'll get through the day better with more sleep. Just get up. It's just one sit up. Do the worst sit up in the world and then you're up. Ok, God you're in charge today. Please help me do the right thing for the right reason. Show me how to live. Gotta make the bed. I'll make it after my shower. Just do it right now. I'll be more awake after the shower. I'll make the bed before I leave. Practice some gratitude, just make it. Be grateful you have a bed to sleep in. I hate everything. I'm so selfish. No I'm not. Please God help me stop thinking. Your thoughts today, not mine. Your words, not mine. Man, work is going to suck today. Be grateful you have a job. I hate my job. They treat me bad. Just show up and try to contribute. You said you were going to give this thing five years. Five years clean and things will be different. This place, this job, all temporary. That isn't acceptance. Please God, let me practice humility and acceptance. Let me accept myself, my place, my situation. Just show up and leave the results up to God. Just turn it over. Does anyone know what that means? Pray to do it and maybe it will happen. Show me the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. So many demands. Is there a limit to what you can pray for in a single session? Law of diminishing returns with prayer. Don't overthink. Please, God quiet my mind and crush my ego. I should shave. No time. They'll think you're a bum if you don't. An embarrassment. At least look like you're getting it together. The restaurant manager who said I had bed-head all the time. I shaved all my hair off and he said I looked crazy. Then he fired me. And I had a year clean then.

Fired from a job while in recovery. Ok, I'll shave. Stop thinking. Clean shirt, clean shirt, clean shirt, clean shirt, clean shirt there it is. Now, you look good. Could fool anyone. They don't even know who you are. Please, God let me practice patience and humility. Let me live in gratitude. Get there early, help set up. Like the meeting. Just practice the principles from the program and you can't miss. They'll see what a good guy you are. God, help me practice spiritual principles, only then can I approve of myself. What are they again? Does just saying "help me practice them" do anything? Honesty, acceptance, surrender, open-mindedness, willingness. A lot of them if you think about it. How could God ensure that I practice all of those at the same time? He'll show me moments when I can practice them and then give me strength to do it. Oh yeah, that's a good prayer. God, give me the knowledge of your will for me and the power to carry it out. Only prayer you really need. All the rest fluff. Where are my shoes? Hall closet. What time is it? Am I forgetting anything? The bed. Selfish. Take care of the things around you, your sponsor said. He's done a lot for you. It will take two minutes. I'm going to be late, though. Just make it. You'll feel better. Ok, not that bad. I do feel better. Turn off the lights, we're supposed to turn off the lights. Let go and let God. Why am I afraid? Do other people feel this anxious in the morning? Give it five years, you'll feel better. Let me stop thinking. It's just the morning. You always feel like this in the morning. Get coffee. What's that good prayer you found again? God, I admit my powerlessness and the unmanageability of my life. Help me live with others as an equal, dependent on you for direction and strength. Yeah, that's a good one. Is my day really going to be different because I thought that prayer just now? Don't think. Quick, what's your gratitude list? I'm grateful I'm tall. I have two hands. My parents love me. I have a nice place to live. My car. My job. My job sucks. No, it's good. I'm glad I have it. Be grateful. Have humility. God, grant me the serenity - Where did I park? Must find the car. Going to be late. There it is. 29. I wish I were younger. Just accept it. God please help me.

By Michael C.