


OCTANA

NEWSLETTER

Winter Edition

Reflections

“Recovery begins when we start to apply the spiritual principles contained in the Twelve Steps of NA to all areas of our lives.”

STEPS OF THE MONTH

Steps
Nine, Ten,
Eleven,
and
Twelve

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Learn about this area's open service positions!

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Personal Stories

LETTING GO

I never thought that I was controlling; I simply believed I knew the best way to do things in any given situation. The more I used, and thus the more bitter I became as a person, the more I distrusted the opinions and actions of people around me. Even, sometimes especially depending on my mood, small, seemingly unimportant things could become such an argument with a person doing things the “wrong way.” I always blamed the mental disorders I have on this hyperfixation on the “proper” ways of doing something. However, with some recovery in my head now, I recognize I have control over the extent those disorders get to have over my actions. I understand that these are simply a facet of my character defects, my disease, that I can control. I am responsible for this defect, and when I act on it, I am straining my peace of mind, as well as intruding on another’s autonomy.

I had been in Narcotics Anonymous for around four months, with intermittent stretches of relapses, when I first

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Personal Stories

met my now partner. I remember I called my sponsor, with about two weeks clean, to talk to him about the quickly obvious desire I had to start a relationship. He told me that it was a bad idea, but that was his opinion and experience. He then suggested I ask for the opinion of a few others and make an informed decision for myself. The one thing I remember most about the conversations I had with multiple men in recovery was that no matter what I did, and regardless of what their opinion was, they all said that my recovery was my own to carry and that it must come first. I took what they said to heart, and for the first time in my experience with love, I began to conceptualize the idea of autonomy for others.

I truly believe this principle is one of the most important ones I practiced in early recovery. I let my partner be where they were in their recovery, which in turn granted me the same grace. Two newcomers walking their own separate paths of recovery. It's a terrible idea on paper, usually in practice, too, but I

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Personal Stories

thank the god of my understanding for affording me the commitment I had early on to letting go of this need to control where they were at. As I've increased my tolerance for the lack of control I have over others, I've looked back on the many arguments I had with family, friends, coworkers, and the like and thought about how different those conversations would have gone if I had ceded my impositions to control and let them live their own lives, for better or for worse. Fortunately, some of those people are still in my life, and I have now been granted the chance to act in a more open-minded manner.

As I continue to recover, more and more opportunities to embrace the autonomy of others' lives will appear. Sometimes those small, seemingly unimportant things others do can and will continue to frustrate me. However, I know that the solution lies in continuing my step work, reflecting on this character defect, and having gratitude that this program has massively gifted me the chance to recover and, really, live life at my pace.

- Max G.

Personal Stories

FROM CARGO CULT TO CONSCIOUS RECOVERY

Cargo Cult (noun): In its origin, the practice of imitating the surface features of something that brought great benefits, such as building imitation airfields, without understanding the deeper forces that made it effective. In modern usage, it describes copying the appearance of a process without applying the principles that give it meaning or power.

When the United States withdrew from the Pacific after World War II, they made no provisions for the indigenous peoples who had come to rely on what the U.S. armed forces provided. It was as if, overnight, a limitless source of food, supplies, and material wealth simply vanished. In the aftermath, some islanders constructed facsimiles of airfields out of local resources, bamboo runways, palm-frond control towers, makeshift Quonset huts. Surely, they believed, the cargo would return if the magic encampments were

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Personal Stories

rebuilt. But no aid, no planes, and no airmen ever came back. This mistaken faith in “If you build it, they will come” became the origin of what we now call the Cargo Cult.

Recovery is a tricky thing. It is hard work and it requires daily effort—especially for me at 93 days clean. When I first found NA and put down the drugs in September, I knew I had found the way. I also knew I didn’t know the way. But I sensed that my path to a meaningful, substance-free life would be in the rooms and the Zooms; and like a newcomer floating on a pink cloud, I rushed to do everything I saw others doing. Fortunately, I found a loving sponsor and both in-person and online relationships to guide me when I inevitably crashed into reality.

My “first life” was as a tech bro—confident, certain, convinced I understood how the world worked. In tech, we use “Cargo Cult” to describe copying something that appears to work and praying it will “just work” somewhere else, without understanding how or why.

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Personal Stories

Sometimes it does... for a while. But code must be maintained, circumstances change, and Cargo-Culted systems have a way of failing mysteriously and completely. And if no one understands how it works in the first place, how can it be kept current or fixed when it fails? The truth is, it can't.

In my first 30 days clean, I built myself a Cargo Cult of Recovery. I experienced sleepless nights, failures, and my own emergency calls, to my sponsor, to fellows, to family. Unlike customers in the tech world, my NA family wasn't angry and didn't walk away. Still, my sponsor did have to drive me home from a group outing after I'd completely melted down. He delivered me, with compassion, into the caring hands of my parents. During that drive, he didn't scold me. He taught me how to become watchful for the ways my Higher Power speaks to me. He introduced me to the spiritual principle of surrender: that in recovery, my job is not to know and understand everything, not to lead or teach, but to be led.

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Personal Stories

My well-intentioned missteps eventually cost me my first sponsor. That woke me up. I began to truly listen in the rooms and Zooms. For weeks, I volunteered to read the Twelve Traditions whenever I could, sometimes twice a day, until my behavior began to change. I learned to seek recovery each morning, ask for guidance, and listen for the answer. At 93 days clean, I can honestly say: I still have no idea what I'm doing. But I pray and meditate daily. I still make a meeting each day, room or Zoom. I exchange simple gratitudes with other newcomers. I try to listen before I speak. I take naps.

Real recovery is living according to spiritual principles, not gorging on the things we want from the recovery buffet. By slowing down and practicing principles rather than copying behaviors, I recently discovered something profound: a lack of desire to use. At 93 days clean, I am grateful for all the addicts who taught me to stop Cargo-Culting recovery and instead live each day, just for today. **The moment I stopped imitating**

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Personal Stories

recovery and started practicing spiritual principles, surrender, honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness, my recovery truly began.

Bradley L.

Step Nine

“We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

I remember after getting through my eighth step, with a bumpy start by thinking I was writing another fourth step. But I was guided by my sponsor to write the name of harmed and the harm, that was all. We would talk about the situations when we would meet next.

I had amends to make to an old friend that lives northeast of Houston. I called my friend and asked him to meet me, that I had something I needed to talk to him about and that it wasn't anything time restricted.

We agreed to meet in the parking lot of a fast-food place in Porter, TX. I called my sponsor before I pulled into the parking lot and asked if there was anything extra or suggested for me to look at before the amends.

My sponsor said that I had this and to listen to my friend afterwards. For me, I was ready for this amends. The steps are in order for a reason.

I would have never been at this parking lot without

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Step Nine

accepting that I was an addict, coming to believe that this program could help, making a decision to work the rest of the steps, taking a moral inventory, finding out the roots and nature of my wrongs, becoming entirely ready to be free of these character defects, humbly asking to have my shortcomings to be removed, writing a list of the harmed and becoming willing to make amends. For me, I had some trouble accepting my friend at times. This friend had gone through prison a couple times and when he would get out of prison there was a change in personality. This friend would change friends. This friend would not be the same person as when he left me all these times. We were best friends and lived on the same old dirt road. When he moved here from New York we connected, and we started running together. I traded him a bicycle for a skateboard that he brought down to Texas. I can not confirm nor deny that these bicycles, and skateboards were hot. We ran hard together for some high school

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Step Nine

years and some years afterwards. So, there were a lot of pasts between us. I found forgiveness for my friend through the fourth step within my resentments and relationships. And some of the resentment reared its ugly head. I was able to see the resentment for a glimpse and know that I had amends to make. This was not about how I was harmed, this was about how I had harmed. I was entirely ready. I wanted to be friends without all of those chains.

We met in the parking lot, and I was still nervous. What I was about to say to my friend was foreign for both of us. We would only talk about our problems we had at home, not our problems with one another. We both got into the back of his early 90's Chevy S10 pickup. We sat across from each other in the bed of the truck. We started off with some small talk to break the ice and start a conversation. I told my friend that I was there to make amends.

I told my friend that I had harmed him emotionally

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Step Nine

and mentally. I gave a couple small examples. I told my friend that I would abandon him when he returned from prison. My friend was not supposed to be associating with the likes of me, being that I was dealing drugs and doing quite a bit too. I remember going to an AA meeting with him a couple times and I was high at both. I would tell people that I was supporting a friend there. I said that I would have changed friends by then and my friend didn't fit the mold. For me, internally I found that I had been abandoned by others, and I had felt what he may have felt. So, I knew that feeling of abandonment and I felt empathy for my friend. I told my friend that amends isn't me saying that I am sorry. Amends is making what was wrong right. I continued to say that whatever he believes I should do to not harm him, nor anyone else in this way, I will follow. He looked at me with a look of somewhat puzzlement. He said "anything"? I knew where he was going with this comment. I said don't get

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Step Nine

weird on me and we laughed for a sec. My friend looked around a bit and looked at the sky like he was working on what to say. He said, “I am glad you are down here with us; you finally dropped down from the clouds and joined us”. This floored me. This is when I knew that he saw my total self-centeredness way before I ever saw it in my step work. I started crying a real hard cry. I could not hold back any of the tears, even while sitting in a busy fast-food parking lot full of cars. I thought we were all high back then and no one would have seen the total self-centeredness of me. He then said he would like for me to continue what I was doing. Internally I was taken back a little, like what does he mean. Then he said ‘whatever you are doing is working. So, keep on doing it’. I kept crying for at least 20-30 minutes while we talked about life and some of the old times. We have kept in contact throughout the years. I still call my friend on his birthday and catch up with him. I tell him happy birthday and that I love him.

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Step Nine

I have continued doing what I was doing and working on myself. I am not cured, nor am I perfect. I am just Sean Fo, and I will keep on trucking.

Sean Fo.

Step Ten

“We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

“Step ten frees us from the wreckage of our present.”

-Basic Text, p. 42

It's hard to talk about my experience with Step Ten without giving a little bit of my history and how I felt before working the twelve steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

Growing up, I loved being alone. I would spend hours by myself. I didn't know it at the time, but what I was doing was trying to escape from my reality. The reality that I didn't like where I lived. The reality that being at home was very scary. The reality that, I felt like other kids had better families, nicer homes, cooler clothes, more friends...all the things I wished I had. And, the reality that I felt different inside. I felt broken, and that I was unlovable.

When I found NA, all I knew was that I wanted to stop using drugs! I was scaring myself by how little self

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Step Ten

control I had and I was terrified that I would die from using. I later found out that by giving up control, to a power greater than myself, opened the door to a life I never imagined.

I got a sponsor, started going to a crap ton of meetings and started working the twelve steps of NA. I started hearing things like, “Just take it one day at a time. One minute at a time, if you need to.” and “You never have to use again, you have a choice.” These simple, little sayings stuck with me over the days and I was able to stay clean, one day at a time. Days turned into weeks, weeks turned to months and months turned to years. As I started to work the steps, I started to learn things like, honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. I started learning about my character defects and about my character assets. I started to learn how to focus on the good things in my life and that I am lovable, talented and kinda funny, just ask Tom.

All of the work leading up to step ten had been about,

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Step Nine

not using no matter what, re-connecting with my Higher Power, re-connecting with myself and re-connecting with others. Step Ten, for me, is about the willingness to continue to grow in my recovery. To continue to look at myself, my actions, my feelings, my attitudes and my relationships on a day-to-day basis and then working on what I need to change. It's about clearing the wreckage of things as they happen to keep them from building up and creating more problems in the future. Our The Basic Text says, "...when these things are left undone, they have a way of festering." Thanks to the twelve steps of NA, and specifically Step Ten, I no longer have to fear my reality. I no longer have to escape my life today or feel alone. Just for today, I have a choice.

ILS

-Tony G.

Step Eleven

“We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”

To me my eleventh step is rooted in discipline in that I pray and listen every day, or at least try to. I pray for the guidance to be where I am supposed to be and I look for the lesson in everything. I've tried traditional meditation and that didn't work great for me. At first I took walks in nature and tried to stay present. Over my recovery it has evolved with me but the message stays the same. You will not mine be done and guide me in my life.

- Ember Z.

Step Twelve

“Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

It is hard to put into words what it means to me to have an awakening of the spirit. The basic text says that all spiritual awakenings have some things in common, such as “an end to loneliness and a sense of direction in our lives.” I think that is true for me. I have also had a deeper empathy for other beings. It has been easier for me to share with others what life is like today as a result of the steps. I used to think that I would be some kind of spiritual superbeing and that I would know exactly what it means to have an awakening of the spirit. Each time I work the steps, the more I come to believe that there is no way for me to measure the experience.

Words are too limiting. I think the only thing that has really come close is in “We Do Recover,” which states, “[t]hat wordless language of recognition, belief and faith, which we call empathy, created the atmosphere in which we could feel time, touch reality and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us.”

- Victor F.

Upcoming Activities



NEW WAY OF LIVING

Potluck

DECEMBER 19, 2025

First United Methodist
1101 Bluebonnet Dr,
Marble Falls, TX

6:00 PM: Food
7:00 PM: Speaker - Tracy B

305 Buena Vista Dr,
Marble Falls, TX

8:00 PM: Walkway of Lights



*Please bring a sharable dish. For more information, please
contact Tommy C at (830) 265-9196*

Common Welfare Safety Tip

Common Welfare is focused on the common welfare of all addicts, and seeks to find solutions to predatory or disruptive behavior, manipulation, intimidation, discrimination, and many more problems we may face.

A safe meeting begins with simple awareness. When someone walks in — especially a newcomer — notice how they're doing and stay mindful of the room's emotional temperature. Predatory behavior grows in the blind spots, but a group that quietly watches over one another closes those gaps before harm takes root. No one needs to police the meeting; we just need to stay awake to each other.

When we stay awake to one another, safety arises; what we notice, we protect, and what we ignore, we allow.

If you need support addressing predatory or disruptive behavior at a meeting, please reach out to Common Welfare at cw@ctana.org

**Common Welfare
meets online on the Tuesday
before Area from 6-7 PM**

**Meeting ID: 823 1204 6371
Passcode: 470920**

Open Service Positions

ASC Facilitator

Clean Time: 4 years

Policy Facilitator

Clean Time: 4 years

PI Facilitator

Clean Time: 2 years

RCM2

Clean Time: 2 years

PR Facilitator

Clean Time: 2 years

PR Co-Facilitator

Clean Time: 2 years

For more information on the requirements, responsibilities, and how to apply for the open service positions, read the CTANA Policy manual at ctana.org

Step 1: Go to ctana.org.

Step 2: Go to the “Downloads” menu item.

Step 3: Under “Service - Area/Group Files,” open the “CTANA Policy March 2025” document.

Step 4: Requirements, responsibilities, and application process are found under “Section Four - Trusted Servants” starting on page 6.

Newsletter Service Opportunities

The Newsletter relies on support from our members to continue reflecting the spirit of recovery in this community. We have multiple service opportunities for upcoming Newsletters! It's first come, first serve, so if you're interested, please email the Newsletter at newsletter@ctana.org.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Personal Stories

Up to 700 words
on an aspect of
your recovery.

Step of the Month

Up to 700 words
on that month's
step.

Reflections

Up to 400 words
on the reflection
topic.

January Newsletter

Personal Stories Writers (2)

Reflections Writers (3)

February Newsletter

Personal Stories Writers (2)

Reflections Writers (3)

Step Two Writer (1)

Reflections

“Recovery begins when we start to apply the spiritual principles contained in the Twelve Steps of NA to all areas of our lives.”

- It Works How and Why: Step 1

RECOVERY IS AN ACTIVE CHANGE IN
OUR IDEAS AND ATTITUDES.

Recovery is an active change in our ideas and attitudes. Recovery isn't hanging out in the smoking area after a meeting. It isn't just going out to eat with other addicts. It isn't even simply working the steps. True recovery happens when I take what I learn from all those experiences and apply it to my life, my thinking, and my choices.

Let's break it down. What does “active” mean? A good working definition is “ready to engage in energetic pursuits,” or “moving, or tending to move about vigorously

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Reflections

or frequently.” My favorite is “being in a state of existence, progress, or motion.”

That’s “active.” Now, what about “change”? I don’t need a dictionary to know that change means making something radically different or replacing one thing with something new. I’m actively implementing change in my ideas and attitudes, or, put another way, my ideas and attitudes are in a state of progress or motion.

To get there, I need our core spiritual principles: honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. I need to be surrounded by recovering addicts who love me and want to help. And I need the courage to step out of my comfort zone and try new things, things I may not understand at first, things that may seem silly or foreign.

I reached a point in my life where I desperately wanted to change. I couldn’t imagine taking one more breath as the person I had become. Oblivion seemed preferable to continued existence. I wanted so desperately to change, not just my drug use, but who I was, that I became willing to do whatever it took.

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Reflections

I never want to return to that life, but I often draw on that moment and that feeling. Anytime I'm faced with an uncomfortable opportunity to grow, I remind myself of what's behind me. I remind myself of my options: forward, toward a new way of life, or backward, to oblivion. The choice is simple. The action is difficult.

As long as I stay clean and don't give up, I have evidence that things will get better. Usually, it's not the circumstances that change, but how I relate to them. When I find a way to change myself, I become better equipped to handle life on life's terms, which is one of the biggest things I've needed all along. I'm grateful to be clean today, and I'm grateful to be in a process that's changing me.



The reflections column is an opportunity for the CTANA community to reflect together on a collective topic. Next month's topic is:

“Recovery begins when we start to apply the spiritual principles contained in the Twelve Steps of NA to all areas of our lives.”

- It Works How and Why: Step 1

Creative Works

IN THIS SEAT...

I earned this seat by using my friends and family and having nowhere to go.

I earned this seat because I died a thousand deaths

I earned this seat by selling my hopes and dreams in order not to feel

I earned this seat because my self hatred has no bounds.

In this seat, I lived in fear

I sit in this seat because I realized that I'm powerless, living in slavery

I sit in this seat because when I reach out someone will take my hand

I sit in this seat to hear my story being told

I sit in this seat to get freedom from my thoughts

I sit in this seat because my disease won't.

In this seat, I live in hope

I stay in this seat making living amends to my friends, family and to myself

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Creative Works

I stay in this seat to remember the people who died in
their disease

I stay in this seat to help someone else sit in theirs

I stay in this seat feeling the warmth of my soul and
seeing the colors of my dreams

In this seat, I'm living in gratitude.

**I'm able to stand up for my recovery, when I'm in
this seat.**

Poem by David Sylvester 2018



“Mountain
Lake”

Lou M

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the members of the CTANA community for your time, support, and thoughtful contributions to our newsletter. Your willingness to share your experience, strength, and hope not only strengthens our collective knowledge but also helps foster a vibrant and connected community. Each submission, whether an article, update, or idea, plays a vital role in keeping our members informed and inspired. We are truly grateful for your continued support and commitment to making the newsletter a meaningful resource for everyone.



We would also like to thank the CTANA members who wrote for the Winter Edition of the newsletter. Your contributions were essential to enabling the newsletter to reflect this community's spirit of recovery. We look forward to hearing more from our members in future editions.