

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION PRESENTATION**

OASC Public Information Subcommittee – October 10, 2002

### ***Identify Ourselves to the Audience***

Chris M, Erik R, and Kerry A.

### ***Statement of Purpose and Anonymity Statement – Erik R***

Thank you for allowing us to present the NA program to you today. The purpose of our presentation today is to help you understand our program and the nature of addiction, as we in NA define it. We understand that your agency serves members of our community that may attend NA meetings on their own or by the direction of the court system. We wish to enlighten you on what NA is, how we function as an organization, and how an addict recovers from addiction through our program. We hope that this information will help you to support your clients attending NA meetings.

Before we get started, we ask your assistance today in maintaining our tradition of personal anonymity by not identifying us as members of Narcotics Anonymous publicly. Please do not identify us by name or by describing the details of our personal circumstances that could reveal our identities in the public media. We thank you for respecting our request.”

### ***Description of NA – Kerry A***

Narcotics Anonymous is an international, community based nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. Our Fellowship is open to any drug addict, regardless of the particular drug or combination of drugs they used. There are no social, religious, economic, racial, ethnic, national, gender, or class-status restrictions to membership. Narcotics Anonymous membership is completely voluntary. We do not maintain membership rolls or keep attendance records for NA or for anyone else. Members live in the community and attend meetings on their own time. There are no dues or fees for membership; most members regularly contribute small sums to help cover expenses at group meetings, but contributions are not mandatory. NA is

strictly supported by contributions of its own members and never accepts outside contributions.

The core of the Narcotics Anonymous program is a series of personal activities known as the Twelve Steps, as adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. These "steps" include admitting there is a problem, seeking help, self-appraisal, confidential self-disclosure, making amends where harm has been done, and working with other drug addicts who want to recover. Some of the benefits in working the "steps" are practicing honesty with ourselves and to others, finding hope in living life on its own terms, developing faith in our lives, having a better understanding of ourselves, changing old behaviors, developing character assets, amending past wrongs to ourselves and to others, continuing to develop faith and improving our living actions, and sharing this gift with others.

Central to the program is an emphasis on what is referred to as a "spiritual awakening," emphasizing its practical value, not its philosophical or metaphysical importance.

Narcotics Anonymous itself is non-religious and encourages each member to cultivate an individual understanding, religious or not, of this "spiritual awakening." The Narcotics Anonymous program uses a very simple, experience-oriented disease concept of addiction. Narcotics Anonymous does not qualify its use of the term "disease" in any medical or specialized therapeutic sense, nor does NA make any attempt to persuade others of the correctness of its view. NA can only say that its members have found acceptance of addiction as a disease to be effective in helping them come to terms with their condition.

### ***History of Narcotics Anonymous and Literature – Chris M***

Narcotics Anonymous sprang from the Alcoholics Anonymous movement in the late 1940s. What we know as Narcotics Anonymous today first held meetings in the Los Angeles area of California, in the early Fifties. For many years NA grew very slowly, spreading from Los Angeles to other major North American cities and Australia in the early 1970s. In 1983 Narcotics Anonymous published its self-titled 'basic text' as we call it and the growth rate has since skyrocketed. Today, Narcotics Anonymous is fairly well established throughout much of Western Europe, the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand, with newly formed groups and NA communities scattered through the Indian

subcontinent, Africa, East Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. At last count we have over 29,000 meetings in 103 countries.

NA in Hawaii started here on Oahu in 1972. The fellowship grew slowly at first and, like the rest of the world, we grew rapidly after the publication of our "Basic Text". Today on Oahu we have 35 meetings a week, on all parts of the island. We also conduct panel presentations in most of the correctional facilities on Oahu. Annually we have a campout on the North Shore to celebrate our recovery. This past April we had approximately 350 members attend our 18<sup>th</sup> Gathering of our Fellowship.

As we said earlier, published literature by Narcotics Anonymous as a whole contributed to the growth of our Fellowship, shaping our identity and our personal program. Here is some of the literature we use for our program (*describes literature, what it is used for, then pass itemst around the audience to examine*).

### ***Meetings – Basic Recovery - Erik R***

Narcotics Anonymous believes that one of the keys to its success is the therapeutic value of addicts working with other addicts. In meetings, each member shares personal experience with others seeking help, not as professionals but simply as people who have the same experience themselves and have found a solution. Narcotics Anonymous has no professional therapists, no residential facilities, and no clinics. NA provides no vocational, legal, financial, psychiatric, or medical services. The closest thing to an "NA counselor" is the sponsor, an experienced member who gives assistance to a newer member in working the 12 Steps of NA. The primary service provided by Narcotics Anonymous is the NA group meeting. Each group runs itself on the basis of principles common to the entire organization, principles laid out in our literature. These principles are found in the Twelve Traditions, which you will find in the literature we have provided to you today. There is no true authority structure in Narcotics Anonymous. The groups are autonomous in matters that do not affect NA as a whole. None of the groups on Oahu have permanent facilities of their own, instead renting space for their weekly meetings in buildings run by public, religious, or civic organizations. Only NA members lead our meetings while other members take part by talking in turn about their experiences in recovering from drug addiction. We call this 'sharing our experience, strength and hope'.

Narcotics Anonymous encourages its members to observe complete abstinence from all drugs, including alcohol, even substances other than an individual's drug of choice, though NA's only stated membership requirement is "a desire to stop using" drugs. It has been our experience that complete and continuous abstinence from drugs provides the best foundation for recovery and personal growth. However, Narcotics Anonymous takes no absolute stand as a Fellowship on the use of caffeine, nicotine, or sugar. The use of prescribed medication for the treatment of specific medical or psychiatric conditions is neither encouraged nor prohibited by NA. Narcotics Anonymous feels that these are matters of personal decision and encourages its members to consult their own experience, the experience of other members, and qualified health professionals in making up their minds about these subjects.

### ***Local Narcotics Anonymous Service Structure – Kerry A***

The basic unit of the Narcotics Anonymous organization is the NA group. The first priority of a NA group is to serve its members by providing a meeting with an atmosphere of recovery. The groups here on Oahu come together once a month to help each other through a service committee that serves to further the primary purpose of the group: to carry the message to the addict that still suffers from drug addiction. The Oahu Area Service Committee provides a number of services among them:

- Distribution of Narcotics Anonymous literature and meeting directories through its Literature Subcommittee;
- Telephone information services through its Phonenumber Subcommittee;
- Public information panel presentations, public service announcements and a informational web site through its Public Information Subcommittee;
- Panel presentations to acquaint treatment or correctional facility residents with the NA program through its Hospitals and Institutions Subcommittee; and,
- Social activities such as dances, campouts, special events during the holidays, that serve to unify our fellowship through its Activities Subcommittee.

Our Area Service Committee is supported exclusively by volunteer NA members, who serve on a rotating basis. We don't have an office or any paid staff here on Oahu. We

can be contacted through our Helpline phone number, which is printed on our schedules and in the telephone directory under Narcotics Anonymous. We can also be contacted through our web site at [www.na-hawaii.org](http://www.na-hawaii.org). This web site also has information on NA within the State of Hawaii and Guam. It also has links to NA worldwide on the internet if you are interested.

### ***Difficulties of Recovery – Erik R***

For your own understanding, I want to talk a little bit about the difficulties faced by recovering addicts. It's hard for non-addicts to understand how difficult it is to lose the obsession and compulsion to use drugs, that the recovery process is a life long commitment. Many addicts that come to NA don't become abstinent after their first meeting. Relapse in recovery is more common than we wish and this is why we tell our newcomers to keep coming back, that the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using drugs.

Another difficulty in recovery is the use of a drug called alcohol. It is our belief that to maintain a program of recovery, we must practice abstinence of all drugs. Newcomers find it difficult not to drink alcohol because it's socially acceptable even when it is not their drug of choice.

Probably what concerns your organization most is the role of the family in the recovery of an addict. NA does not support family members directly or indirectly within its program. Our program of recovery is an individual experience. It is up to the recovering addict to use the principles of recovery to best address their social living within a family.

Another common problem a recovering addict faces in early recovery is the time away from family to work his or her program. The time spent attending NA meetings, working with a sponsor and being of service to the NA program takes the addict away from family life. This fact can add stress to an addict's home life and is another challenge for continued recovery.

As the addict applies him or herself to the program, the wreckage of the past; dealing with anger and resentment of loved ones is not easy and it takes time to repair that damage. There is hope. I can speak from my own experience that making amends to our

families, living a personal program of recovery, changes us into human beings capable of loving others and becoming responsible members of society.

***Closing – Erik R***

*(Closing statement):* One more thing needs to be said about the Narcotics Anonymous program. We recognize that NA is only one organization among many addressing the problem of drug addiction. Narcotics Anonymous does not claim to have a program that will work for all addicts under all circumstances or that it's therapeutic views should be universally adopted. Thank you for listening and now we want to answer any questions you have about our program.*[Question and answer period.]*