

Bucks County Clean Sheet

Narcotics Anonymous
Winter Edition
2013



Guidelines for Submissions Articles to BCCS:

The Guidelines used for BCCS are not personal opinions of members of BCCS subcommittee. To ensure fairness and in the spiritual principles of the program, the BCCS tries to the best of it's ability to employ the same guidelines set forth by the NA Way magazine which was established by the NA World Service Board. The following The following excerpts below regarding editing is taken verbatim from the NA Way Magazine from the NA World website. For additional information visit the website at <http://www.na.org>.

The NA Way Magazine is broad-based recovery and service oriented journal for NA members. One of our roles is featuring updates and information from world services. Our editorial content ranges from personal recovery experiences to opinion pieces of concern to our fellowship as a whole, right through to humor or nostalgia about recovery. While we prefer typewritten documents, we will gladly accept handwritten materials as well.

"Editing: All manuscripts go through a review and editing process. We look for a tone that reflects a spirit of unity and mutual respect. Any article that slanders another NA member will be rejected. Explicit sexual references and all obscene and vulgar language will be deleted from published articles. Articles that are written in a "preachy or teach-y" tone may be edited to read from a more personal one. We make other edits in keeping with NA's understanding of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, using standard NA language such as "clean," "recovery," and "addict." Implied endorsements of outside enterprises are deleted, as are any other references that may be perceived as being in conflict with NA's spiritual principles. Authors' names are printed using the first name and last initial, unless the author asks to be identified as "Anonymous." Opinion pieces that challenge prevailing interpretations of the Twelve Traditions are welcome, and in those cases, some of the editorial guidelines noted above may be relaxed.

In addition, submissions are copyedited to ensure ease of comprehension and adherence to the rules of English grammar, i.e., we will review and revise sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, etc. Editorial staff may also substitute different words for clarification, but content and the author's intentions are retained in the copyediting process. We do our very best to maintain the tone and voice of the author. We prefer definite, specific, concrete language and orthodox spelling. The reference books we most use are current editions of Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, The Chicago Manual of Style, Fowler's Modern English Usage, and The Handbook of Good English.

("-<http://www.na.org/?ID=naway-submissionguides> (NA World Guidelines)

Editor Notes is one suggestion...

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STEP ONE

When I first came to NA and got involved with a sponsor, my primary concern was learning how to stay clean. I'm willing to bet I wasn't alone in that regard. But, it was around the time I got my 1st Step assignment that I found out that drugs were just a symptom of my disease and that the admissions of powerlessness and unmanageability applied to so many other aspects of my life. Not only was I powerless and unmanageable when it came to drugs, I was the same regarding almost everything else.

The First Step, in the Basic Text, tells us pretty plainly, "We are powerless not only over drugs, but over our addiction as well." And if we were to take a look at our 1st Step in How It Works, we'll find, "...when we first come into the program, our drug addiction is how we identify with each other and the program. As we continue in our recovery, we will see how these aspects of our addiction (obsession, compulsion and self-centeredness) can manifest themselves in many areas of our lives."

Powerlessness does not mean hopelessness, helplessness, or incapability. It simply means that I have limitations, boundaries and restrictions that I must try to stay aware of. Just because my life has gotten better as a result of abstinence from drug use (and certain other behaviors), does not mean I can assume total control of anything.

It is the denial of those limitations, boundaries and restrictions that bring about unmanageability and consequences in my life. If I can't control my addiction, how can I control my life? Remember that question from Step One? It's amazing how many of us forget that one. The reality is that there are many powers much greater than myself that directly influence and "control" aspects of my life that I can't begin to understand. This awareness is humbling.

Although I have the ability to make better choices and decisions today because of staying clean and doing the work set forth in the Steps of NA ("powered-up", if you will), I don't fool myself into thinking that I've reached a point of being "powerful" or no longer suffering from the disease of addiction. Although it was desperation and drug addiction that brought me to the rooms of NA, it was the honest admission (and acceptance) of being an addict that led to my initial surrender. The paradox of "surrendering to win" still applies to me, even with years of clean time. I'm still recovering from the disease of addiction, I'm still in need of help because I can't do it alone, and I'm still powerless.

STEP TWO

The Second step in Narcotics Anonymous , is loosely translated in my understanding of a fractured mind as—the process of hope by asking for help to ease the disease of addiction. In the basic text chapter “who’s an addict” I learned what addiction was, obsession and compulsion with symptoms effecting physical, mental, emotional and spiritual parts of myself.

What was the lack of the spiritual? A death of my living self, whose sole purpose was to be in misery till death. Dead lifeless eyes turn downwards, not able to face reality and only my persona as fatally cool until my aforementioned demise.

“We came to believe in a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”- N.A. 2nd Step

Breaking down the words, seeing the whole picture by reading, discussing, writing what I could muster, and asking what other members comprehend while living this step through actually staying clean.

That was the kicker. The bottom line, stay clean as of just for today. Each moment was grueling cause my first step was a joke. I had admittance ticket for N.A., I was full fledged “pickle.” I was not a regular old cucumber no more. I transformed into selfishness because of things long ago, yet when I began to make decisions, I was determined for bliss till I realized I was a slave to a substance. Freedom was lost. I was enslaved to my habitual mind to get one more, of absolutely anything that would distract me from the truth...I’m still living this life day after day.... As me.

Second step requirements for a higher power– Loving, Caring and something Greater than my own self. I was so disillusioned, I am God. Who are these other people? I was so alone, even in a massive gathering of people, no one else existed. “Intangible” - hard to grasp. That was the ultimate power, relationships of humanity.

These fallible people, “ one addict helping another.” Are my power to restore me to sanity,

Solution? Continue to heal and begin to live by going through the steps. “Stop using, lose the desire to use and find a new way to live.”

STEP THREE

This step was a bit scary for me because of my many issues with God. i had been taught many things about God, but had not bothered to ever get an understanding of God for myself. Fear kept me stuck for a few minutes until a few people reminded me that if i made a decision, it would allow me to find out who/what God is. It would open the door for a cooperative relationship to begin that would give me the freedom to ask for help when needed.

Somewhere in the middle of this step i began to see that this decision had nothing to do with my past being turned over to God. It was asking me if i would be willing to make that decision about my life today. Acting on my self will had produced so many conflicts with others and myself that it was no problem at all to see that this was the best choice possible. These two are both necessary to make a decision about so that my whole life can be committed to this spiritual way of living. Nothing held back and always moving forward.

As I continue to make this decision, i find that today is all i have to give to God. i do what i know is right, take a few safe risks, and leave the results in God's hands. The evidence i use to strengthen this surrender is that i have never stayed clean this long by myself. It's a trusting relationship that continues to develop. It produces hope within me that God will take care of me no matter what and that He will continue to help me to learn how to live.

Steps 1,2,3

Ok so with three years clean I kinda learned how to use these three steps as a package; lets identify the problem, search for a solution and commit to that solution when we find it. "we" of course being me and the people of Narcotics Anonymous, namely my sponsor and a handful of "go-to" people in my network that know me pretty well and that care about me. I'd like to say that I automatically apply the first three steps whenever its necessary but i'd be lying. I usually have to sit around stuck for a day or two until I remember, "Oh yeah....I got the first three steps in the closet behind the ukelele i been meaning to learn how to play, I should take them out and use them!" You know what though? Being stuck for a day or two is much better than being stuck for twenty years like I used to be so I don't mind so much and it gets easier to apply them every time I do.

When i want to use 1,2 & 3 I think about the HOW principle. The acronym people invented the HOW principle for us and we are very grateful. HOW stands for Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness. Before anything gets better I have to HONESTLY admit that there is problem but this can be hard sometimes because my Problem-admitting soft-ware is defective. See one of the joys of the disease of addiction, and by joys I mean complete nightmares, is that it is a disease of the mind that convinces the mind that it doesn't have a disease! In fact it tends to convince the mind, my mind anyway, that not only is it not diseased but it is far superior to and much handsomer than all the other minds out there and the REAL problem is that the owners of those other minds constantly refuse to recognize the awesome superiority of my mind and how it expresses itself in my behavior and anyway I'm not the problem...they are the problem my life would be perfectly fine if people would stop being haters and just let me do what I want, I mean GOD! HOW YOU GONNA COME AT ME FOR BEING ME???!?!.....see what I mean? Sheer Insanity! People seem to love to paraphrase Einstein; The consciousness that solves the problem can't be the same as the one that created it, or, like Kaiser Soza, "the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing people he didn't exist" (its best to say that in your head in a creepy Kevin Spacey voice!) So when I HONESTLY admit that I am powerless over my addiction, which to me is a whole bunch of thought processes and habits of thinking characterized by obsession, compulsion and zero impulse control, and driven by self-centered fear, AND that my life has become unmanageable because of this, and not because my ex-girlfriend is a crazy bitch, then i am at the start of the path that leads to me being unstuck....kinda like where the Yellow-brick road starts at that little swirly thing in Munchkin-land. (I just used 6 comas in one sentence=WINNING!!)

Ok so after years of banging my head against the same wall and fifty co-

mas later we have an honest identification of a problem. Now we need to be OPEN-MINDED enough to receive the solution. Solutions are like vampires, you have to actually open your mind and invite them in cause eventually they get kinda tired of knocking and go away. So for the sake of this paragraph lets pretend I have a problem (ha ha ha). Lets say I'm on the phone with my sponsor; "Doug" I say (my sponsors name is not really Doug) "Doug I've finally had it man, the unhealthy relationship choices I consistently make due to the lack of self- knowledge and acceptance that would be progressively diminished by the completion of that fourth step I have been working on for two years have made my life unmanageable and Doug when you're right, you're right and you were right buddy i never shoulda married Diamond from the strip-club after all plus y'know what Doug.....I'm beginning to think that Diamond isn't even her real name!!"

"Well Ulysses(not my real name)," says Doug "Instead of obsessively convincing yourself that Diamond is someone that she is not and compulsively trying fix, control and micro-manage her and the relationship, you may want to consider ending things, Other people have gotten divorces from nut-ball strippers and while certainly quite painful in the short-term, in the long run you will probably be much happier."

"But Doug she is so hot!!"

"Yes but she just burned your house down and if you break up with her not only will you benefit from distancing yourself from the codependent insanity you will also make room for some serious personal growth that will help you to make better choices in the future, don't worry, your friends and I will be here to help you through the hard times!"

" I see so you are saying that abstinence must come first!!!! I am coming to believe that you and Tony and Little Joe are right and maybe you guys CAN help to restore me to sanity! You are a great sponsor Doug, Thank You!!"

"We made a decision to turn our lives over to the care of god as we understand him" is step-latin for the WILLINGNESS to commit to the solution. It's translation in English is: I'm going to do what the Doctor ordered, I'm going to take my medicine, I'm going to do whatever it takes to get better despite the pain and the dreaded uncomfotability of the cure because It's so worth it!!! But the Third step has a price and that price is action. The path to sanity has been laid out but I have to walk it, luckily I'm never alone now, I got good ol' Doug and Tony and Little Joe and that smelly guy, but he means well, to help me along!

3RD WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE NA MEMPHIS

(CONTINUATION FROM LAST ISSUE)

PART 2 OF 3

During the break Bo had approached me about chairing a cut and paste workshop on Chapter 3. I thought all the chapters were completely assembled in the local Lit Committees prior to the conference. Bo explained that they weren't. Some chapters had not been assembled at all. Some were partially completed. I had EXPECTATIONS that I would follow the progress that the Bristol Lit Committee and the Philly Lit Committee had started on Chapters 8 and 10. I thought I should be part of the editing workshop. I asked Bo why he was demoting me. I was an experienced member. Shouldn't I edit? He said he needed an experienced member to run the cut and paste workshop. He couldn't think of anyone who had more experience than me chairing a cut and paste workshop. He said I had more experience in cut and paste than even him and Greg P. had. He needed someone whom he could trust to get the job done while he was focused on learning how to do the editing in a workshop. He then asked me to train other addicts in the cut and paste technique. That way we had other members who could chair the cut and paste workshops. He asked me to stick with that workshop until other members could run it. I reluctantly agreed.

It took a while for me to process that information. I was grateful and willing to be part of the process of writing the NA Big Book. I didn't fully comprehend how unique this process was. I also devalued myself and some of my selfless service at that time of the writing of the Na Book. I was a 21 year old construction worker who dropped out of high school at 16 with straight F's. Do I really have something to offer. I had many internal conflicts. Self worth was high on the list. Arrogance was another... like telling Bo I felt demoted. However, when we said the Literature Prayer at the beginning of the general conference meetings, conference workshops, or at the

Bristol or Philly literature committees, all the internal conflicts I felt were removed.

The editing workshop had not been trialed yet at the conference. The Group Conscious Writing process was trial and error. When someone found something that worked. It was shared with the rest of the conference in Group Conscious and it then became part of the process. Group Conscious felt the editing was so important that we should only have one editing workshop at a time.

Once the editing process was worked out in group conscious the work took off. On a typical day on the conference floor there would be many workshops going on. We had a flow chart for each chapter. You could look at the flow chart and see the progression of work on each chapter. There was cut and paste workshops. When that was completed it would go to typing. The editing workshop would be next. It would then be retyped. It would then go into a review workshop and be evaluated. Additional material could be input here. It would be retyped. It would go back to an edit workshop. It would be retyped again. It would be reviewed again. The final review workshops had some newcomers in it. I was not sure why that was. It must be a mistake. We worked so hard for so long. Why would there be someone in the review process who didn't understand the recovery process. Why would we have a newcomer tell us if the final draft was ok for distribution. I talked to Bo about this glaring mistake. He asked me who were we writing this book for. I said to help the newcomers. The still suffering addict. He said well don't you think before we print it. We should make sure that a newcomer can understand it? He further explained if a newcomer can't comprehend what is in our book than we failed at our task. Everyone who read in the review workshops newcomers and old timers expressed similar responses. They could feel a spiritual presence while reading the book. The book felt like it was written for them. It felt like the book was talking to them.

A typical conference day would start out with a main conference business meeting. We would discuss what was done the day before. We would discuss what worked and what seemed unproductive. We then went over the flow chart. We came up with a priority list or goals for the day. We would then break off into smaller groups. Each workshop was chaired by an experienced member. There were many different workshops and conference activities going on simultaneously. There was cut and paste, editing, and review workshops. There was some always typing. The typist would be typing the edited material, there were people on phones talking long distance typing stories to be added into the book. After a workshop completed its task. All the work was turned in to the Conference Chairperson or Acting Chairperson. You would then get a new assignment or join a workshop that was struggling to complete a task. "Where am I needed now?" many conference participants would ask after completing a workshop.

By day four Pete had pulled through. He had sent the work we did on chapter four to the Memphis Airport. I went to the Airport and picked it up. I brought the work to the conference and turned it in to Bo. At first I felt elated. I was off the hook for being irresponsible. That was until Bo told me chapter ten had just been through the cut and paste workshop at the conference and it was ready for typing. We now had two different group conscious do cut and paste on chapter ten. It was decided to put it through another cut and paste workshop using both versions. This put chapter ten seriously behind schedule.

I didn't see or work that much with Ted and Terica during the conference except for Group Conscious. We may have worked in a workshop or two together but we each of us found our own ways of participating. All three of us were making new friends while we were in the workshops. We were learning new ideas from addicts about recovery in other Narcotics Anonymous Areas from all over the country. We were excited to share these ideas when we returned home.

I usually slept at the conference. There were plenty of sofas and cushioned chairs to sleep on. I would usually stay up if there were people hanging out at the conference. One late night Jim M from Ohio seemed to be on a mission. He had previously brought up on the conference floor the need for a Style Sheet. It was agreed on the conference floor that one was needed. The purpose of it was to have consistent language and terminology throughout the book. It hadn't been work shopped yet. Jim said he was leaving early in the morning and he wanted to work on this before he left. He asked Cathy T. from Memphis and myself to help him write a style sheet. We stayed up all night working on the Style Sheet. We had NA terminology on one side of the paper. Clean, Clean Time, Addict, Addiction, Using were some of the NA terminology. On the other side of the sheet was terminology that was to be replaced. Sober, Sobriety, Drug Addict, Alcoholic, Dope Fiend, Drug Dependent. I didn't understand the importance of this until the "Grey Book" was distributed. (That's another story) After we completed the Style sheet we had a little fun creating a second style sheet. We did a Yankee dialect/Southern dialect. We laughed until the sun came up.

By the sixth day of the conference we had two chapters completed. I was still working on Chapter 3 with the cut and paste workshop. Four more chapters were ready for final review. Chapter 10 was still in the cut and paste workshop. Two chapters were in 2nd and 3rd review workshops. There was some discussion about using the word God versus Higher Power. Group Conscious decided that God should be in our book and our lives!

The seventh Day of the conference I was asked to read the Mailgrams at the beginning of Group Conscious. There were Mailgrams from New Orleans, Louisiana; Nashville, Tennessee; Lisbon, Ohio; and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It was so inspiring. Addicts from all over were sending their love and support to the conference.

****To be concluded in Spring 2013 issue****

