

# Narcotics Anonymous Ireland Parents & Carers Handbook



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087 1689953

My gratitude speaks when I care  
and share with others the N.A. Way

## **Parents and Carers sub-committee of the IRSC Mission Statement**

The Parents and Carers committee was formed to help further assist Parents and Carers and those addicts seeking recovery who struggle to make regular meeting attendance due to family responsibilities.

Recovery is a challenge for all addicts and identification is paramount to the principle of one addict helping another.

Parents who need to attend meetings with their children may feel unwelcome or different. These parents and carers may also not be able to attend meetings as often as other recovering addicts and may find themselves surviving with less meetings and less fellowship interaction such as after-meeting coffee-breaks, conventions, fundraisers and other social gatherings.

Our aims are to help support parents and carers by encouraging existing meetings to become child friendly meetings. We can also assist groups who are willing to hold meetings offering crèche facilities.

Addiction is a family illness and many of us have parents or children affected by our disease. Our families have suffered and we often feel shame and guilt in relation to this. It is important that we find identification and look for similarities between us and other recovering addicts. Many of us have partners or ex-partners who are addicts, some of whom are in recovery, some of whom are not. As the fellowship grows and changes, so do the needs of our members – it is important that any addict is welcome to attend our meetings.

We have to be careful not to isolate but to make the effort and put our recovery first. Meetings can be a difficult choice for parents with small children who need to be put to bed. Hopefully together we can make our fellowship more accessible for parents and carers seeking recovery. Just as our disease is progressive so is our recovery. Recovery also affects our families. Don't leave before the miracle happens. Keep coming back.

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## **Suggestions for Parents and Carers who can't always get to meetings when they need to.**

- Get to as many meetings as you can.  
Ask for help getting to and from meetings if necessary
- Find out if there are any creche or child-friendly meetings in your area
- Do online meetings when you are unable to leave your child
- Pick up the phone
- Speak to someone, even if you only get their answering service
- Find and use an sponsor
- Try to set aside some time for your recovery every day – reading some NA literature is a good idea
- Don't use!

## **Phonelines & Contact Information for NA Ireland**

### **Ireland Region**

+ 353 1 6728000 (information only line)  
info@na-ireland.org  
Irish Service Office, 29 Bride Street, Dublin 8

### **Eastern Area (Leinster)**

+ 353 86 8629308  
PO Box 5793, Rathmines, Dublin 6  
info@nairleat.org

### **Northern Area (Ulster)**

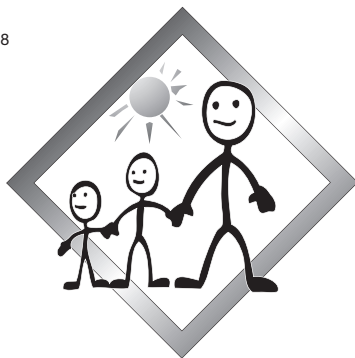
+ 44 7810 172 991  
PO Box 543, Tomb St, Belfast, BT1 1AA  
contact@nanorthernireland.com

### **Southern Area (Munster)**

+ 353 87 1386120  
P.O Box 89, Cork City  
info@nasouth.ie

### **Western Area (Connacht)**

+ 353 86 8149004



The Parents & Carers sub-committee of the Irish Region of Narcotics Anonymous has presented the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The opinions expressed are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any story imply endorsement by Narcotics Anonymous, The Parents & Carers subcommittee of the Irish Region of Narcotics Anonymous or the Irish Regional Committee of Narcotics Anonymous.

# Personal Stories

## Any meeting I got to felt like a blessing

For a long time before I cleaned up I felt ashamed of being a drug using mother and guilty about the ways my children were being affected by my drug use. Instead of motivating me to change, however, such feelings were one of the many excuses I used to continue taking drugs. But eventually, as my life became more and more unmanageable, and the pain of carrying on seemed worse than the thought of trying to stop, I began to look for help. Without telling anyone where I was going, I made my way to my first NA meeting. I can't remember any particular thing I heard that evening, but I do know a seed of hope was planted. When I returned home later that night I went to look in on the sleeping children and for the first time the familiar feeling of guilt was followed by the unfamiliar thought that there was something other than using that I could do about it.

I didn't stop using immediately. It took about six weeks of listening at meetings and talking with people afterwards before I became willing to take the action I needed to get clean. For me, that meant moving away from other drug users, including the children's father. It also meant leaving my eldest child with relations until I got settled and he felt ready to come and live with me. Within a relatively short space of time, I found myself a lone parent with little means of support, living in a remote state housing scheme at the end of a poorly served bus route. I had no car and very little money. What I did have was hope and the support of some NA members who went out of their way to help me. Even with their support though, getting to meetings was a real problem in the early days as I didn't really know anyone close by to where I lived and even if I had done, I didn't have much money to pay for babysitters. Some of my family offered to help but they lived quite far away and getting the children to them in order to get a lunch time meeting involved a two hour journey each way. Often by the time I got home in the evening I felt so stressed out that I would have loved nothing more than to make my way straight to another meeting. I often found myself envying other newcomers who could get to as many meetings as they liked. For me any meeting I got to felt like a blessing and the rare occasions I could go for coffee afterwards, a luxury. The phone became a lifeline and the home visits from NA members aware of my circumstances were something I looked forward to. Arranging outings and get-togethers with other recovering parents and their children also helped a lot.

There were times when the challenges of being a recovering parent seemed overwhelming and I remember holding on tightly to hopeful things I heard from other members who had been through similar experiences. When I expressed my concern to my sponsor that I didn't know if I could stay clean as I had stopped for my children and not for myself she reassured me that that was a good enough reason for now, that I had come to see things differently if I stayed around and did the suggested things. She also explained to me that being a mother in recovery presented me with an opportunity to get well more quickly than I otherwise might as coping with and responding to the needs of the children would require that I really work a recovery programme, not just talk about it. Someone else told me that as a recovering parent I would gain a deep insight into the real meaning and value of taking life 'one day at a time'. I remember learning how to act as if, how to play at being normal, how to fake it until I got the hang of it. I remember being told I wouldn't be given more than I could handle but also the many times I said to God, "I don't know what you think I can handle but I really can't handle this." And then I would get the help I needed in one form or another and I would handle it. The difficulty would be overcome and my faith in recovery would deepen.

Quite a few years have passed since then and over the course of my recovery I have often found myself saying the same or similar things to parents new to recovery or to recovering people new to parenting. I have also come to see that I owe my life to my children as it was they who motivated me to get clean and to keep going when times were difficult. As I write this piece I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the chance I got to share the benefits of recovery with them and for the fellowship and support of the many NA members who helped and supported me over the years.

## **The opportunity to make amends**

A small rabbit that dies of fear long before the dog kills it... That is the best description I have for the beginning of my surrender to the fact that I have an incurable disease called addiction.

I reached the point of hopelessness, loneliness and despair several years before I got clean. Back then I thought I had to live that way, I was destined to remain an addict. I had spent several years in different forms of denial that allowed me to continue using. I switched drugs, got onto a clinic and

surrounded myself with using addicts so I could fit in. I justified every insane thing I did constantly spinning excuses. It didn't matter when I lost my two children.

Nothing mattered.

Nothing mattered except getting stoned. I hurt everyone that crossed my path and justified it with the same tired excuses. I didn't know what else I could do so I continued to use and lived in despair. I just sat on the couch goofing and let my Mother care for my beautiful children.

Then one day through a friend who had gotten clean I found NA and began the process of recovery. I wrote an inventory and trusted my sponsor enough to read it out. I truly believed I was the only woman in NA who had done such horrible things to her own children.

I soon found out that I was not.

One of the many wonderful gifts I have received is the opportunity to make amends. I believe in Miracles because one has happened for my sons and I. Born with an addicted Mother all they had to look forward to was a lot of neglect and very little love.

Today they have me, their Mother, to love them. They also have a loving step-father and an adored younger brother, who was born during my seventh clean year. I know what saved me was the unconditional love I found in NA. My life is so rich and full.

Hopelessness despair and powerlessness have been replaced by hope, faith and joy. It means so much to me to see my family happy and free. This shows me the steps are working in my life. God has granted me the gift of Narcotics Anonymous. The steps, the fellowship and other addicts are my guides to life. It is a wonderful and joyful thing to feel God in my life. It took many years and a society of men and women who call themselves Narcotics Anonymous to bring me such joy.

## **The best mum I can be**

Surprisingly for me the hardest thing in recovery does not come from the daily challenge of staying clean, it comes from the difficulty I experience holding on to my anonymity from being a single parent who struggles with childcare.

I have an amazing 8 year old son who is the light of my life, the reason I began my journey of recovery and I am so grateful everyday that I am well enough now to be the best Mum I can be. I wouldn't change having him for anything but there are days that I feel overwhelmed, angry and hard done by and I have to work very hard to find my gratefulness.

It's during these times, when I need meetings more, coffee with my sponsor and movies with my fellow addicts that anonymity for me becomes a hard thing to protect.

Having to constantly ask family members to mind my son so that I don't have to pay a sitter leads to lots of questions about where I would be running off too. My addiction caused me a lot of shame and my family likes to pretend that it never happened. It is hard then for me to find a balance between the truth of where I'm going and the reality that sometimes I wish I didn't have to be so honest.

I often wonder how much easier life would be if there were meetings that I could bring him too or a network of other parents experiencing the same struggles that I do.

For me though, honesty in all things is the cornerstone of my recovery, so I say where I'm going even when its met with a wall of silence and sometimes a disapproving look.

I am really happy to be able to say that now my recovery is as important to me as the health and happiness of my son, because without it I don't have much of anything. So I will keep asking family members for help, even if it makes them uncomfortable because recovery has taught me that I'm worth fighting for.

## **The gift of being a parent**

I always thought being a parent would be fairly easy – sure what was in it, just provide for your children? That's not so. My way of dealing with anything in life was to have another drink, line, pill, smoke, whatever it took, but I never faced anything head on however trivial or serious.

My son was born with a heart defect. He had to have open heart surgery at two days old. While my wife was with him 24/7, I was running a pub. What I didn't realise was I was running away from my responsibilities and my addiction was steering me.

Again at 14 months my son had surgery. There was little change in my behaviour – if anything it got worse. The mad thing is it's only since I came into recovery I realised all of this.

By the time my daughter was born I had stopped drinking – wasn't I fantastic? – or so every one of my so called mates kept telling me. Look at me: I'm being a great Dad not drinking when I take my little boy to the pub for a game of pool but I was using my son to get out of the house to use.

Eventually when my boy was four and a half and my little girl was six months I asked God to help me. I didn't know what to do so I told the most

important people in my life that I had a problem and I needed help... That was on the 21/02/2004 – that's my clean date and that was the first day of being a proper parent in recovery.

Being a parent to day is different for me as I am now a 24/7 dad. I take my children to school or I collect them, I do what ever is needed to be done to show my children I love them unconditionally, I don't run away anymore.

My son had a stint put in to his heart in November 09. I can honestly say I was never as afraid in all my life, I had fear of the unexpected this was the first time I wasn't numb from some sort of gear in my system. I prayed and prayed for my son to be alright I shared and cried at meetings about the fear I had and then the fear was lifted. My faith in my Higher Power helped me come through my pain. My son came out of it well too.

On March 9, 2010 my ten year old son had open heart surgery again. My wife, who went through ever single heartbeat of my son's and daughter's life whether I was there or not, was really scared and feeling her own pain at her powerlessness over not being able to do anything for him. I was able to give her a hug and be the strong for us.

I was able to be with my son in his hour of need, there when he woke, when he asked for water, all the stuff we are supposed to do as dads.

I must say what I have gotten out of recovery is the chance to be a good honest hard working dad. I have the two most amazing children anyone could ever ask for even though sometimes they drive me to distraction.

I have been given a great gift in recovery – the gift of being a parent who's children are proud of him and who is very proud of his children and not afraid to say it or show it.

## **Addicts can be good parents**

I was nine months clean when my son was born. His mother and I had been using together for years, and we had both gone through a treatment centre during the time she was pregnant. It was a wonderful time when he arrived – we were deeply in love and we felt very able to cope with the upheaval of having our first child.

Unfortunately she didn't stay clean for more than a few months after he was born, which was one of the reasons the relationship started to deteriorate. When he was a year and half old, we separated. It was a very difficult time, and for the first while trying to adjust to raising him as two single parents was pretty hard, and it wasn't helped by my concerns about



her using. It took a long time for me to realise that even though she was using didn't automatically mean she was a bad parent, and once I let go of trying to get her clean and accepted that she was being the best parent she could be under the circumstances, things got a lot better between us. Despite our other problems, I think we were both lucky in that we realised from the start that no matter what happened, we were always going to be part of the same family, and the best thing for our son was to put him first.

Right from the day we separated we shared the parenting of our son, splitting our time between him equally. I worked for myself, so did my best to try and book jobs during the part of the week that he was with her. I also needed to cram meetings and service work and however much of a social life I had into the free part of my week. I was grateful I had a free part of my week to do this, as I saw many others around me who had their kids full-time and had to bring them to meetings. It was still difficult enough, but the reward of having a good relationship with my son made everything worthwhile.

Because we hadn't been married, I had no legal rights of guardianship or custody of my son. During the times that his mother and myself weren't getting along, the fact that my access to him wasn't guaranteed made me feel very insecure, but after a few years things seemed to have become pretty stable. Then my ex-partner told me that she wanted to move to a different country, and that she wanted to take our son with her. Deciding what to do and following it through was to be one of the most challenging times in my whole recovery.

After talking to some lawyers, it was clear that I had very limited options - I could either take her to court for custody, a case which as an unmarried father with a history of drug abuse I would almost certainly lose, or I could let my son go. I chose to go to court, and the following months were really difficult. I'm very grateful to my ex-partner, however, as throughout the whole proceedings we stayed civil to each other and my then eight-year-old son never even knew the court case was going on.

As it turned out, we agreed terms just before the case was heard, and I was granted guardianship and joint custody. My ex-partner changed her plans, and subsequently settled down with a new partner and started a new branch of the family. We both have a great relationship with our son, who is now in his twenties, and is a walking testament to the fact that addicts can be good parents, despite their own difficulties.

## **It took me a while to find my feet**

I was clean 18 months when I found out that I was pregnant. It had been really difficult but recovery had given me so much. I had a full time job, was living in a nice flat, had some wonderful people around me and felt that, for the first time, I was beginning to relax into life. I was going to plenty of meetings, carrying out service and doing all the things that I had been told by people in NA would make me better. And it was working.

The pregnancy was unexpected. All of a sudden my future looked very different and my plans changed overnight. As a single parent I felt that I needed the support of my family so I moved home. Home was in a different city so this meant leaving my job, my friends and the NA that I knew and was comfortable in. It was scary but I was grateful that at least I had had some clean time to rebuild my relationship with my parents prior to moving back.

It took me a while to find my feet with NA after my daughter was born. I wasn't able to get to meetings like before and I found I wasn't pushing myself either. This surprised me as I'd been so involved before, but I didn't like not knowing everyone, I almost felt like I was starting over. I was overwhelmed by how intense the experience of early motherhood was and much of the time all I wanted to do was just be with my daughter and isolate, everything else just seemed too hard. I wasn't able to commit to traditional NA service and I wasn't able to do the social side of NA either. My daughters' father is also in the fellowship and this proved difficult for me.

I knew it was the wrong thing to do but my head just wanted me to run away from the programme. Thankfully there were some wonderful people in the meetings I did go to and I began to get inspired again. I received great support, particularly from other mothers and I was offered the chance to get involved with the Parents and Carers committee that I'm so glad I took. It has allowed me to carry out service in a way that fits around my life and I feel like a part of the fellowship again. Slowly I began to feel more settled in myself and I stopped isolating. I found a few meetings where I was comfortable bringing my daughter and I got a new sponsor whom I used.

Words cannot express how grateful I am that I stuck with the NA programme. The joy my daughter has brought to my life is unimaginable. I know what a gift it is to be able to live in the moment with her and to rejoice in the small things. I know that I truly am doing my best for her and generally speaking I look forward to our days. I am the most content I

have ever been and I know that is only possible through being active in NA, I use the tools of the programme every day. I am incredibly grateful to NA, it not only saved my life but has given me one that I enjoy living.

## **I needed help and I got that in NA**

Nobody knows why I am a little on edge these days especially when an unexpected knock comes to the door - it's because I'm waiting as I have done for the last few months. My daughter is 17 since January and I'm waiting for her to come and find me. I haven't seen her since February 1993 when she was finally taken away from me - she was three and a half weeks old and I don't think I realised what was happening to me - to be perfectly honest I was stoned so didn't really care much. I saw her again four months later for the last time - I received a couple of photos over the years that followed - the last one was when she was four and was in her school uniform. She was absolutely gorgeous.

It's a long story and a painful one. I started using when I was nine, smoking butts of cigarettes and drinking cider in the shed at the back of the house. I liked the way the way I felt when I drank - I did this for many reasons and the main one is I'm an addict and I believe I was born an addict. I can see it early on in my childhood wishing I was someone else, always running from what or whom I never really figured out until I came into NA. I wanted to escape and hide from everyone and everything and by using I escaped. I was happy in a funny sort of a way even though our house was very unsettled and there was both depression and alcoholism rife in the home. My dad is an alcoholic and my mother was depressed because of this, among other things. It was an abusive home both physically and sexually. The result of the sexual abuse from my father resulted in me becoming pregnant. I gave birth to a baby girl when I was fourteen years old - not the best of ideas for a small village in the west of Ireland.

My aunt lived and worked in Dublin and took care of everything. I kept using when I was pregnant even though I didn't realise I was pregnant until I was nearly 5 months gone, but it didn't matter, I kept using and gave birth to a healthy baby girl. I used because my father abused me and because my mother never helped me. I spent the next few years using and running from place to place. I used because I had a baby, I used because I was abused, I used because I missed my daughter, I used because she was taken away from me, I used because I wanted to but most importantly I needed to - I needed to block everything out.

I stopped using because I couldn't do it anymore - using wasn't numbing the pain and feelings running around in my head. I was crazy when I was using and I was crazy when I stopped - I needed help and I got that in NA. I didn't know what to do - a friend was in recovery and suggested that I go to a meeting - I hated her for that but it was the beginning of a new life for me. I'm in recovery longer than I was using - still one day at a time - 12 years and ten months and I struggle at times like everyone else.

My daughter may or may not try and find me - maybe she will never know but I will always remember her - I think of her everyday - all the time but it might be best for her if she doesn't find me. How would I explain to her where she came from, the circumstances - it would hurt me so much if I caused her any pain. I have no doubt that she had a wonderful life. If I get to meet her I'll be able to get through it with the help and support that NA can give me. I don't have to use on this - I just need to talk about things with my sponsor, share in meetings and do the steps of NA.

## **My feelings of isolation began to dwindle**

I've been clean for eight years and am a grateful member of the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The first four years of my recovery I spent going to as many meetings as was humanely possible and taking on nearly as many service positions. I went to conventions, joined committees and did my best to carry a message. I covered a lot of ground, clocked up a lot of miles and made friends with addicts all over the country. I had a sponsor and wrote steps to the best of my ability. I left a job I was unhappy in for a long time, went to college and fumbled in relationships all the while learning and growing and discovering what being responsible for myself is about.

After four years I discovered I was to become a Mother. Everything changed. My relationship eventually broke up, I moved away from my family back to Dublin where I am from and where I got clean and tried to stay with my studies which for various reasons didn't work out. Things weren't easy for a long time and after my beautiful boy was born a whole new reality dawned on me.

I've heard it said many times that if you want to make God laugh make plans. I thought I had it all planned out. Then the sleepless nights happened and the financial unmanageability came back and the never a baby sitter when you need one and the wonder of being a new mother and the terror of an isolated addict happened.

So after trying to fix it all myself I did what I've learned to do if I want to stay clean; I handed my fears to God and asked members for help and the miracles came back tenfold. The Parents and Carers sub committee in the UK was brought to my attention by someone whose guidance I trusted. Then another member told me about a clinic with a day programme and a creche that were willing to facilitate an NA meeting. With the help of another mother in recovery I became the first secretary of that meeting and felt such relief to know that at least once a week I could go to a meeting where my baby would be safe in the room next store to me. My feelings of isolation began to dwindle and even though life has not been smooth since then I know there is a place I can go on a Friday and get a meeting and bring my son without having to make all sorts of arrangements.

I love the diversity of our fellowship and the people it allows me to meet and learn from. I struggle with being committed in a steadfast way and making choices between meeting attendance and family and fun but by being reminded of where I have come from; seeing the courage in newcomers, I usually find a way to put recovery first. If I do lose my way then the fellowship can help me back because by managing to do service with Parents and Carers I have contact with addicts who understand.

My son is wonderfully sociable and loves the faces my recovery brings into his life. He knows my sponsor and my sponsees. He plays with other addicts children happily in creche and at NA gatherings. I owe my life to God and the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous and he owes his to the miracle of recovery.

## **Learning to forgive myself**

Being a mother in recovery is one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences in life.

I was 19 when I had my son it was one of the saddest experiences I ever had as I was thrown out of my family home because my parents said I had brought a lot of shame to the family. I remember when my son was born making a conscious decision that I was going to be the best mum ever and at the time I really believed it. I loved him with all my heart.

My son was two years-of-age when I started using hard drugs. My son was badly affected by my addiction. He witnessed all the drug use, violence, police raids and the devastation that addiction brings with it. At age three he sat with my dad holding two pieces of tissue, he was using one sheet as if it was a sheet of foil and he had the other rolled up like a

tooter. I remember the intense guilt and shame that I felt. I really loved him but drugs controlled my life. The more guilt I felt the more I used.

The next six years were a living hell, I would forget to collect him from school or turn up completely out of it. I had him living in my world of denial; he had to keep all my secrets – what a heavy burden for a young child to carry. I was under no illusion that he was being affected by my addiction, I knew in my heart that my addiction was destroying his young life. I tried everything to stop using. I went to different countries, numerous self detoxes, spiritual healers, etc. and nothing worked. It got to the stage where my mum took over my looking after my son. I was completely lost.

Eventually I met a counsellor who smiled and didn't judge me for being a bad mother. He was the first person ever to give me hope. He was the first person who ever mentioned Narcotics Anonymous to me. I went to meetings but could not stop using. I went into detox when my son was seven because my mum got a barring order against me and was going for guardianship of my son. I went into detox and got my first day clean on the 16/2/1999 and I have been clean ever since thanks to N.A, the steps, God, my sponsor and the wonderful people I have met along the journey. I will be forever grateful to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous for giving me and my son a second chance at life.

The next eleven years was spent staying clean on a daily basis, building an honest loving relationship with my son and learning to forgive myself. I decided to tell my son the truth about my addiction when he was eight as I felt he had been badly affected, that he needed some sort of understanding of what was going on. I apologised to him since he was the person I harmed the most. It's been an ongoing journey of making amends. The biggest amends I've made has been staying clean and being present in his life.

For the first two years of recovery I got one, two and sometimes three meetings a day. I didn't know how to be a mother so I ran to meetings constantly. I was lucky I had a really good family around me so my mum would mind my son while I went to meetings. I remember then feeling guilty that I was never at home, I was always out at meetings. I shared this with a sponsor and they said well do something about it. So at two years I began to get a little bit of balance in my recovery and the guilt began to subside. I learned to play with him, I learned what his interests were and encouraged him the whole way. I got involved with his football team and his school. I stood up for him and was his voice on occasions where he

could not defend himself. I blew myself away sometimes – I never thought I would be able to battle with a school principle for what I believed to be right for my son. I remember been so thankful to NA during these times as God, the steps and people had helped me find my voice and stand up for what I believe.

My son is now nineteen. He has had his own journey of experimenting with drugs. I found this extremely difficult as I transferred all my 'stuff' on to him. I thought he was going to experience everything I did. He really struggled from the age of fifteen to seventeen. I felt so powerless and my behaviour became crazy again in trying to prevent him from going down the road I did. I stopped going to meetings as often for about a year as I felt I needed to be there for him. Even though I stopped going to meetings I still worked the program in my life. I constantly prayed, more than I ever did, I was on the phone constantly to my sponsor and friends and I had to practice the first step on a daily basis. Two years on and he is doing extremely well. I believe he is on his own spiritual journey of recovery. He is so funny, confident, spiritual, loving, respectful, thoughtful and caring. He has his own higher power in his life and it's working.

The most important thing about recovery is working it at home. Practicing spiritual principles with my son, accepting him for who he is and encouraging him to grow into the person he is meant to be. All our steps start with the word "We" and I did none of the above on my own. I had god, my phone, sponsor, meetings, trusted friends and the program in my life. The women in the fellowship kept me going on the days when I wanted to give up. Our women are priceless.

If you are a new mother to recovery, I hope my story has given you some hope. Being a mother and getting to meetings can be difficult but please don't forget there is more to the program than meetings. Get a sponsor, get an understanding of your higher power, always have credit in your phone (and use it), have one other person that you trust in your life. You are not alone. The program of Narcotics Anonymous has so much to offer you and your children.

## **An organised, safe environment for our children**

I got clean when my daughter was three years old. Getting to meetings was extremely difficult. I was a single parent with no family living nearby. I did meet other mothers in NA and we tried to help each other out

with babysitting. As all the meetings were at night time, as soon as my daughter started school I attended a lunch time meeting that ran for a while. Then a women's meeting was formed and we tried from time to time to organise crèche facilities. This was a great idea but we didn't have the organisational skills at the time to keep it going. To make up for lack of meetings I would often meet members for a coffee and a chat during the day and this practice has stood me well as I still do a lot of that today. I think the idea of having an organised safe environment for our children especially in those early years of recovery, is the kind service that is both practical and spiritual and I would love to see that begin to happen throughout Ireland. My daughter, though young, was the person most affected by my using and I often felt like I was in a dilemma. I was trying to get well by going to meetings but I didn't want to cause her more damage by leaving her with just anyone. If ran well these crèche facilities could be a great solution to that dilemma.

## **Becoming a parent in recovery**

Recovery has been amazing to me. It gave me a life, coping skills, happiness in my heart and faith in life again.

When I was eighteen months clean I became pregnant for the first time – a miracle the doctors said would never happen. Through my pregnancy I needed and used NA in a whole new way. I found supports to help me through these new feelings and when I had my son I found that pregnancy had given me the ability to truly love and I didn't realise it until then. In early recovery I understood love.

Now two years on I have two beautiful precious sons, the days of getting a meeting a day or two if I needed have passed. It can be a struggle getting two or three meetings a month with a toddler and a newborn. Having the option of going to a meeting with a crèche has been a lifeline. Since becoming a parent meetings have become even more important to me, purely for my sanity, my re-connection with recovery and to take myself out of myself.

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## **The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. 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.
12. 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.

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## **The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. NA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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## **The Twelve Concepts** **for Service in Narcotics Anonymous**

1. To fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose, the NA groups have joined together to create a structure which develops, coordinates, and maintains services on behalf of NA as a whole.
2. The final responsibility and authority for NA services rests with the NA groups.
3. The NA groups delegate to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it.
4. Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.
5. For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.
6. Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.
7. All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body's decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes.
8. Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.
9. All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes.
10. Any member of a service body can petition that body for the redress of a personal grievance, without fear of reprisal.
11. NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.
12. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government.

The Twelve Concepts for NA Service were modeled on AA's Twelve Concepts for World Service, published by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., and have evolved specific to the needs of Narcotics Anonymous.

## Phone Numbers



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