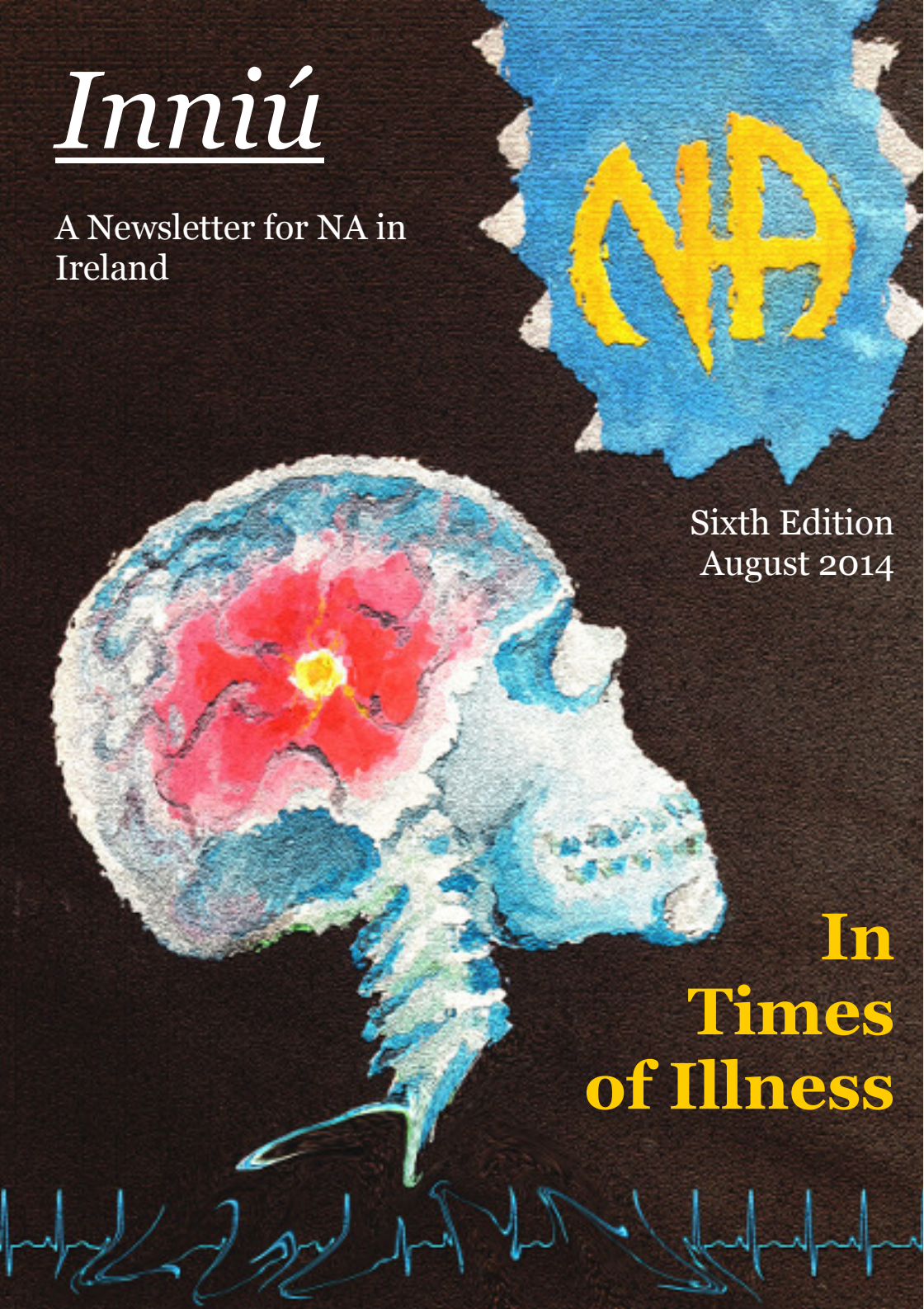


# Inniú

A Newsletter for NA in  
Ireland

Sixth Edition  
August 2014

**In  
Times  
of Illness**



Welcome to the sixth edition of Inniú!

This newsletter will focus on illness in recovery, a challenging issue facing many NA members. Going through an illness or injury in recovery is a difficult one – not only are we worn down by the illness itself, but quite often members face difficult decisions about how to treat the illness. Many of us have agonised over these decisions, trying to find a balance between our health and wellbeing, recovery, and lives of those around us. There are no easy answers to these dilemmas, but a great resource on offer is the NA booklet *In Times of Illness*, which can be downloaded [here](#).



This booklet offers practical suggestions for those living with an illness, injury, or mental health disorder. It offers the experience of members who live with an illness and retain their recovery in NA, while offering support to members who relapse with medication taken for an illness.

This issue of Inniú will similarly share the experience, strength and hope of some of those in the Irish region who have had to face an illness in recovery, and the challenges it brings. It is important to remember, however, that this experience is not

intended to be used as a substitution for medical advice, or used to make decisions regarding healthcare treatment without consulting professionals. As the *In Times of Illness* booklet states:

“ Our goal is to responsibly seek treatment for medical conditions while we acknowledge that we are recovering addicts with the disease of addiction ”

In this issue of *Inniú*, Eamon shares his experience of being diagnosed with a brain tumour, and the strength, hope, and love he received from those around him. Joe describes his journey after the difficult decision to take medical treatment for hepatitis C, and a female member writes about her experience with depression and anti depressants. Each of these people describe how they managed their illness alongside their recovery. *Inniú* is incredibly grateful for what they have shared and hope that it benefits others who may be going through similar difficulties with an illness, injury or mental health disorder.

In fellowship, Stephen H., Regional PR Coordinator

## **Cover art by Marc G**

**We are always looking for submissions, drawings, poetry, art, short stories, articles or correspondence for the newsletter. Feel free to get in touch: [info@na-ireland.org](mailto:info@na-ireland.org)**

# *One Day at a Time*

On June 8<sup>th</sup> 2011, I was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Two days later, after a biopsy I was told I had Non Hodgkins Lymphoma. I was put on medication and sent home to wait for a bed in St. Vincent's hospital, where I would receive large doses of chemotherapy over a five month period.

The ten days before I was admitted gave my wife R. and I a chance to try and come to terms with what we were facing. It gave us a chance to weep. To have my son, family and close friends come to visit. This time gave us a chance to prepare. We both really appreciated this time. I felt very loved and many people made a big effort to support me. My sisters came from far and wide to make a visit possible. I did not want to die but after eighteen years of recovery I felt more able to accept death. I was able to reflect on how important and worthwhile these eighteen years were to me now. How I now took responsibility for my life, how I had learnt to love and to give.

I attended a lot of meetings and drew strength from NA members and sponsor. I read *In times of Illness* and took it with me to the hospital. I accepted and embraced the guidelines laid down in *In times of Illness*. I reached out to

all appropriate people. I informed the hospital that I was a recovering addict, I requested that I did not want to receive any morphine based drugs for pain.

The regime was that I went into St. Ann's ward and the chemo was administered. My body fell apart. It took four weeks to stabilize using various blood products etc., as my immune system was zero. After the first session I got an infection which put me in danger. But I fought back and pulled out of it. Throughout the five months of chemo, one of the most important things was that I managed to keep eating healthy food. Every day my wife R. brought me in a flask of freshly made juice and a flask of homemade soup. Every evening she went out to the car park and cooked tasty tempting and nutritious meals for me on a camping stove. On reflection I believe the goodness of these meals sustained me and aided my immune system. I also gained huge strength from this act of love.

Once my immune system recovered to a tolerable level I was allowed to go home for a two week break before my next round of Chemo. These breaks were something to look forward to and though I was weak we took magical journeys on each one. We stayed in a lovely hotel in Waterford and took a boat trip to The Saltee Islands. We went to France for a week and soaked up the warmth and ate like kings. We

visited my youngest sister in London and went to some excellent gigs at places like The Jazz Cafe in Camden. I attended meetings everywhere and tried to build up some strength to face the next round. While in St. Ann's ward, R. and myself really connected with some of the patients and the staff. The staff who were men and women from every corner of the world impressed us, with their devotion, patience and good humour. This in turn gave me strength to deal with my illness. Generous visits from NA and AA members and when I was able for them, meetings in the day room were uplifting.

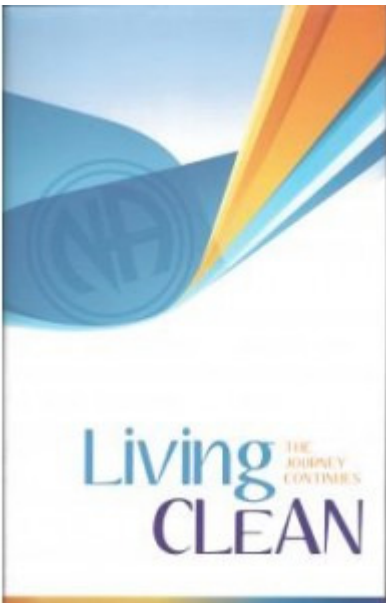
There were bad days. In July my son got married, I was in hospital and not able to attend. I wrote a speech and R. attended on her own and delivered it with love. In November just as I finished my chemo and was waiting to start my Radio Therapy my wife R. was diagnosed with a malignant tumour in her intestine. Somehow we had to find the extra strength to fight this also. In January she had major surgery and is doing well. From all of these experiences I have learnt and grown and our love is deeper than ever.

We are not out of the woods yet but today we are well and living life to the full "one day at a time", appreciating all the good things we have in our life.

Eamon M.

# New Literature!

“ NA’s message has three parts: Any addict can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. *Living Clean: The Journey Continues* is about finding a new way to live the practice of recovery in our daily lives, in our relationships, and in our service to others. It is intended to welcome members new to recovery and to rekindle the passion of longer-term NA members ” (na.org)



Available from the  
Irish Service Office  
Now!

29 Bride Street, Dublin 8

Call the Eastern  
Area Helpline on 086-  
8629308 for office  
opening hours

# *My Experience with Hep C*

I've sat on writing this for some time, no particular reason other than that old scourge of mine, procrastination. Illness and recovery is something I'm very familiar with and it can be the door to a better recovery, or a door back to endless pain. I've been on the receiving end of both recently and in writing this it gives me a chance to let others know you don't have to be afraid if you decide to get treatment.

I have to start by asking myself a question here: why did I take the dual treatment for Hep C? The answer to be honest is I wanted to live and see old age. I'd learned to love myself, I'd given up the self loathing, self hatred and I learned to love and live. It wasn't so easy but I felt the time was right, this is purely individual and nobody can tell you when you should or shouldn't get the treatment. So much so I was willing to put all the negative rumours to one side and focus on ongoing recovery and life.

I spoke to the nurses, councillors, and my girlfriend and of course other NA members who've had the treatment and I made the decision to go for it. It's important to discuss this in depth with your family and loved ones as they are the ones who have to live with you throughout the treatment. They



should be aware of the side effects and symptoms of the drugs. Believe me – I needed to remind others and myself because at times it can get a little heavy.

I was given a date to start and turned up with my girlfriend, got my first injection and basically nothing happened, well at least for awhile. I'd heard so much about the first injection, some people experience something that feels like a 'dirty hit', others nothing. Well that was until we went shopping a couple of hours later. It started like a headache, then a bad flu, then my whole body started to convulse with hot and cold spasms. All I'll say was, 'it was a rough night' and I know in my heart it would have been a whole lot harder if not for my girlfriend's support.

The next morning I felt fine and went for a walk. After that I can tell you of specific incidents and symptoms that I experienced. Keep in mind that I was on the medication for 6 months (self injected and oral medication). So it's important that you understand that life went on pretty normal in between and not to focus alone on the negatives of the treatments. These incidents and symptoms happened over a period of time, not all together and not continually.

The most disturbing for me were the physical side-effects of the treatment e.g. transient hair loss, skin started to breakdown, weight loss. I work in amateur and

professional sport and have always looked after myself (except when I was using of course) and have always kept myself fit. The thing that hurt the most was that my body's oxygen carrying capability broke down and I had to take other shots to boost my immunity. Meaning I couldn't walk up a flight of stairs without gassing out. As I'm a stubborn person I wouldn't give up and kept going to the gym – not because I could do much, I just needed the routine to keep me occupied.

Other addicts stop working, but this wasn't an option for me really. I work for myself so I didn't do as much but still had to pay the bills. As a matter of fact, I had one of the biggest wins in my sporting career during this time as part of a sports medicine team. Most of the rest of the time I just supervised or delegated the work where I could.

My home life was pretty normal except for the last month and half of the treatment where I absolutely blew a fuse over something so petty that I scared the absolute shit out of my girlfriend. As a result I had to bring her to the councillor with me next time. The relationship was still in its infancy (9 months) and I had to reassure her that the incident was something out of character for me. As it happened more than once toward the end of the treatment it definitely put our relationship at a strain sometimes. But we

got through it which was a testimony to her resilience and love for me. I know now it would have been harder without her. At times laughter was our greatest remedy. That's why it's so important to surround yourself with people that love you. I remember an NA friend saying to me, "you'll get rid of the drift wood in your life and you'll know who your friends are before the end of the treatment". How true is that? and all I can say is that I'm blessed to have the people in my life that I have.

I must have counted down the days before my last injection and when it came that was it for me. I suffered no other symptoms other than putting on a few healthy pounds – no depression, nothing. I was just glad it was over. Would I do it again? Yes, if I had too. Life is too precious to give up on it. I love living and want as much of it as I can get. It's truly a small sacrifice to spend 6, or 12 months on a treatment if it gives you back the rest of your life.

Joe C.

# IRISH REGIONAL CONVENTION

## OCTOBER 2014

I.R.C.N.A.29  
17th,18th,19th, October 2014  
Stormont Hotel  
Belfast Northern Ireland

"WE TRAVEL TOGETHER AS ONE  
IN FELLOWSHIP, AND WE PAVE  
THE ROAD AS WE WALK IT FOR  
ALL WHO MAY FOLLOW.  
NO MATTER HOW FAR WE HAVE  
COME, OR HOW FAR WE KNOW  
WE HAVE TO GO, WHEN WE LIVE  
CLEAN, THE JOURNEY  
CONTINUES."

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS, LIVING CLEAN: THE  
JOURNEY CONTINUES

Living CLEAN THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

"We know what we can expect when we walk into a Narcotics Anonymous meeting,  
and it makes us feel safe and secure"

# *I was Ashamed of my Illness*

My first many years of recovery, I was clean, happy, joyous and free - facing life on life's terms. I gave birth to my second child in recovery - a dream come true, but I started feeling the blues and emotional, which is normal after giving birth. Then I started feeling overwhelmed with my responsibilities. My daily tasks were getting harder to do, I started to isolate and withdraw from my fellow members and society. My sponsor and friends had concerns for me, saying things like "come on, pull yourself together", "why aren't you answering the phone?", "you never showed up, what happened?", "you OK?" My family was worried about me also.

I made excuses - I was in complete battle with self, despair and desperation. Right, as we know, we all have defects of character - my obvious one is isolating and anger. I had some sort of handle on this with step 6 and 7. But now this anger I was feeling was rage of the highest order. My mental state was getting worse day by day. I was finding it hard to wash, eat, communicate and get out of bed unless it was for my children. Some days it was so bad I had to crawl up the stairs on my hands and knees. I had lost all love, respect and compassion for myself.

After speaking with baby care nurse she suggested I go to the doctor for anti depressants. My reaction was: me? no, I can't, I'm clean, I am in recovery. After a bit of persuasion I went, if not for me, for my children. I know I couldn't go on much longer like this. The doctor gave me a prescription, I didn't dispense it - three months later, another visit, dispensed it but didn't take the medication. I spoke to other members with different illnesses, read literature, and put all my fears out to my sponsor. I was ashamed of my illness which is called depression. I felt a failure, I worried what people would think or say. Nobody needed to judge me, I was my worst critic. One day my thoughts turned to suicide, and I came close to acting out on them.

So I made the decision to take to the anti depressants. After speaking to other members I knew I had to be vigilant and responsible with my medication, taking them as prescribed. This I did. I battled within and asked Higher Power for acceptance - it didn't come easy but when it did I surrendered. It took time to get well but when I did I made a new commitment to recovery. I took all the help from my loving sponsor and friends, I started to get back to normal. One day, my head said stop the meds. I went with it and had a big fall. Eventually I went back on the meds, discussed with my doctor coming off them and with his direction, my

programme and HP, I am free of my depression medication. I am also free of the sorrow that I felt. Today I am not ashamed and will offer my experience to my fellow members if needed. Today I have to be vigilant about my disease of addiction and also my depression.

Female 14 Years Clean – Eastern Area



# Irish Region Survey 2014

NA World Service Vision:

“Every addict in the world has the chance to experience our message in his or her own language and culture and find the opportunity for a new way of life”

## Introduction

In 2009, the Irish Region published its strategic plan. A strategic plan aims to uncover problems in an organisation and to find ways that these problems can be solved. It acts like a road map, showing the organisation where it needs to go in order to fulfil its mission. This document aims to gather feedback on Strategic Plan 2009-2012 and to ask what the Irish region would like addressed in Strategic Plan 2014-2017.



## Where the Irish Region could improve

The Irish Region spent three years conducting workshops and asking people to answer surveys to find out exactly where we needed to improve. This is the response they got:

- Travellers, foreign nationals, old timers, women with clean time and young people missing from our meetings
- Not enough people doing service
- People not understanding their role
- Not enough handover/mentoring
- Newcomers not properly welcomed
- Few crèche facilities
- Not enough step meetings
- Few social events
- More PR work needed: advertising, speaking engagements, information DVD
- Intimidating personalities
- Inappropriate behaviour in meetings
- Inappropriate outside meeting i.e. gossiping, clicks etc.
- Break downs in communication between Region/Area/ Groups/ Individuals.

- More protection from 13th steppers needed
- H&I needs to continue growing

These were the issues that this Region believed held us back from successfully carrying the message to the still suffering addict.

### Improving Things in Strategic Plan 2009-2012

In response to the issues brought up, the Region created:

- A Regional Events Chair: to promote fellowship events.
- A Regional Literature Chair: to produce an Irish NA newsletter and to support and assist any locally-developed literature
- A Regional Parents and Carers Chair: to liaise with Areas regarding the needs of members with children in their care, and to actively promote child-friendly meetings, crèche facilities and family events.
- A Plan to Actively Promote and Deliver Service Workshops: to train and mentor local members in all four Areas.

- A Regional Service Conference: to hold a yearly or twice yearly Irish Regional Service Conference.
- Ongoing Progress Report

Did it Work?

In 2014, the Irish Regional committee would like to continue meeting the needs of the Irish fellowship and to help it carry the message to the still-suffering addict. To do this we need **YOUR** input. Please answer some or all of the following questions to help us carry this out effectively. Please print out and hand in or post to Irish Service Office at 29 Bride Street, Dublin 8.

Some areas you might think about could be Meetings, Service, Finance, Atmosphere of Recovery, Traditions, Spiritual Principles, Relationships with outside organisations, and Public Awareness of NA.

- **How could Narcotics Anonymous in Ireland better serve *the still-suffering addict*?**

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## *Please Note:*

This newsletter is NOT official NA Literature, it is a forum for Irish Members to share their experience, strength and hope. All input comes from the wide and varied personal experience of NA members, and does not represent Narcotics Anonymous as a whole.

There is a section on the [NA Ireland website](http://na-ireland.org) (na-ireland.org) entitled “Locally produced literature/service material” where you will find the Irish Parents and Carers handbook, NA Ireland Strategic Plan, a history of NA literature. You can download and use any of these materials at workshops etc. All issues of Inniú can also be found here.

**Back cover photo by Augusto De Luca**

