



Third Edition
October 2010

Inniú

A Newsletter for
NA in Ireland

SEX

and Recovery



Welcome to the Third Edition of *Inniú*

A limited amount, one for each group, will be printed initially. All issues of our newsletter are available to download from our website www.na-ireland.org.

If you would like to be on a mailing list so we can let you know when a new issue is out, contact us at the email address below.

An Irish Regional Newsletter was created as a response to consultation in the four areas of Ireland. Unity and Communication and Fun are the goals. We will announce events, have discussion topics, and give NA news, in Ireland and Globally.

The Topic of the next issue after Christmas will be **“A Bridge to Normal Living”**. Please send along your experience, thoughts, stories, poems, artwork on this topic. Input could be about, for example, work, money, family, education, travel, dreams realised, etc., and how you work your programme around it. Also send along any NA related announcements. Let us know if you would like your first name and initial noted, or to remain anonymous. As there is limited space, please don't be offended if some material is not included, writing is always good for us! Send input to:

irscliterature@gmail.com

The area of Sex is one fraught with difficulty and pain, as well as joy for many addicts. It is in this area that many of our members have learned valuable life lessons, and sadly some of us have lost our way in recovery. On the following pages members in Ireland share their experiences, strength and hope.

Recovery is a process of discovery.

Step Three

Female Addict, 21 years clean.

Pretty much all my life I have felt fairly uncomfortable in my own skin, been body shy and something of a sexual coward. Dealing with people seemed very hard to me and having a relationship even harder, so for the majority of my using being single seemed to simplify things. It was an extreme coping strategy, not a life skill. My sexuality was the least of my worries and my sex drive non-existent.

In early recovery, obedient to the 'suggestions' - and more importantly I felt safe hiding behind the suggestion of not getting into a relationship for the first year. Over time I developed a deeply trusting relationship (non-sexual) with my sponsor, learning to love and be loved, all within the safety of my recovery virginity! When I eventually found a guy that rocked my boat and awakened my comatose libido, I began a terrifying and yet exciting 10 day affair (when taking a risk I like a safe option - like a guy moving continents in 10 days). No longer a virgin but still a 'Step Nazi' I was hardly about to sleep with anyone else, there was no rush after all. Some months later I risked an affair with a guy based in another country, that worked for a while but deep down I wanted a partner, a boyfriend with a capital B, a man.

My experience of life and recovery is very little goes to plan, so I fell deeply in love with a woman instead. Not in the plan, oh so not in the plan and what a head wrecker...so I began a few years of non-gender specific anonymous sharing. As recovery goes on I have in spite of myself become more and more open, so this cloak and dagger sharing in meetings was very uncomfortable. My sponsor and my nearest and dearest recovery friends fully in the know meant I could cope with my discomfort and leave the gossips to weave their own tale. So was I now a closeted lesbian, no, just a woman with deep emotional scars seeking some tender healing. Mother stuff maybe? After about 7 years and 3 women later I finally made it back to mental calm of my old heterosexual world. Whatever that 'healing period' was exactly I don't know but I have been with my man for 12 years now (yes, miracles do happen) and many children later I am back on my sexual couch wondering about things like sex drive and libido. I think I am just not particularly sexually motivated either that or as a mother I am just too tired to be frustrated! One thing I know for sure is sex and love are two separate things. Today I love with all my heart and as for sex well it is far from sorted but I am working on it. Like everything in recovery if it gets too uncomfortable I will call my sponsor.

We feared that if we ever revealed ourselves as we were, we would surely be rejected. *Basic Text*

Male Addict, 11 years clean. I did not realise the impact of my sexual behaviour on my life until I came into NA - it was hidden by my using, coping with life and my self-obsession. I heard in meetings how other members, as children in dysfunctional families sought escape through sexual fantasies and obsessive masturbation i.e. as often as 2/3 times daily before 10 years of age. They spoke about the shame they felt, of being different and less than others. Oh how I identified with all of this, my fantasies getting wilder, feeling I was unique in this, harbouring my dark secrets, the guilt, shame, the anger of my Catholic God, the self imposed isolation. Wow!!!! I then found drink and drugs. I could mix socially, bury my fears, inhibitions and lack of self-esteem. For the next 20/30 years when I had drug I could maintain the mask and get by, when I didn't I was fearful, guilty, miserable, mentally tortured and isolated. I turned to my old childhood coping method of compulsive obsessive sexual fantasy and actions and they became wilder. I sexualised my partners in relationships which prevented the development of deep healthy loving relationships. Then the drugs stopped working and as a broken person I was blessed to have found the NA rooms. I got clean and my life has since been transformed BUT on getting clean, to fill the void left by the drugs, came sexual obsession and overeating. In addition to compulsive obsessive fantasy and masturbation came twice weekly visits to prostitutes, internet, and sex phone lines. Now all of this has lessened, subsided and become manageable. The relief of being able to talk honestly to a few trusted NA friends and realising I am not bad, not unique and most important not alone as was the case before I came to NA. My sponsor had similar experiences which he shared with me and he was loving, kind and non-judgmental. His reassurance that with working and living the Steps, working the NA programme and having patience all of this would work its way out. This gave me great hope at a time when I was desperate. My 4th step gave me a deep understanding of who I really am and my sponsor's reassurance that my 6th and 7th steps would offer solutions...as always he was right. Today I am a physically healthy full blooded male in my 50's with a sexual fire and appetite which could boil over and return to the compulsive and obsessive levels of old but for my awareness of where it would take me. A fairly regular 10th step inventory, talking to my Sponsor and trusted NA friends and reaffirming in my daily morning prayer my 6th and 7th step willingness to have my defects and shortcomings removed. Sex is Beautiful. But it is the compulsive and obsession use of it to escape reality that feeds into my addiction and now I know when I am crossing that line. For me its all about awareness and the NA programme and I am so lucky I made it into the NA rooms.

Female Addict 15 years clean

As a using addict and in early recovery my experience with sex and relationships could fit on a postage stamp. At about 6 years clean I was in therapy (again) and writing and sharing on the 12 steps – so much had progressed in my life but not regarding any sexual intimate relationships - I wanted the fantasy of a wonderful loving relationship, of laughing, connection, wonderful sex and maybe a few difficulties that I'd be open to address...yeah right! Behind my walls of defence I discovered that there was a strong belief that it wouldn't happen for me, that I was different and for my own reasons - deeply unlovable. I felt very different for the first 10 years of my recovery. I had the physical body of a woman but I didn't feel grounded in my femininity at all. I felt like a 'half self' for so long – not fully integrated. I thought something was missing but really it was that something needed to grow and be nurtured and what I learnt is that this takes time and in 'Gods time'. After many years I realised that the problem wasn't that I was single but in how I was responding to myself as a single woman was actually keeping me stuck. Doing a fourth step didn't transform all of those core beliefs, a listening sponsor telling me otherwise couldn't change those core beliefs either. The solution is always reported as 'a connection with God' that 'God will do for us what we can't do for ourselves'. My experience has shown Steps 6 & 7 do offer a solution, especially when I'm clear about what I actually need help with! Having a program enabled a path towards more integration but it is living life and applying the program and the steps, I found the biggest tool of transformation. This translated as finding moments of holding myself gently when I'd feel scared, or let down rather than responding with a closed heart to life yet again...real life miracles! I needed to try a lot of different things, various therapies, therapists, workshops, books, and finding people who would listen and inspire me along this changing path. Today I don't feel like that 'half self' – the evidence is in my heart in how I feel about myself. Again in Gods time some change has taken place and it's been a humbling journey to date. I'm now a woman in recovery who has had a number of years experience with relationships and sex and has stayed clean through the challenges. I continue to take responsibility and explore what my experience actually is while in relationship or outside relationship. I feel so many feelings in relationships and this is where I need support from my HP – to be with my feelings and experiences and not just react blindly to them. I've learned that whatever plays out for me in my sexual/intimate relationship is more often than not a reflection of me in all my relationships.

I enjoy sex and I enjoy the intimacy that the sexual act can bring for me as a woman – bringing me more into me and closer to another human being. Eventually on the path of recovery I have felt the beauty of feeling love towards another and feeling loved. An example of the mystical experience of God for me is in connection with self and another. Also, experiencing a beautiful physical relationship is not the Holy Grail that I once thought – being with ‘me’ in a loving way whether single or attached is closer to my truth. My heart has opened to allowing another into my life with all the potential for joy and pain. I’ve still a lot to learn, after almost 16 years - the journey is well under way!

Relationships Can Be a Terribly Painful Area.

Basic Text

Male addict, 11 years clean

The realisation after a short while clean that what once seemed like "natural" highs (because I was using every day for many years) were gone, leaves a vacuum - a very large one. Coming to terms with having no avenue of escape from "reality" or to change how I felt was equally difficult. I had little or no experience with having unadulterated personal or sexual relationships. For many years I would never have had sex without being stoned. In my twenties when using was no longer a choice I got it into my head that I would be a lousy lay if I wasn't using at least one of a number of drugs and I would be afraid to have sex without them. After some years I just didn't give a fuck anymore. What did other people matter as long as I got satisfied. Coming into recovery with this kind of mind set was very difficult to deal with. My addict mind could and did use sex to have that "rush" and to feed into that selfish and self obsessed place that I have within me. Even though I was full of guilt and remorse for my actions in addiction it didn't stop me looking for and getting a "hit" from women. What better way to loose myself or feel better or change how I felt then in some passion and desire. At least I wasn't using! Right?? Of course this was very much at odd with being in a relationship and "practicing these principal in all our affairs". What a word to use in a step! Trying to learn if it was possible for me to have (if there is such a thing) a normal relationship has been a huge challenge for me. I never had the opportunity to really learn what it was all about and to have had the ability to feel the need to change. I still make mistakes and I still act out of selfish and self centred motives although I am more aware of the consequences these days. I do sometimes think that maybe in regards to relationships that I might actually be "broken". However, I have throughout this journey applied the programme of NA as best as I could to my life, and will continue to do so.

Events

The Eastern Area Convention of Narcotics Anonymous will begin on the 4th of March 2011 at the Amber Springs, Gorey. The Annual Eastern Area Christmas party is still a work in progress, but check the website shortly for more details on these two events: www.nairleast.org.

For those of you who missed the Love Sessions Camp Out run by the Western area in August near Mullingar, it was a fantastic weekend. It'll be bigger and bolder next summer, so keep it in mind.

For those with the itch to travel, there are some interesting upcoming Conventions. For more info on these go to www.na.org, then click Services to Members then NA Event Calendar. India: Darjeeling Area Convention Nov. 1—23 and Orissa Convention Feb. 1 - 23. Netherlands: November 5 –7. Thailand: February 18. New York: January 14 –16.

Na News

A new piece of literature is being developed. It is a book called “Living Clean—the Journey Continues”. It has come out of a need to address issues for us addicts who have been around a while. WE are writing it now. Why don't you give your input? The deadline for input on Chapters 6, 7 and the preface is December 31. Go to www.na.org/?ID=projects and click on the Living Clean Project. There is also a fellowship literature survey you can complete, and get information and give input on the new Service Structure project. Only ONE addict in Ireland gave input for the Basic Text project— Lets step it up Ireland! We have a lot to say!

One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life:
that word is **love**.

Sophocles



Mark G, Dublin, 2010