

## **What to expect at your first NA meeting.**

If you are full of fear, emotionally in bits or physically wrecked, that's okay. None of us came to our first NA meeting brimming with good health and positive attitude. Most of us were 'sick and tired of being sick and tired'.

You might have noticed that some meetings are in church halls, community centres, probation offices etc. However, NA is in no way connected to any of these facilities beyond the fact that we pay them rent for the room. There are no strings attached to NA. Anyone may join us, regardless of age, race, sexual identity, religion or lack of religion. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using drugs.

You don't have to wait until you are clean before you come to NA. You simply have to want to stop using. We go to NA in order to recover and in NA we find all the support we need. If you have a particularly bad physical habit, however, you may also need medical help from your doctor or a local drug project. If you are undergoing a detox, NA may be just the extra bit of support you need to make it work.

There are no "professionals" in Narcotics Anonymous – everyone at an NA meeting is more or less like you. We are all recovering addicts. We have found that in our experience there is nothing quite like one addict helping another, mainly because addiction is not easily understood by non-addicts. As we say in NA: 'The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel'.

If you can, try to get to the meeting in good time. Give yourself an extra few minutes to find the

room where the meeting is being held – if it's in a hospital for example, you may get to the front of the building on time only to discover that it takes another twenty minutes to find the right room! It's also a good idea to introduce yourself to the 'secretary', or anyone who looks like they are involved with setting up the meeting (e.g. making the tea, putting out the literature etc.).

It is suggested that you attend a few different meetings in your early days. Each meeting has a different atmosphere and it makes sense to shop around until you find the meetings that suit you (if there are enough meetings in your area to do this). Some newcomers try to attend 90 meetings in 90 days but remember, no-one in NA can tell you to do anything you don't want to do. Anonymity is the bedrock of NA, so you will not be asked to give your full name or sign anything. If you don't want to you do not have to do or say anything, but we suggest you do listen to what is being said and listen to the similarities to your own story, don't concentrate on the differences!

All the things you will hear members talking about – such as 'Steps' and 'Higher Power' – are only suggestions based on our group experiences. Don't reject them out of hand; try to keep an open mind. Chances are you will be in a room full of addicts who are somehow managing to stay clean and are learning how to live happy and fulfilled lives without drugs. Isn't it worth listening to what they have to say?

Although you may not feel like it at first, remember that the more you put into NA the more you will get out of it. Don't shoot off at the end of the meeting, stick around and find out where people are going for coffee afterwards and

tag along. You may feel isolated and left out when you see everyone hugging each other and talking at the end of a meeting, but don't use this as an excuse to bolt out of the door. Be patient, even though 30 seconds can seem like an eternity! Remember, everyone in the room was once at their first meeting.

Willingness is the key. If you are willing to put as much effort into your recovery as you had to put into your drug using, your prospects are good. Willingness also means helping out – such as doing the washing up or putting the chairs away. Anything which helps us to get involved will help our recovery. Recovery from drug addiction is a rocky road, but if you stick close to NA meetings and NA members you will get all the support you need to help you in your journey.

Don't forget, if you need to talk to another recovering drug addict you can ring the Helpline, which is open 24 hours a day on 0300 999 12 12



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This leaflet is produced by the UKSO and is approved by the UK RSC for use by NA Helplines, H&I or PI committees.

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