

NorCal Nar-Anon Messenger

1

December 2020
Volume 1, Issue 3 – COVID-19 EDITION

***C.A.R. Save The Date
Workshops – Pg 7**

***2021 Nar-Anon
Convention – Pg 8**

Letter from the Editor

The concept of this special edition newsletter is to focus on the most glaring issue Nar-Anon meetings face today: how do we continue to offer experience, strength, and hope to families and friends of addicts during a pandemic? While some meetings have thrived in the virtual format, others have struggled greatly.

Special thanks to those who submitted for this special edition. Together, we will get through this.

Gratefully,

Tracy C.
Chair of the NorCal Literature
Committee

Inside this issue:

Letter from the Editor	1
Newcomer's Insights	1
Nar-Anon vs. COVID-19	2-4
Distance Sponsorship	4
PESH (Personal Experience, Strength, Hope)	5
Request from your Region	6

A Newcomer's Insights

Why I keep coming back

I have been to approximately eight Nar-Anon meetings. All virtual. I know why I came. I was lonely. My qualifier is my husband who is a meth addict. I had learned the extent only a week before. He was reporting to a 30-day rehab over 100 miles away. As much as I feared living with an addict I feared him leaving almost as much. I hated being alone. I did not want to be...LONELY. However, I realized that even when he was home and using I was lonely. What I was wanting was friendship and kinship. For him to lovingly talk to me as he used to. To hear about my day. To be understood.

He could not do that. Acceptance of that would come later due to Nar-Anon. It is an almost daily, if not hourly, struggle. Therefore, I went to a local virtual Nar-Anon meeting. Had it been a physical meeting I know I would not have gone. I even remember thinking I

was going to log in quickly and log out quickly. I did not know my video would be on right away and my meeting leaders would quickly see it and sweetly introduce themselves and say "Well hello newcomer!" I was in shell shock. I had no book and no idea of the protocol. I sat in that meeting for an hour and listened to the process (reading of the steps, business meeting announcements, and stories). I even recall sharing. However, I could not get over the feeling. I was not lonely for that one-hour and a half. I was not alone. They all knew. They nodded their heads and they were encouraging and loving. They accepted me. They understood. Some had it worse, some had it better; however, we all just knew a world we lived in was different from the rest.

I do not hear the word lonely a lot during meetings. However, I can

only imagine that every single person who is going through it with an addict feels it. We were lonely and it brought us to Nar-Anon. When we came to Nar-Anon, we were desperate to know we are not alone.

Yet for some of us when we log off those meetings that loneliness returns. Our addict is either healthy or in the throes. They are on the streets or moving on with their life. They might be sitting next to you...yet you feel so far away from them. We cannot really know what their addiction is like... as they cannot know what we are going through. The loneliness is the hardest thing for me. So I log into a meeting and for that 1 hour, I am not alone.

I am not ok sometimes. Therefore, I keep coming back.

- Samantha K.S.

COVID vs. Nar-Anon

- Elk Grove -

2

COVID has changed the footprint of our meetings in Elk Grove. When the shutdown occurred in March, our members rallied and discussions were had of how to keep things going. Each person has a voice. We had our first meeting online using FreeConferenceCall (FCC). We recently had a few in-person meetings which have since stopped. On FCC, we had issues with stability and the bandwidth, so we use the audio function only. We discussed items such as: how to get info to our members, who was going to host, how to continue our seventh tradition. Some of our members were apprehensive about meeting in person.

We have a text list of members. Each member was asked individually whether they wanted to be included. The purpose of texting is to inform members about items related to the meeting, i.e. how and where it is going to be held. Originally, the responses went to one person. However, because of an Android update that apparently deleted this function, all responses now go to everyone. Members are reminded of this each time the first text is sent out so that the informational text does not become a social place and texts meant for one person are not seen by everyone. It has worked thus far. Members are free to drop off the list at any time.

We have continued our 7th Tradition donations. We felt this was necessary as we continue to make donations to the church where our meetings are held. We do this is

because of the work the church has done in the community, and so that we will have a place we can go back to once COVID is under control. We mention at each of the meetings that the 7th Tradition is still being collected and arrangements can be made with the treasurer to make a donation by mail or other means. Other meetings have used Venmo. When we went back to in-person meetings, we did have people who were apprehensive about coming back. Each person made the decision as to what was going to work for them. We did inform everyone what we intended to do: socially distance, wipe down the chairs, tables, door handles, banister and have a hand washing station. Attendance at the meetings has ebbed and flowed. We do not offer a combo of online and in-person as there are other meetings still meeting online. One of the things we learned about FCC, is that as long as one person has a host account, anyone can start the meeting without the host attending.

While at least a couple of people are feeling overwhelmed, we make decisions as to what is good for us. Part of the process of making our decisions, is to look at what our part is supposed to be in continuing the meeting. We are continuing to reach out to other members for help and look for guidance from our Higher Powers. If no one steps up, we set boundaries as to what we are willing to do and not do. So far, it's working because we are working it!

- Anonymous

- Hope After Loss (Virtual) -

I am part of the Nar-Anon Hope after Loss group held virtually, sourced in the Northern California (home group Marin County/Novato). I would like to take the opportunity to inform you of the existence of our group, one of two groups within Nar-Anon that is specifically for those who have lost a loved one to addiction.

We are, and will remain, a virtual meeting, hence we are growing and expanding with participants within the entire US and even from England, Finland, and beyond.

I am also responding to the questions that Tracy sent us as they relate to the fact that our group is virtual and that it is in high demand and very much needed, based on the responses from our participants.

Our group is growing with a steady base of long-time members as well as newcomers. We meet weekly, and will remain virtual with the plan to offer live meetings at times, once it is safe to do so. Our members seem very appreciative that we can meet virtually and therefore expand our fellowship. We see the benefits but look

forward to occasional organized events to meet live in the future. As of now, there are no specific plans to meet in-person.

To my understanding, we do not have financial limitations and collect regular donations.

I do not have the feeling that people are tired or defeated, other than from living with grief and navigating the loss. The group is supportive of all such issues. For most of us, it is an essential meeting venue where we can connect, share, feel supported, be understood and be seen.

From my perspective, I would like to offer this amazing group to even more people. A group like this is so needed and yet there are very few options for grieving ones to find the right fit of a grief group. As for myself, the regular grief groups do not meet my needs as much as a group that shares the same source of death as well as associated stress, histories, and more.

- Marion K.

- Roseville -

Roseville Nar-Anon Family Group is really struggling with our Zoom experience. We started out strong with about 10-12 members attending. As time passed, members lost interest and our attendance dwindled to one member and me for weeks.

Recently, we were given the opportunity to go back to in-person meetings. It lasted two weeks and we got shut down again. I held a group conscience, surveyed the members to discuss the options of 1) to begin Zoom meetings again, or 2) meet outside in the courtyard and possibly use the tent that has been constructed in the church parking lot.

The group members have expressed the desire to meet in the courtyard. We have had two meetings outside. The 6-8 members attending want continue to meet outside. In order to adapt to our new normal, our meeting time is now 6:30 - 7:30pm for the Winter months. People are prepared to do whatever it takes to meet outside including bringing blankets.

In the meantime, I have been contacted by 4 new people who want to join our meeting via Zoom. I had to refer them to other meetings. I would like to conduct the meeting as a hybrid where I could accommodate both people who want the in-person experience and accommodate the people who want to attend on Zoom. I also considered having a separate Zoom meeting. I realize that I am technically challenged when it comes to operating Zoom.

I am very proud of Roseville's history and accomplishments. Prior to COVID, our meetings had 20-40 people attending weekly. The results of COVID have left me feeling very defeated.

If someone can provide information on how I can set up a hybrid meeting, where some people can meet in person and some can join by Zoom can be accomplished where everyone can be accommodated, I would appreciate the help. You can contact me by calling me at 916-390-2174.

- Tracy C.

- Concord -

Mid-March... Oh no, for how long will my meeting be cancelled? How will I sustain my hard won self-recovery? Where will our program newcomers find relief from isolation and the grueling relentless self-imposed obsession over a loved one's never-ending addiction and their constant, imploring need?

Phone calls are made: Perhaps we can use the computer to link us like we do for our business meetings. Even those who normally are not computer savvy easily – *willingly* – learn to use Zoom and FreeConferenceCall (FCC). Our fellowship is up and running, serving our membership with life-affirming support, understanding, hope and kindness, even in the face of our addicted loved ones dying in vaster numbers. We are finding meetings on a virtual platform every day at the click of a fingertip.

Very quickly we are connected beyond the local physical meetings, we are electronically connected globally. Our familiar agreed upon meeting support and format is found in any other City, State of our Union, Europe, Africa, Asia, etc. Everywhere on this planet where there are families and friends suffering from the effects of the drug addiction of a loved one we are

found. We share our experience, strength and hope. "No longer alone" has a new borderless meaning.

In August, fearful, freezing, darkness settles on me. My son begins to use drugs, including alcohol, again after a two-year-clean hiatus. Grief froze me into my bed. I was so physically sick that I went to get the COVID-19 test. It was negative. I have lost so many in my own family. Monday, May 4, 2020, we lost our dear 34-year-old nephew who suffered from the disease of addiction. I am so freshly aware of the final result of uninterrupted active addiction: jails, institutions and death.

My meetings are there for me no matter what. They give me hope. Stories are shared, pain halved, and joy doubled. I find a part of my own pain and joy in each one. Laughter is heard and joy is felt. No judgment from these beloved. Also, no rescue, no one tells me 'what to do or try.' I feel the lightness of kindness without judgment from the members. I am trusted to recover myself with the help of my higher power and I have regained the energy of serenity through my faith.

- Paula L.

- Pacifica -

We are happy to report that attendance at our regular online meetings have increased. We currently have about 18-20 members which includes newcomers, and people from North Bay and East Bay. We have relationships with the Novato, Chico and Stockton groups wherein we all attend each other's meetings and invite members from these groups to each others' regular speaker meetings. Online meetings enable speakers to share their experience, strength and hope conveniently.

We have maintained our prudent reserve. We continue to receive generous 7th Tradition donations. We remind members at each meeting that they can donate by Venmo or by sending a check to our treasurer.

With the increase in COVID cases, we believe that most members are content with meeting online. Zoom meetings afford members to meet from the comfort of their homes and provide the opportunity and flexibility for everyone to attend meetings without spending travel time.

We are fortunate that our members who hold service positions do so willingly. We have not had any problems thus far. We hold a business meeting each month and all are invited to participate. The tempo of our meeting is welcoming and supportive.

We have a longtime member meet with the newcomers 15 minutes prior to the meeting to read the Newcomers Welcome and answer questions. We believe our follow-up with newcomers has a profound, positive impact which results in newcomers returning. One of our longtime members reaches out to newcomers to ascertain how they learned about Nar-Anon and our

meeting. This helps us determine which of our outreach efforts are most effective, i.e., newspapers, posts on NextDoor, Pacifica Patch (online news forum) and flyers at Starbucks, etc.

Someone also follows up with newcomers via email to ensure they receive literature. We also add them to our confidential phone list, if desired.

Our Group Service Representative (GSR) emails all members weekly to remind everyone of the Zoom Meeting ID and which format will take place. Our monthly meeting formats are as follows:

Week 1: Reading from the SESH Book and discussion

Week 2: Ask-It Basket, members submit anonymous questions via Survey Monkey (online polling). Any member can respond

Week 3: Lead Meeting, a regular member takes 10-20 minutes to tell their personal story and how the Nar-Anon program has benefited them

Week 4: Speaker Meeting, a Narcotics Anonymous (NA) member is invited to share

If there is a 5th week: Ask-It Basket

Our group is open to changing formats and believe this helps members stay engaged. For example: our group conscience recently voted to change from 2 weeks of SESH readings to 2 weeks of Ask-It Baskets when there are 5 weeks in a month.

We are fortunate that our group remains healthy!

- Susan R.

Sponsorship in the New Age of COVID-19

Reflections from a Long-Distance Sponsor

...because of what was so freely given to me by my Sponsor. My recovery grew by leaps and bounds while working the Twelve Steps with my sponsor, and our relationship continues. My style is to simply follow how she sponsored me. When I sponsor others, we schedule a time for regular phone calls. I have no judgment; I do not give advice or tell anyone what to do. I relate to a sponsee by sharing similar experiences. I am grateful to be at a place in my recovery where I can be of service to others. Gratitude! - Anonymous

...I feel that sponsorship is a gift for both the sponsor and the sponsee. I am willing to listen, support, and share my experience, strength and hope. I will NOT rescue or judge. My sponsor has helped me find peace even when my son chooses chaos. It would be my honor to help others on their road to recovery. - Anonymous

For meeting updates and to find virtual meetings, go to www.naranonncal.org/meetings

Nar-Anon during the Holidays

In November 2018, I crawled my way into my first Nar-Anon meeting.

Days before my first meeting, I was informed by my mother that my sister, who suffers from addiction and mental illness, was coming to Thanksgiving and she would love it if I would come too. This made me uncomfortable, as I didn't like to be around my addicted sister. I knew that I wouldn't be able to convince my mother to disinvite my sister, given their codependent relationship - so I sought a way out. I thought my only option was to skip town, head for Mexico, Kentucky, Taiwan or anywhere but my mother's house for the holiday. This was the kind of thought process that drove my black and white decision-making before I found Nar-Anon.

At my first meeting, I was invited to share. I broke down in tears and spewed about my anger towards my sister for destroying our family by her drug use and my disgust at my mom's involvement for enabling my sister in her toxic choices. I cried that their codependency had left me to fend for myself my whole life. I was dreading the holidays because they reminded me of my family's dysfunction and my own helplessness.

After my share, someone, perhaps another newcomer, spoke up and told me all the ways I was wrong to judge my mom and sister. She went on to share that her daughter had broken away from her and her addicted son. She told me that I needed to forgive my mom and my

sister whose life was much harder than I could imagine. I was shocked. Was this stranger scolding me?

I learned about crosstalk that night. I know now that we don't engage in it. We don't tell people how to think, act, or feel. Instead, we can share our experience and we do this in terms of using the word of "I". Shortly after the meeting another member came up to me and apologized for the crosstalk. She explained that it generally wasn't allowed and gave me a Newcomers Packet. She encouraged me to try six meetings before deciding if Nar-Anon was right for me. Thankfully, I was desperate enough to try another meeting.

Shortly thereafter, I attended my second meeting. It was a brand new group, but upon entry, I could tell this experience was going to be different. The secretary greeted me with a smile, offered me tea, candy and asked if I would like any literature.

Over time, I became a "regular". I began using the clever slogans as recovery shortcuts—to keep me grounded. I learned about the 12-Steps and began acknowledging my part in the breakage of my family. Soon, I wasn't just a member, but a volunteer for service positions. I set up chairs, passed out literature, and greeted newcomers, which helped me become a part of the Nar-Anon community. Eventually, I found a sponsor and began working the steps. By sharing my story, I can remind newcomers and long-timers alike the importance of respecting one another by not judging or participating in crosstalk.

The lead time prior to the holidays had always been so painful for me. I used my sister's addiction as my excuse for isolating. I thought that if I showed love to my sister and mom, the chaos would crash back into my life like a tornado. I now understand that boundaries should not be punishment for anyone; they are for my health and safety. I have learned to have loving boundaries.

Nar-Anon's gift allowed me to understand that addiction is not a choice, but a spiritual disease. Understanding this helped me have more compassion for both my sister and my mom. The Program allows me to see that I am not perfect. I am capable of making mistakes and hurting people. I see myself more honestly now. I now learn from my mistakes and when I have wronged someone, I promptly make amends. I can learn, grow, and evolve.

This holiday season, I am looking forward to seeing my mom and my sister. I know that I cannot change them. All I can do is love them for exactly who they are today. I'm learning to live one day at a time. Sometimes it's one minute (or nanosecond) at a time! I have a game plan if I begin to feel threatened, but I do not expect chaos anymore. I know I cannot control anyone or anything but my own thoughts and actions, so I choose to think and act with love, hope, and for the first time in a long time, holiday joy.

- Rebecca B.

If you would like to contribute a story or inform our community of an upcoming event, please email litcoord@naranonnorcal.org

Does Your Group Have Excess Prudent Reserves?

6

NorCal RSC (Regional Service Committee) Has A Request

The Nar-Anon Board of Trustees has announced that donations are low due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From January - September 2020, literature sales and donations received from the fellowship are down \$110,000.00 compared to 2019.

Most of our meetings continue online or by phone and routinely send their 7th Tradition donations to the next levels of service (Area and/or Region). These currently may have sufficient funding, however our World Service Office does not.

Please ask your group to discuss and vote by group conscience to send the balance of your group's treasury, anything over the groups ***prudent reserve**, directly to the

World Service Office, WSO, from December 2020 for the next 90 days.

There are two ways to contribute:

1. On Nar-anon.org home page, scroll down to the "contribute" button or copy and paste this webpage in your browser: <http://nar-anon-webstore.myshopify.com/product/donate-to-nar-anon>.

Please be sure to include your group's city, state and ID number in the "special instructions" box/section so your contribution can be attributed accordingly. Your Group's ID number can be found on our regional website, naranonnorcal.org. The WSO contribution website takes most credit cards.

2. Mail Checks to: Nar-Anon, 23110 Crenshaw Blvd. Suite A, Torrance, CA 90505. Please make sure the check memo indicates where the donation is from, Group City, State and most importantly Groups ID number.

***Prudent reserve definition** from Guide to Local Service (GLS), section 9 page 2: "A prudent reserve is an agreed upon amount to be held in reserve for operating expenses... (It is suggested that a group's prudent reserve be equal to at least 3 months' expenditures i.e., rent and literature for meetings, etc.)... It is suggested that all monies accumulated in excess of prudent reserve be sent to the next service levels based on group conscience."

TO: Our Members Left Out in the COVID Winter...You are NOT alone

FROM: NorCal Region Service Committee

While the COVID-19 pandemic surges, the disease of addiction rages. We may not be able to experience the magic of live meetings anytime soon, but Nar-Anon meetings continue and are easier to connect with than ever. We are here for you. Please join us.

Most meetings are still going strong using services such as telephone, FreeConferenceCall or Zoom. These meetings are easy to access. Find us on the naranonnorcal.org website to join meetings in your region. Or, because of the virtual/telephone technology you can join a national and/or worldwide meeting at Nar-Anon.org. Find electronic meetings anytime, anywhere - globally!

If any of our suspended meetings or any others do decide to start meeting again using telephone, FreeConferenceCall or Zoom, please contact the Northern California region's Web Master, at: webcoord@naranonnorcal.org, (information also below). We will support you!

Reach out. We are here waiting for you. Come in from the cold. You are no longer alone.

From: Your NorCal fellowship C/O
chair@naranonnorcal.org - Michael S
secretary@naranonnorcal.org - Linda T.
altdelegate@naranonnorcal.org - Ed H.
delegate@naranonnorcal.org - Paula L.
webcoord@naranonnorcal.org - Creig S.

BIRTHDAY SHOUT-OUTS

January 3rd – Pacifica Nar-Anon Family Group (2 years)

January 7th – Galt Nar-Anon Family Group (4 years)

January 12th – Elk Grove Nar-Anon Family Group (9 years)

Congratulations on another year!

Let us know when your meeting has an upcoming birthday! Email Tracy at litcoord@naranonnorcal.org

SAVE THE DATES!



TO: GROUP, AREA, REGION LEADERS & ALL INTERESTED IN SERVICE

FROM: NORTHERN CALIFORNIA REGION

NorCal Region plans to present FOUR ZOOM “*how to*” workshops:

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CAR

Where the Rubber Meets the Road!

Saturdays, 1:30pm-2:30, Jan 9, Jan 23, Feb 6, & Feb 27.

We intend that using relatable automobile references may help to make this a fun/attractive/effective series of service “*how to*” workshops on presenting the CAR to your group and creating a robust group conscience.

Background:

The [packet of] motions for the 2121 **Conference Agenda Report (CAR)** is a tool by which the World Service Conference Committee communicates the issues/motions that will be addressed at the conference that occurs end of April 2021.

The World Service Conference (WSC) asks that each region distribute the **CAR** to all of its groups, so that every member of the worldwide fellowship may have an opportunity to review it and have their voice heard at the group level.

Each groups’ conscience will then be carried by their group service representative to the region’s assembly so that the regional delegate and/or alternative delegate may bring that voice to the WSC and **every group has an opportunity to be represented and heard at WSC. In this way, Nar-Anon represents all of us.**



Western Regions Convention
of
Nar-Anon Family Groups

2021 Convention



“What a Concept! The ever changing future”

Save the Date, Saturday

February 20, 2021



* If your region is interested in speaking during the multi-regional business meeting, please have a regional officer send an email to WRCNFG@Nar-Anon.org

For meeting updates and to find virtual meetings, go to www.naranonnorcal.org/meetings