

Basic Text Study Guide

Narcotics Anonymous

The Recovery Files

"The disease of addiction is never cured, but it can be arrested. We believe that as a fellowship, we have found a way to live without the use of drugs. We do recover."

Reading Sections

- **The Foundation** — Who Is An Addict? · Why We're Here · What Is NA?
- **The Disease of Addiction** — NA's Unique Disease Concept
- **Steps 1-3: Surrender** — Powerlessness · Hope · Decision
- **Steps 4-6: The Inner Work** — Inventory · Disclosure · Readiness
- **Steps 7-9: Becoming Right** — Humility · Amends · Freedom
- **Steps 10-12: Daily Living** — Maintenance · Prayer · Service
- **The Twelve Traditions** — Unity · Service · Recovery
- **Recovery, Relapse & Spirit** — The NA Message of Hope

Worksheets & Exercises

- **Basic Text Worksheets** — 10 Deep-Work Exercises
- **My Study & Application Plan** — Study · Apply · Share

About This Study Guide

This intensive is a structured, clinically informed guide to the major themes, concepts, and practical teachings of the Basic Text of Narcotics Anonymous. It is a companion to reading the Basic Text with a sponsor — deepening understanding of NA's unique contributions to recovery, personalizing the key concepts, and helping you apply what you are studying to your specific recovery. NA's approach addresses addiction as a disease without qualification by substance — the message is clear: "an addict is an addict."

Sheamus Moran, CSC-AD · www.TheRecoveryFiles.com

READING SECTIONS

The Foundation

Who We Are · Why We're Here · What Is NA · We Do Recover

How to Use This Section

Read each topic alongside the corresponding sections of the Basic Text. This guide deepens and personalizes the reading — it is a companion to the text, not a substitute for it. Work through these reflection questions with your sponsor.

Who We Are: The Opening Statement of NA

Narcotics Anonymous opens with one of the most radical statements in the history of addiction recovery: "We do not have to use addictive substances anymore." NA was founded in 1953 by Jimmy Kinnon, drawing on the AA model but making a fundamental departure: NA would be open to addicts of all substances, without qualification. The preamble is precise: "Narcotics Anonymous is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean." The Basic Text was first published in 1983 after years of committee work — a text written entirely by addicts in recovery, for addicts who need recovery.

1. The NA preamble says drugs 'had become a major problem' for its members. In your own honest assessment, when did your using cross from a choice to a problem — and when did the problem become undeniable? What specifically made it undeniable?

2. NA's foundational claim is that we 'do not have to use addictive substances anymore.' Do you believe this applies to you specifically? What part of you is most certain, and what part remains uncertain?

Why Are We Here: Addiction's Devastating Effect

"Most of us do not have to think twice about why we are here. We know. Our lives were a mess." The Basic Text does not soften addiction's consequences — it names them: "We were dying." The chapter introduces one of the most clinically important claims: the purpose of NA is not to help people stop using one specific drug or manage consequences more effectively. The purpose is far more ambitious: "to offer the addict a way to live drug free" — through a genuine transformation of the person's relationship with themselves, others, and a Power greater than themselves.

1. Write the honest version of your 'why we are here' — the specific ways your using produced the specific devastation that made recovery not just preferable but necessary for survival.

2. The Basic Text describes addiction as producing 'spiritual bankruptcy' — the loss of meaning, connection, and the sense that anything genuinely good is possible. Can you identify this in your own experience? And where do you see it being reversed in recovery?

What Is the NA Program: Three Distinct Elements

The Basic Text defines the NA program through three interconnected elements: the fellowship, the steps, and the traditions. The fellowship is the community of recovering addicts who gather regularly, share experiences honestly, and support each other. Genuine fellowship — the experience of being known in one's full truth by people who understand from the inside — is what the community provides that no individual therapeutic relationship can replicate. The Twelve Steps are the program of personal recovery. The Twelve Traditions are the principles that govern the fellowship's functioning.

1. Of the three elements of the NA program — fellowship, steps, and traditions — which is most active in your current recovery? Which is most underdeveloped? What would more genuine engagement with the weakest element require?

2. The Basic Text says 'the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel.' Have you experienced this specific healing — the specific healing that comes from being helped by someone who has been exactly where you are?

We Do Recover: The Central Promise of NA

Three words that appear early in the Basic Text: "We do recover." Not "some of us recover under certain conditions." Not "we try to recover." We do recover. This statement is the distilled testimony of millions of addicts who were in the same situation as the person reading the text — who found, through the NA program, that recovery was not only possible but actual. The Basic Text is honest: "some of us die before we get a chance to recover." But it is a genuine, experience-based claim that recovery is available — to the specific, desperate, failing, exhausted

addict who has arrived at the fellowship.

1. Do you believe the 'we do recover' promise applies to you — specifically to your specific history, your specific addiction, your specific rock bottom? What evidence from your own recovery so far most compellingly supports that belief?

2. Whose recovery in NA — sponsor, home group member, someone whose story you have heard — most powerfully functions as personal evidence that the 'we do recover' promise is real?

NA's Unique Contribution: An Addict Is an Addict

NA's most important departure from earlier recovery models is the insistence that "an addict is an addict" — that the disease of addiction is not fundamentally defined by which substance a person used. This means the heroin addict, the prescription pill addict, the methamphetamine addict, and the marijuana addict share a common condition that the NA program addresses. The Basic Text says: "The disease does not care what we used. It is cunning, baffling, and powerful." This formulation locates the power of the disease not in any specific substance but in the addictive disease process itself.

1. Does NA's 'an addict is an addict' principle resonate with your experience? Where has that identification most powerfully connected you to people in NA whose specific using history differs from yours but whose experience of addiction is recognizably the same?

2. The Basic Text says the disease is 'cunning, baffling, and powerful.' Describe specifically how your addiction demonstrated each of these three qualities.

READING SECTIONS

The Disease of Addiction

Who Is An Addict · Physical/Mental/Spiritual · Addict's Thinking · Surrender

NA's Disease Concept

NA's three-dimensional disease concept — physical, mental, spiritual — is the foundation for understanding why recovery requires more than stopping. Read these sections alongside 'Who Is An Addict?' in the Basic Text.

Who Is An Addict: NA's Identification Process

The chapter "Who Is An Addict?" accomplishes something clinically difficult: it enables the person reading it to identify themselves as an addict without being told they are one. The description is specific and visceral: "We were searching for something we never found; we used drugs, and then drugs used us." This captures the phenomenology of addiction from the inside. The using that began as searching — for relief, for belonging, for the experience of being okay — became something that happened to the person rather than by the person. The final test the chapter offers is behavioral: "Do I have a problem with drugs?" Not "how much did I use?" but the single, honest question about whether the relationship with drugs produced a problem that the person could not reliably manage.

1. Where in the 'Who Is An Addict?' description did you most clearly recognize yourself — what specific paragraph or sentence most accurately described your experience from the inside?

2. 'We were searching for something we never found; we used drugs, and then drugs used us.' What were you searching for when you first began using? When did the shift occur — when did the using become something happening to you rather than by you?

The Disease Concept: Physical, Mental, Spiritual

The Basic Text describes addiction as a disease with three interconnected dimensions: physical, mental, and spiritual. The physical dimension refers to the bodily changes addiction produces — tolerance, withdrawal, specific physical craving. The mental dimension refers to the obsession — "After a while the compulsion and obsession would set in." The spiritual dimension is perhaps NA's most distinctive contribution: the recognition that addiction produces a specific form of spiritual deterioration — a loss of meaning, connection, values, and the sense of belonging to anything larger than the self and its craving. This spiritual dimension and its recovery through the program is why the steps are understood as a spiritual program rather than simply behavioral

modification.

1. Apply the three-dimensional disease model to your own history: describe your specific experience of each dimension — the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. Which was most severe, and which is most active in your current recovery challenge?

2. If the disease has a spiritual dimension, what does that imply about what recovery must include — and why do behavioral tools alone tend to produce incomplete recovery?

Progressive, Incurable, Fatal: Understanding What We Are Dealing With

The Basic Text describes addiction with three clinical adjectives: progressive, incurable, and potentially fatal. Progressive means the disease worsens over time without treatment, even during periods of abstinence — the addict who returns to using after sobriety typically returns to a more advanced stage. Incurable does not mean untreatable — it means the disease is not resolved by removing the substance or by a period of sobriety. The addict in long-term recovery is not a person who no longer has the disease — they are a person managing it through the practices of the NA program. Potentially fatal means exactly what it says.

1. Where in your own history have you seen the progressive nature of addiction — the escalation over time, the return to more severe levels after abstinence? Be specific.

2. The Basic Text says the disease is 'incurable but arrestable.' Recovery is a daily practice, not a completed achievement. How does this change how you approach your program?

The Addict's Thinking: The Disease Talks to Itself

One of the Basic Text's most important observations is that addiction is not simply a physical phenomenon but a thinking disorder — a specific set of cognitive patterns that sustain and protect the addiction. The addict's thinking involves rationalization (explaining why this time is different), minimization (reducing the significance of consequences), comparison (finding someone whose situation is worse), denial (refusing to see what is visible to everyone else), and

the specific belief in the magical relationship with substances. The Basic Text does not simply describe these thinking patterns — it provides the program's response: "We need to change our attitudes and thought patterns." This change occurs through the honest inventory, sharing in fellowship, step work, the sponsor relationship, and daily spiritual practice.

1. Which specific thinking patterns of the disease are most active in your current recovery — rationalization, minimization, comparison, denial? Give concrete recent examples of each pattern you identify.

2. The Basic Text says the disease 'talks to itself.' Describe what the disease's voice sounds like in your head — what specific things does it say? And what specific practices of the program most effectively interrupt or counter that voice?

Surrender: The First Act of Recovery

The Basic Text's concept of surrender is one of its most important and most misunderstood teachings. In the ordinary sense, surrender means defeat. In the NA sense, surrender is the opposite of defeat: it is the specific act of liberation that occurs when the addict stops fighting the reality of their condition and accepts it fully. The Basic Text says: "When we admitted we were powerless over drugs, we began to see a different way of thinking." The surrender described is not a one-time event but a daily practice — the ongoing, repeated choice to bring the honesty of powerlessness back to the center of one's recovery.

1. Have you experienced genuine surrender in your recovery — the specific relief that comes from fully accepting powerlessness rather than continuing to fight for some version of managed use? Describe what that experience was like.

2. What does the daily practice of surrender look like in your specific recovery — the specific moments when you return to the honesty of powerlessness rather than allowing the disease's thinking to rebuild?

READING SECTIONS

Steps 1-3: The Surrender Foundation

Powerlessness · Coming to Believe · The Decision · God as We Understand

The Foundation of NA Recovery

Steps 1-3 are the foundation on which everything else is built. The Basic Text presents them as a complete unit — the surrender triad. Work through these with your sponsor and the corresponding chapters in the Basic Text.

Step One: We Admitted We Were Powerless Over Our Addiction

The Basic Text's treatment of Step One opens with recognition of its cost: "This is often the hardest step to work honestly." It is asking the addict — a person whose survival strategy has been organized around management of unmanageable situations — to make the one admission most incompatible with that strategy: that management has failed, completely and conclusively. "Powerless" does not mean helpless in every area of life. It means specific: powerless over addiction — in the domain of chemical use, the self-management strategy has produced evidence of its own failure so overwhelming that honest examination cannot maintain the conviction that it will eventually succeed. The second half — "that our lives had become unmanageable" — is equally important. The full picture of unmanageability, domain by domain, is what the Basic Text asks for.

1. Write your personal Step One: not the general acknowledgment that you 'had a problem,' but the specific, exhaustive documentation of the evidence for powerlessness and unmanageability across every domain of your life. Be thorough.

2. Where in your current recovery does the disease's thinking still challenge this admission — what specific arguments does the voice of addiction still make for the possibility that management could eventually work?

Step Two: We Came to Believe That a Power Greater Than Ourselves Could Restore Us to Sanity

Step Two makes hope possible after the hopelessness of a genuine Step One. The Basic Text addresses barriers directly: the Higher Power does not need to be the God of any particular tradition. It needs only to be "a Power greater than ourselves" — greater than the individual addict's own will and thinking, which have proven insufficient. For many in early recovery, the fellowship itself can serve as the initial Higher Power. The "came to believe" formulation describes

a process — gradual, often hesitant, built through small experiences of something working that willpower alone did not produce. The restoration to sanity refers to the specific insanity of addiction: the specific repetition of the same destructive behavior despite the evidence.

1. Where are you in the Step Two process? Are you in early stages with significant barriers? Or has a working belief become genuinely operative in your daily life? Describe honestly where you actually are.

2. Have you experienced even partial restoration to sanity in your recovery — specific moments when the obsession was not present, when the compulsive pull was genuinely absent? What produced those moments?

Step Three: We Made a Decision to Turn Our Will and Our Lives Over to the Care of God as We Understood Him

Step Three is described in the Basic Text as "a decision to allow ourselves to be guided by principles of recovery." The Basic Text acknowledges what every addict knows: it is easy to endorse and difficult to practice. The turning over described is not an event but a practice — the daily, specific, moment-by-moment choice to bring the will back to the program's guidance rather than following the directions of the disease. The Third Step prayer — "Take my will and my life. Guide me in my recovery. Show me how to live" — does not ask for specific outcomes. It asks for guidance and the ability to live according to it.

1. Have you made a genuine Step Three decision — not a recited prayer but an actual lived-in turning point in how you approach your will and your life? What specifically changed in how you make decisions, handle conflict, and navigate uncertainty?

2. 'Take my will and my life. Guide me in my recovery. Show me how to live.' Which part is hardest for you right now — 'take my will,' 'take my life,' 'guide me,' or 'show me how to live'? Why?

The Foundation of Surrender: Steps 1-3 as a Complete Unit

The Basic Text presents Steps One, Two, and Three as a unit — the surrender triad. This unit has a specific logic: we admitted we couldn't do it ourselves (Step One), we came to believe that something could do what we couldn't (Step Two), and we made the decision to turn to that something for help (Step Three). Each step is necessary; none is sufficient alone. A genuine Step One without a Step Two leads to despair. A Step Two without a Step One sidesteps genuine surrender. A Step Three without genuine Step One and Two is the most common failure mode in early recovery. The Basic Text says these three steps together constitute "the cornerstone of our recovery."

1. Examine the integrity of your Steps One through Three as a unit: Is your Step One genuinely complete? Does your Step Two reflect a genuine process of coming to believe? And does your Step Three decision flow genuinely from the first two?

2. What happens in your recovery when that foundation is not solid — when the denial of powerlessness reasserts itself, or the Step Three decision is functionally revoked by the disease's thinking?

READING SECTIONS

Steps 4-6: The Inner Work

Inventory · Disclosure · Readiness · Character Defects

Searching and Fearless

Steps 4-6 are the inner work of recovery — the examination of self that makes genuine change possible. Work through these with your sponsor, not alone.

Step Four: We Made a Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory of Ourselves

Step Four is the first of the action steps. The Basic Text describes the inventory as "a written account of our lives." Writing forces specificity — the vague, managed account that suffices for internal thought cannot persist through the discipline of writing complete sentences about specific events. The NA inventory covers: assets and liabilities (not only wrongs but positive qualities), resentments and the person's part in them, fears and the beliefs underneath them, the history of relationships and conduct, and the specific patterns of behavior that produced harm. The inclusion of assets alongside liabilities is one of NA's important contributions: the inventory is not a courtroom proceeding to establish guilt — it is a clinical examination of character to identify what needs to change and what deserves to be kept.

1. Where are you in your Step Four work? If deferred, be honest about the specific resistance: is it fear of what you will find, shame about specific material, or the specific avoidance that protects the most difficult material from examination?

2. The inventory covers both assets and liabilities. What genuine assets — strengths, positive qualities, capacities — have you identified in your Step Four work? What does acknowledging them feel like?

Step Five: We Admitted to God, to Ourselves, and to Another Human Being the Exact Nature of Our Wrongs

Step Five in NA is the step the Basic Text describes as "the beginning of a healing process." The admission has three dimensions — all three are necessary. The admission to another human being — typically the sponsor — is the step that most directly produces the healing the Basic Text promises, because it is here that the specific therapeutic mechanism of honest disclosure operates. The Basic Text says: "After taking this step, we have begun to get free from our past." The word "begun" is important — the liberation is not complete at Step Five, but it has begun. The specific freedom — the relief of having been fully known, including in one's worst, and having

been met with acceptance rather than rejection — is available only through the vulnerability that Step Five requires.

1. Have you completed a genuine Step Five — bringing the full inventory, including the most shameful material, to your sponsor with nothing withheld? Or has the disclosure been managed, with the most difficult material protected?

2. What did Step Five produce — the Basic Text says it begins a healing process. What specifically did the experience of complete honest disclosure produce in you?

Step Six: We Were Entirely Ready to Have God Remove All These Defects of Character

Step Six is perhaps the most misunderstood step. The Basic Text addresses two common misunderstandings. First: being ready to have character defects removed is not the same as wanting them removed in the abstract. Many defects have served specific functions — the dishonesty that protected us from consequences, the manipulation that gave us control, the isolation that kept us safe from further hurt. Being "entirely ready" requires genuinely understanding how each defect has functioned and genuinely wanting to live without its protection. Second: "we don't have to be perfect at it." What Step Six asks is genuine willingness — the actual internal orientation of wanting the character defects removed.

1. The Basic Text says character defects have served specific functions. For your two or three most significant defects: what specific function has each one served? What did it protect you from, provide for you, or make possible?

2. For which of your character defects is the 'entirely ready' most genuine? And for which is the readiness most incomplete — where some part of you is still defending the defect or still finding it useful?

READING SECTIONS

Steps 7-9: Becoming Right With the World

Humility · The List · Direct Amends · Freedom

Into Action: Steps 7 Through 9

Steps 7-9 are where the inner work meets the outer world — where the transformation the first six steps produced begins to repair what the addiction damaged. Work through these with your sponsor.

Step Seven: We Humbly Asked Him to Remove Our Shortcomings

Step Seven is the action that follows the readiness of Step Six. The Basic Text emphasizes humility as the key spiritual principle — and defines it carefully. In NA, humility is the accurate assessment of the self: neither the grandiosity that addiction tends to produce nor the self-loathing it produces at its worst, but the honest, grounded recognition of who one is, what one has done, what one needs, and what one is capable of becoming with help. The Basic Text says: "Many of us have experienced a turning point at Step Seven. We began to feel real power and a new sense of freedom as we became willing to allow our Higher Power to guide us."

1. How close is your current self-assessment to genuine humility — neither grandiosity nor self-loathing? Where is the grandiosity still present? And where is the self-loathing still active?

2. Have you experienced any specific removal or significant reduction of a character defect through the Step Seven process? Describe what changed and what the change produced in your daily life.

Step Eight: We Made a List of All Persons We Had Harmed and Became Willing to Make Amends to Them All

Step Eight begins the relational repair process. The Basic Text is careful about separating the two elements: making the list and becoming willing to make amends. The list should be complete — every person harmed, without filtering for approachability or whether the harm was "their fault too." The list is not a legal brief — it is a moral accounting. Willingness comes second, and the Basic Text is honest that it may not be immediately available for every name. The Basic Text also introduces an important distinction: "all persons we had harmed" includes ourselves. A complete amends process includes developing a genuine relationship with one's own wellbeing.

1. Have you made a complete Step Eight list — genuinely including all persons harmed, without filtering? Who are you most tempted to leave off the list, and what is the specific resistance?

2. The Basic Text says the Step Eight list includes ourselves. How have you harmed yourself through the addiction years? And what does genuine amends to yourself look like in practice?

Step Nine: We Made Direct Amends to Such People Wherever Possible, Except When to Do So Would Injure Them or Others

Step Nine is where internal transformation meets the external world in the most direct way possible: in the actual, face-to-face repairing of specific harm done to specific people. The "except when to do so would injure them or others" clause is critical — the purpose of Step Nine is not the relief of the addict's guilt but the genuine repair of harm. Amends made in ways that cause additional harm are not genuinely in the spirit of the step. The Basic Text also addresses what constitutes amends: not simply an apology, but a genuine accounting of the harm done. The living amends — demonstrating through consistent, different conduct that the person is genuinely different — is understood as the completion and continuing of the amends process.

1. What is the current state of your Step Nine work — how many amends have been made, what remains, and what is the specific reason for each deferral? What freedom are you missing because of deferred amends?

2. For the most difficult amends on your list — examine your resistance honestly: is it primarily about protecting yourself from consequences, or is there a genuine concern about harm to the other person?

READING SECTIONS

Steps 10-12: Daily Living

Maintenance · Prayer & Meditation · Service · Three Legacies

The Ongoing Program

Steps 10-12 are not the end of the NA program — they are its daily practice. The Basic Text says these steps are how we maintain what the previous steps produced. They are a way of life, not a checklist.

Step Ten: We Continued to Take Personal Inventory and When We Were Wrong Promptly Admitted It

Step Ten is described by the Basic Text as the maintenance step that keeps the previous nine steps functional. It is the daily, regular, in-the-moment practice of honest self-examination that catches the disease's thinking and character defects in operation before they accumulate into the larger emotional states that relapse risk requires. The Basic Text identifies a specific pitfall: "We don't want to give away what we've worked so hard to get." The "promptly admitted it" clause is as important as the inventory itself. The addict who identifies a wrong but defers the acknowledgment is already engaged in the disease's management strategy rather than the program's transparency requirement.

1. What is your actual Step Ten practice — what does it look like on a typical day? Is it a genuine daily review, or has it become nominal — a pro forma acknowledgment while the actual daily examination has ceased?

2. Where in your current recovery is the promptness most consistently absent — where do you most commonly identify a wrong and defer the admission? What specifically makes the deferral feel safer?

Step Eleven: We Sought Through Prayer and Meditation to Improve Our Conscious Contact With God as We Understood Him

Step Eleven is NA's daily spiritual practice step — the ongoing cultivation of conscious contact with a Higher Power that is the spiritual engine of the entire program. The goal is "seeking God's will for us and the power to carry it out" — requiring both the receptive dimension of meditation (learning to listen) and the active dimension of prayer. The addict who begins the day with five minutes of honest prayer — bringing the day's concerns to the Higher Power, asking for the specific knowledge and power needed — is practicing Step Eleven more genuinely than someone

who spends an hour in formal meditation as a performance of spirituality without genuine vulnerability. Step Eleven is not asking for specific outcomes — it is asking for guidance and the power to live according to the Higher Power's will.

1. What is your actual Step Eleven practice — what genuinely occurs in your prayer and meditation? Is there a genuine moment of honest contact with your Higher Power in most days, or has Step Eleven become the step most consistently allowed to lapse?

2. What would 'improved conscious contact' look like specifically for you — what would be different in your daily experience if Step Eleven were fully and genuinely practiced?

Step Twelve: 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

Step Twelve is the culminating step — the expression of a spiritual awakening. The Basic Text is specific: it is not necessarily a sudden, dramatic transformation. For most in NA recovery, it is the gradual, accumulated experience of becoming a genuinely different person. The step has three components: the awakening, the carrying of the message, and the practice of principles in all areas of life. The awakening without message-carrying tends to become self-focused and progressively less vital. The message-carrying without the awakening tends to become performance. And the practice of principles in all affairs — not just in the meeting room, but in every dimension of life — is the specific test of the awakening's depth.

1. Can you identify a spiritual awakening in your NA recovery — not necessarily dramatic, but the gradual change in character, values, and orientation? What specifically is different about how you see yourself and your place in the world?

2. 'Practice these principles in all our affairs' — not only in recovery contexts. Where is the gap most significant between the person you are in the meeting room and the person you are in your work, family life, or financial dealings?

READING SECTIONS

The Twelve Traditions

Unity · Purpose · Autonomy · Anonymity · Principles Before Personalities

NA's Organizational Wisdom

The Traditions are not organizational fine print — they embody the same spiritual principles at the collective level that the Steps embody at the personal level. Understanding them deepens both your program and your NA membership.

Traditions 1-3: The Foundation of NA Unity

Tradition One — "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity" — establishes the paradox that is central to the twelve-step model: the individual's recovery is most secure when the common welfare is protected. Tradition Two establishes the principle of servant leadership and the non-hierarchical nature of NA's organizational structure. No one owns NA. Tradition Three — "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using" — is perhaps the most radical and most important single statement in the Traditions. It establishes that NA has no dues, no qualifications, no screening process, and no minimum period of sobriety.

1. Tradition Three says the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. What was your experience when you first entered NA — were you made to feel that this requirement was genuinely sufficient? And how do you carry the spirit of Tradition Three in how you treat newcomers today?

2. Tradition Two says NA's leaders are 'trusted servants — they do not govern.' Where have you seen the servant leadership principle lived well in your NA experience — and where have you seen its absence produce specific problems?

Traditions 4-6: Autonomy, Purpose, and Separation

Tradition Four grants individual groups freedom to conduct their meetings while establishing that freedom does not extend to actions that would harm the broader fellowship. Tradition Five — "Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry the message to the addict who still suffers" — focuses the fellowship with remarkable precision. NA meetings are not social clubs, professional networks, or political organizations. They have one purpose. Tradition Six — "An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise" — protects the fellowship's focus and credibility.

1. Tradition Five says NA's single primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. How well does your home group serve this purpose? And how do you personally contribute to or detract from the meeting's ability to fulfill it?

2. Where has the drift from Tradition Six's principle of non-affiliation — the mixing of NA with outside enterprises or professional affiliations — produced the specific problems the Tradition was designed to prevent?

Traditions 7-9: Self-Support, Non-Professional, Organization

Tradition Seven — "Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions" — establishes that NA's independence from outside financial support allows it to maintain independence from outside influence. Tradition Eight distinguishes the peer-to-peer recovery work that is the heart of NA's model from professional services that may be contracted to support it. Recovery in NA is not a professional service rendered by credentialed experts to passive recipients — it is addicts helping addicts. Tradition Nine establishes that NA's service boards and committees are accountable to the members they serve, not the other way around.

1. What is your understanding of the Seventh Tradition — do you contribute financially to your home group's self-support, and do you understand why this financial independence is important to NA's integrity?

2. Tradition Eight distinguishes the peer recovery work of NA from professional treatment. In your experience, what specifically does the peer dimension of NA provide that professional treatment cannot?

Traditions 10-12: Public Relations, Anonymity, and Principles

Tradition Ten — "Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues" — protects the fellowship from political and social controversies. Tradition Eleven — "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion" — establishes NA's approach to public

communication: showing what recovery looks like rather than advertising the program. Tradition Twelve — "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities" — is the most profound of the Traditions. Anonymity here is about the spiritual discipline of subordinating the individual ego to the principles that govern the fellowship.

1. Tradition Twelve says anonymity is the spiritual foundation — 'principles before personalities.' Where in your NA experience have you seen personalities override principles? And where have you seen principles genuinely prevailing?

2. 'Attraction rather than promotion' — the NA model of public relations. What does your recovery attract? When people observe how you live and treat others, what message does your life carry about what NA produces?

READING SECTIONS

Recovery, Relapse & Spiritual Life

Relapse Awareness · Spiritual Life · NA Promises · Just For Today

NA's Message of Hope and Honesty

The Basic Text's treatment of recovery, relapse, and spiritual life is characterized by the same honesty and compassion that marks every section — it tells the truth about what recovery requires and what it produces.

Recovery and Relapse: What the Basic Text Teaches

The Basic Text says: "Relapse is a reality. It can happen, and for many addicts it does happen." This honest acknowledgment is followed by equally honest guidance: the path back from relapse is the same path as the path in — through the doors of the meeting, through honesty with the sponsor, through renewed engagement with the steps. The Basic Text is specific about the pattern that typically precedes relapse: not the dramatic decision to use, but the gradual erosion of the recovery program. The isolation that grows before the relapse. The meetings attended but not participated in. The sponsor calls that become less frequent. The Basic Text calls this pattern "an addict alone" — the specific danger of the person who is increasingly living in the isolation and self-will that relapse requires.

1. If you have experienced relapse in your recovery history: what was the specific trajectory that led to it — not the event of using, but the gradual erosion that preceded it? What specific warning signs appeared but were unaddressed?

2. The Basic Text warns about 'an addict alone' — the dangerous isolation that precedes relapse. Where in your current recovery is isolation most active — where are you managing your distance from the sponsor, the home group, or honest disclosure?

The Spiritual Life in NA: More Than Religion

The Basic Text is carefully non-denominational — it does not require any specific theological commitment. What it does require is that recovery has a spiritual dimension that cannot be bypassed, because the disease has a spiritual dimension that cannot be addressed by purely physical or psychological means. The Basic Text describes the spiritual life in specifically practical terms: "A spiritual awakening is an ongoing, expanding awareness of being." It is not a single event or a theological conviction — it is the experience of becoming progressively more genuinely present, more genuinely connected, and more genuinely able to live by values rather than by the

disease's directions.

1. Where in your recovery do you see the spiritual awareness expanding — where are you becoming more genuinely present, more genuinely connected, and more genuinely guided by values rather than by the disease's directions?

2. From your own experience: where have you seen the limits of non-spiritual approaches to managing your addiction? And where have you seen the specific effectiveness of the spiritual practices of the NA program?

Personal Recovery: The Promises of the Basic Text

The Basic Text says: "We have found that by staying clean, getting a sponsor, and working the steps, we can live life on life's terms — without having to use drugs." Living life on life's terms is the specific achievement the program makes possible: not a life without difficulty, but a life in which those experiences can be faced and moved through without the use of substances. The Basic Text also promises: "We find that we are no longer alone." The isolation of addiction is replaced by the genuine community of the NA fellowship. "We begin to feel worthwhile." The self-loathing that addiction produces is replaced by the earned self-respect that comes from sustained, genuine engagement with the recovery process.

1. 'We can live life on life's terms — without having to use drugs.' Name three specific life situations in your recovery that you have navigated without using that, in active addiction, you would have used to manage. What did navigating them produce?

2. 'We find that we are no longer alone.' Has the NA fellowship genuinely addressed the isolation of addiction? Or does isolation persist in a different form — surrounded by people in meetings while remaining genuinely unknown to most of them?

Just for Today: Living One Day at a Time in NA

"Just for Today" captures the essential simplicity of NA's approach to the overwhelming challenge of permanent recovery: it asks not for a lifelong commitment made all at once but for a single day's commitment, made today. The 'Just for Today' approach addresses specific dimensions of the day's living with specific, practical guidance — just for today, I will try to live through this day only. Just for today, I will be happy, accepting that happiness is largely a matter of decision. The "just for today" principle is not a reduction of ambition — it is a recognition of where genuine power resides. Not in the future, which cannot be controlled. In today — this specific, available, manageable unit of time — where recovery is built, one day at a time.

1. 'Just for today' — where in your recovery has this principle been most effective? Where has narrowing the scope from 'forever' to 'just today' made possible a commitment you could not have maintained at the larger scale?

2. Which specific 'Just for Today' action is most relevant and most challenging for you right now? Write your 'just for today' intention for this day specifically.

WORKSHEETS & EXERCISES

Basic Text Worksheets

10 Deep-Work Exercises for Serious NA Program Engagement

How to Use These Worksheets

Work these with your sponsor — not alone. The Basic Text was written by addicts for addicts, and these worksheets extend that peer tradition: bring each completed worksheet to your sponsor before moving to the next. The work is most powerful when it is witnessed.

Worksheet 1 — My Personal Step One Documentation

1. POWERLESSNESS INVENTORY: List every specific instance where you tried and failed to control your using — every promise to moderate, every attempt at a different rule, every time the using took over despite genuine intention to stop. Be exhaustive and specific.

2. UNMANAGEABILITY INVENTORY: For each domain of your life — relationships, family, finances, work, legal, health, housing, spiritual life — describe specifically how the addiction made that domain unmanageable.

3. THE THREE DIMENSIONS: Describe your experience of the physical dimension (cravings, withdrawal), mental dimension (obsession, thinking that kept you using), and spiritual dimension (loss of meaning, disconnection, emptiness). Which was most severe?

4. MY STEP ONE: Write your personal Step One statement — not the generic formula, but the honest, specific, embodied admission of your powerlessness and unmanageability. This is not for performance — it is for you and your sponsor.

Worksheet 2 — My Higher Power Concept in NA

1. What are the specific barriers to the Higher Power concept in your history — previous religious experiences that were harmful, unanswered prayers during active addiction, intellectual resistance, or specific betrayals by people or institutions who claimed to represent God?

2. What is your working Higher Power concept today — the specific understanding of a Power greater than yourself that you can genuinely use in your daily recovery? Describe it in honest, personal terms, not in program-conventional language.

3. Where have you seen this Higher Power concept produce results — specific moments in your recovery when acting as if the concept were true produced something that self-reliance alone did not produce?

4. How has your Higher Power concept evolved through your recovery? If it has not evolved, is that because it is genuinely settled or because the question has not been actively engaged?

Worksheet 3 — The Character Defects Inventory

1. List the character defects most prominent in your Step Four inventory — the patterns of thinking and behaving that the inventory revealed as most consistently producing harm to yourself and others. Name each defect specifically rather than generically.

2. For your top three character defects: describe how each one operates in your current life — what specific situations trigger it, what it feels like from the inside, what behavior it produces, and what consequences it generates.

3. For each of the same three defects: what specific function has it served — what has it protected you from, provided for you, or made possible that vulnerability and honesty would not have provided?

4. For each defect: what is the corresponding spiritual virtue that NA recovery is developing in its place? Describe specifically where you see this virtue beginning to emerge in your life.

Worksheet 4 — The Amends Inventory

1. Write your complete Step Eight list: every person harmed through your addiction — family, intimate partners, friends, colleagues, employers, institutions, and yourself. Do not filter for approachability.

2. For each person on your list: describe specifically how they were harmed. Be concrete rather than general.

3. Categorize your list: Who has been fully approached and the amends made? Who has been approached but incompletely? Who has not yet been approached, and what is the specific barrier?

4. The amends you have made so far — what freedom have they produced? And the amends you have deferred — what is the specific cost of the deferral to your serenity and your daily recovery life?

Worksheet 5 — My Daily Recovery Practice Design

1. Design your complete daily NA practice based on Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve. For the morning: what specific prayer, reflection, or meditation will you practice? How will you prepare for the day guided by NA principles rather than the disease's thinking?

2. For the evening Step Ten review: what specific questions will you ask yourself? How will you address instances where you were wrong — who will you promptly admit it to?

3. For the Step Twelve service dimension: what specific, regular service commitment will be part of your daily or weekly practice?

4. What accountability structure will support this daily practice — who knows what it consists of, who will notice if it lapses, and when will you share your practice design with your sponsor?

Worksheet 6 — The Disease in My Thinking

1. Write out the specific thinking patterns of the disease as they currently operate in your recovery — not as they operated in active addiction, but right now. What specific rationalizations, minimizations, comparisons, or forms of denial does the disease still use?

2. For each pattern you identified: give a recent, specific example — a situation in your recovery in the last thirty days where this thinking was active.

3. What specific NA practices most effectively interrupt or counter each thinking pattern you identified? Design a specific response plan for each.

4. Who in your recovery community knows enough about your specific thinking patterns to call you on them when they see them? If no one — what would it take to give your sponsor that specific knowledge and permission?

Worksheet 7 — The NA Promises Inventory

1. The Basic Text describes specific gifts of recovery: freedom from the obsession, genuine community, self-worth, the ability to live life on life's terms, the joy of living. Rate your current experience of each (1-10) and describe specifically what each one looks like in your actual daily life.

2. Which of the recovery gifts described in the Basic Text is most fully present in your recovery? Be specific and honest — not aspirational, but accurately describing what is genuinely experienced right now.

3. Which gift is most absent — the one whose absence is most noticeable? What does the Basic Text suggest is required to produce it?

4. 'We find that we are no longer alone.' How genuinely present is this specific gift in your recovery? What would it take to deepen this dimension if it is not yet fully present?

Worksheet 8 — The Traditions in My NA Life

1. Which of the Twelve Traditions are most alive and meaningful for you personally — which ones embody principles you have come to genuinely understand through your experience in the fellowship? Name two or three and describe what makes them personally real.

2. Tradition Three says the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. How do you carry this Tradition in how you treat newcomers — do you make the meeting a place where the Tradition is genuinely lived?

3. Tradition Twelve says anonymity is the spiritual foundation — principles before personalities. Name a specific instance where you have been asked to put principles before your own personality or ego in an NA context.

4. If you were explaining to a newcomer why the Traditions matter for their personal recovery — not just for the organization — what would you say? Write that explanation specifically and honestly.

Worksheet 9 — Relapse Prevention and Early Warning Signs

1. Based on your own history and the Basic Text's description of the relapse pattern: what are your specific early warning signs — the specific changes in your thinking, behavior, and program engagement that signal the disease is reasserting itself before any using has occurred?

2. For each early warning sign you identified: what specific NA practice or action is the antidote? Design a specific response plan — the exact steps you will take when you notice each warning sign.

3. Who in your recovery community knows your specific early warning signs and has your explicit permission to call you on them when they see them? If no one — write the specific conversation you will have with your sponsor this week.

4. The Basic Text warns about 'an addict alone.' Where in your current recovery is isolation most active — where are you managing your distance from the fellowship, your sponsor, or honest disclosure?

Worksheet 10 — Letter to the Addict Who Still Suffers

1. Write a letter to someone who is where you were at your worst — in the 'seemingly hopeless state' that the Basic Text describes. Draw on everything the NA program has taught you and on what you most wish you had known when you were at your lowest point.

2. In this letter, be honest about both the difficulty and the possibility — do not minimize what the program requires or perform a cheerfulness that does not match the reality. Tell the truth about the cost and the gift of NA recovery in equal measure.

3. Close the letter with the specific message your recovery carries to the addict who still suffers — the honest testimony of what the NA program has done for you, in your own words, with enough specific detail that it would carry genuine credibility to someone not easily moved by generic optimism. This is the Step Twelve message. This is what you carry.

WORKSHEETS & EXERCISES

My Basic Text Study & Application Plan

Study · Work · Apply · Carry

From Reading to Living

The Basic Text says 'It's not just about not using drugs. It's about becoming fully human again.' This section converts your Basic Text study into a specific, sponsor-accountable plan for living the NA program rather than simply knowing about it. Share this with your sponsor this week.

My Honest Program Audit

An unfiltered assessment of the gap between your NA knowledge and your NA application.

1. Rate your current NA program engagement across three dimensions: Knowledge (how well do you understand the Basic Text's key concepts?), Step Work (how thoroughly have you worked each step with a sponsor?), and Daily Practice (how genuinely are you maintaining Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve as a living practice?)

2. What is the single most important gap between your Basic Text understanding and your NA living — the place where you know more than you are doing? Name it specifically.

3. The Basic Text says 'we do recover.' If your recovery faced its hardest test tomorrow — the worst trigger, the most significant loss — how confident are you that the NA program you have actually built would hold you? What does your honest answer reveal?

The Priority Step Work to Complete

The single most important step work to complete or deepen in the next 90 days.

1. Based on your assessment: which step is most incomplete — the one where the required work has been deferred, managed around, or done only partially? Name it specifically and be honest about what thorough engagement would require that your current approach has not provided.

2. What specifically will you do to complete or deepen this step — what is the concrete first action, what is your sponsor's role, and what is the specific timeline?

3. Who will hold you accountable? Commit to sharing this plan with your sponsor before the end of this week — and write here when and how you will do that.

My Basic Text Study Commitment

A specific, regular Basic Text study practice that goes beyond casual familiarity.

1. Design your Basic Text reading and study plan: which chapters will you read or re-read in the next 90 days? How often will you read? With your sponsor alone, in a study group, or both?

2. What is your early warning system for program drift — the specific indicators that will tell you your engagement with the Basic Text is becoming nominal rather than genuine?

3. What is your response when you detect program drift — the specific NA actions you will take to return to genuine engagement before the drift becomes chronic erosion?

My NA Program Commitment Statement

A personal commitment to the genuine, thorough NA program the Basic Text describes.

1. What is the single most important insight from this study guide — the one concept or practice that most directly addresses the gap between the program you are currently maintaining and the program the Basic Text says produces genuine recovery?

2. Write your personal NA Program Commitment Statement: what you are committing to studying, what step work you are completing, what daily practices you are maintaining, and why — in your own words, from your own honest engagement with what the Basic Text asks and what your specific recovery requires.

3. When will you share this statement with your sponsor? Name the date, the context, and specifically what you are asking your sponsor to hold you accountable to. The Basic Text says 'an addict alone is in bad company.' This commitment is not designed to be kept alone.
