

A few do's and don'ts

The situations you will encounter at an H&I meeting can be handled by simply using common sense. But here are a few do's and don'ts that are often helpful to point out:

- Do not give or accept any money or gifts.
- Don't carry letters or messages in or out of the facility.
- Don't give anyone your own or another member's phone number or address. All personal contact is best left until the person leaves the facility.
- Don't comment on the methods used by the treatment centre. Not all programs are based on the Twelve Steps nor does their understanding of the steps necessarily coincide with the understanding gained in N.A.
- Do try to use N.A. language.
- Do stay with the coordinator so the staff knows your whereabouts at all times.
- Do exercise common sense and respect for the facility in what you wear.
- Do pass any suggestions you might have for H&I to better serve the still suffering addict.
 - Do keep coming back to H&I
- Do make sure you contact facility if unable to attend. This is a must!

***Meetings 1st Saturday of every month @ 9:30 A.M.
The Centre of Hope
#420 - 9th ave. S.E.
Helpline - (403) 569-3427***



Narcotics
Anonymous

***Chinook Area of
Narcotics Anonymous
Kensington Postal Outlet
Box 61134 Calgary, AB. T2M 4S6***

*Hospitals & Institutions
Subcommittee*

***Sharing
in an H&I Meeting***

***"That no addict seeking
recovery need ever die"***

**Reprinted from the English version of the Montreal Area of Narcotics Anonymous. The Chinook Area H & I subcommittee endorses this pamphlet. At this time however, it has not been submitted to W.S.C of Narcotics Anonymous for approval
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So you're sharing at H & I

Many people are at least a little apprehensive about sharing in a prison or detox environment. You might feel intimidated, vulnerable, or if you have never spent time yourself in an institution or hospital, that you have nothing to offer. We understand and can offer the reassurance that the only thing that really matters is whether you are willing to carry a message of recovery from addiction in Narcotics Anonymous.

Those of us active in H&I service find it not only interesting but also, an intensely rewarding and a major part of our own personal recovery. Our initial fears have been replaced by gratitude and enthusiasm.

To watch the eyes of someone who is hearing the N.A. message for the first time slowly come to life, to see that person begin to ask questions and get the first glimmer of hope that maybe there is a way out, and to later see that person at a meeting on the outside accepting a key tag - these experiences await us.

Your personal commitment

To speak at an H&I meeting in the Chinook area, you must have at least 6 months clean; in prisons the clean time requirement is one year with the exception that certain facilities require more clean time. In addition, you must be willing to carry the N.A. message of recovery and to comply with H&I guidelines and the regulations of the facility. This is important because an H&I meeting is different from the autonomous N.A. group meeting you are familiar with.

H&I meetings are made possible through negotiated agreements with each facility. Our guidelines are the result of N.A.'s collective experience and group conscience. Carelessly "doing our own thing" could result in the institution canceling our meeting for not living up to our agreements.

The coordinator who invited you to speak will explain any rules that are to be followed at the particular facility where you are to share. If you find yourself unable to attend a meeting you have volunteered for, please give the coordinator at least 48 hours notice. Do not take it upon yourself to ask someone else to take your place or even to come along with you to the meeting. The coordinator is the only one authorized to invite members to attend the meeting.

Our Message

Our message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live by applying the principles of N.A. to his or her own life. The most important message we can give is that there is hope and freedom from active addiction in Narcotics Anonymous. We describe briefly our past with the focus on hitting bottom and recovery in N.A. We need to talk about what it used to be like so that the addicts in the facility can identify, but we should not glorify our using or overdo the war stories.

Sharing at an H&I meeting differs from sharing at a regular N.A. meeting. An H&I meeting is not an appropriate place to dump our current problems, issues or worries. We have also found that focusing on details of childhood experiences, sexuality, eating disorders, criminal activities, religious experiences, etc. detracts from our effectiveness informing newcomers of the help that is available in N.A. While we may refer to these things in sharing, our focus needs to be on the disease of addiction and how we recover from it in N.A. It can also be helpful to mention our early experiences in recovery, what helped us at the beginning, what obstacles we had to overcome. We are not suggesting that speakers "preach" at H&I meetings. But we try to give a focused and positive message of our own recovery in N.A.

A simple narrative of events accomplishes little, but a sharing of our feelings, denial, self-image, turning points, new awareness etc. carries a powerful message of recovery and the fact that our disease is progressive, incurable and fatal. Our own failures with substitution, geographical cures, religion, psychiatry or medicine can also be helpful. Many inmates or residents at their first N.A. H&I meeting arrive with the preconception that we are a religious organization. We need to keep this in mind when sharing and try to keep references to God, a higher power and spirituality as understandable and as non-threatening as possible. Try to remember how you reacted the first time you heard God mentioned at an N.A. meeting.

Questions and Answers

Unlike regular N.A. meetings, there is a question and answer period at H&I meetings. There is no need to be apprehensive about this. We are usually asked the same kinds of questions a newcomer might ask you over coffee after any ordinary N.A. meeting.

When answering questions, it is important to remember that N.A. has no opinion on outside issues. Several commonly asked questions that do not pertain to N.A. involve various recovery programs and other fellowships, the staff or conditions at the facility, comparisons of different drugs, and whether we consider coffee or tobacco to be drugs. Try not to be drawn into this kind of discussion. Even when you do have personal experience on such outside issues, it is important to remain consistent with the Tenth Tradition and not discuss it in this setting. Always remember to only share your experience, strength and hope about your recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

H&I meeting formats

An H&I meeting is basically an introduction to our Fellowship for addicts who do not have free access to regular N.A. meetings. The type of format we use may vary according to the nature of the facility it is held in. But it always involves outside members bringing in the N.A. message. Whatever format is used, we usually try to get the participants involved in a question and answer period. And allow a little room for fellowship at the end of the meeting. It is suggested that you first attend an H&I meeting as an observer. This will allow you to see how it works and feel quite comfortable when it is time for you to participate.