

“Winds Of Change”

Presented by Dennis S
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Opening Remarks

I am so grateful to be participating in the 4th Annual Nar-Anon Midwest Region Assembly. For me this Assembly is a "yard stick" to measure my growth, recovery and serenity.

I attended the 2nd Annual Assembly in Springfield and had been a member of Nar-Anon for six months. I was doing better than I was prior to attending meetings, but was still in chaos, and a lot of my daily decisions were a struggle. I was amazed at how welcome I felt at this Assembly and listened to everyone and took was a great feeling. I was able to share my new positive thoughts with my "new family".

I left St. Louis and had to deal with a drug related tragedy in my life soon after I got home. I dealt with the situation, and although I will never put it behind me, I again saw how well these group "circle the wagons" when necessary.

Now we are in Chicago, and I am so honored to talk about the "Winds Of Change" with the wonderful people that "got the winds blowing in my direction".

It is like my meetings "I am so glad to be here"

"Windy City" (Origin of Nickname - Wikipedia)

The true origin of the nickname "Windy City" for Chicago has been debated for at least 140 years. The earliest known reference to the nickname appeared in the Cincinnati news papers stemming from the rivalry between the two cities, regarding "the hog butcher" of the midwest and baseball. This dates back to the mid 1870's. The reference seemed to indicate the "wind came from the braggarts".

There was a fierce competition between Chicago and New York City to host the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Charles Dana, editor of the New York Sun, referred to Chicago as the "Windy City" in regards to the "hot air" coming from the politicians. The power in the name lies in the metaphorical use "windy" for "talkative" or "boastful." Chicago politicians became famous for long-windedness, and Chicago's central location as a host city for political conventions helped cement the association of Chicago with loquacious politicians.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, Chicago did not even make the top ten of windiest cities. As with a lot of origins the Chicago nickname is often debated. One fact remains it is "Windy".

"Winds Of Change" & Nar-Anon:

The "**Wind Of Change**" speech was a historically important speech made by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillian to the Parliament of South Africa in 1960. The speech and the results changed the continent of Africa. One of the African leaders named Luthuli noted that the speech gave African people "some inspiration and hope".

For me, the "**Winds Of Change**" started in April, 2011. This is when I was introduced to the fellowship of Nar-Anon. "When the "**Winds of Change**" blow, some people build walls, while others build windmills.

Remember we cannot change the direction of the wind, but we can always adjust our sails." It was time to adjust my sails.

What did I seek in Nar-Anon? **Change!** I wanted to put an end to my pain and turned to Nar-Anon with hope that I would find out what I needed to do to achieve this. Change was going to be a process, but I learned we each work the program in our own way, and in our own time.

I pictured trees in a storm and the answer began to dawn on me. The trees in the storm don't try to stand up straight and tall, and erect. They allow themselves to bend and be blown with the wind. They understand the power of "**letting go.**" The trees and branches that try too hard to stand up strong and straight are the ones that break. It was not the time for me to be standing up strong or I too would break. It was time for me to accept change, it was time for me to find "some inspiration and hope".

Change Evolves:

The Nar-Anon program has numerous tools that helped bring about **Change** in my life. The tools that were most helpful to me were:

Meetings
Sharing with others
Steps One, Two and Three
Service Work

1. Meetings:

My weekly chapter meetings obviously were the beginning of this transformation.

I attended five weekends of family classes at my sons rehab facility while he was a patient. On the last day of class there were four members of Nar-Anon that gave a talk that afternoon. I was very moved by what they had to say and went home and Googled Nar-Anon that evening to find a chapter that I could attend. I picked Elmhurst because it was very close to my office and on a convenient day.

I attended the next Tuesday, not sure of what to expect. Much to my surprise this was the Chapter that the four Nar-Anon members that gave the talk at the rehab center belonged to. My first thought was maybe there is something to this trust in your "Higher Power". I was very comfortable after a couple meetings and was impressed that no one tried to change me, offer advice or try and rescue me. I was "all ears" as I listened to the members share and tell their story, but did not participate. After a couple months I started to speak at the meetings and share my thoughts. The change in me was very evident as I remarked very often "that Wednesday was always my best day of the week because they followed my Tuesday evening Nar-Anon meeting". I was with "family" that understood my situation and in a place that was comfortable, because we were all in the same situation.

I like to paraphrase Andy D. a noted NA speaker that tells his NA people that if you attend three meetings "you have heard all you need to know to stay clean" These couple months taught me that I had all the tools at my finger tips to start my **Change** and recovery. Andy D. also challenges his members to read their literature and "that sponsorship is the responsibility of the group". Tuesdays Together Nar-Anon Family Group is my sponsor, and it works and I am worth it!

2. Sharing With Others:

As I was starting to grow and about four months into Nar-Anon I was asked if I would like to chair a meeting. I had a week to prepare and worked my tail off to prepare a topic. I realized, that the next **Change** was happening. By chairing a meeting I was getting involved, doing research, and gained more insight about each topic.

Thought For Today; SESH Page 304, October 30:

Words of wisdom are not my forte, but I have found the healing effect of sharing my concerns with others. The times I wanted to most hide out with my problems are the times I most need to reach out to others.

3. Steps One, Two, and Three

The Nar-Anon Thirty-Six, Introduction, Steps One, Two, Three, groups the Twelve Steps into four Groups:

Steps One, Two & Three	"Giving Up"
Steps Four, Five & Six	"Owning Up"
Steps Seven, Eight & Nine	"Making Up"
Steps Ten, Eleven & Twelve	"Growing Up"

Giving Up or surrender for me was a monumental task. Giving Up or surrender were not part of my vocabulary or my being. With this in mind, I began my Step Work, the next level of my **Change**.

Step One: We Admitted We were Powerless Over The Addict - That Our Lives Had Become Unmanageable

Step One is very much an awareness Step. It does not ask us to perform a task, it does ask us to make any rash decisions. It "only" asks us to admit we were powerless. I learned an exercise from Nar-Anon Family Groups, Calgary, Alberta, Canada Literature, which was to substitute the name of your addict for the word addict and read Step One again in the first person, "**I Admitted I Was Powerless Over Mark - That Our Lives Had Become Unmanageable**". Over and over say the line. This motivated me to study Step One, think about it, write notes about it and helped me **Change** and surrender.

Thought For Today; SESH Page 2, January 2

I will let the first Three Steps talk to me when I am tempted to get caught up in another person's problems. I believe my sanity is restored whenever I ask for help. Today, I surrender and find my real power by letting go of old ways.

Step Two: Came To Believe That A Power Greater Than Ourselves Could Restore Us To Sanity

Step Two tells us Hope can be found through faith in a Higher Power. If we can believe a Higher Power is in control, we can free ourselves from the fear, confusion and anxiety we have experienced while living with addiction. Some members begin working Step Two by choosing to use their group as Higher Power. I was one of these members. I would acquire Hope through the wisdom and strength I heard and saw in other members. By listening to other members share their understanding of a Higher Power, I learned to comfortably connect with a Higher Power of my own. In Nar-Anon I came to believe the Higher Power of this program is a loving, nurturing

Power that has our best interests at heart. Whatever our situation, belief, understanding, trust or acceptance of a Higher Power is, we are free to discover what works for us. I trust the process. One day at a time our lives will begin to reflect peace and serenity.

SESH Page 55, February 24

When I gave up trying to change the addict and Let Go and Let God, I found that all things were possible. I saw **Changes**, not in the addict perhaps, but in me. I started to believe in a Power greater than myself and saw that my life was being restored to sanity. This is Step Two.

Step Three: Made A decision To Turn Our Will And Our Lives Over To The Care Of God, As We Understood Him

There is a saying in Ala-Teen Twelve Step Program that says, "God can't do his work if you are standing in his way" Our will is our desire or determination to be in control of all situations. Having control is often what we want, but not always what we need. Step Three is also about having faith and letting go. Letting go of some one in order for them to grow in their own way and in their own time is an amazing principle. Letting go to allow someone to grow or find their own recovery is much different from giving up on them.

Thought For Today; SESH Page 71, March 11

I will release my will to my Higher Power. In doing so, I am only giving up an illusion of control and seeing the reality of the situation.

4. Service Work:

I can carry the message of recovery as I experience it. I learn I can help others in a healthy and supportive way when I give freely. This has become such an important part of my **Change** and recovery. As one addict (my son), expressed to me, "We have one choice, If you are not working your recovery, you are working a relapse". I have decided to work my recovery and do service work, especially talking to groups at rehab centers has kept me focused and to truly understand my program and my recovery.

Thought For Today; SESH Page 134, May 13

For me, giving back to the Nar-Anon fellowship is an expression of unconditional love and part of the healing process. When I give freely, without expectations, I help create a healing environment for others and myself.

Closing Remarks

In my opening remarks I stated that when I came home from St. Louis after last years assembly, I had to deal with a drug related tragedy in my life.

My company gave a young man a second chance in life. This was a young man that had been a vicious heroin addict. Thru his NA program he had turned his life around. He came to us and related his whole story, leaving nothing out. He had over five years clean, was a strong sponsor for many, including my son. He did a lot of service work and speaking for NA.

He had a new life, that included a new born son. All three of us at the company felt this was a guy that needed a miracle new start to go with the miracle of his recovery. We sponsored him as an apprentice and hired him.

In October of last year Jon and Violet baptized their son in a beautiful catholic church and asked my son to be the god father. In November, the day after Thanksgiving, Jon's father called me to tell me that Violet found Jon dead in the bathroom from a heroin overdose.

People come into your life for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. When you figure out which it is, you'll know exactly what to do.

Jon came into my life for a season, approximately a half year. He came to our company as an apprentice very eager to learn and to succeed. All of the people he worked with remarked about his great attitude and eagerness to learn his new trade. One of his foreman nicknamed him G I Jon as a testament to his clean cut image and desire to do things right.

Jon also became a friend, somewhat of an adopted son, if you will. We spent time discussing friends, family, especially Violet and Jack, and past tough times and our hopes for the future. I was always impressed with his devotion to his friends and eagerness to help others. This willingness to help, share experiences and hope became very important to me, as did Jon.

I have lost my good friend and I will miss him and our great conversations, but I will cling to a favorite quote by Martin Luther "I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all, but whatever I have placed in God's hands, I still possess".

I am sure Jon is in God's hands and I know he will be in my memory and my heart and I am thankful he was in my life.

NA got my son thru this time, Families Anonymous got Jon's parents thru this time and Nar-Anon got me thru.

These Programs Work!!