THIRTY-ONE DAYS IN NARATEEN

FOREWARD

Thirty-One Days in Narateen was written by Narateen members for members and other teens who face the addiction of a loved one, such as a parent, sibling, or friend. These personal stories share hope, comfort, sanity, and recovery from the effects of the family disease of addiction. Readers can find stories similar to their own, know they are not alone, and learn there is hope whether the addict is still using or not.

Narateen authors share their experience, strength, and hope, as they apply the principles of the Narateen/Nar-Anon program of recovery, to find peace and serenity while dealing with a loved one's addiction.

ENABLING ~ DAY 1

I have reached the point of doing everything for the person I love without realizing that I am doing him wrong. I was fulfilling each and every one of his whims, to the point of providing money for his using. I did it believing that I was helping. This was done unconsciously out of guilt and loneliness.

I came to understand that I could be enabling his addiction. I had to let go and leave him in the hands of a Higher Power. I needed to seek help and let my loved one also seek help.

In Narateen I learned to let go. I go to the group to change, improve, and value myself. By accepting what I cannot change and releasing my will to my Higher Power, I`m learning to love the addict in a healthy way.

UNMANAGEABLE ~ DAY 2

When things are not like I desire or people don't do what I say, I feel like my life is unmanageable. But it is mostly because I am not able to control myself. I am powerless; I am a person who gets carried away by feelings without thinking about the consequences. In Narateen, I accept that I must work on my shortcomings and recover my sanity. When I begin to truly live my own life and not the lives of others, I don't get hurt or hurt others.

In Narateen I work on me and that is the biggest step. My life is unmanageable, I admit it, but today I am important. Through this writing I ask my Higher Power to enlighten me if that is His will.

ROBOT VS. HUMAN BEING ~ DAY 3

I look in the mirror and try to figure out what the difference is between a robot and a human being. My closest definition of a robot is a cold person, hard, unwilling to express their feelings, living day by day in a lie and saying that everything is all right. When I look at myself in the mirror, I think I want to be more human.

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Being a robot will not lead me anywhere. I have to take the First Step, which is to accept that I can change with Narateen meetings. They help me, the members listen to me, and every time I feel more human. Maybe being human is not perfect, but it is real. I must face my circumstances and cope with them to start living happily. I can do this with the help of my Higher Power, in a loving and sensitive way.

THIRD STEP ~ DAY 4

Before I came to Narateen my life was filled with a lot of pain, anguish, fear, and resentment. The addict in my life totally controlled me.

Thanks to Narateen, my behaviors and fears turned into acceptance. I was finding serenity and peace of mind. When I conceive of a Higher Power, to which I give all those burdens that cause me so much pain, I free myself to just be responsible for my recovery. Now I understand that I have a Higher Power that never leaves me alone, that I can let go and trust.

LETTING GO ~ DAY 5

Today I was walking down the street and I saw a person I am angry with. I remembered that one day, I told her that I was going to forgive her for the pain she caused. I realize that I have not let go of the past. So today I must ask my Higher Power to help me let go of all these bonds that are not going to create anything good in me. I am going to do everything humanly possible to let go. With the help of my Higher Power, I can do the impossible.

I must forgive and release control every day to have a better recovery process. If I do not release the reins, those ties will not let me advance. On the contrary, they will create an illness in me. I must ask the Narateen program for help because I know I'm not going to be able to let go alone.

SPIRITUAL FREEDOM ~ DAY 6

When I accept a Higher Power in my life, I can change feelings of despair for feelings of joy, freedom, and serenity. When this happens, I feel grateful to my Higher Power and the Narateen Program.

I admit I'm responsible only for my own life. My choices give me a sense of freedom.

WORKING ON THE FIFTH STEP ~ DAY 7

Admitting to God, another human being and myself the nature of my faults, was something very big. It is very difficult to recognize that I am powerless. I am human and things are not always going to be done according to my way of thinking.

In Narateen, I understand that my Higher Power has a plan. I must let go. I can do everything humanly possible to change. My Higher Power does the impossible part.

My Higher Power has helped me find strength and hope. I noticed lately that things are not as planned, neither at work nor at school. People are different, but although the days are dark and

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very bad, I know that my Higher Power is in control. I know I am loved even though I may not understand the plan.

LIES BLIND ME ~ DAY 8

Sometimes I wonder if something is a lie or reality. I wonder if I believe in situations I wished were true. One of the great tests is for years I wished my brother's illness was not real. Was I the one who created a bubble and begged that it was a lie? I was so blind I think I was the one who was encouraged by believing what was not real.

But unfortunately, one day the bubble of lies I had created exploded, and I had to start seeing reality. I saw the true intention of people. That was the day I entered Narateen.

In Narateen I had the strength to find myself and to help in a human way to improve my life and my family's lives too.

PERSPECTIVE ~ DAY 9

It's hard to see everything as it should be when I'm lying on my bed looking at the wall. It is difficult to go from having my eyes closed, seeing everything dark and open them and see the colors, people and actions. Life is hard and requires a lot of courage to open my eyes and see everything in a different way. I can look at things in a positive way and repeat over and over in my head "just for today", "just for today."

Being able to make changes in myself has been hard. I know everything is not going to be the way I want. It's nice to know I have the opportunity to be in the program. Narateen was with me when I was in a crazy moment. All I can do for the program is to carry the message so that no one should suffer for someone else's addiction.

In the program I found a solution and a connection with my Higher Power. I am recovering with the help of slogans, the steps, traditions and concepts.

FAMILY DISEASE ~ DAY 10

My family illness arose with the person I love the most, my brother. His weird and unhealthy behaviors and attitudes affected my mom and me. I totally changed. I went from being a happy girl to unhappy and enabling. I wasn't me anymore. I was just devoted to protecting my brother and worrying about him.

When I came to Narateen, the members helped me understand my situation. I went back to being myself. I'm learning to change for the better.

TRY TO REMEMBER ~ DAY 11

Narateen is not a therapeutic program.

It's not a program for teenagers who have a problem with drinking or narcotics.

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It's not a place to gossip.

It's not a place for training or keeping of teenagers.

It's not a hangout or entertainment.

But it's a place to find recovery and serenity.

It's a place to share our experience, strength, and hope to help each other.

We learn in Narateen to safeguard ourselves from the disease of addiction and social harm.

We learn how to take care of ourselves, and how to love ourselves, and how to use our abilities to reach balance and serenity.

Narateen is a spiritual program that teaches us skills for living well.

MISSING THE ADDICT ~ DAY 12

Lately I miss my brother. He left the house because of his mistakes, which were caused by addiction. We could not allow him to cause more psychological and physical damage to my mother and me.

It's amazing that I now love and forgive a person who caused me so much pain. I had to let my brother live his life and I started to worry about me. Who am I?

Narateen taught me that I can't change my brother and the only thing I can change is me. Just for today I focus on myself and my happiness.

FEARS AND SHORTCOMINGS ~ DAY 13

My greatest fear was about the person I loved most. He was the person who did psychological, physical and many other harms. I wasn't afraid of him, but I was afraid of what he could do to his life. I was afraid that he would collapse and end up on the street. Then I started to see my fears come true. I completely broke down and started to see things in a very dark way. The day I began to see things in that way, I entered the Narateen program. I learned I had to detach from the addict. I thought they would tell me I don't have to love the addict anymore, but no, they meant I can love him and respect him. I also have to let him live his life and I was very afraid of that.

As I progressed through the Narateen program, I had to face each of my fears, those defects that no one likes to be put to light. I had to face the biggest fear I knew, myself and in that I refer specifically to my shortcomings. My faults were an obstacle every day, but in the program I was taught the slogan, *just for today*. Today I will be the best version of myself. The best recovery is to give everything to my Higher Power, specifically my fears and shortcomings.

LETTING GO – GROWTH ~ DAY 14

When I arrived at my first Narateen meeting, I was an unmanageable person. I not only thought about myself, but also about the addict. It wasn´t the kind of thought that came from worrying

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about him in a healthy way. It was a thought of manipulation and trying to keep him by my side. I was his boss, the one who managed everything. One day in a meeting I heard the slogan *let go and let God.* All the way home I just kept thinking about it. I asked my sponsor what it meant. She explained to me what it meant, that by letting go and letting God, my life could change for the better. I started to let go of the addict and he started to live his own life. Letting go of the addict doesn´t mean I don't love him anymore. It means I don´t have to worry about his life, but can focus on my own.

In recovery I am learning to let go to improve as a person. This has helped with my bad temper, selfishness, and pride. The hardest thing to let go of was pride. Today I can say that I let go of those bonds that won't let me be happy. Today I feel like I am growing up. I feel like I'm a better version of myself. I feel that I finally let go and let God and tell Him that just for today I will trust Him. I repeat this every day.

JUST FOR TODAY ~ DAY 15

Only for today I have the opportunity to be happy. Just for today I have the opportunity to be better than yesterday. That phrase accompanies me every day; it is the hope for my recovery.

One day on the verge of madness and in total chaos, my whole world was broken into pieces. I fainted and when I opened my eyes, the first thing I saw was a sign that said, *Just for Today.*

That day I went to a Narateen meeting and the reading was about the slogan, *just for today*. After listening to the reading and meditating all day I thought to myself, what's wrong with me? What if I try to be happy, just for today?

The next morning when I opened my eyes, I thought just for today I will be happy, just for today I will improve. This is the phrase for all my days. It is an opportunity to practice my recovery.

TRUST ~ DAY 16

Learning to trust someone after they have repeatedly broken it can be extremely difficult and exhausting. When your addict gets clean and wants to jump right back into any kind of a relationship, or wants you to take a chance on trusting what they say, it can be near impossible. After my dad got sober it took years for him to regain my trust. It made me feel like, well, if my dad, the person who is supposed to love me and I'm supposed to trust, breaks it, who else will?

When learning to trust not only him, but other people, I had to understand that trust may be broken. That's not easy to come to terms with, but it can be the reality. Also, realizing that I get to choose when and where I can trust someone helps. Just because you are my parent doesn't mean I have to trust you. I get to choose. Trust takes time to build and can be broken all over again, but you get to choose if it's worth it to you or not.

DETACHMENT ~ DAY 17

Detachment is hard. When we love or care about someone, all we want is for them to get better, for them to eat, shower, have a roof over their heads, to have everything they need. But we can't control those things. It's not easy to help people who don't want help or to be obsessed over

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what the addict chooses to do. In the process we can be taken advantage of. Detachment isn't saying I will never be there for you, or never talk to you again. It means I'm choosing to take care of myself, to worry about myself.

HELPING MYSELF WHEN THE ADDICT ISN'T GETTING BETTER ~ DAY 18

When living with an addict it's important to remember to think about myself. This is much easier said than done, but after years of worrying about making sure they're safe it took a toll on me. Even starting small is a good way to get started helping myself, such as going out and taking a walk. Though it doesn't sound like much it helps so much and paves the way to helping myself.

Another thing that helps is remembering that my loved one's addiction isn't my fault. Though it's hard to accept, it's true, and is a huge step in helping me move forward. Helping myself is a hard journey to take, but the reward makes the struggles along the way worth it.

POWERLESSNESS ~ DAY 19

My family illness began with the person I love the most, my brother. He began to bring behaviors and many strange and bad attitudes that began to affect my mom and then me. I totally changed, a 180 degree turn from being a happy girl to an unhappy girl and an enabler. I was not me anymore. I just dedicated myself to protecting my brother. I left my life to start living and caring for him.

I arrived in Narateen and the group helped me deeply. I began to accept. I was not the same, but now I am better.

MAKING CHOICES ~ DAY 20

What is a decision? It's a door that opens to many roads that may take me to an amazing or horrible place. The decision is up to me.

I didn't understand that and wasn't thinking. I was an impulsive person who let myself be carried away by the actions and follies of others. I am learning to make good decisions. Living with an addict, I must choose for my well-being.

My mom kicked the addict out of the house. I threatened to go with him and prosecute her. When I was walking out, I realized my brother and I could be in danger. The first decision was to stay with my mom. The hardest decision was not to go with my brother to live on the street and support him in the life he was choosing. He was choosing a dangerous lifestyle.

I am already 16 years old and have had a hard time coping with life. I made decisions without knowing where they would take me. Thanks to a Higher Power, one day I entered Narateen and realized all the craziness and bad decisions I was about to make for my brother.

I TALK ~ DAY 21

- Narateen is a place where I can talk freely about my feelings and my problems with others.

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- I talk, talk, about anything I like, anything I hate and about my life, my dreams, my problems, my anger, my grudge, and I don't care how I am judged.
- I don't talk to be approved or encouraged, but my talks vent my discomfort and problems and make me feel relieved and I get serenity with peace of mind.
- By talking I can speak about my capabilities, shortcomings, interests, desires, feelings, God as I understand, and also get closer to my Higher Power.
- Narateen is my safe place. I trust it and pour my heart out.

CONTROL: ALCOHOL IS A DRUG TOO ~ DAY 22

I started coming to Narateen after my dad's drinking got too out of control. His drinking has always been an issue in my house. Seeing someone you love drown themselves in a bottle is heart wrenching. Before Narateen, dealing with an alcoholic father was very hard. I felt very distant from him and everything was always a fight. The words that came out of his mouth made me think I was the problem, but that was not the case. He was the one with the problem and I tried to control it for him. Coming to Narateen made me understand that you cannot control their addiction.

NOT ALONE ~ DAY 23

The feeling of darkness can consume us whether dealing with everyday life or with an addict. I know at one point I felt worthless and that no one would care if I ended my life. I felt like I was alone and that no one was going through what I had to deal with. After I found Narateen, I realized I was not alone. I found the sense of being part of a family even if I'm at my worst. I had to deal with my biological mom, who is an addict. Then growing up, I was adopted and then when I realized my dad was an alcoholic, it was just devastating. I took on the pain of my addicts and tore myself down with them, but Narateen helped me realize that I don't need to do that. I do not need to fix everyone else's problems, no matter how much the addict lies and tells me I need to fix them.

THE 3 Cs ~ DAY 24

Didn't cause, can't control, can't cure,

We, as Narateen members, always want to fix others. We always want things to go our way. We also accept the blame for things we didn't cause.

When I was a small child, both my parents were addicts. I couldn't help feeling like it was my fault. Was I a bad kid? Did they regret having me? Do they love me? I often tried to fix them or tried to force them to be something they weren't. I have learned that I could not have possibly caused this. Addiction is a disease.

They do love me; they are just so consumed by drugs that they have no room for anything else. The real them is hidden by this disease. I also can't control them. The harder I push, the more they resist. The addict has to be ready, truly ready, in order to get clean. However, addiction

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has no cure and will always be a part of them. Once I learned this, believed it, and lived by it, the 3 Cs had a huge impact in my life.

ACCEPTANCE ~ DAY 25

Acceptance is one of the hardest things to learn. It's hard to come to terms with addiction. It's hard to look at my life and see the truth. This, however, is vital. In order to grow and truly accept this program, I have to be real. Addiction is very real, and it's not my fault. Accepting that I need to get help to heal myself is the best thing I can do. I believe that this is the first step on the road to recovery.

HIGHER POWER ~ DAY 26

Thinking about Higher Powers is tricky. I didn't ever really believe in God. I believed because I was scared I would go to hell if I didn't. I thought, why would my Higher Power give me this life if He was real. Why would anything bad happen, really. The program has opened my eyes. Everything happens for a reason. Everything that happens to us teaches us a lesson. We are stronger and smarter than we would have been otherwise. I pray to my Higher Power when I'm going through something that just doesn't make sense. I know He is always listening.

HOPE ~ DAY 27

When I think about what the word hope means in Narateen, it's the same as it means in life. Hope is really a desire for something normally positive to happen. When we find ourselves or someone we love in a place that is unmanageable, what but hope do we have? Hope gives us the strength to fight any rough situations with positivity. Hope is the possibility of great things for us and our loved ones.

POWERLESS ~ DAY 28

If you are reading this, you are on Step One or in recovery, and you realized you are powerless over your addict and your life is unmanageable. When I realized these things, it was really hard for me to do this because I always thought that I could tell her what to do and she had to listen to me. When she didn't, I would get mad, and when I came to Narateen I realized I was powerless.

LETTING GO ~ DAY 29

Before coming to Narateen, my life was always chaotic. My brother was always high and getting into trouble. The actions of my brother always got in the way of my life. Instead of taking care of myself, I was always putting him first. I soon realized that the only way I can heal is by letting him go.

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Most people fear letting go of their loved ones, but it changed my life completely. The constant worry and craziness finally left. I was able to focus on myself and my recovery without worrying about my brother. Not only did I better myself but he did as well.

He is now a year and a half sober. By letting him go on his own path, he learned how to solve his own problems. Thanks to Narateen, I am able to take care of myself, and he is as well.

MY STORY ~ DAY 30

"If they loved me enough they would stop using." Throughout my whole life I've had that thought running in my mind.

My parents and my grandfather are my main addicts. I lived with my parents until I was about six years old. We lived in a doped-up trailer park until my grandparents got custody of my sister and I. We've lived with them ever since. We were just two confused little kids who just knew that our parents didn't love us enough to get clean so they could take proper care of us.

My father got clean off and on and was in and out of jail. He would tell lies to cover up lies. It has been an ongoing cycle. I haven't seen my mom since I was seven years old. My parents are still using.

A counselor recommended Narateen and I gave it a try. It was a lifeline. I found other kids who were experiencing the feelings I was having. It made me feel better that they understood me. I soon came to realize that addiction is a disease, a nasty one, at that. It isn't something that is fixed overnight and has to be done by the addict themselves. I want to love the addiction out of them, or in some cases, I just want to slap it out of them. Loving with boundaries is something I soon came to use as a daily practice. My parents love me, but while they are using, they aren't able to be that loving parent I want. They will have to stop when they are ready. I didn't cause it, I can't control it, and I can't cure it. When I focus on me it gets better.

THINGS WE LEARN IN NARATEEN ~ DAY 31

- Talk it out before fighting.
- Calling members could be useful to learn from their experience.
- Addiction is a disease. The addict is not bad, just sick.
- Be kind and patient with the parent who doesn't use drugs.
- Don't make excuses for the addicts' behavior or take on their responsibilities. This isn't helping them to recover.
- Have sincere relationships with supportive family members.
- Keep in mind younger ones' dignity and treat them with respect.
- Keep coming back to the Narateen meetings and learn the art of listening.
- Proper attention to our education could be very important for our future.
- Accept that we cannot change anyone but ourselves.

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- Try to eliminate negative habits and behaviors, and strengthen positive habits and behaviors.
- It's not our fault that a person we love takes drugs and doesn't behave properly; don't feel guilty.
- Telling the truth is better than lying. Don't run from reality.
- Sharing is beautiful: share love, friendship, happiness, laughter, crying, and talking.
- Just think about today, don't imagine what will happen tomorrow. It might not happen.
- Do not get involved in fights at home, they are not our business, go to another room, study, watch TV or listen to music. If there is violence, call someone you trust.
- Be in touch with group members, trust each other, and honestly share our problems and feelings.
- Share our true feelings at meetings. This will help us and the other members of the group.
- View life with a positive and beautiful mindset.

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