

J U L Y - A U G U S T 2 0 2 5



THE NEWCOMER

THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON

Newcomers are the heart of our fellowship and the reason we keep coming back.

CREATIVE IN RECOVERY

A space to showcase the healing power of creativity in recovery.

REFLECTIONS

Central Texas NA members share hope, strength, and the importance of their newcomer experience.

STAY CONNECTED STAY inspired!

Stories of hope, service opportunities, creative expressions in recovery, messages for newcomers and more.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Get involved, connect with others, and make a positive impact in the fellowship.

Personal Stories

Getting Clean at Nineteen

From as far back as I can remember I've been an addict. My first addiction was sucking my thumb. It was such a comfort, but as I got older it caused me a great deal of shame. At school, it was all I could think about. I was terrified that the other kids would find out and ridicule me. I didn't know what the words obsession or compulsion meant at that time, but now I know that's what I was experiencing.

At age fifteen, my family and world fell apart. My dad went to prison for molesting my sister. Around that same time a friend introduced me to drugs. I immediately loved the way it made me feel and the excitement it brought.

I dropped out of school in tenth grade. I moved in with some friends that used. I worked various terrible jobs, but at least I had the money to get high.

The more I used, the more I felt hopeless, insecure and self-centered. I knew, in my heart, that using wasn't the answer but I didn't know how to stop. I didn't know how to be honest with myself or other people. I was full of fear and self loathing.

By the time I was nineteen I'd had enough. Enough of using. It scared me that I always wanted more.

I tried stopping on my own but ended up sick in the hospital. They sent me to the Oklahoma Mental Hospital at the time. I spent about thirty days there and then my mom found a bed for me at a thirty day treatment center called Valley Hope.

There, I was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous and a new way of life.

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Personal Stories

Getting Clean at Nineteen (continued)

I was full of fear and didn't know anything about NA. All I knew was, I couldn't go on like this. One day, I went to the small chapel they had, got on my knees and cried. This was my first experience with surrender. After my cry fest, I got up and started hearing the message of recovery; that an addict, any addict can stop using, loose the desire to use and find a new way of life.

After treatment I went to as many meetings as I could. They recommended ninety meetings in ninety days but sometimes I did more. I got a sponsor and started working the steps, one day at a time. I got a home group and started to be of service to the fellowship, giving back what was so freely given to me.

Thirty one years later, I'm still an addict, but I'm a recovering addict. I don't use, no matter what. I still try and take it one day at a time. I have a sponsor and actively work the steps. I go to meetings regularly. I work with other people in recovery, which helps me break that cycle of obsession, guilt and shame. I'm learning to love myself. And for that, I'm truly grateful to the program of Narcotics Anonymous.

ILS

-Tony G.

Personal Stories

Belonging Here: Earning My Seat in Narcotics Anonymous

My very first Narcotics Anonymous meeting took place in a residential treatment center. Every week, a member of NA would bring a meeting into the facility, and we would sit in a circle in the cafeteria. I went into the meeting with a bad attitude thinking it would be like other meetings the staff had taken us to. As soon as I heard the readings at the beginning of the meeting, my attitude changed significantly. I knew I was home. I felt something shift in me, something that said, *You belong here.*

That feeling only grew stronger when we read *Chapter One: Who Is an Addict?* from the Basic Text. For the first time in a long time, I heard words that described how I felt inside. I picked up a white key tag that day, my first commitment to a new way of life, and I grabbed every pamphlet on the table, along with the little white booklet. I was ready. That meeting lit a fire in me, and I knew I wanted to keep going.

Once I returned home after treatment, I continued attending meetings in my local area. I was eager, open-minded, willing, and committed to staying clean. For several months, I continued showing up, listening, sharing, and learning. But one evening, a few members approached me to share their opinion: they didn't think I belonged. According to them, my addiction wasn't "that bad" because I hadn't used street drugs, I had only abused prescription medication.

At first, I was angry. I couldn't believe they had the audacity to say something like that to another addict! My second reaction was sadness mixed with doubt. *Maybe they're right*, my disease whispered. *Maybe I don't belong here.*

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Personal Stories

Belonging Here: Earning My Seat in Narcotics Anonymous (continued)

But I knew better. Y'all (the majority of y'all), had taught me better. NA had welcomed me when I was broken. The Basic Text didn't ask what I used, how long I used, or how low I had gone. It said the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. And I had that desire. I had committed myself to this program back in that cafeteria meeting, and I wasn't willing to let go just because a few people didn't understand my story.

None of us stumble into an NA meeting by accident. We come because we're hurting, because we're desperate, because we're searching for a new way to live. I earned my seat not by what I used, but by having the courage to stay, to listen, and to do the work. I came to understand that addiction isn't defined by the drug, it's defined by what it does to you. The pain, the desperation, the spiritual emptiness... Those things don't care if your drug came from a doctor or a dealer.

Today, I no longer feel the need to defend my place in NA. I know I belong. My story may look different from others, but it is no less real. If anything, I now have the honor of welcoming other newcomers who carry the same doubts I once did. I get to look them in the eye and say:

You belong here. You don't have to prove anything. You've already earned your seat.

By Holly G.

We need writers for future newsletters! If you are interested in sharing your recovery story, please email the newsletter sub-subcommittee at:

newsletter@ctana.org

Step Seven

“We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

An Emergency Step Seven

I committed a heinous, absolutely inappropriate act and I admittedly felt justified doing it. I cheated on my husband. I was emotional and angry, trapped in habitual patterns of thinking and acting. Shrouded in rationalization and dishonesty, and unfocused on my side of the street, I vented over the phone to my sponsor.

I was obsessed and distracted, thinking of the affair and my lover, thinking of my husband and telling him...It was a tangled mess in my mind. I couldn't focus, could barely work. I was back to full on active addiction with no dope in my body. I was full of guilt and shame, but I felt justified. “The dynamics of the relationship with my husband,” I tried to explain to my sponsor, “...but it's so...” She wasn't about to hear it. She knew I was full of sh*t.

She told me to read classic passages from our literature that relate to recovery and relapse, the fourth, sixth and seventh step, and surrender. At first, I said I was happy to do it for the relief but my thoughts were petulant and entitled. Opening the book was the catalyst for the shot of willingness and honesty I needed to surrender this situation. I really wanted some freedom from the pain. Although I've read those sentences maybe hundreds of times, it seemed like brand new words infiltrated my viking helmet and provided fresh insight to this sick addict.

Later that week in our step work meeting, she challenged my annoyances with unresolved marital strifes, as I still focused on my husband's behaviors instead of my own lack of acceptance, choice of response, or decision to engage.

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Step Seven

An Emergency Step Seven (continued)

When I shared my revelations from the reading assignment, she was encouraging and vulnerable about her own character defects and experiences with working on the shortcomings. She gave several prayers that have helped her over more than three decades of recovery to minimize her defects. She assigned me to write all of my character defects and shortcomings from the extramarital affair. Again, although I was outwardly forthcoming, inside I was pissy about the assignment and felt like kicking rocks.

After researching character defect lists online, both in an attempt to be thorough and in a desire to procrastinate through research, I made an easy, breezy list that I could feel good about. Nothing too terrible, nothing that really admitted to the monster inside. At that week's meeting, she lovingly and tactfully called me out in her Massachusetts accent. We laughed and we shared more experiences with defects and shortcomings. One week later, I had a full list with all the back hair and pimples. Over the next few weeks, I added two more "columns" to the list to account for causes and proposed solutions.

I naturally struggle with being belligerent and aggressive. Much of this is due to a negative self talk, and I've been able to help it with acceptance. I'm often critical of others from a fear of being judged myself, but when I'm focused on complimenting and helping other people, that fear shrinks. My dishonesty has nearly been eliminated as my esteem has increased from helping others.

Some of the character defects are more difficult and long term such as 'depressed' and 'undisciplined', but I am hopeful with my sponsor, the step work, and the program.

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Step Seven

An Emergency Step Seven (continued)

I feel it important to add that my sponsor suggested several ways for me to tell my husband about the infidelity. We agreed that I needed to tell him and that my goal was to stay in the marriage. Despite our plans of how it might occur, the guilt and obsession led me to sit down on the couch one Friday a week after it happened and blurt it out. My husband is very forgiving and I'm grateful we've forged a stronger relationship as a result.

By R. L.

We need writers for the August - September newsletter's Step of the Month column! We will be discussing the Eighth Step:

"We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."

If you are interested in writing for the newsletter, please email the newsletter sub-subcommittee at newsletter@ctana.org

To our Personal Stories and Step Seven authors: Thank you for your service and for your experience, strength and hope!

Service Opportunities

Support a local meeting

Twisted Sisters

Hybrid | Women's Meeting

When: Tuesday @ 7:00 PM - 8:15 PM

Where: Our Savior Lutheran Church
1513 E. Yager Ln., Austin, TX, 78753

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7646023457>
Password: 12345

Just For Today

In-Person | Literature Study

When: Thursday @ 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

Where: Recovery First ATX
5555 N. Lamar Blvd. Suite H-119, Austin, TX, 78751

We Can

In-Person | Open/Discussion

When: Thursday @ 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Where: Common Ground
2101 E. Ben White, Austin, 78741
Building 30, Day Room 78751

Take up a service position

Literature Chair

Hospitals & Institutions

Requirements: 1 year clean

How to Participate

Attend the next H&I Subcommittee Meeting. Meeting details can be found in the right column or at ctana.org

Attend a subcommittee meeting

Activities

Hybrid | Subcommittee Meeting

When: Sunday, July 27 @ 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Public Relations

Hybrid | Subcommittee Meeting

When: Sunday, July 27 @ 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Hospitals & Institutions

Hybrid | Subcommittee Meeting

When: Sunday, July 27 @ 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Where:

Recovery First ATX
5555 N. Lamar Blvd. Suite H-119
Austin, TX 78751

Zoom Meeting ID: 889 2244 3433
Passcode: 643432

Common Welfare

Virtual | Subcommittee Meeting

When: Tuesday, July 29 @ 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Zoom Meeting ID: 823 1204 6371
Passcode: 470920

Announcement from our Common Welfare Subcommittee

If you need support addressing predatory or disruptive behavior at a meeting, please reach out to Common Welfare at cw@ctana.org

Events and Celebrations

CTANA Clean and Creative Talent Show

An afternoon of clean recovery talent, music, poetry & more!

If you are interested in performing, email activities@ctana.org

When and Where	Location Details
July 19, 2025 @ 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM Rise Recovery 3620B E Whitestone Blvd Cedar Park, TX 78613 USA	The event is located in Building B, the gray building in the back of the parking lot, behind the hospital. Enter the side door on the left of the building.

Recovery by the Sea

Annual beach campvention by CBANA

Registration and more information can be found at recoverybythesea.org

When and Where	Location Details
July 25, 2025 – July 27, 2025 5 miles south of Bob Hall Pier Padre Island Corpus Christi, TX USA	Detailed directions can be found at https://recoverybythesea.org/directions/

Clean Time Celebrants

Tony G. is celebrating 31 years clean on July 10th! His birthday celebration will take place at the Right Stuff Group on Friday, July, 25 at 8:00 PM

“Celebrating the anniversary of an addict who is important to us reminds us what a miracle it is that we are still here.”

Living Clean, page 118

Reflections

Topic of the Month

“The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting because we can only keep what we have by giving it away.”

Members share their courage strength and hope on their time as newcomers, the value of the newcomer, and the importance of “giving it away.”

Next Month's Topic

“Tradition 3: The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.”

We want to hear from you! Submit your reflection on next month's discussion topic by filling out the Newsletter Submission Form at CTANA.org



Reflections

A Reflection on the Newcomer

It's often the case that when a newcomer walks into a meeting for the first time, they bring an unexpected gift to my recovery. Their presence reminds me of what it was like out there in active addiction—of how desperate, broken, and lost I once was. That desperation, as painful as it is to witness, is also the seed of hope. “We reach out to the newcomer because we truly understand the pain they are in.” (It Works: How and Why, Tradition 5)

When I hear a newcomer speak, I'm often reminded just how close I still am to the disease—how quickly I could lose everything. Their stories aren't just war stories—they are warnings. They talk about sleeping on the streets, having the courts on their heels, or losing loved ones to this disease. Their honesty shakes me out of any complacency I might have slipped into. It reminds me that hope and willingness are essentials I can't afford to forget.

But beyond what the newcomer gives to me, I'm called to ask: what do I give to them?

Did I greet the newcomer when they walked in? Did they get a hug from a homegroup member? Did we pass a phone list? Did someone explain how and why to use it? Was that newcomer invited back at the end of the meeting?

Each of these moments is an opportunity for me to practice the spiritual principles of love, service, and unity. “The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away.” (NA Basic Text, Chapter 5)

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Reflections

A Reflection on the Newcomer (continued)

And the newcomer doesn't always look like someone walking into their first-ever meeting. They might be attending a new meeting in town, or they might be visiting from another city. Regardless of the circumstances, they offer me a chance to live my program—to reflect the principles I claim to live by.

So I ask myself: Was I willing to welcome someone I didn't know? Did I show up for the person who still suffers? Did I give away what was so freely given to me?

Because when I do, I carry the message—and when I don't, I risk losing the very thing that saved my life.



The Clarity of the NA Message

The language of recovery is powerful — and sometimes, powerfully misunderstood.

Words like powerlessness and surrender have saved lives by breaking the illusion that we can outthink addiction. But if misunderstood, these words can reinforce shame or keep people stuck.

To say “I am powerless over my addiction” isn't saying “I am powerless.” It's an acknowledgment of limits — that in certain mental states, my will can't be trusted. But this clarity is the turning point. The moment I admit powerlessness over addiction, I reclaim the power to recover — to ask for help, to choose differently, to stay.

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Reflections

The Clarity of the NA Message (continued)

Recovery is not rooted in helplessness, but in humility.

The Twelve Steps were written in the 1930s. Back then, words like surrender and defect of character meant something different. Trauma, neuroscience, and environmental factors were not yet part of the conversation. Today, when people hear powerlessness, they might hear “weakness.” When they hear surrender, they might hear “defeat.”

But that’s not the spirit of the Steps — just how they sound now. If the message is to remain healing, the language must evolve. Reinterpreting the words isn’t rebellion; it’s reverence. It preserves the essence while meeting people where they are.

What if we reframed these terms?

Powerlessness: recognizing where control ends and connection begins.

Surrender: letting go of the fight and aligning with reality.

Higher Power: not necessarily a deity, but anything greater than self — love, conscience, nature, community.

Character defect: patterns that block growth, not a fundamental flaw.

If you’ve ever felt out of place because you questioned certain words, you’re not alone. You don’t have to abandon your mind to save your life. Recovery is for everyone — the thinker, the skeptic, the wounded, the cautious.

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Reflections

The Clarity of the NA Message (continued)

Let's keep refining how we speak — not because the message is flawed, but because clarity is compassion. And compassion is the foundation of this fellowship.



My First Meeting

I found myself wandering around a little church in Austin, following the laminated signs taped to the wall. My feelings of dread built with each step. I'd rewatched a bunch of the NA scenes in *Breaking Bad* before this, so I was pretty sure I knew what I was walking into. I was also pretty sure it wouldn't do much good, but I figured I'd try it, just this one time.

The signs led me to a small room with a handful of people, all much older than me. I remember thinking "Uh oh," but I piped up anyway and asked if this was NA. This lady looked up at me and said, "Yes! Welcome." I was thrown off by that. It had been a long time since I'd arrived at a function and the other partygoers seemed happy to see me. Additionally, this gathering looked nothing like *Breaking Bad*, so I wasn't sure what to expect.

What I really didn't anticipate was for this woman who had laid eyes on me for the first time 15 seconds ago to come up to me and ask to give me a hug. I managed to say "okay," hoping that she wouldn't feel my heart beating out of my chest. She held me, took a deep breath, and some of my anxieties melted away with her exhale. I decided that, sure, this wasn't quite like what I'd seen in *Breaking Bad*, but whatever this was, it was good.

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Reflections

My First Meeting (continued)

I've always felt like I was stumbling through life, never knowing where I was going, but hoping I found the right place along the way. Maybe she can read minds, because the next thing she told me was that I was in the right place, and I remember thinking, "Oh, thank god."

After the meeting, she gave me her phone number and talked to me for over an hour. I tentatively shared where I was at, and was relieved at how her stories aligned with mine. For the first time in a long time, I felt like I wasn't alone. I came back because of her. Because I remembered how I was treated. Because of how she made me feel. Because I needed another hug.

My first taste of the rooms was phenomenal, but not everyone gets that experience. It is easy to get caught up in the excitement of seeing our old friends, but we mustn't forget that the newcomer is the most important person in any room.

If anyone reading this is new to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, know this: welcome, you are in the right place, and you are so very important. Keep coming back.



A Reflection on the Newcomer

I walked into my first meeting broken, unsure if I belonged. But a man (now a close friend) walked up to me, gave me a hug and said, "welcome home." Simple words that will leave an impact for a lifetime. In that moment I felt seen, accepted and no longer alone. Today, I show up for the newcomer the same way so many have shown up for me-- because giving it away is how I keep it. Recovery lives in connection.

Reflections



Thank you to everyone who shared their courage, strength and hope in this month's newsletter!

The reflections column is an opportunity for the CTANA community to reflect together on a collective topic. If you'd like to see a particular topic discussed in a future newsletter, or would like to submit a reflection for the August - September newsletter, fill out the Google Survey at <https://ctana.org/newsletter/>

Submissions for the August - September Newsletter are open till August 6, 2025. The topic of the month is,

“Tradition 3: The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.”

“We strengthen our own recovery when we share it with others who ask for help. If we keep what we have to share, we lose it. Words mean nothing until we put them into action.”

Basic Text, page 58

Creative Works

heal.thY.self



Anonymous

Burn the Ground

I don't know what burns in thee,
But I know what burns in me. A
raging and pumping fire,
It needs fuel, it needs desire.

Middle of the road, too safe, I need
these tough wheels to scrape. Metal
guard rails and paved roads, End
behind me as I go.

I cross into the wild place,
The machines are silent now.
The lights fade away at dusk,
The darkness grows longer here.

Something lurks in the
shadow, Does it fear chaos
from me? Flesh is upon the
breeze now, It waits and sizes
the kill.

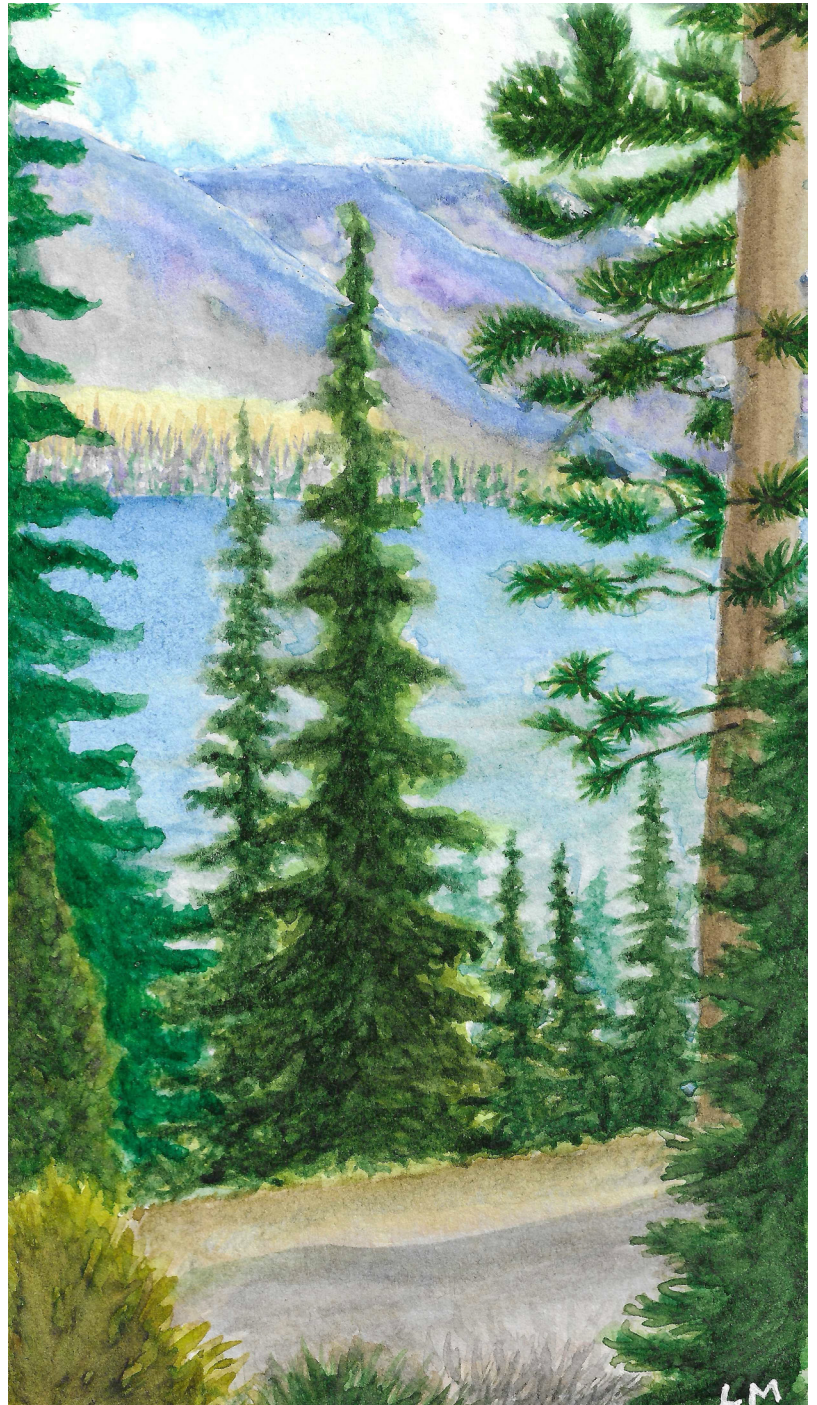
I am gray, and bent, and old,
None the wiser for my years.
The journey is unsure, yet,
Does that make me easy prey?

The thing watches from afar,
Unsure if I am danger.
Up and down and left and right,
Here I stumble through the night.

Packed away upon my belt,
Tools of death for any foe.
Instant reprieve by my
hand, Do not cross into my
land.

Anonymous

Watercolor in the Woods



Lou M.

Wild Grass Daydream

I dreamt a sweet dream of wild grass pastures and buzzing insectoids,
I let the taller sprouts flow through my fingertips as I pass. The sun
beams down from its perch high above,
And the warm earth gives away beneath my boot.
Is there a paradise beyond such a serene summer's day?
What can the Gods offer beyond this mortal coil?
I'll sit and pass my time under the rambling oak tree,
Its branches curl out from the sturdy trunk of decades past. I'll stay
planted for a while in its shade to ponder these things. This rosy
vignette knows not an hour nor day on the calendar. Those societal
pressures and human constructs melt away. Men have strived for
centuries to make a better world. Glass cathedrals where commerce
pumps life away from the living. All the grinding gears and screeching
machinery cannot touch me now. I am at peace under the rustling
leaves.
The crickets whirl past my gaze, the worms chew earth below.
I am frozen in complacency. Homeostasis achieved.
I breathe in the sweet blossom air,
I exhale deeply as one bead of sweat gathers unseen.
I exist for a moment in an ideal.
I want nothing else but to save this time,
To trap it in a bottle so others may share it in peace.
My eyelids grow heavy and my consciousness slips away.

Anonymous

The Picker of Nails

I've walked miles with downward cast eyes.
My shoes crunch the gravel along the street,
The sun glints a metallic reflection in my direction.
Duty calls.

A nail lay prone awaiting an unsuspecting victim.
I've made it my life's mission to dispose of the errant hazard.

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“Embracing
the part
of ourselves
that is
creative—
that changes
the things
around
us in a
meaningful
and positive
way—is an
act of self-
acceptance
that
becomes
visible in
our lives.”

*Living
Clean,
page 112*

Creative Works

The Picker of Nails (continued)

Each time I lift a steel shard off the ground,
I remember the wrath of the hurricane.
Roofs torn asunder. Lives upended. Brick facades crumbled.
The recovery process involved many stray roofing nails.
Each one of my car tires picked up multiple perforations.
I repaired each puncture by hand in the broiling sun.
My mission started back then, nearly 20 years ago, for selfish reasons.
I was tired of patching my tires.

Today I see nails and screws laying everywhere.
I see them in gutters, along sidewalks, resting on pavement, tucked away in flower beds, mixed in with gravel and mud.

I pick them up and send them on their way.
Sometimes I throw them down a storm drain, toss them into dumpsters, launch them deep into wooded territory, or keep them in my pocket until I find a proper receptacle. I do this to prevent them from ending up in a tire,
Not my own property, mind you, but anyone's tire.
The unassuming construction worker keeps my toil alive from here to eternity. The rumbling truck bed full of loose building debris keeps my senses sharp in spite of my advanced age.
Perhaps your commute has been aided by my services.
You are welcome.

Anonymous

“Recovering addicts are brilliant, creative, and compassionate people, whether we know it about ourselves or not.”

Living Clean, page 95

Let your creativity inspire hope and connection throughout our fellowship.
Submit your creative works for the August - September Newsletter!
Submissions are open till August 6, 2025.