



The Triangle of Self-Obsession

This is NA Fellowship-approved literature.

Copyright © 1983 by
Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
All rights reserved.

When we are born we are conscious only of ourselves, we are the universe. We perceive little other than our basic needs, and if these needs are met we are content. As our consciousness expands we become aware of a world outside ourselves. We discover that there are people, places, and things around us, and that they fulfill our needs. At this point we also begin to recognize differences and develop preferences. We learn to want and choose. We are the center of a growing universe and expect to be provided with the things we need and want. Our source of contentment shifts from basic needs miraculously met to the fulfillment of our desires.

Most children, through experiences over a period of time, come to realize that the outside world cannot provide all their wants and needs. They begin to supplement what is given to them with their own efforts. As their dependency on people, places, and things decreases they begin to look to themselves more and more. They become more self-sufficient and learn that happiness and contentment come from within. Most continue to mature; they recognize and accept their strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. At some point, they usually seek the help of a Power greater than themselves to provide the things they cannot provide for themselves. For most people, growing up is a natural process.

As addicts, however, we seem to falter along the way. We never seem to outgrow the self-centeredness of the child. We never seem to find the self-sufficiency that others do. We continue to depend on the world around us and refuse to accept that we will not be given everything. We become self-obsessed; our wants and needs become demands. We reach a point where contentment and fulfillment are impossible. People, places, and things cannot possibly fill the emptiness inside of us, and we react to them with resentment, anger, and fear.

Resentment, anger, and fear make up the triangle of self-obsession. All of our defects of character are forms of these three reactions. Self-obsession is at the heart of our insanity.

Resentment is the way most of us react to our past. It is the reliving of past experiences, again and again in our minds. Anger is the way most of us deal with the present. It is our reaction to and denial of reality. Fear is what we feel when we think about the future. It is our response to the unknown; a fantasy in reverse. All three of these things are expressions of our self-obsession. They are the way that we react when people, places, and things (past, present, and future) do not live up to our demands.

In Narcotics Anonymous we are given a new way of life and a new set of tools. These are the Twelve Steps, and we work them to the best of our ability. If we stay clean, and can learn to practice these principles in all our affairs, a miracle happens. We find freedom—from drugs, from our addiction, and from our self-obsession. Resentment is replaced with acceptance; anger is replaced with love; and fear is replaced with faith.

We have a disease that, in the end, forces us to seek help. We are fortunate that we are given only one choice; one last chance. We must break the triangle of self-obsession; we must grow up, or die.

The way we react to people, places, and things:

Negative		Positive
Resentment	Past	Acceptance
Anger	Present	Love
Fear	Future	Faith