



# A NEW LEAF

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## Learning About the Importance of Balance in Recovery

by Joanne A., Dist. 1

Having used for more than half my life, I never learned the meaning of the word "balance". I would schedule more than I could ever accomplish on any given day, and when that day would come, I would do only the things I felt like doing and forget the rest. I never had any consideration for other people's feelings. The more I repeated this behavior, the worse I felt about myself.

In recovery I have had to find balance between personal time, business, recovery, Higher Power, service, family, relationships and the Grateful Dead. This has been no easy task. I want all of these things in my life today.

When I first came into recovery, I knew my old behavior of "standing people up" wouldn't work, so I constantly tried to do everything. I still had the "isms", without the drugs and alcohol and I definitely was a people pleaser. In recovery I have learned that "no" is a complete sentence and that I have a right to use it. I don't have to explain myself to anyone. This was very difficult in the beginning, as most new behavior is at first. I learned that in some cases I needed to say "I'll think about it and get back to you". There have been times when I am already doing some form of service for an event or meeting, and someone will ask me to do something else. I probably could handle both things, but today I pace myself and leave time for me.

I hated being alone when I was getting loaded. Today I schedule time for myself in my calendar. I work from 8:00 - 4:30 only. No more overtime. I take time with my sponsor, I work the steps, and I go to meetings. My family is back East, but I make time to talk with them regularly. They are special to me and I want them to know it. I have wonderful

friends in my life today, friendships that I like to nurture, so I don't have more close friends than I can handle. One thing I learned in therapy, is that if you love someone, you spend time with them. This is one of the things that helps me feel rich, even without much money.

*... I have learned that "no" is a complete sentence and that I have a right to use it.*

Then there's my passion for the Grateful Dead. I've been a Deadhead for my whole life, and when I got into recovery I decided not to go to shows for a while. Being that I was used to doing 20 to 30 shows per year, it was a great loss and I had to grieve. After over four years in recovery, I decided to go back to shows. I knew there were clean and sober

meetings at the shows, and I felt secure enough with my recovery. I went to my first clean & sober show in July of 1994 and have been to 10 shows since then. It's been great! It's one of the things I do for fun and I am loving every minute of it. I am meeting new clean & sober friends at shows. I got into recovery to do things I loved doing before, only clean and sober. It's great!!!

Last, but not least, is my Higher Power. Once pot used to be my best friend, now God is. I am in constant contact with my Higher Power today. What a miracle. I even found myself thanking God for my life during my last Dead show. Weird huh?

I love being in recovery. It's the best gift I have ever given myself and my loved ones. ♪

## An Exploration of Infinite Possibilities

By A Member of the Dist. 6 Step & Tradition Review Committee

This is an altogether too brief summary of a journey taken by a group of addicts to review and renew their recovery. We in Marijuana Anonymous react two ways, it seems, to challenges. Either we pipe dream it, "Like...yeah, that would be cool", or jump in with a "right on, dude" attitude. A group of us set out, road maps in hand, believing we knew where we were going. We started as 5 men, at the request of one of our most dedicated women, and the blessing of our district.

Our task was to put final touches on the much discussed Twelve Traditions, and review the early draft of the Twelve Steps of Marijuana Anonymous. All in all there was participation by 8 addicts. We set out to cover a Step and a Tradition each week. After three weeks of concluding our meetings at 1 a.m., we decided to

leave well enough alone and do no further work on the Traditions.

We started each session with prayer, and ended each session with prayer. Our collective Higher Power had to be in this or we would fracture into a variety of certainties and beliefs. We had to avoid "MY sponsor says..." and "This book says...". We had to avoid self will running us in tangents.

Did this stuff happen? Oh yes. But, we had all agreed on two ground rules. Not one word would be typed if there wasn't 100% agreement. Also, the spiritual principles of each step would guide us, before, during, and after. We got to see ourselves disagree, without being disagreeable. Some were more concept oriented, others were more experiential. Some wanted a "Big Book" redo, others,

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## A NEW LEAF

The purpose of *A NEW LEAF* is to carry the message of recovery from marijuana addiction. It is through the written experiences of recovering addicts and their stories that we may find experience, strength and hope.

Articles submitted should reflect recovery, unity and service. The articles contained in *A NEW LEAF* are the sole opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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## A Collection of Views and Opinions from Around the Fellowship

### This Month's Question: What Type of Service Work Do You Find Most Rewarding?

**Steven G., 2 Yrs., 11 Mos.**

I find great satisfaction in having the opportunity to speak on panels, especially to adolescents. I get a good feeling when I share my story with a person that may be scared, angry, and hurting; and they get a spark of hope after hearing my experience, strength and hope.

**Brian K., 4 Yrs., 8 Mos.**

For a long time, it was service which affected the most people: general service on the committee level, or arranging big parties for the fellowship, or working the annual conferences. Now, it's on a smaller scale: service to my God and myself first, then to a few others second. The fellowship is third. This keeps my ego out of things and brings serenity to my recovery.

**Anonymous, 4 Years**

It's the work I do when God's will is working through me.

**Tomaso, 3 Yrs., 2 Mos.**

Having commitments at meetings when I was just beginning, because they kept me coming back. Sponsorship later on, because giving away what I had helped me to keep my recovery growing in many ways. Today anything program related helps me become a better person.

**Patricia G., 4 Yrs., 6 Mos.**

Sponsorship, because it has taught me so much about myself. In guiding a sponsee through the program, I recognize my powerless nature over others. Witnessing the spiritual power of recovery helps me to remember to get

out of the way. My MA family is a God-send.

**Andrea, 1 Yr., 5 Mos.**

Sponsorship. I find that when I sponsor people I end up giving them advice that I actually need for myself. I also find that when I'm helping another human being, it not only helps them heal, but also helps me heal.

**Anonymous, 1 Yr. 3 Mos.**

Once, at a meeting, a guy that had just taken a year cake came over and shook my hand. I didn't recognize him. He took out his Big Book and showed me the inside cover, with my signature on it. He reminded me that I had given it to him when he was in a drug re-hab and I had been there with an MA Panel. To answer your question; speaking on panels.

*This month's Roving Reporter  
was compiled by Joellen J.  
from the fellowship in District 6*

## Oops!!!

*Last month's Roving Reporter Question "How do you see the difference between Sobriety and Recovery?" was answered by the fellowship in District 3 NOT District 4. Our apologies to Pat Mc, Andrew P, and Richard A.*

*(We are still hoping to hear from District 4!)*

# An Exploration of Infinite Possibilities

*Continued from Page 1*

the "Basic Text". "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", "It Works, How and Why", and "Bill's Story" were tapped into. We discovered anew the collective recovery and wisdom of 50 years, four fellowships, and thousands upon thousands of clean and sober, recovering

## Who is an Addict?

by Steve C., Dist. 6

I am, but time has given me a new light on my definition and my understanding of this statement.

When I was using, all I saw as an addict was helplessness, confusion, anger, self-pity and hopelessness. I could not see any way out of my seemingly endless cycle of stealing, lying, and using.

My attitude towards people and life in general was negative and destructive. Anytime I started to succeed at anything I always sabotaged it with my using. All my relationships suffered because the only thing on my mind was finding ways to score and use. I was spiritually and emotionally bankrupt. I hated myself and my addiction. I was hopeless.

Now, as a recovering addict, my views and attitudes about being an addict are different. I'm starting to understand and accept that being an addict is just a fact. Good, bad, or indifferent, it's just what I am. I no longer fight the fact that I'm a victim of addiction. I've learned that in any fight there is a winner and a loser. I've learned that my addiction is a hell of a lot stronger than I am and if I fight it, I will lose every time.

I'm also learning that in being a recovering addict, I can learn from all my mistakes of the past; that I can turn all those feelings around and enjoy life as long as I maintain my recovery on a daily basis. I know that I must constantly check my attitudes and my motives to make sure I'm continuing recovery. Today I'm learning to love myself. Today I don't love my addiction but I don't hate it.

Today I don't fight my addiction; I learn ways to deal with it. Today I'm not ashamed of being an addict. Today I'm hopeful. ☺

human beings. At times we were overcome with wonder. At times we just wanted to "borrow" and go on.

Also, being multi-faceted potheads, we attempted to explore each step from several different perspectives. First, the newcomer (our life's blood), who is getting a first taste of the program from the Literature. Meetings and fellowship are important, but growth is in the Steps. We felt that a first reading needed to really "touch" the newcomer, and at the same time show the lifelong permanence and commitment of the program.

Next we considered recovering addicts already in MA that are "once again" going through the Steps. There needed to be some perspective and depth.

We also wanted to make this a "Marijuana Anonymous" document, not to be confused with the other 238 Twelve Step oriented programs. Then again, we used almost every cliché we could find, and even a little humor.

Since the Steps, to be effective, should be taken with a guide; we wanted this document to serve the sponsor. Hopefully, it will serve as a "how to" manual to used by the sponsor and the sponsee, together. We tried to ask all the common newcomer questions. We tried to be creative. We all have different styles of sponsors, and approaches to the

program. What became evident is that the Steps work, and, recovery is always the aim.

Finally, we took to the "high road" of recovery. We wanted to make it clear that this is a spiritual program, with endless possibilities for growth. Some of us started smoking pot to find acceptance. Some just wanted to relax and enjoy. Some started as a "getaway" to freedom and an altered consciousness. We wanted to make it clear that real freedom and serenity (as promised in our program) comes, as we truly practice the eternal principles contained in the Steps, and as our connection with our Higher Power takes root in our lives.

We, as a committee, have found that this experience of the past several months has had a profound effect on our lives and in our sharing. There were times when the unity and the flow of our group was so awesome that we felt it to be God's expression through our group conscience. We are changed. We are thankful for the Steps, the Traditions, the Fellowship of Marijuana Anonymous, and our own spiritual connection. We feel blessed. We have gained a new awareness of the program. We hope you too can gain and grow, as we have, from the Twelve Steps and Traditions of Marijuana Anonymous. Welcome home! ☺

## Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



Michelle P.	Nov.18	1 Year	Loren N.	Jan.14	5 Years
Lisa S.	Dec. 7	1 Year	Dave K.	Jan.15	6 Years
John L.	Dec.15	10 Years	Melody W.	Jan.16	6 Years
Rocky H.	Dec.15	13 Years	John M.	Jan.18	4 Years
John G.	Dec.25	3 Years	Ken P.	Jan.19	5 Years
Don H.	Jan. 1	4 Years	Barbara G.	Jan.20	3 Years
Don S.	Jan. 7	4 Years	Dave G.	Jan.20	3 Years
Tina K.	Jan. 7	5 Years	Todd M.	Jan.21	2 Years
Don M.	Jan. 8	2 Years	Greg R.	Jan.25	6 Years
Dan L.	Jan.12	2 Years	Joellen J.	Jan.26	2 Years
Mike LB	Jan.10	8 Years	Darlene S.	Jan.27	7 Years
Ron V.	Jan.13	8 Years	Mike McK	Jan.29	7 Years

## News Update:

# The First Marijuana Anonymous Convention, Jan. 13, 14, & 15, Santa Cruz, CA "Spiritual, Emotional, and Physical Healing in Recovery"

There are still day passes available for Saturday the 14th (\$25) and Sunday the 15th (\$20). Day registration includes coffee, tea, or soda for the day as well as the workshops. Be assured, nobody will be turned away from the workshops due to lack of funds.

The keynote speaker at the Saturday morning 10:30 meeting will be Karen R. Don't miss it.

The Murder Mystery Dinner on Saturday night is completely booked.

Discounted accommodations are still available at the Dream Inn. Call (800) 662-3838 from CA, and (408) 426-4330 from outside CA. There are also other hotels in Santa Cruz.

There is a lot of excitement about Father Tom, our speaker at the 7 p.m. Friday night opening meeting.

Convention Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. Friday. If you're coming for just Saturday or Sunday, recovery starts promptly at 9 a.m.!

The site of MA's first convention is the DREAM INN, 175 West Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, California.

THIS CONVENTION WILL BE  
HISTORY IN THE MAKING!  
*DON'T MISS IT!*

## Thought for The Month (and the Convention)

*"I have a wealth of friends and, with my [M.A.] friends, an unusual quality of fellowship. For, to these people, I am truly related. First, through mutual pain and despair, and later through mutual objectives and new-found faith and hope".....*

*"There is no more aloneness, with that awful ache, so deep in the heart of every [addict] that nothing, before, could ever reach it. That ache is gone and never need return again.*

*Now there is a sense of belonging, of being wanted and needed and loved."*

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### WORKSHOP TOPICS:

*"H.A.L.T. - Physical Recovery" by Julia R.*

*Prayer Workshop by Bob H.*

*Fourth Step Workshop by Harry H.*

*"Gifts from the Interior, Working with Dreams" by Steve W.*

*Steps 1, 2, and 3 Workshop by Jenne G-B*

*"Anger-Rage, Where to Draw the Line" by Joanne A.*

*"Substitute Addictions - Food in Recovery" by Julia R.*

*Relapse Prevention Workshop by John L.*

*"Solitude, Loneliness, and Isolation: Knowing the Difference" by Kathy C.*

*Meditation Workshop by Ginny L.*

*Sponsorship Workshop by Carol Mc.*

*"Secrets" by Bill D.*

*12th Step Workshop on "Carrying the Message" by Richard A.*

*"The Twelve Traditions" by Loren N.*

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