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## Conscientiously Guilty

I used marijuana addictively from age 15 until I was 52 years old. I went through my adolescence, college, graduate school, marriage, job, first home, and family all with my secret partner by my side – marijuana.

From the outside, I had a normal life. I had a successful career, a beautiful wife, wonderful children, and was living the “fantasy of functionality.” But I was sick inside.

At my job, I excelled and achieved monetary rewards, yet everyone was afraid of me. I had a reputation of being critical, a perfectionist, and moody. People steered clear of me whenever possible. When interactions were necessary, they walked on eggshells. They didn’t know which me they would get on a given day. I was egotistical, but I had low self-esteem. Despite my outward success, I didn’t like myself.

At home, I went through the motions of being a husband and father like an automaton. Domestic life was mundane, boring, and exhausting to me. Held in bold contrast to the transient energy and euphoria I felt when I got high, and my ego-driven successes at work, time with family felt like time wasted in between getting high again.

When I wasn’t high, I was obsessively planning my next high, and of course how to hide it. Like many addicts, my using became more frequent and cavalier, and my efforts to hide it were more slipshod and careless. One time after taking the dog for a walk and smoking, my 13-year-old son said, “Dad you smell like marijuana.”

All that I could say, in my stunned, stoned state was, “Don’t tell your mother.” That night my wife told me I had two choices: marijuana or the family. And she had her own plans that she had been obsessing about: how to take the kids and move in with her mother, unless I was willing to get help. The next night I went to my first MA meeting.

I went to meetings regularly, I found a sponsor, and I worked the 12 Steps. I prayed and meditated. I built a relationship with my Higher Power. I took on service positions.

***“My past was painful,  
but I am better for it,  
and I wouldn’t trade it  
for the world.”***

I was both Chair and Treasurer of my home meeting. And I got well. For the first time in my adult life, I was clear headed and clear eyed.

When I did Step 8, I included my children among those I had harmed. My recovery has been a miracle. Now my favorite activity is spending time with my family. All other activities in my life feel secondary.

I made living amends to my coworkers, as direct amends may have been harmful. And people at my office noticed how much I had changed. I took on new leadership positions and formed close working relationships with my team. I listened to understand and dropped my ego. People like me now, and they are no longer afraid of me or my moods.

One night about 18 months into my recovery, my wife and I were talking about her pregnancy with our first child, now 14 years old, and her first pre-natal ultrasound. Together we remembered that I wasn’t even there for it. I was at work, probably thinking about myself, obsessing about getting high, rather than the health of my wife and unborn child.

As we talked about it, I held her hand, and we both cried. How could I have caused her so much pain? What kind of husband would do that? Here I was, in recovery and working the program, yet I was wracked with guilt and pain about the wreckage of my past. It was a searing pain that I had never experienced before.

My son entered adolescence. He was still a good kid, but he became defiant, challenging, and at times rebellious. I lost my ability to communicate with him without it devolving into a confrontation. And I thought back to that loveable little boy he was. I remembered the myriad of days I spent with him as a toddler and young boy, wasted.

At the time, I saw those as merely opportunities to get high: whether driving to the park with him strapped in the car seat, walking with him in the stroller, or taking a stroll around a bush at his soccer games. The memories made the “new” me cringe with shame. Why did I waste those wonderful opportunities to spend time with my son? Why wasn’t I there for him?

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## ANL's Purpose

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 reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole. MA is not affiliated with—and does not endorse or accept contributions from—any outside enterprise.

We are reaching out to districts to update the ANLP Liaisons and birthday lists. Additionally, district/group service representatives, including but not limited to those serving as ANLP Liaisons, are encouraged to stay in touch: [chiefs@anewleafpublications.org](mailto:chiefs@anewleafpublications.org)

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Of course, I knew the answer to these questions: at the time, I was wracked with addiction and my life was unmanageable. It hurt so much to relive my past, no matter how much I had changed.

With clear and sober eyes, I had looked honestly at myself and my conduct. I had taken an inventory of my character defects, I had made a list of those whom I had harmed. I had asked my Higher Power for help with both. I had “cleaned up my side of the street.” Yet my pain and guilt remained. I felt helpless.

I said to myself, “I wish I could go back and do it all differently.” And sometimes, in moments alone, I cried. Using my own “best thoughts,” I was bereft.

So I sought help where I thought I would find it: in my fellowship, my recovery literature, and my Higher Power. I shared openly at my home meeting about my pain and grief. I talked to my sponsor. I prayed. I wasn’t disappointed; the pillars of my recovery were there to help me through this too!

A close friend in my fellowship advised me to displace the past by doing right in the present. His metaphor, passed to him by others, is of a bucket of dirty water. He explained that you can’t dump the whole thing out and start fresh. You have to displace it with one cup of clean water at a time, by doing the next right thing. It takes time “to get to clean water.”

One day, I serendipitously read a recovery daily affirmation, which said, “[MA] is not woe to me for my sins past and present, but ‘Praise God’ for the progress I am making today. [MA] is not tears over defects, but sweat over fixing them.”

Another day, I read The Promises in AA’s Big Book, which states, “We will not regret the past nor wish to

shut the door on it.” I prayed to my Higher Power and listened for His advice. I heard Him reply:

*“You cannot change the past, and the past is exactly as it should have been, as is the present, as is the future. It is all part of the curriculum of your life; it is your karma. Your action is to show selfless love to your children. Love them from your heart with honesty: openly, genuinely, and purely.”*

These messages coalesced into a plan. The past, with all of its attendant mistakes and harm, is actually an invaluable resource for my recovery in the present. I can not only learn from it, but also lean on it. I am a better person now because of my past, not despite it. All is part of my Higher Power’s will for me, and everything is in its right place.

Now whenever my addict brain idealizes getting high, I remember the past and the harm it caused, and the thought passes swiftly.

When opportunities to spend time with family arise, I remember the past, and I respond, “YES!” When arguments arise with my children, I preface my response with “I love you.” And when my son acts as a defiant teenager, I have a sense of humor and remember that it’s not all about me.

Mostly, I try to be the father and husband that I wasn’t in the past. I share time with them, and love them honestly and purely. When I am with them, I try to stay in the present, not regretting the past nor worrying about the future.

My feelings of guilt were the result of working the Steps honestly to reveal my past. The tools of my recovery helped me transform my regret into an action plan in the present. My past was painful, but I am better for it, and I wouldn’t trade it for the world.

~Ian S

## My Ocean

*My world is an ocean  
Beautiful and vast  
Pockets of life  
Sprout from the past*

*A rainbow of colors in a backdrop of blue  
Teeming with life – a miraculous view  
Yet somehow I'm blinded by something  
not true  
A distrust of others I need to subdue*

*Trapped in a rainbow, I only see black  
As if I'm just waiting for a pending attack*

*So I jumped off that reef and into the deep  
Searching for somewhere I can just be  
Only to find where the skeletons sleep  
Coming to realize it's not what I need*

*I went to the past to color the present  
An impossible task – it's all just a  
remnant  
The reef is long gone  
What remains is resentment  
And I'm forced to decide:  
The deep or contentment?*

*Escaping it all for a distant unknown  
Only to realize I'm still all alone  
Sinless but sinful, I need to atone  
Recapture the truth I always have known*

*Lost in it all – connection to beauty  
Connections to love to others to duty  
To see what I've missed through all of the  
strife  
That in my great ocean, color is life*

~Jared K

## Letter to an Old Friend

Dear Marijuana,  
I'm not mad at you. You were just being yourself, whispering the things in my ear you knew I wanted to hear. You were uplifting, an inspiration. You helped give me patience to sit still and be. We had so many interesting times together. You were amusing and made me giggle until my face and stomach ached. You gave me the courage to socialize with different circles. You helped me lose my inhibitions and loosen my spine as I moved through the world.

You were my dance partner and could get down to whatever playlist I created. You told me I was intelligent and brave and worthy. I would take a hit and fill my lungs then hold it at the top as long as I could, then I would slowly release all the stale air and smoke. You were my muse. You were my friend. You were my match maker. You sat with me when I felt alone. You were my guru. I placed you above many other things, people, and motivations. Together we practiced yoga, cooked, cleaned, and made art.

But gradually your words became garbled and twisted. I lost the whole point. Your medicine began to feel wicked the more insatiable my appetite for you became. The more I disappointed myself, you held up a mirror of the wreckage I was creating and allowing. The more I disappointed myself, the more respect I lost for myself and for you.

I still love you. I just know better now than to mess with you when I need to be accomplishing higher purposes in life. My life became unmanageable and you left me. You turned on me, I don't blame you. It is perhaps the most loving thing you could have done, showing me I can't replay old scenarios and find anything new or worthy. I believe you always loved me as I love you – as medicine, as magic – meant to be enjoyed as an occasional blessing.

I'm sorry I lost my way and took advantage. I apologize for the hurt within myself and my life I have caused. Thank you for all you have taught me. May I remember the many lessons and blessings you have bestowed onto my life. I love you. Good-bye. May you continue to bless the lives of those who respect you.

Love,  
Amelia

## CALLING ALL WRITERS!

**Do you want your story  
to be featured in an  
upcoming issue of the A  
New Leaf Newsletter?**

We are always in need of recovery-focused stories, poems, etc. – about 500-1500 word pieces. Typically, the submission deadline is the 10th of each month, but we are in dire need now, so please send something in as soon as possible.

It's important that your writing stays focused on what happened and what it is like now rather than what it was like.

Send your submissions to:  
[stories@anewleafpublications.org](mailto:stories@anewleafpublications.org)

### MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS WORKSHOPS Step One, Step Two, Step Three

**Sundays: February 5, 12 and 19**  
3:00 pm - 4:00 pm EST (12:00 pm - 1:00 pm PST)

**Step One: Sunday, February 5, 2023**  
<https://ma12.org/workshop/step1>

**Step Two: February 12, 2023**  
<https://ma12.org/workshop/step2>

**Step Three: February 19**  
<https://ma12.org/workshop/step3>

# Marijuana Anonymous Worldwide

For a complete listing of all meetings visit  
WWW.MARIJUANA-ANONYMOUS.ORG

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**DIST. 27 Independent Mtgs.** madistrict27@gmail.com  
www.madistrict27.org

**PHONE MA Phone Meetings**  
www.ma-phone.org

## Step and Tradition of the Month

### Step One

*We admitted we were powerless  
over marijuana, that our lives had  
become unmanageable.*

### Tradition One

*Our common welfare should come  
first; personal recovery depends  
upon MA unity.*

## Celebrating 230 Years of Sobriety!

### District 2

Louise 12/3/1998 24 yrs  
Guy A 11/27/2018 4 yrs

### District 3

Ryan C 11/22/2003 17 yrs

### District 5

Bill G 12/7/1993 29 yrs  
Colin 12/3/2011 11 yrs  
Gary R 12/10/1990 32 yrs

### Jessica G

11/21/2021 1 yr  
Larry C 11/28/1999 23 yrs  
Laura R 12/15/2018 4 yrs  
Lisa S 12/7/1993 29 yrs  
Russell T 12/7/2019 3 yrs

### District 11

Paul S 10/17/2017 3 yrs  
Charles G 11/16/2020 2 yrs

### District 20

Mike D 12/16/2006 16 yrs  
Bella J 12/18/1990 32 yrs

**See your sobriety  
date here!**

*If your sobriety date has occurred, has not  
been published, and is not older than 45  
days, please submit it in the format you see  
on the left by the 16th of the month. You  
may tell your local GSR, ANLP Liason, or  
e-mail to: chiefs@anewleafpublications.org*