

A NEW LEAF

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A Newcomer Experiences... "Change of Habit"

by Ilene M., Dist. 6

Yes, the title of this piece is borrowed from an Elvis movie (remember? Mary Tyler Moore played a perky nun and E.P. played a velvety-voiced doctor(!)), but I assure you, the content is not. It's just that these words best express *this* addict's 82-day experience in the fellowship of Marijuana Anonymous.

For me to take every action that has been suggested to me since I got here, I have had to change my habits. First of all---meetings. Are you kidding? Me, a die-hard, never join anything, not-even-a-Girl-Scout rugged individualist, go to organized meetings? Every day, no less? But I do. Because my prideful habit of never being a part of any group had to be changed. After a few weeks, it started to sink in---maybe that habit had something to do with me being quite a sick little puppy. I thought I disliked groups because I was a superior non-conformist. But a new understanding of myself is beginning to emerge. Perhaps I rejected groups to ward off the possibility that *they* would reject *me*. That's not even an issue in this fellowship. Anyone that has a desire to stop smoking marijuana is welcomed with hugs, hope, and smiles. And so, I was. Within five days, I was flooded with new friends, genuine and helpful people who gave me their real phone numbers and always called me back.

Another thing that definitely had to change was my habit of being an atheist. The idea of a Higher Power or (God forbid) *God* was not a part of my intellectual make-up. I had decided there wasn't any, and anyone who

believed was, well, not my kind of person. In fact, this stubborn habit of mine had kept me out of the program for years. I went on "dry highs" many times on my own will power just to prove that I didn't need to believe any

I have enough willingness to believe, I hope, to get me through the Steps which I am now convinced will lead me to a much more sure and strong faith.

of that stuff to abstain from marijuana. But somehow, life always became intolerable for me, my insanity kicked in, and there I was, smoking more pot than ever. So I finally surrendered and admitted I needed help (another change of habit) and came into the rooms of

Marijuana Anonymous. So if these people wanted me to read *THE BOOK*, I would. Hey, I always liked reading anyway. When I read Chapter Four, I learned that I didn't have to have some full-blown God-consciousness right away. All I had to do was be *willing to believe*. I guessed I could handle that. I had already learned through rough experience that I couldn't quit on my own. It occurred to me

while I was reading---what do I have to lose? The idea of there not being a Higher Power was just that---*an idea*. It was one I had been stubbornly hanging on to for most of my life. And where had it gotten me? Sure, I could

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But Once You Become A Pickle...

By Anonymous, District 6

An addict asked me the other day, "Why can't I declare myself recovered rather than recovering?". I answered that he could declare himself anything he wanted, but that I considered it a dangerous concept at best.

The first step tells us we are powerless over whatever substance we've become addicted to (alcohol, drugs etc.). I've yet to read where we get that power back. I believe there is an invisible line one crosses into addiction, or if you will...one unleashes the beast. Once this occurs, there is no going back. That is why you can never be cured. As my sponsor is fond of saying, "Once you become a pickle you can't ever be a cucumber again." Also, if you declare yourself recovered, do you no longer do the things you've done to stay clean? Do

you stop attending meetings, stop being of service to others, stop praying and meditating, stop reading the big book? If you move away from what has become your lifestyle, it is *possible* that you will return to the behavior that eventually brought you to your knees. But, human nature allows us to deny or romanticize the misery that brought us to these rooms...and if I ever forget where I was, then I run the risk of returning there.

Second, and more importantly, the program is about being willing to grow along spiritual lines (this is not my concept, it says this in the Big Book). Obviously there is no danger that we might achieve spiritual perfection, so progress is the name of our game. To me, progress implies an ongoing process. Recovered, however, implies

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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 Questions Asked at The First MA Convention....

What have you brought to the convention and what are you hoping to come away with?

Al O., District 5, 6 Mos.

An open mind. And, inspiration to continue.

Todd E., District 7, 1 Yr, 5 Mos.

I came for more reasons than I probably know. I came to join in a fellowship; to be part of a SOBER event; to be of service; to meet new friends and get reacquainted with old ones; to recharge my spiritual battery; to learn new things about sobriety, recovery, spirituality, and unity. To love and be loved. What I was hoping to come away with, I did. I played, I worked, I loved. I learned so much and felt emotions. I made friends and have come away feeling refreshed and energized in my soul. I have started a personal tradition, and I am already looking forward to next year. THANKS!!

What Workshop was the most beneficial to you? Why?

Kelly G., District 5, 18 Mos.

The 4th Step Workshop was very beneficial! Why... because it made me realize how important it is to work the program. I've been sitting on my program for 18 months, hanging on to resentments and it's time to get to work. As I've been told, "If you don't work the program, the program will work you!"

Tradition One says that personal recovery depends on MA unity. Did this convention make you feel more "a part of"?

Bob H., District 2, 4 Yrs.

Yes - I loved this convention! It reconstituted my feelings toward MA. It has called on me to recommit my service beyond its current level.

Steve E., District 2, 7 Yrs., 5 Mos.

Yes, although when I was at the Opening Speaker meeting and at a table with people I knew, I felt like I was alone in a room that was filled with strangers. Then things happened to make a change in the way I was feeling; a smile from Carol; a little backrub from Ralph; hearing someone share about introducing ourselves to friends we haven't met yet; and talking to my sponsor, who was also here, all helped. Then the Roving Reporter handed me this question out of a stack of questions and I knew God was with me. It gave me that little extra boost I needed. I talked to a few people about this paper and started to introduce myself to people from other areas. I started to feel much more "at home"! Having lunch with new friends, doing the workshops after lunch, the Murder Mystery Party, and the late night meeting I went to, all helped me feel "a part of". It was truly one of the best weekends in my recovery. God bless everyone!!!

What is the greatest gift you have gotten from your sobriety?

Joellen J., District 6, 2 Yrs.

ME - MYSELF - AND I. When I got here I didn't know who I was. I work daily on me and who I am. Another gift is my life. I never had a "life" until I got to MA. Keep Coming Back!

George T., District 4, 5 Yrs., 3 Mos.

Freedom from fear and uncertainty. I can drive without fear of getting stopped by the cops. I can go to work, knowing that I'm not stoned and that nobody will smell it on me. I won't embarrass myself by acting silly and stoned. I won't screw something up because I can't think straight. I won't lose my career, my home, my relationship because of a drug.

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Roving Reporter**Sheila F., District 2, 6 Yrs., 6 Mos.**

The gyroscope. The greatest gift I've gotten from my sobriety is a built-in gyroscope. When the emotional storms come, and they do come, they no longer sink me. I tend to get hyper in situations which bring up my old abandonment and insecurity stuff. My habit is to act, become more hyper, and then get more hyper. Now I notice in mid-surge, instead of after, that I'm flipping out and ex-hausting myself. I stop. I let my Higher Power spin some serenity and ease back into some kind of doable pace. This makes the rest of the stuff better - relationships, work, and even that old bugaboo, recreation!

Dave K., District 6, 6 Yrs.

It's difficult to pinpoint one gift (as there have been so many like: self esteem, goals, friendship, honesty, and on and on.) But, in choosing one, I think it's the fact of really being able to "feel". Using was much like a fog. No ups or downs - just kind of there. In sobriety and reality, feelings are felt so intensely. That is such a dynamic side to us human beings. When things happen or emotions come up - I really "feel" them. That is a gift and is often why I smile at meetings, when listening to others share (even if it's painful and they're crying). They are really feeling things. That is true honesty!

Eric S., District 2, 5 Yrs.

Hope! Five years ago I was a pot crazed Vietnam Veteran. One night, stoned on pot and booze (a typical, everyday event), I put four shot gun rounds through a poster of Ho Chi Minh. Ho Chi Minh I later learned means "He Who Enlightens". That event was the first lesson in the strange and wonderful workings of my "H.P." Next day, after I killed Ho, I realized that I was fucked up and needed to get clean. I made some phone calls and was turned on to MA. The rest is history. My life has changed so much. I met my wife in this program. We have a baby daughter. Her name is Hope. Along with Courage, Serenity, and Strength; Hope is my greatest gift in sobriety.

Captain Kurt, Dist. 6, 2 Yrs., 5 Mos.

A new life. Since coming into the fellowship of Marijuana Anonymous, I have started a new career, my own business, acquired a new group of loving friends, and since December, a fiancée. (Wedding vows to take place in June.) I have a new life... and I love it! Thanks to God!

Aleta O., District 5, 7 Mos.

When I was using, I was the most important person in my life. Being clean has given me back my daughter, my relationship with my husband, and awareness of my family. Everyone was there when I was using, but I was so busy being stoned I didn't pay attention to them. They have all been very supportive and my whole life feels different now. I regret the years I've lost, but am grateful I've changed while everyone is still here for me.

Thought For The Month


"Pain alone is not the enemy; the real enemy is fear and resistance"

The Buddha

Once A Pickle

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completion of the process. If you're reading this, then you know that addiction is a very powerful and cunning disease. It waits for you. If you give it an opening such as believing you have conquered it, it will vanquish you. Sounds melodramatic, right? Then explain to me why addicts with decades of sobriety go out and die. And why would a person knowingly toss away their career, house, wife and kids, and so on for a joint? The answer is simple: they are powerless. They have lost the power of choice. They are in the throes of a baffling and commanding sickness that causes otherwise rational people to behave in remarkably damaging and self-defeating ways.

I don't plan on giving my addiction the slightest opening if I can avoid it...and declaring myself recovered is just that. I will do my best to stay in fit spiritual condition and make sure that I don't open the door to disaster. I hope to always keep in mind that we never graduate from the steps. See you on the road. 

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!




Angela S.	Feb. 1	6 Years	Christine S.	Feb.13	5 Years
Rick B.	Feb. 1	6 Years	Kathryn R.	Feb.14	2 Years
Joe S.	Feb. 1	2 Years	Dan Z.	Feb.14	2 Years
Eric M.	Feb. 1	2 Years	Cindy K.	Feb.15	2 Years
MoonshotBen	Feb. 4	1 Year	Julie M.	Feb.18	4 Years
George B.	Feb. 6	7 Years	Terry M.	Feb.24	7 Years
Hiking Mike K	Feb. 6	7 Years	Margaret F.	Feb.24	4 Years
Steve G.	Feb. 8	3 Years	Paul F.	Feb.24	2 Years
Bill D.	Feb. 9	5 Years	Richard M.	Feb.25	2 Years
Anne W.	Feb.12	6 Years	HALcoholic N.	Feb.26	4 Years
Billy B.	Feb.13	2 Years	Matty D.	Feb.29	7 Years

Change of Habit

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smoke anybody under the table, but I somehow sensed that life had more to offer me than a dubious achievement like that. So I decided to change my habit, let go of my idea, and cling to this new idea that there is a Higher Power. Do I know exactly what it is yet, or if it's listening when I pray? No. But I don't need to just yet. I have enough willingness to believe, I hope, to get me through the Steps which I am now convinced will lead me to a much more sure and strong faith. Praying---another big change of habit. I do it even though I don't quite understand it. But people who have been sober a long time suggest that I do it and I listen to them, because I want to be sober a long time too.

So far, those have been the biggest changes for me. But I find that I need to make more changes all the time. As difficult situations arise, I call people in the program and they help me figure out new ways to handle them. I'm learning how to deal with things at the outset, so my old habits of people-pleasing, obsessing, and beating myself up won't rear their ugly heads. Things are far from perfect for me. But they are definitely progressing. When I first came in to the program, I thought I'd just learn how to live without marijuana. But now I realize I'm learning how to *live*, period, in the fullest way possible, with honesty, dignity, and love for myself and others. And that, my friends, is the best change of habit of all. 

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You can request a Price Schedule or send \$10 for a one year single subscription to: A New Leaf, P.O. Box 4314, North Hollywood, CA 91607

Makes a great gift! Gift enclosures for the first gift issue available.

Marijuana Anonymous Bulletin Board

SOBER CAMPOUT:

District 5 is hosting a Sober Campout the week-end of February 17,18,19 & 20 at Stone Creek Camp Ground (where else!) in Idyllwild. It's \$7 per day, per car. Bring Firewood! For more information call: Az (714) 638-4224, Mike LB (714) 547-3693, or Hope (714) 533-8820.

CONVENTION POSTSCRIPT:

A fantastic time was had by all! There were over eighty five people in attendance for the full weekend plus many others unable to attend for the entire weekend. On Friday night, for the opening Speaker Meeting, it was "Standing Room Only", and there were seats for 100. The Convention raised \$2,000 over expenses. The Convention Committee is hoping that half of this amount will be retained as "seed" money for the next Convention, with the rest going to World Services to be used at their discretion.

M.A. SERVICE MANUAL:

After five years of hard work, the MA Conference Approved Marijuana Anonymous Service Manuals are now available. It is highly recommended that all districts have at least one Service Manual available to members. Includes recommended guidelines for all service commitments from Local to World Service level. To order, send \$10 (includes postage and handling) to: MA Service Manual, c/o MA World Service Office, P.O. Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404.

TAPES FROM CONVENTION AVAILABLE:

Eight *great* tapes are available from the Convention. Four are from Meetings, and four from Workshops. Write to Encore Cassettes, P.O.Box 231340, San Diego, CA 92194 and request an order form for the 1st MA Convention tapes. Or, you can call (619) 271-1858 or (800) 878-1308.

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