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Mutually Exclusive

I started smoking marijuana at age 14. I tried cigarettes, hard alcohol, and marijuana all at the same time on the same night at a summer camp in Northern Michigan. I was hanging out with the cool older kids and felt like a champion, accepted into some exclusive fold.

By the time I graduated from high school, I was a daily smoker and it became a full-time job. As I made my way through college, I discovered other drugs and continued to abuse alcohol. After graduating, I got a job out in Los Angeles, crashed my car twice, once while drunk, once while high on marijuana. The second time it was totaled.

I took the insurance check, bought a new car, but only put down \$8,000.00 and financed the rest so I'd have cash on hand to support my marijuana habit. The very first thing I did upon arriving in LA was obtain a medical marijuana card.

At the dispensary, the "bud-tender" would have the weed lined up under a glass case with Indica-forward strains on one end, and Sativa-forward strains on the other. I always went for the most Sativa-dominant strain I could. Getting high was about getting "out of my mind." It was about leaving reality. Not feeling. Distraction. But eventually that stopped working.

At the end of 2012, only 18 months after moving to LA, I found myself involuntarily committed at a psych ward in Pasadena after overdosing on pills and alcohol. Of course, marijuana had been involved as

well. I cut my losses and moved back in with my parents in Wisconsin. I was doing intensive outpatient treatment, I had a psychiatrist, a therapist, and I took courses on the Fundamentals of Addiction, Mindfulness Meditation, etc.

My doctors kept telling me to go AA but I refused. First of all, I was convinced I wasn't an alcoholic. Sure, I had a drug problem, but admitting powerlessness over alcohol? No thanks. I would stare at the language of the first step and just couldn't face it. I went to one meeting to placate my doctors and only listened for the differences.

"Compare and despair" was always my M.O. I would put a little bit of clean time together, relapse, put a little time together, relapse, rinse and repeat. I felt irritable, confused, hopeless, I couldn't imagine a life with marijuana or without it. Every time I relapsed, my using and drinking seemed to get worse than the last time.

Finally, in August 2014, after one particularly prodigious bender, I found the willingness to try AA, and to REALLY try it. I had always thought of sobriety as swearing off forever, but I finally understood that it was about abstaining one day at a time. Yet I do think there was some part of me, a deep part of me, that recognized "having a real life" and "drinking/using" were mutually exclusive. I could have one or the other, but I could not have both. Thus set off an 8-year journey that has been increasingly wonderful, weird, challenging, and better.

Instead of regretting episodes of destruction and heartache, now I celebrate milestones of accomplishment and depth. I discovered MA early on in my recovery journey, and there was something incredibly powerful about connecting with other addicts whose primary addiction or "drug of choice" was marijuana. Never underestimate the power of identification to inspire people to try this program.

I cannot overstate the importance of working all 12 steps in order with a sponsor. The process of locating my higher power, taking a personal inventory, sharing that inventory with a trusted confidante, looking at my faults (which I prefer to call "survival skills") and my assets, making amends, exploring prayer and meditation, and helping others are the spiritual tools of action that keep me sober one day at a time.

I continue to struggle with so-called "process addictions," like screens, overeating, nicotine vaping, overspending/shopping, and issues around sex and masturbation. But all of those behaviors and addictions pale in comparison to the destruction and chaos that drugs and alcohol wrought. I just try my best, one day at a time, to pick up a tool in my spiritual toolkit instead of a pipe or bong.

I live in New York City now, I continue to attend AA and MA meetings regularly. I've also recently discovered Recovery Dharma, which I've found incredibly helpful. I have sponsees, service commitments

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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

ANLP Staff

Chairperson:	Joemar G.
Treasurer:	Graham S.
Secretary:	Marcy E.
Managing Editor:	Amy F.
Publishing Editor:	Kyle C.
ANLP Administrator:	OPEN

Contact ANLP

Send articles/stories:
stories@anewleafpublications.org

Other inquiries and correspondence:
info@anewleafpublications.org

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as Co-Chair, Beginner's Liaison, Literature Chair, etc. at various groups around the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Life is full, and I'm keenly aware that it could all disappear if I pick up again.

I'm so happy that my life no longer revolves around obtaining marijuana, smoking marijuana, and recovering from the high just enough to use again. I have a career, stronger relationships with my parents and siblings, and a "chosen family" here in New York that includes my fellow folks in recovery, and friends of old who forgave me through the amends process and are closer to me than ever.

I'm even officiating the wedding of a friend who was the first person to whom I made amends. I no longer seek temporary thrills of euphoria that always result in depressive crashes. Now, I strive for a sort of homeostasis that is never boring as long as I maintain a sense of gratitude that is greater than my expectations.

~ Ross S

I Will Not Give Up

In January 1995, when I was 17 and 4 months prior to my graduation, my mother passed away from breast cancer. My father sank into a depression, and I decided to go out and drink to forget my own pain.

After getting into a car accident that could have claimed mine or my two friends' lives, I quit drinking and started college, but deep down I still suppressed my pain. That's when I met and got married to my first husband. My story with marijuana started in 1997 when I decided to prove to my first husband I was not a goody two shoes.

Once I started, I actually could stop smoking. My husband did not like

that I could stop and he couldn't and had already been abusive, so this just gave him another reason. I ended up in jail for stealing for my husband and his friends to get high. I felt hopeless and decided if I can't beat them, I should join them.

I finally left my first husband after six years of being beaten, choked, a gun was put in my mouth, and a miscarriage. I lost my oldest child to my ex-husband's family, and I had placed my two youngest children with friends for safety. Then I met my second husband. My use hadn't stopped. I was hurt from the abuse, and my heart felt empty from the loss of my kids. I tried to fill that hole with anything: weed, alcohol, coke, meth.

My two youngest kids lived with us when I was with my second husband. When I almost had them taken by state because of the meth use and the abuse they witnessed from my second husband, that was my wake-up call that the meth wasn't worth it, and I went to my first AA program (it was 2004 and there was no MA or NA in that little town in New Mexico).

My second husband did not like that he was advised to also quit, and he got violent and started cheating where drugs were free. The last violent occurrence was in 2006 when he head butted me and left a goose egg on my forehead. Now I had suffered abuse and infidelity from my second husband and ended up fleeing from Portales New Mexico to Midland Texas with my two youngest kids where I met my third husband – yes the third.

My third marriage started off well but then turned abusive. We drank and smoked. By this time my kids were again living elsewhere. I quit weed when I decided to join the Navy in 2012 where I served four years, with alcohol covering all of my addictions. By now my middle child (my daughter) suffered mental issues and my son, who was living somewhere else, was molested (he was 10). I thought my "friends" would keep my kids safe.

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I got my kids back at ages 14 and 12, and I continued to drink (now feeling mom guilt). I was having issues dealing with my daughter who would make false allegations when she did not get her way (no snack for not finishing her supper and telling people we got her drunk).

My son had temper issues from the PTSD. My daughter ended up having to leave. My son is why I quit drinking. One day I drove with my son in the car when I was very drunk. God was watching over us that day!

My son got to his friend's house safely and SOMEHOW I woke up at home on my bedroom floor with no memory of how I'd gotten there. I had texted and called friends with no memory of it. That was the day I quit drinking alcohol in September 2017.

Now we arrive at today. I still have not touched meth since I quit in 2006, and alcohol since 2017. When I left the military I had appetite and insomnia issues. I started smoking weed again, and in 2020 I got a medicinal marijuana card.

My husband also smokes. Unfortunately I discovered that if I took one hit, I wanted more. I found my hand constantly reaching for it. I noticed being foggy headed, easily forgetting stuff, and that my throat hurt.

Today I started my first MA meeting and enjoyed the camaraderie. I discovered that marijuana isn't bad, it's bad for ME. I am an ADDICT, which means I will overdue it. My husband smokes for his PTSD trauma. I am grateful for MA. I am a newcomer that will not give up. After all, I have the DESIRE to stop.

~ Cherie H

A New Beginning

*Higher power, please take away
this burden of pain in my heart.
Take away the regrets I made in
the past. Let me be free and able
to be happy with my new life.
Clean and serene in recovery
Give me wings to fly again, and
to be me.*

~ Cassie C

Service Animal

*Cats like being petted so much
because they can't do it on their own,
at least not like we can.*

*That's probably why we feel good
when we do things for others.
We're caressed where we can't reach,
in places we've never seen.*

*Invisible hands pat parts of us
set in different dimensions,
and we purr in our own ways.*

*We purr like good children should,
and when the petting stops,
we eat some chicken
in the rekindling shade,
eyes tuned to the present landscape
and what it needs from us.*

~ Rich G

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

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

MA World Services

340 S LEMON AVE # 9420, WALNUT, CA 91789-2706

+1.800.766.6779

WWW.MARIJUANA-ANONYMOUS.ORG

INFO@MARIJUANA-ANONYMOUS.ORG

DIST. 2 San Francisco & East Bay +1.510.957.8390
www.madistrict2.org

DIST. 3 South SF Bay Area +1.408.450.0796
www.madistrict3.org

DIST. 4 Western Washington +1.206.414.9270
www.madistrict4.org

DIST. 5 Orange County +1.714.999.9409
www.madistrict5.org

DIST. 6 LA County North +1.818.759.9194
www.madistrict6.org

DIST. 7 LA County South +1.310.494.0189
www.madistrict7.org

DIST. 8 New York
www.ma-newyork.org

DIST. 11 Oregon +1.503.567.9892
www.madistrict11.org

DIST. 12 North Bay, CA +1.415.419.3555/+1.707.583.2326
www.madistrict12.org

DIST. 13 MA Online
www.ma-online.org

DIST. 14 London, England +44.300.124.0373
www.marijuana-anonymous.co.uk

DIST. 16 Melbourne, Australia +61.403.945.083
www.marijuana-anonymous.com

DIST. 17 Denmark
www.ma-danmark.dk

DIST. 18 Sacramento, CA +1.916.341.9469
www.sacramentoma.org

DIST. 19 Toronto, ON, Canada +1.416.999.2244
www.matoronto.org

DIST. 20 San Diego, CA
www.ma-sandiego.org

DIST. 21 Colorado State +1.303.607.7516
www.ma-colorado.org

DIST. 22 New England
www.newenglandma.org

DIST. 23 Georgia State +1.770.468.8508

DIST. 24 Vancouver, BC, Canada +1.778.554.8997

DIST. 25 Chicagoland MarijuanaAnonymousChicago@gmail.com

DIST. 26 Iceland
www.maisland.is

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 Two

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Tradition Two

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority, a loving God whose expression may come through in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Celebrating 256 Years of Sobriety!

District 4

Thor H 12/6/2000 22 yrs

District 5

Amanda 12/17/2014 8 yrs
Bravo 1/2/2017 5 yrs
Jason P 1/3/2021 2 yrs
Layne 1/18/2010 13 yrs
Melody 1/16/1989 34 yrs
Mike McK 12/19/2001 21 yrs
Robert M 1/18/2018 5 yrs
Tony R 1/1/2004 19 yrs

District 6

Loren N 1/14/1990 33 yrs

District 7

Marcy E 1/5/2013 10 yrs

District 11

Bethany D 12/19/2016 6 yrs

District 22

Jesse B 1/3/2022 1 yr
Kyle C 1/31/2016 7 yrs

Independent & Virtual Meetings

Thomas W 1/1/1983 39 yrs
Patty A 12/1/2022 1 yr
Eric R 1/5/1993 30 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