



A NEW LEAF

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Shaking But Not Taking

It's over a month since the Northridge earthquake and life is slowly returning to normal in the MA districts affected by the 6.8 temblor.

The quake disrupted a few meetings in District 6—some rooms closed temporarily for clean-up or repairs, others re-opened after electrical power was restored.

During the first week, make-shift meetings were held in the living rooms of our members and the phone lines were buzzing with reach-out calls alerting our members of the times and locations.

The best news is that no injuries were reported by our members, although a few were forced to move out of their homes. And, as far as we know, none of our members "went out" during this trying time—a testament that the program of Marijuana Anonymous is working.

— B.K.

What's Your Opinion?

We are seeking full-length articles on the subject of "Singleness of Purpose" to be published in an upcoming issue of *A NEW LEAF*. Please send your articles to *A NEW LEAF*, P.O. Box 4314, North Hollywood, CA 91607.

More Tools to Construct a Solid Program

I liked the November article entitled "Tools," so I thought I would make a contribution to the tour of the toolbelt. I found that a lot of the best dumping I did was not on the sympathetic ears of my most recent sponsor nor in the midst of the patient circle of my party-prone peers, but through a medium described to me as "The Morning Pages."

I like to call them my "Morning Pages," considering the level of moroseness in my early morning thinking. I was instructed to sit down and write these pages first thing before shower, newspaper, radio or TV, or anything else distracting. Just keep writing no matter what, even if I had to keep writing "I have nothing to write about" for three pages. I don't know if coffee counts as a distraction but I drink it while writing my three pages (You work this program any way you can).

At first, I told myself I didn't have enough time in the morning. Well, the answer was readily given: get up twenty min-

utes earlier. My next excuse was that three pages is too much, so I write however many I can write and I can usually measure how well I'm working my program by how well I'm feeling at any given point in the week.

I count this as my morning meditation in my never ending effort to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I continue to fail to understand God. My prayer I do all the time, along the lines of "Oh God, here we go again!" But the meditation is tricky. I try to use the meetings a bit, but meetings are interactive, even when I'm not talking. The house-

of-worship-of-my-choice only works if there's a big crowd and I can lose myself in the mob-effect of prayer.

In general, the "Morning Pages" works out well and I recommend it to any who seek something new in their program. △

— Anonymous from the mellow rooms of District 7



When constructing a program, try using this "power" tool.

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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.

Managing Editor
Carol M.

Publication Editor
Brian K.

District 1 Bureau Chief: **Neil L.**
District 3 Bureau Chief: **Richard A.**
District 4 Bureau Chief: **George T.**
District 5 Bureau Chief: **Az A.**
District 6 Bureau Chief: **Rob M.**
District 7 Bureau Chief: **Teri A.**

Published by
The New Leaf Editorial Board

Patricia G., chairman
Loren N., treasurer
George B.

Send all articles, inquiries and
correspondence to:

A NEW LEAF
P.O. Box 4314
No. Hollywood, CA 91607

Fax No.
(213) 258-5622

Editorial Phone Nos.
(818) 708-0717
(818) 760-4013

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A Collection of Views and Opinions from Around the Fellowship

This month's question: *When your life becomes uncomfortable, what action do you take?*

Kathy C. — 7 yrs. 5 mos.

I take a good look at the path I've taken to get into an uncomfortable spot. It usually is a combination of isolation, minimal meetings, lack of prayer and closeness with my God. I simply get back on track and it always falls back into place.

Karie M. — 3 yrs. 11 mos.

First I try to re-evaluate what I have been doing in that time that has brought me to an uncomfortable feeling. I work with my sponsor, therapist or another fellow addict who has been where I have been and worked through it. I go to more meetings and just simply try to reach out. I try to do positive things like read the *Big Book* or go to fellowship to keep myself busy. And I take things one moment at a time.

Michelle E. — 4 yrs. 5 mos.

I attempt to stop and think through the feelings in order to get to the root cause. If I am successful, and the cause is something I have control to change, I then try to discern what it is I have to do to make that change. If I can't figure that out, I pray for the wisdom and guidance to lead me. If it's seriously upsetting, I usually talk it over with another person. I allow myself to let it go until later if I am unable to find a solution right away. However, I usually can apply one of the Twelve Steps or Traditions, or one of the many other concepts. I've learned to rely on the program. The Serenity Prayer is fail safe for me — it has never let me down. At times I divert myself by doing something physical, like walking or gardening — even cleaning house. Or something mental, like reading or writing. Meetings also work — they get me out of me. Bottom line is this: if I'm uncomfortable with me, I change me. If I am uncomfortable with you, I try to communicate my feelings to you or another person. If I am uncomfortable with a situation, I make the choice to leave it or accept it.

Gerald F. — 3 years

I identify what it is I am feeling (usually fear), talk with my God, and know that it is going to be O.K. And, as soon as possible, I do whatever is in front of me to the best of my ability.

Randy F. — 6 yrs. 4 mos.

I take a written Tenth Step in order to discover what part of self is out of balance and then I straighten out the wreckage of my presence. I pray for guidance, courage, strength, wisdom and knowledge of God's will for me, and the power to carry it out. And I call someone in recovery — usually my sponsor.

Stacey S. — 1 yr., 6 mos.

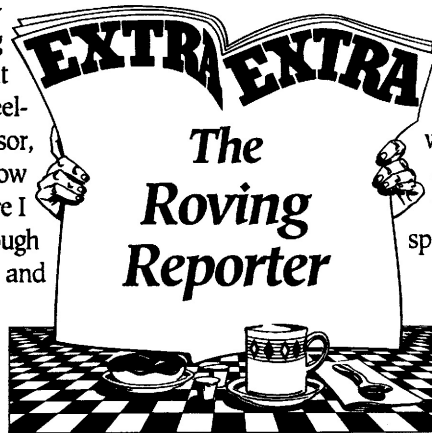
The first thing I try to remember when life is unbalanced is "first things first." I do whatever is in front of me. At times when my committee takes over and I have lost reality for the moment, I have the tools of the program. Writing has been my main savior; "Dear God" letters, especially. Gratitude letters help me in the moment. The second most important tool is my friends. When I can't see what is in front of me, they are always there to steer me in the correct direction. Meetings and the *Big Book* also guide me to a place of comfort. The only actions I do not take is drinking and using. (I thank Brian K. for asking me to see the action I do take.)

Sanford — 5 years (in a row!)

When my life becomes uncomfortable I communicate my feelings to the people I trust. This gives my feelings a lot less power over me. I also write my feelings down in a journal to get them out of my head. Meetings and calling my sponsor are also helpful. Prayer too. Did I mention meditation?

Terry M. — 6 years

Uncomfortable comes before pitiful incomprehensible demoralization. Somewhere between these stages a light goes on in my head, and it says work the steps, clean house, be of service and help another addict. I've found that this is the answer; it works.



Principles Begin With Tradition One

by Rick B., District 5

Tradition One says, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on MA unity."

So what does Tradition One mean to me? When I think about what "Marijuana Smokers Anonymous" was when I was first introduced to the fellowship in 1989, I think of people; people who reached out and helped me to overcome an addiction which had ruled over my life for over twenty years. It is an addiction which had all but destroyed my ability to do "normal" things like loving my family, waking up and dealing with reality on a day-to-day basis, and being a father to my children and a husband to my wife.

In the beginning, I found that the people who were there were also the people interested in preserving the unity of the fellowship. I have since found that the importance of that unity, or oneness, has come to mean something much more far-reaching than I could have ever imagined.

In Alcoholics Anonymous' *Twelve & Twelve* the question is asked, "Is the individual to be dominated by his group and swallowed up in it?" They answer with a resounding "No!" They say that (the fellowship) guards the individual's right to think, talk and act as he or she wishes. Accordingly, no MA group may compel any one individual to do anything. The Twelve Steps are suggestions for recovery; the Twelve Traditions never say "You must." Without unity we may well face anarchy.

A New Leaf is a part of the "unity" as set forth in Tradition One. I am glad and thankful to be able to be a part of it. When I contribute to literature about recovery in MA which is disseminated to addicts who have decided to dare to be free of the menace of marijuana addiction, I know that I am indeed practicing my Step Twelve.

Unity is for the welfare of the individual as well as the commonality. We members may find that our lives actually depend upon obedience to the spiritual principles set forth in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We also find that this priceless gift of sobriety cannot be kept until and unless it is given away. There exists a reality that each of us is but a small part of the great whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for the

preservation of the fellowship.

We learn that the clamor for desires and ambitions within us must be silenced whenever they could damage the group. It is plain and clear that the fellowship must survive or the individual will not.

Therefore, MA has built upon the foun-

dations and the infrastructure of AA and developed its own Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We have learned that recovery is dependent upon "unity" and "singleness of purpose" and that, although we love and know each other, we must always "place principles before personalities." △

The Power to Control Addiction Is Beyond Self Will

by Steve R., District 6

I have been attempting recovery since 1989. I have relapsed many times. Today I have under thirty days. Where did I go wrong?

My first mistake has been my unwillingness to admit defeat. I have always kept a reservation to use.

Today I can admit that I lack the power to control my addiction. My selfishness kept me believing I could control the mental (my obsession), the physical (my compulsive use),

and spirituality (my self-centered ways).

I have been unwilling to ask for help. Today I can accept that my addiction is greater than I am. I need something greater than myself to turn to. Relying on a Higher Power helps me overcome my fear of life.

God is the force that keeps me sober. I have to take the action to let this happen. I have not done this out of fear. Today I say the Serenity Prayer and add, "God, release me of the bondage of self that I may better do thy will." △

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



Mike K.	February 6	6 years
Kathryn R.	February 14	1 year
Dan Z.	February 14	1 year
Margaret F.	February 24	3 years
Matty D.	February 29	6 years
Dennis M.	March 5	1 year
Victor W.	March 6	4 years
Steve A.	March 11	1 year
Karie M.	March 15	4 years
Matthew	March 16	2 years
Janet R.	March 17	6 years
Gary D.	March 19	1 year
Carol Ann M.	March 22	4 years
Becky T.	March 23	2 years
Mike C.	March 25	1 year
Steve M.	March 27	5 years

Beyond the Steps — A Soul Needs Support

by George B., District 6

The 12-step program of MA has given me the opportunity and the tools to recover from my addiction to Marijuana — a drug that had me chained and locked away from my feelings.

When I was using, I was isolated, uncaring, slothful and judgmental of friends, family, society and, most of all, of myself.

Six years ago I walked through these doors bankrupt spiritually, physically and emotionally. I was completely lost.

So I did the things I was told. I got involved with sponsors, worked the Twelve Steps, worked with others, took commitments and became of service to other addicts and to MA as a whole. And I worked on a relationship with God.

I also work with a therapist once a

week and belong to two men's groups that gather to offer support to its members.

My past behavior has been cleaned up and I am no longer treating people the way I use to. I have been accepted as a member of our fellowship for who I am — not for the chameleon I used to be.

My commitments have been picked up by others following in my footsteps, just as I followed in those before me.

My faith and belief in God has grown to a level I never could have dreamed possible. There's not a doubt in my mind that I'm being taken care of. Smoking pot, snorting cocaine and drinking never crosses my mind as an option. Never!

So what's next?

It's time to step from recover to uncover, now that these tools of recovery are so

ingrained. Because there's still a hole that cries for knowledge and nourishment, it's now time to work on my soul. It's time to look deep within my self. Time to work on being a teacher of life to my three beautiful daughters (it's not easy being a single father). And it's time to work on being a caring and understanding partner and lover.

My relationship with men also needs to be worked on further and explored. A place where men support, care and listen to each other is necessary to help me understand what it means to be a man in today's society. For me, that is a man who is not afraid to reach out and touch life, to feel and express his relationship to others and nature. Surely I'm not here just to be sober.

Am I scared? You bet. These are new worlds. We say the road gets narrower. For me this narrow road has just exploded into an eight lane superhighway of self-discovery.

Thank you MA for the opportunity! △

MA WORLDWIDE....

DISTRICT 1 - SAN FRANCISCO
P.O. Box 194252
San Francisco, CA 94119
(510) 287-8873

DISTRICT 2 - EAST BAY
P.O. Box 8354
Berkeley, CA 94707
(510) 287-8873

DISTRICT 3 - SOUTH BAY
P.O. Box 111341
Campbell, CA 95011
(408) 450-0796

DISTRICT 4 - SEATTLE
P.O. Box 45646
Seattle, WA 98145-0646
(206) 548-9034

DISTRICT 5 - ORANGE COUNTY
358 S. Main #215
Orange, CA 92668
(714) 999 - 9409

DISTRICT 6 - LOS ANGELES (NORTH)
P.O. Box 2433
Van Nuys, CA 91404
(818) 566-3678

DISTRICT 7 - LOS ANGELES (SOUTH)
P.O. Box 3012
Culver City, CA 90231
(213) 964-2370

DISTRICT 8 - NEW YORK
(no address at this time)
(212) 459-4423

DISTRICT 9 - SANTA CRUZ
P.O. Box 1481
Santa Cruz, CA 95601

NEW ZEALAND
(no info at this time)

WORLD SERVICE OFFICE, P.O. Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404 • (800) 766-6779

Events/News

MA World Conference

May 28-30

San Jose, California

Annual event convened to conduct the

business affairs of MA, including literature, budgets, policies and procedures, and election of Board of Trustees. All members invited to attend daily meetings and participate in fellowship and talent/no-talent show. *More details to be announced next month.*



MA Seeks Office Manager

Resumes now being accepted for the position of MA World Services' Office Manager. Work is part-time (20 hrs. per month) and is an opportunity for someone to be "of service" and get paid at the same time. Send resume to MA World Services, P.O. Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404.