



A NEW LEAF

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Working the Steps

by Jennifer S., District 8

Something completely unexpected came up for me just now while writing my fourth step. I used the Big Book style of writing about resentments/anger and effects/injuries. I'd been very resistant to this, because I'd thought that I would be forced ultimately to take responsibility, or blame, for every situation. I've been blaming myself my whole life, acquiescing to everyone else, and that's the last thing I want to continue to do.

It turned out quite differently than I had expected (as everything does when I fully surrender), and I'm not even finished yet. In making a list of people, institutions, and principles for whom I harbor resentment and anger, two names channeled themselves out of my pencil without warning. These are people I rarely think about anymore. Not surprisingly, the events surrounding these people occurred when I was 19 — right before I began the reclusive addiction that continued for the following ten years — the last time in my life that I was fully conscious.

Through writing it all out, I now see how I had been permanently affected by trusting someone else's interpretation of a situation over my own. One of the people I resented was a former boyfriend (the last boyfriend with whom I was truly intimate), and the other person is the girl who told me that my whole relationship with

him had been a lie, that he had never loved me. She was his girlfriend before I was. For the next ten years, until today, I believed what she had said.

"It turned out quite differently than I had expected (as everything does when I fully surrender)..."

And because I did, I never again trusted the integrity of a man who behaved lovingly toward me. So I went out with many who behaved unlovingly, because I knew that was, at the very least, honest.

I spent many years in therapy blaming my mother for all my bad

relationships with men. I now know that everything in my life (mom, dad, the movies, etc) has turned me into the person I am today. Through writing out my fourth step I began to *feel* the importance of *all* the events described in my inventory and how they have effected my intimate relationships. For lack of space, I omitted many of the crucial details. I hope I have succeeded in imparting to you the beautiful and liberating results that I experienced from working this step. A huge door has been opened for me. Now I feel I can handle relationships differently and place greater trust and value in my own opinions, perceptions, and intuitions. ♪

The "Cool" Factor

by Mike M., District 1

From the time I was a small boy, I knew dope was a bad thing. I did well in school and sports and managed to stay away from drugs and alcohol. I excelled in spring-board diving and wrestling, winning many trophies and ribbons. I was the son of a doctor and an altar boy in the Catholic church; hell, I thought the Brady bunch was *reality*. Everything seemed to be breeze-city—that is, until the "cool" factor set in.

When I was around 15 years old, I got sick of being thought of as a "goody-goody" and wanted people to think I was

"cool." That was my new goal in life...to be "cool." On the walking path home from school one day, I saw my next door neighbor smoking a joint and I asked him if I could try it—what better way to be cool, right? I finished the doobie with him, but like many of us, I didn't get high my first time smoking.

About a year later, one of those major life changes occurred. Dad picked up the family and moved

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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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Spiritual Experience

by Anonymous

For me, smoking marijuana was a spiritual experience. When I smoked, feelings of wholeness and attunement came over me, and I loved it. The ritual (or religious) part of using pot was also a very important part of my life. It put me in "good spirits," if you will.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, the dope stopped working for me in that way. I no longer got the "good spirits" from the drug, and I believe my soul and the rest of my being suffered. I remained in a condition of discontent and despair for years.

When pot finally stopped working altogether, and put me in "bad spirits," I knew I had to try to stop again. All of my past attempts to stay away had failed, but when I hit my bottom, I knew I had to stop in order to stay out of institutions, or the cemetery. This for me was Step 1.

To make a long article short, I came to the fellowship of MA where I found many things, including love, understanding, help, hope (feel free to increase the list).

The people in the fellowship introduced me to the program contained in the "Big Book," and slowly, as I took suggestions and followed directions, I began the large part of my new spiritual awakening.

These days, I utilize the program to get

into "good spirits." I believe that this has let me release the spirituality that was always in me, which I tried to get externally through you know what.

I wanted spiritual experiences in my way, in my time, through marijuana. Now I realize I can still have these great experiences - not through dope, but in the natural, internal way that God intended for me. *R*

Thought of the Month

"Guilt is a self-made poison, which we administer to ourselves frequently. It is the most effective tool the ego has for insuring that we will remain hopelessly bound to our past and therefore not recognize each opportunity the present offers us for our release. There is only one known antidote for guilt: complete forgiveness, starting with ourselves and extending to everyone who shares the world with us."

Gerald Jampolsky

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



Moonshot Ben	Feb 4	2 yrs		
Susan S.	Feb 5	1 yr!		
Diana C.	Mar 6	1 yr!		
Alan L.	Mar 9	3 yrs		
Karie M.	Mar 15	6 yrs		
John M.	Mar 17	1 yr!		
Eugene A.	Mar 17	2 yrs		
Janet R.	Mar 17	8 yrs		
Dean H.	Mar 18	1 yr!		
Lori F.	Mar 18	1 yr!		
Gary D.	Mar 19	3 yrs		
Carol Ann M.	Mar 22	6 yrs		
Becky T.	Mar 23	4 yrs		
Buffalo Soldier Mike C.	Mar 25	3 yrs		
Tree Keith	Mar 27	1 yr!		
Steven M.	Mar 27	7 yrs		
Diana V.	Mar 28	1 yr!		

The "Cool" Factor

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is from Michigan to California to pursue a career opportunity (I now recognize it as a geographic, although he is a non-practicing alcoholic). "Wow," I thought, "this is my opportunity to start over. Nobody knows me and I have a chance to be considered 'cool' right from the start!" Thus began my career as a stoner. I hooked up with a group of guys in my new high school and began to party. Now I was cool...or so I thought. I was caught smoking pot by my parents several times while in high school, but it never deterred me; like so many of us, I became a skilled con-artist.

In college, I experienced the freedom of living away from my parents. I went to a private college for my freshman year, but after a brother turned me in to my parents for smoking pot, my dad immediately pulled me out of the university. I blamed my brother and my parents, but never myself. Obviously, they just weren't cool enough for me. I attended a local community college for a year, then transferred to UC Santa Barbara to complete my degree in microbiology. The drinking and drugging escalated to a fever pitch and I was far away enough from my family so that I wouldn't be caught. Boy, I was really cool now. Somehow I managed to obtain my bachelor's degree while drinking, drugging, and working my way through school.

Next, I managed to land a decent job at a biotechnology company in the San Francisco Bay area. As circumstance had it, my new boss was a die-hard user. During a Giants opening-night game in 1989, my boss and his friends thought it would be fun to get me really blotto. Being the good addict I was, I obliged, thinking that it was going to be cool. They lost me during the 7th inning stretch and I woke up the next morning in jail. I stayed sober, but not clean, for about 14 months after my first

DUI. I thought that my problem was with alcohol, but that I could still handle pot. Classic denial! After this period of self-imposed sobriety, I began to drink again. Two months after I resumed drinking, I had my second DUI arrest. This was not too cool. I tried a few AA meetings to stay sober, but decided they weren't for me. I have managed to stay off alcohol since 1990 by self-will...big mistake! Self-will combined with denial is a very uncomfortable place to be.

Changing jobs and companies, I again attempted to start my career over. I was using more and more pot to make up for the absence of alcohol. I used for the next three years, and at the end of that time, I finally figured out that smoking pot was not very cool at all. My smoking almost cost me my job and my fiancée. I almost flunked out of a master's program. In a state of sheer desperation I walked into the rooms of MA in April, 1994 and have been clean and sober ever since. The program has turned my life completely around.

Getting clean and sober was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life, but also the most rewarding. I have a master's degree, a wonderful wife, and clearer goals and objectives. The program has helped me understand why I was using and how I could stop using. I will always be grateful to the people who helped me get sober. I know the only ways I can pay them back are by staying sober and by helping others to recover from their addiction. I will have two years this April, but I know that this is just the beginning. I am also grateful that I don't have to worry about staying sober for the rest of my life, but rather just for today. I truly believe in those five simple words: "One day at a time." It may be a long and slippery road ahead, but I don't need to worry about that. By attending meetings and

using the tools I received to deal with life on life's terms, I need not turn to drugs to escape my problems. After 13 years of using, only now that I am sober do I understand the real definition of "cool." Through the program, I have discovered that I am a pretty cool guy after all. *R*

MAWS Conference

The Ninth MAWS (MA World Services) Conference is coming up! It will be held in Seattle over the Memorial Day weekend.

The Conference is where the *business* of MA gets done. Literature is approved, policies and procedures are agreed on (or not, as the case may be), budgets are set, arguments are animated, and the spirit of fellowship abounds. Everyone is welcome to attend and contribute, although the actual voting is done by the delegates from each district, as well as by the trustees.

Each district sends two delegates to the Conference. Think of them as your Senators (only honest). They go to the Conference to represent *you*, the MA member. The structure of MA is an upside-down pyramid. At the top, in the most important position, are the members. Their wishes and needs are the lifeblood of MA.

But if the members' concerns are to be *known*, they must first be *voiced*. Now is your chance to let your delegates know what is on your mind. If they don't know what you want, how can they be of true service?

So please, take this important opportunity to "be a part of" MA. If you don't like something that is going on, suggest a solution. Bored by our literature? Write a new pamphlet!

Most importantly, speak to your delegates now....so that they can speak for you at the Conference. *R*

Bulletin Board

WHALE-WATCHING!

District 5 - Saturday, March 16, 8:30 am. Newport Landing. Half-day event. \$10/ person. Reservations must be made by March 8 by calling Coleman (714) 548-6076.

GARAGE SALE!

District 6 - Saturday, March 30, 8 am-?, in Studio City. For address, to donate items, or to volunteer, contact Ilene M. (818) 763-4767 or Lance D. (818) 340-4320. A great opportunity to clean out your garage AND be of service!

GARAGE SALE!

District 5 - Saturday, March 30. Location: Barbara H's house. For directions, or to donate items, please call Barbara H. (714) 997-5067. A World Services Conference Fund-raiser.

POOL/JACUZZI PARTY!

District 5 - Saturday, April 13, noon to ? Pot Luck. At Mike LB's house. Bring swimming stuff. Families welcome! For information, contact Mike LB (714) 547-3693

KERN RIVER CAMPING TRIP

Hosted by **District 5**. July 19-21. Reservations **must** be made by April 13th!! Call Mike LB (714) 547-3693.

A SWELL GIFT IDEA!

Looking for a gift for a recovering friend? Gift cards can be sent in your name with each subscription purchased of *A NEW LEAF*. Single subscriptions are still just \$10/year. (Issues will be sent in plain "anonymous" envelopes) Mail your order to *A NEW LEAF*, P.O. Box 4314, North Hollywood, CA 91607.

GREETINGS TO NEW MEETINGS!

New meetings are springing up all over the country in areas that are not yet districts. *A NEW LEAF* welcomes and congratulates our new members in Oregon, Pennsylvania, Hawaii, New Hampshire, and Washington D.C. Remember, you are not alone! Keep comin' back!!

Do Your Fourth Step!


Dancin' Tom, District 6

For a lot of people the 4th Step is "the Wall." I think the reason is that it is very easy, in your mind, to say that you have done the first three steps. But the **big** 4th Step forces you to **take some action**. In order for you to do the 4th Step properly you should have a **sponsor**. This requires action and commitment. Then you actually have to sit down and **write something**. For some people this is just too much work.

The 4th Step is a critical part of the program. It forces me to look at my past. It can be a very painful process but it is necessary for my recovery. In order for me become a healthier person, I **must** deal with my past. Why must I deal with my past, you ask? I'm glad you asked.

The reason is this: in order to deal with the present in a healthy manner, I

must take care of the baggage from my past in a healthy manner. Not the unhealthy way I did while I was using drugs. Not the way many of us learned from our dysfunctional families. This is the same reason why the 5th through the 9th Steps are so important. In order to live life in a healthy manner, I **must** eliminate as much baggage as possible. This is what these Steps do. You will feel happy, joyous, and free as the result of taking the action of these six steps. But you must take the action of the 4th Step first. It's a lot of work but well worth the effort.

Thanks for letting me share my recovery and I pray to my higher power that I helped somebody else in theirs. 

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