

A NEW LEAF

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Chasing the First Hit by Rik H.

For most of my dope smoking life, I was in love and obsessed with chasing the exhilaration of that lung expanding, brain melting, first hit. There was nothing that could compare to the excitement and fulfillment that accompanied this experience. For more than twenty years, as a pot head and dealer, I cherished this frequent moment as if it were some type of orgasm or spiritual awakening. Occasionally, the thought that smoking morning, noon, and night might be excessive, but it was quickly replaced with the notion that marijuana was not addictive!

How could I have a problem with weed! The pleasure and stimulus that it provided for me outweighed any rational awareness of unmanageability in my daily living. Getting high was my reward system and my blissful escape from what I accepted as a "tough life." Getting involved with dealing was a way to derive a little excitement and danger that distracted me from the "problems" of living. Problems, that I was convinced were unlike anyone else.

When I scored, the first thing was to fondle and smell the

new batch of sticky, skunky delight. The next ritual was to pack the pipe and fire up that initial inhalation and return my perspective to the key function and reason for my daily existence. There was no concern about being in my car, driving down the highway at rush hour, or even addiction. Remember marijuana was not addictive! This was the frequent reminder that echoed in my head. Once in a while, the thoughts about my wife and kids would venture into the scenario. Then the paranoia would increase. What if I was busted? What if they found my stash? What if it were ever discovered how important of a role weed played in my life?

These were the dangerous beliefs of a doper who was in fact addicted to marijuana. Although the schizophrenic life was somewhat enamoring it had become a regular concern that I wasn't able to cover my tracks as well as I once had. My oldest son had found my stash, and smoked some. I started convincing my wife that she needed to get stoned with me occasionally to loosen up. After all, look what it was doing for me! She only thought that I was tokeing up a couple of

times a week, and I seemed so laid back. The web of deceit and denial was woven so thick that I believed everything would always be O.K.

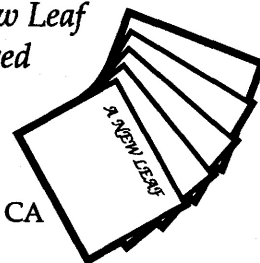
Pot was not the only substance that I found myself in legion with, but it was my drug of choice. Alcohol, cocaine, and ritalin were regular sources of excitement, but herb was my first lady. It had become my best friend, and lover. When my life had finally reached a pinnacle of total unmanageability, a little over three years ago, I was backed into a corner. Emotionally, spiritually, morally, and physically bankrupt, I was caught in a series of lies that I couldn't substantiate with more lies. My first thought was, maybe I could find a 12-step program for compulsive liars. My wife told me

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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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Chasing continued

about an AA group that met every day in the next town, and that I needed to go. I was whipped, and I knew that there was a faint possibility that I could get some help. I got in my car with a nickel bag in my pocket and drove off to my first meeting.

I was fiercely afraid. For the first time in my life I was breaking down the barriers of addiction. There was a long, never ending journey ahead of me, but the first step was to admit that I was in trouble and that I needed help. That day was November 15, 1996. I carried that nickel bag around for a couple of days, but I tossed it out along with my pipes three days later. I went

through the sleepless nights, the anxiety attacks, and the emotional upheaval of early recovery very ungracefully. With the help of a sponsor, a program of recovery, a higher power, and my family, I managed to stay clean one day at a time. Although I am an addict/alcoholic, pot was and remains today to be the most challenging substance for me to deal with...remember I wasn't addicted to pot. My name is Rik, and I am a pot addict. Today, I work very diligently at keeping my habit in perspective, and realizing that my new lease on life is a daily reprieve from the insanity that was once so meaningful and destructive. ▲

One Year by Peter S.

One year has come and gone, rather quickly, I would say. It was such a short time ago at 4:30 am I would roll out of bed, go to work and the first thought on my mind was, "Am I going to smoke today?" A question that was quickly answered as I drove away packing a bowl and smoking it while I steered with my knees, desperately trying to inhale my medicine as quickly as possible. I had to be good and loaded to deal with the graveyard shift employee in my office who had a penchant for arguing as sport. After he would leave and on special days when I felt extra lazy I would light up in the office and doze off. My co-

worker, a fellow stoner, would come in an hour later and tell me he could smell it in the lobby coming out of the elevator. I would shrug my shoulders. I didn't care. Luckily the security guard warned me of some complaints and I quit smoking in the office. I just went to my car instead.

I did everything I could to create time to be alone and get girlfriend who didn't know I smoked at all. She knew of my past and thought I had left all that behind in Florida. For a while I thought getting high was so apart of my life and necessity for me to function in this crazy world. But eventually it sucked me in

One Year continued

like a vacuum and I became unmotivated, lazy, dirty, irresponsible, broke and extremely short tempered.

The best day of my life used to be the time I dropped acid in Disney World with my friends. It really was a blast, but a feeling that was never relived after many futile attempts. But now my best day was actually one of my worst, the day I emotionally broke down while jogging around the Back Bay, thinking about all the reasons why I smoke. Was it because I was scared of being alone and not being successful and failing? Was it because I would get depressed about my constant struggles with my weight? Was it because I was scared about

the day my relationship with my girlfriend would inevitably end because she is older than me and we would never get married and have kids, something that one day I assume that I would want? Was it anger from my mom passing away and not being there to take care of me and guide me? Was it from the feeling of not fitting in?

These are all reasons (excuses) why I smoked. But I thought smoking would calm those fears and instead they only were only enhanced by the green evil. I knew then, doing drugs, eating, drinking and any type of compulsive behavior was a direct result of me not facing those glaring questions.

And unless I faced them, I would continue to erode away into a pile of mush. I ran all the way home and told my girlfriend about my drug use and the many lies I told over the last 16 months and my intentions. I knew she could kick me out and not want anything to do with an addict (something I couldn't blame her for). But she could see the pain in my eyes and gave me the opportunity to get well. I found the MA web page and found a meeting in Costa Mesa on Wednesday night.

Everything I heard, everything I read and everything I saw was exactly what I needed to get my life on the right track. I knew my life was at stake if I

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Peter S. District 2	1/17/99	1 year	Davin	1/20/99	1 year!	Chris E.	3/28/93	7 yrs.
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			Keith G.	3/27/95	5 yrs.			

One Year continued

didn't take the opportunity. I was so used to smoking at work I didn't know what to do with myself.

I brought all sorts of books and literature about self-help and wellness and read them constantly throughout the day trying to make sense of it all. The nights weren't a problem because I went to meetings and learned more about myself as others talked about themselves. I made friends by going to activities and events and opened myself up to others. It was easy to say it was all a joke and it couldn't work. Is this it for me? Is this how I am going to spend the rest of my life? My ego got in the way its fair share, but with the help of the group, family, friends and a sense of a higher power I was able to give it some time and an honest effort. I am glad I did.

Through the means of fellowship I learned how to live my life sober and have fun: real, unadulterated (some-what), clean, crazy fun. I really enjoy my life today. I'm very fortunate to live where I live, have a good job, a supportive and loving family, a wonderful partner and to be apart of Marijuana Anonymous.

I am able to give of myself through service and commitments, which is a wonderful form of voluntary, forced discipline; to be held accountable for my actions. It really helps. But by no means am I cured of my disease. In fact, I'm now beginning to learn the control it has over me and the things I need to do remove its death grip.

Everyday I still commit most or all of the seven deadly sins. I'm still compulsive in

many aspects of my life. Today though, I'm consciously aware of these instances and am working on them, by sometimes writing, sometimes praying to my higher power, sometimes talking to a sponsor or someone else in the program or going to a meeting when I feel down.

Hardly perfect, but it is a huge gain from last year when I tried to conquer everything on my own and failed miserably. My first goal when I came to M.A. was to stop using pot. Which thankfully, as of today, I have succeeded. My next goal is to work the steps as best and honestly as I can, which will make me a better human being for myself and for society. I sometimes think I am still failing because I haven't done the steps yet and give into compulsions. But if I compare myself to what I was a year ago, I feel really good about the person I am today and the growth I've achieved. To steal a cliché, that's progress not perfection. And that's not failing, that's winning. ▲

MAWS Financial Report

For the three month period of
10/1/99 thru 12/31/99
Income:

District 7	\$ 625
District 6	280
Dists. 3,4,&10	275
Meetings	288
TOTAL	\$1,468

Expenses:

Phone & Internet	\$ 564
Off.Supplies & Exp	177
Off.Mgr + W/C Ins	440
TOTAL	\$1,181

Proceeds for this period
\$287.



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