



On Diversity and Inclusion in MA

In keeping with the spirit of its Third Tradition, why shouldn't MA entities (members, groups, service boards – districts and corporate) celebrate its members by raising awareness of inclusion and respecting members with varying abilities, sexual identities, races, ethnicities, gender identities, religions, languages, neighborhoods, socioeconomic backgrounds, and ages? As a Fellowship, we strive to support the well-being of all members as we evolve toward greater diversity, equity, and inclusivity.

Race and privilege have been topics of discussion as they relate to the spirit of Tradition Three, among members of local groups and districts, as well as members of MA's corporate board, MA World Services. And particularly in light of this moment in time, when societal divisions and inequities along racial lines have been laid bare – some members are discussing this complex issue in tandem with the Twelve Traditions – and recognize the need to look at our own disparities.

Some members, who identify as people of color, have shared concerns that their life experiences as it relates to being a marijuana addict person of color in MA, have been viewed as an “outside issue,” even by others who do not identify as persons of color, and therefore have felt unsafe in what they can and cannot share about their own experience. Membership does not and should not include having to tolerate racism or other forms of discrimination in MA or removing this life experience from one's story.

Many groups find that providing a safe space to share this experience to be no more in contradiction of Tradition Ten (an “outside issue”) than the topic of safety and MA itself. Racism and other forms of discrimination in MA is a safety issue. Acknowledging that most of us in MA operate within some unearned privilege is key in understanding and acting upon where we can widen the circle of an accessible message and a feeling of inclusion. For example, if one can acknowledge that they have an unearned privilege over a non-native English-language speaker or a member who is d/Deaf or visually, physically, or mentally impaired, then one can better reflect on how to ensure that all have equal access to the life-saving message of MA.

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While many members – including members who are transgender – identify as either male or female, some members do not identify within these two categories. People whose gender is not female or male often identify as nonbinary, gender nonconforming, genderqueer or genderfluid, among others. Keeping in mind Tradition Ten, a person is the gender they say they are.

MA does not and should not dictate, and has no opinion on, any person's gender or gender pronouns. MA membership is open to all genders and backgrounds. No matter one's

gender identity, some members have shared that they find it helpful to have a safe space to voluntarily share their pronouns with other members of the group in order to help the group get to know them better. Some members have said that they voluntarily share their pronouns at in-person or virtual meetings so that others may feel more comfortable to do so. Some members have also shared that being questioned about their gender identification has made them feel unsafe.

Here are examples of just some of the pronouns of MA members in our Fellowship: they/them/theirs; she/her/hers; and he/him/his.

Most marijuana addicts feel quite comfortable in any MA group. Yet, many MA communities also have “special interest” meetings where it may be easier to be open about certain personal issues. Some MA's come together as specialized MA groups – for “young” people; for women, for men, or for nonbinary; for medical or legal professionals; for LGBTQ+; for BIPOC; and for others.

By providing a safe environment in which marijuana addicts can focus on gaining and maintaining sobriety, the group can fulfill its primary purpose – to carry the MA message to the addict who still suffers. If the members are all marijuana addicts, and if they open the door to all marijuana addicts who seek help – regardless of profession, gender, or other distinction – and meet all the other

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

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On Diversity and Inclusion in MA (continued from p. 1)

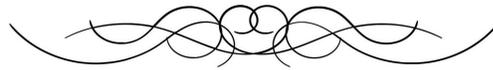
aspects defining an MA group, they may call themselves an MA group.

We in MA believe that marijuana addiction is a disease that is indifferent to age, varying abilities, gender, creed, race, wealth, occupation, or education. Our experience seems to show that anyone can be a marijuana addict.

And, beyond question, anyone who wants to stop using marijuana is welcome in MA.

~ A New Leaf Editors

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Found Myself

I found myself in the darkest of the void. It was in this darkness that I realized three things. First, that my fantasy of control led me here. Second, that my choices were keeping me caged in this darkness. Lastly, I needed to change, or I would surely die here.

I was born into the shadows of addiction, chaos, and generational suffering. At a young age, I had already witnessed those who were sworn to protect me get crushed under the weight of life. The problem was they were all blinded by addiction, rage, and revenge. This cycle was never-ending. This cycle evolved into deeper levels of despair. A life of addiction spins a web of lies and self-destruction. I watched as my mother, father, and my entire family rip each other apart chasing

the illusion of control. This was all to feed the obsession of drugs and alcohol.

I remember making a promise to myself that I would never end up like them. I swore I would do whatever it took to walk a different path. Little did I know that all the tools I had to work with were the ones handed down that kept my family enslaved to the darkness that plagued them.

I remember the first chance I had at what I thought was freedom from myself. I didn't even hesitate to pick up that first drink. The obsession to alleviate the sadness, anger, and depression I felt my entire life was consuming me. I learned how to truly escape. It never even dawned on me that, in this moment, I would open the flood gates of addiction.

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**Speaker
Tapes**

The "MA Speaker Tapes" podcast is a collection of recorded leads from Marijuana Anonymous World Phone Meetings (MAWPM) speaker shares, MA Conventions keynote speakers, workshops, and more.

Listen to MA meetings on Podcasts!

Go to: www.ma-phone.org/speaker-tapes

Found Myself (continued from p. 2)

Here I was picking up where my family left off. Here I was continuing this trend of illusion of control. I used self-pity of my life's situation as a driving force, leading the way to make one bad decision after another.

I attempted to escape the hell cage I was trapped in by moving away. I attempted to control my environment by fleeing it. When I had moments of clarity, I lied to myself. If I only put down certain drugs then I could control the use of others. I could surely control pot, couldn't I? After all, it was a natural plant that grew and had always been my friend.

This pattern continued for 30 years. I made promises to those closest to me that I would only smoke on special occasions like birthdays and BBQs. Then I would find myself sneaking away to get high alone. When caught I promised to only use after work to chill out, or when I had anxiety and needed to calm down. Once again I would find a way to get high when no one was watching.

I had lied so well to myself that I finally decided if I just was high all the time no one would ever suspect a thing, because they would never see "me" again. This worked for a short while. I lived in my own privately defined world.

When COVID hit, the pandemic was much worse than anyone imagined. This sent me into a downward spiral. I was depressed all the time with suicidal ideation. I was barely able to get out of bed.

There were days and nights I would be gripped to the bones with crippling anxiety due to acute and unrelenting panic attacks. I still chose to smoke even though it would only make me further burrow into the emotions. I started to take self-harm to a physical level. I isolated myself from all family and friends and only left my house if it was to get more drugs. This was my rock bottom. I knew I was gonna die so I might as well be high. I cried out to God – a God I didn't believe in – to help me or kill me.

There was no more room to dig. I was in the worst shape of my life. I decided that I needed to do something. I started in therapy. This led me to find a psychiatrist who also specializes in addiction. This is when I began to transform.

He recommended medication and that I start to go to MA meetings. Of course, at first I was completely reluctant and resistant to the idea; however, counter-intuitively, I followed his instructions. I realized also I needed to change where I was living, because I was staying at a den of easy access to everything that helped me self-destruct. I ended a 6-year relationship with my fiancé. I left all of my friends that I considered family. I made a choice to move in with my 80-year-old aunt.

As I continued to go to MA meetings, I started working the steps and found a sponsor. Hope cleared a new path, and my life started to change. I wasn't as depressed. My anxiety was less and less, and I started to see all along it was the choices that I made that led me to my final darkness. If it wasn't for MA and the program, I would be dead.

Getting phone numbers and reaching out to those who could help and understand me when I was having urges and cravings was the lifeline that saved me. I found hope in others. It was by going to meetings every day that I was released of the obsession inside of me. I was finally home. I was surrounded by a fellowship that I soon considered family. This new family understood me.

I found a Sponsor that I trusted. I worked through the step and it revealed my greatest weaknesses. It helped me find my greatest strengths, too. I found a new desire to no longer self-destruct. This new inspiration made me a better, more productive member of society. I embraced the challenges of others as if they were my own. All that was previously lost was now returned to me.

Family, friends, and loved ones re-entered my life. Today, I surround myself with people who have escaped the darkness. They see me and I see them. We love and empathize and show solidarity without condition. They see my scars, my sins, my weaknesses. They love me for it. They see my strengths and find hope in them.

This living death didn't have to be my ending. Instead, I choose one day at a time. I choose a power greater than myself to guide me and to be by my side to help me pick up the tools I need to keep my spirit intact and to carry the message of hope to those who feel hopeless.

~Mary M.

Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood God.

Tradition Three

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using marijuana.

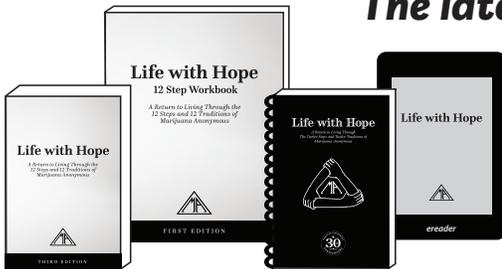
Marijuana Anonymous Worldwide

For a complete listing of all meetings visit
WWW.MARIJUANA-ANONYMOUS.ORG

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District 2

Alex C	1/22/2016	6 yrs
Dan N	2/12/2021	1 yr

District 5

Chris S	2/15/2020	2 yrs
Cory B	2/19/1999	23 yrs
Kristen S	2/21/2017	5 yrs
Jeremy	2/9/2014	8 yrs
Lauren G	2/15/2021	1 yr
Lisa L	2/22/2004	18 yrs
Max S	2/12/2015	7 yrs
Rod H	1/31/2021	1 yr
Sean T	2/20/2018	4 yrs
Steve C	2/16/2016	6 yrs

District 7

Don B	2/5/2009	13 yrs
Melody	1/16/1989	33 yrs
Ryan	2/7/2018	4 yrs

District 19

David	1/1/2020	2 yrs
Franklin L	12/27/2010	12 yrs
Jesse B	1/5/2019	3 yrs
Maarten V	1/1/2021	1 yr
Mayanna K	1/3/2021	1 yr
Sarah G	12/5/2014	7 yrs

District 22

Dean A	2/14/2004	18 yrs
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District 27

Mickie D	1/23/2013	9 yrs
Tiffany P	2/11/2021	1 yr

← **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