



A NEW LEAF

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Beginning Sponsorship

Michael H.

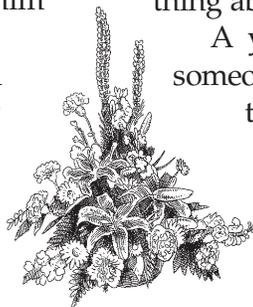
The prelude to my recovery was the most devastating emotional trauma of my adult life. My lover broke up with me suddenly and forever because of my marijuana use. He left me saying "You love dope more than you love me." My mind and heart denied this but my behavior said he was right. I was an addict. He was the love of my life, and I let pot take him away from me.

I qualified further as an addict by taking another four years before becoming ready to get into recovery. That recovery has meant many things to me, but at present what it means most, besides the meetings, is sponsorship.

I have been blessed from the start in my own sponsor, whom I consider the wisest, most dedicated person I have met in the program. I just asked him and he said yes, and I was thrilled. It was an additional gift that he had a lot of time at first to know me and advise me and help me work the steps. I can't imagine a better sponsor, though I can imagine a better sponsee.

My best friend in recovery asked me early on to be his sponsor. I said "Thanks for asking, but I'm too new in this to be anybody's sponsor." I got clean

only a month or so before he did. He got another sponsor, but he and his sponsor didn't seem to click very well and a couple years later he asked me again, and this time I agreed. I'm older; maybe that helps. He's a pretty together person, with a strong marriage, a good job, and a firm commitment to recovery, and all that helps even more than anything about me.



A year later I took on someone else. I sort of volunteered myself this time—a bad sign. You can't impose sponsorship on anyone, and it didn't work. He avoided meetings, built up resentments, and dropped out of the program. This was a big learning experience for me, and I hope it will be one for him, eventually.

Another year passed, and within a short time two more guys asked me to be their sponsor. These two sponsor-sponsee relationships have been more challenging than the one with my good friend, but they have worked and they're ongoing.

Sponsorship is a richly rewarding service that has taken my recovery to another level. It's the best thing you can do for another person in recovery, but of

course they help you even more than you help them. It's a big lesson in turning it over. I learned that best with the guy who drifted away. I don't mind reaching out to help, but when they don't accept and lose their sobriety, you have to let it go.

At times I call on my own sponsor for advice in dealing with my sponsees and he always has it. But as he says, often all you need to do is listen—to be present for them when they need you. You don't have to take on their problems. In fact, you must not. The main thing is to let them feel that you're available to them to talk often and meet regularly. The relationship has a life of its own. Like so much of recovery, sponsorship will always work if you let it.

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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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New Connections

Bea

Every practicing marijuana addict knows how important connections are. I used to drive a hundred miles or more to make my connections and maintain my supply. Since joining M.A., I've found meetings within walking distance of my home, and I now have connections of a whole new sort. In my first year of sobriety, profound changes have been happening in my life since I've reconnected with my Higher Power.

Until last year, I used weed as a smoke screen for the negativity in my life. My brain would tell me: "Got a problem? Feeling stressed, angry, depressed? Blow smoke over it!" I married a "normie" eight years ago imagining we'd live happily ever after and, therefore, I'd rarely need weed anymore. When maintaining a happy marriage turned out to be more stress than I cared to deal with, I turned to my old friend Mary Jane for guidance.

Suspecting that we'd be unable to conceive children, my husband and I had agreed before marriage that we'd adopt. This turned out to be one of the biggest obstacles to marital bliss when he changed his mind, coming up with all sorts of ridiculous excuses why we should put off or skip adoption altogether. The most asinine: "I don't want to adopt a baby until you quit smoking weed." The nerve!

Eventually, I grudgingly admitted that maybe my husband had a point. Mary Jane's company had quit working for me, so I took what I refer to as Step Zero: showing up for meetings.

I had thought I was the only person on the planet struggling unsuccessfully to shake a marijuana addiction, but in Step Zero I found comfort and support when learning I was not alone. While I was working up the willingness to work the other steps, I dealt with my marital and other problems by ignoring them, because I'd spent 21 years blowing smoke over them and I simply didn't know any other way.

After a couple of months in the program, I found a sponsor and began working the steps. After completing my fourth step, I decided my secrets were sicker than anyone else's this side of Alcatraz, so I would need to complete my fifth step with someone who was sworn to secrecy. But who? I'm a Catholic who hadn't been to confession in more than a decade, but it occurred to me that the fifth step was sort of like going to confession, and I recalled that Catholic priests vow to keep your confessions private.

A fellow Catholic in M.A. connected me with a Catholic priest who was also an A.A. member. After I sobbed my way through my fifth step with this priest, he put my resentments toward my husband (which involved more than just the adoption issue) in perspective. He pointed out that I had some serious soul searching to do in regards to saving my marriage.

My eyes were still red from crying when I returned home after completing the step. My husband noticed. We talked. We agreed to work on our problems rather than ignore them, and my

New Connections

concluded

husband said he'd do anything possible to keep our marriage together.

I called my sponsor, who gave me advice on completing my sixth and seventh steps. I was more than just willing to turn my resentments, fears, sexual issues and character defects over to my Higher Power—I was eager and desperate.

I didn't want anyone to ever stumble onto the sick secrets I'd written in my fourth step, so I burned each one, praying as I did so that the smoke from the ashes would rise up to my Higher Power and that He would handle those issues I was powerless over.

He did.

My husband changed his work hours so we could spend more time together working on our issues or just having fun. A marriage that had grown stale became fresh again as we rediscovered our love for each other. In some ways, we've since become like newlyweds again, only better, because these newlyweds have the wisdom and maturity that comes with experience. And this time the bride is sober. As I write these words, my first sober birthday is two weeks away, and my husband and I will celebrate our eighth wedding anniversary a week later.

We started researching our adoption options last month, and over this past weekend I made a new and important connection: my sponsor told me she's accepted a job with an adoption agency.



Stupid, Boring and Glum

Jeff M.

Of the many things I have done to change my life in sobriety one is to get down on my knees and pray every morning, another is to read from several inspirational recovery books. This one morning I was reading from Twenty-Four Hours a Day published by Hazelden when a passage made me stop and really think about what my life was actually like when I was drinking and smoking Marijuana. The passage in the book read as follows, “. . . alcoholics . . . will look at the prospect of living without alcohol and they will ask: “Am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum . . .?” The reason it made me stop and think was that it was the exact same thing I thought when I was thrown kicking and screaming into this program. I failed a drug test and was told that if I wanted to keep my job, and therefore, my lifestyle I had to stop smoking AND drinking. I had always thought that if I did one or the other it would have been OK, but I have learned through the program that if I would have keep drinking I would have gone back to smoking dope. Therefore when I was told I had to stop all drug use I thought my life was over, I thought that I would be living a life where I was stupid, boring and glum. Boy was I ever wrong.

With the clarity of mind that a little time in the program gives you and the thought that this passage put in my head, I started to examine the reality of my drinking and using. When I first

started smoking Marijuana back in the '60's I did it to fit in, to be smart. All the smart kids or whom I thought were smart were doing it and I wanted to be a writer so I started smoking. At least that was one of my many justifications for using. It didn't work, I would smoke a joint and think about writing. I would stare at the blank page for a while then smoke another joint and think and stare some more. If by some strange chance I actually did put pen to paper and wrote something, if I could read it the next day, it didn't make sense, so I didn't accomplish much, except smoke more dope.

At parties I smoked and drank so I would be the life of the party. I was a shy kid and was always afraid of making a mistake, of messing up. Therefore being drunk or loaded gave me an excuse, if I made a fool out of my self I could always blame the booze or dope. And that worked . . . for a while. On good days I would smoke and drink to get the courage to ask someone to dance. Although most of the time just as I was ready I would take one more toke, or shot, and then maybe just one more for good luck, and then . . . and then I was too wasted to do it. Hey no problem drink and smoke some more, sooner or later it will work. Ya right!

So by drinking and smoking to try to not be stupid and boring I became glum. Glum because after awhile smoking or drinking no longer became an option, I had to smoke or drink to 'be myself'. I no longer

smoked or drank to get high, I smoked and drank to be normal. I had to use drugs to be the exact thing I was trying not to be, me. Using was no longer fun. And that is exactly when my Higher Power came in and took over. He sent me to recovery. It wasn't until I came into the program of Marijuana Anonymous and saw there were people a lot CRAZIER SOBER than I ever was stoned that I realized that happiness, intelligence, and joy MUST come

from inside. Your peace and serenity are all an inside job. All that any outside stimulants, be it drugs, material possessions, or even people, can do is to cause you to loose your true self. Only YOU can make yourself Happy, Joyous and Free. For me it comes from a daily reprieve from the craving of drugs, including alcohol, which I maintain by keeping myself spiritually, centered by having daily contact with my Higher Power. This has made

my life anything but Stupid, Boring, and Glum, it has made my life Beyond My Wildest Dreams. My life is so busy being of service, so full of love, that I don't have time to smoke a joint, even if I wanted. Even if I wanted to go back to being that stupid, boring glum person I was unhappy with. I am happy with the person I have become. I am happy with the Happy, Joyous and Free person I am now.

A Note Of Thanks...

We would like to thank Erin O. for her unstinting and selfless service over the years. Erin recently resigned as secretary of ANLP, and her contribution to the success of this publication, ANLP in general, and the Program as a whole. Thank you Erin!

And One of Welcome!

Debra C. of District 7 joins us as our new Managing Editor. She will be receiving and editing stories, forwarding birthdays, and in general making sure we run a tight ship, for which she's eminently suited. We're glad to have her aboard. Welcome Debra!



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Margee W.	4/29/96	5 Years	Melissa D.	4/5/99	2 Years
			Dan L.	4/10/99	2 Years
			Don O.	4/15/99	2 Years
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Tom S.	4/10/96	5 Years	Carol K.	3/7/00	1 Year!
Keith K.	4/7/98	3 Years			
Greg Q.	4/7/99	2 Years	Arizona		
Nathan	4/20/99	2 Years	Gwen G.	4/13/93	8 Years
District 6			Idaho		
Carol S.	4/21/91	10 Years	Stan C.	4/00	1 Year!
Bonnie U.	4/4/93	8 Years	Rhode Island		
Susie C.	4/4/94	7 Years	Joanne K.	4/21/90	11 Years
Sammie	4/15/94	7 Years	Brian K.	4/23/90	11 Years