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A NEW LEAF

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Applying The 12 Traditions In Our Lives by Loren

If you want to learn about yourself, take the Steps. If you want to learn about relationships, study the Traditions. Although the 12 Traditions appear to apply to the conduct of the groups and the fellowship, each tradition has a spiritual principle and practical application for individuals.

On an individual basis, the Traditions are helpful in learning to create and keep boundaries. The traditions are designed to protect ourselves from ourselves. When we were using, we did not know boundaries. We would often cross other people's boundaries and then wonder why they retaliated. We would let people cross our boundaries and then hold a resentment for allowing them to do so.

A good working understanding of the Traditions and how they apply individually is extremely helpful in assisting and advising a sponsee who's confronted with difficult social and relationship situations.

Here is a brief description of how each tradition can be applied on an individual level:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon MA unity.

We should always try to do what is best for everyone rather than advance our own desires and motives. We need to be good listeners in order to ascertain others' needs and, when confused, ask questions to clarify. Our own personal well-being will benefit from seeking what's best for all.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority, a loving God whose expression may come through in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

This tradition speaks to the spiritual principle of humility. Humility means understanding our place in relationship with God and others. We do not try to control and manipulate others to conform to our will. Instead, we attempt to seek God's will, remembering that God gave us choices. With this in mind we always try to choose God's will. Yet we are not so presumptuous as to believe that everything we choose to do is, in fact, God's will.

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

This tradition tells us to be compassionate, understanding, and nonjudgmental – to practice patience and tolerance. We do not judge people by what they look like, where they come from, how much money they have, or their status in society. We see that everyone is a deserving individual with both gifts and faults.

4. Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or MA as a whole.

This tradition reminds us to take care of our own side of the street and allow others to take care of their side. It is not our job to make sure that others go through life without making mistakes. We do not give unsolicited advice to people and tell them what they should do in certain situations. It's important for us to allow others to make their mistakes, unless it starts to spill over and affect others or us.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the marijuana addict who still suffers.

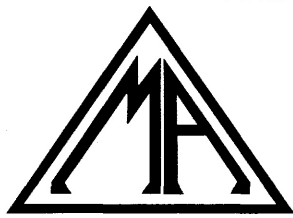
This tradition reminds us to be optimistic and hopeful, especially when dealing with people who are seemingly sick. We do not burden people with our problems or try to illicit sympathy when trying to help someone else. It's not about us; it's about them.

6. MA groups ought never endorse, finance, or lend the MA name to any related facility or outside enterprises, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

This tradition teaches us not to be enabling to other individuals. We literally stay out of other people's business. There are several reasons for this. First of all, we should keep clear of any expectations we may create within ourselves when we help someone financially or otherwise. We run the risk of conflict when we have invested in someone and they do not respond or act the way we believe they should. Similarly, we do not want anyone to feel as if they are obligated to us, even if we do not have such expectations of them. Keeping

The Traditions

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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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We send approximately 650 copies of A New Leaf each month to subscribers in 32 states and 3 foreign nations.

Applying the 12 Traditions In Our Lives *concluded*

clear of resentments and other ill feelings helps us maintain healthy relationships.

7. Every MA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

This tradition reminds us to live within our means and to know our own limitations. When we were using drugs, we often used people, as well. This tradition reminds us not to overstep our bounds. We must not let our material desires get in the way of our spiritual pursuits. By staying financially independent, we do not have to feel obligated to anyone. Also, it is important for us to help others be financially independent as well.

8. Marijuana Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

This tradition tells us not to take unfair advantage of people as a result of our status or position in society. Many of us conduct business or are placed in situations where we could use our personal resources, knowledge or experience to assist others. In doing so we must treat people fairly. This does not mean doing things for free or without compensation if our livelihoods depend on it. However, we are honest, and fully inform people of all their options, even if it may not be to our own advantage to do so.

This tradition also tells us that sometimes we cannot do everything ourselves. Sometimes it is important for us to seek out guidance from people with special knowledge in areas where we lack specific training. This includes doctors, psychologists, accountants, or attorneys, as well as people in other vocations. After all, we wouldn't try to give ourselves a haircut.

9. MA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

This tradition on an individual level means that we do not have any rules or regulations in order to allow others to have a relationship with us. This does not mean that we allow people to step on our values and spiritual principles. It is necessary to let people know who we are, what we stand for, and what is important to us. We may then hold people responsible to not violate our values and principles once they are made aware of them.

10. Marijuana Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the MA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

This tradition reminds us not to take sides and get in between people who are in conflict with each other. By doing so we run the risk of alienating ourselves from one or both of the individuals involved. We may even be accused of fueling the fire.

11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all fellow MA members.

This tradition tells us to walk the walk, that our actions in following spiritual principles speak much louder than our words. We do not push our ideals and values on others. We do not name-drop prestigious or well-known people that we know for the purpose of bolstering our own position.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

This tradition reminds us to keep our egos in check, that maintaining the integrity of our spiritual principles is far more important than our personal desires and ambitions. We do not need to become the center of attention which the world revolves around. We stay anonymous.

Desire Is All It Takes

by Dena

Tradition Three of Marijuana Anonymous states, “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using marijuana.” This is one of the most open, accepting, all-inclusive policies I have had the privilege to experience.

A decade ago, I was first exposed to the rooms by a judge’s order after being arrested for a DUI. I was in denial of my disease and heavily judged others, but I was warmly welcomed by those in the program. I wondered why everyone seemed so understanding and accepting of me, but I blocked out what was being offered and continued my using run for almost 10 more years!

My loving husband became very concerned about my constant pot smoking and, after a year of marriage, demanded that I seek help for my marijuana addiction. I knew this time he was serious, and I found my way into the rooms of Marijuana Anonymous. I was welcomed again by the members in a very accepting manner. It still puzzled me that the group did not demand *anything* of me. Sure, many suggested I abstain from mind-altering substances, work the Steps with a sponsor, and keep coming back. (All of which, I am grateful to say, “I did and I do!”) But, not one member told me what to do, think, believe, or feel.

This refreshing tradition is quite reassuring to me. It reminds me that Marijuana Anonymous is an awesome fellowship, not a cult. I have heard a few non-members mention that the groups seem “cult-like.” In response to that, I simply state Tradition Three. This tradition allows for all walks of life to be members of MA, regardless of race, gender, age, social and economic background, religious beliefs and non-beliefs. Tradition Three is dear to my heart, because it creates room for all in Marijuana Anonymous.

I have become a much better person as a result of applying Tradition three in my life. It has made me less judgmental and more accepting of others. For most of my life, I had sat in judgment of others. Judging was a way for me to shut out others and feel superior to many. Even the name “Dena” comes from the Hebrew meaning “to judge!” It was not a happy way to live. Upon coming to MA and working the program, I have learned to be open, accepting, and supportive of other people, both in and out of the rooms. Tradition Three teaches me that although we are diverse, we have a common bond: a desire to stop using marijuana.

People are sometimes surprised to hear that it is not a requirement in MA to be free from using marijuana, only to have a desire to stop using it. I regularly speak on a panel to teenagers and explain how a person can come to a meeting high, if that is what it takes to get them there. They will not be turned away, because of Tradition Three’s principle. I believe this tradition keeps MA growing and unifies us as a group. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous states in the second paragraph of Chapter Two, “The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds.” The desire to stop using marijuana is both part of our solution to our common peril and the only requirement for membership.

Bonghits for Breakfast

by Paul A., Arizona State Penitentiary

I was a passionate user and eventual abuser of pot for over 20 years. I was a very functional addict. I held a job at a large multi-national firm for 13 years, but my personal life was a mess. I isolated myself from my family, and my friends were all users, of all types. It was bonghits for breakfast, maintenance joint for lunch, and a combination of both all evening. At one point I put together a streak of 19 clean days to prepare for a scheduled UA; otherwise, I was high.

I was in a severe depression and living in dysfunction, but I didn’t even know it. I was just plodding along, thinking all was well as long as I had some weed. If I started running low, I would ensure I had a fresh bag before I ran out – at any expense. I would call in sick or lie about a death in order to get a day off and travel to get a bag. If I had two kinds of weed, dirt and skunk, I would share the dirt with friends but do bong hits of skunk by myself. I was selfish and incorrigible.

My constant smoking of pot didn’t lead to divorce, suicide, or other more “severe” drugs; it led me directly to where I am now, sitting in a prison in Arizona.

I have been clean from Marijuana for 17 months now, and I have no plans to return to using. I can’t smoke again, and more importantly, I won’t smoke again. If I do it, it will be a quick return to where I’m at, and I never want to be here again. My attitude is positive, I have a future, and I’m glad I discovered an organization such as MA that specifically addresses my drug of choice: the former love of my life, the controller of my actions, and simple little weed, marijuana.

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Here/Hear By Meg, District 10

I used to write lyrics
 I used to play by ear
 I used to do a lot of things
 To escape from being here.

I used to go to parties
 I used to stay unclear
 I used to do a lot of things
 To try to disappear.

I used to make a promise
 I used to every year
 I used to do a lot of things
 To avoid what was so near.

I used to try to listen
 I used to never hear
 I used to do a lot of things
 Solely based on fear.

Today,
 I just stay,
 Here.

An Announcement

We have two changes at A New Leaf Publications to announce. Melody W. has replaced Michael V. as our treasurer, and Brandon R. has replaced Loren N. as Executive Director. Loren has been a passionate and committed servant to A New Leaf and MA for many years, and we thank both him and Michael for their service. We also welcome and thank Melody and Brandon!

District 4

John S. 3/12/99 4 years

District 5

Tom W. 4/12/91 21 years
 Brad 4/10/1998 5 years
 Keith K. 4/7/98 5 years
 Mike P. 4/13/99 4 years
 Justin P. 4/1/01 2 years
 Catlin J. 4/2/01 2 years

District 7

Ron H. 3/6/99 4 years

District 10

Kevin H. 2/20/02 1 year!
 Mike M. 4/1/95 8 years

BIRTHDAYS

Are you celebrating a birthday in the next few months? Or have you celebrated one in the last 30 days and not seen it in A New Leaf? If you live in a District area of MA, let your Bureau Chief know about it. If not, tell us! For contact information, see the box on page 2.

District 11

Rodney 23/18/02 1 year!

District 12

Steve S. 4/25/96 7 years

Texas

Becky A. 3/11/02 1 year!
 Margaret 3/7/02 1 year!
 Chris 3/1/2002 1 year!
 Sara A 5/20/00 3 years
 Heather B. 6/25/00 3 years

Humboldt County, Calif.

Greg B. 1/24/94 9 years

Springfield, Mass.

Pauline 4/4/2002 1 year!

Connecticut

Neil Z. 4/1997 6 years

Celebrating 80 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!