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A NEW LEAF

A Publication of Marijuana Anonymous

How to Love Yourself

by Kim B., District 6

I'm not an expert on this topic, because it's something I have to work very hard on, but I *am* learning. Some of these ideas are not my own, so thank you to those from whom I have taken.

As addicts, we find that it is easier to do for others than for ourselves. My sponsor told me to "act as if." I hate it when she says that, but it really helps. Act as if you love yourself and someday you just might. One thing that I had to do, especially in the beginning, was to take baby steps. First, I had to accept myself, then I could start to like myself, and now (after six months) I am just beginning to love myself.

I was angry that I'm an addict and not like normal people. Once I could accept that as a blessing and not a curse, I was ready to move on to the next stage. Actually, I'm still at the liking stage, but on the verge of the loving stage.

Some other things I do: I try not to pass judgment on others because that means judging God's creatures, and that is not what I am here to do. I am here to accept. I accept others (not judge) and I can accept myself, as opposed to comparing (judging) myself to (against) others.

*"I accept
others...and I can
accept myself...I
forgive others and I
can forgive myself."*

I forgive. I forgive others for the wrongs I perceive they have done to me whether these wrongs are real or imagined. I forgive others and I can forgive myself. This is the area I

have to work on the hardest. I still keep my 2X4 very close by in case I need to give myself a beating!

I also like to do something *by myself for myself* every so often. I treat myself to dinner out once a week. I get a facial once a month. I meditate as often as I can tolerate. Sometimes all it takes for me is to look at a child at play, or smell the fresh jasmine blossoming near my apartment. These things all remind me that I am alive and that being alive is a miracle in and of itself.

I keep a little card in my wallet that a friend gave me; it has the "Acceptance" passage from page 449 of *The Big Book* on it. I have found that acceptance is the key that will open all the doors for me: accepting myself, liking myself, and finally, loving myself. ☐



Goodbye to My Old Friend, "I Can't"

by Richard A., District 3

Just the other night, I was reading a book and read that my old friend, "I Can't," had been buried! I couldn't believe it. I didn't even know that "I Can't" had passed away. What a shock this was to me. I have known "I Can't" since I was born. We have been together every day since I first opened my eyes to this big world. I started to grieve. I didn't know how I was going to deal with this death the next day when I woke up.

This was my partner in life. *I can't* think of a day that we have not been together. He even popped up in my last sentence, yet he's dead! I am like the man who has had his leg amputated but still feels a phantom itch where his leg used to be. I'm sad just thinking about this tremendous loss in my life.

I started to wonder how I would go on. I figured I would do what I have done with the loss of other friends in my life. I would think about their life

and not their death! Consider the positive, not dwell on the negative. So I started to reflect on all the miracles that have happened to me in the last 6 1/2 years that I have been clean and sober. As I started going through the list of miracles—my sobriety, my love and trust of a Higher Power, the great family and friends that I have today—I suddenly realized that my friend "I Can't" wasn't there. He had abandoned me. I had another group of friends by my



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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A Collection of Views and Opinions from Around the Fellowship

This month, from District 8—New York:

“The steps state, “...God, as we understand God.” How do you understand God, or a higher power, in your life since you entered recovery?”

Lori F., 1 year 1 month:

My ability to “let go” has increased and given me more peace of mind. My faith that things will turn out well has grown tremendously. I’m not sure what God is, but it would be great to finally know and understand this incredible mystery.

Ross O., 10 months:

How? I don’t know. It passes my understanding as something I can stand under. Universal mind. That which we come from and return to. How can I understand that which by nature defies definition or understanding? This is a tough question. Thanks for asking, though. It really makes me think.

Laura, 2 years 6 months:

There is nothing that is *not* God. Whenever we think “it” is not God, it is *that* that shows us (our small ego) that we need to surrender. God is love. Love created this universe.

Elaine B., 2 years 6 months:

Since I entered recovery I have a new relationship with God. I’ve always believed in a higher power, but I never really knew how to communicate with God. I simply prayed by rote. Then, when I first tried to stop smoking pot and live clean and dry, I couldn’t talk to God at all. I felt abandoned. I felt as though God didn’t have time for me; how else could s/he have let me down so? As I began to work with my sponsor and work the steps, I began to open up to letting God in my life again. Now, I pray from my heart. I practice Step Three on a daily basis. I have faith and trust in a higher power today.

Lisa L., 10 months:

I wasn’t really aware of a higher power until I started coming to the rooms. To me, a higher power is what gives me the drive to move on and not go back. There is a force that is a lot larger than us all: there is no sense in trying to control life as if we were so large or more important than the world itself.

Cliff P., 6 months clean, 1 month sober

To me, God and M.A. (my higher powers) have been my “All-Star Defense Team.” Why? Because every time pot was on the offense, the defense has stopped it on every possession (pot got sacked last week; I intercepted the pass and ran it back for a touchdown). So now, in the 2nd Quarter, it’s me: 6 months, pot: 0 (with the extra point next month).

Joe R., 5 days:

A mysterious and undefinable “power” evidenced by the intelligent design and organization of the universe. An object I used to assert my miserable existence against by perverse, contrary, illegal, immoral, and harmful behavior.



The Roving Reporter

Mark F., 5 years:

Tough question. I see God manifested many ways in my life. First, God is manifest in all the wonderful things that I used to attribute to coincidence—hearing things I need to hear when I need to hear them, or having things turn out better than I ever could have planned them. God shows up in the Third Step work I have to do every day, in knowing that no situation will last forever, and in knowing that I will be taken care of. God is in the beauty that I find in things and in the way that I am humbled by the good things when they happen; God is in the quiet I feel after being overwhelmed by the bad things and by the way that I’m proved wrong every time I think I’m not deserving.

Carl, 5 years:

I rediscovered the Pantheon of Gods that I knew before, but in sobriety I’ve been able to connect with them more clearly and directly and develop a relationship with them.

"I Can't"

Continued from Page 1

side. They were always there for me even though I didn't know them very well. Their names were "I Can" and "I Will;" they were my true friends. Though I hadn't even really acknowledged them, they were good enough friends to stay with me and help me accomplish all that is good in my life today.

My old friend "I Can't" was never around when things were going *right* in my life. He was only there when things were going *wrong*! When I was out using, sitting in front of the television *wishing* for things to go right, my old friend "I Can't" was right by my side making sure they didn't. My old friend "I Can't" was never there when I prayed to my Higher Power to help me through another night without using—a night when I thought I couldn't stand the pain anymore. But my friends "I Can" and "I Will" were there, steadfast and true.

So before I go to sleep tonight, I will say "Farewell" to "I Can't." We were friends for a long time, but now is the time for change. When I awake, I'll know that "I Can" and "I Will" accomplish anything that I put my heart and mind into because my new friends will be right by my side. ■

M.A. – Social Club or Recovery Program? by Anonymous

It's normal to want to be invited to every social event we hear about. Whether we'd go to it or not doesn't matter. We all want to be "a part of," to *belong*. That's just human. Being addicts, we want to belong even more. We were lost and alone inside our heads for such a long time; then we found this group of other addicts that we could relate to. The little kid inside us wants them to take us in, take care of us, and furthermore, take us everywhere with them. Sometimes, some of our members have parties and we're not invited!

Questions for Miss Manners: Should all MA members *have* to invite us to their parties just because we belong to MA too? What if the people at the party are very close friends, or maybe some of them don't even belong to MA? And if we do hear about a party that we're not invited to—should we tell a lot of other people in the program about it so they can get their feelings hurt too because *they* weren't invited? If we belong to MA does that mean we can't invite any of our MA friends to something unless we invite *all* of MA?

Sometimes we forget that MA isn't a social club. It isn't about

events, parties, hikes, campouts, "pot-luck" dinners, or even Conventions and Conferences. It is particularly not about our members' private parties, weddings, showers, bachelor parties, or even sponsor/sponsee family trees and small personal study groups.

MA is a non-profit, spiritually-based, Twelve Step recovery program aimed at getting addicts off marijuana. That's it. That's all it is. It's not a social club. It's about the group helping you to stay clean and sober and you helping everyone else in the group to stay clean and sober. Spiritually, it's about learning to love everyone who's trying to clean up their lives in this program—even if you don't like them! And you don't have to like them! Just help them try to find some recovery—lousy personalities or not. It's about picking up the phone and talking to another addict in trouble. It's about going to meetings and "being there" for the addict in pain. Sometimes it's even about going for coffee after the meeting. It's about starting to "get a life!" It's not about getting upset at other members because *they* are starting to get a life. After all, isn't that what we're here for? ■

Thank You, Rob!

The Editors of *A NEW LEAF* would like to thank Editor Emeritus Rob M. for his tireless efforts on behalf of this publication.

We won't forget how fun it was working with you, Rob—eating pizza and low-fat cookies, *editing editing*, having cats with extra toes clamber all over us as we toiled into the wee hours, getting punchy, "discussing" matters of style, and sharing experience, strength, and hope over the hum of a hard drive.

Being an editor can sometimes be a thankless job (*ahem!*) but with your wit and wisdom, you made us grateful for the opportunity to share it with you. ■

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!

Gwen G.	April 13	3 Years
Carol S.	April 20	5 Years
Jim D.	May 01	2 Years
Mark S.	May 02	2 Years
Mark-yber	May 02	4 Years
Brian K.	May 03	3 Years
Jeff B.	May 05	5 Years
Shannon W.	May 05	6 Years
Charlotte M.	May 06	7 Years
John R.	May 07	9 Years
Hope P.	May 18	4 Years



Abdol	May 18	11 Years
Patti "cakes"	May 20	2 Years
Cap'n Seth	May 20	6 Years
Bob E.	May 20	8 Years
Melody E.	May 20	8 Years
John H.	May 28	6 Years
Sandy L.	May 29	2 Years
Norm B.	May 30	13 Years

Seeking Solutions by Dancin' Tom, District 6

Recently, I was gossiping with friends (I admit that gossiping is one of my character defects; I have asked for it to be removed but my higher power has not thought it necessary yet—but that's another story!) and it occurred to me that when I was using I spent a lot of time complaining about my problems. It seemed that all I ever did was complain about them; I never did anything to fix them.

Now that I am sober I have more problems than I ever did when I was using. I'm not sure if this is because life is more complicated, which it is, or if it's because I *deal* with my problems now instead of taking another hit. I think it is some of both. I now seek solutions to my problems instead of just complaining about them.

I'm not saying you shouldn't complain about your problems. This can be a healthy thing to do. I talk to many different people about my problems. I talk to my sponsor about problems with my program. I talk to my therapist about my deep core issues. I talk to my doctor about my medical problems. I do this to find solutions to my problems if possible. Not all problems have solutions, but that is what acceptance is for. In my experience, I've found that most problems do have solutions if we are willing to look for them. They may not always be ideal, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't look for them.

I sometimes call my friends just to whine and complain. We all do. There are times when I just need a sympathetic ear and a shoulder to cry on. I don't make a habit of it, though. If I did, I would be sitting in a big pile of you-know-what all of the time and would not continue to progress and grow in my life. I feel if I try to seek solutions I am participating in my recovery. If I am just complaining about my problems, then I'm merely "clean and sober." Know the difference: seek the solutions. ■

BULLETIN BOARD



Labor Day (Aug. 30–Sept. 2) campout at Big Basin Redwoods (Sky Meadow group site) in Santa Cruz. Open to all, but closest to **Districts 1, 2, and 3**. For information, reservations, and ride coordination, call **Thomas** at (510) 654-2805.

Meri K., the new Events Chair for **District 5 (Orange County)**, is keeping them hopping with events aplenty! The **first Saturday of every month** (after the meeting) there is **ice skating** at the Ice Chalet in Costa Mesa. Contact **Steve M.** for more info: (714) 974-5120. There will be a group trip to see (and participate in) **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** on **Saturday May 18th** at The Art Theatre in Long Beach. For more

info (on this or any of these events) contact **Meri K.:** (714) 848-5241. The weekend of **June 14-16** is the **Sober Campout** at Dark Canyon Campground (just past Stone Creek in Idyllwild); cost is \$10/person for both nights. And **July 19-21** everyone is invited on a clean and sober **whitewater rafting trip in Kernville** (east of Bakersfield). You'll need to make your own reservations...call **Meri K.** for more info.

For cyber-experience, strength, and hope, tune in to America Online **every Sunday night!** We now have two **MA topic/discussion meetings on AOL:** One from 6:30–8:00 pm (PST), the other from 9:00–10:30 pm (PST). Go into "People Connection," select "Rooms," then select "Private Room," and type in the keyword: **MAOL**. For further info, e-mail **LeafEd@aol.com**.



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