

A NEW LEAF

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My Saturn Garden by Jon P.

I have the post Easter blues. I don't even know what this is about. Maybe I am sensing the possible end of an important relationship. Maybe it is the fear of hoping for the new spring. Maybe it is fear of age and poverty. Maybe it is acceptance of failure. Is it Kosovo and all the mixed emotions that go with bearing witness to those dreadful scenes of our collective inhumanity? Who knows? I do know that I have a wonderful computer between my ears and if I ask it "What could possibly be wrong?" It will tell me of all kinds of possibilities. It seems that the brain computer has an infinite variety of doom stories that it can call upon. "You want to know what is wrong with you? Well, I'll tell you what is wrong with you!" What follows is a several thousand page print out listing all of my defects in exquisite detail. It does not occur to me that I asked the wrong question.

I don't much care for periods like this. I just don't like the down times. According to the contemporary social ethos, we are not supposed to suffer such moments of depression. However there used to be a tra-

dition, I am given to understand, where in Europe some several hundred years ago, people who could afford such things, would build Saturn Gardens. This was a place that one would go into to contemplate the spiritual meaning of one's own depression. This was not an avoidance, but rather an acceptance that perhaps the God Saturn had a secret to tell, a lesson to teach, a gift to bestow. Those were the good old days before depression and pathology had been wed together. As a clinical psychologist I am often called upon to help others to deal with their depression. Cure has become the accepted remedy. I think there is more to gain here however than the simple relief of symptoms. But this is the time of my depression. It is the time to go into my own Saturn Garden. I will go there with you. I imagine that it is surrounded by high green hedges. It is a small rectangular place with very green grass left to grow just a little too high. At the end of the rectangle, not too close to the hedges, there is a half circle marble bench. I like to lean way back without touching the moist green

hedges behind me. Long ago the sculpted marble bench was pure white, but now it has become gray with moss, the growth of smaller organic material, the marks left by others who have suffered here and the passage of time. It is one of those ancient seating places that might have been seen in the piazza's of Rome or Greece or maybe Egypt. It might even be the place where the Buddha sat under the Bodi Tree and contemplated the causes of human suffering. In any event it is a very old bench indeed and has been sat upon by other souls who are now long gone. I wonder about what troubles they too might have come here to contemplate. Where their sorrows worse than my own? (continued on page two)

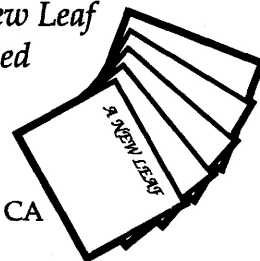
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A NEW LEAF

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 & 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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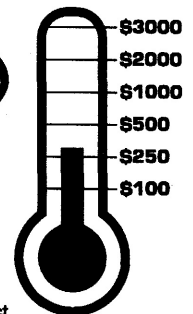
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My Saturn Garden continued

Would these people have considered my worries trivial? Would they dismiss me and my own present sorrow as so much narcissistic self absorption? Maybe someone among of them might have had the insight to understand that each of our troubles are unique and special to our own particular circumstance. There is a kind of individual dignity to that. I like this part of the meditation. I am here in the Saturn garden on this damp and overcast day, to gather the gifts of my own personal suffering. Perhaps what hurts has as much meaning as what pleases. Do you think that we get more from pain than we do from pleasure? I don't. Do both sides of this human duality teach? Maybe we learn as much from pain as from pleasure. So this morning, like too many dawns that have gone before it, I open myself to the pain new learning and to the discomforts of unanticipated growth. This pain will pass. I have had this experience before. The important thing is not to get too wrapped up in the gloom and doom of it all. The ancient Chinese I Ching has something to say about all this: "Don't get lost in losing", we are told in the Book of Changes. In all of it, although no human power could remove this suffering, it is so nice to have others who simply bear witness with me to my limitations, wantings, disappointments, neediness, and the fact

that things often do not turn out as we may have hoped. I am made ready to listen at meetings with a heightened interest as I listen to the sorrows of others. Maybe I will be a little more compassionate, a little less inclined to censure the whiners, the moaners and the groaners. I am comforted, if not healed, by transformative power of paying attention to the community of human suffering. We are not alone. Today I have empathy. One of the gifts, I suppose, of this brief time of sitting with you in my Saturn Garden. Join me here again, if you ever feel the need. There's always room on the bench if you don't mind sitting a little closer together. Here in garden or our sorrows, it think that it is nicer to say the "We" version of the Serenity Prayer: "God grant us the serenity to accept the things that we cannot change. The courage to change the things that we can. And the wisdom to know the difference."

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Thanks to you, we are coming closer to our goal of \$3000 to help with early expenses for Convention2000 in Santa Clara this January. We urge you to donate your penny jars. Contact your local delegate or Kevin G. Convention Chairperson at (408) 249-8885

The Twelve Steps by Yuichi H.

We talk of the steps a lot in meetings, and when we do it's mostly about its prescriptive aspects (i.e., as a guideline for living, or what we "should" be doing). Yet, I don't think that most of us realize that the steps have a descriptive side as well. In fact, I consider the descriptive nature of the steps to be of deeper and greater significance than its prescriptive nature. Let me be clear on what I mean. Most of us, when we come in are told that we must work the steps in order to secure our sobriety, and so with varying degrees of resistance and hesitation, we eventually do so (hopefully). So the steps have been "prescribed" to us, as a remedy for our spiritual/emotional/mental bankruptcy. Yet, when we stay sober for some time and we begin to live the "spiritual life," a strange thing begins to happen. Some people put it this way: the steps begin working us. What I

believe is happening is that when we simply begin to embrace a spiritual way of life, we live the kind of life that is described by the steps. Some may argue that this comes simply from internalizing what has been prescribed to us. I disagree. I tend to believe that if I had no knowledge of the steps, but was truly engaging in living a spiritual way of life, then my life would begin to manifest the same principles as described in the steps. No doubt in my spiritual growth, I would experience the eventual chaos or "powerlessness" (step 1) in certain areas of life, and have no recourse but to let go or "surrender" (steps 2 and 3) my sense of control over whatever the situation was. I would have to engage in some introspection (step 4) and perhaps bounce my ideas off of someone (step 5), and so on. The order may not exactly be the same, but I believe there would

be some similarity. In other words, by living in this "new way," we manifest the steps ourselves. We begin to feel the steps working through us, rather than us working them. We begin to live the steps.

The question you might be asking is, "why should we care?" I think it's important that we realize both aspects because without an awareness of both, we run the risk of losing perspective. Most of us, I believe, are naturally drawn to one or the other. Some are proactive by nature, and when they see something as in their best interests, they will start taking actions as "prescribed" to them. Others who may be living in a manner that is more receptive to the unconscious forces in their lives will tend to allow for the process to occur within themselves. In other words, their strength lies in waiting and allowing what's good to emerge from within themselves. Naturally, there is danger in going too far in either direction, yet there must be a balance and an awareness that in combination, both ways of going about it are valid.

This essay extols the value of "allowing" for the steps to occur. It stems from a perception that this viewpoint is not raised nor discussed enough in meetings. Remember, the steps are not the goal. They are just guideposts that are meant to point us toward the ultimate goal, of living the spiritual life.

**Congratulations to Our Members
Celebrating their Sober Birthdays!**

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Bob E.	5-17-96	3 yrs	Wendy R.	01/23/98	1 yrs
Melody E.	5-17-96	3 yrs	Steve G.	02/19/98	1 year!
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Charlotte M.	5/6/89	10 yrs	Truman	3/23/98	1 year!
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Dangerous Don	5/15/97	2 yrs	Jerri S.	3/9/97	2 yrs
Shannon	5/15/95	4 yrs	Don C.	3/1/97	2 yrs
Travis	5/15/95	4 yrs	Charles C.	2/24/96	3 yrs
Norm B	5/30/83	16 yrs	Tim V.	3/1/94	5 yrs
District 7			Chris F	2/1/88	11 yrs
Jim M.	01/16/95	4 yrs	Ruth	2/13/87	12 yrs

**Roving Reporter:
How do you meditate?**

Dave K. District 6; 10years

I sit down in a quiet, safe environment. I close my eyes and begin to breathe deeply. Inhale through the nose, exhale through the mouth. I focus only on the breath. The mind will "clear up" as you continue with it. I have found that focusing on one particular word can keep one on track. Pick a word that calms, soothes and is non-disturbing. Repeating or focusing on that word as one breathes can be very "centering." If one finds one is unsuccessful at meditating, seek counsel or suggestions from those you trust and try again. One moment at a time.

Jodi B. District 6&7; 2 years

I pretend to be like one of my cats. To quietly sit in a chair with my eyes closed—"Just Being"

Suki, District 2; 3 years

I collect my wish to have a spiritual awakening—using my emotional energy directed toward this wish. Then I try to have an objective simultaneous self observation of my self — inviting Higher Power to observe me also. This can be practiced only momentarily — it can and should be done while engaged in simple, physical activity requiring a minimum of thought.

Nicole, District 6; 7 years

Well, a couple of years ago I became obsessed with finding the ultimate meditation--I want-

ed to learn about and try-out all the different methods to find the "one" that would work best for me. I found many but I yearned for an all inclusive meditation encyclopedia type book. I thought if there isn't one, someone should write one. Right before I was about to end my futile search and get down to researching and writing one myself, I found a book called "Meditation, the First and Last Freedom." I was very excited and took this book home to begin studying. I opened it up and the first thing it told me was that when meditating, if any "technique" or practice is being used, you are, by definition, not meditating. Meditation is the absence of all action and thought, even focusing on the breath is an action. However, any and all meditation techniques are designed to focus and release the attention. They all take practice to eventually achieve the meditative state. All can be effective. What I like to do is just run & jump around, yelling and dancing, singing, whatever, just get really hyped up and then STOP! Suddenly lie down. Deep breathing occurs naturally at this point. Like a crash test dummy my body has stopped, but what is inside is still propelling forward. My mind is really racing & I just let it. No judgement, I just let me and my mind go wherever it will and eventually it slows and them without me even noticing, it stops. When I'm really meditating I am unaware of it. If I'm aware (consciously) of the meditation then I am not really med-



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itating. At first it took a long time to reach this point. But with a commitment to daily practice anyone can achieve it.

Teri A. District 7; 6 years.

I have a meditation spot in my apartment. It's always there for me. I sit, light a candle and them work on clearing my mind. Depending on the time I have available, I either go for a few minutes or a lot (I rarely count time). What's important for me is taking the action to sit down and breathe with God.