



# A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

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## Recovery and the Onion

Michael H.

One of the gifts/curses of Marijuana Anonymous is that we are a relatively small fellowship. I'm becoming ever more aware of this as I venture into some other fellowships to address some other behaviors in my life. One only need pick up a Los Angeles County meeting schedule to be humbled by the relative size of that fellowship with ours. One of the manifestations of the size of Marijuana Anonymous is that, if one attends a fair number of meetings, one becomes very familiar with most of our fellows who also regularly attend meetings. Another risk is that of driving others insane with the repetitions of our stories and the current state of our progress through the program of recovery. I know I have been guilty of this offense against our fellowship and have actually had a dear friend of mine share after me at a meeting and say: "One more time with this 'Layers of the Onion' business and I'm going to fill your car with onions". I guess my helpful friend was trying to point out that I've been lately obsessing a bit with the

***My initial focus was very simple... "How do I keep from killing someone today if I don't smoke pot?"***

evolutionary nature of my recovery journey. But, while I can no longer speak about this at my local meetings without fear of a stinky car, I do believe that many of us go through some similarities in our path back from the insanity of drug addiction, and perhaps a brief recounting of my path to date will be of some assistance to those newer to all this than me (which is, according to our fifth tradition the "one primary purpose" of

each group).

When I first entered an MA meeting, the only thing on my mind was to see whether anyone had actually stopped smoking dope in this program, and what kind of weirdoes went to such a place. Once I decided to give this program a try, my initial focus was very, very simple... "How do I keep from killing someone today if I don't smoke pot?". The basic answer for me was meetings. Meetings, meetings, and more meetings. Since MA has a limited number of meetings, I went to a lot of other 12 step meetings in my first 60 days. I

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## Freedom in Step Three

Ralphie O.

Marijuana Anonymous and Step One gives me freedom from active addiction.

Step Three gives me freedom from worry. What a relief!

My life was filled with worry, guilt, and shame. I always worried about everything and so I constantly tried to manipulate people and situations around me. The more I did this, the more frustrated I became. Why?

Because I always tried to control more than I really could.

I had no idea that this was part of step three. I thought it was all about having to relinquish control of my life to some old

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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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## Recovery and the Onion *continued from page one*

would get up, go to a 7 a.m. meeting, then a 9, then a noon, a 3:30, go eat dinner, and then go to whatever MA meeting was in the valley that night. Until the obsession to use lifted a bit, this was all I did, and my thinking was simply “well, no one is using in these rooms, so if I stay in the rooms, I probably won’t use.” That was it.

Once the obsession to use lifted a bit came the “chaos/zeal” phase also commonly known as the “pink cloud”. I was blessed with having the obsession to use be lifted from me by the time I took my sixty day chip. I also met several really great men who helped me understand the difference between sobriety and recovery and help me get a great start on taking the twelve steps. My initial relationship with sponsorship was to treat it like a meeting. One of the popular (and very useful) clichés about meetings is “Take what you need and leave the rest”. This, combined with “principles, not personalities” is what has given our meetings the remarkable record of so few homicides of speakers. There is no other explanation for how people sitting through some of the shares I’ve heard did not immediately execute the speaker. I thought I could take the same approach to my sponsor’s suggestions. I figured some of them sounded pretty good and I would do those, others seemed a conflict with my plans, and were thus disregarded.

The result of this “my program, not The Program” ap-

proach was predictable. I was gifted by my higher power with the opportunity to address several areas of my drug-arrested personal development and embarked on several “non-suggested” behaviors... a career change, an absurdly inappropriate relationship, and a re-visitation of my adolescence. The resulting chaos drove me to my knees at least as much as my last days of using. I can now see that this was a necessary part of my path of recovery, and resulted in my learning the lesson of willingness.

At this point I was so willing. I entered therapy, recommitted myself to my sponsor and my step work, and began to notice that while I was not the first person ever to walk into these rooms, there were some newer than me who might benefit from my recent mistakes.

Next came the “It’s all good” phase in which I eagerly accepted all the lessons life offered. I became an insufferable program philosopher, alternately imbibing life’s little spans and gifts and belching platitudes and program clichés. I really enjoyed this period of my program, but I’m amazed no-one took a shot at me... I really couldn’t have blamed them. Fortunately my work schedule severely limited my meeting appearances and I was mostly just showing up mornings (Sorry John) thus sparing the bulk of the fellow-

ship from my sanctimonious B.S. This was also the period in which I would always (ALWAYS) speak about my program as representing the “layers of the onion” to indicate that the screwed up parts of me which were demanding my attention did not necessarily directly bear of wanting to stick a spliff in my mouth.

Today, my program is one in which I find myself astonished and blessed everyday by my conscious contact with my higher power. I find it much easier today to keep these revelations very much to myself and to reach out to newcomers in meetings and try to keep them amused until God takes over.

My “program” today, and my life are indistinguishable to me. I seek out God’s will for me as much during a business negotiation as during my morning prayer. I respect God’s sense of humor and irony, and am more likely to be amused than frustrated today when I find myself trying to make the traffic go faster, or get you to be who I want you to.

I’ve embarked on a more dynamic program, and this has meant making changes in what kind of meetings I attend (I now go to almost as many meetings as I did as a newcomer and have again ventured outside our little fellowship to spare you all my omnipresence.). I’ve also recently had to re-evaluate my relationship with my sponsor and admit that I needed to find someone else to help me get to the next onion layer. This was a very painful and difficult decision, but God helped me do it with an attitude of love and gratitude.

So, today my life gets ever more sweet and simple, and I’ve become much better at keeping it to myself and actually listening when you tell me about yours. For all those who were here when I got here, I love you and thank you for your patience up till now. For those of you who have arrived since me, I love you and hope to be of ever-greater assistance to you.

## Freedom in Step Three

*concluded*

dude in the sky who was judging me. If that was the case, I figured I was screwed. I resisted this whole "God" thing. I just didn't like the word or the connotations it brought to mind.

Luckily, I had a sponsor who had felt the same way. He got over it, so there was hope that I could to, if I really wanted to. Eventually, I really wanted to. My sponsor taught me to look at everything that I worried about. I saw that most of my worries usually worked out, despite my worrying about it. The proof was there. He told me to pay attention to the coincidences going on around me. Once he said that, suddenly there were many kinds of interesting coincidences. Were they happening because I was just looking for them, or were they occurring all along and I was just not paying attention? It didn't matter. What mattered was that there was proof for me that something greater than me was at work in my life. That was all I needed. My higher power, which was the rooms, had now shifted to a "God" of my understanding. It amazes me still today that I can say that word without all those ideas coming to mind. So, what does this mean? This means that I can finally be at peace. I have some serenity in my life. I know that as long as I doing the next right thing, to the best of my ability, everything will work out according to the greater plan. This is a true freedom for me. Something beyond my wildest dreams when I first walked through those doors.

As for the shame and guilt, its nice to know the rest of the steps are there for me.

## A Note Of Thanks... One More Time!

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!



# Here's an idea!

As we're sure you're you're aware, *A NEW LEAF* is always looking for articles and stories from not only our readers but all persons working their program of recovery from marijuana. We'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that there's no need to commit to telling your life story; anything you feel worthwhile to share in a meeting is worth submitting.

Along those lines, in an effort to encourage submissions on a continuing basis, and in keeping with a specific meeting format used in various areas, we would like to suggest a topic for future articles on a regular basis. We'll start with this issue, and will make a new suggestion every three months.

So...let's kick off with a topic that probably every addict has had to face at one time or another...ACCEPTANCE.

We're looking forward to putting forth your thoughts! Thanks for your support!

**submit.**  
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12 Years  
7 Years  
4 Years  
3 Years  
6 Years  
2 Years

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10 Years  
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