



## My Messy, Marijuana-Addicted Brain

The first thing I did when I got home from the psychiatric hospital was smoke. My chronic marijuana abuse had culminated in a six-week psychotic episode and the termination of an important intimate relationship. At the time, it didn't occur to me that marijuana was part of the problem. It was just stress. It was the 2020 election. It was senior year of college on Zoom. It was a destructive relationship – anything but the weed.

For me, sobriety has been about reclaiming my brain. Mental illness has been a part of my life since the seventh grade, and I never once thought I would “feel better.” For a while, weed seemed to help in a way that psychiatric medicine didn't. The highs soothed my anxiety, melted my depression, and the sound of bubbling bong water was a nightly lullaby that sang me to sleep.

But my use of the plant quickly became abuse. It wasn't a toke with friends or a puff when I felt a panic attack coming on. I simply preferred being stoned. My brain seemed more friendly when I was high, less critical and, if I was high enough (which was always the goal), my inner monologue went completely offline. During the height of my use, my brain transformed into what felt like fire – sharp zaps of electricity that conjured up hallucinations, paranoia, and bizarre delusions.

After my hospitalization, I was on a mission to “smoke like I used to.” I craved a high I couldn't recreate no matter how hard I tried. The plant brought on newfound paranoia and auditory hallucinations. The delusions continued, though they

began to taper out with the help of an IOP program and consistent therapy. I would smoke a small amount and feel an onslaught of symptoms, so I would take a break and try again a week later.

My breaking point was the night before my sober birthday, in early November of 2021. I had smoked before heading out to a gay bar in Manhattan with friends. On the subway ride there, I started fully hallucinating. “This is not good,” I thought. “This is not going to end well.”

Sure enough, by the time we got into the bar, my poor brain was struggling to keep up with reality. I admitted to my friend, who had been dancing with a cute femme by the coat rack, that I needed to leave – now. By the time I sobered up the next morning, I told myself that I never, ever wanted to feel that way again. On November 6th, I went to my first MA meeting. I haven't smoked since.

When I think about weed today, I instantly recall the manic highs of marijuana-induced psychosis. Some part of me remembers the highs I shared with trusted friends, moments in the woods on my college campus with the sun setting through the naked winter branches.

My sponsor tells me I will always have those memories, but reminds me that those highs are behind me. My relationship with weed became abusive, fast. In recovery, I hold those fond weedy memories with caution. They are tinged by the reality that I am a weed addict,

that I cannot “smoke like a regular person.”

In a similar vein, I have ex-lovers and ex-friends who have mistreated me and who I have mistreated. I know that, for my own health and safety, I cannot be in a relationship with them anymore. This boundary does not erase the kisses or morning walks or late night painting sessions I enjoyed with them. However, I cannot forget the pain these relationships brought me in the end. Looking back after much healing, I am thankful for the lessons they taught me.

In MA, it is common to hear people talk about weed as a friend or lover who turned on them. I like this metaphor because it allows me to view weed not just as a substance I am addicted to, but as something that will always exist in the periphery of my world. My ex-friends and lovers do not disappear just because I choose not to contact them. Weed did not disappear when I decided to stop ingesting it.

I live in a city where weed is everywhere. There's billboards advertising weed delivery services. There's even a dispensary in my neighborhood that operates under the slogan, CANNABIS IS FOR EVERYONE – can you imagine a liquor store using a slogan like that?

I can't go anywhere without seeing something encouraging me to pick up. When I walk by a dispensary, I've started gently saying to myself, “That place is not safe for me.” I have learned to be kind to the part of me

## ANL's Purpose

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 reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole. MA is not affiliated with—and does not endorse or accept contributions from—any outside enterprise.

We are reaching out to districts to update the ANLP Liaisons and birthday lists. Additionally, district/group service representatives, including but not limited to those serving as ANLP Liaisons, are encouraged to stay in touch: [chiefs@anewleafpublications.org](mailto:chiefs@anewleafpublications.org)

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that is addicted. Like the part of me that is mentally ill, I cannot banish or completely rid myself of these parts. I have to befriend them, set boundaries with them, and make sure they're not the ones running the show.

If you look at my official medical record, you will see that I am diagnosed with "cannabis use disorder" as well as a list of mental illnesses. This is what people mean when they refer to someone as "dual diagnosis."

There is no way to erase these records. They describe my lived reality and remind me just what is at stake when it comes to me and this sticky green plant. I'm not interested in demonizing marijuana, nor will I advise anyone on how to use it. All I know is that pot messes with my brain, and my brain is already a messy place to begin with.

~ Myles G

### **It's Not Easy, But It's Simple**

The title is a small phrase with a big impact that I've referred to within—and outside of—MA. The history of my life has been a series of doing things the easy way because. . . well, it's just easier! How I've shown up for myself and my loved ones answered the question of what was easiest for me. And I won't lie, I still see a lot of that energy/behavior poke its head up and direct my life choices.

But by continuing to listen to and take heed of the famous motto "progress, not perfection," I've learned (and continue to learn how) to be kinder to myself as I navigate life as a sober and recovering person, and acknowledge myself for every single progression and victory—no matter the size.

When I began coming into the rooms, attending meetings and listening to shares seemed simple enough. But it wasn't (and isn't) always easy. "Be present?" "Pay attention?" "Notice how that share relates to my life?" The struggle to allow myself to be touched by shares existed and still does at times, four years after first walking through MA's doors. It's not always going to be easy, but it's usually pretty simple. And such has been the case for being of service.

Sobriety felt like a lot to ask of myself at first, let alone recovery. My first meetings were in person before the pandemic. Sitting in those circles, I'd sometimes be asked to read some opening literature. "Sure, I could do that," I thought. I can read. I like to hear myself talk. Yes. Simple.

And that was it. Literally saying yes. . . and the practice of following through, lol. Attending more meetings and hearing more shares, talking to more people and asking more questions, I found myself opening up more to the program.

I began to connect more to the premise that being of service helped me not only stay sober, but find joy in it, even in my grumbly moments! I was learning that spreading my own light ("oh snap, I don't need weed to access my light?!"), and sharing it with others brought me validation and a sense of community—something I had yearned for but also had been afraid of.

As my service responsibilities escalated, so did the voices of my fears and insecurities. But MA has helped me to see how much more valuable I AM than those voices, and how much more powerful I can ultimately be, in MA, and in all parts of my life. My service, my time, my presence, all remind me of my infinite possibilities and that means everything. Simply everything.

~ Anonymous

## Freedom Between

I deserve to live free.  
And freedom,  
She's a finicky one,  
a tricky one who  
blends in with  
the weeds.

She lives in between  
the yes and the no's,  
the broken, the woes.  
The gray  
is Her home,  
that freedom

from the bound  
of perfect,  
the height we can  
not go,  
the lows  
that imprison  
our show.

Freedom, an elusive  
chase,  
a dance  
of embrace.  
Catch Her,  
if you dare.

Let down your hair,  
feel Her in your heart,  
greet Her through art  
and know  
Her home  
lies between.

~ Jeni

## CALLING ALL WRITERS!

**Do you want your story  
to be featured in an  
upcoming issue of the A  
New Leaf Newsletter?**

Send your submissions to:  
[stories@anewleafpublications.org](mailto:stories@anewleafpublications.org)

## 2023 MA World Service Conference Reminders

### Conference Hosted May 26 - May 29 via Zoom

(Fellowship-wide vote will be announced)

### Electing District Delegates

Each district may elect up to two delegates, or non-voting regional representatives, and an alternate(s) whose primary responsibility is to represent the conscience of a District Service Committee (DSC)/Regional Service Committee (RSC) at the MA World Service Conference.

Delegates/regional representatives should be chosen at least 60 days prior to a conference to allow them sufficient time to become familiar with the Conference Agenda. It is highly suggested to reference MA Service Manual 7.1, Chapter 17 Conference Delegates and Regional Representatives and the MA World Service Conference website.

Conference Schedule, Agenda, and Delegate packets have been distributed and can be found at [mawsconference.org/agenda](http://mawsconference.org/agenda)

Conference Registration is now open at [mawsconference.org/register](http://mawsconference.org/register)  
(Conference registration closes on May 12)

### Conference Attendee Training Sessions

- Saturday, May 13, 10:00 am PDT (1:00 pm EDT / 5:00 pm UTC)
- Friday, May 19, 6:00 pm PDT (9:00 pm EDT / 1:00 am UTC)
- Sunday, May 21, 5:00 pm PDT (8:00 pm EDT / 12:00 am UTC)
- Wednesday, May 24, 5:30 pm PDT (8:30 pm EDT / 12:30 am UTC)

*\*Attendance of at least one training session is required for all Conference Attendees prior to the Conference weekend.*

### Questions?

Contact the current Conferences & Conventions Trustee, Ellie J, at:  
[coco@marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:coco@marijuana-anonymous.org)

### 2023 Convention

## Submit Your Workshop Ideas

The 2023 Convention Programming Committee is seeking your feedback on ideas and suggestions for workshops for the Convention this September in Seattle. We are looking for dynamic, engaging, and powerful workshop presenters for upwards of fifteen workshops throughout the weekend. Have ideas?

Complete this form to provide your ideas and suggestions:  
<https://MA12.org/Convention/Workshops>

# Marijuana Anonymous Worldwide

For a complete listing of all meetings visit  
WWW.MARIJUANA-ANONYMOUS.ORG

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		<b>PHONE MA Phone Meetings</b> www.ma-phone.org	

## Step and Tradition of the Month

### Step Five

*Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

### Tradition Five

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

## Celebrating 269 Years of Sobriety!

### District 2

Meredith H	3/23/1997	26 yrs
Tim V	05/01/1994	29 yrs
Dave W	3/8/2003	20 yrs

Marc S	4/10/2011	12 yrs
Mike C	3/25/1993	30 yrs
Paloma	4/8/2012	11 yrs
Reinhard	4/11/2009	14 yrs

### District 24

Jason R	4/1/2018	5 yrs
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### District 4

Michael H	4/20/2006	17 yrs
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### District 13

Jill S	4/27/1981	42 yrs
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### District 5

Amittai S	4/10/2017	6 yrs
Gary W	4/9/2012	11 yrs
Holly E	4/20/2020	3 yrs
Laura	4/20/2004	19 yrs

### District 20

Jules M	4/20/2018	5 yrs
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### District 22

Thomas M	4/2/2022	1 yr
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**See your sobriety date here!**



*If your sobriety date has occurred, has not been published, and is not older than 45 days, please submit it in the format you see on the left by the 16th of the month. You may tell your local GSR, ANLP Liason, or e-mail to: chiefs@anewleafpublications.org*