



Spirituality, Fellowship and the "Program" by Theresa L.

I'm Theresa L., grateful recovering ex-pothead.

I think spirituality, fellowship and the program (the twelve steps) are the essential ingredients to recovery. They are independent but connected concepts. I'm certain that a person needs all three to really recover and be happy.

I have been spending decades developing my spirituality. Even before I became addicted, I considered myself to be a very spiritual person. I did not like organized religions much. They all seem to be too exclusive for me.

I spent time as an agnostic without a clear idea of what or who God was. I even did my time as an atheist -- usually when something pretty bad had happened and I lost faith.

I spent time as Lutheran as a child, abandoned Christianity later in life, studied Buddhism for quite some time and married it to Wicca and my personal hodgepodge of Native American beliefs.

I ran into some Rastafarians along the way and when I was 25 I started smoking pot because I thought it could make me higher. They seemed to know something! I wanted it too.

I thought I had fellowship

with these people and other addicts I was hanging around with! But they all abandoned me eventually. The only ones who stuck around seemed really predatory to me.

Pot seemed to be the solution to all my problems when I started. I have clinical depression, paranoid schizophrenia (I started hallucinating around the time I

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became addicted), and PTSD. I blew off the hallucinations, delusions and paranoia as being part of the high. I really thought I needed marijuana for the depression which I'd been suffering incessantly from for 20+ years with lots of suicidal ideation. It did help for the first hour or so of being high and it was "natural," after all. If my Rastafarian friends saw it as sacred -- that must be so.... And I was sure it was helping with the anger and intrusive thoughts of the PTSD I had from sexual abuse both as a child and an adult. I

was sure that God wanted me to smoke weed. I did not trust doctors and had tried every "solution" but the medical one for my problems. I could not drink -- had no tolerance to alcohol -- made me sick all the time.

I was forced to quit smoking marijuana. I was locked up in jail for trying to burn down one of my abuser's houses because I thought God told me to.

I was in jail for a year and a half. Then I was put in an institution for three years. I did not have the program until I was released. I did a few of the steps out of order and it was not all the steps. However, even doing that, it helped me a great deal. The last year of being locked up I was put in the treatment unit of the institution. Lo and behold, my obsession with marijuana disappeared during that time. It was during my incarceration that I received a bookmark which said "God is love."

I really believe that nowadays. I think if I love myself and others I will be doing God's will. Love will see me through as it has over the years. In July, I will have seven years clean and sober!



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 reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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www.marijuana-anonymous.org
and click on publications

The Journey IS the Destination by Anonymous

I am a sad excuse for a human being when I'm using. Work interferes with my smoking—so the obvious choice is to just not work. School interferes with my scoring—so the obvious choice is not to go to class. Hanging out with friends interferes with my dealing—so the obvious choice is not to have any. It's a scary, sad, and lonely existence. I become one of those pathetic people that want to be held while isolating.

Over a year ago I entered treatment, and when the drugs were taken away my problems didn't go away, they began. The only thing I could do was surrender, or risk dying of sheer terror. I dragged myself to every type of meeting I could find, and through the grace of God and the tangled mess of an addict's

detailed lie, I found my home group: the little known fellowship of Marijuana Anonymous. I soon found a sponsor that asked three seemingly simple things of me; 1. To change my attitude as soon as possible, 2. To be diligent at working the steps and, 3. To get involved.

I did all three. What I have found is that by being at the center of the program, I have not fallen off the edge. I have been given a second chance to live a whole new life with a brand new me. I've learned how to stand on my own two feet. I know now that it is what I DO in recovery that will keep me clean. I have come to understand that the journey is the destination. ▲

Step Five by Lc (*May leftovers*)

Step 5 requires willingness, honesty, humility and courage to face and admit the exact nature of our wrongs to our Higher Power, about what we discovered in Step 4. This open admission allows us to us to see ourselves as we truly are. He already knows all about us. For some it's easier to tell God about our wrongs than to admit them to ourselves. When we look at ourselves with complete honesty, removing the excuses, blaming, and justification, we can see just how we delude ourselves. This is not the time to beat ourselves up for the past. We are just looking at facts apart from the feelings. Admitting to

God and to ourselves is not enough; we must break our isolation and share our faults with another person, without the fear of rejection. Learning to trust is a tool of the program; one that brings relief, recovery and serenity. Pray. Seek guidance to choose wisely. Set a date, time, place. Together we can acknowledge our defenses without condemning ourselves for using them. With a caring witness who can provide perspective on our spiritual journey; we can accept ourselves more on this road to recovery. ▲

Roving Reporter asked:

What does 'serenity' mean to you? How do you achieve daily serenity?

Well, serenity means peace with one's actions and self. Period. And the way I got this is through self-acceptance. This wasn't easy. I meditated, then did the first step, freaked out on my counselor, then I asked God for a simpler way by saying it can't be this difficult. After that it hit me - what it was I don't know, but it worked and now almost every day is a good day. I get things done, spend more time with my sons, work more productively, and work my programs and meetings Monday-Thursday. So make it simple and love yourself.

Serenity means I simply don't get rattled over stuff that don't matter anyway. I don't sweat the small stuff. It means I have a peace with myself and the world around me. It means that other people's stuff won't drag me down. Serenity means I have God in my heart. My God is love, and I'm feeling very loving when I am serene! ~ Theresa L.

Before program, I thought getting high was serenity when actually I was not feeling anything real. I could give you a dictionary definition of calm, peacefulness. But I didn't feel that way often. Or if I did, it wasn't "often enough". I was just faded. When I wasn't high.... I was restless, irritable and discontent. I didn't realize I was powerless or even had a problem, until I tried to quit and could not.

Since then I became willing to

trust in a Higher Power greater than myself, and work the steps to the best of my ability. I've learned that serenity is the calm inside the storm. It's letting go of things I never could control in the first place, by first letting go of my old ideas. It's responding, not reacting. I can't explain the awesome feeling or effect Serenity plays in my life; I can only say this program works! I can tell anyone now that my serenity is one of my most precious possessions. Because it's not material, it's spiritual. It's not just felt, it's experienced.

To maintain this serenity on a daily basis, I must be aware of the

snowball effect of my thinking which can rob me of my serenity. I say that serenity prayer, sometimes backwards if I have to. Sometimes I paraphrase it by saying: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know that person is me." So with the help of Higher Power, the steps, meetings, sponsor(s) and the support and friendship of the program, I can live one day at a time with serenity. I am truly grateful for what the program has given me.
~ Lc

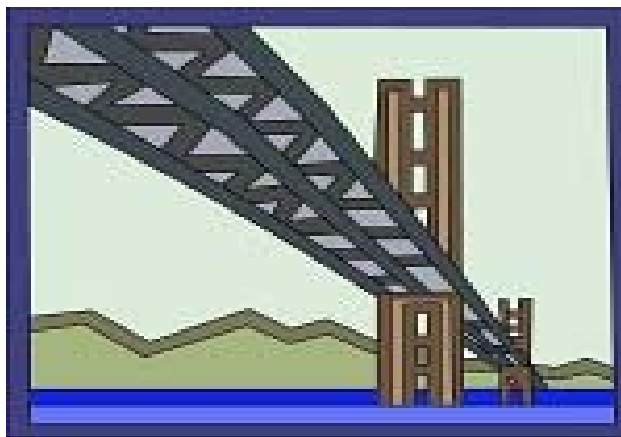


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For a complete listing of all meetings visit www.marijuana-anonymous.org

SUBMIT

Share your experience, strength and hope! Submit your article to your Bureau Chief or see page 2 for contact information.

Roving Reporter Question for July

How do you maintain your Anonymity in life, work, school?

Step Seven

Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

Tradition Seven

Every M.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

birthdays

Celebrating 286 years of sobriety in this issue!

Want your sober published? Let your Bureau Chief know or see ANL contact information on page 2.

District 2

| | | |
|------------|---------|---------|
| Quinn | 5/5/98 | 12 yrs. |
| Susan | 5/15/06 | 3 yrs. |
| Hollis | 5/23/08 | 1 year! |
| Raquel | 5/26/99 | 10 yrs. |
| Suki | 5/29/96 | 14 yrs. |
| Chris McC. | 6/10/00 | 9 yrs. |
| Joanne | 6/12/04 | 5 yrs. |
| Kathy L. | 6/14/97 | 13 yrs. |
| Becky G. | 6/18/06 | 3 yrs. |
| Oliver | 6/25/01 | 8 yrs. |

District 3

| | | |
|------------|---------|---------|
| Matt | 6/4/08 | 1 year! |
| Saagar B. | 6/16/08 | 1 year! |
| Pam L. | 6/23/01 | 8 yrs. |
| Kristen C. | 6/24/04 | 5 yrs. |
| John L. | 6/27/05 | 4 yrs. |

District 4

| | | |
|--------------|---------|--------|
| Chris Mc. | 5/22/06 | 3 yrs. |
| Mark S. | 6/14/04 | 5 yrs. |
| Andy A. | 6/18/07 | 2 yrs. |
| Elizabeth L. | 6/24/06 | 3 yrs. |
| Sonja P. | 6/25/07 | 2 yrs. |

District 5

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|--------|--------|---------|
| Trudie | 6/1/98 | 11 yrs. |
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District 6

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|----------|---------|---------|
| Vicki A. | 4/7/92 | 17 yrs. |
| Sam S. | 5/5/02 | 7 yrs. |
| Mark I. | 6/21/99 | 10 yrs. |

District 7

| | | |
|----------|---------|---------|
| Bryan W. | 4/5/04 | 5 yrs. |
| Teri A. | 4/19/92 | 17 yrs. |
| Alan B. | 5/1/97 | 12 yrs. |
| Josh | 5/3/00 | 9 yrs. |
| Rey S. | 5/16/08 | 1 year! |

District 10

| | | |
|------------|---------|---------|
| Ben R. | 6/1/06 | 3 yrs. |
| Annie F. | 6/7/08 | 1 year! |
| Leonora B. | 6/21/08 | 1 year! |
| Mark G. | 6/24/08 | 1 year! |
| Joey S. | 6/24/08 | 1 year! |
| Ben W. | 6/25/07 | 2 yrs. |

District 11

| | | |
|-----------|---------|---------|
| Ron P. | 6/7/08 | 1 year! |
| Lisa C. | 6/8/08 | 1 year! |
| Alycia S. | 6/26/08 | 1 year! |
| Peter C. | 6/27/08 | 1 year! |

District 12

| | | |
|----------|----------|---------|
| Mike S. | 1/4/07 | 2 yrs. |
| Lora S. | 1/23/08 | 1 year! |
| Jim H. | 1/27/03 | 6 yrs. |
| Anna M. | 2/27/03 | 6 yrs. |
| Sue S. | 3/6/07 | 2 yrs. |
| Don L. | 3/23/96 | 13 yrs. |
| Gino | 4/11/05 | 4 yrs. |
| Steve S. | 4/--/96 | 13 yrs. |
| Ben G. | 9/29/07 | 2 yrs. |
| Kathy | 10/12/04 | 5 yrs. |
| Owen K. | 11/17/98 | 11 yrs. |

District 13

| | | |
|-------|---------|---------|
| Joe | 5/1/93 | 16 yrs. |
| Mitch | 5/15/03 | 6 yrs. |

Other: Eau Claire, WI

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|------------|---------|--------|
| Theresa L. | 7/12/02 | 6 yrs. |
|------------|---------|--------|