



Metaphors on Recovery

In the beginning, I remember thinking about my recovery as a wall – each day clean and each chip pocketed, a thicker and stronger bolster against relapse was built. That first day my recovery was just a wall of paper – thin and tenuous, but I was on the right side of the wall! At thirty days, I had taped up some thin cardboard, doubling up another layer at sixty.

At ninety days, my friends in recovery held up plywood so I could tack it on and plug up the holes (I did a meeting or two every day back then). At six months, there were two by fours being handed to me and I was nailing them up with the drywall. Year by year, another row of bricks was added, and I marked the decades with steel and stone. I think that the metaphor of “the wall” helped me then to see the dangers that are out there and reminded me that I needed to protect myself with people, meetings, and service.

Later on, as I spoke my mind at meetings and with my friends and cohorts, I found myself beginning to describe my recovery as a ladder – how each day I hauled myself up another rung, how I grew stronger and more resolute by these efforts, and how the panorama of my perspective increased the higher I rose out of the fogs of my addiction.

The ladder as a metaphor also helped me conceptualize my vulnerability – that it’s a long, hard climb up, and that I must hold tight because it is a quick and inevitable drop to the very bottom should I choose to release my grip, lean back, and fall. The metaphor of “the ladder” reminds me too that I can and should, from

time to time, look back at how far I have come and where I came from (the lies, the chaos, and the self-destruction), because for me, in this looking, comes gratitude. When I squint upward toward my goals and aspirations, I cannot clearly see where it is that I am going, but there is warmth and golden light; there is hope. Most importantly, I think that the metaphor of a ladder reminds me that I need to hold on fast and to seize the time to look around, take stock, and see what I can from the place I have climbed to so far.

*“...I can and should,
from time to time,
look back at how far
I have come...”*

Today, I sit here at my desk thinking about what new metaphor might help me on the journey. Today, I am thinking of my recovery as a window cleaner. I am here temporarily in the world, looking through glass, but separated by glass from the world as well. I cannot touch or change a lot that I can see, and this is my powerlessness.

Window cleaner must be sprayed on regularly, and it helps me keep the glass clean so that I can see the world, a world always distorted by the glass’s imperfections, but clearer when the film is wiped away. Sometimes I have help, and sometimes I have to clean the glass in ways that I have been shown. Sometimes I’ve just got to try the best I can to clean it up and see. I’m

responsible for all the smudges on my side of the window, by the way, and mostly those are the ones I try to keep clean.

For me, metaphors have been helpful in the past, and help me still, but metaphors are only tools. Life is tough and beautiful, and life is not reducible to metaphor; hold your hands up in front of the fire, sniff the breeze, it is life. Life can be so good – relationships, home, health, possessions, and family; we can hold on to them as best as we are able, and we can use all the tools we have to do so, but things slip away too.

Life is life. I am grateful for my recovery and for the life that I have today. My wife is in the other room, humming and doing her thing, our sweet old dog is sleeping at the end of the bed. We have family and people around us. Today, I won’t be driving to the marijuana store (I’ve actually never been in one) or hiding, mortified, behind the shed with a stinky bong in my hand and a vial of eye drops to mask my stupor from the world.

Today, I will strive to be present and to enjoy my family, our home, and the beautiful world with all its intricacies that surround us. If I make it to this October, I may see what it’s like to be thirty-four years clean and sober and sixty-six years old. I wish you the best with your own life and your own efforts. As always, these are just my opinions, they have helped me and perhaps they can help you too.

Warmly,
Dr. Anonymous

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

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Awakening

"Who's to say that the butterfly breaking through its cocoon isn't the result of its being tired of living in a tight weave of its own making?"

~ from *The Book of Awakening* by Mark Nepo

I realize that for so long I was settling for merely functioning. I reached the point where my desire to flourish overcame my desire to use. I yearned for more – for a life of fulfillment, free from the shackles of substances. "Tired of living in a tight weave of its own making."

My therapist told me that there's a reason I used. To cope, to numb, to shut it all out. I used to shut out the anxiety, and I ended up in the vortex of anxiety regardless – consumed by the thought of using, of getting more, the tight weave of my own making. It was my own making, yes, but it was within a larger system of systems: genetics, patriarchy, heteronormativity, childhood and teenage trauma, and interpersonal violence, to name a few. Are they to blame? Am I to blame? Maybe there is nothing to blame – it simply is.

I am only 21, and yet I spent eight years of my life coping with substances; to get away from myself, the feelings, emotions, and fears. With it, substances took my desires, hopes, and dreams. I settled for the fantasy of functionality. I no longer knew who I was, but did I ever really know who I was? I didn't. I never had the chance to get to know myself up until a year ago or so when I stopped drinking and even then weed kept me unbeknownst to myself.

On the path of sobriety and recovery now, I have clarity. A butterfly coming out of its cocoon – motivated by the desire to fly, to explore, to achieve. I have so many hopes, so many things

I want to do that I have yet to figure out. I'm a recovering butterfly forcing myself out of the cocoon, which once felt so safe and now holds me back. I'm ready to fly and see the beauty in the gifts of sobriety.

~ "Recovering Butterfly" D.D.

God, Higher Power... or Bob

Within the fellowship of Marijuana Anonymous, we have recently been discussing the use of the terms God and higher power, and we will be voting very soon to possibly change the steps and eliminate the word God and use higher power exclusively. I'm not particularly attached to the outcome of this vote. Personally, I would prefer that we don't change the steps, but allow alternate versions of the steps, which would allow for a more inclusive fellowship. I hope the alternate version can be conference approved. I know there are groups currently using them.

Personally, I could use the word God or higher power, but prefer to call him BOB - The Benevolent Observer Of Bullshit. BOB is the BOMB, The Benevolent Observer of My Bullshit. What I mean by this is that Bob is going to let me do what I'm going to do, sit back and shake his head, smile, and say, "oh no, he's at it again." But, concurrently, I could also ask Bob to help me do the next right thing. If I do that, he may show me, in some strange and mysterious way, what the next right thing is for me to do.

At one point in my life while still in active addiction, I set off on a journey walking across the continent looking for a god, a higher power. I don't know if I ever found what I was looking for, but one day I did find this. While walking along the highway, I saw a roadside cross. I walked over to it and read the epitaph. It said, "I expect to pass through this world but once, any kindness that I can do, let me not

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defer or neglect, for I shall not pass this way again."

I cleared away the overgrown grass and set up the plastic flowers and returned to the road. I now carry these words with me. I've come to realize that Bob looks out not only over me but the whole Multiverse. Every action that I do changes the future and changes my life. There are days where I see a spider inside my house and I grab a glass and cover the spider carefully. I slip a piece of paper underneath the spider and take them outside to be released unharmed.

There are days where I let fear overcome me and I crush the spider without thinking. This is a microcosm – that's how I do the will of God, or my higher power, or Bob, if you prefer to call him that. How I do God's will is not in my thoughts or how I share about what God is, it is in my actions. It says in *Life With Hope* on page 150 of the third edition, "I was told that you can't think yourself into the right actions, you have to act your way into the right thinking, and the appropriate actions were working the Steps."

These steps are designed as a series of actions to put us in alignment with the easier, simpler way through the Multiverse, and this life is the only life that we get to live. There are many other timelines that I believe exist, some in which I never became an addict, and some in which I am now dead. But from this point forward in my life, what is it that I choose to make of it? What decisions do I make in step three that change my life, to put me in action toward a better future? This is the only control I have on this plane of existence. And it is my choice, followed by my action, that will dictate all events to come.

I don't care what you call your God, higher power, or any other name that you choose to acknowledge this new way of life. I only hope now that you decide to make that choice and to live a future where you do the next right thing. If there is a God, and we are all his children, the only thing he would want for us is to take care of each other.

~ Michael O

(This article was submitted in May of 2023 prior to the MA Conference.)

Molded

How do I settle into this life I don't deserve, never believed it matched my worth.

Never could fathom truly grasping my dreams. It will all falter and echo my scream.

When I wake up one day and I'm lost, I'm broken, again. I am afraid

I'll never win, I'll never be the one I can become, can un-numb.

It's in my DNA, perhaps, to believe these words are true reaching from you

bleeding into me. Traumas from foggy pasts and altered paths, but wait,

it's hate flipping that scale. Yet in all tongues and hearts, love shall prevail.

So, I forgive and I form a new line. I alter some more, relinquish my roar.

Over and over, I put in the work. Change habits, deeds, epiphanies evoke

a new truth. One I can hold, one I can know is worthy of my mold.

~ Jeni

Open Editor Positions

Fill a Critical Role at ANLP

The Managing Editor and Publishing Editor positions on the ANLP Board are now open! If you have experience with copy editing, publishing, or design, you can be of service in a big way.

Email the ANLP Chair for more information:
chair@anewleafpublications.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>

Twelve Questions?

This month, we're polling our readers for some new and different content...

Which of the Twelve Questions most resonates with you? Send us an article, anywhere between 500-1500 words, and we will include it in an upcoming issue of the ANL Newsletter. It's important to keep your message focused on the message of recovery and hope.

Send your submissions to:
stories@anewleafpublications.org

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For a complete listing of all meetings visit
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Step and Tradition of the Month

Step Six

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Tradition Six

MA groups ought never endorse, finance, or lend the MA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Celebrating 135 Years of Sobriety!

District 3

Heather C 5/17/2019 4 yrs

District 5

Ali R 5/21/2018 5 yrs
 Billy F 5/21/2019 4 yrs
 Chad R 5/4/2021 2 yrs
Dariush 4/17/2022 1 yr
 Dean I 5/15/2001 22 yrs
 Gustav 5/23/2011 12 yrs
 Londyn 5/23/2011 12 yrs
 Lyman 4/27/2010 13 yrs

Marty S 5/14/2017 6 yrs
 Mary C 5/10/2010 13 yrs
 Mel G 5/18/2019 4 yrs
 Tom G. 5/17/2010 13 yrs

District 8

Chris D 5/23/2020 3 yrs

District 11

Parish P 4/9/2022 1 yr
 Sonya A 4/16/2021 2 yrs
Vaughn M 5/5/2022 1 yr

District 27

Amy B 5/18/2017 6 yrs
 Amy F 5/23/2012 11 yrs

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