



The Gift of Denial

Marijuana Anonymous has given me community, serenity, clarity, and relationships beyond anything I could have asked for. It is true that God does for me what I cannot do for myself.

I believe one of the wonderful gifts I had coming into this program was denial. The power of denial cannot be understated. I do not know

how I would have fared out in the world knowing how dependent I was on my defects of character to get me through the day. I did not know how large my grief was. I did not know how terribly I thought of myself or how significant my fears were. It was a blessing to now know how low I would bend for others, disregarding myself in the process.

When I came into MA I found that reality unsupported can oftentimes be misery for an addict. That is why I need the 12 Steps to guide me along, a Sponsor to direct energy towards, and Community

to pick up all of the broken pieces of myself when I inevitably erupt.

When I began to come out of denial in Marijuana Anonymous I did so supported and cared for by my Sponsor. We walked, sometimes

very slowly, through my relationship to each of the 12 Steps, and along the way I began to pick up parts of myself I left behind.



Had I known I had lost these things I would have been much more miserable, I am sure.

Today I still find bits of me along this path of recovery. If I am lucky I don't stub a toe or two on them before I see.

So I am writing this to those of you who still might be in denial, or who are frustrated with the awareness of past denial, to tell you that it can also be a blessing—to sobriety, both physically and emotionally. ▲

~Jacob S.

Life with Hope – “potential” Promises within Each Step

[Editor's Note: This submission by Darlene D. will span multiple ANL issues. The first three Steps can be found in the June 2019 ANL issue (Vol. 29, No. 6). All copy is quoted directly from *Life with Hope*. We have not included line-by-line citation detail, but instead encourage our readers to discover where in the book these lines can be found.]

Step Four

- discovery of the patterns of behavior that had allowed us to be needlessly hurt
- gained a new understanding about those who harmed us
- gained insights into our relationships
- began to see the negative traits and behaviors we practiced
- faced our fears and began to overcome them
- finally free to look at what was right in us
- opened windows
- gained a new appreciation for our loved ones
- transformed our fears into faith
- find a new way to love unconditionally
- new appreciation of our strengths
- new acceptance of our weaknesses

Step Five

- earned a fresh start in life
- feeling of social connectedness and spiritual oneness
- a chance to rejoice the human race
- expansion of our self-knowledge

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Save the Date!
Feb 14-16, 2020
MA World Convention

“A Vision for Us”
Hosted by District 6, Los Angeles

for updates, please email ma2020reg@gmail.com

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.

ANLP Liaisons

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

ANLP Staff

Chairperson:	Rick V.
Treasurer:	John L.
Secretary:	Maurice R.
ANLP Admin:	Thor H.
Managing Editor:	Thor H.
Publishing Editor:	* help!

Contact ANLP

Send articles/stories:
stories@anewleafpublications.org

“potential” Promises

Continued from page 1

- o relieved of the burden of our past
- o sense of belonging begins to grow in us
- o opened a channel to the love that can heal us
- o ability to face the facts of our lives
- o took a stride towards wisdom
- o gained a tool
- o ability to be born anew
- o beginning of the experience of self-acceptance
- o guilty feelings start to fall away
- o begin to feel a closeness and intimacy with all of creation

Step Six

- o an openness to allow our loving God to do deep/lasting work in our hearts and minds
- o responsibility for our recovery
- o new behavior of going beyond our own self-interest/becoming concerned with feelings and well beings of others
- o compulsion to use and the obsession with the drugs had been removed

~by *Darlene D.* (to be continued...)

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A Way Forward

“We take these steps for ourselves, not by ourselves. Others have gone before; others will follow. We recover.”— *Life With Hope*, Step 12.

Recently, I celebrated 4 years of being weed-free, and picked up chips at two meetings, shared my story at one, and got hugs and deeply kind, meaningful, words and love from supportive comrades and fellow recovery travelers. Wow, what a feeling!

When thinking back on how it all started with Marijuana Anonymous, frankly, it's incredible that it happened—given my stubborn head—and to that I credit the 12th Step and a higher power. It is genuinely scary how easily I could have kept denying my issues and full-on trucking deeper into addiction if it wasn't for hearing the message of recovery.

Back when my weed addiction was quickly spiraling, I knew it and could see it objectively with inner thoughts like: “one of these days you're going to be so wasted you'll fall down these stairs if you're not careful” or “what are you doing to think you can trick a cop if you're pulled over?” or “you realize that smoking resin is probably carcinogenic don't you?” or “maybe you shouldn't spend money you don't have and risk getting kicked out because you can't pay rent.”

But I didn't know what to do about it. Rehab didn't seem like a real option to me, because—in my mind—it was too expensive, it was for people with more “serious” problems than mine, and it felt risky if people at work found out and gossiped like I was too much drama and should be fired. I knew very little about 12-Step programs, and saw TV shows and movies with people who drank, smoked crack, shot heroin, did meth, and so forth, but no one was there because of cannabis. Media glorified weed, made it seem funny and

hapless, therapeutic, or as a way to bring people together. Potheads were usually flaky, bohemian, esoteric misfits that despite their penchant for being permahigh, they were lovable and sympathetic dopes.

Fictitious pothead characters weren't like me and always coughing, getting bronchitis, having panic attacks, hearing comments on mouth sores and sooty tongues by dental hygienists, or finding precancerous nodules on a thyroid. My experience wasn't shown as a real situation in the media or around social circles, so I couldn't put together a picture of what the path to change could look like.

It was easy for me to accept what I now consider the enablement of societal views, even in my own family, that weed isn't addictive, it's harmless, it's positive to self-medicate, and it's square to think otherwise. Both of my parents smoke weed, and I'm supposed to see this as a good thing, because they aren't on opioids for their aging health problems - but, it's their weed that gave me early exposure to drugs and I'm not thankful for that. Even now I'm not open about being sober with them, because they reiterate the same story as everyone else - weed can't possibly be a problem. It felt then, and to this day, like a huge stacked deck to go up against in order to get real and find the truth of my experience with pot.

Luckily, I had a sober friend who had found AA, and I could see recovery happening to him. He had reached a scary point, wrote me a long letter about it, and decided to get sober—he was across the country and I didn't know it had gotten so bad for him. I also didn't know what sober meant when he would come to town and we'd go out, as I was far from clean - so I didn't drink around him, worried that I'd be a bad influence, though I'd take edibles and would be secretly high, afraid he'd find out and judge or lecture me. Sobriety was confusing to me.

As my friend continued with AA, expanded into other programs like Codependents Anonymous and Al-Anon, I could hear in our phone chats that he got happier, more vibrant, smarter, wiser and healthier. His mind seemed to work quickly and effectively, while mine was dumbing out more and more; and, his spirit progressed into a brighter shine every time we talked, as I was going deeper into depression, feeling hopeless, and stuck in a deep muck of aimless lethargy. Gradually, as time went on and it got worse for me but better for him, I wanted to be like him. It was attraction, not promotion.

Something popped into my head one day: “I wonder if there's something like what he has with AA, but for pot?” An internet search pulled up Marijuana Anonymous and there were local meetings.

After a particularly wrenching week of unmanageability hitting an undeniable apex, I knew that me and weed had to be done. So, I decided to try a meeting, and had no idea what to expect. It was weird, but the handful of people in the room seemed relaxed, as if getting help for a weed problem was no big deal, and this was a comfort.

The crisis drama inside of me had felt alone and freakish for so long that I half-expected a fiery villagers reaction to me, the monster, if I admitted what was really going on. Instead, there was this reassuring confidence that comes from people who attend meetings regularly, know the routine, did the Steps, and convey with their understanding of how it works—including carrying a positive and hopeful message—that it's all going to be okay. I didn't know how it was going to be okay, but I could see an answer was in there somewhere, even if I had to bungle around awkwardly for a while to figure it out.

Over time, and it took a few years to keep regular sobriety, I got to know

the routine too, and eventually got to a point of being able to give it away, never forgetting those early days of awakening. My friend who had inspired me with his journey in AA, ended up going back out after a decade-plus of sobriety. I tried to push on him until he pushed back, so I dropped it, and now I try to be here without judgement because I know what it's like to be an addict—it's a baffling disease. Addiction gets the best people unfortunately, which is tragic and real, so I try to work my own program. It's all I can do.

My friend's relapse showed me that time is measured best as one day, and to not take recovery for granted, since keeping off substances and being emotionally sober are not automatic promises of time in and of itself, nor is it any easier for the old timer.

I'm thankful for how my friend got me into MA, and keep that in mind as part of my 12th Step - as I know what it's like to be a Newcomer who isn't quite ready to be one, and the tipping point of facing crisis with these seeds of recovery that were unknowingly planted.

For me, the 12th Step influences—which were never verbalized as a preachy sermon, but were shown by witnessing a changing life for the better—gave me courage to seek help. There is ongoing encouragement that comes through in the 12th Step messaging in our rooms, literature, phone meetings, service work, and stories. This is something that we can continuously give without necessarily knowing where or how it lands, or who needs it to not feel alone in their journey today. The 12th Step shows us a way forward, while living in a world that doesn't much validate weed addiction, so that in Marijuana Anonymous we can especially be there for each other, the Newcomer, and the addict who still suffers—Yes, recovery is possible. ▲

~by *Anonymous*

*To work with ANLP, please send a note to board@anewleafpublications.org

Marijuana Anonymous Worldwide

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

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Celebrating 125 Years of Sobriety!

District 2

Mae F. 5/20/2017 2 yrs

District 3

Pam L. 6/23/2001 17 yrs

Kristen B. 6/24/2004 14 yrs

District 5

Andrea Y. 6/15/2010 10 yrs

Brandon 6/6/2011 8 yrs

Gustav 5/23/2011 8 yrs

Londyn 5/23/2011 8 yrs

Trudie 6/1/1998 21 yrs

District 7

Carol W. 5/5/1990 29 yrs

Julia 5/2/2018 1 yr

Lydia 6/3/2018 1 yr

Sam 6/1/2016 3 yrs

Sivan H. 6/1/2018 1 yr

District 11

Jensina F. 6/18/2018 1 yr

District 24

Kelly P. 6/11/2016 3 yrs

More on Birthdays!

First: They're ideally submitted by the 15th of each month.

Plus: Here's an Idea!

At your local MA meetings, consider making a brief report on birthdays a regular **unity-building activity** during each monthly group conscience

meeting: "Okay, so who's birthdays will we be celebrating in the **ANL newsletter next month?**"



GOT A YEAR?

Allow us to publish your anniversary to celebrate!!!

Provide your sobriety date to your local GSR to be forwarded to your ANLP Liaison, **or** e-mail your details to chiefs@anewleafpublications.org

Members / GSRs / ANLP Liaisons are encouraged to submit Birthdays that...

- 1) **HAVE OCCURRED,**
- 2) **HAVE NOT been published recently,**
- 3) **and ARE NOT OLDER THAN 45 days.**

Please use the format shown in the listing above. *Thanks!*

Id

HELP NEEDED
Designer, with *InDesign chops!*

Excited by Panel Icons?
Let's chat!

ANLP is in need of a Publishing Editor. The role requires InDesign CC, a comfort with such things as Text Frame Options, Character and Paragraph Styles, *how they're used in customized layout*, and willingness to serve on a small team, understanding content decisions are sometimes a group process. It's a 1-year commitment, with an optional second.



Experience suggests that the best way to elicit support is asking directly, and we hope our readers will do just that. Specifically, we encourage you to not **only** announce this in meetings, but to learn who in your area might have skill with Adobe InDesign and discuss this service opportunity with them directly. Thank You! ~ANLP Board
board@anewleafpublications.org