



A NEW LEAF

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Starting A Meeting As A Newcomer

by Joe D., District 8

Service in 12-Step programs can be a great thing. Most people usually start with making coffee and setting up chairs. After about five weeks of sobriety in MA, I decided to start a new meeting! It's not something I would recommend casually, but I know that it has helped me - and others - enormously.

In New York City, it seems that there are 12-Step meetings for just about every kind of addiction and for just about every kind of person. Our city's Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center publishes an extensive menu of 12-Step meetings in its monthly newsletter. I had been going to the Center for years attending gatherings of various political and social groups. But there was nothing in that list of 12-Step groups that mentioned marijuana. Had there been, perhaps I might have had a shorter path to recovery.

But, as they say, it happens when it needs to happen. I got serious about finding sobriety and sanity in the last days of 1994. On my third day of attending AA, I got a sponsor. On my fourth day, I shared in an AA meeting about how pot was my real problem. After that meeting, in a crowded and busy hallway, someone (I still don't know who) thrust two pieces of MA literature into my hand. One of them was a card with a list of meetings.

When I attended my first MA meeting about a week later, I knew that I was in the right place. I could really identify when someone told their pot story, and when I shared, I knew that the nodding heads I saw around the room were also coming from a place of

true understanding. But there is more to my story that just pot, and a big part of it is being a gay man. I felt a need for a meeting environment that was predominantly gay, where I could be more comfortable and honest about

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myself and my path to recovery.

The idea of starting a gay and lesbian MA meeting excited me, but I grew nervous at the thought of mentioning it to my sponsor. To my surprise and relief, she said it was a great idea. So did virtually everyone in MA. I did get a gentle warning not to let the pressure of setting up and running a meeting (reserving a room, scheduling speakers, managing rent and inter-group expenses, etc.) interfere with my sobriety. But I've always been pretty good at organizing and making things happen. Fortunately that hasn't changed since I've become sober.

I deliberately chose Wednesday nights for the new meeting, an evening when there was no other MA meeting in town. I set the date for the first meeting about 6 weeks off so that there would be lots of lead time for word of mouth to kick in. I also announced the new meeting at every opportunity - which in itself got me talking in meetings and helped people to learn my name.

In the meantime, I began to feel more comfortable in the other MA meetings and to think that my own personal need for a gay meeting was less critical.

Yet, what a blessing our Wednesday night meeting has been. I say "our" meeting because a community of regulars has quickly formed around it. Our first night we had eight people and now we average twelve to fourteen at every meeting. And we invariably get at least one or two newcomers. Every time I hear one of them say that they saw Marijuana Anonymous listed in the Gay and

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Look For The Lighthouse

by Tim, District 6

It's been an uphill swim, and at first all I could do was paddle towards a place I had really never been in my adult life. A place on a 12-Step map.

My first signs of land were the inspirational shares that I heard at my first meeting. It had been inconceivable that I, soaked in drugs, could be in that straight world, but I started to believe I could chart a course to sobriety.

The actual drug use was really only a part of the leaky boat that I had lived

in for so long. Buying it, the anticipation, how good or how bad a deal would be, munchies, hiding, cops, the smell, coughing, the entire identity. It was a full-time life style. To recover and live in that straight world I would have to jump ship and swim through my fears and doubts and addiction towards a concept. Towards something that had never been real to me.

I'm now coming up on a year and a half and basically I've washed up on

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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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A Collection of Views and Opinions from Around the Fellowship

The Editors would like to thank all of the Attendees at the
'95 MAWS Conference for their responses to the Roving Reporter

*What brought you to the realization
that you were an addict?*

Sheila F., Dist.2, 6+ yrs.

I didn't know I was an addict until after I had been going to meetings and got a sponsor! I kept the idea in the back of my mind that for very special occasions I could use again. I ran this by my sponsor, and she said, "I don't think you've gotten it that you're an addict." What? "Who... me? Oh my god. I'm an addict!" I thought. The light went on.

Pat Mc, Dist.3, 5½ yrs.

After two years of arguing with my therapist about "pot" being addictive, I tried to quit to show her it wasn't. I wasn't able to go one week without using before I realized it. That started me thinking about it, and I got into the program through my therapist. And I came - I came to - then, I came to believe. I guess starting the Steps is really what made me realize that I was an addict.

George T., Dist.4, 5½ yrs.

I was an addict for a long time before I realized it. In the face of overwhelming evidence of my inability to control my use of pot, I kept finding reasons, justifications, and excuses for my behavior! I hit my personal bottom and got into this recovery program. Yet, even at the early stages, I had trouble accepting that I would never be able to find a way to use pot in moderation. I learned I was an addict by listening to the stories of other addicts. I learned I was just like them.

Captain Kurt, Dist.6, 3 yrs.

After being clean for a couple of weeks, I had a counselor help me to realize how unmanageable my life had been for the last 6 to 10 years of my using. When I was able to look at my

past honestly I was finally able to admit to myself, I am an addict. I can now say I am a recovering addict.

*When a close friend "goes out", how do
you handle it?*

Harry H., Portland OR, 8 yrs.

When a close friend goes out, I try to find a way to be loving without either condoning or condemning the slip. The nature of the disease is defiance and relapse and the nature of recovery is love and service. So, my joy is to be of service with a degree of compassion for the newcomer and for myself.

Chris W., Dist.6, 4 yrs.

When someone close to me goes out, all I can do is be understanding. We, as addicts, use. That's what we do. No person could keep me

from hitting my bottom, and I don't want to deprive any addict from doing what is absolutely necessary to hit their bottom, especially someone I'm close to. Understanding, acceptance, and unconditional love - these are the principles I need to practice.

Loren N., Dist.6, 5+ yrs.

It really depends on who the person is. If I throw a life preserver to someone very close to me, I always run the risk of being pulled into the soup myself. Sometimes the only thing I can do is pray for the person; let them know that there is always a place for them. If you can't be a good example, sometimes you have to be a bad warning. There, but for the grace of God, go I.

Stan S., Dist.7

I went out and my MA friends stayed with me. My sponsor told me to keep attending meetings. I did. My friends did not abandon me. For an addict, not to feel abandoned is a blessing.

The Roving Reporter

The Lighthouse

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The shore of sobriety and the fog has lifted. Getting here has been incredibly difficult. The hardest part is the riptide of remembering the fun times. Not every stoned experience was bad, and being sober isn't always so good. But there is no doubt that sobriety is a much better and more fulfilling way of living. The program is the light house that guides me through the rocky seas. It's always clear, always reliable, and it never lets me down, unlike the drug people in the drug world of the drug mind-set, lost in the fog, without direction, drowning in lies and shame.

I think of the innocent child in my backyard, family dinners, Christmas and cartoons. I had no intention of hurting myself. I wanted to do nothing but good. What happened? How did the crazy moon of adulthood change the tides so slowly, so drastically that I became this drug person? Indeed, recovery has been like changing the tide of my soul. Now I swim towards innocence. I now feel the subtle but comforting morning light of confidence.

The change has well begun and it's wonderful. And, it's just beginning. To newcomers just getting their feet wet, I'm waving to you from the beach. Just swim towards me, but remember, it's an uphill swim! 🐬

Newcomer

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Lesbian Center's newsletter and thought they would give it a try, I know I did the right thing in starting the meeting.

Though the majority of people at our Wednesday night meeting are gays and lesbians, the only requirement for attendance is the desire to stop using marijuana. We even have a few straight people who consider it their home group. What keeps us coming back is our shared desire to stay sober - or as they say in other meetings "to stay straight." But on Wednesday nights we usually manage to find another way to say that! 🐬

Never Nevermore In Neverland

by Ellie P., District 7

In the story of Peter Pan, Neverland is the place where children never grow up. This is an apt description of my life while I was smoking pot. Getting stoned and wasted brought my unstable mind to a point of pure fantasy. A life filled with pirates and evil doers. It was me against the world. My negative paranoid vision of the world locked me into my Neverland fantasy. As a result, I wasted my potential as a young adult. I grieve for that today.

Today is a new day. A sober day. Sobriety has been my experience for the last six months and I am finding that life is an adventure. Actually it has been one year that I have not smoked pot. That's a miracle after using heavily for 19 years. I want to recognize my first year off pot and my six months of a completely sober life style. I think both events are noteworthy.

I feel myself growing up. I am maturing and leaving the fantasy-land behind. It is the process of the 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions that has given my life a solid foundation. So, regardless of the dramas that persist around me, I know who I am. I know I have choices

and tools to release me from self-obsession. I believe in myself and still more in the Power which pulls chronic addicts back from the gates of death, as stated in the Doctor's Opinion of the Big Book. I believe I am not alone. I am sober and we recover. I am grateful and humble. 🐬

Thanks To MA

by Steven P., District 8

My new life will be one year old on August 1, 1995. One year ago, I was an adolescent with a wife of nine years (about to leave me), a job I was about to waste away (as I had in the past), and a miserable existence centered upon scoring, smoking, quitting, and inevitably scoring once again. Today, I am a man with a wife of ten years pregnant with our first child, a Partner at work, and a wonderful, though not perfect, existence which brings the realization of new promises with each passing day. I thank MA and each and every one in my home group with all my heart for all that the last year has brought, as well as the clean and sober vistas that lie ahead. Thank you. 🐬

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



Jaime B.	Jul.01	5 Years	Kelly G.	Aug.08	2 Years
Judith B.	Jul.04	4 Years	Coleman G.	Aug.13	3 Years
Annie	Jul.05	3 Years	Don O.	Aug.14	4 Years
Pete D.	Jul.12	2 Years	Steve E.	Aug.14	8 Years
Chris F.	Jul.16	6 Years	John S.	Aug.15	1 Year!
John R.	Jul.17	9 Years	Dana R.	Aug.15	4 Years
Scott B.	Jul.27	9 Years	Captain Kurt	Aug.16	3 Years
Ted J.	Jul.30	5 Years	Bruce S.	Aug.18	2 Years
Kevin V.	Jul.??	10 Years	Jailhouse Dave	Aug.20	4 Years
Steve P.	Aug.01	1 Year!	Joyce M.	Aug.20	5 Years
Vicki M.	Aug.01	3 Years	Lisa T.	Aug.21	5 Years
Marian M.	Aug.01	4 Years	Ginny	Aug.22	7 Years
John C.	Aug.06	2 Years	Tom S.	Aug.25	6 Years
Jack D.	Aug.08	1 Year!	Cindy C.	Aug.26	6 Years
Lance D.	Aug.08	1 Year!	Vicki H.	Aug.28	6 Years
Mary	Aug.08	1 Year!	Andi A.	Aug.29	7 Years

Victim or Problem Solver?

by Anonymous, District 6


I open my eyes in the morning, shake the sand from my head, and try to start my day by asking my Higher Power to keep me sober and give me direction. I feel great! The feeling is usually short lived however, since quickly thereafter my "pea brain" takes over. When Mr. Pea takes over, he ordinarily sends me down one of two paths. The first may be that of the "problem solver". The second path is the "victim".

The problem solver is looking for what can be contributed to life in general. How can I be a good husband, father, employer, and friend? If I do this, as a rule, my day goes well and I feel good. And get this, at times it gives me a conscious glimpse of spirituality. This is Good!

The path of the victim spells trouble for me. The kicker is that there's usually nothing wrong. I just choose to feel sorry for myself. Deadly sins - line up, because here they come. And as they go full circle on me, they'll render down to my favorite: "self pity". So

f... that, f... them, f... this, oh just f... it all. Now leave me alone so I can be a nice little victim! This is Bad!

The scary thing about my roles as problem solver or victim is that I choose which one to take. I would think that 3½ years is enough to detox. Maybe not. But I believe that today I'm capable of making my own sober decision of who I can be that day. I wish that "Mr. Pea Brain" would just stay out of it.

Who will I be when I wake? 

Thought For The Month

"When we discover the still, quiet place that lies within each of us, we can see it as a base to untangle ourselves from the doubt, indecision, ill health, guilt, and other forms of old programming that result in confused and defused actions."

Hallie Iglehart

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CALIF. - Campout! August 18th thru 20th at Point Magoo State Park \$10/person for the weekend plus \$6/car. Call Jim L. at (310) 478-5152

SO.CALIF. - Campout! September 15th thru 17th at Palomar Mountain in San Diego county. \$10 per person for both nites. Kids under 12 free. Call Mike LB at (714) 547-3693.

NO.CALIF. - Beach-Out Pot Luck! September 16th, 1:00 pm, in Santa Cruz. Call Bernie at (408) 662-0894 Box #4. Overnites are available.

N.Y./ S.F. - Everyone in your old home meetings would like to say, "Hello" to Jan M., formerly of Brooklyn, who just moved out to San Francisco. NY's loss is CA's gain.

Convention '96 Update!

Dates are tentatively set for January 12th through the 14th and the selection of a Los Angeles location is in the final stages. Assistance is needed in the following categories:

VOLUNTEERS - Help is needed during the planning process and for the event itself. Contact anyone on the Coordinating Committee. Subcommittees are: Merchandising, Agenda/Program, Entertainment, Fundraising, Public Info/Literature, Hospitality/Security/Volunteers, Registration, and Site Selection.

DONATIONS - *For the event:* walkie-talkies, office supplies, and anything that will help the weekend run more smoothly. *Raffle Items:* Items should be as new or valuable as possible. (Donations are tax deductible and **MUST** come from within MA.) Call Todd E.

ARTWORK - MA related artwork/logo for use on Convention merchandise (shirts, mugs, etc.). Tentative theme is "Life With Hope". Submission deadline is August 15th. Mail to: P. O.Box 3012, Culver City CA 90231

TO HELP, CALL: Todd E. (310) 281-9504, Jonathan R. (213) 653-8777, or Stephen S. (213) 850-1841.

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