



A NEW LEAF

A PUBLICATION OF MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

August 1999

Volume 9 - Number 8

A Way Out of Dis-ease by Yuichi H.

Sometimes I find myself in a state of confusion and/or unease, where I need to make some kind of a decision, or else I just want some kind of resolution to a situation, and don't know exactly how to go about finding it. What's tempting for me then is to want some kind of an answer. I'll delve deeply in my mind, or heart, or even out toward some kind of a Higher Power, hoping for that "answer." Likewise, sometimes I'll open up about what I'm going through with another, and he/she will offer me suggestions or some advice that is fairly specific to the "problem" at hand. These are tactics I've repeated over and over, and in retrospect, I'm convinced that better ways exist.

My very first sponsor in sobriety used to let me talk for hours without hardly ever interrupting, especially with any kind of advice. The most he would do would be to mention something that might result in a change of perception on my part. (I'm not exactly sure what thoughts he carried inside, though having sponsored a number of "talkative" newcomers, I suspect that he may have

been praying for me.) However, when I would talk, I often times found myself blurt-ing out my own answers. I believe that by being in the presence of a man who had been walking a spiritual path for some time, I was able to momentarily rise in my awareness, to the point where I could find my own answers. I believe this is the phenomenon of "Where two or more are gathered..." Still, it wasn't the answers themselves that were easing whatever discomfort I may have been feeling up until that point, but the fact that some part of me was touching (for lack of a better word) a flow, or power, that was larger and outside of myself. Or you might say, that there was a certain "presence." I was in a raised state of consciousness, or as we sometimes hear in the program, I was in a state of God-consciousness.

A "fix-it" type of answer hardly ever pulls me out of my discomfort and dis-ease. What works for me is a raising of my state of mind. In the program, this is oftentimes referred to as "establishing a conscious contact with our Higher Power." I believe a part of our disease

wants us to squander our time and energy trying to figure out or fix some specific "issue," when the real remedy amounts to simply raising one's consciousness, or deepening it, or however way one wants to think of it. Once we are able to establish that other state of mind, the answers come effortlessly, or if they don't, we carry a quiet acceptance about the unresolvedness. The difference between straining for answers and being in that deepened state of mind is well-depicted by Antonio Machado, the poet, who said that either one can try grasping at fish (insights) from above the waters, or else swim in their midst.

The other day, I was confiding in a friend who is also in the program, and toward the end

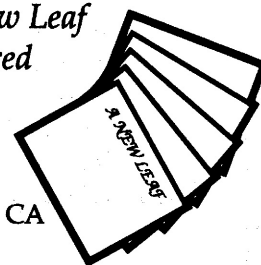
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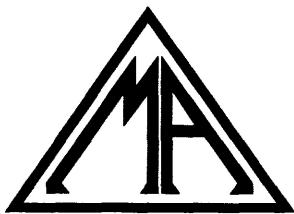
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Articles submitted should reflect recovery, unity and service. The articles contained in A New Leaf are the sole opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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A Way Out of Dis-ease continued

of our conversation she asked me, "So, did you get the answers you needed?" I replied, "No, but I find myself in a place of gratitude, and that's more important because from there I can accept the fact that I don't have the answers." Maybe it sounds too clever, but it was truly how I felt about the situation.

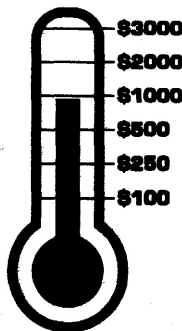
The question then might be: how do we go about effecting such a change? I believe prayer works for some, or perhaps meditation. Or else it could be walking in nature, or talking it out with another who is also walking a spiritual path. There are meetings, and of course, there are the steps, whose purpose exactly is to take us out of our ordinary linear thinking into a more intuitive understanding of whatever is happening around us. Whatever the method, one is then able to see things more clearly, with greater perspective. Then, the obtaining of "answers" becomes almost secondary. What becomes important is not so much holding onto

"answers" and insights, but to maintaining that state of mind. In this way, one is better able to face the various challenges that come up in daily living, rather than trying to sort out an answer to each and every problem that arises. I believe this is what is meant by the saying, "Our sobriety is contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition." It's not contingent on whether we resolve some specific issue. But it is contingent on whether our lives are being lived on a spiritual plane.

How often does one hear of a newcomer who goes to his/her sponsor complaining of a dire situation in their lives, and the sponsor offers some seemingly offhand and unrelated remark like "get a commitment" or "put your hand out to the newcomer," and the suggestion actually works to extricate the newcomer from his or her entanglements! I believe these things work because the trick isn't in solving the newcomers problems, but in getting their lives

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A Way Out of Dis-ease continued

aligned with a more spiritual way of living, and from that new perspective, the problems either disappear or apparently take care of themselves.

So today, when I am feeling disturbed and restless, what I try

to remember is not so much to seek out an answer to my specific situation, but to deepen my sense of spirituality within me.

When I do that, I am able to get out of the frustration of trying to "figure it all out," and

instead, am closer to being in a position where I am more easily able to allow what's best to resolve itself, which is how most situations eventually turn out to be in the end, anyway. ▲

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Dave's Story by David T.

The first time tetrahydrocannabinol crossed my blood brain barrier it was 1968, the Summer of Peace and Love. I was about 14. I smoked it with my friend Rich in the club house we shared with the other kids on the block. Janis Joplin was on the record player and a silhouette of Dylan's head, done in rainbow colors, covered the table we used. The smoke hit me like an orgasm. I loved it.

For the next ten years I got high all around the world on all kinds of substances: smoked up in San Francisco and the California coast; drunk and stoned in Amsterdam; falling down drunk in the streets of Paris; wasted in Stockholm; passed out on Qualudes in the street in Barcelona; blasted on hash in the mountains of Morocco; nodding out on methadone at work in Manhattan; euphoric on smack in Central Park. There was LSD, amphetamines, cleaning fluid, and a drug we called crystal which made you blind and then unconscious. But my higher power saved me from the early grave and I settled into a pattern of smoking 3 joints a day and drinking 2 ice cold beers.

When I was about 30, marijuana began to have a powerful aphrodisiac effect. I spent the next 10 years getting stoned and having sex with women I treated as objects. When they weren't available,

I'd masturbate for hours. I was terribly unhappy, alone and depressed. I made one last attempt to kill the pain by adding cocaine to my marijuana and alcohol mixture. Two weeks later I found myself at a cop spot with a prostitute at midnight and I knew I needed help. I "stood at the turning point." I got "the gift of desperation" and said to myself, "I'll do anything to get clean." My therapist gave me the number of Marijuana Anonymous.

My first year in the program was difficult. The addict in me wasn't going to give up without a fight. I surrendered, kept coming to meetings, and let the addict fight with shadows. I went out many times that first year, but my sponsor was great and I kept coming back. I began to put my sobriety first and reconnect with my higher power.

Now, almost 5 years later, my life is better in every way. I "keep it simple." I live "one day at a time." I practice "live and let live." I try to be "loving and kind to all." I'm much less angry and I'm not alone. I have friends which is something I haven't had since the early days of hanging out in the club house with Rich. I treat women like people, not like toys to be discarded when I get bored with them. I make more money and I try to help another addict whenever I can. ▲



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