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A NEW LEAF

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An Amends to my Brother

by Anonymous

When it came to step 9, I decided to write out my initial offering of amends to each person on my list. Even though many of my offerings were made in person, I found that the writing helped me to get my thoughts together. Here is what I wrote to my brother. I've changed names and written anonymously to protect him and honor the traditions.

My dear Brother,

This letter to you is intended as a "Ninth Step" in the twelve-step addiction recovery program of M.A. I'll try to explain a little more of what that actually means. As you probably are aware at some level, I continue to attend MA meetings and do service work in that organization. But the core work of my own recovery from addiction is my own slow progress through the twelve steps. All the most important progress I have made away from constant pot use, extreme depressive cycles, and general lack of direction and joy in life, I attribute to this 'step work'. I think I read the steps to you at some point when we were talking about my MA program. But it is not important that you understand the twelve steps in great detail, only that you know that that's what I'm working on here.

By doing the preceding eight steps under the guidance of my sponsor in the program and under the care of a higher power (God as I understand God, if you will), I find myself working my way through the ninth step. The previous step, step eight is: "made a list of all those we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all". Step nine is: "made direct amends to such people except when to do so would cause harm to them or others". You are one of the people that I feel I harmed in my addiction. I'd like to tell you as much as I can about how I think that happened. I'm open to hearing anything you have to add that I may not remember. And finally I want to let you know that I'm now living in a way that has opened my heart completely to doing anything possible to make amends for the harm I have done. I take this step with huge love for you, but it's important to understand also that I'm doing it essentially for myself, so that I can be confident that I've 'cleaned up my side of the street' as it were, letting go of any resentment towards myself or anyone else sufficient to drive me towards any active addiction again.

More than anything my addiction helped support years of depression cycles without much hope of improvement (in fact the depression was consistently getting worse). That put me in a very weak position to consistently be the kind of friend and brother to you that I wanted in my heart to be. It's hard to remember all the times I may have been trying to talk to you when stoned, or wishing I could go get stoned, or in the haze of marijuana hangover. As much as I accept these facts of my addiction, and am not out to berate myself, I also have to be honest about having robbed our relationship of what, in my heart, I always wanted to give it...my whole self.

I also feel like my ego was often spun up into a place where I sometimes thought I knew what was best for you, and gave you fairly angry, know-it-all advice about things. When you would reach out to me about your own struggles and fears, I often didn't know how to react in the kindly way that I wanted to and instead angrily assumed that you were trying to bring me down. All of that constituted a deficit in the simple kind of listening, showing up for you, and loving you that I know would have been a much better thing to offer. As much as I wanted to, I didn't know how to live that way.

In particular, I feel like I sometimes let you down around the emerging and then ongoing news around your struggles with Hannah and your subsequent divorce. I essentially wanted to support and love you through it all, and I feel like I sometimes did the right thing, but I was too caught up in my own selfish reactions and the mess of my own life to show up in a consistent way in that role.

When we were on that trip together in California, and you began for the first time to talk to me about the problems in your marriage, I was smoking a lot at that point, and I got pretty freaked out by the news. I was angry about the whole thing. I thought you were trying to hurt me, which is absurd. My reaction contained a lot of thoughts about what I deserved, and not nearly enough room for just plain simple love. Among other twisted ideas, I thought I somehow deserved to have your marriage work out for my sake.

I remember getting more stoned just as soon as I could after that, and pushing you to do the same when we were staying at the mountain house. Honestly, it was how I reacted to everything at that point in my life: get stoned, and if possible, get someone else stoned, so I could feel better about doing it myself. I always tried to play it up as festive and bonding, but it had become more and more often about running away from the most important things in life out of fear, confusion, and resentment. Later on, I also became deeply resentful of Hannah and may have fed that resentment into discussions I had with you, in ways that were not particularly healthy, or helpful. I wanted to show up for you in a much more supportive, less angry way. I'm really sorry that I couldn't do that.

I know that it may be weird to have me offering to make amends for all of this, but you should know that I'm completely comfortable in my offer, and that it's not a limited time thing. It's good for the duration, and it doesn't matter much what you ask of me, when you ask it, or even whether you ever do ask it. I'll do it gladly, and with love.

My own plan for making amends is to show up for you and the others I love however I can, with my whole sober self for the rest of my life. But I'm *always* open to more specific ideas about making amends.

It's also important to me that you know that I'm completely open to talking honestly about any part of my use or addiction with you at any time; none of my addiction and recovery story needs to be any kind of secret. I'm done with secrets among folks I love, and to whatever extent possible, with anyone.

With all my love,
(Your brother)



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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We send approximately 681 copies of *A New Leaf* each month to subscribers in 31 states

2004 MAWS CONFERENCE SUMMARY REPORT

THE 2004 MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICES (MAWS) CONFERENCE was held Memorial Day Weekend in Irvine, California. Hosted by District 5 (Orange County/San Diego), the weekend started with a late evening meeting at Concordia University's outdoor amphitheatre under the stars

DISTRICT REPORTS

The M.A. Online community officially became District 13 of Marijuana Anonymous. A standing ovation was given on the result of this unanimous decision. Many congratulations to those dedicated individuals who helped make this possible. The fellowship as a whole is bigger and stronger than ever. Many districts have thriving Public Information programs and Hospital and Institution panels. Most have full meeting schedules and regular donations to MAWS. Three districts participated in the First Annual Women's Day in M.A. and four districts attended the annual M.A. Unity Day. However some districts do struggle. A common issue was the filling of service positions at the meeting level and district level, where some members have had to fill positions long after their commitment expired. A lack of sponsors to guide newcomers to the next levels of sobriety appears to be a program-wide concern. District 7 (South LA/South Bay) will host the 2005 Convention in Torrance, CA. District 10 (Inland Empire/San Gabriel Valley) will host the 2005 Conference in a location yet to be determined. District 6 (North LA) volunteered to host the 2006 Convention and District 4 (Western Washington) volunteered to host the 2006 Conference.

WORLD SERVICE AND TRUSTEE REPORTS

The MAWS Trustee President, Lisa T., completed her four-year term as a Trustee and expressed humility and fulfillment in being of service, and was recognized for her outstanding contributions, and will continue to be of service as the Executive Secretary of A New Leaf Publications. The Trustees held three successful meetings during the year and saw the Trustees, the Office Manager and master type-setter (Tom White) work to complete the action items generated for the 2003/2004 Conference.

ANLP has undergone significant staff changes in the last year. We express thanks to Debra C. and Paul G. for their service and welcome Mike L.B., Lisa T., Peter S., and Eric M. to the ANLP staff. We give gratitude to Wendy M. and Carol Mc with helping with ANLP's accounting. ANLP printed 4000 copies of *LIFE WITH HOPE*. The ANLP editor would like better communication with district bureau chiefs to consistently produce a quality publication. Subscription rates were modestly raised across the board. ANLP donated \$2000 to MAWS.

After six incredible years as Office Manager, Terri R. stepped down from the position. Tom W. became the new Office Manager in April and worked together with Terri at the 2004 Conference. It was the first year the OM answered the 800 Phone Line and went very well, but added 10 plus hours per month to the position.

The Trustee Treasurer reported the financial health of MAWS is cautiously stable. A record donation of \$6000 from the 2003 Conference in Portland kept MAWS from dipping into prudent reserves and offset below average donations from most districts. Some districts continue to turn in their tax reports late causing extra delays and fees to MAWS. MAWS is financially solvent for the upcoming year, but must get more 7th tradition donations from districts to be able to expand the program further.

The Literature Trustee, Charlotte M., reported that the *LIFE WITH HOPE* workbook project is well under way. Each district was assigned a STEP to work on and happily reports some districts have already turned in drafts while other districts have formed ad-hoc committees. Five more pamphlets were translated to Spanish and the *LIFE WITH HOPE* on CD project has a green light to move forward.

Conference Summary continued...

We'd like to thank Alan B. for his four years of service, and though only for a short time, his role as 800 Line/New Meeting Outreach Trustee. 62 new meeting packet applications were mailed out to twelve different states and three countries. 26 applications were returned and as a result, eight new orphan meetings have been formed.

The Webmaster Trustee, Bean L., who is stepping down after two splendid years of service, reports that all the M.A. pamphlets have been converted to a printable .PDF format in English and can be accessed by all on the www.marijuana-anonymous.org website. In addition, six pamphlets in Spanish are also available on website in .PDF format.

Mar-anon reports that since its creation in January 2003 it currently has 32 members on email lists. The Office Manager and Online Trustee reported that about 50% of incoming calls and emails are by loved ones and all are referred to Mar-anon. Mar-anon began a weekly online meeting on Tuesday nights at 6pm PST. Mar-anon's email address is maranongroup@yahoo.com.

GENERAL SESSION

The work of the conference is largely accomplished by five subcommittees. They meet individually during the weekend and then report back to the combined conference body in "general session." Committees offer recommendations and sponsor motions, the later of which are voted upon by the conference body.

FINANCE recommended that districts host various fund-raising events to be fully self-supporting and to help MAWS maintain a healthy program for all addicts and newcomers. A motion that all districts using the MAWS tax ID # begin using the new Treasurer's report, Appendix F, was passed. Other motions passed including that for new districts who use the MAWS tax ID #, they should be able to donate at least their fair share of the required accounting expenses with the minimum donation of \$300/yr being required; and that all existing districts using the MAWS tax ID # meet this requirement by the 2005/2006 financial year.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES discussed large issues such as: changing the word "GOD" to "HIGHER POWER" in all literature, and changes to meeting formats regarding chip-taking requirements. Motions were passed regarding minor changes to the service manual; and that all MA members be informed that while MAWS recognizes the autonomy of each meeting, the providing or selling of non-MA material at meetings is in conflict with the Traditions of Marijuana Anonymous. The motion to change the suggested meeting format in the service manual regarding chip-taking requirements failed. No action was taken on changing the word "GOD" to "HIGHER POWER."

H&I/PI: A motion was passed to accept June 17, 1989 as the official date of Marijuana Anonymous formation.

LITERATURE worked primarily on the LIFEWITH HOPE workbook and LIFEWITH HOPE on CD projects. Motions addressing various issues regarding the creation of LWVH on CD passed. A motion for each district to assign a representative to the LWVH workbook Ad Hoc committee also passed.

ONLINE reported it will have the necessary merchant transaction information to sell ANLP publications online. The motion to publish LIFEWITH HOPE in separate chapters, (files) in PDF format on the MAWS website to be made freely available in this form, passed.

MOTIONS from the floor included:

- ✓ To change actual language in LIFE WITH HOPE regarding social functions couple an event with some type of recovery based activity. (PASSED)
- ✓ Place a 5-year moratorium on motions to change LIFE WITH HOPE. (FAILED)
- ✓ MAWS to entrust the TRUSTEES to form an Ad Hoc committee to oversee the creation of a Marijuana Anonymous basic text. (PASSED)

Ratification of upcoming 2005 and 2006 Conferences and Conventions. (PASSED)

TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

Jim S. and Bonnie V. were the only Trustees still completing a term; thus their spots were secure. Elections were held for the remaining seven positions and the following were chosen: Judy S., Vicki A., Terri R., Kevin B., Eric R., Mark I., and Peter S. First alternate: Will N. Second alternate: Michael VV.

The trustees were encouraged to actively engage in completing their duties and to enlist the help of the delegates and membership at large. Thanks and gratitude were afforded to those who helped make the conference an overwhelming success. The Trustees met to determine assignments, and the weekend concluded with cheers from all.

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Share on Step 8

Making a list of the people I have harmed reminds me of my selfishness. Exhuming the laundry list of those I have hurt, stepped on, or abused is a gut-wrenching introspective process. Making this list brings me closer to my HP. I need a constant reminder of the way I was, in order to change my ways. In the last 6 months I have strayed from the program...I have not made it to regular meetings. Although I am coming up on 2 years, I probably worked my best program when I was in my first year. I've noticed that my positive behavior is regressing. I am making the same mistakes and hurting the same people, irregardless of my sobriety. Working the Steps is all about coexistence; I call it "rehumanizing". The more I adhere to the program, the easier it is to live with myself and others. The higher my threshold for coexistence, the greater capacity I have for Love.

Chris M - District 5

BIRTHDAYS

Are you celebrating a birthday in the next few months? Or have you celebrated one in the last 30 days and not seen it in *A New Leaf*? If you live in a District area of MA, let your Bureau Chief know about it. If not, tell us! For contact information, see the box on page 2.

District 5

Chris G.	8/21/90	14 years
Lisa T.	8/21/90	14 years
Coleman G.	8/13/92	12 years
Chris M.	8/10/02	2 years
John McC	7/21/91	13 years
Gary T.	7/07/02	3 years

District 7

Alex L.	6/23/88	16 years
Sam K.	5/05/91	13 years
Gary S.	6/23/92	12 years
Jason G.	6/30/93	11 years
Alex M.	6/21/98	6 years
Bhavato	7/12/02	2 years
Mark	6/02/02	2 years
Scott	6/03/03	1 year!

District 2

Lucia W.	8/13/01	3 years
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District 6

Dancin' (Vegas) Tom	8/25/89	15 years
Fellowship Mary	8/03/94	10 years
Sean P.	8/21/96	8 years
Eric B.	8/05/00	4 years
David D.	8/24/01	3 years
Craig H.	7/28/89	15 years
Jim S.	7/05/95	9 years
Morning John	7/23/96	8 years
Pete G.	7/21/97	7 years
Pete B.	7/04/01	3 years
Eric E.	7/27/01	3 years
Mike D.	7/2000	4 years

District 3

Julie F.	8/18/96	8 years
Pam J.	8/12/96	8 years
Chris A.	8/26/02	2 years
Mike G.	8/05/00	4 years

Celebrating 235 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!



Dr. Know, M.D. (The Marijuana Doctor)

"Faith is the only medicine. My higher power does not intervene because he has given me free will. It is up to me to embrace the light or turn my back on him," says an addict. A very thought provoking statement indeed.

We have all gone to great lengths to get high, but what are some of the greatest lengths you have gone to make an ammends to someone you've harmed. I think this is crucial for all addicts working the steps who have not come to #8 and #9 yet. Please submit your contributions to you bureau chier or email to ANLP directly.