



## Are You Sober? by Michael H.

Back on an August night in 2006, when I had been sober for approximately 30 days, I found myself in a minor dilemma. I watched a guy at an MA meeting take a chip for 60 days of sobriety. During his "acceptance speech," he mentioned the glass of wine he had partaken in the previous week. I called my sponsor later that night and told him of what I had witnessed. I explained that I had stopped using all mind-altering substances including alcohol, and I urgently inquired as to how this fellow at the meeting could have had a drink a week ago, yet still he could claim he had 60 days of sobriety. My sponsor's answer was simple, and it's something that I'll never forget: "If he thinks he's sober, he's sober."

This statement cleared up a lot of things for me. Although it didn't change my definition of sobriety, it allowed me to focus on myself and stay out of other people's way. I knew in my heart that I was truly sober, and if this guy wasn't yet ready to get honest with himself, it was none of my business.

Sobriety means different things to different people. This is dangerous territory for an addict.

I remember the days leading up to my eventual surrender and subsequent long term sobriety. I was attempting to reason with my shrink. "Sure," I pleaded, "I

start filling my body with drugs the moment I get home from work, but I remain sober throughout the day until then." I was alluding to my "responsible" lifestyle, without mentioning the fact that, indeed, from the time I returned home from work until the time I went to sleep, I was indulging to the point of inebriation—every day. Luckily, my shrink didn't buy it. He informed me that although technically I was abstinent

**"It was time to get rigorously honest with myself and stop looking for loopholes."**

throughout the workday, I still had drugs in my system from the night before, and at the very least, I was constantly thinking about getting home to start the madness all over again.

This wasn't true sobriety at all. In my heart I knew it, but I was desperately trying to hold on to the only thing I knew—the daily obliteration of my senses and relentless suppression of my feelings. I even expressed trepidation of what a sober life might entail, to which my shrink promptly responded, "You don't even know what it's like to be sober." How grateful I am that I happened to be in a particularly vulnerable place in my life at the

time. However small the crack of light, I was able to see it, and it wouldn't be long now until I experienced sobriety for the first time since childhood.

To me, sobriety is too often confused with ABSTINENCE. For years now I have watched people come to the rooms of MA with the sincere desire of freeing themselves from the grips of marijuana, and yet they still want to continue drinking. Conversely, I have witnessed folks walk into AA meetings intent on sustaining their marijuana use. I don't exclude myself from this group.

I had no intention of abstaining from alcohol when I first began probing MA. If I could just get my marijuana use under control, I figured I would go on drinking as usual. Those who wrote the meeting formats had obviously anticipated this common thought. Therefore, in every meeting I attended, I heard the phrase "sobriety from all mind-altering substances — INCLUDING ALCOHOL." The point was being driven home to me early and often. I very quickly realized that in order to do this thing honestly, I was going to have to give up alcohol too. Just think of this phrase: "I'm SOBER, and I'm DRINKING." It doesn't quite make sense, does it? Well, it didn't to me, and I could ill afford to be half-assing what I viewed as my last chance at life. It was time to get rigorously honest with

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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 reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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[www.marijuana-anonymous.org](http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org)  
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## Are You Sober?

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myself and stop looking for loopholes.

You see, I have the disease of addiction. Of the many symptoms my disease encompasses, one is my abnormal reaction to a normal substance. Sobriety cannot be a question for me; IT HAS TO BE AN ANSWER. There can be no "sobriety from this" or "sobriety from that" for me. That is simply abstinence. Sobriety is an umbrella that covers any substance which has the potential of helping my life to spiral out of control.

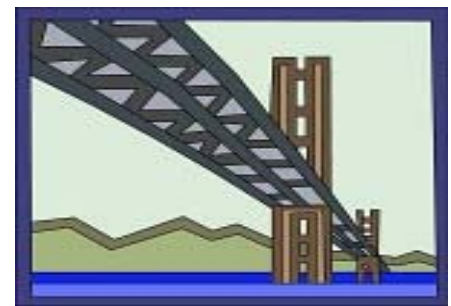
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## My First Step Each Morning— by Steve R..

My road to recovery has meant embracing many of life's lessons, some of which I ignored while traveling the rutted highway of addiction. One lesson that has continued to unfold for me involves the 7th Step. I've discovered that humbly removing my shortcomings takes time.

I spent 36 years ignoring my character assets. If I don't keep my motorcycle in good operating condition, things start breaking down. That's what happened to my assets. Many of them broke down to the point they became defective. Being a habit-making machine, I developed some bad habits that included indulging my shortcomings. Steps 4, 5, and 6 helped me identify and unveil my less desirable habits, my character defects. In Step 7, I asked my Higher Power's help in

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repairing or removing them. This has proven itself to be no easy operation.

My sponsor described the 7th Step as the process step. That has proved true for me. I read my prayer while gathered with my sober brothers for our traditional "7th Step in the Park." I felt an immediate shift in my perception. But a consistent, lasting, change in my behavior has required steady maintenance. MA's, Life with Hope, made that quite clear, "our timetable for having our defects of character removed was not the same as God's timetable. Humility is a simple request and a letting go" (p. 34). My way of letting go requires that I make "a simple request" regularly. That's why I read my 7th Step prayer nearly every morning. I'd like to share it with you.

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## a new leaf

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### **My First Step Each Morning** *(continued from page 1)*

There is One Infinite Mind from which all things arise.  
It is the Mind of God. Mind is in, through and around me.  
It is the Only Mind there is and every time I think I am thinking with It; I am using It and It me.  
I use it now to keep fresh before me this moment of my high resolve that I remain ever faithful to the words I now speak.

I realize and speak the truth when my experiences, feelings, and emotions misdirect me or tempt me to lie.  
I see and experience goodness erasing pain, discomfort and dis-ease.  
I forgive even what appears unforgivable.  
I surrender to an Inner Peace rather than be seduced by fear, anger, or desire.  
I am free from any thoughts of lack or limitation; there is more than enough.  
I repel despair, low self-esteem, and self-deprecation with positivity, confidence and faith.  
I honor my character when it would seem far easier to sacrifice it through manipulation, capitulation, and dishonesty.  
I love my neighbor when I am inclined to judge him.  
I surrender lust in the name of love.  
I surrender anxiety in favor of my own peace.  
I move forward rather than stand still and procrastinate.  
I live boldly, not hiding behind fear.  
I am grateful and love myself.  
I see, sense and feel the joy in all that surrounds me.  
I accept all aspects of me and set boundaries that support my highest and best good.  
I soar to the heights of my own being even when it's more comfortable to stay small.  
The love within me cancels out everything unlovable so that I am peaceful in God's love.

I am allowing my ego to align with the Greater that is within me.  
I allow old unproductive habits and ways of being to die and participate in the birth of a new more loving me that more perfectly expresses my truth and purpose.  
I no longer accept anything that inhibits my enlightenment or blocks the flow of God in my life.  
I abandon my old story line. I am writing a new story – right now.  
I let go of anything and everything that hinders my growth.  
I accept more. I am more. I am open to something great and new.  
I give thanks for the new and gratefully release the old, right now, this moment.  
And so it is!

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### **Are You Sober?**

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Webster's Dictionary offers up a definition of sobriety: "habitual freedom from enthusiasm, inordinate passion, or overheated imagination; calmness; coolness; gravity; seriousness; as, the sobriety of riper years." I have never seen it put quite so eloquently. To describe my disease as an "inordinate passion" or an "overheated imagination" is to speak volumes of truth, not to mention that it's rather funny to me. To describe the daily

spiritual reprieve that I get from sobriety as "habitual freedom" is absolutely beautiful and true as well. "Coolness," "calmness," and "gravity" are also apt ways of depicting the fruits of sobriety.

According to the many longtimers I've talked with, the definition of sobriety has always been a point of contention. My personal definition—"free of all mind-altering substances"—has worked for me. However, if YOU think YOU'RE sober, I guess you're sober. ▲

### **Roving Reporter Question September**

Which Step did you find most difficult and how did you feel when you completed that Step?

#### **Step Nine**

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

#### **Tradition Nine**

M.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

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Specific Duties of the Field Editor:

- Primary discretion as to the selection and editing of articles printed in ANL, as well as the general design and layout of ANL;
- Be involved in the actual selection of articles for publication;
- Will have input on whatever editing is done to submitted articles, which will receive only the minimum amount of editing possible. (i.e.: spelling, omission of obscene or foul language and minimal grammar corrections).
- Select Topics for the Roving Reporter (make up the questions based on topics of recovery)
- Manage and maintain contact with Bureau Chiefs from the Districts to collect articles, news of local events, and "birthdays."
- See to it that ANL-P works in concert with MAWS in publicizing the various MAWS events, such as the annual MA Conference and the annual Convention.
- See to it that condensations of various required MAWS reports be published for members' information.

## birthdays

Celebrating 167 years of sobriety in this issue!

Want your sober published? Let your Bureau Chief know or see ANL contact information on page 2.

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