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# A NEW LEAF

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## What a Long, Strange Trip

by Jeff M.

Early in my sobriety people who would share at meetings that they were Grateful Potheads would really bother me. What was there to be grateful for? I just lost my best friend Mary Jane plus I had to go to all these meetings and share my feelings, YUK. I didn't like it at all. However, the more I stayed sober, the more I began to realize why they were grateful.

The first time I got drunk I was 14 and at my brother's wedding. I didn't just drink a beer, I drank a six pack and got commode-hugging drunk. I didn't like being sick, but I did like being buzzed.

When I was a JR in High School I took my first "real" drug, they were pills called downers. I loved the feeling downers gave me except they made me stumble and drool all over myself. Then I found marijuana. I got the feeling of the downers, peace, love and happiness, but without the stumbling and drooling.

I didn't think of stopping or slowing down until many years later when my four year old daughter came up to me cradling a zig zag paper between her thumbs and forefingers with another zig zag torn up inside as if it was marijuana and said, "Roll me a doobie Daddy." I immediately stopped smoking in front of her. It didn't occur to me to stop smoking completely, just to stop smoking in front of her.

I eventually was smoking pot every day. I tried quitting every morning, but something would happen which would give me a reason to smoke. A guy would cut me off while I was driving. A good song would be on the radio. The best reason of all: the day ended in a 'Y', and I would smoke. The harder I tried to stop, the harder it was to stop.

My job announced they were going to start random testing. I white-knuckled it for 3

months, drank more and passed the test.

I picked up right where I left off. I thought about stopping every time I got high. I would wonder what life would be like without pot. I didn't even realize all I had to do was put down the joint to find out.

The day before the Thanksgiving weekend I went up to the company clinic to have my eyes checked as required by my job. While reviewing my chart the nurse made a comment about not being drug tested in several years. A normal person would have taken this as a hint and not smoked for the holiday weekend, just in case the random drug testing wasn't quite as random as they say. Not me, I kept right on smoking every day.

My first day back to work I was called in for drug testing. I was so scared I did the typical addict prayer, "God if you let me pass I'll only smoke on the weekends." Yeah, like I hadn't tried that before on my own. Later in the week I got a phone call from the company doctor. He asked me if I knew why I failed the drug test. I took a drag from the joint I was smoking and told him "No clue, Doc."

To keep my job I had to go to an outpatient clinic. My first day at the clinic they had a panel from another 12 step group. The more I listened, the more I realized I had heard their story before. A week later the outpatient clinic had a panel from Marijuana Anonymous. Hearing them share their experience, strength and hope was like hearing MY story told to me by a perfect stranger. I knew I was in the right place and I had found what I needed to relieve my obsession for marijuana. At last I had found my home. I could see miracles happening in my life and I started having reasons to be grateful.

So, as much as I hate to admit it, I too am now a grateful pothead.



## 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

## Relieve Me of the Bondage of Self

by Terry H.

I first heard "I'm an ego maniac with an inferiority complex" at an MA meeting. I can relate to this statement. I seem to be on both sides of a spectrum of self-esteem. At times I think of myself as "holier than thou" or some great knowledgeable person that others look up to and at other times I think of myself as a worthless loser. I have learned through program that my self-centered thinking is at the core of this dichotomy. During the first 37 years of my life I felt responsible for much of what was going on outside of me and developed a belief that I could control it. For the past 9 years I have been learning that I am responsible for my actions and God is responsible for the results. I must focus on the right action for me and not let fear or desire for results affect that focus. I am trying to learn humility, to let go of my self-centered egotistical thinking, see others as fellow travelers on this spiritual path and recognize God as the One in charge. My bad habit of judging people (including myself) has diminished as I work the program. I am slowly learning to accept myself, others and life as they are instead of expecting them to be something I have conceived. Life continues to turn out so much different than my ideas and plans of how I wanted it to be and this is very painful at times. I am, however, experiencing levels of joy and fulfillment that I could never have dreamt of, and it is clear now that God knows what is best for me and my loved ones. Today I like myself most of the time. I still do experience periods of self-hatred and inflated ego, but they are less frequent now and the duration is shorter. MA is saving me from the bondage of self and I am grateful.

"Your proper concern is alone the action of duty, not the fruits of the action. Cast then away all desire and fear for the fruits, and perform your duty."

The Bhagavad-Gita

## Put Recovery First

by Pam L.

Put recovery first. What does that mean? It means so many things. To me it means taking time to go to meetings instead of making excuses not to go. It means taking suggestions and following them. It means working the steps with a sponsor, taking responsibility for our own recovery. It means taking on service obligations and following through with them. It means willingness to go to any lengths. What does that mean? My sponsor told me to chase after my recovery with as much determination and energy as I used to get high. She also said, "This is a very simple program. All you have to do is change your life completely." Simple—YES. Easy—NO!!! It looks like putting recovery first and going to any lengths involves lots of "taking." My sponsor also told me this is a selfish program. We have to want recovery and have *take* action and to do whatever it *takes*. No one can do our recovery for us. All of the sayings and clichés I've heard, phrases I call *bumper sticker philosophy* at first seemed corny and trite to me. I now know they are more than just sayings—they are TOOLS. And when used, they can be lifesavers. They are positive affirmations injected with decades of wisdom from "Keep coming back," to "one day at a time" and so many others. They are not mere clichés, but hold meaning and power to those who embrace them and live by their principles. There is so much to take and so much to gain. Happy, Joyous and Free are We!



# The Roving Reporter

For this month the Roving Reporter asked, "Why is it important to be of service?" Here is what a few had to say:

Being of service is important because without it the fellowship will not survive. Service benefits those walking in the door as well as those in the room to receive them. *Drea, District 11*

It is important to me because I tried everything else for over 8 years trying to hold onto some length in sobriety. Service work humbled me to understanding that I AM NOT GOD! It helped me to genuinely get to know other people on a service, then personal basis. It teaches me to remain of service to others so I can stay out of my own head for a while. It reminds me that I was once a newcomer and what was impressive to me at that time about the program of attraction, rather than promotion. Besides...I get to travel and meet new and interesting people from all over the world at conferences and conventions!! *Trisa, District 11*

For me, it's important to be of service for a few different reasons. The first one is, it gets my mind off of myself. When I have a job to do, I'm thinking about my job, not all my baggage. The next reason service work is important for me is that it keeps me working a program, which is the best way I know of to stay clean. The last reason for me is that it keeps me humble. To serve others means not doing "my thing". So I get out of my own head and do for others. *Serena M./Panda, District 11*

I find that being of service to others keeps me out of my ego, helps to eliminate the self-serving ME I once was. One way I can be of service is when I pick up the phone and see how another recovering addict is doing, instead of focusing on ME, my life, my s%&t, all the time. When I serve at the meeting or district level, it reminds me that I am not in my recovery alone and that, like a phone call, I may be able to help someone I don't know stay sober just for today — at the very least it keeps me sober just for today (reminding me I am not in this alone). Little things like making a commitment to make coffee, or making a commitment to bring an item or a person to an event feels good and teaches me what being self-less is all about. And, finally, finding ways to be of service is a 'no-brainer' - go to any meeting and ask what positions might be open, or grab a flyer, and commit to taking another recovering addict to the event - that's all it takes to be of service. - *Anonymous*

It gets me outside of myself & out of self-pity. Without service there would be no MA & we'd all be stuck trying to figure out other ways to get clean & sober. MA has restored my life to a healthy functioning level & I want to help others to overcome their addictions because it makes me feel good. *Gratefully, Brandon, District 11*

Because when you help others, they owe you something. HaHa just kidding. How about this instead: Service directs our attention away from our own petty problems and allows us to help others heal as we ourselves heal. Amen and Amen. — *Eric M, District 11*

It's a way to express gratitude for having a new life, and you can't have it unless you give it away. -- *Mike F., District 11*

Because it helps ME stay clean. It's one of those oxymoronic things: It's selfless (helping still suffering addicts, starting and/or secretarying meetings, doing 12 step calls, etc.) and selfish (helps me stay clean) at the same time. — *Tom W., District 11*

Service is the primary food group for my spiritual nourishment. Through service, I get to experience the depths of my co-dependence and selfishness, and the heights of compassion for others and myself. As I move from being outcome-driven, trying to control how others perceive me, to being spiritually motivated, I am more readily at peace with the my virtuous nature. As I continue to PRACTICE being of service to others, I am less and less anxiety-ridden, and I am less and less disappointed in the outcome of my efforts, because I'm letting go. Without this growth, I would be trapped in the small mind of the abused and neglected, people-pleasing child I grew up with. Instead, I'm learning to love being of service, and love those I serve. As my willingness to serve deepens, I waste less energy on expectation, worry and other low-level emotions, and being active in service can now nourish me. This nourishment gives me a new capacity for self-love, and the peace of mind to remain in joy as an example to others, one day at a time. *Anonymous*

There were people in the rooms when I first arrived talking about their feelings, their struggles, their realizations, and what works for them. This made me feel real, like there were people who understood that which I believed I hid, but probably really didn't. This gave me a way to connect and to let go and recover. Service work gives me an opportunity to repay the gift, and to learn to let go even more, especially at business meetings!!! In the words of a wise brother in the program, "Do you think God helped you get clean just for yourself?" — *Su, District 11*

For November, the Roving Reporter asks, "How long did it take you to work the 12 STEPS?"

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For Land and Online Meeting Schedules Go To:  
http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org

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## COINCIDENCE? I don't think so

When MA first got started in the East Bay (Berkeley & Oakland) back in early 1987, it was called Marijuana Addicts Anonymous. MAA grew quickly and before long, we had four or five meetings a week. Back then, there were no MA chips. We knew that through using pot, most of us had "lost our marbles" - so when clean dates were celebrated, we handed out marbles. On each sobriety birthday, we got back one of our lost marbles. We painted the time right on the marble with fingernail polish. I remembered this several weeks ago when I was looking for a ball to play in a foosball table. I was looking for a large marble, and lo and behold, there was a large dark-colored marble with "18" written on it in fingernail polish. Here I have 18 years of recovery, and I had just found my 18 month marble. Now you too can look at marbles in a new light. Through our recovery in Marijuana Anonymous, we get the opportunity to get back some of our lost marbles.

--by Susan B., District 11



## 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 1

Tina D. 9/23/03 2 years

### District 12

John L. 10/21/03 2 years  
Kathy L. 10/12/04 1 year!  
Owen 10/17/98 7 years

### District 5

Tom G. 10/17/93 12 years  
Jason 10/29/93 12 years  
James V. 10/29/98 7 years

### District 7

Electra 6 years  
Javonne 2 years  
Lynn 9/11/01 4 years

### District 11

Denise 9/23/03 2 years  
Drea 8/27/02 3 years  
Mike C. 9/18/84 21 years  
Susan 10/09/86 19 years  
Pat 7/23/95 10 years

### District 3

Judy F. 10/10/93 12 years  
Doug F. 10/15/97 8 years  
Jim B. 10/15/01 4 years  
Mel G. 10/31/87 18 years  
Ron M. 10/22/89 16 years  
Steve M. 10/04/93 12 years  
Thomas B. 10/04/02 3 years

**Celebrating 183 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!**