



I Had a Spiritual Problem

In the mid- to late '60s drugs, including Cannabis, were getting a lot of attention in the media and at schools. It caught my attention, spurred my interest. A young man in the neighborhood brought a quantity of Marijuana back from Vietnam. An older boy let me try some.

I remember seeing patterns on the garage floor and feeling as if I was in a different place. That started an obsession with chemical experimentation. The obsession continued, and is still hanging around. I didn't have

much interest in alcohol through high school, but after high school I found a lot of reasons to avoid Marijuana. I reasoned that alcohol was socially acceptable, available, and reliable, among other things. So I decided to substitute booze for weed.

Problems started right away, coworkers even suggested that I smoke pot in order to drink less. Eventually a friend took me to AA. It helped, but I still had the obsession with weed. Somehow I heard about

M.A. and I tried it. What I discovered was that I had more than a desire to get high. I had a spiritual problem.

No amount of material things, pleasures, recognition, etc. could fix that. When I'm focused on spiritual things, it doesn't matter how much or how little "stuff" I have, or what people think of me. I'm continuing to learn and grow, trying to practice a new way of living.

by Anonymous



The Truth Is . . .

I was a marijuana addict. I did not smoke it like most people I know; it was not a little hit here and a little hit there; it was full on smoking, you know maybe what I'm talking about, hit after hit until it was gone. If I was somewhere I couldn't smoke I might try to sneak in a hit, but guaranteed I was obsessing about every minute until the moment I could get out of there and start smoking again. I had a couple friends who smoked like I did and we fiendishly networked to get high, sometimes scraping pipes and doing ridiculous things for tiny amounts of smoke.

I was definitely an "escape smoker." Truth be told, though marijuana tended to make me paranoid, remorseful and anxious, I couldn't imagine not doing it. I didn't like my thoughts and feelings and tried to anesthetize my feelings with weed.

Somewhere in the late 1980's it stopped working and being an addict, I added in other substances. That didn't work either. I was finally at that turning point where I couldn't continue and had no idea there was a possibility I could stop. Fortunately a good friend knew about MA and steered me there and I found hope, support and friendship. I also, importantly, discovered that I was not alone.

I worked hard in the program of Marijuana Anonymous. I did the steps, got a sponsor, and sponsored others. I did service, including panels, commitments, and outreach. I have remained clean and sober from marijuana and all mind altering substances for coming up on thirty-two years.

My experience is that it is not the best idea to say how well one's life is going because not everyone is

doing as well yet. That being said, almost everything I have wanted in life has come to me, sometimes not exactly in the way I expected it, but my life is good. The honorific "Doctor" before my name is real, I earned it after being clean and sober for around eight years. I am tremendously grateful to MA, and to the specific people who reached out, and sometimes carried me along with them.

I am writing with the purpose of sharing the truth of my story in the hopes that it brings something to someone who might benefit from it. Each day, even the rough ones, was an improvement and the quality of my problems got better and better. I am more than happy to share this gift, because in my mind that is what it has been.

Thank you.

by Dr. Anonymous

ANL's Purpose

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. MA is not affiliated with—and does not endorse or accept contributions from—any outside enterprise.

We are reaching out to districts to update the ANLP Liaisons and birthday lists. Additionally, district/group service representatives, including but not limited to those serving as ANLP Liaisons, are encouraged to stay in touch: chiefs@anewleafpublications.org

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MA Santa Cruz Style – How We Began!

What I love about MA meetings is that there are certain readings I can always count on for sure to occur – the Serenity Prayer, How it Works (the 12 Steps) and Why it Works (the 12 Traditions) and the Twelve Questions. I can also trust to hear other cannabis addicts share their experience, strength and hope, and that the meeting often ends with the Unity Prayer. While each group is autonomous and can add extra readings, I can always count on the 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions being read at each and every meeting.

The 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions are the glue that keeps us together, the how and why it works! The MA Service Manual outlines a meeting script guide that states: “The 12 traditions are a guide for the group.” As a group we can neither be sustained nor survive with only one and/or the other. We must have both to be whole.

MA, now thirty two years old, is a fairly young 12 step recovery group for cannabis addicts. Much of our operations, our MA approved literature – our *Life with Hope* textbook, pamphlets, workbook and the regular *A New Leaf* newsletter – are a result of years of committees and subcommittees and MA districts coming together for a common goal to carry its message to the newcomer. And also, with an honest and sometimes desperate drive and desire to continue to stay clean and sober; individually and collectively.

Our literature offers us an innovative universal language which many of us longed for in the mid- to late 1980's, before Marijuana Anonymous was formally founded in June 1989.

I remember this time well, as I still have my original 1986 *Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Big Book* and AA 12 and 12 books; as evidence, it is marked up in ink with ‘alcohol’ crossed out and ‘pot’ written in

its place. I also replaced ‘God’ with ‘Goddess’ and ‘he’ with ‘she’.

In the late winter of 1987, five of us, all from AA and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) co-founded a group called ‘Marijuana Smokers Anonymous’ in a historic coffee shop in Santa Cruz, California. We all had one common thread: we were solely and only marijuana addicts who had lost control of any moderation or control of our marijuana use. We had newfound recovery through the open arms of progressive AA and NA meetings in Santa Cruz County. We embraced the steps, traditions and regular meeting attendance, and most of us were clean and sober with sponsors who suggested to us to also refrain from all mind altering substance including alcohol.

The main reason I was motivated to be clean off of cannabis was because I could not control my anger, my irritability and discontent with being a full-time single mom living below poverty. I had been homeless from 1981–82 and again 1985–88. I was hurting my son with my rage, and my inability to provide for us. I wasn't able to attain my goals of completing college. Parenting classes, psychotherapy and multiple blue collar trade jobs could not get me clean from chronic pot use. I was a low bottom cannabis addict.

I, and at least one other member of this early MA group, regularly expressed gratitude that we had been given ‘the gift of desperation’ and following suggestions of our elders came easily for us both. We believed our sponsors and addiction counselors when they told us that alcohol was a drug and/or a mind-altering substance which would release our addiction all over again, if we continued to drink, even occasionally.

I like to call my addiction to cannabis ‘the sleeping dragon’ which can easily awaken, become active again

and burn the shit out of me, my loved ones and my life. I did get burned, but luckily not to the ground, as I have been graced with merciful recovery despite relapses over the last 35 years of my PTSD healing and recovery from cannabis addiction. I can honestly say that of the 35 years, 33 of these years are cumulative clean and sober 24-hour periods. The longest number of consecutive years for me was 13 ½ years, and on October 9, 2021, by the grace of Goddess and MA, I will have 3 years of consecutive clean and sober time. I don't have another relapse in me.

Accountability is essential and humbling as I come back to these rooms over and over to 'save my ass and not my face.' Most of my relapses have been briefly devastating; lasting usually 3–5 weeks each.

In MA we say, 'keep coming back', because the truth is the majority of us addicted to cannabis will relapse. It does not mean we should nor give us permission to do so. It is just the truth; cannabis is a very seductive drug. This is why I'm going to keep telling my story, so that I can reach all the suffering addicts who are too ashamed and too afraid to come back and/or who continue to use cannabis despite their desire not to.

I learned in my early AA and NA meetings a common and universal

belief system that if we allowed our cannabis addict mind to even think we could drink, let alone partake in an occasional beer or glass of wine at weddings or holidays, it could or would eventually lead us back to our drug of choice, marijuana. While I respect MA's singleness of purpose, I always love to say 'we did not start MA so we could drink on the weekend or snort coke on holidays.'

And so, as an old timer in Santa Cruz, I have great respect for and honor AA and NA. AA is 86 years old this year, founded in 1935; that's 56 years older than MA. I like to think of AA as our 'GrandMother' and NA, founded in 1953, as our 'Mother' program.

Some of us old timers (at least I do) still use the AA or NA 12x12 and/or the AA *Big Book* or NA *Basic Text* as companions to our *Life with Hope* text and to our own fairly new *Life with Hope Workbook* ©2005.

This has been my practice in recovery, sponsorship and service. For years before MA wrote the *Life with Hope Workbook*, I worked the NA workbook. I can relate to NA language as an addict. NA also uses more contemporary language in contrast to the old English Christian language of the *Big Book* and 12 steps of AA. Respectfully, how to work the 12 Steps are precisely and exactly outlined in the chapter "How it Works" in the AA *Big Book*. This is how and where MA developed and formatted its workbook columns for

working the fourth step inventory: resentments, fears, sexual inventory and other harms done in our *Life with Hope Workbook*.

That original 1987 Santa Cruz group, was born in the pre-1989 Loma Prieta earthquake coffee shop 'Cafe' Pergolesi. This meeting endured as "The Happy Campers" until 2018. The next time you're on the Pacific Garden Mall in downtown Santa Cruz, come on down to the renovated Lulu Carpenter's across from the town clock. Have yourself a coffee or tea, read the history poster on the wall. Sit down at one of the wooden tables and think of the five of us that started Marijuana Anonymous in this surfer/stoner haven town of Santa Cruz. This story is also a little tribute to the first out lesbians and gender non-conforming women of MA.

Santa Cruz is the original home to 6 newly formed daily womens/non-binary meetings started 3/14/2020 as a result of Shelter in Place on Zoom; part of MA District 3.

**KEEP COMING BACK,
NO MATTER WHAT.**

In love, unity and service,

by Antonia (35-year member of MA)

A Message from A New Leaf Publications:

Through your submissions and support, A New Leaf newsletter promotes ideas and inspiration to our recovery community. Want to know how you can support our mission?

- Contribute a story from your experience, strength, and hope.
- Become an ANL Liaison and make sure anniversaries and stories from your area are represented.
- Start a writing group and support others in expressing their wisdom to the wider fellowship.

Yours, A New Leaf Publications

Marijuana Anonymous Worldwide

For a complete listing of all meetings visit
WWW.MARIJUANA-ANONYMOUS.ORG

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Step Eleven

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

Tradition Eleven

Our public relations policy is based upon attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all fellow MA members.

Celebrating 103 Years of Sobriety!

District 4	District 7
Theo 10/18/1987 34 yrs	Linda T. 9/7/2019 2 yrs
District 5	District 12
Mike G. 9/28/2015 6 yrs	Luigi P. 10/15/2016 5 yrs
Scott 9/28/2014 7 yrs	Diane G. 8/17/2007 14 yrs
District 6	District 27
Joel G. 10/6/1989 32 yrs	Beth F. 10/17/2016 5 yrs

See your sobriety date here!

If your sobriety date has occurred, has not been published, and is not older than 45 days, please submit it in the format you see on the left. You may tell your local GSR, ANLP Liason, or e-mail to: chiefs@anewleafpublications.org

More on Birthdays!

At your MA meetings, consider making a brief report on birthdays during each monthly group conscience meeting.