A New Leaf

Marijuana Anonymous Creative Publication

Murphy's Law

Written by, Ian H.

I started smoking weed at thirteen, 1996. A few years after my parents divorced and my father began his transition. I didn't have words for what I was feeling, so I found something that turned the volume down. By the time I enlisted, I told myself the Army was going to fix me. For a few years it almost did — I stayed clean through basic, through my first duty station, my first deployment. Then I found Spice. Synthetic, untraceable, sold at the gas station off base. I used it whenever I could get away with it. I told myself it wasn't real weed, so it wasn't a real problem.

When I got back from Afghanistan, the drinking and the Spice stopped being something I did and became something that ran me. It didn't happen all at once. It was a slow closing of a door — fewer places I could go, fewer people I could see — until one morning I realized I couldn't leave my house. Not wouldn't. Couldn't. The anxiety sat on my chest, and under it was a depression that told me this was just who I was now. That was the bottom: not a single wreck, but a life quietly shrinking to the size of one room.

I found Marijuana Anonymous years after. I got over a year sober working the program, and I hit the wall every atheist hits in these rooms: Step Two. A power greater than myself. I couldn't picture a god, and I wasn't going to fake one to make the program comfortable. What I found instead was Murphy, my dog, who died two years ago. She was with me through my first months out of uniform, when I didn't know how to be a civilian or a person who wasn't using. She didn't care about my rank or my discharge papers or what I'd done overseas. She just needed me to get up, feed her, walk her, be present for something other than myself. That was the first power greater than myself I ever trusted. It still is.

I'm twenty-five days sober right now, after a relapse. I'm not going to dress that up — it's humbling to be back here after having real time. But long-term recovery, I'm learning, isn't a straight line; it's coming back. I still think of Murphy when Step Two comes up in a meeting. I don't need a name for God. I needed something that loved me without conditions long enough to teach me how to do it myself. Twenty-five days in, that's still what I'm working from.

The Bridge Back to Myself

Written by, A.B.

I spent years
mistaking survival for living.
Calling numbness peace.
Calling escape freedom.
Calling destruction a friend
because it stayed
when everything else left.

Addiction did not arrive all at once.
It came quietly —
a whisper,
a comfort,
a promise that pain could disappear
if I disappeared first.

And for a while,
it worked.
Until the things I loved
began slipping through my hands
like water.

The mornings became heavier.
The mirrors became harder to face.
And somewhere deep inside,
a small voice I thought had died
kept saying:

"This is not the end of your story."

Recovery was not a lightning bolt.
It is smaller than that.
Softer.
A thousand tiny decisions
made in the dark.

Getting out of bed.
Telling the truth.
Drinking water.
Answering the phone.
Sitting with discomfort
instead of running from it.

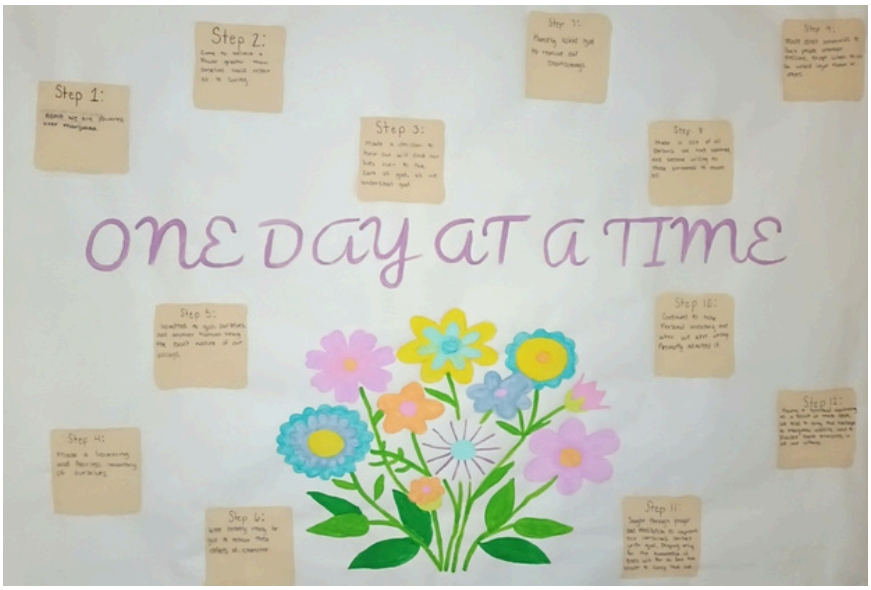
Some days recovery feels heroic.
Some days it feels impossibly ordinary.
But healing, I learned,
is often quiet work.

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A New Leaf celebrates MA member creativity and unifies us in our shared experience as cannabis addicts in recovery. The articles contained within this publication 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—any outside enterprise.

One Day At A Time

Created by, Megan M.



The Twelve Pre-Steps of Online Meetings

Written by, Liz H.

Sometimes it can be hard to dive right into Twelve-Step culture, and often online meetings are the first taste people have of the Twelve Steps. Many of us struggle with social anxiety, and we can feel nervous and afraid to engage, even over an online format. To address this, I have written some pre-steps for the newcomer who isn't quite ready to begin the Twelve Steps just yet. They include steps towards finding a sponsor. They are non-official, and non-canonical; I made them up with the help of my life partner, Rob J.

My preferred 12 Step group is Marijuana Anonymous, which can be accessed only online in my location. However, these pre-steps could be easily adapted to any Twelve-Step group that has an online presence. These pre-steps are meant to be repeated over and over again, in a skill-stacking manner. For example, once you complete pre-step 1, you repeat this pre-step again and again until it is comfortable for you to do it on a regular basis. Only then do you try pre-step 2, and so on. There is no hard schedule you must stick to; take these pre-steps at your own pace, just as you do with the official Twelve Steps.

1. Go to a meeting: This step is the most important step. If you're hearing about these pre-steps for the first time from inside a meeting, then great! You've already completed a step! Going to a meeting can be nerve-wracking, especially for the first time. You can have your camera off and not use the chat function. Just listening is an important beginning to the process of recovery.

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The Bridge Back to Myself

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And slowly,
life is returning.

Not perfectly.
Not all at once.
But honestly.

The laugh that came naturally again.
Music sounding beautiful
instead of distant.
A full night's sleep.
Hope arriving without permission.

I still carry scars.
But they are beginning
to not shame me.
They remind me
that I survived something
that tried to convince me
I was beyond saving.

I wasn't.
And neither are you.
There will come a day
when you realize
you are no longer fighting
just to stay alive —
you are building a life
you genuinely want to wake up to.

Keep going.
Even now.
Especially now.

The person you are becoming
is already reaching back
through time,
grateful you didn't give up.

One moment at a time
and one choice at a time.
Remembering that in life
you might get further,
if you learn to stay.





Miracles Happen

Written by, Still Doug

It has been said; there are two kinds of people in the world, those who believe in miracles, and those who don't. I believe all of God's will in our lives are miracles. Recently I was sitting in a beautiful garden in Salem, Massachusetts.

I see this garden as a miracle, as it has been there since the 17th Century. Not long ago this was a place I would get high, on a lunch break from work. But in August I sat where I used to, with only a homemade sandwich and water. It actually felt good not to get high.

As I enjoyed the stunning garden and my lunch, I felt God's presence. This lunch break was His will not mine! Returning to work I proudly walked in the front door. When I was high, I crept into the back and washed up in a mop-sink, changed my shirt, used mouthwash, eyedrops, and aftershave.

Today, I am not a slave to that behavior. For me that's a miracle. If you're new or coming back, please stay with us.

LET THE MIRACLE HAPPEN.

The Twelve Pre-Steps of Online Meetings

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2. Introduce yourself in the chat: Break the ice by introducing yourself in the chat box, if it is permitted in the meeting. You can just include your name and your pronouns. If you are feeling brave, include where you are located, and how much sober time you have! This pre-step establishes you as a willing participant in the meeting.

3. Turn on your camera: Even if you turn your camera on for only a few minutes, this is an important step towards being truly present in an online meeting. Be sure to follow the rules of the specific group, such as no smoking, drinking, or eating while on camera. Apart from being clothed, there is no need to be well-dressed or well-groomed; no one will judge you for your appearance.

4. Share your sober time: Many online meetings have a portion when we celebrate milestones in recovery by asking fellows to share their sober time. This is important for recovery; it shows that the meetings work, and that recovery is possible. When it comes time to share sober times, pipe in and tell everyone how much time you have.

In Twelve Step rooms, no one will ever make you feel ashamed by how little time you have, even if you have just one day, or a few hours, or even if you are under the influence of your DOC right now. When your sober time is celebrated by others, accept the praise; you deserve it!

5. Volunteer to read: Many online meetings have a portion at the start of the meeting where we ask volunteers to read passages from the official literature. When the Chair is asking for volunteers to read, put up your hand! This step is meant to give you a positive, low-pressure experience speaking in an online room. You don't have to worry about what you will say; it is already written out for you. This counts as Service and is often the very first Service role that newcomers take on in the 12 Step rooms.

6. Share!: This pre-step is a very big deal! Almost every meeting has a "sharing portion" of the meeting where fellows can speak openly about recovery. During this portion, put up your hand, wait for your turn, and then share with the group. For your very first share, you can write out what you will say before the meeting begins, and even practice it in the mirror. Your share does not have to divulge everything in your life; you can just state your name, and how much sober time you have, and, as they say, "take another 24". If you are feeling nervous about sharing, you can share that in your share! Start small and build up the "sharing" muscle until this pre-step becomes easy for you.

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The Twelve Pre-Steps of Online Meetings

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7. Stay for a business meeting: Most meetings have regularly scheduled business meetings, normally occurring once every month. Plan to attend a business meeting and see how the Twelve Step meetings work behind the scenes. Just attending the business meeting is enough for this pre-step.

8. Join a group as an official member: This step does not need to be repeated over and over like the other steps. It is important to be an official member of at least one group, but it can be overwhelming to be an official member of too many groups. My personal recommendation is a maximum of three. To prepare for this step, you should choose a meeting that works well for your schedule, and that you enjoy. Ask if you can join the group as an official member; ask in the chat, or in the "parking lot" which occurs often after the meeting has closed. Usually, you must attend a business meeting to officially join, but sometimes just reaching out to the secretary is enough. Common "perks" to being a member are access to group chats outside of the meeting on WhatsApp, Telegram, or Signal, and the ability to sign up for service positions in the future.

9. Put your phone number in the chat box: It sounds simple enough, but this can be an anxiety-inducing step. Most of the time, no one will reach out to a phone number put in the chat. But sometimes you will receive a text from a stranger, saying that they saw you in the meeting and want to reach out for fellowship; usually it is someone who resonated with your share, if you shared. Connection is the opposite of addiction. Making a non-sponsor friend in recovery is critical to keeping sober. If no one reaches out to you, you still have completed the pre-step.

10. Message or call a phone number from the chat box: This pre-step is the natural follow-up to pre-step 9. Choose someone who you feel you have something in common with; perhaps you resonated with their share, perhaps they are located nearby to you geographically. Send a text message to them. The first text should be clear as to who you are: mention the specific meeting you found their phone number in, and give your name, and why you felt they were someone you could relate to. Even if the person doesn't reply to your text, you have completed this pre-step.

11. Let people know you are looking for a sponsor Many meetings have a sponsor-sponsee connection portion, in which people can declare that they are looking for a sponsor, or if they are available to sponsor. To complete this step, you can announce at this point in the meeting that you are looking for a sponsor. If the meeting doesn't do this, you can simply state it in the chat box. A note on sponsorship: this is a peer-driven program.

Sponsors are not trained professionals; they are just someone who has gone through the same difficulty as you in addiction and wants to help you through the program. It is very normal and common for your first sponsor to not be a "good fit" for you. There is no shame in changing sponsors; it is a matter of trial and error to find a good sponsor that works for you.

12. Reach out to someone who says they are available to be a sponsor: Similar to pre-step 11, when someone declares that they are available to sponsor, or be a temporary sponsor, reach out! It's okay if that person doesn't end up being your sponsor. Repeat pre-steps 11 and 12 until you have a sponsor that you love and are happy with, and with them you can begin the official Twelve Steps.



A Poem For The Addict Still Struggling

Written by, River B.

Hour one: put it down

Hour two: tell someone

Hour three: get to a meeting

Hour four: it's Higher Power I'm seeking

Hour five: listen, journal, cry

Hour six: you gotta stay alive

Hour seven: stay with the pack

Hour eight: flush the stash

Hour nine: okay, now breathe

Hour ten: stay in your seat

Hour eleven: first step, remember

Hour twelve: it starts with surrender

What's So Romantic?

Seven haiku questions based on my recent USING dream

Written by, Jon B.

What's so romantic
about confusion and haze?
Stupid's DOPAMINE?

Allergic Stuffing
packed in with slo-mo chutzpah intensity glow?

Secret ego world
singular life sucking ruse
boosting while wasting?

Paved over dreamscapes
for dispensary charades
Lying to my soul?

Abandoned feelings
packed in a bowl smoked away
each day forgotten?

Minimal progress
for momentary "insight"
delusion triumph?

Doubled down on hits,
tokes of hopelessness grandeur devolving in cess?

A World of Flowers

Written by, Tracy A.

Where are my flowers? I planted them with my trusty bong by my side, tilling the soil in defiance of brutal desert. My roses, lilies and posies of all types bloomed while I toked.

What happened to my lawn and the trees I nursed with care in the searing heat? Green grass, shade and fragrant flowers were the world I created for myself, a world of my own making.

But the guy who paid for those flowers got tired of competing with my bong. So, I left him, and my lawn and gardens, and ran far away. I wanted to toke in peace.

The only thing I took with me was my weed. Then it stopped working. I was alone in a cold, dark place, and all the weed I could ingest, smoke and vape brought no light. That black hole swallowed me for years.

One day during relentless rain and frigid wind, a tiny, tired voice inside me called out: "You are not dead yet! Try to live."

So I tried. My most precious companion went in the trash. Newly found friends cheered me on through sweats and chills and sleepless nights. I love my new friends. They tell me that weed will never work for me again, and I believe them.

The flowers, lawn and trees I left are all dead now, I hear. The desert took back its land as if I had never existed. The world I made is a memory.

Today I noticed the hydrangea are in bloom with huge blue globes appearing up and down the street. Rhododendrons tower above azaleas, lighting up the sky with bright colors. Strawberries, buttercups and aster cover the naturally lush ground.

These are the world's flowers, but they are also mine because I am in the world. No toil is required of me to admire their beauty. They belong here and, now, so do I.

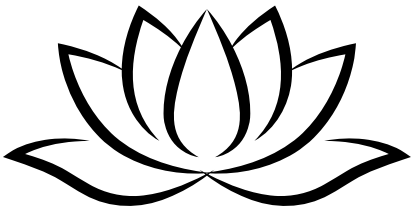


Growing Lotuses in the Blossoming Garden of my New Life

Written by, Emma S.

In my old life of addiction and escapism, I was deluded to think that running away would solve any problems; on reflection it kept me stuck in the same place as life moved forward without me.

With the support of MA literature and fellowship, within myself I have found new ways to cope with existing problems, and due to my emotions being available I have been confronted with some truths yet, the power I used to give away is available to me to solve those problems and stay surfing on the sea of life.



I am grateful to those who went before me and those who are alongside me in recovery, so that I am building my life day by day, instead of letting each day pass by.

"I am actively growing lotuses to admire, instead of being transfixed by the desire to sit still and eat them."

Congratulations!

DISTRICT 2 - SAN FRANCISCO, CA

JOEL G.	10/06/1989	37 YEARS

DISTRICT 3 - SF SOUTH BAY, CA

ANTONIA	10/09/2018	8 YEARS
JOHN L.	11/01/2006	20 YEARS

DISTRICT 5 - ORANGE COUNTY, CA

DENNIS D.	10/28/2011	15 YEARS
DEREK P.	10/01/2013	13 YEARS
FARRAH F.	10/08/2021	5 YEARS
JAMES V.	10/29/1998	28 YEARS
MICHAEL G.	10/26/1990	36 YEARS
RYAN C.	10/05/2021	5 YEARS

DISTRICT 6 - N. LOS ANGELES, CA

LANCE P.	11/08/2009	17 YEARS

DISTRICT 7 - S. LOS ANGELES, CA

KELLY Y.	10/22/2025	2 YEARS

DISTRICT 8 - NEW YORK METRO

FRAN B.	10/12/2024	2 YEARS
HEATHER T.	11/13/2002	24 YEARS

DISTRICT 11 - OREGON

SUSAN C.	10/09/1986	40 YEARS

DISTRICT 22 - COLORADO STATE

JARED W.	10/07/2019	4 YEARS
LILIA S.	10/02/2022	11 YEARS
RACHEL C.	10/13/2015	16 YEARS
RYAN K.	10/13/2010	4 YEARS

DISTRICT 27 - INDEPENDENT

SUSAN L.	10/30/2022	4 YEARS

BRYAN, TEXAS

PAUL W.	09/09/2019	7 YEARS

PEORIA, ILLINOIS

SARA P.	11/18/2025	1 YEAR!

LIVONIA, MISSOURI

JUSTIN H.	11/03/2022	4 YEARS



Share your Soberversary

If your sobriety birthday has occurred within the last two months, we want to celebrate your year(s) of recovery!

Please submit it by the 1st of the month, with your Name, District or Location, Sobriety Date, and Number of Years, to MA12.org/Birthday

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