

A NEW LEAF

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Giving Up Control

by: Bonnie V., District 6

I am a marijuana addict. I don't remember choosing to be an addict, I certainly didn't desire to be one, but somewhere along the line the pot got stronger than I was, and it took control of my life.

I came into this 12 step program to stop smoking pot, and get my life back under my control. The program helped me quit, and as I did my step work my life came back renewed and invigorated. It was no longer controlled by the pot, but the interesting thing was that I still didn't control it either. I've learned in my recovery that control is an illusion, or perhaps more accurately, a delusion.

Control seems to be a big issue for addicts. It gives us a false sense of security: If I'm in charge, I can have things my way, and that will make me safe and happy. It's a big lie we tell ourselves, for it's impossible to control people and events (though we often mistake our influence or manipulation for control). This was one of my earliest lessons in sobriety. There's a second, bigger lie in that old belief as well: the idea that security and happiness depend on outside events. Boy, that one kept me jumping through more hoops in my using days than I like to admit. You know, things like if only I could get this job, this raise, this date, this thin body, this primo bud, life would be perfect and I would be happy.

Sometimes I would get what I wanted, and I would be supremely happy -- for a while. Like the high from pot, I would feel great for a while. And

like pot, eventually the feeling would wear off, and I would need something more to feel good again.

I might have gone on riding this merry-go-round all my life if it hadn't been for the pot. When the good feelings from the pot wore off, I didn't just need more, I needed a lot more. And more, and more, and more. Until everything else in my life

"Something more powerful than me has succeeded in keeping me sober, and that same something is doing a better job running my life now than I ever managed."

started to go to hell. I had a soft bottom compared to some, but it was a dark and bleak and lonely place I don't ever want to go back to, and it was enough to bring me to the first step. I admitted to myself that I

had no control over pot, that I was in fact powerless over it, and I needed help.

I didn't realize it then, but not only was I doing a first step, I was making my first surrender in a series of lessons about giving up control.

Surrender and giving up are negative words in our culture. They bring up images of defeat and humiliation. It's scary to

admit that you're not in control, to step back and let go of the reins. And I think the reason it's so frightening is because we don't have faith that anyone's going to

pick up those reins and steer us to safety. We're afraid we might be all alone out there, that giving up control means abandoning ourselves to the whims of

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Thoughts on Unity

by Todd E., District 7

On November 16th, the fellowship of Districts 5,6,7 and 10 joined together for a "Unity Picnic." Attending this great event and hearing Carol Mc. share so eloquently about the early days of MA and what the program means to her has led to personal meditation about UNITY and what it means to me.

I guess in my mind, unity breaks down into four different categories: unity among individuals, meeting unity, district unity and fellowship unity.

Perhaps the hardest of the categories is unity among individuals. Unfortunately, I still suffer from controlling, fearful

character defects that lead me to speak and think in judgment of others. Of course, if everyone would do things MY way, there wouldn't be any problems. Rather than take care of my side of the street and accept others for who and what they are, I express an opinion on everyone or everything. The more recovery I experience, the more I'm convinced that our fellowship is only as strong and healthy as our personal relationships within the fellowship. Not that I have to be close friends with every member or allow people to treat me improperly. But can I treat others with pity, patience and

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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 necessarily reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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Published by
A NEW LEAF Editorial Board

Patricia G., chairman
Loren N., treasurer
Carol Mc.

Send all articles, inquiries and
correspondence to:

A NEW LEAF
P.O. Box 4314
North Hollywood, CA 91607

E-mail: ANuLeaf@aol.com

Fax No.
(818) 990-2980

Editorial Phone No.
(818) 505-1408

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Thoughts on Unity

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tolerance, regardless of where they are in their spiritual journey?

Then there are the meetings that might operate in ways with which I disagree. A good example is a meeting that brings in speakers for whom pot might not have been the drug of choice. At this point, I have to make a decision: should I carry "my contempt prior to investigation" through this speakers' share and into the ears of my fellow MA members, or should I stop focusing on the differences and start listening to the similarities? I have to remind myself that my disease is cunning, baffling and powerful. It tells me that I don't have anything in common with the alcoholic or cocaine addict, when in fact, the only I DON'T have in common is the drug of choice. The disease is exactly the same. It is important for me to hear people that are living proof of the miracle of the Twelve Steps and Traditions and that carry strong messages of recovery, regardless of fellowship. I have to remember that before MA, marijuana addicts were often shunned from other meetings because of their marijuana addiction. Should I practice the same intolerance toward addicts of other drugs within the rooms of MA?

I have had the good fortune of not only being involved with District 7's DSC, but also helping to plan an MA Convention, and am convinced of the necessity of sharing our knowledge, energy and love with those in other Districts, both bigger and smaller. It is the perfect chance for me on the District level to practice MA's principles in my affairs. My disease wants me to isolate, not only as an individual but within my District, rather than reach out and work with other Districts to help to tackle the issues at hand. Thanks to the hard work of several of people within District 7's DSC, we have established a sign-up list for folks willing to share their experience, strength and hope at speaker meetings, H&I panels and P.I.

panels. The sign up lists were disbursed among Districts 5, 6, 7 and 10 and v... ultimately make their way back to District... where they will be compiled and distributed to secretaries and panel chair-people within the four districts as a resource. What a joy it is to hear a person from another district share at a meeting! This is only one small way in which we can work together to make the whole stronger.

Finally, there is fellowship unity. Southern California, the home our fellowship, is a great testing ground for this. Imagine the collective energy could the various fellowships ever work together. I have had the opportunity to speak on Public Information panels in Los Angeles at various high schools, and often speak alongside members of CA, NA and AA. It is amazing how much I have in common with, and how much strength I can gain from, other addicts. While we as a fellowship have much to learn from "grand-daddy" AA and other fellowships that have come before us, we also have to have the room to make our own mistakes and establish our own traditions.

To people that have criticism for the way things are run on the World Service level, I say, "Climb aboard." The best way to help this fellowship is not by tearing it down, but instead by building it up, from the inside. That is why I have gotten involved on the World Service level, as a Trustee Secretary. Being of service is a great way for me to experience MA's unity firsthand. I have been privileged to see, through service, how our fellowship saves and changes lives and how we learn from and mature through very natural "growing pains." I am blessed to be able to work with newcomers, and then watch as those newcomers go on to take service commitments and work with others themselves. May our unity continue to bond us and move us forward on all levels! R

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!

Eric H.	Nov 28	1 yr!
Glenn K.	Nov 29	1 yr!
Mike H.	Dec 7	4 yrs
Ari	Dec 8	6 yrs
Dave T.	Dec 9	2 yrs
Lisa S.	Dec 7	3 yrs
Gary R.	Dec 10	6 yrs
Mary K.	Dec 17	2 yrs
Brett P.	Dec 17	2 yrs
John L.	Dec 15	12 yrs

Sebastian B.	Dec 16	1 yr!
Matt C.	Dec 21	2 yrs
Jay C.	Dec 23	2 yrs
Mike G.	Dec 24	5 yrs
John G.	Dec 25	5 yrs
Suki G.	Dec 26	2 yrs
Gary G.	Dec 31	2 yrs
Joe D.	Dec 31	2 yrs



Giving Up Control

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chance. Or worse yet, that it means giving over control to someone who will harm us, take advantage of our helplessness, use us to further their own agenda.

That was how I felt about giving up control, and to be honest, I still have times when I feel anxious and uncertain about letting go. But the key is pretty simple, if not always easy. It's about having a spiritual connection. It's about coming to believe in a higher power. It's about learning to trust a loving and caring universe to look after your true best interests, better than you or any other human ever could.

For me to even start giving up trying to control things in my life, I first had to believe there was something out there to hand it over to. Some people do this with a leap of faith, and find themselves landing safely. My journey was more a series of hops, trusting just enough to test a little here, try a new way there. The results were encouraging enough for me to keep hopping forward. As I did my step work, I began having more and more confidence in the existence and reality of my higher power. I knew the program worked for others, and I was beginning to see it actually worked for me too. Something made it work, and it wasn't me. I know, because I tried to stop using pot on my own, and failed miserably. Something more powerful than me has succeeded in keeping me sober, and that same something is doing a better job running my life now than I ever managed. So I call that something my higher power, and I keep working on improving my contact with it.

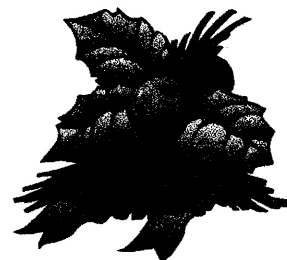
At the same time that I was developing a relationship with my higher power, I was also learning about the process of addiction. I kept hearing about the use of drugs to stuff feelings down, about the emptiness inside all addicts that we try to fill up with outside things like relationships and money and parties and of course more and more drugs. I realized that this was why I needed control. I needed to fill the empty, hurting place, so I crammed it with things that worked temporarily. And God help anyone who got between me and what I needed to stop hurting. I became a controller to ensure my supply of "feelgoods". And I was very, very good at it, only I never anticipated that the "feelgoods" would stop

working. And they did. They'll always fail in the end, because they don't cure the condition, they only mask the symptoms until the illness is too far gone to be denied.

So now, through the program, my reading, my step work, and my sponsor, I'm learning to treat the real disease, the empty hurting place inside that can only be filled from within. It's a disease of the spirit, so the cure comes from spiritual healing. And that's what the program is for, at its core. Along with my fellow addicts, I'm learning to reconnect with my spirit, to have a clear and open contact with my higher power, to let go control and trust that I will get what I truly need (which may be different than what I think I want), to learn from those who have gone before me and teach those who follow after me, and to follow the path that my soul leads me on. R

Happy Holidays!

from the Editors,
Directors and Staff of
A NEW LEAF



MA WORLDWIDE...

DISTRICT 1 - SAN FRANCISCO P.O.Box 460024 San Francisco, CA 94146 (415) 522-7373	DISTRICT 6 - L.A.COUNTY (NORTH) P.O.Box 2433 Van Nuys, CA 91404 (818) 759-9194	DISTRICT 10 L.A.COUNTY (EAST) P.O.Box 94400 Pasadena, CA 91109 (909) 787-6020 (818) 583-9582
DISTRICT 2 - EAST BAY P.O.Box 8354 Berkeley, CA 94707 (510) 287-8873	DISTRICT 7 - L.A.COUNTY (SOUTH) P.O.Box 3012 Culver City, CA 90231 (213) 964-2370	DELAWARE VALLEY CHAPTER P.O.Box 194 Sadsburyville, PA 19369 (610) 622-9243
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DISTRICT 4 - SEATTLE P.O.Box 1509,539 Queen Anne Ave N Seattle, WA 98109 (206) 548-9034	DISTRICT 9 - SANTA CRUZ P.O.Box 3196 Santa Cruz, CA 95063 (408) 427-4088	NEW ZEALAND MA Service Centre P.O.Box 74-388 Newmarket Auckland, New Zealand (09) 846-6822
DISTRICT 5 - ORANGE COUNTY 358 S. Main #215 Orange, CA 92668 (714) 999-9409		

WORLD SERVICE OFFICE

P.O. Box 2912, Van Nuys, CA 91404 (800)766-6779

Marijuana Anonymous World Wide Website
<http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>



The Third Annual Marijuana Anonymous Convention February 14-15-16, 1997 San Diego, CA

- Tentative Agenda -

(specific starting times for registration, workshops and meetings to be announced)

Friday, February 14
4 pm - Registration opens
Dinner on your own
Opening Meeting
Speaker: Az A. (dist. 5)
Late Nite Comedy

Saturday, February 15
Breakfast
Workshops & meetings
Banquet dinner
Keynote Speaker: Rocky (dist. 7)
Dance

Sunday, February 16
Breakfast
Closing meeting
Closing Speaker: Libby (dist. 8)
Raffle

- Hotel Registration -

(Hotel is not included - you must book your room separately)

Handlery Hotel & Resort • 950 Hotel Circle North, San Diego (800) 676-6567

Room Rates: \$69.00 per night plus tax - 1 to 4 people per room

Reservations must be made by February 1st, 1997 to receive Convention rate

You MUST say you are with MA Convention to receive this rate!

You may stay Sunday night at the special Convention room rate if you wish



- Convention Registration Order Form -

Individual Events -

	Cost	# of Tickets	Total
Friday meeting & Late Nite Comedy only	\$10.00	_____	\$ _____
Saturday Breakfast Buffet & Workshops only	25.00	_____	\$ _____
Saturday Banquet Dinner only	25.00	_____	\$ _____
Saturday Dance only	10.00	_____	\$ _____
Sunday Breakfast Buffet & Meeting only	15.00	_____	\$ _____
Meetings & Workshops only (no food)	25.00	_____	\$ _____

(All events include unlimited coffee, iced tea & ice water - soda available in Hospitality Room)

Full Package Includes: -

(Before January 1st - save \$20.00) All events	\$65.00	_____	\$ _____
(After January 1st - save \$15.00) All events	\$70.00	_____	\$ _____

T-Shirt Orders -

Pre-Convention price (\$15.00 at the convention)	\$12.00 each	→	\$ _____
Size desired L (qty)_____ XL (qty)_____ XXL (qty)_____			

Send order form & check for total amount payable to:

MA Convention

358 S. Main St., Suite 215, Orange, CA 92868

Total Registration Cost

(Total all above items ordered) → \$ _____

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Your anonymity will be protected on all materials

Dinner Choice:

Chicken (qty)_____ Veg. Lasagna (qty)_____

Will you require babysitting during workshops? ☐ Yes

Ages of children _____ ☐ No