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A NEW LEAF

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Like A Regular Person

By Jesse

Happy Thanksgiving. I was "just" hungry, not ravenously hungry like Thanksgivings past because I hadn't wandered off with my cousin to smoke a couple of joints to get high before my Grandmother and Aunts put the spread before us and I stuffed myself because the pot gave me the super munchies and I ate food I didn't even care for. Like yams. But Grandma melted those sweet little marshmallows and drizzled them over the yams and it gathered in clumps when I dug the spoon in deep and I just grinned at my cousin and he grinned back at me.

Then after we ate my cousin and I would go out to "walk it off" and smoke a couple more joints to take away that stuffed feeling and before you knew it, I'd be eating a turkey sandwich and Jell-O with fruit in it and a big slice of pumpkin pie with whipped cream... then another joint out back, away from the house, to get rid of that bloated feeling.

In fact, the whole holiday season had always been cyclical that way — eat until I couldn't eat any more, smoke a little to ease that about-to-burst sensation, get the munchies, get stoned from tokin', then hit up the gift baskets of homemade cookies and loaves of banana nut bread and brownies. Hell, I remember more than one Halloween after our friends' kids went to bed we smoked so much dope we ate every single piece of candy in their trick-or-treat bags and laughed and laughed because we thought that was the funniest thing we've ever done. I'm glad I didn't have to be there to explain it to their kids the next morning. But it sure was funny that night. Yeah, right.

But this year I was "just" hungry. Like a regular person. Because I hadn't wandered off and gotten high before dinner. *I wanted* to, but I didn't blah, blah, blah... you know why we all gave up dope — this is my Thanksgiving story. Anyway, I didn't get high but I ate like I was high because that's what I thought I was supposed to do. That's what I'd always done for as long as I could remember.

Afterwards I wanted a joint really bad, mostly just to take away that stuffed feeling. Maybe just a bowl would be nice to get a little buzz and just kick back and relax after that grossly uncomfortable feeling was gone.

But I didn't have any pot. When I decided to quit, I was serious. No pipes in the glove compartment, no little pinches in a baggie tucked away, no one-hitters, no roaches in a clip, no joints hidden under the floor mat just in case. Nothing. Nada. Zip. Zero. You're SOL, pal.

So I went to "walk it off" without any pot but a stomach so full it hurt. When I got away from the house I stopped, braced my hands against a tree, bent over, and puked up my entire meal. I puked until I strangled on the food I'd just shoved down my throat. I puked until my gut hurt and my esophagus was raw. I puked until there was nothing left to puke and I had the dry heaves. I heaved so violently, if I hadn't clung to that tree I would have fallen down.

When I was finished I was exhausted and had to catch my breath. The taste in my mouth was disgusting. Worse than waking up at two in the afternoon after smoking dope and eating burritos and smoking more dope and eating pizza and smoking more dope and eating lo mein and not brushing my teeth before falling asleep on the couch with paper wrappers and cartons and beer bottles trashing my living room. Again. Ok, it was always trashed.

I used the sleeve of the sweater and wiped the vomit from my face. That looked great. And smelled great on cashmere. Then I noticed there was vomit down the front of my sweater too. My arm was shaking. I really... really, really needed a joint to calm down. Where was my cousin when I needed him?

Jail. Busted for dealing. There but for the grace... thank God I had an asthma attack that night. Asthma and smoking 14-16 joints a day? Smart. All I did was hack and cough and try to breathe as smoke swirled around my head. Then I'd just suck back another and call Pizza Hut.

I straightened up from the tree and noticed vomit had splattered on my khakis and calfskin oxfords. I wasn't a kid anymore. How was I gonna sneak back into the house with puke on my clothes? I used to worry that somebody would smell marijuana on me, and now this?

I could have just left. I had my keys and could have got in my car and driven away. But regular people don't just sneak away from their family on Thanksgiving Day.

Potheads do. I thought deciding to stop smoking dope would make all these problems go away. I thought I'd become a regular person and everything would be easy. I thought I'd just live like everybody else does and do things like regular people. I think I remember at the meetings they said deciding to quit and actually quitting was the easy part. Trying to live like a "regular person" would be hell. Those old-timers know their stuff.

So what was I gonna do? Go back in the house where my family was and let them see that I'd vomited on myself? Let them see that I was shaking, that my nerves were on the very edge, that I couldn't sit still because I was jenseing for a hit? Kids were in there. Aunt and Uncles. My Brothers. My Sister. My Parents. My Grandmother.

Or was I gonna get in my car and drive away and hide? Hide my recovery from them like I hid my addiction? Like I "thought" I hid my addiction. If I knew now what they knew then...

And if my family, these people who love me most, won't take me back and be patient while I become a regular person again, who will?

I headed toward the back door. I dread Christmas.



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

TWELFTH STEP SHARES

Step 12 is About Service

by Craig

The Twelfth Step states as a matter of fact that a spiritual awakening and the consequent desire to be of service are both byproducts of having worked the twelve steps. These are not things we have control over receiving; instead, we suddenly find ourselves possessed of them. Awakened to their existence in us.

When we have a spiritual awakening we will want to be of service. Why? What is the link between having a spiritual experience and the consequent desire to do service work? The answer for me is, I believe, spelled out nicely in the St. Francis Prayer: "Higher Power, make me an instrument of your peace . . ." This well-known and often overlooked prayer contains many keys to understanding a special economy wherein self-centeredness has no place. In fact, it is only by thinking about, acting and doing for others that we receive what we need to sustain us as humans: love, acceptance, understanding, forgiveness and hope. Most addicts come into the program working from a different economy, one that operates on the principle of receiving: "show me love, acceptance, understanding, forgiveness and then maybe I'll return it." The deficiency of this economy rests in the fact that our happiness depends on how others treat us and we become victims when we don't receive what we perceive our needs to be. As victims we lash out at the world and wonder why the world treats us so bad.

Today, we have choices, options for how to be effective people in the world. Maybe we are not at Step 12 yet, and maybe we can't be of service right now, but we can do something, even if it's only for ourselves. Call your sponsor, go to a meeting, read a few pages in a recovery book.

Step 12 is not so much a step as it is gift. When we perceive the spiritual nature of this gift, and understand its economy, life will become abundant.

12th Step: Reaching Out Our Hands

By Anonymous

While my inspiration for this share is derived from one person's struggle and newfound hope, I believe this may apply to all of us who work the 12 Steps of Marijuana Anonymous, or any other fellowship for that matter. Nevertheless, I am dedicating this to that one person who asked for help, who inspired me, and gave me the opportunity to strengthen my own recovery by carrying the message. Thank YOU!

Recently an e-mail came across a listserv from someone in dire straights. This person felt they were in a corner over issues surrounding (to put it lightly) personality conflicts with another member. This person felt at risk of relapse over a situation that at one moment seemed totally unmanageable, a true crisis. While I've never felt close to relapse over conflicts with others in meetings - I think maybe I've been lucky - I have on several occasions been to the point where I was ready to drop my service commitments and quit going to certain meetings altogether. I've felt a gnawing at my gut, resentments, judgments, anger, and fear, all ready to rip apart every thread of sanity I had left. I've hit that wall in pain several times: "Who needs this crap?"

I've been blessed to have the courage and willingness to ask for help. Not just my sponsor, but two, three, four, or more people would hear me out, and provide that feedback which kept me from going off the deep end. In fact, some of the best relationships I have in Recovery were forged around such "urgent situations." We'd get to know each other through my cooling-off periods, then I'd get a chance to find my better nature and there'd be actual witnesses to my newfound sense of humanity! Wow!

We all have seen acts of courage and humility in Recovery. We all experience them first hand, over and over, each time we take the first step, again and again. But it's important to keep in mind - especially if you're ever wondering if you should be asking for help, if it's appropriate, the right time, or the right place - when you reach out for help in MA, you are not only working your own program, you're also giving the gift of service to those who provide you the support you need.

Plus, it's good to keep in mind that an addict can never be too sober, too spiritual, or too evolved to ask for help.

Now, someone who asks for help by e-mailing a listserv...! This person gives the opportunity of 12th Step Service to whoever is willing and able to respond. This may be a few, or a dozen, or possibly hundreds of people. It becomes powerful, a learning for many.

Inherent in any program of Recovery there is this divine cycle of giving and receiving which cannot be separated from our collective spiritual path. So no matter where you are, or what your troubles, you're welcome and wanted here in MA! Reach out to us any time, all the time. And ask for help when you first feel the need to, instead of waiting for a crisis. I have unending faith in this program, and I am grateful to those who have helped me. I am also especially grateful for those who, by choosing to unburden themselves and take a chance on me, grant me the opportunity to give something back.

The Roving Reporter

The Roving Reporter asks, "Why would you go all the way to Portland, Oregon for the MA Convention on February 13-15?" And MA answers:

Top 10 Reasons Cindy W. of Upstate NY would go to the MA Convention in Portland, Oregon:

10. To get out of Upstate NY in February, if I canthaw my feet from the ground long enough to get on a plane.
9. To catch a short break from two teenagers.
8. To add another state to my list of states I've visited.
7. To go to more/bigger meetings. We only have one MA meeting a week here and it's the ONLY MA meeting in a 400 mile radius.
6. To be with a couple hundred people as pleased to be dopeless as I am!
5. To listen to speakers who are openly carrying the message that Marijuana is a drug and devastates lives!
4. To be part of a big ol' sober countdown of recovering potheads.
3. To talk openly in every meeting I attend about Marijuana addiction (and not have to substitute "use" or "get wasted" for every time I mean to say POT!
2. To be directly connected to such a large community with which I personally identify.
1. To get what I need and give what I've got, the MA Way! - Cindy

For the energy — 200 people!! -Laurie

Because the fellowship is supposed to be bitchin'. It would be amazing to be in a room full of potheads when they're not getting high and to socialize with a bunch of clean & sober potheads. - Anna

First, because it's the 10th Annual MA Convention. Second, because this is the one place we all get to see each other once a year; otherwise, I don't get to see my MA friends who live in different cities. Third, gathering together affirms for each of us the beauty of this unique program. It was started to fill a big void, and the void remains unless we continue to show up. Fourth, there are TONS of new meetings all over the country, and hopefully if you are NOT within a district, you will come to Portland to meet lots of recovering potheads and share the MA program. Fifth, you're not alone, and at the Convention it is way obvious. Sixth, Portland is a green and luscious city. Seventh, you'll make new friends. Eighth, because 's a lot of fun. Ninth, you get to see how far you've come from being isolated alone in your own home. Tenth, because 's the 10th Annual MA Convention! --Susan B.



Why not? - Kevin G

Conventions are fun. Conventions with potheads are funner. Conventions with potheads in recovery are even funnerer. But conventions hosted in Portland with potheads in recovery are the most funnest! In fact, this 10th Annual MA Convention is going to be WAY TOO MUCH FUN!! -Anonymous
Because the MA convention I attended in 2001 was probably three of the best days in my entire life! Missing last year made me so sad that I decided I will just have to do whatever it takes to get to them from now on. - Zach

For the January issue, the Roving Reporter asks, "What do we mean when we say that Step 1 is the foundation of our program?"

M.A. DISTRICT EVENTS — CONTACT YOUR DISTRICT'S BUREAU CHIEF TO POST AN EVENT

District 2: Holiday Party at Mandana House CRC. 12/6, 8 p.m., after the Saturday evening MA meeting. Bring a "white elephant" and a potluck dish to share.

District 5: Holiday Party at Bea's House (825 Clemensen, Santa Ana), Saturday 12/13, 6:30 p.m.-- Caroling in the neighborhood--Bring food to share--Gift Exchange (\$10 for adults & \$5 for children) For more information call 714-532-2714 --- www.madistrict5.org

District 6: Game Night, Saturday 12/6, 8 p.m., All Saints Church, 8040 Glenoaks, Sun Valley. Games, prizes, and snacks. Call Dan or Mark, 818-692-9869 -- www.madistrict6.org

District 10: Hike and Breakfast at Mt. Echo, January 1. Bring your own beverage and an item to share. Meet at the top of Lake Ave. in Altadena between 6:30 and 6:40 a.m., rain or shine. Contact Richard N. at 626-285-0962.

District 11: Winter Hawks Hockey Game, Saturday 12/6. Tickets are \$5. Game is at 7; we'll meet at 6:45 at the main (east) door of the Coliseum (not the Rose Garden!). Call Paul G, 971-544-0397, for info. -- www.madistrict11.org

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For Land and Online Meeting Schedules Go To: <http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org>
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Step Shares cont.

**Step 12: Authentic Step Work
 By Cindy**

MA meetings started here in 2001 after our own Bill W. went to the west coast and brought the program back to Upstate NY. I had gotten clean and sober in AA, beginning in August of 1994.

I was always a little uncomfortable working with others one-to-one in AA because I'm a pothead, first and foremost, and sometimes it was hard for me to relate to their drinking patterns. Don't get me wrong, I did work with others, and take commitments and work the program of AA, I still go to AA today; but MA provides me with an opportunity to authentically work the 12th step. To carry the message, undiluted; to have my experience, strength and hope sincerely and directly identified with by a newcomer. And for that I am truly grateful.

I have achieved a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps... I have a higher power and I live happy, joyous and free... most days! I live my life through the framework of the 12 steps, finding that when I am in conflict, when I don't know which way to turn, the steps are there to guide me. So many times, when I'm too mired in my own self to see the way out... the steps are working me.

MA Convention 2004!

"Reaching Out Our Hands"

Mark February 13-15, 2004, on your calendars for the 10th annual MA Convention in Portland, Oregon.

For a registration form or more information please visit www.ma2004.org

Please call MA District 11 at 503-221-7007 if you have questions.

See you in Portland!

ANNOUNCEMENT

Effective January 1, 2004, A New Leaf Publications will raise the price of MA's basic text, *Life With Hope*, from \$8 to \$9. To order your copy, visit www.marijuana-anonymous.org/Pages/pub.html.

JOIN the New Leaf Team!

A New Leaf Publications needs a new editor and a bookkeeper! If you're interested in either position, or would just like some more info, please email us at anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org.

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:

Lisa 12/30/01 2 years
 Steve T. 12/29/00 3 years
 Elizabeth 12/01/00 3 years

District 3:

Seth M. 12/24/02 1 year!
 Amanda G. 12/24/01 2 years
 Adam B. 12/27/99 4 years
 Annette G. 12/28/97 6 years
 Mike H. 12/09/96 7 years

District 5:

Lisa S. 12/7/93 10 years

District 6:

Richard T. 12/17/00 3 years
 Mike H. 12/7/92 11 years
 John G. 12/25/91 12 years

District 7:

Penny P. 11/12/01 2 years
 Steve S. 11/25/99 4 years
 Barry R. 9/20/98 5 years

District 9:

Dave N. 12/28/93 10 years
 Pat Mc. 12/29/89 14 years

District 11:

Mike F. 12/28/98 5 years

District 12:

Karen K. 7/25/02 1 year!
 Laura S. 12/4/02 1 year!
 Lawrence D. 9/30/98 5 years
 Theresa D. 10/6/98 5 years
 Owen K. 11/16/98 5 years

Celebrating 131 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!