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Higher Power, As I Don't Understand It

When I first came to Marijuana Anonymous, I understood God to be an all-knowing, judgmental, scary guy in the sky. I didn't like "him" very much. I was very angry at God and I didn't think he gave a hoot about me. He was lurking around every corner, waiting for the right moment to get even with me for all the mistakes I had made in my life, which were many. I saw the word "God" in most of the 12 steps and thought . . . 'I'll skip that part.'

My relationship with God has always been complicated. My parents came from very different religious backgrounds. Growing up, no one ever flat-out said it, but it was understood that one religion was "right," and the other was "wrong." My father was killed when I was very young, so I didn't know much about his faith, but I knew enough to believe that he didn't think it was wrong.

I saw people on both sides of my family have an incredible faith in their God and I ached for a connection like that. When I was around 10 years old, I remember an experience at church camp where I begged God to show me he was real. I didn't get the lightning bolt holy proof I was asking for and left camp frustrated and confused, sure that God didn't want anything to do with me.

Still, I didn't have a complete absence of belief in something greater. Deep down in my core, I believed that there had to be something more. I just didn't know what it was or if I was good enough for it. As a child who had lost her father and other close relatives at a young

age, I couldn't fathom that they were just . . . gone. For most of my life, I blamed the God I grew up with for taking them away. And, for most of my life, marijuana put a bandaid on the pain of their loss and helped me numb my anger and grief.

Newly sober and unsure of the God part of the 12 steps, I heard people talk about their Higher Power in meetings. For every person that shared, there was a different version of God. The idea that I could invent my own Higher Power started to appeal to me.

As I started to work the steps and read through our literature with my sponsor, I noticed that it referred to a "loving" and "positive" Higher Power when it talked about God. This was an idea I could get behind. For a little while, I got really hung up on what to call this power greater than myself. I wasn't a huge fan of the word God, and since I was the inventor, I wanted a name that felt more personal.

Whatever it's called, it's working.

Eventually, my Higher Power became sort of a smorgasbord. Today, it is a dash of the Universe, a pinch of my Higher Self, and a heaping cup of my "Spirit Family." The Universe is the energy that connects me to all things . . . the moon, stars, sun, and sky . . . the water, trees, wind, animals, and other humans. I feel a great connection to my Higher Power when I'm in nature. Being two and a half years sober, I feel like I'm experiencing the wonder of nature for the first time in my life.

My Higher Self is the spirit/soul inside me that communicates with me through my intuition. It's the best version of myself, free of fear, resentment, anxiety, anger, judgement, self-pity. A protector; a caregiver; a warrior; a survivor; and a loving and kind parent, sister, friend. My Spirit Family is made up of all the dead people I know. They are loved ones who died when I was a child, my Father, Grandmother and Grandfather, and Uncle . . . relatives like my great and great-great grandparents and beyond, who I never met on this Earth, but have an inextricable bond with . . . along with friends and other family members (both humans and pets) who have passed on. I imagine these souls surrounding me in a loving embrace when I am scared or lonely, and cheering me on from the front row during times of celebration and accomplishment in my life.

As I continued my step work, I did what I was told – kept an "open mind and hopeful heart" (Life with Hope, page 8). I started praying. I wondered if I was doing it correctly. Again, I realized that this was a process where I got to decide what felt right. Eventually, I was able to shed the ways I thought I was supposed to be praying and come up with something that worked for me.

Today, my prayer practice isn't fancy. Most days, as soon as I wake up, I start rattling off things I'm grateful for . . . like the roof over my head and running water. I say thank you for my sobriety. The Serenity Prayer comes with me through the day and has helped me make

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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Higher Power, As I Don't Understand It (continued)

sense of troubling situations and uncomfortable feelings. I ask for help when I need it, from my Higher Power and people. I have a conversation . . . with the Universe, my Higher Self, or my Spirit Family . . . outloud and on paper. I listen to my intuition and pay attention to repetitive thoughts and themes that show up in my life. For me, repetition is my Higher Power's way of trying to tell me something.

With a little willingness and a little bit of practice, soon, this Higher Power started to work in my life. Or, rather, I started to see it working in my life. It had always been there, but I was too stoned to see the lightning bolts through the smoke. Things started happening that I couldn't chalk up to being a coincidence. . . .

- I showed up at a literature study meeting and they were starting the book (a 400+ page book) from the first page . . .
- The Serenity Prayer showed up in places I wouldn't expect it, like the back of a bag of chips . . .
- Literal signs would show up as I was on a walk or bike ride, things that said "you are not alone" or "you are loved" . . .

I began keeping track of these unexplainable things and today I have over 50 examples (and counting!) of how my Higher Power has shown up in my life.

Today, I have the spiritual connection that I ached for as a kid. I no longer believe in coincidences. I believe that I'm in sync and cooperating with a divine, loving, kind, gentle, patient, forgiving, humorous, beautiful Universe. Or Higher Self.

Or Spirit Family. Or Master Gardener. Or Cosmic Parent. Or God. Whatever it's called, it's working.

As the 9th Step promises say, "God has become a living force in our lives," and this is true for me. God is no longer an abstract idea that I ache for. I have a concrete relationship with my Higher Power and proof that it exists.

My spiritual awakening didn't happen with the flip of a switch. It happened as if I was in a dark room and the dimmer switch was slowly being turned up. Just as most relationships take time to nurture, it's taken some time to get to this point with my Higher Power. I didn't trust it right away and sometimes, I still throw a fit if I don't get what I want, when I want.

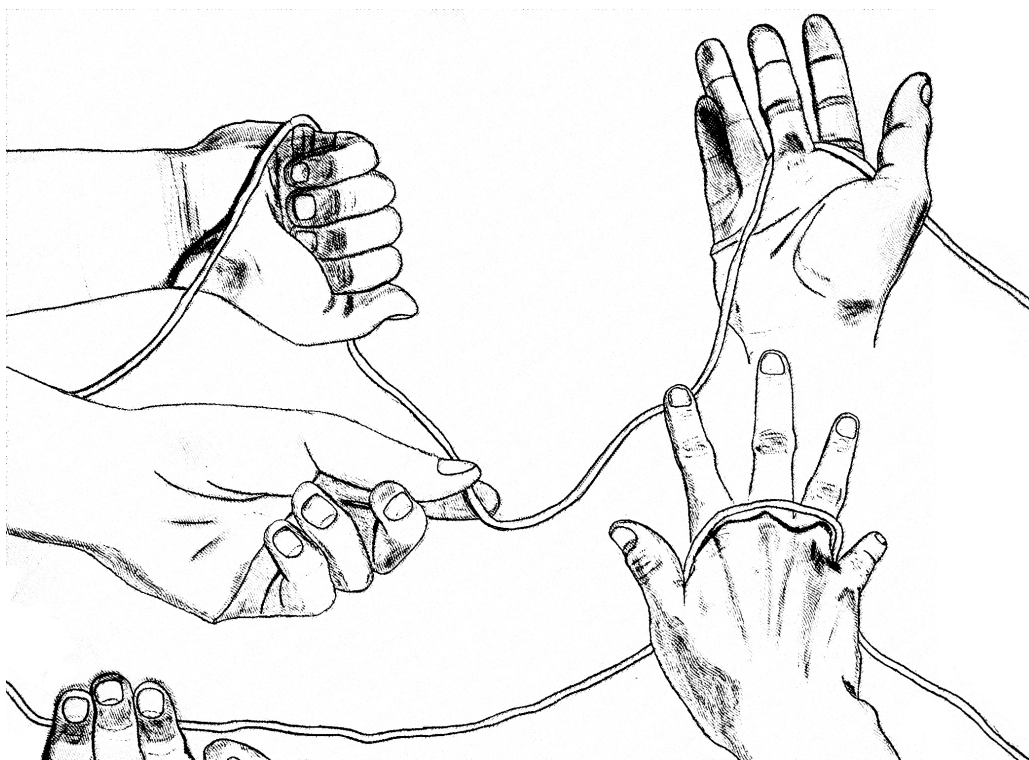
Thanks to recovery in Marijuana Anonymous and my Higher Power, I've been given a life beyond my wildest dreams. A life where I don't have to smoke weed all day, every day and suffer alone in isolation, anger, fear, and anxiety. A life where the simplest joys come from a conversation with a passing stranger, or the honor of being present the first time someone walks in the room to an MA meeting, or the breathtaking beauty of a sunset at the end of a long day.

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE.
YOU ARE LOVED.**

I know my relationship with my Higher Power will continue to evolve and grow, so long as I do my part. Each day, it's up to me to seek out the love of my Higher Power through prayer and meditation and to trust its plan for my day instead of demanding what I want.

I am so grateful to the 12 steps and MA for the gift of God, as I understand God.

Jillene K.



Intertwined

In honor of my 90-day anniversary I made this art piece, Intertwined, depicting the impact the fellowship and program have had on me.

In this piece, all our lives intersect and overlap towards the common goal of helping each other get clean, maintain our sobriety, and prosper.

Out of all the places I could have ended up, I was led to MA, and the people here helped me get this far.

I am truly grateful. I hope that one day I will be able to help someone like MA has helped me.

It works if you work it, so work it 'cause you're worth it.

by Edwin D.



THE ROVING REPORTER

Hi y'all. I'm Back! I've been on an extended sabbatical from *A New Leaf* since late 2018. I've moved from southern California (oh those fires!) to an undisclosed location in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. I'm doing much better now, thank you, and *I do have some questions for "you."*

Every month, our readers have another opportunity to reflect on their recovery and to help carry the message to the addict who still suffers. This issue presents certain questions/topics, the responses to which may be published in the January 2022 issue. In addition to questions/topics, the Step and the Tradition corresponding to the month of publication are offered as topics.

Please consider the following questions and email me your short-answer response(s) to questions 1, 2, or 3 to stories@anewleafpublications.org with Subject: "1/2022 Roving Reporter." We'll print as many of your responses as we have space for in the January 2022 issue of the *A New Leaf* newsletter.

The deadline is the 16th of the month. You need not write more than several sentences, and the exercise may strengthen your recovery. The action you take will certainly bring to life **Step One** and **Tradition One**. The Fellowship hopes to hear from you often.

1. With all my newly acquired technical skills, I snuck into the 2021 MA Convention in New York City in October and I was ready to interview some of you, but I got busted and my mic was muted. So tell me what your experience with the 'virtual' Convention: What did you particularly like about the virtual conference? Or if there was something you didn't like, well you know the drill . . . pray and call your sponsor before responding!
2. Step One: What recent event or circumstance convinced you that you are still "powerless", or that you've got some "unmanageable" thinking going on?
3. Tradition One: This question is "open book," only a page-and-a-half in the *Life with Hope* text. What do we get from practicing 'Unity'?

We look forward to reading your responses.

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For a complete listing of all meetings visit
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www.ma-phone.org

Step Twelve

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to marijuana addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Tradition Twelve

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Celebrating 227 Years of Sobriety!

District 2

Danielle L. 11/7/2020 1 yr
Jason J. 10/14/2020 1 yr
Maggie D. 11/13/2018 3 yrs
Melina R. 9/19/2016 5 yrs

District 5

Carly D. 11/9/2020 1 yr
Dennis D. 10/28/2011 10 yrs
James V. 10/29/1998 23 yrs
Joe W. 10/19/2011 10 yrs
John G. 11/5/2011 10 yrs
Kathy D. 11/4/2003 18 yrs
Larry C. 11/28/1999 22 yrs
Michael L. 10/29/1990 31 yrs
Nathan L. 11/1/2020 1 yr
Ray M. 11/19/2013 8 yrs

Rich C. 11/2/1998 23 yrs
Ron "The Gardner" 11/5/1995 26 yrs
Shelby 11/15/2015 6 yrs
Tina 11/6/2007 14 yrs

District 12

Jim C. 8/7/2016 5 yrs

District 19

Jaime P. 11/7/2020 1 yr
Georgia 10/14/2020 1 yr

District 25

Josh F. 11/30/2017 4 yrs

Independant & Virtual Meetings

Helena 11/5/2020 1 yr
Ernie R. 10/5/2019 2 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