



# A NEW LEAF

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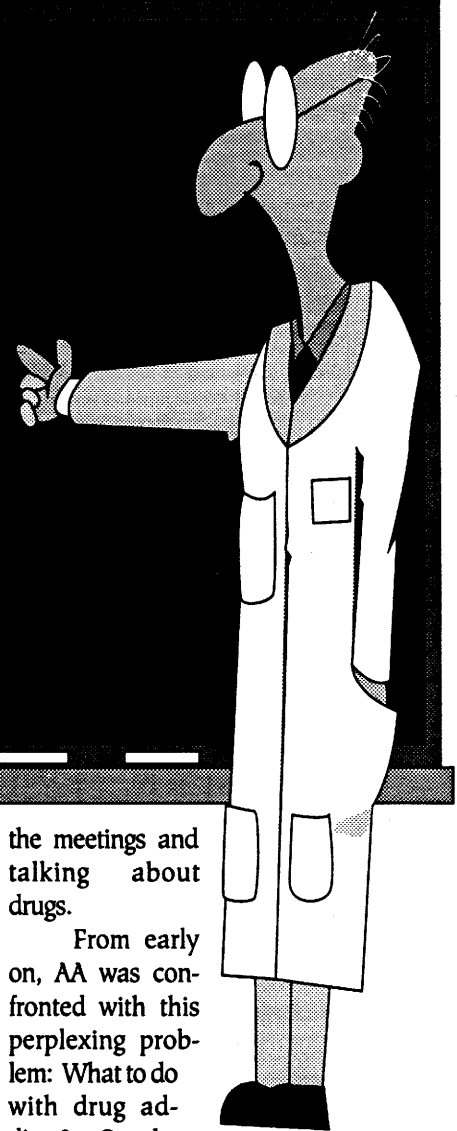
A Publication of Marijuana Anonymous

## ***With So Many Darn Principles, Steps, Traditions and Opinions, What the Heck Do They Mean by 'Singleness of Purpose?'***

We had to ask. And many of you were more than happy to give us an answer. So in this issue we print your responses — some based on research — some from a personal point of view. And just so we don't get any nasty letters (although we'd like some) from the many writers who sent in articles and are still waiting to see them in print, here's what you'll read in next month's issue: Richard A. from San Jose on managing the unmanageable; Brad from L.A. on how making amends pays spiritual dividends; The Roving Reporter hears from the folks in Seattle; and your letters "taking exception" to the opinions expressed inside.

## ***Singleness of Purpose — A Historical Review***

***by Loren N.***



**I**n order to completely comprehend what the concept "singleness of purpose" means in Marijuana Anonymous, it is important to understand how this idea was originally developed in Alcoholics Anonymous. It is also important to understand the relationship of AA to other fellowships, and how other fellowships started after AA adopted the "singleness of purpose" position.

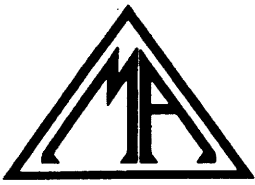
Not long after AA began, it became apparent that the Twelve Steps of recovery would not only benefit alcoholics, but any person whose life has become unmanageable due to compulsive and obsessive behavior. People started to come to AA meetings even though alcohol did not cause them to hit their bottoms. AA members began to feel that their primary purpose to carry the message to the alcoholic, and the atmosphere of identifying with other alcoholics, was being weakened by addicts coming to

the meetings and talking about drugs.

From early on, AA was confronted with this perplexing problem: What to do with drug addicts? On the one hand, AA wanted to keep its focus on alcohol so that the alcoholic hears the message. On the other hand, they did not want to kick these dying people back onto the streets.

After studying this problem, they came up with a solution. AA's position was that they could not accept addicts who were not alcoholics as members; however, they freely offered their steps and traditions for adaptation by any group who wished to use them.

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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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# Singleness of Purpose or Singleness of Substance?

by Rob M., District 6

**F**or as long as I've been in the program, I've been hearing (and participating in) the seemingly endless debate over what is meant by "singleness of purpose." In my opinion, some people misunderstand the concept.

I get the impression that some people interpret "singleness of purpose" as somehow implying that the only subject that one can appropriately share about in a meeting of Marijuana Anonymous is marijuana. (Or perhaps, more specifically, recovery from marijuana addiction.)

I get the feeling that these people believe the "singleness" is referring to a singleness of substance. The

implication being, that if you need to share about alcohol, or cocaine, or food, or pills, you should get up and go find another meeting.

When we take chips in L.A., we acknowledge the fact that clean and sober means abstinence from ALL mind-altering substances, including alcohol. If "singleness of purpose" means that marijuana is the only thing we're concerned about, why can't I go out and have a beer?

In the "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" (p.151) it states, "our Society has concluded it has but one high mission — to carry the (AA) message to those who don't know there's a way out. These legacies of suffering and of recovery are easily passed among (alcoholics), one to another. This is our gift from God, and its bestowal upon others like us is the one aim that today animates (AA's) all around the globe."

I interpret this to mean our "singleness of purpose" is to help the newcomer to recover. I don't think it means that sharing about other types of substance abuse is against the traditions.

I came into MA because pot was my drug of choice. However, it was far from the only substance I abused. More than anything else, I needed to hear about how one recovered from marijuana addiction. But, I found it very helpful and gratifying to discover that many (perhaps most) of my fellows have abused lots of different drugs, just as I had.

We all have different backgrounds and different issues. How many times have you sat through what you thought was an incredibly boring and irrelevant share only to hear the next person exclaim how touched they were by what was just said? My point is this: over time I have heard an overall emphasis on how we

recover from pot addiction. In addition, I've also heard a lot of experience, strength, and hope, shared on lots of other subjects that were sometimes helpful to me, but always helpful to somebody. Recovery means learning to live life on life's terms, and that often involves stuff not directly concerned with pot. Recovery also means acceptance, unconditional love, and patience for our fellows.

I've heard the argument that sharing about other issues dilutes the message and causes people to leave the fellowship. I think that our members must feel safe, accepted and un-judged when they share, or many more people will leave.

The "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" (p.129) says, "No (AA) can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled. Our Twelve Steps to recovery are suggestions; the Twelve Traditions which guarantee (AA's) unity contain not a single 'don't.' They repeatedly say, 'We ought...' but never 'You must!'" △

***"I don't think it means that sharing about other types of substance abuse is against the traditions."***

## Thought of the Month

***"The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good."*** — AA's Big Book, p. 60

# Two Parts Add Up to One Vital Principle

by Everett W., La Habra, CA

I have been sober and clean from all mind altering chemicals for over 39 years. By the grace of God and many 12-step programs, I have not found it necessary to use anything since January 16, 1955.

The main reason I am writing about "Singleness of Purpose" is to do what the Twelfth Step and the Fifth Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous gave to us from the very beginning.

Step 12 - "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in

all our affairs."

Tradition 5 - "Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Since the development of Marijuana Anonymous was founded on the principles of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of AA, we need only substitute the word marijuana, instead of alcohol.

We have proven that the fellowship of MA has been successful for many

years and it is evident by the many members who have been free from marijuana for at least 25 to 40 years.

I really don't care if I am in any particular meeting and an individual identifies that

he is an addict. This brings him/her into the fold of all of the 12-step programs. AA, MA, NA, CA, or SA, it makes no difference, as long as that person wants to stay clean and sober. They are welcome.

It has been my intention, by writing this article, to carry the message of "Singleness of Purpose" to "pass it on."

Thank you for allowing me to share my strength, hope, and experience. △

*"We have proven that the fellowship of MA has been successful for many years..."*

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# Using Was This Addict's Single Purpose

by Betsy C., Los Angeles

In my family, "singleness of purpose" was another way of saying "stubborn." Which I was. And am.

When I was using on a daily basis, singleness of purpose described the way I built my life around pot. I had to keep my job so I could afford it; I had to associate with certain people, many of whom I did not personally like, to maintain my connections; I had to lie in order to keep up the facade of a "normal" life. Everything was sacrificed to getting and smoking pot: my health, my self-respect, my future.

Once I got into recovery, I discovered that this singleness of purpose had a good side, and that I could, in fact, build my life around a physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy lifestyle using the same stubbornness that had kept me focused on marijuana.

I believe that every dark side has its opposite light side, and that the troubles I have had in the past and the ones I have today bear the seeds of my future lessons, if I rely on my Higher Power to show me. △

## Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



Anne W.	February 12	5 years
Julie M.	February 18	3 years
Randy P.	February 27	1 year
God Dan	March 1	1 year
Chris E.	March 28	1 year
Geoff F.	April 1	5 years
Grady S.	April 1	3 years
Chris G.	April 1	3 years
Mike P.	April 4	7 years
Bonnie	April 4	1 year
Dave M.	April 5	1 year
Linda C.	April 7	4 years
Rocky	April 8	4 years
Mark H.	April 8	1 year
Barb H.	April 10	2 years
Van W.	April 12	21 years
Tom W.	April 12	4 years
Mitch V.	April 13	3 years
Chris H.	April 16	3 years
Teri A.	April 19	2 years
Joanne A.	April 21	4 years
Brian K.	April 23	4 years
Paula C.	April 24	7 years
Ron S.	April 25	3 years
Evan B.	April 28	5 years

# "Singleness" — A Historical Review

Continued from page 1

They pledged their support in a spirit of "cooperation, not affiliation." This is why many oldtimers in AA get bent when someone identifies as an addict/alcoholic. They simply do not want the message of AA to be diluted.

AA's solution paved the way for other fellowships to develop, beginning with Narcotics Anonymous. In an attempt to make everyone feel welcome, NA took the opposite approach by changing the first step to read, "We admitted we were powerless over our addiction." The rationale was to focus on the disease of addiction rather than on any particular substance, or group of substances, the use of which is but a symptom of the disease of addiction. In NA, identifying as an addict/alcoholic is frowned upon because it is re-

dundant. If you're an addict, you are an alcoholic by definition, since alcohol is considered a drug in NA.

Initially, this adaptation by NA looked ideal. Finally a place where someone could identify as an addict regardless of what substance they used. In reality, however, this adaptation created the very problem AA feared would occur: identification for some people became difficult because people who were addicted to all kinds of substances were allowed in NA.

Often, I have been to a Marijuana Anonymous meeting where someone will share that they had first tried to get clean in NA. After a while, they figured they did not have that big of a problem, and could go smoke a few more bong loads. They could not identify with the guy found in the gutter with

a harpoon in his arm, or with the little old lady who lied to her doctor to get prescriptions. After all, for a lot of potheads, our bottom was sitting in front of the boob tube watching *I Love Lucy* reruns and eating Lucky Charms while smoking a joint.

So MA was created by potheads who did not feel comfortable identifying solely as alcoholics, or who could not identify with the plethora of addicts in NA. However, in our common sense and infinite wisdom, we realized that many people are not just potheads, but are cross addicted to other substances. Often in a meeting someone will share that pot was not the drug that brought them to their knees, but it was there every day. Others have shared that they were able to give up everything else they used, but just could not stop smoking pot, or thought they could continue smoking pot.

In MA we have tried to create an atmosphere where people with all kinds of issues relating to addiction can feel comfortable sharing. We have allowed people to share about problems with other substances or other manifestations of the disease of addiction. However, we must keep in mind our primary purpose as well: To carry the message to the marijuana addict who still suffers.

Focusing on our primary purpose is important to maintain our sense of identification. That is why secretaries of MA meetings should take care to only choose people to lead or speak who have stories concerning the use of marijuana. In keeping with our Fifth Tradition, as well as our Twelfth Step, we will create an atmosphere in MA where potheads will be free to share about all aspects of their disease without losing the sense of identification that comes with being surrounded by other potheads. With this in mind, we will truly be able to carry the message of recovery to other marijuana addicts.△

## MA World Conference

Annual event convened to conduct the business affairs of MA, including election of Board of Trustees, will be held May 28-30 at City Team Ministries located at 580 Charels Street in San Jose, California. Sponsored by District 3, all MA members invited to attend daily meetings and participate in fellowship and talent/no-talent show. For more information call Jill K. at (408) 371-6661. △

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