



A NEW LEAF

June 1994

Volume 4 • No. 6

A Publication of Marijuana Anonymous

'Crosstalk' Guidelines Could Serve MA Well

by Michelle E., District 6

In a June 1992 edition of the AA publication of *Recovery Times*, an anonymous contribution titled "Crosstalk — what is it, why does it hurt?", caught my eye. The author states that there was confusion about the actual definition of crosstalk within the fellowship of AA. In order to better define the term, the writer contacted the AA World Service Office. Although the WSO admitted that "it's a gray and fuzzy area," they did have some suggested guidelines to share:

1. The only appropriate comment about anyone else's share, a speaker's or another member's, is "Thank you for your share."

2. Any comments, negative or positive, about another's share, experience, life, program, or remarks are crosstalk — that is, interference.

3. A member may talk about his or her own experience as it relates directly or indirectly to another's share, but should not refer to that person's share. Even comments such as, "when you talked about.., it reminded me of my own experience," are possibly inappropriate.

4. Any form of interruption — remarks, side conversations, ges-laugher, ex-cial expres-sive spontaneous is crosstalk.

5. Any advice the meeting — asked for or not — is crosstalk. If advice is requested, it can be offered after the meeting, or by phone.

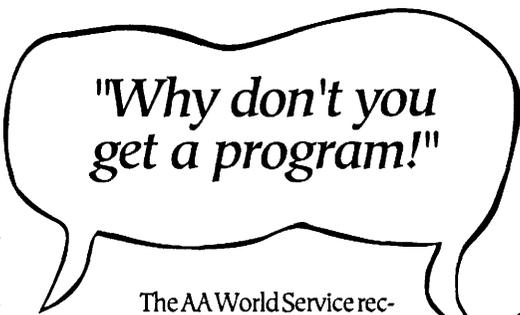
Why does AA strongly discourage

crosstalk? There are several reasons:

1. We need to feel safe about expressing our experience, strength and hope without fear of direct or indirect response ("interference"). For many members, AA is the first place they've felt safe speaking about their experience.

2. Crosstalk is frequently judgmental, expressing an opinion of the person's share. Being judgmental is a character defect many of us are trying to let go of.

3. Crosstalk can break a person's anonymity by introducing information not mentioned in the person's share, revealing relationships outside the meeting.



The AA World Service recommends that each AA meeting do two things to help eliminate crosstalk:

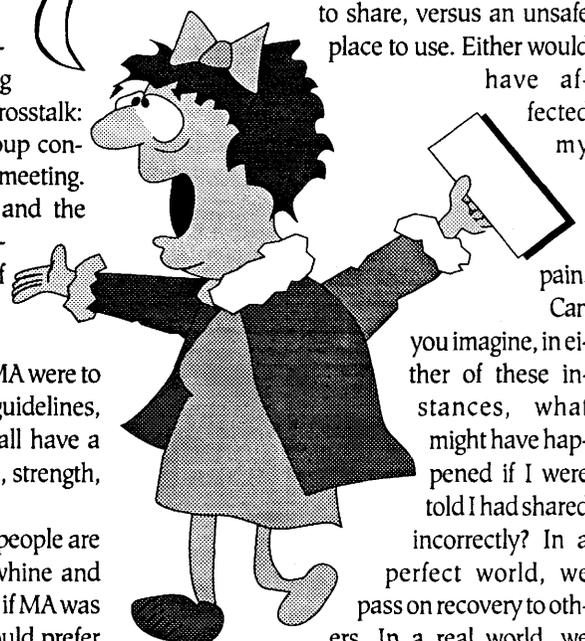
1. Define crosstalk in a group conscience at a steering committee meeting.
2. Include the definition and the prohibition of crosstalk in the format at the opening and closing of the meeting.

It is this author's belief that if MA were to adopt and practice a similar set of guidelines, we would better insure that we all have a safe place to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other.

I have heard it said that some people are disturbed by others in MA that whine and complain about their problems, as if MA was set up like group therapy, and would prefer hearing shares that only include data on recovering from marijuana addiction. With-

out this, it is feared the newcomer may not relate or be able to get answers to their questions and therefore might go away. I am reminded of the time an oldtimer asked me to lead a meeting when I had 30 days clean and sober. What do you suppose I talked about? Recovery? I think not! I talked about my using, for that was the extent of my "experience" at that point. I had not yet developed my strength and hope. Everyone clapped and I felt a part of MA for the first time. People knew me just a little bit better than they had before.

I recall another of my shares when I was clean and sober for one year, in which I spoke and cried about the very recent death of my brother. My only program related comment was that my faith in a newly-found Higher Power was dramatically weakened. I was showered with compassion and unconditional love that night, and found relief from an overwhelming and consuming sorrow. I learned to share my pain. I had a safe place to share, versus an unsafe place to use. Either would have affected my



Can you imagine, in either of these instances, what might have happened if I were told I had shared incorrectly? In a perfect world, we pass on recovery to others. In a real world, we share ourselves with others.

Thanks for being there for me, MA! △



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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A Collection of Views and Opinions from Around the Fellowship

This month we feature three Roving Reporter questions — two asked during the recent conference in San Jose and a third prepared by Neil L. and the fellowship of District 1.

Is the Conference what you expected?

Coleman, Dist. 5 — 1 yr. 10 mos.

The feeling of unity of our entire fellowship was even more awesome than I expected. On a personal level, I never expected to feel the benefits of my recovery the way I did this weekend. I was able to work well with other addicts by using some of the tools of this program. I feel I was able to put my ego on hold and keep the good and welfare of MA as a whole as my priority. I know I have friends that will last a lifetime all over the country.

Mike LB, Dist. 5 — 7 years

I came to this conference with a lot of anxiety because I wasn't sure what to expect. I had been placed on a committee that I knew very little about, and didn't know what we would be working on. Because I have control issues, not knowing was frightening. Fortunately, as always happens, my fears were much worse than reality. I soon found out what my group would be doing and that I could positively contribute. While this conference has been a lot of work and sometimes very frustrating, overall it has been personally rewarding. Our committee has accomplished quite a lot this weekend and I feel very good about this conference.

Joanne A., Dist. 1 — 4 years

One of the things I've learned in recovery is to not have expectations. With that in mind, each one of my four conferences has given me more than I can expect in my wildest dreams. It's a wonderful experience.

Larry T., Dist. 2 — 2 yrs. 5 mos.

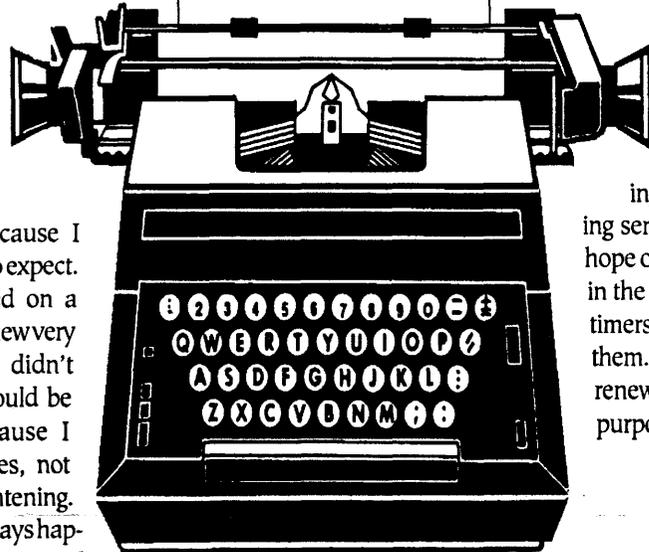
Yes. I attended the 1992 conference in San Francisco.

Howard F., Dist. 4 — 2 years

No. I came to San Jose thinking that I was going to do a little work, attend some meetings, and represent my district. But after having a heated debate over location of the next conference, I found that I had to let my personal agenda take a back seat and do what is in the best interest of MA as a whole, and the addicts that still suffer.

For me, that is helping people do the work, sponsoring people, and doing service, because the hope of the newcomer is in the willingness of old timers to be of service to them. I left San Jose with renewed singleness of purpose.

The Roving Reporters



Why do you go to MA meetings?

Aziz, Dist. 5 — 7 yrs. 8 mos.

To share recovery by sometimes speaking, sometimes listening. To share time with people I've come to love. To learn, as Harry said, "How to love; receive and give." To learn more about myself by listening to you. To do *life*.

Dan A., Dist. 3 — 2 yrs. 2 mos.

For life. To live. To grow.

John L., Dist. 2 — 9 years

To stay clean and sober.

What does serenity mean to you?

Marc, Dist. 1 — 8 months

A calmness from knowing I am in the right place doing the right thing. Having finally found my Higher Power, and being able to love myself. Serenity is a completeness and freedom from the black undefined wanting for something but never knowing what "that" is.

Dana, Dist. 1 — 7 months

Serenity means complete acceptance of life within and around me. Freedom from critical thoughts and obsessions. The ability to receive a Higher Power's guidance and love.

Neil L., Dist. 1 — 2 yrs. 5 mos.

Serenity is the fine-tuned bliss of body, mind and spirit. It's beautiful moments of silence; a cool clean breeze; a great piece of pizza; being able to look people in the eye and, finally, serenity is being able to stop my infernal addicted mind from the sick thinking that led me into the deep dark hole known as Stonerville, U.S.A.

Joe V., Dist. 1 — 11 months

No apologies for being me. Letting go absolutely. Truly accepting what I cannot change. Taking action to change what I can. Not taking responsibility for others feelings when I have nothing to do with them. Turning resentments around to gain strength and acceptance. Letting myself love others. Overcoming fears of failure and success. Finding value in all experiences, good and bad.

Karen B., Dist. 1 — 3 yrs. 6 mos.

Not having obsessive thoughts. Breathing deeply without awareness of it. Being in and appreciating nature. Connecting with people. Being accepting.

Greg T., Dist. 1 — 2 yrs. 2 mos.

Evenness of mind. Acceptance of whatever is in my heart. Being able to be in the body in the moment.

Paul L., Dist. 1 — 2 yrs. 2 mos.

Having a lighter attitude about life. Having acceptance of myself, as I am, at any given moment. Being relieved from my negative thoughts.

Hector A., Dist. 1 — 1 yr. 6 mos.

Solitude — being one with myself. I feel serenity after I have had physical and emotional pain.

Richard, Dist. 1 — 90-plus days

Serenity is knowing I have some place to turn where people understand what I am talking about when I need to talk about my addiction. Serenity is also regaining possession of my life after 10 years of having given it to an herb!

Greg, Dist. 1 — 1 yr. 1 mos.

Peace, acceptance and the willingness to strive toward progress.

Brad C., Dist. 1 — 2 yrs. 6 mos.

"Serenity" is not a place, but rather the journey to that place. When I am serene I know that I am on the right path. It's not that I'm in the right situation, but that I am right, that is, centered and accepting, in any situation.

San Jose Conference Highlights

The annual Marijuana Anonymous World Conference — sponsored by District 3 — was held May 21-23 in San Jose. A few highlights:

- A working draft copy of the long form of MA's 12 Steps was approved and sent to be reviewed by each district's Literature Committee. Proposed revisions are due by November 30. The Traditions were approved for final review.
- Financial difficulties prompted the reduction of services available on MA's 800-line. Callers who want a callback will have to call individual district phone numbers or send written requests for information.
- District 6 (L.A. North) was chosen to host next year's world conference — rather than Seattle — due to financial considerations. It is hoped MA will raise sufficient funds to afford the travel expenses to Seattle for the May '96 conference.
- The MA Service Manual has been

approved as a working document and will be published and distributed when the Minutes of the '94 Conference are completed.

- MA is raising money to fund a first-ever convention. This will be a recovery weekend with seminars and workshops for the fellowship and will not be funded by our regular 7th Tradition.
- A summarization of World Services' year-end financial report will be published in an upcoming issue of *A NEW LEAF*.
- Stacey S. has been hired as the new World Services' Office Manager.
- The Board of Trustees for 1994-95 includes the following members: Joanne A., Richard A., Bill D., Michael LB., Kate Mc., George T. (re-elected), Patricia G. (newly elected), Loren N. (newly elected), and Howard F. (newly elected). Richard A. is now handling the treasury; George B., BW L., and Ginny L. completed terms as trustees. △

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



Sean T.	June 1	3years	Cathy R.	June 16	2 years
Brian W.	June 2	4years	Molly	June 16	1 year
Jill K.	June 8	6years	Chris K.	June 22	1 year
Amber B.	June 15	2years	Carol Mc.	June 23	6 years
Mikki K.	June 15	3years	Dean W.	June 29	2 years
Barbara H.	June 16	2years			

An Addict Recalls His First Year of Sobriety

by Bob L., District 6

May 10 marks my first anniversary being free from all mind-altering substances. The last year that happened to me was in 1969.

The last year of my using was very difficult. I saw my income plummet and my expenses skyrocket. However, I was almost never without pot. The prices kept rising and the quality increased as well, but I never seemed to have enough. And I always found a way to buy that next bag.

I knew I had a problem but I believed I had it under control. After all, three or four times during that period I quit smoking pot altogether for at least a week or two. That made me believe I was not an addict. In my mind an addict wouldn't be able to do that. So what if I drank myself into oblivion in the absence of pot? At least I wasn't getting high.

I could never tell if I was rewarding myself for not smoking any pot or if I was tired of being hung over in the morning. In either case, the end result was the same. I'd get loaded again.

In February of 1993 I woke up one morning really hung over. I decided not to drink or smoke pot ever again. I was going to tough it out this time. God only knows how many times in my life I said that before. But this time would be different, I told myself. That was the last time I had a drink, but started smoking pot again three weeks later and didn't miss a day until May 10, 1993.

On that day, I was out of town and all

"At first, I believed I could help you, never realizing that you could help me."

alone with myself and my insomnia. That's what happened to me when I didn't have pot or booze. While sitting in my motel room at midnight, contemplating buying some liquor, I began thinking about what I had become and I didn't like it.

I had bronchitis on three different occasions in the previous year, was heavily in

debt, my personal relationships with people were strained at best, and my only friends were smoking and drinking buddies. I was tired and ashamed.

I closed my eyes and asked God to please help me. I had a strange sensation and suddenly, for no apparent reason, it occurred to me to pick up the phone. I looked for MA but it had not found its way to Santa Maria. I did find Narcotics Anonymous and I talked to a volunteer for 90 minutes. I went to my first 12 Step meeting two days later and found out about MA through NA.

I've been attending meetings in a few different fellowships ever since. Because I was such a pothead, I prefer MA, but I go to any meeting I can when MA is not available.

The last year has really been an experience. I've gotten more than I bargained for. Not only have I stayed clean and sober but I've actually started to recover through the 12 Steps. The Promises from the Big Book of AA apply to me as well. And probably the biggest change for me is the realization that the better I get, the more I can see how screwed up I've been. Now, I am seeing a counselor as part of my recovery. I didn't think I needed that when I got here.

At first, I believed I could help you, never realizing that you could help me. I figured my 23 years of using could help other people because I've been there.

I have been of service. I've taken commitments at meetings and the district level. I've had the pleasure of starting a meeting and hope to start others. I've also had the pleasure of returning calls to the 800-line for World Services. I will continue to take commitments and be of service as much as possible. However, the difference now is that I realize it is for my benefit, not yours.

Selfish? Maybe. Does it work? It works for me. May the next year be as enlightening as the last! △

Personal Stories Needed

Stories of our members' using days and subsequent recovery are being sought for a soon-to-be-published MA book. Stories will be edited and may be printed in *NEW LEAF* unless the author requests otherwise. Send your personal history to: Carol Mc., 7653 Lindley Ave., Reseda, CA 91335. △

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