



A NEW LEAF

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"Can You Spare Some Change?"

by Geoff F., District 8

Back in the days of the Great Depression (the country's, not ours), "Can you spare some change", was a common request from those neediest and hardest hit by the economic upheaval. For those of us striving to trudge that road to happy destiny, both the need and the answer can carry even more serious consequences. As recovering addicts, we share many characteristics. Ask anyone at fellowship. However, one of the most detrimental characteristics for the addict who is striving for long-term recovery is, in my opinion, the resistance to change.

Everything changes on an almost daily basis. Every day we are one day older, and some lucky days even one day wiser. People get sober. People go out. As this tide ebbs and flows, so does the fellowship of MA. As the fellows change, so do the meetings. Some once very popular might become small or disappear; others seem to spring forth from nowhere to become centers of activity. Yet let a favorite meeting change just a little, or amend its format, or hit a small pebble in the road, and many of us recoil in fear. Fear of change.

Even the user's dialect reflects this seemingly inbred fear. Remember when two stoners would discuss their lives (or lack thereof) and there would be an exchange like this one:

"My boss asked me to do some extra work today, then he refused my

request for a raise. Man, he really put me through some changes!"

What the person meant was that some feelings were brought up, or something in their emotional life was threatened. But look at the lingo: "...put me through some changes!" For us to survive as recovering addicts, we must embrace change. Change means growth, learning, reaching out, opening up and taking risks, among other things. I have often heard that

"It is good, in my opinion, to shake up one's program every once in awhile."

there is no standing still in my program; I am either moving forward or I am going backward. I truly believe this. It is good, in my opinion, to shake up one's program every once in awhile. New meetings, a new slant on things, the wisdom of others not heard before can't help but enhance one's understanding and appreciation of the 12-Step life.

Sure, it's always scary to walk into a new room, shake a new hand or open one's mind to a new idea. How often do we repeat in our rooms, "...contempt prior to investigation." These are not just words. I seem to repeat them a lot in working with other addicts, and certainly I find myself muttering them to myself under my breath. In the past year, I have changed apartments (the previous two no longer exist thanks to LA's Shake

and Bake '94), changed cities (start spreading the news...), made a ton of new acquaintances (and shook a ton of sweaty palms just like mine), fired my second sponsor, began looking for the third, and began to completely re-evaluate my personal program and outlook on life.

This process has been about as much fun as prickly heat and a hell of a lot harder to scratch. But so worthwhile. Every time I do my footwork, no matter how painful, it always ends up in my favor. Without a doubt, this has been the most painful year of my life. I have never learned so much. I'm not patting myself on the back; I'm just another recovering addict sharing his experience, strength and hope.

For several years, those fighting against AIDS have used the slogan "Silence = Death". I truly believe that for us addicts, Stagnation = Death. For if we don't grow, don't take risks, and don't allow sober wisdom to infiltrate our often stubborn psyches, we will go out. And for me, that means death. ☞

*Happy, joyous, and free.
Happy... to be recovering,
Joyous... to be alive,
Free..... to be me!*

Have a peaceful day,
Teri A., Dist.7



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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Marijuana Maintenance Program Didn't Work

by Barbara, District 5

My name is Barbara and I'm a recovering addict and alcoholic. I started seriously using marijuana after I had been sober for three years with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous. I remember going to a party where a lot of people were drinking, and feeling very out of place. The thought came to mind, "Smoke a joint! AA won't care; all they're concerned with is a desire to stop drinking. Besides I smoked throughout college and never had any problems. This isn't like booze.. I can control pot!" So, I started smoking.

During this time I was still attending AA meetings regularly. I'll never forget the guilt and shame I felt when taking a birthday chip. I could no longer pray to my Higher Power. Needless to say, I stopped working the steps. As my AA program declined, my drug use increased. Now I was smoking on a daily basis, and when someone offered me cocaine, I thought, "What the heck? I'm using one drug, another won't matter." Next thing I knew, I was using speed on a daily basis. By this time, I had stopped going to AA meetings completely. How could I work a program while using drugs? I finally hit my bottom when I became so disgusted with myself that I attempted suicide.

After getting out of the hospital, I went back to my old AA meetings. But they didn't want to hear about my drug use. They even told me I didn't have to change my sobriety date. I knew if I didn't though, I would only be fooling myself. By sheer luck (more likely, God's blessing), I discovered Marijuana

Anonymous through a hospital meeting directory.

In MA meetings, I found I could talk about drugs and alcohol. Although the emphasis is strongly on marijuana, the MA fellowship does not have the dangerous tunnel vision which the "singleness of purpose" frame of mind can create. I am grateful for this. Now, after being clean and sober a little over two years, I have returned to AA meetings and try to share strictly about marijuana

"...the MA fellowship does not have the dangerous tunnel vision which the 'singleness of purpose' frame of mind can create."

in MA, and about alcohol in Alcoholics Anonymous. Above all, I must remember, I am powerless over any mind altering chemical.

I am grateful to the MA fellowship for a lot of things, but I think I'm most grateful for the return of a relationship with my Higher Power. You see, now that I am sober and clean, I can pray again. 

Thanks !!!

The editors and the board of directors of A New Leaf wish to express their heartfelt thanks to Brian K. for his service and dedication in his role as Publishing-Editor of A New Leaf for the last seven months. Under Brian's guidance, this publication has taken on a new, sharp, and professional look while at the same time, steadfastly remained a true expression of the MA fellowship's "language of the heart". Thanks again, Brian, you will be missed. 

Wherever You Are... Be There

by Teri A., District 7

My life is right now. This moment, as I put pen to paper, is all the time that I have. Yesterday is done with and I can learn from it. Tomorrow is not here yet so there is no need to worry about it. Right now IS here. As long as I choose to remember this, I will be okay. When I choose to forget this important aspect of my life, I start repeating my old patterns of behavior. This is not a pretty sight.

My old behavior is based on fear. Fear that I won't get what I want when I want it. Fear that I'm not good enough, pretty enough, smart enough, healthy enough, etc... When I'm in fear, I am out of the moment. I am also out of faith. When I am out of faith, I am forgetting that life is okay. Life has a way of taking care of itself if I let it. That's the hardest thing to do. When I'm afraid, my tendency is to try to control everything. If I am controlling it, God can't. If God is not controlling my life, things get worse. When things get worse, I get in more fear. And the vicious cycle continues. Eventually it will get so bad that in order to escape the horrendous state of my life, I will pick up that joint and puff away.

All of this happens when I get out of the moment. Of course, I don't always remember to stay in the moment. I've only had two years of practice as compared to a lifetime of living with my negative behavior. That's why the meetings and fellowship are so important to me. People remind me of things that I tend to forget. They remind me that for this moment I am okay and the situations in my life are working out how they are supposed to.

Through MA and working The Program, I have come to realize that *everything happens in time and on time.*

Surrender to Be Free

by Mike H., District 6

In the movie Raging Bull there is a scene in which boxer Jake LaMotta is fighting Sugar Ray Robinson. Sugar Ray is pounding him mercilessly as LaMotta, nearly defenseless, holds onto the ropes for support. After the final bell rings, LaMotta utters these words to his victorious opponent: "Ya never got me down Ray...ya never got me down." The inference being that while Sugar Ray may have beaten him to a bloody pulp for 15 rounds, he never brought LaMotta to his knees.

This mentality can often be found in recovery as well. It seems that no matter how much agony we're in, we resist hitting our knees in surrender. This malady can be particularly true of men, whose pride and mistaken beliefs about manhood prevent them from fully surrendering.

The difference between recovery and a boxing match is that surrender does not mean defeat. The opposite is true. We become empowered by tapping an inner resource that is profound in both its nature and scope. By aligning with that Higher Power we both lose ourselves and discover ourselves. We finally come in touch with who we really are -- a child of God.

However, without complete surrender there can be no healing and growth. These two elements are what the program is all about. The healing that occurs when one is willing to grow along spiritual lines. After all, this is a spiritual disease. Fortunately, there is a spiritual remedy that can be found in the 12 steps. In my experience, the spirituality of the program is the thin veil that separates me from my addiction.

When I surrendered, it wasn't a matter of getting down on me knees. I was so beaten, so demoralized, that getting on my knees was a step up. It was the interim step I had to take before I could stand on my own two feet.

My suggestion is to surrender to your Higher Power and live in accordance with the spiritual values of the program. If you wrap that Higher Power around yourself like a life jacket, then no matter how rough life's currents become, you will always stay afloat.

Congratulations to our members celebrating their sober birthdays!



Chris W.	July 4	3 years
Marian M.	August 1	3 years
Vicki M.	August 1	2 years
Kelly G.	August 8	1 year
Coleman G.	August 13	2 years
Dana R.	August 15	3 years
Kurt S.	August 16	2 years
Bruce S.	August 18	1 year
Joyce M.	August 20	4 years
Dave M.	August 20	3 years
Cindy C.	August 26	5 years
Vicki H.	August 28	5 years
Andi A.	August 29	6 years
Steve N.	August 31	2 years

How To Live Sober

by Coleman, District 5

A while back, I was at a meeting where the topic for discussion was "Living Sober". It was a big meeting and sharing required coming to a podium in front of the group. As I still hold a lot of that "fear of people" thing, I chose not to share, but it did make me think of how my life is different today. A few of the things living sober for me are:

*Living in the answer, not the problem, and admitting to myself on a daily basis that there is a problem.

*Having a Higher Power in my life and letting it run the world instead of me.

*Not being controlled by the contents of a "zip-lock" baggie. Not having my mood determined

by how full the bag is. Not having my plans revolve around seeing my dealer.

*Really feeling my emotions for the first time in my life and having a set of tools to use when I don't quite know how to handle them.

*Walking through these feelings and learning from them.

*Growing as a person.

*Being honest with myself.

*Saying I'm sorry when I'm wrong.

*Choosing my associations a lot more carefully. I still spend most of my time with people who can do something for me, but now for healthy reasons.

*Taking the risk of letting people know who I really am deep inside. Getting positive results

because I do.

*Having a place to go every night, if I wish, where people accept me for who I am, not for what I might have in my pocket.

*Reading books, not just T.V. Guide and Drag Racing magazines.

*Going to school, and doing well, because I want to be there for myself. Finding out I still have some brain power left.

*Still having no money, but not stressing about it.

*Sleeping and... dreaming!

*Drinking lots of coffee.

But most of all, Living Sober Is:

*Knowing that I NEVER want to go back to the way I used to be. 

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NEW ZEALAND
(no info at this time)

Thought for the Month

"YOU can be the person or voice that helps change the course of another addict's life. Going to a hospital or institution for one or two hours on a panel, telling your story and sharing your strength and hope, this is what H & I is all about. Giving back some of what we have been given is simply being there for someone else who may hear the miracle of your life. We never, ever know when the sharing of our own story will lead to another miracle."

From "Why H & I Panels?"
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