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A NEW LEAF

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The View from the Trench

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. Now that I have some 6+ years of sobriety the view is quite good. That is because I am standing on level ground looking at the world. In the trench all I could see was the muddy walls of the trench. I could have looked up and gotten a glance of the sky but my head was pointed down focused on the shovel I was using to deepen the trench I was standing in. My addiction kept telling me that if I kept digging I would eventually dig my way out of all my problems. My view was looking deeper and darker; my back was breaking from all the shoveling I was doing, and yet I could not stop shoveling.

Then someone said, "All you have to do is stop digging". What a concept, that I could control my environment, and all I had to do was stop digging. The next thing I noticed was that I could see over the side of the trench, I wasn't as deep as I thought I was. With a little effort I could climb over the edge and up on to level ground. And as long as I didn't take a backward step I would not fall back into the trench.

I was free. I could see the world around me not the wall of mud. I could smell the roses and not the mud. My view reached to the horizon, not a narrow slot in the ground. Now all I have to do is trudge the road of happy destiny, which means going forward and my life will get better. But if I decided to go backwards I would surely fall back into that trench.

There was no guarantee that going forward would mean that the world was wonderful and all good things would come my way, but if I went backward I was guaranteed that my life would come apart faster than I could handle.

So I stand here on the edge of the trench setting my goals toward the horizon and the future. I don't know where it will lead me but I do know it has to be better than that damn trench. Thanks for letting me share.

Mike H.--District 13 (online)

Are You Still Unsure About Your Higher Power?

by Richard D. District 7

I just had a birthday in District #7 and I turned 9 years old. Even after all this time being clean and sober I still was unsure at times about the higher power in my life. Well, last week I got a call and asked if I wanted to speak on a panel. I agreed. The panel met on Friday night and I was one of two speakers at an inpatient program. When I got there I said to the other guy "why don't you go first" because I really didn't know what I wanted to speak about. When it was my turn I introduced myself and everything from that point on was about what I've learned in these rooms and didn't really require me to think about what to say. ("Turning it over").

I found myself speaking about when I was new, about 4-6 months clean, how I had left my regular meeting one night and was heading home. I drove 2 blocks and was stopped at a red light. I had the sunroof open in my car and the meeting had been an inspirational and emotional one for me so I had a lot going on inside my head. While I was sitting at the light I was confused about my sobriety, can I do it? Do I want to do it? How was I going to be able to do it? And then, without explanation or thought I felt a power greater than myself lift the obsession of addiction from my body. It's ok to laugh or sigh at this point because I didn't understand it either. When I called my sponsor and explained to him that I will never use again because my obsession had been lifted, he tried very sponsor-like to tell me not to get too big of a head and to continue to work the program because it takes time to get to know your higher power and to rid the body of the toxins and just not to get overly confident about this new-found unexplained feeling. As I tried to explain how strongly I felt about it we both saw this experience differently and truly I could not explain it myself.

As I continued to share my story at this panel, I was moved to make an analogy. We say in the program that "no human power can restore us to sanity" and we admit that our lives are out of control (step 1), then how is it that 9+ years from that time I've never had the obsession or desire or inclination to pick up and use either alcohol, cigarettes or drugs. After 30 years of using, I think that is a pretty strong testimony to the ways our higher power works in our lives.

If you are ever fortunate enough to experience the lifting of the obsession from your body and you can't explain it, just consider that regardless to your belief system, there is a higher power and he/she does work in mysterious ways. Here's hoping you get to experience the wonders of the program as I did.



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

Isolation = Trouble

by Paul G.

I cannot stay sober alone, but I can do it with the help and support of other addicts. That is, as *Life with Hope* says, the foundation of the program: the honest admission of our powerlessness over marijuana. So for me, isolation is trouble.

One of the definitions of humility in our book has to do with being part of, and contributing to, a community of others. My sponsor tells me that shyness is a form of arrogance — thinking that everybody is noticing me above all others — so sitting at home alone, stewing with myself, is a form of arrogance. I am also being of absolutely no service to anyone, and my highest purpose is to help others, spread love, and make the world a better place.

Besides, with just myself around, I'll start to believe my own BS, and then I'm in serious trouble. So I "suit up and show up," mainly for myself. I need to get out of my head, get some perspective, and help others. We do this for ourselves, but not by ourselves.



The Roving Reporter

For May the Roving Report asks, "If I were 'living' the program what would I be doing?" and for June the RR asks, "What is the hardest thing to do sober that you used to do while stoned." Please submit your responses to your local bureau chief or email to anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org Thank you!

2006 Convention—Journey to Serenity Meditation Workshop

At the recent MA Convention in Burbank, there was a workshop on Meditative Writing. As was discussed at the workshop, meditation can be defined as simply being in the present moment. As Carol pointed out, all we ever have is this present moment. There were two meditation and writing exercises. The FIRST consisted of five minutes of meditation followed by five minutes of writing. The SECOND was ten minutes of meditation followed by ten minutes of writing. The below writings were done at the workshop. Try this yourself: meditate and then do some writing — then send what you write to *A New Leaf*.

Thoughts that come up during meditation are affected by my growing knowledge of the 12 steps, the MA fellowship around me, my recovery, and patterns I have established. Giving these thoughts a label provide me with new awareness. While meditating, I am aware of future anticipation, fear and vanity, self-judgment and something profound for me. I learned by letting go of considering other's impressions of me I am giving away what is not mine and taking back a piece of my puzzle that will bring me more wholeness. Suzy P.-District 10

When I was in outpatient treatment, they asked us to draw a picture of our higher power. They gave us blank paper and a bunch of crayons and colored markers and told us to start. I asked myself what my higher power would look like — or even if one existed. I watched with growing frustration as one by one my fellow patients began to draw. They drew eastern symbols and wild landscapes. They drew the sun and the moon and the stars. Still, my paper was blank. I asked myself "do I believe in God?" The only thing I could see was an old, angry, judgmental man with a long, flowing white beard. He was looking down on the earth from a throne in the clouds and he was casting judgment upon me. I felt the waves of punishment descending from the heights and I knew I could not accept this deity. I felt like a failure. Today if you asked me to draw my higher power I still wouldn't be able to draw anything, but for a different reason. Today I am certain of a higher power without any concept of its nature or appearance. Today my drawing of a higher power would be a picture of me with a line through it because the one thing I know for sure is that my higher power is not me. Perhaps it is everything but me. Matt--District 4

2006 Convention -- Journey to Serenity -- Meditation Workshop *cont.*

I am in love with life. I am blessed with life, love, sobriety, recovery, friends, fellowship, hugs, chocolate, Marie, my home, school, choices, dreams, hopes, opportunities. When I sit I give thanks to Spirit that I am. That I exist in this body and have health and wealth and family and friends. My belly relaxes and I give thanks that I get to inhabit this body which is a gift. Life with Hope – how can I continue to relax into the present moment? I sit and can be. I am so busy so much of the time that just BE-ing in can feel intolerable. I'm grateful I sit as often as I do and grateful for the reminders from others to ease up on life – especially the reminders that aren't direct – but that come from observation. Susan B.--District 11

Be here Now. It's the hardest thing there is to be. My mind wants to jump from yesterday to tomorrow to five minutes ago to five minutes from now. Anywhere but Now! Why is that so hard? Being here now is all that is real. There is no moment but this one. Higher Power, help me to keep my mind where my body is: Here and Now. Tiffany G. --District 6

Why am I here? Do I have to have a reason? Isn't just BEING enough? Does there have to be some sort of Grand Plan for me? Do I have a Purpose? Am I supposed to be Someone? Do Something? Say Something? Act Someway? Can't I just be still and know that "I Am?" That's all I need to be—Me. Higher Power, help me to know that being me is enough. Tiffany G.--District 6

Words whispered wander, spiral inward, Tumble around sounding off one by one.	I am I am quiet
Captivating creation causes me to desire movement, Shift and change in my circumstances.	I am loving I am not alone
Dusty desert dwelling, My soul thirsts for a spiritual experience.	Now is a good time to be me
Tough truth transforms perception; I dive deeper hunting for buried treasure.	In the moment, alive, open, sensitive Trusting, secure that which I will need shall come
Seeking self-sustenance has brought me here And I honor where I'm at today. Tiffany G.-D-6	In time on time With faith and action

Tim V.--District 2

Meditation happens for me whenever I am living in the present moment. Meditation is being fully present. When I am not thinking of the past or the future, but am fully engaged in the present moment, I am meditating. I let go of directing traffic and become receptive to higher guidance. I remember to relax my belly and trust in the absolute goodness of the universe...I want to thrive and grow, not get by and survive. I want as much joy and peace in the rest of my life as I had pain and denial in the first half. Susan B --District 11

I realize thoughts and awarenesses that come up during meditation are important clues of issues I need to work on. I remember that self-judgment will lead me to shame and secretiveness and keep me sick. By being in recovery in the MA fellowship, I am starting to feel it could be healthy to admit some of these shortcomings. By being in the fellowship I know I am not the only one who is learning not to try to hide these bent thoughts anymore. I can shed light on the areas of darkness in me by letting those who have made improvements help me use my awareness to grow and move in the direction of hope and change. Suzy P.--District 10

Acceptance truly is the answer to all my problems today. But in order to work, my acceptance must be profound, complete and universal. When I am sad or lonely or angry, I must accept that emotion as something that arises without judgment and without needing to change it. When I can be fully present for the ever-changing show that is my emotional life without making it mean anything about myself, then my problems truly disappear. When I can feel love and compassion toward you in the face of your rudeness to me I am on my way. But it seems to me the real test is whether I can experience anger or resentment toward you and be completely OK with that. When I realize that emotions arise independent of my intentions – when I realize that my emotions say nothing about who I am – then I can experience them with complete acceptance. When I first got clean I felt guilty every time I experienced an emotion. I would tell myself "This is wrong" or "I shouldn't feel this way." That self-judgment extended to every aspect of my life. Now I know that profound self-acceptance is truly the answer to ALL my problems today. All I have to do is make it happen. I think knowing where I'm heading is a good start. ---Matt District 4

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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 2

Angie	1/01/00	6 years
Ari	1/03/02	2 years
Jay L.	1/15/05	1 year!
Doug	1/17/01	5 years
David G.	1/22/86	20 years
Chris F.	2/01/88	18 years
Dave S.	2/01/00	6 years
Ani M.	2/01/05	1 year!
Mo M.	2/02/05	1 year!
Thomas	2/09/05	1 year!
Annemarie	2/14/05	12 years
Carrie	2/21/03	3 years
Charles	2/24/96	10 years
Don C.	3/01/00	6 years
Tim	3/01/84	12 years
Liam K.	3/06/03	3 years
Dave W.	3/08/03	3 years
Ethan A.	3/28/01	5 years

District 7

Rich S.	1/17/05	1 year!
Scott K.	1/24/05	1 year!
Dan B.	2/11/05	1 year!
Mark L.	2/01/90	16 years
Laurence	1/23/88	18 years
(theViper)		
James	1/25/04	2 years
Doug M.	2/04/77	29 years
Bill	2/09/90	16 years
Jonathan R.	2/26/92	14 years
Richard	3/01/96	10 years
Steve C.	2/17/05	1 year!
Zach R.	3/01/04	2 years
Sam H.	2/21/02	4 years
Ron H.	3/06/99	7 years
Frank	1/88	18 years
Erika S.	2/14/05	1 year!
Ben T.	2/17/00	6 years

District 3

Lily E.	5/17/96	10 years
Steve W.	5/03/98	8 years
Ben S.	5/02/02	4 years
Brent W.	5/30/02	4 years
Kim	5/20/04	2 years

District 5

Tom W.	4/12/91	15 years
Keith K.	4/07/98	8 years
Mike P.	4/13/99	7 years
Laura	4/20/04	2 years

District 6

Carol R.	4/20/91	15 years
Lefty	2/06/99	7 years
Vicki A.	4/07/02	4 years

Celebrating 348 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!

You were not able to attend the Convention this year and would like to hear a recording of the speakers?

Just enter the convention website at www.ma2006.com and click on the "extras" tab. This is a secure page so a username and password will be required to hear the speakers. Just enter "lotuseaters" for the username and "december1995" for the password without quotation marks. Thank You ! the Convention Committee