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# A NEW LEAF

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## Still unsure about the higher power thing?

by Richard

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, I realized we both saw this experience differently. 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 of 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.

## Playing the Tape Through

by Anonymous

Sometimes staying sober is easy. Days go by when I don't even think about pot. I live a carefree life, unconsumed by the obsession that used to overwhelm me. I am grateful for those moments of reprieve from my disease. It is truly wonderful when I have a full understanding and acceptance of where this disease could take me. There are other moments, though, where staying sober one minute at a time is a most tumultuous task. During those times I couldn't feel further away from my higher power. I seem to have forgotten what brought me to MA in the first place. I have a great forgetter.

Last night I was at a meeting where the topic was, "What it was like then and what is it like now." As people shared, I began to really remember how it was for me a few years ago when I was infatuated with how I was going to get high the next minute, the next hour, and the next day. I had countless internal battles about quitting every night, only to find myself high again the next day with a new resolve for the following morning. I had awful coughing fits that had me coughing up black resin daily. I felt foggy and confused. I would get up to get something, and by the time I had taken a few steps, I had already forgotten what I had gotten up for. I lost my car keys constantly. I didn't pay my bills on time and racked up many late fees. Nothing was ever my fault. As I sat parked on city streets smoking out of a bong in my car, I was convinced everyone that drove by knew I was getting high. I was cocky, though, and believed that if I maintained the right image that I would never get busted. I tapped out my bank account and spent literally the last \$50 I had to my name on bud. I didn't have car insurance because my supply was much more important. I would get so stoned in my car that when it got dark I would totally lose my sense of direction. If I were smart I would have bought a compass. I let people take advantage of me because they let me get high at their house. I lived to get high and I got high to live. It feels like a lifetime ago that all this was my reality, but it has been only three years.

Thinking back like this to the real deal is what my sponsor calls "playing the tape through." It is one of the best tools I have found to use to stay sober. I am a different person now, and I'd like to continue progressing. The freedom of choice has been returned to me. Today staying sober was easy. I heard my neighbor smoking a bowl and thought about the choice I made for today not to. I feel truly grateful for so much that I have today. All it took was admitting I am powerless and making a decision not to smoke today. I think with a clear head now. I can make decisions and live with the positive or negative consequences. I can even think about the consequences before I make a decision now. Thinking it through is great, and it has helped me to live a more comfortable and productive life.



## 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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## The Roving Reporter

For this month the Roving Reporter asked, "What was the hardest step to work for you and why?" Here is what a few had to say:

**Ninth step** – I was chicken to face people I had harmed. *Anonymous*

**Nine** – because of my financial insecurities and fears behind them. I have still not worked any of my financial amends for fear that they might land me in jail or in financial turmoil. Basically I'm still unwilling. *Anonymous.*

**Fourth** – I'm still on it. It's hard to look at myself and my own actions, but it's also hard to feel what I tried to smoke away. To recall that is sometimes near impossible. *Sheila B., Philadelphia*

**Step Five** – it's hard for me to let people help/support me. Step 5 made me lean on someone and give away a lot of the shit I'd been holding on to – it was hard for me to accept that kind of gift. *Jennifer L, Philadelphia*

**Tenth step** because I find it very hard to crush my ego and admit when I am wrong, but I find it really rewarding when I do. *Joshy, District 7*

**Step 5** because I never thought that I would get all those deep dark secrets out that were keeping me high, and it was also the first time I had allowed myself to trust someone in recovery. *Brad, Districts 5 and 13*

**Fourth step**, what else? I am a salesperson and finally separating honesty from my sales bull\*\*\*\*. It was hard to get to the truth, but it was cleansing once I got there. *Wayne, District 7*

**Step 3** because of the idea of turning it over; that's scary. I feel like I am going to lose myself, as if turning it over to God, he's not going to leave anything of me. The experience has been the opposite. *Thadeus, District 4*

**Seventh step** because it's about my daily connection with God and recognizing my character defects, or as I like to call them, character resets. *Trisa, District 11*

**4th Step** was the hardest: I carried it in my briefcase for over 18 months, always saying "I'll get to it later!" It was like when I said, "I want to stop smoking tomorrow." But I was not ready to write it for ~4-6 months or so, because of fear. While I kept turning it over to my HP to take care of me, I couldn't face my skeletons. Eventually, when I was ready, I couldn't get motivated. So my therapist (also clean & sober ~ 8 years at the time) suggested the following, "Why don't you start your 4th step and not stop writing until you're done?" After I gave a bunch of complaints, eventually I gave this a shot. I started after work, and was writing it in the back of my meeting, and through the night until I am. I didn't finish, so I went to bed & restarted the next morning & finished it. So after 1.5 years, I finished it in less than 8 hours.

Since then, I did one more 4th Step, and it was much easier — because I no longer feared what I would find. In terms of now, at almost 9 years sober, the hardest step for me is either the 6th Step or the 3rd Step. The 6th, because I like many of the character defects that remain and the 3rd, because it's often VERY hard for me to let go. *Ari, District 1*

The **6th** is the hardest for me, because it's where I actually have to change my behavior. The only real indication of willingness is action, so to really work the 6th step I have to start making the decision to not engage in character defects: to not lie, not resent, not live in fear, not be self-centered, etc. These are old habits, and learning to observe them, think about them, and then not do them is hard work — the crux of the program, I'd say. *Paul G, District 11*

For June, the Roving Reporter asks, "What surprised you most about getting sober?" *Thank You.*

## The Way that the Waves are Going Out From the Center

Transcribed from a telephone voice mail message left by my mother-in-law, M, who is one of the kindest people I've ever known.

"...Hi, It's M

Scobie, I spent the day today up in the city because my dear friend NJ lost her boyfriend. He died a couple of days ago. I was up there helping her write an obituary and was just sort of sitting Shiva [Jewish mourning] with her, but anyway, he's a singer-songwriter, and in the process, she mentioned that when I had talked to her several months ago about MA, he joined and had really, really liked the meetings and the fellowship. Then he became too ill and couldn't stay on, but in the meantime he was able to stop smoking dope *and* stop smoking cigarettes as well, and he became very influential among younger singer-songwriters, helping them to stop smoking. So it really had quite a broad influence. And at one point, he got the M.A. newsletter and saw an article, which he liked, and showed it to NJ who said, "Oh, hey, it says it's by Scobie, that's M's family!" So, I just wanted to pass on back to you that because you shared so much information about M.A. With me, that's when NJ mentioned to me that he was possibly in line for a liver transplant, which he couldn't ultimately take because he had too much damage by that point, but she said that when he was in line, he *had* to get off of *everything*, and that's when I mentioned M.A. to NJ because I thought that this might be a way that he could do it, so it was really helpful, and so great that I knew about it through you. So I just wanted to pass that on back to you that this is the way that the waves are going out from the center, and thank you for being you."

by Scobie

## ACTION + REACTION = SERENITY

BY MATT D.

It is not what happens to me, but how I respond to it, that determines my emotional well being.

When I was using, the smallest thing could set me off. I was filled with anger and resentment, and it was all because the world seemed so unjust. After I got clean, the anger, resentment and fear were intensified. I could find no relief until I could accept that almost all of the things that happen to me are outside my control. What I can control is myself and my reactions to the world. When I choose to respond with fear and anger, I give people and events power over me and my emotional well being suffers. However, when I choose to accept the things I cannot change, and instead work on improving myself – when I ask for my higher power's help to respond in a positive way and to be of use to others, I find that the world is not such a bad place. I am able to feel better about myself and my place in the world. My spiritual and emotional well being is enhanced and I am open to the possibility of serenity.

Today, I will not let outside people or events control my emotional reactions. I will accept that much of what happens in my life is out of my control, and I will pray for acceptance and serenity.

## Share on Step 1

by Anonymous

I came to a meeting. I felt apprehensive, out-of-place and shy. I listened, kept coming back, and eventually found a sponsor. I researched a lot of recovery literature to see what made sense to me. I made the decision to work the steps. I found some workbooks and read Life With Hope more thoroughly. My sponsor gave me homework for Step 1. I got through half of it and stalled.

I kept coming back to meetings, listening, sharing and offering whatever service I felt I could. In time, I knew I needed to finish my step work and move on. When I looked at just where I had stopped it hit me like a ton of bricks. I was so scared. I didn't want to face the things about myself that I knew I must in order to recover: experiences, actions and addictions. So, I spoke with a friend I had made at ma-online.org who said, "This is not a test. There is no pass or fail. You are not being judged. There is only what happened, what IS and what you are going to DO about it. Learn from it. Let go and have faith."

I finished step 1, understanding that my life will always contain unexpected islands of unmanageability, but that I can navigate them with greater grace, humility, faith and HOPE as I work my program. I come closer to my higher power, to others, and to myself when I embrace where I am powerless and let go of trying to control what cannot be controlled.

I still get scared. But less and less do I allow myself to wallow in the why, what and where's of my past. I try not to freak out too much in anticipation of steps (or anything else) in my future. "Just for today", the Serenity Prayer, H.P., my sponsor, literature, and all the recovery tools I can discover and use help to lessen these fears and increase my sense of peace. I experience the Serenity Prayer's power more deeply as I let its message into my daily life.

Higher Power, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Hooray for Step 1! I work you again and again with less self-interest and increasing gratitude.

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## Marijuana Anonymous Meditation Book

We are seeking submissions for consideration to be published in a future copy of Marijuana Anonymous' own daily meditation book. Please keep submissions short in length, generally less than 300 words. Random entries are acceptable, but if there is a specific day in mind, please annotate. Please contribute to the growing fellowship of Marijuana Anonymous, as we attempt to make an indelible mark for all marijuana addicts alike. Please send all submissions to [anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org](mailto:anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org) or snail mail to our P.O. BOX printed on page 2. Thank you.

### 2005 MAWS CONFERENCE

Thanks to District 10 for hosting the 2005 Conference and for all their hard work to make it possible. Thanks to the Trustees and Delegates for donating their precious time to help do the important business of M.A.W.S. Please look for a conference recap in the upcoming issue of *A New Leaf*.



# 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.**

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Carol 4/27/04  
 Craig 5/27/87  
 Tommy J 5/01/98

### District 3

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 Jerry P. 6/27/93  
 Will J. 6/09/03

### Austin, TX

Dawn E. 6/07/04  
 Heather B. 6/25/00

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Suki G. 5/26  
 Raquel S. 5/26  
 Robert M. 5/05/00 5 years  
 Kathy L. 6/14  
 Nina S. 6/21/85 20 years  
 Chris M. 6/10/00 5 years

### District 5

Dean W. 6/29/92 13 years  
 Brad M. 6/03/97 8 years  
 Trudie G. 6/01/98 7 years  
 Edward W. 6/22/01 4 years

### District 12

Sarah M. 1/13/04 1 year!  
 Ira F. 1/15/87 18 years  
 Jim H. 1/27/03 2 years  
 Chris F. 2/01/88 17 years  
 Michael G. 2/02/03 2 years  
 Michael D. 2/13/03 2 years  
 Anna M. 2/27/03 2 years  
 (sorry so late!!!)

### West Haven, CT

Neal Z. 4/ ? /97 8 years

### District 13

Andy E. 6/23/02 3 years

**Celebrating 162 Years of Sobriety in This Issue!**