

Keep Coming Back

I will always remember my first Marijuana Anonymous meeting. I was scared and nervous, but I remember all of that melting away as the meeting started. Soon I realized, “This is where I need to be.” I could relate to what I was hearing. Listening intently, I was amazed that there was a group of people just like me. By the end of the meeting, I felt much more relaxed and really glad that I found my way there. A few people approached me after the meeting to greet me and give me a phone list, and to tell me “Keep Coming Back.”

Approximately two weeks after that first meeting, I had what I choose to call a “Spiritual Experience.” I was high and I felt really terrible. I realized that after nine years of smoking every day (morning, noon, and night), that I was an addict and that pot ruled my life. I never wanted to get high again. I feel very fortunate that this happened. I knew I could not get sober on my own, so I made a decision to make MA a part of my life.

The first thirty days were very difficult. My body was changing, mentally and physically, and I felt very strange. MA gave me a program I could believe in and follow. Soon I started looking forward to getting to meetings and sharing my feelings, as well as listening to others. I began to feel more comfortable and soon started talking to people after the meetings. Everyone was very supportive and I knew they really cared about me and my sobriety. I was even nominated back then for the refreshment commitment, which I gladly accepted. Being of service has been an added boost to my program.

It is hard to put into words how my life has changed. I am happy. My self-esteem and self-confidence has improved tenfold. I have never been more proud of anything I have ever done. These sober moments are very precious to me and I wouldn't trade them for anything, not even a joint.

Then and Now

The Sixties: everybody was tuning in, turning on, and dropping out. I wanted to feel a part of it all. Love-ins, concerts, flowers in my hair, Beatles, Doors, Stones—even the music went against the “norm.” I'd swear to this day that The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper told us to “smoke pot, smoke pot, everybody smoke pot.” So I did. Didn't everybody?

Then my heroes started to die. First Hendrix, then Joplin, Morrison, and later on it would be Bonham and Belushi. The list is so long. I couldn't see that I was on the same road. I was still mad at the world and questioning authority, filling up my resentment list daily, and drinking and using to cope. When I finally got sick and tired of feeling sick and tired, I called a hotline, found out about detox, checked into a hospital, and learned about the dis-ease called addiction.

I knew alcohol was a problem, but I still figured I could go back to smoking dope after I took the time to clean out. A few weeks into sobriety and the cravings for pot were unbearable. I shared about it at a meeting and someone told me about MA. I went to a meeting the next night and knew I was home. I could easily identify with everybody. We were all trying to stop the same drug. Alcohol had brought me to my bottom, but pot had kept me there. Talk about cunning, baffling, and powerful. Nothing fits that description better than marijuana.

I feel as if I'm finally usually happy, occasionally joyous, and definitely free from the desire to use marijuana. MA has given me so much. It's given me friends I know I can count on, even when the going gets rough. It's given me principles to live by, and an altered attitude not possible without the 12 Steps and the people who live by them. I even have a Higher Power I choose to call God. For a recovering atheist, that's saying a lot.

I trust my Higher Power in a way I never thought possible. He gives me strength in ways I never knew before, and grants me serenity at times when it doesn't even seem possible. I thank God daily for the gift of recovery and ask that He show me His will in a way that I can understand. He helps me solve my problems by leading the

way to the right person, who gives me direction, or just grants me enough patience to figure it out for myself. Sometimes He just sticks a newcomer in front of me to remind me of where I come from. Oh sure, I fall back into my “stinkin' thinkin'” sometimes, but I'm able to recognize it for what it is. I “Keep Coming Back” and “One Day At A Time,” I feel better. Thanks, God.

Why MA?

A lot of people in other 12 Step programs ask the question, “Why Marijuana Anonymous?” I tell them that for twelve years, I was in and out of two other 12 Step programs and could not put together any length of sobriety or stop smoking pot. I tell them that I could stop drinking and using other drugs for periods of time, but I just could not stop smoking pot. Marijuana was my drug of choice and the other drugs usually always followed a joint. Marijuana was how I started and ended my day. I didn't do anything or go anywhere without pot. It was how I functioned. I tell them that I need to hear from people who smoked pot like I did. I need a program that primarily deals with marijuana.

Without MA, I don't think I could have put together this much sobriety. I never could before I attended Marijuana Anonymous.

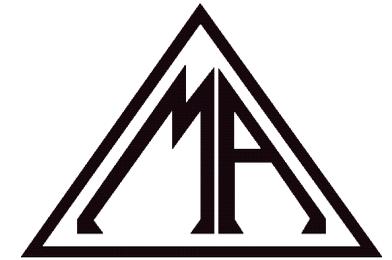
For my sobriety, I attend both MA and another 12 Step program, because I am an addict and an alcoholic. I applaud all the 12 Step programs, but MA will always be the foundation of my sobriety. I feel I belong.

Conference Approved Literature

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Sharing Our Experience, Strength, and Hope: Personal Stories of Marijuana Addicts

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The Story of the Lotus Eaters

About 3000 years ago, the poet Homer told a story about a man called Odysseus and his voyage home to Greece following the Trojan Wars. Odysseus and his men met up with many exciting adventures along the way, but the most relevant to us is the story of his landing on the Island of the Lotus Eaters.

The island was so beautiful that Odysseus wanted to stay there awhile and rest up. So he sent out some scouts to determine if the natives were friendly. Odysseus waited and waited, but the scouts never returned.

What had happened was this: the scouts had indeed met up with the locals, the Lotus Eaters, who turned out to be very friendly. The Lotus Eaters even shared their food with the scouts. But the food — the lotus — was a kind of dope, and the scouts got wasted from it and forgot all about Odysseus, their mission, getting back to Greece... everything. All they wanted to do was hang out, eat lotus, and get high.

Lucky for them, Odysseus came and dragged them kicking and screaming back to the ship. He tied them to their seats and ordered the crew to row like hell, in case anyone else might eat the lotus and forget the way home. The story of Odysseus is about more than just a Greek guy in a boat. It's about the journey people take through life and the obstacles they meet along the way. The story of the Lotus Eaters speaks particularly to us dopeheads. As addicts, we were stuck in a Lotus Land; we forgot our mission; we forgot the other adventures that awaited us; we forgot about going home.

Luckily, we each had within us our own Odysseus, our own Higher Power, which grabbed us by the collar and threw us back into the boat. So now we're rowing like hell. We may not know what's going to come next, but we're back on our way through life again.

Love Yourself First

The story of my recovery is the story of desire. What I desired was life, for I was living without desire. I did not know who I was, or what I wanted, or even how I felt. I couldn't remember anything about my life. I couldn't remember anything at all. I didn't have an identity because without memory and emotion, there is no identity and so I lived without being, because there was no one to be.

To live without a self requires a lot of doing, and I did a lot. I worked 70 hour weeks and I did marijuana continually, but the best and greatest abandonment of self was simply to merge my identity with a woman. (Although this also required more and more and more dope to really seem to work.)

Drugs never stopped working for me, but I stopped coping with work. I recognized I faced mental death if I continued, so I didn't. In the quiet desperation of simply wanting to live, I grew a little bit and wanted to live enough to live life on life's terms. I did withdrawal and, at every point I could, I chose sobriety, even in pain.

I did feelings. I really didn't want to, but after a while, I got used to them. I took an interest in other people and got close to them. I began to see who was really there instead of my delusions. I lost my second marriage this way, but any lie at all will end my sobriety and my life.

After a year's sobriety, I almost went out behind the fact that I was lying to myself and others. I was stealing (had been for many, many years), and calling it something else. In the ongoing development of my recovery, though, it just got to be too much all at once. I had to get straight with myself and God. Once I did, though, I was healed, and in a way I never knew possible before the program.

The joy of my life today is awareness of the details of life and in having the honesty not to want to change them. Although I no longer consider myself "in love," there are many people I do love, and I love them for themselves alone.

The greater prize and the hardest, though, is to love myself.

The First Step

I am a marijuana addict because when using pot, it was the most important thing in my life. More important than anybody or anything. It helped to suppress all the inadequacies I felt. It helped me not to feel the pain of not living up to expectations. It enabled me not to worry about anything. It helped me to not care about the things I really cared about. It enabled me to stay in my own little world and not deal with emotional feelings that would continually come up when I wasn't smoking. It would drive the fear away, but after a while, the fear would return.

Pot helped me not worry about not having a relationship with women, even though I wanted this to happen. Because of negative feelings about myself, I always thought deep down that I was worthless and didn't deserve to be happy. Instead of dealing with these issues I would smoke pot and the feelings would go away. Therefore, I never learned very many social skills or problem solving skills.

Problems would come up and they would seem too huge to deal with. I would smoke pot and look for the answers after smoking, because then the problems seemed smaller. In reality, they were only day to day issues that could be resolved if dealt with, instead of running away from them. I would smoke and not deal with the problems and let them fester inside until I thought, "I just can't handle it." I would try not to think about them, or go somewhere I could start all over, escape, and hope that would teach me how to deal with them the next time. But the next time, they would continue and I would do the same thing, over and over, until it was killing me.

Later, I started to turn to other things (alcohol, cocaine, gambling) in the hope that these things would give me pleasure, or at least let me not care about the problems that followed me wherever I went, and that these feelings I carried around would go away. They didn't. All the alcohol and drugs did was push me farther down, to the point that I finally thought, "There has got to be a better way." I gave in and sought help: the first step.

The Question of Honesty

After knowing and working on the Twelve Steps for 2 1/2 years, due to my concern over someone else's drinking, I came to the realization that honesty was missing in my life. Constant use of marijuana hadn't concerned me as I saw people at meetings chain-smoking cigarettes. "It's all a matter of choice," I rationalized. The question of honesty was raised at a moment when I was particularly receptive. For months, I'd tried to follow the guidance of a therapist who suggested that smoking pot would probably interfere with the search for reality we were pursuing. I could never go a full week without reefer and it bothered me.

A few days before my move to California, a 12 Step acquaintance casually mentioned that what he loved most about his program was the honesty in his life. I made a decision that night that I would not look for a drug supplier when I arrived here. I also knew that my success rate for stopping on my own had been a joke. The day after I arrived, I attended my first drug program meeting. While I found that group only minimally similar to me, going there kept me clean.

After a few weeks, I was persuaded that abstinence from alcohol also made sense. It was explained that even though I didn't consider myself a problem drinker, I was likely to increase my alcohol consumption if I weren't smoking pot. It also made sense that drinking might make me more receptive to slipping if I were offered pot while tipsy.

I was six months clean before being introduced to MA and I felt immediately comfortable. The people in our program have stories more similar to my own than those in any other 12 Step rooms.

I continue to make recovery the most important focus of my life. I go to meetings, have commitments, do lots of reading in the Big Book, use the phone regularly, and have a sponsor. I am hopeful about my future today regardless of many uncertainties. My relationship with my Higher Power continues to grow now that I have found the honesty that was missing from my life for 20 years.