

## I FOUND M.A. ONLINE

I am a recovering pothead. If it had not been for the MA program online I could not introduce myself as “recovering” because, you see, when I found MA online there were no MA meetings at all in the state where I live! I was recently talking to my online sponsor and she suggested that I share my experience, strength, and hope of how I got clean online. I made a commitment that I was willing to do whatever it takes to get clean and stay clean...and part of that is following what is suggested to me by my sponsor...so here goes:

I didn't try pot until I was 26 years old because I was scared of it, scared because it was an illegal drug, but mostly scared because I might enjoy it. This fear enabled me to just say no many times before I finally said yes.

The first time I tried it was on my wedding night. I won't go into details here except to say that my worst fear reigned true. I liked it (the pot, that is; the honeymoon was great too, but I am talking about the pot here!). Anyway, my disease was unleashed that night. I wanted to smoke it as often as possible and did. I thought I was just having fun because after all, pot is not addictive, right? Wrong.

Then, only seven and a half months after I got married, my husband committed suicide and my world was yanked out from under me! I had lost my best friend and my soulmate. When I took the marriage vows and said till death us do part, I had no idea that would be so soon. I didn't want to have to deal with the grief or the issues around a suicide that do not come with other kinds of death. I am NOT saying that grieving a suicide is worse than

grieving other deaths. I am just saying there are some unique issues to being a survivor of suicide. I did not want to look at these. I dove headfirst into all the pot I could get my hands on and used it to numb these emotions.

For the next nine years I continued to use pot regularly. It became an obsession. It was what I thought about morning, noon, and night. I woke up thinking about when in my day I could sneak a little toke or two, went through my day looking forward to that moment when I could toke away, and ended my day toking my way to sleep. I was still running from the feelings. I was terrified that if I allowed the feelings to surface, I would just lose it and end up in a padded room in some hospital.

My obsession with pot grew deeper and deeper. I was not only smoking it daily, but I was also progressing to smoking it at times when I never thought I would allow myself to be under its influence. I'd smoke in the car on the way to an appointment, or just before going to a business meeting (I run my own business out of my home so this made it easy). I'd smoke just before going to another twelve-step meeting. I'd basically smoke just before going anywhere that I could not openly roll one up and smoke it. I spent most of my time with my using friends, who became my closest network. When times were dry and the pot was difficult to get I would crush the seeds and chop up the stems and load up my pipe. I hid film containers with my "emergency stash" pre-cleaned and ready to roll. I had an eelskin lipstick case that was my joint case. I would roll several up at night and fill that lipstick case up with joints so I didn't have to waste time in preparation when I wanted one. I wanted it when I wanted it. I worked out a great arrangement with one of my customers who was also one

of my user buddies. When she needed my product, we traded it for pot. I thought that was a great arrangement.

Then something happened. I began isolating myself in my house only venturing out when I absolutely had to. I quit answering my phone (which is the lifeline of my business) and my addiction went to an even higher level. I woke up and lit up a joint with my morning coffee or soda. I smoked throughout the day. I was stoned more hours than not. What a great life, I thought. I don't have to worry about anything or feel anything. Then the pot quit working. My best friend, marijuana, let me down. No matter how much I smoked, I could not seem to get that high I wanted anymore. I couldn't seem to numb the feelings anymore. What would this pothead do next?

I began drinking heavily with the pot. I had always been a cocktailer, but it was only on occasion. Well, now the occasion was every day. I come from an alcoholic background. Somewhere in all of this insanity, I had a moment (and I DO mean Moment) of clarity. I got scared. I could see that I was headed down the same path of alcoholism that my father had been on. I didn't want that. I had said it would not happen to me. I started wondering if the pot maybe really WAS addictive. I knew about addiction and alcoholism from both my psychology background and from being in other twelve-step programs. I knew what the signs of addiction were. Could they be applied to moi and my marijuana use? But marijuana is NOT addictive. Right? WRONG!

I was miserable. I wanted the insanity to stop, but was at a loss as to how. I could not imagine life without marijuana. How in the world could I quit? It was all I thought about anymore, using it, scoring it, keeping it hidden. I felt

so alone. I went online on my computer and found Marijuana Anonymous. Could it be that there really is such a program? Was I dreaming? I had jokingly said to my using buddies that I needed a twelve-step program for my pot use. Be careful what you joke about, huh?

My journey into recovery began when I found MA's website. Little did I know at the time what a precious and priceless gift this would be. Initially, I thought "Okay, this is great, all I have to do is get the MA meeting schedule in my town and I am on my way." There was only one small problem-there was no MA meeting in my town, or in the whole state for that matter. Once again I felt lost in the abyss of my disease. But alas, I e-mailed MA and asked for help. Guess what? A reply from a wonderful woman came back to me. She said she would be my online sponsor and told me about the online meetings. She asked me if I was willing to do whatever it took to get clean. She was honest, yet warm, and said it wouldn't be easy, but it was a simple program. She snail-mailed me lots of literature from MA and prepared me for detox.

Boy, that was hell! I don't ever want to go back there again. I probably wore her out those first few months. I was craving pot like I can't even put into words. Meanwhile, I had also called a friend here who I knew was in a twelve-step recovery program for alcoholics and talked to her honestly about what was happening. She suggested I go to a meeting with her. I said, "But I'm not an alcoholic." Her response (through a caring yet laughing heart) was, "Well, maybe you aren't, but it's the same Twelve Steps and you could just substitute in your mind the word marijuana every time you hear alcohol. And why don't you

stop drinking just to help you through detoxing from the marijuana too and see what happens?"

Being the willing and good little miserable addict I was, I agreed and went with her to a meeting. I continued to go and sat quietly. When I had to introduce myself I would say, "My name is — and I am an hrmphammffaholic." I could not say alcoholic for the longest time. I sat in those meetings for 6 months without drinking and then realized that if I was addicted to one drug, I was probably addicted to all drugs whether I had tried them or not and alcohol is a drug. So yes I am an alcoholic too, what they call a high bottom drunk. I digress only because it is a part of my story.

I was in daily, sometimes hourly contact with my online sponsor. She reminded me to just stay in today, stay in this minute, don't use for this hour. She helped me through the detox with her loving, supporting, yet tough-love hand. I was irritable (nice way of saying insane), could not sleep, had the sweats all the time, had the shakes, and had unbelievable cravings. My thoughts were still obsessed with pot. I wanted it, yet I wanted to be free from its bondage. My sponsor sent me writing assignments on one Step at a time. I willingly (though sometimes it felt like taking really raunchy tasting medicine that I knew was necessary to take to get well) completed the assignments.

She called me one night all the way from the opposite end of this country. I was overwhelmed with emotion that she would actually take the time and the expense of a long-distance call for this pothead. Her support poured out unceasingly. She helped me through the vivid dreams and the nightmares of using. She explained each symptom of detox and said that it would not last. I had to trust that she

was right, after all, she was clean. I'm happy to report that she WAS right, as she usually is, and the symptoms did subside.

But the obsessive thoughts continued. She told me that those too would go away. Not forever, but I would get some relief and then they would only come back long enough to remind me that I have a disease and that it was waiting for me to fail at recovery and come back to me. What a scary thought. Again, she was right. There came a day when I actually did not think about smoking a joint. What a gift! That was my first glimpse of peace and serenity.

Meanwhile, during all of this contact with my online sponsor, I went to the online meeting. Now, let me remind you that I live on the East Coast, so it was midnight my time when the meeting started and 1:30-2:00 a.m. when it ended. This pothead was willing to do whatever it took to get the support a meeting would offer. I learned to take a nap on Sunday afternoons so I could stay up for the meeting. I "listened" to the shares at the meeting. I felt like I had truly found my home with these people. I could relate to them. They knew me even though most of them lived on the other side of the country from me.

Then one Sunday night when my sponsor was the leader she called on me to share...YIKES!!! I did, and the feelings poured out of me that I had run from for so many years. I was embraced by the group. They shared some tools with me to help me begin to heal from my grief. It didn't matter to them that it had been nine years since my husband died. The point was, I had never dealt with it. I was in therapy too during all of this and still am. I used the tools shared with me, talked at the meetings, talked to my sponsor, read my MA literature, literature for recovering

alcoholics, took my grief to therapy, and began trudging through all of the feelings. First I dealt with what I call the Politically Correct feelings of grief...sadness, loneliness, abandonment, intense sorrow of what was lost and what could have been, etc. Then it came time for the BIGGY, the Politically Incorrect, as I saw it, feeling of anger and resentment. Again the online program of MA was there to embrace me. My sponsor helped me talk about it and understand that it was a large part of the healing I had to go through.

Guess what! I made it! I survived ALL of the emotions, Politically Correct/Incorrect alike, and have found a new peace and a new happiness. I do not regret the past. I do not regret knowing, loving, marrying, and sharing my soul with my husband. Now I can remember him as a gift, though brief, and the wonderful times we did share together. Someone in this wonderful online MA program suggested that he taught me the depths of how much I could give and receive love, and that I would have that again in my life. What a gift. Yes, I wish that I could have had it with my husband and we could have grown old together. But that didn't happen. I can't change that. I can change how his death affects my life. I can learn how to move on with my life, and I can be clean and sober and happy, joyous, and free.

If it had not been for MA online, I would never have learned all of these things. I know I have so much more yet to learn. This journey of recovery has been one filled with miracles and gifts of the heart. I now know peace and serenity. Now there is the first MA meeting in my state, in my town, thanks to my sponsor's suggestion of my starting one up. It is small right now, just 2 of us potheads, but that

**I Found M.A. Online****Life With Hope**

is all that is necessary to have a meeting. For weeks, it was just me and the committee in my head. I used the hour to work on my Fourth Step and to read in my Life with Hope. Now I have the opportunity to share this message of recovery. For that I am grateful and thank my HP each day for online MA.