

YOU ARE NEVER ALONE

If you think you have a problem with marijuana, you are reading the right book. If you know you have a problem with marijuana, I am here to tell you that you NEVER have to smoke pot again. I know this because it is true in my life.

I was raised in East Tennessee. I was a very good student in high school. I got good grades, I was never late for my classes, and I would often remind the teacher when she forgot to assign homework. The other kids in school didn't think this was cool. So even though I was smart, I wasn't very popular. I felt like a geek.

I had read all the frightening stories about how drugs would ruin my life, so I swore I would never touch them. One of my friends in high school got stoned all the time and eventually I became curious. She wasn't ruining her life (or so I thought) so I became interested in finding out more about weed. She gave me a small box containing about a teaspoon of pot. I took it home and carefully hid the box in my closet. I didn't know what to do with the stuff. I was curious, but scared at the same time. I kept the box for about a week and then threw it away.

I actually had my first joint when I was nineteen and just finishing my first year at college. I was what most dope smokers might call a late bloomer. By this time most of my friends and family members (yes, even my mother!) smoked pot. My mom gave me my first joint. I didn't get high at all. I began to wonder what all the fuss was about. My mom told me that the first time you wouldn't get high. I

tried again the following weekend and was very successful. I was laughing at one-word jokes. I was actually doing something daring and illegal for the first time in my life. I had cast off the image of being a goody-two-shoes. People who didn't like me because I was such a geek started hanging around with me after they found out I smoked dope. For the first time in my life I felt cool.

Well, after about a few months of being the party boy I noticed that I wasn't smoking pot like my friends or family. I couldn't seem to get enough. We would smoke one joint and I was ready to smoke another. They would say "Let's wait till we start coming down a bit before we have another." It was at this time that I decided that I needed to start buying my own. That way I could be in control of when the next joint was smoked.

In no time at all I was smoking all the time. I would smoke before my classes in college and wouldn't be able to concentrate on the lessons. I quit college because I would rather smoke pot. I was getting straight A's in my computer science classes, but I withdrew after a year and a half. I told people I didn't have enough money to continue going to college. Funny though, how I always seemed to have enough money to get pot. The truth is that I was on a scholarship and just turned it down because I would rather smoke pot.

For the next seven years I smoked pot and worked at fast food restaurants. That's seven years of saying, "Do you want fries with that?" I was eventually the oldest person working at the place. But I was too stoned all the time to do anything about getting a better job. I eventually reached the end of my rope and didn't know what to do. At no time did it occur to me that smoking pot was the problem. In fact I

considered pot my “reward” for having to put up with such a crummy life.

My misery got so bad that I decided something had to happen. I decided I was going to move to San Francisco. I didn't know anyone there. I didn't have a job waiting there. I just figured that it couldn't be any worse than what I was going through in Tennessee. When I arrived I found out that my cousin lived there. I stayed at his place for a few weeks until I got a job and an apartment. I was able to find a roommate (who smoked pot) to split rent with. I was able to get a job at a bank using my basic word processing skills. The first thing I did when I arrived in San Francisco was score some pot. I was able to keep the job at the bank for about four months until I got so stoned one night that I didn't wake up until 3:00 p.m. the next day. I was too ashamed to tell my boss the real reason I overslept, so I quit my job.

For the next eight years I was always screwing up at work. I would call in sick at least twice a month so I could stay home and get stoned all day. I only worked temporary jobs. This worked well. I could get stoned all the time and if I got fired I'd just get another job. Eventually I became notorious at temporary agencies for my behavior and no one would send me out on jobs. I became broke and behind in my rent.

One day I flipped out. I started threatening my ex and the police came and put me in the mental hospital. The nurse at the hospital asked if I was doing speed, acid, heroin, and all these other narcotics. I told her no. She then asked if I smoked pot. I told her I smoked pot all day long, every day. She asked me if I wanted to quit. I told her “NO. If you think I'm in bad shape now you should see me when

I'm not stoned." The hospital put me on disability and gave me \$1,000 a month because I was diagnosed as being "clinically depressed." They told me to pay my rent and buy food with it. Instead I bought just enough food to get by and a whole lot of pot and didn't pay any rent.

The disability ended after a few months. Now I was way behind in rent. Then, even worse, the pot ran out. So I started selling my possessions. The TV was the first to go, followed by my compact discs. Finally, there I was alone in my apartment with nothing left but my computer. I started to think about how much I could get for it and that is when I had my "moment of clarity." I realized the depths I was sinking to just to get stoned. I decided that I had to quit pot. But try as I might I was still doing whatever it took to get more. I finally realized that I had to quit smoking pot. I also realized that I couldn't quit.

Then I decided I needed help. While I was in the psychiatric ward I found out about twelve-step programs. I went to a twelve-step meeting called Marijuana Anonymous (MA). Nervously I walked into the room and sat down. I looked around and saw people laughing and smiling and I thought that these people couldn't be addicted to pot like I was. The meeting started and a woman told her story. For the first time in my life I heard someone telling the honest truth about how they had used marijuana and what a mess it had made of their lives. For the first time in my life I no longer felt alone. I raised my hand and told the group that I was there because I had been smoking pot for about seventeen years and could not stop. I told them that I had no job, no money, no friends, no hope for my future, and nowhere to turn. I said that I hadn't smoked pot for three days. Everyone in the room started clapping their hands. I

couldn't understand why they were doing that. I wasn't used to people supporting me for anything good I had done. I now understand that each and every person in that room had been off pot for three days once themselves and that each and every person in that room knew what I was feeling.

I listened intently to every word spoken by the other people and all of them had the same basic message. They too had been where I was: desperate, lonely, and beaten. They had found an answer at these twelve-step meetings. They told me they went to a meeting every day for the first ninety days. At first I thought that was an awful lot of meetings in a short amount of time. Since I found the time to smoke pot every day and I wasn't doing that any more I had the time to go to all those meetings. Besides, I wasn't working so I had all day free.

They told me they read some MA literature every day. So I read the pamphlets over and over again. Then I bought the book *Life with Hope*. I read that and most of it didn't make any sense. But, after awhile, some things would sink in. Even today I still read from it and I still learn more from it each time I read it.

They told me that they had gotten rid of everything in their homes that indicated they had ever smoked pot. I got rid of my bong, pipes, trays, rolling papers, ziplock baggies and even those little canisters for film that I used to keep my pot in.

They told me they had a sponsor. That was someone who worked with them one-on-one to learn more about the Twelve Steps. I got a sponsor and while I didn't always like the things he wanted me to do, I tried to do them. One of the things he told me was to avoid bars for six months.

How was I going to have any fun? I had been away from pot for ten long days at this point so I decided I knew best for myself and I went to a bar anyway. I was in that bar for about two hours, and before I knew it I was getting stoned at this guy's house. I didn't even know him, but he said he had pot so I joined the party right away. I went to an MA meeting the next day ashamed that I had smoked pot and expected everyone to laugh at me for failing, but no one laughed. They just helped me to understand Step One, which states "We admitted we were powerless over marijuana and that our lives had become unmanageable."

I had made a decision to quit smoking pot and the moment an opportunity presented itself I was smoking again. That's a lesson I keep with me to this very day. But most importantly, they told me don't smoke pot...no matter what! Well, the first thirty days were long and difficult. I had to stop doing what I had done every day for such a long time. I had trouble sleeping, I thought about pot almost all the time. I even dreamed about smoking pot. My life didn't immediately get better. After all, I came into this program with no money, no job, and on the twenty-first day of not smoking pot I got an eviction notice. I had one month to get my stuff packed and get out.

I wanted a joint the moment the notice was handed to me. But I remembered what they said at the meetings: "Don't smoke pot no matter what." Instead of getting high, I called people I had become acquainted with in the program. They understood how I was feeling and assured me that things would get better. Well it was the last day of being in my apartment and I still didn't have a place to go to. The Sheriff would be there at 6:00 a.m. to make me leave if I hadn't already. I kept my resolve to not smoke pot

no matter what. I didn't really believe in a GOD at that time, but I fell to my knees and in tears prayed that if he wanted me to be homeless that I would, but I wouldn't smoke pot. That very evening I met a guy who was feeling hopeless. He needed a roommate and he needed one fast. He didn't know what to do. I still think that was the first time I really felt the presence of Higher Power in my life. I now live in a very nice neighborhood in the nicest home I have ever had.

By this time I had found another temporary job so I could pay rent. And, since I wasn't getting stoned every day, I was able to remember people's names that I worked with and understand instructions for projects. Even more miraculous was my ability to show up for work every day. Eventually I had the kind of clarity that I hadn't had since college. A supervisor on one of the assignments I had worked on hired me on a permanent basis. I suddenly had the best job I have ever had in my entire life. I am now making more money than I have ever made before. And I even like my job.

After spending so much time alone and stoned I didn't know how to make friends. But I'm happy to report I have new friends now as well. I like to hang around people who are not using drugs and like me for who I am and not the quality of my pot. I thought at first that I would become a geek like I was in high school, because it was the pot that made me cool. But once again, I was wrong. I am a good and fun person. I laugh more than I ever did. I go more places than I used to, and I don't do it alone.

Most of all I have hope. Hope for my future, because I can now envision myself going back to college and getting my Computer Science degree. I have hope that

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Life With Hope

I can now live a full and happy life without pot. And best of all, I have hope that when something does go wrong in my life I don't have to smoke pot to get through it. More good has happened in my life in the last year than I can believe.

Today I have miracles in my life. I woke up this morning and I didn't smoke pot. I went to bed last night without smoking pot. To me these are miracles. I didn't think that I would ever be able to quit smoking. You too can have the same kind of miracles in your life, if you want to.