

## A LIFE WORTH LIVING

I am a marijuana addict. Sometimes it seems like an MA meeting is the only place where people are not amused by that statement. Many people see marijuana as a harmless drug, with no serious side effects. They should have seen me in my first year of sobriety. When I stopped smoking pot, I started feeling again — emotionally and physically. I felt like an abscessed tooth with cold water being poured on it. Withdrawal was painful, uncomfortable, and unpleasant. I found the reality of hitting bottom after I stopped smoking weed. What started out as harmless, recreational pot smoking literally turned into a refuge from pain and reality — the pain in my life and the reality of everyday living.

When I began smoking pot, it was part of a larger experience occurring at the time: Civil Rights, the Vietnam War, hippies and flower power, free sex, turn on, tune in, and drop out. Smoking pot was the politically correct thing to do. It seemed so right at the time. Smoking pot was a way of declaring my independence and establishing an identity. While many of my friends stopped smoking marijuana and went on with their lives, marijuana became the focal point of my life. As a practicing addict, the word “stoned” echoed and reverberated through my head for two decades. It took me twenty years to figure out marijuana did not ease my pain; it just stuffed it deep down inside me. Sobriety opened a Pandora’s Box of emotions.

I did not start out a full-blown addict. It took time, although not very long. I courted other drugs, but marijuana was my steady long after I quit indulging in other

drugs, including alcohol. My experience tells me that whenever I start using I have no idea when I will stop. I am not a person who can smoke a joint today and wait six months before I smoke another one. It does not work that way for me. I am never satisfied, whether I smoke one joint, or one million joints.

I started participating in outpatient drug programs. The hospital drug program I attended required participation in at least one twelve-step meeting per week relating to your drug(s) of choice. I did exactly the required minimum. I felt skeptical in the meetings and thought the people there had bigger problems with drugs than I did. I would stay sober for short periods of time, then go back out to do further research. This went on for several years. Each time I went out, I found myself increasingly powerless over pot and my life more unmanageable. My addiction kept me in a state of loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

During this period of time, I met a fellow marijuana addict in the same hospital program I attended. Mind you, this was my fourth attempt at trying to stay sober. He gave me a card that read: "Welcome my friend and a friend you must be, for letting me help you also helps me. Yes I've had a problem so you're not alone. If you care to discuss it, just pick up the phone." On the card was his name and telephone number. I thought, "This guy can't be for real. This is a joke." What I considered a joke at the time turned out to be a lifesaver for me. Despite my feelings, I kept the card. When I reached the point where I could no longer struggle with the problem alone I called the number. He started taking me to meetings and helped me understand I could live my life free of marijuana one day at a time. We went to meetings of what was then called Marijuana

Smokers Anonymous (MSA). Most of the meetings were small. A meeting of ten people seemed large to me. They gave out dark green chips with MSA printed in bold black lettering for different periods of sobriety. I met a variety of people at the meetings. I discovered addiction was an equal opportunity disease. It does not discriminate against anyone; it welcomes everyone equally without regard to race, nationality, religion, education, and economic level; it includes men, women, adolescents, and children.

In my early days of sobriety, the key for me was found on page 59 of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. "Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon." Half measures availed me nothing. My experience taught me that lesson. Until I was able to fully admit I had a problem with marijuana and life in general, this program did not work for me. I learned recovery provides a solution to my living problem. The Step exercises I did with direction from my sponsors enabled me to enhance and significantly improve my life. The Steps offered me an opportunity to deal with the wrongs I perpetrated during my drug using days and helped me to start looking at the behaviors creating the insanity in my life. Insanity for me, like many other addicts, is doing the same thing over and over again while expecting different results. Today I choose, for the most part, not to live in the problem. Instead, I prefer to find a solution in order to live a more sane, happy life. The Steps are tools I can apply on a daily basis to deal with the emotional conflicts inevitably arising in my life.

Today, I am increasingly willing to accept responsibility for my life. I am grateful to the many people over the years who have participated and are participating in my

**A Life Worth Living**

**Life With Hope**

recovery. I always had a life. Thanks to Marijuana Anonymous, I now have a life worth living.