

I'M NOT AN ADDICT

How could I be an addict? My life is great. I live in a very good area of Los Angeles, drive a nice sports car, have a good job, pay all my bills, and have a wonderful family. This is not the kind of person I grew up believing an addict was. So I smoke pot every day. I still take care of business when it needs to be done. I just use marijuana to relax when I get home from work. I never smoke before or during my job. So I smoke from 4 p.m. 'til midnight every night and do nothing but watch television. It's not a problem; I have nothing else to do anyway.

Then one of those nights hit when I ran out of pot. I was climbing the walls. I went crazy. I called everyone I knew to score even a roach. I remember one night driving 39 miles in a bad storm to get a half a joint from a complete stranger just to get through the night. I remember calling my dealer every hour on the hour to see if it had come in yet. I bought pot from people I normally wouldn't have even talked to much less done business with. What had happened to me? I thought I was using because I wanted to. Now I found that I was using because I had to. I had become an addict!

After 13 years of using I couldn't take it any more. The reality finally hit me that I had no life and that every day was the same. Get up, go to work, come home and spend the rest of the evening stoned in front of the TV with a soda in one hand, a bag of chips in the other and the bong loaded and ready to go! This was the extent of my life, day in and day out for 13 years. Oh, I had lots of friends. One reason might have been that I always had a bag of pot on

the coffee table with papers and a pipe ready to go. If you came in just help yourself. That way I didn't have to go out and I still had the illusion of having a lot of good friends. I would go to parties occasionally, but only if I knew most of the people that were going to be there. I didn't like being stoned in front of people I didn't know in case I made a fool of myself. I very rarely took vacations since most of my money was going into pot. My life was boring. If it weren't for people coming over to my house, I probably would have never seen anyone.

The day finally came when I had a moment of clarity. I hope I never forget that day. I just couldn't take it any more. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. I just wanted the pain of everyday life to stop! I wanted my life to be so much more, but I had no idea how to achieve it. I cried out to my Higher Power that night to help me or, if that was not possible, to end my life now! I cried like a baby for quite a while when I heard that little voice in my head that told me to put away the pot. It was time to stop. For one of the first times in my life I decided to listen to that voice instead of doing it my way.

First I cleaned my bong and my pipes, grabbed my pot, and locked it all up in a drawer. Next I got a therapist. Since I was very depressed with my daily life, I figured that I needed to find a therapist to help me with my problems. Never once did I figure that pot might be the cause of my depression. On my first visit to the therapist, I told her that I had been smoking for 13 years, but that I had stopped and was not going to use anymore. I will never forget her comment to me.

First she told me that pot was a depressant and might have been the reason for my depression over the years. I

couldn't believe it. I had been smoking pot all these years because I was depressed and it was making me more depressed. I was stuck in a catch-22. Second she told me that I would need help in quitting. Why would I need help? I had been clean for over 3 weeks and I figured I now had the self-control not to use again. She told me that, if I were an addict, self-control would not be enough. She said, "Sure, maybe you're okay now, but how about in another week or month or year?" Since I was paying her good money, I decided to listen to the expert and try her way. After all, I was there because I needed change in my life, and the only way change would happen would be if I listened to someone else. Doing it my way obviously hadn't worked, and if I continued to do it my way then nothing was going to change.

Now was the time to try following someone else's suggestions. She told me that I should look into an outpatient program at the drug rehabilitation center. After speaking with the counselor at the center I didn't feel that their program was right for me, but I did hear a very important message. The message that I heard very clearly was that I needed to get to a twelve-step program.

Since MA was very young in the San Jose area (2-3 years old?) the counselor had not heard of it yet, so another twelve-step program was suggested. I started to go to this other program, but the problem was that I could not relate to the stories that I was hearing.

After 5 or 6 meetings I was starting to think that the Twelve Steps were not for me, when all of a sudden a friend of mine called. She was also trying to quit smoking pot and called to tell me of a twelve-step program that she had found in Santa Cruz that was wonderful. Everyone that she

had heard speak at the meeting she could relate to. They all had the same problem that we had, POT! She sent me a meeting schedule for the San Jose area, and I ended up at my first Marijuana Anonymous meeting. I was so nervous walking into that meeting by myself. I never used to do anything by myself. I always needed someone to be there with me, but as I walked into the room with only about 6 people in it, I felt a calm instantly come over me. I just knew that I was in the right place. As the meeting progressed I found myself relating to everyone that spoke. They were telling my story. They knew exactly what I was feeling and going through. I was HOME!

I have now been a part of Marijuana Anonymous for over 5 years as I am writing this. I can't begin to describe all the changes that have happened to me because of this program. By being honest with myself and realizing I had a problem I was able to start on the road to recovery. I swallowed hard and reached out for help. I listened to the people who had walked this path of recovery ahead of me and followed their suggestions. I found a sponsor within a couple of months so I would have a person that could guide me through the Twelve Steps, as he understood them. I began my Steps and rediscovered my belief in a Higher Power. Over the years practicing the Twelve Steps, to the best of my ability, I have started to receive the greatest gift of all, a belief in myself!

I can honestly say today that I have a good life. Each day will always have its ups and downs and that I have no control over, but it is my attitude towards these times that will determine how I feel about life. For the first time in as long as I can remember, I find that most problems don't get to me half as much as they used to. I now know that if I use

or get angry that the problem will still be there. The only way to get through the problem is to deal with it, not avoid it! When hard times come along now I know there is a better way to handle the situation. The program has given me many tools to use in my life and all I have to do is use them. I now have a belief in a Higher Power that is there 24 hours a day for me. I know that there is always a meeting to go to and true friends to reach out to that will be there to help me just as I am there for them.

I can honestly look at my life today and say how grateful I am to be a member in the fellowship of Marijuana Anonymous. I have so much today that I never dreamed I could have. These things didn't happen overnight, and I know that I have a long way to go. I now know that because of the Twelve Steps I have a chance to reach the goals I had always just dreamed of.