

MOMMY WAS DOING DRUGS

I can remember the first time I heard of MA I was going with my friend K— to a twelve-step meeting for recovering alcoholics, as a visitor, in Orange, California. We were walking down the hall of a hospital and my eye was caught by the word “marijuana” on the directory fifty feet away. I was so surprised that I walked up to it to see what it was all about. I giggled as I read the words: “Marijuana Anonymous 7:30 p.m. Monday.” I didn’t even know there was such a thing as MA, but every Monday night for the next nine months I thought about that sign.

Although I was raised in a house free of drugs and alcohol, I was always eager to experiment with them. I never really liked to drink. It gave me a headache and tasted bad to me, but I did it anyway. I started smoking pot when I was eleven years old. My older brother and his friends were smoking in the back yard out of a pipe made from a kid’s soap bottle and a piece of foil. I thought it smelled great, so I went out there and asked them for some. They gave me my very first toke. I thought it was delicious. My head felt light and I began to giggle. In the years that followed I tried every drug that was offered to me, but pot was always my drug of choice. I felt like I had found some kind of long lost friend. I smoked pretty steadily from then on. I went through stages of using other drugs, but I always smoked pot. I was a stoner. Everybody knew it and I was proud of it. Sometimes I would skip a day, but not if I could help it.

I would do whatever it took to get and stay high. I would hang out with people that I didn’t really like because

I knew they would smoke their weed with me. I went to the places I knew pot would be and, if there was no pot, I would leave to find it. I would save every cent I had to buy a bag of weed. Sometimes I would buy a dime bag, sometimes just a joint. I spent many mornings trying to figure out where to get pot, then the rest of the day getting it. I couldn't relax until I was high. I felt the most comfortable around other stoners, if you could call it comfortable. I didn't know anybody that didn't use some kind of drug. I thought that every teenager in America was high on something because every one of my friends was. Drug use never seemed to be abnormal to me because everybody I surrounded myself with smoked pot.

Every day of junior high I would smoke a joint with a friend's brother on the way to school, another on the football field at lunch, and as much as was around when school was out. I was hanging around with friends that were years older than me because they were always high. I was still so young that I had to be home before the street lights went on, but in the few hours between school and home I smoked a lot of pot. I would go home red-eyed and tired. I would sit in my room and eat chips and watch TV until I went to sleep for the night.

When I got to high school I was getting high every chance I had. I went to a continuation school and drugs were everywhere, especially if I looked for them. I could usually find someone to get me high on the way to school, if not I could find someone willing to leave with me and go to a friend's house where I knew there would be pot. I continued my pattern of getting high before, during, and after school for the next four years. I don't know if there was one day of junior high, or high school, that I was not

high at least part of the day. I got really bad grades and was kicked out of school a few times for smoking in the bathroom. But I was a stoner and very proud of it. All my friends were stoners and all their friends were stoners too. Even though I am a smart person, I graduated from high school with a D average.

After graduation I went directly to college. I felt that I needed to be more responsible and in control of my dope smoking. I told myself that I was not going to get high in the morning or until my homework and studying was done. That lasted about three weeks. I would make excuses not to do my homework so I could get high. Then I found excuses to get high before school or between classes. I was also doing a lot of speed and drinking at that time. I would leave a class to go do a line in the bathroom, but I found that I was going too fast to go back to class. So, I would go out to my car and smoke a bowl to bring me down. Then I realized that I was too wasted to even go to class, so I left. I dropped class after class until I was on academic probation. If I ever did study I was stoned. I never took final exams or wrote term papers.

I spent two years making excuses and making mistakes. I was doing the same thing that I had done all through high school. I decided to quit doing the speed and work for a while. I felt that I had tried college and it definitely was not for me.

I found a job at an escrow company and made pretty good money for an undereducated stoner like myself. Now I could afford to buy weed. I went through an eighth every two days.

But I was not getting high before work so I felt I was doing really well. The woman I bought pot from, K—,

became a really special friend of mine. And the fact that she too smoked constantly was a real bonus! I would smoke myself into a headache every day. I had a loaded bowl in my ashtray so I could get high as soon as possible after work. No matter how much pot I smoked it was never enough to satisfy me. I would not just smoke until I was high, but I smoked until I could barely see. I smoked for the taste, for the relief, and just out of habit. I wasn't getting any higher, but I smoked more and more. My boyfriend at the time also smoked as much as possible. That was just what we did. We sat around and got high, listened to music, and figured out ways to get more pot.

When I found out I was pregnant I stopped smoking completely. By this time I had been smoking for nine years straight. It was really hard to quit, but I had so much incentive. I didn't smoke for the first five months of my pregnancy. As time went on I talked to my doctor about smoking pot and he strongly advised me against it, but said that there was no real data on the effects of marijuana use on unborn babies. My other friends had smoked while they were pregnant and it didn't seem too harmful. So, I smoked a little weed after work and sometimes before. It was really hard for me to keep from smoking all the time. I had a hundred excuses and they all seemed to be good enough. I felt guilty and ashamed. I didn't tell anyone that I was smoking. When I would buy it I would say that it was for someone else so I didn't have to hear the lecture or feel the guilt. I would smoke alone where nobody could see. Sometimes I would smoke with K—, but I felt weird about it. I felt like I was bad person doing an unspeakable act. I think that out of all the things that I ever did involving my addiction to marijuana this is the one thing that I regret the most.

After my beautiful daughter was born, smoking wasn't the leisure activity that it used to be. We took turns taking bong hits in the bathroom and blew the smoke into the fan. I would have to go in the other room and close the door, smoke a whole bowl in three minutes, open a window, then go out to my baby. I wouldn't let people smoke around her and because we lived in an apartment, smoking a joint became something of a hassle. More and more I found myself being left out of the usual activities because smoking was not allowed in the house like before. I saw less and less of the friends that I thought really cared about me. As my daughter got older I had to start to hide the pipes and bongs. Smoking pot was not something that I did as a recreation, but instead something I had to do as fast as I could without letting her see or smell it. For the next three years I kept the bong in the closet and hid my pot smoking from my daughter, or at least I thought I was hiding it. I know now that she knew very well what was going on in the other room. At least she knew that after I went in the room for a while I smelt funny, my eyes were funny, I wanted to eat, and I was acting very different. In time she would have put it together and known that Mommy was doing drugs. I knew this, but I still was not ready to quit using.

A year before I quit using, K— got sober. I could see a change in her, and it was all good. She knew how to handle situations better; she seemed to be at peace with herself and her surroundings. She was still the same person that I cared so much about, but she was happier. We would still go places and do things, but we just wouldn't get high anymore. It was very different to me. I can remember the first time I woke up feeling good after a night out. I was so

amazed. I had never experienced anything like it. I was still using on a regular basis, but I was not enjoying myself the way I used to.

I went back to college and was doing pretty well. I still went to class high and did all of my studying high, but this time I felt guilty about it. I would walk around campus and wonder if I was the only person there that was high. I used the stress of my past relationship as an excuse to get high. Now I was out of that relationship and I needed a new excuse. I told myself that I just couldn't handle the stress I was under every day; the stress of going to school, raising a child alone, finals, the guilt I felt about my family situation, work, managing a household, life. I thought that it was really just too much for me. My pot smoking was affecting the way I was raising my daughter too. I would put her in the bath so that I could have five minutes alone to get high. I would put her to bed early so I could sit in my room and puff. I used to get dressed, get her dressed, have my keys in my hand then run back inside to the loaded bong before I went anywhere. I planned my day around her nap. I knew that I would want to take a nap too, so I would get high first thing in the morning and by the time I was burned out it was nap time. If I had a break between classes I would go to my car and smoke a bowl. I smoked a bowl on the way to the day care center and hoped that nobody noticed the smell. My whole life was centered around smoking pot. I soon realized that I was living my whole life in a fog. I was not experiencing anything completely.

I had talked to K— about the program, but never really saw my life as being unmanageable. I never got arrested, or lost jobs, or had my family leave because of my pot smoking. I was getting decent grades and finishing

all my classes. To everybody around me I seemed to be doing fine. I was a functioning addict. I think that I hit my bottom a long time ago and was living there while making excuses the whole time. I was lying to myself and the people around me. I had thoughts of quitting for a long time, but never tried. There was always something that I couldn't deal with that kept me smoking pot. The truth is that I was scared to death of feeling anything!!

I went out with K— to a New Year's Eve party for recovering alcoholics and had a great time hanging out with all the sober people. I was surprised that there were so many of them! They were not boring, or old, or even uncool. They were just like all the other people I had spent so many other New Year's Eves with, except nobody was throwing up in the corner or passing out in the bushes. It was a great way to bring in the New Year! I woke up in the morning and smoked a bowl on the way home and again, I felt guilty. I still was not ready let go completely. I had a lot of fears and doubts. I was afraid that my friends wouldn't want to be around me if I wasn't getting high. I was afraid of changing myself. I was afraid of doing things in a way that I have never done before. And what if I tried to quit and found that I didn't like the person I was without the pot?

I met a really nice boy at that party and he asked me out on a date. I was a little intimidated, because he was sober, but I went out with him. After our second date I came home and lay on my bed. I was so thrilled I could hardly stand it. I was too happy to deal with it and all I really wanted was a bong hit to help me calm down. Then it hit me. I was not unhappy, I was not in a bad place, I was not stressed out. I was just feeling, and that was unacceptable. I knew then that I had a real problem. There was no

excuse other than the fact that I was an addict and had to smoke pot to deal with life. I could not deal with stress, sadness, anger, or frustration. Certainly not with excitement, anticipation, guilt, happiness, or fear. I thought that my head might explode if I was forced to live life on life's terms. I was really afraid of becoming sober. I knew how to smoke and party, I did it very well. For me to see that I was smoking pot to dull my feelings, even the good ones, was a real eyeopener. I still did not feel that I was ready to quit. I was waiting for the urge and the desire to suddenly leave me. I had heard about people that just didn't want to get high anymore. I waited for that day to come and it never did.

I planned to go to a meeting to watch K— take her one-year cake, so I didn't smoke any pot that day. I had taken my daughter to a theme park the day before with my new sober boyfriend, so I had not smoked that day either. I went to the meeting with a few other sober friends. We talked about sobriety and sponsorship on the way to the meeting. My head was spinning. Here were these people that I had partied with so many times in the past telling me that they were happy being sober. It really amazed and baffled me. I went to the meeting and watched K— take her cake. The people there were friendly and happy. They were so proud of her and so was I. I held her one-year chip in my hand and really looked at it. I felt like that chip and this whole sobriety thing was so much bigger than me. I told K— that I would hold on to it until I had one of my own.

She looked at me with delight and said "Really!" I was surprised that I had said that and I felt really uncomfortable. Later, after the meeting, she pulled me out of the room and gave me a 30-day chip and said, "Now you owe

yourself 28 more days." All I could do was hug her and fight the tears. I didn't know how to be sober! What if I couldn't do it? I felt scared, but it felt really good.

I went home that night and cried. I prayed that God would help me get through this because it was something that I really wanted to do. The next day was the hardest. I was at school and the urge to smoke was overwhelming. My every thought was to get high. I wanted to cry, I couldn't concentrate, and I finally left. I went home and made a call. I talked to my friend S— about what I was feeling and, although I don't remember what he said to me, I felt much better. I would not have made it through that third day without talking to him. What he said, or didn't say, saved me. I went to another meeting around the corner from my house. I sat there quietly and cried. Then I went home and got down on my knees and begged God to take away this uncontrollable urge to get high. I took the three-minute egg timer out of the cupboard and flipped it over. I told myself that I was not going to get high in the next three minutes. I watched each grain of sand fall to the bottom. When the three minutes were up, I turned it over again. I could not live sober a day at a time yet, but I could do it three minutes at a time. That is exactly how I did the first couple of weeks.

I went to a few other meetings for recovering alcoholics in the next three days, but I knew I was not an alcoholic. I called MA (I got the number from the phone book) and had them send me a schedule. The first MA meeting I went to was on a Thursday night in Mission Viejo. I walked into the room and was greeted and felt very welcome. I felt like I was home. We talked and laughed and talked some more. I felt like I belonged there. I got some

literature, a phone list, and some helpful hands. These people were there for me, they wanted to help and wanted nothing in return. They would be my friends even if I didn't have buds. They had been through all the same things that I had been through and understood where I was coming from. I shared about the past eight days and how I felt about getting sober. They listened to me and didn't judge me or give me unwanted advice. They were just there to let me know that I was not alone and that there was a program to help me with my problem. There I was, hanging out with the stoners, just like always. The only difference was that we were not getting high. I left there feeling a new joy and all the relief in the world.

I went home and called K—. I asked her to be my temporary sponsor until I could find a permanent one and she agreed. She talked to me about the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, gave me some homework, and prayed with me. She asked me if I was willing to do anything to stay sober and I really was. I threw away all my pipes and my bong — I really was willing to do anything! Today I feel that there is nothing that I cannot handle with the help of my Higher Power and my friends in MA. I know now that I don't need to get high to deal with life. I put my life and my will in His hands and trust in Him to help me through. My life has not become perfect, but I know that it is all right. I know that there is a plan for my life and I remind myself that it is not my plan. I go to meetings regularly, talk to my sponsor, read Alcoholics Anonymous, talk to God every day, and sit quietly so He can talk back to me.

For me, MA is about more than quitting smoking pot-it is about working on the stuff that made me smoke it in the first place. I have learned to take things one day at a

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time and trust that things are working out exactly as God wants them to. I have learned to be honest with myself and others. Now I can set a positive example for my daughter and show her how to love herself. I know that no matter what happens to me I will keep coming back.