

THE GOD THING

I am a recovering marijuana addict who was raised during the Peace and Freedom Movement of the turbulent 60's in Berkeley, California. When my girlfriends said that they would never smoke pot or do drugs I kept quiet because I always knew that I would...someday (and for my entire adult life). It wasn't my choice to start using, though. My dad got me stoned when I was very young, which I do not remember. When I was six, my father dropped seven hits of LSD, flipped out, and committed himself to the mental ward at a state hospital. He was released in 1971 and I haven't seen him since. When I was nine I was given a hit of mescaline by a family friend. My path was set when I carved "F— You!" in the sand in six-foot letters. Shortly after that, I was stealing all the pot I could find and lying about it. By the time I turned thirteen I was smoking all day every day. I moved out when I was fifteen to run from the pain and to use to my heart's content.

From day one I did drugs for only one reason — to escape. I had experienced so much trauma by the time I was seven that I simply did not want to feel or be in my own skin. The chaos around me was far more than I could handle as a young child. I remember consciously choosing my friends based on my marijuana use and dropping people who did not fit in with my need for getting high. My life was shaped by chasing the high from that point on. I was dealing and putting myself in dangerous places to support my lifestyle. I had no regard for anyone else and blamed the whole world for my problems, but now I know that the problem was really the disease within me. I continued in

the vicious cycle of addictive behavior for a long time, even into my recovery.

I did other drugs and alcohol, but the marijuana was my only true friend. I did a great job of concealing it. My own mother did not know the extent of my usage. My grades were consistently A's and B's, I was well liked (except by myself), and I was a good employee. My pot smoking helped me to cope and, more importantly, to have a sense of belonging in a world I never felt safe in. I was a functional pot smoker, which gave me the permission I needed to continue using drugs. I was hanging out with people I did not like or want to be with just to maintain my habit. Today, I choose my friends by the positive things we have to offer each other. I am a true friend and a participant in my family.

At first, my marijuana smoking was fun, laughter, and munchies. In the end, it turned on me. I would be tired and could not go to sleep after the nighttime ritual. I would be hungry but could not eat after the required pre-dinner smoke. I was getting more paranoid and irrational. I no longer liked it yet I was incapable of stopping. I smoked more than the others around me and could not understand why they would not continue to smoke with me. I would stare at my Dad's picture, crying, thinking: "I do not want to end up like you, Dad." I had spent my life retracing his footsteps and found myself flunking out of college. I was lost and confused. It was time. I looked up a twelve-step program in the phone book and went to my second meeting. The first one I had gone to with my uncle about six months prior and got out of there as fast as I could because of the God stuff.

I have not had to smoke marijuana or do any other drugs for over ten years. My recovery has been a fabulous

road of ups, downs, awareness, denial, and the discovery that I am only human. I no longer have to carry the world on my shoulders. Life is no longer black and white. There is a whole spectrum of colors and hues in between. Today I feel all of my feelings and know what they are. I welcome the emotions and am learning to not let them run my life anymore. I have a relationship with my mother today that I never dreamed possible. We have actually become friends and look forward to spending time together. Today's lessons are about breaking the cycle of the obsessive-compulsive behaviors that accompanied my addictions. The integration of my traumatic childhood and my unmanageable adulthood is taking place as I grow and become a mature responsible adult. I am now on the continuous path of learning to love myself and be with me.

In the beginning, I thought that giving up the pot was the hardest thing I had ever done in my life. I took recovery by storm and did whatever it took to stay clean. It was truly minute by minute at times and full of challenges. It worked for me, not only because I was ready but also because I did what was suggested. I let others in for the first time and gave back what I was given. I went to meetings every day, sometimes more than one. I got a sponsor and worked the Steps. I used the telephone! And still do. I did service! For me, reading and writing were difficult and still are, but I did them anyway. I tried to pray and meditate to the best of my ability. Today, I think that life is the hardest thing I have ever done, but the rewards are well worth it. All I have to do is show up and tell the truth.

When I found MA, I found home and a family that would walk the path with me and show me how to live. It was the Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness that

helped me to keep coming back. The things that kept me clean and helped with the detoxification were simple: lots of showers, walks, and ice cream. I gave up all my old friends, including my family, and developed new friendships in recovery. It was the late night chats after meetings and the Step study meetings that helped the most. My disease is mostly about fear of abandonment and being alone, so I surrounded myself with nature (my God) and friends in recovery. I can ask for help today and let others help me. Yet, I still struggle with being told no. I learned how to drive, rent videos, go shopping, and have fun without a joint in my mouth. I did my inventory in coffee shops and started a lot of meetings. The thing that kept me coming back was my ego and not wanting to lose my relationship with my sponsor. I was told to stick with the winners. I did and now I am a double winner. Today I get to re-parent myself and work on my co-dependency issues, which are a continuum of my life as an addict, and being the product of a dysfunctional family in the 60's.

During my time in recovery from marijuana addiction, I have been through therapy, re-birthing, primal pain work, the Steps, churches, going to meetings, not going to meetings, depression, losing my home to a fire, bankruptcy, marriage, separation, divorce, smoking cigarettes, quitting cigarettes...and I did not have to use drugs (nor did I have a desire to use them). This program works if I work it! I did what those before me told me to do. I turned my will and my life over to the care of my Higher Power, worked the Steps with a sponsor, and was of service by doing everything from making coffee at meetings to serving as a trustee for three years at the world service level. All of this made a big difference in my recovery. I know today that the

misery is of my own making and only my spiritual well being can bring me comfort. I have had a few great sponsors who helped me to learn more about myself. These relationships are invaluable even to this day. As an independent, do-it-myself-er I have found that being humble enough to let others in and share myself with them has been an extremely rewarding experience.

I tried many things in my recovery to learn more about the God of my understanding. There were church services, sweat lodges, five years in the remote woods, books, and long theological discussions with others about their beliefs. Not trusting myself, or the world, has led me to struggle a long time with the God thing. I did believe that there was a power greater than myself because I felt it and I heard it within me. It was the thing that taught me the difference between right and wrong or gave me the kindness to help another across the street. In the beginning I just faked it. I used the word "lion" in place of God as it represented the courage, strength, and wisdom I needed to keep coming back and not use in between meetings. I used to think I was fortunate that I was not raised with any religion, because it made it easier for me to grasp onto this program. Today I am discovering that my experiences as a child have actually made it more difficult for me to allow the true gifts of God's love into my life. I have let my ignorance and fear stop me from truly understanding and defining what God means to me. Not letting God work in my life has made my life harder than it needs to be.

Having come full circle once again, I am simply putting one foot in front of the other and letting the program work me. Prayer and meditation are the keys to my serenity today. I have dropped all the walls and am

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allowing a power greater than myself to lead me. I am finding that my God is everywhere, in all that I do: walking, talking, singing, dancing, laughing, crying, and loving. My spirituality is an active part of my life today, ever growing and changing. It is no longer like wearing a shoe that does not fit. The insanity was that I kept trying for so long to make my life work. It is God (as I understand God, not as someone else does) that keeps me alive and well today.

The solid foundation I built in my first three years of recovery from marijuana addiction has carried me through many rough times in the last ten years. It keeps me from getting stoned when life gets tough. Even though I have lost so much in my life, I am always amazed that I am still drawn to love, care, and nurture myself and others. When I get out of the way my Higher Power takes care of me. I am grateful for my recovery and the Twelve Steps for I would not be alive without them. It does not surprise me that I am in the horticulture industry, after all is said and done, because of my connection with nature and the universe. I have gained so much in my life that I would not have without this program and the fellowship of MA.