

## I NEEDED IT TO FEEL OK

I remember seeing my sister being taken away on a stretcher while she was overdosing on LSD and thinking that I never wanted to be like that. That happened when I was in the 8th grade. By the end of the 9th grade I had started to smoke pot and drink wine to feel accepted by the other kids in the neighborhood. By the end of high school, I had lied and stolen to be able to get weed. I had also sold pot and other drugs at school for my sister, in order to get my drugs. I tried other drugs while in school. I eventually dropped out of school in my senior year to join the Army, get married, and get away from home.

While in the Army, I used and sold pot and other drugs. I eventually turned myself in to a drug program to keep from going to Europe. The program was for one year, and I ended up an outcast from the rest of my company. It was difficult to cheat the program due to testing, but I still managed to get loaded. After the year was over, I received a certificate of rehabilitation, so I figured I had no real problem with drugs.

I got out of the Army at the end of my service and moved back to California. After several small jobs here and there, I got the job that I still have today. After getting this job, I met people there who also smoked pot and did other drugs including crank and cocaine. I enjoyed getting high on the crank, but I always had to have my pot. A lot of problems started occurring at home and at work while I was under the influence of the crank and cocaine. It eventually led to my first wife leaving me.

I decided to quit crank and all the other hard drugs and to just smoke pot and drink occasionally because I never acted so crazy under their influence. I also cut off my beard and mustache and cut my hair shorter. After that, I met my present wife while I was working in her apartment. We started dating and she smoked pot with me a couple of times but it wasn't big on her list of things to do. She mainly did it after being pressured by me. I wanted her to be my pot smoking buddy, but she wanted more than that in a relationship with me. After a couple of times of smoking pot, she told me she didn't want to smoke it anymore.

I continued to smoke my pot because I still needed it to feel OK. Most of the other people I was associating with were pot smokers. I found it very difficult to associate with non-users. If we didn't have pot in common, it was just about impossible to develop any kind of relationship with them. I married my second wife telling her I would eventually quit smoking pot. She would try to pressure me into quitting, and I told her that I would. I was lying to her just to satisfy her for the time being. I was smoking pot from the time I got up until I passed out at night. Work or no work, visiting relatives, whatever. I had to have my pot.

Towards the end of my using, I was suffering from short-term memory loss, shortness of breath, and headaches. When I would get headaches, I would take some aspirin and continue to smoke. Most of the time I would smoke by myself, and it had to be outside of our apartment, as my wife didn't like the place to smell of pot. I would also smoke with the people who I sold to. I had to sell pot to help support my usage.

One weekend I was going out of town to visit some friends and bring them some pot and female starter plants.

My wife said that if I brought the stuff, she would stay home for the weekend. She ended up staying home, as I wasn't willing to leave the drugs home. That weekend I decided to quit my job and become a dealer where I first started using. I was willing to give up the relationship with my wife and to quit my job of over eight years. I came home to tell my wife of my plans and, needless to say, she was quite upset. She told me I was crazy and started to move out. We ended up talking about my new plans, but I was so stoned I couldn't carry on a conversation. I finally agreed to go into a 28-day program.

Others in the program before me asked which drugs had gotten me there. I told them that I smoked pot and drank occasionally. I felt "less than" those who were in for other drugs, including alcohol. Like being a pothead was no big deal, even though I smoked it all day long. There was too much going on in the program for me to dwell on it. I started learning about the addictive nature of drugs, and more importantly, I started learning about who I really was.

I came to a point where I started grieving for the loss of my oldest sister who was killed when I was 15. I worked on that and a lot of other issues those 28 days, but that was just the start. I started going to twelve-step meetings in the Bay Area and found a sponsor I could identify with. I heard him share and he was also a pothead.

While at the meetings, I had noticed fliers about a new twelve-step program that was for potheads. It was called Marijuana Addicts Anonymous. There were three meetings a week in the East Bay, and I decided to go to the meetings and check them out.

I was uncomfortable at my first meeting, but I felt good enough to come back. I continued to go to the meetings, and worked on my Steps with my sponsor. I started to do service work in MAA. I was a secretary, treasurer, and a GSR (Group Service Representative) of some of the East Bay meetings. Not all at once though! That would have been too difficult to handle.

Some of the notes I had taken of the early GSR meetings were given over to MAA for our records. We started a birthday night on the last Wednesday of the month, and were using poker chips and marbles with the clean time written in nail polish on them. We also had homemade birthday cards. We eventually merged with other marijuana groups and became what is today Marijuana Anonymous.

I continued working the Steps with my sponsor, and have been through all twelve several times. I also had the need for counseling outside the program, as I was one mixed-up person. I eventually moved from the Bay Area to the San Joaquin Valley some 70 miles away. I still work in the Bay Area, and try to make my home group meeting on Wednesday nights. I usually make at least two meetings a month there. I've thought about starting a meeting where I live, and will do so when my Higher Power guides me to do so.

I can't say that every day has been wonderful and glorious. But it's a whole lot better than it used to be. The program has worked because I work the program. Following suggestions, working with my sponsor, going to meetings, working the Steps with my sponsor, and prayer with my Higher Power, have all helped me stay clean. What a reward this program has given me-my life back!