



Willingness Re-visited

In 2012 I attended the MA convention in Santa Clara. I had missed the three previous conventions and had been looking forward to seeing old friends and sharing fellowship. In the preceding year personal and family issues had taken an emotional toll and I was primed for a recovery-rich experience. I was tired, a bit raw, and open to fresh perspectives.

The theme, *Willingness is the Key*, spoke to me. My serenity had been tested over the holidays and I was shaky but willing to repair some damage and move forward. I needed some help and this event offered me some solid ground, psychic nourishment, and full acceptance. And Dancing.

Well, the convention came and went, and I managed to carry home with me some emotional momentum from which to start healing. I was feeling good. I started this piece and chaired numerous meetings outside my home group... and then settled back into a predictable pattern of work and home. Family, friends, fun, meetings, service and life went on. I was OK. But what happened to the writing? Why didn't I finish the thing on willingness? Ironic and a little sad. Could it be a fear of success?

It's easy to languish in the familial but so much harder to simply do the next right thing. I wanted to finish it. I had written another piece that had found its way into the New Leaf. What was holding me back?

Somehow I'd lost my mojo, the post-convention lift had worn off. I moved on. It fell to the side like so many other unfinished projects over the years. Follow through hasn't been my strength.

So now, nearly 2 years later, I pick up the reins and get back on the horse. Willingness can be as fleeting as happiness. They both require repeated deposits of attention and faith. I believe that if I don't act in the moment it'll slip from my grasp. It's way too easy to fall into old habits. It sure seems easy enough to burn

through 4 hours or more binge watching *Breaking Bad* or *Madmen* but much harder to sit down and sift through my thoughts and feelings to share something real. So I guess I rush to fill the void to avoid feeling my feelings. When I finish my work and do some chores before kicking back on the couch it seems just fine. We all earn our rewards sometimes, even most of the time. Yet there are always things left in the wings. I adapt to my ongoing internal sloth and somehow make friends with it. A sort of *détente* I rationalize

and procrastinate. That's OK. But the important things that don't get done will begin to haunt me eventually. That is where I am with this willingness business. I don't need to further punish myself. There's always room for improvement. Progress is better than inertia.

The old practice of instant gratification only kicks the can further down the road. I can do it "later" but the older I get the fewer "laters" I have left to spend. Doing what I *want* to do much of the time doesn't mean that I will actually feel better or

that it's even in my best interest. This continual flight through time creates an habitual disconnect that dulls my instincts and drains my ambition.

In terms of drug addiction, this kind of pattern takes the form of denial and self-deception. We are driven by fear and inaction and pushed deeper into isolation. Misery and desperation are close by.

Willingness can bring us back from this brink. Pure escape can be ruinous to our self-image. Acceptance is a challenge. If we are open to support from others we will experience positive change. When we accept the charity of spirit and unconditional love in the rooms, good things will follow. It's not about us alone. We become part of a new community that will nurture us and withhold judgment. Trust becomes possible. And yes, willingness is what can lead us out of the shadows and help us find some courage.

There are many things I have wanted to do for many years that have been short-circuited by my own fears. I've followed this well-worn path for too long.

*“Willingness
can be
as fleeting as
happiness.”*

a new leaf

The purpose of A New Leaf is to carry the message of recovery from marijuana addiction. It is through the written experiences of recovering addicts and their stories that we may find experience, strength and hope.

Articles submitted should reflect recovery, unity, and service.

The articles contained in A New Leaf are the sole opinions of the authors and do not reflect the opinions of Marijuana Anonymous as a whole.

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Send all articles, inquiries and correspondence to:
anlp@marijuana-anonymous.org
or submit online:
www.marijuana-anonymous.org
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A New Leaf
P.O. Box 6482
Torrance, CA 90504

IN SPIRIT OF SERVICE

"We do not have any governing authority, but we do have informal rotating service committees" (and commitments). Give freely of what you have found. Volunteer to serve A New Leaf. All are welcome.

How Has My Life Become More Manageable Through Working the 12 Steps?

The 12 Steps of Recovery are the biggest secret kept from those of us who "want to control the uncontrollable". It was not until I became Willing, Honest, and Open-minded that I started to become aware of whom I had become as a result of my addiction. I was swimming in denial and unfortunately for others it was not in that famous river. Plato's "The Allegory of the Cave" comes to mind when I am asked to describe my prior mindset.

"By thoroughly examining my life I was able to see..."

Honestly the 12 Steps of Recovery are about management and not about control. Once this thought process began to sink in I was filled with Hope and Faith about my situation becoming better.

By thoroughly examining my life I was able to see what had once been hidden in my blind spots, I

needed to exercise self-restraint (Discipline) and be Courageous to prove that I made a personal commitment to abandon my defects of character. In other words, I had to become Willing to practice decent reasonable conduct through daily actions and behavior. Being Humble is not an asset and not the sign of weakness it once was. I am acting less out of passion but more out of Compassion. Little by little I am gaining the true Integrity I had so desperately needed to function properly as a human being.

The only way for me to Persevere despite the obstacle of life is to continue to examine my life, gaining Spiritual Awareness through daily prayer and meditation, and by providing for others Selfless Service.

Socrates, who was Plato's teacher, would often admonish him and his other students to "know thyself". It is through the 12 Steps of Recovery that I have been able to know myself better and to manage (not control) what life has to offer for me this day.

Anonymous

Willingness Re-visited

cont'd from pg. 1

Laziness doesn't begin to describe it. Again, it is the Familiar, all this desire and escape, but it isn't serving me well. I'm finding the strength to change the things I can. Facing this fear of success is a good place to start.

With the help of others and the guidance from a power greater than myself, my new goal is to actively follow my heart. After many years in recovery, I am better attuned to the voice of reason and sanity within. In the end, Willingness boils down to actually taking action.

Willingness will get us through the door. It will let us listen, hear, and learn from those who came before us. It will allow us to conceive of a power greater than ourselves. Willingness will lead us to acceptance, commitment, and faith. It will move us toward humility and compassion.

By taking action we generate confidence. When we share our experiences with each other we can all benefit. By becoming residents of the present we can all grow. We are not alone. Hope is available today.

Tim V.



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Step Twelve

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to marijuana addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Tradition Twelve

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

ROVING REPORTER ASKS...

How do you apply faith in your daily life?

(Note: Submit by Monday, January 15th, answers will be published in the February 2014 issue.)

Birthdays

Celebrating 215 years of sobriety!

Want your sobriety date published? Let your Bureau Chief know or see ANLP contact information on page 2. Bureau Chiefs are encouraged to submit Birthdays that, a) HAVE occurred, b) HAVE NOT been published and, c) are not older than 45 days.

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Alex 11/1/11 2yrs.
Bob D. 11/6/01 12 yrs.

District 2

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District 3

Laurie M. 10/19/09 4 yrs.
Sarah M. 11/13/99 14 yrs.

District 4

Brooks S. 10/10/11 2 yrs.
Lyle D. 10/29/11 2 yrs.

District 5

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James V. 10/29/98 15 yrs.
Jason 10/29/93 20 yrs.
Jessica H. 10/29/12 1 yr.
John "English John" 11/5/11 2 yrs.
Kathy B. 11/4/03 10 yrs.
Michael L. 10/29/90 23 yrs.
Nicole M. 11/7/12 1 yr.
Ron "The Gardner" 11/5/95 18 yrs.
Tina 11/6/07 6 yrs.

District 7

Guyo K.* 9/13/08 5 yrs.
Jane E. 11/10/08 5 yrs.
Kristal D.* 3/15/10 3 yrs.
Penny 11/12/01 12 yrs.
Shawna 10/3/12 1 yr.

District 8

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Gabriel 11/1/12 1 yr.

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Sarah A 12/11/06 7 yrs.
Z 9/11/08 5 yrs.

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Kelly P. 10/29/10 3 yrs.

District 15

Heather 11/13/02 11 yrs.
Howie 11/9/05 8 yrs.
Tom 11/10/07 6 yrs.

KEEP COMING BACK!



* Step 10 listings; apologies to Guyo K. and Kristal D.