

to understand everything they were talking about at my first meeting? He laughed and said no and that I would catch on. I could not believe the organization this group had.

A lot of my questions now have answers. I understand that through unselfish responsible volunteers, this program continues to run. Tradition Eight in another program's Twelve & Twelve states, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Today I am working Traditions Two and Eight to the best of my ability.

Thoughts On Service

Marijuana Anonymous wasn't around when I got clean and sober, so I attended other Twelve Step meetings. I had to put up with a lot of BS from alcoholics who didn't want to hear about my "drug" problem. A lot of recovery was being talked about, but not much about how people were living without using marijuana, and that was what I wanted to hear about. I went to another Twelve Step group, but since I was a "laid back" ex-doper, it was difficult to identify with the meetings, which seemed a little too frantic for me. When I was taken to my first MA meeting, it felt like home.

My life in recovery has been a series of commitments which have sometimes helped me when I reached those forks in the road of happy destiny (which I am skipping along, not trudging). Sometimes I reach a fork in the road and think, "This would be easier if I was high", and then I continue the thought and realize: 1. I really don't want to be HIGH, I just don't want the hassle. 2. I have made some commitments, in MA and my life, which I can't fulfill if I go back to pot.

The most important commitment which I have made is to do the best I can to do my part to see that MA is here for the next addict and the ones that come later. Everyone can help MA grow and prosper by becoming willing to help and take an active part. The first job I had in service was to greet people as they came into the meeting. You would be amazed at how much more "at home" a person feels when greeted at the door by a hug, a friendly face, and a nice "Hello."

My first sponsor told me that if I put one half of the effort into staying clean that I put into getting stoned, that I would succeed in my endeavor. So, I try to put more effort into service to MA. I think that all of us addicts need to search inside our hearts, pray to our Higher Power, and get our butts into Service. Good luck, I wish a happy and serene life to us all.

Commitment

Commitment, what a concept! "I can't commit to anything, after all, I only live one day at a time." This was a good excuse for me early in recovery to maintain my selfish and self-centered attitude. Of course, being newly clean and sober, I was only a taker. As far as what I had to offer the fellowship, well let's just say that MA was a lot better off without the attitudes and character defects I came here with.

As I slowly integrated recovery into my clean and sober life, my gratitude level began to rise. The fog of nearly 3 decades began to lift and the wonderful society of MA became the primary focal point of my conscious contact with my HP (Higher Power). Being aware of this brought me to a full understanding and acceptance of Tradition One. Our common welfare *Had* to come first in my case. I knew that I had not come to where I was in sobriety on my own, nor by my own power. I also realized that I could not continue on my own either.

I will never forget the day I became "coffee maker." Wow! My first commitment! It didn't matter to me that I didn't know how to make coffee in a 30 cup pot. Someone was there to show me how. I don't take direction very well, so I forgot the instructions I had received and after about 5 or 6 weeks I noticed that people were not grimacing anymore when they drank my coffee. Even though they suffered through some awful tasting stuff, they nevertheless thanked me on a weekly basis for making the crap. This simple service commitment brought a new dimension to my life. It felt good to be appreciated and to be told so! People got to know me by name, and I got to know them. I began to experience the benefits of belonging to a home group, building relationships with people that I am still in touch with today, some of them dearest friends.

Well, now that I had arrived, I started to expand my service. I had hot tea, hot chocolate, cookies, etc. Sometimes I even had a helper. I kept this commitment for 9 months, until one day the group conscience decided it was time for a new coffee maker. At first I was hurt and resentful. You see, somewhere along the line this commitment became my "primary purpose." My feeling of self worth came from this job. I was doing what is commonly known as working the Twelfth Step, as opposed to working Twelve Steps. My addict mentality was taking a wonderful thing like service and twisting it around to suit my own self-centered ego! Looking back, I see my view of commitment started out with apathy and mutated into control.

I eventually accepted the experience-based suggestions of the older members who told me that I

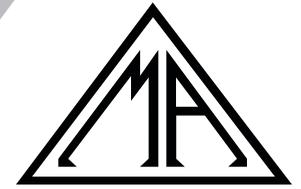
needed the building up of my self worth early on, but now I was in danger of my own ego. I needed to pass on my commitment to someone else now, who needed it at this point in time just as much as I did 9 months before. How wise those early Twelve Step founders were to utilize the spirit of rotation in service!

One day at a time I stayed in MA. I have experienced service work on many different levels. I have entered each commitment exactly the way I did my first, *not knowing how to do this thing*. My HP always put the right teacher in my life when things got shaky. I learned that I did not have to do service alone, and that it was okay to ask questions. I hope I have honored my commitments, as service has helped put honor back in my life. I have stayed on long enough in each position to learn how to do them. I have stepped down from each commitment with some sadness, some feelings of inadequacy, and sometimes relief. I have tried to the best of my ability to "fight the good fight." It's been a long rewarding journey for me.

I have experienced great joy and great sorrow in recovery and more times than not it has been the people I have met in Service that have pulled me along when my spirit was faltering and my heart was crushed. These people were also there when my spirit was soaring. Such people! I would not change one thing in my past, with all its regrets, if it meant I would never have met YOU. You servants have enriched my life to a degree I never thought possible. You were there for me even when YOU didn't know it! Through you, I have learned and experienced Love, Tolerance, Patience, and True Friendship. So you see, to not take a service commitment would have been tantamount to limiting my emotional and spiritual development. How fortunate I am to have stayed around long enough to get to the principles that are beyond all our personalities. If I don't quit now I might start crying, so let me leave you with a quote:

"Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. It is the words that speak boldly of your intentions, and the actions which speak louder than words. It is making the time when there is none. Coming through time after time, year after year after year. Commitment is the stuff character is made of; the power to change the face of things. It is daily triumph of integrity over skepticism."

Personal Stories About Personal Commitments



MARIJUANA ANONYMOUS

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Introduction

These are some stories by a few of our members who have found how much being of service helped start their journey to recovery. Don't get the wrong idea. You can't do service in lieu of the Steps to get recovery. You can, however, let service start you on the road to sobriety, and from there you take the path of recovery.

You Can't Keep What You Have Unless You Give It Away

The Marijuana Anonymous logo is a triangle with the letters MA inscribed in the center. The three sides of the triangle represent Unity, Recovery, and Service. Unity is the fellowship. Recovery is the Twelve Steps and the spiritual principles of the program, and Service is generally described as our commitments to the program and to carrying the message of Marijuana Anonymous. These three aspects of the program are not mutually exclusive. The Twelfth Step and the Fifth Tradition say that I must carry the message to stay clean. Therefore, without Service, there can be no Recovery. Without Recovery, there can be no Unity, and without Unity and the fellowship, there would be nobody to be of Service to.

Service has been an integral part of my program since I got clean. The types of service commitments I have held in the program are many and have evolved as I have grown spiritually in recovery. My first commitment was as treasurer of a meeting that was only two months old. I had thirty days. My sponsor, who I had obtained just hours before, had started the meeting and was acting secretary, GSR, and treasurer. He asked me if I had any service commitments at which time I said no. He then nominated me. Everyone else said they seconded the nomination, and before I knew what was going on, my sponsor handed me the treasury and a treasurer's handbook, and said, "You are now the treasurer of the meeting, be here every week."

Yes, I was a victim of a "railroading." Probably a good thing too. Had I not been railroaded, I would have never committed. I was the type of addict that was very elusive. You could not pin me down to anything, especially not a commitment where I would be duty bound to show up somewhere once a week.

Since that time, I have held various service commitments at all levels. I have had the privilege and pleasure of representing my district at World Service Conferences, where I have participated in making decisions on how MA is going to carry the message of recovery throughout the world. Service to the

fellowship has been an important part of my program, and has helped keep me clean. If I used, I would feel that I not only let myself down but also MA, as well as all my friends in MA.

During the time I have been of service to the fellowship, I have also been going through the recovery process and working on myself. I took the Steps and cleaned house.

Why Commitments Kept Me Sober

After about two weeks of attending my first meeting, I was asked if I would do the cookies & coffee for a week. I don't remember exactly how, but I ended up being the refreshment person for the next six months.

What that did was make me go to the same meeting over and over. Being that it was a small meeting, that meant I would have to share because of the size of the meeting. By sharing, I walked through that first fear, the fear of not sounding good and maybe not looking good. In sharing early on, I learned that I wouldn't be laughed at. I wasn't told, "You're wrong." I wasn't told, "That's stupid" or, "Don't come back." I was told, "Keep coming back", "We need you here because you're a newcomer" and, "We want you here." I learned that sharing helped remove the burden of guilt and fear I carried with me that was held in those dreaded secrets.

Also, by having made this commitment, it meant I was committed to going, regardless of whether I wanted to go or not. Looking back, sometimes I didn't want to go for me, but I didn't want to let you down, so I went for you. Funny how going for you did a lot for me. By going to the same meeting week after week, I started to get comfortable in the room. I was able to share more and more because I trusted you all more and more, thus helping me grow. I got out the negative things then and, by doing so, I didn't have "The Committee" in my head to deal with as much. Because of sharing and removing the power of "The Committee", that in turn allowed me to listen and find solutions to problems through the Steps. This helped me start to get closer to my Higher Power, and that got easier as I got more spiritual through practicing the Steps.

As more time went by, I got to be treasurer, thus keeping me coming back again and again. Between my refreshments commitment and being treasurer I went to that meeting 52 weeks in a row. I also learned about fellowship, due to my commitments, because after the meeting we would go out for coffee every week. There, I learned how to interact on a personal level. That let me get to know people better, grow more comfortable around them, and become part of the group. Basically, I got involved and I took direction

from a sponsor. It was very important early on and helped me develop a good foundation for my program.

I've had a commitment of some kind or another from two weeks up until the present. I am still sober. I guess there is something good about commitments because the four people who followed me as refreshment person are also still sober.

Take on service, get involved, walk through your fear, become a part of. Don't listen to the 100 reasons your head tells you why you can't, and just...*Do it!*

My Cookie Commitment

I did six months as the "cookie guy" at my district's largest meeting. The experience produced several results.

First of all, it meant that I had to be at the meeting. Let's face it, fifty addicts deprived of their cookies would be an ugly situation! People could get hurt. The very idea of not showing up was out of the question. So, as long as I had to be there anyway...I might as well go sober.

The commitment also taught me a thing or two about humility, surrender, and control issues. On several occasions the secretary actually forgot to thank me! Or thanked the wrong person! Or how about the times I dutifully brought in the birthday cake only to find that some usurper to my authority had brought in another cake! ...with prettier decorations!!! And as if that wasn't enough to cause me to go out, there were the people that demanded veggies! Needless to say, all of these emotional traumas necessitated numerous crisis sessions with my sponsor.

Anyway, I survived my six months and gladly passed the commitment on to an unsuspecting newcomer. All and all, the experience caused me to grow up a little, it encouraged me to speak more with my sponsor, AND it helped keep me clean and sober. And just when I thought I was finally off the hook...they went and made me secretary!

MA, Commitments, and Me

I came into Marijuana Anonymous after twenty years of blotting out life with my pot. For me, this program saved my life. When I started sobriety, I was going to give it three months and then do a better job on killing myself than I had at the last try. That was five years ago.

Members told me very early on that commitments would help me "keep coming back." They were right. Those 90 meetings in 90 days are very important for someone who used daily. I needed to get the habit of "NOT smoking" on a daily basis. My service

commitments really helped me to show up on the days my stinkin' thinkin' told me it would be nice to just stay home and isolate. I took my first cookie commitment at two weeks. When I look back now, I have to laugh at all the goodies I brought. I was convinced that if I could just somehow get enough munchies there that the tiny meeting would grow. By the end of three months I had so many commitments that I was no longer trying to kill myself...I just didn't have the time!

I became our county treasurer and soon found myself chasing all over town with paperwork for our first corporation. Our first corporate secretary "went out" right in the middle of the incorporation and, when he did, the reality of just how serious this disease is really hit home. I suddenly became very self conscious about my responsibilities as treasurer. And you know what? That was OK because there were days when the only thing that kept me clean and sober was "*What would people think* if their treasurer went back out?!" Of the three people who signed those original documents, I'm the only one still in these rooms. The pitifully low percentage of addicts who actually stay sober is downright amazing.

Questions

I never understood how this fellowship came to be, or even maintain itself, until I got into service. How did it work? When I put my money in the basket, where does it go? How do we get chips? Who makes the literature? What's a district? What is World Services? Each week I went to meetings that had a room, chips, literature, and people responsible for the meeting. To get a service position you don't have to be the most popular, have the coolest car, or even campaign for the position. My first commitment was as the literature person at my Friday meeting. I volunteered to take the commitment due to the fact that it was only temporary while the designated literature person was on vacation. Well, that person never came back and I was voted in. I wanted to be the very best and went a little overboard at first. That meeting then averaged from five to ten people. I not only had a Big Book and a Twelve & Twelve on the literature table, but two meditation books, ten bumper stickers, six bookmarks, and eight buttons!

My first District Service Committee meeting was overwhelming. That's where the representatives from each meeting come together once a month to hear and vote on new information about and for MA. Did you know the Group Service Representative is your meeting's group conscience? I could barely keep up with what they were talking about. After the meeting I pulled a friend aside and asked him if I was supposed