

For the Loved Ones of Marijuana Addicts



Who Is a Marijuana Addict?

A marijuana addict's life is controlled by marijuana. He or she loses interest in all else, their dreams go up in smoke. Marijuana addiction is a progressive illness often leading to addiction to other drugs, including alcohol. The lives, thinking and desires of marijuana addicts center around marijuana--scoring it, dealing it and finding ways to stay high.

Addiction is a progressive, long-term continuing problem. When an addict tries to stop using and fails because life without the drug is just too hard, that is addiction. Once an addict is convinced he or she cannot live without marijuana, the dependency becomes an obsession. When the addict uses even though he or she promised themselves they wouldn't, this is compulsion.

It is the nature of addiction that addicts don't believe they are ill. Marijuana addicts, in particular, tend to believe that they must be "OK" since there are *much* worse drugs, and *other* people whose lives are *much* worse off as a result of *their* using. That is denial.

We have found that addiction is a physical, mental and spiritual disease. The physical aspect is the compulsion--the inability to stop once we have started. The mental aspect is the obsession, or the overpowering desire to use, even when we are destroying our own lives and the lives of those we love. The spiritual aspect of the disease is our total self-centeredness.

Suggestions to Family Members & Friends of Marijuana Addicts

We addicts in recovery have found, through the Twelve Steps, that we are each responsible for ourselves and our actions. If a loved one helps divert a crisis for the addict, they take away the addict's opportunity to work it out, or fail. This will make it harder for the addict to perceive the problem and begin to seek the solution.

As the addict approaches their bottom and their disease worsens, family members and friends have a tendency to enable the addict, allowing them to postpone the ultimate repercussions of their using. Understandably, loved ones try to ease the suffering the addict may be feeling because of loyalty, love, caring, and a sense of responsibility. Family and friends may give money (which likely goes to buying more marijuana), buy food, pay rent and bills, bail them out of jail, etc. By trying to save the addict from him or herself, you are doing both yourself and the addict a disservice.

Addicts often try to manipulate loved ones through the use of guilt, fear, and anger. This is a very common tactic used (both consciously and unconsciously) by the addict to get what he or she wants by taking advantage of the emotions of those closest to him or her.

Once the Addict Begins Recovery, We Suggest You TRY:

- Encouraging the addict by changing your attitude and approach to the problem.
- Focusing on YOURSELF and your own life. The newly clean addict will be doing the same. Living with an addict affects everyone involved.
- Detaching yourself from the addict's behavior. Detachment is not unkind. Detachment facilitates looking at situations realistically and objectively, thereby making intelligent decisions possible.
- Being encouraging. There may be a significant amount of time while both you and the addict adjust to a new way of life. Try to nurture harmony and balance in this new lifestyle.

Once the Addict begins Recovery, We Suggest That You AVOID:

- Trying to appease or patronize the addict.
- Checking up to see if the addict is stoned or in possession of drugs or alcohol. Yet, try not to let the addict take advantage of you or deceive you. (This can be a tough one!)
- Scolding, nagging or blaming the addict about former use or newfound sobriety.
- Making threats, especially if you aren't prepared to carry them out.

Avoid False Expectations and Seek Understanding

Once the addict stops using and begins the recovery process, don't expect that their faults and all the troubles of your shared lives will disappear. You might find, initially, exactly the opposite. Drug use was a coping mechanism for the addict. That coping mechanism will be "raw" for a while, especially while detoxing. Don't expect that a dramatic positive personality change will immediately take place.

When a marijuana addict begins going to meetings, there may be interference and conflict with your normal living schedule, routines, and family obligations. This is where your compassion, patience, and encouragement will be called upon. The time spent in the past by the addict in the pursuit of getting and staying high may now be spent going to meetings, reading recovery literature, speaking on the phone with other MA members, writing, meditating, and praying. These activities are of paramount importance to the newly clean addict and your support will be of great value.

You may be surprised to find that the addict now insists on attending to certain activities and responsibilities you felt compelled to take care of in the past. This is not a time to condemn past behavior, but an opportunity to practice trust and benevolence. The outcome will be the mutual reward of nurturing a new and healthy relationship.

We as individuals can only be responsible for ourselves. This applies to both the addict and the individual who cares. Take each day, one at a time. Be unafraid and happy. Try to adjust yourself to what is, today. Strengthen your own mind and body, exercise your own soul.

Support For You

Marijuana addiction in your children, spouse, or other loved ones is difficult for you to live with in healthy ways. You need support also. Some options are 12 Step and support groups for friends and family, church groups, and therapy. These resources can teach you how to live your life more fully, regardless of what your loved ones are doing. You may have the opportunity to discuss the unique problem of living with a loved one's addiction.

It is important to remember that addiction is a disease which greatly affects the addict and those who love the addict.

What is Marijuana Anonymous?

MA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from marijuana addiction. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using marijuana. There are no dues or fees for membership. MA is self-supporting through members' contributions. MA is not affiliated with any religious or secular institution or organization and has no opinion on any outside controversies or causes. The primary purpose of its members is to stay free of marijuana and to help the addict who still suffers achieve the same freedom. This is done by practicing the suggested Twelve Steps of recovery and by being guided by the Twelve Traditions.

Ultimately, hope for recovery lies in the addict's ability to recognize that they have a problem and that they need help. This is what we call a "bottom" or "moment of clarity." The addict must have a true desire to stop using and the willingness to admit that the problem cannot be coped with alone.

That is why Marijuana Anonymous exists. We are marijuana addicts ourselves and this is our message: Any addict can stop using, lose the obsession and desire to do so, and discover an infinitely better way of life by following the spiritual principles contained in the Twelve Steps, one day at a time.

The Twelve Steps of Marijuana Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over marijuana, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood God*
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood God*, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. 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.

Conference Approved Literature

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