

## PEN TO PAPER

IT'S BEEN THIRTY-FOUR MONTHS SINCE MY LAST DRUG. During this time, I have overcome so much and reaped many rewards. I started trying to get sober back in late 2002. I was in and out of CMA for a couple of years because, in hindsight, I wasn't really willing to surrender.

I had many hurdles to cross, namely letting go of old religious baggage and the fear of sober sex. While growing up, I was always taught to follow God's will but exhibited a complete aversion to doing so. Little did I know, things were going to turn out the way they were intended no matter how much I fought. I only had the choice of which path to take to the outcome. Usually, I chose the path that was the most painful and devastating.

With the best of intentions, I often railed against the world, developing a tough outer shell designed to shroud deep-seated anger and fear. I was

unable to have faith in what I perceived to be an unjust and unloving God and was absolutely cut off from the sunlight of the Spirit because of my addiction and my need to keep getting high. I used crystal meth and many other drugs relentlessly for more than ten years, and every time the Spirit tried to reveal itself to me, I used even more to blot out the guilt and fear of living in darkness.

I recently finished working the Twelve Steps for the second time. I worked them the first time straight out of the “Big Book,” doing them quickly in order to stay sober. This last time through the Steps it took just under two years of painfully thorough and honest appraisals of myself. Without a doubt, I had another psychic shift after doing Step Five. I also experienced an immense freedom after a second and more thorough Step Nine. My level of gratitude has deepened, and the world no longer owns me as it once did. I feel as if I have meaning and a purpose. This has given me a greater sense of self that’s no longer warped by the need for approval or validation. I was deeply moved when I answered the last of the Step Twelve questions in the *Narcotics Anonymous Step Working Guide*.

It’s a great new freedom—the freedom to love and be loved, the freedom to love myself without having to second-guess my sense of self-worth or self-expression. I have gained immense faith in the God of my understanding, which I have found in the mysterious universal energy that connects us all.

I know this might all sound lofty and esoteric, but it has been my experience. I have absolutely had a spiritual awakening as a direct result of working the Steps, going to meetings, working with others, and using the basic tools that were offered to me.

My relationships with family and friends have deeper roots and longer branches than would have ever been possible when I was using drugs. I have reestablished healthy boundaries with the people in my life and gained respect and compassion for mankind. I trust my inner voice today and my Higher Power’s will for me. All of these interpersonal gifts are nothing short of a miracle, considering the life of rebellion I was accustomed to living. —*Harley M.*