

Clear crystal

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NYCMA
NEW YORK CRYSTAL METH
ANONYMOUS INTERGROUP

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of CMA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

"THAT BEING SAID," SEE PAGE 2

How I discovered serenity

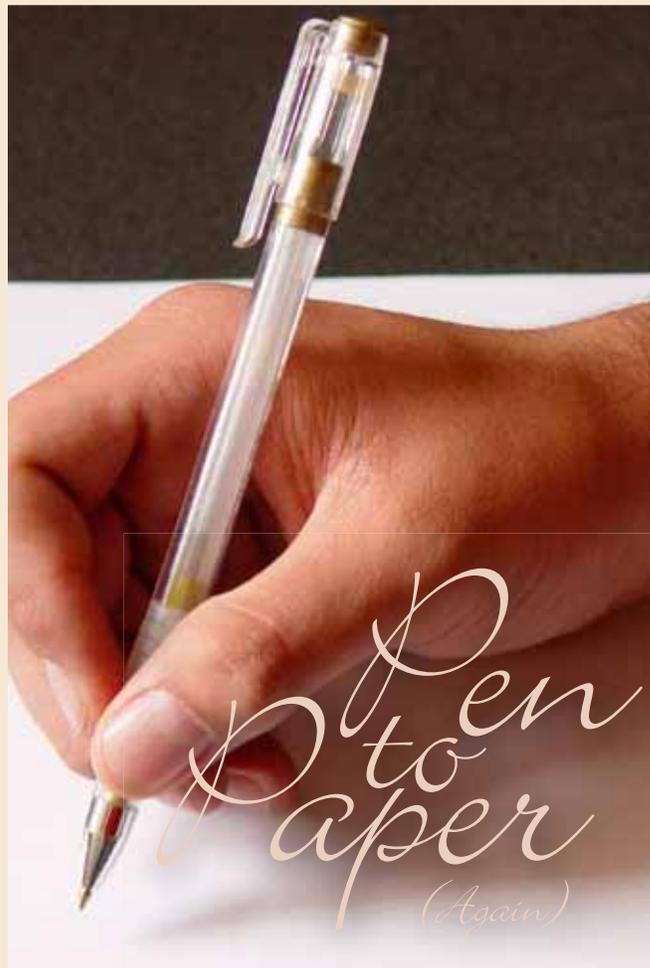
When I first walked into the Rooms, I was confused, angry, depressed—and still using crystal meth. Like many addicts who walk in, I did not “get” the program. Sure, I understood that it could help me put down the meth, but what would I get in return? Following a suggestion, I read about the Promises. Being in early sobriety, even seeing those Promises fulfilled in the lives of recovering addicts, did not convince me that the same radical changes could happen in my own life. I just did not see the purpose in working the Steps.

Though I kept relapsing, I also kept coming back. I kept calling my sponsor and working the Steps, and I took suggestions even though I didn’t want to. I just took my life in sobriety one day at a time and, eventually, I got nearly six months of continuous clean time. After finishing the Fourth and Fifth steps, I went home and followed the suggestion in the Big Book: I took some time to think about each of the first five Steps to examine whether the foundation of my program was stable enough to continue on.

What I discovered seemed nothing short of miraculous. I realized I had the ability to forgive and to let go of resentments. First, I forgave myself. Immediately, I felt a sense of inner peace, and for the first time in my program, I comprehended the word *serenity*.

A couple of days passed after this realization, and my mind felt clearer and more open than it had

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*I*t’s been 34 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 to 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.

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Why labels dehumanize

It’s hard to believe sometimes. Was it really more than six years ago that I made my way to a meeting after my relapse? I remember how awful I felt; I was physically sick and full of guilt and shame. I sat down next to a man I’d known since 1989, when we had partied on Fire Island. (That man would become my next sponsor.) I knew I was defeated and that this time, I was going to have to really work the program. Otherwise, my addiction would kill me. I was finally ready to follow directions and willing to maybe, possibly accept that I didn’t have all the answers.

Slowly, my life got better. But *things* weren’t getting better—I was. I found a new way of living that included: meetings, the Steps, fellowship, service, sponsorship and my own Higher Power that wasn’t me. All these combined to bring me to a place of se-

renity and understanding.

Looking back over the past few years, I can see how I’ve matured. I’m grateful for the clarity that allows me to exercise good judgment. I understand the difference between judgment and being judgmental. The judgmentalism that the Big Book talks of is when we dismiss someone as “just an idiot!”

When I label someone as merely an asshole, a loser, stupid, etc., I’m being judgmental because I’m reducing that person to something less than a human being. It’s dehumanizing. But this is not to say that I stop exercising all judgment. Of course I judge—we all do. I wouldn’t be human if I didn’t. The important thing is what I do with it. The program has brought me to a place of greater understanding of

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CMA-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS

NATIONAL CONFERENCE Park City, Utah, will be the site of the first Crystal Meth Anonymous national convention. It will be held in October. Details can be found at the CMA General Service Website, crystalmeth.org.

FIRST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY Members from Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New York are scheduled to get together for a regional assembly on Saturday, June 7. The three cities make up what is known as the Mid-Atlantic Region of Crystal Meth Anonymous in the U.S. This group elects representatives to the worldwide CMA General Service Organization, in West Hollywood, Calif. The meeting is expected to take place from 1 P.M. to 5 P.M. A workshop and speakers are also planned. Keep an ear out for more announcements at meetings, including for arrangements to charter a bus.

PLEASE, CARRY THE MESSAGE Organizers are asking all CMA members to pass the word about the regional assembly this summer and the World Conference this fall when you're attending meetings out of town.

CALLING ALL GSRs Are your meetings being represented at New York area Intergroup meetings? If not, you may elect a Group Service Representative to represent you in local CMA-related planning and events.

CLEARINGHOUSE NUMBER OUT OF SERVICE Because of a business dispute between our vendor and one of its business partners, our Literature Hotline is currently not in service. Meantime, please contact the Clearinghouse by e-mailing clearinghouse@nycma.org.



USING GOOD JUDGMENT MEANS CONSIDERING MY OPTIONS CAREFULLY, PERHAPS ASKING MY SPONSOR OR A CLOSE FRIEND FOR ADVICE WHEN I NEED TO MAKE A DECISION FOR MYSELF. WHEN I'M BEING JUDGMENTAL, I OFTEN END UP ANGRY BECAUSE SOMETHING ISN'T GOING MY WAY.

LABELS from Page 1

my fellow man. If I think something is wrong or inappropriate, my good judgment may dictate that I speak out.

Through this program I've learned that there are many things I can't control. Often the cause of any feelings of discontent I have are when I'm trying to control something that is beyond my control. That's when I'm playing God. Understanding this helps me get to a place of acceptance. I've learned to accept things, people, situations. Because ultimately, I can only control myself. I have to keep my own side of the street clean since I have to live with myself.

Along with the clarity comes increased responsibility. The other night I was watching an old *Sex and the City* rerun where Carrie met a guy in A.A. who was 11 months sober. He was reluctant to get involved as his sponsor told him to wait until he had a year. The man got involved with Car-

rie anyway and relapsed. It was an episode that used to baffle me. Actually, that suggestion made little sense to me when I first heard it. Now that I've been sober a while, I understand how much newcomers change in their first year of sobriety. They need to learn to put their sobriety first. If I choose to get involved with a newcomer, I'm putting my need for a relationship above their sobriety. I'm interfering with the process of learning to live sober by giving that person something to put ahead of his sobriety. So I wouldn't be living up to my obligation to help a newcomer stay sober. Yes, it's a simple program—but not always easy nor what I want.

These last six years of my life have been quite an experience and I'm really looking forward to more years. I'm healthy, busy and genuinely happy with my life. I'm exploring lots of new areas of interest and I've met the most wonderful people. Yes, the Promises do come true, just not in a way that I ever could have imagined. —JIM R.

SERENITY from Page 1

in years. I was writing about my experiences with the Steps when it occurred to me what the purpose of my program was. For me, the goal of my program was to

learn humility and live in a state of grace. Not only was I able to define my purpose but I was able to define the concepts of humility and grace in a way that resonated within me. Humility for me was being in a state of grace, so I no longer felt compelled to prove myself to others. Instead, my actions would speak for themselves. In other words, by doing service and performing esteemable acts, I would learn humility and display that to those around me. Being in a state of grace meant that I would live in a way that my ego would no longer control the how I reacted when faced with reality, good or bad. I also realized that the polar opposite of ego was self-worth and that the less self-worth I felt, the

more my ego would control me and the more powerless I would become, leading back to a life of unmanageability. Therefore, by having enough self-worth to put my sobriety at the top of my priorities, I have the ability to live a life beyond my wildest dreams, full of grace and gratitude.

My program's purpose was revealed to me, even though I didn't have faith in the beginning that it would be. I believe that as a program needs to fit the individual, each program's purpose is different. Even though the purpose may not be apparent at first, if the Steps are worked thoroughly and the next right action is taken, this goal will become clear and the Promises self-fulfilling. —DAVID H.

that being said... FROM PAGE 1

SLOGAN:

*I am responsible.
When anyone,
anywhere, reaches
out for help, I want
the hand of CMA
always to be there.
And for that: I am
responsible.*

ITS ORIGIN This slogan was, at least unofficially, adapted from

Alcoholics Anonymous and is known as "The Responsibility Declaration." It is said to have been written by Al S., a former *Grapevine* editor and trustee of AA for the 1965 International Convention, in Toronto. Bill W. expanded on the theme in an essay called "Responsibility Is Our Theme" for the July 1965 *Grapevine*. It became a regular feature of the

Grapevine shortly thereafter.

This goes hand in hand with the Fifth Tradition. The long form says: "Each Crystal Meth Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the crystal meth addict who still suffers."

ADAPTED WITH PERMISSION

PEN TO PAPER from Page 1

Promises, promises

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 10 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, and I did 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. I was deeply moved when I answered the last of the Step Twelve questions in the *Narcotics Anonymous Step Working Guide*. 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.

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.**

I went today to the “Promises” meeting, which got me thinking....

When I first heard about the Promises during treatment, I thought they represented a lot of wishful thinking, ridiculous hopes that led to unrealistic expectations. I remember wondering whether Twelve Step recovery was setting me up for disappointment.

For those who are new, the Promises, as we call them, come from pages 83-84 of the Alcoholics Anonymous basic text. Here is an excerpt:

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through.

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away.

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations, which used to baffle us.

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not.

They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

As I finished my first round of amends as part of Step Nine, my sponsor told me to go home and spend 30 minutes reading and reflecting on the Promises. They first came alive in that moment.

I believe that the Promises are nothing more

than what most people naturally experience in daily life. They aren't really extraordinary at all when you think about them. They are all a state of mind that comes as the result of being conscious of the world around you. Even so, they are extraordinary to me. They are God's gift in recovery. I'm becoming a person again.

At the meeting today, one person encouraged us to juxtapose recovery's promises with the promises of our addiction. The contrast is another clear illustration of my journey from addiction. To me, the promises of addiction look like this:

I (addiction) will slowly take over your world.

You will be a prisoner; your options will escape you.

You will laugh to hide the tears inside.

Your world will be built on regrets and resentments, enslaved by your past.

Shame will overwhelm you; you'll consider death liberation.

Your agenda will erase the thoughts of generosity...

And you will see the world through the eyes of victim hood.

Your friendships will narrow to those trapped by their own needs...

And you will fit comfortably in their ranks...

...on a hamster wheel ending in the same lonely place.

You'll lose everything and be too ashamed to reach out.

Frozen in your own thoughts.

You'll treat God like the others who've abandoned you.

My whole world has changed since late February of last year when I started breaking addiction's promises. I know I have a long recovery ahead of me. But now when read the Ninth Step Promises, I understand them and I'm calmed, not unnerved. They are all about consciousness of the world around me. The miracle is in their simplicity.

When someone asks me the meaning of serenity, I now think of the Promises. They are in reach for me and they bring me joy. —**BILL M.**

WHAT IS CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS? Crystal Meth Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other, so they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from addiction to crystal meth. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. There are no dues or fees for CMA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. CMA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; and neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to lead a sober life and to carry the message of recovery to the crystal meth addict who still suffers. —from the CMA General Service pamphlet titled "What Is Crystal Meth Anonymous?"

WITHOUT A DOUBT, I AM A CRYSTAL METH ADDICT

**ONE OF THE LIES I TOLD MYSELF:
Putting more chemicals in here
made me a more interesting person.**

On the day my recovery began, I had no idea it was coming. I was at work, staring at my computer, clicking between my office and personal email accounts. This was typical of my behavior at work when I was crashing. I was bored, depressed, tired, lonely, frustrated, and just trying to get through the day.

The phone rang and it was my friend S.

“Do you want to work out this week?” he asked. He was talking about going to the gym together.

“Sure,” I said, not really caring much one way or the other.

“How about tomorrow?” he asked.

“I see my therapist. What about tonight?” I said. A workout would make my blood pump faster. Maybe that would move me through the crashing process a little faster.

“I’m going to Crystal Meth Anonymous tonight,” he said. I knew he was in the program. He was an addict.

“Maybe I could come along,” I suggested. The words surprised me a little, but they didn’t sound wrong. I wasn’t an addict, but it had been getting harder and harder to stay off the crystal. Maybe these meetings could help.

I’d been feeling more and more frustrated and hopeless about using. I kept making vows to not use, but it wasn’t working. I was tired of showing up at my therapist’s office hopeless and frustrated. “What’s the point?” I said. “It’s the drugs that are making me feel this way. We’re not going to talk our way out of this.”

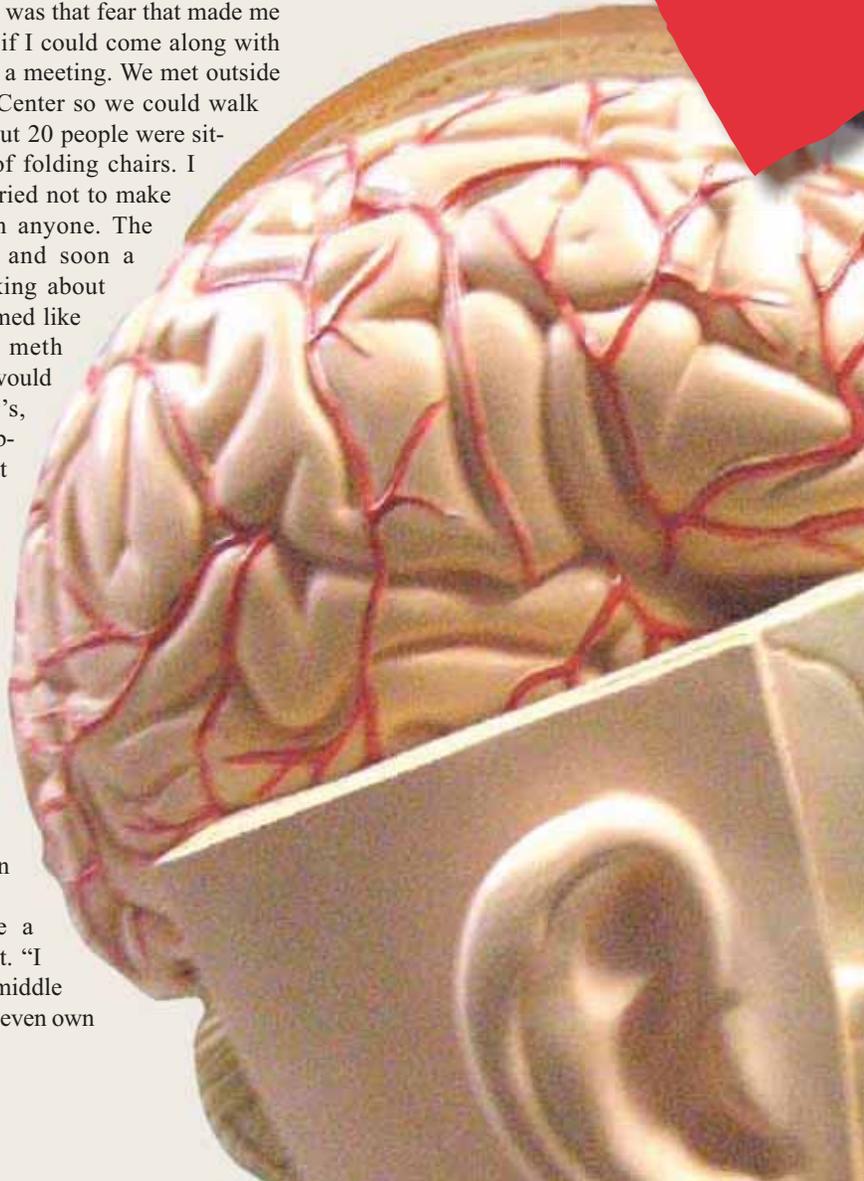
A few weeks prior, I had reached a low and critical point. I was waiting outside an apartment building on East 14th Street. K., a guy I had used with a few times before, was inside with his dealer. I’d told him we could hang out, but I was definitely not going to use. I had told myself to just stop it. Enough was enough. Standing there in the cold, I revised that deci-

sion. “I need something,” I thought. “some relief. I know I’ll feel like hell on Tuesday, but if I don’t get high, I’m just going to be miserable straight through.” Of course, I got high. On that night, I realized how desperate I was. In that decision, I’d crossed a line. I wondered and feared what lines I would cross next.

Maybe it was that fear that made me ask S. if I could come along with him to a meeting. We met outside the Community Center so we could walk in together. About 20 people were sitting in a circle of folding chairs. I took a seat and tried not to make eye contact with anyone. The meeting started and soon a speaker was talking about his daily—it seemed like hourly—crystal meth habit. When he would go to his dealer’s, he’d use in the lobby on his way out of the building. Throughout any given day, he would duck into bathroom stalls at work, in restaurants or bars and take a few hits. He kept his pipe ready to go on his nightstand so he could smoke crystal first thing in the morning.

“I don’t have a dealer,” I thought. “I don’t use in the middle of the day. I don’t even own a pipe.”

After the speaker was finished, people raised their hands, divulged their day counts and then talked about their recovery. I didn’t raise my hand because I wasn’t really an addict. “Maybe next week I will say something,” I thought, “I’ve got three days today. I want to



come back next week and say I have 10.”

The meeting ended and a man next to me turned and said hello. He introduced himself and I figured he was lonely or hitting on me. Nobody was in a hurry to leave, it seemed, but S. leaned over and said,

“Let’s get out of here and get something to eat.”

“That wasn’t so bad,” I said to him as he hurried me away from the building. “I’m coming back next week.”

The next day, I realized that I’d had only two days clean, not three. Counting to two isn’t all that difficult, but I guess my head wasn’t so clear.

During the past eight years, I’d been trying to stop using crystal. I thought that the depression that came after using was the only problem. I tried switching substances to avoid the crash, but always came back to crystal. I’d tried every trick in the book to avoid-ing crashing: cranberry juice, abstaining from alcohol, acupuncture, an couple extra antidepressants. Nothing helped at

all. Lately, I’d decided that sleep deprivation was the culprit. I’d been using during the day and not staying up all night. But once again, the crashing was as bad as ever.

As I have gotten further away from the details of using drugs, I see that the externals of how much and how often I used were only symptoms of my disease of addiction.

By Thursday, I decided that I couldn’t wait a whole week to go to a CMA meeting. If I tried that, I knew I’d get high again. Plus, I couldn’t stop thinking about the meeting. I wanted to go to another one. I wanted to know more. I called S. who told me there were meetings on Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays too.

I went back on Friday. I was nervous and excited. A man at the door greeted me and introduced me to a few people. “What a nice person,” I thought.

He was a nice guy, but I didn’t understand that he was doing his job as “greeter.” Again I just listened, but this time I noticed the Steps and the Traditions on the wall.

“The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.”

“I guess they will let me stay,” I thought.

After that, I went to all four meetings each week. I heard people say “ninety meetings in ninety days” but figured that didn’t apply to me. To be polite, I started to raise my hand, say I was an addict and say my day count. I asked cute guys for phone numbers and started making program calls. I started going to fellowship.

I hated the days when there were no CMA meetings. I started going to other fellowships so I could go to a meeting a day. When I got about 30 days, I asked that nice guy who had greeted me at my second meeting if he would be my sponsor. He said yes.

When I got around 90 days, he suggested we start to work the Steps.

I stayed with it, one day at a time, and admitted I had done my version of many of things that daily users shared about. I had bought drugs from a dealer.

I had used crystal at work.

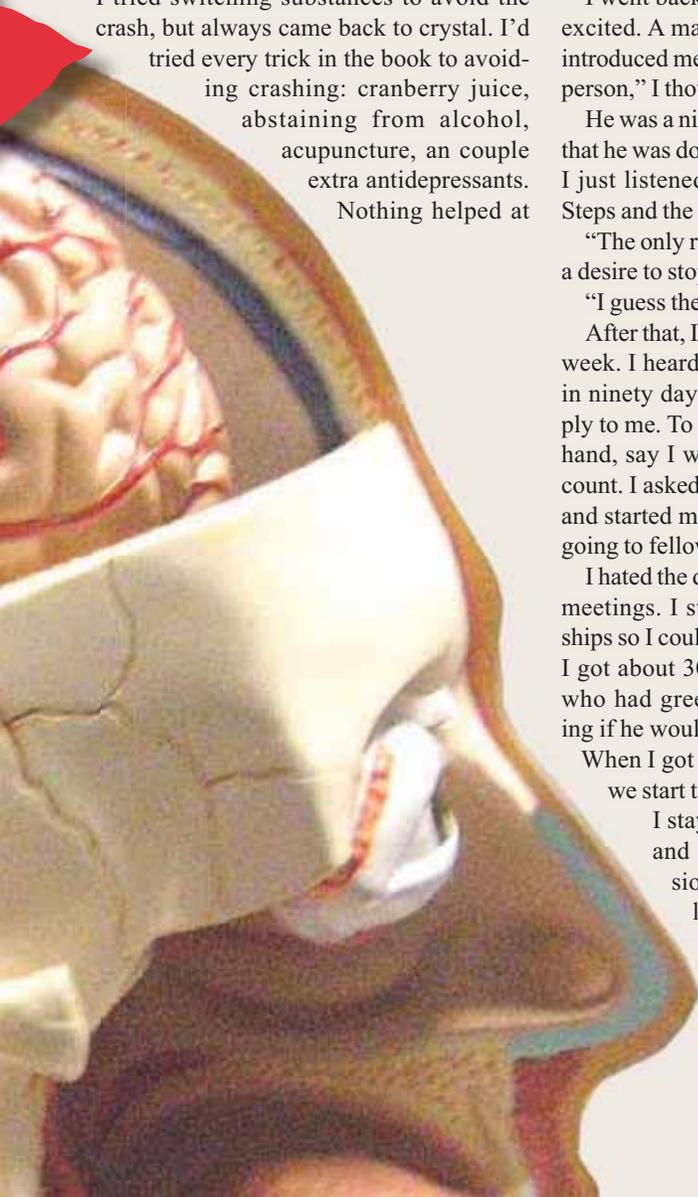
I had put myself in very dangerous situations. I had called in sick to work be-

cause I was using or recovering from it. I had lost jobs—not because I went to work high, but because I was hard to get along with. (I learned later that this was caused by my character defects.) I was distant from my family. I hadn’t really kept in touch with many friends. I stood people up because I was using. When I did show up to see friends or visit family, I didn’t really want to be there. My crystal meth use was probably connected to me getting HIV, that tooth that crumbled, and other health problems. I hadn’t been to jail, but every time I’d used, I’d broken the law.

And I had to admit it—before I came to CMA, I had wanted to use crystal meth more than I wanted to do anything else in life. Now there was something else that I wanted to do more than get high: I wanted to go to meetings. I wanted to be with sober people. I wanted to be sober myself.

That was over six years ago. When I first started my recovery, I told myself I had an interesting career, a nice place to live, a good relationship with my family and some great friends. None of that was really true, certainly not compared to what I have now. My career has opened up in ways I had never imagined. I am closer to my family. I have many new friends, most from the fellowship. Some relationships with old friends have improved. Others fell away as I realized there wasn’t much to them. I sponsor a few people, and I have a sponsor.

As I have gotten further away from the details of using drugs, I see that the externals of how much and how often I used were only symptoms of my disease of addiction. Before I came into the program, I thought that the only problem was the depression that followed crystal meth use. I actually thought that using drugs made me a more interesting person. I see it differently now. I was and I am a crystal meth addict. I had a serious spiritual problem that made me want to use drugs. In my opinion, if I need to blast my brains into oblivion with drugs or alcohol—even occasionally—in order to avoid my feelings and reality, something is quite wrong with my approach to life. I am grateful to the CMA program, the Steps, my fellows, and my Higher Power for giving me a new way to live. —BRUCE C.



THE TWELVE STEPS OF CMA

1. We admitted that we were powerless over crystal meth and 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 a God of our understanding.
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 all 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 to such people 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 a God of our understanding praying only for the 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 crystal meth addicts, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

Lit. panel seeks input

NOTE: This article is a draft of "Sober Sex," a pamphlet the NYCMA Literature Committee is working on. Given the delicate nature of this topic, the committee thought it would be wise to get feedback from the fellowship at large. Please let them know what you think.

"We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them? ...

We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given, and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed."

—Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 69

Sexuality is a charged topic. Crystal Meth Anonymous has no opinion on your sex life—our primary purpose is to lead a sober life and to carry the message of recovery to the crystal meth addict who still suffers.

Sex and relationships have caused many an addict to relapse. In early recovery, many of us have found ourselves in euphoric recall of our using behavior. Feeling hungry, angry, lonely and tired, some of us have sought solace among risky people, places and things. Or we got on a romantic rollercoaster before we were ready, and it threw us on the tracks.

Crystal addicts did not invent compulsive sex or romantic dys-

function and we're not the first people to have complicated feelings about it. Everyone has sex issues, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation or tax bracket. The question is: How can we enjoy our God-given need for intimacy without sinking into morbid reflection and fear, or worse, relapsing?

INSTINCT The sexual urge, like the urge to eat and to sleep, is a powerful natural drive. As addicts, unfortunately, our natural instincts have been warped. Many of us remember being up for days at a time and skipping meals for whole weeks when using. Our craving for the drug distorted what we thought was necessary, acceptable and sane. Some of us starved ourselves of affection and touch and set aside the tricky question of intimacy altogether. Others fell deep into sex addiction, violating the trust of our relationships, setting aside our value systems, and hurting our bodies and spirits. Whichever behavior manifested itself while we were high, we found ourselves profoundly alone.

As we work our programs and connect with other addicts, a healthy disposition with regard to sex and intimacy can be restored. We must remember that we have created a situation where normal and healthy behaviors do not feel right or satisfying, *for the moment.*

TIME Rewiring our brains for

healthy living—and loving—is not something we could do on our own. We needed the help of our sober friends, the Steps and our Higher Power. Above all, however, we needed time. Time to let our neurons get back in sync; time to make healthy, sober connections; time to find out who we really were once the constant cry for crystal subsided.

RELAPSE PREVENTION

Many CMA members who have relapsed say the problem was sex, whether it was searching for it, altering our associations with it after years of using crystal, or feeling we had altogether lost the ability to connect sexually with others. Sometimes sex can trigger addictive thoughts or behaviors, even when we feel pretty stable in our recovery. Here are some of the tools we use to avoid relapsing over it:

1 People, places and things. As long as sex and crystal meth are linked in our minds, we hold on tight to this tool. Whoever or whatever it was—a certain partner, a Website, a club, pornography—if it made us think about using, we stayed away.

2 HALT: Hungry, angry, lonely, tired. If we find ourselves fantasizing about drug-driven sex, we stop and ask ourselves if we are in HALT. Usually some unsatisfied healthy need—for food, sleep or company—is hiding behind our preoccupation.

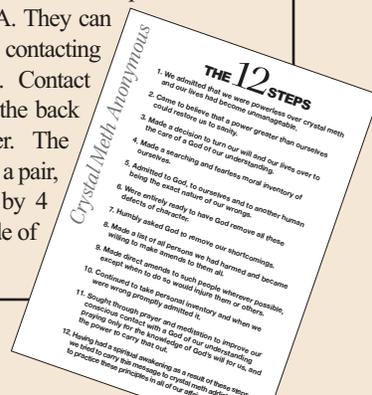
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HUMOR IN RECOVERY



Banners for meetings

The NYCMA Literature Clearinghouse offers banners of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of CMA. They can be ordered by contacting the clearinghouse. Contact information is on the back of this newsletter. The banners cost \$165 a pair, measuring 3 feet by 4 feet. They are made of white canvas.



PAMPHLET from Page 6

3 Put sex on the shelf. Growing confident about intimacy sometimes happens without us worrying about it. Given that sex is a physiological process, some of us found it helpful to imagine we had an actual physical injury. Our sex drive, like a broken arm or a twisted ankle, needed to be in a cast for a while so it could heal. As such some of our sponsors suggested abstinence for the first 90 days or more.

4 Hold off on major changes. Getting involved romantically—or the opposite, getting out of a marriage or other long-term relationship—can be incredibly stressful in early sobriety. Those of us who dove right into major entanglements, defying the suggestion to “keep it simple” for a while, usually regretted it. Or we threw everything into a new boyfriend or girlfriend and found we had a new drug of choice. Many of us who broke up with our partners impulsively found we were unable to deal with the vulnerability of being alone.

A NEW SEXUAL IDEAL As we stay sober, continue to work the Twelve Steps, and attempt to practice these principles in all our sexual and intimate affairs, we begin to accumulate sober references and understand what makes us tick. With the support and guidance of our sponsors, we start to wash away the associations from our using days and develop a sexual ideal that works for us. Every intimate encounter becomes an opportunity to be more honest, considerate and loving; our changing inclinations (and they *will* change) pull us away from situations that leave us, or others, feeling hurt, jealous or bitter.

Some of us seek the help of a therapist or psychiatrist to deal with whatever problems might

be keeping us from enjoying a healthy sober sex life.

THE JOY OF (SOBER) SEX

It may have taken a few weeks or several years, but in time, we have gone on to have romantic and/or sexual encounters without thinking even once of crystal. We wake up to some wonderful facts: We can be sober—in the moment and in our right minds—with a partner and not want to jump out of our skin.

Eventually, if we are fearless and thorough, a completely different paradigm for sexuality and romance will emerge. Many of us can attest that the quality that comes to exist in every aspect of our lives, sex and romance included, make the standards we had in our using pale and insignificant. Whatever it was we found so compelling appears as a joyless feverish sand trap of pain and emptiness. At times we wonder that it ever held such power over us.

Even before this comes to pass, the journey often provides a few gifts: estimable moments devoid of shame and remorse, glimpses into what our sexuality could be, and awareness that we are making progress. These experiences keep us confidently walking the path of sobriety.

In moments of doubt, those of us who have been doing this for a while, ask you to have faith in our collective experience around this issue. Hang in there. Call another addict when you feel you might do something you will regret. We have found that imperious urges and dis-

comforts are greatly diminished and often completely removed when we have shared them with our fellows.

CONNECTION In active addiction, our lives were strictly compartmentalized. Because relationships and friendships were too difficult or too painful, we satisfied our need for intimacy in drug-driven sexual encounters. Or we banished thoughts of connection from our minds entirely, at the mercy of an unhealthy eating disorder, fidgeting with mindless projects we could never finish—the end result was the same: a profound selfish spiritual isolation and depression.

Our sober lives—even our sober sex lives—have a new spiritual center. One member, sober 15 years, recalls his sponsor saying he should “bring God back into the bedroom.” And why not? We take our Higher Power everywhere we go.

Once we got sober, all kinds of personal connections became possible again. We found new sober running buddies in the program and rediscovered old, forgotten bonds with nonusing friends. Some of us have reconnected with our families, showing up for birthdays and enjoying holidays that used to make us nuts. Each day we’re sober, we have the opportunity to explore healthy intimacy with our families, friends and ourselves. It is perhaps the hardest and most rewarding thing we do. We learn not to hide from any person or issue and earn the gift of having nothing to hide.

—NYCMA LITERATURE COMMITTEE

The NYCMA Literature Committee would appreciate feedback based on the following criteria. These four guidelines are those implemented by CMA World to assure the integrity of our message:

- Does the material align with the Traditions?
- Is there any profanity?
- Is there any glorification of drug use or addictive behaviors?
- Does the work alienate anyone by race, age, gender or other group identity?

Please email any comments to literature@nycma.org.

SOBER REFERENCES

Say what? When we first started attending meetings, many of us were unaccustomed to some of the lingo. Here are a few terms you might hear:

BURNING DESIRES Some meetings set aside time for these special kinds of shares. We use these opportunities to speak if we think we may hurt ourself or someone else, or may pick up if we do not get to speak.

DAY COUNT This is the number of days it has been since you took your last drug or drink.

GROUP CONSCIENCE This is the means that a group uses to make decisions. Some groups require majority votes; others require “significant unanimity.” A two-thirds requirement for passage of any proposal is an example of the latter. Some members think significant unanimity encourages group cohesiveness. In any case, a group’s decision in a matter is referred to as “the group conscience.”

RULE 62 “Don’t take yourself too damn seriously.” This line is found on Page 148 of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, published by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. In discussing Tradition Four, Bill W. wrote of an example where a group had grandiose ideas, partly because an enthusiastic promoter got them all excited about building “a great big alcoholic center” using other people’s money. The deal went sour and the experience became a lesson in humility. There is no actual set of rules. The number 62 was likely chosen at random in making a joking reference to the big list of non-existent rules.

THE SHELF We don’t have to deal with every problem all at once. Sometimes we can put an issue “on the shelf.” Otherwise, we can become overwhelmed. If possible, we postpone dealing with issues such as too much debt, job problems and family issues until we get some clean time. Once we have some recovery under our belts, we are better-equipped to face those other issues.

MEETINGS

THIS LIST IS UPDATED REGULARLY AT NYCMA.ORG

SUNDAY

- 9:30 AM **Sunday Solutions**(c) Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 1:30 PM **Getting It** 46th Street Clubhouse
 6:00 PM **Step Meeting** (o)† Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 7:30 PM **Beginner's Basics** (c) Lesbian & Gay Community Center

MONDAY

- 7:45 AM **Good Morning, Higher Power** (c) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:00 PM **Relapse Prevention**(o) Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 7:30 PM **Juntos En Sobriedad** (Meeting conducted in Spanish) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 8:00 PM **NA Book Study** (o) Realization Center
 8:30 PM **59th Street Bridge Back to Life** 36-01 31st Ave., #4D - Astoria, Queens

TUESDAY

- 7:45 AM **Good Morning, Higher Power** (c) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:00 PM **Recovering Together** (o) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 7:30 PM **New York Group No. 1: Beginners** (o) Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 8:00 PM **Long-Term Sobriety** Gay Men's Health Crisis
 9:15 PM **Midtown Miracles** (o) 46th Street Clubhouse

WEDNESDAY

- 7:45 AM **Good Morning, Higher Power** (c) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:30 PM **Solutions in Recovery** (c) Callen-Lorde Health Center
 8:00 PM **Conscious Contact/11th Step** (o) Gay Men's Health Crisis

THURSDAY

- 7:45 AM **Good Morning, Higher Power** (c) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:30 PM **CMA Agnostics** (c) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:30 PM **As Bill Sees It** (o) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 8:00 PM **Big Book Study** (o) Gay Men's Health Crisis

FRIDAY

- 7:45 AM **Good Morning, Higher Power** (c) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:15 PM **Living With HIV** (c) Callen-Lorde Health Center
 8:00 PM **Crystal Clear** (o) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 8:30 PM **The O'Toole Meeting** (c) O'Toole Building/St. Vincent's Medical Center

SATURDAY

- 9:15 AM **Saturday Solutions** (c) Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 5:00 PM **Promises Manhattan Plaza Health Club**
 8:00 PM **Meditation Meeting** (c) Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 9:30 PM **Intimacy, Relationships & Sex in Sobriety** (c) Lesbian & Gay Community Center

MEETING DETAILS

†The last Sunday of every month is a Traditions meeting. **(o) Open Meeting:** Welcomes anyone interested in the CMA program. **(c) Closed meeting:** Welcomes anyone who has, or thinks he or she might have, a problem with crystal meth.

THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF THE SEVENTH TRADITION

When we were using, many of us paid for our addiction with our dignity and self-respect. In recovery, we don't have to live that way anymore.

By keeping Crystal Meth Anonymous self-supporting, we help make sure CMA will be there for those in need of recovery. Many members whose lives are being restored by working the program express their gratitude by giving back to the fellowship. Most of us were dependent on others during our using and only looked to see what we could take from life. In our selfish pursuits, we lost our integrity and gained nothing. Through observing the Seventh Tradition, we learn to take responsibility for ourselves and, therefore, grow in our recovery. The spiritual significance of the Seventh Tradition goes far beyond financial donations. When the members of a meeting accept service commitments, they help ensure the group is self-supporting. This type of donation is an important way we honor the Seventh Tradition.

Anyone can "do" service in CMA, irregardless of his or her financial situation. We also practice this Tradition when we volunteer to help during conventions or organize events that benefit the fellowship. Service can be performed at the meeting, regional or General Service level. All types of service help make the fellowship self-supporting.

—Excerpted from the new CMA General Service pamphlet titled "What Is the Seventh Tradition?"

DIRECTIONS

- **46thStreet Clubhouse** 252 West 46th Street, between 7th and 8th avenues
- **Callen-Lorde Community Health Center** 356 West 18th Street, between 8th & 9th avenues. Check at front desk for room number.
- **Gay Men's HealthCrisis** 119 West 24th Street, between 6th and 7th avenues. Check at front desk for room number.
- **lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Community Services Center** 208 West 13th Street, between 7th and 8th avenues. Check listings at front desk for room number.
- **Manhattan Plaza HealthClub** 482 West 43rd Street, Conference Room Minnesota 1.
- **S. Vincent's O'Toole Building** 203 West 12th Street, Sixth Floor, Large Conference Room
- **Realization Center** 19 Union Square West, Seventh Floor
- **William Ryan Health Center** 110 West 97th Street, between Columbus and Amsterdam

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER



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Submissions and Comments: CMA members are encouraged to submit essays and other original nonfiction writing for publication in Crystal Clear. Interested parties may contact a member of the NYCMA Literature Committee or NYCMA Intergroup for more information. Inquiries and comments may also be sent to newsletter@nycma.org. By submitting material for publication, members affirm that it is comprised solely of original content or that references to other works are credited properly. The writer also assumes all liability for any damages that may result from the publication of his or her article. Crystal Meth Anonymous is a Twelve Step fellowship for those with a desire to stop using crystal meth. Crystal Clear is published periodically by NYCMA Inc., a not-for-profit corporation located in New York City. NYCMA, or its designee(s), reserves the right to refuse submissions and to edit them, including for clarity and space and to avoid triggering the reader. Submissions become property of NYCMA. No compensation is paid. According to our Tenth Tradition, NYCMA has no opinions on outside issues. Opinions expressed in articles are solely those of the writers and do not speak for NYCMA as a whole. This policy was created by the NYCMA Literature Committee at the request of NYCMA Intergroup members. We also suggest that writers keep in mind our Eleventh Tradition: "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films and all other media." The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of CMA have been adapted with permission from AA World Services Inc. NYCMA is not affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous. Visual materials are printed with permission.

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To obtain free or at-cost literature
 for local meetings
 clearinghouse@nycma.org

NYCMA LITERATURE COMMITTEE

Meets regularly
 literature@nycma.org

CRYSTAL CLEAR NEWSLETTER

For inquiries on how to contribute
 to our meeting in print
 newsletter@nycma.org