the BEST thing
MY SPONSOR EVER TOLD ME WAS . . .

SUGGESTIONS FROM OUR FELLOWS
“There is no right answer. You’re a good person and you’re trying to do the right thing. That’s what matters.” —Jim H.

“Why not try accepting this is where you are right now?” —Mike F.

“Go ahead and eat as much ice cream as you want—you’re counting days! Be gentle on yourself.” —Chip E.

“Keep an open mind.” Never fails. It applies to every situation. —Amy H.

“You’re a miracle today.” No matter what was going on in my life, Joe would say this frequently, and it resonated with me. No matter what, I was a miracle to be sober. It’s something I frequently say to people today on their anniversaries. It’s something I always say to myself (in Joe’s voice). —Luis V.

“Alcohol Becomes Crystal.”

“Darlin’, we treat our addictions in the order they kill us. You go ahead and keep smoking those cigarettes for now.”

“Call me tomorrow.”

“I understand what you’re going through, and I promise that it’ll get better.”

“We’ll help you out of your hole. First you have to put down your shovel.” —John T.
"Now this is something I did, and how I did it..."

My sponsor was very careful to only tell me things based on his experience. He also told me all the time how smart I was.

"Be careful that you don’t always try to figure things out yourself!"
—Barry L.

"Make your bed. Wash your dishes. Scrub your toilet."

"Your Higher Power never gives you more than you are able to handle."
—Michael L.

"I don’t have any friends who use crystal meth."

"Stay away from toxic people."

"The world is not going to revolve around your sobriety."
—Billy U.

MARK V: “You know, I was just thinking.”
MY SPONSOR: “There you go, that’s the problem.”

“Everything’s an outside issue, unless you’re going through it!” Also: “If a fellow’s share is going on and on, remember, it’s going to end!"
—Ava L.

“I had a lot of doubts about the program—it seemed like a cult, like I was going to be brainwashed. My sponsor looked at me and said, “Doesn’t your brain need washing?”"—Bob M.

“Understanding why you do the things you do is the booby prize. The explanation of all the crazy things you think and do is simple: You are an addict. That’s all you need to understand.”
—Todd A.

"Your best character asset is your imperfection."

"Your only part in that resentment is holding on to it."

"Just change your perception of the thing that is bothering you."
—Carmine N.

“Take a piece of paper. On one side put five character defects, on the other, five assets. Keep it in your wallet."

“What is cognitive dissonance?”
No, seriously, he said this to me as I sobbed in his arms about a flashback I had to childhood sexual abuse.

“That person can’t hurt you anymore. We will work the Steps together.”

“Wait until you finish your Fourth Step sexual inventory to start having sex again.”

“No sex for at least six months—hopefully a year. And no dating for a year.”

“My sponsor told me that I can be in a sling—as long as I stay sober!”

“Nothing good ever happens after midnight.”

I made plans to have sex with someone counting days. I called and told my sponsor. He yelled, “Red light! Red light! Do not have sex with that man!”

Once, when I was going insane and about to explode over the way someone mistreated me, my sponsor and I had this chat:
MY SPONSOR: “Have you ever been an ass to anyone?”
WIAFE: “No, Well...”
MY SPONSOR: “Well, if you can forgive yourself or hope that the person you harmed could forgive you, then maybe you can forgive this person.”

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My sponsor leaned in, calmly, but with purpose. I’d been furiously yelling, but he hadn’t taken the bait. Why? My usual strategy to hide my fear and shame was to confuse and berate my opponent. It always worked. It had worked for decades.
Why wasn’t it working on him? His tone was matter-of-fact. Not much warmth, but no malice. He whispered into my ear the key phrase that got me through my anger, my fear, and my Step Four: “Jono, you’re not that important.”

The same words would later get me through Step Seven and help me maintain my Step Eleven, too. My sponsor isn’t my parent, whose own self-worth is often tied to the strong ego—or even happiness!—of his kid. A parent would tell me I’m important. My sponsor is a guide whose “worth” is tied to offering experiences and tools and stripping away illusions, illusions that prevent his sponsee from living an authentic life. If my authentic life is a conventionally happy life—and thank god, it can be—then, yay! But that’s not his job, nor is it his or our program’s promise.

I’d been leaving sweaty palm prints on my sponsor’s glass dining room table for weeks during our chats and prep work for Step Four writing. After he said that to me, I cried. He didn’t flinch. I later learned that his glass table had witnessed a lot of crying over the years, lots of sponsees shedding lots of tears. I imagined a bottle of Windex was always on hand after sponsor hour.

Alfredo was my second sponsor. My first sponsor, Scott, had to move back to Miami. He’d seen me through my first three steps, my ego flare-ups, and a few brutal relapses; I will always be profoundly grateful and completely loyal to him. Alfredo is the hero who got me through Step Four. He instructed me to show up at his apartment with a blank notebook. He had told me to be on time. I will never underestimate the respectful gesture of being on time.

I’d ceremoniously decided that a black colored notebook was the appropriate color for Step Four writing, and had to visit three different stores to find the correct one—proof positive that I am a sad perfectionist addict! But I couldn’t hold the pen. Alfredo did most of the writing at first, coaxing the information out of some locked vaults of my memory. There was the usual list of resentments: family, sexual partners, law enforcement (for daring to do its job and pursue me in my errant ways), grown men who’d violently stolen my boyhood innocence, people who stalked me, people who ignored me! (This addict wants to be simultaneously embraced and ignored...a losing proposition.)

I didn’t realize until I looked at my part how much toxic nourishment I got from keeping my anger alive. I was a mini resentment factory, fueled by and producing anger and victimhood. I needed a sponsor to point out this vicious cycle. I was trapped in it and unable to see outside of the jail cell.

We started and ended each writing session with gratitude and prayer. A Fourth Step without a Higher Power is just an exercise in masochism. Why relive this crap unless you’re convinced that you have a Higher Power that will support you as you begin fearless self-examination? Step Four is just a stop on the program journey: Step Three allows me to have confidence in a Higher Power. Step Five allows me to have confidence in humanity, represented, for now, by this humble fellow addict: my sponsor.

When I finished the work, Alfredo gave me a white chip, signaling true surrender. He’d been given this same chip by his sponsor. It wasn’t mine to keep—I was to be its temporary guardian until the first sponsee who passed it to my first sponsee who completed Steps Four and Five with me. I gave a sponsee this chip this year. Sure, the ritual was moving, but at its core it was a business gesture that symbolized the continuation of the work.

A good sponsor is only training the next round of future sponsors. This doesn’t, and cannot, begin and end with me. I’m not that important. ■
1. We admitted that we were powerless over crystal meth and our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a power greater than our selves 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.

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The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—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 Him. 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. 5. Admitted to ourselves, to God, 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 Him 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 God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His 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.
WHAT OUR LITERATURE SAYS ON SPONSORSHIP

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill. Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends — this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

— “Working With Others,” Alcoholics Anonymous, p.89

Our awareness of our patterns of relating with others and the risk we have just taken in admitting them to another bring about a momentous breakthrough in our relationships. Not only do we form a close bond with our sponsor, but the risk we take in trusting this person will help us develop close relationships with others as well. We’ve risked trusting one person with our secrets and our feelings, and we haven’t been rejected. We begin to have the freedom to trust others. Not only do we find out that others are trustworthy and deserve our friendship, we find that we are also trustworthy and deserving. We may have thought we were incapable of loving or being loved or ever having friends. We discover that these beliefs were unfounded. We learn from the example of our sponsor, how to be a more caring friend.

— “Step Five,” It Works: How & Why, pp. 56-57

What a sponsor is not: It is not a sponsor’s job to be a landlord, loan company, lawyer, doctor, accountant, psychiatrist, financial broker, marriage counselor or therapist. Sponsors who are in those professions leave that role at the door of CMA. Here they are like us: one addict trying to help another. Sponsors do not keep up the pretense of being right all the time. If they do not know the answer, they may quickly admit this, and help us find other sources of information including professional guidance when needed.

— “What About Sponsorship?” CMA Conference Approved Pamphlet
NYCMA MEETINGS
This list is updated regularly at nycma.org

SUNDAY
9:00 AM Pier Meeting (May 1–August 31 only) (O) End of Christopher St. Pier
11:15 AM Sunday Solutions (Q) The LGBT Center
6:00 PM Step Meeting – Traditions meeting the last Sunday of each month (O) • (Q) • The LGBT Center
6:30 PM Breaking Good (O) AIDS Project New Haven, CT
7:30 PM Beginner’s Basics (Q) The LGBT Center

MONDAY
7:30 AM Upon Awakening (Q) Judith Peabody Wellness Center
7:45 AM Good Morning, Higher Power (Q) GMHC
6:00 PM Relapse Prevention (Q) The LGBT Center
8:00 PM Book Study (Q) Realization Center
8:00 PM 59th Street Bridge Back to Life (Q) 33-11 Broadway, Apt. 3R, Astoria, NY

TUESDAY
7:30 AM Upon Awakening (Q) Judith Peabody Wellness Center
7:45 AM Good Morning, Higher Power (Q) GMHC
7:30 PM Beginner’s Meeting (Q) • (Q) • The LGBT Center
8:15 PM Long Term Sobriety (Q) GMHC

WEDNESDAY
7:30 AM Upon Awakening (Q) Judith Peabody Wellness Center
7:45 AM Good Morning, Higher Power (Q) GMHC
6:30 PM Harlem Renaissance (Q) Ephesus Church
7:45 PM Solutions in Recovery (Q) The LGBT Center
8:00 PM Conscious Contact (Q) The LGBT Center

THURSDAY
7:30 AM Upon Awakening (Q) Judith Peabody Wellness Center
7:45 AM Good Morning, Higher Power (Q) GMHC
6:30 PM CMA Agnostics (Q) GMHC
7:00 PM Brooklyn Bridge Back to Life (Q) Brooklyn Community Pride Center
7:45 PM It Works! (Q) Golden Hill United Methodist Church Library / Bridgeport, CT
8:00 PM Book Study Meeting (Q) The LGBT Center

FRIDAY
7:30 AM Upon Awakening (Q) Judith Peabody Wellness Center
7:45 AM Good Morning, Higher Power (Q) GMHC
6:15 PM Living with HIV (Q) Hudson Guild Fulton Center
7:30 PM Crystal Clear (Q) • (Q) • The LGBT Center
8:30 PM New Tools (Q) Church of the Holy Apostles

SATURDAY
9:00 AM Pier Meeting (May 1–August 31 only) (Q) End of Christopher St. Pier
11:15 AM Saturday Solutions (Q) • • (Q) • The LGBT Center
1:00 PM A-1 Uptown Meeting (Q) Holyrood Episcopal Church
5:00 PM Promises Meeting* (Q) Manhattan Plaza Health Club
8:00 PM Meditation (Q) The LGBT Center
9:30 PM Intimacy, Relationships & Sex in Sobriety (Q) The LGBT Center

MEETING DETAILS
(O) = Open Meeting (C) = Closed Meeting (•) 1½ hrs (••) 1 hr 15 min (all other meetings last 1 hr)
* Please be on time for the 10-minute silent meditation at the start of each meeting.
* The last Saturday of each month will be a guided meditation meeting.

DIRECTIONS
• AIDS Project New Haven 1302 Chapel St, New Haven, CT 06511
• Brooklyn Community Pride 4 Metro Tech Ctr, (at Wroughton St)
• Church of The Holy Apostles 206 North Ave at 20th St.
• Ephesus Church 101 West 123rd St.
• GMHC 440 W. 33rd St., btw 9th & 10th Av. GMHC pass or photo ID required to enter
• Golden Hill United Methodist Church Library 210 Elm St., Bridgeport, CT 06604
• Holyrood Episcopal Church 715 W 179th St. (A or 1 to 181st)
• Hudson Guild Fulton Center 119 Ave., btw 17th & 18th St.
• Judith Peabody Wellness Center David E. Rogers Unit, 53 W 23rd Street, 6th Floor
• Manhattan Plaza Health Club 460 West 43rd St.
• The LGBT Center 208 W. 13th St, btw 7th & 8th Av. Check lobby for room info
• Realization Center 25 E. 15th St, 7th Floor
• 30-11 Broadway Astoria, NY (QO to Broadway)

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.

HOW IS CMA DIFFERENT THAN OTHER TWELVE STEP PROGRAMS?
We have found that we relate best to other crystal meth addicts because they understand the darkness, paranoia and compulsions of this particular addiction. The Twelve Steps of CMA were adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. We do not believe we are better or worse than those in other Twelve Step programs. At the same time, many of us fail to fully identify with “a falling-down drunk” or, in the case of a heroin addict, “a nodding-off junkie.” The hyper-extended length and intensity of crystal meth’s effects, be it compulsive cleaning or sexual activity, were unique. Many of us have attended other Twelve Step programs, but the feeling of identification in the Rooms of CMA has helped us to keep coming back. After all, who but another meth addict understands the insanity that accompanies the high and, finally, that seemingly bottomless drop into depression that makes us desperate to use still more?

Excerpted from the CMA General Service pamphlet titled “What Is Crystal Meth Anonymous?” Copies may be downloaded free of charge at crystalmeth.org.

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