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suggestions. People of all beliefs are equal members in CMA and have achieved sobriety.

A few suggestions for newcomers

- Remember that CMA is a spiritual, not a religious, program.
- Try to keep an open mind.
- Find a Higher Power that suits you.
- Don't worry if you are uncertain about what your Higher Power is.
- Use the CMA group as your Higher Power if that helps.
- Admit that you cannot do it on your own, and you are well on the way to recovery.

NOTE: When CMA adapted the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, we did not use "Him" or "His" to refer to God. The use of a gender-specific pronoun implied that God was a male animate being, and that may not be the way some of us conceive of our Higher Power. So in CMA, God is simply God—to be defined by each member as he or she wishes.

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NEW YORK CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS

**A HIGHER
POWER**

WHAT IS A HIGHER POWER? Most members of Crystal Meth Anonymous we know tried to stop using drugs long before coming into the rooms of our fellowship. We came to CMA because we couldn't do it on our own. CMA suggests accepting and depending on a power greater than ourselves to help us recover. This power is of our own conception—it can be anything we choose. The important thing is that it works for us.

Why do we need a Higher Power?

A Higher Power is important because most of us needed a power greater than ourselves so we wouldn't go back to drugs. Few of us came to CMA to think about God. We came to stop using drugs and to put an end to our misery. We couldn't quit on our own. Many of us tried and tried—swearing we would never use again after experiencing the consequences, remorse or depression that went along with our using. Some of us could “white knuckle it” for a while—using willpower for days, weeks or months. But willpower could only get us so far and, sooner or later, we were using again. Others couldn't go a day without using. We were desperate to stop, but try as we might, we just couldn't do it. We had turned our wills and our lives over to the care of a higher power—crystal meth. And though crystal and other drugs provided relief and even euphoria for a while, eventually they turned on us.

For most of us, CMA was our last resort. Our willpower hadn't been enough. Our own resources had been insufficient. We felt doomed to a life of active addiction without some outside help. Fortunately, CMA and its solution were there for us. In the First Step, we admitted we couldn't stop using on our own; we were powerless to do so. We could no longer bear the unmanageability of our using lives. We needed a power greater than ourselves—something stronger than our addiction—to

get clean. In the CMA program this power is often called “Higher Power,” “God of our understanding” or “God.”

Finding your Higher Power Try to keep an open mind. There are probably as many conceptions of a Higher Power as there are people in CMA. Some of us already had a clear idea of our spirituality when we came to CMA or began to reexplore the God we grew up with. Others decided to individualize a version of God we could relate to more easily. For others, God was not a “being,” but a spiritual concept: a force or the system that underlies the universe. Your Higher Power could be a concept such as love, hope, faith or compassion, or as many of us found, an unsuspected inner resource. Making your Higher Power the CMA program—the principles, the meetings and your fellows—works too. Thinking of God as Good Orderly Direction or a Group Of Drug addicts is another useful approach.

Some of us called our Higher Power “God” and others did not. Some of us didn't worry about defining it. Others were uncertain and worried that the program wouldn't work if we were unsure about all this “God stuff.” But even if all we could say was, “Supreme Whatever, I'm not going to make it without some other-than-human help!” that was enough for a good start. As long as we were willing to accept the aid of some kind of Higher Power, we could recover.

Accepting the program and working the Steps may be easier for people who have no difficulty accepting the idea of a Higher Power. But even these people embark on a new relationship with their Higher Power. And those who have difficulty coming to believe in a power greater than themselves only have to become willing to explore. In the end, all approaches to a Higher Power can work in recovery.

While it is common to start out thinking of the CMA group and our fellows as our Higher Power, many of us eventually decided we needed more than that. We wanted a Higher Power that could be with us all the time—when we couldn't get to a meeting, when our sponsor was out of town, or when we couldn't reach others in the fellowship. Our Higher Power had to become something greater than a specific person, group or situation.

We allowed our concept of a Higher Power to be vague, uncertain and flexible, if necessary. We allowed our concept to change with time, and it often did. Remember: It's your program and your Higher Power.

What if I don't believe in God? The word *God* is used six times in the Twelve Steps of CMA. For many, this was not a problem. But that word reminded some of us of negative experiences we had had with organized religions or made us think of a harsh, judgmental and punishing God. Many of us were committed atheists or agnostics and didn't see how we would ever fit in. But all of us found that if we kept an open mind, we were able to find a “God of our understanding” that helped us in sobriety.

Not believing in God need not be a problem. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. People of every imaginable belief happily coexist in CMA.

We admit it sounds a little strange to say that the “God of your understanding” could be “No God at all,” but atheists have done just that, and achieved and maintained sobriety.

Is CMA a religious organization? No. CMA is not a religious organization. There are no set religious beliefs to which members must subscribe—no beliefs of any kind are required. Even the Twelve Steps are only

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