

Clear

crystal

Volume 5 • Number 1

NYCMA

 NEW YORK CRYSTAL METH
 ANONYMOUS INTERGROUP

**IT WORKS IF
 YOU WORK IT**

■ Honest, Open and Willing: First, honesty

I learned about honesty through Catholicism and always aimed to be truthful, even if it hurt. In high school, I was mostly a pothead, but also used a smattering of other drugs, until growing out of all of them by age 18. I embraced honesty with the dry-drunklike rigidity that marked my twenties.

Effectively I wore my heart on my sleeve, always explaining myself when it wasn't necessary.

After a decade or so of holier-than-thou healthiness, I found myself compromising all my dearly held principles by taking my first ecstasy pill in April 1997. This required a major liberalization in thought, a good thing on the one hand because I began to let go of my rigidity and uptightness, but it also included major rationalization on the other. What started off as a seemingly innocent attempt to

loosen up and have fun eventually took me other places. While I wasn't a big "liar" per se, I ignored my values, did things out of character, isolated from family and old friends, and avoided certain subjects to keep my double life the dirty little secret I loved. With less integrity, I certainly wasn't living an honest life anymore.

Truth be told (no pun intended), as a recovering Catholic and an individual who's nearly always had good experiences with therapists, I was comfortable enough with confession and self-disclosure to take well to the Twelve Steps when I came in to CMA in 2002 after 5½ years of party-drug use. Here my level of honesty began to deepen and broaden, as I slowly (and I mean s-l-o-w-l-y) learned to share from the heart in meetings.

See **HONESTY** on Page 7

■ Bronze CMA medallions

Thanks to our worldwide Intergroup, the CMA General Services Organization, we can now help our fellows mark their sobriety anniversaries by giving them bronze CMA medallions.

The group has minted one- and two-year recovery medallions and plans to begin the process of adding additional medallions



celebrating more years.

New York area meetings may obtain the medallions at cost beginning in late February from the NYCMA

Literature Clearinghouse. They will be offered for \$3 each.

Individuals may place orders by logging on to the worldwide Intergroup's Web site, crystalmeth.org.

Taking the High Road

Morality is a loaded word. It carries Victorian overtones and reminds me of past experiences with organized religion, in which I was handed a frozen, literalist moral vision that consisted of rules and taboos. There was someone on the outside telling me what was right and what was wrong, and there was little room for interpretation. This parent-and-child version of morality sent me running in the opposite direction for much of my adult life.

Perhaps that is why one of our readings says reassuringly that "addiction is not a moral issue" but a disease that can be treated. Ironically, however, the Twelve Steps—which

See **MORALITY** on Page 7

CMA AT WORK

2007 INTERGROUP OFFICERS STEP IN The recently elected officers of New York Crystal Meth Anonymous, the Intergroup for New York City, have taken their posts. Representatives of local meetings have elected the following people for one-year commitments that began in January: Kelly M., NYCMA Chair.; Carmine N., Treasurer; Anthony L., Public Information Chair; Harley M., Public Information Officer; Charlie W., Public Information Co-chair; Michael A., Hospitals and Institutions Chair; Mike R., Literature Chair; Tom M., Literature Co-chair; Mike M., Literature Coordinator; Eddie P., GSR Coordinator; Kevin C., Secretary; and Bruce C., GSO representative. Elections for Structure and Finance Chair are expected to take place in March. The group extended the term of this position until spring in an effort to provide continuity during the process of obtaining nonprofit status.... **SPEAKING OF NONPROFIT** Our Intergroup has officially incorporated itself under the name NYCMA Inc. Incorporation is required before obtaining nonprofit status from the IRS.... **NEW MEETINGS** Meetings in New York are continuing to multiply and become more diverse. Since the last issue of this newsletter, four new meetings have been started in Manhattan. The new meeting at 9:15 P.M. on Sundays, "Sober by Thirty," is geared toward young people seeking recovery. The other new meetings are "Sunday Solutions," "Promises," and "Midtown Miracles." A full meeting list appears on Page 8.... **MORE HOPE BOOKS ON THE WAY** We sold out of our first book, *Expressions of Hope*, very quickly and more have been ordered. When they arrive, we'll make announcements at meetings. Literature Chairs and other meeting officers may check with the Literature Clearinghouse by calling (646) 405-9825.

■ CMA-related announcements can be posted on the Web

Individual meetings may share their CMA-related announcements with the rest of the fellowship by logging on to nycma.org.

We have added a link for members to submit information directly via the Web site. Click on the "Contact Us" link for instructions on how to fill out the e-form.

Announcements received by the 15th of each month will appear by the first day of the following month.

Anthony L., NYCMA Public Information Officer, says the new setup is designed to make sharing announcements easier for New York area members.

Anthony says he will review all announcements before they are posted to ensure they are consistent with the Twelve Traditions of CMA.

He gave a couple of examples of items that would be considered appropriate:

- ✓ Changes in meeting locations or times.



- ✓ H&I meetings sponsored by individual groups or NYCMA.
 - ✓ Events sponsored by the Intergroup or individual meetings.
 - ✓ Announcements of new meetings.
 - Examples of announcements that cannot be posted:
 - ✓ Sober parties at a member's home.
 - ✓ Events sponsored by other fellowships.
- The addition of this feature follows a major update of

the Web site, including to the downloadable meeting list, as well as to the program literature that is offered there.

Members may also expect minor changes to nycma.org in an effort to make the site easier to navigate.

Intergroup has hired a graphic designer to handle site maintenance, which will allow updates at least once a month, says Anthony.

Space for announcements is limited, so please try to keep them brief.

■ What we learned from Share-A-Day

"There Is a Solution" was the theme of NYCMA's second Share-A-Day, held at the Friends Meeting House on October 7. The planning committee thought the previous year's event was pretty successful, so we decided to follow a similar format. We invited different speakers and came up with some (not all) new workshop topics to keep things fresh.

Last year's committee did a great job of passing on lessons learned. Some lessons were big: Watch your budget. Some were more detailed: Don't expect New York CMA-ers to eat many vegetarian sandwiches. They like meat. Their experience really helped the planning and the event itself run more smoothly.

Carlos M. from Los Angeles was the keynote speaker. Carlos was recommended by Don N., the speaker at the 2005 Share-A-Day. Carlos was followed by breakout sessions on Step work, beginner sobriety, relapse prevention and sex and

relationships. The sessions were repeated after lunch, so members could attend their top two workshop choices.

The day ended with closing remarks from Carlos and members of CMA sharing about their experiences of the day.

The 2006 event was slightly larger than the 2005 event—about 150 members attended. CMA-ers from Philadelphia, Washington, Massachusetts, Florida, and LA were present, in addition to New Yorkers.

Evaluations were largely positive. Generally, people liked that there were some out-of-town speakers. They liked well-planned

interactive workshops and didn't really appreciate a workshop if it was just another meeting or a free-form discussion.

Many helpful suggestions were made. Of course, there were new lessons learned by those of us working on Share-A-Day. We hope next year's event can be even better. **BRUCE C.**

THE 2006 EVENT WAS SLIGHTLY LARGER THAN THE 2005 EVENT—ABOUT 150 MEMBERS ATTENDED.

Midtown group focuses on Ninth Step Promises

The spiritual transformation possible through working the Steps is the focus of the CMA “Promises” meeting, the fellowship’s first in Midtown. It is a speaker meeting, the topic of which is the Ninth Step Promises from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. Speakers have at least a year of clean time and ideally have worked all 12 Steps.

Newcomers are encouraged to attend as the Ninth Step’s Promises embody the hope and potential for change that exist when we do the work of the program.

This open meeting of CMA convenes Saturdays at 5 P.M. at the Manhattan Plaza Health Club, 482 West 43rd Street (south-east corner at 10th Avenue). Look for a blue awning. The meeting is held in the Minnesota I Conference Room.

For anyone who might be unfamiliar, here are the Promises of the Ninth Step:

- ✓ 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

Meetings

A full list appears on Page 8; downloadable lists are offered at nycma.org



have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

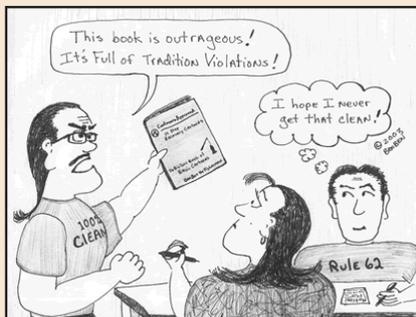
- ✓ That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
- ✓ We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
- ✓ Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
- ✓ Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
- ✓ We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
- ✓ We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. **MIKE R.**

HUMOR IN RECOVERY

“Uhaul”



“Rule 62”



Chances

*RUNNING SCARED WITH NOWHERE TO GO,
RUNNING WILD WITH NO SELF-CONTROL.
NOT KNOWING IF THERE WOULD BE
ANOTHER DAY OF JUST WANTING TO BE
LOVED IN ANY WAY.*

*I RAN, I STUMBLED, I FELL
RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE DOORS OF HELL,
BUT SOMETHING PULLED ME AWAY AND
SAVED SOUL
IT GAVE ME STRENGTH, IT GAVE ME HOPE.*

*SO I BEGAN TO RUN IN THE OTHER
DIRECTION,
THIS TIME WITH A MUCH BETTER
INTENTION.
I NEED IT TO CHANGE, I NEED IT LIGHT,
I WAS SO TIRED OF ONLY LIVING AT
NIGHT.*

*THAT IS HOW I CAME UP TO GOD'S DOOR,
MY BODY WAS TIRED, MY HEART WAS
SORE.
HE TOOK ME INTO HIS ARMS AND
HUGGED ME ALL OVER,
HE MADE ME FEEL BETTER, HE MADE
ME FEEL STRONGER.*

*HE GAVE ME LOVE, HE GAVE ME
SERENITY,
HE TOOK ME AWAY FROM ALL THE
INSANITY.
HE ACCEPTED ME FOR WHO I WAS
WHEN I THOUGHT I WAS NOTHING,
BY REMINDING ME I WAS SPECIAL AND
THAT I WASN'T ROTTEN.*

*SO I THEN DECIDED TO LIVE AND FIGHT,
TO MAKE MY LIFE BETTER BY MAKING IT
RIGHT.
I TOOK A CHANCE AND OPENED MY
HEART,
TO A BETTER TOMORROW WITH A BRAND
NEW START.* **RONNY**

WHAT IS CMA?

OUR PREAMBLE Crystal Meth Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from addiction to crystal meth and all other mind-altering substances. 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 live free of active addiction and to carry that message to the addict who still suffers.

Adapted with permission from Grapevine magazine.

Why Am I Here?

At 3 A.M. on November 8, 2005, the 14th day of a crystal binge, I sat alone, high as a kite, in my bedroom, listening as the voices in my head battled for my soul.

I ONCE READ IN ANOTHER FELLOW'S story that there was nothing in his life to indicate he would end up an addict. I found this amusing—everything suggested I would become an addict. The garden from which my disease grew was fertilized with self-hatred, isolation, low self-esteem, an alcoholic father and the belief that the world owed me something (everything really). So it was no great shock when I became an addict too. What was shocking; I never wanted any of it, the drugs or the alcohol. I fought my use, abuse and addiction every step of the way. I wasn't equipped to fight this battle, and I was trying to do it alone, in my head. I always promised myself that I was never going to be like my dad. Yet, much like he did for 13 years, I find myself sitting in a room, announcing: "Hi, my name is Don, and I am an addict and alcoholic." I have never understood him better than I do today. He continues to teach me, even after his death.

I often wondered, *How did I get here, what am I doing here?* And of course, *Why am I here?* I knew I was not alone in pondering the grand purpose of life, but I was only interested in the easiest answers. The real solutions to my problems required a fearless, honest evaluation of myself. Until recently, I never felt strong enough to do that. So at 40 years old, after 25 years of addiction, I have finally stopped, let in God and listened for the answers.

Experience: how did I get here? My addiction did not start with the first time I got drunk or the first time I smoked pot or

with any of my many other drug firsts. It all started long before I can remember—the first time I hated myself, the first time I believed it when someone told me I was nothing and, more importantly, the moment I began to live in fear. I was born into a home where chaos churned just below the surface and was poised to disturb the uneasy peace at any moment. Love and anger lived side by side. I knew, even then, this was not the way others lived, but it was my life. I have the same wonderful memories as many others: a mother's love, family vacations and festive holidays. But many of my memories are colored by silence and anger. I find it interesting that, in a family of seven children, silence occupies such a prominent place in my recollections. The silence, I know now, was based in fear—fear of drawing attention to myself, angering my father or "causing" another argument. I believed the anger of my memories belonged to my father. I was wrong. The anger was mine, and I clung to it the way other children clung to a favorite blanket. If I was angry, I was strong, in control. I revealed that strength and control by creating trouble. I went out of my way to make the wrong decisions. I pushed limits in every aspect of my life without consequence—or so I thought.

At 6 years of age, I tried beer for the first time. To this day, I can still feel the memory, the sensations. The opened can against my lips, the taste of the beer mixed with that of the steel can and the burn as it went down. I was hooked. I learned how to drink by watching my dad. He would do it

for hours, sitting at a bar, in silence, one beer after another, staring off into space. I was an alcoholic and an addict before I ever started using. I began to drink in earnest at 15. Within a year, I was smoking pot daily, snorting cocaine and dropping acid on weekends. I could be someone else. *I was someone else.* I didn't have to think about my life, sexuality, insecurities or sadness. I could party better than anyone; bigger, better, faster, stronger. This I was great at.

My father, sober for six years, recognized my "greatness." He sat me down to talk. He focused on my drug use and the friends I was spending time with. I always wondered why he never mentioned my nights out drinking. Did he feel this was off limits, that I might throw his alcoholism back in his face? Maybe he was not ready to answer for the pain he had caused his son. I wish we had talked about it. In any case, I was offered an opportunity to change my life. I started therapy. It was good, while my honesty lasted. I began to lie by omission. I was not ready to face my demons. Besides, I could stop on my own whenever I wanted—time after time, again and again for the next 25 years.

When I was 22, my father died. I no longer had him riding me to do better, be better. I began to build a life of lies. With each lie I told, another piece of me disappeared. My soul suffered, my spirit was wounded and God felt beyond reach. I prayed, *Why are you keeping me here? Please help me!* God answered, but I

would not hear. At age 31, my six-year relationship was coming to an end. The ornate, flawless facade I had maintained began to crack and fall away. It had become impossible for me to keep up with my own deception. As my partner began to see the real me, I withdrew. I was afraid of being “found out,” of being alone, of wanting out. I cheated often. I needed to get caught. I needed the hurt I was causing to end. It didn’t. For the next decade, I destroyed many other relationships just by withdrawing.

“Functioning addict”—it’s a nice label. Yes, I went to work every day. Yes, I advanced my career. Yes, I had a nice apartment. And yes, I had lots of material things. These facts in no way indicated my ability to function. I did well in my business life for three reasons, validation: preservation and desperation. I was good at what I did and needed everyone to tell me so. I had a lifestyle and image to maintain in order to feed my fragile ego and mask my low self-esteem. Above all, I needed to succeed to finance my increasing drug habit. I was never surprised by what I could accomplish when my ability to acquire drugs was threatened.

With the “stability” that comes with having a life partner gone from my personal life, I was free to create another “new” me. This incarnation began on Fire Island on July 4, 1996. In a matter of days, I had begun using ecstasy, K and crystal. I had a new group of friends, a share for the summer and a great job in the music industry. I had arrived.

It was everything I ever wanted and everything I thought I deserved. I now realize, these relationships were nothing more than a safe existence of approval and acceptance based on manufactured emotions fueling one long party. I became a daily user!

It was during this time I had my first spiritual awakening. My understanding of this is so clear now, but at the time, it was just an amazing moment I tried to hold on to and learn from. For the first time in my life, I was hearing God. He was there for me. All I needed to do was ask for help. I know now that the path I was walking had divided and it was time to choose a direction. The thrill of my new life and the

drugs were calling out to me. I was powerless over the pull.

My journey has been difficult, but I will never say I chose wrong. Living with regrets and what-ifs was a futile existence for me. I prefer to wonder: would I be where I am today if I had not lived this life? God gave me a lesson to carry on my journey. People move in and out of your life for a reason, take joy in having known them and learn what they were sent to teach you. Some will leave forever, but others will return to continue your lessons. In sobriety, many of those people have returned and I continue to learn from them.

During the last six years of my us-

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ing, I “refined” my drug abuse to include only crystal and alcohol. To me, this was “managing.” I moved to Florida, then back to New York City. I moved apartments more than a dozen times, always with the promise that “things are going to be different.” The result was always the same, me sitting alone in a room with a crystal pipe in my mouth.

Strength: what am I doing here? At 3 A.M. on November 8, 2005, the 14th day of a crystal binge, I sat alone, high as a kite, in my bedroom, listening as the voices in my head battled for my soul. God spoke to me. I didn’t hear any words. I felt them in my heart. I was at peace. I stood, walked from my bedroom to the bathroom and flushed 3 grams of crystal meth down the toilet. I went back to my room. The voices in my head were stunned: *Did you really just flush that? Did you?* I broke my pipe. There were no negotiations. No “one more hit and then I will stop.” It was over.

I cannot say that sobriety has always been easy, but my worst day in sobriety is still better than my best day using. I am present for my life now. God answered the prayers of a lifetime.

I recently heard a sponsor say to his sponsee: “How can you not believe in something that you yourself have said you’ve prayed to?” Throughout my life, I never lost faith in God—I just didn’t know it. For

years, I woke up every day wishing I were dead. *Why not just end my life?* There was always a reason not to: my mother, my family, my ego, chocolate ice cream. God gave me many other reasons along the way. It doesn’t matter why I stayed, just that I did. In this, I have faith.

So God, why are you keeping me here? His answer was once again simple, to experience true joy. My definition of true joy has changed as I achieve a greater understanding of my life and its purpose. True joy is not the euphoria of the “pink cloud” but the calm and serenity of daily life, my reaction to people and situations and, above all, the beautiful and honest relationships that I am

able to nurture with family, friends and fellows. By understanding and letting go of anger, jealousy and ego, I am open to accepting all that the universe has to

offer. That acceptance began with asking for help. The help offered by the fellowship is powerful. I walked into a roomful of strangers and was received immediately and understood.

Never before had I experienced that. We might not always agree, but we understand without judgment. Every day there is a new lesson to be learned if I am open to it. I remind myself that from perceived failure often comes the greatest lesson. How does one live in the light if they have not known darkness? The Twelve Steps started me on a course to higher consciousness. The understanding and growth that came from working them, and doing my best to live by them, offers me a greater view of God’s universe and my place in it. There is no greater direction for living life and becoming everything I strive to be than in the Eleventh Step and its prayer. It is by self-forgetting, that one finds.

Hope: why am I here? My hope is simple: When we are connected to our higher power, ideas, language even the phrase “each other” doesn’t make any sense. I believe that each of us is the same and God can be found in all men and women. What we are on the outside is simply the vessel that takes us on the journey. Believing this, how can I not hope for each of you everything that I hope for myself—true joy. **DON S.**

THE TWELVE STEPS

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 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.

The Twelve Steps of CMA are adapted with permission from AA World Services Inc.

I needed to put down meth, not alcohol, so I came to CMA

First let me say I *love* Alcoholics Anonymous. The program of recovery outlined in the Big Book has been saving my life, one day at a time, since I first entered the rooms with a desire to stop using in August 2005. I am privileged to be able to hear the message of recovery at AA meetings, from AA speakers and in AA literature.

I am convinced, however, that my “bottom” would have had to have been much lower than it already was in order for me to enter the rooms of AA. Because alcohol abuse is not a huge part of my story, it would have been difficult for me to walk into an AA meeting after deciding to stop using crystal meth. I don't think I would have heard the message of recovery in an AA meeting early on—mostly because it would have never entered my mostly fried brain to go to an AA meeting. I didn't believe that I had a problem with alcohol. After all, I didn't enter the rooms of CMA to stop drinking; I walked through the doors because I was sick of using crystal meth.

I'd heard about CMA while I was using and had even attended a meeting prior to August 2005. After that first meeting, I said to myself, *That was interesting*; decided I wasn't an addict; and went home to get as high as possible. I didn't reach my emotional and spiritual bottom until several months after that first meeting. I have a vivid recollection of looking at myself in a mirror while thinking, *You are done. You can't live this way. This stops today, here and now.*

Even after that decision to stop, I didn't start going to CMA right away. I thought I would quit meth on my own. I wasn't comfortable accepting the idea of needing a Twelve Step program, and I was afraid of whom I might see in the rooms. Eventually it became clear that trying to fill my days and nights with frenetic activity to distract myself from using wasn't working. Talk about restless, irritable and discontented. So I visited CMA a second time. I was terrified at first, but so many people reached out to me at those early meetings I just kept coming back. One man in particular held my hand through many of my early meetings, and I am eternally grateful to him.

Now I understand that *addiction* and *alcoholism* are two words for the same disease, but that wasn't

the case in the beginning. I needed CMA to have a place to hear stories like my own. It's clear now there are people in AA with similar experiences, but then I would never have believed it. I needed to be in a place in which I felt safe to share about the shameful things I did while using meth and the places meth took me and know that the listeners would understand. Specifically I needed a place in which I could share how closely sex and meth were intertwined for me. I wasn't proud of that link and thought the people in AA might ask me to leave if I shared about it. Even before entering

the rooms, I felt confident the people in CMA would understand. I had enough experience with meth users to know my behavior was not unique. Several of my former jogging buddies had started their own journeys of recovery in CMA, and they had told me they felt welcomed, safe and understood.

Over time I slowly began to hear the message of total

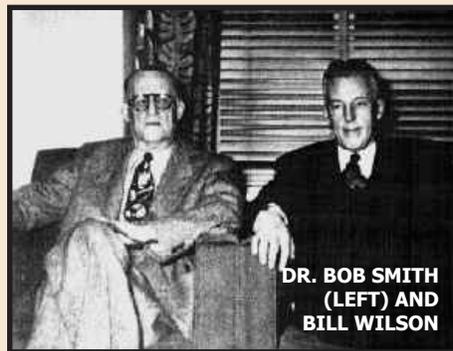
abstinence in CMA sessions and, probably even more slowly, I starting weaning myself off other mind-altering substances. Heck, initially I drank more when I stopped using crystal. I was furious the morning I walked into a meeting and announced that I had thrown out a bag of marijuana I had purchased specifically as consolation prize for no longer using meth. A week or so later, I disposed of my glass pipe and torch. I finally got rid of all those itty-bitty bottles I'd held on to over the years.

Getting rid of the poppers was the hardest, and I pity my poor sponsor, who gently continued to remind me that they were mind-altering, too. After about 90 days off meth (and for the first 90 days I *only* counted time off meth), I finally stopped poppers and reset my day count back to 1.

Over time I've come to realize I'm also an alcoholic, even though I have never consumed that drug in significant amounts. Today I'm grateful for Bill W., Dr. Bob and the men and women who helped to create our program of recovery.

If it's possible, I'm even more grateful that a group of meth addicts decided it was important to create a safe place for other addicts to get well and learn to work the Twelve Steps. Their efforts probably saved me a great deal of additional anguish and, possibly, my life. **GREG P.**

The author recently celebrated one year of continuous sobriety.



DR. BOB SMITH (LEFT) AND BILL WILSON

I UNDERSTAND THAT ADDICTION AND ALCOHOLISM ARE TWO WORDS FOR THE SAME DISEASE.

MORAL from Page 1

represent the heart of our recovery program—challenge us to undergo a complete moral overhaul that sets our lives moving in a new, ethical direction.

Addiction may be a moral issue, after all, but it's not because what we did as addicts was illegal or wrong according to somebody's book of rules.

I don't need someone on the outside to tell me what is right or wrong: I have an innate sense that whatever causes unnecessary suffering and harm is to be avoided and that whatever brings happiness and peace is to be cultivated. My conscience tells me what is right and wrong, and it does not depend on any definitions that are written somewhere. Instead, I see the effects of my actions, and I feel an instinctive revulsion toward that which creates more suffering.

The problem is that I'm not always in touch with my own conscience, and this was especially true when I was an active addict. The "still, small voice" that represents my conscience was drowned out by the shouts of other voices clamoring to be heard: anger and resentment, jealousy, fear, lust, greed and so on. With no access to my conscience and living in self-centered squalor, I resorted to increasingly twisted storylines of rationalization and self-justification to explain to myself my own behavior, and to avoid looking honestly at the real moral implications of my manner of living.

Step Four marked the beginning of a process of reopening the line of communication with my own conscience. This is an open-ended process, I'm finding, that stretches across the next several Steps and into the rest of my life. Through mak-

ing "a searching and fearless" moral inventory of myself, I can identify some of the specific ways in which I have jammed that communication through indulging my character defects.

I then develop a willingness and desire to change, and take action to let go of those defects. I look at the ways I harmed others when I was living in self-centered squalor and begin to mend the damage wherever possible.

Finally I carry this newfound sense of introspection and moral honesty into my daily life, allowing me to reevaluate and realign my entire manner of living.

THE PROBLEM IS THAT I'M NOT ALWAYS IN TOUCH WITH MY OWN CONSCIENCE, AND THIS WAS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN I WAS AN ACTIVE ADDICT.

With a drug like crystal meth, there are also hidden moral dimensions to the experience of addiction: the fact that each purchase supports organized crime and perhaps (some say) even terrorism; the drug's toxic manufacturing process and its disastrous effects on the environment and living beings; and the spread of infectious diseases that prey on meth addicts as a vector.

These are "outside" issues on which CMA as a whole does not take a position, but as an individual in recovery, I have the opportunity to reflect on the broad

moral implications of my personal addiction and to see the far-reaching impact of the choices I make.

For me, that's really what "morality" comes down to: seeing the choices I make and making better ones when necessary. Every time I indulge in a thought of jealousy or resentment, every time I tell a lie or put others down, every time I take something that wasn't offered or manipulate others to satisfy my sexual or material desires, I bring a little more unhappiness and suffering into the world. And every time I do the opposite, I relieve that suffering a little bit. I don't need holy books or stone tablets to tell me which of those is right and which is wrong. I know. And the choice is always mine. From this perspective, not only is addiction a moral issue—everything is a moral issue. **DENNIS H.**

HONESTY from Page 1

I immediately connected with others who shared honestly—no matter what it was—admiring and loving them all the more for it. Somehow I got it, that through sharing and listening, there was healing. I realized with growing clarity that, although incidents (that I could recall) of direct dishonesty seemed few, the life I had been living while using and even before had lacked authenticity.

Newly sober, I found a terrific addiction-savvy therapist. Boy, what a difference! For years I had gone to very able therapists—before and during my using—managing only to gain awareness of my sundry problems. Now sober and increasingly honest, my attitudes and behavior were actually changing. This has been revolutionary. My therapist taught me to become "authentic" by listening to the feelings in my gut rather than the thoughts in my head, as I searched for the New Me and whatever the hell I stood for in this new place.

I learned that honesty is all over The Steps and at the root of it all. I learned that if I were honest, open-minded and willing, I would be humble. If I were humble, I would know gratitude. I would be teachable and could get better. I learned to apply this to my life in general. The first step in addressing any issue I may face is to get honest about it. I learned that being honest doesn't mean I have

to be an open book. I don't have to give all the details. My sponsor taught me early on that I never have to explain myself to anyone. I especially don't have to make people who are not in recovery understand what addiction is or why I am an addict. (Usually they won't understand anyway, so why bother?)

I LEARNED THAT BEING HONEST DOESN'T MEAN I HAVE TO BE AN OPEN BOOK.

In time, I learned that one of the big ways I become inauthentic is by playing roles, usually the role of "good boy" (read: good son/sponsee/therapy client, etc.). Knowing this has enabled me to let go of the need to please my sponsor. The result is that I call him more often, we now get together regularly, we are closer. I feel more connected and supported.

Today as I come up on four years sober it's still hard for me to share in meetings. I worry about what others will think of me. Sometimes I still don't know what exactly I'm feeling. I still flip into roles and sometimes explain too much. But now that I'm living a significantly more honest life, I'm more authentic and have integrity. And I'm equipped to get even better. **Mark S.**

MEETINGS

SUNDAY

- 9:15 AM **Sunday Solutions**(c) Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 6:00 PM **Step Meeting** (o)[†] Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 7:30 PM **Beginner's Basics** (c) Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 9:15 PM **Sober By Thirty** (o)^{††} 46th Street Clubhouse

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**^{†††} Gay Men's Health Crisis
 8:00 PM **NA Book Study** (o) Realization Center

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

- 7:45AM **Good Morning, Higher Power** (c) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:30 PM **Tools for Beginners** (o) Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:30 PM **Solutions in Recovery** (c) Callen-Lorde Health Center
 7:00 PM **CMA Uptown** (o) William Ryan 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
 830 PM **Name to Be Determined** (c) St. Vincent's O'Toole Building

SATURDAY

- 5:00 PM **Promises** Manhattan Plaza Health Club
 9:15 AM **Saturday Solutions** (c) Lesbian & Gay Community Center
 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. ^{††} Meeting is geared toward young people seeking recovery. ^{†††} Meeting is conducted in Spanish ^{††††} Please try to arrive on time so as not to interrupt the silent-meditation portion of the 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.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

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Crystal Clear

Submissions and Comments: P.O. Box 1517, Old Chelsea Station, New York, N.Y. 10113; e-mail: info@nycma.org; fax: 212-777-4957; phone: 212-642-5029 **Crystal Meth Anonymous:** Crystal Meth Anonymous is a Twelve Step fellowship for those with a desire to stop using crystal meth. Crystal Clear, the newsletter of NYCMA, is published periodically. We reserve the right to refuse submissions and to edit for clarity and space and to avoid triggering the reader. No compensation will be paid for any submissions. According to our Tenth Tradition, CMA has no opinions on outside issues. Opinions expressed in articles are solely those of the writers and do not speak for CMA as a whole. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of CMA have been adapted with permission from AA World Services Inc. CMA is not affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous.

HOW DOES SPONSORSHIP WORK? CMA, like other Twelve Step programs, is based on the value of people with a common problem helping each other. Our sponsors helped us to trust and be trusted, perhaps for the first time. Many of us wrestled alone with our problems for so long that we had a tendency to isolate even after coming into recovery. With our sponsors, we started to see that we were no longer alone and never had to be again. We began to believe that we could do together what we could not do by ourselves. Our sponsors were our hotlines. We called them when something triggered us to think about using or brought up unpleasant memories that used to send us to dealers, bars, or the Internet. Our sponsors provided comfort, identified with our feelings, and gave us hope that, in spite of how we felt, we did not have to use.

Our sponsors acted as sounding boards when we had to make decisions. We found it a good idea to discuss major decisions with our sponsors—not so they could make the choice for us but so they could share their own similar experiences with us. Sponsors unfamiliar with a particular dilemma often directed us to someone else in the fellowship who might understand our situation better. Often, our sponsors made suggestions based on their own experience or gave us advice. It was our choice to decide what to do. There are no “musts” in CMA, but we tried to be willing to accept the help being offered. Sponsors help not only when times are confusing or tough but also when things are going well. Success and hope are also shared with a sponsor. Simply by sharing, we experience unconditional love, selflessness, patience, tolerance, honesty, and trust in these crucial relationships.

—Excerpted from the NYCMA pamphlet titled “What Is a Sponsor?”



DIRECTIONS

- **46thStreet Clubouse** 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 97 Street, between Columbus and Amsterdam