

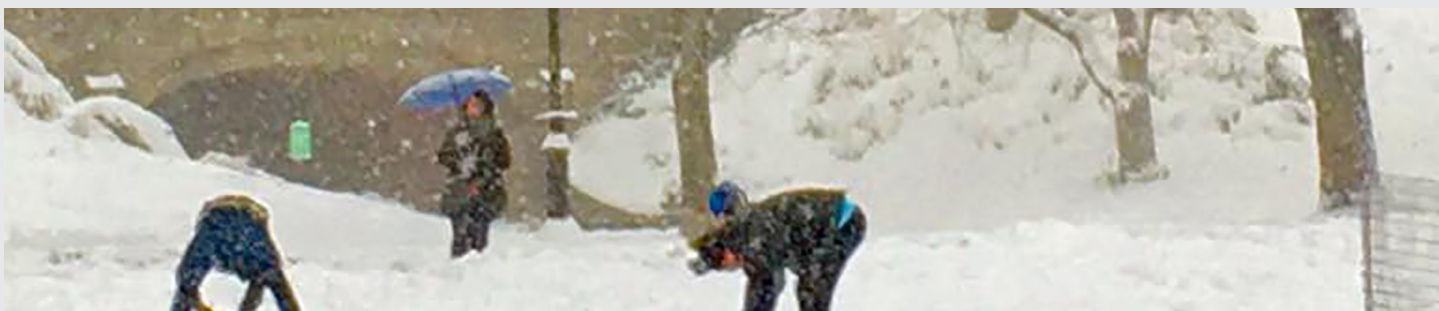
Crystal Clear

NYCMA
NEW YORK CRYSTAL METH
ANONYMOUS INTERGROUP

HOLIDAY 2017

The *Holiday* Issue





Advice for Long Weekends and Holidays

This has been the first November that I have been sober in too many years to count. The holiday season has always been a major trigger for me. Tools that I have found tremendously helpful:

1. to avoid isolation, and reach out to trusted support network when really vulnerable;
2. radical opposite action, and
3. to recall the horrible experiences of my using days.

- Arthur M.

July 5. December 26. January 1. There's a reason a lot of us celebrate anniversaries on these days—the holidays suck!

It's not just that people all around us are drinking and carrying on, or that extra days off throw our schedules out of whack; the holidays bring out a flood of memories and associations that trigger uncomfortable emotions. Thanksgiving and Christmas for me almost always mean flights down to Tennessee, where my parents live. The incantations of the holidays—the songs of expectations that these fraught days dash year after year—are like a bitter magic that reopens old family wounds.

How the hell do we survive this season without relapsing? My sponsors told me a few things at the beginning that still work for me today:

1. At family feasts and office parties, it's my job to take care of myself. I keep a soda or iced tea or seltzer in my hand at all times—that way, when cousin Maury offers me a glass of wine, I can just say, "Thanks, I'm good."
2. I take my recovery wherever I go. My sponsors used to ask me what meetings I was going to while I was at home, and I'd tell them specifically. This kept me accountable—they always wanted to know how the groups were different in the South (a lot more Jesus, but it doesn't bother me). If I was home for a long weekend, I'd build at least one meeting into my schedule. My family knew from the start that I was in the program, so I'd tell them where I was going. But if you haven't told anyone about your addiction,

that's fine—a white lie about shopping or going to the Y won't hurt anyone.

3. Wherever I go, I can always leave. I go to plenty of work-related functions where everyone gets bombed. I just never stay more than an hour. The same goes for family stuff—trains and buses go both ways. If things get really tough, I can come back home to my support system and normal routine. And if a physical escape is impractical, I always have the phone. Seriously—call your sponsor over the holidays! He's probably going through his own family bullshit and could use a break.

Over the years, of course, the holidays stopped being so hard. Now I look forward to them as a chance to reconnect and do service to my folks, who are getting older. The family juju is still at work, but it doesn't freak me out like it did in my first few years. It turns out that I have cousins down the road in Chattanooga who are sober (and in New Jersey and Massachusetts). Family gatherings for us are not terrifying at all, but an opportunity to compare sober notes.

The holidays are difficult, no questions. But they don't have to suck, as long as I take care of myself.

-Mark L.

My first sober holiday was Thanksgiving. Although I was unable to travel home to be with my family, I had a new CMA family which meant that I didn't have to spend this holiday alone. Having celebrated 90 days the previous Sunday, I was in that pink cloud of being off crystal for longer than I had been since I started using.

I invited a handful of sober friends over for dinner and planned a big meal. We cooked all morning, ate all day, and walked along Lake Michigan in the evening before our second round of dessert. It felt great to be sober for the first time ever on Thanksgiving. And then it happened. My best friend in the program – who took me to my first meeting – was in relapse mode, as if a switch had turned. I talked him out of going online – even deleted his account for him – and dropped him off at home thinking I had saved him from relapse. He assured me that he was okay. My pink cloud was momentarily

shattered when he stopped answering my text messages and phone calls. I was triggered and went to bed shaking that night, holding on to my pillow tightly as if it were a metaphor for my sobriety. Witnessing the relapse of the man who led me to the rooms was heavy. I knew what he was doing. I could feel the pull of “going back out”.

The next morning, there was still no reply. I felt awful – triggered, sad and mad at the same time. I called my sponsor, but he was out of town and didn’t answer my call. Then I called my friend Joey. He had a little time under his belt, was a sweetheart, and I looked up to him. I told him the story, and that I was triggered and freaked out. He asked, “How much time do you have?” I said “95 days,” and he replied, “Oh yeah. You are EXACTLY where you need to be right now. It’s okay. You did the right thing by calling. Keep up the good work.”

It is astonishing how little it took to provide relief! Honestly, my craving vanished right then and there. I was able to more easily navigate the rest of the holiday weekend. I’ll never forget Joey and actually have used his advice when others have called me. Stay connected. Reach out. Don’t pick up. Know yourself. Adjust your expectations. Be kind to yourself. Be compassionate. So many lessons learned in one short call!

-Jeff S.

What worked for me to keep from going out during long weekends was to take myself out of the city and go visit my mom in Boston, planning and paying for the trip well in advance. I also would take my bank and credit cards out of my wallet Fridays – putting them in a self-addressed envelope, and mail them to myself so I had no access to funds until they returned Tuesday evening. For the first year, I would turn my phone off and put it in the kitchen drawer so I wouldn’t get any late night invites. Most importantly, I’d go to morning, noon and evening CMA meetings... non-negotiable! I just celebrated six years.

-Russ H.

I am not a big fan of this time of year. I have had

several relapses around this season. Plus, holidays became a lot less meaningful to me after the deaths of my parents. It became hard to feel joyful without having the two people I loved most around anymore. In the past, I let myself get lost in that painful ache of emptiness. I would get high to numb that feeling and escape what I perceived to be the bleakness of my reality.

This year, I plan on doing things differently. I do not want to get caught recreating the trauma and reliving mistakes of holidays past. Thanksgiving was simple and relatively pleasant. I started the day with a meeting. Going to a meeting on important holidays is now an essential part of my recovery. This helps keep me grounded and centered and reminds me

that I’m not alone on this journey. Meetings keep me connected. Now when I attend meetings, I’m not just a lost girl filling a seat. I share and I listen. I feel hope after listening to the thoughts and feelings of my fellow addicts. And I think I might possibly offer some hope to fellows who are struggling.

I don’t know if holidays will ever be a pleasant time for me again. I don’t know what Christmas five years from now will look like. I do

know that this Christmas I plan on getting to a meeting. I want to go to a meeting. My life and recovery depend on it. I truly hope I will once again feel joy at this time of year. I long for that childlike feeling of anticipation that used to always accompany the holidays. I know that by staying clean, I’m working toward this. I have a chance at happiness again. All I can do is take one day at a time. Yes, some days are harder and longer than others, especially during this season. But I must allow myself to stand still and feel everything (the good, the bad, and the ugly) in order to move forward. And I’m okay with that – just for today!

-Erin B.

In the summer of 2013, I ran into some problems with my family, so I separated from them for a while. Things went okay until Christmas neared. About 2004, the family of a friend from CMA had sort of adopted me. Spending Easter or Thanksgiving with my adoptive family seemed fine but to spend Christmas with them seemed like an intrusion. My mother definitely would not have approved.

DECEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Christmas 2013 was a disaster. I escaped, thinking about being alone for the holiday. I wouldn't recommend this for anyone! The crash was unbearable. During Christmas 2014, I relapsed again. I thought, "Hell I can get through it! Soldier on!" I didn't have enough recovery in my life to keep myself safe. Again, the crash sucked big time and the amount of time recovering was way too long.

In the summer of 2015 I went into outpatient rehab. For Christmas that year, I put my recovery first, by going to Massachusetts to spend Christmas with my adoptive family, with whom I have been very open about my recovery. I was very grateful that they helped me out in my time of need.

A holiday geographic has been helpful! My friend and I were able to travel into Boston to attend CMA meetings. Being around people I love – and that love me– helped me keep my mood up and my feet on the ground. Remembering the crashes that happened for the Christmases of 2013 and 2014 was a helpful reminder for just how bad it gets.

Stay sober! You're worth it! Please remember this!

-Raymond B.

For the past two decades I have struggled to stay clean and sober. Nothing had ever worked for me. My weekends and holidays turned into a path of using every day. I couldn't get through life without being high and drunk. The pain was too much for me to handle.

A little over two years ago, I took charge of my life and sobered up. I have stayed sober for the first time in decades. I have found a path through life without the pain and turmoil that had plagued my heart and soul. Being of service every week has been part of my journey. For the past eight years I have been volunteering at a soup kitchen and food pantry two days a week.

For the first time in 13 years, I have started to work again. Working puts clothes on my back, pays my rent and keeps me fed. While my job feeds me, the volunteer work feeds my soul. This is how I stay sober through the weekends and holidays: being of service

and working.

-Jayson C.

One of the best tools I've used for long weekends or party weekends in early sobriety was to have a plan. I would make sure to have meetings lined up and make sober plans with fellows to learn how to have fun without drugs and alcohol and create sober reference. If I felt triggered I would call my sponsor or other sober fellows. I was always guided to pick up the phone. Sometimes if I felt particularly overwhelmed I would leave the city and go to my family or friends where I could stay safe and sober for sure. I also would do something nice for myself after the weekend was over like get a massage for being able to stay sober. These tools over time continued to help me stay sober and changed my perspective about what a long weekend or holiday weekend means to me. Now I look forward to long weekends because they symbolize relaxation and good sober fun with friends or family.

-Gina N.

When I walked into the rooms of CMA, I was broken. That was 6 months ago. Now, with 49 days, I am headed slowly back to life, with the help of the program and fellows.

Having said that, holidays and weekends are still a challenge! In early recovery, life can be confusing, emotional, and turbulent. I'm writing these words having spent my first sober Thanksgiving. I went to two AA meetings with some fellows. I called my sponsor. I had lots of turkey and pie.

That is just one of the holiday trifecta. I plan to attend marathon meetings for Christmas and New Year's, staying connected to recovery via IOP at the Center, and texting messages to fellows of CMA. In addition, I volunteer at a church soup kitchen in Greenpoint, and I started knitting again! For emotionally charged events like Christmas, I need to make a plan and stick to it and remain accountable. The program has taught me that an addict alone is in bad company, so I do service, go to fellowship, and help others to stay sober.

-Secor U.



The 12 Steps of CMA

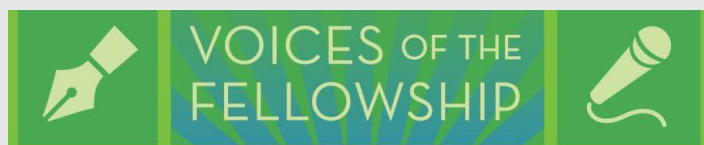
1	We admitted we were powerless over crystal meth, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2	Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3	Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.
4	Made a searching and fearless moral 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 the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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 the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



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CMA General Services (aka World) is looking for written and audio submissions of our stories or the website and upcoming CMA book. “Voices of the Fellowship”. Audio submissions should be 15-45 minutes long, recorded at a CMA meeting or a retreat/round-up. This is a useful tool to take meetings to jails/institutions or if you or someone can’t access a meeting they can listen to one of these qualifications, which are up on the world website now. More information and link on crystalmeth.org or see Robert R. or Wiafe M and link on NYCMA.org.

The **Don'ts** and **Dos** of CMA

 D O N ' T	 D O
Forget the last time you used.	Forgive myself for it. When I know better, I do better.
Try to do too much at one time.	Focus on the addiction that is going to kill me fast.
Overdo it with service.	Give myself time to just be.
Delay doing my Step work because I want to do it perfectly.	My Step work to the best of my ability.
Compare my clean time to theirs.	Be grateful that I am sober today.
Go to the room in search of a boyfriend.	Develop a support system of fellows and friends that I cherish.
Choose a sponsor that I really want to date (or use with). He could become my dealer one day.	Choose a sponsor who has what I want (sobriety), and wants the same for me.
Allow the personalities in the rooms to chase me away.	Learn to accept people where they are in their journey.
Expect to be spoken to and welcomed.	Introduce myself to others.
Wait to incorporate prayer and meditation in my daily practice.	Be still and know I am not alone.
Relapse. The first time is a gift.	Come back if I do!
Let an imperfect program stop me.	Stay sober...just for today.
Push myself to the point of exhaustion in my recovery.	Rest and allow myself time to heal.
Allow myself to isolate.	Know that it's okay to have downtime on my own.
Focus on perfection.	Focus on balance.
Participate in thirteenth-stepping.	Respect myself and others by honoring our Traditions.
Criticize the speaker, the chairs, the space, the lighting, the temperature, etc. Criticize the literature.	Read it with an eye for the message it provides.
Relapse (Did I mention that?) And if I do, don't use other members of the fellowship. It's not pretty.	Stay.
Allow anything to justify using.	Ask for help.
Just "try" to ask for help.	ASK FOR HELP! Know that this helps someone else stay sober too.
Try to save my face and my ass at the same time.	Let the rooms love me until I can love myself.
Forget where using takes me.	Be grateful that we don't have to die from this disease... one day at a time.
Concentrate on the problem.	Live in the solution.



The Best Advice I Received From My Sponsor

"I suggest putting men on the shelf until you work the tenth step," said my first sponsor when we started working together. Yikes! At that point, I hadn't lasted a couple weeks without sex, or the prospect of it, during my entire adult life. He would say, "Sex is not an emergency!" I vehemently disagreed, and found myself involved in romantic and sexual dramas within two months of starting recovery.

Now, two and a half years later and working with a new sponsor, I can see the dismal results of my unwillingness to listen to my first sponsor. I had worked a program, but my head was never free of the distraction of men long enough to genuinely focus on my sobriety and build a better life for myself.

My half-hearted efforts resulted in two drug relapses, countless emotional relapses, and numerous poor decisions. I was broke and living in an apartment furnished with only a desk, a piano, a card table, chairs, my bed, and my dog's bed.

Failure to keep romantic drama out of my life indisputably prevented me from making real progress in my recovery. In November 2017, I celebrated one year of sobriety for the second time. Suspending sex for a year (1) allowed me to separate drugs from sex and (2) provided mental clarity I needed to release repeated patterns of unhealthy relationships. Unconsciously, I had cast men in my life to play out dangerous behaviors and situations – learned in my childhood – that were comfortable for me.

I had also mistaken abuse from boyfriends for love, because the love my parents had shown me included physical and emotional harm. I had assumed that abuse was part of all relationships. Now I can distinguish the difference between hurt that results from our innocent differences, and that which results from abusive behaviors.

Many of us get sober from drugs only to be obstructed by codependent relationships, which can be just as lethal as drugs. A year without being impeded by men has given me clarity and allowed me to define healthier comfort zones; I owe much of this to my sponsor's guidance.

- Kevin L.

Somewhere in the realm of possibility, an addict appears on a television game show:

"I'll take TWELVE STEPPING for \$2000, Alex."

"The answer is, 'None. Nada. Zip."

Zilch. Fugggedaboutit!"

"What is, 'What's the best advice my sponsor ever gave me?'"

I avoid asking for and giving advice, though much of what we say to each other may come across as such. No one, including my sponsor, is here to tell me what actions to take. Conversely, it's not my place to tell me what actions to take. Conversely, it's not my place to tell anyone what to do with their lives. I ask my sponsor for guidance, support, patience and most importantly, his ear. He has my ear. We listen to each other. Agreeing to keep the focus on ourselves creates a mutually beneficial relationship. Conversations cover topics from the sacred to the silly. We easily make each other laugh. I heed his suggestions. Ninety meetings in as many days and a reset of my sobriety date regarding an issue about alcohol use.

Being of service (whenever possible), at least three meetings a week (following my 90 in 90) and step work are the signs I'm serious about recovery. One statement my sponsor makes resonates more than any other. It's after my last, last relapse. Upon my coming back he says, "I want a sponsee who's not going in and out." In the moment I agree to give it a go. Making a daily commitment to this task, I begin to reconnect to a sense of possibility. This is working for me. I'll keep it up. I notice two significant changes. I stick to my word, achieving integrity. My sobriety is intact nearly five years later. Changes in life necessitate we move on from one another. I continue to honor his request, steadfast and sober.

A day at a time, I'm out of **JEOPARDY!**

-David M.

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New York Crystal Meth Anonymous
P.O. Box 1517, Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10113

SUNDAY

11:15AM	Sunday Solutions	The LGBT Community Center	208 W 13th St, NYC
6:00PM	Step Meeting	The LGBT Community Center	208 W 13th St, NYC
6:30PM	Breaking Good	AIDS Project New Haven	1302 Chapel St, New Haven, CT
7:30PM	Beginner's Basics	The LGBT Community Center	208 W 13th St, NYC

MONDAY

7:45AM	Good Morning, Higher Power	GMHC	446 W33rd St, NYC
6:00PM	Relapse Prevention	The LGBT Community Center	208 W13th St, NYC
8:00PM	NA Book Study	Realization Center	25 E15th St, NYC

TUESDAY

7:45AM	Good Morning, Higher Power	GMHC	446 W33rd St, NYC
5:30PM	CMA Watertown	Watertown	1 Sterling Pl, Watertown, NY
6:45PM	Long Term Sobriety/ Advanced Beginners	The LGBT Community Center	208 W13th St, NYC
7:30PM	Beginners' Meeting	St. Veronica's Church	149 Christopher St, NYC

WEDNESDAY

7:45am	Good Morning, Higher Power	GMHC	446 W33rd St, NYC
6:30pm	Harlem Renaissance	Ephesus Church	101 W123rd St, NYC
6:45pm	Solutions in Recovery	The LGBT Community Center	208 W13th St, NYC
7:30pm	Another Day, Another Way	AIDS Project New Haven	1302 Chapel St, New Haven, CT
8:00pm	Conscious Contact	The LGBT Community Center	208 W13th St, NYC

THURSDAY

7:45am	Good Morning, Higher Power	GMHC	446 W33rd St, NYC
6:30pm	CMA Agnostics	GMHC	446 W33rd St, NYC
7:45pm	Book Study Meeting	The LGBT Community Center	208 W13th St, NYC
8:15pm	CMA en Español	Manhattan Plaza Health Club	482 W 43rd St, NYC

FRIDAY

7:45AM	Good Morning, Higher Power	GMHC	446 W33rd St, NYC
6:15PM	Living with HIV	John Lovejoy Elliot Center	441 W26th St, NYC
7:00PM	It Works!	Golden Hill Methodist Church Library	210 Elm St, Bridgeport, CT
7:30PM	Crystal Clear	The LGBT Community Center	208 W13th St, NYC
8:00PM	New Tooles	Church of the Holy Apostles	296 Ninth Ave, NYC

SATURDAY

11:15AM	Saturday Solutions	The LGBT Community Center	208 W13th St, NYC
5:00PM	The Promises	Manhattan Plaza Health Club	482 W 43rd St, NYC
8:00PM	Meditation	The LGBT Community Center	208 W13th St, NYC
9:00PM	Intimacy, Relationships, & Sex in Sobriety	The LGBT Community Center	208 W13th St, NYC

Need help or someone to talk to? **24 HOUR CMA HELPLINE 855-638-4373**