

believe in one or not—has an incredibly calming effect on us. Many of us pray in the morning, asking for help to stay sober another day, and at night, saying a simple thank-you when we make it to bed sober.

"Principles not personalities" People in the fellowship may sometimes let us down, but the principles of the 12 Steps never will. We never let someone else who is working our nerves keep us from seeking the recovery we deserve.

"Progress, not perfection" We try not to be so hard on ourselves. Even Bill W., AA's founder, had problems.

Shelf As in "Just put that on the shelf." We may feel we have other problems (cigarettes, debt, sexual compulsion, job problems, family issues) in addition to our addiction to crystal meth, but we postpone dealing with those other problems directly for a while, until we've begun to lead a life free from crystal meth addiction. The stress of dealing with other problems can make recovery from addiction more difficult. Just staying sober helps most of our problems start resolving themselves. Once we have some recovery under our belts, we take problems off the shelf to be addressed.

Smart feet Knowing when and where meetings are; having a usual routine; attending meetings even though we are busy, bored or don't want to be bothered, because we know its good for us. "Smart feet" is the impulse to get to a meeting whenever something happens that makes us want to use.

Spirituality Not to be confused with religion. CMA is a spiritual program of recovery, but the spiritual path in CMA is very personal and individual. In CMA, we find our own higher power and our own way of communicating with it. A lot of us find literature on this topic—from program literature to religious texts, like the Bible or Koran, to the writings of Carl Jung or William James—helpful.

Sponsors Another recovering addict, with a year or more of clean time, who mentors us in our recovery.

Steps There are 12 of them, and they work. The process of self-discovery they describe unfolds organically the longer you stay sober, but it's best to really work on them—with a sponsor. We work the steps in our own way, at our own pace. The only step we have to work perfectly is Step One.

"Stick with the winners" We try to hang out with

people who have good attitudes and some clean and sober time in the program.

Suggestions Most of us needed a lot of humility to come to our first CMA meeting. Admitting that we don't have the answers to our difficulties, as hard as it is, is the source of our serenity. People in CMA and other fellowships often offer us feedback. Whatever we may think of them and their "advice," we have to remember that they wouldn't be telling us something that didn't work for them.

Surrender Also "Surrender to win." This is the core of the program; it's really explored in Step Three. Surrender is not defeat, it's joining the winning side. Basically, we are willing to try some other way—ours wasn't getting us anywhere.

"Take what you can use and leave the rest"

If a suggestion or concept is confusing or seems contradictory, we set it aside until we are ready. We try not to complicate our programs unnecessarily.

Traditions There are 12 of these, too. The code of conduct for the organization, they are the principles that guide CMA meetings and the group as a whole.

Triggers People, places and things that remind us of using, and anything else—a fight, depression, being hungry, angry, lonely and/or tired—that upsets our equilibrium enough to make us want to use.

We are not professionals We are not doctors. Therefore, we seek professional help for physical or mental problems such as depression or mania, financial counseling or job training.

"We are only as sick as our secrets" Openness takes the toxic strength out of shame. If something is eating away at us, we share about it at meetings and with our sponsor.

Yets These are things we have yet to do but that, knowing the way our minds work, we might encounter on our next relapse—smoking, shooting up, heroin, crack, prostitution, jail, homelessness. Addiction is a progressive disease. If we go out, it will most likely be worse next time.

Zzzzzzzs Coming off crystal we were very, very sleepy. We weren't too hard on ourselves if we needed to lie down and take a nap. Everything in moderation, of course. Sleeping all the time can be a sign of depression.

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NEW YORK CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS

TOOLS OF RECOVERY

■ Tools of Recovery: A to Z

Here are some helpful suggestions—basic tools—to help you stay sober.

“A drug is only an arm’s length away” Slipping is easy: a moment’s inattention; wrong time, wrong place.

“A slip is the end of a process” Also “On the road to a slip, the first step is to get rid of your sponsor,” “A slip occurs before you pick up.”

Abstinence We can’t get high if we don’t pick up that first drug or drink. We’ve learned that using other drugs—alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, poppers—can lead us back to crystal meth or into other addictions. We believe in total abstinence. Using alcohol or drugs invariably triggers our addiction.

Acceptance “...Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change...” We can’t fix everything—certainly not our addiction. We just had to calm down and accept that. And remind ourselves with the Serenity Prayer as needed.

Act as if Also “Fake it till you make it.” Life is totally different when we’re first getting sober—full of crazy feelings and fears, excitement and gratitude. When we don’t know what to do in a certain situation or state of mind, we ask for a suggestion from our sponsor or another person in the program. We can’t “think” our way to right actions, but we can “act” our way to right thoughts. For example, most of us had to *act as if* there was a higher power for a long time when we first entered the program.

Action “...Courage to change the things I can.” Life is a program of action. Most of us started small with things like going to meetings or making our beds.

Big Book The Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, is the basic text of recovery. Most of us read it from time to time, some of us are in study groups where we use it to work the steps.

Bookending If we need to do something or go somewhere that may make us want to use—meeting an ex, the office holiday party, a first date—many of us check in with a program friend before we go and after we’re done.

Burning desires If a meeting is ending and we have not been called on, but think we might use if we don’t get a chance to share, we take the “burning desire”

when it is announced. If we are still not called on, we grab someone right away after the meeting to talk.

Chips When we were counting days, most of us raised our hands and shared our progress with the groups. Those plastic key chains we receive from various meetings as we reach new sober anniversaries are among our most valued possessions.

Choices A recovery bookstore. Choices carries basic recovery literature: *Alcoholics Anonymous* (The Big Book), *The 12 and 12*, *Living Sober*, *Came to Believe*, *Just for Today*, plus step workbooks, a full library of recovery-related literature, and chips, coins, cards and gifts: 220 East 78th Street (between 2nd and 3rd Avenues), 212-794-3858. Barnes & Noble (nationwide, and online) also carries various program literature in its Recovery section.

Coffee Between fellowship, meetings with friends and sponsors, and just generally showing up for life on time now that we’re sober, a lot of us drink more coffee than we used to. This can make us very anxious. Researchers suggest avoiding caffeine within five hours of bedtime if we have trouble sleeping.

Compare and despair We try not to compare our insides to someone else’s outsides.

“Easy does it” We tried not to take on too much in early sobriety.

Feelings are not facts Just because we feel that everyone hates us (or whatever) doesn’t mean they do.

Fellowship The meeting after the meeting. We go for hamburgers and coffee, discuss topics and feelings brought up by the meeting, and chit chat.

“First things first” We learned to prioritize.

“Give time time” Getting sober takes time, and we addicts tend to be impatient people.

“Go to any lengths” We did some sick stuff in our pursuit of drugs; we work just as hard to stay sober. If we used every day, we can go meetings every day.

Good Orderly Direction One popular conception of a higher power: doing the next right thing.

Group Of Drunks Another useful concept of a higher power (from AA): people helping each other get and stay sober.

“Half measures availed us nothing” We have to give sobriety our all or we won’t succeed.

H.A.L.T. Don’t get to Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired.

An afternoon spent struggling with cravings can be explained with these four words. We check in on our physical and emotional condition periodically. Hungry? Eat regular meals at regular mealtimes. Angry? Talk about it a lot with your sponsor and others. Lonely? Go to a meeting, call someone. Tired? Take a nap, go to sleep early, schedule less. (Gay version: HALTF—don’t get too hungry, angry, lonely, tired, *fabulous*.)

H.O.W. Honesty, Open-Mindedness, Willingness, the basic tenets behind Steps One, Two and Three. This is H.O.W. it works: We get honest, we open our minds, and we become willing to surrender and work a program.

Just for today We stay sober one day at a time.

“Keep it simple” Also “Keep it simple, stupid.”

We tried not to do anything too drastic while we were learning how to live sober, on the proven principle that anything we put in front of our sobriety would take us back out.

Keep right size When we are feeling really lousy—or really super—we try to keep our objectivity. Our low self-esteem and grandiosity led us into addiction in the first place.

“Keep the memory green” We must never forget that we are powerless over crystal and other drugs.

Literature CMA is still writing its own “Big Book.” But many of us found *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *The 12 and 12*, *Came to Believe*, *Living Sober*, *As Bill Sees It* and other AA, NA or CA literature valuable in helping us understand the program.

Make your bed This is just one example of how we take care of ourselves in small ways we couldn’t when we used—we deserve a nice clean bed at night.

Meditation We found this is not as mystical as it sounds: We just sit quietly somewhere for a few minutes and listen to our breath—in, out, in, out, in, out... Anxiety melts away, and our higher power comes in.

Meetings At meetings we share our successes and struggles, learn about the steps, explore our spirituality, make friends. We’ve seen how “meeting makers make it.”

90 in 90 People who “keep coming back” have a much better chance of recovering. We recommend 90 meetings in 90 days. Try out different meetings and fellowships.

No major changes (in the first year) This probably sounds impossible and even backwards—why did we get

sober, after all, if it wasn’t to change our lives? But the reasoning behind it is sound. During the first year, we tried not to plunge into new romances, change jobs or homes, or confront long-standing problems in our families. People said to us: Who you are will change. Who knows what you’ll want in a year?

“Nonalcoholic beer is for nonalcoholics” *Near-beer* actually contains a tiny amount of alcohol. We’re better off finding beverages that don’t remind us of alcohol.

One day at a time It’s too overwhelming to think we’ll never use again. We focus on doing whatever it takes to stay clean today. Worry about tomorrow when it comes.

Outside issues If we are depressed, we get help—therapy, antidepressants, economic assistance.

People, places and things We stay away from anything we identify that reminds us of using. People: Dealers, party/fuck buddies, friends we ran with, or others in our lives who throw off our equilibrium. Places: bars, clubs, baths, certain streets or corners, or other places we associate with coping or using. Things: stems, vials, lighters, cocktail glasses... There’s an AA saying, “If you hang out in the barbershop, eventually you’ll get a haircut.”

Phone numbers Telephone numbers are our lifeline. Members who have been around for a while are happy to share their experience, strength, hope—and time. If we want to call our dealer, we call someone from the program instead. For this reason, we always carry the numbers of friends in the program. Many of us make a habit of calling someone, our sponsor or a friend in the program daily. As for our own phone numbers, many of us changed them to avoid getting tempting calls from dealers and using friends.

Play the tape through to the end When a craving starts to overwhelm us, we remember one of our last runs all the way through to the end: from the first drink to the bumps in the bathroom and crazy sex, to desperation, paranoia, STDs, hospitals, lost jobs, evictions, busted relationships—whatever brought us into the rooms. After a while, by playing the tape the whole way through whenever we get a craving, we associate using less with the thrill of escape and more with the reality of our addiction and its consequences.

Prayer Reaching out to a higher power—whether we