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**The shelf** Sometimes we can put other problems on “the shelf.” Otherwise, we become overwhelmed. If possible, we postpone dealing with issues such as debt, job problems, and family issues until we get some clean time. Once we had some recovery under our belts, we were better equipped to face those other issues.

**Slogans** Many of us found comfort and wisdom in these words:

- Don't quit before the miracle
- Don't pick up, no matter what
- Easy does it
- First things first
- Give time time
- It works if you work it
- Keep coming back
- Keep it simple
- Live and let live
- Let go and let God
- Principles, not personalities
- Progress, not perfection
- We are only as sick as our secrets

**Smart feet** We let our feet take us to meetings whenever we needed one. If we aren't sure whether we want to go, our “smart feet” lead us to a meeting.

**Spirituality (not to be confused with religion)** CMA is a spiritual program of recovery, the path of which is personal. In CMA, we find our own Higher Power and individual way of communicating with it.

**Sponsors** A sponsor is another recovering addict, usually with a year or more of clean time, who guides us in our recovery.

**Suggestions** Suggestions from others who have successfully dealt with similar situations often make life easier. We don't have to reinvent the wheel every time we face a challenge. Admitting that we don't have the answers to our difficulties, as hard as it is, can be a great source of serenity.

**Surrender** Surrender is not defeat; it's joining the winning side. Many of us can't start to get better until we admit we have a problem that we can't solve on our own and that we need some help.

**The Twelve Steps** The Steps help many of us get past the desire to use. They get us beyond the surface traits of our addiction. As we work the Steps and get some time, many of us have the desire to use lifted. Most of us are guided by our sponsors through our Stepwork. We work the Steps in our own way, at our own pace.

**The Twelve Traditions** There are twelve of these, too. They are the principles that guide CMA groups and the fellowship as a whole. Many of us have found the Traditions useful in our individual recovery as well.



# Tools of Recovery

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**Tools of recovery** Here are some basic tools that help us stay sober...

**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. CMA is a program of total abstinence.

**Acceptance** "...Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change..." We can't change the fact that we are addicts, but we can change our lives. Acceptance of this can be a great relief and the beginning of the solution.

**Acting "as if"** We all have moments when we don't believe we will get better, don't feel like we belong, don't think we can stay sober for today, or don't think we have the courage to raise our hands to share. We act "as if" we do, and get through some difficult times.

**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" and ask for help. If we are still not called on, we grab someone right away after the meeting to talk.

**Counting days** Every day can be a challenge. Counting them acknowledges the achievement of keeping clean and helps us notice our progress, one day at a time

**Fellowship** The meeting after the meeting. We go for burgers and coffee, discuss topics and feelings brought up by the meeting, make new friends, and get phone numbers.

**A Higher Power** We need more than willpower. We need to ask for help from something Other than ourselves. We can define our Higher Power however we want to, but we have found that we need something greater than ourselves to recover.

**HOW** Honesty, Open-mindedness, and Willingness are the basic tenets behind the first three Steps.

**One, two, and three** We get honest about how we feel, what we've done, who we are, and what we want. We open our minds to new ideas and behaviors—refraining from knee-jerk reactions of cynicism and fear. We become willing to surrender, taking suggestions and accepting help from others.

**HALT** We don't let ourselves get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. Sometimes we just need to eat something, tell someone what we are angry about, pick up the phone, or take a nap.

**Literature** CMA doesn't have its own Big Book yet. Many of us find the literature of other Twelve Step fellowships useful: *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the Big Book), *Narcotics Anonymous* (the Basic Text), *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (the Twelve and Twelve), *Came to Believe*, and *Living Sober* are among the books we use.

**Make your bed** We make our bed every day. This reminds us to take care of ourselves, that we have a new way of life, and that we deserve a nice, clean place to sleep at night.

**Meditation** This is not as mystical as it might sound: We just sit quietly for a few minutes and listen to our breath—in, out, in, out, in, out... Anxiety melts away, and our Higher Power can come in. Some of us go to meditation meetings in CMA and other fellowships.

**Meetings** Meetings may be the most important tool of the program. At meetings we share our successes and struggles, learn about the Steps, explore our spirituality, and make friends.

**Ninety in ninety** People who "keep coming back" have a much better chance of recovering. Many of us take the suggestion of starting off with ninety meetings in ninety days. It sounds like a lot, but we take it one day at a time.

**Other fellowships** Many of us find that we can hear the message of recovery in other Twelve Step rooms, too.

**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. We worry about tomorrow when it comes.

**(Avoiding) people, places, and things**

We stay away from things that make us want to use. **People:** drug dealers, friends we used with, or people who upset us. **Places:** bars, clubs, baths, or certain streets or streetcorners. **Things:** drug paraphernalia or anything that reminds us of using.

**Phone numbers** Telephone numbers are often our lifelines. We ask for phone numbers and give ours out. If we want to call our dealer, we make a program call. If we feel lonely or restless, we make a program call. If we feel just fine, we still make program calls to stay in the habit of it. And we change our phone number if we are getting tempting calls from dealers or people who use.

**Playing 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. Remembering the desperation, paranoia, STDs, depression, and other negative consequences helps us to stay clean.

**Prayer** Reaching out to a Higher Power—whether we 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.

**Professionals** Outside issues need outside help. If we are depressed, sick, homeless, in debt, or unemployed, we seek outside help from professionals with expertise in our areas of need.

**Service** Helping others helps us take the focus off ourselves and makes us feel better. Service can take many forms including elected service positions, setting up chairs, cleaning up after a meeting, or introducing ourselves to a newcomer.