

EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH & HOPE

What is it about stories? About qualifications and shares? Why do we tell them? Storytelling has been with human beings probably longer than fire. It's the basis for all of the arts—from the earliest cave paintings to the latest installment of *The Hunger Games*—and the essence of all teaching. In stories we make sense of our experiences, distilling the meaning we need to carry ourselves into the next day.

From the first meetings of Bill W. and Dr. Bob, the founders of Twelve Step recovery, the particular value of stories to addicts has been obvious. We live with a supposedly incurable obsession; even as the damage to our minds, bodies, souls, careers, and families piles up, we cannot stop using. Yet hearing from another addict how he or she has stayed clean today—that simple prescription can arrest our disease.

Stories are not miraculous or magical. Hearing the stark experience of others shines a light into our own lives, showing us the depths of our denial. Learning about the strength of others—the courageous steps they took and continue taking to get and stay sober—provides us with the simple instruction book we need to do the same. And sharing in the hope of others...

We must never underestimate the power of hope. Hearing that recovery is possible, learning that it can be rewarding and joyous, and seeing the many dividends it pays gives us hope that we can have it, too.

Here then, are some stories—some experience, strength, and hope—from your fellows in Crystal Meth Anonymous.

The Twelve Steps of Crystal Meth Anonymous

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.

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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 a God as we understood Him.
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 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 a 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 alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

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WHERE DID THE CRAZY GO?

The Journey of a Twisted Queen

Was it Friday morning or Saturday afternoon? Had I taken my meds or skipped a day or two? Was my dog all right? These were the questions I asked myself as I peeled away from a drug-fueled thirty-six-hour orgy.

As I not-so-discreetly left the hotel room, I noticed that all eyes were on me. I quickened my pace to the busy streets of Times Square, desperate to hide, but the cameras in the street signs and traffic lights were honed in on me, watching every move I made. The intensity of the surveillance was unmistakable. Hoping to lose my tail, I dashed quickly left and right. I walked against traffic and travelled south instead of north, to my home. Next thing I knew, I was holed up at a sex club. They won't find me here, I thought. Or will they? I cowered in the corner and waited it out another twelve hours. No sex. No drugs. No sleep. No hope.

Welcome to my brand of crazy when I relapse on crystal methamphetamine. That latest twirl with Tina lasted close to six months: Six months of hell, living in the dark, looking over my shoulder, and covering my windows. Never sleeping more than twenty hours a week. I wanted to stop six months ago, but once the drug gets near me I'm off to the races. Whoever says addiction is merely a symptom of some deeper issue hasn't been in the grips of it. "Just stop," they say. I wish it were that easy.

Thirty-seven days later, the crazies have all but vanished except for a trace or two of paranoia, a bruised ego, and a

few lost pounds, which I'm gaining back rapidly. The intense paranoia that I was being followed brought me to my knees. Whether that fear was real or imagined, it saved me, carrying me to the steps of Crystal Meth Anonymous. The fellowship of CMA has given me hope, which inoculates me from going out again. Without it I'd still be out there destroying my mind, body, and soul.

I'm now taking steps to maintain my sobriety. The biggest one this time around is being honest and authentic with myself and those around me. I absolutely believe that without honesty, failure to maintain sobriety is not far off.

I voluntarily committed to attending two days of outpatient and three CMA meetings a week, and I joined an over-forty men's HIV-positive group where we support one another living with addiction, chronic illness, and depression. I even found a sponsor. I don't see the work as hard; I see it as life-giving and a gift.

Thirty-seven days clean! —Wayne K.

CMA HAS GIVEN ME HOPE

WHAT IF
I WANT TO WRITE
AN ARTICLE FOR
THE NEWSLETTER?

Contact a member of the
NYCMA Literature Committee.
You may also send an email to
newsletter@nycma.org.

NOT SO DIFFERENT

My friend Stephen took me to my first meeting on a cold Tuesday night. It was a decent-size room packed with other likeminded addicts! Being at that kind of meeting for the first time was unnerving and intimidating, though my dear friend was there for reinforcement and support. Throughout the meeting, people shared their concerns and problems. Some stories were very personal and heartfelt.

I even heard my own story in someone else's share: I thought I was going to take my problems and secrets to the grave and swore no one would know about any of it. Having a lot of shame about my addiction, I didn't think sharing about it with a bunch of strangers was going to help me solve my problems.

In fact, I wasn't convinced I was an addict at all. In my mind, an addict was someone who was homeless, jobless, and required public assistance. While I was very proud of myself for going to a meeting, I had many internal debates that week about whether this had been the right move. I discussed my decision to go to Crystal Meth Anonymous with a few friends, and even though they were very supportive, I didn't go to another meeting for a week.

I showed up again the following Tuesday. This time I went alone. It was very scary to be there by myself, and I felt extremely uncomfortable. I had ended up using the prior weekend, so when I showed up the second time I had only two days of continuous sobriety. No one knew who I was, and I didn't raise my hand and introduce myself—I didn't want to be noticed. Looking around this time, I noticed I was the only Asian. That seemed odd, and so

I convinced myself I didn't belong. Also, I couldn't understand some of the terminology people were using, words like *sponsorship*, *fellowship*, and *Step work*. I sat still on a corner of my chair and breathed slowly so I wouldn't draw any attention to myself. I made it through the meeting and rushed out of the room as soon as I could.

The third time I went—of course I came back!—someone sat next to me and introduced himself. He

**MY ETHNICITY
HAS NOTHING
TO DO WITH RECOVERY.
THE ONLY REQUIREMENT
IS A DESIRE TO STOP
USING DRUGS**

was the first person to do this and became my first sponsor. I grew to be friendly with a handful of people in my first 30 days. But I still kept a lot of things to myself—I was afraid to share, thinking others would judge me. A false sense of pride and ego prevented me from reaching out and asking for help. I learned later that sharing is the only way other people can get to know me.

My first 90 days of sobriety were the

most crucial period for me as a newcomer. Taking something as potent as crystal meth out of my life, I was left with a void. I needed to replace it with something even more powerful than the drug itself. I filled that void with spirituality by going to meetings.

I challenged myself to be mentally fit and restructured my life so I'd have more time for rest, meetings, and the gym. Everything was regimented—that was exactly what I needed. When I was in active drug use, I had no discipline and no boundaries. Introducing some structure into my routine helped me to focus on the things that mattered and kept my life simple.

Meeting with my sponsor weekly, I learned a lot of things about CMA. He started me reading *Alcoholics Anonymous*—the Big Book—and explained to me patiently how the program worked. He guided me through Step work the way that his sponsor had done with him. We spoke on the phone daily. My monkey mind was still all over the place: I was very impatient and very ignorant. My sponsor was able to calm me down, guiding me through some major decisions. He also shared with me why dating in early recovery was not recommended, saying it would distract me from my path of self-discovery.

I've learned that my experience isn't any different from my fellows'. I consider myself an addict. My ethnicity has nothing to do with recovery. The only requirement to show up at CMA is a desire to stop using drugs. I now chair meetings and take on other service positions. I sponsor other addicts and reach out to newcomers, because I want to help them stay clean and sober. —Bernard B.

WHAT IS CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS? Crystal Meth Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other, so they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from addiction to crystal meth. 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 lead a sober life and to carry the message of recovery to the crystal meth addict who still suffers. —from the CMA General Service pamphlet "What Is Crystal Meth Anonymous?"

COMING FULL CIRCLE

The Higher Power of my childhood was an ultimate authority figure, interpreted to me by my father and the minister of our church. They referred to Him as God, who was some sort of omnipotent person who dwelled in heaven somewhere up in the blue sky. He was said to be a God of love, but He also demanded strict obedience, so to the youthful me He was mostly a God of fear. This difficult, confusing God became entirely tiresome to me, and by the time I grew up I cast aside both Him and His church. I became my own Higher Power.

Throughout my adulthood, I resisted hard drugs, but eventually I succumbed to crystal meth. Speed immediately became my HP—notwithstanding my insistence that it wasn't. Eventually the drug became more demanding than alluring, and I hit bottom when it finally revealed its true nature to me. So my sobriety began when I fired crystal meth as my HP. A close, longtime friend, who'd been greatly concerned about my using, became my HP instead when she told me I had to stop isolating. I knew this meant I was going to go to a CMA meeting, and five days later I went to my first one.

The next day, I decided I'd done my duty by going. But then I got a call from my next HP. A fellow I'd met that night phoned to tell me to go to another meeting, and so I went to my second that day. My sponsor became my HP on the third day, along with what I was starting to allow myself to hear at CMA.

It took a while for me to trust the process, and to become willing to turn my will and life to the care of God as I understood Him (Step Three). Today my HP speaks to me through prayer and meditation (Step Eleven), my sponsor, my sponsees, people in recovery whose sobriety I admire, and qualifications and shares in meetings. Today I'm learning to trust my intuition—it comes from my HP, which also dwells within me. This is especially useful in working with my sponsees. Evidence has also become my HP: By this I mean that I'm able to see that the program works for other people as I witness their lives getting better.

One of the gifts of time is that, eventually, things start to come full circle. The religious, fear-based concept of the God of my childhood never worked for me. What does work for me is to study and practice the principles of a nonreligious, millenniums-old spiritual tradition. When I observe and practice the spiritual laws of the Universe, I'm able to live a richer and more purposeful life. This practice enhances and reinforces everything I've learned in CMA. It's simply saying and doing the same thing in a different way. When I reach the same result by doing two entirely different things, I know I'm on to something. I'm greatly comforted whenever the evidence corroborates with my experience, which then reinforces my belief.

So my Higher Power is very much a work in progress, ever evolving. Now I can even listen to the current minister of the church of my youth preach his sermon and realize that what he's saying is somewhat similar to the message of CMA. This kind of growth is good. My HP doesn't have to be some eternal Immutable Idea chiseled in stone. After all, what kind of HP would it really be, if I were able to define it in such an effortlessly limiting fashion? —Jim H.

UNDERSTANDING MY RECOVERY

When I first came into the rooms of recovery, fellows used lots of terms and concepts that left my head spinning. What is a Higher Power of my understanding? How do I achieve serenity? What is the difference between humility and humiliation? I was told not to worry about these things, that understanding would come with my growing sobriety. First I had to stop using and start listening to those who came before me.

As I started working my Steps with a sponsor, he realized I had a way with words, and he encouraged me to think about these different concepts—the spiritual principles that formed the foundation of my recovery—and write about them in a way that would apply to my new life in sobriety. So I humbly share with you, my fellows and friends, a few of my thoughts:

Faith is seeing light with my heart in taking the next right action, when all my eyes see is the darkness ahead. Courage is taking that next right action when every fiber of my being is screaming for me to turn around and run back. Humility is being grateful that I have the choice to move through fear by taking that next right action... all because I'm sober today.

What results after taking the next right action is inner peace or serenity. The ability to continually take the next right action and move through fear time after time is grace; being able to face life on life's terms is only possible with my Higher Power's help.

The Higher Power of my understanding only helps me when I help myself. I think of it like maintaining and riding a bicycle:

I have the spiritual tools that were laid at my feet, and I have the choice of how to use them. On a daily basis, I evaluate how well my program is working for me, and how well I am working my program. If something is out of whack, then I need to use the tools at my disposal to recalibrate my recovery, like tuning up that bike. My Higher Power only works in my life by helping me keep my balance while riding along my spiritual path, if I'm pedaling forward.

Though I'm sober, I know my addiction is a disease of my thinking, not of my using, and I'm constantly aware of my mental and emotional state. Whenever I have a resentment, I'm living inside someone else's head—I'm therefore out of my mind. Only when I surrender to my program and take my inventory does my Higher Power grant me the grace to move through any situation.

Some think that the Twelve Steps revolve around the self and that the program is inherently selfish. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Steps encourage self-care, being of service to myself, so that in turn, I can be of service to others. After all, we're not here to see through one another; we're here to see one another through.

Gratitude means I'm living in the present, not wallowing in the past or worrying about the future; it also means I know my Higher Power is taking care of me, because I'm working my program. And in quiet moments when I'm introspective and connecting to my Higher Power, I say a little prayer of my own creation that resonates with my own understanding:

"Show me the truth about myself, so I can be of service to others. Grant me the humility to live without prejudice. Help me to be willing to accept the results of my actions without expectation. Allow me to have the courage, patience, and faith to move forward along my spiritual path."
—David H.

**WE'RE NOT HERE TO SEE THROUGH
ONE ANOTHER; WE'RE HERE
TO SEE ONE ANOTHER
THROUGH**

HAPPY NEW

health insurance and not leave my parents in financial disarray when I died. It was a different time, the mid-nineties. People with AIDS were still dying in great numbers. The miraculous drug cocktails were not available yet.

But consider this: I never spent a day in the hospital because of HIV, but I was admitted twice for cocaine and meth psychosis. I never lost a pound to AIDS-related wasting, but I dropped thirty in the three years I did crystal. I've never had an opportunistic infection in 20 years of being HIV-positive, but during my drug years, I had countless STDs, shingles, strep throat infections, a debilitating kidney infection... It's possible that I would have killed myself that last winter if I hadn't had crystal, coke, and so on to medicate. On the other hand—and of course, I didn't know this at the time—alcohol and drugs were fueling most of my depression! And I'd only seroconverted in the first place because I was too drunk and stoned to take care of myself.

Before I stumbled into the rooms in the last year of my using, I relapsed all the time in that slip-and-slide way we often do before we get truly desperate. I was stuck in a cycle of self-sabotage: I hated myself every time I lost another weekend, and swore it off in the depths of my Tuesday-after despair. But then I felt like such a failure by the time Friday (or sometimes Thursday) rolled around, so lousy and lost and hopeless, I had to get high just to escape the feelings.

A few months later, when I was too bitter and paranoid to have much

From that seemingly endless, agonizing year on the binge-and-purge rollercoaster, my most painful memory is New Year's Eve, 1999. I felt especially miserable as the holiday approached. I couldn't quiet the noise in my head. I had a lot of false dreams about who I was supposed to have become by the year 2000, and none of them had come true. Not one.

I told myself it was all because I had HIV. The love of my life would never come back to me because I was polluted. I'd had to compromise my dreams and take a job I hated so I could get

Anyway, that night—the eve of the great Millennium, “Y2K”—my two best friends flew to New York from the West Coast to celebrate with me. I ditched both of them and hooked up with a hustler friend, passing the night away locked in a dirty room. Too sketched out to have the epic sex we'd planned, we yammered away in that pitiful way tweakers do past sunrise.

A few months later, when I was too bitter and paranoid to have much company,

I began to talk to my skeletal self in the mirror. It'd be 4 a.m., and I'd be all alone, smoking my pipe and endlessly, joylessly masturbating and saying to the mirror, “This wasn't supposed to happen to me...” I checked myself into a psych ward, and some days later, went off to rehab in Pennsylvania, where I began my long re-

lationship with folding chairs and church basements.

Why have I not relapsed since then? I really don't know what to say, except that today I don't pick up. I don't pick up no matter what happens, and no matter what I have to do. In the first few years, playing the tape through was the most valuable tool I had. I just couldn't return to the nightmare I'd left behind. My new sober life felt completely weird and in its own way scary, but even though I was

W Y E A R!!!

unsure, it was millions of miles better and more interesting than what I'd left behind. I believed people when they told me I didn't have to pick up today. I believed them when they told me relapse was not a requirement.

Roy Y., an early member of the fellowship in New York, used to say we are all, whether we're sober or actively using, on a relapse wheel. At any moment, he told us, we're either becoming more serene and spiritually fit, and moving further away from drugs; or we're getting more "restless, irritable, and

through the first snort of drugs or sip of alcohol all the way to the bitter lonely end in front of that mirror—I'll understand that I'm truly done with drugs.

So I don't pick up. It sounds deceptively naïve, a la Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No."

still do. I still pray every day—even though I'm an atheist; ask me about that if you're curious. I learned to do life someone else's way instead of my own.

As I got further away from the terror and isolation of that sad New Year's Eve, I transitioned from needing to stay sober to wanting to stay sober. I'd been a person who said "no" to every challenge; sober, I learned to say "yes," even to things that frightened me. I'd been a person fueled entirely by bitterness and anger; working the

Steps, I learned to stop being selfish and ungrateful and to take responsibility for myself. There was a time when I couldn't imagine doing any-

thing social without a drink, or having sex without coke or meth. Now I can't conceive of going through any experience, especially an intimate one, without being present and feeling comfortable in my own skin.

The year 2000 did turn out to be momentous. That's the year I first got sober and found all of you. Anyway, why get all excited or bothered about "Happy New Year"? I only get to say that once a year. I get to say "good morning"—I look forward to saying it—every day. —Mark L.

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discontent," and moving closer to drugs. I'll stay on this wheel my whole life—but when I'm rolling toward relapse, if I'm using the tools of recovery and living in the Steps, I can usually get myself back on track without too much drama.

It's often said that Step One is the only one you have to do perfectly, but I've come to see it the other way around: I'm always going to be imperfect, so I'll always need to keep doing Step One. Anyway, if I continue working this vital Step—playing the tape

But I work really hard to not pick up. I did 90 meetings in 90 days—I probably did daily meetings for two years. I believe the meeting is a sacred, almost magical place where miracles happen. That time is important and shared by all of us; that's why I get off my phone and give it my complete and undivided attention. When I had a few months sober, I began to do service: speaking, chairing meetings, and helping start new ones. I've worked with several sponsors and I'm getting to know a new one right now. I have had many sponsees, and I

WHAT COULD BE THE HARM?

I have nothing but gratitude for Crystal Meth Anonymous, because meth is the drug that brought me to my knees. I think the more severe and intense my addiction became, the more the “gift of desperation” revealed itself, and in turn, the more willing I became to do whatever it takes to recover.

I like to “let the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* do the talking,” as my sponsor says. This is the textbook that gives me clear-cut directions on how to recover. Everything else is only my opinion.

I was born in Connecticut as an only child to parents who were university librarians. Soon we moved to California and then Montana, where we stayed for the rest of my childhood and early adult years. Alcohol was always present and available in my family; it was a coping mechanism that worked well for us. My parents were from the Mad Men generation, so martinis every evening after 5 p.m. were the norm. Brunch included gin fizzes. Wine was always served with dinner. When they had a drink, I had a drink.

At about 14, I started raiding my parents’ liquor cabinet and drinking until I passed out. No one ever spoke about this, but it was clearly the “white elephant” in the living room. Around this time, my father went off the deep end and had a complete nervous breakdown after suffering from depression and mania. My way of coping with this was to drink to oblivion. At 15, I stole my dad’s MasterCard and ran away to New York. I stayed with my uncle and his family briefly and then returned home. My father declined rapidly and my parents divorced.

I was drinking every weekend and sometimes

in the morning before school. When I was 18, my father overdosed on prescription tranquilizers and died. It was ruled a suicide. I went off to college, moving back to New York to attend a private Catholic school. I dropped out after one semester but stayed in the city to pursue an acting and dancing career. My drinking progressed, and the career declined and faded. Soon I wasn’t able to hold down a regular job so I started to work as a stripper and escort and drank to escape.

Finally, after becoming intensely depressed, I found a therapist who suggested AA. At 24 years old, I went to my first meeting and stayed dry for seven years.

When I had about five years sober, I moved to Atlanta. Everything seemed fine. But then the insane idea came into my mind to try just one beer. What would be the harm in that?

I was quickly off to the races, and the rapid progression of my disease took me on a rollercoaster ride that almost killed me. I tried all the drugs I’d never tried before, including cocaine, crack, ecstasy, and pills, until I was introduced to what became my drug of choice, crystal meth.

My normal routine was to put chunks of time together and then go to a local bathhouse to search for crystal and have lots of anonymous sex. Finally,

in 2004, I tested positive for HIV. I went on using crystal, and soon I had a diagnosis of full-blown AIDS. Eventually I moved back to New York: In my mind, this is where recovery had started, and where I’d put together the most clean time.

After several more relapses, I met a sponsor who asked me if I’d ever gone through all Twelve Steps. I said no but that I was willing to try. Nothing else had worked, and I was desperate.

I have had a spiritual experience, an awakening, as a result. My health is now great, and I have a quality of life that’s immensely satisfying. It isn’t what happens to me that’s important, but how I choose to respond. Today I have tools I can use to help me recover from my “seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.”

This could not have happened by my own willpower. My experience is that only a Power Greater than myself could have done this. I continue to take the actions to maintain my recovery and leave the results up to a loving God of my own understanding. I cannot stay sober on what I did yesterday. I know from painful experience that I’ll never be cured. It really comes down to the question, “What am I doing to stay sober today?”

Today I wake up and ask for help to stay sober. My attitude is one of gratitude, and I work the Steps with my sponsor. I do service, am active in my home group, and reach out to newcomers. I strive to practice these principles in “all my affairs.” Progress not perfection is the theme I live by today. —In loving gratitude, Damian.

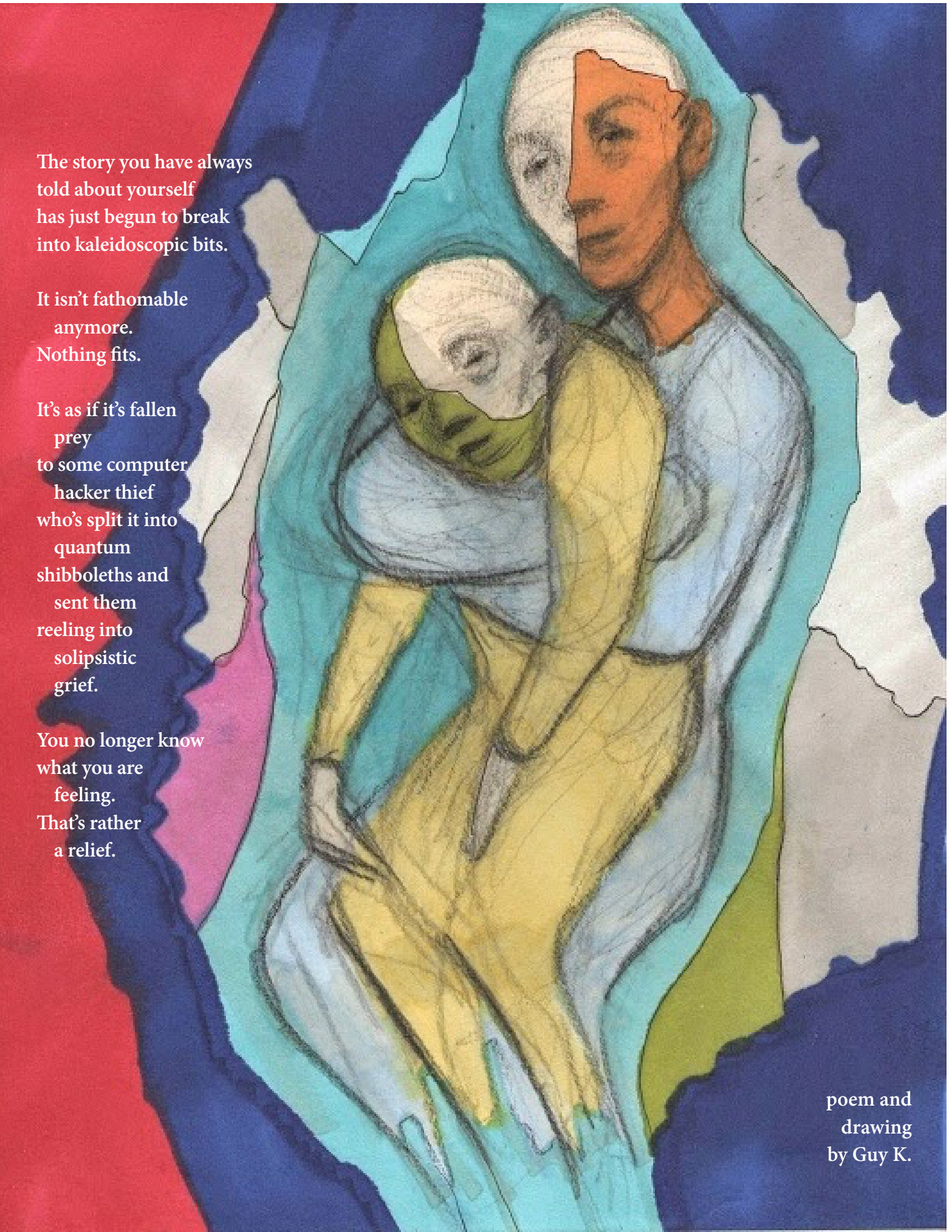
The insane idea came into my mind to try just one beer...

The story you have always
told about yourself
has just begun to break
into kaleidoscopic bits.

It isn't fathomable
anymore.
Nothing fits.

It's as if it's fallen
prey
to some computer
hacker thief
who's split it into
quantum
shibboleths and
sent them
reeling into
solipsistic
grief.

You no longer know
what you are
feeling.
That's rather
a relief.



poem and
drawing
by Guy K.

CHANGING DESTINY

I am a newcomer to Crystal Meth Anonymous, having entered the fellowship in February 2014. I came in at the request of a loved one who couldn't stand to see me hurting. At my first meeting I stared at the floor and didn't participate—my head was still affected by the drug, and I didn't know what good a meeting could bring me. A man approached me when it was over and gave me his number. He asked that I call him later. The clarity and warmth of his voice, of his way of talking, convinced me to call him that night. This man became my sponsor; so it turns out that meeting changed my life.

My experience had been one of deep sadness. I was never able to deal with my

emotions in an honest way. I was irrational, violent, and out-of-control—from a young age I felt that my life, that I myself, was unmanageable. By staying in contact with my sponsor, who'd suffered the pain of addiction and worked the Steps before me, I've come to know a calmness of mind that

I used to believe it was my destiny to fail

I now realize is exactly what my Higher Power wants for me.

I used to believe it was my destiny to fail at life. I thought that for the success of others to have some meaning, a set number of people had to fail. This was a lie I told myself to ease the sting of my addiction, which I couldn't get the upper hand on. By

showing up to CMA meetings one day at a time, I've realized that my so-called destiny is nothing that I can control or decide.

I pray daily for the knowledge of my Higher Power's will for me. Now I believe that I was meant to help others. When I was in active addiction, I spent

all of my time obsessing over my own issues, real and imagined. Because of the program, because I choose to stay sober, talk with my sponsor and fellows, participate at meetings, and work the Steps—all of this decided upon one day at a time—I am finally useful to others. And I have found that is what I wanted all along. —Jack W.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

The Literature Advisory Committee for Crystal Meth Anonymous General Services is seeking submissions for its second book! The new book is expected to focus on specific topics with respect to overcoming obstacles in recovery and living a sober life. The committee is particularly interested in hearing your story dealing with the following:

How to Say No the Right Way

Handling Personalities in the Rooms

Handling Death While Sober

Overall Well-Being (Mind, Body & Spirit)

Professional Boards and Licensing

Handling Prescription Drugs

Handling Drinking

Furthering Careers and Education

When Someone With Time Goes Out

Dealing With Failure in Sobriety

This list is not meant to be all-inclusive; if you want to submit a story relating your experience, strength and hope on a particular subject, please do! Only by sharing our collective experience can we help one another stay sober. Submit to: www.crystalmeth.org using the following menus: Fellowship > General Service Committee > Literature Subcommittee > Submit Your Story Online. Thanks—we hope to hear from you!

EAT THE F---ING CAKE

A play in one act by Abery K.

Fellow: Wanna share a slice of cake?

Abery: Have you seen my ass?!?!?!?

[Abery sighs. It's a long one.]

Michael B.: If the worst thing you do is eat cake, that beats the hell out of committing multiple felonies all night! Eat the f---ing cake!

[The room bursts into laughter. Abery eats the f---ing cake.]

The end

More Wise Words From Our Sponsors

People were so excited by the theme of our last newsletter, they kept sending us nuggets of advice from their sponsors. Enjoy!

The best thing my sponsor ever told me was, "It's not about you!" —Donald S.

This person, Vickie H., wasn't my sponsor but she should be someone's: "It's not about the situations life hands you, **it's how you choose to handle them.**" —Abery K.

The best suggestion my sponsor, John W., ever made to me was to **write a gratitude list every day.** Today's gratitude list: 10 things I am grateful to have heard from my sponsor.

1. You don't have to go to meetings. You get to go to meetings.
2. **Do you want to be right all the time or happy?**
3. There are only two things you can count on finding at a meeting: crazy people and coffee. And sometimes they forget to make the coffee.
4. You can find whatever it is you're looking for at a CMA meeting. If you're looking for reasons to use again, they are here. If you're looking to meet an asshole, they're here, too. But if you're looking for a solution, a message of hope, they are also here. You will find whatever it is you are looking for at a meeting.
5. If you don't have a standing resentment against someone in a meeting room, then you don't have a home group.
6. **Some people call sobriety a gift. It's not—gifts are free. Sobriety is a mortgage: You need to do some work—to make payments.** If you stop making payments, there will be a foreclosure.
7. All any one of us has is our day count. And our day count is always one—we take this program one day at a time. The person in the room who has the most sobriety is whichever one of us woke up first that day.
8. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous is not a book of rules and regulations; it's a book of suggestions.
9. Progress not perfection...Easy does it...One day at a time.
10. Oh yeah, and: How's that working out for ya? —Ward C.

My sponsor has told me many great things—if I say one, I'll remember another. But one great thing he told me was **"if it's hysterical, it's historical."** It's a great reminder that usually if something happens to upset me today, it probably reminds me of

something in my past, probably from when I was a child. When I remind myself of this, I remember that I am no longer a vulnerable child. **I'm a capable adult, and if I was able to survive whatever trauma I experienced as a kid,** I'll be able to survive it as an adult—especially as I continue to work on myself, accumulate more tools, and remember that ultimately I have always been taken care of. —Ari G.

The best thing my sponsor has told me is that **doing the right thing for the wrong reason doesn't make it any less of the right thing.** He said this in reference to my ritualized attendance at CMA meetings for the sole purpose of enjoying some eye candy across the room. I'd methodically get there early and sit far enough to not be seen but close enough to watch. Near the speaker, but with the best view of the back of this guy's neck. My infatuation kept me clean and sober because, well, no one wants to look like a high mess in front of their crush! It gave me the strength to go until I was strong enough to go on my own. My sponsor was totally right. I may have been coming back for the wrong reasons, but I was doing the right thing and coming back. **Spending so much time at those meetings, something was bound to get through.** And something did—a whole lot of somethings. To the point where I kept returning and didn't even notice when my eye candy stopped showing up. So I thank my sponsor for what some may call his less-than-moral encouragement. It got to me where I am, where I want to be. A better, stronger, sober me. —The Repeat Attender

My sponsor told me that he talks to himself all day long. It frequently starts in the morning before he's fully awake. What makes this bad is that the talk is all negative—fault-finding, angry, reproachful, and resentful. I identified with this entirely. He explained that this was the essential voice of the disease, the "ism." If it's left untreated, I am a danger to my self and to others. **The only way out, he explained, was application of the Steps in the moment I'm in, in the day I'm in.** The application starts with recognizing the disease, acknowledging how bad it is, and then inviting a Power Greater than me into my life to help me. —Rick S.

Easy does it, but do it! —Britt C.

MEETINGS THIS LIST IS UPDATED REGULARLY AT NYCMA.ORG

SUNDAY

- 11:15 AM **Sunday Solutions (c)** LGBT Center
 6:00 PM **Step Meeting† (o)** LGBT Center
 6:30 PM **Breaking Good (o)** AIDS Project New Haven, 1302 Chapel St.
 7:30 PM **Beginner's Basics (c)** LGBT Center

MONDAY

- 7:45 AM **Good Morning, Higher Power (c)** Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:00 PM **Relapse Prevention (o)** LGBT Center
 8:00 PM **NA Book Study (o)** Realization Center
 8:00 PM **59th Street Bridge Back to Life (c)** 34-20 32nd St, Apt 3J, Astoria

TUESDAY

- 7:45 AM **Good Morning, Higher Power (c)** Gay Men's Health Crisis
 7:30 PM **Beginners Meeting†† (o)** LGBT Center
 8:15 PM **Long-Term Sobriety (c)** Gay Men's Health Crisis

WEDNESDAY

- 7:45 AM **Good Morning, Higher Power (c)** Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:30 PM **Harlem Renaissance (c)** Ephesus Church, 101 W. 123rd St. at Lenox
 7:45 PM **Solutions in Recovery (c)** LGBT Center
 8:00 PM **Conscious Contact/11th Step (o)** LGBT Center

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
 7:00 PM **Brooklyn Bridge Back to Life (o)** Brooklyn Pride Center
 7:45 PM **It Works (o)** Golden Hill Methodist Church, 210 Elm St., Bridgeport, CT
 8:00 PM **Big Book Study (o)** LGBT Center

FRIDAY

- 7:45 AM **Good Morning, Higher Power (c)** Gay Men's Health Crisis
 6:15 PM **Living With HIV (c)** Hudson Guild Fulton Center
 7:30 PM **Crystal Clear†† (o)** LGBT Center
 8:30 PM **New Tooles (c)** Church of the Holy Apostles

SATURDAY

- 11:15 AM **Saturday Solutions††† (c)** LGBT Center
 5:00 PM **CMA Promises Meeting (o)** Manhattan Plaza Health Club
 8:00 PM **Meditation Meeting†††† (c)** LGBT Center
 9:30 PM **Intimacy, Relationships & Sex in Sobriety (c)** LGBT Center

MEETING DETAILS

(o) Open: Welcomes anyone interested in the CMA program. In addition to regular CMA members, this can include friends and family members seeking information for a loved one, or those curious about the program and not sure it is right for them.

(c) Closed: Welcomes anyone who has, or thinks he or she might have, a problem with crystal meth. †The last Sunday of every month is a Traditions meeting.

†† Meeting lasts 1½ hours. ††† Meeting lasts 1hr 15min. †††† Please try to arrive on time so as not to interrupt the silent-meditation portion of the meeting. The last Saturday of the month will be a guided meditation.

DIRECTIONS

- **Brooklyn Community Pride Center** 4 Metrotech Center, Willoughby St. between Duffield and Gold
- **Church of the Holy Apostles** 296 9th Ave. at 28th St., 2nd floor of Rectory
- **Gay Men's Health Crisis** 446 W. 33rd Street. Check at desk for room number.
- **The Hudson Guild Fulton Center** 119 9th Avenue, between 17th & 18th Streets. Check at desk for room number.
- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Community Services Center** 208 West 13th St., between 7th and 8th Aves. Check in lobby for room number.
- **Manhattan Plaza Health Club** 482 West 43rd Street, Conf. Room Minnesota 1
- **Realization Center** 25 East 15th Street, 7th Floor

HOW IS CMA DIFFERENT FROM OTHER TWELVE STEP PROGRAMS?

We have found that we relate best to other crystal meth addicts because they understand the darkness, paranoia, and compulsions of this particular addiction. The Twelve Steps of CMA were adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. We do not believe we are better or worse than those in other Twelve Step programs. At the same time, many of us fail to fully identify with "a falling-down drunk" or, in the case of a heroin addict, "a nodding-off junkie." The hyper-extended length and intensity of crystal meth's effects, be it compulsive cleaning or sexual activity, were unique. Many of us have attended other Twelve Step programs, but the feeling of identification in the rooms of CMA has helped us to keep coming back. After all, who but another meth addict understands the insanity that accompanies the high and, finally, that seemingly bottomless drop into depression that makes us desperate to use still more? —Excerpted from the CMA General Service pamphlet "What Is Crystal Meth Anonymous?" Copies may be downloaded free of charge at crystalmeth.org.



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