

SHE WAS WILLING TO CHANGE

I AM A CRYSTAL METH ADDICT. TODAY I AM IN RECOVERY FROM THE NEED to use crystal meth, and it is all a result of God and the Twelve Steps of CMA. I was the kind of addict who wanted to be a good person to everyone else but found myself “the victim of others” and how I felt their attitudes affected my life. I couldn’t understand why there was so much pain in life, but at the same time I couldn’t imagine life any other way. My addiction took me to places I never pictured I would go: homeless, powerless over my addiction and other people, and fighting with myself and others over my own behavior. Eventually, even my children were taken from me.

I tried to get sober through the authority of the court system. No go. I tried to earn God’s love by attending local religious groups and even becoming baptized. Nope, still high. Then one day I woke up—or got up, since as a meth addict I did not spend much time sleeping—and prayed to God for help. But this time, I did not specify how I wanted him to help me. Just *please help me to get better*. It was after that that someone said, “I don’t know, maybe you could try AA.” I didn’t know where AA was, so I put little effort into it. I did, however, seek out somewhere I could go to stop the visions of self-inflicted violence in my head. I was so tired of hurting people that I wanted to die, but I didn’t want to leave my kids without a mom.

I truly believe that the morning I woke up and prayed, I was admitting powerlessness to God and knew my life was unmanageable. From that moment, God took care of me because I was willing and wanted to change. I did everything put before me that would lead me to a sober life. That was my first Step One, and the most important of the Steps I was to do for the rest of my life. And praying to God for help, for at least that moment, I was also willing to believe that he could restore me to sanity (Step Two).

I know that God guided me through events and to people in my life. I was led to a lot of places with a lot of really powerful information that would stay with me forever. I was in a detox center when a woman gave me my very first “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous. That was what stopped the violent images in my head. Plus, I really could relate to the illness described in that book. Then a group of people told me about a meeting, which gave me hope that there was somewhere to go so you didn’t have to be alone and that others like me had been able to recover from using drugs and alcohol.

While I was in detox, I was introduced to the idea of treatment centers. Having little experience, I made an appointment with the one with the most brutal reputation I could find—the kind that would tear you down and then build you back up. I had found willingness and was trying to do what I thought God wanted me to do. I still had a court date where the potential was there for me to go to the local jail. So, not knowing it was like a Step Three, I prayed to God again and said, “God, if I need to go to jail, I am okay with that. But, if I go to jail, I will miss my interview with the brutal treatment center and have to find another way. If I do not go to jail, I will go to the brutal treatment center.” This was how I became ready and willing to start a spiritual life. Whether or not I went to jail or treatment is less important than that I became willing to do whatever it took to get sober and find a better way of living life. God led me to AA and about a week or two later to CMA.

As far as officially doing the Steps, I did get a sponsor and do the First, Second, and Third Steps. Step One was a written reflection of what happened, how I was powerless, how my life was unmanageable, and finally

what had brought me to the place where I was willing to get sober. When a sponsor asked me to do Step Two, I was unable to think God would restore me to sanity. I didn't think I was *worth* being restored to sanity! My sponsor continued to tell me to pray about it—not whether or not I was worth being restored to sanity, but whether God could restore me. While I was praying about it one day, I realized that I had not used crystal meth or any other drug for forty-five days. Before I found this fellowship, I could not get through one day without using. I was already being restored to some sort of sanity. In that moment, I felt so much spiritual relief that it gave me hope and strength to continue moving forward. And I continued to turn my will and my life over to the care of God to do what I thought was his will for me.

Now, about Step Four: I have heard much sentiment that this Step is so hard because you have to look at yourself. I'm not sure if it was because my sponsor was pretty mellow about it or maybe I was just ready, but this Step was awesome for me and not very difficult. I was instructed to make my list of resentments, as it says in the "Big Book," and go through the columns. Once I finished, and even before that, I was more than ready to see where I had been at fault. Whether I was at fault in my actions toward myself or my attitudes about other people, I could easily see where the harm in my relationships had come from. Yes, there were a few things that I had no control over, where someone had caused me pain. But remaining resentful about anything would have caused me more harm than good. I was ready and willing to let all of my resentments go.

After completing my Fourth Step, I discussed it with my sponsor for Step Five. I talked about my experiences and how my attitudes and behaviors affected me and the people around me throughout my life. I went home and followed the instructions for Step Six, came back the next day and did Step Seven with my sponsor. I don't know how well Step Seven works, but I pray for God to remove my shortcomings all of the time. I am not perfect today, but I get the privilege of knowing God is there to help me through the times when I need him most. When I make mistakes, I can see my error and, in that, I can make progress to correct it and know that I do not have to feel hate or resentment at myself or anyone else.

About Step Eight: Making the list was easy. Some of it came from my Fourth Step, where I had resented someone and realized I actually had harmed them more than they harmed me. Maybe there was someone I never resented, to whom I knew I owed amends, so I put them on the list. Became willing? I was willing to make amends before I ever started the Steps, so this part was not difficult. I had to find out how to make the amends and which ones might cause harm. With the help of my sponsor and God, I was able to make those decisions.

Step Nine was actively going out to those people and making those amends. I did this in all possible cases. And let me tell you, I am so thankful I had guidance. I was able to focus on my side of the street and seriously let go of any baggage that came from the wreckage of my past. This allowed me to move forward with my life in a much healthier way. I could stop myself from making poor choices or choices I would regret later. Not like using choices, because by this time the desire to use was gone, but choices about boundaries with people and what kinds of relationships I was able to carry on in my new life of recovery. I made amends to many people and my life continued to get better.

Step Ten is something I try to use every day. Some days, I need the guidance of the “Big Book” or my sponsor to see clearly. Other days, I just have an instinct that tells me I have some action to take, that maybe I did something I need to address with God or another human being. This is where I get to make sure I am making progress in my relationships with God, myself, and those around me. When I do Step Ten, I do my Step Eleven, too: I try to hang out with God to understand what I think he wants me to do each day and where I can be of service.

As a result of these Steps, I get to be sober, or recovered, or however one wants to put it. I get to be closer to God and happier with my life. I got my children back. I get to help other addicts and maybe help someone who was like me to become sober. I no longer have to be sad because of the pain I've caused others. Maybe I can give hope to someone who needs hope like I did. Today, my primary purpose is to stay sober and help others achieve sobriety.