

I NEEDED TO PUT DOWN METH, NOT ALCOHOL, SO I CAME TO CMA

FIRST LET ME SAY I LOVE ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. THE program of recovery outlined in the “Big Book” has been saving my life, one day at a time, since I first entered the rooms with a desire to stop using in August 2005. I am privileged to be able to hear the message of recovery at AA meetings, from AA speakers, and in AA literature.

I am convinced, however, that my bottom would have to have been much lower than it already was in order for me to enter the rooms of AA. Because alcohol abuse is not a huge part of my story, it would have been difficult for me to walk into an AA meeting after deciding to stop using crystal meth. I don't think I would have heard the message of recovery in an AA meeting early on—mostly because it would have never entered my fried brain to go to an AA meeting. I didn't believe that I had a problem with alcohol. After all, I didn't enter the rooms of CMA to stop drinking; I walked through the doors because I was sick of using crystal meth.

I'd heard about CMA while I was using and had even attended a meeting prior to August 2005. After that first meeting, I said to myself, *That was interesting*. I decided I wasn't an addict and went home to get as high as possible. I didn't reach my emotional and spiritual bottom until several months after that first meeting. I have a vivid recollection of looking at myself in a mirror and thinking, *You are done. You can't live this way. This stops today, here and now.*

Even after that decision to stop, I didn't start going to CMA right away. I thought I would quit meth on my own. I wasn't comfortable accepting the idea of needing a Twelve Step program, and I was afraid of whom I might see in the rooms. Eventually it became clear that trying to fill my days and nights with frenetic activity to distract myself from using wasn't working. Talk about restless, irritable, and discontented. So I visited CMA a second time. I was terrified at first, but so many people

reached out to me at those early meetings I just kept coming back. One man in particular held my hand through many of my early meetings, and I am eternally grateful to him.

Now I understand that *addiction* and *alcoholism* are two words for the same disease, but that wasn't the case in the beginning. I needed CMA to have a place to hear stories like my own. It's clear now there are people in AA with similar experiences, but back then I would never have believed it. I needed to be in a place where I felt safe to share about the shameful things I did while using meth and the places meth took me, and where I'd know that the listeners would understand. Specifically, I needed a place where I could share how closely sex and meth were intertwined for me. I wasn't proud of that link and thought the people in AA might ask me to leave if I talked about it. Even before entering the rooms, I felt confident the people in CMA would understand. I had enough experience with meth users to know my behavior was not unique. Several of my former jogging buddies had started their own journeys of recovery in CMA, and they had told me they felt welcomed, safe, and understood.

Over time I slowly began to hear the message of total abstinence in CMA sessions, and, probably even more slowly, I starting weaning myself off other mind-altering substances. Heck, initially I drank more when I stopped using crystal. I was furious the morning I walked into a meeting and announced that I had thrown out a bag of marijuana I had purchased specifically as a consolation prize for no longer using meth. A week or so later, I disposed of my glass pipe and torch. I finally got rid of all those itty-bitty bottles I'd held on to over the years. Getting rid of the poppers was the hardest, and I pity my poor sponsor, who gently continued to remind me that they were mind altering, too. After about ninety days off meth (and for the first ninety days I *only* counted time off meth), I finally stopped poppers and reset my day count back to one.

I've come to realize I am also an alcoholic, even though I have never consumed that drug in significant amounts. Today I'm grateful for Bill W., Dr. Bob, and the men and women who helped to create our program of recovery. If it's possible, I'm even more grateful that a group of meth addicts decided it was important to create a safe place for other addicts to get well and learn to work the Twelve Steps. Their efforts probably saved me a great deal of additional anguish and, possibly, my life. —Greg P.