

SERVICE + CMA = SOBER

I HAD HEARD IT SAID MANY TIMES IN CMA THAT “SERVICE keeps you sober.” And though there are many things I did to keep sober, for me service was definitely key. The very first bit of service I did was to stay after meetings and put away chairs. Then, when I was a bit more at ease, I’d come early to set them up. Putting away chairs helped by giving me busywork so I could avoid having to look anyone in the eye or mingling

with all the attractive male strangers. However, the more comfortable I became in the fellowship and in my own skin, the more I looked forward to coming early to set up. I was soon brave enough to volunteer to bring hospitality and be (gulp!) the spiritual timekeeper.

Then I moved on to the type of service known as a commitment. Even though I had previously shied away from the word *commitment* itself, and had it in my head at the time that doing such service meant I would be forced to stay sober (Heaven forbid!) for the entire six-month term, I said yes to the nomination and I said yes when elected. Well, guess what? I did stay sober, and I believe that my first service commitment, being secretary of the Friday night “Living With HIV” topic meeting, helped to keep me clean and reach my first year of continuous sobriety—one week at a time. As my sponsor and everybody else reminded me, it is only one day (sometimes, one hour or one minute!) at a time that I work to stay sober. But I had practiced enough rigorous honesty at that point to know that if I did relapse, I could not in good conscience try to fake people out and keep my service commitment. There were nights when, believing it was too late to make a call—by the way, it is never too late at night to call a fellow when you’re in need—the one thing I had to keep me from using was remembering that I had to show up for service later that week.

That led to other secretary and chair positions at other meetings. It got to the point where if I breathed in the general direction of a business meeting, I found myself getting elected to some service position or another. Treasurer, greeter, street monitor...inventory taker (kidding!). Surprisingly, I found I liked doing service; I felt connected to the fellowship, and more a “part of.” I found there were things I didn’t like about some service positions, and then I became invested in attending business meetings to try to effect changes where I thought they would be helpful. And then came the even bigger lesson for me: acceptance when my ideas were not voted in or made part of the meeting.

Last year I attended an NYCMA intergroup meeting for the first time, and without even understanding what the position was, I was elected public information officer, which I later learned was a one-year commitment! Gradually, service in CMA has taught me how to make longer commitments to people (whom I care for), places (that I care about), and things (that I believe in). Now I serve as public information

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chair for NYCMA and co-secretary of the public information committee for CMA World. I have two projects in which I am heavily involved on the World level. You might think this stuff would give me a big head, but I tell you, the greatest gifts I am learning from World service are humility in the face of the time and dedication that goes in to carrying the message effectively and gratitude for the sanity and bouts of serenity I have today that allow me to concentrate and perform the service I have enlisted to do. With over three years of sobriety now, my suggestions are: Get involved, start where you are comfortable, and recognize that service is anything that you give of yourself to help the fellowship as a whole, or just one other fellow. Yours in service, —*Billy U.*