

I AM POWERLESS

WHEN I CAME TO CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS, I ARRIVED at a place I needed badly. Crystal meth had devastated my life. It was most obvious in my appearance: I had lost about 20 pounds, transforming into a gaunt, stooped shell of the vigorous man I had been. I was sick. I had developed Crohn's disease, which had worsened because of neglect, and I was in constant pain. My career, once the greatest light in my life, was in tatters. Friends and family had slipped away, and my days and nights were a nightmarish whirlpool of Internet hookups and heavy drug use. Fun had disappeared; life had no meaning. I had come to anesthetize the pain of my illness and my life on crystal and other drugs. I was destined to die in this dark world, it seemed.

At CMA, I noticed a banner on which the Twelve Steps of recovery were printed. I had heard of these before. In fact, I had attended a few Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in 1994. (I didn't relate to the alcoholic condition, or maybe I just wasn't ready to sober up.) On this day, in late January 2004, I had been given the gift of desperation, and whatever force had motivated me to come to CMA also gave me the blessing of clarity as I realized that this might very well be my last best chance to end years of misery. Grandiosity, the monkey on my back, had prevented me from seeing the facts of my life clearly, but confronting my shortcomings was not the most immediate concern. First, I was faced with an even more challenging notion: that I was powerless over drugs and alcohol and that my life had become unmanageable.

The unmanageability was as clear to me as an unused crack pipe, but I wasn't sure whether I was truly powerless over crystal meth. Hadn't I been able to stay clean from crystal from Tuesday to Friday on a few occasions? Yes, I had eventually used again, but I was sure I could refrain if I really wanted. I was two weeks clean of crystal on the day I arrived at CMA. Here's what I decided I would do: I would follow the suggestions of

the fellowship to attend regular meetings and get a sponsor. But I would continue to drink and do drugs other than crystal until I got to the point where I lost interest in meth.

The more I heard you share your stories and solutions, your transformed lives, your messages of hope, your laughs and tears, the more I wanted to stay and enjoy you. I would later understand that the group had become my Higher Power and that it was helping me to stay away from crystal.

Even so, troubling things kept occurring. It seemed that every time I smoked pot, did poppers, drank alcohol, or logged on to “that” Web site in search of sex, I came into close proximity with crystal. Reluctantly I shared this with my sponsor, and he pointed out that CMA is a program of total abstinence and that crystal would continue to dog me as long as I maintained relationships with the people, places, and things that were part of my active drug life. One night—while drunk and online—I ran into a “friend.” He offered me crystal. As I dressed to go meet him, I had a spiritual breakthrough. An inner voice reminded me of the hell my life had been for the previous three years. Suddenly I felt uncomfortable, that I wasn’t being true to myself. Then I felt a nagging pain because I wasn’t being honest—I was deceiving my new friends. I shut down the computer, and the next day I told my sponsor I would be willing to try one day of complete sobriety. I reset my day count to Day 1.

That was February 18, 2004, and I have not had a mind- or mood-altering substance since. That night I learned what became for me the “ABCs” of sobriety: Alcohol Becomes Crystal. I cannot safely use any drugs or drink. Later I learned another ABC of the program, three pertinent ideas: “(a) That we were addicts and could not manage our own lives; (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our addiction; (c) That God could and would if He were sought” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 60).

Accepting these concepts has kept me sober. Crystal is a subtle, powerful, cunning foe, and I have been tested by it time and time again. I have come to accept that crystal will always be here. But I don’t have to use it nor despise or regret it. I have a weapon in CMA and this miraculous fellowship. I am grateful I am sober today. —*Jeff G.*