

Over-the-counter drugs

Over-the-counter drugs possess risks, especially if they are mind-altering substances. They can get us high—just as alcohol and other drugs can—becoming new problems with new consequences and unmanageability. Many of us talk to our sponsors honestly about any and all chemicals we take, just to be on the safe side.

Clean and Clear

In recovery, we practice a new way of life without drugs and alcohol. Today, many of us can't imagine any feelings—good or bad—from which we would have to escape by taking a drug. We can tolerate discomfort and see what new experiences might be on the other side of it.

In our active addiction, our lives revolved around drugs: looking for drugs, being high, coming down from using, “white knuckling” it to stay clean for short periods.... Everything took a back seat to drugs. Clean and sober, living a program of recovery, this is no longer the case. Remaining abstinent and working the Twelve Steps, we have a spiritual awakening—a change in our personalities. The obsession to use is lifted. We find a new freedom and a new happiness, a life beyond our wildest dreams. ■



Interim Approved Literature

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12.16.2010

WHAT ABOUT ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS?

ALCOHOL, RECREATIONAL DRUGS, PSYCHOPHARMACEUTICALS, PRESCRIBED MEDICATIONS AND OTC DRUGS
Crystal Meth Anonymous

The goal of Crystal Meth Anonymous is to help crystal meth addicts lead a life free of active addiction. CMA recommends total abstinence from all drugs, including alcohol, for the following reasons:

1. Many crystal meth relapses start with alcohol or another drug.
2. Addicts tend to use any substance addictively. When we do, we find ourselves with the same problems and maybe some new ones.
3. We have found our spiritual lives compromised if we use any mind-altering substances whatsoever. Abstinence works best if we want to live the richest and fullest of lives.

Alcohol

Many of us didn't come to CMA because we had a drinking problem. "Alcohol was never an issue for me," is commonly heard in meetings. But our experience has shown drinking alcohol can be a disaster.

We've seen it happen many times: ABC, or "alcohol becomes crystal." One drink easily leads to two or more, and once we are under the influence, we are much more likely to use. Inhibitions are down. Judgment is impaired. We may feel a little high, but not high enough. We might start off with one friendly drink at an office party and end up calling our old drug dealer that same night. Others experiment with "manageable" drinking, sticking to one or two drinks with seemingly no apparent consequences. But that can be a slippery slope. Once we are drinking, it's not such a big leap to start using crystal meth again. Stories of those who thought they could drink like "normal" people are common in our fellowship. But ultimately, our goal is to live free of active addiction, not to switch from one substance to another.

Being around alcohol

Since alcohol is legal and commonly accepted in many social settings, we may find ourselves in situations where coworkers, friends or family members pressure us to drink socially. Even if they know we are addicts, they may not understand why we choose not to have a glass of wine at dinner or a champagne toast at a wedding. At times, we may need to be in a setting where there is alcohol. When we go to parties and work or family functions where alcohol is served, we must be rigorously honest with ourselves about our motivations for being there, and about our ability to stay sober in a situation where others are drinking. If we feel tempted to drink or do drugs, we can call our sponsor or other fellows for help, and if necessary, leave the scene. When offered alcohol, we suggest that saying, "No, thank you. I don't drink" is more than sufficient as we do not owe an explanation to anyone. This simple statement will become easier in time as we get used to our new life in recovery.

Recreational Drugs

Recreational drug use can lead us back to our addiction just as alcohol can. Many of us returned to crystal meth—our drug of choice—when we used other recreational drugs. Just as alcohol can lead to a new addiction, so can any recreational drug. Substituting one drug for another generates new consequences and finds us new flavors of unmanageability. Is hitting a new bottom the life we want?

Prescribed Medications

We are not doctors. Prescriptions are sometimes necessary; being in recovery does not mean we compromise our health or suffer needless pain. As people in recovery, we are learning to take care of ourselves. However, we should be careful about using our health problems as a reason to compromise our new life. Certain prescribed medications that alter our mood can be a cause for concern. We tell

our doctors we are recovering addicts so they can be more careful about what they prescribe. Some doctors with good intentions may not be versed in addiction—the spiritual nature of our lives is not their area of expertise. Besides, some of us are good at manipulating our doctors: A doctor willing to write a prescription and an addict looking to get high is a bad combination.

The decision to take some medications that alter our mood is personal and individual. We suggest a spiritual solution first whenever possible. Taking a pill may rob us of the chance to learn and truly alleviate our discomfort. We talk to our doctors, sponsors, and trusted fellows, and try to do the right thing.

Psychopharmaceuticals

Rigorous honesty and respect for others is important in this area. We have known people who were bipolar, schizophrenic, or clinically depressed and could not stay sober—or function—without medically necessary drugs. Informed professional supervision is essential in this arena. Some of us were already on these medications when we came into CMA. We talked to our doctors, because stopping abruptly can be very dangerous.

In early recovery, we may experience many strong and unfamiliar feelings. Recovery is a new way of life—we often feel overwhelmed. When we are first getting clean, some of us experience drug-related depression and paranoia. Some of us suffer from withdrawal. These times are difficult, but they are not necessarily indicators of ongoing mental illness. Meetings, our sponsors, our fellows, prayer, meditation, and working the Twelve Steps get many of us through tough emotional times. We remember that we are not experts in the medical treatment of mental disorders.