

The Seven Tools of Compulsive Eaters Anonymous (CEA)-HOW

Have you ever worked with sponsees who were willing to do the food plan but resistant to doing the other tools of the CEA-HOW program? Maybe they were good at weighing and measuring their food but couldn't seem to make outreach calls, go to meetings, or do their reading and writing assignments? If yes, then your sponsees are on a diet and they have made you their diet buddy.

This is where you, as a CEA-HOW sponsor, must take the lead in the relationship. It's important that you let your sponsees know that CEA-HOW is not a diet club; it is a 12-step program that is unique in the recovery world because of its structured and disciplined approach.

Along with working the 12 steps, CEA-HOW members recover from compulsive eating by working The Seven Tools. The tools allow us to recover on all three levels—physical, emotional, and spiritual. The tools support the primary purpose of CEA-HOW, which is to abstain from compulsive eating and to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer. You can find the tools on page 22 of the *Forever Abstinent* gray booklet.

Sometimes the words *structure* and *discipline* can sound like punishments to some people, which may explain why some sponsees are resistant to the other tools. To help them reframe their concept of these words, you can let them know that, rather than look at structure and discipline as punishments, they can look at them as paths to freedom—when we are freed from compulsive eating by working the CEA-HOW program, our lives open up.

Explanations of The Seven Tools are listed below. Use these explanations to illustrate to your sponsees why it is important to work *all* of the CEA-HOW program, not just the food plan.

1. CEA-HOW Food Plan

Abstaining from compulsive eating using the CEA-HOW food plan or a medically edited food plan is the foundation stone of CEA-HOW recovery. Like they say in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), “you’ve got to put the plug in the jug.” Adhering to a weighed-and-measured food plan is how CEA-HOW members put the plug in the jug and learn to eat appropriate food in right-sized portions.

This tool is more than just a method to lose weight; it is an avenue to building rich, full lives. Agreeing to follow a food plan is also an important surrender that sets the tone for working Step 1 because it is a demonstration of admitting powerlessness over food and recognizing an unmanageable life.

2. Literature and Writing

It is important that your sponsees read CEA-HOW literature. The literature gives detailed information about our program. Often your sponsees can find answers to their questions simply by opening up a CEA-HOW pamphlet or book.

Explain to your sponsees that when it comes to writing, there is something almost magical that happens when an open mind and a willing heart connect to a hand that holds a pen, which is then applied to paper. Because writing brings clarity, often old walls of despair come tumbling down and new lives are built on new, firm foundations.

3. Anonymity

Simply put, anonymity is defined by this statement: “What you hear here, who you see here, when you leave here, let it stay here.” Practicing anonymity allows us to respect ourselves and others. It builds trust between members and maintains the integrity of the CEA-HOW program. It’s living by the Golden Rule, which is treating others how we would like to be treated. Check in with your sponsees to make sure they are honoring this tool.

4. Telephone Calls

Ah...the dreaded outreach call. Our program requires we make four of them a day, one to our sponsors and three to other CEA-HOW members. Most of us have felt resistance to this tool at one time or another. But our disease loves isolation where we can stew in our secrets, problems, dilemmas, confusion, guilt, and shame. Explain to your sponsees that picking up the phone is how we foil the disease and “live out loud.” It is our “meeting between meetings.” Remind them that the principal of anonymity applies just as much to outreach calls as it does to meetings. Encourage them to make those outreach calls—the lives they save may be their own.

5. Meetings

Whether they attend them live or via the CEA-HOW phone bridge, your sponsees need to attend three meetings a week—the program requires it. If your sponsees say they are too busy, you may need to remind them that meeting attendance is non-negotiable; we simply don’t recover in isolation.

You can also share with them the joy that happens when CEA-HOW members gather together in unity with a common solution to a common problem. Meetings are powerful. We laugh and cry together and, most importantly, we carry the message of recovery to newcomers.

6. Service

Let your sponsees know they need to be of service in CEA-HOW. Even if they don't have a lot of abstinence, they can still be of service. This is a vital tool that will help them get out of themselves and give back to the program. Service can be as simple as setting up or putting away chairs, doing a reading or sharing at either live or phone bridge meetings, or as advanced as being a part of their local intergroups. Remind your sponsees that service is needed at all levels and at every meeting. Once they get involved in service, they'll feel like they really belong to the program.

7. Sponsorship

Once your sponsees qualify, it's important for them to sponsor others. The Big Book of AA tells us that we must work with others if we are to keep our own recovery. It states that there is nothing that insures against a slip as does intensive work with others. The best gift your sponsees can give to themselves and others is the gift of sponsorship. When we give, we receive. Sponsoring also helps CEA-HOW as a whole—there's nothing like passing it on to ensure that this great movement will continue its purpose.

The best way to teach is by example. If you are using all seven tools, your sponsees are much more likely to do the same. As it's been said in meetings—and it applies as much to the sponsor as it does to the sponsee—"I don't know which of The Seven Tools works...so I think I'll work them all!"