

Steps Six and Seven

By the time your sponsees get to Steps Six and Seven, they will be well-acquainted with the Compulsive Eaters Anonymous (CEA)-HOW process of answering questions and sharing those answers with their sponsors. Questions from the booklet, *CEA-HOW Steps Six through Twelve* will help guide the inner work and action sponsees must take to work the rest of their steps. To help your sponsees get as much as possible out of the rest of the Steps, you can review program literature to guide your sponsees through their recovery process.

One valuable resource is the CEA-HOW pamphlet, *An Overview of the 12 Step Recovery Plan*. This pamphlet contains a short summary of each of the Steps as it relates to compulsive eaters. It may be helpful to read the summary on a particular step with your sponsees before they begin to work on each Step.

Step Six: Became entirely ready for God to remove these defects of character

Along with having your sponsees read the *Overview* pamphlet, you can also have them look up words from each step in the dictionary before they begin the Step Six questions. For example, you could have them look up the words *entirely*, *ready*, *God*, *remove*, *defects*, and *character*. You can ask your sponsees to reflect on each definition as it relates to their compulsive eating experience. Even if your sponsees *think* they know the definition of a particular word, this writing can give them a new awareness in the light of their own experiences as compulsive eaters.

However, if you have not written the definitions in light of your own experience, please do so before asking your sponsees to do it! Sharing our actual experience helps us avoid “lecturing” or acting as “amateur therapists” and reinforces a program of action necessary to recover from compulsive eating.

Steps Six and Seven will serve as bridges toward the promises that come true for each of us when we complete Steps Eight and Nine. It may be tempting to skim over Steps Six and Seven, but it’s important that we spend time really understanding them. Skimming over these Steps (or any others for that matter) can result in slipping or relapsing. Doing thorough work in Steps Six and Seven can also help us avoid half-hearted or insincere amends in Step Nine. How do we guide sponsees in building a strong bridge towards their remaining Steps?

It is sometimes helpful to remind your sponsees that the underlying principle of Step Six is *willingness*. As our *Overview* pamphlet tells us, “Essentially it is an alignment

process with our Higher Power's will for us." As sponsors we can also share our own experience and ways in which we practice willingness in our daily lives.

In Step Six, we become entirely ready to have character defects such as gossip, procrastination, and pride removed by our Higher Powers. The CEA-HOW Step Six questions will guide sponsees in writing down their lists of character defects—even the ones they aren't willing to give up yet.

Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings

In Step Seven our sponsees begin to practice the underlying principle of *humility*. Again, it may be useful for your sponsees to look up the definitions of *humility*, *asked*, and *shortcomings* in the dictionary. How do these words relate to your sponsees's experiences as compulsive eaters with character defects?

Our *Overview* pamphlet reminds us that that this Step "finds strength in our weaknesses and significance in our willingness to change." Remind your sponsees that Step Seven tells us we must ask our Higher Powers to help us be rid of our defects in the same way that our food obsessions were removed. We cannot remove our own character defects without the help of our Higher Powers.

As the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* states "The notion that we would still live our own lives, God helping a little now and then, began to evaporate." We will need to practice the principle of humility throughout our daily lives if we wish to be ready and willing to work the remaining Steps of the CEA-HOW program.

This also means that we don't get to "act out" our character defects while waiting for our Higher Powers to render us white as snow. You may need to remind your sponsees that we need to do our part to have our defects removed, such as taking "contrary action" away from our instinctual desires. For instance, when we want to gossip we can practice "restraint of tongue and pen." When it comes to our character defects, the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* reminds us "The only urgent thing is that we make a beginning and keep on trying."

As CEA-HOW sponsors we must continue practicing the principles of our program in all our affairs. We need to make sure we are staying closely in touch with our own sponsors to keep our own programs strong. As we continue to work the Twelve Steps, and guide our sponsees through their Steps, we can always return to Steps Six and Seven for daily encouragement regarding the principles of willingness and humility, which are cornerstones of our recovery.