

Sponsoring Maintenance in CEA-HOW

Our *Sponsors Guidelines* tell us that in order to qualify as Compulsive Eaters Anonymous (CEA)-HOW maintenance sponsors we must have:

- Ninety days of continuous abstinence
- Reached goal weight
- Served as food, inventory, and step sponsors
- Completed the maintenance questions
- Gone through the maintenance sponsoring step up ceremony

When we reach this level of sponsoring, we've done a lot of work in the program. Now we have another great opportunity to realize the promises of CEA-HOW by helping other compulsive eaters shift into maintenance.

The Maintenance Food Plan Transition

Your sponsees will need to purchase a *CEA-HOW Maintenance Food Plan* to begin the next phase of their journeys. Encourage them to read it thoroughly and to ask you questions about anything they need help understanding. If they are fearful about changing their food, remind them that they are not alone.

Having successfully made the transition from the weight loss food plan to the CEA-HOW maintenance food plan ourselves, we are invaluable resources for sponsees who are going through the same process. The maintenance food plan offers clear guidance on how to transition from the weight loss food plan to maintenance, which we do incrementally over time. We add food selections in weighed and measured portions until our weight stabilizes. While working closely with sponsees on their maintenance food plans, you can also refer them back to their health care professionals and share your own experience with the transition phases.

The maintenance food plan contains additional food choices, so we need to remind our sponsees that if some of these foods create the "phenomenon of craving" they need to work closely with us to eliminate them from their committed food. You can remind them that this principle still holds true in maintenance: "**When in Doubt, Leave it Out.**"

Your sponsees will need to decide on a goal weight. The *Forever Abstinent* book reminds us that establishing a "healthy" or "goal" weight is something that involves our health care professional, our sponsors, and (without question) our Higher Powers as well. Be

sure you share your own experience with setting and obtaining your goal weight and your feelings about it at the time.

It's important to let your sponsees know that they now need to weigh themselves weekly instead of monthly to ensure that their bodies are accepting the transition phases. The weight scale is an important tool that helps keep our recovery on track. It coincides closely with the food scale and measuring cups we use at our abstinent meals.

If your sponsees slip while in maintenance, once they regain their abstinence, they will return to being a maintenance sponsor in these stages:

- **30 Days:** Food Sponsor
- **60 Days:** Food, Inventory, and Step Sponsor
- **90 Days:** Food, Inventory, Step, and Maintenance Sponsor

Again, you can help guide them through these stages.

Practicing the Principles

As our CEA-HOW Concept states, "...our further surrender to the additional steps of recovery offers us a promise of happiness, contentment and achievement in all areas of our lives." In many ways this is exactly our promise in working the maintenance phase of the program. We redouble our efforts using all the tools and concepts that we've been practicing up until this phase of our recovery.

Many compulsive eaters have tried to "go it alone" once they achieved their maintenance weights. Frequently those who slip or relapse will report that they neglected to work their spiritual and emotional programs on a daily basis. As is often said by maintainers, "The food is the last thing to go."

Here is an overview of the basic tools and concepts of CEA-HOW that you can review with your sponsees to reinforce the idea that we need to continue to work the entire CEA-HOW program, not just the food plan:

- **Sugar and Flour Abstinence:** This defines our abstinence from "addictive" substances as written in our literature. It's central to our food plan and is the basis for Step One in the program.

- **Weighing and Measuring:** Our primary tool for combating the compulsion of the disease of compulsive eating; it's our daily opportunity to *surrender* the food to our Higher Powers.
- **Meetings:** As the literature tells us, we *must* attend three meetings a week, which ensures that we keep ourselves open to service and sharing our experience, hope, and strength.
- **CEA-HOW Concept:** This becomes our “contract” with the program of CEA-HOW and it outlines the foundation upon which our program was built.
- **Sponsorship:** One compulsive eater helping another compulsive eater is the essential link we share in our program of recovery. Our Twelve Steps and Traditions are worded to reinforce the concept “this is a “we” program and not an “I” program.
- **Phone Calls:** The vital link we share through daily phone calls with our sponsor, sponsees, and other members strengthens us and opens up opportunities to be of service to others in the program.
- **Twelve Steps:** We find freedom from the food obsession when we work the Twelve Steps, which are the foundation of our program.
- **Twelve Traditions:** Unity in our program is the group expression of our spiritual program of recovery and is strengthened and guided by our Twelve Traditions.
- **Service:** The Twelve Steps offer us the framework for our individual recovery which allows us to be of service to others as we give freely of what was given to us.
- **Honesty, Open Mindedness, Willingness:** As the *CEA-HOW Concept* states, “We pray that the collective group conscience and love that these ideals offer us will promote a strong sense of security that will enable us to experience a new unity and wholeness with all those around us and that the CEA-HOW ideal will help us to progress in our program of recovery on a daily basis.”

Be sure to let your sponsees know that in order to realize all the promises of recovery in Compulsive Eaters Anonymous HOW they need to embrace each of these ideas and make them a part of their daily living.

The Road to Happy Destiny

Remind your sponsees that maintenance is not an ending, rather it's a new beginning. In order to keep what they have, they still need to work the tools and Steps of the CEA-HOW program. Their investment of time and effort into these endeavors will be well worth it. There's probably no better way to say it than what's said in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous on page 164:

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

May God bless you and keep you – until then.