

SERVICE IN THE CEA-HOW PROGRAM

As a sponsor in the Compulsive Eaters Anonymous (CEA)-HOW program, you've undoubtedly experienced the benefits of recovery. When we abstain from compulsive eating, work the steps and tools, and carry the message to our fellows, we enjoy not only freedom from the food obsession but also—as *The CEA-HOW Concept* tells us—“happiness, contentment and achievement in all areas of our lives.”

Our recovery gives us the ability to help other compulsive eaters “when no one can,” as it says in the Big Book (BB) of Alcoholics Anonymous on page 89. “You can secure their confidence when others fail.” Not only *can* we help others, we *must*—it's our Twelfth Step of recovery.

Helping Others is the Foundation Stone of Your Recovery (BB, page 97)

Why all this emphasis on service? Put very simply, we do not maintain our abstinence if we don't carry the message of recovery to our fellows. The BB tells us on page 89 that “nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intense work with other alcoholics” and the same holds true for compulsive eaters.

As recovering compulsive eaters, we need to be of service to keep what we have. And, as CEA-HOW sponsors, we need to emphasize to our sponsees how vital service is so *they* can keep what *they* have.

Service starts with abstinence. It is, as *The Seven Tools of CEA-HOW* says, “the greatest service to ourselves.” Remind your sponsees that when we are abstaining from compulsive eating, we carry the message by being examples that recovery is possible.

However, you may also have to remind them that simply abstaining from compulsive eating is not enough. The BB calls us to action and more action if we are to maintain our recovery. (Or, as it says on page 97: “You may have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be.”)

Fortunately, the CEA-HOW program provides us with many opportunities to be of service, on every level and at every meeting.

Service Is Freedom From the Bondage of Self (The Seven Tools)

One of CEA-HOW's most visible service positions is the sponsorship role. When your sponsees have completed the requirements necessary to become a new sponsor, you will be a pivotal influence in helping them successfully navigate the territory of sponsorship. Your knowledge of the CEA-HOW program—plus your unique experience, strength, and hope—will help shape, enhance, and guide their sponsorship experience.

But sponsorship is only *one* way to be of service in CEA-HOW. The Seven Tools lists *Service* and *Sponsorship* separately. While *sponsorship* is a responsibility that must be earned after fulfilling certain, specific requirements (such as having at least 30 days of continuous CEA-HOW abstinence, answering 30 days of questions, etc.) being of *service* is available to everyone.

It Is Not the Matter of Giving That Is In Question, But When and How to Give. (BB, page 98)

Every meeting needs its service positions such as secretary, treasurer, and literature person, etc. Qualifications for each of these positions can be found in the CEA-HOW booklet, *Structure of Meetings*, available through the CEA-HOW World Service office. In addition, the Seven Tools outlines options that don't have qualification requirements, such as coming to meetings on time and setting up chairs. More advanced members can participate in their intergroup and areas; and some may choose to advance to the World Service level.

But what about sponsees who are not abstaining? Don't they need to be abstinent in order to serve? Happily, the answer is no. In fact, service is one of the best things that people who are still eating can do—getting out of ourselves is the antidote to the self-absorption inherent with active addiction. As their sponsor, you can help them find appropriate ways to give. For example, you can encourage them to be a greeter at a meeting, give rides to and from meetings, or be the meeting's timer.

Now what about the overzealous sponsee? The one who signs up for every service position available? As important as it is to weigh and measure our food, it's equally important to weigh and measure our lives. As compulsive people, we can go overboard not just on things that are bad for us—like eating—but also on things that are good for us—like service. You may have sponsees who are still learning balance and boundaries and may sign up for too many service positions. They may take on multiple commitments

that require high time and energy commitments, which over time can become overwhelming and exhausting.

It's important that you remind them how important it is to *HALT*: not get to *hungry, angry, lonely* or *tired*. You can emphasize how dangerous it is to our abstinence to over-commit ourselves. If we don't HALT, we are more vulnerable to compulsive eating. Service is supposed to *help* our programs, not *hinder* them. You can provide valuable guidance and direction on how much service is appropriate.

Gratitude Should Go Forward (As Bill Sees It, page 29)

As recovering compulsive eaters, we have been given much. We have been freed from the food obsession. We have been given a way of living that enables us to live a richer, fuller, and more joyous life than we ever dreamed possible. And the best repayment we can make is to carry the message of recovery to still others, joyfully. As Bill Wilson said, "The Lord has been so wonderful to me, curing me of this terrible disease that I just want to keep telling people about it" (BB, Page 191).