

## **SPONSORING CEA-HOW MEMBERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

CEA-HOW is a fellowship that welcomes everyone, including members with cognitive or developmental impairment, physical disabilities, visual impairment, dyslexia, mental illnesses, etc.

Our program is inclusive, not exclusive, based on Tradition Three, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively." We find that the CEA-HOW program can easily be modified to fit the special needs of our members. We demonstrate compassion, empathy and love for our disabled sponsees.

Below are some guidelines and best practices we've found that CEA-HOW sponsors can use when working with a sponsee who has special needs. These are meant to be helpful suggestions only.

- Get to know your sponsee. We may find that due to personal limitations sponsees may be unable to answer a question a day. Have an honest conversation, and set realistic guidelines.
- Ask basic questions on what challenges the sponsee faces and what their needs are.
- Let your sponsee do their own work. It's best not to coddle or enable.
- Discuss what formats (audio etc.) can be used for answering questions, i.e.; first 30 day questions and other writings.
- Decide on a reasonable timeline.
- Guide sponsees to resources. CEA-HOW offers recorded literature which can facilitate listening to various chapters of the Big Book, the Twelve and Twelve, and the first 30 questions and other literature. A recording can be made of the sponsee's answer to a question so that the sponsor can listen to it at their appointed time together.
- Identify meeting locations that will meet your sponsee's needs.
- AA Literature such as *AA Comes of Age*, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the Big Book), *AA 12 Steps and 12 Traditions* and *Daily Reflections* are available in Large Print, Braille and on Audio recordings.

Many people are abstinent in the program today partly due to the patience and understanding of an empathetic sponsor. ANY sponsor can sponsor someone with a cognitive or other disability. You need not be afraid. Some basic compassion, patience and understanding is all that is required. The patience that we as sponsors need in this program is sometimes learned through the process of working with a sponsee who challenges us.

We are not healthcare professionals. Remember, "Love and tolerance of others is our code." *Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 84 The determination of the disability is between you,

your sponsee, your Higher Power, and the healthcare professional. We are sure that if you decide to work with a disabled sponsee, you will both reap benefits.