

## CPA SUGGESTED MEETING FORMAT

**This is a suggested meeting format. Many meetings use this as a starting point in their group conscience for drafting their unique meeting format. Each meeting is autonomous. Please, take what you like and leave the rest.**

(Ask for volunteers to read the Preamble, Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, if you wish. These are found at the end of this document.)

1. Before we begin, we ask that you please silence notifications on your devices. (Option for online/phone meetings: Please silence notifications on your devices before unmuting to share.)
2. Welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_ meeting of Chronic Pain Anonymous. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I live with chronic pain and chronic illness ("I am a grateful member," location, etc.). This is a \_\_\_ minute meeting. Let's begin the meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer.

### SERENITY PRAYER:

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.  
Thy will, not mine, be done.

3. Would someone (or name) please read the Preamble?  
Would someone (or name) please read the Twelve Steps of CPA?  
Would someone (or name) please read the Twelve Traditions of CPA?  
(Some meetings also read the Concept corresponding with the current month.)

4. *Optional:* Explain your platform-specific etiquette: venue requirements, priority seating, timekeeping, how to mute/unmute, use of chat, things to avoid (fragrances, loud beeps/noises, motion, vaping or smoking, eating, virtual backgrounds, etc.).
5. Let's introduce ourselves by our first names. *Optional:* People can introduce themselves with their location as well.) If you are new to the meeting, please let us know so we can welcome you. (If there is a newcomer, ask, "Would someone like to read the 'Newcomer's Welcome'?" This can be found at the end of this document.

6. Meeting announcements:

*Optional:*

- Conference-Approved Literature (CAL) is available at the CPA Store at <https://chronicpainanonymous.org/>, and our books can be purchased from online distributors.
  - Our monthly business meeting is held the \_\_\_\_\_ of each month. Any member may call a group conscience at any time.
  - Trusted Servant reports:
    - o General Advisory Council (GAC) report/highlights
    - o Intergroup Representative report/highlights
    - o Secretary report
    - o Treasurer report
    - o Literature report
    - o Public Information (PI)/Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) report
  - Are there any CPA-related announcements?
  - *Optional:* Are there any non-CPA-related (e.g., facility/platform) announcements?
  - Is anyone celebrating a CPA milestone?
7. Tradition Seven states, "Every CPA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." While CPA has no dues or fees, we do have expenses. Our donations pay for services such as literature (professional edits, publishing, printing, and audio recordings), public information, website administration, and bookkeeping. Please give what you can. However, we need you more than we need your money.
    - *Optional:* After meeting expenses are met, contributions are traditionally split 15% to Intergroup and 85% to CPA.

- *Optional:* As of 2022, if every member gave \$5 a month to CPA, we would be fully self-supporting. A once-a-year donation of \$10 is suggested for your local intergroup unless otherwise specified.

*Optional:* (Can be read or entered into chat for video meetings.)

<https://chronicpainanonymous.org/contributions/>

Send check or money order to:  
Chronic Pain Anonymous Service Board  
13802 N. Scottsdale Road  
Suite 151-102  
Scottsdale, AZ 85254-3403

*Optional:* Can we please observe 60 seconds of silence so that all who choose to do so may log on to <https://chronicpainanonymous.org/> and click the "Contribute" button?

8. This is a (topic, discussion, speaker, literature, step study, etc.) meeting. We use the CPA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, exploring ways to apply the program to living with chronic pain and chronic illness. (We are currently reading \_\_\_\_\_/Today's topic/speaker is \_\_\_\_\_.)
9. Sharing Guidelines:  
In CPA, we concentrate on our feelings and attitudes about our situation rather than on the details of the situation. We reflect on how chronic illness and chronic pain have affected our thinking and our behavior. We look at the part we play in our problems and how the Twelve Steps can guide us toward recovery from the obsession with our chronic illness and chronic pain.

When we focus on ways to apply the principles of the program in our daily lives, we discover that our changed attitudes and actions can lead us to a meaningful life of peace and serenity.

Tradition Ten states, "Chronic Pain Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the CPA name ought never be drawn into public controversy." Therefore, in our meetings, we avoid discussions about religion or specific diagnoses, medications, therapies, doctors, insurance

providers, and health care systems. If referring to our own medical issues, we find it is best to keep to general terms. We do not give medical advice. When we share, we guard against crosstalk. When one person responds directly to another who has shared, this is crosstalk.

We come together to share our experience, strength, and hope freely, without interruption. We listen to suffering individuals with compassion and understanding, to offer hope and support. We empower each other to be vulnerable by providing a nonjudgmental, safe meeting.

*Optional:* In order to give everyone an opportunity to share, please limit your time to \_\_\_\_\_ minutes or less. (Provide timekeeping instructions/information.)

10. Closing:

In closing, I would like to remind everyone that the opinions expressed here were strictly those of the person who spoke. Take what you like and leave the rest. Everything that was shared here was done so in confidence. Please respect the anonymity of this meeting and its members. Discussing who was at a meeting or what they shared is a breach of anonymity. Let what you heard here, stay here. Tradition Twelve states, "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

If you are new to CPA, we encourage you to keep coming back. We have found that while our health challenges may differ, how they affect us is often similar. Although today we may be feeling at our worst, in CPA we see the best in each other. In time, with the love and support we have found here, we begin to see the best in ourselves. We invite you to stay after the meeting and talk with someone who is familiar with CPA and the Twelve Steps.

Will all who care to, please join me in the Closing Prayer/Words.

### ***Optional suggested closings:***

(Groups can close the meeting in any way they choose while staying in alignment with the Twelve Traditions.)

1. Serenity Prayer:

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.  
Thy will, not mine, be done.

2. CPA Set Aside Prayer:

God/Higher Power, help me set aside everything I think I know about You, myself, my obsessions, my body, the Twelve Steps, the literature, the people in the fellowship, and all spiritual terms, so that I may have an open mind and a new experience of all these things. Please help me see the truth.

**OR** God/Higher Power, today help me set aside everything I think I know about You, everything I think I know about myself, everything I think I know about others, and everything I think I know about my own recovery, so I may have an open mind and a new experience with all these things. Please help me see the truth.

3. The CPA Declarations (see Appendix)

4. "...sharing my experiences with the Twelve Steps can illuminate the path, so that another person doesn't have to wander alone in the darkness and be lost for as many years as I was. I am here to support others, and I am here to be supported. We are all in this together." (*Stories of Hope*, page 38)

5. Higher Power, we turn these matters over to You this day, so that we may move forward and better do Thy/Your will.

## 6. Closing Meditation:

Focus on an unpleasant emotion, recent situation, or sensation in your body.

Inhale...

Now say to yourself: "This is a moment when I'm suffering."

Exhale...

Now say to yourself: "Suffering is part of being human."

Put your hands on your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and their soft pressure, and be aware of your breathing.

Inhale...

Now say to yourself: "Let me be gentle with myself."

Exhale...

Now say to yourself: "I accept and love myself just the way I am."

## Appendix

### CPA Preamble

CPA is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other, so that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from the disabling effects of chronic pain and chronic illness. We believe that changing attitudes can aid recovery. The only requirement for membership is a desire to recover from the emotional and spiritual debilitation of chronic pain or chronic illness. There are no dues or fees for CPA membership. We are self-supporting through our own contributions. CPA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to live our lives to the fullest by minimizing the effects of chronic pain and chronic illness in our lives and helping others to do the same. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps, and welcoming and giving comfort and understanding to each other.

## **The Twelve Steps of CPA**

1. We admitted we were powerless over pain and illness—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others with chronic pain and chronic illness, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## **The Twelve Traditions of CPA**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CPA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for CPA membership is a desire to recover from the emotional and spiritual debilitation of chronic pain or chronic illness.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or CPA as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to people living with chronic pain and chronic illness.
6. A CPA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the CPA name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every CPA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Chronic Pain Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. CPA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Chronic Pain Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the CPA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television, film, and the Internet.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

### **The Twelve Concepts of Service**

1. The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for the CPA World Services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The CPA groups delegate complete administrative and operational authority to their World Service Conference and its service arms.
3. As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relationship among the groups, the World Service Conference, the Service Board of Trustees and its service corporation, staffs, and committees, and of thus ensuring their effective leadership, it is hereby suggested we endow each of these elements of World Service with a traditional "Right of Decision."
4. The "Right of Participation" ensures equality of opportunity for all in the decision-making process. Participation is the key to harmony.
5. Throughout our structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances will receive careful consideration.



6. The World Service Conference recognizes the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters can be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the Trustee Board.
7. The Trustees have legal rights while the rights of the Conference are traditional.
8. The Trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. The Service Board of Trustees delegates full authority for routine management to its executive committees.
9. Good personal leadership at all service levels is a necessity. In the field of world service, the Service Board of Trustees assumes the primary leadership.
10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
11. The General Service Virtual Office is composed of the Executive Director, selected committees, and staff members.
12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of CPA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserves be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform authoritative acts of government; that, like the Fellowship it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

### **Suggested CPA's Newcomer's Welcome**

[This is a suggestion of how we can welcome newcomers at our meetings. Please feel free to use or modify as the meeting sees fit.]

Hi, welcome! We are glad you are here today.

It can take courage to attend your first meeting. Many of our lives have changed from focusing on the limitations of living with chronic pain and chronic illness to living peacefully, joyfully and comfortably with ourselves and others. CPA has given many of us renewed hope. Here we have found others who understand.

CPA offers many tools to deal with the emotional and spiritual challenges of living with chronic pain and chronic illness. Many of these can be found on our website.

CPA offers a variety of meetings. We suggest that you attend at least six different meetings before deciding if CPA is for you. During the meeting, each of us has the opportunity to share in a safe and supportive environment. We invite you to tell us what brought you here, if you would like to.

Many of us come early or stay late to chat or ask questions. We call this fellowship time and we hope you join us.

We welcome you and hope you keep coming back.

### **The CPA Declaration**

1. Fellowship, rather than loneliness and isolation, will be present in our life.
2. We will enjoy connecting with other people.
3. We will be compassionate and kind to ourselves as well as consider the needs of others.
4. Fear will be replaced by courage, strength and faith to rise and meet any challenges. We will even see challenges as opportunities for spiritual growth.
5. We will forgive those whom we perceive have harmed us so we can be free from the chains of the past.
6. Remembering progress, not perfection, we will approach each day with a positive attitude. We will choose to focus on gratitude, placing our attention on all that is good.
7. Our pain and illness will no longer be the primary focus of our day. We will feel serenity and peace regardless of what condition our body is in. Our body will not determine the joy we experience in life.
8. We will laugh and see the lighter side of situations.
9. We will value ourselves and believe we have something to give to the world. Self-pity will be replaced by a belief our life has meaning and purpose.
10. We will be open to new beginnings and no longer cling to how things were in the past.
11. We will believe we deserve to love and to be loved.
12. We will have faith in a Higher Power which does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. This Power is the foundation that will support and guide us as we move through each moment. Our life will be far better than we ever imagined possible.