

CPA TOOLBOX

In working the CPA Twelve Step program, there are a number of tools members have found helpful in recovering from the disabling effects of chronic pain and chronic illness. Using these tools can help us shift our focus from obsessing over chronic pain and chronic illness to living peacefully, joyfully and comfortably with ourselves and others. The suggested tools are listed in alphabetical order for convenience.

Anonymity

Anonymity means that we are all equal in the fellowship. We come together as equals living with chronic pain and chronic illness. Anonymity offers each of us freedom of expression and safeguards us from gossip. It assures us that our names and faces are not used in the media.

Whatever we share with another CPA member or in a meeting will be held in respect and confidence. What we hear and say at meetings remains there. We honor the anonymity of others and trust they will guard our anonymity as well.

Fellowship Time

Whether in a physical or virtual meeting, we can remain after meetings to socialize with others in the group. This is a time when we can ask questions, get to know each other better, share about our recovery, find a sponsor, and connect with new people in the CPA community. This helps foster the sense of fellowship that is so central to the group's success.

Between meetings, we find it helpful to stay in touch with each other. We use a variety of communication tools to stay connected. Examples of some ways members reach out: telephone, text, video conference, chat, email, and writing letters. Some people in CPA call other members and their sponsors regularly. By communicating with each other, we are ending the isolation that is so common among those living with chronic pain and chronic illness.

Reaching out to friends in the fellowship is how we ask for help and extend it to others. When emotions such as fear or grief are strong and we need a friend at our side, the telephone and computer can provide support and be a lifeline when we are struggling. During difficult times, it helps to connect with someone daily.

Gratitude List

A list of what we are grateful for helps us become aware of the good that is already present. It also helps us to change our perspective—rather than focusing on what we are lacking and/or have lost, we acknowledge the abundance that exists in our daily lives.

This list can be done at any time during the day as we identify what we are grateful for in that moment. It can be short, such as three items for the day. Some prefer a longer list, even using each letter of the alphabet to name one thing they are grateful for. It can be an ongoing list we add to regularly. As we practice gratitude, we each find what works best.

Higher Power

A Power greater than ourselves is the core of our program of spiritual recovery. Although the word “God” is used by some people, this is a personal choice. Some people identify it as “**G**ood **O**rdery **D**irection” or the collective wisdom of the fellowship. We don’t need to be religious to have a Higher Power. We each define our own Higher Power.

It helps to be open-minded as some of us struggle with this concept. We read CPA literature, review the Steps, speak to our sponsor, and talk to program friends as we explore. As we grow in our recovery, our relationship and understanding of our Higher Power can evolve.

Literature

Daily reading of the CPA-approved literature reinforces the Twelve Steps and program principles. It provides insight into our problems and gives us strength and courage to deal with them. It gives us hope that there is a solution for us. It is the collective wisdom of the members of our fellowship that guide us in our recovery journey.

CPA literature is used in our meetings, and we study the literature with our sponsors and other members, just as we read and review it ourselves. Some people in CPA start or end their day reading CPA literature.

Meditation

There are many different approaches to meditation that allow us to remain present in the moment without judgment. Some view meditation as listening. It is an element of Step Eleven, although it can be practiced before working all the Steps.

There are many ways to practice meditation. CPA has a brochure called *Meditation and CPA*, which may be helpful.

Meetings

Meetings are gatherings of two or more members of CPA who come together to share their personal experience, strength, and hope. Meetings offer fellowship with other CPA members and give us an opportunity to identify with others. We share the gifts we receive through the program and find that we are not alone. At meetings, we share our successes and struggles and continue to learn about the program and how to apply it in our lives.

In CPA, there are many ways to attend a meeting: in person, by telephone, by video conference, and more. This variety of meetings ensures accessibility for everyone. We learn there are solutions and help available.

Prayer

Prayer is a tool that helps us maintain conscious contact with our Higher Power. It can provide an anchor and give us courage when we are having a difficult moment.

Some members start and end the day with prayer. We can find prayers that speak to us or write our own. Prayer is a tool that is accessible whenever and wherever we are. It can provide strength, comfort, and guidance, as well as the knowledge that we are not alone. It is an element of Step Eleven, although can be practiced before working all the Steps.

Rest

Attending to our need for rest is vital to living with chronic pain and chronic illness. When we become aware that our symptoms or pain are flaring or that our emotions are reactive, remember the tool of rest. Rest is an action of self-care; it is not being idle. Rest slows us down and can be restorative.

Deciding what this tool looks like is a personal choice and can vary with our situation. For example, for some of us it is total silence, while for others it is a

quiet activity such as reading or listening to music. Each CPA member learns what works best for them. Rest may be for an hour, a day, or many months.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is a tool in which we treat ourselves in a warm and loving way. When we are struggling emotionally or physically, we choose to be an inner ally rather than an inner enemy. We give ourselves understanding and kindness, just as we would for a dear friend who is having a hard time.

We practice this tool by being gentle and kind toward ourselves. When our life circumstances are challenging and feel too difficult to bear, we actively treat ourselves tenderly. We use a soft and caring tone of self-talk. We give ourselves permission for self-care and don't force solutions. We may take action that feels soothing and comforting. We remember that everyone suffers and that we are not alone or unique in our suffering.

Serenity Prayer

This is a simple prayer that has provided solace and strength for many people. It can provide comfort during a challenging procedure or an experience of intense physical sensations. It helps us to let go when we are unable to control a situation.

We reach for the Serenity Prayer and say it in our minds or speak it aloud whenever we need help from our Higher Power.

CPA 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.

Service

Service is vital to our recovery. The fundamental form of service is carrying the message of hope to others who still suffer from the emotional and spiritual distress of living with chronic pain and chronic illness. CPA thrives when we give back what we have received. We help ourselves by helping others.

Service keeps our meetings strong. Some examples of service: sharing our experience, strength, and hope; leading a meeting; participating on a service body; being a group treasurer; or sponsoring. We serve within our capacity so we may help others while caring for ourselves. We look forward to giving to others what was generously given to us; in doing so, we find it nourishes our spirits.

Slogans

Slogans are short, brief reminders of how to work the CPA program of recovery. They are simple and easy to remember, particularly when we are in pain, tired, and dealing with strong emotions. We can post them around us as reminders. They help calm us, provide accessible emotional and spiritual support, give us guidance, and help us slow down. We can use them at any time.

Some common slogans are *One Day at a Time*, *Let Go and Let God*, *First Things First*, *Do the Next Indicated Action*, *Easy Does It*, and *This Too Shall Pass*.

Sponsorship and Working the Twelve Steps

Sponsors are CPA members who are living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability. Sponsorship allows us to continually renew and reaffirm our own recovery through sharing our experience, strength, and hope. No matter how long we have been in CPA, we need someone to speak with on a regular basis.

We ask a sponsor to help us through our program of recovery and guide us through working the Twelve Steps. We learn from each other. To find a sponsor, we look for those who have the recovery we desire. It is always ok to ask; we trust we will find the right sponsor in the right time. In meetings, we are asked to share in a general way; however, with our sponsor, we often share about the personal details of our situation. A sponsor helps us feel supported in our recovery process.

STOP

S - Surrender

Stop what we are doing and surrender to what is in the moment. *Let Go and Let God.*

T - Time out

Step away and take time out. Relax. *Easy Does It.*

O - Observe

Observe what we are feeling and thinking and see realistically what is happening around us. *Freedom from Bondage of Self.*

P - Prioritize

What is the next indicated action? *First Things First.*

Writing/Journaling

Obsession and worry are common ways we cope with chronic pain and chronic illness. When we write out our difficulties, it can become easier to see situations more clearly and possibly to discover necessary action. For some, writing is a way to communicate with a Higher Power.

Writing can be done with pen and paper, on the computer, or using whatever means works best for the individual. Some people find it helps to have a regular time every day to write; others find it works best to write whenever particular feelings or thoughts are troublesome.