

Introduction

Recovery is much easier if you have an unquenchable thirst for it. Without motivation to change, success may not be achievable until you become ready.

To reap the full benefits of the Steps, you must be willing to trust another person and write, perhaps at length, in response to questions and see what comes up. To use this *Beginner's Guide*, you will need a notebook to:

- **Record all answers for this round of working the Steps**
- **Write questions to discuss with your Sponsor or Co-Sponsor**
- **Save insights received when dealing with your clutter—while decluttering, writing, sharing, meditating, or praying**

We Members of Clutterers Anonymous (CLA) desire to achieve balance and harmony in our lives, homes, and interactions with others. We long for simple surroundings that reflect beauty, order, and peace. Clutter is not only in our physical surroundings, but also in our minds, speech, relationships, and schedules. We must address all these areas to solve our problem with stuff.

We in CLA believe that our problem is a true addiction, a *dis-ease*, a three-fold illness: physical, emotional, and spiritual. We achieve three-fold recovery from clutter by working the 12 Steps of Clutterers Anonymous.

The purpose of this *Beginner's Guide* is to lead you in your first journey through the Steps with a Sponsor or Co-Sponsor. The content is inspired by CLA literature and by our Members' experience, strength, and hope.

It is fundamental to obtain a Sponsor who will assist you in working the 12 Steps and dealing with any resistance. Look for a Sponsor who has the recovery you want. If there are no experienced Sponsors available, two Members can work the Steps together as Co-Sponsors. Seek a Step partner who sparks your desire for recovery and has your same commitment to working the Steps. This relationship is essential for success. As soon as you

find a workable match, swap telephone numbers, agree on times, and start working Step 1 together.

Each Step has a guiding principle. In working that Step, we integrate its guiding principle into our recovery. The first three Steps are the “Give Up Steps.” Steps 4 and 5 are the “Own Up Steps.” Steps 6 through 9 are the “Clean Up Steps.” The last three Steps are the “Grow Up Steps.”

While working the Steps, we are encouraged to use the tool of Daily Action. After consulting with our Sponsor or Co-Sponsor, we put into our daily schedule five basic actions (our *Basic 5*) that support our recovery. The typical Basic 5 is:

1. Make my bed
2. Wash my dishes
3. Declutter one item
4. Put away what I take out
5. Process the daily mail

Some other possibilities include:

1. Track my expenses/activities
2. Plan my meals
3. Check in with a recovery Buddy
4. Attend a recovery meeting

Along the journey, we may encounter some resistance. This resistance will continue to plague us until we accept all 12 Steps. Sometimes we have to return to the previous Step: we must embrace it fully before we can proceed.

It is important to remember that working the Steps is an ongoing process. After completing Step 12 for the first time, we reach a better level of functioning in daily life. This is only the beginning. If we find that new problems arise concerning clutter, we go through the Steps again. Some have completed the Steps several times, while others prefer to revisit them annually. Being willing to work the Steps again indicates a level of recovery and our desire to achieve our purpose in life.

Sponsorship is one of the 12 Tools of CLA. Once enough Members have worked the Steps with a Sponsor or Co-Sponsor, there will be a pool of people able to sponsor other Members and Newcomers. We will then not only be *talking the talk*, but also *walking the walk*. Our current Members will model recovery to future Members.