**CLArity Box**

I came to CLA expecting to get organizing tips, but I’m mostly hearing about how people feel about cluttering. Are they ever going to give me tips and how can CLA help me anyway?

Searching for Organization

Dear Searching,

While organizing tips do have their place, that is not what CLA is about. It is easy to find organizing tips in magazine articles, books, and on the internet. I encourage you to explore those resources.

(See “CLArity Box,” page 5)

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**Procrastination: If It Feels So Good, Why Does It Hurt So Bad?**

When it comes to clutter, procrastination is often our way out. We set out to get rid of an old treasured flute we haven’t used in years. It’s the one that’s been taking up space in our closet. We’ll give it away. There’s someone out there just waiting for this flute.

But what if we want to play again? Panic sets in. Suddenly, sorting the laundry never looked so good. But we’re left with flute clutter—much to the chagrin of our spouses and our psyches.

We learn from CLA that our clutter is a symptom of a problem and that we often engage in self-destructive behavior. For me, procrastination is one of those behaviors. According to the many articles on this popular topic, its causes can be quite complex.

But sometimes it’s nothing dark or deep. I love when a friend unexpectedly calls on a Saturday afternoon and invites me out to lunch. Now if I’m chomping on lettuce and chewing on guilt, this might not be too much fun.

There are other times when the relief of putting off a difficult task outweighs the guilt of not doing it. Sometimes I’m just prolonging the pain of whatever it is that’s stressing me out. But hanging onto that task can clutter my mind and zap me of the mental energy I need to be doing other things, like enjoying my favorite TV show or pursuing my dreams.

If you talk to another clutterer or attend a CLA meeting, inevitably the topic of procrastination comes up. I’ve often heard other members say, “Well, clutterers are procrastinators” to explain our sometimes exasperating behavior.

Fear is often a top reason that we procrastinate. It can show up as the (See “Procrastination,” page 3)

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**Letter from the Chair**

**Spring Cleaning, Spring Decluttering: A Fresh, New Self Emerges Through CLA Participation**

Spring cleaning, spring decluttering. Visions of freshness and newness abound.

Or so I had heard.

Before CLA, spring cleaning and decluttering were not activities I practiced in any season: spring, summer, fall, or winter. It is not because I never heard of such behaviors. Indeed, I often heard others talk about getting their houses in order for the spring. However, I was too preoccupied with more “important” things to do and think about. So, instead of a fresh living place with clean, empty spaces—a place renewed by attention to details that nourished and supported inhabitants—(See “Letter from the Chair,” page 4)
My CLA Toolbox—Meetings

There’s something about going to a face-to-face meeting that gets my heart pumping. First, it means I have to get ready. I mean, it’s not as if I can pick up the phone and greet everybody wearing pajamas. These people who stare at me every week are going to look into my eyes and see my wardrobe, not to mention my body language.

Here’s where I can’t hide from who I am. In order to get myself there when I would not otherwise feel like going, I used to have a commitment with another member to pick her up every week. This would ensure that I got myself out of my home because if I didn’t do it for myself, I did it for her. Also, the time we spent in the car was enjoyable and was our only bonding time of the week.

Amazingly, this arrangement lasted over 10 years, but recently it hasn’t been tenable and I sorely miss our time together. Lately, I have been opening up for the group instead, and this service position has kept me showing up. I put the kettle on for tea, open up the room, and pull out the meeting formats, timer, and other items needed to run the meeting. Now someone else is doing that for a while, and already I am making excuses not to attend the meeting—although to be fair, the weather has been excruciatingly cold lately!

We strongly believe in rotation of leadership in our group, which is why a different person leads the meeting each week. One item on our agenda is to write a list of weekly commitments and then read them aloud. The following week we report on whether we have completed them or not. Then we take this one step further—on a separate piece of paper, we write our commitments, names, phone numbers, and the date. We fold this list several times and put it into a can which gets passed around.

(See “CLA Toolbox,” page 7)

News Flash

WSO

- The CLA Cyber Committee is finalizing plans for a complete redesign of the CLA website, ClutterersAnonymous.net. The redesigned website will have a new look and feel; it is hoped it will be less cluttered and more user friendly. The face-to-face meeting page will be much improved, and there are plans for it to be searchable by location. Registration materials will be placed online, and the site may include a short blog with CLA information and recovery content. The designers estimate it will take about two months to complete the redesign once the web design firm is hired.

- The Registration Committee has been hard at work for the past few months reaching out to CLA meeting contacts to obtain their group registrations. As of this writing, more than half of the groups have submitted registrations. Contact has been made with all but a few of these groups, however, so it is expected that most registrations will be received shortly. If your group has not sent in its registration, please submit it as soon as possible. If you have any problems, you can contact the committee at CLARegisCom@gmail.com.

- The Literature Committee has received member reviews of the proposed new abstinence model leaflet from the Fellowship. The committee will make revisions based upon these reviews and will then submit the document to WSO for final approval.

25th Anniversary

- Plans are underway for CLA’s 25th Anniversary celebration this year. A two-day convention will be held in Southern California this fall. The date and place should be decided upon soon, and flyers will be sent to all CLA meetings and other persons on the WSO mailing list. This convention is intended to be Fellowship-wide, so why not make plans to attend if you are able? The committee is also urging local areas to plan their own smaller events.

(See “News Flash,” page 8)
**Procrastination (Continued from page 1)**

seemingly mundane fear of boredom to a more
typical fear, like that of rejection.
Difficulty with decision-making is integrated
with other reasons. In this example, decision-
making is negatively affected by perfectionism:
he can’t figure out where to put the painting
because he can’t decide (fear of making
the wrong decision) which location is best
(perfectionism), so he puts off making the
decision.

Below you’ll find a list I’ve put together
of why clutterers and non-clutterers alike
procrastinate. This list is based on research
and my own experiences.

**Key Reasons for Procrastinating**

- **Fear**: We’re afraid to do something for some
  reason. This can be fear of: success, failure,
  rejection, the consequences, a confrontation,
  making a decision, making a mistake, etc.

- **Decision-making**: We’re afraid of the
  consequences of our decision. We may also
  fear the pain of making the decision.

**Other Common Reasons**

- **Rebelling**: We don’t do it because *they* told
  us to do it.

- **Feeling overwhelmed**: There’s too much to
  do and we don’t know where to start.

- **Confusion**: We don’t understand something or something
doesn’t make sense.

- **Perfectionism**: We don’t feel that we can do it perfectly.

- **Carelessness**: We can’t do it because of errors on our part.

- **Don’t feel like doing it**: It’s too boring, dull, or not
  challenging enough.

- **Don’t know how to do it**: We don’t have the knowledge to
do it.

- **Can’t handle it/do it**: This one is a catch-all. For example,
something unexpected or out of our control has occurred, or
something is uncomfortable.

The above reasons may seem straightforward but can
be loaded with unpleasant feelings such as anger, anxiety,
frustration, and shame. For me, it’s dealing with these feelings
and their causes that makes procrastination so hard to beat.

As with cluttering, there are no hard and fast solutions for
beating procrastination. For me, reviewing the CLA Tools of
Recovery* has been a good start, with bookending looking
especially promising. To build awareness, I plan to catch myself
when I procrastinate and identify which procrastination reason
applies. I’ll write down my findings and look for patterns.
Hopefully, knowledge will be power.

There’s also power in the experience, strength, and hope of
other clutterers. In fact, CLArity plans to share member stories
about procrastination with you in future issues. So watch your
mailbox for your next issue of CLArity, where we’ll continue
discussing this popular unpopular topic.

*The tools can be found in the leaflet, “A Brief Guide,”
and in the booklet, “Is CLA for You? A Newcomer’s Guide to
Recovery.”

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**Not Your Grandmother’s Committees!**

Is volunteering on your bucket list? Ever wanted to do
service? How about from the comfort of your own home?

It’s as easy as joining a CLA committee, or assisting a
committee. It takes less time than you might think, depending
on the committee.

Here’s your opportunity to enhance your own recovery while
doing valuable service.

Additional benefits include:

- **Practicing Teamwork**: Provide input and offer feedback
  as you work through the committee’s agenda. In some
  committees, you may collaborate with other team members on
  specific action items.

- **Practicing Accountability**: You take on the responsibility of
  attending meetings and participating in them. As clutterers, it
  sometimes helps us to follow through when we know others
  are counting on us.

- **Practicing Time Management**: You plan time to attend
  meetings. In some committees, you help determine the
date and time of the next meeting.

- **Using Your Creativity**: Brainstorm ideas, offer suggestions, and develop solutions. Opportunities are open to create content for
CLA publications.

- **Experiencing Pride**: Take pride in knowing you’re contributing to an organization that helps clutterers around the world.

The committee meeting frequencies and volunteer responsibilities are listed below. To
volunteer, all that is needed is a willingness to execute the responsibilities of the committee.

To join any committee, please contact
CLArity using one of the methods listed in the
box on page 2.
(See “Not Your Grandmother’s Committees!”
page 6)
Letter from the Chair
(Continued from page 1)

the place I called home was filled to the brim.
I had flung leftover winter holiday items here and there and had smashed winter and spring clothes together until closet poles broke. Second-semester paperwork vied with first-semester paperwork to see just how high piles could be stacked. Spring cleaning? I couldn’t find a broom, let alone use one (although, of course, I did have multiple brooms bought at different times that I could not see due to the piles). Since I kept forgetting I owned brooms, I kept buying more. Home, my sacred place? Try home, my scary space.

Yet it was indeed at last that I found CLA in the spring one year. In the winter of my soul, I searched for some light to shed upon my situation. Why couldn’t I get organized, ever? Why did this look awful, always? Why was I so unique, utterly? Through the flickering rays of computer lights, I searched for answers.

Through what I believe was my Higher Power’s help and to my complete amazement, eventually I found that I was not alone. Indeed, an actual 12-Step group called CLA existed for those like me. And with this discovery and the phone Fellowship, I could begin behaviors that would lead to my own cleaning and decluttering. During this springtime, a fresh, new self began to emerge from the clutter.

In a manner similar to my personal recovery, CLA as a Fellowship also is experiencing new growth this season. As this article goes to press, the wonderful CLA WSO Literature Committee’s work on an abstinence model has helped spring forth exciting discussions about abstinence in our program. The great work of the CLA Registration Committee is helping us declutter our lists, ensuring that CLA recovery meetings are actually current and active. Plus, plans continue to grow regarding celebration of our CLA 25th Anniversary. Thus, CLA as a Fellowship continues to emerge, bringing forth new growth and developments.

In this time of new ideas cropping up and new behaviors emanating, I plan to try out new developments in my own CLA recovery and encourage others to do so as well. Moreover, this is a great time to make new efforts, explore new possibilities, and seek out new horizons in service to CLA as a whole. Start a new CLA meeting? Hold a local CLA event? Serve on a CLA committee? Our WSO committees are always looking for new members and would love to have your participation. In other words, opportunities are always present to enrich our lives with service to the Fellowship.

This spring, we can challenge ourselves. We can renew our commitment to our own recovery. We can encourage others to cultivate new sprouting of participation in CLA. Additionally, we can expand our possibilities within CLA and support others to do so as well. Through all these means, we can watch our growth, as well as that of others, proliferate.

And through working our program and decluttering the wreckage of our past, our present will emerge and a space will be uncovered for our future.

Happy spring cleaning and decluttering! Deborah G., AZ

Poem—I Hear You

Here is one way that we move toward healing mind clutter:

Strong support system: CLA program, understanding family and friends —whatever gives us the love, strength, and encouragement to tackle this difficult task.


“I Hear You”

When you were struggling in one area,
I heard your recovery in another area.
You were frustrated, overwhelmed, and confused,
but I heard a practice, perseverance, and progress.
You may not feel your success,
but I feel your success,
and that success is leading me out of my mess.
I speak my gratitude with one voice,

but thousands in the rooms echo mine.
Take good care of your precious self.
We need a role model.
Don’t back up, shut down, or hide.
Your voice is making a difference to those who themselves will make a difference.
You may still be uncertain on your deathbed,

but from heaven you will see

the importance of your life. Lisa P., CT

Editor’s Note: The above poem was printed in the Holiday 2013 issue of CLArity; but, due to a printing mistake, part of it was unreadable. Therefore, we are reprinting it here.
About WSO

Nominations for officers of the Clutterers Anonymous World Service Organization (WSO) were accepted on February 22, 2014, at the WSO meeting, and elections will be held on March 22, 2014. Terms for officers will run from April 1, 2014, to March 31, 2015. You can request an expanded list of officers’ duties and requirements by using one of the contact methods in the box on page 2. Officers’ positions are as follows:

• Chairperson—writes agendas for WSO, facilitates WSO meetings, and is ex-officio member on all WSO committees
• Vice-chairperson—assists the chairperson and covers in the absence of the chairperson
• Treasurer—maintains the WSO bank accounts, pays WSO bills, and makes reports on finances to WSO
• Recording Secretary—takes minutes of WSO meetings
• Corresponding Secretary—mails literature to individuals and designated CLA meeting members and answers mail sent to the CLA Post Office Box
• Voice Mail Correspondent—answers messages left on the CLA telephone line
• Webmail Correspondent—answers e-mails sent to WSO
• Public Information Officer—answers queries from news media and other sources
• Archivist—maintains CLA archives online

WSO also has several service committees. Any CLA member can join a committee, and each committee elects its own chairperson. The Cyber, Finance, and Registration Committees need new members, in particular, as well as the Bylaws and Communications Committees, which have not been meeting for some time due to lack of participation. Why not consider giving back to the Fellowship by joining a committee? Working on a committee can be very interesting. For more information, see “Not Your Grandmother’s Committees!” on page 3.

7th Tradition

The 7th Tradition states that all 12-Step groups should be self-supporting through members’ contributions. Whenever possible, groups make contributions to World Service and/or CLA-East.

How does CLA use these funds to meet its expenses and to stay in operation? They pay for:

- Literature printing
- Meeting starter kits
- Meeting lists
- Website
- Webmaster
- Phone cards
- Phone service
- Postage
- Post Office box rental
- 501(c)3 annual filings
- Incorporation fees
- Regional events
- Various office supplies

So you see, there is a lot of help for the clutterer in CLA, but there is no magic button; it takes some effort to work a successful program. As they say in A.A., “It works if you work it!”

CLArity Box (Continued from page 1)

Internet; feel free to use them if they help you. Most clutterers have found that tips by themselves do not help them to maintain clutter-free environments.

CLA is focused on helping us solve our clutter problems by tackling the inner causes of our cluttering, rather than the symptoms. We do this by working the 12 Steps, which are based on those of Alcoholics Anonymous, and are the basis of the CLA program of recovery. (See the “Twelve & Twelve FAQs” article on page 1 and articles in back issues of CLArity for more information.)

The CLA Tools of Recovery, like carmarking and streamlining, have helped many clutterers. They are printed in both the leaflet, “A Brief Guide” and the booklet, “Is CLA for You? A Newcomer’s Guide to Recovery.” CLArity back issues contain articles on all of the tools.

By attending CLA meetings, we find that we are not alone in this disease. When we share our experience, strength, and hope, not only do we help ourselves come to grips with our clutter problems, but also other clutterers may find insights into their own problems by listening to our shares.
Twelve & Twelve FAQs

What would help me work the Steps?

Working the Steps is not always easy, but it can be a path to joy, serenity, and freedom from the chains of the subconscious mind.

What would help most in working the Steps? Doing it with the aid of a sponsor and learning to rely on your Higher Power. To get any real benefit from working the Steps, it is important to be open and honest with ourselves.

Generally, working the Steps involves writing about them. Until the Literature Committee publishes a workbook on working the Steps, many sponsors use material from other 12-Step programs to guide their sponsees in working the Steps.

Most sponsors use a series of questions, while others have few questions but use a more open-ended writing format. If a sponsor does not seem to be working out, try to find one who’s more suitable. At present, CLA has few members who sponsor, and it may take some effort to find another one, though it is well worth it.

How much benefit we get from working the Steps depends largely on ourselves. If we answer questions or write about the Steps in a superficial way, we may gain little. If we are willing to search deeply for our answers and be honest with ourselves, we may gain an amazing sense of freedom and joy. The biggest keys are honesty, openmindedness, and willingness. Most people in this and other Fellowships have to go through the process of working the Steps many times during their lives, each time being able to learn more and gain greater freedom.

However, we don’t work the Steps once, be cured, and then never need to visit them again. In order to get the benefit, ultimately we need to continue with Steps 10 through 12—meaning we use them daily. In other words, we continue to take a quick daily inventory, admitting promptly when we are wrong, seek to follow the will of our Higher Power, and carry the message to others. It is through this continuous daily use of the Steps that we attain true peace and contentment.

(See “Twelve & Twelve FAQs,” page 7)

Not Your Grandmother’s Committees! (Continued from page 3)

CLA Committees

• Cyber: meets one hour every 1-3 weeks. Help to determine the content, design, and operation of the CLA website, www.ClutterersAnonymous.net. No programming experience is needed, but familiarity with the Internet is recommended.

• Finance: meets once a month. Help to establish the CLA World Service Organization (WSO) budget and allocate funds to CLA committees. Also develop, implement, and oversee policies and procedures in all matters concerning the finances of WSO. No accounting background is required.

• CLArity (CLA’s quarterly newsletter): meets one hour every week. Help to determine the content of each issue, write and/or edit articles, proof the final copies, and assist with the operation of CLArity. Assist the committee: edit or write articles, up to four times a year. CLArity members are happy to provide guidance.
   For all editors: no experience required, but a good basic understanding of English language, spelling, and grammar is recommended. All writers are welcome; no experience is necessary.

• Communications (currently not meeting due to lack of members): meets once a month. Help to facilitate a forum where individuals of any committee or group may present ideas, suggestions, or grievances for discussion. Prospective chairpersons should work good personal programs so they don’t get personally involved with the problems presented.

• All Phone Groups (Committee):
   Facilitate liaison between the phone groups and WSO. Any CLA member who attends phone groups is welcome.

• Literature: meets once a month. Help to plan, write, and edit new CLA literature, and occasionally help to revise current literature. Several exciting new literature projects are in the planning stages.

• 25th Anniversary: meets once a month. Help to plan celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of CLA. The focus is the planning of our first-ever convention, which is expected to be in the Los Angeles area in the fall of 2014.

• Registration: meets once a month. Help to create, prepare, and send out registration materials to every CLA recovery meeting contact, and assist with obtaining them. Registrations include the meeting location name and address and other pertinent information. Also, help to make sure this information is kept current.

• Bylaws: meets once a month. Help to formulate and review the regulations by which WSO operates. The bylaws are a legal document, and experience with bylaws would be a plus.

Join a committee today!
**Twelve & Twelve FAQs (Continued from page 6)**

**What are the benefits of working the Steps with a sponsor?**

It is difficult to work the Steps successfully without the guidance of a sponsor. Perhaps it is partly because there is no quick, cut-and-dried way to work the Steps—which can be seen by the various approaches sponsors use with their sponsees, although almost all involve some writing. Most people need someone to listen when they are struggling through a process which involves searching their innermost feelings and actions. A sponsor is not a therapist, but rather a fellow clutterer who can act as a mentor and guide.

But what is it that a sponsor does for a sponsee?

A sponsor is a person who has experience in working the Steps and is able to guide someone through the process. Since each of us is unique, our feelings and experiences will vary.

Our sponsor can help us to shed light on our underlying issues, which may be holding us back from recovery, and help us to incorporate the growth we have gained from the process into enriching our daily lives.

A sponsor is someone we can trust to talk about our inner feelings and listen to our clutter problems. He or she can act as a sounding board for new insights and ideas. A sponsor is a mentor who will listen when we need someone to talk to. We can also turn to them for feedback about Step and clutter issues. After all, they have probably been through the same problems with clutter as we and can always share their own experience, strength, and hope.

In the next issue, we will give ideas on ways to find a sponsor. Kathy H., CA

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**CLA Toolbox (Continued from page 2)**

Each person takes a piece of paper and then, during the week, calls the person whose name they chose. You’d be surprised how much this helps if it’s done right, though people making the calls tend to procrastinate and not call until the day before the meeting.

Over the years, we have had different types of meetings. My favorite was when we used to choose a leaflet, read it from beginning to end, and then share on it. Once a month we always have a business meeting when enough people are present. Now we take one week to read the Step of the month and one week for the Tradition, and then an open week. We can also have open shares at any time.

We have only a very small core group of people, and I’m not sure this latest format is working too well, or if it’s just the time of year when people are extra busy.

We have our meeting in a beautiful location. The garden is delightful, the sanctuary is serene, and there is a surprisingly large indoor circular labyrinth which I have walked several times when I have been in a bad mood. It does help to put things into perspective. We don’t even have to pay rent—we just have to make a very small donation. However, the place is not without its trials and tribulations, and they do challenge me.

There is a young girls’ group, for instance. They meet only once a month, but they are gleefully noisy. They have taught me that I can concentrate on the meeting even when there are distractions. Then there is the theater group. Every so often they put on plays at the church and have intense rehearsals. I love to act and I am often frustrated by envy, but this has taught me absolute loyalty to my group, which comes first. We were displaced from our usual room: another group needs our large space more than we do.

The situation is teaching me to have more patience, be more flexible, and go with the flow. Every lesson I learn is slow and painful, believe me.

Fortunately, the members of the group are my friends, and I am glad to know them and be with them on our life journey.

I go to service meetings over the phone, too. I used to be involved in a lot of them. Now I’m on just the CLArity Committee, which is extremely fulfilling for me. Although it’s not a recovery meeting as such, it has taught me the value of teamwork, friendship, and loyalty and the importance of practicing the Traditions. We meet weekly. I love the team, and working with them is always a pleasure.

We have just started our eighth year of CLArity, and I’m proud to say I’ve been with the team since the newsletter’s inception. Here’s to another eight years! Alison B., NJ
**Officers’ Corner**

Hi, my name is Jeannie. I am a clutterer and the voice mail correspondent for WSO. When you call (866) 402-6855 and leave a message, an e-mail is sent to me immediately with your voice mail attached. I have always loved working with the public and love the investigative part of this job, especially, where did that meeting go? I took on this position in September 2013.

I come from a family of clutterers —my mother, my father, and three of us five children. The others are perfectionists. I married a perfectionist, too. When I was 8 months pregnant and working full time and taking two college courses, my husband came up with a way to help me streamline washing the dishes. He would smash them on the floor. I started keeping up with the dishes. I started to plan my divorce. Our son and his wife are perfectionists too and clutter used to keep them from bringing their kids here.

When I lived with someone else—a husband, a child, a roommate—I was less of a clutterer out of not wanting to annoy them. I haven’t lived with anyone else for about 17 years. Needless to say, I accumulated a lot of stuff. When I took early retirement, I thought I would catch up and declutter. But I found too many interesting things I would rather do. I became a time clutterer.

I found the OA program and then CLA through them four-and-a-half years ago. Since then, I have found progress not perfection, especially since working the “12 and 12” with a sponsor, which I consider the key to success and abstinence. I attended the Saturday Newport Beach, California, meeting until we moved to Seal Beach last spring. The group had to go on hiatus, but two of us regulars are left and want to restart the meeting in Seal Beach or Long Beach; so if you know any clutterers who might attend, please let me know as soon as possible. Thank you for letting me be of service.

Jeannie B., CA

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**CLA Trivia**

Five years ago, CLA introduced the online shopping cart, which enables our members to make 7th Tradition contributions and order literature, meeting starter kits, and CLArity through the CLA website. Since then, while receipts via postal mail have declined, those received online have more than made up for that deficit. In fact, 7th Tradition contributions have increased more than 27%, literature orders by almost 140%, and orders for meeting starter kits by more than 43%. Total revenues for 2013 (not including CLArity, which has its own separate account) increased more than 62% in the past five years.

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**In Appreciation**

The CLArity team thanks everyone for supporting the newsletter. Our appreciation goes to our latest subscribers from Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

And a special thank you to those who are spreading the word about CLArity while doing service in CLA, in face-to-face and phone meetings, and by other means.

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**Welcome to CLArity**

CLArity is a forum where you can exchange your ideas and your experience, strength, and hope with others in the CLA Fellowship.

- Take action to be heard in our community:
  Send a “letter to the editor” to CLArity, 184 South Livingston Ave., Ste. 9-203, Livingston, NJ 07039 or an email to: ClarityNwsltr@yahoo.com. All requests for anonymity will be respected.

- Share CLArity with a friend.