

A Brief Guide

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Clutterers Anonymous

Preamble

Clutterers Anonymous (CLA) is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem with clutter and help each other to recover.

We achieve this as individuals, groups, and a fellowship by practicing our 12 Steps of recovery and by being guided by our 12 Traditions. Each of them embodies a set of principles for living life effectively, inside and outside CLA.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop cluttering. There are no dues or fees for membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. Our Fellowship is based on suggestion, interchange of experience, rotation of leadership, and service.

Clutterers Anonymous is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology, or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to stop cluttering one day at a time and to carry this message of recovery to clutterers who still suffer.

How Do I Know If I'm a Clutterer?

1. Do you have more possessions than you can comfortably handle?
2. Are you embarrassed to invite family, friends, health care providers, or maintenance workers into your home because it is not presentable?
3. Do you find it easier to drop something instead of putting it away, or to wedge it into an overcrowded drawer or closet rather than finding space for it?
4. Is your home, or any part of it, unusable for its intended purpose, with a bed you can't sleep in, a garage you can't park in, a kitchen you can't cook in, or a table you can't use for dining?

5. Is clutter causing problems at home, at work, or in your relationships?
6. Do you hesitate sharing about this problem because you feel embarrassment, guilt, or shame about it?
7. Do you have a weakness for discarded objects, bargain items, freebies, reading materials, or yard sales?
8. Do you use avoidance, distraction, or procrastination to escape dealing with your clutter?
9. Does your clutter create a risk of falling, fire, infestation, or eviction?
10. Do you avoid starting assignments, miss deadlines, or abandon projects because you can't find the paperwork or material you need?
11. Do you have difficulty making decisions about what to do with your possessions, daily living, or life in general?
12. Do you rent storage space to house possessions that you rarely use?
13. Do cleaning, organizing, follow through, upkeep, and maintenance all become daunting tasks, making the simplest of chores insurmountable?
14. Do you bring an item into your home without designating a place for it and releasing an equivalent one?
15. Do you believe that there is all the time in the world to clean your house, finish those projects, and read all those piles of old magazines or newspapers?
16. Are you easily sidetracked, moving from one project to another, without finishing any of them?
17. Are you constantly doing things for others while your own home is out of order?
18. Do you often replace possessions rather than find or clean those you already have?
19. Does perfectionism keep you from doing anything at all?
20. Does clutter cause you to have late charges added to your monthly financial obligations?
21. Do you feel a strong sense of emotional attachment towards your possessions, which makes it difficult to release them?
22. Do you consider all your possessions to be of equal worth, whether or not the objects have financial, functional, or sentimental value?
23. Do you waste your valuable time and talents by constantly rescuing yourself from clutter?
24. Does clutter keep you from enjoying quality leisure time?
25. Is the clutter problem growing?

If you have answered yes to some of these questions, you are not alone, and CLA is here for you.

Tools of Recovery

In working the Clutterers Anonymous program of recovery from cluttering, we have found that there are a number of tools available to assist us. We use these tools to help us achieve and maintain physical, mental, and spiritual sobriety. Many of us have found that we cannot abstain from compulsive cluttering unless we use some, or all, of the tools. **ACTION** is the magic word. We have found that these actions are helpful to create an environment of harmony, order, beauty, and serenity for us.

1. **Service:** The CLA program gives us the opportunity to enhance our own progress by taking on various service responsibilities, from holding office to doing cleanup. As we serve, we risk moving out of isolation, to grow, and to practice the principles of our program within the Fellowship. Service is giving back to the Fellowship.
2. **Meetings:** We attend meetings to learn how the program works and to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. Meetings give us an opportunity to identify with others who have our common problem and move out of isolation.
3. **Sponsorship:** Sponsorship is a personal and confidential, one-on-one relationship between two clutterers. Sponsorship helps both the sponsor and sponsee. It is customary that a sponsor have a sponsor. The CLA sponsor guides the sponsee through the program and the 12 Steps and is not necessarily a friend, but someone in whom we can confide.

Sponsors share their program up to the level of their Step experience, strength, and hope. Choosing a sponsor involves going to several meetings to find someone with whom we can identify— someone who has the type of recovery that we want.

4. **Literature:** Clutterers Anonymous uses only its own Fellowship-approved literature and that of Alcoholics Anonymous in meetings. Literature is an always-available tool that helps us gain insight, as well as strength, to deal with our problems.
5. **Bookending:** We bookend when we talk to other CLA members before and after taking difficult steps in our recovery. This way we can hold ourselves accountable for completing a specific task or project.
6. **Buddies:** Buddies are CLA members and helpmates in recovery. We may call them with our daily plan or ask for help with a project. The buddy and sponsor may or may not be the same person.
7. **Daily action:** We do something each day to further our recovery, doing what we can, no matter how small. Our goal is progress, not perfection.
8. **Earmarking:** We provide a place for our possessions and return them there. We create a home for anything before bringing it in. When we add a new item, we release an old one. For accessibility, beauty, and peace of mind, we keep some empty space.
9. **Focusing:** Our goal is to do one thing at a time.
10. **Streamlining:** We honor what we own by setting limits on our possessions. We keep only those items we use and for which we have space. We realize that the more we acquire, the less we enjoy what we already have.
11. **Telephone:** We use the phone to keep in touch with other members of the Fellowship between meetings. Talking on the phone helps both members.
12. **Trust:** We simplify our lives, believing that when we need a fact or an item, it will be available to us.

The 12 Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over clutter—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 God.
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 God 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 God, praying only for knowledge of God's 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, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The 12 Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CLA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for CLA membership is a desire to stop cluttering.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CLA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the person who still suffers.
6. A CLA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the Clutterers Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every CLA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Clutterers Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Clutterers Anonymous, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. CLA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the Clutterers Anonymous 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, films, television, and all other media.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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