

Newcomers Handbook
Co-Dependents Anonymous

Co-Dependents Anonymous
Newcomers Handbook ©

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Name:

*Date of
1st CoDA Meeting:*

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The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the Serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and Wisdom to know the difference.

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PREAMBLE[©]

THE CO-DEPENDENTS ANONYMOUS PROGRAM OF RECOVERY

Co-Dependents Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships. The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy and loving relationships. We gather together to support and share with each other in a journey of self-discovery – learning to love the self. Living the program allows each of us to become increasingly honest with ourselves about our personal histories and our own codependent behaviors.

We rely upon the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for knowledge and wisdom. These are the principles of our program and guides to developing honest and fulfilling relationships with ourselves and others. In CoDA, we each learn to build a bridge to a Higher Power of our own understanding, and we allow others the same privilege.

This renewal process is a gift of healing for us. By actively working the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous, we can each realize a new joy, acceptance, and serenity in our lives.

CoDA Opening Prayer[©]

*In the spirit of love and truth, we ask our Higher Power
to guide us as we share our experience, strength, and hope.*

*We open our hearts to the light of wisdom,
the warmth of love, and the joy of acceptance.*

CoDA Closing Prayer[©]

*We thank our Higher Power
for all that we have received from this meeting.
As we close, may we take with us
the wisdom, love, acceptance, and hope of recovery.*

WELCOME®

We welcome you to Co-Dependents Anonymous, a program of recovery from codependence, where each of us may share our experience, strength, and hope in our efforts to find freedom where there has been bondage, and peace where there has been turmoil in our relationships with others and ourselves.

Most of us have been searching for ways to overcome the dilemmas of the conflicts in our relationships and our childhoods. Many of us were raised in families where addictions existed – some of us were not. In either case, we have found in each of our lives that codependence is a most deeply-rooted, compulsive behavior, and that it is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional family systems.

We have each experienced in our own ways the painful trauma of the emptiness of our childhood and relationships throughout our lives. We attempted to use others—our mates, our friends, and even our children, as our sole source of identity, value, and well-being, and as a way of trying to restore within us the emotional losses from our childhoods. Our histories may include other powerful addictions which at times we have used to cope with our codependence.

We have all learned to survive life, but in CoDA we are learning to live life. Through applying the Twelve Steps and principles found in CoDA to our daily life and relationships, both present and past, we can experience a new freedom from our self-defeating lifestyles. It is an individual growth process. Each of us is growing at our own pace and will continue to do so as we remain open to God's will for us on a daily basis. Our sharing is our way of identification and helps us to free the emotional bonds of our past and the compulsive control of our present.

No matter how traumatic your past or despairing your present may seem, there is hope for a new day in the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. No longer do you need to rely on others as a power greater than yourself. May you instead find here a new strength within to be that which God intended – Precious and Free.

THE TWELVE STEPS © **of Co-Dependents Anonymous**

1. We admitted we were powerless over others, 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 other codependents and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions are adapted and printed with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS © **of Co-Dependents Anonymous**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving Higher Power as expressed to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership in CoDA is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.
4. Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer.
6. A CoDA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the CoDA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim.
7. Every CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. CoDA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. CoDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the CoDA 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, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions; ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

THE TWELVE PROMISES ©

of Co-Dependents Anonymous

I can expect a miraculous change in my life by working the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. As I make an honest effort to work the Twelve Steps and follow the Twelve Traditions...

1. I know a new sense of belonging. The feelings of emptiness and loneliness will disappear.
2. I am no longer controlled by my fears. I overcome my fears and act with courage, integrity, and dignity.
3. I know a new freedom.
4. I release myself from worry, guilt, and regret about my past and present. I am aware enough not to repeat it.
5. I know a new love and acceptance of myself and others. I feel genuinely lovable, loving, and loved.
6. I learn to see myself as equal to others. My new and renewed relationships are all with equal partners.
7. I am capable of developing and maintaining healthy and loving relationships. The need to control and manipulate others will disappear as I learn to trust those who are trustworthy.
8. I learn that it is possible for me to mend – to become more loving, intimate, and supportive. I have the choice of communicating with my family in a way which is safe for me and respectful of them.
9. I acknowledge that I am a unique and precious creation.
10. I no longer need to rely solely on others to provide my sense of worth.
11. I trust the guidance I receive from my Higher Power and come to believe in my own capabilities.
12. I gradually experience serenity, strength, and spiritual growth in my daily life.

THE FOUR PARTS

OF OUR PROGRAM

I ATTENDING MEETINGS

Attending meetings is necessary for recovery in the CoDA program. Individual recovery does not occur in isolation. If it did, there would be no need for CoDA as a group. A codependent attends meetings for his/her personal recovery, and this attendance benefits everyone. Attendance creates the group, which is then supportive of its members. Without attendance, there would be no group.

It is suggested that a person attend six meetings before they decide if CoDA is right for them. Meetings are not all the same. If a person does not feel that he/she fits in at a certain meeting, they may find that the next week, if they return, there are different people there, and they may feel more comfortable. Or he/she can try attending a different CoDA meeting. There are men's meetings, women's meetings, Spanish meetings, open meetings, closed meetings, Step meetings, book meetings, beginner meetings, and others. Meeting lists are usually available on the literature table, or you can check www.coda.org.

II SHARING & FELLOWSHIP

Sharing is done at several levels in CoDA. The word “sharing” refers to sharing your experience, strength, and hope with others. On one level, it means telling a part of your recovery story. At regular meetings there are usually two forms of sharing. First, a codependent may share his/her entire recovery story by being the speaker for the meeting. Second, smaller parts of personal recovery stories are shared in the small sharing groups after the main speaker. This is an excellent place to tell about a new piece of recovery, even before you know how it fits into your whole story. It is also a wonderful forum for talking about what is currently going on in your life. Every CoDA member has an opportunity to share at every meeting. The only requirement for membership in CoDA is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.

There are many benefits to attending CoDA meetings. An opportunity to share is one. Everyone is given an opportunity to share, but no one is forced to. Regardless of the meeting format, if a person does not wish to share, he/she may state his/her first name and say, “I pass,” or, “I’ll just listen.” Another benefit is fellowship. One of the basic human needs is to belong. Attending meetings and sharing fulfills this basic need. Much sharing is done in casual gatherings such as coffee hours after meetings, potluck dinners, picnics, and barbecues. Many CoDA members think of each other as family.

III WORKING THE STEPS

CoDA is a program of recovery based on working the Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous. To that end, the Fellowship of CoDA functions as a program of group support. Whatever problem a codependent is struggling with when he or she enters the program, working the Steps is the answer for many. Every person who works the program receives therapeutic benefit, but our program is not therapy. Rather it is a program of self-help, self-discovery, and self-definition.

Applying the Steps and practicing the Traditions helps a person to realize that many of his/her problems have a solution. The promise of the program is that when a member is diligent in working the program, he/she will achieve recovery over personal problems of codependence. Recovery occurs differently for everyone. The only generality that seems to be a common denominator is that codependents who work and follow the program increase their own spirituality.

IV SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship is an important part of the CoDA program. It is the newcomer’s responsibility to select a sponsor. It is recommended that a newcomer choose a sponsor with whom they would not possibly become romantically involved. A sponsor is there to hear your beginning story when you are new in the program and to guide you through the Steps.