

# *Newcomers Handout*

*Freedom Group New Westminster, BC*

*(Not for Resale)*



## **PREAMBLE**

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.

## **WELCOME** (Short Version)

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.

Codependence is a deeply-rooted, compulsive behaviour. It is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional family systems. We attempted to use others as our sole source of identity, value, well-being, and as a way of trying to restore our emotional losses. Our histories may include other powerful addictions which we have used to cope with our codependency.

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 lives and relationships, both present and past, we can experience a new freedom from our self-defeating lifestyles. Our sharing 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. May you find 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 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. A 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 to 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 feeling 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. 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 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.

### **Some Recovery Resources Include:**

- Codependents Anonymous Meetings
- Adult Children Anonymous Meetings
- Therapists Trained in codependency Issues
- Seminars and Workshops
- Recovery Books and Tapes

### **Some of the CoDA approved books on codependency issues:**

- CoDA Book - Soft Cover (In-depth reading on recovery)
- 12 Steps and Traditions Workbook Spiral Bound (workbook on the steps and traditions)
- In This Moment Daily Meditation Book (daily meditation book on codependency)
- Tools for Recovery (Members share experience, strength & hope with different tools useful in their recovery.)
- Peeling the Onion (Characteristics of Codependents revisited - Codependents Look at Love, Sex, & Relationship Addiction and Avoidance.)
- 12 Step Handbook
- Newcomers Handbook
- Common Threads of Codependency (Codependents talk about codependency, recovery, relapse and authenticity.)

### **CROSSTALK**

In CoDA meetings we share with others what we have experienced and learned in our current and past relationships. The reason for the cross-talk statement is to make CoDA a safe place for every Codependent to share his or her feelings, without fear of judgment or ridicule. This safety enables a person to experience vulnerability and develop trust. In a CoDA group, each individual is allowed to express feelings honestly and openly without fear that someone will minimize, challenge, or re-interpret those feelings. The Cross-talk statement is there for our mutual protection, growth and recovery.

We don't cross talk because as Codependents we are accustomed to trying to "fix" others. A part of our sickness lies in focusing on others' behavior and losing touch with ourselves. We also concern ourselves too much with what other people think and how they feel about us. Also many of us have become accustomed to taking care of others and not taking responsibility for our own lives. We don't cross talk, but we do talk about what has or has not worked for us.

Cross talk is any verbal or physical response to another person's sharing. Interrupting, asking questions, and offering advice are considered to be cross talk in CoDA. Physical touching is also considered cross talk. In CoDA we encourage the use of "I" statements as a way of focusing the speaker's attention on their individual experience. The use of the words "you" and "we" is discouraged, as these relate more to other people's experiences. Other forms of cross talk include: Care taking, comforting, referring back to a person by name, commenting on what someone has said, replying directly to what someone has said; and discussing people, places or things that don't pertain to your recovery.

If you wish to give feedback to what anyone had to say tonight, please feel free to approach them after the meeting. Please be aware that should you unknowingly engage in cross talk, another group member may point out that they believe you are cross talking, and ask that you express yourself in a

way that is consistent with these guidelines. Given time, it soon becomes clear what it means to share in an environment free of cross talk. It is this form of sharing that makes our group safe, supportive, healthy and magical.

## **Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence**

These patterns and characteristics are offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation. They may be particularly helpful to newcomers.

### **Denial Patterns:**

I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.

I minimize, alter, or deny how I truly feel.

I perceive myself as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.

I lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others. I label others with my negative traits.

I can take care of myself without any help from others.

I mask my pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.

I express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.

I do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom I am attracted.

### **Low Self Esteem Patterns:**

I have difficulty making decisions.

I judge what I think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.

I am embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.

I value others' approval of my thinking, feelings, and behavior over my own.

I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person.

I constantly seek recognition that I think I deserve.

I have difficulty admitting that I made a mistake.

I need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and will even lie to look good.

I am unable to ask others to meet my needs or desires.

I perceive myself as superior to others.

I look to others to provide my sense of safety.

I have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.

I have trouble setting healthy priorities.

### **Compliance Patterns:**

I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.

I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.

I put aside my own interests in order to do what others want.

I am hypervigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.

I am afraid to express my beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.

I accept sexual attention when I want love. I make decisions without regard to the consequences.

I give up my truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.

### **Control Patterns:**

I believe most people are incapable of taking care of themselves.

I attempt to convince others what to think, do, or feel.

I freely offer advice and direction to others without being asked.

I become resentful when others decline my help or reject my advice.

I lavish gifts and favors on those I want to influence.

I use sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance.  
I have to be needed in order to have a relationship with others.  
I demand that my needs be met by others. I use charm and charisma to convince others of my capacity to be caring and compassionate.  
I use blame and shame to emotionally exploit others.  
I refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.  
I adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes.  
I use terms of recovery in an attempt to control the behavior of others.  
I pretend to agree with others to get what I want.

#### **Avoidance Patterns:**

I act in ways that invite others to reject, shame, or express anger toward me.  
I judge harshly what others think, say, or do.  
I avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a means of maintaining distance.  
I allow my addictions to people, places, and things to distract me from achieving intimacy in relationships.  
I use indirect and evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation. I diminish my capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use all the tools of recovery.  
I suppress my feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable.  
I pull people toward me, but when they get close,  
I push them away. I refuse to give up my self-will to avoid surrendering to a power that is greater than myself.  
I believe displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.  
I withhold expressions of appreciation.

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#### **Signs of Unhealthy Boundaries**

- Telling All
- Talking at an intimate level on the first meeting.
- Falling in love with a new acquaintance.
- Falling in love with anyone who reaches out.
- Begin overwhelmed by a person –preoccupied.
- Acting on first sexual impulse.
- Being sexual for partner, not for self.
- Going against personal values or rights to please other.
- Not noticing when someone else displays inappropriate boundaries.
- Not noticing when someone invades your boundaries.
- Accepting food, gifts, touch, sex that you don't want.
- Touching a person without asking.
- Taking as much as you can get for the sake of getting.
- Giving as much as you can give for the sake of giving.
- Allowing someone to take as much as they can from you.
- Letting others direct your life.
- Letting others describe your reality.
- Letting others define you.
- Believing others can anticipate your needs.
- Expecting others to fill your needs automatically.
- Falling apart so someone will take care of you.
- Self-abuse.
- Sexual and physical abuse.
- Food abuse.

## EMOTIONAL BILL OF RIGHTS

1. I have the right to feel better through my own efforts rather than expect the passage of time or anyone else to do it for me.
2. I have the right to feel good about my achievements even if I haven't reached all my goals
3. I have the right to feel good when I am living my life in a way that is good for me and that doesn't hurt others.
4. I have the right to be happy even if not loved by every one for everything I do.
5. I have the right to delay expressing my feelings when that would not be in my best interest.
6. I have the right not to feel miserable even if others do.
7. I have the right to feel good even if I have not met some other person's expectations for me.
8. I have the right to express my angry feelings in a responsible manner.
9. I have the right to express my loving feelings even though other people may not choose to do so.
10. I have the right to experience any feelings if I want to.
11. I have the right to feel very sad when feeling sad makes sense.
12. I have the right to any feeling without having to make my life conform to it.
13. I have the right not to feel guilty (just because I don't feel the same way others do.)
14. I have the right to change the way I feel about things, even though I have always felt that way



## Tools of Recovery

*The twelve steps of Codependents Anonymous* is a program of recovery. The tools are some methods through which we work the twelve steps. A tool is a means to an end. It can never be an end in itself.

In order for a tool to work, it must be used. So, too with our tools of recovery. Unless we act upon them, there can be no recovery

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|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Abstinence  | 7. Business/Meeting |
| 2. Sponsorship | 8. Prayer/Meditatio |
| 3. Meetings    | 9. Writing          |
| 4. Telephone   | 10. Fellowship      |
| 5. Literature  | 11. Slogans         |
| 6. Service     | 12. Anonymity       |

### Abstinence

In Codependents Anonymous, abstinence means to abstain from obsessive, compulsive relationships. There are no absolutes for abstinence. It is both a tool that facilitates working the twelve steps and a result of living the steps.

As a tool, abstinence brings the symptom of Codependency to an immediate halt. We willingly adopt disciplined, well-balanced boundaries. From this vantage point, we can begin to follow the twelve-step recovery program a day at a time. Now, we are able to move beyond the compulsive behavior to a fuller living experience.

As a result of practicing the twelve-step program, the symptom of Codependency is removed on a daily basis. Thus, abstinence is also an attitude change directly due to the program.

Abstinence also means: freedom from bondage of obsessive relationships, planning and developing a manner of living that puts relationships in their proper perspective, trusting that a power greater than ourselves has removed the compulsion to overact, or at such times when it is experienced, we need not react at all, because we have the power to resist, the process of surrendering to something greater than ourselves, the more total our surrender, the more fully realized our freedom from Codependent behavior.

### Sponsorship

Sponsors are CODA members who are committed to abstinence and to living the twelve steps and twelve traditions to the best of their ability.

We ask a sponsor to guide us through our program of recovery on all three levels: Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual. In working with other members of CODA and sharing their experience, strength, and hope, sponsors continually, renew and reaffirm their own growth. Sponsors share their program up to the level of their own experience. Ours is a program of attraction, find a sponsor who has what you want and ask how it was achieved. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors at will.

## Meetings

Meetings are gatherings of two or more compulsive Codependents who come together to share their experience before and after recovery and to share the strength and hope CODA has given them. Though there are many kinds of meetings, fellowship is the basis of all of them. Meetings are an opportunity for us to identify and confirm our common problem by relating to one another and by sharing the gifts we receive through this program.

## Telephone

Codependency is a disease of isolation. The telephone is a means of communicating with another Codependent between meetings. It provides an immediate outlet of those hard to handle highs and lows we all experience. The telephone is also a daily link to our sponsors and, as part of the surrender process, is a tool by which we learn to ask for help, reach out and extend that same help to others.

## Anonymity

Anonymity is a tool as well as a tradition because it guarantees that we will place principles before personalities. It offers each of us freedom of expression and protection against gossip. Anonymity assures us that only we as individual CODA members have the right to make our membership known within our community.

Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and television means that we never allow our last names or faces to be used once we identify ourselves as CODA members.

Within the fellowship, anonymity means that whatever we share with another CODA member will be held in respect and confidence. What we hear at meetings should remain there. It would be understood however, that anonymity must not be used to limit our effectiveness within the Fellowship. It is not a break of anonymity to give our names and addresses to the secretary of our group or to other service offices of CODA for the purpose of conducting CODA business, which is primarily twelve-step work. It is likewise not a break of anonymity to enlist twelve step help for group members in trouble provided we are careful to omit specific personal information. If their disease has reactivated and we persist in protecting their anonymity, we may in effect help kill them and their anonymity.

## Literature

We read the CoDA 'Blue Book' as well as the 'Twelve Steps and Traditions', to reinforce our program. We also read approved CODA literature on a daily basis. The literature impresses on us certain basic truths we have found vital to our growth. Our CODA literature is a tool that gives insight into our problem as well as strength to deal with it, and the very real hope that there is a solution for us

## Writing

In addition to writing our inventories and a list of people we have harmed, most of us have found that writing has been an indispensable tool for working the steps. Further, placing our thoughts and feelings on paper, or describing a troubling incident, helps us to better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed to us by simply thinking or talking about them. In the past, codependent behavior was our most common reaction to life. When we put our difficulties down on paper, it becomes easier to see situations more clearly and perhaps better discern any necessary action.

## Service

Carrying the message to the codependent that still suffers is the basic purpose of our fellowship and therefore the most fundamental form of service. Any service, no matter how small, that will help reach a fellow sufferer adds to the quality of our own recovery. Putting away chairs, making coffee, talking to newcomers, doing whatever needs to be done in a group or for CODA as a whole are ways in which we give back what we have so generously been given. Do what you can when you can. A life of sane and happy usefulness is what we are promised as the result of working the twelve steps. Service fulfills that promise.

Always to extend the hand and heart of CoDA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible.

## Working At Recovery:

The Components to working a program includes:

Establishing fellowship with other recovering people, attending meetings, and listening to others talk about their recovery. Between meetings, we often call another person in recovery or they call us. Many of us find it helpful to read a meditation book daily to help us stay on track. Between meetings, we try to focus on the steps and other recovery concepts, caretaking, shame, and self-neglect. Then we use the steps to help us work out the issues in our lives and move forward through the problem to a solution. Working the steps requires that we become open to what these steps mean to us and what they will do for us. We do not have to work the steps perfectly, we don't even need to wonder if we are doing them well enough, we only need to work them the best we can. Recovery should emphasize where we are going, and where we have been. Although understanding our past is sometimes necessary to go forward, most of us will find that an honest, sincere, and humble effort will work. Put some fun into your life, no matter how small at first. There is no purpose to recovery unless you can enjoy it.

*Always to extend the hand and heart of CODA to all who share my compulsion.  
For this I am responsible.*

CoDA has three suggested prayers that are  
Conference approved as CoDA literature:

**The 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.

Conference Endorsed 9/13/91

**The 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.

Conference Endorsed 9/13/91

Another prayer commonly used at CoDA meetings is the Serenity Prayer, as follows:

**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

Conference Endorsed 1989

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*CoDA literature can be ordered from Co-Dependents Recovery Society (CDRS) [www.cdrs.ca](http://www.cdrs.ca)  
Email: [literature\\_orders@cdrs.ca](mailto:literature_orders@cdrs.ca) or visit their website [www.cdrsestore.ca](http://www.cdrsestore.ca)  
CoDA outreach - [outreach@cdrs.ca](mailto:outreach@cdrs.ca)*