



## 13TH STEPPING

### **What is it?**

13<sup>th</sup> stepping in CoDA can be clarified and addressed openly, with no shame or blame. 13<sup>th</sup> Stepping is sometimes referred to as "hitting on newcomers." It can also simply be defined as making inappropriate romantic and/or sexual advances to members, under the guise of helping with recovery. 13<sup>th</sup> stepping could include attending only to find dates. It also could include sexual innuendos and joking to control or embarrass someone else in the program.

13<sup>th</sup> stepping does not apply to all dating within CoDA or other 12 step programs. It may sometimes be considered appropriate for those with similar amounts of time to date, as we may choose those in active recovery, and/or who are supportive of our own, in order to pursue healthy relationships.

### **Why might it happen?**

As newcomers, we usually begin recovery during a painful time, and we are likely feeling vulnerable. As children, we may have been so desperate for someone to love us, that it may feel nearly impossible to recognize an inappropriate gesture or turn down an offer that appeals to us as an adult. As codependents, a new romantic relationship may be our favorite drug-of-choice. Even those who have been in recovery for awhile may still be growing in awareness and working through these issues. Rescuing and caretaking by another member, especially in the guise of helping with recovery, may appear to be nurturing, supportive, and feel very good to us.

If however, there is a romantic/sexual agenda, it is considered 13<sup>th</sup> stepping. CoDA is a group of people whose common problem is an inability to maintain healthy, mature, functional relationships. Many codependents also have issues with love and sex addiction, and members may act consciously or unconsciously in these ways. We may meet members with unclear boundaries, or who are not aware of their deeper motives .

### **What can I do?**

A newcomer is encouraged to say "No" to any anyone or anything that is uncomfortable for them. As adults in recovery we are learning to choose healthy relationships and set boundaries where needed.

We suggest that if a newcomer is not now in a romantic relationship or is ending one at this time, that they not enter a new romantic relationship for at least one year upon beginning in CoDA. Likewise, it is also suggested that if one is already in a relationship when entering CoDA, he or she may want to wait a year to before making a choice to end it. The exception is if the relationship is abusive. As codependents newly in recovery it may not be clear what is abusive; to help identify abusive behavior, it can be helpful to talk with a sponsor, and/or a counselor. We allow ourselves time to develop new recovery tools, healthier behaviors and better boundaries to replace our old dysfunctional patterns. We allow ourselves time to build our relationships with ourselves and our Higher Power before entering into a new relationship.

In CoDA we learn that healthy, safe and supportive friendships encourage independent thinking and responsibility for self. These healthy friendships allow space for others to grow at their own pace. In healthy friendships the individuals are willing to discuss and accommodate differences, and there is no shame and manipulation.

Together, we can strive to keep CoDA meetings a safe place to be vulnerable and be supported in our recovery.

*Note: this was written by Washington State fellowship.  
This was approved 9/2006*