

Co-Dependents Anonymous

Twelve Service Concepts

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Contents

<i>The Service Concepts,</i>	
<i>Alive & Strong!</i>	4
<i>Service Concept One</i>	6
<i>Service Concept Two</i>	8
<i>Service Concept Three</i>	10
<i>Service Concept Four</i>	13
<i>Service Concept Five</i>	16
<i>Service Concept Six</i>	19
<i>Service Concept Seven</i>	21
<i>Service Concept Eight</i>	23
<i>Service Concept Nine</i>	26
<i>Service Concept Ten</i>	28
<i>Service Concept Eleven</i>	30
<i>Service Concept Twelve</i>	32
<i>In Closing</i>	35

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.

CoDA'S TWELVE SERVICE CONCEPTS

“The Service Concepts, Alive & Strong!”

Introductory Message

CoDA is a spiritual program with elements of spirituality interwoven throughout its code of principles and guidelines (Steps, Traditions, Promises, and Service Concepts). Spirituality is found in healthy groups and healthy sponsor-sponsee relationships, and it is found in healthy recovery. It is the glue that unifies the entire Fellowship to work together for the common welfare of all its members. CoDA promotes its spiritual principles and guidelines at all levels of the CoDA structure, including our service work, which is guided by the Twelve Service Concepts.

The Twelve Service Concepts may be underappreciated. One purpose of this booklet is to provide a different perspective on the significance of these principles in personal recovery as well as service work. They are another set of tools, so to speak, that we can “practice in all our affairs.” This booklet will hopefully convey how CoDA’s Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts come together to help us experience the Twelve Promises, one day at a time. We will learn that the Service Concepts provide principles and guidelines that codependents can apply in their service work while considering “attraction rather than promotion.” It can be added that the Concepts provide a specific application of the principles found in our Traditions. These Service Concepts are tools that we can put into practice in our recovery work.

Together with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, the Service Concepts open up another level of spiritual connection that codependents can experience with one another and with the Fellowship as a whole. They are a source of spiritual guidance for *all members* of CoDA, and not solely for those in service work. The Service Concepts do serve as a framework providing trusted servants with direction and making them accountable for the work they do, like a spiritual lighthouse shining its light outward.

The Service Concepts are the next level in our recovery, as our Step Twelve states; this program of ours teaches us how to “practice these principles in all our affairs.” Furthermore, Tradition 3 encourages us, as codependents, to learn about how to build healthy relationships in our work with others. The founding fathers of the Twelve-step program model discovered service to be a crucial component in their recovery. As codependents in a Twelve-step program, we move forward in our explorations, learning how the Service Concepts can aid in our continued transformation towards healthier lives and more loving relationships.

Through principles and guidelines, there is a spiritual interaction between the members, especially in the group conscience decision-making process that is used in service work. No matter where our HP leads us in our daily lives—CoDA’s SERVICE CONCEPTS MATTER IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS!

Some of the acronyms that appear in this document are:

HP = Higher Power FSM = Fellowship Service Manual
GC = Group Conscience GSR = Group Service Representative
CSC = CoDA Service Conference

The format used for the following Service Concepts recovery work presents each of the Twelve Service Concepts along with an explanation of their significance. At the end of each Service Concept is a Summary of the Service Concept, including a major topic, the essence of the message, and each Concept’s Spiritual Principles within. Afterward, there is a list of questions for personal contemplation and/or group discussion.

The booklet can be used by individual members seeking to deepen their understanding of the Service Concepts and how service translates into more recovery. The Concepts may be a source of study between sponsors and their sponsees and are another recovery tool for workshops and regular meetings.

SERVICE CONCEPT ONE

The members of the Fellowship of Co-Dependents Anonymous, in carrying out the will of a loving Higher Power, advance their individual recoveries, work to ensure the continuance of their groups and their program, and carry the message to codependents who still suffer. They may also collectively authorize and establish service boards or committees and empower trusted servants to perform service work.

Concept 1 refers to *the message* of hope we are asked by our loving Higher Power to share with members and non-members alike. When interacting with family, friends, acquaintances or strangers who are not in a recovery program, we may be tempted to ask “Who is *really* codependent and who is not?” It does not matter who *is* codependent, as it is not for us to judge or decide who is or who isn’t. What *does* matter is that *we are codependent*.

Sharing the message of recovery with other “*codependents who still suffer*” may be done in the most trying of circumstances. In recovery, we may face people and situations that trigger our codependence regularly requiring us to use our recovery tools. In recovery, we are learning to ‘respond’ rather than ‘react’ in an inappropriate manner; we are learning to be respectful and courteous. We are learning to love ourselves and to love others we may know well or not so well. Are we able to choose tolerance and patience when we are faced with daily challenges? We can thus cultivate compassion for others; we are able to choose tolerance and exercise courage in the face of fear. When we allow our Higher Power to show us how to *be* at any moment, we can rise above our struggles on the wings of humility and acceptance.

By doing Step work, we improve our behaviours and become examples and messengers of recovery for those we come in contact with, in our groups, in the Fellowship, and in all our relationships. When we consider how our groups and the Fellowship have helped us discover the difference between codependence and maturity, we realize that we can project a very strong message of hope to those who are still suffering. If we feel that difference within ourselves, others may see that difference as well, showing what is possible for them within the CoDA program.

Any member of CoDA, newcomer or ‘old-timer’ alike, can take on service roles; this is the opportunity to learn and practice the Traditions. Service work includes opening the door and setting up the meeting room, showing up at a meeting and sharing, making coffee, being responsible for finances or literature, taking minutes for group conscience (GC) decisions, or empowering a committee to carry on a specific task for the group or Fellowship as a whole—service work is service work. We

are all *trusted servants*. Our Traditions and Concepts go hand in hand in promoting this principle. We do this work to ensure the continuance of the group and/or the Fellowship at large.

If no one volunteered to open the door, set up the meeting, chair the meeting, make announcements, share their personal experience, strength, and hope, count the funds from the 7th tradition, etc., there would be no meeting. Without meetings, the Fellowship could not sustain itself. We are the lifeblood of the Fellowship leading to the world CoDA Service Conference.

Summary: *CoDA service work when directed by our Higher Power's will, ensures the continuance of the CoDA program through the collective conscience of the Fellowship and its trusted servants who carry the message.*

Spiritual Principle(s): *Carrying the Message in Unity & Authority*

These questions may help you work Service Concept 1:

- 1. Which of the Twelve Steps does this encourage me to always practice while in service?*
- 2. Do I participate in any form of service work? In what way?*
- 3. If I do participate, what is my motivation for doing service work? If I don't currently do service work, why not?*
- 4. As a trusted servant, what message do I carry into my recovery and my group? Into my relationships? The Fellowship?*
- 5. What are the benefits to me of providing service for my group? For the CoDA Fellowship?*
- 6. In what way is service work carrying out the will of a loving HP?*
- 7. Are there reasons why I don't always follow my HP's Will in my recovery, my relationships, or my service work?*
- 8. Has my group had the opportunity to set up committees? If so, have I ever participated? Why or why not?*
- 9. How do I believe I carry the message to others? Has this helped my recovery? What do I believe is "the message?"*
- 10. Am I doing so much service work that I am crowding out others and possibly building up resentment within myself? If so, why?*
- 11. Is it possible that I feel that a particular meeting task (setting up, opening doors, chairing, etc.) belongs to me?*
- 12. How does doing my service work ensure the continuance of my recovery? My relationships? CoDA in general?*

SERVICE CONCEPT TWO

The Fellowship of CoDA has the responsibility of determining, through its group conscience, the service work to be performed, and the best manner to perform such work. This authority is expressed through our group conscience. Authority carries responsibility; thus, CoDA groups conscientiously provide adequate funding and support for the service work they authorize.

The Fellowship refers to all levels of CoDA; it also refers to individual groups and community service groups, such as Intergroups and national organizing bodies or voting entities. The Fellowship comes together once a year at the CoDA Service Conference (CSC) to make collective group conscience decisions regarding the service work to be performed in CoDA. Between CSCs, each group is autonomous. This means that at any level, at any time, if a group conscience is held, the group can authorize and determine with total responsibility and authority how service work is to be performed within their group unless the decision affects other groups and CoDA as a whole. As Tradition 4 states, “*Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole.*”

The group conscience is a key spiritual element of the CoDA program. It is not the personalities nor those entrusted with responsibility who determine what is to be performed and how, but the group conscience of members as guided by their individual Higher Power, as outlined in Concept 1. CoDA service work, when directed by Higher Power’s will, ensures the continuance of the CoDA program. For this reason, we view those doing service work as trusted servants—*trusted* because of the spiritual method used to decide how they will serve the Fellowship and what work they have been given to do. They are given authority and responsibility through the group conscience, and they are accountable to those they serve. Tradition 2, upheld!

What exactly is a group conscience process? As members of CoDA, we experience the group conscience process as one where all the members are asked to participate, and our Higher Power is asked to be the guiding force. When we recite the Serenity Prayer, we hand over our human will to our Higher Power, and we trust that the decision made is a spiritual one. The majority vote either supports or opposes the decision. CoDA takes the group conscience decision-making process seriously because all members are accountable and responsible for supporting the group conscience decision, not just the trusted servants (GSR, Treasurer, etc.) that were given the authority and responsibility to implement the decision. For this reason, it is very important to ensure that each member voting is aware of the impact on the group and CoDA as a whole. To

ensure this accountability, it is common practice for those in service to provide regular reports to the group conscience.

In addition to deciding what and how the work shall be completed, the CoDA group, intergroup, or voting entity is responsible for providing the resources (financial, moral, and spiritual) needed to complete the approved work. For example, if the Literature person needs funds from the Treasurer to purchase new literature, those funds are supplied. The Traditions make it clear that the funds are not individual members' personal funds but those of the group. Funds acquired by the 7th Tradition donations at our meetings make it possible for the group to be self-sufficient. (*Tradition 7—A CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*)

Summary: *The collective group conscience of the Fellowship gives its trusted servants the spiritual authority and responsibility to carry out decisions regarding CoDA service work in an accountable way. The Fellowship is responsible for adequately funding the work of trusted servants*

Spiritual Principle(s): Service & Responsibility

These questions are intended to help you work Service Concept 2:

1. *What do I believe is the purpose of the group conscience? When or where does a GC apply?*
2. *How do I participate in my group's GC? What is my role in the GC process? Am I an active participant? Why or why not?*
3. *What is the ideal way to express oneself in a GC at any level?*
4. *How would I describe my experience with having a GC in my personal life/relationships? Was it positive or not? Explain.*
5. *How do I understand 'authority' and 'responsibility' as indicated in Concept 2? How do I explain "Authority carries responsibility" in all my affairs?*
6. *How responsible has my group been in supporting its GC decisions financially and/or morally? Has it been adequate?*
7. *In what ways is my group accountable to the Fellowship?*
8. *Whose authority is expressed in my relationships? My recovery?*
9. *How do partners/participants in a relationship express their accountability?*

SERVICE CONCEPT THREE

Decisions about service work in the Fellowship and all CoDA affairs are made through the group conscience decision making process. For this spiritual democratic process to work, every member of the group is encouraged to participate, consider all the facts and options concerning the issue, listen respectfully to all opinions expressed, then reflect and meditate to find a loving Higher Power's will. Finally, we deliberate honestly and respectfully to determine the proper course of action. Unanimity in the group is the desired outcome; a majority vote is a group conscience.

Concept 3 touches on the very foundation of doing CoDA service work, i.e. working collectively to spread the message of CoDA using a spiritual and democratic group conscience process. In many ways, Concept 3 is an extension of Tradition 2, which states that the ultimate authority in our deliberations is “a loving Higher Power as expressed to our group conscience.” It describes the process by which we come to an informed group conscience. Our experience in CoDA tells us that an uninformed majority can often be wrong, but a truly informed group conscience, speaking the will of a loving Higher Power, is rarely mistaken. The group conscience process is not about “winning” or “losing” an argument. It’s about finding the will of a loving Higher Power in order to come to a solution that is best for CoDA as a whole.

In a group conscience decision-making procedure, no one governs, controls, manipulates, or uses their codependent patterns to achieve their preferred or hidden agenda. There is equanimity—everyone’s opinion has equal value and is given proper consideration. If everyone in the group agrees to the same solution, this is ideal; if not, a majority is sufficient. A CoDA group conscience decision is similar to that of a functional family where members of the family discuss an issue openly with mutual trust and respect. Members of a CoDA group conducting a group conscience decision are expected to do the same but to also seek the will or some direction from their Higher Power.

Another important factor in this decision-making process is full participation. Imagine a family unit where one or two don’t wish to participate in making any decisions and compare that to a group where most of the members don’t participate in the GC. In either case, the decision will impact everyone in the family or group. In CoDA, no one is coerced to participate, but full participation is preferred. All members are encouraged to participate, but we respect a personal decision to not participate. Out of privacy, respect, and not wanting to meddle in another’s affairs, we accept each member’s decision to be part of the process or not.

As well as having a desire for full participation, it is also important that the group conscience be fully informed and that we take special care to ensure that the minority opinion is heard. Those of us that are dealing with the disease of codependence can sometimes find it difficult to speak out against an apparent majority. Fear of conflict or criticism, or even fear of the attention of a group, have been crippling patterns for many of us. For this reason, it is the responsibility of every member—not just those who are facilitating the group conscience process—to actively seek the minority opinion by encouraging the members who have been mostly silent to speak up.

Even if we disagree with the minority opinion, it is essential that the voice of the minority be heard. The minority may have a vital piece of information that may change the majority's mind. They may see a connection to CoDA principles that the majority of members haven't considered. If the group conscience is to be truly informed, the minority must be heard, without fail.

If the minority feel 'railroaded' or 'shouted down'—if they feel (even mistakenly) that they have not been afforded a fair opportunity to participate in the deliberation—there is no real unity in the final decision. Trusted servants who are working a mature, effective program of recovery can accept a difference of opinion. They can "agree to disagree," but nobody can accept being shut out of the process. And so it becomes every member's responsibility to listen respectfully to the minority voice with an open mind.

There is a spiritual connection between this Concept and the Twelve Steps and our personal recovery. Working the Steps is a very personal and spiritual process in which we discover who we truly are. It can help us understand why we do not participate fully in family or group decision making, either with a partner or in a CoDA group conscience process. Completing our Step work and Tradition work allows us to become spiritually, emotionally, and physically available—to our families, our loved ones, at work, and in CoDA service work. We learn how to bring the will of our Higher Power into the collective decisions we make for the betterment of all concerned.

What does a healthy group conscience process look like? Depending on the issue, the GC can take up to an hour or be ten minutes or less. During the GC, we consider issues that disrupt the group's unity and health. Individually, we seek guidance from our HP in whatever way works for us and then decide what we think is the best solution. We respectfully listen to each person's viewpoint and then consider what we are willing and feeling guided to do. We may then change our opinion based on what we have heard and recast our vote accordingly.

Tradition 1 states: "Our common welfare should come first; personal

recovery depends upon CoDA unity,” not one member’s opinion, although each member has the right to express him/herself. Our personal recovery depends on this unity. Each member of the group participates in making the group healthier, which makes each of our personal recoveries easier. In the spirit of Unity, we accept the result of a majority vote and support the group conscience, even if it is not our preferred solution.

Summary: *Decisions about service work in the Fellowship and all CoDA affairs are made through the participation of all members in the group conscience process.*

Spiritual Principle(s): Group Conscience & Participation

Please consider these questions to better comprehend Concept 3:

- 1. What is an executive decision? If I have experienced someone in the group making executive decisions outside of GC, how did this make me feel? Why is this not appropriate?*
- 2. Why is the GC decision-making process referred to as democratic? Is this different from the ‘community problem-solving method?’*
- 3. How do I feel about sharing my opinion/thoughts during a GC?*
- 4. How do I feel about sharing my opinion/thoughts in a discussion with a loved one (partner, child, sibling, parent, etc.)?*
- 5. Why is unanimity a preferred result when voting? How is a tie resolved in a two-person relationship?*
- 6. What are the consequences of my personal recovery if I proceed without unanimity?*
- 7. How can I encourage a person to speak or discourage someone who monopolizes the discussion, either in relationships or in the Fellowship?*
- 8. What truly permits members to participate, consider, listen, reflect, meditate, and deliberate respectfully when determining the proper course of action?*
- 9. What system of checks and balances does CoDA use to protect the democratic process?*
- 10. Are there such checks and balances in relationships with loved ones? What is your experience with them?*

SERVICE CONCEPT FOUR

All those who volunteer to do service work for CoDA by serving on committees, boards, or corporations are trusted servants, not authority figures. Ideally, trusted servants volunteer out of a desire to follow their Higher Power's will, out of gratitude for the gifts they have received from CoDA, out of a desire to grow in their ability to create and keep healthy relationships, and to contribute what they can of themselves to CoDA. The Fellowship recognizes the need to select the most qualified people willing to serve as trusted servants. At times, trusted servants may hire individuals outside of the Fellowship for commercial services.

In Concept 4, the Fellowship of CoDA provides a list of reasons why someone would want to become a trusted servant. The list may not be complete, but the reasons listed have one common denominator—they are spiritual. Trusted servants are codependents with shortcomings; yet, all reasons listed are qualities valued in trusted servants. These qualities are the by-product of a member's good recovery; as a result, their experience, strength, and hope shine outwards while their connection to their Higher Power is strengthened.

Ideally, the members of a group need to be connected in the same way to each other so that as a group, they can reflect on a group conscience. They draw upon each individual's personal connection to their Higher Power, ultimately leading to decisions that follow their HP's Will. The need for a personal connection to HP and a group connection to HP applies at all levels of CoDA, starting with home groups and down through all levels of the Fellowship. In fact, as trusted servants grow within the Fellowship and participate at different levels of service, their group conscience process decisions are more likely to affect other groups or CoDA as a whole (e.g. Intergroup, a voting entity, or the world), and the need to follow their HP's Will becomes more essential.

Personalities expressed as self-will are possible at all levels of CoDA service work, and trusted servants frequently need to remind themselves of the need to place "principles before personalities," as stated in Tradition 12. The volunteer who wishes to become a trusted servant must be trusted and trustworthy and put their personal will aside in their service work.

In addition to keeping the CoDA principles at the forefront of our service work, anonymity is also essential. In service work, labels or titles of trusted servants are unimportant. Who we are, where we come from, what we do, or how long we have been in recovery is not important; it is vital to leave our reliance on these elements of ego at the door. In CoDA, we are all equal, and labels tend to distance us rather than to unify us. When we identify ourselves, all we need to provide is our first name;

the only other consideration needed is “I am a codependent” or “I am a recovering codependent.”

Nevertheless, having the authority and responsibility to do the assigned work is crucial. So, it matters that the trusted servant is qualified to do the assigned work. In addition to an individual’s qualifications, their experience, strength, and hope in CoDA become a large part of what may qualify one person to serve over another. Group conscience is extremely important in selecting trusted servants; this includes all those qualities mentioned: gratitude for our gifts received from service, our desire to grow, wishing to maintain healthy relationships, etc. The authority and responsibility given to our trusted servants can be a heavy load. However, if our personal reasons for doing service work are as stated in Concept 4, we will carry our authority and responsibility with integrity and humility, with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to guide us. These are the guidelines and principles of our program of recovery, and they are also the ones we use in our service work.

Service Concept 4 also indicates that as trusted servants, we may not be able to do all the work required to complete our tasks. It gives trusted servants the authority to hire someone outside of the Fellowship to complete tasks when necessary, and when authorized, funds can be allocated to pay for these expenses. Trusted servants must keep in mind the gifts they’ve received from recovery and the CoDA Traditions. Tradition 2 states that “our leaders are but trusted servants” and not the other way around—we are all equal in service. Tradition 8 states that “Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever non-professional” since we serve unconditionally without a form of compensation or expectation but rather only to carry the message.

Summary: *Trusted Servants do not govern but participate in the group conscience process, thus ensuring equality.*

Spiritual Principle(s): *Equality & Higher Power’s Will*

These questions will assist to better comprehend the message of Concept 4:

- 1. Can I describe a situation where I had an experience with a trusted servant whose motivations were not ideal? What impact did this have on me? My group?*
- 2. What solution does CoDA recommend if a trusted servant is not trusted?*
- 3. Am I intimidated by a trusted servant’s involvement in my group? If so, what solution does CoDA provide as support for individuals and groups or VEs? How do I see this as being helpful for me?*
- 4. What are some ways that I may be of service to my group and my*

motivations?

5. *What role do The Steps & Traditions play in relation to the Service Concepts?*
6. *What are some of the gifts I have received from CoDA, and how have they been of benefit in my recovery and my relationships?*
7. *What qualifications do I believe I have as a trusted servant? What about in my relationships? Can I name more than one for both?*
8. *How does recovery play into being a trusted servant? How about in my relationships?*
9. *When and where might I need outside help in recovery, in relationships, and in service work?*
10. *How do I come to terms with the understanding that there are no actual 'authority figures' in CoDA when referring to GSRs, committee chairs, and trustees?*

SERVICE CONCEPT FIVE

Trusted servants are directly responsible to those they serve and are bound to honor the group conscience decision-making process and uphold those decisions concerning their service work. The Fellowship also recognizes the need and right for members to honor their own experience, strength, and hope and their Higher Power's will as expressed to them. When the group conscience violates an individual's own truth and makes participation impossible, the individual may relinquish the service position.

Concept 5 identifies a trusted servant's sources of guidance and inspiration: firstly, the group conscience—where a member honours all other members' spiritual guidance; and secondly, when a member follows their own experience, strength, and hope—where a trusted servant (or any member) follows their own Higher Power's will. Trusted servants are bound to honour the group conscience process.

It follows that all decisions that affect a group and its members are to be made within a group conscience. This principle is supported by Tradition 1, where we are reminded that "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity." This accentuates the need for a volunteer to consider the common welfare of their group first and to not make a decision based solely on their personal beliefs; no one governs. If we pay attention, we can see that all of CoDA's principles come together spiritually.

This Concept also provides a disclaimer of sorts: If a trusted servant is not comfortable with the group conscience, he/she may relinquish their service position. This allows a member to honour their own personal truth. In the eyes and minds of the group members, a trusted servant is trusted, meaning that if a particular individual feels uncomfortable with the group's decision, for whatever reason, the group is assured that the trusted servant will express his/her truth and, if need be, will resign. If such a situation presents itself to a group, it may wish to look more closely at the group conscience. This process can only strengthen and enhance the common welfare and is not a means for holding a group hostage.

Although a member may choose to relinquish a service position according to their Higher Power's will, the group conscience process—a spiritual and democratic one—allows a member to speak their truth and share their experience to request that a particular decision be rescheduled in order to be better informed, thereby making the process more honourable and beneficial for the group and CoDA as a whole. Concept 6, described later, also offers any member "the right to respectfully dissent" as a solution. Every member's truth is spiritual if it

is spoken as our Higher Power's will.

It can be said that to ignore or exclude a member's truth, for whatever reason, renders this spiritual process questionable. This principle is supported by Tradition 1, where we are reminded that "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity." It is also supported by Concept 3, explained above, as it clearly describes the elements necessary for this process to work as it should. Our spiritual principles come together for the benefit of the group and CoDA.

All of CoDA's principles tie in with one another. Any one principle examined by itself may be profound, but when the principles are looked at as an ensemble of guidelines, the bigger picture comes into focus. Every member of CoDA has a truth or a personal belief on any matter—hopefully, as expressed through their Higher Power. Honouring our individuality and being true to ourselves as our slogan reminds us—"To thine own self be true"—is an important recovery goal. Promises 1, 9, and 11 express the gifts of our recovery work by working the Twelve Steps and following the Twelve Traditions—learning "I know a new sense of belonging," "I am a unique and precious creation," and, guided by my HP, "come to believe in my own capabilities."

We come to understand that in our service work, we do not make final decisions in isolation or based on one person's opinion because we need to consider our 'common welfare' AND because it is with unity that our best solutions are found. Each member is responsible for being true to oneself and continuing to express oneself accordingly because each member's experience, strength, and hope plays a large role in helping others in their recovery. When members carry what they have learned from their recovery into their service roles, relationships, and personal lives, their trust and faith in HP's guidance becomes even stronger, and they expand their experience, strength, and hope. This is a never-ending lifetime process.

Summary: *We honor group conscience decisions and respect the right of individuals to petition their point of view. When the group conscience is contrary to an individual's own truth we respect their right to express their personal opinion or that of a few and to act according to their Higher Power's will.*

Spiritual Principle(s): Honor & Truth

Here are some questions to consider to work Concept 5:

1. *How do I seek out my HP's Will when making group conscience decisions with regard to what is important for my individual recovery and relationships?*

2. *Do I have a trust issue with my HP or with others? Where do I believe this originated?*
3. *How do I know that I am in tune with my HP's Will when in group conscience, in my relationships, and in my recovery?*
4. *Why would it be important for a service worker to terminate their service commitment after a group conscience decision they disagree with?*
5. *Is relinquishing my position my only resort if my truth is violated as an active trusted servant? Have I ever relinquished a service position? Why?*
6. *What does the concept of 'common welfare' mean to me?*
7. *How openly do I honor/share my experience, strength, and hope at meetings, in relationships, at work? If anything, what would I like to improve?*
8. *Who are 'those' that trusted servants are directly responsible to and serve? How would this apply in relationships?*
9. *Do I uphold decisions with those I am in a relationship with?*
10. *What causes me the greatest struggle to do so? In recovery, what resort do I have if my own truth is violated while being a member of a CoDA group?*
11. *What is more important in a relationship: honor the decisions made with the other participant or abide by my own truth? Is there a solution to resolve that issue?*

SERVICE CONCEPT SIX

The Fellowship guarantees trusted servants the right and authority to freely make decisions commensurate with their responsibilities and the right to participate in group conscience decisions affecting their responsibilities. Each CoDA member is also guaranteed the right to respectfully dissent during the group conscience decision making process. A member may freely and safely express any personal grievances as long as no particular person or group is unexpectedly singled out as the subject of the grievance. Members are encouraged to honor their own integrity as well as the integrity of others.

Concept 6 explains that the Fellowship delegates to trusted servants the responsibility for making group conscience decisions on their behalf when necessary. This applies at all levels of service work—a home group, Intergroup, or regional group, as well as world service boards and committees. Service workers are entrusted with the responsibility and authority to act on behalf of the Fellowship.

This can also be applicable in our relationships as well. For example, in families at home or among co-workers at work, individuals are assigned tasks they are good at or have knowledge about, such as handling the finances. We entrust that person with the responsibility of making those decisions on our behalf for our common welfare. Trusted servants, in a relationship within the Fellowship, are but one other example.

This Concept gives us guidelines on how trusted servants are encouraged to participate during group conscience decisions. A service worker is given the right to express themselves fully during a group conscience. We have the right and authority to help make decisions; we have the right to dissent; we can safely express our thoughts, opinions, and differences without naming another member or a group, making it instead about ourselves. Because we make it about ourselves and not about others, we maintain our own integrity and responsibility, thereby giving us the right to be who we are without having it cost someone else's integrity. That is being true to ourselves; that is being mature; that is being responsible and accountable with integrity. As we safely express ourselves and maintain our integrity, we make it safe for others to do the same; there is a mutual trade-off—a win-win situation. This makes it a safe place for each of us to do our service work or to be in a relationship with others.

This principle can be easily transposed to our own personal world of experience, strength, and hope, where we can, as it says in our Step 12 recovery work, *“practice these principles in all our affairs.”*

The connection between Step Twelve and Concept 6 validates and clarifies how we are to behave and gives us solutions and tools to work with when our codependent traits are being triggered. They provide the checks and balances we can consider not only in our personal affairs but also in CoDA affairs. What we learn in CoDA regarding healthy and loving relationships can be applied to anyone in our lives with whom we have any kind of relationship. If it works at the meeting for one or two hours a week, it will work with family, friends, and acquaintances. Delivery is so important.

Summary: *The Fellowship entrusts its trusted servants to make group conscience decisions on their behalf when necessary.*

Spiritual Principle(s): Integrity & Free Choice

Here are a few questions, regarding Concept 6, for your consideration:

1. *Have I had cause to express disagreement with a GC or personal group decision-making process? How did this make me feel? How was it received? Was I respected?*
2. *What does it mean to me to lose personal integrity? What is an example of when my personal integrity may not have been honoured? How did this affect me? How about in my group, my relationships, or at work?*
3. *What is my understanding of the purpose of a group conscience?*
4. *What is my experience of presenting or not presenting an issue for group conscience at a regular meeting? Did either situation get resolved as a result?*
5. *What is the best delivery method to use when I have an issue I wish to bring forward? Why is this important? How is this method applicable in all areas of my life?*
6. *What one character asset do I find is the most important to be able to express myself openly and honestly in a relationship? How about to "honour my own integrity as well as the integrity of the other?"*
7. *What one character defect must I learn to temper in recovery to qualify as a trusted servant?*
9. *How do I, as a member, "safely express a grievance without singling out the other" in a relationship? How about in my group?*
10. *How does service work help my relationship issues? How is the opposite true?*
11. *How am I able to develop maturity (an opposite term of codependency) as a CoDA member?*

SERVICE CONCEPT SEVEN

*Trusted servants do practice the **Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions** in their service work and in all of their affairs. Trusted servants do not seek power, prestige, wealth, status, or acclaim; do not govern, coerce, or attempt to control others; and do not push a personal agenda, promote controversy, or advance outside issues at CoDA's expense. Since issues over authority, will, money, property, and prestige can and do arise in service work, trusted servants need to practice emotional sobriety, including anonymity, humility, tolerance, gratitude, making amends, and forgiveness.*

Trusted servants are only human! Emotions are part of our human being which changes constantly with circumstances. They are a sign of what is stirring within and can help us determine our response. As codependents we wish to manage those emotions, and even while being true to ourselves, we ideally don't wish to harm anyone as we may have before. We are reminded in The Welcome, that '*codependence is a most deeply rooted compulsive behavior*' and that we try '*to restore within us the emotional losses from our childhoods.*'

Concept 7 describes that trusted servants, although given responsibility and authority, must not seek personal power or acclaim through their service work and that they do not govern or control others to advance their personal agendas or aggrandizement. In addition to the above issues, this Concept also proposes six healthy recovery traits becoming of trusted servants: "*anonymity, humility, tolerance, gratitude, making amends, and forgiveness.*"

These six traits can be used as benchmarks not only for trusted servants in their service work but for all CoDA members who wish to improve their personal recovery and maintain healthy relationships. When we "continue to take personal inventory" while practicing Step 10, we can take stock every day to determine how we are managing our recovery. It goes without saying that it is this recovery that trusted servants bring with them wherever they are called to serve.

In our recovery work, we have learned that we need to remain true to CoDA's principles to be able to attain some level of serenity, courage, and wisdom; these three gifts we ask for when we recite the Serenity Prayer. Steps 10, 11, and 12 ask trusted servants to maintain contact with their HP and to continue practicing the CoDA principles in all their affairs. Traditions 10, 11, and 12 remind trusted servants to refrain from allowing outside issues to interfere with their service work on behalf of the Fellowship in order to maintain anonymity and to place principles before personalities.

When we read the Concepts on their own, they may seem remote and difficult to understand; yet, we must remember that the Service Concepts do not exist in isolation to be pushed aside as inconsequential or unnecessary in our recovery work. Instead, they are meant to complement CoDA's spiritual principles and guidelines, the Steps and Traditions, and to provide additional spiritual guidance for trusted servants to practice and share with their groups, so that our groups can remain safe places.

Summary: *The trusted servants given responsibility and authority do not seek personal power through their service work, nor do they govern or control others to advance their personal agendas.*

Spiritual Principle(s): Humanity & Putting into Practice

These are questions that may help you contemplate Concept 7:

1. *What level of emotional sobriety do I feel I have achieved? What helps me determine this?*
2. *Have I witnessed in others any of the six trait patterns listed above? What seems to be apparent in these individuals? Did this bring about changes within me?*
3. *How do I feel Concept 7 applies to me, my service work, and my personal life?*
4. *What are some ways in which authority, will, money, prestige, etc. may have been an issue for me in my service work? What about in my personal life or at work?*
5. *Have I experienced situations where others have exerted power, control, authority, or prestige in their service work? In my personal life? How did this make me feel? How do I deal with this in a healthy way?*
6. *When is a 'personal agenda' an elephant in the room where service work is concerned? What about in my relationships?*
7. *What tools have I learned to help me practice the six healthy traits above?*
8. *Is my group a safe place? Why do I feel (or not feel) this way?*
9. *What is the major shortcoming that prevents me from maintaining recovery in service work and in relationships? How does recovery help in this regard?*
10. *What is a great gift of recovery that I can bring to the table in service work and in my relationships?*

SERVICE CONCEPT EIGHT

*The CoDA Service Conference (Conference), through its group conscience decision making process, guides the Fellowship in making policy decisions and in following the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. The Conference, though providing guidelines, holds no authority over the decision making process of individual groups. The group conscience process is our decision making process. Failure to honor this process may violate Traditions One and Four and a sanction may be imposed. The harshest sanction Conference can impose on an individual or group is to no longer recognize it as belonging to CoDA; this sanction may only be imposed on those who consistently violate the **Twelve Steps** and **Twelve Traditions**, as determined by guidelines accepted by Conference.*

The CoDA Service Conference is a gathering of Fellowship members who meet annually to make group conscience decisions that provide guidance to the Fellowship—for CoDA as a whole, for our groups, and for each individual member. The Conference uses the *Twelve Steps*, *Twelve Traditions*, and *Twelve Service Concepts* to guide their decisions. However, this Concept makes it clear that the Conference holds no authority over any individual group's decision-making process. This goes hand in hand with Traditions 2 and 4: *"Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern"* and *"Each group should remain autonomous."*

The CSC guides the Fellowship but does not hold authority over the preeminent rights of a group. This is a very spiritual approach—one where we have a Higher Power that guides us, but that also gives us the freedom of choice and authority to decide for ourselves how to live and to operate. We are free to do as we wish; similarly, each group is autonomous and free to do what it wishes, no matter the guidance provided by the CSC. Groups have the autonomy to do as they wish, yet the Conference has the authority to issue sanctions on a particular group that consistently violates the Steps and Traditions. For example, the Conference does stipulate that if a group decides to go about its business in a way that goes against Traditions 1 and 4, it is possibly not reflecting a true group conscience. Nevertheless, although it has this power, the Conference acknowledges our HP's Will for us, which is to avoid harsh sanctions if possible.

Tradition 1 reminds us of two things: *"Our common welfare comes first,"* and *"our recovery depends upon CoDA unity."* The group's welfare comes ahead of any one member's welfare, as it should in a group that has exercised a true group conscience. Also, when there is no unity in the group, each member's recovery is in jeopardy. Frequently, this expresses itself as a group overrun by personalities rather than by principles—this

can be described as a group that is stagnant.

As guided by Step 11, groups and trusted servants are encouraged to pray and meditate to their HP when making decisions on how the group manages its matters. This is the same approach we use in our personal recovery. As we grow in our individual recovery, HP takes on a more important role; as members grow, the group and its group conscience evolve and our connection to the Fellowship and/or the Conference takes on a more important role.

Tradition 4 explains that our groups are autonomous as long as we do not jeopardize other groups or the Fellowship as a whole. Where Tradition 1 speaks of the individual group and the responsibility of its members, Tradition 4 speaks of the responsibility each group has towards all its members and the full Fellowship. These connections are similar, and it is incumbent on the members and their groups to tread softly and own their responsibilities. Should any one member feel that *'common welfare'* and *'unity'* are not present in their group, they have the authority and responsibility to express themselves upon the guidance of their Higher Power. Based on the group conscience of trusted servants, Conference is also given the authority and responsibility to impose sanctions, which may result in an individual and/or group losing their status and membership.

Summary: *Although the Conference holds no authority over decisions of individuals or groups, sanctions may be imposed over those who consistently violate the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.*

Spiritual Principle(s): Tolerance & Consequences

Please refer to these questions to add to your understanding of Concept 8:

1. *What is the spiritual connection between myself and my HP as a member of a group and in the Fellowship as a whole? What is the connection in my personal relationships and with other trusted servants?*
2. *What does it mean to own up to my responsibilities in the group or to CoDA as a whole? To my family and friends? Do I practice my rights better in one place than another? Why would this be?*
3. *Does my group own up to its responsibilities to itself and to the Fellowship?*
4. *Why is it important for Traditions 1, 2, and 4 to be respected in my group, in service work, and in my relationships?*
5. *What can I do for myself in my recovery if a loved one does not honour 'unity' and the 'common welfare?' What about my group or*

colleague?

6. *Am I ready to ask my group to own up to its role as part of the First Tradition? Why or why not?*
7. *Do I understand the full impact of seeing Traditions broken and what consequence may result? What can I do as a CoDA member if I see our Traditions not being honoured?*
8. *What can I say about the presence of an HP when the messages of our Steps and Traditions are not being honoured in service work or in my relationships?*
9. *When guidelines accepted by Conference are violated in our home group and affect service work, what can my role be?*

SERVICE CONCEPT NINE

By tradition, the CoDA Service Conference gives responsibilities to working committees composed of Conference Delegates and other CoDA volunteers or to separate service boards or corporations. All are directly responsible to the Conference. The scope of the work a committee does is determined by the Conference group conscience. The chairperson of each committee assumes the responsibility to ensure the work assigned to the committee is completed in a timely manner.

The richness and spiritual connection between all of CoDA's principles are especially evident in Concept 9. Tradition 9 mentions: *"CoDA as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."* The message is clear.

Concept 9 states that the Conference (CSC) gives responsibilities to committees made up of delegates, volunteers, or service boards who are made up of members of CoDA. Similarly, a group gives responsibilities to its committees or trusted servants who are members of the group. When any group sets up a committee to work on a workshop or an event or accepts a member in a service position, it is mirroring what is done at Conference.

What is the CoDA Service Conference (CSC)? How does it operate? These questions are answered in the CoDA Fellowship Service Manual (FSM), but to summarize: Delegates are members of CoDA who have been selected by group conscience to represent their voting entity at Conference and are given permission by CoDA to be a voting member at the annual Conference, along with other delegates from around the world. From these delegates, the CSC forms various committees and boards to complete specific tasks, such as Literature, Finance, Outreach, etc. These committees and boards answer back to Conference and the Fellowship on an annual basis.

On the surface, a member of a home group may think, *"What does this have to do with me and my recovery?"* or, *"I'll just let the group and the Fellowship take care of themselves, and I'll just concern myself with my recovery."* Well, CoDA's process of delegating and requiring responsible updates is also true, on a smaller scale, in a home group. What each member is responsible for in a group, is also representative of what happens at the CSC.

To draw a comparison, a home group's Treasurer or Chair of an upcoming workshop committee answers to the group. They are trusted servants assigned these specific tasks for which they are responsible to the group. As determined by the group, the Treasurer may be required

to submit a monthly or annual report, and the Chair of the workshop committee may be required to give an update. This is no different than the Treasurer of the Board or the Chair of a Committee who is required to submit a report to the delegates at the annual Conference.

Understanding this process that protects our 'common welfare' is what CoDA unity is all about. It isn't something that just happens with 'them over there'; it begins with 'us over here.'

Summary: *Through the CoDA Service Conference, the Fellowship assigns tasks to committees and boards, to be completed in a timely and effective manner.*

Spiritual Principle(s): Wisdom & Delegation

These questions are provided to help with a greater understanding of Concept 9:

1. *What service work do I currently do (committee, trusted servant, board, etc.)? Who am I answerable to?*
2. *What is my understanding of the meaning of 'common welfare' and 'CoDA unity?'*
3. *What do I see as the role of the group and its importance within the Fellowship?*
4. *What effect does my service work have on my recovery? On my group and the Fellowship as a whole?*
5. *What do I think would happen if I decided to START doing service work for my group or for the Fellowship? What if I stopped doing service work? What if everyone stopped doing service work?*
6. *What is stopping me from volunteering to do service work? What keeps me volunteering to do service work?*
7. *Delegation is a method to get help to complete specific duties or roles. How can I do this in my recovery? In the context of a relationship, how does delegation help?*
8. *When responsibilities are given—in recovery, relationships, or the Fellowship—how is this process protected for the greater good?*
9. *In a relationship, as compared to a committee, is the scope of the work the partners do determined by a group conscience?*
10. *How are the spiritual principles of responsibility and wisdom expressed in my recovery?*

SERVICE CONCEPT TEN

When the CoDA Service Conference is in session, the CoDA Board of Trustees is directly responsible to the Conference. When not in session, the Conference assigns its decision-making authority on material matters to the Trustees. The Board of Trustees is authorized to monitor the work of Conference-appointed service committees and may provide assistance or guidelines when necessary. The Trustees serve as the board of directors of CoDA, Inc., the non-profit corporation, are assigned custodial control of all money and property held in trust for the Fellowship, and are responsible for prudent management of its finances.

Concept 10 identifies CoDA Inc. (Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc.) as a non-profit organization. There are two underlying purposes behind the creation of this legal entity: a spiritual one and a practical one. Concept 10 describes both. The spiritual aspect aims to bring the voice of all members of the Fellowship together to provide guidance and direction at the annual Conference. The practical side addresses the need for a structure to handle the day-to-day operation and management of material matters between Conferences.

The spiritual goal of CoDA is *“to carry the message.”* To do this, CoDA has a bottom-up or *‘inverted pyramid’* structure, in which the groups are at the top of the pyramid, and the Board is at the bottom. (This structure is illustrated in the FSM, Part I.) The groups have the final responsibility and authority through their delegates at the annual Conference. Each group is represented at the annual Conference by their Voting Entity delegate. The GSRs carry the groups’ GC message to their Intergroup or Voting Entity delegate, who then carries the message to CSC. Similarly, the delegates carry the message back to their Voting Entity or Intergroup, and thus back to the groups. With this structure, the spiritual goal of CoDA is maintained. At any time, the trusted servant (or any member) can carry the message sideways—as well as up or down the pyramid structure—to anyone who may be suffering. This spiritual purpose is supported by Tradition 5 and Step 12.

For the practical day-to-day operation of the Fellowship worldwide, local groups rely on the trusted servants serving as GSRs, delegates, committee members and trustees to carry out their responsibilities so that CoDA can continue to achieve its spiritual goal of carrying the message to codependents worldwide. Concept 10 clarifies that when Conference is in session the Board reports to the delegates; but, between Conferences, the Board of Trustees acts on behalf of the Conference on material matters (money, property, prudent management) and by overseeing and providing guidance to the standing service committees. The Trustees and standing committees, comprised of delegates and members from around the world, ensure the ongoing day-to-day

operation of CoDA between conferences.

There is a direct correlation between sharing the message and becoming a trusted servant on either the world or the local group level. At the local group level, the GC decides how it will “*carry the message*” and which service positions it needs for the day-to-day operations of the group (money, chairing meetings, community outreach, literature, etc.) For example, to carry the message, the group can create committees to examine the possibility of preparing a workshop or retreat. The correlation between the local group and the CSC is evident.

As a group grows in membership, so too does the need for trusted servants. The growth in local groups is reflected in the growth of CoDA worldwide. CoDA needs a steady flow of members willing to be GSRs and possible delegates to CSC. Ideally, they will also be willing to do the world service work needed beyond the group level to continue to carry CoDA’s message worldwide.

Summary: *When the CoDA Service Conference is in session, the CoDA Board of Trustees is directly responsible to the Conference. Between CSCs, the Trustees are assigned decision-making authority on Fellowship material matters (money, property, management) which must be ratified at the next CSC.*

Spiritual Principle(s): Prudent Management & Mutual Trust

The intent of these questions is to help you work Concept 10:

1. *What is this ‘inverted pyramid’ and how does this reflect the spiritual purpose of CoDA?*
2. *How are the Steps, Traditions and Concepts interconnected?*
3. *What is the role of HP in the group, the Fellowship and my recovery?*
4. *How can I carry/share the message within the group? Worldwide?*
5. *What role do I play in furthering the growth of my group?*
6. *What is the role of the CoDA Board of Trustees? What would be the equivalent in my home group, Intergroup, or Service Committees?*
7. *Which Traditions are represented at the Board level of CoDA’s service structure? Why should these Traditions matter for a home group?*
8. *Which of the Twelve Steps reflects service work at the Conference, Board, Service Committee level? What does this mean for each member?*
9. *How can service work accelerate individual recovery?*
10. *What are the spiritual principles of ‘responsible management?’ How can these be applied to personal recovery? To relationships?*

SERVICE CONCEPT ELEVEN

The powers of the CoDA Service Conference derive from the pre-eminent authority of the group conscience decision-making process. Arizona State law gives the Board of Trustees legal rights and responsibilities to act for the Fellowship in certain situations. CoDA, Inc.'s Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws are legal documents enumerating these Board rights and responsibilities.

Concept 11 clarifies the powers bestowed on the CoDA Service Conference to direct the decisions made by its trusted servants, as Conference has approved and outlined in the Articles of Incorporation that define CoDA. The need for the establishment of a corporation to organize and handle legal and financial rights and responsibilities became clear in CoDA's early years.

The story of CoDA's early years leading to the need for incorporation is told in the final essay of the CoDA Blue Book, titled "CoDA's First Six Years" (p.574-584), written by CoDA's founders—Ken and Mary. Their story explains the "*Birth of CoDA*," the spiritual nature of the Fellowship, and how it flourished from one group to a vast number of groups, which led to the need to incorporate. The couple shares their experience about their need in their early years to look at their codependency issues, as most members and groups must do. As CoDA blossomed nationally and internationally, the founding members and their team of trusted servants saw the need to provide structure and organization to the groups they so lovingly nurtured. In 1996, CoDA was incorporated as Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc. It was not long afterward that the founding members realized it was time to relinquish their positions as stewards/organizers and to become trusted servants of the Fellowship.

To this day, the Articles of Incorporation provide the legal framework and outline the rights and responsibilities for the Board of Trustees to act for the Fellowship "in certain situations." The Articles also reaffirm CoDA's spiritual principles and guidelines outlined in the CoDA Steps, Traditions, and Service Concepts, as well as the power of the Conference derived "*from the preeminent authority of the group conscience decision-making process.*" They also include the rights of the delegates and the responsibility of trusted servants to provide spiritual and emotional assistance to those who still suffer.

It is the responsibility of the delegates at the annual Conference to determine how Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc. will continue to function from year to year. At the Conference, any member can bring forward motions as needed to change the Bylaws as they currently exist. Each motion will be seriously considered by the voting delegates using the group conscience decision-making process, as outlined in the Fellowship Service Manual. The majority vote will determine whether a

change will occur or not.

The process used by CoDA, Inc. to organize and handle its legal and financial responsibilities can be emulated by any group or number of groups as they grow or as they see the need to assist with spreading and carrying the message. The structure CoDA established to help carry the message and empower members to become their trusted servants is available to all CoDA members and groups. This is no longer two people or one lonely group, as it was in the beginning. CoDA has become a structured Fellowship that permits its members to decide what is best for their local home groups, Intergroups, voting entities, and for CoDA as a whole, according to a Higher Power as expressed to their group conscience.

Summary: *The CoDA Service Conference has preeminent authority over how CoDA is structured and organized, as outlined in the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, and determines the scope of work for the Board of Trustees and all committees.*

Spiritual Principle(s): Structure & Empowerment

Questions are now presented to help with the study of Concept 11:

1. *How does CoDA's incorporation protect me, my group, or CoDA as a whole?*
2. *Why was CoDA incorporated in 1987? Why are the Bylaws important?*
3. *How may the need for structure/number of trusted servants of a newly formed CoDA group of four be different from that of an older group with 20 members or more?*
4. *How does my group's makeup reflect the larger world Fellowship? What examples come to mind?*
5. *The Board has rights and responsibilities. What are your rights and responsibilities relating to structure and organization?*
6. *What would happen to my life and my relationships if structure didn't exist? What would happen in CoDA?*
7. *When referring to rights, why do I also need to consider responsibilities? What about the other way around? Which of the Twelve Steps does this reflect? Which Tradition?*
9. *If any member is concerned about CoDA's structure, what can they do?*
10. *Are certain powers, rights, and responsibilities enunciated here applicable to a relationship? For example: "the powers... derived from the group conscience," "Law(s)... gives legal rights and responsibilities in certain situations."*

SERVICE CONCEPT TWELVE

The Fellowship strives to practice and encourage spiritual principles in all its material, financial, and business affairs, including fairness, equality, and respect for individual rights. Every member within CoDA has a voice and is encouraged to use it. Every member has the right to know what is happening within our organization. To honor this right, and in the spirit of CoDA unity, our CoDA, Inc. organization publishes and distributes group conscience decisions, such as minutes of our service boards and motions from our CoDA Service Conferences, in the most inclusive and timely manner possible.

Concept 12 is the final piece of CoDA’s recovery Tool Set—the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Promises, and the Twelve Service Concepts. We each arrive at our first CoDA Meeting in different ways and for different reasons, but we usually come because our personal dysfunctions have finally caused enough pain for us to realize things can’t stay the same, and we want our lives to change. Someone carried the message to us, and we decided to attend our first meeting. Our life journey and our experience, strength, and hope with CoDA have brought us to the moment when we are now ready to carry the message to those still suffering.

The spiritual principles practiced throughout CoDA—of fairness, equality, and respect for individual rights—become principles we begin to practice in all areas of the Fellowship and all areas of our lives. Our relationships within CoDA and our personal lives begin to change, and we come to *“experience serenity, strength, and spiritual growth”* in our lives (Promise 12). As Step 12 and Tradition 12 guide us, we begin *“to carry this message to other codependents and to practice these principles in all our affairs,”* making sure that we place *“principles before personalities.”*

As Concept 12 identifies, we have learned in CoDA that we have a voice and we are encouraged to express ourselves in healthy ways in our meetings, in our service work and in our personal lives. If we don’t understand something, we ask questions. If something seems wrong to us, we check with our HP or our sponsor and then share our opinions openly, without fear of judgment or criticism. If we are concerned about what is happening in CoDA, we have a right to speak up and to be heard. We have learned to express ourselves in safe and respectful ways (Promise 8).

Every member has the right to know about what is happening in CoDA. To honor this right, the organization publishes and distributes group conscience decisions, such as service boards’ minutes and motions. We

do this in a timely manner that is easily accessible to the public and all CoDA members. CoDA Board Minutes and Policy & Procedures documents are posted on the website, as are all Conference Motions from the first Conference in 1987 onwards. CoDA also provides regular announcements to members who sign up to receive them. Practicing transparency and timely disclosure teaches us good communication skills, and we carry these over into our personal relationships.

If a CoDA member doesn't have access to technology, they can approach any trusted servant regarding what is happening at all levels of the Fellowship. If that trusted servant doesn't have the answer, it is that trusted servant's responsibility to find the answer and to communicate that back or to direct the seeker to the right person for an answer. This is one of the responsibilities of the GSR as stated in the FSM.

As codependents, we need to be careful that we do not provide information to those who are quite capable of finding out for themselves. It is certainly expected that newcomers may need some help finding out how things work, but for those who have been in recovery for more than a certain time, it is really their responsibility to ask for help to make themselves aware to keep themselves informed. We need to remember that it is a recovery pattern to instruct members to inform themselves.

As noted above, Concept 12 is the final piece of CoDA recovery. As noted above, Concept 12 is the final piece of the CoDA recovery program—a spiritual program that gives the codependent guidelines and principles to live by and that they did not learn in their family of origin. We learn to love ourselves first; then, we learn how to have healthy and loving relationships. We learn that this way of life allows us to experience serenity, strength, and spiritual growth that we can openly share with others.

Summary: *Every CoDA member has the right to know what is happening within our organization, has a voice and is encouraged to use it.*

Spiritual Principle(s): Individual Rights & Transparency

Here are a few questions to help you work Concept 12:

1. *What have I learned about the CoDA recovery program and the spiritual principles and guidelines it offers?*
2. *How would I describe the level of transparency in my home group or service group? Do I feel safe to express my opinions without criticism? If not, why?*
3. *As a CoDA member, do I recognize my right to know what is happening? How well does my group keep me aware of what is happening in CoDA?*

4. *How am I encouraged to use my voice within the Fellowship? In my relationships? With HP?*
5. *Do I listen when things are shared about what happens within the Fellowship?*
6. *Do I listen to others who share at meetings? Do I listen to others in my relationships? Do I listen to my HP?*
7. *Do I keep myself informed about what is happening in my relationships?*
8. *Does my group promote the spiritual concepts of fairness, equality, and individual rights? Do I observe these in my relationships?*
9. *What does recovery teach me about those who do not practice equality or fairness? What is it I can do, in a healthy way, for myself?*

IN CLOSING

Each Concept, as presented within these pages, speaks to the spiritual connection within all our other guidelines - the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Promises. The “one ultimate authority” referred to in Tradition Two is the same “loving Higher Power” mentioned in Concept Three. Even our Promises are complementary, such as, “I can expect a miraculous change in my life by working the program.” As CoDA members, we will always be in recovery and in need of our HP’s authority and love.

The “spiritual democratic process” referred to as the group conscience in the Concepts is precious to the CoDA program! We are accountable while being empowered. This process brings us together: the modest voice alongside a more considerable one, those with fears of expressing themselves beside those who are more assured, the uninformed newcomer beside the more knowledgeable. Here fairness, equality, and respect for individual rights are proposed (Concept 12), every member is encouraged to participate (Concept 3) and freely make decisions, while honoring their own and others’ integrity (Concept 6). The quiet unassuming newcomer sitting across from us, as well as a long-standing member, can put forth the message needed to aid those present in voting on a CSC proposal, for the greater good of CoDA. We are all equal partners.

CoDA’s message helps us to improve our lives and the lives of those around us – within and outside of the Fellowship. Together in ‘Unity’, we demonstrate what CoDA has to offer. Service work doesn’t replace recovery; it is a part of working the program. CoDA’s Service Concepts help our members to further discover their authentic selves. It is our hope that these pages inform and encourage members to integrate service work and personal recovery. This is but one message we discover as we continue to explore this Fellowship called Co-Dependents Anonymous.

