

Creating Accessible CoDA Meetings*

Tradition Three reminds us that: *"The only requirement for membership in CoDA is the desire for healthy and loving relationships"*.

It's important that all people can attend and participate in meetings. We remind ourselves of the group's primary purpose of carrying the message to all codependents who still suffer (Tradition Five).

What Does Accessible Mean?

When we hear the word "accessible", most of us think it means making it possible for someone in a wheelchair to enter a building. Most of the information here is about making meetings accessible to those who have disabilities, but it is important to make all people feel welcome including those who are of a certain race, religion, or whichever gender they relate to (such as LGBTQ+). We make our meetings accessible when **any person** can attend our CoDA meeting and feel welcome:

- **Let codependents know that your meeting exists**

Is your meeting a secret? Tradition Eleven reminds us to "attract" rather than "promote" CoDA. Flyers and posters, for instance, attract "codependents who still suffer" to CoDA and our meetings. It makes our meetings accessible. Let "all codependents who still suffer" know that CoDA meetings exist (Tradition Five).

- **Make it possible for those with physical disabilities to attend your meeting by considering these suggestions:**

Remove physical barriers. For example:

- Can people who have **difficulty walking** get into your meeting venue?
- Do you need to reserve some parking near the door?
- Is there a sign telling people where the meeting is?
- Do you need to reserve a place or move some chairs to help someone find a place to put a wheelchair?
- Is the entrance difficult for those in wheelchairs, on crutches, or a walker?
- If the entrance is not at ground level, is there a wheelchair ramp?
- Is the ramp well maintained and clear of objects, snow, and ice?
- Are the entrance doors to the building and the meeting place wide enough?

- Have we made sure that aisles are not blocked and there is space in the room for those who use a walker, cane, or wheelchair wide enough to get through?
- Does the meeting place contain an accessible restroom with wide enough doors and grab bars?
- When we list our meeting on codacanada.ca or another country's website let people know if our venue is wheelchair accessible and other any special instructions.

For the visually impaired or blind:

- People with other physical needs want to feel welcome. You may be visited by people who are visually impaired or blind.
- They and others who don't use a computer may appreciate that you have a phone number besides an email to contact your meeting.
- Some people may use a "text to speech" computer program to access CoDA materials.
- If you have a website or online meeting list, add a dropdown or symbol to increase the size of the text. If this is not possible **Control +** will also help the visually impaired to read your website.
- The **CoDA Blue Book**, **The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook**, and the **In This Moment Daily Meditation Book** are available electronically [HERE](#).
- The CoDA Blue Book Pocket Edition is also on Audible. You don't have to subscribe to Audible to buy it but they will pressure you to do so. It may be helpful for many needs such as those who are visually impaired or for people who need large print. In the future, we hope that more CoDA materials will become available to all members.

For the hearing impaired:

Too many people stop going to CoDA meetings because they cannot hear what is being shared. Meetings can help those members understand what is said. Following are some suggestions from CoDA members to those with hearing disabilities:

- Ask for what you need: "I ask my group members to look up when they speak if they are willing. I can read lips, but not when people's heads are down". If you know that a person has problems hearing, face them when speaking to them, and speak slowly.

- Some people wear hearing aids but some don't. Most people who need help hearing will appreciate it if they are given a chair close to speakers.
- Some meetings which have members who are hearing impaired may use a microphone. They may also provide a "meeting duotang" that contains copies of what is being read which will make it easier for those who are hearing impaired to follow along.
- Make adaptations that work: Speakers, headsets, and microphones can amplify voices so that people with hearing impairment can hear what is being said. You can ask to use some equipment from the venue where you hold your CoDA meeting, if available.
- For someone who uses sign language, a volunteer in the CoDA community might translate into sign language.
- Translation software: Many hearing-impaired people have software that translates speech to writing or sign language. If using such technology, ask members of the meeting to speak clearly or into a microphone. We understand that members must focus on themselves first.

Opportunities to support people to participate in our meetings will occur. Support for one type of disability may interfere with another. For example, one member may need low lights for chronic migraines, while another may need bright lights for visual impairment. We recommend that accessibility be discussed during business meetings when needed.

Members attend because they seek healthy and loving relationships. Never assume what others need. Ask fellow members if they need help before offering it. It is important that we do not touch people or their mobility devices without permission. Examples of actions to avoid without direct permission: taking the arm of a person with a visual disability, moving a walker, or pushing a person in a wheelchair.

If you have ideas, corrections, or updates to share, please send an email to webmaster@codacanada.ca.

*derived from the [CoDA World Outreach Resource Guide](#)