

# Welcome to Co-Dependents Anonymous

[codacanada.ca](http://codacanada.ca)

[coda.org](http://coda.org)



## Newcomers Package

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Day & time of meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Online Meeting ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

Password/Passcode: \_\_\_\_\_

# Your First Meeting

## Before attending:

After finding a meeting from the [CoDA Meeting Locator](#), it is suggested you call the contact person to confirm the meeting date, time, and location. You may have noticed this person is identified by their first name and last initial. This follows the CoDA tradition of anonymity, which says that members are not identified to the world at large. They remain anonymous during meetings, using only first names. Information shared at meetings is not discussed outside the meeting. These safeguards ensure that all things shared are held in strict confidence and trust.

## What a CoDA meeting looks like:

Most meetings have between 5 and 25 people and are 1 hour to 1 1/2 hours in length. Someone may welcome you to the group when you arrive. Most meetings follow a format; the chairperson will read from it and ask volunteers to read different items. Here is a sample of our [Basic Meeting Format](#).

At your first meeting, you may have many questions. You may ask questions before the meeting starts, or after the meeting ends. The meeting itself is about people sharing their experience, strength, and hope in dealing with codependency issues.

At the beginning of a meeting, there are introductions and readings. During the introductions, some will say “Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_”. Others may add “and I am codependent” or “and I am a grateful recovering codependent”. You may be asked to introduce yourself. You might add that you are checking out the meeting for the first time, or any such statement. You are not required to speak at all – it is your choice. Readings are usually the [Preamble](#), which tells a bit about the fellowship, and the [Welcome](#), which tells about codependency. Information in these can be very useful.

Other readings are the [Twelve Steps](#) and the [Twelve Traditions](#). Statements like “turn my will and my life over to the care of God as we understood God” or “made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves” may be uncomfortable to hear. You will hear people share their unique concepts of the God of their understanding, and you may hear different names for this, such as Higher Power, Creator, Great Spirit – the list goes on. You may hear people share pieces of their moral inventories. Some members work these steps quickly; others slowly. There is no right or wrong way; it is suggested that you work them at your own pace. For more information, you may refer to the [Your First Meeting](#) pamphlet.

## **On the subject of God:**

CoDA is a spiritual program, not a religious one, nor is it a cult. Members frequently start, and continue, with no experience with, nor belief in, God. It is suggested that people new to CoDA keep an open mind about spiritual matters. Many have come to understand spirituality in a way that works for them. The CoDA program uses the word God to describe a power greater than ourselves. What a person chooses to imagine or call that power (if anything) is up to the individual.

## **Sharing at a meeting:**

Meetings have structure and guidelines. You will notice everyone is silent when someone is sharing. This is even though participants, including yourself, may have questions or suggestions for the person sharing. That guideline is called ["No Crosstalk"](#). Included in this is the guideline to not refer to another person or their sharing when your time comes to share. We speak about our own experience; no one else's. There is great value in these guidelines because they allow the truth to come through our sharing. If you are unsure about what "No Crosstalk" means, please ask someone after the meeting.

Some meetings go around the room where people share in turn. Others are free-form, where people share as they are moved to. People generally share the topic being discussed or their current issues in life. You may share yours or not. If you have questions about your situation, share about it first. Something may amazingly come to you about it. If not, ask questions later, after the meeting has concluded.

A sign-up list of first names may go around, with phone numbers. You may sign up or not. You might find this list useful in that you are free to call any person listed to talk with them about the program, including the questions you have.

## **Closing:**

At the end of the meeting, the group rises to say a prayer, holding hands. It is frequently The Serenity Prayer, which is well known in all 12-step programs. No participant is required to recite any prayer they find objectionable.

## Types of CoDA meetings:

- **Open Share Meeting:** This type of meeting often has no topic or individual speaker, giving members an opportunity to share their experience, strength, and hope in their recovery as they wish.
- **Topic Share Meeting:** This type of meeting opens with the facilitator or a member of the group suggesting a specific topic, i.e., The Steps, Boundaries, Sponsorship, etc. The facilitator will usually begin the sharing.
- **Step or Tradition Study Meeting:** In this style of meeting, the group uses our Conference Endorsed CoDA literature, such as the CoDA Blue Book and CoDA Workbook, as a foundation for study, discussion, or sharing related to CoDA's Steps and Traditions. For example, the group may elect to read a portion of this material out loud and then have an open-sharing session.
- **Speaker Meeting:** This type of meeting features a personal story of recovery shared by one individual. Speakers share their personal experiences, strength, and hope in the program. The meeting may or may not include open sharing after the speaker, depending on the length of the story shared.

## Recovery in CoDA:

CoDA's suggested program for recovery is based on attending Meetings, working through the Twelve Steps, Sponsorship, and Service. It takes great courage to admit there is a problem. It takes even more courage to take action and seek out help. After attending your first meeting, you may be wondering if CoDA is right for you. It is suggested that you attend at least 6 meetings (different ones, if available where you live) before deciding if CoDA is for you. In addition to traditional face-to-face meetings, CoDA offers Alternative and Virtual Meetings on our [Online Meetings](#) page. The hope of recovery is available to everyone.

***We wish you well on your spiritual journey!***

## **CoDA Opening Prayer ©**

In the spirit of love and truth,  
we ask our Higher Power to guide us  
as we share our experience, strength, and hope.  
We open our hearts to the light of wisdom,  
the warmth of love, and the joy of acceptance.

## **CoDA Closing Prayer ©**

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

## **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

## **The Preamble of Co-Dependents Anonymous ©**

Co-Dependents Anonymous is a fellowship of people whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships. The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy and fulfilling 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 behaviours.

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.

## **The Welcome of Co-Dependents Anonymous © (Long 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.

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

We attempted to use others - our mates, friends, and even our children, as our sole source of identity, value, and wellbeing, and as a way of trying to restore within us the emotional losses from our childhoods. Our histories may include other powerful addictions which at times we have used to cope with our codependence.

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

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

## **The Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous ©**

- 1.** We admitted we were powerless over others - that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2.** Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3.** Made a decision to turn our will and 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.** Every CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8.** Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- 9.** CoDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10.** CoDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the CoDA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11.** Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and all other public forms of communication.
- 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.** 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.

## **CoDA Guide to Sharing:**

As we pursue our recovery, it is important for each of us to speak as we are able. Many of us find speaking among others, especially strangers, a very difficult task. We encourage people to begin slowly and carefully. It is the intention of every CoDA member and group not to ridicule or embarrass anyone. Nothing that is shared is unimportant. The sharing of experiences is best done with “I” statements. Crosstalk and feedback are discouraged.

### **What Is Crosstalk?**

Crosstalk can be: giving unsolicited feedback, advice-giving, answering, making “you” and “we” statements, interrogating, debating, criticizing, controlling, or dominating. It may also include: minimizing another person’s feelings or experiences, physical contact or touch, and body movements, such as nodding one’s head, calling another person present by name, or verbal sounds and noises. In our meetings, we speak about our own experiences, and we listen without comment to what others share. We work toward taking responsibility in our own lives, rather than giving advice to others. Crosstalk guidelines help keep our meeting a safe place.

*Source: FSM, Part 2, Pages 36-37, Last Revision: 2024-02-04*

## **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, humour, 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 behaviour 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 favours 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 behaviour 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.

## Recovery Patterns of Codependence ©

- 1. In codependency,** I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.  
**In recovery,** I am aware of my feelings and identify them, often in the moment.
- 2. In codependency,** I minimize, alter, or deny how I truly feel.  
**In recovery,** I embrace my feelings as being valid and important. I am truthful with myself.
- 3. In codependency,** I perceive myself as being completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.  
**In recovery,** I keep the focus on my own well-being. I know the difference between caring and caretaking.
- 4. In codependency,** I have difficulty making decisions.  
**In recovery,** I trust my ability to make effective decisions.
- 5. In codependency,** I judge everything I think, say, or do harshly, as never “good enough”.  
**In recovery,** I accept myself as I am. I emphasize progress over perfection.
- 6. In codependency,** I am embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.  
**In recovery,** I feel appropriately worthy of the recognition, praise, or gifts I receive.
- 7. In codependency,** I do not ask others to meet my needs or desires.  
**In recovery,** I meet my own needs and wants when possible. I reach out for help when it’s necessary and appropriate.
- 8. In codependency,** I value others’ approval of my thinking, feelings, and behaviour over my own.  
**In recovery,** I have confidence in myself. I no longer seek others’ approval of my thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.
- 9. In codependency,** I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person.  
**In recovery,** I recognize myself as being a lovable and valuable person.
- 10. In codependency,** I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or others’ anger.  
**In recovery,** I am rooted in my own values, even if others don’t agree or become angry.
- 11. In codependency,** I am very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.  
**In recovery,** I can separate my feelings from the feelings of others.

- 12. In codependency,** I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.  
**In recovery,** I am committed to my safety and recovery work. I leave situations that feel unsafe or are inconsistent with my goals.
- 13. In codependency,** I value others' opinions and feelings more than my own and am afraid to express differing opinions and feelings of my own.  
**In recovery,** I respect my own opinions and feelings and express them appropriately.
- 14. In codependency,** I put aside my own interests and hobbies in order to do what others want.  
**In recovery,** I consider my own interests first when asked to participate in another's plans.
- 15. In codependency,** I accept sex when I want love.  
**In recovery,** my sexuality is grounded in genuine intimacy and connection. I know the difference between lust and love.
- 16. In codependency,** I believe most other people are incapable of taking care of themselves.  
**In recovery,** I realize that, with rare exceptions, other adults are capable of managing their own lives. My job is to let them.
- 17. In codependency,** I attempt to convince others of what they "should" think and how they "truly" feel.  
**In recovery,** I accept and value the differing thoughts, feelings, and opinions of others.
- 18. In codependency,** I become resentful when others will not let me help them.  
**In recovery,** I feel comfortable when I see others take care of themselves.
- 19. In codependency,** I freely offer others advice and directions without being asked.  
**In recovery,** I am a compassionate and empathic listener, giving advice only if directly asked.
- 20. In codependency,** I lavish gifts and favours on those I care about.  
**In recovery,** I carefully and honestly contemplate my motivations when preparing to give a gift.
- 21. In codependency,** I use sex to gain approval and acceptance.  
**In recovery,** I feel loved and accepted, just the way I am.
- 22. In codependency,** I have to be "needed" in order to have a relationship with others.  
**In recovery,** I develop relationships with others based on equality, intimacy, and balance.

## Tools of Recovery

The Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous is a program of recovery. The tools are some methods through which we work and live 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, and so, too, with our tools of recovery. Unless we act upon them, there can be no recovery. The tools we practice are our actions in working the Twelve Steps of recovery and the process of developing our own spirituality. By utilizing the tools, we learn to move from fear to faith, from shame to acceptance, and from blame to forgiveness. We also learn about boundaries, self-acceptance, self-love, self-esteem, and how to address our own resistance. We begin to act with integrity and authenticity.

### The Tools Are:

#### 1. ABSTINENCE

In Co-Dependents Anonymous, abstinence means abstaining 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 symptoms 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 compulsive behaviour 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.

For many codependents, abstinence also means:

- Freedom from the 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 strength, courage, and hope to resist
- Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves; consciously deciding to let go of negative feelings towards a person who has harmed us, and towards ourselves when we fall back into our codependent behaviours, may improve our emotional, spiritual, and physical health
- The process of surrendering to something greater than ourselves; the more total our surrender, the more fully realized our freedom from codependent behaviour.



## 2. SPONSORSHIP

The CoDA program suggests that we cannot recover alone. We need to make a conscious decision to seek help from our Higher Power and other recovering CoDA members in order to work the Program. For many codependents, reaching out to others is difficult because we've always done everything ourselves. Some of us fear rejection and would rather not disclose our vulnerabilities to other people. However, in recovery, we learn to ask for help when needed, from our Higher Power, sponsor, or friends.

Some of us have come to CoDA with a history of unmanageable relationships. Being involved in a sponsor/sponsee relationship gives us an opportunity to change unwanted patterns that interfere with our ability to relate with others. We learn another way to choose the people we want to invite into our lives. 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 experiences, sponsors continually renew and reaffirm their own recovery. Sponsors are CoDA members who are committed to living the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability sharing their hope, strength, courage, and recovery.

Sponsoring and being sponsored teaches us about ourselves, our strengths, and our liabilities. It is more "about ourselves" than it is "about" the other person. Eventually, we become willing to put aside the belief that we are responsible for another's well-being, or that someone else is responsible for ours. In the process, we can learn to practice healthy limits, goal-setting, and boundaries. We can find our voices and even learn to say 'no' when appropriate. We can also learn to be accepting, forgiving, and patient, and even change sponsors without experiencing guilt or shame for changing our minds. Most of us find new ways to give and receive love. Some people learn lessons about the freedom and relief of letting go. What we lose in old behaviour we gain in new attitudes of humility and gratitude.

As codependents, many of us find that sponsorship is beneficial to our recovery. Sponsors guide sponsees in working the CoDA Steps. As sponsees, we may share parts of our journal, our Fourth Step inventory, or letters to a family member with our sponsor. As sponsors, we listen actively, intently, patiently, and openly share our experience of how it was for us in codependence and how it is now in recovery. Sponsorship provides a rich arena for both parties to learn to share without becoming enmeshed, without dictating, and without taking things personally. A healthy sponsorship relationship helps build trust and an opportunity for growth. A key ingredient to being a good sponsor is having a sponsor. Participating in sponsorship builds CoDA community and promotes unity. Healthy sponsorship builds healthy meetings.

CoDA is a program of attraction; find a sponsor who has what you want and ask how it was achieved.

### 3. MEETINGS

As codependency led to problems within our relationships, we discovered isolating and hiding our true selves no longer worked and began to realize the benefit of belonging to a group, a place to try out and experience healthy relationships.

Meetings are gatherings of two or more codependents who come together to share their experience in recovery. Though there are many different types 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. We learn more about CoDA, codependence patterns and characteristics, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and even how to cope with uncomfortable feelings and how to engage positively with others in various ways regardless of whether we may agree or disagree with a person.

When sharing in meetings, CoDA members share their own truths about their recovery. We are free to share our feelings and experiences, be they painful, shameful, or joyous, in an atmosphere of safety and security, without being interrupted, criticized, ridiculed, or judged. In fact, we often hear people share stories that are similar to our own. Through identifying with others, we realize we are not alone, and we feel comforted. Listening to others' experiences helps us gain insight into our relationships with others and ourselves. By allowing ourselves to recognize and release pent-up emotions, we begin the healing process. Additionally, many of us find that once we've shared about ourselves, we feel more connected with the group's members and many of us report feeling more positive after attending a meeting.

Recovery depends on CoDA meetings being viable. From the time we were led to our first Co-Dependents Anonymous group and realized the wealth of help obtainable, we have relied on CoDA being available on a consistent basis. When we get the word out about the meetings, we remember our Eleventh Tradition: "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion."

If there are a number of available meetings in the area, CoDA suggests trying several different ones, but the basic meeting format reminds us that "who you see here, what is said here, when you leave here, let it stay here". Respecting the confidentiality of CoDA members adds to a feeling of safety within the group, assuring us that our participation in CoDA is not made known without our consent. Anonymity reminds us of Tradition Twelve: to place principles before personalities.

We may have started going to CoDA meetings hoping to find a one-time cure, but we keep attending meetings because we find ongoing reinforcement in a program that supports our spiritual and personal growth on our journey toward authenticity.

#### **4. TELEPHONE**

Codependency is a disease of isolation. The telephone is a means of communicating with another codependent between meetings. It provides an immediate outlet for those hard-to-handle highs and lows we all experience. The telephone is also a daily link to our sponsor, offers the means to find a meeting, 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 other members. Those of us who have the convenience of cell phones need never be far away from support.

Telephone lists are a lifeline allowing codependents the opportunity to keep in touch with our support network when we need to talk to someone about our codependent issues. When we as group members, agree to have our phone numbers listed for newcomers, we are willing to be available for the codependent who still suffers. However, it is important to remember that those of us available on a phone list are not professional therapists.

#### **5. 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, television, and all other public forms of communication 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 should 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 phone numbers to the secretary of the group or to other service officers of CoDA for the purpose of conducting CoDA business, which is primarily Twelve Step work. It is likewise not a break in 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.

#### **6. LITERATURE**

CoDA Conference Endorsed literature is written by CoDA members for codependents. What better way to feel connected than by reading the words of other members who have gone through what we are experiencing? The CoDA Book and Conference Endorsed pamphlets and booklets are sources of experience, strength, and hope. Reading about codependency as seen through the eyes of other codependents can provide new perspectives and support. It also impresses on us certain basic truths we have found vital to our growth. Many of us also read spiritual literature to start our day off on a positive note.

Our CoDA literature is an ever-available tool that gives insight into our problem as well as the strength to deal with it and the very real hope that there is a solution for us.

Sharing focused on the Steps, Traditions, and topics found in CoDA literature helps members grow together in the program. Reading the literature between meetings helps build a sense of connection to the program and aids our progress toward spirituality.

Slogans (including our prayers, such as the CoDA Opening and Closing Prayers, the Serenity Prayer, Third Step Prayer, and Seventh Step Prayer) are also part of our literature and provide us with opportunities for reflection and daily personal reminders of hope teaching us to practice patience, persistence, and recovery solutions in our otherwise hectic daily lives.

## **7. WRITING**

As codependents, many of us use writing as a tool to identify and process our feelings. By placing our thoughts and feelings on paper, or describing a troubling incident, it 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 behaviour 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.

There are many different forms of the writing tool that are available to us. Some more commonly used forms in CoDA are Journals, Letters, Step Work, and Affirmations.

Journals: Writing in a journal about our experiences, memories, feelings, thoughts, hopes, needs, fears, and desires in our relationships with family, friends, and colleagues helps us gain insight into our issues and work through them. Reading out loud what we have written may be a powerful experience in increasing our self-knowledge. Reviewing earlier journal entries helps us to recognize our progress.

Letters: Some of us write letters to ourselves, to our Higher Power, or others, perhaps even a person who has died. These letters may express love, anger, disappointment, or regret. They may be written without concern for spelling or punctuation and need not be mailed. The important thing is to get the thoughts and feelings on paper. Writing letters to others and ourselves can promote healing, acceptance, and serenity.

Step Work: In addition to using the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook, when working on a step, some of us have found it particularly helpful in writing it out. In each step, we ask ourselves questions like, “What are some characteristics and patterns I see in my behaviour that lead me to believe I might be codependent?”, “Who is my Higher Power?”, “What are some ways I experience taking my will back?”, “Who have I harmed and how?”, “How can I make amends?”, and, “What can I do to be of service and give back?”. Writing our responses down allows us to organize our random thoughts, and possibly bring hidden thoughts to the forefront. We also engage in other Step writings, such as an autobiography in Step One, various inventories in Step Four, lists of people harmed in Step Eight, and so on. Writing in our Step work helps us develop our recovery by understanding our own histories, discovering our liabilities, and taking action by exercising responsibility for ourselves and not anyone else.

## **8. SERVICE**

Carrying the message to the codependent who 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, and 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.

What would happen to Co-Dependents Anonymous if no one volunteered for service? Or what would happen if only a few CoDA members did all the work? The answer is obvious; CoDA would eventually cease to exist. Regular rotation of service positions gives every member the chance to participate, ensuring that recovery continues to serve the worldwide Fellowship and be available for us and those who follow.

Service work is a win-win situation because it benefits the Fellowship as well as the individuals who serve. Through service work, recovering codependents learn many lessons: to work as part of a team, accept group conscience decisions gracefully, be more direct in communicating their needs, negotiate and compromise, be more comfortable taking on leadership roles, set healthy boundaries, and learn more about who we are. Service work provides a natural way for individuals to use their talents and creativity to meet and get to know other codependents in more depth.

CoDA has survived because it is more than a group of people coming together toward a common goal: a desire for healthy and loving relationships. CoDA is a spiritual program that follows a well-mapped-out series of Steps and Traditions and is guided by a loving Higher Power. Through service, our groups and committees continue to carry the message of recovery to codependents who still suffer.

## **9. FELLOWSHIP**

Fellowship is a cornerstone of CoDA recovery. Many newcomers arrive at their first meeting feeling alone and isolated. They may be recently out of a relationship or in a relationship in which their emotional needs are not being met. They come, eager to find answers to their questions, but the no-crosstalk rule discourages that. However, if they stick around, they learn about fellowship, meetings, and how it helps build CoDA community. Socializing after the meeting provides an opportunity for conversations in which newcomers can ask questions, talk in more detail, and get to know other members better.

For most of us, our pasts were filled with secrets we dared not share. Whether we were trying to influence or avoid others, we eventually found that something was missing. For all our efforts, we never seemed to find the sense of emotional security and love we craved. We could not see or value our own needs and wants. Instead, we either became consumed with another person; or avoided others as much as possible. No matter what path brought us to our first CoDA meeting, most of us came with a feeling of believing things could be better if we could learn another way. Codependents are not alone and are not all stamped out of one mold. One thing that keeps us coming back is our identification with other codependents.

As we listen and share in CoDA meetings, we discover that others have similar feelings and behaviours. We hear our own stories coming from the mouths of strangers and are given the opportunity to learn from others.

Our sense of isolation finally begins to lift. Many of us experience the “pink cloud” of early recovery, feeling wonderful from identifying with other codependents. However, we have to be careful not to make other people our Higher Power by seeking our answers and our definition from them or substituting the Fellowship for our parents, friends, lovers, etc. Although others can support us on our journey of self-discovery, we also need to look within ourselves to find our own personal truths. The Fellowship is a community of other recovery people with whom we can be ourselves, without seeking approval and validation, and a network of support to us throughout our recovery. It is meant to add to, and complement our lives with a variety of supports – both in giving and receiving.

## **10. PRAYER AND MEDITATION**

The difference between prayer and meditation can be understood by saying that during prayer, we ask our Higher Power for something, and during meditation, we open ourselves up to hear our Higher Power speak to us.

Meditation is generally an internal, personal practice. It often involves invoking or cultivating a feeling or internal state, such as compassion, or attending to a specific focal point. The basic idea behind most forms of meditation is to focus the mind on turning inward, to pay attention to our inner self, and to center our consciousness so that our minds are open and clear. During meditation, the purpose of this inward concentration is to remove all outside distractions and quiet the chatter inside our heads.

However, during prayer, we clear our minds of all outside distractions in order to be able to focus our thoughts on the prayer itself and the answers or guidance we hope to find by praying. We pray because we have faith in our Higher Power. In Step Two, we came to believe in a power greater than ourselves that could restore us to sanity. We believe He takes care of everything in life and we turn our will over to Him. We believe our Higher Power is in control and everything happens for a reason known to Him. We can only pray for knowledge of that plan for us and the strength to carry it out the best we can and accept that our challenges and struggles may be a gift from Him. Through prayer and meditation, we lose all doubt and gain strength. There is no right or wrong way to pray or to meditate, there is only speaking and listening to our Higher Power in pursuit of our own spiritual growth.

## Slogans

The Co-Dependents Anonymous Tools for Recovery is neither magic nor rocket science. Rather, the tools encompass and provide guidance in those areas of life where we codependents have had difficulties, primarily relationships with others, our Higher Power, and ourselves. We need to reconnect and rebuild our spiritual lives.

We gain strength and guidance from other codependents at meetings, through sponsorship, and through service. We gain insight as we begin to know and accept ourselves, work the Steps with a sponsor, and “walk the talk” with others who speak the same language. Using the tools is our way out of the quagmire into which many of us have fallen. Regular use of the tools can provide the motivation, hope, and determination we need to move forward in our lives.

Slogans are one of these tools available to us to use at any time as our own personal instrument of self-awareness and grounding. Slogans are a handy way to help redirect our thoughts and actions in times of possible relapses into codependence behaviours, to thoughts and actions of recovery living the best we can by the Steps and Traditions CoDA is built upon. Some of these slogans with possible interpretations are listed below.

### **One Day at a Time:**

- focus on this day only and not the future
- break huge overwhelming tasks into smaller, more attainable goals
- do not waste time worrying about the future you have no facts about

### **Keep It Simple:**

- do not focus on anticipating everything that can go wrong, but take it at face value and focus on what is actually happening
- avoid adding too many tasks or elements to a task and keep it as basic as possible
- don't take on more than you can handle at any given time.

### **Remember When:**

- remember you're in recovery
- remember your life before recovery, and where you are now
- remember to practice compassion towards others even when their attitudes and actions bother us

**Easy Does It:**

- don't try to force a solution thus creating further conflicts
- take your time working the Steps to maximize the return in your recovery: doing them thoroughly and doing them well is more valuable to your recovery than doing them fast
- relax and calm yourself down when you feel you're getting worked up
- it is easy to get caught up in speed thinking that's how to be productive, but in rushing through things, we are likely to miss something – we might not hear someone, might not recognize our own needs, or behaviour in a situation and we may forget to view things objectively. This slogan reminds us to slow down, take it easy, and notice what is happening around you.

**First Things First:**

- prioritize, prioritize, prioritize! Do what is necessary when it is necessary before moving on to the next thing – keeping in mind not to jump the gun or start big
- address your own needs, health, and wellness – personal recovery comes first

**Just For Today:**

- allow yourself opportunities to make adjustments or changes to your own attitudes and actions
- explore new possibilities to move forward in a positive direction

**Let It Begin With Me:**

- mind your own actions and attitudes instead of pointing fingers, criticizing or judging someone else's behaviour or blaming others
- approach situations with a different perspective and take responsibility for your part in it; meeting your own needs and exerting your assertiveness

**Think, Think, Think:**

- act versus react – not getting caught up in our emotions and automatically reacting in our codependence patterns and behaviours, but instead, we stop and think about what our recovery tells us about how to cope and live the Steps and Traditions
- making choices within your own best interests of recovery.



## **Other CoDA Slogans:**

1. DENIAL – Don't Even Notice I Am Lying
2. Do The Next Right Thing
3. FEAR – Face Everything And Recover
4. HALT! – Never get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired
5. How Important Is It?
6. If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes
7. Things Don't Change, We Do
8. If You Think You Can, Or Think You Can't, You're Right
9. INSANITY – Doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results
10. It Works If You Work It
11. K.I.S.S. – Keep It Simple Sweetheart
12. Let Go And Let God
13. Life Is Simple. First You Do One Thing, Then You Do The Next
14. Live And Let Live
15. NUTS – Not Using The Steps
16. Progress, Not Perfection
17. Put Down The Magnifying Glass And Pick Up The Mirror
18. Say What You Mean, Mean What You Say, But Don't Say It Mean
19. SPONSOR – Sage Person Offering Newcomers Suggestions On Recovery
20. The Only Way Out Is Through
21. This Too Shall Pass
22. When I Point A Finger At You, Three More Point Back At Me
23. Work It, You're Worth It
24. Yesterday Is History; Tomorrow, A Mystery. Today Is A Gift; That's Why It's Called The Present
25. You're Only As Sick As Your Secrets
26. If You Always Do What You Did, You'll Always Get What You Got

Find which Slogans resonate with you, think about what they mean to you and why, and feel free to incorporate them into your recovery!

## CoDA Literature Description

### [Literature Store](#)

#### BOOKS & WORKBOOKS

1. [CoDA Book](#) – Simply titled the CoDA Book, it contains in-depth readings on recovery, our Fellowship, common questions, and personal stories from codependents. Sometimes erroneously referred to as the *CoDA Blue Book*.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - CoDA Book](#)
2. [CoDA Blue Book, Abridged Version](#) – In-depth readings on recovery, our Fellowship, and common questions, but without personal stories. This edition is the same as the pocket edition but with larger print.
3. [Growing Up in CoDA](#) – Understanding our codependency by exploring, accepting, and healing our childhood injuries and losses.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - Growing Up in CoDA](#)
4. [In This Moment Daily Meditation Book](#) – Has a meditation for each day of the year, written by codependents for codependents. This book is the “printed in Canada” version. There are 2 meditations per page.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - In This Moment Daily Meditation Book](#)
5. [Joy in the Journey: Recover With Color](#) – A coloring book for codependents on our path towards recovery, using the steps, traditions, and promises.
6. [Recipes Across Canada, Ottawa 2024](#) – Within these pages, you’ll discover diverse recipes representing Canada’s unique regions and the shared journey of recovery within our CoDA community.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - Recipes Across Canada, Ottawa 2024](#)
7. [The Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions Workbook \\*Reduced Price\\*](#) – Takes the reader through the Steps and Traditions with a brief explanation followed by a series of questions. For individual or group study.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - The Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions Workbook - Twenty-Year Anniversary Edition - Updated 2023](#)

## BOOKLETS

1. [Building CoDA Community: Healthy Meetings Matter](#) – An overview of what a healthy meeting might look like.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - Building CoDA Community: Healthy Meetings Matter](#)
  - [FREE DOWNLOAD - Building CoDA Community: Healthy Meetings Matter](#)
2. [Common Threads of Codependency](#) – Codependents talk about codependency, recovery, relapse, and authenticity.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - Common Threads of Codependency](#)
3. [Experiences with Crosstalk](#) – Experience, strength, and hope in what crosstalk is and how some members deal with it.
4. [Making Choices](#) – Offers guidance in recognizing how to make choices that support our recovery. Explores codependent and healthy behaviours. This is a new (2021) edition with 40 pages of information.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - Making Choices](#)
5. [Newcomers Handbook](#) – A detailed description of the CoDA program.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - Newcomers Handbook](#)
6. [Peeling the Onion](#) – Characteristics of codependents revisited – codependents look at love, sex, & relationship addiction and avoidance.
7. [Prayers & Affirmations](#) – Both the Prayers and Affirmation booklet are bundled together. Perfect for a newcomer or birthday gift.
  - **Prayers** – This is a collection of Prayers from Conference Approved Literature.
  - **Affirmations** – A pocket-size booklet containing a collection of positive affirmations for recovering codependents. This booklet is larger in size and now includes edition two affirmations.
8. [Sponsorship: What's in it for Me?](#) – Addresses both sides of sponsorship. Explains why we need sponsors and identifies some of the personal benefits gained from sponsoring others.
9. [The Twelve Piece Relationship Toolkit](#) – The purpose of this booklet is to serve as a companion to CoDA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook in support of our Tradition Three, a desire for healthy and loving relationships.
10. [Tools for Recovery](#) – Members share experience, strength & hope with different tools useful in their recovery.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - Tools for Recovery](#)

11. [Traditionally Speaking: Finding Solutions](#) – This booklet expands our understanding of CoDA's Twelve Traditions. Members share their experience in applying the spiritual principles of CoDA meetings and service work to improve all their relationships: in CoDA, at home, at work, and everywhere.
12. [Twelve Service Concepts](#) – The Twelve Service Concepts in depth.
  - [FREE DOWNLOAD - The Twelve Service Concepts](#)
13. [Twelve Steps Handbook](#) – A detailed look at each of the Twelve Steps and how they apply to daily life.
  - [ELECTRONIC EDITION - Twelve Steps Handbook](#)

## PAMPHLETS

1. [Am I Codependent?](#) – Lists the patterns and characteristics of codependency and The Twelve Promises. New! Extended version.
2. [Attending Meetings](#) – Explains how CoDA meetings work and how to participate.
3. [Communications and Recovery](#) – A look at old patterns of communication & how healthier communication can be learned.
4. [Establishing Boundaries in Recovery](#) – What are boundaries? This pamphlet explores different types of boundaries and offers guidance for establishing and maintaining them in a healthy way.
5. [Information for Professionals](#) – An introduction to Co-Dependents Anonymous for professionals. Ideal for counsellors, doctors, or other professionals working in the recovery field.
6. [Reparenting Our Inner Child](#) – Discovering and embracing our inner child can help heal old hurts and pain. This pamphlet discusses ways to discover the child within and nurture the inner child.
7. [Sponsorship in CoDA](#) – An overview of the principles of sponsorship.
8. [Step Pamphlets 1 to 12](#) – Set of 12 pamphlets. Steps one through twelve.
9. [Using the Twelve Traditions](#) – The Twelve Traditions explained.
10. [Welcome to Co-Dependents Anonymous](#) – Includes the CoDA Welcome and the Twelve Steps. Perfect for the newcomer.
11. [What is CoDA? An Introduction](#) – An Introduction to Co-Dependents Anonymous – Features a basic list of characteristics for self-evaluation.

12. [What is CoDAteen?](#) – Brief introduction to the Co-Dependents Anonymous program for teenagers.
  13. [What is Codependency? A Checklist](#) – A checklist of characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes that might be helpful. eg: I must be “needed” in order to have a relationship with others.
  14. [Your First Meeting](#) – A pamphlet for clients of professionals and new members.
- [FREE DOWNLOAD - All Pamphlets above \(Tab #4\)](#)

### **Other Resources:**

1. [CoDA Fellowship Forum Audio Recordings](#) – These are Forums (similar to podcasts) that take place on Zoom on the last Saturday of each month and occasional mid-month weekends. The content consists of 1 or more speakers discussing a variety of CoDA-related topics.
  - To receive email reminders of upcoming Forums please sign up [HERE](#) or send an email to [codaff@codas.org](mailto:codaff@codas.org).
2. [CoDA Canada website](#)
3. [CoDA World website](#)