

CoDA: Co-Dependents Anonymous

A. [Meeting starts at 7:30pm]

Welcome to the Gresham Group meeting of CoDA. My name is _____, and I am your chairperson tonight. We ask that you please silence cell phones. Also, please refrain from distracting behavior such as cell phone usage, texting, talking or eating during the meeting. Let’s start the meeting with a moment of silence to reflect on why we are here, followed by 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.**

B. The CoDA Welcome

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 behavior and that it is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional family 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 well-being, and as a way of trying to restore within us the emotional losses from our childhoods.

CoDA is a fellowship of men and women whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships. The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy and loving relationships. We gather together to support and share with each other in a journey of self-discovery – learning to love the self. Living the program allows each of us to become increasingly honest with ourselves about our personal histories and our own codependent behaviors.

Our histories may include other powerful addictions which at times we have used to cope with our codependence. An addiction, whether to a mind-altering chemical or to a relationship, ultimately affects every area of the addict’s life in a progressively disastrous way. We seek recovery from our codependent addiction of loving too much by relying 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.

As the CoDA Third Tradition states, “The only requirement for membership in CoDA is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.” In the spirit of inclusion, both adults and teenagers are welcome at this meeting. To avoid distractions, we ask that you make other arrangements for children younger than 13.

C. The Twelve Steps – Would a volunteer please introduce themselves by first name and read the 12 Steps.

These are the 12 Steps as adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. They are recommended as the program for our recovery.

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| 1. We admitted we were powerless over others — that our lives had become unmanageable. | 7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings. |
| 2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. | 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. |
| 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God. | 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. |
| 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. | 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it. |
| 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs. | 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. |
| 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. | 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. |

D. The Twelve Traditions – Would a volunteer please read the 12 Traditions.

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| 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity. | 7. A CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. |
| 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. | 8. Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers. |
| 3. The only requirement for membership in CoDA is a desire for healthy and loving relationships. | 9. CoDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. |
| 4. Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole. | 10. CoDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the CoDA name ought never be drawn into public controversy. |
| 5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer. | 11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films. |
| 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. | 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place <i>principles before personalities</i> . [the <i>italicized</i> words are spoken in unison] |

E. The Bill of Rights – Would a volunteer please read The Bill of Rights.

In our recovery, we overcome previous negative programming by owning this Bill of Rights as adapted from Adult Children of Alcoholics.

1. My life has choices beyond mere survival.
2. I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready or feel unsafe.
3. Life is not motivated by fear.
4. I have a right to all my feelings.
5. I am not always guilty.
6. I have the right to make mistakes.
7. There is no need to smile when I cry.
8. I have the right to end conversations with people when I feel put down or humiliated.
9. I can be emotionally healthier than those around me.
10. It is okay to be relaxed, playful, and frivolous.
11. I have the right to change and grow.
12. It is important to set limits and be selfish.
13. I can be angry at someone I love.
14. It is important to take care of myself.

F. The Affirmations – Would a volunteer please read The Affirmations.

1. I feel comfortable and involved with people, including authority figures.
2. I have a strong identity and give myself approval.
3. I accept and use personal criticism in a positive way.
4. I am becoming free from searching to fulfill my need to be abandoned.
5. As I face my own victim role, I am attracted by strengths and understand weaknesses in my love and work relationships.
6. I am getting well through loving and focusing on myself.
7. It feels great to stand up for myself.
8. I enjoy serenity and peace.
9. I am attracted to people who love and take care of themselves.
10. I am free to feel and express all of my feelings.
11. I have a healthy sense of self-esteem.
12. I am freed from fear in my relationships as I trust and rely on my Higher Power.
13. Through the CoDA program I examine and let go of codependent behaviors I learned while living in my dysfunctional family of origin.

- G. Would a volunteer please read...[See Calendar for this week's reading... **15 Characteristics or The Traits of Codependent Behaviors** or one of the five **Recovery Patterns of Codependence** on pages 4 thru 8. After volunteer reads, continue on Page 9.]

15 Characteristics

The following are characteristic behaviors of people who love too much:

1. Typically, you come from a dysfunctional home in which your emotional needs were not met.
2. Having received little real nurturing yourself, you may try to fill this unmet need vicariously by becoming a caregiver, especially to people who appear, in some way, needy.
3. Because you were never able to change your parent(s) into the warm loving caregiver(s) you longed for, you may respond deeply to the familiar type of emotionally unavailable person whom you can again try to change through your love.
4. Terrified of abandonment, you may do anything to keep a relationship from dissolving.
5. Almost nothing may be too much trouble, take too much time, or be too expensive if it will "help" the person you are involved with.
6. Accustomed to lack of love in personal relationships, you may be willing to wait, hope, and try harder to please.
7. You may be willing to take far more than 50% of the responsibility, guilt or blame in any relationship.
8. Your self-esteem may be critically low and deep inside you may not believe you deserve to be happy. Rather, you may believe you must earn the right to enjoy life.
9. You may have a desperate need to control your partner and your relationships, having experienced little security in childhood. You may mask your efforts to control people and situations as "being helpful."
10. In a relationship, you may be much more in touch with your dream of how it *could* be than with the reality of your situation.
11. You may be addicted to relationships and to emotional pain.
12. You may be predisposed emotionally and often biochemically to becoming addicted to drugs, alcohol, and/or certain foods, particularly sugary ones.
13. By being drawn to people with problems that need fixing, or by being enmeshed in situations that are chaotic, uncertain, and emotionally painful, you may avoid focusing on your responsibility to yourself.
14. You may have a tendency toward episodes of depression, which you try to forestall by the excitement provided by an unstable relationship.
15. You may not be attracted to partners who are kind, stable, reliable and interested in you. You find such "nice" people boring.

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The Traits of Codependent Behaviors

I exhibit codependent behaviors when:

My good feelings stem from being liked by you.

My good feelings about who I am stem from receiving approval by you.

Your struggles affect my serenity.

My mental attention is focused on solving your problems or relieving your pain.

My mental attention is focused on protecting you.

I exhibit codependent behaviors when:

My mental attention is focused on manipulating you to "do it my way."

My hobbies and interests are put aside, and my time is spent sharing "your" hobbies and interests.

Your clothing and personal appearance are dictated by my desires, as I feel you are a reflection of me.

Your behaviors are dictated by my desires, as I feel you are a reflection of me.

I am not aware of how "I" feel; I am aware of how "you" feel.

I exhibit codependent behaviors when:

I am not aware of what "I" want; I ask what "you" want. If I am not aware, I assume.

The dreams I have for my future are linked to you.

My fear of rejection determines what I say and do.

My fear of your anger determines what I say and do.

I use giving as a way of feeling safe in my relationships.

I exhibit codependent behaviors when:

My social circle diminishes as I involve myself with you.

I put my values aside in order to connect with you.

I value "your" opinion and way of doing things more than my own.

The quality of "my" life is in relation to the quality of "yours".

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Recovery Patterns of Codependence (1 of 5)

Denial Patterns

Codependents often have difficulty identifying what they are feeling.

In recovery, I am aware of my feelings and identify them, often in the moment. I know the difference between my thoughts and feelings.

Codependents often minimize, alter, or deny how they truly feel.

In recovery, I embrace my feelings; they are valid and important.

Codependents often perceive themselves as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.

In recovery, I know the difference between caring and caretaking. I recognize that caretaking others is often motivated by a need to benefit myself.

Codependents often lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others.

In recovery, I am able to feel compassion for another's feelings and needs.

Codependents often label others with their negative traits.

In recovery, I acknowledge that I may own the negative traits I often perceive in others.

Codependents often think they can take care of themselves without any help from others.

In recovery, I acknowledge that I sometimes need the help of others.

Codependents often mask pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.

In recovery, I am aware of my painful feelings and express them appropriately.

Codependents often express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.

In recovery, I am able to express my feelings openly, directly, and calmly.

Codependents often do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom they are attracted.

In recovery, I pursue intimate relationships only with others who want, and are able to engage in, healthy and loving relationships.

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Recovery Patterns of Codependence (2 of 5)

Low Self-Esteem Patterns

Codependents often have difficulty making decisions.

In recovery, I trust my ability to make effective decisions.

Codependents often judge what they think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.

In recovery, I accept myself as I am. I emphasize progress over perfection.

Codependents often are embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.

In recovery, I feel appropriately worthy of the recognition, praise, or gifts I receive.

Codependents often value others' approval of their thinking, feelings, and behavior over their own.

In recovery, I value the opinions of those I trust, without needing to gain their approval. I have confidence in myself.

Codependents often do not perceive themselves as lovable or worthwhile persons.

In recovery, I recognize myself as being a lovable and valuable person.

Codependents often seek recognition and praise to overcome feeling less than.

In recovery, I seek my own approval first, and examine my motivations carefully when I seek approval from others.

Codependents often have difficulty admitting a mistake.

In recovery, I continue to take my personal inventory, and when I am wrong, promptly admit it.

Codependents often need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and may even lie to look good.

In recovery, I am honest with myself about my behaviors and motivations. I feel secure enough to admit mistakes to myself and others, and to hear their opinions without feeling threatened.

Codependents often are unable to identify or ask for what they need and want.

In recovery, I meet my own needs and wants when possible. I reach out for help when it's necessary and appropriate.

Codependents often perceive themselves as superior to others.

In recovery, I perceive myself as equal to others.

Codependents often look to others to provide their sense of safety.

In recovery, with the help of my Higher Power, I create safety in my life.

Codependents often have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.

In recovery, I avoid procrastination by meeting my responsibilities in a timely manner.

Codependents often have trouble setting healthy priorities and boundaries.

In recovery, I am able to establish and uphold healthy priorities and boundaries in my life.

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Recovery Patterns of Codependence (3 of 5)

Compliance Patterns

Codependents often are extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.

In recovery, I am committed to my safety and leave situations that feel unsafe or are inconsistent with my goals.

Codependents often compromise their own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.

In recovery, I am rooted in my own values, even if others don't agree or become angry.

Codependents often put aside their own interests in order to do what others want.

In recovery, I consider my interests and feelings when asked to participate in another's plans.

Codependents often are hyper-vigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.

In recovery, I can separate my feelings from the feelings of others. I allow myself to experience my feelings and others to be responsible for their feelings.

Codependents often are afraid to express their beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.

In recovery, I respect my own opinions and feelings and express them appropriately.

Codependents often accept sexual attention when they want love.

In recovery, my sexuality is grounded in genuine intimacy and connection. When I need to feel loved, I express my heart's desires. I do not settle for sex without love.

Codependents often make decisions without regard to the consequences.

In recovery, I ask my Higher Power for guidance, and consider possible consequences before I make decisions.

Codependents often give up their truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.

In recovery, I stand in my truth and maintain my integrity, whether others approve or not, even if it means making difficult changes in my life.

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Recovery Patterns of Codependence (4 of 5)

Control Patterns

Codependents often believe 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.

Codependents often attempt to convince others what to think, do, or feel.

In recovery, I accept the thoughts, choices, and feelings of others, even though I may not be comfortable with them.

Codependents often freely offer advice and direction without being asked.

In recovery, I give advice only when asked.

Codependents often become resentful when others decline their help or reject their advice.

In recovery, I am content to see others take care of themselves.

Codependents often lavish gifts and favors on those they want to influence.

In recovery, I carefully and honestly contemplate my motivations when preparing to give a gift.

Codependents often use sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance.

In recovery, I embrace and celebrate my sexuality as evidence of my health and wholeness. I do not use it to gain the approval of others.

Codependents often have to feel needed in order to have a relationship with others.

In recovery, I develop relationships with others based on equality, intimacy, and balance.

Codependents often demand that their needs be met by others.

In recovery, I find and use resources that meet my needs without making demands on others. I ask for help when I need it, without expectation.

Codependents often use charm and charisma to convince others of their capacity to be caring and compassionate.

In recovery, I behave authentically with others, allowing my caring and compassionate qualities to emerge.

Codependents often use blame and shame to exploit others emotionally.

In recovery, I ask directly for what I want and need and trust the outcome to my Higher Power. I do not try to manipulate outcomes with blame or shame.

Codependents often refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.

In recovery, I cooperate, compromise, and negotiate with others in a way that honors my integrity.

Codependents often adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes.

In recovery, I treat others with respect and consideration, and trust my Higher Power to meet my needs and desires.

Codependents often use recovery jargon in an attempt to control the behavior of others.

In recovery, I use my recovery for my own growth and not to manipulate or control others.

Codependents often pretend to agree with others to get what they want.

In recovery, my communication with others is authentic and truthful.

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Recovery Patterns of Codependence (5 of 5)

Avoidance Patterns

Codependents often act in ways that invite others to reject, shame, or express anger toward them.

In recovery, I act in ways that encourage loving and healthy responses from others.

Codependents often judge harshly what others think, say or do.

In recovery, I keep an open mind and accept others as they are.

Codependents often avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a way to maintain distance.

In recovery, I engage in emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy when it is healthy and appropriate for me.

Codependents often allow addictions to people, places, and things to distract them from achieving intimacy in relationships.

In recovery, I practice my recovery to develop healthy and fulfilling relationships.

Codependents often use indirect or evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation.

In recovery, I use direct and straightforward communication to resolve conflicts and deal appropriately with confrontations.

Codependents often diminish their capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use the tools of recovery.

In recovery, when I use the tools of recovery, I am able to develop and maintain healthy relationships of my choosing.

Codependents often suppress their feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable.

In recovery, I embrace my own vulnerability by trusting and honoring my feelings and needs.

Codependents often pull people toward them, but when others get close, push them away.

In recovery, I welcome close relationships while maintaining healthy boundaries.

Codependents often refuse to give up their self-will to avoid surrendering to a power greater than themselves.

In recovery, I believe in and trust a power greater than myself. I willingly surrender my self-will to my Higher Power.

Codependents often believe displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.

In recovery, I honor my authentic emotions and share them when appropriate.

Codependents often withhold expressions of appreciation.

In recovery, I freely engage in expressions of appreciation toward others.

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H. INTRODUCTIONS: Going around the room, we will now have general introductions. My name is _____.

I. NEWCOMERS: Are there any newcomers to the meeting for the 1st, 2nd or 3rd time?

If yes, would you please introduce yourself again so that we can become more familiar with your name? **[pause for newcomers to introduce themselves]** If you have any questions, please ask someone after the meeting.

J. MEETING PROTOCOL: Please note that speaking is ALWAYS optional at any point in our meetings.

K. SHARING: We will now begin our sharing period. In order to learn how to respect boundaries as well as how to set them, there will be a 5 minute time limit for sharing. When your time is up, an alarm will sound to let you know to wrap up your share. Thank you for respecting this boundary. Due to the size of the meeting, please limit your share to one time only.

Would someone please volunteer to be the timekeeper? [pause to select a timekeeper]

We meet to help ourselves and others by sharing our experience, strength and hope. Each person must have a safe place to talk without comments, questions, or advice from others. We avoid crosstalk, which we define as: interrupting another person while they are sharing, commenting on another member's share, using a member's name during our share, handing tissue to an upset member unasked, or reactive behavior. Things we wish to say to others about what they have shared are best said after the meeting. We avoid talk about "him" or "her" (our partners). We are here to learn to change our focus to ourselves. It is important to talk about our own lives, not another's. This meeting is for us. Don't be afraid of silent pauses, as sometimes we need time to collect our thoughts.

Please note the following special announcement. **[pause to get group's attention]**. We are here to share and to listen to each other's experience, strength and hope. Please give your full attention and respect to the group by refraining from any distracting behavior during the meeting. Thank you! We are now open for sharing.

L. PAUSE/ANNOUNCEMENTS [at 8:00pm, Chair pauses the meeting and reads the following]

We will now observe the 7th Tradition, which states “Every CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” The suggested donation is \$2. Newcomers are not expected to contribute until they understand what they are contributing to. Donations pay for meeting expenses, furnishing literature and support CoDA at the community and national levels.

- **CONTACT LIST:** We will pass around a Contact List which can be used as a valuable tool in recovery. This is not a “membership” list nor is it used for tracking attendance. Placing your name on this list is purely voluntary and signifies that you are willing to have other members contact you to discuss CoDA or to share or offer support and information. If this is your first meeting, please do not feel obligated to add your name to the list and consider attending six meetings before doing so. Please feel free to take a copy of the Contact List from the Literature table.

- **CHAIR SIGN-UP LIST:** We will pass around a Chair Sign-up List. If you are willing to volunteer to chair a meeting, as I am today, please add your name to an open date on the list.

- **SPONSORSHIP:** A sponsor is a fellow member of CoDA who can serve as your guide, role model and a source of loving support in the program. Sponsorship usually begins on a temporary basis so that both parties have an opportunity to assess their compatibility in working with each other. Will those willing to serve as a temporary sponsor please raise their hands?

Another form of sponsorship is called “co-sponsorship” where two members sponsor each other and meet or talk regularly about their experience in the program. Will those interested in co-sponsorship please raise their hands?

- **BUSINESS MEETING:** All are welcome at our monthly business meeting which is held immediately after this meeting at 8:30pm on the 1st Thursday of the month. Service work supports our recovery, so please come to the business meeting if you are interested.

- Are there any recovery-related announcements?

- Would a volunteer please offer to hand out newcomer coins and CoDA anniversary coins?

- The meeting is now re-opened for sharing until 8:25pm.

M. [At 8:25 the Chair reads the following]

That’s all the time we have for sharing tonight. In closing, remember that what you heard here should be treated confidentially, keeping it within the walls of this room and the confines of your mind. The opinions expressed here are strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you like and leave the rest.

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.

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***. [Words in *italics* are spoken in unison].

N. The CoDA Promises - Would a volunteer please read The CoDA Promises.

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 Twelve Traditions...

1. I know a new sense of belonging. The feelings 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 the 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.

We also know that we are worthy of the best that life has to offer.

[The last sentence in *italics* is spoken in unison.]

O. Serenity Prayer - Will all who care to, please join me in 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.**

Keep coming back; it works if you work it. So work it, 'cause you're worth it!