

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING: FINDING SOLUTIONS

submitted for consideration at the 2018 CoDA Service

Conference by the CoDA Literature Committee

Do you think that the Traditions apply only to CoDA meetings or to service? That's what we thought before writing *Traditionally Speaking*. As we read members' writing and shares, we learned that the principles behind our Traditions are helpful in all sorts of situations and relationships.

We hope this booklet inspires members of our Fellowship to broaden our understanding of the CoDA Traditions, foster spiritual growth in our daily lives, and provide practical tools for improving our relationships.

In the suggested CoDA meeting format, it says, "CoDA's Twelve Steps are the spiritual guidelines for our individual recovery," and "CoDA's Twelve Traditions are the guiding spiritual principles of our meetings." While it is clear that our Twelve Traditions are vital to the health of CoDA meetings, our experience shows that the Traditions are of great value across the breadth of our lives.

We encourage CoDA members to use *Traditionally Speaking* in meetings and with sponsors. We believe a deeper understanding of the Traditions and wider use of their principles "in all our affairs" will benefit both individuals and CoDA as a whole.

How this project started:

A group of CoDA members met by teleconference to share experiences in which they employed the Traditions in their everyday lives, with examples involving spouses, children, partners, employers, coworkers, friends, and acquaintances.

Some were surprised by how broadly they benefited from knowledge of the Twelve Traditions. They started keeping notes from the monthly meetings and then shared those notes with the CoDA Literature Committee (CLC). Several CLC members developed *Traditionally Speaking* by combining some of the original notes with new material.

We are thankful for the ongoing support given to us by all the members of our Fellowship.

pending CSC endorsement

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on CoDA unity.

What is CoDA unity?

We are all in CoDA for recovery. Our personal recovery depends on our adherence to the principles of the program, including the Steps, Traditions, and the group conscience process. In CoDA, we put aside our differences and keep opinions on outside issues private.

We trust that our group conscience leads to wise and thoughtful decisions, based on Higher Power's guidance and our common welfare. This is what keeps CoDA from being run by any one person, and provides an equal opportunity for every CoDA member to participate. We achieve CoDA unity when we respect these principles.

How does my personal recovery depend on CoDA unity? Can't I do it on my own? We cannot recover in isolation; we need the unity, experience, and support of the Fellowship. As we participate in meetings and listen to others, we overcome denial and gradually start to love ourselves.

What is our common welfare?

Our common welfare comes from our shared purpose: recovery from codependence using the spiritual guidance of our program. We seek our common welfare in CoDA when we work for the good of all our members and the CoDA Fellowship. In any relationship between two people, there are three concerns: my welfare, the other person's welfare, and the common welfare of the relationship. If there are three people in the meeting, there are four concerns. It is both challenging and rewarding to balance all these concerns.

A group inventory supports the common welfare. (There is a suggested process for taking a meeting inventory at the back of this publication.)

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CoDA members share their experience, strength, and hope

1. This Tradition taught me to listen to others instead of assuming I had it right. I learned that other opinions are valuable and assist me in my recovery.

In my marriage, unity is stabilizing and strengthening. When we have differences, our goal is a healthy marriage. We work to accept our differences; many times the differences open us up to new possibilities.

I had lived alone comfortably; when I got into a relationship, it was like pouring fertilizer on my character defects. I always wanted to win. If I wasn't winning, or my needs were not being met, the relationship wasn't working. But getting my partner to change or switching partners wasn't recovery. Recovery is about changing me. Now when my partner and I are in a power struggle, I ask, 'What does the relationship need? Where is our common ground?'

Unity in our relationship isn't enmeshment. Each of us still has a distinct personality, interests, and friends. What we share is the wonderful gift of intimacy, or in CoDA terms, a healthy and loving relationship.

2. Finding common welfare in our daily relationships requires time, communication, and patience, not always easy for codependents. In CoDA, participating in group conscience decision-making and accepting the outcome encourages me to practice new skills. These help me relate to people in new and different ways.

How can I practice these skills in my work life? I want a job done

and am willing to pay someone; the person I pay has the necessary skills and wants to be paid. This seems simple. It becomes complex when we add in everyone's personalities and codependent histories.

When certain demands were made of me at work, I became defensive or tried to please everyone. Now I've learned to pause and seek solutions that are acceptable to all of us.

3. Last month, I did not speak up at a CoDA business meeting. I heard others yelled at and interrupted. I feared that I might be next. I told myself that by being quiet, I was supporting CoDA unity. Later I realized my silence was not in the interest of our common welfare, nor did it support my personal recovery. It is vital that I speak up when I see bullying or fighting. Acknowledging that it is hard for me to speak up, and asking for my Higher Power's help, gives me courage.

4. How do we handle strong personalities who exert control over how things are done in CoDA? The *Fellowship Service Manual* (available at coda.org) contains guidelines on how to deal with a person who is acting out. When we follow these guidelines, our goal is to make our program safe for everyone to participate.

Our informed group conscience allows us to share our thoughts. Our crosstalk guidelines foster a safe environment in which I can express myself. It may encourage others to speak up if I share my perspective. I am reminded I don't have to like what I accept.

"In our meetings we speak about our own experience, and we listen without comment to what others share. We work toward taking responsibility in our own lives, rather than giving advice to others. The No Crosstalk guidelines help keep our meeting a safe place."

How did my family of origin handle controlling members? By fighting, denying, isolating, people-pleasing, shaming, rationalizing, and minimizing. It takes courage and Step work to go in a different direction than the one I experienced as a child. I ask my Higher Power for strength to do this, and recognize I'm not alone. Sometimes it seems easier to take the old path than to practice new behaviors, but I have come to believe that the Steps and Traditions work.

5. Someone who does not respect the common welfare of a group or relationship can destroy it. I used to play in a community orchestra with a conductor who made rehearsals fun. When he stepped down, the conductor who was hired as a replacement was sorely lacking in people skills. Rather than encouraging us in our playing, he shamed individual players in front of all of us; when someone didn't show up for rehearsal, we all got yelled at. Soon the orchestra began to shrink as more and more of us decided we weren't getting anything out of being members of the group. Fortunately, a new conductor was hired before the orchestra disappeared entirely, but it was a close call.

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Tradition Two: 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. What is our group purpose? How is it determined?

Our group purpose in CoDA is to carry the message of recovery to codependents. We decide how to do this by using the group conscience process, always aware that Higher Power is our authority.

Decisions at all levels of CoDA are made with the guidance of our Higher Power. As with all our recovery, the group conscience is about putting aside the self and looking to our Higher Power for guidance.

Members participate in decision-making by sharing their strength, hope, and experience in an effort to determine what is best for everyone in the Fellowship as a whole. We consciously invite our Higher Power to guide and direct us, individually and collectively. We grow in our recovery by putting aside the need to be right while making decisions for the good of CoDA.

A group conscience decision grows out of the combined wisdom invested in the whole group. With the help of our Higher Power, we open our minds to all viewpoints presented and then vote for the one we believe is best for CoDA. We work to keep personalities out of our decision making.

In CoDA, everyone is encouraged to share experience, strength, and hope with each other. We may engage in assertive presentation of our point of view, but we draw a boundary against aggressive persuasion, name-calling, or arm-twisting of people to vote a certain way. A position favored by our Higher Power will naturally attract support.

What is the group purpose in a healthy personal relationship? How is it determined? The ultimate purpose is to create a relationship that is loving and supportive for both partners. Using Tradition One, the couple

works to ensure that they agree with decisions that affect them both whenever possible. When they can't agree, they may pause to ask Higher Power for guidance before coming together for further discussion. Maybe they are not ready to make a decision; maybe they are trying too hard and the work can be put off for a while. Throughout the process, a loving Higher Power provides for generosity of spirit—for us to be respectful of each other.

What is a Group Conscience?

Members share experience, strength and hope, then attempt to reach a consensus. If there isn't agreement, members can choose to delay a decision or expand the group conscience process to include more trusted servants. Service decisions are not emergencies. Additional experience, strength, and hope may provide a new perspective. Or, on occasion, an additional voice carries a different message. Broader participation aids the group in reaching an informed group conscience.

Sometimes, the group conscience can be cumbersome and time consuming. Yet it can teach patience and acceptance of others and their struggles.

What are trusted servants in CoDA?

All those who volunteer to do service work for CoDA are trusted servants, not authority figures. They include treasurers, group representatives, committee members, and more. Members entrust them to carry out the decisions made by the group. Ideally, trusted servants volunteer out of a desire to follow their Higher Power's will, out of gratitude for the gifts they have received from CoDA, and to contribute what they can of themselves.

In our personal relationships, we don't want to be servants. We do strive to be trustworthy and trusted. We act to serve the well-being of our relationships with friends, co-workers, and family.

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CoDA members share their experience, strength, and hope

1. It is easier to practice this Tradition in my service work than in my personal life. In personal relations, not everybody is a respectful, non-interrupting listener. I experience situations in which somebody wants to win, to be right. Not everyone seeks Higher Power's guidance! I struggle to let go, not in anger, but accepting that a loving, generous, spiritual process is not always possible.

Being a codependent, my personal relationship skills were stunted at an early age. I often operated in a selfish and childish manner. I never learned what it would take to have a healthy, intimate relationship. The only thing that concerned me was getting my way. Working the Steps put me back in my proper role as a human being; I left the running of my life, your life, and the life of the universe to God. So I come to my present relationship acknowledging that neither my partner nor I have all the answers.

A foundation of my current relationship is a shared spirituality and belief in a Higher Power. That doesn't mean that both of us belong to the same church; rather we share a similar vision of God as the ultimate authority in our relationship. Another key is respect for each other's beliefs.

Why is shared spirituality so important to us? Without it, we are left to our own best thinking or opinions. There is no higher court of appeal! What we would be left with is a power struggle as two people vie for their own particular vision. There is no third party with a greater vision, power, or wisdom to whom we submit relationship disputes for resolution.

2. This Tradition reminds me that being right is not critical to my being happy. It is my right and responsibility to define and communicate what feels safe to me. I do not have to be right all the time in

everything I do; I can rethink my position and change my mind. I am willing to admit when I am wrong. Letting go of being right can be difficult; sharing experience, strength, and hope is the way I speak my truth without shame or blame.

3. I used to want to control people and outcomes. In CoDA, I gradually learned that we each play a part in life. We bring individual talents, experiences, and insight, as well as fears, sadness, and strengths. All together, we work through the process of decision making, consulting with our Higher Power. We take advantage of the greater experience of the entire group, rather than relying on one or two people to make decisions that affect everybody.
4. I live in a small town in Massachusetts, where we still govern the town by the process of “Town Meeting,” which started in pre-Colonial times. It has similarities to Fellowship. We gather in the auditorium as citizens, each adult able to speak and vote on town issues. We accept or reject every part of the annual budget, every by-law change, and choose the members of the Board of Selectmen, which serves as the executive branch. (In modern times, we also have a paid Town Administrator who manages the town.) The rules strive for respectful participation, without personal criticism of others, each citizen saying what they think.
5. I would like to make reference to Step Two, “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” In the *CoDA Twelve Step and Twelve Tradition Workbook* it states, “We may now recognize the painful consequences of allowing others to be this power. We are not the power greater than ourselves, nor can others be this power for us”. When I turn myself into a power greater than myself, I don’t listen to others. My ego holds on to the

need to be right and make everyone else wrong. This is a painful consequence! Where's the peace and love in all of this?

Tradition Two keeps me in check when I start feeling resentful, angry, and mistrustful. When I start to control outcomes of the group, you better watch out because my self-will definitely runs riot. At this stage I can apply the first three Steps, which take me directly back to my Higher Power, who is the ultimate authority. I also complete a Step Four inventory of my behavior, take Step Five for accountability, then Steps Six and Seven to ask my Higher Power to remove my shortcomings, and Steps Eight and Nine to make amends as needed.

When this is done, my feelings of mistrust convert back to trusting my Higher Power, trusting the process, and loving my CoDA brothers and sisters as they are. Self-will gradually slips away.

6. Recently I was obsessing over a financial problem, attempting to control the outcome and driving myself and others nuts trying to figure everything out. I started to get headaches, felt fearful, frustrated, and flustered. The next day I attended a Step Eleven meeting and during the meditation, I wrote in my journal, "God, you are the ultimate authority, how can I serve you?" I listened to God's will and received the following spiritual awakening:

Stop trying to figure everything out!

I immediately gained hope, peace and acceptance.

At work, when I have fear of authority figures, I call to mind "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern". My employer may govern my work duties and pay check, but can't govern my

thoughts and feelings. I am only one prayer away from gaining peace. I am grateful to have tools to bring to work which can take me from self-will to God's will.

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Tradition Three: The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.

A desire for healthy and loving relationships—who doesn't want that?

Only requirement for membership

CoDA is an encompassing, inclusive Fellowship. We don't judge whether someone qualifies to belong. We don't quiz newcomers about why they show up at a meeting. It seems silly to think that CoDA groups might hand out a list of requirements to join. CoDA is a place where we are accepted because we are seeking healthy relationships.

In CoDA, what we share is a desire for healthy and loving relationships. When we attend CoDA meetings, conferences, and conventions, we have the opportunity to listen to members share their experience, strength, and hope. We listen as they share their spiritual awakenings about having healthy and loving relationships.

And yet, in other areas of life, there can be barriers to overcome.

Except for our family of origin, we choose the relationships in our lives. When we are in any relationship, we are free to stay in that relationship or leave it. While we accept that no one is perfect, we have to decide whether we can live with the imperfections and decisions of others. For some of us, it is important to recognize that running away is a coping strategy that doesn't serve us. Some of us may need to accept that we are in a toxic relationship that we need to leave for our personal safety or sanity. Most of us fall somewhere between these two extremes.

In recovery, we learn that if both people have a desire for a healthy and loving relationship, and both are willing to work on the relationship, we can grow together.

Healthy and Loving Relationships

No human is perfect. We can be irritating and irritated, calm and quick to anger, gentle and harsh, sometimes all in the same day! In healthy re-

relationships, we accept both our own and the other's humanity and seek what is best for *both* of us.

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. Codependents, and those who think they may be codependent, may not have any healthy relationships. What motivated me to attend meetings was the knowledge that I had too many unhealthy relationships. I avoided relationships because of my depression and codependency. I was hermit-like. I felt pain and alienation in my family.

My need for meetings was powerful, which spurred me to get in the car, drive to places I'd never been (before GPS), and sit among people I didn't know. This was new behavior for me that led me to a healthier self-regard. I went to a lot of meetings!

I went to a CoDA meeting where the format asked everyone to self-identify. I was at that meeting, and every meeting, because I had a strong desire for healthy and loving relationships, with others, and with myself. My unhealthiest relationship was the one with myself. I had never heard that term "self-identify" used at other CoDA meetings. After attending a couple of times, I asked someone what that meant. I was told to say, "I'm codependent." I've come to believe that this extra requirement violated Tradition Three.

2. In my recovery, the first thing I looked at was my existing relationships. Many were sick or unhealthy, yet they felt familiar. Was I willing to have healthy relationships? I didn't know if I could survive so much change. I needed to learn what it took to have a healthy relationship — things like boundaries, listening without comment, willingness to allow the other person to have a different opinion. It was a relief to sit in meetings without having to do any-

thing.

In CoDA meetings and conferences, it is important to remember that all of us have a desire for healthy relationships. I wish I had remembered Tradition Three during some rough times. Speaking up when things get difficult is part of recovery. I get to express my thoughts, and it is none of my business what other people think of me. I could say, “I have a desire for healthy and loving relationships and it doesn't feel like I have that right now.”

I have a desire for healthy relationships in my work world, too. They are harder to come by because there are few people in recovery. Here is how I look at different relationships in my life: some people are front porch people; they never get off my front porch, never into the front door of my life. Some people are front room people; they get closer, but not close enough for an intimate relationship. Some people are kitchen people, they get into my life, sit at the table, and share in a healthy and loving relationship with me. I get to decide where I am with each person I meet.

I want healthy, loving relationships and am willing to work on that.

3. When I sponsor people, I work this Tradition. It keeps me out of judgment and reminds me that I can't control the pace of other people's spiritual growth. Sponsees have their own Higher Power— and I am not it. I accept that this program is not for everyone. However, I am grateful this program is here for me.
4. Tradition Three keeps things very simple. When I work together with my fellow CoDA members, I get to practice and use recovery tools. When I get triggered and start to criticize, judge, and try to control others, Tradition Three can get me back on track. I can al-

low my fellow trusted servants the privilege and desire to have healthy and loving relationships. Oh yeah, that's why we are all here, hmm?

In the workplace, Tradition Three comes in handy as a guideline to create healthy boundaries with my customers, boss, and co-workers. I can "act as if" they have the same desire. Another important factor is healthy communication. If I get triggered at work, or with my family of origin, significant other, or in CoDA, it is important to stay connected to my feelings and my Higher Power first and foremost. I share my feelings with my Higher Power by journaling, and share with another trusted person, such as my sponsor. Ultimately, my Higher Power guides me in communicating in a healthy, loving manner.

5. Despite our many differences, I was afraid to ask my husband for a divorce. I had made a commitment and I had to stay married to prove my mother wrong! She had told me, the night before my wedding, that I was making a big mistake. My husband had to stay married to me because his family did not believe in divorce. Finally, after more than 13 miserable years, he suggested that we might do better apart. I was so relieved! And my mother, bless her, never once said, "I told you so."

After my divorce, and the end of the eight year relationship that followed, I was not in any relationship for more than a decade and found that I liked being alone. It gave me the time and space I needed to get into recovery, work the Steps, and go to lots of meetings.

Today, in recovery, I am in the eighteenth year of a healthy and loving relationship with the person I want to be with for the rest of my life. Either of us could choose to end the relationship, but be-

cause I enjoy my own company, I am not afraid about what would happen to me if it did end. I don't try to manage my partner, nor do I allow her to manage me. We are both in this relationship because we want to be, and that is what matters.

6. I am very aware that codependency is frequently passed down from generation to generation. As a codependent in recovery, I am doing my best, in the family I have created, to stop this inherited cycle of codependency. I sometimes find it challenging to maintain healthy and loving relationships as my teen-age children move into adulthood. My first step in breaking unhealthy cycles of codependency is to recognize my own unhealthy reactions. Last week I realized (with some help from my sponsor) that I was trying to control my 20 year old daughter's feelings. I did not want her to be jealous of her first cousin or angry at her grandparents. The fact that she was angry made me angry with her. My sponsor asked me if I could "consider letting her have her own feelings." I realized I was feeling resistance, anger, and shame about all the family "issues" with which my daughter has had to contend. Fortunately, I was able to let go of being angry because my daughter had reacted as she had. I was also able to better sort out my own feelings. There is plenty of room for each of us to have our own feelings. And trying to control her feelings isn't a healthy way for me to deal with my own.

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Tradition Four: Each group should remain autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole.

While CoDA's Tradition One emphasizes the importance of unity, Tradition Four recognizes the freedom for CoDA groups to make decisions for themselves, so long as they consider the overall welfare of the Fellowship. In our own lives, we balance our welfare with the effect our personal decisions may have on others. If we practice conscious contact with our Higher Power as we are making decisions in CoDA groups or our personal lives, we may be surprised by the creativity of the solutions that arise.

Autonomy

Autonomy makes it possible for meetings to decide on the focus, format, length, and frequency of their meetings. How the 7th Tradition is dispersed is up to each group though CoDA has suggested guidelines in the *Fellowship Service Manual*. The only requirements CoDA has for meetings is that they read the Preamble, Welcome, Twelve Steps, and Twelve Traditions as written at every meeting, and register the meeting at coda.org.

There are applications of autonomy that do not support CoDA unity. Examples include using non-CoDA Conference endorsed literature, having non-CoDA members as speakers or workshop presenters, and not sharing 7th Tradition contributions with service groups. In the early years of our Fellowship, some meetings used outside literature. As we wrote more and more literature for ourselves, groups turned to CoDA Conference endorsed literature and eschewed other publications. This led to unity.

In business, each person brings with them their individual experience, creativity, and expertise. Everyone contributing their talents benefits the company as a whole. However, if one person or department thinks they know a better way to do something and acts autonomously without telling others, the organization suffers. When a project team works to-

ward a common objective, one person who does not ask for help with their assigned tasks can cause the entire project to fall apart.

In relationships, each person is free to make decisions about their own lives, while recognizing that some decisions will affect their families and friends.

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. This Tradition helps me in my work life. My decisions as a manager affects not only relationships with those who report to me, but also the business as a whole. The principle of Tradition Four has made my job easier.

I was offered a dream job which would require me to be away from my spouse and our three children for months at a time. We talked about it from every angle, and while it was painful not taking the new job, we decided together that it was in my and the family's best interest to pass on the opportunity.

2. I felt under everyone's thumb prior to coming to CoDA. I was so excited by my new freedom to share in meetings that I monopolized the time. When I realized that this practice was not supporting the welfare of the group, I shortened my shares.
3. Tradition Four gives me wisdom in my personal life. I learn that my nuclear family is autonomous. We make our own decisions, rules, and guidelines. At the same time, I don't want to harm my extended family with my family's decisions. I accept that extended family members make their own decisions, even when they are different from ours.

4. I attended a women's meeting that met at a downtown university at lunch hour. The meeting had grown smaller, but it was a favorite of mine. Then a man announced that he was starting a coed meeting on the same day and time in the same school as our little women's meeting. I spoke with him and asked if he would make his meeting a men's meeting so our women's meeting wouldn't be affected, but he refused. Within a few weeks, the women's meeting was gone. I use this experience now to illustrate what happens when Tradition Four is not respected.

5. During my marriage, my then husband announced one day that he had bought an airplane with most of our savings. Since he hadn't talked to me and I had been hoping we'd eventually save enough to buy our first house, this was a rather unpleasant surprise.

Today, I have a partner who does not share all my interests, so I often do things by myself, as does she. I value my autonomy, but I also have great respect for our relationship. I never make decisions that might affect both of us without talking to her first.

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Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer.

This Tradition gives every CoDA group its purpose. It reminds us we are here to carry the CoDA message that recovery is possible. To recover we work the Steps, follow the Traditions, welcome newcomers, read CoDA Endorsed literature, and attend meetings. Whether the suffering codependent is a newcomer or an old-timer, we remind them there is a way out of suffering.

In individual sharing, we support each other by keeping our focus on the message of recovery; we speak about what it was like, what happened to bring us to CoDA, the work that we have done, and what is it like now. While our recovery meetings carry the message in an immediate way at face-to-face or in alternative meetings by phone, etc., the yearly CoDA Service Conference (CSC) also exists to carry the CoDA message. Delegates, elected by Voting Entities (such as US states and other countries) convene to decide upon matters for our Fellowship.

CSC is where our literature is endorsed by group conscience, budgets are set, and the CoDA, Inc. and CoRe, Inc., (the publishing arm of CoDA) trustees are elected. Both of these entities are non-profit corporations; holding a yearly meeting is a legal requirement. Even if it were not a legal matter, however, it is essential that we meet to make decisions together, with the guidance of our Higher Power, about the best way to carry CoDA's message.

Although we may not think of our friendships and partnerships as having a primary purpose, many do. We may be friends with someone because of shared interests; we may be partnered for intimacy and mutual support. At work, our primary purpose is to do what we are paid to do in harmony with our co-workers.

pending CSC endorsement

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. I ask myself—what is my primary purpose? This Tradition reminds me that there are codependents who still suffer, and at times I still suffer from my own disease of codependency. I look at myself first and ask my Higher Power for guidance. In service, I look for ways to share my own recovery that focuses on the group's primary purpose.

On a personal level, one way my husband and I work on our primary purpose of having a healthy relationship is to have a talk every week about whatever is on our minds. This takes trust and faith, two important ingredients for my marriage and my recovery.

2. When I apply this Tradition to my daily life in relationships with others, I find it useful. My focus is on the relationship and staying present, in the moment. I avoid getting lost in the busyness of daily life so much that I lose focus on the relationship. I have to take business matters seriously, but everything in balance.
3. What is the primary purpose of personal relationships? Once upon a time it was survival and procreation, and certainly we'd all be in a pickle if that ceased. It goes beyond being happy. Primary Purpose, to my way of thinking, has to do with what Higher Power has in mind for relationships.

I suggest the primary purpose of a relationship is to heal us. I believe I am put together with exactly the right person. My partner reflects my issues to me almost perfectly. For this to happen, I have to have gained sanity through my recovery. Only then can I take the harder journey of healing childhood wounds. This happens if I have a partner who has gained sanity in recovery and committed to a mutual journey.

When people tell us they enjoy our relationship, I think we are carrying the message. They don't see a couple doing everything right; what they do see is a couple focused on learning and growing, not fighting old battles. An important practice is letting go of resentments. We choose to live in the solution, rather than wallowing in the problem. In each situation, we ask ourselves, what is my individual part in it? Other people see the changes and they have hope they can develop more healthy, intimate relationships.

Tradition Five represents an awesome responsibility for each of us.

4. Now that my partner and I are in our seventies, the primary purpose of our relationship is to grow old together with mutual compassion and a sense of humor.

5. I am currently a member of the CoDA World Events Committee and working hard with the rest of the members to plan the upcoming CoDA World Service Conference and International CoDA Convention. I feel stressed and overwhelmed. My character defects are showing up more and my self-care is showing up less. When I get triggered and my ego shows up, it's because I am focusing on self-will and not God's will. Tradition Five is a compassionate reminder that the primary purpose of both events is to carry the CoDA message to codependents who still suffer. Then I can pay close attention to God's will.

One of the boundaries I appreciate at meetings is in the no crosstalk guidelines: to use "I" statements when sharing. I also try to use "I" statements outside the rooms of CoDA. It keeps me from care-taking, controlling, and rescuing others.

6. Yesterday at work, I received a call from an angry customer. He raised his voice and I felt powerless. I caught my defensiveness and did not mirror his angry tone. I breathed my way through the conversation. I did the best I could with the work tools I had. Unfortunately, I could not solve the problem; I had to escalate his issue to the next level of support. I used my recovery tools of empathy, courage, and compassion; I was able to see the customer's point of view with an open heart. Wow, it works when I work it!

7. In my groups, am I carrying the message of CoDA recovery? Yes, but I think I could do better. Am I only sharing experience or do I also share strength and hope? I share what I've learned, what CoDA tools I use, the hope I've gained, and the value of listening to people in our Fellowship. Recovery is a gift.

Beyond my local meeting, am I carrying the message in committee work? I've belonged to the CoDA Literature Committee for many years. I sometimes think about rotation of service and consider resigning. I wonder if someone else might speak or write if I were not there. I think literature is an important way of carrying CoDA's message. I strive for unity and consistency in our language across our literature. I think my long history on the CoDA Literature Committee has advantages for that unity of purpose, and I hope I'm not being controlling when I bring up that history.

8. To those close to me, my husband and children, my message was often pretty negative. "Get it done or get out of my way." To others, employers and neighbors, it often seemed positive. "Yes, of course I'll do it." Over time in this program, through study and practice of CoDA's principles, I am conscious that the message I choose to carry is more often a positive, principled one.

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Tradition Six: 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.

In Tradition Five, we learned that our purpose is to carry CoDA's message of recovery to codependents. Tradition Six further defines CoDA recovery: our primary aim is spiritual.

What does it mean to be spiritual?

Spirituality is a personal connection with, a belief in, a power greater than ourselves. "Over time, members decide what their Higher Power should be." (*Co-Dependents Anonymous*)

Co-Dependents Anonymous is not a religious Fellowship; we do not support any specific belief system or worldview. When a CoDA group pays for meeting space in a church, for instance, it is not supporting a church or religion, but paying to rent the room space.

What is an outside enterprise?

CoDA as a whole avoids problems of money, property and prestige. CoDA refrains from being involved with any outside enterprise, such as a recovery center, a therapist, an author, political parties, or fraternal organizations.

Sometimes members ask about a book which they're reading which has not been published by CoDA. Is that book about codependency approved by CoDA? The answer is, "No." We only endorse the literature written anonymously by CoDA members, for CoDA members, and published by CoRe. We don't endorse anyone, so there's no potential for arguments about content, royalties or dominance by a well-known person. Avoiding outside organizations is a firm boundary. Some CoDA members attend other Twelve Step Fellowships. Each Fellowship has their own purpose and program of recovery that is different from CoDA. In CoDA meetings we maintain a healthy boundary by talking about our program, not others.

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For a couple, outside issues could be anything about which they do not agree. They may vote differently or support different causes. This is fine as long as one person doesn't try to force their position on the other. In CoDA , we practice spiritual equality with others.

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. Tradition Six helped to me crystallize my personal philosophy about lending money to friends or family. If I agree to give someone money, I consider it a gift to that person. If they repay me, great. But a loan means I'm open to disappointment or even anger if the friend doesn't repay me. If I value the relationship, I freely give if I am able. This is part of my spiritual life, to be honest with myself and to honor the relationship.

2. For me, my primary spiritual aim is to have honest, loving relationships with God, and myself. From that foundation, I am ready to have healthy and loving relationships with others.

The best relationship doesn't depend on material things; it depends on how well we work together to meet the needs of ourselves and our partners. I don't get overly involved in things outside my primary relationship. I resist the impulse to be a workaholic or to feed my need to be liked. This can manifest in spending money on others or co-signing for a loan just so the other person will love me. Historically, that hasn't worked for me. Sometimes my relationship was compromised because I wasn't truthful with my partner.

My primary spiritual aim is to have healthy relationships with a Higher Power and myself, which prepares me to be **in** relationships with others. Then I find true caring and real, honest, uplifting relationships.

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3. I have been affected by matters of money, property, and prestige. It definitely affected my spirituality and serenity. It took a number of years in CoDA to recognize this as part of my disease. This was not what my Higher Power wanted for me. As I turned it over, Higher Power removed this shortcoming to a large degree, if not yet completely.

4. I'd kind of skip over this one. I didn't quite know how to relate to this Tradition in my personal life. I really didn't understand that the Traditions were for me! But slowly, thoughts started to surface. Aligning myself with a financially successful and prestigious enterprise made me feel better. I was using sources outside myself to feel better. I hung on desperately so I could feel better inside. With the help of my Higher Power and honest inventories, I discovered that what made me feel good was to be an honest and moral person.

Seeking outside sources of approval diverts me from my primary spiritual aim. I humbly ask my Higher Power for help to believe that this is for me, not just others. If I work on this for myself and see the importance of this boundary for my recovery, then I see the importance of this Tradition for CoDA.

5. I think about this in terms of relationships and especially marriage. As a Christian, I believe the purpose of my marital relationship is primarily spiritual. Feeling one up or one down in a relationship can really harm the spiritual purpose of a relationship.

I imagine all of us can cite situations where issues of money, property or prestige screw up a relationship. If I am working 16 hours a day, or volunteering all the time on worthwhile causes, I will probably be too exhausted to spend time with wife or family. And,

when I do, knowing me, I will be reactive. I get very abrupt and dismissive of others in this state. I suppose lack of money can also hurt the spiritual aim, but for me having far different understandings about money is the bigger culprit.

6. My perception growing up was that the main goals of life were to be a rich professional person and to be admired by society. How I lived was in extreme opposition to these goals. I hid away when I could, I squashed my talents, and I resented the folks who were successful by worldly standards. This hampered my growth.

In CoDA, I became acutely aware of these flaws. Over the years of living the Steps and Traditions, I reexamined what I thought was important in life. I acquired a set of values that worked better for me—to have an ever budding relationship with my Higher Power, to be kind to myself and others, to recognize my talents and make use of them, and to be open about my faults and willing to accept help.

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Tradition Seven: A CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions

Tradition Seven is probably the first of CoDA's Traditions that we can relate to as newcomers. It means contributing money to pay the rent. That is familiar. We see people put a few dollars in the basket. We can do that; we can contribute. However, as we grow in our recovery and experience, we begin to see there's more to being self-supporting than money.

Self-Supporting

Being of service in the Fellowship is also part of being self-supporting. Tradition Five speaks of each group's primary purpose—to carry the message to the codependent who still suffers. That takes money *and* showing up and working with others.

The attitude we bring to our participation and service is also important to the message we carry. It makes a difference when we contribute and serve with an attitude of willingness, generosity, compassion, enthusiasm, respect and support.

In our relationships, we make contributions of money or service or both. We may earn more or less than our partners and friends and we may do more or less of the housework. Whatever we do is a contribution to the health of the relationship.

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. What is the problem with outside contributions? Well, it encourages dependency and can engender resentments. A person taking money from Mom or Dad or some other person often does so with resentments because there are strings attached to the gift. Even when those giving the money say there are no strings attached, there are often unspoken expectations.

There is value in making my own way. Learning to manage my finances pays great rewards down the road.

Self-support also has the spiritual value of shifting our dependence to our Higher Power rather than another human being. Delayed gratification is a sign of emotional intelligence and that is a hallmark of recovery. When I was emotionally immature, I wanted more and more. As I have grown in emotional maturity, I want less and less stuff. What I really want, and work at, is to be lovable, loving, and loved, Thereby, I enjoy a richer life.

2. In order to survive and be healthy, a CoDA group needs to be self-supporting through service as well as money. If members are unwilling to do service and rotate positions, a meeting can fail. When members are willing to open the room, order and display literature, chair meetings, handle the treasury, and communicate and cooperate with the wider CoDA community a CoDA group flourishes. Newcomers can be encouraged to help with service by reading foundational documents, arranging chairs, setting out literature, or putting up signs. Simple service helped me feel welcome and part of a group. It occupied those couple of minutes before the meeting when I otherwise felt nervous, shy, quiet, and an outsider. Being asked to arrange chairs helped me feel a part of the group.

In my experience, hospitals don't accept rent. In that case, a group needs to decide what to do by group conscience. If the group donates money in lieu of rent, is that supporting an outside enterprise? Meetings I'm familiar with donate CoDA literature to their hospital's social service department, library or meditation room.

3. In my meeting last night, the topic was the Seventh Tradition. The discussion triggered a memory from my newlywed days. My family was generous, not only my parents, but an aunt and uncle who lived across the street from us. We received a cash gift from my aunt and uncle, which shocked my husband. He wasn't used to such generosity and felt it was just too much. I felt between a rock and a hard place. I loved my aunt and uncle, knew they weren't

expecting anything in return, could easily afford the gift, and wouldn't understand my husband's discomfort.

I decided, with difficulty, that I'd have to tell my aunt and uncle that we couldn't accept extravagant future gifts. It was so hard, because I anticipated they'd be upset. It was my first hard lesson that outside contributions can add stress to a marriage.

4. With time in CoDA recovery, I understood that self-support takes many forms. I wondered, what does it mean to be self-supporting in my friendships? When I was new in the program, I often felt "less than." I was codependent and depressed, with low self-esteem, and believed that everyone else was somehow better than me. Comparing myself to others was a bad habit. It's hard to be in any healthy relationship when one person feels inadequate. That's why I loved to read CoDA's 6th Promise: "I learn to see myself as equal to others..." I longed to feel equal to others. I chose to read it often. With regular Step Ten inventories and my Higher Power's guidance, I came to understand that I don't have to be perfect. I can't be perfect.

Now, I choose to feel equal to others. I am good enough!

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Tradition Eight: Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

Remain Nonprofessional

Non-professional means that in CoDA, no one is paid to share experience, strength, and hope. Speakers or workshop leaders at a CoDA convention may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, when possible, but they are never paid to perform service work. Similarly, CoDA delegates and board members are not paid for their service.

At home, we aren't usually paid for being part of the family, although children may have to do chores to earn their allowance.

Special Workers

The wording of this Tradition is based on the original Traditions developed in the 1930s by Alcoholics Anonymous; it may seem awkward to us today. Special workers are the people who conduct the business side of CoDA, Inc. Some examples are a lawyer, clerical worker, bookkeeper, webmaster, and web designer. These folks may or may not be CoDA members.

The family may decide to pay someone from outside to do some of their work — cleaning, weeding, accounting, etc.

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. As a CoDA member, I maintain a healthy boundary by keeping my professional life separate from CoDA. I bring my talents into my CoDA service work. For example, I am good at greeting and answering questions for newcomers and presenting workshops.

If I present a CoDA workshop, I am not paid; I am grateful to receive spiritual growth. Professionals attending CoDA meetings do so as members only and do not use the Fellowship to further their business interests. Service work is an amazing gift in itself.

2. We each bring to CoDA special talents and limitations. How I use my talents and admit my limits is where spirituality connects with service. Tradition Eight reminds me that equality and humility are important in my relationships with CoDA. If I use my talents and professional training in service to CoDA, I am responsible to learn and follow the group conscience and maintain anonymity about my professional credentials.

Through this Tradition, I learned that I don't have to do everything myself; I can employ others because of their special talents or my time constraints. I no longer have to do without because I don't know how to do something or because I choose to use my limited time on other priorities.

3. Tradition Eight reminds me that I may employ special workers for guidance and assistance; I don't have to do it all. For example, I can hire a personal organizer, moving company, and fitness trainer. Sometimes I find myself overwhelmed by life and that's when I ask for help.

I have the tendency to make authority figures my Higher Power. When a person's work title or profession is revealed in CoDA, I treat them differently. My fear, shame, judgment, and people pleasing characteristics surface. As a CoDA member I am learning to maintain a boundary by keeping my business and professional life to myself.

4. Before she retired, my partner was a geriatric social worker, and when she and I first met, she made a number of useful suggestions about ways my sister and I could help our aging father. I often solve our computer problems. But because technology changes rapidly, there are many problems that I cannot fix. For those, we subscribe to a technical support service.

We take a similar approach to chores. She does the laundry, I do

the dishes; she loves to garden, I love to keep our checkbook in balance and pay our bills. But neither of us likes to clean, so we pay a cleaning service to take care of that. We don't keep records of how much time we spend on any of this.

Neither of us ever expects to be paid by the other, but we know that we have to pay for services we can't do for ourselves.

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Tradition Nine: CoDA as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

When the phrase “ought never be organized” is read, members often chuckle, “Well, that’s good!” or “Never been a problem.” While we do resist hierarchy in fellowship, this Tradition shows us that there is a need for a service structure so that we have clear, orderly direction pertaining to the necessary tasks which help to assure the continuation of CoDA.

We share the tasks and are responsible to those we serve.

Just as in Step One we admit we are powerless over others, in this Tradition, we declare that no individuals are granted the authority to control others within CoDA. Not only is this good for CoDA, it is good for individual members; we really are powerless over others.

Ought Never Be Organized

Other than the guidance of our Traditions, there are no rules governing our members and meetings within the Fellowship. Therefore, we need no organization to enforce rules. We don’t give control of CoDA to any individual.

Similarly, a relationship needs flexibility in order to meet the needs of both people. If one person were to assume sole responsibility for the success of the relationship, that person would resent doing all the work while the other may withdraw, believing their input is not welcome.

What are service boards or committees?

Our service boards include the Board of Trustees of CoDA, Inc. and the Board of Trustees of CoRe, Inc., the publishing arm of CoDA. Each is constituted of CoDA members who are elected by voters at the CoDA Service Conference, our annual business meeting. These entities are responsible for tending to legal requirements; CoRe carries out the print-

ing and distribution of CoDA literature. The Trustees are trusted servants, they do not govern.

Our service structure includes committees that carry out the responsibilities delegated to them in support of the Fellowship. For example, the Literature Committee is responsible for developing CoDA publications. The Hospitals and Institutions Committee serves people who cannot attend CoDA meetings due to their personal limitations or the rules of their institution. The Finance Committee develops the budget and tracks compliance with it. And so forth. These committees were created so that the necessary work would be delegated to volunteers willing to take on the responsibility assigned to them.

Every meeting benefits from the Tradition, too. As *The Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions Workbook* states, “Each CoDA meeting is free to attend to the direct needs of its members. Tradition Nine protects this freedom for each CoDA group. Each meeting and service group can support this Tradition by rotating service positions. By doing so, responsibilities are handed over and an active flow of service and energy exits. Rotating positions also prevents dominance from individuals that may lead to control and a more rigid, organized structure.” When CoDA groups hold regular business meetings where all members have voice and vote in the group conscience and the opportunity to serve, the group is supporting Tradition Nine.

In our relationships, we may agree to a certain division of chores. We can take turns with some tasks and do others together because we like to work side by side. Neither partner is shut out from participating in any of the work.

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. I used to ask my family to follow the schedule that I thought was the most organized for a smoothly running household. I was adamant that tasks be done at certain times and in specific manners. I had lists, posted reminders, and generally was edging to-

ward tyrannical behavior. When there was a revolt, I felt anxious, but I stepped back. Eventually everybody found their own approach. Yes, it lacked my ideal of organization, but it allowed an atmosphere of respect and led to creativity. In time, we were all happier, and the house was still in good shape. The Ninth Tradition makes me aware that I am not the only one who is competent and creative.

2. The Ninth Tradition was uppermost in my mind and that of my partner's when we created a home together. The Tradition doesn't mean that our relationship should be disorganized, but we need to be flexible. Of course, what the founders of Twelve Step programs wanted to avoid was a rigid hierarchy where some people were "authorities". The words "create" and "directly responsible to those they serve" stand out in my mind as do the concepts of delegation and consensus.

Relationships are a creative enterprise. There is no automatic right way. So, we want to avoid saying, "But we've always done it that way." CoDA is about creating healthy relationships. Unfortunately, intimate partnerships don't come with a "how to" manual. Most of us don't want to replicate the models we grew up with. The strands of two life histories are creatively woven into a new and different basket. By definition, a committed relationship is a new spiritual, physical, and emotional reality. My soul mate and I had that in mind when we set the date for our wedding on Columbus Day. As my partner said, "On that day Columbus discovered a new world, and we will begin exploring a new world." I believe her thought catches the essence of what the Ninth Tradition is about for me.

My experience is that when we operate on automatic pilot, we are replicating our dysfunctional family of origin patterns. My job in

the relationship is to keep my side of the street clean so I can be open to God's guidance and be present in every moment of our relationship.

3. A word here about the phrase "ought never be organized." A creative partnership gives birth to harmony while a relationship dependent on following the letter of the law may seem organized, but usually results in disharmony. Organizational plans are more often defensive than creative. My experience is that legalistic definitions of relationships grow out of fear from past failures or wounds. The result is a power struggle for control. A creative relationship promotes a "one day at a time" approach that requires engagement and intimacy. Intimacy is a spiritual connection requiring more spontaneity and grace than organization.

I saw a meeting fall apart because one person did all the service work. When they moved out of town, the meeting fell apart. In a partnership, boards and committees are the means of delegating and sharing in a very creative enterprise. This being true, then each individual has work to do on their fear and need to control.

Ideally both people feel that responsibilities are fairly shared and trust that when a task is delegated, they won't be second guessed. If the bathroom is my task (I do like cleaning up that nasty stuff) then I don't want my partner nitpicking how I do it. If she pays the bills, I don't nag her about whether such and such a bill was paid on time.

I ask, "Am I choosing recovery over fear and anger?" Love is the only spiritual concept big enough to ensure that I am being "directly responsible" to my partner.

4. For my personal recovery, this Tradition reminds me that I do not have all the answers. I don't have to do it all. One of the definitions of organized is efficient and methodical. When I know that something is new to me, where I am at a loss about where to even begin a project, I know I need help. Although I was taught asking for help was weak, I now recognize that is not true. It is okay to ask for help.

5. I don't want my family to be too organized because that could interfere with our individual rights to make decisions for ourselves. If only one person was responsible for buying all our food, for example, that person would be able to decide what everyone eats. If only one person controlled the TV remote at all times, the others would end up watching a lot of shows they dislike or nothing at all. Being disorganized, or at least taking turns, frees us to act spontaneously together or apart.

That said, someone has to do the laundry. So we divvy up the work and take turns doing the things none of us wants to do. But if I sign up to do the laundry this week, not only do I get to decide how I'm going to do it, I can also sign up for something different next week and ask for help folding the fitted sheets when I can't manage them by myself.

Tradition Ten: CoDA has no opinion on outside issues, hence the CoDA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Tradition Ten sets a precise boundary for Co-Dependents Anonymous: we have no opinion on any issues or organizations beyond our Fellowship. It's so simple.

By respecting this boundary, we keep CoDA safe. Thank goodness CoDA has no opinion on outside issues! If CoDA were to express opinions about other organizations, therapy or therapists, authors, or political parties, then we would become embroiled in fights, competition, perhaps even lawsuits. Not on politics, taxes, zoning laws, nor how social workers should work with addicts. Not about how a church where we meet believes or behaves. We have such a clear and simple boundary: we have NO OPINION on any outside issues. Thanks to this rule, we don't have to discuss, worry, argue, or confuse CoDA with any other group. We don't express opinions on anything that is "not CoDA." Thus, we are open and welcoming to all codependents.

Outside Issues in Relationships

What is an outside issue in a relationship? Whatever the people decide on. Often we choose to be friends with someone because we share similar opinions, but what about people we disagree with? Even in marriages or intimate partnerships, we may have strong, differing opinions. Ideally, our differences are the source of rich conversations. However, if the conversation is heated and not leading anywhere, the simplest thing is to agree to disagree. If the friend or relative insists on bringing up the topic again, we have choices. We can keep silent, change the conversation, or leave. We politely practice detachment.

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. When we come together for CoDA, the only goal is recovery. This Tradition teaches us how to accomplish that. Keeping personal boundaries by not discussing outside issues provides space for

healthy relationships to grow.

This is the first real life experience I had with boundaries. When issues are outside of CoDA, I don't bring them into my meetings. How grateful I am to CoDA for learning this. Now I understand the impact when I don't adhere to healthy boundaries in CoDA and in my personal life. I've heard more than once that "what you think is not my business." That is a big lesson for me in my recovery. It is my responsibility as a CoDA member to uphold Tradition Ten.

2. The boundary set by Tradition Ten makes my life easier—I don't need to know what other programs do, I don't have to assess them or find fault; none of that matters. The Fellowship of CoDA, and I personally, are safe when we have "no opinion on outside issues" expressed during meetings. The CoDA name will never be embroiled in controversy, so long as we adhere to Tradition Ten.
3. Maintaining a meeting's boundaries creates safety and security in the meeting. We do not speak of controversial events, religion, or political issues at meetings; they will create discord and conflict. Our focus is on how to have healthy, loving relationships and working the Steps and following the Traditions.
4. One CoDA member defines outside issues for herself with a simple exercise. "I stretch my arms out to my sides as far as possible and twirl around. Everything from my fingertips to my body is my responsibility; everything from my fingertips out into the world is, for me, an outside issue. I don't always like the result, but there is wisdom in the procedure."

5. I don't have to be right, but I do have to be loving to maintain a good relationship. This requires a large dose of acceptance. I may completely disagree with how my wife sees a family member, but it is not my job to belittle or shame her or them.

6. Once, during an election campaign, a member arrived wearing a T-shirt promoting a specific candidate. Although I favored the same candidate, I spoke to her after the meeting to let her know I thought she was bringing an outside issue into the meeting.

I used to share my belief in the importance of this Tradition during a meeting when I thought someone had violated it, but I've learned that what I think of as a neutral statement may be taken as criticism. It's more tactful to speak to the person one-on-one after the meeting.

7. I sponsor a woman who was dreading an upcoming dinner with her husband and another couple where the man likes to argue against their politics. We discussed it and she decided to say to him, "We love you both and value your friendship. We would hate to lose you as friends over some political disagreement." She tried it; the argument stopped; they had a lovely evening.

8. After the World Trade Towers were bombed in 2001, I made the mistake of sharing about it at a meeting. It caused an uproar and disrupted the meeting. I expressed an opinion about an outside issue and learned a lesson.

9. My partner and I are both in Twelve Step recovery. We consider speaking about each other's program practices to be outside issues,

unless one of us invites discussion on some matter. When we attend meetings together, we sit in separate share groups.

Tradition Eleven: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and film.

Tradition Ten cautions us not to bring outside issues into CoDA, thus preventing controversy over matters that do not concern recovery. Tradition Eleven defines a further protection for the Fellowship by stressing that we do not use media of any sort to promote CoDA. The appeal of depending only upon attraction is respectful of ourselves and others. Neither do we divulge our own membership in public arenas; no one person speaks for the Fellowship. Group conscience is the voice of the Fellowship. Group conscience decisions are found in our literature and service materials.

In CoDA and in our personal interactions, we honor the privacy of our friends, business associates, and relatives. It is not appropriate for us to speak for others, unless we've agreed ahead of time.

Attraction rather than promotion

Step One states that we are powerless over others; we allow others the dignity of finding CoDA not by our promotion of the program, but instead by trusting in the power of attraction.

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. I believe that our need for anonymity in all public and social media is vital. If I slip or relapse in public, where it is known that I am in CoDA, it harms the program. That's why I maintain anonymity in media.
2. In my personal relationship, we don't think about "policies" but we do make plans. For example, when it comes to friends, relatives, children and school, weddings, funerals, gifts and the like, we discuss these matters and negotiate what we will do. A plan means that we have considered the appropriate boundaries for the rela-

tionship in the world at large and we are each willing to enforce them. This was a challenge because both of us are independent people.

We were used to doing things the way we wanted without consulting anyone else, so when we moved in together there was a clash. In part, the clash was a result of us each of us having our own agenda. My partner wanted to make sure she didn't end up doing all the housework and I wanted to be sure that what I did was appreciated. We used a win/win approach to reach consensus.

3. An example of how to construe a "public relations policy" for a personal relationship: my partner and I decided what is okay to talk about outside of the relationship. We consider it inappropriate to talk about specifics of our sexual relationship; what is said or done in our bedroom is off limits, except to our sponsors. Another instance involved my role as a father. On more than one occasion, I embarrassed my daughters when I told someone a "cute" story about what they had done. Children deserve honor and respect.

Regarding invitations, I ask my partner not to make any commitments for me until we confer. If I choose to, I attend my partner's events when she asks me, and I accord her the same privilege. We don't make excuses if one of us stays home. We simply say he/she decided not to come. Gift giving is another issue to agree upon. I buy for my friends and my partner for hers. If I don't want to buy a gift for an occasion,, my partner can still give a gift herself. We negotiate how much to spend for joint gifts.

The purpose of the Traditions and good policy is to ensure things run smoothly.

4. In the current world, attraction is not the usual way of getting people to notice your business or program; the usual way is to PROMOTE! If I am living the program, embracing the Steps and Traditions, I may model recovery behavior that attracts people to CoDA. It is often very attractive to be around people in recovery; it is how I found my sponsor — she had what I wanted — living a life of recovery, at peace, in serenity.

5. We are anonymous, not invisible! There are public announcements in newspapers listing times and locations of meetings. CoDA has a website. If a CoDA member gives a TV or radio interview about recovery, that person does not reveal their membership, share their last name or, in the case of TV or internet, show their faces.

Tradition Twelve: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

What Does Anonymity Mean?

The concept of anonymity can be confusing. There are varying levels, or degrees, of anonymity. We remain completely anonymous at the level of press, radio, and film. That's clear. We introduce ourselves by first name only at meetings. That's explicitly stated in the meeting format: "introduce yourself by your first name only".

We help carry CoDA's message without wanting, expecting, or getting credit or recognition. It is good for CoDA and a healthy spiritual exercise for the individual.

What about when talking to CoDA friends, outside of meetings? Sometimes we develop friendships with CoDA members, and then may exchange last names or other personal information with the agreement that we won't share it with others.

In relationships, we respect each other's privacy. We don't tell other people embarrassing stories about our partners. Respecting the need for anonymity says we value ourselves, but we don't take ourselves too seriously.

What is the difference between privacy and secrecy? The focus on anonymity in CoDA often seems to be about keeping our identities secret. That is important in some situations, but as a spiritual foundation of our Traditions, it is far more important that we see ourselves as one of many members and refrain from seeking recognition for ourselves. We carry CoDA's message. In our personal relationships, anonymity may be viewed as a willingness to participate fully in the relationship without needing credit.

What are the principles of CoDA?

CoDA's principles are embodied in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. These include concentrating on our shared welfare, making decisions together with that common welfare in mind, being responsible for our actions, sharing in our primary purpose of recovery, recognizing what's getting in the way of that stated purpose, being able and willing to take care of ourselves, but also being willing to ask for help when necessary. We learn to divide up the work, avoid gossip, be trustworthy, and remain personally anonymous in public.

What about personalities?

When one person dominates a meeting, the other members may start to focus on that person's understanding of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Even if that person seems to have "gotten it", the meeting is less useful to members whose experiences are different from the leader's. Members may start to think that they are doing CoDA the wrong way. Placing principles first reminds us that we work the Steps and apply the Traditions as individuals, each on our unique journey of recovery.

In our relationships, we find serenity, strength, and spiritual growth when both partners feel a sense of belonging in the relationship, love and accept themselves and their partners, and see themselves as equals. No one personality dominates.

CoDA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

1. Anonymity is a tool that keeps me from my need to compare myself to others. Instead of focusing on what I don't have, I focus on what I do have, with gratitude. Anonymity supports the belief that we are all created equal by our Higher Power's love and grace. And our Higher Power loves us all equally.

This Tradition also comes in handy when I start giving my power away to authority figures. When I am triggered by a personality, remembering the phrase "principles before personalities" suggests

to me that I work the Steps.

Anonymity is a boundary. Earlier in my recovery, I shared too much about my CoDA recovery with a business associate. By not remaining anonymous, it jeopardized and harmed my business transaction. It also increased my sense of shame and fear. That was a big lesson and a reiteration of the importance of Tradition Twelve.

2. Early on I was able to understand the concepts in this Tradition and apply them to my life. As with all the Traditions, I see it practiced (or not) in meetings, in doing service outside meetings, and in working with the Fellowship at large.

Each time the Traditions are read, many join the reader at the end with a chorus of "...principles before personalities." That got my attention. In my Step work, I realized it was, indeed, personalities — *others'* I'd been unable to change over a lifetime and *my own* through self-will — that were the reasons I needed to be in these rooms. Getting clearer about the principles of Twelve Step recovery and applying them has been my journey ever since.

3. I depended on my own idea of anonymity to get through the doors of CoDA before I was sure I belonged. I came to believe anonymity has far greater spiritual meaning the longer I stayed, listened, watched, and worked with others. As I observed, then copied, others in CoDA who seemed to have what I wanted, I was able to see my work and my life were better served the less I sought recognition for my service. I learned to do my service for other, healthier reasons. Anonymity also allows me to value my service based on my own goals and performance, rather than seeking praise or accepting the judgment of others.

I let go of titles and jobs; what I or others do is not who I am or who they are. This understanding of anonymity has changed my perspective and allowed me to be comfortable with who I really am.

I experience chaos when I put personalities before the principles of this program. Promise Twelve says, “I gradually experience serenity, strength, and spiritual growth in my daily life.” When I practice Tradition Twelve in all areas of my life, this Promise comes true.

4. It is challenging to keep principles before personalities. In relationships, my rule is no name calling. I express what I feel without blaming or shaming. This works in service work as well. It is not what one person says; it is the group conscience that is the voice of CoDA. If I don't follow this Tradition, I can behave poorly. Instead I continue striving to reach the codependent who still suffers. When in a leadership position, it is my responsibility to be humble enough to allow the Fellowship to lead me. Anonymity is about keeping the program safe.

5. The two principles anchoring this Tradition are perhaps the most important of my life in recovery—the practice of anonymity and acting on principles rather than personalities. Before recovery, I worried about whether people might catch me in a Twelve Step meeting. Now I work to be right-sized in meetings and the world.

Not using last names and titles in CoDA, and doing service that needs to be done rather than just what I want to do, made me aware that being a worker among workers offers peaceful equality that I didn't know was possible.

I practiced putting “principles before personalities” when I made a decision to accept the format of whatever meeting I found myself in and stop looking for ways to improve it. That freed my mind for the study and application of other principles which I carried it into my work in my intergroup. When I acted on my own thinking, I often was out of alignment with the Traditions. When, as a group, we worked toward an informed group conscience, the results were better.

Then, in a CoDA workshop, a member shared his experience of applying the Traditions to his life. This opened a whole new world to me.

6. When I was new in CoDA recovery, 26 years ago, I was desperate to understand how to “work The Twelve Steps.” I knew The Twelve Traditions existed, probably because I read them in a pamphlet or in Codependents Anonymous. They were certainly not read in my meeting in the early years. Eventually, we incorporated The Twelve Traditions in our opening readings, along with the Preamble, Welcome, and Twelve Steps.

A few years into recovery, I went to the CoDA convention in my home state. Being a process oriented person, I was curious about the business meeting, so I went to it. The Twelve Traditions were read to open the meeting, which was probably the first time I had heard them. The one that struck me the most was Tradition Twelve. I was impressed by the calm demeanor and reasonable way business was conducted. People seemed to respect each other and conflicts were worked through without fighting, name calling, or attempts to control. I had never seen anything like it. I have a vague memory of talking to people afterwards about the wisdom in the Traditions. I was deeply impressed and have been involved in service work of some kind ever since.

A few years later, I was a student at a large yoga school. The founder and master teacher had recently been removed because he had been discovered to be having inappropriate sexual relationships with teachers and students. I remember feeling grateful that my CoDA program is guided by the spiritual foundation of principles above personalities. I was also proud of the brave teachers who, despite admiration for the beloved leader, removed him for the good of the school and the students. They put the principles of honesty and integrity above allowing the bad behavior of their leader. A Tradition Twelve lightbulb lit up for me. Since then, I have relied on Tradition Twelve to help me detach from personality related drama, charm offensives, temper tantrums, etc, to look for the important principle in the situation.

7. This Tradition calls on me to see myself as equal to others. I perform what service I can because it needs to be done and I have the skills, time, and willingness to do it. I drop the masks I used to hide behind: money, property, prestige, degrees, titles, age, gender, and all the other ways I separate myself from others.

As a codependent, I used to have a house with bricks but no mortar; now CoDA is the mortar of my life.



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 our 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.

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The 12 Steps of AA:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - 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 our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.
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 Him 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 Him, praying only for knowledge of His 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 alcoholics 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 nonprofessional, 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, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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The 12 Traditions of AA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups of A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the A.A. 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, and films.
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