

# The 3 R's: Recovery from Writing Roadblocks

## NOTES FOR PRESENTERS:

This document is formatted to be printed double-sided and stapled. Please take a moment to read it over and notate or highlight, as well as fill in specifics, to prepare.

**The script begins on page 2.**

Materials:

- Easel paper and tape or push-pins OR Self-adhesive easel paper
  - On one sheet, write "Roadblocks to Writing my Story" at the top and post it on the wall at the front of the room.
- 6-10 black or colored markers, for writing on posters in breakout groups
- Copies of the handout
- Copies of RECOVERY FROM CODEPENDENCE: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION, folded
- Additional paper and pens (and/or pencils), just in case

## Dear Presenter,

This is workshop number 1 in the CoDA Literature Committee's *Storygatherers* workshop series. It is designed to help participants recover from fears and avoidance around sharing their written stories with the fellowship of Codependents Anonymous.

This workshop is designed to be conducted by one or more presenters. Please review the script before beginning and discuss how to best distribute the workload amongst presenters.

Thank you for your willingness and service in conducting this workshop.

## LONG DESCRIPTION

Our Big Book, *Codependents Anonymous*, includes several stories submitted by members active when the book was written -- over twenty years ago. Today, the CoDA Literature committee seeks codependents willing to share their stories, but many of us are blocked by our past abuses from doing so. This workshop provides a safe place to explore the childhood issues that prevent us from sharing our stories. Whether you are a newcomer or old-timer in this program, your story can benefit the codependent who still suffers.

## SHORT DESCRIPTION

This workshop provides a safe place to explore the childhood issues that prevent us from sharing our stories. Whether you are a newcomer or old-timer in this program, your story can benefit the codependent who still suffers.

# WORKSHOP SCRIPT

## A. WELCOME

Good morning, and thank you for attending this workshop today. Welcome to this workshop, "Recovery from Writing Roadblocks". My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am codependent. [My name is...] [I/We] will be your workshop leader[s] today.

This workshop is [# ] minutes in length and will end at [TIME ].

Writing is an exercise that enhances recovery. It is my hope that all of us here today will use writing as a tool to explore our inter-personal and intra-personal lives. If you are having difficulty with this aspect of recovery, this workshop can help you, but be aware that it was designed specifically to help members of CoDA deal with the issues that hold us back from sharing our recovery writing with the fellowship, whether it be via CoDA literature or our virtual newsletter, Co-Nnections.

Codependents Anonymous is a fellowship which strives to be self-supporting. Because of this, we do not endorse outside literature. Instead, we rely on the Experience, Strength, and Hope of our membership. The written experience, strength, and hope is used to produce our CoDA literature. Without members willing to be of service by sharing their writing with the rest of us, CoDA would have no literature. We are all offered, as part of recovery, the opportunity to share. One important way we can do that is to write our stories and share it with the CoDA Literature Committee.

At this time, [we are handing / may I have a volunteer to hand] out the worksheet to those who did not receive them at the door.

[ IF THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH HANDOUTS AND MORE CANNOT BE MADE: [I am/We are] grateful that so many people are interested in this workshop, but this means that there are not enough handouts. Some past participants have found that taking a picture with a cell phone is enough to follow along. That said, is anyone willing to look on with another person and write on journal or looseleaf paper? Thank you. ]

The idea of sharing writing with the fellowship may have brought up some emotions in you, as it did for [me/us]. At this time, I'd like to share with you my impetus for leading this workshop... [Share about fear, shame, low self-esteem, etc around writing. Share about tools used. Share about recovery / results. NO MORE THAN 3-5 minutes EACH]

Thank you for letting [me/us] share. Let's now turn to our worksheets.

## B. STEP ONE: LIST ROADBLOCKS AND LABEL

At this time, I'd like to invite each of you to write briefly about the question for box one, which reads, "What comes to mind when confronted with the idea of writing your story for publication?"

Feel free to write lists or sentences, whichever is more comfortable for you. You will have two minutes to write. If you have a question, please signal [me / one of us]. I will start the timer now.

That has been two minutes. Some of us will need more time to consider more issues. Please feel free to use the format we present today to do that at home or with your home meeting if you have found the format useful. Who would like to share one or two issues that have come up for them so that we may make a list on [the board]? { Endnote 1 } Please, as you start your share, identify yourself by your first name.

While each of us has different primary reasons for not writing for CoDA publication, I imagine that, like me, you are noticing that we all share several of these roadblocks. You are not alone. If any of these look familiar to you, feel free to add them in Box 1A now.

There are several tools we can use to explore our fears, shame, and low-self-esteem issues, today we will be using the PATTERNS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CODEPENDENCY. If anyone does not have a copy of the publication RECOVERY FROM CODEPENDENCE: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION, we have copies to hand out. Please raise your hand if you would like a copy and we will bring it to you. You may also find the patterns at CoDA.org under the tab “Meeting Materials”. If you need assistance with this, please see \_\_\_\_\_. [me, another presenter, etc]

Does everyone now have a copy of the PATTERNS to look at? Good.

With your list from Box 1A in mind, look over the Patterns and Characteristics and write the ones that resonate with you in Box 1B. Some of us find it easier to write the category with the characteristic; it makes the characteristic easier to find because some of us might not yet have memorized this list. If this seems like a good idea to you, feel free to do the same. You might also choose to circle them on the paper itself.

Here is an example: I fear that my work will not be accepted by the committee - I fear they will laugh at it, and therefore, me. I look at the PATTERNS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CODEPENDENCY and see that the Low Self-Esteem pattern “I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person” AND the Avoidance pattern “I avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a means of maintaining distance” both apply, so I write them both down. Remember, there is no “right” or “wrong” here, only what resonates with you in this moment.

I’ll set the timer for three minutes.

## C. STEP FOUR: INVENTORY OF FEARS

Thank you. We will now move on to Part Two. Looking over what you wrote in Box 1B, choose one of the characteristics, patterns, or fears you wrote to focus on. This might be the one which brings up the most emotion, the one you feel the most avoidance around, the most fear or shame of, etc. Write it in Box 2A. (PAUSE) In Box 2B, freewrite about one or both of the following:

- What is the source of this feeling? This could be something from far back in the past.

- Write about the earliest time you remember feeling this way? Who was there? What happened? If this reminds you of something sooner, write about that. Go back until you cannot go back any further.

We will have five minutes to explore and write. I will set the timer for four minutes, then set the timer for one minute to wrap up.

[When first timer goes off: ] There is one minute remaining.

That is all the time we have for writing. I have found it is a good idea to stand up and stretch after writing. Let's do that now, after which, we will share.

We will now share what we have written with another person. Because of the time crunch, and the intimacy required, this next section works best with one-to-one shares. Please find one partner and move your chairs to face each other. Please take your things with you.

## D. STEP FIVE: SHARING

If you have not already, please take a moment to introduce yourself to the other person. We will begin sharing in just a moment.

Decide who will read first. I will set the timer for two minutes. During this time, please read what you have written. Listeners, when the person has finished, please refrain from commenting, and instead focus on positive reinforcement. For example, "I have been through that too, and I understand what you are going through" or, "you're strong, you can get through this and feel more precious and free", or "it's going to be okay, keep working, you can do it." After the timer, you will switch roles. I will start the two minute timer.

It is now time to switch roles. I will re-set the timer for two minutes.

Thank you for participating. I hope that this has been beneficial for you.

We have put some of the common characteristics and fears at the top of these poster papers. Please take a minute to join a group of three to five at a poster paper that appeals to you and/or relates to what you have written and shared about. [ Bring your things. ]

## E. STEP SIX: NEW TOOLS

Please take a minute to introduce yourself to your group members. Discuss with your group what came up for you about the characteristic, fear, etc you choose to explore. We will set the timer for five minutes, so plan accordingly.

Now, discuss what new behaviors, CoDA tools, and other recovery ideas that you could apply to the characteristic or situation. Write your ideas down on the poster paper. You will have eight minutes to discuss and write.

Thank you. I invite you to join us in hanging the poster paper on the wall.

We will now take some time to walk around and look at what the other groups have produced. If you have a new idea come up while reading a poster, please feel free to write the idea on the poster. As you walk, if a poster strikes you as something you'd like to remember, you may take notes on the back of the worksheet, in your journal, or take a picture with your cell phone camera. A note about cameras: in respect for others' anonymity, please do not take pictures with people in the background or foreground without their knowledge and express permission. You may ask others to temporarily move out of the way. I will now set the timer for [ ten ] minutes [or about 1 minute per poster] for walking around.

That is all the time we have for this gallery walk. Poster paper will be taken down before the next workshop, so you will have time to explore more or take pictures at the end. Let's be seated.

## F. DEBRIEF AND CLOSING

We are coming to the end of the workshop. Is there anyone who would like to share an "aha" moment or a new understanding you have gained here today? Please keep your shares to a minute or less to allow others time to share.

Thank you, would anyone else like to share?

This has been part one of the CoDA Literature Committee's two-part workshop on writing for publication. We sincerely hope that you have gained something from participating. If you have comments or constructive criticism about this workshop, please send them to [lit@coda.org](mailto:lit@coda.org). If you have enjoyed this workshop, you are welcome to download the script we used and present it at CoDA events, Retreats, and Conventions in your area. The script is available by emailing [lit@coda.org](mailto:lit@coda.org). { Endnote 3 } Please see me if you have any questions or would like to see the script itself.

[ We are offering the second workshop at (TIME) (DATE "ex: tomorrow") in (LOCATION). That workshop is a time devoted to writing for publication. It explores how this style of writing differs from recovery writing, provides topic ideas, and a safe, supportive venue for writing. We hope you will join us at (TIME) (DATE) in (LOCATION). ]

It is my hope that you continue this journey of recovery from roadblocks that keep you from writing. The tools we have practiced today are equally applicable to many other issues in recovery. For more information about this, please speak with one of us or with your sponsor.

If you feel somewhere in your heart that you have recovery to share with the fellowship, remember that you are worthy. There is a recovery acronym for FEAR: Face Everything And Recover.

Thank you again for joining us today. If you are willing, please join us as we close this workshop with the Serenity Prayer.

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

## ENDNOTES

{ Endnote 1 }

Some example responses: Fear of doing it wrong; Fear of not know how to write correctly; Inertia/Hard to get started; Time management/the need to set aside the time; Need to have space/solitude; Fear of being overwhelmed; Fear of rejections... and so on.

{ Endnote 2 }

An incomplete list of Patterns and Characteristics that may apply:

**Low Self-Esteem:** I judge what I think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough; I am embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts; I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person; I have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects. I have trouble setting healthy priorities.

**Compliance:** I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger; I am afraid to express my beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.

**Control:** I refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.

**Avoidance:** I avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a means of maintaining distance; I refuse to give up my self-will to avoid surrendering to a power that is greater than myself. I believe displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.

{ Endnote 3 }

If you wish, blank copies of the script and worksheet could be provided. Consider making an announcement here if you do so.