

CoDA Literature Committee (CLC) *Storygatherers 2*:

Time to Write Our Stories

Welcome

This is workshop number 2 in the CoDA Literature Committee's *Storygatherers* workshop series. It is designed to give participants some time to begin the process of writing their stories for submission for use in future CoDA literature.

This workshop is designed to be conducted by two to three 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 about how their lives were before CoDA, what they did to find recovery, and how their lives are better now - in other words: experience, strength, and hope, to encourage the codependent who still suffers. Your story is just as valuable as theirs, and we would love it if you shared. This workshop provides time and a safe place to write. Pencils, paper, and copyright release sheets will be provided. If you prefer to type and have a device to type on, we encourage you to bring it.

SHORT DESCRIPTION

This workshop provides time and a safe place to write our stories. Pencils, paper, and copyright release sheets will be provided. If you prefer to type and have a device to type on, we encourage you to bring it.

NOTES FOR PRESENTERS:

Pages 1-4 of this document are formatted to be printed double-sided and stapled. Page 5 is for the presenter(s). Pages 6-10 are formatted to be hung or taped to the wall near the breakout groups. Please take a moment to read over the entire script and other documents and notate or highlight, as well as fill in specifics, to prepare. This workshop can be adapted for many different durations and group sizes.

Materials:

- Tables and chairs for participants
- Loose-leaf paper, pens, pencils, erasers
- Copies of the breakout session instructions, to be posted in breakout session locations. Optional: Additional copies for participants without cell phones.
- Copies of the CLC Copyright Assignment Form
- A timer

WORKSHOP SCRIPT

1. WELCOME

Good morning, and thank you for joining [me/us] in this workshop today. Welcome to this workshop, entitled “Time to Write Our Stories”. My name is _____ and I am codependent. [My name is...] [I/We] will be your workshop leader[s] today.

Codependents Anonymous is a fellowship which strives to be self-supporting. Because of this, we do not endorse outside literature and instead, 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 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 write our stories and share it with the CoDA Literature Committee. Another, not formally covered in this workshop is to share with Co-Nnections, our digital newsletter.

This workshop was created by the CoDA Literature Committee to encourage members of CoDA to write their stories down for publication. Anyone’s stories can be used, whether you are brand-new to the program, or are one of our “old-timers”. Everyone’s story is important and valuable.

2. Directions

The theory behind this workshop is that the biggest roadblocks in writing our stories are: one, making time to write and two, getting started. Many of us dream of “one day” writing our stories, and we wonder what topics to cover. Today, we are going to give you as much time as possible

to write, then give some sharing time, then close with some important information about the CoDA Literature Committee's publication process.

In a moment, you will determine where you are in the writing process. We have three breakout areas, [point:] one, two, and three. Breakout area three is where we will spend time writing, and it is our goal to get everyone there before the end of this workshop, so those who go to the first area will proceed to the second, then the third.

So, without further ado, we'd like you to consider where you are in the writing process:

Breakout Group 1: "Maybe I've written in my journal, but I have done no writing for publication before so I need help getting started from scratch." or "I need some tips on how this writing is different than writing for recovery." Go over there, and I will help you out.

Breakout Group 2: "I'm ready to write, but I need or want some prompts to consider." Go over there, where you'll find prompts in three categories [at each table].

Breakout Group 3: "I know what I want to say, just give me time to start writing!" Go over there and go!

We are now ready to head to our breakout groups. Again, those who need some guidance on the difference between "recovery writing" and "writing for publication" over there, those who need prompts and inspiration over there, and those ready to start writing right away over there. [Breakout groups and writing time]

[Please see **Presenter Note**]

3. Ending the writing

[Depending on the level of silence in the room, speaking here can be jarring for the participants. Feel free to ease back into speech.]

[At five minutes to the end of writing time:] We have five minutes of writing time remaining. Please take some or all of the remaining time to outline or write down the main ideas of where you were going from here so that you will not forget them.

[At the end of writing time:] That is all the time we have for writing at this workshop. Please take thirty seconds to stand up and stretch and move to wake up your body.

Thank you, please be seated.

Please find and stand next to a partner. We will have more instructions in just a moment. We will now take four minutes for sharing. I will set the timer for two minutes, then reset the timer for another two minutes.

During this time, share with him or her one or more of the following: What was this writing experience like for you? What emotions are coursing through your veins right now? Has your

excitement level or reservations about this process changed? How? What is a specific line or paragraph you are especially excited about?

[During sharing time, please pass out the CLC Copyright Assignment Form]

Thank you. Now, where to go from here? I hope you are all excited about your progress and are considering submitting your work to the CoDA Literature Committee so that it might one day help the CoDependent who still suffers. How do we do that?

During sharing time, we passed you a copy of the CoDA Literature Committee's Copyright Assignment Form. All original work submitted to the CLC must be accompanied with a physical copy - not a scan - of the Copyright assignment form. This form states that you understand and agree that the CoDA Literature Committee may use or edit your work for CoDA literature, and that CoRE (the publishing arm of Codependents Anonymous) may publish the work. In other words, it acknowledges that you freely give your work to CoDA to benefit the fellowship as a whole.

On the back of the form, you will find important information on how to get your work to CLC.

Some presenters offer to mail completed work and copyright assignment forms. If you plan to do so, say, "Those who finish may give the work and the form to me and I will mail (/deliver) it all to CLC." Then proceed, including the [also].

You can [also] mail it to: CoDA Literature Committee, Box 33577, Phoenix AZ, 85067-3577. This address can be found on the form itself.

This process is difficult for many people. Members of the Literature Committee are available to support you by answering questions, edit or give feedback, or talk you through tough parts to help you provide your story to the Fellowship. In other words, a temporary "story sponsor" relationship. If this interests you, please email lit@codas.org and tell them that you would like this support.

That is all the time we have for this workshop. Thank you very much for attending. I look forward to reading your story at some point in the future.

Presenter Note

1. Time and participant focus:
 - a. If the writing time available during this workshop is longer than thirty minutes, consider announcing a "stand up and stretch" break every 20-30 minutes.
 - b. Some participants will end early, saying that they are done. Conductors might offer to read the work and suggest areas where the participants can expand. Some suggestions include:

- i. Add or increase details about: What it was like before program, what new tools and/or thought patterns you applied, and what it's like now (Experience, Strength, and Hope).
- ii. Add or increase the amount of detail on how it felt before program, to gain new knowledge, tools, and/or skills, and how it feels now.
- iii. Any section that is vague, unclear, or confusing: "I find this section to be _____. Perhaps you could re-word it to make it clearer for your reader?"
- iv. We suggest that feedback NOT be given on "making it sound better" through more formal or flowery word choice, or metaphoric language. We are not here to impress, but to share.

Breakout group 1 Presenter:

Some presenters are more comfortable with writing than others. If you do not feel confident, you may encourage participants to take a picture of the page and move on to breakout group 2, or you may read the page aloud before doing the above. Please remain available for questions, and do your best to answer or refer participants to the CLC's email address.

Some might take a more active role here. If you are one of these, here are a few notes.

Read the paper to the group answering questions that come up. Stop at the end of number 3. Then, ask participants to free-write for five minutes. When the timer goes off, ask participants to pick out one idea they wrote about, no longer than a sentence, to share with the group. Get six to eight sentences from volunteers. Read section 4, then offer five more minutes to participants to write for another five minutes about that specific topic, or they may proceed to Breakout group 2 for even more topic ideas, then Breakout group 3 to begin writing.

Breakout Group 1: I've never written before or I've written for recovery, but this is different!

1. Reading others' stories deepens understanding of our own story so we are doing this part as a group.
 - a. There are many stories that already exist in CoDA literature: *Codependents Anonymous* (The "Blue Book"); the *Newcomer's Handbook*; the booklet "Sponsorship: What's in it for me?"; etc...
2. Writing is a different way of knowing, as speaking is different from thinking; all leading to deeper understanding/advancement of growth and recovery.
 - a. Imagine you are sharing with another person and write what you would say to him or her.
 - b. Don't worry about being "fancy" - we tend to identify with content. In recovery we learn to accept ourselves, which includes our currently level of writing formality.
3. Just write your first thoughts about your recovery; this is called free-writing or stream-of-consciousness writing; it doesn't matter what comes out, hold your pen loosely, if handwriting;
 - a. Ignore misspellings, punctuation, scrawls, whatever; keep the words coming, no erasing needed,
 - b. If stuck, write gibberish, the same word over and over, whatever, because there are feelings there someplace.

When you are finished, read what you wrote, and consider how to clean it up for presentation - this is editing.
4. Remember our Purpose: helping people get started in CoDA and giving us all something with which to identify. Don't worry, you're not alone: if God let it happen to one of us, God would make sure there was someone else who could help us get through it.

Breakout Group 2A

Prompts for topics:

1. What were some of the early indications that you were codependent?
2. Briefly describe yourself and your situation when you were at your worst.
3. How did you find CoDA? How was it the same or different from your expectations?
4. What have you had to overcome to get where you are today?
5. What “epiphany” have you had recently that changed your understanding of our program?
6. What have you learned about yourself and recovery?
7. What are some of the things that you do to keep yourself on the right path?

Breakout Group 2B

More prompts

Fill in the blank:

How _____ changed my life

How _____ supercharged my recovery

How _____ helped me realize _____

Why _____ is essential to my recovery

The Twelve Steps

The Twelve Traditions

Healthy Boundaries

Healthy Communication

Sponsorship - Having one and/or being one

Writing, Journaling, Art, Music, Dancing, Switching to non-dominant hand (“Expression”)

Reach-out calls (“The power of five”), Bookending, etc

Prayer, Meditation, Meditative movement (Yoga, Tai Chi, etc)

Healthy relationships with self, inner child, inner teen, inner parent, Higher Power, others

Breakout Group 2C

Prompts for frames:

("frame" is the fancy term for "how a story is presented")

"The Big Picture" - Write a story telling how it was before program, what tools you learned and applied, and how your life is now.

"Start at the end" - Show us a day where things are good, then reflect on how bad they were earlier and show how you got to good, ending back in that good place.

"Focus on a tool" - Write an article or story focusing on a particular tool you applied and how it helped you overcome a problem or codependent characteristic.

"Focus on a characteristic" - Write an article or a story focusing on a particular codependent characteristic (or category of same) and the tools you applied.

"Focus on a Promise" - Write about a promise that has come true in your life - how did you get to the point where it was fulfilled? Where do you still need to go?

"Principles of our program" - Focus on the Steps (and/or Traditions) and briefly take us on your journey working them, either the first time or the most recent time....

"Could've" - If it weren't for CoDA, I could've easily _____. Instead I..."

"Letter to my newcomer" - Write a letter to your inner newcomer explaining what s/he is about to go through, what will be done to manage it, and what the benefits were for you. You could end by remembering that there are always more "layers of the onion to peel"...

Breakout Group 3: Ready to Write!

Have a seat, relax, spread out. Write your story.

If you get distracted, here are a few tips:

Get up and stretch every 15-30 minutes and/or take a little walk. A balance between brain activity and body activity will keep both healthy and functional.

You don't have to begin at the beginning; If you can't figure out how to begin, start at the part you know and work out from there. You can "put it in order" later.

Music can help you drown out distractions, but know yourself: does music (or music with lyrics, or certain types of music) distract you?

There is no reason you need to stay here - some people work better outdoors, or in busy cafes, or sitting on the floor in an empty hallway. If it isn't working here, try somewhere else - please return at _____ for the end of the workshop.