

**CoDA GUIDELINES FOR FOLLOWING THE TWELVE TRADITIONS  
IN OUTREACH SERVICE WORK  
\*A Service Work Inventory Tool\***

When a CoDA group or member is considering outreach service activities, it is important to consider the CoDA Twelve Traditions. As a general practice, we suggest the following guideline questions be answered prior to CoDA Outreach activities going forward. If the answer to the question does not uphold the tradition, then that must be remedied before proceeding with the Outreach activity. These questions are not inclusive of all questions to ask oneself, but we offer this guide as tool.

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

Members who engage in CoDA outreach keep in mind that their activities are meant to promote CoDA unity, foster fellowship and support our recovery, rather than being disruptive or divisive.

***Guideline Questions for Tradition One:***

- *Does the activity foster unity, fellowship, and recovery?*
- *Is the activity in any way disruptive or divisive?*

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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.*

As CoDA members, our Higher Power guides us as expressed through our group conscience. No one person leads us, makes plans for us, or provides definitive answers to questions. We determine our collective group conscience by selecting/electing representatives to serve the Fellowship. Using CoDA approved literature as a background, our leaders yield to group conscience for plans, answers, and guidance.

Sometimes people may circumvent our process by claiming to be interpreters of our group conscience. To avoid confusion, when we participate in a group conscience decision, we may make written notes of the people who were notified and/or participated, identify the subject we discussed, and include the results of the decision.

The question that may come up is: Have we made a decision that does not honor CoDA as a whole? This one is very challenging. The best we can do is to vet all our activities in such a way that our own group conscience is followed regarding the traditions. Please refer to the Fellowship Service Manual for the group conscience process (section... page....)

**Guideline Question for Tradition Two:**

- *Have we sufficiently vetted the activity, yielding to Higher Power with our group conscience, using the twelve traditions as guide?*
- *Has a leader bypassed group conscience or provided answers or guidance without referring to CoDA literature?*

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

CoDA is based on inclusion, not exclusion. Anyone with a desire for healthy and loving relationships is welcome.

**Guideline Question for Tradition Three:**

- *Does the activity imply a focus of attainment of healthy and loving relationships?*
- *Is participation being sidelined because of other reasons?*

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

Autonomy gives CoDA meetings the right to make decisions about meeting policies and procedures based on their group conscience. Decisions center on our common welfare, using CoDA approved literature as a background. We acknowledge we are part of a greater whole, the CoDA Fellowship.

It is important to note that CoDA service groups are “*directly responsible to those they serve.*” *Tradition Nine.* As such, if they interpret or add to CoDA approved service items or literature, they get approval from the Fellowship at the annual Service Conference.

**Guideline Questions for Tradition Four:**

- *Is the autonomy of the meeting being influenced by outside entities or individuals?*
- *Does the activity conflict with the autonomy of any other CoDA group ?*

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

The central theme around this tradition is to keep the focus on one thing, which is carrying the message. We know that we cannot keep the gift of recovery unless we give it away. The unique ability of each codependent to identify with and share the CoDA message, uninfluenced by other practices beliefs or motivations is the primary purpose of each group.

***Guideline Questions for Tradition Five:***

- ***Does the group or any activity it initiates have any other purpose that has the effect of dominating the primary purpose?***
- ***Is the focus of our activity directed to carrying the message to the codependent who still suffers?***

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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.

Tradition Six allows groups to not lose focus of our primary spiritual aim, as outlined in *Tradition Five-* "to reach the codependent who still suffers". We don't promote, contribute funds or allow the use of the name "CoDA" or "Codependents Anonymous" for any reason that could divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We may through group conscience allow outside facilities distribute information for outreach in the form of flyers, brochures etc. to get the word out about our program or to post our meeting lists.

Conversely, we don't endorse outside enterprises, outside recovery activities, political philosophies or religion. We may cooperate with other recovery groups in a broad sense, such as sharing table space for literature at a world conference but we do not otherwise endorse or recommend these outside activities. We rely on our Higher Power for guidance and keep in mind in each activity that our primary spiritual aim is to reach out to other codependents.

***Guideline Question for Tradition Six:***

- ***Does the activity allow the CoDA name to be used by any other facility, tradition, or outside enterprise, for any reason that could divert us from our primary spiritual aim?***

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

This tradition is straightforward in its purpose. The guiding principle for outreach is to not accept contributions from outside entities. The practice is to simply decline any such contribution. This includes material contributions from outside entities and contributions of services. We gain support for our activities from within. Members and groups contribute as they are able.

***Guideline Question for Tradition Seven:***

- ***Does the activity involve any contribution of money, material, or service from an outside entity or non-CoDA member?***

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**Tradition Eight:** *Codependents Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*

CoDA members with professional credentials participate in outreach activities only as recovering members of our fellowship. If trusted servants lead professional lives, they have an obligation to establish a boundary keeping their service separate from their profession.

At times, we may not have all the skills required to carry the message, and professionals in any field may be required. We pay them for services rendered and ensure that they honor all our traditions. For example, the website requires expertise beyond what we may have in the fellowship. We hire outside individuals to perform this work.

***Guideline Questions for Tradition Eight***

- *Are members using their personal professions to dominate service work?*
- *If the activity employs special workers, are we sufficiently overseeing the activity to ensure the traditions are being honored?*

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

While CoDA requires boards and committees to carry out its responsibilities it is not a hierarchical organization with leaders who are vested with authority. When making decisions they must be mindful that they are accountable to those they serve. Boards and committees cannot make policy or define the nature of CoDA, without the approval of the Fellowship. Rather, responsibilities are carried out in the spirit of service to CoDA as a whole.

***Guideline Questions for Tradition Nine:***

- *Have we stepped out of the boundaries of trusted service to the fellowship, or individual members around the world?*
- *Have we tried to make policy or define the nature of CoDA independent of what appears in official CoDA service items and literature?*

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

In performing service we must refrain from providing opinions on outside issues. We do not use communications or publicity of any kind to draw Co-Dependents Anonymous, any of its service boards, or any CoDA member into public controversy on any matter.

***Guideline Questions for Tradition Ten:***

- *In the performance of our responsibilities, are we providing opinion on outside issues?*
- *Does the activity create or tie in with any kind of public controversy?*

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**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 films.*

From our CoDA Workbook, *“Attraction is a force that draws people together. CoDA members practicing recovery have an inner quality that attracts others. We rely on this quality when we engage with the public.”*

Promotion is what companies use to advocate products and services, to make sales. There are problems with promotion in this manner that is prohibited.

In service, we must be careful not to promote CoDA with a sales pitch. Anything that has the quality of luring the newcomer in CoDA into the Fellowship, or exaggerating its benefits, or not accurately reflecting the reality of CoDA should not go forward. We also avoid making statements that promise benefits “without qualifications”. “Without qualification” means the statement may not be completely achievable for every individual.

In keeping with Tradition Eleven, our CoDA Workbook, gives us examples of the above to avoid such as *“identifying ourselves professionally; offering opinions; and offering particular outcomes, such as suggesting that attending CoDA meetings will straighten out a marriage or that you’ll feel better within a month.”* Most individuals are unlikely to achieve such results without further effort.

The CoDA Workbook also says *“Another form of inappropriate promotion would be advertising that a prominent author recommends Co-Dependents Anonymous.”*

We do not re-invent codependency when publicizing CoDA at events (such as therapist conferences), meetings, or other activities. For content of any publicity about CoDA that involves the nature or characteristics of codependency, it is best to use CoDA-approved literature, such as leaflets, pamphlets, or other service items.

The second part of the tradition deals with anonymity. We maintain anonymity in public relations because it allows us to maintain our personal recovery by keeping CoDA unity. The reason is there is no individual ego to benefit from it, as it would from advertising an individual and making him/her into a public figure.

Publicity about CoDA meetings or functions must never divulge the identity of any CoDA member beyond phone numbers and first names with last name initial (example: John L), even if that member wants their identity to be known. All visual representations of people must not be recognizable by the public.

***Guideline Questions for Tradition Eleven:***

- ***Might the identity of a person be revealed or his or her face or person in any communication and / or publicity?***

- *Does the content of communications or publicity about what CoDA is stray from what appears in CoDA approved literature?*
- *Does the communication or publicity about CoDA meetings or functions contain statements that promise a benefit without qualification?*

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

From our CoDA Workbook, “*being anonymous may include not only leaving our last names private but also where we live, how much money we make and what we do for a living. Social, economic, and political differences are not identified within the Fellowship... Anonymity creates safety because it establishes an environment where we can speak with less fear of being judged or quoted.*”

When we keep CoDA principles before personalities, we are able to honor the spiritual foundation of all our traditions.

**Guideline Questions for Tradition Twelve:**

- *As we carry out service, are we able to put the principle of anonymity above the wants of our personalities?*
- *Are we able to observe the principles of CoDA when we have a disagreement or personal dislike for the personality or behavior of another trusted servant or group conscience?*