



Meeting in Print
December 2017 (Ed. 6)

"Begin Again"

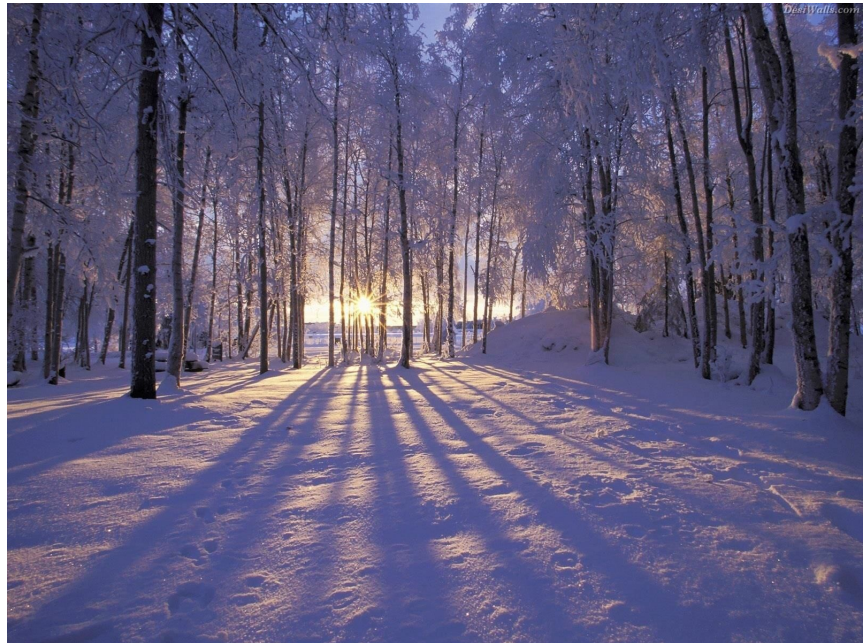
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Greetings from your CoDA Co-NNections Committee

Welcome to the quarterly issue of Meeting in Print, a CoDA recovery and support publication. Meeting in Print contains CoDA-approved literature, including shares, uplifting quotes and artistic material from CoDA members. We hope you find this issue both enjoyable and insightful. Please feel free to contact us with comments and suggestions – and, as always, *your contributions!*

Warmly,

Your Meeting in Print Subcommittee

Opening Readings

The Welcome of Co-Dependents Anonymous

We welcome you to Co-Dependents Anonymous, a program of recovery from codependence, where each of us may share our experience, strength and hope in our efforts to find freedom where there has been bondage and peace where there has been turmoil in our relationships with others and ourselves.

Most of us have been searching for ways to overcome the dilemmas of the conflicts in our relationships and our childhoods. Many of us were raised in families where addictions existed—some of us were not. In either case, we have found in each of our lives that codependence is a most deeply rooted compulsive behavior and that it is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional family systems. We have each experienced in our own ways the painful trauma of the emptiness of our childhood and relationships throughout our lives. We attempted to use others - our mates, friends, and even our children, as our sole source of identity, value and well-being, and as a way of trying to restore within us the emotional losses from our childhoods. Our histories may include other powerful addictions which at times we have used to cope with our codependence. We have all learned to survive life, but in CoDA we are learning to live life. Through applying the Twelve Steps and principles found in CoDA to our daily life and relationships both present and past - we can experience a new freedom from our self defeating lifestyles. It is an individual growth process.

Each of us is growing at our own pace and will continue to do so as we remain open to God's will for us on a daily basis. Our sharing is our way of identification and helps us to free the emotional bonds of our past and the compulsive control of our present. No matter how traumatic your past or despairing your present may seem, there is hope for a new day in the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. No longer do you need to rely on others as a power

greater than yourself. May you instead find here a new strength within to be that which God intended - Precious and Free.

The Preamble of Co-Dependents Anonymous

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

These are the principles of our program and guides to developing honest and fulfilling relationships with ourselves and others. In CoDA, we each learn to build a bridge to a Higher Power of our own understanding, and we allow others the same privilege. This renewal process is a gift of healing for us. By actively working the program of Co-Dependents, we can each realize a new joy, acceptance, and serenity in our lives.



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 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.

The Twelve Traditions of Codependents 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. A 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.

Community Shares

"Who Am I?"

Born as a butterfly

After so many things in my early life

Absorbing so many negative beliefs

Hearing all of these and believing

I realized

I was hiding

In a cocoon

Then, on a very difficult night

Coda came into my life

Finally a relief

I was in the dark

Dying through the minutes

Through the pain

Through my mind

Expecting too much

Living too less

Hoping nothing

One speaking voice

And I found myself petrified

Hearing my life

Through other lives

I could shout at that moment

But I didn't

So I heard all my life

In pieces, in each voice

As a puzzle
Feeling belonging
It made me feel stronger
It made me choose the steps
I stopped running
Running my mind, my body
My soul
And started to walk
Step by Step
And here I am
A butterfly again

By Belbellita



"Just Around the Corner"

I knew something was “wrong” with me, but considering my mother was a paranoid schizophrenic, I thought I was doing pretty good.

Relationships were always hard. I seemed to attract the sickest people in the room. I struggled with conflict, felt unappreciated and seemed to always develop resentments toward co-workers. I was fired from my first three jobs all after they had become toxic for me. I married the most broken man I could find and spent 18 years trying to heal him with my love. I thought if I could just do, or not do, say or not say something, then he would change and I'd be happy.

When he suffered a stroke at age 36, that sealed the deal; he needed me! I didn't feel lovable, so I settled for being needed. I took care of him in every way including controlling all the finances, supporting us by working two jobs and setting aside my needs. In return, he would lie to me about his addiction to pornography, spent money we didn't have, and resented me for over controlling.

After nine years together, I discovered he had hidden \$14,000 in credit card debt. He always missed important events, such as our daughter's baptism party because he was at my dad's house looking at internet porn. I would believe him every time he'd promise to try to do better, but then didn't change. In the end, all I felt was a crushing sense of obligation.

In 2010, I got laid off by the board of directors of the company I co-founded. I felt blindsided by them and my business partner. A month later, my mom was diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer and died just five months later. By the end of the year, I divorced my husband after finding myself “in love” with the first man to offer me what I was craving. He was 20 years my senior, still in a 30-year marriage to someone else, and I believed everything he told me. I knew it was wrong, but I felt compelled to continue the relationship anyway.

I spent the next nearly five years repeating the pattern of trying to control the relationship, thinking if I could make him change, I'd be happy. When I became fearful my depression was impacting my ability to parent my young daughter, I turned to counseling.

My therapist explained my childhood experience was a lot like living with an alcoholic. Unpredictable, as erratic behavior was the norm at my house. My home life was isolating and scary. We couldn't talk about it, and the only feelings that mattered were my mom's. I, of course, knew it was all my fault and if I had any doubt, my mom reminded me.

She was delusional with both auditory and visual hallucinations as well as a religious fixation and paranoia. She'd say God's will was for her to be a housewife and mother, but it was never what she wanted for herself. I remember her leaving the house in tears and my dad going after her. The three of us kids standing there. I didn't understand what was happening or when they'd be back. I not only internalized this rejection, but I came to believe God's will equaled misery and therefore He could not be trusted.

Sometimes she'd say she hated me and wished I was never born. She tried to kill herself on a family vacation when I was eight. I was ten when she blamed me for a miscarriage, saying I didn't love it enough. She found my diary and wrote over my writing that my thoughts were hateful lies. I tried to pray every day that God would make things better, but He never did fix her or take us away. I learned that God didn't answer prayers, not mine anyway. In my child's mind, all my anger turned toward my mom, and my dad became my white knight.

I tried to show him, in every way a kid could, that I was worthy of saving. I tried to be the perfect child, even becoming valedictorian of my high school class. My dad loved me, but he never picked me...always putting my mom's care ahead of us kids. I know now that he did the best he could.

In CoDA, I learned that it was possible to mend, and in the three years since joining, I have already seen miraculous changes in myself, my understanding of what I do and why, and in

my life as a whole. I have seen the promises begin to come true and issues that once boggled me, I can now handle with serenity.

When I'm brave enough and aware enough, I use the tools of recovery: meetings, books, a new relationship with God, as I understand God, a sponsorship group, the 12 steps, self-care, and inner child work to find peace where there has been turmoil in my life and relationships. I realized my irrational child had been driving my emotional bus, and she was not old enough to drive!

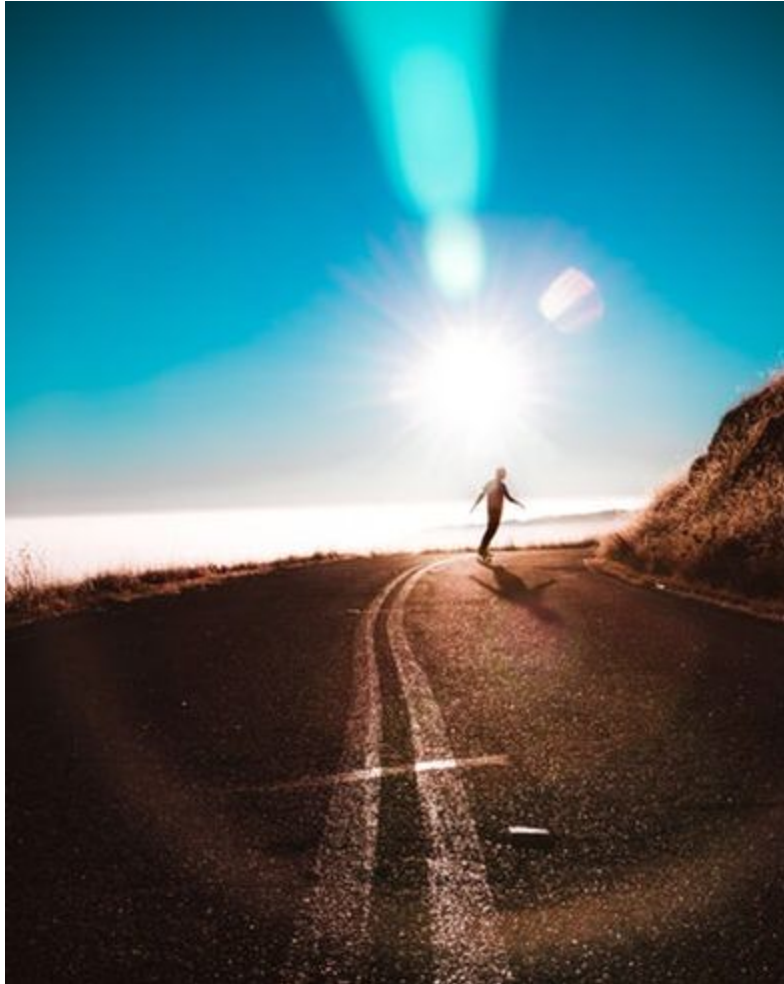
Part of my recovery has to be proving to her that she can trust me to take care of her and that it is safe to trust God too. Seeing is believing, and believing leads to seeing. I heard Him tell me over the radio...not like that crazy way my mom heard Him, but in that funny way we all do...as I turned off my car, just after thinking about how scary it is to trust because I can't see what's around the corner and if He'd just show me first it would be so much easier, I heard someone on the radio say, "You won't know what's around the corner, until you GO around the corner!"

Over time, I have moved through the steps and have seen evidence that they are working as I live them out. I try to keep my focus on myself and use the recovery patterns to help me learn what healthy behaviors look like. I recognize that I have choices and have a newfound belief that I am enough. God is doing for me what I cannot do for myself. The gift of awareness allows me to recognize when I'm getting the co-dependent crazies, and then I can choose to use my new tools of recovery to short circuit them.

Seeing my past with new eyes allows me to see how God was answering my prayers, even if His answer was different than the one I wanted. I can see now how my pattern in love relationships has been unconscious, dysfunctional attempts to heal the rejections from my childhood.

I am setting boundaries of my own and respecting other people's boundaries, focusing on asking "What can I do to take care of me in this situation?", growing in my ability to accept

what is, let go of what was and have faith in what will be. I am replacing the “should” in my life with “could.” When I was finally ready, I surrendered my idea of what I wanted and God gave me so much more than I could’ve imagined. I dove into my recovery. I’m now remarried to someone working as hard on himself as I am on myself. I now have an equal relationship. We each think about ourselves and each other. I was even able to leave a toxic job on my terms instead of being fired like I had been in the past.



What I'd like to leave with are a few random nuggets I have received on my short recovery path so far:

- We are right where we need to be at this moment. Everything we have experienced so far was necessary to get us to this point.
- Codependency is born out of grief and pain. The only way out is through it. We cannot fully heal, unless we have fully grieved our losses.
- I can replace the fear of “the unknown” with the excitement of “something new.”
- I need a Higher Power I trust, and I must keep myself connected to it like a lamp needs an outlet.
- Other people don't hold the box containing my happiness. I hold it myself; I've had it all along.
- My serenity is a priceless gift. I can choose to sell it cheaply (like for a parking spot or \$100 someone owes me) or hang on to it.
- I can pay attention to what my feelings and the pain are trying to teach... is there a boundary that needs setting?, a new direction that needs taking?, or something that needs to be let go of?
- Life is unfolding exactly as it is supposed to and the way it unfolds is good even if it hurts.
- Surrender only hurts until I do it, and it's the only way to win.
- I must be gentle with myself and forgive myself quickly and as often as necessary.
- We are in a boat called recovery...the journey is the destination.

By Roxanne M.

“I Am Enough”

I was feeling lonely. By working the steps I realize that I was ignored as a child. I was told, by their actions, that I wasn't important. But I was. As an adult, I continued this dysfunction by ignoring myself. I believed that others were more important than I was. This attracted people into my life that also believed they were more important than I was. I would spend years doing whatever it took to get noticed, which included many positive and negative actions. Now I know I'm enough. I take care of myself. I will not appease people who do not see and agree with my truth. Everyone experiences loneliness. Many suffer this time of year. The program has given me the tools and the support to find my true self.

I am enough.

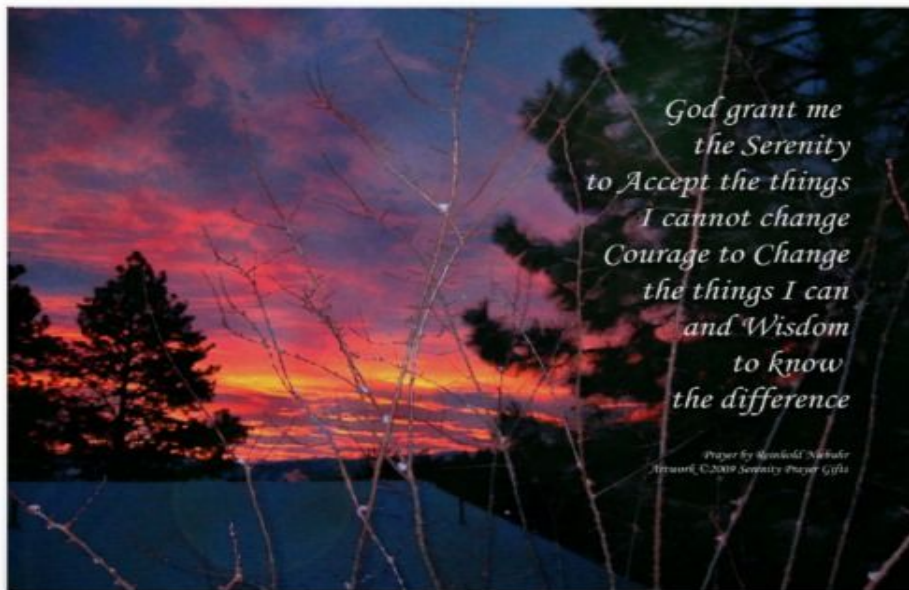
Leah M.

Closing Readings

Affirmation

"I can give to others with no strings attached."

The Serenity Prayer



Meeting Close

We thank our Higher Power
for all that we have received from this meeting.
As we close, may we take with us
the wisdom, love, acceptance, and hope of recovery.

Keep coming back; it works if you work it—so work it; you're worth it!