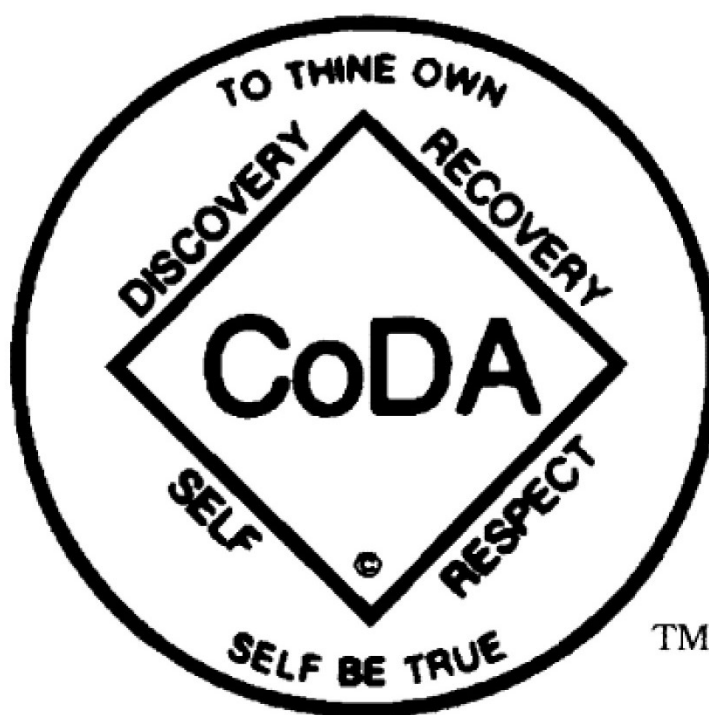


# CoDA Institutional\* Meeting Handbook



\*NOTE: If individuals outside your facility are able to attend your meeting, please refer to the CoDA Meeting Handbook available online at [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org) or email [info@coda.org](mailto:info@coda.org).

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Revised January 20, 2023, to update foundational documents and minor formatting changes.

## **Section 1: Getting Started**

We welcome you to the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. CoDA is the world-wide Fellowship of men and women in recovery from codependence. The CoDA Institutional Meeting Handbook contains all basic documents needed to start and conduct CoDA meetings in an institution or facility where there is restricted access.

Your facility has rules and regulations; please check with the staff to ensure you comply.

CoDA's *Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions* offer guidance for maintaining healthy relationships and having healthy meetings. The CoDA Book contains commentary on all the Steps and Traditions. Rely on the wisdom embodied in the Steps and Traditions. Keep in mind that trusted servants take direction from the Fellowship. A group conscience can be a powerful tool (Tradition 2).

If you have additional questions, email [hosp@coda.org](mailto:hosp@coda.org), or by writing to:

H and I Committee of CoDA Inc.  
PO Box 33577  
Phoenix, AZ 85067-3577

As stated in the 7th Tradition, CoDA is self-supporting only by contributions from the Fellowship. CoDA offers assistance to codependents who still suffer, residing in facilities that have restricted access. This is done through 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition donations from other codependents.

How to reach CoDA Inc.

By mail: PO Box 33577, Arizona 85067–35775

By phone: 602-277-7991, 888-444-2359 (toll-free), or 888-444-2379 (Spanish toll-free)

By email: [info@coda.org](mailto:info@coda.org) (answers general questions concerning CoDA and can help you to contact with the right committee)

We believe that with our Higher Power's guidance, each of us in the CoDA program will grow healthier, one day at a time.

With best wishes for serenity and joy,

Your trusted servants of the Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) Committee of Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc.

In this section you will find information you will need to get a new CoDA meeting started.

**A. In your Institution** - Each institution has its own rules and regulations about holding meetings. Anything in this Handbook may be changed or modified to comply with the rules of your facility.

**B. Meetings** - contains information about different meeting formats and other information that will help you have a healthy meeting. The section on jobs explain the principles of service work in CoDA and describe what jobs typically need to be done to keep a meeting going. Every group needs people to do the work that allows the meeting to continue. This work is known as service.

**C. Commonly Asked Questions** - (CAQ) provides answers about such things as what constitutes a CoDA group.

## **A: In Your Institution**

Thinking about starting a CoDA meeting? Meetings are vital to our Twelve Step program and are usually patterned after the Alcoholics Anonymous program. Consider the following:

### **Where**

This is something you will have to work on with your facility and its administration. Meetings can be held almost anywhere. Though each group is autonomous, please keep in mind to choose a meeting place that will provide personal safety and reasonable anonymity.

### **When**

Check with your administration.

### **Help**

Check with your facility for resources that help support your meeting: Counselors, Chaplains, etc. Ask for help, especially in the beginning. Remember, whenever two or more are gathered, you can have a meeting. You may contact the H&I Committee (see above) for help with contacting local CoDA resources. (See CAQs below.)

### **Announce**

Following the rules of your facility, let people know about the meeting. As people see the announcements (if allowed) and hear about the meeting, they will come.

## **B Meetings**

*Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to other  
codependents who still suffer.*

*~Tradition Five*

## In Your Meeting

The sense of community and belonging, which are the gifts of our program, begin at the group meeting level. The CoDA community uses the *Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions*, which are the foundation for our program, and are guides to our personal behavior and attitudes. They teach us to be respectful and honorable with one another.

A CoDA meeting is much more than a place to sit and tell your troubles, it is a place to meet people like yourself and to learn from those who are different from you; a place to interact with people focused on learning to have healthy and loving relationships.

A CoDA meeting is a group of people who come together around their shared desire for healthy and loving relationships. The meeting uses the *Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions* of Co-Dependents Anonymous as the basis for working toward recovery. It may be a place to find sponsorship, fellowship, as well as the sharing of experience, strength, and hope. A strong sense of acceptance and community makes a meeting attractive both to the newcomer and old timer.

CoDA meetings remain strong and have the ongoing participation of long-term members when they demonstrate the qualities of acceptance and community. Members are encouraged to carry on fellowship outside of the meeting. Your meeting is a part of a world wide fellowship of recovering codependents.

## Types of CoDA Meetings

If possible, take a group conscience (see below) to choose a meeting format. Several different types of meeting formats exist:

**Speaker Meeting:** A speaker meeting features one individual's story of recovery.

Speakers share their experience, strength, and hope with the group. Depending on the length of the individual's story, the meeting may or may not include open sharing after the speaker has shared. If your meeting may have outside speakers; please contact the H&I committee and they will assist as best they can.

**Open Share Meeting:** The open share meeting often has no topic or individual speaker. This gives group members an opportunity to share their experience, strength, and hope on any subject of their recovery.

**Topic Share Meeting:** The topic share meeting opens with a leader or group member choosing a specific topic (e.g., the Steps, setting boundaries, sponsorship, etc.). Any member may begin the sharing on the topic.

**Lead Share Meeting:** Similar to a Topic Share except the leader prepares in advance a brief share on the topic chosen.

**CoDA Book Meeting:** In this format, each person reads out loud a portion (two or three paragraphs-) of the material from the CoDA Book before open sharing. The meeting chooses to share either after each reading or after all reading is completed.

**CoDA Literature Meeting:** This format is the same as the CoDA Book Meeting, except it makes use of other CoDA approved literature. The *Twelve Step Handbook*, the *Newcomers Handbook*, or the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook* are some examples.

You may not be allowed to have a Twelve Step format meeting where CoDA's four foundational documents must be read or possibly open sharing is not allowed. In these cases, your facility may require signing up for a series of "classes" led by a specific leader, usually a peer, who follows a specific curriculum. Some suggested sources for curriculum are: following the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook* or the first five chapters of the *CoDA Book*.

Some literature is available on request without charge through the H&I committee. See above.

## Jobs

Define what tasks must be done (within the rules and regulations of your facility) such as:

- **Chair/Meeting Leader:** The chair/meeting leader leads the meeting. After attending several meetings, any member may lead a meeting.
- **Readers:** Those who share in the reading for the meeting.
- There are other positions in outside meetings.

Jobs in CoDA are usually rotated to prevent "burn out." Job rotation also supports the concept that each meeting depends on all who attend. Let different volunteers perform each task, rotate positions regularly.

## Sharing in Meetings

In our meetings, we speak about our own experience using "I" statements, and we listen without comment to what others share. We work toward taking responsibility for our own lives, rather than giving advice to others. This is why crosstalk is strongly discouraged during our meetings. Crosstalk guidelines help keep our meetings a safe place. Examples of crosstalk may include, but are not limited to:

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| • Giving unsolicited feedback      | • Dominating  |
| • Advising                         | • Minimizing another person's feeling or experiences          |
| • Answering                        | • Physical contact / touch                                    |
| • Making "you" and "we" statements | • Body movements such as nodding one's head or other gestures |
| • Interrogating                    | • Verbal sounds / noises                                      |
| • Debating                         | • Referring to someone present by name                        |
| • Criticizing                      |   |
| • Controlling                      |   |

## Welcoming Newcomers

- Welcome newcomers. Include a statement in the format about when they can ask questions (after the meeting? during a break?)
- Explain the "no crosstalk" custom as part of your meeting format every week.

- Suggest that newcomers try several meetings before deciding if CoDA is right for them.
- Make an effort to say something to a newcomer.

## C. Commonly Asked Questions

### **What Constitutes a CoDA Group?**

A CoDA group is composed of two or more individuals whose purpose in meeting is a desire for healthy relationships. A group applies the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, as adapted for our purpose from Alcoholics Anonymous. A CoDA group reads CoDA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and the copyrighted "Welcome" and "Preamble" as they are written. These readings, along with the availability of CoDA Service Conference Endorsed literature at your meeting, help to support a sense of CoDA unity as called for in CoDA's First Tradition. Because the Twelve Steps are the basis of our recovery, we encourage meetings to periodically focus on the Steps (i.e. one time per month).

As Tradition Four states, ("each group should remain autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole"), it is important that a CoDA meeting present familiar aspects that communicate, "This is CoDA." The reading of the four foundational documents and use of the CoDA approved prayers are familiar to most CoDA meetings. Meetings in institutions may vary significantly from outside meetings for many reasons such as

- institutional rules and regulations
- availability of literature
- ability to give and receive donations
- the ability to have a sharing meeting vs a "class"

This presents confusion when a person attends a meeting outside of the institution. H & I encourages the use of the Institutional Meeting Format found in the CoDA Institutional Meeting Handbook. This format addresses some of these differences in an effort to help alleviate the confusion. When a member is able to attend meetings outside of the institution, he/she may want to review the Meeting Format in the CoDA Meeting Handbook.

### **How does our Group relate to CoDA?**

When a group of people come together in the spirit of Tradition 3, which states, "The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy & loving relationships", and the group reads the four foundational documents of CoDA (Preamble, Welcome, Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions), the group is a CoDA meeting. Typically, institutional meetings do not register with CoDA, Inc. If your contact with the outside is limited, there are a variety of ways that your group can have contact with CoDA.

Some of the ways that institutional meetings receive support from CoDA may be through direct contact with local volunteers, a local intergroup, regional group, or the H&I committee of CoDA, Inc.

**Local Volunteers** - If there are local CoDA meetings in your area, sometimes members will do service work by bringing CoDA meetings into local institutions.

**Local Intergroup** - An intergroup is formed when several local meetings work together to carry the message of CoDA to their community. They may have an H&I committee that will bring CoDA meetings into local institutions. They may also provide resources through donations from its member groups.

**Regional Group (a.k.a. Voting Entity)** - A regional group is formed when several intergroups in a region or state work together to carry the message of CoDA. They may have an H&I committee at this level.

**Hospitals & Institutions Committee (H&I) of CoDA, Inc.** - CoDA, Inc. has a committee of volunteers who provide support and assistance to those mentioned above in addition to residents of institutions. Support can include contact information, and resources.

If you do not have contact with any local or regional groups, contact the H&I Committee of CoDA, Inc. at Co-Dependents Anonymous, P.O. Box 33577, Phoenix, AZ 85067-3577, or by email at [hosp@coda.org](mailto:hosp@coda.org), or visit the CoDA website at [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org) for free downloads.

### **We don't have a speaker available, can we have a speaker meeting?**

Some groups read one of the individual recovery stories that are in the Co-Dependents Anonymous book as a speaker. The reading may work best by passing the book around to share in the reading.

### **How do we practice the Seventh Tradition?**

In institutions where there is limited outside contact, collecting Seventh Tradition donations may be impossible. If volunteers bring the meeting to the institution, voluntary contributions from outside members may support the group's needs.

### **What is a Group Conscience?**

In institutions, it may not be possible to conduct a group conscience, but we have chosen to include this section from the CoDA Fellowship Service Manual, (Updated to 2014) page 13. The group conscience process is an important decision making tool used at all levels of the CoDA structure.

### **The Process of Determining a Group Conscience**

Decisions at all levels of CoDA are made with the guidance of our Higher Power as expressed through the Twelve Traditions. Particularly useful are Tradition One: "Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends upon CoDA Unity." and Tradition Two: "For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving Higher Power as expressed to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Thus, as with all our recovery, group conscience is about putting aside the "self" and looking to Higher Power for guidance



To begin the group conscience process, members present raise issues or items of business. Our goal is to reach agreement on the items presented. The meeting is opened to discussion by the chair/facilitator. When discussion ends, we determine the group conscience by taking a vote. A majority determines the group conscience.

Using a group conscience process is similar to "consensus-based decision making." The primary difference is that in CoDA, people who participate share their strength, hope, and experience with one another 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 a decision for the good of CoDA in a spiritual process.

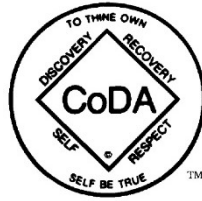
We seek to avoid campaigning in order to gain a win for "our" solution. A group conscience decision grows out of the combined wisdom invested in the whole group. With the help of our Higher Power, we open our minds to all viewpoints presented and then vote for the one we see as best for CoDA. We work to keep "personalities and prestige" from becoming involved. For instance, the voice and wisdom of someone with six months of experience is of as much weight and value as that of someone with ten years of recovery. Finally, be warned that an individual's need for acceptance and approval may circumvent the spiritual process. It isn't Higher Power's will that we go along to get along.

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. If a position is that of our Higher Power, it will naturally attract others.

Sometimes a person may invoke the "Right of Dissenting Opinion." This means that even a minority of one, favoring or opposing an issue, has a right to be heard. Only individual(s) who actively participated in the decision making without circumventing the process can offer a dissenting opinion. At a meeting, it means a person has the right to express a dissenting opinion before the members vote. In the CoDA Fellowship, it means that a member, group of members, or a committee may request the distribution of a dissenting opinion in writing in order to be "heard" by the Fellowship.

In conclusion, while every person has the right to express opinions, the group conscience determines a particular course of action. We demonstrate our openness to the will of Higher Power by accepting that decision even when we may disagree with it.

*The Fellowship Service Manual of Co-Dependents Anonymous, Approved CSC 2014, page 13*



## 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.

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### The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

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 meditations 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 a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



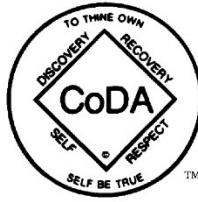
### The Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous ©

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. A CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, 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, films, television and all other public forms of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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## The Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous ©

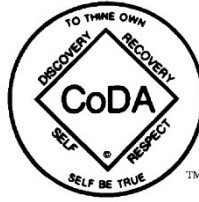
I can expect a miraculous change in my life by working the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. As I make an honest effort to work the *Twelve Steps* and follow the Twelve Traditions...

1. I know a new sense of belonging. The feeling of emptiness and loneliness will disappear.
2. I am no longer controlled by my fears. I overcome my fears and act with courage, integrity and dignity.
3. I know a new freedom.
4. I release myself from worry, guilt, and regret about my past and present. I am aware enough not to repeat it.
5. I know a new love and acceptance of myself and others. I feel genuinely lovable, loving and loved.
6. I learn to see myself as equal to others. My new and renewed relationships are all with equal partners.
7. I am capable of developing and maintaining healthy and loving relationships. The need to control and manipulate others will disappear as I learn to trust those who are trustworthy.
8. I learn that it is possible to mend - to become more loving, intimate and supportive. I have the choice of communicating with my family in a way which is safe for me and respectful of them.
9. I acknowledge that I am a unique and precious creation.
10. I no longer need to rely solely on others to provide my sense of worth.
11. I trust the guidance I receive from my higher power and come to believe in my own capabilities.
12. I gradually experience serenity, strength, and spiritual growth in my daily life.

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"The Journey Continues" on page 79 in the **CoDA Book** is an option to the above reading, or may be read in addition to the above reading.



## Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence

These patterns and characteristics are offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation. They may be particularly helpful to newcomers.

### **Denial Patterns:**

- I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.
- I minimize, alter, or deny how I truly feel.
- I perceive myself as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.
- I lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others.
- I label others with my negative traits.
- I can take care of myself without any help from others.
- I mask my pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.
- I express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.
- I do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom I am attracted.

### **Low Self Esteem Patterns:**

- I have difficulty making decisions.
- I judge what I think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.
- I am embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.
- I value others' approval of my thinking, feelings, and behavior over my own.
- I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person.
- I constantly seek recognition that I think I deserve.
- I have difficulty admitting that I made a mistake.
- I need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and will even lie to look good.
- I am unable to ask others to meet my needs or desires.
- I perceive myself as superior to others.
- I look to others to provide my sense of safety.
- I have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.
- I have trouble setting healthy priorities.

**Compliance Patterns:**

I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.  
I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.  
I put aside my own interests in order to do what others want.  
I am hyper vigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.  
I am afraid to express my beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.  
I accept sexual attention when I want love.  
I make decisions without regard to the consequences.  
I give up my truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.

**Control Patterns:**

I believe most people are incapable of taking care of themselves.  
I attempt to convince others what to think, do, or feel.  
I freely offer advice and direction to others without being asked.  
I become resentful when others decline my help or reject my advice.  
I lavish gifts and favors on those I want to influence.  
I use sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance.  
I have to be needed in order to have a relationship with others.  
I demand that my needs be met by others.  
I use charm and charisma to convince others of my capacity to be caring and compassionate.  
I use blame and shame to emotionally exploit others.  
I refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.  
I adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes.  
I use terms of recovery in an attempt to control the behavior of others.  
I pretend to agree with others to get what I want.

**Avoidance Patterns:**

I act in ways that invite others to reject, shame, or express anger toward me.  
I judge harshly what others think, say, or do.  
I avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a means of maintaining distance.  
I allow my addictions to people, places, and things to distract me from achieving intimacy in relationships.  
I use indirect and evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation.  
I diminish my capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use all the tools of recovery.  
I suppress my feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable.  
I pull people toward me, but when they get close, I push them away.  
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.  
I withhold expressions of appreciation.

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## Recovery Patterns of Codependence©



### Denial Patterns

Codependents often...	In Recovery...
Have difficulty identifying what they are feeling	I am aware of my feelings and identify them, often in the moment. I know the difference between my thoughts and feelings.
Minimize, alter, or deny how they truly feel.	I embrace my feelings; they are valid and important.
Perceive themselves as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others	I know the difference between caring and caretaking. I recognize that caretaking others is often motivated by a need to benefit myself.
Lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others.	I am able to feel compassion for another's feelings and needs.
Label others with their negative traits.	I acknowledge that I may own the negative traits I often perceive in others.
Think they can take care of themselves without any help from others.	I acknowledge that I sometimes need the help of others.
Mask pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.	I am aware of my painful feelings and express them appropriately.
Express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.	I am able to express my feelings openly, directly, and calmly.
Do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom they are attracted.	I pursue intimate relationships only with others who want, and are able to engage in, healthy and loving relationships.

### Compliance Patterns

Codependents often...	In Recovery...
Are extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.	I am committed to my safety and leave situations that feel unsafe or are inconsistent with my goals.
Compromise their own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.	I am rooted in my own values, even if others don't agree or become angry.
Put aside their own interests in order to do what others want.	I consider my interests and feelings when asked to participate in another's plans.
Are hypervigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.	I can separate my feelings from the feelings of others. I allow myself to experience my feelings and others to be responsible for their feelings.
Are afraid to express their beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.	I respect my own opinions and feelings and express them appropriately.
Accept sexual attention when they want love.	My sexuality is grounded in genuine intimacy and connection. When I need to feel loved, I express my heart's desires. I do not settle for sex without love.
Make decisions without regard to the consequences.	I ask my Higher Power for guidance, and consider possible consequences before I make decisions.
Give up their truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.	I stand in my truth and maintain my integrity, whether others approve or not, even if it means making difficult changes in my life.

## Control Patterns

Codependents often...	In Recovery...
Believe people are incapable of taking care of themselves.	I realize that, with rare exceptions, other adults are capable of managing their own lives.
Attempt to convince others what to think, do, or feel.	I accept the thoughts, choices, and feelings of others, even though I may not be comfortable with them.
Freely offer advice and direction without being asked.	I give advice only when asked.
Become resentful when others decline their help or reject their advice.	I am content to see others take care of themselves.
Lavish gifts and favors on those they want to influence.	I carefully and honestly contemplate my motivations when preparing to give a gift.
Use sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance.	I embrace and celebrate my sexuality as evidence of my health and wholeness. I do not use it to gain the approval of others.
Have to feel needed in order to have a relationship with others.	I develop relationships with others based on equality, intimacy, and balance.
Demand that their needs be met by others.	I find and use resources that meet my needs without making demands on others. I ask for help when I need it, without expectation.
Use charm and charisma to convince others of their capacity to be caring and compassionate.	I behave authentically with others, allowing my caring and compassionate qualities to emerge.
Use blame and shame to exploit others emotionally.	I ask directly for what I want and need and trust the outcome to my Higher Power. I do not try to manipulate outcomes with blame or shame.
Refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.	I cooperate, compromise, and negotiate with others in a way that honors my integrity.
Adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes.	I treat others with respect and consideration, and trust my Higher Power to meet my needs and desires.
Use recovery jargon in an attempt to control the behavior of others.	I use my recovery for my own growth and not to manipulate or control others.
Pretend to agree with others to get what they want.	My communication with others is authentic and truthful.

## Low Self Esteem Patterns

Codependents often...	In Recovery...
Have difficulty making decisions.	I trust my ability to make effective decisions.
Judge what they think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.	I accept myself as I am. I emphasize progress over perfection.
Are embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.	I feel appropriately worthy of the recognition, praise, or gifts I receive.
Value others' approval of their thinking, feelings, and behavior over their own.	I value the opinions of those I trust, without needing to gain their approval. I have confidence in myself.
Do not perceive themselves as lovable or worthwhile persons.	I recognize myself as being a lovable and valuable person.
Seek recognition and praise to overcome feeling less than.	I seek my own approval first, and examine my motivations carefully when I seek approval from others.



## Low Self Esteem Patterns (continued)

Codependents often...	In Recovery...
Have difficulty admitting a mistake.	I continue to take my personal inventory, and when I am wrong, promptly admit it.
Need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and may even lie to look good.	I am honest with myself about my behaviors and motivations. I feel secure enough to admit mistakes to myself and others, and to hear their opinions without feeling threatened.
Are unable to identify or ask for what they need and want.	I meet my own needs and wants when possible. I reach out for help when it's necessary and appropriate.
Perceive themselves as superior to others.	I perceive myself as equal to others.
Look to others to provide their sense of safety.	With the help of my Higher Power, I create safety in my life.
Have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.	I avoid procrastination by meeting my responsibilities in a timely manner.
Have trouble setting healthy priorities and boundaries.	I am able to establish and uphold healthy priorities and boundaries in my life.

## Avoidance Patterns

Codependents often...	In Recovery...
Act in ways that invite others to reject, shame, or express anger toward them.	I act in ways that encourage loving and healthy responses from others.
Judge harshly what others think, say, or do.	I keep an open mind and accept others as they are.
Avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a way to maintain distance.	I engage in emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy when it is healthy and appropriate for me.
Allow addictions to people, places, and things to distract them from achieving intimacy in relationships.	I practice my recovery to develop healthy and fulfilling relationships.
Use indirect or evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation.	I use direct and straightforward communication to resolve conflicts and deal appropriately with confrontations.
Diminish their capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use the tools of recovery.	When I use the tools of recovery, I am able to develop and maintain healthy relationships of my choosing.
Suppress their feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable.	I embrace my own vulnerability by trusting and honoring my feelings and needs.
Pull people toward them, but when others get close, push them away.	I welcome close relationships while maintaining healthy boundaries.
Refuse to give up their self-will to avoid surrendering to a power greater than themselves.	I believe in and trust a power greater than myself. I willingly surrender my self-will to my Higher Power.
Believe displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.	I honor my authentic emotions and share them when appropriate.
Withhold expressions of appreciation.	I freely engage in expressions of appreciation toward others.

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## Preamble of Co-Dependents Anonymous<sup>©</sup>

Co-Dependents Anonymous is a fellowship of people 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 Anonymous, we can each realize a new joy, acceptance and serenity in our lives.

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## Welcome to Co-Dependents Anonymous<sup>©</sup> (long version)

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 families and other 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 wellbeing, 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.

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## **Welcome to Co-Dependents Anonymous<sup>©</sup>** (short version)

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.

Codependence is a deeply-rooted, compulsive behavior. It is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional families and other systems. We attempted to use others as our sole source of identity, value, well-being, and as a way of trying to restore our emotional losses. Our histories may include other powerful addictions which we have used to cope with our codependency.

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 lives and relationships, both present and past, we can experience a new freedom from our self-defeating lifestyles. Our sharing 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. May you find a new strength within to be that which God intended - Precious and Free.

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CoDA has three suggested prayers that are  
Conference approved as CoDA literature:

**The CoDA Opening Prayer** ©

In the spirit of love and truth, we ask our Higher Power to  
guide us as we share our experience, strength and hope.

We open our hearts to the light of wisdom, the  
warmth of love, and the joy of acceptance.

Conference Endorsed 9/13/91

**The CoDA Closing Prayer** ©

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.

Conference Endorsed 9/13/91

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without the express written consent of Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc. This document may be  
reprinted from the website [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org) (CoDA)  
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Another prayer commonly used at CoDA meetings is the Serenity Prayer, as follows:

**The Serenity Prayer**

God, grant me the Serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
Courage to change the things I can;  
and Wisdom to know the difference

Conference Endorsed 1989

**I let others experience their own feelings; I keep my advice to myself.**

**I help myself and others by being emotionally present and honest.**

**I share for three to five minutes, keeping the focus on myself.**

**I refrain from commenting on what others share.**

**I share my own experience, strength, and hope—no one else's.**

**I use "I" statements when sharing. (I feel; I believe.)**

## **FOR SAFETY SAKE**

## **FOR SAFETY SAKE**

**I use "I" statements when sharing. (I feel; I believe.)**

**I share my own experience, strength, and hope—no one else's.**

**I refrain from commenting on what others share.**

**I share for three to five minutes, keeping the focus on myself.**

**I help myself and others by being emotionally present and honest.**

**I let others experience their own feelings; I keep my advice to myself.**



## Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) Meeting Format

This meeting format has been modified from the CoDA basic format as a guideline for meetings in prison, jails and institutions. The style of program your meeting wishes to use (whether Sharing, Topic or Step) can be a group conscience decision made by the members of your group. Bold sections are for the meeting leader to read aloud; plain text sections are optional extras. Meeting leader hands out the foundational and meeting documents to those who would like to read aloud. You may also copy and display our “*For Safety Sake*” tent card during meetings.

### Opening Section

**1. Good evening (morning, afternoon) and welcome to this meeting of Co-Dependents Anonymous.**

**My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a codependent. I am your meeting leader tonight (today).**

**Please help me open this meeting with a moment of silence followed by the**

*(This is the meeting leader or group's prayer of choice: the Serenity Prayer or the CoDA Opening Prayer)*

<p><b>The CoDA Opening Prayer_©</b></p> <p>In the spirit of love and truth, we ask our Higher Power to guide us as we share our experience, strength, and hope.</p> <p>We open our hearts to the light of wisdom, the warmth of love, and the joy of acceptance.</p>	<p><b>The Serenity Prayer_</b></p> <p>God, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can; and Wisdom to know the difference</p>
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**2. Will the person with the “Preamble” please read it?**

**3. We welcome any newcomers who are attending their first, second or third meeting of Co-Dependents Anonymous, and ask that you raise your hand and introduce yourself by your first name only...**

**4. So that we can get to know each other better, let's take this time to introduce ourselves by first name only.** *(Meeting leader introduces self and then introductions continue around the room.)*

**5. Will the person with the “Welcome” please read it? (Option- short or long version.)**

**6. CoDA's Twelve Steps are the spiritual guidelines for our individual recovery. Will the person with the Twelve Steps please read them? (Optional- some groups prefer to pass the Twelve Steps around and share the reading of them.)**

**7. CoDA's Twelve Traditions are the guiding spiritual principles of our meetings. Will the person with the Twelve Traditions please read them? Optional- some groups prefer to pass the Twelve Traditions around and share the reading of them.**

**8. Optional -** Will the person with the *Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence* or the *Recovery Patterns of Codependence* please read them? (Due to the length of the Patterns and Characteristics these may be split up into two groups and read on alternate weeks.)

**9. Optional -** At this meeting we celebrate CoDA birthdays of – 1, 2, 3, 6, 9 months and annually. Are there any CoDA birthdays today? **Note:** Ask the person celebrating if they would like to share a few words of recovery. Generally, for birthdays of 1 to 9 months the group claps after each birthday is recognized; for 1 year or more the group sings “Happy Birthday”, ending with “keep coming back”.

### Program Section

Begin your meeting program here. If your meeting reads from CoDA literature, this usually lasts 10 to 15 minutes. To enhance the power of our recovery program, CoDA recommends at least one meeting per month be devoted to Step study.

**10. This week we are on Step /Tradition \_\_\_\_\_, or CoDA Literature \_\_\_\_\_.**

**11. Optional, strongly recommended-** Leader reads the *CoDA Guide to Sharing, What is Crosstalk?* or both.

**CoDA Guide to Sharing:** As we pursue our recovery, it is important for each of us to speak, as we are able. Many of us find speaking among others, especially strangers, a very difficult task. We encourage people to begin slowly and carefully. It is the intention of every CoDA member and group not to ridicule

or embarrass anyone. Nothing that is shared is unimportant or stupid. The sharing of our experiences is best done with “I” statements. “Crosstalk” and “feedback” are discouraged.

### What is “Crosstalk”?

Crosstalk can be: giving unsolicited feedback, advice-giving, answering, making you and we statements, interrogating, debating, criticizing, controlling or dominating. It may also include: minimizing another person’s feeling or experiences, physical contact or touch, body movements, such as nodding one’s head, calling another person present by name, or verbal sounds and noises.

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. Crosstalk guidelines help keep our meeting a safe place.

### 12. The meeting is now open for individual sharing...

**Optional-** Would each of you please limit your sharing to 3-5 minutes to allow for everyone to share? (Group conscience can determine how to indicate when time is up, i.e. a timer, tapping on something, or a gentle reminder by leader.)

## Closing Section

**13. As we bring this meeting to a close, I would like to remind you that CoDA is an anonymous program. We ask that you respect the anonymity and confidentiality of each person in this meeting. We ask that what you see here, what is said here, when you leave here, let it stay here.**

**14. Optional-** Will the person with the *Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous* please read them? (*Optional- some groups prefer to pass the Twelve Promises around and share the reading of them.*)

**15. Thanks to those who read and who do service at this meeting.**

**16. Optional-**Affirmations: We will now go around the room and read a CoDA positive affirmation; you can choose any affirmation from the list, make up your own, or simply pass.

**17. Would all those who care to, please join me in a circle for the closing prayer.**

*(This is the meeting leader or group's prayer of choice: the CoDA Closing Prayer or the Serenity Prayer)*

<p><b>The CoDA Closing Prayer ©</b>          We thank our Higher Power          For all that we have received from the meeting.          As we close, may we take with us          the wisdom, love, acceptance, and hope of recovery.</p>	<p><b>The Serenity Prayer</b>          God, grant me the Serenity          to accept the things I cannot change;          Courage to change the things I can;          and Wisdom to know the difference</p>
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For more information please go to

[www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)

or call toll free

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