



Meeting in Print

March 2022 (Ed. 22)

"Gift of Renewal"

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-Caryn T.

Greetings from your CoDA Co-NNections Committee

Welcome to the quarterly issue of Meeting in Print, a CoDA recovery and support publication. Recovery is for everyone, and we hope you enjoy reading these shares. Meeting in Print contains CoDA-approved literature, as well as 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 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 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 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 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 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, films, television, and all other forms of public communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions; ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Community Shares



-Caryn T.

“Where I am now”

Where I am now in my journey so far: My experience, strength and hope

I first realised there was something called codependency around November time 2020. I always had an underlying feeling that there was something weird about me. I even felt that it was to do with my childhood.

However, I could never quite put my finger on exactly what it was.

A counselor once asked me if I was controlling. Strange how at my later stage in life I knew at some level I probably was. I said “yes, probably”. When she asked “how”? I was stuck.

It wasn't until I read the CoDA literature that I started to be able to identify and recognise my controlling behaviour and begin to explore it.

If and when I ever asked anyone for personal feedback in my life the only responses I ever got were entirely positive: kind, caring, loving, helpful, good sense of humour, genuine, honest, funny...

If I asked anyone “do you think I’m controlling”? I would get a consistent and definitive “definitely not!”

I have subsequently learnt through my experience in CoDA exactly how powerful the act of controlling is through “niceness” and through self-abandonment.

I have now been working very hard on myself in CoDA for almost a year.

In that time, I have only just started to understand what it means in step one when it says “...and I am powerless over my compulsion to act in inappropriate ways” And also, what it means to abandon myself.

PAST EXPERIENCE

Whilst examining my past I came across a particular memory, amongst many others, which was hidden far away.

It was a memory of me being accosted by a group of boys when I was about 14 years old. They grabbed me when I was walking home from my friend’s house. There were roughly 5 or 6 of them who were led by a real thug.

They pinned me up against a fence and searched my pockets. All they could find was a lipstick I used to wear that I had in my pocket.

They used the lipstick to write “my mum is a whore” on the back of my cream linen jacket with my lipstick.

What strikes me now about this memory is that I didn’t tell anyone.

I took the coat home and stuffed it away so my mum wouldn’t see it.

My primary feeling was to protect my mum’s emotions.

I realise now that for my life this was always my primary feeling. To look after other people’s emotions. I completely abandoned myself to this end. To protect my mums’ emotions was paramount.

This erroneously became part of my being and my life’s journey.

I now realise how this has affected me as an individual.

Maybe I was born with a personality that was curious, warm hearted, good humoured and generous of emotion and spirit.

However, looking at this event in its singularity helps me see that at some point in my early life I had abandoned myself to look after my mothers' emotions...extending to all and sundry.

My mother was an angelic kind of person, loving and nurturing. But my mother was also a very traumatised person from her own childhood.

I have learned the word "triggered" and what it means. My mother certainly had triggers from her own very traumatised past.

These triggers were unbeknown to me but would send her into frightening, ghastly, hysterical fits, often involving threats to leave me.

Now I can clearly see how my childhood has affected me and my behaviour and thereby my life and relationships.

STRENGTH

My strength and empowerment have come from knowledge. My knowledge has come from my life experiences and CoDA literature. I have found the key to unlock a lot of my life's mysteries. I have found the key to my behaviours and the effects of these behaviours on my life and relationships from CoDA literature, from meetings, from shares and from fellowship.

HOPE

Now I have hope. Great hope. I know that I now have some answers and although I am aware that I can never be "cured" I can now manage my co-dependency and I can be part of a greater whole in fellowship and in my life. I can see and feel hope. I can see hope of re-joining the human race and becoming a more mentally healthy and balanced person.

I have learned and experienced a spiritual aspect to life that I never had before. This definitely brings with it much more calmness and serenity. It brings acceptance, faith and unity. Unity within the CoDA fellowship and also unity with mankind.

I can listen to others. I can share. I can do service and I can continue learning.

I have always been a willing student and open to listening and learning whatever I can in life.

When I wake up feeling stressed, anxious and fearful, I recite the Serenity Prayer.

When I feel adversely affected by what others are doing, saying or their choices, I say my Step 1 prayer.

I write my gratitude diary everyday, I write my positive affirmations, I write my journal. And before I go to bed, I try to remember to write the good things I have done or achieved that day.

I endeavour to use the tools CoDA has given to me.

I have a way to go, the rest of my life.

I am on step 8 and as it says in step 4: “I am willing to see myself as I truly am: a growing, unfolding, spiritual being. I separate who I am from what I’ve done, knowing that the real me is emerging – loving, joyful and whole. “

I am very lucky that I found a wonderful sponsor who has guided me and continues to guide me with great patience, understanding and gentleness through my steps.

What a wonderful experience it has been for me to find CoDA and to be able to continue on my path and my journey of personal growth and development in a fellowship of loving souls who understand and are willing to share their own experience, strength and hope.

I also forgive myself when I lapse because all said and done, I am only human.

Elaine



-Caryn T.

“What is my favorite color?”

Why do I have to choose one single color?

Everyone else has a favorite color so I should have one...

Sitting in the grass noticing colors, I see the grass is green, I think my favorite color is green.....

But why do I have to choose only one color? I like all the colors. Everyone else has a favorite color. How do I know what mine is? I think it's green... You ask me why green? I have a good answer.... Green is the color of nature, thats why I like green. But the truth is the RAINBOW is my favorite color, can the RAINBOW be my favorite color?

YES SHARON THE RAINBOW CAN BE YOUR FAVORITE COLOR. THAT'S WHAT YOU LIKE, TRUST YOURSELF. THE RAINBOW IS YOUR BESTEST MOST SPECIAL COLOR

Sharon F



-Caryn T.

“Validation”

I recognized at about 52 years of age that I was a people pleaser, approval seeker, always thought I was nice, helpful, giving... Good, right? No! Now I know the truth! I was becoming a doormat! Nothing attractive about that!! So I realized it, but what did I do about it? I started attending CoDA meetings, and now at 55 years of age, I am reading and listening to all of the quality information I can find. Because now I'm finding out why.

One can only put on a Band-Aid, take a pill, drink a drink in an attempt to remedy problems, but getting to the core issue, the cause, is, I believe so important! Seeking validation as a child, and not receiving it, I grew up to be an adult people pleaser, still seeking validation. I became addicted to alcohol. I became a codependent. How do I get out of this cycle? Now alcohol free for over two years, I am learning the importance of loving myself unconditionally. I am starting there, because it is only when I can love myself that I can allow others to love me, and I can begin to love others without conditions. Oh I so desire that! I believe it is what we are created and gifted to do.

Without that ability, it's like having a talent to write, but not having paper or pen. Painful, unfair, devastating!

I have learned the importance of awareness and becoming educated about my issues.

Writing is my outlet, my source of strength to sort out, figure out, what I can do to change, what I can do for the better, to break free of the mold I have been formed in, the codependent mold! To learn how to love myself, which I never learned to do. I thought that was selfish! I was raised Catholic, learned the Commandments, one of which is to love your neighbor as yourself. Now, in my 50s, I'm realizing just what that means, And I am grateful to learn, better now than never! I'm looking forward to, once I learn to love myself without conditions, to loving others without conditions. What does that look like for me? Loving myself without conditions, I become "enough"! I start looking within for validation, I stop craving validation from others, I become lighter, no more heavy heart filled with resentment because others are not meeting my expectations.

I no longer care what others think of me or if they like me or not. I care about what my Higher Power thinks of me and what I think about myself. I no longer want to give myself away, overcommit. I take time for myself daily, to pray, read, reflect, journal, meditate, listen to music. I am aware of how time spent with others affects me.

Do I feel energized? Or drained? I will modify as needed. Do I feel peace, joy? Or anxiety, sadness? I am less judgmental of myself and others, catch myself when I am, and modify. I will not have expectations or make assumptions. I will use positive self talk, affirmations, meditation. I will refuse to be or play victim. I will not wilt when faced with disapproval or disappointment from others. I will set emotional boundaries, so I don't allow others' moods to affect me. I will count my many blessings often, looking forward, not back! I will visualize myself as loving unconditionally! I will start here.... I will exercise physically every day, eat healthy, receive massage, enjoy quality time with loved ones.

My life is balanced, I live in the now, I own my power, smile easily, laugh more.....I am free to be me!!

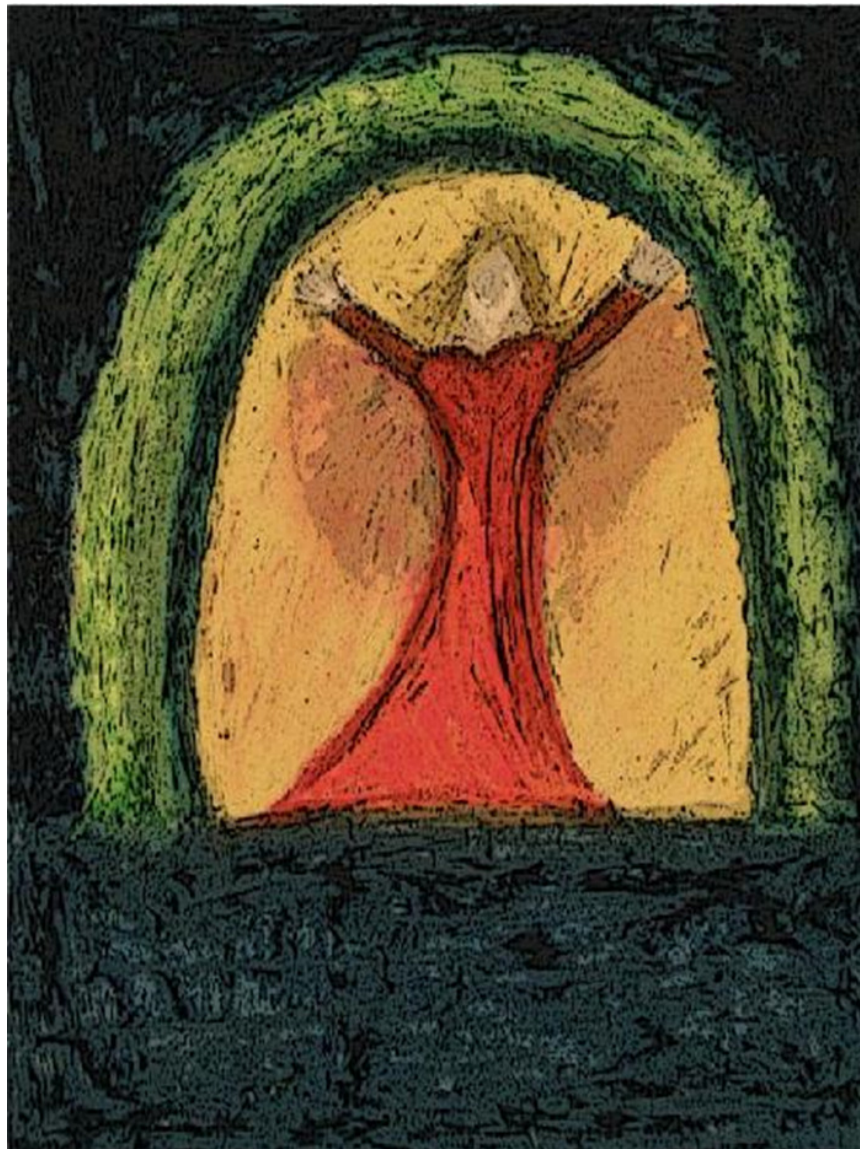
Jeannie S. 12/2/15

Originally published on December 22, 2015 <https://coda.org/2015/validation-12-22-15/>

“Force Field”

Think of a woman surrounded by a force field,
representing her newly founded boundaries.

N.L.



Previously published March 23, 2020

<https://coda.org/drawings-photos-audio-and-video/force-field/>

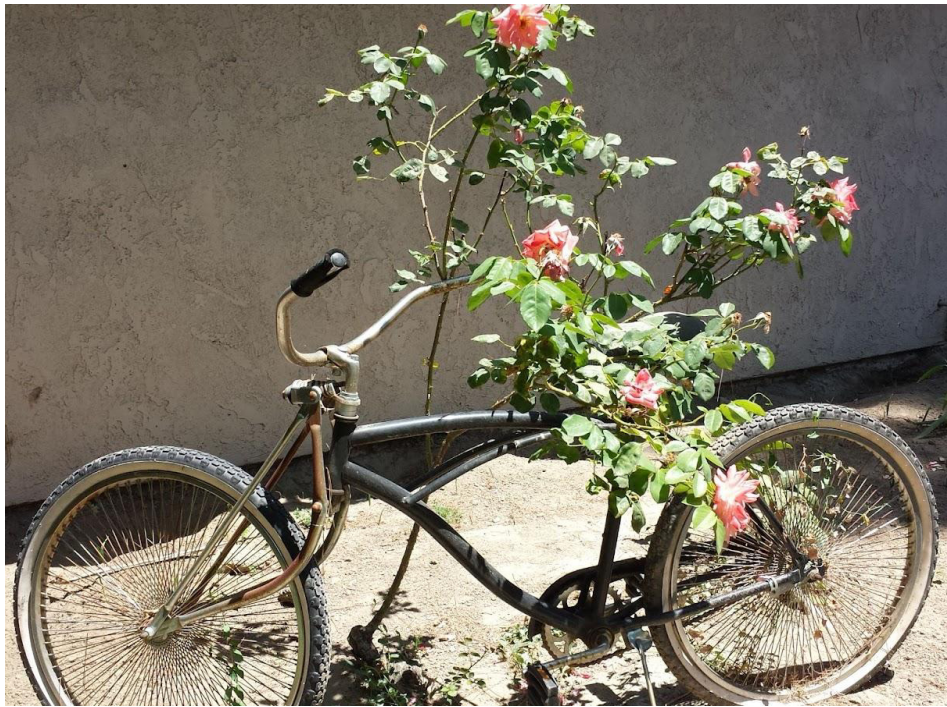


-Caryn T.

“Recovery Haikus”

They sit, bored, dead eyes
I am nothing, a failure
I judge them badly

Pause, take no action
No need to be beloved
Peace comes, answers too
Jim



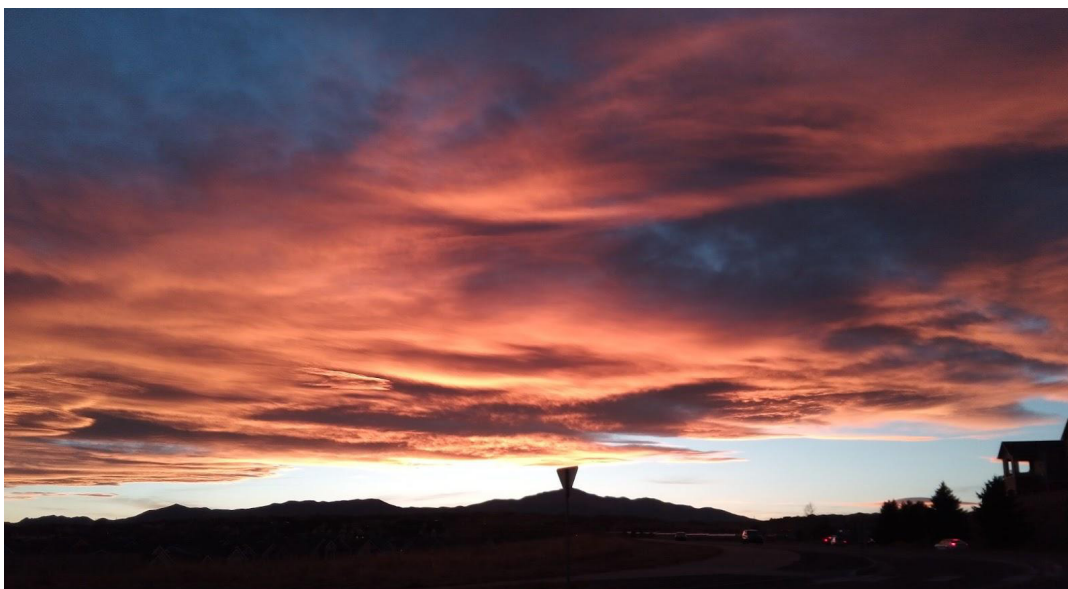
-Caryn T.

“Equal Relationships”

Life was good! I was three years sober, I lost 100 pounds, my career as a first grade teacher was taking off, and I was active in my recovery. I had my own apartment, my own car and I took good care of myself. All I needed was a girl... Lo and behold my school got a new teacher. I didn't think much of her when I first saw her, but one day I saw her sitting alone as the rest of the first grade team invited me to sit with them, but I thought the right thing to do would be to sit with the “new person” so I sat with her & that's when I noticed how beautiful she was. We immediately hit it off. When asked how long we had known each other, we said “Oh, we just met today”. Since that day we were attached at the hip at work. We talked all the time. she worked out, I worked out; she ate healthy, I ate healthy; she was funny, I made her laugh; and we were both first grade teachers. This was it! This had to be it. I was pretty sure she had a boyfriend though so I kept my distance and never made any inappropriate moves, however, she started reaching out to me one day outside of work I thought it was curious & of course I was interested! I kept my distance until I finally asked “Are you single?” she said “Yes I am, but I just got out of a relationship so we have to move slow.” I confessed my feelings and told her that I would love to move slowly. We proceeded to text and

talk and hang out for the next month or so and I showered her with compliments. One day while on the phone she told me she wasn't used to being treated that way. I felt a pit in my stomach. I knew it was over. Sure enough, she got distant over the next week and Sunday night she told me "I could never like you as much as you like me" I was crushed, devastated. I wasn't drinking, I wasn't drugging, and I wasn't overeating, so I really felt trapped. I didn't know what to do so I turned to self harm. I began to cut myself, hold my hand over the stove, slap myself really hard, choke myself, and berate myself in front of the mirror. I knew something was wrong, as much as I loved AA and as much as it had done for me, it was not helping me with whatever was going on. For some reason I thought of CoDA. I had heard of it at some point in my life. I knew 12 steps worked from my previous experience so I got a sponsor at my second meeting, ordered the books, and got to work right away. Every time I read the CoDA big book or answered questions in the green workbook I felt a little bit better. Through my work I realized that I had placed all of my self-worth in this young lady and when she went away so did my worth. I found out that codependency wasn't just about caretaking but has multiple aspects. low self-esteem being the one I relate to the most which also ties into my compliance patterns. However, for me, low self-esteem was my destruction. I slowly worked steps and began saying daily affirmations . About a year into the program I woke up one day and all the negative self talk was gone! I felt OK. I liked myself in fact I might even dare say I loved myself. It's an everyday struggle and dependency is never cured, but I continue to fight; I continue to work on myself and grow. I also learned the best way to gain self-esteem is to set & uphold loving boundaries. I was told to get self esteem I had to do esteemable acts. So the more I helped others, the more I should've felt better about myself, but I didn't. I realized it was because I wasn't standing up for myself! As soon as I started setting boundaries and upholding them that's when my self-esteem started to grow. Today I strive to be in equal and loving relationships and I am willing to walk away from relationships that are not equal.

Osvaldo R.



-Caryn T.

“Love is Knowing When to Walk Away”

“Love is knowing when to walk away.
Love is finally understanding
that love isn’t putting someone in a box.
It’s choosing the ache of silence
over the regret of putting my own foot in my mouth.

It’s the nights I stay up making lists of pros and cons
To try decide
If it’s worth this risk for a simple, “Hey.”
It’s the relief I feel in the morning that I did NOT do that.

You see, love isn’t in the ache of wondering
But In the choice of not choosing impulse.

It's in the patience for forgiveness—
That may never come.

It's the knowledge that
when I repeatedly harm someone I love
The best way to fix it is to leave it alone.
It's knowing that I can no longer justify reasons
That it's okay for me to transmit my trauma.
That love isn't a return to the womb but instead
learning how to hold myself strong so that you can be you.

Love is recovery.
And recovery is knowing the difference between
breathing onto a fire to give it life
And dousing the whole bedroom with gasoline.

Love is remembering

that love isn't the number of times you made me cry
But instead the number of times you held up a mirror
So that when I went looking for you, I was really getting to know myself better.

Love isn't trying to get you back
but instead
it's allowing myself to fall apart
So what is ready to die can fall away.

Love is bowing down to what I don't understand.
It's knowing that being powerless does not mean weak
And Controlling does not make me safe.

It's being humble to all the ways in which I can't see.

Love is stopping the impulse to go back and fix it.

Love is letting you be.

Love is being humble enough to ask

for something larger than me

To show me a map

so that I can find my way out.

So that I can stop blaming

And start changing.

Love is finally accepting

The things I can't change.

Love is finally accepting

That I don't know how to love you.

Love is knowing when to walk away."

-Madison

Originally published on October 10, 2017

<https://coda.org/2017/love-is-knowing-when-to-walk-away-10-10-17/>

Closing Readings

The Serenity Prayer



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

- Photo: Linda R.

Some Affirmations

“I am enough and I have enough.”

“This too shall pass; I am grateful for joyful times, I know that painful times won’t last forever.”

“Higher Power grants me serenity.”

Call for Content

This publication thrives when fellow CoDAs share their recovery. This is a great place to express your creativity through prose, poetry and artistic images, as long as it follows the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Editorial Policy.

See <https://coda.org/service-info/connections-service-info-page/> for more information.

Twelve Promises

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.



-Caryn T.

CoDA Recovery Prayer

God help me to:

Accept other people as they are,

Recognize my own feelings,

Meet my own needs, and

Love myself just as I am.

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.