



Meeting in Print

December 2024 (Ed. 33)

“Serenity, Strength and Spiritual Growth”

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- *Jim H*

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 Anonymous, 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 public forms of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions; ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Community Shares

“From Broken to Risen”

It recently occurred to me that those of us who suffer with codependency are like birds with a broken wing who are meant to fly but cannot. We hop around, trying to mend this wing, until we lose sight of the sky and only see the broken wing. It's exhausting, isolating, unfair, and so defeating. This is a story about how my wing healed and what it was like to step out of the nest and trust that it would work.

My codependency was born of a perfect storm and continued to pick up momentum and objects in its path, growing to a massive power that appeared to have no relief in sight. The contributing factors? (A) a quiet, wonderful father who loved me very much but was plagued by a generational curse of noncommunication (i.e. not knowing how to model boundaries), (B) a sweet, compassionate mother who grew up under an alcoholic, temperamental, abusive father (so, a codependent-in-training), and (C) by far, the largest contributing factor: a 'Romeo & Juliet' first relationship that started when I was young with someone older and moved from a push-pull, obsessive dynamic ...to something beautiful for 2+ years...to a toxic, push-pull, disappointing and heartbreaking mess for 10+ more years.

Unfortunately, without understanding boundaries or knowing what kind of behavior to reject and not allow into my life, the adrenaline and satisfaction I experienced from those first relationships "taught" me to seek it again - and again. After dating a string of toxic men into my mid-30s (narcissists, a sociopath, an alcohol and drug addict, emotionally unavailable and other dangerous men), I walked into a therapist's office and announced I needed help and was ready to hand over the reins.

Over the next four years, "Allie" and I studied attachment theory, healthy behaviors and coping styles, and boundaries. For a long time, I didn't want to date, because I was so scared

of going back into that dark place of depression, fear, resentment, joylessness, rage, distrust, and hate.

Around that time, I joined a local chapter of CoDA and fully engaged in weekly meetings. I read everything I could about codependency and found myself in that literature. It felt sad to identify myself in such a lonely, destructive place, but it also gave me legs I didn't know I had. At first, I didn't even want to stand on them, but quickly enough, I started to rise up like a newly-born calf or colt, testing those wobbly things and realizing....hey, I might be able to do this. With help, affirmations became more helpful, and I learned how to stay in my own lane. That was frightening and freeing. Before, others were in charge of my lane, and I was merely reacting; now, I realized I had my own lane and had the authority to allow in, or kick out, other cars from my lane. I didn't know this power before!

Through CODA, I identified the "patterns" and their intrusion into my life: compliance behaviors that I didn't realize were contributing to low self-esteem, and control patterns that were manifesting as I tried to "fix" others. Working the Steps was crucial: I had unknowingly already worked Steps 1-4 by the time I entered my therapist's office: admitted powerlessness/unmanageable life, knew the answer would be from a professional(s) and God, lay down my ego and submitted to humility to turn my will and life over to God, and committed to a fearless moral inventory no matter how challenging it was.

It's no easy task to criticize and find fault within yourself, but it was so freeing once I did it - in a healthy way. That said, Steps 5-9 came about with work: I finally "saw" and was able to admit how I was falling short and encouraged myself to heal, realizing I tolerated the unacceptable for far too long. In the process, I had caused pain to myself, my mom, and my close friends in the process, who had to hear about it and experience the pain of watching someone they love hurt themselves through poor choices. Of course, Steps 10-12 are lifelong commitments, but they become easier every day, and especially with the right relationship. They also become beautiful if I allow it. Remember - flowers bloom after the rain.

The turn-around and the healing were not immediate, and it was bumpy at times. However, my relationship with God grew stronger as I learned to trust him, and I delighted in the

process of learning to trust myself. It was a gift I had never had. Before, I was always trying to determine if others were trustworthy...but now, I got to focus on whether I trusted myself around someone. If I didn't, or if it didn't feel good, I simply moved away from it.

The crowning jewel of my journey was the day I summoned the courage to send a heartfelt message to that first relationship partner who had dragged me into a decade of trying to "earn," "work for," or "wait on" his love. I wasn't ugly about it, and I didn't bring up the past. I merely stated that as much as I had wanted his love and for things to work out, I was ready to find someone who was ready to love me and put me first, commit and have a family. I received no response, and my therapist even called him an asshole over it! But you know what? I realized I had mastered my craft when I was merely at peace about it and simply not surprised, even with all of the years of emotional, taunting promises. I was finally free. And better yet, I trusted myself to handle what was next.

After that, the trajectory changed: I no longer sought out men who were hot/cold or had a push/pull dynamic. Very soon after, I was excitedly seeing someone who genuinely adored me back, was healthy, mature, followed up, and eventually asked me to marry him. We've been married a year, together for three, and we have a beautiful, healthy relationship in which we both grow. If I ever fall into codependent ways, he politely but firmly encourages me to break that pattern and be true to myself. We're expecting our first child in four months.

Megan

07/12/2024



- *Jim. H*

“It Works if You Work It”

I came to CoDA thanks to my neighbor at the time. She had been talking to me for months about CoDA and going to meetings. Finally, I went to my first meeting on January 5th 1990, in Danbury CT. I knew my life had become unmanageable and even though I was in therapy, I needed more. My marriage was slipping away, and I was looking to fix it any way I could. Little did I know what a gift I was about to give myself by choosing the path of recovery.

For the first few months I just kept showing up at the Friday night meeting. At the time I couldn't tell you what kept me going back. But today I know it was my Higher Power leading the way. Many times, I'd find myself getting angry or rationalizing why I shouldn't go to the meeting. I was too busy, too tired, my kids needed me, or flat out my husband didn't want me going. But during the week I found myself flashing back to things people shared and I would find my way back to that Friday night meeting of CoDA.

The first six months I found it impossible to speak my first name aloud, and it was almost a year before I was able to share in a meeting. The loving support found in the meeting was what I needed. There was no pressure, just unconditional acceptance. It was at this meeting that I experienced acceptance for the first time in my life. I will always be grateful to the people at that meeting for that gift. I was allowed to grow in my recovery at my speed.

The concept of anonymity is special to me. Anonymity allowed me to be me for the first time in my life. To this day I hold anonymity in very high regard. This is a cornerstone in the foundation of my relationship with myself. My relationship with myself started to take hold in my recovery. I

learned about myself through my 4th Step. I got to know the values and imperfections, which, together, make me who I am. I found the courage to divorce my husband and fight for custody of our two children. This process was a very long three years, during which I faced a lot of truth about what my marriage was not and some of the patterns I had repeated from my childhood.

My relationship with my Higher Power (God for some) was tricky. I had been raised in a religious household, but I needed to leave the God of my childhood behind, as he was a judgmental and punishing God. My Higher Power of my understanding today is one of unconditional acceptance and love. A Higher Power without judgment and punishment—a spiritual relationship rather than a religious ritual relationship.

I could never have gotten to this point in my recovery without the sharing of other people at the meetings. The sharing helped me realize I had a right to choose and validated my understanding of my Higher Power; I was not forced into someone else's perceived ideals. With a relationship with my Higher Power, I was able to continue to work on my relationship with myself. I knew I was not alone. And the only way out of the fear I experienced is through the fear. I had spent so much time avoiding dealing with issues in my life.

With the help of my Higher Power slowly I was able to let go and have faith that I didn't need to control things to feel safe. I had survived life growing up in a dysfunctional home, now I wanted to live life. I was able to reach out and create healthy relationships with other people in recovery who were working on themselves. I worked on learning to trust my Higher Power, myself, and others.

It was only through CoDA I was able to heal enough to be willing to date and get into a committed relationship. I was truly blessed in finding a significant other that was also in a recovery program and committed to his own personal growth. We have just celebrated 20 years together. I am grateful to have his support in my life. In my work life I was able to place principles above personalities.

The reality of the world is not everyone is in recovery or wants to be. And that's okay – it's a choice. The boundaries I have learned to set through my recovery have saved my sanity. With caring for aging parents with health issues and then their passing over the last 9 years, I found it very challenging to deal with family members. New life skills that I learned over the years helped me to deal with this very challenging time in my life. The promise of the program that "I learn that it is possible for me 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" played out during this time. I won't say it was easy. I will say I couldn't have done it without what I have learned in CoDA.

I continue to keep my recovery fresh by doing service work. I can share what I have learned with others, reinforcing what I have learned about myself and passing on the hope of recovery. I do

what I can, choosing what is right for me to take care of myself. I celebrated my 26th CoDA birthday in 2016. I have so much to be grateful for thanks to CoDA. I hope to continue to share my experience, strength and hope as I continue my recovery journey.

"It works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it!"

Olean – 7/24/16



- *Jim H*

“Outer Space and Inner Space”

When I first came to CoDA, my ability to be present in my life and relationships was non-existent. From being repeatedly overpowered in my family of origin (FOO), I was like an inert object in outer space, an asteroid. Reactive and not able to *act* in my own best interests. I would fall into orbit around the gravitational pull of a more powerful personality, and not be able to escape the pull without creating some kind of explosion to boost me out of orbit, or, in the worst-case scenario, crash into them, become fused and lose my identity.

In addition, since I was inert and had no personal power, I would sometimes get stuck in isolation – lost in space – far away from any gravitational/relational pull, and not be able to get close to anyone or anything.

Since coming to CoDA, I have gone beneath the surface of my asteroid; inside the shell of my false self. While exploring my inner space in meetings and through using the tools of the program (and my counselor, my ‘hired’ power), I discovered that I was not an inert object; that I had choices and power (both personal and higher); that I was the master of my own spaceship and no one else’s.

I discovered a control panel. As I got in touch with the different parts of myself and began to have feelings, the control panel lit up. The two main controls were ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. Yes, got me closer to people (intimacy). No, gave me distance (boundaries). If I had to say no to someone I wanted to get or stay close to, I could say no seasoned with a lot of yes:

“I would *love* to go to the movies with you (Yes),
but I have chosen to go to a meeting (No).
Perhaps we could go on the weekend (Yes).”

The Yes outweighs the No and the net result is we end up closer, even though No was said for this particular instance.

When I first started taking my little spaceship out for a test drive, I didn’t have a lot of power. I could use the controls, but without the power of my feelings (energy in motion = e-motions = motivation), I would not get far, would go in circles, or worse, would end up in a place completely different from the place I had intended and wonder how in *\$(@&# I got there. I would say Yes when I meant No, or I would set a boundary and not have the feelings to power it up. My feelings were not in accord with my intellect. Therefore, the steering (intellect) was not aligned with the power source (emotions). I was pulling in two (or more) directions, sometimes going in circles. Hardly surprising that I didn’t get anywhere.

In addition, the power source was weak. I needed to contact my higher power, the source of my power and direction. My emotional fuel tank was filled with the sludge of toxic shame, hardened resentments and unprocessed pain, grief and other feelings. My capacity for processing current and old feelings was small. I needed to clean out my fuel tank in order to increase my capacity for current feelings of love, joy, pain, fear – all emotions I need to power and inform my steering decisions.

How to dissolve all this “old stuff”? Love is the solution and the solvent. Affirmations and self-care are great, too, for getting things moving. Feeling the old, painful feelings clears them out, but love soothes and softens the hardened feelings and heals the hurt of finally facing ancient feelings that keep me intellectually, spiritually and emotionally paralyzed or chaotic.

Cleaning out my emotional fuel tank has increased my capacity to power my choices about boundaries and intimacy. Now there is a dialogue between my head and my gut feelings. There is a driver who decides whether to go with my head or my gut. There is a me, with a heart. I can use my head as a B.S. detector, for when my guts are full of s*** (*“I did the same thing every time I had that gut feeling, and it ALWAYS ended badly”*). I can use my gut feelings to balance and inform my head (*“It seemed like a good idea at the time, but I ignored my gut feeling, and it didn’t work under the hood (reality check)”*).

My gut feelings and my analytical thoughts are now on my side, rather than being at war with each other. A strong self can make peace with the warring parts of myself. I can now act rather than react. They are integrated into the larger “me”, which means I now have integrity. I am loyal to myself, and as the captain of my little ship, I can listen to both sides (intellect and feelings), then decide which to listen to and act on.

I have grown a heart, a ME, a pilot for my spaceship from being in this wonderful program. It is from the heart that I get the Courage to change the things I can. The French word for heart is coeur. Courage is heart-ness.

I sometimes stop steering long enough to let my emotions take me to places I didn’t know I needed to go (meditation). The source knows the way home. Even in outer space. I am thankful for a tankful of fresh, clear emotions. Both positive and negative, they are now direct and powerful, and both are what I need to navigate the inner and outer spaces of my life.

Kirsten



- Jim H.

“Without Cover”

I've taken away all false supports,
And am now naked before myself,
Without cover.

I'm feeling raw, visceral,
Emotion and pain.

I'm intensely aware of my coping patterns,
But have yet to truly believe,
In the truth of me;
To be excited about
The special one that is me.

My chest is hurting a lot.
I am trying to be with that and allow it to hurt.
I just opened my door, and the cool night air feels good.

I am not God or you.
I am me, and I am sad.

I am also alive, and able to heal.
I feel paralyzed now, so I'll feel paralyzed now.

My chest hurts, so I'll feel my hurting chest.
Hopelessness and sadness fill me,
So I will feel hopeless and sad.

I am me and feel me.,

This is my life,
My pain.
I will live it and feel it.
It will take as long as it takes.

I will not resist it,
But accept it.

My interpretations are not facts.

I will find faith in the room of my soul.

I may open the door and allow the night breeze to cool me,
But I will stay with my soul.

I will not give its care over to another again.
But I will share it and explore love,
In the beauty of myself.

I will be free without cover.
I will be healed.
I am free and healing.

The river is flowing,
And the current is good.

Brenneman T.
April 21, 2002



- *Caryn T.*

“I Will Be Ok”

I just celebrated my two-year anniversary on June 12, 2024. I am a recovering codependent, and a love addict. Both of those things brought me to CoDA for the first time. Both of those things also brought me to therapy. And both of those things made me want to end my life. At that time, all my worth came from how much someone loved me. How much someone was attracted to me. How much someone dedicated their entire existence to me because I didn't know my own. How much someone had to prove to me that they loved me. How much they had to prove to me that I was enough. And I would put them through tests every day. I would put everyone I knew through these tests, as that is how my self-esteem worked.

I have been plus size my entire life; I mean even as a little child. I was put on a diet when I was around 5/6 years old. I was told from those young ages that I needed to change my body, that I had to be healthy, to get a boyfriend, to be loved, to fit in. That came from my family, the doctors, my friends. I was always the “fat” friend. I can use that word now and take back its power, but that f word was one of the worst f words I ever knew in my life.

My family never meant any harm. Now looking back at it now, I know they just didn't want me to be made fun of, wanted me to have an easier life than they had, and wanted my everyday life not to be harder. What happened though, is that the safe space that I called home, the people that I loved more than anything, as a child's understanding – wanted to change me. Being told to change myself at 6 from the people that loved me the most – if they didn't accept and love me, who would?

If I couldn't be accepted by my looks, then I had to excel at something else. So, I tried to be perfect at school, perfect at college, perfect at work, perfect in what I wore, perfect in what I did, etc, but the idea of perfect was an illusion.

My parents were also codependents, my dad an alcoholic. My mom was incredibly strong, and I know now did her best, as she was dealing with a tumultuous relationship with my dad. My mom was also a love addict, with my dad a love avoidant. So, when my dad wasn't there, not only did I miss him, but I also got her attention and validation. But when dad came back – that was all gone, and I was left again wondering why I wasn't good enough and wasn't worth her/their time. I remember a pivotal moment for me was around three and being locked out of their room and just crying and pounding on their door for hours to be let in and left to be this sobbing mess on the floor. I can still feel that hurt.

As I continued through life – that affirmation of me not being good enough was met every day – when I continued to be made fun of daily due to my size. It didn't matter how many friends I had, what boyfriend I had, how much I wanted to love myself, there has been a bully at every turn. And that bully helped me understand every time that I was not normal, not desirable, and not something anyone would ever want, and that those that seemed to want to be around me

must have something wrong with them. I continued to look at myself through this lens for 30 plus years.

I picked men that were not emotionally available. Men in relationships. I've been the other woman more times than I would like to admit. I've been in situation-ships. I've accepted sex as love and validation. I also thought that this was me getting picked somehow. That if they wanted me sexually it was that I was desirable, that if they chose to spend time with me that I was worth spending time with, and that I had won somehow if they chose me rather than who they were in relationships with.

I've constantly been in long distance relationships. Because why would anyone want to be with me every day? Maybe they would find out more about me, maybe who I really was? Maybe they would find out that I'm not worth it. That I'm not lovable. And everyone ended the exact same way, one of utter chaos, hurt, one of me not being able to cope, wanting to end my life, another tidbit of proof that I wasn't good enough and me bouncing into the next situation, the next man, the next spot that again, would always end the same. I was in a physical and emotional abusive relationship for 9 years. I figured hey at least someone wanted me and finally wanted to commit to me.

The last relationship that I was in was the healthiest I've tried, we've reconnected and are together now, and for once I felt that I could show my true self to someone. I found someone that I wanted to spend my days with, and where I was willing to show the real me to, the realest version of me that I knew. And when we got together before CoDA I would self-sabotage it. I put him through many obstacles. All the tests, constantly trying to have him prove that again. And we ended. And it led me here.

I'll never forget my first CoDA meeting. I drove here to the same spot, the same parking lot where I was when I had that first meeting, and I remember it like it was yesterday. I just sat there and cried. I cried because after 40 plus years I finally felt home. I felt I was somewhere where I was understood and that I was exactly where I needed to be for the first time. My life had become unmanageable. And I needed help.

One of the most important things I had to do was work on my relationship with my higher power, with God as I knew him. Being raised a strict catholic, I only knew of a very stern, punishing God, that would not accept me for who I was. My new relationship though, my God accepts me for who I am, and is a loving best friend that helps me along on my journey.

I have taken a long time in working the Steps and know that I will need to revisit them again, and knowing that the work/and healing, will never stop. Some of the Steps were incredibly hard to get through, but life altering all the same. But the days got better. And even the hard ones, I still have help at the end. For once I felt real hope.

I no longer want to end my life. I like what I see in the mirror now. I'm starting to love myself more and more. I am a plus size model now, and work to advocate for people of size. I'm now who I needed when I was younger. And that's one of my greatest accomplishments.

I now know that no matter what life throws at me that I will be ok. That constant fear has lessened. It's still there, but it's less now. And I may not like everything that happens in this life, and it may hurt tremendously, but I know that I will be okay.

As long as I can remember, my wish every Dec 6th on my birthday would be to be happy. That's what I wished for years, as for once I just wanted to feel that so badly. And now I don't have to wait for my birthday, or my candle on a cake, I am happy now in the smallest of moments. I just sit now in these moments and smile. And I think wow I'm happy. I feel love, I give love, and for once, I am happy to be in this life.

I watched a show where a character mentions they are in AA and that she is a grateful alcoholic. She is in AA and she does that share at the end where she says that she is a grateful alcoholic.

And I can say that I'm a grateful codependent.

Sarah S. 06/12/24



- *Alison J.*

“From Victim to Victor”

My CoDA story: What it was like, what happened and what it is like today in recovery.

I'll start by giving a brief account of what has shaped, in my opinion, my codependent patterns.

As a child I had two loving parents. I remember feeling secure, loved and appreciated. Suddenly, that all changed. One day my dad came home from work, sat down on the sofa and was having a heart attack while my mother was frantically trying to help him. That was my first experience with powerlessness. I was powerless to control what was happening right before my eyes! Minutes later my mom had sent me across the street to the neighbor's house and as I was standing on their front lawn, I saw an ambulance pull up in front of our house. I never saw my dad again. He had died.

The next 13 months were more unsettling yet. My mother would get sick and had to go into the hospital while my Aunt Re would take care of me, and then I would go back home. The last time I expected to go home but instead found myself going to McCabe's funeral home. I was paralyzed with fear as I was now attending the viewing of my mother. My uncle went to take me up to the front room and view her casket, but I refused to go. I figured if I just didn't look at her, I could pretend that it wasn't happening. That is my first recollection of denial. It was too painful to face the truth.

Next, I recall my aunt taking me to my new set of parents! They were relatives of my parents, but I did not know them well. Numb, shocked, confused and paralyzed with fear is an understatement! I was trying to wrap my brain around what happened. All of this was just so overwhelming. I had a lot of self-inflicted shame, thinking I was a bad person to have lost both parents and my dog too. Everything in my life that represented love and stability was gone. I was now living in a new home, new surroundings, new parents, and going to my second kindergarten.

Kindergarten was okay and then after the school season was over, we moved again to a larger home because my stepmom was expecting another child. I tested well for first grade but shortly thereafter my grades began to fall. I was moved to the dumb room. That is when my low self-esteem pattern started. It was a tough situation for everyone. In fairness to my new parents who were kids themselves, They were both 22, had been married a little over a year, had a five and a half year old, a newborn, and my mom was expecting another child! What a mess. And an adjustment for everyone.

It was the 60s so there was no therapy, grief recovery, PTSD knowledge. NOTHING! Those things were not available at the time. My low grades and my secret of trying to keep my classmates from knowing I had a different last name kept me fearful. So, more self-esteem and shame issues. I remember my stepmother getting mad at me and wondering why I was unable

to concentrate on my studies. Think, Marita, think or how could you be so stupid? What are you doing when the teacher is talking? Looking out the window? I felt numb and paralyzed inside.

Sometimes she could be mean, and yell so I tried to avoid her when I felt like I was walking on eggshells. This was so unlike my other parents where things were calmer and kinder. Instead, the atmosphere was chaotic and stern. Anyhow, that's where I developed avoidance patterns. I didn't like getting yelled at, so I tried not to be a burden, I was the helper because I was five and a half years older than their first born. My mom gave me chores of dusting the baseboards and furniture, setting the table and helping with the dinner dishes. I would also run errands for her when she was busy with the babies. That's where I think I got my approval. If I couldn't be smart at least I could try harder and work harder to get approval and acceptance. At least I could do something right.

Jumping ahead a few decades, I graduated high school and decided not to go to college. I didn't think I could trust myself to not party. I also was not motivated or had discipline to study. So, I opted for dental assisting school which I commuted to everyday while living at home.

Fast forward again as I met my soon to be husband. He was everything that my parents liked and, he filled my low self-esteem void. I thought that I would now live happily ever after, like in the fairy tales. I had no idea that that thinking was delusional. I also thought that all my problems were behind me, but I was wrong.

Fast forward again. After I had my second daughter I started to get flashbacks from childhood. I went into therapy and discovered that my childhood was traumatic which was quite honestly a relief to me! Since we didn't talk about problems in my new family, we pretended like things were normal. After all those years my feelings were finally validated!!

Backtracking a little, to when I was 21. I discovered that alcohol took away my shyness and calmed my nerves. That's how I felt relaxed, but it is only a short-term solution.

Today I do not drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes and realize I have much more internal work to do. I am so grateful to CoDA. Working the Steps and coming to CoDA meetings has helped me tremendously in recognizing unhealthy mindsets and patterns. It also has taught me that I am powerless over others and that I am the one who has to have the courage and wisdom to change within. Not to be a victim but to take care of myself in healthy ways, be empowered and help and encourage others.

I am so grateful. Thank you for letting me share.

Marita P.

07/17/2024

Closing Readings

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.

Some Affirmations

I experience the miracle of recovery.

I like myself and accept myself as I am.

I am worth listening to.

I feel calm when I "turn it over."

I ask for help when I need it.

I forgive others and myself.

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.



- *Jim H.*

Twelve Promises

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.

Resources:

Find a Meeting - <https://coda.org/find-a-meeting/>

Subscribe to Email lists - <https://www.codependents.org/sub.htm>

CoDA's Events Calendar - <https://coda.org/calendar/>

YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0oWXZDpoVdKbyJ0YDh1zTQ/playlists>

If links are not active, copy and paste the url into your browser.

Request for Content

This publication thrives when fellow CoDAs share their recovery. This is a great place to express your creativity through prose (200-2000 words), poetry and artistic images, as long as it honors CoDA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and supports Co-NNections' mission.

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