



Meeting in Print

June 2023 (Ed. 27)

"Finding Self in CoDA"

In This Issue:

1 [Opening Readings](#)

2 [Community Shares](#)

["Sweet Wine"](#)

["Scars Into Stars"](#)

["11th Step"](#)

["Just CoDA"](#)

["Shadow Boxing with
Myself"](#)

["Self-Esteem Crash"](#)

3 [Closing Readings](#)

4 [Announcements](#)



- *Alison*

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. We're 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

“Sweet Wine”

You were my sweet wine,
I drank until I was drunk.
Now my head aches,
And my heart is shattered.

It was not your fault,
I am an addict.
You were just too beautiful,
And I was just too weak.

I think I might be in recovery,
But my withdrawal is more patient than I am.
I feel stuck, frozen, trapped,
And this is a dizzying dry-drunk hangover.

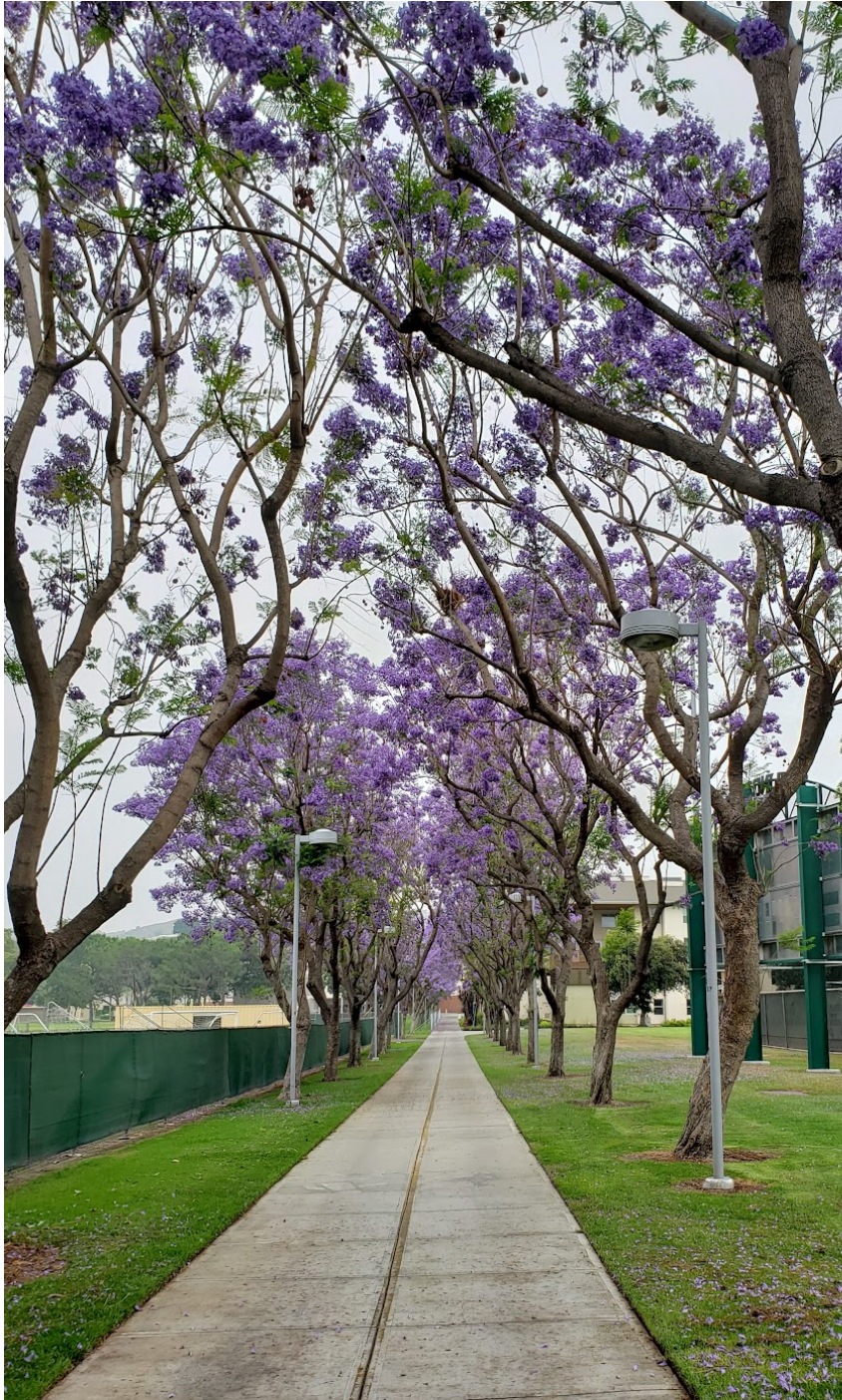
I pray I don't see you,
Then I pray I will.
I don't want to fight this any longer,
And yet I must keep trying.

I am tired of hurting,
I am tired of being thirsty,
I want to drink you in,
And I want to lose myself in you.

But I was already losing myself,
Drunk and drowning in your bitter sweetness.
Being with you hurt me more than this sobriety.
And I will hold on for one more day.

I need to see you!
Oh God, let me see her.
Dear God, be deaf to my prayer,
And I will surrender again.

- David



- *Jim*

“Scars Into Stars”

Hello. My name is Linda C. and I am codependent. I would like to share with you how I changed my Scars into Stars...but before I share my story with you, I want to tell you a little bit about myself.

I am 73 years old and going on 16.

I am the youngest of 10 children.

I have epilepsy but was misdiagnosed and didn't know it because the medical profession didn't know what they know today...I was a walking drug addict. You see, the medical profession would put me on a drug that would work for 3-4 months and then I would have another seizure.

I am sure my parents were ready to pull their hair out.

I was treated "differently" as a child because of my illness.

I was oppressed socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

Needless to say because my parents did what most parents do when they have a child with an illness. Of course they:

Overprotected me

Alienated me from the rest of my siblings

Didn't allow me to participate in social activities

Why did I always feel like I was on the "outside" looking in? Could it have been the drugs?

Why did I always want to be accepted but never was? Could it be because my parents taught my other siblings I was "different."

Why did my brothers and sisters treat me like I was a freak? Well, I finally decided to quit trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. So, being the survivor I am, I developed some coping skills that carried over into adulthood. Not until I found CoDA, did I realize that my situation wasn't as unique as I thought! What a revelation!

It was CoDA, working the Twelve Steps and Traditions, (especially Steps 4 and 10), and working with my sponsor, did I finally come face to face with the many scars I developed over a lifetime. The fact of the matter was I was one "Hot Mess!"

So, I want to share with you my Scars and how they turned into my Stars.

My coping skills were my liabilities and were Scars.

After reviewing my Assets as I worked Step 4, I realized they were my Stars.

What I needed to do to change my Scars into Stars.

Changing my Scars into Stars is a lifelong process and I am grateful each and every day for the CoDA program and the God of my Understanding has given me...for without the above, I would not be able to share my story with you. For that I thank you and want you to all be aware of how much you have helped me in my quest.

That being said, I know we all have a story and we all think ours is unique, until we realize how similar our experiences are. I wasn't able to change my Scars into Stars until I realized this.

Here is how I did it and continue to do it when I work Step 4. First I listed my Liabilities which are my Scars. Then I listed my Assets which are my Stars. I previously thought that my assets were weak.

My Scars are:

Denial – which led to avoidance, which led to refusal to admit I had a problem.

Low Self-Esteem – which led to difficulty in making decisions and I took everything personally.

Fear of Failure – which led to Perfectionism, which led to low self-esteem, which led to lack of accountability and responsibility.

People-pleaser – that was my way to get accepted or approved by my family of origin. Guess what? That is never going to work so I decided to stop beating my head against a brick wall.

I became a Pollyanna – I thought if I was sweet, and didn't stand up for myself, people would feel sorry for me and ultimately make a decision for me. The problem with that is, a lot of times I would agree with someone when I really didn't want to, just to make them feel good. The only person I was hurting was myself.

I became gullible – and I still am. I lost my spirituality. I believed what everyone said was right and they became my God.

I became naive. I didn't trust my instincts. I was like a little toddler who kept falling down but instead of getting up and trying again, I just sat on the floor and wallowed in my so-called pain.

Now once I became aware, accepted and took action on my many scars, I could turn them into Stars. My Stars are my Assets that I mistakenly thought growing up were weaknesses.

My Assets are:

I have empathy

I am understanding

I am honest

I am kind

I am generous

I am loyal

I am compassionate

I have courage

I have integrity

What did I do and how did I change my Scars into Stars? It sounds simpler than it is but does get easier over time.

Instead of being a martyr, I focused on others' needs.

Instead of avoiding responsibility and accountability, I became aware of my challenge, accepted it, and took action to change it.

Instead of being afraid to fail which led to my perfectionism and low self-esteem, I faced my problems with courage, integrity and determination.

Instead of having unrealistic expectations, I set boundaries for myself and I am more realistic.

Instead of Easing God Out of My Life, I chose to Ease the God of my Understanding in my life through prayer, meditation, attending CoDA meetings and doing service work.

Instead of being generous for the wrong reasons – by trying to gain acceptance, approval, and loyalty, I am learning to love God, myself, and my fellow man. A smile, a word of encouragement, taking the time to listen to someone means more than a material gift.

I am a loyal and trustworthy person. In the past, I was loyal to everyone but myself but I am learning to be loyal to my God first, me and then CoDA, family, and friends.

Now, I know that the challenges in life are going to be there and that all the changes I want to make – and I am a work in progress – are not going to happen overnight!

Have I changed all Scars into Stars? ABSOLUTELY NOT! In fact, some of the Stars that I do have just twinkle, some are dimmer than I would like, and some shine brightly. But I keep trying every day to change my Scars into Stars. I know I must be vigilant and focused and be patient with myself.

I hope my story has shown how:

My coping skills became Liabilities and Scars.

My reviewing my Assets, I realized they are my Stars is if a) am aware of my Scar, b) change my attitude toward my Assets, and c) take action necessary to change my Scar into a Star

I realized this is a lifelong process.

I let God in my Life instead of Easing him out of my life.

That being said, I want to give thanks for the honor and privilege to share my story as I continue to change my Scars into Stars. I know I could not have done it without the CoDA program, the Twelve Steps and Traditions, my sponsor, but most of all the continuing encouragement of me and others as well. I consider the CoDA program and its fellowship STARS!!!

It is my hope in your Path to Recovery, that my experiences will give others the strength, courage and integrity to change their Scars into Stars. I am a child of God--Precious and Free. May God Bless You Always.

- Linda C.



- Caryn

“11th Step”

Demi Gods
Disordered Attachments
Things I hold above God
Group Think
Group assimilation
Codependency

To be accepted
To be seen
To be needed

Mommy's eyes
Daddy's attention
Unmet needs

Her
It
the job
the money
the things

burnt down
burnt down to a crisp
because of love
because of ferocious love.

This is God today.
A lover stopping at nothing
destroying all plans
To
Uproot
break apart
and unhinge
the lesser things
that he may have all of me.

Love.

10 minutes every morning
to leave the door open
to grow in intimacy
Slowly
And
Sometimes

quickly

Refined
Purified
like Gold
like real Love
God

- Eliot R.



- Jim H.

“Just” CoDA

I have been in CoDA for about ten months. My therapist recommended it. I am not in any other 12-step program. Initially, it felt awkward because people asked me what other programs I was in. I said, “Just CoDA.” I am not sure they knew what to say. I wasn’t sure CoDA was the right place for me. Being the codependent that I am, I felt guilty that I wasn’t in another 12-step program! I found myself wanting to apologize. It sounds so crazy ten months later.

It didn’t take me long to figure out that I belonged in CoDA. My mother was an adult child of an alcoholic. There is a lot of alcohol in my family generationally and through marriage. I can identify with many of the patterns of behavior and I have my share of protective devices. The last ten months have been a journey. CoDA, in concert with therapy, has been a wonderful resource to explore my issues that resulted from having a parent that grew up in a very abusive alcoholic family. I was physically, emotionally, and sexually abused as a child. I was neglected on a number of different levels. Both of my parents were wounded too. They didn’t have the ability or resources to love, nurture, or raise a child. I looked to others for validation. CoDA is teaching me that I am the only one that can give me the validation that I need. While I may not have grown up with an alcohol or drug addiction, I was addicted early in my life to religion and church and later to work. I am recently retired, and while I enjoyed a certain degree of success at work, it didn’t mean much since I couldn’t validate myself. Happily, through CoDA, that is changing now.

Due to COVID, my first experiences with CoDA were via virtual meetings. I am more of an extrovert, but I found myself very quiet on calls the first few months. I didn’t have a clue what to say and then gradually, I began to share. There were a number of times that I wanted to stop attending the meetings and my therapist continued to encourage me to attend just a little while longer. She helped me to frame the meetings as a “laboratory.” She told me that I was getting a chance to put the things that we were discussing in therapy in practice through a CoDA meeting.

It was hard for me to connect. I was lonely. CoDA was giving me an outlet and an opportunity to explore my defenses and the protective devices that would get in the way when I wanted to connect. Over time, it got easier.

I was glad when there were opportunities to attend a CoDA meeting in person. It came at a good time. I wanted and needed the personal touch that you don’t always get via virtual meetings. It was hard to get to know people in a one-hour meeting that was fairly structured. I wasn’t feeling connected. Finally, in a meeting, I shared that I was new to the area, recently retired, and lonely. I offered to have coffee with people if they would like to get together. It was really hard for me to do in a meeting! I felt exposed. What had I done? I was reminded by my therapist that there may be others in the meeting that feel similarly. I wasn’t sure what reaction I would receive, but a number of people came up afterwards and offered to have coffee. It was the beginning!

I have learned a lot since then. I am not going to connect with everyone that I have coffee with, but at the very least I will get to know someone better which will make the meetings more meaningful. I continue to be amazed at people's stories and the obstacles that people have overcome to fully live. It is our story that connects. At the end of the day, it is all we have, but it is also all we need.

My CoDA journey is just starting, but I am feeling more whole. There is a creative little boy inside of me that is beginning to come up for air. I am giving him permission to breathe. I am Mike and I am a codependent.

- Mike



- *Alison*

“Shadow Boxing with Myself ”

Shadow boxing with myself
It's projections from my past.
It's no fault of anyone else.

Casting my wounds far and wide
Expecting redemption from others
Relates to bruised and battled pride.

Boxing with my shadow self.
Stuck in trauma from my teens.
I've been trying
to heal it for years
Yet
it keeps popping back up it seems.

How can I move forward?
How can anything
I attempt to do last,
If my mind and my emotions
are constantly living in the past?

I offer you my gratitude
For mirroring back into my soul
The shadow parts of myself
Which always battles for control.

So here I am
Moving on again
Shadow self,
once again
has cast its clouds
Upon my heart.

Forcing me to
retreat for a time to reflect -
Dark Nights of the soul
And Then
the strong warrior that I am.
I will stand 5' 2 inches tall
With purity of mind and heart
I will once again
Moving forward
to make a brand new start.

Learning from lessons,

at each and every stop.
Until the end of days
When -
In acceptance for all that I am
giving thanks to the wonders
As I graciously
offer myself back up
unto
The vast Universe
Of
LIFE.

- Pamela W.



- Jim H.

“Self-Esteem Crash”

It was another Christmas day at my dad's house. I was happily chatting with my mother-in-law when I overheard my dad talking to my daughter's boyfriend: "Yeah. Jim's always lazy. No work ethic, not like you." At least that's what I thought I heard. Later, I learned it was nowhere near as harsh and in fact he was including himself in the so-called "lazy group."

Yet I overreacted and forced myself into the conversation, interrupting rudely with a flood of words about how being a salesman was the worst possible 1st career for me. I never stated directly but strongly implied that it was he who pushed me into that decision. I kept dumping words until I finally forced him to reluctantly admit that having a career you hate might affect your performance... Small victory for the cowering little boy who NEVER stood up to daddy in any way for fear of being beaten.

Nevertheless, this confrontation left me with a bad taste in my mouth because I was “flooding” on the salesman career, inappropriate at a family gathering, and using indirect communication. The truth is that I am afraid to tell my father about my anger of how he abused us (his first family) and then neglected us as well. I also have never found the words or the courage to discuss with him how abandoned and lost I felt after college, especially in a sales career where I was somewhat of a fish out of water, where my avoidance tendencies all but doomed me to failure.

Finally, I've never dared talk to him about how I felt he had let me down in those years because he just wanted to avoid any further financial responsibilities. Part of it is a blame game: “Why didn't you encourage me to go to grad school at the time instead of pushing me toward a really painful and scary sales job?” I still don't have the words to say this in a way that won't just make matters worse.

In CoDA recovery, I am practicing a better quality of mindfulness via Steps 10 and 11 and am learning to do better in these triggering situations.

The fact is I was and am still vulnerable to these outbursts because of my low self-esteem pattern. I still sometimes seek self-esteem from others, especially my father. At 61 years old, my dad's approval of my life and "success" still holds way too much importance. In CoDA recovery “I value the opinions of those I trust without needing to gain their approval; I have confidence in myself.” And this is true most of the time, but I still have my blindspots where I still have a lot of work to do.

In the aftermath of my outburst, I was still feeling really crummy about the whole situation; it had awakened my self-esteem problems. So I reached for the patterns and it quickly became clear that my dad's opinion of me held too much importance, an old painful wound reawakened. Self-esteem pattern: “Value others' approval of their thinking, feelings, and behavior over their own.” Reading this pattern helped drive home the true nature of my problem: I need to give up on the idea of gaining his approval. If my father even implies or insinuates in any way that I am

lazy or haven't been as successful as he'd hoped or if he marvels over someone else's success, I feel a stab in my heart that I am somehow worthless, "less than," inferior. At these times, it seems I truly do value his approval of my life, career and "success" over my own.

Luckily, CoDA recovery points me in the direction of claiming my own actions and acknowledging my successes and efforts to work hard and do well. Steps 4 and 5 teach me to admit my own defects. Thus, I take responsibility for myself, own my defects, and rely on God to become a better version of myself. And again I am comforted and guided by the CoDA patterns: "In recovery...I accept myself as I am. I emphasize progress over perfection." Then it hits home. I really don't need his praise to have self-esteem. Like my sponsor says, "It's SELF-esteem, not dad-esteem."

Another one of the self-esteem patterns I struggle with is: "Do not perceive themselves as lovable or worthwhile persons." This is what happened to me on Christmas. I heard my father mentioning something about my work ethic and immediately drew the conclusion he was attacking me.

And from there, I overreacted. Worse yet, the toxic "hit" stayed with me for a few days afterward. I kept obsessing with thoughts of being a failure at life, not ever making enough money, not having a better career, followed by the conclusion (an incorrect one!) that I am not lovable or worthwhile. Otherwise, wouldn't my father respect me more? Wouldn't he praise me for my success? At least once?

In working my program, I reached for the positive thought/affirmation: "I recognize myself as being a lovable and valuable person." With that as a starting point, I was able to think more clearly. I remembered the principle, "Don't compare yourself to others." That's what I had been doing! Compared to my physician father who became violent and erratic when I was growing up partly due to his overwork, maybe I hadn't made as much money or obtained as much prestige. So what! That's okay! Comparing is a fool's game.

Even my pediatrician father once advised me that comparing is the route to misery. He admitted that he used to compare himself with super high paid surgeons and come away feeling "less than" as well. I remembered how hard I have worked and how my wife and I have done very well thank you.

All our bills are paid and we have put one daughter through college (she's an RN now) and are putting the other through now. More importantly, my values are not based on money, property, and prestige. I'm more concerned with health and well being and here I am sober and clean for 35 years, at a healthy weight for 3 years, and actively working a CoDA program. I sponsor and take direction from a sponsor. Since becoming a member of AA in 1986, I've worked the Steps to the best of my ability and helped others in recovery. By my standards, the ones that REALLY COUNT, I am a success. I really don't need my dad's approval to know that I am living a successful life. It might be nice, but that's on him not me.

The principle that we are “self supporting through our own contributions” is something I’ve always taken seriously since the beginning. I came into the rooms unemployable, homeless, and bankrupt in every area of my life.

So I remind myself (again) that It’s not a competition; it’s about living well. It’s not about trying to be #1; it’s about being grateful for what I have and sincerely seeking healthy and loving relationships. All the other stuff is just misery pudding. It may look like pudding but it’s really sh--, a rabbit hole of negativity that serves no good purpose.

Another self-esteem pattern that surfaced during this codependent “slip” was “Codependents often...Judge what they think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.” So it’s really not about my father or my siblings judging me. It’s about me judging myself as never good enough. If I choose to engage with that mindset, I choose misery. Instead, thanks to CoDA and the 12 Steps, I choose to acknowledge my imperfections via Steps 4-7, trust my higher power to push me toward progress in these areas, and in the meantime, I get my “revenge” by enjoying the heck out of life and loving the people in my life, including my father.

In recovery and with God’s grace, I can feel secure enough to admit mistakes to myself and others, and to hear their opinions **without feeling threatened**. I’m still a work in progress on the last part but that’s okay today because I have a program like CoDA where I am loved by fellow codependents who struggle with many of the same issues as me. Thank God I’m not alone!

- Jim H.



- Caryn

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

Today, I love myself.
I am open, honest and willing.
I am restored to sanity.

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.

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.



- Caryn

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.

Call 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 follows CoDA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and the Co-NNections Editorial Policy. See <https://coda.org/service-info/connections-service-info-page/> for more information.