



Meeting in Print

June 2024 (Ed. 31)

“Overcoming”

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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, 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

“My CoDA Recovery”

The following story was submitted in Spanish. Co-NNections is grateful to the CoDA Spanish Outreach committee for translating it into English for this publication.

Hi! I've been a CoDA member for 9 years. I came to CoDA in despair, trying to fix my alcoholic ex-husband. When I attended my first meeting, I felt a huge relief and knew immediately that I belonged there. I felt that I'd found a great treasure. I told my ex-husband about it, thinking that he would come with me to the next meeting and that our marital problems would be resolved and we'd be very happy. Because the program “would fix him.” After all, I felt like a victim, a good person and a perfect one.

Big surprise, he didn't want to attend the meetings. He told me that I was crazy, and I did, indeed, need to go to those meetings and that I should keep on attending by myself. Turns out, he wasn't that far from the truth.

I come from a very dysfunctional alcoholic family. My childhood experience was one of emotional and physical abandonment. My father died when I was 7 years old. My mother immediately sent me to live with an odd family in another state, far from everything that I knew. I suffered beatings, imprisonment, isolation, insults, humiliation and sexual abuse. My story is a long one, but even so I considered myself to be a perfectly sane woman: I had it all. I had a home at an early age, and was economically stable. I had a spouse and two daughters, aged 13 and 14 at that time. We seemed to be a happy family, although I kept swallowing the anger, the infidelities and humiliations. I was terrified of being a divorced woman and of being alone. I loved my ex-husband, and my motto was keeping my family together at all costs. The family that I dreamt of as a child, and the love that I had never had before.

My Higher Power had other plans for me. One day I was sitting in my patio, looking at the sky and an enormous green tree. I ask God “if this man is for me, please change his heart of stone and if he isn't for me, give me the strength to leave him.” I couldn't keep on living with him, since we were fighting more and more and I didn't have the strength to end the relationship.

Just thinking about it gave me a panic attack. Well, I kept on attending CoDA meetings and working on my boundaries in recovery.

The tension between us got worse: I began to claim my rights as a wife and to defend myself intelligently and with deeds. After six months my ex left me. I discovered that he had been living two lives: he had three children outside of our marriage, and a different mother in each case. I felt destroyed: 16 years of my youth and my marriage had been thrown on the garbage heap, I felt.

Today, I give thanks to my Higher Power. After all, he relieved me of a tremendous weight, of something that was hurting me. I have my two daughters, who today are 23 and 24 years old. I enjoy a great relationship with them. I showed them about pardoning their father. I pardoned myself for my own lack of love. I thank CoDA and my companions, who never left me alone. Today, I see that man as if through a dark tunnel through which I had to travel to find my light. Thanks to that man, I came to CoDA, and I stayed here. I am grateful that he gave me my greatest treasure, my daughters! I also found my sanity through CoDA as well. My mother died in December and for the last 5 years I was able to have a good relationship with her and I was able to forgive her. I live in peace and contentment, living one day at a time. Today, my program friends have become part of my family. Thanks to my Higher Power for putting CoDA in my life!

Maria A.

8/27/2023



- Caryn T.

"Steps on the Wall"

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over others - that our lives had become unmanageable. I remember thinking, "Yes, I'm that... I'm here. That's admitting my life has become unmanageable. There, I've done Step 1. What's the next one?" To me, it does still count as doing the step in some way, as part of my experience. However about a year into the program, I realized that some people worked the 12 Steps with a sponsor. I therefore got a sponsor at the next meeting that I went to and worked through a more in depth Step 1. For years, this step would help me stop trying to control others, especially when I wanted to change them.

I usually call Step 1 the "grief and relief" step. Like, if I feel buzzy, anxious, or overwhelmed, I ask myself, "What is Step 1?" Then I remember the Step and say it out loud and often burst out crying. (This is sometimes dangerous to do when I'm driving. But it helps nonetheless!)

I usually realize at this point that I have been hovering over feelings of fear, anger, or sadness. I grieve what I so deeply want or hope for, the outcome I was trying to control. Then comes the relief, sometimes just from the groundedness of letting my 'inner child' know she's safe to feel. She knows that I won't keep pushing her. Usually it's just a relief to remember that some things truly aren't my responsibility at all and I'm allowed to rest.

Today and last night, I felt a strong feeling of coming to Step 1 from another angle. Someone told me once that we look at concepts over time like a diamond, turning it in the light.

Alternatively, it is like one of those wind chimes that twists in beautiful changing shapes. The same concept can mean different things at different times, all at different beneficial angles.

"I admit I am powerless over others". Sometimes that means for me to let go of my behavior. Sometimes that means to hold onto my behavior that I'm scared to do - to speak my truth and remember it's not my responsibility to fix how someone feels about what I shared. I am an adult and can breathe the truth.

I realize from time to time that I try to control myself. I try to control my responses to things, not tell my full truth, so that I can be "liked" or essentially receive temporary, conditional love. Once I realized I was doing that, I saw how unsustainable and fruitless it was.

So I worked on it and saw that growth as part of the Serenity Prayer "the courage to change the things I can," i.e. my own behavior. This links to Steps 6 & 7. I saw it as a contrary action to be authentic and practice learning what it feels to be loved for my real self. But I hadn't associated the idea with Step 1. For some reason. Connecting them helped me.

(As I'm writing this, I'm starting to remember that I think this is written in the Green book! Ah, well, that's why I do the Steps over and over. I forgot, but Higher Power reminded me ever so quietly last night!)

I just looked in the book and question one is, "How do we let go of the fear of what others think?" (I'm very aware that I started writing this to share my experience with others and see how hilariously obvious that I needed to write this for myself.) An example of this was when I was scared to say the truth to my mom's doctors because I want them to like me so they don't leave my mom. But they aren't helping her and it's healthy for me to be honest about that and let the truth guide us to authentic help.

Hovering above my feelings is a fear of abandonment (especially by something that hurts me). This doesn't lead to a healthy and loving relationship with myself or others. It keeps me feeling like I'm in an anxious hot air balloon, one that only stays afloat if I keep breathing panic breaths into it, when what I really need is my two feet on the ground.

So I did Step 1 today, and asked for help around it. With my partner's help, I felt my feelings, got more internal info from myself and him, and then sent an email to the doctors.

Thank you to CoDA for this lifelong journey of small changes that are precious to me.

Ruth G.

10/18/2023



- *Steve S.*

“Learning Acceptance of Self”

In my past I thought I needed to have someone’s love, I needed to give sex, and or accept sex. I learned this because I was sexually abused as a child. As a child I was taught that nothing else about me mattered, and that this was the only way I would be accepted and loved and or gain approval. My stepfather's sexual attention meant I was accepted; I had approval, value and worth.

In my mid-teens I discovered that my body was attractive. I could attract boys; I could attract men. So, I was promiscuous and searched for love using my sexuality. I wanted to be loved for who I was. I didn't know who I was, because I was never taught who I was. I thought I had to use my body and be sexually available to all men and boys who wanted me. I never had the opportunity to explore who I was, nor knew I needed to. I just thought my sexuality was who I was and that got me love.

I had to be slim and beautiful and perfect. I had to make sure my body looked perfect all the time. I had to make sure my face was appealing, and I needed to look a certain way so I could attract whomever I wanted. I did some terrible things and I even convinced two men at two different times to betray their marriage vows. Part of me knew this was wrong, but I blamed the men, they were the ones who broke their vows, not me.

For a few years before CoDA, in an unhappy marriage, I ate all my emotions. I gained too much weight. I didn't care for myself. At one point, I felt I was testing the relationship, and I was thinking that if my husband loved me, it wouldn't matter how I looked. He verbally confirmed that it didn't matter, but I also think he liked me fat so I wouldn't get attention from other men. He was quite jealous, as in my work I met many different people daily and therefore could get attention from other men.

As I look at my body now, I'm trying to accept it as it is. Yes, I am overweight, my body has been through a lot. My upper arms are huge and flabby because I did hard physical work for many years. My belly is round and soft as it carried a child. It carried my emotions. It carried my pain. My thighs were huge because it had to carry all that and more. My face is starting to sag, getting lines and wrinkles. Most people call them character lines. I call them stress lines and lines of burden and pain. It's hard to see my face get old, and I am trying things to stop it, but it's like stopping a tidal wave, impossible.

I've only been in CoDA since 2019. I am grateful for being in CoDA, as I have a little bit more sense of self now and can look back and see myself in a different light. I am just now starting to truly accept my value and worth. Looking back into the past, I can see how all those years of looking to a man for my value and worth has taken a toll on my body, mind and soul. I am in the process of accepting, and I certainly know that my face no longer stops men in their tracks. And definitely my body is no longer perfect. I don't feel as beautiful outside, but I am gaining beauty on the inside because I know I have value and worth as a human. My higher power loves me just the way I am and even though sometimes I think I'm just lying to myself, deep down I truly do believe this.

I am so grateful for this CoDA program. I will be here for the rest of my life, as I am a work in progress and I know, now, I no longer need to be perfect. My Higher Power loves me just the way I am.

Carrie J.

11/08/2023



- *Jim H.*

“Hai-Joy”

Finding freedom, joy,
In CoDA's embrace, I heal
Codependency fades.

Rae

1/29/2024



- *Jim H.*



- *Caryn T.*

“Serenity and Freedom”

I read in CoDA’s little red meditation book, “In This Moment” that each small step is what counts in recovery. Being mindful of what the CoDA program teaches, and practicing brings progress. Sometimes I reach a plateau and it seems that a long time passes without much improvement in my obsessive thoughts, negative emotions and unhealthy behaviors. I can’t say how many times I have called a friend or shared at a meeting about my feelings of despair because things were not changing or moving fast enough for me. “How long is this going to take?” I have wondered out loud. “Why can’t I change?” But I have always been right where I am supposed to be.

When I began in CoDA almost 5 years ago, I was desperate to be free of my self-defeating thinking and mindless fears. I immediately saw that CoDA was a different program than other twelve step groups. I was given a newcomer packet that included a life-changing handout of codependent behaviors and recovery patterns. Rather than being powerless over a substance, as a codependent, I was powerless over my own behavior and emotions. I quickly got the CoDA blue book, the green workbook and a sponsor and started working the steps. I was an enthusiastic pupil. I was grateful to have found help and understanding.

It takes time and effort to study the steps and go to meetings, but if it is what I have to do to change, I will do it. I have found that working the program really is not that hard. By sticking with it and putting one foot in front of the other, it has worked for me. I am being changed with my Higher Power’s help. I just have to remain willing and patient.

There is so much within the CoDA program to remember. The CoDA behaviors and characteristics that I relate to and want to change! I need to remember I am powerless, to let go of control and let my Higher Power take care of things. I also need to remember to practice acceptance and love for myself. Even when I make mistakes and am not perfect, I am OK! My HP loves me just as I am.

The program has taught me to take care of myself in relationships, set boundaries and know what I want and need. The program has taught me to be myself and remember that I have choices, and to give others the freedom to be themselves without trying to change or manipulate them. Other people in my life do not have to act a certain way for me to be happy today. I no longer have the need to people-please to feel safe in a relationship. I have slips,

but when I notice them, I pause, say a prayer and accept myself just as I am. I am much more honest with myself and others.

When I started out, I used the Recovery Patterns of Codependence for my first CoDA 4th Step. This first inventory included how my experience in my family growing up affected me as an adult. It was very revealing. I saw trends in how I related to others in unhealthy ways. I saw how I had developed codependence and ultimately harmed myself and others. The person that listened to my 5th Step guided me to a deeper understanding of my role in my family. She gave me a different perspective and helped me see the truth behind my behavior patterns. I released a lot of guilt and regret that I had been carrying for many years. As a result, I felt grateful, joyous and humbled with what I felt was evidence of my Higher Power at work in my life.

Today I continue to work all the steps and I work them again and again, over and over, back and forth. I like to read and share about the steps with other CoDA members during meetings. My current sponsor showed me how to work the 4th Step and the 10th Step anytime my serenity is broken, if I feel angry or fearful about someone or some situation. I usually find that my ego is behind my aggravations and that my problems are self-created. I list my fears and ask God to remove them. I trust that God will. I look forward to the new awareness and relief that I know a 4th or 10th Step will provide even if it means I owe someone an amends. Sometimes that someone is myself.

To counter any day-to-day negativity, fear or obsessive thinking I may have, I learned to say some favorite effective prayers. To connect with my HP first thing in the morning and throughout the day is now becoming an important routine for me. I know my troubles are a matter of my distorted thinking and that with God's help I can change my thoughts. I say the Serenity Prayer and pray so I can have an open mind. I remind myself of the love my Higher Power has for me. I try to remember that my Higher Power is always with me and will help whenever I ask and even when I don't ask.

When I try out a new communication skill, boundary or action and don't do it perfectly, I don't beat myself up or give up. I trust in the lesson and that I will learn it. I see my progress. My life has changed. There are codependent behaviors that I don't do anymore and things that I am doing differently. I recognize when my ego is trying to bring me down and I practice letting go of the resulting inner turmoil. Acceptance of pretty much everything helps. Doing the healthy

thing is often as simple as minding my own business and leaving it to God. I try not to be bothered by what other people do by telling myself that their behavior has nothing to do with me. They are just being themselves.

Meetings keep me on track. Without meetings, I tend to fall back into codependent behaviors and forget the principles of the program that are described so well in the Steps and Traditions. I share about what I have learned, how I have changed. I listen to others, relate to their experiences and learn from their strength and hope. I provide service at meetings and support others where I can. I have met many people through meetings who share my desire for peace and serenity and healthy relationships. Meetings give me the undoubtable experience that I am not alone.

I do a program activity every day; whether it is going to a meeting, reaching out to others, talking with my sponsor, acknowledging my Higher Power or working a step. I continually see how my perspective of other people and situations has changed for the better. I know there is a lot more for me to learn and just as important, to unlearn. I do not practice my program perfectly. I am not cured. I have to pause and remember to accept my imperfection every day. I am gentle with myself. I encourage myself. I love all of who I am today. I am grateful. I have different expectations now. I expect to be different and I expect to have serenity and freedom in my life. It works, so I work it. I am worth it.

Anonymous

11/27/2023



- *Jim H.*

“My Daddy Don't See Me”

My daddy don't see me.

But he sees himself as being a good man.

A good dad.

A man who laid his life down for his kids.

And he wants to keep it that way;

to have others see him that way.

It was his dream; all along to be exactly that.

But my daddy don't see me.

He don't see my brother neither.

His hand was red blood at church the other day;

taking down mom's artworks.

They had a big ol showing; some of her greatest hits.

She also likes being seen.

Seen as an artist; seen as a woman who never
got her due recognition.

And daddy shows up always, like her traveling roadie;

often to a diminishing audience;

never giving up on her dreams.

Daddy likes to be esteemed by his community.

By the Church.

By the Priest.

By any man that might be surrogate father;

Because he too had a daddy that never saw him neither.
Wrapped up in his own bid for attention and unfulfilled dreams, daddy's old man died young.
And he too didn't know how to have communion with his own sons.

My daddy is 72 years old now.
I still see him as a kid.
Going around here and there,
looking for that external affirmation.
'Good job old man.'
'We really need you round here.'

But back to bleeding today; you know it looked like
the nail of a crucifixion; right there on the front of his hand.
He had nicked it on something.
Blood red and dripping.
And we were just standing there.
And I asked him, "why haven't you cleaned that up yet daddy?"
And he started smiling.
And it appeared to me that he liked it that way.

Daddy likes to bleed.
Daddy likes to be needed.
Just like me.
Only fulfilled when we have the opportunity to be savior.

And since I was young I learned it was the only way to get his attention.
You know, ask him some ol big question, usually one I already had an answer for.
Just to rope him in.
Get into his eyes.
Feel his presence.
Or play small and weak like my mom did.

But daddy couldn't be with me emotionally neither.
Cuz daddy couldn't be with reality.

Now listen, if you look at daddy's life on paper;
you look at all that he did;
you would see daddy as a real self sacrificing kind of man.
A man who put others' needs before his own.
A man who gave it all away.

Now I won't get into how much he beat and bullied my brother and I.
But just for a second here.
To make the point clearer.
Daddy was different behind closed doors; with violent wrathful tendencies.
And he was also a philanderer.
His external persona was just some kind of stage performance.

Trauma bonded to mom, in enmeshed resentful codependency;
mom feigning victimhood of the world at large;
daddy saving her like superman would;
those two fed each other;
like an alcoholic and an enabler.

Anyway's...
I think best to leave the rest to a therapist.

But I bring it up now because what I saw in daddy through the years was some real duplicity.
A false self projected outward.
And a true self that was never cultivated.
And you need that with a kid,
with anyone,

if you're going to have any kind of
real connection.

Not through performance or self sacrifice,
but through mercy, love and vulnerability.

And it helped me laugh today, bumping into daddy at church.
As a 42 year old man, working through my own recovery.
You know, it was like looking into a mirror.

And I finally knew what he was up to,
and I knew it wasn't his fault,
and I knew he couldn't see me,
and for generations to come,
I knew what had to be done.

Wrapping my arms around him,
I kissed his scruffy cheek,
wiping the blood from his hand.
And hugged him tight.
And I said,
"good job old man, good job.
All will be alright."

Eliot R.

12/6/2023



- Caryn T.

“A Spiritual Resurrection”

I was born into a family of five – eight years after the brothers who arrived before me.

The first traumatic event I experienced happened before I formed a memory. My oldest brother, ten years my senior, cut the middle finger on my right hand clean off with a hand saw.

The story that was given had me perpetrating the injury to myself. That story stuck and for the next eighteen years I was seen as a strangely self-harming child.

My father was a three-war veteran and traveled as inspector general for the US Army during the Vietnam war. During my fourth year a heart attack took his life.

The circumstances of my father’s death were tragic. My middle brother had run away from home and the oldest brother along with my father had chased him down into the woods, hauled him to the car and were driving home when my father fell over dead in my middle brother’s lap. My two brothers were not friends and the oldest spread the vicious rumor that “Bobbie killed Dad.”

At my father’s funeral, I was shamed for crying out the anger and grief. Over the next twenty years I did not express grief and only exploded into anger when my capacity to remain calm was beyond manageable.

Bobbie was locked into Juvenile Detention, and soon after he went into the brutal California Correctional System at the age of sixteen. He spent eleven years in prison and was killed at twenty-seven within the system.

My mother had somewhat of a narcissistic personality. She had me late, was caught up in trying to help my incarcerated brother and really had no time, energy or talent for raising me. As a result, I had a very lonely, emotionally vacant and insecure childhood. Tools my mother used to rear me included emotional and spiritual shaming, the creation of a fantasy story about our family and forced gratitude to name a few.

I formed into a person with an addictive personality. I started acting out at the age of six, stealing candy from the supermarket. This grew into stealing cigarettes, dirty magazines, then clothing. After my third shoplifting bust at eleven, she turned to me and said, "If you end up like Bobby, it will kill me." Words a child pays attention to and the making of a perfect codependent.

Throughout my teenage years I hid my addictive self from her and tried to show only the outer success that was required of me, thus (in my child's mind) keeping her alive.

By High School graduation I looked great on paper but was an emotional disaster. My paper record allowed me to win an appointment to the Air Force Academy but in my first year at the AFA my brother was killed so to ease that pain, I started having an affair with a married enlisted man which led to my removal from the prestigious institution. Still looking good on paper, I got a scholarship to play basketball in Texas – but the pain I carried led me into the depths of self-destruction where I was exposed to violence and numerous ways to numb out.

How does one cope with such a painful inner life with no pressure valve? I didn't know about 12-Step programs, rehab programs or therapy. I was raised to do it all on my own, figure it out, put my willpower to it and succeed. Look or ask for help? An unknown concept.

As a flaming codependent, I looked for my identity on the outside. School fell away when I couldn't keep up the rigors of education. I clung to a spiritual community for a while trying to follow the prescription of meditation and yoga – only to fail at that. I tried traveling the world which gave me a sense of self but eventually I ran out of money. I was terrified of anyone finding out what a disaster I was, so every person I got involved with was safely unavailable. They were either married, mentally ill or codependent themselves.

Finally, when my reserves of the willingness to live ran out I tried suicide. When this didn't succeed, my lack of the will to live combined with my addictive personality and codependency led me to very dark mental places. I lived in this headspace for another three years until finding myself at twenty-eight a homeless, broke and unemployable adult. The pain finally punctured my parachute of shame and I understood what it meant to ask for help.

I found an AA meeting, then NA meetings and within a year was in CoDA. I found a sponsor in AA who had spent five years in ACA and was comfortable taking me through the steps in both AA and CoDA. I also found and worked with a therapist.

I was a twenty-nine-year-old person who had never grieved the loss of a father, of a beloved brother, of a lonely childhood, lost opportunities, who had never had a chance to really be angry, never recognized and accepted herself as a human being with feelings who deserved love. In my eyes I was just a fake, a failure, an embarrassment.

I started turning this self-view inside out. The third decade of my life was both painful and liberating. I felt like such a victim that I didn't have much capacity to take responsibility for my part at first. I did 12-Steps with a very kind sponsor who allowed that I may not have caused harm to anyone but myself. CoDA Steps showed me how my codependent behaviors destroyed every chance of loving intimacy that came my way, leading to the sadness and loneliness that I felt. Through the CoDA fourth step I learned to grieve the loss of love, the lost opportunities, and the pain that my behaviors had caused.

By continuing work on the steps I became willing to speak, behave and choose differently. The list of amends to myself seemed unending. I started having a voice, where before I had none. "No" and "Ouch" were the first two words my newly born healthy ego learned to say. My family of origin were so unused to me having a voice, that it took many rough repetitions for them to hear me at all. Over time, I learned to say these things more eloquently with grace and care for the other person in many different scenarios. As a boundary and for the purpose of self-care I stopped communicating with my oldest brother twice for a year or more. Pursuing sibling therapy was the condition I placed on us having a relationship.

Learning to see and accept the limitations of my surviving family was difficult. I had made a career of trying to "make" them see me. When they couldn't, I concluded something was wrong with ME. I tried and failed so many times that I concluded I was a failure. Acceptance taught me that I needed to look elsewhere for the presence and love I craved. That elsewhere was inside of me – the healing love of a compassionate Higher Power – who not only helped me from the outside through people in CoDA, but from the inside through transformation resulting from working the 12-steps.

I made amends to myself in many ways. I learned how to express anger in a way that didn't harm myself or others – sometimes through words, but often through art or through physical activity. Exhaustion was my friend. I learned to hold onto a job, to identify my escapism habit and see how it sabotaged the foundations of a stable life. I went back to school and started using my mind again. This felt great! I achieved two bachelors' degrees then two more professional certifications. I got a good job in a major City doing public service work.

I worked diligently with sponsors and therapists to heal my mother wounds. I eventually understood that the only way love was going to happen in our relationship was if I expected nothing. I eventually was able to be the caregiver for my mother during her end-of-life experience and the executor of her estate after her death. I can honestly say that during the last

four years of her life there was nothing but love between us. An absolute miracle had occurred through working the 12-steps of CoDA.

Ten years ago I still had the problem of falling in love too quickly, being too hopeful for romance and intimate love. However, two marriages and a few 4th step inventories later I feel that I better understand what it is to care for myself, to protect myself, to discern other people's capacities, to provide for my own needs and let others provide for theirs. If I need help, I've learned to ask for help. I also let others ask for help rather than volunteering involvement in their lives uninvited!

When I recognize limitations in someone's ability to love or be honest or take responsibility it's on me to accept them as they are. I'm still a codependent who sometimes experiences episodes of expectation and resentment. I've learned to recognize these feelings and follow up with step-work, an apology for my judgment and efforts at control. I have learned to value myself enough to make choices that honor and serve me. I've learned how to accept my own significance. My recovery leads me to expect very little, accept as much as possible, set good boundaries and weigh my choices carefully.

I also sponsor in CoDA, ever keeping an eye out for my own codependent behaviors that might sabotage Higher Power acting and speaking through me. The gift of being part of other people's healing journey is unparalleled in life. Yes, I work, have friendships, own things, travel and have fun, but sponsorship is the absolute best part of life. It's a powerful experience of love flowing through me. What better purpose can one have than to be a channel of HPs love?

Anyone drawn to work on their codependency through the 12-Steps and be part of the healing process this program has to offer is eligible to become a miracle of transformation, healing, release, freedom and service. I owe more than my life to CoDA. I owe my personal integrity and spiritual resurrection which in my opinion are the most valuable things a person can have in life. I am blessed.

Alena G.

12/4/2023



- Alison J.

“Vision”

My codependency had caused a lot of enmeshment in my family of origin. As part of my recovery, I had to leave the familiar surroundings of Eastern Canada and move out west. It was a major adjustment for me to move away. I was confused, scared and struggled with loss of identity whenever I was away from my parents and siblings.

Driving across the prairies became a peaceful, healing journey for me. There were duck ponds, grasslands, antelope and vast, open skies. As I drove through southwest Saskatchewan, I began to notice the numerous Ferruginous hawks. Sometimes, I would pull over and watch them soaring high above the desolate prairie. After a few years, the hawk became like a totem for me - a spirit guide sent by the creator.

During my regular trips across the prairies, I found a little sideroad off the trans-Canada highway where I could rest. This became a regular routine - my secret resting place. One evening, I pulled into this spot and slept in my car until dawn. Upon awakening, I glanced over towards a gnarled oak tree, I noticed a large hawk's nest, with a mother and a brood of young hawks or “eyas”. It was an enchanting sight and kept me transfixed for a long time. I would visit the hawk's nest several months later, but it seemed as though the young birds had all left the nest. So too, did I have to leave the family nest before I could learn to fly.

Recovery in CoDA has helped me to trust in my own intuition, dreams, aspiration, talents and hopes. Over time, the creator has guided me, restored my confidence and given me a new vision as to what my life is all about. I have composed this poem to celebrate recovery. It alludes to the beauty and majesty of God's creation and its healing power. It also expresses the spiritual renewal and wonderful freedom that CoDA has gifted me with.

My spirit soars, like the hawk,
drifting high above the prairie below.
I see clearly now...
My mind beholds
its vision and purpose.
Life was once shadows,

imperceptible, confused...
From here, high above,
I see new forms emerging:
hidden patterns made clear.
Time is lost, there is only vision.
O God, grant me to see...
as Thou seest.
May the hawk guide my spirit,
and bring me to safety.
A nest woven in a gnarled oak,
on the windswept prairie,
from whence I may soar,
always and ever higher.
For that is where
the Creator abides.
If only we have vision to see,
and behold what truly is.

Michael F
Alberta, Canada



- *Caryn T.*

“Enigma”

In shadows deep, anxiety's embrace, A silent storm, a tangled maze.
In whispers heard, but never seen, It dances wild, a haunting dream.
A heart that races, a mind that spins,
Caught in a web where worry begins.
Each breath a battle, each step a trial,
In the grip of fear, where thoughts compile.
The weight of worlds upon weary shoulders,
Invisible chains, unseen boulders.
A constant companion, yet so alone,
In a crowded room, a silent groan.
But amidst the chaos, a flicker of light,
A glimmer of hope in the darkest night.
For strength lies within, a quiet power,
To face the fear, to seize the hour.
So breathe, my friend, and hold on tight,
For even in darkness, there is light.
Anxiety may linger, but it does not define,
The strength within you, a beacon, a sign.

Miranda S.

4/6/2024



- *Jim H.*

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 recognize my good qualities
I develop relationships with others based on equality, intimacy, and balance.
My friends, sponsor and Higher Power are there for me.

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.



- *Jim H.*

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.