



# Meeting in Print

March 2023 (Ed. 26)

*“Strengthening in Recovery”*

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- *Jim H.*

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## **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

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# Opening Readings

## **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.

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## 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.



- *Lori H.*

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## **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.

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## **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.

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# Community Shares



*-Caryn T.*

## **“Haikus”**

I practice self love  
with patience, sanity returns  
harmony overflows

-Caryn T.

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## “Resisting the We”

For me, building a network was one of the first resisted suggestions when I began this journey. It was impressed upon me that for longevity in Twelve Step life, I ought to consider the "We" of Step One. My sponsor told me no network = missing leg on my recovery stool resulting in a less supportive stool during times of difficulty. It was hard though, calling people and PRACTICING; challenging my old defaults/facing fears/applying programs. I've had so many challenges with calling a network and reaching out (it took time, it took discipline, it was scary, it was a change in behavior and laying down my old excuses.) Now I try not to rationalize why it won't work for me because I'm terminally unique - a sign of my resistance, of my reservation, and a clear sign of my fear and avoidance. Building and maintaining a network, especially when I didn't trust myself or anyone else, was a challenge.

My sponsor told me to call her everyday and man, I resisted, in fact I didn't call her everyday for awhile (she kept working with me anyway). I'd forget almost intentionally. I didn't call the two people each day for almost 6 months.

I had reached Step 8/9 when I started to put down my victim approach to everything and started thinking about my effect on this world/those around me/my codependency's effect on people I love.... At that time I had one person in my CoDA network, Rick. He called me everyday like clock work (almost to my annoyance) to discuss daily meditation.... Some days it felt like a chore and some days it was wonderful. I started to learn so much from those simple calls:

- My first impressions of the reading often missed a lot of the "golden nuggets"
- That I needed more help than I thought
- I may be sick with codependency but I'm not alone anymore
- That someone else has had the exact same experiences as me to write it/read it/share it so I'm not alone and my terminal uniqueness started to abate
- I had a nasty habit of reading it and thinking of all the people in my life that it could apply to; usually next I would fight the urge to send it to them in an attempt to fix them. I was encouraged that the meditation I received was for me from HP and not for anyone else unless they picked it up themselves and read it/ that they too had an HP of their own quietly/continuously revealing more and that I was not that HP

Eventually I started to count on those calls/look forward to them/call him first/try to balance our new friendship and my contribution. One day around step 10/11/12 I was once again doting on him and gushing about how amazing he is and how his calls & E/S/H have saved my life. More stern than usual, he lectured me about the importance of remembering he is sick and probably sicker than me, that sponsors/temporary sponsors are usually sicker than the sponsee that's how they recognize it ("spot it, got it"), listen impartially, deflate the power out of it . He told me not to put him on a pedestal, he's liable to fall off. He was explaining to me probably for the 9th time (on average it takes people 9 times to really hear something). Then he'd wrap up by reminding me that when he calls me he doesn't do it to impress anyone/bond with me/keep me alive/ or make me work my program; there's only one motive: to fortify his own recovery. To stay in the middle of his own bed, to keep the stool of his own recovery balanced, if you will. It wasn't about me! Shouldn't it be about me.... well it was, but it wasn't, but not in any of the ways I thought.. isn't CoDA recovery about me receiving what I need from others... about what they can do to help fix me.... (no, that hasn't been my experience in recovery).

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It was then I realized the point. My sponsor had been asking me for months to make calls/build a network/rely on something bigger than me, outside of my sick but healing brain, seek out newcomers to greet, call two women in the program each day, and fellowship with at least one recovery person each week. It wasn't for her, for CoDA, for the newcomer, for the meeting.... it was to ensure the balanced and supportive nature of my newfound life raft. To build/fortify a practice and behaviors that will hold up in life's storms.

It was then revealed to me that if Rick didn't call me for me, then I shouldn't do any service in recovery for the sake of anything but to fortify my safety raft/my program. Since, I have tried to apply this lesson to my practice and behaviors especially in allocating my resources for service. I am increasingly reminded to invite HP in for clarity of HP's will and courage to be of service in healthy and sustainable ways without avoiding it altogether - balanced.

- T.S.



- Caryn T.

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## “Emotional Punching Bag”

I have written this poem as a tool to help me work through a lot of hurt accrued and held in over the years. Thanks to CoDA, I have finally found not only the courage to face my truth but the language to express myself and my true feelings.

This is in recognition to the Inner Child and Inner Teenage who have an incredible amount of healing thanks to the programme and all the beautiful souls traveling together in recovery.

I will never give up on myself, no matter what and each day I make that promise to myself and God. I am not alone and never have been, but my mind needs time to catch up with my heart and embrace the pain so that I can let it go and live life.

Sending all fellows blessings of strength, hope and courage for the journey, something I have come to experience as an adventure.

To heal I must be prepared to feel and to grow I must be willing to go through to get to the other side.

Emotional punch bag

See me there hanging from the ceiling by a rope,  
See me there, bound, blindfolded and gagged,  
See me there, helpless and powerless to the blows  
That come wave after wave.

Feel me there, confused, lonely and afraid,  
Feel me there, trapped, blinded and silenced,  
Feel me there, beaten through and through  
No place on me unbeaten.

Imagine pain like this with no image,  
Held inside just under the skin,  
Imagine all parts still broken,  
With no idea of where to begin.

This is all I have ever known,  
And how I have always been,  
For the sake of not being abandoned,  
I'll engage in the exchange to be seen.

The day will come when I'll say no,  
Realize that enough is enough,  
But first I must unhook myself,  
And place my feet on the solid stuff.

I am more than just a punch bag,  
It's taken me this long to see,  
If I continue to treat myself as one,  
That is all I will ever be.

Yours in the fellowship

Hannah H.



- *Jim H.*

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## “Experience. Strength. Hope”

### Experience - What I was like before

I was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1966. I was the firstborn child in my family. I have one sister who is two years younger than me. My parents were married the year before I was born. My mother was 23 years old, and my father was 25 years old at that time.

My grandparents on my mother’s side were immigrants from Sicily. My grandparents on my father’s side were immigrants from Poland. Generations of poverty had caused certain ways of thinking and living to be passed on to my nuclear family.

The first year of my life I spent many days in the hospital, and I almost died. I don’t remember it, but I understand that I experienced much physical pain during this time.

My mother tells a story that she thinks is funny how I never rolled over as an infant. There is another story which is connected but I was the one to make the connection during my recovery many years later. As a baby, my grandmother left me on her bed to sleep and I fell into the gap between the bed and the wall. My grandmother found me trapped there screaming and crying for who knows how long. My grandmother kept this a secret for several years before she told my mother what happened. I think the time I spent in the hospital and this incident on the bed taught me not to move to avoid pain and this is likely the beginning of my fear-based codependency.

Growing up, my mother was my primary caretaker. My father worked long hours in a factory. He made good money and we never suffered materially.

My mother was not emotionally available for me nor my sister. She never said, “I love you,” nor gave many hugs. She kept the house very clean and was a great cook. She was a controlling person and took pride in how she would never back down from a situation. She would discipline us with shame, blame and by hitting us with the leather belt. The conversations we had as a family were always filled with mockery and sarcasm. It was not a happy childhood.

I learned to become a very quiet child to avoid the negative attention. I thought this was a normal family because it was the only thing I knew. This was the beginning of my avoidance patterns.

The only person I had power over was my little sister and I treated her in the same way I was being treated. I mocked her and hit her and taunted her. My mother would tell me I was bad when I was simply modeling her own behavior. This was all happening in the first six years of my life. This was the beginning of my control patterns.

When I started school, I learned that I could receive positive attention and praise by getting good grades in class. I was a great student and my teachers loved me. This, I believe, was another factor in how I improperly figured out how to earn my self-worth. It was the beginning of my compliance patterns.

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All my patterns were wrapped in this feeling I had of low self-esteem.

We attended the Catholic church, and I was always afraid to walk into that building because I was taught that God was going to get me if I was bad.

All of this was occurring in the backdrop of Detroit, which is a rough factory town, not for the faint of heart.

In my teenage years, I turned from the survival mechanisms of avoidance and compliance and focused more on control patterns as I became more rebellious. I was becoming more like my mother. I had some characteristics of my father too. He worked hard and he played hard, and he was a contrarian. He was dedicated to supporting the family.

As a teenager my time was wild. It was all sex, drugs, fighting and rock and roll. I am grateful that in my body I am not inclined to become addicted to substances. I partied but it never became an all-consuming problem.

The problem was, I had no identity, and I was always awkwardly trying to fit in, and I was not very successful. I had few real friends, and I didn't know who I was, what I wanted, what I felt or what I should do. This was going on inside my head while at the same time I was a star on the football team, voted most likely to succeed in my class, dated the homecoming queen and got a four-year scholarship from the US Army to a private college.

In college, my codependent addictions to people and things morphed into religion, I joined an evangelical group thinking that would be my answer. It took me ten years to realize how dysfunctional I was in this environment. My control patterns became out of control in this judgmental church setting.

After graduating from college, I married a girl from a religious group, and I was commissioned as an officer in the army. I was a platoon leader in Iraq during the First Gulf War. My control patterns served me well as a man in charge of other people in the military.

I left the army after three years and my daughter was born. In my whole life, I could not pinpoint it but I had a feeling that something was not right, I know now it was my codependence. When my daughter was born, for the first time, I knew something was right. I love this girl with every breath I take.

My next behavioral addiction became making money. I went into commercial real estate and was very successful. My control patterns again served me well in manipulating others to make money. I lived and breathed my business, and the financial success allowed me time and freedom to become more confused about my life. It also allowed an excuse for me to neglect my family.

Her mother and I divorced a few years later and my control patterns were on full display for years as we fought over child custody arrangements. I had left the church and fell into promiscuity. Again, this was another example of me falsely thinking I had all the answers when I had no answers.

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I remember one incident during this time when I was fired from a very good job because I let my control patterns go wild in the office.

I married again in 2007 to an exotic beauty queen of high political stature. Wow, now I can define myself by this unique person. Soon after the wedding I realized she was a full-blown narcissist and my compliance patterns returned with a vengeance. I was trying to please a person who could never be pleased.

Strength – What happened

After several sad years, I realized I was heading towards a second divorce. I desperately turned towards the internet and began research about people who are attracted to narcissists. This is where I discovered the term, “codependence.”

I watched online videos about codependency for one whole year before I got the courage to walk into a meeting. On May 11, 2016, at 7pm, I entered the local community center. There were two women present and the three of us had a meeting. I didn’t know what they were talking about, but I knew I was in the right place. They said, just keep coming back.

In time, as I was ready, I got the blue book and the green book, and I began reading the literature. I began leading some meetings. Chapter 2 in the blue book hit me hard, this was the reason my head was so confused for my whole life. It talks about our spiritual dilemma of having an incorrect higher power. I thought I was supposed to figure out all the answers. I thought wrongly that I was my own higher power. Or in textbook form, I would try to please or fix others to get them to like me, thereby making the other persons my higher power. The problem was, 1) my answers as my own higher power never worked and 2) the approval of these other people who I was trying to please could not fill the void of low self-esteem within me – then resentment and despair would take hold of me.

So, I knew I was not the higher power. But who or what was my proper higher power? Examples of a power greater than myself were all around me. A policeman with a pistol had more power than me. My boss at work had more power than me, etc., etc.

But my negative experiences with organized religion hampered me in defining for myself what my God truly was. It took me three years and the patient help of my sponsor to clearly define my higher power as the positive flowing energy of the universe. Then and only then was I able to muster the courage to begin working the steps. In hindsight, I think how we define our higher power is an exercise in individual semantics, albeit a necessary one.

The first time I worked the steps, I had to keep it simple. I was still overwhelmed with fear. I was afraid to look at myself in the mirror and acknowledge all the years I had lost. I was able to break through this obstacle by asking myself if I was afraid of finding happiness on the other side. It was also helpful to say out loud that I did not choose to be born into that family and my patterns of codependence were necessary survival patterns during the time of my youth!

The main thing I accomplished during my first time working the steps was making amends to myself.

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Hope – What I am like now in recovery

Now, my life is different. Three years ago, I decided to divorce my second wife and only allow people with healthy personalities to become close to me. I retired during the pandemic and moved to the beach in Mexico.

I acknowledge my higher power every day. I connect to my higher power using the tools. The tools I use are meditation, self-talk, continuing to work the steps, long walks, meetings, having a sponsor, being a sponsor, making support calls, receiving support calls, leading meetings, starting meetings, contributing financially to the fellowship, welcoming newcomers, exercise, time on the beach, fun with family, learning to keep my mouth shut and most importantly – putting myself first.

I can honestly say, it has not been easy, but I have found happiness and purpose as I acknowledge that my higher power can do for me what I could not do for myself.

The one thing I do now if I am uncertain about something is I pause and wait. I try not to react to emotions. I try to act in accordance with wisdom that comes from a higher place.

If you are new to the fellowship and you think you might want what I have described, I will tell you the same thing those two women told me at my first meeting: just keep coming back.

I suit up and I show up and I am available. I let my higher power do the heavy lifting. The universe is unfolding as it should.

- R.J.



- Jim H.

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## “Your World Turns Slow”

Your World Turns Slow:

Thrown into a sea you never wished to be  
Lost in a lifeboat, drunken compass by your side  
You float to wherever the ocean may flow  
With a life preserver that no longer suits ya, suits ya

You say yes when you mean no  
You're staying when you want to go  
And still you wonder  
Why your world turns slow

A chameleon with every color at his command  
Camouflage for a familiar stranger  
His beady eyes stare around  
A 360 view, but blind to who's inside, who's inside.

You say yes when you mean no  
You're staying when you want to go  
And still you wonder  
Why your world turns slow

You say yes when you mean no  
You're staying when you want to go  
And still you wonder  
Why your world turns slow

A satellite forever falling into you  
A moon around your planet, close but never touching you  
We're on a seesaw, but this ain't no playground  
Looking up to you, and forever staying down, staying down

You say yes when you mean no  
You're staying when you want to go  
And still you wonder  
Why your world turns slow

- Frank

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# Closing Readings

## The Serenity Prayer

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

### Affirmations

“Today, I love myself.”

“I am rooted in my own values.”

“I accept the imperfection in humans.”

### CoDA Resources:

- Newcomers - <https://coda.org/outreach/supporting-members/supporting-newcomers/>
- Find a Meeting - <https://coda.org/find-a-meeting/>
- Subscribe to announcement lists - <https://www.codependents.org/sub.htm>
- Download literature - <https://coda.org/meeting-materials/service-materials/>
- 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, poetry and artistic images, as long as it follows the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Editorial Policy.

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

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## Twelve Promises

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

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

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## 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.



- Caryn T.