



# *Meeting in Print*

September 2021 (Ed. 20)

*"I Am Still Me"*

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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, including 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 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

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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 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.

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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. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other codependents, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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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, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions; ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



*-Linda R.*

# Community Shares

## "Planting Seeds"

I want to take you to a place I found two years ago when I entered into recovery. It was a sunny afternoon and I had decided to explore that day. I was drawn down a path that led to an abandoned garden. It was so overgrown with weeds that it choked out any hope of being home to beautiful blooming flowers. The soil was dry and cracked, too starved of nutrients for any fruits or vegetables to take root. Next to it rose a shed. Empty of tools sitting vacant after years of neglect. It was clear that no one had tended to this garden for years. What was once a lush landscape, now stood in complete disarray. I looked at this garden and a deep sadness set in. How could someone take something so beautiful and precious and pure and let it get to such a state of unmanageability?

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I looked at this garden and saw my own inner turmoil reflected in it. I looked at those deeply rooted weeds flourishing and saw my own shame, which was deeply rooted within me. I saw the tangled mess of overgrown greenery; twisted, dead vines, and brush; and saw the chaos that consumed me most of my days. I wondered who had let this beautiful space get like this and were they ever going to fix it up. Or were they like me, wishing and hoping that someone else would come and fix everything and make it right. That someone else would uproot the weeds that poisoned any possibility of flourishing and plant the seeds that would nourish the land and stick around to make sure everything stayed watered and healthy.

I sat down on a rusted bench to take it all in. This garden wasn't going to fix itself up magically one day just the same way I wasn't going to wake up healthy, happy, and healed one day without some serious effort. My inner world was a mess, and I needed to find some tools and get to work.

"Hi my name is Stacia and I'm codependent." These words left my mouth for the first time, voice trembling.

When I envisioned my life, I never saw myself sitting around a table at the age of 30 pouring my heart out to strangers in the hopes that my life could begin to get better.

My therapist had mentioned a time or two about codependency. I would always brush it off not knowing what it meant and thinking, that can't be me, it's everyone else who is the problem. So as I worked up the courage to seek help and go to my first meeting of Codependents Anonymous, my mind was flooded with thoughts of my own brokenness and how could there be something so wrong with me that it had come to this.

I poured over the materials after that first meeting, eager to understand what exactly this thing was that had plagued my life for so long. The more I read, the more I saw how I was caught up in these unhealthy patterns of dysfunction. I dove into a recovery book, and for the first time in my life I had found something that profoundly changed my life. I found hope. As I

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read through chapters, I had no idea how what was promised in that book through recovery would ever come to fruition in my own life, but I knew I had to at least try and find it for myself. As I read others' stories of recovery, I wanted what they had found. Serenity. Acceptance. Healing. Love. For the longest time I never knew HOW to find those things, and now I was finally shown the way through the 12 steps. I attended weekly meetings and was blessed to find a sponsor and a co-sponsor to walk this journey with me. I've always known that together we get better and with these two incredible humans by my side, we were able to help each other through some powerful transformations as we worked the 12-step program of Codependents Anonymous.

Now, I tend to my inner garden often. Where it was once filled with weeds of desperation, despair, fear, shame, doubt, helplessness, guilt, and loneliness, I have now made room for the planting of seeds of hope, faith, courage, peace, self-acceptance, personal responsibility, confidence, love, and understanding, and they are beginning to flourish. I am not perfect, in fact I still find myself making mistakes, circling back to old habits and learning new areas that need healing, but it is through my recovery that I am able to let go of the notion that I was ever expected to be perfect in order to be worthy and enough. Or that perfection was required of me in order for my recovery to count. I am able to recognize and celebrate the baby steps I am making each and every day and understand that any missteps along the way are merely an example of my humanity, and I can meet them with grace and compassion. I still wake up some days and want for someone else to take control of my life and make my decisions for me. I find myself wanting to be saved from time to time. When things get difficult, I still sometimes yearn for someone else to come and fix things. I still find myself looking to others for validation. Yet through recovery, these moments become fewer and fewer, and I am able to recognize when my codependency is rearing its big, ugly head and act accordingly using the tools I have developed over the years.

Where there once was an empty shed now stands a space that is full of tools I have gathered throughout recovery to help me continue to thrive. I now have tools to help me recognize and honor my emotions. Tools to help me respond instead of react. Tools to help me discern what

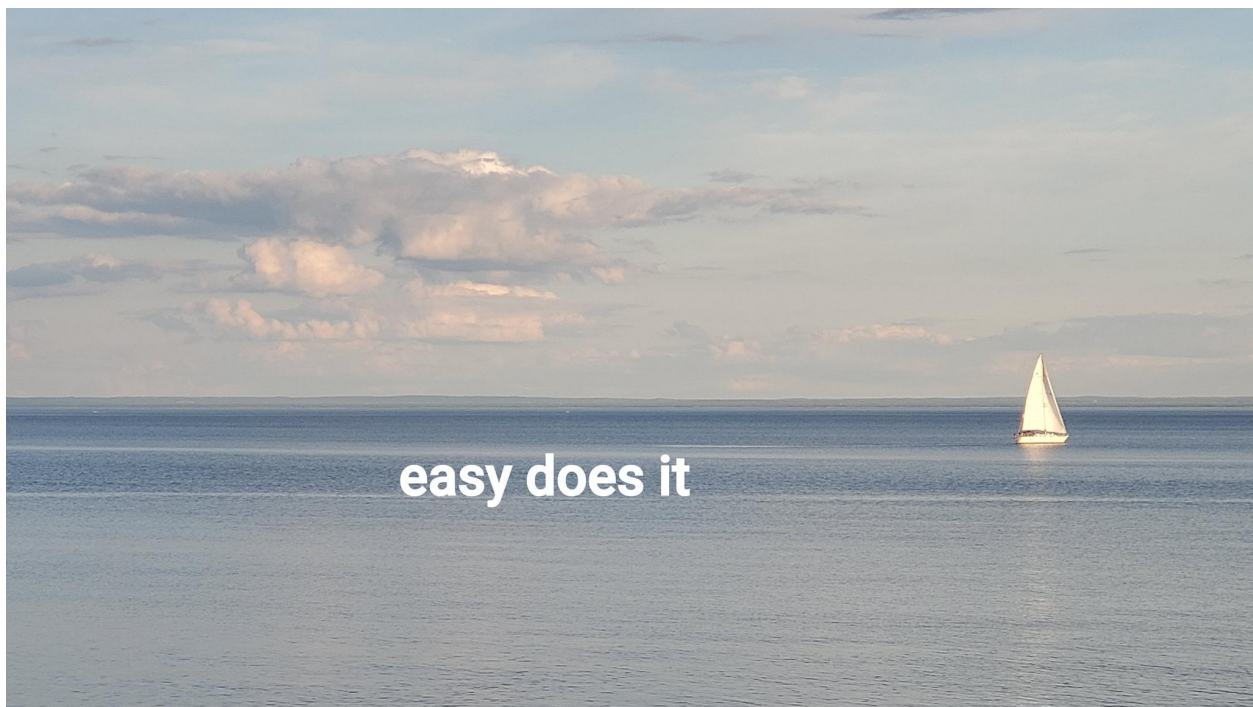
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I have control over and what I don't and the ability to let go of the things I cannot control. Tools to help me set boundaries. Tools to help me see where I begin and end and where another person starts so I don't become enmeshed. Tools to help me recognize my own self worth and live from a place that shows I am worthy of good things in life. Tools to help me live a trustworthy life with integrity, honesty, and personal responsibility. Tools that help me have a healthy relationship with myself and others. Tools to take me from suffering and surviving to serenity and thriving.

My recovery affects every aspect of my life. From the moment I open my eyes in the morning to when I lay my head to rest. It affects how I show up and allows me to live from a place deeply steeped in joy and gratitude. Being alive is no longer a burden, and I no longer see myself as a burden.

Some might say recovery is hard work, and I guess that's one way to look at it. At its core, I see it as intentional work. Recovery takes effort. It takes time and consideration. It's a place where breakdowns lead to breakthroughs and hurt turns to healing. Recovery is where hope lives. And I promise you, there is always hope.

*-Stacia O.*



*-Linda R.*

## "Twelfth CoDA Birthday Summary"

How can a dozen years have passed so quickly! I want to ponder the number 12 for a moment. What is the significance of this recurring number in our recovery program? I looked up information on the number "Twelve" and found that it has been considered important in multiple cultures since antiquity. It refers to "COMPLETENESS", "WHOLENESS". The number 12 is used symbolically in Judeo-Christian literature and also ancient Greek law. It is a symbol of Cosmic Order of time and space. Some examples we see even today include, 12 hours on an analogue clock, 12 months in a year, 12 stars on the flag of the European Union, 12 Days of Christmas, 12 signs of the Zodiac, 12 people on a jury, 12 months in a year, 12 inches in a foot and 12 pairs of ribs in the human body.

In CoDA I learn about and practice many 12's: Steps, Traditions, Promises, Principles and Prayers. The steps are not a religion or philosophy, but a **design for living with our Higher Power, ourselves, and others.** Studying these Steps is very important, but learning to apply these into changed behavior every day, one day at a time, is the proof of the pudding! One of

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my favorite things about CoDA is how we study “Step of the Month” and “Tradition of the Month” every month. In the beginning of my recovery that was not the case. My spirit was so dulled from fear, anger, resentments, and grief that the spiritual awakening came ever so slowly and is still being healed and nurtured. These Steps are the guide to healing myself and my relationships.

I spent many years in deep codependency and learned to use it like a pro. Much rewiring is required to change these “deeply rooted, compulsive behaviors.” My Higher Power is the one that makes this happen. My job is to be willing and open to new behaviors and thoughts. I need to learn to continually improve my connection with God, so that I can learn to see myself more positively and make healthy choices. CoDA has showed me that I **always have a choice**, even when the right one is difficult or unsure. When I focus **on positive self-talk through affirmations**, I build my self-esteem, which in turn brings me closer to my personal integrity, or wholeness. With self-esteem and self-knowledge intact, the healthy options become more apparent. This past year I have continued to study the CoDA booklet, “Healthy Choices,” which is an in depth study of Steps Six and Seven, which require **willingness and humility** with a Higher Power.

Also, this year I have come to see my **“defects of Character”** as being extreme use of an asset in order to survive. When an asset is overworked or over expressed, it becomes negative in its results. Caring evolved to controlling, kindness evolved to compliance at any cost, thinking of others first led to negative self-worth and truth-seeking led to denial. Survival at any cost. It is an ongoing effort to discover my assets and liabilities. I will discover them as my Higher Power deems I am ready to see them and let them go.

This past year was unusual. I discovered a new healing tool, SILENCE. It seems my spirit needs silence for healing, even more than words. Silence is a soul healer, soother, comforter. Having had two surgeries in a year, I found silence also physically healing and pain reducing.

This past year I have had the opportunity to practice DETACHMENT: Letting go of people and events that I could not control. I have found the slogan, “NOT MY MONKEYS, NOT MY CIRCUS”

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a light-hearted reminder of my boundaries and responsibilities. I have continued to use my GOD BOX here as well. It keeps me focused on who is in charge here, definitely not me!

For this next year I have listed a few goals for my recovery.

- I will strive to begin each day with quiet time for prayer and meditation to stay connected to my Higher Power.
- I will continue to write and say affirmations to build my self-esteem.
- I will continue to attend and participate in CoDA meetings and conferences in order to grow and share my recovery.
- I will continue to sponsor women who want to work on Steps One, Two and Three with 30 in depth questions.
- I will continue to find ways to practice the Twelve Principles in all my affairs.

I want to thank each and every one of you for being here and offering your presence and compassionate listening. Those gifts are two very important ingredients in all our recoveries. Miracles happen in these rooms! So keep coming back!

*-Sandy B*



*-Per B.*

## **“The Sunken Place”**

*I wrote this as I was entering another relationship where I knew I would lose myself to their desires and wishes, where I already saw the pattern I had played out so many times before happening. I wrote it before I knew I was codependent or why I kept going through this. I wrote this because I was terrified, because I felt like I was about to lose myself all over again, and nothing is scarier than that.*

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*My weakness brings me to my knees*

*But not in humility*

*In submission*

*But not in the holy way*

*In the way where I give myself away*

*Like a slave with no say*

*I become a possession*

*And the control has begun.*

*My voice drifts off*

*My rights fade too*

*I exist for someone else:*

*Their extension.*

*The take-over has begun.*

*My spirit is terrified*

*I fear for my very life*

*Losing yourself is so scary*

*Existing as the source of  
someone else's happiness.*

*Is a large burden to carry.*

*I try to claw my way out*

*But I can't find the escape*

*My arms grow weak*

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*It is easier to lie still  
Lifeless, void.  
Yet worshiped as a pretty toy.*

*Right and wrong is confusing  
Love and control  
Dominance and submission  
Down and up  
I am now floating in the inbetween  
In the sunken place.*

*Looking back at this now from a distance, I realize I had so many clues to my problem but no solution. I am so relieved to see a door of freedom before me now, of liberation. Addressing my codependency I will learn an inner strength I have never known. And no one will be able to "own" me again. I will have to write a poem about that one day.*

*-Jenell W.*



*-Per B*

## **“Wait for the Time”**

*It was a moment*

*That I realized*

*Freedom*

*Free from the pain*

*And the sorrow*

*Of lost hope*

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*And deep wounds*

*Cut like fabric through the skin of my soul*

*Squirming like worms in my veins*

*One day, I noticed I didn't care*

*It didn't matter anymore*

*None of it*

*I was alone*

*And it wasn't lonely*

*Or scary*

*I walked a long road to get here*

*Carrying burdens of past fears*

*And tears that created a river*

*Of sadness*

*The built channels through my life*

*And tried to take it,*

*But didn't*

*In a year*

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*I walked out of my own prison*

*One of my own making*

*And theirs*

*It was not a key that opened the door*

*It was not forgiveness like they say*

*I don't know what it was*

*It just turned*

*If my smile and ache can walk together*

*So can everyone make peace within themselves*

*For that is where peace truly lies,*

*And dreams*

*I saw my mother sitting on a step*

*And a grateful look in her eye*

*Her daughter made it...*

*Like she always believed she would*

*But it took longer than she would live to see*

*It took so long*

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*Like cages made of dust and steel*

*Holding anger under heartbreak*

*And heartbreak under anger*

*I lost my soul*

*My friends*

*My self*

*And my daughter*

*But time brought them back*

*Some of them*

*I lie here in awe of life*

*How the minutes and hours seem like forever sometimes*

*And are gone with a blink*

*At others*

*So much to do for one breath*

*Just one more*

*Breath*

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*I hear the laughter of children*

*And the cries of my people*

*Humans,*

*All of them,*

*My people*

*Division breeds nothing but loss*

*And suffering*

*I hold my heart in my hands*

*The one sewed together by fate*

*With threads of hope*

*Gratitude*

*And triumph*

*Thank you*

*And hear my story*

*Wait*

*Wait for the time*

*If you live long enough, it will find you*

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*Playing in the fields of wonder,*

*And choice*

*I did not choose the time,*

*Or the place*

*I just worked*

*And kept working*

*I tried to take my life last year*

*I felt no sadness*

*Just a sense of ease*

*And relief*

*I lay quiet*

*No fear*

*No remorse*

*No regret*

*But my body did not give way to the end*

*It was time to awaken*

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*Not go to sleep*

*So here I stand*

*With my heart in my hands*

*Opening to myself*

*And my knowing*

*Trusting that I can not be hurt*

*So deeply again*

*For I have myself*

*No matter what*

*Sweet dreams my child*

*Rest*

*The day will bring sunshine and light*

*You will not be sorry you're here*

*Thank you to all who waited for me*

*And walked in my depth of despair*

*My demons*

*My liars*

*And night*

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*I promise I will not leave by my act*

*I will be grateful for all I will see*

*And touch*

*And feel*

*For I am the wisdom of everything*

*And I have so much still to do*

*-Toni K*



-Per B.

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## **“I Worked the Steps Instead”**

Before working the steps in this program I really didn't understand the problem of codependency as being a spiritual one. I was always bothered by the things people were doing and then blamed them for not doing what I wanted. I got mad cause they didn't live up to my expectations. I didn't know how to live life on life's terms. I remember going to great lengths to get people to feel sorry for me. I thought if they felt sorry for me then they would do what I wanted, be my friend, make me feel better. So I made self pity my main identity. I could not see anything really good or meaningful about myself, and I would share that with someone else and then wait for it, and wait for it to see how they would respond. Sometimes they would try to tell me that I was wrong, eventually though friends and family got tired of that and would roll their eyes or say, "Oh Jessica, come on..." when I shared about my worries about how I just wasn't good enough and didn't measure up. I remember as a child walking around the house and telling my mom stories about what had happened to me at school. I'd share what the other kids were doing or about what a teacher said until she would agree with me that there was something wrong with them. And she eventually did side with me and agreed I didn't have to be their friend anymore. Or maybe yes, there was indeed something wrong with that teacher and maybe they should replace them, she would say. And it would make me feel better for a time but really inside myself as a kid growing up I felt a lot of anxiety and fear and anger and resentment. I was a latch key kid and this fueled the fear I felt.

I spent hours looking through the yellow pages wondering who I would call if something bad happened. At church I took away from it that there was a God and that I should watch out because if I did something wrong then I would go to hell. So I was quite afraid and worried at any minute that the ground was going to open up and I would fall into hell; the devil waiting there for me pitch fork in hand. This did not happen. I did rely on my mom though for reassurance and try to convince her as well that there was something wrong with me for a long time. As I grew up, I would opt to spend time with my mom instead of my friends. I was worried about the social pressures and withdrew socially in high school when people didn't do what I wanted or the results weren't in my favor. I checked out, separated myself from friends. And then I would watch them be happy together and wonder why I wasn't happy too, why I didn't fit in. In work situations I was insecure. I wanted the positions that I had not earned, and I would convince myself that it wasn't fair that others with better educations or who were just more qualified had them. This fueled the anger and resentment I had inside. And for a long time I compulsively ate over that and then tried to manage and control it. So,

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the illness of codependency and compulsive eating went hand and hand for me. I didn't feel good. I didn't have a higher power to rely on, and I tried to get a sense of ease and comfort from my relationships and from compulsive eating, but I would always take things too far. With friends I would have marathon visits. Spend three to five days together then eventually need to go back home then withdraw for a couple of weeks, perhaps not answering phone calls from then. But all the while obsessively thinking about them, wondering what they were doing, and why they didn't just come over and knock on my door. Where was the effort? I'd tell myself they didn't care in the end. I never was able to see how what I was doing was causing my own heartache and pain. I blamed and kept a distance, and I suffered from depression and anxiety. In my relationship with my partner I always got into fights. Traditionally I felt more comfortable pursuing or expressing interest in people who were unavailable, who perhaps had a drug or alcohol problem or had shared that they were only looking for something casually, and then I would get upset when I didn't get a commitment or a connection. Even when I was aware that I wasn't happy in the relationships I stayed in them. I thought that if I tried harder he would eventually ask me to marry him, or do what I wanted. So I tried by making him meals, trying to clean the house, using sex when I wanted love, manipulating, and creating jealousy. I tried to get attention, always focused on getting my own needs met rather than contributing to the relationship. What would come from that was he would eventually break it off with me. I couldn't share my feelings. I was insecure. I thought there was a right and a wrong way of communicating and it made it so that I could not say anything at all. I was stuck in my own thinking and trying to figure it out on my own. I didn't have a connection with a higher power. My solution due to the overwhelm that I felt in my relationships and the anger and resentment was to drive away, perhaps drive off the face of the earth; I didn't know where I'd end up. But instead I went to a CoDA meeting and I heard a woman share her experience and the freedom she had experienced by working the steps, so I called her. She sounded free and clear and connected to a higher power. And she helped me to get started with the step work by referring me to a sponsor who could support me in working the steps. When I spoke to her I could hardly say a thing. I couldn't communicate very well what I was thinking. I don't think I even knew. A clear thought was hard to come up with but she suggested some readings and meetings that I could complete before getting started with the step work. And I did what she suggested because I was desperate and I did not want to drive away; I had a family, children and a partner, but driving away was the only thing I could come up with to do. I worked the steps instead and it gave me a connection with a higher power of my own understanding as well as a way to learn and grow in that connection

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and it has been a new way of living ever since. As well as a way to be unearthed from all the trying and failing that I was buried under.

I began to work the steps daily, and in the beginning was gasping for air coming to the surface. Ultimately the practice of working the steps every day is my new solution and God takes care of the relationships for me. Any amount of thinking or trying in regards to my relationships just led to more chaos and confusion for myself and others. The practice of focusing on the steps frees me from that tangle. I work the steps and focus on prayer and meditation every day to connect with my higher power as well as to stay in connection with God. I get to be happy. Experience joy, peace of mind. My mind is not spinning all the time trying to figure things out. I get guidance and direction from listening to God and praying for the willingness to carry it out. I have experienced much contentment one day at a time because of the opportunity to work the steps, and I'm truly grateful for that. I focus on asking God to remove the character defects when they turn up. I pray and meditate and remind myself God's will not mine be done and I'm not in charge. I sponsor others, share my experience, try to live according to the spiritual principles in my community and daily life, and study the literature to get a better understanding of it. Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience.

*-Jessica K.*



*-Per B.*

## **“As I Grow”**

*As I grow in recovery*

*I grow in greater self love and discovery*

*of who I am...*

*all else fades away...*

*the pain gets less everyday...*

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*and balance comes to play.*

*I know one day this skin I'm in*

*will feel easier to live in...*

*one day at a time.*

*-Alison M*



*-Per B.*

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## **“I am Still Me on the Inside”**

I may not look the same to you, my hair has now turned gray  
But I've not really changed that much, just color's put away  
My heart's the same as it has been; that's not to say it's great,  
My temper can be somewhat short and following rules, a trait!  
My smile has now more wrinkles but it remains sincere  
Though we are two years older, you're still to me so dear.  
Thus, don't dismiss me, oh, just yet, there's life in these old bones,  
My body, though its parts not young, not ready to go "home."  
I truly am still me inside but far from perfect be,  
So please accept me as I am, I'm more than you can see

*-Jeanne K.*

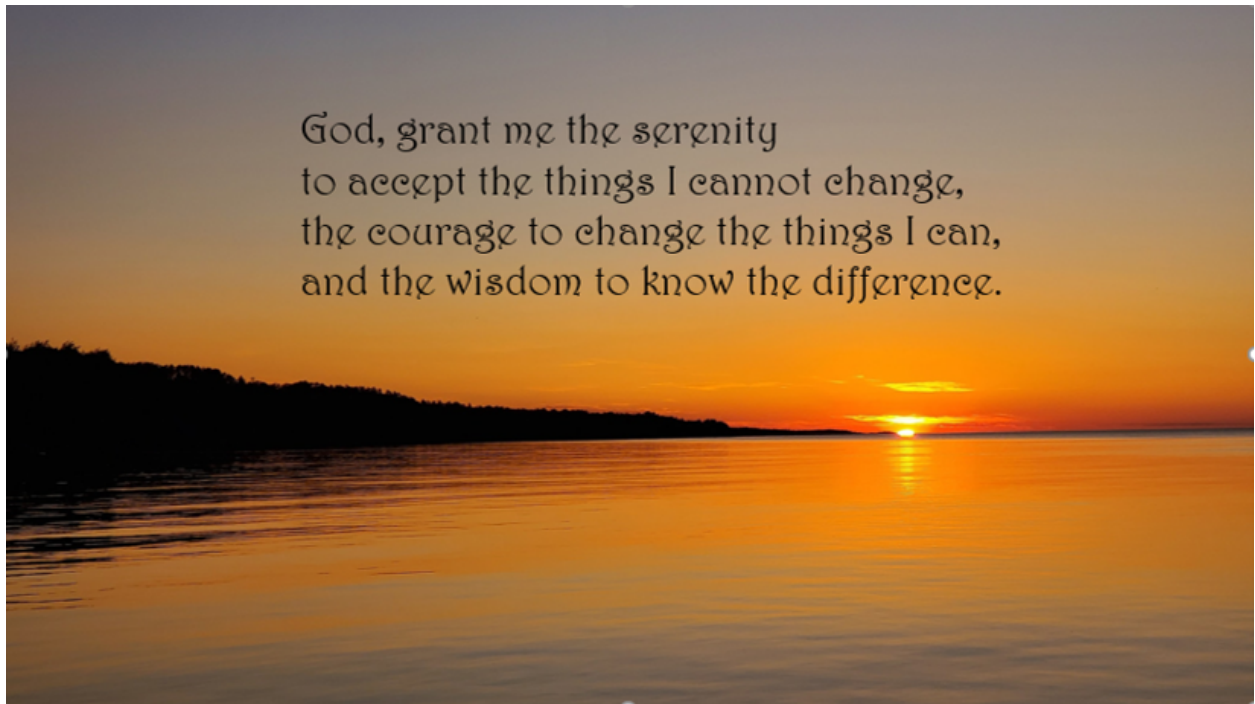


*-Linda R.*

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# Closing Readings

## The Serenity Prayer



*Photo: Linda R.*

## Meeting Close

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.

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## Affirmations and Promises

“I promise to take time for myself to enrich my own mind.”

“Today I will live in the moment, embracing even the smallest joy that comes my way.”



*-Linda R.*