



# *Meeting in Print*

September 2023 (Ed. 28)  
***"We Are Finding Our Way"***

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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

# 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.

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## **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 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



- *Jim H.*

## **“Boundaries”**

How do I learn to set boundaries with you?

For pleasing is something I fervently do

To say what I mean and mean what I say

Is utterly foreign in so many ways

I'd much rather sit here and fume in my head

While saying whatever will please you instead

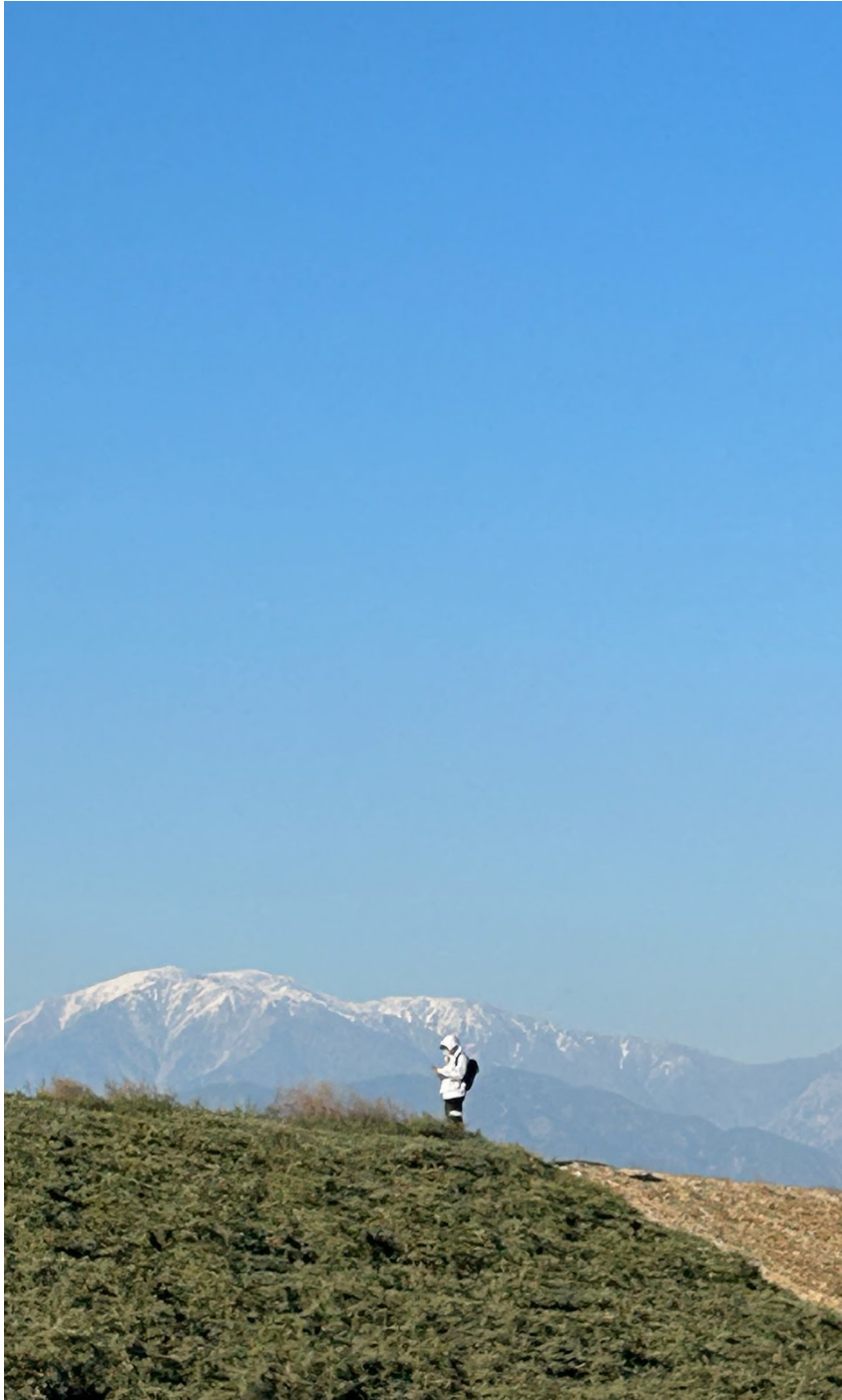
Yet when I'm fuming I don't honor me

And soon pay the price for my duplicity

I'm learning to speak up and mean what I say

And if you don't like it, I'll go on my way.

- Holy B. 03/16/2023



- *Jim H.*



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## “Hatred In My Blood”

Hi, my name is Victoria. I'm a healing codependent. My poem is about my story of the effects of decades of domestic abuse, verbally, physically and emotionally, codependency, and enmeshment in the family of origin dynamic. Also, the healing I started making in recovery from codependency and enmeshment once I was finally able to move out and start my journey to healing as an independent, individual soul.

I had sought out external validation early on in my journey, but now finally realized that self-love is the answer to healing from all my emotional wounds. I am so blessed to be able to add self-love and healing in my vocabulary and I continue on my journey. Healing is not a peaceful easy journey like they show on tv shows. For me, while I was healing from codependency and enmeshment, I was met with a lot of pushback and attempts at further manipulation devaluing my opinions and thoughts from my family members of origin. It just goes to show how strong of a grasp enmeshment has on its members, like a poison that seeps into you when you're just trying to work on your life, and takes decades to pull out of your veins. While those conversations broke my heart all over again, I could not and did not want to stop in my journey until I was able to call my life my own, and walk in my body with confidence and purpose.

The current place I've left the family dynamic is that they are not happy with me (and my boundaries of no contact), and I don't agree with them (on a lot of things). But I guess that's the point of recovering from codependency. Codependents are okay with people-pleasing, making the choice that pleases or benefits others over themselves, and seeking approval and avoiding any conflict by acquiescing or having no standards of how people should behave around them! Not doing what my family wants me to do is one of the behaviors of non-codependents - so I guess by choosing me over my family, I'm exhibiting behavior that a codependent would no longer do!

Hatred is not in my blood

I searched for myself

And I met myself, on the corner of broken dreams and agony

She told me that hatred is not in my blood

I accept what makes me me

I no longer try to fold myself to fit into odd corners

That don't want to house or feed my soul

I was looking for me in all the wrong places

I thought I could find myself in boyfriends

I thought I could find myself in jobs

When they told me they needed me

I felt validated, and like I had a place



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But all these things were external to myself  
And I thought they could tell me I was worthy  
Four years later, I reunited with myself  
And I learned the truth  
Love is what feeds my existence  
Love from myself  
And for myself  
It seared my skin at first, Because I was not used to love  
And some days  
It still feels like I wear it like a mask  
Fake smiling because it doesn't fit me  
I look around  
And I know, I need time to get used to this place  
And maybe that is my new challenge  
Where people accept my boundaries and my spoken no with ease  
Where there is no shaming, secret or loud  
I don't feel broken inside anymore when I talk to people  
Perhaps, that's the biggest change I see in myself these days  
I don't know who I am anymore  
Cruelty was my existence  
This adult has freedom, and she can come and go as she pleases  
She can say no to situations she doesn't like  
She can leave when she is not happy  
I can smile again  
when no one is watching, I dance on sidewalks  
grooving to the beat of my healing heart  
I thought my garden earth was scorched

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Trees that would never grow again  
But I have been nourishing myself everyday with water and sunshine  
Sitting patiently, waiting for those flowers to grow  
I hold my own hand these days too  
And I allow other people to hold my hand  
But I don't NEED them anymore  
I want Love to stay, if it's healthy, but if it leaves  
It won't tear a piece of me with it  
Because I have me

- Victoria



- *Alison*

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## **“Finding Peace Within”**

My name is Selle and I am a recovering codependent. I started working the CoDA program in January of 2021 when my therapist at the time suggested it as a supplemental self-help approach to my relationship traumas and therapy process. Prior to that turning point, I knew something was not right with the way I relate to others (especially in my romantic encounters), but I was not yet ready to admit it was my full blown problem to fix. I was not yet in recovery for my weed and food addiction, but I was sober from alcohol and working hard to gain some control over my eating disorder. There it is - the CONTROL I crave and strive for in every aspect of my life - my ultimate downfall. I got so much out of CoDA meetings and even established a long-distance pen pal / CoDA mentor that awakened a great deal of resolve in me. All the while, I was still in and out of toxic, abusive, unhealthy relationships - often with drugs and alcohol involved in their day to day which was dangerous for my own sobriety. When I was not throwing myself into someone else's life/problems/etc., I was isolating, lonely, depressed, and often eating myself to the brink of explosion. I returned to smoking cannabis to manage my anxiety - and this did not keep me from making poor decisions in the relationship department. All I could think about was the next person I could get into a relationship with and then control. But to me, seeking control was me being helpful, of some use to someone who needed me, feeling needed fueled my identity. CoDA taught me how to be myself without external stressors. CoDA taught me how to live without needing to control EVERYTHING and to this day I think about the Serenity Prayer every single time I run into any kind of hardship.

A year into my CoDA program and many more therapy sessions later - I decided to take a nosedive into another unhealthy dynamic - this time with a married man (albeit separated) but I quickly absorbed his baggage as my own and I was SPIRALING OUT OF CONTROL. He was drinking every morning and I would FUSS. He'd pop some pills and I would get ANGRY. He would choose to see his wife and kids over hanging out with me, after we'd had plans for days - and I would get LIVID and feel so betrayed. It did not take me long to realize I was doing it all again - I was losing myself, I was defying all of my and his boundaries, and I was incredibly unpleasant to be around - which to no surprise led to us splitting up and parting ways. I look back in disgust at how I acted. I thought, "I really am screwed...I can't seem to get it right" - and I stopped dating, hanging out with people, stopped going places, stopped talking to friends, and truly began an epic isolation/cocooning period. I was living with my parents at this point out of

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necessity when my apartment was sold to a real estate company and was going to be bulldozed - I was miserable living under the roof with my mother and father and feeling judged for my decline in mental health. My physical health suffered - overeating, getting high all night and all weekend, working full-time (but barely making ends meet) - and I KNEW that something drastic had to change. Still in therapy, still working CoDA - I took a vow to really focus on myself this time. I did so much work on myself, read a lot of books, did a lot of writing and reflection, and kept to myself enough to heal but also branched out some to semi-socialize when appropriate. Time seemed to fly by as it had been nearly 8 months when I met someone I was head over heels for - he was such a beautiful soul, sweet and caring, loving and affectionate, attentive and wise - and I just thought all my hard work is paying off!

Here I am again - 1 year and some months later and I made the very difficult decision to end that relationship that started out so great! We both identified as codependent people - then we proceeded to move in together really quickly, we got engaged 7 months later, then moved to another place together, and then our bond just fizzled and fell apart but slowly. I became miserable and disconnected, controlling and manipulative toward him whilst he was not holding up his end of anything - and I realized no amount of effort I could make to help him would change him, nor was it my job to fix or control him. He chose his actions - which led to consequences. My choice that I had to make was to un-commit after spending what seemed like a lifetime of love, energy, money and effort into this relationship. I had to make my own choice to survive and it was not going to be with him or anyone else for that matter. I have finally decided to choose myself after all these years - I am so proud to say that today I am single, living on my own with my 3 cats and dog, and feeling so hopeful and excited about my future. I have recently returned to weekly therapy and started my own CoDA Fellowship group in my small town - and I am loving every minute of finding myself again. I feel like I am falling in love but this time it is with my own self and I am so happy to be feeling a semblance of autonomy and identity again. This is what CoDA does for me!

Every day is a challenge, opportunities to learn and grow pop up everywhere I look. Today, I can thrive on my own and feel good about it. My mental health has already started to improve - my anxiety has started to dissipate. I am reconnecting with my authentic self. I can meet my own needs and do my self-care. I am finding peace where there was once turmoil and restfulness instead of chaos. Setting boundaries for myself, with myself, and the world around me.

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I love the CoDA program and the meetings make a huge difference in how I connect with others. I can affirm myself - and know that I am right where I need to be in this moment. I can tell myself I am strong and capable. I will no longer tolerate dysfunction in my personal relationships, and I am going to slay at boundaries this time. I am precious and free!

- Selle T.



- Jim H.

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## **“The Hollowman”**

The new man  
the optimized man  
the chameleon  
a projection

A fabricated self  
wrapped in style du jour  
wrapped in significance  
an outward display  
to gain attention

Appropriated trends  
appropriated friends  
appropriated culture  
curator of trending things

Not for love  
for intimacy  
or wholeness  
but for the compulsive need  
of affirmation.

Who Am I?  
Who Am I?  
Who Am I?

Easy going  
joe cool  
constant smile  
positive mindset  
high sesame credit score  
linked in score  
impenetrable

Fear of failing  
fear of contradictions  
fear of being overlooked  
fear of being average  
fear of death

Fear of losing your attention

The hollow man  
more concerned  
with perception  
than character



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your eyes  
your attention  
make him

the hollow man  
the empty man  
the new man

- Eliot R.



- Alison



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## **“Still Room for Growth ”**

As I think about the service positions that I have taken on during my CoDA journey, I see where they have been a measure of my growth. When I first came to CoDA I went to two meetings before settling on one where I felt comfortable. This became my home group. After a couple of meetings there, they asked for someone to be the group literature person. No hands went up. I knew that Someone needed to take the job, so I bravely raised my hand and became the group literature person. That was a familiar codependent pattern for me – step up to a position and then wonder how and why I got there! As it turned out, I remember that putting out the literature, and selling it after the meeting was very beneficial – to me, as well as the group. I had a place to stand (by the literature table), something to talk to people about (the literature), and I had access to reading all of it myself for free! Other than helping arrange the chairs in the room, that was my first step into doing service work. As my time in CoDA went on, I took on the meeting secretary position and the Group Service Representative positions. I took both because I knew they would help me to overcome my fear of speaking up in my CoDA group. And, finally, I became group treasurer even though I thought I was not good at handling money. But, it turned out that I did a fine job!

A few years later, someone at my meeting said that a literature person was needed at the Community level. By this time, I was feeling that I had gotten a lot of growth from CoDA and it was time that I give back to this important group in my life. So, after attending a business meeting, I stepped forward. This was a great place for me. I ordered the literature for the San Diego CoDA community and sold it during the monthly meeting. I had a chance to listen to the business meeting, meet lots of people who came to pick up the literature, be aware of all new literature as it was produced, and most importantly to practice a new behavior – taking responsibility for an error that I would have tried to “sweep under the carpet” in my earlier days. I had never transferred over the ATM account that I used when purchasing literature into my name and six months later, it was evident that I needed to do that. So, I had to report to the Community meeting that I had neglected a part of my job. The people at the meeting didn’t chastise me or look angry or act like I was stupid. That was a part of my past life– not my present CoDA life. I learned a great lesson – take responsibility for an incident, make amends, and then go on with life having a clear conscience.

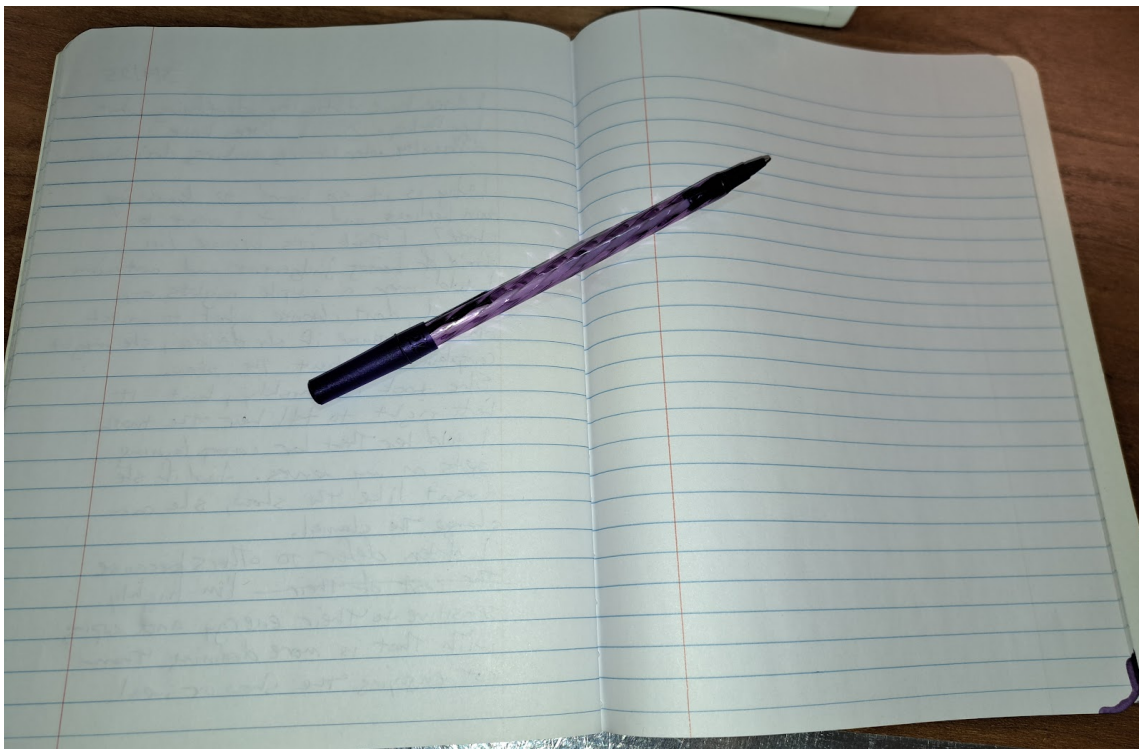
At the next elections, a friend at the community meeting told me that she had almost nominated me to do the secretary position. I told her “oh no, I could never do that! No, no, no.” Well, some years later when I was GSR for my group, the secretary position was not filled and they needed someone to take minutes at that meeting. I did – and took them at the next meeting and the next, and eventually took on that open secretary position and was secretary for the next 3+ years. I found out that not only could I do the secretary job, but that I did it well and enjoyed it. Go, Csilla!!!

While I was secretary, I kept eyeing the open newsletter position hoping that it would be available when elections were held and I was no longer eligible to remain secretary. Lo and behold – it was! And, I took on this service job. I never would have chosen to do this job several years ago because I would have thought I was not qualified for it – my computer skills are minimal and I’ve never done anything like this before.

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The way my service work has progressed has been slow and methodical – as I gain confidence in one position, I am then ready to move on to another, always learning lessons as I go along. I have watched others in the program jump into a service position knowing that they will be supported by their Higher Power and other members of the CoDA community. I am in awe of those people who have that kind of trust. I guess I still have more growing to do and lots more to learn about myself and my Higher Power!

- Csilla



- Caryn

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## **“Childhood Pain”**

He described as love

being Rejected

being Abandoned

being Beaten

being Berated

being taught that this is what I deserve

not understanding that these were the actions of a broken man

spending a lifetime unlearning what he taught.

I am good.

I am loveable.

I am deserving.

I am made in the image and likeness of my Creator.

- Renee D.



- Jim H.

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# 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.

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## 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.



- *Alison*

## **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/UC0oWXZDpoVdKbyJOYDh1zTQ/playlists>

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

## **Call for Content**

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

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