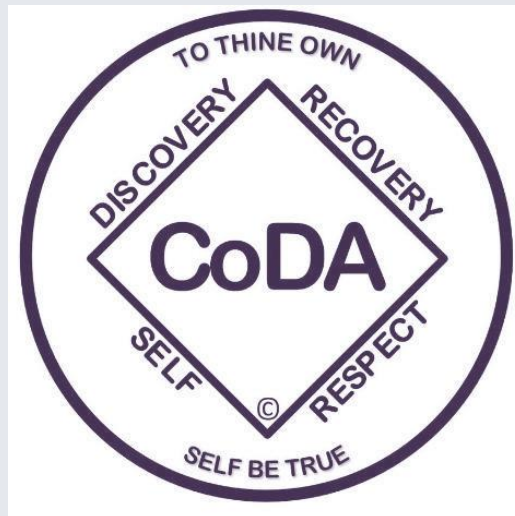


Conference Endorsed  
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# CoDAteen Meeting Handbook



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## PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

The purpose of this document is to provide CoDA and CoDAteen members with all the basic documents and information needed to start and conduct CoDAteen meetings. This document provides information and guidelines for CoDA sponsoring groups and the adult hosts/meeting sponsors who work with teens. CoDA recommends that every meeting have a copy of this handbook. It has the basic documents that support CoDA unity and safety for CoDAteen members.

## CARRYING THE CODA MESSAGE TO TEENAGERS

How do we “carry the message” of recovery to teenagers? Many CoDA members wish they had known about CoDA when we were younger. We are powerless over the past. Today, we can choose to support young people in recovery from codependency.

# SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION AND GETTING STARTED

## A. WHAT IS A CODATEEN MEETING?

A CoDAteen meeting is a group of two or more young people who come together around their shared desire for healthy and loving relationships. These meetings are guided by a CoDA adult member, host/sponsor, who has the desire to work with young people and teenagers. The meeting uses the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous as the basis for working toward recovery. It is a place to find meeting sponsorship and fellowship as well as the sharing of experience, strength, and hope.

CoDAteen groups are hosted or sponsored by an adult CoDA group, intergroup, region, or voting entity and are required to register with Co-Dependents Anonymous for the safety of the group and to have support from CoDA as a whole. CoDAteen meetings have specific behavioral and safety requirements for working with minors but on the whole, they should function as closely as they can to an adult CoDA meeting.

**CODATEEN MEETINGS ARE REQUIRED TO READ THE FOUR FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS AS WRITTEN AT EVERY MEETING:**

**CODATEEN PREAMBLE**

**CODATEEN WELCOME**

**CODA TWELVE STEPS**

**CODA TWELVE TRADITIONS**

With respect to other questions about group organization (date, time, type of meeting), each group is autonomous. As Tradition Four states, *“Each group should remain autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole,”* it is important that a CoDAteen meeting clearly communicates the message, *“This is CoDAteen.”*

## **B. PURPOSE OF A CODATEEN MEETING**

The basic purpose of a CoDAteen meeting is to allow young people to discover a healthy and loving relationship with themselves, a Higher Power and others. This happens according to their experience with step work, meeting sponsorship, and, most importantly, identification with others in the group. Seeing others with similar feelings and problems find a common solution is the key to trusting in a "*Higher Power of our own understanding*".

Dysfunctional families, caregivers, or other adults involved in a teen's life present poor role models. They offer mixed and negative messages which foster self-destructive beliefs and lower self-esteem. It will take a daily healing process of positive affirmations to reverse the impact.

CoDAteen meetings are designed to offer the necessary tools of recovery from codependency and unhealthy relationships. They also offer the example of other members sharing their experience, strength and hope which can bring about healthy change. These examples are far more powerful than words. Attending CoDAteen meetings can be the beginning of a new way of life.

## **C. COMPARISON BETWEEN CODATEEN MEETINGS AND "ADULT" CODA MEETINGS**

CoDAteen is based on *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous*. The CoDAteen meeting format is like CoDA's suggested meeting format. CoDAteens have similar service positions and make meeting decisions based on the group conscience process just as adult meetings do.

CoDAteen members, through their group conscience process, can decide if they want to allow attendance by an adult member other than the regular host/sponsor for special purposes. For example, a CoDA member may be available to share experience, strength, and hope relating to teen issues.

An adult CoDA member may be available to hold a CoDA-related workshop for CoDAteens. These decisions are made by the teens, not the adult hosts/meeting sponsors. Aside from these exceptional circumstances, CoDAteen meetings are not open to adults, except for the approved adult hosts/meeting sponsors who meet the requirements of the sponsoring CoDA group, intergroup, region or voting entity.

## D. STRUCTURE OF CODATEEN

The adult CoDA sponsoring group acts as a service board for the CoDAteen group as stated in Tradition Nine: "CoDAteen as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve".

The sponsoring CoDA group, intergroup, or voting entity is responsible for guiding the CoDAteen group in understanding and applying the Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous. Tradition Four states: "*Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CoDAteen as a whole*". Without the adult sponsoring group "autonomy" would be impossible to establish.

To maintain healthy communication each host/sponsor of a CoDAteen meeting must attend business meetings of the adult sponsoring CoDA group.

The sponsoring group may help with transportation, finance, host/meeting sponsors and recruitment, alternate hosts/meeting sponsors, and special events.

The sponsoring group is responsible for assuring that hosts/meeting sponsors and any other adult CoDA member involved with CoDAteen comply with "CoDA's *Minimum Behavioral and Safety Requirements for CoDAteen*" as well as any local area requirements to work with minors.

It is helpful for the sponsoring CoDA group to liaise with other teen organizations in the area. An important link would be with hospitals and institutions because codependent teens are often overlooked and misunderstood in residential schools, foster care home programs, juvenile halls, and other institutional settings.

### 1. Steps for an adult CoDA meeting, intergroup, region or voting entity wishing to sponsor a CoDAteen meeting.

- a) Call a group conscience business meeting to determine if there is sufficient support within your group to host a CoDAteen meeting.
- b) Read and review "CoDA's Minimum Behavioral and Safety Requirements for CoDAteen" during the group conscience business meeting.
- c) Determine if there are two people in your group who fit the minimum requirements for hosting a CoDAteen meeting.
- d) Please note that for safety's sake, it is mandatory that adult hosts/meeting sponsors follow the "CoDA's Minimum Behavioral and Safety Requirements for CoDAteen."

- e) It is preferred for safety's sake that two adult hosts/meeting sponsors are present at every CoDAteen meeting. If possible, there should be a male and female adult at every CoDAteen meeting.
- f) The sponsoring adult CoDA meeting group should be able to provide an approved substitute host/sponsor when the regular host/sponsor is unavailable.
- g) It is necessary that the two hosts/meeting sponsors do not have a marital, romantic, or sexual relationship with one another.
- h) Contact your local police department or authorities for the most up to date requirements and any necessary procedures to allow adults to work with teens. They may require fingerprints and/or background checks.
- i) Determine if there are funds available to pay for rent and CoDA/CoDAteen literature to start the CoDAteen meeting. The adult CoDA group may financially support the CoDAteen group, if necessary, within the scope of Tradition Seven.
- j) May keep welcome chips and- literature available such as:
  - o CoDAteen Meeting Handbook inserts: [\*IN THIS MOMENT Affirmations\*](#), [\*CoDAteen Tools for Recovery\*](#), [\*Suggestions for CoDAteens\*](#), [\*THE SLOGANS\*](#)
  - o [\*Co-Dependents Anonymous\*](#), the basic text, also known as the *CoDA book* or the *CoDA blue book*.
  - o Free Pamphlets for download: [\*Establishing Boundaries in Recovery\*](#), [\*Communication and Recovery\*](#), [\*Am I Codependent\*](#), [\*Your First Meeting\*](#), [\*Information for Professionals\*](#), *What is CoDAteen?*
  - o Find other free resources at [CoDAteen - CoDA.org](http://CoDAteen - CoDA.org)
  - o More items for sale at : [Buy Literature - CoDA.org](http://Buy Literature - CoDA.org)
  - o Other CoDA Service Conference endorsed literature chosen by the group.

## 2. Considerations for a meeting location for CoDAteen:

- a) Is the location convenient and accessible? How might teens get there?
- b) It is suggested face-to-face meetings take place in the location as the adult meetings.
- c) Will we meet after school when it is convenient for the teenagers to attend?
- d) CoDAteen groups may choose to hold a virtual meeting.
  
- e) The most convenient time, day, and start date are set by the CoDAteens and hosts/meeting sponsors through a group conscience.
- f) Register the CoDAteen meeting with CoDA World by sending an email to [codateen@codateen.org](mailto:codateen@codateen.org) and filling out the form on the website [CoDA.org](http://CoDA.org) "add a meeting".
- g) Decide what ages the group is willing to accept and include that information in your registration.



### **3. Announce the CoDAteen Meeting**

Announce your meeting through local websites, groups, social media, posters, and handouts. Suggested places to announce meetings are:

- a) Local high schools and colleges
- b) Teen and youth centers
- c) Guidance counselors' offices
- d) Treatment centers
- e) Professional offices of doctors and nurses
- f) Medical and mental health clinics
- g) Medical centers and hospitals
- h) Detention Centers
- i) Shelters
- j) Local newspapers
- k) CoDA or other Twelve Step meetings, *for example, Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-anon, Alateen, Adult Children of Alcoholics, etc.*
- l) CoDA Workshops and Retreats
- m) On the CoDA website ([www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)) ([Calendar - CoDA.org](http://Calendar-CoDA.org))
- n) On your local VE, Region or Intergroup website
- o) Libraries
- p) Religious and spiritual places
- q) Municipal centers
- r) Supermarkets or grocery stores
- s) Video or music stores, movies, bowling alleys, etc.

### **4. Can two adult CoDA members host a CoDAteen meeting without the support of a local, intergroup, region or voting entity?**

- For the safety of all involved it is not recommended.

## **E. THE ROLE OF ADULT HOSTS/MEETING SPONSORS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE MEETINGS.**

The main role of adult hosts/meeting sponsors in CoDAteen meetings is to model emotionally mature recovery behavior. They can encourage the teens to reach out to each other and to the hosts/meeting sponsors whenever needed using the voluntary phone list. Adults do not serve as personal meeting sponsors to individual CoDAteens. Teens sponsor each other.

Adults in CoDAteen service need always use caution in any one-on-one interactions with minors, including in person, via phone, or other electronic means. Remember that communications such as text messages and emails can be saved, forwarded, and manipulated. Be sure you know the CoDAteens and that everything you say or write is appropriate for the adult and CoDAteen relationship. **Avoid giving opinions about or otherwise intervening in a way that puts the adult in an adversarial role with the teen's parent/guardian.**

### **1. Ways hosts/meeting sponsors can create a safe place for teenagers to share with each other:**

- a) CoDA's Minimum Behavioral Work the CoDA Steps and Traditions and use CoDA's tools in their own lives and within the CoDAteen meetings.
- b) Model recovery in all interactions, including admitting mistakes and not having all the answers.
- c) Turn to their Higher Power for help.
- d) Arrive early to greet the CoDAteen members.
- e) Start the meeting on time.
- f) Treat each teen equally, without favoritism.
- g) Communicate directly with each other and with CoDAteens.
- h) Be a good listener.
- i) Use "I" statements
- j) Let go of control and trust the group conscience process as the CoDAteens make decisions about their group.
- k) Encourage the group.
- l) Encourage CoDAteens to take on service roles.
- m) Encourage CoDAteens to sponsor or co-sponsor one another.
- n) Support CoDAteens in their recovery.

## F. MINIMUM BEHAVIOR AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR CODATEEN

To ensure the safety of CoDAteen members, at the recommendation of the CoDA Board of Trustees and the CoDAteen Committee, all CoDA members who work with CoDAteens are required to be sponsored and approved by an adult CoDA group, intergroup, region or voting entity. Through group conscience, a sponsoring group is required to adopt a process to approve adult hosts/meeting sponsors who work with CoDAteen members and register with CoDA World. The approval process must meet the minimum requirements listed below.

Every adult CoDA member or host/sponsor involved with CoDAteen service **must**:

1. Be a CoDA member regularly attending CoDA meetings who has a sponsor and is working the CoDA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions according to the CoDA program of recovery.
2. Be at least 25 years old with a minimum of three years of recovery in CoDA and have participated in CoDA service work.
3. Not have been convicted of a felony or equivalent criminal charges internationally.
4. Not have been charged with any form of child abuse.
5. Not have been charged or demonstrated any inappropriate sexual behavior or be named on any sex offender list.
6. Demonstrate emotional stability and sobriety.
7. Remain free from mind altering substances during meetings and service work.
8. Not have demonstrated violent tendencies or coercive abuse that could harm a CoDAteen member.
9. There must be two CoDA hosts/meeting sponsors at every CoDAteen meeting, but if this is not possible, one adult host/sponsor who is approved and sponsored by a CoDA group and meets all other requirements may be acceptable.
10. The group requirements must prohibit overt or covert sexual interaction between any adult and CoDAteen members.
11. The group requirements must prohibit conduct contrary to applicable laws. Research your local area for requirements according to the law.
12. The group requirements must contain procedures which include parental permission and medical care for the teen to participate when necessary. In some circumstances, it might be possible to accept a referral from a counselor, teacher, or doctor. (See *sample Parental Permission Letter in Section 5- Service Forms in the CoDAteen Handbook*)
13. Adopt a process for training adult hosts/meeting sponsors using recommendations and resources from CoDAteen at CoDA World.
14. Adopt a process for addressing problem behaviors within the group, using recommendations and resources from CoDAteen at CoDA World.

**G. OTHER POINTS FOR GROUPS TO THINK ABOUT OR CONSIDER**

1. Requiring two CoDA hosts/meeting sponsors at every CoDAteen meeting.
2. Having background checks, many areas require this by law to work with minors.
3. Deciding on age ranges for your group. In general, CoDAteen is for “teens” ages 13 to 18, however there may be younger children who are ready for CoDAteen who can participate safely in a sharing and learning experience. Each group may decide through group conscience on an acceptable age range, or they may decide to divide their meetings based on the age range. It is encouraged that older teens begin attending CoDA adult meetings while attending CoDAteen to have a smooth transition or they may form a “young adult” CoDA group.
4. Connecting CoDAteen conferences or conventions with CoDA intergroups, regions or voting entities.
5. Hosting a CoDAteen meeting that meets at the same time and place as the sponsoring CoDA meeting or group.
6. Being conscious of diversity.
7. Avoiding one-on-one interactions.
8. Always having an appropriate ratio of adults to CoDAteen members.
9. Ways CoDAteen members can be transported to and from events.
10. Organizing informational and awareness activities, for example, inviting CoDA speakers, setting up workshops, and/or information booths etc. about codependency for teens, adult hosts/meeting sponsors and/or the community.
11. Having local legal counsel review the group requirements for working with minors.
12. CoDA World has many resources and free downloads to help, including the CoDAteen Meeting Handbook found on the CoDAteen webpage at [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org).

## **H. USEFUL TIPS FOR CODA HOSTS/MEETING SPONSORS**

1. Be able to commit to CoDAteen service preferably for two years or a minimum of one year.
2. Have a willingness to share their experience, strength, and hope of CoDA recovery.
3. Be a healthy role model for teens to support teens in their recovery.
4. Practice patience.
5. Be a good listener.
6. Allow Higher Power to work within the CoDAteen meeting.
7. Be aware that CoDAteen is not equipped to deal with crisis situations, for example, potential injuries to self or others, fighting, etc. In an emergency, the host/sponsor can call 911, the national emergency numbers or national suicide prevention hotline of the respective country or local police if needed. Notify the parents or guardians through their emergency contact information provided to the group, as soon as possible.
8. Be in close contact with the sponsoring group after an emergency.
9. Continue to work the CoDA Steps and follow the CoDA Traditions in their own CoDA recovery.
10. Maintain regular contact with the sponsoring CoDA group, region intergroup, or voting entity for support and guidance.
11. Be able to commit to CoDAteen service for one year, two years preferably.
12. When hosts/meeting sponsors are unable to attend their CoDAteen meeting, they are responsible for finding a replacement.
13. Hosting/sponsoring a CoDAteen meeting is a service commitment and is not a substitute for adult CoDA meeting participation.
14. Hosts/meeting sponsors work their recovery by continuing to attend adult CoDA meetings.
15. Our primary responsibility is to model our own recovery behavior as adults.
16. Each host/sponsor must keep the focus on their own recovery, first. The CoDAteen meeting exists for teens' benefit and should be oriented to their needs.
17. Working with CoDAteens can be a most rewarding experience. However, a host/sponsor who feels triggered or disturbed at the CoDAteen meeting needs to step back and take care of their own feelings and CoDA recovery. They need to arrange for a substitute host/sponsor for the CoDAteen meeting.

## I. SOME SUGGESTIONS TO HELP ENGAGE THE TEENS

1. Have a guest CoDA speaker.
2. Use the *Establishing Boundaries in Recovery, Communication and Recovery*, and *Am I Codependent?* pamphlets. ([Free downloads from coda.org](https://www.coda.org))
3. Read and discuss excerpts from *Codependents Anonymous*, (also called the CoDA Book or the Blue Book), or the *CoDA Blue Book Pocket Edition*
4. Use the CoDA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Workbook
5. Use the *CoDAteen Step Study Guide*. Available on [Free downloads from coda.org](https://www.coda.org)
6. Use the self-evaluation tools (Patterns and Characteristics of Codependency and Recovery Patterns and Characteristics) to open the sharing. (See section 4 of this Handbook.)
7. Other sources for sharing are In This Moment Affirmations for CoDAteen, CoDAteen “Dos and Don’ts,” or The Slogans. (See section 4 of this Handbook.)
8. Not all CoDAteen meetings can be financially self-supporting, but the members should be given the opportunity to donate as they can.
9. Meetings may start off small. Some of the teens are not sure what to share or how to say it. Safety, trust, and confidentiality are issues that need to be addressed.
10. It is a good idea to remember what it was like to be a teenager!
11. To give your meeting the best chance for success, work the CoDA Twelve Steps for your own recovery, follow the CoDA Twelve Traditions to help resolve group and personal issues, and reach out to your CoDA community for help.

## SECTION TWO: PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

### A. INFORMING THE PUBLIC ABOUT CODATEEN

- CoDA members and groups can purchase CoDA and CoDAteen literature from CoRe at [corepublications.org](http://corepublications.org). This literature may be distributed at community events and provided for outreach.
- Let people know about the CoDAteen webpage on [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org).
- Look for community events and workshops at community centers, hospital health fairs, youth centers, schools, etc. Participating in these events is a great way to get the word out about CoDAteen and Co-Dependents Anonymous.
- Check with your local youth centers, social service agencies, rehab centers, behavioral health institutions, hospitals, healthcare centers, local school nurses, or counselors to find out if they are holding events or if they wish to receive information about CoDAteen and Co-Dependents Anonymous.

### B. HOST A CODATEEN EVENT AT YOUR CONVENTION OR CONFERENCE.

- If your community is holding a CoDA convention or conference, consider hosting a CoDAteen meeting during the event.
- Make announcements at adult meetings that there will be activities and meetings for teenagers at your event. This way, adult CoDA members know they can invite their teens to the conference. This provides an opportunity for family interaction and to grow together in recovery.

### C. ONLINE AND ALTERNATIVE FORMAT MEETINGS

Teens are not always able to go out to a meeting when they need to share. Adult alternative format CoDA meetings may be available for teens subject to their group conscience.

There are many options, for example, chat room, email, WhatsApp, virtual online platforms, or phone. Social media is a great way to connect, for example, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat. (See [Anonymity and Social Media Guidelines](#))

For updated information about online meetings, check [CoDAteen - CoDA.org](http://CoDAteen - CoDA.org)

## **D. SUGGESTIONS FOR MEETINGS AT LOCAL SCHOOLS AND OTHER PUBLIC AREAS**

- Some schools allow groups to meet inside the school. Any CoDA member can petition the school although it helps if there is a CoDA member who has a connection, like a parent or guardian who can speak with the school or district.
- The success of the meeting depends on the support of the counselors, teachers, staff, and teen or community centers in the area.
- Teen centers, religious buildings, libraries, shelters, and hospitals are other good places for a CoDAteen meeting. However, transportation may be difficult if there is no public or school transportation.
- Having the meeting immediately after school may encourage participation.
- Meeting announcements can be posted in classrooms, auditoriums, school bulletins, or other viable resources approved by CoDAteen and the school.
- Be mindful of maintaining the anonymity of meeting participants.

## **E. SUGGESTIONS FOR MEETINGS ON A UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE CAMPUS**

- Colleges and universities sometimes provide rooms for Twelve Step programs. Speak to the Community Service Division at the college. The college or university may have regulations that need to be followed to hold a meeting on campus. For instance, they may require that meetings be posted, including the meeting time and place.
- If the university or college says you must become a “club” to meet there, look for another place. Being a club, with a membership list, violates *Tradition Twelve: “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions...”*
- Sometimes a faculty member needs to be responsible for the space. The faculty member does not need to oversee the meeting but needs to sign for liability purposes. It may help to involve a faculty member from either the Psychology or Sociology department.
- A university or college may require that on-campus meetings be open to all members of the school community, including staff and faculty. If that is the case, the CoDAteen meeting hosts/meeting sponsors and sponsoring CoDA community need to make a group conscience decision about allowing staff and faculty to attend, keeping in mind the requirements for adults to be involved with minors in their local area.



## SECTION THREE: TRAINING RESOURCES FOR ADULT HOSTS/ MEETING SPONSORS

It is important for groups to adopt a training process and resource guide to assist adult hosts/meeting sponsors. Groups can accomplish this by offering workshops, retreats, materials for reading, etc. This section provides recommended resources and CoDA Service Conference endorsed materials.

### A. HOW TO HELP TEENS PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING

It is important to go over [\*Am I Codependent?\*](#) and [\*Your First Meeting\*](#) pamphlets with the newcomer as soon as possible. (See [Meeting Materials - CoDA.org](http://MeetingMaterials-CoDA.org)) Depending on the age and other factors, it may be necessary to go over this material several times, since some of the jargon may be unfamiliar to younger teens.

However, once they understand their relationship to codependency, they have some basis to relate to others in the meetings. Each person can be encouraged to identify with their own stories in others' sharing. As some teens become more experienced, caution them to be careful to avoid therapy "rap" as a means to sounding better than counterparts.

Each teen should share their own experience, strength and hope and avoid lecturing. For example, "*When I did this or that*" is far more powerful than "*You ought to do this*". Sometimes helping with cleanup or putting up chairs is the best way to say, "I care".

Help newcomers with appropriate sharing style. Remember in a shame-based home, a teen may be at a loss in how to speak up for themselves. "*Hi, I'm Bill, I am a codependent*", is something worth rehearsing with a new CoDAteen. Encourage the teen to share what they are feeling, for example, "*I feel sad, lonely, happy, tired, overwhelmed...*" or maybe that they are not sure how they are feeling.

Review cross talk and how to avoid it. Even unintentionally, it is possible to upset someone with an inappropriate comment. Emphasize talking about personal feelings about situations and concerns. For example, "I feel terrible about this meeting's topic". Occasionally, some CoDAteens may need closure about how some sharing was not directed at them or necessarily critical about their comments. It could have been incidental to someone else's experience. You may use the "*Thirty Second Rule*" and/or repeat the "*CoDA's Guidelines for Safety's Sake*" crosstalk statement during the meeting as needed.

As much as possible, at the end of each meeting, you may close with a “feelings check in” sharing a few words on how they are feeling in this moment. Adult hosts/sponsor can offer their experience, strength and hope if given permission by the teen in response to difficult situations revealed by the teen after the meeting. Living in the solution is the key to happiness.

Hosts/Meeting sponsors and other CoDAteens should become acquainted with suggested meeting courtesies or distractions. For example, avoid whispering or laughing while someone else is sharing. Some of these things may seem trivial, but small matters could make a large difference to some teen's tender feelings.

Older teens and hosts/meeting sponsors should be aware of their facial messages and body language. For example, avoid seductive behavior toward teens. A seeming “jest” could have painful implications for an abused teen. Empathy and getting down to their level, does not relieve hosts/meeting sponsors from their responsibility as adult role models.

*Refer to Experiences in Crosstalk and Building CoDA Community: Healthy Meetings Matter booklets. (See [Meeting Materials - CoDA.org](#))*

Meetings could be ended with reading positive affirmations, the CoDA Promises in addition to the standard or the long version of the “Serenity Prayer” and/or with a guided meditation written by teen group members. Eventually they could take turns leading this meditation. (See Section 4- Sample Meeting Format)

## **B. BOUNDARIES**

In each family system, boundaries limiting each family member to specific roles and behaviors are either clear and healthy or fuzzy to nonexistent and unhealthy.

It is not necessary for adult CoDA hosts/meeting sponsors to be a counselor or therapist to sponsor teens. It can be useful to review [Establishing Boundaries in Recovery](#) (booklet) and *Co-Dependents Anonymous book Chapter 5 on boundaries, Chapter 2 “Our Spiritual Dilemma”*. It is important to continue our own course of personal growth and spiritual focus, remembering our own “inner child” or codependent issues may be triggered.

In our case, spirituality begins with trusting the CoDA process and reminding ourselves to continue working a daily step 10 and 11 and stay in close contact with the adult CoDA sponsoring group and our own sponsor or co-sponsor. Having faith in our Higher Power and seeking a spiritual answer with the Twelve Steps, meeting

sponsorship, and attending meetings leads to freedom from shame-based feelings and allows us to create and support healthy boundaries.

In the dysfunctional family, children develop survival tools, which come to be viewed in recovery as shame-based codependent patterns and characteristics. (See *Co-Dependents Anonymous Book Chapter 5 on boundaries, Chapter 2 "Our Spiritual Dilemma*. The patterns of how these survival tools are used define the shame-based family roles. Such roles provide the illusion of control, which continues until an effective spiritual answer is realized. Effectiveness means touching the heart as well as the deep recesses of the mind.

**These shame-based roles may present as follows:**

Rescuer, enabler, and helper

Antagonist, persecutor, and provoker

Sufferer, martyr, and victim

Codependents have played all these roles at various times. Sometimes they are used within a few minutes to maintain a false sense of control. Usually, one role may dominate and become the shame-based personality of the actor and play out codependent characteristics and patterns. (See *Patterns and Characteristics of Codependents and Recovery Patterns and Characteristics*")

Hopefully, in our own step work and the teen's step work, the primary role becomes identified, and recovery detaches us to a spiritual condition enabling us to address our own codependent patterns and characteristics. The Recovery Patterns and Characteristics are good examples to give us direction. We remember to encourage balance within our lives as well as the teens'.

The "*Serenity Prayer*" (long version) may be the best boundary affirmation written.

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.  
Grant me patience with the changes that take time,  
Appreciation of all that I have,  
Tolerance of those with different struggles,  
And the strength to get up and try again,  
One day at a time.

## **C. FURTHER SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS AND APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES**

Minors are vulnerable to grooming and coercive authority figures such as adults with inappropriate sexual boundaries, including sexual predators. Many regions/states/provinces and countries require that adults who participate in activities with minors undergo a background check and be fingerprinted. CoDAteen suggests this as a requirement for all CoDAteen meeting sponsors/hosts in your area.

Appropriate boundaries require to not engage in any of these behaviors with teens:

- Sexual contact of any kind. This includes verbal, emotional, or physical seduction, implied contact, flirting or any other behavior that could be construed as sexual in nature.
- Manipulation, exploitation or threatening any teen.
- Showing anger inappropriately by yelling, raging, swearing.
- Controlling the CoDAteen meeting or CoDAteen members by engaging in “caretaking,” “fixing” or “rescuing” behaviors.
- Providing therapy, counseling, or professional services of any kind.
- Business relationships of any kind.

## D. TRANSFERENCE

Transference specifically relates to how teens may redirect their feelings from home life to their adult hosts/meeting sponsors. Similarly, adult hosts/meeting sponsors can allow their childhood feelings to influence the way they relate to CoDAteens.

Like codependence, transference is not good or bad, it is just there and needs to be addressed appropriately. Hopefully each CoDAteen sponsoring group will have a diverse group of people who can assist sponsor and teen objectivity.

As hosts/meeting sponsors, we should not be reluctant to refer teens to outside assistance when a situation becomes complicated or unmanageable. We are not therapists. Adult hosts/meeting sponsors exemplifying healthy boundaries is key to CoDAteen recovery.

A teen with an abusive parent/caregiver, could have tremendous anger and projection of mixed emotions towards the same sex sponsor. If this anger can come out non-violently, it can be useful to encourage such a teen to express their feelings. Repressed anger is the most damaging commodity we may have to deal with in teens. *Refer to chapter five of the CoDA book (third edition) for more information on dealing with these types of behaviors that may come up in meetings.*

If we, adult hosts/meeting sponsors, model a spiritual answer, most of the time the basic approaches are going to work. Our primary spiritual approach frequently works without our complete understanding of it.

Be aware that this may be the first time a teen is sharing difficult feelings or past traumas. We are offering a new direction which is based on spiritual courage. Some teens may not be ready for group work, and we may suggest that a CoDAteen seek outside counseling alongside attending CoDAteen meetings. In accordance with Traditions 6 and 10, we can encourage teens to appeal to the group for help, talk to their parents/caregivers (if it is safe) or suggest outside public agencies and community resources to direct the teen to a place they may obtain additional help, but we cannot give advice or make specific referrals ourselves.

Adult hosts/meeting sponsors experiencing anger toward a teen, or some other inappropriate feelings, need to talk to their sponsor and others in their own CoDA group and seek guidance from their Higher Power.

## E. INAPPROPRIATE/DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

At times, new and inexperienced teens may have problems dealing with issues and "acting out" in meetings. Teens often mirror the exaggerated feelings in the home. When acting out happens and is not remedied by using the "*Thirty Second Rule*," if possible, you can choose to repeat "*CoDA's Guidelines for Safety's Sake*" or call an immediate group conscience to discuss the feelings within the group.

If the behavior continues to be inappropriate for the group, the adult hosts/meeting sponsors may ask the teen to briefly step outside of the meeting. A quick review of the teen's feelings and what "came up" for them may be helpful. At the same time, this does not mean forcing the issue. It is simply a loving way to say, "we must have a certain space to all feel safe in sharing". They may need to "boil out" feelings and welcome privacy. It can be a good time to bond with the seriously affected teen. It is usually best to leave the teen to their own process. It is not necessary to precisely define the feeling or problem and fix it. It simply means a feeling came up for them they needed to deal with in their own way, which may not have been appropriate for the rest of the group.

Ideally, it is better to not be one on one when working with a teen's problematic behavior. You may include a second adult host/sponsor or an older teen who is strong in their recovery. If you must be one on one, it is important to take into consideration the teen's sex or sexual orientation. Do not allow yourself to be alone in a potentially compromising situation.

Attacking and bullying should be addressed directly in the group meeting if it occurs during sharing. It could also be a meeting topic to have a time when teens can share their experiences with being bullied or abused or they have been the bully themselves. (See- *Co-Dependents Anonymous Book Chapter 5, section on physical and non-physical forms of abuse and control*)

When a CoDAteen member shares of experiences related to the difficult topics of abuse, violence, or suicide, the adult host/sponsor can encourage the teen to seek help from parents/caregivers (if it is safe), school counselors, social service agencies, police, and the courts. As mentioned previously, some teens may not be-ready for group and/or may be helped by additional counseling outside of the CoDAteen meetings. In these situations, it may be useful to gently suggest to the teen the following example: "*When I have seen someone else hurt the way you have described and/or from my own experience, I found it might be helpful to speak with someone on an individual basis such as a counselor or a therapist to explore deeper issues, along with attending CoDA meetings.*"

Adult hosts/meeting sponsors are careful to limit their part in the discussion to their own experience, and do not give specific advice. It is useful to maintain a list of public agencies, community resources, emergency hotlines etc. to be able to share with the teen where to get help. Be cautious and get other opinions from the adult CoDA sponsoring group before trying to rescue or fix a situation.

**1. Helpful tips to address inappropriate or disruptive behavior:**

- a) For the safety of the teen and the adult, avoid one on one interactions whenever possible.
- b) Use CoDA Guidelines to “*Sharing for Safety Sake*” and the “*Thirty Second Rule*”
- c) Use a “Feelings Check.” (Each person may raise their hand in turn and state very briefly in a few words how they are feeling in this moment.)
- d) If the teen’s behavior is disruptive to the group, a member may call 30 seconds and recite the Serenity Prayer or the Long Serenity Prayer and may re-read the *CoDA Guidelines to Sharing for Safety Sake*.
- e) A group conscience can be called immediately within the meeting to resolve the issue if needed.
- f) Encourage use of the tools of the program. (See [\*Tools of Recovery\*](#), or [\*30 Questions-Steps 1,2,3\*](#))

## SECTION FOUR: MEETING STRUCTURE AND FORMAT

### A. CODATEEN SERVICE POSITIONS

The sponsoring CoDA group may help the teens in developing their service positions. For example, the adult treasurer would work with the teen treasurer in opening bank accounts, maintaining financial records, and expense forecasting. Such activity is a vital part of recovery. Some teens may need assistance with how to handle money.

Any member can call for a group conscience business meeting to address special concerns. The adults are not there to rescue or fix. They are there to keep the tasks appropriate to the development of the group.

These are suggestions of positions that have worked with meetings in the past. Each meeting may decide how to distribute responsibilities among the trusted servants of the meeting, combining, or expanding positions as needed. A meeting does not need to have all these positions.

#### 1. Meeting leader/coordinator/facilitator:

(It is suggested that this position rotates with each meeting or at timed intervals, for example, monthly, or biannually)

- a) Takes a leadership role for the duration of the meeting.
- b) Assumes overall responsibility for meeting format.
- c) Invites speakers or finds a volunteer to handle speaker invitations.
- d) Guides the meeting according to CoDAteen-endorsed guidelines.



**2. Secretary:**

(Suggested term of office - 6 months or 1 year)

- a) Is the business representative for the meeting and acts as liaison to the meeting facility.
- b) Obtains and maintains a meeting room or online/phone/virtual account.
- c) Plans and conducts "group conscience or business meetings" regularly (agenda items may include elections, meeting format, procedures, etc.) and keeps records of meeting group conscience decisions.
- d) Ensures that information about the meeting is kept up to date in the Intergroup, Voting Entity and CoDA World meeting lists.

**3. Group Service Representative (GSR):**

(Usual term 1 to 2 years rotation)

- a) The link between the CoDAteen meeting and the next level. Ideally, a GSR is an established member of the group, with experience, knowledge, and understanding of CoDAteen's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.
- b) Attends the local CoDAteen intergroup, region or voting entity service meetings.
- c) Carries the group conscience to the next local service level and then reports to the meeting on the outcomes.
- d) Notifies the meeting of any local or CoDA World updates, announcements, and flyers.

**4. Treasurer:**

- a) Keeps accurate financial records of the group, and regularly reports to the group about income, expenses, and prudent reserve. (Note: A prudent reserve is determined by the group conscience of the meeting, usually two- or three-months' worth of group expenses).
- b) Pays rent to the meeting facility or alternative format account for use of the meeting room.

- c) Disburses Seventh Tradition funds following the meeting group conscience. **A suggested guideline is offered earlier in this document.**
- d) Turns over records and funds to a new treasurer.

**5. Literature Person:**

- a) Makes CoDA or CoDAteen Conference Endorsed Literature available at the meeting.
- b) Keeps track of group literature supplies and re-orders as needed.
- c) Obtains funds from the group treasurer to restock literature.
- d) Refers newcomers and other CoDAteen members to available CoDA and CoDAteen Conference Endorsed Literature.

**6. Phone Contact Person(s):**

- a) Makes first name and contact info available on local and CoDAteen World meeting lists.
- b) Is available to respond to inquiries about the meeting and CoDAteen.

## B. SUGGESTED CODATEEN MEETING FORMAT

You may be flexible with this sample format, however, to be considered a CoDA meeting you must read the four foundational documents: *The Preamble*, *The Welcome (long or short)*, *The Twelve Steps*, *The Twelve Traditions*. (see Section Five for the documents- they may be printed and passed around at the meeting to invite others to join in the opening section) The style of program your meeting wishes to use (whether Speaker, Sharing, Topic or Step) can be a group conscience decision made by the members of your group. You may also copy and display our “For Safety Sake” tent card during meetings.

### OPENING SECTION

1. “Good evening (morning, afternoon) and welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_ (insert meeting name) meeting of CoDAteen, part of Co-Dependents Anonymous. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a codependent. I am your meeting host tonight (today). CoDAteen asks those with cell phones and pagers to please turn them off or silence them for the duration of the meeting, so we can keep our focus on the meeting without interruptions.”
2. “Please help me open this meeting with a moment of silence followed by a prayer”. (*This is the meeting leader or group’s prayer of choice: the Serenity Prayer or the CoDA Opening Prayer*)

<b><u>The CoDA Opening Prayer</u></b> ®	<b><u>The Serenity Prayer</u></b>
In the spirit of love and truth, we ask our Higher Power to guide us as we share our experience, strength, and hope.	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
We open our hearts to the light of wisdom, the warmth of love, and the joy of acceptance.	
	<b><u>The Long Serenity Prayer</u></b>
	God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.  Grant me patience with the changes that take time, appreciation of all that I have, tolerance of those with different struggles, and the strength to get up and try again.

3. The group meeting leader reads the CoDAteen "[Preamble](#)" as written.
4. "We welcome any newcomers who are attending their first, second or third meeting of CoDAteen and ask that you raise your hand and introduce yourself by your first name only... *(call on raised hands and wait for introductions)* Welcome to CoDAteen. We suggest that you listen for similarities rather than differences in our shares. We suggest that you attend at least six meetings before deciding whether CoDAteen is for you."

**Optional** - *Newcomers can be welcomed by clapping after each or all has been introduced themselves. If your meeting gives out welcome chips and/or newcomer packets, you may distribute those.*

5. "We will now introduce ourselves and do a "Feelings Check." Let us raise our hand in turn and introduce ourselves by our first name only, stating very briefly in a few words how we are feeling at this moment. There will be an opportunity to share more fully later in the meeting." *(Meeting leader introduces self and then introductions continue around the room.)*
6. The group meeting leader reads the CoDAteen "[Welcome](#)" as written (long or short version).
7. "[CoDA's Twelve Steps](#) are the spiritual guidelines for our individual recovery. Will the person with the *Twelve Steps* please read them?" **Optional**- *some groups prefer to pass the Twelve Steps around and share the reading of them.*
8. "[CoDA's Twelve Traditions](#) are the guiding spiritual principles of our meetings. Will the person with the *Twelve Traditions* please read them?" **Optional**- *some groups prefer to pass the Twelve Traditions around and share the reading of them.*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION** *(some groups do this after the Program Section)* **Note:** *If you do not have trusted servants for the below positions or hosting a hybrid/online meeting, 9 to 14 may need to be modified or eliminated. For example: "Go to the link in the chat to sign up for the phone list." Or "You can purchase literature online or download free pamphlets at [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)"*

9. "There are meeting schedules and phone lists on the literature table. Our phone list is just for private CoDAteen use in case we need to reach out and talk with someone, have a problem, or need a ride to a meeting. Newcomers are welcome to it."

*(Meeting roles and positions)*

10. "Our literature person is \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have any announcements?"
11. "Our treasurer is \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have any announcements?"
12. "Our Group Representative is \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have any announcements?"
13. "Our Phone list contact person is \_\_\_\_\_."

14. "Restrooms are located....." Announce any meeting facility issues (smoking policy, etc.)
15. "Are there any CoDAteen announcements?" (*The GSR or secretary shares community, Voting Entity, or CoDA World announcements, unless already shared above. Any member may also share CoDAteen or CoDA related announcements.*)
16. **Optional-** "We give chips at this meeting. Are there any CoDA birthdays today-30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 6 months, 9 months, 1 year, 2 years, etc.?"
17. **Note:** *Some meetings ask the person celebrating if they would like to share a few words of recovery. In some meetings the group claps after each birthday is recognized; for birthdays of 30 days to 9 months; for 1 year or more the group sings "Happy Birthday", ending with "keep coming back".*
18. **Optional- Announce:** "If you would like to celebrate your birthday, please let the secretary know at least one week ahead of time" OR "Is anyone here celebrating a CoDA birthday and like to let it known to the group today?"

## PROGRAM SECTION

Begin your meeting program here. If your meeting has a speaker or reads from CoDA or CoDAteen literature, this usually lasts 10 to 20 minutes. Introduce the speaker, after the speaker shares, he picks a topic for discussion.

If there is no speaker you may ask someone to talk about a problem, read from CoDA literature or pick topics from the ["In This Moment Affirmations for CoDAteen"](#) ["Suggestions for CoDAteens"](#) or [the Slogans](#).

To enhance the po of our recovery program, CoDAteen suggests considering having at least one meeting per month be devoted to studying one of the Twelve Steps. (You can use the *CoDAteen Step Study Guide* or the *CoDA Workbook for Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.)

19. **Read:** "CoDAteen and Co-Dependents Anonymous does not accept harassment, bullying, or expressed intolerance of any kind. No person should be subject to unwanted verbal or physical conduct which intimidates or shows hostility towards that person because of their gender, class, age, appearance, national origin, skin color, disability, language, sexual orientation, or for any other reason. If you feel you are being treated disrespectfully in this meeting, please notify the person leading the meeting."

**20. Read CoDA Guidelines for Sharing - For Safety's Sake -**

“As we pursue our recovery, it is important for each of us to speak as we are able. Many of us find speaking among others, especially strangers, a difficult task. We encourage people to begin slowly and carefully. It is the intention of every CoDAteen member and group not to ridicule or embarrass anyone. Nothing that is shared is unimportant or stupid. The sharing of our experiences is best done with “I” statements. “Crosstalk” and “feedback” are discouraged. While many of us were growing up, no-one listened to us. We were told our feelings were wrong or that they did not matter. We were often interrupted and criticized. We need to know in our meetings we can share without fear of interruption, criticism, or contradiction.”

**FOR SAFETY'S SAKE**

We use “I” statements when sharing. (I feel; I believe.)

We share our own experience, strength, and hope—no one else's.

We do not comment on what others share.

*“We are aware of the time available for shares.” OR “We share three to five minutes, keeping the focus on ourselves.”*

We help ourselves and others by being emotionally present and honest.

We let others experience their own feelings.

We keep advice to ourselves.

“As codependents we are learning to set boundaries and recognize that they are vital to recovery. This is why we discourage feedback, crosstalk and advice giving. We need to learn to keep the focus on our own recovery rather than rescuing or controlling others. If you think that these guidelines have been violated, please ask the meeting host to read them again at the end of a particular share.”

**21.** “I would like to again thank \_\_\_\_\_ for sharing. We will now take turns and share on today's topic or \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Optional-** “Would each of you please limit your sharing to 3-5 (or less if meeting has a lot of attendees) minutes to allow for everyone to share?” Group conscience can decide how to indicate when time is up, i.e., a timer, tapping on something, or a gentle reminder by chairperson.

**CLOSING SECTION**

**22. Read:** “Our Seventh Tradition reminds us that while we do not have dues or fees, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. We ask that you donate only as you can. The

money you offer to the group buys literature and pays meeting expenses.” (*Pass the basket or communicate specifics of how to contribute for an online meeting, for example “See the link in the chat to donate”*)

**Optional-** *some meetings choose to ask for Seventh Tradition donations at the beginning of the meeting, during the announcements section.*

### **23. Read: CLOSING STATEMENT**

"As we bring this meeting to a close, I would like to remind you that CoDA is an anonymous program. Everything shared here is confidential. Only in this way can we feel free to say what is in our minds and hearts, for this is how we help one another in CoDAteen."

"Who you see here, what is said here, when you leave here, let it stay here."

"What each person says is their own opinion. Take what you want and leave the rest. A special note for newcomers, whatever is bothering you has also worried others. You will come to realize that there is no situation too difficult to be bettered and no unhappiness too great to be lessened. We are not perfect. The welcome we give you may not show how much we care or how much we already love and accept you for just who you are. Keep coming back and keep an open mind and you will find a new love and acceptance of yourself and others, one day at a time."

**Optional-** "Will the person with the **Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous** please read them?" (*You may pass around to read individually*)

**Optional-** (*highly recommended*) **Share Affirmations:** Starting with the leader or a volunteer each person in turn gives a positive affirmation such as: "I know a new freedom for me" or "I am enough". You may also use readings from the *In this Moment Affirmations for CoDAteen* or *Making Choices in Recovery* handbook or have teens make up their own.

**24.** "Thanks to our speaker." (*If this is a speaker meeting*)

**25.** "Thanks to those who read and who do service at this meeting."

**26.** **The group leader requests everyone to join in a circle for the closing prayer of choice. The following are the CoDA endorsed prayers.**

**The Serenity Prayer**

**(Long version)**

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.  
Grant me patience with the changes that take time,  
Appreciation of all that I have,  
Tolerance of those with different struggles,  
And the strength to get up and try again,  
One day at a time.

**The CoDA Closing Prayer** ®

We thank our Higher Power  
For all that we have received  
from the meeting.  
As we close, may we take with us  
the wisdom, love, acceptance,  
and hope of recovery.

**C. THIRTY SECOND RULE**

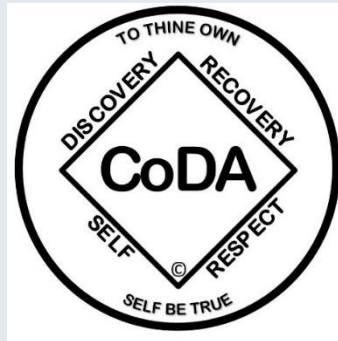
Occasionally, a member(s) may engage in unsafe behavior by not respecting the boundaries of others, or someone may perceive that to happen. In such a situation, any member may call for a "time out" or "thirty seconds." During a time out or thirty seconds, everyone ceases talking and spends time seeking guidance from Higher Power. At the end of the thirty seconds, someone calls "time," and members say the Serenity Prayer before resuming the meeting.



## **SECTION FIVE: FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS AND OTHER MEETING MATERIALS**

The Preamble, Welcome (long or short), Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions must be read at every meeting.

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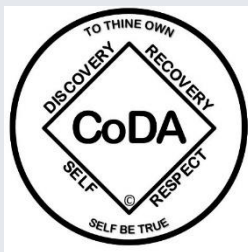


## **CODATEEN PREAMBLE**

CoDAteen, a part of Co-Dependents Anonymous, is a Fellowship of young people 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 CoDAteen, 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 CoDAteen and Co-Dependents Anonymous, we can each realize a new joy, acceptance and serenity in our lives.



## CODATEEN WELCOME

(Long Version)

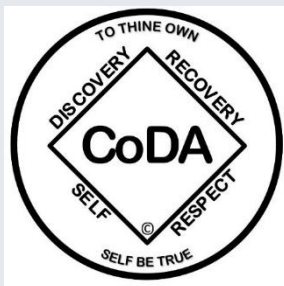
We welcome you to CoDAteen, a part of Co-Dependents Anonymous, a program of recovery from codependence, where each of us may share our experience, strength, and hope in our efforts to find freedom where there has been bondage and peace where there has been turmoil in our relationships with others and 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 family members, parents, guardians, caregivers, teachers, other adults, and even our friends**, 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 CoDAteen 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 – 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 CoDAteen and 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.



## **CODATEEN WELCOME**

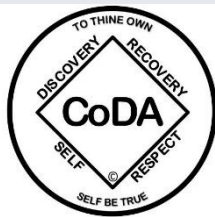
(Short Version)

We welcome you to CoDAteen, a part of Co-Dependents Anonymous - a program of recovery from codependency, 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.

Codependence is a deeply-rooted, compulsive behavior. It is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional families and other systems. We attempted to use others as our sole source of identity, value, well-being, and as a way of trying to restore our emotional losses. Our histories may include other powerful addictions which we have used to cope with our codependency.

We have all learned to survive life, but in CoDAteen we are learning to live life. Through applying the Twelve Steps and principles found in CoDA to our daily lives and relationships, both present and past, we can experience a new freedom from our self-defeating lifestyles. Our sharing helps us to free the emotional bonds of our past and the compulsive control of our present.

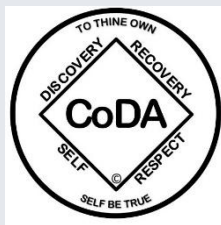
No matter how traumatic your past or despairing your present may seem, there is hope for a new day in the program of CoDAteen and Co-Dependents Anonymous. May you find a new strength within to be that which God intended - Precious and Free.



## THE TWELVE STEPS OF CO-DEPENDENTS ANONYMOUS<sup>®\*</sup>

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 our 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.

*"The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt this material does not mean that AA has reviewed or approved the content of this publication, nor that AA agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism only - use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise."*



## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF CO-DEPENDENTS ANONYMOUS<sup>©\*</sup>

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. Every 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.

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## IN THIS MOMENT AFFIRMATIONS

IN THIS MOMENT, I am happy.

IN THIS MOMENT, I am my own best friend.

IN THIS MOMENT, I love myself just the way I am.

IN THIS MOMENT, I do something I enjoy and plan something special to look forward to.

IN THIS MOMENT, I am not affected by others' emotions, opinions, or approval of me.

IN THIS MOMENT, I take responsibility for myself, and I let you do the same.

IN THIS MOMENT, I say "no" without feeling selfish.

IN THIS MOMENT, I live through this day only and do not tackle my whole life problems at once.

IN THIS MOMENT, I have the courage to ask for help and let go of the outcome.

IN THIS MOMENT, I ask for the willingness to talk about what is bothering me and turn it over to a Higher Power of my own understanding.

IN THIS MOMENT, I enjoy the new sense of freedom I feel by "letting go."

IN THIS MOMENT, I strengthen my mind. I study and learn something useful. I read something that requires effort, thought, and concentration.

IN THIS MOMENT, I am patient.

IN THIS MOMENT, I am grateful for all that I have.

IN THIS MOMENT, I speak calmly and with respect.

IN THIS MOMENT, I am courteous and tolerant of other's struggles.

IN THIS MOMENT, I release myself from worry and indecision and turn them over to my Higher Power.

IN THIS MOMENT, I feel all my feelings, including peace, calm, happiness, and excitement, and when I feel pain, anger, despair, or hopelessness; they help me to discover who I am.

IN THIS MOMENT I recognize my feelings are important; they are neither good nor bad.

IN THIS MOMENT, I am courageous.

IN THIS MOMENT, I enjoy all the beauty that surrounds me.

IN THIS MOMENT, I respect my boundaries and the boundaries of others.

- Physically, I am aware of keeping a safe, respectful, and comfortable distance between you and me.
- Emotionally, I keep an imaginary bubble around me and courageously trust my own feelings. This bubble guards me and helps keep out the things that are not true about me.
- Intellectually, I do my own thinking and talking. I allow others the same privilege. I listen without interrupting and allow others to have their own feelings.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR CODATEENS

1. Do remember you are not the only one who is having problems with relationships.
2. Do look for help in CoDAteen and Co-Dependents Anonymous.
3. Do learn all you can about codependency.
4. Do be honest with yourself and others.
5. Do use your talents in ways that interest you.
6. Do develop healthy boundaries.
7. Do remember that you may not be the only member of your family who is emotionally involved with codependency.
8. Do learn to forgive yourself and others - you only hurt yourself by holding grudges.
9. Do find a CoDAteen member or a safe person outside of your family to confide in.
10. Do take a daily inventory and admit your faults to one person. (Step Ten)
11. Do trust your Higher Power and spend time in prayer and meditation. (Step Eleven)
12. Do pass on your knowledge of CoDAteen to others. (Step Twelve)
13. Don't make it easy for anyone to abuse themselves or others by covering up for them and taking on their responsibility. (Don't enable others.)
14. Don't try to change anyone's behavior. You can't. Only they can.
15. Don't argue with anyone who is angry. Your safety may be at risk.
16. Don't try to get revenge on anyone who has treated you unfairly. The situation will only get worse.
17. Don't take it personally when anyone blames you for their bad moods.
18. Don't use drugs or alcohol as a means of escaping the family situation or to not feel your feelings.
19. Don't condemn, judge, or criticize yourself or others; remember that codependency is a disease of silence, self-neglect, and abandonment.
20. Don't take your parents or other people's problems as the number one thing in your life.
21. Don't expect things to get better overnight.
22. Don't expect to change anyone other than yourself.
23. Don't allow self-pity to grow.
24. Don't let other peoples' problems, or your own, overwhelm you. You can say the Serenity Prayer and use the tools of the CoDAteen program to turn it over to your Higher Power.



## CODATEEN TOOLS FOR RECOVERY

What are recovery tools?

The map for our recovery from codependency includes the CoDAteen Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, attending CoDAteen meetings, working the program with a sponsor, trusting in a Higher Power, and using other CoDAteen recovery tools. If we are willing to use these tools daily, we can succeed at living happier and more meaningful lives.

These tools may include:

- Asking for Help - Reaching out to others may be difficult. Some of us fear rejection, making it hard to open up to other people. However, in recovery we learn to ask for help when needed, from our Higher Power, sponsor, CoDAteen members, or trusted friends.
- Telephone, Texting, What's App, other Electronic Messaging - Those of us who have the convenience of cell phones allow us to connect to others in real time, so we are never too far away from support.
- Telephone List - Most meetings keep a phone list of CoDAteen members and/or adult hosts/meeting sponsors who are available to those who wish to reach out.
- Social Media – CoDAteen members often connect with each other worldwide on social media. This is especially true in areas with few face to face meetings and CoDAteen members.
- Meeting sponsorship – Meeting sponsors guide sponsees in working the CoDAteen Steps and Traditions. They listen carefully and share their experience, strength, and hope. As sponsees, we may share parts of our journal, our Fourth Step inventory, or letters to a family member with our sponsor. (For more information, see the CoDA handbook, *Meeting sponsorship: What's in It for Me?*)
- Literature – Reading CoDA Service Conference endorsed literature about codependency as seen through the eyes of others who have gone through what we have experienced, can provide new perspectives and support for the CoDAteen. (CoDA literature is available in English and Spanish for purchase at [corepublications.org](http://corepublications.org))

- Slowing down and Living in the Present - In stressful moments, deep breathing may help us to collect our thoughts, so we are able to reflect on what is happening in the moment. We can acknowledge that we cannot change past events. The future does not yet exist. When we concentrate on today, most of us find that we have whatever it is we need for the moment. (For example, food, shelter, clothing, a job, friends, health, a Higher Power in our lives.) When we take life “one day at a time,” it becomes manageable.
- Slogans - Slogans can be used by members during sharing and in times of stress. They may be considered “thought stoppers” to be used repeatedly when obsessive, thinking” threatens. See “Slogans” and “Affirmations.”

## THE SLOGANS

LIVE AND LET LIVE -- To get the most out of your life, don't judge or criticize others or concern yourself about what they do.

FIRST THINGS FIRST -- Do first what's most important - you'll get more done. It's a great way to organize your time and energy.

THINK -- Hold back that rash word or thoughtless action.

THINK -- about ways to improve yourself.

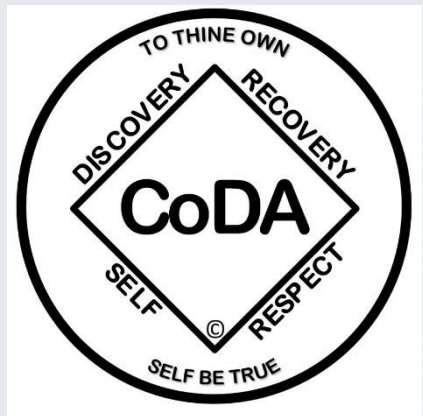
THINK -- before you make decisions.

EASY DOES IT -- Haste makes waste - of time and effort. Relax - get rid of tension and rushing.

LET GO AND LET GOD -- You can't fix everything that's wrong with the world, and with your family and friends. Let it go! God can't work in our lives if we're standing in the way.

ONE DAY AT A TIME -- Today is the most important day of your life. Use it. Forget yesterday - and don't worry about what might happen tomorrow.

LISTEN AND LEARN -- There's something of value to be learned from everyone you meet. Look for it and use it.



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