

# **The Fellowship Service Manual of Co- Dependents Anonymous**

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## **Part 2 Meeting Handbook**

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## Link to Other Parts of the FSM

Below are links to the other 4 parts of the Fellowship Services Manual (FSM). Suggested uses are as follows:

- Part 1 is intended for all members of CoDA, particularly those who intend to do service work
- Part 3 is intended for use by those currently or considering doing service at the levels between meetings and CoDA World. It is intended to be particularly helpful in establishing these service levels.
- Part 4 is intended for use by those currently or considering doing service at the CoDA World level. It is strongly recommended for all those who will be attending a CoDA Service Conference (CSC).
- Part 5 contains more detailed information related to the various service entities that exist at the CoDA World service level, including the CoDA Board of Trustees, the various committees and other working groups and individual positions.
- A combined file has been provided which contains all 5 parts in one file. It is intended to be used to make searching easier by not requiring opening 5 different files.

### Links:

[FSM Part 1 - Structure and General Information](#)

[FSM Part 3 - Guidelines for Intermediate Service Levels](#)

[FSM Part 4 - Service Conference Procedures](#)

[FSM Part 5 - World Level Service Details](#)

[CoDATeen Handbook](#)

[FSM Glossary](#)

[CoDA Acronymns](#)

[FSM Combined File](#)

# Section 01 Introduction and Getting Started

## Purpose of this Manual

The purpose of this document is to provide CoDA members with all the basic documents and information needed to start and conduct CoDA meetings. You may find additional information on the [coda.org](http://coda.org) website and in the other parts of the Fellowship Service Manual.

This document provides information and guidelines. CoDA recommends that every meeting have a copy of this document. It contains the basic documents that support CoDA unity. Also, other helpful parts of the Fellowship Service Manual (FSM) are available for free on the CoDA.org website. By request, our Fellowship Services will send one hard copy of each to newly registered meetings.

## What is a CoDA Meeting

A CoDA meeting is a group of two or more people who come together around their shared desire for healthy and loving relationships. 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 sponsorship and fellowship as well as the sharing of experience, strength, and hope. A strong sense of acceptance and community makes a meeting attractive both to the newcomer and old timer.

There are minimal requirements to be considered a CoDA meeting. These requirements are to read the four following Foundational Documents as written at every meeting and to register the meeting with either CoDA World or their Voting Entity (VE).

- The Welcome (short or long version)
- Preamble of Co-Dependents Anonymous
- Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous
- Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous

In addition, CoDA groups are required to use the Co-Dependents Anonymous book as a primary resource for the meeting. No other Twelve Step book can be used at a CoDA meeting. Exclusive use of Co-Dependents Anonymous book at meetings means that the CoDA message is not diluted in any way.

Meetings who choose not to read the four Foundational Documents or use a non-CoDA Twelve Step book will not be recognized as CoDA meetings and will not be listed in the CoDA Meeting Directory on the CoDA.org website.

CoDA groups register with Co-Dependents Anonymous World in order to stay in contact with CoDA as a whole. With respect to other questions about group organization (date, time, type of meeting), each group is autonomous except in matters affecting CoDA as a whole. Because the Twelve Steps are the basis of our recovery, we strongly suggest that each meeting set aside at least one meeting per month for Step Study.

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 CoDA meeting present familiar aspects that communicate, “This is CoDA.” While it is rare, some meetings have chosen to adopt a format that varies significantly from CoDA guidelines. This presents confusion, particularly to the newcomer, regarding the nature of our program. If the Intergroup, Region or Voting Entity (VE) feels it necessary, a meeting may be informed specifically how it does not appear to be following the

unifying principles of CoDA Tradition. If the meeting decides, by group conscience, not to change, they need to understand that they may no longer be recognized as, nor call themselves, a CoDA meeting and will be removed from Intergroup, Region, Voting Entity (VE) and/or CoDA World meeting listings.

## **Policy Regarding Outside Literature at CoDA Meetings**

CoDA groups may not use any other Twelve Step books, and it is strongly suggested that CoDA groups use only CoDA Conference Endorsed literature.

If a group by informed group conscience chooses to use other outside literature, in order to be an informed group conscience, that group must weigh their decision against the Twelve Traditions to ascertain if a responsible decision has been made.

Some points to consider are:

*Tradition One:* Using CoDA literature supports the growth of CoDA and offers unity and continuity of message.

*Tradition Four:* Will the decision reached by the group affect neighboring groups or CoDA as a whole? What might be a newcomers first impression of CoDA based on the literature chosen? What is a groups responsibility to newcomers?

*Tradition Five:* Is the decision about literature, or for that matter any decision made by the group, in line with CoDA's primary purpose?

*Tradition Six:* Is the use of outside literature an endorsement of a particular author? By making the work of a particular author the focus of a meeting, is that a CoDA meeting or a book study session?

*Tradition Eight:* Use of outside literature may border on therapy. CoDA is a self-help group and uses the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as a basis for recovery.

*Tradition Ten:* Use of copyrighted materials not owned by CoDA may lead to problems in the future and ought to be considered in the decision making process. CoDA will not define codependency but will describe it. Does the use of outside literature support a particular definition?

If, after considering the above points, and a group still chooses to use other outside literature, an announcement must to be made at the beginning and end of the reading of said literature. Updated at 2018 CSC on 10/12/18. Further updated at 2019 CSC on 9/10/19.

## **Things to Consider when Starting a new CoDA Meeting**

- **Where**

Meetings can be held almost anywhere. Try area churches, synagogues, counseling centers, hospitals or places where other groups are held. Though each group is autonomous, for reasons of safety and anonymity, CoDA cautions about holding meetings in individual homes. When choosing a meeting place, please keep in mind personal safety. Also keep in mind that many places are requiring insurance policies and CoDA does not have an umbrella policy that covers meetings. For more information see the Frequently Asked Questions later in this document.

- **When**

Based on a time that's best for you to serve, choose the day and time of the week you want to hold the new meeting.

- **Rent**

It's important that rent (no matter how small) be paid for the meeting place. In this way, we honor our Seventh Tradition: "Every CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining

outside contributions.” Since you won't know how large a meeting will be at the start, try to keep rent to a minimum. Rent may be a percentage of the meeting's collection, a monthly or quarterly fee, or anything to which you and your landlord agree. Some places let you use the space more as a courtesy than as a revenue source, so don't be afraid to negotiate. At the same time, don't abuse their generosity. An annual donation may be appropriate if no rent is charged.

- **Help**

Ask for help, especially in the beginning. Invite people from other meetings to help you get the new meeting going. It helps to have several people present when newcomers show up. And be sure to post a sign at the new meeting location each week so that people can find your room easily.

- **Announce**

Let people know about the new meeting. Visit other meetings with the necessary information (e.g., date, time, directions and/or a map). Place announcements in counseling centers and hospitals. Some local newspapers publish meeting notices at no charge. Just remember the Eleventh Tradition: “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion...” As people see the announcements and hear about the meeting, they will come.

- **Select Type of Meeting**

After a few initial meetings, take a group conscience to choose a type of meeting. For possible types of meetings see “Some Different Types of CoDA Meetings” below.

The following items need to be discussed and decided by the group conscience process:

- What guidelines will be used for sharing?
- How might the meeting deal with crosstalk?
- How will newcomers, literature, and other issues be handled?
- When will regular business meetings take place?

- **Register your meeting**

You may register your meeting online at [coda.org](http://coda.org). Once you have an official number, the meeting will be listed in the CoDA Meeting Directory. If your Voting Entity or Intergroup maintains a meeting list please notify them as well. Please use your assigned group number on all correspondence with CoDA.

- **Define what tasks must be done, such as:**

- Holding the key to unlock and lock facility
- Lead meeting (read format)
- Get speakers if applicable
- Great newcomers
- Buy chips and recognize time in program
- Run and document business meetings that are run on a regular basis
- Stay connected to facility manager
- Set up and clean up meeting room

- **Select and Fill Positions (elected if possible, otherwise volunteers) \*More information in the section “Suggestions for CoDA Meeting Service Positions”**

- *Treasurer*: The Treasurer holds all Seventh Tradition donations, pays rent, and sends excess funds beyond a prudent reserve to the local Intergroup, Voting Entity and/or Co-Dependents Anonymous World.
- *Group Service Rep (GSR)*: The GSR is elected by the meeting to act as a liaison between the meeting and the next service level providing information in both directions.

- *Literature Person*: The literature person orders, sells and keeps inventory and cash flow records of the group's literature.
- *Contact Person(s)*: The contact person responds to telephone, email or other inquiries. Positions in CoDA are usually rotated to prevent "burn out." Position rotation also supports the concept that each meeting depends on all who attend. Let different volunteers perform each task, rotate positions regularly, and limit terms of service.
- **Consider Holding Regular Business Meetings:**

(from Building CoDA Community - Healthy Meetings Matter)

"Healthy meetings hold regular business meetings. Many groups find it convenient to schedule their business meeting monthly, before or after the regular meeting. The dates and times of business meetings are announced ahead of time so that members can plan to attend. Business meetings are open to all CoDA members, and any CoDA member who is present may participate in the group conscience. The greater the input, the more the decisions made will reflect the needs of the group.

Business meetings have a facilitator, or chairperson. This is usually a member who has some time in the CoDA program and who is familiar with the CoDA Traditions. Generally, there is a treasurer's report and a secretary's report, a review of decisions made at the last meeting, and discussion of any new issues or concerns. A wide range of issues may be addressed. Anything that affects the functioning of the CoDA meeting is appropriate. A group may need to elect a trusted servant, such as a new treasurer or a group service representative (GSR) to the local intergroup or voting entity. A group might discuss and decide which literature to buy. There may be questions about the meeting format: "Will we set time limits on sharing?" "Will we give welcome chips to newcomers?" Questions about the no-crosstalk guidelines or other ideas may be fully explored at a business meeting, rather than taking time during the regular meeting.

Business meetings provide a forum for concerns to be aired and resolved. Sometimes it is best to have an initial discussion the month an issue is raised and wait until the next business meeting to arrive at a group conscience. Group issues are decided by members within the framework of our Fourth Tradition: "Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole."

- **Conducting Business Meetings using the Group Conscience Process:**

The group conscience process is used to make decisions at all levels of CoDA. A CoDA group typically has a monthly business meeting to discuss issues affecting the group such as how to address crosstalk, what literature to buy, how to welcome newcomers, etc. A group conscience may also be asked for during a regular meeting, if a decision is needed right away and can't wait for the regular business meeting. Anyone may ask for a group conscience at any time during a CoDA meeting, if and when immediate attention is needed to ensure the safety of an individual or the group, or to uphold the CoDA Traditions.

The spiritual structure of CoDA is based on Tradition Two: "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."

The Community Problem Solving Method (CPSM) is used in World Service CoDA and can be adapted at all levels of CoDA to facilitate group conscience decision making. It is a friendlier and more cooperative method of decision-making than the traditional "Roberts Rules". Motions or group conscience decisions are made only after information around the problem has been gathered, solutions brainstormed and all member's viewpoints have been heard and



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considered.

The process has four steps:

1. Identifying a problem: A member puts forth an issue/ agenda item for the business meeting. The discussion would then be open for questions, clarifications, and gathering any additional information.
2. Brainstorming: Solutions or suggestions are put forth. A common tool used by groups is a “round robin” which is a specialized brainstorming technique in which everyone takes a turn generating and developing ideas in a group. The process relies on each team member building off previous contributions by adding clarifications, challenges, and improving upon the original idea in rounds.
3. Crafting a “motion” or forming a group conscience decision (local business meetings do not need to make “formal motions”). At this point, because everyone has had a chance to be heard without interruption, the formulated decisions are the combined conscience of all the members present. Compromise (finding middle ground) is often reached without extra effort. At this point, the group may ask if any further discussion is needed or another round robin is needed before finalizing the decision or to clarify what is the issue that is coming to a vote. (no need to ask for “pros” and “cons” unless desired by the group)
4. Vote on the issue. Unanimity is desired, but a majority is a group conscience. If the vote is not unanimous, an opportunity for a minority opinion is offered.

Thirty Second Timeout: “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 recite the Serenity Prayer before resuming the meeting.” –Disagreement, Mediation, and Resolution, FSM Part 1, Section 3 (for background and full description of CPSM in World Conference meetings see: FSM Part 4 Section 3)

4022-Healthy-Meetings-Web.pdf (coda.org) see this free download for more information on the group conscience process and business meetings.

## Different Types of CoDA Meetings

**Speaker Meeting:** This type of meeting features a personal story of recovery shared by one individual. Speakers share their personal experience, strength, and hope in the program. The meeting may or may not include open sharing after the speaker, depending on the length of story shared.

**Open Share Meeting:** This type of meeting often has no topic or individual speaker, giving members an opportunity to share their experience, strength, and hope on their recovery as they wish.

**Topic Share Meeting:** This type of meeting opens with the meeting leader or another member of the group suggesting a specific topic, i.e., the Steps, setting boundaries, sponsorship, etc.

**Step or Tradition Study Meeting:** In this type of meeting, the meeting uses CoDA Conference Endorsed literature as a foundation for study, discussion, or sharing related to CoDA's 12 Steps and /or 12 Traditions.

**Focus Meetings:** Meetings may additionally designate, on the meeting finder, the focus of the meeting in any way they wish so long as the four Foundational documents are read at every meeting: The CoDA Steps, The CoDA Traditions, The Preamble and The Welcome. The Meeting Finder shall state, in that case, "Information about such focus designations or other particulars will be available from the contact persons listed" for those meetings. However, in respecting the spirit of Traditions One, Three, and Five, we honor one exception. No member of our Fellowship shall be turned away from even a closed or restricted meeting, if there is no other meeting available to this person.

## Crosstalk

In our meetings, we speak about our own experience, and we listen without comment to what others share. We work toward taking responsibility for our own lives, rather than giving advice to others. This is why crosstalk is strongly discouraged during our meetings. Crosstalk guidelines help keep our meetings a safe place. For more information, please refer to the [Newcomer Handbook](#) and [Experiences with Crosstalk](#).

Examples of crosstalk may include, but are not limited to:

- Giving unsolicited feedback
- Advising
- Answering
- Making "you" and "we" statements
- Interrogating
- Debating
- Criticizing
- Controlling
- Dominating
- Minimizing another person's feeling or experiences
- Physical contact / touch
- Body movements such as nodding one's head or other gestures
- Verbal sounds / noises
- Referring to someone present by name

## Other Helpful Information

### What is a "Home Meeting," and why might I want one?

While having a "home meeting" does not afford us any special rights or privileges at the meeting, many of us find that having a particular meeting where we focus our participation and service work is helpful to our recovery. CoDA is about building and maintaining healthy relationships and those relationships can develop most easily among people we see frequently. CoDA is a community, and this is most evident at the meeting level. Because of this, many of us choose to identify a home meeting, which we attend regularly.

### How can we let people know about our meeting?

Contact your CoDA Intergroup/CSG and/or your Voting Entity to have your meeting listed in your local meeting list(s). This is the best avenue for gaining exposure and support. CoDA meetings can be announced in local papers or on community bulletin boards. Frequently, librarians allow meetings to post notices or leave free material, such as "What Is Codependence?" which can include a meeting's meeting information. According to Tradition Eleven: "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion." We suggest simply stating "[Your Meeting name] CoDA Meeting" with the time, date, and location. Note that we do not use a meeting facility name as a meeting name, in accordance with Tradition Six. If a meeting called itself the Johnson Center CoDA Meeting, for example, this could be considered endorsement of an outside enterprise. Instead, the Hometown Tuesday Night CoDA meeting can post flyers saying that they meet in the Johnson Center.

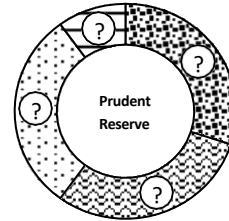
### **Where do we get funds?**

CoDA meetings usually "pass a basket" during the meeting, reminding those attending about our Seventh Tradition, which states that each meeting is fully self- supporting and declines outside contributions. Occasionally, a meeting may pass the basket a second time if contributions are needed for rent, literature, or some other legitimate expense.

### **What is a "prudent reserve," and what do we do with excess moneys collected?**

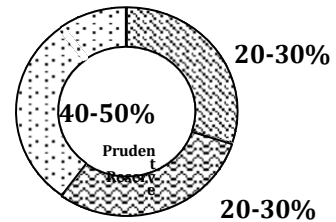
A "prudent reserve" consists of two or three months' worth of meeting expenses. Meeting expenses include items such as rent, supplies, refreshments, and Conference Endorsed literature. The prudent reserve is intended to cover expenses in the event that the meeting has unusually low attendance or donations. It is suggested that, at least quarterly, meetings determine if there are excess funds left after the reserve amount is satisfied. If so, a meeting may decide by group conscience to make a Seventh Tradition donation to the CoDA entities that support the meeting. Each meeting needs to decide for themselves. When sending 7th tradition money to CoDA World please make all checks payable to Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc. It is necessary to contact local Intergroup or Voting Entity to determine how to make out checks when donating to them.

\_\_\_% to your local Intergroup  
 \_\_\_% to your Voting Entity  
 \_\_\_% to Co-Dependents Anonymous World  
 \_\_\_% to another CoDA project or program



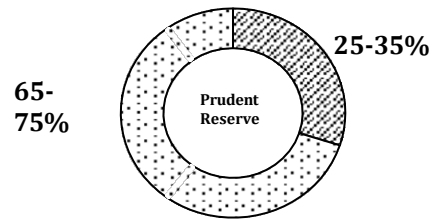
Example if you have an Intergroup:

40-50% to your Intergroup/CSG  
 20-30% to your Voting Entity  
 20-30% to Co-Dependents Anonymous World



Example if you have no Intergroup

65-75% to your Voting Entity  
 25-35% to Co-Dependents Anonymous World



## **Ordering Literature**

The easiest way to order CoDA Conference Approved Literature is to do so on the coda.org website using this [link](#). You can either order directly online or use the form provided on the [CoRe website](#).

## **Is There A Limit to The Amount an Individual May Donate to CoDA?**

Following the Seventh Tradition, the value for donated cash, goods, or professional services rendered by a member to individual meetings, Intergroups, and Voting Entities is suggested not to exceed \$3000USD (three thousand dollars) or equivalent per year. That limit is raised to \$6000 USD (six thousand dollars) or equivalent per year for Co-Dependents Anonymous World in accordance with the larger scale of operation. Please see the donate button at the top of the home page on the coda.org website for more information about what types of donations you can make.

## **Can people leave money to CoDA, Inc. in their wills?**

Requests in wills are acceptable only from CoDA members, with a maximum of \$8,000 from any one person, and only on a onetime basis—not in perpetuity.

## **How Can I Contribute to CoDA to Celebrate My Recovery?**

The 2015 CoDA Service Conference approved the Recovery Celebration Plan, under which some members of the Fellowship may choose to celebrate the anniversary of the start of their recovery by either doing some extra service work or by sending some amount of money a year for each year of recovery they have in CoDA to the CoDA entity(ies) of their choice. Please see the annual donation limits above.

## **What is Gratitude Month?**

In gratitude to our Higher Power and to Co-Dependents Anonymous (CoDA), the 2014 CoDA Service Conference (CSC) has designated November as a time for individuals, local meetings, Intergroups and Voting Entities to give thanks for how CoDA has helped them to live life. CSC suggests that groups at all levels sponsor Gratitude Month by sending donations to CoDA entities of their choice and/or by donating additional service to the CoDA entity of their choice.

## **Can Our Group Use the CoDA Tax ID Number?**

No. The CoDA Tax ID Number, also known as the Employer Identification Number (EIN), is not for use by any other level of CoDA except the CoDA, Inc. level. The Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc. EIN is specific to the corporation of CoDA, a US corporation. Having an “umbrella” tax status would require that each group submit all the identifying information of their officers to CoDA, Inc. for its official record. In addition, CoDA would be responsible for the groups’ financial reporting and financial activity. We would have to establish a system of controls over the finances of each CoDA group, Intergroup/CSG, and Voting Entity. We would somehow have to ensure the use of all income solely for CoDA purposes and require regular reports to some central CoDA organization which would account to tax authorities for the activities of Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc. All of this conflicts with our Traditions of anonymity, group autonomy and our service structure. For this reason, we recommend that each meeting, Intergroup/CSG, or Voting Entity organization assess its own need for a Tax ID #/EIN and, if necessary, apply for its own.

## **How do we open a bank account and obtain a Tax ID Number?**

Check with your local bank to find out what is required to open an account as a meeting, Intergroup/CSG, or Voting Entity organization. In the USA, a bank will usually require:

- A minimum balance.
- A copy of the entities minutes taken at your business meeting that includes the name of your organization.
- A list of all officers of the organization and anyone else who may be a co-signer on the account, including some form of ID such as driver's license and Social Security Number for each person.

## **Getting your group's own Tax ID Number/EIN in the U.S.**

To apply for a Tax ID Number/EIN, you will need to contact the IRS to request Form SS-4: The IRS does not require you to be incorporated to get a Tax ID Number/EIN. Fill in the application as a "nonprofit organization". Your state may have its own regulations concerning when a nonprofit organization must incorporate. It's a good idea to check with a legal and/or tax professional in your state for more information. State or federal agencies may inspect your records. Examples of such records may include minutes of business meetings, any changes in officers, and financial records including receipts for rent and literature. For more regarding tax returns, see the IRS website.

## **Alternatives to getting a Tax ID number/EIN for a bank account**

Some groups use the social security number of the group's treasurer as the Tax ID for the group's bank account. A group may open a checking account under the treasurer's social security number with a Doing Business As (D/B/A) name on the account (such as "Sunrise CoDA"). So long as the account earns no interest there should be no tax consequences for the treasurer. Many meetings hold such a small amount of funds that they do not open a bank account at all. The meeting's treasurer holds the money, or the group may keep the money in a locked file cabinet in their meeting location.

## **Tax Information**

If your meeting sells things like literature, tapes, or other items then you may have to pay sales tax. Whether you need to do so will depend on what country or U.S. state you live in. Hopefully your Intergroup or Voting Entity can help you determine what is required.

## **Tax-Exempt Status**

CoDA meetings are "non-profit" in their financial behavior but they are not automatically "tax-exempt". Obtaining tax exemption status is an expensive and complicated process that involves legal obligations, controversy about Traditions, and ongoing responsibility. Most meetings and Intergroups operate with minimal funds and contributions are generally done in cash anonymously at the meetings. Most regular meeting rarely have any tax liability and do not need tax exemption. Large Intergroups or Voting Entity organizations sometimes do form corporations and get their own tax exemption status.

## **Does CoDA have an "umbrella" insurance policy that would cover our meeting?**

CoDA does not have an umbrella insurance policy that covers individual meetings. Local CoDA organizations may choose to purchase such a policy if it is the only way to find meeting space.

Some options that have worked:

- Asking the requesting facility if their insurance company could provide the needed coverage for an added fee or for free.
- Moving the meeting to a facility that doesn't request additional insurance.
- Signing waivers in lieu of insurance. This might lead to personal liability for group members. Outside legal advice about such matters is recommended.

### **Can a therapist start/facilitate a CoDA meeting?**

We ask that therapists, life coaches, mental health professionals, and all paid professionals start meetings or participate in meetings only as an individual recovering codependent and never in a professional capacity.

In "*Building CoDA Community: Healthy Meetings Matter*" page 17 states: *In CoDA, no one is paid to share experience, strength, and hope, whether at meetings, as sponsors, or in any other Twelve Step related activity. Professionals attending CoDA meetings do so as members only, and do not use the Fellowship to further their business interests.*

### **What to do if a meeting disbands**

In the unfortunate case of a meeting disbanding, the treasurer must ensure that current debts are satisfied. If necessary, negotiate a reduction or forgiveness of rent due. Remaining funds and/or literature can be given to other local CoDA meetings or to the Intergroup or Voting Entity. If there is no other group close enough to easily give literature to literature may be donated to area libraries or institutions.

### **General Responsibilities of Trusted Servants**

- **Preserving continuity:** Outgoing officers are expected to work with the next person holding the position to ensure that procedures, knowledge, and records are passed along.
- **Responsibility of office:** When a person holding a position cannot attend a meeting or other service commitment it is best if they can find a substitute to handle the job. In the event a commitment is not being fulfilled a group conscience may be taken to determine if the meeting wishes the person to continue or to seek another volunteer to take over the position.

## **Suggestions for CoDA Meeting Service Positions**

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.

### **Meeting leader/coordinator/facilitator: (it is suggested that this position rotates with each meeting or at time intervals, i.e., monthly or biannually)**

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

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

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

**Group Service Representative (GSR): (Usual term 1 to 2 years)**

- The link between the CoDA meeting and the next level. Ideally, a GSR is an established member of the group, with experience, knowledge, and understanding of CoDA's *Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions* and *Twelve Service Concepts*.
- Attends the local CoDA Intergroup or Voting Entity service meetings.
- Carries the group conscience to the next local service level and then reports to the meeting on the outcomes.
- Notifies the meeting of any local or CoDA World updates, announcements, and flyers.

**Treasurer:**

- Keeps accurate financial records of the group, and regularly reports to the group regarding 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).
- Pays rent to the meeting facility for use of the meeting room.
- Disburses Seventh Tradition funds in accordance with the meeting group conscience. A suggested guideline is offered earlier in this document.
- Turns over records and funds to a new treasurer.

**Literature Person:**

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

**Phone Contact Person(s):**

- Makes first name and contact info available on local and CoDA World meeting lists.
- Is available to respond to inquiries regarding the meeting and CoDA.



## Section 02 Attracting Members – Community Outreach

### The Community Outreach Package Introduction

Our Eleventh Tradition reminds us that our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. We do not advertise in the traditional sense in that we do not push for everyone to join CoDA. We do not pay celebrity sponsors to speak on our behalf. We do not tell people why they should join up. Instead, we let the program speak for itself. We let people know we are here and then we let them decide for themselves if they want to participate.

The goal is to "carry the message". This Twelfth Step work means, in part, to get information about CoDA and CoDA meetings out into your community so the information is available to other codependents who still suffer. When your meeting is listed in your local newspaper and area mental health professionals know about CoDA more people can learn about CoDA.

The items below can help with attracting members and community outreach:

- 1) Use the Press Release sample below as a way to contact your local newspapers.
- 2) Mail the following information to therapists, hospitals, help-lines, libraries, community centers, and colleges etc., within a 5-10 minute radius of your meeting. Check your phone book for possible nearby locations.
  - "What is CoDA?" pamphlet.
  - Subscription form for a complimentary copy of a local CoDA newsletter. Offer to mail complimentary quarterly mailings to all professionals. A quarterly mailing might include the local CoDA newsletter, updated meeting lists, and flyers about upcoming events.
- 3) Hang a CoDA flyer with meeting information in your community. Some suggestions for locations: churches, supermarkets, community bulletin boards, libraries, doctor's offices. Remember to ask permission first.

Community outreach is a way to implement our Twelfth Step and Fifth Tradition that a CoDA group *"has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to other Co-Dependents who still suffer"*. These suggestions are within the guidelines of Tradition Eleven, which states, *"Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion...."*. If you have any questions, please contact your next level of CoDA service or the CoDA World Outreach Committee [outreach@codas.org](mailto:outreach@codas.org).

## Sample Press Release

This Sample Press Release is in keeping with our 11th Tradition, which states, "*our public relations policy is based upon attraction rather than promotion.*" You may use this form to notify newspapers about your meeting.

### Co-Dependents Anonymous (CoDA) Meeting Information

Co-Dependents Anonymous (CoDA) is a Twelve Step Fellowship of people whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships. The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.

The CoDA meeting in this area meets on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm  
(Day) (Time)  
at \_\_\_\_\_  
(Place) (Address)

For further information contact: \_\_\_\_\_ at (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
CoDA is a non-profit organization supported by the voluntary contributions of attending members.

## Suggestions for Welcoming Newcomers in CoDA Meetings

- Put up a sign in the building that indicates where the meeting is.
- Welcome newcomers. Include a statement in the format about when they can ask questions (after the meeting? during a break?)
- Give each newcomer a *Newcomer Handbook* or "Welcome" chip or a *What is CoDA?* Pamphlet.
- Explain the "no crosstalk" practice as part of your meeting format every week.
- Suggest that newcomers try several meetings before deciding if CoDA is right for them.
- Make an effort to say something to a newcomer.
- If your meeting's members go out after the meeting for coffee or a meal announce at the end of the meeting that everybody is welcome.
- Have meeting lists and phone lists available.
- The contacts for the meeting returns calls and emails promptly.

*Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer. Tradition Five*

## **Section 03 Foundational and Meeting Documents**

The documents enclosed in this section are the foundation upon which all CoDA meetings are built. Many of them can also be found on the [CoDA.org](https://www.co-da.org) website.

- **The Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous**
- **The Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous**
- **The Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous**
- **Service to Others**
- **Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence**
- **Recovery Patterns of Codependence**
- **The Preamble**
- **The Welcome (long version)**
- **The Welcome (short version)**
- **Prayers**
- **“For Safety Sake” tent card**
- **Sample Meeting Format**



## 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 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.

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### The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - 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 Him. 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 Him 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 meditations to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



## The Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous ©

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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 non-professional, 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 public forms of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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## The Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous ©

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

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



## Service to Others

“Our Twelve Steps and their spiritual principles help us to establish our recovery in our relationships with God, ourselves, and others. They offer us spiritual guidelines to help us work with others. Service work in CoDA enables us to put these spiritual guidelines into practice. It embraces a healthy spirit of giving and enables CoDA to exist. Through service work, we acknowledge and esteem every person and their recovery, talents, and abilities. Service work enables us to deepen the recovery we experience and allows God’s gift of recovery to touch the hearts and minds of other codependents.”

*From Codependents Anonymous, page 85*



## Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence

The following checklist is offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation. It may be particularly helpful to newcomers as they begin to understand codependency. It may aid those who have been in recovery a while to determine what traits still need attention and transformation.

### Denial Patterns

#### Codependents often:

- have difficulty identifying what they are feeling.
- minimize, alter, or deny how they truly feel.
- perceive themselves as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.
- lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others.
- label others with their negative traits.
- think they can take care of themselves without any help from others.
- mask pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.
- express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.
- do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom they are attracted.

### Low Self-Esteem Pattern

#### Codependents often:

- have difficulty making decisions.
- judge what they think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.
- are embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.
- value others' approval of their thinking, feelings, and behavior over their own.
- do not perceive themselves as lovable or worthwhile persons.
- seek recognition and praise to overcome feeling less than.
- have difficulty admitting a mistake.
- need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and may even lie to look good.
- are unable to identify or ask for what they need and want.
- perceive themselves as superior to others.
- look to others to provide their sense of safety.
- have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.
- have trouble setting healthy priorities and boundaries.

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## Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence (cont'd.)

### Compliance Patterns

#### Codependents often:

- are extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.
- compromise their own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.
- put aside their own interests in order to do what others want.
- are hypervigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.
- are afraid to express their beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.
- accept sexual attention when they want love.
- make decisions without regard to the consequences.
- give up their truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.

### Control Patterns

#### Codependents often:

- believe people are incapable of taking care of themselves.
- attempt to convince others what to think, do, or feel.
- freely offer advice and direction without being asked.
- become resentful when others decline their help or reject their advice.
- lavish gifts and favors on those they want to influence.
- use sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance.
- have to feel needed in order to have a relationship with others.
- demand that their needs be met by others.
- use charm and charisma to convince others of their capacity to be caring and compassionate.
- use blame and shame to exploit others emotionally.
- refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.
- adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes.
- use recovery jargon in an attempt to control the behavior of others.
- pretend to agree with others to get what they want.

### Avoidance Patterns

#### Codependents often:

- act in ways that invite others to reject, shame, or express anger toward them.
- judge harshly what others think, say, or do.
- avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a way to maintain distance.
- allow addictions to people, places, and things to distract them from achieving intimacy in relationships.
- use indirect or evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation.
- diminish their capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use the tools of recovery.
- suppress their feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable.
- pull people toward them, but when others get close, push them away.
- refuse to give up their self-will to avoid surrendering to a power greater than themselves.
- believe displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.
- withhold expressions of appreciation.

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## Recovery Patterns of Codependence

	Codependents often...	In Recovery...
<b>Denial Patterns</b>	Have difficulty identifying what they are feeling	I am aware of my feelings and identify them, often in the moment. I know the difference between my thoughts and feelings.
	Minimize, alter, or deny how they truly feel.	I embrace my feelings; they are valid and important.
	Perceive themselves as completely unselfish and dedicated to the wellbeing of others	I know the difference between caring and caretaking. I recognize that caretaking others is often motivated by a need to benefit myself.
	Lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others.	I am able to feel compassion for another's feelings and needs.
	Label others with their negative traits.	I acknowledge that I may own the negative traits I often perceive in others.
	Think they can take care of themselves without any help from others.	I acknowledge that I sometimes need the help of others.
	Mask pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.	I am aware of my painful feelings and express them appropriately.
	Express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.	I am able to express my feelings openly, directly, and calmly.
	Do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom they are attracted.	I pursue intimate relationships only with others who want, and are able to engage in, healthy and loving relationships.
<b>Low Self-esteem Patterns</b>	Codependents often...	In Recovery...
	Have difficulty making decisions.	I trust my ability to make effective decisions.
	Judge what they think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.	I accept myself as I am. I emphasize progress over perfection.
	Are embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.	I feel appropriately worthy of the recognition, praise, or gifts I receive.
	Value others' approval of their thinking, feelings, and behavior over their own.	I value the opinions of those I trust, without needing to gain their approval. I have confidence in myself.
Do not perceive themselves as lovable or worthwhile persons.	I recognize myself as being a lovable and valuable person.	

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### Recovery Patterns of Codependence (cont.)

	Codependents often...	In Recovery...
Low Self-esteem Patterns (cont.)	Seek recognition and praise to overcome feeling less than.	I seek my own approval first, and examine my motivations carefully when I seek approval from others.
	Have difficulty admitting a mistake.	I continue to take my personal inventory, and when I am wrong, promptly admit it.
	Need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and may even lie to look good.	I am honest with myself about my behaviors and motivations. I feel secure enough to admit mistakes to myself and others, and to hear their opinions without feeling threatened.
	Are unable to identify or ask for what they need and want.	I meet my own needs and wants when possible. I reach out for help when it's necessary and appropriate.
	Perceive themselves as superior to others.	I perceive myself as equal to others.
	Look to others to provide their sense of safety.	With the help of my Higher Power, I create safety in my life.
	Have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.	I avoid procrastination by meeting my responsibilities in a timely manner.
	Have trouble setting healthy priorities and boundaries.	I am able to establish and uphold healthy priorities and boundaries in my life.
Compliance Patterns	Codependents often...	In Recovery...
	Are extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.	I am committed to my safety and leave situations that feel unsafe or are inconsistent with my goals.
	Compromise their own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.	I am rooted in my own values, even if others don't agree or become angry.
	Put aside their own interests in order to do what others want.	I consider my interests and feelings when asked to participate in another's plans.
	Are hypervigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.	I can separate my feelings from the feelings of others. I allow myself to experience my feelings and others to be responsible for their feelings.
	Are afraid to express their beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.	I respect my own opinions and feelings and express them appropriately.
	Accept sexual attention when they want love.	My sexuality is grounded in genuine intimacy and connection. When I need to feel loved, I express my heart's desires. I do not settle for sex without love.
	Make decisions without regard to the consequences.	I ask my Higher Power for guidance, and consider possible consequences before I make decisions.
Give up their truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.	I stand in my truth and maintain my integrity, whether others approve or not, even if it means making difficult changes in my life.	

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## Recovery Patterns of Codependence (cont.)

	Codependents often...	In Recovery...
<b>Control Patterns</b>	<b>Believe people are incapable of taking care of themselves.</b>	<b>I realize that, with rare exceptions, other adults are capable of managing their own lives.</b>
	<b>Attempt to convince others what to think, do, or feel.</b>	<b>I accept the thoughts, choices, and feelings of others, even though I may not be comfortable with them.</b>
	<b>Freely offer advice and direction without being asked.</b>	<b>I give advice only when asked.</b>
	<b>Become resentful when others decline their help or reject their advice.</b>	<b>I am content to see others take care of themselves.</b>
	<b>Lavish gifts and favors on those they want to influence.</b>	<b>I carefully and honestly contemplate my motivations when preparing to give a gift.</b>
	<b>Use sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance.</b>	<b>I embrace and celebrate my sexuality as evidence of my health and wholeness. I do not use it to gain the approval of others.</b>
	<b>Have to feel needed in order to have a relationship with others.</b>	<b>I develop relationships with others based on equality, intimacy, and balance.</b>
	<b>Demand that their needs be met by others.</b>	<b>I find and use resources that meet my needs without making demands on others. I ask for help when I need it, without expectation.</b>
	<b>Use charm and charisma to convince others of their capacity to be caring and compassionate.</b>	<b>I behave authentically with others, allowing my caring and compassionate qualities to emerge.</b>
	<b>Use blame and shame to exploit others emotionally.</b>	<b>I ask directly for what I want and need and trust the outcome to my Higher Power. I do not try to manipulate outcomes with blame or shame.</b>
	<b>Refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.</b>	<b>I cooperate, compromise, and negotiate with others in a way that honors my integrity.</b>
	<b>Adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes.</b>	<b>I treat others with respect and consideration, and trust my Higher Power to meet my needs and desires.</b>
	<b>Use recovery jargon in an attempt to control the behavior of others.</b>	<b>I use my recovery for my own growth and not to manipulate or control others.</b>
	<b>Pretend to agree with others to get what they want.</b>	<b>My communication with others is authentic and truthful.</b>

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### Recovery Patterns of Codependence (cont.)

	Codependents often...	In Recovery...
<b>Avoidance Patterns</b>	<b>Act in ways that invite others to reject, shame, or express anger toward them.</b>	<b>I act in ways that encourage loving and healthy responses from others.</b>
	<b>Judge harshly what others think, say, or do.</b>	<b>I keep an open mind and accept others as they are.</b>
	<b>Avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a way to maintain distance.</b>	<b>I engage in emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy when it is healthy and appropriate for me.</b>
	<b>Allow addictions to people, places, and things to distract them from achieving intimacy in relationships.</b>	<b>I practice my recovery to develop healthy and fulfilling relationships.</b>
	<b>Use indirect or evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation.</b>	<b>I use direct and straightforward communication to resolve conflicts and deal appropriately with confrontations.</b>
	<b>Diminish their capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use the tools of recovery.</b>	<b>When I use the tools of recovery, I am able to develop and maintain healthy relationships of my choosing.</b>
	<b>Suppress their feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable.</b>	<b>I embrace my own vulnerability by trusting and honoring my feelings and needs.</b>
	<b>Pull people toward them, but when others get close, push them away.</b>	<b>I welcome close relationships while maintaining healthy boundaries.</b>
	<b>Refuse to give up their self-will to avoid surrendering to a power greater than themselves.</b>	<b>I believe in and trust a power greater than myself. I willingly surrender my self-will to my Higher Power.</b>
	<b>Believe displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.</b>	<b>I honor my authentic emotions and share them when appropriate.</b>
	<b>Withhold expressions of appreciation.</b>	<b>I freely engage in expressions of appreciation toward others.</b>

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## Preamble of Co-Dependents Anonymous<sup>®</sup>

Co-Dependents Anonymous is a fellowship of 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 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 Anonymous, we can each realize a new joy, acceptance and serenity in our lives.

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## Welcome to Co-Dependents Anonymous<sup>©</sup> (long version)

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 wellbeing, 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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## Welcome to Co-Dependents Anonymous® (short version)

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.

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 CoDA 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 Co-Dependents Anonymous. May you find a new strength within to be that which God intended - Precious and Free.

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CoDA has five suggested prayers that are Conference endorsed as CoDA literature:

**The CoDA Opening Prayer** ©

In the spirit of love and truth, we ask our Higher Power to guide us as we share our experience, strength and hope.

We open our hearts to the light of wisdom, the warmth of love, and the joy of acceptance.

Conference Endorsed 9/13/91

**The 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.

Conference Endorsed 9/13/91

Other commonly used prayers in CoDA are The Serenity Prayer and The CoDA Recovery Prayer

**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

Conference Endorsed 1989

**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.

Conference Endorsed 10/10/2017

**Service Unity Work Prayer**

Higher Power, please help us stay mindful in our service work, reminding us that we do not seek personal power, nor do we govern or control others to advance our personal agendas. Instead, we practice: Anonymity, Humility, Tolerance, Gratitude, Amends, and Forgiveness"

Conference Endorsed 2020

## For Safety Sake

**I let others experience their own feelings; I keep my advice to myself.**

**I help myself and others by being emotionally present and honest.**

**I share for three to five minutes, keeping the focus on myself.**

**I refrain from commenting on what others share.**

**I share my own experience, strength, and hope—no one else's.**

**I use "I" statements when sharing. (I feel; I believe.)**

**FOR SAFETY SAKE**

## FOR SAFETY SAKE

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## Sample Meeting Format

This sample meeting format is included as a guideline. 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. Bold sections are for the chair or meeting leader to read aloud; plain text sections are optional extras. 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 Co-Dependents Anonymous. My name is \_and I am a codependent. I am your meeting leader tonight (today). CoDA 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. Please help me open this meeting with a moment of silence followed by the**

*(This is the meeting leader or group's prayer of choice: the Serenity Prayer or the CoDA Opening Prayer)*

<p><b><u>The CoDA Opening Prayer</u></b> ©</p> <p>In the spirit of love and truth, we ask our Higher Power</p> <p>to guide us as we share our experience, strength, and hope.</p> <p>We open our hearts to the light of wisdom, the warmth of love, and the joy of acceptance.</p>	<p><b><u>The Serenity Prayer</u></b></p> <p>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</p>
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2. **The group meeting leader reads the CoDA "Preamble" as written.**
3. **"We welcome any newcomers who are attending their first, second or third meeting of Co- Dependents Anonymous, and ask that you raise your hand and introduce yourself by your first name only..."**  
*Optional - Newcomers can be welcomed by clapping after each or all have introduced themselves. If your meeting gives out welcome chips and/or newcomer packets, you may distribute those.*
4. **"So that we can get to know each other better, let's take this time to introduce ourselves by first name only."** *(Meeting leader introduces self and then introductions continue around the room.)*
5. **The group meeting leader reads the CoDA "Welcome" as written** (long or short version).
6. **"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.*
7. **"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.*
8. **Optional** - "Will the person with the *Patterns of Codependence* or the *Recovery Patterns of Codependence* please read them?"

## Announcements Section (some groups do this after the Program Section)

9. "There are meeting schedules and phone lists on the literature table."

10. a) "Our literature person is \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have any announcements?"

b) "Our treasurer is \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have any announcements?"

c) "Our Group Representative is \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have any announcements?"

*Note: If you do not have trusted servants for the above positions, or elect as a group not to speak items 10. Continuing from 11 may be sufficient.*

11. "Restrooms are located....."

Announce any meeting facility issues (smoking policy, etc.)

12. "Are there any CoDA announcements?"

The GSR or secretary shares community, Voting Entity, or CoDA World announcements. Any member may also share CoDA announcements. Some meetings choose to also allow CoDA related announcements.

13. **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.?"

*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".*

14. **Optional- Announce:** "If you would like to celebrate your birthday, please let the secretary know at least one week ahead of time.

## Program Section

Begin your meeting program here. If your meeting has a speaker or reads from CoDA literature, this usually lasts 10 to 20 minutes. To enhance the power of our recovery program, CoDA suggests considering having at least one meeting per month be devoted to studying one of the Twelve Steps.

15. **Optional, strongly suggested-** Read the *CoDA Guide to Sharing, What is Crosstalk?* or both.

Co-Dependents Anonymous does not accept harassment, bullying, 13th stepping 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, pregnancy or for any other reason. If you feel you are being treated disrespectfully in this meeting, please notify the person leading the meeting.

### CoDA Guide to Sharing

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 very difficult task. We encourage people to begin slowly and carefully. It is the intention of every CoDA 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.

### What is "Crosstalk"?

Crosstalk can be: giving unsolicited feedback, advice-giving, answering, making you and we

statements, interrogating, debating, criticizing, controlling or dominating. It may also include: minimizing another person's feeling or experiences, physical contact or touch, body movements, such as nodding one's head, calling another person present by name, or verbal sounds and noises."

"In our meetings we speak about our own experience, and we listen without comment to what others share. We work toward taking responsibility in our own lives, rather than giving advice to others. Crosstalk guidelines help keep our meeting a safe place."

**16. "The meeting is now open for individual sharing..."**

**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 determine how to indicate when time is up, i.e. a timer, tapping on something, or a gentle reminder by chairperson.

## Closing Section

**17. "Our Seventh Tradition reminds us that we are self-supporting through our own contributions. We ask that you donate only as you can. Please remember that a dollar doesn't go as far as it used to. A suggested donation of \$2-5 will help to meet our obligations for rent and other meeting expenses, as well as supporting CoDA at all levels." *Optional-* some meetings choose to ask for Seventh Tradition donations at the beginning of the meeting, during the announcements section.**

**18. "As we bring this meeting to a close, I would like to remind you that CoDA is an anonymous program. We ask that you respect the anonymity and confidentiality of each person in this meeting. We ask that "what you see here, what is said here, when you leave here, let it stay here."**

**Optional-** "Will the person with the *Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous* please read them?"

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

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

**Optional-**Affirmations: Starting with the leader or a volunteer each person in turn gives a positive affirmation such as: "I know a new freedom" or they may pass.

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**

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

### **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.

## Section 04 CoDA Service Forms

Below are some forms that you may find helpful to get your new CoDA meeting started. Make as many copies as you want.

- A. **Contribution Form:** Your group can use this form or you can submit 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition donations to Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc. via [coda.org](http://coda.org).
- B. **Meeting Phone List:** Provides information concerning the purpose of the phone list and a reminder about healthy boundaries, as well as a format for communicating helpful information such as best time to call and sponsorship availability.
- C. **CoDA Meeting Funds Record:** Use this form to help the meeting's Treasurer keep track of money coming in and going out. A written record also provides a means of financial accountability to the group.



## Seventh Tradition Contribution Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Group #: \_\_\_\_\_ Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Meeting Place: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Day and Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Check/Money Order #: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ Check/MO Signed By: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contribution Acknowledgement To Be Sent To:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Contact No: \_\_\_\_\_

### Follow-up information:

Date sent: \_\_\_\_\_ Acknowledgement Rec'd: \_\_\_\_\_

Cancelled Ck Rec'd: \_\_\_\_\_

*It is suggested that a copy of this form be kept for your records.*

*Return completed form to:*

CoDA, Fellowship Services Office  
7375 East 6th Ave  
Suite 9  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251





