



Meeting in Print

March 2025 (Ed. 34)

"It Is Possible to Mend"

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- Anon.

CoDA Co-NNections

Greetings from your CoDA Co-NNections Committee

Welcome to the quarterly issue of Meeting in Print, a CoDA recovery and support publication. Recovery is for everyone, and we hope you enjoy reading these shares. Meeting in Print contains CoDA-approved literature, as well as shares, uplifting quotes and artistic material from CoDA members.

The shares and poetry in this publication link to the Promise 'I learn that it is possible for me to mend'. The topic 'It Is Possible to Mend'.

We hope you find this issue both enjoyable and insightful.

Please feel free to contact us with comments and suggestions – and, as always, *your contributions*! You submit a contribution at <https://coda.org/submit-your-story/>

Warmly,

Your Meeting in Print Subcommittee



- Jim H.

Opening Readings

The Preamble of Co-Dependents Anonymous

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.

The Welcome of Co-Dependents Anonymous

We welcome you to Co-Dependents Anonymous, a program of recovery from codependence, where each of us may share our experience, strength, and hope in our efforts to find freedom where there has been bondage and peace where there has been turmoil in our relationships with others and ourselves.

Most of us have been searching for ways to overcome the dilemmas of the conflicts in our relationships and our childhoods. Many of us were raised in families where addictions existed—some of us were not. In either case, we have found in each of our lives that codependence is a most deeply-rooted compulsive behavior and that it is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional families and other systems.

We have each experienced in our own ways the painful trauma of the emptiness of our childhood and relationships throughout our lives. We attempted to use others—our mates, friends, and even our children, as our sole source of identity, value and well-being, and as a way of trying to restore within us the emotional losses from our childhoods. Our histories may include other powerful addictions which at times we have used to cope with our codependence.

We have all learned to survive life, but in CoDA we are learning to live life. Through applying the Twelve Steps and principles found in CoDA to our daily life and relationships both present and past—we can experience a new freedom from our self-defeating lifestyles. It is an individual growth process. Each of us is growing at our own pace and will continue to do so as we remain open to God's will for us on a daily basis. Our sharing is our way of identification and helps us to free the emotional bonds of our past and the compulsive control of our present.

No matter how traumatic your past or despairing your present may seem, there is hope for a new day in the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. No longer do you need to rely on others as a power greater than yourself. May you instead find here a new strength within to be that which God intended—Precious and Free.

The Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over others - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other codependents, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions of Codependents Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving higher power as expressed to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership in CoDA is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.
4. Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer.
6. A CoDA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the CoDA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim.
7. A CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. CoDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. CoDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the CoDA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and all other public forms of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions; ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Community Shares

“Reflections on Triggers”

What is a trigger?

In the context of codependency, my interpretation of a trigger is an external event, behavior, or situation that activates an intense emotional reaction, often tied to past traumas or unmet emotional needs. These reactions can bring up feelings for me, like fear, anger, shame, or anxiety, which are rooted in my unresolved experiences or unhealthy patterns from my childhood or previous relationships.

Reflections on Triggers: Understanding Our Responsibility and Healing Through Awareness

In my journey of self-discovery and healing, I have come to realize something profound: my triggers are not just random emotional reactions. Triggers are signals — notifications that something from my past has surfaced, revealing a trauma that is still affecting my present. These triggers, while often uncomfortable, have become one of the most insightful tools in my recovery toolbox. They inform me when something should be addressed, when a part of my past is still having a say in my present, and when growth is needed.

Triggers Are Mine to Own

One of the most important lessons I've learned in recent years is that I am responsible for my triggers — no one else is. The situations or people who activate my emotional responses are not to blame. It's easy to point fingers, especially when someone else's words or actions seem to "set me off." But over time, I've come to understand that these reactions are mine to process, not theirs to manage.

Triggers are clues that lead me toward the deeper issues I need to confront and, as long as I am blaming anyone for my triggers, they have to get better before I can get better. Worse, I

can use that as an excuse: I don't have to get better until they get better. Recognizing this pattern has been a crucial step in reclaiming my personal power and growth.

Walking on Eggshells: The Stress of Shared Triggers

I've been in relationships where both my partner and I had unresolved triggers. In these situations, it felt like we were both walking on eggshells, each of us trying to avoid activating the other person's emotional landmines. My partner would react strongly when I unknowingly triggered them, and I often found myself treading lightly, unsure of what might provoke an angry or hurtful response.

It didn't help that I also had my own triggers, ones I expected my partner to avoid. This mutual sensitivity created a tension-filled environment, a constant balancing act of trying to stay on the "safe" side of each other's emotions. Instead of fostering a nurturing, loving space, we ended up with an atmosphere of stress and fear, where neither of us could truly relax or feel safe.

The Shift: Healing Through Awareness and Support

Thankfully, I've learned that there is a different way to approach these triggers — a healthier, more compassionate way. Through my program and the wonderful people in it, I've gained the tools to examine what my triggers really mean. I've learned to sit with the discomfort they bring up and dig deeper into the emotions and memories that lie beneath the surface. With the support of others, I can now ask myself: What is this trigger teaching me? What pain or fear is being revealed?

This process of self-inquiry has helped me reclaim power over my reactions. I've stopped blaming others for activating my triggers, and instead, I take responsibility for my emotional responses. I've learned that healing isn't about avoiding my triggers or trying to prevent them; it's about understanding them and addressing the underlying issues that they reveal.

My triggers don't define me — they guide me toward the transformation I desire.

Byrle – 13/12/24

“The We”

As a teenager and young adult, poetry was my voice for the dark reality I was living. A lot of times my poetry spoke truths I didn't even fully understand about myself yet. I've been writing poetry again as a way to tap into that voice within me - giving it space to let it know it matters and deserves to shine its light.

Here's the latest I wrote

It's a deep, dark, quiet house and no one seems to care.

A broken soul, a broken spirit - A long, blank, empty stare.

I eat, I weep, I run, I crawl

I fight, I scream all inside I call.

No one can hear my cry for help from inside of me.

A stranger, a shrink.

They all try and diagnose me without knowing the whole truth.

No one's really listening.

Yet one day, I stumble upon You.

I hear me in you. Could this be true?

I take a leap - A leap into nothing I think -

But what can I lose but this ache?

My numbness subsides as I take a chance and unhide -

You listen, and I speak.

You speak, and We listen.

And what I see is -

We all take up space here...

and the lights in the bedroom come on.

The oven begins heating, the kettle is humming

I'm beginning to light up...

My home within me.

I keep advocating for my light, for my truth, and for my right

To be seen.

The house is a flurry of dancing now, It's just me in there, carrying a tune.

I take up space in this home now

Excavating any monsters under the bed. or in my head -

They're all asked to leave immediately.

We have no use for you here.

No one can inhabit this house

Without my permission

And I change my mind whenever I'd like

Because this is me.

This home, once dark and numb and empty

Is bustling with all parts of me.

I am home, within me, because of the We.

Kayla H 11/10/24



Waikato, New Zealand. D.R

“It Works If You Work It”

My name is Amy and I am codependent. I attended my first CoDA meeting as a newly divorced mom, a shell of my former self...stuck in a horrific trauma bond with a covert abuser. I was physically and emotionally weak, I cried every day, I was not eating or sleeping much. My emotions were so unregulated, I felt like I was truly dying. My house was in shambles, my finances were ruined and I had just discovered my ex husband's new girlfriend was really not that new. I was continuously raging at a man who tried to ruin me, and then would turn around and try to caretaker him. I was so happy to get this divorce, why did I feel like I was dying? Why am I behaving like a crazy person? My amazing therapist quietly handed me a post it note with the word CoDA written on it.

When I walked into that room for the first time, I was met by two lovely women who welcomed me so warmly. As more women came into the meeting, my nerves started to fade a bit. I was emotionally raw and could hardly make eye contact with anyone without crying. I did manage to say my name but quickly said I was not ready to share yet. When I walked out of that meeting, I bawled my eyes out on the way home. I remember calling my mom and saying “I have found my people!!!” Hearing the patterns and the promises absolutely gutted

me. I knew right then I was a bonafide codependent and I knew I was going to do everything I could to figure this disease out and make those promises happen to me.

As I continued going to meetings, I was able to finally open up a little. I still cried every damn time I shared at a meeting, but I was getting better about it at home and at work. I started reading and studying the Steps. I talked to a friend who is also in recovery and she started showing me how it works. She just kept telling me “it works if you work it” and “more will be revealed”.

Each day, I tried to do the next right thing and also to do something nice for myself. I started relying on my Higher Power more and more. My friend told me to start keeping track of the good things that happened to me when I let my HP take care of it. She called it a “God Box”. My God Box was my journal and I started to notice the new positive patterns of my life when I stopped trying to control everything and everyone.

I also started setting boundaries for the first time in my life. I still struggled but I was no longer rock bottom. I made friends with many amazing women who understood me and my codependency. I jumped in, head first, and started working the Steps. It was not easy, but I was not alone. I was not crazy at all, just really codependent.

My two-year CoDA birthday was four days ago. I cannot believe it has been two years. I chaired a meeting and expressed my gratitude. I still cried, but not like I used to when I was at my worst. I go to meetings as often as possible and I still learn something new from shares at every meeting. The feelings of emptiness and loneliness have disappeared. The other Promises are coming true as well. I feel like I have been given a second chance at life.

I am so thankful for CoDA and the women who keep coming back. It does work if you work it. I never would have imagined two years ago that my life could be this different. For that I am so grateful.

Amy E, 1/09/24



Lake Karapiro, New Zealand, D.R.

“I See”

I See. I see me.

I see my worth and value.

I see my excuses and my avoidance.

I see my innate goodness.

I see my denial and my control.

I see my strength and determination.

I see my obsession and my fear.

I see my guilt and “overactive conscience”

controlling my actions and dependence.

I see my budding power and divinity.

I see my ability to say “no” or “yes.”

I see my growth and progress.

I see me. I finally see me.

I see you. I see your value and worth.

I see your humanity –

your mistakes and weaknesses mixed with compassion and hope.

I see that “it is what it is – without putting judgments on it.”

I see your trembling, your fear, and your shame.

I see your sparkling eyes and jovial smile.

I see your love that has been there all along.

I see your hard work and labor.

I see the little things and the big things.

I see your parts and your pieces.

I see your wishes and dreams.

I see you. I finally see you.

I see God. I see God’s Truth.

I see God’s work in me when I am honest and accountable.

I see God’s details. I see God’s gifts.

I see God’s mercy. I see God’s love.

I see God’s presence in my life.

I see God’s plan. I see God’s promises.

I see God. I finally see God.

(An addendum to my poem as encouraged by my sponsor.)

I see her – the Little Girl within.

I see her value and worth.

I see her humanity –

her mistakes and weaknesses mixed with compassion and hope.

I see that “it is what it is – without putting judgments on it.”

I see her trembling, her fear, and her shame.

I see her sparkling eyes and jovial smile.

I see her love that has been there all along.

I see her hard work and labor.

I see the little things and the big things.

I see her parts and her pieces.

I see her wishes and dreams.

I see her. I finally see her.

Audryn – 6/21/21



Wellington, NZ, D.R

“My Reality Was I Could Never Change”

I had found out about CoDA the first time in desperation to help me in a relationship I was struggling with - at that time I don't remember how I was turned on to getting to a meeting, I just ended up at one. I remember I struggled to understand the meaning behind CoDA and quite honestly, I just wanted a quick fix. I had only attended a handful of meetings when my brother, my best friend committed suicide - sadly, I stopped returning to those meetings. That was in my early 30's.

The next time I would find myself at a meeting was at age 59. I can say, had I remained in CoDA those early years, it would have saved me years of unmanageability. This included relationships, friendships and just about anything I was involved with - especially in my work where I must be able to get along with co-workers. My life was coming to a head.

I had grown up with a very passive mother and a very aggressive father and that made for constant chaos in the home. I learned very early on the only way to survive was to be emotional because if I hadn't been I most certainly would not have been noticed at all. My mother later in my life became my enabler. My mother suffered through all my broken relationships including the one I had with her. I lived with shame and anger.

In December of 2022 my mom sadly passed away from cancer and all of a sudden, I had no one - however I did have my dysfunctional relationships. Suffering, I began to spiral out of control to the point I was planning my suicide and how to take my pets with me. It was nothing short of a miracle when a segment from a self-help podcast came on, a woman mentioned she had been in Co-Dependents Anonymous for nearly 25 years. I hadn't heard "Co-Dependents Anonymous" since those early days and it was right at that moment I got on the CoDA website and found a meeting.

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Walking into that meeting was the first time I felt like I literally belonged somewhere. I was a shell of a person and emotionally I couldn't talk without breaking down. But I was able to listen and this time I really paid attention, because this was the only place I had left to turn. Amongst the many tools I would obtain were that of folks sharing their personal struggles and accomplishments. In reading the traits of Co-Dependents Anonymous I literally associated myself with each of them.

Working the 12 Steps started me to see I was the common denominator in all my relationship problems. The literature that I discovered through CoDA became my "bible"; it was a reference to use between the meetings I was attending. I began to write and it's the writing that began to allow me to fully understand my past and how it molded me into the adult person I had become. Sharing my truth, being vulnerable, I began to understand the beauty of being able to let go of control. I began to learn how to start having a completely different

language with myself, one of love and not shame. I began to understand I no longer had to prove to anyone my worth, especially to myself - I was simply enough. Now nearly one year in meetings helps to keep me on a well-balanced path because it had been years in the making of my unmanageable behaviors.

I understood I had deep rooted behaviors that could easily surface but by attending meetings regularly I have a loving and constant reminder I'm not alone on my journey. Nobody could fix me. I've had to work at that for myself. CoDA has given me a way to understand I have capabilities to manage life - simply, CoDA has helped me to save myself.

Brita. G - 01/15/2025



Tauranga Gardens, N.Z Kate.

“In This Moment”

Christmas times can bring out the best and the worst – in me anyway. I love Christmas, especially this last one when all my family were away on holiday together. But there are some strong triggering experiences that occurred for me this last Christmas and I want to use this opportunity to share, and work through them.

What was the situation that triggered me?

I have a specific situation that I want to reflect on as it triggered me so much that I immediately found myself reacting the same way I did as a child. So, whilst away on holiday with my adult children and their partners, my grandchildren and believe it or not, even my ex-husband, I felt a mixture of very strong feelings. At the times that it felt the most intense, it was almost as if I was outside of myself, observing me interacting (or the lack of, as the case may be) with my family. But what I saw was someone who was almost frozen, she didn't talk a lot and she didn't look like she was having much fun. I wanted to tell myself “come on - get your act together, it's Christmas!”

What was the specific experience that triggered me?

I started to notice how my daughter (a woman in her early 40's) appeared to interact with me differently from the way she interacted with her father. This isn't new but it hasn't been something I have quite seen play out in the way it did. It was not evident in her direct words, but more so her looks and tone of her voice. The tone was dismissive to me, yet a few minutes later she would be cheerful towards her dad. I felt like a neglected child, and it was as if my daughter was the disciplining mother.

To give some context here, I often find myself walking on eggshells around this daughter, something that doesn't occur between myself and my other two children. Therefore, I think I came into this Christmas time of staying together, already in a slightly hyper-vigilant state. Also, just like her dad, my daughter is an alcoholic in recovery. Something I forget to remind myself of. Added to that, my ex-husband is 12 years my senior, and therefore my daughter has always gone out of her way to support her dad financially and emotionally.

She is there for me too, if I need support if I'm not well, and in fact she is very loving at these times. But this isn't something I require very often, therefore my relationship with my daughter remains a little tenuous at times. So, I shouldn't really have been surprised when I saw the differences play out in front of me. But I was, and it threw me.

What was I feeling?

I felt feelings of abandonment. As I said, it was as if I was the child, and my daughter was the parent. Only, just like my mother, my daughter was playing out the role of the 'emotionally absent' parent.

What was this experience triggering?

My earlier experiences as a child were being triggered. Feelings of abandonment flooded over me. The feelings took me by surprise and were intense and overpowering. I felt just like I did as a young child - 'not seen' and 'not heard'. Once again, I was revisiting feelings of isolation and insignificance that I experienced as a child.

Why was I feeling these overwhelming feelings?

As a child, I don't believe anybody validated or even acknowledged my feelings, and the same thing happened in this situation. But was it the responsibility of anyone else to validate my feelings? I am an adult now, so why was I struggling? In this situation I couldn't validate or acknowledge my own feelings because I was too caught up in them – too triggered by them.

I never quite got over these feelings over the few days we were away together. But then I got home, and I picked myself up and dusted myself off. The first thing I did was go to my usual CoDA meeting where I felt safe and listened to. At that first meeting for the year after the holidays, I couldn't say too much, it was still raw. I cried a little when I did share (that surprised me). At the meeting we discussed Step One, and I heard these words: *"At this moment, I do not have to control anyone, including me. If I feel uncomfortable with what another person is doing or not doing, I can remind myself that I am powerless over this person"* (Twelve Steps Handbook, p. 8). And near the end of the meeting, I was also reminded of the 8th promise: *"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"*.

I went home and started reflecting on it. I reminded myself I am powerless over others, but I am not powerless over myself. I can treat my daughter in a way that is safe for me and respectful of her. And, at this moment, and just for today, that's what I am doing.

Debbie. R 1/25/25



D.R

“A Goodbye Letter to My “Old Friends” (7th Step Letter)”

Dear “Old Friends”,

I want to take the time to truly thank each of you for your role and responsibility in my life. You have each helped me survive life in the most helpful ways, full of love and support *at the time* you each served me. Now, you are no longer needed and I want to take time to intentionally thank each of you by name and share with you the value you brought to my life.

Thank you ‘Needing To Do Something About What I’m Feeling’. You no longer serve me and it’s time to let you go. I now know that my feelings are perfect just as they are, goodbye.

Thank you ‘Belief That I Am In Control’. You no longer serve me and it’s time to let you go. I now know that only God is in control and I no longer have to act like I am, goodbye.

Thank you ‘Fear Of Letting Go And Trusting’. You no longer serve me and it’s time to let you go. I now know that I can let go and trust. I feel more peace in that than I have ever felt while living in fear, goodbye.

Thank you ‘Fear Of What Others May Think And Feel About Me’. You no longer serve me and it’s time to let you go. I now know that what others think and feel about me isn’t my business.

What they think and feel about me doesn't define me. As long as I show up with authenticity, I will be guided and loved by God and what others think of me doesn't matter. It only matters what God and I think of me. Goodbye.

Thank you 'Fear Of Others' Anger'. You no longer serve me and it's time to let you go. I now know that anger is just an emotion and I can choose to not attach to it because I am not responsible for another person's anger. I can walk away and lean on God. Goodbye.

Thank you 'Manipulation'. You no longer serve me and it's time to let you go. I now know that manipulation is control in disguise and that I can choose to let go and trust God's plan instead of my will. Goodbye.

Thank you 'Self-Abuse'. You served me for a long time helping me to believe I can control myself and others and that I have to punish myself when I do the "wrong" thing or am "bad". You no longer serve me and it's time to let you go. I now know that self-abuse only makes the problem worse and that trusting God has a plan for me even when I do "bad" or the "wrong" thing. There is always something to learn. Goodbye.

Thank you 'Habit Of Reacting To Others And My Thoughts'. You no longer serve me and it's time to let you go. You served me for a long time and created a false sense of safety and control for me. I now know that my thoughts are just thoughts and they do not need to be reacted to. My thoughts are now given to God to work through. Goodbye Reacting.

Thank you to 'Needing To Be Right'. You no longer serve me and it's time to let you go. You helped me hold only a false sense of control and I no longer need to act like I have control. I now know that God has control and my best interest in mind and that I don't need to prove myself because I am worthy no matter what the outcome of anything is. I know that - because I have God. Goodbye.

Thank you to 'The Need To Do Everything Myself'. You no longer serve me and it's time to let you go. You protected me for a long time when I believed the only way to feel worthy was through my accomplishments and my performances. I now know that I am worthy solely for being myself. I also know that God loves me, celebrates me, and knows that I'm an individual who is important and adds to the world in my own unique way. Goodbye to 'The Need To Do Everything Myself'. I know asking for help is humbling me even more. God is always there for help - it's safe to ask others for help.

Thank you to 'The Desire For Others To Do Things My Way'. You no longer serve me and it's time to let you go. You gave me another way to hold onto a false sense of control. I now know that it's okay to let others learn for themselves and have their own way of doing things. My way is not the only way to do things and I don't need to try and convince anyone it is. Goodbye to 'The Desire For Others To Do Things My Way'.

Thank you to my best old friend 'Perfectionism'. You have been my most reliable old friend

who served as a protective way to hide my true self. You helped me to feel safe even if it was a false sense of safety. I *have* to let you go and show my true colors to the world so that I can grow in confidence and love. I now know that it is completely safe to be myself and if that's not accepted by others it's a compliment - because being authentic will attract the right people. God loves me as I am and I love me as I am. I know who I am. Thank you 'Perfectionism', you are no longer needed - goodbye.

Thank you 'People Pleasing' - another best friend. You have provided so much false safety, but for the longest time you did really help me a lot. I now know that I don't need to hide myself and ignore my own needs to please other people. I now have God to guide me and help me say no, speak up for myself, share my wants, hopes, and needs - and I know they are all more important than pleasing other people. I can only give to others from a full cup and only when I *want* to give, not when I'm trying to gain approval from others. Goodbye.

I am moving on from each of you because you are no longer helping me grow or protecting me. You have served me for a long time, but now I notice that the longer and harder I hold on to you, the more you are leading me to hurt. And I just can't accept that anymore. So thank you all so much for protecting me in the past. Now, I'm looking for a present and future of trusting in God and myself. Goodbye old friends, you can rest now - you did your job; you brought me to recovery and I will always remember you.

With so much love and light. Erin, 01/29/2025



Tauranga Gardens, NZ, Kate.

“The Right Next Step”

When I first came to CoDA two years ago, I was in the worst state I’ve ever been in. I had been white knuckling my codependency for my entire life, but in my relationship with my ex and subsequent separation and divorce, it had become essentially constant magical thinking and dissociation as a way of coping. On top of that, I was so lonely that I could feel it in my bones. Between COVID and a high-control relationship, I had lost almost all of my friendships and had more organically lost touch with most of my dysfunctional family.

I had put CoDA on my calendar in the spring of 2022, thinking it might be useful as I was starting to understand that my relationship with my mom was unhealthy. In my post-separation reliance on her, she was showing up, but in the limited way that enmeshed people show up, like the opposite of a ghost - physically present but without a spirit. I knew SHE was codependent at that point, but I had yet to fully take into my brain that that likely meant that I, too, was codependent.

It took reading the words “Lane has codependent tendencies” in a 70-page custody evaluation report that was my tipping point. The evaluation had been requested by my ex, much to my dismay after so many proof points that he could convince lawyers and courts that he was the wronged party. The evaluation took ten grueling months in total, until the report was complete and shared, via email. As soon as I received it, I called my therapist.

Overall the report was positive for me, but the psychological assessment hurt. Reading those words about myself, that I was codependent, I understood that I still had a lot of work to do. And so I told my therapist that I could either put the report in a drawer, call it done, or I could take that terrible experience and do something good with it. I made the decision on a Friday night, and I showed up to my first CoDA meeting the following Monday.

My first meeting was small, just a few people in person and a few more online. I remember sitting on the couch, feeling totally lost when it came to all of the 12-Step things, reading the Steps, saying the serenity prayer, saying “...and I’m a codependent” and “with that I pass.” It was all new, and back then I still had such strong perfectionist tendencies that I worried about getting it wrong.

All of the shares were vulnerable, but the thing that broke me open was another woman, online, a black square with a name over it, sharing about the abusive relationship she was still navigating at the time. Hearing her share, it felt like my story literally came bursting out of me. I

had pushed my feelings down for years and years, for so long, and just hearing a stranger's similar story, it opened the dam. This is the power of CoDA.

But that first meeting was just a baby step. The hardest part of being a newcomer at CoDA was showing up the second time. The shame ick was hanging over me from my tearful share at the first meeting. 'How could I have been so open with strangers?', my diminishing brain was saying, 'They don't believe you, they don't care'. On the other side of my brain it was the arrogance and fear of judgment: 'How could YOU be in a 12-Step program, what will others think? What would your family say?' I was buried in self-judgement and shame.

Yet, I made it to that second meeting. It was the gentle kindness of the folks at the meeting that brought me back. I had a glimmer of hope that these were my people, even though I couldn't have voiced it like that back then. At the time, I just knew I needed *something* to fill the lonely void, and so I showed up again, and then again, and then again. If I had to point to the major milestones in my CoDA journey, I would say these three:

1. Joining enough social events with our group that I stopped feeling the "they all don't like me" ick that was the foundation of my socialization at the time (and probably for a long time before)
2. Working Steps 4 and 5 in the workbook
3. Completing the workbook

The first milestone has helped me to now enter new social situations with the mindset of "Let's see what this is all about" rather than "They hate me," or "How do I make them like me?". Having a group with strong boundaries and with the explicit tenet of "judge not" helped me push through those worries, I know now that even if I show up grumpy, extra codependent, extra pushy, this group will see my true character behind those defects, and will accept me and help push me along on my healing journey. The days that we are at our worst are the ones when we need the most support and CoDA provides a safe landing spot.

The second milestone builds off of that. Step Four lets us look at our character defects, start to list out how our own personal brand of codependency shows up. "*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory*" is such a beautiful phrase, and captures the importance and weight of that Step. My workbook group spent a lot of time on Step Four, and I'm so grateful that we did, because that was the first moment where I was really able to face the dark parts of myself, to start doing the shadow work.

Step Five, "*Admitted to our Higher Power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs*". This was some deep work. This was the first time I wrote at length about my codependence, and especially about the wrongs I'd committed myself. What brought me to

CoDA had felt like things that happened to me, my abusive ex, his initiation of the custody evaluation, the evaluator noting my codependence.

Even though Step Five is looking at my own wrongs, it is deeply empowering when stuck in a victim mindset, like I was. Step Five allows me to take control and understand that while I didn't choose codependency, at a certain point as an adult, I started making trauma-driven decisions that continue to hurt myself and others. Reading my Step Five statement to my workbook group was a watershed moment. It's the most vulnerable I had ever been at that moment, it was terrifying, but then after the initial ick wore off, it was liberating. Shame was keeping me small, carrying weights that I thought I'd have to carry forever. Telling the truth freed me from that and helped me understand that I'm not as alone or unloveable as I had always assumed. Step Five helped me to start telling myself "I'm a good person, AND I made a bad decision" or "I'm a good person, AND I had this bad behavior." I took back my power by saying the hardest things out loud.

My final milestone to share, finishing the workbook. I recognize after working the Steps, the power of the order that they're in. Now that I've worked all of the Steps, I can more easily apply them as I go.

2024 should have been a really hard one for me, looking back at all that happened. In February, for the first time in my career, I was laid off from my job. Then a few months later I went through a breakup with someone I really cared about. These are major upheavals, and they did lay me out a bit each time. But from working the Steps, I knew what tools I needed for each of those moments. With the job loss, I knew I needed a community, and I found a really thriving community of job seekers and leaned on my CoDA friends. With the breakup, I knew I needed to go deeper with my Step 11 work, and I started meditating regularly.

I remember about six months into my CoDA journey, I started feeling what I now recognize is the early promise of healing, but I was still deep in my codependence. At the time, I still had hopes for the magic pill that would cure me. I had so much jealousy for those who grew up normal and loved and didn't have to go on any epic healing journey. I felt like I was getting close to the moment where I just wouldn't need CoDA, or the tools, or therapy, or any of it anymore because I would just be healed and everything would suddenly be easy. That was such a setup - when inevitably something bad happened, I felt like a failure yet again.

Two years in, I have a much more nuanced mindset about healing and the journey. I recognize that some things will continue to be harder for me than for some other people. I recognize that I

still struggle with setting boundaries, especially with old relationships that have entrenched patterns. I also recognize that I may never have a romantic relationship.

But all of that is OK. Going through the dark night of the soul that brought me to CoDA has granted me a level of empathy that I didn't have before. I can sit with others in their own grief. I am connecting with myself at a much deeper level, in a way that feels profound and loving and novel. I am regularly overwhelmed by the joy and beauty of the tiniest parts of life, because when you experience deep pain you also gain the counterbalance. I am finding myself - becoming whoever I really truly am, just for myself, and just because I want to.

Finally, doing the work in CoDA has gifted me with what feels like an unshakeable resilience at this point. I really can't imagine any situation that will come up that I can't handle. It may knock me out for a day or two, but then I will step back, look at my tools, listen to my thoughts and body, lean on my community, and I will know the next right step.

Lane. D, 14/01/25



DR

Closing Readings

The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the Serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference.

Some Affirmations

I experience the miracle of recovery.
I like myself and accept myself as I am.
I am worth listening to.
I feel calm when I "turn it over."
I ask for help when I need it.
I forgive others and myself.

CoDA Recovery Prayer

God help me to:
Accept other people as they are,
Recognize my own feelings,
Meet my own needs, and
Love myself just as I am.

CoDA Closing Prayer

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

Twelve Promises

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

Resources:

Find a Meeting - <https://coda.org/find-a-meeting/>

Subscribe to Email lists - <https://www.codependents.org/sub.htm>

CoDA's Events Calendar - <https://coda.org/calendar/>

YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0oWXZDpoVdKbyJ0YDh1zTQ/playlists>

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

Request for Content

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

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