

SPANISH OUTREACH

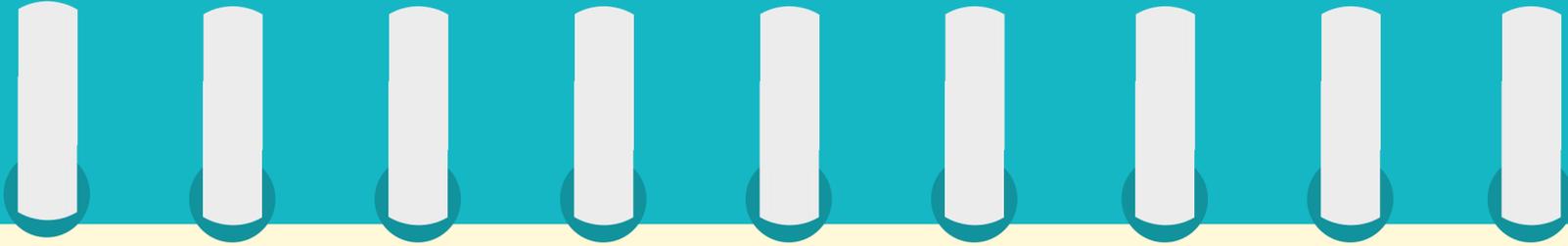


*TRAVEL DIARY
CODA YOUTH*



EXPLANATORY NOTE





Since Spanish Outreach receives requests for information to start or support CoDA Teen groups, to respond to this need we began an inquiry into the structure of CoDA as well as of those groups that, separately, have led groups of young people.

Here we report on the experience of those who have participated in groups focused on the recovery of children, adolescents and young people.

We hope to share that information with those who are interested in consulting it.

Spanish Outreach does not promote the creation of such groups, since there is neither CoDA Literature nor structure to support them.

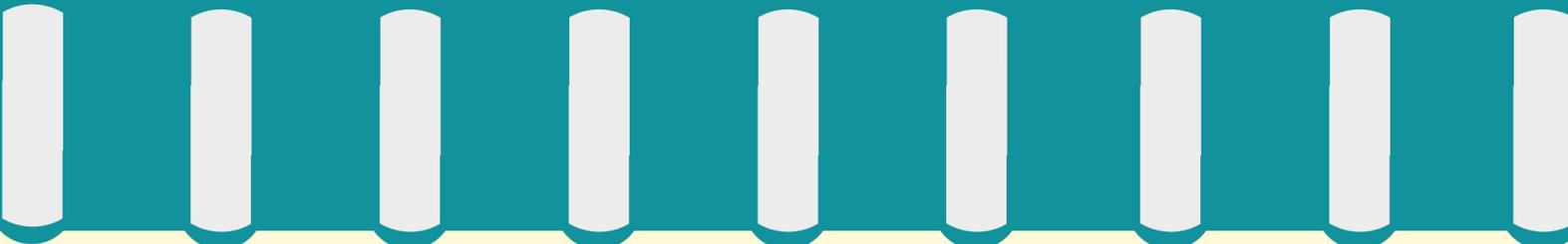
Through these meetings and this Research Report, SPO attempts to convey the participants' experience, strength and

hope, as well as to answer the concerns revealed.

SPO recognizes that each group is free to make its own decisions, according to a group conscience led by a Higher Power.

Background information





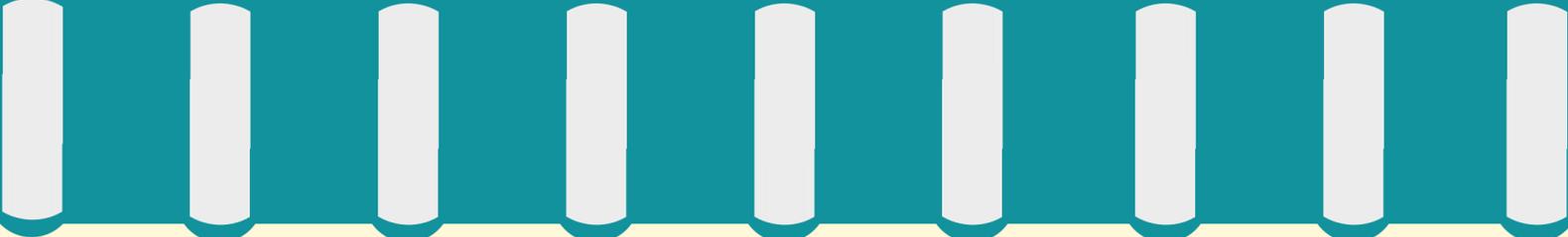
In 1995 the Literature Committee presented three motions on CoDA Teen: one, to gather stories from teens to create a collection of their experiences (Motion 95033 - Book of CoDA Teen), another to establish a list of contacts of CoDA Teen groups (Motion 95034) and another to encourage and distribute (sic) the requirements to be an adult leader of CoDA Teen meetings (Motion 95035). All were accepted by unanimous vote.

Two years passed and in 1997 (with Motion 97038) CoDA Teen was combined with other committees. Then in 2003, CoDA Teen and other combined committees were returned to the status of standing Committees (Motion 03024).

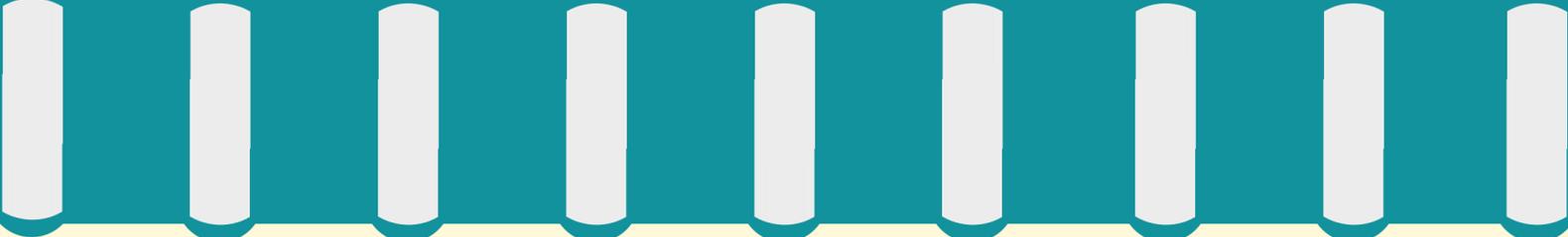
Also in 2003, the literature Committee presented a new document, CoDA teen - CoDA on Campus (Motion 03013).

That document was approved by unanimous vote. 4 years passed and in 2007 Motion 07012 was presented, to disband CoDA Teen, in the hope that it could be combined with another CoDA permanent Committee.

There was a 2/3, binding vote. At the same time, another motion (07025) was filed to stop posting the CoDA Teen Meeting Starter Packet and delete any mention of CoDA Teen groups.

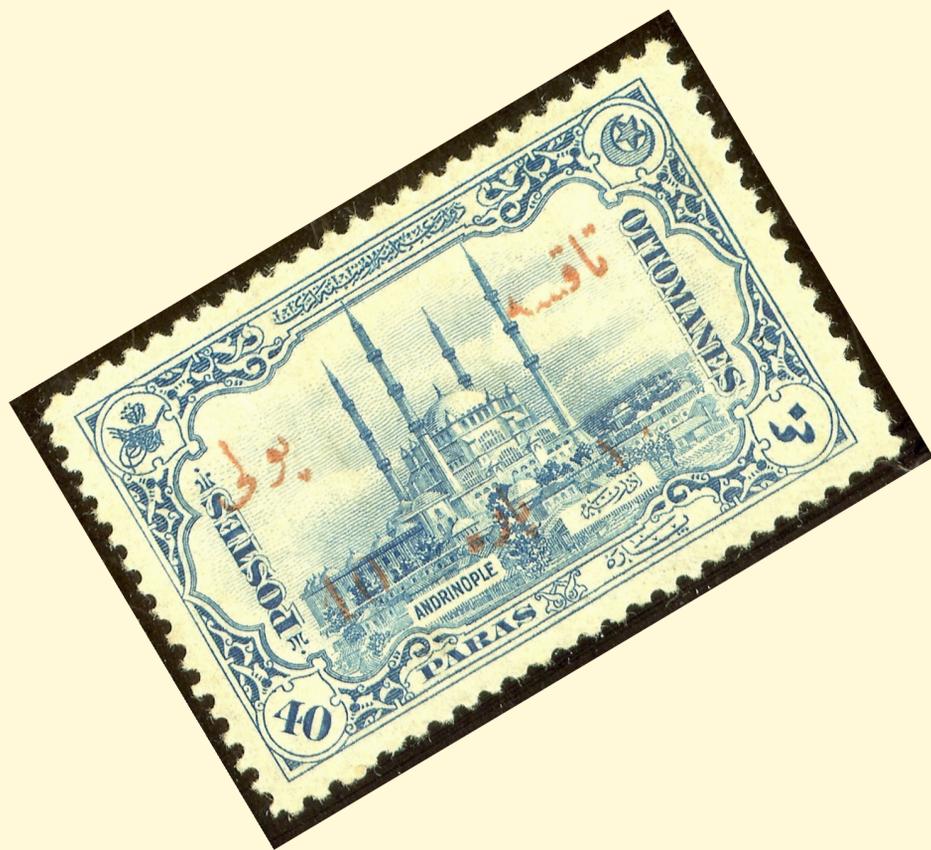


**That motion passed
by 2/3, a binding vote. In the same year, the
Committee in charge of the Fellowship Service
Manual
deleted any mention of CoDA Teen from the FSM
(Motion 07033).**



At the same time in 2007, Motion 07040 voted to include the work already done on CoDA Teen within existing documents. That material was sent to two committees, Literature and Service Structure, to be converted into documents aimed at young adults, and change the orientation of the *CoDA Teen Meeting Starter Packet* into a new direction: to open groups for young adults. Finally, in 2009, since CoDA Teen had already been dissolved in 2007, Motion 09015 directed the Service Structure Committee to delete any reference to CoDA Teen from page 6 of the FSM.

Begin the journey



First stopover



"If I had learned about this group two or three years ago, when I was just entering college, it would have been great. At that time, I was learning how to deal with life but I did not have a clue; that caused me anxiety and anguish. "



FIRST MEETING

Wednesday, March 10, 2021.

Mexico City.

10:30 am

Virtual meeting.

Attendees: Guests

- Jessica**
- Laura M.**
- Daniela G.**
- Luz María S.**
- Dahlia**
- Yoli**

Spanish Outreach Participants

- Adriana G.**
- Mónica R.**
- Elvira M.**



Charged with the hope of carrying the message of CoDA to young people, those present shared their experiences in different groups, including CoDA Teen. The experiences of Alateen 4th and 5th Step group members gave SPO members an appreciation of the gift that the structure of their organization provides. In a group, the young people took responsibility for their group's meetings, experiences, Seventh Tradition, etc. They were sponsored, or they sponsored, with support from the Service Desk.

To ensure a bridge of understanding between members and forestall young people from getting turned off and leaving the group, members chaired the meetings without the presence of adults. The chairs were between 18 and 20 years of age. Adults provided follow-up through polls. Teenagers, from 14 to 16 years of age, turned up with alcohol and drug use problems. Parents had to accompany their youngsters to the meeting. They were asked to first experience the meeting for themselves and then see to their children's opinions.

Of necessity, the parents met separately, so that the opportunity to reach out to the youth was not lost.



On Saturdays, parents attended meetings to hear topics related to how the program was working between them and their children, communication between parent and child, progress in the program, relapses in consumption and to share. In that community I found support.

Parents' commitment to their children being in the program is a requirement.

In the second group (in Mexico City), adults shared. The children were the ones who asked for help. They came to meetings from 8 years old on up, either because they were users, or children of adults who used. They were welcomed without their having to be accompanied by adults.

The group took charge of their contributions, so that they could participate. The shares were painful experiences, but they needed to express themselves and to know that they were not alone, that there was a place where they could go. Because they are minors, adults sponsored them with the support of a manual.

The group was based on the Alateen Book (page 88) where the operation and structure of their meetings is laid out.



Second stopover



We adults have options, but young people in Alateen are teens who still can't make decisions for themselves and usually end up being in the middle of the disagreements between their parents. They get confused by their parents' conflicting opinions. Program provides them with a spiritual solution, from which they can obtain guidance and serenity regardless of what they are living through at home. When they remember that they are powerless over the actions of others, it softens the guilt they feel if they believe that they are responsible for what happens in their families.

Maru



SECOND MEETING

Saturday March 13, 20021

Virtual meeting

1:30 pm

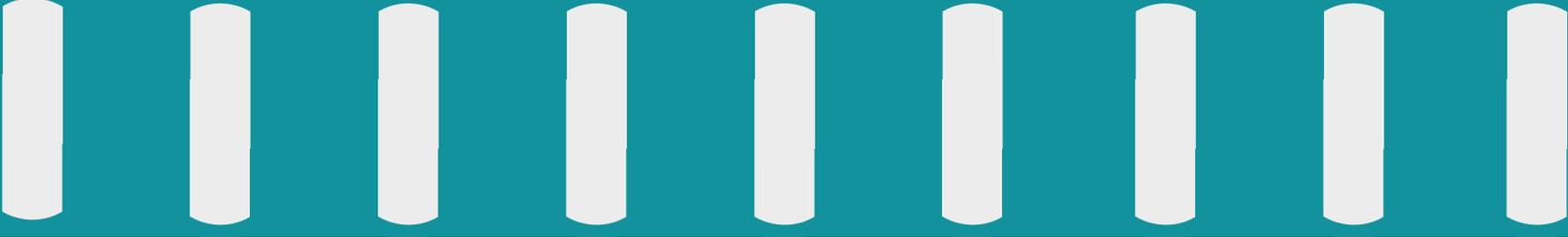
Spanish Outreach Members

- Elvira M.
- Nadia R.
- Mónica R.

Guest attendees

- Maru
- Soco
- Yolanda





From the experience of Alateen and Neurateen members

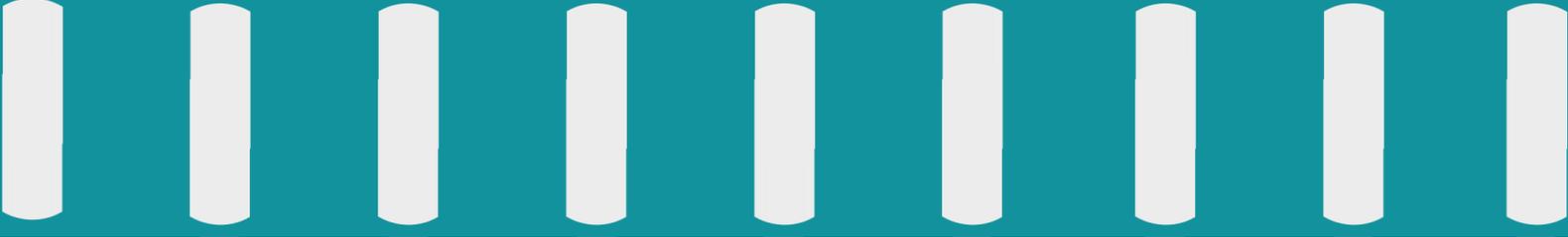
We were impressed by the way that the organization of both fellowships ensures that children and adolescents have a safe space, not just in regard to their sexuality, but also their integrity as human beings.

It was surprising to learn that those who shared at the meeting considered children and adolescents as recovery partners, and did not belittle their experiences because of their age, mental maturity or the emotions they might display. The youth were seen as companions in recovery. As such, they were expected to act accordingly.

They reported that in Alateen there are guides to open groups, that the literature supports people who want to provide service, and also that a solid structure backs up every trusted servant and group member.

If anyone wants to serve as a group chair, they must first show that their record includes no offenses against minors. They must also attend 5 workshops. There, to prepare the future chairs they consider the applicable literature and situations that may occur in the youth groups.





After taking those 5 workshops, would-be chairs must pass an exam.

Attendance at meetings is restricted to the young people plus 2 adult trusted servants, usually women. Children and youth are never to be alone with a single adult; both of the trusted servants must always be present.

There should be rotation of the trusted servants within the groups, with a maximum of a 2-year stay. This is to prevent young people from *becoming attached to any one adult and also to underscore that what helps young people with their problems is the recovery program, not specific people.*

Generally, the young members of the group were children of adult members of other programs. That called for extra care when it came to building trust that everyone's anonymity would be respected, since generally sponsors knew the parents of the youth. On the parents' part, that led to some self-consciousness or the fear that they would be reprimanded by the trusted servants of the adolescent group.

The topics that were touched upon were always related to the experiences of children and adolescents.



The trusted servants shared experiences they had had as children and teens, not their adult experiences. This fostered empathy among attendees. If the sponsors had not lived a similar experience, they just passed.

The young members shared that the environment where

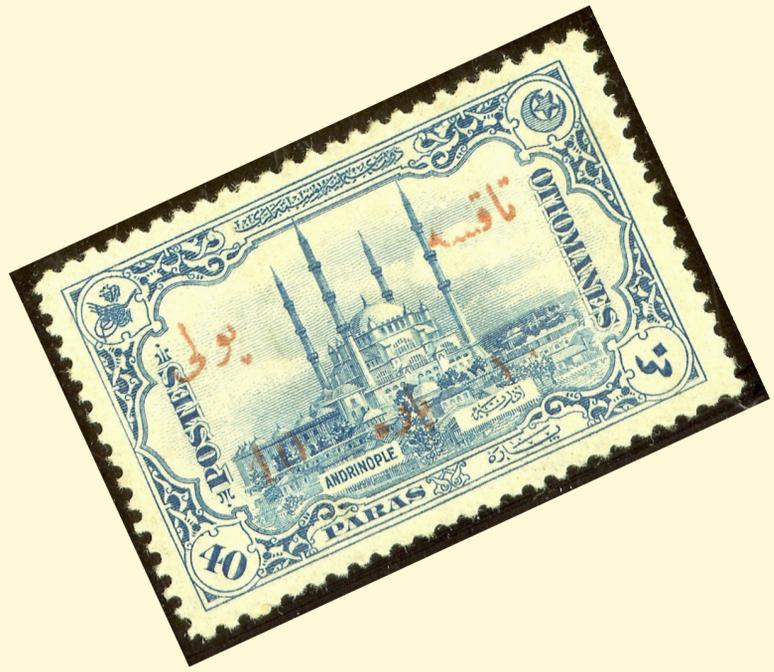
the meeting unfolds is also important. When young people do not feel comfortable, it is difficult for them to return to a meeting.

Her told us that his group prepared a special little room, where there were table games. Recreation was a useful point of connection between the young people as well as between them and the adults.

In the group experience, they found that teens were able to take over trusted servant positions. They carried out the Seventh Tradition, organized an anniversary and even an outing to another teen group to share a meeting and fellowship.



Third stopover



CODA TEEN MEXICO

Saturday March 13, 2021.

Mexico City.

4; 00 pm

Virtual meeting.

Spanish Outreach Members Attending.

-Adriana G.

-Elvira M.

-Lois A.

-Maria P.

-Mónica R.

-Nadia R.

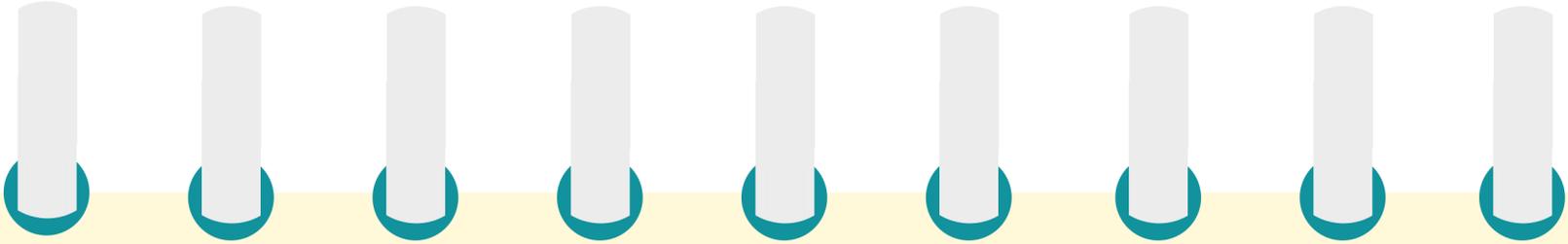
Attendees CODA TEEN Mexico

-Andrea A.

-Isabel C-

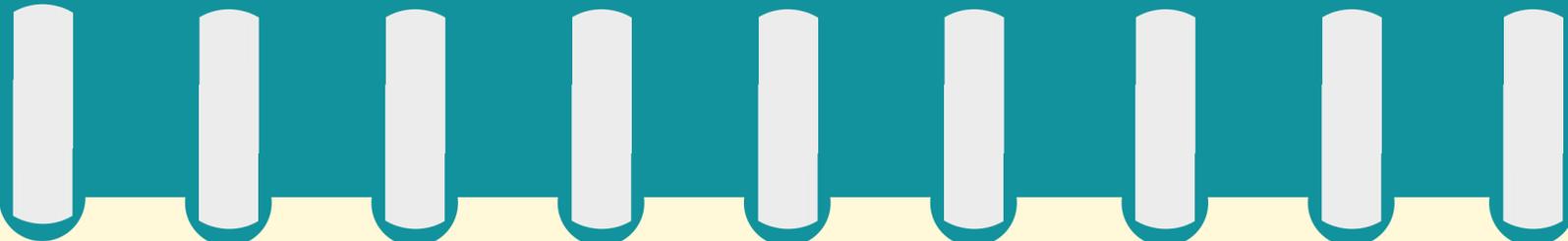
-Christopher A.





During this journey to find out what was, has been and could be among CoDA Teen groups, Spanish Outreach has conducted a series of meetings with different participants. They have been, or would like to be, part of groups that are focused on the Twelve Steps for teens. While they clearly have the same needs and concerns as any adult, one difference is that they require a space specially adapted for them to be able to openly express their emotions and feelings, since these are an important part of being a teenager. In this tour we met with CoDA Teen México, and this is their story...





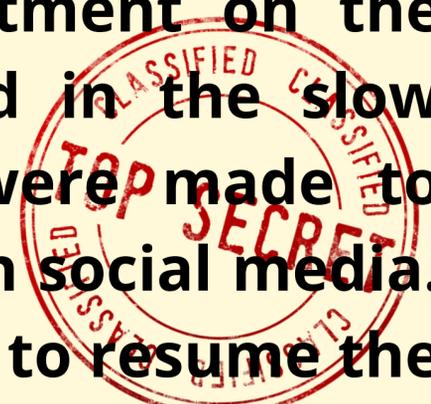
CoDA Teen is a relatively new group; it has been meeting virtually for two years. Its members include teens from 12 to 19 years old. That is not a mandatory age range, since members aged 20-21 years, have fit in. Their purpose, just as with conventional CoDA groups, is to learn to develop healthy, honest and satisfying relationships.

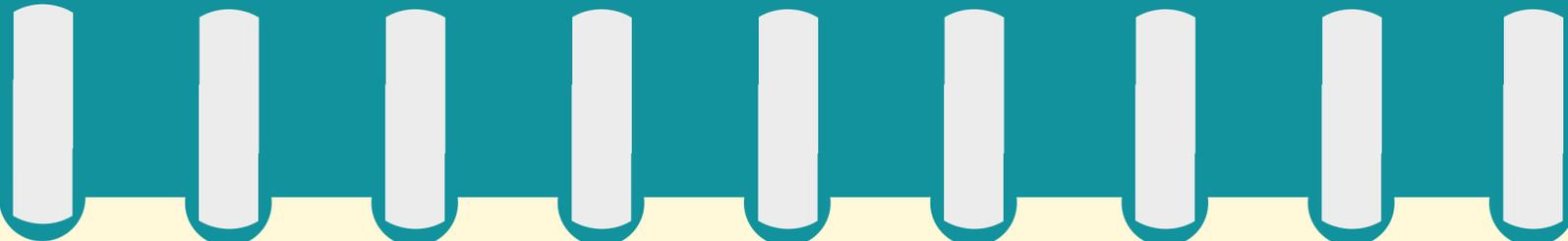
This group arose from the need to create places for young people, whose needs differ from those of an adult, in so far as CoDA groups are concerned.

They began meeting face to face under the guidance of two sponsors.

They relied on a letter of responsibility to guarantee the safety of both members and sponsors regarding the teenagers' shares, as they couldn't discuss the shares once out of the meetings.

This led, initially, to the group having a sizeable attendance. However, lack of commitment on the part of the trusted servants resulted in the slow attrition of membership. Attempts were made to build momentum for the group through social media. Thanks to Facebook, a new enthusiasm to resume the project was created.





When the pandemic began, the project was resumed, based on members' requests and needs during the lockdown. In this way the group was reactivated, even guided by the members themselves.

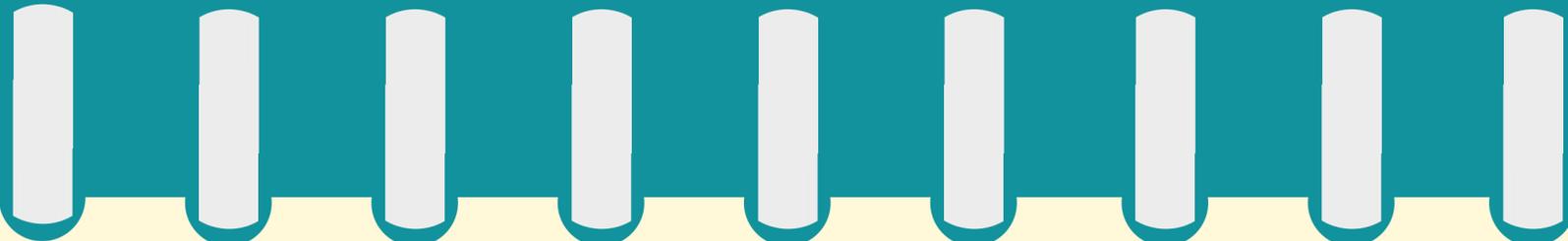
They began by meeting virtually on Saturdays, the day that was the most viable for young people. Without knowing how to start these meetings, they shaped them as they went along.

Currently there are four service chairs for these meetings.

They are based on the Twelve Step program, drawing on the principles of honesty, having an open mind and goodwill.

Their literature is based primarily on books by Melody Beattie and Al-Anon (*One Day at a Time, Just for Today*). Some of the main challenges they have faced include, to name but a few: the group's organization, trying to make things more interactive, creating security filters as much for the chairs as for the members - and what sort of talk to allow.





Given that they have as yet neither literature nor program structure adapted for teenagers, there is no sponsorship as such.

New members have been added to these meetings so the membership has been growing, and even asking for more meetings. The youth are thinking about creating their own literature, adapted for use by teenagers.

Member interest has been growing regarding this last point, without their getting too involved since they don't think that they have sufficient experience to provide that service.

To provide support material, they took on the task of compiling material, that includes CoDA and Alateen program information.

They rely on their own WhatsApp group to offer information. That platform is, at the same time, a tool to keep in touch with one other and to share the Daily Meditation. However, a recurring question is how to run a Twelve Step program.

Born from members' needs to share with one another, new, more dynamic forms of interaction are evolving, so that they can communicate more empathically and effectively with one other.



The chairs' experience has been more rewarding, since every day they find new ways to work with the group.

They try to meet members' needs by adapting the literature, allowing members to share from the heart, blending the shares with meditations and giving them a space where they can feel that they belong.

This last gives the trusted servants a sense of belonging, while creating a commitment to their Fellowship and to themselves, guided by a Higher Power.



Travel Experiences



Fourth Meeting

Wednesday April 7, 2021.

Mexico City.

10:30 a.m

Virtual meeting.

Attendees

Andrea

Jessica P.

Pilly

Luz María

Regina

Spanish Outreach Members

Adriana G.

Mónica R.

Nadia.

Elvira M.



Andrea

Chair of a CoDA Teen group

The teens consider themselves newbies, given that there are no other groups like theirs. The group took shape through different aspects and stages. It was supported for a few years by two sponsors who were also responsive to the parents via a question-and-answer letter that explained the group's responsibilities towards the teenagers.

There were quite a few participants.

They created written materials as well as interactive engagement among the members.

Faced with increased responsibility, the service posts began to rotate. The change in trusted servants created an imbalance that changed the group.

Four of the youth took on the responsibility of being trusted servants to continue the project. Nevertheless, it was impossible to reactivate the group, despite trying to promote it via social media.



They decided not to close their FB page, it was through Facebook that, during the pandemic, several moms contacted them asking for information about the meetings. As an answer to their concerns the group was reactivated with a meeting of catharsis on Saturdays. Due to the favorable response, a second, study meeting was opened up on Tuesdays. The dynamic of the meetings is a hybrid, due to the need of the youth to talk about their concerns, however they try introduce literature little by little. There is commitment and good response from several of them.

The adversities they have faced have guided the group conscience to support their common welfare, for example: Once, a member published photos of a self-flagellation. He was unsubscribed from the chat and asked to process the matter with a sponsor. They recognize that they need guidance to learn what to do on issues related to social networks and WhatsApp, what to allow and not to allow.



New members frequently enter the group. Sponsorship has been provided in a very natural way. The young people look for sponsors and they are learning what that is about.

There are currently four chairs: three females and one male. The presence of both genders is considered to be important for empathy.

The members are concerned about CoDA Teen literature. Because they were pioneers and didn't have any literature, they believe that they are the ones who should create it. They are making progress as needs arise.

They have a folder with literature from CoDA and Alateen.

They deal with youth aged 12 to 19, but when necessary, there are exceptions for 11- and 20-year-olds. As far as the length of the group meeting goes, these can last beyond the announced cut off time, via requests for additional minutes.

Even so, the young people request yet more time. They appreciate the support of those trusted servants who will open more meetings because those who are already in service are overburdened.



Maru

Alateen Meeting Chair

Youth between 12 and 20 years old

There is a guide that provides that, alongside taking workshops, the structure of the Fellowship offers information about the scope of the service to support young people through the Twelve Steps of Al-Anon. Two sponsors with a minimum of two years in the program became certified after taking the workshops.

They support the group's service work. Listening to young people in the meeting environment is a redeeming experience. It is one that allows me communicate with them, grown in empathy and recognize their feelings and thoughts in those of my own children.

Perhaps it is not possible to erase the damage done to my children, but I can make amends by supporting other young people.

To listen to them without judging them, tell them that they are not alone and give them what was given to me by the program, that is what is most important for me.



Luz Maria

One of the founding servants of CoDA Teen Tenorios

“It has been a while since that youth meeting closed. There was quite a show to start this group. The concern was of a sponsor that I had, who, I am glad to say, got to me into service. I learned a lot from her. We were already studying the manual and the topics of the services, so eager to get going that we skipped the group conscience.

We said the youth meeting is going to open, but later we realized that there had to be a vote.

First there was talk of a group of teenagers, except that the Traditions showed us that it would have to be separate from Tenorios. Yes it would have to be another group, adapted to the Tenorios space or the teen group would have to look for another. That was the first obstacle. In the end it would be a meeting, just like the special, women-only or men-only meetings described in the CoDA literature. It was decided to call it youth meeting, It would no longer be called.



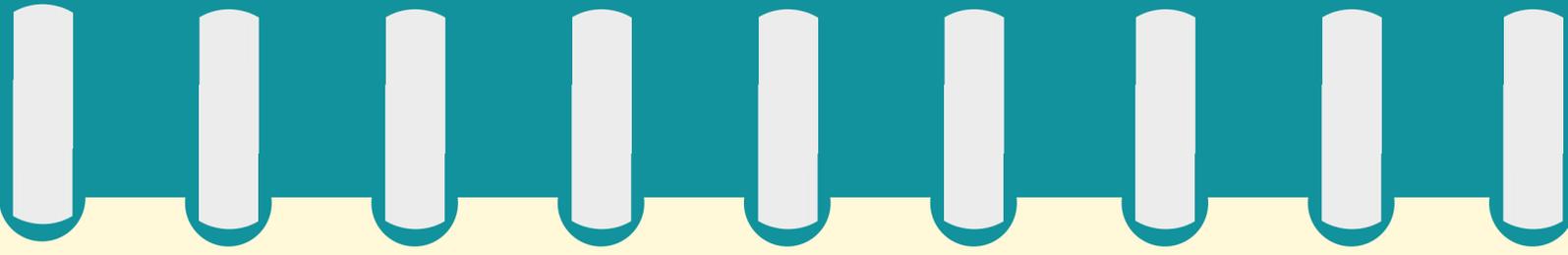
The next obstacle we encountered was that CoDA Mexico was being restructured. There was a fear that working with teenagers would be working with people who, legally, there were minors.

In Mexico, specific laws cover events for children and teens. Since we were adults, how were we going to lead a teenagers' meeting? In short, there were many obstacles.

In the end, it was decided to name the meeting the Young People's Meeting. Only those 18 years and older would be admitted. Fifteen-year-old teens did come. There was one sixteen-year-old. There was one, who later sponsored young people, who came when she was seventeen and a half. She turned eighteen while a member of the group.

Because of our fears that we didn't know how to work with teenagers and that we'd have legal problems, we decided to call it the Youth Meeting. We started working with young people who were eighteen years of age and up. One suggestion was that they be single without children, because of their experiences.





I well recall that four young people and four adult moms attended the first meeting. The ladies sat up front, their children behind them. When one of the ladies shared the classic mother's line, "We do this for your own good!", you should have seen the kids' faces. Through God's grace, they did not leave the group. Still, as the kids say, "Hello!"

I thought, "Adults should not be here." That was my struggle. I went around and around with my conscience: if we closed the meeting, we would be ignoring both the adults and the young people. We would be discriminating. We finally started a simple, open meeting for young people. It was suggested as a meeting for young people only, in case some adult came by who wanted a meeting. There were eleven Tenorios meetings, twelve counting the young people's meeting. That is, the adults had eleven meetings, young people had just one. The young people could also attend the other meetings.

How did we manage it? With the program, like all the others, with the basic book, Pelando la Cebolla, a podium for shares, sponsorship. We followed the program, the only difference was the shares.

Why did we specify that only youth without kids could attend? Because not everyone had had the experience of being a parent.

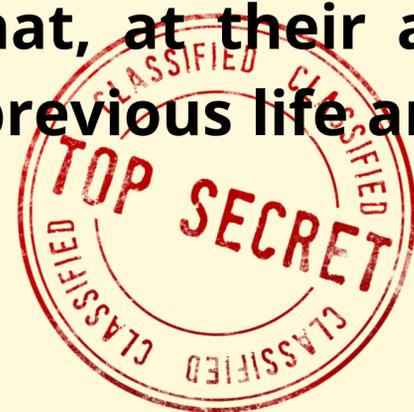


At one time, single women in their thirties and over would come by.

They also shared their experiences as teenagers.

Two of the members did their Steps with me. They did their Fourth and Fifth Steps and stopped. I don't know whether it was before Step Ten or after, but they stayed with the youth meeting, the one that the young woman who came at seventeen and a half was responsible for. She was eighteen by that time. She and a twenty-seven-year-old young man were responsible for that meeting. From there on, we started specifying the ages in the name. It was called "Youth Meeting 18 to 28, single without children," that was our slogan.

Yes, many young people came. We talked about all sorts of issues. Every time the young people shared, they revealed what I had already experienced. I survived drugs, alcohol, promiscuity, violent partners, beatings, etc. And those young people were living through that, at their age. Their shares brought me back to my previous life and I could share all that.

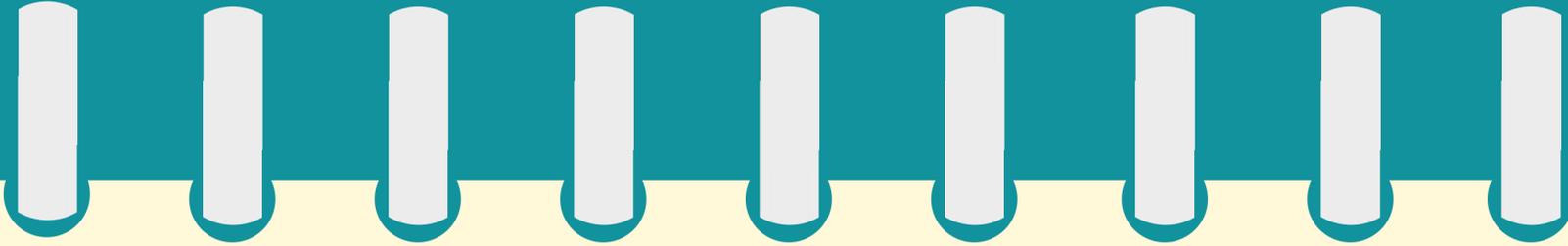


I always said, "I know I'm forty years older than you, yet here we are, sharing." I never shared anything out of bounds with them, that is, nothing outside of what I had experienced as a young woman. I did not share my experiences as an adult, I shared many times as a daughter. My dad is in program and I shared that. I shared my life experiences, from when I was a teenager and a young girl. I was trying to share as they did. At first that was very difficult, but little by little I did relax and I was able to share with them more successfully.

The goal was for two young people to be in charge, not to follow us; for the shares be pure and distinctly about the young. That was indeed achieved. Those two young people were in charge, I do not remember whether it was for a year and a half or two years.

Did every kind of service, including making coffee and welcoming newcomers. One time, we went to the CoDA Teen Virreyes meeting to share. They shared their experience, strength and hope. We did movie therapy, that is, we went to the movies. A few times we went and then we shared about the movie.





Once we went out to eat together. We went to the fair, I think.

We had fellowship sometimes, perhaps five times at most. They also saw one another for coffee.

They started sponsoring the other young people.

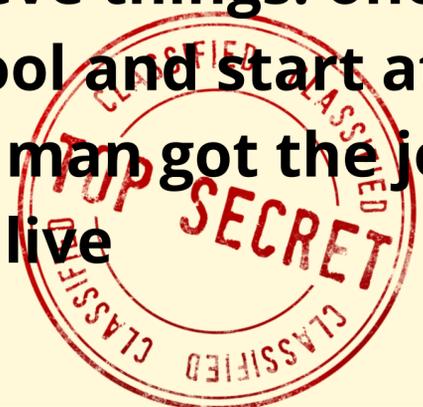
They ran the program just as we did, focused on the experiences of the youth.

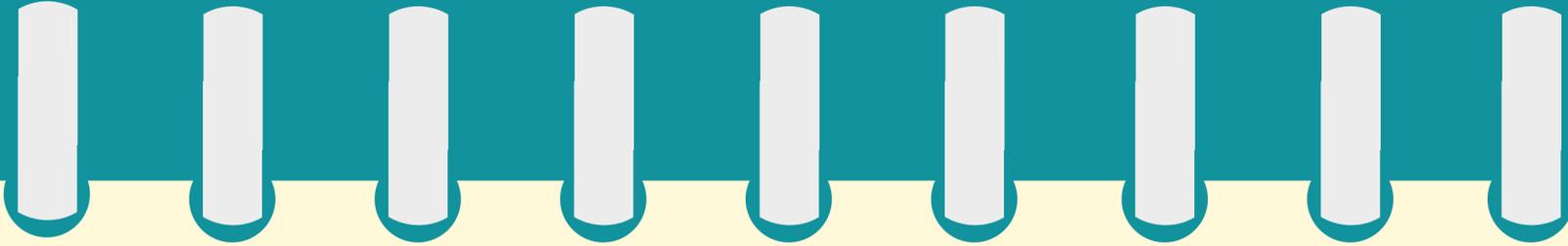
They gave me a lot. I have four nieces and nephews and I have been their confidante for many years. One of them still keeps in contact.

One of my nieces still calls me to talk. The experience I had with those young people enabled me to relate even better with my nieces and nephews.

Yes, they made me travel to the past, and I saw that I have been codependent since I was a girl. When I listen to them and see them cry and complain about their parents, I recognize who I was and am.

I remember that one of the girls brought her mom to the group. Those were very cool experiences. We know that with the program people can achieve things: one young lady managed to finish high school and start at the college she wanted; another young man got the job that he was hoping for and was able to live independently from his parents.





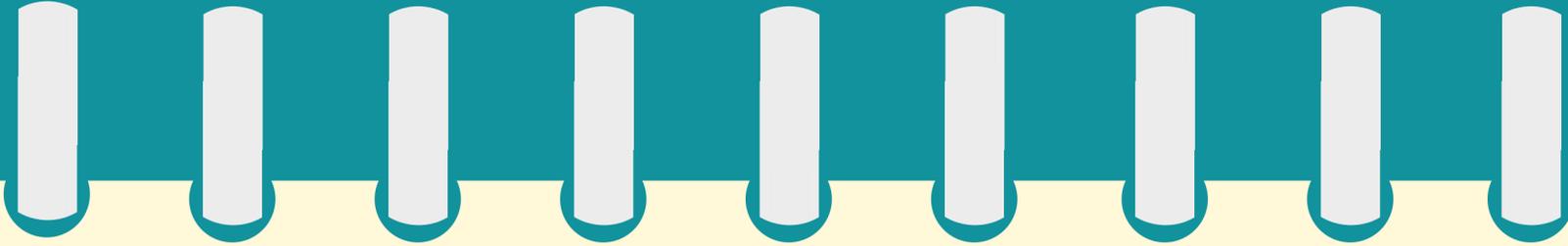
They started to live their lives and have less time to be in the group. Although we tried to support the group and other members began to lead, in the end it was no longer possible to maintain the schedule for the youth meetings. So they were put on hold. They did not close. There was less attendance, for the same reason. One member had to go to work in Santa Fe, another have to move away from home or their situation changed, etc. It was good because they were accomplishing things. But they no longer went to meetings. Finally, the group conscience decided to put it on hold to see how the meeting might reestablish itself.

We never used CoDA Teen literature because as far as I know none is translated.

I read that book to get oriented, I got a sponsor, my sponsor is still involved in the project. It was what we did.

What did it give me? A lot, I grew a lot in that group, I adored those young people. I loved them very much. When I told them that I was withdrawing because it was time for them to walk on their own, we all cried.





It was a genuinely nice fellowship. Despite my being thirty-five or forty years older than them, I could identify with them, I could fit in, I could share, I could be one of them, without ever behaving like a teenager, like a young girl. Some of them still text me or call me on the phone. I recently found myself in a plaza with one of them and we spent a while talking. They are living their lives. This young woman finished college, she's working. Another young man lives with his partner now.

I would like to see a meeting or a CoDA Teen meeting reopened, because they are desperately needed. I listen to how teenagers live through these dramatic relationships that they have learned about from TV and movies. Why should a teenager have to experience that? I hope that many CoDA Teen groups open up."

To end the meeting, a space for questions and comments was opened.

Now is the ideal moment to unite efforts and experiences, to open virtual groups. All but one of the young people who attended CoDA Teen meetings have identified themselves, the sole exception due to personal reasons.



It is important that young people have space to make connections and that they be able to integrate the program into their lives. If they come to program an early age, it is easier for them to take responsibility for themselves and to achieve the goal of recovery. It is an opportunity for young people to shape their lives. The experiences of young people who passed through a group, or are in one, are a good starting point: they are the ones whose suggestions could guide the program.



Pilar

Sharing her experience trying to open a group of CoDA Teen aimed at ages 15-21.

One of the reasons why it did not work was that the literature made no sense to the youngsters. As children of codependents, they believed that passionate relationships and jealousy were normal. At that time, authorized CoDA literature was unavailable in Mexico, so they used Melody Beatty's books. Over six to eight months, Pilar tried different strategies to motivate the group: seeking to adapt the literature to their interests and to the language of those young people, ensuring that both sexes attended the meeting and sharing her experiences as a teenaged codependent.

She asked other people from the Fellowship in the United States to share with her their experiences in maintaining such a group.

The answer was that the youth groups there had also closed, for the same reasons.

Finally, she chose to close the group.



FREQUENT QUESTIONS





How did the sponsorship committee and the parents workshops function?

Jesica:

The sponsorship committee was made up of people who were already sponsoring or who were sponsoring adults. There was a guide to assess whether applicants were really practicing their program. During some meetings, the committee created an evaluation examination to have ready.

A date was set. The exam had questions about literature, to corroborate whether the potential sponsor had knowledge of the issues. It was important to have that exam, given the responsibility of sponsoring young people, in addition to the responsibility to the families of the sponsees.

Watertight guidelines were established: not just anyone could become a sponsor.

Only those who really prepared were able to sponsor. Applicants were asked to reflect on their motivations for providing that particular service.





The parent workshops were open for members of the group. Various family themes were touched upon, such as how to have a good relationship between parents and children in a recovery program or how to establish good communication without crosstalk. The idea was that through the program, a family could learn to live together, setting boundaries for each individual's recovery process and remembering that, to achieve a good relationship, work was necessary on both sides.





How do you work the slogans?

Maru:

Young people are invited to reflect on how to apply the slogans to their lives. Sponsors help young people to work the program. Just as the Steps are worked, in some sessions the slogans were worked in alongside them, as tools to apply simultaneously.

Slogans are useful for young people.

In groups that use the slogans we notice a higher retention capacity, faster learning, and quicker application of what they learned. Therefore, using the slogans hastens recovery.





How do we continue with the Youth CoDA groups?

Literature is very important, for adults as well as for the young. We could start by collecting older members' shares about their teen-age experience as well as those of today's youth. It would be a good idea to start preparing a booklet of quotations along the lines of Peeling the Onion, made up of shares that support the opening of youth groups as well as young people in recovery.

A Youth CoDA Committee could be created to give the groups structure. Unfortunately, existing groups have little information about such matters as how to register a group, or how to organize a meeting. It would strengthen the creation of this type of group if work began in a "homogenized" way.





How do you safeguard the safety of a minor who works the Steps?

JESICA, Alateen

There is a Committee in charge of Sponsorship. Sponsors have to be actively working the Steps, be sponsored and attend meetings. Step study is carried out within a pool of additional trusted servants who monitor the activity. Sponsorship must be between persons of the same sex and the sponsors must have a minimum time of two years in group. Commitment was required, both to the service and to one's own recovery. You had to pass a prior exam to be able to sponsor in the youth groups.





Do you keep the Step work written by the minors?

Jesica Alateen

No records were kept. Parents signed a statement acknowledging the safety rules set out to protect the minors within the group. That included destroying the minors' Step work.

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"A first step may be to provide a space for young people where they can share."

Luz María

"As long as there is humility as well as good will – not human will, but a Higher Power's will – we'll always be able to support the young people who are asking for help today "

Laura

