

# Starter Package

## Co-Dependents Anonymous Canada



## Welcome to Co-Dependents Anonymous

Enclosed is a **Starter Package**, which will assist you in starting and conducting CoDA meetings in your area. A group registration form is also included. Please complete the form and return them as soon as possible to the CoDA address on the bottom of each form. Once the completed registration form is received, they will be processed and you will be assigned a group number. This group number is very important and should be used as identification in all of your correspondence or contributions that you may send to your local groups or CoDA Canada or the World Service of Co-Dependents Anonymous Inc.

Co-Dependents Anonymous was founded on October 22, 1986, and CoDA Canada is in the process of being formed. Since the founding meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, meetings have been established throughout the United States, Canada and many other countries.

Also enclosed is an order form for US Conference-approved printed literature: pamphlets, booklets and other CoDA related items. When placing an order please verify you have a current form by the date. A current order form is available at our literature website: [www.cdrs.ca](http://www.cdrs.ca). To contact CDRS; phone: 1-604-239-1042 or fax: Toll free 1-888-675-8325 or write to Co-Dependents Recovery Society, 423 6th St. Apt. E, New Westminster, B.C., V3L 3B1.

CoDA encourages the use of CoDA approved literature because such literature offers the uniform message of CoDA as per our *Traditions*. **The use of outside literature is not recommended within CoDA meetings.**

If you would like to contact Co-Dependents Anonymous Inc. It may be reached by email [outreach@coda.org](mailto:outreach@coda.org) or visit their website at [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org).

As stated in the Seventh Tradition, CoDA is self supporting through our own contributions from the fellowship. The services we can provide on the National & International level depends on volunteer service work and the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition donations forwarded from each group. CoDA encourages each meeting to follow these suggested guidelines.

Set aside a prudent reserve to pay for the expenses of your CoDA group for two to three months, forwarding the balance of the Seventh Tradition donations in the following suggested manner.

50% to your local Community Group/Office or Inter Group Office  
30% to National level  
20% to your Provincial CoDA Group

If your Province has not yet set up a Provincial Group or you do not have a community group or office, CoDA Canada would greatly appreciate you considering donating the extra amount to help provide better services on the Canadian National level. Funds could also be sent "In Trust" for your future Provincial or community groups.

Contact CoDA Canada [outreach@cdrs.ca](mailto:outreach@cdrs.ca) if we can be of any further service to you. Canadian & Provincial meeting lists are available online at [www.cdrs.ca](http://www.cdrs.ca) We believe that with our Higher Power's guidance, each of us and the CoDA program will continue to grow healthier – one day at a time. Our French Language version of CoDA, known as DAA can be contacted at <http://www.daa-quebec.org> .

In the Service and Spirit of Fellowship  
Co-Dependents Anonymous Canada

## **STARTING A NEW MEETING © 1998 All Rights Reserved**

This is a CoDA National Conference Approved Service Item

### **Starting a New CoDA Meeting**

Thinking about starting a new CoDA meeting? Consider the following.

#### **Where**

Meetings can be held almost anywhere. Try area churches, synagogues, counselling centers, hospitals, or places where other groups hold meetings.

#### **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 honour 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.

#### **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 counselling 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.

#### **Format**

After a few initial meetings, take a group conscience to choose a meeting format. Several different types of meeting formats exist:

**Speakers Meeting:** A speaker meeting features one individual's story of recovery. Speakers share their experience, strength, and hope with the group. Depending on the length of the individual's story, the meeting may or may not include open sharing after the speaker has shared.

**Open Share Meeting:** The open share meeting often has no topic or individual speaker. This gives group members an opportunity to share their experience, strength, and hope on any subject of their recovery.

**Topic Share Meeting:** The topic share meeting opens with a facilitator or group member suggesting a specific topic (e.g., the Steps, setting boundaries, sponsorship, etc.). The facilitator usually begins the sharing.

**Step Meeting:** The Step meeting makes use of our CoDA conference approved literature or the *CoDA Book*. The group may elect to read a portion of the material out loud before open sharing.

#### **Structure**

After the first meeting or two, it's best to reach a consensus on the structure of the new meeting. Note that this can always be changed at a future business meeting. Some questions may include: 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? The **New Meeting Starter Packet** (below) provides information and guidelines.

## New Meeting Starter Packet

CoDA has a **New Meeting Starter Packet**, which includes a meeting format that can be adapted to individual meeting needs. CoDA recommends that every meeting have a copy of this packet. It contains the basic documents that support CoDA unity. A single copy is available for FREE from:

Co-Dependents Recovery Society  
423 6th St. Apt. E  
New Westminster, B.C.  
V3L 3B1  
FAX Toll Free -888-675-8325 Information Line: 1-604-239-1042  
Website – [www.cdrs.ca](http://www.cdrs.ca)

### Registration

Once you receive the **New Meeting Starter Packet**, you will need to register to become a CoDA meeting. In addition to a suggested meeting format, the packet contains all the forms you will need to apply for a registration number.

Once you have an official number, the meeting will be listed in the National Meeting Directory. If you have a provincial organization or Intergroup, tell them about your new meeting so that it can be added to the provincial and/or community's meeting lists as well.

### CoDA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

Just as the Twelve Steps offer guidance for maintaining healthy relationships, our Twelve Traditions offer guidance for maintaining healthy meetings. The **CoDA Book** contains commentary on all the Steps and Traditions. Also, a helpful **Service Manual** is available.

Rely on the wisdom embodied in the Steps and Traditions. Keep in mind that trusted servants take direction from the Fellowship. A group conscience can be a powerful tool.

### Jobs

Define what tasks must be done, such as:

**Key Holder:** The key holder lets people in and locks up after the meeting.

**Chair/Meeting Leader:** The chair/meeting leader runs the meeting.

**Treasurer:** The treasurer holds all Seventh Tradition donations, pays rent, and mails funds to provincial and national offices.

**Secretary:** The secretary takes notes at business meetings and keeps records.

**Literature Person:** The literature person orders and keeps track of the group's CoDA literature.

**Phone Contact Person:** The phone contact person responds to inquiries from people asking about the group.

**Group Service Representative (GSR):** The GSR is elected by the group to represent the meeting's group conscience to community and provincial CoDA organizations. Since GSRs act as liaisons to CoDA as a whole, they are also known as contact persons.

### Growth

In the beginning, people may be called to do service work in more than one job. This is okay on a temporary basis, but may cause "burn out" or resentments over the long term. Jobs in CoDA are usually rotated to prevent "burn out."

Job 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. More information about trusted servants can be found in the **New Meeting Starter Packet**. If at any time the group wants help or support (or has questions), call your Intergroup, community office, or delegates. Our Higher Power will surely make available a member experienced in service, with whom you may consult. Higher Power is present at all Fellowship meetings.

## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What constitutes a CoDA Group?**

A CoDA group is composed of two or more individuals whose purpose in meeting is a desire for healthy relationships. A group applies the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, as adapted for our purpose from Alcoholics Anonymous. A CoDA group reads aloud CoDA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and the copyrighted "Welcome" and "Preamble" as they are written. These readings, along with the availability of National Service Conference Endorsed literature at your meeting, help to support a sense of CoDA unity as called for in CoDA's First Tradition. In addition, CoDA groups register with CoDA National, 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 a community service group 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 local, provincial, regional, and national CoDA listings.

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

While having a "home group" 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 group, which we attend regularly.

### **What is a Closed Group?**

A CoDA meeting may be "open." This means that anyone can attend. "Anyone" means codependents, non-codependents, students, or representatives of other organizations (including the media), etc. (It is expected, and may be specifically asked, that all such visitors agree to respect our need for anonymity and confidentiality.) A "closed" group, however, is a group attended only by people who are codependent or think they may be codependent. Newcomers who think they may be codependent can attend a closed meeting. A closed group may be "restricted." For example, a meeting may be listed as "closed - women." In this example, only women who are codependent (or believe they may be codependent) may attend this meeting. However, in respecting the spirit of Traditions One, Three, and Five, we honour 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.

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

Contact your CoDA community representative or provincial Delegate to have your meeting listed in the community, provincial, or regional CoDA meeting schedule. This is the best avenue for gaining exposure and support. CoDA groups can be announced in local papers or on community bulletin boards. There is also a community outreach packet available for your use. This packet is included in this document in the "Attracting Members" section, or from the CoDA website. Frequently, librarians allow groups to post notices or leave free material, such as "What Is Codependence?", which can include a group's meeting information. According to Tradition Eleven: "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion." We suggest simply stating "[Your Group name] CoDA Meeting" with the time, date, and location. Note that we do not use a meeting facility name as a group name, in accordance with Tradition Six. If a group called itself the Johnson Center CoDA Group, for example, this could be considered endorsement of an outside enterprise. Instead, the Hometown Tuesday Night CoDA group can post flyers saying that they meet in the Johnson Center.

**Where do we get funds?**

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

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

A "prudent reserve" consists of two or three months' worth of group expenses. Group expenses include items such as rent, supplies, coffee, and Conference Endorsed literature. The prudent reserve is to cover expenses in the event that the group has unusually low attendance or donations. For excess funds left after the reserve amount is satisfied, a group normally makes a Seventh Tradition donation according to the following guideline:

50% to your local Community Group/Office or Inter Group Office

30% to National level.

20% to your regional or provincial committee

Additionally, some Canadian CoDA groups may wish to send donations directly to CoDA Inc. (as a US draft must be purchased for this purpose most groups send this money in trust to your Provincial group, or CDRS, to be forwarded, (to reduce the cost of the draft) the choice is up to your group conscience)

**Is there is limit to the amount an individual may donate to CoDA?**

Seventh Tradition cash donations are anonymous, and are not monitored or regulated in any way. The amount given by any individual in a meeting is personal and confidential. Gifts or cash, goods (such as computers or books), or donations of services of value (such as auditing financial records or website maintenance) are subject to limitations on an annual basis. For optimal spiritual health, CoDA groups and service bodies adhere to our Seventh Tradition, which states that we remain self-supporting. Even though people donate with the best intentions, we are warned that problems of "money, property, and prestige" may "divert us from our primary spiritual aim". If the group relies too heavily on one individual or a small group of donors, autonomy is compromised, and group unity may suffer. Therefore, limits are placed on individual contributions, and these limits vary according to the size of the body receiving the gift. For individual groups, provincial or regional organizations, or intergroup service bodies, the value for donated cash, goods, or professional services rendered is limited to \$1000 per year. That limit is raised to \$2000 per year for CoDA Canada, in accordance with the much larger scale of operation. For the spiritual health of CoDA, all donations shall be anonymous, to the extent permitted by the gift documentation process.

**How does our Group register with CoDA Canada?**

Fill out the GROUP REGISTRATION FORM, found in the "Forms" section, and return it to CoDA Canada. Your group will be assigned a number and placed in our directory. If any changes in your group information occur, use the same form and return it the CoDA Canada, so that our records remain current. Please use your assigned group number on all correspondence with CoDA Canada.

**What should we do if the group disbands?**

In the unfortunate case of a group disbanding, the treasurer must ensure that current debts are satisfied. If possible, negotiate a reduction or forgiveness of rent due. Remaining funds and/or literature can be given to other local CoDA groups or to the community, regional, provincial, or national office. If there is no other group close enough to easily give literature to, contact a Delegate or other national representative for guidance, or donate literature to area libraries or institutions.

## SOME 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 facilitator or a member of the group suggesting a specific topic, i.e., the Steps, setting boundaries, sponsorship, etc. The facilitator will usually begin the sharing.

**Step, Tradition, or Book Study Meeting:** In this style of meeting, the group uses our Conference Endorsed CoDA literature and/or the CoDA Book as a foundation for study, discussion, or sharing related to CoDA's Steps and /or Traditions. For example: the group may elect to read a portion of this material out loud and then have an open sharing session.

Because the Twelve Steps are the basis of our recovery, we strongly suggest that each group set aside at least one meeting per month for Step Study.

## GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE POSITIONS

A CoDA group cannot function without the efforts of our trusted servants. Service work starts at the group level. Service positions can be as simple as a 6-month commitment to set up the refreshment table or literature table at each meeting, to a two-year commitment to represent the group each month at the local community service group meetings. This section contains some detailed descriptions of the tasks and responsibilities involved with service positions. These are guidelines for group use, and each group may decide to add, delete, or combine responsibilities as necessary.

### Typical service positions of a CoDA Group are:

- Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Literature person
- Refreshment person(s)
- Phone list person
- Group Representative

### General Responsibilities of Trusted Servants

Preserving continuity: Outgoing officers, particularly in the administrative functions of secretary, treasurer, and Group Representative, are expected to work with the next person holding the position to insure that procedures, knowledge, and records are passed along.

Responsibility of office: When officers cannot attend a meeting or other service commitment, they find a substitute to handle the job. In the event a commitment is not fulfilled, the officer should be given a chance to explain to the group. If desired, a group conscience may then be taken to determine if the group wishes the meeting officer to continue or wishes to seek another volunteer to take over the position.

### Desirable qualities of Group Service Officers

- Welcomes and acknowledge newcomers.
- Encourages Twelve Step attitudes.
- Promotes adherence to CoDA's Twelve Traditions and principles.
- Conducts group conscience on new matters or to resolve disputes.
- Supports CoDA's program of spirituality in the tone and style of the meeting.
- Promotes principles before personalities.

## Guidelines for CoDA Group Service Positions

These are recommendations. Each group may decide how to distribute responsibilities among the trusted servants of the group, combining or expanding positions as needed.

**Chairperson/coordinator/facilitator** takes a leadership role for the duration of the meeting itself (this position rotates with each meeting or at time intervals, i.e., monthly or biannually):

- Assumes overall responsibility for meeting format.
- Invites speakers or finds a volunteer to handle speaker invitations.
- Runs the meeting according to CoDA-endorsed guidelines.
- [Members may volunteer to rotate as meeting leader.]

**Secretary** is the business representative for the group and acts as liaison to the meeting facility. (Suggested term of office – 6 months)

- Obtains and maintains a meeting room, according to meeting group conscience.
- Plans and conducts "business meetings" regularly (for agenda items to include: elections, meeting format, procedures, etc.) and keeps records of group conscience decisions.
- Provides the community service group with the full name, address, and phone number of all officers. \*Changes in the location, time, or day of the group meeting, or contact person should be updated. This may be done through a 'Changes in Group Information' form sent to CoDA Canada.

*\*Note: This personal data is used at the community, provincial/region, and national level only for communication purposes and is held in confidence.*

**Group Service Representative (GSR)** is the link between the CoDA group and CoDA as a whole. Ideally, a GSR is an established member of the group, with solid experience, knowledge, and understanding of CoDA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions...(usual term 2 years):

- Attends the local CoDA community and/or provincial/regional service meetings.
- Carries the group conscience to the local CoDA community and/or provincial service meeting; then reports to the group on the outcomes.
- Notifies the group of any local or national CoDA updates, announcements, and flyers.
- Passes on information to the new Group Representative at the end of the term.

### **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 month's worth of group expenses).
- Pays rent to the meeting facility for use of the meeting room.
- Disburses Seventh Tradition funds in accordance with group conscience.

**Refreshment/set-up Person** (Note: This group discretionary social function.)

- Sets out refreshments, coffee, etc., making sure to use only your own group's supplies.
- Checks supplies weekly, as needed obtain restocking funds from the Treasurer.
- Cleans up the refreshment area and takes care of the trash.
- Passes on information to the new refreshment/set-up person at the end of the term.

### **Literature Person:**

- Puts CoDA Endorsed literature out 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 CoDA members to available CoDA literature.
- Passes on information to the new literature person at the end of term.

### **Phone Contact Person:**

- Makes first name and phone number available on local, provincial, and national meeting lists.
- Is available to receive phone calls in order to give directions to the meeting.

## Foundational and Meeting Documents

- The documents enclosed in this section are the foundation upon which all CoDA meetings are built.
- The Twelve Steps are the spiritual guidelines for our individual recovery
- The Twelve Traditions are the guiding spiritual principles of our meetings. They are also useful guidelines for functioning in any group or relationship.
- The Twelve Promises let us know that there is hope for a new way of life in the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous.
- Patterns of Codependence helps us to see more clearly what codependence is and how it manifests in our lives.
- Prayers help us open and close CoDA meetings, reminding us of our connection with a power greater than ourselves.
- The Preamble introduces us to CoDA and reminds us of who we are as recovering codependents and why we are here in Co-Dependents Anonymous.
- The Welcome addresses us all in the CoDA meeting, acknowledging the pain of our codependence and confirming the joy of our recovery.
- The Basic Meeting Format offers guidelines for conducting any CoDA meeting. It can be adapted by group conscience to suit your specific type and style of meeting.



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

## **The Twelve 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. Make 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**

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, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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### **The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous - Short Form**

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



## **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.



## Patterns of Codependence

### Denial Patterns:

- I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.
- I minimize, alter or deny how I truly feel.
- I perceive myself as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well being of others.

### Low Self Esteem Patterns:

- I have difficulty making decisions.
- I judge everything I think, say or do harshly, as never "good enough."
- I am embarrassed to receive recognition and praise or gifts.
- I do not ask others to meet my needs or desires.
- I value others' approval of my thinking, feelings and behaviour over my own.
- I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person.

### Compliance Patterns:

- I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or others' anger.
- I am very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.
- I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.
- I value others' opinions and feelings more than my own and am afraid to express differing opinions and feelings of my own.
- I put aside my own interests and hobbies in order to do what others want.
- I accept sex when I want love.

### Control Patterns:

- I believe most other people are incapable of taking care of themselves.
- I attempt to convince others of what they "should" think and how they "truly" feel.
- I become resentful when others will not let me help them.
- I freely offer others advice and directions without being asked.
- I lavish gifts and favours on those I care about.
- I use sex to gain approval and acceptance.
- I have to be "needed" in order to have a relationship with others.



CoDA has three suggested prayers that are Conference approved as CoDA National literature. They are:

**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

Another prayer commonly used at CoDA meetings is the Serenity Prayer, as follows:

**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



## **Preamble of Co-Dependents Anonymous**

Co-Dependents Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships. The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy and fulfilling 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 behaviours.

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.



## Welcome to 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 behaviour and that it is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional family 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.



## What is Crosstalk?

Giving unsolicited feedback

Advice-giving

Answering

Making “you” and “we” statements

Interrogating

Debating

Criticizing

Controlling

Dominating

In our meetings we speak about our own experience, and we listen without comment to what others share. We work towards taking responsibility in our lives, rather than giving advice to others.

For a more in depth explanation of crosstalk, please refer to Conference endorsed CoDA literature, such as the [Newcomers Handbook](#).

## Basic Meeting Format

This 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.

### Opening Section

1. **“Good evening (morning, afternoon) and welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_ 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 to silent ringing 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).**

#### **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.

#### **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

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.**

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 of 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* please read them?" \*

## Announcements 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?"

Group announcements (any member)

GSR or secretary shares community, state/regional, national, or WSO 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:* If your meeting gives chips or medallions, give them here. Ask the person celebrating if they would like to share a few words of recovery. Generally, for birthdays of 30 days to 9 months the group claps after each birthday is recognized; for 1 year or more the group sings "Happy Birthday", ending with "keep coming back".

14. "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 15 minutes. To enhance the power of our recovery program, CoDA recommends at least one meeting per month be devoted to Step study.

16. *Optional, strongly recommended*- Read the *CoDA Guide to Sharing, What is Crosstalk?* or both. These may also be read by passing them person-to-person, reading one or more item as it

goes around the room.

## **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."

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

*Optional-* "Would each of you please limit your sharing to 3-5 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 as you can. Seventh Traditions donations are used to support meeting expenses and literature, and to support CoDA at the community and national 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."**

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

20. "Thanks to our speaker\_\_\_\_\_." (If this is a speaker meeting)

21. **"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 NSC 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.

**CoDA – Co-Dependents Anonymous Canada**  
**Meeting List Update Form & Registration Form**

\_\_\_\_\_ Please update Local Community/Inter-group List - Community Group # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please update Provincial Group # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please update CoDA Canada Meeting List Group # CA--999

**Group Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Group # \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting Day \_\_\_\_\_ & Time \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting type: Open, Men, Women, Steps, CoDA Book, Topic, Smoking, Non Smoking, Other

Please list \_\_\_\_\_

Location/Building Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Province \_\_\_\_\_ **Postal Code** \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ Language(s) Spoken at meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Special directions or Notes \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Original start up date? \_\_\_\_\_ MM/DD/YYYY

Date you meeting was last updated? \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ **Approx # of attending** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail Contacts:** For mail to be delivered to your group, CoDA should not be on the envelope

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of **Mail Contact** gives permission for name and address to be used in mailings from CoDA, addresses to be added to Co-Dependents Anonymous Canada & Provincial CoDA Groups Mailing Lists. **Meeting Contacts** will be printed on meeting lists on the web meeting list. **Email and Phone contacts** will be used internal within CoDA or given out on a one by one basis only. Additional phone and email contacts with first names may be listed on back of form.

**Please fill out clearly and return to : Date Submitted** \_\_\_\_\_

**Meeting Updates**  
423 6th St. Apt. E  
New Westminister, B.C.  
V3L 3B1

**Fax Toll Free: 1-888-675-8325**  
E-mail: meeting\_updates@cdrs.ca