

The 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 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 Preamble, Welcome (short version), The Twelve Steps, The Twelve Traditions, Patterns and Characteristics, and the Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous may not be reprinted or republished without the express written consent of Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc. This document may be reprinted from the website www.coda.org (CoDA) for use by members of the CoDA Fellowship.

CoDA is a fellowship of men and women whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships and is not affiliated with any other Twelve Step program.

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Welcome (short version)

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

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

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

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

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.

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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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Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence

These patterns and characteristics are offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation. They may be particularly helpful to newcomers.

Denial Patterns:

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

Low Self Esteem Patterns:

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

Compliance Patterns:

Codependents often ... are extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long...compromise their own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger...put aside their own interests in order to do what others want...are hypervigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings...are afraid to express their beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others...

Compliance Patterns (continued):

...accept sexual attention when they want love...make decisions without regard to the consequences...give up their truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.

Control Patterns:

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

Avoidance Patterns:

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

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 a 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.

Recovery From Codependence: A Brief Introduction



For CoDA meeting information, please go to

www.coda.org

or call

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888.444.2379 (Spanish toll free)

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