Co-Dependents

Anonymous

Eastside

Functional

Relationships

updated 1/31/2018

**1. Opening**

Good evening and welcome to the Eastside Functional Relationships meeting of CoDA. My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I’ll be your chair for tonight.

**All: Hello, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**2.** Please silence your cell phones.

**3.** Let’s start the meeting with a moment of silence to reflect on why we are here followed by 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.”**

**4.** Co-Dependents Anonymous is a fellowship of people whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships. The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy and loving relationships. We gather together to support and share with each other in a journey of self-discovery—learning to love the self. Living the program allows each of us to become increasingly honest with ourselves about our personal histories and our own codependent behaviors.  
  
We rely upon the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for knowledge and wisdom. These are the principles of our program and guides to developing honest and fulfilling relationships with ourselves and others. In CoDA, we each learn to build a bridge to a Higher Power of our own understanding, and we allow others the same privilege.  
  
This renewal process is a gift of healing for us. By actively working the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous, we can each realize a new joy, acceptance, and serenity in our lives.

**5.** We discourage becoming involved with other members romantically, sexually, financially or in business in order to create a boundary and a safe place.

**6.** This is an adults-only meeting. Teenagers are also welcome. Thank you for respecting this boundary.

**7.** Will someone please read the CoDA Welcome?

**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, and 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 life 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 instead find here a new strength within to be that which God intended—Precious and Free.**

(Thank the reader.)

**8. Introductions**

Going around the room, let’s introduce ourselves by first name only. If you wish, you may state your CoDA sobriety date, which is when you first started coming to CoDA.

Those here for their 1st time can receive a newcomer’s coin and a hug. Those here for their 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, or 9th month as well as multiples of years may also receive a coin and a hug.

(Chair begins.)

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_, and I’m a co-dependent.

**9.** Will someone please read the Twelve Steps?

**The Twelve Steps**

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 co-dependents and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

(Thank the reader.)

**10.** CoDA's Twelve Traditions are the guiding spiritual principles of our meetings. Will someone please read the Twelve Traditions?

**The Twelve Traditions**

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 to 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 to 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.**

(Thank the reader.)

**11.** Will someone please read:

*On the 1st meeting of the month:* “Enabling” (p. 6)

*On the 2nd meeting of the month:* “The Traits of a Codependent” (p. 7)

*On the 3rd meeting of the month:* “The 15 Characteristic Behaviors of Co-Dependents” (p. 8)

*On the 4th meeting of the month:* “Good Qualities of a Codependent” (p. 9)

*On the 5th meeting of the month:* Chairperson may choose

**Enabling**

**Enabling is defined as reacting to a person in such a way as to shield them from experiencing the full impact of the harmful consequences of their behavior. Enabling behavior differs from helping in that it permits or allows the person to be irresponsible.**

**I exhibit codependent behaviors when...**

1. **I protect someone from the natural consequences of their behavior.**
2. **I keep secrets about someone’s behavior from others in order to keep the peace.**
3. **I make excuses for someone’s behavior, for example, to schools, friends, legal authorities, work, family members.**
4. **I bail someone out of trouble by paying their debts, fixing tickets, paying lawyers, providing jobs, etc.**
5. **I blame others (friends, teachers, employers, family, myself) for the dependent person’s behavior.**
6. **I see the problem as the result of something else-- shyness, adolescence, loneliness, etc.**
7. **I avoid the chemically dependent person in order to keep the peace. (Out of sight, out of mind.)**
8. **I give money that is undeserved or unearned.**
9. **I attempt to control by planning activities, choosing friends, getting jobs, etc.**
10. **I make threats that have no follow-through or consistency.**
11. **I take care of the chemically dependent person. (Doing for them what they should be doing for themselves.)**

(Thank the reader.)

**Traits of a Codependent**

**Healthy emotional behavior taken to extremes becomes unhealthy and dysfunctional. Codependency is the delusional addiction of trying to alter interior feelings by influencing people, things, or events. Control, or the lack of it, is central to every aspect of life.**

**I exhibit codependent behaviors when…**

1. **My good feelings about who I am stem from receiving approval and being liked by you.**
2. **Your struggle affects my serenity. My mental attention focuses on solving your problems or relieving your pain, which in turn bolsters my self-esteem.**
3. **My mental attention is focused on pleasing and protecting you.**
4. **My mental attention is focused on manipulating you to do it my way.**
5. **My time is spent sharing your interests and hobbies while my own are put aside.**
6. **Your clothing, personal appearance, and behavior are dictated by my desires as I feel you are a reflection of me.**
7. **I am not aware of what I want or how I feel. I am aware of what you want or how you feel. If I don’t know, I’ll assume.**
8. **The dreams I have for the future are linked to you.**
9. **My fear of your anger or rejection determines what I do or say.**
10. **I use giving as a way of feeling safe in our relationship.**
11. **My social circle diminishes as I involve myself with you.**
12. **Putting aside my values to connect with you, I value your opinion and way of doing things more than my own.**
13. **The quality of my life is in direct relation to the quality of yours.**

(Thank the reader.)

**The 15 Characteristic Behaviors of Codependents**

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| **1. Typically, you come from a dysfunctional home where your emotional needs were not met.** | **8. Your self-esteem may be critically low and deep inside you may not believe you deserve to be happy. Rather, you may believe you must earn the right to enjoy life.** |
| **2. Having received little real nurturing yourself, you may try to fill this unmet need vicariously by becoming a caregiver, especially to people who appear in some way needy.** | **9. You may have a desperate need to control your partner and your relationships, having experienced little security in childhood. You mask your efforts to control people and situations as being helpful.** |
| **3. Because you were never able to change your parents into the warm loving caretakers you longed for, you may respond deeply to the familiar type of emotionally unavailable person whom you can again try to change through your love.** | **10. In a relationship, you may be much more in touch with your dream of how it could be, rather than the reality of your situation.** |
| **4. Terrified of abandonment, you may**  **do anything to keep a relationship**  **from dissolving.** | **11. You may be addicted to relationships and emotional pain.** |
| **5. Almost nothing may be too much trouble, take too much time, or be too expensive if it will “help” the person you are involved with.** | **12. You may be predisposed emotionally and often biochemically to becoming addicted to drugs, alcohol, and certain foods, particularly sugary ones.** |
| **6. Accustomed to lack of love in personal relationships, you may be willing to wait, hope, and try harder to please.** | **13. By being drawn to people with problems that need fixing or by being enmeshed in situations that are chaotic, uncertain, and emotionally painful, you may avoid focusing on your responsibility for yourself.** |
| **7. You may be willing to take far more than 50% of the responsibility, guilt, or blame in any relationship.** | **14. You may have a tendency toward episodes of depression, which you try**  **to put off with the excitement of an**  **unstable relationship.** |
|  | **15. You may not be attracted to partners who are kind, stable, reliable, and interested in you. You find such “nice” people boring.** |

(Thank the reader.)

**Good Qualities of a Codependent**

**Many of the traits and behaviors associated with codependency are not in themselves bad. In fact, they are often valued in our culture and spiritual traditions. Only when they are taken to extremes do they become unhealthy or dysfunctional.**

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| **1. High level of organizational ability.** | **10. Strong sense of morality and right and wrong.** |
| **2. Competence at a wide variety of tasks and the ability to learn additional ones quickly.** | **11. Loyalty and a willingness to put the needs of others before one’s own.** |
| **3. Stability and resistance to panic.** | **12. Capacity to never ask, “What’s in this for me?”** |
| **4. Skilled at diplomacy and emotional manipulation.** | **13. The ability to do an enormous amount of work for minimal payoff.** |
| **5. Resilience with a high tolerance to pain.** | **14. High level of nurturing and caretaking skills.** |
| **6. High energy with good resistance to fatigue.** | **15. Tendency toward over-achievement, leading to the ability to work consistently at 120% of capacity.** |
| **7. Good administrative skills.** | **16. Gives low priority to emotional needs and feelings.** |
| **8. The ability to defer gratification indefinitely.** | **17. Has low self-esteem with a very dependent personality. It’s unlikely that a person with high self-esteem would put up with a fraction of what a codependent does.** |
| **9. Crisis intervention skills.** |

(Thank the reader.)

**12.** This meeting provides a member phone list if you’d like a list of CoDA members you can call if you need someone to talk to. Please take a copy from the back table. If your name isn’t on this list, please consider adding it if you want to become a member of this group.

**13.** I'm now passing around our chairperson sign-up. The chairperson just reads from a guide like I'm doing now. If you've attended at least 4–6 CoDA meetings, please consider doing some service work by volunteering to chair a meeting.

**14.** I will now read the CoDA Guidelines for Sharing.

As we pursue our recovery, it’s 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. The sharing of our experiences is best done with “I” statements. “Crosstalk” and “feedback” are discouraged.

Crosstalk can be giving unsolicited feedback, advice giving, answering, and making “you”and “we”statements. 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. We avoid talk about “them.” We are here to learn to change our focus to ourselves. This meeting is for us, not the people we love too much. And don’t be afraid of silent pauses, as sometimes we need time to collect our thoughts.

Please try and limit your share to 4 minutes. A timer will go off after 3 minutes letting you know that you have 1 additional minute to wrap up. Thank you in advance for respecting this boundary.

Would someone be willing to keep time?

**15.** I will now read from the CoDA daily meditation book for today’s date.

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

(Start the closing section at about 7:55 p.m.)

**17. Closing Section**

We now observe the Seventh Tradition.Our Seventh Tradition reminds us that we are self-supporting through our own contributions. This fund is used to pay rent, get literature, and to support local and regional CoDA groups. We ask that you give as you can. The suggested contribution is $2. Newcomers here for the first or second time are not expected to contribute and may purchase CoDA literature instead at the end of the meeting.

**18.** Are there any CoDA-related announcements?

**19.** Would someone volunteer to be the greeter next week? We ask that you arrive no later than 6:45 p.m.

**20.** Will someone please read the Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous?

**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 that 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 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.**

(Thank the reader.)

**21.** Will someone please read the Bill of Rights?

**Bill of Rights**

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| **1. My life has choices beyond mere survival.** | **7. There is no need to smile when I cry.** |
| **2. I have a right to say “no” to anything when**  **I feel I am not ready or it is unsafe.** | **8. I have the right to end conversations with**  **people when I feel put down or humiliated**  **by them.** |
| **3. My life is not motivated by fear.** | **9. I can be emotionally healthier than those**  **around me.** |
| **4. I have a right to all of my feelings.** | **10. It is okay to be relaxed, playful,**  **and frivolous.** |
| **5. I am not always guilty or wrong.** | **11. I have the right to change and grow.** |
| **6. I have the right to make mistakes.** | **12. It is important to set limits and take care**  **of myself.** |

(Thank the reader.)

**22.** As we bring this meeting to a close, we'd like to remind you that CoDA is an anonymous program. We ask that you respect the anonymity and confidentiality of each person here.

We ask that what you see here, what is said here,

When you leave here, let it stay here.

ALL: **Hear, hear.**

The opinions expressed here are strictly of those who gave them. Take what you like and leave the rest. As we close, we thank our Higher Power for all we have received from this meeting. May we take with us the freedom, love, acceptance and hope of recovery. Will all those who care to please join me in reciting the Serenity Prayer?”

(Stand in a circle and join hands.)

**“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.**

*Keep coming back; it works if you work it. So work it ’cause you’re worth it!”*