

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. You may also copy and display our "For Safety Sake" tent card during meetings.

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)

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>The CoDA Opening Prayer</u> ©</p> <p style="text-align: center;">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.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>The Serenity Prayer</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">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</p>
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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* or the *Recovery 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, Voting Entity(VE) , or CoDA World Fellowship 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 CSC 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.

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.

Someone has volunteered to read the "Welcome".

~~Someone has volunteered to read the Typical Characteristics of a Co-Dependent.~~

Someone has volunteered to read the Patterns of Codependency..

Someone has volunteered to read the Characteristics of a Healthy Functioning Adult. ^{CALLED} *EMOTIONAL* *MATURITY*

CoDA's Twelve Steps are the spiritual guidelines for our individual recovery. Someone has volunteered to read the Twelve Steps"

"CoDA's Twelve Traditions are the guiding spiritual principles of our meetings. Someone has volunteered to read the Twelve Traditions of CODA.

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... "

So that we can get to know each other better, let's take this time to introduce ourselves by first name only. Would the newcomers please join in again. (Meeting leader introduces self and then introductions continue around the room.)



Codependents Anonymous

www.CoDA.org

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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.

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

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Foundation Documents

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

The Twelve Steps reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

The 12 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. CoDependents 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.

The Twelve Traditions reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc

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:

- 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.
- I lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others.
- I label others with my negative traits.
- I can take care of myself without any help from others.
- I mask my pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.
- I express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.
- I do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom I am attracted.

Low Self Esteem Patterns:

- I have difficulty making decisions.
- I judge what I think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.
- I am embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.
- I value others' approval of my thinking, feelings, and behavior over my own.
- I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person.
- I constantly seek recognition that I think I deserve.
- I have difficulty admitting that I made a mistake.
- I need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and will even lie to look good.
- I am unable to ask others to meet my needs or desires.
- I perceive myself as superior to others.
- I look to others to provide my sense of safety.
- I have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.
- I have trouble setting healthy priorities.

Compliance Patterns:

- I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.
- I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.
- I put aside my own interests in order to do what others want.
- I am hyper vigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.
- I am afraid to express my beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.

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

Control Patterns:

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

Avoidance Patterns:

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

The *Patterns and Characteristics of Codependency* 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.

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Recovery Patterns of Codependence®

EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Some of the rewards of recovery from co-dependence are suggested here:

1. We are open-minded and able to consider the opinions of others.
2. We have outgrown "black and white" thinking and recognize that no person or situation is entirely good or bad.
3. We avoid self-pity and are open to the abundance of life.
4. We do not expect special consideration from anyone.
5. We are able to manage our temper.
6. We patiently tolerate reasonable delays and can adjust to accommodate others' needs and schedules.
7. We have outgrown envy and jealousy, and are honestly glad when others enjoy success.
8. We accept responsibility for our own actions without trying to make excuses.
9. We do not try to control other people, allowing them to have their own life experience.
10. We are gracious losers and can endure defeat and disappointment without whining or complaining.
11. We are not chronic "fault-finders," habitually blaming neither ourselves or others.
12. We are not emotionally devastated by perceived slights or minor disappointments.
13. We do not easily assume or take on other peoples' emotions.
14. We feel an organic connection to humankind as a whole and gratefully contribute our part to society.
15. We strive to behave like an ideal, loving parent and can empathically nurture both children and adults.

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.

"The Journey Continues" on page 79 in the CoDA Book is an option to the above reading, or may be read in addition to the above reading.

