

Why A Fellowship?

For many of us, codependence and addiction arise partly from feelings of being different, "special" and separate. We may have spent our lives believing that we had to manage alone, that no-one would be there for us and that no-one could understand our pain. Recovery is a return from this isolation. Identifying with others' experiences at meetings is the key to breaking down the barriers of our 'terminal uniqueness'. The CODA Fellowship provides a safe place where we can learn to trust ourselves and others an important foundation for healthy relationships.

Getting the Balance Right

As codependents our behaviour may swing from the extremes of over-dependence and neediness to over-independence and control. We may have been, at times, overly responsible for others, exhausting ourselves and unwittingly depriving others of the right to take responsibility for themselves. At other times we have felt "put upon" and become reluctant to take on any responsibility. Fellowship provides us with opportunities to practice interdependence, as we learn through recovery how to get the balance right, to identify and state what our needs are and to set a boundary if we feel we are taking on too much. Learning to give and receive in ways that work for us is fundamental to having healthy relationships.

Healing shame

Many of us experienced shaming abuse as children often for just being ourselves. This painful, toxic shame and the fear of that shame may have kept us in emotional isolation. Fellowship brings this

shame out of hiding and starts to heal it as we allow others to see who we truly are - unique and precious creations. As this happens we begin to be Fellowship brings this more at ease with ourselves and others and are able to express our thoughts and feelings more spontaneously.

Unity

In our first step we admit that we are powerless over others. By sharing and working with other CODA members we learn that with others we are empowered, at one with our fellows in a common purpose. We begin to understand Tradition One - "personal recovery depends upon CODA unity" and that our own recovery benefits when we put our common welfare first. The illusion of separateness and uniqueness disappear. As we heal we move from spiritual and emotional isolation to connectedness. We learn to be self-empowered, and to speak our truth while allowing others the same privilege.

Working Together - A Common Goal

Fellowship requires that we work together towards a common goal. In this way we keep running costs to a minimum, helping to make the program available to all who need it. We experience true equality with others, perhaps for the first time. Many of us come to the program expecting someone to be taking care of business for us. However, we find that in CODA we can't leave the work to an invisible "they". We learn that "they" is "us".

Low self-esteem and shame are at the core of much codependent behaviour. A lack of faith or belief in oneself can sometimes make us fearful of getting involved. This fear may manifest as grandiosity or as

extreme shyness and withdrawal. Many of us, in our codependence, have been emotionally frozen passive, static, and often unavailable to others. Actively contributing within the Fellowship is a way out of the bind of this painful inertia and into vitality and recovery. The CODA Fellowship supports us to share our difficulties in working through these issues and helps us to become willing and able to enjoy our share of life's responsibilities as we take our first tentative steps towards self-acceptance.

Beginning To Belong - In Our Own Time

Taking part in the Fellowship in an active way begins with simply attending and sharing openly and honestly at meetings. Recovery in CODA is an individual process, and does not necessarily include fellowship and socializing all the time for everyone.

Meetings provide gradual steps for members to choose to begin their journey out of isolation and into fellowship. Many of us are fearful of this and, for some, those first steps will take great courage. We are encouraged to take that leap of faith in ourselves, knowing that the CODA Fellowship provides a safe environment in which to "try our wings".

There are many opportunities to make a contribution to our Fellowship - we can be creative in how we do this! Regular rotation of service positions gives every participant ensuring that recovery continues to be available for ourselves and for those who will member the chance to follow after.

When we withhold ourselves from the Fellowship or think of ourselves as unworthy, or not good enough we reinforce our feelings of being cut off from the care and concern of others; perhaps including the care of a Higher Power. We can easily confuse this behaviour with humility. This is not humility – but may be our version of “isolating” or “avoidance”.

In doing service tasks, especially after meetings, we can be aware of our underlying motives. Are we “keeping busy” for a reason? Maybe to avoid socialising with other members? We try to find a balance and step out of our comfort zones once in a while.

New Friends

Forming our own personal network of CODA contacts will help end our isolation. The goal is to develop a healthy system of support for ourselves with CODA friends and "old timers", people from other CODA groups and other Twelve Step groups.

Our recovery benefits when we spend time in 'good company'. Socializing opportunity for a different type sharing: asking questions, receiving appropriate feedback, and getting to know each other better. CODA must always remain a safe place so please do not use CODA as a 'social club' or a place to get 'dates'.

The following suggestions are intended to help us in our quest for fellowship. We can:

- Chat to other members after meetings
- Help clear up after the meeting

- Involve newer members in helping with our service tasks
- Participate in group conscience & intergroup meetings - our opinion matters
- Make "outreach" phone calls
- Develop a healthy, mutually supportive network - and use it!
- Meet up with other members before and after meetings
- Attend or organise fellowship social events
- Attend or organise workshops
- Find a Sponsor or Cc-sponsor
- Phone other members (just for the fun of it)

By working the fellowship aspects of the program we can begin to learn how to connect with and love ourselves and others. We remember that, "we only get to keep it when we give it away". Having found healing in the supportive Fellowship of CODA, we become, in our turn, part of the healing process as we share our own experience of recovery and carry the message to other codependents who still suffer. This stage seals our own recovery and ensures our continued spiritual growth.

This pamphlet has been approved by CODA Sydney Intergroup Committee as a work in progress - March 2005 CODA Australian Service Office
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Fellowship in CODA

Co-Dependents Anonymous