

CoDA - Australia

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

The First 14 Days

Workbook for Sponsees

For use with the "First 14 Days Sponsor's questions" when working in a sponsorship or co-sponsorship relationship.

(First 14 Day Question Sheets are available from the Intergroup Sponsorship Co-ordinator and CoDA Australasian Website)

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CoDA Australasian Intergroup Endorsed – "Work in Progress"

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CoDA Australia - Structured Sponsorship

Congratulations! on taking the important step of finding yourself a Sponsor. You and your Sponsor have chosen to work using the Structured Sponsorship program which starts with this First 14 Days workbook.

SETTING UP THE SPONSORSHIP RELATIONSHIP

Please read the CoDA Sponsorship pamphlet and the Sponsorship Booklet and discuss any issues or questions that arise with your sponsor. Together you can agree on boundaries and expectations.

USING THIS WORKBOOK

This First 14 Day workbook is concerned with assisting you to identify your own specific co-dependent behaviours especially those that have caused you the most pain or difficulty in your life. It is the start of the process of “getting honest” with yourself – the first step towards self acceptance and healing and will lead into you doing a thorough Step One.

It also helps in the formation of a growing relationship between you and your sponsor – allowing you both to get to know each other better.

There are 14 questions that your sponsor will give you one at a time over a period of approximately 2 to 4 weeks. It is important to work consistently through these and to talk with your sponsor about any difficulties you are having. During this period you will talk or email your sponsor preferably every day or every 2 to 3 days. The next day’s question is given to you by your sponsor at the end of each phone call or by email as you send your last answer.

WHAT NEXT?

At the end of this period you can continue to work with your sponsor starting with Step One using the CoDA Steps & Traditions workbook questions and readings on each Step from the CoDA workbook, the CoDA book and the Steps pamphlets or if they are not available contact the CoDA Sponsorship Co-Ordinator.

CoDA Literature is available from your local CoDA group or can be ordered from the CoDA Australasian Office in Sydney or the Online shop Visit: <http://www.codependentsanonymous.org.au/> or call 0417 995 111 for an order form.

Suggested Literature for Newcomers:

CoDA Newcomers Handbook, Steps & Traditions Workbook, Booklets and Pamphlets on Sponsorship.

The booklets “Common Threads of Codependency” and “Peeling the Onions” are also recommended.

Day One

The CoDA “Preamble” and “Welcome” are read at the start of all CoDA meetings.

CoDA Preamble

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 (as adopted from Alcoholics Anonymous) 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.

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PTO for CoDA Welcome...

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.

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.

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Day Two:

No readings for this question.

Day Three: Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence

These patterns and characteristics are offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation for both newcomers and those who have been in recovery a while.

Often	Never	Some -times	DENIAL PATTERNS:
			I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.
			I minimise, alter or deny how I truly feel.
			I perceive myself as completely unselfish and dedicated to the wellbeing of others.
			I lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others,
			I label others with my own negative traits.
			I can take care of myself without any help from others.
			I mask my pain in various ways such as anger, humour or isolation.
			I express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.
			I do not recognize the unavailability of people I am attracted to.

Often	Never	Some -times	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 behaviour over my own.
			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 even lie to look good.
			I am unable to (or do not) ask others to meet my needs and desires.
			I do not perceive myself as a valuable and loveable person.
			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.

Often	Never	Some -times	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.

Often	Never	Some -times	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 favours 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 behaviour of others.
			I pretend to agree with others to get what I want.

Often	Never	Some -times	AVOIDANCE PATTERNS:
			I act in ways that invite others to reject, shame or express anger towards 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.

Day Four

(These characteristics are offered as an aid to self-evaluation. They are not a definition. They can be helpful to newcomers as they begin to understand co-dependence, remembering to look for similarities, not differences.)

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF CO-DEPENDENT BEHAVIOUR

Co-Dependents Anonymous 1988

I ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS FEELINGS AND /OR BEHAVIOUR

E.g. I feel compelled to “do something about” other peoples’ feelings/ actions

I FEEL OVERLY RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHER’S FEELINGS AND/OR BEHAVIOUR

E.g. what others feel and do is caused by me.

I HAVE DIFFICULTY IDENTIFYING MY FEELINGS – AM I ANGRY? SAD? LONELY? HAPPY?

I HAVE DIFFICULTY EXPRESSING MY FEELINGS – “I AM FEELING ...”

I TEND TO FEAR AND/OR WORRY ABOUT HOW OTHERS MAY RESPOND TO MY FEELINGS.

I HAVE DIFFICULTY IN FORMING AND/OR MAINTAINING CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS.

I AM AFRAID OF BEING HURT AND/OR REJECTED BY OTHERS.

I AM PERFECTIONISTIC AND PLACE TOO MANY EXPECTATIONS ON MYSELF AND OTHERS.

I HAVE DIFFICULTY MAKING DECISIONS

I TEND TO MINIMISE, ALTER OR EVEN DENY THE TRUTH ABOUT HOW I FEEL.

OTHER’S ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES TEND TO DETERMINE HOW I RESPOND/REACT.

I TEND TO PUT OTHER PEOPLE’S WANTS AND NEEDS FIRST.

MY FEAR OF OTHER’S FEELINGS (e.g. ANGER) DETERMINES WHAT I SAY AND DO.

I QUESTION OR IGNORE MY OWN VALUES TO CONNECT WITH SIGNIFICANT OTHERS. I VALUE OTHER’S OPINIONS MORE THAN MY OWN.

MY SELF-ESTEEM IS BOLSTERED BY OUTER/OTHER INFLUENCES. I CANNOT / (WILL NOT) ACKNOWLEDGE GOOD THINGS ABOUT MYSELF.

MY SERENITY AND MENTAL ATTENTION IS DETERMINED BY HOW OTHERS ARE FEELING AND/OR BEHAVING.

I TEND TO JUDGE EVERYTHING I DO, THINK OR SAY HARSHLY, BY SOMEONE ELSE’S STANDARDS (Whose?) – NOTHING I DO, SAY OR THINK IS “GOOD ENOUGH”

I DO NOT KNOW OR BELIEVE THAT BEING VULNERABLE AND ASKING FOR HELP IS OK.

I DO NOT KNOW THAT IT IS OK TO TALK ABOUT PROBLEMS OUTSIDE THE FAMILY; OR THAT FEELINGS “JUST ARE” – AND IT IS BETTER TO SHARE THEM THAN TO DENY, MINIMISE OR JUSTIFY THEM.

I HAVE TO BE “NEEDED” IN ORDER TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS.

I AM STEADFASTLY LOYAL, EVEN WHEN IT IS UNJUSTIFIED AND EVEN HARMFUL.

Day Five

STEP ONE

We admitted we were powerless over others – that our lives had become unmanageable.

For many of us who came to Co-Dependents anonymous minding other people's business had become a way of life. We might have been taught by well-meaning people that we really were responsible for the well-being of others and that our words and actions were powerful enough to change those with whom we interacted.

Having carried this teaching into adulthood, most of us have had difficulty in our relationships with a spouse, lover, child, friend, co-worker, or parent. We had made these "others" our Higher Power, defining who we were by what we imagined they thought. Determining to control, to advise, to guide others, we put off our own good – indefinitely.

In Co-Dependents Anonymous, we are opening ourselves to a new way of thinking and living, one that offers us an end to our compulsive drive to "fix the unfixable".

Powerlessness

Until now we had applied self-control, obsessiveness, and our own clouded thinking to our problems of living. When our relationships broke down, many of us just tried harder, applying our arsenal of misinformation with a vengeance. Our self-will took many forms. We were overbearing. We were people pleasers. We confirmed. We rebelled. We blamed. We hurt ourselves and we hurt others. Some of us had to go to the edge of insanity or death before we were willing to admit our powerlessness. And all the while we were convinced we were doing the right thing. Where was success?

We took a moment to reflect on the futility of trying to feel good about ourselves by focusing on the real or imagined problems of another. And we reminded ourselves that we never had the kind of power these old thoughts suggested we apply.

"But what about the long haul?" we asked. "Will I ever be free of these burdensome thoughts?"

Unmanageability

The second half of this step reminded us of our past. Our lives had become unmanageable because we had chosen to solve problems in a way that did not work. We made our well-being hinge on the imagined well-being (or lack of it) of another.

Chances are that by the time we reach CoDA our lives were out of control. The coping skills we had relied on for a lifetime were no longer working. We were the victims of a compulsive way of behaving so subtly powerful and damaging that no ordinary means could break it. Our lives were truly unmanageable. It was at this point that our old ideas begin to crumble and we became open to the possibility that there might be another way.

Our new life in Co-Dependents Anonymous began with Step One. As we became willing to say the words, "we admit we are powerless over others, and our lives have become unmanageable", we placed the key in the door to our recovery. We had given up making gods out of ourselves and others. We had made room for a true Higher Power, one in which we could eventually place our faith and trust.

In this moment I do not have to control anyone, including me. And if I feel uncomfortable with what another person is doing or not doing I can remind myself, I AM POWERLESS over this person and I AM POWERLESS over my compulsion to act in inappropriate ways.

Having surrendered thus far, we were ready to take Step Two.

Day Six

Read the CoDA Pamphlet reproduced here - “**Boundaries**”

What are Boundaries?

Boundaries are things that separate one thing from another. A good example is our skin. It separates our insides from what is on the outside of our bodies. It's good and keeps us alive. Types of boundaries that we or others disregard (or are unaware of) are sexual, spiritual, emotional, mental, (intellectual) and physical. Any type of boundary violation is spiritual because someone or something is trying to be our Higher Power or control us.

In codependent families, boundaries are never the same from day to day. Sometimes there are no boundaries at all, they shift and change depending on the emotional climate of the people in that family. Once we begin the journey of recovery we begin to build our self esteem and become aware of boundary violations. At first we notice the obvious ones. Then as we grow and learn, we become aware of the more subtle violations.

Emotional Boundary Violations

This can happen to us at any age when someone or something “puts down” or discounts our emotions (feelings) as unimportant, unnecessary or wrong. Sometimes people will try to spare us from feeling our pain, fear, anger, guilt, sadness or shame. Mostly, they will try to do this to spare us from hurt. They are trying to fix us and our feelings. Emotions (feelings) are not wrong or bad, they just are. God gives us a gift at the end of every feeling. For example, after the pain comes the healing. If we do not allow ourselves to experience our feelings, they won't go away. They will eventually come out in ways that may be more painful or when we least expect it.

In order to give ourselves permission to feel our feelings, we need to create boundaries that feel safe. This will work two ways for us (as do all healthy boundaries). First, it gives us permission to feel whatever we are feeling and have that be okay. Secondly, we allow others to be responsible and have their own feelings without trying to change them. When we become aware of our boundaries, we respect and value others' boundaries too. No one can make us feel anything we do not choose to feel.

As codependents, others who cannot handle their own feelings will try to ‘dump’ theirs on us. Often we do not realize this and carry around someone else's emotions. Once again, the awareness of our emotional boundaries will remind us whose ‘stuff’ is whose. Any time we have feelings that are overwhelming, some of those emotions belong to someone else. Our own feelings don't overwhelm us.

Healthy Emotional Boundary

We all have the God-given right to have our feelings. We are also responsible for what we do with them and how we show them. Other people are also entitled to their feelings and accountable for their behaviour around them. Our responsibility in recovery is not to fix (with people, places or things) our or other people's feelings. The first step (“we admitted we were powerless over others – that our lives had become unmanageable”) is perfect here. Realizing our powerlessness over others, we speed our recovery by feeling our feelings and accepting the gift at the end.

Physical Boundary Violations

This can happen to us at any age, when someone or something violates our body space in a physical manner. Sometimes people hug us when we don't want to be hugged. People hit us. People continually touch us while they are talking to us. Sometimes these are in offensive ways, and sometimes they are well meaning. When people stand too close to us or look at us in a way that us uncomfortable, they are violating our physical boundaries. These are only a few ways in which we can have our physical boundaries violated.

Healthy Physical Boundaries

We have the God-given right to say when, where, how, why and who touches or gets close to our body.

Sexual Boundary Violation

This can happen to us at any age when someone or something speaks about or touches our body in a way that is sexually offensive, painful, frightening, embarrassing or shaming to us. The someone can be any member of our family, people close to our family, or someone we trust to take care of us, such as a teacher, clergy or babysitters. The something can be movies, TV shows, lyrics, books, magazines or jokes.

This boundary is truly personal. Sexual boundary violations can be verbal, emotional and physical. A violation can be as horrible and as terrifying as rape or as uncomfortable as an inappropriate use of the eyes such as staring or looking. Criticism of our gender and/or our sexual preference, threats, implied contact or physical seduction are other examples of sexual boundary violations. If we were never taught about sex or were told incorrect information, a sexual boundary was violated. We may not know that what happened to us was a violation, but we feel yucky, we feel dirty, and we feel used.

Healthy Sexual Boundaries

We have the God-Given right to say when, how, why, where and who touches the sexual part of our being.

Mental (Intellectual) Boundary Violations

This can happen at any age when someone, an institution or a principle discounts what and how we think. One form of intellectual boundary violation is when people interrupt us when we are talking or otherwise invalidate our thoughts. As children, teens or adults, we have often heard that “We shouldn’t think like that” or “that kind of thinking will get us nowhere”. To be told that our thought processes are “less than” someone else’s is a boundary violation. When we experience this violation, we learn that to judge and be judged is okay. And we end up violating other’s boundaries.

Healthy Mental (Intellectual) Boundaries

We have the God-given right to our own thinking. It is our choice to accept or reject what others say about what we think or say. To allow ourselves and others the right of thought and let those thoughts and communications of them belong to us will allow us to begin to make our own choices about how we think. The process of recovery has a lot of thinking in it and to be able to think and share those thoughts is scary at first. As we recover and gain in our own self esteem, we have more faith that we are thinking in a spiritually sober way and we allow others to have their own thoughts without interruption and without ridicule. Your thinking can only hurt me if I let it. The gift of owning our intellect is owning our growth.

Spiritual Boundary Violations

This can happen to us at any age when someone or something does not allow us to have our own God, as we understand God. Any type of boundary violation is a spiritual one. When others make choices for us, violate us physically or sexually, discount our feelings, challenge our concept of Higher Power, ignore abuse or invalidate our thinking they are playing Higher Power and are interfering with the relationships of Higher Power of our own understanding. As stated before-any boundary violation is a spiritual violation.

Healthy Spiritual Boundaries

We are exercising healthy boundaries anytime we allow ourselves the right ...

- To define our own God
- To have our own feelings
- To say how and when we are physically and sexually touched
- To have our own thoughts

We are also exercising healthy boundaries when we allow others to have these same rights.

This we learn as we live and work the twelve Steps of Co-dependence Anonymous and practice all of these principles in our daily living.

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Day Seven

(These patterns are offered as an aid to self-evaluation. They are not a definition. They can be helpful to newcomers as they begin to understand co-dependency, remembering to look for similarities, not differences.)

PATTERNS OF CO-DEPENDENCY

Co-Dependents Anonymous 1988

MY GOOD FEELINGS ABOUT WHO I AM STEM FROM BEING LIKED BY YOU.

MY GOOD FEELINGS ABOUT WHO I AM STEM FROM RECEIVING APPROVAL FROM YOU

YOUR STRUGGLE AFFECTS MY SERENITY. MY MENTAL ATTENTION FOCUSES ON SOLVING YOUR PROBLEMS OR RELIEVING YOUR PAIN.

MY MENTAL ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON PLEASING YOU

MY MENTAL ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON PROTECTING YOU

MY MENTAL ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON MANIPULATING YOU (TO DO IT MY WAY)

MY SELF-ESTEEM IS BOLSTERED BY SOLVING YOUR PROBLEMS.

MY SELF-ESTEEM IS BOLSTERED BY RELIEVING YOUR PAIN.

MY OWN HOBBIES AND INTERESTS ARE PUT ASIDE. MY TIME IS SPENT SHARING YOUR INTERESTS AND HOBBIES.

YOUR CLOTHING AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE ARE DICTATED BY MY DESIRES AS I FEEL YOU ARE A REFLECTION OF ME.

YOUR BEHAVIOUR IS DICTATED BY MY DESIRES AS I FEEL YOU ARE A REFLECTION OF ME.

I AM NOT AWARE OF HOW I FEEL, I AM MORE AWARE OF HOW YOU FEEL.

I AM NOT AWARE OF WHAT I WANT – I ASK WHAT YOU WANT. I AM NOT AWARE – I ASSUME.

THE DREAMS I HAVE FOR MY FUTURE ARE LINKED TO YOU.

MY FEAR OF REJECTION DETERMINES WHAT I SAY OR DO.

MY FEAR OF YOUR ANGER DETERMINES WHAT I SAY OR DO.

I USE GIVING AS A WAY OF FEELING SAFE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP

MY SOCIAL CIRCLE DIMINISHES AS I INVOLVE MYSELF WITH YOU.

I VALUE YOUR OPINION AND WAY OF DOING THINGS MORE THAN MY OWN.

THE QUALITY OF MY LIFE IS IN RELATION TO THE QUALITY OF YOURS.

Day Eight

AFFIRMATIONS – JUST FOR TODAY

Today I love and accept myself

Today I accept my feelings

Today I share all my feelings appropriately

Today I am allowed to make mistakes

Today I like who I am

Today I am enough

Today I will not criticise myself or others

Today I love and accept myself and others

Today I let others be

Today I trust my Higher Power

Today I am honest with myself and with others

Today I accept myself

Today I treat myself with care and gentleness

Today I ask my Higher Power for guidance

Today I have the right to protect my thoughts and feelings

Today I remember I am precious and unrepeatable

Today I am my own best friend

Today I make healthy choices and nurture myself and my recovery

Today I am happy to live in my body

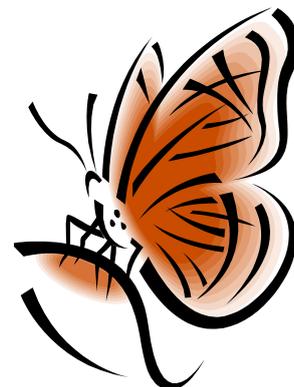
Today I feel beautiful inside and out

Today I accept myself for accepting sex when I wanted to be loved.

Today I accept myself for letting others hurt me in the past

Today I accept myself for hurting others in the past

Today I am capable of changing



Day Nine

SHAME

Shame causes us to believe we are “less than”, stupid, foolish, worthless, inadequate or unwanted. It diminishes our true sense of identity and destroys our belief that we are loving human beings. It erodes our self-esteem and sense of equality in the world.

CoDA Book, page 16

EXPERIENCING FEAR & SHAME AS CHILDREN

As children our identity, as well as our relationships with our Higher Power, ourselves and others were damaged each time we were abused or neglected. We felt shame and naturally feared its reoccurrence, yet we allowed our sense of self and wellbeing to be shaped by those who abused and neglected us. As children, we had no choice.

As we continued to experience abuse or neglect, our fear and shame intensified; we gave more of ourselves away. Over time (most often without our knowing) our abusers became our Higher Power. We learned to fear their authority. As the abuse and neglect continued, the possibility of developing an emotionally fulfilling relationship with ourselves, others and our Higher Power diminished.

We learned survival skills in order to cope. We controlled or avoided potentially volatile circumstances. We cast away our childhood, tried to become little adults or rebelled. Many of us didn't understand our actions because they were often instinctive.

Over time we learned how to alleviate our fear and shame by controlling and/or avoiding ourselves and others. When we felt overwhelmed or stressed out, we relied on what we knew best to survive. In this codependent cycle, we took greater control of life, allowing less room for a Power greater than ourselves to work through us.

CoDA Book , page 17

CONTINUING THIS BEHAVIOUR AS ADULTS

Without some form of help, we carry these emotional conflicts and survival patterns into our adult lives. We hope to find peace and happiness and leave the past behind; but instead, we recreate similar or opposite circumstances in our adult relationships. Neither extreme is healthy. We unknowingly transfer the characteristics and power of our childhood abusers to significant people in our lives today. Sometimes we transfer abusive characteristics to our Higher Power, too.

In our adult relationships, we fearfully guard against any sign of shame, abuse or neglect. We become manipulative or avoid other people and circumstances. This fear can grow stronger than the shame itself. It forms a shaky foundation for relationships. We continue to draw others near us, (hoping for intimacy) but when they get too close, we push them away because of our fear of shame.

CoDA Book ed: pp17-18.

WHAT IS A SHAME SPIRAL?

We may have experienced overwhelming feelings of worthlessness, apathy or panic. We may feel there's no solution or end to the pain; we feel isolated, rejected stupid or foolish. We call this a shame spiral. We may berate or push ourselves harder to meet someone else's expectations, engage in unhealthy sexual behaviour, compulsively eat or starve, or try to escape from a situation by avoiding others. All of these behaviours cause us to feel more pain and confusion. If we don't stop this cycle, our shame will spiral even worse and result in some form of crisis. At these times, it's important to reach to our Higher Power for guidance and strength. We write about our thoughts and feelings, and more importantly, go to meetings and talk with our sponsor and recovery friends. Many of us find that the intensity of our shame fades as we reach toward our Higher Power. We're better able to focus on our choices and regain a sense of empowerment and self-esteem.

*CoDA Book Second Ed Page 116 (First Ed 1995 p109) –
Not in later printings of the First edition*

WHAT IS FEAR OF SHAME?

Fear of shame is our fear of being shamed again by our boss, mate, family members, friends or parents. It has much greater control of our lives than shame itself.

We may be afraid to hear about our mistakes or shortcomings, and in turn, become defensive or critical, possibly avoiding or lying about a situation. We become terrified of being discounted or abandoned. We control others out of fear of their disappointment or anger with us. The shame we fear most is the same type of shame we experienced in our childhood.

Many of us find it helpful to share these fears with our sponsor or friends. When we confront these original feelings and the resulting progressive fears, we're able to soothe and possibly eliminate their intensity.

CoDA Book Second Edition Page 117 (1995 ed: ch 5, p110.)

Day Ten

CONTROLLING AND AVOIDING

The following paragraphs describe how our spiritual dilemma may involve control and avoidance, especially when circumstances become stressful.

CONTROLLING PEOPLE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Many of us take pride in controlling circumstances and those around us. If we think we might be abandoned, abused or neglected by others, we label them as the problem and manipulate them. Specifically, we may overcontrol our mates, children, family members, friends or associates by dominating them. Another way we control them is by being “nice”, passive or quiet for long periods of time. Then, when fear or other feelings overwhelm us, we rage, isolate or allow others to act out our feelings for us.

We become a Higher Power when we control others, to any degree, either quietly or aggressively. We may even reinforce our control with an attitude of arrogance, authority or prejudice. We value others’ beliefs and behaviours as foolish, selfish or worthless. We establish ourselves in a “better than” position. Our way is the only way, we think.

In giving the power of our Higher Power to other people we seek others’ approval, often to the point of abandoning our own needs and desires. We live in fear of those we put in power. We dread their anger or disapproving looks. We fear their disappointment, avoidance or control. In essence, we lose our sense of self (or never gain it) because we become obsessed with their attitudes and behaviours towards us.

AVOIDING PEOPLE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Some of us, out of fear and/or shame, avoid any degree of closeness or intimacy with others. We work hard to prevent placing ourselves in a vulnerable position. We become skilled at hiding our fears, especially when things seem out of control. We may remain silent even when we experience injustice or abuse.

We may fall into martyr roles or act helpless to avoid confrontation or accountability. We may place ourselves in a subservient position and judge ourselves harshly. We may believe we’re not acceptable enough to live a life with relationships, purpose and happiness.

Our codependence worsens; our fear and shame overwhelm us. We control and avoid others even more. But these behaviours are temporary fixes; our fears always return and shame is ever present.

Many of us seek false gods. We numb our feelings with alcohol, drugs, food, sex or work; these often turn into chronic addictions and compound our problems. None of them provide us freedom or peace.

Regardless of whether we position ourselves as “better than” or “less than”, as a controller or avoider, we behave in self-centered ways. Equality is lost.

Page 14 to 15 The CoDA Book

Day Eleven

No reading for this question.

Day Twelve

ENMESHMENT, DETACHMENT AND AVOIDANCE

WHAT IS ENMESHMENT?

Enmeshment occurs in relationships between people who have not developed their own clear identities and/or boundaries. Each person's sense of wholeness and self-worth is intertwined with those of the other person. It is as if there were only one identity, and it is difficult for either to function fully without the other. When we look to another person to define our values, and we accept their needs, feelings or opinions as our own, we are enmeshed. Statements of enmeshment such as, "I'd die without you," "You're my everything," "Without you, I'm nothing," "I need you," or "You make me whole" are found in everyday conversations.

Enmeshment is common among family members, lovers, friends and in caretaking situations. An enmeshed relationship doesn't allow for individuality, autonomy, wholeness, or personal empowerment. Healthy relationships with ourselves, others and our Higher Power are hindered by enmeshment because our focus is most often outward, towards someone else.

The antidote for enmeshment is developing healthy boundaries, keeping the focus on ourselves, and working to define our unique identities, wants, needs and opinions. Maintaining a relationship with our Higher Power, participating in CoDA meetings, and using the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in our relationships with others all help us let go of our enmeshment behaviours and become our authentic selves.

WHAT IS DETACHMENT?

Detachment is the act of disengaging or disconnecting from another person, group of people or situation. Detachment allows us to emotionally and/or physically separate ourselves from people, events and places in order to gain a healthy objective point of view. If we don't like the behaviour of others, we can detach, recognising that we are separate from them with our own distinctive identity and set of boundaries. We endeavour to detach with love and respect for ourselves and others, especially when detaching from family or friends. We ask our Higher Power to help us focus on maintaining our boundaries. Even though we care, we remember that we are not responsible for others people's behaviours, nor are they responsible for our well-being.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DETACHMENT AND AVOIDANCE?

Another way of stating this could be, "What is the difference between letting go and running away?"

In CoDA, detachment is a conscious act of self-care. We choose to disengage emotionally from people and/or leave situations that could harm us. Avoidance is often an unconscious, dysfunctional coping mechanism that allows us to avoid self-accountability, ignore people or situations, hide from the truth, or run away from our responsibilities. Avoidance is often driven by our fear of experiencing rejection, anger, disappointment or shame.

Simply put, detachment is an action based on love and strength while avoidance is based on fear.

*The CoDA Book Second Edition 2009: Pages 112 to 114
1st Edition (First printing 1995) CoDA book Pages 106 to 107
NOT included in later printings of the First Edition*

Day Thirteen

SELF-PARENTING

WHAT IS MEANT BY PARENTING OURSELVES?

Parenting or re-parenting ourselves means recognising we are capable human beings who are choosing to become fully-functioning, emotionally healthy adults. Growing up in dysfunctional families left us with many unmet needs and we may not have felt valued or loved by our parents. As adults in recovery we become aware of our childhood wounds and we have the opportunity to fill those childhood voids. We learn to take care of ourselves by honouring and setting limits with our inner child. We use our recovery tools to nurture ourselves, develop healthy boundaries and become accountable for our actions. As we come to love ourselves we are capable of loving others and accepting love in return. We place our faith in a Higher Power and ask for help in addressing the fears, hurts, shame and anger of the child within.

Parenting ourselves means reflecting on and responding to situations, rather than reacting. It means practicing acceptance and asking for what we want and need in relationships. We strive to let go of self-shame and blame and take responsibility for ourselves, our happiness and our sorrow. As we become more able to take care of ourselves, we discover how to stop expecting others to fulfill our basic needs.

Healthy parenting self-talk is filled with honesty, strength, understanding, compassion and wisdom. If we make a mistake our parent-self or inner parent refrains from making self-shaming statements. Instead we address the mistake with a compassionate inner dialogue such as *“I know I made a mistake; I feel sad and guilty about it, but I’m human – sometimes I make mistakes.”* We nurture ourselves with loving behaviours and thoughts.”

Learning to parent ourselves is a continuous process and requires a variety of teachers. Observing and listening to healthy mothers and fathers talk to their children provides models of good parenting skills. For those of us who were shamed by our parents, we discover we can re-parent our inner child with a nurturing inner parent we choose to create for ourselves. We let go of negative shame-based beliefs and re-parent ourselves with affirmations and permissions that help us recover from childhood wounds. Recovery allows us to be our authentic selves.

We can read books that cover parenting, assertiveness training, affirmations and building self-esteem. Sponsors and CoDA friends may share with us their own self-parenting journey. Such examples can help us learn about loving behaviours and dialogue between our inner parent and inner child. Along with the wisdom, love and accountability found in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, a loving Higher Power is our greatest teacher.

*The CoDA Book Second Edition: pages 106 to 108
1st Edition: pages 104-105*

Day Fourteen

SETTING BOTTOM LINES

WHAT IS MEANT BY BOTTOM-LINE BEHAVIOURS?

A “bottom-line behaviour” is a situation or a specific behaviour that is likely to trigger our codependence. In order to maintain emotional sobriety and advance recovery we avoid these situations and behaviours. For example, an alcoholic avoids taking that first drink; a gambler avoids casinos, lottery tickets etc; and a compulsive eater avoids foods or behaviours that can cause an eating binge.

For codependents, our bottom-line behaviours can manifest in different, complex forms depending on how we act out in our disease. We look at behaviours that have been offensive or hurtful to ourselves and others. These may include remaining in relationships with toxic people, accepting sex as a substitute for love, trying to rescue others, pleasing others at our own expense, obsessive thinking, fantasizing, attempting to control people or circumstances, and condemning ourselves.

We ask our Higher Power for guidance, talk with our sponsor, read inspirational literature and review our Fourth Step for renewed awareness of these behaviours. Each one of us determines what our individual bottom-line behaviours are. We seek out and create guidelines for ourselves – recovery tools to help us abstain from acting-out these behaviours. If we have a codependent slip and engage in one of our bottom line behaviours, we practice self-love by forgiving ourselves. Our fear and shame subside as we become more accountable for our behaviours and actively work on changing them.

*The CoDA Book Second Edition: pages 115 to 116
Not in 1st Edition*

MY CoDA BOTTOM LINES

WHAT NEXT?... Step One.

Working the Steps & Traditions

The CoDA Twelve Steps have been adapted from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous for our use. Millions of people worldwide have applied these concepts to their lives.

These steps hold the strength and spirit of personal recovery. We become willing to work them to the best of our ability. We are as honest as possible with ourselves, our Higher Power and another person. Half hearted attempts to work the Steps often leave us feeling self-defeated; the changes we seek may not last long.

If we attempt to complete the Steps alone, we may perpetuate isolation, a common codependent behaviour. In time many of us seek the loving help of those who have travelled this path before us – sponsors in CoDA can offer us insight, encouragement and support. They help us to see that these Steps cannot be completed quickly or absolutely; they are not quick fixes.

Extract from the CoDA Book pages 23-24

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 feelings 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 for me 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.

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The CoDA Sponsorship Program in Australia

(Adapted From: Connections Newsletter Issue 3: Nov 2004)

In other 12 Step Programs, which have a long history of sponsorship, it is relatively easy to find a sponsor. In CoDA, up until 2001, this was not the case. This is why, early in that year, Sydney CoDA Intergroup set about developing a structured sponsorship program.

Out of this came the “First 14 Days” which is a list of questions and readings that your sponsor will usually give you one day at a time to help you come to a greater understanding of how codependence affects you and what your “bottom-line” codependent behaviours are. This gives you a good starting point from which to begin working the steps with your sponsor using the CoDA Workbooks and also helps your sponsor to learn more about you.

Co-Sponsors are also encouraged to use the “First 14 Days” questions when they start working together.

In July 2002 Intergroup established the service position of Sponsorship Co-ordinator. Since that time the two Sponsorship Co-ordinators, helped to connect members with sponsors and encouraged everyone to make the most of our program and the growth and healing that the 12 Steps can bring to our lives. Sponsorship workshops have been held in 2002, 2003 and July 2006.

Now, in October 2006 the sponsorship program in CoDA is still in its initial stage of growth - the number of available sponsors has grown but there is still a shortage, especially of male sponsors – and newcomers still sometimes have difficulty finding a sponsor.

TO KEEP IT YOU HAVE TO GIVE IT AWAY

If you have worked the first 5 Steps in CoDA with either a Co-Sponsor or a Sponsor you are now qualified to sponsor other members, if you feel ready, you can now sponsor others for the “First 14 Days” and Steps 1 to 5 as you continue to work your program.

For groups with few sponsors it is suggested that after working the First 14 Days and Steps 1 to 3 you can make yourself available to newcomers to be a “Temporary Sponsor” or a “First 14 Days/Steps 1 to 3 Sponsor.” (Their permanent sponsor may turn out to be you!)

The benefits you can receive by being a sponsor are incalculable.



Document History

Date	Version	Change Details
Sept 2019	1.5	Addresses Updated
Jan 2016	1.4	Addresses updated and copyright clause included.
June 2013	1.4	Updated as per Intergroup approval process.
April	1.2	Updated from Janet' s feedback.
Dec 2008	1.1	Updated electronic version received from Alison: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typed up boundaries pamphlet • Added "Day n" to each page where it was missing • Added page numbers • Added "Electronic version created Dec 2008" to version block on page 1
2001	1.0	Document created.