

Co-dependents Anonymous

Australian Sponsorship Program:

'The First 14 Days'

Questions April 08

These questions are intended to be given to the sponsee (or cosponsor) one at a time (over a period of 2 to 4 weeks) ideally by a sponsor who has already worked these first 14 days questions with a sponsor or co-sponsor. Contact the Intergroup Sponsorship co-ordinator for more information or speak to someone who is currently a sponsor in the National Sponsorship Program.

Day One

Read the CoDA "Preamble" & "Welcome". Write out any words or concepts that are unfamiliar to you. Write out the passages that are meaningful to you. Make notes of any thoughts or feelings you have in relation to this reading. Send these to your sponsor.

Day Two

Reflect and write on the idea that isolation/enmeshment are two sides of the same coin and are commonly a part of co-dependent behaviour. Discuss the possibility of 12 Step Recovery being a return from isolation. Send your thoughts to your sponsor.

Day Three

Read the "What is Co-dependence" sheet. Note the words or concepts you are unfamiliar with. Write a sentence about each of the patterns that you identify with. Send these to your sponsor.

Day Four

Read the "Some Characteristics of Co-dependent Behaviour" sheet. Tick the behaviours you most identify with. Choose the ten most relevant and write a few sentences on each, using, when relevant, specific examples from your past (or present). Send these to your sponsor.

Day Five

Read Step One from below. Write down any words or phrases that are meaningful for you. Write a sentence or two on each of these key words/phrases. Send these to your sponsor.

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 on boundaries in the workbook. Write out the key words and phrases that stand out to you and any behaviours that you relate to – write a few notes on these and send to your sponsor.

Day Seven

Read the “Patterns of Co-Dependency. Write down the patterns that you may frequently engage and note those that are less frequent or troublesome.

Make notes on

- a) The effects these behaviours have on you, and
- b) The effects these behaviours have on your relationships.

Day Eight

Read the affirmations in your First 14 Day workbook. Reflect on the ways in which negative thoughts and messages may have affected your attitudes and behaviours. Write notes on how reading positive affirmations affects you and how you think it may be possible to “reprogram” yourself with positive messages.

Day Nine

Read the literature on shame. Write down any words and phrases that stand out to you and any behaviours that you relate to – write a few notes on these. Reflect on the idea that shame is a large part of our codependence. Write notes on how feelings of shame or not being “good enough” have affected you and your relationships. Send these to your sponsor

Day Ten

Read the literature on controlling and/or avoiding people and circumstances.

Reflect on the role fear plays in these behaviours. Write notes on the specific ways in which you have controlled and/or avoided in relationships. What has been the payoff for you?

Day Eleven

For many of us our codependence has developed out of a perceived need to take care of others. Write a few sentences on why it is important to take care of ourselves and in which ways in which you might do this.

Day Twelve

Read the literature on enmeshment, detachment, avoidance. Write out the words and phrases that stand out to you and any behaviours that you relate to and write notes on these.

Day Thirteen

Read “What is Meant by Self Parenting”. Write notes on ways in which you can begin to parent yourself in loving ways.

Day Fourteen

Re-read the 3 lists: What is Codependence, Some Characteristics of Co-dependent Behaviour and the Patterns of Co-dependency. .

i) Write a list of the co-dependent behaviours that you can definitely relate to.

ii) Write a second list of more subtle behaviours that may also cause you problems.

In doing this you may also wish to refer to the list in the Newcomers Handbook starting on page 25.

Note – many of the behaviours appear more than once on the lists, written in slightly different ways, or can be grouped together under similar headings.

Make your lists meaningful for you. You may wish to rewrite some of the patterns in a different way to make them relevant to yourself.

Discuss these with your sponsor and then, with your sponsors guidance, you will choose approximately five behaviours that cause you the most difficulty and write these in your notebook. (These can be referred to as your current “Bottom line behaviours”).

AFTER DAY 14

Over the next few months you are asked to specifically bring your attention to how these five patterns play out in your life, what events trigger them and what affects they have on you and your relationships. Discuss what you discover regularly with your sponsor.

Note: setting „Bottom Line Agreements” around these behaviours can help with gaining awareness around them – contact gheb@5element.com.au for suggested guidelines.

CONGRATULATIONS on completing your First 14 Days! You are now ready to begin

working on Step One using the CoDA Book, Workbook and Step One pamphlet. It is suggested you answer no more than one question a day from the workbook, discussing your responses and any issues that arise with your sponsor on your regular calls (Approx 2-3 per week).

PLEASE SEND FEEDBACK:

- Have you found working through these questions useful? In what way?
- Were there any parts which you found unhelpful or confusing as to their purpose?
- Are there any changes or additions you would like to suggest?

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