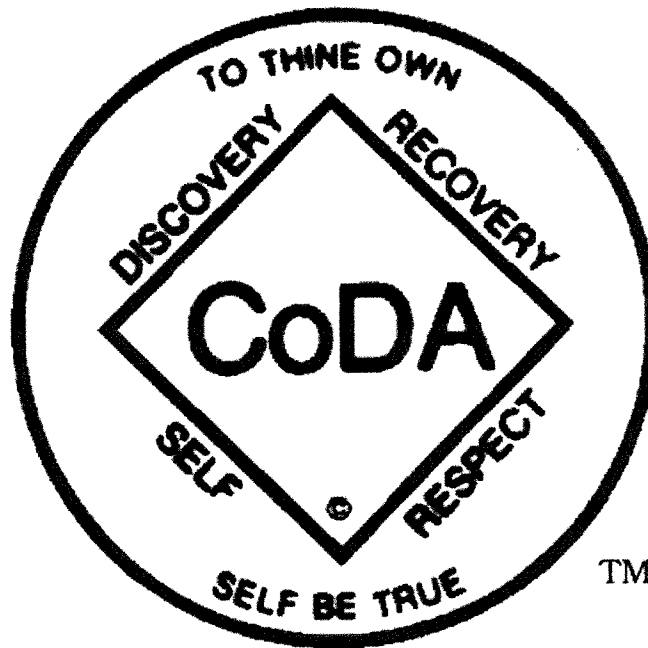


CoDA

Tradition Study



On the 3rd Tuesday of the month, we will collectively read the tradition study for the current month.

***Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first;
personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity.***

Beginning with Tradition One, we practice new behaviors and follow new guidelines in order to restructure our lives in recovery. We become willing to let go of our own egos and personal agendas in order to support the common welfare of CoDA. We learn to speak our truth and we allow others the same privilege. We honor the group conscience process by acknowledging our Higher Power. We let go of our need to control the outcome and accept the results of the group conscience.

Tradition One supports us in all aspects of our service work whether this be at an individual, group, regional, national, or international level. It helps us create a functional environment where in we can attend to the business of Co-Dependents Anonymous. We also find that keeping the spirit of Tradition One in our minds and hearts is essential to working with others. Having acknowledged our difficulties in forming and maintaining functional relationships, we look to Tradition One: our common welfare should come first and our personal recovery depends upon our unity.

As we do our service work, our Step One issues may surface. We find ourselves wanting to control and may actively attempt to manipulate people, places, and things according to our rigid ideas of how they should be. We may want to be the Higher Power or believe we must have the right answers. We may look to others to be our Higher Power and provide answers for us. We can become overly attached to our own opinions or see our differences with others as attacks or threats. Again, we need to place the focus back where it belongs-our common welfare, upon which the unity of our program is dependent. By actively applying the principles of our program, we see that neither control nor compliance supports our common welfare and unity. We learn to listen, to open our minds and our hearts, and to make room for a Higher Power. We seek serenity within ourselves.

Tradition One allows us the opportunity to restructure our lives outside the meeting rooms of Co-Dependents Anonymous. Tradition One serves as a guideline as we learn to practice recovery in our daily lives. Again, we make room for a Higher Power and loosen our tight grasp of how we believe things should be. We learn to care for ourselves by identifying and expressing our feelings, needs, and boundaries. We allow others to do the same. Caring about our own needs is healthy. Allowing others to care for their needs supports the structure of a safe and loving environment. The idea of common welfare and unity being primary can be brought into our recovery in CoDA, as well as with our families and other relationships.

With our deepening awareness of Tradition One, we begin to truly understand how essential the unity of the program is to our personal recovery. Without a strong spiritual structure, most of us believe that, over time, Co-Dependents Anonymous would cease to exist. Therefore, without consistent practice of this Tradition, there would be no place for our recovery. Even the simple process of saying in a meeting "I am Jane, and I am codependent" and having our name repeated, promotes our common welfare. We identify as codependents and acknowledge there is a place for each and every one of us in our program. This process allows for acceptance by helping us remember that no one is more important than another, and we all share a common trait: our codependence.

Tradition Two: 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.

Tradition Two reminds us that a loving Higher Power is greater than the individual, group, or trusted servant. This Tradition allows us to experience humility by recognizing where our direction comes from. This Tradition points out that no one person leads the group, makes plans for the group, or provides answers for the group. The group conscience process offers us safety. Without crosstalk, arguing or shaming, we become willing to speak our truth, remain open to others' opinions, and let go of results. We listen to what is being said, instead of noticing who is saying it. Knowing we can take care of ourselves, we can experience our feelings of vulnerability. We are afforded the opportunity to say we have changed our minds. We can also release black and white thinking, such as: "If I am right, you are wrong," or "I must have all the answers." Knowing that group members can only speak from their place in recovery, we strive to avoid judging one another. We believe in progress, not perfection. We honor the outcome of the group conscience.

We accept the group conscience as our ultimate authority. Tradition Two allows for all concepts of Higher Power to share the room. We begin to experience humility in our lives. We let go of the urge to take on more than we can handle. As trusted servants, we do not create direction—we receive direction from the Fellowship. We let go of our own agenda, trust the group conscience, and remember that we don't have to like something we accept.

Apart from understanding what it means to be a trusted servant, Tradition Two begins to define the structure of our program:

- a loving Higher Power
- the group conscience
- trusted servants

The structure of Tradition Two provides unity and, with unity, we can recover.

In old thinking, we had to have the answers right away, sometimes even before the questions were asked. Today, as we work our program, we learn to choose our response instead of reacting immediately. Ideally, issues brought to our local, regional, national, or international levels come to a vote after having gone through the group conscience process at each respective level. As trusted servants, we find it helpful to wait for a period of time after a motion is presented. This allows members time for meditation and conscious contact with Higher Power before reaching a group conscience decision. There are very few issues that require an immediate decision. At each level, a discussion is held so that all members have an opportunity to speak their individual or group opinion. This allows Higher Power to work at each level of the Fellowship.

Tradition Three: The only requirement for membership in CoDA is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.

The program of Co-Dependents Anonymous is open to anyone with a desire for healthy and loving relationships. Because it is so broad in definition, Tradition Three allows each of us to belong. It helps us to stay out of our judgments about who should and should not attend meetings. We cannot touch, see, or prove whether anyone else has the desire referred to in this Tradition. It does not matter how we look or what we believe, whether we are young or old, what color we are, our religion, or socioeconomic class. Many of us have looked for reasons not to belong. Focusing on our differences has often covered up our fear of not belonging. This Tradition can help us acknowledge that each of us is deserving of recovery.

Many of us found this Tradition comforting when we heard these words at our first meeting. We are given the freedom to attend meetings even if we minimized our experience. We did not have to justify our membership in CoDA. Tradition Three frees us from having to work through our issues, or determine if we are codependent, before beginning our program of recovery. Even if we believe our codependency is our fault, even if we are in complete denial, we can still come to meetings.

We can become increasingly mindful of this Tradition as we work our program with other members. We can embrace this Tradition as it applies to our daily life and relationships with others and ourselves. "I have a desire for healthy and loving relationships" is a positive affirmation which can assist us in our application of this Tradition. Step Three and Tradition Three are direct, yet the directives can be difficult for us to take. We tend to put many things in front of this Tradition. We may battle with the desire to protect ourselves and to control others. As codependents, we may find having healthy relationships is new behavior. As we begin our recovery, we often struggle with our ideas of what "healthy" means.

Codependency can be a subtle disease. To have healthy and loving relationships, we must decide that this is truly what we want. Keeping this desire in our hearts and minds helps us to replace our desire to protect ourselves at all times and at all costs. Promise Three of our program states "I know a new freedom." We begin to feel this freedom when we make this decision to have healthy, loving relationships.

Before recovery, we lived life according to what others wanted in a relationship. By placing our desire for a healthy relationship with ourselves first, we are learning a new way of life. When we love and honor ourselves, we have healthier relationships with others. A loving relationship includes honesty, openness, willingness, acceptance, and taking care of ourselves so that we can go freely to others. We learn to release the need to be filled from the outside, learning instead to be filled from within, before coming into relationship with another. Loyalty to ourselves needs always to come first.

As we do our service work, we can remember to set healthy, functional boundaries. Again, we can keep Tradition Three, and our new ideas about healthy relationships, in our hearts and minds. If we are struggling with someone or something, we remember that we are working on being healthy. Although we may not always like what is happening, we can let go and love others. We can come to our service work with no expectations. We can release our desire to manipulate others. We learn to speak our truth appropriately, and to respect and listen to others.

Tradition Four: Each group should remain autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole.

In Step Four, we take our own individual inventory. In Tradition Four, we can use the inventory process to evaluate our group's effect on other meetings or on CoDA as a whole. We can do this by considering how our group's behaviors and attitudes affect the Fellowship. We may also choose to take time at a meeting or group level to join together to assess whether we are supporting CoDA as a whole. We use the Steps and Traditions as guides to search our hearts in this process.

The creativity of our meetings can flourish because of our commitment to autonomy in this Tradition. As a result, various meeting formats exist to support us in recovery: On-line, phone, Step and Tradition, CoDA Book study; speaker, writing, coed, women's, men's, gay and lesbian, and more. Codependents may hear the message of recovery better in one type of meeting than in another. We respect each meeting's right to autonomy and to carry the message according to its group conscience. This diversity, created by autonomy, helps meet our individual needs and those of the CoDA community.

As much as we value autonomy, we value unity more. In this Tradition, we acknowledge we are part of a greater whole—the Fellowship of Co-Dependents Anonymous. Any decision we make as a group should be centered in our common welfare. Because the Steps, Traditions, Preamble, and Welcome define the CoDA program and our message of recovery, they are read at every meeting as written. The structure and consistency of our Fellowship's message needs to be something on which we can depend. The knowledge that a meeting's basic structure is the same, no matter where we go, provides safety for us. This structure and its emphasis on the basic tools of recovery are essential to both the newcomer and those who have time in the program. Using literature in our meetings which is not CoDA Conference endorsed can detract from CoDA unity and prevent newcomers from hearing CoDA's basic message of recovery.

When reflecting on the Fourth Tradition and the autonomy of our groups, it is also important to ask ourselves whether our meetings are accessible to the newcomer. Structuring our meetings in ways that maximize the ability of the newcomers to grasp the basic tools of recovery, as well as providing a welcoming atmosphere supports the continued strength of our Fellowship. Sponsors, phone lists, CoDA Conference endorsed literature, and the willingness to take service commitments also supports our primary purpose and CoDA as a whole.

It is not always easy to know what will affect other groups or CoDA as a whole. However, by applying the Steps and Traditions, we do our best to support both autonomy and unity. We look at issues that arise in our groups and ask ourselves to remember our responsibility to the program. For instance, how a meeting uses its Seventh Tradition funds is a matter of autonomy, but we gain clarity by reviewing all the Steps and Traditions and linking our decisions to CoDA as a whole. We realize our reliance on the service structure of the CoDA Fellowship. Our Seventh Tradition donations fund such basics as meeting lists, phone lines, literature production, and delegate service. Thus, we review our financial responsibilities, not only to our meeting, but also to the service structure of CoDA. In this way, we acknowledge that CoDA communities, local, regional, national, and international are all part of the definition of CoDA as a whole.

Sharing our experience, strength, and hope at the meeting level and in our service work is a positive example of how our autonomous actions contribute to the well-being of CoDA. When doing service, we speak and act on behalf of those we serve. In meetings, we do our best to remember the worldwide Fellowship of Co-Dependents Anonymous and hold in our hearts the reality that we are part of this greater whole.

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer.

Tradition Five sets a boundary by establishing that each CoDA group "has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer." This very simple directive reminds us that CoDA is a simple program. We are here for one reason—to recover from codependency. We support each other in this simplicity by keeping our focus on CoDA's primary purpose. As we carry the message, our groups do not get into or manage any one person's individual recovery.

"Primary" refers to what we consider the most important principle—the one that comes before all others. The survival and growth of our program depends upon our willingness to carry the message of hope and recovery by using the Steps and following the Traditions. Codependents who still suffer include people who have never attended a meeting, CoDA newcomers, and old-timers alike. We all need to share the message of recovery to gain and maintain our recovery. Tradition Five creates a responsibility for each group to uphold our Fellowship's primary purpose. Although our methods of carrying the message may vary among meetings, the primary purpose of all our groups remains the same.

Our newest members are a very important part of Tradition Five. Newcomers are often searching for ways to understand and find relief from codependency issues. Having current members welcome and speak to newcomers provides a supportive atmosphere. So does having CoDA literature and phone lists available. All of these efforts are ways to carry the message of recovery. Cliques and popularity contests have no place in CoDA; they divert us from our primary purpose and are dangerous to all members of the group. Losing focus on our primary purpose deprives a still suffering codependent of the CoDA message. The Fifth Tradition serves as a spiritual reminder when we have strayed from our purpose. When we share our experience, strength, and hope with our newer members, our own recovery is enhanced.

Honestly sharing what life was like before recovery, the tools we have used in recovery, and what life is like for us now supports Tradition Five. We share our struggles and our triumphs. We wonder how long any of us would have stayed if we had not heard the hope and seen changes occur in those around us. We practice Tradition Five whenever we share in our meetings, with sponsees or sponsors, with friends and family members, or with members of the public.

Supporting each other in recovery is another way that we carry the message. We can make and receive outreach calls and talk with one another after our meetings. Tradition Five helps us understand that by being an example of recovery, we are carrying the message.

In addition to CoDA meetings, we form local, regional, national, and international service groups to carry the message of recovery. Service commitments to these groups include providing public service information about CoDA, providing outreach to hospitals and institutions, and distributing literature.

These are powerful ways to reach the codependent who still suffers, some of whom may not be able to get to a meeting or even know of CoDA. Making commitments within these groups also provides us with an opportunity to live Tradition Five. Our primary purpose is to carry the message; it is through sharing and hearing the message that we recover.

Tradition Six: 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.

Tradition Five teaches us that we come together for no other reason but to recover from codependency. Tradition Six refers to our "primary spiritual aim" for the first time. The spiritual foundation of our program becomes clear as we continue to study our Traditions.

With that purpose in mind, we keep ourselves from engaging in outside obligations and responsibilities. If we lend our name to a building, recovery facility, church, or hospital, we create an obligation outside our program. Outside obligations divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Our focus is always on our spiritual aim, spreading the word to those who still suffer from codependency. If we lose that focus, our program's spiritual foundations will be lost.

Within the Fellowship, we recognize the need to separate material issues from our spiritual aim. We avert problems of money, property, and prestige by assigning legal and financial responsibilities to a Board of Trustees. In our history, we have experienced the distraction created when the wisdom of this Tradition was ignored and we mixed the spiritual and the material. We also respect the wisdom gained from the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, the program we were patterned after.

We are a Twelve Step Fellowship, and therefore we do not endorse books, programs, or individuals outside of the Fellowship. To work CoDA's program of recovery, we recommend using our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and CoDA Conference endorsed literature. Educational workshops within our program also honor and endorse the CoDA Steps, Traditions, and literature. This framework applies to all CoDA activities, such as business meetings, conferences, conventions, and regular CoDA meetings. As sponsors or other trusted servants, we are responsible for keeping our program within the Steps and Traditions. Out of respect for Tradition Six, we never endorse or lend the CoDA name to outside enterprises.

Another way we can be diverted from our primary spiritual aim is when professionals begin or join a CoDA meeting for their own personal gain, instead of coming to a meeting for their own recovery. The prestige of using last names of well-known people also diverts us. In our disease, we may believe someone with prestige would be better able to help us in our recovery. This is a humble program, and there is no place for prestige or personal gain. The power of our program is in the simplicity of one codependent sharing experience, strength, and hope with another.

Tradition Seven: Every CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Our Seventh Tradition is about CoDA meetings and CoDA service groups being fully self-supporting. One way a meeting or group supports itself is financially, which is crucial to the survival and growth of CoDA. Another, and equally crucial way of being self-supporting, is through our service work.

Each of us depends on meetings to be there when we need one. The CoDA Fellowship relies on a continuously changing array of volunteers to do service work. What would happen to CoDA if no one did any service? CoDA would cease to exist. When CoDA members join together to create a meeting or group, it is important that everyone is an equal participant with equal say, and that the responsibility for that group is shared by all. If one individual is doing too much, it takes away from the equal participation of others. Conversely, if an individual does too little, this burdens the rest of the group. Doing our individual part in service, as guided by our Higher Power, supports Tradition Seven.

Being of service is important to CoDA and to our individual recovery, not what we are doing in service. All service positions at all levels are equal. For example, serving as the literature person at your home meeting is just as important as being a CoDA committee chair. As we acknowledge our individual responsibility to the CoDA meeting or group, we also acknowledge that we are a group, with responsibilities of being self-supporting. For instance, if there are not enough volunteers to produce a CoDA community newsletter, we stop publishing it. If no one volunteers to make coffee, there is no coffee.

Groups are self-supporting, in part, when:

- meetings/groups pay for their meeting space
- meetings/groups make donations to CoDA's service structure (local, regional, national, and international)
- members share experience, strength, and hope on a regular basis
- service positions are filled
- service positions are rotated

Self-supporting means that groups look within themselves for funding. Accepting outside contributions creates outside affiliation as discussed in Tradition Six. (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.) Adherence to Tradition Seven protects CoDA groups from outside influence or obligations. To illustrate the problem of a meeting not being fully self-supporting, consider the following:

In a member's will, it was asked that money be given each year to a CoDA community group to help spread the word to the Fellowship. As there are no guidelines for CoDA on this kind of matter, the initial group conscience of the CoDA community group decided that if it was in his will, it would be done. Questions of what to do with this money (spend it, save it, how much to spend, pass it on) diverted the group from being fully self-supporting, as it had been before the bequest. In this example, we came to believe that the bequest had affected the responsibility of the group to be self-supporting.

If we find ourselves attending a CoDA group that is struggling because of non-support, we may choose to do a group inventory as a tool to determine what solutions may be available. As part of that inventory process, we may ask ourselves in what ways we contribute to CoDA in terms of money; time; attention; enthusiasm; energy; trust; respect; compassion; support; and sharing our experience, strength, and hope. Service can be the beginning of a journey out of isolation and an opportunity to practice healthy relationships as a member of the group.

Tradition Eight: Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever non—professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

This Tradition gives us an important guideline: CoDA should remain forever non-professional. This means CoDA meetings and service groups have no professional aspect. Thus, CoDA members with professional credentials participate in meetings only as recovering members of our Fellowship. We gather together as codependents for one purpose, to carry the message of recovery by sharing our experience, strength, and hope. This Tradition also helps us to maintain our equality and humility, valuing each other as fellow members in spiritual recovery.

As we do our service work for CoDA, we may find it necessary to employ special workers for some of the Fellowship's needs. These special workers fill positions that CoDA volunteers may not be able to fill because of time constraints, feasibility, or special skills. Special workers may include administrative help, accountants, and lawyers. As members of the Fellowship, we keep a personal recovery attitude rather than creating airs of superiority.

The members of our Fellowship who come forward to be of service do so in a nonprofessional way. Trusted servants are responsible to those they serve (an individual or community meeting or other CoDA group), doing only those jobs asked of them by that group. Trusted servants do not create their responsibilities. We remember that trusted servants are codependents in recovery and we do not look on them as professionals or as leaders. We also remember that for CoDA's purpose there is but one authority as defined in our Second Tradition, a loving Higher Power as expressed to our group conscience.

If some of our trusted servants lead professional lives, they have an obligation to establish a boundary, keeping their service in the program separate from their profession. In Tradition Six, we learned the importance of not being diverted by money, property, and prestige. Remaining nonprofessional helps all of us with this Tradition. It is often easy for codependents to be enamored of the prestige of a person's professional status. Being mindful of the servant position helps us remember our aim is a spiritual one, not a professional one. All of this protects our program so that members of our Fellowship experience their own spiritual recovery.

In our CoDA workshops, conferences, and conventions, we must remember that what members have to offer is their experience, strength, and hope. In CoDA, no one is paid to share, whether at meetings, as sponsors, or in any other Twelve Step activity. We do not offer advice or answers to other members. This nonprofessional approach creates safety for members. We take what we want and leave the rest. In our recovery from codependency, using the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, we learn that we have our own answers within ourselves. Within this environment, each of us can experience the safety to work our own program at our own pace.

Using CoDA Conference endorsed literature supports our nonprofessional environment. Our program is based on CoDA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and other CoDA literature written by members of our Fellowship sharing their experience, strength, and hope about recovery from codependency. Tradition Eight is an example of how our Traditions protect us from ourselves.

CoDA is a program based on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We let go of dependence on others and receive guidance from our Higher Power. This guidance supports the spiritual nature of our program and is how we remain forever nonprofessional.

Tradition Nine: CoDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

This Tradition protects the service structure of CoDA to serve the changing needs of the Fellowship by stating that CoDA, as such, ought never be organized. The Fellowship gives direction to the service boards made up of trusted servants, and the work is done accordingly. These trusted servants do not govern. There are no agendas, rules, or regulations that are enforced by them. Our guidance comes from the Steps, the Traditions, and our Higher Power as revealed to us through our group conscience process.

Each CoDA meeting is free to attend to the direct needs of its members within The Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous. Tradition Nine protects this freedom for each CoDA group. Each meeting or service group can support this Tradition by rotating service positions. By doing so, responsibilities are handed over and an active flow of service and energy exists. Rotating positions also prevents dominance from individuals that may lead to control and a more rigid, organized structure.

The Steps are our personal guides to spirituality while the Traditions guide our groups in the spiritual role of service work. Our Step work helps us with the application of this Tradition. One of the links between Step Nine and Tradition Nine is that both ask us to be responsible. In Step Nine, we become responsible to ourselves for our actions and acknowledge our right to be, think, and feel; we acknowledge others' right to do the same. In Tradition Nine, we accept our responsibility to trust the authority of the group conscience of those we are serving. We let go of our personal agendas and are reminded that the power in CoDA lies in our collective Higher Power and the group conscience of the Fellowship.

Sometimes, it is necessary to create boards or committees to fulfill the tasks of service. Some of these tasks include mailing out meeting lists, planning conferences and conventions, and maintaining phone service. CoDA's service structure is made up of volunteer service boards and committees serving the needs of the Fellowship at large. Some of the services provided internationally are creating literature, publishing and distributing literature, servicing CoDA's Web site, communication with the Fellowship, and handling finances. These boards or committees must be diligent in their direct responsibility to follow the group conscience of those they are serving.

Co-Dependents Anonymous, Incorporated (CoDA) and CoDA Resource Publishing, incorporated (CoRe) are separate structures with certain legal duties to perform in being responsible for the matters of each respective corporation, but their common purpose is to serve the CoDA Fellowship. Some CoDA communities may incorporate to sign leases for rent requirements, to gain non-profit tax status, to handle insurance liability, and more. All these corporations must also be as free as possible of internal organization. Leaders hold positions of responsibility; the ultimate authority of all these groups is a group conscience. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous guide us all. In the interest of CoDA as a whole, Tradition Nine reminds us that CoDA is guided by the group conscience of the entire Fellowship, not the will of a few individuals.

Tradition Ten: CoDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the CoDA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Tradition Ten gives the CoDA Fellowship a direct guideline—CoDA has no opinion on outside issues. These words define a boundary for CoDA. By following this guideline, the Fellowship is able to avoid public controversy. As members of the Fellowship, we don't represent Co-Dependents Anonymous in public regarding any issue. CoDA has no opinions on anything outside of our Fellowship.

Just as we avoid controversy on a personal level by not giving advice to others, we avoid controversy for the Fellowship by not offering opinions on matters unrelated to CoDA. One way that we eliminate controversy for the group is not recommending outside sources, such as books or workshops. In CoDA, we use the Steps and Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous and CoDA Conference endorsed literature for guidance. This creates a safe environment for newcomers, ourselves, and CoDA as a whole.

When we gather together in CoDA, we place our common welfare first. Our personal recovery depends upon this commitment to CoDA's unity. We experience strength in our Fellowship when we keep the commitment to our common welfare. With our primary purpose foremost in our minds, we put aside our differences and welcome all those who desire healthy and loving relationships. We learn that an outside issue is anything that has the potential to distract us from our primary purpose as stated in Tradition Five, "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer."

Tradition Ten also protects the spiritual nature of our program. We gather together to share our personal experience, strength, and hope of recovery from codependency. CoDA meetings are not the place to discuss our opinions about worldly topics. Honoring this Tradition, we provide a place of safety for everyone, regardless of religious or political preference, It does not matter who we are or what we do. It does matter that we work the Steps, follow the Traditions, and desire healthy and loving relationships.

Tradition Eleven: 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.

Tradition Eleven provides boundaries for the Fellowship and its individual members about how to interact with the public. Two guidelines are established. First, CoDA's "public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion." Second, as CoDA members, we each "maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films."

What is attraction? Attraction is a force that draws things or people together. Every CoDA member practicing recovery has an inner quality that attracts others. We rely on this quality when we engage with the public concerning CoDA, instead of relying on outside publications or professionals. What are appropriate methods to attract new members? We make known the time and location of CoDA meetings without promising results, and we read and distribute CoDA's Conference endorsed literature.

Simply by living our program, attraction is possible. When others recognize our changes, our serenity, our honesty, we begin to hear questions such as, "How did you change?" or "What did you do?" If appropriate, we then share our personal experience, strength, and hope about how we live in recovery today and how that differs from the way we used to live. Honestly sharing our recovery with people attracts newcomers into the Fellowship.

Tradition Eleven asks us to avoid promotion. What is promotion? Promotion can be identifying ourselves professionally; offering opinions; and offering particular outcomes, such as suggesting that attending CoDA meetings will straighten out a marriage or that you'll feel better within a month. Another form of inappropriate promotion would be advertising that a prominent author recommends Co-Dependents Anonymous or advertising that goes beyond simply informing the public about meetings.

Another aspect of this Tradition speaks to anonymity. Anonymous means unidentified or undeclared. Personal anonymity supports a boundary for each CoDA member to stay unidentified at the public relations level. When all in recovery maintain personal anonymity, we find the CoDA unity we need for personal recovery. We rely on living our individual programs.

CoDA has no hierarchy; therefore, no one person speaks for CoDA as a whole.

Why do we have a public relations policy? "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer," according to the Fifth Tradition. Furthermore, Step Twelve tells us "to carry this message to other codependents and to practice these principles in all our affairs." In order for us to carry out our purpose, we provide meeting information and CoDA literature. We offer our experience, strength, and hope and leave the rest to our Higher Power.

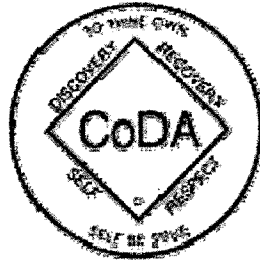
Tradition Twelve: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Tradition Twelve clarifies that CoDA is a spiritual program and that "anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions." Further, anonymity is the base for us to operate from in our meetings and groups, thereby placing "principles before personalities." Doing this protects our program. Simply stated, without anonymity CoDA's structure will fall apart.

In Tradition Eleven, we talked about the meaning of maintaining anonymity in our public relations policy. Now, in Tradition Twelve, we look at coming together in our meetings and CoDA service work with the spirit of anonymity. Being anonymous may include not only keeping our last names private, but also where we live, how much money we make, and what we do for a living. This reduces the possibility of personally judging others and ourselves. Because social, economic, and political differences are not identified within the Fellowship, every member can focus on recovery from codependency. We have the unique opportunity to listen and work with people who have the same goal. With the boundary of anonymity, we are reminded that we come together for one primary purpose: to carry the message of recovery to codependents who still suffer.

Anonymity creates safety because it establishes an environment where we can speak with less fear of being judged or quoted. As one member shared, "I've had the painful experience of being judged by others. Now, in my program, I can make a choice not to behave in that same judgmental way. I remember that everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion. When I listen, consider, and accept, then I know I have heard the principle of what was said." When we honor the concept of anonymity, we place "principles before personalities." Thus, we listen to what is said, not who is saying it. We don't bring our personal agendas to CoDA; we bring our concern of recovery from codependency. "Spiritual" is not defined within our program. Therefore, each member's path or belief is welcome; CoDA is completely inclusive.

Tradition Twelve teaches us to adhere to all of our Traditions by placing the principles of our Traditions before personalities. When we keep this principle first and foremost, CoDA can maintain a healthy existence. The Traditions teach each member and group of Co-Dependents Anonymous how to protect our anonymous, spiritual, and inclusive Fellowship.



CoDA has three suggested prayers that are
Conference approved as CoDA literature:

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.

Conference Endorsed 9/13/91

The CoDA Closing Prayer ©

We thank our Higher Power,
for all that we have received from this meeting. As
we close, may we take with us
the wisdom, love, acceptance, and hope of recovery.

Conference Endorsed 9/13/91

Another prayer commonly used at CoDA meetings is the Serenity Prayer, as follows:

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

Conference Endorsed 1989