

*The*

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*Twelve Steps & Twelve  
Traditions*

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*Workbook*

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*Co-Dependents Anonymous*

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Dear CoDA Member,

The Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions Workbook is the result of a long and rewarding group conscience process.

This project started when a group of CoDA members began to meet weekly to discuss a Step and the corresponding Tradition. After they wrote about their discussions, the material was sent to the CoDA Literature Committee (CLC) for editing and rewriting. The CLC submitted the edited versions to the CoDA Service Conference for endorsement. It was then printed and distributed to the Fellowship.

We, who have participated in this project, have experienced great recovery through the group conscience process. We are grateful for the opportunity to have served the Fellowship of Co-Dependents Anonymous.

In Service,

CoDA's Literature Committee

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## Preface

As the material for our study group was prepared, it became evident that there are three areas covered in the Steps. They are:

- Identifying our codependent characteristics and their manifestations in our lives—OUR EXPERIENCE.
- Using the tools in our program—OUR STRENGTH.
- The rewards of using these tools and experiencing recovery—OUR HOPE.

We found that the Traditions offer us guidelines as we work our recovery, do our service work, and live our program.

Throughout this Workbook you will find codependency referred to as a disease. Many in our group found this quite helpful, and perhaps even necessary, in terms of understanding the effects of codependency, identifying when codependent symptoms appear, and learning to apply the tools of our program (self-care) as we recover, much as we might do in recovery from any other disease. This thought also brings, for many of us, a continuing sense of acceptance about our codependency as we walk our path of recovery. As one person in our group shared, “When I heard others refer to what I had as a disease, it released me from being responsible for my codependency. I could feel free of shame and blame and move on.”

Webster’s dictionary defines the word *disease* as “a condition of the living animal or plant body or of one of its parts that impairs the performance of a vital function; sickness; malady; trouble; a harmful development.” It is in the spirit of this definition that our group conscience voted to use this word as a description of codependency.

Our group’s study of the Traditions made it evident that they offer essential guidelines for our service work and for living our program. We acknowledged our need to be steadfast in our allegiance to the Traditions. We believe the Traditions are to the group what the Steps are to the individual. Our understanding of the interrelations of the Steps and Traditions deepened. We saw that the awareness gained in our Step work can be used in our application of the Traditions in our service work, our meetings, and with one another. We can learn to live our recovery in service and to focus on CoDA as a whole.

As codependents, we acknowledge that we are people unskilled in managing our own lives and relationships. Whatever our issues, we find hope through a common solution: The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. It is not necessary for us to understand how or why the Steps and Traditions work, but rather to trust that they do. This trust is not misplaced; we see those among us realizing the Promises of the program. We have faith that the spiritual principles found in our Steps and Traditions support our recovery and our Fellowship.

## **The Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous\* ©**

1. We admitted we were powerless over others—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other codependents, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps are adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous.

## **The Twelve Traditions of Co-Dependents Anonymous\* ©**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving Higher Power as expressed to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership in CoDA is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.
4. Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer.
6. A CoDA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the CoDA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim.
7. Every CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. CoDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. CoDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the CoDA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions are adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous.

## 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.



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

—Step One

**S**tep One begins our personal relationship with the Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous. We admit we are powerless over our disease of codependency to ourselves and to others. As we do this, many of us begin to experience a sense of belonging and we see that we are not alone. Even though new behavior may feel uncomfortable, we can address each situation in our lives one at a time with the Steps, beginning with Step One. We can stop trying to control; we begin to establish a new relationship with ourselves.

Saying we are powerless over our disease, out loud to the group, starts us on our road of truth. We begin to identify what we are powerless over and see the manifestations of our disease. We learn to identify some of the “untruths” we may have been taught. We come to realize that powerless does not mean weak; controlling others does not make us safe; looking to others for our direction does not support us in living our own lives; judging others is not our business; and believing we are all-powerful is painful. We experience how old tapes playing in our heads can control us. We discover that thinking in terms of black and white or right and wrong is rigid and limiting.

As we work Step One, we begin to find the tools of recovery. Most of us find that using our CoDA literature, as well as listening to others as they share their codependent characteristics, is helpful in the identification process required in Step One. We focus on ourselves and work on staying in the present. We begin to recognize a Higher Power. As we let go, we begin to release responsibility for others. We let go of what others think about us, knowing we are adults and have choices. We learn to ask, “What do I want?,” “What do I think?,” and “What do I feel?” We can make a checklist of tools to support our recovery. We can be still and connect with a Higher Power. We begin to establish healthy boundaries (leave, call someone, take a walk around the block) to better take care of ourselves. We learn that we have done enough when we have listened to our gut, prayed, written, or realized we don’t have to make a decision right away. We also learn that it isn’t necessary to like everything that we accept. We can learn the lessons of true humility and recognize we don’t have all the answers. As we begin to let go of control, we are better able to accept the realities of being human. We find peace.

Our lives are different and rewarding when we are willing to work this Step. We experience freedom, personal integrity, and self-empowerment. Developing a genuine interest in taking care of ourselves and honoring our intuition becomes a priority. As we let go of the need to control others, we begin to focus on that which we can take care of: OURSELVES. We can take our time and act with grace and dignity. When we are connected with ourselves and this Step, we begin to have faith that we are capable of changing, and we learn to release our fears. We begin to recognize we are worthwhile and valuable. We can say “thank you” and give ourselves positive affirmations daily.

*We admitted we were powerless over others—  
that our lives had become unmanageable.*  
—Step One

These questions are intended to help you work Step One:

1. Am I controlling? How?
2. What is the difference between being powerless and being empowered?
3. When I let go of others, how am I then empowered? How does this make my life manageable?
4. How do I let go of the fear of what others think? How do I take care of myself? How does my acceptance of being “powerless over others” assist me in this task?
5. Which codependent characteristics (character defects) keep me from taking Step One?
6. Why does this Step say “admitted we were powerless” instead of admitted I was powerless?
7. What do powerlessness and unmanageability mean to me today?
8. What signs do I see that indicate I’m in denial?
9. What does surrender mean? Why do I need to surrender? Over what do I need to surrender?
10. When do I know I’ve done enough?
11. What are signs of my unmanageability? (Make a list)
12. Why do I want to control?
13. Am I willing to realize that trying to change anyone brings on unmanageability, hostility, resentment?
14. Am I powerless over my codependent behavior?