

THE TWELVE PROMISES OF CO-DEPENDENTS ANONYMOUS

Gold Cost Focus Group 20th September 2008

The Twelve Promises of CoDA tell us we can “**expect a miraculous change**” by working the program. For newcomers, who often feel hopeless or depressed when starting the journey of recovery, the Promises provide hope and encouragement. They give sustenance and reassurance to all codependents who work the program.

Promise 1: I know a new sense of belonging. The feeling of emptiness and loneliness will disappear.

Codependents are not all stamped out of one mould. One thing that keeps us coming back is our identification with other codependents. As we listen and share in CoDA meetings we begin to discover that others have similar feelings and behaviours. We hear our own stories coming from the mouths of strangers. Our sense of isolation finally begins to lift. *(Common Threads P 9)*

Promise 2: I am no longer controlled by my fears. I overcome my fears and act with courage, integrity and dignity.

Promise 3: I know a new freedom

Many of us spent a lifetime fearing and often defending ourselves against exposure. “If you really knew me you wouldn’t like me” could have been our collective chorus of shame. In Step 5 we were asked to relinquish our protective shields and admit to another person who we really were. *(Step 5 Pamphlet)*

Promise 4: I release myself from worry, guilt, and regret about my past and present. I am aware enough not to repeat it.

Promise 5: I know a new love and acceptance of myself and others. I feel genuinely lovable, loving and loved.

Most of us had lived with an undercurrent of constant tension that had sapped our energy and our joy. As we revealed to ourselves that which we had hidden for so long we began to experience the feelings we had long suppressed. As we worked our Fifth Step the pressing weight of what we had locked inside began to lift. This self-admission was a vehicle for self-acceptance. *(Step 5 Pamphlet)*

Promise 6: I learn to see myself as equal to others. My new and renewed relationships are all with equal partners.

Promise 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.

Becoming willing to make amends in Step 8 was the beginning of mending our relationships, both with ourselves and others. It prepared us to venture out from the relative safety of the Fellowship. We would begin to interact with others in a new way. Self-forgiveness would be instrumental in moving us out of our codependence and into healthy, whole relationships with God ourselves and our fellow human beings.

Step 8 Pamphlet

Promise 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.

We have physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and sexual boundaries. It is up to us to determine where those boundaries begin and end. We need to be aware of our own feelings so we can let others know when we feel uneasy or uncomfortable. **We cannot assume other people can read our minds.** Setting boundaries is a skill that requires practice and can lead to a sense of freedom in our lives.

Promise 9: I acknowledge that I am a unique and precious creation

Promise 10: I no longer need to rely solely on others to provide my sense of worth.

The miracles of recovery unfold. Loving relationships with our Higher Power, ourselves and others improve and evolve. We begin to feel more assured that our deepest needs will be cared for. We don't turn as often to other people or to an unhealthy lifestyle to satisfy our spiritual hunger. Like the light of dawn, our Higher Power's will radiates through us with reassurance and trust.

Promise 11: I trust the guidance I receive from my Higher Power and come to believe in my own capabilities.

Promise 12: I gradually experience serenity, strength and spiritual growth in my daily life.

In Step 3 we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power. By working Step 11 we opened ourselves to the nourishing light that conscious contact with God provides. When we were ready, our everyday lives and relationships could reflect the peace and serenity that comes from this conscious contact.

(Step 11 pamphlet)

Through our Higher Power's love, the spiritual principles of our program and our willingness to be rigorously honest in continuing our recovery to the best of our ability, we will come to know a new sense of belonging. We will begin to trust and believe in ourselves and that the healing of our past is possible. We will no longer be controlled by fear and shame. We will find we are able to respond to life's challenges with courage, integrity and dignity. Others will no longer be our gods. We will experience a new love and acceptance of ourselves and others. We will become capable of developing and maintaining healthy and loving relationships, and we will learn to see ourselves as equal to others. We will learn that it is possible for us to mend and become more loving and intimate. We will come to know that we are each a unique creation of a loving Higher Power, born with beauty, value and worth. And we will progressively experience spiritual strength and serenity in our daily lives.

Some of us question if all of this is just too much to hope for. Many of us on this journey do experience the fulfilment of these promises in our lives if we work each of the Steps to the best of our ability, particularly when we make amends to ourselves and others.

We remember that **love and codependence cannot coexist**. Progress is our goal. We give ourselves to our Higher Power and ask to be guided throughout every moment of our day. We work our program to the best of our ability and help others to recover. In this way we are the experience strength and hope of recovery in CoDA.

THE PROMISES REFLECTION QUESTIONS

One

- How have I stopped myself from feeling that I “belong”?
- Have I excluded myself, maybe to avoid risking rejection? How?

Two

- What fears have affected my life?
- Are childhood fears still limiting my life today?

Three

- What is freedom? What would I like to be free from?
- How has my life changed as a result of the CoDA Fellowship?

Four

- How have worry, guilt and regret harmed me and affected my life?
- How could/do I let go of guilt and regrets. Which steps & tools help?

Five

- How would my life be different if I felt lovable, loving and loved all of the time?
- What stops me from accepting myself as I am and others as they are?
- What is the opposite of acceptance? How does it feel?

Six

- What stops me from seeing myself as equally valuable as others?
- Do I treat all people equally (including myself)? With equal respect?
- How would it change my interactions and relationships with others if I felt and acted neither better than nor less than?

Seven

- Have I been relieved of my need to control others yet? What triggers this need?
- I AM capable...How does this knowledge help me in my recovery?
- What is trust? Am I trustworthy?

Eight

- How am I different when I am caretaking than when I am being supportive?
- Did I receive sufficient support, love and healthy intimacy as a child?
- What support would I like to have received from my family?
- What boundaries do I need to set (with others and myself) to allow me to feel safe and be present when I am with my family?

Nine

- How can I be unique and equal at the same time?
- Do I treat myself as a precious creation?
- Have I hidden my unique and precious self from others? Why?

Ten

- In what ways is my self worth still affected by others' opinions or actions? (Either positively or negatively)
- How does my Higher Power help me to see that I have value and worth?
- Do I remember to validate others for who they are?

Eleven

- How have I learned to trust again? How do I receive guidance?
- Do I remember that I have skills and capabilities? What are they?

Twelve

- Gradually! Am I patient with myself and with God?
- How can I use my recovery program when things are going well?
- In what ways, however small, has my serenity grown?

- What do I feel about each of these Promises and about these questions?

MORE QUESTIONS – based on promises version in CoDA Book Page 80 -81

- How did I become honest and admit that my behaviours were causing my life to become unmanageable?
 - Did the taking of Step One allow me to feel that I belong in CoDA?
 - What affect does my past still have on my relationships with others?
 - How have I not trusted myself?
 - What does "healing of our past" mean to me?
 - What happens when I use others as my Higher Power?
 - When I let go of others' opinions – what changes?
 - When I let go of my reactions to others' actions or opinions what happens?
 - What helps me be able to see my beauty, value and worth? What stops me?
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Next pages are "Lucky dip cards - print and cut up - placed one on each chair before the meeting

I know a new sense of belonging. The feelings of emptiness and loneliness will disappear.

How have I stopped myself from feeling that I “belong”?

Have I excluded myself, maybe to avoid risking rejection?

How?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

I am no longer controlled by my fears. I overcome my fears and act with courage integrity and dignity.

What fears have affected my life?

Are childhood fears still limiting my life today?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

I know a new freedom.

What is freedom? What would I like to be free from?

How has my life changed as a result of the CoDA Fellowship?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

I release myself from worry, guilt and regret about my past and present. I am aware enough not to repeat it.

How have worry, guilt and regret harmed me and affected my life?

How could/do I let go of guilt and regrets. Which steps & tools help?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

I know a new love and acceptance of myself and others. I feel genuinely lovable, loving and loved.

How would my life be different if I felt lovable, loving and loved all of the time?

What stops me from accepting myself as I am and others as they are?

What is the opposite of acceptance? How does it feel?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

I learn to see myself as equal to others. My new and renewed relationships are all with equal partners.

What stops me from seeing myself as equally valuable as others?

Do I treat all people equally (including myself)? With equal respect?

How would it change my interactions and relationships with others if I felt and acted neither better than nor less than?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

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.

Have I been relieved of my need to control others yet? What triggers this need?

I AM capable...How does this knowledge help me in my recovery?

What is trust? Am I trustworthy?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

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.

How am I different when I am caretaking than when I am being supportive?

Did I receive sufficient support, love and healthy intimacy as a child?

What support would I like to have received from my family?

What boundaries do I need to set (with others and myself) to allow me to feel safe and be present when I am with my family?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

I acknowledge that I am a unique and precious creation.

How can I be unique and equal at the same time?

Do I treat myself as a precious creation?

Have I hidden my unique and precious self from others? Why?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

I no longer need to rely solely on others to provide my sense of worth.

In what ways is my self worth still affected by others' opinions or actions? (Either positively or negatively)

How does my Higher Power help me to see that I have value and worth?

Do I remember to validate others for who they are?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

I trust the guidance I receive from my Higher Power and come to believe in my own capabilities.

How have I learned to trust again? How do I receive guidance?

Do I remember that I have skills and capabilities? What are they?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

I gradually experience serenity, strength and spiritual growth in my daily life.

Gradually! Am I patient with myself and with God?

How can I use my recovery program when things are going well?

In what ways, however small, has my serenity grown?

What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?

Through our Higher Power's love, the spiritual principles of our program and our **willingness to be rigorously honest** in continuing our recovery to the best of our ability, **we will come to know a new sense of belonging.**

- *How did I become honest and admit that my behaviours were causing my life to become unmanageable?*

- *Did the taking of Step One allow me to feel that I belong in CoDA?*

- *What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?*

We will begin to trust and believe in ourselves and that the healing of our past is possible.

- *What affect does my past still have on my relationships with others?*
- *How have I not trusted myself?*
- *What does “healing of our past” mean to me?*
- *What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?*

Others will no longer be our gods.

- *What happens when I use others as my Higher Power?*
- *When I let go of others’ opinions – what changes?*
- *When I let go of my reactions to others’ actions or opinions what happens?*
- *What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?*

We will come to know that we are each a unique creation of a loving Higher Power, born with beauty, value and worth.

- *What helps me be able to see my beauty, value and worth? What stops me?*
- *How has this promise manifested itself in my life?*
- *What do I feel about this Promise and about these questions?*