

(Karen)

When I started CoDA in Louisiana, I was suicidal and very depressed. I had suffered through the death of my parents and one set of grandparents and the end of a long-term relationship. I was full of pain and realized I had to change or I would die because I could not go on any more by stuffing my feelings. CoDA helped me help myself. I slowly worked my way to emotional and physical health. Service work has been an integral part of that journey. I have received so much from doing service work with CoDA--and especially Outreach. I learned about myself and communicating in healthy ways with others. It hasn't always been a smooth ride, but what in life is?

After several years in CoDA, I joined the Outreach Committee. When I first got involved with the e-mail portion of Outreach, it was through agreeing to be chair of the committee. I was asked to become chair with very little experience with the committee, let alone with answering e-mail. The group conscience process that is now used was not in place. I felt rather overwhelmed but kept plugging away at it. One person would take the rotation for a month or few weeks and then we would switch out. Over time the amount of e-mail that came in increased and through Higher Power's grace, the group conscience process and one week rotations we use today were born. The process has continued to evolve over time and the members of the committee have changed, but we are a great team. We are learning how to work and communicate as a team. I did not experience this kind of interaction growing up. While a lot of our e-mail is from people looking for meeting information, we still get the opportunity to share our experience, strength, and hope and carry the message to the codependent who still suffers. I am delighted with the dedication and service the Outreach volunteers give with no expectation or reward other than doing service for CoDA. I'm proud of the work all of us have done over the years to achieve the successes in this committee.

In service,

Karen

(Wayne)

I 'm married to an addict. Very early in her recovery, she told me that there were Twelve Step programs for me, that is, for the other person in a relationship with an addict/alcoholic. At the time, I was very angry over her use of drugs and the fact she jeopardized her job and our relationship and family with her drug use. I couldn't see why I needed to go to a program when it was her issues that caused our problems. What would I talk about? But over a few months time during her early recovery, I could see changes in her behavior, and it soon became clear that I might want to take a closer look at myself, or risk getting left behind.

I joined a few groups, and finally found the CoDA program after I heard someone speak of it in one of my groups. He had something I wanted, and I'm not sure I knew what it was at the time. What impressed me was his understanding of dysfunctional behaviors, and his ability to point out "enabling" behaviors to the rest of us who didn't understand the term. I started attending CoDA meetings, and after some time, began to work the Steps in a workbook group. Powerlessness was pretty easy to understand, being married to an addict, but unmanageability was not nearly so clear. After much writing and talking with others in my group, it became clear that what was unmanageable in my life was my total lack of awareness/understanding of the need to take care of me, and how to even go about doing it. That was the beginning of a process of change for me.

I have learned many things throughout my CoDA journey. I now understand enabling, and control, and manipulation, and probably a variety of other things that don't come to mind right now. I also understand that I learned many of my codependent behaviors during my childhood in my family of origin. So, they don't go away easily, often resurface in one form or another, and they require my constant attention to avoid relapse.

Service work has kept me connected to CoDA. There have been many times when I didn't want to go to a meeting, but I realized that I had the briefcase of materials and readings, etc and had to go as I had signed up to be the secretary. At some point, I inquired about being an Outreach volunteer, and then I was asked to "tell my recovery story." I had shared at Speaker meetings, but I'd never put my story in writing. This enormous task proved to be fairly easy! Many inquiries I receive on my rotations are from people looking for meetings, but there are also those questions that make me think of my own recovery experiences. The challenge for me is to avoid the tendency to people please and problem solve, and to encourage trying new behaviors through sharing what has worked for me in my recovery. Of course, there have been times when I didn't know the answer to a question, but just like in a time of crisis when I call my sponsor or other recovery friend, someone from Outreach is always there to listen, share his/her ESH, support me, and point me in the right direction. What an incredible journey this has been.

(Debi)

My recovery journey began in March of 1990, when a dear friend invited me to attend a local CoDA meeting. This was the beginning of a long journey of healing from my extremely dysfunctional family of origin.

I attended a Co-dependency/Chemical Dependency Program in 1996, where I was able to give back the shame of the abusive/alcoholic men in my life and come out of denial of my own chemical dependency to alcohol and prescription drugs. I was introduced to the working knowledge of the 12 Steps by my first sponsor. My many sponsors have shared their experience, strength and hope with me. I have learned to dig deep within and

discover my truth and heal. Each time I work the steps it deepens my commitment to my self and my recovery. I am grateful for each of the special sponsor relationships my Higher Power has brought into my life.

I have been through many heartaches since 1990, the loss of my Grand Daughter in 1999, my father on Christmas Eve in 2000, my Grand Mother 2001, Steven my partner in recovery and beloved husband of 35 years. Through each of these losses my Higher Power and my CoDA family have been here to support me and help me grow into the person I am today.

I attend meetings in my local area and on line to continue my recovery journey. I have been involved in service locally for many years and in the last few years on line. I am honored to sponsor women on line and in my home group. I know my recovery is enhanced by my service work, especially in my commitment to my own recovery. Being of service is a way I can give back what was once so freely given to me many years ago and it's my way of "Paying It Forward" to those who are new to recovery and are looking for a better way of life.

I joined the Outreach committee by an invitation of a friend. My Outreach committee experience has given me the opportunity to reach out to the world in my service to CoDA. I take a rotation once a month or so and answer questions from newcomers and those who have been around CoDA for awhile. I have learned many things being on the Outreach committee: commitment, camaraderie, loyalty, boundaries, healthy communication, respect for other's time and talent and patience, because of this I have grown immensely. I can honestly say, "These members have been a part of my support team during many of my life challenges these past few years." Being on the Outreach committee is a rewarding experience for me.

Please join us on the Outreach committee and help us share the message of recovery around the world.

I wish you peace and joy on your recovery journey.

Debi - Outreach committee volunteer.