

## 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 think-

ing 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 conformed. 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 reached 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 began 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.

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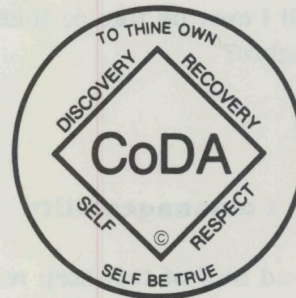


\* Step One. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

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God,

*Grant me the Serenity to accept things I cannot change, Courage to change things I can and the Wisdom to know the difference.*



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# CO-DEPENDENTS ANONYMOUS

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