

STEP ELEVEN

"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."

In Step Three, we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power. By working Step Eleven, 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 our conscious contact with God.

This Step invited us to deepen and broaden the spiritual commitment we made in Step Three. It also suggested that we avail ourselves of the opportunity to grow in our intimate understanding of our Higher Power and to learn what God's will for us truly might be.

When we first considered this step, some of us wondered: hadn't we already learned to use daily meditation and prayer? Hadn't we already discovered a Higher Power? "I think I've been working the Eleventh Step for quite awhile now." The flaw in this rationale became obvious when we noticed that prayer and meditation were given their own separate step, **after** our thorough housecleaning in Steps Four through Nine. Through a deeper understanding of Step Eleven we discovered we needed to take time, regularly, for spiritual reflection. It was a method we could use in order to become aware of God's will for us and a means to find the strength to carry it out.

By working Step Eleven we were given another reprieve from our codependent thinking and behavior. We learned the difference between **our will** for ourselves, what we thought **another's will** for us might be, and **God's will**. We were reminded that our Higher Power was not us or another person, place, or thing. Our lives became simplified. The question that remained for us was, "Am I willing to pray only for knowledge of **God's will** for me, during those times when I want **my will** so much?"

Sought Through Prayer and Meditation To Improve Our Conscious Contact With God As We Understood God.....

In the beginning, some of us needed direction. We weren't clear where prayer left off and meditation began. It was explained to us that prayer was talking to God. Meditation was listening for God's guidance.

How we chose to meditate and pray would be an individual decision. Because our conscious contact with God would be continually improving, our methods might change as we grew spiritually. Some might prefer to meditate alone. Others liked to share this time with a loved one or a group. There were those of us who combined both.

If we had no experience with prayer or meditation, it was suggested that we use the Serenity Prayer. We could take some quiet time to read and re-read the prayer slowly, allowing the meaning in each phrase to be revealed. This would be our preparation, the way in which we could bring our attention to the business at hand.

Following that, it was suggested that we ask God to empty our minds of all the noise and chatter. Some of us would focus our attention on just one part of the prayer or on an image that the prayer evoked in our minds. Others paid attention to the stillness within themselves. Each of us discovered our own way of meditating.

.....Praying Only For Knowledge Of God's Will For Us And The Power To Carry That Out.

We completed the Eleventh Step by addressing the last phrase in the step. Some of us worded this request as a question: "God, what is your will for me?" We clearly acknowledged that what we were seeking was **not** the chance to do **our own** will. Rather, we asked for only one thing, knowledge of **God's** will for us and the power to carry that out. This would be our prayer.

As we focused our attention on this part of Step Eleven a question arose, "How do I know what God's will is for me?" This was something many of us had pondered. It became a special concern to us when we had a decision to make.

There were many opinions. "God's will for me is to be happy, joyous and free." "God's will for me is to work the Twelve Steps and recover from my 'dis-ease.'" "God's will for me **must be** to have this job, this relationship, this car, this experience." What we learned was that the answer for one was not necessarily the answer for all. And most importantly, we realized that no other person could answer this question for us. It was ours to discover.

As we continued to meditate and pray, making it an important part of our daily experience, our path was revealed. It may not have been a dramatic experience. Rarely was a CoDA member struck by "spiritual lightning." In fact, "the message" often came in ways we least expected.

Some of us in CoDA found God's will to be the way we lived our lives when we were in conscious contact with our Higher Power. Often we experienced it as the capacity, step by step, to choose healthier relationships. We may have experienced God's will as an ability to accept all the good that came our way. There were even those among us who were learning to clarify the difference between self-awareness and self-obsession, believing this new understanding to be God's will. In most cases, we found that our lives just got easier to live, even when the situations in which we found ourselves were difficult or confusing.

A few of us, in our codependence, believed we could use Step Eleven to pray for another person in our lives. Perhaps we wanted to "help" or "change" this person to suit our own needs, believing that we knew what was best for him or her. In other cases, we had learned to pray for someone we resented, as a way of having that resentment removed. At this point, there were two important questions we needed to ask ourselves:

- 1.) "Did this person ask me for this 'help?'"
- 2.) "What does this have to do with God's will for me?"

Some of us were uncomfortable with these questions, wondering what could possibly be the harm in praying for others. We soon discovered that the purpose of this introspection was to decide if we were using the energy of prayer in a codependent way, meddling rather than praying.

We discovered that a more effective way to pray for others would be to let go and ask God to take over for us. We didn't need to specify what the results for the other person should be. Rather, we could choose to think of others with love and gratitude as we released them into the care of their own Higher Power.

In the case of a clinging resentment, we were guided back to Step Seven. By asking God to remove this defect of character, (**our** resentment), we would be bringing the focus back to ourselves, where it belonged.

Just as each of us had to take **our own** inventory, request that **our own** character defects be removed, and make **our own** amends, so we learned that the purpose of the Eleventh Step suggested we improve **our own** bond with God.

This healthy attention to **our own** spiritual progress was the cornerstone of our knowledge of

God's will for us and the power to carry that out. And from this, we became ready "to carry the message" to other codependents who still suffered.

In this moment I quiet my thoughts and open my mind and heart to God's guidance for me. In this moment, I feel the gentle peace that conscious contact with God allows. If I am troubled and in doubt or joyful and serene, I turn to God. I know my path will be revealed and the way to my highest good be made known.

Having begun the process of **improving** our conscious contact with our Higher Power, we became ready to move on to the Twelfth Step of the CoDA program.

***Step Eleven.** "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."

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GOD

Grant me the

SERENITY

to accept things

I cannot change,

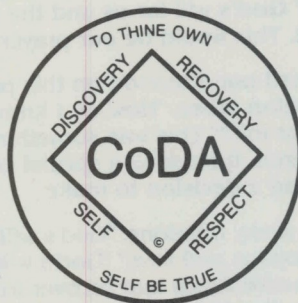
COURAGE

to change things

I can and

WISDOM

to know the difference.



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**CO-DEPENDENTS
ANONYMOUS**

STEP

11

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