

STEP TWELVE

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other co-dependents, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

It has been said that spirituality is finding your **own** path to God. In Co-Dependents Anonymous, we have been given three elements to use for guidance and support on our spiritual path — a Higher Power, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and the Fellowship.

Most often, it was the Fellowship of CoDA that first attracted us to our program of recovery. Here was a group of people who didn't judge each other, who accepted each member as they were, who supported each other through good times and bad, and who nudged each other to "work the program."

By availing ourselves of this Fellowship, both at meetings and one-to-one, we learned how others had practiced the CoDA program. We used this information to work our way carefully through the first eleven Steps. In the process we began to develop, or redevelop, our own understanding of God.

As we reflected on our early days in CoDA, we recalled that many of us arrived at our first meeting feeling beaten by life or confused by our lack of control over others. If we happened to read a copy of the Twelve Steps, we usually breezed through it with mild interest, that is, until we read the words, "...carry this message to others..." A lot of us perked up at that opportunity. We certainly didn't join this fellowship to have a spiritual awakening.

By the time we reached Step Twelve, we had come full circle. Those of us who worked each of the Twelve Steps in the order they were written found ourselves to be a little different than we were at the beginning of our CoDA journey. Changed thinking had led to changed action and, ultimately, changed feelings. While there was still much work to do, most of us had developed faith in a Higher Power, faith in the process of Twelve-Step recovery, and faith in the Fellowship. We knew it worked because we had seen the results in ourselves and in other CoDA members.

Having Had A Spiritual Awakening As The Result Of These Steps.....

The first words of this step were often glossed over in our hurry to "carry the message." They

warranted our attention because they defined the result we expected to achieve. What many of us found so comforting about this Twelve-Step process was that no matter what we believed about ourselves, as long as we worked these steps, the result would be a spiritual awakening.

In order to share this information with others, most of us had to ask ourselves some important questions: What is a "spiritual awakening?" How do I know if I've had one?

When we worked the first three Steps, most of us learned our Higher Power was at least approachable and maybe even loving. We discovered that this Power could do things for us that we couldn't do for ourselves. A simple prayer:

"I place my life and my will in Your hands today."

often relieved years of anxiety. The fact that an insurmountable problem might also be solved, usually in ways we could not have imagined, increased our faith in God and in the Twelve-Step process. Even with years of experience, most of us were still in awe of this phenomenon. Many considered this simple and profound experience the beginning of spiritual awareness.

Steps Four through Nine introduced us to ourselves. We came out of hiding and shared uncomfortable secrets with another person. We did our footwork when it came to Steps Six and Seven, often not knowing what to expect. We may have agonized over Steps Eight and Nine, wondering how on earth we could face some of the folks we had harmed. When it came to making amends to ourselves, many of us took the action, even if we found it a little strange or uncomfortable.

We completed the first nine Steps and while many of us did not see major changes, we did notice subtle differences in our thinking and in our behavior. For some the change was a more tolerant, relaxed attitude about life in general. Often we had more fun, even when we hadn't planned on it. Little things that used to bother us passed without notice. We were less compelled to give advice, lose our tempers, feel defeated, or withdraw. Feeling grateful and sometimes awestruck by things we used to take for granted became the rule rather than the exception. Many of us saw this kind of change as the process of spiritual unfoldment.

By using the Tenth and Eleventh Steps, we incorporated this new way of living into our daily lives. Some viewed this activity as a means of

operating in harmony with basic, spiritual principles.

After some reflection, we realized that a spiritual awakening was not something for which we reached or waited; not something with which we'd be rewarded if we followed the rules and were "good." In this case, a spiritual awakening was the result of working the Twelve Steps in the order in which they were presented. Nothing could stand in the way of this but us.

....We Tried To Carry This Message To Other Co-Dependents....

By living this program, one day at a time, we **became** the message we had hoped to carry. We shared our experience, strength, and hope with other co-dependents at CoDA meetings and one-to-one, when asked. Because we had faith that the recovery process worked for anyone who worked it we were not inclined to rescue fellow CoDA members or others. We offered support and encouragement, not advice. We understood that our way of working the steps may not be right for everyone. What was important was that it be right for us.

We were becoming humble enough to share honestly at meetings and one-to-one. When we felt the joy of our successes we shared them. If we were experiencing difficult challenges or feeling discouraged, we shared these stories too, knowing what we needed to hear might come from someone newer on the path than we were.

It was our process, what we did, rather than our personality that was the message. The Way we "carried it" was by being where we could share it — with other people.

....And Practice These Principles In All Our Affairs

The final phrase in this step reminded us that we could not separate our spirituality from the rest of our lives. The principles embodied in the Twelve Steps were not the private domain of CoDA meeting rooms. They were meant to be practiced in **ALL** our affairs. We were either living them, or we weren't.

As we increased in our dedication to Steps Ten and Eleven, little by little, "practicing these principles in all our affairs" became more natural. As our patience and tolerance improved, we extended the same courtesy and understanding to everyone with whom we came in contact. We made a special effort to do this whenever we spent time

with family members or friends with whom we had experienced past difficulties.

When we faltered, in any area of our lives, we remembered that this was a program based on progress, not perfection.

We came to regard the CoDA program as a precious gift. Because our lives had been so remarkably improved by adherence to its principles, sharing this special gift with others was the way in which we could thank the Power that led us to it. And in doing this, we have continued to be repaid a thousand-fold.

In this moment, I thank God for my spiritual awakening. In this moment, I choose to live all the principles of this simple program, knowing the Wisdom working through me will touch all I meet with God's love and understanding. I am at peace.

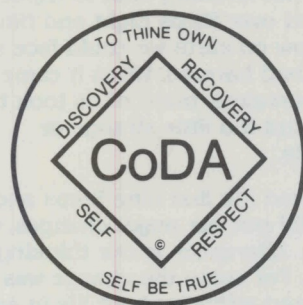
Having practiced each of the Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous, in order, we became ready to share this message with other co-dependents. For this, and for our continuing commitment to work these Steps, we are grateful.

**Step Twelve. "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other co-dependents, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."*

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God,

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



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CO-DEPENDENTS ANONYMOUS

STEP 12

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