

What To Expect At Your First CoDA Meeting

Before attending:

After finding a meeting from the [CoDA Meeting Locator](#), it is suggested you call the contact person to confirm the meeting date, time, and location. You may have noticed this person is identified by their first name, and last initial. This follows the CoDA tradition of anonymity, which says that members are not identified to the world-at-large. They remain anonymous during meetings also, using only first names. Information shared at meetings is not discussed outside the meeting. These safeguards ensure that all things shared are held in strict confidence and trust.

What a CoDA meeting looks like:

Most meetings have between 5 and 25 people and are 1 hour to 1 1/2 hours in length. Someone may welcome you to the group when you arrive. Most meetings follow a format; the chairperson will read from it and ask volunteers to read different items.

At your first meeting, you may have many questions. You may ask questions before the meeting starts, or after the meeting ends. The meeting itself is about people sharing their experience, strength and hope in dealing with codependency issues.

At the beginning of a meeting, there are introductions and readings. During the introductions, some will say “Hi, my name is ____”. Others may add “and I am codependent” or “and I am a grateful recovering codependent”. You may be asked to introduce yourself. You might add that you are checking out the meeting for the first time, or any such statement. You are not required to speak at all – it is your choice. Readings are usually the [Preamble](#), which tells a bit about the fellowship, and the [Welcome](#), which tells about codependency. Information in these can be very useful.

Other readings are the [Twelve Steps](#) and the [Twelve Traditions](#). Statements like “turn my will and my life over to the care of God as we understood God” or “made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves” may be uncomfortable to hear. You will hear people share about their unique concepts of the God of their understanding, and you may hear different names for this, such as Higher Power, Creator, Great Spirit – the list goes on. You may hear people share pieces of their moral inventories. Some members work these steps quickly; others slowly. There is no right or wrong way; it is suggested that you work them at your own pace. For more information, you may refer to the [Your First Meeting](#) pamphlet.

On the subject of God:

CoDA is a *spiritual* program, not a religious one, nor is it a cult. Members frequently start, and continue, with no experience with, nor belief in, God. It is suggested that people new to CoDA keep an open mind about spiritual matters. Many have come to understand spirituality in a way that works for them. The CoDA program uses the word God to describe a power greater than ourselves. What a person chooses to imagine or call that power (if anything) is up to the individual.

Sharing at a meeting:

Meetings have structure and guidelines. You will notice everyone is silent when someone is sharing. This is even though participants, including yourself, may have questions or suggestions for the person sharing. That guideline is called [“No Crosstalk”](#). Included in this is the guideline to not refer to another person or their sharing when your time comes to

share. We speak about our own experience; no one else's. There is great value in these guidelines because they allow the truth to come through our sharing. If you are unsure about what "No Crosstalk" means, please ask someone after the meeting.

Some meetings go around the room where people share in turn. Others are free form, where people share as they are moved to. People generally share about the topic being discussed or their current issues in life. You may share yours or not. If you have questions about your situation, share about it first. Something may amazingly come to you about it. If not, ask questions later, after the meeting has concluded.

A sign-up list of first names may go around, with phone numbers. You may sign up or not. You might find this list useful in that you are free to call any person listed to talk with them about the program, including the questions you have.

Closing:

At the end of the meeting, the group rises to say a prayer, holding hands. It is frequently The Serenity Prayer, which is well known in all 12 step programs. No participant is required to recite any prayer they find objectionable.

Types of CoDA meetings:

- **Open Share Meeting:** This type of meeting often has no topic or individual speaker, giving members an opportunity to share their experience, strength, and hope on their recovery as they wish.
- **Topic Share Meeting:** This type of meeting opens with the facilitator or a member of the group suggesting a specific topic, i.e., The Steps, Boundaries, Sponsorship, etc. The facilitator will usually begin the sharing.
- **Step or Tradition Study Meeting:** In this style of meeting, the group uses our Conference Endorsed CoDA literature, such as the CoDA Blue Book and CoDA Workbook, as a foundation for study, discussion, or sharing related to CoDA's Steps and Traditions. For example, the group may elect to read a portion of this material out loud and then have an open sharing session.
- **Speaker Meeting:** This type of meeting features a personal story of recovery shared by one individual. Speakers share their personal experience, strength, and hope in the program. The meeting may or may not include open sharing after the speaker, depending on the length of the story shared.

Recovery in CoDA:

CoDA's suggested program for recovery is based on attending Meetings, working through the Twelve Steps, Sponsorship and Service. It takes great courage to admit there is a problem. It takes even more courage, to take action and seek out help. After attending your first meeting, you may be wondering if CoDA is right for you. **It is suggested that you attend at least 6 meetings (different ones, if available where you live) before deciding if CoDA is for you.** In addition to traditional Face to Face Meetings, CoDA offers Alternative and Virtual Meetings such as [Online](#) and [Telephone Meetings](#). The hope of recovery is available to everyone.

We wish you well on your spiritual journey!

Reference: <https://codacanada.ca/your-first-meeting/> (adapted Sept 2020)