

CO-ANON Newcomer Pack





What is Co-Anon?

Co-Anon Family Groups is a fellowship of people who are husbands, wives, partners, parents, relatives, or close friends of someone who is chemically dependent. If you are seeking a solution to the problems that come from living with a practicing or recovering addict, we at Co-Anon can help you.

Who are the members? Why are we here?

We are relatives and friends who share a common bond: we feel our lives have been deeply affected by another person's drug abuse. We meet to share our experience, strength and hope. By practicing the 12 Steps of recovery ourselves, we learn to cope with our difficulties and find a more serene approach to life.

What are the 12 Steps? What do they do?

Co-Anon has adopted for our own use the 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions of Cocaine Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous. The Steps are the heart of Co-Anon; the Traditions the backbone. Together, they provide us with a guideline for personal growth, group harmony and spiritual enlightenment. By applying the principles of the Steps in our own daily lives, we can improve our feelings about ourselves, change our attitudes and learn to deal with any situation in a positive way.

Why do I need a program if I'm not an addict?

Drug addiction is a "family disease". It affects the addict and it affects the addict's relationships. Close friends and family members react to the addict's behavior, and get caught up in feelings such as hurt, fear, anger, resentment and guilt. Co-Anon helps relieve these feelings, provides recovery, and offers tools for our own personal growth and spiritual enlightenment.

What do Co-Anon members talk about at meetings?

In sharing our experience, hope and strength with one another, we keep the focus on ourselves and the Co-Anon tools of recovery. We talk about how the disease of drug addiction has affected our thinking and our behavior. We see the part that we have played in our problems, and how we can apply the principles of the 12 Steps to improve our behavior and our attitudes. We sometimes base our group discussion on a Step, Tradition, or slogan from Co-Anon to improve our understanding of the program and foster spiritual growth.

Is this a religious fellowship?

No. It is a spiritual one, where we try to accept the idea that we are dependent upon a power greater than ourselves for help in solving our problems and achieving peace of mind. Members are free to maintain their own spiritual beliefs, or none at all, but we make it a point to avoid discussions in terms of any specific faith.

Who runs this group?

We all do, but so that it runs smoothly we elect trusted servants to specific roles for short periods of time, usually six months to a year. We all volunteer to help the meetings run day to day.

How much does it cost?

We have no dues or fees. Most groups do pass a basket and we give what we can afford on a voluntary basis. We are self-supporting through these contributions which are used for paying rent for a meeting place, refreshments, website hosting, accounts to host virtual meetings, insurance and printing literature such as newcomer packs.

Will anyone say I've been here?

We are urged to respect each other's anonymity. We use first names and last initials; we do not talk about people we see, or repeat what we hear at meetings. We also guard the anonymity of addicts.

How do I start?

We have found it helpful to go to as many meetings as possible, to listen and talk to others before and after meetings. Exchange phone numbers with a willing member with whom you can confidentially share your problems, and reach out to the Co-Anon community whenever you are in difficulty or just need to talk. Between meetings you can read Co-Anon and other related literature. You may wish to ask a member that has already completed their 12 Steps to be your Sponsor: someone to whom you relate and with whom you can continue sharing your personal feelings, and ask for guidance in working the 12 Steps.

We offer you our friendship and our understanding. Keep coming back.



To The **Co-Anon** Newcomer

Most of us come into Co-Anon feeling desperate. We are deeply concerned about the use of cocaine or any other mind-altering substances by a relative or friend.

Our concern for another is greatly affecting our own lives. We come to Co-Anon because we want and need help.

Through the fellowship of Co-Anon many of us have found that help. We have learned ways out of our misery and despair and are living happy and productive lives.

Suggestions

We suggest that you attend 6-8 consecutive meetings before you decide whether the Co-Anon program is for you. We also suggest that you make no major changes in your life for the first 6 months to a year, unless there is violence. In the meantime continue to attend Co-Anon meetings regularly and use the Co-Anon Tools for Recovery.

Co-Anon Tools For Recovery

1. Attend Meetings

Attend as many meetings as possible and keep an open mind. Remember: our situations do not develop overnight and it will take time for us to work our way through them.

2. Read the Literature

Read and re-read all of the information in the Newcomer Pack. Get any additional literature that is available at the meetings and try to read some of it every day.

3. Share at Meetings

Co-Anon meetings provide special time for Newcomers to share, usually toward the end of each meeting. At this time newcomers are encouraged to ask specific questions to the group or to share their feelings and concerns.

4. Reach Out

You can use the www.co-anon.org website to find meetings taking place near you and reach out to people directly via phone or email. These fellows are willing to be contacted when we need to ask a question or to share something that is happening in our lives in confidence.

5. Use the Slogans

We use the slogans in order to help ourselves out of our difficult situations and to develop our peace of mind. Some of our slogans are: "Live and Let Live", "Easy Does It", "Let Go and Let God", "This Too Shall Pass", "Think", "Listen and Learn", "Turn It Over", "Progress Not Perfection", "One Day At A Time", "Keep It Simple", "3 C's: Didn't Cause It, Can't Control It, Can't Cure It", "3 A's: Awareness, Acceptance, Action", "First Things First".

6. Use the Serenity Prayer

It helps to remember that there is a Power greater than ourselves and that the only person each of us can change is ourselves.

God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change
the Courage to change the things I can and
the Wisdom to know the difference

7. Study the 12 Steps of Co-Anon Family Groups

We use the 12 Steps to guide us in our personal growth and enlightenment. We have found that by working these Steps we find solutions to practically any problem. Co-Anon has specific meetings designated for study and discussion of the 12 Steps.

8. Write

Writing is an important part of our spiritual growth and recovery. We write in order to clarify and to let go of our thoughts and feelings. We may wish to keep our writing confidential or to share it with a trusted friend in Co-Anon.

9. Get A Sponsor

A Sponsor is a member of Co-Anon who has completed the 12 Steps. It is suggested this person is of the same gender as us but this is not a rule or requirement. It is ultimately down to who we feel comfortable with and whose journey we identify with. A Sponsor is someone with whom we develop a close relationship in order to share our personal feelings. A Sponsor is someone who gives us guidance in working the 12 Steps.

10. Pray

Co-Anon is a spiritual, rather than a religious program. For many of us, our way out of the pain begins when we admit that our lives have become unmanageable and we become willing to turn to a Power greater than ourselves.

A Few Special Words To Newcomers

If you are concerned about someone else's use of cocaine or any other mind-altering substances we are concerned about you. Co-Anon is the right place for you. Keep coming back! It works!



Enabling

What is enabling?

Enabling is doing for others what they are capable of doing for themselves. When we enable addicts, we prevent them from experiencing the consequences of their own actions. When we do this, we discourage them from learning from their own mistakes which, in turn, prevents them from realizing they have a problem.

Addicts have made drugs their whole life. The normal, natural things every person needs to learn have been put aside. When we continue to reach in and do even the simple things for people we love, how will they learn to do for themselves?

How do we enable?

We enable addicts by doing things like:

- Paying their bills, making car payments, covering bounced checks, paying bail, paying traffic tickets;
- Making excuses for their behavior, changing appointments, calling employers on absenteeism, writing late or absentee excuses to schools, covering up for missed family functions;
- Providing the addict with money, clothing, housing and food;
- Caring for the addict's family by allowing them to live with us, taking their children to school, babysitting, etc.

What does enabling do for us?

Enabling gives us a false sense of control. We do what society tells us a "good" father, mother, parent, husband, wife, partner, son, daughter, sibling or friend should do, but we are not getting the results we desire. We feel frustrated and resentful. Because the addict's behavior does not change, we think we have failed.

Our actions, done with the best of intentions, have backfired.

What is the difference between helping and enabling?

We need to look deep inside ourselves to determine the difference between helping and enabling. "How do I feel when I offer my help? What's in it for me?" Checking our motives will help us decide when we are truly helping or when we are enabling.

Can we enable an addict (or anyone) who is not using?

We can enable anyone, using or not. Our enabling behavior patterns are not directed solely toward the addict and/or the addict's sobriety. Enabling deprives anyone of experiencing the consequences of their own behavior.

Remember, when taking responsibility for our own behavior each one of us must find our own path. Experience teaches us that it is useless to lay out a path for someone else to follow. We must each make our own way to our goal.

When we enable, we put other people's needs before our own.



An *Honest* Look at Ourselves

Addiction is a family disease. This disease affects the addict emotionally and physically and it also dramatically affects the relationships with the people who are involved with the addict. Whether we are the friend or family member, we care about this person so much that we are easily caught up in the insanity of his/her behavior. We begin to focus all of our attention on the addict and make attempts to take control and fix his/her life. This is our form of the disease.

Our behavior, though well meant, becomes as insane as the addict's. We begin to look for signs of use and concentrate on the things we think we can do to get them to stop using: flushing drugs down the toilet, destroying paraphernalia, nagging, scolding, complaining, pleading and bargaining – all to no avail. All of our thinking is directed on what the addict is doing or not doing. This is our obsession.

Watching another human being kill himself/herself with cocaine is painful. The addict continues to spend vast sums of money seemingly unconcerned about their bills, their job, their family, or the condition of their own health. Furthermore, the possibility of jail, the potential violence from drug dealers and irrational behavior of the addict due to their paranoia, torment the people who are close to them.

We begin to worry. We fix everything: making excuses, paying their bills and debts, telling lies to cover up for the addict's behavior and trying to mend damaged relationships. Then we worry some more. This is our anxiety.

In time, the situation and the behavior of the addict makes us angry. The constant covering up, enduring repeated embarrassments, and the realization that the addict is not taking care of his/her responsibilities takes its toll on us. Many of us feel a constant hostility and anger directed towards us. We begin to feel used and unloved and we want to fight back because of the hurt and frustration caused by uncontrolled drug abuse. We sometimes lose our temper, make empty threats, harp on the past or just remain helplessly silent. This is our anger.

At times we pretend that everything is okay by accepting promises from the addict. We want to believe that the problem has gone away each time the drug abuse temporarily stops. When every good sense tells us that there is something definitely wrong with the addict's actions and attitudes, we still hide from how we feel and what we know. This is our denial.

Possibly the most devastating feeling we experience resulting from life with the addict is the fear that we are not clever enough or good enough to have solved the problem for the one we love. We feel somehow responsible that it might have been something that we did or did not do. This is our feeling of guilt.

Having reached a point of emotional despair, we came to Co-Anon initially seeking help for the addict. We wanted someone to tell us how to solve our problem because we knew we could no longer deal with it on our own. We felt imprisoned by responsibilities, unloved and alone. At the same time, some of us even felt self-righteous and arrogant.

In Co-Anon, we become aware of the problems and learn that our own thinking has to change in order to start finding the solutions. In Co-Anon, we learned to deal with our obsession, anxiety, anger, denial and our feeling of guilt. It is through the fellowship that we lessen our emotional despair by sharing our experience, strength and hope with others. By working the 12 Steps of recovery, we try to change our attitudes, learn about our responsibility to ourselves, discover feelings of self-worth, love and grow spiritually. The focus begins to shift from the addict and becomes directed towards our own lives.



About *Addiction*

We have learned that addiction is an illness, not a moral issue. It is a two-fold disease: A physical allergy coupled with an obsession of the mind. It can be arrested, but never cured. It is similar to diabetes in this respect. The only relief the medical community has to suggest is entire abstinence. We can no more prevent the addict's use of drugs than we can stop someone who suffers from tuberculosis coughing. No one, not even the doctor, nor the clergy, nor the family, can do this for them.

We have found that compulsive use of drugs does not indicate lack of affection for the family. It is not a matter of love, but of illness. The addict has lost the power of choice in the matter of drugs. Even when they know what will happen when they take the first drink, pill or fix, they will do so. This is the insanity we speak of in regard to this illness.

When we fully understand and accept that addiction is a disease, that is both mental and physical, and that we are powerless over it, we become ready to learn a better way to live.



Dos and Don'ts

- Do forgive
- Do be honest with yourself
- Do be humble
- Do take it easy - tension is harmful
- Do play - find recreation and hobbies
- Do keep trying whenever you fail
- Do learn the facts about drug addiction and alcoholism
- Do attend Co-Anon meetings often
- Do pray
- Don't be self-righteous
- Don't try to dominate, nag, scold, and complain
- Don't lose your temper
- Don't try to push anyone but yourself
- Don't keep bringing up the past
- Don't keep checking up on the addict
- Don't wallow in self-pity
- Don't make threats you don't intend to carry out
- Don't be over-protective
- Don't be a doormat



Sponsorship

Just knowing that there is one person there to support you, to love you and help you love yourself, is a gift all in itself.

Why Sponsorship?

In the beginning, you have found that it is helpful to go to as many meetings as possible. Once there, you spent time listening and talking to others before and after meetings.

By now, you have realised that Co-Anon Family Groups are based on the 12 Steps of recovery. Like many of us, you realise that you are still not sure what to do; how to work the Steps, get a Sponsor and find a Higher Power.

What Is A Sponsor?

A Sponsor is a member of Co-Anon Family Groups who has completed the 12 Steps. It is suggested that a Sponsor is a person of the same gender but this is not a rule or requirement. It is ultimately down to who you feel comfortable with and whose journey you identify with.

A Sponsor is a person who can share with you how to work the 12 Steps. A Sponsor will show you how the principles of the program are life tools for you to use. A Sponsor shares their personal experiences, strength and hope.

Your Sponsor will be someone who will lend you an ear and honour your personal confidences. They will not share personal information. A Sponsor will be there for you, to support, guide and love you so that you can find and love yourself.

Without a Sponsor, the life of misery and loneliness could return.

How Will A Sponsor Help Me?

A Sponsor will help you think about your situation differently and encourage you to look for the answers outside of what you already know.

A Sponsor will help you assemble the puzzle pieces you have obtained by attending meetings. A Sponsor can show you direction, offer suggestions and will never give advice. They may, however, prod you occasionally or remind you of the principles of the program. They share compassion, but not pity.

Sponsors:

- Answer questions and provide direction when necessary.
- Listen.
- Never take another's inventory, but give honest answers if asked.
- Never give advice or make decisions for a sponsee, particularly about family situations.
- Provide patience, understanding and open-mindedness.
- Accept, care, encourage and love.

What Does A Sponsor Ask Of Me?

In addition to mutual respect and consideration, Sponsors may ask that we:

- Attend meetings regularly and share at these meetings.
- Keep in regular contact, by telephone or in person.
- Study the Steps, Traditions and Co-Anon Family Groups Conference Approved Literature
- Practice the Steps and apply the principles of the program in all aspects of our lives.
- Have the willingness to continue to work the program the best we are able to.
- Be of service or take what we have learned and give it to someone else by sharing with others.

How Does Sponsorship Help The Sponsor?

Sponsorship is not all giving. It is often a two way street. Sponsors see much of themselves in their sponsees. The fellowship between Sponsors and sponsees foster relationships that can last a lifetime.



The 12 Steps of CO-ANON Family Groups

1. We admitted we were powerless over cocaine and all other mind-altering substances and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and practice these principles in all our affairs.

These Steps are used by members of Cocaine Anonymous to achieve sobriety and spiritual growth. They were adopted by the Co-Anon Family Groups for the enlightenment and guidance of its members.

The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adopted with permission of Cocaine Anonymous and Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that CA or AA is affiliated with this program.

AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism. The use of the Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after AA, but which address other problems or concerns, or in any other non-AA context, does not imply otherwise.



The **12** Traditions of **CO-ANON** Family Groups

Our group experience suggests that the unity of Co-Anon Family Groups depends on our adherence to these Traditions.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for Co-Anon membership is that there be a problem of addiction in a relative or friend. The relatives of addicts, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves a Co-Anon Family Group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.
4. Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or Co-Anon or CA as a whole.
5. Each Co-Anon Family Group has but one purpose: to help families of addicts. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps of C.A. ourselves, by encouraging and understanding our addicted relatives, and by welcoming and giving comfort to families of addicts.
6. Our Co-Anon Family Groups ought never endorse, finance or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim. Although a separate entity, we should always cooperate with Cocaine Anonymous.
7. Every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Co-Anon Twelfth Step work should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Our groups, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. The Co-Anon Family Groups have no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all C.A. members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

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Co-Anon Literature

Our Co-Anon literature is free and can be sent to you if you contact literature@co-anon.org.

- 12 Steps of Co-Anon Family Groups
- 12 Traditions of Co-Anon Family Groups
- About addiction
- An Anthology of Denial
- An Honest Look at Ourselves
- Co-Anon and Professionals
- Do's and Dont's
- Enabling
- How to Start a Co-Anon Meeting
- Is Co-Anon for you?
- For the Parents
- The Promises
- Sponsorship
- To the Co-Anon Newcomer
- What is Co-Anon?
- Why do we suggest boundaries?

We also recommend Al-Anon literature because our situation dealing with an addict coincides so closely with that of dealing with an alcoholic.

- How Al-Anon Works
- Al-Anon's Courage to Change
- Al-Anon's One Day At A Time
- Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book)
- Al-Anon's Paths To Recovery