The following is a sample of the meeting guide that our group developed over ten years ago when we started our CoDA Big Book (“blue book”) study groups.

It is based on a generally effective format that is used in many 12 Step Fellowships for their Big Book or Basic Text study meetings. Even if you’ve never conducted a book study meeting in a 12 Step group, you can begin using this format right away.

We’re not offering this as “the right way” or “better way” to do it, nor is it designed to be outside of CoDA’s suggested program of recovery. We do not speak on behalf of CoDA about this matter. It is only a method that we found to work well, and we still use it today.

As always, practice the 12 Step folk wisdom with this: Take what you need and leave the rest.

Our best regards,
Face Everything and Recover CoDA Retreat,

Contents of this packet:

1. The meeting chairperson’s guide (the basic instructions for the meeting)
2. The readings:
   - CoDA Preamble
   - CoDA Welcome
   - CoDA’s No-Crosstalk Rule
   - CoDA’s 12 Steps
   - CoDA’s 12 Traditions
   - Some Characteristics of a Codependent
CoDA Big Book (“blue book”) Study & Discussion Meeting Guide

To do before the Big “Blue” Book Study meeting:

Be sure to have the following items set up before meeting:
   a) Chairs set up in a circle
   b) Pass around the readings: CoDA Welcome, The 12 Steps, The 12 Traditions, Characteristics of a Codependent, The Promises (add the other readings if necessary)
   c) Set out extra CoDA Big Books for those who don’t have one.

Open The Meeting:

1. Say, “Thank you all for coming to the CoDA Big Book Study and Discussion meeting. My name is ______________, and I am codependent.”

The Readings:

Say, “I’ve asked a friend to read the 12 Steps”
   Allow them to read.
Say, “Thank you.”
   Allow them to read.
Say, “I’ve asked a friend to read the 12 Traditions”
   Allow them to read.
Say, “Thank you.”
Say, “I’ve asked a friend to read The Characteristics of a Codependent”
   Allow them to read.
Say, “Thank you.”

Say, “Does anyone have any announcements?”
   Allow time for any CoDA-related announcements.

Start the Book Study:

Say, “In this meeting we will learn the CoDA program of recovery together by reading the CoDA Big Book as a group and then by sharing what comes up for us from the reading.

“The Big Book contains all of the elements of the CoDA program, how to identify the causes and characteristics of co-dependency in our lives, and how to recover from the disease of co-dependency using the CoDA program.

“The format of this meeting is simple: We will go around the room reading a portion of the Big Book together and then we will open the meeting up for Discussion so that we may share our experience, strength and hope with each
other in the hope that we will begin to discover the nature of our disease and the process by which to recover from it.

2. Say, “As we prepare to start, I would like to state a few ground rules for this meeting:

   a. We ask that you do no interrupt anyone’s sharing.

   b. We do not allow cross-talk in this meeting, meaning that we do not comment on anyone’s statements or use anyone’s name.

   c. We do not give advice. Giving advice is contrary to the purpose of the CoDA program and is engaging in the active disease of co-dependence.

   d. Please address your sharing to the group leader.

   e. Please talk only about yourself. We find that “I” statements work best to keep the focus on ourselves.

   f. Begin sharing with your first name and end by saying “thank you” so that we will know when you are finished.

   g. Please limit your sharing to 3 to 5 minutes to allow everyone the chance to share.

Begin the Reading Session:

3. Open the reading with the chapter in the book that is set aside for this week. (We find that about 10 pages is a good maximum number of pages to read during a session.)

Say, “We may read as much or as little as we feel comfortable with, but we usually limit it to one or two paragraphs.”

4. Start the readings where the group left off last time. (page 1 if this is the first mtg.)

5. Once the ten or so pages have been read, Say “thank you to everyone that read. The meeting is now open for sharing what came up for you during the reading.”

   Allow members time to share what came up for them during the reading.

   Keep an eye on the time so you stop the sharing and close the meeting on time.

End the Book Study and Close the Meeting
6. Say, “Does any have a burning desire? A burning desire is anything you feel you must share to avoid harming yourself or others.”

7. Say, “I would like to thank everyone for a great meeting!”

8. Say, “I’ve asked a friend to read The Promises”
   Allow them to read.

Say, “Thank you.”

9. Say, “So that we can all continue to carry our recovery program outside of this room tonight, we try to remember to use the CoDA program’s four elements of recovery:

   **Attending Meetings** - Individual recovery does not occur in isolation. Attending meetings is necessary for recovery. It is helpful if you attend several meetings before you decide whether or not CoDA is for you. You may also want to try several different groups in your area.

   **Sharing & Fellowship** - "Sharing" refers to sharing our experience strength and hope with other coda members. Every member has a chance to share in meetings. Our fellowship creates feelings of belonging and provides us with support and camaraderie.

   **Getting a Sponsor and Working The Steps** - Sponsorship is an important part of the CoDA program, and CoDA is a program of recovery based on working the Twelve Steps of Codependents Anonymous. Working the steps helps a person to realize that many of his/her problems have a solution. The Promise of the program is that when a member is diligent in working the steps, he/she will achieve recovery over personal problems of codependence.

Say, “If anyone would like to volunteer to be a temporary sponsor, please raise your hand.”

Say, “If you need to work the 12 Steps, please see one of these people directly after the meeting.”

Say, “Please remember our most important 12th Tradition: “Anonymity is the foundation of all of our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities, which means to us: Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.”

Say, “Please stand with me and help me close this meeting with the Serenity Prayer.”
Say, “God, Grant me the Serenity to Accept the things I Cannot Change, Courage to Change the things I can and the Wisdom to Know the Difference.”

Meeting Ends: Do this: Gather up the readings, Clean room, Reset chairs, Secure literature & donations, Turn off lights, Lock door.
The Preamble

of Co-Dependents Anonymous

Co-Dependents Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women whose common purpose is to develop healthy relationships. The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthy and loving relationships. We gather together to support and share with each other in a journey of self-discovery -- learning to love the self. Living the program allows each of us to become increasingly honest with ourselves about our personal histories and our own codependent behaviors.

We rely upon the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for knowledge and wisdom. These are the principles of our program and guides to developing honest and fulfilling relationships with ourselves and others. In CoDA, we each learn to build a bridge to a Higher Power of our own understanding, and we allow others the same privilege.

This renewal process is a gift of healing for us. By actively working the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous, we can each realize a new joy, acceptance and serenity in our lives.
Welcome to Co-Dependents Anonymous

We welcome you to Co-Dependents Anonymous, a program of recovery from codependence, where each of us may share our experience, strength, and hope in our efforts to find freedom where there has been bondage and peace where there has been turmoil in our relationships with others and ourselves. Most of us have been searching for ways to overcome the dilemmas of the conflicts in our relationships and our childhoods. Many of us were raised in families where addictions existed - some of us were not. In either case, we have found in each of our lives that codependence is a most deeply rooted compulsive behavior and that it is born out of our sometimes moderately, sometimes extremely dysfunctional family systems. We have each experienced in our own ways the painful trauma of the emptiness of our childhood and relationships throughout our lives.

We attempted to use others - our mates, friends, and even our children, as our sole source of identity, value and well-being, and as a way of trying to restore within us the emotional losses from our childhoods. Our histories may include other powerful addictions which at times we have used to cope with our codependence.

We have all learned to survive life, but in CoDA we are learning to live life. Through applying the Twelve Steps and principles found in CoDA to our daily life and relationships both present and past - we can experience a new freedom from our self-defeating lifestyles. It is an individual growth process. Each of us is growing at our own pace and will continue to do so as we remain open to God’s will for us on a daily basis. Our sharing is our way of identification and helps us to free the emotional bonds of our past and the compulsive control of our present.

No matter how traumatic your past or despairing your present may seem, there is hope for a new day in the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. No longer do you need to rely on others as a power greater than yourself. May you instead find here a new strength within to be that which God intended - Precious and Free.
No Crosstalk

In order to keep this meeting a safe place for all who come here, we accept and practice CoDA’s No-Crosstalk Rule in this meeting.

In our meetings, we speak about our own experience, and we listen without comment to what others share. We work toward taking responsibility for our own lives, rather than giving advice to others. This is why crosstalk is strongly discouraged during our meetings. Crosstalk guidelines help keep our meetings a safe place. For more information, please refer to the Newcomer’s Handbook, or CoDA’s booklet on No Crosstalk.

Examples of crosstalk may include, but are not limited to:

- Giving unsolicited feedback
- Advising
- Answering
- Making “you” and “we” statements
- Interrogating
- Debating
- Criticizing
- Controlling
- Dominating
- Minimizing another person’s feeling or experiences
- Physical contact / touch
- Body movements such as nodding one’s head or other gestures
- Verbal sounds / noises
- Referring to someone present by name

If you have questions about the No-Crosstalk Rule in CoDA, please wait until after the meeting and talk with the trusted servant that is leading the meeting. You can also bring your concerns to the Group Conscience
The Twelve Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over others - 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 lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

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 God to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became 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 God, praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry that out.

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

The Twelve Steps reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
The Twelve Traditions
of Co-Dependents Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon CoDA unity.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving higher power as expressed to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

3. The only requirement for membership in CoDA is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.

4. Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or CoDA as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to other codependents who still suffer.

6. A CoDA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the CoDA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary spiritual aim.

7. A CoDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Co-Dependents Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. CoDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. CoDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the CoDA 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, and films.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions; ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Steps reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
Characteristics of a Co-Dependent

1. Typically, you come from a dysfunctional home in which your emotional needs were not met.

2. Having received little real nurturing yourself, you may try to fill this unmet need vicariously by becoming a care-giver, especially to persons who appear, in some way, needy.

3. Because you were never able to change your parent(s) into the warm, loving caretaker(s) you longed for, you may respond deeply to the familiar type of emotionally unavailable person who you can again try to change, through your love.

4. Terrified of abandonment, you may do anything to keep a relationship from dissolving.

5. Almost nothing is too much trouble, takes too much time, or is too expensive if it will "help" the person you are involved with.

6. Accustomed to lack of love in personal relationships, you may be willing to wait, hope, and try harder to please.

7. You may be willing to take far more than 50 percent of the responsibility, guilt, and blame in any relationship.

8. Your self-esteem may be critically low and deep inside you do not believe you deserve to be happy. Rather, you may also believe you must earn the right to enjoy life.

9. You may have a desperate need to control people and your relationships, having experienced little security in childhood. You may mask your efforts to control people and situations as "being helpful."

10. In a relationship, you may be much more in touch with your dream of how it could be then with the reality of your situation.

11. You may be addicted to people and to emotional pain.

12. You may be predisposed emotionally and often bio-chemically to becoming addicted to drugs, alcohol, and/or certain foods, particularly sugary ones.

13. By being drawn to people with problems that need fixing or by being enmeshed in situations that are chaotic, uncertain, and emotionally painful, you may avoid focusing on your responsibility to yourself.

14. You may have a tendency toward episodes of depression, which you try to forestall through the excitement provided by an unstable relationship.

15. You may not be attracted to people who are kind, stable, reliable, and interested in you. You find such "nice" people boring.
The Twelve Promises of Co-Dependents Anonymous

I can expect a miraculous change in my life by working the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous.

As I make an honest effort to work the Twelve Steps and follow the Twelve Traditions...

1. I know a new sense of belonging. The feeling of emptiness and loneliness will disappear.

2. I am no longer controlled by my fears. I overcome my fears and act with courage, integrity and dignity.

3. I know a new freedom.

4. I release myself from worry, guilt, and regret about my past and present. I am aware enough not to repeat it.

5. I know a new love and acceptance of myself and others. I feel genuinely lovable, loving and loved.

6. I learn to see myself as equal to others. My new and renewed relationships are all with equal partners.

7. I am capable of developing and maintaining healthy and loving relationships. The need to control and manipulate others will disappear as I learn to trust those who are trustworthy.

8. I learn that it is possible to mend - to become more loving, intimate and supportive. I have the choice of communicating with my family in a way which is safe for me and respectful of them.

9. I acknowledge that I am a unique and precious creation.

10. I no longer need to rely solely on others to provide my sense of worth.

11. I trust a guidance I receive from my higher power and come to believe in my own capabilities.

12. I gradually experience serenity, strength, and spiritual growth in my daily life.