

THE 40 QUESTIONS FOR CoDA STEPS FOUR & FIVE

[Page Numbers refer to the CoDA Blue Book Third Edition.] This may not be reprinted or republished without the express written consent of Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc.

1. OK, Let's Go! Read Step Four on pages 41-49 in the CoDA Blue Book. Get the big picture of this step. What attitudes are you striving to have while you do your inventory? How can you use Steps One, Two, and Three to do Step Four? This inventory process is one of the most loving things you can do for yourself. You are about to embark on THE GREAT ADVENTURE Of Discovering The Lost Parts Of Your SELF! Write in detail about a past adventure that you truly enjoyed.

Read Step Five on pages 49-52 in the CoDA Blue Book. Get the big picture of this step also.

2. Do you have a "Recovery Toolbox"? Let's fill it with tools to help you cope and shift your thinking and reactions and prevent you from acting out bottom-line behaviors in the future. As you become more accountable for your behaviors and actively work to change them, your fear and shame subside. What recovery tools have you collected so far? (ie: HALT, Power of Five, Let Go & Let God, Positive Affirmations, etc.) What other recovery tools would you like to put in it? Discuss.

3. Read the section on pages 117-118, "What is meant by bottom-line behaviors?" What eight triggers are listed in this section? Which are your codependent triggers? How are they detrimental to your emotional sobriety? Write about these in your journal. Discuss.

4. Your courage to complete Step Four doesn't come from the absence of fear but your willingness to walk through it. Ponder and discuss the recovery saying: "F-E-A-R stands for Face Everything And Recover." Put this in your Recovery Toolbox.

Stepping Stone: *When will I know that I am finished with my 4th Step? You will know when you can see that you have been repeating similar patterns over and over AND be willing to change those behaviors.*

5. On page 41 re-read the two paragraphs starting with "Moral inventory of ourselves." Are you willing to look at your past behaviors without being critical of yourself? or harsh? or abusive? Is it ok for the uncomfortable feelings you have been avoiding for so long to come up to the surface now to be healed? What is your Step Four focus? What is your direction? Discuss why this inventory must be only of yourself.

6. Read the sections on pages 118-119, "What is a shame spiral?" and "What is fear of shame?" What seven action steps do you need to take to counteract a shame spiral? Write about these steps in your journal. Put these in your Recovery Toolbox. Read the paragraph on page 49 beginning with "When we look....." Many of us learned shame messages about ourselves from our childhood. We believed lies. We confused "making a mistake" with "being a

mistake.” These messages are categorically UNTRUE. How will practicing accountability and responsibility minimize our codependency & feelings of shame? Write about this in your journal.

7. Read the section on pages 104-106, “What does childhood have to do with our lives today?” We are searching for clarity. As we take a long hard look at ourselves, deeply buried feelings begin to surface bringing about the awareness that in the past we have acted as victim or victimizer due to our childhood experiences. Write in your journal the feelings & insights that came up for you. Share with your sponsor or nonjudgmental friends from your meetings.

8a. Read and study the three paragraphs on page 42 beginning with "Until now," Meditate on the words, “Spiritual Journey.” In your meditation, vibrantly visualize yourself in a gentle deep cleansing process. Write in your journal (or draw a picture) what comes up for you.

8b. As you begin this journey on the road to recovery, your purpose is to discover the deeply rooted source of your own codependent characteristics. To do this, you must be patient, loving, and forgiving of yourself. Which of those three traits would you like to be strengthened in you? How would you like to go about that?

9. In your journal describe recent experiences of trusting the care of your loving Higher Power. Who else in your life do you know that has demonstrated gentleness and care in their relationships with themselves and others? Would you be willing to use their examples of gentle & loving attributes as role models for your own recovery? Share your insights about this with your sponsor or co-sponsor.

10a. On pages 107-108, read the section “What is the Child Within?” Are you willing to embrace and accept this part of you that is often unpredictable? Do you want to get back in touch with experiencing the innocence of life, curiosity of nature, and the spirit of who you truly are?

10b. To keep a balance between both the Parent and the Child within you, read the section in Chapter 5, pages 108-110, “What is meant by parenting ourselves?” What is the main intention as we re-parent ourselves? What is self-talk? What is inner dialogue? What issues does your inner child still have that needs healing? Discuss.

10c. Write a letter from your inner child to your loving inner parent asking to get your needs met. <see example> Discuss with your sponsor or co-sponsor. Put it in your Self Care Kit. (Example: Letter from my Inner Child to my Loving Inner Parent.

My Loving Parent, [from ACA red book]

I recognize you. You are the loving VOICE I hear inside ...and I am depending on you to help me to be gentler with myself ... and more accepting of myself.

Help me be an active listener to what I'm telling myself about me. Help me be willing to

challenge my critical inner voice and to care for myself, the precious child within.

Please challenge me to try if I am apathetic but also help me give myself a break if I judge myself too harshly. Help me to stay in touch with my feelings and needs and take very good care of myself with self-love and serenity.

Help me remind myself that I do have worth and value. Help me to be patient and find balance on the teeter-totter of my reality, knowing that I can make it through, and I AM good enough.

Help me focus on PROGRESS ... NOT PERFECTION.

With trust and gratitude,

[Your Name]

11. Re-read pages 42-45 beginning with "Step Four may appear overwhelming....." It states that Step Four is a form of emotional surgery requiring gentleness and care. We are learning to separate and appreciate our innate goodness from our unhealthy thoughts and behaviors. Visualize yourself going through emotional surgery, always treating yourself with gentleness and care. Write about what came up for you during your visualization. Starting today, put aside all self-condemnation.

12. Re-read pages 42-45. Read the list of codependent behaviors on page 44 out-loud to yourself, slowly, thinking about how each might or might not have been in your life. Write in your journal what came up for you. There are always two sides to every situation. We have all reacted or responded to mistreatment by others and so it's easy to rationalize or justify some of our codependent behaviors. How does this only serve to maintain and continue your codependency? Are you willing to look at your part in the dance?

13. Read the section "What are boundaries?" in Chapter 5, pages 110-114. Also obtain a copy and read the pamphlet Setting Healthy Boundaries from your CoDA literature person. Effectively creating, communicating, maintaining your own healthy boundaries is essential for your recovery from codependency.

Put seven boundary categories in your Recovery Toolbox: Physical, Emotional, Intellectual, Spiritual, Sexual, Chronological, & Financial.

Why is it our responsibility to set & maintain them? Next time you watch yourself getting angry, confused, or uncomfortable ask yourself "Where do I need to set a better boundary?" Share your insights with your sponsor or co-sponsor.

14. Discuss the concept of external boundaries. Think of your physical body as you exist in space and time. What is a personal comfort zone? Think about your physical boundaries at home, work, traveling & recreation, etc. Include the dimensions of healthy exercise, nutrition, plus having healthy time & financial boundaries. What physical boundaries are you comfortable with? What physical boundaries are you uncomfortable with? Think about ways you would like to take better care of yourself in these areas. Share your insights with your sponsor or co-sponsor.

15. Re-read pages 112 & 113. Discuss the concept of internal boundaries. What is self-containment? What is emotional safety? How can you ensure that your self-worth is not diminished by another person's words or behavior? What visualization can you use to protect yourself. Do not internalize others' words, messages, or actions until you can determine if any of it is hurtful or not and "rings true" for you. If it is loving, you can bring it into your heart.

16. Reread the bottom paragraph on page 112 beginning with "We use internal boundaries in various ways... "What is a healthy amount of personal and/or financial information to share with an intimate partner? a close friend? family members? children? colleagues? Or new and/or social acquaintances? Write your insights and new awareness in your journal.

17. Re-read and study pages 113-114. Discuss this idea: "We allow others to have their own thoughts, feelings, opinions, behaviors, beliefs, and spirituality." Are you willing to be responsible for your own emotional, mental, and spiritual boundaries? What comes up for you? Discuss having respect for others' boundaries.

18. Discuss the saying, "NO!" is a complete sentence."

19. Practice communicating a healthy boundary aloud in a gentle yet firm way, which is safe for you and respectful of them.

20. Ponder the statement "If someone hasn't dealt with their own lack of boundaries, they probably will not recognize boundaries in others." Discuss.

21. What is the difference between a "boundary" and a "wall?" When is a wall necessary & appropriate? When is a wall avoidance and a deterrent to our ability to have healthy relationships? Discuss. Share all your insights about boundaries with your sponsor or co-sponsor.

22. Are you willing to take very good care for yourself, create emotional safety, and know inner peace? Write a list of loving recovery goals for yourself. (in each category, name three ways you would like to take better care of yourself)

1. physically

2. emotionally

3. intellectually

4. spiritually

5. sexually

6. financially

7. management of your time

Share with your sponsor or co-sponsor.

Put this list in your Self Care Kit or God Box. Ask your Higher Power for help achieving these twenty-one new boundary goals. Do your part then "Let Go & Let God."

23. With practice, setting boundaries comes more easily and helps us free ourselves from our life-long patterns of codependency. Today, while looking at yourself in your eyes in the mirror, with confidence and self-care, practice setting at least three healthy boundaries stating out loud. a) I love myself, therefore...

b) I love myself, therefore...

c) I love myself, therefore...

What was that like for you? How did that feel? Discuss with your sponsor or co-sponsor.

24. Study the list of codependent behaviors on page 44. Describe what each behavior could look like within physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, & sexual boundaries. Let's take lying for example:

- Lying physically might be hiding my actions from others.

- Lying emotionally may be telling myself or others "I'm FINE," when I'm not.

- Lying intellectually may be expressing a lie overtly or covertly to manipulate the flow of information or avoiding a confrontation.

- Lying spiritually may be believing "I'm not enough" or believing "I'm a mistake."

- Lying sexually may be saying "yes" when I really want to say "no."

Now explore your own meanings to all the words on this list. Did you think of any additional unhealthy behaviors? Jealousy? Bullying? This can be a spoken or written exercise. Take your time. Share your feelings & insights about this exercise with your sponsor or co-sponsor.

Stepping Stone: *In a thorough inventory, we must list both assets and liabilities: Make a Positive Attributes list. Name five qualities that you like about yourself.*

25. Read the three sections on pages 114-116. "What is enmeshment?" "What is detachment?" and "What is the difference between detachment and avoidance?" What insights came up for you? How do healthy boundaries apply to these topics? Discuss.

26a. Obtain and read the CoDA pamphlet – Communication & Recovery – from your CoDA literature person. Read & thoroughly discuss each paragraph.

26b. Straight-talking, asking for clarity, and practicing healthy communication skills are all part of a solid foundation for your recovery program. How does blaming, criticizing, and/or making demands undermine healthy & loving communication? Are you willing to negotiate in your relationships with others? Discuss. Write about this in your journal.

26c. Discuss the saying "Clarity is loving and mixed messages are abusive." Has anyone ever given you a vague or mixed message? How did that feel? What was the outcome? How would "clarity" have worked better in that situation? Write about it in your journal.

26d. Have you ever experienced unhealthy communication containing 1) silence or violence 2) blaming 3) criticizing 4) demands? Why does it cause communication to suffer?

26e. Discuss the benefits of using compassionate communication.

- Making Observations instead of judging,

- Expressing Feelings knowing they are caused by our Needs
- Making Requests to get our needs met instead of making demands
- Negotiating Win/Win (or No Deal) Strategies

27. Loving Ourselves Unconditionally & The Grieving Process. Discuss the affirmation “The pain that I might feel by remembering cannot be any worse than the pain I feel by knowing and not remembering.” In the safety of recovery we become willing to heal by compassionately acknowledging our original painful experiences and setting intentions for healthy experiences in our future; to let the iced up, frozen feelings from our past melt away so that eventually only love and peace remains within us. This may be a sporadic or ongoing process. However, it is only possible to do this deeply if you truly love yourself unconditionally! Discuss the principle of unconditional love. Write about this in your journal. Are you willing to love yourself unconditionally?

28. When we accept our true feelings about the past and grieve the loss of what didn't happen, it loses its power over us. We learn to accept our past just as it happened. To “accept” does not mean we have to like it. When we accept what happened and see how we responded, we gain clarity. Sometimes the "death of a dream" is more painful than grieving what actually happened. Are you willing to grieve?

29. Read the section on pages 124-125, “How do I apply my recovery to my relationships?” All healthy relationships require your consistent time, patience, attention, and nurturing. Discuss how you can:

- effectively set healthy boundaries
 - communicate with others safely and respectfully
 - responsibly share feelings, wants, and needs in relationship.
- Share your insights and plans with your sponsor or co-sponsor.

30. Read the last three paragraphs of Step Four on page 49 beginning with "We must remember..." Focus on the last paragraph. What is the definition of the word “humility?” It is a guiding spiritual principle of our recovery. How is humility:

- The opposite of judging & criticizing?
- The opposite of better than & less than roles?
- The opposite of rightness & wrongness attitudes?
- The opposite of blame & shame?
- The opposite of control & manipulation & making demands?

How does humility relate to equality? Write about this in your journal. Discuss.

31. Making the list: Take blank paper and make five columns across the top of each page:

1. NAME/RELATIONSHIP
2. MY CODEPENDENT PATTERNS (pgs4-7)
3. MY ACTIONS & BEHAVIORS (refer to the list on page 44)

4. MY UNDERLYING FEELINGS (ie: sad, angry, frightened, fear of not being good enough, shame, guilt, defiant, arrogant, etc.)

5. CONSEQUENCES TO THE RELATIONSHIP. Make page #1 for your Higher Power, page #2 for Self. Also make pages for your partner/mate, ex-es, children, friends, family members, co-workers, and people with whom you participate in your various activities. How many people are on your list? Leave lots of space to write. Also, is there any other person (present or past) with whom you would feel uncomfortable if they came into the room? Add them to your list also. Just create the empty matrix right now. There will be plenty of time to fill in the other columns and rows.

Stepping Stone: *As you begin this inventory continue your list of positive attributes by adding five more things about yourself that others like. Share with your sponsor.*

32. Taking the inventory: You can do this! Take it slow and easy. We are going to take one pattern at a time. Suggestion: Start each session with a prayer inviting your Higher Power to look at this with you. Set your timer and spend only 10-15 minutes at a time, no more than three times a day. Remember your relationship history with this person. Ask yourself questions about your behaviors with each person on your list.

33. CONTROL PATTERNS:

- Have you ever believed this person was incapable of taking care of themselves?
- Have you ever attempted to convince this person what to think, do, or feel?
- Have you ever thought you knew better how this person should be living their life than they did?
- Have you ever freely offered advice and direction to this person without being asked?
- Have you ever become resentful when this person declined your help or rejected your advice or requests?
- Have you ever lavished gifts and favors on this person? Did you want to influence them? manipulate them? or rescue them from having their negative feelings and/or experiencing negative consequences?
- Have you ever used flirting or your appearance seeking sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance?
- Have you ever had the desire to feel needed in order to have a relationship with this person?
- Have you ever demanded that your needs be met by this person?
- Have you ever used charm and charisma to convince this person of your capacity to be caring and compassionate?
- Have you ever used criticism, blame and shame to exploit this person emotionally? Have you ever taken their personal inventory? Have you ever told them what is wrong with them?
- Have you ever refused to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate? Silence/Violence Cycle?
- Have you ever adopted an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes?

- Have you ever used recovery jargon in an attempt to control the behavior of this person?
- Have you ever pretended to agree with this person to get what you wanted?

Read the sections on pages 120-122 “What Are Physical & Aggressive Forms of Abuse & Control?” and “What Are Non-Physical & Passive Forms of Abuse & Control?” Discuss how Control Patterns are abuse. Re-read the section on pages 122-123 “What is the difference between blame and accountability?” What does taking responsibility sound like? How do responsible people talk? How do they act? What do they believe to be true? When we stop longing for others to make us happy, we can look to ourselves and to our Higher Power. Write about this in your journal. Share your insights with your sponsor or co-sponsor and at meeting level.

Do you have any resentments toward this person? What are they? What vulnerable feelings are buried under your resentments? Have you ever judged them as not being good enough? Have you ever offered them advice and guidance without being asked? Have you ever felt frustration when they refused your offers to help? Have you ever felt anger or frustration when they saw the situation differently than you? Have you had problems of money with this person? You cannot have a healthy relationship with people until you have a healthy relationship with money. Have you ever given a gift to this person and then had a resentment later? Have you done favors for this person and then had a resentment when they didn’t reciprocate? Do you have a struggle with being right or being wrong with this person? Are you right and therefore they are wrong? Are they right and therefore you are wrong? Do you have a need to be right? perfect? Were you taught that “being right” meant you were safe, powerful, and in control? It may feel frightening to imagine letting go of the need to be right, but this is an old behavior based on your childhood survival skills and it no longer serves you well. Discuss these ideas.

Do you have worries or obsessions? Worry or obsession is another characteristic you may have used to survive life. What do you think about during the day? If you could figure out everything that could possibly go wrong, then can you be prepared for everything? How does that work out? Can you see that worry is also a form of control? How is arrogance a form of control? What is the difference between being humble and being arrogant? What is the difference between humility and humiliation? How can honest humility help us open the door to accepting & loving ourselves just as we are? Continue with each person on your list. Keep completing the columns to the right on each sheet. If you need help, ask your sponsor or co-sponsor for more clarity.

34. AVOIDANCE PATTERNS:

- Have you ever acted in ways that invited this person to reject, shame, or express anger toward you?
- Have you ever judged what this person thought, said, or did harshly?
- Have you ever avoided emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a way to maintain distance?
- Have you ever allowed addictions to people, places, and things to distract you from achieving intimacy in relationships?

- Have you ever used indirect or evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation?
- Have you ever diminished your capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use the tools of recovery?
- Have you ever suppressed your feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable?
- Have you ever pulled people toward you, but when the other got close, pushed them away?
- Have you ever refused to give up your self-will to avoid surrendering to a power greater than yourself?
- Have you ever believed displays of emotion were a sign of weakness?
- Have you ever withheld expressions of appreciation?

Continue with each person on your list. Keep completing the columns to the right on each sheet. If you need help, ask your sponsor or co-sponsor for more clarity.

Stepping Stone: Name five more attributes that you like about yourself. Add them to your positive list. Share with your sponsor.

35. DENIAL PATTERNS:

- Have you ever had difficulty identifying what you were feeling?
- Have you ever minimized, altered, or denied how you truly felt?
- Have you ever perceive yourself as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of this person?
- Have you ever lacked empathy for the feelings and needs of the other?
- Have you ever labeled this person with your negative traits?
- Have you ever thought you could take care of yourself without any help from this person?
- Have you ever masked pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation?
- Have you ever expressed negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways?
- Have you ever not recognized the unavailability of those people to whom you were attracted?

When we watch ourselves blaming & accusing others or see painful patterns repeating, we can recognize it as a “red flag.” We can perceive it as a gift or blessing to help us recognize that we may be in denial of a disowned feeling or dealing with an unresolved issue. Otherwise, how would we know? Read the first paragraph on page 48. What is meant when it says, “putting another person’s face on an individual, not allowing us to see their true selves?” Are you willing to discover how you have unknowingly created similar or unhealthy and abusive patterns within your adult relationships? Are you willing to become accountable for these behaviors even though you learned them from your childhood?

Read the section on pages 119-120 “What is projection?” How is projection a denial pattern? Why is recognizing, understanding and healing our disowned parts vital to recovery.

Have you ever heard these sayings?

- “The Boney-Finger Disease.”
- “Projection makes Perception”
- “If you spot it, you got it!”

Discuss these concepts. How do they apply to codependency? Describe how these sayings relate to the deep inner healing work of integrating our disowned parts. Continue with each person on your list. Keep completing the columns to the right on each sheet. If you need help, ask your sponsor or co-sponsor for more clarity.

Stepping Stone: Name five more attributes that you really like about yourself. Add them to your Positive list. Share them with your sponsor.

36. LOW SELF ESTEEM PATTERNS:

- Have you ever had difficulty making decisions? procrastination? perfectionism?
- Have you ever judged what you thought, said, or done harshly, as never good enough?
- Have you ever been embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts?
- Have you ever valued this persons' approval of your thinking, feelings, and behavior over your own?
- Have you ever do not perceived yourself as a lovable or worthwhile person?
- Have you ever sought recognition and praise to overcome feeling "less than?"
- Have you ever had difficulty admitting a mistake?
- Have you ever needed to appear to be right in the eyes of this person and may even lied to look good?
- Have you ever been unable to identify or ask for what you needed and wanted?
- Have you ever perceived yourself as superior to this person?
- Have you ever looked to this person to provide your sense of safety?
- Have you ever had difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects?
- Have you ever had trouble setting healthy priorities and boundaries?

How can positive affirmations and positive self-talk help heal our low self esteem patterns? Continue with each person on your list. Keep completing the columns to the right on each sheet. If you need help, ask your sponsor or co-sponsor for more clarity.

37. COMPLIANCE PATTERNS:

- Have you ever been extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long?
- Have you ever compromised your own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger from this person?
- Have you ever put aside your own interests in order to do what this person wanted?
- Have you ever been hypervigilant regarding the feelings of this person and taken on those feelings?
- Have you ever been afraid to express your beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differed from those of this person?
- Have you ever accepted sex and/or sexual attention when you really wanted love?
- Have you ever made decisions without regard to the consequences?
- Have you ever given up your truth to gain the approval of this person or to avoid change?

Continue with each person on your list. Keep completing the columns to the right on each sheet. If you need help, ask your sponsor or co-sponsor for more clarity.

Stepping Stone: Add to your Positive list of liked attributes you have with five more. Share these new attributes with your sponsor.

38. Balanced Perspective Inventory: Read three paragraphs on page 48 beginning with "To thoroughly explore and understand..... . "We must also explore our strengths, assets, and positive behaviors. On blank paper make new grids with five columns. On these new lists, add the people who did not experience your codependent behaviors. Identify your positive, healthy, appropriate, and loving behaviors in your relationship with each person. (Suggestion: Start by using the list of your positive attributes you've been compiling. Also refer to the "Recovery Patterns of Codependence" on www.coda.org.)

39. As you come to the end of your Step Four and Step Five work, read the sections on pages 116-117 in Chapter 5, "Am I Ever Recovered from Codependence?" and "What Is a Codependent Slip?" Write your insights in your journal. Have you seen any of the codependent patterns repeating over and over as common threads in relationships? Read the last paragraph on page 49 in Step Four beginning with "From the place of humility, we've become ready to complete Step Five." Have you gained humility and a healthier relationship with yourself through this inventory process? Discuss being "right-sized." Read Step Five on pages 49-52. Discuss the principle of accountability. Re-read the last three paragraphs on page 52 in Step Five. We realize that only through God's grace have we come this far .Discuss.

40. Have you noticed that while sharing your answers to these questions with your sponsor or co-sponsor you have simultaneously completed Step Five? Congratulations! You have come an incredible distance on your path of recovery thus far! Are you ready to begin working Step Six?