

CoDA Service Conference 2021 Report

For the CSC held online over 27th to 30th July 2021

By Pete H

TL/DR

As I have ended up writing quite a long report and included a lot of detail, I figured a “Too Long... Didn’t Read” section for the majority of members who will benefit from an abridged set of information that can be shared with your homegroups.

Lots of great items were brought to the CSC and were passed. The highlights are:

Voting entities (like the UK) can now bring agenda items directly to the CSC.

Social media and modern platforms can be used for CoDA to carry the message, for meetings etc without breaching tradition 11. Clarification of the principle of anonymity in these modern times in a connected digital world.

A refocus on CoDA youth services. Looking to relaunch and reinvigorate CoDA youth/teen.

Update of Tradition 11 wording:

- Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and all other public forms of communication.

New literature approved for publishing:

- Newcomers’ handbook second edition – with loads of changes
- Second edition of Making choices in recovery, positive affirmations for working on our shortcomings – loads of changes, essentially a complete re-write
- Joy In the Journey, Recover with colour – a new ‘adult colouring book’
- Codependency & Recovery, The Differences – well known one page document approved by CSC
- Prayers for CoDA’s Twelve Traditions – set of 12 prayers approved
- The Longer Serenity Pray – the prayer used widely in the UK approved by CSC (finally!)

And finally the CoDA Preamble has been agreed to be updated to replace “men and women” with “people”.

Who Am I?

I would like to start by thanking the members of CoDA UK for allowing me to provide service by acting as one of the UK representative delegates to the CoDA Service Conference (CSC) 2021. I would also like to express gratitude to my fellow candidate and alternate delegate Philip F and Cammie A.

The while event was online and to ease people in to aid the levelling of various experience and capability levels with the meeting technology and online meetings there were numerous rehearsals run. During the rehearsals we gathered together as candidates and went through a mock conscience item vote. These rehearsals were suitable imperfect helping us to not take ourselves too seriously.

Looking to the schedule and the content of the delegate pack (that can all still be downloaded from codependents.org) it seemed evident that there was almost certainly a lot of business that must have been trimmed down to squeeze as much in as possible. There were certainly quite a few items from the delegate pack that didn't make it to discussion or vote. Just like our own UK service committee there is so much business to attend to and so little time.

The process that was followed to present and discuss issues was fast and efficient but was prone to running short on time as the proposer could take up much of their allotted schedule by repeating what was in the delegate pack rather than hand the time over to questions or “pro's and con's”. as such time the first couple of days overran by over an hour each, which translated to wrapping things up around 2 am UK time.

Taking on my role as the UK delegate I feel I voted following the principles of the program, in particular, “does this come from a place of love, acceptance, and inclusion”, “does it help the codependent who still suffers”, “does it help to carry the message”, “will this help attraction to the program”.

A short introduction of myself as we may not have met previously. I am Pete and I am codependent. I have been in recovery for three years now having spent a year working the steps in another program prior to finding CoDA. I am fortunate enough to be working the program alongside my partner, gradually growing our dysfunctional relationship of 20+ years into something healthier one day at a time.

I have been grateful to provide service in various areas across CoDA in my time so far, including as the current web service person for the UK NSC. Service has allowed me to practice healthy patterns in safe spaces, helping me build the esteem to bring them into all areas of my life.

I believe that CoDA is a program for helping me to work through and heal the underlying problems in my life from childhood onwards, so they no longer control my present life. I hope that this universal acceptance, healing, and love show in my service and in the way I have represented the CoDA members of the UK in my voting at the CSC.

The Long Version...

For the next section of my report, I will provide a brief overview of the items that were discussed and voted on, how I voted, and the outcome. If you would like to read about each item in more detail, then the accompanying service items report document and the resources from the delegate pack available from <https://www.codependents.org/CSC/2021/2021.htm> are available.

The full motions report from the CSC passed motions from 2021 can be downloaded from here:

- https://www.codependents.org/CSC/2021/2021_Files/2021_CoDA_Motions.pdf

CSC Motions Day 1

Several of the agenda items were for text corrections or updates to literature. The weeks agenda started with a few of these. I have cut out motions raised around changes to breaks, timings, extensions of the day etc to just share the items that may be worth sharing with fellows and home groups.

I have prefaced my commentary with “VE:”

Motion/Issue: 21007

Move to correct the wording of the following sentence from Part 4, Section 2, Page 10 of the Fellowship Service Manual, Last Revision 2021-05-09.

VE: This seemed like a sensible amendment and a clarification of wording so I voted in favour, and it passed.

Motion/Issue: 21008

Move that the Co-Dependents Anonymous (CoDA) Service Structure chart of the inverted pyramid revert to the chart used by CoDA from 2005-2016 as in Figure 1.

VE: there seemed to be a lot of confusion about different versions from different years that have been updated, lost, reverted, edited, etc in various places and formats. As we are not intended to be perfect but making progress it seemed that making a change this year was worthwhile and if those identifying alternatives that they felt were better then that could be brought next year. I voted in favour, and it passed.

Motion/Issue: 21009

Move that Voting Entities be granted the right to bring motions directly to CSC precisely as the CoDA Board of Trustees and World Standing Committees currently do.

VE: This is a most welcome change. Previously to bring an item to the CSC it had to be submitted to a CSC committee who would take it on and bring it to conference. This often meant that items didn't get submitted in the first year and prevented items from being heard. With this passed then any voting entity, including the UK or a UK region, can bring an agenda item to future CSC. I voted in favour, and it passed.

Motion/Issue: 21010

correction: Page 8 Error – to change the comma after “Conference” to a period and change “the” to “The” to begin a new sentence.

VE: this seemed to be a simple typo error and I was mostly surprised items like this couldn't be dealt with by a committee as a trusted servant responsibility. I voted in favour, and it passed.

Motion/Issue: 21011

Move that Motion 20023 be amended to encompass the following seven CoDA Foundational Documents: The CoDA Twelve Steps, the CoDA Twelve Traditions, the CoDA Twelve Service Concepts, the CoDA Twelve Promises, the CoDA Welcome, the Short Version of the CoDA Welcome, and the CoDA Preamble.

VE: This vote was quite contentious and during the statements section I made a representation stating that I felt that preventing any change from being implemented for two years, and to require an initial 66% and then a 75% affirmative vote (more than needed to pass this motion) to make any change to the wording in the defined documents, removes group autonomy, prevents the inclusive evolution of the fellowship in line with the growing understanding of the issues people face in life. Also, that this high bar would allow a small minority to block changes for inclusive wording. I voted against this motion, and it passed.

Motion/Issue: 21002

Chairs and visitors be given voice at convention. Includes everyone that is present will have voice. Not everyone present will have vote. YouTube viewers are just observers.

VE: This item moved to allow those that are attending the CSC as alternate, in other service capacity, as a committee member etc the opportunity to raise their hand to speak on agenda items whether they have a voting right or not. To me this provides opportunity to hear a wider array of experience, strength, and hope than just that of the registered voting delegates. I voted yes on this, and it passed.

Motion/Issue: 21004

Description: Accept the community solving problem as listed on the screen and adapted for virtual. Those in favour of pros is called first and a list is made from raised hands by the moderator. A list of cons will raise their hands and the moderator will write down the names in order. Moderator will then call the alternate views for discussion.

VE: This outlined the way the problem-solving approach to discussing items was to be used for this CSC (already nine motions in) as the approach hadn't technically been approved for use in a virtual CSC. This process had been practiced during the rehearsals and had so far allowed discussion and airing of differing views and E-S-H on matters. I voted yes, and the motion passed.

CSC Motions Day 2

Beginning the second full day of the agenda.

Motion/Issue: 21016

Subject: All motions to take immediate effect unless otherwise stated.

VE: This item was quite important, especially considering the motion being passed on the first day so that any changes, amendments, or corrections to 7 CoDA documents would take two years to be implemented with successive votes of 2/3 and 3/4 to pass. There were several proposed changes to some of the documents in later motions that would be immediately impacted if the change was immediate. The other option was that the changes would take effect at the close of the conference.

During discussion it was mentioned that the approach had always been for items to take effect as soon as they are passed. I was torn on this one as it seemed procedure had not changed, but also that again the precedent that a motion could be passed that would make another impossible simply by the order in which they are submitted or selected to be scheduled. I can't recall how I voted on this item in the end, but it passed with a 2/3 majority.

Motion/Issue: 21018

Subject: Ratification of Board Motions 2020-2021.

VE: this motion was to approve/accept the motions and actions that the CoDA board had passed during the 2020-2021 period. The motions were all provided in the VE delegate pack which can still be viewed. There was quite a lot of business they had gone through, a lot of it general housekeeping as with many committees. I saw nothing in the motions that was problematic and voted yes, the motion passed.

Motion/Issue: 21019

Subject: Correct Preamble

Communications Committee moves that the preamble be changed as noted:

Proposed change: Co-Dependents Anonymous is an inclusive fellowship whose common purpose is to develop healthy and loving relationships. We gather together to support and share with each other in a journey of selfdiscovery – learning to love the self.

VE: I was largely in favour of this, however, this item had been merged with about 3 committees submitting similar proposals to improve the preamble and not all the committees had been informed that their item had been merged into this, and were not consulted with decisions and changes around this. The communications

committee that presented this item also refused crafting. This had also been voted on or discussed last year with the simple change of “men and women” to people and this specific change was being overlooked for a broader amendment. I also felt that this new wording didn’t really correct the repetition word salad that often sounds like gibberish when spoken aloud at meetings. If crafting had been accepted I would have proposed the following:

“co-dependents anonymous is a fellowship of people whose common purpose and 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.”

As it stood, I voted in favour of this as it had become the only option to improve the welcome with inclusive language. From my experience I know how simple language can turn something loving and caring into something frightening and traumatic. Being told I am wrong instead of that I did something wrong. As much as anything it brings to mind a wise quote “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better”. Progress not perfection, and progress is needed. This motion was defeated.

Motion/Issue: 21021

Subject: Accept QR Code for use in CoDA.

VE: A lot seemed to be made of accepting a QR code design to be included in literature and print outs etc. The link was proposed to just point to the coda.org website and carry not further data. There then seemed to be all manner of perfectionistic statements about artwork and different use cases and the general purpose seemed to get lost along the way. I was a bit surprised that this wouldn’t be something that could just be performed by a committee as a trusted servant activity and really doesn’t need to be made a complicated as it was being turned into. The proposer withdrew the motion to further investigate all the overly complicated “well, actually...” thrown at them.

Motion/Issue: 21022

Subject: Revise social media policy.

VE: This item, to my mind, was an important step forward for CoDA as a whole. The Fellowship Service Manual (FSM) and general CoDA guidance on the use of social media and technology platforms has long been based on a very restrictive and blinkered view of the traditions, especially tradition 11. As stated in the motion text,

Tradition 11 speaks of maintaining anonymity when representing CoDA to outside entities. Members engaging with social media, going about their lives online are not representing CoDA. This motion clarifies many things.

- Sharing our faces and full names (our identity) within a meeting, business meeting, or social media does not violate tradition 11.
- Members are also not required to share their face or identity within a CoDA meeting. It is personal choice.
- Outreach, meetings, and CoDA attraction can be performed on social media and other platforms.

Having a technical background myself there is an awful lot of misunderstandings about what is and isn't private and confidential online. A lot of fear, uncertainty, and doubt is spread about platforms and services that is certainly an outside issue and has been preventing the sharing of the message of CoDA recovery and providing the resources that people may find and witness to foster the attraction and reaching the codependent that still suffers. I voted in favour of this motion and it passed.

Motion/Issue: 21025

Subject: Update to CoDA Investment Policy

VE: whilst there are all sorts of complicate issues around making sure that member donations go back into actively serving the membership, carrying the message, and reaching the codependent that still suffers, it seems sensible to ensure that ongoing costs can be safely covered through investment of funds that CoDA holds. There was a large spreadsheet of the current and projected costs for things and the face to face CSC seems to cost an awful lot. Overall it seemed sensible that the funds that in some ways needed to be set aside should be invested in safe locations that also ensure that the value of the money doesn't depreciate. I voted in favour, and the motion passed.

Motion/Issue: 21028

Subject: CoDA and CoRE Board Candidate Introduction.

VE: Five prospective members (2 for CoRE and 3 for the CoDA board) were introduced with an opportunity to share about themselves, their recovery and service experience, and what they hoped to bring to service with CoRE or the CoDA board. It was good to get a feel for the real people that are doing service on behalf of CoDA so that they are not just an entity.

Motion/Issue: 21033

Subject: Spanish Outreach – CoDA youth.

VE: whilst there was no motion attached, Spanish Outreach had created a video that highlights the plight of the young codependent and those actively living through the trauma that is so commonly the foundation of a life of codependency. This has hopefully shone a light in an area of service growth need that fellows in the UK are in the process of taking up.

Motion/Issue: 21035

Subject: Translation and Publication Information / Disclaimer.

VE: in short there seems to be a bit of an oversight in the translated printing such that doesn't currently provide the reader of translated literature information on whether the translated text has been approved by CoDA or CoRE, whether it was translated by volunteers or a paid service.

It seems that there is a large need for translation services from volunteers and where necessary professional services. Also, for these translations to be checked by members for quality and accuracy. With important literature the intent and nuance can be subtle and missed by someone unfamiliar with the content. Among discussion it seemed that there was not a great deal of conversation on this before submission with relevant committees.

I felt it appropriate that members be able to understand that currently translations are not endorsed by CoDA Inc and are the responsibility of the translating country or committee. I voted yes, this was a close vote, passing by a simple majority.

CSC Motions Day 3

The penultimate day had several important items on the agenda, including a proposed change to Tradition 11, many new pieces of literature, and importantly for us in the UK... the endorsement of the longer serenity prayer!

Motion/Issue: 21040

Subject: Replace the Current Tradition 11.

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and all other public forms of communication.

VE: This was coming back for the second-year vote to pass. The change was proposed and passed last year but as a change to a tradition requires passing with a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote in the second year. The historic tradition is obviously quite limited in terms of public media forms in this day and age and whilst it has been understood by most that the spirit of the tradition doesn't just cover 'press, radio, and film' it doesn't hurt to bring it up to date. I did wonder why it wasn't shortened to simply "all public forms of media" but progress not perfection must prevail. I voted yes and this passed with a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority.

Motion/Issue: 21044

Subject: Retreats and Other Events.

To allow the CoDA Events Committee to organize financially self-supporting CoDA events, virtual or face to face, separate from the CoDA Service Conference (CSC) and International CoDA Convention (ICC) in coordination with local CoDA communities when possible.

VE: I queried why this was not just within the bounds of 'trusted servant activity' and was informed that it would be an expansion of the committee role, reach, and responsibility which itself was a 3 year trial period set to end this year. I voted yes as I felt that the more events and activities there are available for members then the greater the chance that members can attend and further their recovery ('build it and they will come'). I voted yes, and it passed with a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority.

Motion/Issue: 21045

Subject: Newcomer Handbook.

CSC to endorse the second edition of the newcomer handbook.

VE: the new version is quite different from the current edition of the newcomer handbook. New literature is always a good thing in my mind, so I was happy to vote yes. The motion passed with a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority and the second edition is endorsed.

Motion/Issue: 21046

Subject: Making choices in recovery, positive affirmations for working on our shortcomings.

CSC to endorse the second edition of the making choices booklet.

VE: another great new edition with significant changes. The new content and format now really help focus the booklet on steps 6 and 7 which I would admit I hadn't realised was the focus of the original. I have had great experience with the first edition and look forward to reading and sharing the new edition. I voted yes and the motion passed. The second edition is endorsed.

Motion/Issue: 21049

Subject: CSC to endorse Joy In The Journey, Recover with colour as a new piece of CoDA literature.

VE: this is the new adult colouring book from CoDA illustrated by a CoDA fellow. So many members have benefited from colouring as an inner child and recovery activity that bringing CoDA messages and literature into colouring really seems a beautiful notion. I was happy to vote yes, and the motion passed unanimously. The book is endorsed.

Motion/Issue: 21050

Subject: Codependency & Recovery, The Differences.

CSC to endorse CoDependency & Recovery, The Differences, as a one-page service item.

VE: apparently this has been around within CoDA for a very long time, the provenance has long been lost which raised some concern with members as a risk of copyright or other legal issue. This is used widely in UK and other global meetings. I have seen and used this document since joining CoDA. I voted yes, and the motion passed.

Motion/Issue: 21052

Subject: Prayers for CoDA's Twelve Traditions

CSC to endorse twelve new prayers, one for each of the The Twelve Traditions.

VE: there were some potentially valid queries around some of the language used. The intent is for the prayers to be available freely on the website and to be included in future prayers booklets. It seemed to me that it would again be good to have something that can be progressed upon rather than wait to try and have the 'perfect' thing. I voted yes, and the motion passed. The prayers are endorsed.

Motion/Issue: 21053

Subject: The Longer Serenity Pray

CSC to endorse The Longer Serenity Prayer as a service piece on our website and pieces of printed literature.

VE: this is the long serenity prayer as well used throughout the UK. To be endorsed as a long version and not to 'replace' the original serenity prayer. There were some valid queries around endorsing a new prayer that uses God rather than higher power. In time these terms will undoubtedly be updated through progress. I voted yes, and the motion passed. The long serenity prayer is now finally CoDA endorsed.

Motion/Issue: 21058

Subject: Board of Trustees Elections

VE: we voted on the board members that were introduced previously with the following results:

- Florence F. – MD – Alternate #2 Board of Directors: elected
- Liliana R. – Colombia, Board of Trustees: not elected
- Katherine T. – AZ – Alternate #1 Board of Directors: elected

Motion/Issue: 21059

Subject: CoRE board elections

VE: we voted on the CoRE board members that were introduced previously with the following results:

- Kathy H – PA: CoRE Board – elected to board
- Annie S – MA: CoRE Board: elected to board

CSC Motions Day 4

The final day of the CSC.

Motion/Issue: 21063

Subject: Issues Mediation Committee Nominations and election.

VE: election for members of the IMC with the following results:

Nominations:

- Shannon O. – Canada
- Carmen W. – NV
- Jorge B. – Mexico

Returning:

- Chris J. – IL
- Steve S. – FL
- Darlene H. – SoCal
- Dan R. – Ontario Canada
- Laurie C. – Georg

All member elected.

Motion/Issue: 21067

VE Canada. Following the presentation and provisional acceptance of the draft version at the 2020 CSC, we request the 2021 CSC to approve the revised version of Service Concepts – “Alive & Strong” as a new piece of printed and/or downloadable CoDa Endorsed Literature.

VE: another great piece of new literature produced for the fellowship. This one makes the service concepts more understandable and accessible to member. I voted yes and this passed unanimously.

Motion/Issue: 21068

Arizona VE: New proposed preamble.

Preamble:

Co-Dependents Anonymous is a Fellowship of people 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 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.

VE: thankfully we were able to add this item as an urgent AOB item given the problems with the first attempt to revise the preamble. Unfortunately, this is now in the two-year process of revision as the preamble is part of the foundation documents and will need to be approved again next year. Groups and regions could start to use this as agreed by their own group conscience. There was a lot of discussion that potentially edged into outside issues, personalities etc. In my mind though the primary purpose here is to update language used to ensure that people are not shamed or excluded but are aware that all are welcome in CoDA. Some people also seem to think that a change in wording would mean that already printed literature must be re-printed which made no sense to me, surely you just don't print any more with the old wording. I voted Yes and this passed with a large majority.