



“Hitting on Newcomers”

By Vicki J. excerpted from "The Newcomer's Handbook of Co-Dependents Anonymous"

CoDA is a group of men and women whose common desire is to have healthy and loving relationships. Many members share that they don't know *how* to have a healthy relationship. A newcomer to CoDA may encounter others attending CoDA who have “fuzzy” boundaries or “hidden agendas” that they are unaware exist in their behavior. In CoDA we are learning that when we were children, we may have truly been victimized. But as recovering adults, we no longer need to be “voluntary victims.”

Therefore, the issue of “hitting on” newcomers needs clarification and to be addressed up front and out in the open. This is an experience which may never occur, but in the likelihood a Newcomer or any other regularly attending CoDA member runs into this situation, there are a few suggestions and guidelines that one Old Timer in the program has to share:

1. First, a Newcomer is encouraged to say "No!" to any person, situation or experience that feels uncomfortable to them.

2. It is suggested that if a Newcomer is presently ending a relationship or not currently in one, that he/she do not enter a new relationship for at least 6 months to one year upon initial participation in CoDA recovery. This option helps the Newcomer adopt an attitude of open friendship with others while allowing time to develop a commitment to get to know themselves and their Higher Power before engaging in a new relationship.

Therefore, if another persists in seeking out a Newcomer, the Newcomer has a new boundary "tool" of recovery available to take responsibility for their own behavior, regardless of where another person may be on the path to recovery.

3. Socializing in a group setting with fellow CoDA members after a regular meeting is a safe way to learn more about someone's specific behavior traits and attitudes before deciding that you would want to spend time alone with this person.

4. Most of us, but not all, enter CoDA recovery during a very painful period in our lives. Being in pain can leave us feeling vulnerable and defenseless until we have time to develop new recovery tools and healthier behaviors to replace our old dysfunctional patterns, vulnerable to someone's "rescuing" behaviors, masked as nurturing support. Being in so much pain, it may feel great to be the object of someone's care-taking attentiveness. Healthy, safe, supportive friendships encourage independent thinking for and responsibility of self. A supportive relationship encourages interaction with safe others, and not isolation from others by being in an exclusive/isolating romantic relationship.

5. Being codependents, sometimes the only way to feel in control of our lives is by controlling others, not only in romantic relationships but in friendships as well. A safe relationship/friendship will encourage enough room for the individuals to take their time to grow slowly, not shame or manipulate each other into doing what only one wants, and the willingness to negotiate differences. A relationship marked by a rigid set of rules demanded by either part could signal unhealthy, dysfunctional behavior.

6. A healthy relationship is not one shrouded in secrecy or shadows. In CoDA recovery we are learning to come out of hiding from other's shameful behavior and to own and take responsibility for our individual actions. In a healthy relationship there will be no need for secrecy. Requiring secrecy could reveal a hidden agenda within that relationship.

