

**The third installment in the continuing series on
*the traditions in healthy and loving relationships.***

The following is what was revealed to us through prayer and meditation and the study of CoDA literature in preparation for presenting a panel discussion on “The Traditions in Healthy and Loving Relationships” for Super Seminar Saturday. As with all things in our program, please *take what you like and leave the rest.*

**TRADITION THREE: The only requirement for membership in CoDA
is a desire for healthy and loving relationships.**

**3. Two or more persons, when gathered together for mutual
benefit, may call themselves a relationship. The only
basic requirement for a good relationship is a mutual
desire to make it work.**

There are many reasons why people get in or stay in a relationship other than a mutual desire to make it work. Feelings of financial insecurity, the need for emotional security provided by a partner, feeling trapped due to responsibilities such as raising children, and the fear of being alone are just a few of these reasons. These are difficult problems to deal with and are the breeding ground for anger and resentments in relationships.

Some days, you can both be intolerable or uncompromising and the desire is all there is. If you could do better, you would. When either of you is being a jackass, the other must try to be accepting, kind, tolerant, loving, understanding – **and silent**. After all, the next time the roles will be reversed and it will be the other’s turn to be a jerk. Believe me, during those times you will want that same kindness and understanding extended to you too.

Personal Story #1:

I always believed that I didn’t belong anywhere. I felt out of place like a red thumb or the odd ball in any situation. Most of all I felt I would never be in a healthy and loving relationship because I wasn’t healthy and I didn’t feel lovable. I didn’t feel capable or deserving of being loved either. This was what my family of origin taught me and what I believed about myself after making unhealthy choices that caused me grief and pain, including a 13-year marriage that ended in divorce. This left me in incredible fear of being hurt again. I thought I needed to protect myself by controlling others.

When my current husband and I met we were not in recovery which is probably why we were attracted to each other. We were both sick and afraid of commitment. He had the same history with romantic relationships that I had including a divorce. We ended up in recovery programs for our own separate issues and got healthier. We’ve continued our recoveries and are still together today.

Promise Three states that “I know a new freedom” and this promise has come true for me as I have worked my steps and this tradition and my husband has worked on his program too. I discovered that I needed to love and honor myself first before I could have healthier relationships with anyone else. A loving relationship includes honesty, openness, willingness, and acceptance. These are the qualities of my marriage today and what I seek in all of my relationships, including the one with my higher power.

Personal Story #2: Tradition Three means putting all else aside that is an obstacle to a healthy and loving relationship with myself and others. That may include: fear, self-defensiveness, being right, making my partner my authority, the need to be filled from the outside, etc. To practice Tradition Three, I need to be willing to practice new and different behaviors, even when I am uncomfortable. As an example, I need to be able to speak up for myself even when I'd rather keep quiet, keep the peace and go along. Other times it means staying quiet when I urgently feel the need to speak, butt in, or act out.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION Three:

- Do my actions say that I have a desire to be in this relationship?
- Do I set myself up as a judge of my partner's intentions or sincerity? Do I judge my partner on anything?
- Do I approach my marriage/relationship unselfishly or do I depend on my partner's language, looks, race, education, age, appearance, job, or other such things for my own self-esteem? What does my partner have to do to keep my ego fluffed up?
- Am I committed to and do I encourage my partner's mental, emotional, spiritual, professional, and individual growth and freedom?
- Am I able to share my feelings and be vulnerable with my partner? Can I listen to my partner's feelings with an open mind?
- Am I reluctant to work on my part of the relationship?
- Do I need my partner to change for me to be okay in my relationship?