

**Prodependence Anonymous
Group Guide: Starter Packet**

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Welcome Letter

Dear _____,

Thank you for contacting Prodependence Anonymous about starting a meeting in your local area or online. We hope you will find serenity, solace, and relationship healing through this community. This brief guidebook will help you start, structure, and conduct your meetings. It will also help you interact with other Prodependence Anonymous meetings throughout the world.

As part of this packet, we have included a Prodependence Anonymous group registration form (page XX). Please complete this form and return it to us as soon as possible, so we can add your group's information to the Prodependence Anonymous website (www.Prodependenceanonymous.org).

Once we have received your registration, you will be assigned a group number. This number is important, and it should be used in all of your group's correspondence.

We recommend that all Prodependence Anonymous groups purchase copies of the book *Prodependence: Moving Beyond Codependency* by Dr. Robert Weiss to use as the basic text of the group. Beyond that, we have provided several in-meeting readings in this packet that your group will likely find useful. If you have suggestions for other literature or readings, please let us know. Our hope, over time, is to grow our list of Program Recommended Literature.

One final note: Prodependence Anonymous is heavily based on the steps and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the first 12-step program of recovery for struggling individuals. We owe Alcoholics Anonymous (and numerous other 12-step programs) a debt of gratitude, as their trials, tribulations, and unceasing efforts have created a pathway we can follow in our own process of healing.

We wish you and your new group all the best as you move forward in Prodependence.

Sincerely,

The International Service Organization of Prodependence Anonymous

Basic Information on Starting a Group

What Is a Prodependence Anonymous Group?

A Prodependence Anonymous group consists of two or more people who meet regularly in an effort to heal their damaged or struggling relationships using the principles of Prodependence and the 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous. Often, though not always, these individuals are in relationship with an active or recovering addict or someone with a profound psychological disorder. That said, every person, regardless of his or her personal situation, is welcome in Prodependence Anonymous because every person can benefit from the teachings of Prodependence Anonymous.

All Prodependence Anonymous groups are self-supporting. Prodependence Anonymous groups are never affiliated with any other organization. Prodependence Anonymous groups are solely focused on developing healthier relationships. We take no opinion on outside issues. We neither endorse nor oppose any causes other than the development of more meaningfully intimate connections with the people we care about. In our meetings, we share our experience, strength, and hope with one another in a safe and confidential space as a way of helping ourselves and our fellow group members.

Why You Might Want to Start a Prodependence Anonymous Group

There are countless reasons to start a Prodependence Anonymous group. A partial list is as follows:

- You have been attending another 12-step program and find that group's teachings to be blaming, shaming, or inadequate, and you want to heal in a warmer, less pathologizing environment.
- You have attended Prodependence Anonymous meetings either in-person or online, and you would like to meet more frequently, in a different location, or at a more convenient time.
- You have attended Prodependence Anonymous meetings either in-person or online, and you would like to create a meeting with a different format or for a specialized group – women only, men only, Spanish language, addicts only, betrayed partners, etc.
- There are differing opinions among group members about meeting place, time, format, or other issues that cannot be resolved by a unified Group Conscience.
- You are in recovery for an addictive or compulsive behavior and you realize that as part of that recovery you need to learn ways to heal your damaged relationships, especially with your closest loved ones.

How to Start a Prodependence Anonymous Group

There is no one way to start a Prodependence Anonymous group. We do, however, recommend that if you want to start a group but are new to 12-step recovery, you attend a few Prodependence Anonymous meetings (in-person if there are meetings in your area; online if there are not) and perhaps a few 12-step meetings in another recovery program. (Any program is OK, but Alcoholics Anonymous is recommended, as it is by far the most well-established program.)

Next, you should find other people who want to participate in a Prodependence Anonymous group. Therapists, therapy groups, churches, other 12 step groups, and coffee shop bulletin boards are fertile grounds for this. If you start talking about Prodependence and why you believe it is important to start a Prodependence Anonymous group, potential members will almost certainly reach out. If you can't find enough people locally to support a group, feel free to start an online group. There are countless people in small towns throughout the world for whom the only option is a digital meeting.

Groups need a minimum of two people to get started, and many 12-step groups have begun with exactly that number, growing over time into the hundreds. That said, it's helpful to have more than two people in case someone is occasionally unable to meet or drops out of the group.

Lastly, we suggest that when you're starting a new group, you need to be persistent. Most groups struggle to find members, establish a format, and help one another on the healing journey for the first several months, or even as much as the first year. This is normal and should not discourage you. If you stick with it, your group will eventually take root and flourish.

Where Should Your Prodependence Anonymous Group Meet?

A primary task for new groups is deciding where to meet. It is recommended that meetings take place in a meeting room where members will not be overheard, and that the meeting space is consistent (rather than moving around). If your group is small (five or fewer), it's OK to meet in someone's home for a short period. But as meetings grow, it is best that they move into a public space of some sort.

Churches, social service organizations, Alano Clubs (dedicated 12-step meeting places), banks, addiction treatment centers, and hospitals often have unused space they will rent at low rates to 12-step groups. Sometimes they will offer their space to you for free, but you should always pay at least a small amount of rent, as that helps your group stay separate from whoever is providing your meeting space. Weather permitting, meetings can take place outdoors in a local park or on the beach, though such meetings may be less private and confidential than many members would like.

Whoever you approach about a meeting space, you should be fully honest about your purpose, letting them know that you want to start a Prodependence Anonymous 12-Step meeting so members can learn to relate to loved ones and others in healthier ways.

Group Contact Information

Your group should have at least one contact person, and preferably two. You can choose to publish a phone number or an email for your group. It is best to have a phone number and email address specifically for the group, and to not use personal phone numbers or emails. This helps protect member anonymity at the public level. Your contact person/people should try to respond to any inquiry within 24 hours, sooner if possible.

Literature

Each Prodependence Anonymous group should have a supply of Prodependence Anonymous recommended literature, including at least one copy of the book *Prodependence: Moving Beyond Codependency*, as this is the book that best explains what Prodependence is, why it was created, and how it can be applied on a day-to-day basis. Several readings for use in meetings are contained in this packet. As new literature is recommended by the International Service Organization, groups will be informed.

For now, the founders of Prodependence Anonymous recommend the following literature.

- Prodependence, by Dr. Rob Weiss
- Lean on Me, by Marion Solomon
- Wired for Love, by Dr. Stan Tatkin
- Hold Me Tight, by Dr. Sue Johnson

Prodependence FAQ

With its attachment-focused view, Prodependence pushes aside the flaws of the now-outdated codependency model, which often suggests that family members of struggling people need to “detach with love” and if they don’t, then neither the family member nor the struggling individual will change or grow. That advice typically leaves loved ones feeling confused and misunderstood rather than supported and validated.

Prodependence approaches the matter differently, choosing to celebrate and value a caregiving loved one’s willingness to support and stay connected with a troubled loved one, while promoting healing for the entire family. Though Prodependence was initially formulated to help people in relationship with struggling loved ones, the principles are applicable to everyone. After all, none of us lives in a vacuum, and no relationship is ever perfect.

Why change things? What was wrong with codependence?

Dr. Rob Weiss formulated the Prodependence model because he’d seen too many loved ones of addicts and other troubled people turn away from desperately needed direction and support because they couldn’t or wouldn’t accept the codependence tenet that being in relationship with a troubled person automatically means there is something wrong *with them*. Basically, the codependence model, for these people, has felt more negative and alienating than invitational. Prodependence provides another option. Prodependence recognizes the inherent grace of caregivers, applauding and appreciating their unconditional love, their courage, and their conviction in trying to support their struggling loved ones while also caring for themselves. Prodependence also recognizes that every relationship, even those that are incredibly healthy, can be strengthened within the prodependence framework.

What is the major difference between codependence and Prodependence?

Codependence is a model of human behavior based in *trauma theory*. To be codependent implies that one tends to bond with those with whom interactions mirror early-life trauma (neglect, abuse, abandonment, etc.) For example, these individuals may tend to bond with an addict. And then, according to the codependency model, failure on the part of the addict triggers the non-addict to act in ways that re-create their traumatic childhood through this troubled adult relationship.

Codependence implies that the loved ones of addicts, due to their underlying, often unconscious childhood issues, tend to, as adults, give too much and love too much. Thus, they attract, enable, and enmesh with addicted or otherwise struggling people. The goals of codependency treatment and recovery (through programs like CoDA) revolve around themes of detachment, becoming less needy, and working through past trauma to become more aware, less enabling, and less accepting of troubled, emotionally unavailable people.

Prodependence is a model of human behavior based in *attachment theory*. To be Prodependent implies that people are able to create deep, bonded adult attachments that mirror their very human, very normal longings for healthy dependence and intimacy. Prodependence assumes that, when one loves and bonds deeply, it is natural (and therefore non-pathological) to do whatever it takes to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those with whom one is attached.

Prodependence implies that loved ones of struggling individuals, regardless of prior history, will take extraordinary measures to keep those they love stable and to ensure the safety of their families. There is no pathology assigned to loving in Prodependence. Instead, Prodependence asserts that loving addicts and other chronically troubled people healthfully requires a different and perhaps more bounded form of love than with healthier people.

Can the codependence approach be counterproductive?

Yes, and it frequently is. Codependence, by definition, implies that there is something wrong with the person who loves, helps, and cares for a struggling family member. This is especially true if that person has given up essential parts of himself or herself in the process. Embracing the codependence model requires loved ones of addicts and other struggling individuals to accept that there is something wrong *with them* that they need to fix. This often causes caregiving loved ones to feel misunderstood and judged. As a result, many leave treatment and 12-step healing before they receive the help they desperately need.

How does Prodependence view the problem behaviors acted out by a struggling person's loved ones, such as enabling, overzealously caretaking, and even raging at the struggling individual?

Prodependence views all such activity as the caregiver's best attempt (given the circumstances) to save a troubled loved one. Prodependence sees these behaviors as loving—though often less than ideal—efforts to save someone. These behaviors are viewed as problematic only due to their ineffectiveness and potential to escalate the problems they were intended to solve. That said, Prodependence does not ever label or judge the loved one who engages in such behaviors. Instead, as stated above, Prodependence views these actions as the caregiving loved one's best effort to stay connected and help despite extremely difficult circumstances.

How does Prodependence tackle typical challenges to treating loved ones of addicts, including emotional reactivity and enabling?

Prodependence considers the fact that loved ones usually lack the specialized education and training that would equip them to work with an out-of-control, addicted, or otherwise troubled person. It also recognizes the immense pain and fear that comes along with witnessing a beloved family member fail. These loving individuals often compensate for their lack of expertise with passionate attempts to help their struggling loved one, but, because of the lack of proper training, their efforts are not always useful and can at times be counterproductive.

In Prodependence, we do not pathologize attempts to heal a troubled person. Caregiving loved ones are not regarded as anything but loving, even when their attempts fail. The goal of Prodependence is to support and validate caregiving loved ones while simultaneously helping them develop skills that will make their loving more effective and useful. These skills include, but are not limited to, setting boundaries, caring for oneself, and, when useful, detachment.

Does Prodependence say that there is nothing wrong with the loved ones of an addict, even when that person exhibits problematic traits?

Prodependence implies that loved ones of addicts and other troubled people are caught up in circumstances, such as witnessing the emotional decline of a beloved family member, that would

naturally overwhelm anyone. Thus, there is nothing wrong with them in terms of relating to the struggling person, regardless of their personal history. They are simply trying to survive and to help their loved ones survive extraordinary, overwhelming circumstances. What these caregivers require from treatment and 12-Step healing is validation for the love and care they have given, in addition to supportive and clear directions about loving the troubled person in healthier ways. That said, caregiving loved ones may in fact have underlying trauma, depression, anxiety, and other issues that they might eventually want to address.

What about those who are so needy and desperate in close relationships that they become unable to function without one? Aren't they deeply codependent?

For several decades, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (the DSM) has had a fully fleshed out, criteria-based diagnosis for people who are so emotionally limited and impaired that they cling to other people for their own emotional stability. It's called Dependent Personality Disorder. Sadly, DPD and codependence are often conflated. Moving from the codependence model of treatment and recovery into the Prodependence approach should put a stop to this confusion.

What kind of healing is appropriate for loved ones of addicts and other troubled people? Don't they still need help with boundaries, self-care, and managing their situations?

Any loving person in a meaningful relationship with an addicted or otherwise struggling person is, by definition, in need of support. He or she likely needs encouragement toward both greater self-care and establishing healthy boundaries with their troubled loved one. However, no loving person in a meaningful relationship with a troubled individual should be asked to doubt the nature of his or her love, or to question his or her own emotional stability, in order to be taught such skills and to be given the support that he or she deserves.

Conducting Prodependence Anonymous Meetings

The 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous

The 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous are the foundation of our program. We have based our version of the steps on the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. We owe a debt of gratitude to the founders and members of AA for creating and developing a deep understanding of how and why these steps can and do lead practitioners toward happier, more intimately connected lives.

The 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous read as follows:

1. We admitted we were powerless over our attempts to heal those we love – 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 our lives over to the care of God *as we understand 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 how our actions have harmed ourselves and others.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove our self-defeating actions and beliefs.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our self-defeating actions and beliefs.
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 understand 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 others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Opening Statement

Prodependence Anonymous is a community of men and women whose common purpose is to develop healthier relationships, especially with addicted or otherwise struggling loved ones. The only requirement for membership is a desire for healthier relationships. We come together in meetings to support and share with each other in a journey of self-discovery – learning to love and care for ourselves while we love and care for our loved ones in more effective ways. Working the 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous and implementing the program in our day-to-day lives helps us feel better about ourselves and our connections with loved ones, no matter how troubled they may be.

We rely upon the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Prodependence Anonymous for guidance as we work to incorporate the principles of Prodependence in our lives. Through this work, we connect with a Higher Power of our own understanding, learn to better care for ourselves, and find ways to care more

effectively for our addicted or otherwise struggling loved ones. We accept that sometimes, though only rarely, the best way to go about this may be to separate and stop attempting to help. This does not mean that we have failed or that we must stop loving the other person; it simply means that our loved one is consistently using us to further and perhaps deepen his or her problematic behaviors, so we need to lovingly step away.

Generally, however, our goal is to continue loving and helping but to do so more effectively, and in ways that are less emotionally draining for us. We find that over time, as we implement the principles of our program into our lives and relationships, we build stronger intimacy with those we love and care for, regardless of whether they choose to seek healing and recovery for themselves. With this, we find serenity and peace.

Closing Statement

As we close this meeting, we would like to remind you that the opinions expressed here were strictly those of the person who gave them. Take what you like and leave the rest.

We also want to remind you that the name of our program is Prodependence *Anonymous*. Anonymity is a foundation of our program. If we hope to find the healing and improved relationships that we seek, we must feel safe to say what is in our hearts and minds. Therefore, who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.

Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference

The 10 Goals of Prodependence

Prodependence Anonymous is geared toward healthier relationships with ourselves and others, especially with loved ones who are struggling with addiction, mental illness, physical illness, or some other debilitating issue. As members of Prodependence Anonymous, we share the following relational goals.

1. To develop mutually supportive and beneficial relationships, with one person's strengths filling in the weak points of the other, and vice versa.
2. To care for ourselves as well as the people we love.
3. To celebrate the basic human need for and pursuit of intimate emotional connection, viewing this as a positive force.
4. To feel loved and accepted exactly as we are.
5. To recognize that with rare exceptions other people can take care of themselves; they do not need (or want) us to manage their lives for them.

6. To value our own thoughts, feelings, and needs, and to express those thoughts, feelings, and needs in healthy, appropriate ways.
7. To be empathetic, compassionate listeners who give advice only when asked.
8. To feel worthwhile and valued in our relationships.
9. To understand the difference between attempts to care for a troubled loved one and attempts to control a troubled loved one.
10. To get our needs met in our relationships, just as we attempt to meet the needs of those with whom we are in relationship.

Meeting Types

Not every Prodependence Anonymous meeting is structured in the same way. This is by design, as group members know better than anyone what works for the group and the group's members. That said, there are some common meeting types, which we will describe here. We have also provided a basic meeting format (page XX) that you can adapt to meet your group's requirements.

- **Speaker Meetings:** A speaker meeting typically features one member's individual story of relationships and healing. Speakers typically share what their life was like, what happened to push them into Prodependence Anonymous, what they have learned, and what their life is like now. Another way of stating this is that they share their experience, strength, and hope with the group. In a speaker meeting, the speaker is the focus of the meeting. After the speaker shares, there may be a period of time for questions and/or feedback, though this is not necessary.
- **Speaker and Sharing Meetings:** In speaker and sharing meetings, a designated speaker opens the meeting with his or her story, usually to an approximate time limit (such as 10 or 15 minutes). After that, the meeting is opened up for anyone who wishes to share. Larger meetings may want to limit the amount of time that individuals may speak, so that all who wish to share will have that opportunity.
- **Open Sharing Meetings:** These meetings do not have a specific topic or a designated speaker to open the meeting. Instead, whoever feels moved to share can do so. Larger meetings may want to limit the amount of time that individuals may speak, so that all who wish to share will have that opportunity.
- **Topic Meetings:** Some topic meetings have the same basic topic every week, such as setting, implementing, and maintaining healthy boundaries. Other meetings will ask for a topic suggestion from group members at the beginning of the meeting as a way of helping members work through specific issues they are facing in the moment. After that, the format is usually either speaker and sharing or open sharing, with shares (generally) focused on the selected topic.
- **Literature Meetings:** Literature meetings are a form of topic meetings, with the topic being a reading from Prodependence Anonymous recommended literature. For instance, the group may opt to read a few pages or even an entire chapter from *Prodependence: Moving Beyond Codependency* before sharing begins. After the reading, the format is usually either speaker and sharing or open sharing, with shares (generally) focused on the selected topic.
- **Step Meetings:** Step meetings are another type of topic meeting, but step meetings specifically focus on working the 12 steps of Prodependence Anonymous. Typically, these meetings open

with a reading about a specific step, with group members discussing their experience with that step. Other step meetings will ask members to share about whichever step it is that they happen to be working at that time. Some step meetings will allow time for questions and/or feedback after someone shares, but this is by no means a necessity. In fact, many meetings specifically disallow this.

- **Meditation Meetings:** Many people who join Prodependence Anonymous are looking for ways to introduce peace and serenity into their lives, in addition to learning how to relate with loved ones and others in healthier, more life-affirming ways. Recognizing this, meetings may choose to implement a short (or even a long) meditation as part of the format. Usually, this is just a quiet period for reflection. Occasionally, there may be a guided meditation of some sort. Groups can also choose a mix of meditation formats, perhaps doing a guided meditation the first week of the month and quiet time the rest of the month. Generally in a meditation meeting, shares will focus on what was experienced during the meditation, and how that experience applies to Prodependence and healthy relationships.

This is not an exhaustive list of meeting types. If your group comes up with a different approach and wants to implement that approach, you should feel free to do so. If a format that we've not listed here works for you, please let us know about it, as we're always open to new ideas.

Sample Meeting Format

As stated above, every Prodependence Anonymous meeting is different, and there is no requirement that meetings be set up in any particular way. That said, most meetings follow a basic format, incorporating the opening statement, the closing statement, the serenity prayer, and perhaps a few readings (such as the 12 Steps, the 12 Traditions, and elements of the Prodependence Q&A).

A sample meeting format is provided below. Each group should feel free to adapt this to meet the group's goals and member needs. Most groups keep printed copies of this format and any readings that are used in their meeting. Sometimes these printouts are laminated because they are handled a lot as the weeks pass.

The designated secretary or speaker/leader for the meeting typically reads from the format to conduct the meeting, with other members participating as requested.

* * * * *

Sample Meeting Format

Welcome Statement

Welcome to today's meeting of Prodependence Anonymous. My name is _____, and I am working to develop prodependent relationships. I have asked _____ to read the Opening Statement.

(Usually, a group member is asked, before the meeting, to read the Opening Statement of Prodependence Anonymous, and when that member agrees to do so, he or she is given a printed copy of the Opening Statement.)

Serenity Prayer

Before we begin, let us recite the serenity prayer.

(At this point, the meeting leader typically says the word "God" to begin the prayer, with the rest of the members then joining in with the full prayer.)

Introductions

Starting with me and proceeding to my right, we will go around the room and introduce ourselves by our first name only, followed by a statement of why we are here. My name is _____ and I am working to develop prodependent relationships.

(Each person in the room can introduce themselves if they so choose. Introducing oneself is never a requirement.)

The Steps

The 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous are the foundation of our program. Working these steps in the order they are written helps us develop happier, more intimately connected lives. I have asked _____ to read the steps.

(Usually, a group member is asked, before the meeting, to read the 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous, and when that member agrees to do so, he or she is given a printed copy of the steps.)

Meeting Type

(At this point, the leader reads an explanation of how the meeting proceeds. In the space below, we have provided sample language for a speaker and sharing meeting.)

This is a speaker and sharing meeting. As today's speaker, I will share my experience, strength, and hope with relationships and Prodependence. When I have finished, the meeting will be open for sharing on any topic related to Prodependence.

Speaker Shares

(Speaker shares for the designated timeframe.)

Open Sharing

The meeting is now open for sharing on any topic related to Prodependence. Please limit your shares to no more than 5 minutes so others who wish to share will have an opportunity to do so. Sharing will conclude when there are 5 minutes left in the meeting.

When sharing, please remember that we try to use "I" statements rather than "you" statements as we talk about our relationships and our efforts to develop Prodependence. We do not interrupt when others are sharing. We do not give advice unless asked. We address our shares to the group rather than specific individuals. We do our best to refrain from language that may be offensive. We attempt to keep our focus on finding and implementing solutions to our problems, rather than reliving and complaining about those problems. This meeting space should feel safe for every member of the group at all times. Anything that is said in this meeting should be treated as confidential.

Who would like to begin sharing?

(A timer may be used to keep shares within a specific time limit, usually no more than 5 minutes.)

Seventh Tradition

We are now out of time for open sharing. Thank you for your participation. If you were unable to share, please connect with another group member after the meeting to check in.

At this time, we will conduct the Seventh Tradition. The seventh tradition of Prodependence Anonymous states, "Every Prodependence Anonymous group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." To this end, we will pass the hat for contributions so the group

can meet its various expenses, including rent for this meeting space, literature for the group, and any amenities provided by the group for the comfort of members.

(Most groups will have a designated treasurer who will pass the hat, tally the money, and make payments as needed.)

Group Announcements

It is now time for announcements. Are there any Prodependence Anonymous announcements?

(Allow time for any announcements.)

Are there any unrelated announcements that may be of interest to the group?

(Allow time for any announcements.)

Following the meeting, members of the group are often available for fellowship. If you are interested in fellowship after the meeting, please raise your hand.

(Allow time for group members to raise their hands.)

Those who are interested in fellowship should connect with one another after the meeting to make plans.

Closing Statement

I have asked _____ to read the Closing Statement.

(Usually, a group member is asked, before the meeting, to read the Closing Statement of Prodependence Anonymous, and when that member agrees to do so, he or she is given a printed copy of the Opening Statement.)

Serenity Prayer

To close our meeting, please join me once again in the serenity prayer.

(At this point, the meeting leader typically says the word "God" to begin the prayer, with the rest of the members then joining in with the full prayer.)

What Is a Home Group?

Many members of Prodependence Anonymous feel a special affinity for one particular group or meeting and choose to refer to it as their Home Group. Having a designated Home Group is helpful to healing and renewal but it is not a requirement; indeed, the only requirement for Prodependence Anonymous membership is a desire to develop healthier relationships. That said, a Home Group is the group where we are known and our attendance and participation is expected by other members. We show up every week, we check in with other group members, we perform service and participate in fellowship. In short, we feel “at home” with this group.

Sponsorship

In Prodependence Anonymous, the job of a sponsor is to guide the sponsee through the 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous, and to provide day-to-day feedback and advice to the sponsee on how to develop Prodependent relationships. Usually, the sponsor is an individual who has made some progress in Prodependence Anonymous who agrees to meet either in-person or through a digital medium (phone, text, video) with a newer member or a member who is struggling. Sponsors and sponsees should feel safe with one another, able to speak freely and confidentially. This is never a professional or paid relationship. Sponsorship is freely given and received. The only “payment” from the sponsee is that he or she agrees to pass along what is learned to others down the line.

Newcomers

Many Prodependence Anonymous groups, during the introductions portion of the meeting, will ask newcomers to the group to identify as such. This is not done to embarrass newcomers. It is done so other group members can reach out, invite newcomers to fellowship, suggest literature, provide encouragement, share the group’s phone list, and generally provide whatever information and support is necessary. Some groups may choose to create a Newcomer Packet, including literature, a list of local meetings, phone numbers, and names of people who are willing to serve, at least temporarily, as sponsors.

Phone Lists

Many Prodependence Anonymous meetings choose to keep and circulate a phone list. In this way, meeting members who choose to share their contact information can reach out when they are struggling, or when another member of the group is struggling. The phone list also helps members stay accountable to commitments they have made toward healing and renewal.

It is not necessary for all group members to have their information on the group’s phone list. Phone lists are strictly voluntary. Usually, members provide their first name and last initial, their phone number and/or email, the best time of day to call (or times to not call). They might also indicate that they are or are not available to sponsor others in the program.

Keeping Things Productive

The 12 Traditions of Prodependence Anonymous

The 12 Traditions of Prodependence Anonymous are what keep our program operating with the least possible strife. They are the governing principles of our program. As with the 12 Steps, the 12 Traditions or Prodependence Anonymous are based on the teachings of Alcoholics Anonymous. As such, we owe a debt of gratitude to the founders and members of AA for creating and developing these much-needed guidelines.

The 12 Principles of Prodependence Anonymous read as follows:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal healing depends on group unity.
2. For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority – a loving Higher Power (as each of us understands that Higher Power). Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for Prodependence Anonymous membership is a desire to develop healthier relationships.
4. Each Prodependence Anonymous group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups of Prodependence Anonymous as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to individuals who are struggling to help and connect with troubled loved ones.
6. A Prodependence Anonymous group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the Prodependence Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert use from our primary purpose.
7. Every Prodependence Anonymous group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Prodependence Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, though our service organization may employ special workers.
9. Prodependence Anonymous should never be organized, but we may create service boards of committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Prodependence Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the Prodependence Anonymous 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, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Trusted Servants

The second tradition of Prodependence Anonymous reads, in part, “Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” That said, Prodependence Anonymous groups and meetings cannot function without the efforts of those who are willing to serve.

Service commitments can last as long the group decides. We do not, however, recommend that any service position be held by the same person for more than one year. Usually, terms are for six months or less.

The duties of trusted servants include:

- Ensuring the meeting room is open at least 30 minutes prior to the meeting.
- Making sure the meeting space is clean and well-kept.
- Ensuring there is sufficient literature to support the group.
- Keeping the treasury and paying bills for the group.
- Ensuring the smooth operation of meetings.
- Keeping group members informed about group expenses and other business matters.
- Taking a Group Inventory and/or a Group Conscience when necessary and implementing the group's decisions as appropriate.
- Preserving group and meeting continuity by ensuring that procedures, knowledge, and records are passed along.
- Conducting elections on a regular schedule so the group can select new trusted servants.

Common service positions in most Prodependence Anonymous groups include:

Secretary

- Represent the group in business affairs, such as finding and renting a meeting space.
- Ensure smooth operation of meetings, according to the group's meeting format.
- For speaker meetings, find and schedule speakers.
- Conduct business meetings as scheduled or as necessary, including elections, Group Inventory and Group Conscience sessions, and whatever else is needed.

Treasurer

- Collect Seventh Tradition contributions and protect the group's treasury.
- Report regularly to the group regarding income, expenses, and a prudent reserve (usually two to three months of typical group expenses).
- Pay rent for the meeting room.
- Disburse funds for group approved purchases of literature and other supplies.
- Keep accurate records of all financial transactions.

Literature Person

- Put out Prodependence Anonymous recommended literature before the start of the meeting.
- Keep track of literature supplies and re-order literature as needed.
- Obtain funds from the Treasurer to pay for new literature as needed and provide receipts of purchase to the Treasurer.
- Refer newcomers and other members to available Prodependence Anonymous recommended literature.

Phone List Person

- Keep the group's phone list current.
- Provide copies of the phone list for distribution at meetings.
- Is able and willing to receive phone calls asking about meetings and to provide directions.

International Service Representative

- Serve as the link between an individual Prodependence Anonymous meeting and Prodependence Anonymous as a whole.
- Vote on behalf of the individual Prodependence Anonymous meeting on international developments and changes in Prodependence Anonymous.
- Convey information from the International Service Organization to the individual meeting, and vice versa.

Not every group chooses to fill every position. Larger groups may choose to create extra service positions, such as Coffee Person, Set-Up Person, Clean-Up Person, Greeter, etc. Generally, the more that people are involved in service, the more likely they are to feel "part of" the program, to work the steps, and to find the healing they seek. So with service, the more the merrier. Within reason, of course.

Conflict Within a Group

Disagreements are a natural part of any relationship or community. Prodependence Anonymous is no different. Hopefully, the spirit of unity and our desire to place relationship healing at the forefront will prevent disagreements from creating factions within a group. To this end, we cultivate tolerance and good will toward other members, always respecting the first Tradition of Prodependence Anonymous, which reads, "Our common welfare should come first; personal healing depends on group unity." Within Prodependence Anonymous, the welfare of the group is more important personal preferences, desires, and opinions.

A group that splinters or divides because of interpersonal conflict between members puts all members of the group at risk. Thus, we have instituted a process for resolving disagreements as they arise, thereby allowing the group's primary focus to be on healing and renewal. (See: Group Inventory on page XX and Group Conscience on page XX.)

We look at our occasional need to resolve group conflicts in healthy ways as instructive and part of healing. Occasionally, however, conflicts within a particular group cannot be resolved in a healthy manner. In such cases, some members may wish to form a new group that is structured to better meet their needs. We do not view this as failure; we view it as growth.

Group Inventory

Occasionally, either during a regularly scheduled business meeting or on an as-needed basis, each Prodependence Anonymous group should take an inventory, looking at both strengths and weaknesses, so changes can be made as the group chooses. Finances, meeting procedures, service positions,

literature, outreach, and anything else that seems pertinent can be discussed in these meetings. These meetings can be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order if the group chooses that format, but generally they are more informal in nature. If members of the group decide they would like to make changes to how the group operates, a Group Conscience should be taken.

Group Conscience

In Prodependence Anonymous, no single member has authority over any other member or any group. Yes, we all have opinions on group issues, but no one opinion is more valid than any other. Thus, conflicts must be resolved and changes should only be made by the group as a whole, with the wellbeing of the group kept at the forefront. We call this process a Group Conscience. Sometimes the conscience is so clear that a group will come to a quick and unanimous decision. Other times, a vote must be taken. As with a Group Inventory, Group Conscience discussions can be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order if the group so chooses, but generally they are more informal in nature.

Always with a Group Conscience, we strive to keep our minds open and to accept the overall will of the group. If a member or multiple members have a strong minority opinion, they can raise the issue again at a later date. In all situations, it is wise to test our disagreements against the Steps and Traditions of Prodependence Anonymous. Often, that is where the best guidance can be found. Whatever is decided by a Group Conscience, the result should be recorded and kept with the group's records, so it can be referred to later if necessary. If a conflict is too great to overcome, some members may wish to form a new group that is structured to better meet their needs. In Prodependence Anonymous, we do not view this as failure; we view it as growth.

Reaching Out at the Group Level

Community Outreach

The 11th Tradition of Prodependence Anonymous tells us that our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. This means we do not advertise in the traditional sense. Instead, we let the Prodependence Anonymous program speak for itself. We let people know we are here and then we let them decide for themselves if they want to participate.

That said, the Fifth Traditions of Prodependence Anonymous states, “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to individuals who are struggling to help and connect with troubled loved ones.” This means that we must do some outreach, making sure those who might benefit from our program and meetings actually know about our program and meetings.

To this end, we suggest the following:

- **Register Your Group with the International Service Organization**

As part of this packet, we have included a Prodependence Anonymous group registration form (see p. XX). Please complete this form and return it to us as soon as possible, so we can add your information to the Prodependence Anonymous website (www.Prodependenceanonymous.org). Once we have received your registration, you will be assigned a group number. This number is important, and it should be used in all of your group’s correspondence.

- **Newspaper Announcement**

Prodependence Anonymous is a community of men and women who meet regularly in an effort to heal their damaged or struggling relationships using the principles of Prodependence and the 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous. In this area, there are meetings DAYS and TIMES. For more information contact FIRST NAME ONLY at PHONE NUMBER or visit the ProdependenceAnonymous.org website.

- **Mail or Deliver Basic Information to Local Therapists, Churches, and Helplines**

Many Prodependence Anonymous groups find it helpful to distribute basic information about the program to local therapists, churches, and helplines. When possible, it helps to say hello and speak to whoever it is that might refer potential members. Typically, you will provide these individuals with:

- What Is a Prodependence Anonymous Group? (page XX)
- The 12 Steps of Prodependence Anonymous (page XX)
- The Opening Statement for Meetings (page XX)
- The Prodependence FAQ (pages XX to XX)
- Information about Local Meetings, Including Contact Information

- **Hang Flyers with Tearaways on Community Bulletin Boards**

Typically, flyers are welcome on bulletin boards in coffee houses, laundries, churches, community centers, and many other venues. Generally, the announcement will be very similar to the Newspaper Announcement described above, with tearaway tabs at the bottom of the sheet with the name of the group, the contact person’s first name, the group’s phone number, and the website, ProdependenceAnonymous.org.

Group Registration Form

The completion and return of this form via US Mail or electronic delivery will register your Prodependence Anonymous group and meeting. Your meeting will be assigned a number and added to our online Prodependence Anonymous meeting directory, making it easier for new members to find you.

Group Name:

Meeting Type (speaker, sharing, literature, etc.):

Meeting Place (full address):

Meeting Day:

Meeting Time:

Other Important Information (no-smoking, women only, men only, etc.):

Group Phone Number:

Group Email Address:

Primary Group Contact (first name and last initial):

Primary Contact Phone Number:

Primary Contact Email:

Secondary Group Contact (first name and last initial):

Primary Contact Phone Number:

Primary Contact Email:

By signing (or e-signing) this document, you give Prodependence Anonymous the right to publish your first name and last initial, along with your group's phone number and email address. Your personal information will only be used if Prodependence Anonymous needs to contact you directly for some important reason (unless, of course, it is also being used as your group's contact information).

Primary Contact Signature and Date

Secondary Contact Signature and Date