

Covenants in CoSA

The video associated with this presentation can be found at:
<https://youtu.be/TPGjqX0SHcA>

What is a Covenant?

As a noun: a contract, compact, treaty, pact, accord, deal, bargain, settlement, concordat, protocol, entente, agreement, arrangement, understanding, pledge, promise, bond, indenture, guarantee, warrant

As a verb: The landlord covenants to repair the property: to undertake, give an undertaking, pledge, promise, agree, contract, vow, guarantee, warrant, commit oneself, bind oneself, give one's word, enter into an agreement, engage

What is a Covenant?

- ❖ The Hebrew word *berith* (covenant) occurs over 280 times in the Old Testament.
- ❖ The English word covenant means "a coming together."
- ❖ The word covenant is often used to denote an agreement more solemn than a contract.

Four elements of a "covenant relationship" - Frank Damazio

1. Covenant relationship begins with a spiritual act of being knit together

Being "knit" **together** is like being chained to one another. In nearly every language, friendship is considered to be the union of souls bound together by the band of love. Covenant relationships produce a sameness – as though one soul were in two bodies. To be knit together, the strands of belief need to be tied in place. There must be a mutual personal commitment to the relationship that includes a mutual respect, resulting in building the other person and not tearing down.

Four elements of a “covenant relationship” - Frank Damazio

2. Covenant relationship begins and grows by making and keeping covenant

The purpose of a covenant is to guarantee that the relationship will remain healthy and will last. The covenant itself is a series of words that are spoken to define the nature of the relationship and the principles of commitment to it. When covenant is the foundation for relationships, the possibility of maintaining permanence and stability is greatly enhanced.

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3. Covenant relationship begins with a “generous soul” attitude

The generous soul gives not only what is valuable and suitable to the relationship, but also asks what is honorable. A “generous soul” attitude causes both people to pour out affirmation, encouragement, and words of greatness. It quickly promotes the other person over self. All relationships grow when the “generous soul” attitude is present.

Four elements of a “covenant relationship”

- Frank Damazio

4. Covenant relationship grows and stays healthy as we protect the relationship

Every relationship will have its times of testing, stretching, problems, and disruption. Outside pressures can be expected; however, we must handle these pressures wisely and successfully if we are to maintain true covenant relationships. We need to consistently protect the relationship by being faithful at all times with our words, attitudes, and actions.

Our covenants will help us resolve conflict

Community is made from conflict as much as from cooperation; the capacity to solve conflict is what gives social relations their sinew . . .

Nils Christie (1977)

Some other “elements of a Covenant relationship” - David Hicks

(1) The **covenant of affirmation**:

There is nothing you have done or will do that will make me stop loving you.

(2) The **covenant of availability**:

I am committed to going beyond myself, to the limits of my time and energy, I will share my knowledge, insights.

Some other “elements of a Covenant relationship” - David Hicks

(4) The **covenant of openness**:

I promise to be a more open person . . . disclosing my feelings, hopes, and longings. The degree to which I do so implies that I cannot make it without you . . . that I trust you with my problems and dreams, and hope you will trust me with yours.

(5) The **covenant of honesty**:

I will try to “mirror” back to you what I am hearing you say and feel. I will risk “speaking the truth in hope we will grow in friendship.

Some other “elements of a Covenant relationship” - David Hicks

(6) The **covenant of sensitivity:**

I promise to be sensitive to you and to your needs to the best of my ability. I will try to hear you--see you--anticipate where you are--and draw you out of the pit of discouragement or withdrawal. It costs to be sensitive, but sometimes through the eyes another person, we see ourselves better.

(7) The **covenant of confidentiality:**

I promise to keep confidential the things we share in order to provide an atmosphere of openness. Why is confidentiality so important? There can be no friendship without trust. When we trust others, we can open up to friendship and deeper relationship.

Some other “elements of a Covenant relationship” - David Hicks

(8) The **covenant of accountability:**

Accountability is the foundation of any relationship covenant for it recognizes when there is a problem and gives permission to share with others. Out of accountability flows the acceptance and forgiveness we need. The relationship helps us to work out a plan of action. It is truly a beautiful thing to be able to say, “What happens to me matters to you.”

Building relationships builds community

This is why we call ourselves “Circles of Support and Accountability.” We could as easily describe ourselves a “**communities**” of support (affirming, available, open, honest, friends, caring, accepting) and Accountability.

The covenant is the heart and mainstay of who we are, how we relate to one another, manage our conflicts and protect or friendship and our community.

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant

- ❖ **Decision-making process** (e.g., by “consensus” with that term and that process defined)
- ❖ **Confidentiality** (What is it? What are its limits? Who decides?)
- ❖ **Community Safety** (as a top priority, as well as conditions limiting confidentiality and the process for breaking confidentiality and sharing information)

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant

- ❖ **Communications:** How will volunteers, core members communicate with one another?
- ❖ **Record Keeping:** What notes, records, etc. are required to be kept, and what other notes records are or will be kept/maintained?
- ❖ **Assessment of Progress/Change:** How will a Core Member's progress and change be assessed? How often will an assessment be made, what will it look like? Who will have input to the assessment? How will progress (or lack of it) be dealt with? With whom will this type of information be shared?
- ❖ **Conformity to Legal Requirements:** (e.g., probation or parole conditions, court orders, registration requirements, etc.)

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant - Volunteers

- ❖ Meeting attendance and schedule (e.g., once weekly with individual contacts in between).
- ❖ Define support as "accompaniment" and invitations to the Core Member to take responsibility by accepting guidance, being assertive, affirming, available, open, honest, friends, caring, accepting
- ❖ And being accountable, recognizing that sometimes people need support in their bid to live an accountable life, and to be willing to offer that kind of support.
- ❖ Define Accountability in terms of accepting responsibility, considering the needs of others and being able to account for one's behavior, time, and progress, and that this is a two-way street, where the Circle Volunteers agree to provide sound modelling of acceptable, responsible behavior.
- ❖ An undertaking to share their lives in socially appropriate and situationally appropriate fashion (e.g., taking into account safety concerns, appropriate boundaries, Core Member offense characteristics, etc.).
- ❖ **A Commitment to Celebrate!** To appropriately celebrate and acknowledge major milestones (birthdays, graduations, achievements, births, deaths – and not just for the core Member), as well as significant community and social celebrations (Nation Day, Independence Day, Christmas, Easter, and other Christian or religious/ethnic holidays as appropriate), and because it feels right – with a keen eye toward restrictions, prohibitions, etc.

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant – Core Members

- ❖ Meeting attendance and schedule (e.g., once weekly with individual contacts in between).
- ❖ To share offense history in its entirety, offense characteristics, patterns, behavioral “cycles”, relapse prevention and safety plans, community safety plans, and to answer the questions of the volunteers.
- ❖ To share a copy of any and all Probation or Parole orders with the Circle and to go over them with the Circle, and to immediately advise the Circle of any changes to these documents and/or conditions.
- ❖ To work diligently toward open, frank, truthful communications as a primary means of building trust and friendship.
- ❖ To work towards being increasingly mindful of the needs and feelings of others, beginning with the Circle.

Basic Elements of a CoSA Covenant – Core Members

- ❖ To accept personal responsibility for himself, and to remain open to accepting guidance, being assertive, and being accountable.
- ❖ To report any lapses or relapses immediately to the appropriate Probation or Parole agent and to immediately brief his Circle as well.
- ❖ To immediately ask for help with the above if needed (e.g., to see support in the work of living accountably, and being accountable).
- ❖ Define support as “accompaniment” and invitations to the Core Member to take responsibility by accepting guidance, being assertive, and being accountable.
- ❖ Define accountability in terms of accepting responsibility, considering the needs of others and being able to account for one’s behavior, time, and progress, and that this is a two-way street, where the Circle Volunteers agree to provide sound modelling of acceptable, responsible behavior.
- ❖ An undertaking to share their lives in socially appropriate and situationally appropriate fashion (e.g., taking into account safety concerns, appropriate boundaries, Core Member offense characteristics, etc.).

For further reading...

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