

## Step Twelve

*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 areas of our lives.*

*Through our personal experience, we COSA members have confirmed that we maintain and grow our recovery by sharing it with others. Step Twelve is essential to each individual's progress and also sustains the COSA fellowship as a whole. The principles of Step Twelve include joyful living in emotional sobriety and outward action in the form of giving without expectations. The strength, hope, and joy we have gained by working the Steps bring us to a new state of consciousness. From this state of sanity and serenity, we are able to give freely to those who still suffer from the effects of compulsive sexual behavior.*

### Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps

At this point in our Step work, many of us are able to look back and realize that admitting our powerlessness and the unmanageability of our lives led us to precious gifts. Working the Twelve Steps allowed us to heal, learn, and grow in ways that we had never before imagined. We gained the ability to recognize our strengths and weaknesses, to view them with a balanced perspective, to admit our mistakes, and to make amends. We cultivated a strong connection with a Higher Power, which enabled us to take responsibility for our lives. With the help of our Higher Power, our sponsors, and other COSA members, we learned how to find and maintain serenity one moment at a time. We came to accept and love ourselves and others.

As we approached Step Twelve, some of us were perplexed about the definition of a spiritual awakening. Through our work in COSA, we developed a personal relationship with a Higher Power and moved beyond our past beliefs. Some of us were expecting a grand spiritual awakening, something akin to a bright light breaking through clouds over a mountain top. Some wondered whether an inner voice would proclaim clearly that we had attained an awakening or whether we would notice a physical sensation, such as levitation or a heart opening or expansion.

While some of us recall a distinct memory or feeling, most of us experienced the spiritual awakening as a gradual process, unfolding incrementally as we worked each Step. Our practice of the Twelve Steps made us ready to receive the gifts of sanity, emotional sobriety, and serenity. It was through our daily choices, decisions, and disciplined practice of new behaviors that our awareness expanded and we awakened to new possibilities. Over time, we developed spiritual and emotional maturity, which enhanced our ability to carry the message to others. We experienced many qualities described in the Promises, which we had heard and read in COSA meetings. We noticed the gifts of COSA in our lives. We recognized this as the spiritual awakening we sought.

## We tried to carry this message to others

Steps One through Eleven kept us accountable to our recovery program and prepared us to deepen our service. Step Twelve directly calls us to carry the COSA message to others who still suffer. By working this Step, we demonstrate our commitment and accountability to the COSA fellowship as a whole. Step Twelve also brings to mind the slogan, “We have to give it away to keep it.” In other words, sharing freely what we have gained is how we continue to heal and grow.

As we navigated through the Steps, our sponsors encouraged us to embrace opportunities to serve the COSA fellowship. Early in recovery, carrying the message was sometimes as simple as being present in meetings and listening attentively to someone who was still suffering. Because our lives had also been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, we were able to provide empathy to a newcomer **in a way** that few others could. We shared the experience, strength, and hope we had gained as we worked the COSA program.

Some sponsors encouraged sponsees to do specific tasks for the fellowship, to participate in business meetings, or to fill service positions. Serving the fellowship helped to ensure we regularly attended meetings. We found that service enhanced our level of participation and the depth of our interaction with other COSA members. Additionally, service contributed to our sense of purpose and belonging in our COSA group and in the fellowship as a whole.

By the time we reached Step Twelve, we felt immense gratitude for those who had passed along COSA’s wisdom through countless acts of service, sponsorship, speaking, leading meetings and workshops, and serving as intergroup representatives and as delegates. We gained strength and hope from long-time COSA members who had maintained recovery and continued to practice the COSA principles in their lives. Their shared experience and support helped deliver us from desperation and hopelessness to serenity, joy, and freedom.

For many of us, Step Twelve presented an opportunity to give back by becoming sponsors ourselves. We recognized that **sponsorship played a key role in COSA’s ability to be fully self-supporting and self-sustaining. Freely giving to others what had been so generously given to us fulfilled COSA’s primary purpose of carrying the message to** those who still suffer.

At first, some of us were intimidated by the idea of sponsoring others. We worried that when a sponsee had questions or needed help, we would not know what to say or would say the wrong thing. Perhaps we did not feel confident that our experience, strength, and hope would be sufficient. For some members, reaching out to others felt uncomfortable; other members worried about past tendencies to overcommit or “people-please.” Our sponsors and those in long-term recovery helped us navigate such dilemmas and self-doubt. As our personal healing progressed, we spent less time thinking about ourselves and more time considering how we could be useful to those who still suffer. We found balance and confidence. Many of us came to realize that our Higher Power was working through us to carry the message to others. When we

focused on the guidance we received from our Higher Power, our sponsors, and other experienced COSA members, our worries subsided.

Some of us started meetings, including groups to study and work through COSA's Twelve Steps. Some of us volunteered at levels beyond our individual meetings, such as serving on the International Service Organization's board or committees. We found increasing joy in our contribution, learning, and self-development. Serving others and the fellowship in these ways became a part of our living spiritual practice.

### We tried to practice these principles in all areas of our lives

Before recovery, many of us had persistently repeated unworkable behaviors in our relationships. For example, some of us depended too much on ourselves and tried to arrange life to be the way we thought it should be, instead of seeking direction from our Higher Power. At times, this led us to disregard other people's boundaries, needs, and wishes. Some of us avoided taking personal responsibility, neglected ourselves, and became overly focused on other people or unhealthy sources of emotional comfort and security.

By working the Twelve Steps, we developed spiritually and gained a rightsized sense of self in relation to those around us. Working our COSA program and deepening our relationship with our Higher Power helped us develop a stronger foundation of emotional stability, no matter what challenges we faced.

This part of Step Twelve invited us to take the principles of the program beyond the fellowship and live them daily in the greater world; that is, it asked us to embody COSA's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts and to use COSA's tools in our approach to everything in our lives. Step Twelve asked us to carry our awakened spirit into every situation, whether we were doing simple daily tasks, dealing with a difficult person, or facing a crisis or traumatic experience. We were challenged to find love, tolerance, faith, and purpose in all circumstances.

Many of us recognized that remaining fit to practice Step Twelve involved practicing the other Steps and a daily recovery routine. This included making conscious contact with a Higher Power, attending meetings regularly, and connecting with a sponsor and/or other COSA members, as well as reflecting on our feelings and reviewing our behaviors (Step Ten), and applying the Steps and Traditions to specific situations. This regular practice helped us to recognize moments of insanity or instability more quickly and more consistently. We surrendered our struggles to our Higher Power more readily, while fairly considering how our behavior ("character defects") may have contributed. We shared our self-reflections with someone else and humbly asked Higher Power for help to let go of unproductive approaches. We sought the willingness to take the next right action, which sometimes included making amends. As we practiced the principles, we gained the courage to take those actions, using recovery principles to make healthier choices.

Step Twelve is dynamic and continuous. It calls on us to practice the program's principles in all areas of our lives, even when we experience difficult moments and find ourselves anxious or agitated. We pause to reflect mindfully and listen for an intuitive voice of wisdom. We wait until clear guidance emerges before making a decision or taking action. Many of us recall helpful program slogans like "Easy does it," "One day at a time," or "Do the next right thing." We often recite the Serenity Prayer, mindfully seeking the wisdom to distinguish that which we can control from that which we cannot, the courage to take necessary action, and the serenity to accept things beyond our control. We practice the principle of humility by regularly reaching out to our Higher Power, sponsors, and other COSA members. We express willingness by diligently applying the Twelve Steps and other COSA tools to maintain emotional sobriety. We manifest patience and love by taking the time to respond with respect and thoughtful intention to ourselves and others. We practice honesty and integrity by "saying what we mean and meaning what we say."

Working the Twelve Steps in all areas of our lives on a daily basis transformed our outlook on life. Our inner peace, strength, and ability to be happy and useful increased. We began to approach our personal and professional endeavors from a perspective of humble, spiritual service, rather than from a motive of needing to please others, receive praise and attention, or gain status or material wealth. Humble dependence upon a Higher Power enabled us to serve others in a healthy, balanced way. Love, acceptance, and hope replaced bitterness, intolerance, and regret. We found we spent less time in conflict and distress and more time being useful to our Higher Power and those around us.

### The Gifts of Step Twelve

*Step Twelve reconnects us with the world in an authentic way. It encourages us to share the joy of living rather than keeping the gifts of recovery to ourselves. Carrying the message grounds us in humility and steers us away from self-centeredness. Practicing the principles helps direct us along a spiritual path. Step Twelve gives us the opportunity to give back to the COSA fellowship and to our Higher Power in gratitude for all that we have received in recovery. And it is in giving that we receive even more. By trying to carry the message to those who still suffer and by practicing the COSA principles in all areas of our lives, our own recovery is reinforced and deepened. We recognize that our Higher Power is doing through us more than we ever thought possible.*