

1 **Tool: Anonymity and Confidentiality**

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3 Anonymity is a foundational Tradition, principle, and tool in the COSA program. Anonymity
4 allows us to be spiritual beings rather than individuals with a specific worldly identity. We also
5 protect the privacy of every member by keeping confidential what is shared with us. Protecting
6 the privacy of others means we do not share what we have heard with anyone, including our
7 partners, friends, or other COSA members.

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9 Anonymity is an essential component of all COSA activities, and COSA highlights this importance
10 in our Traditions. In Tradition Twelve, anonymity is deemed the spiritual foundation of all our
11 Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities. It is imperative that each
12 group and every individual member “guard with special care the anonymity of all Program
13 members,” as stated in Tradition Eleven. Only then can every COSA member feel safe, which is
14 necessary for true recovery.

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16 We may have difficulty trusting others because of trust violations in our past, but because
17 anonymity has such a fundamental role in all of our healing and recovery, we come to learn
18 that we can trust the members of the COSA program. A commitment to confidentiality fosters
19 trust and creates a safe place for all of us to share our experience, strength, and hope.

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21 COSA members come from many walks of life, many creeds and colors, many nationalities and
22 backgrounds. All of that is left at the door when we enter the COSA meeting room. We are here
23 to share, learn the COSA Steps, Traditions, and Promises, and ultimately heal. We are reminded
24 at each meeting that we are in a safe space, protected by anonymity, and governed by
25 principles that recognize our spirituality, not our personalities. We recognize that all of us have
26 come to this healing circle because we have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.

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28 Among the reasons people are attracted to COSA is the fact that we can participate
29 anonymously. Newcomers take a considerable step in attending their first meeting. Honoring
30 this principle, meeting scripts include a short explanation regarding anonymity, which provides
31 encouragement and comfort. The newcomer is assured that their anonymity is safeguarded,
32 and that maintaining the confidentiality of all members of the group is essential to our
33 program. There is unity in our shared anonymity.

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35 One way we create this safe place is by using first names only. We surrender to humility,
36 releasing our desire to be acknowledged by a particular title or role. We strengthen our
37 boundaries, keeping recovery private and free of outside "labels" such as those that relate to
38 our careers, status, and finances. In doing this, we cultivate equality among everyone, nurturing
39 patience, compassion, and tolerance for all. We focus on respecting each individual's journey,
40 and we rise above the details. We rest assured that our participation will not adversely affect
41 other areas of our lives or those of our partners or families.

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43 Maintaining these boundaries strengthens the group and our response to others. We no longer
44 compare, judge, or feel self-righteous or insecure, nor do we feel judged. We become more

45 likely to listen to others with love and compassion without trying to "fix things" or get involved
46 in the details of their personal lives. Being part of a fellowship of equals, we learn that outside
47 labels don't matter because we are all spiritual beings; we all have value; we all come together
48 as equals to share our stories. As a result, the power of sharing gives us the much needed
49 reassurance that we are not alone.

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51 Anonymity and confidentiality also extend to other forms of communications and public
52 relations with outside entities. Tradition Eleven is clear that no COSA member may act as a
53 spokesperson on behalf of all of COSA with the press, radio, films, television, and other public
54 media of communication. Because COSA is an anonymous fellowship, no member is authorized
55 to represent the fellowship publicly. It is comforting to know that COSA as a whole can put its
56 collective trust in a Higher Power.

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58 Confidentiality is also crucial between a sponsor and sponsee. It can be challenging to navigate
59 anonymity when people are in a web of relationships. Sponsees should communicate clearly
60 with their sponsors regarding whether it is appropriate to share something if it involves
61 identifying another person. There will be times when we need to determine what is private and
62 what is not. When in doubt, we can decide to keep information to ourselves until a clearer
63 answer evolves. We may eventually come to a solution through studying the Steps, Traditions,
64 or Concepts.

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66 Being accountable for maintaining the anonymity of others strengthens our own personal
67 integrity. We resolutely guard the confidentiality of our COSA fellows. We remain actively
68 aware of conversations we hold outside of our meeting rooms, our choice of locations for
69 phone calls and Zoom meetings, and how we behave when we happen upon another COSA
70 member in a public place. We are mindful of the consequences of broken confidentiality and
71 the harm it may cause. We confer with our COSA friends to discuss how best to preserve our
72 mutual anonymity in situations outside of COSA.

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74 While it can be safer to share our stories with people in recovery than with others, we are still
75 human beings that make mistakes or do things without grasping their full impact. We realize
76 that there is no such thing as perfect safety when depending on the behavior of others. If
77 someone inadvertently violates the confidentiality that we expect, we know that safety also
78 comes from our reliance on Higher Power and our faith that we will be okay no matter what.
79 Our Higher Power or group conscience may also guide us individually or as a group on how to
80 remind our fellows of the guiding principle of anonymity and the underlying necessity of
81 confidentiality.

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83 As we strengthen our practice of anonymity in COSA, we may begin to see that we have
84 violated the confidentiality of others in our outside personal or business relationships. We may
85 have been guilty of gossiping or sharing others' private information, harming both their and our
86 own reputations through these actions, and making ourselves look like untrustworthy
87 individuals. We may be able to make amends, repair our integrity, and earn trust back from

88 those with whom we have broken it. It is a character-building experience to practice the
89 principle of anonymity in all areas of our lives.

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91 In COSA, we cherish and understand the value of anonymity and confidentiality. As a result, our
92 relationships become more trustworthy and intimate. Practicing anonymity and confidentiality
93 strengthens our recovery in many ways, improving how we relate to others, both in and outside
94 of recovery. We are humbled and our appreciation for humanity broadens when we recognize
95 that we truly are all equals, made evident when we use this tool in COSA.

DRAFT