

1 **Tool: Slogans**

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3

4 **“Slogans are wisdom written in shorthand.”** Slogans are a few simple words cleverly
5 strewn together so that they are memorable, and the messages that they carry are
6 powerful. Their wit and simplicity help us easily recall their wise guidance.

7

8 When a slogan sticks in our head, we can call it up when we need its wisdom. The
9 subtle analogy found in some slogans can carry a message straight to our hearts. When
10 we can easily recall the simple words, we are able to put them to work in our daily lives.
11 We also share meaningful slogans with others, offering hope and inspiration to COSA
12 members who are still suffering.

13

14 Some slogans shine brightly for us. Others we might pick up and put back down,
15 acknowledging their value for some COSA members, but not for us -- at least not right
16 now. We **“take what is useful and leave the rest for later.”** Slogans leave room for
17 our individual interpretations. We can find our own meaning in a slogan, or we may
18 notice that we have a shared understanding with others. If one slogan doesn't fit for us
19 at the moment, there's a good chance that another one will.

20

21 We learn about slogans from a variety of sources. We encounter them in COSA
22 readings or hear them in meeting shares. We sometimes inherit bits of wisdom from our
23 sponsors and later pass them along to our sponsees.

24

25 Many of us have found creative ways to not only embrace slogans in our hearts, but to
26 incorporate them into our day-to-day environments. We may place them on our mirrors
27 or computer screens as reminders, or blend our favorites into artwork that we hang on
28 our walls. Some of us have slogans stamped onto jewelry to wear as a constant
29 reminder, or even tattooed onto a wrist. We might make bookmarks with the phrases we
30 find most helpful. Some of us own a slogan box from which we can pull a printed slogan
31 to read every morning and focus on throughout our day.

32

33 Slogans keep us moving forward in times of despair. Their gentle reminders can give us
34 the courage and hope we need when we are feeling triggered or out of control. They
35 can help redirect our thinking and pull us out of a funk during times of conflict,
36 indecision, and trauma. Slogans often bring us back to what is really important: our
37 relationship with our Higher Power and our spiritual centeredness, reminding us that we
38 are not alone.

39

40 **“H.A.L.T. Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired”** reminds us to take care of ourselves.
41 Sometimes we are so triggered, upset, or busy that we forget about our own needs. We
42 may be distracted and so focused on others' needs that we neglect our own. Some of

43 us are still learning how to identify what we need, or to even recognize that we have
44 needs. **“HALT”** helps us on our self-care journey by reminding us to take care of our
45 most basic requirements. Am I hungry, angry, lonely or tired? If the answer is yes, we
46 can then embrace the reminder and figure out what to do next for our self-care.

47 **“Just do the next right thing.” “First things first.”** When things feel uncertain and
48 overwhelming, we can use this reminder to put one foot in front of the other. When we
49 get too far ahead of ourselves, we can feel paralyzed by fear or doubt. This slogan
50 reminds us to face our life in small increments and to be mindful of what is presently in
51 front of us. **“Keep it simple”** is another slogan that reminds us not to overthink our
52 situation.

53
54 **“One day at a time.”** The wisdom of this slogan helps many of us through times when
55 pain and sadness engulf us and we don’t know how we can go on. When one day at a
56 time is too much to consider, we focus on one minute, or even one breath, at a time.
57 Identifying only where we are today and putting aside our concerns about the future, we
58 are better able to live our best lives. Learning to take life in small bites helps us better
59 savor the delicate flavors of each moment.

60
61 **“This too shall pass.”** These wise simple words offer us hope. As COSA members in
62 recovery, we may have experienced intense emotional pain and even trauma. This
63 slogan reminds us that everything is temporary, including feelings, and that we will get
64 through our challenges with the hope for better tomorrows.

65
66 **“Feelings are not facts.”** This slogan reminds us that our emotional responses may
67 not be based in reality. If we start to immerse ourselves in crazy-making “what if” and “if
68 only” thought processes, this reminder can help pull us out. We can learn to sit with our
69 feelings and notice how they feel in our physical body. We can pray and meditate,
70 asking our Higher Power to help us see what’s really true. Recognizing that our brains
71 can hijack us while trying to protect us helps us learn to allow our feelings to flow
72 through us and dissipate.

73
74 Some acronyms allow us the creativity to choose for ourselves the words that resonate
75 deep within our beings. An acronym with multiple meanings is **F.E.A.R.**:

76 **“F.E.A.R. False evidence appearing real.”**

77 **“F.E.A.R. Face everything and recover.”**

78 **“F.E.A.R. Forgetting everything is alright.”**

79 **“F.E.A.R. Fantasy encourages abandonment of reality.”**

80 These phrases can help us turn our worry or our dread into productive thought
81 processes.

82

83 ***“Serenity is not peace after the storm but peace amid the storm.”*** Recovery is a
84 miraculous gift. It is our common boat that holds us as we weather the storm. We learn
85 in recovery that we cannot control those around us. People will do what they are going
86 to do. With help from our Higher Power and our COSA recovery, we are developing the
87 courage and strength to face our challenges head on. We do not have to postpone joy
88 as we wait for our problems to resolve.

89 ***“Let go and let God.”*** The message of the Serenity Prayer, as well as much of our
90 Step work, is succinctly captured in these five words. We are reminded to replace our
91 self-will with that of our Higher Power. Prior to recovery, we may have tried to fix every
92 problem we could uncover. The lesson we garner in recovery, simply put in this slogan,
93 is that when we turn our will and our lives over to our Higher Power, we find serenity
94 and faith.

95
96 ***“Take the actions, let go of the results.”*** This slogan reminds us to use our recovery
97 behaviors, detach, set boundaries, and take care of ourselves. The people in our lives
98 will react based on their own experiences and perceptions. We learn in COSA to step
99 back and observe the results and accept “what is.”

100

101 ***“Live and let live.”*** The wisdom in this slogan is to focus on our own conduct,
102 recovery, and lives. When we stop judging and criticizing others and instead practice
103 tolerance, we become free to attend to our own needs and desires.

104

105 ***“An expectation is a premeditated resentment.”*** We learn in COSA to pray for
106 empowerment to carry out Higher Power’s will rather than for our own specific desires
107 and expectations. This slogan tells us to stay in the moment and appreciate what Higher
108 Power has in store for us today. We have no right to impose our expectations for
109 behavior or recovery on others. We are setting ourselves up for despair when we set
110 goals for others.

111

112 ***“Resentment is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die.”*** This can
113 be a useful slogan, especially as we work Steps Four and Eight. It reminds us that our
114 recovery work is about our own COSA behaviors and character defects. We must take
115 ownership of our culpability before we can heal. Remaining stuck in blaming or
116 resenting others stifles our own recovery.

117

118 ***“Ego is not my Amigo.”***

119 ***“E.G.O. Edging God Out.”*** These small concepts offer us the powerful reminder to set
120 our self-will and ego aside so we may know Higher Power’s will for us. ***“A little humble
121 pie will never give you indigestion”*** also helps us remember that our recovery is
122 spiritual, and the humility we develop in COSA allows us to humbly ask that our Higher

123 Power's will be done. ***"Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of***
124 ***yourself less."***

125

126 ***"Is it odd or is it God?"*** COSA is a spiritual program. As we learn to have faith in our
127 Higher Power, we might come to believe that coincidences are spiritual reminders that
128 Higher Power is always with us.

129 ***"G.O.D. Good Orderly Direction."***

130 ***"G.O.D. Grace Over Drama."***

131 We can cleverly define this acronym in the way that spiritually suits us.

132

133 When we make a request to our Higher Power, we can expect one of three replies: ***"1.***
134 ***Yes. 2. Yes, but not right now. 3. No, because I have a better plan for you."*** This
135 valuable slogan helps us remember to let go and trust that Higher Power is by our side,
136 and that things will work out as they are supposed to.

137

138 ***"Progress not perfection."*** Many of us spent our pre-recovery days striving to be
139 perfect. After all, if we were perfect, we would have the perfect love, perfect family,
140 perfect work situation, and life would be perfect. We're learning in recovery that there is
141 no such thing as perfection. We may have wasted too much energy and time working
142 for something that was not even possible. When we expect ourselves to accomplish
143 something perfectly, our unreasonable expectations might keep us from taking any
144 action. When we fall short of our goal, which of course we will if our goal is perfection,
145 we might beat ourselves up and give up.

146

147 By instead focusing on our progress, our goals become attainable, we celebrate our
148 successes, and we are motivated to keep going. We may use our mistakes and
149 challenges as opportunities for growth, cutting the word "failure" right out of our
150 vocabulary. And we joyfully anticipate what our Higher Power has in store for us. Other
151 slogans with a similar message include:

152 ***"Perfection, procrastination, paralysis."***

153 ***"I have enough, I do enough, I am enough."***

154 ***"We are human beings, not human doings."***

155 ***"I am perfectly imperfect."***

156

157 ***"Stay on your side of the street."*** In other words, mind your own business! Many of
158 us have been avid caretakers for other people's problems. This slogan can serve as our
159 reminder to set boundaries and emotionally detach from others' chaos. We can let them
160 find their own guidance from their Higher Power. By focusing on ourselves, we devote
161 our energy to our self care. We can do the most good on our own side of the street, the
162 side on which our Higher Power resides!

163 ***“Not my circus, not my monkeys.”*** Some slogans bring a smile to our face as they
164 carry an invaluable message. The striking image of circus monkeys can bring to mind a
165 lot of shenanigans and nonsense. We can embrace the lesson that we no longer have
166 to be caught up in situations that steal our serenity.

167
168 ***“The Three Cs: Didn’t cause it, Can’t control it, Can’t cure it.”*** Many of us are
169 learning in recovery that someone else’s addiction and acting out behaviors are not
170 ours, and we are powerless to change them, as hard as we might try. We don’t have to
171 carry the weight of the world around on our shoulders. We are responsible for ourselves
172 alone. ***“Bless him/her, change me”*** adds a loving spin to this idea.

173
174 ***“If I am not the problem, I have no solutions.”*** In other words, we can stop trying to
175 fix things for other people. We only have control over ourselves and our problems. If we
176 stop trying to control others, we can let go, relax, and spend our precious moments
177 taking care of ourselves.

178
179 ***“Detachment not amputation.”*** Many of us are learning in recovery to stop caretaking
180 and fixing. But when we detach, some of us go too far. These simple words remind us
181 that we can ***“detach with love.”*** We can care enough about another person to allow
182 them to learn from their mistakes while still loving them and wishing the best for them.

183
184 ***“Do no harm”*** tells us that our recovery work should not injure ourselves or others.
185 Taking our Step Four inventory is not about beating ourselves up. And our Step Nine
186 amends free us from the bonds of past transgressions or flawed behaviors, but without
187 collateral damage. We are also reminded that each Step of our recovery work occurs
188 when we are ready, and that our pace is gentle, not admonishing or harmful to
189 ourselves.

190
191 ***“No’ is a complete sentence.”*** Those of us who are people-pleasers have a hard time
192 saying no. We don’t want to let other people down. We’re afraid they’ll think poorly of us
193 or possibly abandon us. This slogan can serve to motivate us to make and keep healthy
194 boundaries. It is not always necessary to provide an explanation when we want to
195 respond with “No” to a request, particularly when we find ourselves explaining out of
196 fear for how the other person will react. We know what is right for us, and that is
197 enough. When we stop assuming responsibility for others’ feelings, we can respond with
198 thoughtful choices rather than reacting from a place of fear and trying to please others.

199
200 ***“Your worth doesn’t depend on another’s opinion.”***

201 ***“Others’ opinions about me are none of my business.”***

202 ***“Don’t let someone who doesn’t know you determine your value.”*** We can waste
203 so much time trying to please others, to the point where we ignore ourselves. These

204 slogans are mighty reminders to shift the focus onto ourselves. We are precious human
205 beings. We do not have to do or be anything to be worthy of love.

206

207 Some slogans encourage us to use our prior mistakes as opportunities and lessons.
208 When we **“accept the things we cannot change,”** we are better able to let them go
209 and move on. Many slogans provide a succinct and wise message to come to terms
210 with our past and maybe even find gratitude for where we’ve been and where we are
211 now.

212 **“Look back but don’t stare.”**

213 **“We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.”**

214 **“It’s ok to visit the past, just don’t set up your tent.”**

215 **“Give up the need for a better past.”**

216 **“If it’s hysterical, it’s historical.”**

217

218 **“Worry doesn’t prevent tomorrow’s tragedies. It only steals today’s joys.”** When
219 worry overwhelms us, this slogan can remind us to let it go so that we can joyfully
220 embrace this one day.

221 **“Today is my day.”**

222 **“Keep your head where your feet are.”**

223 **“The joy is in the journey.”**

224

225 **“Say what you mean; mean what you say; don’t say it mean.”**

226 **“T.H.I.N.K. Is it Thoughtful? Helpful? Inspiring, informative, insightful?**

227 **Necessary? Kind?”**

228 **“How important is it?”**

229 **“Would you rather be right or happy?”**

230 **“Would you rather be right or relational?”**

231 Some slogans offer messages to help us keep things in perspective in our relationships
232 with our Higher Power, others, and ourselves. These slogans give us guidance as we
233 interact with others. They can help us with our communication and point us toward a
234 purer, more spiritual life. If we have a tendency to react impulsively when we are feeling
235 angry or afraid, these slogans can remind us to pause, to consider our powerful words,
236 and to respond gently.

237

238 **“Cultivate an attitude of gratitude.”** The importance of gratitude and having
239 appreciation for even the smallest gifts in our lives helps us refocus. Gratitude can keep
240 us going in dark times and allow us to see a light glimmering at the end of the tunnel.

241

242 **“The Three A’s: Awareness, Acceptance, Action.”** This slogan can offer invaluable
243 guidance when we are facing challenges or anticipating change. It recommends that we
244 consider the entire situation before we take action. When we open our eyes and let
245 ourselves be still and observe, we become aware. **“Keep an open mind”** and **“Denial**

246 ***is not a river in Egypt***" also help us with this, especially when we find uncomfortable
247 truths in our awareness. We allow light to shine into the darkness of confusion and
248 discomfort.

249
250 Acceptance can be challenging for us, and we are asked to admit our powerlessness as
251 early as Step One in our recovery work. We must become willing to embrace what is,
252 even if we don't like it. This can require emotionally charged work and is an important
253 part of the grieving process. ***"Feel your feelings"*** reminds us that we are allowed to
254 acknowledge our feelings and our grief as we walk the path of recovery.

255
256 ***"H.O.W.: Honest, Open, Willing."*** When we are honest, we can be grounded in reality
257 rather than in denial. When we are open-minded we can more easily hear and accept
258 our Higher Power's will for us. When we are willing we can find the courage to take the
259 Steps necessary to our recovery.

260
261 ***"You're only as sick as your secrets."*** This slogan reminds us about the importance
262 of honesty. When we bring our secrets out of the darkness and into the light, they lose
263 their power. We can begin this process by being honest with ourselves. COSA
264 welcomes us into the sunlight!

265
266 ***"Patience takes patience."***

267 ***"Don't just do something, sit there!"***

268 We are sometimes quick to want to jump immediately into action. We want to fix a
269 situation before we take the time to problem-solve or develop a full awareness of it. We
270 learn in recovery that when we try to force a solution, we are pushing our own will and
271 missing out on our Higher Power's will for us. But if we give ourselves the time and
272 space to become aware, and if we are patient, we will be better primed to take action
273 that is relevant, thoughtful and intelligent.

274 ***"Time takes time."***

275 ***"Change is a process, not an event."***

276 ***"God is in the pause."***

277
278 ***"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different
279 results."***

280 ***"Don't go to the hardware store to buy grapefruit."***

281 ***"Nothing changes if nothing changes."***

282 ***"Fake it till you make it."***

283 ***"Willingness is the key."*** These slogans help us remember that in order to effect
284 change, we must start doing something different. We must experiment with new
285 behaviors or thought processes so that in Step Six we can become entirely ready to ask

286 our Higher Power in Step Seven to guide us towards a healthier lifestyle with healthier
287 behaviors.

288 ***“You can’t think your way into a new way of behaving; you have to behave your
289 way into a new way of thinking.”***

290

291 ***“I don’t want you to save me; I want you to stand by my side.”*** Many slogans give
292 us clarity as we attend meetings, develop recovery relationships, and work the Steps
293 with our sponsors or our Step groups. They often remind us why we entered recovery,
294 and that we are not alone. We all benefit from COSA unity.

295 ***“If I quit I will be right back where I started; and when I started I was desperately
296 wishing I was where I am now.”***

297 ***“I am sick and tired of being sick and tired.”***

298 ***“I entered the rooms for someone else, stayed for myself.”***

299 ***“We all come in on different ships but we’re all in the same boat.”***

300 ***“It’s a we not a me program.”***

301 ***“Principles above personalities.”***

302 ***“Take your mess to your sponsor, your message to your group.”***

303 ***“C.P.R. Call, Pray, Read.”***

304 ***“There’s no reason to change if there’s no reason to change.”***

305

306 ***“It works if you work it, so work it -- you’re worth it!”*** These powerful words bring
307 many COSA meetings to a close. Recovery takes hard work. There’s not an instant cure
308 for us, unfortunately. But when we see light in others’ recovery, we are led by their
309 inspiration. And we learn to value ourselves. We are worth it! ***“Recovery is a journey,
310 not a destination.”*** ***“You don’t have to understand the Steps to work them, you
311 have to work them to understand them.”***

312

313 Equipped with the slogans in our COSA toolbox, we can pick and choose which words
314 of wisdom work for us at various times in our recovery. As the miracles of the program
315 emerge in us, we can pass these precious, powerful words to others. ***“We have to give
316 it away to keep it.”***