

1 **Tradition Twelve**

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3 **Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to**
4 **place principles before personalities.**

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6 *Before recovery, our understanding of anonymity may have been limited to the*
7 *dictionary's definition of: "unnamed," "unknown" or "name not made public." In*
8 *recovery, anonymity takes on a deeper, spiritual meaning. Practicing Tradition*
9 *Twelve ensures that the COSA message, not the messenger, will always be our*
10 *focus.*

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12 When we are newcomers to COSA, there is great relief in knowing that our
13 privacy will be respected through anonymity. The discovery that our lives have
14 been affected by compulsive sexual behavior is devastating, painful, and likely
15 shameful. Without the protection anonymity offers, many of us would have
16 hesitated to share our experiences for fear that our information would be
17 exposed and that we would suffer further harm. This practical aspect of
18 anonymity creates a safe space to listen, share, feel heard, and begin our healing
19 journey.

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21 In addition to the practical benefits of anonymity, Tradition Twelve offers a
22 spiritual aspect in which we trust a Power greater than ourselves and leave our
23 "hats" and labels outside the doors of our meetings. We enter as equals. From
24 this place of equality, we can experience one another free from the influences of
25 worldly identities. We come to see that we are all the same in the eyes of our
26 respective God or Higher Power, and we embrace one another in unity and
27 equality.

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29 The environment created by anonymity in our recovery meetings is not to *hide* us,
30 but to help *free* us. Anonymity in our meetings actually fosters greater intimacy
31 among members. We can share our true selves safely, freely, and without fear of
32 judgement. This trust and ability to be vulnerable brings us great relief and helps
33 to lift the burden of our isolation and pain. Sharing honestly with our sponsors

34 and fellow members promotes healing. We become open to receiving compassion
35 and acceptance. This nourishes our healing in a way that we have never
36 experienced before.

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38 Tradition One (Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery
39 depends upon COSA unity) offers an example of anonymity's spiritual influence on
40 our Traditions. Without the equality offered through an avenue of spiritual
41 anonymity, members with many years in recovery might be looked to as "COSA
42 experts." Seen in that light, their singular input could sway or replace the group
43 conscience. Or perhaps there is a member known to have certain professional
44 credentials, or there may be a member of wealthy financial status. Without
45 practicing spiritual anonymity, these members might be looked upon with higher
46 regard than others in the group. Newcomers or other members might defer to
47 them rather than develop their own voice. Situations like these could lead to a
48 hierarchy or cause personalities to overshadow vital recovery principles. The
49 common welfare of the group, the group conscience, and COSA unity would be
50 harmed. Personal recovery would suffer in such an environment. Without the
51 bedrock of anonymity, Tradition One would collapse.

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53 The COSA Diversity Statement* provides additional insight to the unifying power
54 of anonymity. All who identify as having been affected by compulsive sexual
55 behavior are welcomed equally in COSA. We embrace one another with
56 understanding and compassion for the experiences that brought each of us to
57 COSA. The Diversity Statement helps us look beyond the ways in which we may be
58 different from our fellows and to seek out and accept the commonalities that
59 unite us. Diversity gives us the opportunity to learn from people of all kinds and it
60 gives COSA a richer, more widely relatable message to share.

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62 Tradition Twelve also helps us keep personal balance with others in recovery.
63 While we receive invaluable encouragement and inspiration from the experience,
64 strength, and hope of others, placing principles before personalities helps us stay
65 focused on how other members have applied the principles and tools of recovery
66 to improve their lives. We don't put any individual on a pedestal. We can have a

67 healthy admiration for others and their recovery without giving our power away,
68 or making any single individual into a “higher power.” Similarly, we need to be
69 cautious about readily dismissing the opinions of those we may find hard to relate
70 to; in doing so, we risk missing the value of the principles shared by them.

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72 Placing principles before personalities also serves us well in our homes and
73 families. Tradition Twelve reminds us that each member of the family is valuable
74 and plays an integral part of the whole. When we treat one another with respect,
75 and share feelings and differing input freely, it helps each person feel valued and
76 that their contributions are appreciated. When difficulties arise, practicing
77 Tradition Twelve helps us stay focused on the greater good of our family. We are
78 able to put into action the principle of *what’s right* rather than *who’s right*, and
79 thus contribute to the well-being and serenity of our family.

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81 The principles in Tradition Twelve are applicable to all relationships. It helps us
82 keep our friendships balanced, healthy, and reciprocal through mutual respect.
83 We recognize that each of us is a precious individual, entitled to our own
84 decisions regarding personal privacy, boundaries, and the way we express our
85 personalities. We build good relations when we treat everyone fairly and with
86 respect.

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88 In places where there are established hierarchies, such as the workplace, putting
89 principles before personalities is especially helpful. Putting principles first guides
90 us away from cliques, gossip circles, or informal “pecking orders.” Instead, we
91 keep our focus on the work our employer has hired us to do. When working in a
92 team environment, we become valuable contributors if we stay detached from
93 dominant personalities or ego-driven issues and simply focus on the assignment.
94 No matter where we are in the workplace hierarchy, practicing these principles
95 can help us demonstrate our integrity and earn us the respect and trust of others.

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97 As we contemplate Tradition Twelve, we see why anonymity is *the* vital, spiritual
98 underpinning of all our Traditions. The safety and spiritual growth of each COSA
99 member and the whole COSA fellowship depend upon anonymity.

*COSA Diversity Statement

- COSA Diversity is consistent with the Third Tradition of COSA, which states that the only requirement for COSA membership is that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.
- The COSA Fellowship welcomes all genders, all varieties of relationship to the addict, all religious and spiritual preferences, all employment statuses, all marital statuses, all ethnicities, cultures, and languages. COSA does not discriminate on the basis of class, financial status, sexual orientation or gender identification, physical or mental challenges, race, or national origins.
- In COSA, we find hope whether or not there is a sexually addicted person currently in our lives.
- COSA Diversity is consistent with the First Tradition of COSA, which states that our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon COSA unity.

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