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Profile of a Service Worker: COSAs Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope

Story One

When I was first asked to take a service position, I wondered what skills I had to take care of anything for the International Service Organization (ISO) of COSA. But wouldn't you know it, Higher Power was in control of that request.

I was asked to take calls for the ISO office. Me, a retired telephone operator, taking calls, WOW what a stretch!! I might insert here that the person asking this of me did not know I was a former operator.

But even then I had reservations: What kind of questions would be asked? What if I didn't know the answers? What if the person was in crisis? What if, what if, what if....

When I called to ask these questions, I was assured by the ISO Chair that there would be plenty of people to refer the calls to when I didn't know how to answer. So I agreed to try it for "a month or two" to see if it was a good fit.

Three years later I requested to be relieved of the duty due to health concerns and family needs. During those three years, there were probably only a dozen times I had to refer the caller to someone else, mainly because it concerned definite ISO matters.

The few calls I got when the person was in crisis, (mainly because of hearing a very recent disclosure) I felt I was able to handle it through the help of my Higher Power. After all, we have all gone through discovery in one way or the other, and I felt very much at ease sharing my experience, strength, and hope.

I guess what I'm saying for the most part is: if you're asked, it's for a reason. Consider it very strongly because you'll get so much more out of it than what you give to it.

Grateful to have been of service.
~Helen L.

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Story Two



When I first started being of service to COSA, I wanted to give back to an organization whose members have shared their experience, strength and hope with me. It was a way of growing and developing new skills, especially since the prior skills I had learned to survive the environment in which I grew up no longer served me. The insane enmeshment I had with my spouse's and my family-of-origin's compulsive sexual behaviors and co-addictive behaviors made my life unmanageable.

Growing up, I learned to be self-reliant or show a façade of perfectionism to hide family secrets and shame. This kept me isolated and in a miserable state. By creating a new habit of reaching out to help other COSAs through service, I also helped myself break the old, destructive habits of isolation, obsession, and fear.

In service, I learned how to use more tools of the program. By asking questions and obtaining feedback regarding my various service positions, I learned that reaching out for support does not mean I will be criticized or judged by my peers for what I have done. Instead, I obtained guidance on alternative healthier ways of addressing challenging situations. Being judged, misunderstood, and shamed by my family were my experiences prior to recovery. Being of service along with other COSAs, I learn to find joy in certain tasks of which, prior to recovery, I would have been resentful. Before COSA, my insane thought process would have me thinking I was rescuing the organization, then feeling resentful that no one was appreciating my help, and then blaming the organization for being such a burden on me by taking up so much of my time. I gradually learned better boundaries. I learned that the processes are messy. My personal growth occurred sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly. I am amazed with how examples of each of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts turn up during service. I am grateful to see fellow COSAs demonstrate how the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts work...and why these are guidelines, not rules... I have learned the meaning of the healing power of giving through actively participating in service and working my recovery.

~Eveline S.



Story Three



I have been in COSA since 2011. In the last few years, I have started to be interested in service at the ISO level. I started very small; setting up the emails for the weekly COSA meditations that are sent each Wednesday. This year, I took on the role of delegate liaison.

The most basic thing that service work has done for my recovery is to expand my COSA network. I have more examples of people in recovery, and more examples of how to approach recovery. In particular, it is helpful for me to see how others live out their recovery when juggling multiple priorities or facing challenging problems. Service work gives me the opportunity to focus on my character strengths and ask my Higher Power to remove my shortcomings. One of my strengths is being organized and detail-oriented. One of my character flaws is being controlling. Service work challenges me to make use of my organizational abilities, but in a way that does not take over or impose my will on others. I carefully consider my actions, but at a certain point, I practice doing the next right thing. I trust that my Higher Power is guiding my work.

~Sara L, St. Paul, MN

Story Four

Over the past couple of years I've started taking on service positions outside of my home meeting, first as the delegate liaison and now as Balance coordinator. Each time I've considered a new role, there's a voice deep inside that lets me know whether it's the right role and/or right time—my Higher Power consistently shows up to let me know the next right move.

With each new role, my recovery has grown. I'm seeing in a clearer light how I interact with other people. I can see where I still hold judgment and where it can hold me back. I also see more clearly how I can be open to others' views and opinions that may not match mine, but that clearly are okay and valid. I'm learning to "play nice in the sand box" with folks I know and a lot of folks I don't know at all. Most interactions are via email and I'm quickly learning to ask clarifying questions, to ask for what I need, and to be as clear as I can. I'm also getting to hear my voice versus my Higher Power's voice when I start noticing negative self-talk around how I'm performing my service work. I'm still discovering how to dampen that negative self-talk—it's taking a lot of consciousness and perseverance. I continue to be of service not just out of pure good will, but because I'm continuing to learn through service work. And it's a wonderful group of folks to learn with, as COSA's tend to lean toward compassion, empathy, and forgiveness. Everything that I'm learning through service, I get to take and practice in other areas of my life. Service work is a gift that keeps on giving.

~Jennifer N, Bay Area



The Power of Conducting a Group Inventory

To our Fellowship,

The primary purpose of our fellowship is personal recovery through the COSA program. Our meetings can be an invaluable lifeline to that recovery. So, maintaining the health and the sobriety of our meetings is vital. Do you know there's a free tool that meetings can use to do their own "sobriety check-up?"

The COSA Meeting Guide has a chapter designed to make sure meetings are operating at their healthy best. It contains questions to lead your meeting through a group inventory. Just as individual COSA members benefit from regular sobriety check-ins or inventories, so do meetings.

Conducting a group inventory can help group members bring unresolved issues to the group for discussion and identify areas where the meeting can grow. Meeting groups can also celebrate what they're doing well and discover opportunities where they can make improvements and grow.

To find The COSA Meeting Guide click here

http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/The_COSA_Meeting_Guide.pdf

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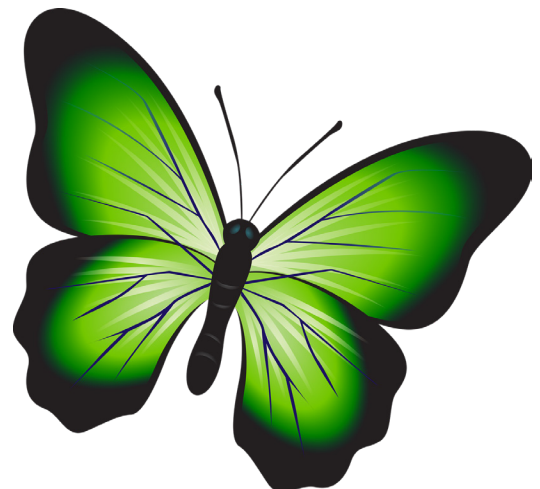
or go to the COSA website under the “Our Program” tab. The group inventory is found in Chapter 5, pages 56 and 57 and was updated by the Delegates at the 2017 COSA convention. Beyond the inventory, the meeting guide contains a wealth of information, meeting tools, scripts, and the collected “best practices” gathered from COSA groups from all across the fellowship.

Here’s a sample of the inventory questions:

- Are our members respectful of each other?
- Are we all invited to participate in the meeting and also in the Group Conscience decisions?
- Are we a fellowship of equals? Are some looked to as COSA experts? What might be some ways to avoid imbalance or dominance in the group?
- Are newcomers given a warm welcome and an introduction to the program and COSA literature?
- Do we use phone lists? If not, do we have another way of staying connected and supporting one another between meetings?
- Do we make COSA literature available at the meeting?
- Does our group belong to an Intergroup and actively participate? If not, would we benefit from connecting with other COSA groups?
- Is our group staying connected with the ISO of COSA?
- Are our members working the Steps? If not, can we identify some ways to encourage this?
- Are our members aware of and able to apply the Traditions? If not, can we identify some ways to encourage this?
- Are members willing to be involved in service at the group level and beyond?
- Do we have a Delegate?
- Do we know and honor the principles of anonymity?
- Do we actively and respectfully listen to one another?
- Do we share experience, strength, and hope or do we engage in advice-giving or crosstalk? If the latter is true, how might we redirect our group toward healthy communication?
- Do we focus on our own recovery or do we spend a lot of time talking about the addict? What are some ways to stay solution-oriented?
- Is our group honoring the Seventh Tradition and supporting our meeting group financially? Do we also donate to the ISO of COSA which provides our materials, literature, support, and convention?

The group inventory is a powerful tool for your group’s health, and the individuals within it. What gifts will it bring to your meeting?

Sandy S.
Vice Chair
International Service Organization of COSA





Literature Committee: Basic Text Update

Hello Fellow COSA Members!

We want to thank you for your feedback on the basic text chapters we received over the past 90 days. We received wonderful recommendations for each section. Most of all we are proud to see the fellowship engaged and sharing such insight to an important piece of our Literature, the basic text.

These draft chapters were released for your input from November 1, 2017 to February 1, 2018 and reflected a variety of sections:

- Tradition One
- Concept One
- Concept Two
- COSA Tools - Outreach Calls.

We hope these new sections kept your interest! Below is an approved list of what we are working towards and with your continued help and support we will get there with great writing and feedback.

Currently we are working on incorporating the recommendations, and will complete all editing by mid April to be ready for the 30 day Delegate Review before the annual meeting.

In addition, we've started writing and planning for our new pieces. We are looking to engage the fellowship's input as we plan for the next Traditions, Concepts, Tools, as well as COSA Stories. We are grateful for your thoughts on all these sections. Look for future surveys to go out soon and throughout the year.

Reminder: mid-April our final drafts on Tradition One, Concepts One and Two, and COSA Tools Outreach Calls are released to the fellowship and Delegates. Please share this information with your meeting groups—take the time to read within your group and provide feedback to your Delegate regarding your vote on each chapter.

Next Surveys: We will be sending out several new surveys for our future writing in 2018/2019.

What can you do to help? We have so many ways of making a difference—writing, editing or assisting in the wonderful work on the basic text. We will be writing not only on Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, but on Tools of Recovery, and COSA Stories as well. If you are interested in finding out more please contact us at cosacopy@yahoo.com.

Thank you for your support!

The Literature in Development Committee





2018 ISO of COSA International Convention

**The Washington Inn
Oakland, California**

**Memorial Day Weekend
May 25-28, 2018**

COSA's annual Convention May 25-28 in Oakland California is fast approaching. If you haven't registered or made hotel reservations, there's no time like the present! You can commit to your recovery and save money.

Discounted early bird convention registration of \$175 is available until April 1. The Early Bird price is \$25 less than onsite registration and includes Saturday lunch and Sunday dinner (a \$120 value, which cannot be purchased after May 10). From April 2-May 10, online pre-registration (including meals) is still available for \$190.

Likewise, Convention discounted rates of \$129 at the COSA Convention hotel, The Washington Inn, are only guaranteed until May 3. Rooms are filling fast so hotel reservations are best made sooner rather than later.

Finally, keep in mind that since our Convention is on Memorial Day Weekend, making reservations now, could get you better rates with airlines or Bay Area attractions.

Details about about Convention speakers, workshops and panels will be posted on the Convention portion of the www.cosa-recovery.org website and shared in fellowship emails as they become available. If you've attended a past Convention, you know that there will be a depth and variety of experience, strength and hope shared. Things are always different – and always good.

Of course, there also will be COSA Twelve Step meetings and Outer Circle fellowship and fun activities, including a hospitality room, quiet room, optional movement classes, arts and crafts and more.

Our Convention – like our fellowship as a whole – is self-supporting through our own contributions of service work and cash. Whether or not you attend this year's Convention, you can help your fellow COSAs who do attend in a variety of ways:

- Individuals and groups can donate to the Convention Scholarship Fund on your online registration form on our website (<https://cosa-convention-registration.myshopify.com/collections/frontpage/products/scholarship-donation>). All donations to COSA are tax deductible.
- Service positions to help the Convention run smoothly are available for COSAs (attending and not attending). Just ask what you can do by e-mailing: conventionvolunteers@cosa-recovery.org
- Our popular Silent Auction raises seed money for the following year's Convention. COSAs donate recovery books, CDs, DVDs, original artwork, jewelry, clothes, items for the home, even services – such as photography or life coaching, restaurant coupons, or even time-share vacation slots. Regifting is OK. Items should be reasonably sized and of good quality. You can bring your donation with you or ship it to arrive by May 23. For the mailing address or questions, contact: silentauction@cosa-recovery.org



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By the same token, if you need financial support to attend the convention, just apply for a scholarship from the Convention Committee on your registration form. Scholarship recipients must volunteer for at least four hours of service work at the convention. Scholarships are awarded on a first come, first served basis.

Here are a few more details to help you plan for a great Convention. We hope to see you there! Questions can be directed to convention@cosa-recovery.org.

Full info is available at the Convention website (www.cosa-recovery.org/2018). You can also get to the Convention website by going to the main ISO website (cosa-recovery.org) and clicking on the Rooted in Recovery icon at the top right of the webpage.



CONVENTION HOTEL: The Washington Inn, a boutique hotel in downtown Oakland, is right across from the Oakland Convention Center and Marriott Center City Hotel. It is about a half-mile from Jack London Square, a waterfront gathering place with shops, restaurants and maritime activities.

Make reservations at (510) 452-1776 or www.thewashingtoninn.com. **Note: You must enter our Group Code (ISO18) in the box marked Group/Promotional Code or give the code to staff on the phone because our convention has reserved all 40 available hotel rooms.** Our rate for the rooms is \$129. Each room has one queen-sized bed and includes continental breakfast, free Wi-fi, and a discounted parking rate. Reservation deadline for this rate: May 3. (Note: Tax will be applied online, but will be removed on checkout, because we are a non-profit.)

MARRIOTT CITY CENTER: Literally steps away from The Washington Inn, this larger hotel has two restaurants, a heated outdoor pool, and a fitness center. The Marriott website – www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/oakdt-oakland-marriott-city-center/ – lists walkable options for dining nearby under its Dining drop-down menu, and under Local Area, offers a nice listing of local attractions, including spas, museums, sports venues, children's activities, and more.

TRANSPORTATION: Information about ground transportation from both Oakland <http://www.oaklandairport.com/ground-transportation/> and San Francisco international airports www.flysfo.com can be found on the airport websites. This includes BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit), limos, taxis, Uber, Lyft, car rentals, etc. The website 511.org has information about transportation options in the Bay Area and includes a convenient trip planning tool.

AREA ATTRACTIONS: On the Convention portion of the www.cosa-recovery.org website, under the Hotel/Travel Information drop-down menu, if you click on Local Area Information a pdf file of tourism resources for Oakland and greater San Francisco will download to your computer.

The Convention is a wonderful chance to meet other COSAs from around the country and world, strengthen our bonds and deepen our recovery. We hope you can join us!



REGISTRATION

Convention and Delegate

(click [here](#) to download printable form)

2018 ISO of COSA Annual Convention
The Washington Inn
Memorial Day Weekend May 25-28, 2018

Please complete the following:

Name _____

City, State/Country _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Name tag (suggested format is first name, last initial, city, state, country if outside USA):

Convention Registration Fees

Full Registration Fees (Friday May 25 - Monday May 28, 2018)

- ☐ Early Bird Registration (by April 1, 2018) (Saturday lunch & Sunday dinner included)\$175
- ☐ Online Pre-Registration (April 1, 2017 - May 10, 2018) (Sat lunch & Sun dinner included) ...\$190
- ☐ Walk-in Registration for the entire weekend (meals not included).....\$200

Day Rates

- ☐ Early Registration Saturday day rate by May 10, 2018 (includes Saturday lunch).....\$100
- ☐ Early Registration Sunday day rate by May 10, 2018 (includes Sunday dinner).....\$100
- ☐ On-site Registration Saturday day rate (no meal included)\$100
- ☐ On-site Registration Sunday day rate (no meals included)\$100

Meals: must be ordered & paid by May 10, 2018

- ☐ Saturday Luncheon with speaker (for additional guests).....\$ 60
- ☐ Sunday Dinner with speaker (for additional guests)\$ 60

Indicate special dietary restrictions/preferences:

- ☐Vegan ☐Vegetarian ☐Gluten-free ☐Dairy-free ☐Sugar-free ☐Kosher

Scholarship Donation: My donation to the scholarship fund \$ _____

Care & Support to Attendees

- ☐ I am a first-time COSA convention attendee.
- ☐ I would like a "Convention Mentor" to support me at the convention.
- ☐ I would like a temporary sponsor at the convention.
- ☐ I will be a "Convention Mentor" to first-time convention COSA attendees.
- ☐ I will be a temporary sponsor to other returning convention COSA attendees.

Additional Information

- ☐ I am a delegate for my home fellowship (please note, delegate registration is done separately).
- ☐ I attend teleconference/telephone meetings (a phone icon is included on your badge).
- ☐ I attend online meetings (a computer icon will be included on your badge).

I will volunteer (shift lengths will vary) to:

- ☐ Work the registration table.
- ☐ Lead Twelve Step COSA meeting (materials provided).
- ☐ Work with the Silent Auction/Convention Store.
- ☐ Work in the ISO Bookstore.
- ☐ Be a Room Host (includes doing the recording of workshops).
- ☐ Work in the Hospitality Suite, where food & drink will be available.
- ☐ Help with the Silent Auction.
- ☐ Help provide Care & Support.
- ☐ Help with scheduling other volunteers.
- ☐ Help decorate COSA Banquet Room (Sunday night)

Workshop and Panel Participation (if checked, someone from the Program Committee will contact you)

- ☐ I am willing to be on a panel or workshop.
- ☐ I am willing to organize a panel or workshop.

Arrival Date: _____ Departure Date: _____

THE ISO of COSA Annual Convention is a 100-percent volunteer effort and we need your help!

Silent Auction Donation: I will donate to the Silent Auction (Someone will contact you with further details)

Payment (required at time of registration) amount enclosed \$ _____

If you are requesting a service scholarship, please complete the following:

- ☐ I am requesting a service scholarship.
- ☐ I acknowledge that as a service scholarship recipient I am to pay the \$50 administrative fee (\$25 is non-refundable if cancelled after May 15, 2018) and volunteer for a minimum of four hours at the convention.

Complete this form and send with check or money order in US\$ payable to ISO of COSA

ISO of COSA - Convention Registration
9219 Katy Freeway, Suite 212
Houston, TX 77024

Registration Online Go to www.cosa-recovery.org/2018 payment by credit card only (via website interface)

Delegate Registration

ISO of COSA Annual Meeting | May 25, 2018 | Oakland, California

- ☐ This is my first delegate meeting.
- ☐ I will be attending the delegate meeting via video conference using ZOOM.
- ☐ I would like a delegate mentor.
- ☐ I would be willing to be a delegate mentor.

List your Meeting (include meeting number): _____

Name of Delegate: _____

Name of Alternate Delegate: _____

Registration Fee for Delegates Attending in Person: \$63

Registration Fee for Delegates Attending via ZOOM Video Conference: \$19

Our Zoom attendance is limited to 20, but we've never exceeded that limit. There are still spots open.

Registration/payment must be received by ISO no later than May 10, 2018.

Delegate Certification

This certifies that the above individual(s) have been elected to represent our group at the ISO of COSA Annual Delegate Meeting.

*Your COSA Group's Trusted Servant's Name _____

Trusted Servant's Phone # _____

Date of Delegate Certification _____

You must be registered no later than May 10, 2018

Delegates with late registrations are welcome to participate
but will not have voting privileges or be provided with a lunch.

No refunds after May 15, 2018



Carry the Message Through Outreach

Dear Fellow COSA Members and Intergroups,

The ISO of COSA Outreach Committee is happy to announce that after a period of inactivity, the Outreach Committee is staffed with volunteers and operational again! We are ready to start helping with outreach and we need your help to get the word out.

To make it easy, we've created a flyer, Carrying the Message through Outreach, that you can print or email to your COSA related contact lists. There is a new Open Letter to Professionals that you can print or email, as well. You can find them on the COSA website under the Be of Service Tab, Do Outreach, or click the links below.

Click here for the flyer:

http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/COSA_OUTREACH_FLYER.pdf

Click here for the letter to professionals:

http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/Outreach_Letter_to_Professionals.pdf

You can make a difference by distributing our new outreach materials. In addition to the flyer, we have business cards and convention cards that can be mailed to you free of charge. We can email you an outreach flyer with tear-aways that you can print and post in a variety of locations.

Through the generosity of four intergroups, we met and exceeded our donation goals. These funds have allowed for the printing of a flyer, 1,000 business cards, 1,000 convention cards, and the postage for us to mail a portion of the cards to the convention committee for distribution. We are also able to pay the registration fees for two of our United Kingdom COSA members to attend a conference of therapists in London.

Please contact me at outreachcommittee@cosa-recovery.org or janiecosatexas@gmail.com if you have any questions, wish to have outreach materials mailed to you, or if you're interested in joining the Outreach Committee!

In Service,

Janie A.
Outreach Committee





Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

The “Made a decision” part of this Step was tricky for me when I came into COSA because I wasn’t trusting my decision-making and I didn’t feel like I had a particularly great track record around making decisions.

Exposure to compulsive sexual behavior at a young age left me with a tendency toward attraction to unhealthy and abusive people and situations. I am drawn to people who are chaotic, mentally ill, non-functioning, and spiritually sick (many of whom suffer from untreated addictions). My disease says these people need me to rescue them.

Today, all of my decisions are saner because I let God make them for me and I make them in collaboration with my fellow COSAs. I ask God every morning to give me the right thoughts, words, and actions for the day; everything from help with what to wear today, to which way to turn when walking down the street, to where to live, what relationships to be in, what jobs to work. Everything!

The only decision I am truly able to make on my own these days is the decision to turn over my will and my life to the care of God.

This can feel very terrifying at times. I don’t know where God is going to lead me. Remembering my poor track record when I’ve done things on my own is helpful in guiding me back to God when I get off course.

So really, even though I get afraid and I don’t know what is going to happen, I am much better off than when I was alone making decisions about everything else.

The challenge for me these days is to keep trusting I am in God’s care, even when seemingly bad things happen.

After all, who am I to say that when a “bad” thing happens it is really bad? I assume when a bad thing happens or a painful situation occurs I am not in God’s care; I think this is faulty thinking on my part.

Because time and time again in my life and in others’ lives, I have seen that I am in God’s care even while these painful, difficult situations have happened.

I have experienced again and again in my life that some of the worst situations have reaped the best growth in me. Landing in COSA allowed me to have a spiritual awakening. Getting mugged gave me the courage and strength to walk away from a marriage that no longer served me. Getting divorced forced me to get clearer about what I wanted in my own life.

None of these things was easy or without grief. They all brought growth and healing, and the suffering I experienced made me a more compassionate, connected, and kind human being.

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Because I have had so much grief and loss in my life, it can be hard for me to keep turning over the uncertainty that comes from life to God. I try to control too much, which is a character defect and a response to my past trauma; now I recognize that controlling does not serve me well today.

And, truly, the uncertainty is what makes life an adventure and sometimes the most fun!

As I keep living, I keep finding that I enjoy my life more and more in recovery! I believe God is guiding me to be as happy, as filled with joy as I can, and that I remain continuously in God's care.

~Sarah S.



Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

I had heard that Step Four was not an easy one and that some people had found it difficult, but since I was new to COSA and to recovery, I was not sure what they meant. I was also attending another fellowship and had completed Steps One through Three during my first year with a sponsor. I was ready to start Step Four with her, but when she asked me to list my character defects and I started having suicidal thoughts, she suggested I talk to my doctor about it. The doctor diagnosed that I was depressed. My sponsor suggested that I stop working on Step Four and wait. During this time, when I was working my Steps in the other fellowship, I began attending a COSA Step group—a group of people that met together to work the Steps and act as each other's co-sponsors. I made it through the first Three Steps again with no problems. I came into COSA with a well-established idea of who the God of my understanding is. I had expanded on it in the other fellowship and recognized that the God of my understanding had the qualities of a loving father. I was willing to turn my life over to him again, because upon discovery of my then husband's acting out, I knew my life was unmanageable and I did not know how to change it. I was still on medication, but I was concerned that the suicidal thoughts would return.

During my two years in COSA before I started working Step Four, I had done some work with my inner child. I used to think this was hogwash, and I would have thought that anyone who talked about having conversations with their inner child was crazy. However, when I kept still and looked for my inner child, I found her hiding in a closet, not wanting to be seen or heard. She believed that she was unlovable—that if anyone ever found out some of the things she had done, they could never love her. She had put on a mask of perfectionism to hide her faults that she could not face. She believed that if anyone were to rip that mask off and expose her, she would lose every shred of lovability that her perfectionism and people-pleasing had brought to her. These character defects had been part of my tool kit to life since I was a child. To remove those masks would have rendered her, in her opinion, unlovable—thus the suicidal thoughts.

Fortunately, as I began Step Four in COSA it was suggested that for every character defect that I identified and for which I wrote an example of how I used that character defect, I was to identify two positive character

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assets that I had. I was also encouraged to find the positive character traits that I would like to have that were the opposite of a character defect. For example, my character defect of procrastination, the opposite positive character qualities that I want to have are acting promptly and being responsible. I also wrote about my positive character qualities of being willing to grow and being friendly. I would share this work each week with my cosponsors: two character defects and four assets with examples. This was a combination of Step Four with Step Five—sharing with another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. With that much positive reinforcement, by the end of Step Four my inner child was able to look at herself honestly, at both warts and ribbons, and to accept that she was lovable. This was a year-long process for me, but the suicidal thoughts had been banished along with the thoughts that I was unlovable. My fear inventory showed me that my strong need for security was caused by my lack of security as a child and that this was driving my decision making. I am grateful today for the two women who have walked by my side for the last five years doing Step work and now Tradition work together. Now I can definitely say I am not perfect. I make mistakes but do not go into shame. I feel lovable, and I am enough. This is what a loving and gentle Step Four did for me.

~Ann Marie V.

The only requirement for COSA membership is that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. The members may call themselves a COSA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.



When I came into COSA, all I saw was how my life had been affected by my husband's compulsive sexual behavior. In working the Steps, especially Steps One and Four, I saw other ways I qualified for COSA: my life had been affected when I was 15 by the compulsive sexual behavior of a family friend who tried to molest me.

Another situation involving sexual behavior occurred in my very first work situation, a summer job. Here, a culture existed in which the workers (all older and male) had posted pin-ups in a room where they spent free time, and they felt free to crack jokes with sexual innuendo. I felt embarrassed, shut down, and "less than." I didn't feel able to talk with my supervisor about the situation or my feelings about it.

In social groups, sometimes others [men] would make jokes with sexual implications. My own husband felt free to pass on such jokes, even when our daughter was growing up. I was affected. I believe our daughter was affected as well. This doesn't happen today. But why was I then unable to speak up in an effective way? Probably because I'd already been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, and this way of behaving, although I didn't like it, seemed like the way men and the world were.

It has become clear over the past few months that there are many, in the United States and worldwide, who have also been affected and who qualify for COSA. Sometimes I wonder whether there is anyone whose life has not been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. Perhaps the only difference is in awareness: there are those who are aware that they have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, and those who are not aware of it.

We who have chosen to join COSA have tools—Steps, Traditions, meetings, etc.—to help us build a support network, where we can talk about these topics and increase our awareness and healing.

This is a topic that's out in the world. When I hear others who are not in COSA share how they've been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, I long to be able to talk about it more freely with people who are not in COSA—with my family, especially my siblings.

I want to be able to say how my life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. How my fear and lack of trust with men has affected my relationship with my husband. How it has taken years of work in COSA (and lots of joy connecting with others) to be able to open up in this fellowship.

I want to be authentic with family. Is that possible? Is it “safe”? Can I claim my feelings and not blame others?

I want to communicate with my family. To my brother: When you joke so much, I feel unseen and unheard. I want a deeper connection. I want to hear your authentic voice. I want to speak my truth and be heard. To my sisters: I have been hurt by compulsive sexual behavior. It has had a deep effect on my life.

I hope that at some point I will be able to say something like this to my siblings. I don't know whether or when that might happen. I'm still searching for how to interact more authentically, yet prudently, with family, friends, and others who are not in recovery as far as I know.

So it feels to me like everyone qualifies for COSA. If you live in this world—if you look at advertisements, read or hear the news—you're affected. Many of us have much deeper ways we are affected; news and ads may be triggers reminding us of other effects. We don't have to be ashamed of any of this—it's human to be affected by difficult events.

I'm grateful for the idea of “progress not perfection.” This tells me I won't stay the same. I am always progressing and never finished. Through working the Steps, attending meetings, and talking with others in recovery, I have experienced more awareness and healing in many areas of my life. I have hope that I can gradually make progress with this as well. Meanwhile, I get to work my program and be in recovery with others with whom I can be truly authentic.

I am grateful for the space to speak and be heard, and recover, in COSA.

~ Ruth G.





Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or COSA as a whole.

The Fourth Tradition for me is about freedom and independence, and boundaries and interdependence.

Tradition Four allows our groups to be autonomous and to be different from one another, with freedom to make our own choices. It encourages us to accept our diversity, honor our individuality, and to embrace our various colors that each meeting brings to the COSA rainbow. At the same time, we must stay within the guidelines so that our primary purpose is solid and undiluted.

We have autonomy in decisions regarding our meeting format. Whether our meeting's focus is on a topic, Step, Tradition, speaker, or something totally different, it's our choice. We can decide if our meeting will be open or closed. We can decide if and how we will address newcomers. Each meeting has its own distinct flavor thanks to Tradition Four.

And Tradition Four unites us. It ensures that we steer on the same course. While we have the liberty to make diverse decisions about our meetings, we must always keep our purpose the same. We are not at liberty to change the wording of our Twelve Steps or Traditions. Nor can our groups create their own literature. Tradition Four gives us security to know we are connected to the greater whole of COSA.

I love how this Tradition relates to my life. As the Promises guarantee, "We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness." In my COSA recovery, I have found freedom like never before. I am no longer living my life with the sole purpose of pleasing others. When I remember to put the focus on myself, choices and opportunities open to me in miraculous ways.

With the help of my Higher Power and the day-at-a-time reminder from my COSA recovery, I am free to make decisions with self-care in the forefront of my mind. It is so liberating! I am able to live my life closer to the full human being I feel my Higher Power created me to be! There is such richness in a life where I can show up for myself.

It is incredibly freeing and, at the same time, when I feel untethered, it can be scary. I think that's where the safety of Tradition Four's boundaries comes in. While I'm free to make decisions for my self-care, I'm also cognizant of those around me and my responsibilities to them. I'm a single beautiful thread that is part of a gorgeous fabric. Awareness of this gives me an understanding of connection. Freedom with connection gives me my grounding.

Our COSA groups, as well as individual COSAs, are interwoven and depend on each other. Our choices naturally impact each other. Tradition Four provides me with the freedom to make my own choices within the healthy confines of respecting and understanding the needs of those who are impacted by those choices.

As I reflect on my codependence and try to get to a healthy place, I must consider my independence as well as my interdependence. If I only consider the impact that I have on others while ignoring my own needs, I am in

continued on next page

an unhealthy place of codependence. If I ignore all others and consider my needs only, to the point of causing harm to others, I am in an unhealthy place of independence and selfishness. Tradition Four guides us to find that healthy balance in interdependence.

~ Liz



New Look For Our Website's Home Page!

To our Fellowship,

Our Technology Committee is usually working hard behind the scenes. But today, their talent and efforts are on full display on the refreshed Home Page on our COSA Website! We have a new, more sophisticated look!

One of the improvements you'll notice is a new "DONATE" button. Once you click the button, a new window will open giving you all the options you need to make secure donations. Within that window is a new "Notes" field for meeting groups to enter their Meeting ID number. This will make it much easier for the ISO to acknowledge and thank each group for their Seventh Tradition contributions. You can find your meeting number next to your meeting listing on the website.

Another feature in the donation window is a box you can click to make recurring monthly donations. What could be easier?! Simply choose the amount you wish to give and it will automatically and securely be charged to your credit card each month. This monthly donation button is an improvement over our old one. It allows you to sign up to give monthly without using Paypal, which costs COSA more to use and involves more labor on our part.

Immediately below the donate button is our fundraising thermometer, displaying our fundraising goal and the up-to-date contributions received toward the goal.

Also, updates were made to The COSA Meeting Guide, and new Outreach Materials were posted.

The COSA Meeting Guide was updated by our Delegates at the 2017 convention. Click here to see it: http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/The_COSA_Meeting_Guide.pdf, or look it up under the "Our Program" tab on the website.

Our Outreach Committee has also added updated materials for use in local outreach and with the helping professions. The flyer and the Open Letter to Professionals are free, downloadable, and printable! Take a look on our website under the "Do Outreach" tab or:

Click here for the flyer: http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/COSA_OUTREACH_FLYER.pdf

Click here for the letter to professionals: http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/Outreach_Letter_to_Professionals.pdf

Many thanks go to our Technology Committee for keeping our website fresh and functional. It's a powerful tool in our mission to carry the COSA message to those who still suffer.

Sandy S.
Vice Chair
International Service Organization of COSA

Every COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

When sending donations to the ISO of COSA, please include your meeting number so we can record it properly and post it in the Balance. We thank you for all your donations!

To find your meeting number:

- Go to www.cosa-recovery.org, click on the Meetings and Events tab, and then on Find a Local Meeting.
- Search for your meeting and note the meeting number in parentheses next to your meeting name.

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report: November/December 2017 Donations

Bay Area Intergroup (CA-07)	\$ 1120.00
Tempe (AZ-02)	\$ 36.00
Claremont (CA-20)	\$ 30.00
Indianapolis (IN-04)	\$ 112.50
Mankato (MN-01)	\$ 50.00
Columbus (OH-06)	\$ 50.00
Hampton (VA-01)	\$ 82.00
Individual Recurring Donations	\$ 4751.00
Individual Single Donations	\$ 410.00
Total	\$ 6,641.50



ISO of 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, sexual orientation or gender identification, physical or mental challenges, race, financial status, 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 on COSA unity.

International Diversity in Writing Statement

As the *Balance* receives more articles from our members from around the world, you may notice different spelling and word usage. We want to maintain the original voice of each author, so that we can benefit from COSA's beautiful diversity.

BY THE FELLOWSHIP FOR THE FELLOWSHIP



We encourage every group, intergroup and member to submit articles that share your ESH (experience, strength, and hope). Also, articles and announcements that share up-coming COSA events in your area; such as retreats, workshops, speakers, etc. We also would love to hear your ideas for what you would like to see in future articles. The *Balance* is a newsletter for the membership, by the membership.

Guidelines for Submitting Literature: http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/lit_guidelines.pdf

Please send your articles to COSACopy@yahoo.com

or by mail to: ISO of COSA, Central Office, 9219 Katy Freeway, Suite 212, Houston, TX 77024 U.S.A.

Phone: 866-899-2672 E-mail: info@cosa-recovery.org

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