



# Dealing with the Pain of My Partner's Sexual Anorexia

My husband and I started dating when I was 19 and he was 24. He was my first real boyfriend and I was in love with all that came with having a relationship. I was also very much caught up in romantic fantasies. I was young, innocent, playful, and trusting, and I was excited about a romantic sex life. I remember feeling nervous about my lack of experience, but I felt I could draw from what I had learned from secretly watching my Dad's hidden pornography videos or what I had read in his collection of magazines. Little did I know then that my father was the first sex addict in my life. Looking back, I realize I was just as broken as my husband. I remember my husband's therapist then saying we were a perfect match. Perhaps we were perfect magnets of two broken people being drawn together.

Almost immediately after we started dating, I felt the disappointments about how things were not the way I envisioned a romantic life to be. There was no romance, or even any real dating, nor passionate sexual encounters like on TV or in the movies; there was none of what I so much desired. Since it wasn't like I envisioned, I assumed I was not doing something right and that I was the problem. I concluded that it must be something about me as he rarely initiated sex. He showed very little emotion and rarely shared intimately about his life, making it difficult to gauge his mood or his interests. Our arguments about his lack of interest or connection began early in our relationship.

Despite these areas getting worse, we were engaged and soon married. Perhaps I justified that having this relationship was still better than none at all. My honeymoon is a very painful memory. I had a neighbour whose wedding was only two weeks before ours. She told me that she had bought a different lingerie for each night and that I should do the same. Despite my reservations due to our lack of intimacy, I got caught up with the fantasy and did as she recommended. When she shared about her romantic honeymoon, I was too ashamed to tell her that I had only used one lingerie; I pretended I had had a similar experience.

During the years that followed, we argued, our relationship deteriorated, and we were both extremely unhappy. I was desperate to get his attention. I tried losing weight, making him jealous, dressing to get his attention, engaging in unhealthy sexual behavior, taking care of all the household chores, making sure the kids behaved...but nothing changed. I was painfully lonely. If I got too

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## RECURRING DONATIONS

### Keeping Updated

Thank you for your donations to the International Service Organization of COSA. Currently, our system is set to automatically update your credit card when it gets a new expiration date. If you need to increase, decrease, or cancel your recurring donations, please contact the ISO of COSA at [iso@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:iso@cosa-recovery.org). Thank you for your support!

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needy, he would yell, “I am home with you all the time... what do you want?” or “All you want is sex!” I lost a part of me. I no longer was the playful young girl who adored him. My already low self-esteem got even lower. I was angry and frustrated. To comfort myself, I medicated my emotional pain by eating. My comfort eating contributed to my low self-esteem and my feeling unattractive. Unfortunately, eating for comfort was only a short-lived Band-Aid for the loneliness and neglect. It has had long-term consequences, though.

Socializing was super painful. I pretended that my life and marriage were wonderful while watching and comparing our marriage to those of our friends. I would try to figure out what I was missing to make ours work. My husband would often be attentive, alive, and flirtatious with my friends or with other women. To me at that time, this just confirmed that I was the reason for his lack of interest. In my efforts to try to tolerate the pain and humiliation of watching him give others the attention I wanted for myself, I turned to alcohol. Getting drunk in order to numb the pain also helped with my own self-loathing and embarrassment.

Hotel stays, anniversaries, birthdays, holidays—especially Valentine’s Day—were filled with deep disappointments, feelings of being unloved, and unbearable loneliness and rejection. I am still traumatized when travelling and being in a hotel room. Perhaps in these moments is when I am faced with the gut-wrenching reality that these private, special occasions are when I feel most vulnerable and most rejected. Through my awareness from working another Twelve Step program, I see that buying chips for hotel stays and snacking in the evenings in the bedroom are ways of medicating some of that trauma. This is but one way of coping, instead of facing those painful nights of feeling all alone and unlovable. My medicating has caused serious medical consequences for me. I struggle each day to work my programs, to help me reverse some of the damage and to try not to cause more. My work in COSA has helped me realize that his addiction was and still is not about me. In COSA, I have found tools to use in triggering situations. I have also learned to set boundaries for my own safety, to look at what is my part in any situation, and to be vulnerable, including asking for what I need.

I remember trying to break the silence about our marriage on two separate occasions. In preparing to share my secret, I treaded very lightly by choosing my words carefully in mentioning his lack of interest. Both times I was met with, “Maybe if you lost some weight!” I was devastated, and this just contributed to the shame I already felt. I hid in silence (after 21 years of marriage) until I found out that my husband had a sexual addiction. We started therapy and I shared my story for the first time. I was relieved of some of the pain because I felt some hope that things were going to get better. Little did I know the impact and depth of trauma I had suffered for so many years and how difficult it is for him to overcome his addiction. My partner’s addiction includes both acting out and acting in, or sexual anorexia, which is the compulsive act to not have sex or to connect intimately. Having lived with the pain and shame of our nearly non-existent sex life, I was now faced with further pain with this reality that his sex life included objectifying other women and an active fantasy life about other women.

I found COSA and I found real hope. It was when I went to the 2015 convention and attended a workshop called “Shrouded Secrets: Effects of Sexual Anorexia” that I first felt truly validated for the pain and shame of my sexless marriage. I heard in others’ stories that I was neither alone nor unique. Others had experienced this devastation, too. I found the courage to fully break my silence. Watching brave COSAs show their vulnerability and share their stories helped me to feel safe and not alone anymore, so that I could share my own story.

I am so grateful to COSA for saving my life and for all the wonderful intimate friendships I have today. I still live with and struggle with the effects of sexual anorexia, but I am finding the courage every day to work towards a more intimate relationship both with my partner and with myself, and to heal from its effects. Most importantly, I am finding myself—my voice, my value, and with these, self-esteem.

~Cindy L.



## Letter from the Chair

We have three new members on our seven-member board. The board has truly benefited from their diverse skills and gifts, and their fresh eyes. One new member recently reflected on her experience so far and said, “My favorite thing about the board, so far, is that we can see all of the efforts that go into COSA. From the board, to the committees, to the individual meetings, we are all working together.”

Board members truly do get a bird’s-eye view of all the behind-the-scenes work that keeps COSA going. For instance, the Literature in Development Subcommittee of our Literature Committee is currently hard at work writing and editing drafts of the next set of chapters for our Basic Text. They are an intelligent, thoughtful group who bring COSA principles into every aspect of their work. They have set ambitious but achievable goals for completing the book—and they will need all of our help to reach that goal. Via email, they will be asking for your input and feedback on the drafts of the next chapters. We’ll have 90 days to review and respond with our thoughts on each chapter. Please make time to participate. Adding your individual voice —your experience, strength, and hope—is vital to the collective wisdom and the COSA voice of our Basic Text.

Our Convention, Outreach, Technology, and Budget and Finance Committees are all working hard for our fellowship, as well. Each committee is staffed by volunteers who bring talents and skills from their careers, life experience, and even hobbies that benefit COSA as a whole. As diverse as our volunteers are, the common thread among them is a desire to give back to our COSA program. It’s a wonderful collaboration.

Service is a powerful way to grow your recovery and help our fellowship at the same time. If you’re curious about or interested in adding your unique gifts to one of our committees or the board, please let me know. I’m at [chair@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:chair@cosa-recovery.org).

Gratefully,

Sandy S.  
International Service Organization of COSA Board Chair

# Basic Text Chapters to Review

Dear COSA friends,

The Literature Committee has been working hard to develop the newest sections of our COSA basic text. This book will be a valuable resource for all, including newcomers. It will offer insights into the COSA Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. It also will include a variety of tools and COSA stories illustrating the miracles of recovery. In order to ensure the book accurately reflects the diversity of COSA perspectives, as well as our common understanding of the COSA program, we are presenting each of these draft chapters to the fellowship for feedback. Feedback for this section of the book can be submitted via email from November 1, 2018 through January 31, 2019.

Each chapter goes through a rigorous writing and editing process before it reaches the fellowship. Also, it is vital that we get additional thoughts, comments and suggestions on the content from the fellowship. It may be fun and helpful to review it with your meeting or group! We will consider all feedback received by the deadline. Final editing decisions will be made by the Literature Committee. We have included feedback guidelines below. Utilizing these feedback guidelines will allow us to review the feedback received in an efficient manner.

After we have reviewed the feedback and made any necessary changes to these drafts, final revised versions will be posted on the COSA website for all fellowship members and delegates to review by April 20, 2019. These proposed chapters will then be voted on for approval by the delegates at the 2019 Annual Delegate Meeting.

## Feedback Guidelines

- Feedback can be submitted to [cosacopy@yahoo.com](mailto:cosacopy@yahoo.com).
- Please submit your feedback by January 31, 2019.
- Please communicate your thoughts in a respectful manner.
- Please reference a page and line number for each piece of feedback.
- Please do not insert comments or suggestions into the document.
- Please do not submit a rewritten document.
- Please explain any changes you are suggesting. For example, "In page 20, line 64 I would like *abc* changed because *xyz*." We want to ensure that when a change is made, it will produce the desired result.
- Types of feedback include grammar (spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, verb tense, etc.), content (principles and presentation of the Tradition, Concept or tool, paragraph structure and placement, flow, etc.), and overall opinion (please include your opinion on paragraphs or sections that you like or relate to as well as those you would like to see changed).

**Click here to access the new draft chapters:**

[Step Six draft](#)

[Step Seven draft](#)

[Traditon Two draft](#)

[Tradition Four draft](#)

[Tradition Five draft](#)

[Tradition Six draft](#)

[Concept Three draft](#)

[Concept Four draft](#)

[COSA Tools - Meetings draft](#)

Thank you,

Your COSA Literature Committee

# 2019 ISO of COSA Annual Convention



**The Meridian Hotel  
Memorial Day Weekend  
May 24-27, 2019**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

United we are **STRONG**: The 26th ISO of COSA Annual Convention will be May 24 through May 27, 2019, in Houston, Texas! We are celebrating the strength that comes from working together in COSA. In unity, we enhance our own and our group's experience, strength, and hope.

Mark your calendar now and start making your plans so you can be there! Your convention committee is hard at work organizing and planning the 2019 COSA Annual Convention. There will be speakers, workshops on Steps and tools, opportunities to share ESH and learn from others, COSA meetings, a hospitality room, a silent auction, bookstore, Serenity-To-Go store, Houston activities, and informal opportunities to make connections with other COSAs.

There will be many options for growing and nourishing your recovery—whether you are new to COSA or have been in recovery for a long time. COSA's Annual Delegate Meeting will be on Friday, May 24, during the day. The convention will begin the evening of May 24 and run through late morning on Monday, May 27.

It's time to start thinking about an individual COSA you might want to nominate as a speaker, or a workshop topic you'd like to propose. Speaker nomination and workshop proposal forms, as well as convention registration, will soon be available online. Regular updates on convention planning will appear in future issues of the Balance.

Together, we can do what we could not do alone. We are all together now, reaching out our hands for a power and strength greater than our own. We look forward to seeing you Make a Big Difference by Giving Monthly!

## We need your help!

The convention committee is looking to fill a few positions. Some require a little attention starting now, others are more involved closer to or at the convention. More hands lighten the load! Please contact the committee at [convention@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:convention@cosa-recovery.org).

- **Program Cochair, communication** – Coordinator needed for subcommittee members already on board for COSA meetings, Quiet room, and Outer Circle. Attend monthly phone meetings.
- **Fellowship email/Balance article/website content editor**– Coordinate with subcommittee chairs for Fellowship Emails, Balance Articles and website content. Update templates of emails, articles and web content. Update articles for Balance.
- **Hospitality Cochair** – Keep hospitality room stocked with snacks and comfortable during the convention. The other cochair position is already filled.
- **Media chair**– Work with Program committee to create a flyer for the Balance and to create and print schedule and registration materials for attendees. Attend monthly phone meetings.

# CAN WE HELP YOU?



Are you interested in growing your local meeting?

Would your local meeting like to do more to carry the message  
to those who are suffering?

Would you like to encourage your members to attend  
the ISO of COSA Annual Convention?

The COSA Outreach Committee may be able to help. Here's how. We can provide any of the following:

- Outreach Convention Cards (5x7) that you can use to invite local members to the convention. They can also be used in the community for outreach. (We mail them to you free of charge.)
- COSA Business Cards that you can use to distribute/mail to medical professionals, therapists, etc. (We mail them to you free of charge.)
- Sample Outreach Letter that you can customize by adding your own meeting information. (We email this to you; local meetings do their own printing.)
- Flyer/Sign with information on the annual ISO of COSA Convention. (We email this to you; local meetings do their own printing.)
- We also have an e-flyer that can be used for outreach if you wish to send an email instead of paper mail.

If you have any questions, or if you are ready to order any of the above,  
please email us at [outreachcommittee@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:outreachcommittee@cosa-recovery.org).

## 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.

# Make a Big Difference by Giving Monthly!

A recurring contribution of **\$20 per month** to the International Service Organization of COSA would cover one of COSA's website bills for the year! What a way to carry the message since it was through the COSA website that most of us located our first meeting.

A recurring gift of **\$30 per month** would cover most of the annual cost for the email service used to update us on COSA news and to send out weekly meditations and links to the *Balance*.

Even giving **\$5 a month** would go a long way toward paying our office postage bill. You can say thank you to COSA by helping to put a stamp on a thank-you note!

## Fully Self-Supporting

Just like each COSA meeting, the International Service Organization of COSA, which supports your local meeting, aims to be fully self-supporting. It's what our Seventh Tradition teaches us to do. How do we achieve that?

It takes of all of us, pitching in together.  
Will you lend a hand? Every bit helps.

The best way to help is to sign up to give monthly!  
Just click here and you're on your way to making a tangible difference for our fellowship.  
<http://cosa-recovery.org/donations.html>

Your contributions are tax-deductible. At the beginning of 2019, the ISO of COSA will send you a statement letting you know how much you gave in monthly donations so you can use it when preparing your taxes.

## Where does the money go?

It supports: The website where you found your meeting • The technology behind the COSA Store where you buy literature • The email service used to keep you informed • Online registration for the convention • Staff payroll • Rent for COSA Headquarters • Board travel • Insurance, and more...

## One-time gifts are a substantial help as well.

Consider sharing this message with your COSA friends or group on how they can help. It's also easy to sign up online to give a one-time gift at [cosa-recovery.org](http://cosa-recovery.org)



**Any financial contribution is an investment in our fellowship's future.**

# STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10· **11** ·12

## SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD GOD, PRAYING ONLY FOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL FOR US AND THE POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT.

It's a piece of cake. I've done all the hard work already. I've done Step One. I've realized there is a problem here and admitted it to anyone who would listen. I've done Step Four. I've identified all my misdeeds, missteps, sins, and shortcomings. I've done Steps Eight and Nine. I've thought of everyone I might have ever done anything to. I've made amends to every last one of them, whether or not they had a clue what I was owing up to.

Sooooo! Here I am, all happy and recovered, never to slip back into what I recovered from. Good to go! Healthy, hale, and hearty! I've got a firm grip on this tiger's tail. So Step Eleven is easy. A minute or so of prayer every day to ask forgiveness for my current "sins", whatever they might be, should satisfy that Step Eleven requirement.

Unfortunately (more likely very fortunately), it just hasn't been that simple for me. It still isn't, after being in this recovery process for 30 years. When I fail to truly practice Step Eleven, I start slipping right back into the same old thoughts, patterns, and behaviors.

I believe there is no such thing as "recovered." Recovery is an ongoing process of receiving God's grace, whoever or whatever you perceive God to be. But God doesn't force himself or herself on us. To continue receiving that precious gift of grace, we must actively look for it every day, and yes, it can be time consuming. But what do we have to do that is more important than maintaining this gift of emotional and spiritual health?

Step Eleven involves reading literature that inspires me to live as well as I can. It involves honest journaling about who I am and where I am in this recovery journey. It involves being in a constant state of prayer. Constant prayer doesn't mean I have to be on my knees in the middle of McDonald's while I wait on my burger. It certainly doesn't mean I wreck my car because I'm praying with closed eyes and bowed head while driving in traffic. Constant prayer is being aware of and living in my circumstances and still being true to myself. It is rejoicing in this gift of recovery. It is gratitude for life. It is perseverance. It is determination to be who we believe God intended us to be. Time consuming...sometimes maybe. It is, however, necessary to maintain, but absolutely worth every minute spent.

The original version of our serenity prayer is worded a little differently than how we say it today. It reads: "God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other."

~Sandy C.



# STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

## 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.

When I arrived at Step Twelve, I was under no illusion that this was a real “arrival” or ending of any kind. I had been prepared to see it as the last stage in my first journey through the Steps. But I found myself stuck like I had never been stuck before. Sure, there were points, especially in Steps Four and Nine, where I had been terrified. There had been times I wanted to go no further but knew I must, and I did go on with the guidance and support of my Higher Power, my sponsor, and my other program friends.

But here I was truly stuck. It was those questions about a spiritual awakening. They stopped me cold, and I didn't know why. I couldn't make progress, and frankly, those questions aggravated me. How was I supposed to know what a spiritual awakening was? Who cared what a spiritual awakening meant to me? I realized I had a seriously bad attitude, but it wasn't obvious where it was coming from or how to deal with it.

So I talked with my sponsor about it. Week after week. My poor sponsor! So patient, so kind, so full of wisdom. I raised the topic of spiritual awakening at my meeting. I asked trusted program friends for their experience, strength, and hope. I read the literature I had, and I found more. I prayed. I meditated. I prayed and meditated some more. I reread the literature. I did my best to be patient and gentle with myself, but it was hard not to feel frustrated when I was doing everything I knew to do and was still stuck.

But slowly a path forward was revealed. My sponsor suggested that I work on the other aspects of the Step and come back later to the spiritual awakening part, so I did that for a while. Then a wise program friend suggested that I journal specifically about what was blocking me. I decided to freewrite, and then ideas and emotions I had no idea were in me flowed out in my stream of consciousness.

I could see that I had made tremendous progress by working the first eleven Steps, but that one of my remaining character defects is to be harsh with myself, to focus on the next thing to be fixed instead of what I have accomplished. Maybe I wasn't allowing myself to finish Step Twelve because I didn't think I deserved it, because I wasn't perfect yet, because I didn't think I'd done enough.

I was also afraid: afraid that I'd done all this work, and somehow, I'd done it wrong. That yes, I'd learned some things, but what if I hadn't had the right spiritual awakening? I was upset with myself that I still hadn't had the spiritual awakening I really wanted, the one that would let me feel, and truly believe, that I'm okay no matter what. Honestly, I still hadn't figured out what a spiritual awakening was. Maybe it meant all those little realizations that have added up to my recovery. Maybe it was the character defects that had evaporated. I think part of the issue was that there was no overwhelming, big experience or change I could point to, so I was afraid I'd missed it. It helped to read that some people make a distinction between a spiritual experience, which happens suddenly and dramatically, and a spiritual awakening, which happens more gradually.

When I read that the effects are the same whether the spiritual awakening comes suddenly or gradually, I realized that I might be able to find my spiritual awakening by looking at the results in my life instead of at the event of the spiritual awakening. I decided to write down the changes in myself as a result of working the Steps and look to see

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if anything in there looked like a spiritual awakening.

To my surprise, I filled up a full page. The list included entries like “I don’t spin in my head on a regular basis. When I do, I recognize it and use program tools to address the root cause” and “I don’t have a desire to tell my qualifier what to do.” I learned about my spiritual awakening by looking at the evidence of my spiritual awakening, and I think that is good enough.

My sponsor had suggested to me that I write a prayer for that part of my spiritual awakening that I really wanted, the part I thought was missing. I tried over and over to write it. The words wouldn’t come; it didn’t feel right. In the end, this is the prayer that came:

God, let me always be in the midst of the spiritual awakening you have planned for me. Give me awareness to know your will, patience to wait for your timing, and humility to trust in your ways.

I now truly believe that my spiritual awakening will always be ongoing. I don’t need to worry about it, plan it out, or force it. If I get quiet and listen, I can trust my Higher Power to lead me through the spiritual awakening that I need exactly when I need it.

~Anonymous

## **E**very 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 <http://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: July/August 2018 Donations

Tempe (AZ-02).....	\$ 22.35
Long Beach (CA-23).....	\$ 100.00
East Bay Sunday (CA-33) .....	\$ 150.00
Winter Park (FL-11) .....	\$ 50.00
Winter Park (FL-12).....	\$ 40.00
Minneapolis (MN-06) .....	\$ 100.00
Doyletown (PA-07).....	\$ 75.00
Memphis (TN-03).....	\$ 100.00
Houston (TX-04).....	\$ 28.00
Vancouver (INT-19) .....	\$ 150.00
COSA Telemeeting Intergroup (TEL-08).\$	200.00
COSA Zoom Recovery (ONL-06-11) .....	\$ 500.00
Individual Donations (July) .....	\$ 1465.50
Individual Donations (August).....	\$ 1430.00
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$ 4360.85</b>

# TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

**OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICY IS BASED ON ATTRACTION RATHER THAN PROMOTION; WE NEED ALWAYS MAINTAIN PERSONAL ANONYMITY AT THE LEVEL OF PRESS, RADIO, FILMS, TELEVISION, AND OTHER PUBLIC MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION. WE NEED GUARD WITH SPECIAL CARE THE ANONYMITY OF ALL PROGRAM MEMBERS.**

Once I had a job in public relations. My job was to help promote the company I was working for and its business interests. I looked out for any news articles about my company and further promoted the ones that sounded positive and alerted my company to ones that were negative. I wrote “talking points” for the negative ones.

In COSA we don't do this. We don't promote the program. This doesn't mean we cannot make information available to those who are suffering and it doesn't mean we cannot share information about COSA, how it has helped us, or how we have benefited. However, we do not push people to come to meetings in the way that a company might promote its business.

Instead, we try to live a life that is attractive to others. I think the principles of the Steps and Traditions are pretty attractive to others. Anytime I share my experience, strength, and hope—how I have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior and how I have found more sanity in my life—this is attractive to others. I think finding forgiveness and making amends is very attractive to others.

I also think respecting others' anonymity is important. When I was new, I was terrified of being exposed as a COSA member. I was very frightened of seeing someone I knew at a meeting. Over time, my paranoia around anonymity faded so that I could relax at meetings a bit more, while still respecting others' anonymity.

I frequently bust my own anonymity these days if I meet someone who needs COSA. I tell them my story, I offer to take them to a meeting, and I share with them that the choice is up to them. I do not push recovery on anyone and I do not make myself a spokesperson for COSA. I do share my story if someone is suffering and I think COSA may help.

If I want someone to be attracted to our program of recovery, my experience has been that the best way I can do this is to be kind and friendly and to live a life I love. To be at ease in my life. To smile, to have joy. To talk about my interests, my hobbies, and the things I love. To share when I am having a hard day. To be honest if I am triggered and to say what Steps and program tools I use to be restored to sanity. To share how I have had a spiritual awakening and how God is at work in my life today.

My experience has been that people are attracted to this way of living. We laugh in our meetings. We have fun. We have joy. This changes the energy of what it is like when we are new.

~Sarah S.

# TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

## ANONYMITY IS THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION OF ALL OUR TRADITIONS, EVER REMINDING US TO PLACE PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES.

One of the blessings of recovery for me has been anonymity. I was terrified of being identified or called out or known for being affected by compulsive sexual behavior. I carried a lot of shame around the behavior I had been exposed to. I felt shame around the actions of people I loved. It felt very complicated to be in the world and talk to anyone about how I had been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.

I am grateful that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions. Anonymity gave me safety because I knew I did not have to reveal any identifiable or personal information if I did not want to. I was terrified of anyone in my non-COSA life knowing I am a COSA.

As I began to get to know other people in meetings and to make friendships with other COSAs, I sometimes felt very uncomfortable if they revealed personal information to me. I was worried about knowing their last name, what they did for a living, where they lived, or where they worked. I barely trusted myself at all. And yet other members trusted me with more details about their lives. It was very healing.

Today, how I interact with my own anonymity is very different from how I handled it as a newcomer. I have learned over time that while I want to respect the anonymity of others, my anonymity is my own, so I can reveal or not reveal as little or as much as I like. And I trust myself to have good boundaries, to care for myself, and to only reveal what I want to in safe situations.

To me “principles before personalities” refers to the principles of the program: honesty, hope, faith, courage, integrity, willingness, humility, love, discipline, patience, awareness, and service. I want to bring kindness, compassion, tolerance, generosity, and respect to my fellow COSAs. And these are more important than people’s personality traits, character defects, assets, etc. It also means these principles are more important than any one person in the meeting, and that adherence to these principles is critical for a group’s well-being and the spirit of unity.

In my personal life, it means I want to place these principles at a higher priority than someone else’s or even my own personality. It doesn’t mean I can’t have a personality, or like/dislike others’ personalities. It means I put the principles at a higher priority than these personal preferences that I have.

~Sarah S.



### 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](http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/lit_guidelines.pdf)

Please send your articles to [COSACopy@yahoo.com](mailto:COSACopy@yahoo.com)

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

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