

May 1992

Volume **1**

● BALANCE

THE COSA NEWSLETTER

Introducing...

COSA (Codependents of Sex Addicts) is a fellowship of men and women recovering from codependency in a relationship with a sex addict. We are scattered across the United States, with chapters in bustling cities and small towns alike. This com-

FOCUS ON: Step One

"We admitted we were powerless over our codependency with the sex addict and that our lives had become unmanageable."

It seems so simple. But to admit powerlessness means more than making a blanket statement about powerlessness and then living life as we have been. The first step requires a new orientation toward life, a new way of looking at things. Sometimes to "take the first step," we have to remove ourselves from the middle and take an objective look. The next trick is to avoid jumping right back in to try to fix it all. I grew up thinking that if things were in shambles, I could pull it all back together again. Now I feel more like Humpty Dumpty. Even with all the king's horses and all the king's men Humpty couldn't get back together again. We share a disease that is like a minefield mired with the pitfalls of faulty thinking. Codependency tells us we can handle it. If we just try hard enough, suffer long enough and give boundaries up enough, it will be o.k. But in finally taking the first step and recognizing our powerlessness over our codependency, we find new freedom and, through God's grace, the power to change what we can change.

monality links us all, and we learn to love each other, even though we may not like everyone involved in the COSA fellowship. It is our hope that *BALANCE*, a newsletter created to reach beyond the boundaries of physical distance, will provide yet another way for members of COSA to share their experience, strength and hope. This is *our* newsletter; this is *your* newsletter. If you want it to work, I invite you to help take the first step to making it work. Send your ideas, thoughts, comments and submissions!

Remember: It's Your Newsletter! ♦

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STORYTIME



My name is Denise and I am codependent. I am 27 years old, but there are days when I feel 93. Just five years ago I was a newlywed college graduate eager to embark upon a successful career. I had convinced myself that I could set my own course in life. Coming to that conclusion meant make-believing that I had a glorious childhood straight out of the storybooks. After all, my family did look "perfect."

My real story isn't quite as pretty as the one I tried to adopt. At three, my father flew off to fight in a war. I was left feeling responsible for my mother's well-being, protection and happiness. My preschool years were spent frantically trying to hold all the pieces together. I carried the things I loved the most—a teddy bear I called "sleep bear," a worn copy of *The Little Engine That Could*, my favorite pillow and blanket—in a rugged green suitcase. I remember never straying far from that suitcase. It was my lifeline. And it held the only bits and pieces of me I felt there was left. My grandfather sexually molested me during this time. When my father returned home, I felt responsible for the entire family and denied my own happiness to keep everything else in balance. We moved often during my childhood, and I rarely felt any kind of stability. At home, I was rewarded for acting "cute" and sexy. It was my escape. I used my sexuality to attract attention and cut off my own feelings in order to please others.

At six, I was again sexually abused—this time by a group of adults waiting at the next-door neighbor's house nearly every day for a year. I believe it was this repeated abuse that caused me to believe that I was meant to be a victim. My elementary and high school years proved more of the same. I strived for perfection, but never felt like I was enough. Eventually, feelings of unworthiness and self-doubt sent me spiraling into even lower self-esteem. As I got older, the gap between my life and the lives of my friends widened. I withdrew emotionally and became obsessed with the goal of being the best at everything. I had scores of friends, but no one I could be real with. All through

those years, I wanted to die.

During college, I became lonely and isolated. Again, I buried my pain in achievements and a few brief sexual relationships. During a summer break, I met my husband. There was a mystery about him. Immediately, I wanted more. Within a few weeks we were involved in an obsessive relationship. There were ups and downs, and sex was the glue that held it all together. I was filled with shame and self-hatred, but could not break away from the patterns that fed those feelings. No matter how my instinct told me this wasn't right for me, I could not separate myself from him. I became enmeshed in his problems, his pain, and his life.

We were married a year later. I didn't know about addiction, but I knew that there was something besides ourselves controlling the relationship and every move we made. As my husband's involvement with pornography and compulsive masturbation continued well into our marriage, my pain deepened. I became angry, destructive and violent. I regularly threw up at work each day, physically sick from the unmanageability of my life. All the while, I kept up appearances. I took full responsibility for his addiction, blaming myself and going to great lengths to maintain a perfect image for friends and family. I gave up my own values to stay with him. Three years later as I entered recovery, I had no concept of who I was apart from my husband.

At my first meeting, I heard people who were lonely, afraid and isolated, like me. Slowly, I began to rebuild trust in a loving God, who was walking with me through all of life's pain and joy. I took comfort in simple things. I began to "work the steps" and work through some of the pain I had buried through the years. I began the process of piecing together what happened and facing my pain, holding fast to the promise that I, too, can "know peace" (the Promises, AA "Big Book"). God is doing for me what I could not do for myself. I'm learning to accept my past, and trust God for each day.

(Louisville, Ky.)

STORYTIME

The Louisville group

recently held its third joint SAA/COSA meeting. At the meetings, usually held quarterly, members of both groups join together to listen to a story from a member of SAA and a member of COSA and to fellowship with one another. Although there was some fear and trepidation before the first joint meeting, the response has been overwhelmingly positive. If the individual member who has volunteered to share his or her story would like feedback, time is allotted for this. The meetings have broadened our perspectives, deepened our understanding of one another and, most importantly, helped us to realize how alike we all are. To make preparation and clean-up as simple as possible, members bring a covered dish.



IdeaLink

SUMMER FUN

Summer is just around the corner. Do you have plans?

The Memorial Day holiday may prove to be an appropriate time to remember...and to change the things we can.

If you never got family vacations as a kid, what's holding you up now? Maybe you had plenty of vacation time, but no real enjoyment of the great outdoors. If so, plan to make this summer different. Only we can make the choice to take back our lives and make the kind of memories we want to remember next year.

Here are some questions to get you started:

- *What kind of vacation do you want?* Sightseeing or a restful trip?
- *Where do you want to go?* Stay at home or go out of state?
- *When do you want to take your vacation?*

In Review

As your COSA newsletter, **BALANCE** would like to include reviews of books, video and audio cassettes, and speakers in this regular feature. With several persons, each submitting one review a year, we would be able to feature six different selections each year based on a bimonthly production schedule. Both fiction and non-fiction books are open for review.

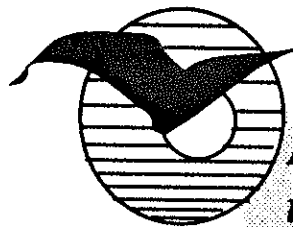
Reviews can include basic information (author, title, number of pages, publisher, subject matter), and personal evaluation, reflection and opinion. When sending in a review try to answer these questions:

- ? *How did this book help me in recovery from codependency or co-addiction*
- ? *What is the background, area of expertise of the author*
- ? *What message is the author trying to convey*
- ? *What makes this particular book stand out from other recovery books that you have read*
- ? *Why do you believe others in recovery might want to read this book*

BALANCE

PO Box 14654
Louisville, KY 40214

"Hold-
ing in
feelings
takes a
lot of
energy"



*For more
information
on COSA:*
Minnesota
InterGroup
PO Box 14537
Minneapolis,
MN 55414