

Volume 1

BALANCE

THE COSA NEWSLETTER

August 1992

A Reminder...

BALANCE began serving as a resource to COSA groups and individual members beginning with the May 1992 issue. This bimonthly newsletter can only survive if **YOU** take an active part in its production through contrib-

FOCUS ON: Step Two

"Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Admitting our powerlessness and recognizing the unmanageability of our lives was one matter. But "coming to believe" and putting our trust in some other "Higher Power"—that was a different matter that would take many of us weeks and months and years of growing and yearning to discover who our Higher Power was and what His/Her presence would mean for us. For many of us, Step Two may present a constant uphill battle of overcoming old ideas about God. Some may have been brought up to fear a punishing, harsh God. Others of us were taught that there was no hope beyond our own ability to care for ourselves. Some received mixed messages or learned to see God through the roles played by our parents and other significant adults. All that is required in Step Two is the first step on the journey. We must let go and allow ourselves to believe in something, someone who has power to restore us to sanity. This step means acknowledging that we are no longer alone, but that there is a force, a power in the universe, that is a loving, caring, capable, trustworthy power able to put things in order and give us what we need to begin the journey of recovery.

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Subscriptions

uting personal stories, journal notes, reflections on steps, COSA ideas, meeting tips, news from COSA committees and planning groups and other story ideas. All contributions will be considered equally and should be sent to: BALANCE, PO Box 14654, Louisville, KY, 40214. If no submissions are received, the newsletter will not be published.

During the recent national COSA conference in Tuscon, an annual subscription fee of \$12 was set. The Michigan Intergroup has graciously agreed to handle subscriptions. If you would like to subscribe, please send the subscription form on the back along with a check made payable to Ila Davis at PO Box 502, Mt. Morris, MI, 48458.

Number 2

STORYTIME

I remember my childhood as enjoyable and filled with love, although there were painful times and unhealthy lessons learned. Mom was preferential in her parenting, preferring her five sons over her four girls. She always said, "There's no such thing as a bad boy; it's the girls that make them that way." I came to believe that in my codependent life. My father, contrary to my Mom, tried not to show any partiality. He was not demonstrative at all. He could not verbally communicate with us kids without frustration and anger, so he spent much of his time in his workshop, emotionally unavailable. He left the discipline and decisions of the household to my mom. One lesson I learned from the way my parents related was that the woman runs the home, but "if she's a good wife," she makes it look as if the man is in charge. This lesson reinforced my codependent need to control and manipulate and my need to discount what I do in order to make "him" look good. With eight siblings, getting attention from my parents was difficult. I was on the basketball, softball and track teams, and the cheerleading squad. Not once did my parents attend.

At age nine I had a convulsion and continue to have epileptic seizures. Messages received from my parents and others regarding my epilepsy have fed my feelings of unworthiness. Although doctors never discovered if my epilepsy is congenital, my parents felt guilty and shameful, and their feelings affected our relationship. Mom was ashamed of the epilepsy, and told me not to tell anyone; my lesson was to be ashamed and embarrassed when having a seizure. Dad was guilt- and fear-filled, ever protective of me. I learned my seizures could get Dad's attention, and I used my epilepsy that way at times.

At 14, I met a guy I felt was perfect and excitedly told Mom about him. She immediately told me she didn't like him, could tell he was sexually active, and didn't want him around. In defiance, I spent every single day of the year that followed with him. Just becoming sexually aware, I did stupid, degrading things with him, and gave up all else but him and sex. This prince of mine told me that I had an ugly body and that I was lucky to have him, because any other man would be embarrassed if I were to have a seizure in public. Because of this, I struggled with my body image. The next summer, I was raped by my brother-in-law. I didn't want my sister to be hurt by knowing. To this day I have not told her. After that incident, I lost all respect for myself. My sexuality became a tool for self-abuse. For years, I had sex with worthless, cruel drunks or drug abusers, people I hadn't met, people I didn't like. I became sexually willing and daring, which led to less and less respect. When I was 16, my brother-in-law shot and killed my father. Mom died two years later. I felt hatred, anger and abandonment. Many times I simply felt lost. Dad's murder was never discussed, and the void left by his death was never mentioned. I needed the void left by Mom's death to be filled, and I began acting compulsively to create an illusion of family—something we no longer were. I tried to become Mom and felt incapable. My seizures became worse, and I withdrew. I ended up in a psych ward for depression with suicidal ideations.

My second serious relationship, resulting from a blind date, came complete with plans of marriage and family within months. Sex became a big part of that relationship almost immediately, and we both enjoyed ourselves. However, we were not

STORYTIME

CONVENTION NEWS

At the COSA Convention held in Tucson, Arizona, over the Memorial Day weekend, the COSA group decided to support a national newsletter. The name Balance was agreed upon, and subscriptions for a year (6 issues) were set at \$12.

A steering committee was formed to study the pros and cons of a national clearinghouse or national service organization, similar to that of SAA and other Twelve Step organizations. This committee will also be studying bylaws for COSA.

Next year's convention will be held in Louisville, tentatively set for Memorial Day weekend.



*God,
grant me
the serenity
to accept
the things I cannot change,*

*The courage
to change
the things I can,*

*and the wisdom
to know
the difference.*

IdeaLink

Quotables

“In loving relationships, an affection connection permeates the bond between two people. It involves being committed, honest and trustworthy in the relationship. Love between two people is expressed not only during sex, but all through the day, by thought, word, and deed. It includes affectionate touching, learning to resolve conflict respectfully, expressing appreciation, making eye contact, being friendly, sharing feelings, and being playful. It also includes being bonded in a variety of ways.”

—p. 318,
Women, Sex, & Addiction
by Charlotte Davis Kasl

Storytime, Continued from Page 2

healthy, and sex became as habitual as the goodnight kiss for us. I acknowledged discomfort with our habit and soon no longer enjoyed the sex. I knew that was the end of our relationship, but I couldn't leave until I found someone else to cling to. I did find someone else, and I went from Dean's List in college to skipping classes, getting high and having sex all day. After several months, I moved from Mom's big house to his roach-infested, two-room apartment. To help pay the rent, I went to work in the game room of an adult bookstore. The whole relationship was demeaning; the sex was abusive, and I didn't like myself or him. In a feeble attempt to break off the relationship, I made a commitment of abstinence.

Seven years into this self-abusive relationship, I met my husband. He liked me, and he was nothing like the person I was in a relationship with; that was enough to attract me to him. He was my way out of the other relationship, so I hung on and climbed aboard to wrestle and break this man. I could make him what he should be, I told myself. Well, the longer I hung on, the sicker my behaviors became. If he wanted to go to a nudist party, I went. If he wanted to spend the evening

with a couple for a hot tub and hot oil massage, I went.

After we married, everything intensified. Life became extremely unmanageable, and I finally was able to see the craziness driving my life, although I still could not identify the problem. I was journaling about my desire for annulment at the time my husband shared with me what he knew of his own sexual addiction.

Within a month, I was attending COSA meetings and have just recently celebrated my two-year birthday. The support and understanding I've received over the last two years has helped to save me and my marriage by helping me to regain my personal identity and to take responsibility for my actions.

I have learned to identify my codependent behaviors. I am now feeling my feelings and processing my motives. Though our sex life is not perfect, sex is not a tool misused to "get love" within my marriage, for I now know that being, not doing, is all that is necessary for love.

I used to trust to a fault. Now I trust with reason, for I have seen many miracles and lots of spiritual growth through working the Twelve Steps. I trust my Higher Power, and I believe I am one of His miracles.

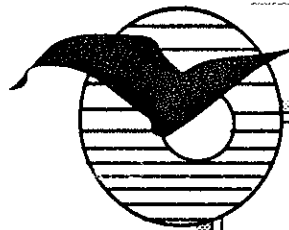
(Louisville, Ky.)

BALANCE

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Send your ideas and
submissions for our
October issue today!

**NOTE: THIS IS THE FINAL ISSUE THAT
WILL BE MAILED FREE OF CHARGE.
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