

# ● BALANCE

THE COSA NEWSLETTER

## *A Community of Caring...*

COSA has given thousands of hurting people around the world new hope. For countless men and women, walking into a COSA fellowship may have been the first time they felt that they belonged. Learning the lesson that

### FOCUS ON: Step Three

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

Having come to believe in a power greater than ourselves, we acted on that belief through turning it over. Again in Step Three we are called upon to let go and let God. This step requires that we place our trust in our Higher Power completely, laying aside our own thoughts about what might be best for us or what direction our life should take. Before we turn it over, however, we must make a decision to do that. Those first three words of Step Three are indeed important for codependents of sex addicts, for many times in our lives we may have had good intentions that we never carried through on for a variety of reasons. Some of us have extreme difficulty making decisions of any kind: where to eat tonight, what to wear to work, whom to invite to our party. But in Step Three, we are asked to make the decision to give up control of our very lives. The step makes it clear that our Higher Power *cares* for us in a way that we are unable to care for ourselves. Many who have worked Step Three in everyday situations and in times of life crises testify that God's complete care was more than evident when they truly let go.

we do not suffer alone is essential if we are to recover from our codependency. That's why to me COSA is a community of caring. Through these Twelve Step fellowships, members learn from one another. Together as a group and as individual members we carry the message to others who are hurting and hopeless. The bond between members is so great there are often no words to adequately describe it. We laugh with one another and weep with one another. We encourage each other and celebrate the opening of new doors in our lives. COSA is many things to its members. In my mind it is a community of caring. What is COSA to you? Answers will be published in upcoming issues of BALANCE. Share your thoughts with us! ✱

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## STORYTIME

**I** thought I was actually fighting for my own self-worth; that is why I so desperately wanted people to like me. I thought their liking me was a comment on me, but it was a comment on them," the journal entry begins. It is dated 1990. I have started the entry with this paragraph from a book I've been reading.

"Today I have to attend a meeting," I continued to write, "a large board meeting, where there will probably be 300 to 400 angry citizens. I will keep this thought in front of me. It is very important for me to remember today and every day: what others think of me is a reflection of what they are, where they are with self, and what they think of self - it is not any reflection of me.

"In group we use the little phrase, 'What you think of me is none of my business.' Hugh Prather's reminder from *Notes to Myself* is also good for codependents. We need true statements like this to stay focused on self and what I think of me."

Reading back over these entries nearly two years later, I remember the evening well. Often I had to recall the words I'd read and written hours earlier. Recently, I used the same paragraph when I attended a school activity. My husband attended with me for the first time since his arrest in 1987. My shame base still feared the criticism. This simple reflection has helped me through difficult situations like this one time and time again.

I turn the pages and find this entry: "I was feeling so good today, then I went shopping for greeting cards. I left the store filled with sadness. I realized the sad feeling as I looked through the greeting cards. As I read them I felt so displaced. I felt the loss. I felt the emptiness.

"I arrived at my group early and decided to read my daily meditation

and write until the others arrived. I opened the meditation book to find a reading on friends.

"Friends...I have just sent a birthday card to my niece, two years older than me. We were friends through school. All the cards talked about the wonderful person she had always been, but I feel deserted by her. I shared with her what her father did to me, and things just don't seem the same anymore. There was some distance before because I chose recovery over divorce. Now there is more distance. The cards didn't fit.

"I tried to find a card for my sister. They all praised her codependent behavior. ('You do so much for others...You are always there,' they said.) I don't want to praise her codependence, but I would like to wish her a happy birthday. As I looked I began to wonder whether I am the one that has nothing close and real or if the world is in a fantasyland. It seems so hard to find cards that say what I am feeling.

"In the reading it asks, *Who knows us better than a good friend?* That tells me I have never, until COSA, really had a good friend. No one has ever known me completely, until COSA. At this moment, I am grieving the loss of never having a true friend as I was growing up; yet, the positive part of what I am feeling is that each new friendship in recovery is such a true, pure gift. I really experienced no losses as the program promises. I had nothing to lose.

"I will grieve my losses whenever I need to grieve. I will recognize my gains, my newness inside after each period of grief. I am recognizing what is happening in me faster. That is true growth for me. I was able to name my greeting card sadness before I even left the store. That is growth!"

-Journal Entries

## STORYTIME

## CONVENTION NEWS

The Louisville COSA and SAA groups are jointly planning the 1993 National Convention, scheduled for May 28-31. Friday will be set aside for business meetings, to include the first COSA delegate conference and our National Steering Committee report.

Registration forms will be in the next issue of **BALANCE**. Inserted in this issue is a Request for Presenters. Place trust in your Higher Power and consider this opportunity to serve the COSA fellowship. Please be willing to share your experience, strength and hope with others. Feel free to make as many copies of the form as your group may need.



*Be Still  
and Know  
What Peace  
There May Be  
in Silence...*

*-from "Desiderata"*

## IdeaLink

### Recovery Can Be Fun!

COSA and SAA of Kalamazoo area decided to try to put some balance of fun along with fellowship into our programs. We scheduled two summer picnics, one in July and one in August, giving everyone a chance to attend one or both dates. We picked the *only* two sunny Saturdays of this past summer!

Everyone who attended seemed to enjoy themselves. We all brought a dish to pass and our own family's meat. Some people even tried waterskiing since we had the use of a boat. It was great to see whole families enjoying themselves and their friends.

We learned recovery can be fun for everybody. We're now planning a fall get-together, and we hope other COSA/SAA fellowships will do the same. Try some healthy fellowship; it's wonderful!

*-Pat B., Kalamazoo COSA*

## Confessions of a Velcro Woman

She hadn't wanted to lose herself this time. But these guys that came into her life were irresistible. She could see them coming. Could pick them out of a crowd of a hundred men like a heat-seeking missile. It was as if they each had the opposing strips of Velcro and became attached. Within seconds she knew what the scenario would be. It was as if she got lost in these relationships. His goals became everything. She wouldn't even remember her goals. It was like evaporating into his interests. To do anything but stick together seemed impossible, but the eventual tearing apart was excruciating.

But whether attached or unattached, the Velcro Woman felt inside her a black hole of emptiness. She had tried to fill it up with drink and food. Thought that the next Velcro Man that came along would fill it up for her. But while physically attached, Velcro Men never seemed to really emotionally connect. And all the while her life was out of control. The dog needed heart worm pills, it was hard to organize the kids lunch money every morning. Her life was a mess.

This would be a nice story if a Fairy Godmother had come to the Velcro Woman and said, "Hey, this is the way it is." It didn't happen that way. One day the Velcro woman decided she needed to get in shape – a mid-life

crisis or something. She took herself for a walk. It felt nice. She started to give herself a walk every day. A few weeks of that and she decided to detach from the latest Velcro Man. It was as if doing one nice, self-caring thing for herself gave her the power to do another good thing for herself.

It was just the beginning. The next year she actually started having some women friends. The year after that she discovered she could sing, and her music poured out. She was able to feel all the emotions through her music that she never could with a Velcro Man. And she learned to give herself time for things she loved. The next time she saw a Velcro Man across the room and the high-drama feeling started, she called her friends. She called them the next day and the next, until the feeling passed.

The day came when she knew she had a choice. She didn't have to get stuck on a Velcro Man. It took a long time, but finally she learned how to have people in her life and have herself, too. And when the Velcro Woman learned that secret, she changed her name to the Velvet Woman. And to think learning to love herself had started with doing just one nice thing.

*"Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."* – Goethe

*–Ann Essling is a writer on the staff of Dr. Patrick Carnes. Dr. Carnes, author of Out of the Shadows, has just completed the second edition of A Gentle Path: A Guidebook Through the Twelve Steps.*

## BALANCE

PO Box 14654  
Louisville, KY 40214

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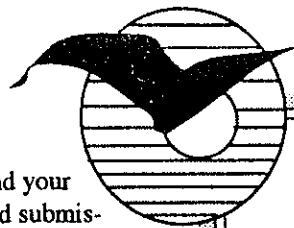
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Personal stories,  
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welcome. Let's make  
BALANCE work!



**For more  
information  
on COSA:**

Minnesota  
InterGroup  
PO Box 14537  
Minneapolis,  
MN 55414

# STEPS OF FAITH LEAPS OF COURAGE

1993 SAA/COSA National Convention Committee

P.O. Box 4864, Louisville, KY 40204-0864 (502)266-0757

Traveling Discovering Intimacy		Sober
Measuring Progress		Sexual Anorexia/ Acting In
Sponsorship	The Steps of Faith/Leaps of courage Convention Committee is currently seeking volunteers and recommendations for presenters, panel participants and speakers. We welcome new and past presenters. We suggest that the presenter have a year in the fellowship, as well as the support of a sponsor or group.	Female or Male Sexuality
Couples in Recovery		Prison/ Institutional Outreach
Long-Term Sobriety	Speakers or presenters may attend their session of the conference without registering for the conference but if they wish to participate in other portions of the conference, they must register. We are unable to offer honoraria or travel expenses to participants. Our inability should in no way discourage any group from raising funds to sponsor sending a speaker.	Writing for SAA
Early Sobriety		Healthy Sexuality
Setting Boundaries	Refer to the list of possible SAA or CoSA topics. Feel free to add to it. If you are a professional in the field, your participation is welcome but the National Service Office of SAA has requested that you not give a presentation. We are sorry for anyone whom this excludes but unfortunately this change has been forced upon us.	Twelve-Step Work
Tools of Recovery		Relapse
Starting Meetings	Proposals should be sent to the program committee before January 15, 1993. Proposals received after that time will be used only if space is available. The committee reserves the right to decline any proposal for any reason. You will be notified by the committee as soon as decisions are made on or about March 15.	Spirituality
Intergroup Development		Overcoming Shame
Making Amends	This is an important function of the conference which serves to bring SAA's and CoSA's from all over the country together.	Forgiveness
Doing Your First Step	Please complete the form on the reverse side and send it to: Steps of Faith/Leaps of Courage, Louisville SAA Intergroup, P.O. Box 4864, Louisville, KY 40204-0864	Sexual Codependency
Doing a Fourth & Fifth Step		Fear vs. Faith
		Prayer and Meditation
		Family Recovery