

January 1994

ISSUE #1



BALANCE

THE COSA NEWSLETTER

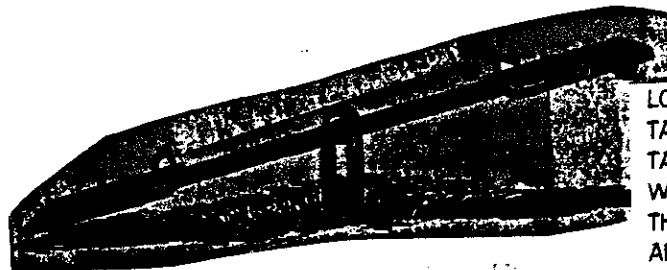
Welcome to January 1994. In this issue we will repeat a few articles. Below you will find "Step One", written as it was in the first issue printed. Our goal is to present a step a month through 1994. You will find sharings from others that you will probably identify with, updates of news in our COSA world, meeting and recovery ideas from other groups, and much more. If by chance, the newsletter does not seem to meet your needs, write to us, contribute with your sharing, your journey, your recovery struggles and successes. We want the newsletter to supply strength to you. We also want you to feel growth and strength by giving back to your newsletter, your group.

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.

JANUARY 1994, WE HAVE TWELVE WONDERFUL MONTHS AHEAD OF US. WE KNOW ABOUT RECOVERY. WE CAN REACH OUT TO OUR RECOVERY RESOURCES. WE CAN USE THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS TO STRIVE FOR BALANCE OR WE CAN STAY ON OUR TEETER TOTTER. IT'S OUR JOURNEY. WE CAN TAKE AS



LONG AS WE WANT. NO ONE WILL TAKE OUR INVENTORY. WE WILL TAKE OUR OWN. REMEMBER THE WORDS OF OUR PROGRAM, "LET THERE BE NO GOSSIP OR CRITICISM AMONG US, INSTEAD LET THE UNDERSTANDING, LOVE AND PEACE OF THE PROGRAM GROW IN EACH OF US ONE DAY AT A TIME."

POWERLESSNESS AND UNMANAGEABILITY

Fear and shame are the two biggest obstacles I face as I attempt the first step. Shame has been my constant companion over the years, and it seems very big and powerful as I write. Fear is here with me too. Fear of what you will think of me once you know about my life. There is also some anger and resentment that a program that requires me to admit I am powerless. I've always considered myself to be an efficient, organized person who "managed" life quite well, even if that meant completely ignoring my feelings about the crises that surrounded me. So now I find it difficult to admit that my life is and was out of my control. The only things that motivate me to take this step are the terrible pain of my present situation and the realization that my past life of denial and pretending was destructive to me and those around me.

I have chosen to work the First Step beginning with the second part- admitting that my life has become unmanageable. This part seems easier to me, and I hope that doing this part will give me the strength to take on the first part.

In October of last year the police called to say that our oldest son, just fifteen, had been implicated in a number of neighborhood sex crimes. We were court-ordered into family therapy. In April of the following year I became deeply depressed and began seeing a therapist on my own. After about ten sessions, my therapist asked to talk to my husband. After that session on the last Wednesday of June, my husband asked to talk to me away from the children. What he revealed to me was his history of compulsive sexual behavior that included several exposures, sex with prostitutes, numerous affairs, one-

night stands with pickups, and an addiction to pornography and masturbation. I was devastated.

At six o'clock that same day the police called to say that they had evidence that our son had reoffended. We took him to the police station and left him there. I knew he would never live with us again. I was beside myself and weeping uncontrollably. I went to see the pastor of our church and stayed with her all night.

Over the next few days I talked to my therapist and our family therapist. What I learned was that both my husband and my son were sex addicts. They explained to me that I had to stop trying to solve their problems and work on my own codependency instead. They suggested I attend a group called COSA. I called and attended a meeting the next week. I was too ashamed to say anything about my life. But I kept coming back and slowly I began to feel a trust level with the group that I had never felt before. And I began to share and to feel the love and warmth of the group.

That is the story of how I ADMITTED that my life had become unmanageable. Actually my life had been unmanageable for a long time. In fact my life had been one long series of crises. Two-and-a-half years after I was married the police drove on our farm to tell my husband that a young girl in the neighboring town had reported him exposing himself to her on the street in the middle of the day. He went to therapy for a year, told me the problem had been solved, and I believed him. Two-and-a-half years later we went bankrupt with two preschool children. While we were living in Peru a few years later my husband gave me a case of hepatitis B after a business trip to the

Andes. I repeatedly discovered our son setting fires in our home. Then, when he was 14, he told me about how he was being sexual with his sister who was three years younger. I went to see two therapists about his problems, but was only too happy to hear them say that I was a preoccupied Mother and that he was a normal teenager experimenting with different behaviors. That same year I had suffered from a miscarriage and a case of clamydia. My husband swore it was as a result of the only time he was unfaithful to me and I was only too happy to believe him. I had suffered from depression and practiced self-mutilation most of my married life. I had increasingly isolated myself. I abandoned creative endeavors like writing, playing the piano and guitar, and crafts. I had abandoned the vibrant spiritual life I had had as a young adult because I thought God had abandoned me. And so it is with desperation that I admit that my life is unmanageable and seek the help of my COSA GROUP and my HIGHER POWER.

Now I am faced with the hard work of identifying what my codependent behaviors are and learning healthier ways of relating to people. In order to begin my recovery, one of the things I had to do was admit that I had been powerless over my childhood experiences in my abusive family. I was powerless over my Mother's physical and verbal abuse. I could not control her temper nor could I have prevented her from beating me and my siblings with a steel rod. I had been powerless over my Dad's sexual addiction and his use of my young body to satisfy his own sexual desires. I had been powerless when my oldest brother raped me at age six while my Dad watched. I was powerless over my

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family's threats about what would happen if I told the secret.

My next step was to admit that I was powerless over my husband's and my son's sex addiction. I cannot prevent their acting out nor am I responsible for it. I learned in COSA that I can stop carrying their shame anytime I want to. The way I have come to understand it, my codependency to sex addiction began when I was victimized by my Dad's sex addiction, intensified itself in the insanity of my relationship with my husband while the major part of my acting-out was directed to my oldest son.

In the five months I have attended COSA I have come to identify many codependent behaviors that I have not been able to control on my own. Some examples are the following:

1) My enormous shame over my inadequacy as a mother, a shame that becomes totally obsessive and destroys my ability to live in the present.

2) Compromising my own moral values because I was so afraid my husband would find me sexually inadequate. Examples include going to X-rated movies with him and allowing him to make sexual comments and gestures to me in front of the children.

3) Accepting degrading and disrespectful comments and behavior from him.

4) Denying my own feelings and perceptions in order to maintain the facade of normal family life.

5) Taking responsibility for everything that went on in our family thereby robbing others of the chance to be responsible people who make their own choices and shoplifting their self-esteem.

6) Trying to control my son's behavior in ways that were not age-appropriate. Even when he was a teen, I tried to control what he ate, what he wore, how he combed his hair and how much sleep he got. As I saw him grow up to be more and

more like his Dad, I became more and more determined to single-handedly turn his life around.

7) Blaming my husband for my unhappiness and trying to even the scores with him by making nasty digs at him in front of others.

8) Nagging while failing to set clear limits.

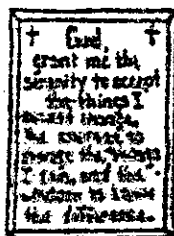
9) Withholding my anger and thereby depriving those around me of a true sense of who I was and who they were.

10) Occasionally flying into a rage when my "nice" attempts to control did not work. One of the things I am most ashamed of is that on one occasion I threatened my son when he defiantly refused to turn off the TV and do the dishes.

I realized that without the COSA program I would be powerless to control these behaviors. For example, even when I promised myself that the next month I was going to stop supervising my son's paper route and allow him to suffer the consequences of his procrastination, the next month I would be in there nagging and controlling again.

I thank this group from the bottom of my heart for all the support you've given me as I take this first step to recovery from codependency. Thanks to all who have spent time on the phone with me. Special thanks to my sponsor, Elaine, who has given me constant support and nurturing. And so I admit to you, my friends in COSA, that I am powerless over my codependency to sex addiction and that my life has become unmanageable.

anonymous



Henry Ford said:
"Whatever you
have you must
either use
or lose..."

AS I LOOK AT THE ABOVE QUOTE BY HENRY FORD, I THINK OF MY RECOVERY PROCESS. THAT TOO IS A USE OR LOSE PROCESS FOR ME I KEEP THE STEPS FIRST IN MY MIND AND IN A JOURNALING EACH DAY. WHEN I GET TIRED OR BUSY OR WHATEVER I DO TO GET AWAY FROM THE STEPS AND RECOVERY, I CAN FEEL MYSELF START TO LOSE THOSE TOOLS WHICH TREASURE SO VERY MUCH. IT IS STILL A MYSTERY TO ME AS TO WHY I WOULD LET GO OF SOMETHING SO VERY PRECIOUS, MY RECOVERY, MY STEPS. YET I DO JUST THAT.

OFTEN. THE PAIN BRINGS ME BACK, REMINDING ME THAT THERE IS A NEW WAY, A WAY THAT I NEVER KNEW BEFORE BEING INTRODUCED TO TWELVE STEP RECOVERY. I AM A GRATEFULLY RECOVERING CO-DEPENDENT. CO-DEPENDENT WHO SEEMS TO HAVE ALL THE TOOLS, YET OFTEN I SET THEM ASIDE AND TRY ALL OVER AGAIN TO DO IT "MY WAY". THANK YOU HIGHER POWER FOR GIVING ME THE STRENGTH AND COURAGE TO PICK UP MY TOOLS EACH TIME I LAY THEM ASIDE.

11/21, Michigan

COSA Literature Available

To order literature, write Minnesota Cosa,
PO Box 14537
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Send an order noting the quantity & cost of each requested item. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. Please include postage and handling, according to the following order totals.
Postage & Handling: .75 for an order of .20 to \$2.00; \$2.00 for orders totaling \$2.01 to \$9.00; \$3.00 for orders from \$9.01 to \$30.00; and \$5.50 for orders over \$30.01.

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COSA Welcome brochure---.20 each
How to start a group--\$2.00
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COSA Stories Vol.I--\$3.50
COSA Stories Vol.II--\$3.50
COSA Medallions--\$3.00 ea (6 mo., years 1-10)
National List of Meetings--\$3.00
Laminated COSA cards with Serenity Prayer, 12 Steps & 12 Traditions/our logo--\$1.00

Send contributions to support your newly formed COSA/NSO to:

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To learn more about what your NSO is doing, refer to your Vol 2 #4 issue of your newsletter "Balance"

**Remember:
It's Your
Newsletter!**

**BALANCE is in need
more stories and other
submissions to continue
its planned publication
schedule.**

QUEST FOR SERENITY RECLAIMING OUR TRUE SELVES 1ST ANNUAL COSA/NSO NATIONAL CONVENTION

DATE: MAY 27-30, 1994

LOCATION: PHOENIX, ARIZONA

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

SHERI T.

4601 N. 56TH STREET

PHOENIX ARIZONA 85018

602 947-7370

CONCURRENT SAA/NSO NATIONAL CONVENTION

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