

BALANCE

MAY 1998

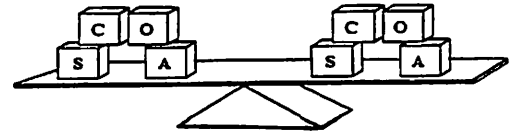
"STEP FIVE"

"Admitted to God, to our selves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

Did you notice what I did? I was preparing the April issue the end of March. I submitted on the third step. I like to keep the step and the month the same. Is that control, or order in my life? I'm not sure. It does seem easier to remember what step has or hasn't been shared.

Anyway, here we are with the May issue and step five. It feels like we just omitted step four, that fearless moral inventory. That would probably be the only way to do a fearless step four (just omit it). Yet I wonder, if the pain is worth the omission. When I try to avoid or omit, I feel the pain. I think of something I heard Pat C. say in one of his presentations. *"The worst pain you will ever feel is the pain of not accepting change"*. I think I feel that same pain when I avoid a step, an omission, or change of any kind.

Well, let's say, I've completed my step four. I've listed those things that I feel good about and also those things that bring me shame, guilt, sadness, fear, and anger.



Once that is finished, I can look at step five.

Step five for me has always been a very healing step. I approach it with fear. Fear of being rejected for sharing what I'm about to share. I chose my listener (receiver) carefully. I want a person who is going to listen and be honest with their feed back. Yet, I don't want judgment, shaming statements or rigid advice.

This step mentions God. I always need to go to God first. Even though God already knows everything, I think He wants me to humble myself (obey) and say it to him. When I do, I receive freedom and strength to proceed in sharing with someone else.

I have experienced several fifth steps on my journey. Let's see as I sit here and count in my head, I think I have shared six fifth steps. I have never regretted any of the sharings. I always begin with fear and apprehension and walk away feeling a weight lifted from my shoulders. I feel the healing freedom of my work.

The steps are in perfect order. If you have never looked at your fourth step, consider it today. Decide who you feel safe sharing it with and watch the progress and healing in your program.

Ila D.

Abstinence

What is abstinence in COSA? This may vary with each person but these are some bottom line behaviors.

My attention and focus will not be on what my partner is doing or whether he/she is acting out. My attention will be upon myself. What am I doing that is destructive and unhealthy? How can I change and what steps do I need to take? I need to take back my power and not allow anyone else to decide for me what I should think, say or do. As a COSA, we will stop blaming and belittling our partner or others and admit to ourselves our own contribution to the situation.

I am responsible for my own safety. If I am in an unsafe situation, I will leave.

I will provide for my own well-being and take care of my body. I will learn to think well of myself.

If I am engaged in any unacceptable sexual behavior or relationships that are destructive, I will take steps to terminate these. I will allow the addict to own and take responsibility for his/her behaviors and I will own and take responsibility for mine.

I will stop thinking of myself as a victim. I have choices and I do not need to let anyone make decisions for me.

Marjorie L.

"THE COSA HAMPTON, VIRGINIA, 1998 CONVENTION MIRACLE!"

Does my Higher Power (whom I call God) work miracles? If you consider the fact that I have not been able to attend a COSA Convention, and that I have wanted to so much, than YES, He has worked a miracle. this coming May 1998, the COSA National Convention will be held in Hampton, Virginia. Hampton is at my back door (Yorktown, where Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington at the end of the Revolutionary War). So I am ten minutes away from the NEST COSA CONVENTION. Was I delighted when I heard that the NSO of COSA had voted to have the convention here, locally.

It has occurred to me that many readers may think that I am enthusiastically feeling the power and love of God. the state of Virginia at one time had two COSA meetings, and one was in Arlington, near Washington, DC, one in Virginia Beach. When I discovered that my second husband has a sexual addiction, I wanted so badly to be able to attend a COSA meeting. However, the meeting in Virginia Beach was no longer functioning. Also the drive to Arlington was across the state and quite a drive. however, my husband had joined SAA as there are several of those meetings to attend here, and during that time, he and I went on a business convention held in Columbus, Ohio. so Columbus was where I had the opportunity to attend my first COSA meeting. I cannot express in words what my heart felt over being able to attend

this gathering. the greeting I received that evening was so loving and caring. The relief and release of so many emotions was a soothing balm for my spirit as they reached out to me so openly that I felt that I was now able to release all the fears and pain of the place that I was in at the time--that of being co-dependent to a sexual addict. Hope was mine for the first time.

Now I had been married before and divorced a sexual addict and possible alcoholic. I then started attending 12 step meetings consisting of Alanon and ACOA about four nights a week. However, it was just a start, as I had no real understanding of what it meant to be a co-dependent, let alone know anything about sexual addiction. Yet the seed had been planted and was growing; however, I stopped attending all but an ACOA meeting-alcoholism in my immediate family, but my family was dysfunctional. So I was "in process", YES! After being divorced, I dated and finally met my current husband, who seemed to be the "ideal man". Right away, I am sure that the astute reader sees the folly and fallacy in my thinking process. I gradually stopped attending my meeting and we eventually married. As time went on, I realized that something was wrong within my marriage. So I prayed for guidance (yes, the process was working). It was given and I confronted my husband and he recognized the he had a sexual addiction and validated me and he started attending meetings within a

month and has continued now for over three years. I could not find a COSA meeting, so I occasionally attended any 12 step meeting for support. However, I could not speak of my husband's particular addiction and I felt such a need for a group where I could do that. Eventually, a meeting started in Virginia Beach and I started attending. I also attempted to start a COSA meeting in Hampton, VA; but, due to attending a local university which sometimes required Tuesday night courses, along with "no shows" for the meeting, I finally had to close the meeting. However, I started attending a CODA meeting and there I encountered finally, a group that was to give me a strong foundation for recovery. I am sure that "timing" was an issue here. I also found that not discussing my husband's addiction, as I did not feel comfortable doing that in this meeting, enabled me to "look at my stuff" and focus on what was healthy behavior for me. I believe that it was part of god's infinite wisdom that this happened as I feel that this took the focus off my husband and put it on me, where it belonged. I experienced the presence of God in CODA and found the members willing to grow and learn. So there is where, I believe, that my "real progress" started. From that point on, I worked "my recovery program" and stopped trying to control/manipulate people and events. It has been one of the greatest gifts and blessings of my life. I feel peace and

serenity as long as I stay in the present, and in the presence of God. It is a journey for me and one that I no longer resist or resent, but thank God that He cared enough to help me along this "journey" toward recovery. I realize that it is a lifelong pilgrimage, and I cherish it. I no longer need to ask "why me". but now I ask "What wonderful challenge is next God?", as I have learned that the journey is one of the most meaningful aspects of my life. It matters not what trials I face, but how I choose to face them. Each challenge or trial has a lesson of love for me if I choose to accept it that way. The many caring people who have listened to me and guided me with their experience is a blessing. The members of the 12 step groups who have chosen "growth & recovery", and who have shared that at meetings, have helped me tremendously. so strangely enough, both COSA and other 12 step groups, and their love, along with the adversities and trials, have helped me along my path of "wholeness and renewed spiritual health". I have been the local contact for the NSO(COSA) and the Hampton COSA convention 1998 for about a year now. I am honored to be of whatever help I can be to COSA and our recovery program--the 12 steps. I have had to drop out of school due to physical reason, and I am thinking of re-opening the COSA Hampton meeting. The other thing that I would like to mention is the rapport that has been established with the local SAA 12 step groups(Regional Inner Group)

as they have consistently reached out to be of help to COSA locally, to the extent of allowing COSA here to be listed on their HELP LINE, which they (SAA) financially support. This has been a wonderful thing to watch happen-and that is, two different 12 step groups helping each other, without any interference by either group in the meetings or running of the other group. Here I am speaking of COSA and SAA. It has worked here in our area as I have also seen it work between AA and Alanon with their combined Sunday Brunch Breakfast meetings. It seems that here the relationship between SAA and COSA is one of helpfulness and compassion. Another miracle perhaps! It has been a long and painful journey to discover what I needed to do in order to have the peace and serenity that I know that God has wanted for me to experience as He wants for all of us. However, I would not change my path thus far, as I have finally reached a destination where I am growing more healthy and recovering "myself". I hope that my story gives hope to those of you who are seeking help with your "challenges", and I can assure you that the "recovery program" works even if you cannot find a COSA meeting in your area. Attend other 12 step groups, as they will benefit you also. I look forward to attending the Hampton COSA convention 1998 and experiencing all the love that awaits me there. I pray that many of you who are hurting and those of you who are also

growing with "new knowledge" about how to confront your fears and pain. find a 12 step meeting and are able to "journey" to the COSA 1998 convention. Of one thing, I am sure, and that is "there is hope" in the program. So take good care of yourselves and come join us in 1998 at the Hampton COSA Convention. I want to see all of you and experience that joyful day. May God bless you all. Yours in recovery, Sandy K., VA.

[WANTED]

1999 CONVENTION: Now accepting bids. Bids can be submitted for combined COSA/SAA convention or a separate COSA convention. Needs to consider when preparing bid: accommodations for 100 people, mtg. rooms, prepared meals, easily accessible from airport.

Mid Winter Retreat: Host needed. Scheduled for President's weekend 1999.

Literature: Topics & sharings to be converted to approved literature by the literature committee

Donations: Regular support by individuals and groups for continued service work, communications and support.

Phone Volunteers: Three people for picking up phone messages and returning calls. Expenses are reimbursed. Personal rewards far exceed time involved.

To reply to any of the above needs:
Write: NSO-COSA
9337 B-KATY FRWY. #142
HOUSTON, TX 77024

Recovery Tools-

The Serenity Prayer as a recovery tool:

When I find myself filled with anxiety, conflict, and obsessing about a situation in my life, I have found value in using the ideas expressed in the Serenity Prayer to more fully understand my circumstances and clarify my options. This process always gives me guidance in seeing what I need to do.

I begin by writing:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change-
Then I write about all of the things in this situation I cannot change.
I spend as long as I need, and enter into the problem with an approach of contemplation. Once this is complete, I write:*

The courage to change the things I can:

I open myself to really looking into what I can change, and during this process, I become much more clear and aware of my own feelings, emotions, fears, and possibilities. This stage always reveals for me resources I didn't previously recognize-strengths, ideas, healing tools, a new approach, letting go, and becoming willing to use these gifts.

When this part is finished, I move to:

The wisdom to know the difference. This is the place for me to write expressions of my gratitude to the creator for revealing to me this wisdom and to reaffirm my faith that using the Serenity Prayer is this way always gives me the guidance I need, and usually in ways more powerful than I ever imagined

Nancy B.



[Personal reflections]

My first year or so in COSA I was very impatient during the business section of our meetings. I remember thinking, "What does this Intergroup stuff have to do with me? When can we get to the check-ins?" Slowly, I got involved with service work on a group level: setting up chairs, giving step talks, serving as the trusted servant for the meeting, making financial contributions, and helping to organize a few retreats. And this was good. All these things helped me to feel a part of the group.

It wasn't until my second year that I started to see COSA as something bigger than the group I attended. I began doing service work for our area Intergroup. In Minnesota we have a COSA phone number. COSA volunteers take turns keeping the phone log, which means calling back all the people who leave recorded messages and sometimes mailing them information. Our National Service Organization for COSA also provides this service for the entire country. Ever wonder who you talked to when you called to find your first meeting? It was a volunteer. A regular COSA person just like you! This is a wonderful way to provide service to our fellowship and volunteers are always needed.

The neat thing about service is that you start out thinking you are going to help someone else. And you do. But the bonus is, you also help yourself. You can't help but learn and grow when you involve yourself with others in this program. I know that prior to recovery, I couldn't say no. I took on way too much responsibility. But now I can say yes and then learn about my capabilities, my energy, and my time. I can make little decisions as I go about how much is too much, what feels right, what doesn't. It's valuable information about me. And I can't think of a safer place to work on it. I also can't think of a better group to serve.

Barb C. MN.