

BALANCE



JULY 1998

This issue is going to include three steps. At our conference in Virginia, many shared that they use the step work in the newsletter for step topic in their groups. Since the board requested we publish only every other month for now, we will include steps 6, 7 and 8. This month you receive the gift of two views of step six. Your fellow COSA members have been busy sharing with you.

If finances change, the board may possibly go back to a monthly issue. We apologize to those of you who were expecting a June issue.

~ Ila D.

“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character”

SIX

At a regional conference I attended in May, I was encouraged to move on in the Steps. I had worked up through Step Five in COSA two times. Then I joined another fellowship and did steps one-two-three. I have felt stuck on Steps Four and Five for three years, and it is time to move on to Step Six. I don't have to work the steps perfectly!

This week I spent a good chunk of time getting started on this step; it's wonderful to feel motivated and challenged and back in action! Unfortunately I have to drop my sponsor and find a new one, because she is still on steps 4 and 5 also. I need to work with someone who has already worked step 6. Oh well!

One morning I got to sit in the shop for three hours while my car's brakes were replaced. I read about Step Six in both the Al-Anon and A.A. 12&12 (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions). Then I wrote a page about what I perceived my tasks to be, and then wrote six pages about my defects (Since then I read the brief paragraph or two in the A.A. "Big Book" and picked up a couple more ideas).

My perception is that I need to make sure my groundwork in Steps 1-5 has been solidly laid, including writing a list of all the defects that were uncovered in Step Four. So far I just pulled defects from the 12 & 12 — things I know about myself. Next I need to go back to my old Step Four work and pull the rest of the list together. My fourth step was a long process, using anger as a starting point to get down to my part in my relations with others. If I am not certain whether or not to call part of my inventory a defect of character, I can refer to the prayer for Step Seven in the A.A. Big Book. It mentions anything that gets in the way of my usefulness to God or my fellows.

My hope is that by the time I have a complete list of defects, I will have a new sponsor. I can share my list of defects with her (it will be like doing 4 and 5 again, but much more succinctly).

Then I think my task will be to ask myself what benefits I get from holding on to each defect, and if I am ready and willing to let go of this defect and its skewed benefits. Am I ready to let God work in this area and give me a new perspective? Even if I don't know what will happen?

If there's anything I won't let go of, I need to ask God for the willingness.

Once I become ready to turn over most of my defects, then I'll be ready for Step Seven.

~ Ruth B.

REVIEWING STEP SIX

“Were Entirely Ready To Have God Remove All These Defects Of Character”

When first contemplating Step 6, again the word *all* jumped out at me, grabbed me by the throat and appeared very large. It has been a time since I really thought literally about this step. I then, while choking, became concerned that perhaps I was neglecting it in my daily life. I return now to the Twelve & Twelve for some insight.

First, let us be reminded that our author suggests it is no small job for “any person capable of enough willingness and honesty to try repeatedly Step 6 on *all* his/her faults — without any reservations whatever.” There, the grip loosens on my throat. He goes on to say that one who can do it “has come a long way spiritually.” The feeling I get from this is that it is hard to do and that our goal might be to pursue this good end, rather than demanding it from ourselves. For me, I am reminded that when I demand, unless it is with pure non-manipulative thinking, I seldom get what I'm wanting. Just ask my husband or the Universe. Furthermore, pursuing, and if not already willing, praying for it, is a step in the God direction. I think it is difficult to be willing to remove some of my non-benefitting practices (so much better to me than defects)

(Continued on page 2)

REVIEWING STEP SIX

(continued)

SIX

because I get a "pay off" from some of these old traits. I pray now to become more and more willing every day. Yet, the word *all* still has hold of me.

Not to worry, the author continues to say that most of our difficulties don't fall under the huge issues, like co-sex addiction, for when ready we want this out of our life. Rather, some of the smaller issues trip us up. He says, normally each human being wants to eat, reproduce, be somebody in the society of his fellows, be safe and secure as he/she tries to attain these things, and that God made us this way naturally. In other words, he gave us instinct to live well. This being so, we believe that God doesn't completely remove from us all our natural desires. Just perhaps the desires that are not natural: more, unrealistic, unhealthy, addictive and negative. Furthermore, A.A.'s idea is that Step 6 states "the best possible attitude one can take in order to make a beginning on this life time job." This is calming information for my perfectionistic, pleasing side and dangerous for my abusive side. I must be careful not to, "I'm-only-human" my opportunities away. Upon reviewing this, the *all* has let go of my throat. I don't think I've been too far off because I incorporate in my daily life questions. For example, when I go against my values or wanted values, my stomach gets sick and my neck and shoulders get tight, and I am reminded, rather forced, to ask, "what did I just do and was I appropriate?"

My hope is that this goal stays with me daily. That I actively pursue being my best, with good, loving and Godly conscious. That I love myself throughout, being able to share and enjoy this good life with you, the world.

Have a good day!

~Michele Y.

"Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings"

SEVEN

This step will be the most important part of our cleansing process and will prepare us for the journey ahead of us. In the first six steps, we were becoming aware, really aware, of our situation, who we really are, looking at the secrets oftentimes hidden in denial. Many of us are meeting ourselves for the first time. Now Step Seven allows us to turn to our Higher Power and ask to be released from those parts that have been causing us pain and dysfunction all of our lives.

My husband and I recently completed Step Six in a couple workbook. At the completion of Step Six, we were asked to list the people and behaviors that we planned to change. We were to follow up by listing the method we planned to use to begin our change. With most behaviors and people, our method of preparing to change was prayer. That's really Step Seven, "asking God or H.P. to remove our shortcomings." It is only our shortcomings that keep us from becoming ready to change. As we pray for our feelings to change and our "preparedness" to happen, we notice the best work happens for us when we include the words "Bless them, Change me," "Bless Joe, Change Me," "Bless Sally,

Change me." After praying this prayer of preparation for just three days, I saw one person on my preparation list. For almost five minutes, I felt love for this person, then all my old feeling came back — BUT FIVE MINUTES. That was a miracle. I haven't felt anything close to pleasant toward this person in a long time. I was amazed. Just three days of preparing and I had five minutes of love. I will continue to pray. I will become prepared as Step Seven suggests.

I like looking back on my step work and seeing the progress. I look forward to new growth, new revelation, more healing that will happen if I continue to work the steps. I know I won't survive if I stop working the steps. I was slowly but surely killing myself before I found this twelve step process of recovery. Now I can relax and know the process will be positive as long as step work is part of my life. I don't have to hold my breath and hope I become changed. I will become changed by working the steps.

I must always add that "Humbly" does not mean humiliate myself. I humble myself before God/H.P. (listen, wait, obey, be open). He will guide me in removing my shortcomings. He will prepare me for my next piece of recovery. I obey my Higher Power by listening to what comes next in my recovery process.

~Ila D.

"Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all."

EIGHT

The first time I read this step, I simply didn't want to do it. How could anyone "think" I had anything to make amends for. I was okay. It was the addict in my life that was the problem. As soon as he got his act together, I would be okay.

Today I see the many ways step work has guided me in keeping the focus on me. I am one of those addicts. Yes, my coaddiction is an addiction. I am an addict.

My first list needed to be a list of the harm I had placed upon myself. This too was new and different. I was a good codependent. I did not think of self. Others must come first (good family training).

Today, after experiencing the steps for almost ten years, I realize how much time I spend in preparation. Preparation starts when I admit my powerlessness. Preparation continues as I come to believe I can be restored. Then I learn to turn it over. That's much different than my old controlling way. More preparation happens as I make my step four inventory. Then I admit to myself, God, and another person the things I have discovered about myself thus far. Step six, I began to become ready to have God remove these defects. In seven, I ask God to remove my shortcomings.

I was never asked to make that step eight list without lots of preparation. As I said in the beginning, the first time I read through the steps I didn't like step eight. I hadn't completed any of the preparation steps. With the preparation, it becomes easier for me to see that I have harmed, and I do want to become willing to make amends. This program does work for me.

~Ila D.

Announcing the 1999 COSA Convention

Some big news from the May 1998 NSO/COSA board meetings is about our annual COSA convention. The 1999 convention was discussed for a good portion of Friday's business. Many, many opinions came out. Some of the thoughts expressed were:

"I don't want my kids to remember Memorial Day as the weekend Mommy and Daddy always went away." "It's more economical and fun to travel and attend convention with my partner." "We need to hold the convention in conjunction with SAA because the recovery is so valuable between COSAs and SAAs." "It's too big a job and we should never again expect any one area or COSA group to do all the work to put on a convention." "Why not try a totally separate COSA convention? It's just one year, one decision. We can always decide to hold convention with SAA in other years."

Someone pulled out a map to look for a city that would be easy for most of our fellowship to get to -- central, driving distance, and so on. That's how we picked **Chicago in June of 1999**. There are no local groups in Chicago that we know of so NSO/COSA is relying on a convention committee formed of board members and COSA members across the country. There are already five people on the convention committee, but we need more help. If you are interested, and I know some of you are, here's what we need:

***Convention chair or co-chairs:** Oversee the convention committees. ***Hospitality chair and committee members:** Provide refreshments for the hospitality room. ***Registration chair and committee members:** Keep track of registrations and staff the table. ***PR chair and committee members:** Work on the theme, logo, outreach, etc. ***Program committee members:** There's a chair already. Provide fun activities and tours as well as speakers and workshops. ***Facilities and Finance** are already covered.

Let's support this break from tradition and create a convention that will provide healing and fun for our COSA fellowship!

NSO Chair: Barb C.

WELCOME FELLOW TRAVELER

As I walk today
I open my heart
There's not doubt or fear
to tear it apart

My eyes as they rest
With thoughts so clear
memories of old or
sound that I hear.

Bring warm friendly faces
eyes sparkling bright
laughter is heard
as I keep you in sight.

You gave of your self
as precious and true
Hope, strength, compassion
to name just a few.

But the greatest of all
was acceptance and love
unconditionally you gave
accepted it was.

And those that are here
for the first time today
You will come to know them all
in a very special way.

With open hearts and listening ears
arms to surround you when smiles
turn to tears.

The laughter will come through
problems will seem small
While sharing their wisdom
their faith will come too.

For this is what I received
and the rest they gave
my thoughts and prayers are with you
tomorrow and today.

Kris A.

Survey on the annual COSA Convention

In an effort to serve the COSA fellowship, a new committee was formed at the May 1998 Board meeting called Focus 2000. One of the committee's purposes is to update the national COSA conventions to meet the needs of our fellowship. So, **we need your thoughts and opinion about the annual COSA convention.**

Please consider the following questions alone or with your group. Write out your ideas and mail them to the NSO/COSA address as input for the Focus 2000 and Convention Committees. You could also mail your ideas to the Balance for publication in this newsletter as a letter to the Editor.

We need to hear from YOU!

* Have you ever attended a national COSA convention? What did you like about it? What did you dislike?

* Do you plan to attend a national COSA convention in the future? Why or why not?

* What is important to you in a national convention? Consider date, location, length of convention, types of activities, cost, who participates, accommodations, and so on.

* How important is it to have a changing theme, logo and banner every year?

* How important is it to hold a national convention every year?

We need your input to accurately reflect the needs and wants of our COSA fellowship! Respond as quickly as you can because it takes a year or more to plan these national events. The year 2000 is even busier than normal for hotels and retreat centers. We want to change according to what you want, but it will take some time. The sooner we hear from you, the sooner any changes can be made. Thank you for your assistance in this process!

May The Force Be With You

The man was a bully. No doubt about it. "Lucky" me — I was picked for "secondary" customs inspection. Question after question he repeated. "What do you do for a living?" "What were you doing in Canada?"

"Visiting friends" ... "Visiting friends." I was tired.

He pushed hard. I cried. "Why are you CRYING?"

"I'm not used to being interrogated."

He got angrier.

"Here — this is everything I bought."

Each "gift" was neatly wrapped and in a small handled bag I pulled from my carry-on. It sat untouched where I'd placed it. He started with my purse. Even went through my wallet — a small zippered coin purse with credit cards and some cash. The contents of both lay before me. I thought back on the last two weeks — healing and spiritual time with my "partner" and four days I'd spent alone on a Vision Quest. I realized "there's nothing the 'Dark Side' can do to shake 'The Force' which had been rooted even deeper within me." Most of the contents of my carry-on now also lay before me. "I hope he felt like a REAL man when he got to the tampons ..." He suddenly paused, took my receipts and left. Back again -- I secretly regretted that he'd stopped short of opening the suitcase loaded with wet, grimy camp-

ing clothes. The ones that had been fermenting in plastic bags for the last three days.

"You may re-pack your bags and proceed."

I summoned all the dignity I could muster and picked up my stuff. I left feeling violated.

I got to the gate in time to board my connecting flight. A somewhat elderly man ahead was having trouble lifting something. He looked embarrassed and flustered. "May I help you?" I asked with empathy. A look of relief crossed his face. An annoyed line was now forming behind us. With some doing and patience, another passenger and I were able to unhook the two bags, collapse the wheeled carrier and stow it all in the overhead. With quiet emphatic grace, the man's wife thanked me in a heavy accent I didn't recognize. They acted as if NO ONE offered them assistance — EVER. How could that be? Helping took so little effort. That frozen moment — being of help and being helped — passed. I moved on to find my seat. Later I discovered that this simple act of compassion had somehow diffused my encounter with "the bully." I gave whispered "thanks" and noticed "The Force" had settled yet a little deeper within.

~Brenda Z.

Announcing the new NSO/COSA Board for 1998/1999

Executive Board Members

Barb C. (MN)	Chair
Burnet O. (TX)	Vice-Chair
Deb R. (IN)	Treasurer
Mary Ellen H. (TX)	Corresponding Secretary
Lisa W. (MI)	Recording Secretary

Board Members:

Ann R. (TX) • Bill Y. (KY)
 Carolyn S. (TX) • Claudine P. (TX)
 Kim S. (TX) • Ruth B. (NC)

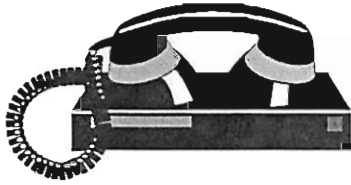
Congratulations and THANK YOU board members!

THE TWELVE STEPS OF COSA

1. We admitted we were powerless over our sexual codependency -- that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of *God as we understood God*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to *God*, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have *God* remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked *God* to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with *God as we understood God*, praying only for knowledge of *God's* will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our day-to-day living.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF COSA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon *COSA* unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving *God* as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The relatives or friends of sex addicts, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves a *COSA* group, provided that as a group, they have no other affiliation.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or *COSA* as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the friend or family member who still suffers. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps ourselves.
6. A *COSA* group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the *COSA* name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every *COSA* group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. *COSA* should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. *COSA*, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. *COSA* has no opinion on outside issues; hence the *COSA* name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all Program members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



Online Support

The address for the E-mail forum for Friends and Family members of people addicted to sex is:

Coanon-approval@MailingList.net

All letters are lower case except for the M & L. The M & L must be capital letters. Coanon is an E-mail support group. This list is closed for the group's safety. It is a 12-step group for people in COSA. S-Anon, Co-SLAA, or those with no meeting, may attend.

Please note the address change.

(Service work enhances my recovery)

When I began volunteering for the COSA National Phone Line three years ago, I noticed right away how thankful most callers were to hear the information I had to offer. As I continued to serve the phone line I found myself learning to be more patient and be a better listener. The callers have helped me realize that the knowledge and experience I have gathered over the years is valuable. I have also learned that it's okay to make mistakes, to admit them promptly, to correct them as best I can and then let them go. My recovery tools have been in constant use with this service work. Now I can say that I am thankful for the *callers*. They have helped me learn and grow.

The phone line needs volunteers. Phone calls, postage, copy fees, etc. are reimbursed by the COSA-NSO. Materials can be mailed and support is only a phone call away. Each volunteer picks up messages once a week. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday are available at this time. It would be helpful to have been working a COSA recovery program and attending meetings for a year or so. If you are interested in volunteering for the phone line please call Bonnie Sue K. (248-684-7885-EST) ~Bonnie Sue K.

National COSA Phone Line

Phone:
612-537-6904



Send contributions
to
support your
NSO-COSA
to:

NSO-COSA
9337-B Katy
Freeway #142
Houston, TX 77024



BALANCE

To subscribe,
send \$12.00

to:

9337-B Katy Freeway #142
BALANCE
NSO-COSA
Houston, TX 77024

Make checks payable to:
"NSO-COSA"
Please specify
"For Balance Subscription"
on your check

COSA Tape Titles - 1998

- 98-1 1998 Convention
Friday Night Opening - Kathy D.
- 98-2 1998 Convention
Saturday Night Banquet - Ila D.
- 98-3 1998 Convention
Sunday Lunch - Rozanne W.
- 98-4 1998 Convention
Monday Brunch - Ruth B.
- 98-5 Steps 1, 2, & 3 - Burnet O.
- 98-6 Steps 4 & 5 - Barb C.
- 98-7 Steps 6-7 - Panel Discussion
- 98-8 Steps 8, 9 & 10 - Panel Discussion
- 98-9 Steps 11 & 12 - Ila & Jewell
- 98-10 Living Without & Living
With A Sex Addict
Bonnie & Bernie
- 98-11 A Couple's Story
Jan W. & Paul W.
- 98-12 Forgiveness - Barb C.



BALANCE

