

BALANCE



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

Turning it over, that frightened me. Turning it over felt like I gave up control. I was a control freak. I didn't see the words *made a decision*. I just tried to force my will to turn it over because I was on step three meeting I heard another lady talk about step three. She talked about the word "*care*". She shared that she never knew God *cared* about her. As she shared what care meant to her, I began to see the *care* in step three. I felt the *care* in step three. I saw myself nestled in a soft, warm nest all warm and safe in the *care* of God's arms. From that meeting on it was easier for me to use step three.

Actually I had gone back to the word *decision* in step three. Always before I had tried to do it. Now,

I just had to make a *decision*. Once the *decision* was in my head, felt comfortable within me, it was easier to turn my will over to the *care* of God.

I must admit I still take my cares and my decisions back from God., I realize how often I pray and turn problems, situations, events over to God, then take them back. This recovery program would be so easy if I just prayed, gave it to God and left it there.

It is comforting to know that I am always forgiven, the care is always available to me when I keep turning the same situations over again and again.

When I first read the words "*as we understood God*", I thought it meant the Higher Power of our belief. Now I think it not only gives me the freedom to choose the Higher Power of my understanding, but it also means I need to be open to understand God's plan, God's timing, God's waiting period. His seems to require patience from me.

When can I take this step? Whenever I need to. I took it when I was new to this disease. I still take it when I am frightened. I take it when I am lonely. I take it when I don't know what else to do. Whenever I really make the decision to turn my life over to my Higher Power I receive peace.

~ Ila D.

"Made a Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory Of Ourselves"

There are so many ways to examine who I am. I've learned so much from each exercise. The first time, I tried to look at all areas. That seemed overwhelming while I was completing it, yet I felt lots of peace and serenity after sharing it with my sponsor. It was the looking within. I had never dared to do that before. Even if I did peek, I would have **never** shared that inner thought with another person. Oh the cleansing that occurred when the thoughts were spoken.

This program is truly a miracle. Talking about it takes the power away. Talking about it takes the shame away. Talking about it takes the fear away. There isn't a drug out there that can do the healing that I receive from facing my issues and sharing them.

I share with so many people who have been in program for years and have never done a fourth step. I

hear statements like "I stopped there", "I jumped over that step". For me, even when I jump over, I'm still stopped there. The only way I know to get through a feeling is to go through. I can't shut it off. I can't go around it or over it or under it. I have to go through the issue, through the pain, through the realness of my feeling.

I have completed many fourth steps since that first one. In doing so, I have face and grieved fear, shame, and anger to name just a few. It was painful at the time, yet now, as I look back, the fear, the shame and the anger seem so minute compared to how it felt before I completed those fourth steps.

~ Ila D.





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

I felt a need to include a little on step five since

I had mentioned it in step four. Writing on step four was a fear filled & pain filled process. Pain filled because as I wrote, the healing was beginning. Fear filled because I don't always take one day at a time. I do look ahead. As I was writing my step four, I kept thinking and fearing the sharing of my step four.

Notice this step says, admit to God, to ourselves, to another. For me, it felt like I did admit to myself for the first time while writing my thoughts and feelings down. Seeing them on paper made them real.. I find myself in prayer constantly. Mostly prayer for the strength to get through the pain

of this. As I prayed, it did feel like the writing was more visible by God than my prayer life had been without the visible writing. It still seemed the most difficult time was yet to come, sharing that step five with another person.

How do we chose that person? I knew it had to be someone I trusted. I had to trust that everything I shared with her/him would stay with her/him. Trusting the person who hears our step five is crucial. If we don't fully trust that person, our step four will have rigorous honesty missing in it. It had to be someone who, I felt , was working a good program. For me, it had to be someone who had already completed a step four.

The turmoil within me the day that was scheduled for me to complete my step four was indescribable. The actual face to face meeting for my step five revelation was soon to happen. I worked all day. I worried while I worked.

I felt distracted at work, unfocused. I wasn't able to make eye contact with patients as they came into the office. It felt like the whole world knew I

was going to reveal my true self within eight hours. I was planning to tell one person, one person whom I trusted, yet the shame, the secrecy felt like it was leaking out of me.

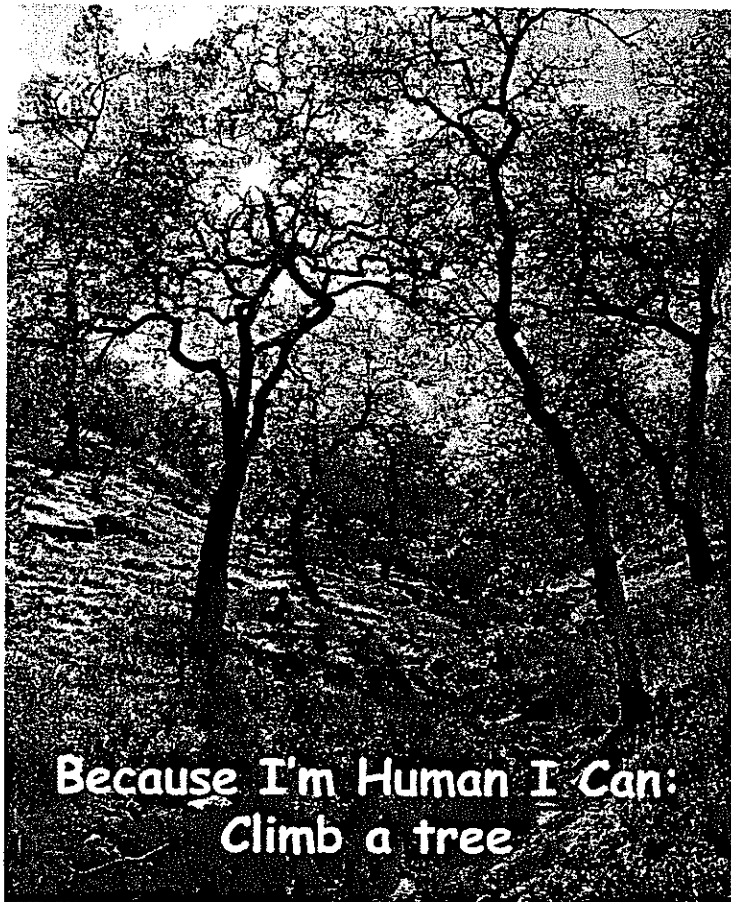
It was a long nervous drive to our meeting place. She was wonderful. She meant me at her cottage, a beautiful view, with the sun just beginning to set over the lake. It was quiet and very private, no phone, no doorbells, no children, just the two of us. I was still nervous.

Then it was over. I had shared for almost two hours. She gave me some feed back, shared what she heard, then we hugged and parted. I felt like I left the weight of a lifetime dumped there in that cottage.

On the way there I was tense and alert. On the way home, I struggled to stay awake. All stress was gone. As I struggled to stay awake, I was trying to figure out why I had been so nervous earlier. Now that it was over, it seemed so senseless.

That is what revealing the truth has done for me. Stress leaves me, shame slides away, anger dissolves, & (most of the time) fear seems rather silly.

Step four and five are not only important, but significant turning points in my recovery. ~Ila D.



**Because I'm Human I Can:
Climb a tree**

Volunteers Are Needed

Once again the COSA National Phone Line could use a couple more volunteers. Each volunteer takes a turn picking up messages from the COSA call in line. This is done on your time schedule. You won't be called by others seeking help. You will call them when your schedule permits.

Phone calls, postage, copy fees, etc. are reimbursed by the COSA-NSO. Materials can be mailed and support is only a phone call away.

If you are interested in volunteering for the phone line, please call Bonnie Sue K. (248-684-7885-EST)

~Bonnie Sue K.

Today I am learning the tools to live.
I don't have to base love on what I can give.
I want to learn the art of being
All I've known is how to be protective.

I'm learning to have hope, love, and caring,
with people like me who didn't mind sharing.
The things they told me are captivating.
The caring of others is so liberating.

I've started all over at an infant stage.
Things from the past put me in a race.
The mythology I've created feels like a cage.
I can get out my books and find the right page.

Accepting from men all this abuse.
I wish they would create a "man anibuse."
I've tried to understand but it's no use.
I feel that sometimes my screws are all lose.

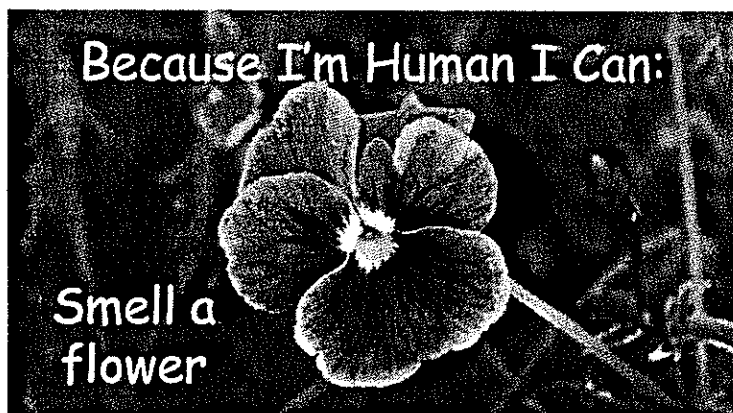
I'm not real sure how this came to be.
I have a lot to explore from repressed memory.
Hopefully somehow I'll set myself free.
I need to break through this stage of infancy.

The American Dream I thought I had found.
I thought I had found a dock on the sound.
Then when the reality came crashing down.
I died inside and no relief could be found.

They say the pain is going to stop real soon.
I fear if it doesn't I'll become a loon.
I've started to shed this ugly cocoon.
I want to be like a butterfly or a balloon.

Codependency is definitely an issue for me.
The elements of intimacy are hard to see.
Soon yesterday's pain will be ready to flee.
Then I've begun to set myself free.

~ Anonymous



A few weeks ago, someone contacted a "seasoned" COSA member and questioned the correct way to run a meeting. Below are some meeting options:

Suggested Guidelines for discussion

The Twelve Steps need to be a part of the meeting. The traditions are also an important part of the meeting. Most groups read all twelve steps at every meeting, then discuss one of those steps during the meeting. Some groups have a meeting topic at some of their meetings.

Some groups read all twelve traditions at every meeting along with the steps. Some groups read the steps and then one of the traditions, for example tradition 2 for February, the second month etc. Some groups read just one tradition if it is the seasoned group, but chose to read all the traditions if a new person is in attendance.

We like to give everyone a chance to share; therefore, we ask that you please limit your talks. Please share your won experience, strength and hope as they relate to today's topic. Wait until all who wish to speak have done so before sharing again.

Please refrain from cross-talking, which means talking to, talking about, or talking with someone else during the meeting. Do not mention any group member by their name or by "you". Instead, please share in "I" terms only—as an example, "I can really relate to what I'm hearing" my situation is like this.." One person speaks at a time, with no interruptions or questions.

As we discuss the topic, please keep in mind Tradition One: personal recovery depends upon COSA unity.

When you share you may inform the group that you would like feedback regarding your situation; however, the feedback is given only after the meeting has closed. Some groups may prefer feedback at the end of the meeting (before closing). Remember, if your group chooses feedback before the meeting closes, it still needs to wait until everyone has had their turn to share.

We have found that feedback is most helpful if it is focused around using the Twelve Steps or the program's slogans. It is also most helpful if given by sharing one's own experience rather than giving advice.

January 1999 Board Meeting

I think we had a remarkable board meeting in Houston a few weeks ago. We covered a lot of ground in a short time. I was pretty brain dead when I got home! I'm looking forward to seeing the minutes of the meeting, I think they will help me remember. I am so grateful for Lisa and the terrific job she did of keeping track of all the discussion on her laptop computer. We agreed to put "action items" in the minutes to help us all remember what we committed to do.

It was great to meet Julie, our mail coordinator, and Dianne, our Literature Chair. I want to say thank you to all the Houston area COSA groups and members whose donations made the board meeting possible. I want to thank all the NSO-COSA Board Members and national volunteers who came so prepared with reports and enthusiasm. And those who couldn't attend sent along reports to keep us all informed.

~ Barb C.

Editors note: These are highlights pulled out of a more complete correspondence that Barb sends to the NSO-COSA board. These highlights are passed on to you to inform you as to how very busy many of the COSA members are. Service work is a wonderful way to help others. However, the very best part of service work is that you will help yourself more than you could ever imagine while you are helping others. Remember to support COSA with service work and regular donations so this valuable resource will continue.

From your NSO-COSA Board Chair:

This morning I read one of my meditation books and it really spoke to me. Beattie said, "One of our choices in recovery is choosing what we want to think—using our mental energy positively...There is magic in empowering the good, because whatever we empower grows bigger..The choice in recovery is *What we want to affirm.*"

I've been thinking all morning about what I want to affirm for NSO-COSA. I write affirmations for myself and my relationships regularly, but I hadn't thought about creating affirmations for NSO-COSA. Because I'm always affirming something anyway, how much better could it be if I consciously affirmed our National Service Organization? Maybe you'd like to create some affirmations, too?

I want to thank you all for the work you do, the support you give, and the energy you bring to carry the COSA message. A special thanks to Jan W., Julie and the many other COSA volunteers who helped with outreach these last months. They have been collecting

the mail, filling envelopes and writing personal letters to the people who wrote to us after the Ann Landers column. At last report, we've received about 250 inquiries. Many of them are sending back literature orders and completed Individual Registration Forms requesting a penpal/sponsorship program. Thank you Kim for handling the many literature orders. Thank you Bonnie Sue and all national phone volunteers for answering the phone calls, which are also growing in number.

A few days ago I received a thank you note from a COSA member who volunteered to write to a young woman who wrote us after reading Ann Landers. Like many, the young woman had sent a letter detailing her life. I want to share with you some of what our COSA volunteer wrote to me about this experience, because I know in my heart that this is what it's all about. This is why we do service work. She wrote:

"...thank you for the opportunity to write to the young woman. I hope it gives her half of what it gave me. I felt like I was writing to myself 30 years ago! What a gift! It feels good to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem."

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!

The NSO's first ever COSA-only national gathering will occur in the Chicago area on July 30, 31 and August 1.

While NSO-COSA has held five national conventions in conjunction with SAA, this year we are going to try something different. At our meeting last summer in Virginia, we voted to have our own independent convention in 1999. This gathering will be a new experience for us all.

We are experimenting and discovering who we are and how we want to define ourselves, both as individuals and as an organization. On July 30 there will be an open meeting for board members and delegates to handle NSO-COSA business. On July 31 and August 1 we will all join to share our recovery, experience, strength and hope.

The convention planning committee is in the process of planning details such as cost, theme and activities. We aim to Keep It Simple; we welcome your participation. Look for more information soon.

See you there!

- Jan W.
& Burnet O.
(committee
co-chairs)

Because I'm Human I Can:
Laugh when I'm Happy

Three months ago, I began my recovery journey intensely...

...reading everything I could get my hands on; talking to anyone that would listen (those also working in recovery); thinking, breathing and living what I thought was recovery. I guess I sort of crashed. I became a bleeding ulcer of a person, overwhelmed by the gravity of generations of dysfunction that I never before had the insight to notice. My thoughts were constantly on how out of balance and truly screwed up my life had become. I saw disorder and problems in every aspect of my life.

At first I felt relieved to have the problem of sexual addiction identified, named, pinpointed, categorized. I felt relieved that there were others out there, in Cosa, just like me. I felt grateful for all the resources. I bought many books and tapes and dove right in to learn about sexual addiction and codependence.

Very soon I discovered as I lived my daily life, went to work, church, my kid's school, I felt as if I had a scarlet letter on my forehead. I began filling up with shame once again! This time it wasn't the shame of a secret but that of a painful existence in desperate need of repair. I remember telling my sponsor, "I want the world to stop for 6 months so I can read all of the books and figure this thing out".

One night my Dad called and said "Turn on channel 7-Hurry!" I did and discovered an unbelievable Opera singer singing on a stage in Venice. I sat mesmerized not necessarily by the opera but by the simple fact that I was able to not dwell in the rot of my problems for about 30 minutes! I discovered that recovery, for me, could be allowing myself to become enraptured by something outside of my program studies. It meant that I could choose an evening to relax and focus on something pleasurable instead of pushing myself so hard all of the time to "figure it out and get better".

Because I was so immersed in my husband's addiction (my coaddiction), it was natural to also become consumed in 'recovery' activities to the point of craziness!

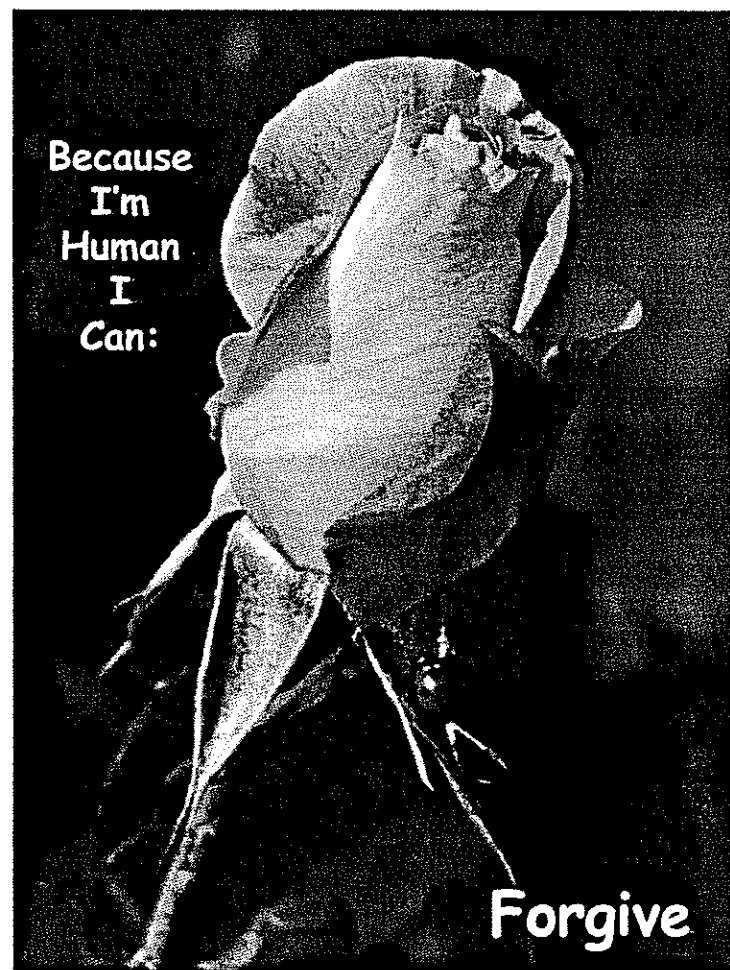
I have started to balance; life examination and self-processing; with esteem building activities. I have started a 'mindful meditation' class. We are to sit and simply pay attention to our

breathing for 15 minutes at a stretch. It is painfully difficult! It means trying to stop my constant inner dialogue of planning the future, evaluating the past and on and on..It sounded so simple- almost too simple to really work. We are learning to use our breathing as an anchor. I think of the things I used to use for anchors and it frightens me.

Recovery seems pretty basic as well, like checking in with myself to see what I need at the moment, or sorting out my true feelings about something, or expressing myself openly and honestly. I guess that in my sickness, I forgot 'the basics' for others and myself. I forgot to protect myself. I forgot to take care of my needs. I also forgot how to enjoy my life!

I am learning to alternate things that 'build me up' as an individual and those, which help me, see my errors in thinking or behaving. I am also starting to realize that the process is the destination.

~ Karen D.





**The COSA-NSO home page on
the internet is there for you**

Check it out at www.shore.net/~cosa
Here is the current Table Of Contents:

What is COSA?
Contact Information
How do I know if COSA is for me?
More about COSA
The Twelve Steps of COSA
The Twelve Traditions of COSA
The Gifts
COSA Recovery Tools (a new piece of literature!)
COSA Literature List
Conferences, Retreats, Workshops, etc.
COSA Registration Form
(so we can send newcomers your way)
E-mail Support Group
Links for Sex Addiction and Codependency.
Let us know what you think, it's your website!

cosa@shore.net
"NSO of COSA Webservant"

**National COSA
Phone Line**

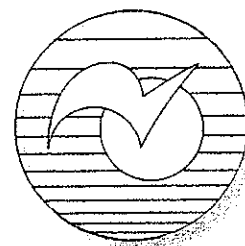
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