



BALANCE



Step Five:

I couldn't complete the last newsletter without sharing some about step five. My reason for that was because Step Four just isn't complete without Step Five. Step four is so very important to my recov-

ery. Yet the healing and growth would never have been as complete and fulfilling if I had failed to go on to complete my step five portion of my journey.

I know today that it was

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

and still is a critical part of my continued recovery.

I know of no other way to release myself from the bondage of me. As I set myself free from my secrets, I set myself free from my pain, my

fear, my shame all the vices that kept me in bondage. To me step five opened the door for me to surge ahead in my discovery of me.

~Ila

The Twelve Steps

— Before

1. I admitted that there were problems in my life that, in time, I would get them under control and manage everyone and everything perfectly.
2. I came to believe that my power would eventually restore others to sanity.
3. I made a decision to dedicate my will and my life to the control of others.
4. I made a searching and fearless moral inventory of everyone.
5. I admitted to God, to myself, and to anyone who would listen, the exact nature of the wrongs of those around me.
6. I was entirely ready to help God remove all their defects of character.
7. I repeatedly asked HIM to remove their shortcomings.
8. I made a list of all people who had harmed me and was anxious to get even with them all.
9. I got even with such people whenever possible, except when to do so would make me look bad.
10. I continued to take everyone's personal inventory and when they were wrong, I promptly reminded them. (Or on rare occasions, when I was wrong, I promptly justified it.)
11. I sought through prayer and nagging, to improve GOD's knowledge of my will for others, and urged HIM to hurry and carry that out.
12. Having had no luck as the result of these Steps, I finally sought help and tried to learn from the real 12-Steps that were so perfectly written and PRACTICE THOSE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OF MY AFFAIRS.

~Submitted by Michelle from Daily Reprieve

Step Six:

"Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

Now that I have shared my inner most self with God, Myself and someone else, the process of recovery seems easier. I can see my patterns more clearly. My sponsor guided me through some of the behavior patterns she observed as she heard my fifth step. Now that I know my characteristics, I find it easier to look at my defects. I see how my characteristics and pattern behaviors fit into this thing I call life.

I also continue to remember that this step tells me to become "ready" to have God remove my defects. I can let go of that pattern I had of

taking action and removing things before I was ready. I also took action before including God. All I have to do now is become ready to look at my defects, name my defects, and acknowledge that I am ready to change. God will be right there guiding me through the process when I am ready.

I am continually reminded that I do need a Higher Power. My Higher Power is God. I need God to have the guts to look at my defects. I need God to have the strength to let go of those defects when I am made aware of them. I need God to continue my journey.

~Ila

COSA affirmations

Inner Wisdom

I remember to take the time to look within myself for solutions to my problems.

I know that my Higher Power will enlighten me., if I learn to slow down and listen.

I know that the Quiet Mind soothes the Troubled Soul.

~KC

Healing thoughts ...

I received the following from a friend. She knew I was struggling with my husband's illness and all the 'stuff' that happens to our focus during illness. It is my understanding that these insights are some healing thoughts from a project that she may be releasing sometime in the future.

Acceptance

I know that
Pain has been my Teacher.
And Spirituality is the Lesson.
I believe that Recovery is a Gift
Which brings me onto my
Spiritual Path.

Self-Care

I look to myself for self-nurturing.
I know if I don't take care of my
MindBodySoul,
I can't expect anyone else to.
Everyday, I do something good for
myself.
I know I cannot depend on anyone
else to provide me with fulfillment.

Self-Nurturing

Each day I restore myself
and I take care to avoid
"running on empty."
I know that if I am stressed
by undernurturing,
then I am apt to overreact
to even the slightest adverse stimuli.

Wholeness

I know that if I am not whole,
Then I am mal-functioning.
much as the addict before recovery.
I know the dangers of HALT: being
too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired.
This makes me a candidate for re-
lapse into my own sickness of
codependency.
Watch out for Guilt, Resentment,
Self-Neglect, Control, Martyrdom, etc.
All the Codependency symptoms and
maybe even write in your journal your
plan for the day: to keep a balance be-
tween caregiving and self-nurturing.
It's difficult to keep boundaries

around your own self-care time and your
ill mate's needy time. Just as a young
mother will grow resentful if the baby
cries when she is trying to shampoo or
even use the bathroom, it is likewise
necessary for caregivers to keep from
feeling drained this same way.

~KC

As I was reminded of my need to take
care of myself, I thought of how so many
of us, lose ourselves to the disease of our
partner or friend. As a codependent, as
a woman, as a mother, I still find it so
easy to slip back into those behaviors
that will destroy me if I fail to stay in
my new and healthier nature of Accep-
tance, Self-Care, Self-Nurturing, and
Wholeness.

My hope is that this will be a reminder
to others to practice Acceptance, Self-
Care, Self-Nurturing, and Wholeness,
regardless of the craziness surrounding
us.

~Ila

"Storms of Addiction"

Traveling down the highway we saw
thousand & thousands of trees over
miles of highway that had been ravaged
by some sort of storm. I wondered what
in thxe world could have caused such a
mess. Some, tops of the trees were
snapped off, some in the middle, and
those that were left with only the bot-
tom of the trunk. Other trees were com-
pletely uprooted. Yet others were merely
bowed over, bent & scarred forever.
Even more of them were left untouched,
with leaves still attached.

The more I thought about it, the more
it reminded me of the vast differences
in the devastation of cycles of addiction.
Some completely devastated and others
merrily touched or tossed by the disease.

Some lives it passes through briefly
and others it bends under the weight.
Yet others it will completely break apart
and uproot. Nobody can tell how much
damage it has done or will be done until
the storm has passed.

I thought what part did the clean up

crews play in the scenario?

The smaller trees would be thrown
in the wood chipper, split for chips into
the woods.

The bigger ones cut, chain sawed into
smaller pieces for firewood or mulch.

The ones that did not fall into the road
or close to it would be left to lay.

To me the trees represented the dif-
ferent types of treatment. It represented
a social view point. It also represented
the different types of recovery or levels
or personal recovery formats. Some may
say "I'm Done, It's Over". Others stay
in the same place and live in denial as
they feel they are recovered until they
rot away or another storm hits, beating
them down more. Some of us addicts
survive the storm.

The clean-up, with leaves intact,
stand tall to carry the message, trying
to shield the message from the storms.
We're the ones that have WEATHERED
the STORM along the highway of LIFE
and ADDICTION.

~Michelle



*Because I'm
Human
I can ...*

... FEEL
happiness, pain,
love, sorrow,
peace



*I'm sorry!!!! The untitled poem the February/March issue was submitted by
Michelle, Not "anonymous" as I erroneously printed.. Please accept my apologies,
Michelle.
Your not so perfect editor. Ila*

1999 NSO-COSA Gathering

July 30,31, and August 1, 1999 • Chicago (Lisle), Illinois

The 1999 Convention Planning Committee, made up of members scattered across several states, undertook the challenge of incorporating the wishes, dreams and needs of COSA members who have attended previous conferences to design a new experience which will allow us to explore and express ourselves and our recovery in a way which will be rewarding and nourishing for all.

We have found a winner of a location in Hickory Ridge Conference Center located in Lisle, Illinois (about 30 minutes from both O'Hare and Midway airports). "Let your mind wander to a place where birds out-sing traffic noise and trees outnumber buildings. A place of towering forests and blossoming gardens that is, amazingly, less than an hour from downtown Chicago," according to the Hickory Ridge brochure. The conference center is sequestered on a quiet 26 acre campus surrounded by an unspoiled arboretum. We believe the serenity of Hickory Ridge coupled with the fact that their client history shows sensitivity toward groups such as ours will provide a physical backdrop conducive to recovery work.

Details regarding fees, schedules and registration will be coming within the next few weeks. Watch for them in the mail and on our website (<http://www.shore.net/~cosa/>). A single fee will cover everything: registration, room for two nights, ALL meals, snacks, facilities, taxes and gratuities. Payment is to be made directly to NSO-COSA by July 10th.

Only a limited number of rooms are available. You can reserve a place now (and support the idea of our Gathering) by sending a nonrefundable deposit check for \$50 (or more) designated "1999 Gathering" to NSO-COSA. Your deposit will be credited to your registration. If you are unable to attend, your deposit will become a tax-deductible donation.

The Gathering will be shorter than Conventions past, beginning Friday evening and closing early Sunday afternoon, with the Delegate Meeting beginning on Friday morning. It

will be simpler, less rigid, less formal, full of new experiences. There will be structure for those who need it and free time for self-directed activities. Our program will be interactive — come prepared to share yourself, your concerns, your vision for NSO, your creativity, your experience, strength and hope. Together we will explore who we are and what we want, both individually and as an organization. In addition to the planned workshops and discussion groups, there will be a variety of fun-filled activities on Saturday afternoon. We may try to organize a volleyball game. Possible fun expeditionary destinations include an arboretum, an art and antique shopping area, or a historical village. We are planning the program as a unified experience; we encourage you to be present for the entire two-day Gathering.

If you want to make travel plans now, you need to know that: the Delegate Meeting begins Friday morning at 8:30, the Gathering runs from Friday evening at 7:00 to 1:00 Sunday afternoon. Check-in time is 3 PM, check-out time is noon, and ground transportation to or from either airport may take up to two hours. NSO-COSA plans to reimburse part of Thursday evening's lodging for delegates who attend Friday's business meeting.

Send the kids to summer camp or Grandma's, or let your co-parent do the babysitting. Board the dog and cat. Give your neighbor a key to come in to feed the ferret and collect your mail. Tell your boss you NEED a four-day weekend. Encourage your partner to enjoy their alone time, knowing that you will return a happier, healthier person. Then pack your bags, and take a weekend just for YOU. Come alone or come with your group. Come by car, train, plane or bus. Just come, join us, for yourself.

See you in Chicago July 30th!

~NSO-COSA 1999 Gathering Planning Committee

Codependent on myself?

I am a worrier. It seems like I worry constantly. On a bad day, if you give me five minutes by myself, I can work myself into a frenzy of worry. For years, I have worried about my loved ones, especially my partner. Now that I am in recovery, I have started worrying about myself. Can one become codependent on oneself?? Ugh oh...here I go again; worrying. Recently when I find myself ruminating and worrying, I have started to recite, in my head or out loud, the 12 steps.

The other day I was starting to think about my partner's recovery and reviewing all of the reasons he is not doing what he needs to do for a successful recovery. I caught myself before the frenzy of worry sucked me under. As I recited the steps I stayed for awhile on the 3rd step: Turning my Will and Life Over to my Higher Power.

Last summer, when my husband's addiction and my co-addiction had reached the lowest, scariest point, I broke the silence. I called a friend of mine who was in Al-Anon and through raking sobs told her everything. She admittedly

didn't understand sexual addiction but said something that has stayed with me. She said, "Well hon , God has a plan for you. You just need to figure out what that is!" At the time I thought, "This God guy has a pretty sick sense of planning".

Since that time I am realizing what it means to turn my will and life over. So many great things have entered my life since that fateful time. Through COSA, I have found a sponsor that I talk to every week. During the week I write down all of the questions, concerns, thoughts, fears and secrets I tend to stuff and bring them to her. She actually doesn't answer most of my questions but she helps me to see to listen, to talk, and to not hide any longer.

When things become overwhelming, I picture a bus with a driver's seat. I imagine I am moving myself out of the driver's seat and back into the bus then I put God right there in the driver's seat. Then I imagine myself sitting back somewhere in the middle of the bus, relaxing, wind gently blowing in my hair, and enjoying the ride.