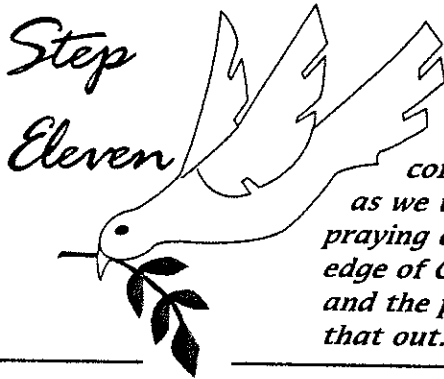


BALANCE



Step Eleven



"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."

If I would just practice this step every day to the fullest, my life would be so easy. If every morning I earnestly prayed for knowledge and wisdom from my Higher Power, my life and my program would be so much easier.

I still catch myself [daily] manipulating my Higher Power, who for me is God. I find myself telling Him what I want to happen, rather than praying/asking for guidance from Him. I argue with Him often. Let's do my plan not yours. I have advanced in my program enough to not use the words, "This isn't fair". I was so shallow when I was into whether it was fair or not.

Let's talk more about fair. When I was getting into fair and unfair, it happened when I compared myself to others. As I see it, this step asks me to seek out through prayer and meditation [listening] what God's will is for my day, for my life. This step doesn't suggest to me to look to others for my guidance, nor does it suggest that I compare my life to others for guidance or a progress check.

And the power to carry that out..... If I believe this step and trust in God, I will be given the power to carry out whatever is in my plan for today. That sounds so easy!!!!!! When will I begin trusting, *completely*, one day at a time.

I'm still a codependent. I want to know the plan now. I want to know my purpose now. I can look back and see how well my life has unfolded for me from simply working the program for *moments* throughout the day. I can only imagine how wonderful my life would be if I trusted in just step eleven every moment of the day.

Hmmm.....not perfection, just progress is the promise of this program. I do believe I experience progress each day....BUT I'm still a codependent and I still let perfection slip in and add chaos to my day.

I will focus again today on just living the plan God has for me for TODAY.

~Ila

Step Twelve

"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 areas of our lives."

Each time I carry the message I am energized. Each time I carry the message my life feels richer and more serene. Each time I carry the message I lose more of my need to judge or take inventories. Each time I carry the message I feel more compassion for others.

How do I carry the message? I still believe the very best way I carry the message is by working my own program. As I work my program I am capable of being for others. As I work my program the amends is happening for me and for others. Others can see my program working through me. Another way I carry the message is by listening. I don't have to fix anyone. I don't have to rescue anyone. I won't make demands on anyone. If I listen and allow them to hear their story, the message has been carried. I carry the message when I attend meetings on a regular basis. I carry the message when I take phone calls and share meeting schedules with others. I carry the message when I order literature or set up chairs.

All of us have a talent. We can carry the message by writing an article for the newsletter. We can carry the message by starting a

meeting in our area. We can also carry the message by simply listening. We carry the message the best when we earnestly work the steps ourselves. Others will be attracted to our change.

As I work my steps, especially step 12, I can expect miracles for me and for others!!

~Ila

Gifts that are free:

The Gift of LISTENING. But you must REALLY listen. No interrupting, no day-dreaming, no planning your response. Just listening.

The gift of SOLITUDE... There are times when we want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.



My marriage and addiction

By kaw

My husband and I are on a beautiful mountaintop. The sun is shining on aspen groves and ancient forests, water sparkling between stones. We are in love. We put our food, water and survival gear in one pack and begin to hike. Without speaking of it, we somehow agree we will take turns carrying the pack. I am meandering along the trail, admiring the view. He hides in the forest and leaves me alone on the trail. I am confused and try to find him in the darkness. Suddenly he reappears. I am relieved, and we walk on. We come to rocky, boulder field. He seems to be right next to me, but he keeps slipping into dark places. I go into the cold places behind the stones and tell him the sunshine is so warm on the other side. He is ashamed I have caught him hiding and rejoins me on the trail. Soon I notice him looking for new caves to get out of the bright light. He slips behind me and is gone again. I begin to constantly lose track of the trail as a storm creates more shadows. I become afraid that we are lost. The sun is no longer shining. I am hungry, tired and feel very alone.

"Why do you keep hiding?" I ask him.

"I'm not hiding," he says. "I'm just resting."

I tell him I am hungry and tired and want to find someplace to stop and eat together. He sits with his back resting against a rock and eats a snack with me. We keep on hiking and the suns moves in and out of clouds. Soon I am counting the stones with shadows and the forests with dark, resting places to anticipate where he will be. I become an expert in discerning caves with cleverly hidden entrances. I am hunting him like a mountain lion stalking a meal. I soon do not notice the sun has set and it is dark and cold. I am like a lion who must eat only one certain type of rabbit. This rabbit is hiding and I can find him. I am not tired because I am chasing this rabbit so intensely. I dream of pulling him from the darkness and the pleasure of acquiring him only for myself.

The suns comes back up in the morning. I am lost from all the wandering and searching I have done for him during the night. He is no where to be found. I am very, very hungry and realize I do not have pack of my own. The sun heats up. I am thirsty now too. I still have a long way to go to get home. How will I get the strength and supplies to get home? I start calling for him. My husband does not

hear me and cannot see me from the darkness of his cave. I lay on the forest floor and wonder how I will go on. I hear others walk by me on the trail and I wish they would see me, or hear me, softly whispering for help. I am embarrassed and ashamed to realize I am in the wilderness with no pack, no food, no water and now no strength to make out on my own.

The sun moves across the sky and over the horizon. Rain, thunder and lightning storms shift over the forest. Days go by and I lay unmoving. Maybe someone else will stumble upon me, but I am too far away from the trail. As I get weaker and weaker, I realize I must get closer to the trail to get help. I am still thinking of my husband and yell that I am going on, on my own and would he please follow me if he can hear me. I crawl to the trail and lay next to it. A woman comes along, bright-eyed, with her own pack. She offers me food and water, and I can sit up. She tells me of a clearing where there are other hikers with plenty of provisions, and they will share with me freely also. I find the clearing and begin to build my strength. I start noticing as I rest with these people that there are all kinds of hikers in the most unusual places, with very adequate supplies, and they are prepared to help me. Some have partners, some walk alone, but I notice that they all have their very own pack with just enough food, water and survival gear to know they can make it on their own in the wilderness. Some walk with me for a time, guiding me through the rocky, unmarked places. Some sit and cry with me as I tell them of searching and searching for my lost husband until I finally had to give up. Some laugh with me and encourage me to swing and dive into a refreshing lake rather than constantly plodding along the trail.

I suddenly hear my husband's voice. He is coming down off the mountain also, but not on the same trail. As soon as I hear my husband's voice I become like the lion, salivating for that certain rabbit taste. I begin to realize that I would eat this certain rabbit until it was extinct, and I would still be hungry because I am so afraid I will starve to death on the mountain. I turn to my hiker friends and start asking how they always have full packs -- where do they get such good food and clean water? They tell me of finding plush meadows with abundant food and sparkling streams with clear skies over-

head and a warm, gentle sun. They tell me the rabbit I believe will satisfy me will not really ease my hunger.

They tell me I must find my own way to these places, but say, "You might try turning right, there at the aspen grove, or left at the cliff edge."

I start walking through the wild forest and see there is no easily marked path. I have my own pack, but sometimes it is too empty and sometimes it is too full. I experiment with what the comfortable weight is that I can and need to carry. Just as I begin to feel afraid that I am lost again, I see an aspen grove and I turn right. And there is a stream and I drink. Ah, now I know where to get water. When I reach the cliff edge I remember not to scramble down the steep rocks and instead, turn left. Suddenly there is soft green grass and I can rest. Then I notice lush gardens from which I can eat. Oh, here is where I can get my food. I do not always have to carry so much.

As I rest, I start to miss my husband again. I walk and begin to call for him. He hears me and comes near. I do not feel like a lion stalking a meal because my stomach is full, and I am not so weary. We talk and agree to keep walking towards home together. Sometimes he really likes the forest and I really like the meadow. Sometimes he still likes to slip into the shadows. I do not go to look for him anymore. Sometimes I slip into a murky swamp and I call out and someone comes to give me a hand. We walk together when we are able. We camp together and share meals. When he hides, I need to go on alone. Sometimes we wake up and need to hike alone for the day, different ways.

I used to be so anxious to get home with him, to settle into one place with full cupboards and a warm hearth, with no uncertainties or empty places. But now I realize that imagined destination may never be mine to own. I get to stay there for a time, but then the mountaintops call me to keep exploring and I want to move on. I wander through my own wild places, knowing that everything I need is abundantly available around me whether my husband is with me or not. I can choose to explore the meadows and swamps, or rest with friends in the way side cabin. Sometimes my husband is with me and sometimes not. But now I carry my own pack.

Long-distance sponsors sought

Dear Fellow COSAS,

I thought this an opportune time, after Diana's great "The ripple effect of service work" challenge in the last Balance newsletter (Sept-Oct), to write and ask for pen pals and long distant sponsors (LDS). I need those of you out there who would like to do service work at the best possible level, the entry level, to respond.

I have done this work myself and the rewards are really tangible. Seeing myself reflected back in each of these women's and men's lives. The healing has been beyond belief. I felt so alone and unheard for so long that to hear others is a gift I cannot describe. It's like going back 30+ years and hearing myself, loving myself, forgiving myself, accepting myself with each person I reach out to.

This is not as overwhelming a task as it may seem! Not all requests want to work the steps - sponsorship. They really just need that initial contact with someone to know that they are not crazy or alone. Some may just want a suggested reading list, but most just want an ear - (pen pal). Some

people write back, some have called to talk, others never respond, and that's OK too. They are right where they need to be. They know where we are when they need to reach out again. When I say I have done this work myself, I will tell you I have been a pen pal/long distance sponsor volunteer for almost a year now and was just asked to take over the COSA Connection Coordinator position. I accepted and am willing to give it my very best. It will take me a while to get everything sorted out and a system in place. I will keep up with my pen pals and sponsorees, but I don't feel I can take on many more. It wouldn't be fair to any of us (me or them). Also I'm accepting the fact in my recovery, that I can't and don't have to do it all. I can ask for help.

The need is great! I have only six LDS sponsors including myself. We each took 2 to 4 sponsorees. I have about 60 more people waiting for pen pals/Long distance sponsors! There was a FLOOD of requests after the Oprah show on Sexual Addiction. This may be only a temporary need for such a great number of Pen pals/sponsors - I'm not sure.

One last Plea -

Remember when you had no one to talk to about this (sexual addiction/co-dependency)? Remember when no one heard or understood? Remember when you were too embarrassed &/or ashamed.....Remember?Remember when you felt all alone?

*Thank You and God Bless
Love EE Joan (ever evolving)*

If you would like to try this form of service work please write to:

COSA CONNECTION

COORDINATOR

NSO-COSA

P O BOX 14537

MINNEAPOLIS, MN. 55414

P.S. It would be a great help in matching people up for "connecting" if you could tell me a little about yourself. Some of the same questions that the people requesting pen pals & LDS answer: male/female age If religion plays a big part of your life (one sponsoree specifically wanted a Christian person) how you like to communicate i.e. (e-mail, snail mail, telephone, etc.) Any other pertinent information.

Thank you, thank you, thank you ...'

To follow Joan's article, here are some 'kudos' from others who have had the gift of a long distance sponsors.....It's been so great for me. Another reason I think it's great is that there isn't a group in Boston and after I found that out..I might have given up pursuing this codependent information because it wasn't easy enough to figure out ...and I frankly didn't have the strength to go start a group.This offered me another avenue to getting help QUICKLY (I was in bad shape when I wrote) and without a lot of effort (I could write you from my own home....) Just knowing you were out there writing to me TRULY gave me strengthI know you're busy dealing with email from other people seeking help, but I just wanted to let you know where I was. Your help last week was "sooooooo" important to me!!! Thank You! It really helped me at a time of

reexamination of what was going on for me at that time. I learned a great deal from your emails. You provided me with very valuable data and wisdom. I'm so grateful for this and for your honesty about your situation. I'm feeling better. I've been thinking about things, and I feel like I'm TRULY ready to SURRENDER to my husband's problem. I'm ready to accept him completely and wholly for who he is, without any expectation of change. Until now, I was really trying to still change him (even though I knew I couldn't..). It doesn't make me super happy...but it's a very complicated situation (relationships often are!!). Certainly, I have boundaries about what I will and will not accept in my life. But, I must stop trying to change him in anyway...and I feel ready.

So, I'm really trying to focus on all the aspects of our relationship (so much of what we have is AWESOME)

but I am being realistic about the sexual aspect. It's a step in the right direction for me. I just wanted you to know that I was doing OK. Part of my issues is that I obsess about this stuff cus I always want to "fix" it. So, now that I'm surrendering, I'll stop obsessing about this area. In my mediation, I am asking for all my thoughts, actions and energies to be completely healthy in every way. This really helps me to be healthy in my focus of life and my relationship.

I know it will take some time to receive information about a sponsor, but I appreciate you forwarding my application. Thanks also for the book recommendations and everything. I know you're probably busy and back at work, and I feel like I'm back on my feet.....Thank you, thank you, thank you! Take care of yourself (I'm sure you will!) I will take care of myself too.:-)

Carrying the message

by Tracy M.

COSA in Eugene, Oregon has grown a lot since it was established in June of 1998. We now have two meetings, a step study and an intergroup. We recently decided that we needed a contact phone line because new members could only find us by calling other fellowships. In order to make it easier to share the responsibility of returning calls, we opted for a pager. It is less expensive than a phone line as well.

We held a business meeting to establish guidelines for who should man the pager and how to handle the calls. This meeting ended up being the first of what we now call Pager Training Sessions. We offer our conclusions as a model and hope that by sharing this information we may assist other groups in carrying the message.

Pager Guidelines

Anyone wishing to perform the 12th Step work of returning calls made to the COSA pager must meet the following criteria.

1. At least one year of recovery in COSA or S-Anon.
2. Have an active relationship with a COSA or Al-Anon sponsor who also has a sponsor.
3. Worked at least through Step 5 in COSA, Al-Anon, AA or OA.
4. Be familiar with the COSA and SAA Questionnaires.
5. Already attended at least one COSA pager training session.

Things to consider if you qualify and are thinking about manning the pager.

- Do you have the privacy at home to make these calls?
- Do you have the time? (the pager must be checked several times a day. Each call should take about one-half an hour).
- Are you comfortable with your telephone skills?
- Are you comfortable telling your story, or parts of it, to a stranger?
- Are you willing to stay in contact with someone if they are reluctant or unable to come to meetings right away?

Suggested Guidelines for Returning Pages

- Give yourself half an hour to return each call.
- Ask your Higher Power for guidance.
- Have the COSA and SAA questionnaires in front of you.
- Let the person talk. Remember how good it feels to be truly heard.
- Briefly share your story. Especially mention things that might relate to something they've already said. Let the person know you've been where they are. Comment on your own experience, in one or two sentences, if they mention something that relates to the COSA Questionnaire, in order to help them hear themselves. Don't forget Strength and Hope.
 - Encourage them to share their story.
 - Gently help them to focus on themselves and not the addict.
 - If you are asked a question, do not analyze or interpret. Answer from your own experience.
 - Avoid "you" statements. Speak in "I" terms.
 - If they are in a relationship with someone who attends SAA meetings they may be a good candidate for COSA. Listen carefully for sex addiction issues (see SAA questionnaire). Codependency to sex addicts should clearly be their primary problem.
 - If they seem to belong to COSA, invite them to a meeting. Include day, time, and directions.
 - Offer them your phone number if you like.
 - If they are reluctant to come to a meeting, offer to call them again in a week or so.
 - If they seem to want more information or display impaired boundaries ask permission to recommend a book, *Boundaries* - Cloud and Townsend or *Facing Love Addiction* - Pia Melody.
 - Encourage them. It is an act of courage to reach out for help.

Each person volunteers for one month at a time. The responsibility of the pager comes with a packet containing the guidelines for returning pages, a log for keeping track of calls, meeting times and directions and instructions for using the pager.

Since our contact line is a pager number, we are not listed in the phone book. We are in the process of getting COSA pamphlets with our number on the back into every church, women's center and therapist's office we can.

The Fifth Tradition states: Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the friend or family member who still suffers. Twelfth-stepping newcomers is one of the most rewarding forms of service. Qualified members make the calls and everyone supports the effort by paying for the pager and getting the number out into our community. We increase the strength of our program when we share our experience and hope.

Life is a journey

The most important truth that my recovery has taught me is that Life is a Journey. Recovery is also a journey. There is no destination. I will never arrive. I will continue to enjoy, learn, love and grow on this recovery journey called life.

When I began my recovery I wanted to arrive. I wanted to get finished. I thought when I got through the book, I would be healed. I have healed so many layers of me. Each time I journey into new areas of me. I heal another layer. Each meeting I attend I experience another part of my journey. Each retreat or conference I experience adds miles to my journey, wonderful miles traveled with friends through feelings and tears.

I compare my recovery journey to my recent journey to Cambodia. I traveled to Cambodia to visit my son and his family. Cambodia wasn't just a destination for me. From the moment I left my home, I began experiencing and enjoying my journey. My daughter drove me to the airport. My time with her was precious and priceless. My next stop was Minnesota. Recovery friends were waiting for me at the gate. We hugged, shed tears, shared conversation and breakfast. I continued my journey to California. Again I was met at the gate by a recovery friend where more hugs, more tears, more sharing over lunch happened.

The next nineteen hours was spent getting to know the most interesting people in flight with me. Then

those marvelous two weeks getting to know my grandchildren & children again. Meeting the natives of Cambodia was a humbling experience. They have nothing and are so much happier than we are. The healing that happened for me was that my "stuff" controls me. They have nothing, no things to clean, no food to worry about storing or processing or spoiling. If food appears, they eat it. No clothes to organize. They are wearing one garment while the other hangs on the fence or tree

to dry. They taught me that I have time for my recovery. I have time to write more. I just have to release the clutter from my life.

On my return journey, I again met friends in California. I was chauffeured to a COSA meeting. There were twenty-one recovering women in that room. It was a beautiful and healing experience and a highlight of my return journey.

My recovery program has

taught me that every moment is a part of my journey. Just as I hope to enjoy each level of healing on my recovery journey, I was able to enjoy the many hours of travel needed to reach Cambodia. I am grateful that my program has taught me to enjoy every moment of my journey

~Ila



A
meditation
about
service
work:

Throughout history, those people who have lived on a high playing field say service is an active part of their lives. They're looking for somebody else to help all the time. They're looking for some way to take a portion of their time and make a difference with it. Reach beyond the confines of your set existence and help those who are in need. You have the power to make somebody's day, and in so doing, make your own better.

Rev. Mary Mannin
Morrissey
[submitted by Diana]

**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!

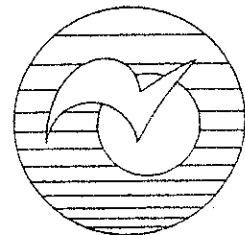
cosa@shore.net
"NSO of COSA Webservant"

National COSA Phone Line
612-537-6904

Send contributions to
support your
NSO-COSA
to:



NSO-COSA
P.O. Box 14537
Minneapolis, MN 55414



BALANCE



To subscribe,
send \$12.00
to:

BALANCE
NSO-COSA
P.O. Box 14537
Minneapolis, MN 55414

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

*Things
I have Learned*

We cannot learn other
people's lessons for them. They
must do the work themselves.
and they will do it when they
are ready.

I can't be completely happy in
life until I have forgiven every-
one, including God and myself.