

Step One: "We admitted we were powerless over compulsive sexual behavior—that our lives had become unmanageable."

First of all, I do need to clarify that I did not come into the program because of compulsive sexual behavior. I am unable to use the present wording of step one for my personal recovery. I came into the program because of my codependency to a sex addicts behavior. I am a codependent. I am a codependent to sexual behavior. I am a codependent to sexual relationships. I am a codependent to relationships.

Am I still codependent? Yes. If I lose my focus and turn my attention to the addicts in my life, my codependency will rear its' ugly face in a moment. I do work my program on a daily, no maybe moment to moment basis, to maintain my sobriety.

Many of you know of my husband's present health challenge. Because of his limitations, I do many tasks for him that he cannot do for himself. I am grateful for my recovery process as I experience this phase in my life. I know without a doubt that before my recovery, I would have totally lost myself in his care. Today, I do realize I am powerless over his present health challenge. I am not powerless over the way I keep my focus on my issues as I contribute to his care.

Step one is the step that brought me to my knees. I really had to admit that I was powerless. All of my codependent years, I had really believed that if I worked a little harder, impressed a little better, lost a little more weight, just did a little more in some area of my life, I would be in control. I never believed I was powerless. Yes, going to my knees and admitting powerlessness was the important first step of my program.

I am powerless over what others think of me. I am powerless over how others live their lives. I am powerless over other people's fear, anger, sadness or any other feelings they have. I am powerless over my own feelings until I am willing to name them and feel them. When I feel them, really feel them, I can heal. When I believed I could control all life by doing, I had no capacity to feel, consequently, no capacity to heal.

I will feel my feelings. I will feel my feelings about my role as a codependent. I will feel my feelings about my husband's health issues. I will feel my feelings regarding a recent death of a dear young boy in my life. As I feel, I will heal.

As I close on this step, I must always remember a slogan I first heard in the Ann Arbor meeting, "It's none of my business what you think of me". That slogan is the best advice I could have ever received. I truly believe as long as I was in my codependency, the idea that was slowly killing me was my strong desire to make sure that everyone thought of me what I thought they should think of me, quite an impossible task. Codependents lose their lives trying to make people like them. I was losing mine that way also.

~ Ila

Step Two: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Always, when I read step two, I remember the little phrase, I can't, God can, I will let him. For me that's the short version of steps one, two, and three. Step one, I'm powerless, I can't. Step two, came to believe that a Power greater than myself can be a benefit to me. In my case, that Power is God. Of course, I can know that, but if I don't go on to step three and let that Power benefit, I still have nothing. I must allow God to work in my life. I must experience step three for step one and two to be beneficial to me.

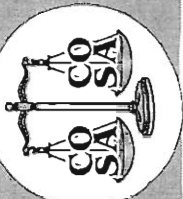
The other thought that always jumps out at me when I read step two is "restore me to sanity". It doesn't say restore me to sanity IF I think I'm insane. This step doesn't leave any doubt that I was insane when I walked into my first 12 step meeting. The good news is that I am salvageable. I can be restored. I can restore my sanity by earnestly working the 12 steps.

Most of us don't want to be considered insane. I too wasn't fond of that idea. Yet, I now know it was my insanity to my codependency that brought me to recovery. It was my insanity that gave me the freedom to live a new and better way. It was my insanity that brought me to the place where I received my tools to release my life of fear, especially fear of siblings, anger, distrust, sadness and uncertainty. Today, I do know I was insane when I walked into my first meeting. I'm grateful the steps are written so clearly that I could not find a way around facing my insanity.

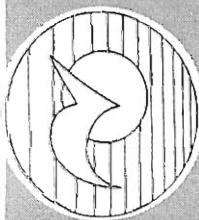
I will remember what it was like when I came into this program. As long as I remember, I will have gifts to give to myself and others. When I feel like giving up, I will remember the insanity. As long as I remember, I will know that I don't want to go back there.

I am grateful for the insanity that brought me face to face with my codependency.

~ Ila



BALANCE





As we begin a New Year, may we remember...

...remember the behaviors we'd like to do differently this year

Today, I am remembering. On December 10, 1999, a special seventeen year old boy, a person who had been a part of our life from the day he was born, was killed in an auto accident.


I don't believe I have regrets. I listened when he wanted to talk. He knew I loved him. He knew I cared.

As I enter this New Year, I hope I will continue to value relationships. I hope I can look into the faces of others without regrets of what I wish I would have said.

I think the following poem, and the poem, "If Tomorrow Never Comes," elsewhere in this issue, are gentle reminders of some goals we may want to include in our New Year plans.

~ *Ila*

A Purpose



We all have some kind of purpose on this earth,
It's not to hurt people or tell them their worth.
Everyone was put here with an equal chance,
Take a look around you, take a good long glance.
Some were meant to heal, and some to teach,
Some are used to build, and some to reach.
You may not know your purpose just yet,
God will tell you, when he knows you are set.
Don't rush your fate, it has already been planned.
And God will always be there to lend a helping hand.
You will go through times that are really rough,
But you will always have someone, when the going gets tough.
Don't judge others, for when you do,
There is always someone else, judging you.
Think about things before they are said,
Say your prayers before going off to bed.
Take time just to sit, and observe all things,
A flower and it's petals, or a bird and it's wings.
For when you just look at what is around,
A new aspect on life could be what you have found.
Live for today, live one day at a time.
Live for yourself, and for God, **that's no crime.**
For when you do all these things to make your life great,
You will find your own way to the pearly white gate.

~ *Claire A.*

2000 COSA Gathering

(When's the last time you went to summer camp?)

Does canoeing, swimming, hiking and playing volleyball sound good to you? How about toasting marshmallows at a campfire, relaxing in a sauna, or sitting quietly with a scenic view of a lake or the woods?

Besides all the outdoor fun of a Minnesota summer retreat, we'll have 12 step meetings, group time, meditations, and workshop opportunities to enhance your recovery. The retreat

center provides all meals and lodging for a very affordable price. [Look for more details in the next issue of Balance.]

So, come make new friends and re-new old recovery friendships. Mark your calendars now for July 21-23, 2000. Give yourself the gift of COSA fellowship. Join us at the 2000 COSA Gathering!

Indulge yourself in 2000

- See the hit play of the season. Get the best seats.
- Go away for a weekend. Take a suite, not a room.
- Go to the local barber or hairdresser and get the works.
 - Stay in bed and read books
 - Do a favor for someone who is important to you.
- Call up a distant friend or relative you haven't seen recently and have a leisurely chat.
 - Do a favor for someone you don't know very well but would like to know better.
- Count your blessings. Realize how much worse things could be.
 - Buy fresh flowers for yourself.
- This is only a start.....you add to the list what you need to do for you this year. Send your list to the newsletter..... share your indulgence with others.

Letters to the recovery group members

Dear Group,

How can we commit to a relationship with our SA spouses, when we know they have a dis-ease which makes them candidates for relapses at any time?

I want to take my wedding vows seriously, but have trepidations because of the knowledge that this addiction is even more difficult to overcome than alcoholism.

I'd like to hear the experiences and feelings of other group members. Thank you for your help.

*Yours in Recovery,
"A COSA member with no local support"*

From your editor,

Several people have asked for a section for asking questions like the one above. We would like to print your experience, strength and hope.

Remember, we want to share your experiences. We do not give advice.

Please send your sharings on this question or any other article you are willing to share with the group to:

BALANCE, P.O.BOX 14537, MINNEAPOLIS MN 55414

Kudos for COSAS Service work ... **WORKS!**

Once again I would like to thank you for all of your help. I read your letters every day until my first meeting. I can't believe how much someone I never even met helped me.

I went to my first meeting. It was everything I wanted it to be and so much more. They are a family of survivors and they welcomed me with open arms. I feel so much better already. They have all walked in my shoes. You were right. I am not alone.

As a matter of fact, everything you told me was right. I know this might sound weird, but I will never ever forget you. You helped me through one of the toughest times in my life. Thank you for helping me be strong.

.....

Thank you! I am feeling a good tired now. I can go to sleep and tomorrow night I will mail back the registration form. Thank you.

I started to say that you don't know how much this means to me. But I have a feeling that you know very well. So you will be the one that goes down in my history as opening a door that I feel may lead to a better quality of life for me.

The world is so full of hope after all. Sometimes you just have to look for it. I am always being led to it and end up turning my back on the answers.

I guess the bottom line is that I do not want to look at me. I do not even know where to begin. For some reason that makes it worse for me. I am tired of not knowing me and why I do the things I do.

Okay. I am going to bed now. Again. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

There is enough bad in the best of us

And enough good in the worst of us,

So that it should hardly behoove any of us

To talk about the rest of us.



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!

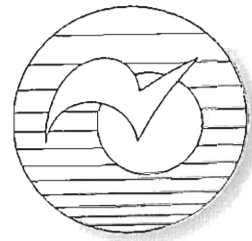
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**Newsletter
published late**

We're sorry the newsletter is a few weeks late. Julie has been doing a marvelous job of formatting the newsletter for us. She recently experienced a serious health challenge.

We are happy you are on the mend and back to assisting in the formatting and sharing of the newsletter to all of us.

Thanks Julie.....we're just happy you're doing better!!!!!!

~ Ilα