



BALANCE



Step Seven:

"Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings"

I believe fear is a major part of my disease. I believe fear is a major part of most addictive behaviors. As I look at that belief, it makes me realize how important it is to climb over that fear by preparing myself to remove my shortcomings. We may not like our shortcomings, but we do feel safer with them than we feel with the unknown. I fear the unknown. If I asked to have my shortcomings removed, what will be revealed that I fear? I know there will be something. For every change, there is the possibility of something new to fear.

I recently was asked how I got to the point of being able to share so openly. My answer was this: Today, I am able to share openly. I believe I have come to this place by talking and talking and talking in meetings and with other group people. I wasn't able to share openly before entering recovery circles. I was fearful to share the real me before recovery. For me, the more I shared in group, the easier it became to share outside of that safe circle. Sometimes I find myself sharing with a sibling or worldly friend and then I see the shocked, surprised or uncomfortable feeling on their face. That's when I realize who I'm sharing with.

Step seven, I ask God to remove my shortcomings. Yet, in order to have that process happen somewhat easily, I have to do the groundwork, meetings, step work, journaling, phone calls, talking, talking, talking.

The steps work if I do the necessary work.

Ilia d.

Step Eight:

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

Right now, I just have to make the list. The willingness will come. It is amazing to me how this program works. I have prepared many lists. I have made lots of amends. Sometimes, when I complete an amends, I hear my head conversation saying, there, we should be about done. I know that's a false head conversation. As long as I continue to be aware of who I am, of my shortcomings, of my good and bad behaviors, I will continue to add to my amends list.

Some of the amends are old situations that are still being revealed to me. Others are new amends that I need to make due to my present ability to continue making mistakes.

Yet, even as I make mistakes, I must always remember, I just become aware today. The willingness to complete the process of making the amends will come as I work my program and stay open to the moment when it is time to complete the process. I am aware that the time between making the list and making the amends is becoming shorter.

Again, I think that has to do with working the program. As mentioned in step seven, as we talk and reveal ourselves in safe places, it becomes easier to overcome the fear of the change that will occur as we ask God to remove our shortcomings and as we make our list and make our amends.

Ilia d.

Step Nine:

"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

The number one most important point that I must remember here is that the amends is for MY recovery. How they react, what they do with it, is their business. It is none of my business.

My amends has to give me the peace I'm seeking. My amends has to free my space so my recovery process can continue.

The very best signal I have for knowing I must make the amends soon is when I become so blocked that I can get nowhere in my process. When that happens, I sit quietly and take an inventory to determine what is blocking my process. 99% of the time, it is an amends that I have avoided. When the pain from the blocking is bad enough, I will complete the amends process.

It's a selfish act. I do it for me. I don't do it for them. Yes, the step says, except when to do so would injure them or others. When I know it would cause undue injury, I will prepare another way to make the amends to set myself free. I have written letters and read them to a sponsor or close support group friend. I have burned a candle while reading my amends aloud. I usually have healing music playing. When I feel complete with my writing, reading and oftentimes praying, I will burn the letter.

It works for me. Step nine tells me to make amends wherever possible. I will add that I need to make amends however possible. I know the amends must set me free. In many cases, my amends has restored a friendship. In some cases, it has severed a false friendship. In either case, I was set free.

Ilia D.

E-mail assistant needed

The NSO of COSA needs a volunteer to assist the Email Coordinator in processing inquiries received through the NSO of COSA web site. This person will forward introductory packages to newcomers via email, provide meeting information and write personal notes of encouragement in cases where the newcomer requests support. This person will also answer or forward to the appropriate volunteer/Board member, other inquiries/requests for information. Incoming email requests for information will need to be checked on a daily basis to ensure a timely response.

Requirements - Member of COSA for one year; empathy for newcomers; high regard for confidentiality and anonymity; writing skills; three to seven hours per week.

Volunteer by writing to NSO-COSA, EMAIL ASISTANT, Attn: Diana, P.O.Box 14537, Minneapolis, MN 55414

Oops!

The article entitled "More about the steps..." was supposed to be credited to "KAW".

We apologize for failing to give her appropriate credit in the May newsletter.

Nature's simple gifts: Back to the basics

One of the beliefs I have acquired as a result of my COSA recovery work is that all of the events in my life are intentional. That is, that God's hand is in all of them, and there is worth and meaning in each little thing. Taken as a whole, each little event is a step in my life's journey. I try to be open to the lessons and directional hints that are presented by those events. With this belief in mind, I've been thinking about my "call" to participate in the National Convention preparation work this year. I wanted to share some of the things I've become aware of with you. The rural retreat setting for the convention, and the theme "Nature's Simple Gifts: Back to the Basics", speaks to the recovery lessons I've learned that are echoed in nature. The most important of these is that life is about abundance, not

survival. God has something living and growing in every small corner of the world, with adaptations to suit every situation. When I'm creating new flowerbeds I know that I can't leave newly dug dirt idle, because something will grow there voluntarily within just a few days! I lived for years before recovery in survival mode - not believing I had any needs, then not believing I could ask for them to be met, being willing to do way more than my share of relationship work to earn love and acceptance, denying myself the non-functional things in life (flowers, music, art, leisure time). Now I know that I am a welcome and valuable part of the planet Earth, and that God intends joy and abundance for me. It is my birthright, if only I claim it. It took years of recovery to discover and then let go of the belief that I had to earn my place in the world. The other big lesson from recovery that is echoed in nature is that the death of some life form is always followed by new

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Step 12 thoughts

by KAW

How does Step 12 work within recovery from codependency? What does progress look like as related to this?

I am tempted to say, "be wary, hold back, don't commit yourself to others". But that doesn't quite feel right. I can be just as selfish and self absorbed as the addict, mine just looks different. Isn't that stance a way to stay defended, control life and hide my true self? In the past I have chosen to over commitment myself so insanely that I have a good excuse to not really be available to others. It is a frantic, chaotic place of living that is from fear. Fear of feeling my own feelings, my own dreams and hopes. Today I am tempted to this place due to fear of screwing up another's recovery. What if I do sponsor someone? What if I make a mistake and hurt them or damage their recovery somehow? Ah... those "what if's" - quite a warning signal for me today...I still try to be perfect, to be God, I still find an excuse to not risk myself.

The deepest truth is that I long to make real connection with others - to be open, calm, truth-filled, clear and with an available heart to myself and others. I want to really see, feel and hear this other person. This is the beginning of a true love connection with others and myself. This is something I want in my marriage, in my friendships, with my family. Doesn't God want this for us, no matter who we meet? Isn't this possible even if I need to set a boundary or choose to care for myself first?

I believe Step 12 is the pathway to begin this discovery process.

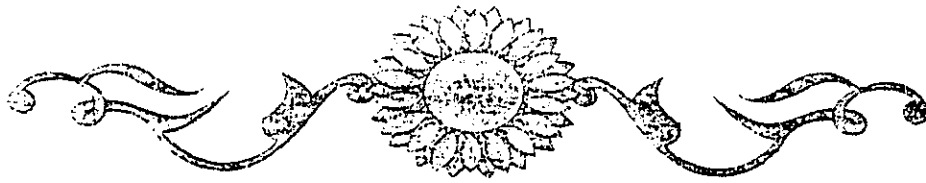
Long Distance Sponsor Program

You cannot believe how wonderful it has felt to be connected to the NSO and other grateful COSAs — well, maybe you do since you talk/write to so many. Something has happened for me — something big, and spiritual — especially in those first few days when I connected with you. Remember what it's like when you were a newcomer and that wonderful comforting feeling of discovering that you're not alone in all this? Well, connecting with you and the NSO was an expansion of that feeling for me — and a reminder of the hope and serenity that is possible.

And the mailing list issues — WHAT a tremendous thing. I had no idea what I was missing all this time. I feel so honored to have an opportunity to share my ESH with others. And, of course it tickles the Co-side of myself by having my opinion and life experience valued. :-)

Thank you so much for being there in e-mail space... and for the dedication and time you give to our program. I am grateful and appreciate you! Talk to you soon.

Eileen M. Sacramento, CA.



Nature's Simple Gifts Back to the Basics

2000 COSA CONVENTION
Minneapolis - St. Paul, MN
July 20 - 23, 2000

Registration Form

Name: _____

Name: (as you want it on your name tag) _____

- Female
 Male

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone (Optional): _____

E-mail (Optional): _____

National Convention Business Meeting Options

Please check all that apply.

- I plan to stay at the Carondelet Center on Thursday night, July 20. Payment of \$25 for one night of lodging is enclosed. Payment for meals will be collected at the Carondelet Center.
- I plan to attend the National Business meeting at the Carondelet Center on Friday, July 21.

National Convention Options at Koinonia Retreat Center

Please circle your selection(s).

	Dates	Accommodations included in cost	Register before May 15	Register before June 15	Register after June 15
Friday evening To Sunday noon	July 21 - July 23	2 nights lodging 6 meals*	\$165	\$180	\$195
Saturday morning to Sunday noon	July 22 - July 23	1 night lodging 5 meals*	\$130	\$145	\$160
Saturday day only	July 22	Up to 3 meals*	\$45	\$45	\$55
Friday night or Sunday morning	July 21 or July 23	1 meal*	\$25	\$25	\$30

- You must register a week in advance to have your meals provided.

- I need a scholarship. Amount Needed _____
Scholarship assistance will be given on a first-come, first-served basis. Scholarships will help to cover the cost of the convention fee only.
- I am enclosing a donation of \$ _____ for scholarships
- I request vegetarian meals
- I need special accommodations: _____
- Payment of _____ is enclosed. Make checks payable to Nature's Simple Gifts. Mail payment and registration to:
 COSA Convention 2000
 P.O. Box 14537
 Minneapolis, MN 55414

Transportation Options

Shuttles – We plan to run shuttles with the following schedule. We will use car pools and if necessary vans or a bus. If your flight schedule cannot accommodate these shuttle times you will need to rent a car to get to the retreat center. Transportation costs will be collected when the service is provided.

Friday

- 5:00 pm Shuttle will leave from the Carondelet Center in St. Paul for Koinonia Retreat Center.
- 8:00 pm Shuttle will leave from Mpls/St. Paul Airport for Koinonia Retreat Center.

Saturday

- 9:00 am Shuttle will leave from Mpls/St. Paul Airport for Koinonia Retreat Center.

Sunday

- 9:00 am Shuttle will leave from Koinonia Retreat Center for Mpls/St. Paul Airport.
- 12 noon Shuttle will leave from Koinonia Retreat Center for Mpls/St. Paul Airport.

Please indicate your transportation status: CHOOSE FROM ABOVE SCHEDULE PLEASE

I will need transportation to Kononia Retreat Center on _____ (day & time).
 I can provide transportation to Kononia Retreat Center from _____ (location) on _____ (day & time).

I will need transportation from Kononia to the airport on _____ (day & time).
 I can provide transportation from Kononia to the airport on _____ (day & time).

**Questions? Call (612) 537-6904 ext. 3
 or e-mail naturessimplegifts@hotmail.com**

Realizing beauty

by Kimberly G.

I had an experience with my close friend, MB. She was telling me how she has trouble accepting her husband's compliments about her beauty during lovemaking.

I thought it would be helpful to hear me, a woman friend without a husband's agenda, tell her that she IS beautiful in every way. I had noticed this consciously about her when I first

saw her that day. I know she has physical flaws, but they are minor and part of the total picture of who she is. She has a radiant glow about her that far surpasses her exterior. She has a beautiful spirit and an open heart. I know she feels "old" by all our societal standards, and saggy after the experience of childbirth.

I wanted her to know that the standards she used to judge her-

self by, pre-baby, are an incomplete assessment of her worth. So I told her, with all my heart, that she is beautiful. I watched her wince under the weight of the compliment. I could hear the tapes in her head playing, "No" and "yeah but, you don't know about this or that flaw" and it broke my heart. I started to cry because I saw me in her reaction. I clearly saw the hundreds of times my own husband has uttered those same words and received the same blasphemous response.

I had empathy for my husband in a way I never had before in that moment. I began to cry, sitting there, nursing my daughter, and MB thought I was bowing to the weight of the recent stressors in my life. We didn't have the op-

portunity to discuss what I was feeling because of our needy children and time constraints. So, when I returned home and put my daughter down for her nap, I wrote MB a letter telling her what I just told you, suggesting that this is an area that we can lean on each other and heal together.

I realized my own beauty in a complete way, through seeing the beauty in my friend. This affected my relationship with my husband. I was able to open sexually to him in a way I never had before, out of appreciation for myself. For once I could forget the pain of his past s.a. transgressions. I allowed myself to stay in the moment, enjoying who I am. Imagine that, NEW sexual experience after being lovers for over 10 years of marriage!

The benefits of registration

The benefits of registering as a group with the COSA National Service Organization (NSO) are as follows:

- We can help newcomers who contact COSA-NSO to get in touch with your group and find your meeting. This type of outreach is our primary purpose; without it, we cannot help those who still suffer.

- Registered groups receive a free subscription to the Balance, COSA's newsletter.

- We will be able to mail NSO information to your group from time to time, so that you will be part of COSA as a whole. Such mailings may include announcements about new literature, materials for the annual convention, and other information for the good of our fellowship. At this time we do not have accurate addresses for mailing business information to every group, so be sure to let us know about address changes!

- You will be able to send a Delegate to participate in the Annual Meeting, so that your group can have a voice in decisions that effect COSA nationally and internationally.

- Note that even if you are only one person, you can still register as a group, provided that you are willing to commit to starting a meeting.

The NSO also accepts registrations from individuals who do not attend a COSA group. The benefits of registering as an individual are as follows:

- We can locate the closest registered COSA meeting in your area.

- If there isn't an active COSA meeting, we can help connect you with other people in your area who are interested in starting a COSA group.

- We can add you to our long-distance sponsorship program. A recovering COSA member will exchange letters, phone calls, and/or e-mail messages with you. (This is a popular program, so it may take a while to match you up with someone.)

Please note that we do not encourage you to register as an individual if you are a member of a COSA group; to keep it simple, we prefer to correspond with group members through their Group information.

Please contact the NSO to receive either a Group or Individual registration form! (Forms are also available on the COSA NSO website.) We respect your privacy and confidentiality; all information is restricted to only those who need it for NSO service work.

Nature's simple gifts:

Continued from previous page

life, and that this cycle is ongoing and necessary. This perspective has helped me to move into and through painful situations in order to gain the lesson that was there for me. My natural inclination is to avoid pain or to let it fill my whole world with despair. The lie I buy into over and over again is that things will always be this bad. The truth of the matter is that today's grief is the necessary predecessor to tomorrow's wisdom and compassion. My stubborn heart has been softened by so many painful lessons. As each new episode comes along I now try to trust the process - that the road to joy is to move into and through the pain, letting go of beliefs and expectations that are holding me in the pain. I'm looking forward to the convention in July. I have an expectation that there are more discoveries in store for me there. I'm so grateful to have some recovery to look back on - to see the changes in my heart that have led to a more graceful life. I'm thankful for all of the people who have made contributions to the recovery community, and I'm grateful to give back some of the energy I received from them.

Thanks, Carol



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"



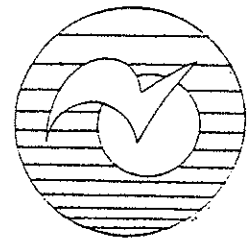
The address for the E-mail forum for Friends and Family members of people addicted to sex is:

cosa@shore.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.

National COSA Phone Line

612-537-6904



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