

Balance

Newsletter of the National Service Organization of COSA

January - March 2003

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Letter from Our Chair

Dear Friends,

I am excited to report that our convention plans for this year are well underway and sound wonderful. We will be meeting in Portland, Oregon, in May. I hope that each of you will find a way to journey to this beautiful city for a weekend of business, recovery and joy.

The business we take care of each year is our Annual Meeting. My personal hope is that we will have some new and energetic faces to join the devoted people who do most of the business of NSO-COSA. I would like to honor some of those here now.

We are very fortunate to have Ila D. as our Nation Service Coordinator. She works day in and day out to keep literature flowing out to you. Because we are an all volunteer (except for her) organization spread all over the country ... and because we are all working programs of recovery ... Ila's job is not al-

ways easy. She has been a great problem solver and tenacious servant to our fellowship.

Jenny E., our Communications Chair, oversees much of our work in getting the word out to people who contact us for information. She watches over our website, phone lines, regional COSA Connections Co-ordinators and our E-mail Contacts. Most likely many of you have successfully joined this path of ours in part due to her work.

This year JoAn D. of Tacoma has worked with finesse to get our Convention 2003 together. At each of our meetings she has reported concisely and thoroughly on her work. We'll see the evidence of this at the gathering in May.

There are many others who contribute in a variety of ways. If this type of work inspires you, come to the Convention and join service work at a different level of recovery.

I am sorry to report that Kathy D. and Bill Y. have resigned from the board this year. Kathy resigned early on after many years of service including Chair of the Board one year. She wanted to move on to other endeavors. Bill cited personal reasons for leaving us. He too has served NSO for a number of years in a host of important ways.

Our board has some difficult issues to resolve. We are in a slow process of ironing out issues with the IRS due to an error in how we are set up as a non-profit organization. They have us registered as a private foundation and we are a public non-profit. Burnet O. and my-

self are working on resolving this. If anyone has some particular expertise in this area we would be grateful for your assistance (akrwinkel@earthlink.net).

We are considering changes in the wording of the Steps. In the process of reviewing these essentials of our program the board decided that we needed to make some special provisions for how Steps and Traditions are made. We have not come to consensus about this yet. In Portland in May we will be looking at the issue again.

I hope I'll see you then!

Ann R., Chair, NSO-COSA



WELCOME NEW GROUPS

Pittsburgh, PA
 San Diego, CA
 Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
 Moncton, NB, Canada
 Mesa, AZ

Remember that each time one of us takes a step forward, we pull the entire community forward. We will keep each of you in our thoughts and prayers.

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Balance, the newsletter of NSO COSA, is published every other month. The authors hold the copyright to their work; NSO-COSA holds the copyright to the newsletter.

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 Distribution — Judi K*

Tradition Seven

"Every COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions"

Orange County, CA. Group..\$25.00
 Seattle COSA, Grp..\$123.41
 Sebastopol, CA....\$20.00
 Mesa, AZ., Sunday, Grp, ..\$31.00
 Mpls., MN., Eastside Grp....\$11.00
 Minnetonka, MN Grp...\$30.00
 Kalamazoo, MI. Grp....\$20.00
 Eau Claire, WI Desert Flowers..\$90.00
 Galveston, TX.,noon Grp...\$11.00
 Dallas, TX. Grp....\$22.52
 Birch Run, MI. Individual....\$100.00

Extra Support Is Needed!

We appreciate all that you've given. However, we are running behind budget by about \$2000. We hope you will consider sending an extra donation.

COSA is a valuable resource for many who are seeking spiritual relief. With a little extra from each of us, we can continue serving those already in recovery, plus reaching out to those who are still in severe pain and seeking relief.

I remember when I was seeking. At that time COSA was much smaller. I believe the phone calls were being received on a recorder in a church closet. (Yes, we were still in the closet.) I made my first phone call in January of 1988. After numerous calls, I received a response in September giving me information about a meeting approximately 90 miles away. It takes nine months to conceive, carry and give birth to a child. The pain I carried for the nine months I was searching for COSA was far worse than any pain I experienced during my child-bearing experiences.

I ask each of you to consider a donation to help our effort to serve those who are still in the kind of pain that all of us were in before we first found COSA.

Thank you in advance for your contribution.

— *Ila D.*

Step One - Honesty

We admitted we were powerless over our COSA disease and others' sex addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.

The first step, for me, is both a blessing and a curse. There is such relief and – sometimes – even joy, when I am able to finally 'get it' and admit that I am powerless over whatever I am struggling with in my life. In all cases, it has to do with my own character defects or the behavior of another. Acknowledging my powerlessness over my own behavior or that of others, gives me somewhere to go ... a direction. I also know the Second Step is right around the corner.

In recovering from my COSA disease, coming from being a 'victim' has been a long and eventful journey. There is a part of me that still wants to blame someone else for my circumstances or my current 'plight in life'. If he would just stay abstinent, if she weren't so judgmental, if only he, if only she, if only, if only, ... if only.

In embracing the first step and my own powerlessness, the 'curse' may be that I no longer have someone else or something else to blame. As I move from the first step on, I will eventually come to acknowledge that I consistently have a choice in whatever dilemma or 'plight' lies before me. Sometimes it is easier to play the victim than to be honest, set a boundary, or look in the mirror ... but there is always a choice that I make. Now, in my recovery, I know I have a responsibility and choice in the situations, relationships, and circumstances in my life. When I admit what I am powerless over, I am able to then see with clarity what my choices really are.

Acknowledging my powerlessness and then embracing my power is the greatest paradox of the first step. In the vulnerable act of surrender, there are solutions and even miracles that await from a Power Greater than myself.

— Sally B.



Step Two - Hope

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

This deceptively simple step is the only one that I haven't had to repeat or redo. Working this step literally changed me for good. I still feel joy in my heart whenever I read it — the joy of remembering the moment that my heart finally became open to God.

As the words "came to believe" imply, this step involves a process, a slow process in my case. My dad (who abused me) was a minister. From adolescence until entering recovery, I was an atheist. The god whom I adamantly did not believe in was sadistic and capricious; he had a cruel sense of humor and was out to get me for his own entertainment. To give myself the illusion of safety, I denied not only the existence of God but also the possibility of mystery in life. If I could not understand something (and therefore control it), it could not exist in my very narrow universe.

When I first entered Twelve Step Recovery, my denial of God was accepted by others with love and compassion. Experiencing such acceptance, I soon softened my position and became a "pragmatist" – I prayed because it helped change me inside, because it worked.

When I worked the Second Step in COSA, there was a question on my worksheet: "Who in your family of origin reminds you of what God might be like?" When I thought about that question, I finally got it. I had confused God with my father. My father is not God; God is not my father! The walls I had built inside myself came crumbling down. My heart opened up to the Mystery in the Universe; my compulsion to understand everything faded away. I felt the presence God: a God beyond my comprehension, a God of Unconditional Love, Compassion, Understanding, Wisdom and Patience.

— Burnet O.

Step Three - Faith

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

Making a decision is a conscious process done with awareness of possible repercussions. It involves thinking something through and committing to action. Step Three may represent the first conscious decision of my life. Before Recovery I acted on impulse and reacted to perceived threats.

The decision of Step Three is one I've made over and over again. I give it to God, then I get grandiose or fearful, and I take it back again. It has taken many years of recovery for me to learn to trust God completely.

My trust and faith have grown through experience. This experience has come from taking the risk of letting go of one outcome, disengaging from one power struggle, getting out of God's way one time. Over and over again. Whenever I've been able to do so (act as if), I've discovered that God's plan is much better than mine, that God's outcome is better than I can imagine. I've also discovered that what I think I want is rarely what I need. And that my life is happier and more serene when I have what I need.

During my second year of recovery I had a wonderful opportunity to experience Step Three. I was told to take a trip to Beijing on business. I had flown often, but I'd never flown sober before. I had always felt, terrifyingly, that I had to keep the plane in the air somehow by my own strength of will. The prospect of flying sober and trusting God and letting go of the outcome (whether I would arrive safely) was scary and seemed difficult. The actual experience was WONDERFUL. Once I no longer had to keep the plane in the air, I could relax, enjoy the journey and watch the clouds go by.

God, I offer myself to you, do with me as you will. Release me from the bondage of self so that I may better serve you,



— Burnet O.

COSA Convention Coming Soon

The place is Portland, Oregon; the dates are May 23-26. If you have never attended a national COSA gathering, I hope you will consider it this year. If you have attended, make plans now to return. The gathering is the most fabulous place for me to receive experience, strength and hope at the deepest level of my being.

As I reflect back through my recovery experience, I can easily recall the times when I was close to quitting; I didn't want to go on feeling the pain of recovery. Often I arrived at the conference depleted. I left filled – filled with the experience, strength and hope of people from all over the world.

That experience, strength and hope is available to you too. Make plans to attend today. Block off the time for you now. You deserve recovery. You deserve time with other recovering people.

— *Ila D.*

Consensus Decision-Making

Our NSO-COSA Board first began using a consensus decision-making process at our 1998 Midwinter Retreat. We tried it because it seemed more congruent with our recovery process. Consensus worked so well for us and felt so right that we have continued using it ever since.

A consensus decision is one which all members of a group are willing to accept and support as if it were their own. It resembles a unanimous decision but goes deeper. The process requires that all those affected be involved, communicating openly and honestly. An attitude of trust and mutual support, a positive acceptance of diverse views and experience, encouragement for each person to share their views and feelings, openness to God's guidance – these factors all create a positive and safe environment, much like a good meeting. We've found that this process is creative – when we approach an issue so openly we usually come up with a decision which is better than any of us expected.

[more next issue]

— Burnet O.