



# Balance

Newsletter of the National Service Organization of COSA

December 2003 – February 2004

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from the chair –

## Carrying the Message

My experience of working with our current Board leaves me inspired and motivated to share my gratitude and hope for the future of our fellowship. We are fortunate to have a dedicated group of board members willing to give of their time and energy to provide a structure within which we can "carry the message". We are establishing a momentum of actions which will increase the ability of our fellowship to reach many more people who are still suffering from the effects of our disease. Our fellowship is continuing to grow; the more people we reach, the more people hear about us, the more people reach out for relief of their pain.


We are taking steps to increase the amount and kinds of literature available through the NSO (National Service Organization) of COSA. This is CARRYING THE MESSAGE. We are continuing to publish the *Balance*, our newsletter. This is CARRYING THE MESSAGE. We have established an online yahoo group where people – newcomers and oldtimers alike – can share their experience, strength and hope to help each other heal. This is CARRYING THE MESSAGE. The newcomers to this group have an opportunity to be heard in a safe forum of people who have shared the pain of this disease. This is CARRYING THE MESSAGE. Some of our COSA Connections Coordinators are working as many as four hours a day to help connect suffering people to a group or to each other. This is CARRYING THE MESSAGE. We are organizing a National Convention this May in Dallas. This is CARRYING THE MESSAGE.

## Deep in the Heart of Recovery

COSA's National 2004 Convention – "Deep in the Heart of Recovery" – is being held in Dallas Texas on Memorial Day weekend: May 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st.

The annual meeting of the general membership will be all day Friday, May 28th. Each COSA group is urged to send a delegate to participate in the general membership meeting. Only official delegates are eligible to be part of the decision-making process, but all members are welcome and encouraged to attend the Friday meeting.

The convention itself begins on Friday evening with an opening ceremony. Check-in for the convention will begin around 3-4 PM Friday afternoon. The convention ends on Monday the 31st with the closing ceremony ending around 2-2:30 PM.

The registration form will be available shortly as a download from the COSA website. It will contain information about how to contact the hotel. The price of a hotel room will be around 80-90 dollars a night, and up to four people can stay in a room for that price. Hotel room registration is done with the hotel directly. Registering for the convention is done separately, and instructions will be on the forthcoming registration form. 

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## WELCOME NEW GROUPS

Olympia WA  
 London England  
 New York NY  
 Eugene OR  
 Austin TX  
 Tulsa OK  
 Mesa AZ  
 Painsville MN

*Each time one of us takes a step forward, we bring the entire community with us. We keep each of you in our thoughts and prayers.*

## 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition

My program has always taught me that I need the Steps to recover. I must utilize all the Steps for my healing to continue. My program has also taught me that the Traditions are the glue that holds my program, including my Steps together. Because my program is so very important to my well being, I find it very important to honor the Traditions as well as work my Steps.

Tradition Seven says, "Every COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." For me that means supporting my local group[s]. It also means supporting my National COSA organization. Some of that support happens through my groups; each groups decides on an amount they wish to donate to National. I also feel a need to donate to National on a personal level. I am a member of the National Board. At this time, we are in need of extra donations. I'm hoping each of you as individuals will consider enhancing your recovery by sharing with your national organization. I'm also hoping you and your group will consider sending support.

— *Ila*

*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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*We apologize for the irregular schedule of the Balance over the past year. As an amends, we will extend the subscription by four months (two issues) for anyone subscribing during 2003. We intend to resume a regular schedule with our next issue.*

— Burnet O

## Tradition Seven

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

Minnetonka MN Sun PM Group 60.00  
 State College PA 10.00  
 Minnetonka MN Sun PM Group 30.00  
 Mankato MN Group 30.00  
 Tulsa OK Group 5.15  
 Plano TX Cosa of Plano Group 30.00  
 Grand Blanc MI 60.00  
 Oxford MI 50.00  
 Kalamazoo MI Group 20.00  
 Indianapolis IN Wed Night Group 11.40  
 Hampton VA 25.00  
 Colmesneil TX 151.00  
 Minnetonka MN Group 30.00  
 Dallas TX Group 150.00  
 Edina MN 10.00  
 St Paul MN Gratitude Group 65.00  
 Minnetonka MN Sun PM Group 30.00  
 Morgantown WV Peace, Love, Joy Group 12.00  
 Eau Claire WI Desert Flowers Group 30.00  
 Hastings MN Group 20.00  
 Oxford MI 50.00  
 Los Angeles CA 20.00  
 Nashville TN 5.00  
 Morinville AB, Canada 3.00  
 Virginia Beach VA Group 15.00  
 Cosa Mesa CA Wed Group 15.00

**Bank Balance on 1/31/2004: \$10,909.75**



## How to Contact Us (NSO COSA)

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1-763-537-6904

info@cosa-recovery.org

http://www.cosa-recovery.org

http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/COSA\_12\_STEP/

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As our fellowship grows, we must be there for those who feel desperate. During a recent board teleconference I became painfully aware of our board member / volunteers who are pleading for assistance with their volunteer duties. As more people contact us for relief from their pain, there is a growing need for volunteers to step forward to give back some of what COSA has given them. More people are crying out for help and are asking us to be there for them.

The COSA Connections Coordinators are also crying out for help. We want to keep up with the growing demand for help for newcomers. BUT, we cannot do it ALONE! We are all volunteers who are donating our service. We want to be there for others, but we also need to be there for ourselves. As you know, self-care is a large part of COSA recovery. As much as we want to serve, we do have limits on the amount of time and energy we can give without becoming depleted. We, as those who serve you, are DESPERATELY CRYING OUT FOR HELP! If the COSA program has helped you, then you have some ESH (experience, strength, and hope) to offer those newcomers who still seem only to have pain. Please, please consider volunteering some of your time to help us CARRY THE MESSAGE, to be there for all of those who are still suffering in this disease. We need help in many areas — telephone volunteers, CCCs, and yahoo online group helpers, to name a few.

We know that stepping into any volunteer service position can be scary. Perhaps we can break down the fear just a bit by explaining what actions are needed in some of the volunteer positions.

**Telephone volunteers:** On a day which you select, you call in to the national phone line, retrieve the messages, then call the person back at a time that is private and convenient for you. There will be no phone calls coming into your home. You will not be interrupted at inconvenient or uncomfortable times. The telephone coordinator will work with you to select a day that is best for you. You do not have to absorb the long distance expense or any postage expense incurred in the course of doing this volunteer work. You may turn in the expenses of your phone calls to the Treasurer for reimbursement. ⇒

**COSA Connections Coordinators:** You will be assigned a geographical region, and your job is to connect people together with existing meetings or with one another to start a new meeting. You would be working with a supervising coordinator who can help answer any questions you may have and provide you with a directory of COSA groups. You will receive requests from COSAs in your region; these requests will be forwarded to you from email volunteers, telephone volunteers, yahoo group moderators and snail mail volunteers. Your task will be to match up people to COSA groups or with other COSAs from the same area. You will also connect newcomers to long-distance temporary sponsors when possible.

**Yahoo Group Moderators:** As the COSA Yahoo Online Group continues to grow, service opportunities abound. Moderators alternate weeks, so each moderator is on-duty a week at a time every three or four weeks. The four main duties are:

- 1) Process new members into the group by sending them welcoming letters and prescreening their first postings.
- 2) Post Special Notices to the group as needed.
- 3) Maintain the group's safety and health by protecting it from inappropriate potential members (such as Spammers) and posting "Let's keep on track" messages when needed.
- 4) Chair established online meetings.

You may believe you have no experience, strength and hope to share. But if you have experienced the pain of addiction and made it through today, then you DO have something to share. We need the experience, strength and hope from each other, newcomers and oldtimers alike, in order to progress in our recovery.

We're thanking you in advance for sharing your recovery with others who are still seeking. If you choose to join our cadre of volunteers, contact us at any of the places in the contact box on page 2.

I hope you find much healing in your recovery process.

— JoAn D.

## Blame/Shame/Pity/Healing

I recently built a milking barn on my dairy. I bought box after box of nails. Big nails, little nails, lots of nails – hundreds of nails have been hammered into the flat boards forming my barn.

I remember one nail. I don't remember the hundreds – just this one. WHY? I held the nail in my left hand between my thumb and index finger, positioned it on the board as I have done thousands of times. With the hammer in my right hand I hit the nail. WRONG... I missed the nail and hit my thumb. Result my thumb HURT. Not little tiny pain. IT HURT BIG HURTS. Dropped everything, grabbed my poor thumb and did that hopping around thing as if it was going to help. It didn't help. Thumb still hurt. Recount what happened. WHO is at fault/blame here? My left hand held the nail, my right hand held the hammer, all the rest of me was between both hands. I did it! No one else was even around. This was my fault, I have no one to blame but me.

Okay, I'm guilty, I admit it – blame myself. To no avail. Thumb still hurts. I know who did it – but I still feel pain. Now I feel sorry for myself, 'cause I was just doing what I was supposed to do. What I have done thousands of times. I really smacked my thumb, now it is throbbing, aching, purplish and swollen. Okay feeling sorry for myself really good now. Not helping. Thumb still hurts. I will NOW move on and forgive myself. I didn't do this on purpose. I didn't set out to smash my thumb with the hammer. It was an accident. I know I was positioned wrong with my weight etc. Okay, I should have moved a bit to get a better angle. I didn't. I forgive myself. Don't even have to look at my thumb – I know it still hurts cause I feel the PAIN. What is wrong here? I took the blame, it was my fault. I felt sorry for myself, I took the pity, it still hurts. I then took the next step – I forgave myself. Nothing is working. I have done everything I can do. But my thumb is still throbbing and hurts and is now getting a blood blister forming on it.

Maybe it didn't accept my apology. That's nonsense, it's part of me, it has to accept my apology. So what went wrong? My thumb was smashed with a hammer – that is some major trauma, my thumb needs to ⇒

HEAL. It is not the same thumb as before I hit it. In the hitting it I damaged the tissues, broke some blood vessels and most likely the bone is not in the normal condition either. Conclusion: The thumb needs to heal. God is the healer, not me. My blaming myself, pitying myself, and forgiving myself is not the healing agent. I can protect my thumb, ice it and care for it while it is healing. But I cannot of my own power will my thumb to heal. Trying to do so is insane. Wanting to do so is hopeful but not factual.

When I go through a mental trauma such as my SA acting out, I don't see the physical injury – it's my mind and so-called heart that hurt. Not seeing the pain, as in bruises etc, makes it feel like maybe it's not real. I have a broken heart. I don't have a bone in my heart to break. That's logic. It's not my heart that is broken at all. It's the area of my mind that is referred to as the heart. No bones were broken, no tissue was damaged. This is all mental pain. I have been taught to deny and avoid mental pain. It's not REAL PAIN. Then do everything to fix that pain, that isn't real, while I'm denying it? HELLO, does that sound like insanity? I cannot heal that pain anymore than I can heal my thumb. My mind needs to rest and be protected from the trauma and any further damage. God can and will heal my mind. It would be insane for me to pick at the blood blister and disturb my thumb anymore. Yet I do that all the time with my mind. I can't put a cast or protective device on my mind as I can my thumb. Yet I have to put my mind to rest on certain issues to allow the healing to take place. I have to take responsibility to prevent further damage. I can't even do that on my own power. God will heal my thumb, it may take a good 4-6 weeks, but it will heal. IF I LEAVE IT ALONE AND DON'T cause any more trauma to it. What would happen if I hit my thumb with a hammer everyday for the next 4-6 weeks? A lot of pain, no healing. We could safely say somewhere in there the thought of really STUPID comes up. My mind will heal IF I LEAVE IT ALONE AND DON'T CAUSE anymore trauma and prevent further damage.

Well I can't do that. I have to use my mind, so I'm in a real fix here. God knows I need to use my mind to function. I can get by without the thumb, but I can't ⇒

get buy without the mind. How long does it take God to heal the mind? For me that depends on how willingly I follow God's leadership and stop abusing my own mind. Hands off the SA's addiction is letting my mind rest. No more blame cycles is letting my mind rest. No more shame bashing is letting my mind rest. No more denial of the pain is letting my mind rest. Accepting I am powerless is letting my mind rest. Coming to believe in a power far greater than me is letting my mind rest. Deciding to turn my life and my will over to God is letting my mind rest. Letting go of the past is letting my mind rest. If I let my mind rest, God can begin to heal my mind. As soon as I start picking it back apart, I have disturbed the rest and interfered with the healing. So I get to start the healing process over again. I have a healthy part of my mind I can still use. Just because I have one thumb smashed doesn't mean my entire hand is not healthy. I can still use the wrist, hand and other fingers. For today, I can let my mind rest, and prevent further damage. I can rely upon the healthy part of my mind and God's power to take care of me. I can let God heal the rest of my mind and my thumb.

Do you think for one second, the NEXT time I use a hammer I will have forgotten about the pain of hitting my thumb? NOT a chance, right? If I did, I most likely will repeat it. God has a reason for not letting our memory have a delete key or an eraser. God will heal my thumb, the pain will be gone. God will NOT erase or delete the cause or the memory from my mind anymore than God will banish me from ever using a hammer again. God will watch me use a hammer again and again. Sometimes God will smile and sometimes God will cringe and say — ohhh ouch huh Kathy! Saw that one comng didn't we? God will start the healing process over for me AGAIN, anytime I slip.

— Kathy

### **Bring Your Recovery When You Move!**

Moving 1300 miles across the country from Michigan to Colorado is not for the faint of heart, but with 12-step recovery it can happen and even happen well! My partner and I decided to pull up roots a year or so ⇒

ago and go west (young man and young woman, so to speak). We did not know then what an undertaking lay before us, but we forged ahead. There were papers and applications to be completed, a house to make ready for sale, much holding of our breath for school acceptance, much holding of our breath for the house sale, preparation for leaving unemployment, securing a new place to live many miles away, a myriad of decisions to make, not to mention processing loss and grief leaving dear friends and family behind. And, this was only the first half of the journey!

After arriving in our new Colorado apartment, you would have thought we traveled through space to another planet. Even the slightest movement (like going to the grocery store or going outside for a walk) seemed monumental because we left everything behind that we had known and loved, that made us feel safe. We were dizzy. All our world was completely upside down, and we were totally disoriented.

Well, thank goodness, 12-step recovery is pretty much the same no matter where you go! Even though the world around us was spinning, we were able to get grounded pretty quickly by going to meetings. And, since we are in a couple of 12-step programs (in addition to COSA and SAA), there were more options for meetings. We arrived in town on a Saturday and by Sunday morning we were at our first 12-step meeting with little or no effort. We also discovered that our new space was loaded with a fine menu of nearly every kind of meeting on every day of the week. Friends came easily too because there is such a bond in 12-step and such a support network where one can actually begin to feel safe in an "unsafe" world.

My purpose for writing about our journey (which is far from over) is to express my deepest gratitude for all of you who continue to show up and keep coming back to meetings and recovery. With 12-step recovery (especially COSA), even the most difficult of situations can be bettered and can produce results that far exceed expectations and go beyond even wildest dreams. Thanks everyone out there who "keeps coming back!"

— Bonnie C

## Standing in My Own Sunshine

As I read about standing in my own sunshine, I thought about the times I have ruined many moments of my life over an incident that has happened, been resolved / or unable to resolve, yet I allowed the incident to occupy my headspace [block my sunshine] for the entire day, sometimes weeks, months or, yes, even years.

Today I focus on dealing with each issue as best I can when it happens, then I file it away until I need to deal with it again.

I can then walk away from the situation back into the sunshine, or the moments that I can enjoy in my life.

Example: A situation that seemed big while it was happening took place on the second anniversary of Arnold's death. Previously, I had that day set aside for me. I wanted to utilize it for processing and healing.

A few days before the 7<sup>th</sup>, I learned that my daughters had been requested to be present in court. It bothered me that it was on the date of Arnold's death. I wondered if I would allow that situation to take my focus from me. I spent time praying and asking that focus would be mine that day. Then, early the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, I learned I had to rush in and open our club as my employee would not be arriving on time. Minutes later, daughter #1 received a phone call that her employee was not coming in to work at her tanning salon. That left daughter #2 going to court alone to support her father. I left to open our club frustrated that daughter #2 would be alone. I arrived at business to face a couple of police. Our alarm system was going off. Another event happening in the same building that my business is in had been racking the front doors attempting to get in. Their contract was for an 8 A.M. They set the alarms off at 6:40 A.M. At 7:30 A.M. my employee arrived at work. 8:30 A.M. daughter #2 called to tell me her husband was going to stay up and go to court with her.

At 9 A.M. I was back home. I had a choice. I could block my sunshine and moan about the way my ⇒

day began OR I could STOP, BREATHE, LET GO OF THE CHAOS and proceed to appreciate the day ahead of me.

I chose to stop, breathe, let go and focus on me. For me, that means I faced the sunshine [the grieving & processing I wanted to feel that day]. I enjoyed the sunshine [I took back my day and experienced the presence of myself]. I saw the sunshine [I stopped from my writing & watched the birds & squirrels & really saw the beauty of the day].

I did not block my sunshine by claiming the day was ruined because it didn't start the way I had anticipated.

If you wish, now would be a time to think about or write about a time that you blocked your own sunshine. Or think or write about a time you saw the sunshine in spite of a situation in your life.

The second example I share was this: I block my sunshine when I refuse to acknowledge my need for rest. A recent meditation talked about the need for rest after emotional and spiritual release. Crying and deep thinking are work. Toxins are released. Those toxins need rest with food and plenty of water to cleanse from our body.

My family-of-origin's definition of work does not include crying and thinking. I can justify rest after hard labor for myself or others. If I'm not doing physical labor, I can block my sunshine. I can easily tell myself I shouldn't be tired. I haven't worked. I don't deserve a time of rest.

What is your family-of-origin definition of work?

You may want to finish this sentence. I block my sunshine when.....

— *Ila D*

