

Balance

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA



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WE CAN ADJUST THE SAILS, BUT WE CANNOT CONTROL THE WIND

With the wind in my hair, the sun on my back, and the spray in my face, most of my experience as a member of the National Service Board of COSA has brought back the feeling of being a young girl again, sailing for the first time.

What began as timid, unsure steps onto the deck of our National Service Board, shifted to exuberance and the thrill of catching the wind for the first time. Finding my footing on board, I began to learn the ropes, and pitch in as a member of the crew. Those who had more experience than I showed me how to look on the horizon to see a squall of wind darkening the water, as it headed our way. I had difficulty seeing it at first, couldn't make out the darker water from the rest of

the crystal-blue lake. Then, someone told me that we wouldn't avoid those darker spots, but rather invite them, as it showed the way towards the best sailing. The fellowship as a whole, and our collective Higher Power, is the wind in our sails, therefore even when the wind changes direction, we must tack and find a way to keep our bearings.

Heading toward our convention this year, I was keenly aware of a shifting of the wind in the sails of our organization. I saw some dark patches on our waters during this past year, and thanks to those words of wisdom from those who were here before me, and my own experiences thus far, I knew to not avoid them -- our board sailed into those patches. It has been exhilarating and at times taxing. I have felt like a deck hand on a sailing ship that has just tacked with a change in the wind. I love the work, feel alive with

guidance from my HP, and at times have worked too hard, taxing myself, and the "weather" has forced me to take a break and allow another crewmember to step on deck in my place. I am so grateful for the experiences I've had.

It hasn't been an easy year -- I've found that change is never easy. Change in my own program has often brought along pain. I've learned to be grateful for the difficult experiences I've had, as they've nearly always brought with them the gifts of insight, growth, and change. My time on the COSA National Board has brought the gifts of awareness of my own voice and some abilities that I didn't know I had. I've made good friendships, seen some of those friends come and go, and each year had the opportunity to meet and get to know

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more new crewmembers."

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Balance Newsletter of the National

LEAVE THE NO-DOZ AT HOME

by Mare

When my Tuesday night Lakeville, MN COSA group asked me to be a delegate to the COSA convention in New Orleans this year, I was delighted and (I thought) well prepared for this service position. Having been a delegate to other national conferences' legislative sessions, I had my No-Doz, my doodle pads and crossword puzzles cut from the local paper that I could surreptitiously work on to stay awake during policy-making sessions. Oh yes, I had my list of issues about which my meeting sisters were concerned. However, to say that my attitude toward and experience of legislative sessions was well, less than engaging, would be an understatement. But I came with questions. As this was my first COSA-SAA conference, and my first time as a delegate to the conference, I was both curious about the workshops and activities and also unsure of where/how I would fit in.

What a conference! What a surprise! I arrived too late for the "Meet and Greet" for the delegates on the evening before the legislative session, so my first experience of the delegates was in the session

itself the next morning. My first impressions were of warmth, friendliness and acceptance. I sat at a table with another delegate from my area and two "older heads" in the program, who were so welcoming and helpful in the meeting, that I was convinced that some very wise person had designed the seating so that the newbies at each table had the encouragement of seasoned delegates. Before long, I lost my reserve and fears and became completely absorbed in the tasks of the day.

There was no need for No-Doz. The meeting followed Roberta's Rules of Order – a method about which I'd read, but never really seen in action. Even now, weeks away from the meeting, I am still staggered by how much we got done in that one day session, even by consensus. I was also amazed at how friendly and intimate the setting was, and how much each person's input, suggestion, comment and question was valued. The level of honesty and candor, particularly about the budget, was a revelation. When I asked questions (often out of ignorance of process), the answers were both com-

passionate as well as competent.

What I struggle to put into words, however, is how that one day session changed me. I came away certain of more friends and allies nationwide, but also humbled with a renewed sense of my personal commitment to COSA, and a deeper understanding about its strengths and challenges. In getting to know other delegates, in addressing the issues before us, in dealing with problems up front with honesty and respect, the people in that session modeled a way of relating that gave me hope for my own program and confidence in the COSA program as a whole. That delegate session colored and enriched the experiences I had at the rest of the conference, opened me to a stronger support network and gave me confidence to volunteer for other national service. Not a bad exchange for the doodle pad and crossword puzzles!

- Mare W., 15 June 2005

A Special Invitation to Become a Part of an Exciting Team

The collective Higher Power of the COSA fellowship is at work in a mighty way. As we approach the end of our silver anniversary year, it is evident that our fellowship has experienced tremendous growth; both in membership and in maturity. With growth comes added responsibility. Over the course of the past year, the ISO of COSA has recognized that we must be willing to adapt our policies and procedures in order to meet the demands of a larger, stronger, international organization. We have continued to come upon old ways of doing business that have served us well in the past; but at this point hinder us. As a result, many organizational changes have been implemented and more improvements are on the horizon. This is an exciting time for our fellowship and the ISO of COSA is hopeful that the benefits of these changes will be felt throughout the fellowship for years to come.

During the 2004 Annual Meeting, the delegates spoke and we listened. They indicated that one of the most critical areas in need of change is the Offi-

cial COSA Website. Placing trust in our collective Higher Power, we were led to move out of our comfort zone as we began to brainstorm in response to the call for change. As a result, last year we assessed the current site and formulated a plan for redevelopment and expansion. We also took a brave look at how we have updated and maintained the site in the past and developed a new, improved approach to maintenance.

A concerted effort was made to put the redevelopment project into motion. A newly organized and expanded site map was developed; which includes a section designed to meet the needs of our growing male membership and several sections designed to more effectively outreach to professionals and the media. The creative juices are still flowing as we continue the process of conceptualizing an updated, professional look. There are plans to translate the site in order to better serve the Spanish speaking community; with hopes of adding other language options in the future. Our new maintenance plan is designed to improve the channels of communication; while allowing for a team approach to service in this area.

The groundwork has been laid and the time has come to begin

construction on the new site. There is much work to do. A project of this magnitude requires a multitude of talents and skills. We are planning to use the team approach by utilizing the talents of several motivated individuals who are willing to work with a minimum of direction. Creative team members should possess healthy self-esteem, good communication skills and a willingness to function within the framework of determined deadlines. We are in need of team members who exhibit strength in the areas of website development and maintenance, as well as those who have strengths in the areas of writing and copy editing. We are also searching for written stories of ESH from a cross section of the COSA fellowship.

Our team will remain focused on **Tradition Five - Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to those who still suffer. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps ourselves.** Please contact me, Beth S., via e-mail at buffiegirl@cox.net, if you are willing to serve the fellowship in this exciting area.

COSA Traditions— Extended Readings— in literature approval process

These are the first three out of 12 Extended readings on our Traditions which are being published in our newsletter as provisional drafts of COSA literature to fulfill the 90 day review for comments by the whole COSA fellowship. **This piece of literature has no known copyright issues.** The rest of the traditions will follow in upcoming issues. We now need your comments, suggestions, revisions and even your endorsement! We need to know that this piece of literature honestly reflects COSA experience, strength, and hope. Please email: cosacopy@yahoo.com Snail mail: P.O. Box 14537, Minneapolis, MN 55414 Your comments and suggestions will be received by more than one person, and your voice is valued!

Tradition One

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon COSA unity. The strength of COSA is in the individual groups where we can each go to find the help, understanding, and growth we need. The traditions give groups the means to stay simple, strong, and related so that there will always be COSA help available for the individual.

The first Tradition states this purpose—personal progress for the greatest number. While each individual in COSA is unique and important, no one individual can distort COSA's message, demand too much attention, or dominate any gathering without jeopardizing the personal progress of other members.

There is unity also in our working of the program. The basic interaction of COSA is the sharing of our experience, strength, and hope. We do this in the groups and we also share with a wider circle of members through Conference-approved literature. Each individual and each group is a small part of a greater whole. Keeping the COSA message undiluted, retaining the simplest yet strongest structure, keeping our eye on the primary purpose—our progress through use of COSA tools—will help the most people to recover from the effects of living with the disease of addiction.

We will retain our unity as long as we keep our priorities straight. We are in COSA because we have encountered problems of living with sexual addiction. COSA has a practical, workable program to teach us how to live a full life for ourselves while recognizing the legitimate needs of others.

Tradition Two

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

Before we came to COSA, many of us thought we needed to assert authority. Even though we felt beaten down and defeated, we knew exactly what needed to be done to stop the disorder in our lives—someone else had to stop acting out sexually. We became self-righteous, super-critical, and authoritarian. We felt that everything was on our shoulders, we had no one else to turn to.

In COSA we learn we can let go of the burden. While we still take care of our duties, we don't have to take on those that rightfully belong to someone else.

While no one in the group speaks for God, we find answers for ourselves from the group. As we hear the honesty of other members' sharing, we become more honest and realistic in facing our situations. As we learn to trust the group, we become more trustworthy. As we feel the concern of the members we begin to reach out in love, becoming more lovable and more loving. When we experience these spiritual qualities demonstrated through the group members, we begin to know a force larger than ourselves. We feel we are an extension of the order, justice, and love of a Higher Power and begin to act from larger motives.

The paradox is that though we no longer feel we are the authority, we find within ourselves the qualities that enable us to do what is right. When we begin to perceive how group conscience works in the group, we can apply it to our family. We realize that in listening to others, giving them respect, attempting to find a consensus of agreement, looking for the humor in a situation, seeing events in a larger perspective can work in the family setting just as well as at meetings. We can, as family members, as COSA members, and as service members of the fellowship, work through

group conscience truly as trusted servants.

Tradition Three

The only requirement for COSA membership is that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. The members may call themselves a COSA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

A problem of sexual addiction in a relative or friend is the only requirement for membership in COSA. That sounds so simple and yet many of us battled it for years. Maybe we didn't know about addiction or couldn't believe it was the cause of problems in our family, and certainly we weren't able to deal with the effects of it in our own behavior.

How fortunate that we can come to COSA, attend meetings and learn the program even if we are not sure whether the problem is addiction; when we can only say, "I think he (or she) acts out too much."

Addiction has been defined as being present if acting out is causing a continuing problem in any area of a person's life: physical, emotional, social, business, marital. If we see our lives affected because of problems due to someone else's acting out, we are eligible for COSA. Then we can benefit from the help available when relatives and friends gather together in a COSA group.

In such a group we can find understanding and the emotional and spiritual support we need. It is because COSA has no other affiliation that it can aid us. We need not be diverted by members who expound on other recovery programs; we can remind them that COSA has a single purpose. We do not espouse any religious creed to practice, follow any psychological bent, or subscribe to any clinical treatment. We all live or have lived with sexual addiction in our home or work situation. We share our mutual experiences within the framework of the COSA program. Starting from that basic groundwork, we can find our individual strength and growth through the mutual aid of the group.

June 2005

Balance Newsletter of the National Service

Historically Speaking...We need to raise our Price!!!!

I'm not exactly sure but I believe our first "Balance" issue went out to the COSA fellowship in 1992 or 1993. As I continue my "Clutter Crusade" [ie. cleaning out boxes & shelves], I may find another box of back issues. If or when that happens, we will then know the exact date of "Balance" beginnings. It was a one page newsletter with an insert of a CoSA's personal story. Yes, it was the beginning. At that time, we set the price at \$12.00. That \$12.00 covered the cost of paper, copying, envelopes and postage. What was the price of a first class stamp twelve years ago? I'm not sure. I do know this. \$12.00 no longer covers the cost of our newsletter.

Not only has the \$12.00 price added stress to our budget, a few years ago, the board voted to send free copies to all registered groups. We wanted every group to know we were out there. We wanted them to feel the connection. We also hoped it would be an incentive for groups to not

only register, but also to keep their "Balance" mailing address current. We hope we achieved some of those goals. However, at this time, as we strive to balance our budget, we have found it necessary to raise the price of the newsletter to \$24.00.

We will also be stopping the free subscription to groups. If this newsletter was received by a group, please be sure this information is shared with your group. If your budget doesn't have the money in it to purchase a subscription, you may want to ask for a special donation just for your newsletter.

It is our intention to keep everyone informed of upcoming events through the newsletter.

May your recovery continue in a positive, although sometimes painful climb upward. I know the newsletter is one of those tools that has assisting me in my journey. lla

Balance, the newsletter of the NSO-COSA, is published bi-monthly. The NSO-COSA holds the copyright to the newsletter.

Editor and distribution ~
Judi

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7th Traditions—Groups		7th Traditions—Individual	
Sunday PM Mtg Houston, TX	\$38.00	Oxford, MI	\$25.00
Tuesday Night Hampton, VA	68.00	Jacksonville, FL	11.30
Thursday Night Group Des Moines, IA	50.00	Duluth, MN	2.00
Thurs, Mtg Houston, TX	11.00	Mankato, MN	25.00
Wed 7:30 pm Costa Mesa, CA	70.50	Hui Iwa, HI	5.00
Minnetonka Group Minnetonka, MN	60.00	Clarkston, MI	50.00
Friday Friends Virginia Beach, VA	15.00		
Saturday Morning Houston, TX	67.00	Minnetonka, MN	60.00
Kingwood, TX	25.00	Minnetonka, MN	60.00
Desert Flowers Eau Claire, WI	30.00	Phoenix, AZ Tuesday PM	25.00
		San Francisco, CA	72.00
		Granite Bay, CA Friday Night Cosa	50.00

(from page 1) I look forward to another year of change and growth for our organization. We've worked hard to bring up some new sails, sails that we hope will catch the wind better than the old, tattered sails we've been sailing with. We've shifted shores from Robert's Rules of Order to Roberta's Rules of Order, after finding how much better these ideas fit with our 12 step principles. That's like raising an entirely new main sail! I look forward to having all hands on deck, and searching out new crewmembers to keep us sailing in a positive direction, and working together towards a common goal -- to spread the message to those Sexual Codependents / Co-Sex Addicts who still suffer. I'm grateful and humbled to be entrusted with the care of this ship, and endeavor to keep us on a steady course.

In loving service,
Christi G.
Your new Chair of the (soon to officially be) INTERnational Service Board of COSA