



NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA



Holiday Issue



Nov-Dec 2005

~ REFLECTIONS ~

by Sheila B.

Earlier today, I looked at my "to do" list, trying to prioritize. I skipped over a note to call a COSA newcomer who had attended her first meeting a few nights ago, feeling that I had too much to do. From somewhere (my higher power?) came the thought, "Call her. It's good service to reach out to newcomers."

She asked me questions about the program, and talked about her struggles. I shared some of my experience, strength, and hope. When we were done, she thanked me for calling her and for listening to her.

The wonder of this program, though, is that I received so many gifts from that phone call. Listening to her pain, I felt grateful for the progress I have made.

Two years ago, I was in so much pain, I had trouble getting through a day without crying. Today, I can go long periods of time without even thinking about that pain.

Back then, I took my husband's actions personally, feeling that I was not attractive or fun enough. Now I know that his addiction has nothing to do with me.

Before all of this came to the surface, I felt that it was my husband's responsibility to do things to make me happy. Today, I understand that I am responsible for taking care of myself.

Two years ago, I thought the problem was all with my husband--he needed to change. Now, I recite daily (sometimes many times a day) the AA passage that says;

I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world, as what needs to be changed in me and my attitudes. (AA Big Book 449)

And finally, prior to this incident, I had a very loose relationship with my higher power. Today, I spend time every day talking to my higher power and being open to hearing the response.

My days are not perfect. There are still times when I act inappropriately, when I get triggered back into old emotions, when I forget to rely on God, when I'm in denial. I know I still have much more to learn. But overall, I have made clear progress, one day at a time.

Thank you, newcomer, for giving me the opportunity to look back on my progress and celebrate it.



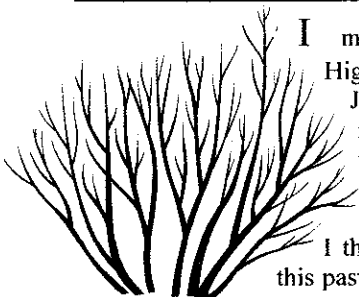
HP AT WORK IN MICHIGAN!

by Christi

I marvel at the gifts recovery brings, and the lessons I have learned from my Higher Power!

Just when I think I know where to focus, what I need to do, I often find that my HP steps gently behind me, taps me on the shoulder, and re-directs me towards what I really need to look at. I am humbled again and again with the awareness that when I run on my own will, I often waste my energy, if not cause more trouble for myself.

I thought I knew what to expect for the mid-year face-to-face board meeting this past month in Michigan. I prepared myself, even prayed about those parts that I



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- Traditions 7,8,9
- COSA FAQ

In every Issue:

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- Literature Order form

Balance

2

7th Traditions Groups

~Houston
Monday AM 10.00
~Houston S
aturday AM 11.00
~Houston
Holy Name Group 20.00
~St. Louis/Kirkwood, MO
Monday 100.00
~San Antonio, TX
Precious Cosas 13.00
~Mesa, AZ,
Sunday PM 50.00

~Costa Mesa, CA
Wed. Night 50.00
~Eau Claire, WI
Desert Flowers
~Brighton, MI 50.00
~Houston, TX
Sunday PM 56.00

7th Traditions Individual

Howard Lake, MN 5.00
Clarkston, MI 75.00
St. Paul, MN 20.00



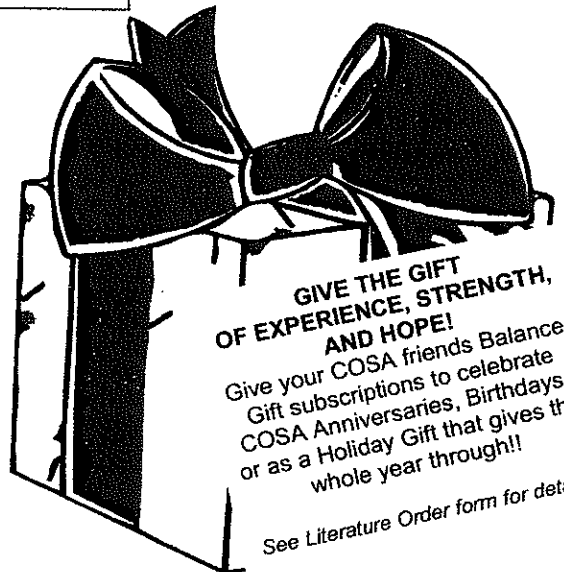
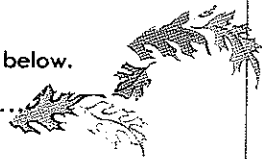
By the Fellowship, for the Fellowship!

A shared vision of those who work on the production of the Balance is to have a folder overflowing with articles submitted from the membership, which can be used as topics for upcoming issues. For this to happen, we encourage every group, intergroup and member to submit articles that share your ESH (experience, strength, and hope). Also, articles that share upcoming events in your area; such as retreats, workshops, speakers etc. Articles that give a voice to your story. We also would love to hear your ideas for what you would like to see in future articles. The Balance is a newsletter for the membership, by the membership. Please send your articles to:

COSACopy@yahoo.com

or by snail mail to the NSO-COSA PO Box listed below.

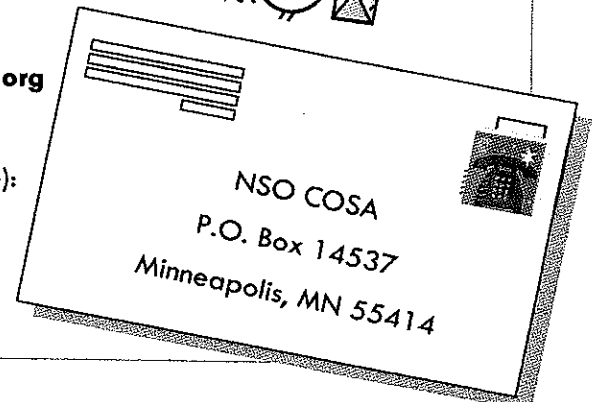
Hope to hear from you soon...

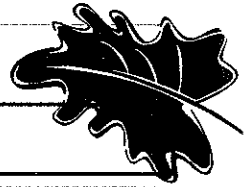


Contact the NSO of COSA

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STEP Shares³ — 11 and 12

Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

As the steps progress, they bring my concept of a Higher Power into focus. I have acknowledged, surrendered, submitted, and learned humility -- and now it is time to learn to hear God's voice on a daily basis. Nearing the end of the steps, the relationship seems to be just beginning!

I came to step 11 feeling I knew a lot about prayer. It was part of my daily life since childhood, a part of my tradition and practice. So the simple focus of limiting my prayers to just asking to know God's will and to have the strength to do it -- that didn't seem right. Again, I put my doubts aside and tried to work the step, without trying to analyze it to death first. I started to notice how many of my prayers were about other people, and were often controlling or a list of instructions for God -- yes, all done in love and concern, but often out of focus. Step 11 forced me to listen more and focus on the things I could change, and not on other people's problems. Whereas in step 7 I was asking God to do something, now in step 11 I am being asked to do things. It is another level of responsibility for my own life, and this step reminds me that my HP is the source of the "courage to change." ~~~ Sandee



Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

I try to remember that I must practice the principles in all my affairs. Step 12 is a daily ritual for me. Some days are better than others. I do practice honesty. I do practice kindness, compassion and respect. I have found that with time, many people have crossed my path where a good 12 step program would really benefit them, but it is not my job to point this out. My job is to be truthful and honest about myself and my life. If I am asked key questions, I decide how much I will disclose about my life's path. I try to practice the importance of attraction rather than promotion. But I can guarantee that if they show up at any number of meetings, my butt will be sitting right next to theirs.

I aim to act in the world with the dignity and grace that we benefit from by having the 12 steps. (Think of the cashier at the grocery store, the clerk at the store...when an error has been made, our friends and family members that benefit from our truth and honesty.)

I do not need to promote the twelve steps... I live the 12 steps. I love that it is a program of attraction; that is what attracted me. (I have learned to keep my mouth shut: Instead of saying things like, "Oh God, you need a program," I know to pray quietly to my God.) ~~~ GP



I know that many of us have been led to our recovery from sexual codependency/coaddiction as a result of being in another 12 step program, and some of us even did so as the result of their working their 12th step in a program. I also notice that this COSA awakening, working COSA's 12th step, has blessed some of us with the readiness to face other distress, such as severe issues with finances, or food, or nicotine, for example, by seeking recovery in other fellowships.

As a member who has worked on each of COSA's 12 steps in depth, I can say that they definitely woke me up spiritually. And now that I am awake, the purposes I find for all this spiritual energy are to do my best to pass on COSA recovery to other sexual codependents/coaddicts, and to live the steps as my new way of life and integrate my awareness to the best of my ability.

I am a recovering alcoholic and, while I had codependency recovery before I came to COSA, for family of origin dysfunction, for my relationships with alcoholics and ragaholics, for unhealthy systems, and for my lack of relationship with myself, my recovery in COSA has changed my sense of my personal boundaries in all my relationships in its own way. It allows my relationship experiences to work for me. It has changed my path in life, my interests, my career choices, and my understanding of my Higher Power. It has opened my eyes to my choices and given me the ability to be responsible for my experiences. It has given me a wide-open world to play in, in safety and health. ~~~ MB

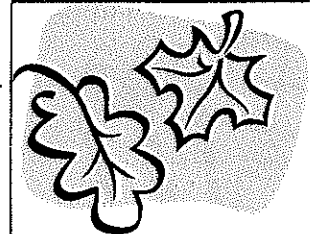
Step 11

Questions:

- 1) Have I/do I find it difficult to spend time in prayer and meditation? Why? If so, what techniques have helped me improve my conscious contact with my HP?
- 2) Have I found this directive on prayer and meditation limiting in any way? Have I found that it has helped me expand my spiritual experience?
- 3) Why is it important that I practice this step

12th Step Questions:

- 1) Have you had any awakening, spiritually, as a result of these steps?
- 2) What are some of the simple ways a member can start to serve and "carry the message"?
- 3) How can the principle of "carrying the message" be done without violating our tradition of "attraction, not promotion?" Have you ever found yourself "promoting" while trying to do the 12th step?
- 4) List some ways you can apply your recovery to other areas of your life.





COSA Needs your Dental Floss, I mean, Service

by Mare W.

Fellowship, noun 1. Companionship, company. 2. Community of interest, activity, feeling or experience. 3. A company of equals or friends.

Service, noun 1. Contribution to the welfare of others or to the whole.

Codependency, noun 1. a psychological condition or a relationship in which a person is controlled or manipulated by another who is affected with a pathological condition.

Ok, ok, I got carried away with the definitions. But whatever Merriam-Webster's failings as a codependent, the dictionary seems to be right on the mark in defining fellowship and service. However, there seems to be a built in problem with service within COSA. I notice that we tend to eschew volunteerism. Somehow we COSAs tend to translate contribution as control, service as servitude. Yet, our very 1st tradition states that, "Our *common* welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on COSA unity." (italics mine) How then do we reconcile commitment to recovery from codependency and compulsions around sexual behavior with commitment to this wonderful "company of equals"?

If there is any litmus test, it seems to me to be part and parcel of what I was taught to do when I first came into a 12-step program. My sponsor, wise with many years in the program, gave me the keys to the program when she told me, "For heaven's sakes, just go to meetings, read the Big Book, work the steps and do service!" Every time I threatened to become all wrapped up in myself, she pushed me to do something useful for the group, her antidote for nauseating self-pity, gothic loneliness, Irish melancholy and pig-headed short-sightedness.

In our growth, COSA has national and local needs that only you can fill. As a COSA recently told me, "This is not a fellowship that can be balanced on the shoulders of three people!" Bernie Siegel, MD, tells a wonderful true story of a prison inmate who successfully scaled the walls of his prison and escaped using a rope made of (would you believe?) dental floss. Many, many strands of dental floss, carefully bartered for and saved, made the rope strong enough to support a person. Your strands of service, bound together, make our fellowship strong enough to support all of those who need us, all of those whom we attract.

In the last issue of Balance there was a page devoted to inviting you to share the most precious commodity you own - your time - to COSA. Please keep in mind your blessings as well as your boundaries, fill out a COSA Helping Hands form, and serve this happy "company of equals" as you are able. Thanks!



-Mare W.

COSA GIFTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

With the holiday season approaching, we asked COSA members what gifts they would wish to give to their fellow COSA members.

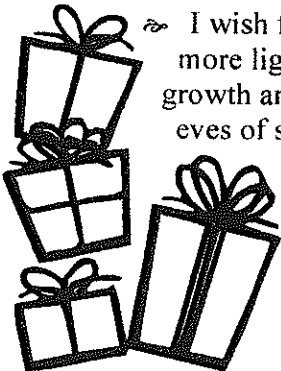
Here are some of the answers we received:



~ I wish for my COSA sisters and brothers a holiday that has more serenity, more giving to self, more light, more healing. May these days be filled with the colors of golden opportunities for growth and the simple silver joys of the season. It is a legend in my family that on these special eves of sacred winter days, what has been lost will be found again. May you find the truth of yourself - and rejoice! Love, Mare W.

~ My wish for my fellow COSA's is the gift of serenity, the kind of serenity inside that you can feel when life seems to be turning out of control, but inside you are calm, serene

(Continued on page 5)



Balance



(Holiday Gifts, Continued from page 4)



and peaceful. —Connie in AZ

~ Awareness, Acceptance, and lovingkindness! —JoAn D.

~ I would hope that you are able to see what a beautiful individual you are. — Joey Z.

~ That you receive peace, joy and freedom through clearer focus and solid boundaries. — Ila D.

~ That each of us recognizes and gives ourselves credit for the growth in recovery we have already done. I'm so often thinking of what I "should" be doing or what I "should" be like that I rarely stop to recognize all my progress. May we each recognize the growth the past year has brought!— Christi G.

~ I wish all my fellows Joy, Hope, Good cheer, Laughter, and Love. — Mavis B.

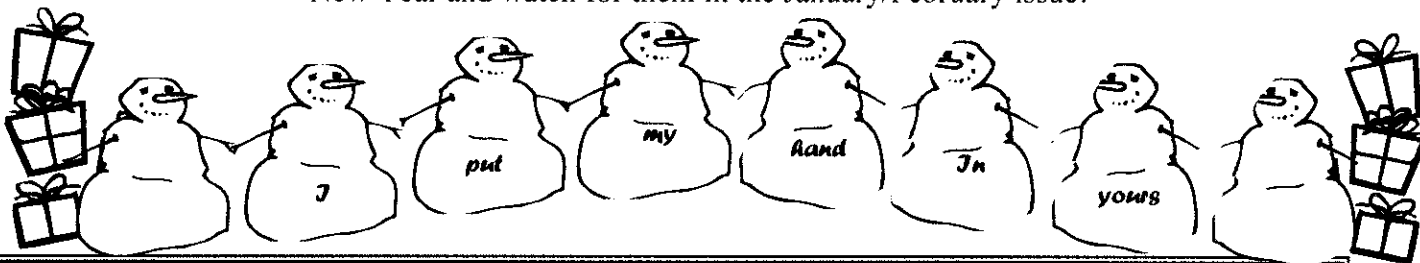
~ My wish for me and my fellow COSAs is that during the upcoming holidays that we actually LET someone help with all of that cooking and all of the dishes afterwards. — DM from Denver

~ Peace!!! —Marnie, NYC

~ Keep the Faith! There is 'Life After Disclosure' and it gets better all the time! —Peace, Love & Joy COSA Group of W.V.[Morgantown]

~ We wish everyone a peaceful holiday season and that we may all stay in touch with the joy of recovery! Thank you for the opportunity to let members know we are connected and important to each other. —New Orleans COSA

MORE TO COME... , send in your own wishes for your fellow COSA members for the New Year and watch for them in the January/February issue!



Please Update your Group Information for our database!

Group Name _____ City & State _____ Meeting Day _____

Your group name, meeting day, city and state will be automatically added to the contact list, and listed on the National COSA website. Please tell us what further information we can provide to newcomers:

Meeting Time: _____ a.m. / p.m. Group Type (i.e. Women's Only, Mixed, Open) _____

Meeting Location (facility, room, street address, city, etc.) _____

Group Phoneline Number: _____ Group Email address: _____

Is your group willing to have your meeting information placed on the National COSA website? Yes No

The National Service Organization of COSA maintains a Contact List so that our volunteers can link individuals searching for groups in their area with existing groups. The volunteers only give out this information to individuals in need of a meeting, and they respect your anonymity. Please also note that we need a mailing address where we can send NSO information that pertains to the business concerns of COSA as a whole. This address will not be given out to anyone: it will only be used for NSO business mailings, and group mailings of the Balance Newsletter.

Group Contact Person: _____ Phone _____ Messages OK? _____

Mailing address: _____


City _____ State _____ Email Address: _____

Alternate Contact Person: _____ Phone _____ Messages OK? _____

Mailing address: _____

City _____ State _____ Email Address: _____

Help keep us current, so that we can continue to spread the word to those who still suffer!





(HP at work. Continued from page 1)

felt I needed to work on and let go of. I arrived in Michigan to find open arms, loving embraces, and the opportunity to roll up my sleeves and get to work on some of the issues that face the fellowship with the other trusted servants on the board.

Somewhere during the board meeting, HP whispered in my ear, "ahem, look over here." I prepared and prayed and wished for success in a certain place, and until I was able to notice that tap on my shoulder, I would not have been able to accomplish those things I sought for.

HP taps us on the shoulder all the time. We pray and wish and want things to go the way we want, and not until we stop to listen are we able to stop wasting our energy and time and get on track. When we let go of our own will and step back, HP unfailingly provides the challenges to help us find the way. When we allow ourselves to do this, we are also provided with the power to carry it out.

A prime example were my preparations for this face to face meeting. I researched on the internet, printed things out, read my Roberta's Rules book, and I don't think any of that prepared me for what was really needed in our board meeting. When my HP tapped me on the shoulder, gently turning me in a different direction, I could see the wasted energy I had expended. I let go and placed my will in the hands of my HP. Does that mean that there were no conflicts? No. Does that mean that there were not challenges that faced the board? Of course not. What it did mean was that the board that serves the fellow-

ship of COSA was able to work together to resolve issues. That tap on the shoulder from my HP helped me to back up and open up to focusing on breaking down some of the emotional parts of working on a board. Sometimes it isn't easy, working together with a dynamic bunch of people who all have great ideas and wonderful minds—oh yeah, and quirks and distinctly different personalities, too.



I witnessed real recovery in action during our mid-year face-to-face meeting in Michigan—willingness to compromise, acknowledge shortcomings, resolve personal difficulties, and the owning of our "part" in difficulties. I felt the tap on my shoulder, and noticed a group of people who happen to be board members for the COSA fellowship, who also happen to be COSA members working on their own recovery, listening to the whisper from within, that tap on the shoulder, the guidance available to us all, if we will turn our self-will over, relax, and let HP work.

HP was at work in Michigan! Your board was, too!

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the fellowship and to work alongside COSA members who truly work their program. We are not perfect, but with the guidance of our collective Higher Power, and with the love we share for the COSA program, we progress toward serving the COSA fellowship, and towards our primary purpose—to spread the word of hope and serenity found in the COSA program to those who have been affected by another person's compulsive sexual behavior.

In loving service,
Christi G.
(chair, NSO-COSA)



Balance Subscription Reminder

Don't forget to mail in your group subscription renewal!

In order to continue receiving newsletters, each group is now asked to renew its subscription by mailing in \$24.00.

The National Service Organization realizes that this might be difficult for newer and smaller groups.

If your group is forced to discontinue your subscription due to a lack of funds, please do what your group conscience leads you to.

THANK YOU for your continued support of the National Service Organization of COSA.

Renew your subscription by sending a check or money order, payable to :

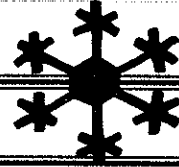
National Service Organization of COSA

P.O. Box 14537

Minneapolis, MN 55414 U.S.A.

Email: info@COSA-Recovery.org

Phone: 1-763-537-6904



COSA FAQ — Literature in review process — Please share your feedback!

The COSA Welcome

We extend a special welcome to newcomers. Although we are sorry for the circumstances which brought you here, we hope that you find in COSA the help and friendship we have been privileged to enjoy. It is suggested that you try six meetings before you decide if the COSA program is for you.

A member phone list is available. People who put their names on this list are willing to take your calls and answer your questions. We encourage you to seek the support of the group.



How do I know if I belong here?

If someone else's sexual behavior is causing you pain, then you can find comfort and hope in COSA. It is suggested that you try six meetings to see if the COSA program is for you.

Why do I have to come to meetings when it's my partner who has the problem?

When we come to COSA we are often spiritually and emotionally depleted. By focusing on ourselves and the part we have played in the dysfunction of our relationships, we can find healing. If we work the 12 Steps of COSA for ourselves, we will learn to make better choices, set boundaries, speak our truth and avoid behaviors that may have enabled the sex addict to continue to practice his or her disease. We realize we cannot find serenity if we continue to focus on someone else's recovery, so we commit ourselves to our own recovery.

Do I have to give my name?

COSA members identify themselves by first name only. Anonymity is the foundation of all COSA traditions. We will treat your name and anything you say as confidential, and we ask that you do the same for us.

Do I have to talk at the meeting?

No one is required to talk or "share" at COSA meetings. We respect your right to decide when you feel comfortable to talk. It is appropriate just to listen until that time.



How much does the COSA program cost?

There are no dues or fees for COSA membership. We are self-supporting through our own contributions. Each member gives what he or she can when the basket is passed. COSA groups may choose to use contributions for rent, literature, scholarships to COSA events or support of Intergroups and our National Service Organization. We ask that you be our guest and not contribute until you feel you are a part of the COSA group.

What do people talk about at COSA meetings?

COSA members meet to share their experience, strength and hope. There are a variety of experiences in COSA recovery that we find helpful to share with each other. They include:

- working the 12 Steps of COSA
- working with a sponsor or sponsoring other members
- setting boundaries
- practicing new, healthy behaviors
- reading COSA or other recovery literature
- sharing feelings
- discovering how we work our program.

Sharing our strength means we talk about how we're growing and lending our support to each other. We share our hope by being an example of how life gets better in recovery.

The safety to share honestly during meetings creates a trust level that many of us have never before experienced. Sometimes the COSA meeting is the first safe place we have to talk about our lives.

We also encourage you to call someone on the COSA phone list. Only members who are willing to take program calls put their names on the list, so you can be assured you won't be troubling the person you call. It is also very helpful to have a sponsor. Sometimes it is better to discuss some issues privately with a sponsor instead of taking them to a meeting.

What is a sponsor and why do I need one?

A sponsor is another COSA member who agrees to help you work the program. Your sponsor will be there for you when you need someone to talk to or ask questions, as well as guide you through working the 12 Steps of COSA. The best way to choose a sponsor is to listen at meet-

ings for someone who has what you want. When you've chosen someone all that's left is to ask, "Will you be my sponsor?"

Can I ask questions during the meeting?

In order for everyone to feel safe, the format of our sharing is that one person speaks at a time without questions, interruptions or cross-talk. Cross-talk is defined as "talking to, talking about or talking with someone else during the meeting." We'll be happy to answer questions after the meeting is over.

Can I ask about or comment on another person's sharing?

If you want to talk about something someone else has said, please don't mention the person by name or point to him or her, or say "you said". We ask that you say, "I can relate to what I heard about...." "My situation is like this...." If you want to ask someone about what they've said, please do so after the meeting.

What is a "feelings check"?

Some COSA meetings include a brief check-in, or "feelings check", at the beginning of the meeting. During introductions with a feelings check, members are invited to reflect on how they are feeling and share their emotions with the group in one or two sentences. Although brief, the "Feelings check" gives each of us an opportunity to be aware of how we feel and to practice expressing our feelings. Like all sharing at COSA meetings, the "feelings check" is optional.

Is there a religious affiliation to COSA?

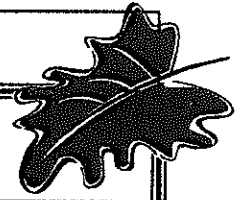
It is not necessary to believe in God to work the COSA program. The word "God" is used in our literature to mean "a Power Greater than ourselves." Members decide for themselves what or whom they will call their Higher Power.

An excerpt

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half-way through.

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the





COSA Traditions 7,8,9 Extended Readings in literature approval process

Here are the next three out of 12 Extended readings on our Traditions. They 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.** Please consider printing these and using them in your meetings. 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: COSA-copy@yahoo.com
Snail mail: NSO COSA
Attn: Literature Committee
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 Seven

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

Like all traditions, this one developed in response to the experience of early groups in AA and Al-Anon. They found that when they accepted contributions from sources other than the members themselves, there were often strings attached, favors expected, subtle pressures exerted, and they lost a measure of their freedom. In following this tradition, groups avoid countless complications. Self-support has made the groups, and COSA as a whole, strong and independent.

In our personal lives, self-support is also essential. When we first come to COSA we're too confused to know what to do, we don't trust ourselves to make decisions. We feel desperate for some strong person to lean on--often it's the addict who disappoints us again and again.

In COSA we discover personal reserves we didn't know we had.

Through reading the literature, applying the steps and sharing with other members at meetings, we begin to feel differently about ourselves. We affirm our worth, we trust our judgment and we can make decisions on our own.

The only unfailing support and lasting personal security for any of us lies in our strength within. It is the security of knowing we have the spirit and inner resources to deal with situations. It also includes contact with our Higher Power as a source of strength. With that well-spring and our own growing confidence, we have the self--support we need. We no longer need to rely on someone else to prop us up.



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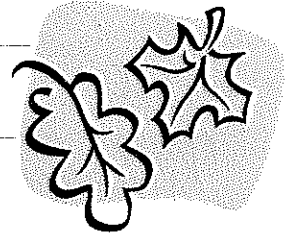
word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us -- sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

The excerpt from the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, pages 83 -- 84 and the Twelve Concepts, the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous have been reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.) Permission to use this excerpt and to reprint and adapt the Twelve Concepts, the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions does not mean that A.A. is in any way affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only - use of this material in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems or concerns, or in any other non-A.A. context, does not imply otherwise.

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(TRADITIONS, Continued from page 8)

Tradition Eight

COSA should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

The essence of COSA is sharing. We are not a teaching or training program. There is no place for professional counseling in the meetings or for persons setting themselves up as authorities who know all the answers. The workers employed in our service centers for their special skills are trusted servants.

In COSA we recognize choices and decide what answer is best for us. No one tells us what to do. Instead we find help from our fellow members who, through example, show us how to find resources within ourselves and in contact with our Higher Power.

This basic strength of COSA -in finding our own way- was graphically described in a recent letter from a member in Nova Scotia. She wrote, "I'm so grateful that our program does not have professionals doing the work. I remember when I first came into COSA feeling so inadequate and full of fear. When I could clear a coffee cup or pass the basket at meetings I started feeling useful. I was somebody and no one could take that away as long as I didn't allow them to. As I started growing, I was able to give some more of myself. There isn't anything more beautiful to me than seeing COSA members expressing their love for each other. It was this kind of love that helped me to begin to like myself and want to change myself."

Changing ourselves, motivated by the love we find through the program -this is the heart of COSA Twelfth Stepping. It is a special kind of caring. It is totally nonprofessional, but it works. If we added up the number of years the members of any group have dealt with the effects of the disease of sexual addiction in COSA, we might find there are few who could match us in actual field work. We share the accumulated strength of practical knowledge.

Through Twelfth Step work we grow in the program and help other members. We are not professionals, but our loving concern is therapeutic.



Tradition Nine

COSA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

In COSA, members work together for our common welfare. We do not need to be organized into a hierarchy or ranking of grades of members. We are all equal. In order to function, committees of service members can deal with specific aspects of the program, such as public information, distribution of literature, work in institutions. But in each case, the service committee is directly responsible to the group, area, assembly or other gathering of members with whom it works.

Any potential misdirection or usurpation of control can be avoided if there is an honest examination of where responsibility lies and to whom any person or group of persons is accountable.

We can solve many difficult situations in our personal lives if we appraise them with this measure. Are we in trouble because we are assuming too much, taking on matters that rightfully belong to others? When we make all the decisions for our spouse and children we have forgotten that many times we can serve better by allowing others to have responsibility for themselves. If we have an overeager sense of duty and an over-inflated view of our own importance, we'll keep running the show. An honest evaluation of our responsibility to those we should be serving can give us a better perspective.



The opposite extreme is if we shirk our obligations, copping out by blaming other people or situations. In the course of living we are responsible to family, coworkers, and group members for our conduct and our share of tasks.

Finally, are we aware of our responsibility to ourselves? We cannot serve others unless we have done what is right for us in the larger point of view.

Welcome to the Sunlight



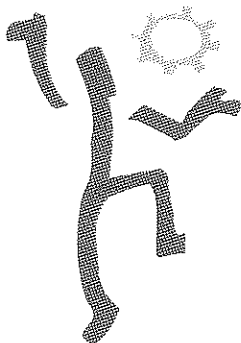
Those of us who have come to COSA have found that we share a common thread. Although our stories may be as varied as the colors of the rainbow, each of us have been impacted by another person's compulsive sexual behavior. The relief we felt as we learned we are not alone allows us to open to the truth: That although we may have been brought to our first meeting because of another person's acting out behaviors, we, too, were in the clutches of a dangerous illness. We may have been too broken, despairing, and lacking in the self-confidence we once possessed to continue to cope with our own lives as they were. We come to find that although we may be capable, dependable, courageous people, we cannot control the impact of the illness of sexual addiction on our lives. We turn our attention away from the sex addict and detach from the emotional turmoil that sexual addiction can bring, turning instead to the proven, workable method by which we can arrest our own illness.

As the kaleidoscope of our personal stories attests, working the 12 steps is just as important for us as it is for the sex addict. To remedy our own emotional, physical and spiritual illness, the COSA program offers several suggestions, but keep in mind that the basis of our program is spiritual, as evidenced by the 12 steps. As a result of practicing the steps, the fog that once shrouded our lives begins to lift, and the symptoms of our own dysfunctions are removed on a daily basis. The 12 steps aid us in our process of surrendering to something greater than ourselves, and we find that the more total our surrender, the more fully realized our freedom from the coping behaviors we learned to use.

Can we guarantee YOU this recovery? The answer is simple. Those who find the most serenity and recovery do so by honestly facing the truth about themselves and their own illness and have been willing to rely on a power greater than themselves for direction in their own life. They also keep coming back to meetings to talk and listen to other recovering members of the COSA program, and take the 12 steps to the best of their ability. If you can commit yourself to these as well, we believe you, too, can indeed join the ranks of those who recover.

Once we become open to our own recovery, the preoccupation with the addict diminishes and in many cases leaves us entirely. As we walk further into the clarity of recovery, we find that to deal with our inner turmoil, we have to have a new way of thinking—of acting on life rather than reacting to it—in essence, a new way of living.

"But I'm too overwhelmed and exhausted. I'll never make it." Don't worry, we have all thought or said about the same thing but, the amazing secret to the success of this program is just that recognition of personal powerlessness. It is our vulnerability that binds us to each other and to a Higher Power and somehow gives us the ability to do what we cannot do alone.



If you decide you are one of us, we welcome you with open arms. Whatever your circumstances, we offer you the gift of acceptance. Step into the sunlight of the spirit. You are not alone anymore.

Welcome to COSA! Welcome home!

COSA Step One — Literature in review process — Please share your feedback!

This First Step Writing is being published in our newsletter as a provisional draft of COSA literature to fulfill the 90 day review for comments by the whole COSA fellowship.

We invite your comments, suggestions, revisions and even your endorsement! We need to know that this piece of literature honestly reflects COSA experience, strength, and hope.

Step 1: We admitted that we were powerless over compulsive sexual behavior, that our lives had become unmanageable.

When most of us came to COSA, we were in varying stages of collapse, from an inability to eat, sleep or do routine daily tasks, to a white-faced trembling stage of nausea and fear, to blazing anger at the betrayal we felt toward the addict. The realization of how deep our loved one's problem went left us stripped and in some cases unable to go on. We thought of suicide and murder at the same time, yet a part of us cried incessantly to somehow help the addict and/or hang on to the relationship -- that maybe things would be OK if we could be enough.

Some of us believed, others felt immediate anger, if the addict even implied, hinted, or said it was our fault; that the pressures we exerted on them were overwhelming or that if we would just do more, be more, everything would be OK. We had our own shame, and may have been used to taking blame. We eagerly took on the responsibility for yet another problem in our lives, and started trying to be enough; To be capable enough, patient enough, attractive enough, responsible enough, sexy enough, silent or outspoken enough, to be a super hero in some or all respects, in order to help this person we loved. In so doing we hoped to gain the respect, love, attention and/or

fidelity we felt we deserved. When these attempts to control or fix the addict failed, we found hopelessness, anger, despair, apathy, or all of these.

Somewhere in our backgrounds abandonment had occurred and we had learned survival and control tactics. Now, those were our defenses of choice. We applied those control tactics to the relationship with our addict. We started snooping, checking bank records, odometer readings, visiting the Spy Store, endlessly psycho-analyzing the addict. All the while looking to separate the truth from the lies we were being told, yet denying the reality of our lives. We ignored the outbursts of temper over nothing, blaming ourselves as the cause of the treatment we received. We let pass the silences that sometimes went on for days, hoping if we were quiet or cheerful or sullen, our loved one would notice and take interest again in us, our family, and their relationships. We were afraid to ask questions we had a right to ask. "Where were you?" "When will you be home?" "What happened to the money?" "Do you want to be here?" We are adapters, so some of us became a scapegoat, and matched how messed up the addict was with our own out of control behaviors, to shift the focus. Fearing abandonment or worse, we often fed our own addictions or crippled ourselves so we couldn't leave. We hurt ourselves by overeating, quitting our jobs, obsessive shopping, drinking alcohol, using illegal or prescription drugs. We reacted by disappearing, being nice, sometimes by functioning and caretaking, or by arguing, being a slob, depressed, a baby. With varied responses, we looked like exhibitionists, sex addicts, saints, wallflowers, or a mixture, in order to remove us from the pain of reality. Distancing from other people and things we loved, we sucked the joy out of our own lives to focus more on the addict and the problems in our family and our relationship with the addict. We covered up, lied to the kids, to our friends, to ourselves. We told everyone or no one, but in either case we pulled away into our own shell of hurt and distrust. As we grew more and more isolated, we hoped things would turn out alright given

just a little more time, while we, our family, and for some of us, our offspring, lived in misery.

At first, having no sense of self worth, we felt valued and a twisted feeling of love in our relationship with the sex addict. Some of us went as far as to throw ourselves into acting out sexually for the addict, participating in activities we usually would have rejected, believing we could do more to satisfy the cravings our addict felt. Some of us tried that first, actually enjoying the attention and sexual energy. Like the addict, we had mixed up love, sex and intimacy into one thought. Some of us initially felt proud of ourselves, later hating and feeling ashamed of these activities. Others were ashamed from the start, but felt powerless to stop. We found demeaning ourselves pulled us further into the cycle of despair, but we hung on to the idea we could do something to change our loved one. We might have numbed ourselves to our sexuality, in our delusional attempt to control the addict. We covered our bodies, wore extra layers of clothing, hiding our sexuality, and detached from ourselves as sexual beings for fear of triggering a response from the addict. We never really knew our own sexuality.

No matter what, it didn't work. Over and over again we denied, minimized, accepted lies as truth, wanted to believe we were at least partially at fault, that there was something we did to cause this. Because, if we caused our loved one's sexual behavior, if we shamed or scared them enough, then there was something we could do to change it. We became powerless over our desire to find some way to change the sex addict. In our attempts to prove to the addict how sick they were, we may have spent hours searching our homes, the computer, the phone bills, for proof --clues to the addict's sexual behavior. We may have spent hours researching the addict's behaviors, character traits, and condition. We became the addict's therapist. We read into everything and analyzed them endlessly, or knew they were

(Step One. Continued from page 13)

lying to us, and helped them find excuses in our "understanding." Our awareness of this revealed to ourselves our own illness, how much time and attention we stole away from our jobs, our children, ourselves. As the truth came out, we learned we cannot be held responsible for someone else's sexual behavior. The discovery of the longevity of the addiction, that most of our loved ones were sex addicts before they were teenagers, led us to understand the condition pre-dated our arrival. The initial relief of the realization of our powerlessness over the addict was soon replaced. Just when we thought we had our feet on solid ground, awareness of just how powerless we were over our life smacked us in the face and overwhelmed us. Inappropriate behaviors and early sexualization were the paving stones on our path to co-sex addiction/codependency. Overt sexual abuse by those in authority - parents, teachers, siblings, neighbors, clergy taught us we were responsible for another's sexual actions. Covert sexual abuse confused our emotional and sometimes physical boundaries. Being an emotional surrogate spouse, exposed to adult nudity and/or sexuality, being the focus of inappropriate attention on our developing sexuality, were some of the ways our illness developed. Sexuality was made to be dirty, shameful or a "duty." Growing up in frozen families which showed no physical or emotional intimacy, we reached out to anyone willing, in order to fill the void. This discovery led many of us to uncover the longevity of our own sexual co-addiction/codependency. We began to allow in the truth -- that our own sexual co-addiction/codependency often pre-dated the current sex addict in our lives. We began to realize our powerlessness. Sex addiction and Co-Addiction/Codependency are diseases as real as cancer or any other disease and we can no more control either one by our thoughts, words and behavior than we could control cancer. Recovery had a new meaning. We came to realize we are powerless over compulsive sexual behavior and we let go of the load of shame, guilt and responsibility we carried. When we also realized how powerless we

have been over our own behaviors and reactions, and finally became willing to admit the unmanageability in our own lives, a sudden lightness and freedom came to us that we never knew existed. Our recovery now focused fully on ourselves, rather than the narrow view of the effects of the addict's behavior. It was a process of constant reminder at first. Whenever we were tempted to take responsibility, to control, to blame, we remembered Step 1, that we are powerless, that our lives had become unmanageable. We found that this process was so much easier than our attempts to control, carry blame, and act as detectives. Our loved one's sexual addiction wasn't our fault. There was no hope of becoming sexy, capable, patient, attractive, responsible, silent, outspoken or messed up enough to stop our loved one's compulsive sexual behavior. We realized the grandiosity of thinking we could -- even a super hero couldn't do it. We focused on recovering from our own behaviors and we rested. We let our powerlessness become our reality. We let go. We looked toward Step 2.

First Step Exercise

(from COSA Newcomer's Guide)

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the First Step, because our chances of being contented with ourselves and our lives are very poor until we accept the seriousness and totality of our illness-sexual co-addiction/codependency-and its impact on our lives. As we grow to understand our own powerlessness and how unmanageable our lives have become trying to control the sex addict and our own co-addiction/codependency, we begin to understand the power that sexual codependency has had over our lives. Each participant in the COSA program is encouraged to record any behaviors and results of behaviors which reflect their powerlessness over sexual codependency.

As you complete this exercise, it may be helpful to preview Co-Sex Addiction/Codependency of Sex Addiction, Is COSA for me?, and the Sobriety Checklist, for examples of powerlessness and unmanageability. A sampling of other behaviors often demonstrated by co-sex addicts is listed below as an aid as you begin to think and write about your own First Step. Review the list and

add your own items to help you find and think about the ways your life was and is unmanageable, and the people, places and things you are powerless over.

1. How do I... How have I been...

- Numb to my own sexual needs and wants.
- Make excuses to not be sexual.
- Feel sex is the only way to be intimate.
- Find it impossible to feel intimate during sex.
- Become sexual with partners before other kinds of intimacy are developed.
- Change clothes out of sight of my spouse or partner to avoid sexual advances.
- Wear additional layers of clothing to divert sexual advances.
- Wear clothes to accommodate the sex addict's wishes.
- Focus on people or objects the addict acts out with rather than focusing on my own feelings about the acting out.

2. Powerlessness and Unmanageability

Sometimes using a different color pen to distinguish between powerlessness and unmanageability is useful.

- What are examples of powerlessness and unmanageability in your current life and relationships?
- What are examples of powerlessness and unmanageability in your past?
- How has your sexual codependency affected you and the goals you set for your life?
- How did the most recent episode of sexual acting out affect you?

We want to hear what you think! Please share your ideas, suggestions and comments, so that we can create literature that truly reflects the voice of COSA. Send your feedback to:

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