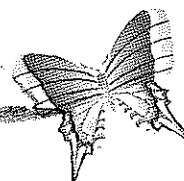
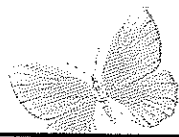


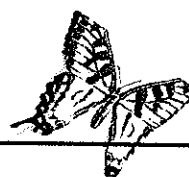
Balance



NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA



Spring Issue



Mar ~ Apr 06

What Sobriety Has Done For Me

by Kerry M.

How I define my addiction: Understanding the label I put on my addiction is an on-going process and has changed over the 3+ years I've been in recovery in COSA. I have referred to myself as: 'I don't know what I am,' 'a partner of a sex addict,' 'a codependent partner of a sex addict,' 'a codependent,' 'a codependent & co-addict,' 'a victim addict.' I currently identify myself as a Codependent Sex Addict. And I acknowledge several other addictions in my life: alcohol, food, work.

How I measure my sobriety: Since I came into recovery I have been working with the Three Circles Recovery Tool to help me identify three different tiers of behaviors I engage in.

Inner circle: behaviors I am powerless over and need to abstain from.

Middle circle: behaviors, which could be positive and healthy or could be triggers for or early warning indicators of my inner circle behaviors.

Outer circle: healthy behaviors I turn to and rely on to abstain from my inner circle behaviors.

For the purpose of this article, I'll share my current inner circle behaviors:

- Having sex with my partner when I am dissociating, having flashbacks or am in some way distracted, uncomfortable or fearful
- Drinking alcohol or using drugs
- Suicidal or self destructive thoughts for more than 24 hours without telling someone
- Keeping secrets about things I'm afraid or ashamed of for more than 24 hours
- Asking my partner questions more than once (even when I believe my intentions are good)

If I do any of these behaviors, I consider it a 'slip' in my sobriety. While I have been sober to these behaviors for 2 years and 9 months, there have been many times when I haven't felt very sober because I've behaved in unhealthy, codependent ways with others or have been acting out in food and work addictions.

What is different for me today over three years after disclosure:

I believe in and trust my higher power

I pray now – everyday, all the time, no special circumstances are needed – and mostly my prayers are to know God's will for me

When I was working on my 3rd step I wrote 2 letters to my HP, it was very difficult and took months to do, now I write letters almost every day to my HP

I spend very little time worrying about what my partner is doing or being afraid of him slipping

I have boundaries I never knew I could or should have

I accept that my partner cannot make me promises, about maintaining his sobriety, but I can expect him to do his best to keep his commitments

I am comfortable living with the uncertainty that I don't know if I would stay in the marriage or not, if my partner slips I feel emotionally honest and closer to my partner than I have ever felt – even before disclosure I feel my feelings, instead of shutting down from them, and have learned to do so without

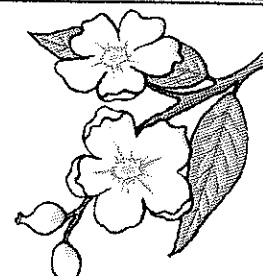
(Sobriety. Continued on page 2)

In this issue:

- Defining My Sobriety in COSA
- Letter to HP
- 2006 COSA Convention update
- COSA members sending wishes of new growth to us all!
- 3rd & 4th Steps
- Roberta's Special Rules for Meetings
- Roundtop, TX Women's retreat

In every Issue:

- 7th Traditions
- Literature Order form



Balance

Thank You



7th Traditions Groups

East Side St. Paul \$ 7.50
Apple Valley, MN \$20.00

7th Traditions Individual

Please send your
donations to the
COSA mailing
address below!

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 on the envelope below. Hope to hear from you soon...



(Sobriety. Continued from page 1)

wallowing (for long) in hopelessness and fear I have positive thoughts/experiences to fill in the voids in my soul, that were created when I excavated my shame and fear in my 4th and 5th step

I accept that there is far more I don't understand about people and the universe, than I do

I accept responsibility for my behaviors and am learning to let go of taking on other's responsibilities

I have learned that what I have labeled "helping others" has often been inappropriate meddling or care-taking; I can hide many a harmful codependent behavior behind a cloak of what I think is a character asset or altruistic behavior – i.e. helping others

My addiction is just as harmful, damaging, life threatening & compulsively programmed into me as my partner's is to him. I used to think he was the one with problems and therefore the source of our marital problem. Now I know that we are each the source of our own troubles and the relationship simply responds with what we each bring to it. We are both addicts - the labels are but a subtle nuance at this point. (If anything, mine is easier to hide behind because it is simply more socially acceptable at this time.)

I have the right and the courage to say "no" to sex or any behavior that others' 'expect' or demand of me

I have been so busy helping other people figure out how to find meaning and happiness in their work and life, that I have not allowed myself to benefit from the pain, hard work, and satisfaction of figuring out those things for myself

I am not a 'reflection' of my partner's (or anyone's) behavior, just my own

It is difficult to feel 'good enough' if I don't really know myself and accept what I uncover

I don't have to prove to anyone that I have suffered great pains and trials in my life – trying to do that only engenders sympathy and sympathy has a short shelf-life on making me feel good; my word is good enough and my right-sized actions attract empathy and build my courage and strength

I have a lot more pesky character defects than I ever would have

Contact the NSO of COSA

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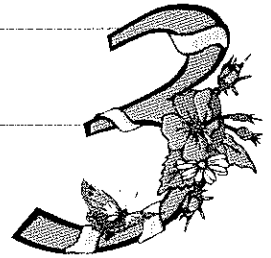
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COSA VOICES~ STEP THREE

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

This step implies so many miracles for me.

Those first three words, made a decision, were so frightening for me when I first heard them. I had been flying by the seat of my pants for so many years, that decisions seemed like laws that I couldn't abide by.

Next, the step goes on to talk about the one thing I knew for sure I didn't have, A will and a life of my own. How in the world was I going to turn my will and my life over to anything? I was void inside. I had pain and rage and underneath that I was void. I had no idea who I was without someone else to define me. At the time I preferred it if it was the SA in my life who defined me. However in a pinch my kids, my Mother or even a best friend would do.

Last but not least I came to the part that was the most confusing for me. The piece in the line that states “the care of God” was the hardest rock for me to swallow. You see I was angry at my Higher Power who I will choose to call God. I hope that doesn't offend anyone. It may have offended me at first. I believed in a Higher Power when I came to COSA. However I also believed I was justified in my resentment toward my God. So trusting any God to care for me was a big issue.

I am so grateful that there are two steps before this one. working the steps in order has given me the understanding to be able to use the next step to build a foundation.

In step one I accepted who and what I am. I accepted that I cannot do anything about my problem alone and that I need others. I accepted that I am a COSA ; that my life has become unmanageable. This is the first thing I began to learn about me. This was the first time I began to try to make a decision for me.

In step two I showed up. I literally just showed up. I just kept coming back. I didn't like it. I complained about it, but I did it. I was angry at God. I had lost a lot, both of my brothers and my father were dead as a result of addiction and now my marriage was doomed. I had also relapsed in my own chemical addiction during my marriage and lost my sobriety. Yet, women in my life at the time just smiled and loved me. Slowly I began to see miracles occur. I began to see that I could be on my own away from my abusive SAH. I could make my own decisions. I could show up for my life and be accountable. Whether I liked it or not a power greater than my self was restoring me to sanity and I was gaining a will and a life.

Thus I could crack the door open to some trust. I must admit that it wasn't much and I had very little humility about how I went about things. Yet, each and every time my God seemed to out maneuver me. My God always seemed to have a better plan for me than I did for myself. Eventually it has just become easier to allow God to run the show to begin with. At least I try to. My disease is pretty crafty and I don't always know right away when I am in the drivers seat.

I have a lot of good people in my life today that love me so unconditionally. I have never known that to be true in the past. What I mean by that is that because I have never had a spiritual connection in my life I have never really had a human connection. I was completely closed off by my disease. My reality was always distorted by trying to be and do and act certain ways to please people. I could never be really honest in any relationship. Today I feel like I can be more real and more human than I ever could. I am not perfect in this but I am so much better.

All of these miracles have happened because I can make a decision to turn the will and life I never had over to a God I have grown to love and rely on.

~ Julie H.

Give your COSA friends Balance Gift subscriptions to celebrate COSA Anniversaries, Birthdays, or other special occasions! It will be sure to "grow" their recovery the whole year through!
See Literature Order form for details



COSA GIFTS ... Thoughts of new growth for us all!

I hope that I - we choose to grow in new ways "outside the pot." Growth is about blooming into ourselves, not about sticking to the sides of the flowerpot.

~ Mare W.

I am so grateful for the gifts and power of COSA

~ Lindy T.

I used to think worrying about others was just a sign of my love for them. Now I want to send my love, not my worries, to others and myself.

~ Kerry M.

Remember the old Cherokee story that tells that with the battle within us all between that of Evil: anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego, and that of Good: joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith - the one that prevails is the one you feed.

~ Lynn M.

The growth for me these days is coming down out of my head, and trusting my intuition, my body, and my heart to guide me. When I over analyze things "up in my head," I lessen my gift of contact with my higher power within me.

~ Christi G.

(Sobriety: Continued from page 2)

guessed or wanted to admit were possible I don't need to rationalize my current behavior by explaining why - I just have to take responsibility for it I have learned that there are always more options available to me than I think there are; if I'm not seeing them in the moment, my first step is to ask for help from my HP and trusted others in recovery - new options always emerge.

The extent of my opportunities is limited by the extent of the fear I choose to live with.

The extent of my opportunities is limited by the extent of the fear I choose to live with. My relationships with everyone are improving as a result of my sobriety, recovery and quickly making amends when I am wrong or have hurt another I feel more confident that I can face difficult and painful memories and new experiences I no longer want to just make others feel good or better, I want my actions, how I take responsibility for myself, to help others learn how to make themselves feel better My will is unreliable and unpredictable and is not the same as my instinct or intuition; my HP's will is wise, reliable and reminds me I am never alone Trying to control outcomes only wears me out and/or brings me misery and it annoys, pisses off, or shuts down those who are on the receiving end of my supposed well-intentioned efforts I have seriously underestimated the incredible healing power and relief that comes from acceptance that I don't have control over everything I focus much more on what I have and less on what I don't have I have spent way more time in my life being passive-aggressive and resentful than I would ever have cared to admit I have, at times, been a victim; it is possible I will be a victim again; but I do not have to live every day being afraid of the possibility of being a victim again I have acknowledged my own sexual anorexia and attempts to control relationships through sex I have finally experienced what it is like to be spiritually, emotionally and physically present when I am sexually intimate with my partner (although I acknowledge I still have difficulties with this) I trust my partner and myself - finally - and I measure and treasure that trust in very different ways today I discovered there is no real difference between lying to myself and lying to other people, bold-faced lies and lies of omission; it was a shock and very difficult, to see, face, and own the liar in me

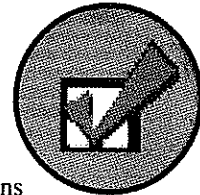
Being sober is no guarantee for happiness, it keeps me alive to continue to have the opportunity to practice as many ways of achieving happiness as I can.

Resources I use to work the steps and help keep me sober:

- Lots of prayer & meditation
- Regular contact with my sponsor
- Regular program calls
- Attend 3-5 meetings a week
- Fellowship with others in COSA & SAA
- Participate in a Feedback Group
- Individual and couples therapy
- Journal regularly
- Service positions at meetings
- Sponsor others in COSA
- Start or help start new meetings
- Attend COSA conventions
- Read daily meditation books and positive affirmations from my stepwork
- Read, reread and study about 20 books I identify as core texts on these conditions.



~ Kerry M., East Bay COSA



HELP WANTED

COSA NATIONAL COORDINATOR (Office Worker)

We are currently accepting inquiries by members interested in working part-time to keep the "business" for the organization of COSA running smoothly.

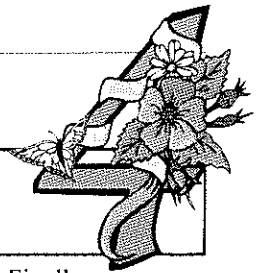
Position Description: Track literature orders, meeting and groups contact lists, 7th tradition donations, office expenses; organize and maintain COSA archives. Fulfill literature orders. Provide sales and management skills to set up and operate our Memorial Day weekend annual convention bookstore, with COSA NSO volunteers. Set up and operate COSA office equipment and store the COSA archives in own home. Provide assistance to NSO Board with basic structural and transitioning tasks and facilitate communication between members and between NSO volunteers.

Stipend position, negotiable.

Ideal Candidate's Qualifications: Active COSA member working the 12 Steps of recovery. Great communication skills, and commitment to follow-through with tasks greatly desired. Development and transitioning skills desired to support COSA's growth and expansion preparatory to establishing COSA's own office space.

If interested: Please contact NSO COSA via email: Info@COSA-Recovery.org or the phone line, at: 763-537-6904

Help Wanted



COSA VOICES~ STEP FOUR

Tips and Tools for Working a Fourth Step

When I'd try to prepare to do this step, too much second-guessing, shame, guilt and panic would come up. Finally somebody told me when that happened, to go back a step. Or two. Or three. I had pressure because my supports were telling me I needed to do a fourth step, and they were also telling me that if I was having that much trouble I needed to slow down. I believe the actual slogan used was; Easy Does It, but Do It!

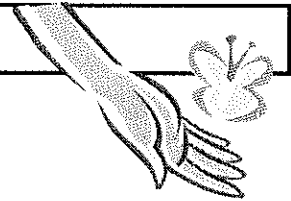
I noticed my limited capacity to look at myself. I was terrified to discover something else was wrong with me that I hadn't uncovered. And I believed that if I looked at my assets I would be fooling myself, and would get a big head. I had a limited capacity to define and to appreciate my real strengths. I had never practiced honest self-appraisal. I barely knew myself. It took what felt like a lot of humility for me to admit that I had mysteries inside me, and parts of me I was ashamed of, and even things that I only pretended were a part of me. I reflexively avoided holding still, which is what I needed in order to learn to Be with these inner truths.

When I tried the simple format described for us below by JH, I was finally ready. I already had opened up my mind so much that I admitted and faced my powerlessness; I was practicing a new kind of relationship with my Higher Power. I was recognizing my own compulsive insanity. I realized that I had not trusted HP to care for me or to show me how to take care of myself, and I said I was ready to do things differently. From doing this process to the best of my ability, I experienced far-reaching relief as I developed my new relationship with myself and my HP and the world I live in. I started with the anger list. Making the first list took a lot of writing over a couple of weeks. It just sort of flowed out of me. I had to make myself take breaks. I was on a roll. The greatest gift that I have found in the fourth step is how surrendering to the process has given me a relationship with ME.

1. Set aside prayer. Dear HP help me set aside everything I think I know about myself to see what you have to reveal to me.
2. Read about the 3rd and 4th Steps in the book, Alcoholics Anonymous
3. Find a quiet place
4. Make an appointment with yourself.
5. Be thorough with your 3rd step.
6. Start with a list of the people, places and institutions you resent, such as: porn shops or religious affiliation
7. List all of the reasons why you resent each one of these people or things.
8. Keep the focus only on yourself forgetting all of the wrongs others have done to you.
9. Keep adding to the list until it seems complete to you.
10. Write about how these resentments have affected your life. Have they affected your pride, sense of security, finances etc.
11. What are your worst fears about these situation?

~ J.H. & M.B.

Attitude of Gratitude: A Letter to HP



Dear Higher Power,

I want to thank You for what you have already done.

I am not going to wait until I see results or receive rewards, ***I am thanking you right now.***

I am not going to wait until I feel better or things look better, ***I am thanking you right now.***

I am not going to wait until people say they are sorry or until they stop talking about me, ***I am thanking you right now.***

I am not going to wait until the pain in my body disappears, ***I am thanking you right now.***

I am not going to wait until my financial situation improves, ***I am going to thank you right now.***

I am not going to wait until the children are asleep and the house is quiet, ***I am going to thank you right now.***

I am not going to wait until I get promoted at work or until I get the job, ***I am going to thank you right now.***

I am not going to wait until I understand every experience in my life that has caused me pain or grief, ***I am going to thank you right now.***

I am not going to wait until the journey gets easier or the challenges are removed, ***I am thanking you right now.***

I am thanking you because I am alive.

I am thanking you because I made it through the day's difficulties.

I am thanking you because I have walked around the obstacles.

I am thanking you because I have the ability and the opportunity to do more and do better.

I'm thanking you because Higher Power, you haven't given up on me, even when I wanted to give up on myself!

~ Anonymous

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2006 National COSA Convention Coming Soon!

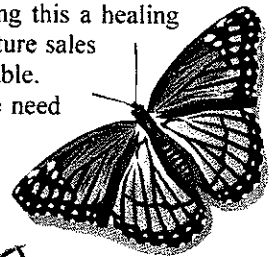
"The 2006 Ready, Set, Growth" convention is approaching very quickly now. If you don't have your registration in or room reserved, it would be best if you completed that obligation soon. The rumor is that the rooms at Marten House are gone. Call there first. There is that possibility that one or two are still available. Remember to mention that you are reserving with "Ready, Set, Growth" to reserve the convention price of \$95.00 per night — the cut off date for that rate is **April 22, 2006**. You are allowed up to four people in the room for that price. The phone number to call for room reservations at the Marten House is 1-800-736-5634 or 317-872-4111. If the rooms are gone, call 1-800-477-8191. That is the ISO/SAA phone number. They have reserved a block of rooms at a nearby Red Roof Inn for the same rate as the Marten House. You can reserve one of those rooms through the ISO 800 number. Simply call and tell the ISO you are with the "Ready, Set, Growth" conference/convention. There is no shuttle service offered by the Marten House or the Red Roof Inn. There is a privately owned shuttle service called Reeves. Their number is 317-894-7295. It would be best to call in advance and arrange a shuttle pick up since it is a very busy weekend. If you know others in your area who are flying in, you may want to order a shuttle as a group. The rates will be a little lower.

When you send in your registration form, be sure to order your "Ready, Set, Growth" t-shirt! The \$12.00 price listed on the form is the discounted price to those of us who order in advance. T-shirts on site will cost more.

Keep in mind that this is your convention! Fill out your workshop/speaker form to assist us in making this a healing recovery experience for all who attend. You might also consider signing up to work a shift at the literature sales table (be the first to check out all the great new literature offerings!), or to work a shift at the registration table.

It was brought to our attention that we do not have a cut off date for the workshop/speaker forms. We need them no later than May 1st (earlier if possible).

We are looking forward to seeing all of you in Indianapolis as our growth and healing continues to happen.



Co-Chairs: Ila D. & Jenny E.

17th Annual COSA Women's Retreat

The purpose of the 17th Annual COSA Women's Retreat is to gather and share the experience, strength and hope which are the trademarks of our recovery. The retreat is intensely spiritual, safe, comforting and informative. This is your opportunity to find the solutions that lead to serenity and spiritual healing. We invite you to join us in working the 12 steps of COSA.

Dates: 23, 24 and 25 of June 2006.

Check-in will begin Friday from 4-7 p.m. The Retreat begins at 8:00 p.m. and continues until Sunday at noon.

Where: Roundtop Retreat Center, Roundtop, Texas.

We invite you to come and enjoy the serenity of nature and the peace and comfort of fellowship at this quaint and beautiful country inn. Every room is furnished with antiques and love. Two wrap-around verandahs with rocking chairs overlooking the private lake provide a restful retreat from our busy lives.

Registration begins March 15, 2006 and continues through June 15, 2006. Late applications will be considered as space permits or in emergency or crisis situations. *Partial scholarships are available in the event of financial difficulties. Please contact Jackie F. for scholarship information. Scholarships will be awarded one week before the retreat.*

Retreat Committee Contacts:

Jackie F.
281.376.1219

jfrank77379@yahoo.com

Elaine K.
817.685.2923

emkusiak@aol.com

Anna K.
361.578.8818

akloesel@aol.com

Checks for registration should not be postmarked and will not be accepted before March 15, 2006

First checks in will receive the preferred room arrangement. Check amount indicates room preference. If sharing a room, indicate the name(s) of your room-mate(s). A confirmation letter will be either mailed or emailed to you. If you register and are unable to come, you are responsible for selling your room to another, as no refunds are possible.

1. Check option you want. Cost includes a 2-night stay with lunch and dinner on Saturday:

_____ \$100 Dorm Room (large, comfy, open sleeping areas) _____ \$150 1 bedroom (private room/share bath)
_____ \$125 2-3 persons per bedroom _____ \$85 Saturday only (flat rate)

2. Print: Name: _____ Telephone#: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Roommate(s): _____

Dietary Restrictions/Special Needs/Comments: _____

3. Make check payable to COSA Annual Retreat.

4. To receive a confirmation letter send in registration with a self-addressed, stamped envelope; otherwise, your email address will be used for confirmation purposes.

5. Mail to COSA Retreat C/O Elaine K., 1524 Alberi Dr., Euless, TX 76039.