



NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA

Spring Issue

March ~ April '08

Codependency and Enabling
COSA VOICES FROM THE FELLOWSHIP



Of all the co-dependent behaviors that inhibit good recovery, caretaking and enabling are at the very top of my list. They are also the hardest to define and see. I have heard that codependency is a disease of relationship and finding a good balance between healthy loving concern and caretaking/enabling is extremely difficult. The following two questions have helped me: First, is the person asking for help in a given situation, and second, is it something they can and should do for themselves? Also, can I be responsible TO someone without be responsible FOR someone? ~ Margie S., Indiana

Growing up with a strong religion and in a large tight-knit family taught me that a life of sacrifice and service to others was the "highest calling." I developed a can-do attitude modeled by my family members. Believing I was in control, I built a life of activism aimed at improving the lives of the less fortunate around me. However, I was often out of touch with my own needs and preferences. This led to a lot of unexpressed resentments and later to anxiety attacks. When my partner disclosed his sex addiction, my world fell apart.

Today, I am slowly acknowledging that my life has become unmanageable. I am practicing reframing. I am learning and practicing self-care. More importantly, I am turning over to God my pain and bewilderment. I am taking care of myself by working the COSA program. I am very grateful to the COSA program for showing me the small steps that I can take, one day at a time." ~ MPT.

Continued on page 3

In this Issue:

COSA MEMBERS SHARE
Codependency and Enabling p. 1 & 3

Ask the Board p. 6

3rd Step Shares
by Jan & Sharon p. 4

4th Step Share
by Betsy p. 5

3rd & 4th Step Writing Exercises p. 3

ANNOUNCEMENTS p. 7

Upcoming COSA Retreats
~NEW! p. 7

Tradition Seven, Part Two
p. 8

In every Issue:
7th Traditions p. 2

Literature Order form
pp. 9-12

CDs AVAILABLE!



7th Traditions Individual

Piermont, NY	50.00
St Paul, MN	25.00
Des Moines, IA	26.00
Minneapolis, MN	20.00
Holt, MI	2.00

By the Fellowship, For the Fellowship

We encourage every group, intergroup and member to submit articles that **share your ESH** (experience, strength, and hope). Also, articles and announcements that **share upcoming COSA 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.

WE NEED SUBMISSIONS!!!

Please send your articles to: **COSACopy@yahoo.com**
or by snail mail to the COSA ISO PO Box listed on the envelope below.

Hope to hear from you soon...



The Tuesday & Thursday Telemeeting's have the SAME number!!!

Telephone number: 1-906-481-2100 Passcode: 679461

Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific Time (8 Mountain, 9 Central, 10 Eastern)
Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time (7 Mountain, 8 Central, 9 Eastern)

7th Traditions Groups

Albany, CA	40.00
St Paul, MN	18.00
San Francisco, CA	120.00
Madison, WI	30.00
Tyler, TX	75.00
South Bend, IN	25.00
Eau Claire, WI	30.00
Manchester UK	50 pounds

* * * * *
 * Give your COSA friends *
 * Balance Gift *
 * subscriptions to celebrate COSA *
 * Anniversaries, *
 * Birthdays, or other *
 * special occasions! *
 * * * * *



Contact the ISO of COSA

Balance, the newsletter of the International Service Organization of COSA, is published six times a year. The ISO holds the copyright to the newsletter.

~Editing, Design & Production by~
COSA Literature Committee

~Layout & Distribution by~
ISO Office Coordinator;
Paula

Phone: 1-763-537-6904

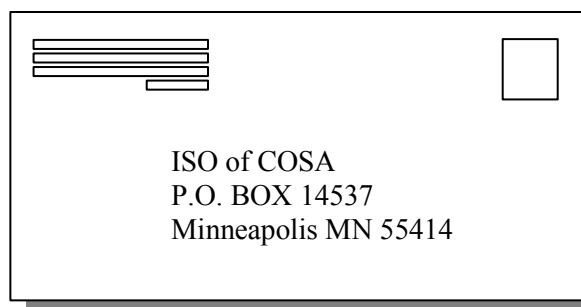
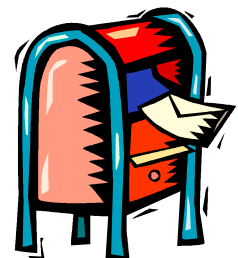
Email: info@cosa-recovery.org

On the web:

<http://www.cosa-recovery.org>

Or Email the Editing Team (COSA Literature Committee):

COSACopy@yahoo.com



Codependency and Enabling
 COSA VOICES FROM THE FELLOWSHIP

Continued from page 1

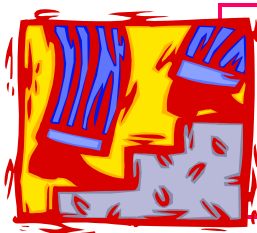
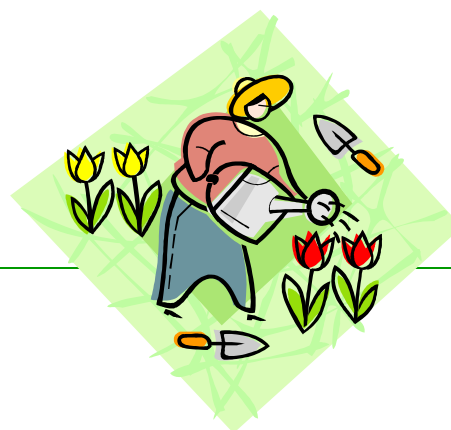
Do we actually have any control over sex addiction? If we truly believe that we did not CAUSE that addiction and we have learned that through our recovery work, it may be a little easier to believe that we cannot control our disease of CoDependency and Co-Addiction.

One of the best (in my opinion) pieces of COSA Literature is our Booklet on CARETAKING. Almost every word in this booklet jumps out to me to read, and re-read, and accept as a group of powerful lessons for me to learn.

An important lesson that I have learned is that when others are having a particularly hard time in their recovery or having a life crisis, I need to be especially careful to practice my Tools of Recovery. Recently, I learned to ask myself these two simple questions. Question One is, "What do I know?", and Question two is "What do I not know?" While it is sometimes hard to answer the first question, the second question keeps me honest about staying on my side of the street.

One day, not too long ago, I just took a quick inventory for myself, let go of engaging with my partner, and repeated the Serenity Prayer to myself, --many, many times!! I was able to get my priorities straight, and breathe the breath of my own wisdom. I was able to practice Self-Care, which is the opposite of Caretaking.

~ Lindy T., California.



**STEP STUDY QUESTIONS~
 FOR GROUP DISCUSSION
 OR
 PERSONAL REFLECTION**

Step Three Questions:

1. What specific fears do you have regarding taking the third step?
2. What does "turn our will and our lives over to the care of God" mean to you?
3. Recall a time when you were filled with fear and anxiety and the situation turned out okay for you.
4. Write a paragraph about the above situation. How does that affect the decision required of you in Step Three?
5. In what ways might you hide behind the third step?
6. What will it cost you to turn your will and life over to the care of God, as you understand God?
7. For how long a period will you choose to turn over your life?

Step Four Questions:

1. The 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 myself.
5. Be thorough with my 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 I resent each one of these people or things.
8. Keep the focus only on myself forgetting all of the wrongs others have done to me.
9. Keep adding to the list until it seems complete to me.
10. Write about how these resentments have affected my life. Have they affected my pride, sense of security, finances etc.
11. What are my worst fears about these situations?

By J.H. & M.B.

COSA VOICES STEP THREE: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

When I came to COSA I believed in God. I believed in a God who created the Heavens and the Earth, the Flowers, Trees, Creatures and you and me. I believed I could talk with God anytime and ask for help for you. Yet, I was strong-willed and self-reliant. I had overcome and risen above a difficult childhood that included sexual abuse. My thinking was that God blessed me with a healthy body and a good mind and that was all I was entitled to. I have a sister who has neither, so how could I be so selfish to ask for anything more for myself?

I thought I was doing such a good job of controlling my life with my willpower that when I came sobbing and heart-broken to my first COSA meeting, I was on my third marriage. I waited twelve years after my first divorce from an alcoholic so I would not make another mistake; and three years after the second marriage, for the same reason. After seven years of what I thought was finally going to be the perfect marriage for me, but was leaving me feeling empty and abandoned, my husband confessed he was a sex addict. I didn't know what that meant or suspect

that it could lead me to the healing my Higher Power offers me for the asking...or the evolving healthy relationship my husband and I now have.

In the COSA program, I first came to understand, and believe, that I am entitled equally to all of God's blessings as well as love, support, comfort and guidance. I can ask for whatever I need, whenever I need it, and peacefully wait for the guidance I seek. God is doing a much better job with my life than I did alone. I just celebrated twelve years with my wonderful COSA Family and my husband and I will celebrate our eighteenth wedding anniversary in May. With God's care, and our recovery programs, it is the perfect marriage for me.

~ Jan B.



Step 3 asked me how my life would be if I knew I couldn't control other people, knew that other people and circumstances couldn't control me, and knew that all of that was okay. I didn't have to believe that I couldn't control others; I didn't have to believe that others couldn't control me. All I had to do was think about how my life would be if I knew those things.

The hardest part of this was acting as if all of this lack of control was okay. I had spent my entire life feeling that I just had to control people and events or the world would fall apart. I was so busy holding up the brick wall that I couldn't step away to see that the brick wall was part of a building that was perfectly capable of holding itself up. Step 3 invited me to pretend that I could step away. It gave me the freedom to envision a life without all that control.

Step 3 gave me a glimpse of what my codependency was costing me. Step 3 also gave me a vision of how wonderful and awesome my life could be in recovery from my codependency. ~ Sharon G



COSA VOICES *STEP FOUR*: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

At first, Step Four felt really scary. Early in recovery I was filled with shame about myself and my predicament. I felt angry and fearful, even though I wasn't aware of the extent of it much of the time. I was in denial about a lot of things and had become very isolated. I was also a die-hard perfectionist and desperately afraid of making mistakes. This made it hard for me to open up and be honest with anyone, even (and especially) myself. After much stalling – which I don't recommend – I approached Step Four with all the earnestness and thoroughness I could muster.

What I have learned, to my relief, is that the Fourth Step is not a method for flogging others or myself. It is just as it describes itself to be: an inventory, a stock taking. It's simply a way of becoming aware. In fact, the Fourth Step for me is ultimately about forgiveness and peace.

For some, the focus on *ourselves* in the COSA Fourth Step seems a bit odd. Isn't the sex addict the "reason" for my being in COSA in the first place? Over time, what becomes more and more clear to me is that it is *only* in looking at my own part that I can truly find serenity. I used to constantly look to others to "make me" happy, make me feel safe and secure, or fulfill my life. My inner peace became contingent on those people: their moods, their attitudes, and ultimately whether they were in relationship with me or not. What I know now is that when I do this, I give all my power away.

The Steps have helped me turn the focus back to myself and my Higher Power, where it belongs. The grace of my Higher Power is *always* with me, if I am open to it. This openness is healthy reliance, and with this reliance, the Fourth Step helps me focus on where I *do* have power to change, where I *do* have choices: me. This realization has been the key to my serenity and a new sense of inner strength.

Working the Fourth Step has been a life-changing experience. It has helped me to see the

consistent undercurrent of low self-esteem and fear that clouded most all of my perceptions and choices, not just those related to my qualifier and co-sex addiction. Taking responsibility for myself was a new concept and something that I certainly haven't done gracefully at times. I'm still in the process of recovering. I still have "off" days, and I certainly don't do things perfectly, but I feel much more comfortable being perfectly imperfect me. While I don't share my innermost recovery issues with everyone, I don't feel shame about them

anymore either. Thanks to working the Steps, I feel more integrated and more whole. Who I present to you is who I truly am. I can be a nurturing friend to myself. I have more to give to others, and in a healthy way. Today I recognize that I have choices. I certainly couldn't have made these statements before recovery. The Fourth Step process is like cleaning out a drawer. There are some great and useful things inside, but

unless I stay aware of what I have and keep the clutter out, I won't be able to find what I need when I need it. So, from time to time I take a look at what I've got. I organize and simplify. I get rid of what I don't want – the things that are weighing me down, that I don't have use for anymore – and I identify the things I'd like to keep. I also recognize where I might need something new.

Sounds harmless and easy, right? I certainly wasn't able to achieve this level of calm objectivity in working Step Four the first time. Through my years in recovery, though, I've come to realize (and have witnessed in others) the transformation that happens as a direct result of this internal housekeeping. So, despite the often uncomfortable feelings that may come up in doing an inventory, I know that the awareness I gain will bring healing and positive change.

Today I have a rich, fulfilling life guided by my Higher Power, self-responsibility, and the principles of this program. Today, I feel excited and free, and for that I am so grateful. ~ Betsy H.



Ask The Board

The second in a new series of questions received from our members via the COSA website, responded to by members of COSA's International Service Organization.

Question:

I would like to join the message board group, and have been waiting two weeks for approval. The form said 48-72 hrs. Could someone take a look and see what the problem is?
 I get a message saying your application is pending, so I cannot access the message board in the COSA_12STEP
 ~Connie



Answer:

COSA 12 Step is in the process of being revamped and all posts are being moderated. We are a volunteer organization and have a severe shortage of service workers. We do not have anyone serving in a position to write back to members whose post does not meet the guidelines. The guidelines can be found in the files section on the website.

Please feel free to contact the service workers directly at COSA_12_Step-owner@yahogroups.com if you have any further questions.



Respectfully,
 COSA Board



Join us in Seattle

Your 2008 COSA Convention, Chart Your Course...Step By Step, begins on Friday May 23rd with an evening opening ceremony. Saturday and Sunday will feature workshops, COSA meetings, and of course lots of opportunities for fellowship. Once again, this convention is side-by-side with SAA's annual convention. On Saturday evening there will be a combined COSA/SAA dinner. Then on Sunday afternoon there will be a COSA luncheon with speakers. The convention wraps up on Monday May 26th with a COSA brunch and a very special closing session.



Postmarked By:
 4/30 5/1+

Friday-Monday \$150 \$170
 (includes Saturday Dinner w/SAA, Sunday Lunch and Monday Brunch)

or
 Discount as needed for First Time Attendees and Guests
 \$105 \$125

Please send checks and registration forms to:

Paula N.
 920 Forrester Ave NW
 Albuquerque, NM 87102



Hotel

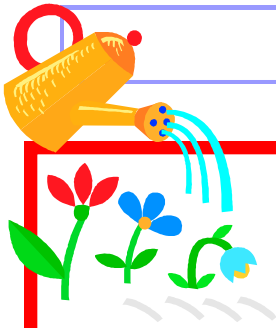
Marriott Sea-Tac Airport
 3201 South 176th St
 Seattle, WA 98188
 206-241-2000
 1-800-314-0925

Please call the Marriott by **May 1, 2008** and ask for the ISO-COSA group rate of \$119 (up to 4 people). It is critical that you reserve your rooms under this group block, so that COSA is not charged for unused rooms.

Register online or more info:
www.cosa-recovery.org/convention
 User Name: seattle
 Password: wash2008



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Upcoming COSA Retreats

"Recovering with the Three Circles"

April 11-13

Chatawa, MS

Contact Joey Z. at 225-344-2070 or
joeyz2006@gmail.com

Serenity, Prayer, and Inner Peace

April 25-27, 2008

Charleston MI

Contact Ila at 989-624-9893 or
naturalwonder06@gmail.com

Summer Women's Retreat: Step Study Retreat

June 20-22, 2008

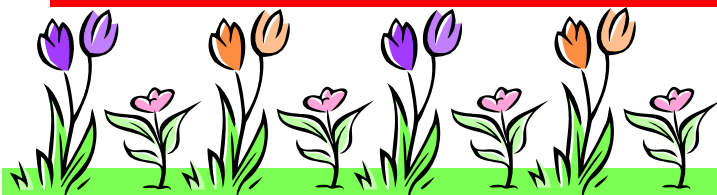
Round Top TX

Contact Jackie at 281-217-1656 or
jfrank77379@yahoo.com

What Retreats do you know about?

List them here!

Send your information to
cosacopy@yahoo.com



**Contact the COSA Convention
Committee for additional info
conventions@cosa-recovery.org
Register online or for more info:
www.cosa-recovery.org/convention
User name: seattle
Password: wash2008**

Help Wanted

COSA_12_STEP

ONLINE

MESSAGE BOARD

CCC Distributor

Distribute the contact requests from new COSA members to their regional CCCs. Answer correspondence from new members about basic information.

PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Online Listings Liaison

Assist us to correct and update our information on others' websites so that people who try to locate us can always find us. Many listings are outdated or incorrect.

Help contact various websites that list our description, our fellowship services and contact information. Provide them with our correct, updated information.

ISO COMMUNICATION'S COMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSON

Be the email liaison to the ISO Communications Service Coordinators, including our regional CCC's, the national phone line coordinator, tele-meeting coordinators, web-mail and snail mail coordinators, and online coordinator.

Work with the ISO Board and the ISO Coordinator to learn how to keep these divisions updated on COSA news, meeting contacts and basic info.

Work to develop the vision for growth and strengthening of communications inside COSA. This is a volunteer position.

EMAIL: ISO@COSA-RECOVERY.ORG

If you have any of the following tapes and are willing to let ISO borrow them to convert them to CD, please contact Paula at iso@cosa-recovery.org. In exchange for your help, we'll send you the same recording on CD.

We are still missing these 10 tapes:

- 95-2 Reclaiming Our Senses
- 96-4 Couple's Communication
- 96-5 Recovery and the Internet
- 97-2 Deep in the Heart
- 98-9 Steps 11 & 12
- 99-1 1999 COSA Gathering Personal Story
- 03-1 Addiction & Codependency
- 03-5 Food Issues & COSA Recovery
- 04-3 What Are your Inner Circles—COSA Bottom Lines
- 05-8 IDing & Taking Off My Masks

THANKS for HELPING US RESTORE OUR LIBRARY!

**Part Two of a Special Three-Part Article about
Tradition Seven: Every COSA group should be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.**

Identifying the Problem

Over the years, many of us who are aware of the state of things have speculated on the possible causes and solutions. We've looked at our disease characteristics themselves for possible answers, we've considered our demographics, we've identified the many gaps and shortcomings in the way that we have been able to carry the message to each other. We have found many partial explanations. One factor we need to face as a fellowship is the impact of our own codependent condition upon arrival to COSA.

By the time we get here, some of us are tired of giving. After years of giving ourselves away, we can no longer see the value of stepping in to meet a need, of accepting guidance or direction, or of learning to perform a simple, humble task for the good of the group. The act of giving seemed to become a complex challenge only approachable by our most sage and venerable members. We reserved the act of service only for those who had worked through the lengthy written and meditative exercises on all 12 steps with a sponsor and a home group.

Or we are so afraid to not do a job perfectly, that we do not dare to accept it. Or some of us have even shared that our disease had so convinced us of our worthlessness, that we "compared our own insides to other peoples' outsides" and figured we didn't have much to offer. Or, rather than foster the willingness and

humility to learn the basics of service, to try the 12-step ways of doing things and learn their value through experience, we jump into service without realizing what we have yet to learn, and exert our will or our way of doing things. When others in service suggest that we follow, we become offended, we feel controlled, and we may have suffered as we developed a defensive and righteous attitude, even raising a stink about it. We were still expecting to play out our hero-and-caretaker role and have it work for us.

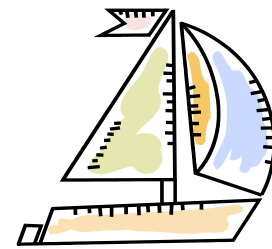
Oftentimes, even in long-term recovery, our issues with dependency have resisted change. Rather than step up for service positions, some of us have still preferred to criticize the work not being done by those who do. We have stayed on the sidelines, figuring it all out, correcting those few who do perform service work and resenting them for not taking our suggestions— even though we have never performed that task or followed direction to learn a service position. Or we may take on a service position and find ourselves obsessed and disappointed with the state of service and feeling martyred now even to our recovery fellowship, sharing with our friends in the fellowship how much it is a burden. Or we may still devote hours of our time to obsessing or working on a personal relationship, and not be able to imagine taking time away to devote to service. Or we were so horrified at watching our lone recovery pal who was dedicated to service as they seemed to lose themselves in the volume of work that we vowed that we

would never let that happen to us and avoided any commitments like the plague! We coached our sponsees to do the same.

Some of us simply did not want to give our money or our time. When we took time to get honest about this with ourselves, many of us wanted desperately to be taken care of without having to do anything in return. We wanted our program not to cost anything, to be free, or for other people to take care of things. When people would ask us for our money or our time, our first reaction was resistance.

Some of us have addressed our fellows in service as if they were our customer service representatives and as if our COSA fellowship were a corporate entity providing merchandise and services and we the customers. Then we experienced the inadequacy of services in our fellowship from the role of consumers.

We are missing the boat. We did not truly see the value in accepting guidance or direction, or of learning to perform a simple, humble task for the good of the group and trusting the outcome to our HP.



The 7th Tradition

A COSA VOICE

I started only recently to view service as part of the 7th tradition. For the longest time, I thought service was part of the 12th step. It took listening to the CD on "balancing service and sobriety" for me to understand that service is part of the 7th tradition. And now I see that the 12th step calls for service in the form of a message, e.g., sponsoring, sharing, being a speaker, etc... Before, I thought that service was an optional part of my recovery until I was much further along in my steps. At some point, someone mentioned that one need not wait to practice the maintenance steps, 10, 11 and 12: daily inventory, prayer & meditation, and service/carrying the

message. This reinforced my impression that service was optional. Then I heard that someone questions whether it was acceptable to accept a SAA partner to help with COSA service work, because COSA should be self-supportive according to the 7th tradition. That's when a light bulb went on in my head. The 7th tradition is not only the envelope being circulated, it is also me doing service work and asking for other COSAs to do the same. Being of service in COSA and asking others to volunteer is about self care as someone who benefits from the gifts of the program.

