



NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA

Fall Issue September-October 2008

A COSA member shares her story. Part of a new series of COSA Stories ~ Special Thanks to the family members mentioned in these stories who have granted permission to the authors to disclose personal details of their lives.

Suzanne's Story

How it was: a life of chaos, confusion, dishonesty, exhaustion, martyrdom, persecution, victimization, anger, resentment, rage, suffering, pain, grief, abandonment, worthlessness and loneliness. Growing up in a home with the secret of sex addiction and victimized as a small child by a pedophile, I have never known any other way of surviving. My life skills, behaviors, were ingrained from early childhood, and the toxicity of "the secret" I absorbed as being all about me, I am not worthy, not loved, not wanted, a mistake, a hardship for my parents and the cause of their anger toward each other. My two older siblings didn't like me; one sister acted like I had leprosy and an older brother was mean and cruel. But I fixed all that. When my younger sister came along when I was eight, I became her mother. I pretended she was my sole responsibility because my mother was never there, or so it seemed. Even when she was there she wasn't there, her mind was always somewhere else. My father was never around, well, he was sometimes but we were not something he was interested in. We were a pain in his butt and way too expensive. We all avoided him so as not to make him mad.

The life skills I learned followed me into adolescence and adulthood and soon they became character defects. My ability to survive as a child by focusing on everyone around me, helping everyone, always saying the right thing, never making anyone mad, never acknowledging what I saw, felt or heard, being the perfect peace-keeper and never showing my fear, all prevented me from really knowing who I was. Even though I felt powerful, omnipotent, smart, and self-assured on the outside, I was really weak, frightened beyond belief, stupid, worthless, unloved, flawed and less than on the inside. I never could be myself because it was not accepted in my family.

Continued on page 3



Volume 5, Issue 2



In this Issue:

A COSA MEMBERS STORY

pp. 1, 3, & 6

TWO! 9th Step Shares

by Betsy & Kristi p. 4

TWO! 10th Step Shares

by Betsy & Kristi p. 5

9th & 10th Step Writing Exercises

p. 5

Convention Committee Page

p. 8

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Automatic Recurring Donation

Upcoming Retreats

New Group # Assignments

Correction for CD 08-12

In every Issue:

7th Traditions p. 2

New COSA Groups p. 2

Literature Order form

pp. 9-12

**CONVENTION CDs
AVAILABLE!**

THANK YOU!

7th Traditions Individuals

Concord, CA	\$40.00
Des Moines, IA	\$20.50
Somers, NY	\$ 5.00
Owego, NY	\$10.00
Eugene, OR	\$ 7.00
Rosharon, TX	\$ 5.00
Total	\$89.50

NEW option for giving!

Recurring Donations*
Total for 7/10/08-9/01/08
\$537

*See page 7 FOR DETAILS



7th Traditions Groups

CA-07	\$359.38
MN-04	\$ 20.00
MN-06	\$100.00
MN-11	\$ 10.00
NY-03	\$ 25.00
OR-03	\$ 70.00
TN-01	\$ 50.00
TX-06	\$ 20.00
TX-29	\$ 25.00
TOTAL	\$709.38

NEW! GROUP NUMBER
ASSIGNMENTS
SEE PAGE 7 FOR DETAILS



Tuesday & Thursday Telemeeting's

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)

Welcome NEW COSA Groups!

Phoenix: AZ-05

Marietta: OH-05

Dallas: TX-28

Fort Worth: TX-29

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. 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 COSA ISO PO Box listed on the envelope below.

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

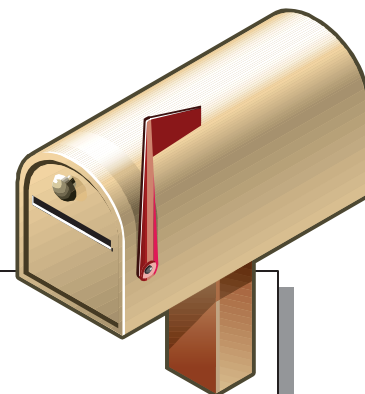
Phone: 1-763-537-6904

Email: info@cosa-recovery.org

On the web: www.cosa-recovery.org

Email the Editing Team

at COSACopy@yahoo.com



ISO of COSA
P.O. BOX 14537
Minneapolis MN 55414

Continued from page 1

I was too sensitive, too dramatic, too emotional, too much of everything. "Chicken Little, Sarah Burnheart", those were my "pet names". I loved the story of Chicken Little because he was so honest and tried to help everyone by letting them know the sky was falling. That was me. I never knew they were being critical because I believed what people said. I trusted; I was "gullible." If I showed emotion, especially since I seemed to be the only one in the family who was too full of feelings, I was called "Sarah Burnheart". I don't even know how to spell it, I spell it the way I felt, my heart was burning all the time. I overreacted all the time, so to make things peaceful, I just stopped. Then my parents would love me, I would let everyone else cause trouble and I would be the good kid.

Looking at my dysfunctional life in my family history has given me the keys to recovery. I know that I picked boyfriends and husbands (two of them) out of my character defects so my life would have meaning and I could continue to live in an illusion of intimacy, a fairy tale. I tried to fit in by playing along, allowing them to make all the decisions, never making waves, never sharing feelings, always the peace-keeper so they would continue to love me. I specialized at taking care of... everything.

My second husband came along after ten years of singleness and one serious boyfriend. I met and married him in less than a year, I wasn't going to let this "knight in shining armor" get away! I was the perfect wife, working full time and making more money than him; actually he was unemployed when we got married. That was OK, because I tapped into my "fix-it" skills and got him the perfect job-- with my best friends in their business. Within a few months he moved into my house because he was evicted from his apartment due to non-payment of rent. When he lost job after job, I was the one who told him where he should look, how to

do it, and how to interview. I trusted him because he loved me, so I put him right onto all of my bank and credit card accounts, as he had to file bankruptcy due to his divorce. I believed every word that came out of his mouth. I fell hook, line and sinker into a fantasy, an illusion of a dream I had always wanted, to simply be loved. I wanted to be worthy of being special, needed, faithful, loyal, and part of a couple that shared feelings and experienced true intimacy. After all, I had just spent seven years in two other 12 Step Programs, family therapy with my two daughters, doing weekend intensives working on my family of origin, individual therapy, going to self help lectures, buying all the new tapes on recovery, reading every co-dependent book that came out. I was going to finally be happy. I ignored the gut instincts, I ignored the mysterious emails and pictures of other women, and I ignored the obvious stares from neighbors as we walked the dogs. I ignored and I ignored. I was in heavy duty denial; after all that is what I was taught, ignore whatever I saw, felt or heard. I wasn't going to allow anything to damage my perfect marriage to my wonderful, romantic, caring, loving husband.

Finally the pain of reality became too much for me to ignore. I had become adept at super-sleuthing and reality clobbered me like a ton of bricks. I went into shock, I called our therapist, and I searched the Internet for anything I could find on sex addiction. I didn't know for what though; he was just an alcoholic and as soon as he sobered up then all of this would go away, or so I thought. I read and read all about sex addiction and "co-sex addiction". It all sounded strangely familiar and I could see my family secrets revealed. I saw my mother's strange "the lights are on but no one's home behavior". I saw my behavior, as a child and now. I couldn't believe it. All of a sudden I felt O.K. I finally figured out what the "secret" was and it wasn't me.

Continued on page 6



Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step nine is an action step toward positive change. I heard that it promised relief and a new sense of freedom. However, I felt so intensely ashamed of myself, once I fully realized my wrongs, that I felt reluctant to face those whom I owed amends. Luckily, I had others to help me find moderation and keep me moving forward. For me, step nine hasn't provided instant relief, but rather a gradual awakening to a whole new way of being. It has helped me to reconcile with my past and to forgive myself and others.

Before recovery, I was mired in blame and shame. I felt victimized by people and circumstances and engaged in destructive tactics like extra-relational flirting, quiet (but insidious) judgment of others, people pleasing and strategic omissions (lying). I now recognize these behaviors as subconscious attempts to feel some sense of power, worth, and control. Of course none of it worked, but instead left me feeling empty and bad about myself. It was almost like sleep-walking, I was so out of touch with my true self. The steps have helped me wake up and see this self-defeating system. Step nine has helped to release me from corrosive guilt. I still have areas where I struggle, but on the whole I am much more free.

For me, the key to this step is making "clean" amends. In some cases this means taking immediate action. Sometimes it means waiting until I am certain of my part, feeling a sense of good orderly direction, or rid of the worst of my anger toward the other person. It always means making amends succinctly, without groveling or justifying. Sometimes a few specific, honest words suffice, especially when spoken with as much sensitivity to the other person as possible. Other times, my amends are actions. Finally, one of the most valuable things I have learned in recovery is crucial in step nine: all I need to do is to do my part and let go of the outcome. If I am open to the mystery of the process, I am often amazed. ~Betsy H.

When I first began my road to recovery, Step Nine was difficult. I was anxious to be free and therefore moved through the previous eight quickly. My first amends were to my sister. I thought it would be a slam dunk because she has always loved me. When it came time to do it, my heart was pounding and I was scared. She accepted my amends and, to my surprise, seemed to understand that I needed to give it. Apparently I had not imagined the behavior that deemed it necessary. I went through that list within a period of one year and each time I was anxious, but the pay-off was worth these feelings. I felt clearer and more a part of society than I ever had before. I have done many amends since then, but most of the amends in my life are living amends to myself and to those around me. ~Kristi M.



Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step ten helps me stay current and clear. When I first learned about step ten, my impulse was to be hyper-vigilant. Any tiny misstep, and I would come down on myself—hard. I’ve never known a person, though, who thrived under judgment and threats. I am learning to relax and be more gentle with myself. Step ten has helped me become more peaceful with being human.

Step ten is a valuable gift in several circumstances. Life happens, and—despite my best intentions—I’m bound to make a mistake or two. Step ten assures me that this can be remedied: I can clean up my part and let go of the rest. Also, as I recover I occasionally discover something I have overlooked, or never considered, some hidden remnant of remorse from a past mistake. Step ten provides a solution for release. Finally, regardless of my diligent efforts to keep a clean slate, I have had the occasional resentment creep in. I know that this can prove disastrous if I allow it to live for long. Recovery has taught me that somewhere behind the resentment is an opportunity for self-discovery. The offending thoughts are undoubtedly fueled by fear, envy, insecurity, expectations... a lapse in my recovery-centered attitude. By practicing step ten I can find the place where I still need work and I can remind myself that no human power, place, situation, or thing “make me” feel whole, safe, complete. It’s up to my Higher Power and me. Through step ten I can ask for God’s help, find out what my part is, make amends where necessary, and let it all go. This is how I continue to grow. ~ Betsy H

Step ten is a wonderful way to stay current. My journal writing is the easiest way to continue to take inventory. My "new pair of glasses" has taught me, too, that when I find something unacceptable, before reacting, I take the time to look at my behavior first, talk to my sponsor and then proceed with the most self loving and dignified course of action.

Both of these steps have given me tools to live one day at a time. When I learned how to do better, I have done better. ~ Kristi M.

STEP STUDY QUESTIONS

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION OR PERSONAL REFLECTION

**Step
Nine
Questions:**

1. The meaning of the phrase "to make amends" means to change something, or to make up for something. Now that I am willing to make up for my errors, what do I specifically need to do that would be effective, appropriate, or sufficient?
2. How do I choose which amends to make first?
3. When do I know if I am going to injure others?
4. Should I discuss each amends with someone else before I make them directly?
5. Would it be helpful to “bookend” (check in with my sponsor before and after) any amends that are particularly challenging, or do I need to "bookend" each one?
6. When making my amends how can I be sure I will not repeat my old behaviors?
7. What is my self-care plan if my efforts are rejected or they don't forgive me?
8. What do I need to do if I find myself procrastinating on making my amends?
9. How will making amends improve my relationship with my HP (Higher Power)?

**Step
Ten
Questions:**

1. Am I practicing honest and gentle self-awareness today?
2. Am I procrastinating in being honest about a mistake I made?
3. How does this cause me to feel?
4. What actions did I take that may have put me in spiritual isolation today?
5. Did I do anything to perpetuate my obsessions or compulsions and what affect did that have on others?



Continued from page 3

It was addiction, sex addiction, and I am a co-sex-addict, a codependent. It all made sense to me now and a huge burden was lifted. I just had to learn what I did to be so dysfunctional and then I could change it.

I found an open sex addiction telemeeting online and called in. I waited to hear the solution, how to fix my sex addict husband. I told my story and they referred me to COSA. I didn't even get any sympathy from them on that call. I glued myself to the COSA website and read everything I could on the 12 Step posts. I wasn't weird, there were so many people who were living in the black abyss like I was, dying inside but just going through the daily routine of living. I wrote posts, read them on the board, felt more pain, grieved, cried and gradually started to heal. I found a sponsor online. Someone cared enough to email me and give me her telephone number if I needed to call. Wow, I never experienced such caring and warmth. I called and I called and I called. I found a COSA telemeeting. I called in every Tuesday and Wednesday religiously. I stopped work everyday and called in. I needed to connect with others who knew the depth of my pain. I ordered workbooks for the spouse of the sex-addict. I painfully made myself do every exercise everyday, after all, "he said" it would get better if I did them. I took time off of work. All I wanted to do was lay in bed and weep. I couldn't eat and I just wanted to die. I forced myself out of bed, out of the house and into as many 12 Step meetings as I could in two weeks. Sometimes I just stayed at the Triangle Club all day. I wish there was a meeting for COSA. There wasn't one even in the state of Nevada.

I knew I had to do something to stay out of denial and move forward so I asked my sponsor how to start a meeting and that is what I did. I found a local church that had one slot open for a meeting (Higher

Power at work) and I started a local COSA meeting. I worked through workbooks on grief, betrayal, sexual abuse and family of origin, shared them with therapists, my sponsor(s) and started working the steps in both 12 Step Programs. I attended meetings 9 - 10 times a week for over three months while I saw a therapist two times a week, I had to survive. I became honest, the shame started to lift, I started to feel OK, normal, but what was normal? I attended a COSA retreat, and with great encouragement from my sponsor, agreed fearfully to be the Saturday night speaker to a group of recovering sex addicts and fellow COSA's. I shared honestly, attended workshops, journaled and healed



some more. Gradually, I felt myself climb out of the dark, dark abyss. I began to learn who I was, and really like what I saw. I let go of the huge sack of shame I had been carrying around my entire life. I took the focus off of everyone else in my life, especially my addict husband, and I let it all go, and put my life in the hands of my Higher Power, God. I started to trust again, which grew my faith and hope that I could live a life of serenity. I began to laugh again, and feel that wonderful deep sense of joy, the joy of living and that I was going to be O.K., no matter what. I saw my family in a different light. I saw my addict husband as a wounded child of God, but best of all I saw myself as the same; a wounded child of God, someone who is precious and fallible, someone who is worthy of love because I am, someone who has an innate right to be happy, joyous and free; free to be who I really am, free to love as I am, free to be loved and free to make healthy choices. For the first time in my life I can honestly say I know what it feels like to be serene, to live in peace and to really trust in a "power greater than myself." I am truly happy, on the inside and out, for the very first time in my life. COSA saved my life and I am eternally grateful!

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT WWW.COSA-RECOVERY.ORG

