



# Balance

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA®

**Spring Issue**

**March-April 2010**

## Sponsorship Considered: Several Points of View

We find sponsorship to be an especially important part of working a healthy COSA recovery program. Newcomers often have many questions and concerns about how the sponsorship relationship is established and how it works.

In terms of finding a sponsor, we usually recommend attending at least six meetings to listen to other COSAs share about their recovery and Step work. If we hear something that touches us and we decide that COSA recovery is something we want for ourselves, the time is right to find a sponsor. During our sharing in meetings it is appropriate to say we are looking for a sponsor. After the meeting we can approach someone whose recovery we admire or someone whose share resonates with us and talk with him or her. We can always make practice outreach calls in between meetings to get more closely acquainted with those we find inspiring. Since a sponsor works closely with a sponsee during the sponsee's journey through the Steps, it is important that we find out if this potential sponsor is available for this commitment. We also recommend that this potential sponsor have a sponsor him or herself, and that the potential sponsor has worked at least through Step Five of COSA. We may wish to consider this potential sponsor's time and experience in the program as well.

There may be times when we get turned down by the person we ask to sponsor us. There is no need to be embarrassed or discouraged by this. Many recovering COSAs have full, rich lives as the result of their healing and are perhaps already sponsoring other people. We can work through any discouragement and keep moving forward with hope and faith. We urge you to "keep coming back", and keep seeking the right match.

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**7th Tradition Fund Drive**

Total for  
1/25/10 -3/10/10

**\$3,423.14**

**Recurring Donations**

Total for  
11/25/09-1/25/10  
**\$755.42**

**7th Traditions Groups**  
1/05/10 - 1/24/10

TX-20	200.00
Anonymous	52.50
IN-02	105.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$357.50</b>

**COSA Telemeetings**  
[www.cosacall.com](http://www.cosacall.com)

**New Telephone Number: 1-218-862-6420**  
**Passcode: 679461**

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

Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time  
(4 Pacific, 5 Mountain, 6 Central)

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

**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](mailto:COSACopy@yahoo.com)  
or by snail mail to the ISO of COSA PO Box listed on the envelope below.

**Contact the ISO of COSA**

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### **What is the meaning of the COSA Seventh Tradition?**

Money that is collected by passing a basket/envelope in meetings is a Seventh Tradition donation. As our current ISO treasurer, Margie S., says, “The Traditions are the glue that hold COSA together.” COSA is based on the steps and traditions of AA. In its early years, that fellowship decided to decline outside contributions in order to make sure that their members themselves would be accountable for their fellowship’s failure or success. They wanted to be sure that their fellowship not become a charity cause or pass off its responsibility onto outsiders, *lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose* (see Tradition Six).

The Seventh Tradition of COSA states: *Every COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.* What this means is that together we are responsible for supporting and sustaining our COSA fellowship. The mission of the International Service Organization (ISO) of COSA is based on our Twelfth Step: *... to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.*

### **The Third Leg of the Stool: The Twelve Concepts**

The Twelve Steps, as we know, are the basis for our individual growth and recovery in COSA. The Twelve Traditions are the means by which the fellowship promotes harmony and growth for each meeting and for COSA as a whole. In addition to the Steps and Traditions, COSA also adopted the Twelve Concepts from AA as the third leg of the stool on which our fellowship rests. The Twelve Concepts put the *final responsibility and ultimate authority for COSA (...) in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.* (see Concept One) COSA Concept Twelve states: *The Annual Meeting shall observe the spirit of COSA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; (...)*

### **How does ISO of COSA live out the Seventh Tradition and Twelve Concepts?**

The ISO of COSA is responsible for the prudent use of its entrusted funds. Each year at the annual delegate meeting (held adjacent to the COSA Convention), ISO reports to the fellowship on financial matters and proposes a budget for the coming year. The delegates review the budget, have any questions answered and after any modifications are made, a vote is taken for approval.

Every meeting is responsible for its own financial sustainability. Some meetings hold “prudent reserves” for their rent and literature expenses in an amount the meeting’s group conscience determines is appropriate to cover such expenses for a few months. Meetings generally disburse the rest to the ISO of COSA and/or their regional Intergroups for the use of the broader fellowship.

Gratefully, Goal Two Committee for the Board of the ISO of COSA

PLEASE READ THIS AT EVERY MEETING BETWEEN  
JANUARY 25 AND MARCH 14

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Seven Weeks to Boost Seventh Tradition for ISO of COSA

As COSAs progress in our Step work, we become aware of the importance of the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts. These are the principles that support us, individually and collectively, in building and maintaining a strong fellowship.

The Seventh Tradition of COSA states that our fellowship needs to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. In other words, together we are responsible for supporting and sustaining our COSA fellowship. The International Service Organization (ISO) of COSA's mission is based on our Twelfth Step:... *carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.* To help us do this, our ISO needs to raise about \$24,000 a year to cover the costs of: maintaining an up-to-date COSA website; publishing and distributing the COSA newsletter, *The Balance*; producing and distributing literature for the fellowship; paying our part-time service worker, the ISO Coordinator, a living wage; paying our office rent; and reaching out to healthcare providers and the general public to spread the word about the gifts of the COSA program. A few years ago, the ISO initiated a monthly pledge program whereby any COSA can provide regular monthly contributions to ISO, in addition to the amount each meeting sends to ISO regularly. These contributions enable ISO of COSA to predict its cash flow and plan ahead for the needs of our fellowship.

Beginning in January 2010, the ISO of COSA will launch a seven-week campaign to increase Seventh Tradition pledges made directly to the ISO office. These pledges can be mailed in with the green donation cards that are sent out with literature orders. Or you can make an even greener donation by going directly to the COSA website (<http://www.cosa-recovery.org/donate.html>) and making an online donation or pledge.

From January 25 through March 14 we will be asking an officer of each meeting to explain the importance of building a strong ISO by promoting direct donations to the ISO. This is an important way you can show gratitude for the gifts of recovery you have received from our fellowship. This is also an important step you can take to bring the message of recovery to those who still suffer. We hope that you will join with us and pledge a monthly contribution to our ISO. There is no minimum amount; choose an amount that feels appropriate for you. Annual or one-time donations, of course, are always welcome.

Gratefully,  
Goal Two Committee for the Board of the ISO of COSA

Continued from page 1

We do have healthy options if there are not many people in our home group who are available to sponsor. Co-sponsoring is one solution when COSAs can't find a sponsor or temporary sponsor right away, and we want to begin working on the Steps. Co-sponsors generally meet at agreed-upon times, once a week, once every two weeks, or once a month. They may wish to decide upon a set structure for their time together, for example, allowing time for prayer, a feelings check-in, reading, writing, and sharing. If we know any other COSAs who are currently co-sponsoring one another, we may wish to ask them how they work together. We can benefit in our own co-sponsoring arrangement by considering the experience, strength, and hope of those who have come before us. Sometimes a member of a co-sponsoring group or pair may move at a faster pace with the Steps than the other or others in the group. If the relationship is still working, this is just fine. Each person can go at his or her own pace.

There is also the possibility of connecting with a long-distance sponsor. Many COSAs worldwide sponsor and are sponsored this way. Scheduled phone calls, on line chats, and email check-ins are strong tools for working together like this. Some COSAs prefer snail mail to email and make photocopies of their Step work or journaling and mail it to their sponsors for feedback.

COSA has a booklet called "COSA Sponsorship-Frequently Asked Questions" as well as a CD of a panel discussion on sponsorship. Both of these are available for purchase through our website and may be helpful in the sponsorship process.

Working with a sponsor and sponsoring are experiences like none other. We can be resourceful in finding ways to make this kind of recovery partnership work. It is a great opportunity to learn and grow for both the sponsor and the sponsee. We hope that the following shares will help and inspire and we wish you all the best on your recovery journey.

- Lindy

## Sponsorship as a Gift Shared by Recovering People

My conception of sponsorship is simply this: two recovering people learning with and from each other. We focus on the Steps, the Traditions, and the tools of recovery. That's it. If other things such as friendship and fun activities come with this (as they often do) that's great! Yet the primary purpose of this agreed-upon, recovery-defined relationship is recovery. This keeps things simple for me.

Sponsorship is a beautiful thing whether I am sponsoring or being sponsored. Either way, I am learning how to receive and how to give in healthier, more moderate ways. I am learning how to communicate more cleanly and clearly. I am becoming a better listener. I am learning to look for solutions and consider suggestions for action in an open-minded way. I am growing in my ability to own my own feelings and not take on or feel responsible for the feelings of others. I am learning when to keep my expectations in check and when I need to express a need or set a boundary.

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Sponsorship has been a *very* important aspect of my growth and healing.

As a new person in recovery, I had to learn how to trust my sponsor. It didn't come easily to me because in my family of origin, to share an intimate detail of my life felt like giving away my privacy and opening myself up for harsh criticism. On some level I really wanted to be heard and understood. Yet I felt choked with shame. I didn't want to seem "messy" or feel out of control. I often minimized what I was feeling, glossed over the shameful details, or called my sponsor several days after something difficult had happened, to report calmly how I had gotten through it. Thankfully my sponsor is very safe and loving. She has been patient, warm, and non-judgmental, allowing me to open up at my own pace. It has taken me a great deal of willingness to call her when I am right in the middle of a flood of emotions. It requires trust – in her and in my Higher Power. Today, I can share what's really going on with me. It is such a relief.

Early in my recovery I was encouraged to sponsor people. I was reluctant to do this because I didn't feel like I had a very comprehensive understanding of the program or that I was "recovered enough" yet. When I was asked to be a sponsor for the first time, I was honored and happy to do it and flattered to be asked. I quickly realized that while I am still "a work in progress", I did indeed have useful things to share. She and each person I have sponsored since has also taught *me* a lot. The women I sponsor help me stay connected to my meetings and my own recovery.

Trusting my sponsor and sponsoring others involves humility in the most positive sense. The love and acceptance my sponsor gives me helps me forgive myself for not being perfect. This is something I have had a hard time doing on my own. And when I am serving as a sponsor, it is essential for me to remember that I don't have to have all the answers. I am not an expert or an authority; the answers and outcomes for the person I am sponsoring are between her and her Higher Power. I am simply there to listen, to share what I know about the program, to encourage her to trust her Higher Power and to be true to herself. What I can offer is an attentive ear, honest feedback and open sharing about what I have learned. I aim to be consistent and safe.

Like everything else in my recovery, trusting my sponsor and sponsoring others has been an ongoing process, with moments of joy and frustration, love and sadness, optimism and humor. Most of all, sponsorship gives me a deep sense of connectedness. I don't do things perfectly and most likely I never will, but I can see ways in which I've grown and changed for the better and I have seen others grow and change too. I have seen the promises come true in so many lives and my life is so rich because of the relationships I've formed in COSA.

Betsy H.

## COSA Men's Perspectives on Finding a Sponsor and the Value of Sponsorship

Finding a sponsor in a group of codependents is challenging for both men and women. It is important to remember that many people in COSA are working on creating healthy boundaries within helping relationships. One of the jobs for most of us in COSA is that we are learning how to support others without being controlling or overly involved in another person's recovery. So, if someone says that they can't be a sponsor right now, it isn't personal. Take it as a sign that this person is working on setting his or her own boundaries in his or her recovery work.

The best recommendations I have for a man in COSA looking for a sponsor are the same suggestions I would give to all people in recovery. We look for someone in your meetings who has a recovery plan that you want to emulate. Then we start building a relationship with this person, be it as two people supporting each other in recovery or as a sponsor and sponsee. Also we remember to build these relationships slowly. The relationships we create with other people in program become an important part of our recovery but they take time to develop.

It is best to start by creating temporary relationships -- find a temporary sponsor who will help us work on one specific Step or one specific activity. For example, we look for a temporary sponsor to guide us through writing a sobriety plan or we ask someone to be our recovery buddy and help us to find a sponsor. Then we talk to this person about our search for a sponsor.

If there are no other men in our meeting, we look for supportive relationships with people with whom there is little risk for romantic confusion. This might mean finding support from lesbian members of COSA or look for support from women who have long-term sobriety.

I started my recovery work by creating a support group of five new COSA members. We supported each other through the process of looking for sponsors. I think it was also less threatening for women to have one man in a small group instead of having a one-on-one relationship with a man.

I've also used COSA resources for support. Dan O.'s share was one of the first COSA CDs I listened to -- as a gay man I found his story very helpful. His story was a lot like mine. I think the CD of Eric's speech from the 2009 Convention would be helpful for heterosexual men in COSA. Eric is a great speaker and he has a lot of good insight for all COSAs.

Also, COSA men looking for support from other recovering COSA men, may plan on attending the annual convention - this is a chance to meet more people in recovery. This will create new opportunities to connect with other men in COSA.

- Anonymous

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For me, having a COSA sponsor is critical. It really helps me process the shame aspect of this disease and it lets me know that I am not alone and some alien man with another weird condition. It is particularly crucial in the Fifth Step when we confess the exact nature of our wrongs to God, ourselves and another human being. It is really important to me to have another COSA to confide this information to, purely in a capacity from someone who has "been there, done that". It just helps me to feel that I am not alone and that I am actually understood.

I found my COSA sponsor at one of my face-to-face meetings. She was visiting New York from the other coast and visited our meeting. She shared her recovery experience at this meeting and afterwards she gave the best possible suggestions of anyone I have ever come upon. She uttered the famous words: "That's just not gonna work for me." She gave me the words in relation to a situation I was experiencing with my addict.

We later met up at a convention and she agreed to sponsor me!

— Brian K.

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### The Benefits of Being a Sponsor

Sponsoring others in COSA keeps me honest. I cannot in good conscience tell a sponsee about how great a certain recovery tool is if I am not using it myself. I need to model my recovery. Second, sponsoring other COSAs involves sharing how my life was before recovery and what I've since learned. Sharing the specific ways recovery has transformed my life keeps me on track with my own program. I don't want to go backwards!

Eleanor S., Oakland

### **Providing COSA Meetings for Adolescents (Ages 13-17)**

Recently the International Service Organization (ISO) Board has heard concerns from the fellowship about how to provide safe meetings for adolescents (ages 13-17) in COSA. The ISO Executive Committee, and the Board as a whole, have discussed the issue and will present a report to the 2010 delegates.

#### **What Are the Concerns?**

There are not many underage teens in COSA yet, but at times, COSAs whose children have been affected have wondered whether COSA meetings would be appropriate. On the one hand, it seems like COSA could be a good program for teenagers. On the other hand, some shares in adult COSA meetings could be considered harmful to teens under 18 years old. Other Twelve Step fellowships have struggled with similar concerns, and the Board is currently looking at the possibility of adapting the safety guidelines of one such program to COSAs needs. But first, we'd like to hear from you.

#### **How Your Voice Can Be Heard**

The Board has a lot of strength and hope to offer adolescents who have been affected, but would like to hear your experiences. We are interested in hearing from anyone in the fellowship, but we would particularly like to hear the voices of COSAs who are:

- Currently under 13-17 years old and attending adult COSA meetings
- Young adults (over 18) who attended COSA meetings when they were 13- 17 years old
- Parents of adolescents 13-17 years old who have been affected
- Parents of young adults (over 18) who have been affected

The contribution of your experience is an invaluable gift to the Board and the delegates in their group conscience process. In time, it will help us as a fellowship to carry the COSA message further to all who are suffering. Your email to [info@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:info@cosa-recovery.org) will be forwarded to the Board's *ad hoc* committee.





## Albuquerque 2010 Convention

May 28 – 31

### Silent Auction Needs Your Support

Together we can all make our auction a success for COSA's ISO. We are in need of COSA members to help before and/or during the convention and we need donations. Do you have new items hanging around in your closets that you don't use? Have something you want to re-gift? Do you have a special talent for sewing, making note cards or jewelry that you would be willing to share by making something for the auction? You say you aren't able to attend the convention and don't know of anyone coming? Not a problem! We can help you find someone to bring the item or it can be shipped directly to the hotel. Have other questions? Call Elaine at 817.705.0271 or email [weand50@yahoo.com](mailto:weand50@yahoo.com).

### Goal One Committee Report

Through the Committee's brain storming, they realized that one of the most effective ways of increasing service volunteers was to encourage sober and sustainable local meetings. Teleconferences were held in October, December and February to help those that are struggling. The next Sober and Sustainable Meeting Teleconference is scheduled for April 5th at 6 PM Pacific, 7 PM Mountain, 8 PM Central and 9 PM Eastern. The phone number is 218-862-1000 and the Access Code is 1051791#. The Committee's future plans include contacting individual meetings to ask them what resources they used or could use to help struggling meetings.

### Goal Two Committee Report

The goal two committee is in full swing as our seventh tradition/seven weeks campaign gets underway. All board members should have their assignments and the necessary tools to do the contact calling as assigned. We have a set goal and are encouraging recurring donations.

Thank you to all committee members-Ben, Eleanor, Kerstin, and Lindy for all the hard work and much coordinating.

Respectfully submitted,

Margie S.  
Treasurer

### Goal Three Committee Report

The Goal Three Committee (also known as the COSA Book Feasibility Task Force) received the experience, strength and hope of four other Twelve Step fellowships as to how they produced their basic texts. The committee will compile the responses into a single report, which it will present to the delegates in Albuquerque, along with recommendations for producing a COSA book.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Ann R.  
Goal Three Committee Secretary

## Step Three

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

By the time I reached Step Three, I appreciated the words, *"as we understood God."* I had struggled with the spiritual aspect of the COSA recovery program. As a scientist, I had made a career out of questioning everything and demanding proof. Asking me for a leap of faith in God to care for my life was pretty much like asking me to volunteer for partial brain amputation. Yet, I had tried psychotherapy, life coaches, motivational speakers, past-life regression hypnosis and more self-help approaches. My life was still unmanageable. It was at first more important for me to let go of my will than to believe in anything else. This part was easier as I had plenty of proof attesting to the limits of my will to cope with my life.

Out of desperation, I opened myself to at least being receptive to whatever spiritual power was out there. By then I had experienced relief and understood so much more about myself from working my first Step. Consequently, I was ready to, at a minimum, turn my will over to the Twelve Steps. At first I defined God as time. I decided to let go of my impatience, the rush in my life, and let time carry me through the stages of grief. I memorized the Third Step prayer and recited it daily on my way to work in the morning. Asking to be relieved of the bondage of self daily helped me let go of my will.

I filled in a small notebook with collages and drawings that represented inspiration, safety and bliss for me. I started noting the amazing coincidences happening in my life. As I wrote them, I got a sense that what I needed had been provided in my life, independently of my own will. I made the decision to trust that this would happen again.

Today I define faith as science plus humility. I do not know the nature of the spiritual power acting in my life, but I no longer need to know. I can accept simply that this is beyond my understanding. I came to believe that the only difference between science and religion is semantic. We don't know why two masses attract and we call it gravity. We don't know why the people we need show up unexpectedly and we call it HP/God. Why is there even a debate? The only difference is whether we believe in love, not whether we believe in God/Gravity. Love is present in my life today. I can genuinely give and receive it.

Announcing the New Step Four Booklet! Available March 2010  
See literature order forms

## **Step Four** Made a fearless and searching moral inventory of ourselves.

I've heard the simple definition of a miracle is a change in perception. That makes sense when I think of how in doing my Fourth Step inventory I began to receive the miracles of the COSA program.

While Steps One through Three wove the safety net I needed to sit myself down and do a "searching and fearless moral inventory"; I have to admit the procrastination in writing a Fourth Step went on for a while. As I look back I know the trepidation I felt was worse than writing my inventory.

One of the first shortcomings revealed was how focusing on and trying to change the addict was a familiar and comfortable procrastination aid. That old behavior was much more comfortable than trying to change the only person I can, myself. There was a temptation to limit my responsibility to the fact that I stayed in relationship(s) with the addict(s); the search had to be more thorough to determine what liabilities in my own personality were blocking my feeling the sunlight of Spirit.

The self awareness I received in doing Step Four began my freedom from martyrdom and victim thinking and gave me the courage to change. Two fears that loomed large in my inventory were fear of people and of financial insecurity. It was very revealing that these two fears predated meeting any of my qualifiers. This helped me see that some of my shortcomings could not be blamed on anyone, not even myself. They were just old survival traits that no longer served me or my loved ones. I saw how preoccupation with others' behavior allowed me to remain in denial about my contribution to what wasn't working in my life. The denial of any need to change my own behavior was one of many pay-offs or reasons for maintaining the status quo in my relationships.

My sponsor and I looked to recovery literature from another Twelve Steps program as a general guide for doing Step Four. After listing the people, places and things I resented, and my reasons, I wrote how the situations which caused my resentments affected my security (social and financial) and my self esteem. The most valuable work was in searching for my part or responsibility in the situations which caused my resentment. I was able to see my immaturity and non-acceptance of much of what life had brought me. Feelings of uselessness and self pity were familiar.

They say the truth will set us free and that's what I experienced before I was halfway done with the Fourth Step. I saw that withdrawing emotionally and stewing in anger were my only survival tools in the past. If and when those old tools are used today, they are used with less and less intensity and duration, as I continue to work the COSA program. And Step Ten is always available to guide me in promptly admitting any wrong thinking or action. Then I let go and let God.

I was reminded that my inventory required that I look for my assets as well. I had to give myself credit for my willingness to work the Steps and for being as honest and open minded as I could in following suggestions. I acknowledged a strength of character that kept me coming back and I explored what those strengths were that allowed me to receive the gifts of sobriety in COSA.

The experience of working the Fourth Step gave me a wonderful sense of completion and I looked forward to sharing a Fifth Step with a trusted person, in my case my sponsor. She had already won my trust without question and I looked forward to the closeness of sharing my inventory and the freedom it would bring. It is a wonderful ride we are on and I am so glad we have found each other, one and all!

Yours in Gratitude,  
- Lura Lisa

### Step Three Questions

1. What do I believe about making decisions?
2. What does it look like when I have made a decision?
3. What does "turn our will and our lives over to the care of God" mean to me?
4. How do I know when I have made a decision to turn my will and life over to the care of my H.P. rather than relying on self will, or impulse, or what I think others would have me do?
5. How am I starting to accept and fulfill the part that says "God as we understood God"?
6. What specific fears do I have regarding taking the third step?
7. Can I recall a time when I was filled with fear and anxiety and the situation turned out okay for me? Write a paragraph about the above situation. How does that affect the decision required of me in Step Three?
8. In what ways might I hide behind the third step?
9. What will it cost me to turn my will and life over to the care of God, as I understand God? What will I gain?

### Step Four Exercises

1. Be thorough with my Third Step.
2. Set aside prayer: "Dear Higher Power, help me set aside everything I think I know about myself to see what will be revealed to me."
3. Read about the Fourth Step in recovery books.
4. Make an appointment with myself.
5. Find a quiet place.
6. Start with a list of the people, places and institutions I resent. Who and what do I resent? (a resentment is an anger I continue to revisit over and over again).
7. List all of the reasons why I resent each one of these people or things. What is each and every reason, situation, I resent this person, place or institution?
8. What do I tell myself that perpetuates and justifies this resentment? We focus on our own feelings of resentment, rather than trying to measure and judge the wrongs done to us.
9. Keep adding to the list until it seems complete to me.
10. Write about how these resentments have affected my life. How have they affected my pride, sense of security, finances, etc?
11. What are my worst fears about all these situations? What is my fear about the thing or situation that keeps me stuck?