

Balance

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA

Summer Issue May-June 2010

Connecting Through Clear, Clean Communication

The COSA program has helped me to make truer and richer connections with my recovering-addict partner, my COSA friends, and many others in my life. These precious relationships sustain me, and would not be possible if I had not learned how to identify my needs and feelings and to communicate them clearly.

Developing awareness of my truth has taken time and practice. All aspects of the program – from meetings and phone calls to Step work – help me reverse my lifetime habit of denying or distancing myself from my feelings and placing blame on others. Somewhere in my life I learned to anticipate or guess at what others wanted me to say or do, rather than asking myself how /felt or what /wanted. This led me to being intensely accommodating to others and either stifling my needs and feelings entirely, or expressing them in indirect, manipulative ways. I ended up feeling frustrated, bottled up, and angry much of the time. I felt trapped in relationships, thinking that the other people were being controlling or oppressive. In truth, while I did gravitate toward people with these tendencies, I was contributing to the situation: I was ignoring and abandoning myself. So, it is exciting and empowering (and a little scary) to learn to identify and claim my own feelings, thoughts, and desires. It is at the core of learning to esteem myself. Yet to become *aware* of my true self is only part of the solution. I also need to share.

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Welcome New Groups!
TEL-04
CT-02

Recurring Donations

Total for
1/26-4/25/10
\$320.21

7th Traditions Groups
1/26 - 4/24/10

WA-02	51.00
NM-01	100.00
OH-01	76.00
MN-14	200.00
NJ-02	25.00
TX-28	60.00

COSA Telemeetings
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)

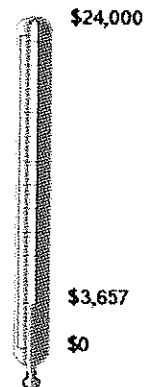
Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time
(7 Mountain, 8 Central, 9 Eastern)

NOTE: check www.cosacall.com for a new Europe call on Tuesdays as well as a COSA Parents Telemeeting on Wednesdays

7th Tradition Fund Drive

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

\$3,657.14



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.

Guidelines for Submitting Literature : <http://www.cosa-recovery.org/literature.html> (scroll down, then click on pdf link)

Please send your articles to: COSACopy@yahoo.com
or by snail mail to the ISO of COSA 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 Central Office

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at COSACopy@yahoo.com

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In order to make real connections with others I need to share who and where I am today.

When I came to COSA, I was not in the practice of telling people what was going on with me at all. I kept much of myself hidden. I was mute about most everything, from the small stuff to the things that really mattered. I was very self-critical and I anticipated anger or rejection from any person who might see the *real* me. I kept my distance; I felt disconnected and alone.

I know now that I was essentially isolating myself by not fully “showing up” in my relationships. I am developing the courage to share. It is in sharing of myself with others – all of me, not simply the glossy, high-functioning, “together” parts – that true connections happen. Some things obviously need to be shared with close attention to wording, or timing, or shared only with a trusted few, yet they still need to be shared.

In addition to cultivating the courage to share, I also try to be mindful of *how* I share. I am coming to appreciate more and more what I call “clean” communication. For me this means being attentive to my motives when I share. I need to check in with myself at times before sharing. Am I sharing in hopes of fixing or influencing someone? Do I have an agenda? Am I trying to sound good? Am I trying to affect an outcome or control a situation? The cleanest sharing for me is when I can talk about my feelings simply, without placing blame and without attachment to any particular outcome other than to be heard. This is my ideal. The “no crosstalk” guidelines from my meetings are useful for me in a wide variety of situations. They teach me to express myself in ways that reflect self-responsibility. I feel cleaner when I am not talking about others and when I am not insinuating that I have the answers. Humility is key. After the judgmental self-righteousness of my COSA disease, humility is a relief and a much more satisfying perspective to come from. This also helps me grow as a listener. Respecting

Continued from page 3

Another key aspect of my learning to connect with others is knowing where my boundaries are, and remembering I have choices regarding *who* I spend time with and *how* we spend that time. I am learning to discern who feels "safe." Safe people, for me, are those who keep their word; those whose words and actions match; those who are gentle, respectful, humble and wise in a way that I would like to be. I am learning how to place limits on or remove myself from conversations and interactions with those I don't feel safe with. I can be cordial and professional, but I don't have to be vulnerable when I don't feel safe.

The program has given me a beautiful gift: through sharing I am learning to "allow" myself to be loved and cared for. As much as I have claimed to want this, it has also been a challenge for me to actually accept it because I felt deep down that I was unworthy and unlovable. It is deeply affirming to discover that when I reach out to others, rather than rejecting me, they are more than willing to offer me support and caring. Through experiencing this gentleness and acceptance I can learn to let go of my merciless perfectionism. I can develop a more relaxed, humor-filled relationship with myself, and this extends to my relationships with others. I am discovering self-forgiveness and self-acceptance that I have never known before. The more comfortable I am with myself, flaws and all, the more human I am. The more human I am, the more others can relate to me, and I to them. And, the more I let go of needing to having things "buttoned up" all the time, the more of me is actually present and available for conversations, for empathy, for true exchange of feelings and thoughts. It is in this sense of ease that relationships flourish. I am surrendering my isolation, in favor of a healthier, happier life filled with inspiring, recovering people.

***Announcing the New Step Four Booklet! Now available!
See literature order forms!***

Goal One Committee Report

The Goal 1 Committee met in March to discuss increasing service volunteers. They considered a Convention workshop on Sponsorship that focused on successes and challenges. They brainstormed ideas such as a database of previous volunteers, volunteer support for committees, and the role of Intergroups including sponsoring annual retreats and workshops. In April, they hope to receive feedback on the 4 questions sent out regarding "Connecting with Struggling Meetings."

- Is your meeting struggling?
- If yes, in what ways do you and your fellow COSA's see your meeting struggling?
- Have you discussed this in your business meeting? What solutions have you tried to improve your meetings?
- What resources could you use or have used to improve your meetings?

Goal Two Committee Report

Goal Two ran a 7 week-long fundraising campaign and is continuing to monitor incoming pledges. The pledge goal was \$2,000 per month or \$24,000 per year. Two thermometers on the website show recurring donations (left) and total amount of donations (right). As of April 1st:

- Monthly recurring donations are at \$320
- One time donations are at \$3,907

The committee decided to leave the page and thermometers in place in case further donations come in.

Goal Two developed a rubber stamp to be used on outgoing pledge cards and other materials to refer to the COSA donation web-page. The stamp will read as follows:

Please visit the COSA website at

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

for an even 'greener' donation.

We learned that we need to find out more about how to raise funds from our fellowship. We are looking into preparing a questionnaire for the convention to learn from the fellowship the reasons to give / not to give to a special fundraising campaign.

Goal Three Committee Report**March 28, 2010**

On March 20th, the Goal 3 Committee sent Part 1 of our year-end report to the Executive Committee for discussion in their meeting of March 21st. The feedback we received was that the report lacked cost details, but otherwise was very thorough.

On March 28th, the committee met for the last time to discuss the responses to Questionnaire items 22-29. Suzanne agreed to summarize cost information from a book entitled *How to Self-Publish*. Carol Ann will incorporate excerpts from Suzanne's summary into the year-end report to the Board.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Ann R.

Looking Forward to Convention

Just think...the biggest COSA meeting in the world is about to happen over this coming Memorial Weekend...and I get to be there! Women and men gathered to share - just that really makes me so grateful. I look forward to hearing the stories and meeting new friends on the journey to *milagros* in the Southwest.

~ Ann R.

I look forward to meeting new and seeing old friends that I see once a year at convention - that alone makes it a very special time. I look forward to the workshops, meetings and seminars and most especially the growth I get at convention. It's a lot of gain for no pain. I'm always up for that!!!!!!!!!!!!

~ Lura Lisa

When I attended the 2009 convention in Oakland, there were many things I looked forward to: fellowship with my traveling girl friends, learning more about how the COSA fellowship works, interesting workshops. I also had a definite challenge in my mind; I needed to expose myself to "male energy". Intellectually, I knew that not all men were untrustworthy and it was unfair to categorize them that way. After almost five years in recovery, I realized I needed to begin to face my generalized fear of men. Although I was anxious, I also looked forward to observing how I would react to being in rooms with recovering men. I figured it was the safest way to approach my challenge, as recovering men might have sensitivity to the issues I was experiencing.

I am happy to report that after placing myself in the situation, I actually came away from the convention with a newfound energy. My fear of men had definitely decreased. And furthermore, I was enriched by the men's shares and the few personal interactions I had with some of the men. For me, conventions are a wonderful and safe way to explore new territories and try on new behaviors. I am looking forward to this year's convention wholeheartedly!

2010 ISO of COSA Convention

"Milagros In the Southwest"



Albuquerque, N.M.
May 28th - May 31st

Website: **www.cosa-recovery.org/abq2010**

Login: **milagros** Password: **abq2010**

Come to the website and find everything you need to register!

Deadlines for discounts: Register by 4/30 \$110.00, after 4/30 \$130.00

Deadline for meal reservations is May 10th

There are many opportunities to serve *while at* the convention. Please consider signing up to volunteer when you register or when you check-in at the Registration Table. They will have the list of areas that still need help. Volunteers at the convention serve in a variety of tasks:

Temporary Sponsor – consider sharing your experience, strength and hope with a new member while at the convention!

Registration Table – help register and greet people, great way to meet everyone!

Hospitality Suite – help make sure food is ready, coffee is made, clean up and great fellowship!

Lead a 12 Step COSA Meeting (script and readings will be provided)

Silent Auction – help display beautiful donations, tally winners, make sure winners get their prizes!

Bookstore –assist people with purchases of books and CDs.

See you there!

Step Five**Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**

The Fifth Step was a genuinely therapeutic time for me. It was really nice to be able to make an appointment and to really have a grasp on what I was going to be doing at that time. I really like the custom of the fellowship that suggests the one other person be someone else in COSA, i.e., sponsor or co-sponsor. It was very nice to be with someone who had been there, done that. It helped me to take the pressure off of being judged or at least that familiar anticipation/expectation of being judged. In my Fifth Step, I was, in fact, met with understanding, love and a few jokes to alleviate anxiety.

Up until completing my Third Step, I had a lot of anxiety around telling others the truth about my wrongs. As a child, my father used to drill in my head that I was not to air our dirty laundry and I carried some of that into my adulthood. The Fifth Step freed me from those ties that bind. I was able to honor my sensitivity and to take ownership for the things I had done. It gave me a blank page to start with, and a new sense of freedom. The Fifth Step gives you something to mourn and something of which you can take pride! It was a big leap of faith for me to tell my sponsor my entire "fearless and moral inventory" and then admit the exact nature of my wrongs?!? God! How will I do that? Well, exactly right, I did it with God! I had so many trust issues coming into COSA and here was a safe environment to build trust and trust was ultimately built.

I figured out by the end of my Fifth Step talk that the exact nature of my wrongs was trying to control everything and not letting God have a chance to work. The lies I've told, the insensitive things I've said and done, trying to be perfect were all my efforts to control others and it was, in fact, a lack of trust in God. My prayer used to be, "Dear Lord, Please stay out of this!" and I am really grateful now that my prayers are now "Dear God, Please take the wheel because I can't do it anymore!"

~ Brian K.

step Five Share

I had been in recovery for nearly two years the first time I was brave enough to face my own issues and write them out in a personal inventory for my first Fourth Step. It was terrifying to me to move even further, and take that Fifth Step - to share with another human being all that I had discovered in that Fourth Step work about myself, all that I was now able to acknowledge to myself and my HP. After the work I had put into my Fourth Step, I was able to admit to my HP and myself those things I had discovered. But to share with another person? Whoa, talk about fear. I felt as if I stood before a great brick wall that I didn't know if I could get through, let alone if I could handle what lay on the other side.

I had so much fear that it would only compound those awful times I had just recalled in vivid detail. What if this person I shared with found what I shared so horrible that she abandoned me? What if she thought I was just too sick to work with further? What if...?

What I didn't know at that time was that I was standing on a threshold of huge growth and healing, and that, as the quote above states, my fears were actually tissue paper-thin, masquerading as a mighty brick wall. I gathered up my courage, and took that Step, though, and I walked over that threshold. Sharing that which scared me most about myself helped me toward the healing I would continue in later Steps. It helped me heal the shame that hung around me like a mantle, dragging me down and causing me to fear moving forward. And although I wasn't aware of it yet, I also gave courage to the people I chose to involve in my sharing. For me, taking that Step was like stepping past that dark, ominous brick wall, into a garden of light, a place where I could continue my work and let go of those traits that I was now discovering didn't serve me anymore.

Each Step we take stands before us, ready for involvement. And each will offer us opportunities for personal growth and occasions to help another make progress on his or her path to the future. Challenges are to be expected. They further our purpose. They foster our maturity. How different it is for me, to look forward today with secure anticipation, to trust in what the future brings. I must admit that the fear and the dread are not gone completely. They hover before me, masquerading as that brick wall, on occasion. They no longer need to darken all of my day, however. I can choose to recognize their presence as parts of my whole, not all of it.

I can step toward today with assurance, reaching out to others along the way, trusting that my accumulated steps add stability to my future.

Step Six**Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**

Thoughts on the Sixth Step: I remember how I felt after giving my Fifth Step to my co-sponsors, after admitting out loud to other human beings the depths of my low self esteem, and how that had manifested in my disease of codependence over a lifetime. Along with the sense of purging and cleansing were feelings of regret, shame, fear, and a lot of pain. I also remember feeling terrified at repeating any of my defects. How do I live with myself now? Then came the mysterious Sixth Step – about becoming willing to let go and let my HP remove my defects. It took me a while to understand how to work this step, to bring it home. After reading and talking with my co-sponsors, it became my favorite step, along with Step Seven.

My Sixth Step work is to ask my Higher Power to remove my defects, and to let go of the urge to control them, to white-knuckle them away, as my ego would have it. To me the Sixth Step is about laying down my arms against the things I don't like about myself. It is about accepting and having compassion for myself despite my faults. I can achieve this through prayer, meditation, interacting with others and asking for help. It is setting the emotional and spiritual ground for moving out of my comfort zone in my actions and taking an unfamiliar path by gradually learning to make new choices, the work of the Seventh Step. I free up my spirit and energy to try out new attitudes and behaviors in place of the ones that no longer work for me.

~ Maureen P., Oakland

Step Five Questions

1. Can I talk to my Higher Power in a way that builds trust between myself and my Higher Power?
2. In preparing to admit to another human being, am I ready to admit to myself the exact nature of my wrongs?
3. At an appropriate time, am I able to share with sponsor, or co-sponsor, the exact nature of my wrongs? (my Fourth Step)

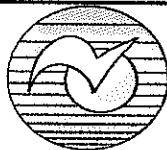
Step Six Exercises

1. What benefits are there of keeping some of my defects of character?
2. Am I willing to have God, or my Higher Power, removed ALL of my defects of character? If I woke up tomorrow and God or my Higher Power had removed all of my defects of character, how would I know?

OOPS!!!

**I PROMISED THE SILENT AUCTION I'D
SEND SOMETHING AND HAVEN'T DONE
ANYTHING YET! HAVE YOU?**

The ISO of COSA Silent Auction at our Annual Convention is a major fundraiser. Please consider donating something to help us get the word out to those who still suffer. Email Elaine at weand50@yahoo.com or call her at (817) 705-0271 with any questions.



Announcements
Upcoming COSA Retreats

Men in COSA
 COSA Parents and
 COSA Double Winners
 Present the



COSA 1-2-3 Workshop

Saturday, May 8, 2010

8 am to 3 pm at

The Council on Alcohol & Drugs

303 Jackson Hill

To jump-start our COSA recovery, we are offering this workshop for all area COSAs – newcomers and veterans alike. Everyone whose life has been affected is welcome.

The workshop will have four sessions that cover the chapter on “Coaddiction” from *Out of the Shadows* as well as the ISO of COSA booklets on Steps 1, 2 and 3. Each session will have a 20-minute presentation followed by private journaling and small group sharing on what we learned about ourselves.

There are no dues or fees for the workshop, but voluntary contributions will go towards rent for the meeting space. Snacks will be provided, and lunch is on your own.

For more information, please contact the following meeting representatives:

Men in COSA: menincosahouston@att.net

COSA Parents: madcrespo@gmail.com

COSA DWs: hellocarolann@yahoo.com

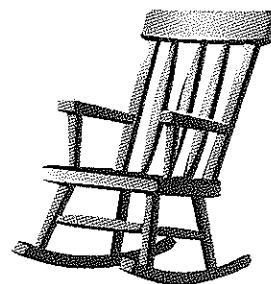
20th Annual COSA Women's Step Retreat

Roundtop Retreat Center

Roundtop, Texas

www.roundtopretreat.org

June 26-28, 2009



Check-in at the retreat site Friday from 5-7 pm. Depart Sunday at noon. The retreat site is large, country house that provides numerous rooms furnished with “antiques and love”. Two wrap-around verandas with rocking chairs overlook the private lake and gardens. The main meeting room is comfortably furnished like an oversized living room.

For further information contact:

Tina H. 832-971-3532; thoffman25@gmail.com

Lisa H. 281-744-4373; lhammond75@yahoo.com