



**Volume 6, Issue 9**

**Fall Issue**

**Sept/Oct 2010**

## Tools for Times of Transition

We all know that change in life is inevitable, but that doesn't mean it is always easy. While gradual changes allow us the time to become adjusted, unanticipated and rapid changes can be intensely challenging. Transition often means moving into the realm of the unknown. This can be unnerving. Many if not all COSAs have experienced the trauma of abruptly shifting circumstances or several big changes happening at once.

Times of change can evoke deep (and at times unrecognized) fear. Flooded with a desire to have some command over outcomes, we come face-to-face with the limits of our ability to control people, places and things. We may feel needy, anxious, easily angered, or emotionally shut down. We may throw ourselves into frenetic action, or we may find myriad ways to procrastinate. We may not even be aware that we have shifted into being hyper-vigilant. It may take a stiff neck, clenched jaw, or a stomach-ache for us to realize that we are repeatedly checking our surroundings and the words, actions and expressions of others in an effort to determine how things will turn out. We may wrestle with insistent ideas about "if I do this, then \_\_\_\_\_ will happen" or "when \_\_\_\_\_ happens, then everything will be o.k." We may obsess about what may happen in the future, or morosely focus on things we cannot change from our past.

Comfort is out of reach until we can muster a certain amount of surrender. It seems counter-intuitive in times of big change to let go of outcomes, but this is key for our emotional sobriety and serenity. We need to bring ourselves back to the present moment and determine the simple, solution-oriented things we can do here and now. We need to let go of just about everything else, at least for the time being. For COSAs at any stage of recovery, times of transition are the perfect opportunity to nurture faith and remember the first three Steps: determining that we can't seem to manage this on our own; believing a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity; and then letting go and letting God.

Faith and trust don't have to be things we already have. Any time of change is a good

### In this Issue:

Tools for Times of Transition <i>By Betsy H.</i>	<b>1,3,5</b>
Call for Topics, Titles or Cover Art for Upcoming Book	<b>2</b>
Retreats	<b>4</b>
Goal One Committee Report <i>By Mila T.</i>	<b>5</b>
Step Nine Share <i>By Kerry M.</i>	<b>6, 8</b>
Ninth & Tenth Step Writing Exercises	<b>8</b>
Step Ten Share <i>By Lura Lisa</i>	<b>9</b>
Step Ten Share <i>By Claudia M.</i>	<b>9, 10</b>

### In every Issue:

Seventh Tradition	<b>2</b>
Literature Order form	<b>11-12</b>
COSA Telemeeting Reminders	<b>3, 7, 8</b>



### 7th Tradition:

To the Fellowship: We have not included the Seventh Tradition donation information in this issue due to moving our Central Office from Albuquerque to Houston. We will add this information to the report in the November/December issue.

In service,  
Elaine K.,  
ISO of COSA Chair

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

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Distribution by—ISO Office Manager

## Call For Topics, Titles, or Cover Art for Upcoming Book

Hello Fellow COSAs!

The COSA Book Development Committee (BookCom) is excited to be moving towards creating COSA's basic text.

One of our objectives this year is to put together an outline for the book. In order to do that, we need to know what you want us to include. So we are calling for all COSAs to share with us any COSA recovery:

- Topics
- Titles or
- Cover Art

Please understand that this is not a call for authors, personal stories or chapters. And, while we will do our best to include as many topics as possible within our outline, there can only be one title and one cover. When the time is right, we will select the title and cover art from those sent to us by the COSA fellowship.

All COSAs are invited to send any ideas as soon as possible to the COSA Book Development Committee at [BookCom@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:BookCom@cosa-recovery.org). The BookCom will put together a first draft of the outline at the end of March 2011.

We look forward to hearing from all of you!

Sincerely,  
JoAn D., BookCom Chair

## 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

**COSA ISO, P.O. BOX 79908, Houston, TX 77279-9908**

Guidelines for Submitting Literature:

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

## Tools—Continued from page 1

service. When all seems unclear, we can open our minds and our hearts to good or orderly direction. Then, it may be time for decisive action, or (sometimes even harder than taking action) it may be time to wait.

One of the most dramatic transitions for new COSAs is the shift from denial into awareness. For some, this is a dramatic jolt. For others, it is a gentler shift from not-knowing into full realization. Either way, discovery and the struggle to accept our situation as it is can stir up feelings of intense rage, despair, indignance or shame. We may experience unpredictable bouts of panic or thoughts of revenge. Many of us discover deep wells of grief as we let go of what we *thought* our lives were and grow in our acceptance of how and where we actually are. For the newcomer, this change of perspective is a chance to open up to all that the program has to offer, to find safe and supportive COSA members to listen to us and to guide us, and to begin working the steps.

For those who stay with the program, understanding of our “courage to change the things we can” continues to evolve. Even positive changes of our own choosing – such as a new career, a new relationship, or a return to school – can present us with challenges. The stress of transition can re-ignite some of our most deep-rooted COSA issues such as gnawing self-doubt, feelings of unworthiness, or reluctance to claim our power. We may catch ourselves reverting to old, self-defeating patterns of thinking or behaving. What we are really reaching out for is a sense of control or safety. This type of transition is a great opportunity to dive into Steps Eleven and Twelve. We can listen for our Higher Power’s guidance and contribute to the well-being of *all* through sponsoring and service work.

Regardless of where we are in our process of recovery, there are several things we can all keep in mind when transition tempts us to panic. For some, it may help to simply take a few moments to sit calmly and breathe, or to take a short walk in a beautiful place. For others, it may be to make a gratitude list, or a to-do list – including even of the small things – to check off one at a time. The key may be to take immediate and focused action where it is within our power to do so. One small action toward a goal can be enough to set a whole new plan in motion.

Some of the COSA tools at the top of our list might be: keeping things simple, practicing self-care, prayer and meditation, attending meetings, journaling, and doing step work. For some of us it is crucial to revisit our circles to remind ourselves of those middle circle thoughts and behaviors that could lead us in a direction we don’t want to go. Checking in with other COSAs helps us stay moderate in our thinking instead of allowing the stress to push us into the extremes. A well-timed phone call may help us steer clear of hours of either-or, all-or-nothing thinking. Step work is an avenue toward deep and lasting growth and a sense of moving forward despite confusing times. We can opportunity to *discover and cultivate* faith and our own inner wisdom. For those COSAs who feel a conscious contact with a Higher Power of their understanding, transition times may include much prayer. For those who don’t feel connected to a specific Higher Power, faith in the healing potential of the recovery program or our

[Continued on page 5](#)



### COSA Telemeetings

[www.cosacall.com](http://www.cosacall.com)

**NEW Phone Number:**  
**1-218-862-6420**

**Passcode: 679461**

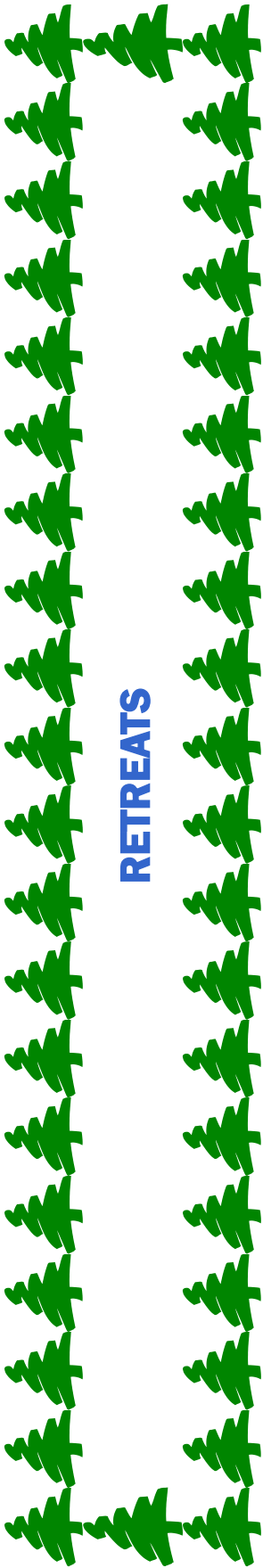
Tuesdays,  
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(8 MT, 9 CT, 10 ET)

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COSA Parents  
Telemeeting on  
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## Serenity on the Sound

The 20th Annual Puget Sound Retreat will be held the weekend before Labor Day (August 26th - 29th, 2010) on the beautiful and tranquil Key Peninsula near Seattle, WA. Serenity on the Sound is a retreat open to all COSA and SAA members, other S-recovery fellowships, and adult family and friends in recovery.

**Come to:**

- Deepen your recovery with many workshops to choose from
- Build relationships
- Meditate
- Drum around the bonfire
- Play outdoor games
- Canoe, nature walk and swim
- Enjoy great food
- Relax in a tranquil setting overlooking Puget Sound
- Provide service by helping with meals and other camp support

Friday night COSA Keynote Speaker Elaine K, ISO of COSA Chair.  
 For more information and registration please visit the official website for Serenity on the Sound: [www.soundretreat.org](http://www.soundretreat.org)

## Simple Serenity COSA Retreat

Experience recovery, peace and serenity in the tranquil setting of Sonoma County, California at the 4th Annual **Simple Serenity COSA Retreat**, October 8-10, 2010 at St. Dorothy's Rest ([stdorothysrest.org](http://stdorothysrest.org)), located near the village of Camp Meeker, CA. Join fellow COSAs in participant-led meetings, workshops, and step work. In addition, there will be ample personal time to reflect, relax and journal. Opportunities to present a workshop are still available. Contact one of the program committee co-chairs: Jennifer B. ([pbandjennybanana@gmail.com](mailto:pbandjennybanana@gmail.com)) or Ruth G ([ruthscricketsong@aol.com](mailto:ruthscricketsong@aol.com)) if you have a workshop idea to propose. To register for this retreat, please contact the Retreat Planning Team at [SimpleSerenityCosaRetreat@gmail.com](mailto:SimpleSerenityCosaRetreat@gmail.com)

## Continued from page 3

home group will provide support. Most of us find solace in fellowship and in being of also aim for lightness and humor. We can take time for play.

Gentleness with ourselves is key. This may feel like contrary action to those of us who tend to deal with stress by picking on ourselves in one way or another or running ourselves ragged. It is important to honor and love ourselves. This, too, may be a challenge for those of us who tend to abandon ourselves in times of pressure. And finally, patience helps. We remind ourselves that all is unfolding in our Higher Power's time. We trust this timing and simply "do today" to the very best of our ability.

Our growth may not always come easily. Our progress may be slow or may not happen in a linear way. It may appear messy, or we may seem to be slipping back into our deeply-ingrained habits and shortcomings. If we stick with the program we can grow into a new sense of courage, strength, and well-being. It helps to remember that courage doesn't mean fearlessness; it means feeling the fear, and continuing to move forward anyway. We may not know exactly where our new path is leading us, but recovery helps us find the next indicated step. If we are willing and open to the principles of recovery, we can find a solid foundation upon which to build each new day and a whole new way of living.

- Betsy H.

## Goal 1 Report—Increase Service Volunteers

The Goal One Committee met on Sunday July 18. Only 2 members of the committee called in for the teleconference. The Chair will call other Board Members and delegates who signed up for the Committee to encourage participation.

Among the actions items were are follows:

1. To review Sponsorship feedback, literature and other sources and present a proposal on how sponsorship can be encouraged in meetings and in the organization .
2. To review the "Types of Meeting" handout circulated at the Convention and explore how this can be used to encourage sober and sustainable meetings.
3. To explore the value of quarterly meetings among the CCC's (COSA Connection Coordinators) in order to improve communication among COSA members.
4. To review materials on "Connecting with Struggling Meetings" and find useful solutions on improving meetings and increasing service volunteers.

- Mila T., Goal One Chair

Next

Next  
Sober

Sober  
&  
Sustainable  
Teleconference

Thursday  
Nov. 4th

Is your COSA meeting struggling to attract service volunteers? Are you thinking of starting a new COSA Meeting? Concerned about how to attract and retain COSA newcomers or old timers? Bring your questions and/or your Experience, Strength and Hope about starting and sustaining Sober COSA Meetings on the Teleconference scheduled for:  
**Thursday, November 4<sup>th</sup>**, 6pm Pacific Time, 7pm Mountain Time, 8pm Central and 9pm Eastern. The Teleconference # is **218-862-1000** and the **Access Code is 1051791#**.



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

## Step Nine

With my Eighth Step list of people I had harmed with my behavior and the willingness to make amends to them all, I began the work of my Ninth Step with a teaspoon of trepidation and a full cup of fear. I was confused and lacked confidence that I would have the courage and wisdom to know how to tell who might be harmed by my amends or not, but I was willing to try with the help of my co-sponsors, others with experience, strength and hope with the Ninth Step, my therapist and my Higher Power.

First, I wrote a letter to each person on my list, acknowledging and naming the harm I had done to each. This took some time and it often felt overwhelming. I decided to work on one amends at a time to make it feel more manageable. Each letter became an exercise in clarifying the nature of my harm and how to communicate my amends with a humble heart instead of humiliating myself or being self-effacing. I found I had to write multiple versions of each letter before I got them spiritually fit enough. They started long and ended short, as I found it better to stick with the facts of what I did that caused harm than to offer explanations about my recovery process or for my past actions. Perhaps my greatest challenge was to only write about my part, leaving out any reference or allusions to the harms the other person had caused me. I learned to focus on making amends *for me*, to free myself of the wreckage of my own behavior.

Second, I made decisions about the order in which I made amends. I began with my qualifier only because he was already in recovery and was familiar with the process from having made amends himself, so I felt safe. I went on to make amends to those on my list who I felt safe enough to be vulnerable with, and this helped me as I 'learned' the art and science of how to make healthy amends. I made mistakes along the way but benefited greatly from each one. The most difficult amends I saved for last: my amends to my son, my mother, my father and the man who sexually abused me, the spouse of a man I had an affair with and myself (not so much because I thought my amends to myself would be harder, but because I seriously discounted the magnitude and significance of them). Today I encourage my sponsees to begin with their amends to self, as it can yield great clarity when moving on to make amends to others.

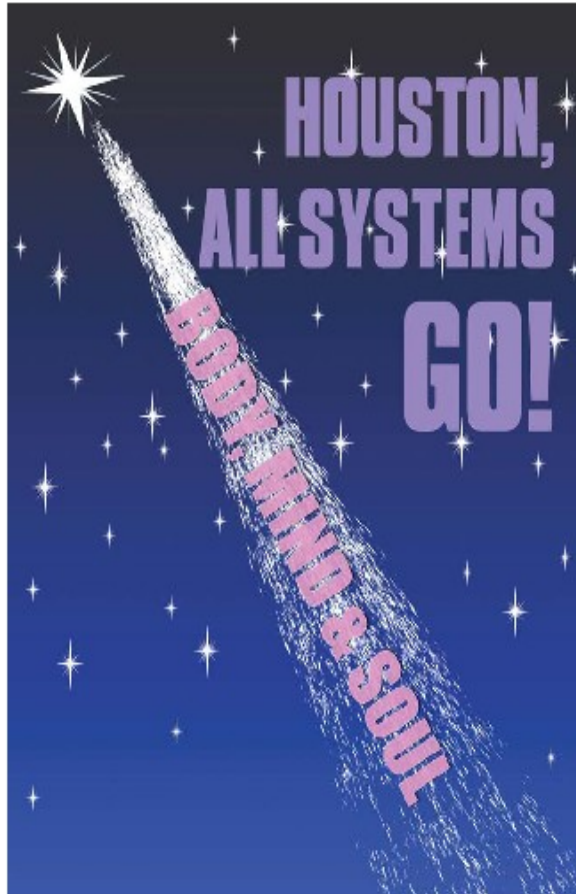
Third, I reasoned out what form the amends would take: letter, email, in person, over the phone, a spiritual, or a living amends, etc. This was tricky because I worried both ends of the continuum: not feeling I was being brave enough, or that I would further harm others under the guise of holding myself to the highest standard. Some people rejected my amends, some were angered, some relieved and some grateful. In the end, I learned with time, the only measure of success I should be concerned with was how I felt. Had I let go of my shame? Did I feel at peace with myself? Did I stay on my side of the street? Was I still carrying resentments toward the other person or myself? When the answers were yes, yes, yes and no, I felt complete.

Continued on page 8



# SAVE THE DATE

*ISO of COSA International Convention and Annual Meeting*



**May 27-30, 2011**

Houston Marriott Westchase  
2900 Briarpark Dr.  
Houston, Texas 77042

If you are interested in helping with the event, please contact Lynda B. at [lynda@broussard-ad.com](mailto:lynda@broussard-ad.com)

[www.cosa-recovery.org/houston2011](http://www.cosa-recovery.org/houston2011)

**Login: systems Password: houston2011**



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Wednesdays

## Step Nine—Continued from Page 6

When I first came into recovery I was skeptical about the Ninth Step Promises; I wanted guarantees not promises. I believed I deserved an incentive if I was going to invest my time in my partner's recovery. But by the time I finished my Ninth Step I understood why the promises don't come true until after the Ninth Step and why it is so essential for me to work the steps for myself and no other.

Humbly Submitted,  
Kerry M., Oakland, CA

### Step Nine Questions:

- How do I choose which amends to make first?
- When do I know if I am going to injure others?
- Should I discuss each amends with someone else such as my sponsor before I make it directly to the person I have harmed?
- When making my amends how can I be sure I will not repeat my old behaviors?
- What is my self-care plan if my efforts are rejected or the person I am making amends to forgive me? What tools can I use to let go of the outcome and to remind myself that the outcome belongs to my Higher Power?
- How will making amends improve my relationship with my HP (Higher Power)?

### Step Ten Questions:

- Am I resisting this step? If I skip over it, what effect might this have?
- What actions did I take that may have put me in spiritual isolation today?
- Did I do anything to perpetuate my obsessions or compulsions and what effect did that have on others? On me?
- Am I willing to take a balanced view of myself, identifying my mistakes yet also celebrating areas in which I've made progress?

Am I having difficulty giving myself credit for the areas in which I *am* making progress?



## Step Ten

For me, working a Tenth Step is the best prescription for any relationship, especially with our significant others. Promptly admitting our wrongs after taking a moral inventory is the most important Step in maintaining our program of healthy human relationships. Therefore, Step Ten is an undertaking I regularly continue, having done my Ninth Step amends.

It used to be sooooo difficult for me to apologize for my behavior. I was always right after all, so I saw admitting my wrong as less than rigorously honest. I have to admit that my husband taught by example to be quick to apologize even when I know he still thought he was right.

I believe nations would get along a lot better if they followed the Tenth Step.

I cannot say I take a Tenth Step every day or night. It more often happens after a conflict or when I have been less than loving to husband, children, friends or even hotel clerks who I feel have treated me unkindly. I often discover that it's not that I was treated unkindly, it's that I wasn't taken care of. And often, no matter how much I have wanted to be taken care of, it is simply not a lot of people's job to take care of me. I see now that the only person really charged with that job is me.

I have also begun a journal practice where I let my heart tell my head who I might admit I was wrong to, if I were to act with the belief that my heart is intelligent. Studies have shown that the heart does send messages to the head. That is the center I want to come from - my heart center - and the Tenth Step is the best avenue I've found to "faith it til' I make it" and to act in accord with my belief that I am a spiritual being having a human experience.

In Gratitude,  
Lura Lisa (LL)

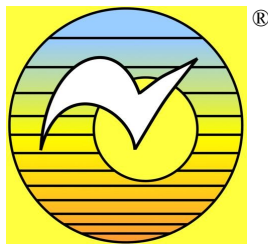
I found Step Ten in COSA to be life changing. In my first Step Nine, I made amends for wrongs that were twenty-five years old. Now I had the opportunity to set things right within moments or hours. I no longer had to live in guilt for years.

My sponsor asked me to do a Step Ten every day for a month. I chose to review my day, especially looking for any character defects I had identified in my Step Six. I was especially careful to identify and take care of any resentment. My inner circle includes holding resentments for more than twenty-four hours, so I needed to be prompt. Sometimes I would talk to the person involved, if that was safe, and sometimes I would talk it out with my sponsor.



# 10

**Continued  
to take  
personal  
Inventory  
and when  
we were  
wrong  
promptly  
admitted it.**



**The  
International  
Service  
Office  
  
(ISO)  
  
of COSA**

**Contact us at the  
NEW Houston  
Location!:**

**COSA ISO  
P.O. BOX 79908  
Houston, TX  
77279-9908**

**Phone:  
763-537-6904**

**E-mail:  
info@cosa-recovery.org**

## Step Ten—Continued from page nine

At times I need to do more than a quick review, so I write out the steps briefly on an incident or behavior that had come up, and I share it with my sponsor. This practice has taught me a lot about myself. I found out that I take too much responsibility for others' feelings. My sponsor often pointed out that the only amends owed were to myself.

When I write the steps out, I might ask myself these questions or take these actions:

1. What am I powerless over in this situation? How has it made my life unmanageable?
2. In what ways can I identify insane thoughts or behaviors? Where is my Higher Power in this situation? Do I believe my Higher Power can restore me to sanity? What would that look like in this situation?
3. I write a letter to my Higher Power and turn the situation over. I write a note for my God Box.
4. I write a short history of events and talk about my feelings.
5. I share Steps One through Four with my sponsor or a COSA friend.
6. I list my shortcomings that are evident in the situation.
7. I pray to my Higher Power to remove those shortcomings.
8. I make a list of all those I have hurt. Usually it is me, and sometimes others need to be on that list. I check with my sponsor.
9. I make amends, promptly.
10. I continue to look at this situation until it is resolved.
11. I pray about it.

I share the lessons I have learned in meetings and with COSA friends. I make amends to myself in several different ways. Sometimes I do some outer circle behaviors. I might make a special effort to treat myself as my own best friend. I might do some reading on an applicable shortcoming or solution. I have done a lot of reading on fear and faith. I have gotten myself pedicures, or bought myself a new shirt. And all of this attention helped me with another shortcoming: low self esteem. It was hard for me to think so little of myself when I was treating myself so well.

I have learned Step Ten needs to be a way of life for me. It is my Number One defense against inner circle behaviors. That guilt is not a thing of the past, but it is a shadow of its former self.

-Claudia M., Mesa, AZ