



Volume 6, Issue 5

Winter Issue

Jan/Feb 2011

New Beginnings: Embracing Our COSA Recovery and a Warm Sense of Community

The new year brings with it a sense of promise and renewed hope. In this issue of the Balance we celebrate this feeling with stories of new beginnings in COSA.

For many of us, coming to our first meeting is a significant beginning, a starting point from which we enter into a whole new way of living. We find relief, good, orderly direction, and a deep sense of connectedness. For some, this is the perfect time of year to begin the First Step, a step that is the key opening the door to new understanding. Many of us who have been in the program for years remember the first three steps every day; revisiting our foundation refreshes our sense of focus and serenity anew.

We wish you all the best for the new year as we make this journey together one day at a time.

Betsy

Power of the COSA First Step

Keep coming back. The program works! These are the words that echoed at my first COSA meeting. I had nothing to lose; I kept coming back. A week went by, I started to feel hopeful. Then a month, I started to feel relieved...relieved that I wasn't alone. Three months approached and things started to make sense. I recently completed my First Step: *We admitted that we were powerless over compulsive sexual behavior - that our lives had become unmanageable.* Now in November, I'm eight months strong.

True gifts of the COSA program are having a sponsor, fellowship, and clarity of my Higher Power. Just as vital is the gift of the COSA First Step. My first attempt at putting pen to paper was a challenge, and so were the second and third attempts. This would mean all the secrets that I held onto for so long would now become a story for all to hear. I was completely scared but definitely ready. I thought about how I felt when I heard my first Step One share... A spectrum of emotions hit me - tears of anguish and hurt mingled with feelings of hope and triumph. It was healing to let out the emotions that were buried deep inside and so powerful to look

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**Every COSA
group ought
to be fully self
-supporting,
declining
outside
contributions.**

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

Editing, Design, Production & Layout by—COSA Literature Committee

Distribution by—ISO Office Manager

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

RECURRING

October	\$ 398.42
November,	\$ 433.42

TOTAL	\$ 831.84
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7TH TRADITION

October	\$ 56.00
November	\$ 81.40

TOTAL	\$ 137.40
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GRAND TOTAL	\$ 969.24
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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

<p>COSA ISO P.O. BOX 79908 Houston, TX 77279-9908</p>
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Power of the COSA First Step—Continued from page 1

around and see the unity of emotions. We were all together.

Working the COSA First Step is a celebration. Admitting powerlessness and that my life had become unmanageable gives me a fresh start. Sharing my story allows me to be an inspiration to others. I am grateful for my program!

JT

First Step Poem

My adult writes about the past -

Goal-oriented, hoping for healing, to meet the goal, complete the step, learn the lessons and be able to move forward.

My little girl is afraid, so afraid.

It must be all her fault, all this pain and chaos, all the many, many mistakes.

She rises to defend herself. "It's not my fault" she says, convinced that it is.

She finds her way into the writing, explaining, ever explaining; hoping to avoid the pain and the senseless, ever deeper fear.

A Guiding Voice reminds me that the Bottom Line is what counts.

The Simple Truth of my experience.

Surrender to that truth;

The plain truth of my flawed limited humanity

Brings freedom.

Linda P, Walnut Creek CA

Goal 1 Report—Increase Service Volunteers

Sept 19, 2010

1. The group discussed going forward with the COSA-sponsorship webpage with the goal of presenting a proposal to the Board in March 2011. Each committee member will check in with their respective home groups regarding suggestions, viability and interactive features. Of particular interest is the partial reproduction on-line of the Sponsorship Booklet.
2. Committee members shared their experiences in various Inter-groups and found similarities and differences in Bylaws and fellowship.
3. The committee also discussed other committee work on "Meeting Formats", assistance to struggling meetings, deadlines and next agenda items.

Respectfully submitted,

Mila T

Goal 1 Committee Chair



COSA Telemeetings

www.cosacall.com

Phone Number:
1-218-862-6420

Passcode: 679461

NEW Mondays
Step/Tradition Study
9:00am (PT)
(10MT, 11 CT, Noon ET)

NEW Mondays
Recovery Tools for
Emotional Sobriety
5:00pm (PT)
(6 MT, 7 CT, 8 ET)

Tuesdays,
7:00pm (PT)
(8 MT, 9 CT, 10 ET)

Wednesdays,
4:00pm (PT)
(5 MT, 6 CT, 7 ET)

Thursdays,
6:00pm (PT)
(7 MT, 8 CT, 9 ET)

Men's Only COSA Mtg.
Sunday
10:00am (PT)
(11am MT, 12noon CT,
1:00 pm ET)

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



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First Step Story

“How did I get here?”

I thought as I sat alone in the STD clinic of the gay and lesbian center in Hollywood, waiting to get the results from a barrage of tests. Dehumanizing swabs and blood draws and scraping this and that to see if the effects of my partner's sex addiction would leave more than just emotional scars.

I have endured a lot in my life of 37 years. There have been many things that have shaped and formed me into the man I have become. Little could have prepared me for these last six months of my life.

And there I was, waiting alone.

Although it had been a rough two weeks, progress was already being made. My boyfriend had found recovery. We had both read multiple books. I was planning to attend my first COSA meeting. This was leaps and bounds ahead of where we were two years ago when I first discovered that there might be trouble in paradise.

My History

We had been partnered for five years when I learned that my boyfriend was engaging in sex outside of our relationship. The discovery occurred when he handed me his iphone to help navigate to a church we had never visited. We were on our way to a baptism where my partner was to be anointed as the god father for his newest nephew. When I turned on the phone, a text message appeared and I read one sentence that told me more than I ever wanted to know. The following few weeks were horrible, but ultimately, I was appeased by platitudes and reassurances that it would never happen again. I believed him.

What followed were two years of lies. I had gut feelings that my partner was continuing to act out, but had no proof. I didn't have any tools or support at my disposal. I just had blind faith in, and unearned trust for, my partner. Here I was, going through the motions of a clunky relationship. I was pretending that everything was perfect and feeling like everything was all wrong. I was stranded.

I kept noticing little things here and there that implicated my partner in extra curricular sexual activities, but it took 2 years to discover the proverbial smoking gun.

The Final Straw

We were vacationing with three other couples when I discovered the email that was the catalyst to set this quest of recovery in motion. Reading the email launched me into a deep, dark despair. I immediately confronted my partner and will never forget the moment when he said, “I think I have a problem, and I need help.”

Two weeks of blurred, emotional, traumatic, ferocious, agonizing and sometimes cata- tonic states of consciousness passed. But clarity of purpose and direction was obvious. We both needed help. He needed help to overcome his sex addiction, and I needed help to eliminate my codependency. We both needed recovery tools. We both sought them out.

New Beginnings

I discovered COSA through some of the reading I had done and immediately searched for a local group. The thought that there was a group of people getting together who shared my story was uplifting and gave me hope. This hope diminished, however, when I read that my local chapter was a women's only group. I was devastated.

I continued to search online for a recovery group to attend. Checking every gay center throughout Southern California, working through the psychological services offered through my employer was all for naught. It seemed there were countless groups with countless names for men with a sex addiction, but few or no options for men in my position.

It took me several days to gather the strength and determination to pick up a phone and reach out. I thought that at the very least, the local women's COSA group might be able to refer me to some services I had yet to discover. So I made the call.

A woman picked up the phone and I immediately launched into a pent-up, rambling plea for help. I indicated that I knew the group was designated for women only, but that I desperately needed to find some support. She consoled me with such compassion by stating that just within the past week, the COSA group had voted to open its membership to both men and women. It was meant to be. I had found my salvation.

Six Months Later

I received my six month COSA chip on November 8, 2010.

By fully immersing myself into the COSA program, I have found a tranquility and peace of mind that has been unknown to me my entire life. The words, "No longer is there a sense of hopelessness," ring true to me every moment of every day.

While I have come far in my journey in these short months, I fully understand how much further I have to go. But I willingly take on this challenge with the strength and support of my fellow COSA members and the tools and traditions of the program.

COSA has provided me a fresh perspective on myself, my relationship with my partner, and my approach to the world.

Little did I know I would be a new man six months after that day I found myself in the lobby of the STD clinic. I had been subjected to all the tests, and spent some time telling my story to the case-worker in charge of my file. It was a long and brutal day. When I was finally called in to get my results, I could hardly walk. The case worker held my hand as he told me that I was completely healthy. I had tested clean. I burst into tears and threw my arms around him.

It was the best hug I have ever had.

As he held me while I wept, he said, "It's gonna be OK." And I knew he was right.

Sean

Sober & Sustainable Teleconferences

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.

Upcoming Schedule:

Saturday, January 8th
1:00pm (PST),
2:00pm (MST),
3:00pm (CST),
4:00pm (EST)

Saturday, March 12th
1:00pm (PST),
2:00pm (MST),
3:00pm (CST),
4:00pm (EST)

Thursday, May 5th
6:00pm (PST),
7:00pm (MST),
8:00pm (CST),
9:00pm (EST)

Saturday, July 9th
1:00pm (PST),
2:00pm (MST),
3:00pm (CST),
4:00pm (EST)

The Teleconference # is **218-862-1000** and the **Access Code is 1051791#.**

Cost is only whatever your personal long distance carrier charges.



**We admitted
we were
powerless
over
compulsive
sexual
behavior—that
our lives had
become un-
manageable.**

Powerless and Unmanageable

Admitting that I was powerless over my husband’s disease was easier said than done. Since entering recovery two years ago, I felt sure I knew what that meant: that his addiction was about ‘him’ not me. If I could do my own work and detach, I would achieve the peace and serenity that the Program promised. I held out hope that, sooner rather than later, my husband would “see the light” and hurl himself into the recovery boat with all the commitment I knew he could muster.

It didn’t happen that way.

It’s been six years since the sky fell in. Those nagging, gnawing feelings that somehow, on some level, things were amiss, were too powerful to ignore. The feelings kept rising to the surface, despite being told that I was being ‘ridiculous,’ given the silent treatment, and stared at in stony silence. The frustration and pain I felt when my husband refused to even fight about something so important made me feel crazy and petty. But tolerating the intolerable was pretty familiar territory, so despite the calamity that rocked our lives, we’d put on our game faces and head out to work at the company which we owned together. One day, after no longer being able to deny the inappropriateness of a relationship that he was having with one of our contract employees, I asked him to relieve her of her duties, and he refused. Feeling a combination of pain, fear and despair, I called her in myself and told her that her services were no longer needed. He stood by as a silent witness. At home later that night, a rambling confession tumbled out of him; he confessed to years of lying and secret keeping, and of multiple affairs with clients, colleagues, and close friends of mine. I was numb and devastated, and felt like a broken mirror. My sole purpose thereafter was to care take our two kids and our business, while at the same time, trying to look like we were ‘fine.’

Tens of thousands dollars worth of treatment and therapy later and sitting in COSA rooms, I know today what I didn’t know then. Despite all the interventions that I had initiated, the obsessive scramble for the magic pill was, in itself, a sign of my own addictive disease. It was an outward sign that I had not accepted my own powerlessness. I was still trying to manage and manipulate the outcome of the disease.

The moment of clarity came recently while in couples’ therapy when he rationalized his behavior about disregarding a written agreement we had both executed, a major boundary violation. I stared in disbelief as I listened to my needs and wants being summarily dismissed in favor of what was comfortable for him. Through the grace of my Higher Power, my ears could now hear what he was saying, not what I wanted his words to mean. Only then did I fully understand that I was not on his radar screen. I knew at that point that he had not yet grasped *his* powerlessness and unmanageable life, nor had I until that moment.

I realized at the deepest level that his addiction *really* wasn’t about me....I didn’t even share the stage. Expecting him to be empathetic to my needs, to demonstrate the compassion and intimacy I craved, and to fulfill my desire for him to show up as the healthy, functional person I had fantasized him to be, was an order too tall to fill. No amount of pleading, arguing, or manipulating can ‘install’ that chip. It is an inside job

and the desire to surrender the disease to our Higher Power and to the process must come from within, not from an external desire to make it so. Only through admitting my powerlessness over the situation have I learned to accept him for who he is, not who I want him to be. In our respective addictions, we were 'perfect' for each other. Through the gift of recovery, our relationship of 20 years has been redefined. We now find ourselves aligned as committed co-parents and caring friends who are simply unable to relate to each other in a healthy way as husband and wife. It is a process, and we are uncertain how that will look, but however it unfolds, we will be fine.

I am grateful for the awareness. Just for today, I will concentrate my energies on doing the next right thing for my children and me, safe in the knowledge that my Higher Power will do for me what I cannot do for myself.

M.C., Houston TX

First Step Story

It took me over seven years after my first twelve-step meeting to finish my COSA First Step. At first, I didn't think the Steps had anything to offer me. My problem, I thought, was that my husband had a problem. I felt I didn't belong and eventually quit attending meetings altogether.

Three years later, still seeking healing, I found a recovery community online. A group of us worked the Steps, independent of any particular fellowship. When Step Twelve's spiritual awakening arrived as promised, I knew it was time to return to meetings. This time I was determined to work the program the "right" way: keep my mind open to God's will, get a sponsor, work the Steps.

My meeting was new and tiny and options for local sponsorship were limited. For nearly a year, I was stuck. I thought working the Steps the "right" way meant both working with a "real" sponsor and working locally. After praying for God's will for me, I realized I hadn't kept that open mind. My will and perfectionism were hindering my Step work. So, I began talking to others in my group and found a cosponsor who is a true blessing in my life.

We meet for Step work once a week. It took over a year to work Step One. During that process, even after many years of working on myself in other ways, I saw patterns I'd never seen before, and got a renewed sense of my own powerlessness and unmanageability. I finally presented my First Step in October.

Step One refers to "we," rather than "I." Seven years ago, I didn't see myself as part of that "we," but through my work on Step One, the help of my cosponsor and the support of my group, I've found acceptance and belonging.

Amy, San Jose CA



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Passcode: 679461

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



Spring Retreat

New Beginnings
COSA Weekend
Retreat

March 18 - 20,
2011
for Men and
Women COSAs

Long Beach,
California

for more
information, please
email Audra:
am022670@gmail.com

First Step Story

When I originally signed up for this speaker slot, I had just begun to work on my First Step and I thought it would be good for me to share with you my process of preparing for it..

But since signing up, I have come to realize that what I really needed to share were the stages I have moved through in the last three years.

I have gone from:

total unawareness of the need for any recovery

to

the desire to work on my First Step in COSA.

Between these stages were many months of pain, admitting and then acceptance.

I can see now each stage happened in the order that it did, in preparation for then next stage.

1. Dramatic disclosure
2. Learning about this thing called recovery
3. Willingness to investigate couple recovery with my partner
4. Accepting powerlessness in my relationship with my partner
5. Accepting powerlessness in my own life
6. Seeing "my part" in the dynamics of our family
7. Seeing my family of origin issues as the birthplace of my relationship issues
8. Seeing my relationship issues as codependent issues
9. Seeing my family of origin as the birthplace of my codependent issues.
10. Accepting I am a codependent and beginning to attend COSA
11. Defining my COSA sobriety
12. Accepting that even though my partner's actions got me into recovery, I belong here and would belong even without my partner.

Every stage was difficult and amazing and worth some kind of a share, but the stage I want to focus on is

11. Defining my COSA sobriety.

The concept of sobriety was very difficult for me, because it was so confusing. When I began working on it, I had just started COSA and was just beginning to see how my co-dependence had affected every part of my life, my relationships, my parenting, and my work.

When I began working on my circles I had no idea of what should go in my inner circle. In other words, I had no idea of what was SOBER OR UN-SOBER behavior. I came up with a list of behaviors that felt like trouble to me.

Inner

1. Going numb, in response to situations
 - No feelings
 - No words
 - No needs

EXAMPLE: Someone speaks harshly to me (or my children), I back away, ignore it, explain it away. Basically I do not acknowledge it for what it is.

EXAMPLE: I cannot ask for help. I cannot explain help I might need if help is offered

- 2. Denying reality that makes me uncomfortable or thinking things are "not fair".
- 3. Losing myself and merging with others.
 - Only having the viewpoint of others
 - People pleasing
 - "walking on egg shells"
 - desperately trying to say what people want me to say so it will deflect their anger
 - dismissing my own intuition as "silly" or not possible to "know"
- 4. Disappearing or desiring to disappear
 - I don't expect people to see me or appreciate me
 - Not trusting of praise
 - Accepting all blame in a problem
 - Assuming everything is my fault
- 5. Out-of-proportion anger or sadness

FOR EXAMPLE: sobbing for two hours over a lost garden tool
- 6. Isolating
 - Avoiding healthy friendships, instead attaching myself to unhealthy friends

=====
The more I have thought about my own sobriety the more these six behaviors seemed a bit redundant.

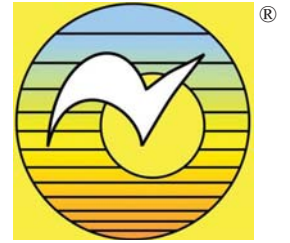
- 1. I deny my own feeling and needs.
- 2. I deny my own reality
- 3. I deny my own viewpoint
- 4. I deny my own intuition
- 5. I deny myself healthy relationships.

In short my un-sober behavior is denial.

Realizing this has helped me understand that all the stages I have gone through are each important, but they are just things I needed to do so I can stop practicing denial.

I am more than the dramatic disclosure story, more than years of isolating, more than couple recovery, more than my parenting, and more than my work. I am someone who has been addicted to denial and in my First Step I need to investigate where that denial came from and how I let it control me.

Judith



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:
866-899-2672

E-mail:
info@cosa-recovery.org



**Came to
believe that
a power
greater than
ourselves
could restore
us to sanity.**



Step Two

“Came”, “Came to”; “Came to **Believe**”. Those three words, the beginning of Step Two, were repeated to me in just this manner, very early in my recovery. It gave me great pause then and still does today. I have since found no better way to describe the process of recovery and particularly the ability to grasp Step Two than this phrasing of these three powerful words.

My “coming” to recovery began in 1989 with the realization that, more and more, what came out of my mouth- anger, bitterness, and rage- were not consistent with my internal beliefs about myself as a person. That internal/external discrepancy was becoming more and more bothersome and destructive in my relationships. I “Came to” some four years later when my husband entered rehab. While attending family week, it became clear that my life and marriage were spinning out of control and that I was losing control.

It would be another eight years before I truly “Came to **Believe**”. In February 2001, I made an agreement with the Higher Power that I would never again underestimate the power of this disease. I determined to work the steps, attend COSA meetings, and do whatever it takes to stay in recovery for a lifetime.

For me, this step also means, that while I may be powerless (Step One) I am not helpless or alone. There is a “power greater than ourselves” that helps us along this spiritual path. I believe that our concept and belief about just what that Higher Power looks like or does is a process as well. My concept of the Higher Power grows and changes daily—that is the beauty of this wonderful program!

Margie S., Richmond IN

Goal 3 Report—COSA Book Development

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. 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**

T R A D I T I O N S

1. Our Common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon COSA unity.

Honoring Tradition One means humbly supporting the program that has given me so much. This tradition has helped me realize how much better it feels to consider the greatest good for the greatest number than to focus on my individual agenda without regard to the cost to or impact on others. It is the difference between coming from a place of trust and love, and coming from a place of fear. Love expands, builds, and nurtures, whereas fear shrivels and tears things down.

For me, putting the unity and welfare of COSA first means being trustworthy, inclusive, and safe. It means not engaging in gossip, judgementalness, or crosstalk. It means being generous with my service while also letting go of my need to feel in control. It means being open minded rather than defensive in group business meetings; I can honor and give voice to my own perspective, and *also* be open to the viewpoints of others and the wisdom of the group.

I want to contribute to the promise of relief and recovery for the next suffering COSA who walks through that meeting door... and that COSA could be any one of us. I can do this by being unifying and positive COSA member, rather than a negative or divisive one. The priceless gift of hope has been given to me when I have needed it. Tradition One reminds me to keep it vibrant and pass it on. Betsy

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

Tradition Two reminds me of the value of humility. Even if I am a natural leader, it is important for the health of the group and the fellowship for me to avoid any urge toward control or prestige. I may have good ideas about how my meeting ought to be run, and I can certainly make suggestions for healthy change, yet I always need to remember that I am not in charge. Each and every COSA member has an equal right to participate in group conscience discussions and decision-making. We are all needed, important, and equal, from the longest-attending long-timer to the brand new newcomer.

I especially like the mention in this tradition of “a loving God”. This puts my mind and heart at ease when group dynamics are shifting or there is tension. As it is in my personal recovery, the same is true for the group: I can keep faith that guidance *will come*...from the loving Source of wisdom.

This Tradition also reminds me that rotation of leadership is healthy and necessary for any group. Even if my meeting’s trusted servants are doing a superb job, no one person is indispensable in any one service position. Change is healthy; rotation of leadership every six months or so guards against any single personality or perspective dominating the group. It opens up opportunities for other COSA members to become involved, and receive all of the gifts that come with being of service. It keeps the meeting fresh, empowered, and vital. Betsy

Step One Questions

- How do I feel about the concept of being powerless?

- Have I admitted powerlessness over sexual addiction and my own co-addiction, or are there areas where I still feel that I have power or control?

- What are some of the ways in which I have tried to exert this power and control?

- Is there a specific incident that has helped me realize my powerlessness?

- What are some of the red flags in my current thinking or behavior that may signal a need to remember and practice Step One?

- Who are some of the people whom I feel safe to acknowledge my powerlessness with?

- Whom do I refer to when I say "We"?

Step Two Questions

- How do I define "insanity" and "sanity"?
- Do I believe it is possible to recover and feel sane?
- What would help me be restored to sanity?
- What are the forms of a "power greater than myself" in my life right now?
- Do I have resistance to "coming to believe"?
- What are some current indicators that I am willing?
- Can I identify some evidence of a Higher Power working in the lives of other recovering COSA's?
- Do I feel that I too can have this in my life? If not, why not?
- Can I equate this Step with "coming to believe that I will have help in healing from unmanageability" I uncovered in Step One?
- How does it feel to know I'll have this help?