

Volume 6, Issue 6

Spring Issue

Mar/Apr2011

Listening for Similarities

On the surface, listening seems like a passive process that doesn't require much thought. We do it automatically. However, some years ago, I fielded a call from a COSA first-timer who taught me a valuable lesson about myself and new ways of listening that deepened my recovery.

Like many new members, the caller was focused on the addict and had a strong urge to take action. I told her I understood her perspective because when my father disclosed that he was a sex addict and a closeted gay man, I really wanted to *DO* something – although I had no clue what. I told her that by continuing to come to meetings I learned from others in COSA how to pause and reflect before taking action. Her response was, "Well, maybe that's fine when the sex addict is your father – but this is my *husband!*" Rather than being taken aback, I smiled because I realized I probably thought the exact reverse once upon a time: "Recovery might be fine when the sex addict is your husband – but this is my *father!*"

The obstacle in my conversation with the newcomer was not that one of us was "right" and the other was "wrong," but that the nature of co-addiction probably lends itself to listening for differences. In this case, the newcomer was essentially saying, "The insight you are offering doesn't apply to me because you are an adult child and I am a spouse." But valuable spiritual lessons can also be dismissed on the basis of many other differences. You are male; I am female. You are married; I am single. You are straight; I am gay. You are an adult; I am a teenager. Early on, these kinds of differences seem vital and real, but as many of us make spiritual progress in COSA, we gradually see that they lose their relevance over time. Further, if we continue to focus on differences, we contribute to our own sense of isolation and terminal uniqueness. As a result, when we disqualify or dismiss the insights of others who seem different on the surface, we prolong our own suffering. This is precisely why Tradition Three calls us time and again to remember that there is only one thing that matters in COSA – that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. When I make a choice to attune myself to that one unifying commonality, I am often surprised at the volume and clarity of recovery I hear.

As COSA becomes more diverse, it seems that listening for similarities may not be a lesson for newcomers alone. Throughout the fellowship, there are more and more new members taking their rightful place in our circles, bringing with them a wider range of experiences of COSA recovery. It is possible for COSA brothers to heal and nurture as surely as any COSA sister; and, at times, COSA

In This Issue

Listening for Similarities
By Carol Ann R. 1, 3

Step Three Share
By Sarah S. 4, 5

Step Four Share
By Gail 5

90 Day Literature
Review 7

New Literature 7

Traditions 3 & 4
By Betsy H. 12, 13

In Every Issue

By the Fellowship 2

Seventh Tradition 2

New Meetings 3

Sober & Sustainable
Teleconference 6

Step Questions 6

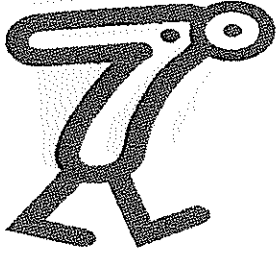
Goal Committees
Reports 7, 13

Retreats 8

2011 Convention
(includes Registration
Form) 9-11

COSA Telemeetings 13

Literature Order Form 14, 15



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

Balance, the newsletter
of the International Ser-
vice Organization of
COSA is published six
times a year. The ISO
holds the copyright to
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Editing, Design, Produc-
tion & Layout by—COSA
Literature Committee

Distribution by—

ISO Office Manager

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

RECURRING

Dec. 1st thru Jan. 31st 2010 \$ 825.41

7TH TRADITION— Dec. 1—Jan. 31

\$1,500	CA-09	
\$80.00	TX-13	
\$31.00	MN-01	
\$40.00	CA-27	
\$14.00	TX-04	
\$18.71	TX-25	
\$62.20	CA-19	
\$30.00	NJ-01	
\$50.00	CT-02	\$ 1,825.91

GRAND TOTAL \$ 2,651.32

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

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

Phone: 866-899-2672

E-mail: info@cosa-recovery.org

Listening for Similarities—cont'd. from page 1

teens can provide lessons to adults in COSA that demonstrate startling maturity. If we start with the belief that every COSA's experience of recovery is valid and valuable to us, then we all stand to gain from a greater array of unique insights and perspectives. Once our circles might have looked somewhat homogeneous, and the disease may have encouraged us to close our ranks to unusual looking members. However, as our fellowship has grown and our circles have widened, so too has the wealth of our fellowship's spiritual gifts. To me, the ability to listen for similarities might precede even the message of the Steps. Without it, such fundamental concepts of powerlessness and unmanageability may be lost in the static of perceived separation.

So the basic question seems to be "How can we encourage the practice of listening for similarities when the disease of co-addiction itself encourages the perception of great distance and lack of understanding?" Once again, I think the answer is to start with myself. Some of the following ideas have helped me adjust my hearing. I encourage myself to:

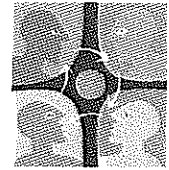
1. Become aware of subtle clues to my willingness to listen today. The word "not" can be a warning to me about my focus. If I hear myself think or (worse) say things like "Thank goodness I am not like So-and-So," I may need to admit that I am resistant to gifts they have for me.
2. Assume that each COSA brother and sister is carrying a spiritual gift for me, and listen for it.
3. Pay particular attention to those who challenge my sense of serenity. Often, that is where the real gold can be found.
4. Ask my Higher Power for help if I am tempted to believe no common ground exists with someone else – and brace myself for the outcome. Not all similarities are warm and fuzzy.
5. Genuinely consider all feedback – solicited and unsolicited, verbal and non-verbal. I don't have to own all of it, but rejecting it without consideration often means something significant.
6. Share as though others are also attuned to similarities with me, and resist the projection that others are judging, criticizing or finding fault. Instead, I can speak as though my words are valuable to others somehow, even if I don't know how. Others cannot reflect the similarities they see back to me if I am unwilling to show them who I really am.

Validate others in the circle for their gifts with genuine sincerity.

While not exhaustive, these practices have generally allowed me to gain more from the sharing and examples of others. The only things I lost as a result were some budding resentments, a little false pride and the sense that I am terribly, terribly special.

The newcomer I spoke to on the phone who prompted this aspect of my recovery did not come to our meeting (to my knowledge). So I have no idea if I helped her at all. I do know, however, that she helped me. Listening for similarities has allowed me to take up my rightful spot in the thickest part of the bell curve. Ultimately, it has gradually become confirmation that I am fully in the flow of life; that I belong. I am grateful for the "difference" that pointed to a truer, deeper similarity between the two of us.

Carol Ann R., Houston, TX



NEW MEETINGS

CANADA

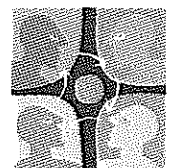
- **Manitoba,**
Winnipeg

US

- **Alabama,**
Birmingham
- **Maryland,**
Bowie
- **North Dakota**
Fargo/Moorehead
- **Texas**
Dallas—5
meetings
- **Utah**
Provo
- **Washington**
Bellingham

www.cosa-recovery.org

**website for meet-
ings in your area**





**“Made a
decision
to turn our
will and
our lives
over to the
care of God
as we un-
derstood
God.”**

Step Three Share

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

I really love Step Three. Step Three gives me the option to turn over my will and my life to the God of my understanding.

When I came to COSA, I considered myself an atheist, so both Steps Two and Three seemed really strange to me. I had a lot of anger at organized religion, especially at the religion I was raised in. I associated it with sexual abuse, oppression, and rules.

I like the Steps, because they are simply suggestions. That’s all. My way wasn’t working very well for me. And because everyone else in my home group looked happy, while I was quite miserable, I decided to give the suggestions a try.

I like that in COSA we can choose our own Higher Power. I don’t have to have the same Higher Power as anyone else in COSA, nor do they have to have mine. And yet, my Higher Power (whom I choose to call God) and the Higher Power I hear others talking about share many traits in common. The God of my understanding is loving, kind, caring, open, accepting of my imperfections, guiding, has my back and my best interests in mind, and wants me to learn and grow. And, really important for me, the Higher Power I choose to believe in today has a direction for me and gives me free will to meet that direction.

When I align this free will with my Higher Power’s will for me, amazing things can happen! I love paying attention to the synchronicities and the beautiful, amazing coincidences God can bring: A program call from a COSA friend just as I was thinking of that friend, running into a fellow COSA during the middle of my workday in downtown San Francisco, or the words of a stranger. I find God often shows up for me in other people – which is a beautiful healing path for me since I came to COSA in part because of the grief and pain I was feeling in the negative relationships I was experiencing with other people.

As part of my daily Step Three practice, I say the Third Step Prayer every morning. Some mornings it is easy, and other mornings it is harder. Sometimes I am quite willing to surrender to God’s will and other mornings it is difficult for me. I often want things to be Sarah’s way, instead of God’s way. Fortunately, my Step One work reminds me of what happens when I follow Sarah’s will instead of God’s will – things don’t work out so great.

I also use my God box for many things I just don’t know what to do with. I have a Nine x Eleven x Four box that I have put hundreds of folded up letters in--long letters to God, fear lists, amends my sponsor and I agreed it was not yet the right time to make, wishes, wants, dreams, desperate prayers and requests for help--you name it.

When I remember I am turning it over to God as I understand God, and not to the angry, abusive God of my childhood, it is much easier. When I remember that I am a precious child of God, and I am turning my will and my live over to the CARE of

God, it is also much easier – because this Step implies I am under God’s care. It also implies that because we turn over “our lives” and “our will,” we are all under God’s care. This lets me off the hook from not only being my own Higher Power, but also from being anyone else’s rescuer or Higher Power. What a relief! I am not abandoned, alone and out on my own, nor is anyone else I love and care about.

Others in COSA, other twelve step fellowships, and others in relationship with a Higher Power also turn over their will and their lives each day. Even though it may seem as though I am doing it alone, it is a spiritual practice we do each day together.

Sarah S.
San Francisco, CA

Step Four Share

As I prepared to work Step Four, I heard some old-timers say how rough that Step was. But I knew that the harder a step was, the more recovery I’d gain from completing it. I was looking forward to the “reward” but not the “work.”

The first roadblock I came across was the twelve-step book I was using just didn’t seem to work for me. I started searching the internet for other twelve-step books commonly used by the members of the COSA fellowship and even those used in other twelve-step fellowships. By accumulating these different methods, I could approach Step Four using a variety of tools. I wanted to work this step to the fullest because I felt it was one of the most important of the Twelve Steps. By accumulating these different methods, I could approach Step Four using a variety of tools. I wanted to work this step to the fullest because I felt it was one of the most important of the 12 steps.

I didn’t rush Step Four; it took several months. One of the biggest breakthroughs for me while working this Step was that I found that my strengths and weaknesses in relationships in general added up to the “perfect storm” to attract a sex-addict partner. Step Four forced me to re-visit the family-of-origin issues I had already addressed in some workshops, and it helped me to solidify my previous conclusions about those issues.

Finally, it helped me to go back over my writings like an editor--with a red pen. As I read through it, I circled common threads and key themes, jotting short comments accentuated by several exclamation points. At the end, I had discovered very important self-realizations. These key pieces of self-discovery didn’t leave me torn down—conversely, they encouraged me. My red-inked roadmap clearly showed me how I came to be where I am. I was not only OK with that, but satisfied that I now could move on to the next step. After completing Step Four, I felt educated and hopeful.

Gail



**“Made a
Searching
and
fearless
moral
inventory
of
ourselves.”**

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, 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.

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 Higher Power rather than relying on self-will, 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 about taking the Third Step?
7. Can I recall a time when although I was filled with fear and anxiety, 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?
 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 anger I continue to revisit over and over again).
7. List all the reasons why I resent each one of these people or things. Now, list each and every reason 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?

Goal Three Committee Report: COSA Book Development

Hello Fellow COSAs!

We are 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

90 Day Review Announcement

We welcome your input!

COSA Literature in Development for 2010 - 2011

Each year, prior to the convention, proposed literature is made available to everyone in the fellowship for a 90-day review period. We invite members to give us input during this time, in an effort to make our literature as clear and useful as possible, and to ensure that it reflects and serves everyone in our diverse COSA fellowship.

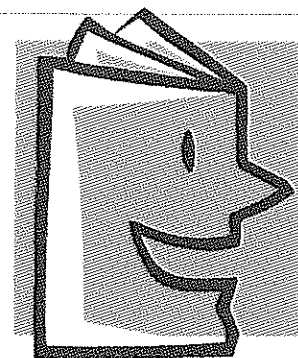
We encourage you to read through the proposed literature carefully and give us your feedback. You will find the *Literature in Development* document in the Delegate section of the Convention website, or you can request it via email from cosa-copy@yahoo.com.

Deadline: Please email comments to cosacopy@yahoo.com by May 20 at the latest. Early feedback is appreciated because it helps the Literature Committee with compiling.

The *Literature in Development* for this year will be voted on at the Annual Meeting Friday, May 27, 2011 in Houston, TX preceding our Annual Convention.

We thank you in advance for your help!

Betsy H. for the Literature Committee ISO of COSA Board



New Literature

The Literature Committee of COSA is proud to announce that two new booklets have been completed.

- *Step Five*
- *Using the Twelve Steps to Work through any Conflict*

These will soon be available for purchase online and also at the 2011 COSA Convention in Houston, Texas.

Step Five continues our Step series, and *Using the Twelve Steps to Work through any Conflict* was developed from a workshop presented at the 2009 COSA Convention in Oakland, California.

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3. The only requirement for COSA membership is that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. The members may call themselves a COSA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

When I entered recovery I became aware of how much I craved acceptance and understanding. I was afraid of being rejected. I struggled with shame and I worried a lot about "doing things the right way." I tried repeatedly to earn people's affection. Tradition Three reassures me; all I have to do to be member of COSA is to be who I am, just as I am. If my life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, then I belong. It helps to have an open heart, an open mind, and willingness to work the program, but even these are not requirements.

I am embarrassed to admit that once I had been in COSA for a while, I became frustrated by some of the other COSAs. I didn't think they were working their programs "the right way," the way I thought they should. I got stuck in controlling thoughts and behaviors. I had forgotten how important it was for me to feel accepted. Tradition Three provided relief; it reminded me that if COSA accepts me as I am, then it's important for me to offer the same to others. I can remember that everything is unfolding in Higher Power's time, exactly as it should. As I grow every day in my acceptance of others, I am also more accepting of myself. Harmony within the group encourages recovery for everyone. This is the grace of the program.

I am also thankful that Tradition Three keeps the focus of our groups clean and clear. Our meetings concentrate on COSA recovery only; we don't affiliate with any religious or political ideology, local charity or personal business venture--no matter how worthy. This way we can be as inclusive as possible and avoid any confusion about motives. The fellowship is here for all who identify as COSAs regardless of our differences in other areas of our lives. By honoring Tradition Three, we can offer the precious gifts of recovery to the greatest number of people.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or COSA as a whole.

Tradition Four encourages a balance of freedom and accountability, something that I have been working toward in my individual recovery. For me, attaining a healthy, right-sized sense of self involves being free and self-actualized, while also being considerate of others to the best of my ability. In my understanding of sobriety, the two are equally important and strengthen one another.

Each group may have distinctive needs, based upon its members, region, or specific circumstances. Tradition Four encourages groups to be responsive and meet these needs quickly and directly. For example, a group may wish to change from an open-sharing format to a steps and traditions focus. It may change from an hour-long meeting to an hour and a half, or it may meet early on the third week of the month. The meeting I attend changed from a women-only group to being open to both men and women COSAs. We accomplished this through discussion and

a group conscience vote, guided by our Higher Power. Groups are free to exercise any of these options – and many others – in order to help their members grow and to effectively carry the message of recovery.

This freedom comes with responsibility. Since the conduct of any COSA group may reflect upon the COSA fellowship as a whole, we want to represent COSA in a healthy and favorable way to those seeking recovery and to our local community. For example, my group aims to be welcoming, supportive and safe for its members. In our interactions with the church we rent a room from, we pay our rent on time, we are courteous and tidy, consistent and cooperative. All of these seemingly small actions contribute to our shared well-being. We can recover and help others recover most effectively when our groups are guided by the good, orderly direction of the Twelve Traditions.

Matters that may affect other COSA groups or the whole fellowship need careful attention and thoughtful discussion before any action is taken. The vitality of the fellowship and its ability to serve depend upon it. Some matters are best resolved at our annual Delegate meeting and with the guidance of the trusted servants of the ISO of COSA. While consulting the entire fellowship is less immediate than making a quick decision at our local group, I have faith in this process. I want the help of COSA to be there for the next person who needs it. The balance of autonomy and responsibility ensure that it will be.

Betsy

Goal One Committee Report: Increase Service Volunteers

January 23, 2011

1. The Committee will prepare a proposal to publish the Sponsorship Booklet online.
2. The Committee will send information on Intergroups to Lit Com, review the proposed Lit Com materials on Intergroup, and invite a Lit Com member to the next Goal 1 meeting for further discussion.
3. The Committee will review the proposed Lit Com document on meeting formats, and after comparing it to the Goal One document, will discuss further action with Lit Com.

Respectfully Submitted, Mila

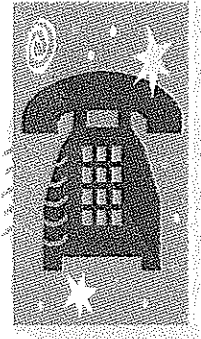
Goal Two Committee Report: Fiscal Responsibility

January 2011

The Goal Two Committee met and created a draft for a pamphlet on the Seventh Tradition. This pamphlet went to the Board for approval, and will now go in to the Literature in Development for 90-day review.

It will be voted on at the Houston Convention Annual Meeting by the Delegates.

Submitted by Lindy T. Goal Two Committee member



COSA Telemeetings

www.cosacall.com

Phone Number:
1-218-862-6420

Passcode: 679461

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

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