



Volume 8, Issue 3 Winter Issue November/December 2011

Favorite Recovery Tools

Our COSA Monday night meeting is a source of great warmth, courage, and support. One of the things we talk about a lot is using the tools of recovery. It's empowering when we start to realize that we have a lot more choices than we thought we did. Tools help us find inner peace and inner strength. They keep us away from old ways of thinking and reacting, and keep us moving toward solutions and healthy living. Here are a few words from some of our members about the recovery tools they like to use. What do you have in your COSA tool kit?

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One of my most valuable tools is my phone list. This allows me to check in with my support team whether I am doing well and celebrating the joy of recovery, or needing some encouragement in the dark times. When I use this tool liberally I find comfort from the connection with others who walk this path ahead and beside me. In my dark times, I call until I reach someone. Those I don't reach, I leave a message with the general idea that I am hurting and reaching out, and would like a call when they are able. This works so great because my incredible support comes through over the next few days and I benefit from each conversation. So sometimes I get calls back a few days after my event and it allows me to discuss what I've learned from the pain and how I have gained in the process. So by reaching out in my pain I benefit from my support group for days! It is so encouraging over the next few days to get the return calls that build my recovery. It also helps me to not stop after making one or two calls and retreat to my pity pot. When I act this way I do not have the support I need.

Robin, Long Beach, CA

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The phone list... I'm scared of it. I don't know why, because when I use it, I love it...
Texting... I find this easier than phoning and I can save the texts and read them again and again.

Literature... Knowledge and education help me so much to not feel alone in the dark.
Slogans... These are short, quick ways for me to stay on track.

Breathe... It seems logical, but sometimes I forget to do it.

Meetings... These are safe places for me.

Outer-circle activities... All I can say is, I don't give them up for others: they are a stress

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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

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Committee

Distribution by—

I SO Office Manager

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report/Aug. & Sept. 2011

Group	
OH-06	60.00
TX-20	169.00
CA-23	100.00
CA-08	120.00
	449.00
Recurring	
	975.42
Total	1,424.42

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



The COSA Literature Committee is responsible for producing booklets, pamphlets, and other literature for the fellowship, as well as publishing the *Balance*. Also, LitCom would like to develop an editing team and a layout and design team to work with the COSA Book Task Force toward completion of Goal 3: COSA Book Development. We have an ambitious plan for this year's literature and we need your help!

Would you be interested in serving the fellowship through involvement with LitCom? Some of our current projects include booklets on Steps Seven, Eight, and Nine, a booklet about Triggers, and a piece on Attraction Not Promotion. If you would like to write, edit or do layout and design with us, please email COSAcopy@yahoo.com for more information.

Thanks!
Claudia M
Literature Committee
Chair

Goal Three Committee Report: COSA Book Development

The Goal 3 committee is working hard on finalizing a draft for our COSA book's table of contents. We have reviewed the texts from nine other fellowships for inspiration. Six of our members recently completed a "basic recovery workshop" designed to help them work the Twelve Steps. They are now better equipped for their Goal 3 committee work.

If you are interested in working on the COSA book contact jadntacoma@aol.com

JoAn D.
Chair, Goal 3 Committee



**Sought
through prayer
and meditation
to improve our
conscious con-
tact with God
as we under-
stood God,
praying only
for knowledge
of God's will
for us and the
power to carry
that out.**

Step Eleven

For me, this step is the ultimate surrender: the way by which God restores me to sanity from my disease of codependency. It is about letting go of all control and trusting a God of my understanding to take care of me.

The key to this step, for me, was learning discernment. When I began to meditate, I could barely sit for 5 minutes without getting frustrated by all the thoughts whizzing through my head. My teacher simply reminded me to detach from the thoughts and just watch, witness them. As I did this, the period of time I could sit became longer and the silent time between the thoughts became longer. On some days, there was more silence and connection to God than mind chatter! It was in these moments of focused silence that I learned to “hear” the God of my understanding.

I believe we all “hear” God in our own, unique ways. I hear God as a voice – steady and welling up from a deep place inside me. I also hear God in my body – a knot in my stomach when I am in fear – an inexplicable urge to talk to someone – a desire to take a different way to work than I usually do. The quieter my mind, the more clearly I can hear God’s will for me in my daily life.

The longer I witnessed the thoughts in my mind, the more I began to notice how many people were in there talking...Mom, Dad, my inner addict, my inner co-dependent, friends, etc.

Through therapy, working the steps with my sponsor, and talking about this with people in the program, I began to discern the difference between each of those voices and God’s voice. I discovered that all those other voices have an urgency and intensity that is not true of the God of my understanding. By listening in the quiet, I began to discern the difference between each of these voices and the God of my understanding. Each voice has character defects that express when I act on what I hear, whereas when I act on the guidance of a God of my understanding, all falls into place with ease, grace, joy and abundance. The bigger question is “Am I willing to truly accept that my life can be full of ease, grace, joy, and abundance?”

What I notice today is that I can follow that steady, deep voice of God AND all those other voices can be protesting loudly because I know who they are and why they are talking. For example, this morning I was catching a flight to Chicago to represent COSA at a convention dedicated to healthy sexuality. I was late for the airport and was praying fervently “I am present and surrendered allowing my life to unfold with ease, grace, joy, and abundance.” I was hearing God’s voice saying the timing was just perfect and remained anxious none-the-less. There were long lines at the security check-point and my flight was leaving in 30 minutes.

I became very agitated – while praying at the same time, mind you! When I got through the security checkpoint, I was delayed because I didn’t have all my liquids in a quart sized bag. I had to go back to the beginning, find a baggie and go through the checkpoint again. By the time I got to the checkpoint the second time, I was in tears – my flight was posted as an on-time departure and it was past time! How could missing this plane be God’s will? I kept moving forward in the line, one step at a time, expressing my discomfort and anxiety without blaming and shaming the security people or the others in line – praying all the way and still hearing “all is well.” When I finally passed the checkpoint and

Continued on page 5

Step Eleven—cont'd.

rounded the corner for my gate, all the seats were full...the plane had been delayed and they had not even begun boarding!

Throughout the experience, I could discern God's voice saying "all is well, keep going through the steps" and another voice saying "This is horrible! I've missed my flight! I'm scared. I'm not being cared for – see there's no God! When will I get to Chicago? This isn't fair! Everyone out of my way! Move faster! What's so wrong with carrying on liquid anyway? UGH!!!!" It was VERY challenging to keep trusting and following that still, deep voice AND acknowledging and expressing the fear – but I did, and here I am, typing this article on the flight to Chicago. I never was in control – God was – and God's timing and process was just perfect.

~ *Emilah D., Albuquerque, NM*

ISO of COSA Diversity Statement

- COSA Diversity is consistent with the Third Tradition of COSA, which states that the only requirement for COSA membership is that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.
- The COSA Fellowship welcomes all genders, all varieties of relationship to the addict, all religious and spiritual preferences, all employment statuses, all marital statuses, all ethnicities, cultures, and languages. COSA does not discriminate on the basis of class, sexual orientation or gender identification, physical or mental challenges, race, financial status, or national origins.
- In COSA, we find hope whether or not there is a sexually addicted person currently in our lives.
- COSA Diversity is consistent with the First Tradition of COSA, which states that our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on COSA unity.





Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

Step Twelve

When I started working the Steps I wanted and hoped for a reward at the end of my journey. I wanted life to turn out the way I wanted it to, as a result of working so hard at these steps. I hadn't gotten to Step Twelve at that point yet to know what I would get in return for working the Steps was a spiritual awakening. I didn't even know that is what I needed most in my life. I struggled through the first few steps, and wanted to give up. I kept on going and finally had taken myself, with the help of my Higher Power, to the Twelfth Step. Finally I could see that yes, I did have a spiritual awakening. My life had changed in many ways that I would have never been able to plan for, or do on my own. The promises of the Steps came and I was a changed woman.

However this step had a second part to it. 'Carried this message to others, and practice these principles in all areas of our lives.' I could understand the last part. I knew now the Steps worked in my life, and I knew if I stopped working them, I would become crazy again. My life would become unmanageable. I was not overwhelmed with the idea of working the Twelve Steps in all areas of my life, because I saw what changes could occur when I worked them. However, I was confused about carrying the message to others. My whole life I had been trying to change other people. Wasn't trying to get them to come to Twelve Step recovery trying to control or change another person? I talked to my Sponsor about this Step before I started to read or work on it, and she explained to me that carrying the message can mean simple things, like living a life of recovery and that could be carrying a message to another person who is struggling. If they saw what I came from, and how the Steps had transformed me, then maybe that message would help them want to get what I had.

Another part of carrying the message meant service work. COSA had given me so much. It transformed me. It gave me a life. Hosting a meeting, writing for COSA, and working on the Literature committee helped spread the message of COSA to others, and I was also allowing them to be who they were. I was just sharing my Experience, Strength and Hope. I was helping get others messages of experience, strength and hope reach people still suffering from this disease.

For a long time I had been ashamed of my recovery, afraid to share it, and not knowing who was safe to let in. Now I know that sharing this with safe people helps me and may help them. Sharing my Experience, Strength, and Hope, rather than giving advice is what carrying the message to others means today. Giving others the room to decide for themselves and living the best life I can for myself, through the Twelve Steps is a healthier option than telling them what to do, and getting frustrated when their path is different than mine.

I no longer hide that Twelve Step recovery is what saved my life and changed me. This is part of carrying the message to others.

Carolee D, Ontario, Canada

2011 Board Retreat

Ten members of your Board of Trustees met in Indiana from August 11th through the 14th to get to know each other better and to plan our work for the coming year. One of the most important achievements was Strategic Goals and time lines for each Board Committee.

We shared with each other our goals for the year and the milestones we needed to make those goals happen. We have some exciting plans to move forward on Goals 1, 2, and 3, which we received from the Delegates at the Annual Delegate Meeting:

2011-2012 Delegate Goals:

1. Increase Communication between ISO, Registered Meetings, and Individuals
2. Increase Financial Revenue and Responsibility
3. COSA Book Task Force



Our Central Office Task Force, begun in response to Goal 1, is working to make better use of our resources to respond to the fellowship in a timely, efficient way. For Goal 2 we are working on fundraisers in order to more thoroughly spread the message of COSA. These are a few of the stepping stones toward achieving the goals you, through your delegates, set for the fellowship. The Central Office Task Force is focused on identifying and correcting some of the challenges we have in serving the fellowship, filling literature orders in a timely manner, and calling up on the resources of the Houston area to provide assistance.

The Board is also considering a blog online and a *"Balance"* magazine article to better communicate with our registered meetings as well as individuals.

Those Board members who are working Goal 2 have several exciting plans to raise funds while having fun. Keep an eye on your email for the details on *"Living Out Loud"* this October.

Goal 3's Chair was unable to attend the face-to face meeting.

As a result of your Delegates' vote, incoming Board members are required to have completed all Twelve Steps in order to join the Board. At the 2011 Board retreat, we voted to raise the requirements for all international service candidates as follows:

1. Strong commitment to their personal recovery.
2. Familiarity with COSA's Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts.
3. Sign-off from sponsor as required by Committee Chair.
4. Have done service work at the local meeting level.

We feel that these suggestions may increase the level of recovery of our trusted servants, and perhaps increase service at the group level.

Each Board committee had the opportunity to report on their work, and receive feedback and suggestions from the Board as a whole. This time together strengthened our relationships and our determination to serve you in the best way possible.

In Service, The ISO of COSA Board

Board Check In

Recovery Tools

Favorite Tools—cont'd.

reliever and a coping mechanism!

Convention... This was a great way for me to see the bigger picture and meet other COSAs with other perspectives.

Sponsor... She is an angel.

Journaling... When I journal I can let things flow. This process documents the facts of what I experience so I can re-read them and know I am not crazy. I can also tear up the pages afterward, if I feel like it.

Higher Power... I don't have to bear the burden alone. Even if my conception of a Higher Power is a feeling, or an energy, or nature, I can turn my concern over to it when I need to.

Support... For me, false pride = panic attacks; sharing = strength.

Circles... These provide a foundation from which to view myself in an honest way.

The Promises... The Promises are there, if I let them be.

Jess E, Long Beach, CA

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I have always had a relationship with God but recovery has opened my eyes to so much more than I had before. My prior experience with God existed when I was hurt or in pain. I only relied on Him in those dark times. I realize now that a true relationship with my Higher Power consists of sharing just like I do with my tangible friends: the good, the bad and the ugly! I need to cultivate and grow that relationship just like all other relationships. This only occurs through regular communication and the sharing of all my experiences: the hurts, the pain, and the darkest of times; as well as the happiness and joy I have. I am learning about unconditional love, trust, and honesty through this new intimate relationship. Recovery is amazingly wonderful and I am eternally grateful.

Robin, Long Beach, CA

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After months (and years, really) of suffering, I have found hope in COSA. As a newcomer, I can say the tool that brings me a good, quick dose of sanity and freedom from the obsession of co-dependency is to focus on myself. It is almost like magic! When I think about my husband, I start feeling crazy. When I focus on myself and my own feelings, sanity returns. This is a simple tool, and the most rudimentary form of working the First Step. Focusing on me brings some semblance of manageability. I can deal with myself, and find solutions for myself. Perspective magically appears.

Once I have the focus on myself and my feelings, the next important tool I use is staying in the moment. Even when I focus on myself, I have learned that when I focus on the past, especially my husband's past behavior, I am stuck in a whirlwind of anger, pain, resentment, and bitterness. When I dwell on the future, I am stuck in fear, uncertainty, and self-doubt. I get relief from being stuck in those negative cycles by taking a deep breath, and just focusing on the here and now. Now, I am in

Continued on page 9

Favorite Tools—cont'd.

recovery. Now, I am learning a better way to live my life. Here I find peace. Here I find relief. (Of course, this is completely dependent upon my remembering to focus on myself, because focusing on what other people are doing “in this moment” brings back the feeling crazy!)

Staying in the moment has become an exercise that has brought very profound gifts into my life. It puts me in a position to identify and feel my feelings. I then have an opportunity to let them go. When practicing meditation, focusing solely on being in the moment, and clearing my mind of all thoughts, I find I am left with profound feelings of peace and love. This is when I feel directly connected to my Higher Power, and this contact has transformed my life.

Kristen B.

.....

Having fun: this is one of my newest COSA tools.

I use lots of recovery tools daily. They’ve become part of my routine and something I enjoy tools like reading daily meditations, journaling, praying, meditating, sharing with and listening to other COSAs, and being of service. In a recent meeting I heard one of our members share about the importance of taking it easy and having fun. “Yes,” I thought to myself, “this is important for me, too!”

I’ve been quite a perfectionist in my life. I pushed myself very hard, and punished myself severely when I fell short of my aim. So this tool of being playful and having fun really, really helps. With this tool I’m lightening up and enjoying the simple pleasures of life. It may be just a walk out in a beautiful, natural place, or watching a silly movie, eating strawberries while sitting on the grass in the front yard with friends, buying lime Popsicles, sharing a bunch of brightly colored flowers with my co-workers, or joking with a clerk at the market. These little acts bring a smile to my face and a happiness that can be infectious.

This “having fun” tool helps me, too, when I’m having a particularly challenging time. It helps me remember that even if something significant in my life is *not* working out the way I want it to, I can still find ways to bring joy to my day. This doesn’t mean I force myself to feel better or deny my feelings, but I can recognize that all is definitely not lost. It has taken practice for me to open myself up to the positive when I’m in a sad or frightened place, but I can do it. My recovery has been about cleaning up my past and learning how to live in a healthier way. It is also about learning how to truly enjoy living. I’m so grateful for all that I have learned so far.

Betsy H.

Recovery Tools

Tradition Eleven

Tradition Eleven: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all Program members

One of the greatest challenges I have faced in working the Traditions is balancing Tradition Eleven's "attraction rather than promotion" with Tradition Five's "primary purpose". Tradition Five tells us that the primary purpose of our entire program is to carry the message of COSA recovery to those who still suffer. In our attempts to avoid "promotion" and protect anonymity at all costs, we often over-correct and hide from the suffering COSA entirely.

Promotion, in our modern world, often refers to flyers and advertising. When I first started out in Twelve Step programs, I assumed that this was what we were referring to here: that, in order to protect our anonymity, we must not advertise the presence of our meetings! I thought, as many people did, that it might invite all sorts of trouble to put up flyers, list our meeting or our intergroup in the classifieds, or send out information to professionals who might have clients affected by compulsive sexual behavior. What if somebody came who wasn't really a member? What if somebody came who knew one of us and we "got in trouble"? What if somebody came who just wanted to exploit us? No, no, no, we couldn't possibly think of it.

And the fear we felt grew even further. It whispered into our ears that we had to be as anonymous as possible, so that we could protect every possible bit of our lives. We avoided sharing our last names or our professions with each other. I wouldn't even answer questions like, "Oh, did you see so-and-so at the meeting last week?" I know I wasn't the only one. "I can't tell you that! Anonymity!" Sometimes I would accidentally find out that another member worked in the same field I did, or worked at the same place I once had. It was always wonderful to learn these interesting things about each other. It brought us closer together, but I avoided these topics like the plague!

As I grew and saw what worked for the various meetings and fellowships that I was a part of, I learned that this wasn't what was meant by "anonymity" or "promotion" at all. We are allowed to share our full names and our full lives with one another. I have even heard it said that we can violate Tradition Eleven by being too "anonymous", by making it too hard for other members to find us. If a newcomer who particularly wants to share with one of us can't track down our phone number, for example, it can be very harmful to them. Having a printed phone list for the meeting can help; so can sharing our full names with them, and letting them know us well enough to find us in the outside world.

On an individual level, the Eleventh Tradition urges us to attract people to COSA by being the best versions of ourselves we can be, through working the Twelve Steps, and sharing with them about how our program has changed our lives, when they are ready to hear it.

It urges us not to "promote" COSA by instead telling people that they need it. Trying to force people to accept the idea that they have been harmed by compulsive sexual behav-

Tradition Eleven—cont'd.

ior, when they are not ready to face that, can harm them more. And even worse, it can sour them to COSA so that they do not consider it when they do think they need help. "COSA? Oh, I knew someone from COSA once. Boy, those people are pushy. I don't think I want what they have, thank you very much." This is just the opposite of "attraction," and is just the kind of thing we want to avoid in our own lives. This is harmful "promotion." It's codependent, manipulative "fixing."

But, we might ask, wouldn't it help people identify with the program if they could see what happy recovered COSAs look like? Why not publicly "come out of the COSA closet"? Sure, our friends, family, and co-workers can know about our personal program of recovery. This is a big part of how we carry the message. But when we share with the media, we turn the program upside-down. Suddenly, we are not anonymous, though everybody else is, in the faceless crowd of people who are watching us on TV or reading about us in the newspaper. There are two main reasons that we don't share our full names with the media if we are speaking as COSA members. First, we're a fellowship of equals, and that's pretty rare. It's hard for outsiders to understand the idea that there is no spokesperson for COSA. They naturally assume that anybody who speaks about an organization is speaking on its behalf. Keeping our names anonymous so that they see something surprising like "Ross F." instead of the "Rosstopher F. Schmidelwagon, Vice-President of COSA" which they expect is one of the best and clearest ways to show that we are not speaking on COSA's behalf.

Second, this kind of publicity presents a danger to our own recovery. Before Twelve Step fellowships had the Twelve Traditions, it was common for celebrities in recovery to end up speaking a lot on their program, and for many regular people who were speaking about their amazing recovery to become celebrities. It was invariably bad for their emotional sobriety. There is a lot of pressure involved in having the public eye on you. It means that every aspect of your life is subject to being publicized, and judged as a good or bad example of what the COSA program does. It puts the burden of carrying the COSA message entirely on you, instead of evenly across the shoulders of everyone in the fellowship. It makes it very easy if the public saw a COSA speaking somewhere under their own name and profession, for them to associate that profession with COSA: "Oh, I saw that COSA therapist on TV the other day." They begin to get a very warped one-person view of what our miraculous program of recovery looks like. Because as strangers to the program, they have no way of knowing what part of our lives has been touched by COSA and what parts are irrelevant.

The Eleventh Tradition instead guides us toward healthy sharing: respecting our own boundaries and the boundaries of others, and carrying the message to others that working the Twelve Steps in COSA relieves us of the negative effects of compulsive sexual behavior and transforms our lives.

Dani S.



**WELCOME
NEW
MEETING:
in
HAWAII
HI-01**



Tradition Twelve

Tradition Twelve: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

I used to “disappear” in plain sight; I didn’t realize I was doing this. I kept my thoughts and feelings tightly packed deep down inside of me, in a place that was almost inaccessible, even to me. I kept a lot of secrets. I wanted to connect with people, but I was afraid to show who I really was. This made it nearly impossible for me to get close to anyone, even myself. When I got involved with a sex addict, my fear and shame pushed me even deeper into this shivering, far-away place.

Coming into recovery meetings where I actually talked about what was going on with me, and people actually listened, was a stretch well beyond my comfort zone. It felt scary to come out into the light, but it was here that I found healing.

The only way I could make this leap of faith was to do so anonymously. I didn’t have to sign up, I didn’t need to provide identification or my zip code. I didn’t have to announce to the world that I was attending COSA meetings. I could just quietly go and grow. It was also a relief to identify by my first name only. This semi-incognito approach helped me feel safe enough to open up a little bit at a time.

I learned that I could trust COSAs to honor my anonymity and keep what I shared in confidence. I grew up in a house with few boundaries and no sense of privacy, so it took time to build this trust in others and in myself. Yet, I did build it. The rewards have been great. In finding a safe haven in which to share my thoughts and feelings, I began to face my circumstances more directly. This helped me see my situation more clearly. I began to realize where I could make healthy changes, and I started to let my true self show. Anonymity provided the ideal conditions for the garden of my recovery to bloom.

The longer I am in COSA, the more I realize that anonymity has many faces that I didn’t recognize at first. When I attend my meeting or interact with individual COSAs, I can shed the labels and expectations that define me in other areas of my life, and I can simply be. The Traditions and the principle of anonymity remind me that I don’t need to suffer in the extremes of feeling better than or less than; we are a fellowship of equals. Anonymity helps make it so.

Anonymity, to me, also means clean communication: no triangulating or gossiping. If I respect the anonymity of others in the program, which I do, then I do not discuss their personal matters with anyone else, unless I am absolutely certain they would be okay with it. I am cautious, even when I have the best of intentions, not to overstep and share about something that is not mine to share.

Tradition Twelve—cont'd.

In our area, the COSA meetings are few and our community is fairly small. One aspect of anonymity that has worked well for us has been maintaining the anonymity of whom we sponsor and who our sponsors are. We also refer to “spending time with another COSA” instead of mentioning a specific person by name. These practices may seem overly careful or awkward, but it does help us avoid issues of favoritism, cliques, or gossiping. It helps us be inclusive, and to keep things simple.

.Anonymity also applies to service positions. The Traditions remind me that we are non-professional. We have no experts and no longstanding COSA gurus. Through the COSA service I have done, I have learned to let go of the need to feel needed, and the need to feel important and right. I have learned the joy of giving without expecting anything; it feels much better. When I was new, I struggled with this and occasionally I still do. But now I know the freedom of giving with no strings attached. It feels clean and healthy, and it is something I strive for in all areas of my life. If I can't give something out of simple willingness and generosity, then I can't afford to give it, whatever it is; the cost is too great for everyone. Anonymity taught me this, and reminds me to be humble and clean in my giving.

“Principles before personalities” is a phrase I have heard for many years. I wasn't sure what it meant at first, but have come to understand its wisdom. It is a sanity-saver for me in every instance. Whenever I catch myself resisting someone, or trying to control, convince, or cajole (whether it's in a recovery situation or not), I realize I am forgetting our spiritual principles. Instead, I have slipped into favoring my own agenda and have set aside my faith in a Higher Power (who takes care of outcomes much better than I can). Remembering principles before personalities helps me stay “right-sized”. I am not superior or inferior; I am one voice of many. I can have faith in the group's conscience, and I can use the Traditions as a sturdy ladder to climb out of most any troublesome situation. When I feel myself internally clinging to my own way, I can take a deep breath and reinvest my trust in the Steps and Traditions. The principles remind me to share my truth honestly and let go. It is not my job to be the ultimate authority. I can keep my ego out of the equation, and live and let live.

To say that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all the Traditions is to say also that it is of the utmost value. In looking at all the ways that anonymity touches my life, I can see this value clearly. Even after some time in the program, I don't work the Steps and Traditions perfectly, but I do make progress. I have learned little by little, to have healthier boundaries and a level-headed, right-sized perception of myself within the bigger scheme of things. My well-being and the well-being of the fellowship are closely related. Without the program I wouldn't have gained the tools or serenity I have today. It is with gratitude and a joyful heart that I uphold the Twelfth Tradition to the very best of my ability.



**WELCOME
NEW
MEETING:
in
VANCOUVER
INT—19**



Praying is not a spiritually acceptable form of obsessive thinking

One of the ways I cause myself harm in my co-addiction is hanging onto a hurt so tight that I can't sleep. It begins a terrible cycle and yet I still have times when I do it. Since I acknowledged my connection with my Higher Power in recovery, I have been in the process, daily, of learning how to pray and benefiting from doing so. So when my mind latches onto something my addict wants to obsess over, I now know I need to pray and ask for my Higher Power's guidance. This is a good strategy and under most circumstances it gets me back to sanity and serenity and the prospect of healthy behavior. But one night I got triggered in a way I hadn't in a long time and my co-addiction slipped into my house through an open door. I wasn't ready to let go of my hurt feelings and in my co-addiction I believed it was not a problem if I stayed up all night praying. The problem was the more I prayed about my worries the more worries I came up with to pray about. So my co-addiction had essentially convinced me that praying was a spiritually acceptable way of replacing my obsessive thinking.

Needless to say I didn't sleep at all. If I had prayed and turned my hurt and fears over to God, my co-addiction would have had nothing to do but let me go to sleep. Fortunately my obsessive thinking disguised-as-useful-praying only lasted one night and instead of unleashing my exhausted hurt feelings on my partner when he woke I made a program call. (I've noticed I'm always much better behaved with people in Program than I am with my partner.) Then I changed my plans for the day so I could go to a meeting where I heard a First Step and heard a fellow COSA say the words, "I decided I was a codependent," and, "the past is in the past," and, "I'm still learning this new language called 'letting go'." By applying my recovery tools it became clear that I was choosing to make myself miserable by not trusting my Higher Power to simply hold my hurt feelings for me while I slept through one night.

Fellowship

We occasionally host a potluck dinner at our house where we invite recovery friends from both our fellowships to come. Those gatherings in fellowship are always seasoned with love, peace and laughter, as well as the feelings that come with pain. There was a time, when I first came into recovery, when I was angry every time I saw or heard people in my partner's fellowship laugh when they were together. How could they make light when I was in so much pain, the victim of their common addiction? All my life I was a very serious person and an acute observer. I have watched how others live and move through life, as if it were a sport I needed to learn in order to play the game correctly. That may not have been a bad idea as a kid, but as I learned the first time I worked the Fourth Step in COSA, I got lost in the pursuit of learning from a distance, and forgot to practice and find my own way through living fully in my own life. Today I try to practice a living amends to myself to no longer waste my life by watching, and studying others as they live theirs.

As I have worked the Steps and trusted myself to the fellowship of others in recovery, I have found an unexpected ability to laugh at myself and to feel joy even in the midst of sadness or struggles. What a gift this has been. Today it is clear that my judgment and anger from the past was really jealousy because my partner and others in his fellowship had what I wanted, but couldn't yet access myself. Today I regularly practice laughing.

When my grandfather was in a nursing home and he knew his health was failing, I remember he didn't want people to stand around with long faces, feeling sorry for him. He wanted us to tell stories that made us laugh until we cried or cry until we laughed, and when we did he'd say, "Yah, yah." In the face of his death he laughed at himself, and at memories from the past, and was happy for those of us who survived him. Now when I'm in fellowship with others who are on a spiritual journey, I know I can encourage them with a smile, tears of joy, and a laugh or my own "Yah, yah."

-Anonymous

Meditations