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Spring Issue

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Boundaries

This last week I have had a new lesson about boundaries.

When I first came to COSA, I wished there was a shortcut to dealing with my boundary problems. Today I understand why such a shortcut is impossible: my boundaries are completely and uniquely about me. What I want, need, will and won't tolerate, what I choose to prioritize, and the limits I place are as unique as my fingerprint. They are one outward expression of who I am as a person. As I begin to uncover and accept the truth about myself, my own authentic boundaries emerge. Boundaries create an environment where it is safe and possible for the real me to be known.

There is value in placing boundaries on myself. These boundaries are about claiming and speaking up for what I want as well as acting in accordance with my own values and beliefs. My inner and outer circles reflect this; both the behaviors that I say an outright "no" to, for my own sanity, as well as those I say "yes" to because they nurture and sustain me.

Sometimes I need to look at my motivation for placing a boundary. If it is about changing someone's behavior, trying to produce a given outcome, if it is to punish or manipulate then it is not a boundary; it is a control tactic or an interpersonal game. This kind of behavior is destructive to me and to my serenity and is hurtful to others as well.

Boundaries reflect esteem for myself and for my needs, and at the same time they show my esteem for others. My experience shows me that lasting intimacy cannot exist without boundaries.

Last week, I had a chance to learn and meditate again on what I have learned because I threw everything I just shared out the window.

Almost a year ago, I began a new relationship, the first serious relationship I have had since my marriage to my sex addicted husband ended. I have developed a closeness with this new man that I have never had in a romantic relationship. I have felt a warmth and acceptance that is new and beautiful.

I am a recovering co-sex addict. The co-addicted part of me is not always rational and still experiences moments of terror as we grow closer. Sometimes I find myself poised for catastrophe. I still carry scars and fears about intimacy in relationships. Love, acceptance and openness are new territory for me. There is a part of me that is so uncomfortable

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Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

Financials will be published in the Balance as soon as they are available.

Thank you for your patience.

By the Fellowship - For the Fellowship

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

tions.

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/Writing Guidelines Revision 20110521 Final.pdf

(scroll down, then click on pdf link)

Please send your articles to COSACopy@yahoo.com or by snail mail to the

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Phone: 866-899-2672 E-mail: info@cosa-recovery.org



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Boundaries

Boundaries—cont'd.

with this closeness that my instinct is often to push it away. The closer my boyfriend and I become, the more I am confronted by those fears. On most days, when those fears emerge I can see them for what they are and practice letting them go.

Last week, I gave in to my fears in an unhealthy way. I went snooping on my boyfriend's computer. There was no "reason"; I had an urge and I acted on it without pausing to think about why. Snooping and spying are acting-out behaviors for me that I have not engaged in, for my own well-being, in more than two years. I know that this behavior is hurtful to me and it shows an absolute disregard for the boundaries of the person I am spying on. I chose to act against everything I have learned.

I found nothing that gave me concern that he has a problem with sex addiction; I didn't expect to. Unfortunately, I did find some things that were extremely triggering to me.

I was shocked and I felt numb. I was also immensely ashamed of myself. Irrespective of what I might have found, I had violated my own boundaries. I am proud of my sobriety and my growth, violating it filled me with a sense of horror.

I knew that I needed to talk to my boyfriend. I also knew that because all I could feel was numbness and shame, I needed to take some time to get clear with myself about how I felt and how I was going to discuss it with him in a respectful manner.

Instead of honoring my earlier decision, as soon as he got home from work I pounced on him. He was very angry with me for spying on him; he could not understand why I would go behind his back when I could simply have asked. He felt that I was holding him hostage to my past.

Despite the fact that I could understand his anger, when I am approaching someone from a place of shame, many of my other shortcomings begin to emerge. I began to feel defensive. Yes, I had spied, and I was not proud of it. His feelings in that moment were irrelevant to me because of the powerful nature of the trigger for me.

What followed was a heated conflict, which I do not deal with well. For both our sakes, I should have called a temporary halt to the conversation. I didn't. In my final moment of rage I told him that I was done with him and our relationship. That was not what I truly wanted. I wanted to stop fighting, I wanted to be heard. I felt afraid and hurt. I said none of this. I reverted to an old, self-defeating posture I have long adopted when I feel small, afraid and overwhelmed. It is a way to feel momentarily powerful when I feel cornered. As I know well, empty threats are not boundaries.

Boundary violations have consequences. That night, I trod on both of ours. When I said those words, not only did I violate a boundary that I had put in place for myself but also I went crashing through his. I ripped away at his belief that I was committed to working out differences in our relationship.

The next day we were able to have the calm conversation I had originally wanted--both



Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our

wrongs.

Step Five

Step Five is where the miracles started happening for me. Step Five attacked my belief that I am bad--not just not enough, not just less than, but inherently bad. Step Five thus challenged the foundations of my isolation.

The words we, our, us, or ourselves, appear nineteen times in the Twelve Steps. Surely this is a program of connection, companionship, and friendship in which isolation cannot survive. I know that this is the case for me, and I came to believe it in Step Five--in my Step Five and in yours.

I have heard that when I compare you and me, I am comparing my insides to your outsides. I see you with makeup on or shaven and groomed. I see your best behavior. I can't hear the arguments that go on behind closed doors, the tears, the recriminations. I know nothing of your doubts and fears and secrets. Surely I am different. Surely I am less. Surely I am bad, and you are not.

As I compare, the gulf between you and me gets wider. I can't seem to cross it, even when you offer friendship. So often I have made friends, and still felt isolated, not admitting that I see you as better, smarter, more "together" than I will ever be. We cannot be close, because we are so different.

Then I experience Step Five. As we share Step Five, we all share our dark secrets, the times when we did the dance of co-sex addiction and codependence. One of the definitions of intimacy includes detailed knowledge, and I find that detailed knowledge of both you and myself in Step Five. In this most amazing Step, I come to know you and you come to know me. I learn the details of my own life in the writing, and the details of your life in your sharing.

I read my Fifth Step to my whole group. It was memorable enough. I read my litany of harms to myself and to others, and my long-held core beliefs that had haunted me all my life. I talked about things that would have curled my mother's hair. Afterwards, I asked for feedback from the group and I was given love and acceptance. I also came to understand that I was truly a part of this fellowship when my fellow COSAs shared their experiences and their beliefs.

But perhaps the greater miracles came when I heard Fifth Steps, both in my group and from sponsees. I heard some awful things. I heard about actions and beliefs that were similar to my actions and beliefs. I came to know deep down that each of us has been affected deeply by someone else's sex addiction. And I was brought to tears when I realized that while I had been moved by the love and acceptance of others, it was when I felt those feelings for you that the isolation was annihilated.

Step Five — cont'd.

It was only then, hearing your Fifth Step, your shame, your "dirt," that I believed in my heart that nothing I had done was unforgiveable.

When you forgave me, you healed me. When I forgave you, I realized and believed the depth of love that was in those rooms. I felt the compassion for you, I knew the sorrow for what you had been through, I understood your actions and your reactions. I had felt the same feelings. And yet I knew you to be wonderful people. Wow. I must be wonderful, too. Let's be wonderful together.

-Claudia M. Mesa. AZ

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.





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

Step Six

Step Six was a formidable Step for me. I had been in Twelve-Step programs for two decades, and in COSA for two years, before I felt safe enough to attempt Step Six. Previously, each time after I did Steps Four and Five in other programs, something always happened that stopped me: my sponsor moved away, or said something that sounded like criticism, or didn't say much at all.

I believe that so much shame came up in Steps Four and Five that I couldn't see my way clear to start Step Six. And I didn't feel safe and secure enough with my sponsor or cosponsor. Two COSAs particularly helped me feel safe and supported enough to move on. One was a temporary sponsor who lovingly and gently encouraged me over the course of several months, and the other is my co-sponsor.

After my temporary sponsor was no longer available, I floundered for a while. Finally, a COSA friend and I agreed to co-sponsor each other. We both worked hard, albeit erratically in times of stress and health challenges. Although I was already on Step Four, I felt a need to return to Step One and write it in story form. My co-sponsor listened patiently and empathically through many, many phone calls, and shared how she related to what I wrote—while I read my Step One, recounted highlights from my work on Steps Two and Three, and shared my voluminous Step Four writing on each characteristic from a long list of codependent characteristics. With each phone call, I felt more deeply heard and understood. I didn't feel so alone anymore.

By the time I finished Steps Four and Five, sixteen months after our first phone call, I felt safe enough to start Step Six. In a different workbook, I found some pointed questions to answer for each character trait. How did this character trait harm me? How did it harm others and/or keep them away from me? Was I ready to let go of it? (Sometimes my answer was a vehement "YES!"—and sometimes a bewildered "But what would I do without it?") And finally, what did I gain by holding on to that trait?

I was surprised at how clear and succinct my answers to these questions were. Exactly what I did (and still do at times) was right in front of my face. I saw myself people-pleasing and caretaking and controlling. In Step Six, I saw the harm done to me and others. I saw how I either didn't know what else to do, or felt I couldn't do it "right." I didn't want to take responsibility. I was afraid of offending someone. I was afraid of feeling, or looking stupid or unsuccessful.

Day by day, week by week, I wrote. Knowing I could only read a limited amount to my cosponsor on our weekly phone call, made it easier for me to just write a couple of pages instead of blasting myself with writing about all my character defects in one sitting.

I am so grateful to my co-sponsor for her patient and compassionate listening and for her caring feedback and sharing. It was so healing for me. I needed to write a lot. I needed to be heard a lot. I needed to know that every week, someone would be there for me and I would be there for her.

Step Six — cont'd.

Detailing my character defects in Step Six, in a paradoxical way, was a victory and a success for me. I had been afraid I would never get past Step Five, yet I did! I had somehow felt as if I might die of shame if I had to not only know of my "character defects," but also write in detail about them, and then tell someone else. I didn't die of shame; in fact, I was able to let go of some of it.

Step Six helped me see my part in negative or difficult interactions with others. I finally understood, by writing about it, how behaving in ways that used to feel praiseworthy (like being "good," not speaking up, not "bothering others") had a negative effect on others and didn't feel good to me or reflect well on me either.

Doing Step Six was like taking an X-ray of my emotional and behavioral self. I saw the dark and the light. I saw how I was trying to do things well and be the perfect little girl or the perfect big girl, and how it didn't work. For example, I finally saw that when I engaged in my habit of saying what wasn't working in my life (what else was there to talk about?), everyone around me gave me advice. I hated this but hadn't known how to stop it. When I stopped talking so much about what wasn't working in my life and instead talked about what I enjoyed or appreciated, the advice lessened. It was magic. Slow, but a miracle nonetheless.

Step Six helped me become more authentic, more able to be matter-of-fact about my defects, and more able to share with others, even those not in a Twelve-Step program. It made me more "me," yet it gently began to separate those behaviors and show the seam between them and me. Those behaviors were not "me." I didn't have to do them forever. In Step Seven I would learn what I could do instead.

-Ruth G.

CALLING ALL COSAS

A great way to enhance your convention experience is to serve two hours in any of the following areas:

- Bookstore
- Hospitality Suite
- Registration Table
- Silent Auction
- Secretary a face-to-face meeting

You will have fun and it is a great way to meet other COSAs.

Simply indicate your intention on your Registration Form. If you are not coming to the convention, you can still be of service by sending in an item for the silent auction.



We welcome you to join us at the convention in Vancouver.
May 25 – 28, 2012

Sheraton Vancouver
Airport Hotel
7551 Westminster
Highway
Richmond, BC V6X
1A3
1-800-663-0299

Check our convention website

at: http://www.cosa-recovery.org/2012
User name: borders
Password: recovery

If you have any questions send an email to convention@cosarecovery.org

Boundaries - cont'd.

about my spying and about my feelings. I felt heard and cared about. We agreed on a boundary regarding making threats. Neither of us wants to be in a high drama relationship where every difficult conversation ends with me showing him the door.

In many ways I feel what I have shared is a story of boundary failure rather than success (and I have had successes), but it is the story that I feel I need to tell. It is honest. One of the most important lessons I have learned in COSA is that I cannot change the past, but I can learn from it. I felt profound shame about my failures in this situation; a product of feeling "I should know and do better." I have yet to find value in shame: it produces no growth, and sometimes there is as much to be learned from my mistakes as there is from my triumphs. Progress, not perfection.

From this experience I got a chance to practice looking at and taking responsibility for my own behavior instead of assigning blame. I got to practice seeing the harms that I had caused and making a prompt amends. I have been given a strong reminder about the importance of boundaries and the consequences of reverting to old patterns.

I have some boundary work to do around things that came up in this situation. I know today I lack clarity about what is right for me in this specific situation. This means I have been granted another opportunity to practice patience and search inside myself for answers about what I need and want; thanks to COSA, I have a safe and loving support system while I take the time to explore this, and I have a loving Higher Power to guide me.

-Amy E.

I spent some time with my new puppy this afternoon, teaching him to fetch. I use a clicker when I train him. I threw a toy, clicked when he ran to get it, clicked and gave him a treat when he came to me when I called, threw it again, clicked when he ran to get it, etc. Then things got tougher. He only got a click and a treat when he brought the toy back to me. It got tougher yet, because then I wanted to teach him to drop the toy at my feet. I know that's how my Higher Power teaches me. I'm not sure he uses a clicker, but I definitely get treats when I start doing things the way my HP teaches me in recovery. I shut my mouth, instead of being sarcastic or rude. Click! I get better relationships.

I am more pleasant to be around. Click! I have more friends. I stop trying to control my husband's sex addiction. Click! Our marriage is better!

But, like the dog training, it keeps getting tougher all the time. The bar keeps getting set higher. Now I'm learning about things like boundaries, and blame, and shame, and stuff I had no idea about when I was a pup in recovery.

My relationships keep getting better and better; the self-loathing is gone--replaced by self-love. I am learning what detachment is all about. I am happier than I have ever been. And when I listen, I can really hear my Higher Power guiding me, and talking to me, and calling me to come to him.

It takes forever to get well. But it takes no time at all to get better. Click! I'm coming! I'm coming!

- Claudia M, Mesa, AZ

://www.cosa-recovery.org/literature.

Three COSA Pamphlets now downloadable!!

Three COSA pamphlets are now available as free downloads on our website. Just go to the top of the literature order form and click on these titles to download the pamphlet in PDF format:

- Welcome to the Sunlight
- **COSA FAQs**
- **COSA Tools**

These pieces are great for carrying the message to newcomers or to support your own recovery!

Change of Address

Dear COSA friends,

We're making a small but important change. We will no longer be using our post office box. Please send all COSA correspondence – including literature orders and donations – to our street address from now on. This will save us time and resources. We appreciate your help making this shift.

Effective immediately, as of January 13, 2012, our new mailing address is:

ISO of COSA Central Office 9219 Katy Freeway Suite 212 Houston, TX 77024 U.S.A.

If you have correspondence currently en route, it will be forwarded to our new address. For all future mail, use the street address. Please spread the word by notifying the trusted servants of your local meetings and announcing this change to your groups. Thank you and best wishes.

In gratitude and recovery,

The ISO of COSA





Calling All Writers!!

The Goal 3 Committee is pleased to invite COSA members who are experienced writers to submit shares on one of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, COSA tools (including service) and/or on the topic of their Higher Power to the following web address: goal3writers@yahoo.com.

The requirements and guidelines for writers for the COSA Book are as follows:

- 1. The writer shall be a member of COSA and have completed all Twelve Steps of COSA with a COSA sponsor.
- 2. All selections will be donations to the Fellowship with the only remuneration being the spiritual growth that comes from sharing one's Experience, Strength and Hope with the whole fellowship.
- 3. Our intention is not to make existing pamphlets obsolete by incorporating large tracts of text from pamphlets into the COSA book.
- 4. Instead we wish to distill and amplify basic recovery principles from existing pamphlets and to incorporate those principles in a new form into the COSA book.
- 5. We wish to insure that all descriptions of spiritual principles, tools of recovery and personal stories authentically reflect the broad diversity of the entire COSA fellowship.
- 6. We request that personal stories contain all three elements of Experience, Strength and Hope.
- 7. We also request that those personal stories reflect: What it was like. What happened. What it's like now.

LitCom Call for Diversity

A Call for Diverse COSA Perspectives...

Help make COSA literature as inclusive and effective as possible.

There is no simple way to describe the "usual" COSA member or COSA experience; as individuals, we have a broad range of life experiences and perspectives. As a fellowship, though, we unite as a multifaceted, sparkling gem.

As your Literature Committee, we want the COSA literature to truly reflect this diversity within our unity. We want COSA newcomers, no matter who they are, to see themselves reflected in our writings.

Literature Opportunities

LitCom Call for Diversity- cont'd.

Right now we are especially in need of COSA male perspectives, as well as those of COSA parents, COSA adult children, and others who may be currently underrepresented in our literature. If you are interested in sharing your unique COSA perspective, we invite you to send us your written contributions, or join us on the Literature Committee in some capacity.

Current projects include *Balance* articles, booklets for Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve, and other literature. Please email COSAcopy@yahoo.com for more information.

We value your input, and together, we can help carry the message of COSA's hope and healing to others.

With gratitude,
Betsy H.
for the Literature Committee

Call for COSA Book Editors!

At the 2011 Annual Delegates Meeting, the Goal 3 Committee was empowered to form a team of editors to work on the COSA Book. We will soon be receiving submissions from members of the fellowship. We need your help to create the very best book possible to enhance everyone's recovery! Please review the criteria and information below and let us know of your interest by e-mailing goal3editors@yahoo.com.

Editors will receive submissions by email and will work together in editing copy.

- 1. All members of the Editorial Subcommittee (Edit Subcom) working on the COSA Book must have completed all Twelve Steps of COSA with a COSA sponsor.
- 2. The Editorial Subcommittee will function as "the initial pair of eyes" to insure that:
 - a.) The manuscript is consistent with the recovery message of the Twelve Steps of COSA.
 - b.) The manuscript is consistent with the Twelve Traditions of COSA.
 - c.) The manuscript content is well written and grammatically correct.
 - d.) The personal stories contain all three elements of experience, strength and hope.
- 3. Members of the Editorial Subcommittee will honor the integrity of personal stories by minimizing the extent to which they are edited.
- 4. Note that we expect to fine tune boundaries between author(s), COSA Book Development Committee and Literature Committee as the Board gains its own experience with the process.

The COSA Book committee is proud to invite all COSA members who can meet these requirements to share the joy of participating in this uplifting experience of growth.

Tradition 5: Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to those who still suffer. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps ourselves.

Tradition Five reminds me that there is only one primary purpose for COSA groups. It tells me what that purpose is, and it tells me how to achieve it. Tradition Five holds an astonishing instruction: Carry the message by practicing the Twelve Steps! That is how we can achieve our primary purpose. That, according to this Tradition, is the *only* way to carry the message.

I must work *all* Twelve Steps in order to carry the message of COSA to those who still suffer. I can't give away what I don't have, so I must begin by working all the Steps. I can't keep what I don't give away, so the Twelfth Step tells me to carry the message and practice the principles I learn in all the Steps.

That's a tall order! There are a lot of us who haven't completed the Steps, and many who haven't begun. I've heard it said that that's okay--it's up to each of us to decide when--and even whether to work the Steps. But Tradition Five seems to tell me I'm not going far if I don't work the Steps.

There is a sign in my face-to-face COSA meeting room. It says "Meetings = Relief. Steps = Recovery." And that's been true for me. I was not on a winning streak when I came into COSA. I was in pain, and I was confused, angry, and ashamed. I spent a few months going to meetings, and getting relief. I needed that time to become ready to do the work. But it was not until I did my Step work that I got recovery. Sure, in the meetings I learned some really good sayings, and I heard some good stuff. Things got better when I just went to meetings. But I got better when I worked the Steps.

Someone told me once that I should carry the message of COSA to every newcomer, and everyone who asked me for help with the effects of someone else's compulsive sexual behavior. If necessary, they said, use words. I learned early on that people judged me by my actions, not my words. And my actions didn't start getting sane and admirable until I worked the Twelve Steps.

I was drawn to my sponsor by her actions, not her words. She said pretty amazing things, to be sure, but it was her work with newcomers like me, as well as her serenity and wisdom, that attracted me. I played the movie without the words, and what I saw in her was very good. She was the one who put up that sign about the Steps being Recovery. She walked the walk as well as talking the talk.

I told her I wanted what she had, and that I was willing to work to get it. She told me to work the Steps and carry the message to those who still suffer. I worked the Twelve Steps,

Tradition Six: A COSA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the COSA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Tradition Six outlines most of our relationship with money. We know from Tradition Seven that we are to be self-supporting. We don't apply for grants, or ask for outside donations in some other way. Tradition Six tells us that, similarly, we don't give outside donations to other organizations or causes.

Many of us go through a passionate sort of phase where we want to carry the COSA message by any means necessary. Why not start a COSA rehab center, or have our COSA meeting sponsor a local marathon to get our name out there? Plenty of COSAs are in the helping professions--why not do a COSA-based self-help book or talk show, or create a sort of COSA therapy? It would bring in tons of money, while helping so many people!

The answer is simple. There are three problems that this tradition warns us can arise. First, problems of money. Here Tradition Six goes hand-in-hand with Tradition Seven. We know, from decades of our own experience and the experiences other twelve-step fellowships have shared, that when we accumulate too much money, arguments quickly follow. Having an excess of money on our hands tends to lead to conflict within the group about how it should be spent.

Of course, we may simply say we will send any money that we don't need for our basic expenses to the International Service Office. No conflict, right? But problems of property can still arise. How does the group organize all of the work involved? Who is in charge? If someone is "in charge," and there are suddenly managers and power dynamics--the kind of "organization" that Tradition Nine warns us against--how will we maintain the unity that is so crucial to us? If the group invests a lot of time, and potentially money, into an outside project which collapses, what will happen to the group? And even with smaller projects--what happens if a member who took on commitments disappears, potentially taking information, money, or materials with them?

What a distraction from our primary purpose! But there's yet another potential pitfall: prestige. If we were to endorse an outside person or project, we might escape the first two problems. Perhaps we would avoid chaos there. And yet, we might find that the prestige associated in being viewed as an authoritative source of answers on codependency or sex addiction would bring our groups to their knees. Prestige is inflammatory to the ego. And when our egos get inflamed, all the self-will and defensiveness and control issues that are so central to codependency come raging forth, like rabid lions.



"...but I started to move in a new direction and it started to happen, **I** started with accepting little things grace..."

COSA Recovery: A Male Perspective

Starting from the beginning, I resisted the change, the loss, I kept holding on to the dream, I blamed myself - A LOT. I cried, I begged, I pleaded with God to make it go away - the pain, I prayed prayed PRAYED I thought about, missed, emailed, called, wanted Jeannine - ALOT, I ate, slept worked worked out but I began to do these other things too: I went to my first COSA meeting, I read on the first meeting, I shared, I stayed for fellowship, at that first meeting I met Dave, called Dave, called Dave, called Dave, Dave said, "Okay, even if you can just focus on, 'This is my hand, I feel my hand, this is my other hand....' I got on the contact list and I made program calls talked, talked, talked, cried, shared my pain my doubts and fears, asked for help, got help cried some more, went to meetings, went to meetings, went to more meetings, I read everything about sex addiction and codependency and co-addiction I could get my hands on, then I got a sponsor, called my sponsor, called my sponsor, called my sponsor, I called my sponsor, ALOT!!! I worked the steps, did a fearless and searching moral inventory for the first time, shared it ALL with god and another human being, felt more peace and serenity after my fifth step than I had felt for a long long time:) I got suggestions for my healthy recovery and I followed them not all of them and not all the time and not perfectly, but I started to move in a new direction and it started to happen, i started with accepting little things with grace, little things like, I spilled my coffee on the carpet, my friend didn't come for a visit as promised, my input was rejected, little things and I was accepting them with grace, I kept praying, kept making calls going to meetings actually started listening more and my talking turned into sharing, prayed but my praying turned into asking for different things, how could i help those around me? could i have strength but only to do His will, I meditated, meditated, meditated, static just static at first, then quiet, then different thoughts than I had before new thoughts new friends new hope new strength and courage new messages, not my messages, not the old messages, feelings - still there not as strong now, still there, from the beginning seconds turned into minutes, minutes to hours, hours to days, weeks, months...strangers turned into associates, turned into friends, turned into fellow spirits on the same journey I am still accepting, but I do not do it all at once and I can never do it alone. Thank God I never have to do it alone!!!

Today, alone but never alone, I stood in the middle of my living room with my two feet together, firmly planted. I looked down, I looked up, I looked over at the clock on the wall, which read, 3:46 pm and I said aloud to God to me to no one to everyone, "I am enough."

It's working.

Take what is useful from that my dear friend, my dear dear fellow spirit and leave the rest for later.

-Brian R.

Upstate NY

Tradition 5 — cont'd.

and I continue to work them, and I carry the message for two reasons that I can think of: because I need to carry the message to keep it, and because I am grateful for all COSA has done for me.

When I see the lights go on in a sponsee's eyes, I know that I have been part of reaching someone who was just like I was struggling when I walked into COSA. The thrill is unbelievable. My Higher Power does not call the equipped, he equips those he calls. He equipped me by sending me a sponsor who could help guide me through the Twelve Steps. It is my honor and privilege to work Tradition Five by helping the ones who came after me.

It is my primary purpose, and I do it by working the Twelve Steps of COSA.

-Anonymous

Tradition 6 — cont'd.

Prestige is the ultimate distraction from our primary purpose: it brings with it a million questions from outside sources about outside issues. Even so small an act as lending the COSA name to a project confuses people, misleading them about COSA's purpose and abilities. Imagine the plight of a COSA group in the same area with a so-called "COSA psychologist" or "COSA rehab center." The people they were trying to carry the message to would begin to view them with suspicion, thinking that COSA must cost money; that COSA was telling them they had a mental illness; that they were to be offered a free service, then upsold on drugs or therapy; that we were not helped spiritually by carrying the message (and therefore that they wouldn't be either), but helped financially instead. Many people, seeking the effective and freely given program of action that COSA offers, would accidentally find instead something that cost money, did not work for everyone, and might have nothing to do with recovery.

It's to avoid confusion and chaos that we stick with Tradition Six. It keeps things simple. When the COSA message is simple, it's a lot easier to carry to the COSA who still suffers. And after all, isn't that what we're here for?

- Dani S.





I gave this question some thought and realized there are probably as many answers as there are attendees. For some COSA members, the Annual International Convention is all about the recovery-focused workshops. Others come for the speakers, or the fellowship. Still others spend most of their time connecting with other COSAs, shopping in the COSA bookstore, and/or at the silent auction. Some COSAs spend hours in member-to-member conversations in the hospitality suite. I can only tell you about my experiences.



The location and theme of the convention changes annually, just like I have changed. I get something different out of each one I have attended, because I'm in a different place in my recovery each time. I had been in COSA just four months when I attended my first convention, and I'd been very isolated. Although I learned many things, I think what was most important to me was learning that there was hope, and that I was not alone. One year, I focused on the spirituality aspect of my recovery and went to workshops that were focused on that subject. It helped me get past Steps Two and Three. Another year, I was extremely angry at my addict and every other addict, so I challenged myself to attend an open workshop hosted by SAA. I gained acceptance and it reinforced my understanding of powerlessness.



I have learned to love the fellowship in the Hospitality Suite. Now that I've had the good fortune to attend several years, I look for certain people that I only get to see at the convention. Oh, I get to talk to them on the phone, but seeing them and getting a real hug instead of a "cyber" hug is so much better!



The meetings are invaluable for those who have very limited face-to-face meetings, or none at all. If someone attends telemeetings or the online chat meetings, putting a face to the name or voice is such a grand feeling! I enjoy my face-to-face meeting at home, and at the convention I get to hear the wisdom of COSAs from around the world.

There are lots of opportunities for service at the convention; they are varied in the type of work and length of time needed. Many times, I have heard about the need of a particular International Service Organization (ISO) Committee that piqued my interest and got me involved. In giving my time and talent to this organization, I have gained far more than what I have given.



The convention is a major fundraiser for the ISO Seventh Tradition collections, raffles, and the silent auction of items donated by the fellowship, all keep our organization running so that we can continue to spread the word to those who still suffer.

Have I answered the question? Maybe the best answer is that the Convention *is* what you make of it, just like life.

Respectfully submitted,

-Elaine K. Chair, ISO of COSA

Things to know if you are coming to Vancouver for the convention

<u>Dates:</u> Convention: May 25 - 28, 2012 (Friday night speaker, Sat & Sun workshops, Monday brunch speaker)

Board members have a meeting all day Thursday, May 24th.

Delegates have a Meet & Greet Thursday evening, May 24th, and a meeting all day Friday May 25th.

Every COSA meeting can elect a delegate to attend this meeting.

Hotel Info:

Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel 7551 Westminster Highway Richmond, BC V6X 1A3 1-800-663-0299

A SPECIAL CONVENTION RATE of \$145.00 US (Canadian) plus taxes per night (double occupancy) is offered 3 days prior, during, and 3 days after the convention. For the special rate call directly to in-house reservations at 1-800-663-0299 before Tuesday, April 24, 2012. Ask for the Boundaries without Borders rate.

Airport Transportation:

Flying into Vancouver International Airport (YVR):

Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel provides a 24-hour free shuttle from **Vancouver International Airport.** It leaves every 30 minutes, on the quarter hour. If you arrive after 2 a.m. please call the hotel to confirm (1-800-663-0299).

Taxi fare from Vancouver International Airport (YVR) to the hotel is approximately \$12 US to \$15 US (Canadian).

Flying into Seattle/Tacoma International Airport (SEA) or Bellingham, WA International Airport (BLI): Our hotel is 4 hours by bus from Seattle and 2 hours by bus from Bellingham, Washington. (Border crossing times will vary depending on time of travel).

Quick Shuttle http://www.quickcoach.com/schedule.htm provides bus transportation from SeaTac Airport (SEA-Seattle/Tacoma Intl.), downtown Seattle, and Bellingham, WA International Airport (BLI-Bellingham Intl.) to the Vancouver International Airport.

Be sure to get off the Quick Shuttle bus at the Vancouver International Airport (don't continue to downtown Vancouver) as our hotel is located near the airport. From the Vancouver Airport, you can take the free Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel Shuttle right to our convention hotel.

Remember to obtain or renew your passport:

For all cross-border travel (even by car) you now need a passport to get into Canada. Information about crossing the border into Canada can be found at www.cbsa.gc.ca/menu-eng.html

About Vancouver:

Vancouver is located between the mountains and the ocean. It has a mild climate and is known for its beautiful cherry blossoms in the spring. This stunning city offers many attractions and adventures to enjoy. Two helpful websites are www.tourismvancouver.com/visitors/ and http://vancouver.ca/. Our hotel is in Richmond, close to the airport. It is a short walk to the Sky Train which takes you directly to downtown Vancouver.

If you have a few extra days you might want to think about a drive up to Whistler (about 2 ½ hours) www.whistler.ca, or a ferry ride/flight to Victoria on Vancouver Island www.vancouverisland.travel/.

Questions? Contact our convention email coordinator at convention@cosa-recovery.org











ISO of COSA International Convention and Annual Meeting



May 25-28, 2012 Memorial Day Weekend Vancouver, B.C. Canada

> Workshops, Speakers, COSA Meetings, Fellowship & Fun!!

Contact the COSA Convention Committee for additional information at: convention@cosa-recovery.org

Welcome to Vancouver 2012

Your 2012 COSA Convention, *Boundaries Without Borders*, begins on Friday, May 25th, with an opening ceremony speaker and information to support your recovery experience throughout the weekend. Saturday and Sunday will feature Step-related workshops and self-care classes that will help guide you through your personal journey of recovery. As always, there will be COSA meetings, a bookstore with COSA literature and recovery CDs, a COSA hospitality suite, and plenty of fellowship time including a joint SAA/ COSA Outing and Banquet. Sunday's COSA brunch will include a speaker. The convention ends on Monday, May 28th with a COSA brunch and speaker.

Delegate Meeting

If you are serving as your home group's Delegate, please join us for a Delegate Orientation Reception from 7:30pm until 9 pm Thursday, May 24th. The Annual Delegate Meeting will be held from 8 am – 5 pm Friday, May 25th. All Delegates are welcome. For more details on the Delegate Meeting & Packet, click on the Delegate tab on the Convention webpage at:

http://www.cosa-recovery.org/2012

User Name: borders Password: recovery

Please bring Silent Auction items to help with COSA fundraising. You can also help by volunteering or mentoring someone who is attending their first COSA convention.

COSA Meetings –If you are willing to lead/secretary one of the many COSA meetings at this year's convention (script and readings will be provided), please check the appropriate box on the Registration Form.

Scholarships

The COSA scholarship fund will provide financial assistance to COSAs on a first come, first served basis, helping with the registration cost only. Please donate if you can. To request financial assistance, write a brief statement describing your need and whether you will require 50% or a 100% scholarship to attend. Online registrants, please use the COMMENTS section; mail-in registrants please include this as a letter with your registration form. Scholarships are in exchange for service hours and are limited, so contact us soon if you are interested.

Registration

All registrations will be confirmed via e-mail.

REGISTRATION OPTIONS:

ONLINE: http://www.cosa-recovery.org/2012

User Name: borders
Password: recovery
Accepting Credit Cards (via PayPal)

OR

BY MAIL:

Please mail your payment and completed registration form to:
ISO of COSA – Convention Registration
9219 Katy Freeway, Suite 212
Houston, TX 77024 USA

Checks or money orders in US\$ payable to: ISO of COSA Annual Convention Payment required at time of registration (unless full scholarship requested). Registration date will be based on the postmark date.

Hotel

Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel 7551 Westminster Highway Richmond, BC V6X 1A3 Canada

Call In-House reservations at **1-800-663-0229** and let them know you are booking for the **Boundaries Without Borders** event.

Booking your room under the COSA group block name will help COSA satisfy our booking commitment.

Remember to have your passport ready for crossing into Canada

Airport Transportation

Hotel provides 24-hour free shuttle from Vancouver International Airport (every 30 minutes, on the quarter hour).

Taxi fare from airport is \$12-\$15 (Canadian \$)













2012 Annual ISO of COSA

Vancouver Convention Silent Auction

Donations/Gifts

SILENT

S I		Help Support ISO of COSA		S
L E	*Gift Certificates *Collectibles	*Time-Shares	*Gift Baskets *Arts and Crafts	E
N	*Vacation Condos/0	Cottages *Gently	Used Items/Re-gifting	N
т	* All A	uction Items We	elcome!	т

AUCTION! AUCTION! AUCTION!

Together we can all make our auction a success for ISO of COSA. Meetings and Individuals please join in and bring or send something to the convention.

If you are mailing your donation please send it to:

CT&T Enterprises 11851 Pintail Drive Richmond, BC V7E 4N7

<u>Canada</u>

and email <u>cosasilentauction@yahoo.com</u>

to let us know it is coming. Be sure to include

the value of the item and a minimum bid price.

ISO of COSA International Convention and Annual Meeting

Registration Form

Name:		_	
City:	State:	_ Country:	
Phone:		_ E-mail:	
Name for Nametag (sug): company a registrant to any ISO of COSA event.
*Registration fe Meals \$50 Saturday Ju \$40 Sunday Lui \$35 Monday Bi \$112 Total Mea	egistration Fee: \$2 e does not include m point Banquet** \$ ncheon*** \$ runch*** \$ al Package** \$ stal Package** \$ stal Package must be contained can be extended dietary requests, if contained to the contained of the	eals ordered & paid for kent to May 16th any: gan, Vegetarian asher meals avail \$\$	oy May 1 st n, Gluten-free, Dairy-free lable at an additional cost) noney orders in US\$ payable to:
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☐ I am inter Mentor" t	tendees: t time convention a ested in having a "C so support me at the sted in an orientation	Convention e convention	Volunteering I would like to volunteer (1-2 hr shift): ☐ Work the registration table ☐ Help in Hospitality Suite ☐ Lead/secretary a 12 step COSA meeting (script and readings will be provided)
sor, or a " convention I would like Silent Auction	ested in being a ten Convention Mentor In COSA attendees. In temporary spons	" to 1 st time or	□ Work with the Silent Auction □ Work in the Bookstore To help with scheduling volunteers it would be helpful to know: Arrival Day AM AFT EVE Departure Day AM AFT EVE





Online Meetings/Online Message Boards

http://www.cosa-recovery.org/online.html

Join <u>COSA 12 STEP</u>, a Yahoo Groups forum for COSA members. COSA 12 STEP is an announcement board owned and operated by the ISO whose main purpose is to help isolated COSAs connect and to support our online chat meetings.

COSA Parents of Teen Sex Addicts is an Online Group for COSA Parents

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.

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

Cost is only whatever your personal long distance carrier charges.

Saturday, May 5, 2012 1:00pm (PDT), 2:00pm (MDT), 3:00pm (CDT), 4:00pm (EDT)

Thursday, July 19, 2012 6:00pm (PDT), 7:00pm (MST), 8:00pm (CDT), 9:00pm (EDT)



Telemeetings—www.cosacall.com

Phone Number: 1-218-862-6420 Passcode: 679461

MONDAY	Step/Tradition Study	9:00am (PT) (10MT, 11 CT, Noon ET)
	Recovery Tools	5:00pm (PT)(6 MT, 7 CT, 8 ET)
TUESDAY		7:00pm (PT) (8 MT, 9 CT, 10 ET)
WEDNESDAY		4:00pm (PT) (5 MT, 6 CT, 7 ET)
	COSA Parents of Teen Sex Addicts	6:00pm (PT) (7 MT. 8CT, 9ET)
THURSDAY		6:00pm (PT) (7 MT, 8 CT, 9 ET)
SATURDAY		5:00pm (PT) (6 MT, 7 CT, 8 ET)
SUNDAY	Men's Only COSA Mtg. NOTE: New callers must be 12-Stepped.	10:00am (PT) (11am MT, 12pmCT, 1pm ET)



The telemeetings are looking for a few good men and women to serve. Many of the telemeetings would like to increase the diversity of their trusted servants. We need COSA members who are interested in being of service as a guest speaker and/or reader for seven to ten minutes at the beginning of meetings. We are especially interested in COSA members involved in service, including Board and committee members.

If you are interested in helping please email us. You might also encourage others to consider serving the fellowship in this area. The email addresses for each telemeeting are

listed at: www.cosacall.com



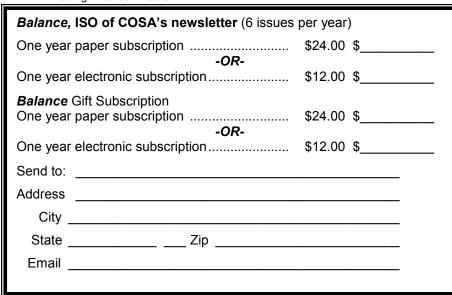
Telemeetings



COSA National Convention CDs

These recordings from the annual COSA National Conventions. They haven't been edited or reviewed for sound quality or content. For 1995-1998 CDs, please download a complete CD Order Form at http://www.cosa-recovery.org/COSA_CD_Order_Form.pdf

2002 – San Francisco02-1 2002 COSA Convention Saturday Banquet - Keynote Speaker Dan O.	2008 - Seattle (cont.)08-6 Do Telemeetings Really Work? - Panel Moderators:
2003 - Portland03-2 Fear—Name our fears, discuss how to overcome them - Ila D & Donna J03-3 The 2nd Step in COSA - Mavis B03-4 How to Start a COSA Meeting - Charlie E. & Stacy H.	Ale B. & Kerry M.
2004 - Dallas04-1 COSA/SAA Dallas, TX Story & Banquet - Gwen W04-2 Learning to Take Care of Yourself—In spite of Your Core Beliefs - Ila D04-4 Reclaiming Our Sacred Sexuality - Margaret C04-5 Working with others: Sponsorship - Julie B.	Works & Feels - Presenters: Ila D. & Gayle D. 08-11 2008 Sunday COSA Luncheon - COSA Speaker: Albert A. 08-12 Working a Recovery Program When Your Partner is Not
 2005 – New Orleans 05-1 New Orleans-Opening Speaker - Randy S. 05-2 Getting Beyond the Mask: 4th & 5th Steps - Dawn D. 05-3 Support for Double Winners - Carol Ann 	 - Presenter: Deborra S. 08-17 2008 Closing COSA Brunch - COSA Speaker: Margie S.; Closing Meditation: Joey Z.
	 2009 - Oakland _09-1 2009 COSA Opening Session – Eleanor S.'s Story _09-4 Bringing Step 5 Alive in Your Life - Ila D. _09-8 Clarity Begins with Steps 1,2,3 - Connie P. / Renee _09-9 Parents of Teen Sex Addicts: A Challenging New Look at the Three C's - Carol Ann R.
2006 - Indianapolis06-1 Voices of Growth: Enhance Your Program with Telemeetings – Ale06-2 Closing the Black Holes for Enhanced Healing – Ila, Jenny, & Joey Z06-3 For Free, For Fun – Emilah06-4 Can't. God Can. Drop It In!! – JoAn D06-5 COSA Speaker for combined banquet – JoAn D. 2007 - Minneapolis	09-10 Recovery Preparedness Kit: Tools for when in a Crisis -
	2010 - Albuquerque 10-1 2010 COSA Opening Session – Jaime S.'s COSA Story10-2 First Things First10-3 Step One: Is the Wording Acceptable to You? - Georgia K10-4 The 12 th Step at Every Step – Finding a reason to believe - Ann R & Brian K10-5 The Circles: How I define my own sobriety by using this tool Kerstin H.
2008 - Seattle08-1 2008 COSA Opening Session - Connie P08-2 Sponsor/Co-Sponsor Workshop - Panel Moderator: DM S08-3 Step 4 & 5 Workshop: Navigating Your Moral Inventory - Ale B. & Kerry M08-4 Step 6 & 7 Workshop - Panel Moderator: Sue D08-5 Step 8 & 9 Workshop: Working Through Forgiveness and Making Amends - Albert A.	Lefstin H.
Balance, ISO of COSA's newsletter (6 issues per year) One year paper subscription	





Please mail your order with a check or money-order payable in U.S. dollars to: International Service Organization of COSA (or ISO-COSA)

9219 Katy Freeway, Suite 212

Houston, TX 77024 U.S.A.

COSA Literature Order Form

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City, State & Zip:		//
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Your participation is vital to the development of new literature. All committed COSA members who have at least one year in the program are invited

COSA ISO Literature is written by the members of COSA groups around the World.