

Volume 11, Issue 3 Winter Issue November/December 2014

Triggers

When I first came to COSA, I had no idea what a trigger was. I thought it was that little thingamajig on a gun that made it fire off a bullet. It took some time and patience to educate myself so I clearly understood what a trigger was. I learned a lot but honestly, I didn't like anything that I learned. As a matter of fact, it seemed the more I read about triggers, the more *triggered* I felt!

I learned that the effect of a trigger is like a flashback that takes the person back to the original trauma. I learned that each person's triggers vary and that triggers are activated by the senses, most commonly sight and sound. There are internal triggers such as anger, anxiety, and sadness. There are external triggers like magazine covers, certain sexual scenes in movies, and even commercials. Basically, triggers are EVERYWHERE!

To add to the complexity of how triggers work, I then needed to understand the effect they had on me. I had a vague understanding, at best, of the havoc that these so-called triggers seemed to have on my life.

I can't remember how many traumas I have had throughout my life and I can't remember how many traumas there have been since the original day of discovery or all the slips throughout my husband's recovery. I just knew that I certainly did not want to go back to the original trauma or the 2nd or 3rd trauma or any trauma, for that matter.

I also did not want to keep engaging in habitual responses that only brought me more pain. In the beginning, I had no idea how to get myself out of this endless cycle of being triggered. It seemed that no matter where I went, what I saw, or what I heard, I felt triggered. I was powerless over my life, and my life had definitely become unmanageable.

I remember an incident in early recovery when I was triggered. I had finally decided that I was going to start journaling, and my husband encouraged me to use his laptop. He assured me that he had deleted everything on it and that it was safe to use. After several weeks, I wrote out my first few paragraphs. I was so excited. I did it...finally! Everything went well until I went to save it. I decided to put it in the folder with my name on it but for some reason, I couldn't find it. I tried a few different methods to no avail. However, I inadvertently found some pornographic videos. I just sat there in shock not knowing what to do. It took a moment to come back to life and figure out how to pause the video.

I was alone and just sat there. I had no idea what to do. I was devastated and in tears. I couldn't breathe. I felt hot and faint. I was in complete shock and denial at the video I

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Triggers

Triggers-cont'd.

saw on the laptop. My heart was racing and I felt disabling panic and anxiety among other things.

I had a similar reaction months later when I arrived home one day from work and my husband told me he had a slip. I could not believe it. All that time had passed and yet there I was experiencing the same reaction as before although the incidents were a bit different. As each slip occurred, I continued to respond in the same fashion. How could this possibly be? This is when my reaction patterns to triggers became rather apparent to me.

Each time that I was triggered, I inevitably had a variety of these same immediate reactions: a racing heart, nausea, feeling faint, panic, anxiety, fear, paralysis, shock. These feelings came fast and furious each and every time as the pain overtook my mind and body. It was terrifying, and more than once I thought that I wouldn't survive. I felt victimized over and over. I was a prisoner in my own mind and body every time this happened.

Shortly thereafter, I started to experience PTSD symptoms such as difficulty focusing or concentrating, flashbacks, irritability, fear of falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, fear of being alone, fear of the other shoe dropping, intense physical reactions to any reminders, and physical illnesses. I felt detached, hypervigilant, depressed, and hopeless. The list went on. I could no longer live like this.

I figured the best way of coping with my triggers was by avoiding them. I could avoid going near the magazine rack at the checkout stand. I could avoid the car wash on the corner. I could choose not to watch movies with explicit content. I thought this just might work until I realized that I could not control every single thing around me. It is almost impossible to do.

I had to escape, but there was no way to avoid these triggers, as some of them were my thoughts and emotions (this also contributed to my feeling out of control). I had to figure out how to identify my triggers and cope with them. I asked myself some really tough questions. What situations upset me? What thoughts or emotions set me off? What visual stimulation was triggering? I had to face the reality that I needed healthy, effective coping strategies and I had to make a commitment to practice them often, especially when I wasn't triggered. I started with learning about what my triggers were. Then I became aware of my reactions when I was triggered. Later On, I was able to identify physiological responses prior to a full-blown traumatic response. One of the benefits of identifying my triggers is that it helped me acknowledge the emotional wounds that I was still working through. Acknowledging my feelings was more beneficial than trying to push them down or ignore them.

As a result of my increased awareness, my emotional reactions became a little less intense and out of control. This gave me a sense of freedom because I started to learn how to respond in new, healthy ways. I was amazed to learn that I *can* change how I respond to triggers. I could condition myself to learn to feel and control the intensity of my emotions which in turn would reduce my practice of avoidance. Previously, the effort that I spent avoiding left little-to-no energy to manage day-to-day life.

Triggers-cont'd.

I have come a long way since that first meltdown yet I know it won't be my last. I have to keep in mind that there will be times when my inner resources will not be sufficient to match the demands of situations that cause me stress or duress. I just have to remind myself often that recovery is an ongoing, gradual, life-long process. Learning to cope with these emotional speed bumps is part of this healing process.

In general, there are things that I can do to bring about peace and serenity during times of stress. Being mindful helps me stay in the present. Deep breathing or any form of relaxation is very helpful. Writing regularly in a journal is a goal of mine. I love walking and being out in nature. I find easy, repetitive activity such as playing cards or word games, folding towels or doing dishes very soothing. I welcome anything that provides distraction and gives me a short self-care break. One of the things I love most is sharing with my COSA friends. They are my extended family. Spending time with them gives me a sense of well-being, love, and support that I have not been able to find anywhere else.

I have learned that when I am in crisis I need a Critical Action Plan (C.A.P.) in place for times when I am triggered, whether I am new to program or not. It outlines what I will do in case of an emotional emergency. On my C.A.P., I have a list of several program friends and their phone numbers. I have included the times and phone numbers of all the telemeetings that I attend. I have a list of things to do for self-care that are crucial to my immediate well-being, like eating, drinking water, resting, taking medication, praying, meditating, making program calls, attending meetings, etc. I also have outer circle activities on that sheet as well.

I have learned that there is no easy or quick way to overcome my feelings when I am triggered. But I have found that the best way to move past these emotions and start feeling better is by helping other people. When I engage in positive activity, it counters the helplessness I feel and empowers me to carry the message. Nothing has helped me as much as helping others that still suffer. That is the blessing for me—the more that I give, the more that I receive and the greater the healing I experience. May each and every one of you share in the same blessing!

With Much Love and Gratitude, Rouchelle Tucson, AZ





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



Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

July 2014-August 2014

<u>Group</u>	<u>Amount</u>
CA- Irvine	\$119.00
CA-23	\$140.00
CA-26	\$25.00
Columbus Group	\$30.00
COSA NY	\$233.00
FL-11	\$25.00
Houston Serenity Sisters	\$58.00
Memphis Tues Nite	\$50.00
Mesa, AZ Sunday Group	\$100.90
Omaha Monday Night	\$15.00
San Jose Plaza Group	\$50.00
Santa Anna Group	\$10.00
Santa Rosa Group	\$108.00
South Carolina	\$30.00
St. Andrews Ocean NJ	\$50.00
Telemeetings	\$8.00
The Woodlands, TX Monday Night	\$29.50
Individual	\$240.00
Recurring Donations	\$1,253.00
Total	\$2,574.40

Due to a delay in our production schedule for the *Balance*, the financials provided in the September/October issue are duplicated here as they were intended for inclusion in this issue. We will provide updated Seventh Tradition financials in the next issue. We apologize for the inconvenience.

by the Fellowship-For the Fellowshi

By the Fellowship - For the Fellowship

Balance, the newsletter of the International Service Organization of **COSA** is published six times a year. The ISO holds the copyright to this newsletter Editing, Design, Production & Layout by COSA Literature Committee.

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/PDF/lit_guidelines.pdf

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

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

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

etter from the Chair

Dear Fellow COSAs,

If you've been reading your e-mail, you might have figured out that your Board of Trustees is getting intentional about creative opportunities to offer resources on Sponsorship and Step work. When the last fellowship e-mail went out this month, we received responses from a lot of COSAs who wanted to get involved or ask some questions. Heady stuff. Apparently, we are on target with the Sponsorship and Step initiatives.

Among the COSAs I heard from was a long-timer who offered her service to members who are looking for sponsors. The same day, I also got an e-mail from a member who has no access to meetings and wants to get involved. I was so happy to introduce these two members to each other. There are other members out there who don't have the easy access I do to meetings, or who belong to meetings that don't have members able or willing to sponsor. If you have some interest and availability to stand in the gap, please e-mail SponsorshipHelp@cosa-recovery.org, our new resource for sponsors and sponsees.

Board members are recognizing their responsibility to support COSA financially as well as with their time. As part of the Board program to "give or get \$500 for COSA", Nancy P. (Budget and Finance Chair) and I held a "Checkbook Dinner Party" last week. I cleaned my house, organized my Tupperware, set a beautiful table, and cooked a gourmet meal. Then Nancy told the ten people at the table to bring out their checkbooks and show their gratitude for the COSA program by contributing to the general fund. I told them about my experience of giving time and treasure to COSA and seeing my Higher Power give me back double. You can't out give God, I said. I was so impressed by this experience that I wrote a check for more than I thought I could afford.

The week after the dinner party, a large credit appeared on my charge account because of an error on an order I had placed. When I called to tell them it was a mistake, they checked their records and told me to keep the credit. The amount was almost exactly twice my donation. You can't out give God.

After dinner, we held a COSA meeting for all members who wished to attend. We read an excerpt from the *Welcome* section of the COSA basic text which has recently been presented to the fellowship as literature-in-review. I cried; others applauded. We are going to have ourselves a book soon.

Don't let an opportunity to give back to the fellowship that has given so much to so many pass you by. During the month of November, please join the Attitude of Gratitude Outer Circle event. Get together with your group members in Outer Circle activities and take a Seventh Tradition collection for the ISO of COSA. We will put your donations to good use. Some groups have plans for baking parties, canoeing, ice cream socials, and more.

I want to personally thank all of you who give back to COSA with your time and money. The recurring donation you make, the sponsees you sponsor, or the service you do at the group, Intergroup, Board Committee or Board level is what keeps the doors open and the lights on for the next newcomer who walks in the door hurt, confused, and angry. Let's make sure that those newcomers find a healthy, vibrant COSA to come home to. Hugs,

Claudia

Step Eleven

Each time I do a step my sponsor always asks me to redefine the words, create a list quickly...don't think. Then underline the first ones that feel right, again without thinking. Then put all those words together—what does it mean to me now? This has helped me really connect with this Step, right from the start. For example:

Sought: Looked for, <u>searched</u> Through: in, <u>by way of</u>

Prayer: words to connect to my HP

And Meditation: <u>silent meaningful way of thinking</u>
To improve: to gain a better understanding, <u>to enhance</u>

Conscious: <u>awareness</u>, awake Contact: <u>reaching out</u>, to call

With God: with my HP, with the universe

As we: as all of us, <u>or as I</u> Understood: <u>know</u>

God: my HP

Praying: thoughts of needs or help, connection

Only for: just for

Knowledge: wisdom, awareness

Of God's: his, of my HP's, of the universe's

Will: <u>desire</u> <u>And the</u>

Power: <u>effort</u>, strength, force To Carry: to bring, to hold, <u>to move</u>

That out: in a forward movement, to show

New meaning of Step Eleven for me is:

"I searched by way of words to connect to my HP, in a silent and meaningful way of thinking.....to enhance my awareness of reaching out to my HP, in my own way, to know my HP's connection, just for wisdom and for awareness of my HP's desire for me, and for the effort to move it forward"

It's amazing what meanings come out of redefining the words. I always feel it brings an amazing personal connection! When I work a Step for the first time, I don't always know what the Step means (how should I approach the work, how do I connect to my Higher Power more, how do I listen to my Higher Power, what "will" does my Higher Power have for me, etc?). This little redefinition of the words gets me started on the right track every time.

My sponsor said "Set aside a time each day to build your relationship with your HP." I thought: And do what--sit and listen for a message? I just learned to define what my Higher Power was in Step Two and to let go in Step Three--now how do I listen for my Higher Power's desire for me? I could see this was going to be tough.

So the next day, not thinking about any of this, I left or my business trip. I had an hour before a dinner with clients and was in my hotel room answering work e-mails and catching up on messages, When I started to delete old texts, I happened to see one from several



power to carry that out God as we understood God meditation to improve our God's will for us and

Step Eleven

Step Eleven-cont'd.

months ago that I had sent to a new COSA member. I had been wondering how she was doing because the last time she came to COSA I could see the pain she was going through. I wondered if she had stopped coming since I had not seen her for quite a while.

I thought for a minute about texting her again....I typed it out but didn't send it. I wanted to tell her I was thinking of her. She reminded me of me when I first came to COSA—of the pain of not wanting to be part of this group. I sat there and paused, thinking: "Don't reach out, she may not like it, I don't know if she's going to meetings, I may be pushing her away if I text again, would she think I was checking up on her?"...so I didn't send it.

I thought maybe I would send it another day. I turned away from my phone, a few minutes later it buzzed, and when I picked it up and saw her name, a strange feeling came over me. I thought for a quick minute: "Shoot, did I hit send on that text earlier?" No, I didn't. I got a text from her, out of the blue. She was checking in on me. She was thinking about me at that very moment because she had just come from a meeting. It put a smile on my face....was it synchronicity like I used to say or was it my HP telling me that my thoughts about her were just being responded to....to let me know she was doing well. Was it a reminder to tell me that reaching out to someone I care about is never a bother? These are the moments that remind me that my hope and good wishes for someone were being sent for me.....maybe it was my HP saying if you can't do it, I will.

This simple meaning of connection to another COSA member in a loving and caring way, reminded me about my Step Eleven work that I was starting to do with connecting to my HP. When I want to talk to my Higher Power I sit outside or take a walk. But what do I do if I want to listen to my HP?...I wasn't doing anything yet. I thought: Well, others hear clear messages, but I don't. Am I supposed to hear a voice? Or is my Higher Power his will for me in a different way?...How do I know?...Someone tell me!

What I learned from that simple text that I could not send to a new COSA Member, was a message saying: Don't be afraid to start. Connection does not come easily, it may come with fear, and it's not like everyone else's...Connection comes over time. Like true friendship, it has to build. It might not be clear at first, but if I make time for my Higher Power, if I send a message and wait for a response...it might not come quickly and I may not have all the answers now how it will come. It might be a lesson in patience. But in a silent meaningful way I could reach out to my HP, like I did with that COSA member, and I might get a message back.

~EJH Mesa, AZ

"Attitude of Gratitude" Outer Circle Week!

"Attitude of Gratitude" Outer Circle Week!

November 1-7, 2014

Dear COSA in Recovery,

I want to invite you to start your November with an attitude of gratitude! Gather up your COSA friends and pick an Outer Circle activity to enjoy together any time during the first week of November, 2014. It's a fundraiser for the International Service Organization of COSA.

What do you mean by Outer Circle?

Outer Circle behaviors provide a roadmap for sober living. In our literature, it says when formulating our Outer Circles, "We can include things in our lives that give us a sense of value, meaning, and purpose."

One of those things for many of us is fellowship with COSA friends. That's what we're asking you to consider doing – something fun or spiritually enriching where you can celebrate your recovery and reflect on your gratitude for the COSA fellowship and the International Service Organization of COSA that supports all of us.

Whatever you choose to do, please take a moment to reflect on your gratitude for all that your COSA program has given you. Then show that gratitude by making a Seventh Tradition donation to help carry the message to those who still suffer.

Not sure what to do? Here are some examples from our last Outer Circle Fundraiser:

Take a walk. Go to a coffee shop for fellowship. Organize a potluck. Talk about gratitude in a meeting and donate the night's Seventh Tradition collection. Make jewelry. Go to the movies.

Please send Seventh Tradition donations by check to:

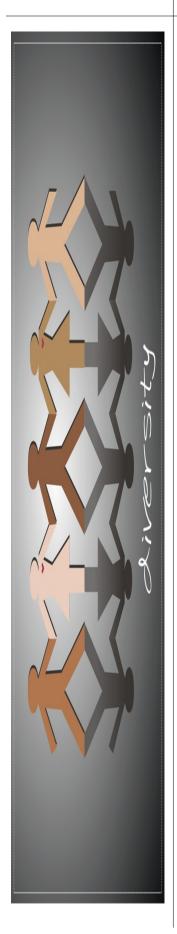
ISO of COSA 9219 Katy Freeway, Ste. 212 Houston, TX 77024

Or you can make the donation online with a credit card and write "Outer Circle" in the Description Box (on the second donation screen).

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

All proceeds for this event will go to carrying the message to those who still suffer.

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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.

Attitude of Gratitude-cont'd.

Questions? E-mail me at resources@cosa-recovery.org.

In Service,

Emily G.

Resource Development Committee Chair / Vice Chair International Service Organization of COSA

P.S. - Donations to the International Service Organization of COSA are tax-deductible.

What is the International Service Organization of COSA?

It is the group that supports all of the local meetings around the country and the world. It runs the website that lists the meetings. It puts out COSA literature, puts on an annual convention, hosts the COSA online store, and holds the Annual Delegate Meeting, where the Delegates help make decisions for the fellowship.

Step Twelve

The TWELFTH STEP ... what a monumental achievement for those who have worked the program to this level! I have just completed a year-long Step study, and it reminds me of what it must have been like when I took my first baby steps: my parents applauding and praising, my siblings cheering and encouraging, and the whole network of family being informed of the good news. I was developing. I was progressing and entering a new phase of independence in my life. My Twelfth Step into this spiritual awakening of COSA recovery is no less exhilarating, awe-inspiring, or promising than those first toddling paces. In many ways, my recovery offers a deeper adventure into a spiritual aspect of life that frees me from destructive patterns. I have started this COSA Step work and I only want to move forward. I have no intention of regressing to my crib-bound days!

Even though fireworks didn't explode across the sky when I completed my Twelfth Step, I didn't need them to. I knew, and those close to me knew, that I was a changed person. I was no longer trapped in the fetal position of codependency. I stood up for myself with healthy boundaries (of course in the process, I took my share of spills and fell right down). I finally did find my balance though--through working the Steps, group support, positive self-talk, discipline with mindfulness principles, and sponsor support. When I did get to a place of balance, it felt right--it felt right at that deep gut level where you know you've accomplished something tremendous.

One surprising aspect of my evolving recovery has been the number of dear friends and family that have felt threatened by my new progress and independence. I remind myself that they are enmeshed in their worlds of codependency. Their realities are built on the misconceptions of dysfunctional family dynamics. I limit my discussions with them to my own personal experiences with addiction and recovery. I don't preach or browbeat because I understand that in their minds, if they let go of their codependencies, they sincerely believe that their relationships and lives would crumble. Based on my experience, I have come to understand that self-awareness is the most daunting task that a person can face. It seems apparent that people rush through their days in desperate attempts to avoid awareness in their own souls. I won't think of myself as more or less evolved than these "non-steppers" ... I am only a person who was forced by the circumstances of my life to come to terms with the destructive nature of my codependency. In the analogy of the "new stepper," my friends have awakened from their naps, restricted to their cribs, only to see me stepping around the nursery, finding new discoveries to explore. "Not fair!" they cry, "get back to being confined like us!" It is a natural, expected reaction.

The spiritual awakening that I have encountered as I work through Step Twelve has helped me move from a "taking" to a "giving" frame of mind. For me, the "taking" aspect of my codependency involved accepting continual lies from my co-addict. I was in denial so much of the time that I wound up deceiving those around me, and--most detrimentally--myself. The "giving" mentality that I've stepped up to is not the grasping, manipulative type of giving, but deeper and more self-aware. I have given myself the knowledge of my condition. I am now able to face unhealthy childhood patterns that led to the adult reactions which deterred me. I have given myself a sense of peace that comes from long, difficult work on the obsessive, self-destructive thoughts that stem from feelings of childhood abandonment. I have been struggling to channel mindfulness instead of obsession through meditation, prayer, and recovery work; it is by no means perfect, but

Twelve

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

Step Twelve-cont'd

remarkably better than a year ago. I have given myself freedom from the illusion that a human being can take the place of my Higher Power. I can now view the codependent in my life as a person whose actions and mindsets emerge from a deeply dysfunctional childhood. The "giving" isn't for me alone! With a sense of love and respect for myself and others, I implement boundaries on my behavior to protect my sobriety. I give my partner the boundaries that I hope he will one day be strong enough to give himself. I will give someone, someday, the gift of my sponsorship. My future gift of sponsorship will be, as a favorite author of mine describes, "perfectly imperfect", because that Is what I am.

When I reached Step Twelve, I realized that my "Twelve Stepping" was only just beginning. I am not crawling back into that confining crib of codependency ... no way, no how! I invite you to join me in all the imaginable expressions of these Steps. We'll take the poised, proud steps of those who are graduating from dysfunction to self-awareness. We'll take the eager, racing steps of children discovering new adventures in mindfulness and freedom. We'll take the gleeful jig steps of prisoners released from their chains. It all begins now!

~Betsy S.

Mini-Retreat in Central New York

2nd Annual Mini-Retreat in Central New York

Topics are "Intimacy/Vulnerability and Gratitude" Friday 12/5/2014 at 6:00pm - Saturday 12/6/2014 at 11am

For details, email Syracusecosa@yahoo.com

The International Service Organization of COSA provides this information as a courtesy to facilitate exchange of information about local COSA activities. These events are not endorsed by ISO of COSA. Lack of endorsement does not mean the ISO of COSA opposes the event but rather clarifies that it is not an ISO event.

Weigh in on the First Sections of the COSA Book!

Dear COSA friends,

This is your chance to make COSA history. We're so excited to announce we have a solid draft of the first seven sections of **COSA's first basic text**. We need you to take a look and give your feedback.

We want to be sure the book accurately reflects the diversity of COSA perspectives, as well as our common understanding of the COSA program. That's why we're asking you to give it a read. We're all in this together.

Please read through these documents and send us your comments and suggestions. The documents for your review can be found here http://cosa-recovery.org/LitInDev.html as well as on the Delegate website http://cosa-recovery.org/2015/Delegates/ LitInDev.html

We ask that you be as brief and specific as possible with your input. This will help make the literature-in-review process go smoothly. You are welcome to send input in sections, corresponding with each topic, if that is easiest. It may also be fun and helpful to review the literature with your meeting or group!

The Literature Committee will consider all feedback received. Please send your comments and suggestions before January 18, 2015.

E-mail: cosacopy@yahoo.com

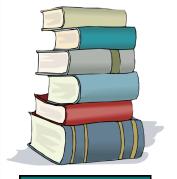
Or mail to: ISO Central Office, Attention: Literature Committee 9219 Katy Freeway, Suite 212 Houston, TX 77024

We appreciate your help and we hope you are as excited about this project as we are!

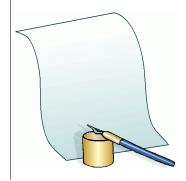
Yours in service,

The COSA Literature Committee

P.S. Please consider supporting your Literature Committee through service. We are particularly looking for a couple of detail-oriented individuals who have a love for grammar and precision in writing to serve as Expedited Review Editors. If you have an interest in serving in this capacity, or are otherwise interested in LitCom service, please e-mail us at cosacopy@yahoo.com.



Weigh in on the COSA Book



Literature Committee Call for Diversity

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.

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. 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 COSA Literature Committee

Call for Spanish Language Translators

¿Habla usted español?

COSA is taking its international status to a new level. The Spanish translation team has produced some literature in Spanish, but we are currently hoping to expand the size of our team in order to facilitate this process.

We are currently looking for bilingual COSA members who are willing to translate or edit translated material.

If you interested in joining a dynamic team of translators and you want to carry the COSA message to Spanish speakers who still suffer please contact cosacopy@yahoo.com.

COSA's Online Store Has New Recordings Available. Check it Out!!

There's a great new way to buy COSA literature!

Were you frustrated by our antiquated online store? Well, please visit our up-to-date site at http://cosa-store.myshopify.com/ and purchase some MP3s, a few booklets, a CD, or a medallion. You'll find it's a lot more user-friendly and pleasant to use.

We've added descriptions for each of the literature pieces, and recordings.

All of the recordings from Los Angeles 2014 are currently available in CD or MP3 format. Recordings from Summerlin 2013 and Vancouver 2012 are available in CD or MP3 format, and these have descriptions to help you choose as well. We'll be adding other MP3 recordings in time.

Our customers from the old online store were not imported into the new site, so please reregister the first time you visit. You may also choose to shop as a guest. You'll use a major credit card to make your purchase.

We'd love to hear your feedback. If you have comments, please e-mail us at cosatechcom@yahoogroups.com

In Service, The COSA Technology Committee

Four COSA Pamphlets now downloadable!!

Four COSA pamphlets are now available as free downloads on our website. Just follow the link below and click on these titles to download the pamphlet in PDF format:

- Welcome to the Sunlight
- COSA FAQs
- COSA Tools
- Defining Co-Sex Addiction

In addition, you can now download past *Balance* issues, going all the way back to 1994 for free! You'll find personal shares on every Step, as well as Tradition shares, and questions on each Step. These are first-person reflections you won't find anywhere else.

You can find these great resource here:

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

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



Working the COSA Program: The Steps & Sponsorship

Step One breaks through my denial. Before I came into COSA, I thought: My life isn't so bad! Or: If I try, I can change what happened—or at least how I feel about it! In Step One, I admit: I cannot control anyone's behavior, I cannot control the past, and my life is unmanageable if I cannot face my entire life! I have the courage to make this admission because other COSAs have been honest with me about what they have gone through and how the Steps have transformed their lives! Honesty without hope is too much to bear, and I'm grateful to all who share their Experience, Strength, and Hope.

In Steps Two and Three I start to gain some of my own Experience, Strength, and Hope! In Step Two, I suspend my disbelief, and hope that I might be able to trust a power greater than myself. All I am asked to do here is say, "There could be something that could help me!" In Step Three, I make a decision to turn my will and my life—my thoughts, feelings, and actions—over to the care of this Higher Power! It helps me to think of the Steps as an experiment: All right, alright, if I try this, what are the results? Experimenting with the Steps with an open mind has worked for me!

Steps Four and Five are where I start to take actions that change me and the way that I see life. I take a look at where I need to grow, and I tell another person—telling a sponsor has worked best for me—about my resentments, fears, etc. and, more specifically, what I can learn about myself from those things.

In Steps Six and Seven, I prepare my heart to have resentments, fears, dishonesty, and selfishness (in all their forms) lifted, and then I simply ask Higher Power to lift them. I have done my part by getting clear about the nature of my problem and being honest with Higher Power, myself, and another person (in Step Five) about what I've learned. Now I allow God (as I understand God) to lift what stands in the way of my relationship with God, with myself, and with other people.

In Steps Eight and Nine, I become willing to amend the harms I've caused. Then, with the help of my sponsor and with God's guidance, I make amends to those I've harmed. When I make these amends, I am freed from fears that hold me back from doing all I can in the world.

Steps Ten and Eleven are the daily part of the Program: a miniature version of all the Steps that helps me to keep my life clean, sober, and sane, one day at a time. In Step Ten, I check in for fear, selfishness, dishonesty, and resentment, asking God to lift them, making amends if needed, telling another person what is going on, and then turning to be of service in that moment. In Step Eleven, I check in with God at the beginning of the day about the day ahead, looking to be of service to God and to others; I check in during the day when I'm not sure of the next right action to take; and I check in at the end of the day to see how I did and to pray!

Step Twelve is where I check to see: Am I working these Steps on everything in my life that needs my attention? And am I passing along what I've been given? The reason that I came to a Twelve-Step Group in the first place was that someone told me she had come to one and it had helped her. You don't have to be on Step Twelve to be able to share the Step work you've done and how COSA is transforming your life one day at a time!

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.

Attraction rather than promotion

I love this concept! I understand attraction to come from within, unfolding naturally. Promotion has an outward focus and is more forced.

When we concentrate on promoting something, we focus on the audience, the receiver, the other person. What will they want to hear? How will they respond to how I behave? How can I convince them to see it my way and do what I want? It is about focusing on the other person and how she or he will reaction to my presentation.

Attraction, on the other hand, is me focusing on myself, taking care of myself, and letting things happen as they will. It is someone seeing something and being drawn to it. If someone is attracted to something I am doing, the feeling comes from them, purely flowing. In recovery I am learning to focus inwardly. Instead of looking to others for verification, I am learning to look within myself. Instead of focusing on the addict, I am learning to focus on my own recovery. It is letting go and letting God.

Promotion puts the onus on me to make them want what I have. Attraction takes the burden off me because I recognize that I really can't control their reaction. And that lightens my load.

Anonymity

Anonymity creates safety. I am able to feel safe when I know that everything I say will remain in the rooms.

I used to work as an attorney for children going through family court. I remember meeting with a client, a little four-year-old who sat across the desk from me in his little suit looking so scared. As I explained the attorney-client privilege to him and told him that it meant that everything he told me was "secret." I saw his little shoulders relax and his whole demeanor change. He felt safe and was able to then share with me the information I needed to do my job.

I believe this Tradition serves the same purpose. I am able to be in COSA rooms with other COSAs and feel the safety of the room. It allows me to be vulnerable and speak from the heart. If I do not feel comfortable to speak my heart, I cannot reap the gifts of the program. It is only when I am truly open that I can experience recovery. And to do this, I need to feel safe with the guarantee of anonymity.

Anonymity also takes away the ego which in turn leaves room for humility. As I write this, I am anonymous. You don't know who I am and it doesn't matter. I am any COSA. That leaves room for vulnerability and pure thoughts.

Press/radio/TV

This COSA Tradition is based on those of the earliest Twelve Step fellowships. I have come

Tradition Eleven-cont'd.

to understand, as I consider COSA's Eleventh Tradition, that there was a time when addiction was not understood, and those who suffered were shunned, making this Tradition all the more important. I've heard it said that sex addiction today is viewed by the general public with just as much misunderstanding as those early addicts were faced with when the first Twelve Step groups formed. Because of the stigma of sex addiction and co-addiction in our current culture, anonymity in COSA seems all the more important.

And yes, of course, don't worry, I don't have any desire to broadcast the fact that I am a co-addict of a sex addict!

Guard with special care the anonymity of all program members

The words "guard with special care" denote to me the sheer importance as well as the tenderness of the anonymity of program members. I've wondered about the phrase "all program members." Who are they?

It's been said that the "program members" to which this refers are members of COSA. Or maybe it's meant to be more inclusive of all COSAs as well as sex addicts. I prefer to interpret the last sentence of this Tradition to guard the anonymity all people in recovery.

Submitted by anonymous (i.e. any COSA)!

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

The value and importance of anonymity is a completely new concept for me. Before the program, I truly believed that I was a good keeper of personal information. However, now I see that when I felt this information could be used as a means to connect with someone or feel important, I did not hesitate to share. I operated as if anyone's business but my own was everyone's business. The information enabled me to feel powerful and special.

I am so grateful for the tradition of anonymity. Who I see and what I hear in a meeting stay in a meeting. Early on in my recovery, I remember fearing that I would see someone I knew from the outside. What would they say? What would they think? Would my business become everyone's business? After all, that was how I operated. My attitude and behavior has changed drastically. I know that we come to a meeting because we want and need help. We come because we want a better life. I can honor the anonymity of others, so they can feel safe to share what is in their hearts and minds. I can assure others that what they say is kept in confidence. In this environment, I feel safe to share openly and honestly. When I share honestly from my heart and others do the same, that is when I feel the presence of a Higher Power. That is when I experience healing and growth from within.

The last part of the Tradition, "reminding us to place principles before personalities," has been life changing. As a result of working the Steps, I have principles today. What a gift! Life is much simpler when I let myself be guided by principles rather than my desire to please others. I am grateful that my sponsor identifies when I am practicing old behavior. When I struggled with siblings while planning an 80th and 90th birthday party for my

Tradition Twelve-cont'd.

parents, my sponsor told me to focus on my principles and not the different personalities. Simple! When my sponsee stopped going to meetings and I lamented about what to do and say, my sponsor pointed out that I have recovery principles today that include attending meetings regularly. My sponsee's choice was not in line with what I believe to be a fundamental part of working the program. It felt so good to speak up clearly and concisely. It was very simple although not easy. The self-esteem I get from putting my program first has been amazing. I'm not afraid to speak up when I am letting myself by guided by the Steps and Traditions. I get to be consistent and true to myself by putting principles before personalities. This is a life that I can be proud of.

~Sharon

2015 Convention: Give Yourself the Gift of Recovery

Give Yourself the Gift of Recovery: Attend the Reflections of Grace Convention

COSA's 22nd Annual Convention will be held Memorial Day Weekend, May 22-25, 2015 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC.

The convention is a great opportunity to reflect and grow in recovery. Workshops, speakers, meetings and informal gatherings allow members from many regions to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other.

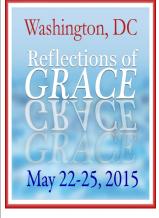
The convention kicks off with a speaker on Friday night followed by two days of workshops and panels on a variety of topics dealing with recovery. The COSA Banquet will be held Sunday night and is a new event that includes a COSA and guest speaker. Other convention offerings include Twelve Step meetings, meditation and hospitality rooms, and many opportunities for fun and fellowship.

The Omni Shoreham describes itself as "an elegant urban retreat" that combines modern comfort, central location and top-notch service. Serving Washington since 1930, the 834 room luxury hotel overlooks Rock Creek National Park and walking distance from the National Zoo. Its 11-acre grounds include a spa and fitness center.

The hotel is eight miles from Reagan National Airport, 28 miles from Dulles International Airport and 33 miles from Baltimore-Washington International Airport. The Hotel is conveniently located on the Red Line of Washington, DC's Metro for those arriving by train it is an easy transfer.

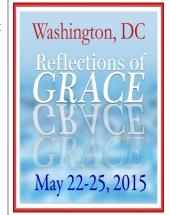
More details about the convention – including registration forms, room rates and meal options, will be available in upcoming issues of the *Balance* and posted on the convention website – <u>cosa-recovery.org/2015/ConventionInfo.html</u>.

For more about the hotel, go to www.omnihotels.com/hotels/washington-dc-shoreham.





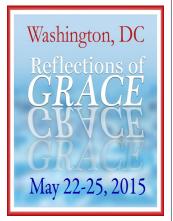






Washington, DC Reflections of GRACE GRACE May 22-25, 2015





2015 Convention: Supporting the Silent Auction

Donating to the Silent Auction

Donations to the Silent Auction give another COSA a personal memento of this year's convention – May 22-25, 2015 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC – and are our primary source of seed money for the following year's convention.

Here are a few ideas for donating items to the Silent Auction:

- 1) If you receive holiday gifts that you won't ever use consider re-gifting them to the Silent Auction. A happy COSA will bid on them and use them miles from the eyes of the original giver.
- 2) Decluttering? One person's clutter can be another person's treasure. You may have gently used items that would be perfect for the Silent Auction.
- 3) If you enjoy creating works of art, make a few paintings, notecards, ceramic mugs whatever you do for use in the Silent Auction. Hand-crafted items are always popular with bidders.
- 4) Buy tickets to a Washington, DC area attraction for the Monday or Tuesday after the convention. For fellow COSAs who stay a few days after the convention, tickets to the National Zoo, a concert, or a Washington Nationals baseball game might be a fun activity they were going to do anyway and this way the outing benefits COSA.
- 5) Got recovery stuff? Recovery books, blank notebooks, items from the COSA bookstore, inspirational posters, refrigerator magnets, bookmarks, etc.

Gifts in past years have included: original artwork, restaurant gift certificates, jewelry, handmade crafts and quilts, cards, bookmarks, professional services (life-coaching, etc.), and get-away weeks or weekends in timeshares, vacation homes, or mother-in-law units/rooms.

Most people bring their items with them to the convention. But you can mail donations up to a month before the convention. If you have a question, please send an e-mail to silentauction@cosa-recovery.org.

The success and fun of the Silent Auction depends on all of us being creative with what we can contribute. We welcome your help working the silent auction at the convention. It's fun! If you want to make a commitment to that, just email us.

Gratefully, 2015 Silent Auction Committee

Reunión Telefónica en Español

You are invited to attend COSA en Español Telemeetings

Since early November COSA has held telemeetings in Spanish. For those of you that feel more comfortable expressing yourself in Spanish this is a great opportunity to help your recovery, connect and have fellowship with other Spanish-speaking COSAs. Join the weekly telemeeting of COSA en Español on Tuesdays from 5:30 to 6:30 PM Pacific Time (8:30-9:30 PM Eastern Time).

Call-in information:

1-712-432-1500 Password 1057988#

This meeting is open to all COSAs around the world. The only requirement to attend this meeting is that your life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. Join the call and share your experience, strength and hope with other Spanish speaking COSAs. If you would like more information you can send an e-mail to cosaenspanol@gmail.com or Maritza i@ymail.com

Convidamos a usted a participar de las reuniones telefónicas de COSA en español.

Desde principios de Noviembre 2013, COSA ha ofrecido reuniones telefónicas en español. Para todos aquellos que se sienten más cómodos expresándose en español esta es un excelente oportunidad para conectarse y entablar compañerismo con otros miembros de COSA.

Nos reunimos semanalmente los días Martes desde las 5:30hs a las 16:30hs horario de los Estados Unidos, zona del Pacifico (8:30 a las 9:30hs horario del Este).

Llamar al número:

1-712-432-1500 codigo1057988#

Estas reuniones están abiertas para cualquier miembro de COSA sin necesidad que resida en los Estados Unidos, las llamadas pueden hacerse desde cualquier parte del mundo. El único requisito para participar de estas reuniones es que usted haya sido afectado por el comportamiento sexual compulsivo. Únase a nuestra llamada y comparta su experiencia, fuerza, y esperanza con otros miembros de COSA de habla hispana. Si usted precisa de mayor información puede enviar su email a cosaenspanol@gmail.com o a Maritza i@ymail.com





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.

Telemeetings—www.cosacall.com

For call in numbers for each Telemeeting, check the www.cosacall.com website.

DAILY	Daily Tenth Step	Noon (PT) (1 MT, 2 CT, 3 ET)
	Daily Eleventh Step	9:00pm (PT) (10MT, 11 CT, Midnight ET)
MONDAY	Step/Tradition Study	9:00am (PT) (10MT, 11 CT, Noon ET)
	Recovery Tools	5:00pm (PT) (6 MT, 7 CT, 8 ET)
TUESDAY	COSA En Español	5:30pm (PT) (6:30 MT, 7:30 CT, 10:30 ET)
	Men's Only COSA Mtg.	6:00pm (PT) (7 MT, 8 CT, 9 ET)
	Step Study	7:00pm (PT) (8 MT, 9 CT, 10 ET)
WEDNESDAY	COSA Tools	4:00pm (PT) (5 MT, 6 CT, 7 ET)
THURSDAY	Serenity	6:00pm (PT) (7 MT, 8 CT, 9 ET)
FRIDAY	Step/Tradition/Concept Study	6:00pm (PT) (7 MT, 8 CT, 9 ET)
SATURDAY		5:00pm (PT) (6 MT, 7 CT, 8 ET)
SUNDAY	Eighth/Ninth Step Mtg.	11:00am (PT) (12p, MT, 1pm CT, 2pm ET)



COSA Literature and CD Order Form

REV 06/13

Ship to Name:	Date:/	_/	
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COSA Pamphlets			
A Question of Recovery		\$0.75 x	
COSA FAQ 🛽		\$0.75 x	
COSA Media Information		\$0.75 x	
COSA Tools 2		\$0.75 x	
Defining Co-Sex Addiction/Sexual Codependency 2		\$0.75 x	
Fact Sheet For Professionals		\$0.75 x	
Twelve Concepts for Groups		\$0.75 x	
Twelve Traditions in Action: A Checklist for COSA Groups		\$0.75 x	
Welcome to the Sunlight! ☑		\$0.75 x	= \$
COSA Booklets			
A Program of Recovery / 52 Questions		\$2.50 x	= \$
Attraction not Promotion (New 2012!!)		\$2.50 x	
Boundaries in Recovery		\$2.50 x	= \$
Caretaking		\$2.50 x	= \$
COSA Parents in Recovery		\$2.50 x	= \$
COSA Triggers (New 2012!!)		\$2.50 x	= \$
COSA Twelve Traditions		\$2.50 x	= \$
Healing Power of Giving (New 2013!!)		\$2.50 x	
Men in COSA (New 2013!!)		\$2.50 x	= \$
Sobriety in COSA		\$2.50 x	= \$
Sponsorship Guide (New 2013!!)		\$2.50 x	= \$
Step One, w/COSA Voices and Exercises included!		\$2.50 x	= \$
Step Two, w/COSA Voices and Questions included!		\$2.50 x	= \$
Step Three, w/COSA Voices and Questions included!		\$2.50 x	
Step Four, w/COSA Voices and Exercises included!		\$2.50 x	= \$
Step Five, w/COSA Voices and Questions included!		\$2.50 x	
Step Six, w/COSA Voices and Questions included! (New 2012!!)		\$2.50 x	= \$
Step Seven, w/COSA Voices and Questions included! (New 2012!!)		\$2.50 x	= \$
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Step Eleven, w/COSA Voices and Questions included! (New 2013!!)		\$2.50 x	= \$
Step Twelve, w/COSA Voices and Questions included! (New 2013!!)		\$2.50 x	= \$
Using the Twelve Steps to Work Through any Conflict		\$2.50 x	= \$
Collection of English COSA Literature (9 Pamphlets & 24 Booklets)		\$60.00 x	= \$
Simple Newcomer Welcome Packet of Literature (4 Pamphlets, noted by 2)			= \$
COSA French Literature			
COSA FAQ: Foire aux Questions (Pamphlet)		\$0.75 v	= \$
COSA Tools: Les Outils de COSA (Pamphlet)			= \$
Defining Co-Sex Addiction/Sexual Codependency: Identifier le Problem (Pamphlet)		\$0.75 x	= \$
Welcome to the Sunlight: Bienvenue au grand jour (Pamphlet)		\$0.75 x	= \$ = \$
Step One: Premiere Etape (Booklet)		\$0.73 x \$2.50 x	
		ψ2.30 X	[_]
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100 - Defining Co-Sex Addiction/Sexual Codependency (Pamphlet) (Black/White)			= \$
100 - Fact Sheet For Professionals (Pamphlet) (Black/White)			= \$
100 - COSA Outreach Business Cards		\$10.00 x	= \$
Additional COSA Material			
COSA Stories, Volume I (book)		\$3.50 x	= \$
COSA Stories, Volume II (book)		\$3.50 x	= \$
A Guide To Program Calls, Pocket Meeting (Serenity Prayer, Twelve Steps, & Twelve Tradition			
and Spirituality in COSA: Mutual Respect & Diversity (2 Wallet Cards and 1 Card)		\$1.00 x	= \$
COSA Medallions (3 or 6 month, 1-25 year, blank)			= \$
COSA Pins (Colored Cloisonne COSA Logo)			

COSA International Convention CDs—\$7.00 each

These recordings are from the annual COSA International Conventions. They haven't been edited for sound quality or content.

For a complete listing of all COSA recordings, please see http://www.cosa-recovery.org/convention CDs.html. MP3s of our more recent conventions are available for purchase at our online store for \$3.00 each.

2013 - Summerlin

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13-1 2013 COSA Opening Session—Georgia		\$7.00 x	= \$
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.3-9 COSA/SAA Joint Banquet COSA Speaker—Betsy H.			
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3-11 Living Trigger-Free—Dani S			
.3-12 Ready to Sponsor? Ready to Sponsor! - Annie S			= \$
3-13 My Recovery Plan:Tools to Maintain Sobriety—Rob			: = \$
.3-15 2013 Sunday COSA Luncheon - COSA Speaker: Sara			
.3-16 2013 Closing COSA Brunch - COSA Speaker: Amy E.			
2-1 2012 COSA Opening Session—Helene B.'s COSA Stor			
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0-3 Step One: Is the Wording Acceptable to You?—Geol			
.0-4 The 12 th Step at Every Step – Finding a reason to be			
0-5 The Circles: How I define my own sobriety by using to			
0-6 COSA/SAA Joint Banquet—Margo M. & Bob H.'s CO			
0-7 COSA Luncheon Speaker: Elaine K.'s COSA Story			
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