



# Balance

## Post Convention Issue

July/August 2015

### Conference Update – Delegate Meeting

#### Attendees:

**Registered Delegates:** Amy M.J. / Monday Night South Bay (CA), Audra / New Beginnings(CA), Christi P. / Apple Valley Wednesday (MN), Deb H. / East Bay Sunday Meeting (CA), Diana L. / Daily Tenth Step Telemeeting (TEL-12), Erin J. / Spanaway Recovery Group (WA), Joey Z. / Orlando COSA Step Study / Winter Park Monday, Kathy / Women’s Circle of Hope (CA), Kerry M. / SF Bay Area, Intergroup Bay Area (CA), Kristy B. / Syracuse Tuesday Night Meeting (NY), Linda P. / Walnut Creek COSA Group (CA), Marlane / NOLA COSA River Ridge (LA), Mary Joy / United Lutheran Church (OR), Maureen P. / East Bay COSA Monday, Ruth / Sunday Night Serenity (NJ), Sally / Thousand Cranes Tucson (AZ), Sarah S. / San Francisco Saturday Morning (CA), Susan K. K. / Saturday CoEd Meeting (TX), Suyapa / COSA Journey of Hope (CA), Terrie / Hope in Healing (AZ).

**Zoom Delegates:** Ann Marie V. / Longwood COSA Meeting (FL), Eileen N. / Miracles in Progress (AZ), Heather K. / Serenity in the City (CA)

**Other COSAs:** Crystal, guest; Eric C., Incoming Board Member; Frank F., guest; JoAn D., guest; Mila T., Delegate Liaison.

**Board Members:** Amy E., Dorothy O., Emily G., Nancy P., Sandy S., Sara P., Wendy W.

**Shared Roles:** Emily G., Moderator; Wendy W., Facilitator; Joey Z., Zoom Facilitator; Nancy P., Timer; Sandy S., meeting minutes.

#### Agenda Items:

##### Meeting Convene and Welcome

The meeting opened with the Serenity Prayer. Participants read the Twelve Steps of COSA, the Twelve Traditions of COSA, and the Twelve Concepts of COSA.

##### Delegate Orientation, Rules of Order, Concepts Study

Following Delegate introductions, the Delegates reviewed ISO of COSA Safe Communications Procedures. Wendy W. explained the Rules of Order and the decision-making model. Delegates studied the Concepts and presented the group with the results of their table discussions, distilled to sum up in two sentences how their assigned Concept pertains to their role as a Delegate.

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**Conference Update – Delegate Meeting continued****2015 - 2016 Budget Q & A**

The following are answers provided during the Q & A:

- There is no Chair for the Resource Development Committee and so it is currently inactive.
- Less income is being projected for the Chicago convention because expenses in Chicago are greater than we've ever had before.
- The Literature Committee is focused on the new text, so no additional new literature is being generated at this time, thus the budget reflects a 17% reduction in sales.
- Susan K. and Joey Z. researched shipping with postal service and it is their system based on ordering volume and tiers based on weight, shape, and size. The minimum amount will be charged if you order a small amount. We don't make any money on shipping charges.
- The Board has agreed to a one-year trial to ship international orders at domestic shipping rates beginning July 1st to support international groups that are not yet fully self-supporting.
- Our Prudent Reserve is \$13,000.00 in savings that is never touched plus another \$10,000.00 in savings. The requirement is 20% of operating income.
- The cost to us for our medallions is \$2.24 each. We buy in quantity so we get a volume discount.
- No assumption as to cost of a name change has been built into the current budget due to the length of time required to make a name change
- We currently have a call-in phone line which is routed through a computer and handled by a volunteer who sends it where it is needed.
- The ISO reimburses Board travel expenses at half the cost of the hotel room, at the least expensive flight option rate and a \$40.00 per day per diem, if funds are available.
- Expense reports and receipts are submitted for record keeping and also to get a true record of the costs. Some Board members make a donation of their reimbursement or donate in many other ways.

Budget Approval Vote - Unanimous **Green**, Budget approved.

**Tradition Three Discussion – Kerry M.**

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

The COSA name leads some to believe that COSA is only for partners, and those who identify as codependent to a sex addict. In fact, Tradition Three is much broader than that. This may cause newcomers qualified by other means to not feel welcome, for instance sex workers, double winners, etc. It is important that anyone affected be welcomed and given confirmation that they belong, even if in a different way.

The following questions, concerns, and comments were presented regarding the issue:

- Inconsistency leads to not feeling welcome and not fully identifying with COSA. Offers the solution of welcoming any new member by introducing yourself saying how you qualify (this is why I'm here).
- Closed meetings became inclusive; they began to value the participation of all people. One COSA shared fear of identifying as a Double Winner because she might not be welcomed.
- If doing outreach, how do we explain who we are? Do we just allow people to make their own decisions about where they belong – we simply welcome them.
- Diversity can also be a factor. Home group is in a very conservative state. She said triggers will occur and so they put into their meeting preamble that you may hear things that trigger you. She said that by working on her own recovery she is more accepting and able to welcome people as they are.
- Why doesn't it say "affected by another person's sexual behavior"?
- A newcomer once froze because she thought the group was SAA. Suggests adding "someone else's compulsive sexual behavior".

**COSA Name Discussion – Ruth**

Ruth recounted the history of the evolution of the COSA name, beginning as an acronym. She posed the question; how do new people connect to us? How can we be clear with therapists and organizations that only refer partners of SAA's to COSA. The name can send a confusing message.

**Conference Update – Delegate Meeting continued**

Ruth raised two questions to the group. The first:

How confused do you feel by the COSA name? Participants were asked to respond by a show of hands using a scale on a range of 0-10, zero equals not confused, 1-3 representing a little confused, 4-6 representing some confusion, and 7-10 representing a lot of confusion.

Voting results

Not confused = 13

A little confused = 10

Some confusion = 1

A lot of confusion = 4

The second question:

How much would you like to see the name or its meaning changed?

Voting used a similar scale: zero don't change the name, 1-3 perhaps change the name, 4-6 consider it, 7-10 absolutely change the name.

Voting results

Don't change the name = 12

Perhaps = 5

Consider it = 9

Absolutely = 3

The following questions and concerns were raised regarding the issue:

- Making the assumption that we change the name, would the public be confused when we do outreach? Would the name change clear the confusion that we are not a group made up of just partners of SAA's?
- I would prefer to use sex addicts here since there are other sex addiction fellowships and this refers to just the one.

**Motion** - Amy M.J. - Retake the vote about confusion over COSA name after the discussion. Motion **seconded** by Kerry M.

- How we introduce ourselves at the meetings might help and to discuss it at our meetings will help. "Hi I'm so-and-so and I've been affected by compulsive sexual behavior".
- The name itself does nothing to make us more inclusive or exclusive.
- How much money would it cost and what is involved to make a name change?
- Difficult to change the name. All the literature would be affected. How do we identify and find a way to make C-O-S-A mean something? If we change it, how do newcomers find us? What terms would we use for search engines to find us?

Delegates ask to hear from Outreach experience and then re-vote.

- We have an identity problem when newcomers whose qualifier isn't a partner say, "No, that's not what those people do, this group is just for partners". Consistency in the message starts at the meeting level.

Group conscience does not have consensus on taking a re-vote.

A round of one-minute shares begins.

- A former Outreach Chair's opinion: the name is recognized, respected, and stands on its own.
- The name is not the issue; our welcomeness and acceptance at meeting is. Rather than focus on the name, we should focus on the deeper problem.
- Would changing the name solve the problem? Channel energy to solve the issue, not toward name change.

**Proposal** – Sara P. - Should we put effort into creating a committee to address changing the name?

**Conference Update – Delegate Meeting continued**

**Proposal** – Erin J. - Vote to continue discussion

- The name is not the issue. The big issue is how we welcome others and give support around the meeting welcome.
- A suggestion to amend the proposal – toward a group conscience to spend time addressing the problem.

**Proposal** – Kerry M. – Take another vote, yea or nay, on confusion about who we are in our meetings.

- This is two different issues: identity is one and changing the name is a separate issue.
- If we changed the name where is the indication we should look within? We've grown as a fellowship but perhaps the literature is not as mature.
- Names matter. Not against the COSA name, but it should have meaning.
- What is our primary purpose? We need clarity on that.
- A suggestion is made that we study the Third Tradition at meetings and fellowship wide.
- How welcome do we make newcomers feel? How did they find us? What do we stand for? How much problem is this name actually causing?

**Proposal** – Kerry – Should more time be spent throughout the year, either by committee or group, to change the name.

Majority vote fails, proposal does not pass.

**Proposal** – Kerry – Agree to focus this year on clearing the confusion, increasing understanding, and how we apply the Third Tradition to our meetings.

Majority vote achieved, **proposal passes**.

**Meeting Guide Change & Discussion of Basic Text – Amy E.**

**Proposal** - Amy E. – Remove paragraph on outside literature from the COSA meeting guide.

The following questions and concerns were raised regarding the issue:

- Felt the paragraph was descriptive rather than prescriptive.
- Needs more information on the subject.
- This is outside the Literature Committee's writing guidelines. At the ISO level, no position is given on outside literature.
- Awareness over the second part of the Third Tradition at the time this was written answered the confusion.
- Experienced how outside literature diluted the COSA message. There is enough COSA literature now.
- Ten years ago there was not much COSA literature. New people brought up the idea of changing the meeting guide because there is newer literature and more literature now.

Majority vote achieved, **proposal passes**.

Amy E. answers question regarding the Basic Text, specific to use of certain descriptive terms such as "codependent," "co-sex addict," "sexual codependent," and "codependent to a sex-addict."

The following questions, comments and concerns were raised regarding the issue:

- A small number wanted one definition for all and a larger number wanted to strike all the terms.
- If someone were sharing their own personal stories in "COSA Stories" would it be in their own words and identifying themselves as they see fit? Amy responded to this question saying that the Literature Committee will consider this and bring a recommendation back to the Delegates.
- Supports striking the language. This language is limiting to qualifying us.
- We haven't flushed out all good ideas for the history portion. Comments here will help the next draft.
- Can the COSA basic text help me understand the identifying terms? If we define one, we have to define all and how does the Third Tradition come in? These terms come from the helping professions.
- The descriptive terms helped her identify solely as a COSA.
- Perhaps we can look to other fellowships for their guidance on their struggle with this.
- We are focused on the behaviors and common problems even though co-dependency was never mentioned.

**Conference Update – Delegate Meeting continued**

- We are more welcoming by leaving co-dependency and other terms out. What is the benefit of having it? Does the risk of leaving it in also risk alienating?
- By letting go of the label, we become more inclusive and it helps each person to better identify with COSA. The benefit is in staying focused on the Third Tradition and being inclusive.
- Include all economic, social – include all and have a diversity focus.
- Our Diversity Statement is included.
- Using outside wording violates our Traditions by implied endorsement. If we use an outside or third party word, it is endorsing it.
- The section on “Who are COSAs?” labeling rather “We are mothers, church members, etc.”
- The deadline for specific feedback has passed, but there will probably be changes to Who Are COSAs.
- Some meetings didn’t have access to the basic text information due to dissemination.
- One or two groups missed it, but they are getting the word out now. It was put out two months in advance and reminded throughout.

Amy E. closes by saying our comments here will be reported on and discussed. The Literature Committee asks for Delegate feedback so that they have a sense that they are on the right path. Primary goals are transparency and keeping the book in line with the spiritual principles of our program. The names of contributors will be deleted in the final draft, preserving anonymity. In light of the discussion, comments, and feedback gathered from the Delegate Meeting, the Literature Committee will move forward with the writing of the book in accordance with the “Use of Terms” in the COSA book. The “Use of Terms” section is attached herein.

**Question and Answers on the Annual Report to the Delegates**

- Please state fiscal year dates on all financials and add a column to show percentage of change on profit and loss statements.

**General Questions / Concerns from Delegates**

- A therapist happens to be attending a separate convention here and saw us. She needs more information as she has patients who could benefit from COSA. She’d like to sit in on a session. We had no answer for her because we didn’t have a group conscience. Opportunity missed? We all need to answer that question.
- When people say we have limited meetings, we need to shift that perspective to look at what we do have versus what we don’t. We have telemeetings and on-line meetings. There is always something available.
- A delegate asks about whether there is a hotline for crisis calls. There is a phone number on our website that is answered by a volunteer.
- One person suggests that volunteers could take different shifts and transfer crisis calls to members’ cell phones.
- Request for ESH: One meeting location has specifically stated that they are not allowed to show the address of their location. Does anyone have any ESH on this?
- Another group in a similar situation added “Please call for important information on directions and parking” on the website.

**Board Elections**

Board prospects share briefly with the Delegates as to why they wish to serve.

Amy E. - Literature Committee Chair; Emily G. – Board Chair; Eric C. – Member at Large; Sandy S. – Board Secretary; Sara P. – Convention Committee Chair; Wendy W. – Board Treasurer

Delegates vote - **All prospects are elected.**

**Review of Committees and Opportunity to Sign Up**

Each committee was represented and positions within explained. Time was allotted for Delegates to meet with Chairs to get more information and to volunteer.

**Review of Available Literature – Susan K.**

Susan K. highlights our brochures and reminds that there is free shipping during the convention. Orders fill in 5-10 days.

**Matching Campaign Announcement – Emily**

Emily explains the Matching Funds Campaign, how an anonymous COSA will match new and additional monthly giving for the next three months, provided we meet a \$2,000.00 mark.

**Conference Update – Delegate Meeting continued****Delegate Evaluations**

Time was given for Delegates to complete evaluations of the Delegate process.

**Meeting Conclusion**

The meeting concluded with the Serenity Prayer.

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**Use of Terms**

**Background:** In October, 2014, the COSA Literature Committee submitted draft sections of the COSA basic text to the fellowship for review. We have received much input and carefully considered all of it. One facet of the book prompted conflicting feedback: the use of terms such as "codependent," "co-sex addict," "sexual codependent," and "codependent to a sex addict(s)" (referred to as "codependent/co-addict" below). Some COSAs asked us to strike the words from the text completely. Others asked us to explain them in greater detail.

The Literature in Development team has spent a great deal of time reflecting on this. We have turned to a Higher Power and the Twelve Traditions to guide our thinking and discussions. The clearest, simplest direction has come from examining our Third Tradition: *The only requirement for COSA membership is that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.*

**The Literature Committee recommends the following course of action with regard to the writing of the COSA basic text: outside of the section entitled "Who are COSAs" (excerpt below) we will refrain from using these terms (codependent/co-addict, etc.) in the body of the text.**

**Reasoning:** Our intention in doing this is to uphold COSA's Third Tradition. Our understanding of this Tradition, as it is currently written, is that the only requirement for membership is that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. In other words, we are not required to be codependent or to call ourselves codependent or co-addicts in order to be members of this fellowship.

Of course, individual members are autonomous and have the right to identify themselves in the way that feels appropriate for them. As this relates to our COSA basic text, however, we believe that it will be more unifying to use language that addresses the specifics of our common problem rather than labels that have the potential to be divisive. We plan to describe the common problem by referring to behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and characteristics COSAs may share or experience.

Another factor leading to LitCom's recommendation to adopt this approach is that these terms, while helpful to some, originate outside COSA, from the helping professions and amongst professional writers. They mean different things to different people. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to reach a COSA consensus on the scope and exact meaning of the terms, especially without looking to specific outside sources. We believe that, even if we were able to define these terms without relying on outside sources, it would be unlikely that we could define them in a way that the whole fellowship might support.

To focus on each of the individual ways our members identify as COSAs, or to define these terms in detail, may prove a distraction from our Third Tradition. It may be unintentionally divisive and would likely place us in conflict with other Traditions as well.

We believe that avoiding emphasis on specific terms is the most inclusive approach and it honors the First Tradition by supporting COSA unity. We can serve COSAs most effectively by producing a book that speaks to us as one unified group of individuals instead of fracturing us into separate groups labeled with identifying terms. We want a book in which it is clear that we are addressing "all COSAs"—all those affected by compulsive sexual behavior who choose to join our fellowship.

In short, the COSA Literature Committee feels that defining these terms in the COSA book would lead to conflicts with Traditions One, Three, Four, Six, and Ten.

Additional Traditions we looked to for guidance:

Tradition Four: *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or COSA as a whole.* The book, as an ISO publication, is meant to represent the COSA fellowship a whole. While autonomous members have the absolute right to use whatever resources outside of COSA that are helpful, we need to take care that the message of the COSA book represents the principles of the COSA program only.



**Conference Update – Delegate Meeting continued**

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.* Continued use of these terms in our basic text may constitute an implied endorsement of them. People are free to use these terms if they fit, but if we implicitly or explicitly link the COSA name to these outside terms, our ability to reach everyone who has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior is diminished. There are many things outside of COSA that individual members may find helpful and these terms have certainly helped some of us to understand and name the ways in which we have been affected. To use these terms in the COSA book may indirectly tie us to those writers and professional sources outside of COSA who specialize in addressing these terms and conditions.

Tradition Ten: *COSA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the COSA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.* If the terms (codependent and co-sex addict) are an “outside issue” in that they are defined and treated in various ways in the broader society, then we ought to have no opinion on them. One of the most important things that we can do to fulfill our primary purpose—to carry the message to those suffering from the effects of compulsive sexual behavior—is to be clear about who and what we are. When we tie the COSA name and message to terms that originate outside the fellowship, and which are not a requirement for membership, we risk alienating those that we might otherwise help. When we refrain from taking a position on an outside issue in the book, we are able to present the COSA message more clearly. We are able to communicate without the distractions, and possible division, that come from trying to address the various ways individual members might identify themselves as COSAs.

*Excerpt from Who Are COSAs*

*Some of us refer to ourselves simply as COSA members or recovering COSAs. Although it was originally an abbreviation, today the term COSA refers only to the fact that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. Some of us identify as codependent, codependent to a sex addict (or sex addicts), as a co-sex addict, or as a sexual codependent. These terms are not a requirement or meant to limit us, but rather to acknowledge the challenges we are contending with. When we identify as a COSA member, we claim our connection to the shared purpose of the COSA Twelve Step fellowship: to recover, and to help others recover, from the effects of sexually compulsive behavior.*

\*This paragraph may be subject to change before the final copy of the book is printed.

## **STEP SEVEN: Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.**

It was difficult for me to put my thoughts into words on paper that would be understandable. I have tried to write two times and my thoughts are jumbled. I did my daily reading this morning about Step Seven. Now, I have a better understanding why this seemed so difficult for me. The first three words of Step Seven are “Humbly asked God.” I had forgotten that God is in control and I have not really forgiven my ex-husband.

I was remembering the 2008 COSA Convention in Seattle which I attended and decided to go to the work shop on Forgiveness. I was working on forgiving my first husband who died in 2000. The pain of sexual and financial betrayals ran very deep for me and I wanted to let this all go. I just did not know how. These feelings were no longer serving me. They were a hindrance. Someone spoke about letting go balloons. Then someone else said write a letter then burn it. So, with the help of God of my understanding, I visualized a colorful kite floating peacefully in the breeze with fluffy white clouds and a bright blue sky. I could let my feelings of pain, anger and resentment float up to the sky like the kite. To help me with this visualization, I bought a fish ground kite when I arrived home. This was the most beautiful reminder that God is in control.

So, the years of 2009-2012, I thought that I could do this with my second husband with his sexual addiction. It was a gradual process. In October of 2012, I came to a decision to divorce my second husband. I knew that I would not go back like I did with my first husband. In the past, it was very much like a revolving door. I told my husband that I wanted a divorce since he was not going to counseling or SAA meetings. For me, this was a way that I forgave him for being an addict and our relationship was not what I wanted for the rest of my life. I was letting him go to have his own journey in life. For my part, I was calm and peaceful during this truthful conversation. During this conversation, I was mostly doing the talking. I did not have any misgivings or indecisiveness. I would file for the divorce since he did not want this to happen. So, I took the time to feel my feelings. So, for some reason unbeknown to me, I waited to file the papers until spring of 2013. I just knew that I needed to be gentle with myself.

**STEP SEVEN - continued**

In April of 2013, I had found out that he lied to me about money. Over the past five years working as an over the road trucker, he had spent a sizable amount on himself. Needless to say, I had those icky, gut wrenching pains of betrayal, anger and resentment, **again**. I felt justified with these feelings. I had no tears to shed. He has never been honest as to where the money went nor will I ever know. I could only speculate which gets me in the whirlpool of negativity which I do not want to go there again. I requested that he pay me maintenance for the next three years. I felt justified in requesting this. I felt that he needed consequences to his behavior. However, I realize that I have not really forgiven him with this betrayal. I have been trying to do this on my own. This has not worked too well for me. I know now that I need to ask God. I am very strong willed and my righteous pride gets in the way. Therefore, the more I practice these less desirable traits; the less God is able to work miracles in my recovery journey.

My other thoughts are that these feelings are only feelings and will not last forever. Most importantly, I know from the past the feelings of freedom, peace and serenity that comes when I am able to let these feelings go. I have a lot to look forward to. This is a "we" program. I know with the help from my Higher Power anything is possible. I just need a reminder every now and then.

~Anonymous

**STEP EIGHT: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**

Today, I put my second husband on my amends list. I do not know when or how this will take place. At this point in time, I am not ready because I still harbor anger and resentment toward him. I know that in time I will be able to forgive him. I forgave my first husband for the same betrayals. I can most certainly forgive my ex-husband. I need to remind myself that the word "willing" is the key. I am willing to forgive him. What form will this be in? I have no idea. I do know that God will give me the guidance and knowledge when I am ready.

I also needed to put myself on this list. I had the old feelings of being stupid for not seeing the truth four years ago. The truth was in black and white, his check stubs. Along with the feelings of stupidity, I felt not good enough, unlovable, shame and many other negative feelings. I have been in this program for eight years and knew that I was in the ditch. So, I reached out to trustworthy people in COSA. Through emails and phone calls, I was able to get back on the bridge of recovery. I needed validation that I had the right to feeling the way I did and to nurture myself through the pain of this betrayal. I remembered that these were only feelings and the next choice for me was either act or react. This was my way to become willing to forgive myself with God's help and began to have compassion for myself as well.

~Anonymous



## Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

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

March – April 2015

<u>Group</u>	<u>Amount</u>
COSA Long Beach (CA-23)	\$100.00
East Bay COSA (CA-08)	\$93.00
Santa Clara, CA	\$100.00
Santa Rosa, CA Tuesday COSA	\$300.00
Spanaway, WA	\$150.00
Monday Woodlands	\$19.00
Individual	\$255.00
Recurring Donations	\$1,930.00
Bay Area Intergroup Convention Fundraiser	\$645.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,592.00</b>

### 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.

**TRADITION SEVEN:** Every COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions.

I used to look at this Tradition and think “wouldn’t it be wonderful to get outside contributions and help to support members of COSA”. Why not publicize and look for help or outside contributions? But as I learn what it means to be a healthy individual and recovering COSA member, I see the intent of this Tradition. If we are a healthy individual, meeting, group, family member, co-worker, and world wide organization we need to be able to support ourselves first.

Before I came to COSA I used to put my will on others, and thought if they just did what I said their lives would be ok, and I would get frustrated when they didn’t. I learned in COSA that if someone can help themselves, let them, it might just be their way to grow or come to learn from their situation, or maybe they have a different goal than I do. As an individual in COSA I look to first support myself and when I have difficulty I can reach out, learn how to ask, and not feel shame. I don’t leave my issue with for to fix. And I have always grown from this.

As a COSA group, family member, or work team, I learn to do the same. We look to support ourselves, yet learn how and where to reach out. We do not leave our issues with others to make all the decisions, as we may not get the answers that are right for our group. If I think about my own work projects and our team issues, we don’t abdicate decisions to others, we don’t ask others to take over and run the project. We reach out for others’ experiences and skills to guide or support us. In this way we keep in line with our mission and goals.

As a COSA group, we strive to do the same. We can reach out to another group or the ISO of COSA to find out what others have done or how they might handle it, yet we do not abdicate the decision to another group. We follow what is in our best interest, in line with our mission and COSA overall as only we know what is best for us. In this way, we remain healthy, learning how to make decisions, learning when to reach out, and when to lean on our HP.

When I think of the last part of this Tradition “declining outside contributions” it reminds me of those adolescent years when my Dad said “well since I am paying for it, I get to tell you what I want you to do”. I couldn’t wait for my independence to pave my own way. I used to think that I couldn’t survive without his help. When I think of COSA and what might happen if we accepted charity or donations from outside members - it could certainly impact our mission and strategy. It could impact us as members even if it influenced us only in the slightest of ways. Since we strive to be independent and learn what is best for us, we avoid this influence.

Tradition Seven is so critical to our health and happiness, and it is such a wonderful reminder that we are striving for both, and love when I hear Tradition Seven in every meeting I attend!

~ Beth. Mesa, AZ

**TRADITION EIGHT :** COSA should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

I am grateful for all of the volunteers who keep the ISO of COSA running. The dedication of these generous people is touching and inspiring. Even though the link may not be immediately obvious to a casual observer, I owe my recovery in large part to COSA volunteers at all levels of the organization.

I also understand that there are certain jobs that need to be done within any organization that will be best done by an employee or special worker. Paying someone to perform a professional service ensures a level of continuity and clarity of purpose. The ISO of COSA may at times need to hire an administrative assistant, a writer, or a legal advisor, for instance. Where the Traditions provide a point of clarity here, though, is that this person is just that: a professional administrative assistant, a professional writer, or a professional lawyer – not a “professional COSA”, because there is no such thing. No single person ought to take on the role of professional representative of COSA because COSA is a diverse, dynamic group of people.

As with other Twelve Step fellowships, we aim to keep our organization lean, compact, and humble. We strive to maintain a minimum of bureaucracy. We want the connection between the COSA program and the COSA who is still suffering to be as direct and unencumbered as possible.

~Betsy As seen in Volume 6, Issue 7 of the Balance.

## Post Convention Reflections

**The 2015 COSA Convention, *Reflections of Grace*, was held May 22-25 at the Omni Shoreham in Washington, DC. Recordings of the sessions and speakers are now available through the COSA Store in both CD and MP3 format. The following “reflections of grace” are from some of the attendees on their convention experience:**

This was my first conference, and I'm so glad I participated. What struck me, and stayed with me, was the diversity of our community. I met COSAs who were female and male, straight and gay, and at every stage of their journey. I heard from COSAs who were deeply faithful, but I also attended a session on "Recovery without the 'G word.'" I talked to COSAs who were struggling, right now, with the addicts in their lives ... and I heard presentations by COSAs who have moved on to new lives and new relationships. Every interaction helped me to understand my own situation better.

~ Laurie S.

I'm from California, and this was my first COSA Convention after 2 years in COSA and 7 years in another fellowship. I loved it! I loved the content and pacing of the workshops, getting to the nitty gritty of what we are about in the delegate discussions, and meeting so many people who I felt comfortable telling the real truth. The speakers and panels of COSAs who told their own stories were particularly powerful for me. Hearing people share flat out about what has happened in their lives makes it easier for me. My shame factor was diminished from attending the convention, and I love that too! Thank you.

~ Kathy C.

I am new to COSA. At first, I was upset that I needed to belong to COSA, let alone attend a COSA conference on my Memorial Day weekend. However, after meeting the fellow attendees, hearing their stories, and how they gained strength and hope through COSA, I knew right away I was in the right place. They knew what I was going through and showed so much compassion. I learned that COSA is not about blaming others, but about helping those who have been affected. I learned so much about myself and it really jump-started my recovery. I will be going back every year and I can't wait to share my own message of recovery, strength, and hope.

~ Bob B.

This was my first convention. I met and had the opportunity to hear about the experiences of some amazing people there. I took copious notes at one of the panels (which I use in my recovery work), went to a wonderful meeting, as well as several excellent workshops. I had several intense conversations with new recovery friends, and enjoyed meeting one who was formerly only an online acquaintance! I also had the (unforeseen) opportunity to be aware of my behavior, as lots of feelings got triggered, which I dealt with as they arose both during and after the convention. I am SO grateful for the plentiful and healthy vegetarian food options in that extraordinarily comfortable and well-kept hospitality suite! Thanks very much to all who worked so hard putting it together!

~ Adrienne

This year's Reflections of Grace Conference marks my 5th since 2008 (Seattle was my first). I've been in COSA recovery since that first convention where I found my sponsor. We've stayed connected since and continue working on the steps and issues related to COSA recovery.

I live in Vancouver Canada and she in NYC. This year we met in Washington and I'm grateful she was there to support me through a very difficult emotional roller coaster ride! I was deep into my eating disorder which was further exasperated by the feelings that surfaced while at the conference. My inner teenager came out in full force and she was mad as hell! This my sponsor says was very good 'cause I never felt safe enough to feel all the pain associated with the effect of growing up with a father and mother who are my main qualifiers in COSA.

During the Conference I attended the ACOSA workshop and 12-step ACOSA meeting. Sad and grateful I was not alone. This powerful program continues to help me break out of the denial and find peace and serenity of the effects sexual addiction has on me as an adult as well as in my childhood.

It was also wonderful to see friends I only get to meet at Convention. I loved the outing to the Washington Memorial and the Mall. Besides that I was way too dissociated to really stay grounded in much of the other programming offered. I was happy I traveled with a very good friend who attended his first SAA conference. He was my inspiration to stay focused on recovery and glad he had the beautiful opportunity to witness recovery in action!

~ Louise G.

**Post Convention Reflections – continued**

The convention was my first. I've been in COSA only about a year, but in another 12-step program for about 30, so felt right at home (never attended a convention with that program, either). I soaked up the warmth of the people, the honesty, and the wisdom, strength, and hope. The plenary speakers were amazing. My SAA partner attended the dinner events with me. We would have attended some regular sessions together but the times between the two weren't synchronized so it didn't work. That would be something to fix in future. My partner made a big breakthrough in his recovery, thanks to various moments of serendipity with convention-goers and speakers.

~ Kathy K.

This was my second convention (8.5 yrs recovery, DFW area). I only attended one day but really enjoyed myself. I participated in the sexual anorexia class (very I-focused), the Spanish 12 step meeting (fun to practice recovery in another language), the couples recovery presentation (very good content) and the lunch talk on Saturday (great job, transparent). I appreciated the convention sponsoring my attendance. I was really impressed with all the silent auction entries but wasn't able to participate b/c I was only able to attend on Saturday. Loved the resting/healing/retreat/suite! It was well stocked, comfortable and accessible!

~ Sandra P.

My husband and I have been in recovery 2 years this July. Washington was our second conference, but my first COSA experience. I walked away from this conference with renewed hope in my recovery, with incredible COSA literature, learning about online Zoom meetings (which I now attend regularly), new friendships and an endless amount of Experience, Strength & Hope. I am hooked! We attended a seminar on Sexual Avoidance that has changed our relationship and has strengthened our recovery as a couple. We hope we will be able to attend all future COSA/SAA conferences and appreciate all the people who were so vulnerable and allowed us to learn from them.

~ Cindy L.

I am in recovery since late March, discovered and accepted my husband's betrayal as a result of his sex addiction in April. The convention in May was my first and I attended it as if my life was depending on it. It's the first birthday in the last 19 years I spent without my partner, but also was the best and most heartwarming/wrenching one for me. Attending my first COSA convention is the best thing I've ever done for myself. The whole weekend was like I was in intense psychotherapy. It was informative, heartwarming/wrenching, shocking, welcoming and very loving. I've never experienced so much love and acceptance from total strangers like my newly met COSA friends. I was high on adrenaline, scared but also knew I was safe. It's an experience so complicated and fabulous, you can only know by being there yourself.

~ Joyce L.

**Additional Resources on our website:**

COSA PHONE MEETING SCHEDULE:	<a href="http://www.cosa-recovery.org/cosacall_schedule.html">http://www.cosa-recovery.org/cosacall_schedule.html</a>
ONLINE STORE:	<a href="http://cosa-store.myshopify.com/">http://cosa-store.myshopify.com/</a>
FREE DOWNLOADS:	<a href="http://www.cosa-recovery.org/freedownloads.html">http://www.cosa-recovery.org/freedownloads.html</a>
NEWCOMER INFORMATION:	<a href="http://cosa-recovery.org/newcomers.html">http://cosa-recovery.org/newcomers.html</a>
MAIL IN <u>LITERATURE</u> ORDER FORMS:	<a href="http://www.cosa-recovery.org/literature.html">http://www.cosa-recovery.org/literature.html</a>
MAIL IN <u>CD</u> ORDER FORMS:	<a href="http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/convention_recordings.pdf">http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/convention_recordings.pdf</a>

## By the Fellowship – For the Fellowship

We encourage every group, intergroup and member to submit articles that **share your ESH (experience, strength, and hope)**. Also, articles and announcements that share up-coming 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://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/lit\\_guidelines.pdf](http://cosa-recovery.org/PDF/lit_guidelines.pdf)

Please send your articles to [COSACopy@yahoo.com](mailto:COSACopy@yahoo.com)

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