



New Year Issue

Jan/Feb 2016

Diversity and Inclusivity

Just getting up the nerve to attend my first COSA meeting was difficult. I remember that first drive out to the church and the thoughts slowly churning in my mind. Will I find any peace here? Is this going to be worth the effort? Twelve Step programs were not meant for people like me, my addict was the one who needed a program, and it would be a waste of time for myself.

I was not surprised to find the meeting room full of women, and buzzing with the greetings of old friends. I asked if I was in the right place and once given the affirmative I was asked to step into the hallway for the newcomer welcome and intro. Oddly enough, the only kindness I would feel that evening came from the awesome person who did the welcome and explained how the program worked in a general way. She eventually became my sponsor. I am ever grateful to her for that first impression she gave: without it I doubt I would have gone back.

Does this sound a little confusing? Maybe a little unsettling for a group of COSAs to not be so welcoming? Let me explain, and don't judge my people—they are awesome. I am Mexican, I stand 6'4" tall, I am covered in tattoos, and I am a man. Oh yeah, I was barely containing the rage I felt after discovering my wife's affair, and I am pretty sure everyone could feel it.

My first meeting was interesting, a First Step share, which caused me a bit of panic. The first question out of my mouth after the meeting was "Am I going to be expected to speak like that, too?" There was not a chance that I was going to sit in front of these people crying, and going on about how messed up my family is, and how depressed/fearful/humiliated I felt when I learned of my wife's acting out in her addiction. I didn't feel any of that craziness. I was just here to deal with the anger, figuring that after a few months of working on it I would be right as rain! Uh-huh...

I continued to show up every week, and watched and listened. I was going to need a sponsor and that created a big problem. Only two other males were in the group and only one was sponsoring at the time. He had a full group and could not take on anyone else. The only person willing to sponsor was a woman, and that was not going to please my wife. Transference had already set in, and the mentality my wife carried was: "I never thought I would cheat on my husband, I did, and eventually you will cheat on me." I knew she feared that I would seek revenge or just happen to fall into the arms of another woman. Her greatest fear was that I would start to have feelings for another woman and that was easily going to happen through sharing intimate details of my life to a sponsor or others in COSA. Then it got a bit worse. My sponsor asked if I was willing to work within a Step Study group. At first I felt a bit of relief. It would not be just me and my sponsor; there would be others present and that would be more comforting for my wife to know I was in a group and not just one on one. I am sure I will be able to hear most of you groan after reading that last line.

First and foremost I had to set the boundaries. I was learning how to do this because as we all know a good codependent doesn't usually have strong boundary skills. I never meet with anyone alone other than my sponsor. No emails, texts, or calls unless my sponsor is included in them too. When we meet outside of our normal Monday Step share group it is never at anyone's home. There are other smaller boundaries I had to put into play, but this gives you the idea.

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I have never gone outside of the bounds I set and only once had someone try to cross them. It was dealt with quickly and, fortunately, was just a minor bump in my recovery.

I was raised in the very machismo, “boys-don’t-cry” environment of an old-school Mexican family. Dad busted his butt to get us by and Mom tended to the home. I had an older sister and a younger sister and each one of them belonged to a parent. That left me as the one watching from the outside. Commence grooming the codependent. I would do what I could to get any recognition/attention/affection from my parents and by the time I was twelve I could cook a full meal, do my own laundry, and was self-sufficient in many other ways. All it got me was more responsibility and less time to be a kid. I was often left alone with my sisters, we were latchkey kids, and I was influenced by them in many ways. When I started becoming a little too “sensitive” one of two things would happen. I was either made fun of or yelled at for not being a “man.” This didn’t happen just within the family at home either; uncles, aunts, or friends of the family all had their fun.

If my family knew what has come to pass in my marriage, I would dread the reaction. I honestly believe that my sisters and my mom would never treat my wife well again. My dad—I am not too sure. Some of my family who know me in my faith would be okay and accepting, and I would also be mocked by the rest. They still do not know, most likely never will, and it tears me up inside to know that I cannot share my intimate life with them. They are not the forgiving type even if they carry the same burden of conscience. Maybe one day I will be able to tell them. Until that day I should send them the bills for my therapy sessions.

When I was asked to write this, I set out to do so with the mindset that it would define diversity. After all, I was different and my presence in COSA created a new mixture, a new view. It would drip with rich recovery language and insight. As started to write, I realized that my diversity created challenges to my recovery and that sharing these hurdles has been a catharsis. I can handle these emotions in a much better way now. I am sorry to those who expected something a little more refined, but that is not who I am. This is what being diverse means to me. I may have different challenges than others in COSA but I have the same goals. I want to achieve peace, serenity, and strength within myself.

A year after walking into my first COSA meeting, I did my First Step share. In that time, I had learned that my anger was the expression of my fears, my depression, and my humiliation. I was not less of a person because of someone else’s actions and choices. That night I read about my family and childhood, the day I discovered the affair, and disclosure. I cried through some of it and felt the release of many wounds as I finished. I received thanks and encouraging words for my share, and I was no longer an intimidating male in the group--I was a trusted friend and a very grateful COSA.

With much thanks,
Jaime

Diversity - Article Two

When I first discovered that my partner was a sex addict I felt like my world had just imploded. I couldn’t eat, sleep, or make sense of anything, and because I was in the throes of my co-addiction and the trauma of disclosure, I wasn’t sure how to even make it from moment to moment.

Thankfully, I had friends in recovery who were there to help me find COSA. Sadly, though, when I looked up the one meeting in Tucson at the time, it said it was a “closed” meeting. I thought that meant the meeting was full and was no longer accepting new members, but I was desperate, so I left a message pleading with them to let me in.

Imagine my relief when a very compassionate woman left me a message urging me to come. This was on Friday, the day my world fell apart. The next meeting wasn’t until Monday, and in my pain, I wasn’t sure how I would make it through a weekend that seemed eternal.

When I first went to the meeting and heard people share with love, compassion,--and joy!--I caught a glimpse of recovery in the lives of people who had been through what I’d just suffered. That gave me tremendous hope. Here they were smiling and laughing and hugging and talking about the gifts and promises of recovery. It was exactly what I needed. Thank God I was able to go to that meeting. Looking back on it, I feel like my local COSA group probably saved my life.

Diversity article – continued

I immediately jumped in with both feet and shared my story. A bunch of other newcomers joined around the same time, and we started a Step Study group together. Then we started having COSA events, like hiking, painting parties, karaoke, and shared meals. Most of my non-recovery friends and family judged me for being with a sex addict or gave me really unhealthy advice, so my COSA group became the only place where I could truly, deeply, and intrinsically be myself and know that I would be accepted and loved. My local COSA group became my family when the rest of the world let me down, or when I didn't know how to deal with my life.

Several months later I signed up to be our first ever delegate from Tucson. At the convention I met several men who were desperate to meet other men in COSA, men who had flown to Albuquerque so they could finally attend a meeting in person because all of the meetings in their states were closed to men. Over and over again I heard stories about people being rejected from a COSA group for one reason or another. I couldn't imagine. What would I have done if my Tucson group had not let me in?

Feelings of betrayal, rejection, and isolation were some of the deepest wounds I had when I discovered my partner's sex addiction, and the radical acceptance I got when I joined the Tucson meeting was without a doubt the greatest healing salve during those torturous first months. Most of my closest friends are from COSA now. COSA is what has given me the tools to heal that sense of betrayal, rejection, and isolation, so when I met men who were barred from attending a COSA group, I just couldn't believe it. And, if I'm honest, I probably felt a little superior because our Tucson group was so open.

Then, several months later, a sex addict walked into our room, wanting to join our group. People were activated and triggered in a huge way. How could she be a COSA if she's a sex addict? What about all the people who were triggered by her shares--or just by her being there? Could we open up and have real honesty and safety if we knew she went to sex addiction meetings too? We had lots of fears and lots of questions.

We had an emergency business meeting to figure out what our group conscience was. In that raw, honest, prayerful meeting, we saw right there in our own opening statement the words we read every week: "This is a closed group open to anyone whose life has been affected by another person's sexually compulsive behavior."

This woman was a sex addict — and so was her husband. After being in a sex addiction program for a few years and getting some good recovery, she realized that along with her husband, her father was a sex addict, as was her childhood abuser and every one of her previous partners. She also recognized her own unhealthy coping mechanisms and was trying to stay sober in both aspects. COSA probably had tools she needed to learn. While she was doing well at her own recovery from sex addiction, she felt powerless over her desires to control her husband's behavior, monitor his activity, obsess about his acting out, keep tabs on his recovery, and all the other things COSA members talk about in meetings. Yep, she was definitely a COSA.

And yet she triggered so many of us, so we made new guidelines to keep people from getting triggered. We continued to wrestle with that until we realized that in trying to keep triggers from happening in our meetings, we were in effect blocking any ease of expression and thus the safety in our gathering. People became afraid to say things that might trigger someone else, and so they stopped sharing. The fear of triggers became its own form of censorship. People stopped signing up for First Step shares, and the fear of being triggered in a meeting (or triggering someone else) became an oppressive force keeping people from sharing their own pain. And it kept people from sharing their own experience, strength, and hope. That was obviously not working.

Finally, we decided to update our meeting format with a line saying: "We remind you that we are each responsible for our own emotional safety and we encourage you to take care of yourself. If someone shares something that you find triggering, please practice appropriate self-care."

We have also since updated our language to be open to *anyone* whose life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, in accordance with our Third Tradition discussion at the 2015 COSA Convention. Yes, we realize that opens our group up to almost anyone, and we are happy about that. The benefits we get from our diversity *far* outweigh any triggering events we have ever had, or any discomfort we face by sitting and sharing with those who may not be like us. After all, everyone in our meeting has at least one thing in common: our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.

We will continue to be challenged as we grow in our diversity and accessibility, but that's why we have the guidance of the Twelve Traditions. While every meeting is autonomous, and the Twelve Traditions can be interpreted in different ways, I think COSA's spirit of diversity and inclusivity make us a much more powerful and a much healthier organization.

Diversity article – continued

I realize now that I could have been denied access to COSA on multiple levels. I am so grateful to have such phenomenal access to recovery here in Tucson, now with multiple meetings in the city, as well as internationally with Zoom meetings, telemeetings, the annual convention, and service opportunities with the ISO. I am grateful that no matter where someone lives, they can somehow get access to COSA materials and groups online or by phone. When I think about the gifts of my local meetings, and the real-life relationships I have with my Tucson COSA family, I can't imagine how different my recovery path would have been had my home group been closed to me. That's one of the reasons I am so excited about being on the board of the ISO of COSA, and why it was important for me to share my story as a speaker at this year's convention. Our different voices are so important. It is my dream that someday every COSA has the opportunity to share his or her voice in confidence, and that every person suffering from the effects of compulsive sexual behavior can find solace in a local meeting, in a hug from a new friend in recovery, and in the radical acceptance of wildly diverse people who share a common story, a common struggle, and a common hope.

Eric C.
Tucson, AZ

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Hello COSAs,

It may not be the most pressing question on your mind. But you may have found yourself wondering at some point, "What do the International Service of COSA Board Members do exactly? And what do they get out of service?"

I asked a few of our Board Members and here's what they said:

Sandy, our Board Secretary, says these are a few of her favorite things:

- Behind-the-scenes work to bring the Delegate Meeting together
- Creating the Delegate Meeting Summary - and the honor to have witnessed and been a part of our group conscience in action at the Delegate Meeting.
- Working to provide the best possible annual convention to our Fellowship
- Working to find COSAs who are willing to help with the work and business of COSA
- Writing Fellowship Emails
- Working with COSAs from all over the world
- Enjoying the fellowship, spirit of commitment and service with the all board members
- Growing in my personal recovery in ways I never could have imagined
- Growing in my insight of how our organization works and the spiritual principles that make it possible
- Making a difference for the whole of COSA

I've gotten way more joy, satisfaction and recovery than the "work" I've contributed.

Eric, Board Member-at-Large says, as a board member I...

- Have helped recruit people for other service and leadership positions
- Have VASTLY deepened my recovery, especially at the Board Retreat
- Have made what are probably lifelong friends
- Have gained a tremendous appreciation for what makes COSA possible
- Have learned how important COSA is to so many people, from newcomers who are still in shock to long-term members with years of sobriety
- Have learned how to be a better leader, communicator, negotiator, spouse, friend, employee...Board service takes the Twelfth Step to a whole new level, giving me tools that I can truly use in all aspects of my life
- Have deepened my relationship with my HP

Letter from the Chair – continued

As for me, in the last couple of weeks, I have

- Participated in a Nominating Committee Meeting to discuss open service roles and how to fill them
- Filled out a 7-page insurance form for COSA, which required me to reach out for help from many different people (COSAs and professionals) to collect the information needed
- Called two different people looking to fill an email coordinator role
- Drafted the agenda for our upcoming board meeting
- Written a fellowship email seeking new board nominees
- Met with our Literature Committee Chair to learn about the status of their work
- Checked in with the COSA member who answers COSA voicemails
- Worked alongside our Delegate Liaison to prepare documents to keep our incoming Delegates in the loop.
- Worked alongside our Board Secretary to formulate a plan for anonymous voting in Board Elections

What do I get out of it? Most of the time, I don't know what I'm learning until later on when it applies to some other situation I find myself in. But the immediate benefit is the lifting of those negative internal voices in my head that question my self-worth and purpose. That's worth a lot. It adds up to a feeling of freedom that makes way for joy.

In Service,

Emily G.
Board Chair
International Service Organization of COSA

STEP ONE: We admitted we were powerless over compulsive sexual behavior – that our lives had become unmanageable.

My family history includes a great deal of control on the parts of both my mother and my father. Our family systems included religion, rigidity, and a very strong religious work ethic. My upbringing was quite strict. My father was a career medical officer in the Army—a heart specialist, frequently called away to perform emergency surgeries. My mother was a stay-at-home mom, painfully shy and fearful. I grew up an “army brat”--moving every two to three years, always having to say goodbye to old friends and make new friends. My messages as a child were: appearances are important, exceed, excel, and go above and beyond.

I'm the youngest of five, with four older brothers. There were unpredictable explosive tempers in my family, but also lots of affection in our home, and no sexual abuse. My brothers were always faster, smarter, stronger, and more adept at everything. I was left feeling “not enough” and hurt or frustrated to no end.

There was not a lot of clear sex education in my family. I found my sexuality a powerful tool. I found I was able to use sex to manipulate.

After my first marriage failed, I started living a single life that was very unmanageable. I had multiple partners and compulsive, unprotected sex though I knew it was foolish and risky. I believed I was beautiful, powerful, and in control. But inside I was lonely and longed for an intimate relationship with someone I could trust.

After my divorce I fell deeply in love with my current husband who, to his credit, a few years into our relationship revealed that he had a sex addiction involving pornography and masturbation. This was before our marriage and more than 20 years ago. The addiction had been going on for ten years. My husband's father (also a sex addict) passed away suddenly the first year after our marriage and my husband fell into deep depression. He ran to his addiction. My career began taking off; I was anxious about measuring up and I looked the other way.

Step One – continued

In this co-addictive dance I resorted to being overly controlling. My resentment manifested itself in unmanageable passive-aggressive outbursts and manipulation.

We wanted to have a child so we went to an infertility specialist. I was absolutely devastated to learn that I had only a 3% chance of getting pregnant. In his addiction my husband was feeling very inadequate and suicidal. I wanted to believe that if I just “tried harder,” my relationship would transform. I lost my self-esteem, my self-confidence, and my self-respect.

Because I was unable to have children I felt a failure to my husband. Again, I was not “enough.” As I went about my hectic schedule I found myself fantasizing about suicide. I knew this was not healthy so I forced myself to walk in the door of COSA. Now I see how powerless I am over my husband’s addiction. I am powerless over my childlessness, my poor judgment and my past.

When I was in college I came close to dying in a house fire. Before I jumped out of the upper story window of the smoke-filled house I experienced a strong spiritual connection with my Higher Power. In my mind I said, “I’m not ready to go yet.” I felt the briefest sensation of being heard...then suddenly I felt my roommates pulling me over to the window to jump to safety. I’m grateful to my HP for preparing me similarly to “jump to safety” through COSA.

Mary P.

STEP TWO: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

As I look at Step Two, I reflect on the Higher Power beliefs that I brought to my recovery process. God was a punishing person. There was only one way for me to obtain approval and recognition from God (my Higher Power). That was to perform for people, a church, a group to get the approval I thought was coming from God. My God stuff only happened at specific scheduled times. That was what I brought into my recovery relationship.

As I progress in recovery, I have come to believe in a power greater than myself. That power is with me all the time, not just when I am in a certain building, or a scheduled meeting or event. Step Two has taught me a new, constant relationship with my Higher Power. I need that constant relationship. I need that security of constant Higher Power support to restore myself to sanity.

As I look at the sanity part of this step, I again remember that Step Two does say it will restore me to sanity. It doesn't say restore me, IF I happen to be insane. The step makes no exceptions. I was insane. I was insane in my beliefs about religion, God, approval by works and performance. Step Two has given me my power. It has given me my serenity. Step Two is my beginning of letting go. It is my preparation for Step Three.

I turn my life over to the power greater than myself. That feels so caring for me. In my family of origin, I never felt that nurtured. There was no caring person that I felt safe to turn my life over to. Step Two gives me nurturing and hope.

Ila

Reprinted from Jan/Feb 2010 Balance issue

WINDS of CHANGE

2016 ISO of COSA Annual Convention
Chicago Hyatt McCormick Place
Chicago, IL
Memorial Day Weekend
May 27–30, 2016

COSA's 23rd Annual Convention



Welcome to Chicago, Illinois

This is the once-a-year event where you may obtain valuable information about working the Steps, reflect and grow in your recovery, and connect with other COSAs. This convention kicks off with a speaker on Friday night followed by two days of workshops and panels on a variety of recovery topics. Special functions will feature speakers who share their recovery stories. There will be a variety of COSA Twelve Step meetings, a meditation room, and many opportunities for fun and fellowship. Please join us!

2016 Program and COSA Speakers

You are invited to attend and to expand your recovery through participating in the many events and opportunities available. Workshops, speakers, meetings and informal gatherings allow members from many regions to share experience, strength, and hope with each other. This year we have some exciting things planned, including an opening reception to be held after the Delegate Meeting and prior to Friday night's speaker. On Saturday and Sunday we will have workshops and panels. Saturday's luncheon will include a buffet and speaker. Sunday evening we will gather for a special banquet followed by two speakers – a COSA and a guest sharing recovery from sex addiction. On Monday we will be focusing on re-entry with activities to help with the transition to daily life which will include tools to take with you.

Additional information will be posted and updated at <http://www.cosa-recovery.org/2016>

Please email convention@cosa-recovery.org if you have any questions.

Hotel & Convention Location

This year's convention will be held at Chicago Hyatt McCormick Place. Please reserve your room under the COSA group block name, **Winds of Change**, so COSA meets its minimum reservation and is not charged for unused rooms. Any additional information will be posted and updated at <http://www.cosa-recovery.org/2016>

Registration

Registration is done online through the COSA website. It is a two-part process. First complete the registration and then submit payment. The weekend convention fee includes all of the events with the exception of the cost of Saturday's luncheon. To get the discounted early bird price of \$185, pay by April 1st. The fee includes the Sunday Banquet. The fee goes up to \$200 after April 1 through May 13.) Walk-in and day only rates are also available. Saturday's luncheon is \$50 and extra banquet tickets are \$100 each. If you have questions or problems with registering, contact the Convention Committee at convention@cosa-recovery.org

Annual Convention News – continued**Service Scholarships**

The COSA service scholarship fund will provide financial assistance to COSAs on a first-come, first-served basis, helping with the registration cost. COSA service scholarships are funded entirely by fellow COSAs; donations to this fund are greatly appreciated. To apply for a scholarship, register on-line and follow the instructions provided. Service scholarships require volunteer hours at the convention (4-hour minimum) and are limited. A nonrefundable \$25 administrative fee is required for every registrant requesting a scholarship.

Care & Support

Part of the convention experience is receiving recovery support. Convention mentors are available to attendees to guide them through the convention process. Indicate your need for a mentor or willingness to serve as a mentor on your registration. COSA members also provide support to attendees throughout the convention.

Volunteering

Our convention is run entirely by volunteers. Please consider helping with registration, hospitality, Twelve Step meetings, the silent auction, sound recording of meetings, or in other ways. Indicate your willingness to help when registering and you will be contacted by the Volunteer Committee.

Silent Auction and Convention Store Donations

A fun way of raising seed money for the next convention is our silent auction. Please consider a donation, which you can bring or ship to the convention. You can donate even if you don't attend. For any questions, including shipping instructions, please contact silentauction@cosa-recovery.org

In addition, a new fundraiser this year is our Convention Store! We'll have lots of self-care items available for purchase, like scrubby gloves, bubble bath, and lotions just to name a few! There will be lots of travel size items available so you won't have to pack them plus your purchase goes toward seed money for the next convention which is a win-win for all of us!

For additional information, consult the website at www.cosa-recovery.org/2016 or contact the COSA Convention Committee at convention@cosa-recovery.org.

COSA - Additional Resources on our website:

NEWCOMER INFO:	http://cosa-recovery.org/newcomers.html
MEETING GUIDE:	http://www.cosa-recovery.org/PDF/The_COSA_Meeting_Guide.pdf
ONLINE STORE	http://cosa-store.myshopify.com/
FREE DOWNLOADS:	http://www.cosa-recovery.org/freedownloads.html
WRITING FOR COSA:	http://www.cosa-recovery.org/submissions.html

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

September – October 2015

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

<u>Group</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Bay Area Intergroup	\$62.00
CA-08 East Bay Monday	\$60.40
CA-23	\$125.00
Eugene, OR	\$35.00
FL-11	\$90.00
Indianapolis Wednesday	\$164.80
Longwood, FL	\$75.00
Madison East	\$50.00
Madison, WI	\$125.00
Memphis Tuesday	\$70.00
MN -01	\$50.00
OH-06	\$30.00
Reston, VA	\$50.00
Stillwater COSA	\$50.00
Syracuse, NY	\$75.00
Telemeeting	\$20.00
Tucson Thousand Cranes	\$100.00
Walnut Creek, CA	\$96.11
Recurring Individual	\$2,161.00
Individual	\$110.00
Total	\$3,599.31

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 ONE: Our common welfare should come first – personal recovery depends on COSA unity.

As I look at this First Tradition, it reminds me that I am part of something bigger than just myself. I am part of a family, a team, and the world around me. My own growth comes when I engage with others and share not only what is best for me, but also what is best for the whole.

It doesn't mean I have no voice when I am part of a group. Being healthy means I have opinions and can express my needs. I want to be individual in thinking, yet work together with others to understand what our similar purpose is, yet in my family, we never talked about a common purpose or important goals.

Before recovery I voiced my opinion because I felt I needed to be heard and understood. I also wanted to be right. I thought less about listening. It's not that I didn't care about others; I just wasn't humble enough to see what I might learn. I thought what was good for me was probably a good idea for others. I never thought this was a form of control, or that I had a closed mind.

This Tradition reminds me about taking my mom to the movies, with other family members. I was thinking we were all going to the same movie. In my mind I thought we had a common purpose, to enjoy an evening together at the same movie. Wasn't it just understood? We all agreed on the same movie quickly when we walked up to the ticket counter – or most of us did. Then my youngest sister bought a different movie ticket and said "You all go to that one and I will go alone to mine."

We asked why she wouldn't just join us, and pleaded a little to do it for Mom's sake. I didn't take the time to ask her opinion earlier, and I felt disappointed she didn't follow the group. In the end, we couldn't change her mind. Then out of the blue, my mother changed her mind so my little sister wasn't alone. This wasn't going the way I had planned! This was upsetting...wasn't our goal to be together?

In my family, we didn't know how to talk about common goals upfront, whether small or large ones. I think we felt that you just had to go with what the group wanted. And then I remembered that my mother always rescued the lone standout. I know this is a small issue about movie tickets, yet it reminds me about how I could have applied this Tradition to my family. Did we take time to voice our individual desires ahead of time, and did we come up with our common purpose? No, and it got out of hand.

In my family, as in COSA, I want to be willing to accept and appreciate that others are in different opinions, and are in different stages of life or recovery. I can certainly be accepting of them and their opinions. I pause a lot, listen more, allow others to do what they feel is right, and weigh in last sometimes, as I might learn something valuable that I hadn't thought of.

This Tradition reminds me that unity does not mean uniformity, it means openness to hear others' thoughts and desires first, then work to define a common purposeletting go when appropriate, and working together when most important. When we have unity we might just grow more, love more, and experience more...from one another.

TRADITION TWO: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

I love this tradition! I take from it three main ideas. The first is a Higher Power as the ultimate authority of our group, second is the reminder to let go and trust, and third is humility in defining the group leader as a "trusted servant" who does "not govern".

Higher Power

Tradition Two tells us that in our COSA group and at our COSA meetings, our only authority is a loving God, or Higher Power. I think that's a huge part of why I find COSA meetings so spiritually powerful. At every meeting I attend, I am able to feel the presence of that Higher Power. Our leaders, our trusted servants, never govern at our meetings. We must make room for a Higher Power to be our authority.

For my life purpose as well, there is but one authority, my Higher Power, a loving God.

As I was growing up, I believed that my parents were my higher power. They had authority over me and I believed everything they told me. I saw them as my strength, my anchor, my everything. I think that when I became an adult, I knew in my head that they were human beings, just like me, but my heart didn't get the concept. It was scary to believe that I didn't have an anchor. My mom died 13 years ago, and today my dad is an alcoholic who rages and has no spiritual foundation, yet I have a difficult time truly accepting in my core that they are not my higher power.

When I met my husband, he became my anchor. He was more important to me than I was. Because of this, I put him on a pedestal and did backward somersaults to try to please him so that I could feel I was ok. And then I learned about his addiction and his acting out behaviors and his secret life. He wasn't on my side. I was really able to understand that he was a human being, and a very damaged human being at that. When I really understood who my husband was, I was so lost. If neither my parents nor my husband were my anchor, where did that leave me? I felt so very alone drifting out to sea.

In recovery, I've come to understand that my Higher Power is my anchor. In everything I do, I am not alone. I have a guide, a spirit.

Trust

I just love the concept of a "trusted servant". Tradition Two reminds me to lean into the courage to trust in the leader of the group. When I learned of my husband's deceptions, I lost trust in the person who was my partner in life. And with that, I lost trust in people, and most of all, in myself. In my recovery, I am working hard to rebuild that trust. With baby steps, and many "one days at a time," I am coming to a place of trust. Part of baby stepping for me has been attending meetings and being called to put my trust in the rotation of our "trusted servant."

Humility

Lastly, this tradition reminds me of the importance of humility. The idea of a person leading the group who has no authority to govern and who is in fact referred to as a "servant" rings of humility.

Prior to recovery, I had no concept of humility! My black-and-white dualistic thinking told me that either I am perfect, or I am crap. I didn't want to be crap, so I tried to be perfect, or at least appear perfect. And in my effort, I wasn't willing to take a good look at myself. If I did something that I didn't like, if one of my many character defects emerged, I would quickly use my very well-oiled, finely tuned defense system to either ignore it, explain it away, or minimize it. It's hard to be humble when you're working so hard to portray your- self as a perfect human being!

But in recovery, I am coming to understand that I am a perfectly imperfect human being, no greater than and no less than any other human being. The idea of a leader as a servant whom others trust and who does not govern, on its face is confusing! My first thought is that a leader is someone who is better than me, while a servant is someone less than me. The only way I can make sense of this is to shed these old judgmental thoughts of comparing. I just am: no better, no worse. For now I get the concept in my head. I'm working to incorporate it into my heart!

I can live a much fuller and richer life from a place of humility. When I think I'm better than others, I can't allow myself to be truly seen by them. It's a lonely existence without true intimacy. And when I think of myself as being less than others, I feel unworthy and intimidated, thus unable to have a true relationship.

I am so grateful for the wisdom of the lessons of Tradition Two. They are so meaningful in my life today! And I'm so grateful for recovery and COSA!

With much love and gratitude,
Liz from Orlando

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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://www.cosa-recovery.org/Writing_Guidelines_Revision_20110521_Final.pdf

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