



Balance

Fear

Prior to entering COSA recovery, much of my life was rooted in fear. Fear drove me into panic attacks, raging at my spouse, and self-loathing shame spirals. I had no idea this was fear. I lived this way and I didn't have any other guidance or tools for how to live.

When I entered COSA recovery because my life had become unmanageable due to the effects of compulsive sexual behavior, I knew things were bad, however, I still didn't know fear was driving me. I just knew I felt crazy and thought the sex addict in my life was the problem. I came to COSA desperate for help.

As I slowly started to work my COSA recovery program, I began to try to understand and feel my feelings. I was just beginning to understand that a lot of what drove me was fear.

During this time I also began to identify my triggers and started to look at the family of origin issues I had been avoiding and burying. The effects of the compulsive sexual behavior of my family members were undeniable and made my life very unmanageable in the first few years of recovery as I was uncovering deeper and deeper layers of trauma.

I was suicidal pretty often as I started to deal with and explore these issues. Writing my First Step was excruciating and also incredibly healing. I knew it was working and I also felt pretty terrible while I was working on it.

I didn't have a lot of resources or resilience during this time and understanding the gentleness of the outer circle was really beyond me. It felt like the COSAs in my meetings were speaking a different language when they talked about "having fun". What I did do and could do was go to a lot of COSA meetings, make a ton of program calls, work with a sponsor, and try to pray and use other COSA tools.

I became really terrified of any triggers, I didn't think I could handle anything, and even the slightest sideways glance from a stranger could send me into tears and terror. I started to notice that fear was really running the show.

Steps Two and Three helped me to see that my fear made me insane and that I could be restored to sanity. I made a decision to start turning this fear over to my Higher Power. In Step Four I catalogued and inventoried my fears and then I used Step Five to begin to really share how deep it ran. Even several fear inventories down the road, my fear can still feel enormous.

I learned during this time that I was imbalanced around fear. I was terrified of people, places, acting out behaviors I had witnessed or received disclosure around, past traumatic memories of my sexual abuse and incest history, and most significantly, my own mind and thoughts. I would trigger myself all of the time just by my thinking, even though in most of these situations I was truly safe and okay.

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And, yet, I also had a history around completely ignoring my intuition of dangerous people and situations, unhealthy relationships, and risky behaviors. I had no healthy fear of involving myself with mentally ill or unstable people with compulsive sexual behavior; and/or other addictions and inappropriate actions. I took undue risks with my safety, security, and well-being and yet I had no fears about this.

Meanwhile, my terror for situations like feeling like I needed to bake four different kinds of muffins for the people in my office, even though I didn't even like baking, was intense and amplified!

Slowly and over time, the Steps, meetings, and people in the program helped. I cannot tell you how many program calls I made where some amazing fellow COSA member talked me through and encouraged me around the kinds of life situations many of us face: job interviews, moving, couples counseling, therapy appointments, conflicts with friends, contact from my family of origin, etc. You name it, I was terrified by it and I made program calls around it!

In Steps Six and Seven, I started to become willing to let go of my fears and ask for my Higher Power's help in taking them away. And, then I began to face my terror of Step Nine. I needed to find a lot of willingness in Step Eight and then somehow I did Step Nine. And then some of the fear actually started to leave me in ways I could actually see.

Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve help me stay out of fear on a daily basis. With Step Ten, I notice fear and how it gets me all jumbled up. I share about it. I ask God to lift it. With Step Eleven, I begin my day in prayer and meditation and with a daily reading. These get me out of my crappy morning fear and allow me to envision a day in which I pray for my Higher Power's will for me and understand that I will be given the power to carry that out. If the fear sticks around I go back to Step Ten. I find fear blocks me from my Higher Power and prevents me from living the kind of life I value and where I think God wants me being of service.

Step Twelve keeps me talking about my own personal fears and challenges. Like right now I am afraid I am going to be single and lonely forever. I ask God to lift it as I write this, share it here, and do the next right thing in front of me, which is to keep writing this article.

I find new things to be afraid of all the time. Most of the time now, I don't let it stop me from living a full life. In addition to the things listed above, I have walked through fears of being unemployed, changing and starting new jobs, separating from my spouse, moving back in with my spouse, and getting divorced. I have navigated dating and a breakup and this year since I am turning 39, I will be working on my fear of trying 39 new things (I'm sure I will likely be afraid of each of them as the time arrives to do them)!

And still I don't fully understand my fear and I don't think it will ever fully leave me. I wonder how much of the fear I carry is my nature, how much is trauma, how much is character defect, and how much is simply part of the human experience. I do not know and don't think I will figure it out anytime soon. What I do know is that I do best with fear when I notice it, share about it, and ask God to lift it. I also know I do well when I walk through it and honor the times when I am not ready to walk through it. I know I need a lot of support from COSA friends.

Sarah S.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

To Our Fellowship,

I will be at the upcoming COSA Convention in Chicago over Memorial Day weekend. Will you?

The Convention Committee, staffed solely by volunteers, has been working on this event for more than a year.

If you're not sure about whether you want to attend, a good way to get a sense of what happens there is to listen to some of the recordings from previous years.

Letter from the Chair - continued

You can download MP3s of workshops and speakers from recent conventions here:

<http://cosa-store.myshopify.com/collections/cosa-convention-mp3s>

They are \$3 each.

If you're working on your First Step, the banquet, opening ceremony, and brunch recordings might interest you. Speakers at those events often focus on the unmanageability of their lives before recovery, what they were and are powerless over, and how recovery has changed their outlook and their lives.

If you're thinking about becoming a sponsor, or looking for experience, strength, and hope on the process, there's a workshop about that you may find interesting to listen to.

If you're interested in starting a meeting or looking to grow the meeting in your area, there's a workshop recording on that too.

Those are just a few of the many options so take a look.

The program details for the upcoming convention are still in the works. They will be available ahead of the convention.

Find registration information here: <http://cosa-recovery.org/2016/ConventionInfo.html>

The registration form is here: <http://cosa-convention-registration.myshopify.com/pages/registration-form>

Hope to see you there.

Emily G.
Board Chair
International Service Organization of COSA

PS Thanks to those of you who reached out to me in response to one of my last letters. I heard from several of you, including a COSA as far away as Nigeria. I'm glad to know you're out there.

UNEXPECTED GIFTS AT THE CONVENTION

The distance I've had to travel to get to a COSA convention has been measured more in recovery than miles. I came to my first COSA meeting several years ago in May, just a few weeks before the Annual ISO of COSA Convention. There was a bit of talk about it at our meeting, but I was still too raw from the recent discovery of my husband's addiction to pay much attention to convention matters. When our delegate returned and gave an overview of her experience, all I could hear was that COSA members and members of a group for sex addicts were staying at the same hotel! That didn't make any sense to me. How could that be safe? With a whopping total of four meetings under my belt I still believed that "they" were the enemy. I couldn't fathom voluntarily placing myself in a hotel where sex addicts would be roaming the hallways and lobby!

Fast forward in time and recovery. The annual convention was coming to my area. By this time, I had intellectually embraced the benefit of having our convention side by side with a recovery group, specifically for sex addiction. I had also thrown out my old, broken "us against them" thinking. I had grown a lot in my recovery, but I was still a little wary of men in particular. I knew there would be an orientation for first-time attendees, and there would be COSA Care and Support volunteers I could seek out if I were feeling triggered. These measures helped me feel safe. So rather than focusing on "them," I was free to focus on the great program that was being offered.

Unexpected Gifts at the Convention - continued

Looking at the content, I felt as if seemed like my Higher Power had directed the whole program right to me. I was ready and excited to attend my first convention! So I packed a suitcase and headed to a hotel where there would be recovering members of a sex addiction recovery group roaming the hallways and lobby....

Since this was my first experience with mixed genders within COSA and since there were sex addicts attending, I admit I was a little nervous when I first entered the convention area. It was busy with men and women checking in, getting materials and greeting one another. It was still early. No one was familiar to me and I couldn't tell which fellowship they belonged to. I felt a little fear creeping in, so I asked my Higher Power to help me be calm and be open to whatever I needed to learn.

The first workshop I attended was all COSA women. A spirit of loving camaraderie filled the room. It was fun and informative, and I felt safe. I was relaxed and more comfortable now. The next workshop was open to both fellowships, and it was conducted by a man in COSA. He shared a bit of his background and then delivered a thunderbolt of a workshop. He had amazing recovery. I knew there were men in COSA, but I'd never had the opportunity to meet any. My Higher Power, knowing my lingering discomfort around men, made sure this first impression was a beautiful and powerful one. My mind and heart had been moved in a very humbling but exhilarating way. A new layer of spiritual awakening began to take place in me. When I stood to leave the workshop I noticed a handful of women from my home meeting. They were with their husbands, who were members of the other fellowship. A friend called me over to meet her husband. I was nervous, but he shook my hand and gave me a warm, genuine greeting. I was nearly floored by this. I realized that "they," too, might be nervous and wary of "us," but he had clearly worked to overcome it and had shown me grace. It was another great lesson for me.

As I walked from workshop to workshop, I noticed the atmosphere changing. There was a lot more mingling and more small groups gathered in conversations. More laughter. People were smiling at one another in a friendly way as they passed each other. The fellowship between people in these two fellowships was blooming! There was tremendous camaraderie, joy, and hope in the air. I was breathing it in. And I was now a contributing part of it. In the space of one day something wonderful was taking root in me. Acceptance, humility, gratitude, and fellowship were growing in me as I'd never experienced before—and this was just from my interactions with others! It didn't even take into account all the benefits I'd gotten from the workshops and speakers, which had been my primary purpose for attending!

At the end of that first day I stepped onto a crowded elevator filled with all sorts of recovering members. The atmosphere and conversation was so jovial that it took us all several seconds to realize that the elevator wasn't moving. Since I was the last one in, someone asked me if I'd pushed the button and I replied that I hadn't. A man next to me joked "Oh, come on. I bet you're a real 'button pusher'"—and we all erupted into laughter! Our collective laughter, our common goals of recovery, and our common hopes and humanity flooded through me in that moment. For me, this moment was only possible with the help of my Higher Power.

In my gratitude for such an intense boost of recovery, I volunteered to serve on our 2015 Convention Committee. I had the privilege of helping to create a wonderful convention for our COSA Fellowship. I also conducted a workshop at that convention. I asked that it be open to members of both fellowships. After the workshop was over, two members of the sex addiction fellowship thanked me for the information and said that they related to a lot of what they'd heard and that they felt we shared some common issues. That was very powerful to hear.

At that same convention I also participated in a panel discussion that required deep vulnerability and bravery on my part. It, too, was attended by members of the other fellowship for recovery from sex addiction. After the panel discussion, a group of us left together, chatting away, with the other fellowship-members among us. There I was, relaxed, joyful—and roaming the hallways and lobby with all kinds of people in recovery.

The content of our ISO of COSA conventions is always outstanding. The Convention Committee works for a year to plan it for us. They reach out to seek ideas, speakers, presenters, and volunteers from all over our worldwide COSA Fellowship. The workshops are prepared and delivered by COSA members from their real life experience, strength, and hope. It's as informative as it is inspiring. But for me the gifts go far beyond the actual program. I feel a concentrated dose of Higher Power there. Meeting COSAs from all over the world and developing friendships with them is another priceless gift of the convention. All of this has allowed me to grow to a place of greater acceptance, love, and compassion. This growth has opened unexpected doors of opportunity and recovery for me that I would otherwise never have recognized or dared to pass through.

Sandy S.

WINDS of CHANGE

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



Throw caution to the *WIND!*

The Convention Committee has been busy planning the four-day event to be held in Chicago this Memorial Day weekend with hopes that you will join us! What a great opportunity to expand your recovery by gaining insight into working the Steps, the Traditions, and recovery tools while connecting with other COSAs!

Some things are *CHANGING!*

Here is a tentative schedule to give you an idea of what to expect:

Friday, May 27

- Opening Reception at 6:00 pm.
- Opening Session with COSA speaker at 7:00 pm.
- Twelve Step meetings and informal gatherings for fellowship and fun (“Outer Circle”).

Saturday, May 28

- Early morning options for self-care, reflection, and connecting.
- Panels and workshops throughout the day (9:00 am-5:00 pm).
- Luncheon with COSA speaker at noon (cost of lunch not included with registration).
- Twelve Step meetings offered various times.
- Outer Circle activities.

Sunday, May 29

- Early morning options for self-care, reflection, connecting.
- Panels and workshops throughout the day (9:00 am-4:00 pm).
- COSA Banquet (5:30 pm-9:30 pm) – this special event is planned to be a festive occasion for conference attendees. The cost of the banquet is included with the cost of weekend conference registration. For those wanting to bring a guest, tickets can be purchased separately. We will have both a COSA speaker and a guest speaker recovering from sex addiction.
- Twelve Step meetings offered various times.
- Outer Circle activities.

Annual Convention News – continued

Monday, May 30

- Twelve Step meetings offered.
- *Serenity Send-off*: this is a time for connecting, self-care, and preparing for re-entry. It will be a group activity to transition from the convention back into life (9:00 am-11:00 am).

Book your stay at the convention hotel

This year's convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency 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. The link to book your reservation is located on the COSA website at www.cosa-recovery.org/2016

Easy online registration

Also at the COSA website is our two-part registration process. First, complete the registration, and then submit payment. The weekend convention fee includes the cost of all the events with the exception 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 \$40 and extra banquet tickets are \$95 each. If you have questions or problems with registering, contact the Convention Committee at convention@cosa-recovery.org. Please note that all food functions are buffet style to accommodate those with special dietary needs.

Offering financial help with registration

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 online 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.

You are not alone! We offer 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, 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. For those who can't attend, the Convention Committee has jobs for you, too!

Silent Auction and Serenity-on-the-Go Store donations needed!

A fun way of raising seed money for the next convention is our silent auction. We're asking for items to be sold at our silent auction or convention store, called "Serenity-on-the-Go"! In the past these items have been everything from affirmation cards to vacation time-shares to stained glass. We also accept gently used items or things like artwork, kitchen utensils, quilts, jewelry, or greeting cards. Gift baskets or boxes are also good possibilities. (Keep in mind that many of these items will be transported with their new owner on an airplane.) If you can't come to the convention, we still want your donated items. We have an advance shipping location or you can send it along with a friend to the convention. For any questions, including shipping instructions, please contact silentauction@cosa-recovery.org.

The **Serenity-on-the-Go Store** is a new initiative offering self-care items like scrubby gloves, bubble bath, and lotions for purchase. There will be travel size items available so you'll be able to pack them easily for the trip home plus your purchase goes toward seed money for the next convention which is a win-win for all of us! We will also have some gift items like cards and bags there for purchase as well.

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

STEP THREE: Made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

When I first worked Step Three, I had been in COSA just over a year. I had an intellectual struggle with this Step. I didn't have a clear understanding of who or what my Higher Power was. I wondered how I could turn my will and my life over to the unknown. That would be crazy! The unknown has always been scary for me, and letting the unknown take over my life was extra scary.

COSA's Step Three booklet asked questions about instances when I had been afraid, but things turned out well in the end. As I journaled on this topic, I realized that even when my biggest fears came true, I was still fine. At one point, my worst fear had been to fail at my marriage. Even though I was a successful, independent woman, I had always had the belief that my worth as a person was somehow measured by my marriage. I reached a point where I knew I had to separate from my husband, for my own well-being. Even though I knew it was the right decision, I felt guilty and ashamed. It was a hard transition. I remember having to talk myself through making breakfast (put the bagel in the toaster, heat water for tea, take bagel out of toaster...), because otherwise I would just stand in the kitchen. I felt like I was pretending to be a competent adult.

Improvement was gradual. One day, I could make breakfast. Another day, I found myself truly present and engaged at work, rather than going through the motions. I spent time laughing with friends rather than crying. After some time, I started to feel more normal. I was back in the flow of life. I had faced my fear.

Reflecting on this example did not solve my intellectual struggles about my Higher Power or about turning my life over. Instead, it reframed the question for me. It was no longer a question about the truth of God. I was deciding between two ways of living my life:

1. In fear and anxiety.
2. In the belief that the world has what I need and I have the ability to access it.

I chose to go with number two. I chose to live life on life's terms. I chose to give my fears and anxieties to my ill-defined Higher Power. I chose to stop worrying about who or what my Higher Power was. I turned over my questions. I trusted that when it was the right time in my life to answer them, I would be able to do that. This decision helped me to face Step Four. I didn't go into Step Four with all the tools I would need. I didn't even know what those tools would be. When I needed help, I sought it, and I completed Step Four. I did the work, relying on my Higher Power's help and guidance.

Although I say that I "worked Step Three," it would be more accurate to say that I began working Step Three and continue to work it every day. I have to turn fear and anxiety over to my Higher Power on a regular basis. I might give the same fear to my Higher Power ten times or ten thousand times. That's the real "work" of this Step.

Sara L.
St. Paul

STEP FOUR: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

I was hurting and beyond broken when I came to my first COSA meeting. In those early days when we'd read the Steps, I was unnerved by Step Four. I couldn't imagine any benefit in dragging up the moral inventory of my fifty years in "searching and fearless" detail. It just sounded like more pain.

My fear began to fade as the foundation of Steps One through Three built a safe mental and spiritual haven for me. With the help of my Higher Power, I'd come to trust that the Steps were a set of practical yet loving ways to learn about my true self and restore me to a whole and healthy life. That safety helped me open up to Step Four.

Step Four – continued

When my sponsor gave me Excel spreadsheets to complement the work in our literature, I was excited! The very first column was about the persons, institutions, or principles I had resentment toward. The next column was for detailing what harm they'd caused. The third column asked what specific area of my life had been hurt. I couldn't wait to spill every detail of how I'd been wronged! But in my excitement to get busy vilifying others, I glossed over the last column, which was to examine my part in it. How did I even have a part in it? The question was daunting.

So I did what I've learned to do in COSA; I was gentle with myself and started with the easiest items first. Applying the recovery I already had to the logical flow of the Step's process made some resentments fall away easily. But I still had to find my part in the dynamic. This search revealed that my part was almost always rooted in fear. Fear kept me from standing up for myself, from setting boundaries, and not from trusting myself. Fear kept me a prisoner, doomed to keep repeating a vicious cycle.

But a miracle was at work. When I began to see my patterns of behavior emerge, I was shocked. I had not been aware of the wreckage I was causing myself! That was hard to face, especially where I'd unwittingly caused harm to others. But this new information also brought me answers and immense relief. I also realized that looking at my part was not designed to guilt or shame me, but to enlighten me. Rather than the self-loathing I was afraid I'd feel when I faced myself, I had compassion. I also saw the Step differently now and was able to work it with an unburdened heart and the hope that I could break the cycle. Not only could I let go of all that toxic resentment I'd been carrying—now I had the tools to prevent resentments from developing going forward! This was a life changing revelation for me.

Equally important to identifying my self-defeating behaviors and liabilities was the powerful work of finding my attributes and assets. These became the seeds of coming to love, trust, and respect myself again.

In addition to using Step Four retrospectively, I also use it proactively. When I identify someone who pushes certain of my buttons, I work through the Step Four process to develop a strategy of recovery tools to use that are specific to our dynamic. Being mindful of who I am, and who they are, and having a plan to take care of myself with them, has made a huge positive impact. All areas of my life have improved from the power in this Step. I am forever grateful for Step Four.

Sandy S.

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

November – December 2015

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

<u>Group</u>	<u>Amount</u>
AZ-02	\$77.00
Bay Area Clothing Swap	\$100.00
CA-08 Oakland Monday Night	\$97.00
Circle of Hope Laguna Hills, CA	\$94.00
COSA Bay Area Intergroup	\$821.74
COSA Group North Vancouver	\$100.00
COSA Tyler TX-01	\$50.00
Duluth MN	\$60.00
Duluth MN	\$20.00
Mission Viejo CA	\$20.00
Monday Night St. Louis	\$150.00
SC-1	\$45.00
St Anselm Catholic Church NJ	\$50.00
Still Waters	\$50.00
The Hampton Roads COSA	\$44.00
Thursday Night Walnut Creek	\$24.00
Tuesday Night Santa Rosa	\$133.00
Wednesday Serenity in the City Oakland	\$66.80
PayPal	\$1,783.00
Recurring Individual	\$440.00
Individual	\$1,065.00
Total	\$5,290.54

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 THREE: 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.

Tradition Three is simple. Not easy but simple! Anyone, anywhere, who reaches out for help because of compulsive sexual behavior is welcome in COSA recovery.

I understand Tradition Three to be the inclusion tradition. Most organizations have application forms, rules, membership requirements, and so on. COSA, though, offers unconditional love and acceptance to anyone who walks through our doors and whose life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.

From the first day I walked into the COSA rooms, I knew I belonged. It was as simple as that. I was where I was supposed to be.

COSA's broad acceptance and inclusive nature creates fertile ground for participation and growth in recovery. The environment of inclusion helps me to feel safe so I keep coming back.

Before COSA, I often felt like an outsider in groups I had joined. Even when I was treated with warmth and acceptance, I had a difficult time letting it in. Recovery in COSA has given me a true sense of belonging. In an environment of full inclusion, I can let down my guard and show up honestly and authentically. And when I do that and still feel accepted, I am able to feel a deep sense of love for who I really am which in turn helps my recovery blossom!

Tradition Three does not dictate how or to what extent our lives have to be affected in order to qualify for membership. It doesn't matter. I determine if my life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.

A few weeks ago my young adult daughter attended her first COSA meeting with me. She was affected by the compulsive sexual behavior of her dad, my husband. How compulsive sexual behavior impacted her is so much different than its effect on me. And yet, we are both included as members of COSA.

“The members may call themselves a COSA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.”

If COSA were to have other affiliations, our primary focus would be diluted and our purpose would be compromised. We would risk division. If COSA had other affiliations, those needing COSA recovery may feel excluded and would therefore not be able to fully benefit from recovery.

I too must leave my affiliations outside of the room. I am simply a person seeking COSA recovery.

I am grateful for the Third Tradition that ensures the openness and welcoming culture of COSA.

Liz

TRADITION FOUR: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or COSA as a whole.

The Traditions have helped me in my recovery and in all areas of my life. When I studied Tradition Four in a small group, I learned how Tradition Four makes it possible for the fellowship to sustain itself in a healthy and sober way. This makes me feel safe in the fellowship and meetings. In the past, I dreaded any kind of group meeting in my life, whether it was a business, community, or even a party-planning meeting. I feared that a meeting would be hijacked by someone who talked incessantly, or who tried to force their opinions on others. I watched the clock and became anxious when a meeting didn't end on time. I don't have this fear in COSA meetings largely because we have the Traditions.

I read in another Twelve Step fellowship that Tradition Four allows us to have “both unity and independence to flourish.” When I walk into a COSA meeting I know that there are well-established principles in place that are consistent across COSA, and yet are flexible enough for each individual meeting.

Tradition Four – continued

Walking in the door, I know that there will be COSA readings, COSA approved literature, and guidelines for having a sober meeting. At the same time, with the Traditions as a framework, there is room for each meeting to draw on its group conscience to decide certain features of the meeting, such as timing shares, being open or closed, and having informal fellowship before or after the meeting. It is a miracle of recovery that I, who once dreaded any group meeting, now look forward to my COSA meetings.

I recently experienced Tradition Four in action when a meeting I attend had to find a new location. The members explored different options and brought them to the meeting. Our group conscience as guided by our Higher Power led us to a new location that charged substantially higher rent. Our meeting is autonomous, so we were able to choose a new location and add language to our script to support the meeting's new rent. We voted to add language to our Seventh Tradition announcement, stating the amount of the monthly rent, encouraging everyone to give what they can, and assuring all that no one would be turned away for lack of funds. This meeting followed Tradition Four by making an autonomous decision to add direct language to its script to meet its needs, while acting consistently with other meetings and COSA as a whole in making sure that the meeting is open to anyone, regardless of their financial means.

Before joining COSA, I avoided meetings at all costs. I sometimes worried that I would run screaming from a conference room. Now that I know that the Traditions keep COSA meetings consistent yet flexible, I have enjoyed getting to be of service in Intergroup and ISO Convention Committee meetings. This amazes me, and makes me grateful that the Promises do come true one day, and one meeting, at a time.

Anonymous, SF Bay Area

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

Please send your articles to COSACopy@yahoo.com

or by mail to:

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