



Working the Steps – Sometimes Slowly, Sometimes Quickly

I've heard it said that going to meetings provides relief but that the real miracles happen by working the Steps.

I have tried several different approaches to working the Twelve Steps; there's no right or wrong way to do it. And there's no such thing as perfectly working the Steps! If it works, work it; if not, try something else. What works for one person might not work for another. And what works best for me today might not work for me further down the road.

In the very beginning of my recovery, I tried working the Steps alone because I didn't feel comfortable with asking for help. Working in isolation wasn't a good choice for me; I needed guidance as well as accountability and structure.

About two months into my recovery, I learned about a weekly Step study meeting that was just starting up. This meeting moved very slowly and diligently through the Steps, spending several months on each Step. Each person took a turn reading a paragraph or a question about the Step and then shared thoughts, experiences, and feelings that it brought up. Then everyone had an opportunity to share and share again and maybe several more times when another's share inspired more thoughts. Usually there were 10-15 people in attendance and often there were different people at each meeting. I attended regularly and I listened to the shares from my desperate place. I offered what little experience, strength, and hope that I could dredge up.

I left those meetings being so critical of myself. My character defects of self judgment ("Oh geez, I sounded so stupid when I shared about...") and comparing ("They have so much strength and serenity and I'm so broken") came up. But I heard so much wisdom in those meetings and left with hope; I wanted what they had!

I wanted to write down jewels that I heard but I didn't know if that was allowed. Someone told me to get out of my head and to try diving into my heart. I had no idea how to do that. I think that just sitting, listening, feeling, and not taking notes in the meetings were helpful for me. And sharing when I had the nerve!

It was a wonderful place for my early exposure to the Steps. But I felt very intimidated. It was a relatively large

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meeting and I didn't know who would be there each week. With my comfort level inhibited, I didn't allow myself to be as vulnerable as I could have been.

An important lesson for me as I work the Steps is my need to be real. When I "hold my cards too tightly to my heart," I don't experience as much growth as when I am brave and allow myself to be truly seen.

I got through Step One in that large Step meeting and then chose another venue. I asked someone to sponsor me. I repeated Step One with her and she guided me through the first five Steps. We moved quite quickly and she was there for me if I had any questions. But the process felt incomplete to me. I wasn't comfortable with the one-sidedness of the relationship, with the focus being all on me.

I then got into a Step study group with about seven other COSAs. The group conscience was to allow new members in for the first three weeks and then close the group to ensure continuity and safety for the members. Back to Step One for me. We read together, commented on the readings and then answered questions. It was really helpful for me to be able to hear other people sharing about each Step and to have the opportunity to process my own dysfunction, as well as to share my experience, strength, and hope with others. The group quickly dwindled to three people and by the following year, two of us were left. We didn't change the structure but instead of calling ourselves a Step study group, we became each other's cosponsor.

We always started with COSA readings and questions but often used other sources if there were issues we wanted to delve into more deeply. For example, when we were working Step Eight, we wanted a better understanding of what it means to forgive oneself. We found additional readings on the topic so we could feel ready to move to Step Nine, which for both of us, included making amends to ourselves.

Using the Steps to work a particular issue

When I first entered the program, my focus for my Step work was on my husband and the pain I had experienced as a result of his actions, as well as my wish to control him so that I could stay safe in the relationship. Every now and then this surfaces as an issue for me. But far more often, I use my program and the Steps to work through other life challenges that I am experiencing. My daughter has significant challenges and, before my recovery, much of my life's focus was to fix her. I understand now how powerless I am over this. It really helps me to turn her care over to my or her Higher Power. I've worked the Steps, sometimes using the 15 minute version from a COSA convention workshop when I remember to, and I have found serenity like never before.

Lessons I have learned about working the Steps

- Be consistent. It's like exercising. When I get out of my routine, it's easy to fall away from it. On weeks that my cosponsor and I can't meet, we know we have the next meeting date already arranged.
- Steps build upon each other in a miraculous way. When I feel stuck, it helps me to go back to the prior Step.
- Make sure I feel safe so I can be vulnerable and speak from my heart. If I'm not feeling safe, I need to honor that feeling, and then figure out what I need.
- There's no right or perfect way to work the Steps.
- I can live a fuller, richer and more serene life when I incorporate the Steps into my day-to-day being. I am much more able to feel the continuous presence of a/my Higher Power in my life.

What working the Steps has provided for me

- Miracles.
- Connection with others.
- Joy.
- Freedom.
- Connection with a/my Higher Power.
- Serenity and peace.
- A new way of being, and spiritual growth.
- Increased self-love as well as love for others.



- Liz



CARRYING THE MESSAGE THROUGH OUTREACH

Are you looking to grow your meeting? Would you like to practice the Twelfth Step by carrying the message of COSA?

The COSA Outreach Committee has tools to help you spread the word... And they are FREE!

- **Outreach Convention Cards** (5x7) – can be used by local meetings to provide information on the convention for its members or can be used for community outreach. (*We mail them to you free of charge.*)
- **COSA Business Cards** – can be used by individuals or local meetings to do outreach to medical professionals, therapist, etc. (*We mail them to you free of charge.*)
- **Sample Outreach Letter** that you can edit to customize by adding your own meeting information. (*We will email to you – local meetings would do their own printing.*)
- **Flyer/Sign** with information on the annual ISO of COSA Convention. (*We will email to you – local meetings would do their own printing.*)

Reasons to do outreach:

1. Carrying the message to those who still suffer. Medical professionals and therapists can help their patients find us.
2. Grow your meeting.
3. Encourage more COSAs to attend the convention which helps with their recovery.

If you have any questions, or if you are ready to order business cards or convention cards, please email us at outreachcommittee@cosa-recovery.org

Please indicate number of convention cards/business cards needed and provide a mailing address. Thank you!

Yours in Service,
The COSA Outreach Committee

This offer has been made possible by the financial generosity of several COSA Intergroups and COSA members who shared their letters and card designs with us. Thank you to Houston, Southern California, and Telemeeting Intergroups and to Eveline, Kerry M. and the Convention Committee.

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.



2018 ISO of COSA Annual Convention

The Washington Inn

Memorial Day Weekend

May 25-28, 2018

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Rooted in Recovery: The 25th ISO of COSA Annual Convention will be May 25 through May 28, 2018, in Oakland, California! Mark your calendar now and start making your plans so you can be there! Your convention committee is hard at work organizing and planning the 2018 COSA Annual Convention. This event only happens once a year, as COSAs from near and far gather to give and receive experience, strength, and hope.

There will be wonderful speakers, workshops on Steps and tools, opportunities to share ESH and learn from others, COSA meetings, a hospitality room, a silent auction, and informal opportunities to make connections with other COSAs. Plus, there will be Outer Circle activities for some creativity and fun! There will be incredible opportunities to grow and nourish your recovery—whether you are new to COSA or have been in recovery for a long time.

COSA's Annual Delegate Meeting will be on Friday, May 25, during the day (9 a.m.-5 p.m.). The convention will begin the evening of May 25 and run through late morning on Monday, May 28.

It's time to start thinking about an individual COSA you might want to nominate as a speaker or a workshop topic you might care to propose. The Speaker Nomination and Workshop Proposal forms will soon be available online. Convention registration will be available online by January 1, 2018. Regular updates about the convention planning will be included in future issues of the *Balance*. You can also find information and updates on the convention website <http://cosa-recovery.org/2018/>

Hope to see you in Oakland!

Your 2018 Convention Committee

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

There are many ways you can help with our 2018 Convention: some bigger, some smaller; some now, some later or at the convention. Whether you have one hour or more to help, there is a committee for you! Contact us at convention@cosa-recovery.org and we can help you find a way to be of service that works for you.

We are actively looking for people to fill the following specific roles:

Volunteer Coordinator: oversees the assignment of COSAs to service positions on the ground at the convention and contacts convention registrants prior to the convention to get service commitments. The Volunteer Coordinator position can be shared by two COSAs, and additional COSAs can be recruited to help with the work.

Bookstore Coordinator: a one-person job done almost entirely at the convention. You would assist our COSA Office Coordinator directly with setting up, running, and then packing up the Bookstore at convention. Note: other volunteers will be found to help staff the Bookstore Table.





Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

In approaching Step Eleven, I followed my sponsor's suggestions and adopted several daily practices which, through sustained repetition, have improved my conscious contact with my Higher Power.

When I wake up in the morning, I meditate for a short time, usually while still lying in bed, and I pray for my Higher Power to lift anything that might interfere with hearing my Higher Power's guidance. This includes anything that shows up as some form of fear, resentment, dishonesty, or self-seeking. I then pray for my Higher Power to show me the next right thing to do throughout the day, and to help me be aware of and have the strength, willingness, and capacity to follow my Higher Power's will for me all day long.

Throughout the day, I practice connecting with my Higher Power, asking my Higher Power to help me let go of my will and be open to my Higher Power's will for me. This has helped me to feel my Higher Power's presence, to develop my intuitive connection to my Higher Power, and therefore to develop my ability to intuitively know what God's will is for me in any given situation. This also helps me to remember that I have made the decision (in Step Three) to give my will and my life over to my Higher Power.

When I feel doubtful or triggered, I ask God for specific guidance to show me what is the next right thing to do. When I'm still unclear, I ask for awareness or insight on what decision to make next. Through practice, my ability to hear my Higher Power's guidance clearly has continued to improve.

When needed, I work my Tenth Step first, asking my Higher Power to lift any fear, resentment, self-seeking, and/or dishonesty that has crept in (especially if I'm triggered) so that I may once again clearly hear my Higher Power's guidance. It's similar to removing the "static" from the communication line. I've learned that the "static" is always on my end, so I can work to get God's help in clearing it. By continually observing my interior landscape and watching for anything that interferes with hearing God's guidance (Step Ten), I keep the lines open.

One of the most powerful examples of how this Step served me happened three and a half years ago when my younger son, an active heroin addict at that time, landed in jail. He looked very bad, just skin and bones. As a mother, I felt scared to see him like this; I felt truly powerless. Unsure about what to do, I prayed for my numerous fears, my resentment (mostly of the addictive disease), and my self-seeking and dishonesty (thinking I could figure out the right thing to do by myself) to be lifted. Then I prayed for guidance. As a result, I took several actions I normally would not have taken. At every step, I continued to pray for guidance, having no idea myself what I should do next. My son got into treatment, got sober, and today has three and a half years of sobriety. This is a true miracle. This is my Higher Power's doing, not mine; on this point, I'm crystal clear.

I use the same approach to decide what I'm eating for lunch, what service I will take on, the best way to respond to my sponsees and my family members, and anything and everything else in my life. I'm so grateful to the Twelve Steps, especially the Eleventh Step, for this blueprint of how to lead my life.

- Linda P., Walnut Creek, CA





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

From almost the beginning of my recovery journey, I've been a regular attendee of the COSA Zoom Room meetings. By the time I was ready for Step Twelve, I knew that I wanted to give back to the entity that had provided so much to my recovery. Twelfth Step work is about giving back—and, as I learned from practicing this Step, gaining from the giving.

In collaboration with several of the COSA Zoom Room meeting members with more recovery and experience than I, we made two important decisions:

that the most valuable contribution would be to begin a new meeting in the afternoon so that those in Europe and similar time zones could have another time option for a meeting
that the COSA literature was a rich source of material, making it easy for a relative newbie like myself to plan for each meeting.

The first meeting was July 2, 2016 and we began with the “Caretaking” booklet. In September, group conscience decided to use “COSA Triggers.” In December, we began “Boundaries in Recovery,” followed by “Sobriety in COSA,” then “COSA: A Program of Recovery.” Who knows which booklet will be next or which country will be represented? (Some of the countries represented so far include: Austria, Canada, England, Finland, Germany, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and of course the USA—from the four corners including Alaska and Hawaii.) But no matter what we read and share, each week I always learn more about myself, how recovery works for me, and how to apply the principles I learn from this experience to my own growth.

Beginning the meeting gave me eyes to see the need for sponsors and confidence to then begin to sponsor others who were seeking recovery through working the Steps—another Twelfth Step action. What a blessing and arena for growth this has been for me! Not only do I have the privilege of watching others grow and learn, I am given the opportunity to work each Step again as they do, and I have gained deep, forever friends from all over the world.

My appreciation for the gifts of COSA and for the Zoom Room meetings is overflowing. I have no doubt that my Higher Power led me to the connecting link on the COSA-recovery website. Today, because of those gifts, I continue to heal from the traumatic effects of codependency and addiction to a sex addict. The privilege of giving back to COSA and to the COSA Zoom Room meetings is a major and continuing part of my recovery program. Color me grateful!

-Martha Jean, Ohio



International Diversity in Writing Statement

As the Balance receives more articles from our members from around the world, you may notice different spelling and word usage. We want to maintain the original voice of each author, so that we can benefit from COSA's beautiful diversity.



Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all Program members.

When I started attending COSA and gradually began seeing positive changes in my life, I was tempted to “sell my product” to all my friends who I knew were going through similar issues. Because the program was working so well for me, I just knew it would work for my friends. I thought I knew exactly what they needed, and I insisted that they try it. For those with loved ones suffering from the effects of compulsive sexual behaviors, I would insist that COSA was the path to serenity for them. While it seemed like a nice thing to say in my mind, the second those words left my mouth, the aftertaste of regret lingered. Did I really know what was best for them?

At the time I hadn't realized the importance of Tradition Eleven: Attraction, not promotion. We come to the Twelve Steps out of attraction; I know I did. No one told me about it and no one pushed me to go. It is precisely that attraction that keeps us coming back. Once I started attending, no one told me what to do. No one shamed or discouraged me. No one got after me if I failed to follow through on things I said I would or wouldn't do. We all just worked our program and supported each other along the way. There is something about the program and the Promises, and in how they naturally work themselves out in each of us, as we trust in the process and do the work. It is a very personal experience that plays itself out differently in everyone.

When we try to promote the program, however, we run two major risks: 1) setting high and unrealistic expectations and goals by comparing someone else's situation, life, and recovery to that of another, and 2) breaching the vital confidentiality and anonymity of all program members. Anonymity and confidentiality allow us to share our experiences, strengths, hope, true thoughts, and feelings without fear of judgment or criticism. The “safe space” provided by our practice of anonymity and confidentiality is one of the major reasons why people are able to work their recovery.

Tradition Eleven highlights the importance of anonymity in public media. When I first found out about my qualifier's compulsive behavior, I obsessively looked up information online, trying to find out more about the disease, and where he and I could turn for help. I wanted to reach out to others who were going through similar situations. I blogged at length about my qualifier, not realizing that I had violated his anonymity indirectly. It seemed therapeutic to me, at the time, to share my experiences, but looking back, I realize I was doing more damage than good for everyone involved. I was so focused on myself and the trauma I was going through that I didn't realize why these Traditions are so important and how they can apply in a broader sense as well. Anonymity isn't just for the COSA Program member, and this is an important part that I regret I did not realize. While I am in attendance as a codependent partner of a sex addict, I can easily forget that my qualifier deserves and should be honored with the same level of anonymity that I hope and expect for myself.

Coming to a Twelve Step program, in itself, takes courage, no matter what program we are working. We came on our own, in hopes of healing, recovery, and living a more fulfilling life. By honoring the uniqueness, individuality, and anonymity of all program members, we feel safe. And in safety we can begin the healing process.

- Anonymous





Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

When I joined COSA, I did not trust many people and I did not understand what anonymity truly meant. I assumed it meant confidentiality: don't share someone's name or story outside my meeting group. I learned that our meetings are meant to be safe places, where we can feel trust and respect, and where no judgment occurs. I learned over time that a meeting was the one true place I could share. What a relief that was!

I also learned that the more experienced members or those who have attended longer are not our senior leaders in COSA. Since I heard so much sobriety in their shares, I used to look up to them and expect them to know how everything worked and to have all the answers. I felt the same way if I knew someone in our group was a recovery professional outside of COSA: I kind of expected they would know the answers to everything.

I learned through this Tradition that I must not place the personalities of those I looked up to above COSA's principles. To me this meant that I must respect them, that they are allowed to have a safe, loving, trusting place to lay their hat and just be someone in need. As a newer member I might someday even be able to share some experience, strength, and hope that might give them insight in their own recovery. I was learning to be an equal part of the group: that I could be treated the same and treat others the same way also.

At first I did not understand how something as simple as "anonymity" could be the spiritual foundation for all our Traditions. I thought of anonymity as just one element of many spiritual foundations in COSA. I now see how anonymity is critical in all the Traditions that allow our groups to operate. Anonymity helps me trust so that I can be open to share. It teaches me to respect all who walk in the room—laying aside any judgment—and helps me practice humility which is critical to my recovery and to my understanding of anonymity.

Now, to me, anonymity does not just mean confidentiality as I first thought, but it has a broader and deeper meaning: that we are all equally important and don't have or need power or influence over each other. We may see differences in our situations or in our concepts or descriptions of a Higher Power, yet we practice anonymity through humbleness and constant connection to our Higher Power.

This spiritual foundation of COSA allows each of us to grow, share, and learn from each other and from our Higher Power. We all come as equals and in healthy relationship with God and others.

- Beth H



**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

Please send your articles to COSACopy@yahoo.com
or by mail to: ISO of COSA, Central Office, 9219 Katy Freeway, Suite 212, Houston, TX 77024 U.S.A.

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

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

To our generous COSA fellowship,

Your contributions made it possible! Donations poured in and the International Service Organization (ISO) of COSA met and exceeded its fundraising goal!

While the goal for the fiscal year was \$29,500, COSAs donated \$30,346!

Well done, COSAs! And thank you!

At the convention in May, our projections for our fiscal year ending June 30th showed we were facing a deficit of approximately \$3,000 for the year.

With changes in our spending, and the success of the convention, we ended up in the black, with a surplus of \$6,972.

This created an amazing opportunity to give our fellowship a new stability we can all give thanks for.

The donated funds from groups and individuals have allowed the ISO of COSA, for the first time, to raise its prudent reserve to \$20,000 (formerly \$10,000). The new amount is just above our guidelines to have three months' worth of operating funds set aside.

I want to thank everyone for the way you've helped make this fellowship self-supporting.

We are still asking for donations, as we are in a new fiscal year, with a new fundraising goal of \$32,352.

But for now, please accept my thanks for all of the ways you've helped COSA continue and grow.

In Service,

Emily G

ISO of COSA Board Chair

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

When sending donations to the ISO of COSA, please include your meeting number so we can record it properly and post it in the Balance. We thank you for all your donations!

To find your meeting number:

- Go to www.cosa-recovery.org, click on the Meetings and Events tab, and then on Find a Local Meeting.
- Search for your meeting and note the meeting number in parentheses next to your meeting name.

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report: July/August Donations

COSA Telemeeting (TEL-08).....	\$ 150.00
COSA Eleventh Step Meeting (TEL-11)	\$ 176.20
Spanish Telemeeting (TEL-14).....	\$ 100.00
Tempe (AZ-02).....	\$ 25.00
Alamo (CA-02).....	\$ 46.00
East Bay (CA-09).....	\$ 187.00
Long Beach (CA-23).....	\$ 200.00
Santa Rosa (CA-27)	\$ 320.83
South Bay (CA-29)	\$ 200.00
Costa Mesa (CA-34).....	\$ 50.00
Palm Beach Gardens (FL-13).....	\$ 100.00
Longwood (FL-14)	\$ 125.00
N Vancouver, Canada (INT-19)	\$ 300.00
Mankato (MN-01).....	\$ 50.00
Owatonna (MN-04).....	\$ 40.00
Syracuse (NY-01)	\$ 100.00
Kingwood Monday Night (TX-23)	\$ 207.00
Individual Recurring Donations.....	\$ 2,793.00
Individual Single Donations	\$ 805.29
Total	\$ 5,975.32

Dear COSA friends,

The Literature Committee has been working hard to develop the newest sections of our COSA basic text. This book will be a valuable resource for all, including newcomers. It will offer insights into the COSA Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, and will include a variety of COSA stories and tools illustrating the miracles of recovery. In order to ensure the book accurately reflects the diversity of COSA perspectives, as well as our common understanding of the COSA program, we present each of these draft chapters to the fellowship for feedback. Feedback for this section of the book can be submitted via email November 1, 2017, through January 31, 2018.

Please read through each draft and send us your comments and suggestions. It may also be fun and helpful to review it with your meeting or group! We will consider all feedback received and final editing decisions will be made by the Literature Committee. We have included feedback guidelines below. Utilizing these feedback guidelines will allow us to apply the feedback received in an efficient manner.

Lastly, after the feedback has been applied to these drafts, final revised versions will be posted on the COSA website for all fellowship members and delegates to review by April 20, 2018. These proposed chapters will then be voted on for approval by the delegates at the 2018 Annual Delegate Meeting.

Feedback Guidelines

- Feedback can be submitted to cosacopy@yahoo.com.
-
- Please submit your feedback by **January 31, 2018**.
-
- Please communicate your thoughts in a respectful manner.
-
- Please reference a line number for each piece of feedback.
-
- Please do not insert comments or suggestions into the document.
-
- Please do not submit a rewritten document.

Please explain any changes you are suggesting. For example, “In line 64 I would like abc changed because xyz.” We want to ensure that when a change is made, it will produce the desired result.

Types of feedback include grammar (spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, verb tense, etc.), content (principles and presentation of the Tradition, Concept or tool, paragraph structure and placement, flow, etc.), and overall opinion (please include your opinion on paragraphs or sections that you like or relate to as well as those you would like to see changed).

Click here to access the new draft chapters:

[Tradition One](#)

[Concept One](#)

[Concept Two](#)

[COSA Tools - Outreach Calls](#)

Thank you,

Your COSA Literature Committee

