



## Designing My Higher Power

The wounds of my childhood run deep inside me. I was born into addiction. My family was quiet, unobtrusive and vague. Nothing dramatic or chaotic happened. But it was dangerous and deadening nonetheless.

I felt completely alone in my family of six. I felt like an alien who didn't belong here, on this planet. I felt separated from love, from warmth, and from the group, and I watched them all have all of those things as if I was behind a glass partition watching a movie. This was due to a trauma with my dad that got pushed under the carpet, ignored and dismissed as if it didn't happen. And so I felt pushed under the carpet, ignored and dismissed as if I didn't happen. And I shut down. I left my body during the trauma. I quit feeling, quit wondering, quit thinking and got as small as I possibly could. And then I walked through life that way.

As a baby, I adored my dad. I knew he loved me-unlike my stern, scary, unapproachable mom. He would take me in his arms and, without speaking, spin magical stories of special loves and happily-ever-afters. He was my God and my hero. But he also had a compulsive sexual problem, and when I was five he abused me in the shower. I felt betrayed. My God, my hero, full of special love and happily-ever-afters betrayed my body, my mind, my soul, and I was broken. The world I had believed in wholeheartedly was shattered. And because there was zero communication around this event, I was left alone to pick up the few pieces I could, to move on and grow up.

It is no surprise, then, that the few pieces I could pick up centered around being addicted to men who betray, and around a whirlwind of codependent thoughts, feelings and behaviors that left me certain I had no worth, that left me depleted, destitute and despairing. I was certain that I was broken and unfixable. And that only a male someone who wouldn't betray me could save me. I was willing to do a bewildering variety of behaviors in the name of that quest, some of them completely against my morals, my values, my body and my sense of self. I betrayed myself over and over again. I did not set appropriate boundaries. I accepted abuse and didn't get out of the way. I accepted my husband's infidelities and didn't demand better. I had affairs myself. I believed the criticism and judgments heaped on me from on high by my husband. I put everyone but me first. My vision was blurred and all I could see was the mirage of a better life, the life my dad promised me when I was little.

My first Higher Power in COSA was by default. I grew up in a patriarchal society in a church where everyone prayed to a patriarchal God. So of course my

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HP was male. Of course he was called God. Of course he mirrored the images from my church growing up. And of course I thought I knew Him, and that life with Him was fine.

The problem was I kept confusing Him with the men I would get tangled up with and that I became addicted to. I had a huge “aha” moment when, as I was in the depths of despair over the loss of a romantic relationship and was complaining about how I was feeling, my sponsor said, “Are you talking about Rick or are you talking about God?” And I realized that the two had become interchangeable. I did not know where the man who had betrayed me ended and the God I was relying on to love me began. In my mind the man had betrayed me, and God had agreed with him. And I kept seeking God’s approval, just like I was doing with the man. And I kept failing and falling deeper and deeper into despair. My failure to get Rick to love me mirrored my failure to get God to love me. I was in the depths of Step One powerlessness and unmanageability.

That moment was one of the worst in my life, and was also one of the most pivotal in my recovery.

My sponsor suggested that I design a non-male Higher Power. I was flabbergasted. I had no idea that I could do this. I just took my default God as judge, jury and executioner and never questioned the wisdom of doing so.

In retrospect it seems outright crazy to pray to a being that mirrors what you are addicted to, and then expect that being to behave differently than all the things I was addicted to, but I did so.

Anyway, it was a huge revelation to me, and changed my life almost instantly. I developed some new rules.

My HP could no longer be male. I started with “It,” but I kept visualizing a swirly blue lady enveloping me and my despair. I was in a meditation class at the time and was supposed to be meditating on green that week, but this stubborn blue lady kept distracting me until I just gave in and let her hold me. Over time She became my Higher Power.

I could no longer call my HP God. I tried a variety of names in my meditations and prayers as I worked on my Second and Third Steps, and ended up settling on “Divine Spirit” as the name of my Higher Power.

I could no longer have an HP that was stern or judgmental. I had to have an HP that was absolutely safe to approach, that would love me unconditionally now and forever. That would be on my side, even when I couldn’t be. Someone I could crawl on my knees to when I was in the depths of despair, and who would hold me. I had to have an HP that would never betray me, that would always guide me to what’s best for me. I needed an HP that would never fail me as I floundered through life, blind and confused.

Those are the rules I developed for my HP.

Over time my relationship with Her has grown and morphed into many things. She appears to me in many ways. I don’t always see a swirly blue lady. Sometimes I just sit and feel her holding me in love, and realize that I am not alone and never have been. Sometimes I float beyond my body and sit in her wisdom and see marvelous worlds and marvelous truths.

Sometimes life with my HP is not as fun, and the truths I see are hard to digest. My worst moment with her was a backpacking trip a year and a half ago that was full of my ego. My body was ailing and I stubbornly went anyway. I hiked six miles in, using all my toilet paper and Kleenex along the way. My water purifier failed and my sleeping pad got a hole in it and deflated. I was cold, sore and miserable. Every direction I turned to go in was blocked. I ended up sitting on the edge of a noisy stream crying. I cried loudly and unreservedly. I grieved all the loves, all the lives I thought I should have, but couldn’t. And I was angry too. I felt like a steer being herded through a series of chutes,

My failure to get Rick to love me mirrored my failure to get God to love me. I was in the depths of Step One powerlessness and unmanageability.

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with gates clanging shut behind me at every turn. And then I got it. I did not like being hit in the head by the two-by-four masquerading as my lovely and serene Divine Spirit. But I had to admit She was there. She was in my face guiding me as only an ego as stubborn as mine needs to be guided. And I surrendered then and there to her wisdom as I was able to understand it.

And I continue to do so today.

~Tracy S

# Update on the Board Chair



Dear fellow COSAs,

It has been a joy and privilege to serve on the COSA board, and as your chair. In the delicate balance of living life in recovery I've recently had to re-prioritize life, work, home, serenity and service. I have stepped down as the board chair and will serve the remainder of this service year as a Member at Large for the board.

Chris C., our COSA brother from the Bay Area in California, was unanimously approved by the board to be our new chair. Chris has 13 years in COSA and a huge heart for service and great vision for COSA. He's been a tremendous asset to the board and I know he'll be a great chair.

I want to thank everyone for their support and encouragement.

With a joyful, peaceful heart,

Sandy S.

## 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 *Balance*. We thank you for all your donations!

To find your meeting number:

- Go to <http://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.

### RECURRING DONATIONS

#### Keeping Updated

Thank you for your donations to the International Service Organization of COSA. Currently, our system is set to automatically update your credit card when it gets a new expiration date. If you need to increase, decrease, or cancel your recurring donations, please contact the ISO of COSA at [iso@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:iso@cosa-recovery.org). Thank you for your support!

### Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

#### October 2019

Irvine (CA-13).....	\$ 286.00
Winter Park (FL-12).....	\$ 50.00
Indianapolis (IN-04).....	\$ 150.00
Individual Donations.....	\$ 1403.00
<b>October Total .....</b>	<b>\$ 1889.00</b>

#### November 2019

Long Beach (CA-23).....	\$ 100.00
South Bay (CA-29).....	\$ 65.00
Eugene (OR-07).....	\$ 50.00
Madison West (WI-08).....	\$ 150.00
Individual Donations.....	\$ 1285.00
<b>November Total.....</b>	<b>\$ 1750.00</b>

#### December 2019

Boulder (CO-04).....	\$ 39.00
Doylestown (PA-07).....	\$ 45.00
Madison East (WI-07).....	\$ 100.00
Individual Donations.....	\$ 2970.00
<b>December Total.....</b>	<b>\$ 3154.00</b>

# Outreach 2019/2020

This past year at the Houston convention, the Outreach Committee found a groundswell of COSAs with a passion to carry the message.

The Outreach Committee is looking for ways to support and encourage individual COSAs who are considering starting a meeting, especially face-to-face meetings. To date COSA has relied upon brave and often desperate individuals taking it upon themselves to create the support network they need to recover from the effects of this disease. We know this is a big task. Yet from that brave step to start that first meeting often springs a group of meetings that serve a large metropolitan area!

Because this is a daunting undertaking for an individual, there are large sections of the U.S. and the world that do not have a network of supportive COSAs that newcomers can turn to. In the U.S. and Canada, the cities of Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Miami, Pittsburg, San Diego, Toronto, and Vancouver all have one thing in common: no COSA meetings. This list names only a few of the cities in the U.S. and Canada without a COSA meeting. This list is too long.

The Outreach Committee is looking to change the paradigm of how COSA meetings start. We want to reduce barriers and help individuals connect with support and find a partner to start a meeting. Here are some of the efforts this group of loving COSAs are undertaking:

1. Translation of the Twelve Step pamphlets into Spanish is now in progress, and we hope to have these available for sale soon. These are a first effort to allow COSA to grow beyond the borders of English-speaking countries and provide greater inclusiveness within those borders.
2. Each month the Outreach Committee receives inquiries from individuals who are considering starting a meeting but would like to find a partner to help them start a meeting. In response the Outreach Committee has begun searching the archived inquiries from other COSAs asking to be notified if a meeting opens in their area and connecting these COSAs in the hope this will be the support each is looking for.
3. The Outreach Committee is experimenting with pairing COSAs who have asked to be notified if a meeting opens in their area, if they are in the same area. This gives them a chance to support each other and know that they are not alone. Our hope is that with some encouragement from the Outreach Committee, they might decide to start a meeting together.
4. The Outreach Committee continues to mentor meetings that have started, staying in touch, and answering questions, providing support and perspective as these meetings grow.

The Outreach Committee welcomes all who want to be of service in helping new meetings form. Every little bit helps! Here are a few suggestions:

1. Making connections: If you know of someone who has been thinking of starting a meeting, or a COSA who has moved to a new city without face-to-face meetings, let them know what the Outreach Committee is doing now and encourage them to contact us at [outreachcommittee@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:outreachcommittee@cosa-recovery.org). We are finding that these little connections have great results!
2. An established meeting might offer a set of literature for a new meeting.
3. Join the Outreach Committee and be a new meeting mentor!

In Service, the Outreach Committee!!

# Literature Committee Update on Basic Text

Dear COSA friends,

The Literature Committee has been steadily working on 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 tools and also COSA stories 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 draft chapters to the fellowship for feedback.

Feedback for the following sections of the book can be submitted via email from **November 6, 2019, through February 5, 2020:**

- [Step Eight](#)
- [Step Nine](#)
- [Tradition Eight](#)
- [Tradition Nine](#)
- [Tradition Ten](#)
- [Tool: Detachment](#)
- [Tool: Acknowledging Grief](#)
- [Tool: Sponsorship](#)

Please read through each draft and send us your comments and suggestions. It may also be supportive 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.

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 21, 2020. These proposed chapters will then be voted on for approval by the delegates at the 2020 Annual Delegate Meeting.

## **Feedback Guidelines**

- Feedback or questions can be submitted to [cosacopy@yahoo.com](mailto:cosacopy@yahoo.com)
- Please submit your feedback by **February 5**  
Please try to get your feedback in as early as possible. You can submit feedback on one or a few chapters when you have it, and then later submit the rest. It helps us when feedback comes in at a steady rate instead of all at the end. If you can send some in one or two months before the deadline, that helps a lot. Even one week before the deadline is helpful. We are so grateful for your collaboration as we work on making sure everyone's voice is heard in the process of writing COSA's basic text.
- Please communicate your thoughts in a respectful manner.
- Please reference a page and line number for each piece of feedback.
- Please do not insert comments or suggestions into the document or into a copy of the document; instead, as requested above, please just reference the line number and then state your specific suggestions and comments:
- See Table:

Line #	omit	add	because	so it would read
28	the phrase <i>abc</i>	<i>def</i>	It would be clearer and gentler	“ ___ def___”
48		also	It would be clearer and more specific	“ ___also___”
68		This is just an example	This is an important and relevant idea which is not found elsewhere.	“ ___. This is just an example. ___”

- Please do not submit a rewritten document [one that does not show the brief original text and identify what you'd like changed].
- Please explain any changes you are suggesting. For example, “On page 2, line 34, I would like abc changed to def because xyz.” We want to ensure that when a change is made, it will produce the desired result. For more examples of feedback, see table above and written sentences below.
- 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).

Examples of possible feedback in written form:

- On Page 1, Line 28, please omit the phrase abc and substitute def because [e.g., it would be clearer and gentler.] So it would read ‘ \_ def \_.’

- On Page 2, Line 48, please insert the phrase “ \_\_\_” between the words “ \_\_\_” and “ \_\_\_” because I feel it is clearer and more specific [or whatever your reason is]. So it would read “ \_\_\_ \_\_\_.”

- On Page 3, Line 68, please insert the following sentence because I feel this is an important and relevant idea which fits well here and which is not found elsewhere in this document. Sentence to be inserted between the words “ \_\_\_.” and “The....”: \_\_\_\_\_. So it would read “ \_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_. The....”

Thank you,

Your COSA Literature Committee

# 2020 ISO of COSA International Convention

*It's almost time!*



We'll be "Connecting in Columbus" May 22-25  
at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Columbus, Ohio.

- Enrich your recovery with a weekend of Twelve Step workshops, speakers, and Twelve Step meetings, plus meditation, conversation, camaraderie, and fun!
- Our hotel is located in the heart of a vibrant arts district. A free shuttle loops through five miles of art galleries, 128 restaurants, river promenade with kayaking and paddle boating, a major science museum, Veterans museum, and many unique shops.
- We'll gather on the second floor of the Hyatt Regency. (Note: SAA is meeting on the first floor of the Hyatt, accessed via a nearby escalator.)
- After a day of workshops, unwind with a Nightcap of Creativity. Bring your poems, essays, songs, guitar playing, comedy routines, or other entertainment gifts. Share your recovery and creativity in a relaxed, supportive, casual setting.
- Volunteer your skills and talents to help with the convention—for a day, for an hour, whatever you can. We need you! Expand your recovery and connection through service.
- For details, reach out to us at [conventionvolunteers@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:conventionvolunteers@cosa-recovery.org)
- It's time to reserve your hotel room by clicking [reserve my hotel room](#)  
If you'd like to reduce costs by sharing a room with a fellow COSA, we'll connect you! Let us know if you're interested at [roommate@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:roommate@cosa-recovery.org)
- Registration will open on (or before!) March 1. Register early and save money.
- To learn about registration, hotel, traveling to Columbus and more,  
... click  on the [cosa-recovery.org](http://cosa-recovery.org) home page.

Hope to see you in Columbus!

*Connecting in ColumbUS Convention Committee*

# STEP 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · 10 · 11 · 12

## WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR -- THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

After being in recovery for four years and working the Twelve Steps my sponsor asked me if I felt ready to write my Step One again and share it at a meeting. I agreed. I felt it was ripe. I had already written several versions, but each time I write my Step One story, I heal a bit more and I accept my history. I have to face the secrets I have hidden even from myself. Writing my story at this point forced me to process, integrate and find where I was now with my story—and put it onto paper in a concise way timed to 26 minutes!

First off, I found that my focus had shifted away from my qualifier and towards my Family of Origin. However, when I came to write about “The Marriage Years,” I had a lot of traumatic dreams. I woke up feeling the load of pain underneath the surface, the soft underbelly of it. I no longer had my Anger to protect me! I had released a lot of it in working the Steps. Suddenly my fear and pain were surfacing again. I needed to back off for a few days and root myself firmly in the NOW. My marriage was over. All that was Past. Finished.

So how did I keep myself in the Present? I used the recovery tool of the Outer Circle. It rooted me in the Present and in this new chapter of my life. I made plans to go to a movie and supper with a friend.

I took an art therapy workshop focused on the Shadow and our sub-personalities. I phoned the therapist and told her my situation. “This will be perfect for you,” she said. “How timely!” The Shadow is 90% gold when we face it.

There were still a lot of emotions which needed to be processed. Without the protective filter of Anger, I needed healthier tools to help me process the feelings. In the workshop visualization I met “Suffering Lydia” who said simply, “Let me speak.” I did a painting of her. I glued a key on the frame. I put her on the kitchen counter and over the next few days had an ongoing dialogue with her and processed her feelings. She told me, “You have the key there now. You just have to unlock and let me speak and tell my story.”

Then I was able to write about my marriage years with a healthy detachment and new insights. I had a new acceptance of everything that had been and also what had not been—and I was grateful for it all. I came to a new level of forgiveness towards myself, my husband, my parents and qualifiers.

Everything was written and I submitted it to my sponsor for editing and feedback. She said, “No more editing. Leave it as it is!” I bookended with self-care, doing things that were good and nourishing for me.

I gave my First Step in a telemeeting. The next day the key fell off the frame onto the counter! This wonderful synchronicity confirmed for me that I had unlocked my story lurking in the shadows.

I have since given my Step One publicly at Convention and at a Zoom meeting. Each time I share my story, I shed a level of shame and free myself more. I peel away another level of the onion. Many tears are released as I get closer to the core, to my True Self. I’ve gotten very comfortable with crying and I know that in our COSA fellowship, tears are honoured.

Once I understood that giving my Step One publicly was an act of service, everything shifted. It took the focus off me and my ego, my fears, my secrets and shame. I understood that sharing our First Step helps others too.

Wherever we are in our recovery journey, whether it's our first time doing Step One or our 15th, our story keeps changing as we have fresh insights about ourselves and what happened. We grow and evolve as we work the Steps and the Steps work us!

Receiving feedback from others was a daunting but rewarding experience. I was surprised as COSAs told me how certain phrases I used or a certain detail in my story helped them make sense of their own experience. I learned that our stories and our pain are transformed when we give them away and they help others heal.

Writing and sharing our Step One story requires a lot of courage. The courage to face our pain and suffering, as well as the good times. The courage to defy the family and social taboos about revealing what we really felt and experienced. The courage to leave the known and painful Past—and step into the Unknown. It is the first step in setting ourselves free, in making our lives manageable again. I found it bolstered my own courage if I kept repeating the line in the Serenity Prayer, “grant me the courage to change the things I can.”

We are powerless about most things in life, but we do have the power to decide how we want to live. We can step into the magic of the COSA Twelve Steps.

We can take the first step towards our spiritual awakening. And we are not alone.

If you wish to give service by sharing your Step One story, speak to your sponsor.

~Margaret Z, Canada



### **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.

## **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.

# STEP 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · 10 · 11 · 12

## CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY.

I think it is very important to build a strong foundation in this program by thoroughly working Steps 1, 2, and 3. For working my steps, I was taught to look up the words in each of the steps in the dictionary. According to a dictionary, sane means ability to make right choices and having a sound mind. When I was in my co-addictive pattern, I definitely was not making right choices or showing signs of a sound mind. My unhealthy patterns were snooping, interrogating, jealousy, watching men watch women, ignoring red flags, dismissing my values, obsessing, shaming men for participating in pornography and other sexual addiction activities, and settling for being with a man active in his addiction(s). Although I practiced these unhealthy patterns in previous relationships, I was not willing or ready to really address my co-addictive issues at this level until this past relationship with a man I will call BF. I was in so much pain that I finally started turning this relationship over to my Higher Power on a daily basis. I quit trying to control BF and allowed the outcome of the relationship to unfold. I believe it unfolded for my highest good and his. I was compromising myself by not living within my values. I wish I would have walked away before the relationship began because I saw the red flags before we dated, but I didn't. BF gave me a gift by breaking up with me.

That relationship brought me to COSA. Through COSA, my sponsor, my co-sponsor, others in recovery, and my therapist, I have learned a lot about boundaries, my values, and what I want in a relationship. Some of the most important things I have determined through recovery are that I will not be with a man who is active in any addiction; I will only be sexual if I am in a conscious, committed, monogamous, and intimate relationship; and I will live by my values. By working the steps and focusing on me, I have been restored to sanity. I think that is the reason why I am now in a healthy relationship with a man in recovery that meets my needs and values.

I met him (JA) in another recovery program about three years ago; I saw JA again at my therapist's office; then, I saw JA in yet another recovery program. You see, I am one of those lucky double winners. I had to deal with my sex addiction before I could see my co-addiction issues. In February 2008, I will have five years of abstinence from my bottom line behavior, which is going to bars and picking up men. After a year of getting to know each other as friends, we started dating. In about two months we started dating exclusively, so we were ready to kiss. We made a conscious decision to be in an intimate, committed, monogamous relationship after approximately four months of dating. This is the healthiest dating experience and relationship I have ever been in. Another important thing I have learned in recovery is not to make my boyfriend my Higher Power. In the past, I would place his needs, wants, and values above mine. Now, first and foremost in my life is my recovery and values.

Working my steps and having a deeper relationship with my Higher Power has restored me to sanity. My connection with my Higher Power is deeper now due to my recovery, but I want to continue to deepen that relationship with my Higher Power. A dictionary says believe is to have trust or confidence in being true, real, good, etc. Believing in a Higher Power has never been an issue for me. Since I have been 6 years old, I have sought a connection with my Higher Power that I call Spirit or Presence. I was fortunate enough to grow up in a family where religion wasn't forced on me. I am very grateful for that. My mom believed in the fundamental concept of a Higher Power, whom she called God, her whole life. After looking at several religions over the years, I consider myself spiritual (not religious). A sweet woman told me that the difference between being religious and being spiritual is that the religious person is afraid of hell and the spiritual person has been to hell and back. My addictions felt like I was in hell, but through a relationship with my Higher Power I am back. My mom was concerned about me because she thought I did not believe. I explained to her that I definitely believe, but just different than what she believes. One of the many gifts of twelve-step recovery is choosing your concept of a Higher Power. My mom died recently and it was

very comforting to me to know that she had a relationship with God to help her pass. I connect with Spirit through nature, prayer, meditation, running, loving, recovering, and connecting with family and friends. For me, whatever brings me peace and keeps me in the present moment is connecting with Higher Power.

~Amy L.

Reprinted from *Balance* Jan/Feb 2008

# TRADITION 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · 10 · 11 · 12

## OUR COMMON WELFARE SHOULD COME FIRST; PERSONAL RECOVERY DEPENDS UPON COSA UNITY.

It used to be all about you. Then it became all about me. Now it is about us. Tradition One reminds me that although it begins with me, and the focus on myself, my needs, and my feelings is important, my personal recovery does depend upon COSA unity. Without me, I could not have come through the doors of COSA. Without you, there would be no group to attend. Without us there would be no COSA fellowship.

Although I used to focus solely on you, it was for one purpose: to ease my pain and make me feel better. Did it work? No. Was it for selfish reasons? Yes. I didn't know how to live any other way. Focusing on others got me through my childhood. I knew I would be accepted in my family if I did everything for them. So I did everything for them, and grew up learning to resent it, while wearing a smile on my face. This gave me an awfully big illusion of control. I thought if I controlled every decision in my family of origin (and the one I chose as an adult), then I would be safe. Everyone else was out to harm me, in my mind, so that was the only option I thought would keep me safe. That ended up being the decision that kept me exactly where I was and worse. Thinking that way kept me from having loving relationships based on equality. Tradition One reminds me how we are all equals when we walk in the doors of COSA, but more importantly we are all equals when we walk out as well. The other members of my family have a voice and if I want a peaceful home, I need to listen and consider them so we could come to solutions together.

This Tradition doesn't come naturally to me. I have to work on it daily and often I slip. My Higher Power and my meetings remind me that recovery in my relationships depends upon unity. I was used to being what I thought you wanted me to be, so I would be liked and loved. Other times my actions were the opposite extreme, it was my way or the highway. Tradition One taught me that my partner and I would need to make decisions together in order to have the best relationship. I didn't have to change who I was to be loved, and I didn't have to have my way all the time either. There was a middle that was more balanced.

Working this Tradition has become very important in my relationships with others, not only in COSA but at home too.

~Carolee D,  
Ontario Canada

Reprinted from *Balance* Volume 8, Issue 4 (January/February 2012)

# TRADITION 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · 10 · 11 · 12

## 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.

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.

Tradition Two guards against power struggles in my group. We have business meetings and we learn that our Higher Power is in the group conscience that we agree with, and our Higher Power is in the group conscience that we don't agree with. We avoid letting one or two members dominate the group. We remember our only ultimate authority is our Higher Power, and our leaders guide but don't govern. Tradition Two suggests that we are a fellowship of equals.

This Tradition helps me gain clarity in my relationship with my spouse, as well. My marriage was not one of equality. We fought for the power to decide how to spend our money, paint our kitchen, or trim the orchid tree. We also battled over my husband's recovery from sex addiction. I wanted to call the shots. I told him which therapist he should see, which meetings were healthier, and which sponsors were going to better suit me. I was breaking Tradition Two. I was the acting authority in our home, and I fought for my right to stay that way. At first it was easy. My husband was too wrapped up in his addiction to care what I did, and I got free rein. But as he recovered, he took back some of his power. He no longer wanted me governing every detail of our lives. It was awful.

I am grateful we no longer live that way. We are more a fellowship of equals. We have decided together which areas each of us is responsible for, and we have meetings of two when things come up. We have our Higher Power to lead us, and on most days, we are equals. We avoid our old power struggles. Recovery helped us to live out Tradition Two in our home.

~Anonymous

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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.

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