

Tradition Eight

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

Tradition Eight reminds us that recovery is never for sale. We are not paid to carry the message to those who still suffer. We freely give what was so generously given to us. We enthusiastically carry the message from a place of gratitude, not from a desire for monetary rewards. When we work for financial gain, we may lose sight of our spiritual focus. Money as a motivator might interfere with our connection with fellow COSA members, our COSA program, and our Higher Power. Tradition Eight directs COSA to remain unencumbered by financial interests.

What we have to offer others is our own experience, strength, and hope: what our lives were like before recovery, where we are now, how we got here, and where we are heading. COSA's foundation is built on the generous and free-flowing sharing of our stories and our spiritual journeys. A wonderful, nurturing atmosphere is created when we each share from the heart.

This humble and genuine sharing is the fabric of COSA. Spirituality enters in between the threads of our shares when we set aside our egos and make room to receive grace and wisdom from our Higher Power and from other COSA members. Every day in recovery is a brand new one, that is one reason we keep coming back. When we admit our powerlessness and become willing to surrender our will and our lives to our Higher Power, we experience the opportunity to touch a sense of the sacred.

We learn early on that COSA is not a therapy group. We do not give advice or try to fix one another. Some of us did not understand this at first. We attended our first meeting hoping to get easy answers. We looked to the more seasoned members to tell us what we needed to do to escape our pain. Some of us left our first meeting surprised that the COSA members in attendance did not give us any advice at all, but instead focused on their own recovery. Nevertheless, their shares helped us feel that we were no longer alone with dark secrets. Seeing their serenity and hearing them articulate feelings that we never expected anyone else to understand, we left with a glimmer of relief and hope. We gained comfort and insight that many of us could not find any other way.

Our program is a spiritual program as opposed to a professional one. When we serve in a professional capacity, we may work to find solutions for others. However, in recovery we acknowledge that we do not have all the answers. This leaves room for the guidance of a Higher Power.

There is no such job position as a professional COSA. Professionals are specifically trained to provide a service, and typically they are paid for that service. In COSA, the only "training" we receive is through the work we do in our own recovery. With the support from our program and the guidance from our Higher Power, our individual experience, strength, and hope are our unique offerings.

COSA is a fellowship of equals, whether we are newcomers or long-term members. There is no hierarchy of membership. There are no leaders. No person is more or less valuable than another. We are all human beings. The only one with more knowledge than the rest is our Higher Power.

Some of us seek help from professionals in addition to working the COSA program. Some COSA members are themselves professional therapists, doctors, social workers, and the like. But when we enter a COSA meeting, we leave our professional hats at the door. **We are all equals in COSA recovery,** all here for healing. We may volunteer our talents in service to COSA, but we are not paid to perform any roles.

However, Tradition Eight states that COSA's service centers may employ special workers. It is unrealistic to expect a large international organization to run solely on volunteer power if it is to remain sustainable for years to come. COSA may employ special workers to keep things running smoothly. Without this work, the administrative services of COSA would very likely grind to a halt.

The duties performed by COSA's special workers may include such things as managing its office, monitoring the mail, sending out COSA literature, working to ensure that COSA is in compliance with not-for-profit standards, entering data for COSA's tax returns, and providing monthly reports to the board. The special workers communicate directly with the board's chair and treasurer and are accountable to the board as well as to the fellowship. At times, COSA contracts with professionals who have other specific skills that COSA needs to grow. For example, COSA may hire an expert web designer to work on its website.

Importantly, special workers are never paid to do Twelve Step work or carry the COSA message of recovery. All the tasks they perform support the program administratively so that those in recovery can continue to share their experience, strength, and hope, thus carrying COSA's message with integrity.

COSA is not a business, and recovery is not for sale. COSA is fueled by volunteer members who serve with honest, heartfelt enthusiasm rather than from a sense of obligation or a desire to profit. By freely giving service to our recovery program and offering our experience, strength, and hope to other COSA members, we honor the Twelfth Step and practice these principles in all areas of our lives. In order to keep recovery, we must give it away—not sell it, but give it. Our recovery in COSA depends upon a Power greater than ourselves, and that cannot be bought. It is always **freely** available to us **if we are willing to do our part.**