

Tradition Seven

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

Tradition Seven, in conjunction with Tradition Six, acts as a protective shell, ensuring that COSA is not compromised by outside interests. The Sixth Tradition dissuades COSA from supporting or giving resources to outside groups. Tradition Seven recommends that COSA rely solely on its members and accept no support from outside sources. Together, these two traditions help COSA remain independent, autonomous, and focused on a steady course toward our primary purpose, helping those who still suffer from the effects of compulsive sexual behavior.

Even when outside funds or resources are given with the best of intentions, accepting them puts COSA at risk of diluting its primary purpose. A COSA group that accepts a contribution from an outside entity may experience a sense of indebtedness, even if the giver asks for nothing in return.

For example, a small COSA group was meeting at a religious facility. The facility offered to let the group use the meeting room rent-free. Led by the principles of the Seventh Tradition, the COSA group members decided by group conscience that they would pay rent, even though it was not requested. They perceived the rent-free space to be an outside donation, one that may have resulted in a sense of indebtedness to the church or in the appearance of a religious affiliation. Had the church requested that the group make religious materials available during the meeting, the group members or the church may have felt that the group was obligated to comply because the meeting room had been gifted. Tradition Seven holds sacred the priority to maintain COSA's autonomy. By refusing the offer, the group was confident that it was free from outside influences.

COSA is sustained solely by voluntary contributions from its members. Tradition Seven offers us opportunities to support COSA every time a meeting basket is passed. When we give to COSA, we not only help it flourish, we also develop a sense of purpose and connection to our COSA community. By supporting COSA, we invest in our collective well-being. Tradition Seven's direction to be self-supporting is both unifying and empowering.

Groups may decide how to use member contributions. The funds may be used to pay rent and website fees, purchase literature and materials, and help delegates attend the annual COSA convention. In addition, local groups are responsible for supporting and sustaining COSA's International Service Organization (ISO), ensuring that it also remains self-supporting. Money donated to the ISO is used to pay for office rent and supplies, compensate the administrative assistant(s), maintain the website, publish materials, and help finance the annual convention.

Through Tradition Seven, COSA members work together to ensure that COSA maintains a prudent fiscal reserve and has adequate resources to continue to carry the message. Each group is free to determine the amount needed in reserve. COSA groups and ISO strive to have sufficient funds not only to pay current expenses, but also to support lasting continuity.

At the same time, COSA remains humble and free of entanglements by avoiding excessive stockpiles of financial resources. Without financial distractions, COSA is better able to remain focused on helping those whose lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.

At times, individuals may be unable to contribute financially. Even so, everyone is welcomed into COSA, and each member is embraced and valued equally. As some meeting scripts state, "We have no dues or fees. We need you more than we need your money." We give only what we can. Sustaining COSA also depends upon nonfinancial contributions, such as members participating in meetings, working their programs, and providing service.

While Tradition Seven is intended to guide COSA groups to remain self-supporting, we may also apply the principle in our lives and individual recovery journeys. Some of us have found that when we are dependent on someone else, we sacrifice our autonomy and lose our sense of self-worth and capability. We often fail to take care of ourselves and instead focus on others.

In the past, we may have relied upon others to support us even when it did not feel safe or right. Perhaps we have had unrealistic expectations or hopes that someone else could take care of our needs, and inevitably we were left feeling disappointed, resentful, or victimized. When we set ourselves up to feel beholden to someone else, we often ignore our own needs and wants.

As we work the Twelve Steps of recovery and begin to trust our Higher Power, we learn to care for and trust ourselves. From this place of groundedness and connection, we regain our sense of self-worth and discernment. When we take responsibility for our own lives, we experience a feeling of empowerment, well-being, and completeness. As COSA members in recovery, we are learning to hear our authentic voices and gain the courage to follow our truth. We no longer work so hard to try to please others or to let them determine what is best for us.

Tradition Seven both secures COSA's path to its primary purpose and offers us the meaningful and often life-changing opportunity to contribute to our beloved fellowship. The Tradition's lesson, that of taking responsibility for ourselves and for COSA, is key to sustaining COSA's integrity and supporting our ability to carry the message to others who still suffer.