

# Balance

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION OF COSA  
Winter Issue January-February 2009

## DIVERSITY IN COSA

At the last Convention in Seattle WA, the ISO of COSA Board decided to make Diversity a main focus for the coming year 2008-2009. The Board worked on a Diversity Statement at our Face-to-Face meeting in Albuquerque, NM in October 2008.

Here is the Diversity Statement, and some COSA voices regarding this subject. We hope that this is just the beginning of a great dialogue that can continue in to the new year, and in to the Oakland Convention in May 2009. ~ Lindy T., Literature Chair



### 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 both 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, 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 upon COSA unity.

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A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR

### COSA VOICES

As a gay American man born of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean descent who was brought up in a Catholic household with an agnostic father and a Catholic mother, diversity has been an issue that has weighed heavily on my mind from a very early age. I have seen personal economic security and complete economic devastation, employment and unemployment. I have seen mental illness plague family members in the face of life's other great stressors. I managed to survive three strokes by the age of 11 and learned how to walk again, even when doctors would say I would not. Diversity became synonymous with my life.

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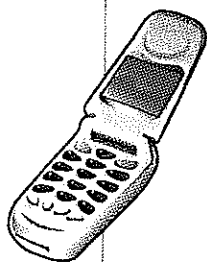
## 7th Traditions Individuals

Holt, MI	\$ 8.00
Maple Grove, MN	\$ 60.00
Minneapolis, MN	\$ 20.00
Woodside, NY	\$ 10.00
Midlothian, VA	\$ 2.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$100.00</b>

Recurring Donations  
Total for 11/02/08-12/28/08  
**\$456**

## 7th Traditions Groups

CA-01	\$250.00
CA-13	\$ 16.50
IN-04	\$136.64
MN-04	\$ 20.00
MN-14	\$ 50.00
NM-01	\$ 30.00
TX-04	\$ 60.00
Katy TX	\$121.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$684.14</b>



## Tuesday &amp; Thursday Telemeeting's

[www.cosacall.com](http://www.cosacall.com)

## Telephone number:

**1-906-481-2100 Passcode: 679461**

Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific Time  
(8 Mountain, 9 Central, 10 Eastern)

Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time  
(7 Mountain, 8 Central, 9 Eastern)

## Welcome NEW COSA Groups!

Australia  
Montrose, CO  
Appleton, WI



## 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 upcoming 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.

Please send your articles to: [COSACopy@yahoo.com](mailto:COSACopy@yahoo.com)  
or by snail mail to the COSA ISO PO Box listed on the envelope below.

## Contact the ISO of COSA

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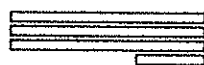
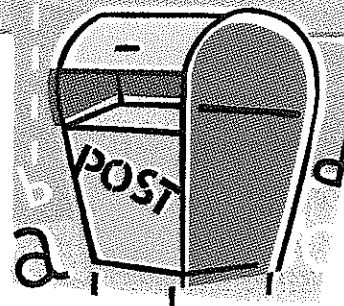
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When I was approached at the 2008 Convention in Seattle to handle the Men in COSA e-mails, and after talking with other COSA members, I found that the term "diversity in COSA" really needed to broaden its definition from Men in COSA to include all those who feel a sense of "difference" within our fellowship, whether it be on the basis of class, sexual orientation or gender identification, physical or mental challenges, race, or national origins. I look forward to hearing all of your thoughts about ways we can address this issue. In acceptance, we find love and in love, we find hope. Hope is at the very heart of our recovery.

I hope that a Higher Power finds each and every one of you well, especially during this season of love, hope and change. ~Brian, Diversity Coordinator

Let me begin by saying that, I am grateful to COSA for changing my life. I came out of isolation and discovered new ways of dealing with pain and anxiety. My daily readings on "letting go" have centered me. COSA gave me tools to understand my value system better. Most of all I have regained hope and trust in my Higher Power. I am thankful for the fellowship that COSA brings. I offer these comments in the context of our discussion on growth and bringing the COSA light to others.

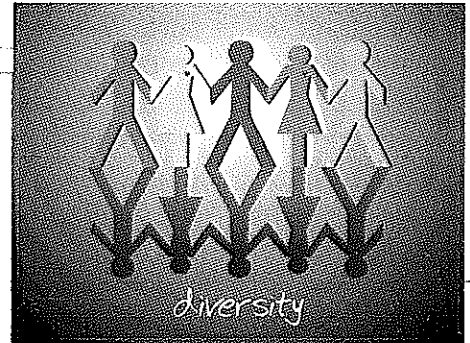
I am a first generation immigrant and a woman of color. When I first came to COSA, the words and terms confused me even though I was fluent in English. Words and concepts in the western world were not exactly the same as I understood them in my culture of origin. I needed to listen more to the context they referred to. Listening to stories helped me clarify what I needed to hear.

It took me a long time to accept self care as a worthy value. In my culture of origin, self care was the same as "selfish". Caring for others in the community had a higher value, and self care was diminished. I was raised in a clan system where in order for the whole to survive, I needed to subsume my individual needs,

sacrifice and place the well-being of the family first. On the flipside – individuals can depend on being cared for by the clan. When one is in need, clan members are expected to step up and offer physical, emotional and spiritual assistance. I continue to explore the healthy boundaries of my self-care and caring for my clan and family on a daily basis.

Rigorous honesty is another value that I found complicated to practice. In my culture of origin, direct communication leads to conflict and "loss of face." Maintaining smooth interpersonal relationships and reciprocity are accepted cultural norms. Even superficial relationships are part of the fabric of the social safety net. It is very challenging for me to practice rigorous honesty in my interactions with family and others from my culture of origin.

I believe that COSA has much to offer other cultures and the diverse communities of color in our neighborhoods. We have a positive universal message. However, how do we "start where people are"? Our challenge is to frame our message in a manner and language that reaches all who are in need of what COSA offers. ~MPT



I arrived in the rooms of COSA in February 2006 feeling out of control as a result of not knowing how to respond to my partner's sexual acting out. Quite ironic being a sex addict myself as well as a COSA. I was warmly embraced by the COSA fellowship in San Francisco from the very first meeting despite being very different in many respects. I am an African American gay male who is also a sex addict and a COSA. Those attributes really didn't matter. We are all joined together in the rooms of COSA to heal from sexual co-addiction and co-dependence regardless of sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or socioeconomic status. I am grateful to have found the Bay Area COSA fellowship. I welcome all to join us for the 2009 COSA convention here in Oakland! ~Daryl W

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STEP ONE: *"We admitted that we were powerless over sexual compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable."*

My life as a co-dependent started long before I met my husband. It probably started at age 4, being the oldest of three children with parents who neglected us. I was codependent in all of my relationships and most of my partners were addicts of some sort. When I met my husband, I was determined to become everything he wanted. I became a skier, went on all of his golf outings (I hate golf), kept an immaculate house, cooked him dinner and massaged him almost every night. I completely sacrificed my wants and needs to be the perfect wife. I was motivated by fear. Fear that I wasn't good enough, beautiful enough or smart enough to be with him. Fear that if I had needs or was less than perfect that he would leave me.

During my first pregnancy, I discovered what I thought was the first time he acted out. I was completely devastated. I had lost all of the power I thought I had to my pregnancy. I was no longer a physically perfect sex partner, had no energy to cook, massage him or keep up the house. After I gave birth to my son, I found out he had acted out again. I resorted to showing him how hurt and angry I was. I thought, he surely would change when he saw how devastated I was. Being a victim became my power. I didn't realize the hurt and anger was hurting me more than it was hurting him. We went to therapy, he said all the right things and made more promises.

Over the next few years, I felt suspicious

numerous times. When I approached him with my suspicions he repeatedly denied them. I started not trusting myself and my gut instincts. I started feeling like I was crazy. My anxiety level started rising; I constantly felt confused by the world around me. I couldn't trust my judgement or make decisions. I became more and more angry and resentful. I didn't like myself and my self-esteem deteriorated. I blamed him for all of these feelings and for who I had become. And yet at the same time, I felt a twisted pride in myself for my loyalty and dedication to him and our marriage. I prided myself for my strength and what I could endure.

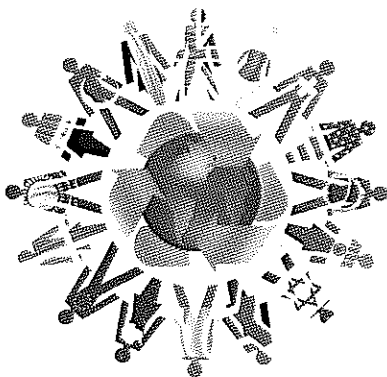
It was during my second pregnancy, that my husband's addictive sexual behaviors were at their worst when it was coupled with another addiction. At this point of time, my life had become completely unmanageable. I was absolutely obsessed with his behaviors. Instead of taking care of myself and the child I had inside of me, I spent my time checking the spywear I had on his computer, conversing with the private investigator I had hired, checking his clothes, bags, car, phone and hotel bills. I had also made it my job to get him sober from drugs. I had completely lost myself. I felt so ugly, stupid, crazy, pathetic, hurt, scared, angry and all alone in the world. I wanted to die. I had thoughts of suicide. I had lost all of my faith in God and people. All of this emotional turmoil affected my pregnancy and I was put into the hospital so they could monitor me.

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Two weeks after my daughter was born, I found out my husband had acted out again. I completely lost the ability to take care of myself in the most basic ways. I could not feed myself enough food to produce breast milk, I couldn't sleep or stop crying. I felt like I couldn't breathe. I was put on anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medication to help me function and get through a day. It was at this point, I realized that all of my efforts to control failed. All of my snooping didn't make a difference. All of my time trying to be the perfect wife/sex partner didn't stop him from acting out. All of the pain and anger I felt and showed him didn't make him change. I was completely powerless. I was powerless over my husband's addictive sexual behavior. I was powerless over sex addiction.

In November of 2006 I found my higher power. Beginning of 2007, my husband and I started going to couples sexual addiction retreats. In the summer of 2007, I started seeing a therapist who specializes in sex addiction and co-dependence. August, I received full disclosure and all of my suspicions were validated. That Sunday I walked into my first COSA meeting. Slowly, my recovery started to grow. December of that same year I checked myself into an outpatient program for sex addicts and co-dependents. January of 2008, my husband and I started a therapeutic separation and I started the amazing journey of finding, nurturing and healing myself. Our therapeutic separation lasted 9 months and we are now living in the same house again. We both have come such a long way that we feel like different people. We still struggle with things but we now have recovery tools to help us. I know that, no matter what happens in the future, I will be fine. My recovery would not have been successful without my COSA meeting. Every week, I am reminded to keep the focus on me. Every week I hear your stories and I don't feel so alone. Every week I am heard, understood, accepted and feel your support. Thank you. ~Vanessa M.



#### Unity Prayer

I PUT MY HAND IN YOURS  
AND TOGETHER WE CAN DO  
WHAT WE COULD NEVER DO ALONE.  
NO LONGER IS THERE  
A SENSE OF HOPELESSNESS,  
NO LONGER MUST WE EACH DEPEND  
UPON OUR OWN UNSTEADY WILLPOWER.  
WE ARE ALL TOGETHER NOW  
REACHING OUT OUR HANDS  
FOR A POWER AND STRENGTH  
GREATER THAN OURS,  
AND AS WE JOIN HANDS  
WE FIND LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING  
BEYOND OUR WILDEST DREAMS.

**STEP TWO: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."**

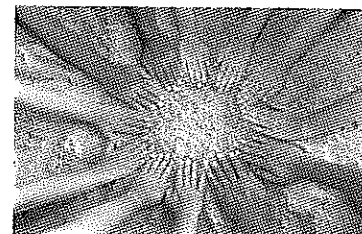
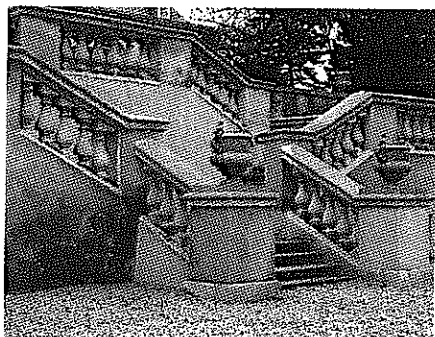
Always, when I read step two, I remember the little phrase: I can't, God can, let God. For me that's the short version of steps one, two and three. Step one, I'm powerless, I can't. Step two, came to believe that a Power greater than myself can be a benefit to me. In my case, that Power is God. Of course, I can know that, but if I don't go on to step three and let that Power benefit, I still have nothing. I must allow God to work in my life. I must experience step three for step one and two to be beneficial to me.

The other thought that always jumps out at me when I read step two is "restore me to sanity." It doesn't say restore me to sanity IF I think I'm insane. This step doesn't leave any doubt that I was insane when I walked into my first 12 step meeting. The good news is that I am salvageable. I can be restored. I can restore my sanity by earnestly working the 12 steps.

Most of us don't want to be considered insane. I, too, wasn't fond of that idea. Yet, I now know it was my insanity to my codependency that brought me to recovery. It was my insanity that gave me the freedom to live a new and better way. It was my insanity that brought me to the place where I received my tools to release my life of fear, especially fear of siblings, anger, distrust, sadness and uncertainty. Today, I do know I was insane when I walked into my first meeting. I'm grateful the steps are written so clearly that I could not find a way around facing my insanity.

I will remember what it was like when I came into this program. As long as I remember, I will have gifts to give to myself and others. When I feel like giving up, I will remember the insanity. As long as I remember, I will know that I don't want to go back there.

I am grateful for the insanity that brought me face to face with my codependency. ~Ila, 2001 (from the Archives of COSA Balance literature)

**STEP STUDY QUESTIONS~ FOR GROUP DISCUSSION OR PERSONAL REFLECTION****Step 1 Questions**

- How do I feel about the concept of being powerless?
- Have I admitted powerlessness over sexual addiction and my own co-addiction, or are there areas where I still feel that I have power or control?
- What are some of the ways in which I have tried to exert this power or control?
- Is there a specific incident that has helped me realize my powerlessness?
- What are some of the signs that my life has been unmanageable in the past?
- What are some of the red flags in my current thinking or behavior that may signal a need to remember and practice Step 1?
- Who are some of the people whom I feel safe to acknowledge my powerlessness with? Whom do I refer to when I say "We"?

**Step 2 Questions**

- How do I define "insanity" and "sanity"?
- Do I believe it is possible to recover and feel sane?
- What would help me be restored to sanity?
- What are the forms of a "power greater than myself" in my life right now?
- Do I have resistance to "coming to believe"? Can I identify these internal road blocks?
- How might I "come to believe"? What are some current indicators that I am willing?
- Can I identify some evidence of a Higher Power working in the lives of other recovering COSAs? Do I feel that I, too, can have this in my life? If not, why not?
- Can I equate this Step with "coming to believe that I will have help in healing from the unmanageability" I uncovered in Step 1? How does it feel to know I'll have this help?

*Continued from page 3*

## DIVERSITY IN COSA

I was asked if I wanted to contribute to the Balance article on Diversity in COSA because as a Hispanic I fit the definition of diversity: *the inclusion of diverse people (as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization.*

I am a Hispanic female. Being Hispanic I am in a racial minority in COSA. Ironically, I am also part of a cultural majority because I am female. When I was in high school, a teacher used me as an example when he was explaining affirmative action. He pointed out that because I was part of a minority race and female I would be given more consideration for a position when affirmative action was applied. I

remember feeling great embarrassment and guilt when he made me the center of the discussion. My classmates verbalized resentment and feelings of unfairness at my special status. This memory can take on many directions but I want to focus on how I felt about the labels: Hispanic, female.

I did not feel like I was part of the greater whole at that moment. I did not want to be spotlighted by those *labels*. The specific labels are not the focus here. What struck me as unfair was that assumptions were being made about who I am as a person based on the labels. My son is gay. That fact alone does not tell anything about who he is as a person. It tells you his sexual preference and that's all. If someone makes the choice to jump to a conclusion about him based on the fact that he is gay that tells more about the other person than it does my son. Now if someone is more comfortable with me because of my experience of being Hispanic, female, mother of a gay

son, mother of a teenage recovering alcoholic, etc. than I welcome that. On the other hand, if someone doesn't feel comfortable with me because of any of those facts then I will respect that. Just as I have my own path, so does that person.

So although I am Hispanic I cannot begin to represent all the Hispanics of the world. Yes, I have had a different cultural experience than my fellow Caucasian COSA friend but I don't need him to know that experience first hand to support me in my recovery. My friend has been affected by someone else's compulsive sexual behavior. That is the first hand experience I find

comfort in. I can grow with the strength and hope I get from all COSA's and if they have a different experience than my Hispanic upbringing that widens my world all that more. In getting to know this person I can share what it was like growing up number eight of nine children in a devout Catholic home where by virtue of gender alone our parents placed different values on their children. I can listen and

learn from the details of his cultural experience. What we share is the understanding that although we are different we can find love and understanding in each other because of our shared experience of being affected by someone else's compulsive sexual behavior. Our differences in race, gender, and culture are special bonuses we get to share with each other in our recovery process.

Thanks to all my wonderful, supportive, and loving COSA friends for being part of my recovery. ~ Paula

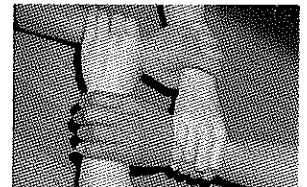


## Diversity Thoughts

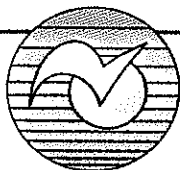
When I walked into my home meeting, the Saturday morning COSA meeting in San Francisco, I was greatly relieved and immediately comforted by the diversity in the room. Men and women of all different ages, nationalities, ethnicities, and sexual orientations were there. Surely, this was not only about me or the way I looked, as I had mistakenly believed.

Had I walked into a room full of all women (I was so scared of that!), or all people of one age bracket or race, I may very well have walked out. If there was a place for all of these different types of people, there was a place for someone as screwed up and as messed up and miserable as the me that walked into that room two years ago.

I am so grateful for the diversity in COSA; it helps me feel safe and reminds me that I am not so different after all. There is a place for me and all of us here, no matter where we come from or what our individual situation may be. ~ Sarah S., San Francisco







## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Upcoming COSA Retreat



#### Houston TX Area Retreat

The Retreat will be  
Jan 30 - Feb 1, 2009

at Cho-Yeh Retreat Center in  
Livingston, Texas. This retreat center is  
about 1 1/2 hours from Houston and  
about 3 1/2 hours from Dallas/ Fort Worth,  
San Antonio, Austin, Waco. For further  
information contact:  
[sharonr62@yahoo.com](mailto:sharonr62@yahoo.com).



#### YOUR Feedback Wanted!

The ISO of COSA Central Office needs  
your opinion on literature pricing. There  
have been some voices that have asked  
that the price of the literature be  
evaluated.

Please take a moment to send an email to  
[iso@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:iso@cosa-recovery.org)  
and share your thoughts on the price of COSA  
literature. Let your voice be heard.



### Diversify Your World

*May 21-25, 2009*

*Memorial Day weekend  
Oakland, California*

Meet New Friends at the  
ISO of COSA International  
Convention and Annual Meeting



**Oakland  
2009**

quaking with clarity

To register online or for more info:  
[www.cosa-recovery.org/oakland](http://www.cosa-recovery.org/oakland)

User Name: oakland  
Password: cali2009

Or contact the COSA Convention Committee  
for additional information at:  
[convention@cosa-recovery.org](mailto:convention@cosa-recovery.org)

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT [WWW.COSA-RECOVERY.ORG](http://WWW.COSA-RECOVERY.ORG)