

Balance

Newsletter of International Service Organization of COSA



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Being a Sponsor

Being a sponsor in COSA has shown me how to honor and respect another person's journey in life, in the COSA Twelve Steps and in recovery. It has taught me that I must have the humility and faith to understand that I do not know what another person's journey should look like. It means that no person is on my time frame. A sponsee will gently reach their own awareness, and will make changes, decisions and actions in their own time, not mine.

Being a sponsor means supporting a person through their COSA journey of discovery and growth using patience, active listening and loving kindness, not judgement. Sometimes as a sponsor I gently point things out, or maybe not so gently. That is because that person "hired" me to be their sponsor, and I will do my job. It is not always easy telling someone the truth, especially if they might get angry at me, but I am still going to do my job. Taking the easy way out is not an option.

If I am caretaking or people pleasing, in the end, that is not serving a sponsee. It is of the utmost importance to be truthful and honest while weighing and measuring hurtfulness. I must take into account how new a person is to recovery, and what I believe they can handle about the truth, given their present mental, emotional and spiritual condition. It is my job to be aware of their state of mind, so as not to cause more harm.

I do not "own" my sponsees. They are not "my property". They do not owe me anything. I must be willing to give freely of my time and attention (within my own established boundaries in that relationship). If I expect anything at all from a sponsee, I need to take a good look at me. If I am not able to give freely of my time and attention without holding a resentment, I need to set further boundaries and look at my own behavior or expectations.

As a sponsor, I am not a parent, but at times I may offer some parental love if needed. I am not a person's protector. Sponsees sometimes make bad choices and decisions, but we all learn from consequences, not from being "protected". That does not mean that as a sponsor I can't offer some healthy guidance, that is why I'm here, but I can't force anyone to take it, nor will I be hurt, angry or resentful that they didn't take my terrific advice. Again, I give freely, with NO expectations, including that others will accept my guidance or suggestions. They may not.

I am enough. I will always share my own personal experience. That is what I have to offer as well as what others have shared with me (I share others' experience anonymously). I cannot offer guidance in anything that I do not have experience with. Therefore, it humbles me to know that I am NOT the

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**Check out COSA's
newly redesigned
website**

cosa-recovery.org

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Great I AM. I am just me, and a collection of all of my experiences.

With my higher power, my heart and my experience, I am enough. This does not mean I need to be “everything” in all things, in all ways, to a sponsee. If I think that is what sponsoring is, that is my ego and self-will running riot. I have lost my humility, and lost touch with my higher power. Sponsoring is not about having all the answers, all the time, for all matters.

As a sponsor I can have the humility to say “I don’t know” and guide a person elsewhere. Trying to fix something I have no experience with can cause additional harm and confusion.

I do not break my sponsee’s anonymity. It is none of anyone’s business who I sponsor in COSA nor do I brag about it. That is breaking confidence and trust and feeding my own ego. I consider these relationships private. If a sponsee chooses to break the anonymity of our relationship, that is their choice, but I will not.

Having one committed call per week with a sponsee at a designated time and day pays off. This expresses the commitment of the sponsee to their journey in recovery as well as the commitment of the sponsor to the sponsee. This also establishes regular communication so each can get to know the other. In no time at all, the calls become very comfortable and valuable on both ends. Seeing a sponsee at a COSA meeting is not the best place to share privately. Also meeting for coffee, breakfast, lunch or dinner is always great.

If a sponsee is not invested in their personal recovery, they will not show up at COSA meetings regularly and will miss committed calls. This is a clue to reconsider this relationship. There are other COSAs that would love a sponsor and would greatly benefit. It is okay to let a sponsee go and allow someone in that might be ready to make the commitment. There will be someone there for the other person when they are ready. It is something to think about.

It is always easier to smooth things over, and say, “Oh, that’s okay”... but as a sponsor, it is my job to be upfront when a behavior causes harm or is of concern. That is my job. That is why they hired me. However, I will not beat the dead horse either. I understand that we are all powerless, and sometimes we can’t let go of a behavior – until our higher power intercedes. And I am not that higher power for anyone; I am just the sponsor.

It is a relief to know that I can allow my higher power and my sponsee’s higher power to do what we cannot. It all works out in the end. I step aside and let God do his work, because I know I am not Him.

As a sponsor it is important to know where we STOP and where GOD IS, which is everywhere. I allow Him to do His work, and I will do mine.

~Anonymous



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: <https://cosa-recovery.org/service/write-for-cosa/writing-guidelines-for-cosa-literature/>

Please send your articles to COSACopy@yahoo.com

or by mail to: ISO of COSA, Central Office, 9219 Katy Freeway, Suite 266, Houston, TX 77024 U.S.A.

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

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Healing Through Self-Forgiveness

The act of self-forgiveness for me required honesty, vulnerability and a lot of courage. I also needed a good amount of kindness, compassion and acceptance, but I received these gifts back tenfold when I offered myself forgiveness.

Before I could even think about self-forgiveness, I had to identify what I was forgiving myself for. That required a Step Four searching and fearless inventory. I had to take a long hard look in the mirror and be totally open and honest with myself, leaving no stone unturned, as best I could.

Honesty was a tough one for me. Not that I was intentionally trying to deceive myself. No, I'm actually a very honest person. What gets in the way for me is my overactive and, I might add, unhealthy tool of denial. While I'm at it, denial mixed with a good dose of sugar coating impedes the making of a complete and thorough Step Four inventory. To tell you the truth (pun intended), my character defect of denial and pollyanna approach to life was at the top of my character defects list, making it quite challenging for me to do the rest of my inventory and truly see myself in all my defects and attributes.

To add insult to injury, I'm a reformed perfectionist. Prior to recovery, I lived in a black and white world where, in my mind, if I wasn't perfect, I was horrid. That made it all the more challenging to see my character defects.

But it was with patience and the kind and loving support of my Higher Power and my co-sponsor that I was able to see past my rose-colored lenses, and be searching and fearless as I identified the various harms I had committed. By recognizing my denial defect, I was able to set aside the "I need to be perfect" myth, and be gentle and patient with myself as I added to my Fourth Step list.

Once I had named all of my defects, I needed to identify the damage I had caused. I included myself on my Step Eight list of the people I had harmed. The list of harms to myself resulted from my neglecting myself. I paid so much attention to others - what they wanted, what they needed, what kind of bending over backwards I needed to do to please them - that I totally ignored my needs, wants and desires. It was so bad that I let others define my reality, who I am and what I think of myself.

I then made amends to myself in Step Nine. I've heard that when we make our Ninth Step amends, we don't ask for forgiveness. Our job is just to clean up our side of the street. So when I made my Ninth Step amends, I focused solely on what I needed to say to make my amends and tried to let go of the other person's reaction. It felt more authentic to let go of any expectation that the other person might tell me that I was forgiven. I understood that my intentions were about me and making right.

If, after hearing my amends, the person told me that she or he forgave me for the harm I had caused, well, that was a lovely bonus. But my focus was not on forgiveness. So when I made amends to myself, I didn't consider asking for or offering myself forgiveness.

I actually didn't see asking for or receiving forgiveness included in any of the Twelve Steps. When I got through Step Twelve I felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment and relief. But yet, something was missing. I believe what was missing for me was the power of self-forgiveness.

How do I forgive myself? First, I need to accept my mistakes. And I mean truly accept that I have caused harm to someone else or myself. My denial defect can lead me to justify it away. "Oh, that wasn't that bad, it could have been worse," etc. To be able to truly forgive myself requires that I first feel remorse and that I take responsibility for my actions. Minimizing my actions or the harm I caused is not helpful. Forgiving myself is not telling myself that what I did wasn't so bad. It is reminding myself that I am enough, that regardless of my actions, I am a worthy, loved, human being.

Then I ask myself for forgiveness. Even if I don't believe I'm worthy of it, I ask and I forgive myself anyway. Even

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if what I did is really harmful and something I'm feeling terrible about, I ask and forgive anyway. Forgiveness is a conscious release of resentment and anger. It's a choice I make and is a path to freedom. Forgiveness to me is not saying, "No worries. It's OK." It's a letting go of bitterness, and opening up to self-love and acceptance. If I need help, I can always ask my Higher Power to support me in forgiving myself. Forgiveness is my way to move forward in peace, serenity and love.

When I was able to ask for, and grant myself, forgiveness, I experienced a new cleansing light to my program as well as my life. Now when I do my 10th Step personal inventory, I include in my amends, to either myself or to someone else, a request to myself for forgiveness. I forgive myself and open up to love myself. I lean deeply into self-compassion. Hope emerges from the rubble.

~Liz G



Letter from the Chair

I would like to introduce myself as Chris C., the new Chair of the ISO of COSA board. I'll have been in this program for 15 years in May. My home meeting is in Alamo, California, in a little room at the back of a Safeway grocery store, near the cleaning goods in aisle 7. Our little joke is, "Clean up your life on aisle 7!" Come visit if you can! All are welcome.

As a male in COSA, I attended meetings, but I kept myself apart from the "we" of the program until about 5 years ago when I finally shed the baggage that I brought to the rooms. After allowing myself the full support of my COSA sisters and brothers, my life, serenity, and love of this program expanded immensely! Because of the love and support I have received from my fellow COSAs, today I feel a strong pull from my Higher Power to serve this fellowship to the best of my abilities, to give back that which was so freely given. I feel an ache when I think about people that have just discovered they have been affected by this disease but are in situations that limit their access to healing resources.

I am grateful to be a member of this board, and I would not have stepped into this role without their loving support. I know that we all are supporting each other as we, in our perfectly imperfect ways, try to be your trusted servants.

Thanks for listening,

Chris C.

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.

The Outreach Committee Needs You!

If you are a COSA who is passionate about carrying the message to those who still suffer, please consider the Outreach Committee as a perfect fit for your skills. We are in need of people who will:

- **Coordinate Support for Individual COSAs**
 - ◁ Create spreadsheets to keep track of COSA information
 - ◁ Sponsor new COSAs
 - ◁ Interview no-longer-active COSAs
- **Coordinate New Meeting Support**
 - ◁ Help establish local new meetings
 - ◁ Create podcasts
 - ◁ Reach out to closed meetings
 - ◁ Function as Telephone and Zoom meeting liaison
- **Coordinate Internal Communications**
 - ◁ Translate literature to other languages
 - ◁ Read and record our present literature for audio books
 - ◁ Edit and catalog the above audio books
 - ◁ Write/design materials for printed communication
- **Coordinate External Communications**
 - ◁ Creatively inform the public of our mission via social media
 - ◁ Creatively inform professionals of our mission
 - ◁ Be a liaison to other 12-Step organizations

The opportunities are endless – definitely not limited by the above list – and can only be accomplished by those who are able to pass on the gifts they have received from COSA. If you are one of these people, please consider this your invitation to join us. Write to outreachcommittee@cosa-recovery.org for more information.

Video Meetings

The **COSA Zoom Room** is offering those COSAs affected by the coronavirus to continue their recovery journey via Zoom video meetings. Zoom meeting times are posted on the CZR website: cosazoomroom.org

If your face to face meeting would like to see if a room is available, please contact the CZR via cosazoomroom@yahoo.com for available meeting times.

Phone Meetings

During this time of “sheltering in place” and “social distancing,” many of us need additional support and may be unable to continue attending our usual face-to-face meetings. Phone meetings stand ready to help all COSAs find more recovery support. Below are some FAQs and additional information to help you access this vital resource. How do I find out when phone meetings are happening and how to dial in?

Go to our website home page: cosa-recovery.org. Then click on the Meetings tab. Next, follow the drop down menu options and click on the Phone Meetings menu option, then click the option for the Meeting Schedule and the list of meetings will appear. When you find a meeting you’d like to attend, simply click the title of the meeting and you’ll be taken to the dial-in instructions. Dialing in consists of calling a “free conference call” number followed by an access code. You can also go straight to the phone meeting schedule by going to cosacall.com.

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How many phone meetings are there?

There are several phone meetings every day, including two meetings which meet for only thirty minutes but meet every day of the week. The other phone meetings are structured more like a face-to-face meeting, meeting for an hour once a week.

Do I need to say who I am when on phone meetings?

Here is important info from the phone meeting page of our website: “An automated voice will ask you to say your name before you enter the call. Please disregard this message and press the # key on your phone instead. This allows you to bypass saying your name and immediately join the call. We want newcomers to feel free to join our meeting and not have to announce themselves until they feel comfortable doing so. We do not use this feature because of the anonymous nature of our calls, but we are unable to turn off this part of the service. When you are ready, you can let us know you are on the call during the Introductions portion of the live call.”

How do I share in a phone meeting?

Additional info from the phone meeting page of our website: “Some of our meetings use a Universal Mute to improve the sound quality on the call. If you say something during a call but no one seems to hear you, the call is likely on Universal Mute. You will need to press *6 to bypass the Universal Mute so people can hear you. We encourage members to remain muted unless they are speaking so mute yourself after you speak by pressing *6 again.” Like all COSA meetings, you may choose to share or to pass.

What else might I need to know?

Many COSAs have been able to work their program entirely by participating in phone meetings. Many COSAs supplement their attendance at face-to-face and/or online meetings by attending phone meetings as well. Just like face-to-face meetings, phone meetings vary in “personality,” composition and “feel” from one another. It is advised to attend several meetings to assess whether a specific phone meeting is a good fit for your recovery.

Connecting US...virtually was held May 23-24, 2020

We on the Program Committee approached the task of putting together a program for the virtual Convention with several priorities in mind: We wanted a program that would honor the spirit of COSA’s Columbus convention of “being connected” while being manageable in a virtual environment, and we wanted to emphasize topics and tools that were particularly relevant to helping us cope with the additional stresses of sheltering in place and living through a pandemic. We thought the things we were struggling with— isolation, fear, overwhelm, and negative thought patterns—might be common to many COSA members, so we focused our attention on those tools and Steps that were helping us the most. These included gratitude, recognizing our powerlessness, turning things over to our Higher Power, taking things one day at a time, being of service, and connecting with other COSA members.

One of the things that helped the Virtual Program Committee plan the Online convention in such a condensed timeframe was our ability to collaborate with many of the speakers and workshop presenters who had already been scheduled for Columbus. With our themes in mind, we looked at the preliminary program that was in place for Columbus, and chose several workshops that closely aligned with those themes. We reached out to the presenters to see if they were willing to brave the online format, and were glad that several were willing to give it a try. We were also gratified that the speakers we asked were willing to give their shares virtually. To round out the program, we found presenters to develop a few new workshops, and we were particularly grateful for their positivity and willingness to do so with so little time.

We all remembered how important the social parts of a Convention are: the casual conversations, the new connections, the fun of partaking in activities and meals together. These were the hardest things to recreate virtually, but we gave it our best try, allowing time between each formal event for fellowship, and extra time in the middle of each day to play games, socialize, or just get to know new people in one of the virtual channels.

From the Literature Committee

Update on COSA's Basic Text

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.

In response to the delegates' request for more time to review chapters, we have three timeframes for chapter feedback by the Fellowship. In each timeframe, there will be between four and seven chapters for review:

- Group One: July 15-October 15
- Group Two: September 15-December 15
- Group Three: November 15-February 15

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.

Group One Feedback due October 15, 2020 OR BEFORE

[Step Ten](#)

[Step Eleven](#)

[Tradition Seven](#)

[Sponsorship](#)

- Feedback or questions can be submitted to cosacopy@yahoo.com
- 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 example on website)
- 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).

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. These proposed chapters will then be voted on for approval by the delegates at the 2021 Annual Delegate Meeting.

COSA literature now available on Amazon!

In addition to **all Twelve COSA Step booklets**, the following booklets are available for purchase as ebooks!



Boundaries
Sobriety
Sponsorship
Triggers
Using the Twelve Steps to Work Through Any Conflict
Men in COSA
52 Questions

- In the US, use the link: <https://bit.ly/cosa-us-lit>
- In the UK, use the link: <https://bit.ly/cosa-uk-lit>
- In other regions, search for “COSA Step” on your regional Amazon website.

We recognize that finances are tight for many right now, so in response to the crisis, we have set an introductory price at the minimum possible of **\$.99 US per booklet** (with equivalent minimum pricing in other regions).

We would also like to remind you that we have many wonderful resources online in the form of MP3 recordings from past conventions (<https://cosa-store.myshopify.com/collections/cosa-convention-mp3s>), as well as free downloadable literature, including over 25 years of back issues of our *Balance* newsletter (<https://cosa-recovery.org/balance/>).

We are grateful to share in the gifts of recovery that help us work through these times together.

STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD GOD.

The first word that stands out for me today is “care”. It took me a while in recovery to really understand and accept that there was a Force, a Power that cares for me - that wants and intends *good* things for me! This was hard to fathom after all the years of suffering and pain.

When I was honest with myself, I had to admit that I had been unhappy for many years, but kept making the best of it. I had often felt abandoned by God. Slowly I realized that all my Needs will be provided with no effort on my part. I experienced many synchronicities that my mind could not explain away. Good things were happening for me once I really started working the Steps. Gradually I began to accept and expect good things!

When I first came to this Step, I realized I had a trust issue with the God of my understanding. Two times in the Steps this phrase is repeated, “God as we understood God.” This has been very comforting and has allowed me room to grow spiritually. I really needed to grow. God had been the source of a lot of pain!

I had to reject the God of my childhood. Having grown up with a father who was a minister, my daddy was Mr. God. We were in a glass fishbowl and I experienced the shadow side of living with someone who is on a pedestal. Kids ostracized me and taunted “Preacher’s Kid.” I just wanted to belong. I became a people-pleaser just to fit in and have friends. Also I had experienced sexual abuse at age 6 when I stayed with a “good church family” while my mother was in the hospital after the birth of my baby sister. This was repeated in my marriage, as I married a minister. I made him my god. My SA husband was the source of happiness but also of pain, because of his betrayal and his sexual anorexia and avoidance with me.

I needed a bigger God. I had a lot of anger towards a masculine god, as I understood God. My sponsor suggested that I needed to explore the feminine aspect of the divine. Slowly over the last five years my understanding of my Higher Power has been growing and becoming more inclusive and expansive, more compassionate. The Dark Night of the Soul I had gone through was very necessary to force me to evolve and open to spiritual awakening.

I now can trust my Higher Power and am able to turn over my will and my life. I see how my self-will kept me in old patterns that I had outgrown. My ego self has very short-sighted, myopic vision. However, my self-will is very stubborn and well-honed, having helped me survive. So I need to do a Step Three every day, and sometimes every hour and minute when I’m in a rough spot. “Not my will but Your Will be done.” My surrender muscle is getting stronger with practice!

A Higher Will has a larger vision of us and our lives. It knows better than we do what is best for us on a soul level. When we can align ourselves and our will with that Greater Source, our lives become more manageable automatically. As The Promises promise, “God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.”

~Margaret Z, Canada

STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

I was hurting and beyond broken when I came to my first COSA meeting. In those early days when we'd read the Steps, I was unnerved by Step Four. I couldn't imagine any benefit in dragging up the moral inventory of my fifty years in "searching and fearless" detail. It just sounded like more pain.

My fear began to fade as the foundation of Steps One through Three built a safe mental and spiritual haven for me. With the help of my Higher Power, I'd come to trust that the Steps were a set of practical yet loving ways to learn about my true self and restore me to a whole and healthy life. That safety helped me open up to Step Four.

When my sponsor gave me Excel spreadsheets to complement the work in our literature, I was excited! The very first column was about the persons, institutions, or principles I had resentment toward. The next column was for detailing what harm they'd caused. The third column asked what specific area of my life had been hurt. I couldn't wait to spill every detail of how I'd been wronged! But in my excitement to get busy vilifying others, I glossed over the last column, which was to examine my part in it. How did I even have a part in it? The question was daunting.

So I did what I've learned to do in COSA; I was gentle with myself and started with the easiest items first. Applying the recovery I already had to the logical flow of the Step's process made some resentments fall away easily. But I still had to find my part in the dynamic. This search revealed that my part was almost always rooted in fear. Fear kept me from standing up for myself, from setting boundaries, and not from trusting myself. Fear kept me a prisoner, doomed to keep repeating a vicious cycle.

But a miracle was at work. When I began to see my patterns of behavior emerge, I was shocked. I had not been aware of the wreckage I was causing myself! That was hard to face, especially where I'd unwittingly caused harm to others. But this new information also brought me answers and immense relief. I also realized that looking at my part was not designed to guilt or shame me, but to enlighten me. Rather than the self-loathing I was afraid I'd feel when I faced myself, I had compassion. I also saw the Step differently now and was able to work it with an unburdened heart and the hope that I could break the cycle. Not only could I let go of all that toxic resentment I'd been carrying—now I had the tools to prevent resentments from developing going forward! This was a life changing revelation for me.

Equally important to identifying my self-defeating behaviors and liabilities was the powerful work of finding my attributes and assets. These became the seeds of coming to love, trust, and respect myself again.

In addition to using Step Four retrospectively, I also use it proactively. When I identify someone who pushes certain of my buttons, I work through the Step Four process to develop a strategy of recovery tools to use that are specific to our dynamic. Being mindful of who I am, and who they are, and having a plan to take care of myself with them, has made a huge positive impact. All areas of my life have improved from the power in this Step. I am forever grateful for Step Four.

~Sandy S.

Reprinted from March/April 2016 *Balance*

STEP 1·2·3·4· 5 ·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS.

When I first thought about completing Step Five, I didn't think anything of it, except that it needed to get done. However, once I completed Step Four, I was very hesitant about sharing in Step Five, not because of shame, but out of fear that there is now documented evidence of all my wrongdoings. What if my ex finds it and tries to take my son away from me because of it? I worried about that for a little bit but let it go. I knew: 1) it was in God's hands, and 2) I'm much too strong to let my history determine my future.

I realized that even as I shared my Steps, it may fall into the wrong hands. It may lead to criticism and harsh judgment. But that's what Step One is all about: being powerless. Step Two was all about admitting that only my HP could restore me to sanity. And Step Three solidified it by having me turn my will and life over to my HP. I addressed it simply by balancing where I was with where I want to be. It's more difficult to go backwards and ignore the reality that there is no other way than to allow my HP into my life, give it all to my HP, and see the miracles work themselves out in my life.

An obstacle that came up frequently in Step Five, however, was letting go of my resentment because I wanted to justify why I was resentful. I wanted to clarify why it was ok (in my eyes) to hold onto my resentments. My sponsor pointed out that my resentments stood out quite a bit, possibly preventing me from true recovery, and were clearly embedded in my Step Four work. I realized then that I hadn't fully processed them. Now I see how processing resentment is a process in itself. I had to ask myself, "why do I think I'm feeling this way?" and "what was my role in this?" The clearer I am on my role, the more I realize I can actually take my life in a positive direction and take responsibility for where it goes now and in the future.

Admitting to God and to another human being the "exact nature of our wrongs" is challenging. It's hard to admit to myself if there is something I am avoiding looking at or admitting to myself, because as honest as I believe myself to be, part of my disease (codependency) has me lying to myself all the time. I'm so blinded by it, that I often only see it later after resentment has built up. What I've come to learn though is that being honest and open feels really good. When I am avoiding stuff, I usually feel unsure or "stuck" on something. I forget important things, and I become a bit moody and reactive to small irritations. By balancing the pros of sharing with the cons of "hiding," there is no doubt the sharing of it and releasing is the only way to live. The peace that comes with it is all the reminder I need to keep turning it over to my HP.

To every relationship, there was only one common denominator: myself. What was MY role in all of this? In the past, I gave up my integrity and dignity. I gave up my personal values and beliefs. I stepped aside and let others take advantage of me because I saw others' needs as more important than my own. I was afraid that by speaking up, asking for more, or expecting better I was somehow pompous, self-righteous, and selfish. This scared me because I had the erroneous belief that if I didn't sacrifice myself, I wouldn't find that love that I was so desperately searching for. It was an endless cycle. And that is why I can no longer allow behavior that jeopardizes my well-being. Because I love myself. I value myself. The triad of admitting to God, ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of my wrongs reminded me that I am lovable and loved; forgivable and forgiven.

Gratefully,
~Tamiko

STEP 1·2·3·4·5· 6 ·7·8·9·10·11·12

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER.

Step Six was a formidable Step for me. I had been in Twelve-Step programs for two decades, and in COSA for two years, before I felt safe enough to attempt Step Six. Previously, each time after I did Steps Four and Five in other programs, something always happened that stopped me: my sponsor moved away, or said something that sounded like criticism, or didn't say much at all.

I believe that so much shame came up in Steps Four and Five that I couldn't see my way clear to start Step Six. And I didn't feel safe and secure enough with my sponsor or cosponsor. Two COSAs particularly helped me feel safe and supported enough to move on. One was a temporary sponsor who lovingly and gently encouraged me over the course of several months, and the other is my co-sponsor.

After my temporary sponsor was no longer available, I floundered for a while. Finally, a COSA friend and I agreed to co-sponsor each other. We both worked hard, albeit erratically in times of stress and health challenges. Although I was already on Step Four, I felt a need to return to Step One and write it in story form. My co-sponsor listened patiently and empathically through many, many phone calls, and shared how she related to what I wrote—while I read my Step One, recounted highlights from my work on Steps Two and Three, and shared my voluminous Step Four writing on each characteristic from a long list of codependent characteristics. With each phone call, I felt more deeply heard and understood. I didn't feel so alone anymore.

By the time I finished Steps Four and Five, sixteen months after our first phone call, I felt safe enough to start Step Six. In a different workbook, I found some pointed questions to answer for each character trait. How did this character trait harm me? How did it harm others and/or keep them away from me? Was I ready to let go of it? (Sometimes my answer was a vehement "YES!"—and sometimes a bewildered "But what would I do without it?") And finally, what did I gain by holding on to that trait?

I was surprised at how clear and succinct my answers to these questions were. Exactly what I did (and still do at times) was right in front of my face. I saw myself people-pleasing and caretaking and controlling. In Step Six, I saw the harm done to me and others. I saw how I either didn't know what else to do, or felt I couldn't do it "right." I didn't want to take responsibility. I was afraid of offending someone. I was afraid of feeling, or looking stupid or unsuccessful.

Day by day, week by week, I wrote. Knowing I could only read a limited amount to my cosponsor on our weekly phone call, made it easier for me to just write a couple of pages instead of blasting myself with writing about all my character defects in one sitting.

I am so grateful to my co-sponsor for her patient and compassionate listening and for her caring feedback and sharing. It was so healing for me. I needed to write a lot. I needed to be heard a lot. I needed to know that every week, someone would be there for me and I would be there for her.

Detailing my character defects in Step Six, in a paradoxical way, was a victory and a success for me. I had been afraid I would never get past Step Five, yet I did! I had somehow felt as if I might die of shame if I had to not only know of my "character defects," but also write in detail about them, and then tell someone else. I didn't die of shame; in fact, I was able to let go of some of it.

continued from previous page

Step Six helped me see my part in negative or difficult interactions with others. I finally understood, by writing about it, how behaving in ways that used to feel praiseworthy (like being “good,” not speaking up, not “bothering others”) had a negative effect on others and didn’t feel good to me or reflect well on me either.

Doing Step Six was like taking an X-ray of my emotional and behavioral self. I saw the dark and the light. I saw how I was trying to do things well and be the perfect little girl or the perfect big girl, and how it didn’t work. For example, I finally saw that when I engaged in my habit of saying what wasn’t working in my life (what else was there to talk about?), everyone around me gave me advice. I hated this but hadn’t known how to stop it. When I stopped talking so much about what wasn’t working in my life and instead talked about what I enjoyed or appreciated, the advice lessened. It was magic. Slow, but a miracle nonetheless.

Step Six helped me become more authentic, more able to be matter-of-fact about my defects, and more able to share with others, even those not in a Twelve-Step program. It made me more “me,” yet it gently began to separate those behaviors and show the seam between them and me. Those behaviors were not “me.” I didn’t have to do them forever. In Step Seven I would learn what I could do instead.

~Ruth G.

Reprinted from *Balance* May/June 2012

Step 9 Amend to My Little Girl

I love you

And I am sorry it has taken so long for me
to find you
to see you
to hear you
and to focus on your needs over others

You are a precious being
and you complete me
and I am so glad you are home
in my heart
and in my belly

My commitment to you is that we live happily ever
after

I will continue to be present to
and make amends for
all the ways I have abandoned
and continue to abandon
you

I will do my best to meet your needs
and put you first

I will continue to let you teach me
about you
about life
and about what’s precious in it

I will continue to let you speak
and let you speak through me
when you need me to

Let us journey together into our future

I am so glad to have such a precious precocious pas-
sionate bright being inside me
leading me
guiding me
teaching me

So thank you for coming home to me
12-19-19

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR COSA MEMBERSHIP IS THAT OUR LIVES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR. THE MEMBERS MAY CALL THEMSELVES A COSA GROUP, PROVIDED THAT, AS A GROUP, THEY HAVE NO OTHER AFFILIATION.

When I experience Tradition Three, I know that I am accepted into COSA because I have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior and am in the grips of my own co-addiction disease. Period. There is no requirement that I be or do anything else. Once a COSA – always a COSA. What a blessing! Where else can I go to find the kind of understanding that is so intrinsic to my specific co-addiction?

For me, willingness is the key to the relationship between Tradition Three and Step Three. Tradition Three reminds me that I need to be willing to relinquish the denial that I am a co-addict and my life has been affected by the traumatic experiences of compulsive sexual behavior. In Step Three I must be willing to give control of my life – including the trauma, co-addiction and the relationship that's been painful – to the care of God as I understand God – and then maintain that willingness to let my Higher Power take care of and protect me. Tradition Three is a grand reminder that I choose daily: to relinquish my perfectionism, care-taking and people pleasing ideals, be willing to accept that I'm human and a COSA, and welcome the recovery offered in the spiritual solution of COSA meetings.

I am extraordinarily grateful to have a COSA family, where we share our experience, strength and hope regarding the pain of betrayal, the challenge of triggers, and the associated grief through compassion and understanding. We heal, learn, grow and recover together as a group. This is the gift of Tradition Three: acceptance – we are not alone.

~Martha Jean

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

EACH GROUP SHOULD BE AUTONOMOUS EXCEPT IN MATTERS AFFECTING OTHER GROUPS OR COSA AS A WHOLE.

When I first found myself searching for a COSA group to join, I was not in a good place mentally, and had I not been fortunate enough to find a group that I felt “at home” in, I may have run back into isolation. That first impression is powerful. Yet, not all groups are the same, and that’s what makes Tradition Four so wonderful.

All the Traditions tend to use broad concepts and words that can seem vague, confusing, and unappealing, which leads us to either drown it out, or say we understand what it means and how it applies to us, when in fact we really don’t. Well, maybe that’s just me. I still don’t understand many of the Traditions, but fully understanding the Traditions is just as important in recovery as actually working the Steps. It helps us see the big picture around why the program works the way it does and the important role we have in that collective.

How is Tradition Four relevant to me? Tradition Four allows each group the autonomy to run meetings in a way that meets the needs of its members. This can be anything from the timing and location, to having snacks, how we share, if we have guest speakers, how we present our Step One, whether our group is open or closed, and even what we do after the meeting. All of these dynamics can be done a little differently depending on which meeting we go to. That helps us know, as well, that even if one meeting didn’t resonate with us, it doesn’t mean we won’t get anything from COSA. It just means that we have more options in our recovery, whether that is speaking up about our needs in the meeting, or even searching for a different group that already follows a flow that resonates more with us or feels more comfortable. Our needs may even change over time, so remembering this Tradition is important in our personal recovery.

What I especially appreciated was that after my divorce, life got pretty busy. But even with a different lifestyle, I was able to continue my meetings online. The format was slightly different, but I was able to open up my lunch break once per week and maintain my recovery. This worked well for me. If I had been required to attend in person, I could not have made my COSA meetings.

More importantly, given the isolated and sad situation I was in, knowing that my voice actually mattered helped a lot. It helped me remember that it wasn’t me “joining a group” but joining a family, in which my presence, my voice, my sharing, and my recovery were just as important as everyone else’s; and who knows, maybe that even helped people who wanted to say something but couldn’t.

Tradition Four isn’t about changing or uprooting a system we don’t like but knowing we have a voice both as a group and as an individual, in the building of something we all share and benefit from. This autonomy means that in general, we do not need “approval” from the International Service Organization (ISO), because we are still abiding by the other Traditions and Steps, and we continue to do this at our group level. This ensures that we are still carrying the message and still able to maintain the integrity of COSA as a whole.

Gratefully,
~Tamiko

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

EACH GROUP HAS BUT ONE PRIMARY PURPOSE -- TO CARRY ITS MESSAGE TO THOSE WHO STILL SUFFER. WE DO THIS BY PRACTICING THE TWELVE STEPS OURSELVES.

Primary Purpose

My COSA group has grown substantially over the last year and a half or so. Our attendance is two to three times what it was previously. This means lots of new energy, insights and depth to the group. It also means questions, change and sometimes disagreement. Recently, someone asked me why we do a particular thing. I had to laugh because the answer was, "We have always done it that way." No one was particularly committed to it, but it was that way as long as any of us could remember and it worked OK. There simply had been no reason to change it (until now). The great thing about this was that we could have a conversation about the best way to do it. No one asked, "how do we do this in a way that best carries the message to those who still suffer," but that was clearly the intent of the discussion. We each spoke our own truth, while also trying to understand other points of view. In particular, we tried to give special consideration to newcomers.

This is hard work. Keeping myself focused is challenging enough. For my meeting to stay focused on ONE thing is really impressive. The fact that COSA as a whole can do this is hard to imagine! I only believe it because I have seen it.

Carry its Message

I have to admit that when I first read "carry its message," I pictured a butler with a silver tray of COSA literature, all organized and categorized, served with a cup of tea. I wish it was that easy. The COSA butler has never delivered a neat and tidy message to me. In my case, receiving the message looked something like this: I left my first meeting with a few bits of insight that I hung onto till the next meeting. I also had phone numbers of people to call. Slowly, I added more insights and more phone numbers. I forgot some of the insights. I read literature and kept going to meetings. Eventually, I began to understand the Steps. I got a sponsor. There were setbacks and forward progress. I understood myself better. I could not pinpoint when I officially received "The COSA Message."

I try to remember my own disorganized process when I talk to newcomers. Sometimes they email to say they will come and don't show up. Sometimes they come once and don't return for months. This is all part of their process. The meeting will be ready for them when they come back.

Those who Still Suffer

My understanding of "those who still suffer" has changed over time. Clearly it includes newcomers, as well as those who have not yet found COSA. They are certainly still suffering. But sometimes, so am I. I work my program and go to meetings, but I'm still an imperfect human being. I am reminded of the adage that it doesn't matter how far down the road I have gone, I'm still the same distance from the ditch. There are days when I fall back into old thinking patterns or pick up old behaviors. I suffer. Some days, I need the COSA message just as much as a newcomer needs it. In other words, I need other COSAs to keep working their programs so they can carry the message to me.

~Anonymous

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

A COSA GROUP OUGHT NEVER ENDORSE, FINANCE, OR LEND THE COSA NAME TO ANY RELATED FACILITY OR OUTSIDE ENTERPRISE, LEST PROBLEMS OF MONEY, PROPERTY AND PRESTIGE DIVERT US FROM OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE.

What I take away from this Tradition is that as a COSA, our primary purpose is to carry the COSA message to those who still suffer. In other words, we simply serve as a vessel of the COSA message, whether that be through our Experience, Strength, and Hope (ESH) or our actions in the way we live our lives. That's it. When a COSA group endorses, finances, or lends the COSA name to an outside entity, however, conflicts of interest can easily arise, which quickly distorts the Traditions.

I've found that through practicing Tradition Six, I am also obliged to establish and maintain healthy boundaries in my recovery: boundaries such as staying on my own side of the street, and focusing on working my own program instead of trying to work someone else's program for them. It can be tempting to share the valuable tools we've collected over the course of our recovery. While we all share the common condition of having our lives affected by compulsive sexual behavior, having healthy boundaries means that we don't assume we know what is best for others, and we don't force our non-COSA tools onto others, as it may cause undue pressure, or take advantage of people in vulnerable situations. Others may feel obligated to adopt or follow our recommendations. And while we may not have intended it, our honest efforts could end up causing more harm than good.

When COSAs maintain our primary focus, we feel confident that when we attend a meeting or speak with other COSAs or our sponsor, we are only being supported and provided information that would not sway us in any one direction. The tools in front of us are COSA-focused and not tainted with any financial interests, agenda, or non-COSA influence.

The more I study the Traditions, the more I see how they play out in my daily life as well. I begin to see how truly valuable they are to the program. For example, at about the same time I began attending COSA, I also started attending a religion study group to help me understand religious writings, and apply virtues like patience, faith in a higher power, and love in my recovery. This small group of women immediately took me in and befriended me in my despair and loneliness. Their attention and warmth excited me and gave me hope. I thoroughly enjoyed reading with them, and gained a lot of insight through their guided explanations. A few short months later, however, my group of ladies recommended regular attendance at their place of worship, and the acceptance of their religious tenets. Because I already had established a Higher Power of my own understanding, I didn't feel comfortable changing that and told them "no", assuming we would continue the study group. Unfortunately, they stopped talking to me, and our study groups ended. I'm sure my friends had genuinely good intentions and only wanted the best for me. But the group I found may have strongly believed that the "program" they were in was the one and only program that worked, and as a result I felt pressured and obligated to commit to follow a path that I didn't feel was best for me at the time. That was when the Tradition Six made the most sense to me.

In COSA, while there is a membership "requirement," that requirement is only that our life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. I don't have to change myself, my religious beliefs, or even follow any given protocol. When I go to the meetings, there is only one agenda, and that is to carry the COSA message to those who still suffer.

continued from previous page

It brings me peace of mind. What that message means to me is that I can take what I need and leave the rest. I'm sure that should I ever want to go back to a religious group, I can now do so and not feel coerced into any given spiritual path. However, early in my recovery and in my most vulnerable time of loneliness and despair, I did not have the boundaries I have now. Feeling coerced led me to feel deceived and rejected.

Tradition Six protects us. When we do not endorse, finance, or lend the COSA name to outside endeavors, we honor everyone as a unique individual with a unique path, empowered to follow a path of recovery utilizing whatever resources we wish for our own lives.

Gratefully,
~Tamiko

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. Thank you for your support!

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

January 2020

AZ-02 (Tempe).....	\$ 28.00
CA-13 (Irvine)	\$ 74.00
MN-06 (Minneapolis)	\$ 50.00
TX-22 (Houston).....	\$ 34.00
TEL-08 (Intergroup).....	\$ 500.00
INT-19 (Vancouver)	\$ 200.00
Individual Donations	\$ 1311.00
Individual Recurring.....	\$ 1150.00
January Total	\$ 3347.00

February 2020

CA-02 (Alamo).....	\$ 129.13
CA-09 (Oakland).....	\$ 120.00
CA-27 (Santa Rosa)	\$ 45.00
FL-13 (Palm Beach)	\$ 50.00
TX-23 (Houston).....	\$ 30.00
Individual Donations	\$ 1321.00
Individual Recurring.....	\$ 1345.00
February Total.....	\$ 3040.13

March 2020

CA-01 (San Francisco).....	\$ 45.00
CA-20 (Claremont)	\$ 15.00
FL-15 (Naples).....	\$ 100.00
TX-04 (Houston).....	\$ 34.00
Individual Donations	\$ 1040.00
Individual Recurring.....	\$ 1298.00
February Total.....	\$ 2812.00

April 2020

TEL-11 (Eleventh Step Meeting)	\$ 50.00
Individual Donations	\$ 1290.00
Individual Recurring.....	\$ 1106.00
February Total.....	\$ 2446.00