

COSA Telemeeting Readings

The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

Welcome

We welcome you to the COSA fellowship and extend to you our support and friendship.

COSA is a Twelve Step recovery program for spiritual development, no matter what our religious or philosophical beliefs. Through working the Twelve Steps, we seek to achieve serenity, one day at a time.

The only requirement for COSA membership is to have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. When dealing with the effects of this behavior, many of us experience profound trauma, pain, powerlessness, and unmanageability. Often, we turn to unhealthy behaviors of our own to manage our pain or try to control the behaviors of others.

In the long run, our efforts fail. The consequences leave us in despair: our self-esteem, personal boundaries, and values are seriously compromised. Our health and our lives are at risk, and we may feel our identity has been lost. We realize our need to reach out for help.

COSA offers hope, whether or not there is a sexually addicted person currently in our lives. In COSA, we begin to experience relief from our isolation in the safety of an anonymous gathering with others who share our stories. Everything that is said in the group meetings and between members must be held in confidence. This promotes open and honest sharing of our experience, strength, and hope, creating a trust level that many of us have never before experienced.

By working the Twelve Steps in COSA, we gain a new perspective on ourselves and our lives. The loving interchange of help among members and daily use of program tools make us ready to receive the priceless gifts of serenity and freedom.

The Gifts of the COSA Program

With the twelve suggested steps of recovery, and the wisdom, experience, and support of the COSA group, we discover the faith and acceptance to let go of the situations we were once desperate to control, and the courage and strength to grow in matters we once avoided or denied.

Gradually, the gifts multiply. As our awareness increases, so does our personal power and self-esteem. In our relationships, we learn detachment and become more fully present. In continued recovery, we live our lives in deeper joy, serenity, and fulfillment, one day at a time.

The Twelve Steps of COSA

1. We admitted we were powerless over compulsive sexual behavior – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

*The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol--that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
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11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous have been reprinted and adapted with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. ("AAWS"). Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that Alcoholics Anonymous is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only - use of A.A.'s Steps or an adapted version in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, or use in any other non-A.A. context, does not imply otherwise.

The Twelve Traditions of COSA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon COSA unity.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or COSA as a whole.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Every COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. COSA should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. COSA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. COSA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the COSA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all Program members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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COSA Weekly Readings

Week One: Facing the Effects of Compulsive Sexual Behavior

One of the most difficult aspects of facing the effects of compulsive sexual behavior is admitting our powerlessness over the addict. This continual attempt to affect or control the sex addict renders our lives unmanageable. Behaviors that are familiar to those of us affected by [another person's] compulsive sexual behavior are recognizable and detrimental to both the addict and to us.

Ways in which we enable the addict and progress in our own illness are through lying about, explaining away, or covering up the sex addict's behavior. When dealing with the effects of compulsive sexual behavior, our delusional thinking increases as we make half-hearted efforts to stop the sex abuse, believe promises like "it won't happen again," or ignore others' reports of the sex addict acting out.

Some clues in recognizing our own acting-out behavior might be the constant thinking about the sex addict, looking for clues to the sex addict acting out, checking on amounts of money spent by the sex addict, checking on where the sex addict has been and for how long, or checking in private journals or with friends of the sex addict for clues. Because of the difficulty in admitting our powerlessness over the sex addict, continued attempts to influence the sex addict to quit the acting out escalate. The duration and frequency of these attempts to change or control the sex addict increase the unmanageability in our lives.

Our self-esteem continually becomes worse. We believe that if we just looked different or were more intelligent or attractive, we could change the sex addict. We do things to ourselves that are abusive and degrading. We experience loss of memory, insane behaviors, or destructive acts against ourselves or others near us. At times, accidents or other dangerous situations produced by our preoccupation with the sex addict occur. Our own sense of boundaries, morals, or ethics erodes as our own acting-out behavior advances in its own debilitating stages. Finally, in the progression of our own illness, our spiritual being, the essence of who we are, is lost.

In COSA, we gain the support and tools needed to reclaim our lives. We take concrete steps to begin to heal from the trauma of sex addiction and take responsibility for our own behavior. We find freedom from our preoccupation with the sex addict and learn to make healthy decisions on our own behalf.

Week Two: A Question of Recovery

When we first come to COSA, we have many questions that plague our minds. We want to know how to find peace through being able to do the right thing, say the right thing, and act the right way—to somehow find a way to control the chaos in our lives. We want someone to give us direction and the answers we so earnestly seek. After attending COSA meetings for a while, learning from others' experience, strength, and hope offered in the meetings, and working the Twelve Steps to the best of our ability, we begin to search for answers to similar questions, but we find our focus has shifted. We begin to focus on ourselves, rather than the addict and other people, places, and things. We begin to ask questions which may lead us to a fuller understanding of our own selves, leading to a more thorough recovery and the serenity we were seeking all along. The following are questions many of us had before recovery and the questions we now have in recovery:

- **Before:** Will I ever be able to trust him/her again?
Now: How do I trust myself?
 - **Before:** Will I be able to forgive him/her?
Now: How do I forgive myself?
 - **Before:** If I begin to honestly look at my life, will I end up leaving my relationship?
Now: If I don't begin to honestly look at myself and my life, will I be capable of remaining in any relationship?
 - **Before:** If I'm in a relationship with a sex addict, does that mean that I might be one too, and I'm just in denial about it?
Now: How do I work through my own sexual dysfunctions, and fear of sexual intimacy?
 - **Before:** Will I ever feel safe in a relationship again?
Now: How do I feel safe with myself?
 - **Before:** How do I help my partner stay sober?
Now: How do I measure my own sobriety in my COSA program, and how do I stay sober?
 - **Before:** Is sex addiction a real addiction, or just an excuse for bad behavior?
Now: Is my compulsive behavior a real addiction, or just an excuse for my own bad behavior?
 - **Before:** How do I honor the caring and helpful person that I am, and work the program when the program is telling me to mind my own business, and let people whom I see as incapable of helping themselves hit their own bottom?
Now: How do I take responsibility for my own care and well-being, without feeling guilt, fear, or shame for doing so, and learn to see the reality of where my needs begin and another's end?
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Week Three: What is Sobriety

Following the Twelve Steps is a way of life leading to freedom, happiness, and serenity. In COSA, we begin to experience relief from our isolation, in the safety of an anonymous gathering with others who share our stories. We find hope, and little by little, sanity and clarity return and our own truth begins to emerge. Our stories are similar, but each individual defines his or her own sobriety. Below are responses of COSA members to the question: *"What does COSA sobriety mean to YOU?"*

- A state of independence resulting from a reliance and trust in myself and in my Higher Power.
 - Minding my own business.
 - The ability to see alternatives.
 - Freedom to learn about my sexuality, to accept who I am and what My Higher Power has created.
 - Trusting my own reality.
 - Letting go of outcomes.
 - Not taking responsibility for the sex addict's behavior. Letting the sex addict be responsible for his or her behavior.
 - Being honest about my need to work the COSA program.
 - Identifying my needs and learning to ask for them to be met.
 - Focusing on my own program and not on the sex addict's program.
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Week Four: Recognizing My Own Dysfunctional Sexual Behavior

A sampling of some behaviors often acknowledged and demonstrated by those of us affected by compulsive sexual behavior is listed below:

- Being numb to my own sexual needs and wants.
 - Making excuses not to be sexual.
 - Feeling sex is the only way to be intimate.
 - Finding it impossible to feel intimate during sex.
 - Becoming sexual with partners before other kinds of intimacy are developed.
 - Changing clothes out of sight of my spouse or partner to avoid sexual advances.
 - Wearing additional layers of clothing to divert sexual advances.
 - Wearing clothes to accommodate the sex addict's wishes.
 - Focusing on people or objects the addict acts out with rather than focusing on my own feelings about the acting out.
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Week Five: The Twelve Traditions of COSA

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The Promises - If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

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Closing

As we close, please be mindful that we each express our own opinions here. Take what is useful and save the rest for later. We share with you based on our own experience, strength and hope. It is always best if you can focus on and identify with the feelings expressed rather than the situations.

The confidence of this room is a must for safety in our recovery. What is said here needs to stay confidential. Please leave the shares you have found here where they belong - in this room and the boundaries of your own personal thoughts.

If you are like us, finding others that understand is a great comfort. We hope we have shown you a special welcome at our meeting. There is not one of us here who does not remember what it felt like to attend our first meeting.

Through the process of reaching out, we begin to get to know one another, and understand that although we are all different, we can see that the program works, and that there is no circumstance too challenging to be improved and no sorrow too great to be lightened. Support is a vital part of our recovery. This disease thrives in the darkness. We can bring it out into the light.

Will those who wish please join me in closing with "I Put My Hand In Yours..."

"I Put My Hand in Yours..."

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 will power. 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. Keep coming back! It works!

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Telemeeting Voicemail: 641-715-3900, ext. 743942#