

Balance

Newsletter of International Service Organization of COSA



September/October 2021
Volume 18, Issue 2

Selfishness vs. Self-Centeredness

I have always had a very hard time tolerating selfish behavior. Over the years I have taken great pride in the fact that I myself was definitely not a selfish person, in any shape or form. I made a point of proving to anyone and everyone that selfishness would be the last thing I could be accused of. I can see that this mindset was an integral part of my codependency.

Then I joined COSA. I was distressed to learn that I am displaying unhealthy behavior when I experience peoples' emotions as though they are the result of something I have done, or have not done. It is not necessarily about me or connected to me! I had held the belief that my mother was angry because I didn't do the chore the way I knew she expected. My qualifier was withdrawn because I forgot to arrange things the way he likes.

I learned that others are probably upset about something totally unrelated, which is what causes them to behave less patiently with me. They may have been hungry so they snapped at me. They may be absorbed by something so they don't hear me. They may be triggered, preoccupied...it is not always about me.

Oh no, could it be that my hyper-sensitivity to peoples' comments could be stemming from a place of selfishness? Maybe I am also a selfish person and I am in denial about it? Maybe?

It was hard for me to come to terms with the possibility that after all my efforts to prove otherwise, I really behave just as selfishly as the people I scorn.

This has been a concern of mine for several months, and I understood that I needed to leave it up to Higher Power. When HP thinks I am ready to deal with that character defect, HP will show me what I need to know.

Then I went to a talk on addiction and codependency. The presenter explained that an addict usually acts in a selfish way, and a codependent usually acts in a self-centered way. That got me listening! This was the answer to my problem! I was not selfish, I was self-centered!

A selfish person has the attitude: I have to get what I want regardless of what anyone else wants or needs. The self-centered person, on the other hand, constantly puts themselves in the center of the event. Typical thoughts are: people don't like it when I visit them, their bad mood is because I am not good enough, their sadness is because I didn't remember their birthday, they look angry because I bothered them, etc.

IN THIS ISSUE

Selfishness vs. Self-Centeredness	
COSA-Teen Meetings Coming Soon	2
Letter from the ISO of COSA Chair	3
Step Nine	4
Step Ten	5
Tradition Nine	6
Tradition Ten	7
Financial Report	7



Photo by Johannes Plenio from Pexels

Today I feel free...free from the burden of thinking I am not as nice, caring and kind as I always thought I was, free to see that peoples' issues are not about me. I need only carry myself around at any given time; there is no need for me to carry others as well. I am so grateful to this program for setting me free! My brain is clear now. I can empathize and say to myself, "Wow, someone doesn't seem to be having a good day today." It is not necessary for it to always be about me.

~TN from L.A., California

COSA-Teen Meetings – Coming Soon

For many of us, our first exposure to another's compulsive sexual behavior began before we turned 18. A program like COSA-Teen could have helped us make sense of it. We acknowledge that when there is dysfunction in the home due to sexual betrayal, teens in the home know something isn't right and COSA-Teen offers the belief that it's not about them. We recognize that it is not the COSA's job to cover up for the addict or take up his/her shame, nor is it healthy to gaslight the children to preserve the parent's ego. Additionally, outside the home, society can lead a youth to unhealthy expectations regarding their relationship to sex and sexual behavior.

In 2011, the Delegates voted to begin a Teen program within COSA. With virtual meetings now easily available, we have a perfect opportunity to follow through with that request and have recently built a program around their recommendations.

To begin this program, the ISO Board voted to fund a separate Zoom room only for COSA-Teen meetings, and to provide for each Facilitator to have a background check by a company specializing in volunteers for non-profit organizations. A Facilitator is an adult COSA who has met the necessary requirements* and is willing and excited about guiding teenagers toward a life of recovery. The COSA-Teen meetings will be listed on the [cosa-recovery.org](https://www.cosa-recovery.org) website. Teens aged 13-17 will be eligible to attend these meetings. The COSA meeting format will be used at first; however the recommendation will be for the teens to create their own script and literature.

Each meeting will have two adult Facilitators present. Facilitators will not individually sponsor a teen, but sponsorship is allowed for groups of more than one teen or for a Step Study. Once a teen has completed Step Five, they may become a sponsor for another teen.

If you have a teen in your home that could benefit from this program, please contact COSA-Teen@iso-recovery.org.

*Facilitator Requirements:

- Be a COSA member regularly attending ISO-registered COSA meetings.
- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Have been a member of COSA for at least one year.
- Have the written support of your COSA sponsor.
- Have worked at least through Step Five of the COSA program.
- Agree to facilitate at least one online meeting per month.
- Agree to an annual background check at ISO of COSA's expense.
- Not have been convicted of a felony.
- Not have been charged with, or convicted of, child abuse or any form of inappropriate sexual behavior, sexual misconduct, or physical violence.
- Not have demonstrated emotional problems which could result in harm to COSA Teen members.
- Agree to not meet with any COSA teen alone- in person or online.
- Be willing to comply with local laws regarding reporting disclosures of child abuse.
- Be certified by the vetting provider.

Letter from the ISO of COSA Chair



Dear COSAs,

I do not remember the content of my first COSA meeting, but I distinctly remember how I felt after. I have no idea which step we discussed or if there were announcements. But... I remember suddenly feeling connected to people who had a similar experience. Most of my world was unsteady, but COSA was one solid thing I could stand on. More importantly, I could stand WITH my COSA siblings. That connection carried me for a while, until I could carry myself again. I am grateful to still have a strong connection to my home group, and to have connections at the ISO level. My hope for each of you is that you find the same sustaining and nurturing connections.

Connection seems to be a theme with the board over the last few years. We have spent a lot of time trying to be more connected to the fellowship as a whole and to the delegates. Over the last two years, we reached out to all meetings—or as many of them as we could get in touch with. (More on that in a minute.) This year, we'll be trying to discern what the fellowship wants to see in future delegate meetings and conventions. We'll also be sharing the results of the survey that many of you completed a few months ago. Thank you to everyone who shared their thoughts on the survey!

This is where my very spiritual notions about connection run into more practical matters. I have a few requests for you.

Sign Up to Get Emails

Many COSAs read the *Balance* newsletter online, or it is forwarded by someone in their meeting. In addition to the *Balance*, COSA has a weekly email, "COSAs in the Know." Signing up is the best way to stay connected to the board, committees, and other COSA happenings. Each week, there's a COSA reading in addition to news and announcements. You can sign up for these emails at the bottom of the COSA home page, <https://cosa-recovery.org/>.

Stay tuned to "COSAs in the Know" because it is the fastest, most immediate way the ISO Board can reach out to the fellowship.

Meeting Listings

Please check that your meeting information is up-to-date on the COSA website. If a newcomer found your listing right now, would they get up-to-date information? Could they connect with someone before the meeting if they have questions? When the board tried to reach out to meetings, we often found emails and phone numbers were out of date. You can update your COSA meeting info at <https://cosa-recovery.org/meetings/register-a-cosa-meeting/>.

In Conclusion

I want to end with the second most exciting part of the COSA year. For me, the most exciting part of the COSA year is the convention and the second most exciting is the release of the convention recordings. The 2021 recordings may be found at <https://cosa-recovery.org/product-category/mp3/2021-virtual/>. If you want to buy the whole set, the link is <https://cosa-recovery.org/shop/mp3-collection/2021-mp3-collection/>. I have listened to twelve sessions so far, and they have all been beautiful and insightful. I'll listen to one, then reflect on it for a while, then pick another. Every session has taught me something, reminded me of why I value COSA, and surprised me in some way.

As always, feel free to reach out to me at chair@cosa-recovery.org.

In peace,

Sara L.
ISO of COSA Chair

STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8· 9 ·10·11·12

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS.

By the time I began earnestly and methodically working the Steps, I had heard all Twelve Steps read aloud in meetings numerous times. I was acutely, even painfully, aware of Step Nine's existence and its place in the process of recovery, but in those early days it was far off in some distant future. That was a good place for it then, because I was too wounded and too heartbroken myself to recognize and atone for the pain I had caused others.

Through participation in a Step study, I journeyed through Step after Step — one day at a time. It took eleven months to reach Step Nine. That once far-off distant future arrived, and I had compiled a list of persons I had harmed.

Reading the names through my tears, I decided who would be my first three amends: an ex-husband, a family friend, and my daughter. The first two were short, straightforward, and sincere apologies for specific incidents, and I had no need of a reply from them. My daughter, however, was different. We had been estranged for more than a year, and I wanted nothing more than an opportunity to reconcile.

After praying about the letters, writing, and reviewing, I took them to the post office. As my heart pounded and my hand dropped them in the mail slot, I entrusted them to the loving care of Higher Power. I prayed that they would be received in the spirit of sincerity and openness. I asked HP to surround me and hold me close no matter what the outcome. And then, I let them go and trusted HP to do the rest.

Within a week I had received a lovely card from the family friend with an unexpected expression of love and affirmation. Not long after, my daughter texted me. "Thank you for the letter. It really meant a lot. I've been working on myself this last year, too, and I'm ready to have you back in my life." What a miracle! Her response was better than I could have imagined, and my heart overflowed with gratitude.

Taking the time to work the Steps in the COSA community intentionally and wholly has given me the ability to make a clean and sincere amends and more importantly to leave the outcomes to HP's timing. The Steps and my HP together worked a miracle inside of me and have begun to work some miracles in my relationships. I am so grateful for the tools of COSA!

Since those first amends, I keep working through my list. Some have fallen on deaf ears, yielding nothing, at least not yet. I am trying to be "patient for the things that take time." I continue to trust the outcomes to HP, and I am confident that HP will be faithful to complete the good work begun in my life and in my relationships through Step Nine.

~Angie J.
Kansas, USA

STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9· 10

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT.

Step Ten helps me become more aware of what went well, what is still a struggle for me, and which of my old coping skills keep coming back like a stubborn fungus! Step Ten reminds me of the saying, “It’s not whether you win or lose, it’s how you play the game.” I played a lot of fastpitch softball when I was growing up. During a championship finals tournament, we faced the perennial state winners who expected to win easily against our patched together, ‘unknown’ team. At the end of the game, it was an odd sight. The winning team looked disheveled in their perfect uniforms, with long faces and heads hung low. Our team (in hand-me-down uniforms covered in sweat and a day’s worth of dirt) was smiling, hugging and proud that we took them into extra innings, even though we had lost. I wouldn’t change a thing. My Tenth Step is less about outcomes, and more about how my heart feels.

Before joining COSA, I spent many years in total insanity, with the only intention being to cover up or justify my behaviors “better,” not to alter my insane behavior. This was not because I was an unusually horrible person who went out of my way to cause myself and others harm. I simply lacked the tools it requires to take a personal inventory. To take any inventory, awareness and honesty are needed. If I am not “present” or mindful, I remain unaware. Change rarely happens for me without deliberate effort.

Being honest is paramount to the process, and being without it guarantees insanity. I want rigorous honesty from my husband (and others) and even find myself demanding it. The awareness that I must also be rigorously honest was unsettling. I had been an emphatic justifier, minimizer, and was often in denial. One gift I have received by growing away from these tools of destruction is that I now trust myself more. I can count on myself more. I no longer need “the committee” to agree with me. My work is to make the decision my HP and I find most acceptable. I can then allow others to take care of themselves on their journey.

...which reminds me that I need self-care and connection with my HP to fearlessly inventory. I used to harshly judge myself. Self-care (self-love) has been another gift of this journey. This shift in how I talk to myself, about myself, has given me more freedom than I knew was possible. Being kind to myself mushrooms into being more kind to others. My self-compassion grows, and I am able to judge others less. I worry less about outcomes and what others think. Regardless if things go well or poorly, my job is to find the spiritual growth opportunity that is offered. Being grateful for the smallest of things is self-care for me. Misery really is optional. Accepting that I am imperfect on an imperfect journey with others who are also imperfect is a leveling, humbling, more enjoyable experience.

I try to approach a daily inventory by asking the truth of what I feel in my heart. How is your heart today?

Peace and Love on your journey!

~Julie P., Zoomer in Ohio

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

COSA, AS SUCH, OUGHT NEVER BE ORGANIZED; BUT WE MAY CREATE SERVICE BOARDS OR COMMITTEES DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THOSE THEY SERVE

When I first heard this Tradition — honestly, maybe it was the first dozen times or more — the wording always made me chuckle. “COSA ought never be organized...” When coming to COSA, my whole life was disorganized, so why not have my recovery group be disorganized, too? It would fit right in with my chaotic way of life. However, it only took a meeting or two to see that my COSA group was anything but disorganized. The meetings were very orderly, with planned topics and scripted meeting introductions. Maybe I am just simple-minded, because the phrase “ought never be organized” continued to stump me, and I was too embarrassed to ask for clarity.

About a year into my meeting attendance, the group decided to do a topic series on the COSA Traditions. When we got to Tradition Nine, I was excited. I learned that though COSA meetings are organized, its members are not to be organized into a hierarchy or have ranking members. This was a lightbulb moment!! No one person should have power, authority, or control over another, yet the service boards that COSAs serve on are answerable to those they serve.

My sponsor often says, “Experience does not make experts,” and this Tradition backs up her statement. In my codependency, however, this Tradition doesn’t sit well. My unhealthy thinking wants someone who has walked this journey longer than me to be the expert of my life. This fear-based thinking can easily be seen throughout my life, creating that familiar chaos. I have always wanted someone to tell me what to do, how to fix my life, dictate my next step, and — let me tell you — there was no shortage of unhealthy people around me willing to offer advice.

As I worked through this Tradition in my personal life, I realized I was eager to give over personal responsibility for fear of failure and lack of trust in my own decision making. My thought was, if I followed someone else’s guidance, then any poor choice was not my fault but the person’s who suggested it; I could always go back and blame anyone but me. Somehow I missed the fact that I chose to accept and act on the poor advice to begin with. I still had ownership to take.

I also learned, in other areas of life, I was taking on more responsibility than appropriate. I found that in situations I was comfortable with, I was more than happy to be one of those “know-it-alls” I mentioned earlier, freely telling others how to solve their problems. (Wow! Hello, Chaos! I struggled to own my own choices, but I was happy to own others’!) The boundaries of authority and responsibility were blurred.

COSA works with service boards and committees similar to my life. If I have a leaky pipe, I call a plumber. I don’t ask my hairdresser for advice about a leak. I grant my plumber the authority to give guidance on my plumbing needs. Also, I don’t ask my plumber the best way to color my hair; his authority stops at the plumbing in my house, while my grey hair falls under the authority of my hairdresser. Each service member is only responsible for the area they serve. In my healthy friendships, responsibility ends at listening and offering support when facing struggles. I gratefully acknowledge the lack of expertise and hierarchy in all these relationships and love the concept of Experience, Strength, and Hope used in my COSA meeting. We are each responsible for our own decisions and are free from the burden and blame of overreaching control.

Tradition Nine, though the wording still makes me laugh at times, also makes me smile at the freedom from chaos. I am grateful COSA has adopted this healthy way of operating and works hard to continue to embrace it for the future.

~Anonymous

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

COSA HAS NO OPINION ON OUTSIDE ISSUES; HENCE THE COSA NAME OUGHT NEVER BE DRAWN INTO PUBLIC CONTROVERSY.

This Tradition makes me proud to be a COSA. I firmly believe, from its core and working all the way to its outermost reach, COSA's only purpose is to carry the message of hope to those who still suffer. When I say "I am a COSA," I know exactly what I am joining myself with. I am not concerned about being joined with political or religious affiliations. I am not concerned about my contributions going to support anything other than carrying the message of hope. COSA, as a fellowship, has no opinions or goals outside of its primary purpose. It keeps the fellowship focused and successful in its purpose.

Tradition Ten does not eliminate my opinion as an individual. In fact, my individual values and beliefs are even stronger now from being a COSA. Before coming to COSA, I was unaware of my likes and dislikes. My favorite ice cream was whatever I thought my husband would want a bite of. My movie choices were those that I believed my friends would want to see. I wanted to be accepted and agreeable. The recovery work in the Twelve Steps helped me find my individuality and gave me the strength to learn when and how to speak my truth. Keeping my individual views quiet in a COSA meeting does not minimize my beliefs, it frees me to focus on the primary purpose of COSA. Despite COSA not having outside opinions, I love that I can still be very sure of my own faith and opinions on outside issues, while being confident that the goals of COSA are being achieved.

~K.D.

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report August 2021

Individual Donations	\$ 457.00
Individual Recurring	\$ 1706.00
Total	\$ 2163.00

Tradition Seven **E**very COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

SENDING DONATIONS: *Include your Meeting Number*

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!



Photo by Aron Visuals from Pexels

Photographs Wanted

A new option for service—send us your photos! We are looking for photos (no people to protect anonymity) for inclusion in future issues of *Balance*. Send photos to Balance@cosa-recovery.org along with your first name, last initial, and phone number.

COSA Authors Wanted

Writing can be a rewarding form of service. Not only does sharing our experience, strength, and hope help others in the fellowship, it enhances the writer's personal program of recovery, often bringing us to new levels of awareness and growth. COSA members may submit shares for consideration for publication in the bi-monthly newsletter, *Balance*. The Literature Committee has developed [specific guidelines](#) to help our authors keep their writing recovery-focused with consistent style and usage. Once you have reviewed the guidelines and prepared your submission, please e-mail your item(s) to Balance@cosa-recovery.org, along with your first name, last initial, and phone number.

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.



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 and questions to: Balance@cosa-recovery.org

Balance, the newsletter of the International Service Organization of COSA is published six times a year. The ISO holds the copyright to this newsletter Editing, Design, Production & Layout by COSA Literature Committee.