

1 **Practicing Gratitude**

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3 Gratitude was probably the last thing on our minds when we arrived in COSA. Many of us were
4 experiencing more pain, anger, and devastation than we thought it possible to endure. But as
5 we progressed in our recovery and listened to the experience, strength, and hope of other
6 COSA members, we came to understand how practicing gratitude could be a valuable tool in
7 our recovery.

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9 Practicing gratitude is about shifting our perspective, finding moments of joy, and then savoring
10 them. It can be a powerful tool in both our recovery and in our lives. By practicing gratitude, we
11 have the ability to turn our day around. We move our attention away from everything that is
12 wrong in our lives so that we can better appreciate the beauty and abundance of the day set out
13 for us by our Higher Power. We might experience a complete shift in our energy as we focus on
14 our strengths and the blessings in our lives, and begin to recognize peace and abundance.
15 Some people even believe that when we open ourselves to gratitude, we experience change on
16 a cellular level, boosting our immunity against disease and improving the way our bodies age.

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18 We might have to start small with our gratitude practice. Prior to recovery, many of us found
19 ourselves feeling hopeless and defeated. Recognizing just one blessing, like a bird singing
20 outside our window, or the sun shining on a wildflower, opens us to be grateful for other gifts.
21 Gratitude might serve to pull us out of the lowest depths and with practice, living in gratitude
22 becomes a way of life for many of us.

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24 Paying attention to the present moment and to our current environment helps us to develop our
25 gratitude practice. Pausing to take stock of things that bring us joy can help us feel relaxed and
26 calm. Some of us write about them in a daily gratitude journal, jot them down to put in a
27 gratitude box, or record them using an app. During difficult times, we may refer to our gratitude
28 lists to help us cope. Others have established a daily practice of emailing our sponsors a list of
29 some things for which we are particularly grateful. Or we may simply thank our Higher Power
30 each morning for the day in front of us.

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32 Our gratitude practice helps us remember that we do in fact have choices. We don't have to
33 play the victim or wallow in self-pity. We can fixate on our problems, or we can choose to
34 cultivate an "attitude of gratitude." Since there is no such thing as a "perfect" life, imperfections

35 are always there for us to find. We can so easily focus on what's going wrong in our lives, as we
36 complain or fall into negative self-talk. But when we accept imperfections as a part of life, and
37 choose to turn our focus to the things that bring us joy, our gratitude practice steers us away
38 from negative emotions such as dissatisfaction, envy, fear, and regret, and toward happiness,
39 joy, beauty, and freedom.

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41 We need to be careful that we aren't putting on our rose-colored glasses and living in denial.
42 Some of us might have a tendency to try to warp our lives into a fairytale in an attempt to avoid
43 painful feelings. Practicing gratitude doesn't mean burying our heads in the sand and ignoring
44 our problems or our feelings of anger, sadness, or pain. But we don't need to stay in a place of
45 misery either. We might even find ourselves being grateful for our various tough life challenges
46 because they present us with opportunities to grow.

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48 When practicing gratitude, many of us experience a profound appreciation for our COSA
49 program. When newcomers hear other COSA members talk about gratitude for the program,
50 they might experience shock, disbelief, or maybe even anger. But if not for the effects of
51 compulsive sexual behavior in our lives, we would not have found COSA. And if not for COSA,
52 we would not have received the priceless gifts of experience, strength, and hope from our
53 sponsors and other COSA members, renewed our connection with our Higher Power, or
54 undergone a spiritual awakening.

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56 Our gratitude practice deepens and intensifies the gifts we receive when we work the Twelve
57 Steps of COSA. This tool can help us clear our negative thoughts and feelings so that we can
58 courageously move forward in our Step work. We may find that a dose of gratitude allows us to
59 dig a little deeper and work a little harder.

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61 When we do service in our program or help others, we might experience a sense of gratitude for
62 who we are and what we can contribute. By pausing to appreciate the opportunity to help
63 others, we recognize a sense of purpose and find deeper fulfillment in our lives.

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65 We may practice gratitude by articulating our thanks to other program members or to our family
66 and friends. When we stop to tell another, "Thank you," "I appreciate it," or even "I appreciate
67 you," we may become more aware of the love we have for others and of the care we might be
68 receiving from them. And who knows, our gratitude might be contagious!

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70 Over time, we might develop gratitude to those for whom we hold strong resentments, such as
71 the sex addict in our lives. Finding gratitude when we're feeling resentful may take patience and
72 grace. Our sponsors might remind us that we can be grateful for someone and at the same time
73 feel frustrated with them. The slogan, "It's hard to be hateful when I am grateful," can hold a lot
74 of wisdom for us when we're being dragged down by our anger and resentment.

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76 Our gratitude practice doesn't have to include big important events or monumental moments,
77 and often it doesn't. If we wait for those big gifts to materialize, we may very well be missing out
78 on all of the small things that pass our way moment by moment. Practicing gratitude is often
79 helpful to those of us who tend to worry about what's to come, or who ruminate on regrets from
80 the past. It can also be a powerful tool when we're feeling irritated, sad, or disconnected. When
81 we are able to focus on our minute-by-minute blessings, we are better able to appreciate and
82 enjoy what's directly in front of us. We remember that it's the myriad of little moments that
83 actually make up our lives.

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85 As human beings walking this earth, we are, no doubt, receiving Higher Power's gifts every day.
86 Even on our most difficult days, the gifts are abundant. Sometimes we don't take the opportunity
87 to be mindful of the gifts. But with the tool of gratitude practice, our recovery, our days, and even
88 our moments are endowed with the precious gift of appreciation, which cultivates our awareness
89 of the beauty and joy that surround us.