

Balance

Newsletter of International Service Organization of COSA



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How I Used my Recovery During a Pandemic

Covid spoiled my plans for the recovery I thought I needed.

I knew about my husband's infidelity for six months before confronting him. When I did, he admitted it, but he refused to answer my questions. After a forced disclosure with a pastor and a few months of trying to live in the same apartment, I told him I wanted to separate for the summer so I could figure things out. In the fall, I retreated further and rented a room, not even telling him where I lived. We saw each other only by appointment and to discuss practical issues—repaying our debt or to make plans with our adult children for the holidays. It was such a relief to just be alone in my apartment, to shuttle back and forth to work, and to socialize in minimal ways. The chaos subsided and I no longer wondered about my sanity. I found a better therapist. Daily, I was proving to myself I could be financially independent, and that I had value, I had friends, and I had a contribution to make beyond the marriage. Living apart was crucial in finding "me" again.

I told myself I was better off doing this by myself. For nine months I had organized my life just the way I wanted it, and it was easier, and I felt safe. I was learning to take care of myself and was finally working the Steps. I found a sponsor and kept working on my recovery. There were days I could only face an hour at a time, talking to myself through each one out loud. I grappled with loneliness, but long walks, phoning friends, and meetings helped. I found friendship with women who were rebuilding their lives as I was. COSA Zoom rooms provided an unconditional space that helped me see my reality more clearly.

But after those nine months, the onset of Covid changed that rhythm. Colleagues from the ministry offered their apartment for us to shelter in place together. My SAH was in recovery. I had to make a choice, and it was scary to take the risk of losing the progress I had gained. On the one hand I wondered if I was caving in, and on the other, I was learning to trust my Higher Power and myself. I saw that it was a choice I could make, if I could state and keep my boundaries. I decided not to plunge in, as I had with so many poor decisions in the past. I paused with COSA friends to think about what I needed to feel safe. I was learning that people tell you who they are by their responses. If my SAH wasn't willing to agree, I did not have to move in. We met, and I outlined what conditions would make it possible for me to share an apartment and feel safe. Among them were that both of us stay in active recovery, have regular check-ins, and have separate rooms and a place to do our work. He agreed.

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Photos submitted by COSAs

To submit your photos for possible inclusion in a future *Balance*, send to balance@cosa-recovery.org

I wasn't ready for the roller coaster of my own reactivity when I moved in with my SAH. I felt calm when we got along, but disagreements sent me spinning for days. Keeping my recovery routines became anchors, and I was working on Step Four with my sponsor. I had to face my faults and admit that I was quick to focus on others before myself. I was proud and found it hard to ask for help directly. I lapsed into being passive when I was overwhelmed. At times I was my own worst enemy.

I wrote down my boundaries, so I was quicker to notice when they were violated, and also knew what I was prepared to do to keep them intact. I learned to hold my ground and ask for what I needed. Because of my support system, I wasn't as scared to make mistakes, to redo a conversation or change my mind. I had back-up. I also had tough, tiring days when I didn't know if I had done the right thing by trying to work out my recovery within this relationship. I closed my door. I took breaks and stopped trying to "push through" like I always did, and I rested.

I won't say that I did the right thing or the wrong thing. I can only say that I did it. I grew. I worked and reasoned things out. I rediscovered my spiritual practice and I got stronger and healthier than I was two years ago. I found out that The Promises could materialize in a pandemic—against all odds, and that my Higher Power really could do for me what I could not.

~Anonymous

How I Used my Recovery During a Pandemic - article 2

There I was, waiting at the curb of the airline terminal in L.A., trying to identify the face of someone I'd seen for months — but only on my iPad. We'd been together in COSA Zoom meetings countless times. We'd connected through numerous texts and phone calls. I considered her one of my closest friends, yet we'd never met face to face. We would never have known one another if not for the pandemic, and now here I was, taking her up on her offer to come visit.

I started going to online COSA meetings after D-Day in late February 2020. By the time I got the courage to go to a meeting, the world was on lockdown. I began attending meetings as a tiny square among a bunch of other squares on Zoom. At first I just listened. I was traumatized. That screen became an oasis of hope and sanity as I began to hear the collective ESH of fellow COSAs, the best group of people I never planned to be a member of. People like me, on a path they never wished for or imagined. People with tools, wisdom, and serenity, who weren't going it alone. I knew I'd stumbled upon a roadmap to sanity, that I was broken, and here was a crack where the light would come through.

I joined a Twelve Step study group in May, learning that sobriety is not the opposite of addiction: community is.

Higher Power was introducing me to the First Step; that I was powerless, that my life had become unmanageable. I heard the sanity and serenity of others who had turned their will and lives over to the care of HP, and I began to know that the only way "out" was through. I surrendered because I was definitely not living. I was dead inside. I needed a spiritual change in order to be open to the work ahead.

A year later, I wrote this to myself on the anniversary of discovery:

This year has been a remarkable journey. I've watched you go from a train wreck, a slobbering mess triggered by every and anything, a pool of emotional goo, to a person who has learned to coexist with the constant visitors of heartache, pain, and fear. You've become part of a community that walks with you, that has your back. Beautiful souls that see you and love you unconditionally for who you truly are. People you've never met in person who know more about you than anyone, except maybe God. People who have walked every step with you. People who had their phones on 24/7 if you needed them. People who checked in every day. People who helped to keep pointing you forward. You've done so much hard work. Your life slid into the pandemic along with the rest of the world, at a time when you were in lockdown with the person who had mortally wounded you. You were in recovery in lockdown with your qualifier. Wow. You did that. You moved to the light. You did the work. You dove headlong into Twelve Step recovery, meditation and prayer, and community. You let yourself say the two most humble, profound words anyone can say: help me.

All your smarts, brains, privilege, talent — none of it mattered. You were a hot mess, living a lie. You did the bravest thing a person can do when they're drowning: yell for the lifeguard. Notice that I haven't spent any time indulging your self-pity, or diving deep into the character flaws of the people who wounded you. The journey has been about you, not them. Congratulations...

Yes, everyone who has been in this community during the pandemic: Congratulations. You had the tenacity to hang on to community through this challenging time in a crazy world.

How did it turn out with my COSA friend, Donna? We managed to recognize each other, and I got in the right car. We each thought we were taller. We spent the next four days hiking, swimming, walking on the beach, and talking. Although we had never met in person, we were old friends. We know each other's journey.

We surprised our sponsor by showing up at her house. She was stunned. We spent the afternoon overlooking the ocean, walking the cliffs, and expressing gratitude for one another—finally—face to face. I am grateful every day for the gifts that came out of the pandemic. My connection to community has never been richer than that which grew out of a time when the world was isolated. I've learned that isolation is truly in the mind.

I'm still on the path. It's not a straight line. But this time HP has given me traveling partners.

~Anonymous

How I Used my Recovery During a Pandemic - article 3

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, I had just finished the last of my twelve chemotherapy treatments, and the cancer was in remission. Since the time I was diagnosed with cancer eighteen months earlier, my life had been filled with surgeries, appointments, and treatments. For months I had talked about having a big celebration after that twelfth appointment, but priorities shifted with the announcement of the pandemic. With my very compromised immune system, staying home and isolating became the new priority.

While many were learning about Zoom for the first time, I was already familiar. Without a local COSA meeting within 120 miles, all my meetings had been in the COSA Zoom Room. I was even meeting my therapist on Zoom during the weeks of my treatments. My husband, however, had to switch his recovery meetings and therapy sessions to Zoom and began teleworking immediately. Our family of seven was home and doing what we could to keep everyone healthy.

Towards the start of sheltering in place we made time for lots of family activities. We went for daily walks together, played board games and did late night movie nights. The kids loved the family time, and I was regaining my strength. During my treatments I was often in bed, and my husband carried much of the workload. The pandemic allowed me to make up for lost time with the family and give my husband a much needed break.

However, at what seemed like beautiful family gatherings, my husband did not seem engaged. I noticed him pulling away and growing more and more irritable. He was snapping at the kids, arguing with me, spending more time on his phone, and making excuses to go for drives. We went camping one weekend, and after an argument, he took off and didn't return until the next morning. After each argument we would talk things out, yet I could tell something wasn't right. During our nightly check-ins, he admitted he was struggling with the isolation but always assured me he was sober and doing fine sexually.

By mid-summer, I too began to get stir crazy and was becoming very preoccupied with my husband. The kids picked up on the tension, and our family time dwindled. I found myself getting easily triggered, and I knew something had to change. Going back to the basics of my recovery, I started having quiet mornings with my Higher Power. After one of these mornings, I felt God tugging on me to clean up my side of the street and revisit my boundaries. My sobriety was starting to slip. I joined a Step Study group, increased my recovery meetings, and met with

my sponsor for coffee on Zoom twice a week. I needed to connect daily with my HP and my recovery community to keep my sanity in a time that felt so insane.

After one oncology appointment, my oncologist gave me the OK to social-distance in public for short periods of time while wearing a mask. With this new freedom, I decided to start a business. Though I hadn't worked outside the home in 13 years, I was so eager for something new. My business was very simple: I worked for property managers, cleaning empty apartments in preparation for the new tenants. This allowed me to safely work alone, while still being outside the home. It must have been a God thing because the very first property manager I approached hired me on the spot! The business took off faster than I could've expected, and I was loving every minute of it.

Later that summer, after an argument with my husband, he announced he was leaving. I was terrified. We had an emergency couples therapy session, and the therapist agreed that a 30-day therapeutic separation would be beneficial. We sat the kids down, and my husband explained that the separation would be spent focusing on our individual recovery and reconnecting with God. At the end of the month, we would come together stronger, making our family stronger. I was so proud of the way he explained it to the kids, and I was confident this separation would be a good thing. When he left, however, all seven of us were in tears praying the month would pass quickly.

That month, my husband and I had very little contact, but he visited the kids regularly and we'd pass little love notes back and forth. Because of the pandemic, I was forced to stay home instead of drowning my sorrows with busyness. I spent each night in fervent prayer with my Higher Power. The first week was spent in tears pleading with God to fix all the awful things I saw in my husband and begging Him to keep my husband sober. Not too long into the month, however, my Higher Power started to reveal things I needed to work on. I started to see my lack of gratitude, my bitterness, my self-righteousness, and my insecurities. I began spending the evenings asking God to remove my character defects. Simultaneously, my gratitude for God's protection and leading came into view. I saw that God's timing was perfect in areas of my health and separation. I appreciated the community and COSA family He'd surrounded me with, the new business He was blessing, and the priceless relationship I had with my kids. I saw how even during this time of marital separation, I was never separated from God. God's blessings were all around me, and being preoccupied with my husband's addiction blinded me to them. The month flew past and became such a pivotal time in my recovery.

During a couples session, just before the month was to end, I asked my husband about his sobriety while we were apart. I was blindsided by his disclosure. He admitted that he had never made it to the place he was staying before acting out. He disclosed a relapse that started back in the spring and peaked during the first three weeks of the separation. He then followed his confession with, "but it's all out of my system now, so I want to come home." "No! You are not coming home!!" I was blown away and absolutely devastated. I assured him he was not welcome at home, and I wasn't sure if he would ever be. He was not happy with my response and tried convincing me of his sobriety, but during that month apart, God gave me such clarity and peace, and there was no possible way I could go back to living in chaos.

That 30-day separation ended up lasting six months. My husband hit rock bottom and decided his life and family were not worth sacrificing to sex addiction. He got serious about his recovery work and began a Step Study with his group. We continued our weekly couples sessions and after some time started dating again. He apologized to the family for his deception and explained that he still had things he needed to work on. He told the kids he needed more time apart to reconnect to God, strengthen his recovery and build trust. Slowly he integrated back into the home by coming for dinner and putting the kids to bed. I saw such a change in him that I'd never seen before. His connection to God is the pillar of his recovery, and I am so proud of the work he is doing.

My husband has been back home now for almost a year, the kids are back at school, and I continue to work my small business. I am still amazed at the work God did in my life over that year of sheltering in place. The lessons I learned during that time are precious to me, and I am so grateful for each of them. I learned that being alone is never really alone when I am connected to my Higher Power, that my life is worth my focus, that God has a plan for me and I can trust it, ...and that coffee tastes better with COSAs in the Zoom Room.

~KD

Letter from the ISO of COSA Chair



Dear COSAs,

When I was asked to join the board, if I had known there would be a global pandemic, I would have probably declined. I would have (realistically) predicted that if COSA survived such a pandemic, it would end up depleted, smaller and more fragmented. I am grateful to be wrong, and thankful to you for proving me wrong. We've just spent 18 months learning to overcome isolation during lockdowns, to develop intimacy in spite of social distancing, and to drop our emotional masks while wearing physical ones. That is incredible, and it is all due to you. I am writing to express my gratitude.

THANK YOU! This is a belated thank you for your fabulous support of COSA during an incredibly challenging time. The easiest thing to quantify is financial support. In fiscal year 2021, total donations were \$40,750. That's nearly \$7,000 higher than the previous year. That is such great support! Huge thanks to each individual and each COSA group who contributed!

We have no way to measure contributions of time and talent, but if we did, they would be off the charts. I am reluctant to begin naming all of the ways COSAs have contributed, as I am sure to leave off something important. However, I am going to risk it and shout out just a few ways I see COSAs carrying the message.

- Another amazing online convention.
- The Outreach Committee did "in-reach" to learn more about how we are serving COSAs and where we can improve.
- The database coordinators are constantly updating meeting descriptions to make sure that newcomers have current information about where and when to find meetings.
- Every day COSAs set up rooms (physical rooms or Zoom rooms) to ensure meetings are welcoming and warm.
- Many COSAs put time and thought into things that seem like administrative background, but are actually key to ensuring a strong, sustainable fellowship. I think of things like ensuring adequate insurance coverage, finding faster ways to get literature to COSAs around the world, and communicating to delegates without overwhelming them.

I am very sure that there are a thousand things I have missed. I can be sure of this because, as the board chair, on a regular basis, I hear about new or old things that COSAs are doing, things I had no idea about. Often, they are things I would have said were impractical or even impossible. (This is my reminder to stay humble and to trust the group conscience.) I invite you to share COSA efforts for which you are grateful. They can be big or small. You can write to me at chair@cosa-recovery.org.

Finally, I want to say something about gratitude. I deeply believe in the power of gratitude, and I have a daily gratitude practice. I am writing this message from a place of deep gratitude for COSA. I also know that forced gratitude is worse than no gratitude. So, if you are not in a place to feel grateful, or if a gratitude message does not resonate with you, I offer you a COSA slogan that I use all the time: "Take what works for you and leave the rest." I have found that COSA is big enough to encompass my gratitude and my pain, and I wish the same for you.

Peace,

Sara L.
ISO of COSA Board Chair



ISO OF COSA ANNUAL CONVENTION

MAY 27-30, 2022

ATLANTA, GEORGIA, USA

The 2022 COSA Convention will be held in Atlanta at the Westin Buckhead on Memorial Day Weekend (May 27 through May 30). The Convention Committee has started meeting, planning has just begun, and your help is needed!

How do you feel the pull of service to the fellowship? In a big way? In a little way? Whatever way you want to be of service, it is enough! If you are considering serving the fellowship by participating in the COSA Convention, know that our goal for the committee members is to be of service to the fellowship in a sober and sustainable way, and to plan this convention in a way that works for our recovery and balance in our life.

We need plenty of help! No special skills are needed, just willingness. There are many options if you might be considering service, including:

- Service on the Convention Committee, helping with the program, registration, media, planning, scheduling. Now is when we need you!!
- Thinking about a workshop idea? Now is the time to put it into action! The Program Committee will be accepting proposals for workshops in the coming months.
- Direct service at the Convention sounds good to you? As a room host? Secretary a Twelve Step meeting? Let us know now!

Regardless of how you want to serve on the Convention Committee, contact us at convention@cosa-recovery.org

The Convention Committee is seeking nominations for speakers and proposals for panels and workshops.

- Think about the COSAs whose shares have made a lasting impact on your heart.
- Have you got a particular passion for one of the Steps, Traditions, recovery tools, or another COSA-relevant topic?

Any COSA can recommend a speaker, offer a workshop, or organize a panel. Your ideas are what make the convention great! Maybe you feel too new to recovery to give a workshop. That's okay! If you have questions about a specific Step, Tradition, or recovery tool you can create a panel workshop and invite other COSAs to speak on it!

The theme of the convention is **Unity in Diversity**, so if that sparks something for you please get in touch with your ideas!

Please use the forms for workshop proposals and speaker nominations found here:

- [Workshop Proposal form](#)
- [Speaker Nomination form](#)

The deadline to submit all proposals and nominations is Friday, February 11, 2022.

Contact the Program Committee with any questions, ideas, or concerns at programcommittee@cosa-recovery.org

Literature Committee Updates

Thank you and Feedback Requested for Basic Text Chapters



The Literature in Development Committee would like to express gratitude to the Fellowship and the Delegates. Ten chapters for COSA's basic text were approved at the 2021 Annual Delegate Meeting held May 28:

- Steps Ten and Eleven
- Traditions Seven, Eleven, and Twelve
- Concept Five
- Tools on Sponsorship, Writing/journaling, Anonymity, and Slogans

Our goal is to finish this basic text in the next couple of years. We have submitted five more chapters for feedback from the fellowship: Concepts Six, Seven, and Eight, Tool on the Serenity Prayer, and Tool on Practicing Gratitude. We value the insight of the fellowship and desire to incorporate the experience, strength, and hope from all COSAs.

With gratitude and encouragement,

The Literature in Development Committee

Feedback Requested on COSA's Basic Text

The Literature Committee requests your [feedback](#) on the draft chapters presented to the Fellowship. 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. Written feedback guidelines are included below. Utilizing these feedback guidelines will allow us to apply the feedback received in an efficient manner.

Feedback due January 20, 2022 OR BEFORE

[Concept Six](#)

[Concept Seven](#)

[Concept Eight](#)

[Tool: The Serenity Prayer](#)

[Tool: Practicing Gratitude](#)

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 2022 Annual Delegate Meeting.

Feedback Guidelines for Basic Text (or see [website](#))

- Feedback or questions can be submitted to litcom@cosa-recovery.org.
- Please submit your feedback by **the appropriate deadline of January 20**.
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 Table:

Line #	omit	add	because	so it would read
28	the phrase <i>abc</i>	<i>def</i>	It would be clearer and gentler	"__ def__"
48		also	It would be clearer and more specific	"__ also__"
68		This is just an example	This is an important and relevant idea which is not found elsewhere.	"__. This is just an example. __"

- 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).

Examples of possible feedback in written form:

- On Page 1, Line 28, please omit the phrase abc and substitute def because [e.g., it would be clearer and gentler.] So it would read ' __ def __.'

- On Page 2, Line 48, please insert the phrase "__" between the words "__" and "__" because I feel it is clearer and more specific [or whatever your reason is]. So it would read "__ __ __."

- On Page 3, Line 68, please insert the following sentence because I feel this is an important and relevant idea which fits well here and which is not found elsewhere in this document. Sentence to be inserted between the words "__" and "The....": _____. So it would read "__ . _____. The...."

Thank you,

Your COSA Literature Committee

STEP

1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

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.

I was excited and terrified to do my Eleventh Step!

I was excited to forge a deeper connection to my HP, and terrified I would not like my own company. I had never spent several days exclusively with me.

I had not treated myself to a personal vacation in 25 years of marriage, and the only reason it was happening now (without the accompanying feelings of guilt) was thanks to this program. I finally believed that I deserved time on my own, time to connect to “inner me” and not have to take care of anyone else. I was determined that nothing would stand in my way of doing my Eleventh Step in the best way for me— traveling away from home.

And so, armed with spiritual reading material, a journal and book of prayers, I was off for two days.

Initially I wanted to do it ‘right.’ I wanted to be assured that HP would be happy to hear from li'l old me, but maybe I would not do a good enough job and then it would be a disaster? The perfectionist in me was afraid to fail.

When I realised that with this approach I was setting myself up for failure I decided to just be the perfectly imperfect person G-d had created me to be. I would follow the rhythm of my body and not worry too much about outcomes. I was also curious to see how I would handle going no contact: no family, no phone, no music, no technology — no distractions! Would I like being exclusively with myself or would I go stir crazy?

I was pleasantly surprised to see that I savored every moment of getting in touch with me: feeling my feelings, checking in with myself, tapping in to my needs and following my body's schedule. I slept, ate, journaled, prayed and meditated to my own tune. I found a sense of freedom in being able to be with me without judgement and censor. This was the first time I was not operating by other people's needs or my perceived idea of what I imagined they expected of me....but rather asking myself what I felt like doing in the moment.

When those awesome two days were over, I felt differently about myself and my spiritual value. I can connect to HP on a deeper level! Best of all, I wasn't bad company!

I found myself loath to return to my old routine. The chaos of living with a non-recovering addict was underscored by my inner peace, and I no longer wanted to abandon myself by allowing myself to be pulled into that insanity. I was grateful to HP for giving me the opportunity to experience this short getaway. I prayed that I could take the lessons with me by continuously checking-in to discern what I wanted and needed.

Today, three years later, I still treasure and savor this special experience — the discovery of being comfortable with my imperfect self to spend time with HP, and learning to like me and the peace that comes with it.

~Anonymous

STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

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.

When I was asked to write an article, my reaction was something to the effect that I must be confused with someone else. My eventual response was that if it was Higher Power's will, then I would/could do it. Step Twelve highlights some of my character flaws, like diminishing myself (what could I possibly have to say that was meaningful?); comparing myself to others (I just finished Step Twelve, I don't have the experience, insight or gift of words that others demonstrate); fear of failure, rejection, and vulnerability (what if what I write is scoffed at or I look stupid?). I have a longstanding embarrassing fear of public speaking. I couldn't put three words together without hyperventilating when I first came to COSA. Sometimes I didn't even unmute when saying the Serenity Prayer! When I finally started sharing, I had to rehearse what I wanted to say, and was ever so grateful when time didn't allow for more shares. All those things are changing. My character flaws still mess with me, but the huge difference is that I recognize an HP who is right beside me giving me opportunities to put my faith and recovery into action. I may not have a lot of faith in myself, but I have faith in my HP. And faith in myself is bolstered when others show their faith in me, and I believe it's HP working when that happens. Another COSA recently asked me to speak at her weekly meeting. All my old messages came rushing back, and my scared self wanted to say, "No, thanks." Her words to me were, "Speak from your heart," and those were the words I needed to hear. HP was giving me an opportunity, and I'm grateful I listened to those urgings. Recovery is partially about finding and revealing myself without fear of judgment or ridicule. There is no safer place than in these COSA rooms.

Part of the beauty of Step Twelve is that it doesn't have to be complicated or compartmentalized. It starts with showing up at the very first COSA meeting and continuing to attend, and then by sharing to what degree is comfortable. I'm able to lead now, and I'm an Intergroup representative. It means listening to HP even when it is scary. It doesn't mean taking on a role I'm not prepared for. It doesn't mean saying yes when I really mean no. It doesn't mean that I have to have it all together, or that I have to be eloquent. And this is a big one for me; I don't have to be computer savvy! HP won't lead me anywhere I have no business going. My job is to pay attention and be aware of my HP's will for me, whether it be in service or some other realm. Step Twelve is ultimately not about me. It's about reaching out to others, especially those who still suffer.

~Linda H.

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

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.

Tradition Eleven provides me and the COSA fellowship with the guidance needed to maintain safe and anonymous communications, relations, interactions and connections inside and outside of our fellowship.

Tradition Eleven makes it clear to me that my membership in COSA is anonymous (meaning my membership is private and no member has permission to share this). It is important as I continue to recover from the effects of living with compulsive sexual behavior that I be thoughtful and protective of my personal anonymity, inside and outside of COSA. This tradition creates a safe harbor for me, our members across the globe, and our fellowship, where we can anonymously recover from the effects of compulsive sexual behavior, and continue to carry the message to those that still suffer by working the Twelve Steps of COSA. Tradition Eleven's purpose is grounding for me and establishes the trust I need to open up and share at meetings as well as with my sponsor and other COSAs.

Tradition Eleven further extends the principle of anonymity by pointing out that it is essential that every COSA member's anonymity be "guarded with special care." To know that the confidentiality of every member is important and shall be protected by all COSA members is reinforcing to me, since I come from a place of broken trust, disgrace, confusion and hurt.

Tradition Eleven also speaks to me about my social media boundaries. My recovery requires me to use sensitivity and discretion when it comes to any kind of social media activity. First, I do not post or share recovery writings, Twelve Step materials, sayings or pictures on my personal pages or others' pages. This would break my personal anonymity, which I choose not to do — and I could very well put my partner's or another person's anonymity at risk! My connections on my social media are family, friends and acquaintances (like the lady who sells the bagels at the farmers market).

I made a decision a very long time ago not to "friend" my COSA or other recovery group members on my social media pages. I knew it would be a distraction as well as connect people that should not be connected. I do not want my group members to be combined with my family and other personal relations. Given my personality, strong opinions and lingering character defects, keeping my recovery off of social media was the right decision for me. It also protects me from breaking another's anonymity accidentally, and vice versa, from a member breaking my anonymity by posting something on my page that I would not want seen.

I get to know my recovering group members at meetings, on the phone, on Zoom, at lunch, dinner or at Committee meetings — not by what they post on social media. I have no regrets and feel that my COSA relationships are very "clean" because of this choice. If there are people in my personal life that would benefit from knowing that I live a Twelve Step recovery life, I have personally shared this information with them privately, by choice.

Tradition Eleven also makes it clear that I will never be COSA's official "spokesperson," nor will anyone for that matter. I am welcome to share my story, record my story, write my story, share my ESH in any format I wish – but NOT in the public media as a "member of" COSA. I can introduce myself as having been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, if I wish, or in some other way. But we must remain anonymous as members of COSA. I respect and understand this Tradition. I also know that no other COSA can tell my story or share my experience, nor can they represent me or the entire fellowship. So remaining anonymous publicly is the right spiritual path for us as a fellowship.

There is a freedom that comes with my personal anonymity in COSA, as well as with COSA's principle of maintaining personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication.

Fundamentally, what I share about me and what others share about themselves at a COSA meeting is confidential. For many COSAs, including myself, lost trust, not knowing what was real, what was going to happen next, who I was, or who my partner was, prevented me from being able to see myself or let someone else get to know me. Attending COSA meetings where my anonymity is "guarded with special care" gives me the opportunity to slowly trust again and learn who I actually am through working the Twelve Steps. I am able to watch others become who they are as well. When I attend a meeting, I am honoring other members' anonymity as well as my own.

In the end, the attraction of COSA recovery is the transmission of our message of hope, first and foremost. It is heard and experienced when a newcomer attends one of our meetings and listens to the "experience and strength" of our members. The hope can also be experienced by attending a convention, a COSA Zoom meeting, going to our COSA website, reading our literature or talking personally to any one of our many anonymous members around the world.

~An Anonymously Recovering COSA

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

**ANONYMITY IS THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION OF ALL OUR TRADITIONS,
EVER REMINDING US TO PLACE PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES.**

In my COSA recovery I have learned that anonymity is much more than not knowing someone's last name. It is not divulging personal information about someone other than yourself; it is keeping other's confidence, minding my own business, respecting others' choices even if I don't agree, and allowing others the consequences and dignity of their own lives. It took me a long time, a lot of pain, and recovery to see these things.

Before I found recovery in COSA, I felt the need to disclose all the anguish I was feeling about my husband's sex addiction and betrayal to my family, to my husband's family, and also to some of my own very close friends. BIG mistake. Of course, everyone had their opinion and advice of what I should or shouldn't do, and they still do. Ultimately, we both were rejected by our families, and I was left completely alone and feeling extremely isolated. I have never fully recovered my relationships with either side of the family (my husband's or my own family). I cannot take back the private information that I shared with family and friends, and I have no control over their reaction to it, who they passed it on to, or how they feel about it.

At one point in my early recovery, I also decided to attend an online seminar on sex addiction, offered by a well-known clinic on the other side of the country. Unfortunately, their virtual format was through Facebook, and I wrote a question for the speaker. The seminar ended and the next morning I got a call from my daughter-in-law, saying that she had just gotten a Facebook notification that I had made a comment on this sex addiction website which was posted for all my friends to see! I was overwhelmed with shame, embarrassment, and completely mortified. Now, anyone that I or my husband knew could see this. We were able to have the comment removed after an hysterical call to the clinic, but we will never know how many people saw the post before it was taken down.

Very shortly after, in a fury, I told my husband to move out. I was just so angry. My next problem was: what do I tell the neighbors and friends in my condo development? We lived in a very large complex where we had lots of friends and acquaintances with whom we socialized quite a bit. My plan was to explain to each of my neighbors our situation; but I dreaded the conversations, the talking behind my back, the questions and the need for updates. It was exhausting worrying about, and it was embarrassing knowing that our relationship updates would be the topic of conversation for a long time to come.

Luckily, by then, I had a sponsor in COSA. Thank you God! She began to help by first explaining to me that my marriage situation was a confidential and private matter. There was no requirement for me to share these intimate details with my neighbors. She then helped me form the only words I had to speak to one neighbor when asked where my husband was lately: "My husband and I are going through some crap right now, and are separating for a while. I'm okay, and appreciate your concern, but it's very personal and private and I don't want to discuss it." I was sure that information about our status would blow through the place like wildfire. Only once, when I was alone with one person from the "group" did someone ask me directly, "Ok, what happened?" I was able to say, "Thank you for your concern, but I really don't discuss my marriage with anyone." There was a pause, and then "okay," and no one asked again. There was incredible strength for me in that simple statement. There was privacy, respect for myself, my partner, and growth in my COSA recovery.

Understanding anonymity also meant I had no business "sharing the good news" or any difficult news about another COSA member with my group, or with anyone else. Whether a member has just gotten a job promotion, has an impressive title, made a big decision or recently experienced a difficulty; they may not want others to know anything more than that they are just another COSA member. It could make it difficult for them to focus on their own recovery.

This principle of anonymity works and is the foundation of all our recovery. When I hear in a meeting "who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here," it gives me the security I need to look at me and my life. In the safety of others who have walked my walk, my COSA recovery truly began.

~A happily Anonymous Member of COSA

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report September 2021

Individual Donations	\$ 910.00
Individual Recurring.....	\$ 1381.00
AZ-02 (Tempe).....	\$ 75.00
CA-23 (Long Beach).....	\$ 100.00
TEL-11 (Eleventh Tradition).....	\$ 57.05
Total	\$ 2523.05

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 submitted by a COSA

Photographs Wanted

Thank you to those who submitted photos! We are looking for photos (no people to protect anonymity) for inclusion in future issues of *Balance*. We especially invite photos from non-US COSA residents. We would like to identify the location (city or landmark and country). Send photos to balance@cosa-recovery.org along with your first name, last initial, and email address.

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

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