

1 **Step Twelve**

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3 *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this*
4 *message to others, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.*

5 *Through our personal experience, we COSA members have confirmed that we maintain*
6 *and grow our recovery by sharing it with others. Step Twelve is essential to each*
7 *individual's growth in recovery and also sustains the COSA fellowship as a whole. The*
8 *principles of Step Twelve include joyful living in emotional sobriety and outward action in*
9 *the form of giving without expectations. The strength, hope, and joy we have gained by*
10 *working the Steps bring us to a new state of consciousness. From this state of sanity*
11 *and serenity, we are able to give freely to those who still suffer from the effects of*
12 *compulsive sexual behavior.*

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14 Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps

15 At this point in our Step work, we are able to look back and realize that admitting our
16 powerlessness and the unmanageability of our lives led us to precious gifts. Working the Twelve
17 Steps allowed us to heal, learn, and grow in ways that we had never before imagined. We
18 gained the ability to recognize our strengths and weaknesses, to view them with a balanced
19 perspective, to admit our mistakes, and to make amends. We cultivated a strong connection
20 with a Higher Power, which enabled us to take responsibility for our lives. With the help of our
21 Higher Power, our sponsor, and other COSA members, we learned how to find and maintain
22 serenity one moment at a time. We came to accept and love ourselves and others.

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24 As we approached Step Twelve, some of us were perplexed about the definition of a spiritual
25 awakening. Perhaps experiences from our religious backgrounds did not resonate with the
26 personal relationship we had developed with a Higher Power in COSA. Some of us were
27 expecting a grand spiritual awakening, something akin to a bright light breaking through clouds
28 over a mountain top. Some wondered whether an inner voice would proclaim clearly that we
29 had attained an awakening or whether we would notice a physical sensation, such as levitation
30 or a heart opening or expansion.

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32 While some of us recall a distinct memory or feeling, most of us experienced the spiritual
33 awakening as a gradual process, unfolding incrementally as we worked each Step. Our practice
34 of the Twelve Steps made us ready to receive the gifts of sanity, emotional sobriety, and
35 serenity. It was through our daily choices, decisions, and disciplined practice of new behaviors
36 that our awareness expanded and we awakened to new possibilities. Over time, we developed
37 spiritual and emotional maturity, which enhanced our ability to carry the message to others. We
38 experienced many qualities described in the Promises, which we had heard and read in COSA
39 meetings. We noticed the Gifts of COSA in our lives. We recognized this as the spiritual
40 awakening we sought.

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43 We tried to carry this message to others

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45 Steps One through Eleven kept us accountable to our recovery program and prepared us to
46 deepen our service. Step Twelve directly calls us to carry the COSA message to others who still
47 suffer. By working this Step, we demonstrate our commitment and accountability to the COSA
48 fellowship as a whole. Step Twelve also brings to mind the slogan, “We have to give it away to
49 keep it.” In other words, sharing freely what we have gained is how we continue to heal and
50 grow.

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52 As we navigated through the Steps, our sponsors encouraged us to embrace opportunities to
53 serve the COSA fellowship. Early in recovery, carrying the message was sometimes as simple
54 as being present in meetings and listening attentively to someone who was still suffering.
55 Because our lives had also been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, we found we were
56 able to provide a sense of empathy to a newcomer that few others could. We shared the
57 experience, strength, and hope we had gained as we worked the COSA program. Some
58 sponsors encouraged sponsees to do specific tasks for the fellowship, to participate in business
59 meetings, or to fill service positions. Serving the fellowship helped to ensure we regularly
60 attended meetings. We found that service enhanced our level of participation and the depth of
61 our interaction with other COSA members. Additionally, service contributed to our sense of
62 purpose and belonging in our COSA group and in the fellowship as a whole.

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64 By the time we reached Step Twelve, we felt immense gratitude for those who had passed
65 along COSA’s wisdom through countless acts of service—including sponsorship, speaking,
66 leading meetings and workshops, and serving as intergroup representatives and as delegates.
67 We gained strength and hope from long-time COSA members who had maintained recovery
68 and continued to practice the COSA principles in their lives. Their shared experience and
69 support helped deliver us from desperation and hopelessness to serenity, joy, and freedom.

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71 For many of us, Step Twelve presented an opportunity to give back by becoming sponsors
72 ourselves. We recognized that COSA is fully self-supporting and self-sustaining. We knew from
73 experience that only other COSA members could empathize with the suffering, powerlessness,
74 and unmanageability that had brought us to our first COSA meeting. We knew that those who
75 still suffer needed the same kind of support we had received then.

76

77 At first, some of us were intimidated by the idea of sponsoring others. We worried that when a
78 sponsee had questions or needed help, we would not know what to say or would say the wrong
79 thing. Perhaps we did not feel confident that our experience, strength, and hope would be
80 sufficient. For some members, reaching out to others felt uncomfortable; other members worried
81 about past tendencies to overcommit or “people-please.” Our sponsors and those in long-term
82 recovery helped us navigate such dilemmas and self-doubt. As our personal healing
83 progressed, we spent less time thinking about ourselves and more time considering how we
84 could be useful to those who still suffer. We found balance and confidence. Many of us came to
85 realize that our Higher Power was working through us to carry the message to others. When we

86 focused on the guidance we received from our Higher Power, our sponsors, and other
87 experienced COSA members, our worries subsided.

88
89 Some of us started meetings, including groups to study and work through COSA's Twelve
90 Steps. Some of us volunteered at levels beyond our individual meetings, such as serving on the
91 International Service Organization's board or committees. We found increasing joy in our
92 contribution, learning, and self-development. Serving others and the fellowship in these ways
93 became a part of our living spiritual practice.

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96 We tried to practice these principles in all areas of our lives

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98 Before recovery, many of us had persistently repeated unworkable behaviors in our
99 relationships. For example, some of us depended too much on ourselves and tried to arrange
100 life to be the way we thought it should be, instead of seeking direction from our Higher Power.
101 At times, this led us to disregard other people's boundaries, needs, and wishes. Some of us
102 avoided taking personal responsibility, neglected ourselves, and became overly focused on
103 other people or unhealthy sources of emotional comfort and security.

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105 By working the Twelve Steps, we developed spiritually and gained a rightsized sense of self in
106 relation to those around us. Working our COSA program and deepening our relationship with
107 our Higher Power helped us develop a stronger foundation of emotional stability, no matter what
108 challenges we faced.

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110 This part of Step Twelve invited us to take the principles of the program beyond the fellowship
111 and live them daily in the greater world; that is, it asked us to embody COSA's Steps, Traditions,
112 and Concepts and to use COSA's tools in our approach to everything in our lives. Step Twelve
113 asked us to carry our awakened spirit into every situation, whether we were doing simple daily
114 tasks, dealing with a difficult person, or facing a crisis or traumatic experience. We were
115 challenged to find love, tolerance, faith, and purpose in all circumstances.

116

117 Many of us recognized that remaining fit to practice Step Twelve involved practicing the other
118 Steps and a daily recovery routine. This included making conscious contact with a Higher
119 Power, attending meetings regularly, and connecting with a sponsor and/or other COSA
120 members, as well as reflecting on our feelings and reviewing our behaviors (Step Ten), and
121 applying the Steps and Traditions to specific situations. This regular practice helped us to
122 recognize moments of insanity or instability more quickly and more consistently. We
123 surrendered our struggles to our Higher Power more readily, while fairly considering how our
124 behavior ("character defects") may have contributed. We shared our self-reflections with
125 someone else and humbly asked Higher Power for help to let go of unproductive approaches.
126 We sought the willingness to take the right next action, which sometimes included making
127 amends. As we practiced the principles, we gained the courage to take those actions, using
128 recovery principles to make healthier choices.

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130 Step Twelve is dynamic and continuous. We practice program principles in all areas of our lives,
131 even when we experience difficult moments and find ourselves anxious or agitated. We pause
132 to reflect mindfully and listen for an intuitive voice of wisdom. We wait until clear guidance
133 emerges before making a decision or taking action. Many of us recall helpful program slogans
134 like “Easy does it,” “One day at a time,” or “Do the next right thing.” We often recite the Serenity
135 Prayer, mindfully seeking the wisdom to distinguish that which we can control from that which
136 we cannot, the courage to take necessary action, and the serenity to accept things beyond our
137 control. We practice the principle of humility by regularly reaching out to our Higher Power,
138 sponsors, and other COSA members. We practice willingness by diligently applying the Twelve
139 Steps and other COSA tools to maintain emotional sobriety. We practice patience and love by
140 taking the time to respond with respect and thoughtful intention to ourselves and others. We
141 practice honesty and integrity by “saying what we mean and meaning what we say.”
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143 Working the Twelve Steps in all areas of our lives on a daily basis transformed our outlook on
144 life. Our inner peace, strength, and ability to be happy and useful increased. We began to
145 approach our personal and professional endeavors from a perspective of humble, spiritual
146 service, rather than from a motive of needing to please others, receive praise and attention, or
147 gain status or material wealth. Humble dependence upon a Higher Power enabled us to serve
148 others in a healthy, balanced way. Love, acceptance, and hope replaced bitterness, intolerance,
149 and regret. We found we spent less time in conflict and distress and more time being useful to
150 our Higher Power and those around us.
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153 The Gifts of Step Twelve

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155 *Step Twelve reconnects us with the world in an authentic way. It encourages us to share the joy*
156 *of living rather than keeping our gifts of recovery to ourselves. Carrying the message grounds*
157 *us in humility and steers us away from self-centeredness. Practicing the principles helps direct*
158 *us along a spiritual path. Step Twelve gives us the opportunity to give back to the COSA*
159 *fellowship and to our Higher Power in gratitude for all that we have received in recovery. And it*
160 *is in giving that we receive even more. By trying to carry the message to those who still suffer*
161 *and by practicing the COSA principles in all areas of our lives, our own recovery is reinforced*
162 *and deepened. We recognize that our Higher Power is doing through us more than we ever*
163 *thought possible.*