

Balance

Newsletter of International Service Organization of COSA



January/February 2024
Volume 21, Issue 1

Inadequate and Unfulfilled Sex Life

This article began as a slide presentation which I gave in the Tuesday Step Study meeting. After doing the research and sharing my ESH on this topic in bullet form, I thought it would be worthwhile to write this information as an article for the Balance so it could be shared with the entire fellowship.

Overt acting-out behaviors may have initially brought us to COSA. However, as we start attending meetings and working the Twelve Steps, we may slowly become aware of underlying sexual problems existing in the relationship. It is completely normal for sexual problems to occur in any relationship. There may be too many sexual demands, not enough, or incompatibility in terms of libido levels.

Sexual problems can be worked out if we become aware of them. Then, it takes the courage to get help. However, sometimes we do not seek the help that would move us forward to be more functional, free, and sexually whole. Why? What holds us back? Shame, Ignorance, and Fear. These three biggies are very powerful. They can keep us a miserable, suffering prisoner in the shadows for many years.

Sex is super-charged in our society. Anything around sex induces shame. This shame can prevent us from talking about our problem. The source of the shame needs to be identified and named. Is it really my shame? Did I do something

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Winter Virtual Convention

February 24-25, 2024

IT TAKES
HEART
WINTER 2024

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From the Balance Team

We hope you're as pleased as we are to see the return of the *Balance*! We need your help to make sure it continues. If you have an interest in writing for the *Balance*, please email us at balance@cosa-recovery.org. Let us know if you have a particular topic, Step, or Tradition on which you'd like to write, or if you're open to accepting writing assignments. We look forward to hearing from you!

Please click [here](#) for COSA's Writing Guidelines.

Seventh Tradition Year-End Statements

The ISO office will be sending Seventh Tradition year-end statements to all individuals who have donated to ISO of COSA to provide financial support to our fellowship in 2023. These emails should arrive by January 31, 2024. If you do not receive a statement and would like one, please send an email to isocosaooffice@gmail.com. Please include the name of the individual who made the donation and the email address where you would like the statement sent.

shameful? Or have I been carrying a shame which really belongs to someone else? This is a real thing and it has a name: carried shame.

Sometimes plain old ignorance holds us back. We didn't receive adequate sexual information when we were growing up or as adults. We don't even know that sexual addiction is a thing or we've never heard of sexual anorexia or intimacy disorder. We may lack sexual information from our partner. They may not have shared certain facts about their sexuality or sexual experiences and interests.

Sexual anorexia was identified fairly recently. The COSA recovery meeting devoted to dealing with sexual anorexia defines it in the meeting script. "Just as food anorexia is compulsive avoidance of eating, sexual anorexia is the compulsive avoidance of sexual contact and can extend to all forms of physical and emotional nourishment." The Anorexia/Avoidance meeting welcomes those who have been affected by another's or their own avoidant or anorexic behaviors. The meetings are on Mondays at 9 p.m. Eastern in the COSA Zoom Room.

Our defense mechanisms may also keep us in the dark. By definition, these are strategies designed to protect our psyche from events which would otherwise overwhelm or prevent us from being able to function. These mechanisms helped us survive and deal with overwhelming events in the only way available to us as a child. However, now as an adult, they can become dysfunctional. They keep us ignorant and unaware of what happened and the events that left their wounding imprints on us.

The defense mechanisms that operate for the child are repression, suppression, and dissociation. In all three of these mechanisms, events and feelings go into the unconscious and are forgotten. It may be very difficult to access them. Sometimes events in our adult life spontaneously lead us to remember things from our childhood. I became thankful following discovery of my SAH's gay porn when it triggered memories of my own childhood sexual abuse when I was six. I came to see that I was unconsciously repeating a pattern from my childhood in my marriage relationship. My soul was seeking for my adult self to find a solution to the sexual wounding.

As adults, the defense mechanisms available to us are denial, minimization, and delusion. The journey out of denial is painful but liberating. Finally facing reality allows us to face and deal with what really is. With appropriate help, either within COSA working the Twelve Steps and/or with a professional therapist, we can learn to re-associate, heal sexual wounds, and reclaim our healthy, whole sexual selves. The Twelve Steps work their magic in this healing journey of reconnecting with Self.

The third thing which can hold us back is Fear. When we say certain words out loud, finally, they become real. They do not loom as large and they lose their power over us. It's simply "I have a sexual problem" or "My partner has a sexual problem". Admitting we have a problem. Asking for help. Finding appropriate help. The Unknown, and being vulnerable, are universal sources of fear. A helpful approach is to ask our Higher Power to help us let go of the fears which are sabotaging our full potential of life and learn to trust that we are cared for.

My ESH

I was filled with shame that after marriage my husband wanted to avoid me and not be sexually intimate in a spontaneous way. The marriage was not coming together sexually like in romantic movies and books. I sensed I had made a huge mistake, but I couldn't figure out what it was!

I was ashamed that I could be attracted to a man who was more interested in men than in me. However, I had done nothing shameful. I was carrying his shame. He's the one who had been dishonest with me and kept me ignorant of certain basic facts which are core to a relationship like marriage. A Step Four Shame Inventory really helped me sort out all this.

I was ignorant about sexual addiction, sexual anorexia, compulsive masturbation, bisexuality, and homosexuality. I was married in 1971. Sexuality has opened up a lot in the years since then. However, I was lacking sexual information from my husband about his struggles concerning his sexual orientation and his homosexual interests which

continued from previous page

predated me. His disclosure came 19 years later. He had betrayed me many times and was a master of deception. I had a gut instinct that something was wrong, but it was so hidden that I couldn't figure it out. I was also in denial. When I learned about sexual anorexia, I resonated with it immediately. I had written many times in my journal, "I'm on a starvation diet in the bedroom". He was anorexic with me and acting out with strangers.

My fears played their part too. I interpreted his avoidance of me very personally. I figured it meant that I was not enough, not sexy enough, unloveable, unworthy. I had to let go of my fears of abandonment, of being a single mom (which I was in reality, living with a workaholic), and of being alone, my core insecurity.

I had tolerated not having an adequate and fulfilling sex life for too many years. It was my responsibility to assume my recovery. I needed to become aware of my part and choose what I needed in order to heal. He had his disease. But I also had my disease. For years I had tolerated the intolerable, my self-esteem so eroded that I felt I only deserved crumbs of love. In recovery I became aware that I had unconsciously chosen an anorexic partner who wouldn't be too demanding sexually. This was safe for me as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. I could not blame him any longer.

I came to recognize my own intimacy disorder. I had not fully shared my feelings with my husband, especially not those that would make him angry or displeased with me. He had hurt me so much that I did not want to make myself too vulnerable with him. Intimacy disorder is commonly characterized by "If you knew me, you wouldn't love me".

The Promises assure us that "we will be amazed." Working the Twelve Steps and being in COSA have helped me heal. I have rebuilt the relationship with my Self and with a Power greater than myself. Learning to trust my gut feelings and knowing that my Higher Power loves and cares for me has set me free to be my authentic self. I am finally living my best life! The ironic thing is that I feel sexier and more loveable now—even more than I did when I was in a romantic relationship!

~Anonymous



From the COSA Board

Dear Precious and Valued Delegates,

First, we, as your COSA ISO Board, want to say thank you to the past, present, and future delegates who serve as representatives for your meetings. You are the link between COSA as a whole and the people who sit in the rooms. Our job is to carry out the collective objectives of all COSA members. Delegates are the voice of the whole. We appreciate you and you are an absolute necessity to the functioning of COSA!

Last November was the first time we implemented the Delegate's decision to split the Annual Delegate Meeting into two yearly events. As far as we're aware, there have never been three proposals in a year. We acknowledge that the Fall Delegate Meeting was a bit rough. We could have been more organized, structured, and timely.

Thank Higher Power this is a program of progress, not perfection! While none of us on the Board is perfect, we are dedicated to improving our service to you. There are many growth opportunities to come out of the Delegate Meeting and we have already started looking at what we can improve.

We thank you for your service and are grateful for your grace and patience. We look forward to working with you again in the spring!

Peace always,
~Julana, Eveline, Sara, Amy, Julie, Pat D, Vicky

2024 COSA Conventions

Our members convene and share recovery through speakers in long-time recovery, workshop presenters on tools of the program, and panel speakers on topics near and dear to the hearts of recovering COSAs. We are currently seeking volunteers to be part of the program as speakers, panelists, workshop leaders, and behind-the-scenes Zoom room hosts. Feeling called to be of service to the COSA fellowship? Let us know if you are interested in volunteering your time and talent for this extraordinary virtual event. Please save the dates and be on the lookout for upcoming website and email announcements.



**IT TAKES
HEART**
WINTER 2024

VIRTUAL CONVENTION
FEBRUARY 24-25, 2024

To register, go to

<https://cosa-recovery.org/conventions/2024-convention/>



**IT TAKES
HEART**
SUMMER 2024

IN-PERSON CONVENTION

MAY 31-JUNE 2, 2024

Renaissance Columbus Downtown Hotel
Columbus, Ohio

Volunteers Needed

If you are interested in volunteering for the
Virtual or In-person Convention, please [complete the survey](#).



More on the Summer Convention

Same weekend as the ISO of SAA Convention in Columbus, OH

[Hotel Preview](#)

Note: Please make hotel reservations through our discount group code when it becomes available (not third-party travel apps) as we only get credit for booking rooms directly through the hotel. Stay tuned to the *Balance* and the *COSA In the Know* for further information regarding the convention program/registration and the hotel rates/group code. Your willingness is very much appreciated.

Your 2024 ISO of COSA Convention Chairs,
Bobby S. / Stephanie H.

Info and Questions: 2024COSA.Convention@gmail.com

STEP 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · 10 · 11 · 12

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR -- THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

I used to be under the wildly imaginative impression that I was “in control.” I was organized and self-sufficient. I’d made my life manageable with helpful checklists, day planners, and denial. My well-oiled machine came to a crashing halt on the day I discovered my partner’s sex addiction. Not one of those mechanisms, not even denial, could stand up against that kind of shock, betrayal, and pain.

The roller coaster of alternating waves of rage, pain, confusion, and despair following discovery was merciless. The level of rage I felt actually frightened me. I had fallen apart mentally, emotionally, physically. Even my job was in jeopardy because I couldn’t function or stop crying. There seemed to be nowhere to go for help or relief.

My qualifier told me he truly loved me and he didn’t know why he was acting out. He seemed as confused and as in despair about his behavior as I was. Trying to make sense of it, we decided to get counseling. It didn’t go well. He was more interested in having the therapist think he was a “nice guy,” rather than focusing on us. I couldn’t get a word in edgewise. He kept interrupting me when I tried to tell her some of the things he’d done to me. Those stories could have stocked a Red Flag Superstore.

Needless to say, I got my own therapist. About three sessions in, she suggested COSA. I did NOT want to sit in a room full of strangers and talk about this thing that had destroyed me. But my therapist continued to encourage me and said it would help to be heard and understood by others who had similar experiences. So I went, but with a huge chip on my shoulder and visible resentment for having to be there. I was immediately humbled by the kindness, warmth and understanding I received. The chip I came in with was replaced with a newcomer chip and a glimmer of hope.

Over the next few meetings it became clear I could not control my partner or his addiction. The slogan “I didn’t cause it, I can’t control it, I can’t cure it” repeated in my head. There was a strange-for-me relief and real freedom in that concept.

Learning I didn’t have control, did not mean I was helpless. I took powerful action for myself by working Step One with my sponsor. It put me on the journey of healing not only the adult version of myself, but also the little child version of me who cocooned her life in control mechanisms in order to survive a household of chaos, violence, and addiction.

I will always be grateful for the wisdom, grace, and power of the first three Steps and how they have transformed my life. The short version of these Steps together looks like this for me:

Step One: I can’t;
Step Two: Higher Power can;
Step Three: I’m going to let Him.

Love,
~A grateful COSA member

STEP 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · 10 · 11 · 12

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY.

Step Two is a powerfully worded call to action. Came, Believe, Restore, all of these verbs present one with vital options for healthy momentum in recovery. These words were intentionally selected for specific purposes. Often, I find that looking at the Steps through a variety of lenses assists my growth. Let's look at the opposites of each.

Came: hide, flee, lose, miss, go away, dismiss, ignore

Believe: doubt, question, reject, dispute, abandon, deny, contend

Restore: abolish, forsake, derelict, deprive, weaken, damage, stifle

When I consider the life-giving alternative to these antonyms, it makes practicing this Step appealing. Yet, there is a catch, always a catch. None of the promises that we acquire from working Step Two are accomplished without surrender and acceptance of the suggestion that we are not capable of arriving at sanity on our own. In some ways, the thought of a Power Greater than me is comforting, encouraging, and supportive. In others, it has been a painful journey that has led to deconstruction and then restoration. No building project is 100% fun, easy, or free. There are usually hiccups and roadblocks that may or may not result in delays and high price tags. Using a construction metaphor is one way I have transferred this Step to my recovery process.

If my Higher Power has a plan to restore my sanity, (and I believe they do) then there will be times that I may need to accept the blueprints as written. Whether I believe that a second floor is practical, is not the issue. I may not have known that there would be a better view from those windows, or more space would be required. When the work has been completed, there is gratitude. Often, what is listed in the schematic is not something that I want to follow. I know SO much better that this or that screw is not loose or even needed. A better plan would be to hurry up and just fix the structure, but the Power Greater than me knows that when corners are cut, so is my sanity. What can be constructed with the support of a Higher Power, who knows my assets and defects, is infinitely better than what my limited understanding can produce. The question always comes down to, "Am I willing to let go, trust, and accept?"

Step Two comes with a caveat: yielding my will. As with all the Steps, this relinquishment is a gentle action, filled with grace and patience from Higher Power. At no time will I be forced into sanity, recovery, or sobriety. I can operate as normal, being my own "power" with its limitations, foibles, and doubts. Or, I can come to believe that my sanity is worth the trust, the hope, and the continual process of healing offered within this step through a Power Greater than me.

As a personal action step, take one or two of the antonyms listed and see if there is an opposite affirmation that you can reframe into a positive meditation.

*There are days when I ignore your direction and dispute evidence of your care.
Today, I will openly seek the plans Higher Power has for my strengthened sanity.*

~Amy B.

TRADITION 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · 10 · 11 · 12

OUR COMMON WELFARE SHOULD COME FIRST; PERSONAL RECOVERY DEPENDS UPON COSA UNITY.

Unity not Uniformity

The Traditions give us guidance on how to have healthy relationships within the fellowship and also the relationships in our lives outside COSA.

Tradition One states right off that COSA is a “WE” program. Our “common welfare” comes first and foremost. This suggests to me that the group must be healthy for everyone, and that the needs and feelings of all are embraced. This seems to go contrary to everything we experience in our very individualistic society. I had only known dysfunctional organizations starting with my family of origin, the school board that employed me, and the government.

When I first came to COSA it was a big learning curve for me. I realized gradually that “I’m not alone in this”. I had experienced years of being isolated and of isolating myself. Here I learned that I could ask for help and reach out for support. I experienced Something that was bigger than me and included me.

I came to see that I had a basic mistrust of others. I had grown up in a fishbowl. My parents had a high profile in the community. All decisions in my family of origin were made with the question “What will other people think?” I was taught that I had to “please others”. As a teen I experienced a lot of social rejection when I tried to affirm my individuality. However, my most basic need was to belong and be accepted just as I was.

My marriage was a repeat of the dynamics in my childhood. I was in the fishbowl again due to my partner’s high public profile. I experienced a lot of painful rejection because of his sexual anorexia with me combined with my own low self- esteem and intimacy disorder. I was an empath and I had also developed a coping mechanism in which I “merged” with others and lost myself in groups. I abandoned myself in order to fit in. I felt vulnerable with conflict and didn’t want to rock the boat.

In a COSA group, for the first time in my life I discovered that I was one of equals with all members of the group. My welfare was important too—but it was my responsibility, as was my recovery. This was so healing for me!

COSA Unity is necessary for the survival of the fellowship. There is Something which is greater than all of us. If there was conflict at meetings, we would not want to attend. Yet meetings and service are key to our personal recovery.

In order to have Unity, we need to have respect for others. Listen to others. Our differences are not threatening. As we listen and learn other points of view and experience, we become larger and more inclusive as a group. Then we can come to a group conscience which expresses the wish of our Higher Power, that mysterious Something that holds us all together in a healthy whole. This Unity is larger than the sum of the parts.

Thanks to Tradition One I could be my true self. In fact, I was encouraged to always tell my truth and to listen to others’ truths. Within COSA Unity, there is room for us to each be the true individuals that our Higher Power created us to be. There is a place for true individuality, not uniformity.

~Margie Z

TRADITION 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · 10 · 11 · 12

**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.**

Authority has long been a confusing topic for me. I have struggled in my life with understanding how to regard myself in relationships with others. Labeling others as “better than” or “less than” me had been a lifelong habit before coming to COSA recovery. I used these labels to assign value to others’ opinions in my life. If they were “better than”, I gave them greater authority and power than my thoughts or beliefs. And, if they were “less than”, I assigned myself as superior and disregarded them.

My work on Step Four and sharing this work in Step Five, really challenged these ideas. I did not understand how to be loving in my personal life.

I was also used to governing quite a bit. I grew up in a family with compulsive sexual behavior, controlling, codependency, and mental illness. Whoever was the most functional or the angriest, depending on the situation, had the authority and governed/controlled other members of the household.

I learned to anticipate and notice others’ problems and tried to help solve them. I tried to govern others because I figured someone ought to or I thought it was expected of me. I couldn’t tolerate chaos (I am still not great at it!) so I tried to take control. I felt unsafe.

I didn’t want to look at myself or my own problems. I didn’t want to, because if I did, I would have seen how unhappy I was and had to feel a lot of grief. A lot of the controlling in my life comes from not wanting to deal with unhappy feelings!

I learned so much from watching the emotional sobriety of other COSAs. They could let the meeting be imperfect, whereas I was white knuckling my way through every word of the script. Regularly attending business meetings has given me such a great opportunity to witness the group’s Divine Design where only a loving Higher Power is the authority!

They also really help me see the judgments and character defects I have in action. I learned that my Higher Power and Tradition Two had better ideas about how to let the group conscience be the authority.

Tradition Two is such a relief to me today. In fact, the more time I get the privilege of being in our fellowship, the more I realize that frequently my best approach is to hang back and listen to Higher Power. I don’t do it perfectly, and that is ok because I am just a trusted servant.

The word govern means to “exercise continuous sovereign authority over” and I understand today that isn’t my role and I have found relief and comfort over this being in the care of the God of my understanding.

~ Sarah S.

COSA-Teen Monthly Online Meeting for 13-18 year olds



COSA-Teen is a monthly online meeting for 13-18-year-olds whose lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. Dealing with sex addiction in a close family member, navigating a hyper-sexualized society, or maintaining a healthy dating relationship can be difficult for anyone. Giving teens a place to grow with and from each other's experience, strength and hope, along with the gentle guidance of vetted facilitators, can be a great help! We have all seen and experienced the miracles made possible by recovery. Imagine having the comfort, guidance, and community that come through recovery while growing into adulthood!

If you are 13-18 and your life has been affected by someone's compulsive sexual behavior, or if you have such a teen in your life, we'd love to hear from you!

COSA-Teen is currently preparing for 2024! The teen meeting has been on hold for a few months while we gather contact information for any teens interested in attending. If you are 13-18 and your life has been affected by someone's compulsive sexual behavior, or if you have such a teen in your life, we'd love to hear from you!

COSA-Teen is facilitated by experienced adult COSAs who have been professionally vetted. Facilitators are not sponsors, always facilitate in pairs, and never meet with teens alone.

The COSA-Teen meeting information is:

- 2nd Sunday each month, 2:00 pm Eastern Standard Time
- Zoom ID 937 5238 8740
- Contact COSA-Teen@cosa-recovery.org for the password



COSA-RECOVERY.ORG Resources

COSA's website hosts lots of resources for individuals, groups, and Intergrups.

<https://cosa-recovery.org/resources/>

Note from website: These attachments and links contain materials COSA members have found to be helpful. The ISO of COSA neither endorses nor opposes the contents of these links. These resources reflect the individual experience, strength, and hope of the COSAs who created them. Please visit the COSA Store for conference-approved literature on the COSA program, including Step booklets, as well as other great mp3s.

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.

MAKING SEVENTH TRADITION DONATIONS



COSA's
Tradition
Seven

Every COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting,
declining outside contributions.

There are no dues or fees for COSA membership. Our fellowship is supported entirely through our own members' voluntary contributions.

**Make Your Secure
Donation Today**

SENDING DONATIONS: *Include your Meeting Number*

When **making a donation** to the ISO of COSA, please include your meeting number so that we can record it properly and post it in the *Balance*. We thank you for your support!

To find your meeting number:

Go to <http://www.cosa-recovery.org>,

click on the "Meetings" tab, then on the appropriate sub-tab

("Local Meetings", "Online Meetings", or "Phone Meetings")

Search for your meeting and note the meeting number in parentheses next to your meeting name.

RECURRING DONATIONS: *Keeping Payment Information Up-to-Date*

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. Your support is appreciated!

Seventh Tradition: Financial Report

October-November 2023

October 2023

Individual Donations	\$ 440.00
Individual Recurring	\$ 1,065.00
CA-40 (Cosa Mesa)	\$ 50.00
Total	\$ 1,555.00

November 2023

Individual Donations	\$ 774.00
Individual Recurring	\$ 973.00
Total	\$ 1,747.00



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 upcoming 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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