

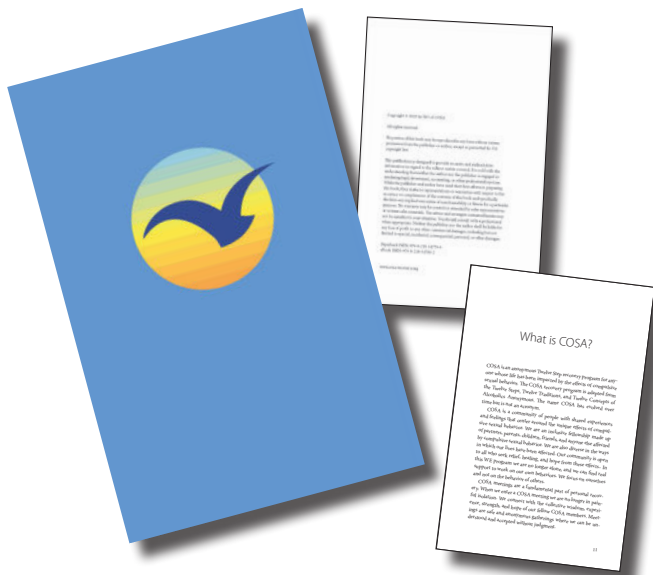
Balance

Newsletter of International Service Organization of COSA



COSA Recovery Available Now!

Order your copy of *COSA Recovery*, the highly-anticipated book on COSA's Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts, and recovery tools!



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Columbus, Ohio

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COSA-Teen Meeting

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 Time (US)
- Zoom Meeting ID: 937 5238 8740
- Contact COSA-Teen@cosa-recovery.org for the password

Call for Balance Writers

Looking for a forum to share your experience, strength, and hope with other COSAs? Want to help keep the *Balance* newsletter thriving? Consider submitting a share for the *Balance*! We all have a valuable story to tell. Email balance@cosa-recovery.org and we'll guide you through the process.



I was having wood floors installed in my home. I found a reclaimed wood flooring store. It was an hour away, but the price was unbeatable. Much of the wood was knotty or rotted on the ends. It took the contractor twice as long to install because so much of the flooring was unfit. He made several comments about having the most expensive wood pile growing in the backyard. But I loved the look of the floor: rustic, handmade, and unique. With only a few square feet left to finish, we were out of wood again. The contractor purchased the last of the wood from a nearby “big box” store and finally finished the project. I said, “That last part is perfect. I hate it. But the rest looks great!” The contractor laughed, shook his head and said that I was the most unusual client he had ever had.

That part of the floor was perfect. The planks were straight and true, and it was beautiful. I promptly covered it with my gray couch. No one ever commented on the perfect flooring, but they did notice the planks with different colors, sizes and characteristics. Someone asked if I had beaten the flooring with a chain. That contractor could have thought worse of me!

I am influenced by my aesthetic surroundings. My style is best described as “whatever brings me joy.” This makes my husband very uncomfortable! When I said I had purchased a display hutch at a local shabby chic store for our very formal dining room, he fell silent with big eyes. Two days after we brought it home I asked him if he disliked it any less than on the first day. Let’s just say it’s growing on him, and he did say it was pretty with the light turned on inside. But it is very imperfect and it makes me happy every time I look at it.

Truthfully, I embraced imperfection in no other place in my life. And that stole my joy.

My life has been less than perfect. I have been divorced. I am now married to a sex and love addict. I fell out of love with my career. I have distant relationships with most of my relatives. I imagine my Higher Power creating that imperfect floor in me. I imagine that when I was in my messiest stages, my HP found absolute delight in my surrendering to what was willed for me. I do not believe HP blesses the decisions I make by creating poor outcomes, but HP does orchestrate each lesson with awareness and growth. This program is spiritual. It has taught me that in the waiting there can be peace. I have found that my HP and I have an exchange of information that is pertinent to this day, in this moment, no more and no less. Today, I am equipped with all I need. And if that is still imperfect, then that is where I need to be.

~JP, A Zoomer in Ohio

Together
we can do
what we
could
never do
alone.

From the COSA Board

I am grateful:

- That with Step Three, I can accept challenging situations, then let go and let our Higher Power take care of these situations which are beyond my control.
- That a Step Four inventory encourages me to courageously recognize my own responsibility rather than thinking about how others could have acted differently toward me.
- That Tradition Three tells us the only requirement for COSA membership is that our lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior and that our members may call themselves a COSA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. This includes a large number of COSA members who identify that their lives have been affected by another person's/persons' compulsive sexual behaviors.
- Tradition Four means each group is autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or COSA as a whole. This means we are a diverse group of present or past partners or spouses of sex addicts, adult children of sex addicts, parents and family members or friends of those who struggle with compulsive sexual behaviors, people who identify both as COSAs and as sex addicts, sexual abuse survivors, and people of all genders and sexual orientations. COSA is an inclusive organization and we create and honor healthy boundaries to keep ourselves safe.
- The birth of our *COSA Recovery* Book — over ten years in the making, as it finally arrives! I am forever grateful for the efforts of COSA as a whole. "Together we can do what we cannot do alone."

Your humble Co-chair,
Eveline

Announcing COSA's new logo

The COSA Board approved the updated COSA logo earlier this year, which will begin appearing on the website and all new literature, beginning with *COSA Recovery*.





**IT TAKES
HEART**
SUMMER 2024

SAVE THE DATE

2024 Summer In-Person Convention

MAY 31-JUNE 2, 2024

Renaissance Columbus Downtown Hotel, Columbus, Ohio

- ♥ Hands-on/Creative/Interactive Workshops and MORE!
- ♥ Featured Speakers
- ♥ Friday evening through Sunday 1pm
- ♥ Local Touring
- ♥ Beautiful Hotel (amazingly inexpensive)

For more information, see <https://cosa-recovery.org/conventions/2024-convention/>

2024 Winter Convention
was a VIRTUAL SUCCESS!

**THANK
YOU!**

**THANK
YOU!**

**THANK
YOU!**

a lot of
It Takes \wedge Hearts

The COSA Fellowship is a volunteer organization. All of the committees and service boards are composed of volunteers. We are a service organization and so, on behalf of the 2024 Convention Committee, we thank everyone who helped with the preparation of the convention and the many hands involved in this event. We also want to acknowledge all volunteers in COSA's programs, outreach, and service throughout the Fellowship.

For those considering service, we have many areas needing help. Service is one of the COSA recovery tools! To volunteer at the ISO level, complete the form here: <https://cosa-recovery.org/service/>.

Untitled

Three years ago your addiction shattered my heart
Porn, Snapchat, Instagram, Only Fans
Lies, betrayal, gaslighting, deception

Wasn't I enough? Pretty enough? Sexy enough? Smart enough?
Fun enough? Confident enough? Skinny enough?

Three years wasted trying to be...enough
You were addicted to sex
I was addicted to you

I let myself get lost in the labyrinth of your love
Except... it wasn't love at all

Wasn't I worthy? Worthy of honesty? Worthy of true love?
Worthy of a real connection? Worthy of kindness? Worthy of
commitment?

Three years ago your addiction shattered my heart
But three years ago your addiction saved my life

Never again will I let myself get consumed in anyone's love but
my own

Never again will I crave others to fill a void

Never again will I desire someone like you

Because...
I AM enough
I AM worthy

~Emily D



My local area COSA groups are so excited for the release of the COSA Recovery book! Our groups are planning a "High Tea with the Book Club" themed event to celebrate it.

We try to have an annual "Tea" event where we have speakers, panels or workshops. Yes, there are finger sandwiches and we dress up—and some of us even wear fancy hats! It's a fun day of fellowship and recovery. This year our event will focus on reading from the new book and sharing.

I'm curious to hear how other groups or Intergroups are celebrating the book launch. *Please share!*

~ A grateful Southern California COSA

Jot Your Thought

What's your favorite COSA recovery
quote or slogan and why?



Jot yours down and share it in the next edition of the *Balance*!

Send it to: balance@cosa-recovery.org and inform us
of whether you wish to remain anonymous.

Emails may be edited prior to inclusion. Thank you!

COSA TOOLS OF RECOVERY

BOUNDARIES

I recently had a life-changing experience with upholding a boundary. I had learned in COSA that the value of setting and upholding boundaries was to provide myself a safe space when interacting with others. I have learned that boundaries are about honoring myself and deciding what I will do to protect my heart and mind. Boundaries are important in all relationships, but because I have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, I find it especially important in a romantic relationship.

Recently my partner expressed his interest in seeking friendships now that his youngest child is in college and our long-distance relationship involves extended periods of time apart. I endorsed this endeavor, and even was agreeable to his having female as well as male friends. I voiced my concern over friendships with the opposite sex because emotional and/or physical affairs could develop, so I asked that he refrain from forming friendships with others where he felt any kind of attraction or sexual tension. Surprisingly, he did not want to commit to this. I was really taken aback by his response and told him that this was an important boundary for me. He felt this was too restrictive. The discussion ended with me telling him that we couldn't continue as a couple. I would take a couple of days to process this before finalizing this breakup.

An important context to note is that upholding boundaries has been really difficult for me, especially when it involves my self-worth, which this did. I have repeatedly interpreted others' behaviors such as not honoring a boundary as a rejection of me. Rejection in this situation would confirm my inner beliefs of my own unworthiness, unlovability, and not being enough. My internal voice spoke words like "if he loved you, he would agree to this" or "if you were enough, he wouldn't be doing this." These are exactly the kinds of issues and lack of boundaries that I had in my marriage to a sex addict and avoidant.

In a remarkable shift, on this night I not only stated and upheld my boundary, but I didn't get emotional, I didn't take the "lesser-than" stance, and I didn't blame either of us. I stayed present by listening to his response, to my inner voice, and to my Higher Power. I heard these internal words, "he is choosing something else; this isn't rejection" and "what do you want?".

By staying present, I felt my Higher Power's presence which included feeling loved and accepted. Typically, in these settings, I would have been crying and so upset that it would have taken me a long time to settle down. I would not have felt safe because I didn't know how to uphold the boundary I set. My mind would be racing alongside my rapidly beating heart.

On this night, by contrast, I was also feeling empowered. I was in the safe space that well-protected boundaries provide. It was wonderful! There I had a dialogue with my HP about love, honor, and respect. HP suggested that I expand this space to allow for some flexibility. By doing this, I could see that the issue was about my not feeling respected and honored, not about my feeling loved. HP asked me to consider my partner's issue, which likely was also about respect due to his belief that I was controlling. In this open space where I felt safe, loved, and reassured, I was open to further discussion (which we very successfully did). I realized that I wanted this relationship to continue, but I needed to feel respected as well as loved in order to continue it.

The greatest gift from upholding this boundary and staying present was that I found out what safety really feels like. I experienced the gift of honoring my own values and respecting myself. I could see that my years of recovery work have made a difference in how I relate to myself and how that affects my behavior. What began as an unpleasant event took an incredible turn toward the positive because of this new awareness. What others choose in response to my boundary is not about me. What is important is my response to my boundary, and my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about me. The importance of upholding a boundary is about the importance of me.

~Sara P.

STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD GOD.

When I got to COSA I was in a tremendous amount of emotional and spiritual pain—just like most of us when we find these rooms. Pain is a huge motivator for me and I knew that by going to meetings and finding a sponsor it was a start to getting out of that pain.

I discovered my husband's acting out by complete accident. Two weeks later the whole world shut down. It was me, it was him, and our five-year old adjusting to this new "normal" of living through a global pandemic plus riding the emotional rollercoaster of post discovery.

I began Step work right away. My sponsor so kindly opened up her home--she gently and patiently listened to my Step One. I admitted that I was completely powerless over compulsive sexual behavior and that my life had DEFINITELY become unmanageable. It was my first experience with surrendering to this disease. I moved along to Step Two and had complete trust that I COULD be restored to sanity by going to lots of meetings and listening to the COSA members that had come before me.

When I got to Step Three I was starting to feel some relief from working the first two Steps. Step Three is a 100% total surrender Step. I "made the decision" to give my Higher Power all my fears, worries—all people, places and things because I could finally admit defeat in trying to control all aspects of my life (including sex addiction). I was in so much pain I was willing to go to any lengths to feel something better.

I share in meetings often that I'm grateful that the Steps are in order for a reason. There is no way that I could have been prepared for Steps Four and Five if it weren't for the first three Steps, especially Step Three.

Do I work this Step perfectly all the time? The answer is no; no, I do not. I have to remember that I'm a human being full of faults and imperfections, but I'm also worthy of my Higher Power's love and support. When I feel that my HP isn't working fast enough, I sometimes make a decision to take matters into my own hands and do what I've done in the past—manipulate and control to get it done the way I see fit. But the longer I come to meetings and the longer I keep an open mind, the easier it becomes to surrender to Step Three. Most days I'm talking to my HP all day long, telling God that I'm in the flow of your will, not mine! We all know where our wills have gotten us! I've learned that it's fun watching things unfold from the sidelines, and that patience pays off. My HP is not in the past, but in the present. I take HP with me everywhere, in the front seat strapped in!

Today, I have a couple of tools for working Step Three and I encourage my sponsees to do the same. I have a special box that I like to call a "God Box". I put all those fears, worries in it—all people, places, and things written on a strip of paper, then say a prayer, and surrender them to my HP. And the best part about it is going back and looking over the things I once obsessed about no longer being a problem in my life today. Lastly, every morning before my feet hit the floor I say: God, I can't (Step One), you can (Step Two) so, please take it (Step Three).

~Monique

STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

I was hurting and beyond broken when I came to my first COSA meeting. In those early days when we'd read the Steps, I was unnerved by Step Four. I couldn't imagine any benefit in dragging up the moral inventory of my 50 years on earth in "searching and fearless" detail. It just sounded like more pain.

My fear began to fade as the foundation of Steps One through Three built a safe emotional and spiritual haven for me. With the help of my sponsor and my Higher Power, I'd come to trust that the Steps were a set of practical yet loving ways to learn about my true self and restore me to a whole and healthy life. That safety helped me open up to Step Four.

When my sponsor gave me columned worksheets to complement the work with our literature, it was a bit daunting. The first column was about the persons, institutions, and societal conventions I had resentment toward. The next two columns were for detailing what harm they'd caused and the specific areas of my life they'd hurt. So far, so good! The last column, however, asked me to examine my part in it. How did I even have a part in it – and how could I face it if I did?

So, I did what I've learned to do in COSA; I was gentle with myself. I started with the easiest items first. I used the logical flow of the Step's process and felt some resentments fall away easily. But I still had to find my part in the dynamic. This search revealed that my part was almost always rooted in fear and its many guises. Fear kept me from standing up for myself, from setting boundaries, and not trusting myself. Fear kept me a prisoner; doomed to keep repeating a vicious cycle.

But a miracle was at work. When I began to see my patterns of behavior emerge, I was shocked. I had not been aware of the wreckage I was causing myself. That was hard to face, especially where I'd unwittingly caused harm to others. But this new information also brought me answers and immense relief. I also realized that looking at my part was not designed to guilt or shame me, but to enlighten me. Rather than the self-loathing I was afraid I'd feel when I faced myself, I had compassion for the fearful, hurt child and woman I had been. From this new vantage point, I was able to work the Step with an unburdened heart and the hope that I could break the cycle. Not only could I let go of the burdens I'd been carrying, now I had the tools to pause in situations, see my self-defeating behaviors vying for their old voice, and instead choose recovery behavior. This has been life changing for me. Equally important to identifying my harmful old behaviors and liabilities was the powerful work of finding my attributes and assets. These became the seeds of coming to love, trust, and respect myself again.

Now I view Step Four, not with dread, but as an invitation to look inward and gain deeper self-awareness. I work through the Step's process to identify what's going on with me and take appropriate action for myself. Because of the power in this Step all areas of my life have improved, and I am forever grateful.

Love,
~A grateful COSA

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR COSA MEMBERSHIP IS THAT OUR LIVES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR. THE MEMBERS MAY CALL THEMSELVES A COSA GROUP, PROVIDED THAT, AS A GROUP, THEY HAVE NO OTHER AFFILIATION.

When I came to my first COSA meeting more than eight years ago, I was angry and frightened. I was angry about the profound effects of another's compulsive sexual behavior on my life, yet I was frightened that, because of my own past compulsive sexual behaviors, I would not be welcome in the COSA fellowship.

How grateful I am, then, for the wisdom of Tradition Three: "The only requirement for COSA membership is to have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior." This Tradition reminds me that I belong in COSA because I meet the single requirement for membership; I don't have to be afraid that I will be rejected because of my past behaviors. I believe my Higher Power really showed this Tradition in action to me at my very first meeting because I met someone in fellowship afterwards with whose story I could very much relate. Like me, they also had both been affected by compulsive sexual behavior and had struggled with their own compulsive sexual behaviors in the past. This "double winner" has served as my sponsor in COSA for the past eight years. I am also grateful that, since my first meeting, I have met others in the COSA program who, like me, identify as "double winners."

My lived experience of Tradition Three is a valuable reminder to me that COSA is an "opt-in" program. No one else decides for me whether I belong or not; I am offered the power of choice. It is up to me, with the help of my Higher Power, to discern if I have been affected by compulsive sexual behaviors. Furthermore, I am welcome in the COSA fellowship through any stage of discernment about the effects of compulsive sexual behavior on my life. Because of this truth, I now know that it is not my place to judge anyone's fitness for membership in COSA, whether considering their past before their first meeting or observing their current behaviors or situations. I am charged, through the words of Tradition Three, to offer continually the same hand of welcome that was shown to me. This also teaches me that I don't have to worry about getting "kicked out" of the fellowship when I am having a hard time and/or questioning whether the program is "right for me" (I have had several phases of stinkin' thinkin' that I am "terminally unique.") My Higher Power, my sponsor, my COSA family, and the Steps and Traditions have happily been there through all of my doubts, questions, and worries.

In the grace and wisdom of our Steps and Traditions, I have found much healing, support, and welcome in the COSA fellowship. The fears that I had about not being welcome and not belonging in the program came from my own shame about my past. Thanks to the miracle of healing in the Steps and to the love and support of my COSA family, I now believe that I belong. Thank you, Higher Power and COSA, for teaching me these lessons!

~Anonymous

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.

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

EACH GROUP SHOULD BE AUTONOMOUS EXCEPT IN MATTERS AFFECTING OTHER GROUPS OR COSA AS A WHOLE.

I believe Tradition Four is great advice for all groups and individuals. It's a fancy way of saying, "Live and let live," with a disclaimer about being aware of how our actions may affect other groups or individuals.

In our COSA groups we have the freedom to run our meetings and activities in any way we choose as long as we don't misrepresent COSA as a whole or infringe on the rights of other groups or Intergroups. Each meeting can use its own script and its own readings, choose its own location, etc. The need for caution arises if those scripts, readings, locations, etc. might somehow affect the fellowship or any part of it. That's when we rely on Traditions One and Two which affirm our commitment to COSA unity and our reliance on a group conscience. If either of these principles is threatened, we may need to reach out to people or groups outside of own group for reflection and input; in short, we need to contribute to the unity of the fellowship through consultation and ensure that no harm will come to COSA as a whole or another group through our own group's actions.

Inherent in this autonomy is the right to be wrong. Although a group's actions may have no effect outside its own boundaries, this action may not be in the group's eventual best interests. In such cases, if the group is listening to its own conscience, it may come to grips with a need to make amends to itself and take corrective action. The Twelve Traditions, when followed, provide the guardrails that allow our individual groups to grow and develop while contributing to the growth and development of the overall fellowship as well.

Tradition Four applies equally well in our personal lives as individual people, members of families, and participants in all types of groups like work forces, sports teams, and neighborhoods. We each have the right and responsibility to make our own decisions and conduct our lives in pursuit of our own goals and dreams. As in COSA, we are wise to consider how our behavior might affect others. If a conflict arises, we'll probably reach resolution best when we seek counsel outside of ourselves. If I always prepare my favorite dishes for dinner, I may be satisfied but the other people in my family could feel unimportant. When I ask for menu suggestions, I can ensure that my preferences don't leave others disappointed and hungry. At work, I do everything I can to meet my own sales goals but I'm careful near the boundaries of my territory so that my practices don't have a negative impact on the adjacent territory. I try to make sure that any effect on the company as a whole is positive. Tradition Four encourages me to keep the focus on myself while maintaining awareness of those around me.

The Traditions provide ground rules for healthy functioning in all sorts of groups. When we follow them in our COSA groups, we find freedom to grow and heal, as well as a safe place to fail. The Fourth Tradition, especially, reminds us to look around before we act and be sure we don't impinge on another group's right to the same autonomy.

~An anonymous long-timer

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

December 2023

Individual Donations	\$ 848.00
Individual Recurring	\$ 1,013.00
AZ-02 (Tempe Stepping into Recovery)	\$ 60.00
FL-15 (Naples Into the Light)	\$ 50.00
TEL-07 (COSA Recovery Tools)	\$ 120.00
TEL-08 (Telemeeting Intergroup)	\$ 300.00
TEL-11 (Daily Eleventh Step)	\$ 220.98
Total	\$ 2,861.98

January 2024

Individual Donations	\$ 817.00
Individual Recurring	\$ 1,013.00
CA-07 (N California Intergroup)	\$ 2,000.00
CA-13 (Women's Circle of Hope)	\$ 246.00
TX-22 (Houston West Side Sundry Night)	\$ 63.00
ONL-00 (Monday Night Zoom)	\$ 50.00
Total	\$ 4,189.00

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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