

Balance

Newsletter of International Service Organization of COSA



Summer Convention Reflection

The COSA “It Takes Heart 2024” Columbus convention did not disappoint! Although it was a slightly smaller gathering than my first in-person experience, it was just as valuable to me because of the connection I felt with faces I had only seen on Zoom and some former convention attendees.

Even though it was my second in-person convention, there were a few “firsts” for me. I felt like I brought energy and joy to the room on the first night with a musical icebreaker activity. I spoke on a COSA/ACSA panel the following day. On the last day I presented an interactive activity on the importance of affirmations in recovery to a room full of “grown-ups” and I didn’t die! Excuse the hyperbole, but in the past I had only been comfortable teaching children. I was a little afraid of judgment in this unfamiliar territory. I did not consider myself a public speaker. I asked HP for help and let go of the outcome. There was an outpouring of acceptance, gratitude, and validation from all the participants.

Every person who contributed and attended this convention showed true grit, valor, courage, and fortitude. There were so many newcomers without access to in-person meetings who attended this event. This was their first in-person convention! I’m grateful to COSA and all who helped put this convention together. My heart is full.



**IT TAKES
HEART**
SUMMER 2024

In grateful service, Audrey G.

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2025 Convention Planning Begins!

Consider Serving on the Committee

We have all kinds of service positions for those interested in helping with planing the winter (virtual) and summer (in-person) COSA conventions. The Committee is just forming, and we need volunteers. To be included on an upcoming planning meeting or to inquire about service opportunities for the conventions, email 2025cosa.conventions@gmail.com.

Recovery RED



When I first started attending meetings in the COSA Zoom Room, I was so overwhelmed with pain that I would often just sit and cry as I listened to others share. I didn't have enough of my SELF to share during meetings. Hearing the pain of other COSAs helped me to understand that I was not alone in my feelings. And while I was not able to manage my life at that moment, I also began to understand that there was a potential for calm and serenity in the future. I could see it on the faces of some of the women in CZR meetings.

My childhood experiences and my adult experience with my SAH led me to believe that my needs and wants were of little importance, that I was of little value and not worthy of love or care. I became a super caretaker. I put the wants and needs of others before my own. Ultimately, by focusing so intensely on what others wanted and needed, I felt as though my SELF had disappeared. I was so busy thinking about everyone else that I just stopped thinking about myself. If someone asked me what I wanted to do for lunch, I would respond with "Oh, I don't care! What do YOU want to do?"

And I got used to it.

I got used to being in the shadow, being in the background, not receiving attention, not needing attention, disappearing. I am by nature an introvert so it worked for me. I didn't like too much attention. I was quiet by nature. Honestly, if I were a superhero my superpower would be "invisibility".

While "disappearing" may have aligned itself with my introversion, it was not a healthy place. It kept me socially isolated and withdrawn. It kept me from experiencing and expressing my feelings. It motivated me to shut down rather than speaking up for myself and my needs. It made it easy for others to overlook me and to minimize my value as a person. It enabled loss of connection with reality.

I cannot continue to be invisible. I must remind myself daily that my HP created my spirit and it is good. I am worthy of love and attention right now, just as I am. I want to be completely present and alive today. I want to participate actively in the life I've been given. So, in January 2024, as I began the COSA Step Study, I started wearing red lipstick every day—even when I am just doing dishes or laundry. It's hard to be invisible when wearing red lipstick. People tend to notice. I notice myself. I call it "recovery red". I think of it as a symbol of my commitment to myself ... and I have a lot to learn about myself.

~Deborah B.

Delegate Dispatch

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

All COSA members are invited to review the 2024 Annual Report to the Delegates, published by the ISO board. This document offers great insight into the accomplishments and objectives of our COSA board committees. Please find it at the following link https://cosa-recovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024_ISO_Of_COSA_Annual_Report.pdf

For your reference, here are the June 2023 and November 2023 Delegate Meeting summaries.

June 2023 (Day 1)

<https://cosa-recovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-PUBLIC-del-mtg-DAY-1-clean-from-ER.pdf>

June 2023 (Day 2)

<https://cosa-recovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-PUBLIC-del-mtg-DAY-2-clean-from-ER.pdf>

November 2023

<https://cosa-recovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/NOV-19-PUBLIC-DELEGATE-MEETING-EDITED-BY-ER-1.pdf>



Become a Delegate

When your group participates in COSA as a whole by electing a year-round delegate, you help the ISO understand and serve your group's needs. You share your experience, strength, and hope with other meetings. Your ability to apply the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts deepens. You connect with COSA at the heart of it all!

Keep Your Meeting Information Current!

[COSA Meeting Registration/Update Form](#)

Resources for Meetings

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU NEED!

The Outreach committee is here to help you and your meeting obtain needed resources, such as the new *COSA Recovery* book, scholarships, and new meeting materials!

Contact us at outreachcommittee@cosa-recovery.org and let us know what you or your meeting needs, or any barriers you are facing in obtaining COSA literature.

We hope to hear from you soon!

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE YOU RECOVERING?

As we grow in our recovery, we develop a new way of living that includes taking our recovery out into the world with us. Please send an anonymous photo to balance@cosa-recovery.org showing us where in the world you have taken your copy of *COSA Recovery*. This photo might include your favorite reading spot, a special pen you use for notes, or a sweet treat! Be sure to include the location of your *COSA Recovery* photo so we can see how far and wide the COSA message is being carried!



Enjoying *COSA Recovery* in the beautiful Upper Peninsula of Michigan! –Madeleine C.

COSA Recovery traveled with me to sunny Palm Springs, CA! –Nan H.



Yosemite National Park – Anonymous Hiking COSA

COSA Recovery is now available!

PRINT

US\$20.00

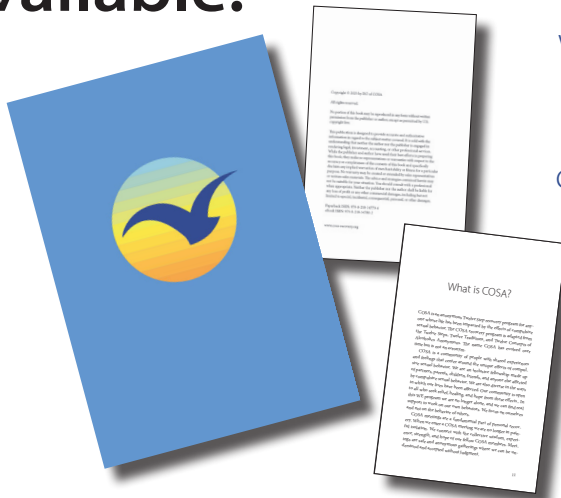
Regular price US\$25.00

eBOOK

US\$5.00

Regular price US\$10.00

Purchase from
Amazon



This beautiful book features all new, conference-approved writing on the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts - PLUS chapters on more than a dozen powerful COSA tools.

Get yours today!

Jot Your Thought

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



Jot yours down and send it to: balance@cosa-recovery.org and inform us of whether you wish to remain anonymous. We would love to share it in an upcoming issue of the *Balance*!

Emails may be edited prior to inclusion. Thank you!

I appreciate the collection of Slogans and Wise Sayings in our COSA Recovery book. One of my favorites is “Expectations are resentments waiting to happen.” It reminds me to let others be themselves, and for me to let go of outcomes. —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.

COSA TOOLS OF RECOVERY

WORKING THE TWELVE STEPS

IN 15 MINUTES ON A QUESTION

HOW TO USE IT: Working the Twelve Steps in 15 minutes is my favorite recovery tool. I want to promote it like a TV infomercial: It's Quick! It's Free! It has all the Steps! This is the Swiss Army Knife of recovery tools. Let me explain and demonstrate.

I first learned about this tool at a COSA convention many years ago. A fellow COSA led a workshop where we split into groups of two and worked the Steps with a timer. My partner and I didn't finish on time but we both came out of the workshop with direction on how to deal with family members who leave a trail of dirty dishes in their wake. Since then, I have used this tool with another person or on my own in my journal. I may get direction right away, or later when I've stopped my spinning thoughts. There are several variations of this tool in our new COSA Recovery book that offers a guide for "Working the Twelve Steps Around a Specific Situation" at pp. 304-311. This version goes deeper into Step work and takes longer than 15 minutes. The COSA Zoom Room offers another version: [From Confusion to Clarity: Working the Steps in 15 minutes](#)

I like to use a shorter version so that I can address a specific issue quickly and get relief sooner. I've shared this tool in COSA workshops, and my format has evolved into 12 bullet prompts. I'll use these prompts as I work the Steps in this article.

Why we Use it: *COSA Recovery* recommends using the Steps around a specific situation to "resolve difficulties in our daily lives and avoid the traps of our old ways of thinking." The book suggests using the tool when we are: *paralyzed, overwhelmed, reactive, or triggered*, by doing so, we can experience *clarity, comfort, direction, and relief*. It's easy to see why I'd like to pick a serene condition from Door No. 2, and get out of the insanity of Door No. 1! This tool isn't magic, but if we put in the work, we can regain our serenity and freedom with our Higher Power's help.

It's important to use this tool for a specific situation, not, "How can I find happiness?" but a situation in our daily life that is causing us difficulty. Here are some examples of specific situations from other COSAs:

- Working through the aftermath of a difficult conversation
- Looking for specific direction on how to stay safe while traveling
- Deciding whether to attend a challenging family event
- Moving forward when stuck on a particular Step

The best way of sharing this tool is by putting it into action, so I'll work it here. My specific situation today is that I need to decide what to do for my younger brother's birthday. This brother is seven years younger than I am, and was treated in an indulgent way as the "baby" of the family. I tried to protect him from the anger and violence in our home while we were growing up. In the past, I have given him money and expensive gifts. I don't do this with my other siblings. He doesn't reciprocate these gestures, and hasn't given me gifts or cards on my birthday. I resent him and myself in this situation, but I don't know how to stop trying to make his life better with gifts.

1. **What am I powerless over and how is my life unmanageable?** *I am powerless over my feelings of sadness for his childhood in an abusive home, and my desire for him to be happy. My life is unmanageable today because my thoughts are spinning around this gift. This distracts me from being of service in the world and interferes with my serenity.*
2. **Can a Higher Power restore me to sanity?** *Yes, I've seen this happen in my life many times in many ways.*
3. **Say a prayer turning over this situation and everyone involved to my Higher Power.** *Sometimes I pray a COSA Prayer, or "God, please help me get it together," or just "Help!"*
4. **What is the fear, resentment, selfishness, or dishonesty that is coming up for me in this situation?** *I am resentful that I have given my brother substantial money and expensive gifts when he doesn't reciprocate. I resent that he doesn't always express gratitude, and he is still unhappy and depressed no matter what I do. I'm selfish in that I want him to do things my way. I am fearful that he'll abandon me if I don't keep dotting on him. I'm dishonest in continuing to give him gifts when I resent him. He hasn't even asked for gifts!*
5. **What are the core beliefs that underlie my feelings and behaviors?** *As his older sister in a family affected by multiple addictions, I was the caretaker. I believe that I am responsible for my brother's happiness and that gifts will make him happy like they did when he was four years old.*
6. **What are three character defects/defaults that come up around this situation?** *Caretaking, over-responsibility, dishonesty.*
7. **Say a prayer asking my Higher Power to lift these character defaults.** *I can say the Seventh Step prayer or my own prayer, which can be as simple as "Higher Power, I'm tired of dragging this baggage around. Please take it from me. And by the way, thanks!"*
8. **Who have I harmed in this situation?** *I've harmed my brother by treating him like he cannot take care of himself and appointing myself as his rescuer. I've harmed myself by being overly responsible and feeding my resentments. I've harmed my family's finances by spending too much money on my brother.*
9. **Make amends to those we have harmed.** *How can I make amends to my brother? I can make living amends by giving him right-sized gifts, maybe a birthday card, a cake, or inviting him for dinner. I can tell him I'm sorry that he is depressed and I'll listen if he wants to talk. I'll make amends to myself by scaling back on my gifts to him and letting go of the idea that I can buy my brother happiness.*
10. **Continue to take inventory.** *Keep meditating on this situation and my character defaults. I'll check back on my progress at letting them go at least two or three times this week in my daily Tenth Step inventory. I'll share my progress with my sponsor.*
11. **Continue to pray about this until I have direction and more serenity.** *I'll pray for my brother, for me, and for our relationship every day.*
12. **Share my experience, strength, and hope about this tool.** *I can share about this tool in a meeting, in fellowship, or in writing in the Balance newsletter (done!).*

STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6· **7** ·8·9·10·11·12

HUMBLY ASKED GOD TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS.

Well, I know I don't want to live in my own will anymore. I don't want to feel alone, helpless, like I need to escape, like I'm worthless, etc. I want to step beyond that. My Higher Power has empathy for why I have those core negative beliefs. My Higher Power doesn't blame me, but also doesn't want to see me suffering anymore. My Higher Power is Twelve Step communities, the willingness of my friends to support me, the loving energy from animals, and the beauty in the world untouched by humans. It is loving and caring. It is forgiving, it is playful, it is relaxed, and it is firm. It is letting go of pain and suffering to enjoy the present moment. It is not worrying. It is knowing that there is enough and that we are all enough as we are. It can allow sadness without falling into hopelessness. It can wrap around me and keep me safe. It is having hope that I am slowly changing and not stuck.

~ Charlotte N., Oakland, CA



STEP 1·2·3·4·5·6·7· **8** ·9·10·11·12

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED, AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL.

I'm a list maker, and when I started Step Eight, I had my list of people from Step Four to start working from and thought I had a good head start. This should go quickly, I thought! As I reviewed my Step Eight list and began to feel my feelings toward each person on it, I began to see that people fell into two categories for me: those I could see myself making heartfelt, genuine amends to, and those I could not—yet.

My mom fell into the 'not yet' category. Our relationship was complicated. She gave birth to me when she was 17, when she should have been enjoying her senior year in high school. Instead of attending her prom, she was attending to a baby with colic. My very existence had upended her life and, in her eyes, ruined her future. Needless to say, my childhood was not easy and she made it very clear how hard I had made her life.

I tried my whole life before recovery to (very unskillfully) "fix" it and somehow make her happy with me, but to no avail. She'd feel victimized. I'd follow up with rudeness and lashing out. She'd pull away. Then the cycle would begin again.

Fast forward to my life in my recovery. I knew I needed my Higher Power's help becoming willing. My sponsor patiently worked with me and wisely said, "Just pray for the willingness to be willing and trust the process." Nearly a year of praying for willingness to be willing passed and I thought I was getting nowhere.

Then out of the blue my mom invited me to a high school reunion. Not hers, because she didn't get to finish high school, but her older brother's reunion. He had been very popular, and she had always been his sidekick, enjoying the benefits of his popularity. But he had recently passed away, so she asked me to go with her.

The event was perfect for her. There was dancing (her favorite activity), socializing, and catching up with acquaintances. I could see she was genuinely having a great time—until one of the women attending came up to her and made some horrible comments that completely humiliated my mom. I overheard it and saw my mom act like she was unfazed, but I saw the mask slip. In that moment, I saw with crystal clarity that my mom still just wanted to belong and be accepted by this peer group, even 50 years after high school. A sliver of compassion opened a door in my heart, and I recognized my Higher Power's invitation to step through. I was finally able to really see my mom and have compassion for her humanness. That compassion opened my heart to willingness. Before long, I was finally able to make direct amends to her. I also made living amends.

Through the Step Eight process Higher Power gave me the gift of willingness, which led to the "clean up" and healing I needed. She and I were able to have a better relationship. Years later when my mom passed away, I had no unfinished business or regret, just compassionate acceptance, peace, and forgiveness. In fact, it was me by her side, fully present in love and gratitude, holding her hand when she slipped from this life.

I'm so grateful that I trusted my Higher Power and the process to keep praying and keep going. There were miracles just beyond the door I'd been stuck behind.

~ Anonymous

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

EVERY COSA GROUP OUGHT TO BE FULLY SELF-SUPPORTING, DECLINING OUTSIDE CONTRIBUTIONS.

I love the Traditions! They give our COSA meetings the structure needed to keep them safe and even sacred. When I study how the lessons from each Tradition can be applied to my life in a personal way, I find that I'm able to take my recovery to a deeper level.

The short simple sentence of Tradition Seven provides a bounty of inspiration and guidance for my personal growth. Lessons I receive from the Traditions can morph and change, depending on what issues I'm dealing with at the time. These days, when I consider Tradition Seven's message about outside contributions, I focus on being emotionally self-supporting. From this angle, I see outside contributions as seeking acceptance from people outside of me, instead of focusing on self acceptance.

When I define myself by what others think of me, I do myself such a disservice. Doing a little review of my life, I'm sad to see that I have been other people's doormats. Throughout so much of my life, I've made others more important to me than I am to myself.

Why is it that others' applause for me is more valuable than my own? My applause can be just as loud, just as big, just as meaningful, as long as I pay attention to it. If I look outside of myself for answers, guidance, ok-ness, not only do I come up short, I disrespect myself. Tradition Seven provides the reminder that I am a whole, worthy person.

Several years ago, prior to recovery, a good friend of mine was in town visiting her family. She told me she'd give me a call to make time to see me while she was in town. I waited all weekend for her call but it never came. I felt such hurt and resentment. She was with her family and I wasn't her priority. That doesn't mean I'm not worthy. But I sure felt it. I made her my priority while neglecting myself.

I believe as human beings, we all have the need to be seen. When I'm treated as if I'm invisible, I feel devalued and even neglected. And here I was, ignoring and disrespecting my very core. I was treating myself as if I didn't matter.

In recovery I'm learning to be my own priority. I need to answer to myself first. And if I disappoint others, that might be ok if I'm putting myself first.

Tradition Seven guides me to consider an inward perspective as opposed to an outward one. For so long I didn't trust myself so my first instinct wouldn't be to check in with my own instinct. Instead, I'd follow whatever I saw others doing.

There's a line from an old Cat Stevens song that goes, "Yes the answer lies within, so why not take a look now?" As I grow in my recovery, I'm learning to trust myself. I'm becoming acquainted with myself and gradually understanding that I have deep wisdom if I pay attention. My core deserves to be listened to. And of course, that's not to say that I can't ask for help. But today I'm going to first acknowledge that I have wisdom within that's worthy of attention. I matter!

~Liz

TRADITION 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

COSA SHOULD REMAIN FOREVER NON-PROFESSIONAL, BUT OUR SERVICE CENTERS MAY EMPLOY SPECIAL WORKERS.

When it came to my profession, I accepted that the people at the “top” in positions of authority made most of the decisions, got the best parking spots and the best coffee. I thought that was normal. Coming into COSA and experiencing the upside-down triangle of the ISO was a quaint idea, but I didn’t buy it. I am not sure I even agreed with that type of structure. You see, I believed in hierarchy. I embraced hierarchy. I staked my worth on a foothold of “better than” and “less than”. I invented the imaginary bar I set for myself and worse—the bar I set for others. Doing this set me up to become annoyed often, disappointed regularly, and salty about things that usually turned out to be none of my business.

The idea that a group of traumatized, betrayed, spiritually-seeking people could support a world wide fellowship for over thirty years is radical. COSA has accomplished amazing things through the work of many non-professional volunteers! Volunteers wrote a book, developed websites, organized conventions, and have continued to carry the message, all the while remaining self-supporting. Someone told me early in my recovery that COSAs are pretty savvy people and should not be underestimated. Indeed! COSAs are radical!

How do we incentivize a volunteer? COSA can’t offer them the best parking spot or a holiday bonus. Each service position is an expression of the member’s own needs, identified with their HP. My first ISO service position is still very special to me. It really “grew” my recovery and offered me peace. I needed the service more than it needed me. Enthusiasm and passion allowed me to serve the fellowship because I believed in what I was doing. But I also believed that rotating service roles is healthy. Eventually, I decided to step away from that service. I knew I didn’t need to stay in the role out of guilt or external need. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity I was given. I learned so much and because it was a healthy, prayerful exit, I have such a fondness for the service role I left, but will not forget.

Whatever the need is for the fellowship, a willing volunteer may serve. Or, the need goes unmet and the fellowship adjusts, or finds a way to continue, such as employing a special worker. Special workers are needed for things we may need specialists for in our own lives, such as tax specialists or website designers.

Though service can be challenging, may we each never forget the alternative of the upside down triangle. I don’t think it’s worth the parking spot. This Tradition keeps each individual free to serve in their own way, at the right time, in the right role, right-sized. Professionals need not apply.

~Julie P., Zoom Room

CONCEPT 1·2·3·4·5·6·7·8·9·10·11·12

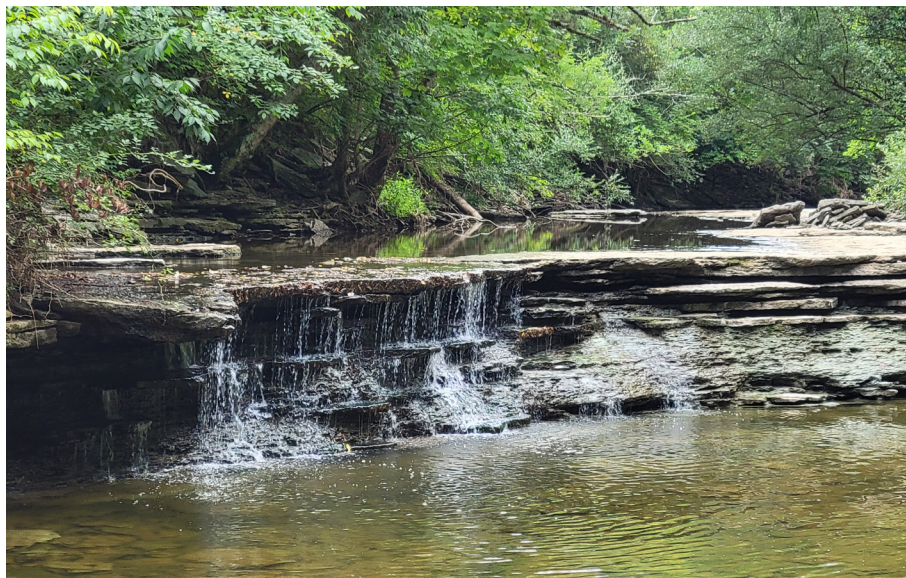
THE TRUSTEES ARE THE PRINCIPAL PLANNERS AND ADMINISTRATORS OF OVERALL POLICY AND FINANCE. THEY HAVE CUSTODIAL OVERSIGHT OF THE SEPARATELY INCORPORATED AND CONSTANTLY ACTIVE SERVICES, EXERCISING THIS THROUGH THEIR ABILITY TO ELECT ALL THE DIRECTORS OF THESE ENTITIES.

This says to me that we can't do it all. We can't manage everything. This doesn't seem to me to be just about money but about everything in our organization. It's a guideline that can make things more manageable for the people who come after us. I think this ultimately strengthens us as a whole.

In my own life, it reminds me that I am not my Higher Power. My Higher Power is. I can't fix everyone and I can't fix all situations. When one situation becomes burdensome, I ask for assistance. That might mean I hire someone to advise me. It might mean I ask someone for their ESH. I don't always look at everything objectively. Sometimes it feels like squirrels are running rampant in my brain. I can look for, and accept, help. This also helps me to NOT overburden myself and take on more than I'm capable of. And it reminds me that I'm not the expert on everything.

I wrote these words several months back; looking at them now, I see that they are ones I need to remind myself of and re-read daily.

Thanks, I'm Pat D, a grateful recovering COSA.



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

April 2024

Individual Donations	\$ 1,330.00
Individual Recurring	\$ 1,008.00
ONL-34	\$ 25.00
TEL-08	\$ 580.12
Total	\$ 2,943.11

May 2024

Individual Donations	\$ 615.00
Individual Recurring	\$ 1083.00
TX-23	\$ 30.00
Seventh Tradition Fund Drive	\$ 100.00
Total	\$ 1,828.00

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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