

The COSA® Meeting Guide:
**Starting and Maintaining Sober and
Sustainable Groups**



Acknowledgements

COSA would like to thank those individuals and groups who have generously donated the words and wisdom that have made *The COSA Meeting Guide* what it is.

Introduction: Open Letter to Groups from the Board Chair

The COSA Meeting Guide is an ambitious transformation of *How To Start A New Group*. Rather than a primer on how to start a meeting, this new publication guides our groups as we form them, as we grow them, and as we experience the problems inherent in cultivating a sober and sustainable group.

Our groups are the cornerstone of our fellowship, and the Fourth Tradition tells us that "Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or COSA as a whole." This guide will empower our groups to practice autonomy without endangering our ability to fulfill our primary purpose. We want to assure the newcomer and long-timer alike that when they attend a COSA meeting, they will get COSA and nothing else.

The COSA Meeting Guide reflects the spiritual progress of the fellowship as a whole in the past year. As *The COSA Meeting Guide* was being written, COSA moved the Central Office from a staff member's house to a permanent office in Houston, Texas. We have done a lot of work in building a foundation to allow our trusted servants to better serve the groups. Also this year, we have come closer to a longstanding goal of broader inclusiveness in the ranks of trusted servants and in the groups themselves. COSA is growing, and the change in this booklet reflects the growth in this fellowship.

Yours in Recovery,

Elaine K.

November 2011

*The COSA Meeting
Guide:*
Starting and Maintaining Sober and Sustainable Groups

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Chapter One

General Information about COSA

What is COSA?

COSA is an anonymous Twelve-Step fellowship for anyone whose life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. COSA is self-supporting through the voluntary contributions of members. It is not affiliated with any outside organization, including treatment centers, religions, or therapy. COSA members find help through studying and working the Twelve Steps, as they have been adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. These Steps are the basis for our individual growth and recovery in COSA:

The Twelve Steps of COSA

1. We admitted we were powerless over compulsive sexual behavior -- that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous have been reprinted and adapted with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. ("AAWS"). Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that Alcoholics Anonymous is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only - use of A.A.'s Steps or an adapted version in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, or use in any other non-A.A. context, does not imply otherwise.

What is a COSA Group?

One or more individuals can start a COSA meeting, and a COSA group is any two or more people who meet on a regular basis for mutual support, using the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of COSA as a basis for their meeting. To be considered a member group of the ISO, a COSA group must affiliate with the ISO by filling out and submitting a Group Registration Form. ISO membership is lost if the group ceases to be a COSA group.

The Twelve Traditions have stood the test of time. They make it possible to reduce the distractions that result from conflict and they promote cooperation within the groups. They are also useful in finding healthy solutions to situations that arise in our own personal lives. COSA unity is rooted and grounded in these Traditions.

The Twelve Traditions of COSA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon COSA unity.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or COSA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to those who still suffer. We do this by practicing the Twelve Steps ourselves.
6. A COSA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the COSA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every COSA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. COSA should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. COSA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. COSA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the COSA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all Program members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
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What is a COSA Business Meeting?

Business Meetings are an opportunity for a single, autonomous group to identify and resolve challenges as well as to foster spiritual growth. Group members make informed decisions that affect group members as a whole. Decisions may include starting and ending times, problems with crosstalk, and format issues or details. Like recovery meetings, Business Meetings often begin and end with the Serenity Prayer, respect the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of COSA, provide time for members to share their experience, strength, and hope in recovery, and give members a chance to practice the principles of the program in all their activities. They are opportunities to honor each COSA member individually as well as to maintain the sobriety of the group and its ability to carry the message of recovery. In this sense, Business Meetings are also recovery meetings. Please see Business Meetings in the Sample Meeting Formats section.

It is recommended that the Business Meeting begin with the Serenity Prayer and a brief statement of the issues to be discussed. It is important that everyone clearly understands the issues before generating solutions. This keeps our Business Meetings crisp and focused. It also encourages people to keep the discussion focused on the solution as opposed to getting lost in a lengthy, time-consuming discussion of the problem. The matter is then opened for discussion and each member is free to speak regarding the topic, while observing safe communication practices. One person speaks at a time without crosstalk. Once everyone who would like to give input has had a chance to do so, a motion proposing a solution to the current issue is made by a group member. The motion may be seconded by another group member and a vote taken to resolve the issue. Otherwise, discussion and motions may continue until the members are ready to

vote. This process continues until all issues on the agenda are resolved.

Group Conscience of the meeting dictates whether decisions are made by a simple majority or by another process. The ISO of COSA Board adopts its voting procedures from *Roberta's Rules of Order*. All of the group members are asked to vote green if the motion is satisfactory as it is, yellow if it is generally okay with some hesitations, and red if it is not acceptable. It is constructive and healthy for the group to hear what those who voted yellow and red have to say before making a final decision. Group Conscience of the meeting also determines how many people need to be present in a Business Meeting to have a quorum for votes.

A Secretary records all the group decisions and summarizes the opinions expressed in the minutes of the Business Meeting. The minutes are kept with the group papers. Once a decision has been made by Group Conscience, the group does its best to support this decision. A change regarding the issue ought to have another Group Conscience vote.

As the First Tradition reminds us, “our common welfare should come first,” so the group honors the majority vote. We view the Group Conscience vote as our Higher Power expressed through the group. It is an opportunity to be gracious whether the vote goes “our way” or not.

What is a COSA Intergroup?

A COSA Intergroup is made up of representatives who have been elected by the member groups they serve, usually one per group. The Intergroup Representatives serve as liaisons between their home groups and the Intergroup, making announcements at meetings, relaying information between groups as needed, and so forth. These representatives are empowered to make decisions on their group's behalf. Please see Intergroup Representative in the Service Roles Within the Group section.

An Intergroup provides materials and services to a variety of other COSA groups. They maintain a master list of local meetings that may include member contact information. They schedule and coordinate local retreats and workshops, organize fellowship events, and provide support to new local groups. Intergroups may collect Seventh Tradition donations from the groups they serve, or hold fundraisers, in order to be fully self-supporting. The groups that make up an Intergroup can share a common geographic area or characteristic. For instance, the Bay Area COSA Intergroup serves the Bay Area of San Francisco, and the Telemeeting Intergroup serves groups that meet by teleconference. Because each Intergroup is autonomous, their actual functions and practices are determined by Group Conscience. Please see Business Meetings in the Sample Meeting Formats section.

Some Intergroups meet monthly while others meet quarterly. Intergroups allow the groups they serve to pool their resources and coordinate activities to carry the COSA message further than any single meeting could on its own. Like the meetings they represent, Intergroup meetings often begin and end with the Serenity Prayer, respect the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of COSA, provide time for members to share their experience, strength, and hope in recovery, and give members a chance to practice the principles of the program in all their activities. In this sense, Intergroup meetings are also recovery meetings. Bylaws are a common way for Intergroups to maintain consistency of business practices over time.

Intergroups commonly elect three officers among themselves. These are Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. In some Intergroups, these officers may serve for six months and for no longer than four terms. Group

Conscience decides how many representatives constitute a quorum. The Chair runs the meetings and oversees the Intergroup itself. The Chair prepares and sends out the meeting agenda. The Secretary takes notes and distributes minutes of meetings. The Treasurer collects and disburses funds, maintains financial records, prepares a budget, and provides a brief report at every meeting.

An Intergroup may also elect a Delegate to represent itself at the Biannual Delegate Meeting. For more on Delegates and the Biannual Delegate Meeting, please see ISO Delegate in the Service Roles Within the Group section.

What is the ISO of COSA?

COSA's International Service Organization (ISO) of COSA is a non-profit entity considered to be a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The ISO Mission statement reads as follows:

Our Mission is to serve the fellowship of COSA by fostering the growth of individual groups and facilitating communications of COSA principles and ideals through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

The one primary purpose of the ISO of COSA is to carry the message to those who suffer. As such, the objectives of the International Service Organization of COSA, Inc., include, but are not limited to:

- Serving member groups and individual members of the COSA fellowship, always abiding by the principles of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of COSA as adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Writing, approving, and publishing COSA literature.
- Communicating with member groups and individual members of COSA. Such communication includes Public Relations, publication of the newsletter, and publication of a directory of COSA meetings.
- Creating and implementing means of Public Information, in order to spread the word of the hope and recovery found in this program.
- Sponsoring and organizing the Annual International Convention.
- Forming and directing any committees to serve the purpose of the ISO.

The Twelve Concepts of COSA

While the Twelve Steps are the basis for personal recovery and the Twelve Traditions guide group dynamics and relationships, the Twelve Concepts are the foundation for COSA service.

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for COSA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship.
2. The Annual Meeting of Delegates and the ISO Board of COSA has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole society in its world affairs.
3. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of COSA, "the Annual Meeting," the

International Service Organization of COSA and its service committees, the contracted workers, and the executives with a traditional right of decision.

4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

5. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

6. The Annual Meeting of the board and delegates recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most international service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Annual Meeting, acting as the International Service Organization.

7. The Charter and Bylaws of the International Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct international service affairs. The Annual Meeting Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the COSA purse for final effectiveness.

8. 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.

9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

11. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction, procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

12. The Annual Meeting shall observe the spirit of COSA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never performs acts of governments, and that, like the fellowship it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

THE TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

2. The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole society in its world affairs.

3. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A.—the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives—with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

5. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

7. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of over-all 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.

9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

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12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government; that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

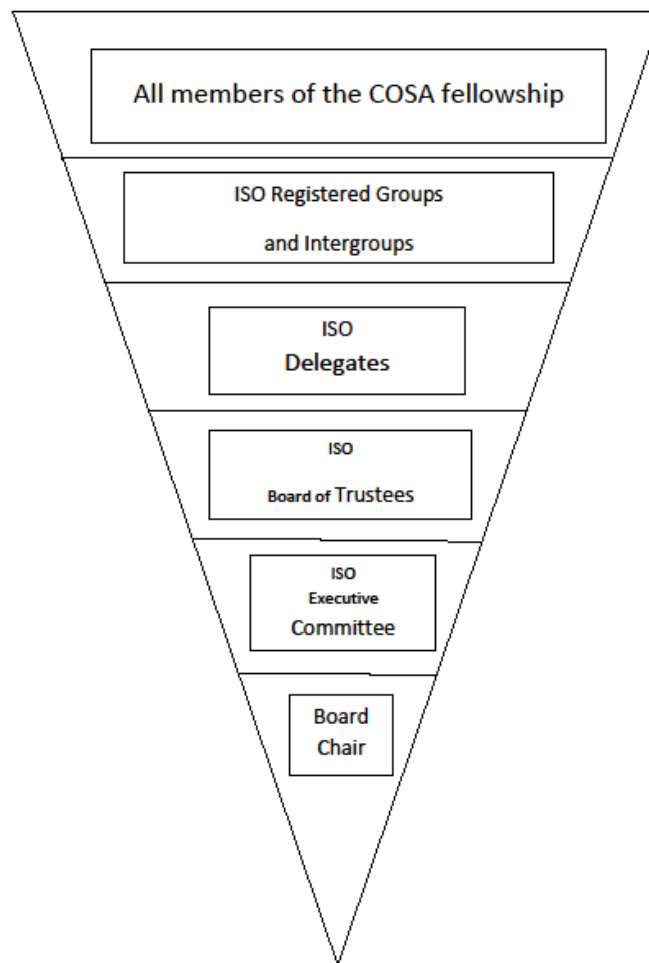
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The ISO of COSA Organizational Structure: The Inverted Triangle

The Second Tradition reminds us that “Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” The organizational structure of the ISO of COSA reflects that. The informed Group Conscience is communicated to the trusted servants, and decisions are made which reflect that Group Conscience. See the Inverted Triangle in the graphic below:

ISO of COSA Organizational Structure:

The Inverted Triangle



The ISO Central Office

The ISO Central Office is an operations center where literature and records are stored and services such as order fulfillment and the maintenance of financial records are performed. In accordance with Tradition Eight, staff members at the ISO Central Office work for pay.

Chapter Two

Meeting Tools

Starting a New Meeting: Simple Steps

Here are some simple steps we have taken to start a new group. They are suggestions only, based on our experiences.

1. Determine an area, day, time

- a. If you are an individual, pick a place, day, and time that work best for you.
- b. If you are a small group of members, discuss the possibilities and take a Group Conscience vote.
- c. Either way, plan to attend consistently for the first three to six months, minimum.

2. Find a location

- a. Identify and approach houses of worship, community centers, etc., for a room to rent.
- b. Venues where other Twelve Step meetings are held are a good place to start. c. Have basic COSA information available for venue representatives.
- d. Be courteous and friendly; meet with them in person when possible.

3. Secure the day and time

- a. Deposit: The initiating member or group may need to put down a deposit; the meeting, once it is financially able, should reimburse this in order to be fully self-supporting.
- b. Keys: If there is more than one member, and the group is given keys to the facility, it is best to have two sets of keys, if possible.
- c. For a Zoom meeting: Contact COSA Zoom Intergroup at cosazoomroom@yahoo.com to request permission to establish a new meeting on COSA's Zoom channel.

4. Spread the word

- a. Send a completed registration form to the ISO (Internal Service Organization of COSA). See www.cosa-recovery.org under the Meetings tab for the registration form, which can be filled out online.

International Service Organization of COSA (or ISO of COSA)
Central Office
539 W. Commerce Street, Suite 1496

Dallas, TX 75208
USA
866-899-2672
Email: info@cosa-recovery.org

- b. “Inreach”: Share the information with other COSA groups, announce at retreats and other COSA events.
 - i. If there are concerns about anonymity, consider setting up a dedicated email and/or phone line to field incoming requests for information. Making the time, date, and location of your meeting available allows newcomers to find your meeting with ease.
 - ii. If there is an Intergroup in your area, connect with them. If no Intergroup presently exists, consider forming one if there is more than one group in your area.

5. Setting up and supporting the meeting

- a. Format options: Consider starting with a standard template. Revisit it in six months or a year to consider making adjustments.
- b. Service positions: Determine and define service positions.
- c. Outreach: Contact local health care professionals, therapists, and others who might be able to refer potential COSA members.

6. Basic materials

- a. Meeting documents
 - i. Format
 - ii. COSA Readings
 - iii. Slogans
- b. COSA literature (when starting the group, consider taking a separate collection to order literature). All COSA literature is helpful. Here are good ones to get started with:
 - i. Newcomer packets (*Welcome to the Sunlight!*, *COSA Tools*, and *COSA FAQ*)
 - ii. *COSA Sobriety*
 - iii. *A Program of Recovery/52 Questions*
 - iv. *Caretaking*
 - v. *Boundaries*
 - vi. Business Meeting format and guidelines (See Business Meetings in the Sample Meeting Formats section.)
 - vii. Safe Communication Procedures (See Guidelines for Safe Communication in the Sharing in Meetings section.)
 - viii. Service Position descriptions (See Service Roles Within the Group section.)
- c. Basic Supplies, including but not limited to: three-ring binder for the format and meeting materials, pens, basket or bag for the Seventh Tradition collection, envelopes for Seventh

Tradition collection, timer, sign-up sheet to be added to the phone list, copies of the phone list of the meeting members, box or bag to keep all of the meeting materials in, signs directing newcomers to the room (if needed).

7. Keeping the faith

- a. Don't give up and don't take it personally if some members come and go.
- b. It may take up to a year to establish regular attendance by a core group of members.
- c. New meetings often have many newcomers. Find ways to connect with some long-timers (via phone, Internet, etc.) as mentors. Consider having guest speakers or a Circles Workshop.
- d. Once the meeting becomes established, you may want to conduct an annual or biennial "sobriety inventory" of your group. This will help ensure that the meeting stays healthy and can provide the most support to its members.

Sober and Sustainable Meetings

The following information is based upon answers to Sober and Sustainable Meetings Questionnaires completed at the ISO of COSA Convention in May, 2008.

Meeting Basics & Format

- Accessible location and time
- Meeting starts on time and is consistent
- Clearly-established trusted servants who are reliable
- Some meetings may wish to choose a place or time that isn't too close to SAA
- Clearly-established format, in agreement with the Steps, Traditions, and basic tenets of COSA
- Maintain the focus on COSA's primary purpose
- Is supported by the Group Conscience
- May include leader's shares, guest speakers sharing their stories, Step studies, Traditions studies, COSA literature studies, First Step shares, Sobriety Circles, etc.
- May include a list of topics for discussion
- May include breakout for small group sharing if the meeting is large
- Use COSA-approved materials
- Use and honor a timer to ensure equal sharing
- Engage and welcome the newcomer
- Maintain an accurate and complete phone list

Suggestions for Sharing

- No crosstalk or unsolicited feedback
- Practice focused sharing (experience, strength, and hope (ESH) on topic)
- Speak in "I" terms only
- Focus on our own recovery (not on the sex addict or other COSA members)

Avoiding Distractions from our Primary Purpose

- Refrain from discussion of religion or politics
- Refrain from criticism or judgment
- Refrain from personality conflicts, instead rely upon the Traditions and Group Conscience
- Strive to create an environment of warmth and encouragement
- Avoid cliques or exclusivity

Healthy Interactions between Members

- Respect confidentiality both within COSA discussions and outside the meeting room, whether in person, on the phone, or through email
- Respect diversity and differences
- Refrain from controlling, caretaking, giving advice, gossiping, or dominating
- Maintain anonymity of sponsors and cosponsors
- Foster and nurture active sponsor/sponsee relationships

Group Business

- Conduct regularly-scheduled Business Meetings
- All members are encouraged to contribute to the welfare of the group
- Honor each individual's right to express their opinion
- Honor the Group Conscience
- As needed, devise clear and agreed-upon group strategies for handling issues that may arise
- Maintain a prudent reserve of money for rent and meeting necessities, and whenever possible, contribute regularly to ISO
- Send a group representative to Intergroup meetings (wherever possible)
- Send a Delegate to the Annual International Convention

Service Positions

- Regularly-scheduled rotation of the trusted servants in service positions
- Trusted servants listen to all points of view, set boundaries, and honor the Group Conscience
- Trusted servants pass along their ESH regarding their position to the next trusted servant

In Summary

Sober and sustainable meetings have a clear and consistent structure in place. Group members observe safe communication practices and honor the group's commonly agreed-upon boundaries. The focus of healthy COSA meetings is personal recovery and carrying the message to others who still suffer. This purpose is directly linked to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of COSA. By maintaining a relaxed, yet unwavering, adherence to these principles, we can ensure that the gifts of recovery will continue to come to those who join the COSA program.

While no meeting may be perfect in every way, we can each strive to maintain these practices in our meetings to the best of our ability. The spiritual progress that is the goal for each member is also important for the group as a whole.

It is helpful to refer to and observe the Twelve Traditions of COSA for guidance.

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, and all ethnicities, cultures, and languages. COSA does not discriminate on the basis of class, sexual orientation or gender identification, physical or mental challenges, race, 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 upon COSA unity.”

Open and Closed Meetings

A closed meeting is open only to those who think they may have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. An open meeting is open to anyone interested in finding out about COSA, including therapists, students, educators, or medical professionals.

Topics and Readings

COSA Literature

COSA Literature is a body of pamphlets and booklets written by and for COSA members that has been approved by the ISO Literature Committee and the COSA Delegates.

Outside Literature

Because COSA existed for years without its own basic text, many groups choose to use outside literature. Since we are based on the original Twelve Step programs of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon, some COSA members refer to literature from those and other Twelve Step programs to learn more about addiction and aid them in their recovery. Many members have also found value in SAA literature, which aids COSA recovery and fosters empathy between recovering addicts and COSAs. Please remember that we are not affiliated with A.A., Al-Anon, or SAA.

Slogans

Many members find slogans to be an easy way to learn some of the basics of a recovery program:

- Easy Does It
- First Things First
- HALT (We don't allow ourselves to become too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired)
- Higher Power
- HOW (HOW our program works: Honesty, Open-mindedness, and Willingness)
- Keep it Simple
- Let Go and Let God
- Live and Let Live
- One Day at a Time
- Progress not Perfection

Prayers

Serenity Prayer (we version)

God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference.

I Put My Hand In Yours

I put my hand in yours, and together we can do what we cannot do alone. No longer is there a sense of hopelessness. No longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower. We are all together now, reaching out for power and strength greater than ours. And as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.

From *I Put My Hand In Yours*. Copyright 1968 by Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Overeaters Anonymous, Inc.

Other Prayers

Groups may wish to write their own prayers in their own words. We suggest that specific religious content be avoided.

Anonymity

Anonymity means that sharing the fine details about our lives is not as important as sharing what we think and feel. In COSA, we identify ourselves by first name and last initial. COSA meetings are also confidential which means that everything we say in the meeting must be held in confidence. Anonymity and confidentiality allow us to say what we are truly thinking and feeling without fear of gossip or criticism.

Some members choose to voluntarily reveal their membership in COSA to help others. Other members may choose to use their full names within COSA service or in the rooms. The principle of anonymity requires that no judgments be made about a member's decisions about the level of their personal anonymity. Tradition Eleven tells us we must respect our own personal anonymity at the public level. It is only at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication that personal anonymity is mandated. No one member speaks for COSA, and each member has a sacred story to tell.

Sharing in Meetings

Experience, Strength, and Hope

During meetings, COSA members share their own experience, strength, and hope with the group. Advice-giving or telling people what to do, censure, belittlement, scolding or preaching, judging or commenting on what people say, and crosstalk (which means talking to, talking about, or talking with someone else during the meeting) are strongly discouraged. Members are encouraged to talk only about themselves, using "I" terms, and to give feedback only in a feedback meeting.

Staying in the Solution

It is most helpful if members focus on the tools of the program, including the Steps, Traditions, and slogans. It is often necessary to talk about a problem, but sharing problems only brings short-term relief without recovery. Some members say “bring your mess to your sponsor and your message to your meeting.” It is part of the trusted servant’s/Secretary’s role to monitor discussion, and it is also everyone’s responsibility to speak up when someone is inappropriate. The “Guidelines for Safe Communication” could be used as a reading prior to opening up the topic for discussion.

Safe Communication

ISO of COSA Safe Communications Procedures

These guidelines are a requirement of service at the ISO level. If any member violates these guidelines, they may be given a warning. If they continue to violate the guidelines, they may be removed from their service position. Service is a privilege, not a right.

We use the spiritual principles set forth in the COSA Traditions.

We begin each meeting with the “We” version of the Serenity Prayer.

"God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

We read Tradition Two.

"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."

We read the *Guidelines for Safe Communications*, which are:

1. We respect others and ourselves in the group by using the safety guidelines.
2. We use "I" or "we" statements. We avoid blaming and shaming, button pushing, case building and the taking or sharing of another person's inventory.
3. We practice active listening, especially when in formal Board meetings.
4. We respectfully allow others to have the floor. We do not interrupt others.
5. We remain present when others are addressing the Board (i.e. giving committee reports).
6. We schedule a 5-10-minute break each hour during Business Meetings to allow people to attend to their personal needs.
7. We agree that one person at a time has the floor.
8. We wait until the speaker is finished, before raising our hands or if by phone, asking to be recognized by the Chair to speak.
9. We ask for clarity and use mirror feedback if we are uncertain about what the speaker is saying.
10. We avoid triangulating with others by practicing direct communication.
11. We say what we mean, mean what we say, and we do not say it meanly. When we say how we feel, what

we think, and what we like or dislike, we use care and concern for the relationships within our Board and committees.

12. We accept that we will have disagreements.
13. We accept that there are many right answers.
14. We speak in polite voices. We do not use yelling, intimidation, or sarcasm.
15. We agree to keep our language clean.
16. We table issues when emotions run high, for a period, beginning with one hour, or until the next ISO Board meeting.
17. We commit to return to discussion of tabled issues at a specific mutually acceptable time.
18. We own our responsibility for our own feelings and triggers. We contain ourselves.
19. We respect the limits of our job descriptions, the rotation of service roles, and any service term limits.
20. We agree that all of us are equally responsible for the relationships within the Board and service committees.
21. We agree to show up, speak our truths, and then, turn over the outcomes to our HP as expressed in our Group Conscience.

Listening in Meetings

Being Heard

Few of us have had the experience of truly being heard before we arrived in COSA. In COSA meetings and in member-to-member phone calls or conversations, often the greatest gift we can give one another is our full attention. Sharing is a way members can work through COSA issues and discover their own answers. It is reassuring and healing to be heard and believed, and to realize we are not alone.

Listening for Similarities

Within COSA's diverse fellowship we find a wide range of viewpoints and experiences. It might be tempting to think that we don't have much in common with those around us in meetings. And yet, when we listen for similarities rather than focusing on differences, we feel more connected. We can learn from the experiences of others, even if their situation is very different from ours.

Being Present for Others

Being present for others means bearing witness to their healing process. We cannot save or rescue someone from their pain or situation, but we can help make our meeting an emotional safe haven by listening without criticism or judgment. When members feel safe, they are more inclined to share things that they have never uttered aloud to anyone before. This kind of honesty is deeply healing. For those who struggle with acceptance of others, it is helpful to remember that each of us grows and heals in our Higher Power's time, and in our Higher Power's way.

Meeting Expenses and Tradition Seven

Money collected for the Seventh Tradition can be used to pay rent, buy literature, start a telephone voice-

mail, pay for online meeting services, get a post office box, create a lending library, or do public outreach.

Every meeting is responsible for its own financial sustainability. Some meetings hold “prudent reserves” for their rent and literature expenses in an amount the meeting’s Group Conscience determines is appropriate to cover such expenses for a few months. Meetings generally disburse the rest to the ISO of COSA and/or their regional Intergroups for the use of the broader fellowship. Donations to the ISO allow us to carry the message farther than any single meeting could on its own. Please see Treasurer in the Service Roles Within the Group section.

The ISO of COSA is responsible for the prudent use of its entrusted funds. Each year, at the Biannual Delegate Meeting (held immediately preceding the Annual International Convention), the ISO reports to the fellowship on financial matters and proposes a budget for the coming year. The Delegates review the proposed budget and have an opportunity to ask questions. Once any necessary modifications are made, a vote is taken for approval.

SERVICE AND DONATIONS ARE INTERTWINED.

Phone Lists

Group members use a phone list during the week for additional support. Calling each other when problems arise can be more productive than saving your concerns until the next meeting. It is recommended that newcomers make “practice” calls before trouble strikes, so they can feel safer about calling someone. For many members, between-meeting phone calls are an important source of wisdom and encouragement. A volunteer can create, update, and print sufficient phone lists for members and newcomers. Phone lists may include things like: members’ first names and last initials, phone numbers, email addresses, whether that person is looking for a sponsor or willing to sponsor someone, best times to call, sobriety date, etc. The phone list should be used for recovery purposes only.

Note: Please use care and common sense with your words when leaving a voice message. It may not be safe to make a specific reference to COSA or recovery. We must take special care to guard the anonymity of all program members.

Finding a Sponsor

A sponsor in COSA is someone who guides us as we work the Steps of the program. A sponsor shares their experience, strength, and hope (ESH) while offering encouragement and support on a regular basis.” (COSA Sponsorship Booklet, page 3.) Please see this booklet for further information regarding how to choose a sponsor or become a sponsor. A sponsor spends time with you, and listens to you. A sponsor helps you to see alternatives and find clarity. Eventually, your sponsor will know your whole story. Some people choose to call their sponsor every day; others may meet face-to-face on a regular basis.

Service Roles within the Group

Rotation of service roles within the group is healthy for everyone. Making a commitment benefits our recovery, and stepping down to allow others the same opportunity is beneficial for all. It helps us honor “principles before personalities.” No one COSA is an expert or in charge; each and every one of us is valuable

for a sober and sustainable group.

Chair / Leader / Secretary

A trusted servant (sometimes referred to as the Secretary or Chair) for a meeting is the person who accepts responsibility for starting and ending the meeting on time, keeping it on course during discussion, and sometimes presenting the topic or story. This person will repeat the safety guidelines for sharing, should a member ask, or should a situation call for this. This is not a president but rather a facilitator. Some groups choose to have a separate person present the topic. Groups generally offer much encouragement and acceptance for each person to conduct the meeting her or his own way, aiming for progress, not perfection. This position may be held for short terms, such as a month or two or three at a time, or it may be passed from member to member every week. Longer periods can lead to power issues. Passing leadership every week may be disruptive to continuity, but it also gives everyone a chance to serve without burdening any one person.

In some areas, this role is split into a Secretary position and a meeting leader position. The Secretary takes the service commitment for six months and is responsible for keeping the meeting materials in order and opening and closing the meeting room. A final responsibility for the Secretary is to assist in the transition to a new trusted servant when the commitment is finished. It is recommended that the Secretary have at least six months of consistent attendance at meetings before making this commitment. The meeting leader, in this arrangement, changes each week. The leader facilitates the meeting and refers to the meeting format for guidance. Any group member can serve as the leader. It helps to have a calendar so that members can sign up to lead a meeting ahead of time. This gives them time to think about what they would like to share, and also ensures diversity.

Treasurer

- Collects funds from the Seventh Tradition collection and literature purchases.
- Keeps an updated record of expenses and resources.
- Collects funds from the meeting to support the meeting's Delegate with travel expenses related to serving at the Annual International Convention.
- Collects funds from the meeting to support group members who serve on the Board of the International Service Organization (ISO) of COSA with travel expenses related to serving on the Board of Trustees.
- Collects funds from the meeting to provide scholarships for registration fees and/or travel expenses for meeting members who otherwise would not be able to attend the Annual International Convention.
- Disburses funds for purchases such as literature, voice-mail, and office supplies.
- Works with the Literature Coordinator to purchase literature from the International Service Organization (ISO) of COSA.
- Ensures timely payment of rent.
- Presents Treasurer's report at the Business Meeting.
- Assists in the transition to a new trusted servant when the commitment is up.
- Serves six-month term of service, or other, as determined by Group Conscience.

A Literature Reserve is held in cash (amount determined by the Group Conscience, suggested three months of meeting expenses) to reimburse the Literature Coordinator for literature purchases. Essentially, a minimum amount of cash should be available for the Literature Coordinator to be reimbursed promptly.

A Room Reserve is held in cash. This is an amount determined by the Group Conscience. An amount equal to

three months of rent payments is suggested. This is for room rental or an advance deposit for a room, in case the group needs to change venues. When funds from a reserve are used, they should be replaced with Seventh Tradition donations from the next meeting(s) until the reserve is reestablished. The Treasurer collects money and stores it, holding \$20 for making change.

The Treasurer records:

- Weekly Log of incoming funds, expenses, and disbursements
- Reserves
- Record of Delegate fund
- Record of Board member fund if applicable
- Record of scholarship fund
- Record of donating excess funds to the International Service Organization (ISO) and Intergroup (IG)
- Receipts for expenses

The Treasurer manages the Seventh Tradition collection at meetings. The Treasurer passes the envelope to collect Seventh Tradition donations at each meeting. The collection envelope has \$20 for making change. The Treasurer records Seventh Tradition donations in the Treasurer's Log and notes the number of attendees. When the Treasurer will be absent from a meeting, they ask someone from the meeting in advance to collect Seventh Tradition funds for the group in their absence. No money is left in the meeting room.

Literature Sales

The Literature Coordinator gives the Treasurer money collected from literature sales at the end of each meeting. The Literature Coordinator does not hold on to money. The Treasurer records the amount in the Treasurer's Log as "Literature Sales."

CD Deposits

The Literature Coordinator collects \$10 per CD from individuals borrowing CDs and keeps track of borrowers. The Treasurer holds the CD deposits in a separate envelope. CD deposits are not included in the Treasurer's Log because borrowers can reclaim deposits if CDs are returned within 30 days. If the borrower does not return the CD within 30 days, then the deposit is transferred to the Treasurer's Log as "CD deposits."

Expenses and Disbursing Funds

When the Literature Coordinator makes a purchase, he or she gives the Treasurer an e-mail or paper receipt. The Treasurer can then reimburse him or her and record the expense in the Treasurer's Log. If there is not enough cash, the Treasurer uses funds from the Literature Reserve.

Periodically, the group purchases supplies such as sobriety medallions. These are a nice way for group members to mark their time and progress in the program. This purchase needs to be approved at a group meeting prior to making the advance or reimbursing an individual for the purchase. The Treasurer keeps the receipts and records the expense in the Treasurer's log.

When the group needs to pay rent for a meeting room, the Treasurer is responsible for paying the rent, managing the funds to ensure that timely payment is made, and recording the expense in the log.

As funds build beyond a prudent reserve, the group periodically donates to their Intergroup and/or ISO. This is a donation by the group to the larger COSA fellowship in accordance with the Seventh Tradition of COSA to be “fully self-supporting.” The amount of the donation is determined through Group Conscience and the Treasurer records these disbursements in the Treasurer's Log.

Write personal checks and reimburse yourself with cash OR get bank checks. (A draft transmittal letter is kept in the Treasurer's notebook.)

Mail contributions (check or money order)

*to: ISO of COSA Central Office
539 W. Commerce Street, Suite 1496
Dallas, TX 75208, U.S.A.
Phone: 866-899-2672*

email: iso@cosa-recovery.org

website: www.cosa-recovery.org

Make recurring or one-time donations online at:

<https://cosa-recovery.org/service/donations>

Literature Coordinator

The Literature Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the supply of COSA-sponsored literature at the weekly meeting. The job responsibilities are:

- Arrive a few minutes before the meeting starts to display the available literature.
- Keep stock of COSA pamphlets, booklets, and audio CDs. These are purchased directly from COSA. The COSA Literature Order form is available at the back of the *Balance* newsletter and also on-line at www.cosa-recovery.org.
- In addition to the ISO of COSA's Conference-approved Literature, there are many other helpful recovery-related books available. Note: If the group decides to offer some of these, it is important to remember that COSA neither endorses nor opposes any of them. Groups are encouraged to display non-COSA literature separately from ISO of COSA Conference-approved Literature.
- Give newcomer packets to newcomers free of charge. Sell all other literature at cost.
- Collect funds for any literature purchased by group members (this may require 10-15 minutes after the end of the meeting). Give all funds collected through literature sales to the group Treasurer.
- Keep an audio CD lending log with the member's name and date of the loan. Audio CDs can be borrowed for a \$10 returnable deposit. The deposit money is given to the Treasurer to hold. This money is returned to the borrower, in full, when he or she returns the CD within a month. If the CD is out for more than a month, the deposit is relinquished to the group Treasury.
- Encourage group members to subscribe to the *Balance* newsletter (can subscribe through www.cosa-recovery.org).
- Keep a minimum of three newcomer packets.
- Keep a clear inventory regarding literature and work with the Group Conscience and the Treasurer to make literature purchases.
- If literature is purchased with the Literature Coordinator's own money, they are reimbursed by the Treasurer.
- Find a substitute to bring the literature if unable to attend a meeting.
- Assist in the transition to a new trusted servant when the commitment is up.

Medallion Coordinator

This trusted servant is responsible for maintaining and distributing medallions to group members for various lengths of time in recovery. Their responsibilities are:

- Attend meetings regularly and bring a supply of chips and medallions for presentation to newcomers and other recipients.
- Propose medallion orders to the group so that the meeting maintains a six- to twelve-month supply. This can be determined easily in meetings where the phone list includes sobriety dates.
- Order medallions from www.cosa-recovery.org or from *ISO of COSA Central Office*: 539 W. Commerce Street, Suite 1496 Dallas, TX 75208 U.S.A. *phone*: 866-899-2672. Allow several weeks for delivery.
- Submit receipts to the Treasurer for reimbursement.
- If unable to attend a meeting, find a substitute to bring the medallions.
- Assist in the transition to a new trusted servant when the commitment is up.

Group Contact

The Group Contact maintains open communication with newcomers seeking meetings and support. This can be done by phone or e-mail, or both. Some groups choose to have a dedicated email address or phone line for their group. Please note: effective e-mail addresses are checked regularly by local trusted servants and are named clearly (e.g. yourtowncosas@carrier.net is clearer for this purpose than bobnmary@carrier.net).

Newcomer Contact

This person can be the same person as the Group Contact listed above, or a separate person. It is recommended that the group member who holds this position has time in recovery and has worked the Steps, at least through Step Five.

The Newcomer Contact conducts monthly half-hour newcomer orientation meetings. These are usually held just before or after the regularly-scheduled weekly meeting. This person serves as a contact for newcomers as they get acquainted with the group. The job responsibilities are:

- Announce the upcoming newcomer meetings (at the main meeting and via group email).
- Conduct newcomer meetings that serve as a general introduction to COSA. Possible topics include: COSA literature, Steps and Traditions, ISO contact information, COSA telemeetings and online meetings, anonymity, making outreach calls, crosstalk, Seventh Tradition, sponsors, etc.
- Provide newcomer pamphlets and current copies of the phone list to newcomers.
- Receive phone calls from, and offer support and information to, newcomers.

Intergroup Representative

An Intergroup Representative is chosen by the group to attend Intergroup meetings and bring back the

materials, services, and information to their group. He or she attends the Intergroup meetings (or telemeetings) regularly. The Intergroup Representative makes announcements at the meeting, relaying information from the Intergroup as needed (i.e. a First Step being held at another meeting, an upcoming, local retreat, etc.). He or she brings questions or concerns about the health and well-being of your group (or telemeeting) to the Intergroup. He or she shares experience, strength, and hope about meetings to those who are interested in starting or have just started a new meeting (or telemeeting). Sobriety requirements and length of term vary by Group Conscience for each meeting; a six month term is recommended. Also see What is a COSA Intergroup in the General Information about COSA section.

ISO Delegate

An ISO Delegate is chosen by the Group Conscience to represent their group at the Biannual Delegate Meeting, and to serve as a conduit for information between their group and the ISO of COSA for a two-year term. There is a maximum of three consecutive terms, and no lifetime limit at this time. This maximum will provide for rotation of service that is so crucial to our program and our recovery.

Attendance at the Biannual Delegate Meeting is recommended but not required. If a group's Delegate is unable to attend the Annual International Convention, another group member may attend as an Alternate Delegate, provided they register as such. The Biannual Delegate Meeting is held immediately before the Annual International Convention during the last weekend in May. Groups may choose to raise money through a special Seventh Tradition collection to pay for some or all of their Delegate's convention-related expenses. Delegates are encouraged to offer their local voices in service to one of the ISO committees. Service commitments may be made by Delegates upon being elected to the position or at the Annual International Convention, where they have an opportunity to learn about the various committees and their functions. During the second year of a Delegate's term, they may choose to stay on the same committee or move to a different one.

The first responsibility of the Delegate or Alternate Delegate is to complete the Delegate Registration Form by the due date. Early registration is necessary in order for the Delegate to have voting privileges. Prior to the convention, Delegates are asked to review a packet of information online, including proposed new COSA literature for review. The Delegate or Alternate Delegate reviews this packet and encourages the members of the group to do so. Groups discuss the issues presented and do their best to communicate their Group Conscience on issues included in Delegate motions. The group's Delegate gathers input from the meeting's members (at a Business Meeting or in fellowship) to bring to the Biannual Delegate Meeting.

Each Delegate attends a series of Delegate Orientation Teleconferences prior to the Annual Delegate Meeting, usually in March and April. One crucial part of the Delegate's job is to participate in the Biannual Delegate Meeting, which takes place all day on Friday. This can be done either by attending in person or online.

Sometimes discussion in the Biannual Delegate Meeting reveals new information. The Delegates will need to rely on their relationship with their Higher Power and vote their individual conscience. When the group elects a Delegate, the group gives their Delegate the right of decision which makes effective leadership at the international level possible.

After the Annual Delegate Meeting, the Delegate reports back to the meeting's members (at a Business Meeting or as a speaker share at a meeting) about what happened at the Biannual Delegate Meeting. By carrying the Group Conscience to the Biannual Delegate Meeting and bringing back information to the group, Delegates provide an invaluable link between the group and the COSA fellowship through the ISO.

Throughout the year, Delegates continue to serve as a liaison between their group and ISO by forwarding Board communications to the group, relaying the group's concerns to ISO, voting for their group on ISO issues, and so forth.

Other Group Service Opportunities

A meeting may offer other service opportunities for those who would like to assist the group with the gift of service. These positions include:

Timekeeper: The Timekeeper is responsible for keeping the meeting and the shares on schedule by using a timer. This position can rotate week to week, or may be held for up to six months. **Greeter:** The Greeter arrives at the meeting a few minutes early to help set up the meeting room and to greet arriving group members, especially newcomers. This position can rotate week to week, or may be held for up to six months.

Calendar Coordinator: In meetings where the Secretary and meeting leader are two separate positions, a Calendar Coordinator may oversee the meeting leader sign-up schedule. This person is responsible for maintaining a calendar and passing it at the weekly meeting so that interested people can sign up to lead future meetings. If newcomers are present, the Calendar Coordinator explains what the purpose of the calendar is before passing it. The keeper of the calendar also announces who is scheduled to lead the next meeting and if that person is not present, the Calendar Coordinator is responsible for reminding him or her with a call or email.

Speaker Seeker: The Speaker Seeker regularly attends the meeting and maintains a weekly schedule of upcoming Guest Speakers and Readers. He or she makes announcements about upcoming First Step presentations and confirms that the First Step Speaker has a sponsor or cosponsor and has already shared their First Step with them prior to sharing the Step with the group. The Speaker Seeker sends a copy of the First Step Speaker Presentation Script to the First Step Speaker to relay to their sponsor or cosponsor (note: if the sponsor or cosponsor is unable to be present to read the script, the First Step Presenter or the Speaker may ask someone from the meeting to do this in their place). The Speaker Seeker also asks for volunteers to be of service as a Speaker or Reader during the "Announcements" portion near the end of the meeting. The sobriety requirements and length of term for this position vary by Group Conscience for each meeting; a three to six month term is recommended.

Note: There may be some overlap between the Speaker Seeker position and the Calendar Coordinator position (listed directly above it). Both positions are optional, and members are encouraged to select the arrangement that best serves the needs of their groups.

Trusted servants are important to the wellbeing of a group and its members. Their generosity is much appreciated. It is also healthy for meetings to have a regular rotation of leadership in keeping with the

Traditions, particularly Traditions Two and Seven.

Group Conscience

In the Group Conscience process, we are listening for our Higher Power's will for us. When a group is faced with a concern or a decision that will affect the meeting as a whole, or group members, a Group Conscience vote needs to be taken. Usually, this happens at a Business Meeting. Please see Business Meetings in the Sample Meeting Formats section.

Group Conscience formats are decided by the group. We are simply offering some suggestions. Please know that the group is autonomous in this, and any other, decision which does not affect COSA as a whole.

It is helpful if the upcoming Group Conscience discussion and vote are announced ahead of time. The meeting leader may do this for two to three weeks prior to the Business Meeting to give members a chance to consider the issues. Many groups notify their members by e-mail or by group announcements and invite members to add items to the agenda. Groups may wish to limit the number of items to be discussed in order to keep the meeting to a manageable length. They might schedule another meeting for those items that are not currently considered urgent by the group.

As the First Tradition reminds us, "our common welfare should come first," so the group honors the majority vote. We view the Group Conscience vote as our Higher Power expressed through the group. It is an opportunity to be gracious whether the vote goes "our way" or not.

Fellowship: The Meeting after the Meeting

For many, the time spent after the meeting with other COSAs at a coffee shop or elsewhere is an opportunity to connect with fellow COSAs, share at greater length, and get feedback. It is important to remember that this is not a COSA meeting. Occasionally a member may have to respond gracefully to unsolicited advice or even gossip. Healthy boundaries and observance of the Traditions help keep this to a minimum. In recovery, we learn to practice COSA principles in all areas of our lives and to develop healthy relationships based on mutual respect and trust.

Solicited and Unsolicited Feedback

As a general rule, COSA members do not give advice or feedback unless asked to do so. If asked directly, a COSA member is free to share personal experience, strength, and hope.

For the member seeking feedback, it is wise to approach those COSAs who have recovery you admire. It may be helpful to seek feedback from two or three different COSAs. Ultimately, your decisions are yours to make, with the love and guidance of your Higher Power.

It is helpful for the member giving feedback to keep a “fellow recoverer” attitude instead of assuming or asserting authority. This is an opportunity to practice humility and give from the heart while letting go of outcomes. The Steps and Traditions provide a useful structure to rely on, regardless of the specifics of the situation.

We are all learning to listen for our Higher Power’s guidance, to trust our own inner truth, and to find our own answers.

Feedback Groups

A feedback group is usually composed of three to five COSA members who meet weekly, either face-to-face, on the phone, or virtually, to support each other by sharing, listening, and providing feedback. It is a closed group, meaning that once the group is established, the same people meet each week, and it is not open to additional members. This fosters a sense of intimacy and continuity that is very helpful in the recovery process. Please see the Sample Meeting Formats section.

Chapter Three

Sample Meeting Formats

Elements of the Meeting Format

Each group is free to create a format that suits the needs of their particular meeting, as long as it is in keeping with the Steps and Traditions of COSA. It will become clear in looking at the formats below that there are several aspects that are common to almost all formats. These include but are not limited to: beginning and ending the meeting with prayer, members introducing themselves by first name, various program readings, an explanation of guidelines for the particular meeting (e.g. no crosstalk, amount of time for shares, etc.), Seventh Tradition collection, and announcements. Some meetings find it helpful to revise or update their format from time to time as the needs of the group change.

Group Autonomy: Freedom and Responsibility

In COSA, each group has its own unique personality, with distinctive needs, based upon its members, region, or specific circumstances. Tradition Four encourages groups to be responsive and meet these needs quickly and directly. Yet this freedom also comes with responsibility. Since the conduct of any COSA group may reflect upon the COSA fellowship as a whole, we want to represent COSA in a healthy and favorable way to those seeking recovery and to our local community. Groups addressing matters that may affect other COSA groups or the whole fellowship need to have thoughtful and thorough discussions before any action is taken. Some issues are best resolved at our Biannual Delegate Meeting and with the guidance of the trusted servants of the ISO of COSA.

Suggested Format for Mixed General Meetings

This suggested format can be adopted in full or used as a starting point for your group's own format. We have also included suggestions for some of the many different types of COSA meetings.

- Open with the Serenity Prayer.
- Read the *COSA Welcome*.
- Read the *Twelve Steps of COSA*.
- Read the *Twelve Traditions of COSA*.
- Welcome and introduce new members by first name. Point out available literature to them.
- Make general announcements related to COSA.
- Pass a calendar or have some process for individuals to sign-up as trusted servants, to be meeting facilitators, and to carry the meeting materials.
- Pass the sign-in book for phone numbers.
- Have someone lead the discussion topic for the day.
- Pass the basket or envelope for collections according to our Seventh Tradition.
- Read the Closing or another reading.
- Members hold hands in a circle and say the Serenity Prayer or I Put My Hand In Yours, or another group choice.

Many groups use the COSA Step booklets, other COSA literature, and material from the *Balance* newsletter as resources for study and discussion. COSA does not have its own daily reading book yet. While COSA cannot endorse or recommend specific outside literature selections, groups do sometimes use them.

Many groups select a certain week in each month for a particular type of presentation. Examples include the Step or Tradition for that month (note Twelve Steps/Traditions, twelve months/year).

As an alternative, the presenter may select a topic for discussion and share their experiences, insights, reflections, and so forth to get it started. The meeting then continues with members relating their own experience, strength, and hope to the topic. This is also the time for individuals to discuss their current personal needs and issues.

There is no crosstalk during the sharing. We encourage you to share using statements in the "I" form. At this time, some groups choose to count off into smaller groups for greater intimacy and more time for each person to share. Other groups stay together during the whole meeting. One example of a script for a general meeting format follows.

Mixed General Meeting Script

[This is a suggested format for a general meeting]

Welcome to [name of group]. My name is _____ and I'm your trusted servant for tonight's meeting. Before we begin, please silence any cell phones. Thank you.

Please join me in saying the Serenity Prayer:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
change, courage to change the things I can,*

*and wisdom to know the
difference.*

COSA is an anonymous Twelve-Step recovery program for people whose lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. We extend to you our support and friendship. In COSA, we find hope whether or not there is a sexually addicted person currently in our lives. With the humble act of reaching out, we begin the process of recovery.

The program is based on that of Alcoholics Anonymous, with AA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions providing the foundation of our program. COSA is not a counseling or therapy group. Meetings give us the opportunity to share with others in a safe place, without fear of judgment, while also providing a chance to listen and learn from the experience, strength, and hope of others.

Will someone please read *The Twelve Steps*?

Will someone please read *The Twelve Traditions*?

At the core of the program is the belief in and reliance on a Power greater than ourselves. When we work the COSA program, we find that our pain and struggles are eased on a daily basis. The preoccupation with the addict decreases and for some will disappear entirely. Through recovery, we move away from a life of emotional turmoil to a healthier living experience.

We encourage newcomers to attend at least six meetings in a row to get acquainted with the group and open up to the gifts of this program.

(Read the following paragraph only if newcomers are present.)

If you are attending a COSA meeting for the first time, will you please hold up your hand and tell us your first name? This is not done to embarrass you, but so we may welcome you. **(newcomers introduce themselves)** Welcome. We're glad you are here. If you are interested in literature or a phone list, please see the Literature Coordinator or the Secretary after the meeting. While you are welcome to share at any point during the meeting, the last five minutes are reserved for newcomers to share.

We will begin with a brief check-in. Starting on my left, please introduce yourself by your first name and say a few words about how you are feeling.

Thank you and welcome to each of you.

Will someone please read **(Group Conscience chooses one or more short readings from COSA literature)**?

The remainder of the meeting is for sharing. We will begin with the leader, who will share their own experience, strength, and hope. The leader may select a topic for today's meeting at the end of their share *(a list of suggested topics follows this script)*. The leader will now share for up to ten minutes.

The leader now shares for up to ten minutes.

(Then, the leader reads the following sharing guidelines)

If you want to share, please raise your hand. You are then free to share for up to [four or another number] minutes. One person speaks at a time, with no interruptions. Because a crucial part of our recovery is learning to focus on ourselves rather than on the behaviors of others, we try not to give advice. Please

refrain from cross-talking, which includes: giving unsolicited feedback, responding or referring to another person's share, making "you" or "we" statements, minimizing or judging another person's feelings or experiences, or addressing someone by name. Instead, please share in "I" terms only – for example, "I can really relate to what I'm hearing; my situation is like this..."

You will hear the timer at [three or another number] minutes. Please take the last minute to wrap up your share. If you need more time, you may ask someone to talk with you after the meeting, or use the phone list.

Finally, please honor the COSA tradition of anonymity. Everything that is said in the meetings and between members must be held in confidence. To avoid triggering others, please refrain from graphic details.

Would someone like to share?

(At [time], take a break from sharing and read the following)

Our Seventh Tradition states that we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Donations are used for meeting expenses, support of ISO, and program literature. (Please pass the basket around). Are there any:

- Secretary's announcements
- Treasurer's report
- Chips/medallions
- Literature announcements
- Calendar announcements
- Additional COSA announcements

(Return to sharing)

(Ten minutes before the meeting closes, please read the following, only if there are newcomers)

It is now [time]. Would any newcomer like to share?

(When newcomer finishes sharing, or if there are no newcomers, please read the following)

We have a few minutes for those who want to request feedback. If you would like feedback, please raise your hand and briefly state the situation you would like feedback about. Those who wish to share their experience relating to the issue can speak with you after the meeting or arrange a phone call.

If there are no newcomers or feedback requests, we have time for one more share.

(Five minutes before the meeting closes, please read the following)

Thank you for your shares. It is now time to close the meeting.

As our personal stories attest, you can find recovery through this program when you are willing to be honest about your own behavior, work the Steps, and use the tools of the program.

Remember that phone support can be a valuable resource between meetings. Call someone on the phone list when you are facing a particularly difficult situation, or if you just want to check in, get acquainted, and stay connected between meetings.

Sponsors are central to COSA recovery. A sponsor offers encouragement and support, shares their

experience, and guides you through the Twelve Steps. If you are looking for a sponsor, attend several meetings first, and listen to the sharing. Find someone you feel comfortable with, whose recovery you admire, and ask him or her if they are available and willing to sponsor you. Having a sponsor you feel safe with and trust is especially important as you begin working the Steps.

Finally, if concerns arise regarding the conduct of our COSA group or a group member, please discuss them first with your sponsor. If the issue needs further attention, it may be brought to the group Secretary, and, if necessary, discussed at our Group Conscience meeting.

While our conceptions of recovery may evolve over time, we hope that the peace, love and understanding of this program grow in you every day, one day at a time.

Will someone please read *The Promises*?

Again, what is said here must remain confidential. We ask that you please respect the anonymity of all program members. Thank you.

After a moment of silent meditation for the COSA who is still suffering, will someone please lead us in I Put My Hand In Yours?

Keep coming back – it works!

The following is a list of suggested topics for discussion. Members are free to suggest any topic that is safe and relevant to recovery in COSA. Literature readings can be good prompts for discussion, also.

Affirmations	Forgiveness	Obsession
Anger	Gratitude	Perfectionism
Blaming	Grief	Reaching Out
Boundaries	Higher Power	Self-Care
Denial	Honesty Intimacy	Sponsorship
Detachment	Letting Go	Steps
Expectations	Meditation/Prayer	Tools
Fear		Trust

Men-Only, Women-Only, LGBTQIA+, Adult Children of Sex Addicts, and other Meetings

Meetings with attendance limited to certain groups may use their own format or individualize an existing format to meet their group's needs.

COSA Parents Meetings

COSA Parents Step Study Script

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a recovering COSA. Let's

pause for a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
change, courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Welcome to the COSA Parents Step Study.

This is a closed meeting for anyone whose life has been affected by compulsive sexual behavior, and is focused on the recovery of parents. We define the word "parent" very broadly to include biological parents, step-parents, grandparents or others in service to qualifiers such as teachers, clergy and counselors.

Initially, we may have come to COSA when we realized we had developed ways of coping that were hurting us and those we love. Over time, our patterns of behavior may have reduced our effectiveness as parents, partners, workers, and friends. We came to COSA feeling confused, hopeless, and overwhelmed. Breaking through the denial and secrets that kept us locked in shame and isolation can help us begin the process of recovery. In COSA, we believe we can learn to live in a new way. We are not alone, and there is hope.

By working the Twelve Steps, we gain a new perspective on ourselves and our lives. The format of this meeting is to focus on the Step of the week. We complete all Twelve Steps each quarter. As the seasons pass, we support each other by sharing how we work the Steps and how the Steps are working in our lives.

Will someone read the Twelve Steps of COSA?

Will someone read the COSA Tradition that corresponds to the Step of the week?

COSA is an anonymous fellowship. Everything that is said in group meetings and between members must be held in confidence. By opening up to each other without fear of judgment, we help each other find the miracles of recovery.

Please introduce yourself, using your first name only. If you are new to the fellowship, or if this is your first

time at this meeting, please let us know so that we can welcome you.

Hi, I'm _____, and I'm a recovering COSA.

In COSA meetings we do not engage in crosstalk. Crosstalk means speaking directly to or about another person during the meetings. We speak only about ourselves, using "I" terms, to share our experience, strength, and hope. Listening with detached compassion and maintaining healthy boundaries during sharing provides safety for each of us to travel our own recovery journey without fear of judgment or criticism. While you are sharing, you may request feedback which is given after the meeting has ended.

We will read for three to five minutes, and then open for sharing on the topic.

Tonight's reading is on Step ___ from _____. **(Readings on the Step of the week can come from COSA-approved literature, or another source.)**

(At five minutes before the hour, close sharing time by saying....)

The time for sharing has ended. If you did not get an opportunity to share, we encourage you to talk with someone after the meeting or call for support.

According to our Seventh Tradition, we have no dues or fees but are fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. The envelope has been passed for this purpose.

Are there any announcements? **(announcements are made)** Please remember that COSA's Annual International Convention is held each Memorial Day Weekend. For more information, please visit www.cosa-recovery.org.

Will all those who care to, please join in I Put My Hand In Yours?

I put my hand in yours and together we can do what we could never do alone. No longer is there a sense of hopelessness. No longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady will power. We are all together now reaching out our hands for a power and strength greater than ours. And, as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.

Healthy Intimate Relationships (HIR) Meetings

COSA HIR Meeting Script

Welcome to the _____ Healthy Intimate Relationships Meeting. My name is _____. I'm a _____ and your Secretary for this meeting. HIR (or Healthy Intimate Relationships) is a style of blended meeting in which both COSAs and sex addicts are welcome to participate fully, with or without partners. This meeting uses the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of COSA to help us develop a greater capacity for empathy and emotional intimacy in our primary love relationships.

May we ask that you now please turn off or set your phones to silent if you haven't already done so? So that everyone can be comfortable here, we ask that you respect the confidentiality of everyone present. **Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.** Also, please do not refer to specific acting out places, people, and events as these references can be triggering to others.

Let's begin with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
change, courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

May we hear the *Welcome*, please? Thank you _____. May we hear the *Twelve Steps*, please? Thank you _____. In this meeting, we read the *Tradition* of the Month. May we hear the _____ Tradition? Thank you _____.

It's now time for introductions: My name is _____ and I'm a _____. At the first and third meetings of the month, the format is speaker-discussion. For the rest of the month, the format is question and response.

(Speaker-discussion format:)

Today's meeting format is speaker-discussion. Our speaker is _____ who will share his/her experience, strength, and hope for 15 minutes on the topic of healthy intimate relationships. I will give you a signal when you have five minutes left.

(At about _____ p.m.) It's now time for the discussion portion of the meeting. The speaker will now choose a topic. **(Discussion follows in a format determined by the group.)**

(After speaker chooses) In order to provide a safe and supportive environment for sharing, please refrain from cross-talking, which means talking to, talking about, or talking with someone else during the meeting. Instead, please share in "I" terms only. Please keep your shares to three minutes so everyone has a chance to share. If you do not wish to share, please feel free to pass. Who would like to begin?

(Question and response format:)

Today's meeting format is question and response to address questions about healthy intimate relationships in the context of recovery. Anyone can pose a question by raising a hand. Once a question has been posed,

anyone can raise a hand to volunteer a response. The Secretary will call on people to respond. Time permitting, three people will be given the opportunity to respond to each question.

Opinions expressed are strictly those of each speaker. Take what you like and leave the rest. Questions and responses are timed at three minutes each. Group Conscience asks that you be mindful of the number of times you pose a question or provide a response so that as many people as possible can have a chance to participate in the meeting.

In order to provide a safe and supportive environment for sharing, please refrain from cross-talking, which means talking to, talking about, or talking with someone else during the meeting. Instead, please share in “I” terms only. Please keep your shares to three minutes so everyone has a chance to share. Who would like to begin?

(At about ____am/pm AND as relevant.) Now is the time we set aside for people new to the program to share or ask a question if they haven’t already had the opportunity. If no newcomer wants to share or ask a question, the floor is open to anyone. **(Note: usually ten minutes or so is allotted to this portion.)**

(At about ____am/pm, about five minutes before the end of the meeting) That is all the time we have for sharing. If you didn’t get a chance to speak, please share with someone after the meeting. It is now time to practice the Seventh Tradition, which states: “each group should be self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” We do have expenses such as rent and literature.

While the envelope is being passed, may we hear from the Literature Coordinator? Are there any COSA-related announcements?

Let’s thank all who make this meeting possible:

Our Treasurer, _____;
Our Literature Coordinator, _____; Our
Group Contact, _____;
Our Intergroup Representative, _____;
Today’s Speaker, _____;
_____ for being Timekeeper;

and thank you for allowing me to be of service as your Secretary.

Our Business Meeting immediately follows this meeting on the last meeting of each month. Every member of the group is welcome to attend.

May we hear *The Promises*, please? Thank you _____.

May we hear the *Closing* please? Thank you _____.

Step Meetings with Feedback
Step Meeting with Feedback Script

Serenity Prayer

We will start with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
change, courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Meeting Introduction

Hi, my name is _____ and I am a recovering COSA. I will be leading tonight's/this afternoon's/this morning's meeting. Welcome to COSA, a fellowship and support group for people who have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. We meet together to offer each other hope, understanding, and encouragement as we share our strength and experiences.

Newcomer Welcome

If this is anyone's first meeting, we would like to welcome you. Would you like to introduce yourself to the group with your first name only? We are glad you are here, _____. We begin our meeting with a series of readings to remind ourselves of the principles that our program is based on. Then, one member of the group shares experience in working a Step or we discuss a topic related to recovery. The second hour of the meeting is spent in small groups for further discussion. During that time, two volunteers will meet with you to share more information about COSA. Thank you for coming.

Readings

Twelve Steps of COSA: Our program is based on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous but we are not affiliated with A.A. or any other organization. We are not a religious group or aligned with any sect or denomination. Would the volunteer who has the Twelve Steps of COSA please read them?

Twelve Traditions of COSA: Would the volunteer who has the Twelve Traditions please read the Tradition of the month?

Anonymity: Anonymity is a cornerstone of the Twelve Step Program so, we use only our first names during meetings. Whatever our status or position outside of this group, it is not an issue here. This is a safe place; whatever we speak of in this room is confidential and should stay within the confines of our minds. Please remember: **“Whomever you see here, whatever you hear here, let it stay here when you leave here”**

Invitation: We hope you will join in sharing the collective experience, strength, and hope that is ours when we work the Twelve Steps in COSA and trust our Higher Power to deliver the promises of recovery. During every meeting — little by little — sanity, clarity and our own truth begin to emerge. With the humble act of reaching out, we begin the process of recovery. If you are new, or struggling, remember that others of us have been there too. Keep coming back – IT WORKS!

Announcements

Do we have any announcements?

Feelings Check-In (no feedback)

If you feel comfortable doing so, please take about one minute to share how you are feeling spiritually, emotionally, physically, and sexually. Remember that we are only naming our feelings at this time, not giving an explanation for them. In addition you may state your level of sobriety, what Step you are working on, and any out-reach calls you made during the week.

Step Presentation (If no one has a Step to present, a topic is discussed at this time.)

Monitor time appropriately to allow one hour for Small Group Breakout.

Sharing our personal stories lessens our shame and isolation. We find that we learn something new each time we tell our stories or hear others share their own. And whenever we are reminded of the pain of our old way of life, our desire to recover is renewed.

_____ has volunteered to share their ___th Step with us. Please remember that this is _____'s own personal Step work and does not represent COSA as a whole.

When Step Presentation is complete: Thank you for sharing your _____ Step with us. Would you like feedback from the group? *(If feedback is requested, read guidelines below. If not, skip to Seventh Tradition)*

Feedback Guidelines

We would like to give everyone a chance to share so, we ask that you please limit your talks. Please share your own experiences, strength and hope. Please refrain from cross-talking, which means talking to, talking about, or talking with someone else during the meeting. Instead, please share with "I" terms only, for example, "I can really relate to what I'm hearing. My situation is like this..." One person speaks at a time, with no interruptions or questions.

Seventh Tradition

The Seventh Tradition says that "each group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." Our groups have no established dues. The small amount of money that is collected at each meeting is considered a contribution that helps to pay our rent, buy literature, and support our local COSA Intergroup and the ISO of COSA.

If there is a newcomer present: Can I have two volunteers to speak with our newcomer, _____?

Small Group Breakout *(last hour of meeting; limit small groups to four individuals or fewer at the discretion of the meeting leader, based on the number of members present)*

Before we break into Small Groups, I will read the Small Group Guidelines.

1. One person volunteers to be the time keeper. The group determines how much time each person has to share and the time keeper monitors the time accordingly.
2. Only one person speaks at a time. There are no questions, feedback or interruptions during this time.
3. After you share, you may inform the group that you welcome feedback regarding your situation.
4. The feedback is given by one person at a time and ends after everyone who wishes to give feedback has done so. Please, speak only when it is your turn.
5. We have found that feedback is most helpful when we use the Twelve Steps or program slogans to illustrate our points.
6. It is also most helpful if the feedback given pertains to your own personal experience. We don't try to give advice. If you feel you could suggest a helpful counselor or another Twelve Step group, please share your suggestions after the meeting.
7. Please use general terms when referring to your Higher Power, outside organizations and fellowships, counselors, etcetera.

We will now count off by twos/threes/fours and form small groups for further discussion.

Closing

It is now ___ o'clock and it's time for our meeting to close. All those who care to may join in the closing prayer. ***The meeting leader begins the closing prayer of their choice.***

Meetings for Professionals

Members in specific helping professions such as therapists or doctors may be reluctant to attend their local meetings due to anonymity concerns. These members may choose to conduct meetings for professionals only. This way, they can work on their COSA recovery while also maintaining healthy boundaries between themselves and their clients who may be working on similar issues. They may use their own format or individualize an existing format to meet their group's needs.

Telemeetings

Telemeetings are a wonderful resource for those who don't have access to face-to-face meetings, those who are traveling, and/or those who wish to add more meetings to their week. For anyone interested in starting a telemeeting, please read and follow the step-by-step *How to Start a Telemeeting Guide* which can be found by going to www.cosa-recovery.org, clicking the Meetings tab, and clicking on the Being of Service tab under Phone Meetings.

COSA Telemeetings Secretary Script

As people join

Welcome callers as you hear people joining the call. After the meeting starts, use your discretion about doing this. You may want to wait until general introductions. Ask who has the readings and make a note of this so you can call on individuals to read. The readings are available on the website: www.cosa-recovery.org.

Introduction

Welcome to the _____ (Meeting name) COSA Telemeeting. My name is _____. I'm a _____ and your Secretary. (pause). This is a _____ meeting (fill in type of meeting, i.e. open or closed) for those whose lives have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior.

Silence and Serenity Prayer

Let's begin the meeting with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

To reduce background noise I will now set the Universal Mute feature; you can also press *6 to mute or unmute your phone when you would like to speak. For those helping with the readings you will need to press *6 after the universal mute has been set.”

Welcome

_____ (name), would you please read the Welcome?

Gifts of the COSA Program

_____ (name), would you please read the *Gifts of the COSA Program*?

COSA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

_____ (name), would you please read the Twelve Steps of COSA? _____ (name), would you please read Tradition ____ (the number that corresponds to the month)?

Weekly COSA Reading

_____ (name), would you please read this week's COSA reading?

A number of COSA readings are available at www.cosa-recovery.org

Introductions

It is now time for introductions. If you are comfortable doing so, please indicate the city and/or state you are calling from. If you are a visitor, feel free to identify yourself as such. My name is _____. I'm a _____ and I'm calling from _____.

Guest Reading or Speaker

The program format is _____ (type of meeting, i.e. *COSA Step Study, COSA Tools, Question and Response, Speaker Meeting, etc.*) meeting. _____ has agreed to be our Guest Reader/Speaker tonight, he/she will read/speak on the topic of _____ for 7 minutes (***note: 25 minutes for First Step speaker and someone will need to read the First Step Introduction Script before the First Step begins***). Before we begin, I will reset the Universal Mute. Please remember to press *6 to unmute yourself when you'd like to share.

General Shares

The meeting is now open for general sharing. You can share about tonight's topic or just get current. To keep the meeting safe, we do not crosstalk which means making direct comments about another person's share or referring to another person by name, in your share. Instead, please share in "I" terms only. Sharing is optional, although encouraged, and anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions. Visitors are also welcome to share. We will reserve some time for questions and answers at the end of the meeting. Shares will be timed with a gentle reminder to wrap up at three minutes. Who would like to be our timer? Who would like to begin? (***5-6 minutes before end of meeting:***) That is all the time we have for sharing.

Seventh Tradition

Now is the time for us to honor the Seventh Tradition, which states "every group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." Since we can't pass a basket on our call, we make donations by check, recurring donations by credit card or Paypal. Go to the COSA website at www.cosa-recovery.org and click on Meetings, then Phone Meetings, and then Donations. Find out how and where to send your donation in our weekly email announcements or under the How to Make a Donation tab on our website (www.cosa-recovery.org).

Announcements

Now it is time for announcements:

- If you would like to be added to our contact list (to make program calls, find a sponsor or cosponsor, or receive announcements) please send an email to: _____(email address for the meeting).
- Who would like to be our guest speaker or reader next week?
- Our Business Meeting is the _____week of every month, immediately after the meeting. If you have something you'd like to put on the agenda, please email the secretary at _____(email address for the meeting).
- Sponsorship is an important part of working a COSA recovery program. To learn more about sponsorship or cosponsorship, talk with others after the meeting or make program calls to people on the contact list to hear their experience, strength, and hope about finding a sponsor.
- Are there any other announcements? (write down any new announcements to be added to the weekly announcements to email to the meeting's Email Coordinator).

_____ (name), would you please read The Promises?

The Promises

_____ (name), would you please read the Closing?

Closing

I Put My Hand In Yours

Please join me in saying I Put My Hand In Yours:

I put my hand in yours and together we can do what we could never do alone. No longer is there a sense of hopelessness. No longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady will power. We are all together now reaching out our hands for a power and strength greater than ours. And, as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams. Keep coming back! It works!

Fellowship

You are welcome to stay on the call for fellowship. Now is a good time to ask questions or share, if you didn't get a chance to share during the meeting. You are also welcome to leave at any time. Are there any questions? *(If someone wants to share, reinforce that they have three minutes to share)*

General notes:

- The main COSA website is: www.cosa-recovery.org
- Telemeeting phone number: _____ (your meeting's dial-in phone number)
- Telemeeting access code for members: _____
- Telemeeting access code for the Meeting Secretary _____ (Note: the Secretary must enter this code to control the universal mute and other control features on the call)

Online Meetings

Online meetings can be a great resource for COSA members who do not have a face-to-face meeting, or are unable to attend their local face-to-face meetings. Online meetings are run using Zoom. A list of Zoom-based meetings as well as readings and suggested scripts can be found at <https://cosazoomroom.org>. Any COSA member who wishes to attend a Zoom meeting for the first time should reach out to the email contact listed for that specific meeting in order to receive the meeting's password.

Feedback Groups

A feedback group is usually composed of three to five COSA members who meet weekly, either face-to-face, on the phone, or virtually, to support each other by sharing, listening, and providing feedback. It is a closed group, meaning that once the group is established, the same people meet each week, and it is not open to additional members. This fosters a sense of intimacy and continuity that is very helpful in the recovery process.

At weekly meetings, each member has time to check in and present issues he or she would like feedback about. The other members listen, reflect back what they heard, and offer empathy, support, and constructive feedback. Often, this feedback is based upon each member's own experience, or refers to a tool, slogan, or Step. For example, "When I was struggling with something similar, it helped me to remind myself daily of the first three Steps; I did this every morning when I first woke up." Sometimes, members will give feedback that gently challenges a counterproductive view or behavior and suggests a new course of action. For instance, "I hear you being very hard on yourself. It might be helpful to consider, and even write down, your strengths and what you believe you did well in that situation." Between meetings, members can also make program calls or email each other, and have mutual check-ins.

It is important that the feedback group feel safe and anonymous. For this reason, individual feedback groups establish general ground rules for communication and conduct. Some groups may require a minimum number of months of active COSA membership or the completion of a certain Step with a sponsor. Also, it is not recommended that a sponsor and sponsee be in the same feedback group.

Possible format for a feedback group meeting:

1. Opening meditation: Begin with a two-minute silent meditation.
2. Individual share: One member has six uninterrupted minutes to check in and can ask for feedback on specific issues. Other members may take notes.
3. Feedback from other members: Each member has two minutes to provide feedback to the member who shared.
4. Repeat steps two and three for each member.
5. Wrap-up: Each member takes two minutes to relate insights and checkout.
6. Closing meditation: Close with two minutes of silent meditation.

Business Meetings

It is recommended that the Business Meeting begin with the Serenity Prayer and a brief statement of the issues to be discussed. It is important that everyone clearly understands the issues before generating solutions. This keeps our Business Meetings crisp and focused. It also encourages people to keep the discussion focused on the solution as opposed to getting lost in a lengthy, time-consuming discussion of the problem. The matter is then opened for discussion and each member is free to speak regarding the topic, while observing safe communication practices. One person speaks at a time without crosstalk. Once everyone who would like to give input has had a chance to do so, a motion proposing a solution to the current issue is made by a group member. The motion may be seconded by another group member and a vote taken to resolve the issue. Otherwise, discussion and motions may continue until the members are ready to vote. This process continues until all issues on the agenda are resolved.

Group Conscience of the meeting dictates whether decisions are made by a simple majority or by another process. The ISO of COSA Board adopts its voting procedures from *Roberta's Rules of Order*. All of the group members are asked to vote green if the motion is satisfactory as it is, yellow if it is generally okay with some hesitations, and red if it is not acceptable. It is constructive and healthy for the group to hear what those who voted yellow and red have to say before making a final decision. Group Conscience of the meeting also determines how many people need to be present in a Business Meeting to have a quorum for votes.

A Secretary records all the group decisions and summarizes the opinions expressed in the minutes of the Business Meeting. The minutes are kept with the group papers. Once a decision has been made by Group Conscience, the group does its best to support this decision. A change regarding the issue ought to have another Group Conscience vote.

As the First Tradition reminds us, “our common welfare should come first,” so the group honors the majority vote. We view the Group Conscience vote as our Higher Power expressed through the group. It is an opportunity to be gracious whether the vote goes “our way” or not.

Possible format for a Business Meeting:

1. Opening: Begin with the Serenity Prayer.
2. Brief individual check-in: Members have up to 30 seconds each to introduce themselves and say a few words about how they are feeling.
3. Volunteers: Members volunteer for the roles of Summary Recorder, Action Item Recorder, and Time Keeper.
4. Preamble: The leader reads a brief preamble for the meeting. This may include mention of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, a summary of how the meeting is conducted, and a gentle reminder of safe communication procedures.

5. Introduction: The leader briefly reviews the summary from the previous Business Meeting. The group may also set or review the date for the next Business meeting. The group votes to approve these items.
6. Action Items: The group will review existing action items (if any) and set new ones as the meeting progresses.
7. Content: This portion of the meeting is devoted to discussing the current issues, making motions for solutions, and taking Group Conscience votes.
8. Group business: The group may choose to take a Seventh Tradition collection at this time, make announcements, and so forth.
9. Closing: After a few moments of silence for the COSA who is still suffering, the Business Meeting ends with the Serenity Prayer or I Put My Hand In Yours.

Chapter Four

Suggested Readings

Welcome

We welcome you to the COSA fellowship and extend to you our support and friendship.

COSA is a Twelve Step recovery program for spiritual development, no matter what our religious or philosophical beliefs. Through working the Twelve Steps, we seek to achieve serenity, one day at a time.

The only requirement for COSA membership is to have been affected by compulsive sexual behavior. When dealing with the effects of this behavior, many of us experience profound trauma, pain, powerlessness, and unmanageability. Often we turn to unhealthy behaviors of our own to manage our pain or try to control the behaviors of others.

In the long run, our efforts fail. The consequences leave us in despair: our self-esteem, personal boundaries, and values are seriously compromised. Our health and our lives are at risk, and we may feel our identity has been lost. We realize our need to reach out for help.

COSA offers hope, whether or not there is a sexually addicted person currently in our lives. In COSA, we begin to experience relief from our isolation in the safety of an anonymous gathering with others who share our stories. Everything that is said in the group meetings and between members must be held in confidence. This promotes open and honest sharing of our experience, strength, and hope, creating a trust level that many of us have never before experienced.

By working the Twelve Steps in COSA, we gain a new perspective on ourselves and our lives. The loving interchange of help among members and daily use of program tools make us ready to receive the priceless gifts of serenity and freedom.

The Gifts of the COSA Program

With the Twelve suggested Steps of recovery, and the wisdom, experience, and support of the COSA group, we discover the faith and acceptance to let go of the situations we were once desperate to control, and the courage and strength to grow in matters we once avoided or denied. Gradually, the gifts multiply. As our awareness increases, so does our personal power and self-esteem. In our relationships, we learn detachment and become more fully present. In continued recovery, we live our lives in deeper joy, serenity, and fulfillment, one day at a time.

Recovery

We have found that when we thoroughly work our COSA program, we receive the life-changing gifts of recovery. We begin our journey toward healing when we walk through the meeting doors. We grow as we listen, as we share, as we work Steps, and as we take service positions to help the fellowship thrive. The promises become ours as we open our hearts and minds to the Steps, tools, and principles.

The Promises

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

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Closing

As we close, please be mindful that we each express our own opinions here. Take what is useful and leave the rest. We share with you based on our own experience, strength, and hope. We try to focus on, and identify with, the feelings expressed, rather than the situations. What is said here needs to stay confidential; this is necessary for safety in our recovery.

If you are new to the program, finding others that understand can be a great comfort. We hope we have shown you a special welcome at our meeting. There is not one of us here who does not remember what it felt like to attend our first meeting. Through the process of reaching out, we get to know one another. Although we are all different, we can see that the program works. There is no burden too heavy to be lifted and no sorrow too great to be healed. Support is a vital part of our recovery. This disease thrives in the darkness. We *can* bring it out into the light and find hope.

Chapter Five

Maintaining an Established Meeting

Conducting a Group Inventory

Groups evolve just as recovering individuals evolve. Things that may have worked for the group in its early years may no longer work. Rather than resorting to criticism and judgment, sometimes an objective inventory and a few changes are all that is needed. We remember to place principles before personalities, and aim for progress not perfection.

It is important for meetings to stay healthy and fresh. Just as individual COSA members benefit from a regular sobriety check-in or inventory, so do meetings. Conducting a group inventory will help group members bring unresolved issues to the group for discussion and identify areas where the meeting can grow.

It is helpful to conduct a group inventory each year, or every other year, in order to stay on track. Group members approach this inventory with trust that a Higher Power, as expressed through the Group Conscience, will lead them to finding constructive solutions. It is important with a group inventory, as with a personal inventory, to identify what needs to change, but also remember to celebrate what is working.

As with all meetings and Group Conscience discussions, we practice safe communication and honor the input of each member of the group. It is helpful to remember that something that may be causing a problem for the group in the present may have, at one time, served a purpose. In other words, the way things have been done in the meeting is not necessarily “bad” and “wrong,” it’s just that the needs of the group may have changed, or we may have new information that informs our thinking and behavior.

We pay careful attention to the Twelve Traditions when conducting a group inventory. COSA individual recovery depends in large part upon the support of a healthy, Higher Power-directed group. Please see Sober and Sustainable Meetings in the Meeting Tools section of this booklet for points to consider.

Some sample group inventory questions include:

- Are our members respectful of each other?
- Are we all invited to participate in the meeting and also in the Group Conscience decisions?
- Are we a fellowship of equals? Are some looked to as COSA experts? What might be some ways to avoid imbalance or dominance in the group?
- Are newcomers given a warm welcome and an introduction to the program and COSA literature?
- Do we use phone lists? If not, do we have another way of staying connected and supporting one another between meetings?
- Do we make COSA literature available at the meeting?
- Does our group belong to an Intergroup and actively participate? If not, would we benefit from connecting with other COSA groups?
- Is our group staying connected with the ISO of COSA?

- Are our members working the Steps? If not, can we identify some ways to encourage this?
- Are our members aware of and able to apply the Traditions? If not, can we identify some ways to encourage this?
- Are members willing to be involved in service at the group level and beyond?
- Do we have a Delegate?
- Do we know and honor the principles of anonymity?
- Do we actively and respectfully listen to one another?
- Do we share experience, strength, and hope or do we engage in advice-giving or crosstalk? If the latter is true, how might we redirect our group toward healthy communication?
- Do we focus on our own recovery or do we spend a lot of time talking about the addict? What are some ways to stay solution-oriented?
- Is our group honoring the Seventh Tradition and supporting our meeting group financially? Do we also donate to the ISO of COSA which provides our materials, literature, support and convention?

When Meetings Get Too Small

If a meeting gets too small, there is the risk that it may feel stagnant. The responsibility for maintaining the meeting may rest consistently upon too few people. There are several factors that lead to a meeting getting too small. Some are easily remedied, and others may require more effort.

A meeting may lose members due to an unresolved issue in the meeting itself. In this case, a group inventory can be conducted, and the appropriate changes made. Please see Sober and Sustainable Meetings in the Meeting Tools section for help in pinpointing problem areas and solutions.

If the small size of the group is due in part to an out-of-the-way location or an awkward day or time, sometimes this can be changed. If there are simply not that many COSAs in a geographic area, members of a small group can invite COSAs from other neighboring areas to speak. This brings fresh perspectives. An active Intergroup may be crucial in connecting a small group with larger ones. It may be helpful to reinvigorate public outreach, raising awareness of what COSA is and whom it can help. Some COSA members may make fliers, post announcements in recovery publications, contact area therapists and health care providers, and so forth. Please see the Public Outreach section.

When Meetings Get Too Large

“Too large” may be a subjective term, since some COSAs enjoy big groups. Other COSAs, however, feel safer and more comfortable in smaller meetings. Large groups may be ideal for a speaker format and for diversity of membership.

One risk of a meeting getting too large is that some members may tend to “hide out” without actually participating, or they may feel disconnected or too intimidated to share. If this happens, there are several solutions. One option is to open the meeting as a large group, and then split into smaller groups to allow each member an opportunity to share if he or she would like to. Toward the end of the meeting, the group can reconvene as a larger group again. Another potential solution would be to have newcomer contacts or greeters

take the initiative, making themselves available to newcomers before or after the meeting. If a meeting is consistently large and this doesn't feel right to the members, there is always the option of starting a second group.

Supporting the Start of New Local Groups

When the circumstances are right, a new group will take hold quickly. In the beginning, however, it is helpful to have a consistent core of members who come each week, and to pool financial resources until the meeting becomes self-supporting. If there is a much larger group in the same area, this larger group may wish to gift or loan the smaller group money or supplies. They also may wish to serve as a "sponsor group" to the smaller group, if both groups are interested in this. An active Intergroup may be especially effective in lending support to a fledgling group in its area.

Chapter Six

Public Outreach

Carrying the COSA Message to Others

Tradition Five encourages us to keep our focus clearly delineated: our primary purpose is to carry the message to those who still suffer. There are many opportunities to do this. We can share the promises of recovery in face-to-face meetings, over the phone, through service work, sharing in treatment centers, and when situations present themselves in our everyday lives.

The most effective transmission of the COSA message happens when we give it, with healthy boundaries, to those who are seeking recovery. We carry the message through our experience, strength, and hope; the other person is responsible for what does with it. We hope that each will benefit to the fullest, and yet we remember that the result is in our Higher Power's hands.

There will be times in our daily lives, when the circumstances are right, and opening up to someone about COSA is the right thing to do. A COSA member does this by sharing a little bit about their own story and the solutions they found in recovery. The key, beyond this, is to allow the other person to come to their own conclusions. Please see Attraction Not Promotion in the Public Outreach section. We do our own part and let go of the rest.

We can also carry the message through outreach and in-reach. Outreach is any effort to raise the awareness of professionals who may have contact with potential COSA members. In-reach refers to raising our members' awareness of the tools and resources available in the fellowship.

Attraction not Promotion

The nice thing about healing is that true recovery speaks for itself. A COSA member who is fulfilled, well-balanced, and healthy will have plenty to share through their actions, without necessarily needing to say a word about COSA or recovery. We can transmit what we have learned through our behavior, our active and engaged listening, and our care with our words. Those who "want what we have" in terms of recovery, will be drawn to us. There is no need to go out and promote.

If the right situation presents itself, we may identify ourselves as a member of COSA, and introduce someone to the COSA program. We can share our story and leave it at that, allowing the other person to make up their own mind if COSA is for them. While it is clear there are many who would benefit from the COSA program, it is not our job to convince them of this. We do our part and let go of the results.

One important way to carry the message of recovery is to continue to work on our own recovery on a daily basis.

Outside Issues

Tradition Ten states that “COSA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the COSA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.” We in the COSA fellowship are a very diverse gathering of people. It is essential that we do not allow outside issues such as race, politics, organizations, religion, and so forth to interfere with our effectiveness in carrying the message of healing in COSA. For instance, people who are at opposite ends of the political spectrum may be crucial to each other’s recovery support network provided that they don’t allow their divergent political views to interfere. A debate about religion or philosophy could prove divisive in a meeting. Instead, we set aside all outside issues and focus on our shared goal of healing.

Endorsing Outside Enterprises

Tradition Six reminds us that “A COSA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the COSA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.” All of the COSA Traditions are in place to insure the health and longevity of the program. Tradition Six is no exception. If we as a fellowship, or our groups individually, were to affiliate with outside enterprises of any sort we would run the risk of becoming distracted from our primary purpose, which is to carry the message to the COSA who is still suffering. COSA is not the place to promote a business venture or a political candidate, or even to lobby for a cause that would seemingly benefit COSA as a whole. Instead, we keep our mission simple and our motives as focused and pure as possible.

The Fellowship’s Anonymity

We have the option to reveal ourselves any way we wish within the fellowship but at the level of press, radio, films, and TV we remain anonymous. The principle of anonymity does not in any way restrict us from letting anyone in the community know about COSA. By informing them of the availability of help through our fellowship we may be a means of extending a lifeline.

Although COSA members have personal anonymity, the COSA fellowship is not anonymous. It is important and even essential for the fellowship to use public outreach to make COSA more familiar to potential members and to professionals.

Cooperation with Helping Professionals

We can make COSA’s help and hope known to potential members by cooperating with local helping professionals, such as therapists, doctors, and nurses. We can raise awareness of all that COSA offers through emails, letters, fliers, and in-person office visits.

SAMPLE LETTER TO HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

The ISO of COSA offers a letter to professionals on the COSA website. It is available for all groups to use. This letter is updated to stay current with the evolving language and definitions used by healthcare professionals.

“An Open Letter to Healthcare Professionals” on the COSA website at:
<https://cosa-recovery.org/what-is-cosa/open-letter-to-healthcare-professionals/>

Groups may wish to close the letter with the following sample:

We have enclosed fliers for our meeting and brochures about the program. Please feel free to distribute these to your clients in need. If you have questions, please call or email us directly, or you are welcome to visit the COSA website at www.cosa-recovery.org for more information.

Thank you very much for your help in raising awareness about COSA.

Sincerely,

[your first name and group name]

It is important to uphold Tradition Six and remember that COSA does not endorse any outside enterprise (regardless of how helpful it may be). So we may make personal recommendations in private conversations, but we do not promote or distribute any information about therapists, doctors, or treatment facilities during our COSA meetings. All outside information and literature should be kept clearly separate from COSA literature.

Other Ways to Reach Out

Word of Mouth

There are many other ways to reach out to the community and raise awareness of COSA as a resource for those who are still suffering. One-to-one conversations and teaching by example are clearly two ways to spread the word.

Panel Discussions

Intergroups or local recovery facilities may sponsor panel discussions where COSA members are invited to speak about their recovery program to the general public or a specific audience.

Fishbowl Meetings

A “fishbowl” meeting is another option in which willing COSA members participate in a meeting that is observed by community members, such as health care providers, researchers, students, or potential COSA members.

John School

COSA materials, or even a COSA member, may be available to carry the message at a John School (for those arrested for solicitation).

Exhibit Tables

COSA has experienced great success participating in conferences for mental health practitioners, offering exhibit tables with COSA literature and information.

Public Service Announcements

COSA groups may post public service announcements in local publications to highlight COSA resources in their area.

Responding to the Media

In any interaction with the public, and particularly in responding to the members of the media, COSA members need to keep Tradition Four close to heart. If a COSA member speaks to the media, he or she may be seen as representing the entire fellowship, so special care needs to be taken with word choice and conduct. We want to carry the message of COSA recovery as clearly and effectively as possible.

Chapter Seven

Affirmations for Service Work: *Remember*

Remember...

**my recovery and my serenity come first;
the rest will work itself out.**

It helps to:

- Remember that I don't have to have all the answers.
- Remember that more will be revealed and I have only this day, this moment.
- Remember that I am doing the best I can with the knowledge and the tools I have right now.
- Remember that I can ask for help from my Higher Power, my recovery allies and others who nurture me.
- Remember that I am not the only one who is responsible when things go wrong (though I might FEEL this way).
- Remember that my Higher Power is guiding me.
- Remember that it is okay and healthy to have feelings, and that I can give myself the time and space I need to process them.
- Remember that my serenity is more important than rushing around trying to smooth things out.
- Remember that the Steps can help in almost any situation.
- Remember that sometimes the solution is to *take action*... and sometimes,, the best solution is to wait and see.

Chapter Eight

Registration

Group and Intergroup Registration

If you want to register your group or Intergroup with COSA's International Service Organization so that people in your area can be referred to you for attending or starting a COSA meeting, please fill out the group registration form available on the website at www.cosa-recovery.org/meetings/register-a-cosa-meeting/.

If you are an individual in an area where there are no meetings, *and you are willing to commit to starting a meeting*, this form will allow you to register as a COSA group. Then, if anyone else in your area is looking for support, he or she can be referred to you. A COSA group is any two or more people who meet on a regular basis for mutual support, using the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of COSA as a basis for their meeting.

We hope that the wisdom and serenity of this program grow within you every day, one day at a time.