

WRITING GUIDELINES for COSA LITERATURE

Literature Committee of ISO of COSA

Approved 5/21/11

Thank you for contributing your time and insights to COSA literature. We appreciate your generosity. The Literature Committee, with the assistance of the ISO Board, has created some guidelines to make the whole process run smoothly.

Submissions

Please be sure that your writing adheres to all items on the Writing Guidelines for COSA Literature list. Then, submit your writing for possible inclusion in COSA literature to cosacopy@yahoo.com. Include the topic and/or specific literature project (if any) in the subject line and your first name and phone number in the body of the e-mail. If you are working directly with a member of the Literature Committee, and are e-mailing directly to her or him, please include cosacopy@yahoo.com in the Cc line for archiving purposes.

The Process

Once we receive your submission, we will send an acknowledgment of receipt, along with a release form. Please sign and return the release form by mail immediately, using the instructions you receive. Your submission will be forwarded to members of the COSA Literature Committee.

Several factors will influence how quickly the Literature Committee may review and possibly publish your written work. Please know that the Literature Committee works on multiple projects simultaneously, so we may or may not use your submission right away. Prioritization is based on factors such as the number of submissions we are receiving, the topic your writing addresses, and the space and resources available to publish the material. All writing that cannot be used immediately is archived for potential publication later on.

The Literature Committee is responsible to the ISO Board and the COSA fellowship for ensuring that all published materials adhere to COSA's Writing Guidelines and our Traditions. So, please note that if we do include your written work in one of COSA's publications, it will first go through an editing process, to ensure clarity, correct grammar and spelling, and consistency in style. We make every effort to maintain the author's voice and content. Once the Literature Committee has identified items that may need changes, we will notify you of the proposed edits. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this process, and for sharing your experience, strength and hope through the power of the written word.

Writing Guidelines for COSA Literature: A Checklist

Contact Information

1. **Byline:** State how you want to be identified in article bylines, for example: your first name and last initial, initials only, with or without city and state, or 'Anonymous.'
2. **Other Data:** Include an e-mail address and a phone number.

Style

1. **Acronym:** The official acronym for our service organization is the ISO of COSA, and the full name is the International Service Organization of COSA. COSA is spelled in capital letters without periods. Please note that we do not currently use COSA itself as an acronym.
2. **Numbers:** Whole numbers from one to ten are written out. When referring to the Steps and Traditions, all numbers are written out and capitalized (One to Twelve). Variations, such as Step One or First Step, Tradition One or First Tradition, are acceptable.
3. **Capitalizing:** References to a Step or Tradition with the numeric name, or to the Steps or Traditions in general without the numeric name, should be capitalized, for example: "working Step One", or "observing the Traditions."
4. **Spelling consistency:** e-mail, Internet, Intergroup, okay (spelled out), catalog, co-worker.

5. **Spacing:** A single space should be used after periods.
6. **Standard Reference:** For all other issues of style, please refer to the standard reference used by the Literature Committee.

□ Content

1. **“I” Terms:** COSA literature expresses our own recovery (experience, strength and hope, or ESH). We keep the focus on ourselves by using “I”-terms only.
2. **ESH:** Experience is the story of what happened in our lives, strength comes from the application of spiritual tools and lessons learned from the COSA message, and hope is the resulting belief that continued spiritual progress is possible in the future.
3. **Compassion:** We do not shame, blame or judge one another or ourselves.
4. **Anonymity:** We maintain and protect our own anonymity and that of others.
5. **Inclusivity:** We use care with our word choice, respecting our fellowship’s diversity, and avoiding any evaluative comments regarding differences in religious belief, background, opinion, gender or sexual orientation.
6. **Spirituality:** Although we encourage spiritual lessons in our writing, we refrain from using specific religious references. We use general terms like Higher Power, God or God of our understanding. We refer to COSA document entitled “Spirituality in COSA: Mutual Respect and Diversity.”
7. **Clean Communication:** We refrain from giving advice or gossiping.
8. **Responsibility:** We aim in our writing to move away from helplessness and victim-thinking toward empowering our recovery and taking responsibility for ourselves and our decisions.
9. **Outside issues:** We do not promote, solicit or advertise outside causes or issues. No COSA literature uses the actual name of any other business, venture, organization or event, other than COSA.
10. **Other Fellowships:** We do not refer to other fellowships by name. Instead, we use general statements like “another Twelve Step fellowship.” The only exception is when we express gratitude to AA for allowing us to adapt the Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts to the needs of COSA.
11. **Outside Sources:** We refrain from referring to or quoting outside sources, i.e. anything other than COSA literature. Instead, we use general statements like, “I used a helpful codependency workbook,” or “I found great comfort in a book on faith.”
12. **Word Choice:** We balance honesty with consideration for others in our writing. We refrain from swearing, using explicit language, or describing graphic sexual content, as it may be triggering to others.

Thank you for helping to make COSA literature inspiring and vibrant!