



ComLine

Adult Children of Alcoholics
Experience, Strength & Hope

Volume 26, Number 3

March 2010

ACA Tradition Three

The only requirement for membership in ACA is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family.

“What membership requirements do we impose on those considering ACA membership? ...our Third Tradition reminds us to avoid creating a long list of requirements on ACA membership. Anyone having the desire to recover from the effects of growing up in a dysfunctional home qualifies, regardless of whether alcohol was a factor in the home. That is it. There are no screening committees, questionnaires, or waiting periods to join. You are an ACA member when you say you are...

Adult children who are codependents, addicts, debtors, overeaters, sexually compulsive, alcoholics, and gamblers are members if they have a desire to recover from the effects of a dysfunctional family. We cannot turn away anyone seeking help from the isolation and madness of the effects of a dysfunctional upbringing. With the simple requirement, ACA has a diverse fellowship with a variety of individual experiences. We are a fellowship of great width and depth...

In ACA, developing a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in a dysfunctional family can be one of our greatest tools of recovery. We need a sincere desire to sustain us. The effects of family dysfunction did not occur overnight, so recovery will not occur overnight. We will need desire and willingness to work our program consistently. Desire coupled with willingness is a strong formula for change.”

Excerpts from pages 505 and 506 of the ACA Fellowship Text

About ACA

Adult Children of Alcoholics is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition program of women and men who grew up in an environment of addictiveness (alcohol or other substances) or in otherwise dysfunctional homes. Our willingness and resiliency bring us together.

We share our experience, strength, and hope to validate our experience as well as give some hope to the new member. We take positive action in our lives today. By practicing the Twelve Steps, focusing on “The Solution”, and accepting a loving Higher Power of our own understanding, we find freedom from the past and a way to improve our lives.

For more information, please visit:
www.adultchildren.org

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ComLine is published thirteen times per year by ACA’s World Service Organization (WSO). ComLine is intended as a communication line from WSO to the fellowship of ACA around the world, and as a forum for the fellowship to share their experience, strength, and hope in recovery. The opinions expressed are those of the individual writing the article and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ACA fellowship or WSO.

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ACA WSO, Inc., PO Box 3216, Torrance, CA 90510.

The Twelve Traditions of Adult Children of Alcoholics

“While the Twelve Steps address recovery for the individual, the Twelve Traditions promote group unity and stability. The

Traditions guarantee that we will always have a meeting to attend and that the meeting will focus on recovery from the effects of family dysfunction.

The Traditions allow our groups and service structure to remain focused on the primary purpose of carrying the ACA message to the adult child who still suffers.”

From the ACA Fellowship Text, pg. 346

Communicating with WSO

WSO Board and Committee members do their best to be responsive to inquiries. Please be patient with us—we are all volunteers and aren't always able to respond as quickly as we'd like.

E-Mail is usually the fastest and best way to reach us. Various points of contact are shown in the “Who to Contact” section below.

You can also write to us at:
ACA WSO, PO Box 3216, Torrance, CA, 90510, USA.

Please do not send Express Mail. We don't pick up the mail every day, so it's a waste of money for you, plus it requires us to make a special trip to the Post Office during business hours.

Thanks,
and we look forward to hearing from you!

Who to Contact

If you have questions regarding:

- Local Meetings...
- New Meetings...
- ACA Events...
- ACA Literature...
- Fellowship Text and Workbook orders...
- Hospitals and Institutions support...
- ACA Outreach...
- or Public Information...

Please go to www.adultchildren.org, and select “Contact” from the options menu. Comments and requests submitted by this web form will be routed to the appropriate ACA WSO committee for response.

Each 2010 edition of the ComLine will feature one of the ACA Traditions:

January

Tradition One- Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.

February

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.

March

Tradition Three- The only requirement for membership in ACA is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family.

April

Tradition Four- Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other Twelve Step programs.

May

Tradition Five- Each group has but one primary purpose— to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.

June

Tradition Six- An ACA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the ACA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

July

Tradition Seven- Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

August

Tradition Eight- Adult Children of Alcoholics should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

September

Tradition Nine- ACA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

October

Tradition Ten- Adult Children of Alcoholics has no opinion on outside issues; hence the ACA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

November

Tradition Eleven- Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.

December

Tradition Twelve- Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Effects of Family Alcoholism

Natalia K.

I came to ACA more than five years ago, in September 2004. While I identified myself completely with all the items of the Laundry List, I had never attributed my problems to the fact of growing up in an alcoholic family. My parents were wealthy and respectable persons. They drank expensive wines served in crystal glasses, in the company of interesting and well-educated people, talking about politics and art. In the summer we went to the sea.

Unfortunately the family disease of alcoholism does not make a difference between crystal glasses and simple table glasses. I experienced all the outcomes of family alcoholism, including emotional and physical abuse, neglect, abandonment, fear, and despair.

Before I came to ACA, my life appeared to be okay. I was studying in Europe in a prestigious university. I had a relationship. I was travelling all over the world, and I had many friends and hobbies. But I felt explicitly that I did not have control over my life and emotions and that I was moving towards an emotional collapse. My relationships with my mother and boyfriend gave me a lot of pain. I had panic attacks and couldn't sleep. I could hardly concentrate on my work and studies. I did not see anything around me. I felt pain, fear, and despair.

When I found an ACA meeting for the first time, I felt that this was "my program". Our ACA group was new and we did not have much experience, but we had a lot of hope and courage. I started to work the Twelve Steps of ACA and to attend meetings regularly. As I listened to other adult children in meetings, I found out a lot about myself. It was incredible to see people sharing in meetings.

I knew nothing about them except their name, but at the same time I knew more about them than the most devoted friend, because I also had experienced the abuse, neglect, fear, shame, and guilt of a dysfunctional home.

I thought that my First Step was accomplished by default- because I had admitted that my life was out of control and had asked for help. But this was only a formal approach to the Step. In reality, I continued to control the environment without success, and I continued to make the same relationship mistakes in my daily life. A year and a half after coming to the program I realized that I was still absolutely out of control. I finally saw the real dimension of my compulsivity and dysfunction, and this time I lived the First Step in my heart.

Today, ACA meetings complement my life. I have a lot of things to do, but the meetings help me to live, instead of just surviving, like before. Now I communicate with my family without expectations. I try not to look for support in places where there is no support. I have fewer friends now, but they are reliable and close people who accept me as I am.

Step Ten also continues to help me not put my problems under the carpet. It is interesting now to analyze the events of my day. After working Steps Six and Seven, I became less critical towards myself and others. So even if I find a mistake in my behavior today, I do not lose emotional balance. It is impossible not to fall down in life. The ACA program and my daily inventory simply helps me get back on my feet. I no longer have fear if something goes wrong. I have a right to make mistakes. I am human.

A Desire to Recover

Anita R.

In the past I have looked at my life and wondered how I could ever overcome my past. The amount of abuse I survived, the memories buried deep down inside, and the pain – it was all too much to look at. I often even thought that about myself, "I am too much".

I have learned not to underestimate the desire to recover and the power it has had and continues to have in my life. I have looked at memories or traits I had and couldn't see the path ahead. I wondered how I would ever get through it.

I have also learned to trust my higher power and to trust that the way will be there when I am ready. I still need to remind myself of this often. In the past when something bubbled to the surface that I knew needed to be looked at, I met it with stress. This is too big! I'll never be able to feel this or look at this. It will kill me!

It has taken me many years, but now I know that my

higher power would not let it come to the surface if I did not have the ability to deal with it. That would be cruel, and my higher power is not cruel. My journey has proven this to me. I can look back over the past 10 years and see how I was gently guided. At the time, I could not see this, but in hindsight it is very clear.

In the past year, I have been working on resting in that knowledge. Now, when something new comes up for me to look at, I work at being more relaxed. I know that I will make it through to the other side.

I am learning this dance with my higher power. Something comes up from my past and I want to heal. My higher power knows I want to heal more than anything. It is a desire stronger than anything else in my life. When the desire is there, the way comes. It may not come as fast as I want it, or in the way that I want it, but it always comes.

Giving My Self a Chance

Leo D.

I write this reflection from a state park where I decided to spend the weekend. The sun dances on the surface of the lake and through the windows of the lodge –it feels peaceful, restful, completely right. Yesterday I arrived here, after making a conscious decision: I wanted to have some distance from my life in the city and seek the spiritual soul that, these days, I try to strengthen. Arriving here, not the physical place, but the mental realm in which I crave some solitude, and the company of my Higher Power, is one of the many miracles my membership in ACA has, selflessly, given me. For someone who dreaded the simple thought of being alone (except the required amount of time) this is a miracle.

About 3 years ago I arrived at an ACA room for the first time. My relationship issues had been at the forefront of my life for almost half of it. Having “failed” once again at creating that cherished dream of lustful romance, companionship and support, I was left with nothing else but the unbearable truth that deep, ancestral pain surrounded every one of my attempts at having a romantic relationship. I wanted a different life now. In desperation, I allowed myself to be guided. My former lover, an active alcoholic, had given me the gift of the 12 Steps; and even though I pushed him to seek sobriety, and he tried and tried, I was the only one left with the choice of giving a

program, any recovery program, a chance. Even though I started out in another 12-Step program, as soon as I was invited to come to an ACA meeting, I knew I belonged. There was no choir of angels, or drum roll welcoming me; instead there was more pain, anguish, tears, anxiety, and the undeniable truth that I, just like my ex-lover, had to face my demons. I have been striving to do that since then.

Did I deliberately choose to be part of ACA? No. I only made efforts to not stop coming to meetings or shy away from working a Step. I allowed myself to be guided, to feel the truth in my gut, to stay with the pain instead of shoving it into the deepest corners of my unconscious, to live life as best as I could, to learn to act instead of react, and stay with me and the lessons from the past. Still, I don't feel like this has been the result of my strong will or my intellectual mind. Because, you see, I walk with the multitude before me who, wisely and inspired, recognized life could be more than a daily struggle and who, perhaps like me, had the desire to recover from an unhealthy way of being. I even imagine that they, like me today, gave themselves a chance, through fear and panic, to learn to be alone, and enjoy this sun, the waters in the lake, and the continual presence of the Divine, loving each one of its children on Earth.

The ComLine Archive can be accessed through the ACA WSO forum:

just go to www.adultchildren.org and select “Newsletters”

ComLine editions published since 2004 are available to read or download, and new issues are posted each month.

The ComLine Needs You

Would you like to share about one of the ACA Traditions? Are you willing to share your experience, strength, or hope in ACA recovery? Want to tell the fellowship about what's going on with ACA in your region? Just send us an article!

ComLine Guidelines

Articles may be submitted for publication by mailing them to ComLine, PO Box 3216, Torrance, CA 90510, or by submitting them electronically through the web form found at www.adultchildren.org. Articles which are not used will be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Articles will be selected for publication at the discretion of the editorial staff. Articles which might violate the Twelve Steps or the Twelve Traditions of ACA will not be printed. Profanity, related euphemisms, personal attacks on others, and libelous statements will not be used. Authors will be listed with a first name and last initial only, even if it's a pseudonym.

ComLine Subscriptions

ComLine is mailed to subscribers and to 7th Tradition supporters of ACA WSO. For those who wish to receive ComLine via postal mail, we request a donation to offset our cost of printing and postage. Rates shown are in U.S. Dollars:

Inside the US:	\$16.00/ year
Canada:	\$19.25/ year (USD)
International:	\$24.00/ year (USD)

To subscribe, please send your mailing information and donation to: ACA WSO, PO Box 3216, Torrance, CA 90510.

Subscriptions can also be processed online at: www.acawso.com/wsobook/literature.php

2010 Annual Business Conference: You're All Invited!

The next Annual Business Conference of Adult Children of Alcoholics will be held April 23-25 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA. All ACA members are welcome to attend. Each registered ACA group is also encouraged to elect one voting delegate to attend the ABC. Only those delegates registered as the authorized representative of their ACA meeting or Intergroup will be eligible to vote on motions at the ABC.

Whether you will be representing your ACA group or just attending as a visitor, please register to let us know you're coming! Registration forms are available on the 2010 ABC webpage and can be submitted either electronically or by postal mail.

In February, every registered ACA meeting and Intergroup was mailed a Group Conscience Survey Ballot detailing four proposed items of business. Groups are now requested to discuss and vote on which of these items should be addressed at the 2010 ABC.

Items receiving the support of at least 2/3 of the ballots returned will be presented for discussion and action by delegates at the 2010 ABC. Group conscience ballots may be returned by mail, or may be submitted online at www.acawso.com/abc. If your meeting has not received a Group Conscience Survey ballot, it is also available for download from the ABC webpage.



Proposed business items:

- IL193 suggests that a Sponsorship Workshop be created with guidelines for ACA sponsors and sponsees.
- IL005 suggests that a Sponsorship pamphlet be created and made available for distribution.
- WI077 suggests that a Sponsorship Committee be formed for the purpose of increasing the sponsorship concept within the ACA/ACOA community.
- IL005 suggests that an ACA group inventory document be created.

Each of these items is now posted for comment on the ACA WSO forum. To share your thoughts, just go to www.adultchildren.org, select "Online Forums", log in, and scroll down to the "2010 Annual Business Conference" topic.

Remember that comments posted to the forum do not constitute a group conscience vote. To cast a meeting or Intergroup vote, please complete the online ballot at www.acawso.com/abc.



Agenda Highlights:

2010 Annual Business Conference of Adult Children of Alcoholics
April 23-25, 2010 - UUMC "Great Hall" - 2915 E 5th Street - Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA

Friday, April 23rd

- 4:30 pm Great Hall opens
- 6:00 pm Opening of the 2010 Annual Business Conference of Adult Children of Alcoholics
- 7:30 pm Presentation of the ACA World Service Organization Annual Report and ACA WSO Committee Reports

Saturday, April 24th

- 9:00 am Welcome and announcements
- 10:00 am Presentation of Group Conscience Survey ballot totals. Begin discussion and voting on approved ballot items.
- 4:00 pm "ACA Unity and Consistency": group discussion of ACA's singleness of purpose and fellowship message
- 6:00 pm Dinner together at a local restaurant

Sunday, April 25th

- 9:00 am Review of ACA World Service Organization goals for 2010
- 10:00 am In-person meeting of the Adult Children of Alcoholics WSO Board of Trustees
 * Elect 2011 ABC Committee Chair and present proposed 2011 ABC locations
- 2:00 pm Regular ACA meeting of the Tulsa "Original Workbook Group"

Visit the 2010 ABC webpage for details and more information:
www.acawso.com/abc

More Tradition Three Insight

ACA Fellowship Text, page 504

"I had a desire to learn more about ACA before I developed a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in a dysfunctional home. I had to get information in counseling and meetings to help me debrief what happened to me. Before I found ACA, I thought I was a no-good person, who needed to act right or smarter or something.

The thought of developing a desire to recover from my childhood neglect and abuse would have never occurred to me without ACA. I would have remained lost in self-condemnation. There would have been no self-acceptance, no self-forgiveness, and no desire to become my own Loving Parent and a member of ACA.

My desire to learn about ACA and my family of origin was good enough to get started. I developed a desire to recover from the effects of a dysfunctional home by attending meetings and working the Twelve Steps. I found out what happened to me with meaning and detail that I could understand. I have a desire to recover from my abandonment and shame. I am a member of ACA."

ACA WSO Committee Highlights

In the first two months of 2010, the Outreach Committee responded to nearly 700 requests for information. In January, a backlog of 533 e-mails was addressed with assistance from the WSO board, committee members, and Signal Hill office staff. In February, 139 new e-mail requests were answered. Information requests in February included:

- ACA Text/Workbook Questions - 10
- Local Meeting Information - 38
- New Meeting Information - 11
- Phone Meeting Information - 3
- Online Meeting Information - 2
- Non-English Meeting Schedule - 1
- General Meeting Information - 17
- General ACA Information - 13
- Sponsorship Information - 1
- Support for ACA families - 2
- OPPM questions - 1
- ACA Forums questions - 1
- 7th Tradition questions - 1
- General Donations Information - 1
- Literature Translation questions - 1

Phone calls to the Signal Hill office mostly involved requests for local meeting information from people without regular internet access. Some also had basic ACA questions.

Yours in Service,
Linda L., Outreach Chairperson

News from the Fellowship



From Poland (Jędrzej "Andrew" Sz.):

"Alcoholism within the family system constitutes a wide-spread problem in Poland. Even though the first ACA meetings were established in Poland as early as in 1988 – less than a year before the collapse of the communistic regime – only for the last several years has this difficult issue been gaining necessary awareness among Poles.

It is estimated that approximately 40% of citizens of Poland are suffering from ACA-related traumas. In addition to that, it is understood that there are currently 1.5 million Polish children being brought up in alcoholic families. On the basis of one study carried out in the late 90s of the last century, the author concluded that every two out of three Polish children of alcoholic families witnessed or personally experienced physical violence.

Currently, there are at least 93 active ACA meetings in 61 cities in Poland, and additionally, there are around 12 Polish speaking ACA meetings in 10 European Union countries. Polish ACA meetings can vary in size and form: small groups consisting of several people are popular, but large "open for public" discussions can also be found occasionally. The latter can involve up to 150-200 people.

I believe one of the reasons there are not many ACA groups in larger cities in Poland is because we do not yet have a Polish version of the ACA Fellowship Text. Having said that, we are doing our best to change that as soon as possible. A committee of native-Polish speakers recently formed to begin the work of translating the ACA Fellowship Text and 12 Steps Workbook."

ACA WSO Treasurer's Monthly Report

Financial Summary: January 2010

From the Treasurer:

Bank Balances:

December 31, 2009

Checking account	13,183.92
PayPal account	1,714.59
Savings Account	57,744.99

January 31, 2010

Checking account	12,372.84
Pay Pal account	2,777.96
Savings Account	58,504.81

\$40,000 of the savings account has now been designated for office lease.

\$750 each month is being set aside in the savings account to cover expenses of hosting the 2010 Annual Business Conference of ACA.

\$15,500 was transferred from Pay Pal to the checking account during the month.

Profit and Loss- January 2010

Income

7th Tradition	1,482.75
ACA Fellowship book purchase	11,224.25
Bank Interest	9.82
California Sales Tax	246.02
ComLine Subscriptions	80.00
Fellowship text index	50.00
Handbook Contribution	27.73
Literature Sales	762.05
Workbook Purchase	5,291.25
Total Income	19,173.87

Expense

Fellowship text expenses	7,790.59
Insurance	970.00
Office Expenses	5,123.68
Pay Pal Fees	601.77
Payroll Expenses	4,130.77
Web and Support	44.95
Total Expense	18,661.76

Net Income **512.11**

The ACA Fellowship is growing. That is, if the orders that we are receiving are any indication since there has been quite a lot coming into the office every day.

For the month of January we transferred \$15,500 from Pay Pal to the ACA checking account and received \$1,482.75 in 7th Tradition contributions.

If you have any questions, email me at:
PhyllisACA@cableone.net

Phyllis R
Treasurer ACA WSO

Seventh Tradition Contributions– January 2010

“The fund flow model of ACA is based on a 60/40 disbursement. After a group meets its monthly expenses and sets aside money for a prudent reserve, 60 percent of what is left over is usually sent to the local Intergroup and 40 percent is sent to WSO.

A prudent reserve usually is the amount that equals one to two month's worth of meeting expenses. Meeting expenses would include rent, utilities, and other group expenses.”

** Please note that Seventh Tradition contributions mailed to ACA WSO take approximately 3 months to appear in this ComLine report.*

CA 717 - Los Angeles, CA	80.00
MA 028 - Arlington, MA	50.00
OR 079 - Portland, OR	42.00
DC 014 - Washington, DC	200.00
CAN 099 - Toronto, Canada	111.75
AL 020 - Birmingham, AL	20.00
CAN 290 - Ontario, Canada	25.00
NJ 014 - Toms River, NJ	50.00
CT 072 - Fairfield County, CT	25.00
PA 076 - Oaks, PA	240.00
MN 096 - Burnsville, MN	16.00
OK 019 - Tulsa, OK	67.87
IG 575 - Montreal, Quebec, Canada	116.13
CA 898 - San Diego, CA	120.00
CA 942 - San Diego, CA	120.00
OR 085 - Ashland, Oregon	10.00
Anonymous	189.00
TOTAL 7th Tradition	1,482.75

You can now write or call our office with any questions.

ACA World Services — 1400 E. 33rd Street, Signal Hill, CA 90755

Tel (562) 595-7831 Fax (562) 595-7822 — Office hours: Tues - Fri 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - Sat 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 am.

ComLine

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USA**

**Return Service
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