

GUIDELINES FOR NEW MEETINGS

A. MEETINGS ARE AUTONOMOUS (TRADITION #4)

Each meeting makes its own decisions on policy in keeping with the 12 Traditions. The Traditions provide guidelines for group conduct just as the Steps provide guidelines for individual recovery.

B. LOCATE A FACILITY

A group needs a safe place to meet. Groups have found space in recovery centers, Intergroup centers, churches, parks, schools, hospitals, recovery book stores, or public service organizations at reasonable rents. Some meetings have started in someone's home, but usually found the need to move into a larger, "neutral space" within a few months.

C. GETTING STARTED

If possible, you may want to get a commitment from two or three other program people to show up for a few meetings to insure the new group's early survival. Meetings registered with the ACA WSO (registration form included in this packet) will be published in our online Meeting Directory which will help people find the meeting. Your local Intergroup may also have local meeting directories or call centers that can help new members find your meeting.

D. MEETING OFFICERS

Each meeting provides opportunities for service which keeps the meeting operational. In a healthy meeting, several people do a little of the work and the jobs get done.

E. MEETING FORMATS

This packet contains a sample format. You may also refer to the ACA Fellowship Textbook for other samples.

F. CROSSTALK

Crosstalk is interrupting, giving advice, or making comments about another person's sharing. It is also talking to someone or making distracting noise during sharing time. In ACA, we don't crosstalk. When others listen to us, just listen, our reality, our truth, our ideas, our feelings, our self-image, our beings are affirmed. When we focus only on our own recovery (keeping out of other people's), we are taking responsibility for our own lives. We do this by presenting all statements in the "I", first-person, form.

G. ANONYMITY

Anonymity allows us to share our feelings and to experience an "Identity" apart from a "label". "Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here," is a good rule to follow in creating a safe place to share our feelings and recovery without fear of gossip, retaliation, or of our anonymity being broken.

H. LITERATURE

Each meeting determines the books, tapes, flyers, or pamphlets appropriate to its literature table as each meeting is autonomous. In keeping with Tradition 6, "An ACA group never endorses, finances or lends our name to any facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose." Always keep the Newcomer in mind and select appropriate literature to provide ACA information to any new member.

I. ATTRACTION

Ours is a program of attraction, not promotion. If ACA meetings already exist in the area, you may want to distribute a flyer announcing your new meeting at them. If they don't, you may want to distribute flyers with permission at other 12-Step meetings and invite a few close friends.

J. STARTING A NEW MEETING

The program grows because someone has a need to begin a new meeting and tries to meet that need.

K. NEWCOMERS

The love and respect we offer to Newcomers is a reflection of the love and respect we are learning to offer ourselves.

L. SAFETY POLICIES

At a regular business meeting draw up your meeting plan for what to do with disruptions at meetings according to group consensus. Some ideas you may consider:

1. Keep Tradition 1: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.
2. Ask those who disrupt to leave.
3. Ask those who disrupt to take one week (2 weeks, 4 weeks...) away from this meeting.
4. Offer those who disrupt an opportunity to earn their way back into the meeting by making amends to the group and by performing a designated service.
5. Ban individuals who continue to disrupt the meeting.
6. Escort a person who is disruptive from the meeting. Escorting is done by a group of meeting members designated to do this as determined in a Business Meeting.
7. Shut down the meeting immediately and have all members depart for the common welfare.
8. Call the police if there is clear and present danger to lives, health, or property.

M. OTHER PROBLEMS

When problems occur for which this packet has no answers, check the Twelve Traditions and present the problem in a Business Meeting for a group conscience. The ACA Fellowship Textbook may offer some insight as well.

If your group is still unclear on what to do, you may contact your local Intergroup or ACA WSO for suggestions. No matter the source of where you obtain your suggestions, it is ultimately your meeting that will decide what is best to do for it's own welfare.

**MEETING OFFICERS
(SERVICE POSITIONS)
GENERAL
INFORMATION**

We suggest that service positions terms be at least six (6) months in duration. These guidelines are provided for your easy reference. Each meeting is autonomous and can modify, change or delete guidelines as the group majority sees fit.

A. Meeting Secretary –

1. Registers meeting with the Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization (ACA WSO) office.
2. Sends meeting information changes (new location, new officer, etc.) to ACA WSO and the Intergroup.
3. Opens and closes the meeting, unless this is delegated to another trusted servant.
4. Ensures meeting room is set up and cleaned up.
5. Welcomes Newcomers. Greets newcomers before meetings, talks with them after the meeting and provides New Member Packets accordingly, unless otherwise delegated.
6. Is responsible for the unity and safety of the meeting:
 - a. Hold business meetings.
 - b. Limits time of sharing by timer or other means.
 - c. Help ensure “no crosstalk” rule.
7. Announces service opportunities at least one (1) week in advance of the opening and facilitate the election process for new or established service jobs.
8. Presents the Secretary’s Report/Announcements during meeting.
9. Fills in or helps find temporary replacements for other services positions as needed.

B. Meeting Treasurer –

1. Collects and records 7th Tradition donations.
2. Pays meeting expenses (rent, coffee, etc.).
3. Reimburses members who present receipts for refreshments, literature, copies, chips, etc.
4. Keeps a “prudent reserve” (usually 1 month’s normal meeting expenses).
5. After all expenses are paid, while maintaining a prudent reserve, and as approved by a group conscience, sends the excess funds to the local ACA Intergroup and/or World Service Organization to continue their work: telephone information, meeting directories, literature, events, et cetera.
6. Sends 7th Tradition donations to the local ACA intergroup, region and World Service Organization offices (60% to Intergroup/Region & 40% to WSO).
7. Gives the financial status of the meeting to the members of the meeting as designated by the meeting format (weekly, monthly, etc.).

C. Literature Chairperson –

1. Displays literature at each meeting (sets up literature table, etc.).
2. Replenishes all depleted literature (buys books, makes copies, etc.).
3. Cleans up and puts away literature at the end of each meeting.
4. Presents all receipts to the meeting Treasurer for reimbursement.

D. ACA Intergroup Representative –

1. Attends the local Intergroup meetings.
2. Makes concerns and questions of meeting known to the Intergroup.
3. Continue to offer support to the Intergroup or communicate service needs to the meeting.
4. Distribute information collected to the meetings (events, news, literature, etc.).

E. ACA WSO Group Representative –

1. Attend monthly teleconference meetings. Teleconferences are held the 2nd Saturday of each month. Dial (712) 432-0075 code: 427266# to connect with the callers.
2. Makes concerns and questions of meeting known to ACA WSO.
3. Continue to offer support to ACA WSO or communicate service needs to the meeting.
4. Distribute information collected to the meetings (events, news, literature, etc.).

F. Other possible service opportunities –

Greeters, set up room/clean up room; Speaker Coordinator, Timer, Coffee person, Cake person, Chip person, etc.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

A. GROUP CONSCIENCE

This is the vote of the meeting fellowship on matters affecting the group. In ACA all power rests with the members of the Program, not in "trusted servants." Every member may vote. Any decision reached is to be, as much as possible, a reflection of the will of the group and a reflection of the spirit of our fellowship, not merely a majority vote. For "Substantial Unanimity" to exist, every member needs to be considered and as close as possible to a unanimous vote needs to exist. If there is substantial disagreement on the issue, more information and discussion may be needed before "substantial unanimity" can exist. The issue is then tabled until the next Business meeting and discussed again. If considerable disharmony continues, the issue may be dropped in order to maintain the unity of the meeting (Tradition 1).

B. MINORITY OPINION

Members, who have an opinion on an issue that is in the "minority," have the right to present their concern at their business meeting.

C. BUSINESS MEETING ISSUES

A Business Meeting, generally held monthly after a regular meeting or as needed, is the format used to determine meeting policy on issues such as:

1. Election of officers
2. Changing time/date/location/focus of a meeting
3. Meeting format
4. Timer/sharing issues
5. Discussing literature/book policies
6. Smoking/non-smoking issues
7. Financial reports
8. Organizing special activities
9. Having the presence of children allowed at a meeting
10. Possible violation of The Traditions by member(s) of a meeting

11. Possible violation of the safety of a meeting

12. Using the 7th Tradition to fund activities

D. ANNOUNCING THE BUSINESS MEETING

During the announcements, a member may request a "Business Meeting" to discuss an issue. The issues to be discussed may be announced briefly with no discussion in the regular meeting. A business meeting is scheduled as soon as possible by the group (after the next meeting or at some later date).

All members should have as much advance information and/or lead time necessary to prepare for a business meeting. For elections the business meeting might be announced one to four weeks in advance, for lesser issues, after the next regular meeting may be appropriate.

E. REGULAR ACA MEETINGS ARE FOR RECOVERY

It is not recommended to try to get the group conscience during the "Secretary's Announcements". Attempts to do so often result in a rush job and resentment of those who come to share, not to discuss business issues.

F. THE BUSINESS MEETING STRUCTURE

The Secretary chairs the meeting. Each issue to be voted on is announced during the Secretary's Report of the regular meeting. During the Business Meeting, the issue is discussed, possible solutions are presented, and a vote is taken. A majority of those in attendance sets the meeting policy. If someone complains about insufficient advance notification during the Announcements of a regular meeting, then the group takes a "group conscience": to determine if sufficient advance notification was given. If most feel they were given sufficient time and data, the Traditions have been served and the policy stands.

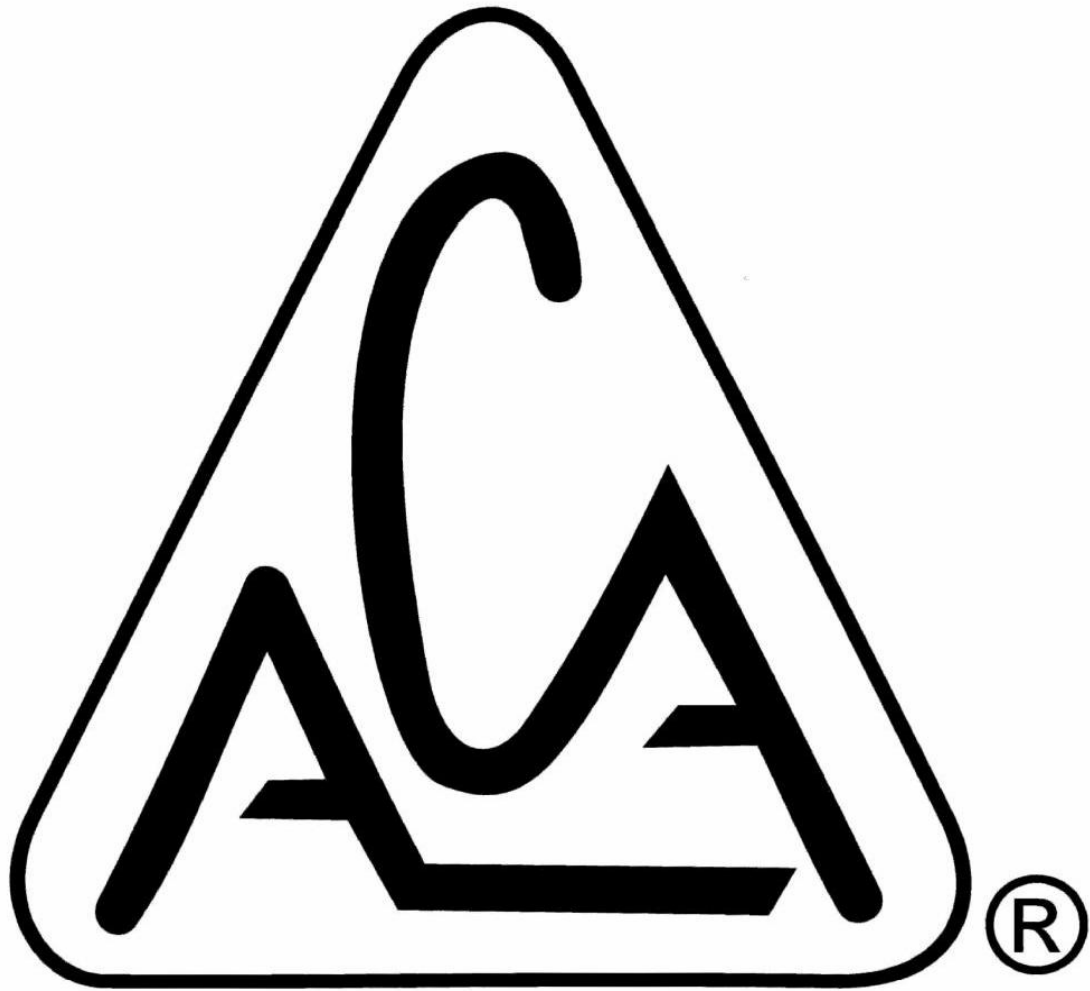
G. VOTING ON ANNUAL BUSINESS CONFERENCE (ABC) ISSUES

Each year ACA has an Annual Business Conference (ABC). Each meeting is eligible to send a delegate and one or more alternates. At this meeting the group conscience of those attending will serve to give direction to World Service Organization (WSO) for the following year. The ABC is usually held in April. Meetings which do not send a delegate may still express their concerns in writing. WSO has also in the past submitted to all registered meetings issues of concern for the group conscience of all meetings that wish to participate. This process has been referred to as a "Group Conscience Survey". WSO also may send "Ballot Items" which, if passed by majority vote of all who participate, will become ACA policy.

FORMS

ACA MEETING FORMAT, READINGS & LITERATURE

These forms are provided for use at registered ACA meetings only and may be copied as needed for use in the meetings. They may also be enlarged to poster size for posting at the meeting.



**Adult Children of Alcoholics
and Dysfunctional Families**

ACA MEETING FORMAT

Meeting lasts 1.5 hours

Hello. My name is *(your first name)*. Welcome to *(name of meeting)* meeting of Adult Children of Alcoholics.

Please be sure all cell phones are turned off during the meeting.

We meet to share the experience we had as children growing up in an alcoholic or dysfunctional home. That experience infected us then and it affects us today. By practicing the 12 Steps, by focusing on the Solution, and by accepting a Higher Power of our understanding, we find freedom from the effects of alcoholism and other family dysfunction. We identify with "The Problem" and learn to live in "The Solution", one day at a time.

Will you please join me in a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer?

I've asked _____ to read The Problem (or The Laundry List)

I've asked _____ to read The Solution.

I've asked _____ to read The 12 Steps.

You may have related to our readings even if there was no apparent alcoholism or addiction in your home. This is common because dysfunction can occur in a family without the presence of addition. We welcome you.

If you are attending an ACA meeting for the first time, will you please introduce yourself by your first name? This is not to embarrass you, but so we may welcome you and get to know you. *(Lead applause)*. We are glad you are here. Keep coming back. May we go around the room and introduce ourselves by our first name. My name is _____.

This program is not easy, but if you can handle what comes up at six consecutive meetings in a row, you will start to come out of denial. This will give you freedom from the past. Both you and your life will change.

In the beginning, many of us could not recognize or accept that some of our current attitudes or behaviors result from some experience related to alcoholism or dysfunction in our childhood. We behave as adult children, which means we bring self-doubt and fear learned in childhood to our adult interactions. By attending six meetings in a row and attending regularly thereafter, we come to know and begin to act as our True Selves.

We encourage each member to share openly about his or her experiences as time allows. This is a safe place to share your adult and childhood experiences without being judged. To allow everyone a chance to share during the meeting, we ask each person to limit their sharing to five minutes. *(Three to four if the meeting is large)*

What you hear at this meeting should remain at the meeting. We do not talk about another person's story or experiences to other people. Please respect the anonymity of those who share with us today.

We do not cross talk during the sharing time. Cross talk means interrupting, referring to, or commenting on what another person has said during the meeting. We do not cross talk because adult children come from family backgrounds where feelings and perceptions were judged as wrong or defective. We accept without comment what others say because it is true for them. We work toward taking more responsibility in our lives rather than giving advice to others.

Today's meeting is a _____ (*Step Study, Open or Topic discussion, Tradition Study, Speaker or other*). We will begin sharing now and will end at _____ (*approx. 15 minutes before the close of the meeting*).

(Leader can call on people who raise their hands, or you can go around left to right/right to left – leader or meeting choice)

We can now begin sharing.

(Group sharing ends.)

It's now time for the 7th Tradition (*pass the basket*) which states that "Every ACA group ought to be self supporting, declining outside contributions." Newcomers are encouraged to buy literature/books and need not contribute at their first meeting.

Can someone read the 12th Traditions?

Now it's time for the:

- Secretary's Announcements.
- Treasurer Report
- Intergroup Committee Report

Does anyone have any other ACA related announcements?

(If time allows) Does anyone else have a burning desire to share? **&/or** That's all the time we have for sharing. Thank you for being here and please keep coming back. If you did not have a chance to share, please speak to someone after the meeting if you need to talk.

It is time to read The Promises?

Will _____ please close the meeting with the prayer of your choice? (*stand and form a circle by holding hands*)

Keep coming back. It works.

The Laundry List

(14 Traits of an Adult Child)

These are characteristics we seem to have in common due to being brought up in an alcoholic household.

1. We became isolated and afraid of people and authority figures.
2. We became approval seekers and lost our identity in the process.
3. We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism.
4. We either become alcoholics, marry them, or both, or find another compulsive personality such as a workaholic to fulfill our sick abandonment needs.
5. We live life from the viewpoint of victims and are attracted by that weakness in our love and friendship relationships.
6. We have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility and it is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves. This enables us not to look too closely at our own faults.
7. We get guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.
8. We became addicted to excitement.
9. We confuse love and pity and tend to "love" people we can "pity" and "rescue".
10. We have stuffed our feelings from our traumatic childhoods and have lost the ability to feel or express our feelings because it hurts so much (denial).
11. We judge ourselves harshly and have a very low sense of self-esteem.
12. We are dependent personalities who are terrified of abandonment and will do anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to experience painful abandonment feelings which we received from living with sick people who were never there emotionally for us.
13. Alcoholism is a family disease; we became para-alcoholics and took on the characteristics of the disease even though we did not pick up the drink.
14. Para-alcoholics are reactors rather than actors.

Tony A., 1978

The TWELVE CONCEPTS

Concept I

The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for ACA World Services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship.

Concept II

Authority for the active maintenance of our world services is hereby delegated to the actual voice, the effective conscience for our whole fellowship.

Concept III

As a means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relationship between the ACA meetings, the ACA WSO Board of Trustees, and its staff and committees, and thus ensuring their effective leadership, it is herein suggested that we endow each of these elements of service with the traditional Right of Decision.*

**The right of decision as defined herein refers to:*

- 1) the right and responsibility of each trusted servant to speak and vote his/her own conscience, in the absence of any contrary mandate, on any issue regardless of the level of service;*
- 2) the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and the Commitment to Service will be followed by trusted servants in decision making;*
- 3) delegates to the Annual Business Conference are trusted servants and therefore equally guided by the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, 12 Concepts, and the Commitment to Service;*
- 4) standard practice that decisions made by subcommittees are subject to the authority of the service body which creates its mission and defines its parameters.*

Concept IV

Throughout our structure, we maintain at all responsible levels a traditional Right of Participation.

Concept V

Throughout our structure, a Right of Petition prevails, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of grievances will be carefully considered.

Concept VI

On behalf of ACA as a whole, our Annual Business Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Annual Business Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters would be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the World Service Organization when they act among themselves as the World Service Organization of Adult Children of Alcoholics.

Concept VII

The Annual Business Conference recognizes that the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of the Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the world service affairs of Adult Children of Alcoholics. It is further understood that our World Service Organization relies upon the force of tradition and the power of the ACA purse for its final effectiveness.

Concept VIII

The Trustees of the World Service Organization act in this primary capacity: with respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs.

Concept IX

Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are, at all levels, indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization.

Concept X

Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority – the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description, or by the Operating Policy and Procedures Manual and bylaws.

Concept XI

While the Trustees hold final responsibility for ACA's World Service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate trustees, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

Concept XII

In all its proceedings, Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization shall observe the spirit of the ACA Twelve Traditions, taking great care that the conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no WSO action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the WSO may act for the service of Adult Children of Alcoholics, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the fellowship of Adult Children of Alcoholics which it serves, the WSO itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

The PROBLEM

Many of us found that we had several characteristics in common as a result of being brought up in an alcoholic or dysfunctional household. We had come to feel isolated and uneasy with other people, especially authority figures. To protect ourselves, we became people-pleasers, even though we lost our own identities in the process. All the same we would mistake any personal criticism as a threat. We either became alcoholics (or practiced other addictive behavior) ourselves, or married them, or both. Failing that, we found other compulsive personalities, such as a workaholic, to fulfill our sick need for abandonment.

We lived life from the standpoint of victims. Having an overdeveloped sense of responsibility, we preferred to be concerned with others rather than ourselves. We got guilt feelings when we stood up for ourselves rather than giving in to others. Thus, we became reactors rather than actors, letting others take the initiative. We were dependent personalities, terrified of abandonment, willing to do almost anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to be abandoned emotionally. Yet we kept choosing insecure relationships because they matched our childhood relationship with alcoholic or dysfunctional parents.

These symptoms of the family disease of alcoholism or other dysfunction made us 'co-victims', those who take on the characteristics of the disease without necessarily ever taking a drink. We learned to keep our feelings down as children and kept them buried as adults. As a result of this conditioning, we confused love with pity, tending to love those we could rescue. Even more self-defeating, we became addicted to excitement in all our affairs, preferring constant upset to workable relationships. This is a description, not an indictment.

Adapted from The Laundry List

The SOLUTION

The solution is to become your own loving parent

As ACA becomes a safe place for you, you will find freedom to express all the hurts and fears you have kept inside and to free yourself from the shame and blame that are carryovers from the past. You will become an adult who is imprisoned no longer by childhood reactions. You will recover the child within you, learning to accept and love yourself.

The healing begins when we risk moving out of isolation. Feelings and buried memories will return. By gradually releasing the burden of unexpressed grief, we slowly move out of the past. We learn to re-parent ourselves with gentleness, humor, love and respect.

This process allows us to see our biological parents as the instruments of our existence. Our actual parent is a Higher Power whom some of us choose to call God. Although we had alcoholic or dysfunctional parents, our Higher Power gave us the Twelve Steps of Recovery.

This is the action and work that heals us: we use the Steps; we use the meetings; we use the telephone. We share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. We learn to restructure our sick thinking one day at a time. When we release our parents from responsibility for our actions today, we become free to make healthful decisions as actors, not reactors. We progress from hurting, to healing, to helping. We awaken to a sense of wholeness we never knew was possible.

By attending these meetings on a regular basis, you will come to see parental alcoholism or family dysfunction for what it is: a disease that infected you as a child and continues to affect you as an adult. You will learn to keep the focus on yourself in the here and now. You will take responsibility for your own life and supply your own parenting.

You will not do this alone. Look around you and you will see others who know how you feel. We love and encourage you no matter what. We ask you to accept us just as we accept you.

This is a spiritual program based on action coming from love. We are sure that as the love grows inside you, you will see beautiful changes in all your relationships, especially with your God, yourself, and your parents.

The ACA Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over the effects of alcoholism or other family dysfunction, 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 understand 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 understand God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others who still suffer, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The ACA Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as may be expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. 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.
4. Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other 12-Step programs.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.
6. An ACA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the ACA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every ACA Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Adult Children of Alcoholics should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. ACA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Adult Children of Alcoholics has no opinion on outside issues; hence the ACA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, T.V. and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The ACA PROMISES

1. We will discover our real identities by loving and accepting ourselves.
2. Our self-esteem will increase as we give ourselves approval on a daily basis.
3. Fear of authority figures and the need to people-please will leave us.
4. Our ability to share intimacy will grow inside us.
5. As we face our abandonment issues, we will be attracted by strengths and become more tolerant of weaknesses.
6. We will enjoy feeling stable, peaceful, and financially secure.
7. We will learn how to play and have fun in our lives.
8. We will choose to love people who can love and be responsible for themselves.
9. Healthy boundaries and limits will become easier for us to set.
10. Fears of failures and success will leave us, as we intuitively make healthier choices.
11. With help from our ACA support group, we will slowly release our dysfunctional behaviors.
12. Gradually, with our Higher Power's help, we learn to expect the best and get it.