

## **Welcome to Penn State Online ACA**

Hello ACA friends, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I'm an adult child.

Welcome to the Penn State Online Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families meeting. Let's take a moment to each introduce ourselves by first name and where we're calling in from.

Welcome everybody. For newcomers, it is recommended to attend 5–6 meetings before making a decision to continue with ACA.

The only requirement for membership in ACA is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or dysfunctional family. Please keep your microphone muted except when you are sharing or joining the group in prayer.

Per the Big Red Book and Tony A, one of the founders of ACA, "An adult child is someone who responds to adult situations with self-doubt, self-blame, or a sense of being wrong or inferior – all learned from stages of childhood. Without help, we unknowingly operate with ineffective thoughts and judgments as adults. The regression can be subtle, but it is there sabotaging our decisions and relationships." P. vii, Big Red Book.

We meet to share the experience we had as children growing up in an alcoholic or dysfunctional home. 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.

**Please join me in a moment of silence followed by the Set Aside Prayer.**

Higher Power, Let me set aside, everything I think I know about You, and me, and this program, and these steps, for an Open Mind, and a new experience, with You, and me, and this program, and these steps.

# THE PROBLEM

*Ask for volunteer*

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

*Ask for volunteer*

The solution is to become your own loving parent. It takes a while to recognize that we treat ourselves, our inner children, and others, the way our parents treated us. We have become too comfortable with shaming ourselves, blaming ourselves, and harming ourselves. "Even the adult child who seems to blame others without mercy, secretly believes he or she has little value as a person." (BRB p299) But admitting that we have internalized our parents' behavior is only "discovery". Recovery is the focus.

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 patience, gentleness, humor, love and respect.

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 how to love and heal our inner children. We learn to keep the focus on ourselves in the here and now. We take responsibility for our own lives and supply our own parenting. We encourage adult children to be patient and gentle with themselves as they travel inward. We work together to make this meeting a safe place for all of us to share our childhood experiences and their effects on us today.

We are not alone. In ACA the most hurt people on the planet are welcomed with open arms, hearts, and ears. Once we have found ACA, it is suggested that we find a fellow traveler to journey with. In these spiritual teams, we venture backward and forward with action coming from love, understanding, and patience.

Look around you and you will see others who know how you feel. We will love and encourage you no matter what. 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 Higher Power, yourself, and your parents.

## ACA'S 12 STEPS

*Reader's choice of Tony A's or ACA's 12 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 that 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.

## TONY A'S 12 STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over the effects of living with alcoholism and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could bring us clarity.
3. We made a decision to practice self-love and to trust in a Higher Power of our understanding.
4. We made a searching and blameless inventory of our parents because, in essence, we had become them.
5. We admitted to our Higher Power, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our childhood abandonment.
6. We were entirely ready to begin the healing process with the aid of our Higher Power.
7. We humbly asked our Higher Power to help us with our healing process.
8. We became willing to open ourselves to receive the unconditional love of our Higher Power.
9. We became willing to accept our own unconditional love by understanding that our Higher Power loves us unconditionally.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and to love and approve of ourselves.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power, praying only for knowledge of its will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. We have had a spiritual awakening as a result of taking these steps, and we continue to love ourselves and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## **SAFETY**

*Host reads*

It is this group's conscience to provide a safe, respectful, and inclusive meeting place for all attendees, which we view as critical to achieving our primary purpose: helping adult children to achieve emotional sobriety. In order to provide a welcoming environment for everyone, we ask that each person here refrains from any language or behavior that is intended to harm, disrupt, or threaten the well-being of the group or any of our members.

## **ON CROSS TALK and SHARING**

*Ask for volunteer*

In a moment we will read from approved ACA literature. There will be time for members to voluntarily share their thoughts and experiences. During this time, we do not cross talk. Cross talk includes interrupting or commenting on what another person says, and any words of encouragement or praise, advice or opinions, or judgment, whether positive or negative. We do not say we resonated with another person's share; we do not refer to another person's share in any way.

We do not cross talk because adult children come from family backgrounds where "our integrity was badly mangled" and our feelings and perceptions were not allowed at all, or they were denied, judged, dismissed, and invalidated. "Physical, psychological, social, and spiritual boundaries were rarely if ever respected in our homes. We learn about respecting boundaries at our first meeting when we observe the no cross talk rule." (Daily Affirmations p268)

At this meeting we are free to share without having to think about how others are reacting to what we say, and so we can work on focusing inside ourselves to find and speak our own truths.

We do not mention another person's share during our share. We give support by listening and then thanking another person for their share. You are welcome to share after you read or feel free to "pass" when it is your turn. In this meeting we keep to three to four minute self-timed shares. We will attempt to close by 8:15pm each meeting, depending on the number of members on the call.

This brings us to the closing part of the meeting.

## THE 12 TRADITIONS

We will now read one of the Twelve Traditions of ACA corresponding to the month.

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 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 PROMISES

Please remember you are welcome to pass if you want to simply listen.

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 failure 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.



## **MEETING CLOSE**

*Host reads*

Are there any ACA related announcements?

Newcomers often wonder how they can reach out to fellow ACAs. If anyone is open to sharing contact information (email or phone), feel free to do that through the chat.

## **7th TRADITION - SELF-SUSTAINING MEETING**

*Host reads*

To cover costs of Zoom licensing, ACA members who attend Penn State Online regularly (weekly or more) please donate \$1/week (or \$4/month) via

**Paypal.me/brozena using option “Family and Friends”**

...otherwise PayPal collects a fee per donation.

## **Let's close the meeting with the ACA Serenity Prayer**

Higher Power, grant me the serenity

To accept the people I cannot change,

The courage to change the one I can

And the wisdom to know that one is me.