



The Preamble

Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition program of men and women who grew up in alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional homes. The ACA program was founded on the belief that family dysfunction is a disease that infected us as children and affects us as adults. Our membership also includes adults from homes where alcohol or drugs were not present; however, abuse, neglect or unhealthy behavior was.

We meet to share our experience and recovery in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We discover how alcoholism and other family dysfunction affected us in the past and how it influences us in the present. We begin to see the unhealthy elements of our childhood. By practicing the Twelve steps, focusing on the ACA Solution, and accepting a loving Higher Power of our own understanding, we find freedom.

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.**

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 behaviors 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 keep choosing insecure relationships because they matched our childhood relationships 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 feeling down as children and keep 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.

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 free yourself from the shame and blame that are carry-overs 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 love and accept 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 reparent ourselves with gentleness, humor, love, and respect.

This process allows us to see our own 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 learn to 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 that you 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 yourself, your Higher Power, and your parents.

The ACA 12 Steps	The Tony A 12 Steps (published in 1991)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 the knowledge of God's will for use 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. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

The ACA 12 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 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 cooperated 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, poverty, 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, out never to 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 anonymity at the level of press, radio, T.V., films and other public media.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The 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 weakness.
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. Health 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.

ACA Bibliography

Text (Frequently) Read at Meetings

ACA Oregon website <https://acaoregon.com/> (local meetings, events, and more)

ACA World Service Organization website www.adultchildren.org (order books and additional resources)

Books (can be purchased from meeting Literature person or online)

Adult Children of Alcoholics and other Dysfunctional Families. (ACA Big Red Book) Order at <http://www.adultchildren.org/>

12 Steps of Adult Children Steps Workbook. (The Yellow Workbook) Order at <http://www.adultchildren.org/>

The Laundry List Workbook Order at <http://www.adultchildren.org/>

Daily Affirmations “Strengthening My Recovery” Meditations for Adult Children of Alcoholics <http://www.adultchildren.org/>