

BEING A SUPPORTER

An ACA supporter shares their spiritual program of recovery with a sharing person and provides feedback to help build their foundation for recovery through the ACA program work. A supporter understands the effects of being raised in a dysfunctional family. A supporter also understands the importance of resolving stored grief and reparenting oneself through the ACA Steps. ACA supporters are not therapists or counselors, but they can offer needed support to a sharing person revisiting neglect, abuse, trauma, and other overwhelming experiences of childhood.

WHAT AN ACA SUPPORTER DOES:

- Shares their experience, strength, and hope in recovery.
- Helps a sharing person understand the effects of family alcoholism and dysfunction, emotional intoxication, and the Laundry List traits of an Adult Child.
- Encourages active step work, meeting attendance, reparenting, meditation, and seeking a higher power.
- Encourages a sharing person to break old family rules which discouraged talking, trusting, feeling, and remembering.
- Helps a sharing person identify, express, and understand feelings.
- Gives an example of their own active recovery.



BEING A SHARING PERSON

A sharing person actively participates in their own recovery and takes full responsibility for their program and behavior.

The supporter asks the sharing person to be honest with themselves and others. Sharing people will make regular contact with their supporter and will aim to follow through on commitments. A supporting person may watch for willingness from the sharing person and will pay attention to whether the sharing person completes step or other work and attends meetings regularly.

AFFIRMATIONS AND COMMITMENTS

For the Sharing Person:

- I can ask for help without feeling like I am a burden.
- I can be equal in a relationship with another person.
- I am willing to do whatever it takes to recover.
- I am capable of selecting a healthy supporting person.
- I will work my ACA program one step at a time.
- I will celebrate the milestones in my recovery.

For the Supporter:

- I have something to offer another person.
- I can help someone with what I have learned in recovery.
- I can help another ACA regardless of the type of abuse we experienced as children.
- I can share my experience instead of giving advice.
- I will avoid fixing or rescuing others.
- I will maintain healthy boundaries.

For more information about the Connections book visit:
www.adultchildren.org/literature/connections

Local information:

Connections



**A guide to support in
recovery for adult children of
alcoholics/dysfunctional families**



**Adult Children of Alcoholics®/
Dysfunctional Families**

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As the ACA Solution states, “The healing begins when we risk moving out of isolation.” It adds, “Look around you and you will see others who know how you feel. We will love and encourage you no matter what.” These statements show the importance of reaching out for support from other ACAs. Support includes sponsors and fellow travelers. It also includes many other ways to get or give support. The purpose of this trifold is to offer some of the many ways we can come out of isolation and grow in recovery.

DEFINING SUPPORT IN ACA RECOVERY

Chapter 11 of Adult Children of Alcoholics recommends the “fellow traveler” method of sponsorship. This has led to confusion. Fellow Travelers, as used here, refer to two people who share back and forth equally, taking turns to listen intently and offer support. They are often of similar experience in program, but need not be. In the sponsor/sponsee relationship, the sponsor listens intently to the sponsee share and offers support but does not expect support back from the sponsee. Typically, the sponsor will have their own sponsor for support.

- We use an umbrella term, ‘support’, to help us see the commonalities in all the possible support relationships we can have in ACA recovery.
- The term “support” is not designed to substitute for any other term members use for support relationships. It is designed to show that in all support relationships, one person shares their experience openly and honestly, learning to trust the other. The other person listens intently with love and uses the voice of the inner loving parent in responding to the person sharing.
- In any support relationship, the goal is the same: honest communication and loving feedback resulting in growth in recovery for both people.
- We use the word “sharing person” for those who share their recovery experience with a supporting person in any support relationship. This includes sponsorship, fellow travelers, group work, recovery partners etc.
- The word “supporting person” includes anyone who listens intently and gently, and lovingly helps another person in recovery, holding space without judgment.

- The term “supporting person” includes sponsors, fellow travelers, recovery partners, sharing partners, recovery coaches and work group members.
- In your support relationship, we recommend you use the term that works for you.
- We remember that each person in ACA is worthy of equal respect, whether supporting, being supported, or mutually supporting each other.

THE RANGE OF WAYS TO FIND SUPPORT

We understand that many ACAs choose not to work with a sponsor, sometimes because of fear of authority figures and sometimes because of a lack of people willing to be sponsors. But all ACAs can find support for their recovery program. We name some of the ways to find support in the book, Connections. ACA offers many opportunities to come out of isolation, share openly and honestly and receive support:

- Meetings
- Small Group Work
- Recovery Friends, Recovery Network
- Service Roles and Service Support
- Working One-on-One with someone with similar experience (often called a Fellow Traveler)
- Working One-on-One with someone with more experience (often called a Sponsor)
- Working Short Term with a Mentor
- Connections contains a section on how to approach someone to be a supporter.



Whether we choose to work with a sponsor, a fellow traveler, in group work, or in other recovery relationships, we look for similar qualities in a supporter. We look for someone who focuses on the ACA program, attends meetings regularly, and follows ACA principles and the Traditions.

Typically, we try to find a supporter to whom we are unlikely to become romantically or sexually attracted.

We may ask for a potential supporter’s telephone number and then call to talk about ACA. If we find we are comfortable talking with that person, we ask if they are available for support. We also discuss expectations of the relationship. Connections gives helpful advice on questions to ask to agree on the nature of the support relationship.

If we are asked to be a supporter, we try to say “yes.” Being an ACA supporter, even if it simply means taking program calls from time to time, is one of the key actions that helps an ACA member maintain emotional sobriety while continuing to grow spiritually. By supporting others, we learn more about ourselves and the sequence of recovery. We learn that if we are working the ACA program and attending ACA meetings regularly, we have something to offer another person. We can pass on the gift of recovery that was given to us.

