



ComLINE

Volume 30 Issue 3 Fourth Quarter

Experience, Strength and Hope

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The Birth of ACA

by Omer G.



The founding of Adult Children of Alcoholics 37 years ago was subtle but also dramatic. We mark the official founding of ACA/ACoA in the spring of 1978. That's when cofounder Tony A. penned the 14 traits of an Adult Child, which is also known as the *Laundry List*.

With 260 words, the *Laundry List* is the foundational document of our fellowship. The writing of the traits set us on a course that involved an amicable separation from Al-Anon to become an autonomous Twelve Step fellowship with its own meetings, literature, service structure and primary purpose.

The events, leading up to the writing of the *Laundry List*, began about 1976. That's when a group of Alateens in New York started holding a special-focus meeting. As Tony recalled in a 1992 interview with ACA WSO, the Alateens were mostly 20-year-old members, who would soon be moving up to Al-Anon; however, they did not want to move up to a fellowship that was primarily focused on spousal issues and spousal drinking.

At these early ACA-link meetings, the Alateens wanted mostly young people in attendance. However, after awhile, about 1977, they invited Tony to the meeting after hearing his AA story, which included his alcoholic upbringing. Although he was 50 years old, the age difference did not matter because of the language of identification.

Tony described these early meetings as occasionally chaotic and sometimes volatile. During the meetings, the Alateens angrily shared about abuse, neglect, and abandonment. They were angry not only at the alcoholic but also the non-drinking parent as well.

In his interview with ACA WSO, Tony recalled how these early meetings began to flounder due to a lack of focus. Consequently, the Alateens confronted Tony to provide structure and focus for the meeting. On the morning after being confronted, a Thursday, Tony wrote the *Laundry List*.

"It was as if Someone Else was writing the *List* through me," Tony said.

Soon after the *Laundry List* was written, Tony recalled how representatives from Al-Anon showed up and informed the group that they could not read the *Laundry List* because it was not conference approved literature. The group members voted to not give up the list and then to strike out on their own. This was the 1978 group conscience that, when coupled with the *Laundry List*, gave birth to today's ACA.

About the ACA ComLINE

The ComLINE is published quarterly by Adult Children of Alcoholics® World Service Organization, with one free report of the Annual Business Conference (ABC). The 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 recovery. The ComLINE slogan is "Experience, Strength, and Hope". The opinions expressed are those of the individuals writing the articles and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ACA fellowship or WSO.

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Happy 37th Birthday, ACA!

Ed. Note: Tony A. died in 2004 in Florida. He was 77 years old.

Beginning a Speakers Bureau

by John M.

As the Speakers Meeting Coordinator for my Intergroup, I e-mailed a flyer to other Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) to inform them about an up-coming speaker at a local meeting. One ACA friend shared her experience, strength, and hope about how her Intergroup developed their ACA Speakers Bureau. Since my term limit is over for this commitment, I thought I'd pass on the following information:

Our Intergroup Office Chair received many calls for ACA members to speak to schools, Hospital and Institution (H&I) panels, and to other ACA meetings. The difficulty in locating speakers was reported to our Intergroup, so we created an ACA Speakers Bureau.

At an ACA Speakers Bureau orientation meeting, ACA members reviewed Traditions guidelines and collected contact information, topics, forums, topic preferences, and speaker availability. We also noted travel distances to schools, hospitals, jails, prisons, and other ACA meetings. Our Speakers Bureau made ap-

pointments to listen to speaker stories in order to match speakers with specific requests.

Our Speakers Bureau invited ACA old timers and newcomers to speak at our ACA meetings for members to experience what audiences might hear. ACA members attended the special speaker event at schools/colleges, hospitals, institutions, and other ACA meetings in order to get a feel for the audiences. Special event requests often wanted speakers to take five or ten minutes to introduce a topic, to tell them about the ACA program, or to just briefly tell their stories in order for the audiences to hear new perspectives.

Each month our ACA Speaker Bureau was invited to send a different ACA speaker to a nearby jail/rehabilitation center to be represented on a Twelve Step program panel consisting of one member from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Codependents Anonymous (CA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), and Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) to share their stories with inmates.

When the ACA Speaker

Bureau had more speakers than invitations, we developed eight-hour marathons with speakers addressing themed topics on the inner child, life skills, sponsorship, relationships, money, and the ACA Twelve Steps. Attendees donated \$10 at the door. Money and relationships were hot topics! The marathon was used as an Intergroup fundraiser for projects to help carry the message. At our Annual ACA Retreat/Convention, we supplied speakers who shared their stories of experience, strength and hope.

Forming the Speakers Bureau has been an incredible experience. Perhaps your group, intergroup, region or state could form a Speakers Bureau, too. State ACA Speaker Bureaus could connect with one another, opening up endless opportunities to share positive growth with others in this powerful program of recovery.

Please feel free to send me (c/o litstaff@adultchildren.org) your experiences in speaking on behalf of ACA at meetings, community venues, or in hospitals & institutions. Thank you! J. M. 🍷

ACA Speaker Recordings

Below is a list of a few links to recordings of ACA speakers for you to enjoy listening to their experience, strength and hope.

- ACA Convention 2005 http://www.acaconvention.org/html/2005_speakers.htm
- ACA Convention 2006 http://www.acaconvention.org/html/2006_speakers.htm
- ACA Convention 2007 http://www.acaconvention.org/html/2007_speakers.htm
- ACA Convention 2008 http://www.acaconvention.org/html/2008_speakers.htm
- ACA Convention 2009 http://www.acaconvention.org/html/2009_speakers.htm
- Arizona Intergroup <http://aca-arizona.org/aca-speakers/>
- ACA Oregon Speakers <http://acaoregon.com/2008-aca-recordings/>

The current version of this list is available at http://acaintergroups.org/ACARegionsWiki/index.php?title=Speaker_Recordings

The Languages of Our Childhood



Did you know that WSO offers nearly 100 pieces of free literature in more than a dozen languages?

updated to include “The Flip Side of The Laundry List”, “The Other Laundry List”, and “The Flip Side of The Other Laundry List”. These lists are the focal point of *The Laundry Lists Workbook*, which will be available for purchase in October.

Did you know that adult children around the world are continually adding to this by translating literature daily? And that much of this is available on our website at no charge? Here’s how to find it:

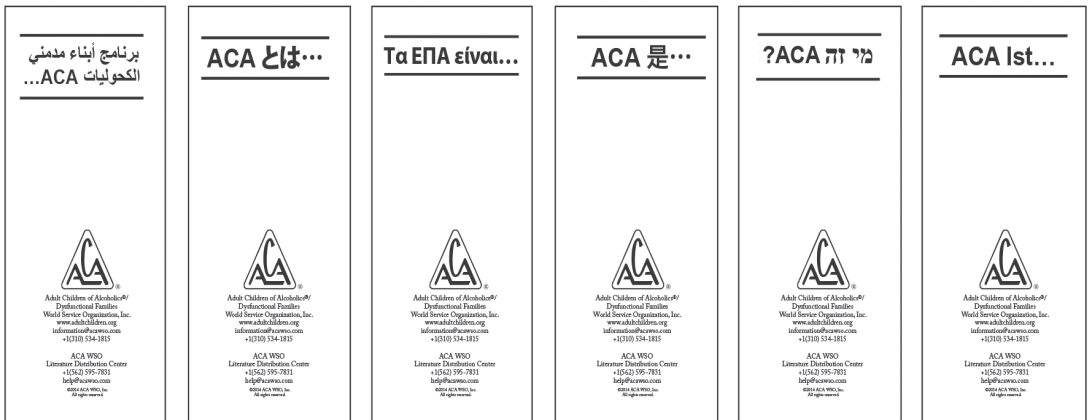
You can also click on the “Select Language” link to see how WSO is committed to translating the ACA literature into the languages of our childhood. Our Multi-Lingual ACA Literature page links to dozens of PDF documents in both US Letter and A4 formats to download and print, with new pieces added regularly.

Go to adultchildren.org, and click on **LITERATURE** at the top of the page.

The FAQ’s have been translated in various languages, they can be found at <http://www.adultchildren.org/faq>. You can then click on “Select Language” and pick a language that is **bolded**.

Here you will find a treasure trove of valuable information, including “ACA Is...” as a web page, and a “Sample Meeting Format” to download and edit for your own meetings. “The Laundry List” link goes to a page that has been recently

Translated books for purchase can be found at shop.adultchildren.org/. Look for even more to be added soon! 🌟



The Editor has heard this: “Most ‘inner children’ need to read in the language of their own childhood to really understand information.”

From Our Treasurer

In keeping with the WSO Board’s intent of maintaining transparency in all financial matters, monthly reports are posted on the website’s Repository at <http://www.repository.adultchildren.org/wso-treasurer>.

Seventh Tradition contributions are also shown in the “Donations Received” sub-tab.

If you have any questions I can answer in future issues of the *ComLine*, please contact me.

Yours in Service,
 Mary Jo L.
 ACA WSO Treasurer
treasurer@adultchildren.org
<http://adultchildren.org/>

Best Practices

Ready Set GO!!

by The West Great Lakes ACA Intergroup RSG Committee

What Is It? Ready Set GO is a tool that takes a member through the ACA Twelve Steps in four weeks. It is especially helpful before working our Twelve Steps Workbook. In the Chicagoland area we have been using it for a few years and also in Fitchburg, Wisconsin. We have had positive feedback from members who have taken ACA/ACOA/RSG. Now it is time to share ACA/ACOA/RSG with the greater fellowship to see how it is received.

The full package is available on our website at <http://www.repository.adultchildren.org/aca-notices>. Print it out (as it is, one-sided and in black and white) and try it out. There is a format to follow for groups. 🐾

Promise Ten

“Fears of failure and success will leave us, as we intuitively make healthier choices.”

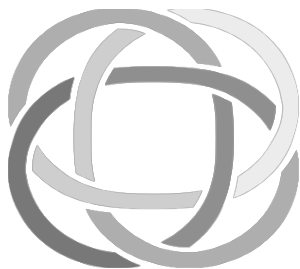
This is a picture of me looking down on all my fears and deciding to face them any way.

by Bryon



Untie The Knot

by Cari



The mother yelled, the father drank.
 The brother watched, the daughter sank.
 The string weaved itself, a family became.
 All around, next door, across town,
 Strings weaved, families came
 together, the same.
 Eyes stung as loudness prevailed, minds shrank.
 The anger, the drink, the doors
 closed with a yank.
 The string weaved, slowly, tighter, day by day.

The knot created, without a
 thought, child's play?
 Family knot, family wrought.
 Grown-ups, the brother, the
 sister, bound in string.
 The knot of string, so tightly woven;
 anger, fights, neglect, follows, does,
 controls; what is this thing?
 Untie that knot, lay those strings side by side.
 Find out what was denied.
 Look at them one at a time, so innocent
 alone, but oh, how sublime.
 Untie that knot, set yourself free!
 Let yourself heal, let yourself be.
 Untie that knot, leave those strings
 alone, we've come so far, our
 power is now our own.
 Untie that knot, it's you who can.
 Our time is now, make your healthy plan. 🌱

Från en kollega som talar svenska

by Liisa

Hej, jag heter Liisa ock mina föräldrar drack livet av sig. Jag bor i Östra Finland. Phyllis frågade mig att skriva på svenska. Jag ska försöka: vi alla här lär det i skolan.

Jag är mycket lycklig, för att jag har varit med i ACA för nästan 17 år. Mitt liv har förändrats så mycket! Jag har fått mitt liv helt och hållet för mig själv. Jag lever mitt liv som jag vill.

Tack för det fjärde steget vet jag nu hurdan jag är. Jag tror inte mer om någon anser att jag är dum, jag bara lär mig att jag har gjort något som den här människa tänkar är dumt. För mig det är en stor skillnad.

När jag började gå på ACA möterna ville jag inte lära känna människor. Jag bara talade ut mina sorger ock gick ut. Men över tiden öppnade jag mig till andra, gick med till tjänsten ock småningom ACA har blivit en stor del av mitt liv.



Sweden

Här i Finland har vi ganska många veckosluten per år när vi aca människor träffar varandra. På dessa ACA retritter arbetar vi med stegen eller känslor på olika sett. Vi skriver ock ritar med den svagare hand, vi dansar, spelar, vandrar i skogen ock lekar med snö, talar till snögubbarna som tar olika roller ock så vidare. Den stora röda boken, som vi kan läsa på våra modersmål, ger hela tiden nya ideer ock inspirerar os. Allt det har hjälpt mig att växa till en ny människa. Jag vill inte mer leva utan ACA. Förut har jag många gånger blivit "färdig" ock lämnat ACA, men livet har serverat mig något svårt ock tagit mig tillbaka.

Nu lever jag i en gammal skol mit i skogen, långt borta från stan. Jag kallar mitt hem "Eheytys", Defragmentering. Med min ACA grupp Polvijärvi organiserar vi här ACA retritter ock människor kommer hit från hela landet. Det är så fint!

I september ska vi tre finnar resa till Arizona, Mingus Mountain ACA retritt. Det är så spännande! Jag hoppas att ha många år med ACA ock se den växa i hela världen. Jag tackar Heli för hjälp med skrivning. 🌱

Classic ComLINE 2007

by unknown

Even Though . . .

My parents weren't available to me, I can be.

My parents couldn't admit that I had needs, I can.

My parents were in denial, I don't have to be.

My parents couldn't meet my needs. I am learning to.

My parents couldn't say "I love you" when they were sober,
I can admit my love without being drunk.

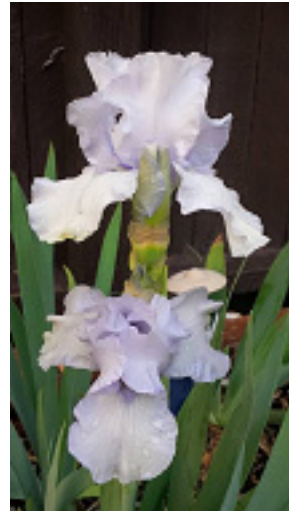
My parents used alcohol to hide their feelings, I can admit
that I have feelings, and I can let them in.

My parents used alcohol to avoid listening to that still, small
voice; I can sit still and listen, even when I'm afraid of what
I will hear.

My parents didn't treat me as a real person, I am learning
to recognize and admit my own worth.

My parents used alcohol to avoid change; I can be
open to possibilities without panic.

I was raised in a home of denial, I don't live there anymore. ☺



Promise Eleven

“With help from our ACA support group, we will slowly release our dysfunctional behaviors.”

Up and Down Meetings

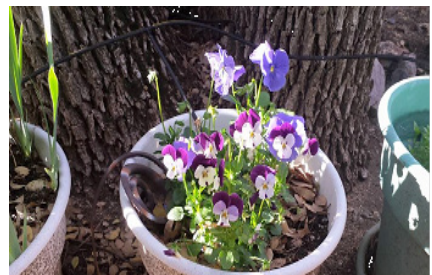
by Phyllis R.

The meeting I've been going to for the last 14 years has had ups and downs in attendance. Every once in awhile, I get a phone call from someone asking is your meeting still going? They saw my phone number either in the newspaper or on the web site for ACA. And I always say yes. And sometimes even with a call, they don't come. Still, the foundation for my meeting is me and maybe one or two others. Sometimes, a group from a rehab program will swell the numbers in attendance. It's always great to have them even though their main program is not working on emotional sobriety. It can be a little discouraging that more people don't come to 'my' meeting. ACA has so much to offer.

Of course, it's not an easy program. No one is going to be healed miraculously. It could happen. Still, I like seeing new people show up. Many have been to an ACA meeting years ago, usually before the publishing of our Big Red Book. They are surprised to find that there is such a manual. Sometimes they buy it — I always have some

available for purchase since I want people to have them as soon as possible before they begin to think about not buying it.

And when they don't come back to 'my' meeting I wonder. What could I do? Once I asked a person who had come a few times that question. He responded from his own experience that we shouldn't be quite so welcoming. He was shy and perhaps was overwhelmed. I can't stop being me so if I overwhelm someone, that's not my problem, sadly. I just keep attending for me and hopefully knowing that I'm planting seeds. Maybe they will sprout. ☺



Musical Chairs

by Christine B.

Part of my ACA recovery is recognizing when I am acting based on a feeling from the past. Change is only possible if I first feel the feeling, which means coming out of denial. As a writer, I can often “right size” these feelings by writing about an image or event that expresses the feeling. For example, I have a regular recovery breakfast at a local diner and I’m always afraid there won’t be room for me (abandonment). I realized that the game “Musical Chairs” is a perfect example of how this feels:

When I was five, when I had
one pink party dress, one pair
of white socks with eyelet trim,
when life seemed filled with not enough.

A party game that seemed designed
by monsters or an evil witch.

Peppy music played, I skipped around
a row of chairs, anticipating
cake and goody bags.

As soon as I was lulled into my role
in this fairy tale, as soon as I heard

*Disneyworld, or beach vacation, or
Good Job, Sweetie. You’re the best—.*

The music stopped. Stunned by silence.
Pause. And in that pause, the other clever
children, grabbed a chair, nudged me
over, sat down quick.

I stood. They stared.

Some kindly grownup took my hand
and leaned me up against the wall.

Where I’m still standing, in the land of
not enough to go around. 🐼

The Language of Family

by Cathy M.

I never thought about it really... that besides English, I might have learned another language while growing up. I was trying to understand the origins of my anger, rage, and unhealthy interactions, when suddenly my background in language and language learning came to mind and stopped me dead in my tracks. Grammatical structures are as dear to me as the expressions they represent, so framing anger and brokenness as a language learned brought an understanding that just hadn’t been in my head before. I realized I learned how to speak both English and dysfunction as a child and how being bilingual means communicating with the phrases and expressions native to my spoken tongue, as well as with the anger, rage, and pouting silence of my second native language.

“I ain’t wrote my homework yet,” I might have said to Mom. “Honey, it’s *I haven’t written*,” she says, and with a smile and eyes full of love, she explains how a language has tenses, and how they sometimes change, and how it’s ok to make mistakes.

Didn’t happen... Mom was a writer by trade, well versed in the intricacies of language, and she used that knowledge handily — mainly to maintain her separateness and prove her elevated status from those of us vying for her affection. Wearing a cloak of silence and fear throughout my childhood buried any feelings I might have

had about being constantly corrected. So now I know where to put my commas (and yours, too, I’m sorry to say), and I say “*haven’t written*” instead of “*ain’t wrote*”, but sadly, I also shake my head in scorn while correcting those dear to me with the fluency of a native speaker of dysfunction.

Some contend that a soul is born with each new language learned... that as you learn Italian, pasta dishes find a place next to hamburgers, and that Tchaikovsky and Elvis shake hands while mastering Russian. Sadly, however, while acquiring the nuances of dysfunction, denial, isolation, guilt, and fear find their place right smack in the middle of every word and every relationship. Personally, I’ve come to realize how, with the fluency of a native speaker, my accents range from mad victim to silent pouter and others in between when speaking dysfunction.

As children, we grow into fluency by making mistakes. As adults, we refine our native fluency with the passing of years. As an adult child of two alcoholics, ACA has been helping me review the grammar and syntax of my second native tongue and become aware of the many accents of my dysfunction. With this growing awareness, thankfully, I gradually begin to speak a language of serenity and peace unknown until now. 🐼

Strengthening My Recovery

by Phyllis R.

Most every morning, I read from the ACA Dailey Meditations book to start out my day in a positive way. Today's (May 13), talks about random acts of kindness. I know when I first started out in ACA I could hardly take care of myself, let alone think about 'helping' others.

Now it's not hard at all to smile at people or let someone in line ahead of me at a store when they have one item and my basket is full. That's one of the lovely things about ACA. My outreach is growing and I am taking much better care of myself. I still need to work on a variety of things, and that's okay. I'm not perfect. I am lovable and capable (IALAC) so I don't have to BE perfect. My Higher Power is always with me, even when I don't think about HP. 🌻



Are You Sabotaging Your Relationships?

by Francis B

How are your relationships? Business? Person-al? Family? Friendships? Romantic? Yourself? Any issues? Any recurring patterns? The first reaction is to blame it on the other party. It's easier to see the faults in others than in ourselves. Though relationships take two to tango. We must have had something to do with it. They say most of our problems are of our own making. So how do we honestly look at our part in our relationships and take responsibility for them so we can change and improve all of our relationships?

100% of relationships have some level of dysfunction, some more than others. That's because none of us were raised in a healthy family. If we didn't get all of our needs met as children, we were abused. This abuse leads to codependency. There are many aspects of codependency. Though codependency is focusing outside of our self to meet our needs instead of meeting our own needs. John Bradshaw says codependency is people addiction. Pia Mellody says codependency is emotional immaturity. We're

unable to stand on our own two feet and need to rely on others. There are many ways that we do this. Because of an insecure childhood, we might try to control others. If we were abandoned as children, we might fear abandonment and people please others. If we were shamed or criticized as children, we might fear others' criticism and anger and avoid confrontation and standing up for ourselves. If we were blamed as children, we might learn to blame others. If we weren't esteemed as children, we might have low self-esteem as adults, letting others treat us poorly, treating ourselves poorly or treating others poorly. If there weren't boundaries growing up, we don't have boundaries as adults, letting others offend us or offending others. If we were neglected as children, we might be too needy of others. If we were enmeshed as children, we might feel smothered by others and push them away. If we were overly responsible as children, we might feel overly responsible to take care of others, caretaking, rescuing and enabling them. As

you can see, how we were treated as children affects how we relate to others as adults affecting all of our relationships. All of these actions are abusive, dishonest, manipulative, controlling, and avoiding. We're also abandoning ourselves, focusing on others and their feelings and neglecting our own. This usually leads to resentment and passive-aggressiveness. So how do we change?

There are many ways to change. Pia Mellody says we need to get our history straight. John Lee says we need to grow up. Counseling addresses our history, how it infected us then and how it continues to affect us today. Twelve Step programs like CODA (Codependents Anonymous), help us recover from codependency and ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics/Dysfunctional Families), help us recover from our childhood abuse. In ACA, we learn to re-parent ourselves and give ourselves what we didn't get from others. We learn to stand on our own two feet and be responsible for ourselves and take care of ourselves so we don't need oth-

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Are You Sabotaging Your Relationships?

ers to take of us. We also let others be responsible for themselves and take care of themselves. In CODA, we learn to esteem ourselves through affirmations. We learn to set boundaries, protecting ourselves and not offending others. Our relationships become more loving and honest.

Do any of your relationships have problems? Are there recurring patterns? Are you

sabotaging your relationships? Are you responsible for your part? Are you doing what you need to do to change? Why not? Don't you want better relationships? It starts with you being a better person. There are many things you can do. All of your relationships will improve, starting with the most important relationship with yourself. And if a relationship doesn't

improve, you can choose not to be in it. Here's wishing you better relationships. 🍀

Ed. Note: ACA's Fourth Tradition states, "Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other Twelve-Step programs."

Shhh

by Charles E.



Anonymity

by Eileen W.

In thinking back about this topic, anonymity had more than one gift for me. First, it made it safe for me to be in recovery. The alcoholics in my life wouldn't know where I was going and what I was doing. But the other safety factor was for my personal identity. All I needed to share was my first name. I didn't have to share my family life or my work experience, so the other people in the meetings couldn't know about my sense of worthlessness.

In the beginning I set everyone else up on a pedestal. Some people were so high up on the pedestal that I never dared to talk with them. But I did learn from them and all the others who shared their stories. The time came when one day I realized that I had just spoken with one of

the "elevated" women remembering that I wasn't worthy. And it had seemed just fine with her to talk to me. And I got it. Somewhere along the way, I had grown and the pedestal had shrunk. We were now all on the same plane.

Anonymity had kept me safe until I got the message from my Higher Power that I was okay. He has created all of us as individuals. I didn't have to be like my brother to curry my Mother's favor. My assignment from God was to become myself. And that was what I was learning how to do in recovery... I was getting acquainted with the true self God made here in me, and I was acting on it. ACA is not only a program of recovery, it's a program of discovery! 🍀

What “Organization” Means To Me, TRADITION NINE

by Cari G. D.

During my 20+ year career, I worked for many “organizations”. During my childhood, I was a family imposed member of a religious following, yet another “organization”. Before I knew the impact of the dysfunctional, alcoholic family on me, I struggled with the rigidity, rules, hierarchy, and control of all those “organizations”, and tried to force fit myself into those rules and regulations by becoming a well-known “organizer” who cajoled and manipulated teams into believing in shared goals and outcomes. When I crossed paths with someone who would not adhere to my organizing efforts, the shared goals philosophy, and my way of making things happen, I would become disgruntled and openly difficult, throwing up my hands in disgust, and expecting higher ups to step in and “force” that individual to comply. It was a vicious cycle of dysfunction, and my definition of “organization”.

When I finally went to therapy in search of “what’s wrong with me”, my therapist and I worked on delving into my childhood where it was discovered I am an adult child of alcoholism and family dysfunction. While the therapy helped immensely, I wondered if there were other people like me, affected by their childhoods in the same way. I asked my therapist, and that was how I was introduced to ACA.

My first thoughts were, “oh no, not another organization”. Immediately I reverted to feelings

of oppression, and wanting to avoid all those mixed bad emotions. I avoided attending for weeks, and when I finally did attend, I hesitated in participating, still very skeptical of what this “organization” was all about. I couldn’t believe that there existed a worldwide group that claims it’s not “organized”.

What I eventually let myself discover was that, yes, this is a group that really is not my definition of organizations. There really are no “authority” figures, no rigid rules, no hierarchy, or any one person or committee we all have to answer to. This is a worldwide organization of loving, caring, supportive people who share a common history. It really breaks the mold of what we have been used to and have accepted as meaning “organization”. There are guidelines, and other practices which are necessary in order to conduct business, but none of that interferes with or negatively influences the trust that is built in to the structure of ACA.

I was suspicious at first, but now fully grasp the lack of formal organization and how the only authority figures in ACA are my own Higher Power and myself. I am an ever grateful participant in my weekly group meetings where we express support for one another, and continue our healing process, without rigidity, formal organization, or layers of hierarchy, because after all, we are adult children. 🌱

Is Your Past Holding You Back?

By Francis B.

There is a famous saying that those who don’t know history are destined to repeat it. Well, the same goes for our personal history. If we don’t know our personal history, we are destined to repeat it. And if our history has issues like most of us, we’re going to cause our own future issues. We all need to recover from something. We can recover

from our past and change our future by facing our history. Maya Angelou said that history, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be un-lived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again. So how do you face your history to not repeat it?

Most of us were not raised in a healthy family. John Bradshaw, a pioneer in recovery, says that 100% of all families

are dysfunctional on some level. Pia Melody, a pioneer in codependency recovery, says that anything less than nurturing parenting is abuse. Our childhood years are our most developmental. As children, we have developmental needs that need to be met. We have physical, emotional and spiritual needs. We need to feel safe, be heard, valued, affirmed,

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Is Your Past Holding You Back?

accepted and loved. Not only did many of us not get what we needed, we were neglected; verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually abused; shamed; judged; belittled; and yelled at. We might have had perfectionistic parents who expected too much from us. We might have had emotionally unavailable parents who had their own unresolved issues from the past or addictions such as alcoholism, drug addiction, workaholism, gambling addiction, overeating or sex addiction. The abuse we experienced might have been overt or covert. One traumatic event can cause trauma in us. Daily abuse over many years causes even more trauma. Children can suffer from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), similar to war veterans or anyone experiencing serious trauma. Since most of our thinking is subconscious, about 70%, we don't even realize how much we were affected by what happened to us. We have deep-seated wounds. Anger, fear, sadness, and busyness are the result. Many of us are in denial, repressed what happened because it was too painful, medicate it, or just move on from the past without fac-

ing it. Many of us shut down or disassociated from our feelings. Many of us recreated the same issues and relationship problems we experienced as children in our adult relationships and lives. Some of us developed our own addictions or got involved in relationships with people with them. Most of our problems are of our own making. So what is the solution? Pia Mellody says we need to get our history straight. So how do we do that?

Like Maya said, we need to face our history with courage. We have to stop denying, repressing, medicating and running from our past. We have to face it to recover from it. There are many ways to do that. First, we need to stop running from our past and face it. We need to stop medicating our feelings with various addictions so we can feel our feelings. John Bradshaw says feeling is healing. Some of us might need or could benefit from Twelve Step programs like AA, NA, GA, or OA to deal with our addictions. Some of us need or could benefit from more intensive inpatient or outpatient treatment. Individual or group counseling could also help to

look at our history with trained professionals and others. When free of our stage one addictions and in touch with our feelings, stage two recovery could help. Other Twelve Step programs like Al-Anon, CODA, or ACA focus more on our family-of-origin issues and relationships with others and ourselves. Many faiths and religions offer faith-based recovery programs. Recovery groups that focus on grief, loss and anger can be helpful. There are many self-help and recovery books* that can also help. Most of us can't recover on our own. We need help from others. By facing our past and working through the issues and feelings, we can recover. As we recover, we break the chains of the past and are free to create a new and better future.

So is your past holding you back? Now you know if it is, what's holding you back, and what you can do to change that. Are you doing what you can? Why not? You deserve to be the best person you can be and have the best life you can have, experiencing all of the freedom, happiness, and success that comes with that. Here's to your future success. 🍀

Promise Twelve

“Gradually, with our Higher Power’s help, we learn to expect the best and get it.”

*Our own ACA Big Red Book (Fellowship text) may be purchased on our WSO web site.



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