

# A New Life

A Guide Through  
The 12 Steps As Outlined in  
The ACA Red Book  
2019

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# A NEW LIFE in ACA

The purpose of ACA is three-fold: to shelter and support newcomers in confronting denial; to comfort those mourning their early loss of security, trust, and love; and to teach the skills for reparenting ourselves with gentleness, humor, love and respect, Red Book 82. Ask someone to participate in *your new life*, RB 149. Are you willing to do whatever it takes to recover and find peace and serenity? RB 124

## Six Suggestions For Ongoing Recovery:

1. Stop acting out on food, sex, relationships, gambling, spending, alcohol & drugs.
2. Go to meetings regularly and break the “Don’t Talk” rule.
3. Get a Sponsor and work the Twelve Steps.
4. Get the ACA Red Book
5. Get telephone numbers. Don’t isolate.
6. Get a Higher Power.

## Are you willing to:

- Meet with me for One Hour A Week? \_\_\_\_\_
- Attend 60 Recovery Meetings in 90 days? RB125 \_\_\_\_\_
- Read the Red Book and discuss what you highlight? \_\_\_\_\_
- Try to Journal every day? \_\_\_\_\_
- If Single, agree not to date for 1 year? RB p. 51 & 403 \_\_\_\_\_
- Avoid drinking for 90 days? \_\_\_\_\_
- Give 24 hour notice when you need to cancel? \_\_\_\_\_

To keep recovery a priority in my life, I may have to let you go if we miss two weeks in a row. Red Book 73 Recovery is the first place where we surrender to victor.

A Sponsor is a person with a working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions who shares their Experience, Strength, and Hope. A Sponsor is not therapist, bank, grocery store, babysitter, or taxi. We meet to work through the 12 steps as outlined in the Red Book. We pass on what was freely given to us.

Homework Buy a Red Book\_\_\_\_ 2 Make a list of Daily Recovery meetings\_\_

All Red Book or RB references are to the book: *ACA Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families*, 2006.

# PHONE LIST

A phone call may save your life. Try to break the isolation and call 2-3 people every day. If the phone feels heavy now, imagine what it's like when you're upset. The suggestion is that if you date men, call women, if you date women, call men. In recovery, we try not to complicate our program with romance.

Reach out now so when you *need* help, it's easier to call.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

## A DROWNING MAN

A woman frantically dials 911.

Emergency Response "Hello, 911, How can we help you?"

My husband is drowning! Emergency Response, "We are on our way."

A few minutes later there is a knock at the door. She opens the door and escorts the Emergency Medical Technician in and goes to the pool in the back yard.

A man is splashing around in the pool desperately trying to keep his head above water. His head bobbing under and popping up as he desperately gasps for air.

The technician calmly stands by the edge of the pool. The woman yells, DO SOMETHING!! The technician calmly replies, Maim, we have to wait till he surrenders, or he will take us both down. The woman is just as frantic as the man; equally desperate, feeling helpless, hopeless and out of control.

The Emergency Technician knows, you have to wait till they surrender.

Whether you are the alcoholic or the enabler. You have to become Willing to try something different, and trying something new is the scariest thing in the world. Most of us would rather die than try something new. Are you willing to surrender and try something different? Remember, be patient, walking into a dark forest for 20-30 years, it may take a little while to get out.

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 1

We admitted we were powerless over the effects of alcoholism or other family dysfunction, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Tony A Step One - We admitted that we were powerless over the effects of living with alcoholism and that our lives had become unmanageable.

Spiritual Principle - Powerlessness and Surrender Red Book p. 129

In recovery we cease fighting everyone and everything; we learn there are no big deals.

**Stages of Recovery** Red Book p. xxviii

**Stage One** – Most people recovering from addictions and other disorders can recover more successfully by first stabilizing these for a time, since otherwise these problems are usually distractions from ACA recovery issues and work.

**Stage Two** – 1. Realizing our True Self 2. Grieving hurts, losses and traumas  
3. Finding and fulfilling our healthy needs 4. Working through core recovery issues

**Stage Three** –Refining our relationship with self, others, and God. RB p. xxviii

“The ACA disease model addresses the body, mind, and spirit of the adult child. Clinical research strongly suggests that childhood trauma or neglect are stored in the tissue of the children. The emotional or physical trauma does not go away without an effort to address the original cause. Red Book 17

Homework: Read Red Book Chapter 6 p. 81-106 \_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun \_\_\_\_\_

# RECOVERY MEETING SCHEDULE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wed	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sun
8 am							
10 am							
Noon							
6 pm							
8 pm							
10 pm							

Make a list of meetings you enjoy. Since ACA is currently somewhat limited, include other recovery meetings. Al-Anon, CODA, AA, SA, OA, EA, NA, FA

Suggested meetings per week:

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| No Meetings, No Chance      | 1-2 meetings to opens the door to Recovery       |
| Few Meetings, Few Chances   | 3-4 meetings to walk into the rooms              |
| Many Meetings, Many Chances | 5 + In the middle of the room In Active Recovery |

In recovery, it is suggested that we not make any major changes the first year. Big changes would include: moving, divorcing, getting married, changing jobs or careers, buying a car, adopting a child or a pet, or remodeling. Focus on Recovery.

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 1 Week Two

“With Step One... While we had the illusion of choice as adults, what we really practiced was control, which predictably fizzled into binges on food, work, sex, gambling, spending, or destructive relationships... When we realize such powerlessness as an adult we step back, let go, and take a new course of action, or take no action. We learn to detach with compassion and to stop trying to repair our family of origin... Promise Eleven states: With help from our ACA support group, we will slowly release our dysfunctional behaviors. Promise Twelve states: Gradually with our Higher Power’s help, we learn to expect the best and get it.” RB p. 103-104

Give examples of how you are powerless over alcoholism and dysfunction.

What needs to change? Everything. Your playground, playmates and all your toys.

Family History Red Book p. 126 Yellow Book p. 34-44

On a separate piece of paper, write the name of family member and the corresponding labels from the Yellow Workbook on p. 35.

RB p.96-98 Identify Family Roles. Hero, Lost Child, Scapegoat, or Mascot?

AFFIRMATION I am a valuable person

Homework Read Red Book Chapter 6 p. 118-129\_\_\_\_ p 120 Together

Make a list of things you can do to pamper yourself. \_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for\_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun\_\_\_\_\_

# WEEKLY ROUTINE

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Monday    Tuesday    Wed    Thursday    Friday    Saturday    Sunday

Did you have							
Breakfast							
Lunch							
Dinner							
Alcohol y/n							
3 + Drinks							
Sleep 6-8 hrs							
Wake up?							
1-2 times							
3-4 times							
5 + times							
Meeting							
Pray							
Meditate							
Exercise							
Sponsor							

For the next week, Look at your routine and Mark each item that you do.

Each one of these can help clear your mind, nourish your body,

and feed your soul so you can become happy, joyous, and free.

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 2

Came to Believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Tony A Step Two - We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could bring us to clarity.

Spiritual Principal – Open-mindedness and Clarity p. 137

Write a paragraph or less, describing what your concept of a Higher Power is.

Are they Loving, Kind, Patient, Gentle, Tolerant, Compassionate, and Forgiving?

Remember, If you are breathing, you are worthy. My sponsor told me that we are all a thread in the tapestry of life. We are strong and beautiful together.

“The ACA disease model addresses the body, mind, and spirit of the adult child. Clinical research strongly suggests that childhood trauma or neglect are stored in the tissue of the children. The emotional or physical trauma does not go away without an effort to address the original cause.” Red Book p. 17

What is the worst punishment in America? Solitary Confinement.

And what do we do to ourselves? Isolate

Homework      Read Together p. 107 \_\_\_\_      Read p. 130-137 \_\_\_\_

Make a list of all the things you love in this world. \_\_\_\_\_

Something Fun\_\_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for\_\_\_\_\_



## Erik Erikson's Stages of Development

Stage 1	Trust vs. Mistrust	During the First Year	Feeding
	Children develop a sense of trust when caregivers provide reliability, Feeding, care, and affection. If the child develops trust, they will feel safe and secure in the world. Failure to receive this leads to mistrust.		
Stage 2	Autonomy vs. Doubt	Second Year	Toilet Training
	Children develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and a sense of independence. Success leads to feelings of autonomy while failure results in feelings of shame and doubt.		
Stage 3	Initiative vs. Guilt	3 - 5	Exploration
	Children need to begin asserting control and power over the environment. Success leads to a sense of purpose.		
Stage 4	Industry vs. Inferiority	6 - 12	School
	Children cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence while failure results in feeling inferior.		
Stage 5	Identity vs. Confusion	13 - 18	Social Relationships
	Teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.		
Stage 6	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Early Adult	
	Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships. Success leads to strong relationships while failure results in loneliness and isolation.		
Stage 7	Generativity vs. Self-Absorption	Middle Age	Work and Parenthood
	Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment while Failure results in shallow involvement in the world.		
Stage 8	Integrity vs. Despair	Old Age	Reflection on Life
	We need to look back and feel a sense of fulfillment. Success leads to feelings of wisdom, failure results in regret, bitterness and despair.		

There was a study with babies. The first group were given only the basic necessities - bathed, fed, burped and changed. The second group of babies were fed, talked to, and cuddled. The first group of babies all died. Love and affection are so important that we literally die without it.

# A NEW LIFE

“Since Alcoholism is a family disease, all family members are affected without having to take a drink. With an amazing predictability, the children grow up to be addicted or marry an addicted or compulsive person. Many adult children become addicted to alcohol or other drugs thinking their lives will be different than their parents... ACA works best for those abstaining from alcohol, drugs, and prescription medication... Members should consult their doctor.” Red Book p. 13

“We believe that each of us is born with a True Self that is forced into hiding by dysfunctional parenting. A false self emerges that protects the hidden True Self from harm, but at a heavy price. Without help, the destructive false self is too much for most adult children to separate from. ACA holds hope and acceptance to the hurting adult children of the world, who can hit bottom and reach out for help. Allowing the True Self to emerge in the nurturing atmosphere of ACA is a Spiritual Experience that awaits any adult child stepping onto the broad highway of ACA recovery.” RB p. xv

Prioritize Healing Your Self with HALTED.

Are you Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired or Exercising Daily? RB p. 52

In ACA, we are learning to reparent ourselves with gentleness, humor, love and respect. Simple actions like eating, sleeping, and exercising can make a huge difference in our physical and mental well-being.

“In ACA we learn to keep the focus on ourselves and live and let live.” RB p xvii

Homework      Weekly Routine \_\_\_\_      Read Welcome to ACA RB p. xii-xxvi \_\_\_\_

Start a Journal and list several things you are grateful for and make a list of things that are fun.      How many times a night are you waking up? \_\_\_\_

# A NEW LIFE

Rather than run and hide, to disconnect from each other, to rescue each other or to control each other, we bore witness to each other's pain and story. RB p. xix

"The common denominator among adult children from a variety of dysfunctional homes is chronic loss and abandonment... we learn "don't talk, don't trust, and don't feel." Red Book p. xx

"The natural responses to trauma are flight, fight, or freeze. For most kids, they need to freeze. They are not able to run, or fight, so in essence they run within... This program goes within to bring true peace for those who want it." Red Book p. xxii

## ACA DISEASE MODEL

BODY - Have PTSD, Stored Trauma, or Neglect

MIND - Identify with the Laundry List

SPIRIT - Have a Hidden Inner Child

If you have two of these, then you have the other. RB p. xxvi

In addition to emotional suffering, codependents can suffer from serious or chronic physical illnesses... including stomach problems, severe headaches, insomnia, colon problems, and skin ailments. Red Book p. 7

While facing these times, we learn to talk about our feelings and to be gentle with ourselves. We avoid isolation or becoming inappropriately angry or blaming others. We begin to trust the process of living life on life's terms. We are not alone. We realize that life today really is different than when we were children. RB p. 73

Homework Write One Trauma \_\_\_\_\_ Read RB xxvii-xxxvii \_\_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_ Something Fun \_\_\_\_\_

## Types of Abuse or Trauma

Physical      Emotional      Sexual      Financial      Spiritual

Hitting	Yelling	Unwanted Sex	Withhold \$	Not Let you...	
Pushing	Blaming	Have Affair	Hide \$	Put Down	
Burning	Put Down	Withhold	Control \$	Manipulate	
Kicking	Call Names	Use Porn	Not let work	Isolate you	
Pulling Hair	Isolate	Compare	Steal \$/Cards	Force on you	
Pinching	Manipulate	Put Down	No Education	Withhold	
Strangling	Lie to	Sell or Trade You	Get Fired	Control	
Ticking	Degrade	Force Birth Control	Destroy Stuff		
Throwing	Humiliate	Refuse Birth Control	Use Drugs		
Sleep Disrupt	Brainwash	Touch Privates	Eviction		
	Embarrass	Sex In Front of You	Refuse work		
Punch Holes	Not Talk to	Give an STD	Not Pay Bills		
Lock in or out	Laugh At	Force Object in/on			
Stalk	Criticize	Force Sex Work			
Drive Fast	Sarcasm	Flash you			
Force you to use drugs	Say you are crazy	Masturbate in front of you	Forge Signature		

Do you feel like nothing you do is ever good enough? Do you feel like your family is holding you hostage? Do you have a PhD in People Pleasing? Their lack of planning does not have to be your emergency. You don't have to live like that anymore. You *can* have a new life.

## Healthy Family

Feels Safe	Listens to you	Loving
Talks not yells	Calm	Safe to Cry
Serene	Shares Feelings	Peaceful
Respectful	Supportive	Stable
Adult is not Higher Power	Doesn't Move Annually	Not Dominating
Respects Belongings	Compromises	Respect Space
Values Others Opinions	Encouraged	Validates one another
Allowed Mistakes	Works Together	Solves Problems Together
Feel A part of	Talks to each other	Opinions are valued and
Doesn't force to eat bad food	Spends time together	Respected
Accepts you are you are	Has Fun together	
	Has meals together	
	Plans vacations together	
Encouraged to know a Higher Power of our Understanding		
Each Person Feels like an Important Contributing Part of the Whole Family		

### Bookcase

A family showed up to buy a bookcase. The Dad asked the three year old boy to help him. I thought how is a tiny boy going to help. The man went to the cab and pulled out a rope and said to the boy, Hey Buddy, how do you think we should load the bookcase? Should we lay it down in the back? Yah! said the boy. Wow you have great ideas! said the Dad. Here son, hold the rope and help me. Thank you. Good Job!! How do you think we should tie it down buddy? The boy pointed to the ties on the truck. The Dad nodded, smiled, and said you are right! Good Job Buddy! You are such a good helper! The boy grinned from ear to ear. The bookcase was loaded and they were on their way, but the boy left feeling taller than the bookcase.

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 3

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God.

Tony A Step Three - We made a decision to practice self-love and to trust in a Higher Power of our understanding.

Spiritual Principals - Willingness and Accepting Help Red Book p. 149

### AAA Third Step Prayer

"God, I am willing to surrender my fears and to place my will and my life in your care, one day at a time." Red Book p. 149

### AA Third Step Prayer

"God, I offer myself to thee to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help. Of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of Life, May I do Thy will always!" *Alcoholics Anonymous* p. 63 Remember, God doesn't make junk.

Affirmations From the Yellow Workbook p. 69

- 1 I am willing to consider releasing some control in my life.
- 2 I am willing to call someone when I feel the urge to control another's thoughts or actions.
- 3 I believe that real choice comes from the God of my understating rather than my illusion of control and orderliness.
- 4 I desire real choice and discernment.
- 5 I surrender my family to God as I understand God.
- 6 I surrender my self-hate.

Homework: Read p. 106-108 \_\_\_\_ 138-149 \_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_ Something Fun \_\_\_\_\_

God is Good. If it ain't Good, it ain't God.

# Stress Test

Life has normal stress. Prolonged stress or too much stress can be unhealthy.

Review your life over the past 12 months and check for each time an event occurred.

Parking or Speeding Ticket	10	___	___
Spend a Holiday with Family	12	___	___
Taking a Vacation	14	___	___
Major Purchase like a Car or Computer	16	___	___
Argument or name calling	17	___	___
Change in Social or Recreational activities	18	___	___
Change Church or Spiritual activities	19	___	___
Moving	20	___	___
Change in Work Responsibilities or Hours	21	___	___
Conflict with Boss or Supervisor	22	___	___
Change in Personal Habits	23	___	___
Raising Children -Per child living with you	25	___	___
Remodeling	26	___	___
Spouse Retires or begins to work at home	27	___	___
Child leaves Home or Comes Back	28	___	___
Conflict with In laws	29	___	___
Foreclosure	30	___	___
Buy or Sell a Home (points for each one)	32	___	___
Change Jobs	33	___	___
Change in Finances	34	___	___
Increase in number of arguments with Partner	36	___	___
Pregnancy or Miscarriage	38	___	___
Death of a Friend or distant relative	40	___	___
Adopt or gain a family member - a dog, cat, etc	41	___	___
Marital Reconciliation	42	___	___
Sexual challenges	44	___	___
Family member won't speak to you	45	___	___
Retirement	46	___	___
Being fired or losing job	48	___	___
Personal injury or illness/ER visit	50	___	___
Wedding in immediate family	51	___	___
Being Primary caregiver	60	___	___
Relationship Separation	65	___	___
Suicide Attempt	70	___	___
Divorce or End of long term relationship	75	___	___
Death of a Spouse or close family member	100	___	___
	TOTAL	_____	_____

0-149

Normal Stress

Low Risk for Stress Related Illness

150-299

Medium Stress

Medium Risk

300+

High Stress

High Risk for Mental or Physical Illness

If your score is over 300, make relaxation a priority and seek professional help.

# A NEW LIFE

As children, Instincts kept us alive.

We have always done the best we can with what we have.

Sometimes, the best thing we can do is nothing. Try something new and surrender.

We do not have to beat ourselves up for what we have done, we are simply mirroring what we were taught.

As our false self took over more and more, our real self went further and further into hiding until literally we didn't know who we were.

Recovery offers A New Way of Living. All we have is divinely given and inspired, but  
How are we using it?

If the path seems impossible, it is. We are incapable of keeping up the false self.

The 12 Steps of Recovery offer a new way of life, that encourages us to find our real authentic self, and use all that you have been divinely bestowed.

The promises state: We will discover our real identities by loving and accepting ourselves. Red Book p 591.

Read all of the promises. They may seem out of reach, but there are any before us who have experienced them.

Give this process a genuine try and if you don't like it, We will refund your misery.

Abraham Lincoln "People are about as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Insanity is repeating the same mistake and expecting different results. p.137

Eleanor Roosevelt "Life is what you make it. Always has been, always will be"

Mother Teresa " I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish he didn't trust me so much."

Gandhi "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."



# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 4

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. RB p. 9

Tony A Step Four - We made a searching and blameless inventory of our parents.

Spiritual Principals are Self Honesty and Courage.

### ACA Fourth Step Prayer

Help me to be rigorously honest and to care for myself during this Fourth Step process. Let me practice gentleness and not abandon myself on this spiritual journey. Help me remember that I have attributes RB p. 171

I will listen without judgment, and treat your story with complete confidentiality. 636

Read "We are not God... Red Book p. xxii Realize it, Relate it, and Release it.

"The adult child has dissociated from his or her body. The person appears to function quite normally in society; however, the stored trauma is there, creating bodily ailments that can appear as depression, panic disorders, hyperactivity, or sloth. Because of this storing or dissociation, many adult children are truly baffled when a counselor suggests that they are holding down feelings." Red Book p. 17

Learning to survive or develop resilience are admirable traits; however, in ACA we learn to go beyond mere survival. We strive for true healing and connection with a Higher Power through the realization that we have worth and that we are lovable just the way we are. However, the process of recovery takes time and patience. RB 72

Homework: Read p. 108-110 \_\_\_\_ p. 150-160 \_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_ Something that is Fun \_\_\_\_\_

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 4

Made a Searching and Fearless moral inventory of ourselves. Red Book p. 92

Tony A Step Four - We made a searching and blameless inventory of our parents.

Spiritual Principals – Self Honesty and Courage

Obsessive Thinking - What can I do when I just can't stop thinking about something or someone? Here are a few suggestions:

- 1 Get out of you physical location. Go somewhere
- 2 Allow yourself to feel all the feelings. Feeling is Healing
- 3 Focus on the Positive and Write a Gratitude journal.
- 4 Meditate
- 5 Allow yourself a certain amount of time (10 minutes) then move on.
- 6 Talk with a friend in recovery.
- 7 Get out and have some fun.

Feelings Definitions p. 162

Yellow Book p 77

Part 1 Rate Each Word 1-10

Part 2 Pick three words and Write How You Feel

Homework – Red Book p. 160-164 \_\_\_\_\_

God is like Gravity, it works whether you believe in it or not.

GOD -Gift of Desperation -Good Orderly Direction -Grace Over Drama -Great Outdoors

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun \_\_\_\_\_

# A NEW LIFE

## Step 4

Made a Searching and Fearless moral inventory of ourselves. Red Book p. 92

Tony A Step Four - We made a searching and blameless inventory of our parents.

### Spiritual Principals – Self Honesty and Courage

I always wondered why abused kids fought with the police when they were rescued. Claiming that they wanted to go back with their abuser. Fear of the unknown is greater than the pain of abuse.

Trust can be Physical, Emotion, Financial, or Sexual. Trust can manifest as contractual, competency, or communication. We tend to respond in childish ways because that is all we know. We have black and white thinking and the world is really a rainbow of color and options.

Just walking into the rooms of recovery took great courage and a degree of trust, that there may be something different out there, A New Way to Live.

Homework: Red Book p. 164-167 \_\_\_\_

Survival Traits - Circle Laundry List Traits p. 164 \_\_\_\_

Face the Terror of trying something new, and Boldly go where you have never been. Have Peace, Serenity and Contentment. Uncover, Understand, and Discard.

I know you are doing your best. You are like an artichoke, and more will be revealed as you work your way toward your heart.

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun \_\_\_\_\_

# Make A List of Pampering and Fun Things

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_
- 11 \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_
- 14 \_\_\_\_\_
- 15 \_\_\_\_\_

When you get to your gentleness breaks, come back to this page and

*Try to do one every day.*

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 4

### Childhood Inventory

Write down events or traumas that happened to you from birth to age 22. Include Moving, Changing School, Marriages, divorces, deaths, including pets, hospitalization, car accidents, drowning, burns, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual abuse. Did you ever have an anxiety attack? Also include when siblings were born or witnessing siblings or parents being hit, yelled at, swearing, name calling, raped, isolated, punished, embarrassed, betrayed, abandoned, humiliated, shamed, and blamed.

Talk with parents, siblings and other relatives who may give you clues as to what happened because they were older and may remember more.

Start at the beginning

0 Where you were born

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6 \_\_\_\_\_

7 \_\_\_\_\_

8 \_\_\_\_\_

9 \_\_\_\_\_

10 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11 \_\_\_\_\_

12 \_\_\_\_\_

13 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14 \_\_\_\_\_

15 \_\_\_\_\_

16 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17 \_\_\_\_\_

18 \_\_\_\_\_

19 \_\_\_\_\_

20 \_\_\_\_\_

21 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Read this to your Sponsor.

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 4

Often times, completing a Childhood Inventory will stir up memories and emotions that can be overwhelming. In recovery, Feeling is Healing. The only way to get over something is to walk through it. Try not to judge yourself or your feelings, but accept them as they come. Try to be patient with yourself. Try to accept your inner child and listen without judgment. Try to be the loving supportive, gentle parent you never had.

When looking over your childhood, were there family members who had heart attacks, strokes, falls, burns, or drowning? None of these are part of normal aging, and according to the Center for Disease Control, all can be caused by drinking alcohol.

### Inner Child Questions

Look over these questions in the red book. Write your answers and bring them with you to discuss with your Sponsor. Red Book p 328

### Inner Child Affirmations

1. I love my Inner Child unconditionally.
2. I will protect my Inner Child to the best of my ability
3. I will take time to listen to my Inner Child and to follow through on promises.
4. I will integrate my Inner Child into my life through play, creativity, and spirituality.
5. I will take time to become my own Loving Parent. Red Book p 328

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 4

Please Read p. 167-187 Work at your own pace, maybe 1-2 worksheets per week.

		Red Book	Yellow Workbook
1	Laundry List Worksheet Red Book	166	81
2	Family Secrets Inventory	167	82
3	Shame Inventory	168	82
4	Abandonment Inventory	169	83
5	Harms Inventory	170	84
	Gentleness Break	171	86
6	Anger/Resentment Inventory	172	87
7	Relationship Inventory	173	89
8	Sexual Abuse Worksheet	173	90
	Rape is awful. But what opportunity does it offer?		
	Forgiveness	Compassion	Acceptance
	Gentleness Break	174	92
9	Denial Inventory	175	92
	My Behavior	176	95
10	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	177	96/101
	Trauma and Neglect Inventory	183	99
11	Feelings Exercise	185	102
12	Praise Work	187	103

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun \_\_\_\_\_



1 **Laundry List Worksheet**

Red Book 166

YB 81

Check the number of traits you identify with, then fill out the following chart.

Event	Cause	I felt...	Reaction	Trait Developed







5 **Harms Inventory: Generational Transfer** RB 170 YB 84

In this exercise, we inventory how we have abandoned or neglected other people in our lives. We must remember we are facing our actions with courage and honesty. This is not easy, and we should give ourselves a gentleness break. RB p. 170

Those I harmed      What I did      Result      Was this done to me?

During this gentleness break go back to your list of things to pamper yourself and have some fun! ACA is not an easy program. Adult children have tremendous inner strength, and another strength that has been there is your Higher Power. Take a gentleness break, but continue to meet with your sponsor or counselor. RB p. 171

Eleventh Step Promise - With the help from our ACA support group, we will slowly release our dysfunctional behaviors.

Fourth Step Prayer - Red Book 171

Whatever you have buried deep inside will fester and poison your soul as long as it stays in the dark. Let it out. Come into the Sunlight of the Spirit. Be Free! Recovery is up to you. Are you ready to let go of the past? They say, You are only as sick as your secrets. Are you ready to be free?

Boundaries

Maybe take a look at boundaries. The ACA Red Book says, "The ore we let go, the stronger our boundaries become. This is the ACA paradox: Letting go creates stronger boundaries. P 148.

Growing up in dysfunctional families, boundaries are often unclear. Setting a boundary can be as simple as saying No. Setting a boundary can be driving your own car and leaving the event. Setting a boundary could be telling ourselves, "we will no longer be loyal to denial and dysfunctional family roles." RB 123 We are not responsible for rescuing, saving, or healing our parents or siblings who remain mired in family dysfunction. Setting boundaries does not mean that you will tell someone how to change, or behave around you. We can detach with love and begin the gradual process of learning about boundaries. RB 102

**6 Stored Anger and Resentment Inventory**      RB 172      YB 87

In ACA we want to lift up resentment and see what is underneath. We believe resentment is stored anger caused by innumerable losses as a child. Such loss creates grief appearing as depression, addition, to creating stored anger. Most adult children deny they have anger and therefore deny they are angry. One the other hand, there are some adult children who can explode with anger but never seem to tap the stored anger deep within them. They really want to change or curb their anger but they feel powerless to do so. Red Book p. 172 The Higher Power is patient as it seeks to help the adult childe find wholeness and integration of a divided self. RB p. 137

The goal of this exercise is to find you anger and see what's beneath.

I resent	The Cause	Affects my	My reaction	Inner Child's reaction

7 **Relationship Inventory**

RB 173

YB 89

Make a list of qualities you want for a romance. Make a list of qualities you want from a friendship? Please bring both lists next time to share with me.

As adult children, most of us have used a variety of relationships in an attempt to heal ourselves from the chronic sense of aloneness in our lives. We have used sex, romance and friendships to feel safe or not alone... Until we get help, we continually look outside ourselves for drugs, gambling, sex, or people to make us feel whole, but it never works. Red Book p. 173

Person      What I expected      What I got      Dependent Behavior      How Ended

Person	What I expected	What I got	Dependent Behavior	How Ended



This exercise helps some adult children identify sexual abuse. For many incest survivors, this exercise can stir strong memories. We urge you to stay in contact with your counselor or sponsor. It is important to remember that you did not cause the sexual abuse. (and you did not deserve it. A child never has a part in child abuse, the adult or adults are responsible)

Rape is awful. But what opportunity does it offer?

A. Forgiveness B. Understanding – It happened to them too.

Sexual abuser	What happened?	My Age at abuse	Who was told?	Who got blamed?	How did abuse stop?

Read the Promises on page 591

I am doing the best I can. I can forgive myself. I am making progress. I don't have to be perfect. I can learn to trust myself, others, and a Higher Power.

I know God will not give me anything I can't handle,

I just wish He didn't trust me so much. Mother Teresa

### Affirmations

1. It is ok to know who I am.
2. It is ok to trust myself.
3. It is ok to say I am an adult child.
4. It is ok to know another way to live.
5. It is ok to say no without feeling guilty.
6. It is ok to give myself a break.
7. It is ok to cry when I watch a movie or hear a song.
8. My feelings are ok even if I am still learning how to distinguish them.
9. It is ok to not take care of others when I think.
10. It is ok to feel angry.
11. It is ok to have fun and celebrate.
12. It is ok to make mistakes and to learn.
13. It is ok not to know everything.
14. It is ok to say, "I don't know."
15. It is ok to ask someone to show me how to do things. Red Book p 329

## 9 Denial Worksheet RB 175 My Behavior RB 176 YB 92

Denial also includes trivializing behavior or remarks that were obviously harmful to us. If we don't admit that harmful behavior occurred, then we can still be in denial, and we fail to acknowledge the effects of the harm in our lives. YB 1

BE VERY SPECIFIC - One Incident at a time

What happened	What Age	How I felt	Parents message	My description
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## **10 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** RB 177 YB 96/101

PTSD symptoms can include hypervigilance of surroundings, unexplained body sensations, increased heart rate, and being startled easily. It is as if our bodies rewired themselves to protect us from severe harm that almost (or did) occur. Most adult children are shut down emotionally or "numbed out" We have become adept at shutting down our feelings instantly. It is difficult for us to realize what our body is trying to tell us. We ignore our body or misinterpret its language. YB p. 96

Many of us have endured trauma for so long, that we don't even recognize it. ACA suggests, when a parent misses enough birthdays, curses loudly and hotly long enough, and constantly blames the child for normal needs, then you have an area for review. Yellow Workbook p. 98 Symptoms might include headaches, backaches, and throat problems. Tense shoulders, genital sensations, dull pain, twitches, or numbness. Yellow Workbook p. 99

As you recall information for this worksheet, think about your posture, breathing, or feelings associated with the items you list. Think about whether you were sitting, standing, or lying down. Was the room lighted or dark? Were you outside? Did you place your hands anywhere or squeeze your eyes shut during the trauma or abuse? Did you rock yourself in a chair after the event? Did you take a walk or hide in your closet after the abuse or anticipating abuse? YB 99

Take your time when filling out this worksheet. Maybe even take a break for a day or two and allow feelings and memories to come up. You could also call a sibling and ask them what they remember. Sometimes older or younger siblings have great insights. The goal is to walk through these events, understand them, and be free of them.

Always consult a professional.

**10 Trauma and Neglect Inventory**

RB 183

YB 99

Event	Age	What Happened	Parents Perspective	Symptom Funny Habit	Where stored in Body
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## 11 Feelings Exercise

RB 185

YB 102

Loved	Joyful	ashamed	humorous	irritated
Angry	embarrassed	trusted	betrayed	pleased
Satisfied	ambivalent	hopeful	inspired	loving
Frustrated	sad	grieved	accepted	excited
Grateful	confident	humiliated	guilty	serene
Rested	shame	abandoned	pleasure	safe
Tenacious	playful	thoughtful	fascinated	enthralled

EXAMPLE: I feel HOPEFULL when I ATTEND ACA MEETINGS because I FEEL SAFE AND HEARD.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ because

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## 12 Praise Work

RB 187

YB 103

All too often we beat ourselves up. We forget to focus on the positive, the good within us. Let's begin to focus on the positive and see the glass half full. Have an attitude of gratitude.

Circle the traits you believe you have.

Strong	Compassionate	Spontaneous	trustworthy	Prompt
Humorous	Courteous	Creative	Tenacious	Kind
Sensitive	hard working	Loving	Judicious	Talented
Willing	honest	A Listener	Accepting	A Friend
Intelligent	Organized	Spiritual	ACA Member	Modest

Now find a quiet spot and say out loud, I am \_\_\_\_\_.

It is essential that you remember you have positive qualities and a spiritual direction in your life. Yellow Workbook p. 104

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun \_\_\_\_\_

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 4

Make a list of all the things you love in this world.

Where are you on that list?

Who Prioritized you?

Maybe it's time you prioritize and love yourself.

You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe

deserve your love and affection.

Gandhi

### **Puppy**

Make a list of all the things you would do to care for a puppy.

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Did you include play dates, doctor visits, naps, treats, and snuggles?

Do you deserve as much care as a puppy?

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 5

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. Red Book p. 92

Tony A Step Five - WE admitted to our Higher Power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our childhood abandonment.

### Spiritual Principals – Honesty and Trust

Fifth Step Prayer Red Book p. 206

In Step Five, we talk about what happened. We trust another person to listen to us without judgment. We feel the feelings that come up with help... RB p. 193

Did you ever wish you were someone else?\_\_\_ somewhere else?\_\_\_ dead?\_\_\_

Did you ever try to commit suicide? How many times?

How old were you? Why did you want to die?

Did you ever beat anyone? Who?

Did you molest anyone?

Did you go to jail or prison? For how long? For what?

Did you ever get a DUI?

Were you ever institutionalized?

How old were you? How long did you stay?

Is there anything else you can remember?

Greif Work p. 199-204

Experienced ACA members speak of grief with a sense of serenity rather than with sorrow or resentment. They have made peace with their losses and found wholeness. Red Book p. 200

Read Together: p. 193 and Go Through the Pain p. 195

Homework Read p. 190-206\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for\_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun\_\_\_\_\_

## Character Traits

<b>Healthy</b>	<b>Unhealthy</b>	<b>Healthy</b>	<b>Unhealthy</b>
Considerate	Self-centered	Discreet	Not Discreet
Helpful	Self-indulgent	Stable	Unstable
Generous	Selfish	Peaceful	Violent
Thoughtful	Self-pitying	Calm	Panicky
Open Minded	Closed Minded	Consistent	Inconsistent
Gracious	Stubborn	Sincere	Insincere
Respectful	Disrespectful	Honest	Dishonest
Patient	Impatient	Willing	Unwilling
Tolerant	Intolerant	Accepting	Judgmental
Realistic	Unrealistic	Humble	Arrogant
Cooperative	Dominating	Relaxed	Tense
Outgoing	Withdrawn	Confident	Fearful
Forgiving	Resentful	Hopeful	Despondent
Trusting	Suspicious	Optimistic	Pessimistic
Trustworthy	Untrustworthy	Living in Today	Past or Future
Content	Envious	Hard Working	Lazy
Agreeable	Disagreeable	Prompt	Late
Cheerful	Depressed	Purposeful	Aimless
Courteous	Discourteous	Responsible	Irresponsible
Kind	Unkind	Grateful	Ungrateful
Loving	Hateful	Willing to Grow	Stagnant
Caring	Uncaring	Spiritual	Self-Will



# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 6

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Tony A Step Six - We were entirely ready to begin the healing process with the aid of our Higher Power.

### The Spiritual Principal – Willingness

We have learned that we have a disease of perception. Many adult children are very capable of pointing out and finding their character defects.

Make a list of your positive attributes

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Homework – Read Red Book p. 111-112 and p. 207-216 \_\_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun \_\_\_\_\_

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 7

Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings. RB p. 92

Tony A Step Seven - We humbly asked our Higher Power to help us with our healing process. Spiritual Principals –Humility

### Seventh Step Prayer

“God. I am now ready that you should remove from me all my defects of character, which block me from accepting your divine love and living with true humility toward others. Renew my strength so that I might help myself and others along this path of recovery.” Red Book p. 220 Humility is not humiliation. With humility we find that our will aligns with God’s will. Red Book p. 223

Tony A suggested that if you grew up in a dysfunctional home that does not feel safe or loving, then how can you put trust in a Higher Power. "We projected our abandoning parents onto a Higher Power, believing that God was vengeful or indifferent... We also learned that our compulsion to control ourselves or others was a major stumbling block in our ability to let God help us." Red Book p. 219

Nothing Changes if Nothing changes. We have to risk moving out of isolation and try something new and different, and put our trust in a Sponsor and a Higher Power of our understanding to guide us.

Trust can have different types. Physical, Emotional, Financial, sexual and Spiritual.

Homework Read p. 217-226\_\_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for\_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun\_\_\_\_\_

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 8

Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. Red Book p. 92

Tony A Step Eight - We became willing to open ourselves to receive the unconditional love of our Higher Power.

### Spiritual Principals –Willingness and Self-Forgiveness

Making Amends is not for the other person, it is for you.

Put yourself at the top of the amends list. Who have you harmed the most?

“Forgiving ourselves is foreign to most of us because self forgiveness is nurturing and affirming.” Red Book p. 234 Making amends is about clearing our side of the street up, so if you have any expectations of their response, wait to make the amends.

We have no expectations about their response. Making Amends is for us not for them.

**Forgive** - verb: 1. stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone or something for an offense, flaw, or mistake. 2. Cancel a debt

Synonyms: excuse, overlook, disregard, ignore, pass over, make allowances for, turn a blind eye, turn a deaf ear to, indulge, or tolerate.

**Forgiveness** - noun: the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven.

Synonyms: pardon, absolve, exoneration, dispensation, clemency, or mercy

Find a quiet place with no distractions for several hours and make a list of people you have harmed.

After you feel you have done as much as you can for today, read the list with your sponsor.

Before you make amends, Please talk them over with your sponsor.

# *Forgiveness*

If we are wronged physically, mentally or spiritually, we can develop deep wounds. If we do not forgive, then we continue to harm ourselves, we hold on to the pain, and get stuck. One Doctor said this is the only disease that we have to convince the patient that they have it. Denial is the chief characteristic. I am not the problem, **They Are!**

Some say we act like pigs in slop, all warm and cozy in our misery.

Forgive and we shall be forgiven.

A man in recovery once shared his story. He said his daughter was murdered by her husband. The grieving man said, "I have two choices. Forgive my son in law or make amends to him."

When we refuse to forgive, we may harbor hate, pain, vengeance, or resentment in our heart which weighs upon us rather than the wrongdoer. The price we pay for not forgiving is great, we keep a suspicious mind, we hesitate to trust again, we destroy our creativity, we wallow in negativity and negative actions which retards our growth.

A process of forgiving can be to Look at the other person as just a human, A Child of God just like us, fearful, confused, wounded, and hurting. Try to separate the act from the person. We all make mistakes. Hurting people hurt people.

Forgiveness does not mean that we condone the behavior.

Forgiveness means that we are willing to Let Go and Let God handle it.

Forgiving means we are willing to let go of the pain, the anger, and the resentment and

Be Free!

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 8

Write an Amends Letter Sample Letter:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_, I am in a program of recovery which requires me to clear away the wreckage of my past. Through this program I realized that I have a disease of perception, and I want to set things right. **EXAMPLE:** I was selfish, self centered, and controlling. I lied to you, stole from you, and cheated you and I am very sorry. I was wondering if there is anything I can do to make it up to you? p. 242

Maybe you are at the top of your Amends list. Write a letter to your inner child...

### 5 year old

Dear Sweet, Precious, Beautiful, Intelligent, Darling Little Boy or Girl,

You are a good Girl/Boy. You did nothing wrong. You are safe now and Everything will be Ok. It is Ok to make mistakes, that is how we learn. Give them a big, warm, long hug and say I Love You!

### 10 year old

Dear Creative, Responsible, and Loving Girl/Boy,

You are a good girl/boy. You are safe. I trust you and You are very important to me. I know you are doing the best you can. Do you want to talk about anything? I want to listen. Is there anything I can do for you? Give them a big, warm, hug and say I Love You.

### 15 year old

Dear Amazing, Awesome, Magnificent Intelligent, Girl/Boy,

You are safe now. You didn't do anything wrong. You deserve respect, patience, and compassion. You are so strong and courageous, and very important to me. You could not have done anything differently given what you were taught. Would you like to talk about it? Is there anything I can do for you? Ask them, Can I hug You? Tell them I Love You!

Read the Amends Letters to your Sponsor before you make amends.

You can make amends in person and You can ask your sponsor to go with you.

Homework Read Red Book p. 112-113 \_\_\_\_\_ p. 227-234 \_\_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for \_\_\_\_\_

Something Fun \_\_\_\_\_

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 9

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. Red Book p. 92

Tony A Step Nine - We became willing to accept our own unconditional love by understanding that our Higher Power loves us unconditionally.

### Spiritual Principals –Forgiveness and Courage

“Sincerity, brevity, and humility are the ideas we keep in mind as we make our amends. We must remember that we are making amends for our benefit.” RB p. 241

Read Red Book p. 242 In making Amends, we keep it simple. p. 239

We use the 8th Step list to decide together who and what amends to make.

List of people to make Amends to:

First Amends To Myself

Second Amends \_\_\_\_\_

Third Amends \_\_\_\_\_

Fourth Amends \_\_\_\_\_

Fifth Amends \_\_\_\_\_

Homework Read p. 113-114 \_\_\_\_ p. 235-249 \_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun\_\_\_\_\_

Grateful for\_\_\_\_\_

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 10

Continued to take person inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. Red Book p. 93      Spiritual Principals –Honesty and Discernment

Tony -We continued to take personal inventory and to love and approve of ourselves.

- 1) Personal Inventory Read      p 257\_\_\_\_
- 2) Choice Exercise      p. 258

We have is a disease of perception. My perception is that I don't have a choice. How you perceive life is your choice. Is your glass half empty or half full.

- 3) One day at a Time Exercise      p. 259

We progress from hurting to healing to helping one day at a time.

What tools do you have in recovery? Meetings, telephone, Steps, and Sponsor.

- 4) Feelings and Journaling Exercise p. 260

Feeling is healing. Writing is one way to get feelings out. Try writing every day. At the end of one week, read back what you wrote. What do you notice?

- 5) Praise Exercise p. 261      Make a list of positive qualities about yourself.

You deserve to be treated with love, patience, kindness, gentleness, and respect. If you aren't getting what you want from someone else, try giving it to yourself. Become your own loving parent, and do something loving for yourself.

Homework      Read Red Book p. 114-115\_\_\_\_      p. 250-262\_\_\_\_

Make a list of your Perfect Life\_\_\_\_

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 11

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand God praying only for knowledge of Gods will for us and the power to carry that out. Red Book p. 93

Tony A Step Eleven - 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.

### Spiritual Principals – Seeking and Listening

Prayer may be talking to your Higher Power and Meditation is Listening.

Meditation can be as simple as sitting and breathing deeply in and out.

Try to sit for just five minutes every day and then gradually increase the time.

Through meditation, we learn to reconnect with ourselves and our Higher Power. It is a way of slowing down and finding peace and serenity.

Getting “In” Our Bodies p. 268\_\_\_ God Within p. 271\_\_\_ Meditation Exercise 276\_\_\_

Grief Work revisited: Connecting with our Inner Child p. 275

Homework Read p. 116\_\_\_ p. 263-278\_\_\_

How many times are you waking up at night?\_\_\_\_\_

Look back on p 10 and see how many times you were waking up.

You will probably be getting close to a year in recovery and will be able to date. Make a list of qualities you want in a Romantic Partner. If you have more than 15 items, then you may want to simplify.

Read Red Book p 402- 403\_\_\_

Something that is Fun\_\_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for\_\_\_\_\_



# *Grief*

Grief usually presents itself as depression or lethargy... ACA offers a safe place where we can grieve our childhood losses without being judged. Red Book p 331

Seeking our grief is an honest effort to go inward to find the God of our understanding. Red Book p 201 Grief work restores the power of tears. We cry deeply knowing that we are finally safe and that we are finally understood. RB 202

In grief work, we find it easier to have forgiving thoughts of our parents because we begin to have forgiving thoughts of ourselves. Red Book 202.

There are several ways to channel our grief.

1. Journaling RB 203
2. Looking at Photos remembering and letting go RB 150
3. Role Playing RB 203

For example you might model, What a healthy parent/family do?

4. Some grief work simply takes time to heal. Red Book 203
5. Guided Meditation Red Book 275

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross developed stages of Grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. There is no particular order, not everyone experiences all of them, but some people may repeat several stages.

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 11

### Inner Drug Store

"we believe that some of our stored feelings become a "drug," driving us from the inside to harm ourselves or others... As codependents we seek to control others or live through others without truly realizing that we are driven on the inside by fear and emotional pain... some of us became addicted to excitement." RB 457

"We might question the use of fear or emotional pain as a drug... for the adult child, the pay-off involves finding familiarity. Since we have known primarily fear and emotional pain as children, we can seek this out to feel normal as adults. We seek the familiar even though we know we are harming or neglecting ourselves in the process. To see the effects of inner drugs, we can inventory our relationships and find a pattern of emotional pain or fear based decisions... we are not at fault for using feelings as inner drugs." Red book p 457

Whether we use external distractions like alcohol, pills, drugs, shopping, sex, food, gambling, or our internal drug store, the result is the same, we are disconnected from ourselves and our Higher Power. This disconnection can also be called Dissociation which is discussed in the ACA Red book on page 459.

Many of us unknowingly have been self will run riot. Often times, it can be difficult to slow down for prayer and meditation, but they will improve your recovery by increasing your conscious contact with a higher power.

ACA Founder, Tony A said prayer and meditation saved his life. February 1991 talk on YouTube look for 'Tony A Talk New Steps'

# A NEW LIFE

## STEP 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. Red Book p. 93

Tony A Step Twelve - We have had a spiritual awakening as the result of taking these steps, and we continue to love ourselves and to practice these principals in all our affairs.

### Spiritual Principals – Love and Self Love

God Exists p. 283

Avoiding A Spiritual Bypass p. 287

Service is Grounded in Self-Love p. 288

Get out of Your Self p. 292

Homework Read p. 116-117\_\_\_\_\_ p. 279-294\_\_\_\_\_

Something you are Grateful for\_\_\_\_\_

Something that is Fun\_\_\_\_\_

Thank You for Sharing your Experience, Strength, and Hope.

May You Become All that you are Intended!!

# Spiritual Experience

## The Story of Wild Bill

During WW II, The Americans liberated a Nazi concentration camps. Many prisoners were so malnourished and weak that they still died even after they were freed. Those who survived needed to be returned to their homes, but the Americans did not speak all the different languages. There were German Jews, French Jews, Polish Jews, Russian Jews, and more. It was discovered that one of the prisoners spoke 5 different languages so he was asked to help. This man had a long wiry mustache that reminded the American's of Wild Bill Hickok, so they nicknamed him Wild Bill. Since Wild Bill was in good health, the American assumed that he had just arrived to the concentration camp. After a time, the Americans asked Wild Bill how long he was there and he said 6 years. The soldiers were amazed and asked what his story was. Wild Bill told them the Nazi's came to his village and rounded up all the people. When they found out that Bill could speak five languages the Nazi's thought he would be useful to them. The Nazi's shot his wife and five children right in front of him. Wild Bill decided that he could hate them or forgive them.

Over the years in the concentration camp, Wild Bill became known for his unbiased positions and was often the mediator for all the different groups in the concentration camp. Even inside the concentration camp, many of the people could not get along. Wild Bill became known for his fairness, kindness and compassion so many people brought their disputes to him. Even after 6 years, Wild Bill stayed and worked tirelessly 12 hours a day to help people get on the right train, back to home.

This story illustrates the power of forgiveness, blooming where you are planting, and unconditional love for all.

# DEFINITIONS

**14 TRAITS** - also known as The Laundry List See Red Book p. 587

**ACA Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families** - "The disease of family dysfunction manifests itself in dependency, addiction, and dissociative personalities. The disease can kill. Every day, adult children commit suicide, die in addiction, or die one day at a time in silent isolation, thinking they are hopeless. In ACA we believe we were born whole and became fragmented in body, mind, and spirit through abandonment and shame. We need help finding a way to return to our miracle state." Red Book p. 143

**ABANDONMENT** - "One form is as simple as the parent leaving the child alone without returning. Or it can involve parental perfectionism in which a child's behavior never measures up. Parents abandon their children when they fail to praise or recognize a child's true effort to please the parent. Instead most parents are quick to criticize and correct a child's behavior but rarely find time to praise the child or to build confidence for good choices." Red Book p. 11

**ABUSE** - "For our purposes, abuse can be verbal, nonverbal, emotional, physical, religious, and sexual. We believe that hitting, threats, projections, belittlement, and indifference are the delivery mechanisms that deeply insert the disease of family dysfunction within us. Abuse can be a single traumatic event or it can be cumulative events over time. Some of the signs of abuse and neglect are addiction, codependence, workaholism, and phobias." Red Book p. 27

**ACCEPTANCE** - Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation - some fact of my life - unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake." Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition p. 417

**ADDICTION** - Many realize that their addiction to drugs, work, sex, or food is a symptom of being raised in an abusive or neglectful family. Red Book p 448.

**ALCOHOLISM** - Alcoholism is a disease that affects the body mind and spirit and is chronic, progressive, and fatal if left untreated. According to the American Medical Association (AMA), American Psychiatric Association (APA), and the Center for Disease Control (CDC), a woman may have a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) if they

consume more than 7 drinks in one week and a man may have SUD if he consumes 14 or more drinks a week. A binge is considered 4 or more drinks on one occasion.

It became clear that alcoholics have a different concept of one drink so the professionals qualified what one drink is: one 12 ounce beer, one 4-5 ounce glass of wine, and 1 ½ ounces of hard alcohol (Gin, Rum, Vodka, Whisky, etc.) Individuals and their families should consult a professional for a Substance Use Disorder diagnosis and treatment options.

**AMENDS** - Step 9, made direct amends to such people, takes more people out of recovery than any other step. Humbling ourselves to admit we were wrong may be the scariest thing we have ever done, but making amends is not for the other person. If we want to truly be free, we have to make amends. In fact, my sponsor told me to put myself at the top of the list. My sponsor asked me, Who have I hurt more than anyone else in the world? Myself. Making amends to oneself can be as easy as getting to a meeting and beginning to work with others. Making amends to others can be as simple as saying, "I'm sorry. What can I do to make it up to you."

**ANGER** - Anger is defined as a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility. The ACA book describes anger as, "tightened jaw, upwelling in the chest, gritted teeth, dilated pupils, angry thoughts." Red Book p. 162

**BALANCE** - In ACA we learn that balance is an important aspect of healthy living. "The Promises represent a balance of action, feeling and being. This is the spiritual material that self-love is made from." Red Book 442

**BILL OF RIGHTS** In 2019 ACA is discussing making Rights conference approved.

1. Life should have choices beyond mere survival.
2. You have the right to say no to anything when you feel you are not ready or safe.
3. Life should not be motivated by fear.
4. You have a right to all your feelings.
5. You are probably not guilty.
6. You have a right to make mistakes.
7. There is no need to smile when you cry.
8. You have the right to terminate conversations with people who make you feel put down and humiliated.
9. You can be healthier than those around you.
10. It is okay to be relaxed, playful and frivolous.
11. You have a right to change and grow.
12. It is important to set limits and be selfish.
13. You can be angry with someone you love.
14. You can take care of yourself, no matter what circumstances you are in.

**BIRTHDAY** - A recovery birthday is a date that the individual picks and marks their annual anniversary of recovery. The recovery birthday could be the first day you went to a meeting, the first day you got a sponsor, or when you started working the steps. You decide when your recovery begins.

**DEPRESSION** - Everyone feels down from time to time, but if it lasts for more than two weeks or if you have 5 or more symptoms please consult a professional.

1. Loss of interest or pleasure in normal activities
2. Weight gain or weight loss
3. Sleeping too much or too little
4. Loss of energy
5. Feeling worthless or guilty
6. Loss of concentration
7. Suicidal
8. Hyperactivity or Sloth
9. Depressed Mood

**DISSOCIATION** - "As ACA's, we can dissociate from ourselves in a variety of ways that are difficult to recognize until we get help. In addition to drugs, work, sex, or food, we dissociate in other manners that block a true connection with ourselves and a Higher Power. Other examples of dissociation include: compulsive cleaning, compulsive exercising, obsessive reading, fantasizing about sex or romance, telephone sex, pornography, compulsive masturbation, workaholism, and harmful thrill seeking. There is also compulsive spending and hoarding. Many of us leave clutter about our houses to cover up things we do not want to look at in ourselves." Red Book p 459

**EMBARRASSED** - An emotion arising from being exposed, caught in the act, confronted, ridiculed. Red Book p. 162

**EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY** - We cease self-harming behavior and make an effort to mature emotionally and spiritually. Emotional sobriety is evident in our willing to seek and do God's (Higher Power) will. Red Book p. 347

**FEAR** - pounding heartbeat, dilated pupils, increased breathing, tightened skin, extreme alertness. Red Book 162

**FORGIVENESS** is letting go of the desire for a different past.

**GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE** GSR - Attends Business meetings, Intergroup meetings, and World Service Organization (WSO) meetings. Red Book

600 A GSR listens to concerns and requests from their meeting and brings them to the Intergroup so is the link between their meeting and the WSO.

**GRIEF** - A sense that something has been taken. Red Book p. 163 Elizabeth Kubler Ross stated that there are stages of grief and can be experienced in any order and even repeated. Denial, anger, Bargaining Depression, and Acceptance. One therapist suggested that I take some time each day to grieve over the loss of my childhood.

**GUILT** - A sense of unease or regret for a wrongful or neglectful act against another. Red Book 162 Guilt is about what we have done and shame is about who we are.

**HELPLESSNESS** - Inability to defend oneself. noun

**HITTING BOTTOM** - Recognizing that we have bottomed out with drugs, control, or another compulsive behavior is a critical first step toward ACA recovery. While a bottom is in progress, denial is rampant. RB p.66 We must shatter the illusion that we can reason out a painless solution. We cannot grow and find our true inner selves as long as we engage in family dysfunction that is draining and unhealthy. RB p.123

**HUMILITY** - A modest or low view of one's own importance. Noun "True humility is the willingness to seek and do God's will with our best effort." Red Book p 223

**INNER CHILD** - "The Inner Child has original trust, original belief, and original love. The child within understands feelings and the language of the Higher Power. The Inner Child or True Self is present during our spiritual experiences and underpins our spiritual awakening." Red Book p. 302

**INTERGROUP** - An Intergroup helps organize meetings and activities in their geographical area and to carry the ACA message into treatment centers and other facilities. Each ACA group is autonomous, but the groups routinely seek guidance from Intergroups, Regions, and WSO (World Service Organization) for group affairs. Red Book p 509.

**JOY** - A feeling of great pleasure and happiness. Noun

**LAUNDRY LIST** - also known as the 14 Traits Red Book p. 587

**LOVING PARENT** - Red Book p. 298 "A Loving Parent asks us to think about what we have been told about ourselves. A Loving Parent supports us in breaking the loyalty to unhealthy family messages and beliefs. Red Book p. 302

**LOVED** - A sense of feeling valued, understood, and heard. Feeling safe, warmth in heart and lightness of body. Red Book p. 162

**MISTAKES** - Mistakes can mean shame or a sense of failure for many of us. Most of us agonize over mistakes because we internalize the error. We believe we are the mistake instead of understanding that we make mistakes. Red Book p. 38 With self-



love and patience, we can find value in our mistakes. We learn from our mistakes rather than condemning ourselves. Red Book p. 440 Thomas Edison tried 1,000 times before he made the light bulb work. That means he made 999 mistakes. So give yourself a break and try 1,000 times to make your light shine!

**NON-DOMINANT HANDWRITING** - Which ever hand you normally write with is your dominant hand and the other is your non-dominant. Non-dominant handwriting is a way to get in touch with your inner child. Try writing questions with your dominant hand and answer with your non-dominant. Red Book 305

**ONGOING RECOVERY** - These six suggestions of ACA recovery represent the basics whether we are a newcomer or a member with years in the program:

1. Stop acting out on food, sex, relationships, gambling, spending, or alcohol/drugs.
2. Go to meetings regularly and break the don't talk rule.
3. Get a sponsor and work the Twelve Steps
4. Get the ACA big book. Give yourself a break and read it.
5. Get telephone numbers. Don't isolate.
6. Get a Higher Power. Red Book p. 571

**PANIC ATTACK** - a discrete period in which there is the sudden onset of intense apprehension, fearfulness, or terror often associated with feelings of impending doom. During these attacks, symptoms such as shortness of breath, palpitations, chest pain or discomfort, choking or smothering sensations, and fear of "going crazy" or losing control are present. DSM IV p. 393

**POWERLESSNESS** - Lack of ability, influence, or power. noun

**PROBLEM** - Red Book p. 589

**PROMISES** - Red Book p. 591

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 will learn to expect the best and get it.

**PTSD** - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD was initially identified as a condition that affected war veterans or victims of traumatic events such as a natural disaster. It is a generally accepted fact that ACA members who lived through violent and unsafe homes developed PTSD. PTSD symptoms can include hypervigilance or the constant monitoring of one's surroundings for potential threat of harm. Other symptoms can include an uneasiness that is associated with a certain place or event. There can also be sensations in the body that seem unexplainable but persistent under certain conditions. Rage is also a symptom. Red Book p. 345

"PTSD is a condition of the body and mind in which a person stores the memory of a violent attack or life-threatening event. The intense feelings of fear, despair, or potential loss become stored in the body and mind creating post traumatic stress. The condition can govern behavior and decisions on a subconscious level. In some cases the fear can be triggered by events similar to the original trauma." Red Book p. 344

People who experience flood, fire, earthquake, gunfire, yelling, fighting, getting lost or separated, rape, murder, or war, may have physical and mental trauma as the result of surviving these events. Symptoms can include shortness of breath, a feeling that the walls are closing in, headaches, dizziness, vomiting, or tightness in the chest.

PTSD is characterized by the reexperiencing of an extremely traumatic event accompanied by symptoms of increased arousal and by avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma. DSM-IV p. 393

**PURPOSE OF ACA** - (1) to shelter and support 'newcomer' in confronting 'denial'; (2) to comfort those mourning their early loss of security, trust and love; and (3) to teach the skills for reparenting ourselves with gentleness humor, love and respect. RB p. 82

**REGION** - Regions are formed by several Intergroups in a geographical area. RB 509

**RELAPSE** - An ACA relapse can involve a return to sustained dependency on our survival traits or family role. Another type of ACA relapse can involve binging on food, sex, or drugs. Red Book p. 69

**SAFETY IN MEETINGS** - In rare instances, ACA groups have had to address the problematic behavior of a group member. It is important to remember that all group members are responsible for group safety and order. Red Book p. 584-585

1. Tradition One - Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon ACA unity.
2. Two or more group members can ask a disruptive person to leave.
3. If problematic behaviors persist, ask the person to take a break from the meeting.

4. If the person is disruptive and will not leave the meeting, escort them out.
5. If the disruptive person becomes violent or threatening, shut down the meeting immediately and have all members depart for the common welfare.

6. Call the police if there is a clear and present danger to lives, health, or property.

**SHAME** - "Shame involves a belief that we are inferior, defective, or unwanted. Unlike guilt which is usually associated with an action, we can have a general feeling of shame without having to do anything." Red Book p. 344

**SPEAKERS** - ACA members share their experience strength and hope by telling their story. To hear Speakers online go to [www.acaconvention.org/history](http://www.acaconvention.org/history)

**SPIRITUAL AWAKENING** - With a Spiritual Awakening, we move from theories about God to the belief that a Higher Power is accessible and hears our prayers. We know that a loving god or a Spirit of The Universe exists... In AA, there is the dramatic spiritual awakening or "bright light" experience. AA Cofounder, Bill Wilson, had such an experience in 1934 as he faced near insanity brought on by an alcoholic binge. This experience is not the norm, but it does occur. The dramatic experience can bring about a profound change in attitude and belief in a Higher Power. There is also a spiritual awakening of the "educational variety." This gradual awakening emerges as the person comes to a greater understanding of a Higher Power through Step work, meditation, prayer, and helping others find ACA." Red Book p. 283 "ACA is a spiritual program that confronts the effects of the disease of dysfunction head on. The disease affects our bodies, minds, and spirits and requires a spiritual solution for lasting impact." Red Book p. 107

**SPIRITUAL AXIOM** - It is a Spiritual Axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something going on in us. AA 12 X 12 p. 90.

**SPIRITUALITY** - Spirituality is a surrendering process. We surrender the illusion that we must have all the answers, that we must be in charge so we can hide our shame. By becoming aware of the reality of what we are able to control, by facing our old fears of being out of control, we become willing. Red Book p. xxii

**SOLUTION** - Red Book p. 590

**SPONSOR** - A Sponsor is someone who attends meetings regularly, works an active ACA program, and is willing to be available in assisting you in your program. The sponsor will not work your program for you, but he or she can offer support, hope and clarity. We strongly suggest getting a sponsor early on. Do not go it alone. Our experience shows that you cannot recover in isolation. Red Book, p. 125 A Sponsor is not a therapist, baby sitter, bank, grocery store, or taxi.

**STAGES OF MOURNING** - According to ACA, the First Stage is Moving out of Isolation, Second is a Return of Feelings, and third is Reparenting ourselves, Red Book 82-83. Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross defined the stages of grief as Denial, Anger Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance and suggested that not everyone goes through all the stages and some may even repeat the same one.

**STEPS** - The ACA Steps are in the Red Book on page 586, and are modeled after the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 steps written by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith in 1935. The ACA founder, Tony A also wrote 12 steps for the adult child which he published in his book, *The Laundry List* in 1991.

**SUD** - Substance Use Disorder - The essential feature of SUD is a cluster of cognitive, behavior, and physiological symptoms indicating that the individual continues use of the substance despite significant substance related problems. Dependence is defined as a cluster of three or more of the symptoms listed below occurring at any time in the same 12-month period. According to the American Psychiatric Association, APA DSM V, p. 176 1. Increased Tolerance 2. Withdrawals when substance is no longer used 3. Substance taken in larger amounts or over a longer periods of time 4. Persistent desire 5. Great deal of time spent on activities necessary to obtain the substance 6. Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance use 7. The substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance. DSM IV p. 181.

**TONY A** - Founder of ACA in 1978 and author of *The Laundry List in 1991*. ACA and its beginnings, Red Book xxxi. Tony has a quote in the Red Book on page 625

**TRADITIONS** - Red Book p. 592

**TRAUMA** - Defined as severe shock caused by an injury. In the Red Book p. 624 "Trauma was defined as the maximal arousal of the sympathetic nervous system by pain or the threat of pain." We have also learned that pain can be emotional or physical, sexual, spiritual, and financial.

**TRUE SELF** -The True Self has been referred to as "The Inner Child (who) has original trust, original belief, and original love. The child within understands feelings and the language of the Higher Power. The Inner Child or True Self is present during our spiritual experiences and underpins our spiritual awakening." Red Book p. 302

**WORKPLACE LAUNDRY LIST** - The workplace laundry list is a list of 24 statements that describe many of our thoughts and interactions at work. Red Book p. 416-419

All Red Book or RB references are to the *Adult Children of Alcoholics* book, 2006.