



Adult Children of Alcoholics/ Dysfunctional Families
SUNDAY 2 pm (Pacific time) **Anger Release Meeting Format**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86390602690?pwd=OGFyQUtpQXhkTzIzL0lwNnhHcUdWZz09>

Zoom ID 863-9060-2690 Pwd: sharelove

LEADER: Hello, my name is _____ Welcome to the Sunday Anger Release meeting of Adult Children of Alcoholics/ Dysfunctional Families.

We meet to share our experience growing up in an alcoholic or dysfunctional home, the way it affected us then and the ways it affects us today. By practicing the 12 steps, by focusing on the Solution and by accepting a Higher Power of our understanding, we find freedom from denial of the effects that growing up in an alcoholic or dysfunctional home had on our lives. We identify with the Problem and learn to live in the Solution, One Day at a Time.

Please unmute yourselves and join me in the ACA Serenity Prayer.

ALL: God, grant me the serenity
To accept the people I cannot change,
The courage to change the one I can,
And the wisdom to know that one is me.

LEADER: You may mute yourselves again. To any newcomers to the ACA program, please be aware that this is a special workshop for anger, not a regular ACA meeting. Please consult the ACA website for any regular ACA meetings. To any newcomers to the anger workshop, Welcome. This is a safe place to express anger and other feelings.

Would someone like to read “The PROBLEM?” (*Group member reads*)

The Problem

Many of us found that we had several characteristics in common as a result of being raised in dysfunctional families which may have included alcoholism, rage-aholism, etc.

As children, we did not receive the acceptance and respect we needed and deserved for a “healthy” development. Our families may have mistreated us in different ways – through neglect, beatings, sexual abuse, denying our reality, and other humiliating forms of abuse. We may have been told we were loved, even though we could see that we were not being treated in a loving way. We may have idolized them and believed that we deserved their treatment. We experienced anger along with confusion, loneliness, fear, sadness and pain. There was no safe way to express our feelings, and no one to hear us.

Other people often told us what we should be feeling, and forced us to adopt their feelings. The boundaries between us and the rest of the world were blurred or nonexistent. To protect ourselves, we became people pleasers and lost our own feelings and identities in the process. We adopted our abusers’ guilt and shame and began to feel that we were bad. This was the root of our low self-esteem.

After losing the right to have our own feelings, we were shamed for a natural part of ourselves. The loss we suffered was enormous. Making a child feel bad for having feelings is like shaming a rainbow for shining colors. We eventually felt embarrassed about having feelings and repressed them. The repressed feelings became buried in our unconscious, fighting to be expressed.

The feelings built up as we pushed them back and turned them in, onto ourselves. Some of the common side effects of suppressed feelings are: depression, numbness, isolation, unworkable relationships, body aches and pains, fatigue, compulsive behavior, binge eating, rage, self-hatred, hurting or mutilating oneself, sexual perversion, cruelty and crime. Our caged-up feelings, especially anger, are so difficult to contain that we often misdirect the energy and take it out on ourselves or other innocent bystanders.

Anger, more than any other feeling, was often forbidden. When we tried to show our anger toward our parents or others, we were threatened, shamed, sent to our rooms or beaten. They could get angry at us, but we were told we were bad if we showed anger at them. So we locked up our anger along with our other feelings. It was not our fault. We needed these coping skills to survive our childhoods.

This is a description, not an indictment.

LEADER: *Would someone like to read “The SOLUTION?” (Group member reads)*

THE SOLUTION

As ACA becomes a safe place for you, you will find freedom to express all the hurts and fears that you have kept inside and to free yourself from the shame and blame that are carry-overs from the past. You will become an adult who is imprisoned no longer by childhood reactions. You will recover the child within you, learning to love and accept yourself.

The healing begins when we risk moving out of isolation. Feelings and buried memories will return. By gradually releasing the burden of unexpressed grief, we slowly move out of the past. We learn to re-parent ourselves with gentleness, humor, love and respect.

This process allows us to see our biological parents as the instruments of our existence. Our actual parent is a Higher Power whom some of us choose to call G-d. Although we had alcoholic or dysfunctional parents, our Higher Power gave us the Twelve Steps of Recovery.

This is the action and work that heals us. We suggest using the “building blocks”: Sharing, Steps, Sponsor, Service, Support.

We suggest sharing our experience, strength, hope and being a presence at meetings. We suggest doing the steps with a sponsor, to do service, to reach out through the telephone for support. When we recover, we recover our identity.

We learn to restructure our sick thinking one day at a time. When we release our parents from responsibility for our actions today, we become free to make healthful decisions as actors, not reactors. We progress from hurting, to healing, to helping. We awaken to a sense of wholeness we never knew was possible.

By attending these meetings on a regular basis, you will come to see parental alcoholism or family dysfunction for what it is: a disease that infected you as a child and continues to affect you as an adult. You will learn to keep the focus on yourself in the here and now. You will take responsibility for your own life and supply your own parenting.

You will not do this alone. Look around you and you will see others who know how you feel. We love and encourage you no matter what. We ask you to accept us just as we accept you.

This is a spiritual program based on action coming from love. We are sure that as the love grows inside you, you will see beautiful changes in all your relationships, especially with your Higher Power, yourself and your parents.

LEADER: *Would someone like to read “The 12 Steps?” (Group member reads)*

The 12 Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over the effects of alcoholism or other family dysfunction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others who still suffer, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

LEADER:

As it says in the ACA Red Book, "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, in addition to creating stored anger.

"Most adult children deny they have anger and therefore deny they are angry. On the other hand, there are some adult children who can explode with anger but never seem to tap the stored anger deep within them. Without naming their childhood loss, they can 'recharge' and explode repeatedly, feeling ashamed or confused by their behavior. They really want to change or curb their anger, but they feel powerless to do so."

The goal of this meeting is to give you a place to "lift up" your anger and find out about its sources in your childhood. It may come from childhood violence, trauma or even situations such as having felt unsafe in your home, being deprived of the opportunity to learn to play, or the loss of your identity. It may be helpful to connect your feelings today with the feelings you had as a child.

****Ask yourself: When is the first time I felt this way? ****

At this meeting, we find support to express the anger we had to keep bottled up as children. We are encouraged to yell, scream, and fight back against those who harmed us, rather than to take our anger out on innocent bystanders or ourselves. Allowing ourselves to direct the anger at the people who hurt us when we were children, and feeling the pain, fear and frustration associated with it, is the only way out of rage. We can use our creative ability to bring our aggressors, alive or dead, in front of us here, and we can strike back at them in anger.

Many of us fear that if we let our anger out, it will overwhelm us and never stop. This is not the case. As you will see in this workshop, anger once released loses its power over us and leaves us relieved rather than rageful. It also allows us to release the pain of the past that may be masked by the anger.

This is a good place to work on boundaries. Remember, the people processing are not angry at you and are not hitting you. Likewise, you can express anger or hit the pillow without hurting yourself physically, mentally, or spiritually. By following our guidelines, we make the meeting safe for everyone including you.

LEADER: Would someone like to read “the Guidelines for Sharing?” (*Group member reads*)

Anger Release Guidelines for Sharing

You may want to sit on the floor, a couch or bed with a soft pillow to hit. For safety reasons, please hit only soft materials. Some people attend this meeting from a car where they yell without disturbing others. Please mute yourself during someone else’s share.

This is a no-crosstalk meeting, which means no commenting or referring directly or indirectly to anyone else’s share during the meeting. Please save your comments until after the meeting. It is okay to say... “something has been brought up for me.”

It is not okay to direct anger at any member of the group, including yourself. This includes processing anger towards groups of people based on their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

Please respect the time limits for sharing and stop when you hear the second beep.

If you agree to these guidelines, PLEASE signify by raising your hand, or refrain from sharing. Any member of the group may enforce these safety measures by a gentle reminder. We err on the side of safety. Thank you.

LEADER:.

We have agreed to use a timer for five (5) minutes. After four minutes, the timer will go off, followed by an additional minute. After the timer goes off please wrap up your sharing as soon as possible. (Meeting members can vote to change the sharing time if desired.)

Would anyone like to be the timer? Who would like to share?

(Group members share for agreed upon time.)

After everyone has shared, the group may express anger together for one minute, by hitting a pillow, stomping, vocalizing, using bad language, pressing against a wall, or any physical expression of anger which does not harm ourselves or others.

LEADER: It’s time for the 7th tradition. According to our Seventh Tradition, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Our group expenses include rent for this Zoom meeting. Payments can be made online at <https://shareselfhelp.org/donate-share-the-self-help-and-recovery-exchange/>

LEADER: Are there any announcements?

The following meetings are held in Pacific time.

ACA “Becoming Your Own Loving Parent” (Chapter 8 of the Big Red Book) 6 pm Sunday

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85456964208?pwd=WFV2TGQvbCtnenk2alRhUytQbUViUT09>

Zoom ID 854-5696-4208 Password: sharelove

ACA for people of color—Tues. 4 pm Speaker/share/Reading/Inner child. For info contact

ACA4POC@yahoo.com

Transforming trauma into healing and recovery, Underearners Anonymous, Weds. 8 pm

Zoom ID 852-6114-1619 Email Nicole@shareselfhelp.org for Password

LEADER: It is important to feel complete before leaving this Zoom meeting. Feel free to take time after the meeting to share with others what came up for you. To prevent stiffening and sore muscles, we recommend stretching and/or a hot bath with Epson salts.

At this time, let us close our eyes and spend a few moments breathing in and out deeply, releasing any extra tension we have in our bodies. We will breathe in and out three times.

Would anyone like to read the ACA Personal Bill of Rights? (*Group member reads*)

ACA Personal Bill of Rights

1. Life should have choices beyond mere survival.
2. You have a right to say “NO” to anything that you feel you are not ready for or that feels unsafe.
3. Life should not be motivated by fear.
4. You have a right to all your feelings.
5. You probably are not guilty.
6. You have a right to make mistakes.
7. There is no need to smile when you cry.
8. You have a 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 O.K. 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 at someone you love.
14. You can take care of yourself, under any circumstances.

LEADER: Thank you for joining us, and please keep coming back. Would anyone like to lead us in the Unity Statement?

Unity

I put my hand in yours
and together we can do
what we could never do alone.

No longer is there a sense of hopelessness.
No longer must we each depend upon
our own unsteady willpower.

We are all together now,
reaching out our hands for strength
greater than our own.

And as we join hands,
We find love and understanding
Beyond our wildest dreams.

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KEEP COMING BACK—IT WORKS IF YOU WORK IT AND YOU’RE WORTH IT