



Loving Parent Guidebook Book Study & Discussion

(Prior to the start of the meeting, the secretary hands out the readings)

Hello. Welcome to the *SHARE at Noon! Loving Parent Guidebook Book Study & Discussion* meeting of Adult Children of Alcoholics and other Dysfunctional Families.

My name is _____ and I'm an ACA and the leader for today. The only requirement for membership in ACA is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family.

Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves by first names only. *(Everyone introduces themselves.)*

I've asked _____ to read the ACA Welcome Statement.

I've asked _____ to read the 12 Steps.

I've asked _____ to read the Solution is to Become Your Own Loving Parent.

If you are attending an ACA meeting for the first time or new to this meeting, will you please introduce yourself again by your first name only? This is not to embarrass you but so we may welcome you and get to know you.

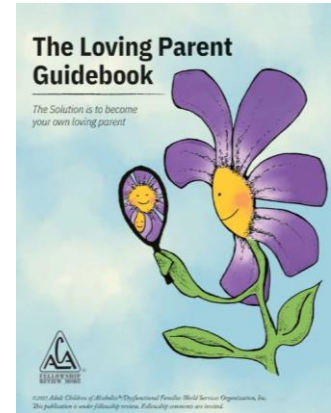
Welcome everyone. We hope you will begin to get the freedom from your past dysfunction, trauma and pain that you deserve. We believe both you and your life can change, and will change as you become your own Loving Parent.

In the beginning, many of us could not see that some of our current self-talk, attitudes and behaviors result from our experiences related to alcoholism or other family dysfunction. We define an "adult child" as someone who responds to adult situations with self-doubt, self-blame, and/or a sense of feeling inferior – often learned from stages of childhood. Without help, we unknowingly operate with critical thoughts and judgments of ourselves. This sometimes sabotages our decisions, relationships and lives. By attending meetings, studying the ACA literature and fostering fellowship regularly, we come to know and begin to act as our true Selves. When we work the ACA Program together, we learn to become

our own “Loving Parent.” We begin to understand that we are on the path to recovery, and that we are equal to others, neither better than nor less than; we are doing the best we can!

Today’s meeting is a book study followed by writing and sharing. The meeting format consists of readings from *ACA’s Loving Parent Guidebook*, writing and sharing. At the conclusion of the workbook, we will start again at the beginning of the book.

We will now begin reading where we left off last week. Each person will read a paragraph or two, or choose to “pass” if they prefer not to read. We will continue reading this way for 10 minutes. *(Please set timer accordingly for 10 minutes)*



That concludes our workbook reading for today’s meeting. We will now write for 8 minutes on the reading or whatever is going on with us. *(Please set timer accordingly for 8 minutes)*

That concludes our writing for today’s meeting.

For the remainder of the meeting until 12:55, we will share about the reading or our writing or another aspect of developing our Loving Parent. To allow everyone a chance to share during the meeting, we ask each person to limit their sharing to 3 - 5 minutes. *(Agree on a sharing time: if it’s more people, reduce the time).*

I’ve asked _____ to read the ACA Sharing Guidelines.

We’ll now begin sharing. *(Please set timer accordingly)*

(At 12:55) That concludes the sharing portion of our meeting.

It’s now time for the 7th Tradition which states that “Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” The suggested donation for this meeting is \$2 to \$3 and is used for rent, meeting supplies and support for ACA. As always, we need you more than we need your money-no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

It’s now time for announcements.

Do we have any announcements about literature, phone list, the treasury, intergroup or other ACA related announcements? Please be concise and brief.

A great way to work the 12th Step is to take on service positions. We have group service positions available. These positions carry a 6-month commitment: Jan 1- Jun 30 and Jul 1- Dec 31.

Let's thank everyone that helps put on our meeting.

Finally, let's thank the leader _____ for leading a great meeting!

(Hand this back to today's Leader.)

Thank you for being here and please keep coming back. If you did not have a chance to share, please speak to someone after the meeting if you need to talk.

I've asked _____ to read the ACA Promises

Let's close the meeting with the we version of the Serenity Prayer?

(Stand and form a circle holding hands.)

"Keep coming back. It works if you work it an you're worth it."



THE ACA WELCOME STATEMENT

In ACA, we meet to share the experience we had as children growing up in an alcoholic or dysfunctional home. That experience affected us then and it affects us today. By practicing the 12 Steps of ACA, by focusing on Becoming our own Loving Parent as the ACA Solution and by accepting a Higher Power of our understanding, we find freedom from the effects of alcoholism and other family dysfunction. As it says in the ACA Red Book, “As Fellow Travelers we share the same road but urge everyone to choose their own way... With a willingness to be a fellow traveler... we can help each other find the ACA Solution through the Steps and through reparenting ourselves.” (ACA Red Book, pp 370-371.)

We identify with “The Problem” and learn to live in “The Solution,” one day at a time.

You may have related to ACA even if there was no apparent alcoholism or addiction in your home. This is common because dysfunction can occur in a family without the presence of addiction. We welcome you.



ACA 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 a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others who still suffer, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



The Solution is to Become Your Own Loving Parent

As ACA becomes a safe place for you, you will find freedom to express all the hurts and fears you have kept inside and to free yourself from the shame and blame that are carryovers 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 accept and love 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 God. Although we had alcoholic or dysfunctional parents, our Higher Power gave us the Twelve Steps of Recovery.

This is the action and work that heals us: we use the Steps; we use the meetings; we use the telephone. We share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. We learn to restructure our sick thinking one day at a time. When we release our parents from responsibility for our actions today, we become free to make healthful decisions as actors, not reactors. We progress from hurting, to healing, to helping. We awaken to a sense of wholeness we never knew was possible.

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



ACA PROMISES

1. We will discover our real identities by loving and accepting ourselves.
2. Our self-esteem will increase as we give ourselves approval on a daily basis.
3. Fear of authority figures and the need to people please will leave us.
4. Our ability to share intimacy will grow inside us.
5. As we face our abandonment issues, we will be attracted by strengths and become more tolerant of 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. Fear 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.



The ACA SHARING GUIDELINES

ACA is a safe place to open up and share. We encourage each member to share openly about his or her experiences.

ACA is an anonymous program. We do not talk about another person's story or experiences to other people. Please respect the anonymity of those who share with us today. What you hear here, let it stay here.

CROSS TALK

Many ACA members come from family backgrounds where feelings and perceptions were judged as wrong or defective. In ACA, each person may share his or her experience, feelings and perceptions without fear of judgment or interruption. As part of creating that safety, cross talk is not permitted. Cross talk means interrupting, referring to, or commenting on what another person has said during the meeting.

This is important for two reasons. When we were growing up, no one listened to us: they told us that our feelings were wrong. Second, as adults, we are accustomed to taking care of other people and not taking responsibility for our lives. In ACA, we speak about our own experience and feelings; we accept without comment what others say because it is true for them. We work toward taking more responsibility in our lives rather than giving advice to others.

FIXING OTHERS: LEARNING TO LISTEN

In ACA, we do not touch, hug, offer tissues or attempt to comfort others when they become emotional during an ACA meeting. If someone begins to cry during a meeting, we allow the person to feel his or her feelings without interruption. Each person may help themselves to tissues if they need them.

To touch or hug is known as "fixing." As children we tried to fix our parents or to control them with our behavior. In ACA, we are learning to take care of ourselves. We support others by accepting them into our meetings and listening to them. We allow them to feel their feelings in peace.

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 a power and strength greater than our own,

and as we join hands,
we find love and understanding
beyond our wildest dreams!