

ACA in the Workplace, Monday 18:00 CET (11 AM EST)

WEB0175

Zoom Meeting ID: 820-6458-4162

pwd: none

Script Available using hyperlink under Monday Evening meeting

<https://acafellowworldtravelers.com/>

(updated: February 12, 2024)

Hello and welcome to this meeting of Adult Children of Alcoholic/Dysfunctional Families, focused on ACA in the workplace.

My name is _____. I'm an adult child of an alcoholic/dysfunctional family, and today's chairperson.

This meeting is one hour and 15 minutes long. Please join us in the Parking Lot for additional fellowship. Will anyone volunteer to give service by hosting the parking lot for 15 minutes, directly following this meeting? _____ thank you for your service!

The Serenity Prayer

To begin the meeting, will you please join me in a moment of silence for all of the Adult Children who are still suffering? (silence)

Please unmute yourself, if you care to join me in saying the original version of The Serenity Prayer:

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Thank you.

Preamble

ACA is a spiritual program supporting people who grew up with family dysfunction. That experience infected us then and it affects us today. While our members may be from homes where alcohol or drugs were present, it's not a requirement. People who suffered abuse, neglect or unhealthy behavior are also members.

The purpose of ACA is to:

1. shelter and support members confronting denial;
2. comfort those mourning their early loss of security, trust and love; and,
3. teach skills for reparenting ourselves with gentleness, humor, love and respect.

ACA provides a safe, nonjudgmental environment that allows us to grieve our childhoods and to conduct an honest inventory of ourselves and our families. Identifying with The Laundry List Traits (The Problem), we learn to live in The Solution, one day at a time.

Group Readings

It is now time for our group readings. Please read with as little background noise as possible and please ensure your microphones are muted unless you are reading or sharing.

Who would like to read "*The Problem: A checklist for ACAs in the Workplace*" (or start and pass on to someone else)?

The Problem: A Checklist for ACAs in the Workplace (BRB Page 417)

1. We confuse our boss or supervisor with our alcoholic parent(s) or qualifier and have similar relationship patterns, behaviors, and reactions that are carryovers from childhood.
2. We confuse our co-workers with our siblings or our alcoholic parent(s) and repeat childhood reactions in those working relationships.
3. We expect lavish praise and acknowledgment from our boss for our efforts on the job.
4. Authority figures scare us and we feel afraid when we need to talk to them.
5. We get a negative "gut reaction" when dealing with someone who has the physical characteristics or mannerisms of our alcoholic qualifier.
6. We have felt isolated and different from everyone around us, but we don't really know why.
7. We lose our temper when things upset us rather than dealing with problems productively.
8. We busy ourselves with our co-workers' jobs, often telling them how to do their work.
9. We can get hurt feelings when co-workers do things socially together without asking us, even though we have not made an effort to get to know them and join in the social life.
10. We are afraid to make the first move to get to know a co-worker better, thinking they will not like us or approve of us.
11. We usually do not know how to ask for what we want or need on the job, even for little things.
12. We do not know how to speak up for ourselves when someone has said or done something inappropriate. We try desperately to avoid face-to face confrontations.
13. We are sensitive and can get extremely upset with any form of criticism of our work.
14. We want to be in charge of every project or activity, feeling more comfortable when we are in control of every detail, rather than letting others be responsible.
15. We may be the workplace "clown" to cover up our insecurities or to get attention from others.

16. We are people-pleasers and may take on extra work, or our co-workers' tasks, in order to be liked and receive approval from others.
17. We do not know how to be assertive in getting our needs met or expressing a concern. We may have to repeatedly rehearse our comments before delivering them.
18. We have felt that we do not deserve a raise, promotion, better workspace, or a better job.
19. We do not know how to set boundaries, and we let others interrupt us. We can accept more work without knowing how to say "no" appropriately.
20. We are perfectionists about our own work and expect others to be the same and have the same work ethics and values.
21. We become workaholics because it gives us a feeling of self-worth we did not get as a child.
22. We may jump from job to job, looking for the perfect position as the substitute for the secure and nurturing home environment we did not have.
23. We get upset when people do things that affect us or our work without asking us first.
24. We have a high tolerance for workplace dysfunction and tend to stick it out in an unhappy job because we lack the self-esteem to leave.

The Solution (BRB Page 590)

Who would like to read *The Solution* (or start and pass on to someone else)?

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.

Traditions

Who would like to read The Tradition of the Month, which is #... and The 12th Tradition?

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. 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.
4. Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other Twelve-Step programs.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.
6. An ACA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the ACA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Adult Children of Alcoholics should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. ACA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Adult Children of Alcoholics has no opinion on outside issues; hence the ACA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, films, and other public media.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Welcome and Introductions

If you are attending an ACA meeting for the first time, will you please introduce yourself by your first name? This is not to embarrass you, but so we may welcome and greet you.
(pause)

[If there are Newcomers, read the following:]

We are glad that you are here. It is suggested that you attend six meetings before deciding if this program is for you. In that way, you will have time to hear about the general recovery tools that all Twelve Step programs share and also the specific ACA recovery tools. You will hear the topic readings about ACA in The Workplace and people's personal "shares" about it and other ACA related subjects. People often relate to our readings and the sharing of others even if there was no apparent alcoholism or addiction in their childhood home. This is common because family dysfunction can occur without the presence of addiction.

Let us introduce ourselves and optionally state where we are calling from. I will start first: My name is and I'm calling from (*Pause for introductions*)

Welcome all and thank you for being with us here today!

Topic Reading: BRB Chapter 14 - Taking Our Program To Work (pages 415 - 427)

Now we will read Chapter 14 in the Big Red Book. We read a few paragraphs to complete a section. The sections are:

- Opening of Chapter 14
- What is the Workplace Laundry List?, A Checklist for ACAs in the Workplace
- Identifying with The Laundry List (Problem)
- Identifying with The Solution
- Relying on the ACA Program
- Using Your Toolbag at Work

Last week, we left off on section ___/ page ___. (Full reading at bottom of script)

Who would like to read the section, or 1-2 paragraphs and pass it on?

Sharing

We all want to feel safe as well as heard during the meetings. If you feel you need to share very difficult details that may possibly trigger someone, please share how you feel but be mindful to be gentle with others.

For the serenity of the meeting:

1. While sharing, use audio only and keep your camera off (by group conscience).
2. Please make sure there is as little background noise as possible.
3. Please mute when you are not sharing.
4. Please lower your digital hand when you are finished.
5. Please do not cross talk during the sharing time.

Cross talk means interrupting, referring to, or commenting on what another person has said during the meeting. We do not cross talk because adult children come from family backgrounds where feelings and perceptions were judged as wrong or defective. We accept without comment what others say because it is true for them.

Spiritual Timekeeper

To allow as many of us as possible to share during the meeting, we ask that each person limit their share to 3 minutes. Please allow for silence before requesting a second round of sharing, as it might happen that not everyone who wants to share is able to quickly speak up.

Who would like to serve as the spiritual timekeeper, providing a gentle reminder at the three minute mark?

Open meeting

Those who would like to share may raise a digital hand. You will then be invited to share. If you are dialing in by phone, press star 9 to raise your digital hand and star 6 to unmute.

The meeting is now open for sharing.

[5 minutes before the meeting ends] **Does anyone have a burning desire to share?**

Conclusion This is all the time we have for sharing.

Please remember: who you see here and what you hear here should remain at this meeting. We do not talk about another person's story or experiences to other people.

Please respect the anonymity of those who shared. The opinions expressed here today are those of individual ACA members and do not represent ACA as a whole. Remember what you find worthwhile and forget the rest.

Business meeting

(first Monday of the month only, for a maximum 10 minutes)

- *Timekeeper?*

The 7th Tradition

It's now time for the 7th Tradition. Our 7th Tradition states that "Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

7th tradition contributions can be made to acafwt.treasurer@gmail.com via PayPal.

Announcements

Are there any ACA related announcements?

- The business meeting is held for 10 minutes within the meeting itself, on the first Monday of the month.

- The intergroup link is acafellowworldtravelers.com, where a version of the meeting script and other resources are available.

The ACA Promises (BRB Page 591)

Who would like to read The Promises? (Or start then pass on to someone else)

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.

Wrap up

Thanks to those who were of service as they read, shared, listened or simply were present.

Thank you _____ for being the Spiritual Timekeeper.

Thank you _____ for being the Screen Sharing/Technical Host.

Thank you _____ for volunteering to chair the parking lot which will be open for 15 minutes directly following this meeting.

Please open your mic if you would like to join us in closing this meeting by saying the long version of the **ACA SERENITY PRAYER** (PAUSE):

"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.

Grant me patience for the changes that take time;

Appreciation for all that I have;

Tolerance for those with difference struggles;

and, the strength to get up and try again, one day at a time."

This ends the formal part of the meeting. Again, please join us in the Parking Lot for additional fellowship. Thank you everyone!

End of Meeting Script

Chapter 14 Taking Our Program to Work

ACA is a proven program that can help us in every area of our lives if we apply it. We can take our program with us wherever we go. Working our program outside the meeting rooms of ACA has produced dramatic changes in our lives. In addition to seeing changes in our closest relationships, we can see a change in our attitude and in our relationships at work. We seem to feel more confident in what we do for a living, or we learn to give ourselves a break when we make a mistake. We learn to resolve situations that may have been simmering for months or even years. We become actors rather than reactors, and for some of us, our rediscovered inner strength prompts us to leave a dissatisfying job.

We gradually integrate our program at work. We make small changes, such as not always volunteering for overtime. We make a conscious decision to step back from our role as people-pleasers and let others volunteer for extra work. We may gently set a boundary with a fellow employee who takes things from our desk without asking. We learn to say, "Can you ask before taking things from my desk?"

Taking our program to work doesn't mean we analyze others or invite them to ACA meetings. We avoid preaching about ACA. We do not invade boundaries with our ACA program, but we stand ready to apply the principles of honesty, humility, and forgiveness in our lives outside ACA meetings. We usually don't break our anonymity at work; however, there are occasions when we can share about our program with a co-worker if our motives are clear. We usually talk to our sponsor or another ACA member before breaking our anonymity.

It is essential that we practice ACA in every area of our lives to continue to grow emotionally and spiritually. We cannot act one way in an ACA meeting and another way outside the meetings. We cannot let the behavior of a co-worker or any other person divert us from our program. We are stepping away from the days of giving away our power to others and wandering through life in an unfocused manner. By practicing ACA outside of meetings, we can avoid recreating our family of origin at work. We can avoid being a victim, a hero, or the invisible employee who is rarely noticed and passed over for pay raises.

Without working our program, we can easily take the patterns and roles we learned at home and apply them in the workplace. We risk taking our parental programming and our false attitudes about ourselves into our working life.

Even if we don't work full-time, looking at ACA traits in the workplace can help improve our interaction in other groups or social settings. We may work part-time or have a position in a volunteer, charitable, or worship group. We may be retired and be part of a recreational group. The personality types that can be difficult for us will likely show up whenever and wherever we interact with others on a regular basis. This chapter on ACA experience in the workplace will help us focus on our program and improve our behavior in relationships wherever we go.

What is the Workplace Laundry List?

The workplace laundry list is a list of 24 statements that describe many of our thoughts and interactions at work.ⁱ The list is a creative adaptation of The Laundry List (Problem), which is a detailed look at the 14 traits of an adult child. The workplace list shows how we can attempt to recreate our dysfunctional family roles at work or in some social settings. While working the Steps and attending meetings improves much of this behavior, the workplace laundry list further focuses our efforts to improve ourselves outside of meetings.

Many ACAs have used this list to identify and change their ineffective behaviors. The "qualifier" mentioned in these statements is the person who infected us with the disease of alcoholism or other dysfunction.

Working at the Laundromat - A Checklist for ACAs in the Workplace

[intentionally removed since we read this in our meeting script opening]

Identifying with The Laundry List (Problem)

Many of us express a profound “that’s me!” when reading this description of workplace behavior of some adult children. This reaction is similar to the reaction we got when we heard The Laundry List (Problem) read at our first meeting. After awhile, the characteristics we seem to have in common begin to relate to several areas of our life and not just the main one that may have led us to an ACA meeting in the first place.

Some behaviors listed in The Laundry List (Problem) may be easy to spot at work: “We became isolated and afraid of people and authority figures,” or “We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism.” Other traits may be more subtle to uncover because we are so accustomed to living our lives from an ingrained point of view. Without focus at work, we can overlook these traits: “We get guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves,” “We judge ourselves harshly and have a very low sense of self-esteem,” and “We are reactors, rather than actors.”

My first recollection of an incident that I can now attribute to an ACA reaction in the workplace was with my boss, who was the CEO of the company. He always treated me very kindly and had a grandfatherly manner with me. I had just finished an important, very lengthy document for my company. I was so proud and glad to be finished with it. I hand carried it into my boss’s office and put it into his “IN” basket while he was sitting at his desk. “Here’s the document,” I said proudly. He responded with one word “Good,” and turned back to the work on his desk. I felt hurt and rejected. Why didn’t he tell me what a good job I had done and stop what he was doing to thumb through the document? I was anguished and started crying back at my desk. I hid my feelings from everyone in the office. I knew I shouldn’t be so upset, but I was. Now I recognize that the situation had instantly taken me back to my childhood. I was bringing work home from school with a good grade, wanting attention and praise from my alcoholic father, but I was ignored or he was simply unavailable. I was totally unaware that I was having an ACA reaction at the time.

ACAs can feel different from everyone else in the workplace. There is a noticeable feeling of not fitting in. We may be highly competent in our work but live with an unspoken fear that we will be exposed as being incompetent or unprepared. We can play scenarios in our heads about the possibility of being shamed or belittled by a co-worker. We can become hypervigilant about being exposed. We fear someone might say, “You don’t know what you are doing, do you?” or, “Can’t you figure that out?”

Manipulation was essential for my survival in the workplace. As a result of believing my father’s messages that I was stupid, I was too embarrassed to let someone know I needed help or didn’t know how to do something. To get help, I would manipulate my co-workers by playing a role, such as being overly nice, being the victim, or volunteering to do something for them. After all, asking for help was not an option because it cemented my father’s opinion. One day, I called another branch of our company with a question. When my supervisor found out, he said not to call another branch because it made me look stupid and consequently reflected negatively on him. In my mind, I instantly turned 12 years

old, lowered my head and thought dad must have been right. Now after 18 years in the program, I've learned there is no need for manipulation, and I've changed my way of thinking. I can ask for something directly because I have higher self esteem and don't worry about appearing stupid. Sometimes I fall back into old habits and behaviors, but now I have the tools to get myself right back on track.

As adult children, we may be more sensitive to the difficult people in the workplace. Our co-workers seem to be able to shrug off unpleasant people, unfounded criticism, and the so-called “bad boss.” We can feel powerless and may go home thinking “Why do others treat me the way they do at work?” Or we may feel revengeful: “I’ll get back at them!”

At the same time, there are genuine “problem employees” who everyone recognizes. Most of these difficult employees are adult children playing out their scapegoat role from childhood. Literature about adult children of alcoholics includes a description of four roles that children can take on in an alcoholic or dysfunctional family: hero, scapegoat, lost child, and mascot/clown.ⁱⁱ These roles can easily be transferred to the workplace.

The scapegoat child grows up accepting blame where none is due or attracts blame and acts out with negativity. In the workplace, the scapegoat or problem employee may attract blame with negative behavior and then complain about being picked on or treated unfairly. Operating from a sense of resentment, the scapegoat easily stirs up trouble at work. The ultimate result can be a showdown with an explosion of anger at the boss or a co-worker. Some scapegoat or problem employees quit their jobs, believing they have been treated unfairly. Many of these problem employees are within the ACA family and can change with willingness and effort.

The hero child usually grows up to be the perfectionist workaholic who is independent and overly-responsible but who still has feelings of low self-worth. The lost child is often a good observer and listener and does not demand much of others. As an employee, the lost child does not want to draw attention and may be depressed and unable to establish close relationships. This is the invisible employee who no one knows much about.

The mascot or clown child has a good sense of humor and is easily identified as the workplace clown. He or she is able to entertain and amuse co-workers. The mascot or clown worker seeks attention and makes friends easily, but underneath has feelings of unworthiness.

We learned these roles as children to protect ourselves. Most of our behaviors started as defense mechanisms that helped us survive an alcoholic, dysfunctional, or abusive experience. These roles transfer into adulthood with an uncanny accuracy. We look to the ACA solution to change our workplace behavior.

Identifying with The Solution

Many parts of the ACA Solution help us handle workplace issues in ways that work better for us. Some of these items from The Solution are:

- we risk moving out of isolation
- you will become an adult who is imprisoned no longer by childhood reactions
- you will become your own loving parent
- we learn to reparent ourselves with gentleness, humor, love, and respect
- you will learn how to keep the focus on yourself in the present
- we become free to make healthful decisions as actors, not reactors

Working our program on a daily basis helps us to spot situations where our tendencies are motivating our behavior and thinking in ways that are not in our best interest. That “ah-ha” moment when we recognize that our past is affecting us in the present is a first big step toward a new way of thinking and behaving at work.

Isolation. That’s the big ACA problem I encounter in the workplace. That’s why, both consciously and unconsciously, I’ve arranged my life to be self-employed. In doing so, I have completely isolated myself. Sometimes the loneliness borders on unbearable. But by recognizing through ACA that I tend to isolate, I’ve taken steps to forge other non-work relationships. It’s hard at times, but I’m not quite as isolated as I used to be. I find that when I am in the traditional workplace for meetings, I recognize my desire to pull away and, instead, step into what I fear. More and more, I believe in myself in situations that used to make me dive for emotional cover.

That’s a huge accomplishment, and I know that in the future, I’ll be even more whole and present.

As we apply ACA principles in the workplace, we learn when to take action or when we can accept something we cannot change. In any given situation, we can think about what we will do instead of reacting to another’s behavior. As we consider our options, we can ask ourselves some questions: Am I recreating my family role in the workplace? Am I moving out of isolation at work and making friends? How can I reparent myself in this situation? Can I accept my co-workers, knowing I have no control over them? Finding the answers to these questions can be difficult. The “wisdom to know the difference” is sometimes a gut feeling, sometimes a hunch, and sometimes the result of focused soul searching. Sometimes it is just a leap of faith, trusting in our Higher Power to take care of us in the current situation. Some of us use an adaptation of the Serenity Prayer that can be helpful in dealing with workplace challenges.

*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.*

Relying on the ACA Program

Usually our ACA group is our best resource to help us deal with workplace relationships. Where else can we go and talk about something that is bothering us and have total acceptance? We can share even the smallest work incident and how it affects us. We can share our successes and failures in a supportive atmosphere.

There may be no other place where we can really share what is in our hearts and minds without judgment. When we share our story at an ACA meeting, we can see the nodding, smiles, and laughter from those identifying with us. Many of us have chosen an ACA sponsor to help us with our program. Having someone to call outside of meetings can be helpful, especially if we have something to share at the end of the workday.

When we start using our program at work, we begin to understand that there is a difference between our parents and a boss or co-worker who we dislike at times or find easy to criticize. We do not have to use our family roles and old behaviors on the job. We can retire these roles and pick up the tools of the ACA program. When we retire our family role, we begin to see the spiritual nature of our work. Our perception of our work changes in addition to our attitude about it.

If we feel we are being criticized at work, we can stop and do some positive self-talk: “My boss is not my parent who I could never please. I don’t like my boss’s attitude sometimes, but I can do things differently than when I was a child. I can talk to someone. I can use the phone. I can use the meetings. I can ask my Higher Power for help.” A helpful tactic is to change our perspective.

If our current issue is dealing with people and their personalities, we need to remember that they are not our family members. When we stop mentally putting a family member’s face on our co-workers, what they say or do will affect us less. If we are having a strong reaction to someone in the workplace, we learn to ask ourselves: “Am I projecting a family situation into this moment? Am I having an ACA reaction?”

I used to always have confrontations when communicating with a co-worker face to face. I ended up communicating with this individual only by voice mail. The owners of the company finally decided to intervene and arranged a face-to-face meeting with all of us. It occurred to me while we were discussing the personality conflict that I was reacting to my co-worker’s physical demeanor, which subconsciously reminded me of my brutal alcoholic stepfather. From the day I recognized this, we have not had another confrontation.

For some of us, it is the work itself that is the problem and not the people. We may have chosen a job that doesn’t make the most of our talents and abilities because we have been programmed from childhood to have a low opinion of ourselves. We may be in an organization that has a culture of not respecting the employees. It may take a while, but as we work our program, we can develop the strength and courage to move on and find another job that allows us to feel good about ourselves. This is the hard part of “becoming our own loving parent” in the workplace. As much as we would wish it, no one is going to suddenly appear and magically whisk us out of that poor work environment. We come to realize that we will have to do it ourselves, sometimes in small steps that ultimately lead up to a giant leap. By using our program and the support of our fellowship, we learn that we can affect changes in our working lives.

Working in a creative field, where rejection is the norm, I’ve had plenty of opportunities to re-feel the terror of abandonment. In my mind, rejection

represents abandonment by my alcoholic mother. But over the years, by first working in a step-study group and then attending weekly meetings, I've learned to recognize that fear. It still gets me, but not as often. And even when I am in the grip now, I have the group to turn to for support and new management skills. I still have a long ways to go. The difference is that I can recognize and respond to what's going on.

Using Your Toolbag at Work

We have an ACA toolbag. Sometimes we may fortify ourselves mentally with all our tools before we begin our workday. Sometimes we may forget to mentally strap on our toolbag before we go to work. That is okay, too. We learn that we are not perfect, another important step in our personal growth. We must accept that there is a learning period in ACA. We can work a stellar ACA program by going to meetings, working the Steps, and helping others, but we must be patient with ourselves as we apply the program and change behavior. If we try something and it does not show immediate results, we must be willing to try it again. We must try something more than once. The tools and principles of ACA work if we are willing to work them.

The following tools have been gathered from workshops, panel discussions, and group sharing. In addition to attending ACA meetings regularly, applying these workplace tools can help you make meaningful change and progress.

Some Tools to Use

- Make a decision to use ACA principles in the workplace.
- Circle the number of workplace laundry list items you identify with and make a decision to work on one of the items each day.
- Establish a telephone or e-mail pal and share your need for support. We know of two ACA members who support each other by e-mail during the work day. Reading a message such as "Hang in there. I'm with you" can mean a lot when you are changing your behavior at work.
- Break out of isolation at work. Sometimes you are not the only one having problems with a difficult person or situation at work. Share your thoughts with others, and they will often share their views with you. Avoid engaging in workplace gossip or repeating claims that you cannot prove to be true.
- At the end of the day, make contact with someone in ACA. When they ask, "How are you?" begin talking about your day at work. Describe which workplace trait you are trying to change. Avoid focusing on a co-worker's behavior. Talk about your behavior and what you are doing to change.
- Remember HALTS. Do not get too hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or serious. When you get overly tired, it is easy to over-react to a situation. Exercise, get enough sleep, write in a journal, and aim for a balanced lifestyle.
- Take a risk, and try to make new friends and acquaintances. Ask someone to go to lunch with you, or join others at lunch if the opportunity arises.
- Keep a journal on the progress you have made in addressing the workplace laundry list.
- Carry an ACA token in your pocket or carry the Serenity Prayer with you in your pocket or purse. Say the Serenity Prayer as often as needed.

- Seek counseling if necessary. Many in ACA have found this very helpful in addition to their group work or Twelve Step study work.

This chapter reveals the experience of ACA members taking their program to work and into other relationships. When we work ACA principles outside the meetings our lives improve dramatically. We learn to truly connect to life and to contribute to society in a manner that is fulfilling to ourselves. We find the spiritual meaning in our work.

End of Chapter 14 Big Red Book

The Flip Side of The Laundry List *[Optional reading - if time allows]*

1. We move out of isolation and are not unrealistically afraid of other people, even authority figures.
2. We do not depend on others to tell us who we are.
3. We are not automatically frightened by angry people and no longer regard personal criticism as a threat.
4. We do not have a compulsive need to recreate abandonment.
5. We stop living life from the standpoint of victims and are not attracted by this trait in our important relationships.
6. We do not use enabling as a way to avoid looking at our own shortcomings.
7. We do not feel guilty when we stand up for ourselves.
8. We avoid emotional intoxication and choose workable relationships instead of constant upset.
9. We are able to distinguish love from pity, and do not think "rescuing" people we "pity" is an act of love.
10. We come out of denial about our traumatic childhoods and regain the ability to feel and express our emotions.
11. We stop judging and condemning ourselves and discover a sense of self-worth.
12. We grow in independence and are no longer terrified of abandonment. We have interdependent relationships with healthy people, not dependent relationships with people who are emotionally unavailable.
13. The characteristics of alcoholism and para-alcoholism we have internalized are identified, acknowledged, and removed.
14. We are actors, not reactors

The Flip Side of The Other Laundry List *[Optional reading- if time allows]*

1. We face and resolve our fear of people and our dread of isolation and stop intimidating others with our power and position.
2. We realize the sanctuary we have built to protect the frightened and injured child within has become a prison and we become willing to risk moving out of isolation.
3. With our renewed sense of self-worth and self-esteem we realize it is no longer necessary to protect ourselves by intimidating others with contempt, ridicule and anger.
4. We accept and comfort the isolated and hurt inner child we have abandoned and disavowed and thereby end the need to act out our fears of enmeshment and abandonment with other people.
5. Because we are whole and complete we no longer try to control others through manipulation and force and bind them to us with fear in order to avoid feeling isolated and alone.
6. Through our in-depth inventory we discover our true identity as capable, worthwhile people. By asking to have our shortcomings removed we are freed from the burden of inferiority and grandiosity.
7. We support and encourage others in their efforts to be assertive.
8. We uncover, acknowledge and express our childhood fears and withdraw from emotional intoxication.
9. We have compassion for anyone who is trapped in the "drama triangle" and is desperately searching for a way out of insanity.
10. We accept we were traumatized in childhood and lost the ability to feel. Using the 12 Steps as a program of recovery we regain the ability to feel and remember and become whole human beings who are happy, joyous and free.
11. In accepting we were powerless as children to "save" our family, we are able to release our self-hate and to stop punishing ourselves and others for not being enough.
12. By accepting and reuniting with the inner child we are no longer threatened by intimacy, by the fear of being engulfed or made invisible.
13. By acknowledging the reality of family dysfunction we no longer have to act as if nothing were wrong or keep denying that we are still unconsciously reacting to childhood harm and injury.
14. We stop denying and do something about our post-traumatic dependency on substances, people, places and things to distort and avoid reality.

ⁱ The ACA annual convention held in southern California has offered panel discussions on “ACA in the Workplace.” A literature search discovered an item in the ACA WSO files titled “A Laundry List for the Workplace,” but no source was identified. At the 2005 convention, a Twelve Step meeting was held which focused on “ACA in the Workplace.” The meeting leader developed a new handout, “Working at the Laundromat: A Laundry List for ACAs in the Workplace.”

ⁱⁱ Roles developed by Sharon Wegscheider.