

This pamphlet is provided to aid the ACA newcomer in exploring the tools of discovery/ recovery available in our program. It is absolutely essential that we recognize that there are many tools at our disposal but that each individual must carefully decide which and how each tool may apply and be used for our own unique plan of recovery.

ACA is a Twelve-Step Program of discovery/recovery, and our purpose is threefold: 1) to shelter and support newcomers in confronting denial; 2) to comfort those mourning their early loss of security, trust and love; and 3) to teach the skills of "reparenting ourselves with gentleness, humor, love and respect"!

The title "The Tool Bag" is indicative of many facets of our program. As with any craftsperson, the choice of tools available and the proper selection and use of each tool can greatly enhance the work we produce. Our recovery is very similar to creating and producing a fine work of art, a home --- even a relationship. Each has tools that we learn to use and, with use, become skillful and accomplished, with dedication - a master.

Not everyone will use the same tools; not everyone will attempt the same work. We each seek our own goals, dream our own dreams, and find our own niche in the scheme of things.

These are merely the tools available and not a complete list by far. Choose your tools with care, develop your own unique skills, and pursue those things that will help you to become free from the crippling pain of the past and accomplished in the life that exists today.

1. The Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Problem and Solution.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are the rich heritage of our Twelve-Step Program. There are many books examining the exact nature of these steps.

Working these Steps and Traditions means developing an understanding of how these Steps apply to us in our daily lives. Working these Steps and Traditions requires reading, writing, sharing, and living our understanding of these Steps and Traditions. We do so with the tools that follow in the light of our identification with "The Problem" and our understanding of "The Solution."

2. The Meetings

The Meetings are where we share our experience, strength, and hope. We share our identification with The Problem and learn we are not alone. We learn that there are others like us, and there is hope. There is recovery. There is a light at the end of the tunnel.

3. Reading & Writing

In order to further our own program of discovery/recovery, we educate ourselves. We do this by exploring the Problem, Solution, Steps, and Traditions and by reading literature, books and other publications that pertain to our program.

We write to explore further our understanding of our program. By writing, we document our process and clarify questions for ourselves. This process requires a level of discipline and dedication. This dedication to the self, ourselves, leads to the freedom, understanding, and compassion needed to nurture our inner child.

4. The Telephone

We listen and share in our meetings and often find people like ourselves that we strongly relate to. By continuing to share outside the meetings, we further our process of discovery/recovery. We receive the support necessary to carry on our growth and also give the same.

Often we are far more compassionate and honest with others than with ourselves. In the process of sharing with others, we learn to practice the same level of gentleness and respect with ourselves. We act as mirrors for one another and provide an avenue to escape the isolation of our childhood.

5. Sponsorship

Some of us choose to have sponsors. Sponsorship is a way to avoid the isolation we experienced as children. We seek others a little farther along the path to provide us with guidance and possible answers to our questions.

In sponsoring or being a sponsor, we develop relationships based on the Steps and Traditions. We can often share things on a one-to-one basis that may be too terrifying to share in a meeting. We learn about intimacy, trust, risking, success and failure.

A sponsor is not perfect --- we are all in this program to overcome the effects of our childhood. But, just like sharing in meetings or with other friends, we stretch ourselves a little farther, risk a little more. We do this with someone who shows a level of recovery that we would like to develop.

Later, as our program progresses, we extend this same level of sharing to another. It is here in extending beyond ourselves that we develop a breadth of friendships. We learn about limited and casual friendships, and establish a support network of many types, levels and intensities of relationships.

6. Service

In service we try to give back to the program some of what we have received. By helping in the meetings as an officer or as a set-up or clean up person, or by volunteering on the Intergroup or board level, we make this program available to others that follow us. Our recovery depends on an ongoing program of discovery and the PRACTICE of our recovery. Service provides us with the

opportunity to practice this recovery in an atmosphere of support

7. Boundaries

All too often we overlook the concept of boundaries as a tool in recovery. Relationships, whether with ourselves or others, are core issues in our recovery. For some, boundaries are too strong. For others they are nonexistent. For others they may be ineffective.

The first step in establishing our boundaries is to love and respect ourselves. With that perspective, we are then able to communicate healthy messages to others. In this way we ensure our own protection and avoid giving negative or misleading messages to others.

8. Hugs

The ability to give, to ask for, and to receive a hug is not something most of us practiced growing up. Sometimes all we need is the warm, friendly validation of a hug.

Hugs are common greetings and farewells we use in this program. We learn to ask for hugs when we feel we want or need them. We respect the feelings of others without question when they choose not to hug or be hugged. We respect our own feelings to turn down the offer of a hug when, for whatever reason, it feels uncomfortable.

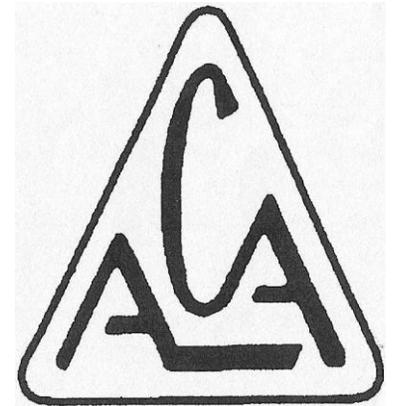
Getting and receiving hugs can make a serious difference in how we view ourselves, others, and the world we live in. It is a milestone in our recovery to ask for what we need. It is a beginning step toward our goal for true intimacy.

"The ACA Program and How it Works." Los Angeles: Adult Children of Alcoholics; Identity, Purpose, and Relationship Committee, 1984.



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THE TOOL BAG



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