



ComLINE

Volume 32, Issue 3, Third Quarter

Experience, Strength, and Hope

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About the ACA ComLINE

The *ComLine* is published quarterly by Adult Children of Alcoholics® (ACA) World Service Organization (WSO). The *ComLine* is intended as a communication line from the WSO to the fellowship of ACA around the world, and as a forum for the fellowship to share recovery. The *ComLine* slogan is "Experience, Strength, and Hope." The opinions expressed are those of the individuals writing the articles and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ACA fellowship or WSO.

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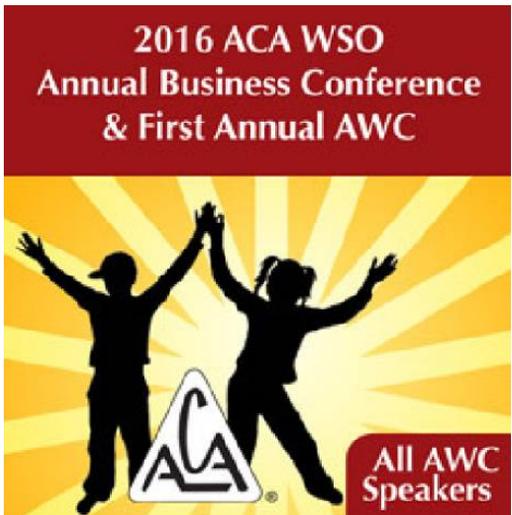


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NEW! Audio ACA Speaker Downloads Available!

Need your battery energized? Need an ACA speaker for your group? Adult Children of Alcoholics now has speaker downloads for sale. The 2016 Annual Business Conference and First Annual AWC has recorded the speaker events, and are now available.



Purchase each topic separately for \$3.00 each, or all seven for \$18. The following topics are available:

- Keynote Speaker – **Nicole M.**
- Keynote Speaker – **Bill D.**
- Keynote Speaker – **Majbrit M.**
- Bonnie M.** – The Power of Mindfulness Workshop
- Jay B.** – The Laundry List Workshop
- Kathy A.** – Connecting with Your Inner Child Workshop

Listen to them at home, in your car, on your phone, on your MP3 player – whenever you're ready!

ACA Sponsorship: Fellow Travelers *Free Download!*



The unique model of sponsorship practiced in ACA places the sponsor and sponsee on equal footing, seeking answers and solutions together. Through sponsorship, adult children find empathy. This is the mutual understanding that puts action into our identification with another adult child. We employ four types of sponsorship:

Traditional: An experienced ACA member guides a sponsee through the Twelve Steps and helps them understand the ACA recovery process.

Co-Sponsor: Two ACA members with similar program time and experience support each other's continued recovery.

Temporary: ACA members in a treatment or institutional facility may use a short-term sponsor until a more permanent sponsor in an ACA home group may be found.

Long Distance: ACA members who are geographically isolated may use online or telephone meetings for support. Where circumstances prevent face-to-face contact with a sponsor, long-distance sponsorship can still be meaningful and effective.

Download this free trifold on our site at www.adultchildren.org/non-english-literature.

Look for future translations soon!

STEP 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Thank You, Phyllis!

Over a year ago, Phyllis R. announced during a monthly WSO teleconference call, she had a dream/vision about reviving the Adult Children of Alcoholics *ComLine*. Many of us immediately jumped on board to assist her.

Phyllis, we would like to say a special thank you for bringing back the *ComLine*. We've enjoyed working with you and have enjoyed reading those words of wisdom that exemplify the experience, strength and hope towards which this program strives.

Thank you for not being afraid to ask for help and for turning the *ComLine* into a reality again!

As the new editor of the *ComLine* and a grateful member of ACA, we will do our best to follow in your footsteps. We thank you for leading the way!

In Joy of Service,

Mardi M.



My Child Heart

By William



My child heart, full of wonder and innocence...
Once ruled the life of such a little one...
Sunshine and birds frolicked in his mind's eye...
Toys and Christmas... Easter eggs and chocolate...
A golden boy doted on by grandma's smile...
Cousins and playmates... danced in the sun...
A black dog and a boy... explored butterflies...
And grasshoppers

Then a shadow was cast...
From where he did not know...
His little heart began to fear...
The life of innocence was lost forever...
His soul murdered...
By those who said they loved him...
He cried and no one heard...
He prayed and no one came...

Then his little heart began to close...
Walls were built... brick by brick...
Day by day... month by month... year by year...
Until the little one was no longer there

Blocked away in a prison that he built...
And didn't know existed...
No longer did his heart soar...
His dreams were as smoke on the wind

Soon he was so far away from himself...
He no longer knew who he was...
Love escaped him... love abandoned him...
Love hurt him... he did not understand

He numbed himself from the pain...
Years went by... time bled away...
Hatred entered... pain ever enduring...
He pushed himself away from all...
Everyone... and God

Life became a vortex... of numbness...
And the numbness became comfortable...
As if it had become his friend... lover...
He had become blind... deaf and dumb...
Walls built so high and deep...
Numbness paralyzed all feelings of anything...
Locked away in his self-made prison...
Comfortable... waiting for death...
Then the angel came

The one who watched over him his whole life...
He could not feel his angel...
Nor see him... hear him...
God had sent him to the little boy...
Because he loved him so much...
But the little boy was now a man

But the angel knew him...
And began to whisper...
The whispers were not heard...
At once...
The walls were deep...
And the prison dark... and empty... save one...
Then... a glimmer... he was wallowing in pain...
And misery so deep... you could taste it...
His eyes opened to see it was familiar... yet...
Then a solid beam of God's eternal love...
Pierced the darkness... He was blinded...
For his eyes had not seen love... for so long

His heart was flooded with feelings long lost...
It was so overwhelming...
And he nearly died from it...
Still in his prison of self-made hatred...
Hatred of himself...
He began to climb...
Over one wall then another

His life began to change...
People who once abandoned him...
Helped him up...
He found others whose souls were murdered...
And bonded with them... he began to rise

People helped him along the way...
Some he didn't know...
Some he felt that he knew forever...
Years passed...
Sometimes he had to rest from his climb...
And whenever he did...
God's angel found a place he could rest...
A safe place

Sometimes those who were helping him...
Stayed with him... sometimes they didn't...
And he had to feel the pain again...
But now armed with God's love he endured...
Now he seeks the little one...
The one who was lost

Sometimes he feels him...
When he walks his little dog...
Now an older man... he sometimes can feel...
He sometimes can see... he sometimes can hear...
The dreams that had blown away...
The love that had always escaped him

As he walks with his little friend...
He sometimes sees... butterflies and grasshoppers...
And a feeling comes over him...
Something familiar... and he begins to wonder...
Innocent, and pure, as God's own breath



I am powerless over my childhood reactions.
I surrender to them.
I am my cure.
I can ask for help.
I am focusing on myself.

I am looking inside.
I am resting within me.
I am mastering my mind.
I am approving myself.
I am responsible for myself.
I am proud of myself.
I am satisfied with myself.
I love myself.

I am gentle with myself.
I am forgiving with myself.
I trust myself.
I trust others.
I take care of myself.
I take care of my body.
I am listening to my body.
I take rests.
I relax.

I am equanimous.
I am serene.
I am peace of mind.
I am balanced.
I am feeling.
I make choices.
I act.

The Gifts of Forgiveness

By Erin D.



My husband still teases me about the library of self-help books I had when we first began dating. It included every book ever written with the word *love* in the title; the other books all had *forgiveness* in the title.



Forgiveness and love seemed to be elusive. I spent five years in South America believing I had forgiven my father's abuse. Yet, when I returned home, the fear and feelings of betrayal seemed as if they were waiting for me. I wanted to experience that "talk show moment" of people who were able to forgive awful crimes, drunk drivers, rape, murder, incest and yet I had no idea how they got there. I yearned for the *ah-ha* moment that was just not coming.

Recovery in Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) allows time for the gift

of forgiveness to take hold. I had not been one to experience the lightning bolt moments of spirituality, but rather the quiet knowing that opened like a flower to take me in. One of those moments happened when I awakened to the experience of self-forgiveness. I don't remember exactly when I started to feel like the shy, reserved, little girl covered in the dirt of shame. Mommy would say, "Go tell Daddy how pretty you look."

It wasn't Mommy's fault. Her inherent fault was her attraction to his touch, his advances and later to his anger and rage. It was in that moment of my awareness of that little girl and her feelings, that I felt the gift of self-forgiveness, the *knowing*.

As I continued to learn how Daddy also suffered deep wounds of betrayal from his parents, it opened the way to my forgiveness. I don't remember the details leading up to the quiet knowing, the *spiritual experience*, but that feeling has stayed with me from that very day. I came to an awakening of what was meant by "the gift of forgiveness." I was endlessly searching for it growing up, and I honestly thought it never could happen. Through ACA the gifts keep coming.



Third Annual ACA Business Conference (ABC) European Meeting in Moscow this September 2016!

By Denis

My name is Denis, and I'm an Adult Child from Moscow, Russia. I attended the Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) Annual Business Convention (ABC) 2013 in Denmark as a delegate of Moscow Intergroup. It was the first ABC outside the US and I was the first delegate attending from Russia. It was one of the key milestones in my life. For the first time, I realized I'd made a decision on my own to go abroad. Oh, so many firsts! I came to believe in myself and in my not perfect but understandable English.

I would like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to those who had organized and attended the ABC 2013 in Denmark. Thank you so much! I love you!



There were more than 60 people attending from Denmark, Russia, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Turkey, Latvia, Poland, Italy, Hungary, UK, Norway, and the US. Many European countries attended ABC for the first time! All so different, speaking different languages, but ACA united us all.

I saw and felt the real "worldwide fellowship" without borders as stated in our Big Red Book (BRB). We had far more similarities than differences, as we all were recovering Adult Children. The most special and heartbreaking moment was when each nation's members spoke the Serenity Prayer in their native language, an unbelievable experience of true unity! Then the idea of holding an annual ACA European Meeting (EM) was born; the first was held in Riga, Latvia in 2014 and second was in Helsinki, Finland in 2015. Both meetings had great success. Some members of Moscow Intergroup (IG) also attended.

The idea of holding the 3rd ACA European Meeting meeting in Moscow was

set. After all, Moscow IG and I personally had attended four ACA Russian Big Meetings in Moscow since 2012, as well as speaker meetings with ACAs from the US and Europe, both in person and via Skype. The meeting in Helsinki, Moscow was declared and approved as a place for the 3rd ACA European Meeting in 2016! EM 2016 is being organized by the Moscow Intergroup in collaboration with the WSO European Committee, and combined together with the 5th ACA Russian Big Meeting 2016. I'm very proud to be part of this collaboration.

Many meetings are planned: ACA meetings, business meetings of European groups, and Intergroups on service structure development in European countries and in Europe as a whole. There will also be a best practice workshop and discussion on the translation and publishing issues of ACA literature in Europe, as well as time for fun and creativity for our Inner Children!

I hope it will bring stronger collaboration and mutual relationships between ACA members, groups, Intergroups from different countries, and the WSO European Committee. I'll be glad to meet old ACA friends and new fellow travelers!

We warmly welcome all ACAs to Moscow on **September 23-25, 2016** to share your experience, strength, and hope and to discuss service structure and many other organizational questions about Europe and Russia. For more information please visit:

www.vdamoscov.ru/aca-european-meeting-2016

Please email us if you have any questions: bv2016@vdamoscov.ru.

Welcome to Moscow!

It's Generational – NOT Intentional!

By Al E.

It's Generational – NOT Intentional! We emerged from the family factor either missing some parts or acquiring some defective parts or both. That experience lasted a little over 6,500 days, i.e., birth to age 18. If you had another parent who was an enabler, like I did, then I think it is more like 13,000 days or 2 times the 6,500 days.

In my family, my parents were too busy with drinking! Or their minds were pre-occupied about drinking. Or their minds were pre-occupied with their own unresolved grief or insecurity. My father, upon reaching age 12, had watched three of his siblings die off; my mother lost her father at age 2. They were insecure and unfinished people. Looking back now, it was unrealistic for me to expect support from them. Yet, I still had these expectations. I repressed them and aligned myself with the household dysfunction. I grew up with two dysfunctional traits that, I believe, are universally shared by almost everyone, even those who do not identify themselves as ACAs!

One, I fear change and will do a lot of illogical, crazy stuff to avoid change. Two, I love it when people agree with me—it gives me the confirmation—the green light—that I am somehow OK or normal! I think I now have your complete attention! You are me, and I am you! From our ACA meditation book, *Strengthening My Recovery*, April 2, page 97: “It’s totally “normal” that we reacted the way we did to the dysfunctional conditions in our upbringing. It’s not our fault. We were powerless.” And so were my parents! They behaved in ways mapped out by their parents and their dysfunctional

circumstances. It’s generational; not intentional.



Is there a solution? Yes, in part The Solution states: “*When we release our parents from responsibility for our actions today, we become FREE to make healthful decisions as actors, not reactors.... We awaken to a sense of wholeness (peace of mind) that we never knew was possible.*” **THAT’S THE GOOD NEWS.** Are we alone in all this? Definitely not! With a Higher Power, the Steps, a Group, a Sponsor, and the Program, I can re-parent my SELF!

Now enter the *priceless gift of serenity*: that peace of mind you get in a sort of magical way that comes quickly, sometimes when you least expect it! It is a miracle; miracles can happen to us in shorter, quicker times than our minds can imagine. But it does require us to *practice these principles in all our affairs.* So, I know I’m not going *ANYWHERE* unless I get going with the ACA program!

Newly Formed Colorado Intergroup Holds Its *First ACA Workshop!*

By Pam O., Workshop Panelist



The newly formed Colorado Adult Children of Alcoholics/Dysfunctional Families (ACA) Intergroup recently held its first ever workshop, “Sponsorship/Fellow Traveler.” It was well attended by members from around the state, representing eight cities.

An ice breaker exercise started the event, followed by some role playing. The moderator narrated, then members spoke various inner child dialogues we might have with ourselves when seeking a sponsor. Thoughts by potential sponsors were also role played. Our Inner Children were very present in the dialogue.

A panel of speakers—all with a variety of experience—shared their thoughts on sponsorship and fellow-traveler relationships. Some described the difficulty of finding a sponsor and getting starting as a fellow traveler. A great way to get started in the steps was to have a workbook study group.

More experienced members spoke about their sponsor history—how they asked their first sponsor, how they did the work, what they learned and how they sponsor today. They also described co-sponsoring.

The importance of safety and discussion of boundaries was helpful, along with hearing that our Higher Power is in it all and works through us. Using the ACA literature, we each had booklets with specific descriptions and nuances of the sponsor/sponsee relationship, including the LGBT community.

Expectations were described and various challenges were addressed. There were questions and answers, and a lot of notes were taken.

The afternoon included much camaraderie, and new sponsor/sponsee relationships blossomed. All in all, the workshop was a great success, and the Colorado ACA Intergroup plans on more workshops for the community in the near future.

A special “thank you” to all who participated and all who attended.

*Keep Coming Back –
It Works!*

STEP SEVEN: Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

Who Me? Write an Article for the *ComLINE*? It's the Who, What, and Why?

Have you been asked to write an article for the *ComLine*? This newsletter is our Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) communication vehicle from the World Service Organization (WSO) to the fellowship. It can be a way to uplift our fellow travelers between meetings. It can answer some intimate questions or just give someone a way to work their ACA pathway.

Who? To whom are you addressing your article? Of course it is our ACA fellowship, but perhaps the article will address the first timers or the person who has been struggling in their recovery.

What? What do you really want others to know about your own (experience, strength and hope) work in ACA? Remember, we are not alone regarding our past, either in an alcoholic childhood background or even a dysfunctional upbringing. Our parents didn't know, but that is no reason for us to keep perpetuating our sadness and grief. Yes, we do have to grow, and it's up to each individual to work that out. Our ACA meetings and literature are here for the taking. And your article can make a difference.

Why? Think about why you want to share your story. Has your meeting given you something to ponder or answer the question, "Why am I in ACA?" In answering, an article can lift up the reader to know that he/she is not alone in past histories that are similar.



If you would like to write an article and are hesitant to do so, why not ask for help? As the past editor, I am very willing to work with you, if you'd like. We have proof readers, so you don't have to be concerned about spelling or punctuation.

I wrote this article just to encourage all of you out in our ACA Fellowship world to help us to help others. We also include stories in languages other than English to include those who don't speak English.

On the ACA website, you can go to <http://www.adultchildren.org/comline> for information on how to submit your work, as well as downloading archived *ComLines*.

With much ACA happiness,
Phyllis R.

STEP EIGHT: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Delegates Corner - Report Update for ACA Members Service Structure Committee Update

By Bill D., Florida, Chair

Greetings Fellow ACAs,

The ACA WSO created the ad hoc Service Structure Committee after the 2016 ABC to review the ACA service structure and make recommendations to the WSO Board and for improvements to fill the void between the ACA groups and WSO.

The eight-delegate committee is chaired by a WSO board member. The committee has undertaken the task of compiling and analyzing the service structures of nine other Twelve Step fellowships as well as ACA's own structure. We have had several meetings via teleconference, and are using the collaborative platform Slack to perform this work.

To date the fellowships of Acoholics Anonymous, Codependents Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, and ACA have been documented and analyzed. Still remaining to be analyzed are AI-Anon, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous, Nar-Anon, and Crystal Meth Anonymous. The committee is using a grid-type system known as a rubric to compare the different aspects of the various fellowships.

The committee members are: Bill D., Florida (Chair); Marcia J., Iowa (Co-Chair/Secretary); Bonnie K-M., Texas; Charlie H., Washington DC; Jim R., New York; Marietta B., Connecticut; Melanie M., Tennessee; Nancy U., Florida and Tom R., Pennsylvania.

We are grateful to be of service to the fellowship that has given so much to us and many others.

Member and Public Service Committee Update

By Bill D., Florida, Chair

Hello Fellow ACAs,

As the new chair of the ACA MPS Committee, I wanted to take a moment and introduce myself and the chairs of the various sub-committees that comprise the MPS committee. My name is Bill D., and I am one of your newest WSO Board members recently ratified at the 2016 ABC held in Florida. I am from Miami, Florida and went to my first ACOA meeting in 1986. Between AA and ACA, I am grateful to have over 31 years of continuous twelve-step fellowship, membership, and service. Anyone who'd like to help carry the message of ACA hope, please email me at mpschair@adultchildren.org.

The MPS Subcommittee Chairs are: Bonnie K-M., Texas, Chair – Intergroups Subcommittee (intergroups@adultchildren.org);

Josie E., Texas/North Carolina, Chair – Hospitals & Institution Subcommittee (hichair@adultchildren.org);

Laura L., California, Chair – Delegate Support Subcommittee (dtsc@acawso.org).

We also have a special worker who telecommutes. She receives and responds to or forwards all in-coming email and voicemail inquiries via the website and help line regarding the fellowship.

The basic mission of MPS is to provide ACA service to the fellowship, and to respond to member and public inquiries for assistance. We do this primarily through the sub-committees, and are looking for local intergroups and/or groups who wish to establish service committees at the local level to assist the MPS efforts.

Please contact us at the email addresses listed above to get involved in carrying the ACA message in your community.

First European Committee Plan and Budget Approved

The first ACA WSO European Committee (EC) plan and budget was approved at a meeting of the Board of Trustees that was held on Saturday 23 April in conjunction with the 2016 Annual Business Conference (ABC) at Delray Beach, Florida, USA. Our basic goals and program of activities until the end of this year are as follows:

- a) Create a simple website for the European Community (EC) to communicate and connect with the European fellowship.
- b) Appoint as many Country Representatives as possible throughout Europe.
- c) Attend the annual ACA European Meeting in September in Moscow, Russia.
- d) Send an EC member to as many national annual events as possible (budget and availability).
- e) Continue to support the fellowship's needs on a case-by-case basis per country.
- f) Establish tracking and reporting mechanisms with the help of the WSO Finance Committee.

A Call to Serve the European Committee to Help Manage Fellowship Growth

Now that the ACA WSO European Committee (EC) has a vision, plan and budget, it is time to officially ask members to step up and volunteer their service to help realize this vision and plan. We have an immediate need to fill Country Representative positions associated with the EC.

Country Representatives are similar to ACA WSO Group Representatives in that they act as the EC's eyes and ears in a specific European country to report on

information, developments, news and local concerns regarding meetings, literature, translations and 7th Tradition donations. Since a Country Representative acts as an ACA Ambassador for their fellowship in their country, it would be advantageous for this person to be an active trusted servant of the fellowship in their country, as well as have the ability to communicate clearly in English.

We currently have Country Representatives from Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Russia.

The Country Representative Positions require the trusted servant to attend the monthly EC teleconference calls held on the first Saturday of the month at 14:00 CET. The initial duration of this position is until the end of 2016 and may be renewed by mutual consent for the calendar year 2017.

The time commitment required for this position varies but is estimated to be in the range of 4-8 hours per month. If you are interested in serving please contact Majbrit (eu@acawso.com) or Jeffrey (eu-finance@acawso.com) by email.

To Russia with Love – 3rd Annual ACA European Meeting to be Held in Moscow

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the 3rd annual ACA European Meeting which will be held in Moscow, Russia on 23-25 September 2016. For more information about the ACA European Meeting in Moscow please contact Denis, the InterGroup representative in Moscow: dhomeworld@gmail.com.

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