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About the ACA ComLINE

The ACA ComLine is published quarterly by Adult Children of Alcoholics® World Service Organization, with one free report of the Annual Business Conference (ABC). The ComLine is intended as a communication line from 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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"Finding Emotional Sobriety" New Trifold Helps AA Members

A new ACA trifold is carrying our fellowship's message to members of Alcoholics Anonymous who are themselves children of dysfunctional families. The trifold is available on [WSO's free downloadable literature page](#).

"Finding Emotional Sobriety" draws on the words of AA co-founder Bill W., and describes ACA as a path to full personal recovery. It warns that alcoholism is a generational disease, and that if we don't address our childhood injuries, we are more likely to pass along the same suffering we knew as children.

Since the trifold was first distributed at an AA convention in Florida in 2017, it has been received enthusiastically by recovering alcoholics in the U.S., Canada, and Europe.

Why is this trifold important, and how can you help ACA carry this message?

As many of us know personally, and as the fourth Laundry List trait states, adult children are at high risk to become alcoholics—using alcohol to self-medicate untreated emotional pain.

Many in AA acknowledge growing up in alcoholic homes, but they don't fully appreciate the personal impact. At some point, many realize that happiness remains

see *Emotional Sobriety* on page 2

Finding Emotional Sobriety

"Many oldsters who have put our AA "booze cure" to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. ... Peace and joy may still elude us."

—Bill W.

© A.A. Grapevine, 1958



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Emotional Sobriety

continued from page 1

elusive and human relations remain frustrating. They are dry, but not emotionally sober, and the frustration can lead some alcoholics to resume drinking.

If you are in AA, you can share this trifold with a friend who still suffers as an adult child. If you attend meetings in a recovery club, you can leave trifolds in a literature area. This simple act of Twelfth Step service can help other suffering adult children find the missing piece to their recovery.

This trifold is a first in a continuing effort by ACA to introduce our program to other 12-Step fellowships, so that the many adult children seeking help with substance addictions and compulsive behaviors can get to the root of their suffering. ❁

Who Loved ME????

by Toni P.

Where were you when I was sad and blue?

Where were you when I needed to hear I love you?

Where were you when I was hurt
and I needed a hug?

Who loved me when I was a little kid?

It's all one big blank to me

Who loved me? No one I could see!

It's a big empty spot inside of me!

Who loved me? No one I could see!

When I found God it was plain to see

He was the one who loved me.

He was the one I could not see.

Yet by thirteen I knew He loved me.

Years later God is not enough.

I need to learn how to love myself.

Frozen Feelings

“After completing Step Five, we sit quietly and reflect upon our inventory.... We have looked at shame, abandonment, sexual issues, frozen feelings and our spiritual beliefs. We sense that we have an inner courage that has always been there and which is now emerging.” ❁

BRB p. 214



photo by Mardi M.

The Promises Really Do Come True

by Carol S., Olympia, Washington

The ACA Promises really do come true, and today Promise 10 means the most to me: *Fears of failure and success will leave us, as we intuitively make healthier choices.*

I was 74 when I first attended an ACA meeting in Olympia, Washington. I hadn't heard from my precious older daughter for four years, and those years were painful. The silence started when my youngest daughter had a double mastectomy.

The real growth started with ACA

The ACA Promises were what gave me hope, and I held on tight. I attended both Codependents Anonymous (CoDA) and ACA, and worked both programs and did service work. I got a sponsor in CoDA and when she quit, I got a co-sponsor in ACA to work the steps.

That's when real growth started to happen. I could see I was obsessing over my lost relationship with my oldest daughter and reached out to her for some explanation for her refusal to communicate. She said she had decided to let certain relationships go and gave me a few insights as to why: we'd had an argument after my youngest daughter's surgery; my oldest was screaming at me, and I defended myself. Bottom line: I re-acted!

A family reunited

Then, lo and behold, at our pre-Christmas dinner last year, my oldest daughter showed up early for a family dinner. We had some time to talk before everyone else came. The timing was perfect, and the conversation was good. And then, the oldest showed up for a Christmas dinner at my youngest daughter's house! I felt this huge emotional release as if I had been holding my breath for over four years.

Support during loss and grief

My oldest son passed away in his sleep four days after that Christmas, and our newly

re-united family supported each other in this very sad time of loss and grief.

Amends rejected

The next year, on my oldest daughter's birthday, I spent most of the day writing out an amends to her. Months later, I emailed her the letter as part of my 12-step program, because I wanted to make amends to her.

She answered back, and she said she wanted nothing to do with any of that crap. I told her okay, she could just tear it up.

Amends accepted

However, a few weeks later, she emailed me she had some furniture she was going to get rid of, and asked me if I might want any of it. I said, "Yes and thank you!" She came over and delivered the furniture by herself. I asked her for a hug, and she gave me one!

Renewed relationship

On my youngest daughter's next birthday, the family went out to dinner and I was invited. My oldest daughter came to my place, picked me up and even gave me a ride home.

Last Saturday night my oldest daughter texted me: "Mom, I passed you driving, and you didn't have your headlights on!"

We texted back a forth a few times. It appears to me that we now have a relationship. Yippee!

Promises fulfilled

I believe – letting go and surrendering to my higher power, admitting I was powerless over my relationship with my daughter, working the steps with a co-sponsor, attending meetings and giving service – have all given me fulfillment of The Promises.

I am so thankful for the ACA program, my ACA community, and I am learning to make healthier choices. Because, there is truth in what we all say: "It works if you work it!" 🌿

Coming to Believe...

by Karin S., Chicagoland

I came to recovery with a clear understanding of God. A few years before, I had had a dramatic conversion experience and spent a lot of time studying scripture to solidify my faith. In fact, what I learned in my study is what encouraged me to uncover the hidden truths within myself, a process of self-examination that led me straight into the rooms of ACA.

From peace to power struggle

What I found there surprised me. For the first time in my life, I could relate to what people shared about their experiences of growing up in family dysfunction. Within minutes of entering my first meeting, I felt a strong sense of belonging. Another moment of identification occurred just a few weeks later. The group was struggling – a lot of newcomers had recently joined, and long-time attendees were feeling increasingly displaced. The simple service of chairing the meeting often turned into a power struggle.

One day, in the middle of our half-time break, a sudden argument erupted. I watched it unfold, feeling like I was witnessing everyone's inner children in action. My own inner child of course, objectively observed the outburst; immediately I removed myself from the heat of the outburst.

From chaos to balance

It was sheer chaos for a few minutes. At one point, though, it ended, and the group re-

turned to the orderly business of conducting a recovery meeting. Oddly, witnessing this outburst and recognizing its familiarity gave me a stronger sense of belonging than any warm welcome or heartfelt encouragement could have provided. It reminded me of all the blaming, self-defending, and the desperate need to be heard, including the gaslighting; all the behaviors I'd grown up with. The end result showed me a way to move beyond all the chaos by demonstrating the Traditions at work!

I formally learned about the Traditions not long after. I proceeded to study them with the same intensity with which I had studied scripture before – as if my life depended on them. The traditions helped me to make sense of my childhood experience.

No one in my family knew of the Traditions – yet they managed to violate them left, right, and center. My emotionally unstable mother made herself the higher power of our family, with the primary purpose of making my alcoholic father believe he was in charge; everything spiraled out of control from there. No wonder I felt so confused!

Once I began to align my life and relationships with the principles captured in the Traditions, life became easier. I stopped feeling responsible for other people's inappropriate reactions toward me.

Today, my understanding of God is no longer based on study, but rather on a sense of feeling truly loved and supported by something greater than myself. It still blows my mind, though, that a bunch of unreliable drunks and crazy co-dependents came up with a set of principles as powerful as the Traditions, as wonderful guidelines to cut through the chaos of alcoholism and dysfunction, replacing old behaviors with good orderly conduct! 🌸



photo by Mardi M.

Daring to be the Real Me

by Tim M., Denver, Colorado

At a meeting earlier this year, I was listening to shares going around the table. I suddenly had a realization that changed my understanding of the way I was raised. My father was extremely irritable when he was drunk, which was close to constantly for the first eight years of my life.

What irritated him most were small children. “Children are to be seen and not heard” was practically a gospel verse in our home, although I didn’t believe the part about being seen. While growing up, I avoided my dad as much as humanly possible. When I had to be around him, perfect silence and invisibility were my goals.

All I wanted was approval

I was sitting in an ACA meeting in an old stone church – four blocks from the house where I grew up. Something clicked. I realized that as a child I wasn’t just trying to fade into the background to avoid my father’s rage and irritation with me, I was actually trying to please him. All I wanted and needed in my early childhood was his approval and his praise.

I would have done anything to please him, and what my traumatized child mind believed would please him most was if I didn’t exist. So, I didn’t speak. I didn’t have an opinion. I never did anything that would make the tiniest ripple, much less a wave.

I lived in terror

This distorted belief shaped my childhood and continued to shape me into my adult life. I realized before I found the program, I was terrified of taking up space. I was terrified of having an opinion. I was terrified of speaking my mind. Although, honestly, I didn’t have any idea what speaking my mind meant.

I realized I spent my childhood, not just avoiding negative consequences, but I also was actively shaping myself into an amorphous blob; I did nothing to gain approval! What a discovery!

A deep awareness

This awareness showed me just how deep my emotional trauma was, and how much I had suffered as a young boy. This realization now helps me in my day-to-day choices. When I am afraid to raise my hand and speak up in class, or give my true opinion in a group conversation, or share what’s really going through my mind and soul at a meeting, I do it anyway. I’m still terrified, but I do it.

I now know – hiding myself, refusing to be for fear of offending someone else, and choosing to be invisible to please others – these are defense mechanisms that served me in my childhood. But today, I have the courage to change my old behaviors in order to experience a joyful life and to be the person I was meant to be. 🌱

Step One

“We admitted we were powerless over the effects of alcoholism or other family dysfunction, that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Step Two

“Came to believe that a Power Greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

Step Three

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God.”

Deliverance at My House

by Ken C.

By the fall of 2007, the ACA Yellow Workbook had come out. I was ready to plunge head first and go deep into the steps. Our meeting decided to have a workbook group, and we'd support each other. Since I had never done all the steps in any other 12-step program, I thought this would be good for me to do the steps with our group.

I could only share with my sponsor

While doing the workbook, my issues came up. I would be in touch with my sponsor to talk about the issues (old monsters in the closet that were finally coming out). I would put stars next to my responses in the workbook indicating I would only share these with my sponsor. At this time, I was not comfortable to share everything with the group.

It had gotten so bad for me, I wrote on my workbook page: "It feels like an alien is popping out of my stomach." (like the movie, "Aliens"). I had started to emotionally spiral out of control because so much was coming up and out. I called my sponsor, and he helped me the best he could. I called another fellow traveler, who offered me her experience doing the steps the first time.

What will I be without my goo?

While in my house, I was in so much pain. I was writhing on the floor in a fetal position. I was just in agony of seeing the wreckage of my past in black on white on the pages of my 4th Step Inventory.

Then I heard a voice. "Just let go." I said "What will I be without my goo?" And firmly I heard the voice say again, "Just let go." So, when I made a conscious effort to let go of this pain, I FELT A HAND GO THROUGH ME FROM HEAD TO TOE PULLING SOMETHING OUT OF ME.

The pain stopped. I had a spiritual awakening BIG TIME! I heard my inner child. I felt the hand of God go through me.

I've heard of deliverance, but now I can testify it happened to me, alone in my house.

The pain? Yes, it is real. Walk through it. Don't run and hide. If a therapist is needed, don't be afraid to get one.

Call Fellow Travelers. It's true: Peace and serenity are on the other side. Come join us! ✨



Overcoming Fear of Powerlessness

by Charlie H., Falls Church, Virginia.

One of my starkest childhood memories came at age six. I was literally powerless, and my life was not just unmanageable. It was in imminent danger.

As our family car approached a curve on the highway, my mother slumped unconscious over the steering wheel. My two older brothers, already trained to accept any craziness, stared straight ahead, seemingly okay with rolling down the steep slope we were speeding toward. After a few anxious moments, I shouted loud enough to wake my mom. She veered back to safety, and we drove home without a word.

When I entered ACA, I struggled to understand the First Step. The words “powerless” and “unmanageable” seemed almost like a foreign language to me. But when I look at the many moments where my family’s life was unmanageable and I had no power to fix it, I wonder now why the First Step was such a stretch for me.

I couldn’t see the obvious

I can think of three reasons—little roadblocks in my psyche that kept me from seeing what was obvious. Roadblocks that might have convinced me I didn’t need ACA, and to continue the futile adult life I was living.

First, I recoiled at the word “powerless.” It sounded too much like “helpless” or “trapped.” I’d had enough of these feelings as a child, and “accepting I was powerless” triggered shame and resentment. It felt like going backward, not forward.

Second, I didn’t like, or even understand, “unmanageable.” I’d spent most of my life desperately acting like I was normal, and healthy, and a-okay, thank you. I hated admitting that my False Self had hit a dead end.

Finally, I feared where the First Step seemed to be leading. It meant admitting I had a problem that I couldn’t solve by myself. Like many adult children, I hated needing to ask for help.

Fortunately, I did not leave ACA. I accepted for a while that I was stuck at the front door of the Twelve Steps. Gradually, meeting by meeting, the desire to seem “normal” began to fade away. I accepted that I would never get better until I let go of old thinking.

I also found a very simple shorthand for

“
Better answers are
freely available.”

stating this step. “I have a problem I can’t fix. I need some help.”

This simpler summary works with any problem, past or present.

The First Step helped me (and my Inner Child) grieve my childhood. My Inner Child admitted he needed a parent, and I became that for him.

Powerless over the past

I admitted I needed help from therapists, and fellow travelers. Their acceptance and mirroring convinced me at long last that I was blameless for the world I grew up in.

Whether in the back seat of a careening car or suffering through broken holidays, my child was truly powerless over the past.

Asking for help when I need it

As an adult, the First Step keeps me from staying stuck in destructive self-sufficiency, or in flashbacks of shame or childhood helplessness. At work and in relationships, I am quicker to recognize when my life isn’t working. I ask for help, from my Higher Power and my fellow travelers.

When I accept that I don’t have the answers, better answers are freely available. 🌿

Forgive Your Dad

by Ken C.

In my dysfunctional upbringing, I am one of three children to my parents. When I was five years old, I saw my mommy cry and daddy was gone. I thought something I did caused this problem.

Next thing, we ended up living with my grandmother. Six months or so later, my dad appeared again. I asked him where he'd gone? He would tell me to run along and play. It wasn't until I was a teenager that I found out my dad had shot someone during an argument when he was drunk.

The seeds of resentment

The guy did not die, but my dad did have to go to prison for six months or so. My mom sold the house, and we ended up moving in with my grandmother.

Over the years, that resentment grew and grew towards my dad for not telling me at a level I could understand, (for example, "Daddy did something bad and is going away for a while"). I loved him, but resented him.

A prisoner beckoned

Fast forward to about 2010. There was a cork board with announcements and flyers at the meeting place where the ACA Forest Park meeting is held. I saw a letter pinned to the cork board. It was from a twenty-five-year-old man in prison; he was looking to

be paroled to this area and wanted to attend meetings here.

As I finished reading the letter, I heard in the spirit, "Write him." I looked around and saw no one else there. Again, I heard firmer, "Write Him!" Ok, ok. God, you want me to write to this man in prison. I can do that.

So, I wrote him. We exchanged about a dozen or so letters. He had been in prison for about three years of a five-year sentence. No one had ever visited him during his incarceration. He wanted to be paroled here.

I thought, I better go and meet this man. How will I know if I want him paroled to my house? Can I even stand him?

So, I picked a date, and wrote him I was coming.

Coming full circle

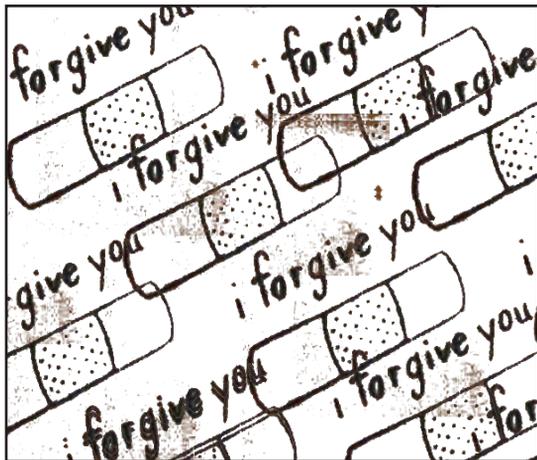
The date came. He was 6'2" tall, with a million tattoos. He came right up and hugged me tightly. He was happy to have company. We sat down on the chairs. I noticed he had three tattoos on his arm that looked like children. I asked him, "What are these tattoos?" He said, right before he came into prison his girlfriend had triplets. These were their pictures.

I then realized – THIS WAS ABOUT ME. Here, I am willing to have compassion for a person I did not know, who had three children; yet I had resentments towards my dad who went to prison about the same age as this guy.

After the meeting, I bawled my eyes out in the car. I realized this whole experience was arranged by God for me to clean up my heart.

I went back another time to visit this man in prison. But, unfortunately, due to limitations on his parole, he would not be allowed to be paroled to my place.

Again, in review, I see how God arranged the entire beginning, middle and end. I had to trust God in what He was leading me through – leading me to forgive my dad. 🌿



Addressing Predatory Behavior (APB)

by Karin S., Chair, APB Working Group

Greetings, ACA Fellow Travelers! I hope this message finds you well and looking for a happy and joyful new year!

I would like to take a moment to provide an update about the progress we are making in the Addressing Predatory Behavior (APB) working group with respect to preparing for publication of the *ComLine* special issue in February. We are right on target for publication of this special issue in mid-February.

As of December, we have eight viable member shares. The content of these shares covers a broad range of topics:

- analysis, based on extensive BRB quotes, of why we as ACA's are so particularly vulnerable to predatory and other types of boundary-less behavior;
- delineation of the differences between awkwardness among members vs. 13th stepping vs. predatory behavior;
- description of different types of predatory behavior (pushing services/products; pursuit of sexual/romantic interests);
- questions of individual and meeting response when predatory behavior is witnessed or reported to the group;
- predator perspective

We are currently in the process of editing these shares, working closely with their authors to capture the essence of what is being shared while at the same time meeting the requirements for publication. Our goal is to truthfully represent a variety of different perspectives on the topic, while at the same time weaving these perspectives together in a way that helps us point a way forward for our fellowship as a whole in addressing this important issue.

If you feel a burning desire to share your own perspective on this topic, we can still accept submissions until January 31, 2019, even though the official deadline was in December. Please see <https://acawso.org/2018/10/24/apb-call-for-submissions-comline/> for detailed instructions on how to submit your story, or email it to apb@acawso.org. To learn more about the work of the Addressing Predatory Behavior working group, please visit <https://acawso.org/category/apb/>. 

Total Surrender

by Toni P.

My story may have been similar to yours

The abuse, the confusion,
the heartache and blues.

Not knowing when
enough was enough.

Drudging through life
without giving up my fight.

Not till I totally surrendered
to my Higher Power,
did my life change forever.

When I could not walk
or wiggle my toes,
I knew God had to be called.

Not able to take care of myself,
brought me to ask God for help.

Little by little my Higher Power
stood me up.
Helping to again be able to walk.

It was then I surrendered
totally to my God,
My life, my heart and my soul.

Since I have surrendered, I found
humility. Which makes me a better
friend and person than I thought I
could ever be.

My life is so real to live every day.
I think of others who inspired me along
the way.

I thank my Higher Power
for all that He has done,
my new hope, my new life.

All I can offer to you is my desire
to walk the talk.

To surrender was not a loss.
It turned out to be a remarkable choice.

Something happened
when I hit my bottom.

I connected and found my way
and I got Him.

ACA Highlight Links – Get to where you want to be

WSO Monthly Teleconference of Trustee Board Meeting

2nd Saturday every month – Come join us!

Teleconference Number: 712-432-0075, Pin 427266#.

Press *6 to mute or un-mute.

<https://acawso.org/monthly-telecon/>

2019 ACA Annual Business Conference (ABC) / ACA World Conference (AWC)

April 25-28, 2019

Malmö, Sweden – All are welcome!

<https://www.acaworldconvention.org/>

Find WSO’s Region Map – Which region do you belong to?

Teleconference Third Saturday

Teleconference Number:

605-472-5354 code 861824#

<https://adultchildren.org/regions-listing/>

WSO’s Monthly Treasurer’s Report

<https://acawso.org/category/treasurer-reports/>

Has your meeting sent a 7th Tradition donation to WSO?

The most recent monthly donation report

<https://acawso.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ACAWSO-7-Tradition-October-2018-rev.pdf>

Get the Traveler monthly newsletter emailed to You – Uniting 5000+ ACA members – Sign up now!

<https://adultchildren.org/newsletter/>

ComLine – ACA’s quarterly submissions:

What is the *Comline*?

How do I submit a story, art or poetry?

<https://adultchildren.org/literature/comline/>

Find a Meeting – This list is International! Check it out!

<https://adultchildren.org/meeting-search/>

Register your ACA meeting

Make it easy for interested people to find your meeting – it’s global!

<https://adultchildren.org/meeting/meeting-register/>

Update your ACA meeting web page

All meetings required to update once a year – now there are two opt-ins!

<https://adultchildren.org/meeting-search/>

ACA WSO’s public service announcement (PSA)!

Download and send to your radio stations now!

<https://acawso.org/category/audio-public-resources/>

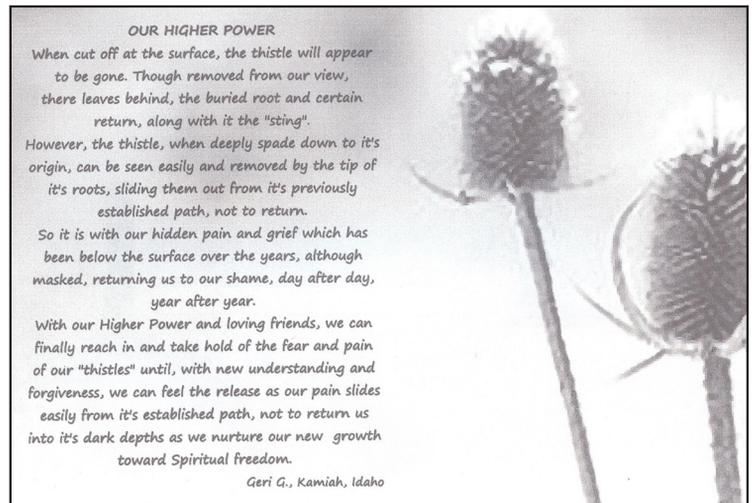
NEW! Receive ACA Daily ACA Meditation now!

Here’s today’s ACA meditation!

<https://adultchildren.org/meditation-sign-up/>

What Literature/ Recordings/Coins are available for sale

<https://shop.adultchildren.org/>



Montana ACA Hosts Retreat

On September 21-23, 2018, Montana ACA hosted its first-ever gathering retreat at a beautiful lodge near Lakeside, Montana, complete with a gorgeous view of Flathead Lake, wonderful meals and rustic cabins in the woods. Thirty-five ACA members came from Connecticut, California, Alaska, Idaho, Washington and, of course, Montana. We even had a Skype visit from Bill D. from Florida, our World Service Organization's Treasurer, who shared his story, along with a WSO update.

The weekend workshop topics included 12-Stepping a Problem, Sponsorship, Self-Forgiveness, and Inner Child Journaling. Several speakers shared their recovery stories, including a lovely story/song/guitar presentation in the glow of a stone fireplace. No outdoor Montana setting would be complete without an outdoor fire pit, s'mores, and swings; it was so much fun getting to know our new ACA family!

Sunday morning culminated with a guided meditation, inviting us to join our inner child on the shores of Flathead Lake, spiritual shares on The Promises, followed by a special thank you to all the presenters and committee members, and fond goodbye hugs.

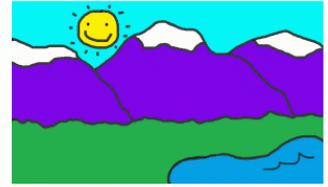
It was wonderful to meet our ACA Fellow Travelers for a meaningful weekend in Montana!

Historically, ACA began in Missoula in the late '70s and morphed into an Adult Child focused-Al-Anon meeting; attendance was up and down for many years. Around 2011, ACA members decided to become affiliated with the ACA World Service, and now there are approximately 12 ACA meetings in our state. With today's technology, ACA is now a rapidly growing international fellowship.

Thank you ACA, for showing us how to find a life of happiness, joy, AND serenity!

In service,
Montana ACA
Retreat Committee

Seeking Peace Through Recovery



Montana ACA Retreat

Comments from retreat attendees:

This past weekend was an amazing journey for me!

It was an excellent retreat and perfect location!!

THANKYOU for a truly life enriching experience!

This was very well done! I learned so much. Thank you.

Thank you for working to bring us to our inner child in a safe, beautiful place.



Promise One

"We will discover our real identities by loving and accepting ourselves."

Promise Two

"Our self-esteem will increase as we give ourselves approval on a daily basis."

Promise Three

"Fear of authority figures and the need to 'people-please' will leave us."

ACA World Service Organization (WSO) Malmö, Sweden April 25-26, 2019

Each year, the ACA World Service Organization conducts a business meeting, in order to inform the membership, as well as to hear their concerns. Like a group business meeting on a larger scale, the ABC offers financial disclosures and committee reports, and the opportunity to discuss topics and ratify board members.

Every Group and Inter-group is encouraged to send a Delegate for representation – to voice and vote, throughout the conference. Though non-delegates may

not vote, all ACA members are welcome to attend the Business Conference. Join us, and take this opportunity to gain a greater insight into service in ACA.

This year, ACA is utilizing technology to reach our world-wide membership, allowing delegates to vote remotely on proposals, and to participate in this year's conference. For more information regarding the events, please go to: <https://www.acaworldconvention.org/>.

Please join us in Malmö!



Conference and Convention Dates

Annual Business Conference (ABC) April 25-26, 2019

ACA World Convention (AWC) April 26-28, 2019

Business Conference for ACA Sweden (in Swedish) April 27, 2019

