



In This Issue

Step 7 – Humbly
 Asked God 1

My “Brother” 2

Setting Myself Free. 3

Setting Boundaries Does
 Become Easier. 4

Delegates Vote on Ballot
 Proposals 5

Where in the World
 is ACA? 6

Where Does the
 Money Go? 8

Exciting ACA News,
 Updates, and How
 YOU Can Help! 9

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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Step 7

Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings

by Chris W., Pennsylvania

The Steps are about my relationship with myself, while the Traditions are about my relationship with others.

I made it through the gauntlet of Steps 4 (ouch), 5 (shame-buster), and 6 (the threshold), and here I am at Step 7 (service). Service, you say? Yes, Step 7 is all about service to myself; with the help of my Higher Power (HP), I unburden myself of the weight of my shortcomings. Maybe I can illustrate through a dream I had not too long ago.

I was starting on a country hike with Mom, when I noticed her backpack was enormous compared to her frail stature. I told her she wouldn't make the journey if she didn't unload some of her stuff. I offered to help her identify what was essential and leave the rest behind. Mom said she couldn't part with anything in her bag, and she refused to take an inventory. I was devastated, but I went on without her.

My Higher Power already knows what is in my backpack

(representing my heart, mind and soul). When I release that which no longer serves me, I can complete my journey. This process allows me to demonstrate courage, trust in my HP, and faith in my abilities to work the program.

I now have room to love and serve others: I can listen without judgment, empathize with Fellow Travelers and encourage them to trust the process. It works when I work it.



My “Brother”

by *Kimberly B.*

I have a brother
from another mother
to whom I can relate
like no other.

But wait...
here is where I hesitate;
I realize it's through
that mysterious force
we call fate,
truly,
it is with his children
that I absolutely relate.

DON'T TALK
DON'T TRUST
DON'T FEEL

These are the rules of his house,
an unspoken deal.

It's the same in every house like his,
just like mine growing up,
the energy is familiar,
we are kin.

There are thousands,
probably millions of children
who suffer in this way,
tiptoeing through landmines of eggshells,
day after day.

The abusers don't realize
that their habits cause others so much pain,

why do we drink
 smoke and
 shoot up?

Oh yeah,

avoidance of our own un-good feeling emotion
(Deep down we know it's all in
vain)

What makes it terrifyingly difficult
to let go
of that which we've held onto for so long,
is that it's been there longer

than we can remember,
the very notes of our own personal song.

Choosing to truly heal yourself
is the toughest road of all,
definitely not meant
for the weak, meek or small.

The thing is,
it may seem quite daunting
to feel that which was buried so long ago,
but if I could do it,
so can you,
this I surely know.

Pain is just a thought,
like everything else in this life,
but letting it swim
from your gut to your head,
keeps you in a perpetual cycle
of struggle and strife.

Choosing to feel it in your heart
may seem like an ominous task.
But how does it differ from a wasp sting?
As young Jesse just taught us,
when you accept it,
then let it go,
pain doesn't last.

What a burden it must be for you,
a heavy, heavy load,
to carry all that pain around
as you travel down every road,

While you lovingly care for your family
providing for all their needs,
my hope is that this poem has touched your heart
and of my words you will take heed.

Even though I love this
brother from another mother,
I've spent a lot of time
hating him too,
he is married to my sweet, sweet sister,
whose name happens to be Lou.

Well that's how it is with love and hate,
two star-crossed lovers on a perpetual date,
can't have one without the other,
this I say to you
my brother from another mother. 

Setting Myself Free

by DCH

As I worked the steps and took a blameless inventory of my parents, I realized there were other authority figures in my life that had impacted me negatively. I grew up very religious and sought solace from my family in the all-or-nothing rules of organized religion.

Entrenched dysfunction

Through ACA, I learned that my internalizing of these extreme religious beliefs entrenched me more deeply in my dysfunctional role as a martyr/hero-child and

as someone with a strong, perfectionist, inner critical parent. I wanted to become a religious person as the ultimate expression of that martyr role.

However, living in community with others activated my laundry list traits and brought me to my rock bottom of getting kicked out. This experience brought me to ACA and recovery.

Working the Steps

The process of working the Steps, particularly, Step 4,

where I did an inventory of the religious messages I received in childhood and Step 9, where I sought to make amends for the ways that I harmed others by acting as a critical parent and reacting based on my laundry list traits, helped me create this visual of where I am today.

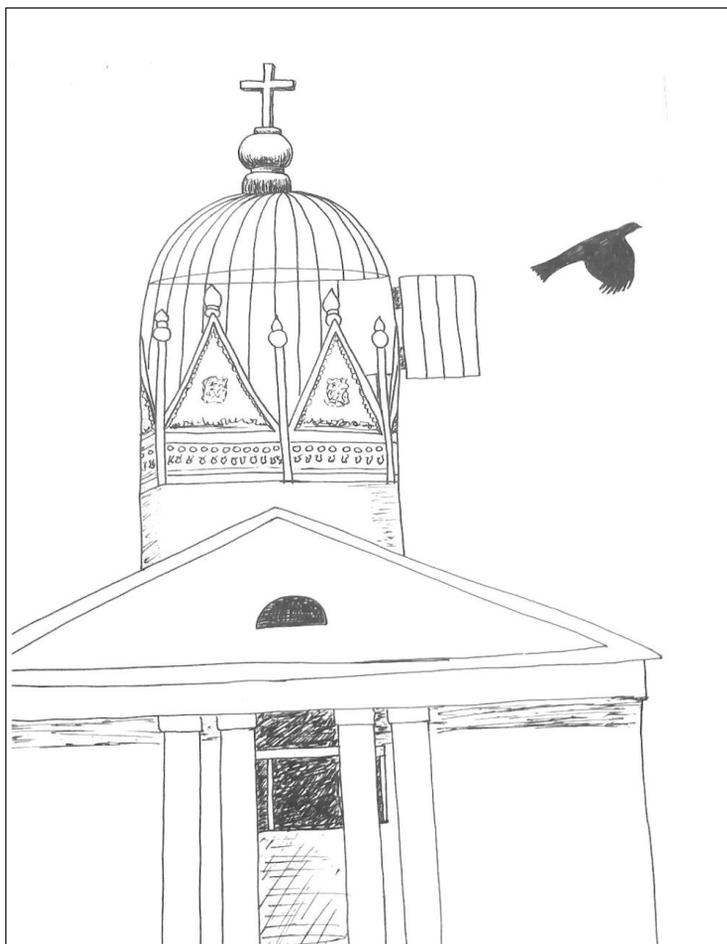
Working the Steps has taught me that there is a difference between religiosity and spirituality. I still practice the religion of my childhood, but with much less rigidity. I have let go of an image of God as one who keeps score and is distant like my parents. I have let go of the martyr role and discovered my self-worth is intrinsic.

Today, I believe that my Loving Higher Power is

- a benevolent power greater than myself,
- who makes everything work out in the end,
- who does not give me challenges greater than I can handle, and
- who loves me unconditionally and does not abandon me.

On this day, I let go of the ways that I have harmed others and the ways that rigid organized religion has harmed me. I forgive myself and I set myself free.

Peace,
DCH



Setting Boundaries Does Become Easier

by Carol F., Montana

I remember a time when I believed there was no way most of The Promises could really come true for me. I was a failure at setting boundaries. There was no way healthy boundaries and limits would become easier to set.

Nobody would listen

I had told the abusive people in my life to talk to me respectfully. I had told them to stop taking advantage of me. Nobody would listen to my requests. Nobody seemed to care about or show any respect for my boundaries. Nobody was changing. Slowly I started to understand, I was still wanting others to change.

Defining boundaries

Boundaries are about what I will do, not about making another person do something. I had to learn

to change the only person I could: *me*.

If someone speaks to me disrespectfully, I can ask them to stop, or I will choose to leave the house. If someone asks to borrow money, it's up to me to say *no*. If I am asked to work on my day off, I have the choice to say *no*, whether they like it or not.

My lesson

What I am also learning is the more I heal from my past trauma, the more I love and accept myself. The more I love myself, the more my self-respect grows.

Most of my life, I seemed to carry an aura that said *abuse me*. Since I had no respect for myself, I did not expect others to treat me with respect. I subconsciously attracted abusive people into my world.

As my self-respect grew, I started sending out a healthy aura: *I love and respect myself and expect you to do the same*.

I am learning to say *no* and to leave situations that are abusive. At an ACA meeting, I had heard I cannot set boundaries and take care of my feelings at the same time.

I no longer have the need to people-please. It is okay if someone doesn't like my *no*. Taking care of myself is becoming more natural.

When I was 17, my younger brother committed suicide. I had transferred my guilt of not protecting him and keeping him safe to my firstborn son.

It was very hard for me to set limits with my older son. He is 24 now and has drug and alcohol issues. Out of guilt, I have enabled him by lending him money and rescuing him from the consequences of his actions.

As I have forgiven myself for not saving my younger brother, I have also realized it's getting easier for me to set boundaries and limits with my older son. I will be forever grateful to ACA for giving me the tools to heal from my guilt and self-loathing, and for helping me to understand the power and freedom of Promise 9: Healthy boundaries and limits will become easier for us to set! 



I am learning to say "no" and to leave situations that are abusive.

Delegates Vote on Ballot Proposals

by Christine B.

Ask 70 adult children, all Delegates from meetings or intergroups around the world, to sit quietly and listen to reports of the ACA World Service officers for three hours. Feed them Swedish meatballs. Then when it's nap time, put them back in the same room and let them debate whether ACA should have a particular mission statement. Watch what happens. I was there.

Some object to the language. Some think we don't need a mission statement; it's too "corporate." Some want a mission statement, but not *this* one. Some want to vote on whether we need a mission statement before looking at language. Some think a committee should be formed. Then, someone says there should be a difference between a mission statement for the World Service Organization and a mission for the fellowship – meaning the meetings themselves.

Then, the real fun begins as we try to sort out the debate according to *Roberts Rules of Order*. Basically, the rules require a formal "motion," then a second to the motion, then discussion, then a vote. Even if there is a single minority opinion, then the minority is invited to make a "statement" about their position. Then, the Chair asks if anyone in the majority wants to change their vote based on what the minority said. If even one person says *yes*, we vote again. Majority wins.

Here's where it gets really complex.

Here's where adult children begin to feel confused or judgmental or upset because someone else got the rules wrong – all these behaviors we know all too well. Because – after the motion and before the Vote – there can be up to two "Friendly Amendments." The Chair has to keep track of them. When everyone is totally frustrated because some people are talking about the motion, while others are talking about one of the amendments, someone will say "Call the Question."

"Call the Question" means let's stop talking and start voting. Before we vote on the motion, we have to vote on Calling the Question. If that

gets a *yes* vote, then we vote on Friendly Amendment #2 (if there is one). Then, another Call the Question, now on Friendly Amendment #1. Whether or not the Friendly Amendments pass, we finally get to the original motion, amended or not.

The first motion on creating a mission statement took over an hour of debate without a vote. It was "postponed," so it could be revised for next year. It was one of only two of the ballot proposals that went out to all ACA groups to vote on whether it should go on the annual business convention agenda, which required a two-thirds vote of the membership. Imagine if all twelve proposals had made it!

But defeat is not the end! WSO can still adopt a mission statement. Formal motions are not the only way WSO takes action. In fact, this may be the least effective way. Any proposal can be submitted again next year. The board can always appoint a working group on any issue at any time.

Then we went to the second motion, this one was about adopting a diversity statement. After more of the same process, we ran out of time and tabled it until the next morning; the delegates eventually approved it.

But here's the best part: THEN, we got on buses, went to a Swedish camp to play horseshoes and Frisbee and listen to Swedish drinking songs. We ate eel and crayfish and other odd-looking food. We left our debate where it belonged and became happy adult children playing together.

Sound like fun? It was. 🦋

"Call the Question" means let's stop talking and start voting.



Where in the World is ACA?

by Pam M.

At the May ACA World Service Teleconference, I kept waiting for someone to announce the numbers for how many meetings, Intergroups, and Regions we have. Maybe I was playing online Mahjong when that was announced, or maybe the rotation of WSO Board Officers and Committee Chairs eliminated those numbers.

In any case, I am the elected Intergroup Representative to the WSO, so I went to the ACA websites to get those numbers to include in my written report.

I did not find them. It was Sunday, so I couldn't pick up the phone and call Signal Hill, so I went to "Plan C."

Plan C became a Herculean task

I'd simply count the meetings from the website listings. It seemed like such a reasonable thing to do at the time....

There's only one Region. It's in my neighborhood, so that was easy. Counting the Intergroups from the Intergroups search listings didn't take long either – 106 Intergroups are listed.

Then I went to the *Find a Meeting* link.

Hey, a mere 3 hours later (in the midst of it I had to feed my Basset Hound and Tuxedo Cat, let the dog frolic in the yard, and eat my dinner), I had a list of meetings by country.

A traveler's wish

If I were traveling, it would be nice to find country meetings grouped by geographical location using, say continents, but the website listed the countries by name – all 195 of them – including the Vatican (spoiler alert – there ARE no ACA meetings in the Vatican).

So I had the opportunity of trying to pronounce the names of countries I never heard of, nor knew which continent they were a part of.

So, if you will be traveling, perhaps you will stop and attend an ACA meeting or two.

You can find meetings through the ACA WSO website at www.adultchildren.org.

Here's what I learned that made me feel warm and fuzzy:

As of May 2019 we have 2,397 meetings (2218 in-person, 30 online, 127 telephone, and 22 online audio), 106 Intergroups, and 1 Region.

Registered Meetings by Country

Many meetings are unregistered due to language and limitations of how to input different kinds of addresses into a computer form



that is now being fixed to accommodate them.

Australia – 37	Israel – 5
Austria – 3	Italy – 14
Belarus – 1	Japan – 14
Belgium – 2	Kenya – 3
Canada – 58	Latvia – 4
China – 3	Lithuania – 8
Columbia – 1	Luxembourg – 1
Cyprus – 1	Malta – 1
Czech Republic – 7	Mexico – 13
Denmark – 46	Mongolia – 1
Dominican Republic – 1	Netherlands – 13
Ecuador – 2	Oman – 1
Estonia – 4	Panama – 4
Finland – 29	Poland – 15
Germany – 16	Portugal – 1
Ghana – 1	Puerto Rico – 1
Greece – 4	Romania – 1
Guatemala – 2	Russia – 47
Hungary – 4	Singapore – 2
India – 5	Slovakia – 4
Ireland – 8	South Africa – 5
	Spain – 6
	Sweden – 74

Switzerland – 3
Thailand – 3
Turkey – 4
Ukraine – 5
United Kingdom – 39
USA – 1,570
Venezuela – 1
Virgin Islands (U.S.) – 1
Zambia – 1

So, if you need to designate a Higher Power for your spiritual guidance, maybe you can use the global ACA program as the power greater than yourself. Consider it your world-wide support system.

Oh, and since ACA meetings are all around the world, please make sure to keep your meeting information updated at www.adultchildren.org/meetings.

Step Seven

“Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.”

Step Eight

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.”

Step Nine

“Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

Promise Seven

“We will learn how to play and have fun in our lives.”

Promise Eight

“We will choose to love people who can love and be responsible for themselves.”

Promise Nine

“Healthy boundaries and limits will become easier for us to set.”

Where Does the Money Go?

by Christine B.

As a Delegate to the ACA Annual Business Conference (ABC) in Malmö, Sweden, I was interested to hear the report of past World Service Organization (WSO) Treasurer, Bill D., and to meet the new Treasurer, Pat H.

I thought WSO maintained an "office"

I learned so much! First, I thought WSO maintained an "office," with employees, phone lines, and desks with computers. You know, a group of them, who did the business of WSO to serve us. I was wrong.

I was amazed to learn about our trusted servants

WSO has a small warehouse from which it ships literature with only THREE employees. When I heard the reports of trusted servants, I was amazed to learn they were ALL volunteers, and all in remote locations.

"I know hard business needs to be done in person."

Second, I learned that WSO, with a budget of over \$1 million, relies in part on sales of literature to fund our outreach work, including the expenses of putting on the annual ABC/AWC conference, board meetings, literature development, and keeping up with increased technology demands.

As Bill D. reported, our contributions have increased over the last year to \$117,000. WSO also used \$190,000 in literature revenue to support the work of the fellowship.



WSO has a small warehouse from which it ships literature with only THREE employees.

Members asked whether using literature sales to fund fellowship work affected WSO's being self-supporting through its own contributions. Pat H. clarified, "ACA is self-supporting by the 7th tradition donations in conjunction with the production and sales of ACA literature."

Bill D. was asked whether WSO has an earmarked prudent reserve of three months' expenses, which would be \$240,000.

WSO is growing rapidly...

After talking with Pat H., our new treasurer, I realized WSO is growing so quickly that its growth expenses somewhat deplete what would otherwise be an earmarked fund of \$240,000 for a prudent reserve.

As Pat pointed out to me, "It is an indication of ACA's health that there isn't as much cash on hand for a prudent reserve. We are self-funding our growth. We are not taking out loans or borrowing against our assets. I think that is something the membership can be proud of."

...and so are its expenses

The largest fellowship expense is the ABC/AWC conference. This annual event is not self-funding, but is a critical part of bringing the world-wide fellowship together.

As the fellowship grows, this annual event will become even more important. The recent Malmö, Sweden conference was attended by nearly 500 participants from more than 24 countries. Our ten board members also meet face-to-face twice a year.

Face-to-face meetings are essential to the work we do

Delegates asked if we could save money by eliminating face-to-face meetings. I've been a part of many boards over my career, and I know hard business needs to be done in person. Those meetings are essential to the work we do.

Our board is stretched thin

Our board is stretched thin. The bylaws authorize twenty members; we have ten.

Theoretically, we could decrease the time spent by our board members if we increased the size of the board. But, as Pat H. has commented, the more pressing need is for more Committee members.

The existing board of ten is much larger than in years past. But most importantly, they need help from all of us to get their work done.

Our Board members are incredibly hard-working. It is clear they take very seriously the trust the fellowship places on them. **Our Board members and Committee Chairs are highly dedicated**

As I heard the board reports at the World Conference, and then saw how many workshops were put on by those same board members, I appreciated how much ACA depends on a few highly dedicated Board members and Committee Chairs.

“

There is no 'us and them'. There is only 'us and us'.

”

Finally, I learned there is no *us* and *them*. There is only *us and us*. And it takes *all of us* to help support and grow ACA and our WSO. Thank you, Board, for all you do!

*Our board is stretched thin.
The bylaws authorize twenty members;
we have ten.*



Exciting ACA News, Updates, and How YOU Can Help:

FREE AUDIO MP3 DOWNLOAD

Closing Talk April 2019 AWC in Malmö, Sweden, by Charlie H: "Courage Applied" <https://shop.adultchildren.org/collections/2019-awc/products/2019-awc-closing-talk>

ACA WEBSITE AND DATA BASE

The Database and Website Committee has a channel on Slack. If you are interested in participating, please send an email to webservant@adultchildren.org.

We meet twice every other Wednesday at 1:00 pm ET via telecon. We can use people experienced with web design, particularly WordPress.

ACA REGIONS

Greater Western USA Region (Region #2, 661-269-3937, gwuregion@gmail.com, [Regions Website](#)).
Teleconference Board Meeting, 3rd Saturday of every month, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm Pacific Time. Call (605) 472-5354. Access Code: 861824#. Volunteers needed; call or send email.

ACA INTERGROUPS

Intergroups are forming globally, creating networks to better assist. See if there is an intergroup meeting in your area: <https://adultchildren.org/intergroup-listing>

Reminder: The Intergroups' Subcommittee meets every 4th Saturday of the month noon at 1:30 pm ET.

Next meeting will be Saturday 7/27/19 at 12:00-1:30 pm ET. Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/878197377>

ACA LITERATURE

See all the amazing things that are happening with Literature, [here](#). If literature is one of your strengths, we need all kinds of volunteers: Editors/Proof Readers/ Writers/Graphic Artists. Email litchair@acawso.org

Join the Monthly Teleconference with ACA Board of Trustees [2nd Saturday](#).

ACA DONATIONS

Would you like to send a monetary donation from your group? Would you like to donate anonymously? Click [here](#) to donate. Or would you like to donate your time with service? These are so many areas in which we need [help](#). Here is the volunteer form you'll need to fill out and submit: <https://acawso.org/service/>.

ACA Speaker Audios

Archived individual speakers from the ACA World Convention from 2016 to 2019, available [here](#).

ACA ABC/AWC

Recording of the 2019 ABC business sessions in Malmo, Sweden were recorded and are available here: <https://acawso.org/category/abc-committee/>.

ACA COMLINE – Your quarterly global newsletter

ALWAYS NEEDED: Please submit your 250-500 word share, poems, art work or photos to litstaff@adultchildren.org along with a [signed release form](#) to become published in our quarterly electronic publication. Each quarterly issue features the theme of Steps, Traditions and Promises. Please share your experience, strength and hope!

NEW! *ComLine* Special Edition: [Addressing Predatory Behavior](#).

NEW! Russia is the first county to translate the *ComLine* into another language. See it at <https://adultchildren.ru/lit/wso/comline/2019-q1/>.

ACA eBOOKs AVAILABLE

The list is growing; check it out: <https://shop.adultchildren.org/pages/e-books>.

See all the committee calendars at <https://acawso.org/committees-calendar/>

