



Connections

A Guide to Support in Recovery For Adult Children of
Alcoholic/Dysfunctional Families



Opening Meditation

- **Higher power, may I remember that ACA and its meeting and service structure are different from my family of origin. May I be patient and avoid reaching for the easiest way out when I am confronted with a difficult situation. Help me and those supporting me in my ACA program to ask for help in keeping our relationship safe and recovery-oriented. Also help us celebrate the things that we do right.**



Origin of Connections Book

- *This Guide was written to address a motion passed by ACA delegates in 2017:*

We propose that the WSO revise BRB Chapter 11 and the sponsorship pamphlet for clarity and consistency. (See Appendix A for the full ballot proposal.)



Fellow Travelers v. Sponsors

- A working group was set up to resolve this inconsistency, which resulted in strong opinions about whether “fellow travelers,” or “sponsorship” was the better form of support relationship, and what term could encompass both types of relationship.
- After two years, the working group agreed to use the general term “support” as an umbrella term for any relationship between ACAs who work together on recovery. In addition, the working group realized that presenting the range of ways to support others in recovery required more than revising the sponsorship pamphlet.
- That is why we ultimately wrote this Guide.
-



Support is a Relationship

- *The term “support” is not designed to substitute for “fellow travelers,” “sponsorship” or any other term members use for support relationships. It is designed to show that in all support relationships, one person shares their experience openly and honestly, learning to trust the other, and the other person listens intently with love and uses the voice of the inner loving parent in responding to the person sharing.*
- *In any support relationship, the goal is the same: honest communication and loving feedback resulting in growth in recovery for both people.*

Supporting/Sharing

- We use the word “sharing person” for those who share their recovery experience with a supporting person. The word “supporting person” includes anyone who listens intently and gently and lovingly helps another person in recovery, holding space without judgment. The term “support” includes sponsors, co-sponsors, fellow travelers, recovery partners, sharing partners, recovery coaches and group work members.
- Using an umbrella term helps us see the commonalities in support relationships.
- In your support relationship, use the term that works for you.


The bedrock
of our ACA
program is
love

- *This Guide is not designed to help ACAs connect with a sponsor or other support person, although we make suggestions about how and where support can be found.*
- *Sponsorship is less about years in recovery or knowledge of the ACA program and more about being a loving presence and guide. Our past wounds may cause us to either resist trusting someone who seeks to guide us or to reject help, thinking we must find the perfect person, one who would never hurt or disappoint us.*
- *The bedrock of our ACA program is love. If we seek and offer support with love, we will begin to heal our childhood wounds.*
-




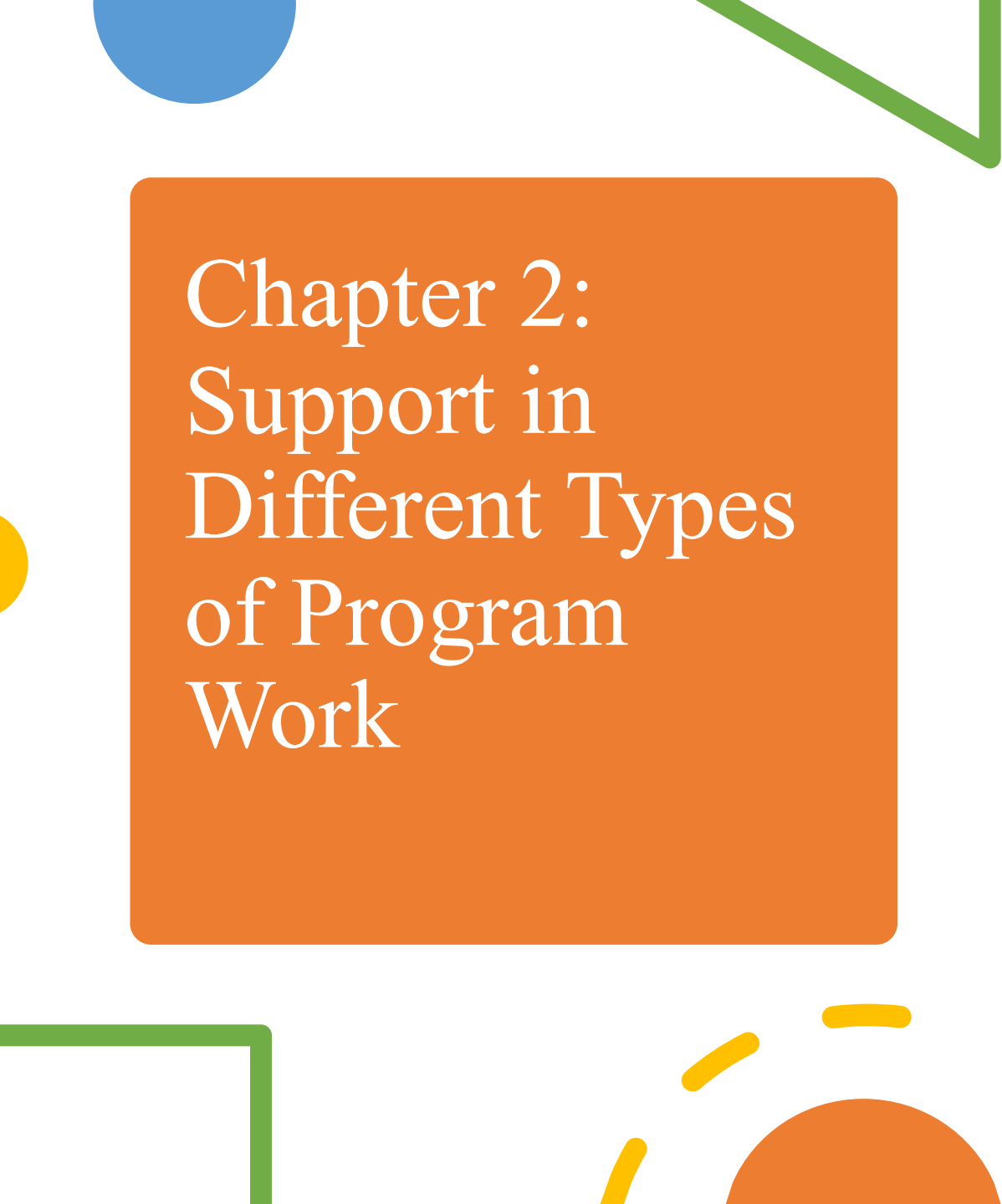
Support is a Spiritual Process

- Above all, support is a spiritual process. Asking for help is scary.
- As a supporting person, we must heal our ACA trait of fixing or rescuing. We avoid being an authority figure and choose gentle honesty over people pleasing. If in doubt, we check with our own support network. We remember that ACAs long to be heard. We all suffered a loss of trust as children. Rebuilding trust takes time. We are patient and kind.
- As the sharing person, we risk coming out of isolation. We build self-esteem by believing we are worthy of support in recovery. We practice being honest and vulnerable. These characteristics affect all support relationships.




Chapter 1: The Range of Ways to Support Each Other in ACA Recovery

- Meetings
 - Small Group Work
 - Recovery Friends, Recovery Network
 - Service Roles and Service Support
 - Working One-on-One with Someone with Similar Experience
 - Often called Fellow Traveler
 - Working Short Term with a Mentor
 - Working One-on-One with Someone with More Experience
 - Often called Sponsorship
- 




Chapter 2: Support in Different Types of Program Work

- Introduces all the program work where we may meet and work support relationships, from introductory formats/workshops such as Ready, Set, Go!! or A New Hope to Study Workgroups, Feeling Work, Reparenting Work, etc.




Chapter 3: The Benefits of Support Relationships

- *Most of the support relationships discussed in “Range of Ways” involve sharing back and forth, where each party alternates being the supporting person or the sharing person.*
 - *Even in relationships such as mentor or sponsor, the supporter often reports that their program is greatly improved by supporting another.*
 - *In this section, we look at the benefits of support to both parties in a support relationship.*
- 

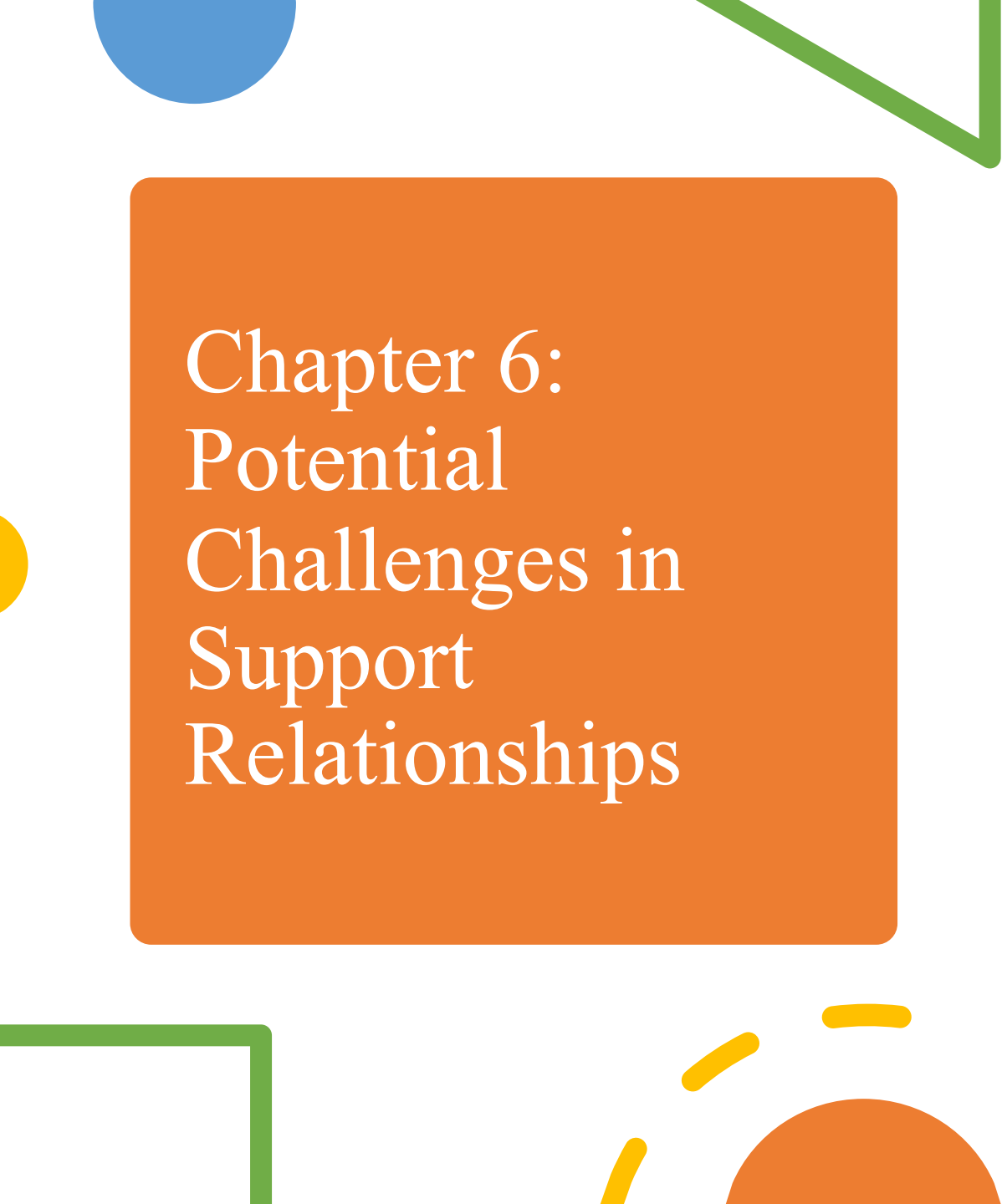
Chapter 4: Getting Started with Support

- What to look for in a supporting person.
- What to avoid.
- How to start the conversation.
- *We look for supporters who have strong recovery and a willingness to share. This is often a trial-and-error process. Some of us look for people who have a similar life experience. Then we may discover that is less important than we thought. Some of us look for someone older or with more years in program and then find the perfect person sitting next to us in a beginners meeting.*



Chapter 5: Key Commitments in Support Relationships

- *Most of these commitments apply equally to the sharing person and the supporting person--whether in a meeting, small group or working one-on-one.*
- *Some of these commitments may come earlier or later in the relationship.*
- *These commitments address the process of supporting each other—the loving principles that guide our conversations.*



Chapter 6: Potential Challenges in Support Relationships

- *The following section highlights some potential challenges we may encounter in support relationships. We offer some possible solutions.*
- *Above all else, we caution to remember that we are all adult children trying to do the best we can in helping each other.*

Chapter 7: For Sponsors or Those Considering Sponsorship

- *The sponsor, unlike all the other support relationships discussed in this Guide, supports a sponsee by keeping the focus on the sponsee, and sharing their own experience only when helpful to the sponsee's recovery.*
- *Some ACAs resist when asked by someone to become a "sponsor." They may feel that the level of experience and the responsibility of guiding another's recovery program is overwhelming.*
 - This chapter discusses some common objections to becoming a sponsor and offers some new perspectives.



Conclusion:

- *Everyone will create their own path to recovery and healing. ACA does not offer one “right” recovery plan for all people at all times. The nature of our recovery may evolve as we change and grow in our program. Also, regardless of the terms used, the benefits, commitments, and problems that may arise are common for us all.*
 - *Remember: We do not have to recover alone. Recovery is a process and takes time and patience. As we work our program together with our supporters, we will learn to expect the best and get it!*
- 