

# *ACA 12 Steps Workshop*

## Handout Worksheet

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- **Laundry List Trait** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Step 6th Survival Trait** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Step 8 List 1.** \_\_\_\_\_

## Opening Prayer

### Set Aside Prayer:

God,

Please help me set aside everything I think I know about myself, my past, my spiritual path,  
and especially you.

So, I may have an open mind and a new experience of myself, my past, my spiritual path,  
and you.

Please let me see the truth.

## Laundry List of ACA

- 1 We became isolated and afraid of people and authority figures.
- 2 We became approval seekers and lost our identity in the process.
- 3 We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism.
- 4 We either become alcoholics, marry them or both, or find another compulsive personality such as a workaholic to fulfill our sick abandonment needs.
- 5 We live life from the viewpoint of victims and we are attracted by that weakness in our love and friendship relationships.
- 6 We have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility and it is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves; this enables us not to look too closely at our own faults, etc.
- 7 We get guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.
- 8 We became addicted to excitement.
- 9 We confuse love and pity and tend to "love" people we can "pity" and "rescue."
- 10 We have "stuffed" our feelings from our traumatic childhoods and have lost the ability to feel or express our feelings because it hurts so much (Denial).
- 11 We judge ourselves harshly and have a very low sense of self-esteem.
- 12 We are dependent personalities who are terrified of abandonment and will do anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to experience painful abandonment feelings, which we received from living with sick people who were never there emotionally for us.
- 13 Alcoholism is a family disease; and we became para-alcoholics and took on the characteristics of that disease even though we did not pick up the drink.
- 14 Para-alcoholics are reactors rather than actors.

Step 1:

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

**Qualification Questions (Yes / No):**

- Was there an alcoholic or addict in the family? \_\_\_\_\_
- Was there perfectionism in a parent or in the family? \_\_\_\_\_
- Was your family militaristic? \_\_\_\_\_
- Was there a hypochondriac parent? \_\_\_\_\_
- Was there an emotionally ill parent? \_\_\_\_\_
- Was there sexual abuse? \_\_\_\_\_
- Was there incest? \_\_\_\_\_
- Was there mental illness in a parent? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you feel there was some other form of family dysfunction present while you were a child? \_\_\_\_\_

**REVIEW LAUNDRY LIST of ACA, on Page 3.**

**Unmanageability Questions:**

- Do you feel that growing up with your family of origin has effected your life in a negative way? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you feel that the Laundry List Trait that you identified with has affected your life in a negative way? \_\_\_\_\_

**Powerless Questions:**

- Have you ever tried to change the behavior of your dysfunctional family with no result? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you ever tried to change the effects or behavior of the Laundry List Trait that you identified with, with no result? \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2:

*Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

Step 3.

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

**Step 3 Prayer**

God, I am willing to surrender my fears and to place my will and my life in Your care one day at a time. Grant me the wisdom to know the difference between the things I can and cannot change. Help me to remember that I can ask for help. I am not alone. Amen.

Big Red Book p. 149

**\*SIDE NOTE:**

**\*Before we start Steps 4 & 5. It is essential to realize that the more you trust and dig deep on these next two steps (Steps 4 & 5), the more healing you will experience. We only have a few minutes for these steps, so focus on being honest and sharing what you can.**

Step 4:

*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

*Going back to the first step, recall the trait that you identified with.*

**Questions:**

Referring to the Laundry List Trait you related to in Step 1,

How does this trait interfere in my life today?

How do you identify with this trait?

Are there any memories that are tied to this trait?

What do you feel when you process this trait?

**Open for notes...**

**Fourth Step Prayer**

Divine Creator. Help me to be rigorously honest and to care for myself during this Fourth Step process. Let me practice gentleness and not abandon myself on this spiritual journey. Help me remember that I have attributes, and that I can ask for forgiveness. I am not alone. I can ask for help. Amen (BRB p.171)

## Step 5:

*Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

### *Fifth Step Prayer*

*Divine Creator. Thank you for this chance to speak honesty with another person about the events of my life. Help me accept responsibility for my actions. Let me show compassion for myself and my family as I revisit my thinking and actions that have blocked me from Your love. Restore my child within. Restore my feelings. Restore my trust in myself. Amen.*

*Big Red Book p. 206*

### **Points and questions to assist with sharing in step 5**

- Referring to the Laundry List Trait you related to in Step 1,
- How does this trait interfere in my life today?
- How do you identify with this trait?
- Are there any memories that are tied to this trait?
- What do you feel when you process this trait?

Step 6:

*Were entirely ready to have / were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

***Survival Traits associated with Laundry List Trait.***

**Trait 1.** Fear of authority figures, isolation, fear of people.

**Trait 2.** People pleasing.

**Trait 3.** Fear of angry people, hypersensitivity.

**Trait 4.** Addiction, codependency (addiction to the addict).

**Trait 5.** Living as a victim.

**Trait 6.** Overdeveloped sense of responsibility...

**Trait 7.** Guilt, Shame.

**Trait 8.** Addiction, fear.

**Trait 9.** Confusing love with pity.

**Trait 10.** Stuffed feelings.

**Trait 11.** Judgement, low self-esteem.

**Trait 12.** Dependency on others.

**Trait 13.** Addiction.

**Trait 14.** Reactors.

**6th Step Prayer**

*“God give me the willingness”*

Step 7:

*Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.*

Seventh Step Prayer – Character Defects

God. I am now ready that you should remove from me all of my defects of character which block me from accepting your divine love and living with true humility toward others. Renew my strength so that I might help myself and others along this path of recovery. (BRB pp.220-221)



### 7th Step Prayer

“God. I am now ready that you should integrate my survival traits, which block me from accepting your divine love. Grant me wholeness. (BRB p. 221)

God, I humbly ask you to integrate my trait of...(insert your survival trait)\_\_\_\_\_ Amen.”

### Step 8:

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

List of persons you have harmed:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

-Are you willing to make amends to yourself and the harm you have caused yourself?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Step: 9

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

#### **Step 9 Amends:**

“ I am involved in a program in which I am learning to change my behavior and to live more honestly and openly. Part of the process involves making amends to people I have harmed with my behavior. I am making amends to you for using **\_(insert your survival trait from Step 6)**\_\_\_\_\_.

I want to make it right. I am not making excuses, but I have harmed people, especially **myself**, based on my lack of knowledge about living.”

“I AM CHANGING MY BEHAVIOR!”

“**(Insert First Name)** \_\_\_\_\_, I forgive you, I accept you exactly the way you are, and I truly do love you.

Thank you”

## Step 10

*Continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.*

-Do you promise, to yourself, to do your very best to keep an eye out for this Laundry List and Survival Trait that you identified? \_\_\_\_\_

-Do you promise yourself that when it does pop up in your life, to admit it promptly? \_\_\_\_\_

-Do you promise that when it pops up, forgive yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

-Do you promise that when it pops up and harms you, or others, you will make amends to those harmed? \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 11

*Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.*

Prayer = Talking to God/Inner Child

Meditation = Listening to God/Inner Child

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*“Step Eleven is also where we further address our addiction to excitement... Through meditation we learn to quiet our minds and to relax. With meditative techniques, we let go of racing thoughts. We learn to be in the moment and to be present in our bodies... In Step Eleven, we take time out of the day to focus on our spiritual path. We connect with God through our True Self when we find stillness and listen for God’s footstep. Our True Self knows God’s call. The True Self knows the path that our Higher Power takes to the heart. It is the path of love.*

*Through Step Eleven, we find God’s will and a personal power that we did not know existed. There is real power. We can have it if we make the effort and let our Higher Power lead the way.”*

*Excerpt from P.164 of The ACA Yellow Steps Workbook.*

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-Are you willing to make a commitment that when things are off in your life you communicate where you are, and if needed ask for help within your growing support network? \_\_\_\_\_

-Are you willing to make a commitment that when things are off in your life you listen to your body and your instincts? \_\_\_\_\_

-Are you willing to make a commitment that when things are off in your life you listen to the stories within your growing support network to help determine your next indicated action? \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 12

*Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others who still suffer, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

### **Closing Prayer**

ACA Serenity Prayer:

God, Grant me the serenity,

to accept the people I cannot change,

the courage to change the one I can

and the wisdom to know that one is me

KEEP COMING BACK IT WORKS IF YOU WORK IT, AND

WE ARE WORTH IT!!

# The Promises and the Solution

Many phrases of the ACA "The Solution" reading can help those in recovery handle issues in ways that work better for them. Some relevant phrases from the ACA "Solution" are:

- We risk moving out of isolation.
- We become an adult who is imprisoned no longer by childhood reactions.
- You will become your own loving parent.
- We learn to re-parent ourselves with gentleness, humour, love and respect.
- You will learn how to keep the focus on yourself in the here and now.
- We become free to make healthful decisions as actors, not reactors.

Working our 12-step program daily helps us spot situations where our childhood patterns and tendencies motivate our behaviors and thinking in ways that are not in our best interests. That "ah-ha" moment when we recognize that our past is affecting us in the present is the first big step toward a new way of thinking and behaving at work.

Once we have connected the dots on how our past is affecting our present, we can come up with a solution. Practicing it on a daily basis is a challenge, but over time, it is easier.

## Family Roles

By working the Steps, the adult child realises family roles that were required to approximate protection in an unsafe home. We often feared for our safety and took on roles to disarm our parents. The adult child in recovery gets the chance to retire his or her role with dignity. We are always young enough to work an ACA program and receive its benefits.

### **Hero or Rescuer**

We insanely knock ourselves out in relationships or in the workplace, hoping for affirmation and praise, which we don't believe we deserve. Some of us tolerate unreasonable amounts of abuse or neglect in return for meager amounts of attention. We mask our efforts to control another person by appearing helpful.

### **Lost Child or Invisible Child**

We remain silent, knowing that it is not safe to speak. We retreat to our room and remain absorbed in reading books, or fantasies of living elsewhere. Many lost children avoid relationships because we are terrified of abandonment.

### **Scapegoat or Black Sheep**

We live out the parents' prophesy of being a bad or rotten kid. The scapegoat child grows up accepting blame where none is due or attracts blame and acts out with negativity.

### **Mascot or Clown**

Typically, the youngest of the family, the mascot serves as comic relief for dysfunctional homes that leave little room for joy.

*Source: Page 5, Twelve Steps of Adult Children; Chapters 7 and 14, ACA Fellowship Text (Big Red Book)*

## ACA Prayers

**ACA Serenity Prayer:** God, grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the one I can and the wisdom to know that one is me.

**Serenity Prayer:** God. Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

**We version - Serenity Prayer:** God. Grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference.

**Meditation Prayer:** Higher Power. Help me to be willing to recognize the Loving Parent inside of me. Help me integrate my Inner Child more actively into my daily life so that I remain awake spiritually. Grant me the courage to change the things I can. Grant me the wisdom of my Inner Child. BRB p.330

**Third Step Prayer:** God. I am willing to surrender my fears and to place my will and my life in your care, one day at a time. Grant me the wisdom to know the difference between the things I can and cannot change. Help me to remember that I can ask for help. I am not alone. Amen. BRB p.149

**Fourth Step Prayer:** Divine Creator. Help me to be rigorously honest and to care for myself during this Fourth Step process. Let me practice gentleness and not abandon myself on this spiritual journey. Help me remember that I have attributes. BRB p.71

**Fifth Step Prayer:** Thank you for this chance to speak honestly with another person about the events of my life. Help me accept responsibility for my actions. Let me show compassion for myself and my family as I revisit my thinking and actions that have blocked me from your love. Restore my child within. Restore my feelings. Restore my trust in myself. Amen. BRB p.206

**Seventh Step Prayer:** God. I am now ready that you should remove from me all my defects of character, which block me from accepting your divine love and living with true humility towards others. Renew my strength so that I might help myself and others along this path of recovery. BRB p.220

**Eleventh Step Prayer:** Create your own Eleventh Step prayer and place it on a wallet card to carry to work or to meetings. Keep it simple, but create a prayer that is specific to you and your relationship with the Divine, Higher Power or God. This is your own prayer.

## ACA STEPS AND SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE

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

*(Powerlessness and Surrender, BRB p.129)*

**2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

*(Open-Mindedness and Clarity, BRB p.137)*

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

*(Willingness and Accepting Help, BRB p.149)*

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

*(Self-Honesty and Courage, BRB p.188)*

5. Admitted to God, to our selves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

*(Honesty and Trust, BRB p.206)*

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

*(Willingness, BRB p.216)*

7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

*(Humility, BRB p.226)*

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

*(Willingness and Self-Forgiveness, BRB p.234)*

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

*(Forgiveness and Courage, BRB p.249)*

10. Continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

*(Honesty and Discernment, BRB p.262)*

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry it out.



*(Seeking and Listening, BRB p.278)*

**12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others who still suffer, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

*(Love and Self-Love, BRB p.294)*