

Appendix D

ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

Handbook Principles

- Family Dysfunction: This handbook strives to increase inclusivity by clearly summarizing the various expressions of family dysfunction beyond alcoholism so more people can benefit from ACA as a program of recovery.
- Trauma Recovery vs. Addictions Recovery: Whereas most Twelve Step programs are understood to be addiction recovery programs, this Handbook understands ACA to be primarily a trauma recovery program. This distinction presents unique 12 Step program “translation” considerations, which this Handbook attempts to address.
- Laundry Lists Traits: Both the Laundry List Traits and the Other/Opposite Laundry Lists Traits are presented up-front as part of this Handbook. Both lists present a wide range of childhood trauma expressions that adult children can experience, and heal through ACA recovery work.
- 12 Steps: While the ACA 12 Steps are presented in this Handbook as foundational in ACA recovery, Tony A.’s 12 Steps are also mentioned. Many in ACA identify strongly with Tony’s version of the Steps and include it in their recovery work. Although copyright law prohibits copying or distributing Tony A.’s steps, we are not prohibited from creating new sets of steps that are more gentle and loving. The Literature Committee of the World Service Organization will be presenting additional sets of steps to ACA members for their use by group conscience. Additionally, this Handbook embraces the notion that “ACA members work the Steps in order, avoiding looking ahead and perhaps becoming overwhelmed” (BRB). Therefore, this Handbook for beginners provides only a general overview of the 12 Steps and an introduction to Step 1. However, the concepts and principles of all the Steps are indirectly presented. For example: “Inner Loving Parent,” “Inner Child,” and “Spirituality” (Steps 2 and 3), “Childhood Trauma” (Step 4), “Grief” (Step 5), etc.
- Spiritual Inclusivity: This Handbook takes to heart that ACA is a spiritual and not a religious program—atheists, agnostics, and believers are all welcome and valued:
 - Belief in a personified or anthropomorphized deity is not required for ACA healing—spiritually or otherwise. However, exploring resources beyond one’s current awareness and seeking out powers greater than oneself is essential.
 - Some spiritual teachers say that a finger pointing at the moon is not itself the moon. The term “higher power(s)” and similar terms and phrases such as “resources beyond one’s current awareness” and “powers greater than oneself”

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are used to point towards something. These terms used in this way are not proper nouns. Therefore, they are not capitalized in this Handbook, except when referencing other ACA literature where these terms have been capitalized.

- The term “higher power(s)” in this Handbook is used without reference to gender.
- The term “higher power(s)” in this Handbook makes beginning attempts not to reference singular or plural designation for higher power(s).
- The term “God” is not used unless when referencing existing ACA literature or in first-person accounts.
- Fellow Traveler Model: This Handbook takes to heart the 1989 ACA Sponsorship Committee’s caution about the traditional AA sponsorship model when it states that it does not “adequately address the tendencies of the ACA personality, namely our over-reliance on others for direction and approval and our tendency to try to manage someone else’s life.” Without a modification to that model, it was feared that a sponsor may dominate a sponsee who may be willing to give up personal freedom and choice. Therefore, that Committee recommended the “fellow traveler” or co-sponsor approach for healthy peer-to-peer recovery relationships in ACA. More recent ACA literature recommends that members choose the form of support that works for them, whether it is a sponsor, a fellow traveler, a co-sponsor, a recovery partner, or other term. In all forms of support, one person speaks honestly and openly with trust and the other person listens intently and speaks gently and lovingly, using the voice of the inner loving parent.
- Service: This Handbook frames service work in ACA as an extension of service to self (ACA Identity Report #3, section “Re-Emergence of the United Self”). Therefore, this Handbook examines ACA service work within the context of the Laundry Lists Traits and presents healthy service to others as being in alignment with the ACA Solution of reparenting.

