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*This trifold is provided to aid the ACA newcomer in exploring the tools of discovery/recovery available in our program. It is absolutely essential that we recognize that there are many tools at our disposal and that each individual must carefully decide which and how each tool may apply and be used for our own unique plan of recovery.*

ACA is a Twelve-Step Program of discovery/recovery, and our purpose is threefold: 1) to shelter and support newcomers in confronting denial; 2) to comfort those mourning their early loss of security, trust and love; and 3) to teach the skills of “reparenting ourselves with gentleness, humor, love and respect.”

The title “The Tool Bag” is indicative of many tenets of our program. As with any craftsperson, the choice of tools available and the proper selection and use of each tool can greatly enhance the work we produce. Our recovery is very similar to creating and producing a fine work of art, a tome – even a relationship. Each craftsman has tools that they learn to use, and with use, become skillful and accomplished, with dedication – a master.

Not everyone will use the same tools; not everyone will attempt the same work. We each set our own goals, dream our own dreams, and find our own niche in the scheme of things.

These are merely the tools available, and are not intended to be a complete list. Choose your tools with care, develop your own unique skills, and pursue these things that will help you to become free from the crippling pain of the past and become accomplished in the life that exists today.

### **1. The Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, The Problem and Solution**

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are the rich heritage of our Twelve-Step Program. There are many books that examine the exact nature of these steps.

Working these Steps and Traditions means developing an understanding of how these Steps apply to us in our daily lives. Working these Steps and Traditions requires reading, writing, sharing, and living our understanding of these Steps and Traditions. We do so with the tools that follow in the light of our identification with “The Problem” and our understanding of “The Solution”.

### **2. The Meetings**

The meetings are where we share our experience, strength, and hope. We share our identification with The Problem and learn that we are not alone. We learn that there are others like us, and there is hope. There is recovery. There is a light at the end of the tunnel.

### **3. Reading and Writing**

In order to further our own program of discovery/recovery, we educate ourselves. We do this by exploring The Problem, The Solution, The ACA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and by reading literature, books and other publications that pertain to our program.

We write to further explore our understanding of our program. Through writing we document our process and clarify questions for ourselves. This process requires a level of discipline and dedication. This dedication to the self – ourselves – leads to the freedom, understanding, and compassion needed to nurture our inner child.

### **4. The Telephone**

We listen and share in our meetings and often find people like ourselves who we strongly relate to. By continuing to share outside the meetings, we further our process of discovery/recovery. We receive the support necessary to carry on our growth and also to support others in their process.

Often we are far more compassionate and honest with others than with ourselves. In the process of sharing with others we learn to practice the same

level of gentleness and respect with ourselves. We act as mirrors for one another and provide an avenue to escape the isolation of our childhood.

### **5. Sponsorship**

Some of us choose to have sponsors. Sponsorship is a way to avoid the isolation we experienced as children. We seek others a little further along the path to provide us with guidance and possible answers to our questions.

In sponsoring or being a sponsee, we develop relationships based on the Steps and Traditions. We can often share things on a one-to-one basis that may be too terrifying to share in a meeting. We learn about intimacy, trust, risk, success, and failure.

A sponsor is not perfect – we are all in this program to overcome the effects of our childhood. But, just like sharing in meetings or with other friends, we stretch ourselves a little further, and risk a little more. We do this with someone who shows a level of recovery that we would like to develop.

Later, as our program progresses, we extend this same level of sharing to another. It is here in extending beyond ourselves that we develop a breadth of friendships. We learn about limited and casual friendships, and establish a support network of many types, levels and intensities of relationships.

### **6. Service**

In service we try to give back to the program some of what we have received. By helping in the meetings as an officer, or as a set-up or clean up person, or by volunteering at the Intergroup or board level, we make this program available to others who follow us. Our recovery depends on an ongoing program of discovery and the PRACTICE of our recovery. Service provides us with the opportunity to practice this recovery in an atmosphere of support.

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## THE TWELVE STEPS OF ACA

1. We admitted we were powerless over the effects of alcoholism or other family dysfunction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
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.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others who still suffer, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ACA

- TRADITION ONE: Our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends on ACA unity.**
- TRADITION TWO: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.**
- TRADITION THREE: The only requirement for membership in ACA is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family.**
- TRADITION FOUR: Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other Twelve Step programs.**
- TRADITION FIVE: Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.**
- TRADITION SIX: An ACA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the ACA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**
- TRADITION SEVEN: Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.**
- TRADITION EIGHT: Adult Children of Alcoholics should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.**
- TRADITION NINE: ACA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.**
- TRADITION TEN: Adult Children of Alcoholics has no opinion on outside issues; hence the ACA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.**
- TRADITION ELEVEN: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, films, and other public media.**
- TRADITION TWELVE: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

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# The Tool Bag

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