

Welcome to ACA. We are very glad that you are here. As newcomers beginning this journey to a spiritual awakening, we may feel all sorts of feelings: relieved, sad, elated, even confused. Soon after arriving, some of us may become comfortable enough to engage in reading ACA literature, find a fellow traveler and take the suggested steps of recovery.

When the Newcomer's Glow Dims

In our experience, newcomers exhibit an initial glow. The glow from the so-called "pink cloud" of being in ACA will start to fade and we may feel disillusioned. Don't be disheartened. Many of us thought that the Steps were a magic set of words that, once spoken, would lift the spell of dysfunction. There's more to ACA recovery than chanting the steps or recounting our stories – a lot more.

Keep the Focus

The dimming of the newcomer's glow signals the opening of the opportunity to do the healing "work" of getting behind the words, beyond our habits, to the deeper recesses of our subconscious where the conflicts, memories and feeling from our traumatic childhoods have been walled off by the critical survival parents or false selves* who have waited for us to be well enough to process them.

On the Greatness Inside of You

By this point of our recovery process, we may have learned all the ACA terms of recovery, we may have attended a great many meetings, we may have worked the steps a multitude of times, and served in many levels of service. Some may even think we are "the one". In our experience, you are the only "one".

Discerning the Distractions and Disguises

As we reach this level of our recovery, the distractions are many and the disguises are especially clever: the boring job, the new/old romantic interest, the lack of funds, etc. We may also perceive that meetings are for complaining and blaming, that closure is a fantasy, and there's no recovery there. They run from the ordinary to the quite extraordinary.

The critical survival parents or false selves have a great many of these tricks up their numerous sleeves, and will

*We believe that each of us is born with a True Self that is forced into hiding by dysfunctional parenting. A false self [critical survival parent] emerges that protects the hidden True Self from harm, but at a heavy price. BRB p. xv.

stop at nothing to prevent the painful truth from coming out. After all, this has been their one and only chore – to keep the pain-stricken inner children shuttered from any potential threat to their cocooned state. It usually takes a while for the goodness we have found in ACA to turn to trust.

The Healing Work Beckons

Ultimately, the healing "work" beckoned all of us to go deeper. Being aware of our stories, how we distorted them or how we took on the dysfunctional characteristics isn't the solution – it's awareness without consciousness – the oftentimes sad and predictable starting point of the actual recovery process. We have found the healing "work" looms further back than we can initially fathom.

By now, our defenses have probably become alerted, our invisible protective shield is at maximum power. After all, our critical survival parent or false self has been taking careful notes at the meetings too! Still the program's promise of a spiritual awakening cannot be deferred. It is our destiny. The healing "work" has to get done.

Keep Coming Back

"Keep coming back" takes on a whole new meaning when almost every fiber of our being wants to shut down and run as far and fast as possible. This is the pivotal stage when recovery *may* happen if we are persistent and consistent. Attending to our spiritual fitness allows us to weather the discomfort. To turn back now would mean to miss the most precious opportunity of our lives.

If we can anticipate the loss of the newcomer's glow, if we can keep our focus on our spiritual goal and away from the distractions, and if we can learn our spiritual lessons despite the many smokescreens, our effort will be rewarded a thousand fold. This healing "work" pays off handsomely in immeasurable, indescribable ways.

Spiritual Goal of the Healing "Work"

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.

Healing Work Defined

Processing and integrating our underlying conflicts, memories, and feelings is the core of the healing "work" that allows us to become whole (not dissociated), present (not living in the past/future), and spiritually awakened (not spiritually deadened and numb).

Preparation for the Healing "Work"

We may need to prepare for our integration process. Preparation may require recovery from external (exogenous) addictions to substances. We will also need to recover from any unhealthy dependencies on mentally, behaviorally, or emotionally produced internal (endogenous) addictions.

Seek Physical and Emotional Balance

As the result of this initial deconditioning, we can then seek to recover our original physical and emotional balance (sobriety), and our original goodness – our awakened spiritual consciousness.

Understanding Dependence and Addiction

To understand the healing "work," we may want to consider that adult children are as unhealthfully dependent on their survival defense mechanisms (critical survival parents or false selves) as alcoholics are on alcohol or as addicts are on substances. To understand what the healing "work" involves, it may be helpful to have a definition of unhealthy dependency and addiction.

Unhealthy Dependence and Addiction Defined

One definition of mental, behavioral, emotional or physical unhealthy dependencies or addictions may be that we have:

- obsessive and/or compulsive (dys-eased or dys-ordered) relationships with
- mindsets, behaviors, feelings or mood/mind altering substances that
- ultimately creates unmanageability in order to
- block traumatic or painful conflicts, memories and feelings that
- our critical survival parents or false selves don't believe or trust that
- we can resolve, remember or feel (recover).

Safe Processing

Our priority is to safely access, process and integrate the conflicts, memories and feelings that fuel our dependencies or addictions. Unlike substances that must be completely abstained from to achieve physical recovery, our survival defense mechanisms (false selves or critical survival parents) have to be disengaged safely for integration to occur. Having a ACA fellow traveller

will encourage us to stay the course; this cannot be overemphasized.

For the disengagement process to be safe, it is essential the healing “work” be done gently, humorously, lovingly and respectfully (that is, from a True Self or an inner loving parent space), and that we reparent the critical survival parents or false selves, our key defenders/protectors, and inner children, in a nurturing and integrative manner.

When we clear this challenging hurdle with a secure and nurturing grounding (True Self or inner loving parent), we are able to better utilize the Twelve Steps and reparenting tools to further build our physical, mental and spiritual capacity to resolve the conflicts, recollect the exact memories, and express the specific associated feelings that our dependencies or addictions blocked off.

We may want to consider picking a long-haul slogan to remind ourselves of this milestones’ significance when we reach this phase of our spiritual development; and let’s please remember to be gentle, humorous, loving and respectful with our critical survival parent or false self, too. After all, they are our oldest friends, our trusted defenders and our devoted protectors, and they deserve no less.

Suggested slogans, some funny, for the long-haul:

- ACA is a way of life that works if you work it. BRB p. 51
- One small step for man, and we still have to do the healing “work”. :-)
- Safely Access, Process and Integrate
- Attend many meetings, read voraciously, share all we want – we still have to do the healing “work”. :-)
- Moving forward by going inward
- We still have to do the healing “work”, sweetheart! :-)
- Stay on Course
- Seriously?! We still have to do the healing “work”. :-)
- Persistent Consistent Active
- Look! Up in the sky, it’s a bird, it’s a plane, no, we still have to do the healing “work”. :-)
- Recollect, Feel, Resolve
- If it’s not one thing, we still have to do the healing “work”. :-)
- Nurturing and Integrative Process For All
- Did we mention, we still have to do the healing “work”? :-)

- Abstinence and Disengagement
- What part of *we still have to do the healing “work”* do we not understand? :-)
- Talk Trust Feel
- Yoda says, “The healing ‘work’ we still have to do.” :-)

Sharing the Gift of Recovery

As we progress on our spiritual quest, we are empowered by our experiences to maintain and elevate our spiritual consciousness, foremost with our selves, then in our interactions with our fellow traveler, with other ACAs and especially with newcomers.

No gift is greater than the one we have gratefully and freely received and gladly give away to newcomers who are embarking on this spiritual journey. Sharing the gift of recovery brings us great joy and satisfaction.

The newcomer just walking into ACA usually doesn’t think that recovery is possible, doesn’t believe that the traumatic and painful conflicts, memories and feelings are really behind their unmanageable lives and, if they are behind the newcomer’s unmanageable life, the newcomer doesn’t trust that they are really processable.

Our consistent attendance and humble service in meetings, our honest sharing the experience, strength and hope of our recovery process helps us to keep what we have by giving it away. We reassure them that their spiritual awakening is possible and is indeed a miracle that can be realized if we do the healing “work.”

Doing the healing “work” one day at a time, we have seen the temporary glow of our early days become the permanent radiance of our awakened spirits as we take spiritual flight from our protective cocoons and transform into the unique beings our Higher Power intended us to be. We sincerely thank you for your presence and we invite you to keep coming back. It works if you work it.



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To the Beginner In All of Us



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