

### **Step One**

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

Page 129 - Spiritual Principles: Powerlessness and Surrender

Page 96 - Paragraph 2 - Lines 3-7

Denial, which fosters a lack of clarity, is the glue that allows the disease of family dysfunction to thrive. Cloaked in denial, the disease is passed on to the next generation with amazing consistency. The basic language of denial is: "don't talk, don't trust, don't feel."

Page 96-97 - Paragraph 3 - 1st and 2nd sentence

With Step One we come out of denial and talk about what happened. We bring details to light.

Page 97 - Lines 13-15

Our siblings may have remembered things differently, but we know our own truth. We know what happened and we are breaking our silence.

Page 97 - Paragraph 1

Families without alcoholism have similar situations. These families abuse the children through the use of intellect, manipulation, or silence. We know our truth.

Page 97 - Paragraph 2 - Lines 5-7

The roles which are usually present in alcoholic and dysfunctional homes include "family hero, lost child, scapegoat, and mascot."

Page 98 - Paragraph 3 - Lines 2-4

Many adult children realize they have absorbed generational shame, abandonment, and rage only to grow up and recreate similar families or relationships.

Page 99 - Paragraph 2 - Lines 4-6

We grew up with the same loss, shame and self-hate as other adult children. Like others, we turned to control in adulthood for a sense of safety.

Page 99 - Paragraph 3 - Lines 5-8

We cannot change anyone. The only person we can change is ourselves, and an adult child rarely changes unless he or she becomes willing to learn a new way to live. The good news is this: There is another way to live.

Page 102 - Paragraph 1 - Lines 4-10

Powerlessness in ACA can mean that we were not responsible for our parents' dysfunctional behavior as children or adults. It means that as adults we are not responsible for going back and "fixing" the family unit. We are not responsible for rescuing, saving, or healing our parents or siblings who remain mired in family dysfunction. We can detach with love and begin the gradual process of learning about boundaries. We live and let live.

Page 103 Paragraph 1 Lines 8-12

By admitting our powerlessness, we take our first step toward reclaiming personal power, which is critical for healing our fractured identities. If we are compulsively self-reliant, we take our first step toward trust and asking for help.

Page 104 - Paragraph 1

Like powerlessness, the concept of unmanageability in Step One is often misunderstood by adult children. While some of our families were chaotic and unstable when we were children, many homes seemed manageable and productive. But we learned that productivity does not always equal a manageable, wholesome life. For many of us, what we thought was manageable or desirable in our dysfunctional homes was actually oppressive control.

Page 104 - Paragraph 2

The unmanageability that we speak of in Step One involves our desire to control others and ourselves while having a sense that we are not capable or effective. While we have moments of control, we usually experience painful episodes of losing control. We feel hurt when confronted by our loved ones for our controlling behavior. They act out in anger or abandonment to disrupt our attempts to control them. We may be momentarily hurt, but we usually blame others for this abandonment. We blame them for not reading our minds or not acting in a manner that we would approve. We run about attempting to control others and situations in an effort to avoid our own unmanageable lives. Control is an attempt to minimize uncertainty and to avoid our own uncomfortable feelings about the past and present. Yet, our unmanageability, fueled by our fear-based control, inevitably creates what we fear the most: abandonment.

Page 123 - Paragraph 4

ACA recovery begins when the adult child gives up, asks for help, and then accepts the help offered. Some adult children call giving up "hitting a Bottom,"

Page 124 - Paragraph 3

Surrender means we become willing to do whatever it takes to recover and find peace and serenity in our lives. We admit complete defeat and give up notions that we can "fix" or control someone else. We become

willing to attend meetings, work the Twelve Steps, and break through the denial of family dysfunction.

Page 405 - Paragraph 4 - Lines 2-3

With feelings, respect, trust, and honesty we no longer confuse love and Pity

Page 155 - Paragraph 2

In ACA, we seek 'emotional sobriety' by making a commitment to love ourselves and be good to ourselves. We stop harming ourselves by attaining ACA emotional sobriety.

Page 201 - Paragraph 1 - Lines 2-7

We are removing layers of shame and despair to find our True Selves. We began peeling back layers of the onion in Step One with the admission of being powerless over the effects of family dysfunction. Just as an onion can bring tears, our grief work will help us find our tears.

Page 125 - Paragraph 1

Moreover, the disease is generational, which means the traits and thoughts you have at this moment have been passed down from generations hence. Relief from the disease occurs when we do Step work, attend Twelve Step meetings, and seek a Higher Power's guidance. By admitting we are powerless over the effects of family dysfunction and that our lives have become unmanageable, we are ready to move onto Step Two.

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Summary reading of the ACA Twelve Steps in 12 Days

### **Step Two**

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

Page 137 - Spiritual Principles: Open Mindedness and Clarity

Page 106 - Paragraph 4

Moving to Steps Two and Three, many adult children are confronted with the issue of faith and a Higher Power. In our anger at our parents and God, many of us thought we had outgrown or moved past this issue in our lives. Frankly, some of us did not like this part of the ACA program. Being told of the spiritual nature of ACA irritated some of us. We wondered about the need for spirituality in recovery. We must remember that ACA is a spiritual and not religious program. Faith and religious conviction are not requirements for ACA membership. We avoid dogmatism and theological discussions, yet, a Higher Power is a key part of the ACA way of life.

Page 107 - Paragraph 1

Many adult children have assigned the traits of their dysfunctional parents to God or a Higher Power. If their parents were shaming, vengeful, and inconsistent, then their God tends to be the same. Some adult children describe having a "getcha God." For them, God keeps a record of their

behavior and punishes them or “gets them” for making mistakes.

Page 137 - Paragraph 1

It has been said that “insanity is repeating the same mistake and expecting a different result.” That has been our experience. Change does not occur until the adult child does the Step work needed to curb the tendency to reach outside ourselves for love and affirmation. One of the keys to being restored to sanity involves surrendering our need to harm ourselves or to run from our feelings. We must also be honest about our actions and motives. We must name our behavior properly to avoid the delusional thinking that we are “feeling fine” when in reality we are headed for trouble. Such honesty or clarity of thought comes from seeking a Higher Power and by attending ACA meetings. We stop reacting and become actors, choosing a nurturing role in our Higher Power’s play rather than a nightmare role in a destructive or unloving relationship.

Page 107 - Paragraph 3 - Lines 5-8

One purpose of Step Two is to introduce the idea of keeping an open mind on the possibility of a Higher Power who can restore sanity. In some cases, our Higher Power helps us create sanity or wholeness for the first time in our lives.

Page 107 - Paragraph 4

ACA is a spiritual program that confronts the effects of the disease of dysfunction head on. The disease affects our bodies, minds, and spirits and requires a spiritual solution for lasting impact. Knowing where our perceptions of a Higher Power originated from and if the perceptions are accurate, is critical. We must discern what we believe or do not believe if we are to work Step Two and the remainder of the Steps.

Pages 135-136 Paragraph 4

In one respect, Step Two implies that we had sanity and lost it when in reality we may be learning about sanity for the first time in ACA. A helpful tip in working Step Two involves replacing the word “sanity” with “clarity.” By working Step Two, we gain clarity about how our family dysfunction affects us in our lives as adults. We gain clarity about our abandonment and internal shame. Many of us find Step Two sanity through clarity.

Page 137 - Paragraph 2

When we settle down and listen, we begin to realize that the Power that brought us to ACA is still with us today. Where we once thought we found ACA by mistake, we begin to realize that a benevolent Power has been guiding us all along. Discovering this Power is one of the great miracles that many adult children have experienced in working Step Two and the remaining Steps. For some the Higher Power is recognized simply as loving and nurturing. The Higher Power is patient as it seeks to help the adult child find wholeness and integration of a divided self.

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### **Step Three**

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

Page 149 - Spiritual Principles:  
Willingness and Accepting Help

Page 107-108 - Paragraph 5

Moving into Step Three, we see the third Step is merely a decision to ask our Higher Power to help us live courageously and sanely on a daily basis. One day at a time, we recover from the disease of family dysfunction. Step Three is underpinned by the ACA Solution, which is read at the opening of most adult child meetings. The ACA Solution is that we become our “own loving parent.” Becoming our own loving parent involves seeing our “biological parents as the instruments of our existence.” As The Solution states: “Our actual parent is our Higher Power, whom some of us choose to call God.”

Page 108 - Paragraph 1

Working Step Three in ACA means that we realize that our parents brought us into the world. However, we are children of God, seeking to reclaim our true nature or original selves. The Twelve Steps support this journey to the Inner Child or True Self.

Page 108 - Paragraph 2

Meanwhile, Step Three helps further free us from the generational shame and abuse wrought by dysfunctional parents or caregivers. By realizing that our actual parent is our Higher Power, we complete more of the separation-from-family work. This work is critical so that we can frame the past in its proper perspective while reaching for a brighter future. We gradually realize our painful past can become our greatest asset. We realize we can help others who lack hope and clarity about what happened to them as children. As we learn to tell our story in meetings and in sponsorship, we move from “hurting, to healing, to helping.” By practicing Step Three we begin to stand on our own. We are clear on what we believe. We seek God’s will with greater clarity. We come to believe that we really are children of God, as we understand God. We

come to believe that God hears our prayers. We are less confused on what to pray about. We begin to have true choice.

Page 142 - Paragraph 1 - Lines 6-14

In Step Three we open our minds to new possibilities. Some of us are comfortable with the word "God" for a Higher Power. Others will use Spirit of the Universe, Father of Light, Earth Mother, or the Divine. Some ACA members still investigating their spiritual path choose an ACA group as a power greater than themselves. Whatever we choose to call our Higher Power, we make a decision to turn our will and life over to its care on daily Basis.

Page 142 - Paragraph 2

We turn over everything without bargaining with God as we understand God. We don't release some things to a Higher Power and hold onto others. If we struggle with turning over our will and life to a Higher Power, we can begin by turning over our self-hate, self-doubt, or fear. We can ask God to take our compulsions, resentments, and learned rage. Some of us will work up to turning over our will and life to the care of God. This is a process that we learn to trust.

Page 143 - Paragraph 1 - Lines 7-14

The disease of family dysfunction manifests itself in dependency, addiction, and dissociative personalities. The disease can kill. Every day, adult children commit suicide, die in addiction, or die one day at a time in silent isolation, thinking they are hopeless. In ACA, we believe we were born whole and became fragmented in body, mind, and spirit through abandonment and shame. We need help finding a way to return to our miracle state.

Page 143 - Paragraph 2 - Last sentence

We believe in a spiritual solution for the disease of family dysfunction.

Pages 143-144 - Paragraph 3

In addition to a deep sense of shame and abandonment, we believe that most of our emotional and mental distress can be traced to our steadfast nature to control. In ACA, we realize that control was the survival trait which kept us safe or alive in our dysfunctional homes. We controlled our thoughts, our voices, and many times our posture to escape detection from an abusive parent or care giver. We knew our parents were looking for imaginary cues to criticize us or verbally attack us. As adults we continue to control ourselves and our relationships in an unhealthy manner. This brings abandonment or predictable turmoil. We make promises to do better but eventually return to our obsessive need to compulsively arrange, question, worry, dust, wash, lock, unlock, read, or hypervigilantly survey our thoughts and actions to feel safe. But it is never enough. Experience shows there is little hope and little spirituality in homes governed by smothering control.

Pages 145-146 - Paragraph 3

This Step is a bottomless well of hope, which is needed to deal with our fear-based attempts to control ourselves and others. As we work the remainder of the Twelve Steps, we will invariably struggle with control and self-doubt. Such struggles are only natural since we relied on controlling our feelings and emotions to survive in our homes and relationships.

Control meant a sense of safety and predictability; however, we surrendered much of our personality and spirit through this manner of living. In Step Three we begin the gradual and gentle process of easing off of stifling control and replacing it with emotional freedom.

Page 146 - Paragraph 1

Each time we encounter the cliff face of control and feel overwhelmed by steep walls, we must remember we can draw on an endless well of God's grace. The Third Step, coupled with our association with other recovering adult children, is an endless resource of hope and reassurance. We can tap it indefinitely, one day a time.

Pages 155-156 - Paragraph 5

In Step Three we learned that our compulsion to control others and ourselves blocks God's will for us, which is to live in peace with our feelings, creativity, and spirituality. We learn that real choice is God's gift to us for letting go. We learned that our attempts at choice before recovery were actually veiled in control. In Step Three, we learned that choice often begins by facing our denial. As we grow in the program, our decisions include true choice that progresses to discernment. We learn to be still and know that God is God.

Page 149 - ACA 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

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#### **Step Four**

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

Page 188 - Spiritual Principles: Self-honesty and Courage

Page 108 - Paragraph 3

In Steps Four and Five, we review in detail how we were raised. We remember the messages, situations, and feelings. We also look at how we react and think in relationships as adults. We tell our story to another person and to God, as we understand God.

Page 109 - Paragraph 1 - Line 2

In ACA, we inventory our family system in addition to inventorying our own behavior. Other Twelve Step fellowships tend to limit a review of family dynamics. In ACA, we look at our parent's behavior, family roles,

rules, messages, abuse, neglect, and how that affects us as adults. We balance the inventory of our family system with a thorough inventory of our own behavior.

Page 109 - Paragraph 3

It is not the purpose of the Twelve Steps of ACA to place blame on the parents or caregivers; however, the adult child also must not shield the parents during the inventory process.

Page 109 - Paragraph 4

Our cofounder, Tony A., believed that adult children could take a “blameless” inventory of his or her parents. That means the adult can name the types of abuse that occurred and the role playing necessary to survive the upbringing; however, with a “blameless” inventory, the adult child also realizes the generational nature of such abuse or neglect. The parents were passing on some form of what was done to them.

Page 109-110 - Paragraph 5 - Line 3 thru the end of the paragraph

We must balance taking responsibility for misdeeds committed as an adult with the knowledge that our mistakes probably have their origin in the abuse we endured as children. We seek balance. We don't want to use our childhood abuse as an excuse to avoid taking responsibility for our actions as adults. But we also do not want to belittle ourselves for these mistakes or abuses. Adult children can be brutally hard on themselves for making mistakes. We condemn ourselves and rage at ourselves with ease. This serves no good purpose and only means that we have learned to abuse ourselves. No one needs to beat up an adult child. We do it to ourselves long after our parents or relatives have stopped. We need to stop this self-condemning behavior. We can take full responsibility for our actions, knowing that our childhood abuse contributed to our abuses as adults. We also know that we are not blaming anyone for our adult behavior. We are learning to love ourselves. We can do this.

Page 110 - Paragraph 2

In Step Four, we also shatter the cardinal rules of family dysfunction. The “don't talk” rule that most of us learned as children is broken so that a self-inventory can be fully reached. Breaking this rule began in Step One with the admission of being powerless over the effects of alcoholism and family dysfunction. When we work Steps Four and Five, we also break the rules of “don't trust” and “don't feel” by listing and articulating our life story in a structured manner. We learn to trust the person to whom we tell our story. We feel the feelings that arise by sharing such information. This sharing of our story with our sponsor or informed counselor reveals destructive patterns in our adult lives while illuminating abuses from our childhood. We also begin to see our grief or stored loss lying beneath our decisions to wrong ourselves and others.

Page 110 -111 - Paragraph 3

In Step Four, the adult child learns to “name” the acts of abandonment, shame, and other forms of abuse practiced by dysfunctional parents. At the same time in Step Four, the adult child lists his or her own defects of

character, acts of selfishness, and blame that allowed the adult child to rationalize destructive behavior or reject real solutions.

Page 157 - Paragraph 1

The key word to remember in working ACA's Fourth Step is "blameless." ACA founder Tony A believed that adult children should take a "searching and blameless inventory of our parents because in essence we had become them." Tony believed that we internalized our parents. We had become them in thinking and action even if we took steps to be different. While we focus primarily on ourselves in Step Four, we have added an inventory of the family to the process. ACA believes that we cannot take a searching and fearless inventory if we leave out the family.

Page 157 - Paragraph 2

Blame is not the purpose of Step Four or any of ACA's Twelve Steps. However, we can hold our parents and family accountable for their action and inaction. Blameless and accountability are the guideposts that steer us toward a balanced but searching inventory.

Page 157-158 - Paragraph 4

We avoid blame because we are aware of the generational nature of family dysfunction. Our parents passed on the seeds of shame and fear given to them. They were once children without a choice. They survived as we survived. While some parents were obviously sadistic or unrepentant, others did the best they could. These parents made a conscious decision to raise their children differently than they were raised. Many of these parents abstained from alcohol, yet passed on problematic fear and shame just the same. Some of these well-meaning parents learned to say affirming statements of love and encouragement. Yet, they still transferred their own self-doubt and lack of self-love in large measures. Many of us are the adult children of these parents. We have acted out with addiction or another self-harming behavior, continuing the disease of family dysfunction.

Page 159 - Paragraph 1

We stress fairness with our parents while holding them accountable for another reason as well. Many of us working Step Four realize we have harmed our own children. We have passed on what was done to us. Many of us have changed our behavior and made amends. However, some of us could one day be the focus of an inventory of our own children arriving at the doors of ACA. This is another reason to take a blameless, yet fair, inventory of the family and parents. If we give fairness, we can hope for fairness.

Page 159 - Paragraph 3

While working Step Four and all of the ACA Steps, we encourage you to nurture yourself. We must balance this probing look at our behavior with gentleness. We must protect our Inner Child or True Self vigorously. At the same time, we cannot let discomfort or fear stop us from getting honest about our own behavior.

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## **Step Five**

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

Page 206 - Spiritual Principles:

Honesty and Trust

Page 195 - Paragraph 2

There is no way around Steps Four or Five. We must go through them to get to the other side, to find the God of our understanding waiting there with a timeless embrace. This is our experience. Thousands of adult children have completed Step Five and found a peace and serenity not known before. They are waiting for you on the other side of Step Five. They called upon the inner strength which helped them survive a dysfunctional upbringing. They used that inner strength to make it through Step Five with room to spare. You have this inner strength by the very fact you have completed the first four Steps of the program.

Page 195 - Paragraph 3

Step Five gives us a chance to finally talk about what matters to someone we trust. We give our Fifth Step without grand promises to be perfect or strive for perfection. We tell our story to another person with honesty and sincerity and leave the results to God as we understand God. We can finally give ourselves breathing room to change one day at a time. We claim our humanness and our position in the world.

Page 196 - Paragraph 1

We approach Step Five with an attitude of self-love and trust that our Higher Power is with us and will not abandon us. We have taken a hard look at ourselves and our family of origin in Step Four. We have held nothing back. We are now preparing to release years of stored grief, shame, and hurtful secrets to God and to someone who understands.

Pages 196-197 - Paragraph 3

The spiritual principles of Step Five are honesty and trust. We must have self-honesty about the effects of growing up in a dysfunctional home. The

effects are our survival traits, which include people-pleasing, becoming addicted or marrying an addict, fearing authority figures, and feeling guilty when we ask for what we need. We often confuse love and pity, and we tend to “love” people we can rescue. We also can be the rescued. We stay in abusive relationships because they resemble how we were raised. We are terrified of abandonment so we tolerate high levels of abuse or neglect as adults. The abuse seems normal.

Page 197 - Paragraph 1

In Step Five, we must also have self-honesty about those we have harmed, including ourselves.

Page 197 - Paragraph 5

If we minimize our wrongs or fail to see their exact nature, we fall short of the mark of self-honesty in Step Five. Self-honesty does not mean self harm. We want rigorous honesty, but we do not want to abuse ourselves by being rigorously scathing. If we overstate our wrongs and beat ourselves up, we tend to drift into an attitude of martyrdom, or we assume the victim posture.

Page 198 - Paragraph 2

Step Five is where we embrace a more balanced view of who we are as sons, daughters, citizens, employees, business owners, and spiritual seekers. Since we come from homes that were out of balance with abuse or hypercritical attitudes, it is not easy for us to embrace our positive qualities. But we have such traits as compassion, trust, intelligence, and spirituality. Other positive traits are friendliness, honesty, and tenacity. We are not the disease of family dysfunction, but we have acted on harmful traits developed in that family when we were children. We are facing our behaviors in Step Five and making an honest attempt to change. We can feel good about this effort and our good character no matter what our story reveals.

Page 198 - Paragraph 3

When we look at the exact nature of our wrongs, we see that we have harmed ourselves based on our sense of being unacceptable, inferior, or lost. Further examination of our wrongs reveals there can be both legal and spiritual consequences to our actions. When we break the law there is a legal wrong, but we also see a spiritual separation as well. We separate ourselves from our Higher Power with our behavior. We experience spiritual loss.

Page 199 - Paragraph 2

But the adult child should also realize that the exact nature of a wrong can also involve loss. That is the secret in understanding Step Five. All of these harmful acts add up to loss. Each time we harmed another person or ourselves, we lost a piece of ourselves. Each time we shamed our own child or spouse, there was loss. Each time we judged ourselves without mercy for common mistakes, there was loss. Each day we remained in an abusive, dependent relationship there was loss.

Page 206 - Fifth Step Prayer

Divine Creator. 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.

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### **Step Six**

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

Page 216 - Spiritual Principle:

Willingness

Page 209 - Paragraph 2

In Step Six we realize that we have defects of character like most of the population in the world. However, our defects of character tend to be entrenched and trap us in unfulfilling relationships and block us from receiving the love of a Higher Power. Our defects can include

procrastination, lust, envy, greed, selfishness, and judgmentalness. We also have survival traits or common behaviors. The survival traits are the 14 characteristics of The Laundry List (Problem). These common behaviors represent the effects of growing up in a dysfunctional home. They are in a different category than defects of character.

Page 209 - Paragraph 3

Our survival traits include people-pleasing, addictiveness, hypervigilance, and stuffing our feelings to avoid conflict or arguments. We often confuse love with pity and tend to “love” those we can rescue. Even though we have identified such traits in Step Four, we are still new at this. We need focus to find our best course of action for release. Many adult children take the path of removal for character defects and take the path of integration for the survival traits.

Page 209 - Paragraph 4 - Lines 1 and 2

There is a key distinction between defects of character and the survival traits of The Laundry List.

Page 210 - Paragraph 2 - First Sentence

The key to becoming free of character defects while making peace with our survival traits involves a three-pronged approach with willingness, prayer, and time.

Page 210 - Paragraph 4

Willingness is our most powerful ally because it means we are teachable when it comes to addressing our defects of character. By being teachable, we learn to discern how much effort to put into changing our defects and when to get out of the way and let God handle it.

Page 211

## THE LAUNDRY LIST TREE

The Fruit  
Defects of Character

Mistrust  
Feeling Superior  
Procrastination  
Greed  
Pettiness  
Envy  
Lust  
Perfectionism  
Isolation  
Dishonesty  
Judgmental  
Self Centeredness

The Branches  
Laundry List 14 Traits  
Para alcoholics  
Codependency

Reactors rather than actors  
Judge ourselves harshly  
Stuff our feelings  
Afraid of people and  
authority figures  
Confuse love and pity  
Addictive lives  
Addicted to excitement  
Approval seekers  
Self-sacrificial  
Terrified of abandonment  
Frightened by angry people  
Live life from the  
viewpoint of victims

#### On the Cover

The front cover of the ACA  
12 Steps Workbook depicts  
The Laundry List Tree,  
which represents the traits  
of an adult child. The tree  
also shows the distinction  
between the traits which  
are learned in childhood  
and the defects of  
character that develop later  
in life. The Laundry List  
Traits represents the limbs  
while the character defects  
are the fruit.

#### Page 212 - Paragraph 2 - 1st Sentence

Becoming willing to have a Higher Power remove our defects of character  
can range from being painless, to moments of discomfort to agony.

#### Page 212 - Paragraph 3 - Last 2 Sentences

We now have friends and a Higher Power to rely on. We are not alone.

#### Page 212 - Paragraph 4 - Sentence 1 and Partial 2nd Sentence

Our experience reveals that there is value in emotional pain. With  
support, and with gentleness, we can find our healthy pain and its healing  
release.

#### Page 213 - Paragraph 2

By facing our pain, we learn that we really are not alone in our suffering.  
When we find ourselves in this kind of pain in Step Six, we stay close to  
meetings and keep our faces turned toward God as we understand God.

#### Page 214 - Paragraph 3

With Step Six, you are taking the time to become entirely ready. You are

about to ask God to humbly remove your shortcomings with a Seventh Step prayer. Step Seven states: "Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings."

Page 214 - Paragraph 4

We have a list of our defects of character. We prepared our list by reviewing our Fourth Step inventory. We also understand our survival traits and their function in our life. These are The Laundry List traits that we respect but which now must be further lessened or integrated.

Page 215 - Paragraph 1 - Line 4

Our character defects and survival traits are old friends we are beginning to bid farewell.

Page 215 - Paragraph 2 - Sentences 1-3 & 5

By now, we have stopped punishing ourselves. We are asking God, as we understand God, to help us become entirely ready to have these defects of character removed. We must realize that good intentions do not work in removing our defects of character. We need help from a power greater than ourselves to achieve Step Six results.

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### **Step Seven**

#### ***Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.***

Page 226 - Spiritual Principle:

Humility

Page 219 - Paragraph 1

As we approach Step Seven, we take time to notice that we have taken a fearless and thorough look at ourselves and our family of origin.

Page 220 - Paragraph 2

In Step Seven, we realize we cannot remove our shortcomings without the help of a Higher Power. We may have had moments of freedom from our defects, but they seem to return or take on a new form if we fail to ask for God's intervention. To our horror, we see a defect reappear in a new obsession or new twist that is torturous to face alone. In Step Seven, we muster all the trust or faith that we can. We rely upon God to remove our defects of character. We humbly ask God, as we understand God, to remove our shortcomings.

Page 220 - Paragraph 3

For removal of our defects of character, we sit in a relaxed position and concentrate on becoming entirely willing. We also become willing to integrate our survival traits. We may meditate and pray. When we are ready, we repeat the Seventh Step prayer for each defect or survival trait

we wish to have removed or integrated. Do not be concerned if you are not clear if you are addressing a defect or survival trait. God will understand. Humbly ask God, as you understand God, to remove your defects of character.

When we are ready, we repeat the Seventh Step prayer for each defect or survival trait we wish to have removed or integrated.

Page 220

Seventh Step Prayer - Character Defects

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 toward others. Renew my strength so that I might help myself and others along this path of recovery.

Page 221

Seventh Step Prayer - Laundry List Traits

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

With our character defects and survival traits addressed, we rely upon our Step Seven humility to prepare us for the amends process in Steps Eight and Nine. Humility will lead us as we find our path of self forgiveness while making things right for those we have harmed.

"I humbly ask you to:

"Remove my defect of . Amen."

Select defects of character:

self-centeredness

judgementalness

procrastination

envy

greed

lust

feeling superior

dishonesty

pettiness

people-pleasing

fear of authority figures

stuffing our feelings

addiction

confusing love with pity

judging ourselves harshly

"I humbly ask you to:

"Integrate my trait of . Amen."

Laundry List

survival traits or

common

behaviors:

Page 222 - Paragraph 2

Step Seven is an ongoing process. We can work this Step almost anywhere and anytime we feel the need to have a character defect removed. If we slip into judging another ACA member wrongfully, we can say "God. Please remove my shortcoming of judgementalness."

Page 223 - Paragraph 1

Humility is not humiliation; however, some adult children have humiliated themselves and found humility. Humiliation tends to come from our need to harm ourselves by reenacting the shame from our childhood. Without help, our toxic shame from the past will find a way to express itself in our adult lives no matter how perfect we act and no matter how hard we try to control ourselves or others. The shame finds a way to well up. We are horrified by its expression in relationships or event and our participation in it.

Page 223 - Paragraph 2

Humility comes from God and is a sibling of anonymity, a foundational principle of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. Through anonymity, we practice service with love. We seek to be of maximum service to our Higher Power and others.

Page 223 - Paragraph 3

With humility we find that our will aligns with God's will on a more frequent basis. True humility is the willingness to seek and do God's will with our best effort. We know that we are not perfect and know we could fall short. Yet, we try our best to live this Step and obtain its spiritual intent of removing our shortcomings through humility.

Page 225 - Paragraph 1

In addition to an inner peace and a glimpse of God's will, humility also brings an unexpected burst of creative energy for many adult children. Since we have backed away from trying to control others, we suddenly realize we have more energy to do things for ourselves. We have more time to attend concerts, go hiking, or begin a book of poems or finish one. Many adult children take their Inner Children to the circus, or buy watercolors and spend afternoons painting and mixing colors to see what happens.

Page 225 - Paragraph 3 - Line 6

We reparent ourselves by listing any problematic thinking or behavior that might linger after completing Step Seven. We strive to be free of these defects of character, but we also remind ourselves that we have positive qualities. Through humility, we can ask our Higher Power to help us avoid picking up and using a defect of character. We humbly ask our Higher Power to help us address our remaining defects. In this exercise we seek balance in our lives. We avoid focusing only on our problematic behavior. List your positive qualities across from problematic behavior that continues to affect your life. We reparent ourselves with the positive qualities.

Page 226 - Example:  
Continued Defects < >  
Self-centered < >  
Not always honest < >  
Manipulative < >  
Perfectionist < >  
Balance/Reparent with  
Selflessness  
Rigorous honesty  
Sincerity  
Compromise

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### **Step Eight**

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

Page 234 - Spiritual Principles:  
Willingness and Self-forgiveness

Pages 229-230 - Paragraph 5

In Step Eight we make a list of the people we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all. While making such a list, we are also mindful of our Inner Child and the need to protect the child within from harm during the amends process. While we will concentrate here on willingness and making the list, we must realize that many adult children have families that remain in denial about family addiction or dysfunction. Walking into your home and announcing that you are an adult child might bring an unintended effect. We urge caution for some circumstances; however, we do not let fear or being uncomfortable stop us from making this important list of our wrongs.

Page 230 - Paragraph 1

With Step Eight and Step Nine we are strengthening our commitment to changing our lives. We are doing something that is not easy but which will build confidence and set us free. We are moving past our comfort zone. We are moving further away from our dependent, people-pleasing selves toward our new home. We are improving a real connection with our Higher Power.

Page 231 - Paragraph 2

Making an Eighth Step list of those we have harmed and facing our part is an act of courage. This outward courage is a reflection of our inward strength that has been there all along. How could we have survived and arrived at ACA without this inner courage and without a Higher Power? While we once thought we survived by coincidence, we are now beginning to believe in divine intervention at some level. Not all of us can

put our finger on it, but many of us know we should not be here. We should not have survived, but we did. We certainly should not have made it to ACA where we now sit contemplating a list of people we have harmed and feeling confident enough to follow through with amends. Many of us who have been locked up or locked down, realize we are lucky as well to have this chance. We want to be sincere. We want to follow through and contribute to society in a meaningful manner. We also want to be the best we can be for our immediate families. We want to finally be emotionally, spiritually, and physically present with them.

Page 234 - Paragraph 2

In Step Eight, we are still learning to trust ourselves and to stand with ourselves without fading. If we balk at forgiving ourselves, we face this doubt and affirm ourselves. We get back to the business of self-forgiveness. We show self-forgiveness when we place our name at the top of the Eighth Step list. We also show self-forgiveness by listening to the words we use to describe ourselves. Where we once described ourselves as “lazy,” “mean,” or “incapable of love,” we now describe ourselves in a gentler tone and with language that reflects the growing love inside of us. We begin to hear ourselves say: “I thought I was unlovable, but in fact I am a precious child of God. I am a miracle.”

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## **Step Nine**

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

Page 249 - Spiritual Principles:  
Forgiveness and Courage

Page 237 - Paragraph 1

Step Nine can be one of the greatest recovery moments that we will ever experience in ACA. While the Step can appear daunting, Step Nine is one of the fellowship's best kept secrets. The emotional and spiritual rewards of this Step are like a great hidden treasure. We cannot tell you how the amends process will turn out for you, but we can promise fulfillment and growth that will exceed your expectations if this Step is faced with honesty, sincerity, and thoroughness.

Page 237 - Paragraph 2

We liken the Steps leading up to Step Nine as a spiritual ropes course. The challenge course has involved risk, group support, and the realization of inner courage.

Pages 238-239 - Paragraph 3

We see no blame for anyone for what we are about to do in Step Nine. We are not blaming our parents or ourselves. We are willing to make amends to those we have harmed so that we can be free to serve God and society. During the amends process, we will protect ourselves and our Inner Child, but we will not shrink from this important Step. We feel as if we are closer to God, and we want to live and let live. We are learning to repent ourselves with love and gentleness. The sky is clear. We step off into Step Nine.

Page 239 - Paragraph 1

Step Nine is about mending relationships with others and ourselves. The Step also involves cleaning up the wreckage of our past and being willing to release resentments. In some cases, an amends will help restore a relationship. In other cases, an amends will bring closure to a past relationship or association.

Page 239 - Paragraph 3

The emotional and spiritual rewards for making our amends are awesome. Many such benefits are intangible but they assure us that we are finally making greater progress in our lives. We are truly involved in real behaviors that are bringing change into our lives. In Step Nine, we are bringing together the pieces of our spiritual blueprint created by the preceding Steps. We are building our new home. We are turning on switches and opening windows installed by the hands of the Spirit of the Universe. There is still work to be done, but we are on our way. We have our foundation in place.

Page 239-240 - Paragraph 4

We approach Step Nine with humility and with a sense that we are about to make a significant shift in our lives. We are breaking the shackles of unhealthy dependence and carried shame. With the support of ACA, we understand we can lay down the guilt and shame we have carried from past behavior. We realize that this is a chance to address behavior that we thought was unforgivable. For years, many of us have carried guilt about some thoughts and actions. Many of these behaviors are a reenactment of what was done to us as children. Some of us have struggled horribly with these behaviors, believing we were evil or hopeless. We may have even tried to change but failed. We thought we were unique. Some of our behavior has been disturbing and perhaps outside the bounds of law. With Step Nine, we are naming what we have done and making amends for what we have done. With the help of ACA, our worst acts become forgivable if we are humble and seek help from a Higher Power. Honesty is a must as well.

Page 240 - Paragraph 3

We approach our amends list with an attitude of neutrality. We are not judging ourselves or others for their wrongdoings. We want to focus on our own missteps and not on the other person.

Page 241 - Paragraph 2

During our amends, we don't attempt to educate people about ACA unless they ask. Even then we keep it brief unless they sincerely want to hear more. We don't recruit people to ACA in our amends process. We also don't bring up our newfound spirituality unless the moment is appropriate. It is not wise to meet someone we have harmed and announce our new or renewed focus on God. To do so places us at risk of being branded a religious crank.

Page 241 - Paragraph 3 - Thru Line 3

Amends vary in type and form, but keep in mind that amends means making things right. Our first amends should be to ourselves. We have harmed ourselves with codependency, drugs, sex, work, gambling, and food like no other people on the planet.

Continue to Last 3 Sentences on Page 242

We are claiming our spot in ACA. We matter. We can forgive ourselves.

Page 242 - Paragraph 1

We use our inner courage to make a start. With our amends, we make no excuses for our behaviors, but we promise to do our best to change. We make practical statements about change instead of uttering grand resolutions or windy claims to be different. We want our actions, rather than our words, to show that we have changed.

Page 242 - Paragraph 2

In making an amends, we might say:

"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 (name the behavior, action, or other). I want to make it right. I am not making excuses, but I have harmed people based on my lack of knowledge about living, I am changing my behavior."

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

Page 262 - Spiritual Principles:  
Honesty and Discernment

Page 251-252 - Paragraph 5

Step Ten is where we continue to inventory our behavior and thinking. With this Step we continue to let go of control and expose our denial about the effects of being raised in a dysfunctional home. We learn to take a balanced view of our behavior, avoiding the tendency to take too much responsibility for the actions of others. At the same time, we also curb our tendency to blame others when we are obviously wrong, yet are too afraid or ashamed to admit it. In these cases, we keep it simple. There is no need for long analysis of our behavior. We know what the issues are for us. We make an amends with briefness in mind but with a sincere desire to change. Keeping it simple is the best course in some matters. Other amends might require background information about our past and a longer explanation. We will discern those situations as they arise.

Page 252 - Paragraph 1

Step Ten helps us apply what we are learning in meetings and to gauge our daily progress. In Step Ten, we are making a statement to hang onto the hard-won changes we are employing in our lives. We are living with more honesty and affirmation of ourselves. We realize we don't have to act perfect or flawless to be loved or accepted. We can make errors and laugh at ourselves without feeling shame. We are less fearful of people and their opinions of us.

Page 252 - Paragraph 3

Step Ten helps us polish the spiritual principles we are learning and using in our daily lives. To remain spiritually fit, we must continue to attend meetings, share our feelings, and help others. By helping others on their path of recovery, we help ourselves and learn to break our isolation. We get out of ourselves and contribute to the well-being of our ACA support group. With Step Ten, our personal and spiritual lives improve gradually.

Page 252 - Paragraph 4

Step Ten calls us to inventory our use of the ACA program to improve our marriages, jobs, and choices. We must practice the ACA program in the home and in our jobs if we are to be true to ourselves. The home or office is not an easy place to practice the principles of ACA, but we must. We do not preach about ACA or invade boundaries with our program. Yet, we stand ready to apply the principles of honesty, humility, and forgiveness outside ACA meetings as well as inside the meetings. We also ask for what we need and keep our word. This is not easy, but neither was living with our addictiveness. It took effort to support addictive choices. Practicing spiritual principles and inventorying our lives takes effort as

well, but this is the labor of self-love.

Page 254 - Paragraph 1

A daily or weekly inventory is different than the hypervigilance we have practiced before recovery. In our Step Ten inventory we judge ourselves less harshly because we know we are human and will make mistakes. We know we can talk about our feelings and our missteps without being judged when we share in ACA meetings. We have shaken hands with our critical inner parent. We are beginning to listen to the actual parent, whom many of us choose to call God.

Pages 256-257 - Paragraph 3

Step Ten is where we can continue to integrate any left over character defects or survival skills into our emerging identity. As we learned in Step Seven, there will be residual defects and survival traits that won't recede easily. This does not mean we have failed in previous Steps. Step Ten is where we can acknowledge and embrace these lingering but less useful traits. We use humility and consistent effort to integrate these aspects of our personality.

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## **Step Eleven**

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

Page 278 - Spiritual Principles:  
Seeking and Listening

Pages 265-266 - Paragraph 1 - Sentences 1-10

Step Eleven is where we travel often to find greater levels of maturity through prayer and meditation. Through meditation, we begin to visualize emotional sobriety. We find out what ACA recovery looks like. We begin to see that recovery is a noticeable freedom from the damaging affects of The Laundry List traits. We realize our Step work has brought some measure of healing from the trauma and neglect of our childhood. We intuitively rely on the Steps and ACA meetings to face every situation in our lives. We rely upon God as we understand God for sure footing. With emotional sobriety, reparenting ourselves becomes a reality in our lives. We love ourselves. The proof of emotional sobriety can be found in our relationships with others and with God, as we understand God.

Page 266 - Paragraph 1 - Lines 4-6

With meditative techniques, we let go of racing thoughts. We learn to be in the moment and to be present in our bodies. We learn that our thoughts can end.

Page 266 - Paragraph 1 - Last Sentence

We can let troublesome thoughts die a natural death in meditation.

Page 266 - Paragraph 2

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.

Page 267 - Paragraph 3

Our primary founder, Tony A., said "The adult child personality is a personality which doubts God or cannot believe the unseen, but which seeks God who is unseen." We cannot stop ourselves from seeking contact with a Higher Power. It is part of being an adult child, We must accept this great fact. We are called to God and cannot resist. Acting distracted or indifferent no longer works. The True Parent calls.

Pages 272-273 - Paragraph 4

Whatever meditative style we choose, the goal is to seek God's will and the power to carry that out. With continued meditation, we return to our everyday activities, feeling more emotionally sober. We feel more energy to get involved in life and to contribute in making a better world. By traveling inward in meditation, we find strength to go farther outward than we could have imagined.

Pages 273-274 - Paragraph 3

Prayer and meditation will take us further. We pray to put into action the principles and concepts we are finding in ACA. We pray for strength and power to work the ACA program and to stay focused. We pray for God to take out what blocks us from accepting ourselves. We pray to connect with our Inner Child.

Page 275 - Paragraph 1

The simple prayer is an example of seeking and listening, which is the heart of ACA's Eleventh Step. Many ACA members describe prayer as seeking God's guidance and meditation as listening for it. We pray and listen in Step Eleven.

Page 275 - Paragraph 2

With prayer and meditation we find our true inner power. This is the inner strength that we have always had but used limitedly. God has been holding onto it until we were ready to claim it in Step Eleven. This is the power which changes our life and our course of thinking and behaving. This is the power which keeps us going when we lapse into judging ourselves or feel discouraged about making progress in ACA. This is the power that we find when we ask humbly to be used for the greater good of the world.

Page 275 - Paragraph 3

We feel more alive than ever before with Step Eleven. We are more imaginative and hopeful. A return to prayer and creativity are two of the gifts of Step Eleven in addition to making conscious contact with God within.

Page 274 - Prayer

'God, When I look let me truly see.  
When I listen let me truly hear.'

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## **Step Twelve**

***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.***

Page 294 - Spiritual Principles: Love and Self-love

Page 282 - Paragraph 1

In Step Twelve we claim our program of recovery for ourselves by putting into practice the spiritual principles we have used and continue to use to reparent ourselves. The principles include surrender, hope, honesty, self-forgiveness, humility, and many more from the Twelve Steps. (Additional principles are: powerlessness, open-mindedness, clarity, willingness, acceptance, courage, trust, forgiveness, discernment, seeking, listening, love and self-love).

Page 283 - Paragraph 1

The Twelfth Step is our stage where we become actors instead of reactors without solutions. Acting from a foundation of self-love and respect, we offer our spiritual solutions to adult children seeking a better way of life. We also help ourselves.

Page 283 - Paragraph 2

One of the results of a spiritual awakening involves the understanding that God is real. With a spiritual awakening, we move from theories about God to the belief that a Higher Power is accessible and hears our prayers. We know that a loving God or a Spirit of the Universe exists. We have come to believe that God, as we understand God, is the Actual Parent.

Page 284 - Paragraph 3

With a spiritual experience, we usually realize that we are transformed in some manner. We know something has changed inside of us even though we do not yet fully understand it. For some of us, our spiritual focus seems sharper. We know a peace that we could not imagine previously. We can still have moments of being affected by life, but these moments seem milder and are handled more quickly. We know there is something greater than ourselves at work in the universe. We let go and let God work in these matters.

Page 286 - Paragraph 3

A spiritual awakening simplifies our lives. We intuitively know what we need and what we can live without. We are no longer reacting to people, places, and things. We live and let live.

Page 288 - Paragraph 2

Spiritually awake adult children understand the spiritual axiom which states: "We must give away what we have to keep it." This is one of the most selfless acts of love we can offer a

confused world; however, we must love ourselves first to have something to give away. Self-love is a result of working the Twelve Steps, being vulnerable, asking for help, and being aware of our bodies through meditation and proper breathing. We love ourselves when we find our pain. We sit with it without acting out on drugs or some other compulsive activity. We go after our stored grief and greet it and feel it. We find our True Selves and sit beside the Divine Light.

Page 289 - Paragraph 5

Meanwhile, those who are spiritually awake accept Twelve Step work with an attitude of service rather than sacrifice. By the time we reach this Step, we know the difference between being a rescuer and giving service with love.

Page 292 - Partial Paragraph 1

While much of ACA's program involves the inward journey, Step Twelve reminds us to journey outward as well. We carry the message to other adult children in our meetings, on the telephone, and through service work. We get out of ourselves by sponsoring others, giving rides to meetings, and by getting involved at an ACA event or fund raiser. There are many opportunities if we only look. Most of this activity falls under the title of Twelve Step work, and it means that we are answering the call to carry the message to others.