

ACA/ACD 12 Steps Sponsor Guide (Adult Children of Alcoholics and/or Adult Children of Dysfunction)

The twelve steps of Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunction are God given and are an excellent form of therapy for the fatal disease of codependency and adult children of alcoholics and dysfunction. Like any good therapy, they explain the disease itself. In our disease of codependency and ACA/ACD I was:

a) Isolated from God Because I lived against my conscience, I lived a lie. The biggest lie was the one I told to myself. This separated me from a God of my understanding. The first three steps reconcile me with a God of my understanding.

b) Isolated from myself Because I drowned my feelings for so long, I became fragmented from myself. I lost myself. Because I hadn't felt for so long, I could not express or validate my feelings. All the middle steps reconcile me with myself.

c) Isolated from others I was co-dependent and an ACA in a post-traumatic stress disorder state and therefore unavailable both physically and emotionally for others. The twelfth step reconciles me with others.

I was full of fear, anger and resentment, which are resolved in the fourth step.

Guilt is resolved in the fifth step; character defects and shortcomings are resolved in steps six and seven. Forgiveness from self and others is resolved in step eight and nine.

The Twelve Steps can be simplified into eight phrases;

stop fighting (step one)

trust God (step three)

clean house (steps four through nine)

help others (step twelve)

OR

giving up (steps one through three)

cleaning up (steps four through seven)

making up (steps eight and nine)

keeping up (steps ten, eleven, and twelve)

Prayer is very important before beginning any step. Pray out loud with a sponsee before you start. You allow the prayer to fit the step. No matter which step we work, two spiritual gifts are given to us; a) greater acceptance of a Higher Power and b) more humility.

1. Step One – “I can’t”

“We admitted we were powerless over the effects of addiction – that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Prayer for Step One: *“To the God of our understanding, please let us recognize our powerlessness and our unmanageability. Send us Your grace and Honesty to own our problem.”*

Directions for Step One:

1. Read: Starting the Journey pages 1-4 in the ACA 12 Step Book and Step One in the ACA 12 Step Book
2. Have a sponsee write two examples of their powerlessness and two examples of their unmanageability.

Working Step One:

When reviewing their examples, try to hone in on powerless in two forms:

- a) When I act out in my dysfunction (Fear, Anger, Rage, Depression) my life becomes unmanageable and

b) And any control is an illusion of control.

Note the first word of the step says “we” and not “I.” We recover together and I stay dysfunctional alone.

Also note that all the steps are written in past tense, the initial ACA founders wrote the steps and they have worked for them, and therefore they can work for us.

2. Step two – “He can”

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

Prayer for Step Two: *“To the God of our understanding, please send us Your gift of faith to believe in Your grace and power to restore us to sanity.”*

Directions for Step Two;

1. Read Step Two in the ACA Twelve Steps For Adult Children Book

2. Questions:
1. Have you come to believe?
 2. If yes, how did you come to believe?
 3. If you have to be restored to sanity, what was your insanity?
 4. Why does the step say “could” instead of “would”?

Working Step Two:

Answers you hope to elicit:

1. Yes.
2. By coming into the rooms of ACA and seeing recovery in live, living color.
3. The insanity was not what I did when I was acting out, even though that was very insane, the insanity this step is driving at is when, after a period of not being co-dependent, we act out again and think it’s going to be different. In other words, doing the same twice and expecting different results.
4. There is no guarantee; it only works if we work it.

3. Step Three – “I think I’ll let Him”

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

Prayer for Step Three: *“To the God of our understanding, we pray for Your grace to make a decision and to implement that decision.”*

Directions for Step Three:

1. Read the Third Step in the ACA Twelve Step Book.

- 2 Questions
1. Have you made a decision?
 2. If yes, how do you plan to implement that decision?
 3. Explain the God of your understanding, who He is, what does He do, is He loving and all powerful, available, approachable and involved with us.

Working Step Three:

Answers you hope to elicit:

1. Yes.
2. To stay in compliance to ACA which entails going to meetings and working the next nine steps.
This is how the decision is implemented.
3. Let the sponsee know that he/she can pick any God he wants.

End with reading the third step prayer on page 34 of the ACA 12 Step Book

4. Step Four – 4 Sessions--- what we have, what we don’t have and what has to go.

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Prayer for Step Four: *“To the God of our understanding, we pray for honesty and introspection. Allow us Your grace to know ourselves; the good, the bad, and the ugly. Amen.”*

Directions for Step Four PART 1:

1. Read Step Four in the ACA Twelve Steps Book
2. Write ten things you like about yourself and ten things you don't like about yourself. Have them save the ten things they don't like about themselves for steps six and seven.

Directions for Step Four PART 2:

1. Read Step Four in the ACA Twelve Steps Book
2. Resentment List- Make a list of all people you Resent. “People who take up space in our minds.” – This is discussed in paragraph #2 on page 47 of the ACA Twelve Steps Book. When going over their resentment list, let them know that the word resentment comes from the Latin word resentoria, which means “to re-feel.” We are re-feeling the pain and anger from the past. Resentment keeps these people renting space in our heads and also keeps them tied to us. Give the direction to pray for these people every day for two weeks and to pray that they have the same good things that we want for ourselves and our families. This process is self-oriented, to rid us of this spiritual toxin of resentment.

Directions for Step Four PART 3:

1. Read Step Four in the ACA Twelve Steps Book
2. Seven Capital Sins --Give one example of when you acted out in each of these capital sins:
 - Pride
 - Anger
 - Envy
 - Greed
 - Lust
 - Gluttony
 - Sloth

Directions for Step Four PART 4:

1. Read Step Four in the ACA Twelve Steps Book and the Co-dependent inventory.
2. Do the inventory on pages 52-65 in the ACA Twelve-Step Book. On a scale from one to ten, how much does each of the 14 core issues affect your life? Number one indicates it has little negative effect; number ten indicates it has great negative effect.

5. Step Five – Resolution of guilt

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

Prayer for Step Five: Read Prayer Page 68

Directions for Step Five:

- 1 Read Step Five in the ACA Twelve step book.

2. Step five is the exact nature of our wrongs. Write down the six things you have done which have caused you the most shame and guilt. The six things you told yourself you would never reveal, which you would take them to your grave. Your secrets keep you sick.

Working Step Five

Review six things

I share here one or two

6. Step Six - Sometimes called “The forgotten step”

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

Prayer for Step Six *“To the God of understanding, we ask to become ready to have You remove all these defects of character that keep us from happiness in our lives and being of service to You. Amen.”*

Directions for Step Six

1. Read Step Six the ACA Twelve step book.
2. Read the Promises in the ACA 12 Step Book page 182
3. Review and become ready and humble to ask God to remove the following defects from Step 4 & 5: Ten things you didn't like about yourself, 7 Capital sins, any other addictions—chemical or behavioral, Ex: nicotine, gambling, workaholism, over-eating, sugar addiction, sex addition, the core issues from co-dependent inventory

Working Step Six- Review the Promises on page 104 of the Twelve and Twelve.

Strength not ordinarily our own.

Wisdom beyond our capability.

Peace of mind in spite of outward difficulties.

Ask sponsee to invite these promises into their lives and to look for and recognize them when they appear. The Twelve Promises ACA 12 Step Book from page 182, and a brief discussion follow:

“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through”

1. “We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.” We will be free from the wreckage of our past, free from the bondage of codependency, free from bondage of self and attachments. Why wouldn't this freedom lead us to a new happiness?
2. “We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.” We stopped regretting the past because it has been resolved. It has been grieved and we let go of what happened to us and the offenses we have committed. I have no regrets for what might have been because my experiences have shaped my strengths as well as my defects of character.
3. “We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.” Having lived a great part of our lives against our conscience because of our diseases, we now find the serenity and peace we never knew possible. This serenity is due to forgiveness and love.
4. “No matter how far down the scale we have gone we will see how our experiences can benefit others.” No one understands codependents and adult children like other codependents and adult children, addicts like other addicts, wounded people like others who were wounded. In recovery we have insight into the disease we share

with others. We have compassion and understanding. Empathy, sympathy, and honesty help resolve these problems.

5. “That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.” We need to differentiate between normal healthy grief and self-pity. We know the difference in ourselves. Grief is working through issues while self-pity is wallowing, whining, and being stuck in our pain and anger.

6. “We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.” Self-centeredness is replaced with other-centeredness. We need to differentiate between selfishness and self-orientation. We must fill ourselves up before we have anything to give to others. We are responsible to meet our own needs and take appropriate care of ourselves. All the middle steps of ACA are about going through the process of self-knowledge, self-acceptance, self-appreciation, and finally self-celebration. In order to be properly other centered, you must have something to offer to others.

7. “Self-seeking will slip away.”

8. “Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change.” Instead of being totally preoccupied with our attachments and dependencies, we are now thinking of others and trying to help them meet their needs. We need to differentiate between enabling and helping. Enabling is doing for others what they should do for themselves. We must allow others to take accountability and responsibility for their choices, allowing others to do for themselves. Our outlook on life changes from one of impending doom and pessimism to one of optimism.

9. “Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.” Because people have let us down in the past and have betrayed us, we have severe trust issues. Now we can be more discerning in our choices by surrounding ourselves with trustworthy people; people who respect us and will love us. Freedom from fear of economic insecurity does not mean we will all be wealthy in an economic sense. It simply means we trust God to meet all of our needs and we can differentiate between our needs and wants.

10. “We will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us.” In our dysfunction we were hypervigilant. This is a learned survival skill that protected us from being hurt as children. The problem with the adult trait is that it keeps us on alert all the time. We never can relax. We walk into a room and we know in short order who can hurt us. We have learned body language and voice inflection and all kinds of small nuances. When we allow God to balance this character defect it becomes a character asset. We become very intuitive and totally understand a persons’ agenda. We also listen to and trust that small voice within which we all know as the Higher Power.

11. “We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.” We develop the awareness that God is intimately involved in every moment of our day. We trust the power of prayer. We learn how to access the grace of God by means of the steps and how He speaks through others in the Twelve Steps rooms. We are not acting out in our excesses. We know that this happens only by the grace of God and not by our own strength.

The ACA 12 Step Book asks: “Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.” The important key word in this paragraph is work. We do the footwork and God gives us the strength through His grace. Ask the sponsee to invite these promises into their lives and to recognize them when they present themselves.

7. Step Seven – The other forgotten step.

Step 7: “Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.”

Prayer for Step 7 *“To the God of understanding, we ask to become ready to have You remove all these defects of character that keep us from happiness in our lives and being of service to You. Amen.”*

Directions for Step 7

1. Read Step 7 in the ACA 12 Steps Book
2. Place the Step 6 defects in two lists: a) those things we are willing to let go of now and b) those that we are not quite ready to let go of yet.

Working Step 7

Of the two lists---Hopefully there is nothing that we will never be ready to let go of.

Note: “God will never render us as white as snow”

Complete Step 7 by each taking turns reading a paragraph from the Step Seven prayer on pages 88-89.

8. Step Eight –Forgiveness step

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

Prayer for Step Eight: *“To the God of our understanding we pray for willingness, honesty, and guidance. We make amends simply because they have to be made. We seek forgiveness from others and forgiveness of ourselves.”*

Directions for Step Eight:

1. Read Step Eight in the ACA Twelve Steps Book
 2. Make a list of all persons you had harmed, example of list is grid on pg. 106 of the ACA 12 Step Book.
Tell Sponsee: Put yourself* on the list because you caused the most harm to yourself in codependency
Tell Sponsee: Do not make any amend until we review list next week.
- * Ask Sponsee, “How do you plan to make amends to yourself?” Hopefully you will elicit that they will stay in compliance to ACA and the steps and principles.

Working Step Eight:

Go over each name on the list and carefully advise the Sponsee how, when, where and even if the amends are to be made.

9. Step Nine

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

Prayer for Step Nine:

“To the God of our understanding give us the courage, the strength to go out to our fellows and to repair the damage done in the past.”

Directions for Step Nine:

1. Read Step Nine in the ACA Twelve Steps Book
2. Review circled sentences pages 109, 111, 112 before ending this session. (New edition pp 109, 111, 111)
3. Make amends now.

Working Step Nine:

As they make their amends, be careful not to cause harm to others. Also try to protect the Sponsee as best you can. Remember to warn the Sponsee not to drag up any of the other person's issues but only to "clean our side of the street." Also warn them that the amends may be rejected and they are powerless over the response. They are only to try to make the amends.

10. Step Ten

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

Prayer for Step Ten:

"To the God of our understanding, please continue to send us insight, honesty and willingness to inventory ourselves. Give us the humility to admit when we are wrong."

Directions for Step Ten: 1. Read Step Ten in the ACA Twelve Step Book.

Working Step Ten:

Step Ten describes three types of inventory;

Inventory taken at the end of the day--This is the time we evaluate our actions and attitudes of the past 16 hours. We watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, fears or any other acting out of our character defects.

Spot inventory--Whenever we are emotionally disturbed, we stop and ask ourselves this question; "What is really going on here?" This is extremely important when we are dealing with our co-dependent core issues. If we get ten chances to grow in a day, we can use the spot inventory and not act out on our character defects. Sometimes we realize the problem after we've already acted out and then we promptly admit our wrongs and make amends.

Inventory taken once a year--We do this inventory with a sponsor or spiritual advisor. Some ACA/ACD members take a weekend retreat once a year to do their yearly inventory. We are not cured of Codependency. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition.

Step Ten will always send us back to Steps six and seven with all of our character defects and shortcomings.

Review character traits pages 127-140 and changes from Step 4

11. Step Eleven

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Prayer for Step Eleven: *"To the God of our understanding, please send us Your grace to want to spend time in a relationship with You. Help us to speak with You and listen for Your will for us."*

Directions for Step Eleven: 1. Read Step eleven in the ACA Twelve Steps Book

Working Step Eleven:

The most important prayers we say on a daily basis are "help" when we get up in the morning and "thank you" when we go to bed at night. If we can say these words to our Higher Power, we have gained that day's codependent and emotional sobriety.

There are four types of prayer and the word ACTS is the acronym for the four types of prayer.

A – adoration – we adore you, O God.

C – contrition – we are sorry for our sins, shortcomings, and character defects.

T – thanksgiving – it's nice if we feel grateful, but if that's not true, we still better be grateful for our codependent and emotional sobriety and all the gifts that God has given us.

S – supplication – asking for our needs to be met if it be Gods will.

Meditation – if prayer is talking to God, then meditation is listening to God. There is a story about Saint Joan of Arc that states: when God was instructing her to tell the King of France what God's will for France was, the King objected, saying "Why is God talking to you, a little girl, and not talking to me, the King of France?" Her response was "He is speaking to you, you are just not listening." And so God speaks to all of us; we need to just take time to listen. Recommend to the Sponsee that he/she start with just ten minutes a day. Ask him to get comfortable and visualize his Higher Power in his mind sitting in front of him. Spend time trying to listen. Most days we will hear that we are loved, that we need to do the next right thing, that we are in His will and that He is intimately involved with every moment of our day.

12. 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."

Prayer for Step Twelve: *"To the God of our understanding, we pray that we be able to recognize and measure our spiritual awakening. With Your grace we have entirely changed our ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Help us to show our gratitude to You by extending help to others in ACA. Help us to know and to practice these principles of our program in all that we do."*

Directions for Step Twelve:

1. Read step twelve in the ACA 12 Steps Book.

2. Questions:
1. Have you had a spiritual awakening?
 2. If yes, describe your spiritual awakening.
 3. How do you intend to work with others?
 4. What are the principles of the program and how do you intend to practice them? Just give them the answer here. This is not a physics final exam!!

Working Step 12: Answers you hope to elicit:

1. Yes.
2. The profound metamorphosis that has occurred in body, mind and spirit.
3. Involvement in the program with service work and a willingness to sponsor others and/or be part of their support group.
4. The four absolutes the old-timers talked about are appropriate for the principles and they are:
Honesty
Purity
Unselfishness
Love

Conclusion

Having finished all Twelve Steps, hopefully within one year of our codependent and emotional sobriety, we would expect to be totally changed. We are not the same people we were. That is good because the old self will recycle again and the new self has found a solution to the codependency and emotional sobriety problem, as well as a whole new way of life. If in our sickness we were fragmented, that being we thought one thing, felt another, and acted out a third.

We now, as a result of the Twelve Steps, have wholeness, an integration, or continuity. We think, feel and act out the same on any issue. We have had a paradigm shift, a total change of thinking. We replace codependency, fear, shame, and abandonment thinking with recovery. We have found a way to total healing of the entire person – body, mind and spirit. We've had a healing to our "soul sickness". We continue to live the Twelve Steps in our lives and help others to realize this tremendous gift. We continue to grow always in the spirituality a loving God has given us in the Twelve Steps of Adult Children of Alcoholics/Dysfunction. Show them this doesn't cause you any problem now because your issues have been forgiven and resolved.