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**VISUALIZATION &
ACTIVE
IMAGINATION
TOOLS FOR
ADULT CHILDREN**

LITTLE BOOK I

**By Kathleen S.
12-Step Recovery**



**"LITTLE BOOK" #1:
VISUALIZATION & ACTIVE IMAGINATION
TOOLS FOR ADULT CHILDREN**

by Kathleen S. 12-Step Recovery

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DEDICATION:
TO US, OUR *LIVING* PROGRAM

*“We will be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit
as you tread the Road of Happy Destiny.”*

“A Vision For You”, ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (1939)

The fellowship lives *through us all*, through the discoveries, insights and the challenges we face. ‘Happy Destiny’ is *a path* we share, an *adventure*, not a *dwelling* place to hide! *This planet’s future is surely in our care, to fashion and create.* Is this a blessing? Since no other person can do our part, for *we are needed and unique*, in our recovery, our Higher Power makes us capable, whole, certain, empowered and at peace. *Yes, that’s the deal!*

12-Step recovery is *unfailing* for those who want a way of life that lets us tell the truth, no matter what our history includes or leaves behind, and it has a track record to prove it, since 1935 when a group of “hopeless drunks” discovered hope and meaning in their lives—lives others had given up—*among themselves.*

12-Step recovery is a *method*, not just a miracle of chance or birth, not something that can be snatched away by an authority who’s on a “power trip.” It gives each of us *an even chance*, if we are willing to accept it. If we are willing to *insist* on finding the Higher Power, *the Spiritual Being* within who is having a *human experience* through us, then we will find it, out of grace.

I came to 12-Step recovery December 31, 1975, at 9:30 PM when I finished my last drink, an Irish coffee in Brennan’s Bar in Berkeley, CA. *“My life was unmanageable.”* I knew that. It had been unmanageable since I was born. *I am a primary ACA*, who self-medicated with booze, but ACA didn’t exist in 1975. I found 12-Step recovery initially in AA. The *method* saved my life. *“In all my affairs”* included *all of me and all my issues, then and now.* I have a simple message: Be welcome. Don’t worry. Stick around.
Kathleen S. *another* ACA Founder, December 20, 2019.

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INTRODUCTION

“In ACA today, the adult child looks at the patterns of family dysfunction and is encouraged to talk about all aspects of the childhood in ACA meetings and with a sponsor or informed counselor. At the same time, the AA-adapted steps require the individual to inventory one’s self and to change destructive behavior. We take responsibility for our behavior knowing that some of that behavior was handed off to us by our parents.”

Tony A., an ACA Founder (ACA oral interview, 1992)

What Is the Purpose of These “Little Books?”

These “little books” are meant as aids to merge and to reconcile the ACA 12-Step materials created by Kathleen S. in the ACA fellowship of Intergroups (1987-1991) with the ACA *Big Red Book*, *Yellow Workbook* and *The Laundry Lists Workbook* that are currently on offer through ACA/WSO, Inc.

Our aim in this work is only to strengthen and empower ACA as force for healing in this world—a force now desperately needed in these times of peril, confusion and distrust! The Kathleen S. 12-Step Recovery materials for adult children aren’t new; they have a track-record of success and they’ve remained continuously in print since 1987. They’ve been vetted and in use in ACA Intergroups and meetings and by individual therapists working with substance abusers and codependents, all this time.

Why these materials aren’t already part of ACA’s “official” literature requires clarifying ACA’s evolution as an organization—fearlessly as well as lovingly. As a *living fellowship—a process*

which remains on-going and *alive*—*gradual progress* is as true for us as an *organization* as it is for us as *individuals*.



Turtle Bay Wild Flower Garden Sanctuary, Redding, CA 2018.

ACA TOOLS: VISUALIZATION & ACTIVE IMAGINATION

The HAPPY JOYOUS & FREE ACA Phone Meeting ¹ (CA1312) Step Eleven Handout includes a visualization exercise *for exploring prayer*, but this can also be used to walk into the temple of one's inner being to do inventory (Steps 4, 6, 8 or 10) by asking our HP to support our Inner Child so he or she can show us (or tell us, or even "sniff out") the buried memories that he or she wants us to attend to.

In my case, when I first learned these techniques (1984), I had an issue with tobacco (my primary substance abuse addiction) that I couldn't get free of no matter how I tried Step Four or pursued other methods (7th Day Church workshops, etc.) Turned out, my "hook" to smoking was a *scent memory*.

My dad, who was my only safe connection in my family and who'd died of a heart attack when I was nine, *smelled* of cigarettes; I "*got him back*" *subconsciously*, when I began to smoke, several years later, as a teenager, but that "trigger" couldn't be reached by ordinary techniques of writing or trying to just build aversions or new behavior tracks. I needed to use "right brain" techniques--in this case, visualization/active imagination, to let my inner child show me who was "my inner smoker"--i.e., my dad! The facilitator suggested I dialogue with him (my Inner Dad) and ask him to institute some new behaviors to keep up our bond, behaviors that didn't involve smoking. This was in June 1984. In the next few days, I "got" some new behaviors--taking deep breaths, talking "with my

¹ Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization, Inc.
<https://adultchildren.org/meeting-details/?meeting=554>

hands" when agitated, getting up and walking about when really feeling stressed--seemingly from within, from my Inner Dad, not from me initiating them--and I was advised by my facilitator to welcome and embrace these new connections, which I did.

As of July 1, 1984, I had become tobacco free, without the horrors of anxiety, etc., I'd previously experienced in my many prior attempts--and I remain tobacco free, entirely, since then. So this was a skill set I developed, initially *out of my own need*, then as a profession co-therapist,² which I brought into ACA. I had quickly understood this Inner Child reparenting technique to be *a holistic new way* to work the inventory steps. Since 1986, when four of us (all from AA/AlAnon and NA) began the Humboldt ACA Intergroup, just about everyone who has integrated these techniques within their 12-Step program work has seen remarkable transformations take place, sometime despite their own resistance!

MORE

We include instructions for using Visualization/Active Imagination as a powerful holistic healing process, a summary of how it was taught to me in 1984.

While HCI published both of us (1989), I shared these tools with John Bradshaw, who then incorporated them in his third book, ***Homecoming: Reclaiming and Championing Your Inner Child*** (1990.) If these techniques seem a bit "far out" or feel risky to use, it is because they challenge some "old ideas" we've been taught about how to conceive of a Higher or Inner Power (God.³) *It is a good idea to open up direct communication with your concept of a Higher Power in 12-Step Recovery, no matter what tools are offered to you!* Your HP wants only the best for you.

² With David Quigley, founder of Alchemical Hypnotherapy, at Heartwood College of the Healing Arts, Harris, California, 1984 through 1986.. David's training center is now in Santa Rosa, CA <https://www.alchemyinstitute.com/>

³ As a Presbyterian decan, I've asked my personal savior, Jesus Christ, to be my guide and my companion in the Temple of My Inner Being, to make sure that work we do *within* is in his care.

STEP ELEVEN ⁴ MEDITATION

Seek 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 power to carry that out.

Nan-in, a Japanese Zen master, poured tea for his visitor. He filled the cup, and then kept on pouring. The visitor watched until he could contain himself no more. "Look! It's overfull. No more can go in!" "Like this cup," Nan-in responded, "you, too, are full of your own speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

-MuJu, Japanese, 13th Century.



Well, you see, once upon a time there was a blazing fire inside me. The cold could do nothing against it, a youthfulness, a spring no autumn could touch. . . . There was an enormous energy there. . . . a force, it must have been the life force, mustn't it? . . . And then it grew weaker and it all died away. . . .

Eugene Ionesco, French, born 1912

⁴ This is a chapter from *12-Steps to Freedom A Recovery Workbook* (1989, 2018) by Friends in Recovery & Kathleen S. It was created in and vetted by ACA Intergroup members, 1988-89. It is reprinted here with permission.

Personal recovery in any 12-Step program can be described as a spiritual journey from a kind of spiritual death back into life. We who were the lost people—victims of addictions or codependent patterns—rediscover our authentic, inner selves again. We move from the bleak, barren landscapes of a failed existence back into a fruitful way of life, full of challenge and opportunity.

Connecting with our lost inner identity, the magical Inner Child within, is a spiritual process. However much therapy, medical treatment, hard work and good sponsorship may provide, the actual experience of healing requires connecting with a deeply spiritual core within ourselves. What makes recovery a reality is the fire of vitality that is reawakened in us. As much as we may gratefully acknowledge the skilled guidance and support we receive from others, it still remains that all of this would count for little if no spark of fire within ourselves existed to respond.

To build a strong connection to the resources we have, the flame of spirit within us needs to be fueled, if it is to burn with a steady light. Working Step Eleven is a way to feed the contact between our ordinary awareness and our spiritual power source within. Making regular use of prayer and meditation is a maintenance practice that helps keep us in touch with personal inspiration.



Even if we are willing to acknowledge the importance of spirituality in recovery, we may still have a certain amount of resistance to the idea of prayer—or to the systematic practice of it. In order to begin to integrate the practice of prayer into our daily lives as Step Eleven recommends, we may need to reconsider the meaning and purpose of prayer. What has prayer meant to us in the past?

Painful associations can easily block the way to utilizing prayer—or wanting to take time for it. Perhaps we associate humiliating memories with prayer—memories of begging God or of

trying in vain to strike a deal with God to stave off a disaster. Why weren't our prayers answered? Weren't we good enough? Or did we fail, somehow? We may feel unwilling to try prayer again—as though we are facing the possibility of a kind of soul-rejection if we do.

Maybe we were exposed to prayer in a household where appearances were everything and emotions were suppressed. We may have memories of prayer as a ritual smothering the Child within. We may have come to look on prayer as an undertaking intended mainly to impress others or to keep from being criticized. We may remember prayer as a mechanical repeating of mere words, hollow rituals devoid of meaning, feelings, or power. If we experienced much religious hypocrisy in the past, we may fear that turning to prayer represents a kind of self-negation.

If we are tormented by these or similar associations with the idea of prayer, our first response to Step Eleven is likely to be a form of inner resistance—avoidance, defiance, or denial. We remind ourselves that resistance is often an indicator of a need to unblock more inner walls and feel the feelings that have been stuffed away. We may need to begin working Step Eleven by giving ourselves permission to grieve the pain of confusion and loss that is locked inside ourselves and is associated with *old ideas* about prayer.



We can help ourselves by redefining *our understanding* of prayer now. We can take the initiative to reparent our Inner Child with a more realistic understanding, one that is no longer hooked to vain pleading or self-abasement. The *New Century Dictionary* (1957, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.,) tells us that prayer is "*communication directed toward God [including] asking, praising, adoring, confessing.*" Regardless of any confusion which we may have associated with the idea, prayer really isn't so complicated, after all. Prayer is the act of extending ourselves

toward the God of our understanding. It's a matter of how we conceive of God and of our relationship to the spiritual that determines if and how we pray and what form those prayers will take.

If we work to replace any old conceptions we might have of a weak or mean God with a kinder understanding, then reaching out to our Higher Power becomes easier. A Higher (or Inner) Power that is both capable and willing to support us is an ally that we want to reach. When we pray, we affirm our personal right to communicate with the God of our understanding. Few rights rival this one, in terms of power in our lives.

How and when we pray is up to us. We may or may not feel it is appropriate to get down upon our knees in prayer. Praying in a group, including saying the Serenity Prayer at the beginning of 12-Step meetings, is never an obligation. These personal decisions are always a matter of free choice. In all 12-Step programs we are assured of our right to a personal relationship with the God of our understanding. As we develop that relationship, we pray in words, dance, ritual ceremony, song or whatever comes from our hearts. If we don't have a positive memory of prayer we learned in childhood, Step Eleven is a chance to explore new options.

We may find ways to claim as prayer some activities that we may not have associated with concepts of prayer before. Affirmations, for instance, are a positive form of prayer that *asks by affirming* that God is willing and able to see us made whole. *Affirmations are a spiritual antidote to old ideas* about God and about prayer. Repeating (or writing) affirmations directly contradicts old behavior hangovers we may carry. We no longer beg an external force when we pray in affirmations. Instead, we join ourselves with the God/Spirit that dwells within us (See "Creating With Affirmations," Appendix I, for suggestions utilizing this form of prayer.) *Rejoicing in our blessings* is another form of prayer we may not have claimed. When we express (inwardly or

outwardly) our gratitude for the good things we see around us—the pleasures of restored health and sanity, the joy we feel in fellowship—we are doing what the dictionary defines as *praising and rejoicing*. When we appreciate a sunset or feel awe in the face of nature, of talent or courage and we acknowledge the spiritual basis of these wonders, we are also praising God.

If we begin to claim these forms of prayer and worship, we may find that we have always been pretty spiritual folks. Many of us find, when we review memories of childhood, that we praised the beauty of life, even if we had no words to express the reverent feelings within our hearts. What little child has not, in his/her peaceful moments, delighted in life? We can choose to count among our prayers our appreciation for a waterfall, or for a bird's song, the sounds of children's laughter, the smell of dinner cooking. We can choose to see the work we do as a prayer of offering we make with our bodies and our minds, a praise to our Higher Power that gives us energy and direction. The love we give to others can be a prayer if we see it is a validation of spirit that flows from heart to heart.

Once we have come to understand prayer as a right we enjoy, rather than as a burden or an obligation, then the whole activity begins to take on a natural harmony in our lives. We find building and improving a conscious contact with the God of our understanding is no longer an activity that takes us away from life. Instead, prayer becomes an integrated pulsebeat that gradually comes to underlay much of what we do.



Step Eleven also asks us to practice meditation to improve our conscious contact with the God of our understanding. If prayer is the act of reaching out to God, then meditation can be seen as the act of letting Spirit in. When we take time to meditate, we make a conscious decision to open ourselves to guidance and inspiration.

One of the classic methods of meditating is the practice of clearing the mind of all thought. All distractions, including emotional responses to thoughts, are gradually released, dismissed. The object of classical meditation is emptiness, stillness, complete one-pointedness of being. Achieving this state of poised detachment may be the goal of years of discipline.

But meditation need not be so formal nor so thoroughgoing to be effective. Our goal, in Step Eleven, is just to make some space and time available in our schedules to receive new direction. Meditation involves making a decision to set aside our projects, goals, and other commitments for a few minutes and to use that time receptively. Rather than attempting to become entirely devoid of all thought, most find it easier to simply replace the usual preoccupations of the mind with something else—inspirational reading or repeating a brief, affirmative statement (mantra)—to refocus our awareness and create a quiet space within. Making a decision to suspend action and worry while listening to a piece of music or a meditation tape is another good approach. Yoga, rhythmic programs of exercise, jogging, drawing, making pottery, lying in the cool grass contemplating the clouds that sail across the sky—any of these practices can be used in meditation, so long as we make a conscious decision to release our everyday cares and ambitions while we do them.



Once we see that meditation need not be the rigorous practice of a demanding discipline, the practice usually feels less intimidating. We may, nonetheless, still be inclined to postpone or forget to give ourselves quiet breaks.

Keeping ourselves distracted—out of our bodies to a greater or lesser extent—is a defense. We may have learned to stuff pain, fear, or grief by focusing on something outside of ourselves or on a different feeling. When we lived lives that were dominated by addiction, our Inner Child within simply had to escape

from a present that it was powerless to change. Without necessarily making a conscious decision, we found ways to escape. We coped and survived.

Coping by escaping from *the now* is a habit that, once established, often dies hard. Individuals in recovery often admit that they have been addicted to excitement—to anger, to silent rehearsals of dialogue with people who aren't present, to fantasies of fear, worry, domination or conquest. These distractions cut us off from our authentic selves within. To compound the confusion, we may also have become magnets generating or gravitating toward real crisis in our lives and relationships. We may act out our fantasies, live out our fears.

Meditation is a practice that directly contradicts all these forms of distraction. When we meditate, we give ourselves permission to be 100% in the present, *here and now*. We give ourselves over to the care of God as we understand God. We consciously release our hold upon everything. For those of us who have learned self-protective excitement habits, meditation may threaten something near and dear to us—our ability to escape from feelings in the present!

Rather than blaming ourselves as failures who are unable to work Step Eleven, we need to see our old coping mechanisms for what they were: the way we survived an impossible past! Under past circumstances, escape was probably in order. We lacked other tools. Now, if we'll use them, we have healing tools. A good beginning is simply to take a few minutes to breathe deeply while we go over the ways it is now safe to be in the present. How has our life changed? How are we different? We may still feel like rebelling, but gentle, persistent reparenting will usually succeed better than insistent demands. As we note the ways that we are now safe to be our undefended selves, we reassure our Child within that the experience of recovery is lasting and trustworthy. This may take a little time, but, fortunately for us,

the Child within wants to be present in the now The Child within has gifts for us: creativity, innocence, a sense of fun.

Re-entering the present as an undefended, vulnerable human being is risky but essential. Playful forms of meditation are good ways to rebond with our inner self. As we gradually replace distraction with meditation, our Inner Child returns.

Seeking to discover and live out "*God's will for us*" is basic to recovery. We who lost touch with our authentic inner self find that this connection is restored as addictions, compulsions and codependent patterns fall away. What is most authentic about each of us is primarily spiritual in nature. In the continued practice of Step Eleven, we seek gradually to reduce the inner conflict that interferes with contact with our authentic self. When momentary goals take us away from this larger goal, we remind ourselves of the purpose of Step Eleven. Lasting success depends upon sticking with our truest selves. We need to remember not to abandon ourselves. When in doubt, we ask, "*Is this goal (or impulse) in keeping with my highest good?*" We seek direct validation by means of prayer, along with the power to live by what we discover is written in our hearts. In Step Eleven, we seek guidance so that our actions cease to be rooted in reaction to forces outside of ourselves. We move in the direction of balance and poise, toward being in touch with a comfortable sense of purpose and inner harmony.

As we become increasingly willing to practice Step Eleven and to live from the guidance we receive, we tend naturally to experience a growing feeling of confidence. We usually notice increased tolerance toward others. Finding inner validation, we no longer feel so fearful of making or acknowledging mistakes. We no longer have to guess at what to do or say, nor do we second-guess others to gain their approval or divert their wrath. Even sadness and pain eventually lose some of their force in our lives. Fear of these feelings or shame about having them begins to evaporate in the strong light of Spirit.

As we come to live more on spiritual power, directing our will toward conscious contact with the God of our understanding, we find more of the courage necessary to face our lives with honesty—and humor. After all, spiritual power is an inexhaustible wellspring that has been made available to us, a day at a time. We come to understand that we needn't fear—or hate. With prayer and meditation to keep our contact with our Source, we may truly come to walk in peace. And as we accept ourselves as worthy of this peace, we may discover previously unrecognized talents and gifts within ourselves.

ACTIVE IMAGINATION ROAD TEST: ·TEMPLE OF HEALING

Exercise 1: Guided Visualization

Guided Visualization/Active Imagination is an effective form of meditation for tapping deep inner resources of personal spiritual power. This form of meditation allows us to contact memories and feelings while it empowers and heals from within. It is also a process that encourages internal unification to continue even during sleep or times when our conscious attention is directed toward other interests, since we bond it with such basic functions as breathing and heartbeat. Here is an exercise for developing this skill.

1. Read over the following *Guided Visualization*. Allow yourself to become comfortable with the images and with the idea of allowing yourself to experience this form of healing meditation.
2. Tape record the meditation, or have a friend read it to you. Allow yourself to relax and go with the suggestions.

3. Play the tape (or listen to someone read it) every day for a week or two.

We begin now by taking in some deep, deep relaxing breaths of sparkling fresh air. Allow yourself to let your breathing become rhythmic as it slows down and becomes a deeper and more peaceful feeling.

Feel the air around you—the fresh sweet air that sparkles with a silvery golden light that fills it. Feel it as it flows smoothly, deep into your lungs. Allow yourself to see the light, sparkling and silvery as stardust. Breathe it in and breathe it out. Visualize your breathing as a stream of sparkling silver, surrounding you with healing light.

Allow your lungs to carry this silvery gold light to your pulsing flowing bloodstream and flow throughout your body. Feel the silver sparkle in your legs and feet. Feel it flowing up through your thighs, your hips and swirling pure relaxation in every organ of your body. Experience it tingling down through your arms into your fingertips. Allow this silvery golden light to spread healing and relaxation into your neck and head, moving effortlessly throughout your entire body. Feel yourself entirely filled up with healing, gentle, glowing light.

If you like, you can move this soft silvery golden light around like a sparkler of healing, releasing tensions or discomforts in any of your organs or muscles in your body. You may wish to notice especially your neck, or in your shoulders, anywhere at all those little knots of tension may accumulate. Using your fingertips to direct the flow, imagine yourself dissolving each and every knot of tension with a sparkler of pure light. Let yourself relax and float in a sea of light and healing.

Now, imagine that you have flexible, metallic, grounding cords of pure earth energy extending from the bottoms of your feet into the very molten core and center of the earth. These cords do not in any way restrict your movements. Instead, they

create a constant flowing pulse of metallic, glittery bluegreen energy that circulates up from the very center of the earth into your body. This energy from the center of the planet is power—fully magnetic and very, very strong. If you are willing to let go of painful memories, you can let this bluegreen energy magnetically attract any toxic-feeling memories from anywhere within you, and then take them deep into the center of the earth, down into the molten core where everything is liquid fire. The pressure in the earth's core is very great, so powerful it takes all of those toxins and impurities and it turns them into jewels—pressuring these experiences of toxic thought into beautiful sparkling diamonds, sapphires, rubies, and other riches—treasures that are yours to keep. You can use them for adornment or exchange them for the nourishments you need or as gifts you wish to give.

And now expand the light that fills you, mixing the silvery-gold light that you breathe into your blood with the magnetic bluegreen energy of your grounding cords. Connecting yourself to the center of the earth, experience yourself entirely surrounded with healing light and energy available to you. Breathe in and surround yourself in a circle of radiant, healing, bluegold light. This light protects you totally. Only that which is for your highest good and healing can enter now. Anything not important to your healing and wellbeing is sent harmlessly away. Experience feeling completely safe, secure, protected within a radiant fountain of bluegold light. This circle of pure light is strengthened with every breath you take, waking and sleeping, day by day

Imagine yourself living your life with this circle of light around you. What is best for you seeks you out. What is harmful cannot reach you. You are free to direct the flowing into all of your activities, into every relationship, past and present. As you direct the light around you, you move easily, always experiencing your connectedness and safety as you breathe the light, deeply peaceful and relaxed. Pause now for a minute and feel the

power of connectedness and safety all around you. It is a fountain of healing that cascades around you endlessly, nourishing and healing every experience and memory.

Taking a deep breath, allow yourself to experience this power and protection. And every time you choose to do so, you can feel this sense of safety by taking in a deep, relaxing breath. Your metallic cords into the center of the earth are yours to keep. You can feel yourself becoming centered, connected through the force of gravity to the center of the earth. Breathing in the bluegold light of air and earth, experience the healing. And with every breath you take, this process of self healing becomes more and more a natural and integrated aspect of your Inner Self. Every time you pause to contact this deep process, consciously ta/ang thought to breathe in clean, fresh air, it becomes easier and easier to experience and to direct this healing to yourself, or to the others in your life who have a deep connection in your heart.

Now, returning to normal consciousness, you feel the energy of relaxed, centered awareness flowing through every part of your body. You come into full, normal consciousness awake, alive and alert, ready to go on with your day, knowing that you can contact and experience the safety, peace and confidence that is yours to keep by simply taking in a deep, relaxing breath. At the count of three, you are back, fully awake and refreshed, and ready to go on with your day. One. Two. Three.

When you have become comfortable with this meditation, you may wish to use this safe place within as a personal inner temple, a safe place to go to ask for guidance and direction from God as you understand God. Remember, you always have a right to peace and safety in your inner temple. Only that which is there for your highest good has a right to be there with you. If an attacking image or voice disturbs you while you are involved in meditation, confront it. Ask it, "Why are you here? You can only be here if you are working for my highest good." Within your

temple, this sort of question has to be answered honestly, when it is asked. You will either be shown what the healing gift for you is, or the voice or image will have to leave at once.

Exercise 2: Have a Talk with God

If you are troubled by ideas that praying is limited to repeating certain set prayers, here are some brief exercises to expand your horizons.

1. Look over a familiar prayer, such as the Serenity Prayer, and rewrite it in your own words. Say the ideas out loud, speaking directly to your Higher Power.
2. Tell your Higher Power how you feel right now, using your own words. If you feel good, thank your Higher Power. If you feel awful, ask your Higher Power to give you the help you need, in a way you can clearly understand it along with the power and willingness to act. If you don't feel very willing, say that, too. If you're angry with God as you understand God, say that, too. Try telling God the truth, whatever it may be, and see what happens.
3. Go somewhere beautiful and talk to God. Go to the ocean, or to a lake, or waterfall. Talk to God while you are walking along a friendly path.
4. Talk to God while you are at a movie, or on a date. Ask for guidance to be the person you are meant to be in every situation you are in. A simple request, like, "*Guide me, please!*" is usually enough to make a real difference.

Exercise 3: Reflections on My Space

Here's an hour-long creative process designed to get in touch with suppressed emotion. Try it as a cure for a case of the blahs, when life seems to be nothing but an endless string of identical routines. Do it periodically every few months or yearly. It's a good way to check on progress in recovery and it's both objective and fun.

1. Sit down in a comfortable place where you can look around your environment at home. Imagine you have left all of your other interests and concerns in a large secure trunk somewhere safe and have locked it. Everything will be there when you come back. Take in three deep breaths and let them out slowly, stretching your arms, shoulders and neck to release any tension as you breathe out. Relax.
2. Ask your Higher Power to guide your imagination. Study your house from an objective point of view, as if you were analyzing a dream. Loosen up and let yourself listen to your imagination freely, without screening your impressions. Imagine the stuff of your home as symbols appearing in your dream. What does the room you're in tell you about the person (or people) who live there? How are things organized (or not organized)? Do the pieces of furniture relate to one another in style or placement? What is the atmosphere created in this particular room? How do you feel about this room?
3. Write or speak into a tape recorder as you respond to the above questions. Give yourself about five minutes. Don't edit or pass judgment on your impressions. Be thorough and honest.

Example I feel OK about this room. It doesn't really excite me, but it's OK. I like the artwork on the walls, but I hate the color of the carpet, and it's pretty worn. I enjoy the plants, but they are looking a little drab, like they need some care. I actually don't care for the way the furniture is arranged. It is a little too cluttered and the space isn't used as well as it could be. There are a number of things that are just in the way, not useful at all, just taking up space.

4. Review this description as if it were yourself that had been described. Give your imagination complete freedom to use everything you've noticed as symbols about yourself.

Example I notice that the overall feeling present is, "OK, but" The description is lacking in emotion or excitement except for the word "hate" (referring to the carpet.) Am I generally lacking in emotion, except for what I hate? Do I like some aspects of myself, such as my creativity (artwork on the walls) but hate my inability to maintain steady, sufficient income to meet my basic needs (carpet on the floor)? Am I looking and feeling a little drab, as though a day in the sunshine would do me some good? Do I need vitamins, exercise or care (plants)? Do I feel I'm carrying around excess emotional or mental baggage from the past and remaining unfocused in the present (clutter and poor use of space)? Do I have some habits or thoughts about myself that are not useful, or are actually in the way of my growth and development (useless items)?

5. After interpreting your dream, ask yourself what you want to do to change the situation. Act on the room.

Example I look at the room again. I would like to replace the carpet with a plush Persian rug. I notice I selected the one thing I have the least ability to change today, the item I described with the strongest emotion. Do I do the same thing in my recovery? Do I look at the most difficult area and then feel frustrated that I can't effect an immediate change? Admitting that I may be quitting before I start, taking this approach, I consider small changes. Maybe I can't go buy a Persian rug this afternoon, but I can get rid of some of the clutter and useless items. Maybe I have a friend who would enjoy some of them? I can rearrange the room more to my liking. I can dust the plants and give them some love and water. Is some of the stuff I feel is useless clutter actually someone else's? Do I need to communicate with them?

6. Coming back to me, I ask these same questions. Do I want to change? Do I have time for the process? If I don't, what is more important? What are my priorities and values at present? Do I have the energy and tools to make the changes? Where am I using my energies? Do I need more support? Do

I have old tapes running about my life and are my priorities based on someone else's values or desires for me?

If at all possible, make changes in the room as part of this exercise. Give yourself an experience of change and progress. Let the changes you make in your environment be a form of prayer in action, a testimony to your willingness to accept guidance from within and act upon it.

Exercise 4: One-Pointedness

Whether it is lap-swimming or rebuilding a motorcycle or tending house plants or a garden, many—even most—people in recovery have one or more activities they devote themselves to out of *interest*, not out of compulsion or duty. Ancient cultures often turned everyday activities, such as building thatch fencing or caring for tools, *into art, simply by devoting one-pointed attention to the acts involved*. Why not turn shoveling snow, washing dishes, arranging food on a shelf or any of life's mundane tasks into an *art-form, a meditation on living today?*

Questions to Ponder

1. Is prayer a word with meaning for you?
2. Do you feel you can meditate?
3. What does conscious contact feel like? How does it show up in your life?
4. Is knowledge of God's will something you sense inside yourself? How about power?

Personal Sharing From Inner Children in Recovery

I was feeling tired and sick this evening, so I went and took a sauna by myself. It's been a sad time for me, with friendships ending and much of the old hostility cropping up at home—perhaps due to stress? I don't know.

But in my sauna tonight, I was not worried or upset. I was musing, instead, that I never had a living grandmother. Both of my grandmothers died young of asthma before my parents were

grown up or met each other. I often use time in the sauna for meditation, so I asked God to bring me in touch with old women-spirits, like the grandmothers I never had or knew.

The sauna is a small, wood-lined room with high benches for lying in the extremely dry, hot air. It gets up to 180° F., and I pour eucalyptus oil on the hot stones, so the air becomes tangy and penetrating. It's very relaxing and peaceful.

Toward the end of the session, I felt guided to relax on a low bench, where it wasn't quite so hot. As soon as I lay back there, I had the experience of having Nan Mother, Lorena, become present—a delicate presence, but quite assured. She shared that she felt somewhat sad and confused about her own unresolved issues, even now that she had died. She showed me a dark place in her heart, where her first husband was in her past, with a lot of unresolved hurt and sadness (over his drinking and his running out on her and her two babies, almost sixty years ago). She saw him as an old, drunk beggar calling to her from deep shadow. He reminded her of a young man she once loved so much and missed so bitterly. She couldn't walk freely past him into heaven. She felt angry and also somehow afraid.

Her second husband had a lot of unresolved anger toward her first husband, too. She felt she had to do something to resolve this conflict between them, or else get caught up in this sad old business again. She didn't want anyone to suffer, no matter how badly they had acted. But she couldn't deny the truth, either, and so she felt stuck. While I was seeing all of this, it was as though she were working a program with me. I just accepted it as a gift from my own Higher Power. In the meditation, I shared the idea that Lorena invite both these spirits to move toward the light with her in peace and harmony. And, as far as resolving the old hard feelings, what about seeing both men as little children, instead of full-grown men with all those grudges?

When I made that last suggestion, she suddenly became a little girl, herself, sitting, golden and curly, in a real old-fashioned

garden, behind a cozy-looking white frame house. She was playing with a little spotted cat, laughing a hearty belly-laugh, as she sat there in the soft grass and white clover. All the feelings of conflict just vanished, dissolved in a sudden burst of sparkle, warmed by the friendly sun. Little Lorena had some friends who were hugging her and telling her how glad they were to see her, and how much they had missed her. And she and I both started crying—in that warm, sunny, fragrant garden, with a big pink rose bush on the back of the house, and smells of clover all around. Two boys who had been stuck in errors and resentment as big men who'd tried to be her husband were climbing in a tree, each about six or eight years old. They were all restored to being children, innocent and safe—and finally there to stay.

-Raven

I do a thing like meditation. I study classical guitar and do some things that are not "trying to make music." I do finger exercises that have me watching what one finger does, or two, or doing something that is just playing two notes.

I'm looking for accuracy, precision, and a complete lack of muscle tension except for what is needed to make the sound. My feet, knees, hips, spine, shoulders and arms submit to gravity. I focus my mind on the quality of the sound and empty it of all else.

I try to generate a feeling of love in my heart and send it to those in solitary confinement and suffering throughout the world.

I think of all the blessings I have and feel grateful.

-Luke H., Cottonwood, CA 2018

Stage III Recovery

I woke up with a smile
feelin' good about life
I'm an integrated person
a Mother and a Wife.
I woke up with a grin
feelin' like a sage
I'm a whole person now
at this wonderful gold age.
I woke up with a sigh
and grabbed my "writing book"
I'm feelin' wonderful
and think how good I look
I woke up with this joy
and peace within my heart
it took me so very long
to find this final part.
I woke up so peaceful
feelin' "in the pink"
I hardly ever worry now
what other people think.
I woke up with gratitude
and abundance I can share
I can take my life and live it
I know now . . . anywhere!
I woke up with a smile
feeling great love in my heart
I turned 50 yesterday
am ready for the next part.
I woke up with contentment
and respect for this past chapter
I'm having such fun now, God
could you postpone the "forever after"?
I woke up in love with life
on my face a full-blown smile

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I'm feelin' such peace now, Lord
let me stay here a long, long while.

-Carol Ann F., 7/29/90, Vashon Island, WA



HOW TO DO IT ⁵

The admonition to "keep an open mind" is often heard around 12-Step support groups and is considered an essential ingredient in recovery. Many Adult Children will ask, "How can we keep our minds open, when many of us can remember only isolated incidents of *years* of our lives, especially our childhoods?" "How do you open a mind that is sealed shut?"

Others may have memories that haunt or torment them when they are recalled. They want to know if they must dredge up these painful, humiliating or revolting experiences in order to recover. Are we to relive horrors, feelings and experiences we've worked hard to suppress?

These questions are valid concerns to consider and support in recovery. Each group is more or less apprehensive about the *past*, feeling apprehensive about being open-minded with his personal history and experiences.

The Guided Visualization/Active Imagination process is an effective means to unlock closed mental doors while introducing previously untapped resources of personal spiritual power. Ultimately spiritual power heals us and dispels fears by opening doors of mental prisons that may have kept us from living life to the fullest.

Guided Visualization/Active Imagination empowers and centers inner identity and heals from within. From a base of greater personal strength, we become able to risk exploring painful histories and feelings.

⁵ Here we provide a short but complete course on how to safely use visualization/active imagination in ACA. If there are some repetitions, it's because it is reprinted from an earlier book, *With Gentleness, Humor & Love* (1989) by Kathleen S. & Jewell E., Humboldt ACA Intergroup. Used with permission

The Jungian techniques employed in Guided Visualization/Active Imagination are gentle, permissive, suggestive and supportive of feelings rather than directive or authoritarian in nature. These traits can overcome blocks by reducing fears and internal defensive reactions. As far as effective self communication is concerned, permissive suggestion is an example of "less is more." This is especially true for those who have automatic defenses toward authority directives or resistance to taking orders.

Guided Visualization/Active Imagination practices have become widely accepted among body-workers, yoga and other meditation practitioners and religious groups that emphasize locating spiritual guidance from within. In addition, applications in psychology, hypnotherapy and accelerated learning programs may use these techniques for exploring past issues or replacing old habits with new alternatives. These potentially powerful applications may be useful in recovery/discovery, provided they respect the specific needs of Adult Children. These needs include (1) personal empowerment and an enhanced sense of identity (stemming from lack of self-esteem) and (2) simple and effective ways to pace recovery. Adult Children need to go at their own pace in order to willingly risk exploring painful, humiliating or revolting experiences from their traumatic childhoods.

Stage I: Visualization

Stage I of the two-stage process for Guided Visualization/Active Imagination offers *techniques to achieve healing, centering and gaining a sense of personal safety and confidence within ourselves*. The goal of Stage I is to create an inner place of peace, sanctuary and inspiration, or a favorite place within ourselves where healing can occur.

In Stage I the healing may continue in spite of responsibilities of our job, children, school or personal relationships. The potential for this uninterrupted healing element is an important aspect of this process.

The Visualization practice can be used consciously to delve

deeply and more sensitively into any of the 12 Steps or to strengthen contact with a Higher Power For example, when used along with prayer and meditation in Step Eleven, the process tends to release buried memories and restore feelings that had been lost. This in turn clarifies the releasing of old behaviors and attitudes mentioned in Steps Four and Six through Nine.

Stage II: Active Imagination

The combination of Active Imagination with Visualization from Stage I makes possible the reexamination of our personal histories as they exist within our own minds on a feeling level, making satisfying new adjustments in the process. From the place of security found in Stage I, we can undertake Stage II and venture deeper into self-exploration, encountering memories of figures and events. Here we can experience rescue and empowerment, and can rejoice with our Inner Child as we use our own unique resources for creative change.

In this two-stage application, each of us remains in charge and able to return comfortably to the Sanctuary of personal healing in Stage I. This may happen when time requires the focus be returned to other interests or responsibilities, or when we feel the need for more internal time to heal and to nurture ourselves.

The effects of Guided Visualization/Active Imagination practice vary, from person to person. Some experience sudden insight, new and brilliant light flooding issues that formerly may have been real puzzles. Others experience gradual, cumulative effects, subtle changes in perceptions, or new concepts and ideas for handling challenges in practical living. Most who have familiarized themselves with these techniques find that they do gain self-esteem from these practices and develop an enhanced realization of their own individual inner identity

The final instruction, "Stepping back to Sanctuary", from Stage I applies to any point in Stage II, allowing for individual progress at a relaxed rate. Predicting just what may or may not be comfortable at this internal level of feeling isn't always easy or even possible in advance Thus, getting acquainted with this stepping back routine is

a good reparenting practice. Some Adult Children are inclined to overcommit or shut down experiments with themselves in recovery, having no idea what their normal pace might be. Just getting into a habit of learning to use safety nets is a big step in selfcare for some of us!

Instructions: Stage I: Guided Visualization

Familiarize yourself with the elements that comprise an effective Guided Visualization/Active Imagination, then, read the Stage I Guided Visualization included below. Note how each of the elements is handled. You may substitute other “pictures” for the ones we have used, but be sure you *keep in all the elements*, because, omitting any of these in Stage I may leave the process incomplete or ineffective for you.

Centering

Relaxation

Begin by taking in some deep, deep relaxing breaths of sparkling fresh air. Allow your breathing to become rhythmic as it slows and becomes deeper and more peaceful. Feel the air, fresh sweet air that sparkles with the silvery-golden light filling it. Feel it as it flows smoothly and deeply into your lungs. Allow your lungs to carry this silvery-golden light into your pulsing, flowing bloodstream. This light will spread healing and relaxation throughout your entire body. If there is anywhere in any organ of your body where you experience tension or any feeling of discomfort, direct this flow of healing light to that place now. If you wish, you can move this soft silvery-golden light around like a sparkler of healing, releasing tensions or discomforts in any organ or part of your own body. You may wish to notice especially your neck, your shoulders or anywhere that little knots of tension may accumulate.

Grounding

Imagine that you have flexible metallic cords of pure earth energy extending from the bottoms of your feet into the very molten core and center of the planet Earth. These cords in no way restrict your movements, instead they create a constant flowing pulse or

powerful, glittery and bright energy that circulates into your body. This energy from the center of the planet is magnetic. If you choose to do so, you can let it magnetically attract any toxins or any toxic-feeling memories from anywhere within your body or mind, and take them back into the deep powerful molten center of the planet Earth. The pressure in the Earth's core is very great and powerful so that it takes all of those toxins and impurities and turns them into jewels. This pressure turns these carbons, these experiences of painful thoughts into beautiful sparkling diamonds, sapphires, rubies and other riches. These treasures are yours to claim, to use for adornment or to exchange for the nourishments you need, or to give them, as you choose.

Protecting

Now expand the light that fills you, mixing the fresh sweet air that you breathe into your lungs and bloodstream with the magnetic richness of the Earth's energy. You can surround yourself completely with radiant glittery blue-golden light. This light protects you totally. All that enters is for your highest good and healing. Anything that is not important for your healing and enjoyment is no longer drawn to you but is sent harmlessly away. You are entirely in charge of your own process. You direct it and move easily, experiencing your connectedness and safety through your grounding cords and as you breathe in deeply and relax. Pause now, for a minute, and feel the power of your connectedness and safety within this fountain of glittery blue-golden light. Experience it flowing over you from the very center of your crown as a cascading fountain of healing and protecting light that you direct and move, just as you wish. Take a deep breath and allow yourself to experience this power and protection.

Anchoring

Every time you choose to experience this sense of feeling powerfully centered, just take a deep relaxing breath. These cords of metallic energy connecting you to the powerful energy within the Earth are yours to keep. They are joined together with the light that fills your lungs with air and with every breath you take. This

process of self-healing becomes more and more a natural and integrated aspect of your Inner Being every time you consciously undertake this process by taking a minute to breathe in a deep, refreshing breath, it becomes easier and easier with each repetition to experience and to direct this healing to yourself, or to the others in your life with whom you are connected in your heart.

Sanctuary

Entering

As you continue to experience this healing and protection, imagine yourself entering your Inner Place. While keeping your grounding cords connected, breathing deeply and relaxing, imagine you are entering your favorite place. This place is always safe, cheerful, peaceful and beautiful. It can be a place that you remember or a place that you make up. Looking around your favorite place, notice what you see or hear.

Expanding

Once in this place, look around and know that it is your own. Perhaps there may be *smells* that bring you feelings of happiness or safety? Add or move around whatever you'd like to arrange another way. In this place, you are safe, you are in control and nothing and no one interferes. This is your place of healing, your Temple of the Inner Being.

Returning

You can return to this favorite place anytime you choose. You have a beautiful golden key that belongs to you alone. No one enters here but you. You can have peacefulness here at any moment of the night or day, without fear of this safe, protected place vanishing or being violated. You have the only golden key to this sanctuary of your Inner Life.

Anchoring

You may wish to locate a place in your own body and to touch the place right now. Whenever you choose to return to your favorite place, you can do so instantly, just by touching that special place on your body and taking a deep breath. All of what

you have experienced here returns and enables you to easily re-connect yourself to this process of healing that you have now created. If you choose, you can touch this special place on your body while you are listening to music and bring the music with you to this Sanctuary. (If this is a prelude to Stage II, continue with the Stage II processes. If not, then complete the following experience to return to normal waking consciousness)

Transition

Return to full and alert consciousness at the count from 1 to 3.
(1) Look around your Sanctuary, experience the safety and security you have here. Let it fill your heart and flow all through your body
(2) Feel the tingle of sensations returning to your body as you move into a waking state of poised and centered consciousness; feel yourself reentering the present
(3) Now fully awake, filled with vitality and rested as though you had taken a wonderful healing nap, you are back and ready to face your day with a smile: Alert. Alive. Awake!

If you are working with a partner, ask them to read you this Grounded Visualization. If you are on your own, tape record the process. Use a gentle but fully audible voice. In the Sanctuary section, be sure to allow enough time between your suggestions so that there is room for your imagination to act without being rushed.

Some people will find it is easier to operate on a feeling rather than a visual level. They will *sense* protection or feel the grounding cords. Others *hear* more than *see*, so that the sounds of birds singing, bells tinkling, water rushing or surf crashing against the shore may bring about the peacefulness and security needed to begin self-healing. You may want to adapt the process further by adding meditation or audio tapes. The return to normal waking consciousness will usually take 15 to 30 minutes. There are no fixed rules of how much time to spend in the process, once you have become used to coming and going and have created an internal sense of Sanctuary. Some people will allow most of the process of self-healing to go on below the conscious level, perhaps spending little time - a minute or two or five, in the midst of their busy schedule. Others

will find *going within* a practice that gives real enjoyment, and these persons may *take* the time, perhaps rearranging their schedules. Use Stage I of this Tool as freely as you like. It is made up of "pure healing"

Instructions: Stage II: Active Imagination

When you are ready, you can begin to utilize Stage II of this process. The basics are sketched here. We invite you to go at a pace comfortable to you while you experiment with mastering this Tool. It is a good idea to interact with others, either by working together, supporting each other's exploration of Inner Space, or by sharing your experiences and insights in discussion. Strange as it may seem at first glance, this Tool, designed to take us within ourselves, turns out to be a major aid for "risking coming out of isolation."

Any of the Stage II elements can be accessed individually (*once* you have become familiar with the techniques) and combined as you feel appropriate. Remember to follow your *feelings* at all times, whether it means backing off for a little rest and relaxation in your Sanctuary or means trying something new and daring in the process for yourself. Another point to remember is to always *offer, suggest* and *support* your Inner Child (or other Inner Personalities) rather than ordering or questioning. Finally, avoid asking questions that engage the intellect, such as "What do you *think* about . . . ?"

Feelings are the golden cords that reach us from within and guide us in this process. Thinking about these experiences is perfectly okay before and after the process, and can be extremely rewarding and creative. In fact, many find that whole new categories of thought become available to them as the result of these internal journeys.

Now, from within the Stage I Sanctuary, suggest to yourself that you take a walk *deeper into Inner Space*, perhaps taking a stairway or downward path that takes you *where you need to go* to find out useful and important aspects about yourself. You may find it helpful to make a countdown, going backward from 10 to 1, as you descend the steps or pathway. Suggesting that your body feels lighter

is often helpful, too. Take a few minutes to do this transition. When you have become comfortably settled in the privacy of your own Inner being, you are ready to begin exploring.

Exploring

Notice the physical place you've entered. No matter where you are - castle, beach, forest, you will notice a comfortable place to sit with a computer/remote control. This is your personal device. You have dozens and dozens of your own tapes that you can pull up and view. If you are in touch with your Inner Child, she or he can join you on the couch as you scan your tapes. (Let the Child decide which one to view.) Your device gives you complete control. You can stop the action, replay, adjust the volume, go to slow motion or whatever seems appropriate so that you and your Inner Child are safe and secure from danger. If the memories are especially painful or frightening, you can distance yourself still another level by putting you and your Child on the moon, where you can see yourselves back there on the couch watching the clip.

Reconnecting

You may choose to enter any scene or picture that appears. You can *become* your Inner Child, seeing/speaking from the *present tense* and reliving this experience again. Feel, hear and smell the situation. Allow your feelings to become the feelings of your Inner Child. If this upsets or frightens you, take some deep breaths and experience your Sanctuary again, while remaining in the picture with your Child. Try to let these feelings emerge freely. It's okay to cry. It's okay to be angry. Nothing you do as your Inner Child can harm or damage anyone, however violent or bitter these old feelings may be! You experience them as part of your own healing.

Rescuing

To get in touch with your Adult Self, let your Adult Self enter this scene and pick up, hug or touch your Inner Child. Tell your Inner Child that you will be there, will protect, will take home with you or will stand up for your Child. Do whatever your Adult Self feels or your Child asks to make the scene safe for your Child. This can still include "freeze framing" (as done with a device control) a parent

figure so that the Child can get out their feelings *safely*. If your Adult Self feels inclined to have some extra help, take anyone you wish into the scene. This can mean bringing (1) Superman to stand up to Daddy for you, (2) a number of people who have been lied to, to hear the truth, or (3) the God of your understanding to radiate love and power in a situation where there had been none.

Altering History

Realize that you and your Inner Child are entirely free to alter this experience. After all, you have an absolute right to peace, tranquility and joyousness within your Inner World! You can hire new Inner Parents, *perfect ones* who give your Inner Child (and each other) exactly what is needed and who unconditionally love and appreciate your Child Within. Even if the old parents are reluctant to move out, you can either demand them to do so, or if they want to reform themselves, tell them to get back to you once they've made a real start to reassess. Ask them directly, "Are you here within my Inner Sanctuary for my highest good?" They will *have to go or change* unless they can answer with an unqualified, "Yes, I am!" You have a perfect right to unconditional loyalty, love and support from *all* your Inner Personalities You deserve unqualified love and it's definitely there for you in your Sanctuary.

Using means that comes to mind, you can change or modify any scene or interaction. This includes using your device remote control to do whatever seems appropriate, such as replaying scenes so that your Inner Child is *heard* and *heeded*. It's also possible to use spiritual power to heal or rectify what may be impossible to overcome directly. If that seems okay to you, you can go back to previous lives and reconnect with powerful Inner Guides to channel wisdom. You may wish to locate your own Inner Mate as well, if you long for a sense of heartfelt companionship as a constant in your life.

A fellow traveler, Ray G., commented playfully, "If you find yourself in a memory situation that overwhelms you, go back to a past life when you were a Perfect Master to experience re-

newal and insight for your own personal answer!". As you become more at home *within*, experiment!

Remember, in Active Imagination processes, your imagination is in charge and has only the limits of what you decide is personally acceptable as restraints. Because no action is taken outside of your own mind, there need be no holding back or repression of feelings, fantasies or wishes. Active Imagination deals only with the content of our own "mental worlds", where each of us has a complete right to peace, support and freedom. Any action we may take in settling old scores, getting unruly parents, siblings or lovers to behave, or clearing up communications for our Inner Child's security or self-esteem operates internally within our minds exclusively. This internal action never includes acting on others in physical reality while in a Visualization. Anything goes and no one need concern himself about external standards of acceptability. In Active Imagination, each of us is free to be our own standard of acceptability: warrior, lover, friend.

Stepping Back To Sanctuary

Anytime you find yourself becoming scattered, separated or panicky in any of these Stage II procedures and experiences, *pause* and take in a few deep, relaxing breaths. Remember that you are in control of your own process here and are safely within your Inner Sanctuary. Feel blue-golden light. Let this fountain of pure healing flood over you and protect you. Reexperience *your favorite place*. Taking all the time you need, experience your safety, power and personal control of your own process. If you like, go back into Stage II or return to full consciousness, using a transition similar to the Guided Visualization example we included at the end of Stage I.

Some people notice an upswing in dream activities soon after they begin utilizing Guided Visualization/Active Imagination practices. If you notice this or would like to increase your dream awareness, give yourself some suggestions while you are in your Sanctuary. For example, perhaps my Inner Guides will bring an answer to me in my dreams, and it will be clear and vivid so that I will have no trouble understanding and remembering. If the

dreams you are experiencing seem frightening, ask your healing tools (the grounding cords and light) to flood your dream experiences and keep you safe and warm in sleep.

Most people find that these visualizations have a wonderful effect on their entire program for recovery/discovery and add whole new dimensions to the Steps. We suggest you start with Step Eleven, using Guided Visualization as an aid in your meditations, and allow your Inner Child to guide your process. We'd like to *welcome* you to this new experience of healing . Keep coming back!

Become Your Own Loving Parent Exercise

Practice Guided Visualization/Active Imagination in all of the 12 Steps with reparenting as the focus:

Imagine you have decided to become the parent of a needy Child who has great potential and promise!

1. How do you feel about the prospect of this new responsibility?
2. What support do you need, yourself, in order to do a really good job for this important Child of yours?
3. Considering your Child now, has your Child suffered from neglect that requires attention? For example, Does your Child need a medical checkup or dental work? Do they deserve nicer surroundings or environment so that he or she can flower? How about educational needs or retraining?
4. What guidance and encouragement does this Child need? Is this Child shy or withdrawn in group situations? Does he get frustrated easily and give up or bristle under criticism? How about habits or addictions that really need attention?
5. What values do you already have that you want to share

and model for your Child?

6. What are your hopes, as a parent, for this new relationship? Do you wish for a Child who will cheer your old age with JOY [and maybe grandchildren] or a Child who will make a great name for your family? Do you long for trust and love to flow between you, free and constant as the sun?

7. What activities will you personally commit to, to nurture and build your relationship with your Child? What about regular, healthful exercise and diet? What sorts of play will you make a priority? Can your Child interrupt you when he needs love? Will you give this Child hugs? Try to be very clear about these commitments They will mean a great deal to your Child, and keeping them will do a lot to develop trust between you.

This exercise brings Visualization/Active Imagination and the Inventory Steps, Four, Six and Ten into a clearer kind of focus for Adult Children who are seeking to re-bond with their lost or angry Inner Child. Being willing to *imagine* from the point-of-view of our Inner Child is a friendly, caring act on the part of us that is Adult. It's an invitation to our Inner Child, to play, to get in touch. Try it with an open mind and heart and be surprised by the results!

Here are some blank pages for you to note down you experiences, comments and insights. Doodles are good, too!

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES:

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES:

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES:

IMAGINATION & HEALING

Using Visualization in Working All 12-Steps

We include here creative sharing and insights selected from materials shared by adult children—much of it already published thirty-plus years ago, when ACA Service was Regional Intergroups and ACA meetings. ⁶ These are examples of how visualization opens up (“gives permission to”) our Inner Child to share *freely*, with out the implied threat most of us have internalized of being laughed at, scorned or invalidated. Our fellowship is a safe place for our Inner Child. We hope *you* will be encouraged to experiment in your own personal recovery and within your groups!

STEP ONE:

Quotes and creative sharing on *admitting powerlessness*, not giving up! There is a big difference; that’s why we have a program.

*With all the earnestness at our command, we beg
of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start.
Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and
the result was nil until we let go absolutely.*

Alcoholics Anonymous, Chapter 5, “How It Works” (1939)

Prison

I spent a long, dark time in this Prison
living someone else's life;
not mine.

A lifetime of fears and depression. She laughed at me and

⁶ From *12-Steps to Freedom, A Recovery Workbook* (1990), *With Gentleness, Humor and Love* (1989), and others, all are used with permission of authors.

taunted me; her days were filled with gloom. She said to call her
Mom.

The sun shined thru my Prison the first six years.

Days of play and fun and song. My Hero was tall, played a
guitar. He asked me to call him Dad.

Never good enough; Honor Roll.

Never pretty enough; someone else's clothes.

Never clean enough or neat enough; She'd pout in her room
for days. My Brother came to my Prison life;

would he be treated like me-by her?

No...his Family's a different one; we both called her Mom.

Years of yearning and crying... not understood rage.

More tears in my own Prison. Would this life ever subside?

How long? So dark;

So painful this Prison.

Why? I asked her why she did these things?

This person I called Mom.

She'd ask for pills or shock-treatments. I'd stay in my
Prison...to serve...so long.

I tried to climb out of my Prison so many times before.

I couldn't make any sense of this; I had a singing,
dancing soul.

"It would go to my Head", she said, so I went back again
into my Prison...so dark...so long.

I bolted out, once and for all not very long ago;

two years

My Hero's dead, she said it was my fault

He worried about me...you see.

She tries so hard now, to put me back into my Prison...so
dark...

so long.

I'm out for good.

The Prison is gone; ashes left behind.

The Prison Matron is dead, too, you see.

She asked me to call her Mom.

My Hero lives his life inside my song and dance and poetry.

I'm my own Hero now.

Carried me off on a shimmery white horse.

Depression...long, dark...gone;

Living and loving my life...for me and freedom's liberating
price...sharing.

-Carol Ann F., 8/5/89, Vashon Island, WA



Recovery Means Freedom

Just for Today

from obsessions and compulsions

which used to dominate me;

Recovery means freedom

Just for Today

from re-living "family patterns"

that once seemed

hopeless or inevitable;

Recovery means freedom

Just for Today

to live outside the shadows

cast by others our lives;

In my personal Recovery

Just for Today

I take the Steps

to accept these freedoms

in myself, within my heart

and in all of my affairs.

• **Anonymous**

STEP TWO:

Simply stated, Step 2 says that we need to believe in something that will help us to restore ourselves and our lives to health and well-being. Many of us have had major problems in dealing with authority figures or with a God whom we could believe in. It is a very scary thing to put faith or trust in something. We weren't able to trust or rely on our parents to bring us security, love, direction or happiness. Instead we relied on ourselves for survival.

We may resist thinking of ourselves in any way insane because

we think insane people are in psychiatric hospitals or insane asylums. Simply defined, insanity is unsoundness of mind and emotions. When we acknowledge that we need to be restored to sanity, we are simply admitting the need to develop new, healthy attitudes and behaviors. Many people liken this process of restoration to sanity with bringing ourselves to a state of integration, wholeness and serenity.

One unique dimension and goal of the 12-Steps is the process of discovering, awakening, and evoking our child spirit so that the child within us is gradually integrated with the other parts of ourselves. The child within is that part of us that experienced what happened in our family system; it has incurred the deepest wounds and hence is in the most need of healing and restoration. This child spirit has been maligned, ridiculed, rejected and/or abandoned. It has been afflicted with guilt, hurt, fear and shame. Because of the disease that victimizes us, our child spirit was stifled and repressed, thereby never having the opportunity to be, to play, or to grow.

If we will welcome the child spirit within in Step 2, we will begin to discover the power of this child spirit for healing. It is the child within who has the capacity to feel and to give new life to us. It is the child within who enables us to be spontaneous, creative, playful, curious, loving, hopeful, and joyous.

By beginning to trust a higher power in the recovery process, we will begin to create a healthy connection between our adult and our child within. This connection will begin to fill the giant void we previously tried to fill unknowingly with destructive addictions, relationships, and other obsessions and compulsions. This connection strengthens us so we can let go of these addictions and move into the healing process.

-Mark L., Hartford, CT

Exercise 2: Draw Your Higher (Inner) Power

1. Using colored markers or pencils, draw a picture of a "higher power" that you believe may help you to live a sane life.

2. If you are uncomfortable with the idea of drawing "God," try just doing a circle filled with colors, as many colors as you like. Or draw some power that is in this world that you feel may be helpful to you. (Maybe a spaceship to take you away?) Don't be too serious!
 3. Put yourself in the picture.
 4. Draw yourself living a "sane" life. What does that look like? If you prefer to just use colors to represent a "sane feeling," do that, instead. (Or do two pictures?)
 5. Put your pictures up somewhere where you can see them every day for at least a week or two.
 6. Talk to these pictures (out loud, if possible) and ask this higher power to become real in your life. Ask for a clearer picture of "sane" living and "sane" feeling.
- Replace your pictures when you feel it is time for you to do so. Save your old ones for a year or two at least.
-

STEP THREE

Exercise 5: A Collage

This exercise provides a way to open up communications between the thinking mind and the imagination, using art to bring our adult-self into better contact with the spiritual Inner Child.

1. Select a topic. General topics freely open up possibilities for images. Examples include: Authority, Intimacy, God-Goddess-Higher Power, Mother, Mate, My Identity, Goals, Wishes, Dreams That Can Come True. Any of these tend to elicit more than just one picture, feeling or memory.
2. Gather materials. It's a good idea to give yourself about a week to gather materials. Allow yourself time to let your imagination and your thinking mind open up to this project, bringing up images, memories, and incidents, while you make an effort to get together magazines and the tools

you will need: scissors, glue, and a large sheet of construction board or paper. To stimulate your imagination and jog your memories, try giving yourself a few minutes just before going to sleep to think and visualize about your topic. Sometimes unexpected dream images may result.

3. Create structure for yourself (or decide you do not want one). Most collages and drawings end up as wadded pieces of paper in the trash because they lacked needed organization before the actual artwork even began. Before you begin pasting on your images, decide how you want to organize this design. You may wish to put images across the top of your paper or to arrange them clockwise or counterclockwise down the paper.
4. You may decide to put your inner, more private feeling images toward the center of your paper and to arrange what you see as external to yourself toward the edges. Perhaps you see yourself as scrunched down in a corner, with various images or colors pushing in on you, or chasing you or moving away from you. Of course, you may decide to let your feelings take charge of your paper, and decide not to organize your art at all. No matter which way you go, you will have made a choice, and making choices tends to release feelings and ideas which might otherwise be blocked by the unspoken question, "Am I doing this right?"
5. Give yourself permission to go through with this project and have fun. Give yourself a whole afternoon or evening to have fun making your Collage. Some people enjoy sharing this sort of activity with a few friends, while others prefer to be alone. Use a piece of paper which is large enough. Don't be cramped. However, it should not be so large that you feel intimidated at the prospect of having to fill it up! Let your feelings come up as you select and apply your images. You may wish to add to them, using crayons, markers, paint or colored paper. Seeds, grass, feathers, string or thread-any found objects around your home or garden-

may be incorporated. Give yourself permission to get really involved. If words or sounds come up while you are doing this project, go ahead and let them out, speaking, singing or expressing any pent-up feelings out loud. Write them on the collage if you like. Let your inner child fully participate and engage in child-level self-expression. Give yourself permission to feel completion, too, noticing when the project feels complete and saying so: "Now this is done" (or words to that effect).

6. Value your creative effort. It is a good idea to mat and frame your collages. Put your collage up on your wall where you can appreciate it and interact with it as an ongoing communication from you to you! Note the emotions, memories, insights, and concepts that come to you. After a month or so, replace this collage with something else, if you like. It's a good idea to keep a recovery yearbook to reflect on, as you go along, to see your own development as it unfolds.

STEP FOUR

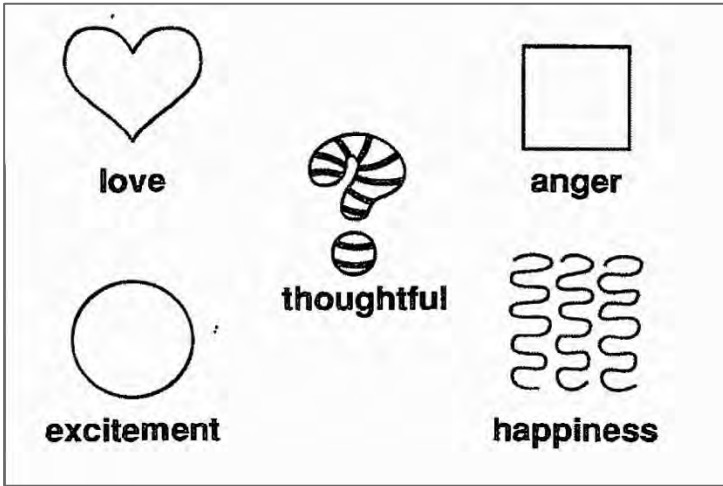
Exercise 6: Map Your Feelings

Here's a creative way for even young children, to inventory and identify their feelings (Step 4) and then share them in a safe relationship and setting (Step 5). This Exercise was shared with us by Hannah S. (age 10), who learned it at the United Indian Health Clinic, Trinidad, California, in December 1988.

On a piece of paper, write five feelings you sometimes have. (Step 4). Example:

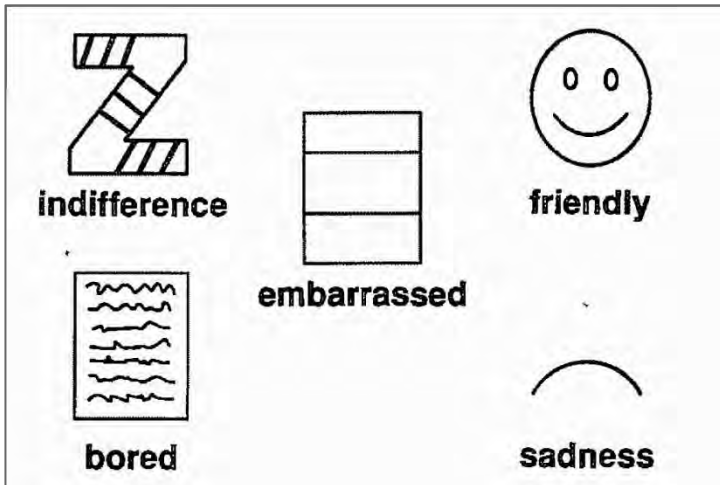
1. love
2. excitement
3. thoughtful
4. anger
5. happiness

Draw a different symbol for each of this feeling. Example:



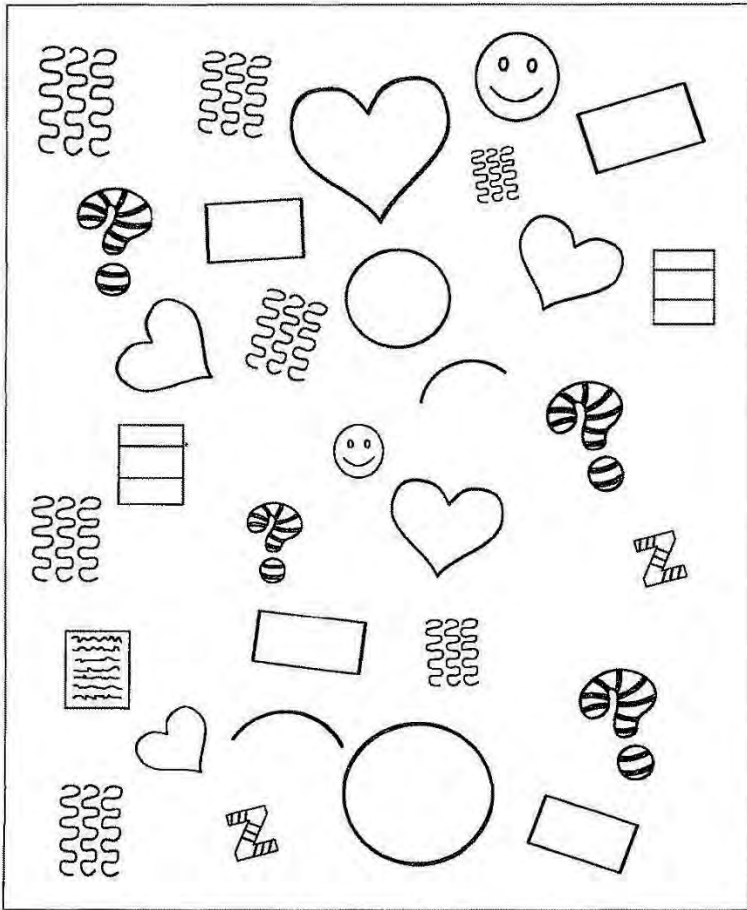
Now, write an *opposite feeling* that you sometimes have for each of your first five feelings. (Step 4). Example:

1. indifference (un-love)
2. bored
3. embarrassed
4. friendly
5. sadness



Now, using the only the symbols for these different feelings (no words), draw a map that shows how you have felt today (or during another time you remember). (Step 4.)

Example Feeling Map



(By Hannah S.)

Share your Feeling Map with a trusted friend or therapist Let her guess how you've been feeling from your Map and tell her whether or not she's read your clues correctly. (Step 5.)

Tell a story about your Feeling Map and the things that happened to make you feel the way you did. (Step 5.)

SELF-INVENTORY IN REFLECTION

"Here's how I heard it: Dad told me that Mom told Dad that Grandma told Mom that my cousin told Grandma that I said something derogatory about his brother." - This was the beginning of a letter to my grandmother last year. I was really angry to see a lie about me once again circulating throughout the entire family.

Grandma is the self-appointed judge of everyone in the family. She's committed to finding fault with others wherever she can, especially those who don't buy into her power addiction.

She's also a master at indirect communication.

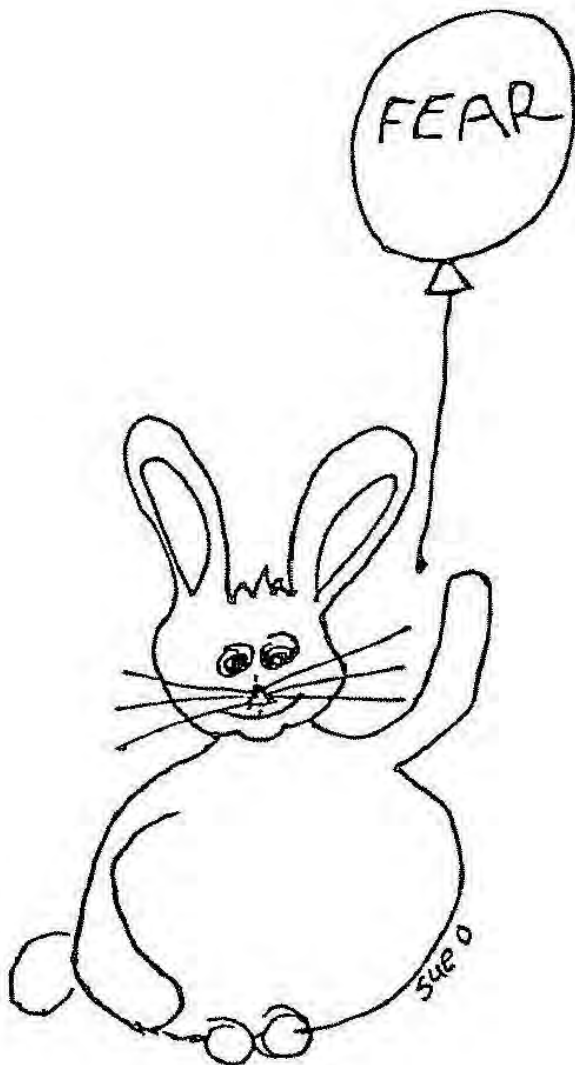
I called Mom and complained about Grandma's gossip. Predictably she defended her mother, so I called both my sisters. We belabored the issue and reaffirmed what a turd Grandma is. I called my sponsor about it. I called my cousin. I shared it at several meetings. I went back to the word processor repeatedly, and finely honed the letter to my grandmother. I never mailed the letter.

I can't control what others say or do. I can break my cycle of addiction to excitement that incidents like this provoke. Taking my own inventory, I see that some of what I did helped me get in touch with my feelings. Most of what I did, however, simply fed my resentment. In the process I also communicated indirectly, and involved two more family members in the crisis.

●**Anonymous**

STEP FIVE

**LETTING GO,
or,
"WHO REFRAMED ROGER RABBIT?"**

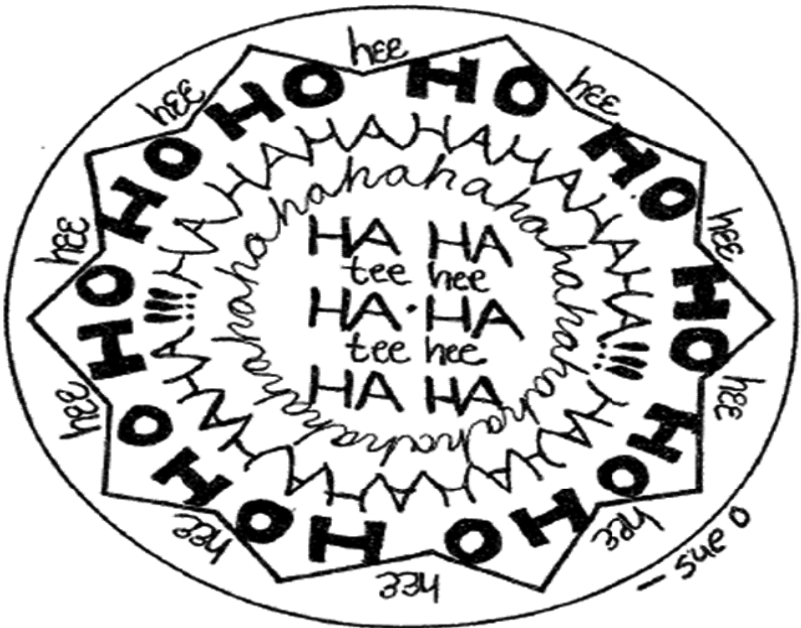


STEP SIX

The Hurt

I wear my sadness
Like a shroud. It is my death.
My skin is white
And pale and soft-
Underbellied- Not tough enough.
Not enough exposure To the sun.
I feel wrong. On guard.
Ready For attack.
But I am safe in my cloak;
Dagger in its sheath.
Hidden in my hood,
I go into this world Unseen.
If I unwrapped myself, Who would I be?
Sue O., Summer 1989, Humboldt ACA

The Heal



STEP SEVEN

Exercise 1: The 10-Day "Worry-Loss" Diet

Here's a crash diet that really works—to eliminate unsightly lumps of worry or bulges of anxiety! Start with the character defects you have decided you are willing to have removed.

1. Ask your Higher Power to remove each one of them, as best suits your purpose for your highest good.
2. Visualize yourself handing over each and every defect on your list to the God of your understanding. Visualize yourself letting go.
3. Then, visualize yourself moving on to other things. Consciously shift your attention—concentrate on an activity, think about a topic you are interested in—anything of interest, so long as it doesn't involve what ever was on your list.
4. For the next 10 days, practice abstinence from worrying about any—thing that was on your list. Practice a day at a time (or an hour at a time) in which you don't think about the character defects you have asked God to **remove**.
5. Shift your attention to something useful or fun. Don't worry. Keep at it. It gets easier!

STEP EIGHT

A Mindfulness Perspective

I am an adult child of an alcoholic and drug addict on a journey to a place within myself where forgiveness is moot. I believe that, through a process I am unable to fully explain or prove, I chose to be born into my nuclear family; I chose my father and mother. Sim-

ilarly, I chose and continue to choose all of the people and circumstances that fill my life. Today I look at these circumstances and personal relationships as challenges or lessons that I have chosen, consciously or unconsciously, to engage in to attain my highest spiritual awakening.

As I view my past, I see my own pain and confusion. Throughout my life I blamed others for inflicting this pain. I felt I was unfairly treated, or insisted that I was the surprised victim of circumstances beyond my control. Now, I see more clearly. The people (parents, husbands) and the circumstances (death, suicide, addiction, divorces, illness) are not to blame. They were the instruments of my self-created divine plan of growth. They were the actors and stage setting that I chose. A good student does not blame the lesson-giver but is grateful for the lesson and takes responsibility for the need to learn it. The fact that my lessons were difficult attests to my need to learn them and the great potential they hold for my advancement. This theory also helps me to understand the phenomenon of repeat lessons. For if I choose to ultimately learn a lesson but refuse to learn it at one point in time, I will continue to choose similar people and circumstances to provide the opportunity again and again to learn it.

This brings forward a challenge to me, in a way greater than any other in my recovery. It is the challenge to fully accept myself



and my life, which means an acceptance of the lessons I have chosen to learn. The challenge is to fully forgive myself for the misguided blaming of others and for the lessons unlearned and repeated. Perhaps the greatest effort must be expended in order to forgive myself for the suffering I have allowed myself to endure throughout these lessons.

In the past, I experienced pain because, in part, of my misunderstanding that people's actions or circumstances were directed against me personally, without my consent. A clearer perspective dictates that people's

actions and the circumstances they created were not a personal vendetta against me. I chose the lesson and the other person cooperated in its execution. Within the lesson, the other person expressed herself in the highest way possible at the time. In fact, the person's actions were probably a manifestation of her/his growth process in lessons they chose for themselves. Each situation or relationship brought to awareness lessons for one or all parties and a corresponding opportunity for growth and understanding.

At this point I question the transformation of my painful feelings into judgments, such as blaming others, which requires a determination of what is or who is right or wrong. I need to and want to experience my feelings in every

experience, but do I need to accept emotional injury that limits my future? Can I see other people's actions as their soul's attempt to move into a position of perfect spiritual awareness, the soul's innate perfection? If I can be accepting and grateful for these lessons and willing to learn and move on, there will be a change in my perspective. Like the vast open sky that allows storms to move in and through it without influencing its embrace of the next day's weather, I can allow myself to move through each lesson and to embrace—without judgments or prejudices based on past experiences—future lessons. For like the sky, I remain, and the stormy experiences pass. With such an understanding, my choice is not to accept emotional injury for other people's actions. My choice is to set myself and others free from the past through an increased understanding of my life's process.

An important ingredient in forgiveness is release. In this case, I release the lesson, the lesson-giver and myself. Emotions that were present and helpful throughout the lesson need not be clung to when their usefulness has passed. Release is the final step. This is the magic that allows me to move on with maximum freedom to the next lesson in my progression in spiritual unfoldment. This, the substance that gives final form to the lesson well learned. The joy at the end of a long, hard road. The final gift that I give myself.

Susan S., Springfield, IL

STEP NINE



STEP TEN

Wandering

Rarely ever do I see a snake - I saw one
 today - I couldn't say for sure
 if it were a rattlesnake or not - having
 no rattles - but that is common
 for a youngish smallish snake as this one
 was - he appeared to have
 pits behind his eyes - his head
 was large and flat compared
 to the rest of him and he
 may have had diamonds on his back--I
 tickled him with a twig where he was
 stretched out across the old sand road - he
 didn't coil but just stuck out his tongue and
 slithered quietly away
 smooth-moving creatures snakes
 my neighbors often see them - kill them - usually
 with guns - but I don't
 often see them although I've
 lived here years and years
 and live here more than anyone - I
 wouldn't want to tread on one -
 especially a neighbor with a gun or
 pits behind his eyes or not recognize
 a viper out of context - why
 I wonder do I see them rarely
 when the world's convinced they are an everpresent
 danger? I must live a life in parallel
 to everybody else and not
 quite touch the realm of snakes
 except for curiosity
 extending twigs and tongues
 or should I be
 afraid?

Raven (June 14, 1983)

STEP ELEVEN

Here are a few brief Guided Visualizations ⁷ to share with your Inner Child in meditation. Our Inner Children love stories! Self-care and comforting reassurance is a way to welcome our Inner Child's participation in reaching out to a loving Higher Power, building conscious contact and gaining knowledge of God's will for us:

Work Addiction Inventory/Meditation

As an exercise in reparenting your Inner Child, imagine your Child in the arms of a loving, cheerful Higher Power. This Higher Power is willing to toss and swing you up in gleeful play. Laughter and fun surround you, and you are free to laugh without restraint. Your world is full of fun-loving people who accept you and enjoy your company. You are on a grassy playing field in the sun with lots of friends doing interesting activities. Carry this image with you and keep it in your heart to contact as you move through your daily life. You deserve to be loved and accepted every day of your life. Gratefully, own this experience and rejoice!

Codependent "Managers" Inventory/Meditation

Consider reparenting your Inner Child by adopting a system of beliefs that are compatible with good health, which encourage honesty and creative efforts, and which support self-respect. Visualize your Inner Child in a meadow with friends, turning summersaults, laughing and free. Notice some of the ways your Higher Power protects these children and keeps them safe. Let your adult self feel gratitude for this and now, join in the fun! Build trust with your Inner Child by actively living in this vision yourself, a day at a time. Consider ceasing to worry about whether anyone else does!

⁷ From Appendix II, Issues in Recovery Inventories, *12-Steps to Freedom, A Recovery Workbook* (1990). These are at the end of each Inventory.

Power Addictions Inventory/Meditation

In reparenting yourself today, imagine yourself as the rightful owner of a beautiful castle, bright and glistening upon a high, high hill. Your walls are hung with tapestries so rich and beautiful just looking at them fills your heart with joy. While someone quietly plays music, the smells of a delicious feast being prepared for you tugs your attention. Those who love you care about each other and are unguarded when they interact. They have useful lives and so do you. Everyone around you is committed to creativity and to repairing old mistakes. You are confident that you can make a difference in the world without exploiting anyone or anything. It is peaceful but exciting, too, to be in a fellowship of trustworthy peers. All of this is yours to keep and to enjoy. Every time you choose to take in a deep, relaxing breath and allow yourself to experience this rich contentment, you see it becoming tangible, more and more, around you in the now. . In this atmosphere of perfect security, you are free to examine all of your feelings as they occur. You can allow yourself to express your insights and ideas and you say no or yes without worry about “bad consequences”. You can relax and let love in. Your inner space is a fine, strong castle and you are welcome here!



Phone Addicts Inventory

As an exercise in re-parenting, imagine your adult self going back into your childhood as a warrior on a powerful, spirited horse. See yourself equipped to handle any sort of emergency or trouble. You can take modern weapons, if you like—rocket launchers, submarines—anything necessary to be in control of any situation you may find. Look for your Inner Child in the incidents of your childhood. Find the places



where your Child needed the extra help of a warrior. Go there to give your Child exactly the support your Child wants. Make a commitment to protect your Child, no matter what. If you need more help, bring in whatever is needed for your Child to be safe. Commit yourself to a program of taking action. Add in-person relating to your on-line relationships. How about getting together to just have fun? Let your Inner Children take your warrior-adult on an adventure of his/her choice! And bring a friend!



STEP TWELVE

Personal Sharing

How does your group elect your Trusted Servants? Do you hold elections, with candidates running against each other, or do you use a different method? Before sharing my own preference, let me share with you what I have against running ACA's against each other:

First off, think of what the word "*against*" means.

Second, this kind of competition results in *winner*s—but also in *loser*s.

I know this from experience: At the first ACA election of officers, the losers left the group. Since there was only one group in the ACA fellowship at that time, these human beings effectively left ACA - Ready or not!

I abstained from that first election in Westwood, California in 1980, for the reasons given above. And I still abstain. I will vote on issues, because I am a member of the group conscience. Sometimes an issue is identified with the person or persons presenting the issue. In this case, I try to make it crystal-clear that my vote is cast on principles, not personalities.

But we are considering here is election of officers as Trusted Servants. And even servants have personalities, agreed? To replace the personality-contest-type election, may I suggest a method that's proven useful?

When an election is necessary or desirable, call a Business Meeting for the purpose of nominating officers. At the Business Meeting, ask who is willing to serve the group. Then make sure that everyone who is willing gets something to do and some recognition, through self-nomination.

The first time we used this method was at the Federal Building, where we averaged 100 people per meeting. To serve so many ACAs, we came up with a number of positions for Trusted Servants to fill: Secretary, Co-Secretary, Night Chair (4 in number). In all, 15

ACA's got A New Employer—and every office got a back-up Trusted Servant to fill in as needed.

Since you make the rules for this election game, you can have as many Trusted Servants as you want. If three or more people nominate themselves for an office—great! Or even greater, perhaps, titles (and attendant service) can rotate around your whole group.

I hope I've made this point: Within the group, when two people run for an office, there should be two winners. Nobody joined ACA to learn how to be a loser. We already memorized that script.

To those who lost when the Westwood group had competitive elections, I supported their founding a group of their own. Some did. Some of us kids are that resilient. Kids who are not . . . let's make sure we provide as safe place for them to accept and render Service!

-Jack E., an ACA Founder, Westwood, CA (1988.)



Yes, We Need Each Other! and That's a Blessing!

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SPACE FOR YOUR CREATIVITY, HOPES & DREAMS:

OUR ORGANIZATIONAL PAST (OPTIONAL)

Some of us aren't interested in "How We Got Here" as an ACA fellowship, and that's perfectly all right. We came to recovery with a need, a pressing, driving need, for help and clarity as individuals. That's where we all begin. This material is optional—of interest to those who have questions about our history and evolution as a fellowship—which is on-going. What part we have in it, as individuals, is in the care and direction of our Higher Power, who we trust.

A Revisionist's View of ACA's Evolution:

In 1978, while Tony A. and the fellowship in Brooklyn started ACA in AIAnon—soon to be "transplanted" to Los Angeles where it took root initially through the efforts of Jack E., AA member and ACA co-founder—our ACA program didn't *only* spring into existence as 12-Step recovery for adult children in Los Angeles or in New York, despite the *Big Red Book's* omission of this larger history.⁸ The *pressing need* for ACA recovery was bigger than that.⁹

⁸ Probably, this larger scope of ACA's coming into existence was omitted because what I'm outlining here *is* confusing, thus seemed either irrelevant or felt threatening to try to integrate to those who "anchored" ACA in the LA/SFV Intergroup and set it up to incorporate as ACA/iWSO.

⁹ Among the serious social issues that prompted a new burst of research into the dynamics of post-WWII families in the 1970s—80s, was the steep increase in PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorders) among returning Viet Nam war veterans. This disorder presented patterns of behaviors that resisted both diagnosis and treatment! Rejection and distrust of authority characterized this as well as several other dynamics "the Baby-Boomers" generation displayed. Draft-resistors, civil rights activists, depression, aggression, violent crime, suicide and

ACA/ACoA and COA groups had similar genesis as in LA/NYC fellowships—*but independently*—in Chicago, San Diego, Dallas, Phoenix, Seattle, San Francisco and in smaller cities, at around this same time-frame, 1980-1986. Hundreds of ACA groups and Inter-groups came into being throughout the USA, in Canada, in Britain, Scandinavia, Australia, Ireland, France. *Each of these fellowships had, of course, its own ACA “co-founders” a mix of enthusiastic members eager to network ACA into a world-wide fellowship and Service Structure.* ¹⁰ Jack E.’s *Problem & Solution* had “long legs”!

Aca’s Co-Founders: A Mix Of Givers & Seekers

Claudia Black’s *It Won’t Happen to Me* (1982), powerful and well-written as it is, was *only one* among several of the breakthrough books and articles that opened a wide-spread audience to the topic of how addiction and dysfunction in post WW II American

escalating drug use among young people were among the confusing and unsettling societal factors in play. Old norms no longer commanded respect.

¹⁰ I (Kathleen S.) come from this group, a co-founder of a very active Inter-group, Humboldt ACA. I authored ACA’s first 12-Step workbook, *Healing A Broken Heart* (1987), in ACA’s first Writer’s Workshop (1987). This ACA 12-Steps is specifically adapted to adult children who are already in a 12-Step program. It was written with the view to it being part of ACA program literature. The LA/SFV Intergroup wouldn’t cooperate, so Humboldt IG asked me to offer it to Health Communications, Inc. (HCI), a commercial publisher, who quickly picked it up.

HCI actively sought to *compete with AA World Service, Inc* (and Hazelden, Inc.) as *publishers* of ACA (and CoDA) books. This is an important point: HCI’s role in founding ACA, as a movement, deserves recognition: HCI published my first two ACA 12-Step workbooks (1988, 1989), then Tony A.’s book (1991), as well as books by John Bradshaw, Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse, Janet Woititz, Robert Subby, Charles Whitfield and others, during this period. HCI hosted conferences and published “Changes,” a magazine they thought would be like “Grapevine” in the ACA movement, though it was geared to interest adult children *therapists* more than other ACAs. HCI’s Board are therapists (some listed above, who they publish.) Later, as a part of marketing, HCI helped start CoDependents Anonymous (CoDA), too. HCI was initially and intentionally a powerful force in “framing” ACA. Hazelden, Inc. and HCI competed for authors; shaping “the recovery message” by who they chose to publish, in vying for what is, indeed, a major market. HCI’s focus, as a *business primarily marketing to and serving professional therapists and authors*, discounts self-help as *treatment*, a factor that contributes to fellowship confusion about anonymous 12-Step material in ACA.

families impacts *everyone* in the household, drinkers or not. Crazy as this may seem to us today, prior to the mid-1960s, every individual's "problem behaviors" were seen as more or less *arising in a vacuum*, not, at least in part, results—coping mechanisms for survival—of growing up in families impacted by addiction.

By the 1980s, clinical psychiatrists and community therapists began to facilitate what were (and are) versions of ACA, as groups, both as support and aftercare for their individual clients.¹¹

Some helping professionals are, of course, also members of AlAnon, AA or of another 12-Step program, so Jack E.'s version of The Laundry List, "The Problem" & "The Solution," which by this time were in general circulation,¹² quickly came into nearly universal use as ACA's *de facto* start-up materials. Even MD's and therapists who may have no first-hand knowledge of 12-Step recovery themselves usually do encourage 12-Step group participation as an *aftercare component* or *support* to clients if substance abuse issues are in their history, because of AA's long track record in the field.

¹¹ By the mid-1970s, family therapists and medical doctors hurriedly began to explore how addiction and addiction-like patterns created and reinforced defeatist behaviors and outlooks within families, realizing that feed-back channels that hadn't been seen as inter-related probably were—discovering previously unsuspected ties to domestic violence, and to a diversity of risky, self- and other-harming compulsive patterns, including patterns of disengagement and retreat. The need was great; the time was right. This work, along with related pharmacological research, is, of course, ongoing.

¹² "The Problem" and "The Solution" were circulated via dial-up "bulletin boards" (early versions of computer websites) and hand-to-hand by 198 Jack E. of Santa Monica, the ACA members who set up the "Teddy Bear Hollow" ACA dial-up Bulletin Board in Washington, D.C. were AA members. Tony A. wasn't in the fellowship during this period, from around 1980 through 1990. Tony A. was not active in ACA's Intergroup-based Service Structure. In later interviews, he said he didn't want to become an icon or a saint. Tony didn't interact with the ACAs who worked by teleconference on ACA's Literature Committee. His book, *The Laundry List* (1991) was not vetted within ACA as a whole and it was not "donated" to ACA WSO, Inc. upon his death. He wasn't discounted or disrespected; his authorship of the Laundry List was just a *factoid* in early ACA!

So, Summing Up:

ACA had many “co-founders,” a diverse group made up of helping professionals, people of faith, and already sober members of AA, NA and/or their family members familiar with AlAnon.

ACA’s initial Service Structure—drawn from the geographically spread out meetings and Intergroups—included many people who were unfamiliar with 12-Step recovery—Steps or Traditions—as well as individuals from 12-Step programs who might hold *differing strongly held* ideas about the 12-Step Traditions, and how fellowships *should run*. Some wore “several hats” within these backgrounds.

Plus—what’s most important—our leadership was (and is) made up of Adult Children *who are engaging in their own recovery*. We came *as we were*, with Issues, every one!

How Are We Doing?

It helps to have a sense of humor, at least, in the long, long run. Once we are out of danger, sure to survive, with solid ground (or maybe a boat) under you, it’s good to finally relax and let the universe hold us up: in a place that we can trust.

Sure, we’ve had to struggle. Things don’t always go our way. Another AA maxim, “*When we are [in recovery], we are much like other people.*” That’s comforting, *if* we share a common good, but it sounds pretty awful if we’re all condemned to fail!

In future little books, I’ll share more about myself and my journey in recovery. I’ll talk about what I believe are bedrock factors we share—what Bill W. called “instinctive drives,”—that have been misunderstood, mishandled and manipulated. These bedrock drives are some of “the things we cannot change” and we, as adult children, need “courage to change the things we can” *to reclaim them* as what Bill called, “surely, God-given”—if we are going to heal *as people who deserve a planet!* I offer these ideas, for what they’re worth, as a survivor and a pioneer.

Some of you will find what I share a source of inspiration, empowerment and hope. That’s good. That’s what I want to do; it’s

who I am. This little book provides a chapter, Step Eleven from a book I authored/edited in ACA in 1989,¹³ with the help and support of two dozen Intergroups and individuals who share personal experiences on working the Steps, excerpts from another book I co-wrote with an AlAnon/ACA co-founder of the Humboldt ACA Intergroup, Jewell E., in 1988¹⁴ and a selection of Personal Sharing Whole Brain Step Four: poems, graphics and tools from Inner Children who participated in creating these two books.

Finally, I want to say, if I still sound a bit defensive and angry in some of my footnotes, *I apologize*. I am still working my way through my issues, which is an incredible blessing for me, but I have some tough times doing that, none the less. I feel like I've done a good job, staying present, and for the most part, staying civil. Kathleen S., the Inner Child, is a kindly, fun, good-looking happy girl and woman. She is a gentle soul rejoicing in this world, despite a lot of "old ideas" we must replace—and pretty damned quick, too!—that want to resist, deny, negate, exploit us, Inner Children/*Spiritual Beings who we are, sharing human experiences*.

An important part of me says, "Oh, bullshit! I'm not afraid of you, you Old Ideas! My Higher Power who I know as God, the Life Force, runs this world and I am welcome here, and safe. Amen!" I stick with that outlook, one day at a time. I accept your love and wisdom, too, my fellow travelers! Thank you and God bless you!

Keep coming back. It works, and yes, recovery *is* possible!

¹³ 12-Steps to Freedom, A Recovery Workbook (1990, 2018.)

¹⁴ *With Gentleness, Humor, Love & Respect* (1989, HCI), to be reissued in 2020 as a Amazon paperback and eBook.

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Kathleen S., Poet, Real Estate Broker, August 1974, Harris, CA
Photo by Bob Warrick

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hi, thanks for this channel! ¹⁵ I have a lot to share, if you are open to co-interaction! I am Kathleen S., a sober member of AA since 1975, and a founder of using active imagination techniques,

¹⁵ Written in "Discuss Comments" December 2019, in response to a TED Talk about using LSD in substance abuse treatment by researchers at University of New Mexico Psychology Department.

in light trance or with psychedelics, as part of 12-Step recovery in Adult Child work (ACA.)

I was a frequent guest at Tim Leary's Millbrook compound in upstate NY in the mid-60s where I'd been invited by Ralph Metzner (a Leary/Alpert ¹⁶ co-worker.)

I am what I now know is "a primary Adult Child" of a dysfunctional family, but ACA didn't exist in 1975 and *my life was unmanageable*, despite the fact I didn't fit my own idea of "What's an alcoholic?" I loved the 12-Step process, as a way to anchor, center and move forward in a body, on this earth! I felt welcome from the first, which was a surprise because I didn't feel welcome anywhere at all when I first went to AA, in Berkeley, CA, in a light rain on Telegraph Avenue.

I binge-drank as a teen, added speed to not blackout and pot to not throw up, and later, cut out the booze entirely, in favor of pot, and then peyote. What I needed, as a person who'd been subjected to an authority's sustained invalidation and abuse, was *a reliable template* that I could use, one that no crazed or power mad "boss" could use against me or scrap under my feet: The 12-Step program, the Steps and, to an extent, the fellowship, fit the bill.



Kathleen S., Maui, HI

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I'd gone back to heavy drinking to self-medicate clinical depression by the time I got into AA. In the San Francisco Bay Area there are a lot of *different kinds* of people, which may make AA more tolerant there than it is in a lot of places. That was important. I didn't think I fit "the mold" of "alcoholic" and, to a large extent, I don't, thus, *encouragement* to stick around was a big factor in getting me to give the Steps, *as a process one must do* (not just read and talk about), *some time* to have effect.

AA meetings are, by the way, very similar to light trance induction sessions. The moment of silence, readings, introductions—all

¹⁶ Richard Alpert, PhD (Harvard) renamed himself *Ram Das* in 1967.

little rituals that we internalize—are *inductions* that, in effect, are "triggers" we set up in ourselves to tell our inner watchdog-defensive self, "OK, now let's take a break and listen for a while." People who recover (stay dry, or clean in NA, off gambling in GA, etc.) are people who "install" these little induction rituals, whether they are aware of doing this or not. A lot of AA members don't ever look this closely at "how it works," and many actively resist even thinking about the mechanics of the process--as though it would be "a jinx" to demystify it. They may believe that "spiritual" means "magic" or something secret.

Nice thing about a 12- Step program: We don't have to argue with them, or anybody, about how we understand the program, or our Higher Power. There is no "wrong way" to work the Steps, although we each do need at least one other person who will genuinely tolerate our point of view, not invalidate us, sneer, etc., to "anchor" the process in a shared reality that's bigger than ourselves at least initially, as part of doing the Steps. So, instead of being sucked into the kinds of b.s. sidetracks a lot of confused people bring into the recovery arena with them, we, too, can tolerate the "If it works, don't fix it" crowd. We can and do find co-sponsors who will just trust the process to take care of us and lead us into light. That's what I was encouraged to do—and did—finding, in the SF Bay Area, at least, enough experimental eccentrics in recovery to accept me and to support me in my path and study and adventure. That was surprising, too.

I'm a person, remember, who came into 12-Step recovery just a few years after Charlie Manson's "tribe" had given LSD a bad name by murdering seven people in Los Angeles--on LSD. AA wasn't rolling out a carpet to welcome advocates--or former users--of psychedelics or even of pot! And I'd been a kind of central figures in the California counter culture, personally, from 1964 through 1969, having taken injectable DMT with the chemists and their friends at UC Riverside, an experiment which resulted in an out-of-body experience, not just for myself, but for the entire group of perhaps ten who were in the room to watch. These individuals (who set up Owsley Stanley's lab for him, in Marin County, CA)

thereafter provided me with 10,000 mcg vials of Owsley's LSD, to sell or give away, as often as I asked for them (once or twice a month) or else shipped them to "Large Spotted Dragon" c/o whomever came by my place on Channing Way in Berkeley, had a cup of tea, and left me \$100. and their address. (No street drug dealer was going to do this—drop off the money and then get the drugs a few days later, in the mail! This was an intentional devise we used.)

We were not criminals or profiteers; we were, then, as now, spiritual beings having human experiences in this world. If Jerry Brown, our former governor, took LSD, I was probably the one who provided it, via this little network. I made sure anyone from Boalt Hall (UC Berkeley's Law School) that wanted LSD could get it.

Timothy Leary did a great deal to ruin the social atmosphere that we had created in GB and the California coast--he and a number of patriarchally-conditioned people (women as much as men, it is sad to say!) who were, themselves caught up in the power struggle that so marks the dysfunction that is we are challenged to reverse, if this planetary community will prevail and evolve.

The counter culture's collapse disillusioned me, personally. What I had seen as an inspired direction devolved into a collection of "dope dealers and debutants," a parade of sensational journalism clips splashed across big media featuring "big names" of people who had lost it, if they'd ever had it. I was one of those! I found this experience crushing because, foolishly, it seemed to me, I'd trusted *personalities* who turned out to be just faces of our distorted social fabric, grabbing for control.

In recovery, I regained my center. I revised the Steps to make use of the tools Bill Wilson alludes to, in Step Eight of *TWELVE STEPS & TWELVE TRADITIONS* (1952), working to bring his insights about how it is important to delve into our buried memories, to root out "*the violent twists which have since discolored our personalities and altered our lives for the worse*" as a focus for what's presently called "reclaiming the Inner Child" in 12-Step recovery. I wrote my first ACA 12-Step book in 1987, thirty-two years ago. It sold 30,000 copies and my work has stayed in print continuously in

one form or another since then. Don't worry if you will succeed. Just do your best.

But, as an aside, let me correct some confusing "lore" about AA and drug use in detox treatment and aftercare: DR. Bob (Smith), co-founder of AA died in 1951 or 1952; I don't think LSD existed at that time. Dr. Bob was an advocate of in-patient treatment, which he was instrumental in getting going. Hazelden (The Betty Ford Hospital) was founded by his branch of early AA. I don't know if they experimented with LSD in treating alcoholism there at any point, but they did detox with psychoactive drugs and perhaps still do. Bill (Wilson), in NYC, did experiment with LSD, working with Drs. Humphrey Osmund and Abram Hoffer,¹⁷ who were central pioneers in this field although best known for using Vitamin B6 (niacin) to treat mood disorders and mental illness. Bill had chronic depression which the B6 relieved. Bill wanted AA to advocate for B6's use, but the AA Trustees (who were mostly psychiatrists and non-members of AA) shut him down, saying "*You aren't qualified to advocate that, Bill, because you aren't an MD.*" Hoffer and Osmund saw Bill W. as a colleague and collaborator, however, and welcomed him as a co-worker. Bill took LSD with their group which included, among others, Aldous Huxley (author of *Doors of Perception*, *Brave New World*) and Linus Pauling.

I worked with Dr. Osmund in 1966-68, interviewing people in the psychedelic movement who were taking LSD in non-clinical settings, on tape (owners of the Village Head Shop in NYC, people at Tim Leary's Millbrook, members of the Grateful Dead, those sorts.) Dr. Osmund,



1 Luke H. & Kathleen S., 2014

¹⁷ Dr. Hoffer, shortly before his death, detailed Bill W. (Wilson)'s participation in Hoffer/Humphrey research in *The Vitamin Cure for Alcoholism* (2009.) AA WSO, Inc has buried or deleted Bill's writings on these topics, but he did write a pamphlet on Niacin as an aid to managing post-detox depression which was in AA's "official literature" for a time. (I'm not sure when it was dropped.)

who headed the NJ Neuropsychiatric Institute in Princeton, coined the term "psychedelic" in a letter to Huxley, who was his friend from school.

I didn't meet Bill Wilson at that time and I didn't know anything about AA or even begin to see myself as "a drunk" (I imagined alcoholics as guys in overcoats in alleys with cheap wine in a paper sacks.) But there has been--and yet remains—a fellowship of seeker-scholar-healers that has *a vertical time stream down through the centuries*. We do still love & work together!