



**Adult Children Of Alcoholics And  
Dysfunctional Families UK**  
[www.adultchildrenofalcoholics.co.uk](http://www.adultchildrenofalcoholics.co.uk)

## **NEWCOMER'S LEAFLET: STAYING SAFE IN ACA**

### **WELCOME TO ACA**

Meetings are intended to be a safe place. We share our experience, strength and hope; we offer compassion and understanding. We also have the right not to share, unless we are ready. We welcome you to join us.

We were all profoundly affected by the dysfunction in our families of origin, whether alcohol was present in the home or not. Consequently, we developed a set of "laundry list" traits that helped us survive that experience. These traits may have been adaptive at the time, but have now come to substantially disrupt our lives.

We recover by "working our programme." This means attending ACA meetings and working the 12 Steps. The Steps are not meant to be worked in isolation, which is why we work with more experienced members, a 12 Step

group, and/or our fellow travellers (others in ACA).

ACA is a spiritual programme, not a religious programme. The only requirement for membership is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family. ACA has no membership fees.

Since each meeting is autonomous, and each meeting can be a different experience, we recommend that if your first meeting is not a fit for you, try other meetings before deciding if the ACA programme can be helpful in your journey from discovery to recovery.

### **RESPECT FOR NEWCOMERS**

Newcomers can be particularly vulnerable to emotional, financial and sexual abuses. Some people attending meetings who have not grown beyond their victim/victimiser scripts may attempt to meet their needs through manipulation of newcomers. This is called the "Thirteenth Step" which violates the safety of the meeting and is ***not part of our programme.***

The love and respect we offer to newcomers is a reflection of the love and respect we are learning to offer ourselves. In the words of the first Identity Committee report, "we teach the skills of reparenting through gentleness, humility, love and respect".

### **FELLOW TRAVELLERS AND SPONSORSHIP IN ACA**

As "fellow travellers" in recovery, we need not fear sponsorship as a re-enactment of the domination, neglect or control we experienced as children. For many of us, ACA sponsorship will be our first chance to establish a relationship based on equality and mutual respect. This may be an unfamiliar concept since we come from families in which healthy relationships with respect and trust were not practiced.

Asking another fellow ACA member for help, whether it's sponsorship, to be a fellow traveller or someone for outreach is a key step in our recovery. Typically, we look for someone who is the same sex to avoid romantic confusion and to protect ourselves from those who are not here

for recovery and who wish to exploit a vulnerable newcomer.

LGBTQ members need to consider similar issues. Dysfunctional behaviour, no matter what sexual orientation, can undermine the programme for the sponsor and sponsee. We avoid these situations by being mindful of our choice of sponsor/sponsee.

To find an ACA sponsor, fellow traveller or someone for outreach, we go to ACA meetings and events and listen to members sharing. We look for someone who has worked the Twelve Steps of ACA, attends meetings regularly, and understands ACA principles. We may also look for someone who has achieved an observable level of serenity and emotional sobriety and with whom we feel a sense of safety and trust.

## HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

It is important to be aware that an ACA sponsor or fellow traveller:

- is not a parent, authority figure, or Higher Power to the sponsee or fellow traveller
- does not judge or invalidate the feelings or insights of the sponsee or fellow traveller
- does not do for a sponsee or fellow traveller what they can do for themselves,

- does not give or lend money
- does not become romantically or sexually involved with a sponsee or fellow traveller

Be mindful about sharing your personal details and phone number with other ACA members until you get to know them.

If you are uncomfortable with another member's behaviour, please talk to a trusted member of ACA, or you can email [in confidence](mailto:safeguard@adultchildrenofalcoholics.co.uk) the ACA UK Safeguarding Committee:

[safeguard@adultchildrenofalcoholics.co.uk](mailto:safeguard@adultchildrenofalcoholics.co.uk)

## SIX SUGGESTIONS FOR ONGOING RECOVERY

While ACA members avoid giving advice, we can share our recovery experience.

These six suggestions of ACA recovery represent the basics whether we are a newcomer or a member with years in the programme:

1. Address addictive or compulsive behaviours involving food, sex, relationships, gambling, spending, alcohol, drugs, etc.
2. Attend ACA meetings regularly and

share.

3. Get the ACA Big Red Book.
4. Use the telephone and reach out to fellow travelers.
5. Find a co-sponsor or fellow traveller and work the Twelve Steps.
6. Get a Higher Power.

We are glad you are here. Keep coming back!

**Click the QR Code to take you straight to our ACA Safety page which has many more resources:**

