

# The Steps and Our Inner Child

Using ACA's Tools to Make Peace With Our Past

Charlie H.,  
Virtual AWC, April 25, 2020

This presentation is based on ACA's new "Getting Started" book project



# BRB: Unanswered Questions

- Is ACA entirely a 12 Step Program? (Chapter 7)
- Is ACA entirely a Reparenting Program? (Chapter 8)
- Is ACA both? (The Solution)



# Both: Steps *and* Reparenting

- ACA's unique feature: *We invite our Inner Child into our recovery process. This is key to becoming a whole person, as described in 'The Solution.'*
- To aid our recovery, the Steps must help the Inner Child heal and grow—not frighten them away.



# Both: Steps *and* Reparenting

- “Getting Started” rethinks the Steps in early recovery.
- It combines reparenting, childhood grieving, and a more loving introduction to ACA’s 12 Steps. We draw more attention to Tony A.’s insights.



# Early Recovery: What Does the Inner Child Need?



- 1) Safety
- 2) Validation (emerge from denial)
- 3) Grieve Early Losses (feel our feelings)
- 4) Love and Self-Worth (release all childhood shame)

*Emotional needs of the Inner Child are similar to the needs of ACA newcomers.*

## Reparenting or 12 Steps?

Early ACA healing starts with the Inner Child's needs. It involves a reunion between our Inner Child and Loving Inner Parent

# 'AA' 12 Steps: Are They Inner-Child Friendly?

- “Powerless” and “Unmanageable” (Step 1)
  - “Fearless Moral Inventory of Ourselves” (Step 4)
  - “Exact Nature of Our Wrongs” (Step 5)
  - “Defects of Character” (Steps 6 & 7)
  - “Made Direct Amends” to “All Persons We Had Harmed” (Steps 8 & 9)
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- AA’s starting focus: Righting the wrongs we have committed.  
ACA inner child healing: love and nurturing.

# 'AA' 12 Steps: Are They Inner-Child Friendly?

The Step 8 & 9 Dilemma: Do we apologize to our parents?

In early ACA recovery, 'AA'-style Steps can seem 'out of sync,' even shaming or unsafe.



# Rethinking the Steps

‘AA’ Steps: Focus on Amend to Others

ACA Steps: FIRST focus is an Amend to Ourselves and to Our Inner Child

NOTE: ‘AA’ Steps have an essential place in ACA—*after* early childhood healing. ACA-focused Steps support reparenting.



# Child-Friendly Steps



# Rethinking the Steps

First Focus: Only our first 10 years of life

Start by Imagining Your Child (meditation)

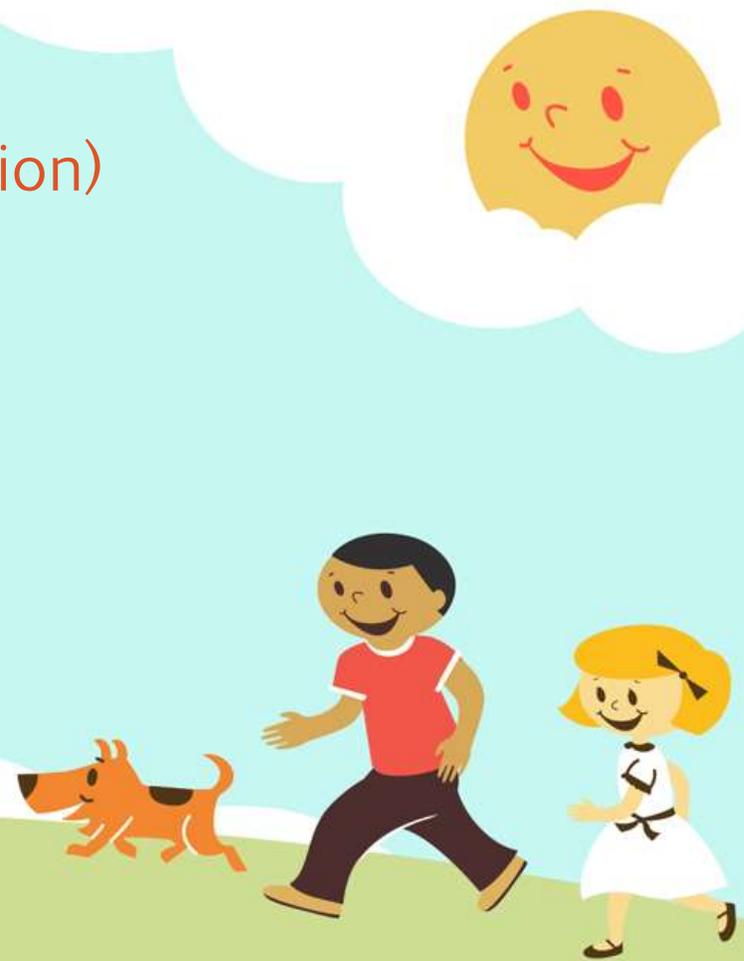


# Today's 'Child-Friendly' Step Focus

- Step 1: Defined our original powerlessness
- Steps 4 & 5: Inventory and deep sharing
- Steps 6 & 7: Releasing misplaced childhood shame
- Steps 8 & 9: Making amends to our wounded Inner Child

# Rethinking the Steps

Start by Imagining Your Child (meditation)



# Child-Friendly Step 1 (Focus on 0 to 10 years)

- ‘AA-style’ Step 1: Powerless over our own addiction and dysfunction, which causes unmanageable chaos
- A childhood-focused Step 1 question: What was I powerless over when I was 4? When I was 6?

ACA Step 1 Insight: *“As a child, I was powerless over my family. What happened wasn’t my fault, or my Inner child’s fault.”*

## Child-Friendly Step 4 (Focus on 0 to 10 years)

- ‘AA-style’ Step 4: ‘Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves’
- A childhood-focused Step 4: Borrowing from Tony A., a ‘blameless inventory of our parents’ (BRB, Page 157)

ACA Step 4 Insight: *“First focus is on the family, not the child.”*

# Child-Friendly Step 5 (Focus on 0 to 10 years)

- ‘AA-style’ Step 5: Admitted the ‘exact nature of our wrongs’ to God, ourselves and another person
- A childhood-focused Step 5 from Tony A.: ‘admitted the exact nature of our childhood abandonment’ (referenced in BRB, page 195)

ACA Step 5 Insight: *Giving voice to our childhood grieving*

## Child-Friendly Step 5 (Focus on 0 to 10 years)

- Completing our childhood grieving (BRB, Page 204): “What did I receive from my dysfunctional family, and what would I have received from loving parents in the same situation?”
- “The difference between what you got and what you could have received is the measure of loss or grief.” (BRB, 204)

A childhood-focused Step 5 from Tony A.: ‘admitted the exact nature of our childhood abandonment’

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## Child-Friendly Steps 6 & 7 (Focus on 0 to 10 years)

- ‘AA-style’ Step 6: Willing to have God remove “all our defects of character”
- A childhood-focused Steps 6 & 7 question: When we 4, or 6, or 8, did we even have defects of character?

ACA Step 6 & 7 Insight: *“Inner Child, YOU did nothing wrong.  
You were just being a child.”*

## Child-Friendly Step 8 (Focus on 0 to 10 years)

- ‘AA-style’ Step 8: ‘Made a list of all persons we had harmed’
- A childhood-focused Steps 8 question: At 4, or 6, or 8, who did we seriously and permanently harm?  
*Answer: No one! The harm at that stage in our life was done to us, not by us.*

ACA Step 8 Insight: *“Only two names are on our list: the child we could not protect then, and our wounded Inner Child today”*

# Child-Friendly Step 9 (Focus on 0 to 10 years)

- ‘AA-style’ Step 9: ‘Made direct amends ... wherever possible’
- A childhood-focused Step 9 amend: “I am sorry for what happened to you as a young child. Inner Child, my amend to you today is that I will be there as a Loving Parent *every day*. I love you.”

## Child-Friendly Step 9 (Focus on 0 to 10 years)

*ACA Step 9 Insight: The amend to our Inner Child is a living amend. By being there for our Inner Child every day, we can complete our early childhood healing. We also reunite our wounded Inner Child and Loving Inner Parent.*

- Benefits of childhood-focused Step 9 amend: My child feels loved, forgiven, and supported on a daily basis. This is the foundation of feelings and joy in adulthood.

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# 'AA-Style' 12 steps and later recovery

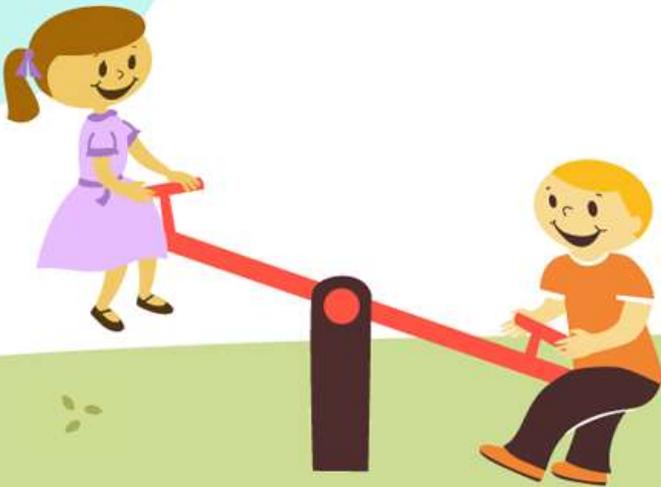
- 1) By doing “child-friendly” steps first, we can later do the ‘AA-style’ steps with self-compassion and perspective. We understand our family’s role in our adult behavior.
- 2) Steps 8 and 9 become a healthy pathway to release shame. We squarely face and repair the harms we have done.
- 3) An ‘AA-style’ Step 1 helps us face our own adult addictions.
- 4) The adult-focused steps help us ‘do life’ and be a healthy loving parent. Our Inner child can be a happy, playful child.

# Stepping Into the Solution: Love, Compassion & Healthy Accountability

- ‘You will become an adult who is imprisoned no longer by childhood reactions.’
- ‘You will recover the child within you, learning to accept and love yourself.’
- ‘You will take responsibility for your own life and supply your own parenting.’
- ‘As the love grows inside you, you will see beautiful changes in all your relationships.’



# Questions, and Additional Resources



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