

The Steps and Your Inner Child

Finding a Path to Deep Healing

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book project. Please do not redistribute without
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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.

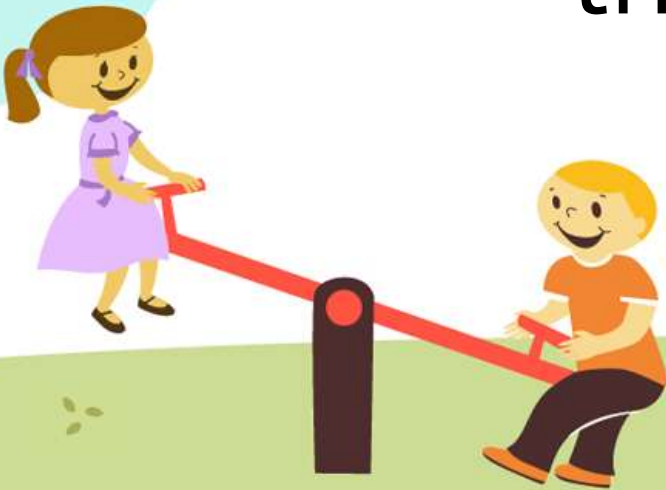


Both: Steps *and* Reparenting

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

Newcomers and the Inner Child have similar emotional needs. As the Inner Child finds safety in a Loving Inner Parent, we find safety in the ACA program.

Early Recovery: Steps or Reparenting?

- *Writing group ALL started with inner child/reparenting*
- First need was for inner child to Talk, Trust, & Feel
- We had to make contact with our childhood losses



Are Traditional Steps Inner-Child Friendly?

- AA's starting focus: Righting the wrongs *we have* committed
- ACA inner child healing: love and nurturing. Addressing *the impact of other people's* wrongs
- ACA's dual truth: Others have wronged us, and we have wronged others

Are Traditional Steps 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)
- Trusting an Unseen Higher Power (Steps 2, 3, & 11)

Are Traditional Steps 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.

Are Traditional Steps Inner-Child Friendly?

Tony A., 1991: “The AA Steps not only are not appropriate for adult children of alcoholics. I believe that the AA steps drive ACoAs crazy.”

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

Rethinking the Steps

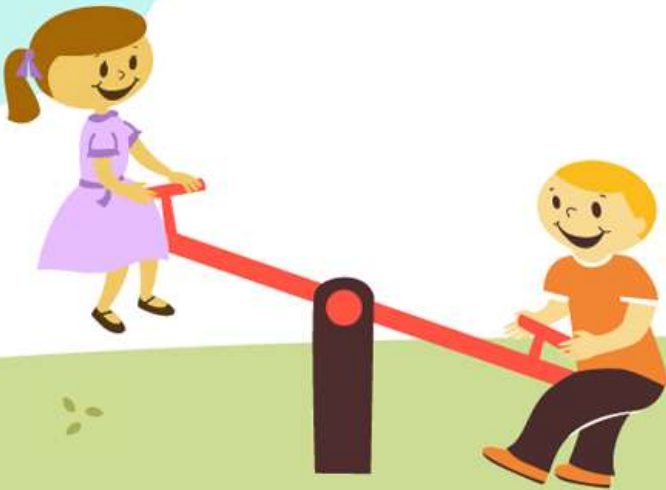
‘AA’ Steps: Focus on Amend to Others

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-Focused Steps



Rethinking the Steps

Examine our lives in two distinct stages

First Focus: Only our first 8-10 years of life

Later Focus: Our teen and adult years



Rethinking the Steps

Start by Imagining Your Child (meditation with photo)



*Focus on the child you
were before starting Steps.*

Child-Focused Step 1 (Attention on 0 to 8-10 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-Focused Step 4 (Attention on 0 to 8-10 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-Focused Step 5 (Attention on 0 to 8-10 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-Focused Step 5 (Attention on 0 to 8-10 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’*

Child-Focused Steps 6 & 7 (Attention on 0 to 8-10 years)

- ‘AA-style’ Step 6: Willing to have God remove “all our defects of character”
- A childhood-focused Steps 6 & 7 question: When we were 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-Focused Step 8 (Attention on 0 to 8-10 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-Focused Step 9 (Attention on 0 to 8-10 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.”

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- 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?

ACA healing starts with the Inner Child's needs. Child-focused Steps 1, 4, and 5 help our child safely accept, share, and grieve losses.

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Reparenting or 12 Steps?

Child-friendly Steps 6 & 7 release our Inner Child from shame or guilt for our family's failures. Steps 8 & 9 ask our Loving Parent to validate our child's injuries and pledge to protect the child daily.

Traditional 12 steps and later recovery

- 1) By doing “child-focused” steps first, we can later do the Traditional 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) A Traditional 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.

Matching 'Child-Focused' And 'Adult' Steps To Personal Experience



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.'



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