

## THE 12 STEPS OF ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over the past abuse – that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood Him*.

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

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

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong and when we made progress, promptly admitted it.

Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## **12 TRADITIONS OF ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS**

**Tradition 1:** Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS unity.

**Tradition 2:** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

**Tradition 3:** Adults Abused As Children, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation. The only requirement for ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS membership is a desire to heal from the past abuse.

**Tradition 4:** Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting another group or ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS as a whole.

**Tradition 5:** Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the Adults Abused As Children who still suffer. We do this by practicing the 12 Steps of ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS ourselves.

**Tradition 6:** An Adult Abused As Children Anonymous group ought never endorse, finance, or lend our name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

**Tradition 7:** Every ADULT ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

**Tradition 8:** ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

**Tradition 9:** ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS groups, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

**Tradition 10:** ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS has no opinion on outside issues; hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

**Tradition 11:** Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, films, and other public media.

**Tradition 12:** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

## THE WORDING IN THE 12 STEPS

**We** is the first word of each of the 12 Steps of ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS. Even though it is only written out in Step 1, it is implied that “We” begins all the Steps. We understand that the Steps are not designed to be gone through by ourselves. It is our relationship with a Power greater than ourselves that is paramount in helping us create the changes in our lives that we have needed. It is *this* power that guides, supports and helps us through the Steps. We are not alone. The idea and exploration of this greater Power is up to each of us as individuals. Even then, it is not uncommon for our understanding of this power to change over time.

Some of the common references that people use to relate to this **Power** are:

Spirit	God/Goddess
Universal Intelligence	Higher Self
Higher Power	Divine Mind
Source	Tao
All That Is	Great Mystery
Nature	Universe

Adults Abused As Children Anonymous is a non-denominational program. We do not discuss religious views in the meetings.

The pronoun **Him** and the word **God** used in the 12 Steps of ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS have been retained from the original 12 Steps of

Alcoholics Anonymous written in 1939. Adults Abused As Children Anonymous has no opinion on the gender of a Power greater than ourselves.

### **A sponsor is also a part of the “We”**

In addition to a Power greater than ourselves, we also go through the Steps with other members of the ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS program. We are encouraged to ask a specific member to be our sponsor. A sponsor is a trusted member who guides or helps us as we progress through each Step. Ideally, they have been through the Steps themselves. (Some ask a therapist, clergy, mentor or a trusted friend to be their sponsor, since confidentiality is paramount!) We all share something in common in this 12 Step group...a childhood of abuse. We connect with others who understand and are ‘there’ for us when we need them. The Steps were not designed to be done in isolation and sometimes we need another to hold the space for us to fall apart. However, some of us who do not have access to a meeting will successfully progress through the Steps with another trusted person.

## **VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS OF ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS**

### **VISION STATEMENT:**

We are a vibrant community of Adults Abused as Children leading healthy and satisfying lives as beacons of hope for all.

### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

To empower Adults Abused as Children to create inner peace and lasting change through using the 12 Steps of Adults Abused As Children Anonymous. To inspire people to share their journey of healing from victim to wholeness.



## **What is ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS?**

ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS is a program of 12 Steps for Adults Abused As Children to follow to help us heal from our child abuse. The program suggests that we attend group meetings on a regular basis, if possible. We are supported and organized only by our members. It operates independently of any outside funding, thus we are a fellowship of men and women who come together with a common issue as adults abused as children. We have no fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone.

As Adults Abused As Children, we may discover a new action we could take or a new attitude we could adopt by listening to others as they work through the 12 Steps themselves and, in addition, our share may help another. The only requirement is the desire to heal. All of the Steps are a suggested program of recovery based on the experiences of those who came before us.

As we work through the Steps, it is advised that we choose another member of ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS to be our sponsor. A sponsor is someone we trust who has already worked the Step we are on and can assist us in understanding it for ourselves as we go through it. We always choose who our sponsor is and we can change sponsors for any reason at any time.

The anonymous aspect of the program reminds us that everything shared from one member to another, by any member in the meeting or outside of it, is held in the strictest nature of confidentiality. In addition, we realize that although we are each unique in our individuality, we are all equal in the program with none of us being more important or special than another.

As adults we need a safe place where we can go to feel supported, where we can grow and become better informed about the effects that child abuse has had on our lives. We will discover how our past abuse has shaped who we are today so we can begin our path to lasting change and find the healing that we have so longed for. This is the goal of the 12 Step program of ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS.

## **WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?**

### **What is child abuse?**

Child abuse has been described as maltreatment or neglect resulting in the harm of a child. The people who decide whether we were abused or not is *us*. No one but us may know what really happened and what it was really like. Only we know if we are an Adult Abused As A Child.

### **Abuse is abuse is abuse**

An individual's abuse is not less significant, or more significant or traumatic, if it happened only once or if it went on for months or even years. It is not about the length of time or the number of times that it happened for the effects to be dramatic. Regardless of the types of abuse, the results of child abuse for Adults Abused as Children are far more similar than they are different. There is no hierarchy of trauma in the types of abuse.

## **SOME TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE**

-physical

-sexual

-emotional

-psychological/mental

-neglect/abandonment

-government program

-ritual

-religious

## WHAT IS SELF-LOVE?

### We Love Ourselves

As children we may have assumed that it was our parents' job to love us; now that we are adults, we learn that it is *our* job alone to love ourselves. It is not the responsibility of our spouse or partner; nor is it our children's job either. We are each accountable for loving ourselves. The love others give us is a gift, not their responsibility, fulfilling our expectations. (They were not put on the face of this earth just to love us!) Since some of us did not feel loved as a child, as adults we still have the very strong longing to feel loved by another and think we need their love to be happy. However, it is good news for Adults Abused As Children to find out that we can satisfy our longing to be loved by loving ourselves and allowing our Higher Power and others to love us. **We see that the experience of feeling loved now is possible because it is in our hands, not someone else's.** We make a lifelong decision to love ourselves no matter what! We are aware that this decision opens up a whole new world of possibilities for us. We are no longer trying to get love from someone else to feel good.

Many of us have developed attention-seeking skills to feel loved, but now we can surrender these old ways and just love ourselves as we are. We surrender being a "goody two shoes" so we'll be appreciated and surrender telling others what they want to hear, whether we believe it or not. We let go of putting others' wants before our own, so they won't leave us. We release the need to maintain silence as we play small, so as not to take the focus off another. As we surrender one day at a time, we find we don't need to be anything other than whom or what we are today to feel loved. We learn to give it to ourselves and are open to receive it from a Higher Power.

## **WORKING THE PROGRAM OF ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS**

Newcomers often ask, “How do we work the program of ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS?” Going through the 12 Steps gives us a way to structure our lives in sync with what we want, in addition to teaching us how to do it. The most effective way to begin, is to go through each Step, preferably in order beginning with Step 1. Since one Step builds on the others, we gain understanding from a previous one in order to work the Step we’re on. Focusing on the Steps is a tool others have found helpful. We do this by reading literature on a particular Step or about a certain situation, journaling about it and sharing it with someone else, such as a sponsor. As we go through each Step we see how it applies to our lives today and also how it sheds light on what it brings up from the past.

Involving others breaks our isolation tendency. We practice trust, honesty and courage when we choose to connect with another person. Making phone calls to another member or trusted friend, attending ADULTS ABUSED AS CHILDREN ANONYMOUS meetings, listening to others share their experiences and sharing our own are ways to include others in our program of recovery.

Service, or giving of self, offers us the opportunity to make a difference as well as gives us a way of expressing our gratitude for all we have received. In the program we might sponsor another member, call someone who needs support or volunteer at a meeting.

Maintaining our desire and inner passion for happiness by caring about ourselves is the foundation of the program, as this desire motivates, fuels and directs our thinking and our actions. We knew what we wanted for ourselves, but we didn’t know how to make it happen. Repeating meaningful affirmations, prayer and meditation are effective ways to connect with a Power greater than ourselves

which reminds us that with help, we can change. We welcome personal growth knowing it is the key to these changes and we discover choices we didn't even know we had.

We use all these tools to support our aim of rebuilding our lives one day at a time!