

ASCA NEWS

November 1999

THE MORRIS CENTER *for healing from child abuse*

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Notes from Executive Director, *George Bilotta, PhD*

As I view the backyard through the window panes of my study, I regrettably concede that the brilliant colors of October are quickly fading, giving away to brownish tones and thinning branches. It has been a glorious array of festive colors and autumn smells this past month. We had our Indian summer two weeks ago. There is a definite chill that now hangs in the air. The leaves are swirling about and my lighter weight jacket has receded into the back of the closet with the wool coming forward.

Recently, I loaded up on our web site a new section - *Resources: Some practical everyday resources for adult survivors*. Our resource listing will always be a work-in-progress with ongoing updates as new resources are discovered and older resources change. Our resource list is designed to be current, practical and user-friendly. It is fashioned for survivors who want practical everyday resources to help them with their ongoing process of recovery. Our resource page seems to offer something new and helpful, rather than just a compendium of resource sites. If you have a moment, tap into our new resource page. Let me know what you think and if you have any suggestions.

My projects for November include inaugurating our Internet ASCA Meeting. I will also focus some of my time on contacting as many survivor organizations as possible to encourage them to inform their membership about our new web site and what it has to offer for their members or clientele. Additionally, I will take this opportunity to ask that they update our information on their web site or add us to their web site referral listing. If you ever come across a web site that has inaccurate or outdated information about The Morris Center and/or ASCA, e-mail me with the information. I will contact them with the updated information for their web site. Finally, I will be writing an article about The Morris Center and ASCA for the January/February edition of *The Chorus*, the newsletter of VOICES In Action.

I did not receive much of a response to October's question concerning what does it mean to recover, heal from childhood abuse. Consequently, I have nothing to report concerning a summary of what others think. I will try something like this again at a future time.

To conclude, if you are interested in helping to inaugurate our Internet ASCA Meeting by writing a short share to be posted on our web site, just go to our web site: www.ascasupport.org and click on "Internet ASCA Meeting" for guidelines to submitting a share for the Internet ASCA Meeting.

Happy Thanksgiving! The holidays will soon be upon us.

ASCA Meeting Ongoing Education Moment:

Guideline #3:

This is an anonymous meeting. Only first names are used.

ASCA meetings and the ASCA program follow standard guidelines concerning anonymity. Participants in ASCA have no obligation to reveal their name or anything specific about who they are. The only requirement for participation in ASCA is that we self-identify as survivors of childhood abuse: physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse or neglect. During the meeting only first names are used. Even a pseudonym is okay. Anonymity respects the boundaries of participants. We are all in various stages of recovery. Some stages and some people require more anonymity than others.

Respectful anonymity also extends beyond ASCA meetings. Outside of official meeting business, i.e., co- secretaries conferring with each other, or with other members of the ASCA meeting group concerning ASCA meeting business, participants should not be contacting each other unless explicit permission has been specifically given by the person being contacted. Many friendships will form between long-term ASCA members which is a wonderful and natural evolution of being part of a long-term group. When friendships have developed, permission to contact each other is extended both implicitly and explicitly. Developing friendships does not violate anonymity.

On the other hand, ASCA has the custom of the telephone support list whereby volunteers list their name and telephone number to be a support contact for the week. It is okay to contact a person who has volunteered as a support person, but only for that week. It is not okay and it goes against the spirit of anonymity when someone retains that telephone number and calls the person several weeks later. The telephone list is only active for a week. Many people do not place their name and number on the list every week.

It is a severe breach of anonymity when a person uses a telephone support number to try to make a social engagement. Though ASCA does not have any rules or guidelines concerning socializing outside of the ASCA meeting, pursuing someone for a date is not customary and should only be done if it is perfectly clear (without ambiguity) that someone desires to be contacted for a social engagement.

In the past there have been occasions when a member has tried to pursue another member for the purposes of dating. Though we meet potential partners in a wide variety of situations and this includes ASCA, pursuing an unwanted, unsolicited social engagement is contrary to the spirit of anonymity and the philosophy of ASCA. Many wonderful friendships and relationships will emerge through being a part of an ASCA meeting for an extended period of time. The guideline of anonymity implies that people should be left alone unless they specifically state that they want contact outside the meeting.

Rotation C Topic: Possible ASCA Meeting Topic for November

Thankfulness: Placing Daily Life Into Perspective

Our thoughts often turn to the notion of thankfulness given the upcoming Thanksgiving Holiday. Some people may quibble and quarrel: "What do I have to be thankful for? Look at how my child abuse has impeded my life. I'm not thankful. I'm actually quite pissed-off." Experiencing and expressing our anger is necessary and pertinent to recovery. But it is also just a small part of who we are, i.e., angry, pissed-off people. If we choose however, to live primarily from this perspective, i.e., through the angry feelings, the anger will tilt, distort and deform our daily life direction. It will disproportionately influence and ultimately be unhelpful as to how we see life and the world. How we hear ourselves and others. How we feel about everything within us, around us and in the universe. How we touch the world and allow life to touch us. How we open or close our heart.

The very phenomenon of anger results in closing us up and closing us off from ourselves, people and the world. Cultivating thankfulness does not deny, negate nor erase our angry feelings. Rather cultivating thankfulness in reference to anger places our anger into perspective. It is a restorative antidote for the effects of experiencing and expressing the anger we have concerning our childhood abuse. For many people cultivating thankfulness may even focus and empower their anger into constructive action, into positive cathartic expression. Cultivating thankfulness in our everyday lives places life into perspective, places our pain into perspective, places our efforts in recovery from childhood abuse into perspective. A sense of thankfulness brings about increased harmony and balance into daily life.

Living daily life from a thankful orientation helps us to appreciate more of who we are today, how far along in recovery we have traveled, how precious various people in our lives are to us. Cultivating thankfulness supports us in living life from a perspective that our cup is half full rather than drained and half empty. Not- taking-for-granted everything that is beautiful, working well, sacred and bountiful in our lives is an enduring and reinforcing effect of cultivating thankfulness. By cultivating thankfulness in our everyday lives, the colors of life seem brighter, the hassles and difficulties of daily life seem manageable and less intrusive. The way we interact with people and especially with ourselves seems increasingly gentle and inviting. Cultivating thankfulness opens our heart to the wonder and the possibilities that surround us.

There are many ways to cultivate thankfulness. One practical way is simply to choose thankfulness as a meditative theme for the month of November. During spare moments, transition moments, we could dwell on the theme of thankfulness as a meditative energizing pause. We wake up in the morning and remind ourselves that today's theme is "thankfulness". By simply attending to and acknowledging what is good about our life today, what is working well, what brings pleasure, beauty and enjoyment into our life, this all cultivates thankfulness. Over a period of days and weeks our orientation of living life seems to be pointed in the primary direction of thankfulness. We move from a stance of taking

much of daily life for granted and move toward a stance of reflective thankfulness. This musing with the theme of thankfulness unfolds as a soothing salve, an energy booster, an instructive teacher. Cultivating thankfulness is the gateway to hope, the coal for stoking the furnace promoting the heat and passion for life, the restorative power that continuously renews and refreshes our daily journey.

Questions:

What have been the consequences in my life for not cultivating a sense of thankfulness into my daily rhythm?

How will cultivating thankfulness effect the usual way that I approach my day, other people, the tasks that I undertake on a daily basis?

What are some practical ways that will assist in cultivating a thankful orientation in my daily life?

For a listing of additional topics for rotation C meetings refer to the last section of the ASCA Meeting Support Materials manual or click her to link you to ["Suggested Topics for Rotation C Meetings."](#)

Co-Secretary Update

Beginning with the November issue of the *ASCA NEWS* any updates for current Co-Secretaries of ASCA meetings will be included in this section of the *ASCA NEWS*. Co-Secretaries or some designated person from the meeting downloads the *ASCA NEWS*. It is duplicated and distributed to the meeting membership.

If your meeting has not yet forwarded its 4th Quarter fee for its listing on our web site, please send it in promptly. For information refer to the last paragraph in the "ASCA Meeting List" section of our web page or [click here to link you to "Instructions for listing..."](#)

For the San Francisco Bay area, the fee for the ASCA telephone voice mail listing is also pass due. Please forward if you have not yet accomplished this and make payable your \$15 fee for the 4th Quarter to: Dorothy Boerste, 537 Franklin Street . #307 . San Francisco . CA . 94109.


For smaller ASCA meetings, please remember that there is a new provision to customize an ASCA meeting when there are fewer than 7 people in attendance. You might want to review these options if this pertains to your meeting situation. These options are found in the *ASCA Meeting Format & Support Materials* manual under the heading "Customizing the ASCA Meeting Format" or [click here to link you to "Customizing..."](#)

If you have a question or a situation that needs discussion, you can always reach George Bilotta, Executive Director, by e-mailing him or telephoning him directly in Massachusetts 508.835.6054. Never hesitate to e- mail or call.

Thank you for making your meeting possible. Without dedicated Co-Secretaries, ASCA could not exist.

Observations, Questions, Comments

If you have any observations, questions and/or comments that you want to share concerning ASCA and THE MORRIS CENTER, George Bilotta, Executive Director, welcomes your inquiries, phone: 508.835.6054, e-mail: tmc_asca@dnai.com.

Click here to  us with your responses to some or all of the following.