

ASCA News • February 2000

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From the Desk of Executive Director George Bilotta

As we move deeply into the middle of winter there seems to be a chilling silence outside my window. I have noticed that the birds who usually dine at the backyard feeder stay away when the temperature dips below freezing.

Recently several snow storms have blanketed the area with a deep cover of white. Even the wind sounds cold and void. Yet as I look at the leafless oriental maple tree outside my window, hundreds of dormant buds clearly grace the tree's branches. This beautiful magnificent tree though numbed into inactivity by winter's bitter chill, still retains its innate potential to eventually unfold into its splendor and glory.

Analogously, it seems that our past childhood abuse was a bitter chill that numbed into inactivity part of the splendor and beauty of who we are. Though many routinely feel the chill of low-self esteem, depression, anxiety, self-doubt, confusion, etc., we still retain our innate potential to fully unfold into the wonderful, talented, energized and caring people that comprise the core of who we are. Perhaps when we experience some of the ongoing consequences in our everyday lives from the numbing chill of our past abuse, we might try to view the yet to unfold buds that adorn us interiorly and exteriorly. Pausing to see and feel the parts of us that have yet to unfold in their fulness, can often instill a sense of hope and encouragement. It can bring comfort and reassurance. As we slowly work our recovery and incrementally raise the temperature of our inner environment, a fuller unfolding of who we are continues to emerge.

In this issue of the ASCA News, there are the usual month's suggestions for the rotation C ASCA meeting topic and an ongoing education moment. In addition, there is a poem submitted by James Daniel and a new column, "A Reflective Moment" which I plan to continue every month. As I mentioned in January, the turn of the millennium seems to call us to respond differently from our usual approach to dealing with life. Instead of moving immediately into action, through this new column I want to encourage all to a year of pausing and reflecting on some of the foundational issues that our lives rest upon.

My long awaited trip to San Francisco has finally been arranged for early March. I plan to visit any ASCA meeting that would find it beneficial for me to attend. Perhaps at the meetings I attend we could have a business meeting so there will be time to address any issues or concerns. I will be in contact with all the oo-secretaries during the next couple weeks.



A Reflective Moment

The Pause that Refreshes

by George Bilotta

There are fundamental questions concerning life that we all respond to in one way or another. Some people by pausing and reflecting over a period of time and by repeatedly revisiting the question(s) respond directly to life's questions. Other people tend to respond indirectly, in that they rarely think about the questions. They seldom if ever pause to ponder, to speculate, to consider fundamental questions. The answers we give to such questions point us in certain directions as we pass through life. Consequently some people travel through life with a compass, with confidence, with direction. Others, who do not spend the time to pause and reflect, often seem to be lost or seem to wander without purpose, without direction.

How a question is phrased, or how to ask the more precise question, is also important. Even the phrasing of a fundamental life question already points us in a certain direction. For example, we are sometimes asked, "What do you want to get out of life? Or we might ask ourselves, "what do I want out of life?" At first glance this seems to be a basic question to which we should respond. Yet the question is already slanting us in a specific direction, the direction of the "I", the "ego", the "me first". When we live our lives from an "ego" perspective, from the "I" perspective, from the "me" perspective, it tends to narrow our view of the world, it tend to reduce the possibilites. It is more like looking through a tube. We can not view the totality of what is around us when we view life through a tube.

Alternatively, perhaps the primary question could be phrased, "to what does life call me, or what does life ask of me? I think this is the more foundational question. When stated in this manner, it requires that one turn 360 degrees in order to take in all the possibilities. It is truly an open question and a thorough investigation, rather than the previous question that tends to be narrowing and somewhat closed.

I think that our recovery efforts are encouraged or stymied by which fundamental question concerning life we ask, and to which we respond. Life is larger than any one individual person. Life encompasses, intertwines and interacts on some level with everything that has preceded us and everything that presently lives around us. We are not isolated segments of reality, but rather part of a great dynamic force that perpetuates all life in its various wonderful forms.

As I mentioned last month, I think it is worthwhile to spend some of our time reflecting on some of life's most fundamental questions as we slowly move into a new millennium. So perhaps during the month you might dwell on the question - "What is life asking of you?"



ASCA Meeting Ongoing Education Moment: Art of Supportive Feedback

Supportive feedback, as an art form, increases our ability to be gracious people. It is a skill that we can learn and promote in our daily lives. For our ASCA meetings, supportive feedback helps to build community within the meeting, adding a sense of cohesiveness, understanding and compassion. For our daily lives, the art of supportive feedback is an essential communication skill. Increasing our ability to provide supportive feedback enhances the quality of our relationships within the family, workplace, with friends and at play.

As an art-filled skill, supportive feedback, is a particular way or stance of being in the world. People who have cultivated the art of supportive feedback move through their day effortlessly and spontaneously being supportive of others and in turn themselves. Developing the art of supportive feedback is helpful for people who may be prone to egoism, narcissism, navel gazing, and/or have an imbalance between the "me" and the "we". It helps to round off those rough edges about ourselves.

As stated in our ASCA Meeting Handout, supportive feedback is the only type of feedback permitted in our meetings. "Supportive comments include statements that are empathetic, nurturing, encouraging, affirming, and/or validating. Supportive feedback is not a time to give a mini-share. It is an opportunity to say something supportive directly to the presenter..."

One way to promote the development of supportive feedback is to make a conscious choice every morning for a week to go out of our way to be supportive to specific people in our lives. Conscious practice helps to cultivate the art of supportive feedback in our lives.



Poetry

Son of Daddy Gander

by James Daniel, Copyright 1999

The Son of Daddy Gander
Was not his Father's son
Nor was he the offspring
Of his cold Medusa mum.
He must have come from some place
To which they's never been.
He never come a-knockin'
But somebody let him in.

They tried to force him
Into a mold
They wanted to make him
Just one of the fold

But he was stubborn
And that made them mad.
Wanting to be him
Got labeled him "bad".

They broke his legs,
Then gave him crutches
Just so he'd stay
In their clutches.
Never to fly
Too close to the sun
Never to know
An iota of fun.

Except when he writes
To escape from his plights
And remembers in tidbits
The places he's from
And can see on the paper
The real himself some.



Rotation C Topic:

Possible ASCA Meeting Topic for February

Depression: The Yoke of Childhood Abuse

We all know, though it differs from person to person, what depression feels like: the energylessness, the lethargy, without purpose, the dread, the disinterest in life, etc. Depression is perhaps the single most universal feeling and experience that survivors of childhood abuse tend to share with each other. Depression's insidiousness creeps into our very core, coating and cooling our being, our spirit like a winter's ice storm coating, freezing and encasing anything uncovered and unprotected.

Questions:

1. What are the usual characteristics of your style of depression?
 2. At this stage of recovery, how does depression creep up on you?
 3. Are there situations in your life that promote and/or increase your depression?
 4. When depression zaps you, how do you go about soothing yourself?
 5. Looking back on past episodes and experiences of depression, was there anything that helped to lift the depression?
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Co-Secretary Update

Any updates for current Co-Secretaries of ASCA meetings are included in this section of the ASCA NEWS. In addition, Co-Secretaries or some designated person from the meeting should be downloading the ASCA NEWS. It is then duplicated and distributed to the meeting membership.

Remember that the fee for the 1st Quarter of 2000 for listing your meeting on our web site is presently due. For information concerning this refer to the last paragraph in the "ASCA Meeting List" section of our web page.

For the San Francisco Bay area ASCA meetings, the \$15 fee for the 1st Quarter of 2000 to support the ASCA telephone voice mail listing is also presently due. Please forward your payment of \$15 payable to: Dorothy Boerste. Mail to Dorothy Boerste, 1537 Franklin St. #307, San Francisco, CA, 94109.

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



Announcement!

"The Third Annual Ritual Abuse, Secretive Organizations and Mind Control Conference" will be held on August 5 and 6, 2000 at the DoubleTree Hotel at Bradley International Airport (between Hartford, CT and Springfield, MA). The purpose of the conference will be to help survivors of ritual abuse and to help stop future occurrences of ritual abuse and mind control. The conference will be for survivors, co-survivors, helping professionals and others interested in the above topic.

For more information write S.M.A.R.T., PO Box 1295, Easthampton, MA 01027-1295 USA E-mail: smartnews@aol.com, Current conference information is also available at: <http://members.aol.com/smartnews/smart-2000-conference.htm>



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, welcomes your inquiries, phone: 508.835.6054, e-mail: georgebilotta@cs.com. If you would like to contribute a poem, story, article, etc. to our ASCA News please contact us.