

## Welcome To ASCA<sup>SM</sup>

*If you are new to ASCA, we recommend that you read this handout prior to sharing. Your understanding of our guidelines and procedures is important. Please study this "Welcome to ASCA" handout at your leisure. If you have any questions, the co-facilitators will be happy to assist you.*

ASCA<sup>SM</sup> participants commit to working cooperatively and empathetically with each other. ASCA<sup>SM</sup> meetings are **not** intended to be psychotherapy or to substitute for consultation with a licensed mental health professional. The Morris Center's *Survivor to Thriver* manual and other helpful materials are available at [ascasupport.org](http://ascasupport.org).

**By participating in this ASCA meeting, we all agree to abide by the guidelines and spirit of ASCA. Each member is responsible for keeping the meeting focused on recovery and discussion of ASCA-related topics.**

### Tips for Participation:

- For anonymity, please give only your first name
- Prior to the first meeting, talk to the co-facilitators to let them know you are new to the meeting and to review any questions you may have
- Download or purchase a copy of the *Survivor to Thriver* manual from our website at [ascasupport.org](http://ascasupport.org)

### Flow of ASCA Meetings

1. Opening Comments by Co-Facilitators, Readings
2. Rotation B and C only: Presenter (maximum 15 minutes)
3. Rotation B and C only: Feedback to Presenter (10 minutes)
4. Tag Shares (no feedback in tag shares, except Rotation A meeting)
5. Closure Comments
6. Announcements & Closing

### Rotation Sequence and Meeting Focus

Our ASCA meeting formats rotate. This helps us cover the stages and tasks associated with healing the emotional and behavioral wounds caused by childhood abuse. It aids us in transforming our identities from victims to survivors to thrivers.

Rotation A – Meeting has an open topic. This means that our shares may relate to any aspect of our childhood abuse histories; the Stages and Steps; our struggles and successes; any of the various efforts we are making to move on with our lives; or how we are transforming our identities from victim to survivor to thriver.

Rotation B – Meeting we will concentrate on one of the steps. A volunteer will read the section from the *Survivor to Thriver* manual. Consider reading and working through some of the exercises pertaining to this step prior to the meeting alone, with a buddy, or with your therapist.

Rotation C – Meeting we will concentrate on one of the topics in the C reader. A volunteer will read the section from the reader. Consider reading and working through some of the materials prior to the meeting alone, with a buddy, or with your therapist.

## Meeting Guidelines

Please remember that **we all bear responsibility** to keep this meeting **helpful and safe**.

<b>Do:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Show respect for each other and for the group</li><li>◆ Stick only to the requested feedback categories</li><li>◆ Speak about your own feelings/experience and use “I” statements</li><li>◆ Stay focused on the step or topic</li><li>◆ When in doubt, tone down your comments or ask for clarification from the co-facilitators</li></ul>
<b>Don't:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Don't shout or use excessive profanity in the group</li><li>◆ Don't use “should” statements</li><li>◆ Don't criticize, belittle, attack, or “tease” anyone in the group</li><li>◆ Don't try to psychoanalyze or “take another person's inventory”</li><li>◆ Don't interrupt another speaker or have side conversations</li></ul>

In addition to our dos and don'ts, we ask that you observe the same guidelines as all ASCA meetings:

- Please join on time and remain until the conclusion of the meeting. Entering late or leaving the meeting early is disruptive to fellow participants.
- ASCA meetings are exclusively for adult survivors of physical, sexual, or emotional childhood abuse.
- This is an anonymous meeting. Only first names are used.
- What you hear today is told in confidence and should not be repeated outside this meeting.
- We ask that no one attend our meeting under the influence of alcohol or drugs, unless it is a physician-prescribed medication.
- ASCA meetings are not intended for survivors who are currently perpetrating abuse on others. Talking about past or present perpetrator type behavior is not permissible.
- Language that is considered derogatory concerning race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or other minority status is unacceptable in the meeting.
- By participating in this meeting, we all agree to abide by the spirit of ASCA, our guidelines, and any interventions by the co-facilitators.

## Speaker Guidelines

When you are the 15-minute presenter, what you say is important for you and for others in the meeting. In general, we encourage you to

- speak about your feelings and **use “I” statements** vs. “you” statements
- speak in a way that people can “take in” what you are saying (**no advice-giving, criticism, psychoanalyzing, shouting, or “acting out”**)
- try to stay focused on the step or topic for today
- share about your own experience, strength, and hope (e.g., what it was like, what happened, what it's like now)

## Art of Supportive Feedback

Following a volunteer's presentation or share, the speaker may request feedback from the meeting members. Members will have about 30 seconds each, sometimes longer. Be sure to stick to the time limits that the co-facilitators specify. The speaker chooses from the people who volunteer, and may discontinue the feedback process at any time.

*Supportive comments include statements that are empathetic, nurturing, encouraging, affirming, and/or validating.*

Feedback is not a time to give a mini-share. It is an opportunity to say something supportive directly to the presenter. Also, even if the same supportive comment has already been made by someone, repeating the supportive comment in one's own words is helpful for the presenter to hear again from another person. We often need to hear the same support many times before it takes root. When we support the presenter, we are also supporting each other and ourselves. We all absorb supportive comments vicariously.

## Categories of Feedback

**Remember:** feedback is not a mini-share. It is an opportunity to say something supportive directly to another person.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
1. Supportive Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Mirroring the speaker by sharing your own experiences</li> <li>◆ Offering direct acknowledgement and encouragement. Examples:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nurture</i> - I feel so much admiration for you. I would have been scared in that same situation.</li> <li>• <i>Affirm</i> - I agree with you. I know myself how hard it is to try and reach out for help.</li> <li>• <i>Validate</i> - What you said really resonated with me. I appreciate hearing how angry you said you were feeling about what happened.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2. Information and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Helpful hints</li> <li>◆ Resource information such as books, movies, or groups that you may have found helpful. Examples:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Hints</i> - I discovered a wonderful way to calm myself when I feel bad memories overwhelming me at work. I use a breathing technique called "4-box." It consists of...</li> <li>• <i>Resources</i> – I am reading a book called, ___, that's giving me so many insights on how to set better boundaries with my family and friends. I've tried some of the suggestions and they worked. I highly recommend it!</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Cross-Talk

Cross-talk is engaging in direct dialogue with someone or referencing someone else in the group or the group as a whole (e.g. saying "we" or "all of us in this group")—whether during your own share or at any other time. It also includes referring to the content of another person's share. The only exception to this rule is the brief period following a person's share, if the speaker chooses to receive supportive feedback from the group. While you may want to share about something that someone else in the group has brought up, directly addressing that person by saying something like "What you said about..." or "When Joe said..." is cross-talk. While it may seem natural to refer to the other person, please refrain from doing so. Directly addressing another meeting member can provoke anxiety or be unwelcome.

## Safety Rules

- You may experience some strong feelings that may seem unexplainable or unexpected. See if you can allow yourself to experience these feelings here among other survivors.
- Should you feel safer leaving the meeting, please do so quietly. If you would like someone to talk to later, please let the co-facilitators know via e-mail after the meeting.
- **If you disagree with an intervention by a co-facilitator, please discuss the matter with the co-facilitator after the meeting. Please do not disrupt the meeting by trying to engage the co-facilitator about an intervention during the meeting** because this creates an unsafe environment for everyone. By participating in this meeting, you have agreed to abide by co-facilitator decisions.

## Daily Survival Tips

The following are some suggestions about what to do when the memories, feelings, thoughts, or sensations get to be more than you think you can handle. Start with the first tip and go down the list as needed until the crisis subsides. Add to or change this list to create a personal safety plan.

1. Ground yourself in the present by rubbing your hands or legs, stating your name and current information, such as your age, the date, etc.
2. Let them happen. Don't fight them, experience them in the safest way that you can.
3. Write in your journal.
4. Talk to someone you trust, such as a friend, fellow ASCA participant, or your therapist.
5. Remember the strengths that helped you survive as a child.
6. Do exercise, yoga, meditation, deep breathing, or a relaxation exercise.
7. Go to your "safe place" or call on your spirituality.
8. Do art—drawing, painting or collage—to express your feelings, organize your memories, and demonstrate your strength.
9. Call a telephone hotline.
10. Go to a hospital emergency room.

## A Partial List of Feelings

We experience a variety of feelings in any given situation. Sometimes our feelings may even seem contradictory. Reviewing this list might help you associate a label or word with the feelings you are experiencing **right now**.

<b>A</b>	<i>Abandoned, abused, accepted, accused, admired, adventurous, affectionate, affirmed, afraid, aggressive, aggravated, agitated, alarmed, alienated, alive, alone, ambivalent, angry, annoyed, antagonistic, anticipated, anxious, apathetic, appreciated, apprehensive, approved, arrogant, ashamed, assertive, attacked, attractive, awed, awkward,</i>
<b>B</b>	<i>Balanced, beaten, belligerent, betrayed, bewildered, bitter, blamed, bored, bothered, bugged, burned up</i>
<b>C</b>	<i>Capable, cared for, castrated, caustic, chagrined, challenged, cheated, closed, comfortable, comforted, compassionate, competent, complacent, compromised, concerned, confident, confused, congruent, connected, consumed, contaminated, controlled, out of control, creative, cross, cruel, crushed, curious,</i>
<b>D</b>	<i>Dead, deceived, defeated, defensive, defiant, degraded, dejected, delighted, deserving, desired, desperate, destroyed, devastated, dirty, disappointed, discontented, disgusted, disillusioned, disjointed, dismayed, distant, distorted, distracted, distressed, disturbed, dominated, domineering, drained, dread, drowning, drugged, dumb, dying,</i>
<b>E</b>	<i>Eager, edgy, egotistic, elated, embarrassed, embraced, empty, endangered, enraged, enthused, envious, evasive, exasperated, exhausted, exhilarated, exploited, explosive, exposed,</i>
<b>F</b>	<i>Failed, failure, fat, fatigued, fearful, fighting mad, floundering, fooled, forgiven, forgotten, fouled, free, friendless, friendly, frightened, frustrated, furious,</i>
<b>G</b>	<i>Galled, generous, genuine, gifted, gracious, grateful, gratified, greedy, grumpy, guilty,</i>
<b>H</b>	<i>Hate, hated, hatred, healed, heavy, helpless, hopeful, hopeless, hostile, hurt, hyperactive, hypocritical,</i>
<b>I</b>	<i>Ignored, immobilized, impatient, impotent, inadequate, indifferent, incompetent, inconsistent, in control, indecisive, independent, indignant, inferior, infuriated, inhibited, injured, insecure, irked, irritated, isolated, intense, integrated, intimate, intimidated, irrational, irritable,</i>
<b>J</b>	<i>Jealous, joyful, judged, judgmental, liberated, light, limited, lonely, like a loser, lost, lovable, loved, loyal,</i>
<b>M</b>	<i>Mad, manipulated, marked, masked, masochistic, melancholic, miffed, misinformed, misunderstood,</i>
<b>N</b>	<i>Naked, needy, neglected, noxious,</i>
<b>O</b>	<i>Obligated, offended, optimistic, outraged, overlooked, oversized, oversexed, overwhelmed,</i>
<b>P</b>	<i>Pain, panic, paranoid, passionate, peaceful, persecuted, perturbed, pessimistic, phony, pissed-off, playful, pleased, pleased, possessed, possessive, powerful, powerless, precious, preoccupied, pressured, private, protective, proud, provoked, punished, purposeful, put down, put out, puzzled,</i>
<b>R</b>	<i>Rageful, rambunctious, reassured, rejected, resentful, responsible, responsive, restrained, resurrected, revengeful, reverence, rewarded, rigid,</i>

<b>S</b>	<i>Sacred, sad, sadistic, scapegoated, scared, secretive, secure, seductive, seething, selfish, sensual, shaky, shamed, shocked, shy, sick, sincere, sinful, smothered, soiled, sorrowful, spontaneous, spiteful, stressed, strong, stubborn, stupid, subservient, superior, supported, suspicious, sympathetic,</i>
<b>T</b>	<i>Teed off, tender, terrified, threatened, ticked off, tired, tolerant, tolerated, traumatized, tranquil, triumphant, trusted, trusting, turned off,</i>
<b>U</b>	<i>Ugly, unable, unappreciated, unbalanced, uncertain, understood, unfulfilled, unhappy, unique, unloved, unprepared, upset, unresponsive, unlikable, uptight, used, useful, useless,</i>
<b>V</b>	<i>Vain, valuable, vengeful, vicious, vindicated, vindictive, violent, vulnerable,</i>
<b>W</b>	<i>Warm, weak, weary, whole, withdrawn, wonderful, worn out, worthless, worthy</i>
<b>Y</b>	<i>Youthful, yearning</i>
<b>Z</b>	<i>Zany, zealous</i>

## Closure Comments

Following the shares and prior to the announcements, meeting participants are invited to make a very brief (about 20 seconds or less) comment on how they are feeling as the meeting comes to a close.

One of the co-facilitators will begin the closing comments process, and it will then proceed in a round robin fashion. This is not the time to do a mini-share or to evaluate the meeting process. This is a time to **briefly express your feelings**.

### For example:

- **I feel** energized as I leave. I appreciate being able to just listen to shares.
- **I feel** exhausted. This is very tough work for me.
- I'm having a difficult time. **I'm feeling** a lot of pain and frustration.
- **I'm feeling** hopeful for the first time in a long time. Thank you.

## Closing Statement

(Read at the end of all meetings)

We have come together to face our past, united in survival,  
determined to rebuild our lives, by healing the pain and transforming our shame.

We will find comfort in our safe places, wherever they may be.

Feelings can be felt, memories can be recalled, and sensations can be soothed.

We close our meeting now with renewed faith in our power,  
armed with self-knowledge, fed by our strength drawn from survival,  
empowered by the challenge of change, and graced with a sense of hope for what our future can be.

# ASCA Statement of Philosophy

(Read at the beginning of all meetings)

## **Volunteer Reader One**

**We are here today to face our past and reclaim our lives as survivors of childhood abuse. We know intuitively or objectively that we were physically, sexually, or emotionally abused as children. We believe that our abuse has affected who we are as adults today. We are determined to remake our lives by taking back what was once taken from us - our innocence, our power, our right to determine who we are and how we will live in the world.**

## **Volunteer Reader Two**

**We hold our abusers responsible for the abuse, whomever they may be, for we, as children wanted only their love. We hold that only we are responsible for our lives as adults. We accept that recovery involves discussing the memories of our abuse. We believe that there is power in remembering despite the pain that it will bring. We accept that we cannot do this alone. We need the help of others to transform the shame into self-compassion, self-empowerment, and self-acceptance.**

## **Volunteer Reader Three**

**We believe that everyone has their own unique story to tell. We pledge to listen to every member's efforts to remember, grieve, and heal. We will offer respect, support, and hope to help challenge the self-judgments, self-criticism, and self-blaming that holds us hostage to our past. We will hold in confidence what we hear of others' most vulnerable secrets. We will allow everyone to take the lead in deciding what the past means for them.**

## **Volunteer Reader Four**

**We are prepared to commit our hearts, our minds, and our spirit to change our lives. We understand that we as children were victims. We believe that today as adults we are survivors. We trust that tomorrow with recovery we will live as thrivers. We pledge today to stand together united in our best efforts to heal from the past. We make this pledge to ourselves in the company of our peers on this day forward.**

# Stages and Steps

## Stage One — Remembering

1. I am in a breakthrough crisis, having gained some sense of my abuse.
2. I have determined that I was physically, sexually or emotionally abused as a child.
3. I have made a commitment to recovery from my childhood abuse.
4. I shall re-experience each set of memories as they surface in my mind.
5. I accept that I was powerless over my abusers' actions, which holds THEM responsible.
6. I can respect my shame and anger as a consequence of my abuse, but shall try not to turn it against myself or others.
7. I can sense my inner child whose efforts to survive now can be appreciated.

## Stage Two — Mourning

8. I have made an inventory of the problem areas in my adult life.
9. I have identified the parts of myself connected to self-sabotage.
10. I can control my anger and find healthy outlets for my aggression.
11. I can identify faulty beliefs and distorted perceptions in myself and others.
12. I am facing my shame and developing self-compassion.
13. I accept that I have the right to be who I want to be and live the way I want to live.
14. I am able to grieve my childhood and mourn the loss of those who failed me.

## Stage Three — Healing

15. I am entitled to take the initiative to share in life's riches.
16. I am strengthening the healthy parts of myself, adding to my self-esteem.
17. I can make necessary changes in my behavior and relationships at home and work.
18. I have resolved the abuse with my offenders to the extent acceptable to me.
19. I hold my own meaning about the abuse that releases me from the legacy of the past.
20. I see myself as a thriver in all aspects of life - love, work, parenting, and play.
21. I am resolved in the reunion of my new self and eternal soul.

Founded in 1991, The Norma J. Morris Center, [ascasupport.org](http://ascasupport.org), is an international nonprofit 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt service organization based in San Francisco. Its mission is to provide survivors of child abuse with economical and effective opportunities to recover from their trauma, and to assist all who seek to nurture their human spirit. The Morris Center started the Adult Survivors of Child Abuse support group program in 1993. If you have any questions, comments, complaints, or suggestions, please contact The Morris Center at [info@ascasupport.org](mailto:info@ascasupport.org).

### Disclaimer

ASCA is a community-based support group of peers. It is not a therapy group, and the meeting co-facilitators do not serve in the capacity of professionally trained therapists. The ASCA program should not be used as a substitute for professional care and services. The Norma J. Morris Center and your local ASCA meeting assume no responsibility for any damages, injuries, or losses that occur as a result of participation in ASCA support groups. You should always consult a trained professional with any questions about your specific needs and concerns. Always know your own limitations and factor in your own good judgment and common sense. Your use of any material provided on The Morris Center or local ASCA websites or participation in ASCA support groups constitutes your acceptance of the terms in this disclaimer.