

ASCA Co-Secretary and Co-Facilitator Training Manual



The Norma J. Morris Center
For healing from child abuse

Revision 11/2004

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1.0 Welcome/Manual Review

- 1.1 Welcome and Thanks for Participating in Training
- 1.2 Goals of the Workshop are to discuss, explore, and feel more comfortable with:
 - 1.2.1 The nature, structure and function of self-help support groups in general and ASCA in particular
 - 1.2.2 Co-Secretary duties, roles, and skills
 - 1.2.3 Communication and intervention skills
 - 1.2.4 ASCA support group process and dynamics
 - 1.2.4 Organization of ASCA and resources of The Morris Center
- 1.3 Our vision is that you will come away from this experience, feeling more:
 - Confident (about your skills and ability to learn how to facilitate ASCA meetings)
 - Secure (that you will have tools, resources, and support available) as a Co-Secretary/Co-Facilitator
 - Connected (to a wider community of ASCA meeting facilitators, Board of Directors members, and ASCA meeting veterans)
 - Inspired (about the ASCA program, your own leadership potential, and your own personal development)
 - Engaged (because you had fun learning)
- 1.4 We have built our learning curriculum (which includes pre-work, and follow-up mentoring) for ASCA Co-Secretaries and Co-Facilitators on the following performance objectives.

By the end of this learning process, participants will be able to:

 - Recognize that you don't have to be "perfect" in the role of Co-Secretary/Co-Facilitator
 - Explain the ASCA philosophy and meeting guidelines to other participants
 - Collaborate and communicate with your partners (as Co-Facilitators) before, during, and after the meetings
 - Create a safe and inviting environment for ASCA meeting participants
 - Describe how to access the tools, information, and resources available to help you facilitate meetings
 - Demonstrate how to handle simple situations that occur more frequently in meetings
 - Explain how to handle difficult situations that occur less frequently in meetings
 - Feel comfortable using the script to conduct a meeting
- 1.5 Focus of Workshop and Self-Study Manual: Training and Growth in Three Areas
 - 1.3.1 Organizational: how to run safe meetings

- 1.3.2 Personal: how to deal with own issues around abuse and recovery
- 1.3.3 Interpersonal: effective teamwork and group interaction skills
- 1.6 Workshop Incorporates Multiple Learning Modalities
 - 1.4.1 Experiential: role-plays and simulations
 - 1.4.2 Individual self-assessments and reflection
 - 1.4.3 Group discussion
 - 1.4.4 Question/answer sessions
 - 1.4.5 Self-Study: Reading materials in Manual
- 1.7 Overview of Training Manual
 - 1.5.1 Pre-Work: to help prepare you for learning process
 - 1.5.2 Post Self-Assessment: section numbers correspond to numbered sections in the body of the manual
 - 1.5.3 Meeting Kit: contains supplemental information to run an ASCA meeting

2.0 Pre-Work

The purpose of participating in the ASCA Co-Facilitator training is to

- Prepare and support you in being excellent Co-Secretaries/Co-Facilitators, and
- Help you to enhance your life

We will accomplish this by:

- Acknowledging self - strengths and areas requiring growth
- Fostering reflectivity (e.g., what am I feeling?)
- Developing skills, to respond to myself and to others

Our vision is that you will come away from this experience feeling more:

- Confident (about your skills and ability to learn how to facilitate ASCA meetings)
- Secure (that you will have tools, resources, and support available) as a Co-Secretary/Co-Facilitator
- Connected (to a wider community of ASCA meeting facilitators, Board of Directors members, and ASCA meeting veterans)
- Inspired (about the ASCA program, your own leadership potential, and your own personal development)
- Engaged (because you had fun learning)

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 To help you prepare for the upcoming workshop session, please read the following article on “Defining Self-Help Mutual Support Groups”

## **Pre-Workshop Reading: Defining Self-Help Mutual Support Groups**

As a facilitator of ASCA (Adult Survivors of Child Abuse) support groups, participants may ask you how we differ from or are similar to therapy groups, 12-Step groups, etc. Many of our new group members may have had exposure to and involvement with SIA (Survivors of Incest Anonymous), ISA (Incest Survivors Anonymous) or ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics).

New members may come with the expectation that our ASCA support groups operate similarly to 12-Step groups, the most widely known type of self-help program. However, there are many types of self-help mutual support groups. The United States Public Health -Service, at one time, estimated that there were more than 500,000 support groups meeting across the country on a regular basis.

### ***Therapy Groups vs. Support Groups***

The category that people most often confuse with support groups is that of *therapy groups*. Therapy groups have been a popular form of psychotherapy for nearly three decades. Because the popularity of therapy groups coincided with a leap in 12-Step attendance, many people mistakenly assume that support groups and therapy groups are essentially the same. There are some similarities - but there are also some significant defining differences.

#### Leadership:

- Therapy groups rely mainly on the guidance and expertise of a highly trained therapist. Members look to the therapist for help, generally paying a fee for this service.
- On the other hand, the leadership, authority and expertise in support groups reside with its participants. Members look to each other for help. Facilitators adopt their roles on a volunteer basis

#### Underlying Assumptions:

- Therapy groups are usually modeled on an assumption of "illness". Participants, therefore, need "treatment" (in this case, group treatment), which is moderated by a therapist
- Support groups presume that participants are fundamentally healthy and able to help themselves and each other.

#### Focus:

- The primary focus of therapy groups is emotional insight and growth.
- The focus of support groups can shift (from sharing emotions to exchanging information to social support) as needed.

### Methodology:

- Therapy groups typically focus on examining the past and looking at "root causes" to gain intellectual insight into current dysfunctional behavior. Therapists use active interventions and controlled group dynamics as tools to achieve insight, change and growth.
- The primary goal of support groups is social support and empowerment through unification and information. Sharing and self-disclosure among participants can lead to the by-product of emotional insight, change and growth. However, support group facilitators only intervene, as needed, to maintain safety and structure within the group.

Despite these differences, remember that support groups can *be therapeutic without being therapy*.

### **Categories of Mutual Support Groups**

We can categorize most mutual support groups according to the needs they address:

- Overcoming Addiction
- Overcoming Crises
- Social Support
- Victim/Patient Support.

In ASCA, we focus our social support on helping fellow survivors overcome and transcend painful victimization as children. ASCA support groups, therefore, span several categories: Overcoming Crisis, Social Support, and Victim/Patient Support.

### **A Common Definition of Self-Help Groups**

In 1989, the National Network of Mutual Help Centers developed the following working definition of "self-help groups" This definition contributed a valuable starting point for the development of ASCA's guidelines:

- A self-help group or mutual support group is a voluntary gathering of people who share common experiences or problems. Participants offer each other emotional and/or practical support based on the unique perspective only available to those who have shared these experiences.
- Self-Help groups are run by and for group members. Professional providers may participate in the self-help process at the request and sanction of the group.
- Self-Help includes discussion, sharing of information and experiences, and other activities that promote mutual support and empowerment
- Self-Help groups are open to people with common experiences and/or common concerns.

- Self-Help groups require no fees for participation, although a nominal donation may be requested in order to cover expenses

### ***Principles of Self-Help Mutual Support Groups***

These principles distinguish self-help groups from other types of groups:

- Open, honest communication is essential to the integrity of a support group.
- Together we can know and do more than any one of us alone. Each individual has value and can contribute to the group process.
- Each individual is the ultimate authority on what s/he needs.
- Each of us has the ability to use our inner and outer resources. Some of us use this ability more than others.

### ***Authority and Empowerment in Self-Help Groups***

These two important self-help concepts shaped ASCA's Guidelines:

**Authority** for decision-making regarding "appropriate" problem resolutions always resides with the individual participant. We consider our collective experience as the most powerful teacher on a topic. Although sensitive and knowledgeable professionals can make an important contribution to the support group, expertise regarding the topic is ultimately derived from the group's exploration of its members' common experience.

**Empowerment**, for the individual in a support group, comes from the realization that the source of "authority" and healing resides within the participants themselves. *The primary role of the facilitator is to make it easier for the participants to help each other make this discovery.*

### ***ASCA Support Group Purpose***

We can sum up the "why" of our guidelines by understanding our purpose for meeting together. We gather in a safe, caring, and supportive environment to:

- Be with others who understand and share the same challenges
- Work towards acceptance and healing of the difficult feelings, which accompany remembering, mourning and transcending the pain of our past
- Share approaches to recovery from our past and creative problem solving in our present lives
- Learn more about stopping the cycle of child abuse by healing ourselves and preventing its continuation with our own children and children's children
- Promote research, treatment and advocacy

- Remember that laughter, taking care of ourselves and planning for the future are essential for our well-being
- Help others who are going where we have been

### **Summary**

Now that we've finished our exploration of self-help mutual support groups and examined where ASCA fits within that spectrum of possibilities, we are ready to take a closer look at our guidelines and how to intervene when someone violates a guideline. As a Co-Secretary or Co-Facilitator for ASCA support groups, remember: our guidelines provide the basis for group safety and empowerment. We derived the guidelines from the knowledge and principles discussed in this article -- as well as the values, which the founding (and current) members of ASCA believe in and have agreed to uphold.

Try to make sure that every participant in your support group has a copy of the meeting guidelines handout and has read this important document. It will, ultimately, serve as an invaluable reference for "collectively responsible" group facilitation.

### **The Essence of How to Conduct All ASCA Meetings**

- We have the right to silence and anonymity - no one has to talk
- We agree to confidentiality - personal issues stay in the group
- We listen carefully to what others have to say - avoid side conversations
- We respect the group's ruling on cross-talk
- We affirm how we feel - it's okay to cry, laugh, and express anger
- We do not condone and cannot allow currently active perpetrators of abuse to attend our meetings
- We affirm the facilitators' and Co-Secretaries' role: to help us create a positive and supportive experience for all
- We respect and maintain time-frames for speaking and shares
- We begin and end on time

### **ASCA Meeting Guidelines**

We ask that you observe these same guidelines at all ASCA meetings:

1. **Please arrive on time and remain until the conclusion** of the meeting. Latecomers will be asked to wait outside so that speakers who are sharing are not interrupted.
2. **ASCA meetings are exclusively for adult survivors** of physical, sexual, or emotional childhood abuse.
3. This is an **anonymous meeting. Only first names are used.**
4. **What you hear today is told in confidence** and should not be repeated outside this meeting.

5. We ask that **no one attend our meeting under the influence of alcohol or drugs**, unless it is a physician-prescribed medication.
6. ASCA meetings are not intended for survivors who are currently perpetrating abuse on others. **Talking about your acts of past or present perpetrator type behavior is not permissible.**
7. **Language that is considered derogatory** concerning race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or other minority status **is unacceptable** in our meeting.
8. By participating in this meeting, **we all agree to abide by the spirit of ASCA, our guidelines and any interventions by the Co-Facilitators.**

In addition to the above guidelines, please observe these Ground Rules at Step Work Meetings:

### ASCA Step Work Meeting Ground Rules

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Do's and Don'ts | <i>Please remember that we <b>all bear responsibility</b> to keep this step work meeting <b>helpful and safe.</b></i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <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 and agenda</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>             |

### 3.0 Self-Reflection on Readiness

Please take a few minutes to reflect on the following questions and jot down your initial thoughts and feelings. You may wish to share your thoughts with others during the workshop – or keep them as part of your private journal.

1. What are the feelings that you associate with being or contemplating being an ASCA co-secretary/co-facilitator?
2. What are the words you would use to describe what it means to be or to consider being a co-secretary/co-facilitator?
3. What is the value for you in being a co-secretary/co-facilitator or a potential co-secretary/co-facilitator?
4. What do you think you need in order to become an excellent co-secretary/co-facilitator?

## 4.0 Learning Concepts for Co-Facilitator Readiness

ROLES AND KEY COMPETENCIES (Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors):

- 4.1 Information (Organizational)
- 4.2 Nuts and Bolts of Running Meetings (Organizational)
- 4.3 Consistency, Reliability, Responsibility (Personal)
- 4.4 Handling Difficult Meeting Situations (Interpersonal)
- 4.5 Leadership and Teamwork (Interpersonal)
- 4.6 Communication (Interpersonal)
- 4.7 Managing Personal Reactions (Personal)
- 4.8 Compassion, Empathy, Support (Personal)

### 4.1 INFORMATION (Organizational)

- 4.1.1 Knowledge of Self-Help Groups  
See Section 2.0 Pre-Work

- 4.1.2 Knowledge of Philosophy, Organizational Structure, and Administration of ASCA, and its relationship to The Morris Center

The Morris Center is a not-for profit corporation established in 1991 to provide healing opportunities for adult survivors of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Located in San Francisco, The Morris Center provides the ASCA program, training and education for survivors and professionals, and public awareness services. The Morris Center's most important role is in the development of the Adult Survivors of Child Abuse (ASCA) Guided Self-Help Recovery and Prevention Program.

ASCA is a registered service mark of The Morris Center. The Morris Center owns the copyrights for all of the materials produced by and for the ASCA program. The Morris Center is also responsible for the overall administration and licensing of the ASCA program.

ASCA is based on a three-stage psychological recovery model first described by J. Patrick Gannon, PhD in his book *SOUL SURVIVORS: A New Beginning For Adults Abused As Children* (Simon & Schuster, 1989). Dr. Gannon was the clinical consultant for The Morris Center from 1993 – 1995. He, along with a committee of fellow survivors, adapted the original 21 steps of the three-stage model to serve the ASCA program.

Unlike 12-Step programs, the ASCA recovery principles are psychological in nature, rather than spiritual. ASCA is based on the idea of "guided self-

help," which includes training Co-Secretaries (themselves survivors but not professionals), who run support group meetings.

If a geographic region has more than one ASCA meeting, Co-Secretaries/Co-Facilitators can work with other Co-Secretaries/Co-Facilitators to organize a countywide Service Council, which meets monthly to review common meeting issues, recruit new Co-Secretaries, publicize meetings, and plan trainings.

ASCA can provide a variety of service opportunities - ranging from being a Co-Secretary for your own meetings to creating or serving on a Regional Service Council and/or serving on various committees for The Morris Center. All service opportunities augment survivors' traditional recovery activities by developing skills that we can apply to other areas of our lives.

#### 4.1.3 Knowledge of Roles for The Morris Center, Co-Secretaries, and Meeting Participants

Volunteerism is the "heart and soul" of The Morris Center. So, we should clarify some roles within ASCA and The Morris Center.

Key roles of The Morris Center Board of Directors:

- Oversee the direction and development of The Morris Center's programs, including ASCA
- Develop and evaluate the training and research aspects of ASCA, and other programs of The Morris Center.

Key Roles of Co-Secretaries:

- Run the ASCA meetings and facilitate their continued growth and vitality
- Run monthly business meetings
- Ensure an orderly transition to the next Co-Secretary team once their term of service expires

Key Responsibilities of Meeting Participants:

- Adhere faithfully to the meeting format, which provides group safety
- Contribute financial support to sustain the overall health of the meetings
- Provide input to Co-Secretaries/Co-Facilitators
- Help to grow the ASCA meeting

Everyone has some level of responsibility for how ASCA is run and developed over time. That is the spirit of "self-help" – collaboration

through commitment and respect for the mutual benefit of ASCA and its members.

#### 4.1.4 Knowledge of Community Resources for Survivors

Co-Secretaries need to know what other kinds of services are available in their communities to assist survivors as they progress through recovery. These services should include crisis and emergency services such as telephone hotlines, 24-hour hospital emergency rooms, crisis mental health services, suicide prevention, medical services, low cost psychotherapy services, community conflict and mediation boards, and 12-Step meetings.

Maintaining a Community Resource List fulfills one of the key benefits of self-help meetings: sharing information about resources that can augment a survivor's recovery plan.

#### 4.1.5 Knowledge of general issues in child abuse/reporting

It is very helpful for Co-Secretaries to have some general knowledge of child abuse - its causes, effects, and likely consequences for adult survivors. You can obtain this by reading any of the popular books on the subject available at bookstores or the library. Remember, you don't have to become an expert in the field of child abuse, but consider how knowledge translates into power. Knowing about how you and others were affected by child abuse is one strategy for enhancing your recovery.

One crucial piece of information every Co-Secretary needs to know has to do with the laws about reporting child abuse. Child abuse is a **crime**. Unlike health professionals, you are **NOT** required to report child abuse. However, with recovery comes responsibility for the prevention of child abuse, when you witness it or hear others who witness it.

Reporting child abuse serves two primary purposes: 1) protecting the child, and 2) getting help for the abusive parent or caretaker. If the abuser is also a survivor (and the vast majority are), his/her recovery must begin with refraining from abusing children or engaging in any type of domestic violence.

If you see or hear of a child being abused, you may voluntarily make a report by calling your local Child Protection Services at the number listed in the front part of the telephone book. If, while serving as a Co-Secretary at an ASCA meeting, you hear of a child being abused, you may want to approach the person who conveyed that information and inquire how you or s/he might make a child abuse report. Remember that,

for the report to be accepted, you will need to have identifying information about the child and the abuser so that the authorities can locate them.

While this action might appear to some to violate the confidentiality agreement of self-help meetings, the protection of a child from child abuse must be an overriding priority. ASCA members and Co-Secretaries cannot be expected to maintain the silence about another member's abusive behavior. If you encounter a situation that involves making a child abuse report, you can get some additional emotional support from:

- Your therapist
- Your Service Council (if you have one in your region)
- Fellow Co-Secretaries and Co-Facilitators in the online ASCA Meeting Facilitators Yahoo Group  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/asca-mtg-facilitators/join>

## 4.2 NUTS AND BOLTS OF RUNNING ASCA MEETINGS (Organizational)

### 4.2.1 Co-Secretary Meeting Tasks/Checklist

See Section 10. 0 for the Meeting Tasks and Checklist

### 4.2.2 Meeting Administration

See Section 10.0 for ASCA meeting administration tips and guidelines

### 4.2.3 Promoting Meeting Development

See Section 11.0 for Meeting Development Ideas

### 4.2.4 Assessing and Understanding Group Dynamics

See Section 7.1 for group dynamics

### 4.2.5 Problem Solving When Needed

During the course of running meetings, you may encounter situations that require some quick thinking on your part. Because the ASCA meeting format has been tested over a number of years, these situations tend to be infrequent. Nevertheless, participants may make particular requests to accommodate a special need. Always try to maintain the meeting format. However, if the request is reasonable and you can accommodate it without much fuss, then allow it.

- One example of this situation is when, after several minutes of silence during the "tag" section of the meeting, a person who has already shared requests to speak again on another topic.
- Another example is when your Co-Secretary becomes sick at the last minute and someone volunteers (preferably someone who has been trained) to read the Co-Secretary Two role.

Do you make alterations? Yes, because the alterations make sense. They solve a need without violating the basic spirit of safety that the format is designed to ensure. Please do not make any alterations that undermine the general principles of safety and support, or the spirit of ASCA.

#### 4.2.6 How and when to call business meetings

See Section 10.7 for information about calling and conducting a business meeting.

### 4.3 CONSISTENCY, RELIABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY (personal)

#### 4.3.1 Taking your Commitment Seriously

Being a Co-Secretary of a meeting requires a certain level of commitment to other survivors, who rely on you to conduct a safe, predictable meeting each week. For many survivors, this commitment may be more than they can bear.

If you are in recovery, this necessary level of commitment may clash with your own internal feelings, problems in your adult life or reactions to hearing "war stories" week after week.

We want you to do what is best for you. Once you decide to become a Co-Secretary and take the training, we expect that you will do your very best to carry out your commitment. If you need help, or if your situation changes so that you need to take a break, ask for help from your Co-Secretary. Begin to transition your role to another person.

The best plan is to make an objective assessment of your readiness before, during or immediately after you complete your training.

- Review Section 4.0 to see if any of the categories of Co-Secretary functioning seems beyond your capacities at this point.
- Discuss your concerns honestly with other Co-Secretaries, your local Service Council, and the workshop trainers.

#### 4.3.2 Taking Responsibility for Co-Secretary Tasks

Being a Co-Secretary also means taking responsibility for a variety of tasks (see Section 10.0, for a list of these tasks).

Since the beginning of ASCA, we have found that some amount of meeting administration, basic accounting, meeting promotion, and contact with your local Service Council (and perhaps, The Morris Center) is necessary to make the meetings work effectively.

We have outlined these tasks in the Co-Secretary Guidelines (in Section 10.0) for your convenience. Please take these responsibilities seriously.

We can make ASCA an effective and efficient self-help program without becoming bureaucratic.

#### 4.3.3 Following the ASCA Format Precisely

We ask the Co-Secretaries to make a special effort to stick to the ASCA meeting format as precisely as possible. Many of us worked long and hard to create a format that ensures safety (a feature that is so essential to the success of self-help groups). Learn the format so that you know how it works and - better yet - know why we do what we do to maintain safety.

You may question why something is organized a certain way, especially if you are used to conducting other types of meetings. Changing the format won't necessarily make the meeting better. The basic purpose of following the format consistently over time is that it makes the meeting predictable and, therefore, safe.

Ideally, a survivor from California should be able to attend an ASCA meeting in Illinois or South Africa and know exactly the guidelines s/he will need to follow and how the meeting will flow. Remember, as Co-Secretaries, you are the "protectors" of the meeting's safety. (See Section 7.2 and 7.3 for further discussion)

#### 4.3.4 Punctuality and Accountability

At a very basic level, being a Co-Secretary means

- Starting the meeting on time
- Presenting the meeting format exactly the way it is written
- Ending the meeting on time
- Following through on other Co-Secretary tasks

If you agree to provide something to meeting participants, please follow through. Your credibility as a responsible Co-Secretary is on the line. Remember that survivors typically had inconsistent authority figures in their lives. We want to give survivors a healthier model of authority. Your function as a responsible and consistent meeting Co-Secretary is the best way to provide that.

#### 4.3.5 Maintaining A Consistent Presence Over Time

Beyond commitment, responsibility, punctuality and accountability, there is one other suggestion that will help you in your role as Co-Secretary. We ask you to maintain as consistent a "presence" as possible when you are running a meeting. This means being in your "role" as Co-Secretary (however you identify that for yourself) the same way week after week.

Why do we stress this? Because as Co-Secretary, you set the tone of the meeting, presenting yourself the same way week after week will convey a feeling of safety for survivors. Remember that most abusive parents were anything but consistent. Survivors will typically feel anxious when someone they look to for structure and safety suddenly starts appearing erratic.

Of course, always being consistent represents an ideal. We are certainly not asking you to be a robot! When you open a meeting, just think of how you want to come across to others and try to be as consistent as possible.

#### 4.4 HANDLING DIFFICULT MEETING SITUATIONS (Interpersonal)

##### 4.4.1 How to Intervene When Format Challenges Occur

See Section 7.4 for challenges to the meeting format.

##### 4.4.2 How to Intervene in Crisis Situations

See Section 7.4.3 for the survivor who is having a crisis.

##### 4.4.3 Proposing Compromise Solutions to Resolve Conflict

This point is similar to the Problem Solving issue mentioned in Section 4.2.5 under Nuts and Bolts of Running an ASCA Meeting. There are many meeting level issues that need to be decided upon by the Co-Secretaries and participants. We describe the process to make these decisions as "consensus-building."

We suggest that you discuss any conflict resolutions in your monthly Business Meetings, where time and format permits a full airing of views. If a participant wants you to make a decision on the spot during a recovery meeting, try to defer the issue to the next Business Meeting. If appropriate, invite the survivor to make a brief presentation.

As Co-Secretaries, how do you give everyone his/her chance to provide input, feel listened to, and engage in discussion before arriving at a compromise decision that everyone can live with? In this situation, you are functioning more as the facilitator of a meeting than a boss who arbitrarily imposes a decision.

After a reasonable amount of discussion, see if you can summarize the various positions of the group. Then address where the positions seem in keeping with the ideals and values of ASCA. If a particular decision is going to undermine the meeting format or spirit of safety, you should express that concern and suggest some alternatives.

Look for the solution that would satisfy everyone or that everyone can support in some way. Suggest it and see how people respond to it. Accept modifications of the solution **if it can bring everyone together without threatening meeting safety or the basic tenets of the ASCA program.**

If you and your Co-Secretary get “stuck” in this process, defer the decision to the next Business Meeting and discuss it with your Service Council (if one exists in your region) or a trusted advisor. You may also want to check if there is a local non-profit conflict resolution organization in your county, which might provide free counseling on your situation.

#### 4.5 LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK (Interpersonal)

##### 4.5.1 Visualizing Your "Ideal Leader"

Being a Co-Secretary involves an element of leadership. You are leading a group of people in following a meeting format for a purpose that the group shares. You are sitting in front, convening the meeting, and fulfilling the trust that is vested in you as a Co-Secretary to enforce the guidelines and arbitrate conflicts.

Many survivors avoid taking on leadership roles because of ambivalent feelings about power, authority and leadership. Learning how to provide leadership (and model healthy authority) is one way in which the role of Co-Secretary can help you resolve some of your underlying abuse issues. But it will take practice and, like any challenge, a certain amount of courage and perseverance.

Try to visualize the type of leader you would like to be. You may have trouble thinking of a role model because your parent figures rated poorly in this capacity. So, think of who in the media, books, or history you admire and why. What is it about their styles that you like?

In ASCA, we do not encourage leadership styles that are authoritarian and dogmatic because our self-help model is based on the value of empowerment. Are you able to communicate in a calm, considerate, yet firm way? Can you be thoughtful and reflective while at the same time decisive?

Everyone has a different personality, and what is right for one person may be wrong for another. One basic ingredient of leadership is the capacity to feel comfortable being you. Some people refer to this as "presence".

Try writing a list of all the characteristics and qualities of your "ideal leader" and then think about these before and after each meeting. Allow yourself to work towards this ideal over time. Be careful not to have too

many expectations – or to try to be perfect from the beginning. Persevere in your vision and efforts. Eventually, you will succeed in trying to integrate many of the behaviors of your ideal leader.

#### 4.5.2 Public Speaking

Part of your leadership style will be determined by your style of public speaking. You probably have heard that public speaking is the Number One anxiety-producing activity of Americans today. So, if you are anxious about speaking in front of a meeting, **join the club!!!**

Most people get anxious before meetings. But don't let nervousness deter you. You are not alone. Talk to your Co-Secretary about it. Have a glass of water nearby so you can quench the "dry mouth syndrome". The meeting format is broken up to give you breathing space. Learn to take some long, slow, deep breaths. Try to speak slowly, concentrating on each word.

Practice reading the meeting script out loud until you know it well. Try to pause after each sentence. Remember to breathe while you talk. Imagine speaking in a conversational tone, as though you were speaking to a friend. Add an extra comment here or there if it makes you feel more comfortable.

If you feel stuck or overly anxious, discuss it with your Co-Secretary, your therapist, or a good friend. Read a book on relaxation. Watch how other Co-Secretaries handle the public speaking chores and ask them for tips. **JUST DO YOUR BEST.** Remember, with practice, you will get better, week-by-week.

#### 4.5.3 Modeling Healthy Authority

As we mentioned in the section on "Leadership", we want Co-Secretaries to express healthy authority without being authoritarian. Healthy authority means carrying out the tasks of the Co-Secretary role in a manner that reflects ASCA values of empathy, compassion and respect.

Healthy authority also means holding firm to the meeting guidelines that enhance safety. You can "hold firm" in a nice way, which respects the other person. The way you model healthy authority in your role will help define the culture of your particular meeting.

#### 4.5.4 "Holding" the Meeting

The idea of "holding" a meeting means creating a space that communicates to the meeting participants a sense of safety, containment,

and support. This is done by the Co-Secretaries' presence - how you communicate and behave is important. Not just the words you say but also the tone of your voice and your facial expressions are important.

Think of people you might have known who had this presence - a teacher, a friend's parent, or maybe your therapist. The way they behave evokes a feeling of calm, safety and general well being.

You want the meeting participants to sense that "things are under control". You want people to feel that you, the Co-Secretaries, have the skills, understanding, and confidence to deal with whatever comes up in the meeting. This will be very reassuring and cut down on the number of challenges to the format. It will also deepen the level of sharing. Acting as a team, will help you both create this type of presence.

#### 4.5.5 Demonstrating Teamwork with Your Co-Secretary

Ideally, you and your Co-Secretary act as a team that supports and complements each other in your efforts to run safe, consistent meetings. Demonstrating teamwork means:

- Being in communication with each other around the planning of the meetings
- Making sure each of you knows what the other is responsible for
- Sharing the various tasks of each of the Co-Secretary roles
- Asking the other for help when needed
- Requesting clarification when you are unclear on how to proceed
- Consulting with each other if a situation comes up that needs a decision
- Consulting with each other on any circumstances that require you to collaborate and come up with a solution.

Teamwork also means supporting each other emotionally. If one of you is having a bad day, tell the other and offer/ask for something that may make it easier. The bottom line is that working as a team makes the experience more fun and rewarding.

Teamwork is a skill that is in high demand in most jobs. The experience you gain, while working as part of a Co-Secretary team, is something that you can apply throughout your life.

#### 4.5.6 Teamwork Challenges

Interventions require teamwork. Even though one co-secretary initiates an intervention, it is best to think of all interventions as a team effort. **Both Co-Secretaries** intervene although only one might actually speak. "Backing up" your co-secretary exhibits the highest form of teamwork. It is

precisely because of interventions that we have two Co-Secretaries. Each provides mutual support and reassurance for the other.

Each member of the team has a responsibility. During an intervention for a guideline violation, the Co-Secretary who did not initiate the intervention should be alert and aware of ways to verbally (and non-verbally) support the other Co-Secretary.

If the person is not accepting what your Co-Secretary is saying, it is essential that you help support the intervention. As the non-intervening Co-Secretary, try to find a way to get the violator to accept the intervention. This allows the meeting to continue in an orderly fashion.

- Try a different explanation of the intervention
- Make a suggestion to speak later -- after the meeting
- Make a simple statement indicating that "you understand their point but..."

Always **try** to have one "stock" line at your service that you can use even under duress to get you into the discussion. Those first few words may be the hardest to say but other words or phrases will follow more easily. It is a matter of overcoming your "verbal and emotional inertia".

📖 For example: "OK, let's calm down a bit." or "Let me jump in here." or "Can I say something about this?" or "Hold the fort!"

You might continue with:

📖 It sounds like you (the violator) might be feeling \_\_\_\_\_. We are intervening only because we are concerned about safety. Can we talk about it later?"

📖 "This conversation is not feeling comfortable for us. We are all survivors here and we all need to feel safe, including us, the Co-Secretaries. You may have different feelings about this but this is not the place or the process to resolve it. Can we agree to finish the meeting out and discuss it later?"

Try a different approach than your partner did. If your partner's intervention was soft, try being firmer. If her/his approach seemed authoritarian, try being more relaxed and flexible without invalidating your partner's efforts. Always offer the chance to talk more about the issue after the meeting.

Any number of factors can raise the complexity of the situation For example:

- More than one meeting member jumps into the discussion.

- The interchange gets heated.
- The violator or someone else starts to get aggressive.
- Your co-secretary looks beleaguered.

**Not jumping in at this point is to fall short on the teamwork quotient.**

Remember that your prime responsibility as a Co-Secretary is to provide and maintain group safety. Each member of the group, including you and your Co-Secretary, is entitled to that support. Imagine yourself in the same situation. Think of how you would want your teammate to support you. Anything you can do to shift the focus away from your partner will provide the break s/he needs to catch her/his breath.

## 4.6 COMMUNICATION (Interpersonal)

### 4.6.1 Active Listening, Clear Thinking, Thoughtful Responding

Communication is a complex interaction between people. For our purposes, think of it as a three-step process of active listening, clear thinking, and thoughtful responding. This process repeats itself over and over again until the interaction is completed.

Active listening means not only concentrating on what is being said to you, but also communicating to others that you understand what is being said. You can demonstrate your understanding by:

- Nodding your head
- Affirming the message with "Uh-huhs"
- Summarizing or paraphrasing what you heard
- Asking clarifying questions

Once people feel heard and understood, they typically relax a bit, which allows their message to be processed by the listener.

Clear thinking means taking the message and deciphering its meaning, value and purpose in relation to the question being addressed. Clear thinking means being able to spot the strengths and weaknesses of the message and communicating both – so that you can move the discussion toward a viable solution. Clear thinking also means determining if the message represents a true solution to your needs or might make matters worse.

You will need to communicate back to the person in a reasoned, thoughtful way. The purpose of your comments may be to facilitate further discussion, register your doubts about the message, affirm your agreement with the person's message, or to buy time for future consideration. Whatever you decide to do, you want to communicate it in a

way that leaves the person feeling respected, appreciated for having made the suggestion, and involved in the higher goal of doing what is best for the meeting - even if that means not endorsing their idea.

This is a tall order, to say the least! It is often best to stick to the content of the issue being discussed so that the interaction doesn't become personal. The basic rule of thumb in communicating is to help the person feel good about the interaction even if you disagree with what she or he is saying.

While many verbal interactions are simply a transfer of information, more challenging communication involves discussion to resolve something. That's where this three-step process may be most helpful.

#### 4.6.2 Assertiveness without Aggression or Avoidance

Being assertive without lapsing into either aggressiveness on the one end or avoidance on the other is challenging for most survivors. Avoidance stems from a fear of speaking up and aggressiveness is an angry overreaction against the fear. Assertiveness means being able to intervene with both sensitivity and firmness when a format violation occurs. Assertiveness means being in control and stating what needs to be done in order for the meeting to proceed.

Assertiveness is one skill that survivors may need to practice or get additional training on in order to put it into practice. The hardest part is trying it out the first time. After that, it starts to get easier to be assertive in other areas of your life as well.

#### 4.6.3 When in Doubt, Buy Some Time, Consult with Others

To be sure, there will be situations that come up for which you or your Co-Secretary are not prepared or are unsure of how to respond. One good strategy to remember is "when in doubt, buy some time," so that you can consult with your Co-Secretary or an outside resource. Deferring a decision is always better than making a bad decision on the spot.

We always want the meeting to proceed uninterrupted if possible. Buying time and deferring discussion until after the meeting, is a "safety valve" to defuse potentially disruptive issues.

You can say:

 "I understand your concern, but we have to continue the meeting. So, could we agree to talk about this after the meeting?"

📖 "That suggestion sounds OK, but it may have implications for how we proceed, so could we defer the decision until we gather more feedback?"

📖 "Let's put this on the agenda for our next Business Meeting, OK?"

#### 4.7 MANAGING PERSONAL REACTIONS (Personal)

##### 4.7.1 Balancing Your Own Recovery Needs with Your Co-Secretary Responsibilities

See Section 9.1 for discussion

##### 4.7.2 When to Shift to Personal Recovery in Meetings

See Section 9.2 for discussion

##### 4.7.3 Not Getting Triggered by Others' Stories

See Section 9.3 for the discussion

##### 4.7.4 Knowing When You Need Help And Asking for It

See Section 9.4 for the discussion

##### 4.7.5 Handling Anxiety in a Healthy Way

See Section 9.4 for the discussion

#### 4.8 COMPASSION/EMPATHY/SUPPORT (Personal)

##### 4.8.1 Developing Your Emotional Voice

Your voice is your instrument for conveying the emotional values of recovery -compassion, empathy and support. Your voice is what holds the meeting together and sets up the safe healing environment that survivors need to face their past.

Try practicing the format alone and speaking in tones that express the emotional climate that you want to convey. Explore how to use your voice to communicate the emotional values that you deem important. In this way, you model how you want others treated in the room. This point also ties into what we said earlier about being the kind of leader you want to be. (See Section 4.5.1 *Visualizing Your Ideal Leader*).

#### 4.8.2 Respecting Personal Boundaries

Co-Secretaries need to know their own boundaries so they will not become involved with others' dilemmas beyond their own capacities to help. Being a Co-Secretary doesn't mean becoming co-dependent with other survivors. Co-Secretaries are not like sponsors (as 12-Step groups define sponsors).

The best times to make more one-on-one contact with participants are before and after the meetings. During these times, be careful not to step into the role of therapist by telling other survivors what to do. That is for them to figure out. Your role is to listen, provide support and encourage participants to work their recovery in whatever ways they find helpful.

#### 4.8.3 Style That Reflects Personal Warmth, Respect, Competence, and Fairness

Co-Secretaries will want to model a manner of interacting with others that projects the values underlying the ASCA program. We value emotional warmth and empathy as well as respect for self and others. We challenge ourselves to maintain a certain standard of functioning, which incorporates a sense of competence and objectivity about our performance. We always want to honor a sense of fairness and justice for all.

These values are what ASCA is all about, and, as Co-Secretaries, you are the main bearers of these traditions. By setting a standard in these areas, you help to establish the appropriate meeting culture that is so crucial to recovery. In doing so, you also help set a recovery direction for yourself. This can challenge you and offer opportunities for mastery. You give hope and inspiration to others who are in earlier stages of recovery.

## 5.0 Job Description for ASCA Volunteer Co-Secretary or Co-Facilitator

### Purpose:

The Adult Survivors of Child Abuse (ASCA) program offers many support groups throughout the Bay Area and a few groups internationally. These groups are for adults recovering from the after-effects of childhood abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, mental and spiritual). ASCA groups provide a safe environment for people to express feelings, give and receive support, learn about recovery from childhood abuse, and discover ways to more effectively cope with self-destructive behaviors while nurturing their emerging healthy selves.

The Morris Center offers ASCA program materials at no fee through our website at [www.ascasupport.org](http://www.ascasupport.org). ASCA support groups are, therefore, usually offered on a donation basis or at a low provider fee (typically, \$10 - 20). Most groups meet once a week. Volunteers, who are also fellow survivors of childhood abuse, facilitate these support groups.

We are always interested in speaking with individuals who are interested in facilitating ASCA support groups. We offer training. Below you will find information on the type of people we look for and the expectations we have of our facilitators.

### Qualifications:

**People who are interested - but who lack experience or skill in some of these areas - should still consider signing up for training.**

- Interested in running an ASCA meeting
- Comfortable with the expression of emotions
- Flexible in responding to the needs of participants
- Comfortable with providing leadership
- Able to set and maintain a positive tone
- Able to separate personal needs and group needs
- Actively working on own recovery issues
- Previous or current involvement in ASCA meetings
- Reliable/Punctual
- Good listening skills
- Good communication skills

### Experience:

We also think it is helpful to have the following experience:

- Knowledge of childhood abuse recovery and related issues
- Personal experiences with professional therapy and/or self-help programs
- Prior facilitator and/or support group experiences
- Awareness of the various community/professional resources available in local area
- Participation in self-help mutual support groups as a member

### Expectations:

A support group Co-Secretary/Facilitator must be prepared to make the following commitments:

- Participate fully in a thorough initial training program, which may include workshops, support group participation, and meetings.
- Commit to at least three months of volunteering as a co-secretary/facilitator (3-4 hours weekly: includes the meeting, travel, phone calls, co-secretary/facilitator consultation and support, business meetings, etc.)
- Follow the ASCA Guidelines for Co-Secretaries and the ASCA Meeting Guidelines for support groups
- Follow the ASCA Co-Secretary's checklist of duties as closely as possible

### Rewards:

The ideal candidate is motivated intrinsically by a desire to assist himself/herself and fellow survivors recover from childhood abuse.

As a Co-Secretary/Co-Facilitator candidate, you will receive important training in group dynamics and facilitation. This experience will prove valuable in all aspects of your life.

## 6.0 Notes for Processing the Workshop Role Plays on Interventions

- 6.1 We will first ask how the Co-Secretaries felt in responding to the role in which they were intervening.
- 6.2 It will be helpful if the Co-Secretaries can identify what, if anything, they may need in terms of strategy, or phraseology to respond in the way they think is appropriate
- 6.3 Next, we will ask the person playing the role how s/he felt. What was your sense of being heard and reconciled with following the guidelines, as suggested by the Co-Secretary?
- 6.4 After that, we will open up comments from the group, and offer suggestions for improvement corresponding to the eight categories of Co-Secretary functioning presented earlier.
- 6.5 Remember that responding to meeting safety challenges is one of the most difficult aspects of being a Co-Secretary. We are emphasizing this skill because it requires the most training and practice.
- 6.6 It is rare that a Co-Secretary trainee feels completely successful in his/her first efforts to intervene. Remember that you are here to learn. You will continue to learn the more you practice.
- 6.7 Use next section for Making Notes

Write down any questions, thoughts, reactions, or observations from the role plays that relate to any of the following eight categories.

INFORMATION (Organizational)

NUTS AND BOLTS OF RUNNING ASCA MEETINGS (Organizational)

CONSISTENCY, RELIABILITY, AND RESPONSIBILITY (Personal)

HANDLING DIFFICULT MEETING SITUATIONS (Interpersonal)

LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK (Interpersonal)

COMMUNICATION (Interpersonal)

MANAGING PERSONAL REACTIONS (Personal)

COMPASSION/EMPATHY (Personal)

## 7.0 Group Dynamics, Safety, Structure, Format Challenges, and Interventions

### 7.1. Group Dynamics

7.1.1 Groups are like living organisms—alive, changing, shifting in boundaries, needs and motivations and points of view—all in one shared interpersonal space—a kind of community family.

7.1.2 Underlying this reality is the fact that child abuse at its core is an INTERPERSONAL CRIME. It occurs between people. That is why we must stress safety.

7.1.3 ASCA meetings may trigger reactions based on the survivor's own childhood and family experience. Thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and fears can all come "alive" in the meetings. These feelings then become available for working through and processing at a later time. This is part of the recovery process.

7.1.4 The basic purpose of the meetings is to hear others talk about their recovery from abuse, and to allow each survivor to address abuse issues in a fundamentally healthier context than one's family.

7.1.5 To do that, we must create a structure that supports pro-recovery activities, values, and shared commitment.

7.1.6 As Co-Secretaries, you are the holder of the "safe space" - a space where survivors can experience consistency, reliability, and safety.

### 7.2 Safety

7.2.1 One of the most common threats to the safety of a support group is cross-talk. A participant might refer to another's share with a comment like "I was really moved by your description of being woken in the middle of the night..." This may seem natural, empathetic and harmless. How does cross-talk threaten group safety?

Referring to another person in the group can trigger feelings between participants—intentionally or unintentionally—which they cannot easily resolve during the meeting. The person referred to may feel misunderstood or misrepresented. Someone not referred to may feel overlooked. Other participants may feel anxious about what kind of remarks may be directed toward them after they share their "most vulnerable secrets." There is no format in the meeting to handle this kind of emotional response between participants. Left without a means of clarification, these emotional responses may cause people to avoid the meeting. That is why cross-talk threatens the safety of the group as a whole.

7.2.2 One of the biggest challenges for Co-Secretaries is to "hold" to the structure, even in the face of challenges from participants (we'll talk about that later).

7.2.3 Any change is a challenge to safety:

- Room Changes
- Changes in Co-Secretaries
- Changes in format
- Inconsistency in interventions

7.2.4 Meetings, which promote a feeling of safety, challenge survivors' fears of people and replace the fear with a feeling of connection and mutuality. Mastering the fear of people develops self-confidence.

7.2.5 As survivors, we all need to confront our fear of people -- which is one purpose ASCA serves.

- Mastery of the interpersonal fears
- Mastery of confronting the abuse
- Counteracting the "conspiracy of silence", which results from the abuse

7.2.6 People can grow when they feel safe enough to do it. That is why people can change once they get out of the abusive family.

### 7.3 Structure and Consistency

7.3.1 The meeting format is our structure - the frame for each survivor's experience, which helps us all be in the meeting and deal with abuse and recovery.

7.3.2 Think of it as a holding environment - the structure that you help maintain is like hands supporting survivors' efforts to heal.

7.3.3 Survivors heal when they experience enough safety and containment of their emotional fears to look at what happened to them. The regularity and predictability of the meeting format frees up energy to face difficult feelings and memories.

7.3.4 As Co-Secretaries, you are the hands that contain the meeting and maintain the safety that is so crucial to survivors' recovery.

## 7.4 Format Challenges

### 7.4.1 SPEAKER TALKS TOO LONG

This is the most likely challenge to the meeting format that will require your intervention. We don't have to be overly rigid about keeping time. But the rule of thumb is that we signal people at the agreed upon interval before their time is up. And we signal them once again when the time is up. If they continue talking for another minute, you will need to interrupt them and ask them to stop.

The challenge here is to intervene in a sensitive, gentle way that attempts to minimize the disruption for the speaker.

📖 "Bill, we'd like to hear more but we're out of time. Could we move on or would you like to say one final thing?"

📖 "Jane, we really need to stop here. How about signing up later to be a speaker at a future meeting?"

The strategy that works best is to:

- Be positive about the person's share
- State the need to stop, and then
- Invite them to share in the future (this last part serves the meeting's need for future speakers and people's need to feel accepted and valued).

### 7.4.2 DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Disruptive behavior is any situation in which a speaker

- Verbally attacks the group or individuals in the meeting
- Interjects cross-talk comments into shares
- Holds on-going side conversations
- Shows an agitated state of behavior such as getting up and walking around.
- Uses derogatory or defamatory language

In general, the disruptive person seems more involved with him/herself and his/her agenda (whatever that may be), rather than what is going on in the meeting itself.

- The first challenge is to see if you can figure out the meaning of the disruptive behavior. Is it simple insensitivity, a reaction to something s/he has heard, or a need to be the center of attention?

- We are not asking you to diagnose him/her on the spot. But try to get a sense of what the motivation for the behavior might be.
- You may need to break temporarily from the structure of the meeting to ask him first, to refrain from whatever s/he is doing and secondly, offer to provide an alternative forum for discussing what is bothering him (after the meeting is over).
- Depending on what s/he does and how s/he responds to requests to refrain, you will need to deal with the problem in the short term (while the meeting process is suspended) so that the meeting can resume.
- You do not want one person to have the power of suspending the meeting format for more than the few minutes it takes you to develop a short-term solution that resolves the meeting disruption.

📖 "Excuse me. Could you please not \_\_\_\_\_? We need to continue the meeting and it is difficult for people to hear \_\_\_\_\_. That is not part of what we do in here."

📖 "It looks or sounds like something might be troubling you. Could we agree to discuss this after the meeting is over?"

- The issue in using excessive profanity or inflammatory language is "acting out with words" rather than "using words to express the anger". We always want to model the latter in managing the emotional by-products of the abuse. This distinction may be subtle for some ASCA meeting participants but, in the interest of maintaining meeting safety for all, especially in the Step Work Meeting (where there is a ground rule about using excessive profanity) it is a good idea that the Co-Facilitators address this challenge of the meeting format.

📖 "Excuse me \_\_\_\_\_, I know you are feeling the anger and rage at what was done to you when you use that word, but please be mindful that some survivors in the meeting can get triggered or upset by that word. This is why we have a guideline against using derogatory language and a ground rule against excessive profanity. Thank you for your consideration."

- If the person won't postpone discussion about the guideline violation, etc. until after the meeting, the next-best strategy is to assign someone to be with the person outside the room to help him/her deal with whatever is bothering him/her.

 Could I have a volunteer to sit with \_\_\_\_\_ outside to support him/her through whatever is going on with him/her?

- If no one volunteers, ask your Co-Secretary to leave with the person. **Note, however, that neither you nor anyone else should go outside with a participant if you feel that s/he may harm or hurt you in any way.**
- If nothing seems to work, try simply asking her/him what you can suggest that would be acceptable to her/him and that will also allow the meeting to proceed.

#### 7.4.3 SURVIVOR WHO IS HAVING A CRISIS

This is a delicate situation, in which a survivor is experiencing severe anxiety, loss of control of feelings or behavior (including verbalizations), loss of reality awareness, or moving around in an agitated state. The survivor may think s/he is some place else or think people are doing something bad to her/him.

 “Could I have a volunteer to sit with \_\_\_\_\_ outside to support her/him through what is going on with her/him?”

- If no volunteers, ask your Co-Secretary to leave with the person. **Note, however, that neither you nor anyone else should go outside with a participant if you feel that s/he may harm or hurt you in any way.**
- Once outside of the meeting, try to calm the person down. Try asking when thing started getting difficult today. See if you can figure out what the trigger is. If the person can identify this, let him/her talk it out and empathize with him/her.
- Ask the person if s/he knows anyone, whom s/he can talk to for help. Think of some of the Survival Tips in the “Welcome to ASCA” handout and ask the person to try them out. Inquire whether or not the person has a therapist or what s/he normally does when s/he finds her/himself in this place
- If nothing works, call security and have them call the police, who will take the person to Psychiatric Emergency Services at the local hospital.
- Stay with the person until security arrives. Offer to call him/her later to check in.

- If a better solution appears (for example, a friend or acquaintance comes forward who will escort the person home), go with that. Use your judgment about what would be best for the person. Safety is paramount. So, don't leave him/her alone if you don't trust her/his condition.
- Don't try to drive the person to the emergency room yourself. Call the police to handle that option.

#### 7.4.4 TALKING OUT OF TURN

This may be due to unfamiliarity with the meeting format, simple insensitivity, or, possibly, a strong reaction to what is being talked about.

📖 "Excuse me, \_\_\_\_\_ has the floor for his/her share now. Let's try to stay with the format listed in the handout. If you'd like, you can raise your hand to be tagged to go next." (During discussion tag shares)

📖 "I'm sorry. We're having some trouble hearing what is being said. If you'd like to talk among yourselves, it might be better to step outside."

#### 7.4.5 WRONG OR INAPPROPRIATE IDEA STATED AS FACT

- This is an unusual but important challenge because it requires you to make a judgment about what is being said. We don't want "wrong" ideas or suggestions to be represented as facts without some question being raised about their validity.
- In general, clearly wrong, dangerous or aggressive ideas, plans, or behaviors may need to be "tabbed" by the Co-Secretaries as something that may not be true or valid.
- Consider that such interventions are even more necessary when the inappropriate idea is stated by the survivor as an **intended future action or something that s/he is suggesting that others do**. In other words, if there is some danger to self or others or even criminal action implied by the speaker's words or plans, then the Co-Secretaries should definitely speak up.
- Examples of inappropriate ideas stated as fact are that:
  - Sometimes the abuse occurred because it was the child's FAULT.
  - If the sexual contact FELT GOOD or was experienced as pleasurable, it means that the person liked it or asked for it.

- Getting revenge on your perpetrator is acceptable behavior, considering what they did to you. (However, the desire or FEELING of wanting revenge is normal)
- Misrepresentation of what ASCA is about or how it operates or who it serves
- Ideas that sound wrong or questionable. Co-Secretaries can tab this by saying that there is some controversy about whether that is true or not.
- Examples of how to challenge inappropriate ideas stated as facts:
  - 📖 "I want to make one clarification about a comment that was just made. Most experts in the field do not believe it is EVER the child's fault that she was abused. Children do not have the necessary judgement or interpersonal power to make an informed decision like that."
  - 📖 "I want to make one clarification about a comment that was just made. If a child is being sexually stimulated in a certain way, his/her body is going to respond with some sensations of pleasure whether s/he likes it or not. It doesn't necessarily mean s/he asked for it or wanted it to happen."
- Examples of inappropriate or dangerous plans of behavior being suggested:
  - "I think the only way to really get over the abuse is to confront your abuser and challenge him to face you. If you can provoke him/her and s/he gets aggressive, you have the right to punish him/her the way s/he did when you were a kid. Just make sure that you don't lose the fight because then you'll feel worse."
  - "The only way to get back at your perpetrator is through the courts. Sue him and make him pay for what he did. "
  - "An eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth, I say. Do to him/her what he did to you. If you can't make it right through might, then you're a wimp and you deserve to feel like a victim".
- Examples of how to respond to inappropriate or dangerous plans:
  - 📖 "Excuse me. You're talking about doing something that could easily turn violent or dangerous to yourself or the offender. That may not be the best way to deal with your feelings of anger and rage about the abuse. Also, we don't want others to get the idea that violence is

sometimes a solution – because it isn't. Let's talk after the meeting about other options. Okay?"

📖 "Some of what you say makes me a bit concerned. I'm not sure your idea of a solution is right for everyone. You might want to run this idea past someone whose judgement you trust. Okay?"

#### 7.4.6 PERPETRATOR BEHAVIOR OR INTENTIONS

We can expect that some perpetrators may be attracted to ASCA and want to participate out of some particular motivation -healthy or not.

ASCA wants to help survivors understand their past, which may include aggressive/abusive feelings. If the perpetrator is a survivor and in the process of feeling the pain and recovering memories of the victimization as a child and can control his/her aggression toward others, then the meetings should be open to him/her. However, s/he must attend to survivor issues while in ASCA and **not address perpetration**. ASCA is **not** a program to help perpetrators get control of their abusive behavior.

ASCA is an appropriate place to express feelings and thoughts about one's anger and aggression. The difference from the perpetrator issue raised above is that the focus is on the **thought or feeling** about the anger and aggressive impulses, **not on acting out those impulses**.

Most survivors have strong anger and aggression due to their particular form of abuse. Part of recovery is trying to resolve or "neutralize" the enormous charge left over from the trauma. Anger is a feeling that we must integrate into our emotional range and draw from, when personal boundary and safety issues arise.

Your challenge will be to distinguish between perpetrator behavior and a survivor's thoughts or feelings about anger and aggression.

Examples of perpetrator behavior are:

- Angrily challenging what someone is saying
- Talking about hurting someone or abusing someone - **stated as a plan or intention**
- Making a reference to abusing someone else in the past (especially if the person does not seem to recognize their behavior as a form of

abuse, and does not express both remorse and responsibility for stopping the behavior)

- Calling someone a name such as a jerk, dope, crazy, loony, honey, babe, chick, queen, dyke, faggot, queer, or any racial/ethnic slur.
- Talking about getting revenge or confronting an abuser in an overly aggressive, risky, or potentially violent manner.
- Encouraging others to act out aggressively in some manner.

What you can say when you hear the above is:

📖 "Excuse me. What you're talking about here is causing me some concern. Are you talking about actually doing this or are you just expressing the fantasy of doing it?"

📖 "Let me interrupt for just a second. What you are saying might be interpreted as perpetrator behavior. ASCA does not support using aggressive or violent means to resolve a confrontation (or take some action around the abuse). So, it would be better if you could address the issue in a more appropriate way." (Pause for reaction).

📖 "If you can't, then maybe we should move on to another speaker and you and I can talk after the meeting, OK?"

📖 "Excuse me. The tone of voice you are using sounds overly aggressive. We need this to be a safe place for survivors, and the way you are addressing us doesn't feel safe. Could you please stop? You and I can talk after the meeting about this more, but it just isn't the right way to share here in this meeting."

📖 "Excuse me \_\_\_\_\_, perhaps you are feeling anger and rage at what was done to you when you use that derogatory word, but we have a strict guideline (#7) against using derogatory language. We respect each other in this room and that type of reference is disrespectful. You and I can talk after the meeting about this more, but it just isn't the right way to share here in this meeting."

📖 "Excuse me. You are scaring people here with your behavior. Could you please stop it now or leave the room? If you need help, ask me."

📖 "If you won't cooperate, you will leave us no choice but to call building security."

- Examples of SURVIVOR THOUGHTS AND FEELING about anger and aggression issues, which DO NOT need intervention:
  - "I feel so angry and enraged. It takes over my whole body. I just let myself feel it and then it subsides a bit. I try to write about it in my journal and do some drawing. I have some fantasies of what I'd like to do to him - like string him up and torture him - but I'd never really do it. "
  - "There are times when I can feel my father's offender part in me well up. I can come so close to acting on it. I think it would feel real good to make someone else feel the way I did as a kid. In fact, when I was younger, I didn't always have control over this part. I acted on it. And it didn't feel real good. I felt like I had become HIM and that made me sick. Whenever I feel that part come up inside me, I remember that sick feeling and it helps me to get control. I am different from him and I want to keep it that way. "

## 8.0 Managing Personal Reactions

### 8.1 Balancing Recovery Needs with Co-Secretary Responsibilities

Being a Co-Secretary means taking on service responsibilities in addition to dealing with your own recovery. This means you need to be able to manage your recovery reactions in the meeting well enough to perform your Co-Secretary duties.

**Please do not think** that being a Co-Secretary means you cannot be a survivor. You are a survivor who is also a leader. The best strategy is to take care of yourself by attending other ASCA meetings as a participant, and by going to therapy or other self-help activities. The better you continue to take care of your own recovery needs, the easier it will be to perform your Co-Secretary responsibilities.

In the space below, write about any unresolved recovery needs you may have. How do you plan to continue to work on these issues while performing Co-Secretary duties?

## 8.2 When to Shift from Co-Secretary Role to Personal Recovery

There is a time in the meetings for Co-Secretaries to temporarily drop their responsibilities to the group and address their own recovery needs. Co-Secretaries are welcome to share in either the longer speaker share or in the shorter "tag" shares. It is often powerful in meetings to hear a survivor share when that person is also performing Co-Secretary duties. Think of the implications for the witnessing survivor! You are modeling how an authority figure (of sorts) can be competent at leading others in a compassionate way, while also revealing her/his personal feelings and receiving support from others.

Co-Secretaries have a powerful opportunity to model:

- How to be both strong and vulnerable
- How to blend healthy authority with self-respectful recovery work.

In the space below, describe the kind of share that you might present in a meeting that you are facilitating:

### 8.3 Not Getting Triggered by Others' Stories

Sitting, as a Co-Secretary, and listening to survivors' shares will also bring up your own recovery issues. Like anyone, you too will be moved by what you hear. What can you do to not get "triggered" in detrimental ways? First, accept that you **will** get triggered to some extent. The questions are:

- 1) How strong will your reaction be?
- 2) What can you do to manage it?

You want to avoid getting triggered to such an extent that you cannot carry on your Co-Secretary duties.

Know what your trigger points are and create a way of facing the feelings when they come up in a meeting. If something triggers you for the first time, try writing it down immediately and returning to your notes later. Then try to re-focus yourself on the task of being a Co-Secretary. Usually, returning to a more "in your head" focus will reduce your strong feelings after a few minutes.

If your reaction is unmanageable, you can also tell your fellow Co-Secretary that you need him/her to read your next section of the script. Remember that if you become extremely upset, you can leave the room (after telling your Co-Secretary what is happening). You can go outside the room for a few minutes until you compose yourself. Try taking some "4-Box" deep breaths: 1) Breathe in slowly and deeply for 4 counts, 2) Hold for 4 counts, 3) Exhale slowly for 4 counts, 4) Hold for 4 counts.

In the space below, write down the types of content you hear in a meeting, which might trigger some strong personal reactions:

#### 8.4 Knowing When You Need Help and Asking for it

One responsibility you have as a Co-Secretary is to recognize when you need help and then ask for it. Maybe you need more training or support to handle specific situations. You can ask for help from your partner Co-Secretary, your Service Council (if you have one in your area), and/or other outside resources, such as the online “ASCA Meeting Facilitators” Yahoo group or The Morris Center’s Training Committee.

Maybe you are going through a particularly difficult stretch in recovery or life that makes it especially hard to continue. Talk with someone about it. Don't isolate yourself or hide your concerns. This is where your recovery dovetails with the responsibilities of being a Co-Secretary. If you ever feel you cannot handle the Co-Secretary duties, let your Co-Secretary know you must step down as a Co-Secretary. You can take a break on a temporary or permanent basis. Service work in ASCA does NOT mean you should do something that you feel you cannot do.

Only you can determine when you cannot handle the responsibilities of running meetings. This means being in touch with how you feel about giving service. And, if you feel overwhelmed, overburdened, or too emotionally reactive to function the way you would like, take a break until things ease up. Many survivors move in and out of service responsibilities - depending on their current situation.

What happens if others (e.g., your Co-Secretary) tell you that you don't seem to be handling the responsibilities of being a Co-Secretary and that you need help. What do you do then? First, listen to the person's concerns. Discuss your thoughts and feelings about what they person said. Try to come to a decision that is acceptable to all parties. It may be best (for the group and for yourself) if you give yourself the benefit of the doubt by taking a break before resuming your service at another time. Try not to belittle yourself if you cannot give service right now. This is a time for you to put your own interests first.

In the space below, write down some signs that might indicate to you that you are having difficulty handling your Co-Secretary responsibilities.

## 8.5 Handling Anxiety in a Healthy Way

Expect some anxiety about being a Co-Secretary and running a meeting - especially when you first start out. The key challenge is to learn how to deal with the anxiety when it comes up before the meeting or during the meeting. Instead of avoiding it, try doing something about it.

8.5.1 Recognize that all challenges have some risk.

8.5.2 Learn a relaxation exercise to calm your anxiety such as slowly breathing deeply (using the 4-Box method described in Section 8.3). Remember your vision of the kind of Co-Secretary you want to be. Keep doing this for as long as it takes to calm down.

You can also carry around a personal affirmation.

Example: "I am strong and take good care of myself. I remember to breathe. I send love to my fears. My fears are the places within me that await my love."

Write your own personal affirmation in the space below.

8.5.3 Verbally reassure yourself by sharing your concerns with others and accepting the support that comes back to you. Try to simply do your best and let go of some of your fears (e.g., needing to be perfect, etc.)

In the space below, write down some of your own methods for dealing with anxiety:

8.6 The following space is for writing down any reactions that may come up for you, as a Co-Secretary, during an ASCA meeting. Just jot down your reactions and return to these notes after the meeting is over.

## 9.0 Organizational Overview of ASCA: Roles, Responsibilities, and Opportunities

### 9.1 Local meetings

9.1.1 Discuss and resolve routine procedural meeting issues

9.1.2 Promote meeting development

9.1.3 Provide feedback to your regional Service Council (if you have one) and to The Morris Center via:

- Co-Secretaries
- ASCA Newsletter editor
- E-mail or phone call to The Morris Center

### 9.2 Meeting Co-Secretaries

9.2.1 Facilitate meetings

9.2.2 Responsible for overall health and safety of meetings

9.2.3 Identify potential Co-Secretaries and encourage them to attend training

9.2.4 Ensure that there are always trained Co-Secretaries ready to relieve or step in

9.2.5 Implement routine meeting procedures

- Copy blank phone lists
- Arrange for speakers
- Maintain bookkeeping
- Maintain meeting materials and supplies
- Develop area-specific community resource/referral list
- Conduct regular Business Meetings

9.2.6 Serve on regional Service Council (or help create a Service Council if you have more than one ASCA meeting in your local geographic area)

9.2.7 Give feedback on meeting issues to Service Council (if one exists in geographic area)

### 9.3 Regional Service Councils

- 9.3.1 Serve as Co-Secretaries on rotating basis
- 9.3.2 Promote and establish meetings in county/region
- 9.3.3 Recruit participants, potential Co-Secretaries/other volunteers
- 9.3.4 Monitor meeting progress in county/region
- 9.3.5 Develop community resource list for all regional meetings

### 9.4 The Morris Center Board of Directors

- 9.4.1 Develop and sustain ASCA program
- 9.4.2 Modify and update ASCA format, materials, and literature
- 9.4.3 Seek input and feedback from meeting Co-Secretaries and Service Councils on development and expansion of ASCA program
- 9.4.4 Serve on and oversee ASCA program subcommittees as needed

## 10.0 Co-Secretary Guidelines

### 10.1 Time Issues

10.1.1 Start the meeting promptly at the designated time, regardless of how many people are in attendance.

10.1.2 Limit speakers to the time limits

10.1.3 Limit discussion shares to the time limits

10.1.4 End the meeting at the designated time

10.1.5 Co-Secretaries should support each other on the obligation of time frames.

 For example, if a speaker ignores Co-Secretary one's time signal, Co-Secretary two can say, "We're now out of time, please wrap it up in the next few minutes."

 If the speaker continues, try saying "We really need to stop now, how about continuing your share at a future meeting?"

### 10.2 Adhering to the Format

10.2.1 Your main task as Co-Secretary is to run a good, "clean" meeting, which means following the format and script as much as possible.

10.2.2 Adhere to the meeting format and script unless unusual circumstances require you to make a change

10.2.3 The meeting format serves as a "holding" container for powerful feelings. A consistent, predictable meeting structure provides a sense of safety for participants.

10.2.4 Survivors need to feel comfortable and safe in order to face the material we hear and talk about in our meetings.

### 10.3 Respecting Silences

10.3.1 People are typically uncomfortable being in a group that is silent. But don't worry if it happens.

10.3.2 Let the silence just happen. Stay with the process, even if you feel somewhat uncomfortable.

10.3.3 Silence can create powerful moments of reflection for participants. Silence gives people a chance to collect themselves, reflect on what they are feeling, and determine if they have something they want to share.

10.3.4 The silence probably won't last longer than five or ten minutes. The first person to talk will probably offer a deeper and more powerful share.

10.3.5 Silences serve to deepen what people can feel and eventually say.

#### 10.4 Difficult or Unexpected Situations

11.4.1 Please refer to Section 7.4 on Format Challenges and Section 4.6 on Communication.

#### 10.5 Items Not Covered

10.5. 1 If it becomes clear that unforeseen circumstances require you to make a temporary change in how the meeting will be conducted that day, the Co-Secretaries should decide how to make such a change.

- For example, if the room or building is unusable for some reason, you need to make alternative plans for where to meet.
- Another example is if one of the speakers doesn't show up for the meeting. The two Co-Secretaries must decide whether to extend the tag share part of the meeting.

10.5.4 **If a change is necessary, you should announce it at the beginning of the meeting and explain the change.** Try to keep the explanation simple and low-key so that the meeting can proceed in as normal a way as possible.

10.5.5 In general, if a situation comes up that we have not yet considered, the guiding principle is to keep the solution as close as possible to the regular ASCA meeting format.

Just make the best decision you can, **and remember to debrief after the meeting with your co-secretary.** Also, if appropriate, discuss the situation at your next Business Meeting.

## MEETING CHECKLIST FOR CO-SECRETARY ONE

The following list serves as a **general guide** on how you might divide responsibilities equitably for each ASCA meeting. Please feel free to adjust this checklist to fit your meeting's specific needs and circumstances.

### At Least Two Days Before The Meeting:

- Make contact with the other Co-Secretary and agree on which role you and they will assume (Co-Secretary One or Two).
- Make contact with the speakers and provide support for their upcoming share.

### On Meeting Day:

- Arrive 15 minutes before the meeting is scheduled to start
- Arrange the tables and chairs (if necessary).
- Place the "Welcome to ASCA" handouts on the table or chairs.
- If other Co-Secretary is not present 5 minutes before the meeting starts, solicit the group members for a volunteer (preferably, someone who has gone through training) to fill in for that meeting day. Be prepared to direct the volunteer through the meeting.
- Check with Co-Secretary Two about whether you are going to get together for coffee after the meeting. If both of you are going for coffee, make an announcement to invite the group.

### During The Meeting:

- Follow meeting script as indicated for Co-Secretary One.
- Keep time for speaker shares, giving the warning and time-up signals.
- Pass out phone list at the beginning and close of the meeting and pick it up at the end of the meeting.
- Pass out donation basket at the end of the meeting.
- Make a standard announcement at the end of the announcements section about

- Publicizing the ASCA meeting in the community
- Recruiting for new Co-Secretaries
- Dates of upcoming Co-Secretary training workshops
- Going out for coffee after the meeting
- Anything else that might help grow the meeting

#### After The Meeting:

- Be available to respond to questions, chat with newcomers and offer appreciation/praise to speakers
- Schedule future speakers.
- Make sure both you and Co-Secretary Two have updated copies of the speaker list.
- Count the donations, write amount in meeting ledger book, and follow bookkeeping procedures.
- After the meeting, turn off lights and close the door, unless there are building personnel designated to do that.

#### MEETING CHECKLIST FOR CO-SECRETARY TWO

The following list serves as a general guide on how to divide responsibilities equitably for each ASCA meeting. Please feel free to adjust this checklist to fit your meeting's specific needs and circumstances.

#### At Least Two Days Before The Meeting:

- Make contact with the other Co-Secretary and agree on what role you each will assume (Co- Secretary One or Two).

#### On Meeting Day:

- Arrive 15 minutes before the meeting is scheduled to start
- Put up signs directing people to the meeting room.

- Ask for volunteers to read from the Survivor to Thriver Manual (in Step Work Meetings). Make sure they have copies of the manual from which to read.
- If no one volunteers, you and/or your Co-Secretary can read.
- If other Co-Secretary is not present 5 minutes before the meeting starts, solicit for a volunteer to fill in for that meeting only (ask participants who have been trained as a Co-Secretary). Be prepared to direct volunteer through the meeting.
- Check with Co-Secretary about whether you're going to get together for coffee after the meeting.

#### During The Meeting:

- Follow the meeting script as indicated for Co-Secretary Two
- Introduce the speakers.

#### After The Meeting:

- Be available to respond to questions, chat with newcomers and offer appreciation/praise to speaker
- Schedule future speakers.
- Make sure both you and Co-Secretary One have updated copies of the speaker list.
- Assist in counting the donations.
- Collect the leftover handouts, and take down signs directing people to the meeting.
- Assist in closing the room and/or building.

## 10.6 PHONE CONTACTS

10.6.1 A telephone call is often a person's first link to a self-help group. Initial phone contact can encourage callers to explore attending ASCA by connecting with a "real" person who knows how they feel.

### 10.6.2 Tips on How to Handle Phone Contacts

- Be sensitive to callers' feelings.
- Find out specifically what the person's problem/needs are. What does this person hope to get from the self-help group?
- Don't push people to come to a meeting if they are not ready.
- Use a gentle voice tone and try to put your caller at ease.
- Talk slowly, quietly, and calmly.
- Listen for "cues" from the caller, and use a pace/style that will make her/him feel comfortable.

### 10.6.2 If Caller Is Ready to Come to a Meeting

- Encourage person to come, if s/he is ready.
- Give information about time and place and type of meeting available in your community (closed, open, mostly women/men, etc.)

### 10.6.3 How to Help Ease Fears/Anxiety of Some Callers

- Invite caller to bring a support person with her/him if your meeting holds periodic open meetings.
- Describe what happens in the group and some of the rules
- Offer to meet her/him at the door or before the meeting and introduce her/him to others.
- Have emergency phone numbers available (crisis hotlines, counseling services, etc.) as an alternative if the person seems to need emergency services
- Unless you have actually been through what the caller is describing, don't say, "I know how you feel."
- If you want, spend some time disclosing your own feelings and experiences in recovery to the caller.

- Encourage callers to tap into their existing network for additional support (e. g., family, friends, neighbors, doctor, etc.)

#### 10.6.7 Setting Boundaries with Callers

- Work at being patient, but also constructive and assertive with people who talk too long or who call when you are unable to talk.
- If caller phones at an inconvenient time, let him/her know that you are really interested in talking and would be happy to call back -- or ask when s/he can call back.
- If your time is limited, say gently, "I have about ten minutes now. If we don't finish, what are some good times to reach you?" Follow through on what you say you will do.
- If someone starts to repeat him/herself, you can say, "Can we hold that for the whole group to hear? What you are saying is important and the whole group will want to hear it."
- **KNOW THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE TO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS.** We may want to make things better for others and may feel helpless if we can't. Sometimes it's good just to listen and let the caller know you are interested.

10.6.8 After a difficult phone contact, know that you can also reach out to your fellow Co-Secretary.

### 10.7 How to Conduct Business Meetings

Business meetings are the place to accomplish all non-recovery work that supports the continued functioning of the meeting. The business meeting is necessary because, at its core, ASCA is a volunteer self-help group that cannot function without the active involvement of its membership.

The Morris Center's responsibility is to provide program ideas, models, and materials. It is the meeting participants' responsibility to make sure the meeting is self-supporting and sustains itself.

#### 10.7.1 Business meetings are the place to talk about:

- How the meetings are run
- Making necessary decisions that are within the meeting's sphere of responsibilities.

- Addressing group dissatisfactions and particular problem situations that may arise out of the meetings.

10.7.2 Call a business meeting on a regular basis, preferably once a month or when issues or decisions indicate the need for a business meeting.

10.7.3 At least two weeks before the next business meeting, and a week thereafter, make an announcement during the Announcements portion of the meeting about the date and time of the next business meeting.

10.7.4 Generally, the best time to have a business meeting is immediately after an ASCA recovery meeting.

10.7.5 The Co-Secretaries should prepare a preliminary agenda at least a few days before the business meeting.

#### 10.7.6 How to Conduct the Business Meeting

- Co-Secretary One calls the meeting to order.
- Co-Secretary One asks if there are any items to add to the agenda, which the Co-Secretaries have created.
- Discuss each item in order of priority.
- Everyone who wants to talk is given a chance to have his/her say.
- When the Co-Secretaries sense that the group is moving towards consensus, "close" the discussion process by proposing the group make a decision or, if appropriate, take a vote on a proposal.
- Co-Secretary Two summarizes all decisions prior to adjourning the meeting.
- Business meetings should last no longer than one hour. If a meeting goes beyond that, consider tabling whatever issue is causing the time delay until the next meeting.
- Co-Secretaries should conduct the business meetings in a style that follows the recommendations made in Section 4.5 on Leadership and Teamwork and Section 4.6 on Communication.

10.7.7 The Co-Secretaries have the responsibility of implementing whatever decisions are made in the business meeting.

- **Write down all decisions** you made in the meeting for reference by future Co-Secretaries.
- **Document these decisions in a set of meeting records, which you will pass on to the next Co-Secretary team along with the financial bookkeeping.**

## 11.0 Meeting Development Ideas

### 11.1 The Challenge Of Meeting Development

11.1.1 ASCA meetings exist in their infancy but need to grow and "thrive" in order to ensure survival.

11.1.2 The minimum number of participants for a healthy meeting is 8, including two Co-Secretaries, although 10 or 12 is even better. With fewer than 8 participants, there is less sense of safety, because participants may feel pressure to share even when they do not want to share.

11.1.3 ASCA meetings need to build up their attendance in order to develop future Co-Secretaries, Service Council members, and trainers for future Co-Secretary Training Workshops.

11.1.4 Most importantly, larger meetings have "vitality" and provide more diverse recovery experiences for meeting participants. Think of every participant as a "resource"- the more resources at a meeting, the more beneficial it can be.

### 11.2 Growing A Meeting Is a Leadership Challenge

11.2.1 Developing a meeting allows Co-Secretaries the chance to practice leadership skills by encouraging involvement of others, delegating tasks, asking participants to help out, identifying those interested in providing service, and brainstorming with others about how to grow the meeting and then implement those strategies.

11.2.2 If you have a particularly effective idea, please let your Service Council in your region (if you have one), fellow ASCA Meeting Facilitators in the Yahoo Group, and The Morris Center Board of Directors know about it. We will want to include it in future updates of this manual.

### 11.3 Meeting Development Strategies

11.3.1 Use the Announcements portion of each meeting to encourage participants to reach out to other survivors in the community to attend ASCA. Use the talents of your meeting participants to spread the word.

11.3.2 Make a special connection with newcomers before and/or after each meeting by introducing yourself, referring them to ASCA literature, and inviting them back next week.

- 11.3.3 Recruit regular members to take the Co-Secretary training so you will have extra back up for meetings. Always announce when the next training will be.
- 11.3.4 Ask the group to distribute flyers to locations around the city where other survivors are likely to see the flyers (e.g., 12-Step meetings, churches, universities).
- 11.3.5 Encourage participants, who attend 12-Step meetings, to promote ASCA within the 12-Step community. Emphasize that we are a separate program for a separate problem.
- 11.3.6 Use the time after meetings to talk up the need for developing a "core" group of participants to make the meeting their own. We want each ASCA meeting to take on the particular personality of the core members. If members come and go after a few meetings, the meeting never develops an identity - an important issue for any self-help group.
- 11.3.7 Keep an ear open for what your members indicate they need from ASCA (and perhaps are not getting) and then encourage speakers to address these needs in their shares - as long as it is consistent with what the speakers need for their recovery. For example, if you hear that the meeting is too "war story oriented", encourage speakers to share more about their own personal recovery strategies.

## 12.0 Closing Exercise

12.1 The purpose of this closing exercise is to bring us back together as a group and offer everyone the chance to speak about what this training experience has meant. **How do you feel leaving today? What is the main thing you got out of today?**

The group will appreciate any comment that offers you a sense of closure to this training experience. You may also choose to pass the “Talking Stick”<sup>1</sup> on to the next person.

12.2 Everyone will sit or stand in a circle. One of the facilitators will go first and describe what the day has meant to him/her.

12.4 After the facilitator has spoken, s/he will pass the “Talking Stick” to the person on her/his right in the circle.

12.6 This will continue until everyone has shared (or passed).

12.7 The last person to share will then pass the Talking Stick back to the facilitator who started the process. The circle will be closed and our day together will be complete.

**Please, fill out the Workshop Evaluation form and leave it for the trainers before you leave. Thank you!**

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<sup>1</sup> The “Talking Stick” can be a timer (which most facilitators use in the ASCA meetings) or any other object that might symbolize something meaningful to the group.

## 13.0 Post Self-Assessment for Co-Secretary Readiness

### RATING SCALE:

No Confidence

0

1

2

3

Very Confident

4

Directions: **After you complete the workshop AND READ ALL OF THE MATERIALS in this handbook**, please complete this self-assessment. In the blank spaces below, write the number that best reflects how you feel about your current **ABILITY TO PERFORM** or your **UNDERSTANDING** of these items. Use your Self-Assessment as a discussion tool with your meeting's current Co-Secretaries soon after you complete this workshop.

### INFORMATION

1. \_\_\_\_ I can explain the purpose and principles of self-help support groups
2. \_\_\_\_ I can describe the philosophy, organizational structure, and administration of ASCA, and the relationship of ASCA with The Morris Center
3. \_\_\_\_ I can explain the roles of The Morris Center Board of Directors, Co-Secretaries/Co-Facilitators, and meeting participants
4. \_\_\_\_ I can create a list of local community resources for survivors
5. \_\_\_\_ I can describe the Co-Secretary's obligation in reporting child abuse

### NUTS AND BOLTS OF RUNNING ASCA MEETINGS

6. \_\_\_\_ I can describe the Co-Secretary meeting tasks
7. \_\_\_\_ I feel ready (with some mentoring) to perform basic recovery meeting and business meeting administration
8. \_\_\_\_ I can describe what to look for in group dynamics
9. \_\_\_\_ I can explain the reason for ASCA's meeting guidelines to participants

### HANDLING DIFFICULT MEETING SITUATIONS

16. \_\_\_\_ I can perform basic interventions (time and crosstalk) when format challenges occur
17. \_\_\_\_ I can describe how to intervene in difficult meeting situations
18. \_\_\_\_ I can describe how to propose compromises to resolve conflicts

### LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK

- 19. \_\_\_\_ I can describe the basics of how to speak effectively in public
- 20. \_\_\_\_ I have created my own image of an "Ideal Leader"
- 21. \_\_\_\_ I can demonstrate healthy authority
- 22. \_\_\_\_ I can demonstrate teamwork with others
- 23. \_\_\_\_ I feel confident that with some practice and mentoring, I can "hold" a meeting

### COMMUNICATION

- 24. \_\_\_\_ I can demonstrate how to listen actively, think clearly, and respond thoughtfully to others
- 25. \_\_\_\_ I feel confident that with some practice and mentoring, I can act assertively without being aggressive
- 26. \_\_\_\_ I can explain the importance of communicating regularly with my Co-Secretary

### MANAGING PERSONAL REACTIONS

- 27. \_\_\_\_ I can identify how to balance recovery needs with Co-Secretary responsibilities
- 28. \_\_\_\_ I can identify what to do when I'm triggered by others' stories
- 29. \_\_\_\_ I can ask for help when I need it
- 30. \_\_\_\_ I can identify strategies for how to handle anxiety in a healthy way
- 31. \_\_\_\_ I can identify when to shift from Co-Secretary role to personal recovery in meetings

### COMPASSION/EMPATHY

- 32. \_\_\_\_ I can, with some practice and mentoring, convey compassion and empathy in words
- 33. \_\_\_\_ I am able to respect personal and interpersonal boundaries
- 34. \_\_\_\_ I am able to express warmth, respect, and firmness

## 14.0 Co-Secretary Resource and Reference List

### 1. The Morris Center's ASCA website: [www.ascasupport.org](http://www.ascasupport.org)

*Our website is a great resource when you need additional information and tools! Here is where you can access the ASCA Newsletter, ASCA meeting materials (including the format script, templates for signs, meeting administration forms, and handouts). You can download the Survivor to Thriver Manual used for our Step Work Meetings. You can also access our online ASCA recovery meeting, which is hosted on our partner's, iSurvive, website.*

### 2. Yahoo! ASCA Meeting Facilitators Group

This is a great virtual "meeting place" to exchange ideas, poll for opinions, and discuss ASCA meeting challenges with other ASCA meeting facilitators around the world! To join this free e-group, simply e-mail Stu Frank (Chicago ASCA meeting facilitator) at [sdf3@mindspring.com](mailto:sdf3@mindspring.com).

NO ONE can view our e-group other than ASCA Co-Facilitators and trainers. The group is **not available** to the Yahoo community at large. The only way someone can join this group and have access to our information is for the moderators, Stu and Jessy, to enter the person's email address into the group's webpage. This online group isn't even listed in the Yahoo Groups Directory. As a member of this group, you may send messages to other ASCA meeting facilitators using just one email address:

[asca-mtg-facilitators@yahoogroups.com](mailto:asca-mtg-facilitators@yahoogroups.com).

You can also share photos and files, coordinate events, and more.

We are very excited about the potential benefits of having such a forum to easily communicate amongst ourselves – even across geographical time zones. So, please feel free to make use of this free e-group. If you have questions or suggestions, please feel free to send them directly to Stu at [sdf3@mindspring.com](mailto:sdf3@mindspring.com) (telephone 847-845-8895). You may also contact Jessy at [ascaus@yahoo.com](mailto:ascaus@yahoo.com)

### 3. The Morris Center's ASCA Co-Secretary and Co-Facilitator Training Committee

- a. All trainers: [asca-mtg-facilitators@yahoogroups.com](mailto:asca-mtg-facilitators@yahoogroups.com)
- b. Margaret Jayko [maymo@aol.com](mailto:maymo@aol.com)
- c. Jessy Keiser [ascaus@yahoo.com](mailto:ascaus@yahoo.com)
- d. Bob Roberts [broberts@emf.net](mailto:broberts@emf.net)
- e. David Vandevent [DVandevent@aol.com](mailto:DVandevent@aol.com)

# **ASCA Meeting Tool Kit**

## ASCA Meeting Tool Kit

### ***Specific Explanations of Guidelines***

#### ***Guideline #2: ASCA meetings are exclusively for survivors of physical, sexual or emotional childhood abuse.***

ASCA, Adults Survivors of Child Abuse, is a support program for adult survivors of physical, sexual or emotional childhood abuse or neglect. One of our prerequisites for attendance at ASCA meetings is self-identification as a survivor of childhood abuse. Family, partners, and friends who support us are not permitted to attend ASCA meetings, unless they are also survivors of childhood abuse. Occasionally however, a local ASCA meeting might decide to hold a special informational ASCA meeting to which family, partners, friends or other interested individuals are invited.

Sometimes a new ASCA attendee might question whether s/he is truly a survivor of childhood abuse. The person may not have clear recollections of being sexually or physically abused. Many people only refer to childhood abuse as physical or sexual abuse and forget about their emotional abuse. However, many people can readily identify patterns of childhood emotional abuse when they stop and examine their childhood history. Many people who suspect that they may have been abused sexually and/or physically begin with what they remember - a pattern of emotional abuse. Some of these individuals eventually unfold recollections of being sexually and/or physically abused.

As described in our *Survivor to Thriver Manual* on page 46, emotional abuse is defined as "a pattern of psychologically destructive interactions with a child that is characterized by five types of behaviors: rejecting, isolating, terrorizing, ignoring and corrupting. Emotional abuse involves the use of words as weapons . . ." When a current or prospective ASCA participant is questioning whether or not they are a survivor of child abuse, reviewing chapter three in our *Survivor to Thriver manual* would probably be a helpful tool to assist in clarifying their situation.

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#### ***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 the person being contacted has explicitly given permission. Many ASCA members form long-term friendships. That is a wonderful and natural evolution of being part of a support group. When friendships develop, each party extends permission to contact each other both implicitly and explicitly. Developing friendships does not violate anonymity.

On the other hand, ASCA meetings customarily pass around a telephone support list. Volunteers list their names and telephone numbers 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 names and numbers 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 wants to be contacted for a social engagement.

There have been occasions in the past when a member tried to pursue another member for the purposes of dating. Though we meet potential partners in a wide variety of situations, including ASCA meetings, 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 time. The guideline of anonymity implies that people should be left alone unless they specifically state that they want contact outside the meeting.

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***Guideline #4: What you hear today is told in confidence and should not be repeated outside this meeting.***

During an ASCA meeting, we take participants into our confidence. We share a mutual expectation that people in attendance will extend to each other reciprocal support and respect. Within an ASCA meeting, we trust that members will do no harm to us. In fact, we anticipate that members will gently hold whatever we express, as they would caress a vulnerable infant.

Repeating something from the meeting to another person outside the meeting is a breach of confidence. Repeating something that directly or indirectly violates a person's anonymity is a gross violation of that person's confidence. It is okay to discuss with others one's own share but not the shares of others. It is okay to discuss with others themes that come up in a meeting. Naturally, you would discuss these themes from your own personal perspective and not include confidential information from others.

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***Guideline #5: We ask that no one attend our meeting under the influence of alcohol or drugs, unless the medication is prescribed by a physician.***

We are all well aware that many survivors of childhood abuse have become chemically addicted or tend to abuse alcohol, drugs, and food. Survivors often use addictions to lessen and numb the pain. We sometimes use them to escape from the reality of the past and the discomfort of the present. Many of us have worked through or are working on our sobriety as we continue our journey of recovery from childhood abuse.

To attend an ASCA meeting under the influence of alcohol or a non-prescribed drug is neither helpful nor respectful – of ourselves or to others attending the ASCA meeting. Even a single glass of wine or one beer can alter our mood and feelings. We should try to come to our ASCA meetings not only unaltered from chemical substances, but also from anything else that would tend to alter or numb our mood or feelings.

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***Meeting Guideline # 6: ASCA meetings are not intended for survivors who are currently perpetrating abuse on others.***

ASCA focuses on issues directly pertinent to our recovery from being abused physically, sexually, emotionally, and/or neglected as a child. Other programs exist to help individuals with perpetrator type behavior deal with impulse control, anger management, boundaries, etc.

The reality is, however, that some survivors, especially as older children or teenagers, did to other younger children what was done to them. In relating our story and experiences of abuse during ASCA meetings, it is legitimate to briefly mention as part of our story that we abused a younger sibling, a cousin, a neighborhood child, etc. and express our feelings of remorse.

In addition, we acknowledge that some adult survivors of child abuse also abused their own children while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or due to their own lack of self-control, etc. The most common form of abuse by some adult survivors is emotional abuse and various forms of inappropriate discipline. Our experience of ASCA participants suggests that rarely does a survivor, who sexually abused a child, participate in ASCA. Again, you do **not** have to intervene if a survivor briefly

acknowledges the fact he/she abused his/her children in the past, to express remorse, and to note that he/she extinguished the behavior. **It is not acceptable for the survivor to elaborate or detail the abuse in any way when acknowledging such past behavior.** It is only permissible to acknowledge the basic behavior.

Here is an example where you **do not need to intervene**: "When I was 14 years old, I abused my younger brother. I feel sad and disgusted that I did that. I am trying to deal with this situation today with my brother." This statement briefly relates the basic outline of the facts of our story. There is an acknowledgement, an acceptance of responsibility, expression of remorse and sorrow, and a plan to deal with this past situation.

A survivor would be breaking the guideline if he/she explained in detail the type of abusive behavior, how s/he did it, how often, the reasons, circumstances, etc. If the person begins to describe such details, you need to intervene immediately. Guideline 6 only permits a very brief, clear, succinct note of basic fact. It is not acceptable to elaborate - in any way, whatsoever - about the abusive behavior. Here is an example of what you can say:

"Excuse me but we need to ask you to stop. Your share is beginning to cross Guideline 6. In ASCA meetings, we work on our recovery by focusing on what was done to us and how we are trying to move on with our lives. If you like, we can talk some more after this meeting. There are other programs in the Bay Area that focus on \_\_\_\_\_ [e.g., impulse control, anger management, aggression fantasies]."

Safety and focus are the two primary reasons for Guideline 6. ASCA meetings are a safe place for a community of survivors to come together. Therefore, the common good **always** preempts the individual need.

### ***Banning an ASCA Participant from Meetings***

Under certain extreme conditions, the Co-Facilitators, in conjunction with the meeting membership, have the option, authority, and responsibility to prohibit a survivor from participating in ASCA meetings. This has happened only a few times since 1993. It is a strong and decisive action taken by the Co-Facilitators and meeting membership to guarantee the ongoing safety of the group.

Two basic conditions trigger the process of barring someone from participating in ASCA meetings.

1. **The individual refuses to observe the meeting guidelines.** If, after repeated interventions, a person continues to break the meeting guidelines, you may need to ask the person to not attend future meetings. In the past, this happened when a survivor also happened to be a perpetrator. The person had a need to discuss issues and personal dynamics connected with perpetrating abuse on others. The person was seeking help but repeatedly crossing Guideline 6.

ASCA is a program for survivors of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse or neglect. ASCA is not a program to assist people with their perpetration issues and behavior. If a person is presently perpetrating - or has in the recent past perpetrated - abuse on a child or teenager, he/she is not an appropriate candidate for ASCA. Such a person needs assistance that ASCA is not designed to offer. Refer this person to another appropriate program where he/she can receive the necessary help.

2. **The person is taking advantage of the meeting or taking advantage of some of its members.** The second condition is more difficult to articulate. It pertains to an ASCA participant who, in the big picture, is perpetrating a type of abuse. The person might be consistently sharing in a manner that is offensive and/or antagonistic to other members. To many people within the group, the shares appear more in the service of titillating and harassing rather than to deal and focus with past abuse. One way to confirm this dynamic is when many members report the same negative reaction to this person's shares over a reasonable time interval. If, after talking to the person about this issue, the person does not change his/her manner of sharing, you may need to ask the person not to attend future meetings.
3. **The person is harassing a member(s) of the group.** Another situation involves a participant harassing members of the group, maybe for dating purposes. The person's boundaries are poor. The person may be taking advantage of the vulnerability of group members. The person may try to ingratiate him/herself to a member of the group and then try to take advantage of the person.

When any of the above difficult situations occurs in the meeting, the Co-Facilitators should check out and discuss the situation between themselves and with other senior members of the ASCA meeting. To help clarify, gain perspective, and to strategize possible interventions, the Co-Facilitators can discuss their situation with other facilitators in the "ASCA Meeting Facilitators" Yahoo group. Co-Facilitators can also contact The Morris Center's Board of Directors and discuss the situation. Both the Board and the e-group can be wonderful resources and helpful allies in such situations.

Co-Facilitators always have the authority to ask a participant to leave a meeting at any time. To enact the process of prohibiting the person from future ASCA meetings, take the meeting membership into counsel through a business meeting. When you officially un-invite a person from attending ASCA meetings, you should give the person other local resources that might be useful. Inform the person that if he/she should try to attend an ASCA meeting in the future, you will immediately call the police to have the person removed. This is the standard procedure, no "if's", "and's", or "but's".

**The process of banning someone from a meeting is a rare occurrence. Most ASCA meetings are open to the public. So, occasionally, a person who is not an appropriate candidate for ASCA may appear in your meeting. Although the process of barring someone from your meetings may raise anxiety, fears, and**

**other distressing feelings for you, it is also an opportunity to practice assertiveness, firmness, compassion, and courage! It is an opportunity to practice teamwork and collaboration. It is an invitation to stretch and grow.**

## ***The Heart of the ASCA Meeting Guidelines***

(This is a helpful short article, which you may want to copy and make available in your meetings as a handout.)

Our ASCA meeting format contains eight basic meeting guidelines along with additional guidelines for sharing, feedback, closure comments, etc. Years ago we intentionally chose the word, “guidelines”. We accepted the inevitable reality that most of life, including ASCA meetings, is experienced in the gray area. Life is rarely clear-cut and without some ambiguity.

During an ASCA meeting, situations sometimes arise that require gentle unfolding and subjective interpretation within the confines of our agreed upon (and time-tested) guidelines. Our guidelines aim to provide guidance and safety. They are not meant to be like harsh blocks of cement that impede our way. We formulated the guidelines to be helpful – not to humiliate or hurt.

Some of the guidelines are concrete like #1 arriving on time, #2 meetings are exclusively for survivors, #3 only first names are used, #4 what you hear is told in confidence, or #5 don't use alcohol or drugs before a meeting. However, guidelines #6, #7 and #8 - along with the sharing and feedback guidelines - reside more within the gray area. Rather than being concrete, these guidelines point us in a direction, and require a generous scoop of goodwill and some common sense on the part of all participants. Gentle compassion, thoughtful understanding, and an empathetic heart are the most important elements to interpreting a guideline.

Good will means that we assume the best intentions and place our heart in a mode of receptive understanding. Often the person we perceive as breaking the guideline is doing the best s/he can. The person might be ignorant or confused about the guideline. The participant might be overwhelmed at the moment. It does not help to be offended by a violation - or a perceived violation - of a guideline. Rather, try to graciously accept the co-facilitator's decision concerning the situation. Assuming the best intentions is more in the spirit of our ASCA guidelines than being rigid, reactive or blowing a situation out of proportion and out of perspective.

Sometimes something will happen within an ASCA meeting, which results in a person(s) feeling uncomfortable or anxious. When something happens during a meeting, with which you disagree or which you find unsettling, it would be helpful to discuss the situation with the Co-Facilitators following the conclusion of the meeting. Often this kind of follow-through can clarify and rectify a situation. You will probably leave the meeting more satisfied and peaceful when you discuss difficult situations with the Co-Facilitators, than if you simply leave the meeting upset and in a huff. Part of recovery is learning how to gently confront situations that seem askew.

To summarize, the heart of our ASCA guidelines serves to promote helpfulness and safety. We optimize our guidelines when we participate with a receptive heart and a generous scoop of goodwill.

## ***Sharing Basics***

(This is a helpful short article, which you may want to copy and make available in your meetings as a handout.)

Occasionally, members inquire into the parameters of what can or cannot be shared in an ASCA meeting. We have some clear meeting guidelines – especially, Guideline 6 and Guideline 7. Guideline 6 prohibits any type of discussion or disclosure of past or present perpetrator type behavior. Guideline 7 prohibits derogatory language aimed at gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.

Our share guidelines encourage us to speak about our feelings and to share in a way that others can "take-in" what we are saying. Nevertheless, it may be helpful to provide additional clarification for some participants.

First, sharing is a two way street. We share and disclose to liberate ourselves from our secrets, our shame, our humiliation, our painful story of childhood abuse, and its negative effects on our lives. We also share to relate our successes, our strategies, and our growth as human beings, who have been impacted by childhood abuse.

We share in the context of a community of people who have been through similar experiences. Thus, our shares are meant not only as a catharsis and an opportunity to gain insight and support, but also to connect with others through our sharing. We all know how various shares impact us - how we nod in empathy, how we squirm with discomfort, how our agitation oozes out, how our sadness releases tears as we listen to others share.

Some people think that they should be permitted to share anything they want and in any manner that they want. When our ASCA guidelines and spirit of sharing are crossed and not observed, a meeting can quickly descend into chaos. Some of us have had experiences of this happening in a meeting. We feel unsafe, confused and frightened. At this point, a meeting ceases to be helpful, and turns counterproductive.

Share guidelines are not meant to control. Rather, share guidelines are meant to provide conditions for an optimal healing experience for everyone - sharers and listeners.

Second, outside of Guidelines 6 and 7 mentioned above, there is no restriction concerning the content of our shares. Some people sense that their shares may be too intense for others or that others may feel uncomfortable with what they want to say. When this thought arises, we might begin our share by stating to the Co-Facilitators that we want to share something - but we are concerned that it may be too intense or make others feel uncomfortable. We could ask the Co-Facilitators to help us stay within the guidelines. This type of introduction frees us. We disclose our need to share something that feels potentially overwhelming and that may stretch the guidelines. At the same time, we open ourselves to support and assistance to keep us on track. Everyone in the

room - sharer, Co-Facilitators and listening members are all cheering for us, wanting us to succeed. We are all doing the best we can with difficult material.

Third, the Co-Facilitators sometimes intervene upon sharers - not so much for the content of a share but, rather, for the manner and tone by which the sharer is presenting. For example, if I start shouting and screaming or standing up and moving about in an agitated way, the style of my share and its tone is no longer productive and helpful. Though it may feel cathartic for me, it has destroyed the sense of safety and soundness of others in the meeting. When a share veers off course and impinges on the integrity of the meeting's safety and predictability, then the share must come to an immediate halt. A Co-facilitator accomplishes this through an intervention.

Here is another example to illustrate the manner, flavor, style, and nuance of a counter-productive share. This is an example of a sharer who discloses the explicit, sexually abusive behavior of their perpetrator(s). Most survivors, at some point in their recovery, find it helpful to relate what happened to them - the rape, the seduction, the assault, the badgering, the threats, etc. However, some survivors might describe their past experiences in a way that comes across as sexually arousing, sleazy, slimy, and in a manner meant to provoke others within the meeting. The sharer moves from describing and relating something from a wrenching heart, to describing and relating material that comes more from the unhealthy part (the out-of-control part) of the self.

This type of a share might seem okay in content. However, the sharer's presentation is experienced by the meeting members as inappropriate, unhelpful, and not within the spirit of sharing. The reality is that some people who attend ASCA meetings hurt so much that they are often unaware of the way they come across. Though they may not consciously intend to be provocative, they inadvertently are provocative. Provocation of any kind is always inappropriate and is unhelpful in our meetings. Often the intensity of a sharer's rebuttal to a co-facilitator's intervention is an indication of his/her inappropriateness.

Fourth, not every share that a listener may experience as uncomfortable is inappropriate. Many things that people might share are appropriate but may make some people feel uncomfortable. Just because I may feel uncomfortable, uneasy, and agitated by a share does not make the share inappropriate or unhelpful. A feeling is a feeling - neither right nor wrong, neither good nor bad.

To make a judgment about the inappropriateness of a share we must move from feeling to thinking. Does the share violate any of the guidelines? Is the share being presented in a provocative manner? If we cannot affirm the specifics of the violation, then the share is probably stirring up our own unresolved stuff around the material of the share. Therefore, we feel uncomfortable, uneasy, agitated, etc. Though we may feel uncomfortable, the share is probably still appropriate.

Finally, as we state at the beginning of every ASCA meeting, "by participating in this meeting we all agree to honor and abide by.... any interventions made by the Co-

Facilitators." Again, sharing is a two way street. To maintain the integrity of a meeting, we need to approach the meeting in a spirit of goodwill and trust. We trust the Co-Facilitators. We trustingly defer to the difficult decisions that Co-Facilitators sometimes have to make during a meeting.

Again, when Co-Facilitators make an intervention, they intervene not to control or humiliate, but rather to maintain the integrity of the meeting. Co-Facilitators do the very best that they can. One reason we have two Co-Facilitators is for a check and balance. If you think that you will feel controlled if a co-facilitator (in all honesty and sincerity) needs to intervene on your share, then you might not be ready to participate in ASCA meetings. A measure of goodwill is helpful to participating in – and getting the most out of - ASCA meetings.

Discussing Share Basics might take several meetings to fully explore. Hopefully, genuine discussion about sharing will lead to more helpful sharing for sharers and listener, as well as less need for intervention by the Co-Facilitators.

## **Co-Facilitator Interventions**

(This is a helpful short article, which you may want to copy and make available in your meetings as a handout.)

One of the duties of a co-facilitator during an ASCA meeting is to intervene if the guidelines or the spirit of ASCA are being crossed, ignored, or disregarded. Co-Facilitators report that intervening during a meeting is the most difficult, scary and undesirable aspect of being a co-facilitator. It is helpful to remember that Co-Facilitators do the best they can. They deserve our support, understanding and cooperation.

Interventions have two purposes. The first purpose is to stop a behavior that crosses our guidelines. The second purpose is to maintain the safety, integrity and consistency of the meeting. Co-Facilitators intervene because something seems to be askew. They make their best effort to rectify the situation.

Sometimes a participant asks a question, while giving a share, and the Co-Facilitator responds to help clarify. The most common type of intervention is with a participant who is unfamiliar with our guidelines. In the rare situation that a participant knowingly and purposefully violates a guideline, the Co-Facilitators must take the situation seriously. They may need to ask the person, after the meeting, to reconsider if ASCA is appropriate for him/her.

ASCA meetings are not group process psychotherapy sessions. We are peer-based support groups. Members agree to cooperate and adhere to the ASCA guidelines, and to be respectful. An ASCA meeting is not a place to act out. It is a setting to receive and give support. A person, who is not willing or capable of adhering to our ASCA guidelines and format, is not a suitable candidate for participating in ASCA. Our ASCA program has its limitations and is not designed for everyone. For example, our meetings are not designed to deal with people who are struggling with severe forms of schizophrenia.

Co-Facilitators intervene to maintain the safety, integrity and consistency of the meetings. They do not intervene to be mean, or to humiliate, or to scold. In these difficult situations, they do the best they can for the common good.

During an ASCA meeting, the Co-Facilitators are the final arbiters. No one is perfect. It takes time to cultivate the skills of an experienced co-facilitator. So if a Co-Facilitator makes an intervention, doing the best that he/she can, we encourage participants to refrain from judgment, to cooperate, and to discuss the situation with the Co-Facilitator following the conclusion of the meeting.

Your ASCA meeting may want to plan a business meeting in the near future to discuss the role of Co-Facilitators and interventions. The membership might discuss how to be supportive and cooperative during an intervention. Co-Facilitators might describe what it feels like to intervene. Participants might describe what it feels like to be the receiver of an intervention. What is usually helpful? What is not helpful?

## Overview of Step Meeting Format

This table describes each section and purpose of the Step Work Meeting format

| SECTION                                            | PURPOSE & DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | TIME            |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Welcome                                            | Set the tone, explain purpose, ground rules, guidelines, and format of meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 5 min.          |
| Check-In                                           | Quick check-ins (round robin style) to help people feel more connected and safe. Format is 30 seconds per person: state 1) your first name only, 2) the feelings you bring with you to this meeting, and 3) what you hope to get out of meeting today. The co-facilitators start check-in and model this process.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 5 -10 min.      |
| ASCA Stages & Steps                                | Read the ASCA 21 Steps aloud                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 5 min.          |
| Step Reading from Manual                           | Volunteer reads <i>Survivor to Thriver</i> manual section on the step for that day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 5 min.          |
| Individual Journaling, Art work, or other exercise | Purpose: help people collect their thoughts and formulate their own ideas before going into tag shares on the step.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 10 min.         |
| Group Share [Breakout]                             | Note: If we have a large number of people at the meeting, we might break up into smaller groups of 6 - 10 people, for just the group share portion of the meeting.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                 |
| Round 1: Uninterrupted "Go-Around" Group Share     | Each participant who wishes to share her/his initial thoughts/feelings on the step does so (these <i>uninterrupted</i> shares should be kept within a 2-3 minute time-frame). People can choose to pass.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 18-20 min.      |
| Round 2: Tag Shares with Feedback                  | <b>Categories of feedback allowed: 1) Supportive, and 2) Information &amp; Resources</b><br>Each person has a total of 7 ½ minutes: 5 minutes for sharing his/her additional insights, questions, and feelings about the step, up to 2 minutes to receive feedback, and 30 seconds to say how they feel about the feedback.                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 45 min.         |
| Checkout                                           | Quick checkouts (round robin style) to help people feel some closure, and hear how other people are feeling about the meeting. Format is 30 seconds per person: state 1) your feelings as we close the meeting, 2) what one thing you got out of this meeting. The co-facilitators start the checkout and model this process.                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 5 -10 min.      |
| Encouragement to Use Buddy System                  | Co-facilitators suggest that people "buddy up" with someone to work on the Steps between meetings.<br><b>Purpose and benefit:</b> Working with another person on a step, and checking in with each other between meetings, will help us reach our goals. We get feedback and encouragement from someone who is also working on similar issues.<br><br><b>This is also totally voluntary</b> – much like the telephone sign-up list. People self-select their "buddies". There is a set of guidelines on how to do this in the handout. | 1 min.          |
| Closing                                            | Announcements, review next week's materials, read ASCA Closing Statement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 5 min.          |
|                                                    | <b>Total</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>120 min.</b> |

### **Example: ASCA NYC Group Rules as Passed on 9/7/04**

*This is an example of how one group (the New York ASCA meeting), after several business meetings, created additional rules for their specific location. We are providing this in the training manual **only as an example** of how - depending on your particular group's requirements – you may need to supplement existing meeting materials with additional procedures and rules.*

#### Participation

1. Participants need to have attended at least 8 meetings to be eligible to be a co-secretary.
2. Participants need to have attended at least 4 ASCA meetings (given by ASCA NYC or some other ASCA group) to give a long share.
3. A person cannot attend a meeting without having first viewed the web site or taken the Welcome to ASCA handout home with them to read. The purpose is to weed out people who are simply curious (but are not child abuse victims) after seeing our meeting signs in the Children's Aid Society building.

#### Shares

1. A participant cannot give a tag share if they have already given a long share at a meeting.
2. A participant cannot give more than one long share in any four-week period.
3. If there are no participants at the meeting who are eligible to give a long share (either due to inexperience or the four week limitation) the long share shall be bypassed.

#### Meeting Structure

1. The business meeting will not have a long share. The last share must begin by 7:30 PM. The share need not be shortened. It can be the same length as every other share that meeting but must begin by 7:30 PM. After the share, the meeting should be brought to a close in the usual manner. After a two-minute break, the business meeting will begin.
2. The last share of any meeting must begin by 7:40 PM. The share need not be shortened. It can be the same length as every other share that meeting but must begin by 7:40 PM.
3. Tuesday meetings will rotate according to the pattern B-A-B-C. C rotation meetings will not include outside readings at this time. The meetings will consist of topics agreed upon by the group and may include reading materials published by ASCA.
4. Thursday meetings will all be A meetings.

5. Meetings will start at 6:30 PM sharp. Late-comers must wait until the two designated moments for allowing late entrances.

## Voting

1. All long-term decisions (decisions affecting more than one meeting) will be decided by vote at the first Tuesday meeting of the month - the business meeting. These include decisions on participation rules, rotation patterns, money, meeting times, and meeting materials. Choice of reading material for C rotations will also be decided by vote at the business meeting. This includes all decisions affecting Thursday meetings.
2. All short-term decisions (those relevant only to the present meeting) need to be decided by vote. An example is whether or not to open a window.
3. Any person may make a motion for a vote if they are eligible. Co-secretary one should state the motion and then ask if anyone seconds the motion or wants to discuss it. People should raise their hands to do either.
4. The co-secretary should select people in the order in which they raise their hands.
5. If a person seconds a motion, the secretary should ask if anybody wants to discuss it.
6. People should raise their hands to participate in the discussion. Comments should be kept under one minute if possible. The secretary can interrupt any person after one minute but can allow them to continue if warranted.
7. After discussion, the secretary should call for the vote (if it has been seconded), stating the matter to be voted upon, and asking for all who are in favor, opposed, and abstaining. If no person raises a hand for discussion, the secretary should call for the vote.
8. Similar procedure should be followed during the business meeting. A business meeting leader must be selected before the business meeting. The meeting initiator should ask for volunteers. If there is more than one volunteer and the volunteers do not defer to one person, the candidates shall choose from papers in a can, all but one of which is blank. The non-blank paper shall say "leader" on it.
9. All matters up for vote at the business meeting must be announced at least one week prior at an earlier meeting and sent out in the business meeting materials email. No motions for unannounced topics may be made at the business meeting itself. To be put on the voting list, the issue must be proposed through a motion at an earlier meeting and seconded by another person.
10. The time for discussion of each topic at the business meeting shall be determined by dividing a half-hour (the time set aside for the business portion) by the number of pre-advertised issues. If there are five issues, each will get 6 minutes of time. At the end of the time will be the vote. Majority rules in all matters.
11. The meeting initiator may volunteer for co-secretary duties by saying the following at the onset of the meeting: "I would like to volunteer to be co-secretary-one. Does anybody else volunteer for this job?" If there is more than one

volunteer, the assignment will be made by pulling papers from a can. The same procedure will be used in assigning the business leader.

12. Co-secretary one will be the mediator for all group discussion, not including the business section of the business meetings. This includes selection of people to speak and administration over voting.
13. Outside of the 20 second check out at the end of the meeting, meeting participants should raise a hand before addressing the group. Co-secretary one will call upon the person to speak. People should try not to blurt out motions or comments if possible. Please wait to be called upon.
14. Participants need to have attended at least 8 meetings to participate in long-term votes.

## Materials

1. Any materials used in educational moments must be pre-approved by the group.
2. Any materials left on the literature table must be pre-approved by the group. Thus, far only materials published by ASCA have been approved for the table. The only exception to this is the one page listing of suicide hotlines that appears on our website.

## Conduct

1. Shouting or excessive profanity is prohibited during shares or at any other time at a meeting.
2. Cross-talk, defined as reference to another person in the group or their share, is prohibited except during supportive feedback to a long share.
3. Descriptions of abuse initiated by a participant whether past, present, or planned are prohibited during meetings.
4. A person may not contact anybody else in the group unless the receiver of the contact is listed on the current week's support sign up list or unless they have given express permission to be contacted even when not listed on the sheet.
5. Supportive feedback after long shares is meant for the benefit of the person who shared. The time should not be used for a mini-share. Also, it is not a time for analysis of the speaker, lecturing about the issues, or advice.
6. The segment of the meeting for tag shares should not be used for any other discussion even if no person is volunteering to speak.
7. Outside of the 20 second check out at the end of the meeting, meeting participants should raise a hand before addressing the group. Co-secretary one will call upon the person to speak. People should try not to blurt out motions or comments if possible. Please wait to be called upon.

## ***Meeting Hints Setting the Tone Before the Meeting Begins***

As a Co-Secretary or Co-Facilitator, ASCA meeting participants often look to you to set the tone. Setting a warm and welcoming tone helps people to feel comfortable and relaxed. This is especially true for new ASCA participants.

Most of us like to feel welcome. We appreciate a friendly gesture. It makes us feel a part of the group. Talking with new a participant before the meeting starts is a friendly gesture. This connection prior the meeting might prevent a newcomer from inadvertently violating one of the meeting's guidelines. This connection might also help you later, if you need to make an intervention.

### **Things you might do to set the tone prior to the meeting:**

- 📖 Introduce yourself to a newcomer: “Hello, my-name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am one of the two Co-Secretaries who will be facilitating the meeting. This is our Welcome to ASCA handout. It describes how our meeting operates. If you have any questions or if you want to debrief after the meeting, please let me know.”
- 📖 Say hello to a sporadic participant: “Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am glad to see you again. Here's our meeting info and a copy of our last *ASCA Newsletter*.”

**Remember: These 15-second interactions could pay big dividends.**

## Communication Skills Tips



### USE "I" STATEMENTS

It is important to focus on "I" statements when talking to your partner or other survivors.

*Example: Instead of saying "You made me angry", say "I feel angry".*

### WE DON'T GIVE ADVICE

Good communication in our meetings is about listening and speaking about our own experience - NOT about giving advice, even if someone specifically requests advice.

*Example: Instead of saying "You should do..." say "When I was in a similar situation, I found it helpful to..."*

### MUTUAL RESPECT

Respect everyone's recovery path - no matter how strange and peculiar it may seem to us. We don't need to convert anyone to our point of view. We **can**, however, talk about what has been helpful for us - without judgment of the other person's ways.

### LISTEN WITH AN OPEN MIND: MIRROR THE MESSAGE

This may be hard to do sometimes (especially if someone seems to be "attacking" you). But it is critical to listen with an open mind rather than immediately defend or explain ourselves. To help you do this, try to mirror what the person said after he/she finishes speaking.

*Example: Instead of saying, "I always put up the signs. Today was the first day I did not do that because I was running late!" say "I hear that you are angry with me because I forgot to put up the signs, and a new participant could not find our meeting room. Is that correct?"*

## VALIDATE AND EMPATHIZE

Whenever possible (after mirroring) try to validate or empathize with the person's feelings. You don't have to agree with the person in order to do this.

*Example: "I can understand how you could come to that conclusion ". Then follow it up with something to show you have at least tried to put yourself in the other person's shoes, such as: "I guess you could be feeling very frustrated with me right now, and feel that I acted selfishly."*

You are validating that your partner has a point of view, is not insane, and has a right to their feelings! This is the same thing we would want from them!

**Listening and "feeling heard" opens the door to true communication and teamwork!**

