

# ASCA News • October 1999

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## From the Desk of Executive Director

### George Bilotta

In Massachusetts the leaves are turning color. The autumn breeze is increasingly brisk. The ducks and geese are flying south. In California, I understand that the San Francisco Bay Area has been enjoying their traditionally warm autumn weather. And in San Diego, it is down right hot sometimes with the Santa Ana winds this time of year.

It has been a challenge the past two months to relocate from San Francisco to a small community of 6,500 in West Boylston, Massachusetts. Though everyday brings surprises, I'm finally feeling more and more settled. It has been quite the transition from California back to Massachusetts, having lived in California since 1977.

You will notice that the ASCA News masthead sports an additional address and telephone number for our national headquarters here in Massachusetts. Never hesitate to contact me.

As I refocus my energy on spreading ASCA nationally, a simple but essential question calls for a response: What does it mean to recover, to heal from childhood abuse? We often use and hear the terms recover and heal but what does recovery and healing look and feel like to you? What are the indications for you that you are on the path of recovery, of healing?

To begin unfolding this basic question, I need your assistance. If you are presently on our web site, please take a few moments and e-mail me your thoughts concerning what it means for you to recover, to heal from childhood abuse? Does recovery differ from healing for you? If you receive the ASCA News through your meeting, please consider e-mailing me with your thoughts or sending them to me in Massachusetts through traditional mail. I'll report back to you next month concerning our collective responses.

In addition, I am looking for a few people who would be interested in helping to inaugurate our online meeting by writing a short share to be posted on our web site. All shares will be anonymous. Only the sharer and I will know the sharer's identity. If you are interested, contact me by e-mail: [tmc\\_asca@dnai.com](mailto:tmc_asca@dnai.com) and I will supply you with the details.

[Click here](#) to email us with your responses to some or all of the following.

1. What does it mean for you to recover, to heal from your past childhood abuse?
2. What does recovery and healing look and feel like for you?

3. What are the indications for you that you are on the path of recovery, of healing?
  4. Does recovery differ from healing for you?
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### **ASCA Meeting Ongoing Education Moment: 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. This might transpire when the person does 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 present 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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### **Rotation C Topic:**

#### **Possible ASCA Meeting Topic for October**

#### **Control: A Paradox**

For many of us survivors of child abuse, control, being in control, having control over our environment and life circumstances seems important. When we were children, when we were being abused physically, sexually and/or emotionally, we were not in control of our environment and our life circumstances. Ironically, our perpetrators were not in control either. Rather, they were out-of-control.

To be in control is to possess influence and authority. Control is to regulate, manage and direct. It also implies restraint and proportionality. But what does it

mean to have control over our environment and life circumstances? If control is an illusion, as some would say, what then do we really crave concerning control, being in control?

Two images come to mind. The first is the image of a horse, buggy and driver. To influence, manage and direct the horse, the driver loosely holds the reins. The reins are relaxed with sufficient play in the driver's palm. The secret to having authority over the horse and buggy is restraint and proportionality. When needing to turn the buggy, the driver gently adjusts the reins in hand ever so slightly and lightly thus directing the horse to turn in the desired direction.

The second image reveals a parent who is blue in the face from trying to control a 2-year-old child or a 16-year-old teenager. The parent is all worked-up, exasperated, body tight, straining, rigid, driven and locked in a battle of egos and wills. Influence and authority, regulating, managing and directing seem impossible. The qualities of restraint and proportionality seem missing from the equations and the interactions.

Being in control, having control over our environment and life circumstances seems to require restraint and proportionality above anything else. There seems to be an equation whereby the more energy and exertion we expend in a situation the less control we actually possess. The paradox of control seems to imply that restraint and proportionality are two primary keys to healthy control in reference to our environment and life circumstances.

Questions:

1. What does it mean for me to be in control of my environment and life circumstances?
2. In trying to control a situation, what do I really want?
3. How can I promote a sense of restraint and proportionality within my daily life?



### **Observations, Questions, Comments!**

If you have any observations, questions and/or comments that you want to share concerning ASCA and THE MORRIS CENTER, George Bilotta, welcomes your inquiries, phone: 508.835.6054, e-mail: [georgebilotta@cs.com](mailto:georgebilotta@cs.com). If you would like to contribute a poem, story, article, etc. to our ASCA News please contact us.