

ASCA News • April 2000

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From the Desk of Executive Director George Bilotta

With Spring in the air the harshness of cold winter days seems long ago. Looking out my window the number of birds migrating north have dramatically increased over the past few weeks. The Japanese maple tree is full of buds preparing itself to burst forth with leafy life. It's a quiet time with great expectation in the air. Everything is just waiting for the warmth of middle Spring to bring forth the full glory of renewed life.

During our lives, we seem to experience numerous periods of renewed life, periods of rejuvenation, periods of Spring following a period of hibernation or hardship. The Morris Center for example is moving into another period of renewed life with a new group of dedicated people planning to assume various positions on our Board of Directors later in May. The new Board will consist of many people who have extensive histories with The Morris Center and ASCA, people who know ASCA inside and out. We plan to also bring onto the Board other members who are new to The Morris Center and ASCA who offer talents and specializations which will help to round out our Board. With new faces, new ideas, and renewed energy, we can all anticipate many wonderful things to come about during the second half of 2000, enhancing and complementing everything we are already doing. We will begin introducing new Board member through our May, June and July issues of ASCA News.

I will be in San Francisco Friday, May 5th through Monday, May 8th. I will be meeting and working with prospective new Board members. In addition, I am asking the Co-Secretaries to inquire if there is need for a Co-Secretary training that we can schedule for Saturday, May 6th, probably 9:30am to 4:00pm. We would need at least 6 people to sign-up by Monday, April 24th in order for the training to go forward. Any ASCA member can participate in the training. There is a \$20 registration fee which includes materials. A sliding scale is also available. If you are interested let us know by either contacting me directly by e-mailing at tmc_asca@dnai.com, or telephoning me at 508.835.6054, or letting your Co-Secretaries know that you want to participate on Saturday, May 6th. *We need to know by Monday, April 24th.*

The following brief article is a continuation of our monthly series focused on pondering some of life's basic questions.



A Reflective Moment

The Values by Which We Live

by George Bilotta

We often say that we value this, that we value that. A value possesses a particular importance or usefulness for our lives. For example, we may say that we value education, relationships, free time, money, cultivating a loving family environment, or that we value personal characteristics such as integrity, honesty, compassion, kindness, etc. Though as a society we may share many similar values like freedom, democracy, caring for those incapable of taking care of themselves due to sickness, old age, etc., each of us holds special particular values that are unique to our core self, that shape our everyday lives, that define who we are.

What we value has a formative influence, i.e., it points us in a specific direction in our lives. Values are like a compass, they help us to find our way, especially when life becomes confusing, overwhelming, hectic, disorienting, etc. If we are unaware of our specific values, the values that form us, that direct our lives, then our values may be more like a compass that has been forgotten at home while we are on a hiking trip. In this manner, our values like a forgotten compass are not helpful when we need them, since we are unaware of what they are. We have forgotten them and how they operate in our lives.

If we are unaware of our core values, then they will not provide us with direction, with comfort or encouragement during stormy and stressful periods. They will not be available to help us to rebalance our lives, to regain focus and perspective, to interpret and to give meaning to our lives. Upon reflection we might determine that we may want to cultivate additional values. Though we may have inherited a variety of values from our family, society, friends and organizations with which we were raised, we always have the choice of cultivating additional values that may be more suitable and helpful for our lives today.

Questions:

1. What are your six primary or core values?
 2. How did these particular values become central to your life?
 3. Why do they continue to be core to who you are today?
 4. Are there other values that you would like to cultivate in your life?
 5. How might you go about cultivating them?
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ASCA Meeting Ongoing Education Moment: Co-Secretary Interventions

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

There are two purposes of an intervention. The first purpose is to stop a behavior that is ignoring our guidelines. The second purpose is to maintain the safety, integrity and consistency of the meeting. Co-Secretaries intervene because something seems to be askew and the Co-Secretaries make their best effort to rectify the situation.

Sometimes a guideline is crossed unknowingly and other times a guideline is crossed on purpose usually to provoke. The more common intervention is with a participant who is doing something unknowingly, out of ignorance perhaps of our guidelines. Sometimes a participant may ask a question while giving a share to which the Co-Secretary responds to help clarify.

In the rare situation that a participant knowingly and purposefully violates a guideline, the situation needs to be taken seriously. The person needs to reconsider what he/she is doing and if ASCA is appropriate for him/her. ASCA meetings are not group process psychotherapy sessions, but rather a communal support group whereby members agree to cooperate and adhere to the ASCA guidelines, 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 is not capable of adhering to our ASCA guidelines and spirit, is not a suitable candidate for participation in ASCA. ASCA meetings have limitations as a support program. It is not designed to deal with people who do not want to join cooperatively or who are not capable of abiding by the ASCA guidelines and spirit.

Co-Secretaries 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-Secretaries are the final arbiters. Co-Secretaries are not perfect. It takes time to cultivate the skills of an experienced Co-Secretary. So if a Co-Secretary 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-Secretary 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-Secretary and interventions. Co-Secretaries might describe what it feels like to intervene. Participants may describe what it feels like to be intervened on. The membership might discuss how to be supportive and cooperative during an intervention. What is usually helpful? What is usually unhelpful?



Poetry

Broken Words

by James Daniel, Copyright 1999

Frozen words heavily encrusted
With betrayal fall from my hands
And crush my toes. Ouch!
That hurt.

Promises once made I could
No longer bear the weight of
Lie in pieces 'round my feet.
Words entrusted to me by
The kings and queens of
Empty promises.
Words I was naive enough
To believe in, to find hope in,
To elope with, now in pieces
At my feet. Interesting.

I'll move on eventually
Probably when my toes
Stop hurting a bit
First let me dig my heels into
These bits of sentences around me
Separate the letters from the words
Thaw out the bitterness
Extract the innocence. There.
That's better.

Now I'll remember not to accept
Others' words so readily
And not to lie to myself so much
And know that words are only words
They're not that important, really
And they don't have to rhyme
(At least not this time.)
There. Good. I feel better.
Thanks for listening.
I'm outta here. See ya later.



Rotation C Topic: Possible ASCA Meeting Topic for April Exploring Relationships

Many survivors of childhood abuse acknowledge that establishing, fostering and continuing relationships in their many and diverse forms is challenging, frustrating and scary. On the other hand most people in general, find relationships difficult and problematic as well. For us survivors, special concerns around trust, consistency, manipulation, as well as physical and emotional intimacy contribute as some of the stumbling blocks prohibiting healthy, satisfying and fulfilling relationships.

In relationships, we participate in a process of connecting and joining with another person or with a group of people. To begin exploring what relationships are all about for us, it might be helpful to examine and elaborate on the following questions.

Questions:

1. What are my unique gifts that I have to offer in a relationship -- as a spouse/partner, a friend, a collegial coworker, a parent, a family member, a neighbor, etc.?
2. What are the five major nonnegotiable characteristics that must exist within a relationship in order for me to connect and to join the relationship, e.g., mutual respect, etc.?
3. What are the five major behaviors that will exclude me from continuing in a relationship, e.g. physical violence, etc.?
4. What did I learn about relationships during my childhood and teenage years?
5. When I say that I want to be in a relationship, what am I looking for in that relationship? How would I articulate what I am looking for?



Co-Secretary Update

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

1. Remember that the fee for the 2nd Quarter of 2000 for listing your meeting on our web site is presently due. Make your \$10 check payable to The Morris Center and mail to: The Morris Center, 1537 Franklin St. #307, San Francisco, CA, 94109-4581.
2. For the San Francisco Bay area ASCA meetings, the \$15 fee for the 2nd Quarter of 2000 for the ASCA telephone voice mail listing is also presently due. Please forward your payment of \$15 payable to: Dorothy Boerste. Mail to Dorothy Boerste, 1537 Franklin St. #307, San Francisco, CA, 94109.
3. If there are members of your group who want to participate in the Co-

Secretary training in San Francisco on Saturday, May 6th, please let George Bilotta know by Monday, May 24th.

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



Announcement!

Survivorship and Bay Area Women Against Rape present: *Honoring Your Story --- Easing Your Journey.*

A full-day conference for survivors of ritual abuse, sadistic sexual abuse, mind control and torture, pro-survivors, partners, friends and family members traveling beside them on the healing path.

Saturday, May 6, 2000, Preservation Park ~ Oakland, California

For detailed information and registration contact: Survivorship, PMB 139, 3181 Mission St., San Francisco, CA 94110-4515

e-mail: info@survivorship.org

web site: <http://www.survivorship.org>



Observations, Questions, Comments!

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