

ASCA News • December 2000

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From the President of the Board

Jessy Keiser

It's December already! There's a chill in the air and frost at night. It's hard to believe! The Thanksgiving turkey is barely carved, yet shopping messages on television and radio airwaves proclaim that Christmas is just around the corner. Wasn't it just yesterday that we were celebrating the New Year and a new millennium?

This year, as 2000 draws to a close, the new Board of Directors decided it was important to take some time out and review where ASCA has been - and where we want to go in the future.

On Sunday morning, November 19th, we all met at a Board member's home in Woodacre, California. We spent the day using Peter Drucker's Organization Self-Assessment Tools and reviewing the first four of his Five Questions:

What is our mission?

Who are our customers?

What do our customers value?

What are our results?

In order to answer some of those questions, we listened to reports from fellow members on the Board. George Bilotta gave us a report on the grant research that he conducted this year. Amaroq de Quebradas reported on what some providers and agencies had to say about ASCA during her community outreach. We also examined some of the data from the surveys our members submitted, along with past research collected through our Search Conference in 1995 and our Membership Maintenance committee in 1996.

We started the day off by stating some desired outcomes for our Board Retreat. We wanted to have more clarity on what our mission should be, and to build greater understanding amongst ourselves. By the time 4:30 rolled around, I believe we had achieved those outcomes. We were all tired but had also learned a lot from each other!

The Board's plan is to continuously scan our external environment and internal membership so that we know what our community truly needs. We realize that the only way any organization (especially a non-profit) can survive - let alone grow and thrive - is to make sure that we deliver what our members need and what our mission statement promises. We are also aware of the fact that we cannot deliver our mission without the support and volunteerism of members. Members like you and me!

The Board's next meeting will be in February. At that time, we will discuss the fifth and final question in Drucker's Self-Assessment Tools: What is our plan for the

next three years? I will report the results of that meeting in the March issue of the Newsletter.

By the way, we are still waiting on the return of surveys from some of the provider-based meetings. A full report on the ASCA Membership Survey results will be published in the newsletter as soon as we receive them. Meanwhile, if you haven't turned in your survey yet, please do so as soon as possible. If you did not receive a survey from your meeting co-secretary, and would like to participate in this important process, you can download a copy from our website at <http://www.ascasupport.org/survey2000-10-11.htm>

For now, I'll close this article with one of my favorite quotations. It is taken from the work of Gandhi. He said, "Be the change you want to see in the world". As a survivor and grateful ASCA thriver, those words have become the 22nd step for me. Happy Holidays! Peace in 2001....

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



A Reflective Moment for December

Patience: Acknowledging and Accepting Reality

by George Bilotta

Living in a fast paced society, the virtue, goodness and advantage of fostering patience in our daily lives receives little notice and discussion.

Advertisements bombard us with manic type messages to move quickly, to gather as much as possible, to soak up the gratification that our contemporary culture offers on a routine basis. Consequently, we have Olympians who use steroids. Banks offer credit cards to college students who often have little or no ability to pay off their debt. Many people expect to be in solid relationships without first changing their dysfunctional ways. While extracting information from the Internet, many will become impatient with having to wait 5 or 10 seconds for information to appear on their screen.

I think that it would be safe to say that our society at-large lacks the stamina of patience. We often have difficulty quietly being in the moment. While standing in a line waiting for our turn with a checkout clerk, many people grow impatient. They experience the situation as a waste of time. Because they lack the stamina of patience they do not know how to transform a few waiting moments into an exercise of personal growth, into a pause that refreshes. Often we become agitated when something does not go our way, when a person does not do something the way we want, when the world in general does not seem to flash green lights all day long for us.

What is patience or what are some of patience's constituent parts? In general a dictionary would suggest that patience is the ability to endure pain, difficulty or annoyance within a manner of calmness. Many people might retort - who wants to endure pain, or undergo difficulty, or bear with annoyance? In addition, we are asked to endure with calmness? For some people it sounds almost masochistic. For others, they picture themselves as children listening to a parent who reprimands them, reminding them to be patient, to hold their horses. However, the

reality of our daily lives suggests that life is constantly intersecting with difficulties, annoyances, disruptions, obstacles, complications, problems, controversies, pain, worries and troubles. It is impossible to escape from this usual stuff of life. In part, this is what life is all about.

Fostering the stamina of patience offers a sense of calmness within our daily difficulties, worries, problems, etc. The alternative is to be constantly knocked off balance, off course, or to react in a manner that results in more difficulty, in worsening an already difficult or problematic situation. So in daily life we can choose to calmly accept reality, and appropriately and creatively respond to a difficult or problematic situation, or we can fight reality and constantly be knocked off balance.

For me patience and fostering a calming endurance has more to do with acknowledging and accepting reality. It has to do with not fighting or resisting our present or past realities, whatever they may be. Again, while standing in line if I acknowledge and accept that this is my present reality, i.e., waiting my turn to checkout, then I can provide myself with options as to how I want to be a person who is waiting in line. If I choose to deny or resent my reality of waiting in line, then my heart becomes agitated, bored, impatient, numbed, dissociated, etc.

Cultivating patience gives way to calmness. Deliberately and purposefully fostering patience unfolds a specific way of living that enables us to maneuver calmly and reflectively through life's daily storms and disturbances. If we choose not to foster the virtue of patience, then we might find that we have lost our rudder and our way. We may discover that the daily grind of life is burdensome and without joy. In a sense, the stamina of patience unfolds the serenity of hope. Without hope, we live in despair, without direction and void of meaning.



Rotation C Topic:

Possible ASCA Meeting Topic for December

The Holidays: A Stress-Filled Time of the Year

What do the holidays evoke for you? Some people feel weighted down with painful and disturbing memories. Other survivors feel conflicted with thoughts about good times during the holiday, but also recall some horrendous recollections of abuse, chaos, fighting, etc. Many people long for the mythical and elusive Norman Rockwell picture of playing out the holidays that the news media dangles constantly in front of us like a thousand blinking lights strung around a tree alluring and mesmerizing us.

One thing that seems universal about the holiday season is the acknowledgement and growing acceptance that the holidays are full of stress. Stress derives from a wide variety of circumstances and reasons. If we travel, there is the stress of being away from the comfort and reassuring surroundings of our home. If friends or family visit, there is the stress of responsibility of providing and taking care of many details. For many there is the stress of purchasing presents, participating in parties and gatherings, being swept up in the holiday mentality. Not feeling in control is another form of stress during the holidays. Feeling resentful and conflicted that we should be up and cheery when in reality we are down and sad is another kind of stress for some.

Like any other difficult situation, thinking through and developing a plan to handle the inevitable stress that comes along with the holiday season might provide us with the best possible way of dealing with the holidays.

Questions:

1. What has been your experience of the holiday season?
2. What are the sources of stress for you during the coming holidays?
3. How might you proactively reduce the stress on yourself during the holiday season?



ASCA Meeting Ongoing Education Moment: Using the *Survivor to Thrive* Manual

The Morris Center's *Survivor to Thrive* manual was created as an accompaniment to the recovery process for adult survivors of physical, sexual and/or emotional child abuse or neglect. We should always remember however, that our manual and ASCA is only one of many different and powerful ways that we survivors use to heal our emotional wounds and to move-on with our lives.

The *Survivor to Thrive* manual offers an organized way and plan to proceed. It is a discriminating aid to help us clarify our story of abuse and recovery. Providing exercises that gently challenge us to work through some of our unresolved stuff, the manual is full of practical ways of looking at our past abuse experiences and how we proceed with our recovery. Often the material will stimulate our recall and jog our memory. In working through much of the material we may notice a piggyback effect whereby one memory leads to another, to another, or to an elaboration and clarification of past situations. In many ways the *Survivor to Thrive* manual challenges us to rethink, clarify and acknowledge not only the past but also our present and future.

Finally, many people who regularly attend ASCA meetings find that their shares become more insightful and fruitful when they work through some material in the manual during the week.

The *Survivor to Thrive* manual is available free for your use by downloading the manual from our web site: www.ascasupport.org. It can also be purchased. If you want to order the *Survivor to Thrive* manual simply forward a check for \$23 payable to THE MORRIS CENTER and forward to: THE MORRIS CENTER, c/o George Bilotta, 173 Malden Street, West Boylston, MA 01583.



From the Desk of George Bilotta

With the fall season quickly giving way to winter's hibernation accompanied by the end of the year holidays, I want to use this occasion to thank everyone who has contributed in anyway whatsoever to making The Morris Center and ASCA vibrant, helpful and a healing avenue for many survivors. So many people in a wide variety of ways dedicate time, energy and a spirit

of good will to making us a successful endeavor.

Looking back over the past year, there is much for which to be thankful. The Board of Directors continues with diligence and skill to bring us into the 21st century. Various co-secretaries from the community based and the provider based ASCA meetings ensure that meetings are safe and consistent. Without the work and management of the co-secretaries ASCA meetings simply could not exist. There are others who do a variety of odds and ends. They are like the glue that keeps everything together whether they contribute financially, gather the mail, make telephone calls, etc.

Finally, I want to express appreciation to Norma Morris. Norma continues to provide the major portion of the financial resources that permits The Morris Center and ASCA to continue its mission. There is no person in the United States who has given more generously and wholeheartedly than Norma Morris. Over the past 9 years through her backing we have been able to promote effective and cost sensitive alternatives for healing for adult survivors of childhood abuse. We thank you, Norma, for your generosity, compassion and commitment to an unpopular cause.

Happy Holidays and best wishes for the coming New Year!



Co-Secretary Update

Any updates for current Co-Secretaries of ASCA meetings are included in this section of the ASCA News. Currently, we forward a hardcopy of the ASCA News to all the meetings. A Co-Secretary or some designated person from the meeting should be duplicating and distributing the ASCA News to the meeting membership.

1. If there are changes in co-secretary assignments, please let me know. Also if co-secretaries have a change in address or telephone number, please send me these changes. Finally, if as a co-secretary you have e-mail, would you please e-mail me at georgebilotta@cs.com so I can verify and have your e-mail. You can also contact me at 173 Malden Street, West Boylston, MA 01583-1020, 508.835.6054.



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.