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What is the essence of authenticity? How do we process anger ? How do we deal with anger at ASCA meetings ? What is dis-ease, and how can psychotherapy help? In this issue of the ASCA newsletter you'll find some interesting insights to all of these questions.

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In This Issue...

If you need some support starting an ASCA group or if your organization would like us to host a presentation on the ASCA program at your facility, please [contact us](#).

The Essence of Service...

Peace and Goodwill,

Roundtable on Anger

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Roundtable Notes

P.S. Thank you for your feedback! [Please keep it coming!](#)

Thoughts on Expressing Anger

The Etiology of Dis-ease

Poem: Clearview

Activism: Surveys for Science *help substantiate needs of adult survivors by taking these surveys:*

E. Diane Champé Institute

University of Amsterdam

***The Essence of Service...
Love the One You're With***

by Rachel Grant

As I think about what it means to thrive, an area that reveals itself is how we show up in the world to share our true selves with others in our daily lives. We may look to volunteering with organizations, offering our time and energy to support a particular cause, co-facilitating an ASCA self-help support group, or serving in some other way that contributes to society. This practice is of great value to both the giver and the receiver. Yet, I think we often miss the countless opportunities to serve those who are in our immediate circle, the ones we are closest to, the ones who support us during our emotional recovery, and the ones who cross our path every day. Thriving is being able to share the gift of our authentic selves.

What Gets in the Way of Authenticity

One of the behaviors that used to inhibit and prevent me from giving, or sharing freely with others was a kind of "stinginess". I am not talking about the kind of Ebenezer Scrooge stinginess that causes us to give a \$1 tip when we really could give more. Rather, I'm referring to another manifestation of stinginess: a withholding of myself, born out of a compulsion to hide and protect myself -- to preserve a sense of control; a mask of my shame. Where does this type of stinginess come from, how does it most often show up, and how can we break free of it?

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Looking Good is Lonely

Human beings are funny creatures. We desire interaction and relationship, yet often behave in ways that directly counter this need. I found that one of the main things, which got in the way of authentically interacting and forming relationships with others, was my *desire to look good!* How many times had I been in a conversation during which the other person begins speaking on a topic, and I had no idea what they are talking about? Yet, I nodded and agreed as if I were also a scholar on Far Eastern spices. When I almost tripped and fell, my first response wasn't, "Thank goodness I didn't get hurt" but rather, "Did anyone see!?" Or what about when I was struggling through a difficult time in my life, but refused to tell any of my friends, because I didn't

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Clearview

*in the deep within
i am unblemished
in the deep without
my wounds are healing*

*minds of lines of separation
dissolve*

*washed away by our tears
vision, beyond division
appears*

*i feel through to my clearview
i can see my soul*

*i am not my wounds
i am not my memories
i am a life to be lived
a mystery
to love*

*by Alexander Smith
San Francisco, California*

want them to think I was a failure.

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Why We Hide

As survivors of child abuse, we formed a belief that to hide our true selves (psychologically and emotionally) was the safest thing to do -- our abuser(s) would no longer be able to hurt us. Many of us suffered in silence and worked to keep up appearances to the outside world -- looking good was a way to keep from acknowledging the horrible truth of what was happening. As children, we often felt responsible for the abuse perpetrated on us. Our self-image was so damaged that we believed if we told someone what was going on, they would side with the abuser, and that would only affirm our feelings of shame. My beliefs were: "I am wrong. I am bad. I am the problem. I am not worthy of love". How could I have believed otherwise, when the one that was supposed to love and care for me was hurting me?

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Respecting our Shame

It is important to remember Step Six of the ASCA program: "I can respect my shame and anger as a consequence of my abuse, but shall try not to turn it against myself or others." A healthy ego is important, and a desire to protect it is a natural and appropriate response. The first preliminary step in the ASCA recovery program is to remove ourselves from abusive relationships. We no longer put ourselves in situations where people systematically abuse us. Safety first! However, I believe that as we begin to recover and want to thrive, if we never risk our ego by giving up the compulsion to, "look good," then we miss key opportunities to share and learn from others. We can miss out on a chance for others to share genuinely with us, and, perhaps most tragically, to really be seen and known by others, which is the essence of intimacy. Ultimately, we can miss out on the experience of loving and being loved.

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Imposing Our Shameful Beliefs on Others

Another way that shame showed up for me in the past was in my amazing ability to make choices for other people. Listen to the following invitation,

Earthtoalexander@yahoo.com

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Roundtable on Anger

by Bo

On December 12, 2009 I had the opportunity to attend a two-hour ASCA Roundtable on Anger hosted by the Saturday morning ASCA meeting at UCSF in San Francisco. Nine people, including the facilitators, participated in the roundtable. The roundtable was designed as a collaborative learning experience and consisted of seven discussion questions. Participants also had the chance to witness an impromptu demonstration of a real conflict resolution between two meeting members, which was conducted after the round table.

To review the notes from the roundtable discussion and the action plan developed by participants, [click on this link](#). Please see the editorial: [Thoughts on Expressing Anger](#)

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"Hey, there's a party this weekend, I'm sure you're too busy to go and wouldn't be interested, but I think it will be a lot of fun; you can come if you have the time." What in the world was that? I mistakenly believed that this sort of non-invitation would protect my ego from the disappointment of rejection. But what it actually did was strengthen my belief that I was "not worth the time" of the other person. Otherwise, the person would attend my party.

My error was in thinking that a "no" to an invitation meant the person was saying "no" to my worth as a human being. Instead, now I can make a clear request - "Would you like to help me on this project?" instead of, "I have this project that I'd like your help on, but I understand you're probably too busy." Then, I accept the person's answer without taking it as a personal affront to my value as a human being. Often, if someone declines my invitation, he or she will offer an explanation, e.g. "Sorry, I already have too many projects." When I learned to recognize that a person may refuse an invitation for any number of reasons, I was able to give up the need to protect myself by "trying to look good". I also grew to recognize that even if going to the party wasn't "their cup of tea", it did not mean that I was a "bad" cup of tea!

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Asking for What I Want

By making clear requests, I don't give a mixed message or impose a negative influence on the responder. My example of not asking others for support (e.g. keeping secret that I was struggling in life) is also a type of choosing for others. The people in our lives want to give their support. It is an act of stinginess to deny them the opportunity to love and care for us. So, how do I now counter this tendency to choose for others? It may seem simplistic, but, when I extend an invitation, I filter out anything that isn't the clear request. When I need support - I ask! I stop choosing for others. I am simply asking for what I want. We are worth the support, others want to give us. That's a great affirmation! "I am worth the support others want to give me."

The Gift of Authenticity

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The Etiology of Dis-ease *dis-ease (literally: without ease)* By Danny Buskirk

The act of not being authentically seen, heard, and mirrored does a world of harm, as stated in the words of psychoanalytic theorists D.W. Winnicott and Heinz Kohut

Winnicott used the powerful term *annihilation* to refer to the experience of not being mirrored—one is torn from being and plunged toward nonbeing. This nonmirroring is what self psychology calls empathic failure or selfobject failure—events, moments, interactions, and so on, in which we were not treated as living conscious human beings but as objects, as things. In Kohut's words, here we are faced with "the indifference of the nonhuman, the non-empathically responding world" (Kohut, 1984, p. 18 in *Psychosynthesis: a psychology of the spirit*, p. 122).

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I know now that it is a gift to those I am interacting with when I give up the need to look good. It is a gift when I make clear and direct requests. It is a gift when I am vulnerable with loved ones, holding the intention to build a more intimate and trusting relationship. I have discovered that relationships become more genuine, and the people we are with appreciate our openness... and begin to be more open with us. We begin to foster a safe and supportive environment where everyone can thrive.

Rachel Grant is a Life & Trauma Recovery Coach and the founder of Beyond Surviving, a workshop for those who have been sexually abused or assaulted. If you'd like to learn more about the work she does, please contact her at

rachelgrantcoaching@gmail.com or beyondsurviving@gmail.com

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Thoughts on Expressing Anger

by Bo

There are volumes of papers on the definition and origins of anger. I find the why's and wherefore's of its manifestation - and how to deal with it - controversial, to say the least. Many authors believe that our anger response is a natural reaction to a perceived threat. It is a response to a perceived injustice, loss, or threat of loss. The perceived loss could be the loss of our life or the loss of something that supports our life as we want to live it. Good enough for me. For the purposes of this article, I will leave it at that.

Most people believe that anger is an inevitable part of our human experience and that efforts to avoid or suppress anger will have ill effects on our mental health. That makes sense to me too. So what do we do with this inevitable aspect of suffering that we would rather not experience?

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Not Wanting to Feel Angry Doesn't Help

The Unconscious

It is my belief that an unconscious mind exists within the psyche. The unconscious is the unseen storehouse of the psyche that holds "memories that are painful and have been repressed" (Fadiman and Frager, p. 64). Jung believed that the unconscious "cannot be known and thus must be described in relationship to consciousness" (Fadiman and Frager, p. 64). It is through psychic symptoms that we are able to obtain glimpses of the unconscious at work. To a great degree, it is the unconscious that is in charge of the psyche. It is the unconscious that often causes us to behave in manners incongruent with what is considered healthy or appropriate by the conscious mind. For example, the act of consistently choosing partners that betray, or friends that disappoint, may be viewed as behavior from the unconscious. It is apparent that our conscious mind would never choose these painful and repetitive patterns. Yet they happen, time and time again. The responsibility for these maladaptive phenomena lies within the unconscious. What can be done about the seemingly endless patterns, often left over from childhood, is to work toward healthy integration and compassionate acceptance. It is my belief this is best done in psychotherapy.

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Healing with the Earth

It is crucial at this point in our evolution to realize that we are not separate from nature, but are indeed an integral part of it. Humanity must shift from an anthropocentric paradigm to an eco-centric paradigm in the strong

Very few of us would describe anger as a pleasurable experience. Yet, in my own path of recovery from child abuse, I've come to realize that experiencing my feelings of anger -- past and present -- is crucial to my healing. Not wanting to feel angry doesn't help me. My anger turns into rage and then I begin to feel hopeless. I have come to understand that as a child, my father conditioned me to suppress my feelings of anger. It was definitely not okay to express my feelings -- especially anger -- and the consequences of doing so only brought me more abuse.

Accepting my anger has been and continues to be a crucial step in my own recovery process. I still don't like it and doubt I ever will. But I have softened my resistance to my reality of anger.

Respecting My Anger

Step 6 of the ASCA program states, "I can respect my shame and anger as a consequence of my abuse, but shall try not to turn it against myself or others." Working with this step in a safe environment, such as my therapist's office and in ASCA meetings, has been a transformative experience for me. I have come to realize that my suppression of anger often kept me from taking positive healthy action. There were times I remained paralyzed instead of advocating for myself and taking action. For instance, ending my relationship with my father was a very healthy expression of self-respect. It was a self-loving action prompted by feelings of anger.

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I'm so Mad I Could Scream

While it's true that the violent expression of anger (yelling, screaming, hitting) is not acceptable behavior in the general public, it certainly is acceptable behavior in a safe therapeutic environment facilitated by trained professionals. Many of my most satisfying therapy sessions have focused on expressing my pent-up rage in the form of yelling, screaming, and hitting in order to get to the core feeling of my grief over the loss of a loving parent I never knew. This is helpful because I sometimes lack a vocabulary to express the rage I feel about what happened to me as a child. There are just no words to describe it, they don't exist. Being able to make guttural sounds, yelling, and screaming have been some of the

hope that our species will continue and our planet may thrive. In Iroquois philosophy there is a law: *In every deliberation we must consider the impact on the seventh generation.* Since we are both connected to as well as a component of nature (and incidentally, stand to do the most harm of every species), it behooves psychology to assist us in deeply understanding this urgent message. The theory behind our acting on behalf of nature is that damaging the macrocosm of the earth ultimately harms our individual microcosms.

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Environmentally Caused Maladies

According to a Center for Disease Control study, ten percent of American women and four percent of American men take antidepressant drugs.

Concurrently, the state of the world continues down a perilous path of self-destruction. I believe there is a correlation between the way in which we treat our external environment and our depressed inner states of being. The damage we impart on other humans and the more-than-human-world (Abram, 1997) should not be overlooked as one possible cause for neurosis, addictive behavior, child abuse, depression, and other mental disorders. To work with these environmentally caused maladies, it is strongly suggested that we work together with nature to (once again) come to the ultimate realization that we are not separate from, but are indeed one with the natural world.

Pathways to Integration

In essence, the goal is to enter a state of wholeness or unity with

most indispensable practices I have discovered to obtain a cathartic release.

How to Deal with Anger in the Context of an ASCA Meeting

The primary differentiator of self-help support groups, in general, is that they are led by peers who are there to support others as well as themselves, while voluntarily leading the meetings. Even when some ASCA meeting facilitators are also therapists, they are not there to provide professional advice or psychotherapy. I myself, along with the founders of the ASCA Program, believe that that the psychotherapeutic process should be left to a different forum: therapy groups led by trained professionals.

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ASCA Sharing Basics

By prohibiting certain behaviors and encouraging others, the founders of the ASCA self-help program created a support group format that helps laypersons, with minimal training, create a safe meeting environment. One of the behaviors encouraged in ASCA meetings is to talk freely about our feelings of anger – but not to “act out” our anger.

Cofacilitators-Keeping It Safe

The ASCA Co-Facilitator Training Manual ([free download](#)) specifies that “acting out” our anger requires an intervention by one of the facilitators. On page 74, highlighting the third point for sharing basics, the manual states:

"Third, a cofacilitator sometimes intervenes upon sharers-not so much for the content of the share, 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."

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the earth. Some possibilities for coexisting within this mindset include performing ritual inclusive of nature, being a good steward of the earth, vision quests, meditating in a natural setting, communing safely with plant and animal wildlife, and walking in nature as a personal (spiritual) practice.

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Suffering, Trauma and Psychotherapy

To integrate suffering and trauma, the experience must first be told to someone. More than told, however, it needs to be deeply heard. The experience and feelings of the trauma need to be acknowledged and affirmed. A psychotherapist plays an important role in the simple act of listening. The telling of the traumatic event cannot be hurried, as trust must first be present. We will tell our story as trust develops. Our experience must be believed, validated, and feel accepted by our therapist's lack of judgment. Furthermore, we must know that our story will be held in the strictest of confidence. We must be assured of our absolute safety within the setting of our chosen therapeutic container.

The text *Modern Psychology and Ancient Wisdom* by Sharon G. Mijares, PhD, speaks to rage, boundaries, disempowerment, and sexual abuse. It is my belief that getting in touch with feelings around sexual abuse and disempowerment allows the abuse survivor to feel the rage and broken boundaries and begin the healing process. There may always be a *traumatized* aspect to the abused individual, but it takes on new meaning in the light of

Therapeutic without Therapy

While ASCA is not a therapy group but a mutual self-help support group, coming to ASCA meetings can be therapeutic. I have learned to express extreme anger and frustration in ASCA support groups without yelling, screaming, or cursing. I am not saying there is not value in yelling and screaming to release anger. Clearly, I think there is. I'm simply saying that I can do that in my therapist's office or a therapy group session. In ASCA meetings I have found it useful to learn how to talk about my feelings of anger, without acting it out. I have grown to appreciate that, both as a meeting participant and as a co-facilitator.

This article was inspired by my participation in the ASCA roundtable on anger and the formal notes taken by fellow participant. ([click here for notes](#)) I came out of it with a reinforced understanding and respect for the thoughtful safety built into our ASCA self-help support groups.

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empowerment felt through the archetype of the wounded healer.

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As stated by Mijares:

"Rage is a natural attribute meant to protect boundaries. It is linked with instinctive power. Getting in touch with this rage at a deep archetypal level doesn't mean that women [or men] need to act out violently. It empowers them to have a presence that dispels abuse by its very nature. This protective power is accessed from deep in the belly area of the body." (Mijares, p. 85).

Deeply feeling and acknowledging the rage and suffering left over from childhood abuse is one way to become whole. It is a form of respecting the self, loving the self, and acquiring embodied knowledge that the abuse was a grave injustice. Rage therefore provides a path to walk with integrity and a more authentic existence. It may not be pleasant, but ignoring the rage is to suppress it and create a false sense of reality.

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Healing the BodyMind

Along with storytelling, body-centered psychotherapy is another way to access the deeper and oft-suppressed emotional content of the psyche. The body has for so long been ignored, especially within the context of the Western patriarchal worldview. I am pleased to read in *Modern Psychology and Ancient Wisdom*: reclamation of the body is a source of healing. Somatic psychotherapy holds that the body contains emotional intelligence, as well as trauma, and the way to healing is by accessing these repressed

energies through the physical body.

Traveling A Healing Path

In my current work as a psychotherapy intern at Haight Ashbury Free Clinic Inc. in San Francisco, I am honored to sit with those struggling with both substance abuse issues as well as clinically diagnosed mental disorders. I co-facilitate two groups and also see people for individual therapy. My fellow travelers suffer from all forms of child and adult abuse: betrayal, shame, Winnicott's annihilation, painful memories stored in the unconscious, separation from Mother Earth, distance from their bodies, and invalidated emotions. As we travel together down the healing path, I sit in non-judgment as I deeply listen to their stories. It is intensely challenging and incredibly fulfilling to work with such courageous souls. I am hopeful as we endeavor to bring forth their inner-healer.

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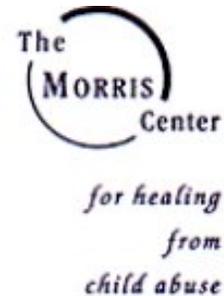
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Humbly starting in 1989 as the Adult Survivors of Incest Foundation, The Morris Center has grown to become an international resource for adult survivors of neglect, physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse over the past 20 years. The Morris Center receives no government funding and is comprised entirely of volunteers.



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