

**Building Loving and Healthy Intimate Relationships
Guided by the 12 Traditions of ACA**

Presented by Adelina F and Dan M at the Toronto ACA Annual Conference
'Relationships in ACA Recovery'
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This material was inspired by the workshop '*The Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous in Relationships*' developed by Dave and Polly P. from Cypress, California. We have adapted the content of their workshop to reflect the ACA Traditions and approach.

About Relationships

A few relevant concepts about relationships found in the Big Red Book of ACA, in Chapter 13, 'Relationships: Applying What We Have Learned':

In ACA we become willing to apply what we learn in the program to our daily lives and our relationships. We must be willing to apply the principles of the Steps and to reparent ourselves if we want [our life] to change.

Moving away from codependent behaviour and towards healthy relationships is one of the results of working the ACA program.

In ACA we learn to trust ourselves and to contribute to another person's life. By addressing our control and perfectionism, we let others make mistakes and learn from them. If we have addressed our area of abandonment and shame thus far, we no longer see people as a source to medicate our fear of abandonment. We no longer use people to divert us from our own feelings by focusing our attention on someone else... We no longer fear abandonment so much that we remain in unloving relationships.

Through ACA, we can begin to see our partners as individuals we would like to know rather than to possess. This is freedom from codependence.

The 12 Traditions of ACA

A few ideas about the purpose of the 12 Traditions of ACA, as described by the Big Red Book of ACA (Chapter 19):

'The ACA 12 Traditions are adapted from the 12 Traditions of AA. They outline fellowship unity, group autonomy, and the ultimate authority of ACA – a loving God – as expressed in our group conscience. The Traditions offer wisdom on being self-supporting as a fellowship, and on avoiding promotion when attracting new members. The ACA Traditions frame our leadership style in the language of being a trusted servant. We avoid a style of governance or authority over another. When asked to serve, we lead by example rather than by directive.

With the 12 Traditions, we sustain ACA groups to allow the ACA Solution of reparenting one's self to emerge and thrive.

We have learned from our own experience that the 12 Traditions are non-negotiable. Group decisions that follow the Traditions and their intent have a signature that we learn to recognize as a group conscience. By adhering to the Traditions, we begin to see God's footprint in our group decisions.'

The 12 Traditions as it pertains to healthy Relationships

We would like to review the 12 Traditions, re-written as it pertains to relationships. In brackets we have the original ACA 12 Traditions for reference.

Tradition 1

Our common welfare should come first. A healthy relationship depends upon unity.

(Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.)

Tradition 2

A loving God is the ultimate authority in our relationship, expressed as our group conscience. Each of us is God's trusted servant - neither governs

(For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.)

Tradition 3

The basic requirement for a good relationship is a mutual desire to be in it and make it work

(The only requirement for membership in ACA is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family.)

Tradition 4

Each of us should be autonomous except in matters affecting the other, our family, or society as a whole

(Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other Twelve-Step programs.)

Tradition 5

A healthy relationship has but one primary purpose - to love each other and to serve as an expression of God's love.

(Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.)

Tradition 6

We ought never single-handedly endorse, finance, or lend our name to any outside enterprise lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our commitment to each other.

(An ACA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the ACA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.)

Tradition 7

Each of us ought to strive to be fully self-supporting spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

(Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.)

Tradition 8

Our relationship should remain forever a non-professional, free, and giving relationship - each to the other.

(Adult Children of Alcoholics should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.)

Tradition 9

Our relationship ought never be organized or under the control of only one partner.

(ACA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.)

Tradition 10

We each are entitled to our own opinion on outside issues. Hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

(Adult Children of Alcoholics has no opinion on outside issues; hence the ACA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.)

Tradition 11

We individually convey our beliefs and philosophy through attraction rather than promotion. We are each in charge of our own anonymity.

(Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, films, and other public media.)

Tradition 12

Anonymity or selflessness is a spiritual foundation of our way of life as partners, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

(Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.)

Building healthy relationships guided by the ACA 12 Traditions

Tradition 1

Our common welfare should come first. A healthy relationship depends upon unity.

Unity begins with each individual. Unity of purpose and commitment to the same values is essential in building a healthy relationship. Having a solid relationship with a Higher Power within is vital to expressing unity in a relationship. If you are following the guidance and the will of God, as you understand Him, you are more able to participate in a healthy loving relationship. Why? Because a working relationship with God provides faith, and faith removes fear. Unity requires harmonious cooperation. Unity demands a willingness to listen to the ideas, feelings, and opinions of the other with an open mind. Unity means sharing views and not insisting on promoting our own way as the only way.

A relationship is a living entity, which has 3 components: me, you and the relationship itself. I am responsible to address my own issues (with your support, and others'); you are responsible to address your own issues (with my support and others'), and we are both responsible to address the issues about our relationship (practical things such as managing finances and household responsibilities, relating to each other's children, intimacy, communication, problem solving, etc). I can't take care of our relationship on my own, you can't do it on your own, we need to do it together.

Every relationship evolves in time. In order for a relationship to work and grow, we need to understand the stages of relationships (from infatuation and honeymoon, to power struggles, to 100% commitment to each other and unconditional love and support).

We also need to understand that there are differences between men and women in general, and that we have differences in our personalities. We honour and appreciate our differences as they complement each other. But we also needed to mitigate some of our differences.

Unity cannot automatically preserve itself. Like personal recovery, we have to work to maintain it. Here too, we need honesty, humility, open-mindedness, unselfishness and, above all, vigilance. We can't take our relationship, and each other, for granted. Our relationship, and being in each other's life, is a gift.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 1:

1. What effect do my actions have on our relationship? Am I a giver or a taker? Do I do unifying things? Am I quick to criticize? Am I eager to praise?
2. What am I willing to sacrifice for our relationship?
3. Do I use silence as a refuge or punishment while expecting my partner to read my mind?
4. Do I listen when my partner has something to say?
5. Do I admire and approve of my partner? Do they know that?
6. Am I a healing, mending, integrating force in our relationship, or am I divisive?
7. Am I a peacemaker? Or, because of my own insecurity, is it critical to my ego that I be right?
8. Can I be flexible?

Flexibility is taught by nature. You will see the trees bend in the wind; their branches are flexible. To be rigid is to break. When we have life problems it is good to be flexible. We need to flow with what is going on. If we resist, it becomes more painful. We need to be on the path of least resistance.

1. Do I think of my partner and myself as a unit? Am I selfish or self-centered with respect to our relationship and my wellbeing? Do I think in terms of our house, our cars, our bank account? Or do I think in terms of my car, my money, my stuff?
2. Can my partner have both male and female friends?
3. Do I try to be understanding when my partner triggers me, or am I abrasive, rageful, critical, rejecting?
4. Do I say platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility? Do I sneak around and do things that I know my partner won't like or that will violate our values?
5. Do I share all of me - good and bad? Or do I have secrets? Do I have discernment on what to share and when? Do I know how to set healthy boundaries – physical, emotional, mental – with my partner?

Tradition 2

A loving God is the ultimate authority in our relationship, expressed as our group conscience. Each of us is God's trusted servant - neither governs

Tradition 2 has 2 components: the ultimate authority for our relationship is a loving God, and neither of us governs the relationship, we are on equal footing.

Inviting God into the space of our relationship has become a regular practice for us. We review spiritual readings every morning and discuss what the readings mean to us.

We also invite God into our relationship when we have disagreements or we see things differently than our partner. Instead of arguing or entering in a power struggle, we decide to let go. We say, "You could be right", or "I am sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me."

Because we don't like confrontations, we risk to stuff up our feelings and develop resentments if we don't address things in time. We need to muster courage and humility to bring up things that upset us. We try doing so without shaming or blaming the other.

Communicating in difficult situations from our Adult Self, instead of the Wounded Child or Critical Parent, is an art we are learning to master. When we recognize that the ultimate authority is God, as we understand God, this becomes easier.

Another thing we need to be aware of is power balance. In relationships usually one of the partners has a more dominant personality and likes to make the decisions. This allows the one who dominates to feel indispensable and important. They risk developing a controlling attitude.

Some people like to be dominated and wash themselves from the responsibility of making decisions. They may feel that this absolves them of being blamed for mistakes or failures. In such situations, love does not exist, and the relationship is unhealthy. The active participation by both members in the relationship is essential for its growth.

We also need to practice courtesy. That is, none of us will speak or make decisions on behalf of the other, without consulting them first.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 2:

1. Do I insist on being the leader? Am I willing to compromise? Do I strive for equity with my partner?
2. Do I trust my partner? Am I absolutely trustworthy? Try this little prayer: "God, treat me tomorrow the way I treat my partner today". Or this one: "God, help me not to do anything today that I can't tell my partner about tonight".
3. Do I try to speak for my partner without consulting them?
4. Do I criticize my partner? Do I appreciate and praise them?
5. Is my ego so strong that I must have credit for more than I do? Am I so insecure that I must always have praise for my actions and ideas?
6. Do I do my share? And is that my opinion, or my partner's?
7. Does the thought of God being in charge of our relationship cause me any discomfort, or do I like and rely on that idea?

Tradition 3

The basic requirement for a good relationship is a mutual desire to be in it and make it work

Why do people struggle so hard to make relationships work? Part of the reason is because they're entering into relationships for the wrong reasons. People find themselves unsatisfied in love because they lack a true purpose for being in it. As of now, most people get into relationships to satisfy their own personal needs. This might work for a few years, but eventually the relationship fails us, and we end up unsatisfied as a result.

There are many reasons why people stay in a relationship other than a mutual desire such as: worries for their financial security, the need for emotional security by having a partner, fear of abandonment and separation, or feeling trapped due to responsibilities such as having children to raise and the fear of having to do so alone. This can lead to anger and resentments.

But when two people come together with the *intention of growth*, the relationship strives towards something much greater than gratification. The partnership becomes a journey of evolution, and the two individuals have an opportunity to expand more than they could alone.

When either of us is being triggered and in pain, the other must try to be accepting, kind, tolerant, loving, and understanding - and silent. After all, the roles will be reversed eventually, and it will be the other's turn to be triggered or struggling.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 3:

1. Do my actions say that I have a desire to be in this relationship?
2. Do I set myself up as a judge of my partner's intentions or sincerity? Do I judge my partner in anything?
3. Do I approach our relationship unselfishly, or do I depend on my partner's language, looks, race, education, age, appearance, job, or other such things for my own self esteem? What does my partner have to do to keep my ego fluffed up?
4. Am I committed to and do I encourage my partner's spiritual, professional, and individual growth and freedom?
5. Am I able to share my feelings with my partner? Can I listen to my partner's feelings with an open mind?
6. It is said that each partner has 100% responsibility for their experience in the relationship. Not 50% - 50%. Am I willing to take full responsibility and work on my part of the relationship?

Tradition 4

Each of us should be autonomous except in matters affecting the other, our family, or society as a whole

This tradition gives our relationship freedom in all essential matters. Each partner is free to choose their own way of functioning, yet this freedom carries the responsibility of preserving the unity of the relationship as a whole.

Autonomy means self-governing. In order to be autonomous, we must first realize that above all we are God's children – not just someone's child, mother, father, brother, sister, wife, husband, etc. In Step 11 we ask God what His Will is for us, and the power to carry that out, one day at a time. Then we go about trying to do His Will. This will always help our relationship.

We each actively encourage the other to follow their passion. We have become secure within ourselves and our relationship, so we do not feel such an attitude is threatening. Neither of us is an extension of the other.

At the same time, we believe we don't have the right to make a commitment without asking first. We practice courtesy and respect. As always, freedom brings responsibility. Because we are mostly autonomous, it is up to us individually to avoid any action that might harm our relationship.

The Fourth Tradition suggests that we should take an honest look at our relationship, asking about the activities we have planned independently. Will these actions compromise or impact in any way the unity that we have worked so hard to develop?

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 4:

1. Do I feel like there are only certain ways to do things? And are they my ways? And do I insist on things being done in those ways or am I willing to make a compromise?
2. Do I always think about how or if my decisions will affect my partner? And if so, do I communicate with my partner and come to an agreement?
3. Am I willing to go to any lengths - his/her lengths, not mine - to protect the integrity of the relationship?
4. Do I carefully avoid injuring my partner emotionally, physically, or spiritually?
5. How do I deal with my partner's anger regarding something I've done through my autonomy? Am I defensive? Do I try to subdue them with still greater anger? Do I point out previous "mistakes" they have made? Do I try to punish them in any way?

Tradition 5

A healthy relationship has but one primary purpose - to love each other and to serve as an expression of God's love.

Our primary purpose is to express the Love and the program spiritual principles (Surrender, Hope, Honesty, Forgiveness and Self-forgiveness, Humility, Open-

mindedness, Clarity, Willingness, Acceptance, Courage, Trust, Discernment) in all that we do, and to share this with others.

What we have is a relationship based on recovery. It always has been and must continue to be or it won't survive. We are wounded people and our behavior still reflects our wounds sometimes, as well as our recovery. That means that our Laundry List and Other Laundry List traits will resurface in our interactions. We will be tempted to constellate the Wounded-Child / Critical Parent dynamic. We are responsible for integrating our own survival traits and heal the Inner Child by working the ACA program and doing Reparenting work.

Tradition five also asks us to give comfort, encouragement, and understanding to our partner. When one of us does something or says something that is harmful or hurtful, it is often because we are unhappy with something about ourselves and could possibly need compassion instead of judgment or an angry response. Rather than lashing out, we try to say to ourselves: "At a time like this, what do I think a loving partner, or a Loving Parent would do?" We then try to do that. You might also ask God to allow you to see the other person through His eyes.

Each of us tries to play a part in all aspects of our life together; however, we don't insist on rigid equality. We need to be flexible and put things in context. Flexibility is a sign of emotional maturity.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 5:

1. Do we have a "primary purpose", and do we know what it is?
2. Do I resort to emotional blackmail? Do I ever start sentences with the phrase, "If you loved me you would...."?
3. Do I demand rigid equality? And if so, do I monitor my share as closely as I monitor my partner's? Do I really understand that my troubles are of my own making?
4. Do I really understand that I have a part in everything that I experience? Do I understand that whenever I am upset at someone else, it might be because of something that I reject about myself?
5. Do we express God's Love in our relationship, and do we share it with others?

6. How much do I like myself? Do I have, or I need, self-esteem and self-respect?
7. Am I a patient and non-critical listener?
8. Can I see my partner through God's eyes and hear my partner through God's ears?

Tradition 6

We ought never single-handedly endorse, finance, or lend our name to any outside enterprise lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our commitment to each other.

This is especially important in financial situations, as well as when it comes to official contracts or agreements.

Neither of us can meet all of the needs of the other. We are each responsible for taking care of ourselves, but we are enhanced by our association with each other.

A partner should be supportive spiritually, emotionally and physically to the relationship, but a mature partner doesn't do for the other what they can do for themselves. Doing so could promote an inflated ego. It would divert us from the primary purpose of the relationship, which is to express God's Love and not one's own self-will. It is our experience that God does not do for us what we should, and can, do for ourselves.

Being needed for the sake of being needed seems to be one of the symptoms of the problem. We have each found that, from time to time, we have an over-developed sense of responsibility. Without realizing it, we can create situations in which we place ourselves in the role of helper, fixer, or enabler.

This kind of behavior can create unhealthy dependencies in those we are trying to help. We have a false sense of security when we are needed in this way. We think that we are okay because we think that we are fulfilling a vital role. However, when our self-esteem is placed in the hands of others, we feel worthless when they no longer "need us".

We are proud of each other. We admire each other for different reasons. We learn a lot from each other.

We encourage each other and are interested in each other's growth, but we have found that we must each allow the other the dignity to grow, and perhaps to fail on their own, without assistance, insistence, or advice. We allow each other to have different ideas, concepts, beliefs, and feelings.

One should not work harder on their partner's program than they do. One needs the assurance that their well-being and/or sobriety is between them and God and does not depend on another person. Despite their very best intentions, anyone will ultimately make mistakes from time to time.

This tradition protects each individual's identity in the relationship and thus preserves the unity of the relationship. The best relationships are those where "dependence is mutual, independence is equal, and obligations are reciprocal."

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 6:

1. Do I encourage and support my partner?
2. What is motivating me when I try to be all things to my partner?
3. Can I hear God's voice when I am screaming at my mate?
4. Do I allow my partner the dignity to fail?
5. Do I pretend to agree with my partner just to keep things going?
6. Do I take responsibility for my own spiritual, emotional, and physical needs?
7. Am I in this relationship just to feel needed or loved?

Tradition 7

Each of us ought to strive to be fully self-supporting spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

To us, this means that each of us must be responsible for ourselves. Any kind of dependence (financial, emotional, etc.) can lead to power imbalance in the relationship.

Being self-supporting is impossible if one of the partners becomes the Higher Power for the other. The same is true when one person in the relationship is overly dependent on the other for their emotional well being. Our self-worth

comes from within and from God, not from having to have someone in our life in order to feel to feel okay about ourselves.

We believe we are here to enhance each others lives – not to be each others lives.

When each partner of the relationship understands that they are responsible for their own wellbeing and progress, a greater spiritual strength flows into each and the relationship growth stronger. Each partner will do their own part without asking or expecting the other to do it for them. We each are responsible for our own growth.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 7:

1. Do I try to be the boss? Do I attempt to assume control of my partner and our relationship?
2. Do my needs for comfort or a feeling of safety limit my partner's options?
3. Do I accept responsibility for myself? Can I admit to my innermost self that my problems are of my own making?
4. Do I try to manage and control through the purse strings?
5. Am I managed and controlled by the purse strings?
6. Do I think that because something is good for me personally that it is also good for my partner?
7. Do I deceive myself by thinking how generous I am when in reality I am giving only when I can do it on my own terms? Can I remember that giving can be a position of control?
8. Do I take responsibility for my own physical needs (health, diet, exercise)?

Tradition 8

Our relationship should remain forever an unprofessional, free, and giving relationship - each to the other.

Our individual contributions to the relationship should be free and from the heart. When it comes to chores we try to share the tasks, do some of them together (i.e. cooking, grocery shopping, house projects), or taking turns doing the same task (i.e. laundry or vacuuming). Neither of us is the boss.

We must avoid taking a "professional" or know-it-all attitude. Personal opinions are just that - personal. Neither of us is a certified expert on addiction, the twelve steps, marriage, sex, medicine, spirituality, or humility.

We have found that when we are individually living by the principles of the twelve steps and collectively by the principles of the twelve traditions, and maintaining a good relationship with God, we experience a growing sense of serenity and peace with each other.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 8:

1. Do I try to sound like an expert on things? If so, why do I need to do that?
2. Is my security at risk? Is my fear triggered? Does my ego feel threatened?
3. Do I believe that one or the other partner should be in charge based on their gender? Or experience? Or education? Or job? Or anything?
4. Do I make an effort to understand my partner's opinions and views? Do I really listen to my partner and show respect for their opinions and views?
5. Does my identity and feelings of self worth depend upon my relationship with my partner?
6. Who or what was my role model for a healthy relationship?
7. Can I give for fun and for free - requiring nothing in return?
8. Do I charge my partner 'a fee' for being in a relationship with me? If so, what is it? How expensive is my love and companionship?
9. Do I take hostages in my relationships? Do I feel that my partner belongs to me?

Tradition 9

Our relationship ought never be organized or under the control of only one partner.

The only real authority in our relationship is that of the spiritual principles. It is never one's personal authority.

A relationship ought never be organized means that it needs to be spontaneous, unpretentious, unrehearsed, and candid. Organization is meant to avoid or prevent the unexpected, usually because of fear of the unknown.

Rigid organization in a relationship leads to attempts at control, which is at the root of an unhealthy relationship. Attempts to control lead only to anger, rebellion, and resentments. A marriage or romantic relationship is no place for a constitution, organizational charts, bylaws, or Robert's Rules of Order.

This tradition gives us permission to have fun, be playful, lighten up (Promise 7). We don't take ourselves too seriously. Our lives have been very difficult at times and there weren't a lot of laughs. We like each other's sense of humor and laugh a lot together.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 9:

1. Am I mature enough to understand and use the spiritual principles of ACA in my relationship - even if no one makes me do so - with a sense of personal responsibility?
2. Do I exercise patience and humility in the things I do in my relationship?
3. Do I assume responsibility, or do I try to take on authority?
4. Have I learned how and when to step aside gracefully when I begin to overstep my bounds?
5. Who decides who does what in the day-to-day business of a relationship?
6. Am I a "peace at any price" person at the expense of setting healthy boundaries?

Tradition 10

We each are entitled to our own opinion on outside issues. Hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Within the context of relationships, we believe this means that we are careful about our opinions and rely on "live and let live".

Making hurtful remarks under the guise of joking, or strait out insults can be extremely detrimental to a relationship. A thoughtless cheap shot can quickly and easily can escalate into a big fight and the outcome can be devastating. Some remarks, no matter how much you may later regret them, will not - cannot - ever be forgotten.

Also, being dishonest, telling white lies about where we were, what we were doing, and who we were doing it with, is detrimental. One cannot successful be dishonest with the other partner for very long.

Trust in your partner and feeling safe are essential for a healthy relationship.

We do not drag our relationship into public controversy. In fact, we avoid heated controversy completely. We neither carry "our" opinion around. I carry mine – Dan carries his. We don't agree on everything and we agreed to allow the other be who they are.

We try to always be courteous. The very essence of 12 Step recovery programs is treating others - all others - with patience, tolerance, courtesy, and kindness. A quiet composed response, coming from our Adult self, or our Inner Loving Parent, will dampen anger. It adds to our dignity and self esteem when we are able to avoid saying things we will regret.

We also don't speak negatively of each other to friends or in public. Being publicly critical is one of the symptoms of dysfunctional relationships. Besides, feelings are temporary unless stated publicly. Somehow, giving voice to them in public gives them authenticity and longevity. They are remembered. Look at the tabloids.

Love is an action – not a feeling. If you love someone, you treat them like you love them. If you want to know whether or not you are loved, ask your heart, or Inner Child. Your Inner Child knows everything. Do you feel loved? Do the words match the actions?

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 10:

1. Do I give the impression that "we" have an opinion and I am its keeper?
2. Am I careful to keep confidences given to me by my partner?
3. Am I publicly critical of my partner?
4. What would my partner say if asked whether or not I loved them?
5. Does either of us have emotional scars from repeated heated controversy and struggles for power and control?
6. How important is it for me to be right? Would I rather be right than happy?
7. Do I expect or need my partner to see and feel the same as me on issues?

8. Can I let my partner disagree with my ideas without feeling rejected and without getting defensive?

Tradition 11

We individually convey our beliefs and philosophy through attraction rather than promotion. We are each in charge of our own anonymity.

The spirit of this tradition is that we accept another person as they are, putting both the Golden and Silver Rules into practice within the relationship. The Golden rule is, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". The Silver rule is: "Don't do for others what they need to do for themselves".

Finally, anonymity in a relationship is that ability to do something good and not have to advertise it. Anonymity is a positive attitude, not complaining when things are not just as we would have them. Anonymity is being understanding and forgiving when our partner makes a mistake. Anonymity is saying encouraging things to our loved ones; showing gratitude for small favors, etc. Anonymity is the ability to do good for good's sake without having to take credit or receive special strokes. Anonymity is being happy doing good without expectations of reward or return. There is no room in healthy relationships for self-glorification and pride but there is much room for great amounts of gratitude, humility and a willingness to be of service to others.

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 11:

1. Is my relationship treated with care in public?
2. Is my partner ever embarrassed or humiliated by my appearance or behaviours?
3. Do I give relationships a bad name?
4. Am I guilty of promoting my views rather than being inspiring?
5. Can I go about my affairs without giving my partner advice on how he or she should conduct theirs?
6. Can I do good things for my relationship anonymously? Do I do good things for my relationship anonymously?
7. Can I give my partner the right to be wrong? Can I give my partner the right to be right?

8. How do I feel when my partner criticizes the way I am trying to live my recovery program?
9. Which do I give more of to my partner: appreciation or criticism?
10. What happens when one partner in the relationship is getting noticeably better and the other is not?

Tradition 12

Anonymity or selflessness is a spiritual foundation of our way of life as partners, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

There is no room in our primary purpose for ego, pride, arrogance, selfishness, or unwillingness. There is however a lot of room for love, gratitude, humility, willingness, love, forgiveness, understanding, joy, and freedom.

We have learned that lessons can be learned from everyone. Some will teach us how to be, and others will teach us how not to be. We are reminded that our primary purpose is to be of service, to express God's Love, to treat ourselves and others well.

How should your partner be treated? Ask yourself these questions:

1. What would I like an article in the Toronto Star to say about the way I treat my partner?
2. How should a good partner act toward their partner?
3. How should one talk about their partner or their relationship?
4. Is the way I treat my partner likely to improve or enrich our relationship or make it worse?

If you're not pleased with the answers, ask yourself this: What can I do to change? None of us got here knowing how to be a good partner. We have all had to learn, sometimes slowly and painfully, how to do better. Our answer has been the steps, the traditions and the spiritual principles of ACA.

We again recommend the short prayer we presented earlier: 'God, treat me tomorrow the way I treat my partner today.'

CHECKLIST FOR TRADITION 12:

1. Is there a spiritual foundation to our relationship? Have we had a spiritual awakening?
2. Do I place our common welfare first? What would happen to me if my partner disappeared?
3. Do I treat my partner in a way that I'm proud of? Do I treat my partner one way in public and another in private? Do I care if others see every aspect of how I treat my partner?
4. Can I comfortably say, "I can't do anything my partner can't watch"?
5. Do I have an immature need for attention and recognition?
6. What is meant by 'discounting the message because of the messenger'?
7. Do I have personal integrity? Am I be true to my own beliefs?
8. Is my relationship growing healthier, or is deteriorating?

Conclusion

Having a warm loving relationship with another is one of life's greatest experiences, and one of God's greatest gifts. It contains all there is in great measure if you let it...love, fun, intimacy, humor, tears, laughter, pain and growth. It is worth all of its trouble and tears ten times over.

Our ability to conduct a good relationship usually has to be learned and somehow it must become our way of life - our values - what we do when nobody is watching and there is no chance of getting caught.

By doing our best to adapt these traditions and their underlying concepts of positive regard, humility, communication, fearlessness, love, understanding, courtesy, and honesty, we have seen not only our relationship benefit, but all of our other relationships as well.

Kahlil Gibran wrote about marriage in his book, *The Prophet*:

*Love one another, but make not a bond of love:
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,*

*Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
for only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together yet not too near together:
for the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.*