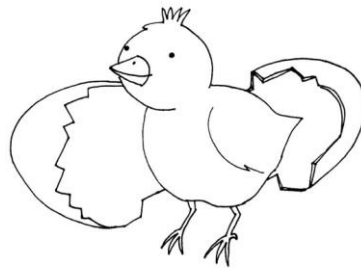


# New Meeting Packet



*Dear Trusted Servant,*

*Thank you for “Stepping Up” to provide leadership in ACA. This packet is designed to help you facilitate meetings in accordance with the Twelve Traditions. In it you will find guidelines to lead recovery and business meetings, program concept explanations and policies, a meeting format, meeting readings, a meeting registration form, and a 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition form.*



Central Coast ACA Intergroup

## **I. GUIDELINES FOR & RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTED SERVANTS**

*(may have Co-Chairs for positions)*

### **A. MEETING SECRETARY**

1. Updates Meeting Information: Sends changes in meeting location, Meeting Secretary or Meeting Treasurer, or address/phone number changes to Intergroup and World Service Organization (WSO). *Notify the facility in which you meet when you are turning over the key to a new Secretary – provide new name, address, and phone number.*
2. Carries the message that we care and that there is hope and recovery in these rooms.
3. Opens and closes the meetings unless this is delegated to another trusted servant.
4. Safeguards the facility: keys, ensures clean up including chairs, tables, spills, etc.
5. Arranges for meeting leaders and speakers: Invites meeting participants to read or lead. Invites speakers from Intergroup Speakers Bureau or invites individuals exhibiting apparent recovery heard at other ACA meeting to be guest speakers.



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6. Welcomes Newcomers: Greets newcomers before meetings, talks with them after the meeting (may also have designated greeters).
7. Is responsible for the unity and safety of the meeting: Enforces the “no crosstalk” rule; limits time of sharing by timer or other means; holds business meetings as needed; acts within the group conscience of the meeting.
8. Recognizes Members’ Time in Program: chips, cards, cake, etc.
9. Presents Secretary’s Report and Announcements at meetings.
10. Announces Service Position Opportunities coming open at least one week in advance; a one-year commitment is the usual term. Facilitates elections.
11. Steps Up: Retiring Meeting Secretaries are encouraged to continue their 12<sup>th</sup> Step work by “carrying the message to those who still suffer: and giving back to ACA what ACA has given them, by becoming, for example, the Intergroup Representative for their meeting or taking on an open meeting position.
12. Orients the Incoming Secretary: The outgoing Secretary orients the incoming Secretary to procedures determined by group conscience. See to the meeting information updates to Intergroup, WSO, and the facility where the meeting takes place.

**B. TREASURER** *(If position is vacant, Meeting Secretary assumes these responsibilities)*

1. Collects 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition donations each week and fills in the Treasurer’s form.
2. Pays meeting expenses (rent, P. O. Box, etc.)
3. Reimburses members who present receipts for refreshments, literature, copies, chips, etc.
4. Keeps a “prudent reserve” (3-6 months of meeting expenses).\
5. After the meeting has enough income from 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition donations to pay for monthly expenses and has amassed a prudent reserve, the meeting has a group conscience to decide how much of their excess funds to send to their Intergroup, Region, and World Service Organization. The suggested allocation is to send 60% of the remaining money to Intergroup, 30% to Region, and 10% to ACA WSO. money orders may be mailed in or contributions may be made on the websites.
6. Suggests, when 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition is taken, that the standard one-dollar donation given since 1935 no longer covers the cost to “carry the message to those who still suffer”; reminds the group of the meeting’s responsibility fund the efforts of Intergroup, Region, and World Service Organization to continue their work: telephone information, meeting directories, literature, and events.
7. Reports the financial status of the meeting each month during announcements.



**C. MEETING REPRESENTATIVE TO INTERGROUP** *(If position is vacant, Meeting Secretary assumes these responsibilities)*

1. Attends Intergroup meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom 838 7102 1602 passcode 123456.
2. Carries information, concerns, and announcements from the meeting to Intergroup and from Intergroup to the meeting.
3. Makes questions and concerns of the meeting known to Intergroup.
4. Chairs or works on the Intergroup committees: office, literature, newsletter, speakers bureau, and special events (recovery marathon meetings, ACA Birthday Party (January), dances, recovery conferences...).

**D. LITERATURE CHAIRPERSON** *(If position is vacant, Meeting Secretary assumes these responsibilities)*

1. Orders literature from ACA WSO
2. Downloads and photocopies free literature from Intergroup, Region, and WSO websites
3. Displays literature at each meeting.
4. Presents receipts to the meeting Treasurer for reimbursement.

**E. REFRESHMENTS CHAIRPERSON** *(If position is vacant, Meeting Secretary assumes these responsibilities)*

1. Provides refreshments.
2. Replaces depleted supplies (cups, paper towels, napkins, etc.).
3. Presents receipts to meeting Treasurer for reimbursement.

**F. OTHER POSSIBLE SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES:**

Sponsors; Greeters; Set up/Clean up; Sharing timer; Informational Technology Person on Zoom meetings, etc.

## **II. BUSINESS MEETINGS**

**A. GROUP CONSCIENCE**

This is the vote of the meeting members on matters affecting the group. In ACA all power rests with the members of the program, not in “trusted servants”. Every member has a voice. Any decision reached is to be, as much as possible, a reflection of the will of the group and a reflection of the spirit of our fellowship, not merely a majority vote. For “substantial unanimity” to exist, every member needs to be considered and a unanimous vote needs to exist when possible. If there is substantial disagreement on the issue, more information and discussion may be needed before “substantial unanimity” can exist. The issue is then tabled



until the next Business meeting and discussed again. If considerable disharmony continues, the issue may be dropped altogether to maintain the unity of the meeting (Tradition #1).

## **B. MINORITY OPINION**

Members who have an opinion on an issue that is in the “minority” have the right to present their concern at their meeting. After a minority opinion is expressed, another vote is taken to determine if the minority opinion has changed anyone’s mind. It still take substantial unanimity to pass a motion.

## **C. A BUSINESS MEETING**

A business meeting, generally held monthly after a regular meeting or as needed, is the format used to determine meeting policy of issues such as:

1. election of officers
2. changing time/date/location/focus of a meeting
3. meeting format
4. timer/sharing issues
5. discussing literature policies
6. financial reports
7. organizing special activities
8. having the presence of children or teens allowed at a meeting
9. possible violation of the Traditions by a member or members of a meeting
10. possible violation of the safety of a meeting
11. using the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition donations to fund activities

## **D. ANNOUNCING THE BUSINESS MEETING**

1. During the announcements a member may request a business meeting to discuss an issue. The issues to be discussed may be announced briefly with no discussion at a recovery meeting. A business meeting is scheduled as soon as possible by the group (after the meeting or at some later date).
2. All members should have as much advance information and/or lead time necessary to prepare for a business meeting. For elections the business meeting might be announced 1-4 weeks in advance; for lesser issues, discussion at the next regular meeting may be appropriate.

## **E. REGULAR ACA MEETINGS ARE FOR RECOVERY**

It is not recommended to try to get the group conscience during the “Secretary’s Announcements”. Attempts to do so often result in a rush job and resentment of those who come to share, not to discuss business issues.

## **F. THE BUSINESS MEETING STRUCTURE**

The Secretary chairs the meeting. Each issue to be voted on is announced during the Secretary’s Report of the regular meeting. During the business meeting the issue is discussed, possible solutions are presented, and a vote is taken. A majority of those in attendance set the meeting policy. If someone complains about insufficient advance notification during the Announcements of a regular meeting, then the group takes a “group conscience” to determine if sufficient advance notification was given. If most feel they were given sufficient time and data and that the Traditions have been adhered to then the policy stands.



### **G. VOTING ON ANNUAL BUSINESS CONFERENCE (ABC) ISSUES**

Each year ACA has an Annual Business Conference (ABC). Each meeting is eligible to send a delegate and one or more alternates. At this meeting the group conscience of those attending will serve to give direction to the World Service Organization (WSO) for the following year. Ballot items, if passed by majority vote of all delegates who participate, will become ACA policy.

## **III. GUIDELINES FOR NEW MEETINGS**

### **A. MEETINGS ARE AUTONOMOUS**

Each meeting makes its own decision on policy in keeping with the 12 Traditions. The Tradition provide guidelines for group conduct just as the Steps provide guidelines for individual recovery.

### **B. LOCATE A FACILITY**

A group needs a safe place to meet. Groups have found space in Alano Clubs, churches, schools, hospitals, recovery bookstores, community rooms of businesses, or public service organizations at reasonable rents. Some meetings have started in someone's home, but usually found the need to move into a larger, "neutral" space within a few months.

### **C. GETTING STARTED**

If possible, you may want to get a commitment from two or three other program people that show up for a few meetings to insure the new group's early survival. For support, meetings may contact the Central Coast ACA Intergroup (P. O. Box 73; Arroyo Grande, CA 93421; [ccacaig@gmail.com](mailto:ccacaig@gmail.com)).

### **D. TRUSTED SERVANTS**

Each meeting provides opportunities for service which keeps the meeting operational. In a healthy meeting many people do a little bit of the work and the jobs get done.

### **E. MEETING FORMATS**

This packet contains a sample meeting format. There are other formats for meetings. If you create a specialized meeting format, please send a copy to Intergroup.

### **F. CROSSTALK**

Crosstalk is interrupting verbally, by making noise or gestures, pacing or walking around, giving advice, or making comments about another person's sharing. It is also talking to someone during sharing time. In ACA we don't crosstalk. When others listen to us, just listen, our reality, our truth, our ideas, our feelings, our self-image, our beings are affirmed. When we focus only on our own recovery, we are taking responsibility for our own lives. We do this by presenting all statements in the "I", first-person form.



G. **ANONYMITY**

Anonymity allows us to share our feelings and to experience an identity apart from a label. “Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here” is a good rule to follow to create a safe place to share our feelings and recovery without fear of gossip, retaliation, or of personal exposure.

H. **LITERATURE**

Each meeting determines the ACA literature it chooses to use. ACA has an open literature policy, meaning that outside literature that are in keeping with the ACA 12 Traditions on ACA Recovery topics may be used.

I. **ATTRACTION**

Ours is a program of attraction, not promotion. If ACA meetings already exist in the area, you may want to distribute a flyer announcing your new meeting in those meetings. If no meetings exist, you may ask permission to distribute flyers at other 12-Step meetings, Alano Clubs, community facilities, or invite a few close friends to begin.

J. **STARTING A NEW MEETING**

The program grows because someone has a need to begin a new meeting and tries to meet that need.

K. **NEWCOMERS**

The love and respect we offer to newcomers is a reflection of the love and respect we are learning to offer ourselves.

L. **SAFETY POLICIES**

At a regular business meeting, determine your meeting plan for what to do with disruptions at meetings according to group consensus. Some ideas you may consider:

1. Keep Tradition 1: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.
2. Ask those who disrupt to leave.
3. Ask those who disrupt to take one week (or 2 weeks, 4 weeks...) away from this meeting.
4. Offer those who disrupt an opportunity to earn their way back into the meeting by making direct amends to the group and performing a designated service.
5. Ban individuals who continue to disrupt the meeting.
6. Escort a person who is disruptive from the meeting. At a business meeting it should be determined which people are designated or if the entire group will stand in unison to quietly “herd” the disrupter out the door.
7. Shut down the meeting immediately and have all members depart for the common welfare.
8. Call the police if there is clear and present danger to property, health, or lives and tell them truthfully what is happening – “We’re having a meeting here at \_\_\_\_\_ facility and (name or description of individual) is \_\_\_\_\_”



(e.g. threatening to “get” or kill us, assaulting by hitting/kicking, throwing chairs, smashing windshields with a tire-iron...).”

M. **OTHER PROBLEMS**

When problems occur not addressed here, check the 12 Traditions and present the problem in a business meeting for a group conscience. Come to Intergroup. We have no “right” answers, but we can tell you what has worked for us in our meetings in the past.

## **A MEETING FORMAT & READINGS**

### **OPENING (20 minutes)**

Hi! My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Welcome to the Reparenting My Inner Child meeting of Adult Children of Alcoholics.

1. In this meeting we read “The Problem” or the “Laundry List.” You belong here even if your parents were not alcoholic if you identify with these common characteristics of adult children.
2. We meet here to share the experiences we had as children growing up in alcoholic or dysfunctional homes, how it infected us then, and the affect it has on our lives today. By practicing the 12 Steps, by focusing on “The Solution,” and by accepting a Higher Power of our own understanding, we find freedom from the effects of our childhood environment of alcoholism and family dysfunction. We identify with “The Problem” and learn to live in “The Solution,” one day at a time.
3. Please, let us have a moment of silence for all who have not yet found recovery, after which we will recite the ACA Serenity Prayer:

**God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the people I cannot change,  
the courage to change the one I can,  
and the wisdom to know that one is me.**

4. Will someone please read:  
The Problem or The Laundry List

## **The Problem**

Many of us found that we had several characteristics in common as a result of being brought up in an alcoholic or dysfunctional household. We had come to feel isolated, uneasy with other people, and especially authority figures. To protect ourselves, we became



people-pleasers, even though we lost our own identities in the process. All the same we would mistake any personal criticism as a threat. We either became alcoholics (or practiced other addictive behavior) ourselves, or married them, or both. Failing that, we found another compulsive personality, such as a workaholic, to fulfill our sick need for abandonment.

We lived life from the standpoint of victims. Having an overdeveloped sense of responsibility, we preferred to be concerned with others rather than ourselves. We got guilt feelings when we stood up for ourselves rather than giving in to others. Thus, we became reactors, rather than actors, letting others take the initiative. We were dependent personalities, terrified of abandonment, willing to do almost anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to be abandoned emotionally. Yet we kept choosing insecure relationships because they matched our childhood relationship with alcoholic or dysfunctional parents.

These symptoms of the family disease of alcoholism or other dysfunction made us “co-victims”, those who take on the characteristics of the disease without necessarily ever taking a drink. We learned to keep our feelings down as children and kept them buried as adults. As a result of this conditioning, we confused love with pity, tending to love those we could rescue. Even more self-defeating, we became addicted to excitement in all our affairs, preferring constant upset to workable relationships. This is a description, not an indictment.

## The "Laundry List"

*These are characteristics we seem to have in common due to being brought up in an alcoholic household.*

- We became isolated and afraid of people and authority





figures.

- We became approval seekers and lost our identity in the process.
- We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism.
- We either become alcoholics, marry them, or both, or find another compulsive personality such as a workaholic to fulfill our sick abandonment needs.
- We live life from the viewpoint of victims and are attracted by that weakness in our love and friendship relationships.
- We have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility, and it is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves. This enables us not to look too closely at our own faults.
- We get guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.
- We become addicted to excitement.
- We confuse love with pity and tend to “love” people who we can pity and rescue.
- We have stuffed our feelings from our traumatic childhoods and have lost the ability to feel or express our feelings because it hurts so much (denial).
- We judge ourselves harshly and have a very low sense of self-esteem.
- We are dependent personalities who are terrified of abandonment and will do anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to experience painful abandonment feelings which we received from living with sick people who were never there emotionally for us.
- Alcoholism is a family disease, and we became para-alcoholics and took on the characteristics of the disease even though we did not pick up the drink.
- Para-alcoholics are reactors rather than actors.

Tony A., 1977



# The Solution

**The Solution is to become your own loving parent.** As ACA becomes a safe place for you, you will find freedom to express all the hurts and fears you have kept inside and to free yourself from the shame and blame that are carryovers from the past. You will become an adult who is imprisoned no longer by childhood reactions. You will recover the child within you, learning to accept and love yourself.

The healing begins when we risk moving out of isolation. Feelings and buried memories will return. By gradually releasing the burden of unexpressed grief, we slowly move out of the past. We learn to reparent ourselves with gentleness, humor, love and respect. This process allows us to see our biological parents as the instruments of our existence. Our actual parent is a Higher Power whom some of us choose to call God. Although we had alcoholic or dysfunctional parents, our Higher Power gave us the Twelve Steps of Recovery.

This is the action and work that heals us: we use the Steps; we use the meetings; we use the telephone. We share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. We learn to restructure our sick thinking one day at a time. When we release our parents from responsibility for our actions today, we become free to make healthful decisions as actors, not reactors. We progress from hurting, to healing, to helping. We awaken to a sense of wholeness we never knew was possible. By attending these meetings on a regular basis, you will come to see parental alcoholism or family dysfunction for what it is: a disease that infected you as a child and continues to affect you as an adult.

You will learn to keep the focus on yourself in the here and



now. You will take responsibility for your own life and supply your own parenting. You will not do this alone. Look around you and you will see others who know how you feel. We will love and encourage you no matter what. We ask you to accept us just as we accept you. This is a spiritual program based on action coming from love. We are sure that as the love grows inside you, you will see beautiful changes in all your relationships, especially with God, yourself, and your parents.

## The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over the effects of alcoholism or other family dysfunction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry it out.



12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others who still suffer, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## **The Twelve Traditions**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority --- a loving God as may be expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. 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.
4. Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other 12-Step programs.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose --- to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.
6. 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.
7. Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Adult Children of Alcoholics should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. ACA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Adult Children of Alcoholics has no opinion on outside issues; hence the ACA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.



11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media.
  12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.
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5. We will now introduce ourselves using our first names only, please.
  6. We do not break for refreshments at this meeting, but you may help yourself quietly during the meeting to whatever refreshments are available. This meeting ends at \_\_\_\_\_.
  7. If this is the first ACA meeting for you, please raise your hand and tell us your name. We ask you to do this because we want to get to know you.

***Read only if Newcomer is present:***

- This program is not easy, but if you keep coming back to these meetings, you will start to come out of denial. This will give you freedom from the past. You and your life will change.
- Many of us could not recognize or accept that some of our current attitudes or behaviors result from our childhood experiences related to alcoholism or family dysfunction. Having not yet solved the mystery of our own selves, we often behave as adult children without realizing it.
- By attending 6 meetings in a row at the beginning, and attending regularly thereafter, we come to know our real selves and learn to behave responsibly. We do this by identifying with the listing of characteristics that we read in “The Problem” and “The Laundry List.”
- In ACA, we learn to live in the solution and choose to become our own Loving Parents. We come out of denial and share the pain of our childhood memories. We experience love and acceptance from members of our ACA group. We become aware that feelings of the past and present form a pattern; and we learn that the pattern can change. Newcomers are encouraged to get Recovery and Service Sponsors to guide them in recovery.
- So, please, keep coming back. Listen, learn, and, most of all, share your feelings.

**8. 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition / Announcements**

- It is now time for our 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition, which states, “Every ACA group should be self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”
- Does the meeting Secretary have any ACA announcements? Does anyone else have ACA-related announcements?



## SHARING

We are about to open the meeting for sharing on the topics of our choice. We need to remind ourselves about the crosstalk rules and, if newcomers are here, explain the progression of sharing we do in ACA.

- **Crosstalk** - Everyone is encouraged to share. So that everyone can share, please limit your sharing to 3 to 5 minutes, and, as a courtesy, we ask that everyone be given a turn during each part of our meeting. If you do not want to share, please say, “Pass”, so we do not keep waiting for you to speak. Please, do not cross talk, distract from the speaker, or otherwise interrupt.

- **Sharing in ACA** *read only if newcomers are present*

In ACA, if we do not share, we cannot heal.

It is important for newcomers to share no matter how haltingly, incoherently, or disorganized the words may be. Telling our stories out loud allows us to hear our problem, recognize it, and validate that truth.

What we share about depends on where we are in our recovery process. As time goes along, our sharing evolves. The first topic is generally what brought us to an ACA meeting. Following that our sharing takes on various functions.

1. In the beginning, we often wail, complain, cry, rant, rave, blame, and whine; this is a necessary stage that brings us out of denial. When we speak our thoughts aloud, we recognize that we have a problem and what it is. Until we make our discomfort real by voicing it, we cannot recognize our problem so we cannot solve it.
2. When we start sharing our problems, feelings start to rise within us, and we begin to learn how to express them appropriately.
3. We describe how we overreacted to a situation and our feelings about it.
4. We describe our current problem and our feelings about it.
5. We trace our feelings about a current situation back to a similar problem we experienced as children, recognizing that neither have been resolved.
6. We grieve our losses.
7. We talk about possible solutions to resolve the childhood problem and the current problem.
8. We commit ourselves to a plan of action to solve the past and present problems.
9. We share our healing as we progress.
10. Finally, we share on topics introduced by others; we describe our own problem, how it was rooted in the past, and how we resolved the past and present problems. In this way we affirm our own recovery and display for our fellows that recovery happens in ACA.

- We often have a volunteer to time the sharing so the most people get an opportunity to share. Do we have a volunteer to be our timer? The meeting is now open for sharing.

## CLOSING



- Will someone please read “The Promises?”

## **The ACA Promises**

1. We will discover our real identities by loving and accepting ourselves.
2. Our self-esteem will increase as we give ourselves approval on a daily basis.
3. Fear of authority figures and the need to "people-please" will leave us.
4. Our ability to share intimacy will grow inside us.
5. As we face our abandonment issues, we will be attracted by strengths and become more tolerant of weaknesses.
6. We will enjoy feeling stable, peaceful, and financially secure.
7. We will learn how to play and have fun in our lives.
8. We will choose to love people who can love and be responsible for themselves.
9. Healthy boundaries and limits will become easier for us to set.
10. Fears of failure and success will leave us, as we intuitively make healthier choices.
11. With help from our ACA support group, we will slowly release our dysfunctional behaviors.
12. Gradually, with our Higher Power’s help, we will learn to expect the best and get it.

- We sometimes have fellowship directly after this meeting. Meeting participants may want to ask questions about the meeting or recovery, share comments, or just talk. You are invited.
- This is a fellowship of recovering adults intended to complement, not replace, other 12-Step programs. You are encouraged to attend your other 12-Step groups during the week to support your recovery journey.
- Please respect the confidentiality and anonymity of each person here. We have trust and confidence that what we shared with you at this meeting will remain here at this meeting. Who you saw here, what was said here, when you leave here, let it stay here.
- Will all, who care to, join me in the ACA Serenity Prayer?





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