

ASCA News • July 2000

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



A Reflective Moment

Promoting Courage Within Our Lives

Facing Life's Changes, Difficulties & Challenges

by George Bilotta

With our emerging 21st century full of speed, intertwined with jam-packed lives, with increasing demands on our time and energy - trying to live a reflective life in order to foster courage has never been more essential. We constantly face change in every aspect of our lives. Cultivating courage, as a quality of the heart, empowers us to encounter our daily difficulties and challenges with a firmness of conviction. Courage does not take away the pain, the hassles, nor the frustrations of daily living, but rather courage functions more like a restorative salve. Whether we face intransigent recovery dilemmas, or emotional disadvantages like depression, anxieties, distorted self-images, or difficult people within family, at work, on the street, etc., a focus on trying to cultivate courage enables us to face life with increased meaning, with greater endurance and energy, with an intensified sense of purpose.

If part of courage comes from firmness of conviction, from where does our conviction draw its substance? Firmness of conviction draws not from feelings, nor from the opinions of others, but rather from rigorous thinking. Disciplined and thoroughness of thinking assures that one is right, without doubt. Confident that one's conviction has been intensively tested and proven true, we now possess a grounded trustworthiness that empowers us (courage) to forthrightly face the changes, difficulties and challenges that daily life inevitably showers upon us. Courage increases self-esteem, promotes healthy self-images, energizes and enables us to welcome daily life with increased vigor and passion.

To generously paraphrase Socrates, rigorous thinking is constantly challenging our assumptions and beliefs - about the way that we live, who we are, whom we say and believe that we are. Rigorous thinking includes continuously questioning our society's priorities and what society states what it means to be a good human being, a good citizen. Rigorous thinking encompasses intensive examination of what others say about us, and how we permit what they say to effect us.

The result of rigorous thinking unfold and disclose guided wisdom. Over a period of time the accumulation of discipline and of thorough thinking gives way to in-depth knowledge, an understanding of what is right and true concerning self and our relationship to others and to things of the world. Wisdom guides our days, our lives, just as a compass inevitably points to north, orienting our direction, guiding our life's journey.

As a value of the heart, courage is substantive, adding stamina to life, and rippling with positive impact throughout our day and life. Courage favorably effects how we look at ourselves, how we feel about ourselves, how we present ourselves to others, and how we go about picking-up the daily tasks of life. We cannot change substantially and we cannot alter our lives significantly, without investing in cultivating courage through rigorous thinking. If we are usually distrustful of others, scared of life, perpetually indecisive and apprehensive about tomorrow, we might discover that focusing on trying to promote courage produces an increased firmness of conviction that like a compass guides and points the way.

Questions to ponder:

1. How do you systematically go about challenging your/society's assumptions and beliefs?
2. How can you go about increasing rigorous thinking?
3. How do you sense that fostering courage would negatively and positively effect your life?
4. How would the cultivation of courage influence how you go about working your recovery from childhood abuse?



Rotation C Topic: Possible ASCA Meeting Topic for July Telling Our Story

Perhaps the single most powerful aspect concerning our recovery process, especially during Stage One recovery, is the telling of our story. Our "story" usually includes 1) the circumstances surrounding our abuse, 2) the factual details of the various incidents of abuse, (physical, sexual and/or emotional), 3) the experiences of family and elders responding and/or not responding to the abuse, 4) the effects of the abuse throughout the years, and 5) our struggles and successes with recovery.

The importance and the potential positive impact of telling and retelling our story in its many manifestations can never be underestimated. The story telling process improves our memory of the past and decreases its negative emotional impact on our present lives. It curtails our tendency to minimize and deny what actually happened. Clarifying the abuse's effects on our lives, it provides perspective to that which we need to focus in order to continue to move-on with our lives. It diminishes the scariness of the abuse and lessens the fear we have of the people who abused us. Telling our story to whomever has the capacity and willingness to listen, removes the burden of singularly carrying the horrendously heavy load of memories. Telling and retelling our story is a process giving way to freedom from the desolation of the past, to liberation from the chains that hold us back from being the people we desire to be.

There are many ways and tools to tell, to express our story. Some include talking to and with others individually and within groups, writing the story as historical fact, composing poetry, drafting a play, choreographing a dance, painting and drawing, creating a video, dictating a series of audio tapes. Some of these avenues of relating our story of abuse include other people and some can be done successfully alone and privately. A combination of expression is probably more

helpful than a single expression of telling and retelling our story of abuse and recovery.

Questions:

1. What has been my experience thus far of telling my story?
2. What have been the benefits to my life and recovery process by telling and retelling my story?
3. Are there other avenues that I might pursue that I have not yet used concerning telling my story to enhance my recovery process?



New Board of Directors of THE MORRIS CENTER for healing from child abuse Introducing Some of the Board

Jessy Keiser

Director ASCA Program Development, and Board Development

"Hello! My name is Jessy Keiser. Some of you may already know me. I am one of the original ASCA Leadership Council members. This was the group of survivors and thrivers who founded the ASCA program in 1993.

Over the years, I have been involved with ASCA as a support group co-secretary, facilitator trainer, member - and now, as a Board Director. For many years, ASCA has been my community - the place I can come home to and always feel welcome. ASCA has been an integral part of my healing and growth.

Today I am honored to serve our ASCA community in the capacity of Director of Board Development and Director of Program Development. What qualifies me for these positions? Well, I can give you my professional credentials (I do have a Master of Science degree in Organization Development, as well as 12 years of experience in facilitation and training). But I'd rather talk about my vision and my commitment to make our program and community one of the strongest grass-roots programs globally accessible to fellow adult survivors.

How can I do that? I can't. Not without your help. In fact, I am counting on your support and activism to help us achieve this vision. Right now, we are at a great juncture in the road. I am looking for volunteers to staff our Program Development Committee and help ASCA to evolve into the future. If you are interested in being on this committee, please contact me directly via e-mail. My e-mail address is jmkeiser@ispchannel.com. Please leave a telephone number and times/days that I can reach you. If you prefer, you can also let Margaret know about your interest. She'll pass on the information to me and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Thank you in advance. I look forward to working with you in the coming year!"

Jessy Keiser, e-mail: jmkeiser@ispchannel.com

Amaroq de Quebrazas
Director of Community Outreach

Amaroq is a Mexican American native of San Francisco's Mission District. As a Communication Impact Consultant and Facilitator, Amaroq is known for her innovative and somewhat "unorthodox" approach of aiding groups to welcome tension and conflict as well as harmonious interaction as part of healthy team building. Her mission is to work with psychology, social activist and media arts groups targeting diversity and community building as desired outcomes. She is a professional member of Cine Accion, The Film Arts Foundation, The Institute of Noetic Sciences and The International Association of Facilitators.

Amaroq states that "as the Director of Community Outreach, I monitor and respond to our voice-mail system. Second, I am involved in designing and implementing a program to promote the ASCA program within the general community. If you are interested in assisting me you can leave me a message on the voice mail 415.928.4576 or e-mail me at amaroq@sirius.com."

Amaroq de Quebrazas, e-mail: amaroq@sirius.com

Diane Whitney
Director of ASCA News

I attended my first ASCA meeting in early 1994. After years of various therapies, I finally found a place where I felt completely understood. Within a few months, I attended the co-secretary training and soon took on that role. Eventually, I was asked to participate in what was then called the Leadership Council, a group which consisted of Morris Center Staff and ASCA participants who helped shape the direction of ASCA.

After a period of inactivity, I am delighted to become re-involved with ASCA as a member of the new Board of Directors. I will be in charge of getting the ASCA News out every month. It is my hope that our newsletter will continue to be an efficient tool of communication in the ASCA community and will effectively address issues of concern to all of us. To that end, I earnestly invite your input, both in the form of articles, poetry or book reviews for publication and in the form of suggestions for topics you'd like to see addressed. Better still, if you'd like to join the ASCA News Committee and work on the newsletter on a regular basis, I would love to hear from you."

Diane Whitney, e-mail: diawhitney@aol.com

Richard Scott
Treasurer

My business background is one of business management and accounting, sales and marketing and business development. The understanding of the various facets of business have made my experience more enriching as well as valuable to the people for whom I have been employed. I am presently the manager of business development for an e-commerce B2B web site in the East bay as well as an independent contractor to a variety of small businesses assisting them in their

business management and development needs.

My growing up years were pretty intense. I was raised in an alcoholic/drug addictive home that eventually led to the demise of one parent by suicide. The Morris Center's ASCA program helped me to realize how much effort that I felt at the time were seeming small improvements did count for as personal accomplishments from the derailing effects the drug abuse and imposed behaviors from those learned in prior generations of my family. The first step is the individual's risk in breaking the silence that usually grips the individual as well as the family and suffocates the healing and developmental processes from these and other negative behaviors.

It is my hope that more people who have commonly endured such injurious experiences will be provided a space and access to knowledge of resources that will assist in developing and fostering their own improvement for the betterment of quality of life for themselves and those they love. The beginning for each individual is to find a place that can augment the channel of resources necessary for re-connecting with one's self and develop the means to foster supportive relationships in one's life that will facilitate with that healing process. It is my intent to assist the Morris Center to be more effective in the provision of these services as well as resources invaluablely provided to date.

Richard Scott, e-mail: scottrj@pacbell.net

In the August issue of ASCA News, we will introduce additional Board members.



Co-Secretary Update

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

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