



Hand in Hand

A Publication of Recovering Couples Anonymous
World Service Organization

PO Box 11029, Oakland, CA 94611 (510) 663-2312

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Our common welfare should come first

by Katherine S, RCA World Service Board Chair

Italicized words are from the text in The Twelve Traditions of RCA

“Now we must embark upon the 12 Traditions which provide guidance and direction for the RCA fellowship.” At the 2003 RCACC Open Business Meeting, the RCA fellowship voted, by a greater than 75% majority, to ensure that the 12 Traditions are honored, by inserting into By-Law 1.2 the words, “as guided by the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions.” The Traditions have been given even more influence than before; they are a vital force in the decision making processes of the organization.

For the fellowship to flourish and grow

“The 12 Traditions must be understood and applied in order for the fellowship to flourish and grow.” The Trustees have taken this guidance seriously, making it a prime goal for the year to incorporate the words and the spirit of the Traditions into our meetings, our committee work, and all our procedures. Taking turns, at the beginning of each Board meeting, Trustees present a Tradition and how it applies to the World Service Organization and World Service Board.

To ensure the RCA fellowship will always be available

“The “Traditions” are the glue and backbone of RCA itself. These 12 Traditions come to us through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. We follow the Traditions to ensure the RCA fellowship will always be available for those couples who are recovering from multiple addictions which have affected their relationships.” In RCA, the Outreach Committee is responsible for the overall policy of keeping RCA available. It is often said, “The newcomer is the lifeblood of the organization.” We are charged with the responsibility of getting the word out. How can you help?

Couple recovery depends upon RCA unity.

“We have a responsibility to express ourselves--to give the program to others. We have experience, strength and hope in relationships to share.” Most of us have seen that some couples come, stay until it gets better, and leave. Others find out that

“stepping together” is a little work, OK, a lot of work, and look for an easier softer way. We need to be here when they come back!!! And we need to find ways to help them stay. If you have found some things that work please share them.

We continue to show up

“As we continue to show up, we learn from one another. We leave meetings with a sense of hope and of belonging. Our commitment expands from ourselves, to a Higher Power, to our partner in recovery, and to our group.” Just as keeping our commitment to our partners can be difficult; commitments to service are difficult as well. In lives already busy, we must find time for meetings, follow up, committee work, task forces. Why then, do we do it? Why continue to show up? Is it because, at the heart of the human being, there is the desire to learn, to grow, to expand, to belong, to give our gift and invest our talents?

Welcome to Christi and Jason

At our last meeting, two new Trustees joined the Board. They are Jason and Christi G., from Minnesota. Please read their story, elsewhere in this publication. Also look for the story of Jim and Diane, our other Canadian couples. We do have room on the Board for another couple, and there are many opportunities for service on committees. Please consider this your personal invitation to step up to World Service. And thank you for letting me be of service!

Long-Distance Sponsorship Opportunities

A message from the RCA Sponsorship committee

One of the RCA Tools of Recovery is Sponsorship. This helps both the sponsor and sponsee couples, since “giving it [ESH - : Experience, Strength and Hope] away to keep it” is a way to stay “emotionally sober.” For guidance and accountability, this is a very important means of providing and receiving the support that recovering couples need.

Some couples live in areas where there is no opportunity for them to find nearby face-to-face groups, where they might go to meet couples whom they could ask to serve as their sponsors.

But with the Recovery Tool of Long-Distance sponsors, newcomers can have the support their coupleship needs to grow by arranging to connect by phone, e-mail, or snail mail.

If you are a recovering couple who does not yet have couple support, please reach out and ask for long-distance sponsors. And if you and your partner are willing to do your 12th-step work, by volunteering to support another a couple, please let us know, by contacting us at:

Sponsorship@recovering-couples.org

Disclaimer

Articles in the *Hand in Hand* are the Experience, Strength and Hope of the individuals and groups who submitted them. Please take what you like and leave the rest.

It works for us...

Step Work Prayer – Inviting Higher Power

Doing step work as a couple was sometimes as challenging as most of the rest of our life as a couple before RCA. It was suggested to us that we invite our Couple Higher Power into the process. We found this prayer in some Debtors Anonymous material we had. It was offered as a prayer to be said before holding a "Pressure Relief Meeting". We now start every RCA Step Work session with this prayer and we have found each event to be much more pleasant. This prayer is not copyrighted and is offered here for anyone to use.

Higher Power (God, Lord, Father, etc.), we come to you as friends. It has been said that whenever two or more are gathered together in Your name, there You will be in the midst. We believe that You are here with us now. We believe this is something You would have us do, and that it has Your blessing.

We pledge with You always to be honest, and to search our hearts for weaknesses and errors that we not block Your help.

We believe that You want us to be real partners with You in this business of living, accepting our full responsibility and certain that the rewards will be freedom and growth and happiness.

For this we are grateful. We ask You at all times to guide us. Help us daily to come closer to You and grant us new ways of living, in gratitude.

May Your Will, not ours, be done.

Individual Experience Strength & Hope

On The Lighter Side

At a meeting recently someone suggested an important part of wedding vows that has been missing all these years. Maybe what they should say is:

"To Love, Honor and Negotiate"

Another member was startled to learn he had been saying the Serenity Prayer with a "twist" and he didn't even realize it. *"Grant me the Serenity to accept the things I can not stand"*

He wondered how long he had been saying that without even realizing it.

We Need Your Stories!

As members of RCA, each of us is part of a community that depends on, and learns from, each other. Please invite those in your RCA community to share their Couple Stories, their 7th Step Contracts, Reflections, and their Experience, Strength and Hope with the rest of the RCA community. These can be emailed to HinH@recovering-couples.org or US Postal to the World Service Office. All submissions to the *Hand in Hand* will be considered for inclusion in the next edition of the Blue Book.

Up Coming Events

RCA Asilomar Retreat

Beyond Our Wildest Dreams
February 27-29, 2004
In Northern California

Come join in the magic of the 2004 RCA retreat at Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, California. The peaceful and relaxing surroundings provide an opportunity to focus on recovery and our coupleships so that "together we can do what we can never do alone".

Contact Marilyn and David at 925-803-0306 or Nancy and Sharon at 415-239-5692 for more information

Come and Explore Relationship Characteristics (Both Functional & Dysfunctional)

At The Third Annual

North Midwest RCA Retreat

to be held on Lake Geneva, at the Aurora University
on July 23- 25, 2004.

Plan to become a part of this continuing tradition for couples in the Midwest. This year the focus of the weekend will be exploring the Characteristics of Functional and Dysfunctional relationships, as outlined in RCA Literature, learning to "choose" and create the kind of coupleship we want.

2004 RCA Convention and Conference

in Winnipeg Canada
October 22nd – 24th, 2004



Recovery
in The Heart
of North America

Make your reservations
visit the RCA web site:
<http://www.recovering-couples.org>

Inspirational Corner**Reflection on Crosstalk**

We have recognized that following the safety guidelines and avoiding *Crosstalk* are important. *Crosstalk* means giving advice, trying to fix, commenting directly to a person about what has been shared, or engaging in side conversations during the meeting. A safe environment allows us the freedom to experience and share our pain, and to admit to one another the vulnerable, secret aspects of ourselves. This is from "Welcome to R.C.A. Newcomer Couple!" P. 2

These words of wisdom tell us what happens at a meeting. We are learning that avoiding *Crosstalk* is just as important in our meetings of two - because giving advice, wanting to fix, giving input or opinions before we're asked, or engaging in side conversations (including phone or email distractions) prohibit the very openness we need and want for ourselves and our partners.

Our commitment today

Today we will listen - really listen - to one another, not just for what is said, but also for feelings that are expressed, both verbally and non-verbally. We will reflect these back as clearly as we can.

My commitment today

Today, I will provide my listening eyes and ears to my partner, by being a friend and knowing that God is doing for my partner what I cannot do myself

- Individual Experience Strength & Hope .

World Service Board Activity

The World Service Board met on October 26, November 16, and December 15, 2003.

The following Motions were passed on Oct.26

- RCA voting requires a substantial unanimity of at least two-thirds of all present for any motion to be passed.
- All committee chairs must be members of the RCA board. Article 5 previously stated, Chairs *should* be members of the Board of Trustees.
- Those serving on committees have twelve months of experience working the twelve steps, either in another 12-step group or in RCA.
- Ed, Communication Committee Chair, asked for, and received, board approval for posting the *Hand in Hand* to the web site and for updating the email system.

The following elections and actions were passed on November 16, 2003

- Christi and Jason G., of MN, were elected to the Board of Trustees.
- Kathy M. was elected Literature Chair.
- KC H. was elected Sponsorship Committee Chair.
- A task force was created to present a WSB Safe Communication Contract. Jane and Doreen offered to serve on the task force.
- Ed B. established the deadline dates and reviewed the approval process for Winter 2003 Hand in Hand

December 14 actions will be published after the minutes are approved by WSB.

For those who like to be more fully informed, minutes approved on December 14 will be sent out with the next Office Manager's report.

A Little Peace

Last year when I was standing amongst other would-be holiday decorators in a fabric store obsessing over the correct color of ribbons to buy, I made the remark, "I've been here three times! I'll never finish!" and a woman next to me wisely said, "Hey, didn't you hear? You're not supposed to finish."

And all at once the stress fell away from my body and I beamed with renewed energy because its true, it's OK not to finish...in fact, its perfectly imperfect not to finish, not to be cured, or done growing or all together or to make mistakes. Halleluiah!

I really like the idea that I'm doing enough (grin) and maybe it'll stick with me if I keep doing all I can do and letting go of the rest.
-Submitted by Jane in recovery with Ed

Treasurer's Report

The statistics again are not so encouraging to me, however I can say that we are just above the water line, and as I understand in other 12 steppers, poverty is the desired position and our fellowship's dedication is the vehicle. Scary isn't it? From the latest quarter's stats, I can share some facts with you:

1. We have gone from a first quarter loss of \$558 to an income this quarter of \$1732. You probably already have this info. This seems like an improvement, however \$2000 is still from Philadelphia. We're still "riding the bell" as it were.
2. In the 3 months of Oct-Nov-Dec, our groups 7th Tradition (only) has gone from \$1673 to \$882 to \$714. Not a good trend. I do not know how to increase group donations. Well really, I do. It's about increasing our fellowship numbers. That is my opinion. I really don't believe in putting out a "plea" letter every 3 months. It feels like a "whine - wolf" letter.
3. Perhaps when we're ready to get really knocked out. In my own experience and my "bull ahead" type of stance, I would like to ask people what lawyers fees are now, the cost of divorce, alimony payments, child support, and the size of the holes in little children's hearts when Mommy or Daddy walks away. I had an idea that each coupleship give 25 cents for every day of the year, for their faith, hope, and love. Is it worth that???? "It's up to you!!!"
4. You will notice in our "expense" graph, that there is a huge jump from \$2400 to \$4200. I have not connected with the Office Manager. yet, However, I believe that his office hours were way down in Oct (28), and then jumped to 133 in December. Even though this seems a lot I can also see that in this 2nd quarter the total hours he claimed was only 278, down considerably from the 1st quarter. 381.
5. Also our Merchandise sales this quarter dropped steadily also, from \$1769 to \$1485 to \$1192 over the 3 months. Our merchandise and 7th seem to parallel one another. I know not why.

In general, even though our income is not quite going the way this "actor" would like, we are surviving. Thriving I believe will come with patience and attraction. Our bank account was decreased by about \$2000 this quarter, and still maintains at \$5022. I believe our biggest factor this quarter as opposed to last, is that the Office Manager's hours have been reduced by significant a \$1500 +.

Meet New Board of Trustee Couples**Jason and Christi**

Jason I was told by a fellow at my individual meeting of a program of recovery for coupleships, which was supposed to be a way of healing the wounds of the past and restore communication, trust and intimacy to our relationship. I was nervous to suggest the idea to Christi. I thought she had lost hope, however I found myself *finally* feeling hopeful for our relationship. I was finally honest, and although I was scared to open up, I was finally willing, and it felt good.

Through RCA, I was able to see other couples being honest with one another. I saw other addicts modeling an openness to hear the pain and anger their partners have felt, and really being honest with their partners about themselves. I could see that when these other addicts were able to open up and share of themselves honestly, they weren't abandoned by their partners - in fact, they become closer through the process of sharing and honesty. This helped me to find the courage to open up myself, and share with Christi some of the parts of me that I was so afraid to share. This, in turn, helped me to examine my own feelings and share more honestly and openly at my individual program, and release yet more shame. In letting go of that shame, I could become more and more open and available to really hear Christi's pain.

I also became more willing to be open to hear Christi's side through first hearing another codependent share at our RCA meetings. I hadn't caused that other person pain, therefore I didn't get defensive or feel the need to justify my behavior when I heard them share. This empathy for another person could then carry over to Christi. I could be more open to hearing what feelings she experienced in our relationship. I could let them in then.

Christi I have found that the gifts I've gotten in the RCA program have not only enhanced our coupleship program of recovery, it has enhanced and brought gifts to my individual program. As the codependent in our relationship, I had such a difficult time relating to my husband when he tried to share about his own pain.

I found, however, that I *could* hear an addict who was not my own husband speak about their wounded-ness, their pain, their struggles in their coupleships and allow it in. I didn't have the "filters" of anger, hurt and betrayal, with these other addicts, so when they shared about themselves, it didn't bring up my own pain or anger nearly as much. I could then "translate" this insight to what Jason had to share with me.

US~ We believe that the three legs of our stools of recovery are incredibly interdependent. Our individual programs support and nourish our individual souls, which in turn supports and nourishes our coupleship. Our work on our coupleship healing and growth supports and nourishes the coupleship, and in turn supports and nourishes our individual programs. All interwoven, all interdependent. Each leg is individually important to the whole. Without one leg, our lives would lose its balance. We need all three legs to have stability.

Jim and Diane

This introduction is presented here in the tongue in cheek comic style that is characteristic of their playful relationship.

Both Jim and Diane have long term recovery in a variety of 12 step programmes being as sick as they are.

When they met, Jim and Diane just knew that the rocks in her head matched the holes in his. After Jim shamelessly 13th Stepped Diane; they were encouraged to get more help in the form of RCA. (Then later I had to do the 14th - amends for the 13th)

Diane did all the paperwork and Jim made all the decisions and in this hopelessly co-dependent manner the First Hamilton Group of RCA was born. We still go to many meetings. Jim more than Diane because he's just that much more sicker.

Our new friends in programme inspire us to be the best we can. Attending the Conference in Philadelphia convinced Diane and Jim that they could do a lot better job than anyone else and so, they volunteered for positions on the Board of Trustees.

Enriched by the challenges, Diane is now retired and Jim is more passionately studying the 12 Traditions than ever before!!

Diane & Jim – Hamilton, Canada

WSO OFFICE MANAGER'S REPORT

The following report reflects the time period of July 1, 2003 through December 11, 2003.

HOURS

Since the beginning of the fiscal year, July 1, 2003, a total of 730 hours were put in doing WSO Office related work. This breaks down to 626 hours for the Office Manager; 39 hours for the E-mail Consultant; 65 Hours by volunteers. These hours were spent primarily on the following major categories –Phone/Voice Mail; E-mail; Literature Orders/Post Office; Preparation for the RCAC in Philadelphia; Office-Records & Business; Accounting & Financial; and Special Projects.

CONTACTS

This fiscal year has brought the office approximately 165 phone calls and approximately 1,475 e-mails to the WSO office and RCA website.

LITERATURE/TAPE ORDERS

Merchandise sales were \$8,394.00, up \$481 from the same period last year. The RCA Blue Book, Reflections Booklet, Welcome to the Newcomer pamphlet, and Step pamphlets, followed closely by the Affirmations for Couples and RCA Conflict Resolution Contract brochures were the leading sellers. The anniversary medallions continue to be popular. We also sold 22 Meeting Starter Packets. Two RCA Tape sets were sold as well as 25 individual tapes.

(continued on page 5)

WSO OFFICE MANAGER'S REPORT*(continued from page 4)***DONATIONS**

7th tradition and individual donations for the current fiscal year are up \$1,885 over the same period last year, to a total of \$9,533.81

HAND IN HAND

The Hand in Hand has been posted on the web site. We are moving in the direction of sending as many copies out by e-mail as we can, and encouraging members to download it from the web site. We are confirming an e-mail address for each meeting in order to send the Hand in Hand, and be sure each meeting has a copy or copies. Those meetings, or individuals without e-mail can get the Hand in Hand via postal mail for a subscription of \$12 per year.

VOLUNTEERS

Three volunteers came to help this fiscal year. Thank you Alan, Lenel, and Suzanne!!

SPECIAL PROJECTS

There are several ongoing special projects. The RCA Meeting Directory is the foremost. This project has been dragging out as it develops and changes. I am hoping to have it done within the next month. My apologies for taking so long. I am working on having the directory online and it is a more complicated process than I anticipated.

I am also working on establishing a more user friendly filing system, as well as hard copy files for each RCA group. Another project in process is developing a policy and procedure manual for the WSO Office. This will become part of the office and will serve to guide future Office Managers, or to serve as a guide in case of emergency. Updating the database is also an on-going, long term project.

WEBSITE

I just want to take this opportunity to thank Josie H for her outstanding service as webmaster and e-mail consultant. Thanks Josie for all you do, and who you are.

DONATIONS

A big thank you to Cookie and Steve of the SF East Bay RCA for the generous donation of a copy machine. It came just in time! My old copy machine was barely hanging on!

FINANCIAL BOTTOM LINE

The bottom line is that in the current fiscal year we have a net income of \$1,959.63 as compared to a loss of \$5,663.67 during the same period last year! This is a dramatic improvement. The successful RCAC in Philadelphia helped a lot, as well as increased 7th tradition donations. Thank you all. We are working to restore our prudent reserve and to set aside income for future Blue Book purchases.

NEW MEETINGS

Our total number of active meetings is up a little over last year. We have several new meetings in California, Canada, Michigan, Minnesota, Oklahoma, N.Carolina, and Massachusetts. Several meetings have dis-banded in Florida, the Boston area, California, and Minnesota.

CONCLUSION

The current fiscal year has brought a dramatic improvement in the overall state of RCA. Income is up and expenses have been reduced. We have a largely new Board of Trustees who are working together to strengthen RCA, heal old wounds, and extend outreach to those couples reaching out for help. As WSO Office Manager, I feel part of a team once again and am excited about the direction RCA is taking. Of course there are many challenges to be met in the coming year.

There are still many areas in the country that do not have RCA groups. More outreach is needed. Establishing more telephone meetings, having more long distance sponsor couples, and having an online meeting are all areas of service the Fellowship needs couples to step up to serve. We have just begun to form a service infrastructure. This work must continue in order for RCA to survive and serve. There is new literature to be written and approved.

More regional retreats and conferences need to be planned and become reality. Regular communication with the Fellowship through the Group Contact Couples needs to be improved and developed. A more effective way of recruiting and coordinating volunteers at the WSO Office needs to be developed and implemented. I am optimistic about these needs being met, and more! I trust that Higher Powers' vision for RCA will become our reality in the coming year, through our work and faith. I look forward to working with you all to manifest that vision. Hold the thought of RCA groups in every city and town in the USA, Canada and beyond! Let's do it!

Your trusted servant,

Steve Adams
WSO Office Manager

Valentine's Day is here!

The WSO has the perfect gift for your coupleship!

Heart Cards are available just in time for this **Valentine's Day!**

A deck of 20 lovely Heart Cards include 15 with wonderful suggestions for creating deeper intimacy. 5 are left blank for you to use your imaginations!

Only \$3.00 and no calories!

Contact Steve at the WSO to buy them at

(510) 663-2312 or wso-rca@pacbell.net

SUGGESTED MEETING TOPICS

Issues For Recovering Couples

The first 3 of 12 presuppositions about couples who are in recovery

1. **Couples are a oneness.** Together two people who are in a committed relationship form a coupleship, a oneness, a distinct and separate entity. This coupleship has a life of its own and needs to be nurtured appropriately. Couple recovery depends on this nurturance. Both partners in a relationship need individual recovery: meetings, sponsors, therapy, a support group, spirituality, recreation, vocation, and other individual interests. A coupleship needs these same elements for couple recovery. There are, then, three elements of couple recovery.

Our individual recoveries are the two basic components. Our coupleship's recovery is the third component. One of the symbols of RCA is the three-legged stool. Each leg represents one of these components. If one leg is missing, the stool will fall. If one component is missing, the relationship will fail.

This is why, for example, many of us know how hard it is for one partner to be identified as the addict and in recovery while the other partner has no individual recovery. One partner grows and the other doesn't. Individual recovery for only one partner will, therefore, produce more distance in the relationship.

2. **In addictive relationships, the partner of a primary addict is referred to as the co-addict.** Addiction theory suggests that this person is often a co-dependent and/or an enabler. Some co-addicts have assumed that if the addict gets sober they will no longer be co-addicts. This is not true. Co-addiction is a disease in and of itself. Co-addicts grow up in families where they learn to cope with addictions of all kinds on the part of other family members. They may find that throughout their lives they related to a series of addicts. Their current partner is just another in a long list. They make a choice to be with their current partner for good reasons. They will not get well just because their partner is recovering. Being in relationship with an addict is normal for them.

Co-addicts should, therefore, be in recovery for themselves. Sobriety becomes learning healthy self-nurture, boundaries, and individuality.

Co-addicts may have their own primary addiction(s). It is not uncommon that two addicts are in relationship and are co-addicted to each other. Each one might historically claim that his or her addiction is fueled by trying to cope with his or her partner. This is not true.

3. **Both partners must accept responsibility for the health or disease of their relationship.** Each of us brings our own addictions, personalities, family-of-origin messages, and various individual dysfunctions into the relationship. The relationship doesn't create them. The elements brought by both partners contribute to the nature of the relationship.

This does not mean that we are responsible for any addictive or dysfunctional behavior on our partner's part. Those behaviors are his/her responsibility and reflect choices that he/she makes in order to cope with feelings (including the feelings generated by the state of the relationship). Both of us are responsible for the presence or absence of intimacy between us.

As soon as each of us accepts mutual responsibility, we are ready for the First Step of RCA: "**We** admitted that **we** were powerless over **our** relationship and that **our** life together had become unmanageable."

**Jul 03- Dec 03
World Service Office
Income**

7th Tradition & Donations

7th Tradition	
Burbank, CA - 45010	50.00
Stratford, NJ - 70010	13.00
Columbia/Sonora, CA - 45015	450.00
Des Moines, Iowa - 55005	154.00
Detroit Lakes, MN - 63050	25.00
Eagan, MN - 63005	10.00
Encino, CA - 45020	98.41
Fairfax, VA - 86005	50.00
Gilbert, AZ - 43005	100.00
Grand Rapids, MI - 62015	172.28
Green Gulch Retreat	79.00
Houston, TX - 83025	214.72
LA Monthly Step Meeting	21.00
Los Angeles, - 45045	578.71
Los Angeles, CA - 45040	25.00
Marlton, NJ - 70005	67.50
Morgantown, WV - 88005	10.00
New Orleans, LA - 58005	360.27
Norwell, MA - 61020	200.00
Oakland, CA - 45050	47.03
Palo Alto, CA - 45060	513.61
Portland, OR - 77010	23.00
River Head, NY - 72010	75.00
Rockville, MD - 60015	125.00
Sacramento, CA - 45065	61.00
San Diego/La Mesa - 45075	100.00
San Francisco, CA - 45085	420.00
Santa Cruz, Ca 45100	100.00
Seattle, WA - 87005	200.00
Seattle, WA - 87010	246.00
St. Petersburg, FL - 49035	282.88
Walnut Creek, CA 45105	539.50
Wernersville, PA 78030	150.00
7th Tradition - Other	3,325.90
Total 7th Tradition	8,887.81
Individual	646.00
Total Donations	9,533.81
Merchandise	8,394.00
Postage and Handling	1,113.83
Total Income	19,041.64

Expense

Bank Charges	100.00
Consultant	
E-mail	390.00
WSO	9,390.00
Total Consultant	9,780.00
Insurance	1,352.84
Total Internet	78.24
Total Office Equipment	70.36
Office Supplies	37.28
Pay Pal Fees	146.49
Postage	
USPS Box rent	68.00
Postage - Other	735.07
Total Postage	803.07
Total Printing	420.49
Total Reimbursement	64.51
Rent	3,202.00
Subcontractor	154.26
Taxes & Licenses	25.00
Telephone	847.47
Total Expense	17,082.01
Net Income	1,959.63