

Loving Parent Workshop Outline

(1) BRB Pg. 295 “While becoming your own Loving Parent is at the core of healing from a neglectful childhood, it is also the gateway to the child within. **In addition to the ACA Twelve Steps, this is The ACA Solution.** By reparenting ourselves with gentleness, humor, love, and respect, we find our child within and true connection to a Higher Power. This is the God who does not abandon

(2) BRB Pg. 306 “All adult children arrive at ACA with hypercritical messages in their minds. We can judge ourselves or others without mercy. These are the “old tapes” that can pilot our lives onto the jagged rocks of self-destruction. The old tapes can be personified as the inner Critical Parent. This is the critical voice who blames and belittles or who judges and undermines. **Becoming aware of the Critical Parent is essential for the development of the Loving Parent”.**

Worksheet: Common Situations and Times the Critical Parent Shows Up

(The Loving Parent Guidebook, pg 54)

Situation	Physical Sensations	Emotions	Memories, mental images, thoughts, or other cues
Misplaced keys	Increased heart rate, shallow breathing, dizziness, pit at bottom of stomach	Panic, shame, fear	Running late to school because I woke up late, I'm in trouble, I'm not okay, going to miss out.

Forgetting something important	Stomach drops, flushed face, walls are closing in, heart rate increase, cold sweats	Shame, dread, embarrassed, low self image, inadequate	Dads mad, everything sucks, I suck
Running late	Panic, heaviness, sluggishness	Defeated, apathy, giving up	Memory of mom making me late to friends birthday party, "you'll never fit in", "you shouldn't even bother"
Situation	Physical Sensations	Emotions	Memories, mental images, thoughts, or other cues
Talking to somebody new			
Not getting response you were expecting			
Breaking something			
Forgetting something important			
Running Late			
Procrastinating			
Forgot to bring your BRB to the meeting			
Pronounced something wrong			
Forgot someones name			
Spelled something wrong			

Misplaced keys			
Comparing yourself to others on social media			

(3) BRB Pg. 299 “Reparenting ourselves can mean many things, but the central theme is that we are willing to challenge our critical, inner voice and to care for the child within. By reparenting ourselves, we lose interest in harming ourselves with addictions and compulsions. We remind ourselves that we have worth. We do this as often as it takes without thought of the repetition or how it might sound to another person”.

(The Loving Parent Guidebook, pg. 222. Appendix B: Instructions to Prepare for Guided Practices.)

“Take a moment to settle in and feel your breath or listen to the sounds in your space. If you choose the breath, pay attention to the part of your body where your breath feels most comfortable for you – that could be your nostrils, belly, or the rise and fall of your shoulders. Pay attention to that one place, and take a few slow breaths, feeling your breath. Let any thoughts you might have fade away. (Pause) If your mind wanders, that’s okay. Gently bring yourself back to the present moment and put your attention on your breath or sounds. Continue to breath naturally”.

Guided Practice: Setting Boundaries with the Critical Parent by Summoning the Loving Parent

(The Loving Parent Guidebook, pg. 58)

“This guided practice helps you connect to what it feels like to set a gentle boundary with your critical parent – a skill that will serve you well on your reparenting journey”.

You awaken from a night’s rest to a soft light filtering through your bedroom window. The sheets are soft and pleasing against your skin.

You shift in the bed. Your stomach tightens, and your heart races. Your breathing becomes ragged. You feel confused. You have no pressing appointments today or anything else that would cause you to feel this way.

You remember hearing a fellow traveler share how they try to notice what they’re thinking whenever they feel uncomfortable. When you tune in to your thoughts, you notice a running commentary about the day – what you have to do, how little time you have to do it, and the like. This might come as a voice, physical sensations, images, or just a sense of dread.

You call on your loving parent, who knows what to do from a clear, loving place. Your loving parent addresses your critical parent in a gentle but firm tone.

“Thank you for your concern. I’m here now. You can relax and take a break.”

You take a deep breath. The critical parent begins to speak again, and your loving parent speaks up. “I know you’re trying to protect us, and I’ve got this.” Your body relaxes a bit.

You stretch and prepare to get out of bed. The critical parent shows up again, and you realize you can be free to move on your day, even if the critical parent is there. You don't need to listen to what they say. The more your loving parent shows up, the more the critical parent will relax.

When you're ready, slowly open your eyes or lift your gaze. Reconnect to the here and now. Look around your space and let this feeling continue into your day.

1. What was the guided practice like for you? Were you able to set a boundary?
2. If you created a boundary with the critical parent, how did it feel?
3. If you didn't create a boundary, what came up that prevented that? How did that feel?
4. Anything else you'd like to share about your experience?

Loving Parent Serenity Prayer

Remember that prayer is a relationship...

“God,
grant me the serenity of the loving parent inside me,
the courage to quiet the inner voice that hurts me,
the strength to listen to the voice that affirms me,
and the wisdom to hear the difference within me.”

Esau G.

12 STEPS TO BECOMING OUR OWN LOVING PARENT

1. We admitted we were powerless over the judgments from our inner critical parent, that our thoughts had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that we do have an Inner Loving Parent that could affirm us back to wholeness.
3. Made a decision to turn our inner critical parent's judgments over to the care of God as we understand God.
4. Made an honest and searching moral inventory of our inner critical parent's judgments.
5. Admitted to God, our Inner Loving Parent, and to another ACA the exact nature of our inner critical parent's judgments.
6. Were entirely ready to allow our Inner Loving Parent to replace these judgments with loving affirmations.
7. Allowed our Inner Loving Parent, with God's help, to replace these judgments with affirmations.
8. Made a list of all persons our inner critical parent judged, including ourselves, and starting with ourselves became willing to make amends for them all.
9. Made internal amends when those judgments remained thoughts, voiced our amends when those thoughts became words, to such people whenever appropriate except when to do so would isolate or abandon ourselves or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory of our inner critical parent's judgments and, when we became aware, promptly replaced those judgments with affirmations.
11. Sought through prayer and affirmation to improve our conscious contact with our Inner Loving Parent, as we understand our Inner Loving Parent, affirming only the truth of ourselves and the power to carry that out.

12. Having become our own Loving Parent as a result of these affirmations, we express our love to others who still suffer, and voice these affirmations in all our affairs.

Esau G.

(4) BRB Pg. 296 “**Becoming our own Loving Parent – reparenting ourselves – requires that we accept the reality of the Inner Child.** The child within is our original identity which knows how to love and trust freely. We become willing to consistently seek out and integrate the Inner Child into our lives. By making the effort, the child within becomes our guide to feelings, creativity, and spirituality. Through reparenting, we learn to listen for the child within. We can re-stage our childhood and teen years with gentleness by being a Loving Parent to ourselves. With the help of our ACA friends, we learn how to fill in the nurturing and attention we did not receive as children”.

Find a quiet and comfortable space without distraction. You may sit in a chair or sit on the floor. An outdoor location is acceptable as well. Sit upright but be comfortable. Begin the meditation by closing your eyes and taking a deep breath and releasing it slowly. As you take four or five slow breaths, let any thoughts you might have fade away. Be aware of being present in your body. If your mind is wandering, gently focus on yourself and be present in the moment and in your body. Continue breathing naturally.

Imagine that you are sitting on a warm beach. The weather is pleasant and not too hot. The beach is secluded but safe. You can feel the warm sand beneath your feet as you stand up and look out upon a calm, blue ocean. White sea gulls are diving for fish and the smell of seawater is refreshing. You are wearing a T-shirt, loose trousers, and a floppy hat to block the sun. In front of you, near the shoreline, you see an image of yourself when you were six or eight years old. Your Inner Child is bent at the waist picking up starfish and sea shells. The child notices you and waves you over. You walk up to the child and the child reaches out and places a starfish in one of your hands. You smile and feel the bristles of the tiny starfish tickling you. Your Inner Child smiles and squints to

block the friendly sun. The child reaches out and grips your hand. The child's skin has been warmed by sun rays. You both begin walking along the beach. You notice the child's soft hair and sensitive touch as you walk. The child trusts you and giggles softly each time a wave washes up the shore almost touching your feet. You walk for many moments, chatting softly, but paying attention to the child's innocence and imagination. You want to protect the child. You notice two people ahead, and they seem familiar so you keep walking toward them. Your Inner Child squeezes your hand and moves slightly behind you as you move closer to the couple. The child becomes shy, pushing into your leg from behind. You keep walking. You recognize the couple before you reach them. They are your parents, waiting for you to walk up. They grin at you and your Inner Child. They ask if they can walk with the child. You feel your stomach tighten, and you look down at your Inner Child to find the child pressed into your legs from the back. The child won't look at you and won't let go of your hand. You smile at your parents but ask them to wait for another day to walk the child. You and your Inner Child walk up the beach away from your parents and sit down. The child looks over a shoulder, climbs into your lap, and sits down. You hold your Inner Child. You both watch your parents walk away. The sun is lower now but still warm. Your Inner Child naps. You are safe. Your Inner Child is safe. You are going to make it. You know what you are doing. You can trust yourself to take care of your Inner Child. You can trust yourself to love. Continue to meditate and hold your Inner Child. When you are ready to stop, gently wake the child, walk the child to your cottage, and tuck it into bed. After putting the child to bed, back out of the room, counting slowly backward from ten. Open your eyes.

This exercise represents the loss or grief of our childhoods. Our families were not always safe or nurturing. This is loss. The exercise also represents our reparenting choice today. We can take care of ourselves and our Inner Child.

You can use this exercise to revisit your childhood. Upon occasion you can ask the Inner Child how the child feels or what the child is experiencing. Listen and then journal or write

(5) BRB Pg. 299 “We awaken the Loving Parent inside by actively listening to what we tell ourselves about ourselves. We stop in mid-sentence if we are putting ourselves down or criticizing our thoughts or behaviors. We identify the source of the negativity which is the inner critic inside all adult children. We face this critical voice with affirmations that state who we truly are. Through reparenting ourselves, we re-frame our mistakes as chances to learn or grow emotionally. This is a sign of becoming our own Loving Parent”.

ACA LOVING PARENT AFFIRMATIONS

1. It is okay to know who I am.
2. It is okay to trust myself.
3. It is okay to say I am an adult child.
4. It is okay to know another way to live.
5. It is okay to say no without feeling guilty.
6. It is okay to give myself a break.
7. It is okay to cry when I watch a movie or hear a song.
8. My feelings are okay even if I am still learning how to distinguish them.
9. It is okay to not take care of others when I think.
10. It is okay to feel angry.
11. It is okay to have fun and celebrate.
12. It is okay to make mistakes and learn.
13. It is okay to not know everything.
14. It is okay to say "I don't know."
15. It is okay to ask someone to show me how to do things.
16. It is okay to dream and have hope.
17. It is okay to think about things differently than my family.
18. It is okay to explore and say, "I like this or I like that."
19. It is okay to detach with love.
20. It is okay to seek my own Higher Power.
21. It is okay to reparent myself with thoughtfulness.

22. It is okay to say I love myself.

23. It is okay to work an ACA program.

Please send your
experience with this
workshop to Esau G.

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