

F.A.C.T.

FOSTERED ADULT CHILDREN TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION

Hello everyone and welcome to F.A.C.T. We would especially like to welcome any newcomers. If you feel comfortable telling us your name, please do so. We would like to acknowledge you and encourage you to keep coming back.

MISSION STATEMENT

OUR MISSION

F.A.C.T. is an alliance of adults who as children were separated from their parents and lived in foster care. We seek support and mutual understanding of our unique problems in coping with life and learning how to find our place in the world. There are no dues or fees for membership. The only requirement for attendance at a F.A.C.T. meeting is a desire to heal from our past by sharing our experience, strength and hope. F.A.C.T. is not a replacement for individual counseling and strongly encourages people to seek additional help if necessary.

If everyone is comfortable doing so, we'd like to hold hands and say a short F.A.C.T. prayer.

As we unite, no longer is there a sense of isolation. By reaching out to one another, we hope to find strength in recovering from our unique issues as former fostered and abandoned children, for the purpose of moving into a brighter future.

(Ask one person to read HEALING)

HEALING

The mission of F.A.C.T. is to help former foster children walk a new path that will build a bridge to healing. The **First Stepping Stone** on this path is to recognize we have been injured from our foster care experience, that we are powerless over our past and our lives are unmanageable. The **Second Stepping Stone** is to come to realize we can not heal alone, that only a Power greater than ourselves could restore order, hope, and sanity to our lives. The **Third Stepping Stone** is to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him. The **Fourth Stepping Stone** is to make a searching and fearless emotional inventory of our foster care experience to discover the nature of the damage. The **Fifth Stepping Stone** is to share this inventory with God and another human being. The **Sixth Stepping Stone** is to work through our anger and pain. The **Seventh Stepping Stone** is to become aware of how our injuries hurt others and accept responsibility for our responses to the trauma we suffered. The **Eighth Stepping Stone** is to continue to take personal inventory and become willing to let go of our resentments. The **Ninth Stepping Stone** is to seek through prayer and meditation to improve

our relationship with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. The **Tenth Stepping Stone** is to have a spiritual awakening as a result of these stepping stones and to reach out to other former foster children and practice these principles in our lives.

(Ask one person to read STATEMENT OF BELIEFS)

STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

We believe we are the children of a loving God, however we understand Him to be.

We believe and accept that we were powerless over the circumstances of our past.

We believe the injuries of our childhood can be healed.

We believe we can be reconciled with those who injured us.

We believe releasing those who injured us leads to healing.

We believe we have a rightful place in the family of man.

We believe we are neither slaves of the past nor masters of the future.

We believe our isolation ends when we share our pain.

We believe that in finding others who are lost we find ourselves.

We believe God has a higher purpose for all of His children.

Each stepping stone on this bridge to healing is an integral part of the healing process. It is our hope that as we work through these stepping stones we can come to embrace all of these beliefs.

(Ask one person to read GOALS OF RECOVERY)

GOALS OF RECOVERY

As former foster children, we believe there are certain goals we need to pursue in order to secure a better future. These goals are:

1. Make better decisions in our lives by becoming aware of how the past affects our decisions today
2. Become more patient and tolerant

3. Achieve better self-esteem
4. Cut the cords of shame that binds us by realizing that the abuses of the past are not our fault
5. Improve the quality of our life and our standard of living
6. Enhance the quality of our social and intimate relationships
7. Be able to reach out to others who feel lost or abandoned

It is our hope that as we endeavor to reach these goals, we will begin to cast our own shadow rather than live in it.

Are there any announcements concerning F.A.C.T.?

On the tables are lists of F.A.C.T. discussion issues that relate to the 10 Stepping Stones. In each meeting we will focus on one particular Stepping Stone and discuss Related Issues, Goals of Recovery, and Statement of Beliefs.

The **Stepping Stone** that will be discussed tonight is _____.

Since F.A.C.T. is a new support group, things may not be perfected yet. We want everyone here to feel a part of F.A.C.T. and we encourage anyone who might have any new ideas for F.A.C.T. to share them with us after the meeting. We value your input and respect your opinions.

As stated in the group rules, there is no cross-talking allowed during the meeting. If you desire feedback from someone, wait until the meeting is finished. It is also crucial that what we discuss in these meetings remain confidential. We also ask that you be considerate of how much time you spend talking so that everyone has a chance to share.

There are refreshments on the counter for everyone. Feel free to help yourself. The meeting will last 1 and 1/2 hours. At the end of the meeting, all who are comfortable doing so will hold hands and say the Serenity Prayer. Enjoy your meeting.

ENDING PRAYER FOR F.A.C.T. MEETING
SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the...
Serenity to accept the things I can not change
Courage to change the things I can, and the
Wisdom to know the difference
Patience for the things that take time
Appreciation for all that we have, and
Tolerance for those with different struggles
Freedom to live beyond the limitations of our past ways, the
Ability to feel your love for us and our love for each other and the
Strength to get up and try again even when we feel it is hopeless.

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F.A.C.T.
Fostered Adult Children Together
OUR COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

There are currently about 500,000 in the foster care system in the U.S. and 88,000 in Canada.

Many former foster children:

Have problems with stability because we were moved so many times, usually from town to town and sometimes from state to state

As adults change vocations on average every six months and change types of vocations far more often than the general population

Work at low-paying minimum-wage jobs

Don't get high-school diplomas but obtain G.E.D. certificates five to ten years later

Report cases of sexual abuse, usually by relatives and friends of the foster parents

Report cases of physical and emotional abuse

Suffer from low self-esteem and confidence, especially between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight

Have stress disorders that appear around twenty-eight years of age

Often have poor social interactions; friendships, even long-term ones, are usually on and off due to instability, moving around a lot, changing vocations and psychological stress

Have difficulty bonding with other people

Have emotional turmoil with personal relationships

Question their parenting abilities

Have trouble managing their finances and budgeting their money

Haven't had solid role models and therefore lack a good understanding of social roles and social expectations

Struggle with guilt and shame because we feel as if we must be bad people in order for our parents and foster parents to have seemingly rejected us

Suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (P.T.S.D.) and feel frozen in the past, afraid to move forward and strive for a better life

Have problems with depression, largely because of our unresolved grieving issues

Are homeless (currently at least 25% of the homeless population are former foster children)

Are at least 30% more prone to alcohol and substance abuse than the general population

Are inmates in our prison systems (at least two out of three according to conservative estimates)

Are 50% more likely to have a history of domestic violence than the overall population

As heads of households have already lost at least one child to foster care

Are four times more likely to be sexually abused than children in the general population

If you are a former foster child you could benefit from F.A.C.T.

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HEALING

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GOALS OF RECOVERY

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10 STEPPING STONES AND THE BRIDGE TO HEALING

1. We recognize we have been injured from our foster care experience, that we are powerless over our past and our lives are unmanageable.
2. Come to realize we can not heal alone, that only a Power greater than ourselves could restore order, hope, and sanity to our lives.
3. Make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.
4. Make a searching and fearless emotional inventory of our foster care experience to discover the nature of the damage.
5. Share this inventory with God and another human being.
6. Humbly ask God he help us work through our anger and pain.
7. Become aware of how our injuries hurt others and accept responsibility for our responses to the trauma we suffered.
8. Continue to take personal inventory and become willing to let go of our resentments.
9. Seek through prayer and meditation to improve our relationship with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
10. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these stepping stones, we reach out to other former foster children and practice these principles in our lives.

Each stepping stone on this bridge to healing is an integral part of the healing process. In each meeting we will focus on one particular stepping stone and discuss related issues.

RELATED DISCUSSION ISSUES

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. isolation and loneliness | 14. financial problems |
| 2. loss and grief | 15. guilt |
| 3. anger | 16. independence versus dependence |
| 4. sense of failure | 17. sense of being failed by the foster-care system |
| 5. abandonment | 18. alcohol and substance abuse problems |
| 6. poor social interaction | 19. how to break the cycle |
| 7. poor parenting skills | 20. difficulty with emotions |
| 8. instability (moving a lot) | 21. trust |
| 9. vocational problems | 22. shame |
| 10. educational problems | 23. depression |
| 11. sexual abuse | 24. difficulty believing in and/or trusting God |
| 12. self-esteem | 25. domestic problems |
| 13. stress disorders | 26. criminal behavior |

F.A.C.T.
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GROUP RULES

1. F.A.C.T. is a self-help support group, not a reference agency or resource center, but we do not discourage individual members from assisting others.
2. F.A.C.T. is for anyone who is a former foster child.
3. No alcohol or drugs allowed in F.A.C.T. meetings. We will not turn away those who are currently abusing drugs or alcohol, but because your addiction can only interfere with your recovery from F.A.C.T. issues, we strongly recommend you seek additional help for your addiction.
4. Each person should be allowed (but not required) to speak.
5. No one should get up to leave while a F.A.C.T. meeting is in progress unless it is an emergency.
6. We are free to express our emotions as long as it isn't done violently.
7. No feedback or cross-talking is allowed during F.A.C.T. meetings. If feedback is desired, wait until the meeting is over.
8. Do not have side communications--it is discourteous to whoever is talking.
9. No hugging or touching is allowed unless it's desired.
10. If someone is crying, don't offer him or her a tissue or pat the person on the back (this could suggest to them that they shouldn't be crying, which is non-validating and could interfere with their emotional healing).
11. Never ridicule someone for his or her feelings. Be validating towards other people's pain.
12. We listen and express our feelings. We do not prescribe, diagnose, judge or give advice. We offer suggestions if they are sought.
13. What we share is confidential and we have a right to remain anonymous if we so choose.
14. We each share responsibility for making the group work. We have no group leader.
15. F.A.C.T. meetings will be limited to 1 & 1/2 hours.