The Twelve Steps of RCA - Step 1

We admitted we were powerless over our relationship--that our lives together had become unmanageable.

Most of us have family-of-origin issues and all of us have a history. We may not have gotten what we needed emotionally, physically, mentally, or spiritually. When we were growing up there may have been abuse (physical, sexual, spiritual, or emotional), abandonment, or deprivation. We all bring "baggage" to the coupleship. The Steps teach us how to look at our baggage and how to reverse the process of blaming.

Each of us is responsible for the presence or absence of intimacy between us. As soon as each of us accepts responsibility, we are ready for Step One of RCA. Step One involves taking full responsibility for the health or disease of the relationship. Each person carries 100%.

Occasionally some couples might not be far enough along in their individual recovery (or not in recovery at all) to be able to answer the following questions, or they might get into fights or other dysfunctional behavior simply by raising certain issues. In these cases, we encourage Step work be done only in the presence of a sponsoring couple.

Couples come into RCA at different stages. Step One involves understanding dysfunctional patterns. It also involves understanding family-of-origin issues, personality traits, and other individual issues that affect our current coupleship.

Writing is important for clarity and thoroughness. *We suggest that you*:

1. Read aloud the "Safety Guidelines".
2. Take one pencil and one piece of paper and begin the process together. RCA is about the "we-ness" and "usness" of our relationship. In RCA, we open ourselves up to a new way of thinking and living in coupleship.
3. Make couple decisions: Who will hold the pencil and do the writing? Are you able to share, negotiate, or compromise? Is there a power struggle? Are you ready to take the First Step?
4. Divide the paper in half with a vertical line down the middle.
5. Make lists of the coupleship issues over which you feel powerless.
6. As an alternative, divide the duties of writing and dictating, or each write your own part.

We suggest you answer the following questions:

[An alternate suggestion: consider answering the following questions separately, as individual partners. When both partners are done writing, consider getting with another RCA couple or your RCA sponsor couple and then read aloud your answers to each other in the presence of this other witnessing couple. Here are some other suggestions for when you write your answers to these questions and for when you read aloud your answers to each other.

- *When you write your answers, it is suggested that your response be written as a complete sentence, not just as word notes.*
- *When you share your answer to the question, read the question aloud, then read aloud your answer exactly as it is written.*
- *It is suggested that your partner not give you feedback in any way regarding the content of your answer except if he/she does not understand the answer. In that case, the listening partner might say, "Can you clarify your answer? I didn't understand it." It is recommended that under no circumstances are the*

answers given open for debate that either one of you. You each write what is specifically your reality, and your partner listens.

- *It is suggested that you each alternate reading aloud your answer question by question -- that is, partner A on the 1st question, then partner B on the 1st question, then partner A on the 2nd question, and so on.*
- *It is okay to cry, feel pain, love, anger, joy or any other emotion. It is not okay to berate your partner or try to change their ideas, opinions or feelings.*
- *Once the Step is done, it is recommended that you do not rehash it; the Step is complete and finished. You are urged never to use anything your partner shares during the Steps as a weapon during an argument. What your partner shares is the way she/he sees the coupleship and the world. You may accept and respect your partner's viewpoint and still not agree with it.]*

1. What dysfunctional roles have you brought from your family of origin?

2. What have your family-of-origin models taught you about relationships?

3. If you have had experiences of abuse, how have those affected your ability to relate, to be intimate, and to be sexual?

4. How do your individual addictions or dysfunctions affect your coupleship?

5. What are recurring issues you never seem to resolve (e.g., how you spend money, how you spend your time together, parent, divide the household duties, celebrate the holidays, etc.)?

6. How do these issues bring you to anger and what are your patterns of expressing anger?

7. In what ways do you feel hopeless about your coupleship?

8. In order to save your coupleship, what measures have you tried that haven't seemed to work?

9. How do you fight unfairly?

Understanding the powerlessness and unmanageability of your relationship is key. Remember, you are a beautiful and unique couple and you deserve recovery. Having surrendered thus far, you are ready to take Step Two.

Affirmation

Today we affirm the little child within our partner and nurture that special quality.