

In Memoriam: Herbert L. Gravitz, NACoA Founder

Herbert L. Gravitz (1942-2015) was a founding member of the National Association for Children of Alcoholics. While serving on the board, he lectured throughout the country, consulted on the movie *Shattered Spirits*, and wrote articles as well as a NACoA handbook on children of alcoholics.

His seminal self-help book, co-written with Julie Bowden in 1987, was *Recovery: A Guide for Adult Children of Alcoholics*. Called a “classic” by *Publisher’s Weekly*, *Recovery* sold hundreds of thousands of copies and was used as the “Big Book” in early ACA meetings. Several other books followed, focused on spirituality, obsessive compulsive disorder and family issues.

Herb was a brilliant therapist and dedicated writer. He was considered by many to be the “therapist of therapists,” constantly reading and studying to hone his considerable skills. Treating a wide range of human challenges, he often used metaphor and Eriksonian hypnotherapy to create powerful solutions for his patients. Here is how one of his clients captured his impact: “Herb was a true warrior for life and healing.

He never gave up on me, his other clients or himself.” (Mary Jo)

Herb believed he resonated with the trauma children experience in a household with an alcoholic parent because of his family’s traumatic experience in the holocaust. The many relatives murdered due to their Jewish ancestry were the source of his life-long dedication to relieve suffering and isolation wherever he found it. He drew on his early experience of extreme trauma in the family to help other families that had been touched by trauma.

He was father to three sons whom he loved deeply. He also had an extensive network of friends. In his personal life he followed his dreams, often in the face of headwinds, remaining forever undefeated.

Herb Gravitz's memory and the gifts of his writing and of leading countless clients to emotional health and healing will impact generations to come. He will be sorely missed by NACoA, which he supported until the time of his death, and by countless and silent souls whose lives have been immeasurably improved because of his work. RIP, dear friend.