

The Loving Parent Guidebook

*The Solution is to become
your own loving parent*



©2021 Adult Children of Alcoholics®/Dysfunctional Families World Services Organization, Inc.
This publication is under fellowship review. Fellowship comments are invited.

Coming in June 2021

Print★ & Kindle eBook
available for preorder at the
Annual World Convention
May 1-2

★Within the U.S. The European Committee and Global Members Committee are working together with WSO for the International Launch.

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WHAT'S INSIDE

This 234-page spiral-bound workbook is structured to help you access the love inside you and grow the awareness and skills you need to become your own loving parent:

- In Chapters 1-9, *Laying a Foundation for Reparenting*, you will awaken your loving parent, and identify and connect with your inner family.
- Chapters 10-16, *Deepening Your Reparenting Skills*, help you grow your reparenting skills to protect, nurture, support, and guide your inner family.
- In Chapters 17-21, *Nurturing a Loving Inner Home*, you'll connect more deeply with your inner family to build a loving inner home.
- Chapter 22, *Reparenting as a Way of Life*, concludes the book with an example of how to approach reparenting as a way of life.

This guide includes many fellowship shares about reparenting and inner child work. To help you integrate reparenting into your daily life, the guide also includes:

- Sample loving parent messages.
- Exercises, questions for reflection, and guided practices.
- Sample meeting scripts.
- Images by *The Loving Parent Guidebook* artist team that you can color.
- A link for additional reparenting resources.

CHAPTERS BEGIN WITH A MEDITATION/PRAYER AND END WITH AN AFFIRMATION/MEDITATION



Awakening Your Loving Parent

Meditation / Prayer

*May I open my heart and recognize the love that is already inside me. May I trust
that with that love I can become my own loving parent.*

Our inner loving parent can be seen as an aspect of our true selves, embodying qualities including compassion, curiosity, love, and wholeness. Our loving parent can also be seen as an expression of a higher power working through us in a practical way. Our loving parent never goes away, but we can lose sight of it—like a sky obscured by clouds. We can learn to regularly access our loving parent and connect with all our inner family members in new, healthier ways. This is possible at any age and even after years of recovery.

By becoming our own loving parent we can begin to discover our own separate adult identity and individuate from our family of origin. We may have distanced ourselves by moving away, getting a job, and creating our own family. However, unconscious habits, beliefs, and behaviors passed down through the generations might continue to drive our choices. Individuation allows us to recognize and release patterns that no longer serve us. We feel free to practice new ways of being that help us live healthy lives that are more aligned with our true selves.

When we first start to reparent, our loving parent may seem inaccessible because the loudest, most urgent, or most compelling inner family members can absorb our attention and take over. The more aware we become of the unconscious patterns in our inner life, the more we can individuate from our wounded and reactive inner family members so that we can tend to them as their loving parent. As a loving parent, our role is to nurture a relationship with our inner child, inner teen, and critical parent, so they no longer take over when childhood wounding gets triggered.¹

Becoming our own loving parent is a process. Each one of us will define and express our loving parent uniquely, though healthy parenting examples can guide us. We can learn how to use the compassion, empathy, love, and kindness we all have—and have probably directed toward others—to reparent ourselves. We will need to practice with our inner family and fellow travelers. Just as we can't recover alone, we can't reparent in isolation. We need each other.

¹ Depending on our background, it may be difficult to develop a relationship with our inner child and inner teen (and critical parent). They may take over consistently, making it challenging to strengthen our access to our loving parent. If this is the case, we can consider seeking support from a qualified therapist.

Below are some additional techniques that you can use to create a safe inner family space:

1. Draw your inner family's safe space.
2. Build something to represent the space, using wood, paper mâché, felt, construction paper, clay, or whatever else inspires you.
- Search in magazines or on the internet to find an existing image that represents your healing environment. Place the image where you'll regularly see it.
- Find a song or create a playlist that will help you feel safe.
- Memorize a prayer or phrase to recite when you need a sense of safety.

Consider sharing your experience² of creating your inner family's safe space with a sponsor, fellow traveler(s), or therapist.

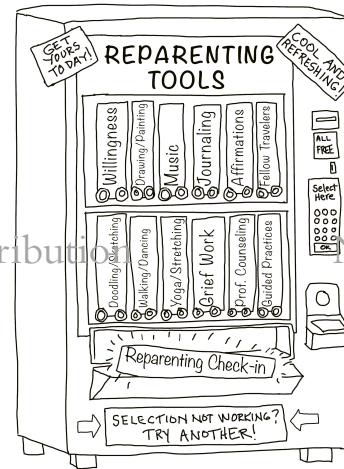
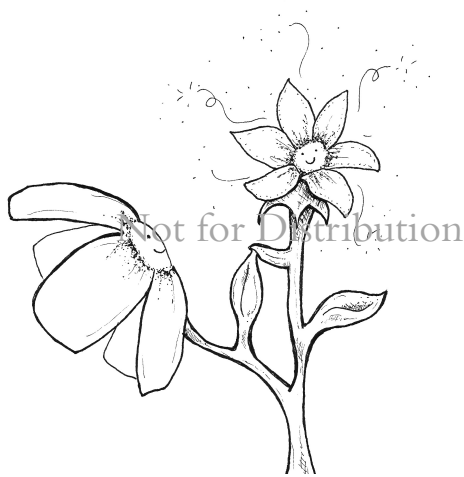
Your Key Chapter Takeaway(s):

Affirmation / Meditation

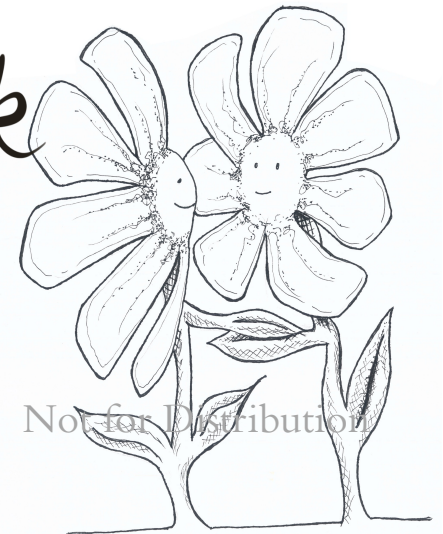
I can learn to connect with my inner family members. I can experience the love, compassion, intuition, and purpose that comes with getting to know them.

² In future chapters, you'll see the text "The Power of Sharing," which will serve as a reminder to consider sharing your work with a sponsor, fellow traveler(s) or with a therapist.

ORIGINAL IMAGES REPRESENTING MANY BACKGROUNDS



gentleness break



SUPPORT FOR IDENTIFYING FEELINGS, NEEDS, AND PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

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Appendix D: Feelings, Needs & Physical Sensations Sheet



Feelings when needs are met

GLAD
happy
excited
hopeful
joyful
satisfied
delighted
encouraged
confident
inspired
relieved
touched
proud
elated

PEACEFUL
calm
content
expansive
serene
joyful
satisfied
delighted
encouraged
confident
inspired
relieved
touched
proud
elated

THANKFUL
grateful
appreciative



Feelings when needs are not met

SAD
lonely
heavy
hopeless
gloomy
grief
overwhelmed
distant
discouraged
distressed
disheartened
disappointed

SCARED
afraid
fearful
terrified
startled
nervous
panicky
jittery
horrified
anxious
lonely
skeptical
suspicious

TIED
exhausted
lethargic
weary
overwhelmed
withdrawn

MAD
angry
annoyed
exasperated
agitated
furious
enraged
hostile
bitter
resentful
disgusted
frustrated

UNEASY
uncomfortable
pained
hurt
miserable
guilty



Universal human needs

TRUST
safety
security
understanding
honesty
love
to matter
community
play/fun
appreciation
freedom
meaning
rest

COMPASSION
empathy
autonomy
choice
freedom
nurturance
comfort
warmth/caring
self-expression
contribution
creativity
effectiveness
growth
healing

RECOGNITION
respect
validation
equality
reliability
predictability

INTEGRITY
self-worth
authenticity
purpose
honesty
clarity
celebration
humor
passion
mourning
accountability
peace
ease
beauty

CLARITY
awareness
to be heard
to be seen



Physical sensations

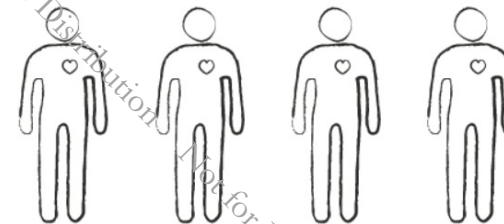
aching
bloated
breathless
bubbly
burry
clammy
clenched
cold
cool
congested
contracted
curled
damp
dull
dry
itchy
jittery
jumpy
expansive
faint

floating
flowing
fluid
flushed
fluttery
fragile
frantic
frozen
full
fuzzy
glowing
heavy
heated
hollow
hot
limber
lumpy
moist
numb
open
paralyzed
pounding
prickly
puffy
pulsing
queasy
quivery
radiating
ragged
raw
restricted
shaky
smooth
spacey

spacious
spinning
stiff
still
strong
suffocating
sweaty
tense
thick
thin
tight
tingly
trembling
throbbing
twitchy
vibrating
warm
wobbly

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Color in where you feel the emotions shown. Use different colors to represent temperature, tightness, intensity.



Sad

Mad

Scared

Glad

Your responses to the worksheet below can help you better recognize feeling cues in your daily life.

Worksheet: Identifying Feelings in Your Body

Emotion	Common or Habitual Thoughts	Physical Sensations
Mad	It's wrong; they shouldn't speak to me that way; it's not fair.	Tight jaw, heat in the hands and arms, racing heart, shallow breathing
Love		
Mad		
Glad		
Sad		
Peaceful		

PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO NURTURE THE INNER CHILDREN

Chapter 12: Tending to Your Inner Children

To practice nurturing through words, think of a current situation that is mildly painful (but not intense) so you can begin to strengthen your compassion little by little. Once you have a situation in mind, ask, "What does my inner child or inner teenager need to hear to feel my loving parent's compassion?" Perhaps they need to hear, "This is hard," or "It makes sense that you feel this way," or "You need kindness like everyone else." Maybe they feel lonely and need to hear, "You will never have to be alone again. I'm here with you." Note how it feels in your body to offer your inner child or inner teen these loving messages.

Experiment with the following messages to see which ones resonate, adapting them and fine-tuning your language to what your inner child or inner teen need to hear.

Example Messages for Your Inner Child

All your feelings are welcome here.	Even though this feels like the past, this is different.
I'm here. I'll keep you safe.	I love you. You are enough, no matter what.
I care about how you feel.	I get that you're angry. I'm on it.
This is an adult job. I've got this.	You seem scared. Would you like to hold my hand?

Example Messages for Your Inner Teenager

Wow, that sounds hard.	You don't have to be strong this time. I'll handle this.
I get that you're angry.	How about I do this and, if it doesn't feel good, I'll stop, and we can find another option?
I've got your back.	You're feeling a powerful urge. Take a breath, and we'll explore other ways to cope.
Try not to take this personally; their reaction isn't about you. I see you.	

Sometimes nurturing through words might seem dry, disconnected, or uncomfortable. Sometimes it lands, and you feel a shift. Whatever the case, keep practicing and noticing what messages resonate. See if it's possible to allow yourself to not be good at this and give yourself time to find your loving parent's voice. Trying to get it right is a sign the critical parent has slipped into the driver's seat.

What would a
loving parent
do or say in this situation?

Worksheet: Empathizing with Your Inner Children

In the next exercise, read each statement as if it were your inner child or inner teen speaking to you. Deny the feeling and notice any feelings or physical sensations that arise. Then practice empathizing with their feelings and needs, letting yourself feel what it must be like for them. Tap into what your heart hears, letting go of getting the words "right." Notice any physical sensations or emotions that arise.


Worksheet: Empathizing with Your Inner Children

Inner Child or Inner Teenager	Denying	Empathizing
Example: She ignored me.	She didn't ignore you. You're overreacting.	Are you feeling hurt because you need to matter?
Example: They dropped the ball again. I'm tired of them holding up my work.	Don't make such a big deal out of it. I'm sure they'll do it.	Do you feel frustrated because you value reliability?
I really messed up.		
I don't have any friends.		
No one listens to me.		
How dare they!		
I can't do this.		
Look what I made!		
I slept well last night.		
They abandoned me.		


THE REPARARENTING CHECK-IN

A chapter devoted to the practice that inspired *The Loving Parent Guidebook*, and that has already helped many recovering adult children reparent themselves.


Reparenting check-in




(1) Ground your attention
Tune in to your breathing, where it's comfortable for you, and notice how it feels. What emotions and physical sensations are here?



(2) Who is triggered?
Who or what part of you needs your loving parent's attention?



(3) What was the trigger?
What triggered this part of you? People, places, things? The critical parent or distorted thinking? It's okay if you don't know.



(4) Tend to this part
Notice if you feel compassion, curiosity, or a desire to connect with this part of yourself. Once you do, how can you tend to them?

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HELPFUL WORKSHEETS WITH EXAMPLES

Worksheet: Reframing Critical Parent Messages with Affirmations	
Critical Parent Message	Affirmation
Example, "You screwed that up."	It's okay to make mistakes and learn.
Example, "You will look weak."	It's okay to ask for help.
Example, "Those people are losers."	It's okay to think about things differently than my family.

A VARIETY OF EXERCISES

Members will find inventories, worksheets, reflection questions, letters, guided practices, a partner practice, and more.

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Exercise: Signs the Critical Parent is Active

Check any of the signs below that you've experienced when your critical parent is active.

- ☐ Perfectionism
- ☐ Control
- ☐ All-or-nothing thinking (never, always, nothing, everything)
- ☐ Being judgmental toward yourself or others
- ☐ Worrying, catastrophizing, projecting into the future
Could be in words or images of disastrous scenarios
- ☐ Avoiding healthy risks or vulnerability
- ☐ Making predictions about what will happen if you don't do what it says. "You'll lose your job"; "You will be shunned from the community." etc.
- ☐ Rumination (On a past event/conversation, imagining "do-overs.")
- ☐ Comparing
- ☐ Rehearsing an upcoming event/conversation
- ☐ Thoughts that dismiss, minimize, invalidate, undermine, cause doubt, scrutinize, argue with feelings, fight reality (I'm not feeling x; is that bad? Am I avoiding my feelings?)
- ☐ Doubt, questioning your reality
- ☐ Withholding approval
- ☐ Gossip
- ☐ "Shoulds"—statements about what you or someone else should, ought, or must do. ("I should be able to do this without feeling afraid." "I should be over this stuff by now.") etc.
- ☐ Making assumptions ("They're mad at you. They're blaming you.")
- ☐ A finger pointing at you, a whip, or other menacing image

"Instead of hearing criticism (real or imagined) and considering it, my critical parent shouts that I am bad, wrong, and takes up all my psychic space. Much of the time this is over imagined criticism." -Fellow Traveler

REFLECTIONS & SHARES

Thought-provoking reflection questions are mixed in with text, exercises, and gentleness break reminders.

Preface: About This Guidebook and How to Use It

Sometimes **reparenting "work"** is taking a walk, calling a friend to catch up, having a cup of tea, or doing nothing. **Our mindset** is as important as what we do or don't do.

"Although I saw recovery victories in my life, I didn't understand how the Steps were contributing to reparenting until several years into the program. When it came to making amends, things started to make sense. I had many amends to make to myself, and I could do better at loving myself because of all the work I had put into the program." -Fellow Traveler

Learning to Reparent Yourself with Gentleness, Humor, Love, and Respect

As we begin the work of reparenting, we may become more aware of the old hurts and trauma stored in our bodies. This can show up as excess tension, tightness, and headaches. We can balance this work with self-care, such as gentleness breaks whenever they're needed, eating well, resting, and taking time to do something fun. We may need to soothe our pain-racked bodies to feel calm. Yoga, meditation, gentle stretching, prayer, massage, tai-chi, art, music, movement, dance, poetry, comedy, play, being in nature, spending time with animals, and connecting with supportive resources can help us do this. Self-care is an expression of our loving parent's gentleness, humor, love, and respect.

Reflections: Identifying Your Supportive Resources

Identifying supportive resources early in your reparenting journey helps you call on them more easily at stressful times. Some supportive resources: nature, animals, a sponsor, fellow travelers, movement, poetry, singing, humming, whistling, the sky, calming sounds like those of running water or chimes, movement, holding something comforting, placing your hand on your heart.

1. Do you have a "go-to" supportive resource? If so, what is it?

2. List a few resources that can help your body feel more physically calm.

3. If you freeze up or your body wants to shut down, what resources could help your body feel more alive?

When we're triggered or out of balance, it can be hard to discern what we need. Tip: transfer your answers from the questions above to a list that you can carry with you and use when you get triggered.

5

Fellow traveler shares

TESTIMONIALS

“I really believe that this Guidebook will fundamentally alter how recovery in ACA is understood, and how it happens.” –Fellow Traveler

“This book could benefit all ACAs and fills a huge need in our program for concrete information on how to embrace the ACA Solution. *The Loving Parent Guidebook* finally provides practical instruction on HOW to reparent.” –Fellow Traveler

“I'm incredibly impressed with the sensitivity, care, strength, and power of this book.” –Fellow Traveler

This guidebook is excellent! All ACA literature is important in adult child recovery. However, this may become the most important single piece of our literature suite.

-Greg R. Chair, Lit Strategic Planning
Committee and Lit Eval Co-Chair Elect

THE LOVING PARENT GUIDEBOOK DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This guidebook will be published soon in Fellowship Review Mode. Over 50 volunteers worked on the LPG from 2017-2021 as editors, reviewers, readers, and writers.

THE LPG IS IN FELLOWSHIP REVIEW MODE



Once a submission passes the WSO Literature Committee's multi-step evaluation process, it moves to the Board for print approval.



It is then published in "Fellowship Review Mode."



During the next one to three years the LPG will be in fellowship review mode.

The LPG is here



Members use the literature and offer feedback through an online form. The Literature Committee reviews and incorporates feedback through group conscience.



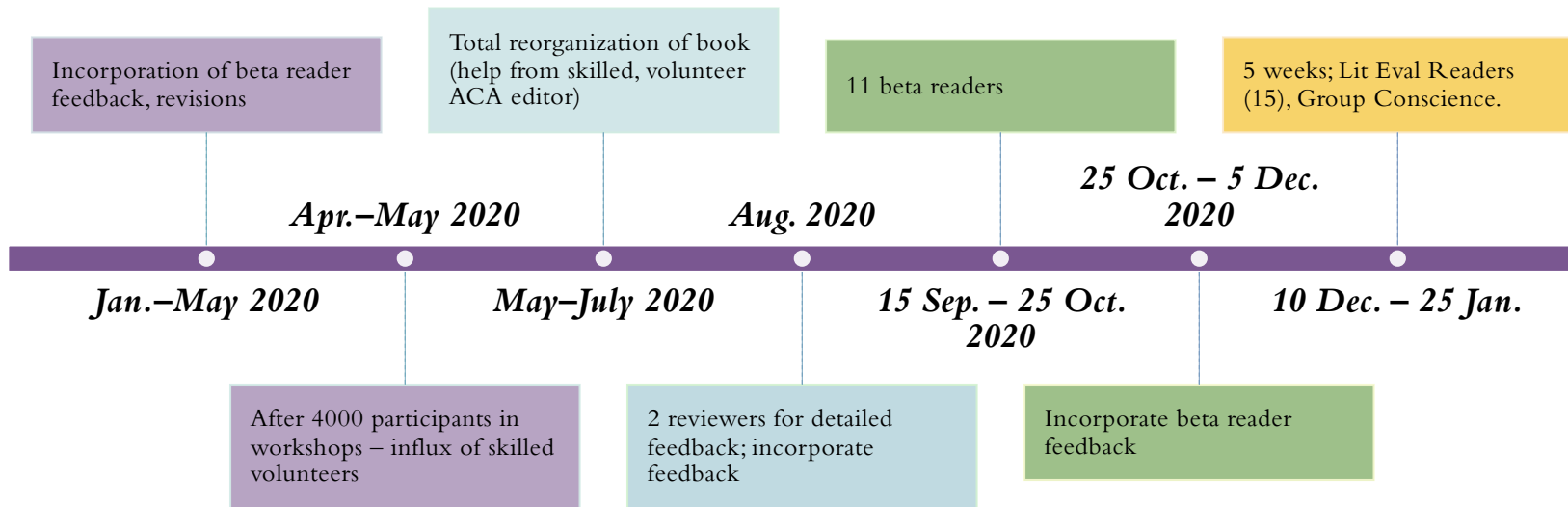
The Literature Committee Submits the literature to the Board, then Annual Business Conference (ABC) for designation as Conference-approved literature.

LPG DEVELOPMENT PROCESS 2017-2019

17 VOLUNTEERS/READERS



DEVELOPMENT- 2020 OVER 33 VOLUNTEERS / READERS



LIT EVAL RECOMMENDATION

3 options for projects conceptually approved by an ABC:

Recommend contingent on
specified changes

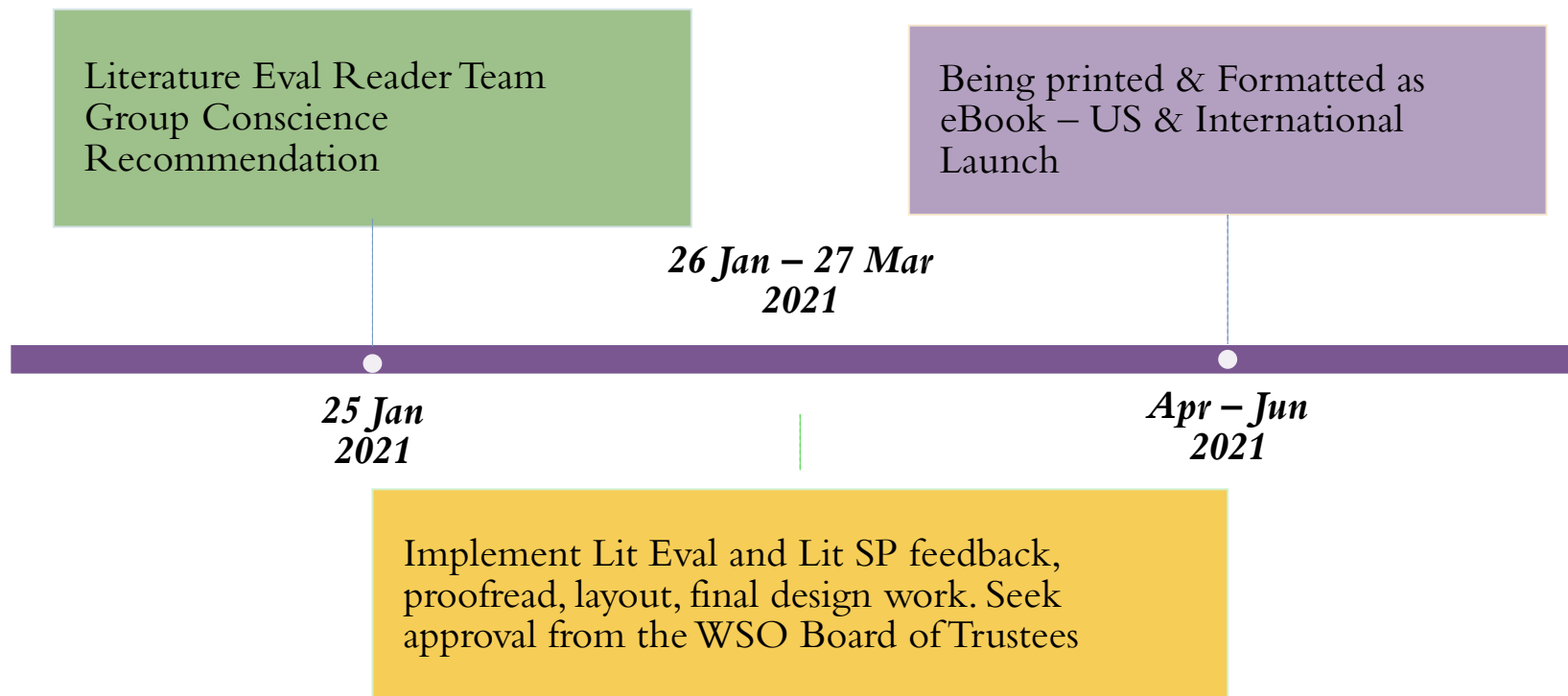
Recommend

Recommend for further
development and re-evaluation



The Loving Parent Guidebook received a full group
conscience recommendation of **RECOMMEND**
from 2 reader teams (15 readers total)

DEVELOPMENT- 2021 OVER 9 VOLUNTEERS



LITERATURE EVALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE CONCLUSION

Our group conscience effort recommends a HIGH PRIORITY in releasing the LPG to begin testing and capturing fellowship-wide feedback.

-Literature Evaluation Reader Team Group
Conscience for *The Loving Parent Guidebook*

The *Loving Parent Guidebook* will be available to pre-order in May 2021.