



The Laundry List *(14 Traits of an Adult Child)*

These are characteristics we seem to have in common due to being brought up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional household.

- 1) We became isolated and afraid of people and authority figures.
- 2) We became approval seekers and lost our identity in the process.
- 3) We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism.
- 4) We either become alcoholics, marry them or both, or find another compulsive personality such as a workaholic to fulfill our sick abandonment needs.
- 5) We live life from the viewpoint of victims and are attracted by that weakness in our love and friendship relationships.
- 6) We have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility, and it is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves; this enables us not to look too closely at our own faults, etc.
- 7) We get guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.
- 8) We became addicted to excitement.
- 9) We confuse love and pity and tend to “love” people we can “pity” and “rescue.”
- 10) We have “stuffed” our feelings from our traumatic childhoods and have lost the ability to feel or express our feelings because it hurts so much (Denial).
- 11) We judge ourselves harshly and have a very low sense of self-esteem.
- 12) We are dependent personalities who are terrified of abandonment and will do anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to experience painful abandonment feelings, which we received from living with sick people who were never there emotionally for us.
- 13) Alcoholism is a family disease; we became para-alcoholics and took on the characteristics of that disease even though we did not pick up the drink.
- 14) Para-alcoholics are reactors rather than actors.

Tony A. 1978



The ACA Twelve Steps

- 1) We admitted we were powerless over the effects of alcoholism or other family dysfunction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2) Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3) Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God.
- 4) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5) Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6) Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7) Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
- 8) Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9) Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10) Continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
- 11) Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12) Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others who still suffer, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted from the original Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Adult Children of Alcoholics®/Dysfunctional Families World Service Organization, Inc.
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The ACA Twelve Traditions

- 1) Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on ACA unity.
- 2) For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
- 3) The only requirement for membership in ACA is a desire to recover from the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family.
- 4) Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or ACA as a whole. We cooperate with all other Twelve-Step programs.
- 5) Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the adult child who still suffers.
- 6) An ACA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the ACA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- 7) Every ACA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8) Adult Children of Alcoholics should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- 9) ACA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10) Adult Children of Alcoholics has no opinion on outside issues; hence the ACA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11) Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, films, and other public media.
- 12) Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions are reprinted and adapted from the original Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous and are used with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

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The Solution

The Solution is to become your own loving parent. As ACA becomes a safe place for you, you will find freedom to express all the hurts and fears you have kept inside and to free yourself from the shame and blame that are carryovers from the past. You will become an adult who is imprisoned no longer by childhood reactions. You will recover the child within you, learning to accept and love yourself.

The healing begins when we risk moving out of isolation. Feelings and buried memories will return. By gradually releasing the burden of unexpressed grief, we slowly move out of the past. We learn to reparent ourselves with gentleness, humor, love, and respect. This process allows us to see our biological parents as the instruments of our existence. Our actual parent is a Higher Power whom some of us choose to call God. Although we had alcoholic or dysfunctional parents, our Higher Power gave us the Twelve Steps of Recovery.

This is the action and work that heals us: we use the Steps; we use the meetings; we use the telephone. We share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. We learn to restructure our sick thinking one day at a time. When we release our parents from responsibility for our actions today, we become free to make healthful decisions as actors, not reactors. We progress from hurting, to healing, to helping. We awaken to a sense of wholeness we never knew was possible. By attending these meetings on a regular basis, you will come to see parental alcoholism or family dysfunction for what it is: a disease that infected you as a child and continues to affect you as an adult.

You will learn to keep the focus on yourself in the here and now. You will take responsibility for your own life and supply your own parenting. You will not do this alone. Look around you and you will see others who know how you feel. We will love and encourage you no matter what. We ask you to accept us just as we accept you. This is a spiritual program based on action coming from love. We are sure that as the love grows inside you, you will see beautiful changes in all your relationships, especially with God, yourself, and your parents.

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Closing Prayers

ACA Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to accept the
people I cannot change,
the courage to change the one I can,
and the wisdom to know that one is me.

Responsibility Pledge

When anyone, anywhere
reaches out for help,
Let the hand of ACA always be there,
And Let it Begin with Me.