

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

1. Families develop their own rules—either spoken or unspoken—to cope with the behavior of an alcoholic caregiver. For example: “Don’t talk about family problems” or “avoid conflict”. Growing up, these rules may have been necessary to survive. However, in future relationships, these same rules can be harmful. What rules did your family develop in response to your caregiver’s alcohol use?
2. Children of alcoholics often take on roles that are not normally expected of kids. They may act as a caregiver for younger siblings, a mediator, a scapegoat, or another age-inappropriate role. As a child, what roles did you have in your family? How do these roles impact you now, either positively or negatively?
3. Our childhoods influence how we relate to others throughout our lives. How do you think your experiences during childhood continue to affect your relationships with others?
4. Because alcoholic caregivers are often absent (either physically or emotionally), their children are left to deal with difficult emotions by themselves. In some cases, this leads to the development of unhealthy coping strategies, such as avoidance. As a child, how did you cope with your caregiver’s alcohol use? How do you cope with difficult emotions now?
5. Despite a difficult upbringing, adult children of alcoholics may find that they have developed tremendous strength and resilience. What did you learn during childhood that is still valuable to you now? What strengths did you develop during your childhood?
6. As an adult, what would you say to a current child of an alcoholic? What feelings might you have toward this child?
7. In many households with an alcoholic caregiver, the topic of drinking is off-limits. This leaves children with unanswered questions and misconceptions about alcohol. As a child, what were your beliefs about alcohol? How have your beliefs changed over the years?