



CELEBRATE RECOVERY®

ADULT CHILDREN OF FAMILY DYSFUNCTION

Issue Pamphlet

Celebrate Recovery®

Issue Pamphlet: ADULT CHILDREN OF FAMILY DYSFUNCTION
Copyright © 2025 Version 2025.07.23

Modifications are strictly prohibited without the written permission of the Celebrate Recovery® Global Team.

CelebrateRecovery.com

Exploring the Issue of Adult Children of Family Dysfunction

Did you grow up in a family or home where one or more of the caregivers struggled with addiction, compulsions, co-dependency or other unhealthy behaviors? Was your home filled with conflict, neglect, or anxious systems?

Often children from dysfunctional families think the systems they grew up in are normal and may be unaware of the adverse effects.

Adult children of Family Dysfunction often develop survival skills from childhood, such as isolation, perfectionism, and family peacemaking, which then become habits or hangups as adults.

Characteristics of an Adult Child of Family Dysfunction may include but are not limited to:

- We suffer from lack of self-confidence or low self-esteem.
- We have difficulty trusting others.
- We have difficulty acknowledging or expressing emotion as an adult, having learned how to repress painful or confusing emotions as a child.
- We have to guess what is normal, having grown up in a dysfunctional home.
- We have spent time taking care of others while neglecting our own needs.
- We lived in anxiety, walking on egg shells, waiting for the other shoe to drop.
- We struggled with unexplained anger, rage, and sadness.
- We have difficulty following through on a project because of a struggle to concentrate and focus.
- We manage time poorly and do not set priorities in a way that works effectively for us.
- We have difficulty forming healthy adult relationships.
- We judge ourselves harshly, especially when things did not go perfectly.
- We are prone to addiction to alcohol or drugs, self-harm, or self-destructive behavior.
- We are either extremely responsible or irresponsible brought on by a lack of good example growing up.
- We overreact to change.
- We get angry frequently or easily, and tend to isolate.
- We constantly seek approval and affirmation.

- We had to grow up too soon, lose childlike qualities of innocence due to having to take on major responsibilities at an early age.

How We Find Recovery

Through a relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Higher Power, and by working the 8 recovery principles and the Christ-centered 12 steps, we can find freedom from our hurts, hang ups and habits.

Characteristics of an Adult Child of Family Dysfunction in Recovery may include but are not limited to:

- Accept Jesus Christ as Higher Power
- Work the 12 step recovery process diligently and consistently. We recognize we are powerless to heal from the damaged emotions resulting from our childhood.
- We come to believe that we matter to God and He loves us as His child.
- We look to God and His Word to find our identity as worthwhile and loved human beings.
- We learn that the emotions we are feeling are very real and need to be acknowledged.
- We learn how to organize our emotions. First by noticing them, then honoring them, organizing them, and sharing them with God and at least one other person.
- We learn to offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us and make amends for harm we've done to others.
- We gradually release the burden of unexpressed grief, slowly move out of the past, and no longer allow it to control us.
- We can set clear limitations and boundaries.
- Become an adult who is no longer imprisoned by childhood reactions.
- We are willing to mature in our relationship with God and others.
- We come to believe that God won't waste the hurt in our lives.
- In our recovery, we become willing to be used by God to bring hope to others with similar struggles.