

What it Means to be an Adult Child

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The physical and psychological toll of growing up as a child in a dysfunctional home can continue well into adulthood. Many of these individuals develop relationship problems or some form of mental illness.

In addition to lifelong struggles, the Adult Child is at higher risk of developing dysfunctional behavior themselves—including their own addictions. For instance, alcoholic parents pass several behavioral traits to their children including a predisposition towards alcohol abuse and dependency.

Lifelong Traumas of Adult Children

The impact of dysfunctional parents on children has far-reaching consequences. How long depends on the severity of the neglect and abuse. In other words, the trauma of parental dysfunction can have widespread emotional and behavioral consequences on our **adult** lives. It can lead to many problems such: hyper-vigilance, anxiety, trouble with self-regulation, and hyper-reactivity (easily triggered). For example, an alcoholic mother-daughter relationship may result in emotional numbing, loss of trust, or unresolved grief.

In addition, growing up with a dysfunctional mother or father may create a tendency to isolate and develop formidable psychological defenses. For instance, some children of alcohol abusers are prone to high-risk behaviors or are overactive and impulsive. Others suffer from relationship issues and depression.

Unfortunately, dysfunctional families are the norm today. For a discussion of how having a dysfunctional mother or father puts a person at a genetic and psychological vulnerability to develop the same emotional and physical problems is discussed in John Bradshaw's book *Toxic Secrets*. Still, it is important to note that not every child of a dysfunctional environment will develop psychological problems or go on to dysfunctional thinking and acting themselves.

The solution to this problem is to reach out for help and be open to change. If you are reading this you have done so. Welcome to this meeting.