

Adult children of alcoholic families

Published 12 December 2005. Updated 17 March 2010.

The parents' alcohol use and attitudes towards alcohol have an effect on the child and his style of drinking. The parents may support a moderate use of alcohol and staying sober in certain situations, but they may also provide a model for an alcoholic style of drinking. The child may also learn that alcohol can be used to overcome problems and crises. These effects are evident even if the child's development is taken into another direction by later experiences in life and factors outside the home.

In alcoholic families that have long-term, complicated problems the effect is particularly clear. The children of alcoholic families are twice, or even four times, as likely to become alcoholics. Three out of four may use alcohol excessively. Children of alcoholics are also likely to marry alcoholics. Even the grandchildren are three times more likely to become alcoholics.

The effect that the parents' alcohol use has can be biological, psychological or socio-cultural. In spite of hereditary factors, there is no "alcohol gene" that would inevitably predetermine someone to become an alcoholic. Growing up in an alcoholic family or in any environment where a lot of alcohol is used does not determine the fate of the child, either. Alcoholism is a question of a predisposition that, together with other factors, may lead to an alcohol problem. This development can be prevented or put right in many ways.

The adult children of alcoholics use alcohol in many different ways. Alcohol is a special issue also if the adult child of an alcoholic family has an overly negative attitude towards alcohol or if he becomes distressed in situations where alcohol is used. The risk of excessive or problem drinking as well as the risk of an alcohol addiction should always be taken into account. It is wise to monitor your use of alcohol. If problems appear, cut down on your consumption or become an abstainer. You can also discuss your problems related to adulthood and the alcoholic family with a professional helper or at special groups for adult children of alcoholic families. You can also use McConnell's "A Workbook for Healing: Adult Children of Alcoholics".

Information on groups for adult children of alcoholics:

<https://www.aal.fi/>

Ari Saarto

Development director
A-Clinic Foundation

Updated 17 March 2010:

*Janne Takala and Minna Magnusson
'Fragile Childhood' project group*

[See also ►](#)

The [Fragile Childhood](#) project emphasises the importance of children's views and prioritising children's need for help.

link

Source URL: <https://paihdelinkki.fi/en/info-bank/articles/substance-use-and-family/adult-children-alcoholic-families>