

**“THE LAUNDRY LIST”
(14 TRAITS OF AN ADULT CHILD)**

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.

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 love and encourage you no matter what. We ask you 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.

THE ACA PROMISES

1. We will discover our real identities by loving and accepting ourselves.
2. Our self-esteem will increase as we give ourselves approval on a daily basis.
3. Fear of authority figures and the need to “people-please” will leave us.
4. Our ability to share intimacy will grow inside us.
5. As we face our abandonment issues, we will be attracted by strengths and become more tolerant of weaknesses.
6. We will enjoy feeling stable, peaceful, and financially secure.
7. We will learn how to play and have fun in our lives.
8. We will choose to love people who can love and be responsible for themselves.
9. Healthy boundaries and limits will become easier for us to set.
10. Fears of failure and success will leave us, as we intuitively make healthier choices.
11. With help from our ACA support group, we will slowly release our dysfunctional behaviors.
12. Gradually, with our Higher Power’s help, we will learn to expect the best and get it.

Affirmations

- ♥ It is okay to know who I am.
- ♥ It is okay to trust myself.
- ♥ It is okay to say I am an adult child.
- ♥ It is okay to know another way to live.
- ♥ It is okay to say no without feeling guilty.
- ♥ It is okay to give myself a break.
- ♥ It is okay to cry when I watch a movie or hear a song.
- ♥ My feelings are okay even if I am still learning how to distinguish them.
- ♥ It is okay to not take care of others when I think.
- ♥ It is okay to feel angry.
- ♥ It is okay to have fun and celebrate.
- ♥ It is okay to make mistakes and learn.
- ♥ It is okay to not know everything.
- ♥ It is okay to say “I don’t know.”
- ♥ It is okay to ask someone to show me how to do things.
- ♥ It is okay to dream and have hope.
- ♥ It is okay to think about things differently than my family.
- ♥ It is okay to explore and say, “I like this or I like that.”
- ♥ It is okay to detach with love.
- ♥ It is okay to seek my own Higher Power.
- ♥ It is okay to reparent myself with thoughtfulness.
- ♥ It is okay to say I love myself.
- ♥ It is okay to work an ACA program.

The 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

ACA **E**ssentials

“THE LAUNDRY LIST” THE SOLUTION THE ACA PROMISES AFFIRMATIONS THE TWELVE STEPS

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.

—ACA Serenity Prayer taken from the ACA Newcomer’s booklet



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