

Section I

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

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WHAT'S MY ROLE?

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Develop a better understanding of one's own needs and ways to meet them.
2. Recognize your own behaviors and thoughts that create inner conflicts and that interfere in relationships.
3. Replace negative, self-defeating thoughts and behaviors with more positive self-adaptive thoughts and behaviors.

ADDITIONAL HOMEWORK THAT MAY BE APPLICABLE TO CLIENTS WHO ARE CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

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|----------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| • Anxiety | Beating Self-Defeating Beliefs | Page 42 |
| • Codependence | I'm Not in Kansas Anymore | Page 114 |
| • Depression | There's Always a Sunrise | Page 130 |

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS IN WHICH THIS EXERCISE MAY BE USEFUL

- Codependence

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

When children grow up in an alcoholic home, they tend to learn to fear emotional abandonment, have trouble trusting others, and are unable to express their own feelings, wishes, or needs. As a result, they will learn to identify with a particular role. This role, frequently, follows them into adulthood. In a group setting, members can be extremely helpful in pointing out when others are acting out their assigned roles. The goal, however, is for individual members to improve their self-monitoring skills and recognize it themselves. They then need to learn ways to change. The following exercise is designed to help group members identify and recognize when they are engaging in such roles, as well as what to do about it.

WHAT'S MY ROLE?

The following exercise is designed to help you identify when you are acting out a role and what you can do to change.

1. Describe the characteristics of many adult children of alcoholics.

2. Pick out characteristics with which you tend to identify most.

3. Are you more like the *placater*, *adjuster*, *responsible one*, or the *acting-out child*? Why do you think so?

4. Describe times when you have engaged in these behaviors.

5. Keep track this week of times when you engage in such role behavior and the thoughts and feelings that occur during such times.

Behavior	Day/Time	Thought	Feeling

6. Pick two or three of the situations in no. 5 and describe what you wanted to do or say but didn't.

7. Review the "Thoughts" column in no. 5. For each negative thought, write a more adaptive and positive thought.

Negative/self-defeating thought	Positive thought

WHAT CAN I CONTROL? WHAT DO I NEED?

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Recognize situations in which you do have control and those in which you do not.
2. Identify feelings associated with situations in which you do have control and those in which you do not.
3. Develop a sense of boundaries and ways to take care of oneself.

ADDITIONAL HOMEWORK THAT MAY BE APPLICABLE TO CLIENTS WHO ARE CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

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|----------------|--------------------------------|----------|
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ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS IN WHICH THIS EXERCISE MAY BE USEFUL

- Anger Control Problems
- Codependence

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

This exercise is designed to help individuals break away from the pattern of trying to please others so much that they have forgotten about themselves and their own needs. Control is a central issue with this problem. By helping individuals figure out the process of how they end up doing so much for others, they can also learn how to start accepting what they can control and what they don't have to try to control.

WHAT CAN I CONTROL? WHAT DO I NEED?

If you are tired of trying to please others so much that you have forgotten about who you are, this exercise can help. Learning what you can control and what you cannot is a key ingredient to changing this pattern.

1. Make a list of at least 10 activities that you do for yourself (e.g., take a bubble bath, get your nails done, go out to dinner, etc.).

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

F. _____

G. _____

H. _____

I. _____

J. _____

2. Keep track of what you do. Was that for me or for someone else? Ask yourself if you were in control.

Behavior	Me or someone else?	Was I in control?
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

- Review your list and describe how you felt in each situation.

Often, it is helpful to evaluate our behavior to see if we are being true to ourselves. Sometimes, we find that we do things either out of habit or a need to avoid conflict. For this next part, the goal is to begin challenging the reasons for your behavior.

- Keep track of times when others ask you to do something and you do it despite really not wanting to. Be as honest with yourself as you can.

Behavior	If I did not do this, what would happen?
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

- Ask two or three others if they agree with your answer to "what would happen?"
- In each of the preceding situations, describe what you were hoping to control (e.g., "I didn't want them to think badly of me").

- Try turning someone down the next time they ask you to do something. Describe what happens.

WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TALK ABOUT THAT!

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Members give voice to the feelings and thoughts that they've held in because of the "Don't talk" rule in the family.
2. Members acknowledge the feelings that are associated with the times when they kept quiet or broke the rule.
3. Members recognize how they continue the "Don't talk" rule nowadays.

ADDITIONAL HOMEWORK THAT MAY BE APPLICABLE TO CLIENTS WHO ARE CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

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ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS IN WHICH THIS EXERCISE MAY BE USEFUL

- Codependence
- Incest

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

In most situations, children of alcoholics grew up with the family rule of "Don't talk about it." Secrecy is a key factor to any kind of abuse continuing, whether it be alcoholism, drug abuse, or child abuse. Living by this rule teaches children to disregard feelings of uncomfortableness ("This doesn't feel right but no one talks about it. I guess I shouldn't feel this way"). This can continue into adulthood and lead to many adults having difficulty with speaking up for themselves and taking care of having their own needs met.

WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TALK ABOUT THAT!

How many times have you swallowed your feelings and thoughts? Want to stop? Complete the following exercise as a way of learning to have a voice for your thoughts and feelings. P.S.—You can talk about it!

1. Recall and record times when you felt uneasy in your family.

2. What feelings did you have back then? What feelings do you have now as you are thinking about it?

3. Write down what you were saying to yourself but rarely, if ever, said out loud. Or think about what you would say now.

4. During this week, pay attention to times when you feel as if “I can’t or shouldn’t talk.” Write about these situations, and your fears or other feelings.

5. In your next group session, discuss your experiences, thoughts, and feelings.