

The ACA Laundry Lists Framework

ACA cofounder Tony A. wrote the 14 Traits of an adult child of an alcoholic in 1978. From the descriptive power of the traits, ACA was born and created. In just 260 words, **The Laundry List** describes the thinking and personality of an adult reared in a dysfunctional family. **The Other Laundry List** is briefly mentioned in the “ACA Fellowship Text” (BRB pp. 8-9), and a fuller explanation was presented at a convention in 2008. While the original Laundry List describes how we were affected by alcoholism and family dysfunction, it was pointed out that as adults, we might in turn, “act out” those traits by becoming victimizers. In other words, adult children, by adopting their parents’ behaviors, “become” their parents. **The Flip Side of The Laundry List** and **The Flip Side of The Other Laundry List** detail how, through reparenting and practicing the ACA Twelve Steps, we might be freed from these effects. This Laundry Lists Framework is for ACAs who are ready to embark on advanced work on their survival trails, and the ACA “Laundry Lists Workbook” is designed for ACAs who have already gone through all the Steps in the ACA “Twelve Steps Workbook.”

TRAIT 1	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>We became isolated and afraid of people and authority figures.</i>	To cover our fear of people and our dread of isolation we tragically become the very authority figures who frighten others and cause them to withdraw.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We move out of isolation and are not unrealistically afraid of other people, even authority figures.	We face and resolve our fear of people and our dread of isolation and stop intimidating others with our power and position.

TRAIT 2	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>We became approval seekers and lost our identity in the process.</i>	To avoid becoming enmeshed and entangled with other people and losing ourselves in the process, we become rigidly self-sufficient. We disdain the approval of others.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We do not depend on others to tell us who we are.	We realize the sanctuary we have built to protect the frightened and injured child within has become a prison and we become willing to risk moving out of isolation.

TRAIT 3	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism.</i>	We frighten people with our anger and threat of belittling criticism.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We are not automatically frightened by angry people and no longer regard personal criticism as a threat.	With our renewed sense of self-worth and self-esteem we realize it is no longer necessary to protect ourselves by intimidating others with contempt, ridicule and anger.

TRAIT 4	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>We either become alcoholics, marry them or both, or find another compulsive personality such as a workaholic to fulfill our sick abandonment needs.</i>	We dominate others and abandon them before they can abandon us or we avoid relationships with dependent people altogether. To avoid being hurt, we isolate and dissociate and thereby abandon ourselves.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We do not have a compulsive need to recreate abandonment.	We accept and comfort the isolated and hurt inner child we have abandoned and disavowed and thereby end the need to act out our fears of enmeshment and abandonment with other people.

TRAIT 5	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>We live life from the viewpoint of victims and we are attracted by that weakness in our love and friendship relationships.</i>	We live life from the standpoint of a victimizer, and are attracted to people we can manipulate and control in our important relationships.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We stop living life from the standpoint of victims and are not attracted by this trait in our important relationships.	Because we are whole and complete we no longer try to control others through manipulation and force and bind them to us with fear in order to avoid feeling isolated and alone.

TRAIT 6	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>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.</i>	We are irresponsible and self-centered. Our inflated sense of self-worth and self-importance prevents us from seeing our deficiencies and shortcomings.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We do not use enabling as a way to avoid looking at our own shortcomings.	Through our in-depth inventory we discover our true identity as capable, worthwhile people. By asking to have our shortcomings removed we are freed from the burden of inferiority and grandiosity.

TRAIT 7	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>We get guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.</i>	We make others feel guilty when they attempt to assert themselves.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We do not feel guilty when we stand up for ourselves.	We support and encourage others in their efforts to be assertive.

TRAIT 8	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>We became addicted to excitement.</i>	We inhibit our fear by staying deadened and numb.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We avoid emotional intoxication and choose workable relationships instead of constant upset.	We uncover, acknowledge and express our childhood fears and withdraw from emotional intoxication.

TRAIT 9	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>We confuse love and pity and tend to "love" people we can "pity" and "rescue."</i>	We hate people who "play" the victim and beg to be rescued.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We are able to distinguish love from pity, and do not think "rescuing" people we "pity" is an act of love.	We have compassion for anyone who is trapped in the "drama triangle" and is desperately searching for a way out of insanity.

TRAIT 10	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>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).</i>	We deny that we've been hurt and are suppressing our emotions by the dramatic expression of "pseudo" feelings
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We come out of denial about our traumatic childhoods and regain the ability to feel and express our emotions.	We accept we were traumatized in childhood and lost the ability to feel. Using the 12 Steps as a program of recovery we regain the ability to feel and remember and become whole human beings who are happy, joyous and free.

TRAIT 11	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>We judge ourselves harshly and have a very low sense of self-esteem.</i>	To protect ourselves from self-punishment for failing to "save" the family we project our self-hate onto others and punish them instead.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We stop judging and condemning ourselves and discover a sense of self-worth.	In accepting we were powerless as children to "save" our family we are able to release our self-hate and to stop punishing ourselves and others for not being enough.

TRAIT 12	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>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.</i>	We "manage" the massive amount of deprivation we feel, coming from abandonment within the home, by quickly letting go of relationships that threaten our "independence" (not too close).
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We grow in independence and are no longer terrified of abandonment. We have interdependent relationships with healthy people, not dependent relationships with people who are emotionally unavailable.	By accepting and reuniting with the inner child we are no longer threatened by intimacy, by the fear of being engulfed or made invisible.

TRAIT 13	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>Alcoholism is a family disease; and we became para-alcoholics and took on the characteristics of that disease even though we did not pick up the drink.</i>	We refuse to admit we've been affected by family dysfunction or that there was dysfunction in the home or that we have internalized any of the family's destructive attitudes and behaviors.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	The characteristics of alcoholism and para-alcoholism we have internalized are identified, acknowledged, and removed.	By acknowledging the reality of family dysfunction we no longer have to act as if nothing were wrong or keep denying that we are still unconsciously reacting to childhood harm and injury.

TRAIT 14	Laundry List	Other Laundry List
	<i>Para-alcoholics are reactors rather than actors.</i>	We act as if we are nothing like the dependent people who raised us.
	Flip Side of the Laundry List	Flip Side of the Other Laundry List
	We are actors, not reactors.	We stop denying and do something about our post-traumatic dependency on substances, people, places and things to distort and avoid reality.