



MEDIA INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families

These questions are sample questions to have on hand when being interviewed either for radio, institutions such as schools or colleges, hospitals, prisons, vendor fairs, etc. These suggested answers may be used as a guideline for members to use when interviewed, and also given to the person doing the interview.

1. Q. What does being an Adult Child of Alcoholics and/or Dysfunctional family, otherwise known as ACA mean?

A. Since 1978, Adult Children came to be recognized as a term used to help identify people who were raised in alcoholic and/or dysfunctional families. Adult Children were also recognized as having difficulty in their adult relationships because of learned behaviors in their family of origin that caused hurt and conflict in their adult relationships. An “adult child” means we react with fear and self doubt learned in childhood: we don’t talk, trust or feel. It also can result in basic fight or flight.

2. Q. What is Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families?

A. It is a 12-Step program consisting of a global fellowship of Adult Children who share their experience, strength and hope with each other to face their abandonment issues in order to heal through their pain to become happy and healthy people.

3. Q. How long has Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families been around?

A. ACA began in 1978, when Tony A. felt he outgrew Al-Anon and Alateen. He came up with a list of 14 traits that he felt were the core issues of being raised in an alcoholic or dysfunctional family.

The need to be with other people who knew and understood these traits gathered around Tony, and ACoA began. It then transitioned into ACA. Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families has exploded globally, and ACA meetings have been started in 58 countries.

4. Q. What is the purpose of ACA?

A. ACA has but one purpose: to help people heal and to carry the message to those who still suffer.

5. Q. Who can be a member of ACA?

A. Anyone who seeks healing from growing up in an alcoholic or dysfunctional family.

6. Q. Are people hesitant to come to ACA?

A. Yes. Many of us carry shame and guilt from what we learned in the families we grew up in. Many of us kept secrets of dysfunction in our families; no family gatherings, nightly hypervigilance from the actions of our caregivers; then there’s the fear of anyone finding out about our family dysfunction. The rules of “Don’t Talk, Don’t Trust, Don’t Feel” develop into denial and isolation. ACA is a program of courage in order to face and tell our stories.

7. Q. What is the purpose of anonymity?

A. It is vital for Adult Children to feel safe in order to share. As in many twelve step programs, there is a slogan: “Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.” ACA has developed safety protocols in order to honor and preserve safety and respect in our meetings.

8. Q. Do you find most of the people in AA, Al-Anon or other 12-Step programs have the same frustrations?

A. Yes, because family of origin issues with dysfunction is a multi-generational disease, many people were brought up with the lack of attention and nurturing. Members learn there is hope because they find the solution is to become their own loving parent and to love themselves by changing behaviors.

9. Q. Will ACA tell me how to change my parents or my family?

A. We learn that we cannot change another person, place or thing; the only thing we can change is ourselves. By focusing on our ineffective behavior, along with courage to change, we eventually understand the ultimate gift in life: we learn how to let go of the past and to love ourselves.

10. Q. How do ACA members learn to “let go”?

A. We release ourselves from the bondage of the past and stay in the present moment by going to meetings, sharing, listening to others, and by working the ACA 12 Steps with a sponsor/fellow traveler. We learn to practice healthier ways of dealing with our problems, in spite of what is going on around us.

11. Q. What are the Twelve Steps?

A. They are the twelve principles for personal recovery adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. All the Twelve Step programs use these basic principles. ACA’s Step One is: “We admitted we were powerless over the effects of alcoholism or other family dysfunction, that our lives have become unmanageable.” The main difference with ACA is, we also take an inventory of our parents; not to blame them, but to have a clearer picture of what we learned from being raised in an alcoholic or dysfunctional family.

12. Q. Is there a program for Young Adult Children?

A. Currently, at this time, we are in the process of creating a booklet for ACA Teens, directly taken from our *Big Red Book*, “Adult Teen”, Chapter 18, page 475.

13. Q. Can you tell me more about “dysfunction” and what that means in this 12 Step program?

A. The ACA literature discusses how the trauma experienced during childhood can result in developing coping mechanisms that become dysfunctional in adult life. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can result from the trauma of sexual assault, death in the family, constant insecurity, physical or mental abuse, and many other perceived or actual threats. Defensive coping mechanisms developed as a child can include denial, dissociation, social withdrawal, depression, self-harm, obsessions or compulsions. While these mechanisms may have helped a person survive childhood – as an adult, they can develop into alcoholism, codependency or other addictions, with an inability to feel normal emotions such as joy, difficulty dealing with sadness or grief, suicide, dangerous or antisocial behavior, unhealthy relationships, and even harming others in the same ways done to them.

14. Q. Why do you think people would be interested in coming to ACA?

A. There are many people who go to 12-step programs to stop their addictions. People come to ACA to find out *why* they are addicted, why their lives are so dysfunctional and/or to recover from the effects of childhood trauma, abandonment and neglect.

15. Q. Where can a person in this area get more information about Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families?

A. You can call our Signal Hill CA office: 560-595-7831, or go to our website: <https://adultchildren.org> (There may also be an ACA contact in your local area.)

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