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Emotional Intelligence and ACAs (Adult Children of Alcoholics)

By Susan Dunn

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Everyone in the alcoholic's family suffers effects from the disease. Typically everyone involved in the life of the alcoholic and dysfunctional family has low or no emotional intelligence. They don't know what they think or feel, and don't think they have a right to.

Many of the challenges facing Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACAs) can be addressed by developing Emotional Intelligence. Here are some examples.

[Source: Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service Organization (http://www.adultchildren.org)

1. ACAs tend to over−react to anger and criticism, and are afraid of authority figures.

EQ COMPETENCY: Constructive discontent.

If you're an ACA and someone gets angry at you, you shrink inside and shut down or panic, reacting in a way that isn't always appropriate to the actual real−life situation. Learning constructive ways to deal with the emotions engendered by disagreement and criticism are part of EQ.

Emotional Intelligence means not taking constructive criticism personally and emotionally, but getting the message and benefiting from it. Experiencing fear and anger, strong emotions designed for survival, can't be controlled, but we always have a choice in how we respond to them.

2. ACAs often feel isolated and lonely and uneasy with other people.

EQ COMPETENCY: Interpersonal skills, Emotional Expression and Communication.

Isolation is one of the worst things we can do to ourselves. To live in emotional isolation can be worse on our health than such things as smoking and being overweight. Learning to communicate well, and

express feelings appropriately is part of the EQ experience.

3. ACAs feel like victims when something bad happens to them.

EQ COMPETENCY: Personal Power.

Personal Power is the opposite of victim−ology. Instead of asking "Who will take care of me?" you learn to ask, "How will I take care of myself?" It means building confidence in your ability to handle your life and believing that you can do it.

4. ACAs are often uncomfortable with emotional intimacy. They're afraid to reveal their feelings and who they are, and reluctant to become vulnerable.

EQ COMPETENCY: Emotional Expression.

The first step in EQ is self−awareness; to become aware of your feelings. Only then can you learn how to express them accurately and appropriately.

5. ACAs tend to confuse pity with love, and to be more concerned about others than they are about themselves.

EQ COMPETENCY: Interpersonal skills, Empathy.

Healthy Empathy means being able to understand where the other person is coming from, but with respect for one's own boundaries. You can understand how the other person feels, but not have to join them in the feeling. Empathy does not involve the feeling of pity.

6. ACAs judge themselves harshly and are over−responsible. Often they are perfectionists.

EQ COMPETENCY: Being adamantly and relentlessly self−forgiving.

Understanding that we're human, and that we all make mistakes is what this is all about. It takes a lot of practice for most of us to `get' this competency. It involves self−talk and learned optimism, and managing the emotions of failures, losses, rejections and mistakes. It isn't good for your health, your work, or your relationships to be a perfectionist!

7. ACAs have difficulty in identifying, understanding, and expressing their feelings.

EQ COMPETENCY: EQ!

The cornerstone of Emotional Intelligence is self−awareness - being able to identify and understand your feelings. If you lived in an environment where feelings were not welcome, denigrated, mocked, punished, ignored, denied, or lied about, it will take some practice to be able to bring them up, identify them, and understand them. That's what EQ coaching is all about!

8. ACAs over−value the approval of others, and will ignore their own values, preferences and beliefs in deference to others'. Feeling vulnerable, they protect themselves by being overly anxious to please others.

EQ COMPETENCY: Integrated Self, Personal Power and Intentionality.

These competencies help us stay centered, and act with intent, based on our own values, preferences, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. When we own and claim our Personal Power, we can aim to get along with others with good will, but are no longer driven to please someone else at our own expense.

9. ACAs tend to be addicted to excitement. They are risk seekers who prefer constant upset to workable solutions.

EQ COMPETENCY: Understanding, accepting and processing emotions, operating with Intentionality, and often being able eventually to modulate emotions.

EQ means learning where emotions come from and how they operate and being able to make choices

instead of knee jerk reactions. We learn the different `feel' or emotions from the reptilian brain and the limbic brain, and when and how to blend this with the thinking brain, the neocortex. Understanding where the need for excitement comes from allows us to manage it, and avoid chaotic situations that self−sabotage. EQ is all about workable solutions and how to achieve them.

10. ACAs are imprisoned by childhood reactions.

EQ COMPETENCY: Emotional Intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence means understanding where emotions come from, and being able to experience them, consider them, learn from them, and then make a decision to respond (or not), instead of reacting without thinking. Developing your Emotional Intelligence will help you avoid being entrapped in any unrealistic, rash or un−reasoned reaction.

©Susan Dunn, MA, Emotional Intelligence Coach and Consultant, http://www.susandunn.cc . Coaching, internet courses, business program, teleclasses and ebooks around emotional intelligence. Susan is the author of "EQ's Answer to Addiction: the 14th Step", http://www.webstrategies.cc/ebooklibrary.html . Mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc for FREE eZine.

Alcoholics Meetings − Know The Truth And How It Can Help You

By Steven J. Acren

My husband and I recently moved to a different city within the state we live in. My husband has casually attended alcoholics meetings for several years. The alcoholics meetings can be of great support; however it is crucial to find the one that will meet your particular needs. If the meetings are

inconvenient in terms of time or location you will probably not benefit enough from them.

In my husband's case, we found that in our new community they had several different meeting times spread out within the week. My husband went to one meeting on a Monday night, but discovered that most of his peers were much younger than him. He did not feel that he would gain the support that he needed from this particular group. After the meeting he found a poster advertising that on Tuesday's a group of men over 50 met at the same location. He attended that meeting and instantly found the support and understanding that he had been accustomed to in the alcoholics meetings in our former community.

There are multiple directories that list alcoholics meetings. There are also many ways of accessing the directories. Local newspapers, area churches and visitor information centers are just a few places to look out for the listings. Good news for computer users, many alcoholics meetings are listed on the websites of cities and communities. This will usually tell you the meeting times, locations and type of group.

Alcoholics meetings are held in most communities. In the larger communities and cities the alcoholics meetings are often broken up into specialty or sub groups, for example meetings for men, women, smokers, non−smokers, gays or lesbians. There are a great number of subgroups for the alcoholics meetings, so if you have a specific interest area or need, you should be able to find just the right one. Or easily switch to another should you want to.

Most communities also offer alcoholics meetings for adult children of alcoholics as well as for significant others that may be co−dependent. In smaller communities the groups may seem very tight knit and closed to new comers, however most meetings for alcoholics welcome new members at all times. Because alcoholics meetings tend to follow a similar agenda and beliefs it is possible to attend meetings in communities that you are visiting. Often times being away from home on vacation or at business meetings may be a time that is particularly difficult for the alcoholic to maintain sobriety, but most likely a meeting will be taking place in the community that you find yourself in. Do not miss that opportunity and let your wild drinking habits be let loose.

Alcoholics meetings are not limited only to the United States. Several countries hold meetings on a regular basis, so attending alcoholic meetings when traveling abroad is a possible option. This is a great way of not only gaining the support you need while traveling, but also a way to establish relationships and make new friends around the world.

Whether you are new to recovery, or have many years of sobriety, attendance at alcoholics meetings is a way of gaining support, giving support, and developing long term relationships with others who've suffered exactly what you are going through and want to extend a helping hand. You can emulate positive role models and learn how to rein in your persistent habits of drinking.

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