

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION PROGRAM
STUDY MATERIAL
SECTION 13
ALCOHOLISM IN THE FAMILY AND EFFECTS ON THE CHILDREN

INSTRUCTIONS

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS BOOKLET. DO NOT FOLD, MUTILATE OR SHANK THIS BOOKLET. Read the material carefully. Fill in the test section number on top of the answer sheet provided, then select the letter of the best answer to each question and put it in the space provided. Answer all questions in the test booklet. If you are not sure of an answer, it is better to guess than leave it blank.

At times you may feel that more than one of the answers will fit, but only one is the best answer according to the study material you have read. To pass this test, you must make at least an 85% You **MUST** turn this booklet in before you can be given a test.

INTRODUCTION

In the last lesson, we looked at some of the abnormal behavior that alcohol causes in people. We also looked at the defenses and feelings of the chemically- dependent person (alcoholic) and the enabler (Co-dependent).

In this lesson, we will study the children in the family of a substance abuser. We will also learn about the psychological harm done to these children while being raised by an alcoholic or chemically-dependent parent. You will be shown the children's roles and personalities, and how their personalities are affected by being raised in a dysfunctional family.

We will also study the types of psychological defenses these children develop in order to survive in the hostile family setting created by an alcoholic or drug abuser. To survive, these children often hide their true feelings behind a front, or mask, that they show the world. Inside they live painful lives.

Each child in an alcoholic family forms a different kind of disguise to cover the pain and emotional scars.

ALCOHOLIC FAMILIES

Remember, an ENABLER is someone who picks up responsibilities that the alcoholic should be handling, thus helping the alcoholic keep drinking. Enablers also bail the alcoholic out of the trouble he gets into. Enablers can be a spouses, parents, friends or co-workers. These people are usually not aware that they are actually helping the alcoholic to keep drinking. They do not normally see that by doing things for the substance abuser, they are letting him drink instead of forcing him to take care of his own responsibilities (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 89-90).

In order to get out of taking responsibility for their own behavior, alcoholics often unfairly blame other family members or other people in general for their problems. Everyone except the alcoholic and the bottle are to blame (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 82).

When children are blamed and abused for problems they did not cause, they start to get a bad image or feel worthless about themselves. Their self esteem drops, and they may start to believe that they are no good and deserve to be victimized (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 86, graph, page 29 -30).

Children raised in abusive homes often search out abusive spouses to continue the abusive patterns they were used to as children. The more abuse the children of alcohol or drug abusing parents receive, the more they become convinced that they are bad people. They also grow up thinking that abuse is a normal part of life, they think everybody is abused and does the same to others. When people are abusive to them in return, this reinforces their belief that they are a bad people. Because they don't like themselves they don't like anyone else either. This causes many problems in life (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 29 -30).

Most people behave like they **think** they are, or as they were **taught**. If parents teach children to think that they are good and worthwhile, they act like they are good and worthwhile. If they are taught that they are no good, they act that way (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 29).

When a substance abuser blames problems on a child, the child gets a bad message about themselves. The child then begins to think of himself as a problem, and they act like problems (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 102).

This can results in relationship problems with others. The abused child may end up seeking out abusive relationships with people even after they leave their abusive families. Fights and divorces are common. Later in life, to cope, they often abuse alcohol or drugs, just as their parents did (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 102).

A child pays less attention to what parents say than to how the parent acts. They will do as their parents do, not as their parents say to do, using parents as models (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 102).

If you get angry and beat your children, you are only teaching them that beating up people is the way to get rid of anger. They learn that it is ok to beat up on people smaller and weaker than themselves. These children do not learn to be violent by being told, but by observing and experiencing how violent their parents are. After a beating you may see a child go and kick a dog or cat, or smash a toy.

Unfortunately, the child of an alcoholic or drug abuser is usually given more than his fair share of senseless beatings and verbal abuse. As a result, he is likely to grow up beating and abusing others. These children are also much more likely to stuff anger to the point of exploding. When they do go off, they are more likely to hurt somebody or cause serious damage to property.

Since physical and emotional abuse in the dysfunctional family is plentiful and emotional nourishment rare, each child has to fight for the care and attention needed to survive. Nobody likes to be ignored, and all children crave attention. Attention is one of the basic needs in life (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, page 146). People who do not get the attention they need will often do extreme, abnormal and even ridiculous things in order to get it.

One of the many problems with being raised in an alcoholic home is that most of the alcoholic parent's attention is given to the bottle. What little attention remains is often used up trying to get out of the trouble drinking gets them into. If they both do not drink, one is often trying to fix the problems caused by the other. Often they are both worn out and want to be left alone. Because their own lives are such a mess, they have little or no time for their children. The silent message is that the child is not worth the time of day. This is never said in words, but the message is clear (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, page 81).

Because the parents are so preoccupied with their problems, a child really has to do something great to stand out. It does not take long for the child to figure out that alcohol is more important to their parents than they are (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, pages 81-82).

On top of being neglected by drinking parents, kids are prone to being physically abused when their parents are recovering from a drinking binge. Due to the nervousness caused by withdrawal from alcohol or sedative drugs, the alcoholic is edgy. It usually does not take much to provoke such a parent into becoming physically or verbally abusive toward an active child. A child's high energy level tends to annoy drunks. When annoyed, many alcoholics lash out, and the helpless child is often the one who receives the most damage (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, *Loosening the Grip*, pages 170-171).

When a parent lashes out against a child for no good reason that the child can see, the child often figures that they were attacked because they are not a good person. Without even thinking about it, these parents are teaching their children to feel worthless and bad about themselves (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, page 12, para 1-2). When the child grows up he acts that way and may end up in prison.

Due to a combination of problems caused by alcohol, the child of a substance abuser faces rejection, loneliness and isolation. The children end up believing that the most important people in their lives, their parents, really don't care about them, how could anyone else (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 12, para 1-2, page 90).

Where is the other parent during all of this? Especially if he / she is not alcoholic. If the marriage has survived, and just one parent is alcoholic, the other parent is often very busy trying to take care of the entire family and the trouble that the alcoholic causes for the family. The non-drinking parent is, therefore, not able to give the child the type and quality of attention that is needed to feel loved and worthwhile (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages, 29-30).

Often the spouse of the alcoholic is barely able to take care of their own emotional needs. As a result of this neglect, the child often grows up feeling they are not worth the time of day. They refuse to believe that anyone could care about them, and have difficulty recognizing when someone does. Since nobody has shown them how to care about themselves, they act worthless as they get older. Such children learn through their parents actions to feel unworthy. This lesson is often non-verbally hammered into their heads for many years through how their parents treat them. It is a very hard lesson to unlearn.

The way these children are treated as they grow up and what they are taught to think of themselves from an early age can cause the child severe problems for the rest of their lives (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 29-30, 95).

When these children grow up, they will treat their own children in the same way that they were treated. The parents do not know any better. This is why it is said that one irresponsible, alcoholic parent can affect three generations of children. This means the behavior of this same irresponsible, abusive parent can badly effect the lives of children yet to come for over 150 years into the future (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 102-103).

To get some perspective on how severe a problem this could be, imagine a drunk, physically and emotionally abusing his child right before the civil war. The effects of his abuse and the damage he caused is passed onto his children. These children then end up abusing their children and they end up abusing their children. As a result, of that one drunk abusing his children, his children's children are experiencing problems today, almost 150 years later.

One of the worst things that can happen to any child is to feel isolated, alone, and unloved. The child cannot compete for attention with alcohol if the parent is addicted.

In order to get any attention, the desperate child often realizes that by being bad and acting out, and causing problems, they can at least get some attention. Unfortunately, getting attention for doing bad things is better than getting no attention at all (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 43-44, 102-103).

Not all the children in the family choose to get attention by being bad. Each child in the family will figure out different ways to get the badly needed attention from their addicted

parents. This often depends on when they arrive in the family, such as first child, second, third, etc (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages , 84-85-86).

Studies have shown that the way these neglected children get attention is amazingly similar and follows well defined patterns in most dysfunctional or alcoholic families. In later sections of this booklet, we will study these patterns (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 84-85-86).

"ALCOHOLISM IN THE FAMILY AND EFFECTS ON THE CHILDREN"

(Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages , 84).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What or who is an "enabler?"
2. The "enabler" is always aware that he/she is actually helping the alcoholic or drug addict continue their abuse. TRUE or FALSE.
3. What do alcoholics often do in order to get out of taking responsibility for their own behavior?
4. When children are blamed and abused for problems they did not cause, they start to get a bad _____ or feel _____ about themselves.
5. Children raised in abusive homes grow up thinking that abuse is a _____ part of life, and it is how people are supposed to treat other people.
6. Most people behave like they _____ they are, or as they were _____ .
7. When a substance abuser blames problems on a child, the child gets a bad message about _____. The child then begins to think of _____ as a problem.
8. The abused child may end up seeking out _____ types of people, even after they leave their _____ families.
9. If you get angry and beat your children, you are only teaching them that _____ is the way to get rid of anger.
10. _____ all children crave _____ is one of the basic needs in life. People who do not get the _____ they need will often do extreme, abnormal, and even ridiculous things in order to get it.
11. Why do alcoholic parents usually not give their children the attention they need?

12. On top of being neglected by drinking parents, kids are prone to being _____ when their parents are recovering from a drinking binge.
13. _____ the child of a substance abuser faces rejection, loneliness, and isolation. They end up believing that no one _____.

STUDY QUESTIONS

14. If only one of the parents is alcoholic, why is it that the other parent is not able to give the children the attention they need?
15. Why is it said that one irresponsible alcoholic parent can effect three generations of children (up to 150 years later)?
16. One of the earmarks of a dysfunctional family is that they will not _____ that they have problems. They try to _____ their problems from themselves and everyone else.

I.

THE FAMILY "HERO" (THE FIRST CHILD):

One of the earmarks of a dysfunctional family is they will not admit that they have problems. In this way, they do not have to face their problems. It's kind of like burying your head in the sand. They try to hide their problems from themselves and everyone else. They pretend their family is normal when deep inside, they know it is not. Living in such a world of delusion causes a lot of stress. The family becomes a group of actors taking on roles that they must always play so they can appear normal. Each of the family members, and especially the children assume different roles. The remainder of this lesson will examine those roles (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 84-104).

The Hero, or achiever, the member of a dysfunctional family who gets things done and accomplishes great things. This role is usually played by the first-born child in an alcoholic or dysfunctional family. This is due to the family feeling bad about itself and needing someone to look good. The sick family gives this child many rewards and lots of attention for making the family look good. In this way, other people will not see how sick the family really is. They can point to the first child if he or she is succeeding, thinking they are showing others what good parents they are (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 104).

The first child to come into the dysfunctional family has several choices as to how to go about getting attention. They soon see that they get lots of attention by doing well at things

they undertake. There are no competitors. Often, this child chooses to get attention from the parents by doing good things. They get good marks at school.

Some names used to describe the child are: School Jock, Company Man, or Social Nice Guy/Gal. For our purposes here, however, we will see him as the family "hero", an over-achiever or workaholic. He or she is success oriented and does well at whatever they do (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 104).

By becoming the family achiever, these children draw positive attention to themselves and their family. **It is often the job of the first child to try to give the family a sense of worth or value.** This is a valuable front for an alcoholic family to have. Everyone in the family knows the family has problems, and that they are not like other families. By having at least one child who is succeeding, they convince themselves that they are doing a decent job of parenting (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 105).

Families often compare the kind of job they are doing raising their kids with other families. When a child in the neighborhood gets an award at school, all of the neighborhood with children of about the same age know about it. Parents often brag about what good children they have, and what awards they have won. They feel that their children are extensions of themselves, and that if the child achieves something great, they have also. They take the credit.

Deep down the members of an alcoholic family realize that their family is not working "normally". They may sense that their family fights much more than other families in the neighborhood, and that they have many more problems. Secretly, they know that something is seriously wrong, they don't seem to be as happy as other people, but they will not admit it to themselves or to anyone else (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, Loosening the Grip, pages 167-168).

The alcoholic parents are primarily worried about appearances, how they **look** to other people. In reality, the parents of the dysfunctional family feel bad about themselves. They know that they are not being fair to their family, and may end up resenting their families and themselves as they struggle with their alcohol problem. They know that there are big problems in the family, but they try to hide it from everyone, including themselves.

If one of their children does good things in school and wins awards, they feel better about themselves. They give the hero all kinds of special favors for making them feel like good parents. At the same time, they often end up ignoring the rest of the family. The first child is the families shining star, the "hero" (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 106).

Having first dibbs on all the attention, it may seem like the first child has it made. This is not the case, the only time the hero gets attention from the alcoholic parent is when he or she does something especially good. Can you see how this puts lots of pressure on this first child to keep doing good things? They have to keep doing more each time in order to get badly needed attention from the parents. This child often grows up feeling that if they are not doing something great all the time, they are not worth much. The first child constantly feels pressured to do more. They often do not feel valued for **who they are**, but only for **what they**

do. They equate their self worth with accomplishing things, always feeling driven to achieve; no matter how much they do, it never seems to be enough (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 106-107).

If something happens, and this child is kept from achieving their goals, they tend to feel worthless and empty inside. As this child grows older, the pressure they feel to achieve stays with them (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 106-107).

The "hero" wants to feel that he is loved for who he is, not just for what he does. Since all his life he was only given attention only for what he accomplished, he does not know how to feel good about himself without achieving all the time. For the first child, this is a never ending circle: the pressure to achieve constantly builds, until he may start to crack or take drugs in order to cope (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 109).

Of all the children in the family, the Hero is the one most likely to begin abusing alcohol or drugs later in life (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 109).

Amazingly, these first born children do a good job of hiding their problems from the world by achieving, doing well in school, working hard at the job and being responsible and successful. They appear to have it all together. While inside they feel pressured and insecure and fearful. No one knows that they have deep hidden problems (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 109).

Because the first child looks successful and self confident, they are not likely to look for help. They do not appear to need help. This child may have sworn not to become alcoholic like his parents. Instead, they may avoid alcohol but end up turning to other drugs, like cocaine.

You can see how the Hero of a dysfunctional family builds a good image and provides worth for the drug-dependent family. They often become cheerleaders, football stars, honor students, or perfect employees. **The first child often takes on successful responsible roles.** They were rewarded for doing this by their families.

These children are practiced at being responsible, as they were forced to take responsibility for their family while their mother or father was drinking (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 110-111).

As you have seen, first children provide worth to the dysfunctional family and their parents give most of their attention to them. This leaves the other children in the family starved for attention. They are forced to figure out how to get their basic needs for attention met in other ways. The parents seem to be blind to the fact that the other children in the family are being neglected. Because of their own problems, the parents are barely able to give the hero positive attention, and even then, only for short periods of time when they do something good. This means that the "Hero's" victories are often short lived and they have to keep finding different areas to achieve in if they are going to continue getting attention from their parents (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 115).

A major problem with being the child of an alcoholic parent is that these parents are very selfish and self centered. Everything comes after themselves and their alcohol, including their family. This really hurts the family. It puts much stress on the non-drinking spouse to meet all of the family needs. The non-drinking parent is often so involved trying to keep the family going that often they do not have the time to give their children needed attention (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 107-109).

Both parents know that the job they are doing raising their children is not good. They develop tricks to fool themselves and others into thinking that they are good parents.

One trick that allows the parents to think they are doing a good job raising their family is the family's "law of silence". It simply states: whatever happens in the family must stay in the family. If the children are not allowed to talk about what happens in the family and check their perceptions against those of other people outside the family, they are led to believe that their sick family is normal. As far as the parents are concerned, as long as the children stay silent, the parents do not have to face criticism from outside the family or justify their behavior. In short, kids are not supposed to talk to anyone outside about any of the problems that go on inside the family. If they do, they will be shamed and treated as traitors to the family. With these secret rules, the outside world is locked out while the whole family buries and hides problems so no one will think bad of them. The child has little chance of checking what the family is telling him against what is normal in the world and other families (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 81).

This unwritten rule forbids children from telling friends or counselors about family problems and shuts children off from any outside help. If the children live by these rules pressure builds and they have no one they can turn to with their problems. Often they end up storing their problems inside as pressure continues to build (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 81).

Keeping things inside is very stressful and unhealthy for a child. If they try to approach the non-drinking parent to talk, the parent may say something like "you should not talk about your Mother / Father like that (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 83).

We are your parents and you should show respect". They may be told that they need to love their parents, even though they are bad parents, and they really hate them. Because parents are bigger and more powerful, children often buy into what they say. They get to thinking they are bad for feeling the way they feel and the non-drinking parent often will not confirm and listen to their thoughts and feelings. Because the parents often protect each other and lie to the child, these children eventually learn not to trust their own perceptions or their own sense of reality. They may see and feel things one way, yet the parent is telling them they are wrong. Since the secret family rule forbids them from going outside the family for help, they do not know who or what to trust. They often end up becoming very confused and not trusting anyone (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 83).

While the family rule is that no one is to talk about the family problems **outside** the family, neither do they discuss the problems **inside** the family. They often **deny** that problems exist or they down play them. Even if they admit to some problems they often minimize how

bad they really are. This is one of the reasons we call them a **dysfunctional family** (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 83).

A dysfunctional family does not face reality. The children as well as the parents carry all their problems inside. The child does not know how to cope with this pressure. This load often results in the children acting in strange ways and ending up maladjusted, confused and in trouble.

The parents encourage the first child to support the family image, or the front that the family is doing well. At the same time this child has to fight for what little attention the dysfunctional parents can give. Despite the fact that the other children are starving for attention, the parents often support the Hero of the family with money, clothes, and special favors.

The parents encourage the first child to keep up the show of "having it all together" for the sake of the family. The other children feel neglected and slighted (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 83).

Despite outward appearances, the Hero does not get much real love, and that hurts. They get attention or approval only for what they do, not for who they are. Getting approval and attention from the parents is one of the main things the Hero lives for. First children feel that they have to constantly be doing bigger and better things to get more and more attention. While this child appears to be the best off, serious problems go along with this child's situation (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 109).

The first child feels that they are only worthwhile if they are doing something to make the family look good. The first child usually is not given attention by the parents for any other reason. No matter big a great thing the first child does, they will only for a short while get the attention they crave. After the newness of their accomplishment wears off, they have to look for their next big project or accomplishment to get more attention (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 109).

Often the parents of these children were raised in dysfunctional families themselves. They never got enough love and attention themselves. It is very difficult for these parents to give something that they never got.

The child doesn't fully understand what is going on, often thinking that if they work a little harder or do something a little greater they will get more love and attention from the parents. No matter how hard they work or how many wonderful things they do, they are only given small amounts of attention from their parents. This does not satisfy the need for someone to really care for them for who they are and not for what they have done. These children crave to be loved, but they are being used by the dysfunctional parents to keep up appearances. It's a no win situation for the child. Over time, no matter how well they do or how much attention they get, it will not be enough. Since it is impossible to be doing good things **all** the time, the first child has a big problem. They put themselves under great amounts of stress trying to work harder to accomplish greater and greater things. When they run out of great things to do or cannot do any more they feel worthless and depressed (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 111).

To the pre-occupied alcoholic parent, it does not seem to matter who their children really are.

They are more interested in their own needs than with the fact that their children are emotionally starving and hurting (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, pages 81-104).

The substance abusing parent may not have much love to give. They don't like themselves, and as a result, they have a very hard time liking anyone else, including their own children. This means that none of their children get much real love. Often, the best these children can hope for is some attention now and then. The children are in a constant contest for whatever attention the parents are able to give.

The first children of substance abusing parents often end up feeling like failures: lonely, hurt, confused, and angry. Because their parents have hurt them so often, these children have trouble feeling, trusting, or sharing feelings with others. They have learned that their parents are untrustworthy and don't care about their feelings. They then start to think that this must be true of everyone. Eventually they bury their feelings and to different degrees stop feeling, so they can stop hurting (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, pages 104, pages 108-9).

These children feel that if their parents do not care, why should a stranger. They must not be worthy of decent consideration. Thinking that because their own parents treat them like this, they must not be worthwhile individuals. This causes them more problems later on in life as the psychological junk they bury comes out inappropriately in their relationships with others, or they have difficulty trusting or relating to others.

Because of the way these children have been treated by their parents, they later develop problems dealing with authority figures. They generalize the unfair treatment received by their parents to all authority and they often grow up expecting the similar kind of harsh treatment from all authority figures. Usually the authority figure isn't even given a fair chance. The child reacts immediately to any suspicious action, feeling that these people will automatically abuse them the first chance they get. Their behavior becomes a self fulfilling prophesy, and they usually end up getting what they expect, as they bring it upon themselves (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, pages 114-115).

Children of substance abusing parents suffer from neglect. While the first child works hard to make up for feeling neglected and inadequate, hard work alone does not meet the deep need for love and acceptance. This child puts up a front, afraid to let other people see how much pain they have inside. To cope with the fear and insecurity, they may over compensate by acting special or over important.

This is a front and inside they really do not feel very special (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, pages 114).

One way for the first child to feel special or worthwhile is by being super-responsible. This increases their stress level greatly, yet they don't seem to be able to stop being super responsible. Due to one or both of their parents abusing alcohol or drugs, they have been forced to take responsibility for their family from a young age. Whatever the parents did not

get done, these children often end up doing (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 105-114-115).

Since they have been taking responsibility for things since they were children, as adults they don't seem to be able to stop. The parents often give the first child rewards and attention for picking up the responsibilities that the parents should be dealing with. Picking up these responsibilities is one of the few ways that the first child could get any feeling of worth from the parents. If the child stops taking care of the parents, the parents make this child feel worthless and insecure (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 105).

As adults they continue being super responsible. Taking responsibility is one of the ways they make themselves feel worthwhile, even as adults. If they are stopped, they begin to feel worthless and inadequate. Behaving this way often makes this child a success on the job, but also causes a great deal of personal stress.

Because the hero is so responsible, does a good job, and denies feelings and stresses, they are often the last people to appear as if they have problems. Even though they often become stressed out, they deny these bad feelings and are usually the last people to accept help or counseling. The first child, programmed by the dysfunctional family not to talk about or show anyone that they have problems, carries this behavior over into their adult lives. Often they can't even tell their wives or husbands when they are having problems or feeling bad. They try to deny that there are problems, even to themselves. This increases their stress levels even higher, causing even more problems for them (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 104, page 111).

Without help the first child can grow up feeling lonely, hurt, inadequate, confused, and angry. These children were taught by their parents to deny their problems. When the stress gets too high, they turn to alcohol or drugs just like their parents did, and the cycle begins again. Often following their parents example, they hide their problems from the outside world, and use substances in order to cope (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 114, page 115).

Since the first child is so good at hiding problems from others, they are least likely to get the help they need. The first child will often suffer silently, slowly losing their grip on life and depending more on alcohol or drugs to cope with their stresses and hidden feelings (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 114, page 115).

Since these adults never had much fun when they were kids, they tend to take things too seriously. They feel that life has always been and will continue to be hard and painful. This attitude was developed while growing up, having to work so hard for the basic attention needed for survival was little fun. Fun had little place in their lives. It was seen as a waste of time by the thankless alcoholic parent.

STUDY QUESTIONS: THE FAMILY "HERO" (THE FIRST CHILD)

1. How does the "first child" often choose to get attention from the parents?

2. What is the job, or role, of the "first child?"
3. Parents often feel that their children are _____ of themselves, and that if the child achieves something great, they have also.
4. The alcoholic parents are primarily worried about _____, how they _____ to other people.
5. If one of their (alcoholic parents) children does good things in school, and wins awards, they (the alcoholic parents) feel better about _____.
6. _____ the only time the "hero" (the first child) gets attention from the alcoholic parent is when he or she does _____.
7. The "first child" constantly feels pressured to DO more. The "first child" often does not feel valued for _____, but only for _____.
8. If something happens, and the child (first child) is kept from achieving their goals, they tend to feel _____ and _____ inside.
9. Of all the children in the family, the "hero" (the first child) is the one most likely to begin _____ or _____ later in life.

STUDY QUESTIONS

10. Because the "first child" LOOKS successful and self-confident, they are not likely to look for _____, and do not appear to need _____.
11. The "first child" provides worth to the family and the parents give most of their attention to the "first child". How does this cause problems for the other children in the family?
12. A major problem with being the child of an alcoholic parent is that the parent is that the parent is very _____ and _____ - _____. Everything comes after their alcohol, including their family.
13. One of the tricks that allows the (alcoholic) parents to think they are doing a good job raising their family is the _____.
14. How does the "law of silence" affect the children in a dysfunctional family?
15. How does the "law of silence" work as far as the parents are concerned?
16. While the family rule (of a dysfunctional family) is that no one is to talk about the family problems _____ of the family, neither do they discuss the problems

_____ the family. They often _____ that problems exist or they play them down.

17. First children feel that they constantly need to be doing things (achieving), or they are not worthwhile. They put themselves under tremendous amounts of _____ trying to work harder to accomplish greater things.
18. The first child of substance abusing parents often end up feeling like _____: lonely, hurt, confused, and angry.
19. Because of the way these children (first children) have been treated by their parents, they may develop problems dealing with _____ figures.
20. How does the first child often over-compensate in order to cope with fear and insecurity?
21. One way for the first child to feel special is by being _____ - _____.

STUDY QUESTIONS

22. Why is the "hero" (the first child) often the last one (in a dysfunctional family) to appear as if they have problems, and the last to accept help or counseling?
23. When the stress gets too high, they turn to alcohol or drugs, just like their parents did, and the _____ begins again.
24. Since these adults never had much fun when they were kids, tending to take things too seriously, they often feel that life is _____ and _____.

II.

THE SECOND CHILD

"THE SCAPEGOAT"

If a second child comes along, he or she sees the parents giving the first child all of their attention and favors. After all, it's the first child that is making the family look good and making the parents look good. It doesn't take long for the second child to see there is a "special" bond between the substance abusing parents and the first child (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, pages 116, page 117).

To the second child it seems clear that the parents are playing favorites and the first child is the pet (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, pages 116, page 117).

The second child has to figure a way to get some of the limited amount of attention the dysfunctional parents can supply. The quickest and easiest way is to cause trouble. Bad attention after all is better than no attention. The second child often causes so much trouble that the parents **have** to pay attention (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 116).

It's difficult for the second child to figure out how to get attention for being good. The first child is an expert at it by the time they come along. The second child cannot possibly compete. **The second child often chooses to get into trouble in order to get attention. As a result, these children are often called scapegoats, trouble makers, or problem children** (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 116, para 2).

The second child just wants to be part of the family and get some attention. They may try different ways to get the parents attention, but when they don't work, this child will often resort to causing trouble. Problems get attention quickly. The second child is starving emotionally while the first child gets what little attention the parents can give (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 116, para 1).

The substance abusing parent is so self centered and absorbed in their problems, that they are not aware of the needs of either child. If they are aware, they may not have the means to give the child what is needed. The second child may start to resent the first child, the parents, or the entire family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, pages 116-117).

The role of the "scapegoat" in the family is to provide a distraction from the parents' issues and family problems (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 124).

By watching how the parents treat the hero, the second child learns that the family gives attention only for what is accomplished, not for "who you are" or "how you feel" (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 116).

The second child usually does not want to work as hard as the hero to prove their worth. It is easier for them to pull away from the family and look for feelings of belonging elsewhere. Anger builds up as the second child realizes that he needs to break from the family to get any kind of positive attention. He finds he must get attention outside the family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 117, para 2).

Before the second child comes to know that they need to leave to emotionally survive, they learn that one sure way to get attention is by causing trouble. The second child often gets attention by being destructive, getting into trouble in school, the neighborhood, or by being put into a juvenile detention center. The scapegoat or second child is the one who always seems to be a matter of concern for the family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 117, para 4).

The scapegoat is only a symptom of the dysfunctional (sick) family, not the main problem. They are only representative of the families problems, not the cause (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 126).

These children (second children) learn that attention can be had from the parents by running away, refusing to be part of the family, using chemicals, committing crimes, or being stubborn and withdrawn. If the second child in this family is a female, attention can be had by getting involved with gangs, using drugs, or getting pregnant.

When the family is focused on all of the problems that the second child is causing they don't have to deal with the core of the problem, the parents (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 117).

This is why it is said that the second child serves as a distraction. Since this child is causing so much trouble, the parents often focus on and release their own built up anger from other things onto the scapegoat. This only adds fuel to the fire, and the second child gets worse. The scapegoats acting out ruins the fantasy or front that the parents try to show neighbors of having the perfect family. The child becomes an easy target, the **focal point**, everyone looks at this child instead of the alcoholic. While the parents are watching for what the second child will do next, they are not even trying to solve their own problems which are causing this whole mess in the first place (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 117, para 1-2-3).

The scapegoat is the family member who is the most vocal and the most likely to be heard and therefore to get help. Being this visible they are most likely to be sent to a counselor, Juvenile Court, or a mental health program (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 124).

The second child develops defenses which cover up their true feelings. This child has many feelings that they don't talk about. These feelings are very painful, made up of anger, loneliness, fear, hurt, and rejection. To hide these feelings from themselves, the scapegoat uses the following defenses: withdrawal from family, challenging authority, acting out, brooding, chemical abuse, and making the wrong kinds of friends outside of the family where it is possible to get some attention. Since they are always in the middle of a mess, the scapegoat also ends up being addicted to excitement. Being raised under the above conditions can be very difficult, damaging, and very exciting. They grow used to having excitement and turmoil around all the time, which distracts them from looking at themselves and their own problems. As long as they can focus their attention outside of themselves, they never will take a good look at what they have become and their own problems. Many of these children end up being sent to prison to be stopped temporarily. They do illegal things just for the excitement, all the while avoiding dealing with all the hate, hurt, pain and confusion of their childhood. They are much more afraid of looking at themselves and their problems than of getting into trouble (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 124, bottom).

The scapegoat is the black sheep of the family. Often finding their own set of friends outside of the family who support and approve of their crazy behavior. Their outside friends serve as a substitute family and often meet the emotional needs of the scapegoat (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 124, bottom).

This substitute family group can have great influence over the child, and can make it difficult for the parents to have any control. Unfortunately, much of the time the scapegoat moves toward other friends who also crave excitement, and they end up getting into trouble together.

They convince each other that what they do is ok, and it is almost impossible for the parents to tell the child otherwise. The peer group often has more power over the second child than the parents do. For all practical purposes, the parents lose control over their child at this point. Since they refuse to face their own problems, they are not likely to get control of the child back (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 126, para 1-2-3-4).

STUDY QUESTIONS: THE SCAPE GOAT - THE SECOND CHILD

1. Because it is the first child that makes the family look good, it appears to the second child that the parents are _____, and the first child is the pet.
2. What does the second child often choose to do in order to get needed attention in a dysfunctional family?
3. What is the role of the "Scapegoat" (the second child) in the dysfunctional family?
4. By watching how the parents treat the "hero" (the first child) the second child learns that the family gives attention only for what is accomplished, not for who you are or how you feel. The second child does not want to _____ as the "hero" to prove his or her worth.
5. _____ builds up as the second child realizes that he needs to break from the family to get any kind of positive attention.
6. The "scapegoat" is only a _____ of the sick family, not the main problem. They are only _____ of the problem.
7. What are some of the ways mentioned in the text that the second child (the "scapegoat") learns in order to get attention from his parents?
8. When the family is focused on all of the problems that the second child is causing, they don't have to deal with the core of the problem, the _____ this is why it is said that the second child serves as a _____.

STUDY QUESTIONS

9. Why is the "scapegoat" (the second child) the _____ likely to get help for his problems?
10. What are the defenses often used by the second child in order to hide feelings of anger, loneliness, fear, hurt and rejection?
11. Since they are always in the middle of a mess, the "scapegoat" also ends up being addicted to _____ which is also another way of avoiding dealing with feelings.

12. Where does the "scapegoat" (the second child) often go to find support and approval for his crazy behavior?
13. Unfortunately, much of the time, the "scapegoat" moves toward other friends who also _____, and they end up getting into trouble together.

III.

THE THIRD CHILD

THE LOST CHILD

The third child is the "lost child". They don't know how to compete with the first and second child for their share of the attention. They clearly see that the first child gets most of the attention by being good. The second child gets the rest by being bad. How is this third child supposed to get noticed at all? (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 127).

This child learns not to make close connections with the family because they have been hurt or disappointed so many times. They learn that the best way to cope is by bowing out and staying to themselves (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 127).

The third child will be given many promises by the drinking parent. Almost all of these promises will be broken. The lost child eventually learns to distrust not only the parents, but everyone else. Because so many promises have been broken to them, they often come to believe that they cannot trust anyone, ever, especially authority figures. This will cause many problems for this child as he or she child grows older. This child copes by becoming a LONER, spending time alone or quietly busy. To them this seems the safest way to stay out of the craziness blowing through the family and out of trouble.

This child does not usually get caught in the violent emotional cross fires in which the first two children have found themselves (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 128, para 1-2-3-4).

People rarely notice the lost child. These children seem to have a gift for blending into the background virtually unnoticed. This child is hardly ever given any attention, either positive or negative. They are just there. Later in life, these children become wall flowers. They do not attract any attention, and just seem to blend in. Nobody notices them. At parties they are almost invisible (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 128, para 2-3-4-5).

The third child suffers the most from the pain and loneliness. This child's role is to offer the family relief. The family is relieved that the third child is not demanding attention or making trouble. The family feels that it does not have to worry about this child. The lost child gets less attention than the other two. To survive, he stays out of the way, suffering in quiet desperation (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 128, page 134).

To cope with their isolated situation, the third child develops a wall of defenses to survive. This wall hides the true feelings of this child. Many of their feelings are buried alive, and as a result, still having an effect on this child well into adulthood. The child grows up thinking that they can expect the same type of treatment from everyone that they got from their crazy family. As with all self fulfilling ideas, they often get what they expect (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 128, para 5, page 134).

The feelings that the third child hides, and keeps to themselves are: Loneliness, hurt, feeling worthless, and hidden or suppressed anger. They hide these feelings from others by withdrawing from others, overeating or acting snobbish. They are generally super independent and often end up rejecting others in order to be left alone. They are afraid to make friends or get to close to anyone as they have been burned so many times by the parents (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 134).

The lost child may develop a pattern of staying to themselves for their entire life. They may never get married, or have a close relationship. They are afraid to get close to others (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 134).

STUDY QUESTIONS: THE THIRD CHILD (THE "LOST CHILD")

1. The third child of a dysfunctional family is often the "lost child," because they don't know how to compete with the first and second child for his _____.
2. Why does the third child not make close connections with the family?....or why do they keep to themselves?
3. This child (the third child) copes by becoming a _____, spending time alone or quietly busy.
4. The third child suffers the most from _____ and _____.
5. What is the role of the third child in the dysfunctional family?
6. The family is relieved that the third child is not demanding _____ or making _____.
7. What are the feelings hidden by the "third child?"
8. They (The third child) are generally super _____ and often end up rejecting or avoiding others in order to be left alone.

IV.

THE FOURTH CHILD

THE MASCOT OR THE CLOWN

If there is a fourth child they also have the problem of figuring out how to get their need for attention met (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 137).

The fourth child typically adjusts in this sick family, by being a clown (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 137).

The fourth child is the one who brings fun into the family. Fun is something that the family is badly lacking. No one takes the clown seriously. Other people feel that they joke around so much that they could not possibly ever be serious or understand anything serious (1981, Another Chance, page 140, para 2-3).

Clowns are cute, fun to be around, and able to use charm and humor to survive in this painful family system.

This child is a welcome relief from the fighting, conflict, and serious problems of the chemically dependent, dysfunctional family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 140, para 2-3). The clown believes that he will not be attacked by other members of the family, if he keeps them laughing. His humor seems to cover up the many family problems. This helps them avoid the deadly seriousness of their family situation (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 140, para 1).

The fourth child is often the worst off of all the children in the entire sick family. They are nervous and appear hyperactive (overly active). They may be sent to a counselor or psychiatrist who may label them hyperactive and prescribe drugs. If a doctor makes this mistake, it seriously adds to the chemical dependency of the entire family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 144).

The fourth child is often cute, fragile and easily hurt. They do a lot of silly things to attract attention to themselves. Clowns are in a very vulnerable and scary position in the family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 144, para 2-3).

Because they appear hyperactive and have a lot of energy, they are often targets of physical abuse. By being on the move all the time, this child gets on the parents nerves. They are likely to be attacked by an alcoholic parent. Alcoholics are so nervous and irritable themselves that they don't handle any kind of stress well. Instead of facing the fact that the alcohol is the cause of their nervousness, it is easier for the alcoholic to falsely blame the fourth child for irritating them and then beat him or her (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 144, para 2-, page 147).

As the clown grows up they often become the school clown, company joker, or the social cut up. Once again this child is seen for what they do and not for who they really are.

What the clown actually feels inside is very different from their outward joking. They have frozen feelings hidden deep inside that they do not want to face. These feelings can be fear, insecurity, confusion, and loneliness (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 146 ,page 147, bottom-top).

Defenses that the fourth child uses to keep people away from their buried feelings are humor, hyper-activity, fragility, and acting super cute, or joking (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 147).

STUDY QUESTIONS: THE FORTH CHILD (THE CLOWN)

1. The "forth child" is the one who brings _____ into the family.
2. Why is the "clown" (the fourth child) a welcome relief from the fighting, conflict, and serious problems of the chemically dependent, dysfunctional family?
3. The "clown" (fourth child) believes that he will not be attacked by other members of the family if he keeps them _____.
4. The clown is often the worst / best off of all the children in the entire family.
5. The "fourth child" is often fragile and easily _____. they are in a very vulnerable position in the family.
6. Because they (the fourth children) appear hyper active, and have a lot of energy, they are often targets of _____.
7. What are the frozen feelings hidden inside that the "clown" (fourth children) do not want to face.
8. What are the defenses that the "fourth child" uses to keep people away from their own buried feelings?

CONCLUSION:

No matter how many children in a drug dependent family, all of them will suffer some degree of psychological damage (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 150, para 1).

They will all develop their own particular defensive patterns. They will carry these defense patterns into adult life, expecting the same treatment from everyone that they got from their parents. Because of how they act and what they expect, they often arrange for what they expect to come true. Since this is how they believe the world is, they choose the people and situations that reinforce how they believe the world is. We all do this. Keeping the world how they were raised to see it causes trouble for the children well into adulthood and possibly their

entire lives. These children repeatedly have problems dealing with relationships (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 150).

Since their parents taught them to hide their problems, they may not even realize that they have any problems, and as a result can never fix them. They get used to seeing life the way they were taught to see it within the sick family in which they were raised. Before they can even to begin to recover, they must realize that they are not happy, and this is not how life was meant to be. They must confront the problems of being raised in a dysfunctional family before they can even begin working on other areas of psychological growth (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 150).

Often the children of alcoholics end up emotionally and socially backward (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 84-85). This is due more to how they are raised than from anything physically wrong with them. Their parents were so busy fighting and abusing drugs, the children were never taught proper social skills. They were not taught how to interact with others in a gentle and respectful manner. These children treat other people in the same ways that their family treated them. Since they were raised in a dysfunctional family, they do not know any better (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 84-85).

The way their family treated them is usually not how other people, raised in normal families expect or want to be treated. Children raised in sick families have nothing with which to compare their lives or families. Since physical and emotional abuse is what they received all their lives, it may be all they know how to give to their children. They may even think that everyone was raised as they were. As a result of being raised in a substance abusing family, these children also face many other problems. These children need help but at the same time do not realize that they need help (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 84-85).

If you recognize many of the symptoms that we have talked about in this lesson, you are not alone. It has been estimated that over one quarter of the U.S. population may be facing similar problems. There are many adult children of alcoholics who suffered physical and mental abuse currently struggling to deal with the problems. As a matter of fact, there are so many people looking for help that self help groups have sprung up throughout the country. These groups are called **Adult Children Of Alcoholics** groups, or A.C.O.A. **These groups are free** and deal with the specific problems that result from being raised in an alcoholic or abusive home. You can find these groups in most cities and large towns. Your local A.A. chapter would be able to tell you if there is a group near where you live. Remember, these services are valuable and free! If your wife or husband was raised in a substance abusing or sick family, please tell them of these groups.

All they need to do is have the courage to admit there is a problem which needs to be changed and go for help (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 84-85).

Denying that there are any problems from being raised an alcoholic or abusive home will most likely be the biggest block in asking for help. Admitting that a problem exists is the first step in recovery (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 153).

If you have been raised in an abusive or alcoholic family, the responsibility for understanding and seeking help for the problems is yours (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, pages 157).

In summary, chemical dependency is a family disease. It can be recognized by the following characteristics.

1. It is systemic - This means that the family is a system and each person reacts to and affects other people in the family system. You do not live alone in a family. Whatever you do, or your parents do, affects the other members of your family in one way or another. If a is an alcoholic, the entire family becomes sick. Having an alcoholic or drug abuser in the family affects everyone in a very bad way. If one of the parents in the family is an alcoholic or drug abuser, the entire family suffers and becomes sick (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, pages 82, 153).
2. Delusion-- (deceived or misled) This means that the family members in a substance abusing family are really fooling themselves and everyone else about how they really feel. They bury and hide their feelings from themselves and everyone else. These feelings are buried alive. Even though the person trying to hide these feelings does not realize it, they are affected by them when they don't deal with them. These people may feel very nervous without knowing why. They may be unable to sleep and feel edgy all the Time. At the same time they continue to deny that they have any problems at all. If you do not admit your problem, there is little you can do to fix the it. These delusions cause massive problems later in life as bad things keep happening to this person over and over again, they can't figure out that they make their own problems. This person is convinced that someone else is causing his problems. As long as they are looking for answers outside of themselves, and blaming problems on other people, they will never be able to make the changes where they need to make inside of themselves (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G.) (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, page 55).
3. Compulsive Behavior -- Compulsive behavior is a feeling that you have to be doing something all the time.

Its a feeling of being driven, of forcing yourself to keep moving. Children of alcoholics and substance abusers often feel this way. Their lives have been out of control for so long that they feel that they have to do the best they can to control everything and everybody to keep some kind of stability in their lives. Even after they leave the crazy family, they do the best they can to keep their life in order. They often structure everything and live according to rigid rules or a schedule. They may loose the ability to be flexible. What causes them the most trouble however, is that they try to control other people too much. Other people do not like this and will either avoid this person or end up in an argument or a fight with them (Wegscheider, S., 1981, *Another Chance*, page 65-66).
4. Individual-- This means that each family member can be characterized by special behaviors. Each member of the alcoholic family reacts in a very specific, exact or special way in reaction to the problems caused by the alcoholic in the family. Each person in this family has certain types of problems that come from being raised in this

type family. On the other hand, these problems follow a pattern. This pattern is similar to those found in other dysfunctional families. Remember how the first child reacts different from the second child who is different from the third? (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 55).

5. Destructive--Each family member pays a very heavy price to survive in the alcoholic family. Being raised in an alcoholic or substance abusing family almost always because a lot of damage to the family members. This is especially true in the area of relating or interacting with other people outside the family. Members of these types of families tend to treat everyone as if they are members of their crazy family. People who were raised in normal homes do not know where they are coming from and tend to avoid them (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 55).

The overall picture of the chemically dependent family is a system of related, concerned persons who are hurting and in crisis. Within this type of family, there is much self-delusion, many compulsive behavior patterns and a growing primary disease of chemical dependency (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 28-29, bottom-top).

The alcoholic needs treatment for the disease of alcoholism and the family members need treatment for the Psychological damage that the drinker causes in the family (Wegscheider, S., 1981, Another Chance, page 28-29-30).

Treatment methods may vary, but the need for recognition, acceptance and understanding of each member's role in the family disease of alcoholism is necessary for full family recovery (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., page 54 bottom).

Your Psychology Department has much more information on the specific kinds of psychological damage done to children who were raised by parents abusing alcohol or drugs. We would be glad to give you more information or refer you to specific books on the subject at your request.

If one of the people who did raise you was a substance abuser, you probably have some problems that need to be worked out. We would highly recommend that you link yourself up with such free groups such as Adult Children of Alcoholics or get involved in a program or group offered in your unit Psychology Department.

V.

STUDY QUESTIONS: STUDY PACKET # 13 CONCLUSION

1. No matter how many children in a drug dependent family there are, all of them will suffer some degree of _____.
2. Adult children of alcoholics repeatedly have problems dealing with _____.
3. Often, the children of alcoholics end up emotionally and socially _____.
4. Since physical and emotional abuse is what they (Adult Children of Alcoholics) received all their lives, it may be all they know how to _____.
5. List the five (5) characteristics in recognizing the chemically dependent family.

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