

# MARY PENDER GREENE, LCSW-R

## “Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families”

### Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families

A dysfunctional family is a family in which conflict, misbehavior and sometimes abuse occur continually and regularly, leading other members to accommodate such actions and adopt the idea that the situation is normal. If you did not grow up with alcoholism but lived with other compulsive behaviors or stressful situations—gambling, addictions, overeating, mental illness, profound religious attitudes, adoption, foster care, emotional or physical abuse (domestic violence)—you may find that you can identify with the characteristics described below. Much of what’s true for the children of alcoholics is also true for others from dysfunctional homes. Understanding this can help you to reduce the isolation felt from believing you were "different" due to your life experiences.

**By Janet G. Woititz**

### **Adult Children of Dysfunction – The Expanded Edition**

1. Adult children of dysfunction **guess at what is normal.**
2. Adult children of dysfunction **have difficulty following a project through from beginning to end.**
3. Adult children of dysfunction **lie when it would be just as easy to tell the truth.**
4. Adult children of dysfunction **judge themselves without mercy.**
5. Adult children of dysfunction **have difficulty having fun.**
6. Adult children of dysfunction **take themselves very seriously.**
7. Adult children of dysfunction **have difficulty with intimate relationships.**
8. Adult children of dysfunction **overreact to changes over which they have no control.**
9. Adult children of dysfunction **constantly seek approval and affirmation.**
10. Adult children of dysfunction **usually feel that they are different from other people.**
11. Adult children of dysfunction **are super responsible or super irresponsible.**
12. Adult children of dysfunction **are extremely loyal, even in the face of evidence that the loyalty is undeserved.**
13. Adult children of dysfunction **are impulsive.** They tend to lock themselves into a course of action without giving serious consideration to alternative behaviors or possible consequences. This impulsively leads to confusion, self-loathing and loss of control over their environment. In addition, they spend an excessive amount of energy cleaning up the mess.