

Development of the Term ACA, or ACOA, Adult Children, Adult children of Alcoholics

Dr. Jane Bolton, PsyD, LMFT, CC
Psychotherapy and Master Coaching

In 1969, Canadian therapist Margaret Cork offered the first modern study on the children of alcoholic families in "THE FORGOTTEN CHILDREN." In New York City in 1977, a small group of Al-Anon members discovered they were all the children of alcoholics. They started the first "Children of Alcoholics" meeting.

In the late 1970s, a New Jersey based therapist began working with a group consisting of adults who had been raised in alcoholic homes. The result of this group was the ground-breaking 1982 book "ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS" by Janet Geringer-Woititz. In her book, Dr. Woititz describes the basic characteristics of an Adult Child of Alcoholics. Her list consisted of observations of the group of ACAs she facilitated. Her "List of Characteristics" and the "Laundry List," used in the New York COA meetings, found their way to other parts of the country to be modified and eventually emerge at the 1984 ACA CSB/IWSO Business Conference as "The Problem."