



MARRIAGE CONSENT: IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD (Conclusion)

In our last issue, we began the discussion of the roles children raised in alcoholic families take on in order to survive. We must bear in mind is that these roles are deep-seated, mostly rigid patterns of perceiving, relating and behaving that pose difficulties in adulthood. Claudia Brown, in *It Will Never Happen To Me, Growing up with Addiction*, states:

It is about this time, when a young person reaches the mid-twenties, that the effects of growing up in an alcoholic home begin to become apparent. These now adult children of alcoholics begin to experience a loneliness which doesn't make sense to them. They become aware of feelings which separate them from others and find themselves depressed. As this depression occurs more frequently and lasts longer, the source of the depression seems unidentifiable.

Feelings of being fearful and anxious occur more frequently; again, the source is not identifiable. They have problems related to intimacy; they find themselves having difficulty maintaining a close relationship or find that some things seem to be missing in their relationships. A lack of meaningfulness begins to permeate every aspect of their lives. And, very possibly, they are beginning to drink more, or they already find themselves in a relationship with someone who could become or is an alcoholic (pp 32-33).

These “roles” have left emotional and psychological voids in the development of the individual. Most of these gaps are related to control and trust issues, dependency, and inability to express feelings. Since most children of alcoholics have not had their emotional needs met, they have a very difficult time with their emotions later in life.

Many adult children of alcoholics have serious difficulties in relationships, especially intimate ones. Since they lacked the experience of fundamental relationships, they have not learned the essentials of give-

and-take or the sharing of thoughts, feelings, hopes, and dreams. Entering marriage embodying one of these roles, or more than one, oftentimes tends to be a deal-breaker in the marriage. Some of these adult children of alcoholics have not learned to resolve conflict in a healthy manner. They will either become aggressive and argumentative or avoid conflict at all costs to avoid the pain that is involved. There are also those who are extremely “other” centered, taking care of the needs of the other, always centering their attention outside of themselves, and becoming the super-provider; working long hours. Oftentimes, this turns into self-pity and resentment.

It is good for those preparing couples for marriage to be aware of some of the tendencies of adult children of alcoholics and to be aware of the fact that, if these persons have not dealt with those tendencies and have not grown in maturity in regard to those areas, these issues are capable of rendering the person unable to make the commitment to marriage.

That's it for now. Until next time, keep the faith, love God's people, and always honor the code!