



INTERVENTION GUIDE FOR THE FAMILY

A How-to Resource

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“WHEN YOUR WORLD IS FALLING... FAMILY GIVES YOU A PLACE TO LAND.”

For anyone who is considered family...

There is an unspoken wish list that accompanies the concept of family. For many, it includes an ideology of nonjudgment and unconditional love, where its members can express themselves openly without fear. Where personal safety is never compromised and support for our hopes and dreams is ever-present. While these notions are what families can certainly aspire to, many will fall short.

With drug or alcohol addiction, family simply fades away. And for the mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, cousins, aunts and uncles, and friends we treat like family, witnessing the decay of a loved one stricken with substance abuse is heart wrenching.

We commend your compassion and the desire to help create change. You and your family can be the necessary facilitators of a life-altering moment in the person dependent on drugs and alcohol.

This Intervention Guide was created for you, the family. To help you stay strong and understand exactly what's ahead of you from intervention, treatment and long term recovery.



WHY INTERVENTION

If you've watched any reality TV shows or YouTube videos about drug or alcohol intervention, you might think that it's anything but genuine and obviously rehearsed. In actuality, a good intervention is rehearsed. In fact, it has to be for many reasons.

For anyone living with a person who is abusing drugs or alcohol, the enjoyment in life is gone. What remains is a family dynamic that is run on fear, distrust, disrespect, anger, trauma, sadness, avoidance and denial. But the damage to emotional wellbeing doesn't stop there.

Your loved one isn't the only individual who is a shadow of their former self. Each person who has an interpersonal relationship with the addict is affected. Instead of open communication, there is doubt. Thoughts of looking forward to the next get together are mixed with overall feelings of dread.

You don't have to be the person using substances to live in an altered state of reality.

It's a symptom of the dysfunction when there's drug and alcohol addiction among you. Where walking on eggshells is an everyday occurrence, with no relief in sight. And the nightmare of watching the ones you hold dear continue to destroy themselves is better in comparison to the fear of the phone ringing and finding out that they're gone. Forever.

Your family can handle intervention. Visit our website at: <https://interventionhelpline.com/helping-the-family/>





NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF FAMILY

Organizing a well-founded intervention is like a buck stop for the entire family. Everyone has to take ownership for how they feel and the manner in which the addict has been enabled to continue using. Intervention confronts active addiction and interrupts it, with the intent on reversing the process, to escape an inevitable rock bottom.

At the core of every addiction recovery success story is a person, or people, who care enough to throw caution to the wind and face reality, head on. Every addict needs to be reminded of his or her self-worth, God-given talents, and that they have something to offer in this life.

But intervention takes practice. Those closest to the addict will be tested, relentlessly. To make an impression, you have to be willing and able to draw a collective hard line. It's what family can do and it's a powerful adversary to addiction.

ADDICTION IS A REPEAT OFFENDER. INTERVENTION RUNS PARALLEL

Successful intervention may not happen the first time around.

Addiction is a recurring, behavioral disease that affects physical, mental and spiritual wellness. Like other diseases or chronic health conditions, overcoming drug and alcohol addiction takes personal commitment, supervision, management, ongoing support and a lifestyle change.

Be prepared to engage in multiple interventions if necessary. This doesn't mean that your efforts weren't effective. It's just the nature of addiction.

[Unsure if your family needs an intervention? Review the Addiction Assessment next.](#)



HOW SERIOUS IS THE ADDICTION TO DRUGS OR ALCOHOL?

Don't put extra pressure on yourself to be the next addiction industry expert. As a person close to the one who is suffering through substance abuse, you hurt for them and bear personal pain. It's a connection that will provide value during the intervention process.

In order to get a better idea of what problem does exist and how deep it runs, we urge you to go through this Addiction Assessment and answer honestly. Have other people closest to your loved one take the test as well. It will help the family and, in case you decide to work with a third-party interventionist, provide information that can assist in identifying the best drug and alcohol treatment program possible.



DRUG & ALCOHOL ASSESSMENT

Review the following carefully. Take the assessment now but retake it every 30 days to help monitor any changes or if addictive behaviors and symptoms worsen. Depending on the drug of choice, some or all may apply.

Physical Signs of Addiction

- Have you noticed any unexplained weight gain or loss recently? Yes / No
- Does your loved one exhibit profuse sweating not related to heat or physical activity? Yes / No
- Do the eyes often seem red, glassy or tired? Are the pupils dilated? Yes / No
- Take note of the person's face, hands, arms, legs and feet. Are there bruises or burns, cuts or sores not normally there in the past? Yes / No
- While visiting their bedroom or home, is there evidence of active alcohol or drug abuse? Evidence can include empty bottles or cans of alcohol or hidden, partially full or full bottles. Drug paraphernalia to include pipes, syringes, lighters or razor blades. Missing light bulbs from fixtures (often used to smoke crack). Multiple medication bottles prescribed in their name or someone else's. Yes / No

Behavioral Signs of Addiction

- Does your loved one disappear for long periods of time? Days? Weeks? Yes / No
- Is there doctor shopping going on? (Seeing multiple doctors for the treatment of the same ailment or pain.) Yes / No
- Is your loved one late to obligations or misses them: work, school, family or social functions? Yes / No
- Have long term friends been replaced by a new group of friends? Yes / No
- Have you noticed a decline in participation of recreational activities or hobbies once enjoyed? Yes / No
- Is substance abuse in the person you care about out of control? Yes / No
- Is there a problem with focus? Is memory loss or forgetfulness becoming more of an issue? Yes / No
- Have you noticed that he or she is engaging in more risky behavior, including driving while intoxicated, medicated, or having sex with acquaintances, strangers or multiple partners? Yes / No
- Is the need for cash on hand causing sudden desires to sell personal belongings? Yes / No
- Have you noticed shortages on your cash, bank accounts, jewelry or other items? Could he or she be stealing from you, other family, friends, place of work or random businesses? Yes / No
- Is there a recent history of DUI, public intoxication, fighting, drug possession and corresponding arrests? Yes / No

Emotional Signs of Addiction

- Are there unusual mood swings? Yes / No
- Is there a general sense of apathy or disinterest in life? Yes / No
- Have you noticed anxiety or depression in your loved one that wasn't there before? Yes / No
- Do you know of relationship issues that someone is having with family members, friends, a spouse or partner? Yes / No
- When you or others approach him or her about concerns regarding drug or alcohol intake, is there an angry or defensive response? Yes / No
- Is there an undeniable change in speech pattern or emotional expression? Are there unusual signs of hyperactivity, rapid speech, or overly animated and lengthy communication? Yes / No

With this assessment, you now better understand the scope of what your loved one is battling and can start to construct a game plan for intervention.



INTERVENTION IS THE SEED OF RECOVERY

Imagine your loved one free from drug and alcohol addiction.

Everything about your loved one's life will be more vibrant, clear and full. You and other family members and close friends will also experience greater joy in seeing the benefits of sobriety to your inner circle. To represent this as a visual reference, successful addiction treatment and sustained recovery are like a great harvest coming to fruition.

Intervention is the seed of recovery. How you go about the research, planning and delivery of the intervention and subsequent treatment program is the crucial set up to feed personal growth and see the harvest of greater wellbeing.

Before the intervention ever takes place, there must be an initial assessment about the substance abuse. The Addiction Assessment in this guide, placed before this section, gives you a good idea of what's going on with your loved one. Now it's time to initiate an intervention plan.

Before the Intervention

- Do your homework
- Pick your partners
- Choose a leader
- Design intervention letters of persuasion
- Practice, practice, practice
- Decide on a place and time

Planning brings the future into the present to act on it now.

Homework. You may not know which drug(s) are being used for sure though you may already have suspicions. Research the signs of different drug addictions and symptoms of withdrawals to help pinpoint the substance. Refer to the Addiction Assessment repeatedly to note any changes in physical signs or behaviors. Consider meeting with a therapist or addiction support group to gain more awareness of the subject and how others deal with the situation. We've included resources on page 24 of this Guide for reference.

Once you have an idea of what you're dealing with, begin researching treatment centers and the programs they have to offer. Understand the costs, what insurance is accepted, or other types of payment plans available so you can make arrangements ahead of time. For more details, go to page 22 for the section entitled After Intervention, What's Next?

Partners. There is strength in numbers. Think about the people in your loved one's life. Who does he or she look up to and value their opinions? Sometimes this means family members. Other times, this could be cherished friends from before addiction took hold. Perhaps a school counselor, therapist, sports coach or supervisor at work. These are the **6 to 8 people** who can provide the most compelling stories to help win the case for addiction treatment. If it's appropriate and will not prove traumatic for children, they too can be included.

Team Lead. There is a process in the sharing of information during the intervention. One person must be designated to take the lead on this, keep to the task at hand and maintain a cool head. The team lead is the only one in the intervention who can talk out of turn in the process, much like a liaison between the other people and the person who needs to get to treatment.

The team lead is the only person who can interrupt the intervention process. In addition, the team lead begins the intervention with a statement about what is about to take place, and helps the other people get through their reading in the specific order that was planned.



Intervention Letter. This will be difficult for some but it's your chance to speak from the heart. Let love, compassion, hope and respect guide your writings. It may take you multiple times to get your letter to your liking but make sure it comes from a place of honesty. Be careful to refrain from making judgments, or presenting your thoughts with an argumentative tone. It's easy to let inner anxiousness escalate. If you feel that coming on, take a breath, slow your pace. And continue. Present your story as if there's a beginning, middle, and an end.

1. The beginning explains what you like or love about the person. Share a memory about the two of you that will bring laughter or joy, much like a door opener would be when speaking with a stranger.
2. Then go to the present. Express how you feel about the drug or alcohol use and the impact it has made on him or her as well as others who care.
3. The end of the letter is asking for a new beginning. This is where you ask your loved one to accept the offer for addiction treatment. **If treatment is not agreed to, each person may reveal Plan B, which is explained on page 14.**

Practice. Get together with your team of individuals set to participate in the intervention well in advance. Have each read their letters aloud to the group. This helps identify areas of negative language or tone that can be altered before the intervention. People are different and how they react to sharing emotions can be a powerful tool as well. Select the order of letter reading so that more emotional presentations are placed in between the more straightforward ones.

The Place. Choosing the right environment to hold an intervention can help ease everyone's mind and allows the person you're concerned about to be more receptive to what is unfolding. It should be private, without distractions, and comfortable but not so much so that people lose focus. Once the intervention begins, wherever each participant is seated should not change. The key is to maintain focus on the loved one and the objective—to get them to go to treatment. To make the intervention as seamless as possible, all those involved must show up fully present and sober. This includes the one who needs addiction treatment.



THE PEOPLE WHO HELP PLANT THE SEED

Every participant in the intervention has a special place in the life of the person who needs help, even if that person doesn't acknowledge it at the time. With this in mind, remember that who you believe is right for the intervention may differ from what will prove most impactful for your loved one.

To get a larger view of *his or her* world, **review the following types of people** who may be instrumental in the loved one's life. Put a name to the title and begin to formulate your list of potential participants.

- Parents
- Children
- Spouse or Partner
- Siblings
- Grandparents
- Aunts and Uncles
- Cousins
- Best Friends
- Boyfriend or Girlfriend
- Roommate
- Family Friends
- Neighbors
- Family Friends
- Neighbors
- Life Coach
- Sports Coach
- Teachers
- School Counselor
- Mentors
- Trusted Advisors
- Clergy, Spiritual Leaders
- Coworkers
- Employer

Grab a pen to start writing your first draft of the intervention letter.

HELPFUL TIPS TO WRITE THE PERFECT LETTER

Let's go into more detail about how to write an intervention letter. As mentioned earlier in this Guide, we need to provide the beginning, middle and the end. The following provides prompts and suggestions on how to construct each section well.

Beginning: State the person's name, and make a declaration about how much the person means to you.

Express your love and caring and definitively ask for their undivided attention. Once you have that, stress that you are speaking from the heart.

Dear (person's name),

I wanted to be here today because I care so very much about you and only want the best for you. This is why it is my hope that you seek treatment for your drug/alcohol use.

(Add a positive, joyous memory of the person here and use specific details.) _____

(Mention an activity or shared hobby you did together in the past.) _____

Remember when you used to... (mention something once enjoyed, before addiction.) _____

Now, state anything that they completed in the past year that was an accomplishment. If there are none, gently state that. _____

Middle: This is the point at which you step back in to the here and now. State specific ways that your loved one's behavior has changed since drug and/or alcohol addiction began. Again, be careful to take an arm's length yet compassionate approach, without extolling or insinuating judgment or blame.

Name instances where substance abuse has negatively affected the person's life. _____

State any consequences that arose as a result of the addiction. _____

Now, how has your loved one's addiction affected you: emotionally, physically, in the workplace, financially, and in your personal relationships? _____

What are your greatest fears, should the drug or alcohol abuse continue? _____

End: A good persuasive letter will end by circling back to some of the elements first mentioned in the beginning. Take this time to restate your love and caring for this person and the need to seriously address mental and physical health, now. This is why you are asking them to seek treatment, right now. Everything has been taken care of. All you need is his or her consent. Be sure you are knowledgeable enough about what the plan is should you be asked questions.

Provide key benefits to addiction treatment. _____

Explain where treatment will take place and how transport there will happen. _____

Complete your letter presentation with, **"Will you agree to go to the treatment being offered now?"**

If after all intervention participants deliver their letter to the person with the addiction and he or she still refuses treatment, it is time for each to go to Plan B.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A 'PLAN B'

Many times, people aren't ready to admit they have a problem much less get into treatment at the moment you and other family members are presenting your compelling cases to support the idea. But family doesn't give up that easily. Which is why every intervention has a second phase or Plan B.

Only exercise Plan B if your loved one refuses to go to treatment. The person has been given the opportunity to own addiction. If it's refused, Plan B is the time to own your personal part in enabling their addictive behaviors thus far.

Not only will you admit to it but share the information aloud. **Now this is the crucial part: You will also declare that you will no longer engage in enabling them.** This is your life-changing moment. And through this change, your loved one will be impacted, making it more challenging to continue in a lifestyle of drug or alcohol abuse. It may take time to realize the effect but overall, from this point forward, things will change.

To help you identify how you may have been enabling the addiction, think through the following questions:

1. How have you covered up, paid for, ignored, or excused behaviors that allowed drug or alcohol use to continue?
2. What do you have to do or change to wholeheartedly stop this enabling behavior?

Make some notes for yourself. With that information, come up with a list of what you will do once the intervention is over, in the event that addiction treatment will not take place. These will be your Plan B, which you will present without emotion and in a firm tone.

If you don't go to addiction treatment, I will... _____

If you don't go to addiction treatment, I will... _____

If you don't go to addiction treatment, will... _____

Watch our video for more tips on writing an effective intervention letter:
<https://youtu.be/oOVVZIAQJ8k>

HOW TO RESPOND TO “NO”

Anyone who works in sales has received training to learn how to deal with and override objections.

You may not be a salesperson. The person with an addiction problem isn't a product or service, either. However, the art of intervention is including the right information, delivered in the right way, to engage a desired response. Think of it as a form of persuasive argument (without the yelling). In that sense, you are selling the process of treatment and recovery.

Overcoming Objections

Increasing the odds in your favor in having a successful intervention has much to do with preparation. In dealing with the individual with the prescription medication, street drug or alcohol dependency, you can have the upper hand well in advance. Intervention is a chess game that you're playing before the addict ever knows it exists. As such, try to put yourself in those shoes and come up with the reasons why they would decline the offer to get help.

- Identify potential objections
- Create solutions
- Verbalize cause and effect of each

It's difficult to imagine what your loved one will say or how they respond as addictive behaviors and heightened emotions bring about unanticipated answers. So we've provided FRWs, frequent reasons why a person says “No” to addiction treatment, and what you can do to plan for the objections, and how to get past them.

12 REASONS WHY THEY SAY “NO” AND HOW TO RESPOND

OBJECTION #1:

“I DON’T NEED IT.”

Proactive Step

Show them your intervention letter. You’ve provided instances and evidence to justify the need for treatment.

Your Response

“We’re all here because we see how your drug (or alcohol) abuse has changed you. We know the person you truly are inside and want to see you healthy again. Because we love you. Everything’s ready for you. Just give rehab a try. You already know what the alternative is.”

OBJECTION #2:

“I CAN’T. I’LL LOSE MY JOB.”

Proactive Step

Before the intervention, get knowledgeable on the Family and Medical Leave Act, that offers some protections for people who need treatment without losing employment. Suggest to your loved one to speak with the Human Resources representative at the workplace. Mention that the employer may already suspect there is a problem and without treatment, job loss is imminent.

Your Response

“You’re valued at work. Everyone wants the best for you and will support you. Your performance at work will improve after treatment too.”

OBJECTION #3:

“I HAVE NO ONE TO TAKE CARE OF THE KIDS (SPOUSE/PARTNER/MOTHER/FATHER).”

Proactive Step

Before the intervention, have people designated to take care of children, aging parents or other dependents. Make sure these are people who your loved one trusts so this doesn't add to their stress about being in treatment. If possible, include family members who were most impacted by the addiction so they have closure and can begin to heal.

Your Response

“We're ready for you to focus on yourself and do what's needed to get clean and sober. We look forward to seeing you happier and healthier. By doing this, it's a chance at being the best parent (spouse/partner/son/daughter) we know you can be.”

OBJECTION #4:

“I CAN'T LEAVE MY DOG (CAT).”

Proactive Step

Already have an action plan in place: a friend, family member or kennel arranged to take on the responsibility of pet care during treatment. Avoid difficult emotional moments during the intervention by having the pet ready to go, allowing your loved one to say goodbye, before treatment begins.

Your Response

“We know how much you love Charlie. That's why we've already made arrangements with Mom to take him in, so you don't have to worry. He's in good hands.”

OBJECTION #5:

“I CAN’T BE GONE THAT LONG.” OR
“IT’S TOO FAR AWAY.”

Proactive Step

Explain that there was a lot of time and research done to choose the facility/program that will provide the right care and support the specific needs of the individual throughout the recovery process. Make sure that you know whether the facility will allow guest visits during their treatment.

Your Response

“It’s a short amount of time that will help give you a longer, healthier life.” “Many other people with drug addiction like you have gone through similar programs and do well with extended treatment. The results are better.”

“It’s easier to focus on your recovery without the familiar distractions close to home.”

OBJECTION #6:

“I’M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
MY (FRIEND/FAMILY MEMBER) ISN’T HERE.”

Proactive Step

While you are planning the intervention, make sure to include everyone that your loved one would want to be there. For those who are unable to attend, they can still contribute by writing an intervention letter that can be presented by another person in attendance, or call via phone or webcam.

Your Response

“Brittany wanted to be here but couldn’t manage it with the baby. But she’ll be calling you to share her thoughts and support within the hour.” “Your life coach, John, wrote this letter that he wanted you to have. So you know he’s thinking of you and only wants the best.”

OBJECTION #7:

“I FEEL TOO SICK. I REALLY NEED A DRINK.”
OR “I HAVE TO GET HIGH NOW.”

Proactive Step

Understand that this is part of the withdrawal process. If your loved one has a physical dependency on a substance (most do), then treatment should begin with a medical detox program, ensuring safe, supervised and a more comfortable experience.

Your Response

“We know that you’ve built up a dependency for the drug (alcohol) and this is a normal part of the process. The treatment program begins with medical detox so you can get through it easier, and focus on recovery.”

OBJECTION #8:

“I DON’T HAVE TIME FOR THAT.”

Proactive Step

This objection is common and can indicate that the person has yet to face that active addiction has taken hold. Be prepared to show a unified front in showing evidence that there is a problem. Share your feelings and justifiable concerns through intervention letters.

Your Response

“We really care about your wellbeing. That’s why we’re all on board with handling anything you need us to while you’re in treatment. So you can just focus on you.”

OBJECTION #9:

“I FEEL LIKE YOU’RE ALL CONSPIRING AGAINST ME. WHAT DID I EVER DO TO YOU?”

Proactive Step

Intervention can make your loved one get defensive, especially if it comes as a complete surprise. Ensure the person that everyone there loves her (him) and this meeting and the treatment selected is for the best interests.

Your Response

“We’re all here to support you and our intentions come from our love and concern for you.” “We only want what’s best for you, to see you whole again and we feel that this treatment will help get you there.”

OBJECTION #10:

“OH... LIKE I’M THE ONLY ONE IN THIS FAMILY WITH A PROBLEM. WHY AM I THE ONLY ONE?”

Proactive Step

This intervention should be all about this one individual. When they try to deflect it to others, it’s a way to avoid the present. Keep the focus on the family member who is going to treatment.

Your Response

“Remember what happened to your older brother Michael? We’re doing this so it doesn’t happen to you.” “You are our concern right now.” “The family will also be going into therapy.”

OBJECTION #11:

“I CAN’T JUST UP AND LEAVE.
WHO’S GONNA PAY ALL MY BILLS?”

Proactive Step

This objection comes from a practical standpoint. If possible, obtain access to their financial accounts so that timely payments can continue for mortgage or rent, and other fixed obligations. Formulate a plan and include others who can be trusted to help with payments. Designate one person to manage their finances until treatment is completed. Financial assistance may be needed.

Your Response

“We’ve already thought of that and don’t want you to worry.” “The mortgage company is letting us delay one payment by adding it to the back end of the loan.” “Your sister is making the minimum payments to your credit cards, until you get back home.”

OBJECTION #12:

“WHY DO YOU CARE? I DON’T. IF I DIE FROM
USING (DRINKING) IT’S MY CHOICE.”

Proactive Step

Near 50 percent of people with drug or alcohol addiction also have a mental health disorder. Just because your loved one acts as if life doesn’t matter, it does. See to it that the treatment program includes mental health assessment and counseling.

Your Response

“That’s part of why you need treatment. To help uncover why you have those feelings.” “You’ll meet with specialized therapists at treatment who can help you with that.”

Now that you have an idea of the potential roadblocks that can happen during an intervention, mentally and emotionally prepare to rise above them and stand strong in the process.

AFTER INTERVENTION, WHAT'S NEXT?

By now you realize how important it is to do your homework well in advance of the intervention. Choosing the medical detox facility, type of treatment program, location and duration of program, financial obligations to be met and insurance required must be all organized and taken care of in the event that your loved one admits there is a problem and is ready to enter into treatment.

There are options as addiction treatment and recovery are a journey best taken through a program that caters to an individual's specific needs.

If you need help with finding available facilities across the U.S., want to bring on a professional interventionist or wish to speak with an addiction industry expert, Intervention Helpline is available at: <https://interventionhelpline.com>.

Don't know what to look for and what to avoid?
Find Addiction Treatment FAQs, next.



ADDICTION TREATMENT FAQs

Peace of mind is often hard to find when you're living with someone else's drug or alcohol addiction. Having the information to make a more educated decision about how to start the recovery process can help you sleep at night.

Here are some questions to ask a professional in an addiction treatment center to get things going in the right direction.

- Is the treatment facility gender-specific and if so, what are the benefits compared to co-ed?
- Is there a place that treats teenagers only? The elderly?
- Does the detox program provide for 24-hour medically supervised care?
- How many clients (beds) are there in the treatment facility?
- How long is the program: 30, 60, 90 days or more?
- What is the recommended length of treatment for (specific drug or alcohol)?
- How much will my insurance cover?
- Are there benefits to getting treatment away from home?
- What's the difference between detox, inpatient, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient and sober living programs?
- Are there licensed mental health therapists who can treat depression, anxiety, bipolar or other disorders?
- Can I visit my loved one during treatment?
- Does the treatment program assist with court dates due to a DUI?
- Is there a work reintegration program or life skills training during treatment?
- What kind of food do they serve?
- Do alternative therapies help during treatment?
- What is Medication Assisted Treatment and where can I find that type of program?
- Are there family therapy programs?

FAMILY RESOURCES

Before, During and After Intervention and Addiction Treatment

Much of the focus for an intervention is on the individuals with the substance abuse issue. But their use has also greatly impacted your life. As you, family members, close friends and others in the community go through the process of supporting your loved one through addictive behaviors and, hopefully, their treatment and recovery, everyone needs a healing hand to survive.

We urge you to seek support groups that focus on the emotional challenges faced by those who love someone with drug addiction or alcohol use disorder.

Even families need to be reminded that through it all, they are never alone.

Find Support for the Family

Alcoholics Anonymous

<http://www.aa.org>

Narcotics Anonymous

<http://www.na.org>

The US Substance Abuse & Mental

Health Services Administration

<http://www.samhsa.gov>

Al-Anon

<http://www.al-anon>

Al-Anon for Teens

<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org>

Co-Dependents Anonymous

<http://www.coda.org>

Adult Children of Alcoholics

<http://www.adultchildren.org>

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