

## **Hiding in Shame from Health and Hope: Adult Children of Addiction as Pastoral/Spiritual Care Students and the Benefits of an ACOA Group**

The range of ACOA experience

Trauma as part of the ACOA experience

### Story telling for ACOA

“Prior to participating in the ACOA group, I had never had the opportunity to hear the stories of other ACOAs and had never shared my experience...Through sharing in the ACOA group, I was able to gain the courage to share my story on a deeper level with my CPE group and more importantly, begin to face and deal with the shame that I had allowed to define me.”

### Grief and Loss Unnamed

“At first I wondered why it was important to talk about it. Was I complaining? Was I talking too much? I soon learned the pain was inside me; however, I had not expressed it. As I began expressing the pain of my childhood and adult experiences about living with an alcoholic parent I began to heal. I began to see my importance as a person.”

### Shame

“When I began attending the ACOA group, I had never really dealt with my shame related to growing up in an alcoholic home. I had been in and out of counseling a few times, but had avoided the issue...I began to share stories I had never told anyone. Words do not seem like enough to describe the acceptance I felt from my group...I was able to gain courage from sharing in ACOA to be more open in the larger CPE resident group.”

Relationship of Shame to Call to Ministry, and Connection to Self Care

### Validation of Experience

“I shared how so many times it was my responsibility as a small child to comfort my mother when she and my father had been fighting or when she was upset over his drinking. One of the group member’s eyes became teary and she said that her heart broke for that little girl. Her

Stan Yancey, MSW, LCSW, MDiv, AAPC Certified Member

WakeMed Health & Hospitals Department of Spiritual Care, 3000 New Bern Ave., Raleigh NC 27610

[syancey@wakemed.org](mailto:syancey@wakemed.org), Phone 919-350-7096

reaction and her statement became a moment of clarity for me. ..I was able to use that to make the connection between my feelings of never being good enough as an adult with the unrealistic expectations that were placed on me as a child.”

#### Roles often played in Addicted homes

“Hard for me to play and laugh, and I tend to take myself too seriously...the scenes (from a children of alcoholic documentary) that depicted children playing and laughing, it made me feel the vast emptiness inside of me. It also made me angry – angry that I was raised in an environment that did not allow space for me to play.”

#### Counter transference issues

“Trends in my pastoral care. My father was the absent one, my mother was who I was close to and connected to-and in my pastoral care I found myself gravitating towards ministry with female patients over male ones...It was an eye opening correlation.”

#### Supervisor Relationship

“He (father) died in 1991 without being in contact with me, and without my knowing of his death....Another supervisor, after listening to what I had talked about in ACOA about this strong desire to know more of my father, suggested tracking down his death certificate to see if I could learn where he was buried. I was able earlier this year to go and find his grave...shed some tears, say things I needed to say and bring more closure to our relationship.”

#### Peer Relationships

#### Impact for Clinical Training and Pastoral Ministry

#### Logistics: Different size programs and an ACOA group

- Small group
- Joint groups
- Use of Pastoral Counselors, or Other Group Facilitators
- 12 Step Groups

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