

Adult Children of Humans

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A new diagnostic group, Adult Children of Humans (ACOH) is identified. An instrument for making the diagnosis along with scoring and treatment guidelines is provided.

Adult Children of Humans

As a practicing psychologist, I have watched an increasing number of people label themselves members of one “problem” group or another, from co-dependents to adult children of alcoholics. I have reviewed the lists of unique “symptoms” that are said to define these various groups and believe it is time to cast a wider net. After reflecting on my extensive graduate and post-graduate training and experience, not to mention 50-odd years as a member of the human race, I have divined 10 symptoms of a newly identified, and until now sorely neglected group: Adult Children of Humans (ACOH). With our keen eye for research, we behavior therapists may soon be able to determine with confidence which of our clients, friends, colleagues, and perhaps even ourselves can be classified as ACOH.

ACOH Inventory Description and Development

The ACOH inventory is a brief self-report questionnaire that can be administered at any time and any place in under 15 minutes. It consists of 10 forced-choice, True/False items. It has strong face validity. To date, all individuals identified as ACOH have continued to be so classified, providing perfect reliability. Scoring and interpretation is both easy and straightforward. If examinees are over 18 years old and report three or more of these “symptoms,” they should be regarded as ACOH.

ACOH Inventory

- | | | |
|--|----------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> While I sometimes feel quite capable of handling life’s problems, at other times I feel I can’t. | T | F |
| <input type="checkbox"/> While I strongly feel the world should treat me fairly and am quite upset if it doesn’t, I also recognize that the universe doesn’t actually run on a fairness principle. | T | F |
| <input type="checkbox"/> While I sometimes cope fairly well with failure, at other times I feel hopeless and think I’m no good. | T | F |
| <input type="checkbox"/> While I recognize that some of my past behavior was foolish, I sometimes do the same sort of thing again when the opportunity presents itself. | T | F |
| <input type="checkbox"/> While I often cope fairly well with certain life frustrations, at other times I get in quite a “tizzy.” | T | F |

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ While I often force myself to do what is wise in the long run, despite the difficulties, I sometimes declare that certain problems are just too hard and refuse to take any action. | <p>T F</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ While I am often hopeful about the future, at other times I am pessimistic and doubt anything I do will make a difference. | <p>T F</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ While I often see that many people in the world have problems worse than mine, I frequently act as if my troubles and frustrations are as bad as possible. | <p>T F</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ When others point out how things could be worse for me than they currently are, I often recognize they are being realistic but at other times I think they are only minimizing my problems and not taking me seriously. | <p>T F</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ While I usually think I shouldn't set my performance standards unrealistically high, I occasionally see that even though only one person in the entire world gets the Olympic gold medal for any given event, the rest often find joy in attempting to achieve that goal regardless of success. | <p>T F</p> |

Discussion

Unfortunately, humanity is a chronic condition from which an ACOH never completely recovers. However, ACOH can recover from the silly if popular notion that human fallibilities are symptoms of diseases caught through association with family or friends who tenaciously behave in thoroughly annoying and/or self-defeating ways. ACOH can reduce emotional disturbances about their condition by recognizing that they do not have these disturbances because important people gave them bad cards in life or taught them to play their cards badly. Rather, and this is a cardinal feature of ACOH, they not only often and tenaciously hold onto the hazy thinking they once learned but more often and with considerable creativity, produce hazy thinking of their very own! With effort, ACOH can learn to accept rather than condemn themselves and, by doing so, live relatively satisfying, if endlessly fallible, lives. Unfortunately, they will never completely recover.