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WHEN BOOZE RULES THE FAMILY

The latest report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that an average resident of an EU country consumes 11.3 litres of pure alcohol per year. The average Pole (over 15 years of age) consumes even more – as much as 11.7 litres of pure alcohol per year. Nearly one million Polish people are struggling with alcohol addiction. This number, however, is only the tip of the iceberg because alcoholism affects all family members, sometimes causing irreversible damage.

Although, from time to time, the shock and the tragedy of victims of drunk drivers, children beaten up by intoxicated parents, and the drastic descriptions of murders committed under the influence reverberate through the society, the stereotype of how to have a good time does not change. Strong alcoholic drinks still remain an indispensable part of any successful party because tradition and cultural habits demand it. Announcements by the WHO confirming that no level of alcohol consumption is safe for our health, high fines, confiscating cars from drunk drivers, and huge resources allocated to treating alcoholism and its consequences do not deter people as there is still a lack of knowledge and education.

The monograph entitled *Codziennosc w perspektywie doświadczeń dorosłych dzieci alkoholików. Zarządzanie rozwojem osobistym* (lit. Everyday life from the perspective of the experiences of adult children of alcoholics. Managing personal development) by Prof. Ewa Syrek (Institute of Pedagogy, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Silesia) and Rev. Grzegorz Polok, PhD, DLitt (Department of Market and Marketing Research, University of Economics in Katowice) has been circulating in Katowice's universities for a year now. Both scholars have a wealth of experience and knowledge on the topic. Prof. Ewa Syrek's research interests are related to social pedagogy, health pedagogy, and the sociology of health and illness, while Reverend Polok, in addition to being an active lecturer since 2001, has also been providing spiritual care to a therapy group at the 'Zawodzie' Academic Chaplaincy in Katowice, which includes ACDF (adult children from dysfunctional families) and ACA (adult children of alcoholics) students.

Many years of research by the scholars resulted in a compendium of knowledge on how to overcome the traumas from growing up in homes affected by alcoholism. The monograph, a significant part of which consists of anonymous confessions by students, provides encouragement and assistance in overcoming fears, unjustified feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and similar emotions. The voice of adult children of alcoholics leaves a stronger impression than mere statistics, it also helps to overcome the fear of asking for help, and the unwarranted shame.

Alcoholism disrupts family life, resulting in, among other things, family dysfunction, co-dependency, violence, financial problems, and a misunderstanding of social and professional roles.

I experienced a lot of fear as a child. On the one hand, I was afraid of my father and him returning home, on the other for my sick mother's life and for our future. Sometimes I am afraid that I'll always be afraid – the ACA syndrome comes through in this statement as clear as day.

The effects of childhood experiences vary greatly. The scope of the ACA syndrome is extensive, and it can manifest as low self-esteem, fear of making decisions, fear of new situations, inability to manage free time, difficulty in recognising feelings, fear of rejection, difficulties socialising, and denial of one's own needs.

As Prof. Ewa Syrek explains, 'Co-dependency is a concept analysed in scientific literature. It has undergone many changes and its definition depends on the theoretical and methodological approach in a given scientific discipline (e.g. psychology, medicine, education, social policy, etc.). Various models of co-dependency can be found in the literature. Worth noting is the fact that a

co-dependent person is characterised, among other things, by the presence of various disorders (e.g. anxiety disorder, mental disorders, weak sense of self, emotional problems, and others). Co-dependency disrupts psychosocial well-being', emphasises the pedagogist. Addicts and their co-dependents can benefit from various forms of help and support, including self-help groups, e.g. AA (alcoholics anonymous), Al-Anon (for co-dependents), Alateen (for co-dependent children), professional therapy centres.

'In scientific literature and social practice, there are different therapies according to the person they are aimed at and the needs of the individuals and social groups, as well as to the type of therapy the therapist specialises in (psychological therapy, educational therapy). In general, young adults have great career ambitions and aspirations to achieve professional and social success, which is why self-reflection, future-oriented competencies and strategies, as well as motivation and openness to personal development, effective decision-making, emotional intelligence, and personal and collective relationship-building skills are so important in this process. Undertaking personal development activities allows them to satisfy many important needs, including the need for meaning in their lives, self-development, recognition, success, and many others. Undergoing psychotherapy is a conscious choice and, according to research, has the intended effect of changing the quality of life of an ACA person', concludes Ewa Syrek.

Therapy will not make all life's problems disappear, but as one survey participant states: *therapy helps to look at problems from a different angle – a healthy one! To live consciously and fully.*