

# LESSON 1 – DELAYED EMOTIONAL GROWTH

Adults are expected to act responsibly, develop common sense, and gain wisdom. They have an awareness of behavioral consequences - both positive and negative. The actions of our loved ones suffering from addiction, however, are not those of responsible adults. They appear to live according to their emotional age, not their actual age. A common cause of this **Delayed Emotional Growth** is the use of alcohol or drugs during a person's developmental years (childhood through early twenties).

Suffering from addiction and delayed emotional growth at the same time can lead a person to feel hopeless – “*I may never be able to change*” and create resistance to change. Although addiction can eventually be diagnosed, delayed emotional growth is challenging to identify.

**Change is Painful**  
Change involves challenging what is familiar to us and daring to question our traditional needs for safety, comfort, and control. It's often a painful experience.

## Traits of Delayed Emotional Growth

Check traits you recognize in your loved one

1. Morals of Convenience
  - Lies
  - Steals
  - Breaks promises
2. Immature Self-Centeredness
  - Resents “authority”
  - Wants instant gratification
  - Takes “no” too personally
  - Excessively controlling
  - Excessively angry (not always obvious)
  - Refuses to accept full responsibility for own decisions
  - Excessively selfish and excessively unselfish (lack of boundaries)
3. Never “Left Home” (emotionally)
  - Afraid to live in sober environment where it's difficult to manipulate
  - Someone's always there to rescue (parent, spouse, relative, friend, etc.)

**ABC's of Addiction and Delayed Emotional Growth**

- A \_\_\_\_\_  
B \_\_\_\_\_  
C \_\_\_\_\_

**Hope comes from the willingness to make genuine changes as they work on both problems at the same time.**

## Developing Adult Life Skills

Check traits you recognize in your loved one

1. Healthy Morals
  - Honesty
  - Earning money (legally)
  - Keeping commitments
2. Less Self-Centered and More Tolerant
  - Submits to authority (when beneficial)
  - Patiently delays gratification (when necessary)
  - Accepting “no” without taking it personally
  - Giving up control when it's best to do so
  - Managing anger
  - Taking full responsibility for decisions
  - Limiting selfishness (boundaries with self)
  - Limiting unselfishness (boundaries with others)
3. Leaving Home & Becoming Own Person
  - Living in a sober environment that is not so easy to manipulate

**ABC's of Recovery from both Addiction and Delayed Emotional Growth**

- A \_\_\_\_\_ for H \_\_\_\_\_  
Be W \_\_\_\_\_ to L \_\_\_\_\_  
C \_\_\_\_\_ to do what is  
S \_\_\_\_\_

*As a result of developing these skills, one can become **hopeful** and believe they can live a successful life without substances.*

**Change equals an Awareness** of the problem combined with the practice of **New Actions** over the course of time.

**C = A + NA**