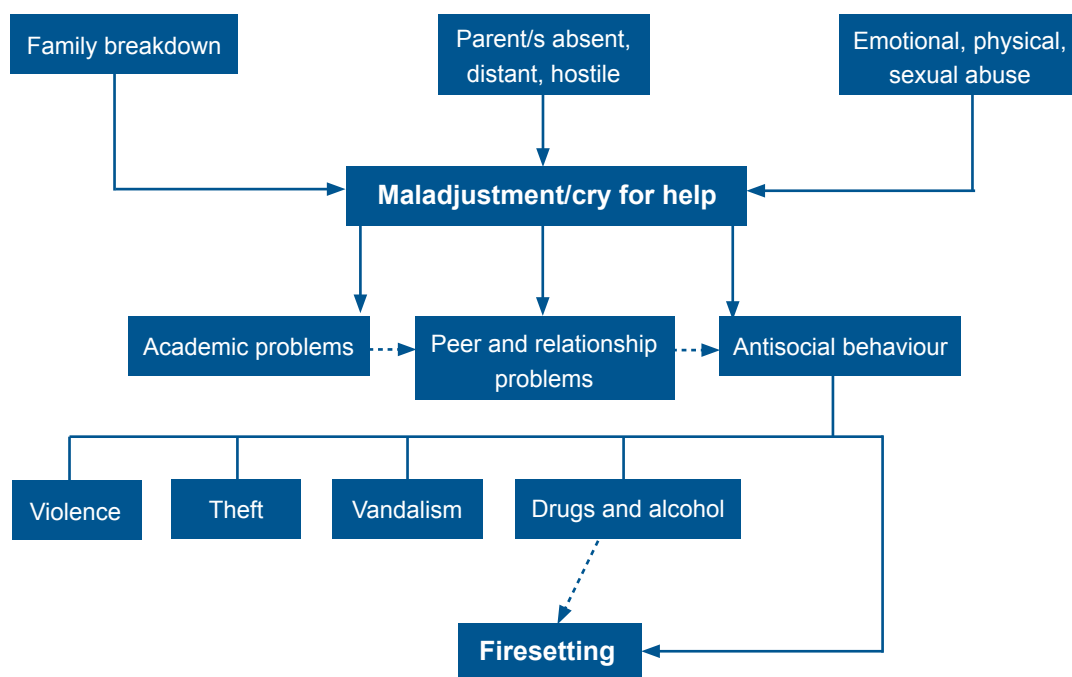


Motives for committing arson: part 2 – children firesetters

Firesetting by children differs in some fundamental ways from adult firesetting. Understanding some of the factors behind child firesetting can help prevent firesetting behaviour becoming established and may stop more serious fires being lit as the child grows up. Many children play with fire to some extent and most fires started by children are accidents resulting from fireplay or experimentation. A small group of children engage in problematic firesetting and a few go on to light fires regularly. Child problem firesetters are typically characterised by deeply troubled family backgrounds, often involving family breakdown and where one or more parents are absent, distant or hostile. Many children who engage in firesetting have been emotionally and physically abused or neglected. Many have been sexually abused. Abusive and troubled backgrounds can lead to problems with schooling, difficulties with peer relationships and a range of antisocial behaviours, including firesetting.



Source: Willis M 2004 *The invisible hand: bushfire arson in Australia*. Presentation to the 1st annual Bushfire CRC conference, Perth 7–9 October 2004 <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/PDF%20Files/conf%202004/willis%20handout.pdf>

For more information:

Willis M 2004. *Bushfire arson: a review of the literature*. Research and public policy series no 61. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology