

Family Roles **In Addiction & Codependency**

Though often unrealized, help for codependency, alcohol and drug addiction should many time be a family affair. As people read through the addiction family roles presented they can often identify the person in their life who plays each role. Roles though present in situations without addiction, often become more apparent when an addict is present. Members will unknowingly take on specific stereotypes that can many times be classified as:

The Addict.
The Hero.
The Mascot.
The Lost Child.
The Scapegoat.
The Caretaker (Enabler).

The following information on each role, defines how many people are instructed when taking basic steps to begin overcoming roles individually. Each role is given a brief description for understanding one basis of family addiction recovery. A summary follows with information on how and why the roles lead to codependency.

Addiction and the Family Role 1, The Addict

The person with the addiction is the center, and though the key to alcohol and drug addiction recovery, not necessarily the most important in family recovery. The "world" revolves around this person, causing the addict to become the center of attention. As the roles are defined, the others unconsciously take on the rest of the roles to complete the balance after the problem has been introduced. Recovery many times on this person.

Addiction and the Family Role 2, The Hero

The **Hero** is the one who needs to make the family, and role players, look good. They ignore the problem and present things in a positive manner as if the roles within the family did not exist. The Hero is the perfectionist. If they overcome this role they can play an important part in the addiction recovery process.

The underlying feelings are fear, guilt, and shame.

Addiction and the Family Role 3, The Mascot

The **Mascot's** role is that of the jester. They will often make inappropriate jokes about the those involved. Though they do bring humor to the family roles, it is often harmful humor, and they sometimes hinder addiction recovery.

The underlying feelings are embarrassment, shame, and anger.

Addiction and the Family Role 4, The Lost Child

The **Lost Child** is the silent, "out of the way" family member, and will never mention alcohol or recovery. They are quiet and reserved, careful to not make problems. The Lost Child gives up self needs and makes efforts to avoid any conversation regarding the underlying roles.

The underlying feelings are guilt, loneliness, neglect, and anger.

Addiction and the Family Role 5, The Scapegoat

The **Scapegoat** often acts out in front of others. They will rebel, make noise, and divert attention from the person who is addicted and their need for help in addiction recovery. The Scapegoat covers or draws attention away from the real problem.

The underlying feelings are shame, guilt, and empty.

Addiction and the Family Role 6, The Caretaker (Enabler)

The **Caretaker (Enabler)** makes all the other roles possible. They try to keep everyone happy and the family in balance, void of the issue. They make excuses for all behaviors and actions, and never mention addiction recovery or getting help. The Caretaker (Enabler) presents a situation without problems to the public.

The underlying feelings are inadequacy, fear, and helplessness.

As with any recovery, it is sometimes necessary and helpful to gather information, to better understand what others are seeing or feeling. For a family, information and help must be sought for the whole family before the recovery can be complete. Information and understanding may be all that are necessary to bring about recovery, but a specialist might also be necessary, since there may be grief and loss to overcome in the process. The quiz section outlines some of the negative effects roles have and leads into codependency.

Addiction and the Family Roles - A Short Quiz

Healthy Family System:

Self worth is high.

Communication is direct, clear, specific and honest and feelings are expressed.

Rules are human, flexible and appropriate to change.

It is natural to link and be open to society.

Each person has goals and plans to get there, and should be supported by the family.

Rules in a dependent or addicted family

Dependents use of drug is the most important thing in a family life.
Drug use is not the cause of family problems, it is denial which is the root.
Blaming others, don't make mention of it, covering up, alibis, loyalty of family enables.
Nobody may discuss problem outside the family.
Nobody says what they feel or think.

If the second set of rules describes your family, please continue.

Family Roles Lead to Codependency

Addiction and the Family Roles How they lead to Codependency

The parts played by family members lead to codependency. Members make decisions concerning what the other person needs. Codependency leads to aversion and lack of self orientation in a situation where an addiction is present. Ultimately people "become" the part they are playing.

The goal in alcohol and drug addiction recovery is to bring each member as a whole into a situation where the problems can be dealt with. Individual talents and abilities should be integrated into the situation, allowing emotional honesty about the situation, without guilt or punishment.

*** The overall goal in overcoming codependency is to make each person whole.**

People become familiar with and dependent on the role they play in families. In overcoming the family roles, you will begin to overcome issues, and what could be classified as the addiction to the role. While the conquering of the substance is important to the person with the addiction. A point to remember is the substance(s) is not the key to family recovery, removing the underlying roles are.

In beginning recovery, each family member must become proactive against the addiction to the role, and learn to become their true self. The goal is for each person to become independent, and then approach the substance addiction recovery as a group of individuals, rather than as people playing a part. Whole, independent people can freely contribute to the recovery of the person overcoming the addiction, while a person playing a part can only perform the role.

Starting Points:

Begin with yourself.

Find, and write a list of your strengths and weaknesses.

Build on what you have.

Let go of trying to be perfect and realize all people have some weaknesses.

*** A true person utilizes strengths, while building up their weaknesses.**

Addiction recovery for the codependent role, is tough. You must be personally honest and decide what you like or dislike. This may be as simple as defining how you wish things were, without playing the part, and adding support or friends in areas, or as encompassing as rethinking the path of your life.

Refraining from forcing yourself to engage in activities, because of the codependency, is important to successful recovery from the addiction. There are many resources for codependent roles and overcoming these roles. Please, be honest in deciding if you have an addiction to a specific role in a relationship and find resources to help you in your recovery.

As you begin to understand, breaking the family role should become easier. Remember to be understanding of others also.