



takes on roles to deal with the dysfunction. Children who grow up in addicted/dysfunctional families tend to follow designated roles as the family acts out the drama of addiction/dysfunction. Children develop these roles due to family dynamics. For a child in dysfunctional household, he or she will usually only fulfill one role. In a more functioning household, children often move fluidly between roles.

All of these roles have positive traits; for instance, it's admirable to get good grades and help around the house (hero traits), but problems can occur if functioning in one of these roles becomes too dominating, obsessive, a pressure, gets the child in trouble, or it can have a limiting effect, not allowing the person to be a unique individual or express their own particular set of skills, talents and abilities. Counseling can help a child to draw out the good traits they possess and work at overcoming the hindering traits.

<http://www.kathyradina.com/art/art35.html>

<http://www.opengrove.com/downloads/news/volume03/news03i02.pdf>

**The Star** the addict or main cause of family dysfunction

**Chief Enabler.** The chief enabler is person who makes the addict's life work. They generally absorb the consequences of the addict's behavior. While the *chief enabler* is usually the other parent, it is not uncommon to have children fulfilling this role by working jobs to provide for the family, buying drugs or alcohol for the addicted parent, and enabling the addict to continue in his or her addiction.

*Inside, the chief enabler feels very out of control. Their life revolves around the addict and the addict's behavior. Because the chief enabler lives in response to another person, they are unable to live out their own wishes and dreams.*

**Hero.** The family hero is the so-called "perfect child". He tends to be responsible, respectful, successful in school and probably even well dressed. On the outside he can look; capable, talented, conservative, serious, trustworthy, strong, superior, creative, busy, arrogant or angelic. This child makes the family look good, and families like to look good. The message is "How can anything be wrong with a family (with) a child like this?" This child fulfills the family values. If the family values emphasize the need for advanced education and careers, this child will be the perfect student. If the family values are criminal in nature, this child will become a professional criminal. Addicted parents often brag about the *hero* child.

*Inside, the hero feels tremendous pressure to achieve. It feels as if the entire family is depending on them to be successful. They will often put aside their needs in order to achieve. This child is particularly vulnerable to addiction due to the disconnection from himself. The Hero often feels; anxious, inadequate, terrified of failure, angry, sad, lonely, worthless, ashamed or numb. To help yourself or someone you know break out of having to play the role of The Hero, you will need;*

1. Permission to make mistakes and not be "perfect".
2. Opportunities to express feelings and needs.
3. Opportunities to play

**Scapegoat/Rebel.** This is the problem child; the child who absorbs the family conflict. As a young child, the scapegoat might be blamed for things that he cannot control. This teaches the child that they will be in trouble no matter what they do. Therefore, by adolescence, the *scapegoat* acts out the family anger through aggressive acts, criminal behavior and difficulties in school. This child seems to always be in trouble. He helps the family by taking the focus off the families' problems and pulling negative attention onto himself. On the outside they often look; angry, sullen, strong, rebellious, wild, defiant, rude, tough or mouthy.

*Inside, the scapegoat feels hopeless and trapped. There is very little this child can do without getting into trouble. The scapegoat believes that something is wrong with him. He often feels; hurt, afraid to trust, rejected by the family, misunderstood, hopeless, blamed or betrayed. To help yourself or someone you know break out of this role, you will need:*

1. Permission to be successful.
2. Supportive confirmation.
3. Structure and consistency

**Mascot (Clown).** This is the fun and funny child. They are the life of the party. In fact, many family occasions cannot begin until the mascot arrives. The mascot child often "lights up" the room. The goal of the family mascot is to break the tension and lighten the mood with humor or antics. He is usually "the cute one." On the outside The Mascot may look; funny, carefree, attention seeking, charming, light-hearted, dramatic, lovable, needy, manipulative or immature.

*Inside, the mascot is terrified of family conflict. This child feels responsible for everyone getting along and will often intercede in family arguments with jokes to distract from the argument. While popular in school, this child struggles with any form of intimate relationship due to their fear of conflict. On the inside he often feels; terrified, needy, confused, ashamed, left out, helpless, dependent, angry, guilty, lonely or insecure. To help yourself or someone you know break out of this role, you will need;*

1. To be taken seriously.
2. To hear that your opinions count.
3. Support and validation of feelings.

**Lost (Forgotten) Child.** The Lost Child is often left places or otherwise forgotten. In turn, this child becomes involved in their own world of books, fantasy or television. A lost child may have an entire world filled with friends and activities that the family knows nothing about. The Lost Child is usually known as "the quiet one" or "the dreamer". He stays out of the way of problems and spends a lot of time alone. Everything seems fine in his life, so things can't be too bad in the family. On the outside he looks; quiet, creative, independent, agreeable, artistic, musical, soft-hearted, invisible, soft-spoken, lost in a book, and certainly avoidant of conflict. He strives to go unnoticed during family conflict so anger is never directed at him.

*Inside, the lost child feels very sad and alone. She is invisible to almost everyone in the family. Often, in adulthood, the lost child may completely disconnect from the family literally creating her own world. The Lost Child often feels; left out, lonely, angry, fragile, sad, isolated, powerless, scared, confused, unnecessary, depressed or suicidal. To help yourself or someone you know break out of this role, you will need;*

1. Positive attention.
2. Encouragement to take chances.
3. To feel connected to other people.