



Handout Module 2: Family Dynamics of Alcohol and Other Drugs



Roles in the Addicted Family

Addiction is a very serious problem in society today and has been for many decades. Family roles and addiction go hand in hand. Family members play a role in one of the member's addiction to either alcohol or drugs. When a family is dysfunctional, each member assumes different roles to cope.

- **The Chief Enabler** is caring, compassionate, empathic, good listener, sensitive to others, giving, and has a nice smile.
- **The Family Hero** has a specific role to follow. The classic function of the family hero is to make the family look good. Others may get into trouble with drugs or alcohol. But the family hero decides not to go that route. The family hero gets a college degree, a good job, and makes the decision to stay clean and out of trouble. There are both positive and negative attributes in this situation.
- **The Family Mascot** has a well-defined function in taking the onus off the serious issue of alcoholism. By providing daily mega doses of humor, the family mascot keeps everyone laughing and enables the family to keep up one happy facade. Everything is alright as long as we're having fun with the family mascot in the front row.
- **The Scapegoat** identified as the "family problem." They are likely to get into various kinds of trouble, including drug and alcohol abuse, as a way of expressing their anger at the family. They also function as a sort of pressure valve. When tension builds in the family, the scapegoat will misbehave as a way of relieving pressure while allowing the family to avoid dealing with the drinking problem. Scapegoats tend to be unaware of feelings other than anger.
- **The Lost Child** copes with the chaos of their families in inappropriate ways. They learn never to expect or to plan anything. They often strive to be invisible and to avoid taking a stand or rocking the boat. As a result, they often come to feel that they are drifting through life and are out of control.



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