

# **The Family Solution Finder**

## **Study Guide**



### **Part 1**

Learn About the Family Dynamic

### **Seminar # 2**

The Different roles of a Family

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## ***Practical Exercise # Two***    *Match the role with each family member*

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**The Substance Misuser:** Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

We generally characterize the Dependent as the focal point within the greater spectrum of dysfunctional family roles. As they slide farther down the scale and lose themselves in substance misuse, the family's trajectory alters course. Family members change their behaviors, whether willingly or unwillingly, to accommodate the Dependent's lifestyle. For some, this means enabling. A family member may find themselves lying to family friends or cancelling obligations to bail their loved one out of a jam. Other family members react more harshly, sometimes even cutting off all contact with the Dependent. At either extreme, this changes the whole of the family dynamic.

Naturally, the Dependent faces the most obvious struggles in recovery. In fact, some might even say they benefit from the existence of such a clear-cut role. They often needn't do much soul-searching to arrive at the conclusion that their behaviors must change. (Obviously, there are exceptions, and not all Dependents succeed in recovery or even attempt it.) The Dependent will still need to identify certain behavior patterns if they wish to achieve a full recovery. At the onset, however, the problematic aspects of this dysfunction will appear far more tangibly than those stemming from other dysfunctional family roles.

What behavior are you observing that shows this is their role:

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**The Enabler:** Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

Also known as the caretaker, we can identify at least one primary similarity between the Caretaker and the Dependent: the bulk of their daily lives seem to revolve around drugs and alcohol.

Common behaviors of the Caretaker may include posting bail after an arrest, making excuses for their addicted loved one's behavior, and looking after the Dependent's basic needs when intoxication prevents the Dependent from doing so themselves. Caretakers generally suffer from codependency, which affects their relationships with all members of the household.

They often facilitate—and sometimes encourage, whether purposefully or not—all dysfunctional family roles. Heaping praise upon the Hero, enabling the Problem Child's behaviors, falling prey to the Mastermind's manipulation, etc. We usually think of the Caretaker as a spouse or parent. In some cases, however, the chemical dependency of an adult in the household may necessitate that one of the children step up to fill this role. In such cases, the Caretaker may fit the roles of both Hero and Lost Child. They work to keep the family together but grow up feeling as if they never got to experience a true childhood.

This may lead to feelings of bitterness and resentment. Fear and inadequacy also tend to characterize the Caretaker, especially those who blame themselves for the Dependent's suffering.

**QUESTION TO CONSIDER:**

- Does the enabler facilitate the roles of other family members? If yes, how will you address this with them?
- What actions are they taking that create enabling?
- Do they blame themselves for the dependent's suffering?

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The Hero: Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

The Caretaker might make excuses for the Dependent, but the Hero is ultimately the one who does the best job of bringing esteem to the family. Heroes work hard to demonstrate responsibility, seeking achievement in any form possible. Younger Heroes will often find numerous extracurricular activities at school, while working in their free time. The family may rarely see the Hero due to the sheer amount of time they spend adding to their roster of accomplishments.

Despite outward appearances, the Hero suffers as much internal strife as any of the other dysfunctional family roles. Due to their hard-working lifestyle and extreme perfectionism, Heroes suffer high levels of stress. The constant struggle for achievement, the drive to set themselves apart from the family's dysfunction, essentially becomes its own addiction. Much like the Caretaker, the Hero often develops major control issues. They seek validation by trying to control the world around them. To some extent, they may succeed in this. But as each accomplishment fails to provide true inner peace, they respond by working even harder. Eventually, the Hero may take on too much or spread themselves too thin. This leads to extreme feelings of guilt and shame when the Hero finally takes on a task they cannot accomplish and must come to grips with failure.

Relationships between the Hero and other family members sometimes become volatile. The Hero may resent the Dependent or Problem Child, blaming them for the family's struggles. They may even blame the Caretaker for allowing this to happen. In many cases, the Hero feels stuck in their lifestyle simply because nobody else is stepping up to the plate. They may feel as if the family's burdens rest upon their shoulders. Left unresolved, these inflated feelings of self-importance may lead to a difficult life of constant overwork.

**QUESTION TO CONSIDER:**

- Is their volatility between the hero and other family members?
- Is there a sharing of the responsibilities or does the hero do it all? If Yes, how will you change this?

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The Scapegoat: Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

Many define the Scapegoat in the same manner as we defined the Problem Child above, particularly regarding those who draw attention away from the Dependent's behavior. They characterize this as an effort to protect their addicted family member, possibly out of feelings of guilt or shame. But in *Not My Kid: A Family's Guide to Kids and Drugs*—which precedes Wegscheider-Cruse's book by about five years—authors Beth Polson and Dr. Miller Newton define the Scapegoat as a family member who often does nothing to earn their role within the family's dysfunction.

In this take on dysfunctional family roles, the Scapegoat suffers misplaced blame for the behaviors of others in the family. Rather than a Problem Child who diverts attention, this definition casts the Scapegoat as an individual who generally exhibits relative stability and emotional health compared to the rest of the household. Nonetheless, they may receive blame for the Dependent's behaviors if even tangentially connected to them. "How could you allow this to happen?" "Why didn't you say something sooner?" In some cases, they may even receive blame for events in which they did not participate by any action or inaction, and in fact did not even know about until they found themselves drawn into the conflict as wrongly accused culprit.

The Scapegoat will sometimes grow to believe others' perceptions of them. The guilt with which they have been unjustly saddled will characterize future relationships by causing frequent feelings of inferiority and self-loathing. By contrast, some Scapegoats who recognize their unfair treatment may struggle with trust issues. And due to the complexities of human behavior, some Scapegoats will find themselves regularly torn between both extremes.

In a dysfunctional way, the scapegoat will bring the entire family together. The addicted family system comes together so that they can feel better about whom they are in comparison to what the scapegoat is doing. Having a scapegoat to look at keeps everyone in the family from facing their [own problems or addictions](#). Any anger or frustration that is felt over the addiction will be released onto the scapegoat inadvertently.

**QUESTION TO CONSIDER:**

- Is there misplaced blame for the dependent's behavior.
- Are they believing the unjustly assigned guilt?
- Are they showing trust issues?

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The Mastermind: Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

Much like the Problem Child, the Mastermind may fail to appear on most addiction-centered breakdowns of dysfunctional family roles due to the sheer assumption that the Dependent usually takes up this mantle. We associate the Mastermind with manipulation and opportunism, traits sometimes employed by Dependents to hide or facilitate their continued use. From the standpoint of the Caretaker, and occasionally the Scapegoat, the Dependent fills this role.

The Mastermind, however, sometimes occupies a much more complex space within the overall family dynamic. Some Masterminds put on the façade of other dysfunctional family roles at will, depending upon the aims they seek to achieve. Usually, however, the Mastermind simply observes the behaviors exhibited by the rest of the family, using them to their advantage. They may use the diversions of the Problem Child or Scapegoat to engage in their own misbehavior. Or they may take advantage of the Caretaker's enabling nature to fulfill desires that might otherwise be denied to them.

We should clarify that, while the above description casts the Mastermind almost as a villain, they don't necessarily act with nefarious intent. Sometimes, in the wake of the chaos caused by competing dysfunctional family roles, opportunism may seem the only way to meet their needs.

**QUESTION TO CONSIDER:**

- Is this person showing signs of manipulation? If yes, how will you address this trait?

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The Mascot: Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

All the dysfunctional family roles share one thing in common—regardless of their outlook on the situation, they usually take the Dependent's addiction seriously. The same can be said of the Mascot; however, you wouldn't necessarily know it.

The Mascot often cracks jokes or finds other ways of trying to provide entertainment. They do so to alleviate the family's stress, although sometimes this may backfire. Particularly insensitive jokes or immature antics will sometimes test others' patience. When their jokes are poorly received, this often only heightens their fear and causes them to double down with more humor. On such occasions, the Mascot may briefly switch roles and become the Scapegoat. Eventually, when things calm down, they return to their role as the family jester.

Much like the Hero, the Mascot's outward appearance masks deep-seated insecurities. They use their sense of humor as a defense mechanism to put off dealing with pain, fear, or any other sort of emotional discomfort that might cause them trouble. As a result, these feelings remain

unprocessed and unresolved. Mascots find themselves in a state of arrested emotional development, unable to cope properly with negative emotions.

Their sense of humor becomes their most defining characteristic, and they fear that any failure on their part to maintain it may result in abandonment. And so while their antics may gain them some popularity (both inside and outside the family), this popularity feels cheap.

The Mascot becomes isolated within a sea of people who enjoy their company, yet don't really know them as anything other than a walking laugh factory.

#### QUESTION TO CONSIDER:

- Are you observing traits of insecurities?
- Does this person make inappropriate, insensitive comments or jokes?

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The Lost Child: Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

Each of the above dysfunctional family roles manifests through action. The Lost Child stands apart, in that we characterize this role primarily by inaction. Those who fit into this role try hard not to rock the boat. They may never mention the Dependent's behavior, perhaps even going out of their way to avoid family discussions about it. Introverted and inconspicuous, the Lost Child may take this role by choice. Many times, however, the Lost Child is as their title implies—someone whose needs were simply neglected.

Since we characterize the Lost Child by their neglected needs, they may easily fit into many of the other dysfunctional family roles. A Lost Child who gets fed up and angry with their role may wear the mask of Problem Child for a day, simply to take the spotlight for a short period of time. The Hero may identify as the Lost Child if they feel the rest of the family does not acknowledge their achievements. Sometimes the Lost Child plays the role of Scapegoat, disappearing from the family's radar until they become entangled in a family dispute against their will. Usually, however, the Lost Child simply stays out of the way. In a dysfunctional household, the Lost Child feels it safer to remain neither seen nor heard.

Even when the Lost Child assumes their role by choice, they may still resent the family for their neglect. Lost Children often grow up feeling ostracized, lonely and inadequate. They assume their neglect must result from some sort of personal failing. That something must be wrong with them, or else they would

receive the love they deserve. This lack of esteem may lead to dangerous behaviors later on, such as self-harm or a tendency to become involved in abusive relationships.

**QUESTION TO CONSIDER:**

- Does this person show signs of resentment?
- Do they seem inactive in the on goings of the family discussions?

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## The Story



**ASSIGNMENT VIDEO:** On [www.youtube.com/](http://www.youtube.com/)

**Search Title:** Dysfunctional Families 01

**Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8lQ6gDlQs>

**Duration:** 7:40min

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*Practical Exercise # One: Dysfunctional Families 01*

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1. What are the common family (shame bound) frailties in your family?
2. Are you seeing a power vacuum in your family? What does it look like?
3. What are your family rules?

## The Story



**ASSIGNMENT VIDEO:** On [www.youtube.com/](http://www.youtube.com/)

**Search Title:** Codependency: The Chemical Dependent Family

**Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0e5gZfkVcg>

**Duration:** 12:00min

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### *Practical Exercise # Three: FAMILY MEMBER ROLES WORKSHEET*

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State an example of a family wide issue being presented to the family unit. Use this issue for each family member and state how that family member is likely to respond to this family wide issue.

**WHAT ISSUE IS OUR FAMILY IS FACING:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mother:** What role is she playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will she likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Father:** What role is he playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will he likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Sibling One:** What role are they playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will they likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Sibling Two:** What role are they playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will they likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Extended Family System:

List Extended Members: What role are they playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will they likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue.

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Take this seminar content and apply it to the development of the "Family Master Plan of Action".

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### *Practical Exercise #1 Match the role with each family member*

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**The Substance Misuser:** Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

We generally characterize the Dependent as the focal point within the greater spectrum of dysfunctional family roles. As they slide farther down the scale and lose themselves in substance misuse, the family's trajectory alters course. Family members change their behaviors, whether willingly or unwillingly, to accommodate the Dependent's lifestyle. For some, this means enabling. A family member may find themselves lying to family friends or cancelling obligations to bail their loved one out of a jam. Other family members react more harshly, sometimes even cutting off all contact with the Dependent. At either extreme, this changes the whole of the family dynamic.

Naturally, the Dependent faces the most obvious struggles in recovery. In fact, some might even say they benefit from the existence of such a clear-cut role. They often needn't do much soul-searching to arrive at the conclusion that their behaviors must change. (Obviously, there are exceptions, and not all Dependents succeed in recovery or even attempt it.) The Dependent will still need to identify certain behavior patterns if they wish to achieve a full recovery. At the onset, however, the problematic aspects of this dysfunction will appear far more tangibly than those stemming from other dysfunctional family roles.

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This may lead to feelings of bitterness and resentment. Fear and inadequacy also tend to characterize the Caretaker, especially those who blame themselves for the Dependent's suffering.

**QUESTION TO CONSIDER:**

- Does the enabler facilitate the roles of other family members? If yes, how will you address this with them?
- What actions are they taking that create enabling?
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**QUESTION TO CONSIDER:**

- Are you observing traits of insecurities?
- Does this person make inappropriate, insensitive comments or jokes?

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The Lost Child: Family Member Name \_\_\_\_\_

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**QUESTION TO CONSIDER:**

- Does this person show signs of resentment?
- Do they seem inactive in the on goings of the family discussions?

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## The Story



**ASSIGNMENT VIDEO:** On [www.youtube.com/](http://www.youtube.com/)

**Search Title:** Family Dynamics of Addiction AliCEUs Counseling Education Jun 2, 2016

**Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaM1k9VKVes>

**Duration:** 48:23min



[AliCEUs Counseling Education](#)

Published on Jun 2, 2016

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AliCEUs provides counseling education and CEs for LPCs, LMHCs, LMFTs and LCSWs as well as addiction counselor precertification training and continuing education.

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## *Practical Exercise # 2 FAMILY MEMBER ROLES WORKSHEET*

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State an example of a family wide issue being presented to the family unit. Use this issue for each family member and state how that family member is likely to respond to this family wide issue.

**WHAT ISSUE IS OUR FAMILY IS FACING:** \_\_\_\_\_

(i.e theft to support addiction)

**Mother:** What role is she playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will she likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue

\_\_\_\_\_

**Father:** What role is he playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will he likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue

\_\_\_\_\_

**Sibling One:** What role are they playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will they likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue

\_\_\_\_\_

**Sibling Two:** What role are they playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will they likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue

\_\_\_\_\_

**Extended Family System:**

**List Extended Members:** What role are they playing \_\_\_\_\_. How will they likely act when addressing \_\_\_\_\_ issue.

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Take this seminar content and apply it to the development of the "Family Master Plan of Action".

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### *Family or Group Discussions (Ref: Study Guide & Workbook)*

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1. How would you describe the obstacles of Denial, Enabling and Codependency from Seminar # 1 (The Family is a System) created by the roles each family member assumes in responding to the impact in your family dynamic? (ref: study guidebook)
2. Why is knowing the roles of family members, valuable? (ref: workbook)
3. In what way are internal obstacles a part of your family system? (ref: study guidebook)
4. In what way can an issue impacting the family come from both internal and external sources be influenced by a role a family member is playing? (ref: workbook)
5. Attach an observed family members behavior to their assigned roles.

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### *MASTER FAMILY PLAN OF ACTION FOR: "FAMILY IS A SYSTEM"*

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1. **Identify which of the seven characteristic patterns of interaction may exist in your family.**
2. **Our Family will need to first understand each member role.**
3. **The family members will use an issue to then determine what will be the likely response from each member, given the role they play.**



# Stay Connected

You do not have to go through this alone. Here are five ways to stay connected.

1. Email Us: [familiesimpactedbyopioids@gmail.com](mailto:familiesimpactedbyopioids@gmail.com)
2. Visit our Website: [www.familiesimpactedbyopioids.com](http://www.familiesimpactedbyopioids.com)
3. Connect with Us Linked-In: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/roypoillon>
4. Follow Us on Facebook: families impacted by opioids public group
5. [www.Youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) Channel Subscribe with Us: The Solution Finder Roy Poillon

Or be old fashion and just call us: 440.385.7605 Cleveland, Ohio

To purchase our books: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) search Roy Poillon