

Dysfunctional Family Roles

| Dysfunctional Family Role | What's on the outside | What you don't see | What they do for the family and why they play along | Without help this is very possible | What is possible with help |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|
| Hero | Perfect, can't be wrong, gets positive attention, awards, degrees | Fear of Failing, over-controlled | Family feels we are not so bad, because this person is so good. The Hero likes the extra power and attention | Workaholic, Physical illness, Controlling, Not much fun Prideful, Shameless | Achievement oriented vs. Success Has learned to say no and not be so perfect, can get in touch with the "bad" stuff |
| Scapegoat | "Bad," angry, impulsive, never good enough, "Black Sheep" of family, Doesn't fit in | Hurt, rejection, full of shame, feels like a loser | Marriage is brought together to "fix" the scapegoat. Hero feels "good" because scapegoat is "bad." We can avoid our "bad" stuff by downloading it onto the scapegoat. | Addictive, trouble with law, promiscuous, "chip on shoulder," continuing to play the role in jobs and future relationships, constantly in trouble | Can learn to be good and feel good, learns to take appropriate risks, business owners, missionary types |
| Lost Child | Ignored, quiet, invisible, loves animals, material possessions, artistic, sometimes has learning disabilities | Frozen feelings, can't express feelings, lonely | The family feels, "at least we don't have to worry about this kid" | Doesn't share opinions, doesn't feel needed—can die early because of this | Talented and creative, can learn to participate and share wisdom that the achieve by being quieter, good listeners, feels needed and connected with time |
| Clown or Mascot | Funny, hysterical, anything for a laugh, cute, immature | Hides pain with humor, scared, feels inadequate | They bring comic relief to the family. Helps the family avoid issues. | Continues to build up pain, lets others tell them what to do too much, too much of a follower, never grows up | Can feel range of emotion, can use laughter in good ways, learns to take the lead more, grows up into more responsibility |

Additional Notes: Sometimes Hero and Scapegoat switch roles over time. You can have two Heroes if the family has a large gap between children. It can also happen when the first two children are a boy hero and a girl hero. The healthier the family, the less these roles are written in cement. The more dysfunctional, the more difficult it is to get out of these roles. One needs to see ones own behavior, thoughts and feelings as part of the role and then step out of the role.