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CHILDREN'S ROLE IDENTIFICATION IN THE DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

ROLE & PURPOSE

HERO

Provides a change of focus for the family; Brings self-esteem into it. Usually is the oldest child.

CHARACTERISTICS

- Gets good grades; perfectionist
- Over-involved in activities
- Good relationships with authority figures
- Pleasing
- Volunteers often
- Very successful; High achiever
- Feels(s) he is always missing the mark; not good enough
- Follows intellectual pursuits to achieve recognition
- Intellectualizes; disregards feelings
- Extreme feelings of shame

WHAT TO DO

- Help child lessen need to be perfect
- Develop the courage to be imperfect
- Help the child decrease the need to be responsible for everyone and everything; learn to concentrate on responsibility for self
- Help the child learn to value self instead of accomplishments
- Stress the value & enjoyment of cooperation and sharing
- **HELP THE CHILD LEARN TO ACCEPT FAILURE!**

SCAPEGOAT

Provides a change of focus by being thought of as the source of the family's problems. Usually the second child.

- Troublemaker; disruptive
- Academically borderline
- Dishonest; argumentative; blames others
- Attention seeking; negative leader
- Unwilling to take responsibility
- Poor relationships with authority figures
- Feels hurt, guilty

- Disengage the child from the power struggle; be calm
- Avoid expressing shock or disgust
- Let the child experience consequences of behavior
- Give opportunities for the child to use power appropriately
- **BE FAIR – BUT FIRM!**

MASCOT

Takes the focus off family by using humor. Usually one of the younger children.

- Has lots of friends; spends little time at home
- Goes "with the flow"; short attention span
- Exaggerated, often inappropriate emotional response; avoids angry confrontations
- Disowns responsibility; attracts attention
- Gets into trouble, but not the malicious kind

- Help child humor appropriately
- Help child learn to take care of self
- Help child manage need for attention
- Be consistent & firm; do not coax, remind, reward; use natural and logical consequences
- **DO NOT REINFORCE HUMOR BY LAUGHING AT HIM/HER!**

LOST CHILD

Provides relief for family; one child not to worry about; often the middle child.

- Pleasant when spoken to; passive
- Quiet, easily overlooked
- No opinions or expression of emotions
- Causes no attention to self
- Avoids close relationships; loner
- Withdraws into own world; distant
- Uncomfortable with any kind of attention
- Does nothing to draw attention to self

- Help the child use creativity and imagination
- Respond with nonpublic encouragement or praise
- Avoid pampering
- Don't criticize
- Encourage anything positive
- Provide success experiences
- **DON'T GIVE UP!**

Reviewed 6/09

OVER FOR FAMILY ROLES



Resource from NCADA's RADAR library. For more information visit our website at www.ncada-stl.org. For questions on substance use, abuse and related problems, call NCADA's Help Line at (314) 962-3456.