

Addiction in the Family System

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Learning Objectives

- Explore the impact substance use has on a family dynamic
- Understand family roles in families where a loved one is addicted
- Demonstrate understanding of the positive and negative aspects of each family role
- Explore the connection between family roles and co-dependent relationships





Addiction

- According to the CDC:
 - In 2016, 48.5 million Americans used illicit drugs or misused prescription drugs.
 - Opioid overdose visits to the emergency department increased by 30% from July 2016 to September 2017.
 - Sales of—and deaths from—prescription opioids have nearly quadrupled in the United States since 1999.
 - An average of 6 people die from alcohol poisoning in the US each day—and 76% of these are middle-aged adults.
 - Binge drinking results in \$171 billion a year in healthcare-related costs and lowered employee productivity.

Where does addition start?

- **Biology:** The genes that people are born with account for about 60% of a person's risk for addiction.
- **Environment:** A person's environment includes many different influences, from family and friends to economic status and general quality of life.
- **Development:** Genetic and environmental factors interact with critical developmental stages in a person's life to affect addiction risk. Although taking drugs at any age can lead to addiction, the earlier that drug use begins, the more likely it will progress to addiction.

Substance Use ,Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation

- In 2013, among persons aged 12 or older, the rate of substance dependence was higher among American Indians or Alaska Natives (AI/AN) than any other population group.
- Combined 2003 to 2011 data, indicates that African Americans were less likely than persons of other racial and ethnic groups to need alcohol use treatment in the past year but more likely to need illicit drug use treatment.
- According to SAMHSA, in 2010, Latinos and Latinas between the ages of 18 to 25 had high rates of past month binge drinking (35.8 percent) and illicit drug use (14.6 percent).
- In 2015, an estimated 15.1% of L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+ adults had an alcohol or illicit drug use disorder in the past year.
- Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) encompasses the following racial groups: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian. In comparison to the general population, alcohol use and illicit drug use have generally been found to be less prevalent among AANHPI populations.

Family Roles

- Families are organized around roles, rules, rituals, boundaries, and hierarchy.
- Each member of a family establishes a certain role within the family dynamic.
- Children take on two roles: one dominant and the other auxiliary.
- A child's birth order often influences their dominant role.
- The role(s) a child takes on in their family of origin is one of the major forces that shapes who a child becomes.

Family Dynamics and Addiction

- These roles and the dynamic of the family get distorted when a family member struggles with addiction.
- When addiction hits the home, members of the family begin to take on roles they were never intended to assume.
- Shame controls families that harbor addicts in their midst.
- The natural reaction of families is to keep the problem a secret.

3 Rules of Addiction

Don't Talk

Don't Trust

Don't Feel

Addict's Family Survival Roles



Hero

- This person is usually the oldest child in the family.
- They will typically be model students and, later, very career-oriented.
- In families wrecked by shame and guilt over addiction, this family member is a source of pride.
- This child may take on the responsibilities of a parent and become the family breadwinner and emotional support.

Positives/Negatives of Hero Role

| Positives: | Negatives: |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Independent | Fears rejection |
| Organized | Perfectionist |
| Successful | Unable to play |
| Survivor | Unreasonably high expectations |
| Leader | Inflexible |

Scapegoat

- Considered the troublesome child in the family dynamic.
- They deal with their frustrations by acting out, causing trouble, and going outside the family to find satisfaction.
- This person's bad behavior can be acknowledged by family members – unlike that of the addict.
- This child also provides family members with a focus that enables them to avoid facing their own problems. In a situation at the breaking point with stress over the addict's behavior, the scapegoat becomes a means of releasing anger and frustration.

Positives/Negatives of Scapegoat

| Positives: | Negatives: |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Many friends | Often chemically dependent |
| Exciting Life | Irresponsible |
| Adapts easily | Manipulative |
| Fun loving | Passive Aggressive |
| Handles stress well | Lies |

Lost Child

- This role is assumed by the child who has decided that the best way of surviving in a home with addiction is to keep a low profile.
- The lost child goes unnoticed and can disappear for hours.
- Due to being "out of sight, they are also out of mind", and usually feel unimportant.
- This family member deals with addiction in the family by pretending it doesn't exist.

Positives/Negatives of Lost Child

| Positives: | Negatives: |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Creative | Isolated |
| Well-read | Lacks social skills |
| Resourceful | Low self-esteem |
| Enjoys solitude | Mistrusts |
| Good listener | Fantasizes |

Mascot

- Often the youngest child in the family assumes this role.
- This is the child who is coddled and is a source of joy for other family members.
- The older siblings have a tendency to want to protect this child.
- Yet despite all the efforts to protect this child from the truth, they cannot help but discover over time that something is drastically wrong with the family dynamic.

Positives/Negatives of Mascot

| Positives: | Negatives: |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Sense of humor | Never taken seriously |
| Charming | Denies own feelings |
| Playful | Dependent |
| Attracts attention | Seeks attention |
| Keeps the peace | Irresponsible |

Enabler

- Their intentions are good but their efforts are counterproductive – for the addict and for themselves.
- This person is usually the closest to the addicted person.
- The enabler does all this because it is painful for them to confront the reality of their predicament and is desperate to protect themselves and their family.

Codependency

A psychological condition or a relationship in which a person is controlled or manipulated by another who is affected with a pathological condition (such as an addiction to alcohol or heroin).

Signs and Symptoms of Codependency

- *Care Taking*
- *Low Self-Esteem*
- *Repression*
- *Obsession*
- *Controlling*
- *Denial*
- *Dependency*
- *Poor Communication*
- *Lack of Trust*
- *Anger*
- *Sex Problems*
- *Weak Boundaries*

How Does A Dysfunctional Family Dynamic Lead to Co-dependency?

- Dysfunctional families do not acknowledge that problems exist.
- They don't talk about problems or confront them.
- As a result, family members learn to repress emotions and disregard their own needs.
- Attention and energy is focused on the family member who is ill or addicted.
- The co-dependent person typically sacrifices his or her needs to take care of a person who is addicted.

Characteristics of Adult Children of Substance Abusers:

- Fear of Losing Control
- Fear of Feelings
- Fear of Conflict
- Overdeveloped Sense of Responsibility
- Inability to Relax and Have Fun
- Living in a World of Denial
- Difficulties With intimate Relationships
- Living Life From The Viewpoint of a Victim
- Tendency to Confuse Love and Pity
- Fear of Abandonment
- Tendency to Assume a Black and White Perspective Under Pressure
- Tendency Toward Physical Complaints
- Suffering From Backlog of Delayed grief
- Tendency to React Rather Than to Act
- Ability to Survive

Attachment and Co-Dependency

- Attachment when it comes to co-dependency is a big deal.
- Attachment is becoming overly involved, sometimes hopelessly entangled.
- Attachment can take several forms including:
 - Becoming obsessively worried about, and preoccupied with, a problem or person
 - Obsession with controlling the problems or people in a co-dependent's life
 - Becoming reactionary instead of being authentic
 - Becoming emotionally dependent
 - Becoming caretakers (rescuers or enablers) and disregarding personal needs

Ways to Stop Co-Dependent Behavior

1. Learn To Recognize Reactions
2. Find Comfort
3. Examine What Happened
4. Take Care of Oneself
5. Set Clear Boundaries

Stages of Recovery for Adult Children of Substance Users

1. Survivor Stage
2. Identification Stage
3. Core Issues Stage
4. Integration Stage
5. Genesis

Treating Families of Substance Users

- Provide psychoeducation on addiction as a disease
- Set realistic and attainable goals
- Encourage recovery meetings/therapy for all family members
- Provide psychoeducation on healthy ways to support someone in recovery
- Meet both the substance user and their families where they are at

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