

TRIBAL PROGRAM NEWS

- * Scapegoat. A scapegoat is usually the child in the family who is blamed for causing the family to experience the dysfunction. In essence, if it weren't for this child, the family would be okay.
- * Victim. People who take on the role of victim often express self-pity, are good at blaming and manipulation, and often feel others are persecuting them. Their charm and manipulation have others believing they are being treated unjustly.
- * Family Hero. This person plays the role of the family caretaker. Whether adult or child, the family hero acts responsible, follows the rules, and is generally perceived as a "good" person in an unfortunate situation.
- * Lost Child. As the label suggests, the lost child gets misplaced in all the dysfunction. While the battles go on, this person gets little to no attention, acts quiet and shy, and lives in a solitary fantasy life.
- * Chief Enabler. The chief enabler keeps the dysfunctional behavior going. Acting as fuel for the fire, this person often feels closest to the victim while behaving responsibly to protect the family. This self-righteous, super responsible person often acts like a martyr, exhibiting passive aggressive behaviors.
- * Mascot. The mascot is the family clown. The functional purpose of the mascot is to distract the focus away from the problem issues and draw the attention to him/herself. The mascot often acts immature and cute while feeling insecure and anxious about the situation.

Children raised in family systems where these roles are active suffer in many ways. The children may vacillate between isolation, or acting out inappropriate physical affection. They might also develop a chameleon nature of changing or shifting behavior based on inconsistencies in their environment.

Abused children are groomed, they learn that they are appreciated only when they are obedient, out of the way, or taking care of another family member. They are groomed to be co-dependent. They are taught to be subservient, that their individual needs are not important.

Most frequently the main focus is on the family dysfunction, or crisis at hand. The children live in constant turmoil, filled with inconsistency, crisis, inappropriate expression or non-expression of emotions, and secrecy.

Impairment of self-concept, depressive or self-destructive behavior is also common behaviors among abused children. They exhibit a tendency

for low frustration tolerance, impulsiveness, suspiciousness and mistrust of adults, tendency to control and manipulate and a need for immediate gratification.

Frequently role reversal occurs in family systems where abuse occurs. As usual, inappropriate expectations by parents for children to be caretakers are a major factor. The children are often so caught up in caring for others, their their psychological and emotional developmental needs are left unmet. They are not educated in how to establish boundaries or how to express their own feelings or needs. They are groomed to "not rock the boat," as it is already a sinking ship scenario and just one little shift could send it all tumbling. This is neglect, but not easily recognized by those affected because they are so busy scrambling to survive, they don't have time to really look at the whole picture.

Children exhibit behaviors which reflect their values, or lack of values, which are born of errors that reflect how they have been treated, and in turn view themselves. They often come to view themselves as victims and this enables them to self-righteously justify their inappropriate actions or behaviors. Children are prone to overreact, internalize and act out to feelings they experience or those which are directed at themselves. They aren't able to develop and maintain the boundaries necessary to prevent these negative results.

In our society name calling is one of the most obvious forms of verbal abuse. We live in a society where one-upmanship, defeating, putting down, topping, countering, manipulating, criticizing, hard selling and intimidating are accepted as fair games by many. This type of interaction does not consider boundaries, which are necessary for emotional well-being. This type of treatment also creates a loss of control. Having no control can lead to problems with self-esteem. To live in a world of such catastrophic events and to be so powerless can be very detrimental to one's sense of self-worth. Efforts to sustain positive interpersonal relationships are defeated. Instability and inconsistency become the norm. Emotions become very unstable and overreacting is a frequent occurrence in the dysfunctional family. Individuals who grow up in these types of situations are often prone to be labeled with the following terms: depression, anti-social personality, obsessive-compulsive, manic-depressive, to name just a few.

Identifying and developing a process to heal dysfunction is a difficult process. It is one filled with unsightly visions of actions and memories, often self-inflicted, or affecting those whom we love the most. Recovery is not an instant success experience, it is an honest interaction with our "humanness," facing our imperfections, and accepting ourselves for who we are and who we are not. Spirituality is a big

part of one's recovery, and can give reason to the most insane and difficult test we can face. It is our spirituality that can give us the strength and insight we often need.

The process of recovery is a gradual awakening rather than an event. It takes time to unlearn all the messages that have been programmed into our psyche, and reacting to the old messages will bring about emotions.

Respect and kindness can play a key role in the mending of dysfunction. Each individual is entitled to their opinion and an opportunity to be empowered. The following is an example of guidelines that can exist in a healthy family system.

BASIC RIGHTS IN A RELATIONSHIP

The right to good will from the other.

The right to emotional support.

The right to be heard by others and responded to with courtesy.

The right to have your own view, even if your mate, or co-worker has a different view.

The right to have your feelings and experience acknowledged as real.

The right to receive a sincere apology for any jokes you find offensive.

The right to clear and informative answers to questions that concern what is legitimately your business.

The right to live free from accusation and blame.

The right to live free from criticism and judgement.

The right to have your work and your interests spoken of with respect.

The right to encouragement.

The right to live free from emotional and physical threat.

The right to live free from angry outbursts and rage.

The right to be called by no name that devalues you.

The right to be respectfully asked rather than ordered.

Once we begin the process to respect others and learn to accept things we cannot change we are on the road to recovery. Oftentimes we have the intense urge to crush whatever is not "our way," or to force the result. We reach in anger, rather than taking the time to be patient and learn from the experience. Expressing patience and compassion to gain learning is also a new sensation to many, as we were taught to control and conquer, rather than compromise or concede. The challenge is to use the skills and techniques we have developed to create a healthy and nurturing environment for our families and ourselves. Once we begin to develop a positive self-concept, we gain the most important tool in empowering ourselves to overcome obstacles.