

THE FAMILY STEPS INTO

Dysfunctional Roles

To offset the pain, discomfort, and unpleasantness of their loved one's use, family members engage in their own behaviors to compensate, attempting to restore balance to the family system.

When family members attempt to compensate for their loved one's dysfunctional behaviors, they may do some of the following:

- Loan money or pay their bills
- Call in sick to their employer
- Make excuses for or defend their behavior
- Pretend nothing is wrong
- Manage their medication for them
- Take over their responsibilities or not give them responsibilities
- Avoid topics that could rock the boat
- Plan their activities for them
- Lecture them on their behavior
- Minimize the impact of their behavior
- Use or drink with their loved one
- Belittling or shaming their loved one

Families step into compensatory behaviors naturally over time. Their intention is to protect the family from shame and embarrassment, or perhaps even to protect the family image to outsiders, as families may believe that they're somehow responsible for their loved one's medical disease. Such behaviors often have an immediate positive effect on the alleviation of emotional suffering and mitigation of any real or imagined crises. This reinforces the use of these behaviors in the brain.

Compensatory behaviors end up allowing the substance use to progress, as it's never actually addressed. This leads families to try harder - increasing the intensity and frequency of their actions, as well as the sense of protectiveness over their family. As they shoulder more burdens for their loved one, the loved one has less responsibilities that keep them from using how they want to use. The family begins to be consumed by their growing responsibilities, leading them into isolation, while their loved one's behavior worsens.

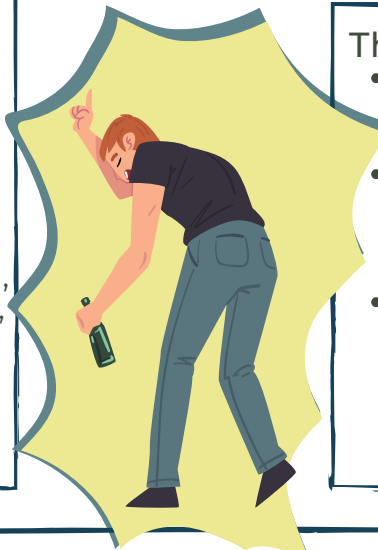
When we refer to the concept of *Family Recovery*, we are referencing these behaviors and the steps family members are taking to address them. It is easy to hold the expectation that the loved one's abstinence from a substance will solve all the family's problems. In reality, for a family to truly be successful, they all must address their own problematic behaviors and the underlying feelings that both result from and perpetuate them.

While your loved one didn't choose to have a SUD, they are **STILL** responsible for the behaviors they choose.

THE FAMILY STEPS INTO *Dysfunctional Roles*

The Victim

- The Victim uses substances problematically
- The family's behaviors center around the behaviors of the Victim
- The Victim stays in this role through gaslighting, emotional manipulation, guilt trips, and anger
- Underneath their behavior, they are full of shame



The Rescuer

- The Rescuer has the highest commitment to compensatory behaviors
- The Rescuer is involved in caretaking for both the Victim and for other family members
- Underneath their behavior is powerlessness, helplessness, fear, and shame



The Hero

- The Hero rescues the family in a unique way
- The Hero is a high achiever, which restores value and worth to the family, making up for the Victim's dishonor
- Underneath their achievement is perfectionism, anxiety, and low self-esteem



The Scapegoat

- The Scapegoat tells the truth about the family's shame
- When they're not listened to, they act out
- Their behaviors create reprieve, as the family focuses on their dysfunction rather than that of the Victim
- Underneath their behavior is anger, hurt, and depression



The Mascot

- The Mascot also rescues the family by providing relief
- They do this through humor and other entertainment efforts
- Underneath their behavior is anxiety and low self-esteem



The Lost Child

- The Lost Child protects the family by being invisible
- They know that emotional resources are scarce, and to support the family, they become smaller by asking for less
- The Lost Child doesn't complain, spends time alone, and is often parentified
- Underneath their behavior is fear, anxiety, and depression

