



Family Issues

Definitions & Discussion Questions

Family System Analogy



A child's mobile is a good analogy for a family system. Each part is connected together but also moves independently of each other. Healthy family systems function in a balanced manner. When someone or something becomes unhealthy or dysfunctional in the family, the system becomes unbalanced and family roles change in an attempt to regain balance.

Family Homeostasis: Familiar and accepted organization and routines that keep a family functioning in a balanced manner. A family's homeostatic balance resists change and members try to re-establish it when unbalanced.

Family Roles: Specific ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are shaped by how we interact in our family. Roles develop to help the family maintain homeostasis or balance. They have positive and negative aspects but, in an unhealthy family system, roles can become rigid and fixed.

Correction Requires Connection: Healthy brain development requires positive, consistent connection with caregivers. Early negative experiences wire the brain to expect stress and alter how the brain learns or connects.

Critical Thinking Section

Students:

- Who is in your family?
- What are your family's strengths? What are your family's challenges?
- Do you consider your family to be healthy or dysfunctional? Why?
- What are five things you love about your family? What are two things you wish you could change about your family?
- Which role do you relate to? Why?
- What caused you to take on a specific role in your family?
- Does anyone in your family play the other roles? How? Why?
- How does your family solve problems and make decisions?
- How does your family communicate love & appreciation?

Do You Relate to a Role:

- VICTIM:** The main cause of the family dysfunction; has addiction or illness.
- CHIEF ENABLER:** Overfunctions and enables dysfunction; angry martyr.
- HERO:** The 'good' or 'responsible' one who carries the family pride; high achiever, often feels inadequate/guilty; difficulty relaxing, playing & being wrong.
- BLACK SHEEP/SCAPEGOAT:** The person who everyone in the family thinks needs help, treatment, or shows obvious symptoms or problems; gets blamed a lot; feels angry, jealous, or insecure.
- MASCOT/CLOWN:** The person who uses humor to distract from family conflict to make everything seem okay; difficulty taking things seriously; hides feelings.
- LOST CHILD:** The passive, obedient, hidden one no one has to worry about; easy going; fearful; lacks direction.

Staff & Family:

- What family rules does your family follow? Talk, Deal, Trust & Feel OR Don't Talk, Don't Trust, Don't Deal & Don't Feel
- What roles do your kids or students try on? What positive and negative consequences do they face because of their roles?
- What roles do the adults in your family fall into? How do these roles feel and affect the family?
- How does your family communicate and solve problems?
- What would you change about how your family communications or solves problems?
- How do individuals and the family as a whole cope with problems?