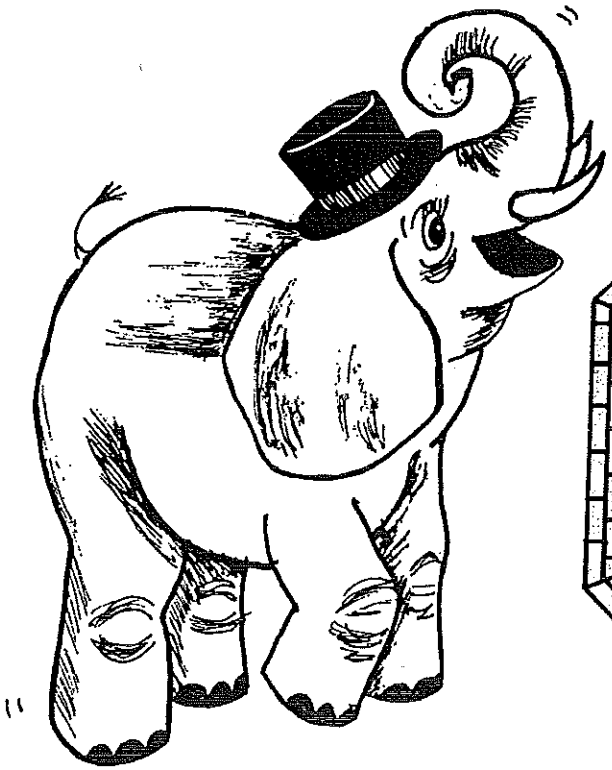
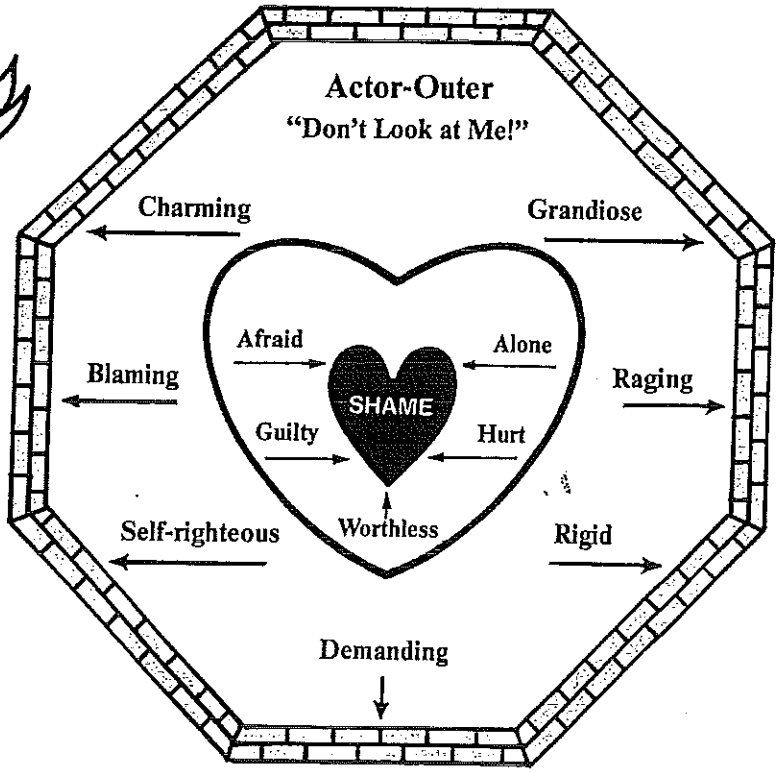
# THE CHEMICAL OR BEHAVIORAL ADDICT

The "Actor Outer" seeks comfort and escape from what feels like a tremendous burden of responsibility. They haven't acquired the skills to cope with pain any other way. Despite the self-righteous air, the Actor Outer wears the "black hat."

**The Actor-Outer's Job: Create the Chaos to which Everyone Else Reacts.**






The true feelings are surrounded by the Wall of Protection, which traps the Actor-Outer into a rigid, painful denial system. Typical compulsive behaviors include workaholism, religious addiction, RAGEaholism, gambling, and/or sex addiction.

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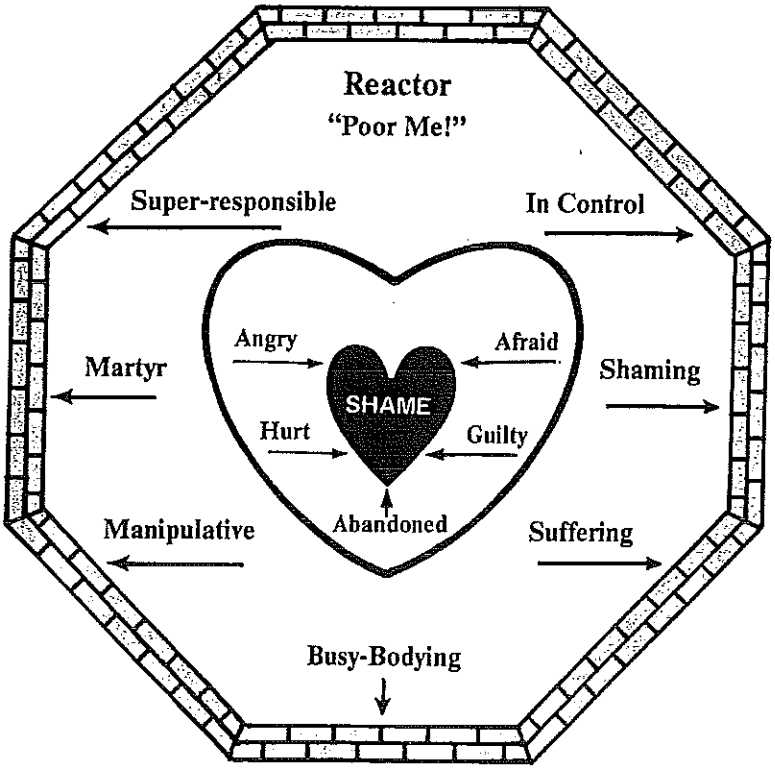
# THE CHIEF ENABLER

The "Reactor" is the person upon whom the "Actor-Outer" relies most heavily, although often this is hidden dependency. As the disease progresses (and it *always* does), Chief Enablers become more and more enmeshed -- their lives revolve around the Actor-Outer -- they are obsessed with their efforts to change, control, manipulate or compensate for the addict's destructive behavior. The Chief Enabler looks real good up next to the addict and wears the "white hat."

## The Chief Enabler's Job: Maintain Control at Any Cost.



Chief Enablers, despite all efforts to the contrary, are "out of control" because they are usually totally out of touch with their own feelings, being trapped behind their wall of focusing on everyone but themselves. Along with relationship addiction, this person often suffers with eating disorders, religious addiction, overspending, chronic illness (often with medication addiction), and/or co-sex addiction.

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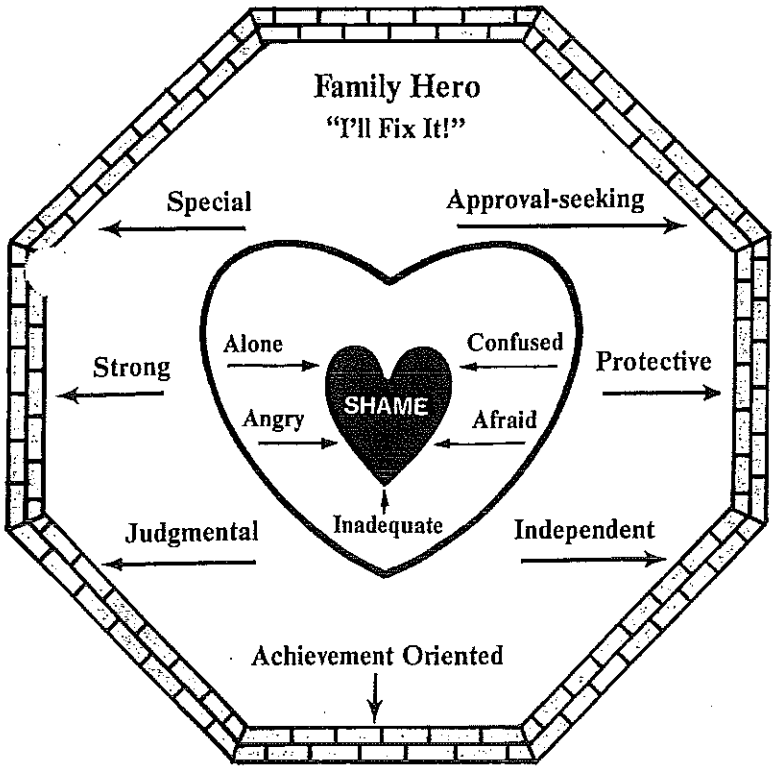
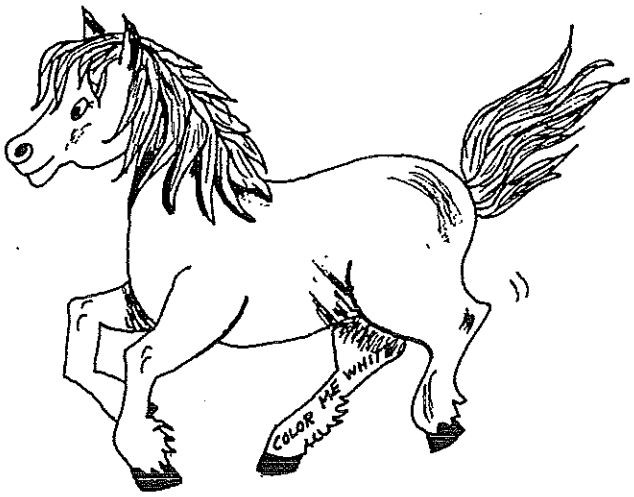
# THE FAMILY HERO

The Family Hero is often, but not always, the oldest child in the Family. This child takes on the responsibility for "fixing" the family's pain. They become hypervigilant to everything that's happening, and seek approval and self-worth through their successes. They often do succeed courageously outside the family, but continue to feel worthless and defeated when all their efforts fail to arrest the progression of the family's dysfunction.

**The Family Hero's Job: Fix Everything and Make the Family Look Good.**




Because they appear strong and capable, Family Heroes often are given the role of "surrogate spouse" to their opposite sex parent. When they finally, often despairingly, leave home, Family Heroes frequently suffer "survivor guilt" and continue their efforts to save the family. This hook interferes with their ability to participate fully in their own relationships.

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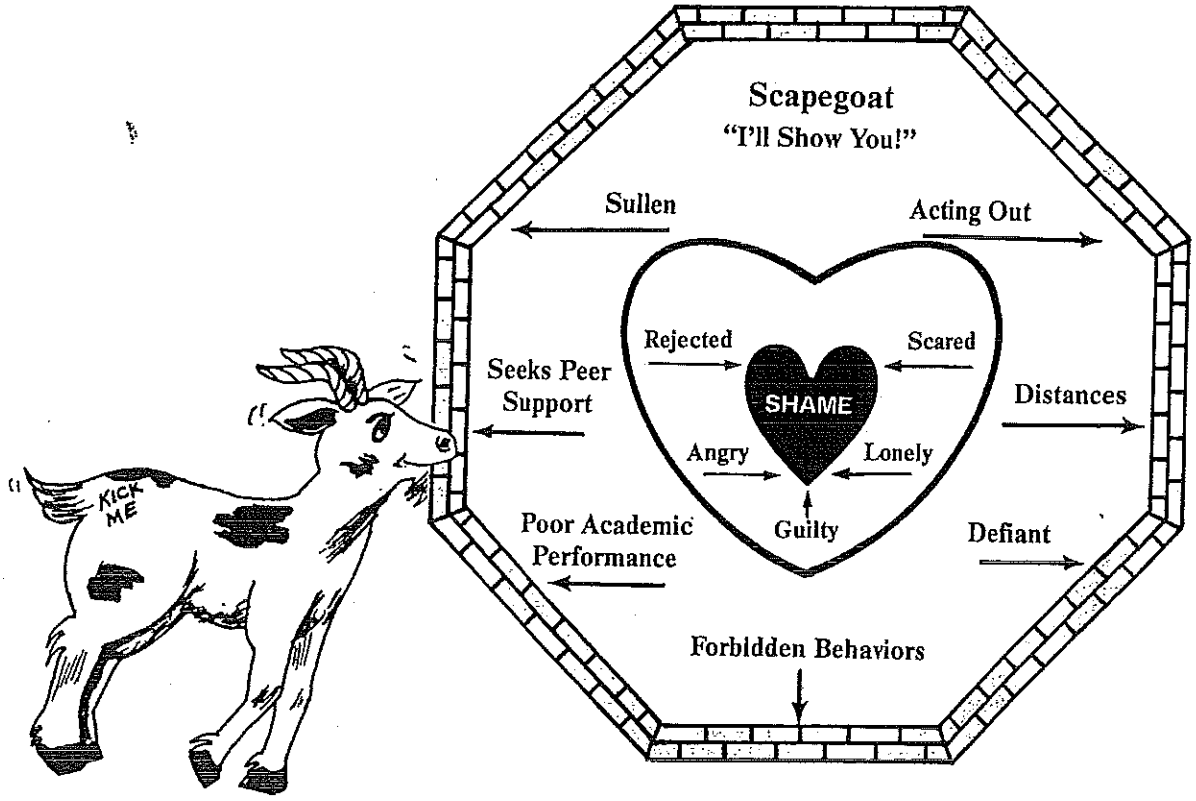
# THE SCAPEGOAT

The Scapegoat absorbs the blame for the Family's dysfunction. They are hypersensitive, and learn early that the Family Hero is in a no-win position. They react oppositionally, and look for their validation and support outside the family, usually with peers who are also Scapegoats from other dysfunctional families, identifying with the "Black Sheep" syndrome.

**The Scapegoat's Job: Provide a "Dumping Ground" for the Family's Anger-- Enabling Everyone Else to Feel Superior.**




Scapegoats react to the Family's rejection with anger and defiance. Negative attention is seen as better than being ignored. "Forbidden behaviors" may include acting out sexually, with chemicals, truancy, fighting, etc. Their anger often gets generalized to all authority figures, so they usually have trouble with money, the legal system, employers, etc. Spiritually, they rebel against their perception of a blaming and angry God.

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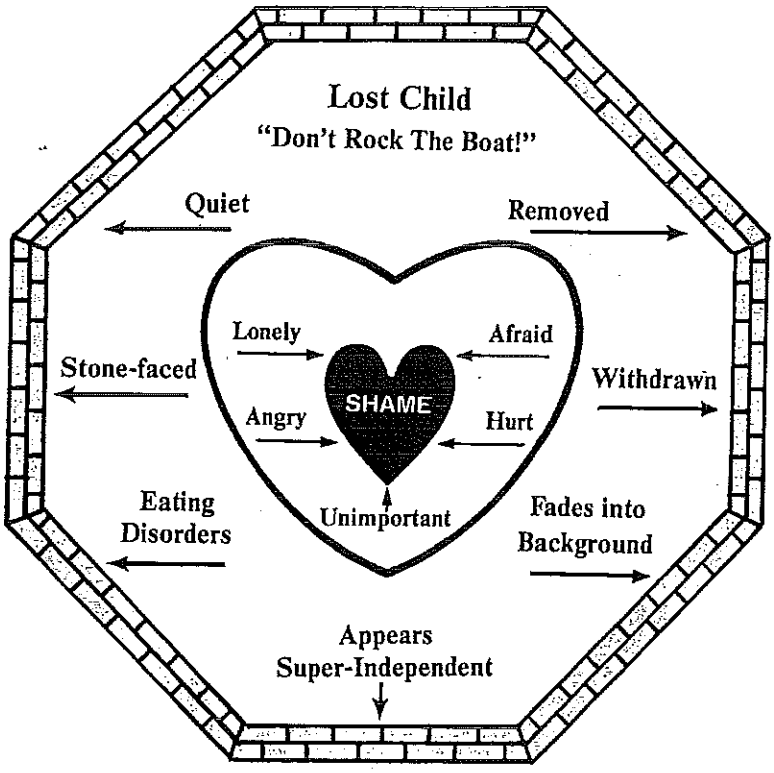
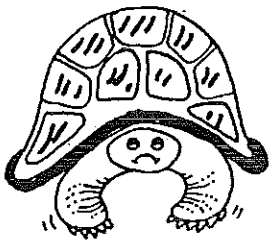
# THE LOST CHILD

This child perceptively picks what appears to be the "safest" role in the Family -- remaining mostly unnoticed by being *"very good"* and *"very quiet."* They fade into the background of the chaotic family arena, masking their pain and loneliness behind a wall of disengagement. Because they don't "squeak', they receive little of the Family's time, attention or direction. They learn to rely on their own limited resources to survive.

## The Lost Child's Job: Being the Person No One Has to Worry About.



Lost children have great difficulty contacting and sharing their emotions, so their relationships tend to be shallow and unfulfilling. Their carried shame can grow to overwhelming proportions. Their loneliness may drive them to depression and severe withdrawal, often with suicidal tendencies.

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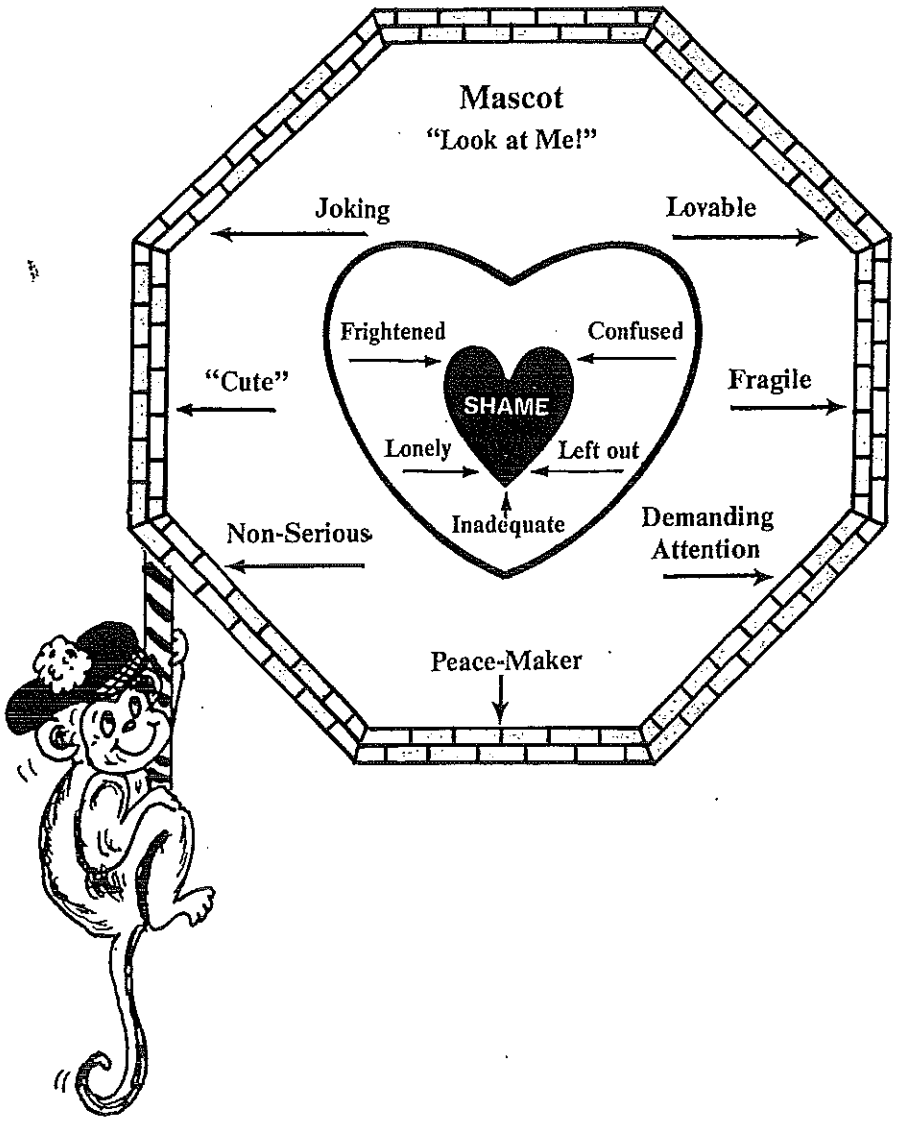
# THE MASCOT

The Mascot is often, but not always, the youngest child. No one takes this child too seriously, and he or she is often shielded and protected from the unacknowledged "battleground" of the system. The Mascot provides amusement, affection, and/or distraction, giving the family a semblance of normalcy.

## The Mascot's Job: Provide Diversion with "Monkey Business."




Behind their wall of being "cute", charming, and unaffected, Mascots acutely sense the insecurity of the system, and feel excluded and unable to fend for themselves. They struggle with emotional immaturity and dependency throughout their adult lives. They tend to live out the self-fulfilling prophecy of being clumsy, inadequate, and "needy."

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# THE PLAYERS

## "HOW THE NOT-SO-MERRY GOES 'ROUND"

| ROLE | WHAT IS OFTEN SEEN | WHAT IS HIDDEN | WHAT IS NEEDED |
|---|---|---|---|
| CHEMICAL OR BEHAVIORAL ADDICT<br><br>"Actor-Outer" | THE MASK<br>charming<br>grandiose<br>aggressive<br>self righteous<br>rigid<br>blaming | SHAME<br>worthlessness<br>fear<br>guilt<br>loneliness<br>despair | LOVE<br>supportive confrontation<br>being held accountable<br>acceptance<br>private space and time<br>validation |
| THE CHIEF ENABLER<br><br>"ReActor" | THE MASK<br>super responsible<br>martyrdom<br>wimpish<br>virtuous<br>shaming<br>manipulative | SHAME<br>rage<br>guilt<br>exhaustion<br>paranoia<br>dependency<br>victimized | LOVE<br>supportive confrontation<br>detachment<br>meeting their own needs<br>depending on their own identity<br>attentive to their own feelings |
| THE FAMILY HERO | THE MASK<br>successful<br>helpful<br>independent<br>perceptive<br>needless<br>got-it-together | SHAME<br>guilt<br>confusion<br>neediness<br>inadequacy<br>fear of failure<br>fear of success | LOVE<br>unconditional acceptance<br>walking through fear<br>vulnerability<br>permission to relax<br>letting go |
| THE SCAPEGOAT | THE MASK<br>"forbidden behaviors"<br>defiance<br>acting out<br>loyalty to peers<br>blaming | SHAME<br>rejection<br>worthlessness<br>loneliness<br>confusion<br>fear of trusting | LOVE<br>supportive confrontation<br>structure<br>acceptance<br>positive attention<br>consistency<br>opportunity for successes |
| THE LOST CHILD | THE MASK<br>mellow<br>loner<br>super independent<br>retreating<br>reticent | SHAME<br>loneliness<br>rage<br>valueless<br>fear of exposure<br>powerlessness | LOVE<br>invitation to risk<br>active participation<br>encouragement<br>positive attention<br>reassurance |
| THE MASCOT | THE MASK<br>peace-maker<br>non-serious "monkey business"<br>lovable<br>attention-seeking<br>fragile | SHAME<br>confusion<br>feeling "left-out"<br>terror of being alone<br>helpless<br>feeling "little" | LOVE<br>inclusion<br>consultation<br>affection<br>taken seriously<br>affirmation |

# UNHEALTHY ROLES: A Self Test

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each of the following statements; then choose the term which best describes your response. Put the number that corresponds to the term by each statement. Add your score. Your lowest score will more than likely be your primary role. The next lowest will be your secondary role.

1 = Always

2 = Very Often

3 = Often

4 = Sometimes

5 = Seldom

6 = Very Seldom

7 = Never

## THE HERO

_____I am extremely helpful to others

_____I am very responsible.

_____It is important that things be done right.

_____People often wonder how I can do so many things.

_____I have very high standards

_____People say that I am a perfectionist.

_____I often feel guilty when things do not go well.

_____It is hard for me to receive a compliment.

_____I often drive myself harder than I should.

_____I do not like to fail at anything.

_____ TOTAL

## THE LOST CHILD

_____I do not like conflict.

_____I will go along with you just to avoid conflict

_____I find ways to withdraw when things are tense.

_____People describe me as quiet and withdrawn.

_____I consider myself a loner; an independent-type.

_____I tend to feel insignificant.

_____I often fantasize or daydream.

_____I often feel lonely.

_____I often feel I have to do what others want.

_____I find it difficult to ask for whatI need.

_____ TOTAL

## THE MASCOT

_____It is important to have a good time.

_____I have a lot of energy

_____I love to be around people.

_____I am told that I am the life of the party.

_____I do not like conflict.

_____When I sense conflict, I try to make things better with humor.

_____Commitment is difficult for me.

_____I do not like to get too serious

_____I don't let people know the real me.

_____I sometimes wonder who the real me is.

_____TOTAL

## THE SCAPEGOAT

_____I am my own person.

_____I am often angry.

_____Life seems unfair to me.

_____People constantly find fault with me. They blame me for what goes wrong.

_____I have trouble getting close to people.

_____It seems like someone is always letting me down.

_____I am told that I am stubborn.

_____I would rather learn things my own way.

_____I do not like people telling me what to do.

_____I can be a stong leader, but it can go in the wrong direction.

_____TOTAL

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

WHICH IS MY PRIMARY ROLE? _____

WHICH IS MY SECONDARY ROLE? _____

**To learn more about dysfunctional families consult:**

[1]Common aspects of object relations and self-representations in offspring from disparate dysfunctional families, J.A. Hadley, E.L. Holloway, & B. Mallinckrodt. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 1993, 40 (3), 348-356.

[2] *It Will Never Happen to Me*. C. Black. NY: Ballentine, 1981

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