

2. see that you are being lured to play the game (understanding that your role in it is to lose)
3. refuse to play.

If the game is “Rescue Me”, your response might be, “Let me know how you solve that problem.” If the game is “Give Me Your Nifty Thing”, your answer can be, “No, I really enjoy it and treasure it myself!” The solution to the game, “Let Me Use All Your Time, Ability, Energy, and Resources”, can be to say, “No” or “I’ll have to check my calendar.”

Say No

If you choose to do things for someone, you need to question your own motives before you commit to any action. If *you* are willing to do it, you ought to be getting something healthy from the transaction. You then need to determine if you have the *extra* time, energy, and ability to do it. Do not commit yourself if you have any doubt. Give yourself permission to say, “No.” You might even use this opportunity to set up a reciprocal trade – “I’ll do this one thing _____ if you do this other thing _____ for me first”; *without an equal trade no healthy relationship exists.*

Decide On, Communicate, and Enforce Boundaries

Recovery depends on figuring out who you are, what your likes and dislikes are, and what your limits are. Recognizing the feelings of your Inner Child is the easiest, fastest way to figure out what your limits are. Once you know what they are, then communicating them to others is essential. Communicate them in advance if possible, but definitely when your boundaries have been violated. Others cannot read your mind; they will not stop violating your boundaries if you don’t tell them to stop. If your boundary is crossed again, you need to immediately act on the consequence you decided on. If the boundary is violated the third time by the same person, you need to end the relationship because that person is consciously abusing you and will continue to do so. You are not bound by guilt to put up with boundary violations.

Respect Yourself

To become emotionally healthy, you need to make the decision to respect yourself. To do that you focus on yourself instead of others and become rigorously honest in taking your inventory: who you are, who you aren’t but want to be, what you actually need, and what you want. As your own loving parent, you then find healthy ways to supply those needs and wants yourself.

Realize Why You Do What You Do

Becoming aware of what you do allows you to look at why you do it. You are then able to trace your dysfunctional behavior to old messages (stemming from childhood instances of abuse, neglect, abandonment, loss, and trauma), silence the messages, and resolve the issues. Then you will act more appropriately in daily interactions and respond rather than react to dysfunctional people and life disruptions.



Central Coast ACA Intergroup
ccacaig@gmail.com

Greater Western USA Region
gwuregion@gmail.com

Letting Go of Dysfunction



Produced by
Central Coast ACA Intergroup
 ccacaig@gmail.com



Distributed by
Greater Western USA Region
 P. O. Box 73
 Arroyo Grande, CA 93421
 gwuregion@gmail.com

THE PROBLEM

Dysfunctional Family Systems

Parents in a dysfunctional family include one alcoholic/addict and one codependent, two alcoholics/addicts, or two codependents. The codependent parents relinquish control to the alcoholic/addict parents, taking on long-suffering roles. Children in dysfunctional families make decisions of how to survive the family abuse since they can't escape or fight back. They often pattern their lives after the parent-abuser or the parent-victim.

Alcoholics or Addicts

Alcoholics and addicts are people who misuse substances, engage in behaviors, or adopt beliefs to dull their pain, escape their feelings, or feel alive. Substances include but are not limited to: alcohol, caffeine, drugs, and tobacco. Behaviors may include excessive use of technology or media, pornography, sexual abuse of self or others, raging, gambling, risky or dangerous activities, and hoarding. Adopted beliefs may be grandiosity, superiority, and "right" to control, exploit, and/or manipulate others. They

- Fluctuate between reactive positions:
 - 1). I am the victim; you are my savior; he is the perpetrator
 - 2). You are the victim; I am your rescuer (and you will owe me for it); he is the perpetrator
 - 3). You are the perpetrator who has betrayed me; I am the victim; I will find another Super-Hero
- Charm others to manipulate them (eye contact, listening, touch, intimate social proximity, compliments, gifts, parental nurturing, and protection)
- Isolate the codependent from all others
- Intimidate codependents with superior education, intelligence, skills, station in life, creativity, etc.
- Undermine, ignore, minimize, and shame efforts and accomplishments of codependents and disparage their pride
- Rally codependents to fight causes and quietly enjoy watching the mayhem

- Bait others into arguments and competitions where the addicts have unfair advantage; they must "win" and others must "lose," be hurt, or humiliated
- Erratically create, define, assert, and enforce their constantly changing family rules
- Dramatize plights to create urgency and allegiance
- Work the angles (preferring indirect, convoluted, and "quick-fix" solutions)
- Are hyper-vigilant and unforgiving when THEIR boundaries are violated, using such "violations" to manipulate others
- Manipulate codependents (push and pull) with conditional love, abandonment, and violence

Codependents

- Allow or insist others use them or their services, time, skills, creativity...
- Believe they deserve to be used and abused; it is their role
- Believe they are too afraid, weak, stupid... and cede control and responsibility
- Become self-effacing and self-destructive to please abusers and/or avoid abuse
- Try to read the minds of their controllers to pre-empt outbursts and avoid violence; believe others also read their minds
- Adopt and champion the opinions, attitudes, behavior, and causes of the controllers to gain their approval or avoid abuse of self or others
- Live for hints of compliments and recognition from the controllers
- Keep trying to please their controllers and everyone else because everyone is more important
- Sell out or minimize value of other codependents
- Suffer in silence and/or sigh a lot (martyrdom) or whine loudly and "guilt" others

When a Family Member Changes Behavior

When someone stops playing by the dysfunctional family rules, the family dynamic becomes unbalanced and uncomfortable. As a result, the disrupter who is "making waves" and "ruining" the lives of everyone else in that

dysfunctional system becomes the person the others try to force back into his/her dysfunctional role by:

- Escalating control through guilt, abandoning, whining, crying, undermining, threatening...
- Threatening to disown or exile the disrupter
- Replacing the renegade immediately with a more compliant person to prove how worthless and expendable the disrupter is
- Attacking the renegade physically, his/her reputation, or livelihood

THE SOLUTION

Associate with Functional People

At the beginning of recovery, it may be easiest to step out of the baiting game by staying away or distancing yourself from all people (relatives, friends, co-workers...) who bring out your dysfunctional behavior. When you have learned what your limits are, how to communicate them, how to assert yourself, and to stand your ground, you will no longer feel threatened or be lured into dysfunctional roles and games. As you progress in recovery you will be more comfortable interacting with dysfunctional people because you will know how to handle them and keep yourself safe.

Refuse to Play

It is not always possible to avoid family members and others you interact with daily who are dysfunctional. Remember that the point of a dysfunctional game is for the one who introduces the game to "win". The rules of the game ensure that outcome every time. So when a "game" is introduced, the sane response to it is to:

1. recognize that your adrenaline has increased because you have been baited