

9 Dysfunctional Family Maneuvers by People in the Bible

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Dysfunctional family maneuvers allow the family to deal with their emotions and anxiety without having to face the truth about what is really going on. Dysfunction entered families when sin entered the human race in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve's "first family" experienced dissension, the murder of one son, the banishment of another son, and more. Since then, families continue to be dysfunctional in the way they deal with problems. Consider these 9 maneuvers and their functions in the family:

1. The Cut-off

An individual who dares to speak the truth, be different, or refuse to conform is cut-off from having a relationship with the family or an individual as a punishment or as pressure to give in. The cut-off is an extreme maneuver and is usually used by an individual who has experienced cut-off in a prior relationship. God actually started cut-off with his banishment of Cain.

2. The Detour

Whatever you bring up that needs to be addressed is ignored by bringing up something else. You will find yourself arguing about the new point being made and never being able to get the person to focus on your concerns. You may also find yourself defending your right to bring up your point and as a result never have the person address your concern. David didn't allow the

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real issues to be brought up in his family.

3. The Scapegoat

The family focuses all their anxiety and negativity on one family member who is used as a scapegoat to avoid the family having to face the truth about what is going on. The scapegoated person has also been referred to as "the identified patient." This may be the person who is acting out as "the bad guy" or the one who is overly-criticized as a result of unrealistic expectations. Sarah and Abraham scapegoated Hagar.

4, The Triangle

When the relationship between two people gets too hot, a third person is brought in or jumps in to try to reduce the pressure on one of the participants. The participants each take on one of three roles: the persecutor, the victim, or the rescuer. These triangles make the dysfunction worse and prevent the two people from working on their relationship. Absalom jumped in to rescue his sister, Tamar, from Amnon after he raped her.

5. The Ostrich

This family member sticks his/her head in the sand and pretends things are different than they are. The denial can be extreme and impossible to permeate even to the point that it seems absurd. Arguing with this person in an attempt to force a reality check is futile. This person is typically the one that enables and covers up and prevents others from dealing with the consequences of bad decisions. The Priest Eli was an ostrich when it came to his sons and their misbehavior.

6. The Blamer

No matter what happens, this person will find someone or something to blame his/her own actions on. The blame can be abusive when it is extreme, but is always incredibly frustrating. Attempts to get this person to take responsibility only result in more blame. Cain blamed his brother Abel and it resulted in Abel's death.

7. The Victim

This person is the one who is sensitive, difficult, addicted, or helpless. The role of the victim is to get everyone to focus on the victim's inability to deal with life so others will make allowances and not expect this person to be responsible. This is also the person who keeps people walking on eggshells. We see Leah, Jacob's wife, as a victim.

8. The Protector

This person's role is to protect, take care of, and control to keep everything together. This person also takes on the role of the fixer, the responsible one, and the caretaker. The protector has to over-function to make up for those that under-function in the family. David's son,

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Absalom, was the protector in his family later on.

9. The Alliance

Two family members will join together to increase their power, focus on another family member, convince each other they are right, and manipulate the family system. This has also been called a coalition. Two famous coalitions in the Bible were Rebekah's and Jacob's scheme to get his brother, Esau's, blessing from Isaac and Joseph's brothers scheme to kill him.

Families will continue to be dysfunctional as long as sin is present in the world, but recognizing these 9 dysfunctional family maneuvers will help you sort through the difficult dynamics in your relationships and give you insight into how to react.

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