

Addiction, Chaos, and Drama

Addicts Manipulation



- Addicts are so good at manipulation and dishonesty that it is difficult for many to comprehend they are not being truthful or sincere in their speech. What makes an addict so convincing is they often believe their own story.
 - With a highly distorted perception of reality, addicts instinctively manipulate because they are convinced with what they are saying and what they believe is true.
 - If you were to put an addict on a polygraph test, they would most likely pass. They are so convinced in the moment that they come off as being sincere, honest, and believable. Addicts are known to be dishonest even when the truth would be a better option.
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How Addicts Manipulate



Why Manipulate?



- Addicts manipulate to get what they want, punish others, stay comfortable, and maintain the status quo. It is not uncommon for families to describe manipulative and mental disorder behaviors present even before the substance use was introduced.
 - It is not always the case, but it is more common than you might think. It is not to say they have either of these disorders even when showing symptoms. Substance use disorder clients may manipulate others because they do not feel good about themselves.
 - At times, they push people away because they are fearful of rejection.
 - The reason for this strategy is that if you push them away first, you do not allow the other to get close. By not letting them get close, you are preventing rejection from ever occurring.
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Inflicting Emotional Pain



- Addicts inflict pain onto the people the addict feels is the cause of their pain. Whether it is true or not, addicts do this because they believe this.
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Common Examples



- *“I have tried to get a job, and nobody will hire me. My soon-to-be ex-wife is causing me all these problems.”*
 - *“If you were going through what I was going through, you would use drugs too.”*
 - *“So, you’re not going to help me? Then if I die or go to jail, it is your fault. You don’t love me anymore.”*
 - *“I promise if you just give me money this one last time, I won’t ask you again, or I will look at rehabs tomorrow.”*
 - *“So, you’re just going to let me die or go to jail then? You will never see me again.”*
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Why are Addicts Manipulative?

Why Manipulate?



- The point being made here is that many substance users manipulate to avoid all discomfort. It isn't necessarily coming from a place of being a bad person or just a lying addict. We're not giving manipulation and substance use a free pass. Both manipulation and substance use are ineffective solutions and are not sustainable
 - For the addict, this is all they know, and when a family allows it, the substance user feels entitled and becomes angered (which is rooted in fear) when confronted or questioned about it. T
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Selfishness



- Selfishness is an overwhelming similarity among substance users. We don't believe it is possible to not be one without the other.
 - **Not all selfish people are substance users, and just about every substance user is selfish.** Some people are selfish and don't even know they are. Many people do nice things for others, and the same people are referred to as good people who would give you the shirt off their backs.
 - Are they doing these things for the greater good, or are they doing it for themselves?
 - A great test is to observe what happens and how you feel after the good deed is done. An unselfish person will be ok regardless of the response from the one receiving the good deed. A selfish person will be angered if they are not validated or acknowledged.
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Guilt



- Guilt is the feeling you have when you acknowledge or realize you have done something wrong.
 - When substance users act out using guilt as a manipulation, they are essentially diverting attention away from themselves and selfishly making it about the others they believe are to blame.
 - When you don't give the substance user what they want, they make you feel guilty for their problem and try to manipulate you into solving it for them at the same time.
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Shame



- When an addict shames a family member, they are often trying to inflict pain onto the person they feel is the cause of their pain.
 - Addicts are themselves hurting, and hurting people hurt other people. It is not uncommon for the addict to have a go-to person to manipulate with shame.
 - Guilt is a little less personal than shaming them. When the addict pulls out the shame, they are often sending a message that the person they are shaming is directly or indirectly responsible for their feelings.
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Control



- Many addicts attempt to control everything they can. They often do this with smoke and mirror illusions led by manipulations.
 - The addict feels that if they can control people, places, and things, they believe they can control the outcome.
 - By manipulating others with these strategies, they are often successful in making others do what they need to use drugs and alcohol successfully.
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How an Addict Manipulates

Isolating



- Addicts and lost child family members isolate themselves to keep people away to avoid rejection. They also do this to see if they are worthy of love by whether or not the family comes running to them or provides extra attention.
 - The addict isolates in an attempt to gain sympathy and empathy from the family members then play the victim when found. This often works because the family becomes riddled with guilt and shame and often believes they drove the substance user into isolation.
 - The addict feels this way, so they are not wrong; they are not necessarily healthily attracting attention. They use isolation as a manipulation to reel the family in to strengthen their victim stance and flip the script on the family for pushing them into hiding.
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Silent Treatment



- The addict uses the silent treatment to get others talking and to punish them.
 - Most people are uncomfortable in silence, and the substance user knows it.
 - The silent treatment becomes a battle of will as to who will break first.
 - The silent treatment is also used as a passive-aggressive manipulation. By going silent, the substance user sends the message to stay out of their business and not ask questions.
 - The longer it goes, the more eggshells the family walks on and the harder it becomes to break the silence. During this time, the addict comes and goes with impunity.
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Guilt-tripping



- The most common one we see during intervention is when the addict says:
 - *“Had you not done this intervention and went about it differently, I would have gone to treatment... Now, because you went about it this way, I am not going anywhere.”*
 - Most follow it up with playing the victim at the intervention and then use guilt and shame on the family. This is an attempt to make them believe they went about this the wrong way and that they are horrible people for attempting to get them the help they need.
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Blame Shifting



- One of the first warning signs of blame-shifting from a person in recovery is speaking ill-will of their 12-step meetings and sponsor. Gossiping is a form of blame-shifting, finding fault in other people, places, and things. Relapses happen long before the person consumes drugs and alcohol.
 - Blame-shifting and a negative attitude is often an early-stage warning sign. The same applies to those refusing to get help who are actively using drugs or alcohol.
 - They make comments such as treatment doesn't work, they are just in it for the money, and the 12 steps don't work either.
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Dependency



- The primary enabler becomes dependent on being needed by the addict, and the addiction becomes their purpose.
 - For the martyr they become a victim and receive attention, empathy, and sympathy from others.
 - Their dependency on this paralyzes them by a fear of change – what will happen if their loved one gets better?
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Lashing Out



For substance users, lashing out is often used to teach others not to question them. If a family member learns that anything they do will be met with harsh resistance, they are most likely not to say anything and comply to avoid any confrontation.

In summary, we have a two-fold situation that occurs when the addict lashes out:

- First, they are showing their hand that they are scared with the anger and outburst.
 - Second, the family reacts in fear and surrenders to the manipulation or seeks to avoid any confrontation altogether.
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How to Tell if an Addict is Lying and How to Cope

Addicts and Lying



- Sadly, an addict often lies while actively using substances and is headed for relapse when in the middle of a behavioral downturn.
 - Addicts are also known to be dishonest in detox and the early stages of treatment.
 - The biggest mistake a family makes is believing the dishonesty comes from the substance use itself.
 - An addict can be more dishonest when free of drugs and alcohol while in treatment for months, weeks, and days leading up to using drugs or alcohol again.
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Coping



- To cope with an addict lying, the best thing a family can do is enter recovery themselves.
 - The more family members take care of themselves and not the addict, the better it will be to navigate truths and lies.
 - The goal for any family member is not to get caught up in trying to figure this out.
 - Trying to figure out truth and lies is exhausting, and you're just riding the insanity train with them. Not to mention, this is codependent behavior.
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Fear is an emotion that often paralyzes families and substance users. Anger is always a result of fear in some way, shape, or form. Many people, mostly men, disagree. They are often unable to see the connection between fear and anger. They immediately want to defend that they are not scared or fearful. Many times the anger that originates from fear is when the ego or self-esteem is threatened.

Is It Time for an Intervention?

- Family First Intervention seeks to help your loved one receive treatment and to create treatment plans for families in order to support each other and heal together. Addiction is a family problem, and understanding family systems and why one enables and reacts is a large part of the overall solution. Addiction is not a victimless crime that only affects the person using substances. It affects the family as much if not more than the addict or alcoholic. Furthermore, there is one substance user and many more family members with different ideas and views. Each of the family members is affected differently and is acting out in different ways. Helping one substance user is far less difficult than helping several different personalities and emotions affected by the addiction.
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