

Family Roles Exploration

Below you will find a tool useful for exploring the roles and dynamics in your family of origin. Should you have started a family of your own, you can use the same model to understand these roles. The purpose of this activity is to develop insight into the intergenerational aspects of roles as well as the impact of various roles on individuals and the way in which they impacted others and the family in general.

You may be curious about your own role in the family, answering the below questions may clarify some of the roles. You may identify with more than one role, or multiple family members may fit well into several. That's okay!

Often families in which multiple members can share roles indicating healthy dynamics where responsibility is shared and mutual support is encouraged. It may also be helpful to consider who in your family might think and feel other responses to gain perspective, even if you don't agree.

Consider the following roles in the context of this quiz, what role most closely illustrates each of these roles:

- The Hero
- The Black Sheep
- The Parentified Child
- The Golden Child
- The Enforcer
- The Identified Problem
- The Class Clown
- The Lost Child
- The Caretaker/Enabler
- The Peace Keeper

Quiz

- **When conflict arises in the family:**
 - You fade into the background
 - Battle lines are formed
 - You break the tension
 - You're blamed for initiating or contributing to the conflict
 - You intervene and serve as an apologist across players
 - You stop the conflict by asserting authority
- **What's a common theme in childhood stories about you?**
 - Winning in sports and excelling in school, lots of recognition
 - Making everyone laugh
 - Getting into fights
 - Negotiating arguments
 - There aren't any, generally you are associated with the stories of others, not your own
 - Anger and shutting down the behaviors of others
 - Ways in which you facilitated others avoiding punishment or consequences
- **Which of these statements do you most relate to?**
 - Families work best when everyone gets along
 - Families are there to support you
 - Families are the best audience
 - Families rarely notice what I need the most
 - Families are chaotic if no one takes control
 - Family holds grudges and plays sides
 - Family pushes you to be your best, even if you don't want to be
 - Families take a lot of work

- **At the last family event I was:**
 - In trouble for being late
 - Overwhelmed by hosting
 - Always keeping the conversation going
 - Irritated by others being late and let them know it.
 - Not invited or reminded
 - The topic of conversation because of your successes
 - The topic of conversation because of your shortcomings
 - Distracted by any conflict that came up, however minor
- **If you find yourself in an argument your style is:**
 - Take the initiative to sort it out
 - Feel upset and vent
 - Shut down
 - Avoid it happening in the first place
 - Defuse the situation with jokes or self deprecation
 - Defensive, feel blamed
 - Sheepish, quick to let it go
 - Aggressive, expecting to be met with more of the same
 - Expectation that others will capitulate to your perspective
- **When you feel down you:**
 - Complain to someone
 - Withdraw from others
 - Pretend it's not happening
 - Focus on the ways in which others let you down
 - Go out for a good time with friends
 - Feel guilty, others have worse problems
 - Eat well, get more sleep and engage in self care
- **By the time you reached adulthood, you were known as the person who is:**
 - Invited to every party

- Disorganized and all over the place
- Overlooked
- In charge
- Disruptive and angry
- Attention Seeking
- Anxious to diffuse interpersonal problems
- Praised by teachers, a winner
- Everyone's emotional support system
- **Sometimes you wonder if:**
 - Your type A tendencies are offputting to others
 - You need to grow up
 - Can ever show the real you
 - You are actually loved or just holding the fort together
 - What would happen if you failed
 - If it's even possible for you to fail
 - If you got better, would people still love you
 - If you ever needed support if anyone would show up
 - If you struggled would anyone notice or care
 - If you weren't able to please others they might leave you
- **You admire people who:**
 - Display confidence and self assurance
 - Are organized and professional
 - Have a happy family
 - Win all the time
 - Make everyone happy
 - Make it all happen easily
 - Manage conflict well
 - Are able to set and hold boundaries effectively
 - Are able to be content or peaceful

What have you learned about yourself by answering these questions? Was it hard or easy for you to see yourself in the options? Do others fit well into other responses? Now that you've had a chance to identify with roles and understand the thoughts and feelings that can go with each, consider the following table for insight.

