

# Foundations of Substance Use, Abuse, and Dependence

## MODULE 3 Family Aspects of Chemical Dependence

### Objectives

- Develop an understanding of the dynamics operating within healthy and unhealthy families and relationships.
- Gain awareness of the roles we play in our families and relationships.
- Increase awareness of the impact chemical dependence has on families and relationships.

The sequence of activities for **Module 3** is:

- Lecture: Family on Ice
- Small Group Discussion: Substance Abuse and the Roles Played in Family Systems
- Video and Discussion: *Reflections From the Heart of a Child*
- Video and Discussion: *Erica's Story*
- Closure: Family Aspects of Chemical Dependence



**Time:** 3 1/2 hours

### **Emphasis Areas:**

- Family on Ice
- *Reflections From the Heart of a Child*
- *Erica's Story*

### **Equipment Needed:**

- Easel board
- Markers
- Monitor
- VCR
- Video: *Reflections From the Heart of a Child*
- Video: *Erica's Story*

## FAMILY ON ICE

60 minutes      Large group



Lecture

### Trainer Script

Every culture throughout history has told stories to pass on important information, teach lessons, and convey meaning that is specific to that culture. “Family on Ice” is a story like that. It metaphorically describes family systems theory as it relates to how one person’s abuse of substances can “unbalance” an entire family system.

**Note:** *If you know a real family, perhaps related to you, tell their story. Put names and faces on the “roles.” Describe how those real people survived and what happened to them as adults. You may want to make a “family picture” or a collage from photographs of anonymous people you find in magazines.*

#### 1. Like Walking on Ice

Visualize trying to walk outdoors right after an ice storm, or for those of you from warmer climates, visualize the first time you ever tried to ice skate. What happened when you tried to stand up straight? Chances are that you did the “slip and slide” like most of us. If you happened to fall, you may have created a domino effect causing others in close proximity to fall.

Substance abuse is **a lot like walking on ice**. You can’t predict if you’ll stand or fall. Sometimes a person has fun while using substances. But when abuse begins, using is anything but fun.

#### 2. Observer’s Perspective

Much like the **observers** shown here, people often view those ice storms from the comfort of their living rooms. They may see others slipping and sliding and immediately react with a chuckle. Sometimes others don’t even see the ice — they don’t know it’s slippery out there. Until the observers experience the ice for themselves, they really don’t know why others “look funny.”

#### Living With Substance Abuse Is Like Walking on Ice . . .



. . . it’s sometimes fun  
. . . it’s sometimes anything  
*but* fun  
. . . it’s always inconsistent

Overhead Mod. 3-1

#### An Observer’s Perspective



Don’t they look funny, George, sliding around like that? Wonder why they don’t just walk like us normal folks?

Overhead Mod. 3-2

### 3. Substance Abuser

When someone begins to abuse or becomes dependent upon drugs or alcohol, the “ice storm” begins. But it’s like the **substance abuser** can’t even see the ice! Sometimes he or she is charming and the life of the party. Other times substance abusers are just the opposite. *“You can’t do anything right,”* or *“I wouldn’t drink so much if it weren’t for you...”* are just some of the words you might hear when substance abusers lose their balance.

When the substance abuser is really slipping and sliding or has just fallen momentarily, you’ll hear things like *“I can handle it.”* Occasionally other family members will hear apologies for things the substance abuser said or did while under the influence.


With help, the substance dependent person often describes feelings of guilt and pain for not “seeing the ice.” He or she feels bad about what he or she has done and how badly the drinking made everyone else slip and slide.

### 4. Chief Enabler

The **chief enabler** is sometimes the partner of the substance abuser, or maybe a boss, co-worker, or friend. People who assume this role generally find themselves cleaning up the messes of the substance abuser, trying really hard to help him or her “stand up on the ice.” They might even blame themselves for the substance abuse. After all, the substance abuser frequently says: *“You’re the reason I drink.”*


The chief enabler is TIRE D even though he or she keeps working really hard to get everyone to stand up straight. Trying to get control is hard work!

With help — with or without the substance abuser — the chief enabler can get off the ice, too. He or she can begin to hold others accountable for their actions, and can stop protecting, lying, and covering for them. Most important, the chief enabler can let others experience their own crisis.

Substance Abuser			
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Role</td> <td>• Controls Family Balance</td> </tr> </table>	Role	• Controls Family Balance	 <p>Pain, Guilt</p>
Role	• Controls Family Balance		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Visible Characteristics</td> <td>• “Symptom Carrier” • Irresponsible, Charming • Blaming, Grandiose</td> </tr> </table>	Visible Characteristics	• “Symptom Carrier” • Irresponsible, Charming • Blaming, Grandiose	
Visible Characteristics	• “Symptom Carrier” • Irresponsible, Charming • Blaming, Grandiose		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>With Help . . .</td> <td>• Achieves Sobriety • Accepts Responsibility for Self • Deals with Underlying Problems</td> </tr> </table>	With Help . . .	• Achieves Sobriety • Accepts Responsibility for Self • Deals with Underlying Problems	
With Help . . .	• Achieves Sobriety • Accepts Responsibility for Self • Deals with Underlying Problems		

Overhead Mod. 3-3

**Note:** After each slide, ask participants to think of someone they know who has assumed this family role. No sharing!

Chief Enabler			
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Role</td> <td>• Protects Family from Crisis</td> </tr> </table>	Role	• Protects Family from Crisis	 <p>Ashamed, Inadequate</p>
Role	• Protects Family from Crisis		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Visible Characteristics</td> <td>• Rescuer, Fixer • Hypervigilant – Must Protect • Self-blaming</td> </tr> </table>	Visible Characteristics	• Rescuer, Fixer • Hypervigilant – Must Protect • Self-blaming	
Visible Characteristics	• Rescuer, Fixer • Hypervigilant – Must Protect • Self-blaming		
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>With Help . . .</td> <td>• Accepts Responsibility for Self • Holds Others Accountable • Shares Power in Relationships</td> </tr> </table>	With Help . . .	• Accepts Responsibility for Self • Holds Others Accountable • Shares Power in Relationships	
With Help . . .	• Accepts Responsibility for Self • Holds Others Accountable • Shares Power in Relationships		

Overhead Mod. 3-4

### 5. Family Hero

The **family hero** is often the oldest child in the family. This is not always true but you know you're a family hero if you feel inadequate even though others see you as "special." The hero's job is to somehow accomplish enough so that others will think well of the family — and no one will notice that the hero and his or her family are standing on ice. The family hero often gets good grades in school, is what they sometimes call an "overachiever," and can be counted upon to "be there."

With help, the family hero can step off the ice, too, and RELAX. He or she learns not to take on so much responsibility — especially not to take on the substance abuser's problems. Many family heroes grow up to be executives and leaders.

### 6. Scapegoat

The **scapegoat** has a big job in the family. The second-born child may take on this role, but again, that's only sometimes. You can easily spot scapegoats because they're often in the limelight. In school a scapegoat might look angry or non-conforming — a real "problem child." Teachers may compare the scapegoat to his or her older sibling and say things like, "*I can't believe they're from the same family!*"

The scapegoat is sometimes known as the "identified patient" in counseling circles. That's because he or she becomes the problem child so others won't have to look elsewhere for a problem. Scapegoats become the focus or diversion for the family. They get blamed for almost everything. It's hard to tell sometimes, but scapegoats are really feeling hurt and guilty under all that scratchy, icy behavior. Without help, they can get in trouble with the law, not live up to their potential, get pregnant, or get involved in other kinds of acting-out behaviors.

With help, the scapegoat can begin to take responsibility for himself or herself. Scapegoats make good counselors because they can identify and develop compassion for others who have problems.

Family Hero	
<p><i>Role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bestows Family Respectability</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Visible Characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overachiever</li> <li>• Highly Responsible</li> <li>• Top Grades</li> </ul>	
<p><i>With Help . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets Limits</li> <li>• Learns to Relax</li> <li>• Develops Leadership Skills</li> </ul>	

Overhead Mod. 3-5

Scapegoat	
<p><i>Role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides Family with Diversion</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Visible Characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angry, Defiant</li> <li>• Underachiever</li> <li>• Identified Patient</li> </ul>	
<p><i>With Help . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieves Insight</li> <li>• Accepts Self-Responsibility</li> <li>• Does Well Helping Others</li> </ul>	

Overhead Mod. 3-6

## 7. Mascot

Being a **mascot** is a lot like being a clown in a circus or a parade. Think about when clowns are in a parade or in the circus ring. Everyone stops to find out what funny things the clowns will do next. Clowns look silly sometimes just to make people laugh. We always smile when we are in the company of a clown.


The family member who becomes the mascot brings fun and humor to the sadness of always trying to walk on the ice. He or she has a sixth sense for another person's sadness and tries to brighten the day or provide comfort. Sometimes mascots wear such convincing clown faces that others fail to see how scared they really are. Often mascots become confused about whether people like them for themselves or because they're so funny.

With help, they learn that they don't have to make people laugh all the time. They begin to acknowledge and take care of their own feelings of discomfort instead of "laughing them off." Many comedians were once mascots. Grown up mascots usually have good people skills.


## 8. Lost Soul

You have to look very hard for the **lost soul** in the Ice family. That's because lost souls try to stand still, very still, on the ice. This is how they provide relief from everyone else's slipping and sliding. The lost soul withdraws and tries not to attract any attention — good or bad. He or she follows another's lead or blends into the woodwork. The lost soul often feels lonely and unimportant. He or she often develops a rich fantasy life where things seem better.

If noticed and helped off the ice, the lost soul can become the found soul. Many former lost souls are great artists, musicians, writers, and innovators. They work well independently but can allow others to recognize their hidden talents.

Mascot	
<p><i>Role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supplies Family with Fun</li> </ul>	 <p>Afraid, Confused</p>
<p><i>Visible Characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class Clown, Attention-Getter</li> <li>• Can Be a Comfort</li> <li>• Can Be Immature</li> </ul>	
<p><i>With Help . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops Appropriate Humor</li> <li>• Takes Care of Self</li> <li>• Excels at "People Skills"</li> </ul>	

Overhead Mod. 3-7

Lost Soul	
<p><i>Role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives Family No Trouble</li> </ul>	 <p>Lonely, Unimportant</p>
<p><i>Visible Characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invisible, Withdrawn</li> <li>• Quiet, a Loner</li> <li>• Active Fantasy Life</li> </ul>	
<p><i>With Help . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovers Personal Talents</li> <li>• Develops Creativity</li> <li>• Works Well Independently</li> </ul>	

Overhead Mod. 3-8

**9. Living with Substance Abuse**

Now you can imagine what it's like to be a member of the Ice family. One or two family members may never notice the ice because they're too busy trying to get their balance. The others might get used to standing on ice — they "adjust."

Sometimes a crisis happens. The substance abuser might get in trouble with the police or get fired from a job. The scapegoat may get into trouble at school, the lost soul may get more and more depressed, or something else REALLY BIG happens to make someone notice. A crisis is when someone says it is time to look at why we're standing on ice. They ask: *"Why are we standing out here? Is there something else we can do? Is there something I can do?"*

Then they try to step off the ice.

**10. Recovering from Substance Abuse**

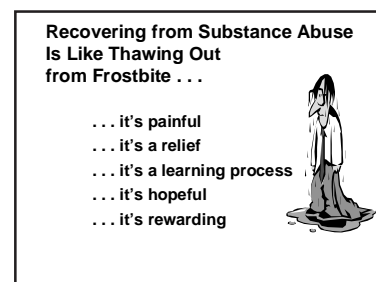
Getting off the ice isn't easy. First you have to "thaw." Remember how it feels when it's really cold outside and you forgot to wear your gloves? If you've ever been unfortunate enough to have frostbite, you know that when your fingers get REALLY COLD they don't hurt anymore. But when you begin to warm them up, they get prickly and hurt.

Stepping out of the Ice family can be a lot like stepping off an ice rink, too. If you've ever gone ice skating, you probably remember what it's like to try to walk in regular shoes after a long day at the rink. It feels like you're standing still when you're used to slipping, sliding, or gliding across the ice.

Sometimes people forget what it was like to be in the Ice Family and they try to stand on the ice again thinking, *"It will be different this time."* In recovery circles, we might call this a slip or a relapse. Others might call it a learning experience. Whatever it's called, it means many people do stop and start drinking or using drugs several times before the stop more permanently. Relapse is common and part of the recovery process.



Overhead Mod. 3-9



Overhead Mod. 3-10

## OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: RESILIENCY

**Note:** If participants are doing a lot of family therapy with young children or if there is high interest, the trainer may want to incorporate this information on “resiliency.” It should come after Family on Ice as a way to illustrate what healthy children are like and how they behave. The trainer can use this information to elaborate on goals treatment providers can set when working with children from alcoholic families.

Children are often described as being “resilient” because they are able to adjust to the necessary changes in the family system when the substance abusing member of the family enters recovery.

Resilience is the ability to:

- bounce back into a shape or position
- recover strength or spirits quickly
- recover in the face of hardship or trouble

There are some personality characteristics and temperament factors that are common to children (and adults) who are resilient. They are a healthy sense of:

- Optimism
- Empathy
- Insight
- Intellectual competence
- Self-esteem
- Direction or mission/religious beliefs
- Determination and perserverance

### Resilience

The ability to:

- bounce back into shape or position
- recover strength or spirits quickly
- recover in the face of hardship or trouble

Overhead Mod. 3-11

### Resilience: Personality & Temperament Factors

- Optimism
- Empathy
- Insight
- Intellectual competence
- Self-esteem
- Direction or mission / religious beliefs
- Determination & perseverance

Overhead Mod. 3-12

Children can be taught some important life skills and behaviors that will help increase their resiliency in the face of adversity. These life skills and learned behaviors include:

- Emotional management skills
- Interpersonal social skills
- Intra-personal, reflective skills
- Academic and job skills
- Ability to restore self-esteem
- Planning skills
- Problem-solving skills

Other sources of positive and nurturing care can increase a child's (or adult's) sense of resilience. These sources of resilience include:

- Caring and support
- High expectations (but not unreasonably high)
- Participation in pro-social activities
- Strength and influence of faith community
- Positive peer affiliations
- General social support structures

**Resilience: Life Skills**

- Emotional management skills
- Interpersonal social skills
- Intra-personal, reflective skills
- Academic & job skills
- Ability to restore self-esteem
- Planning skills
- Problem-solving skills

Overhead Mod. 3-13

**Sources of Resilience**

- Caring & support
- High expectations
- Participation in pro-social activities
- Strength & influence of faith community
- Positive peer affiliations
- General social support structures

Overhead Mod. 3-14

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

30 minutes      Small groups



**Trainer Note:** After the Family on Ice presentation, break into small groups for discussion.

1. Which childhood role do you identify most strongly with?
2. Have you adopted any characteristics of other roles as an adult?
3. Can you see any influence of your childhood family role on your present adult relationships?

- Break into small groups for discussion
- Ask each group to select a reporter to take notes and briefly report the group's answers to the large group
- Allow 10 minutes for small group discussion; then ask groups to report
- Allow 5 minutes for group reports

**Small Group Discussion**

- Which childhood role do you identify most strongly with?
- Have you adopted any characteristics of the other roles as an adult?
- Can you see any influence of your childhood family role on your present adult relationships?

Overhead Mod. 3-15

**BREAK**

10 minutes      Large group

- Break 10 minutes

