

Communication Techniques of the Chemically Dependent Family

SECRETS: Rule #1: Don't tell anybody what is seen, what is heard, what is felt, or what is experienced.

UNDER COVER OPERATIONS: An entire family hiding out behind closed curtains as if there was something top secret to protect from the light of day.

PROJECTION: Predicting the future, especially what everyone else is going to do. "He will blow up if *you* say a single word about yesterday."

MIND READING: Family members assuming that others know what they want without ever having to telling anyone. Thinking they know what others are feeling without ever talking directly with them.

SELECTIVE HEARING LOSS: Only hearing the things that they want to hear. Unable to hear other viewpoints.

MIXED MESSAGES: A definite yes and no in the same sentence. "Do whatever *you* want as long as you do whatever I want."

NO TALK RULE: Don't talk about feelings or any subjects that make family members think about how they are feeling.

LOUD, INTIMIDATING OUTBURSTS: Blasting out a message in a way that cuts off a reply. "I know what I am doing. Just shut up and mind your own business."

THE SILENT TREATMENT: If family members are upset with someone they simply don't talk to that person for a day, a week, a month, a year, a lifetime.

SECOND HAND NEWS: Family members never tell another person when they are feeling upset because sooner or later someone else will speak for them. "He said that she said that you and her were history."

TRIANGLE TALK: Indirect conversations through a designated messenger. "You just tell him that he should call her because there's no way I'm going to talk to him."

RUMOR MILL: Creating a story without the facts and passing it off as the truth to make someone else look bad. "I bet he's the kind of guy that gets into all kinds of trouble."

THE BLAME GAME: Assigning complete responsibility for an incident to other people despite their own participation. "If it weren't for him, this never would have happened."

STANDARD RESPONSE: Always answering the same way regardless of the situation and circumstance. "I don't want to hear about it. The answer is no. "