

# When Kids Carry their Parent's Pain

*The warning signs of children facing complex family crisis*

*By Dwight Bain, Nationally Certified Counselor & Certified Life Coach*

A dad loses a job. A family spits up through divorce. A drunk driver crashes into a mini-van and a mom is left in a coma. A natural disaster or foreclosure forces a family into the sad situation of having to leave a neighborhood and home behind.

There are dozens of complex situations that affect families every day, yet often the emotional pain lasts for years in the hearts and minds of the kids who go through tough times. When children are exposed to high levels of stress they can struggle in four primary areas which reflect their parent's pain. Think of the four points of a compass and you can gain a sense of how kids carry their parent's pain- over-perform, under-perform, blowing up or blowing in. Here's a quick overview of these four primary factors to help you identify the warning signs and symptoms, as well as to know when to reach out and seek help for your child.

## **Over-Performers**

This group takes the hidden pain inside and turns it into the competitive need for greater achievement, accomplishment and achievement. A child who deals with their internalized stress this way is often over-looked because it's socially acceptable and even prized to have a child who is a perfectionist and junior work-a-holic. To want a child to reach their potential is a great goal, but not at the expense of losing the innocence of their childhood by letting them race into the adult world as a performer instead of a real person.

## **Under-Performers**

Some kids exposed to traumatic events don't fight against it- they do the opposite and just give up. These kids drift through their childhood with no motivation or drive to accomplish anything for any reason. These apathetic kids may get caught up with playing to avoid growing up and taking on responsibility as a way to avoid dealing with anything. Sometimes that can be through excessive use of media, video games, the Internet or music, but it's all driven by the same root cause, to avoid facing feeling any pain or problems.

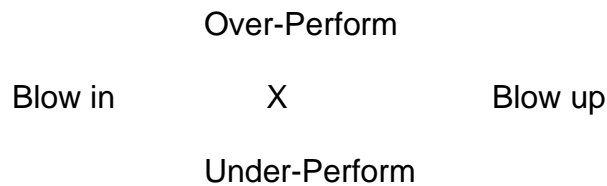
## **Blow Up**

This group is easy to spot, because they are full of rebellion and it shows. Drugs, alcohol, sexual acting out, shoplifting, violence, body piercing or inking, academic failure, dressing or acting in aggressive ways to reflect a complete rejection of authority. While these kids may seem tough on the outside, in reality they are full of insecurity on the inside. Sometimes seductive and sometimes sly, but always deeply scared on the inside, especially of being alone, so this group is most likely to travel in packs with other kids who are equally wounded.

## **Blow In**

This final group faces the most dangerous symptoms of all. The quiet kids who have a tendency to stuff everything inside can often end up with significant anxiety, depression, resentment, social phobias, cutting or other self-destructive behavior, including suicidal or homicidal thinking. Kids who carry their parent's pain and allow it to blow in can end up in very destructive situations, yet because they suffer in silence many parents don't realize there is a problem until it's too late. School shooters are rare, but overly shy kids who never reach their potential because they are too afraid to try are in classrooms in every school district in the country.

Visualize these behaviors as the four points of a compass with your child in the middle.



While it's normal for every child to have mild traits of any one of these four factors, it's the extremes that a parent needs to be concerned about. Since the goal of raising healthy kids is to help them reach their God designed potential, if it seems that the stress a child has experienced is extreme and they are sliding toward any one of these four extremes, it may be time to take bold action as a parent to deal with the pain of a complex family crisis so your kids don't have to carry the pain.

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**About the author-** Dwight Bain is dedicated to helping people achieve greater results. He is a Nationally Certified Counselor, Certified Life Coach and Certified Family Law Mediator in practice since 1984 with a primary focus on solving crisis events and managing major change. He is a member of the National Speakers Association who partners with the media, major corporations and non-profit organizations to make a positive difference in our culture. Access more counseling and coaching resources designed to save you time by solving stressful situations by visiting his counseling blog with over 150 complimentary articles and special reports at [www.LifeWorksGroup.org](http://www.LifeWorksGroup.org)