



Is There a Godfather In Your Life?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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In 1972 Francis Ford Coppola produced and directed the first of three award-winning movies about a fictional New York crime family. Recently, one of the television stations had a "Godfather Weekend" and replayed these over and over again. Watching them reminded me of how people with Antisocial Personality Disorder function.

According to the story, a Sicilian man insulted a mafia chieftain. As a result, everyone in the man's family was killed, except the nine-year old son, Vito, who managed to escape to North America. Vito began doing favours for others in exchange for promises and loyalty. Over the years he did not hesitate to disrespect the law or intimidate people through threats, crime or murder. He just took what he wanted, without considering how others were affected.

It is rather difficult for the criminals to juggle all their complex relationships because they are always trying to figure out who they can trust. Their inner circle of wives and children are usually lied to about their activities in an attempt to protect them. Some loyal friends are invited into the "family" and remain as long as they are willing to do what the "Godfather" or leader tells them to do. "Enemies" are dealt with through violence and death.

The Godfather's fortune and business enterprise grew but he ages as time passes in the three movies. Leadership of "the family" organization passes to younger generations, all of whom share the same corrupt values.

"The Godfather" movies reveal the inner workings of organized crime. One person holds the power to put out a "hit" on another and his command is carried out. But it does not explain the individual lack of morals or the ability to lie and perform violent acts that disregard the law.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V* outlines the criteria for Antisocial Personality Disorder. These include significant impairments in both self and interpersonal functioning. Identify and self-direction are usually based on desire for power, personal gain or pleasure combined with an absence of internal standards or ethical behaviours. A lack of empathy and incapacity to have intimate relationships results in coercion, intimidation and absence of remorse.

Pathological personality traits include antagonism (manipulation, deceitfulness, callousness and hostility) as well as disinhibition (irresponsibility, impulsivity and risk-taking). These can be very deceiving. Sometimes a criminal presents as being a caring individual, respected friend and supportive problem-solver. They often say what you want to hear and even though they may seem to "have it all" their pattern of behaviour usually leads to betrayal, long-term jail sentences and/or death at a young age.

In the "Godfather" movies, those involved in the crime family financially provided for their wives, were proud of their children and attended church. These activities, however, were not always as selfless as they might appear to be at first. In fact, they seem to be done because it suited the criminal and met their needs for loyalty and power. As soon as the wife or family member wasn't meeting the needs of the criminal anymore, a price was paid.

Some theorists believe that empathy can be taught but, Antisocial Personality Disorder is an ingrained pattern of behaviour that usually lasts throughout a lifetime.

Is there a Godfather or criminal personality in your life?

Better not think that you can change that person but instead be like Vito's daughter-in-law. Get out and love the person from a distance! Otherwise you will likely be used, abused and have regrets in the future.