

Co-Dependency

Codependency is a condition that occurs when an individual's identity is lost in a reactive posture to other people, places or things. It has many different manifestations, but also has some specific identifiable symptoms. Codependency also has a definable course and predictable outcomes if untreated. Codependency begins in early childhood years and usually **DOES NOT get better with time**. In many instances the behaviors become more and more painful and exaggerated with time.

The following five behaviors are commonly seen with codependent individuals.

- 1. Attempting to control** behavior and feelings in self and others despite obvious consequences. This can be seen when control becomes more important than the personal costs or the content outcome. (“Cutting off your nose to spite your face”)
- 2. Taking responsibility for meeting other's needs** to the exclusion of meeting one's own needs. When personal growth and enhancement take a backseat to “helping” and being important to others.
- 3. Having unclear boundaries** in situations of intimacy and separation. Not knowing where ownership and responsibility end and begin are common in this symptom. Issues of “whose problem is it?” **are experienced over and over.**
- 4. Being in enmeshed/dependent relationships** with dysfunctional individuals such as alcoholics, addicts or those with **impulse control disorders**. Attraction to people or situations that require your help. . . the “messiah complex”. In order to be ok I must save other people, whether they need or want it isn't an issue.
- 5. Having a number of feelings related symptoms** such as depression, anxiety, compulsions or medical illnesses. Most codependents suffer from physical conversion symptoms, where the emotional burdens and costs convert over into physical symptoms. They die earlier than the spouses they live with.

Codependents tend to feel very little self-worth and often feel the need to make themselves indispensable to others. They often engage in “care taking” (doing for others what they can do for themselves) to the point of becoming very manipulative and controlling of other people's behavior. While attempting to rescue others the codependent often feels used, victimized and resentful.

As codependents progressively lose touch with their own feelings, as their primary concern becomes fulfilling other's expectations. The focus is external rather than internal self fulfillment. Because the relationship is used in the same way an alcoholic uses alcohol, (to get a fix) codependents often become “relationship addicts”, preoccupied with the needs and doings of others. They are often perceived by others as “busy bodies” “Gestapo” and in general far too interested in what others are doing. This alienates others and usually causes them to pull away from the codependent. The codependent then becomes a target for passive aggressive behavior that is designed to gain some control or power back from the codependent. This dumps gas on the fire and when the codependent becomes threatened by the passive aggressive behaviors they

then typically escalate and become more overbearing out of their fears. As the codependent become more and more overbearing the spouse becomes more and more fed up and withdraws/becomes more passive aggressive and the cycle continues, getting more out of round with each passing day.

As the process of “fixing” others becomes more and more advanced, the codependent’s boundaries become less defined and more confusing. With this step comes a profound neglect of self-progression. Hobbies, education, and coequal relationships may all be neglected. Passion lists will not be formulated, much less acted upon. Physical, spiritual, emotional and social needs all become less and less important as the codependent accelerates the dynamic and attempts to take control. The primary issue at this stage will be control of others and their behavior. The codependent feels increasingly out of control and impotent as they fail to produce the results they so desperately want.

Further, as codependents experience failing self-esteem, inability to control their world, and mounting fear and confusion, they become progressively judgmental of others. The stress created by these issues in the codependent often contributes further to physical illness, alienation and unhappiness and bitterness.

Codependency can also result in sexual issues. Codependents often may become involved in compulsive sexual behavior in an attempt to feel better about themselves. Some may shut down in an attempt to control the dynamics in the relationship and feel more in control themselves. Boundary issues become increasingly difficult to deal with and the codependent may have a smearing of “what is theirs and what is others” as far as ownership and responsibility.

It has been observed that active chemical dependents frequently outlive their codependent spouses. . . what that means is that a codependent lifestyle is physically toxic and debilitating.

Steps for healing codependency

1. LEARN TO DEPEND ON SELF!!!
2. STOP LOOKING FOR HAPPINESS FROM OTHERS.
3. FINISH CHILDHOOD ISSUES
4. NUTURE THE INNER CHILD
5. NUTURE SPIRITUALITY
6. LEARN ACCEPTANCE
7. FEEL FEELINGS
8. BE ANGRY
9. SET GOALS
10. COMMUNICATE
11. SET BOUNDARIES
12. FORGIVENESS

Remember that healing is a process and takes time and courage. Often the therapy may take a number of years to make the permanent changes in thinking and behavior. Quick fixes and brief therapy do not “heal to the core” when it comes to codependency. With courage and determination, effective tools and good support this toxic way of living can be changed.