

We are codependent because we allow the behavior of another person to effect our behavior so that we become consumed with that person and their problems. This obsession with the issues and problems of others becomes debilitating to us we exhaust inordinate and inappropriate amounts of mental and emotional energy over them, leaving little, if any, energy for ourselves.

Often our childhood was so chaotic and our environments were so out of control, we learned ways to escape to try to find serenity. As we grew into adulthood, we worked hard at trying to control our external environment, believing it was the key to our happiness and inner peace. Our family of origin was frequently dysfunctional. Sometimes we even blamed ourselves for our parent's problems. If we were terrorized by a volatile alcoholic parent, anger became an unacceptable and unwelcomed guest in our lives. Anger was to be avoided at all costs. As a result, we learned to appease; we learned to rescue. We learned to be aware of others' feelings in order to protect ourselves and began to lose touch with our own feelings. We made ourselves responsible for the happiness of others, and when they weren't happy, neither were we.

We are extremely loyal but also extremely insecure. Self-doubt is our constant companion, and often self-hatred. Being unacceptable to ourselves, we hide our true selves, convinced that if anyone truly knew us, they would abandon us. This fear of abandonment often fuels our codependent behavior as we seek to do everything in our power to become so valuable that others would not want to leave us. By choice, our lives are not our own and our emotions are the property of whatever crisis the person(s) closest to us is having.

The Solution

We don't have to live this way! We do have a choice. We can live free of these obligatory compulsions. Through God's help we can learn to take responsibility for our own lives and allow others to take responsibility for theirs.

With Jesus Christ as our Higher Power we learn how to apply the 8 Recovery Principles and 12 Steps, designed to guide us through the journey we call "Recovery." If we are diligent to provide willingness, integrity, consistency and rigorous honesty, God will supply us with courage, strength and the ability to take the necessary steps to gain freedom from our compulsive behaviors.

Are you codependent?

Wondering if you may be codependent? Here are some characteristics of those dealing with this disorder: I assume responsibility for others' feelings and behaviors.

- I feel guilty about others' feelings and behaviors.
- I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.
- I am afraid of my own anger, yet sometimes erupt in rage.
- I worry about how others may respond to my feelings, opinions, and behavior.
- I have difficulty making decisions.
- I am afraid of being hurt and/or rejected by others.
- I minimize or deny how I truly feel.
- I am very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.

- I am afraid to express differing opinions or feelings.
- I value others' opinions and feelings more than my own.
- I put other people's needs and desires before my own.
- I am embarrassed to receive recognition and praise or gifts.
- I judge everything I think, say, or do harshly, as never "good enough."
- I am a perfectionist.
- I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.
- I do not ask others to meet my needs or desires.
- I do not perceive myself as lovable and worthwhile.
- I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or others' anger.
- I am very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.
- I am afraid to express differing opinions or feelings.

In its broadest sense, codependency can be defined as an addiction to people, behaviors, or things. Codependency is the fallacy of trying to control interior feelings by controlling people, things, and events on the outside. To the codependent, control or the lack of it is central to every aspect of life.