

The Problems with Codependency

The term first came into professional language in the late 1970's. It became a way of describing people who resist giving up their caretaker role as much as the chemically addicted person resists staying clean.

However, the reference is no longer limited to this. It is now used to describe people struggling with overreliance and control issues – whether or not they are in a relationship with an unhealthy person.

Defined:

Codependency is an overdependence on others. The attempt to control the very thing/situation or person that is controlling us.

It is a matter of degree: to some extent...aren't we all controlled by actions and opinions of others?

It is the "act of controlling" which characterizes those who are codependent.

What Does Codependency Look Like?

1. The **Caretaker** (not care **giver**)

*Care "takers" try to do for others what they could do for themselves
They over anticipate what others need so they can help
They try to be the hero, eager to fix problems*

2. The Rescuer

*The one who bails others out of the consequences of their poor choices.
They cover for others' mistakes.
They protect and defend others by making excuses for their inappropriate behavior. They minimize the seriousness of a problem.*

3. The Pleaser

*This is not the one trying to be considerate of others' real needs & feelings.
Pleasers try to do or be what they **think** others want them to do or be.
They readily agree to avoid confrontation.
They control others by doing or saying anything for anyone at anytime.*

4. The Helpless Victim

*Choose to be weak unnecessarily. They don't want to be helped, they want to be taken care of.
They manipulate others to feel sorry for them...controlling others through "weakness."*

5. The Intimidator

*I Peter 5:3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock
Intimidators get things done their way. They are pushy even without raising their voices.
They use knowledge to control. They are cordial & friendly as long as you agree with them.*

What Drives a Codependent Person?

1. Fear:
*Fear of disapproval, rejection or anger. Have a nagging dread that something terrible is going to happen if they don't stay in control.
Some worry about what others might do or think if they fail.
(Like a parent worried that others will view them as a bad parent for their adult child's irresponsible behavior)*
2. Misplaced Trust:
*It's appropriate to need and depend on other people and for family members to want each other's love and acceptance. But codependents need and depend on others too much.
Codependents make others so important that their ultimate joy & fulfillment in life hinges on others' love, approval and presence.*
3. By Example:
*The "generational" sin. Sins passed to the next generation by parental example.
Codependency is a learned behavior.
Children have no control over their parents nor the example they set, but they are responsible for choosing to follow or reject it.*

What is wrong with Codependency?

1. It doesn't work
2. It creates more problems, such as:
 - a. Resentment
 - b. Stress
 - c. Depression and Addiction
 - d. Health Complications
3. It's Unloving
4. It's a Sign of an Unrecognized Problem.

Recognizing signs – the **attachment** point:

An unhealthy **attachment** is when:

- we may become excessively worried & preoccupied with a problem or person (when much of our mental energy & emotions is attached)
- we may graduate to becoming obsessed with and controlling of the people & problems in our environment
- we become total reactionaries – instead of acting purely by our own will/choice
- we may become emotionally dependent on the people around us

Are you a reactor?

Reacting usually does not work so why do we do it?

Typically we are anxious and afraid of what has happened, what might happen and what is happening.

- we react because most people react
- we react because we think we have to react...we actually don't have to
- sometimes we react because we don't feel good about ourselves

1. We don't have to forfeit our peace nor our power to think & feel for anyone or anything. Remember we have the same access to facts/resources when we are at peace as when we're frantic & chaos. Our minds perform at peak levels when they are free of emotions.
2. We don't have to take things so seriously (ourselves, events or other people)
3. We don't have to take other peoples behaviors as reflections of our self-worth.
4. We don't have to take rejection as a reflection of our self-worth
5. We don't have to take things so personally.
6. We don't have to take little things personally either.

Our reactions can result in a chain reaction that eventually causes everyone to be upset and nobody knows why. Then everyone's out of control and being controlled. (The Perfect Storm for a Codependent!!)

Sometimes our reactions provoke other people to react in certain ways. We actually help them justify certain behaviors. (gives the addict their "out")

Detachment:

1. Learn to recognize when you are reacting, when you are allowing someone or something yank your strings.

Recognize those feelings of anxiety, outrage, rejection, shame, worry or confusion
When you lose your sense of peace & serenity, you are caught up in a reaction.

2. Make yourself comfortable.

When you realize you are in the midst of a chaotic reaction, say or do as little as possible until you can restore your level of serenity and peace.

Go for a walk, clean the kitchen, sit in the bathroom, go to a friend's house, go to a meeting – but do something safe. Don't take a fast drive down the street...etc

3. Examine what happened. Sort yourself out, or discuss it with a friend to help clear your thoughts and emotions. Feelings and emotions go wild when we try to keep them caged inside. Talk about your feelings and take responsibility for them.

4. Figure out what you need to do to take care of yourself. Make decisions based on reality and make them from a peaceful state. Do want to let it go? Do you need to apologize? Do you need to have a heart to heart talk with someone?

Keep in mind what your responsibilities are:

You are not responsible for making others “see the light”, nor to “set them straight”. If you can’t get peaceful about a decision, then let it go. It’s not time to make it yet. Wait until your mind is consistent and emotions are calm.

Set yourself free: Let Go and Let God

People say codependent people are controllers.

Contrary to what copendents think, they are not the people “who make things happen”...they are people who consistently with a great deal of effort try to **force** things to happen.

- We control in the name of love
- we do it because we are only trying to help
- we do it because we know best how things should go and only we know how people should behave
- we do it because we are right and they are wrong
- we control because we are afraid not to do it
- we do it because we don't know what else to do.
- we do it to stop the pain
- we control because we think we have to
- we control because we don't think
- we control because controlling is all we can think about.....that's the way we've always done things

Control is an illusion. People ultimately do what they want to do. They feel how they want to feel, think what they want to think. They do the things they believe they need to do and they will change only when they are ready to change. It does not matter if they are right or wrong, or if they are hurting themselves. It does not matter.

We cannot change people. It's the cold hard truth. It is hard to accept. But as the saying goes “All you can change is yourself, but sometimes that changes everything.”