



Codependency: A Misunderstood Problem

By Renée Siegel

The concept of codependency has been widely used in the recovery world to describe both the addiction to a person and also to describe the state of being where one's focus is on another rather than self. The focus may not necessarily be on a spouse or significant other; it can be on a child or friend.

Codependency can also be viewed as an umbrella under which love, sex and relationship addictions hide.

Although it is commonly thought that women are codependent more often than men, men are also clearly capable of being codependent.

The object of one's codependent behavior is usually impacted in a negative way. Codependent behavior keeps the object of one's affection from personal growth, self expression and autonomy.

The following can serve as a guide to assist in identifying characteristics of codependent behavior and codependency.

1. Most of the good feelings I have about myself come from your approval of me.
2. My sense of well being is strongly affected by your struggles and my attention is on fixing your struggles.
3. Attention is focused on pleasing, protecting and manipulating one to see the world " my way."
4. I feel better about myself when I am able to solve your problems.
5. Rather than address my own interests and hobbies, I adopt yours as my own.
6. You should know what I want and need because we are so close.
7. I avoid conflict with you by denying or being fearful of my anger and resentment.
8. Unless you like my friends, my circle of friendship is your circle of friendship.
9. If you do not want me to have friends outside of our relationship, I will drop them.
10. When your life is going well, so is mine. If your life is going poorly, so is mine.
11. I ignore my own needs in order to address your needs because your needs are so much more important.



12. I am in very much in touch with your feelings, but cannot access my own feelings.
13. It is so much easier to give than to receive that I see giving as the only part I play.
14. I cannot feel safe unless you create safety for me.
15. I am out of touch with what is important to me, even if I have been in touch with what is important to me in the past.
16. Our relationship is so important to me that even if I do not agree with your values, your values become my values.
17. Connecting with you is the most important thing in my life.
18. I see you as an extension of me; I am no longer my own person.
19. I feel better about myself by solving your problems.
20. If I do feel sorry for myself, no one would really understand anyway so why get help.
21. I don't understand why anyone would see me as anything less than perfect as I have dedicated my life to helping others.

Codependent behavior often develops in the spouses and significant others of addicts.

The path to recovery from codependent behavior is just as arduous and demanding as the recovery from substance or process addictions.

The ongoing goal of recovery from codependency is to integrate the Self, experience personal empowerment and to learn to become interdependent with others.

There is assistance for codependent recovery. Self help groups such as AlAnon, GamAnon, Coda are offered in various locations throughout the Valley.

Professionally led therapy groups and individual counseling offered through counseling agencies can help as well. Self help is often used with ongoing therapy. Although codependency is often overlooked as nurturing and supportive behavior, it often is not. Please consider the above issues if you think you may be codependent and get help to begin your own recovery process!