

Some Characteristics of Codependency

Codependency: needing and enabling others to stay dependent on you in order to control their behavior.

- I assume responsibility for others' feelings and behaviors.
- I feel that others need help or instruction from me in order to get by.
- I feel more secure helping others than I do when they can help themselves without me.
- I have difficulty in identifying just what my feelings are.
- I have difficulty expressing feelings assertively and nonabusively.
- I tend to stuff my anger a long time, then explode and feel bad afterwards.
- I tend to select needy, selfish, manipulative, or psychologically ill partners.
- I sometimes find myself talking to my partner like a parent talks to a child.
- I tend to fear or worry about how others may respond to my feelings.
- I have difficulty in maintaining close relationships.
- I am afraid of being hurt or rejected by others.
- I am perfectionistic and place too many expectations on myself and others.
- I tend to minimize, alter or even deny the truth about how I feel.
- Other people's wants, needs, actions and attitudes tend to determine how I react.
- I tend to be passive and withdrawn when other people get angry.
- I question or ignore my own values to connect with significant others.
- I think that without me, my partner would be lost in life.
- My self-esteem is bolstered by outer influences.
- I feel lonely even when I'm with people.
- I have trouble trusting people.
- When someone hurts me, I tend to assume they did it on purpose.
- I tend to judge what I do, think, or say harshly or by someone else's standards; I can never be good enough.
- I do not know or believe that it's OK to be vulnerable or to ask for help.
- I do not know that it is OK to talk about problems outside the family, or that feelings just are -- and it is better to share them than to deny, minimize or justify them.
- I am loyal even when the loyalty is unjustified and even harmful to me.

Some Codependent Attitudes:

- I must be "needed" in order to have a relationship with others.
- I agree with others so they will like me.
- I focus my attention on protecting others.
- I believe most of the people I know are incapable of taking care of themselves.
- I keep score of good deeds and favors and become hurt or angry when they are not reciprocated.
- I am unusually skilled at guessing how other people are feeling.
- I can meet other people's needs and desires before I'm even asked to.
- I become resentful when others will not let me help them.
- I am calm and efficient in other people's crisis situations.
- I feel good about myself only when I am helping others.
- I freely offer others advice and directions without being asked.
- I put aside my own interests and concerns in order to do what others want.
- I ask for help and nurturing only when I am ill, and then reluctantly.
- I cannot tolerate seeing others in pain.
- I lavish gifts and favors on people I care about.
- I use sex to gain approval and acceptance.
- I attempt to convince others of how they "truly" think and "should" feel.
- I perceive myself as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.

Signs of Unhealthy Boundaries

- Telling all.
- Talking at an intimate level at the first meeting.
- Falling in love with a new acquaintance.
- Falling in love with anyone who reaches out.
- Being overwhelmed by or obsessed with a person.
- Acting on the first sexual impulse.
- Being sexual for your partner, not yourself.
- Going against personal values or rights to please others.
- Not noticing when someone else displays inappropriate boundaries.
- Not noticing when someone invades your boundaries.
- Not noticing when someone uses seduction as a control tactic or a substitution for intimacy.
- Accepting food, gifts, money, touches, or sex that you don't want.
- Touching a person without asking.
- Standing or sitting too close to someone who is obviously uncomfortable with it.
- Taking as much as you can for the sake of getting.
- Giving as much as you can for the sake of giving.
- Allowing someone to take as much as they can from you.
- Letting others direct your life.
- Letting others describe your reality.
- Letting others define you.
- Dominating others with your views and opinions.
- Expecting others to fill your needs automatically.
- Falling apart so someone will take care of you.
- Self-abuse.
- Sexual and physical abuse.
- Food and chemical abuse.

Needing others to be dependent on you circumvents taking care of your own needs, including the need to tend your own wounds. A handy practice if you suspect you have a codependent urge to be around emotionally disabled people is to ask yourself what their injuries symbolize in you. This encourages turning inward to start on the deep healings that chronically caretaking others puts off and defends against.