

Codependent Behavior

It's possible that, unknowingly, you have fallen into the trap of codependent behavior. Codependent behavior is a harmful type of behavior that is also known as **addiction to relationships** – even if the relationship is toxic or violent.

Let's take Susie for example. Susie grew up in a home where her mother was physically and verbally abused by her husband. Every day, she witnessed the suffering, threats and strong beatings given to her mother. But her mother never had the courage to leave the relationship because, in her words, "he did not do it intentionally." Another example is a mother can have a codependent relationship with her children. She must have her children need her, no matter how old the children are or even if they are married. If the child is married and their spouse takes that need from the mother or the spouse themselves is not needy of that mother; then often times that mother will undermined that child's spousal relationship.

The most important thing to understand about codependence is that it's a **learned behavior**. Susie grew up accepting these codependent behaviors as normal, so she clung – as her mother did – to unhealthy relationships. This also would apply for a boy that has grown to a man. It also can be in a parent child relationship. For example, a mother can have a codependent relationship with her children. She must have her children need her, no matter how old they are or even if they are married. If the child is married and their spouse takes that need from the mother or the spouse themselves is not needy of that mother, then at times that mother will undermined that child's spousal relationship.

Codependent behavior is learned by imitating behaviors observed in the family environment. But, as everything learned, you can also unlearn, if you have the right tools to understand what is wrong and tools on how to change it. The first part is to at least identify that it's a problem.

What Types of People Are More Likely to be Codependents?

Codependency is a **disorder** of the personality. It mainly affects amorous couples but also occurs in siblings, parents, friends or colleagues of an alcoholic or drug addict. Originally, codependent behavior was considered as co-dependency to unhealthy relationships with people with addictions, patients with chronic, terminal or mental illnesses. In their desire to help or please, the person sacrifices themselves to the point of losing their own dignity, time, resources and feelings in order to "save" or prioritize the other. However, at present, the term is used to identify any person, in any type of codependent relationship, regardless of whether there are drugs or diseases involved in their relationship dynamics.

10 Signs of Codependent Behavior

1. Always being concerned about pleasing others. Codependents sacrifice their needs for the sake of those of their partner or those of other people.
2. Having difficulty saying no or expressing their preferences. Codependent people are slaves of others. They are not free to express what they feel without fear of being judged. They think if they express their opinion, they will be rejected or judged.
3. Dysfunctional communication.
Codependents have problems when it comes to communicating their thoughts, feelings, and needs. They are afraid to say the truth because they never want to bother the other person. As a result, communication becomes dishonest and confused.

4. Low self-esteem.

The self-esteem of codependent people depends to a large extent on the approval of others. They worry too much about what others think of them.

5. Fear of being rejected or abandoned.

Codependents are often people who don't know how to be alone. They feel a sense of sadness and anguish in the face of loneliness. They need to continually interact with other people to alleviate their anxiety.

6. Denial.

They turn a blind eye on problematic aspects of their partner and the relationship. They do not give due attention or thought to these problems.

7. They spend their time trying to change their partner or other people. They have the confidence that they can change the negative aspects of the person they love.

8. Weak or no limits. Codependents often feel responsible for the feelings and problems of others. They are excessively empathic. As they have weak limits, they easily absorb the negative emotions of others.

9. They are still trapped in an unsatisfactory relationship. This relationship is sometimes extremely abusive, and deep down, they know that this relationship does not suit them. However, they still cling to it because they fear to be alone and don't have the strength to walk away from the relationship.

10. Control. Codependents often feel the need to control (implicitly or explicitly) those around them. They do it because controlling behavior gives them a sense of security.

How to Heal from Codependent Behavior

Codependency is developed by behaviors learned in childhood. The treatment aimed to help the person overcome it focuses on therapy and analysis of the root of these problems, to identify the patterns of destructive behavior and their origin. Once the cause of this codependent behavior has been found, then in individual therapy or group therapies can be performed to help the person overcome their dependence on their loved one. The person with codependence must relearn what positive feelings are, how to manage their emotions and understand what love is and is not, to avoid falling into a new phase of destructive codependent behavior.

What to Do If Codependence Is Part of Your Dynamic?

If you have identified codependent behavior in you or your family environment, you must remember that information is the most important. If you understand what causes this behavior, it is easier to understand the cycle of addiction and how it can be extended in all your relationships. Everyone should learn to be self-examining and seek to correct their personal needs, even if that means learning to say no sometimes. Freedom is one of the foundations of true love, and every one of us has the right to experience it.

Conclusion

It is important to seek help because if the codependency symptoms are not treated, they will worsen over time. Much effort is required to resist falling into codependent behaviors, which at first sight may seem normal or harmless but ultimately lead to the annihilation of self-esteem and important relationships. Admitting that there is a problem is usually the hardest first step to take. Once you recognize the problem, you are well on the way to achieving a happier and more fulfilling life.