

I. Understanding CODEPENDENCY

Children have inborn needs for **SECURITY, AFFIRMATION, WARMTH, LOVE** and **GUIDANCE**.

In dysfunctional families, many of these needs go unmet; consequently, these children enter adulthood with a **sense of incompleteness**, and have a strong need for some kind of **security outside themselves to complete them**. They unconsciously seek to **fill the voids** that were missing from their childhood, yet, do not know exactly what it is.

- A. Many victims of sexual abuse did not learn what constituted a **healthy, respectful relationship** because we rarely, if ever, saw it modeled.
- B. It is important to learn what a healthy, loving relationship is. Until this happens, we can easily become **codependent** upon those we **think** are healthy and will **COMPLETE us**.
 - 1. **We cling like glue and often LOSE OUR IDENTITY to that person.**
- C. In its broadest sense, **CODEPENDENCY** can be defined as **an ADDICTION to PEOPLE, BEHAVIORS or THINGS, where one finds their IDENTITY in an other person or their addiction.**
 - 1. Codependency is **DOING for others what they are capable of doing for themselves.**
- D. Codependent people try to meet their emotional or inner needs by **controlling** people, things and events on the **OUTSIDE**.
 - 1. **Codependency emanates from UNMET or BLOCKED God-given NEEDS, such as LOVE, ACCEPTANCE, and SECURITY.**

Codependent individuals may be so **ENMESHED with another human being** that they actually become addicted to that person.

Their own Sense of Self—PERSONAL IDENTITY—is severely restricted, crowded out by that other person's identity and problems.

- E. **Codependents** draw to themselves not just another **person**, but also chemicals (usually alcohol or drugs) or **behaviors** - - shopping, busy-ness, sports, work, church activities or **things** - - food, money, sexuality.
- F. **They struggle relentlessly to fill the great emotional hole or EMPTINESS within themselves.** There is a strong sense of **something missing** in the individual's life.
- G. **A codependent person is "addicted" to a destructive pattern of relating to other people.** This pattern is usually learned from childhood in an **abusive and/or non-nurturing home** or from following a set of oppressive rules. **Codependency is a learned behavior.**
- H. Dysfunctional family systems include:
 - 1. Emotionally or psychologically disturbed family system
 - 2. Physically and/or sexually abusive family system
 - 3. Fundamentalistic or rigidly "*religious*" family system
- I. **Codependent, disrespectful relationships are marked by MUTUAL DISRESPECT and attempts to control the other's acts and/or attitudes.**
- J. **Codependent relationships are ALWAYS DISRESPECTFUL.**
 - 1. Codependency prevents people from developing responsibility. One remains dependent

- on the co-dependent.
- 2. The other person often becomes your IDOL as your whole life centers around them.
- 3. Individuals are ROBBED of making their own decisions.

The power of codependency is its **FAMILIARITY**.
It “*feels*” safe, even though it feels **MISERABLE**.

- K.** People with compulsive disorders (alcoholics, etc.) are usually attractive people – radiating power, energy, and charm. They promise the world. Never mind that they deliver pain, suffering, and anguish...

The foundation of codependency is the FEAR of ABANDONMENT.

The **NEED to CONTROL** is at the **ROOT** of Codependency.
Its roots are embedded in a child’s EARLY MEMORIES of ABSOLUTE HELPLESSNESS in the presence of inadequate and sometimes abusive caregivers.

- L.** A frequent factor that triggers **codependency** are the unwritten, silent rules that usually develop in the child’s immediate family and set the pace and structure for relationships.

These rules:

1. **Prohibit talking** about problems
2. **Prohibit openly expressing feelings**, or communicating honestly and directly
3. **Unrealistic expectations** about being good or being perfect
4. **Twisted definitions** about selfishness

(No one is allowed to rock the delicately balanced family boat through growth or healthy change.)

- M.** A person who is **codependent** is **REACTIONARY** - they react like a puppet on a string to other people. **They are held HOSTAGE by other people’s behaviors, moods or opinions.**

The **codependent** bases their self-worth and actions on someone else’s life and/or problems.
Sometimes called the “**disease to please**,” the bondage is real.

- N.** Codependency is a **self-focused way of life in which a person blind to his or her true self, continually reacts to others they’re being controlled by** and who are seeking to control their behavior, attitudes, and/or opinions.
 1. This **results** in spiritual sterility
 2. Loss of authenticity
 3. Absence of intimacy.
 4. They **live in denial** about basic realities in their relationships.
 5. **Manipulation** is rooted in pride and selfishness and involves viewing others as **OBJECTS, not as individuals. Seeks to limit freedom through CONTROL.**
 - a. Tools of manipulation are **position, power, deception, and distortion.**
 - b. Results are always a denigration of God’s best as the manipulative individual **believes that he knows more than God.**
 - c. **Anytime a person focuses on SELF rather than God, the possibility of Manipulation exists.**
 - (1) Attempt to control environment, circumstances, and people by whatever means available.
 - (2) **Manipulation** is ultimately rooted in a lack of trust in God and a **negative self-image** that manifests itself in a **driving need to control.**

DENIAL keeps us from Authenticity.
We remain **strangers to ourselves**, unaware of our **TRUE feelings and needs** and reacting shallowly to even the important people in our lives.

- O. **The Disease of CODEPENDENCE** causes us to keep **REPEATING patterns that are FAMILIAR**. So we:
1. Pick Untrustworthy people to **trust**
 2. Undependable people to **depend on**
 3. Unavailable people to **love**.
 - 4.

II. **MAJOR ISSUES OF CODEPENDENCY**

A. **FEAR OF ABANDONMENT**

Fear of abandonment is displayed in two major ways:

FIRST: By **APPROVAL ADDICTION** - powerful pull of approval.

1. When the codependent FEELS LIKED and APPROVED, they experience a temporary “fix” of safety and self respect.
 - a. **The CORE** of Codependency is the “**Need to be Needed**”
2. Most **lack an inner source of approval from God and themselves to provide a lasting sense of safety and realistic self-respect**.
 - a. Consequently, they **pursue approval from others** by being lovable and/or by being competent/perfectionistic.
 - b. Codependents are **NOT doing “good;”** they are “allowing” evil because they are afraid of abandonment and disapproval.
 - c. Feels that the other person’s problem is most likely her fault, the codependent (enabler) allows the behavior to determine her worth.
 - d. **In PURSUIT of APPROVAL, adult children often relinquish their right to make their own choices**.

It is disrespectful and inappropriate when ONE person in a relationship almost always determines what both parties do.

SECOND: By a **HIGH TOLERANCE for INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR** - Abused individuals have been **prepared** thoroughly to **tolerate inappropriate behavior** by growing up in a dysfunctional environment.

1. Codependents value their intense, often romantic relationships and the feeling of approval it supplies so they **tolerate inappropriate behaviors**.

Healthy Interdependence says, “*I believe other adults have the capacity to make competent choices and be responsible for the consequences of those choices whether they are wise or foolish.*”

Codependence cries (in contrast), “*I believe I can choose best for others, even unimpaired adults, and I will save them from experiencing the consequences of their own foolish choices. Others must think, behave, feel, and look the way I decide in order for me to feel safe.*”

2. Clearly, the codependent approach to relationships is profoundly disrespectful. This attitude betrays their belief that God cannot guide and care for someone else the way he guides and cares for them.

B. **INTIMACY**

1. **GENUINE intimacy is a SHARED sense of OPENNESS**.
 - a. It is the ability to be **WHO and WHAT** you are with **another person who is able to**

- do the same.
- b. *“The more you are able to BE YOURSELF, the more intimate you are...”*
- c. **SELF-DISCLOSURE** is a **Hallmark of Intimacy.**”
- d. We can’t share our hearts without knowing our hearts.
- e. **“NEED-LOVE”** is NOT real love, but is in fact, enabling.

C. DENIAL

1. The **basis for Genuine Intimacy is Genuine Honesty. DENIAL sabotages both.**
 - a. One of the results of denial is a tendency for **“IMPRESSION” or “IMAGE MANAGEMENT.**
 - b. Our society promotes superficiality and encourages the desire to *“look good.”*
 - c. This becomes a top priority for codependents who stress out managing every aspect of life in the hopes of presenting the **“right”** image.

Our **“image”** of a good spouse/parent/worker/Christian may really prevent us from becoming those things because of our false beliefs. We stress ourselves unnecessarily to fit images which are **not reality oriented** just to maintain an ego façade and give the right impression.

2. **Denial is a “given” in dysfunctional families and relationships.** It is **NOT rational** and cannot be talked away.
 - a. On a deeper level of DENIAL, **codependents REFUSE to FACE** their TRUE FEELINGS.
 - b. REPRESSION of negative emotions keeps them **“safe” from REALITY** and from the frightening consequences of becoming honest.
 - c. **Denial keeps us from AUTHENTICITY.**
 - We remain **STRANGERS to OURSELVES**, unaware of our true self.
 - d. When we construct **false selves** behind which to stay safe, the dynamic behind the **pretense** is a DETERMINATION to make our lives work **OUR OWN WAY**, to keep **OURSELVES IN CHARGE** of our own lives INSTEAD OF entrusting ourselves to **God’s care.**

Our denial system is our way of **Pretending, and Deceiving OURSELVES.**
Denial has to do with a refusal to honestly face what really IS in a situation.
 It is an **unwillingness to see how bad we really are and those around us.**

3. **Problems stemming from Codependency** are tragic and affect Christians and non-Christians alike. These problems include:
 - a. **Divorce & relationship difficulties**
 - b. **Substance abuse**
 - c. **Compulsive behaviors** out of control
 - d. Religious addictions - obsessive, but give no life
 - e. **Depression**
 - f. **Anger** beyond reason
 - g. **Denial** of problems
4. There are those who keep trying to find someone to **accept them** just as they longed to be accepted as children.
 - a. Their attempts at **intimacy** are **phony** and **strained** because they continue to wear their masks while feigning openness.

These **adults cannot tolerate being alone** because they **need the approval** of others to

feel alive and safe. They try to rush relationships to an artificial level of pseudo-intimacy. As the relationship begins to develop, they begin to **cling and clutch**. Clutching at the other person in a relationship usually prompts him or her to back away.

5. Frequently, when a **codependent** person discontinues their relationship with one troubled person, they find another troubled person and **repeat** the codependent behaviors in the new relationship.
 - a. This tends to prevail throughout the **codependent's** life **IF** they do not identify and change their behaviors and coping mechanisms.

True interdependence occurs when two persons, who are secure in GOD'S ACCEPTANCE, can **GIVE** and **RECEIVE LOVE** and **FORGIVENESS WITHOUT** demanding APPROVAL or CONFORMITY to EXPECTATIONS in return.

III. **CODEPENDENCE as “*Delayed Stress Syndrome*”**

- A. **In a war, soldiers are forced to DENY THEIR EMOTIONS in order TO SURVIVE**. This EMOTIONAL DENIAL works to help the soldier survive the war, but later can have devastating DELAYED CONSEQUENCES. The medical profession has now recognized the trauma and damage that this emotional denial can cause, and have coined a term to describe the effects of this type of denial. That term is "*Delayed Stress Syndrome*."

In a war soldiers have to deny what it feels like to see friends killed and maimed; what it feels like to kill other human beings and have them attempting to kill you.

1. There is trauma caused by the EVENTS THEMSELVES.
2. There is trauma due to the necessity of DENYING THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT of the events.
3. There is trauma from the effects the EMOTIONAL DENIAL has on the person's life AFTER he/she has returned from the war because **AS LONG AS** the person is **DENYING** his/her **EMOTIONAL TRAUMA** she/he is **DENYING** a **PART** of **HER/HIMSELF**.
4. The **stress** caused by the trauma, and the **effect of denying** the trauma, by **denying self**, eventually surfaces in ways which **produce new trauma**:
 - a. Anxiety
 - b. Alcohol and drug abuse
 - c. Nightmares
 - d. Uncontrollable rage
 - e. Inability to maintain relationships
 - f. Inability to hold jobs
 - g. Depression
 - h. Suicide

B. **CODEPENDENCE** is a form of “*Delayed Stress Syndrome*”

1. Instead of blood and death (although some do experience blood and death literally), what happened to many of us as children was **SPIRITUAL DEATH** and **EMOTIONAL MAIMING**, **MENTAL TORTURE** and **PHYSICAL VIOLATION**.
 - a. We were **forced to grow up DENYING** the **REALITY** of what was happening in our homes.

- b. We were **forced to DENY our FEELINGS** about what we were experiencing and seeing and sensing.
 - c. We were **forced to DENY OUR SELVES**.
 - d. We **grew up having to DENY the EMOTIONAL REALITY** of :
 - (1) Parental alcoholism
 - (2) Parental addictions
 - (3) Parental mental illness
 - (4) Rage & Violence
 - (5) Depression
 - (6) Abandonment
 - (7) Betrayal
 - (8) Deprivation
 - (9) Neglect
 - (10) Incest
 - (11) Our parents fighting
 - (12) The underlying tension
 - (13) Anger because they weren't being honest enough to fight
 - (14) Dad's ignoring us because of his work-a-holism
 - (15) Mom smothering us because she had no other identity than being a mother
 - (16) The abuse that one parent heaped on another who wouldn't defend him/herself
 - (17) The abuse we received from one of our parents while the other wouldn't defend us
 - (18) Having only one parent
 - (19) Having two parents who stayed together and shouldn't have; etc.
2. We **grew up with MESSAGES** like:
- a. Children should be seen and not heard
 - b. Big boys don't cry
 - c. Little ladies don't get angry
 - d. It is not okay to be angry at someone you love - especially your parents
 - e. God loves you but will send you to burn in hell forever if you touch your shameful private parts
 - f. Don't make noise, or run, or in any way be a normal child
 - g. Do not make mistakes
 - h. Don't do anything wrong; etc., etc.
3. We were **born into the middle of a war** where our **SENSE of SELF** was **BATTERED** and **FRACTURED** and **BROKEN** into pieces.
4. Some of us grew up in the **middle of battlefields** where **OUR BEINGS** were **DISCOUNTED**, **OUR PERCEPTIONS** **INVALIDATED** and **OUR FEELINGS** **IGNORED** and **NULLIFIED**.
5. The war we were born into, the battlefield many of us grew up in, was **NOT** in some foreign country against some identified "enemy" –
- a. It was in the **"homes"** which were **SUPPOSED TO BE** our **SAFE HAVEN** with our parents whom **we loved and trusted** to take care of us.
 - b. It was not for a year or two or three - it was for sixteen or seventeen or eighteen years.
 - c. We experienced what is called **"Sanctuary Trauma"** – our **SAFEST place to be** **was NOT SAFE** –

- (1) And we experienced it on a **DAILY BASIS** for **YEARS** and years.
 - (2) Some of the greatest damage was done to us in **SUBTLE ways** on a **DAILY basis** because **OUR SANCTUARY** was a **BATTLEFIELD**.
6. It was **NOT a battlefield because our parents were wrong or bad** –
 - a. It was a battlefield **because THEY were at WAR WITHIN**, because they were born into the middle of a war.
 - b. **By doing our healing we are becoming the emotionally honest role models that our parents may never had the chance to be.**
 - c. **Through taking steps to heal and recover**, we are helping to **BREAK the CYCLES** of self-destructive behavior that have dictated human existence for thousands of years.

C. CODEPENDENCE is a very vicious and powerful form of “*Delayed Stress Syndrome*.”

1. **The trauma of feeling like we were NOT SAFE in our own homes makes it very DIFFICULT to FEEL like we are SAFE anywhere.**
2. **FEELING like we were NOT LOVABLE to our own parents makes it very DIFFICULT to BELIEVE that anyone CAN LOVE US.**
3. **Codependence is being AT WAR WITH OURSELVES** - which makes it **almost impossible to trust and love ourselves**.
 - a. Codependence is **DENYING** parts of **OURSELVES** so that we do **NOT KNOW WHO** we are.
4. Codependency is insidious because it is so **pervasive**.
 - a. **The CORE EMOTIONAL BELIEF that “there is something wrong with who we are as beings” affects all of the relationships in our life and KEEPS US from learning HOW to TRULY LOVE.**
 - b. In a **CODEPENDENT SOCIETY** value is assigned **in COMPARISON** (richer **than**, prettier **than**, more spiritual **than**, healthier **than**, etc.) so that the only way to feel good about self is to **judge and look down on** others.
 - (1) **COMPARISON** serves the belief in **separation** which makes violence, homelessness, pollution, and billionaires possible.
 - (2) **LOVE** is about feeling **connected** in the scheme of things, not separate.
5. Codependence is vicious because it causes us to **hate and abuse ourselves**.
 - a. We were taught to judge and shame ourselves for being **HUMAN**.
 - b. At the **core** of our relationship with ourselves is the feeling that **we** are somehow **not worthy and not lovable**.

The reason that we have not been loving our neighbor as ourselves is because we have been doing it backwards. We were taught to **judge and feel ashamed** of ourselves. We were **taught to hate ourselves for being human**.

"If I am feeling like a **"failure"** and giving power to the **"critical parent"** voice within that is telling me that I am a **FAILURE** - then I can get **STUCK** in a very painful place where I am **SHAMING MYSELF FOR BEING ME**. In this dynamic I am being **the VICTIM of MYSELF** and also being **MY OWN PERPETRATOR** - and the next step is to **RESCUE MYSELF** by using one of the old tools to go unconscious (food, alcohol, sex, etc.) Thus the disease has me running around in a squirrel cage of **suffering and shame**, a dance of **pain, blame, and self-abuse**."

6. The way it works in practice is like this:
 - I am **FEELING** fat;
 - I **JUDGE** myself for being fat;
 - I **SHAME** myself for being fat;
 - I **BEAT** myself for being fat;
 - then I am HURTING so badly that I have to relieve some of the pain;
 - so to **NURTURE** myself I eat a pizza;
 - then I **JUDGE** myself for eating the pizza, etc. etc.
7. To the disease, this is a **FUNCTIONAL CYCLE**.
 - a. The SHAME begets the SELF-ABUSE which begets the SHAME which serves the purpose of the disease which is to KEEP US SEPARATE so that we don't set ourselves up to fail by believing that we are worthy and lovable.
 - b. Obviously, this is a dysfunctional cycle if our purpose is to be happy and enjoy being alive.

Comparison of Clear & Co-Dependent Identities

Clear Identity

Co-Dependent Identity

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. I know who I am | 1. I <u>act as if</u> I know who I am |
| 2. I care for myself and can therefore care for others | 2. I care for others and <u>tend not to</u> care for myself |
| 3. I respect authority when appropriate | 3. I respect authority even when it hurts me because I am afraid of what will happen if I don't |
| 4. I like to get close to others but I keep my identity and separateness when I do | 4. I <u>fear getting close to others</u> because I might get hurt or lose myself in the process |
| 5. I enjoy receiving and giving compliments | 5. I <u>do not believe compliments</u> given to me and I admire some people more than myself |
| 6. I find life a comfortable clear place to be | 6. I <u>find life to be confusing and painful</u> much of the time |
| 7. I like being alone | 7. For me, being alone usually means being <u>lonely</u> |
| 8. I feel that everyone has something worthwhile to offer, including me | 8. I feel that I am better than many people; and that many people are better than me |
| 9. I have faced crises in my life and resolved them to my own satisfaction | 9. I am unable to change my life the way that I would like to and I have no idea that my life could be any different |

Codependency is **always a symptom of ABANDONMENT**,
including neglect, abuse and enmeshment.

Codependence is a **LOSS** of one's inner reality and an **ADDICTION** to outer reality.