

Codependency describes an unhealthy dependence on someone else who engages in self-destructive behavior, including substance use disorders. Codependency harms that person's ability to initiate or participate in loving, healthy relationships.

COMMON ISSUES

Fear of abandonment

A fear of abandonment often stems from psychological (and sometimes physical) neglect during childhood. Codependent people try to please others in order to feel good about themselves. They will also avoid conflict if an effort to not offend anyone else. As a result of these behaviors and a fear of rejection, codependent people have a difficult time forming or maintaining close relationships.

Unclear boundaries

Codependent people struggle to maintain boundaries between themselves and others. They take on issues of others as their own, including feelings. This causes codependent people to lose sight of who they are and their own needs.

Need to control

Codependent people feel overly responsible for others, and want to control those around them. This often has the opposite effect, and people are pushed further away, increasing their fear of abandonment.

Communication issues

Codependent people struggle with expressing feelings. Those who grow up with dysfunctional family relationships often learn that it is dangerous to talk about issues. As adults, they tend to communicate indirectly and manipulate others into hearing or doing only what they want them to.



Trust

Codependent individuals frequently come from families where promises were broken and lying was normal, so they learn at an early age not to trust. This lack of trust often continues into adulthood.

Inability to feel or express feelings

Dysfunctional families discourage the sharing of feelings. Children growing up in that environment tend to emotionally shut down in order to survive. Codependent adults struggle to accurately identify and express their feelings, making it difficult for them to have their emotional needs met.

FINDING HELP

Counseling or support groups can help effect positive change. Groups such as CODA (Codependents Anonymous), Al-Anon, ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics) and other support groups are available. If you would like to talk to someone about codependency, call NCADA.

For help or information, call NCADA at 314.962.3456 or visit ncada-stl.org

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CODEPENDENCY & ITS PROGRESSION

SYMPTOMS

Occasional relief drinking or using
Occasional doubts
Accepts increased using

INITIAL STAGE

Rationalizes behavior of person using substances
Increasingly dependent on behavior of person using substances
“Controls” secretly and spontaneously
Has feelings of guilt
Doubts sanity
Constantly critical
Unable to discuss problem
Makes excuses to family and friends

CRUCIAL PHASE

Hides fears with grandiose and aggressive behavior
Experiences self pity
Experiences false hope
Efforts to control person using substances fail
Loses emotional control
Becomes over involved in outside activities
Aware of work and money problems
Avoids family and friends
Neglects food
Has unreasonable resentments
Suffers physical deterioration
Loses will power
Makes idle threats
Suffers moral deterioration

CHRONIC PHASE

Immobilized
Has impaired thinking
Has indefinable fears
Unable to initiate action
Obsessed with person's drug use
Has vague spiritual desires
Exhausts all alibis
Admits defeat

SURRENDER

SUPPORT & RECOVERY

Regains emotional stability
Shares strength with support group
Continues with support group

EDUCATION & GROWTH

Accepts chemical dependency
Desires help—starts with support group
Stops reacting to behavior of person using substances
Takes personal inventory
Experiences renewed hope
Self confidence returns
Improves personal relationships
Appreciates independence
Develops self-esteem
Recognizes own needs and values
Faces reality
Widens circle of friends