

THE PROBLEM

On the surface, codependency sounds like “Christian teaching.” Codependents always put others first before taking care of themselves. (Aren’t Christians to put others first?) Codependents give themselves away. (Shouldn’t Christians do the same?) Codependents martyr themselves. (Christianity honors its martyrs.)

COMPLIANCE PATTERNS

As a codependent, you:

- Assume responsibility for others’ feelings and behaviors.
- Feel guilty about others’ feelings and behaviors.
- Have difficulty identifying what you are feeling.
- Have difficulty expressing feelings.
- Are afraid of your own anger, yet sometimes erupt in rage.
- Worry about how others may respond to your feelings, opinions, and behavior.
- Have difficulty making decisions.
- Are afraid of being hurt and/or rejected by others.
- Minimize, alter or deny how you truly feel.
- Are very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.
- Are afraid to express differing opinions or feeling.
- Value others opinions and feelings more than your own.
- Put other people’s needs and desires before your own.
- Embarrassed to receive recognition and praise, or gifts.
- Judge everything you think, say, or do harshly, as never “good enough.”
- Are a perfectionist.
- Are extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.
- Do not ask others to meet your needs or desires.
- Do not perceive yourself as lovable and worthwhile.
- Compromise your own values and integrity to avoid rejection or others’ anger.

In its broadest sense, codependency can be defined as an addiction to people, behaviors or things. Codependency is the fallacy of trying to control interior feelings by controlling people, things, and events on the outside. To the codependent, control or the lack of it is central to every aspect of life.

THE SOLUTION

Jesus taught the value of the individual. He said we are to love others equal to ourselves, not more than ourselves. The love of self forms the basis for loving others. The differences between a life of service and codependency take several forms. Motivation differs. Does the individual give himself and his service freely or because he considers himself to be of no value? Does he seek to “please people?” Does he act out of guilt and fear? Does he act out of a need to be needed (which means he actually uses the other person to meet his own needs; the “helpee” becomes an object to help the helper achieve his own goals).

- Codependents learn to gain his self-worth through Jesus Christ.
- Christianity (The Bible) teaches that a person has worth simply because he was created by God.
- Your self-worth is not based on the work you do or the service you perform.
- Service is to be an active choice. Codependents learn to “act” rather than “react.”
- Codependents allow healthy Christian service to bring joy.
- Christian faith calls for balanced living and taking care of yourself.
- Codependents learn to choose balanced behavior rather than addictive behavior and to allow others to be in charge of their own lives.
- Codependents learn to live balanced lives; taking responsibility for their own health and well-being.
- Codependents learn how to set and hold healthy boundaries and to set limits for themselves, not allowing others to compromise those boundaries.
- Codependents learn to help others in appropriate ways, by allowing others to act independently, rather than making others dependent on them.
- Codependents learn to be God-directed and be free from compulsiveness, knowing that God brings the ultimate results.