

Other Dependencies



Dependence in Relationships

Dependence in relationships (co-dependency) is an emotional, physical and behavioural pattern of coping that generally comes as a result of living in a dysfunctional family system. This usually generates obsessive compulsive behavioural patterns. Thus it diminishes their ability to either form or stay in loving relationships. This type of dependence can be found within individuals, families and communities.

Dependence in relationships is both a systemic condition and an individual condition. Both forms of the disease need to be *actively* addressed for recovery to be successful. A co-dependent person needs to understand their particular 'relationship dependence system' (or pattern of co-dependence), and how their particular dependency is related to that system.

This is essential for the system to change and for that change to be lasting. For this to happen they need to gain an awareness of their own dependencies and the consequent behaviour. They need to focus on the 'big' picture of their dependence and not just the smaller aspects of their behaviour. The danger in not focusing on the big picture is that they may end up with the illusion of 'doing something' (yet achieving nothing) about their dependence.

Check List for Dependency in Relationships

Do you need to be needed?

Do you rescue others from themselves?

Do you seek approval from others?

Do you judge yourself harshly?

Do you doubt your own ability?

Do you find it difficult to talk about your problems?

Do you try to be in control at all times?

Do you need to be in a relationship?

Do you have difficulty saying no to others?

Do you crave acceptance from others?

Are you a martyr?

Are you a perfectionist?

Are you indispensable?

Are your expectations of yourself realistic?

Are your relationships dysfunctional?

A co-dependent person's good feelings stem from being liked, and approved of, by others. Their energy is focussed on protecting, manipulating, solving the problems of and relieving the pain of others. This boosts their self-esteem. They are more aware of the feelings of others than they are of their own feelings. They are more aware of the needs and wants of others than you are of their own.

They do not ask for your needs to be met. Their fear of rejection governs what they say or do as does their fear of other people's anger.

Defence Mechanisms that Impede the Process of Recovery from Co-Dependency

Some commonly used defence mechanisms are:

- Denial, denial, in this instance, is the inability to see situations realistically.
- Rescuing, rescuing serves to allow you to focus on the issues of others and not on your own issues.
- Not allowing others to be responsible for themselves. This occurs when you become so enmeshed in others that your own issues fade into the background.

In not wanting to let go of the real or perceived power they have over others, they create a situation where they 'make' themselves indispensable. This allows them to not take responsibility for themselves.

The process of recovery may be further blocked by being:

- Unwilling to address original pain and its associated issues
- In relationships with people whose hidden needs enable them to remain dependent.
- In denial about their co dependency
- Indispensable to others (in their own opinion).

To move to more healthy and less dependent relationships it is important to:

- Stop any acting out behaviour. In this case, that's the dependent way of relating to yourself and others.
- Begin to work on your core issues, e.g. child within, grief/loss work etc.
- Undergo some sort of corrective experience, such as working through the Bridge Program, a 12 Step Program, group and one to one support, CoDA meetings, assertiveness training etc.
- Commit spiritually. It is important that this component is added to the recovery program.

What Can You Do?

Facilitate your own recovery from co-dependency in relationships is by the telling of your own story. In doing this, you experience the healing value of talking.

Aspects of the dynamics of your own and your family's dependent relationships need to be understood. Gaining an understanding of the dynamics of the family system will prove helpful, but ultimately you have to take responsibility for yourself and claim back your own life.

The danger in having too much focus on the dysfunction of your family system is that you may be robbed of the opportunity of taking responsibility for your personal co-dependence process and the recovery that is possible by doing so.

Sex and Love Addiction

Sex and love addicts are people who have lost control and no longer have the freedom of choice. They are therefore not “free” to stop their sexual behaviour.

Lust has become an addiction. With lust as the driving force behind your sexual acting out you are engaged in an activity that is progressively and increasingly addictive and destructive. Some common feelings for *addicts* with this type of spiritual malady are:

- Inadequacy
- Unworthiness
- Loneliness
- Fear

Feelings of separation, or disconnectedness, from parents, peers and self are common and are dealt with by living in a world of sexual fantasy. In true addictive style, sex *addicts* pursue sex through promiscuity, adultery, dependency relationships and more fantasy. With sex addiction there is also an addiction to the intrigue to the forbidden ... the tease.

As a sex addict, you will never know true relationship with another because you are addicted to the *unreal*. This type of relationship bypasses intimacy and true union. The unreal, the fantasy, corrupts the reality of what a loving and sexual relationship really is.

The end product for the sex addict is always self hate, emptiness, remorse, guilt and pain. You never achieve what you so strongly desire...LOVE. This is because your ‘habit’ makes true intimacy impossible.

Lust Kills Love

Lust kills love because the sex addict takes from others that which is missing from within themselves; LOVE. True recovery from sex addiction lies in a spiritual victory over lust, as lust is the driving force behind the sexual acting out behaviour of the sex addict. God can do for that which you cannot do for yourself. This is a spiritual fight fought with an enemy within.

Just like the drug addict who would like to control and therefore enjoy their use of drugs, as a sex addict, you are setting yourself an impossible task in wanting to control your sexually compulsive behaviour. It simply cannot be done this way. You have taken yourself out of the whole context of what is right or wrong regarding sexual relations.

You lust and want to be lusted after. Love does not get a look in. The situation for the sex addict is the same as that of the drug addict who has lost control of their drug use. You are not free to stop because you have lost the power of choice; you are powerless over your addiction.

God will work on this with you – if you ask Him!

Workaholism

Each day, generally as they wake up, the workaholic thinks of one thing...work. They want to prove to themselves, and others, that they are a worthy person. Work can become an addiction that can affect other areas of your life, such as family, relationships and health.

Workaholism is a compulsive behaviour involving working (and therefore taking on even more responsibility) to the extreme. If a workaholic stops working they lose the ability to be at ease with themselves.

As a workaholic, you lose the enjoyment and efficiency that can be experienced from a job well done. You consequently lose your sense of worth, which you previously derived from your work.

Workaholism is an addiction. The workaholic will chase, through work, the success that is missing in other parts of their life, such as family relationships, satisfaction with life or outside interests. The workaholic therefore places themselves in such a position that if anything goes wrong with their work or they lose their job their whole world collapses.

Of serious concern is the fact that workaholism is a mechanism used by the person to avoid their reality. The workaholic uses work to force out emotions. You need to learn to face up to the issues in your life and deal with life on its own terms, much the same as the alcoholic, drug addict or compulsive gambler has to, if you are to recover from your addiction.

Too much focus on work (getting good feelings about yourself from your work) can lead to:

- Neglect of your family and social life
- A distorted concept of what is and what is not important in life
- A loss of productivity and efficiency in your work.

Just like the addict, the workaholic is often the last person to know that something is wrong. You have trouble separating yourself from your work because you feel that the extent of your personal sense of self worth is directly related to how much you can produce at work. Little else matters.



Some Strategies to use if you are a Workaholic:

- Gradually cut down the number of hours you work each day/week.
- Avoid talking shop over lunch or tea breaks.
- Make recreation and social activities important personal commitments and plan time for them.
- Carefully select the right leisure activities.
- Exercise (in moderation) on a regular basis.
- Make a decision not to feel guilt when you are not working.

Perfectionism

People with the personality trait of perfectionism have an unconscious need to be in control of themselves and others. The payoff in this is that they minimise the risks in their lives.

Characteristics of Perfectionism:

- Compulsive need for order and routine
- Over-developed work ethic, often to the point of workaholism
- Fear of making wrong decisions or mistakes
- Need to be faultless - morally, personally and professionally
- Emotional guardedness
- Frugality
- Need to follow rules
- Tendency to be negative

In today's society there is increasing pressure for higher and higher levels of productivity and efficiency. Most people want to be the best person they can be. Whilst it can be personally rewarding to achieve your goals if you try to make everything 'perfect' you may become disillusioned and frustrated when your efforts, no matter how thorough and diligently undertaken, do not reach your perfectionist standards.

What may have begun as the pursuit of excellence becomes the tyranny of perfectionism. The difference between striving for excellence and being a perfectionist is that people striving for excellence can accept and even take pride in a less than absolutely perfect job without feeling inadequate. Perfectionism creates a variety of emotional and behavioural problems such as depression, workaholism, panic attacks and eating disorders amongst others.

Strategies for Transforming Perfection into Excellence:

- Aim for balance
- Set realistic goals
- Keep a journal of your successes
- Don't dwell on past 'imperfect' successes
- Do some things just for fun without critiquing your performance
- Recognise when you have reached your limit and alter your expectations

To Avoid Being A Perfectionis Parent You Could:

- Give consistent and unconditional approval for your children's accomplishments
- Don't expect your children to do things as well as you do
- Don't criticise your children for every mistake or imperfection
- Don't use your children to fulfil your unrealised dreams

Some Points for Discussion

1. What types of other dependent behaviours do you still exhibit?
2. What do you avoid in hanging on to these other dependent behaviours?
3. How are you going to change these other dependent behaviours?
4. What do you need to do to ensure you lead a healthy and productive lifestyle?