

# Codependency

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A Secondhand Life

# What does it *really* mean?

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- Codependent personality is a dysfunctional relationship with the self by living through another, or for another in attempts to control, blame, or fix.

The irony? Is that most people who are in fact codependent, are deep down wanting someone to care about them, fix them.

**Simply Said- I get my needs met through other people.**



# What are the “symptoms?”

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- Seeing life as black or white
- Difficulty maintaining a healthy relationship
- Believe that others are responsible for our emotions
- Having feelings of powerlessness
- Isolate and resent authority figures because were in charge!
- Fear of Change
- Having difficulty setting boundaries

# What are the feelings behind Co-dependency?

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- Feeling of inadequacy
- Lack of self confidence
- Cannot make final decisions
- Confusion between love and pity
- Acting like the victim
- Lies. When it would be easier to tell the truth
- The helper. Always wanting to help the next
- Worry and think about other's problems more than your own
- Feel safe when giving/helping others

# Powerlessness

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- Ever tried to help someone so much, but it just isn't working? Perhaps you're exhausted now, and now understand that it simply won't work. This often occurs in recovery, whether you are the addict, or the one helping the addict.
- You know it is useless because you have tried everything you can to change that person's behavior... reread that sentence. YOU tried to CHANGE someone else's behavior. (lets get real now)



A wife tells of her efforts:

“I hid his bottles and looked for the ones he had hidden. I spent hours putting water in the vodka, and marking levels of alcohol on the bottles. Looking back, I can see how pointless it all was, but it seemed important at the time. I used to pace the floor crying, my mind, so blank I couldn’t think. I rehearsed what I would say to him and imagined what he would answer. I was sure if I could plan the right words, I could reach him.”

The reason why nothing worked?

**Addiction is powerful. Addiction can make people self centered, and the only thing that gets their attention is a threat to their own well being. That is why it is difficult to understand that others cannot change other’s behaviors.**

As long as we deny our powerlessness, the problem will continue.

You have spent a great deal of energy trying to deny that feeling. We have covered debts, lies, and covered for others, even talking to the other person, about that changes WE want for THEM.

It just doesn't work.

Who is codependent on you??? Who tries and tries to control your behavior?



# The Family

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- When the family is still struggling for control of the situation, the alcoholic is firmly in control of the family. As long as you are trying to get good feelings from the relationship, which is near impossible as long as the addict still uses, the family will walk on egg shells to minimize problems.
  - **EXAMPLE:** You may agree to doing something to avoid conflict or a fight, or you may take on a job or a chore just to see it get done. This gives all the power to the alcoholic, addict... why would they do the dirty work when you are going to do it for them!



# Have you heard this one?

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- A father said, “We couldn’t bear to face the truth about our daughter’s drinking. She kept the house at an uproar but we kept trying. We bribed her not to drink; we let her break rules we wouldn’t tolerate the other children breaking. Finally, we had to admit to ourselves that nothing we could think of would work. We gave her the choice of treatment, or leaving home. It was very hard to do. But in admitting powerlessness over her condition, we gained the strength to do it.”

# Questions

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- 1. Why was the daughter treated so special?
- 2. What should have been done?
- 3. WHEN should have that been done?
- 4. Do you see a common factor in the story that correlates with you and your relationship?
- 5. Who is the codependent? You, or them? 😊



# Obsession

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- Obsession does serve a purpose. Any guesses?
- Obsession gives one an illusion of power and control over life. Some people even see worry as an accomplishment. Obsession feels like a sense of movement, even when nothing is happening.
  - **EXAMPLE:** Ever feel accomplished making a list, planning to do something, or telling someone, when actually nothing has happened yet?

# Lets flip this

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- Most of this PowerPoint has discussed how **OTHERS** are codependent on US...

Flip the script

Have we been codependent on other's behaviors? Have we tried to control, fix, play the victim, or control someone else?



# Progression of Co-Dependency

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- **Early**
  - No symptoms noticeable, seen as a wonderful caring person
- **Middle**
  - Symptoms beginning to show up, however still look like a caring sensitive person
- **Late**
  - Diagnosable angry, Repeating behavior, See's life as black and white, controlling

# What can we do about all this?

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- It is hard to let go, especially of habits, relationships, and defenses after they stopped being good for us a long time ago. Its natural to ignore what we know, hoping that if we didn't notice, we wont lose what we thought we had. It is sad and hard to admit powerlessness to another human being, it makes us feel weak and defeated, but it should give you feeling of strength!
- Have you ever felt as if a relationship was so harmful, like a drug? And have you ever quit drugs? How did it make you feel? See where this is going?



# Coping Strategies

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- Don't take the blame for other's actions
- Practice detachment
  - Do not allow yourself to become obsessed with your family member
- Set realistic limits and expectations, but don't think that you can exercise complete control over them.
- Be patient- remember that it took you a long time to get in this situation and it will probably take some time for improvements to occur.

**You will discover that with change comes  
fear and anxiety, remember, all moods fade  
and pass**

**Your goal at the beginning was to help  
someone, your intentions were good, it just  
did not work. And now you must move on.**



**It will hurt.**

**It will take time.**

**It will require dedication.**

**It will require willpower.**

**You will need to make healthy decisions.**

**It requires sacrifice.**

**You will need to push your body to its max.**

**There will be temptation.**

**But, I promise you, when  
you reach your goal, it's**

**worth it.**