

CODEPENDENCY

CODEPENDENCY DESCRIBES UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS IN WHICH INDIVIDUALS USE ONE ANOTHER TO GET THEIR OWN EMOTIONAL NEEDS MET IN A MANNER THAT HARMS EACH OTHER AND THE RELATIONSHIP.

Codependence develops in love-deficient relationships where internal brokenness exists. Someone struggling with codependence (often unknowingly) looks to another person to fill his or her need for love or significance, rather than looking to God.

Codependent relationships develop patterns where God is given a back seat while individuals use one another to meet their own emotional needs. These patterns often involve denial and enablement of sin, conditional love and affection, weak boundaries, and a sacrifice of personal identity to maintain the relationship. An “emotionally weak” person needs to be connected to someone “emotionally strong.” However, the caregiving “strong” person, is actually weak because of his or her need to be needed. God designed us to live in relationships and experience him through them. But, only God can satisfy our needs for love and significance. He calls us to give our hearts to him fully, worshiping him alone. When satisfied with his perfect love, then we can love one another like God loves us—selflessly and honestly.

CODEPENDENT CHARACTERISTICS INCLUDE:

- Loss of personal identity.
- Feelings of low self-worth.
- Difficulty setting boundaries and violations of conscience.
- Fears of abandonment or of being trapped in the relationship.

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS

You are significant to God. God designed you fearfully and wonderfully to bear his image. He made you for a purpose. Jesus suffered and died to pay for your sin to offer you eternal life. You are precious to him.

- “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

CODEPENDENCY ASSESSMENT

If you wonder whether you struggle with codependency, honestly answer the following questions:

1. Is your attention focused on pleasing the other person?
2. Do you spend a lot of time trying to solve the other person’s problems or trying to protect him/her?
3. Do you regularly set aside your own interests or hobbies for the other person’s interests or hobbies?
4. Do you value the other person’s opinion and way of Doing things more than your own?
5. Are you more aware of how the other person feels than your own feelings?
6. Are your feelings about yourself tied to the love and approval you receive from the other person?
7. Do you feel better about yourself when you are able to relieve the other person’s pain or problem?
8. Does fear of rejection or fear of another’s response determine what you say or do with him/her?
9. Do you set aside your values to connect with that other person?
10. Is your quality of life and happiness in direct relation to another’s quality of life and happiness?

- “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” (Psalm 139:13)
- “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)

ALLOWING A RELATIONSHIP OR A PERSON OTHER THAN GOD TO DETERMINE YOUR SIGNIFICANCE IS IDOLATRY. What God thinks about you and about life is what matters most. Giving yourself away to someone to the point that you are no longer whole in Christ to earn or keep his/her love is idolizing that relationship.

- “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3)
- “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:10)

YOU ARE NOT THE SAVIOR. If you are working harder at someone’s recovery than that person is willing to work, your self-worth may be tied to your ability to help—a need to be needed. Christ changes hearts.

He alone is sufficient to free people of struggles. Continually rescuing/excusing someone from pain caused by their sin, may be very thing preventing them from recognizing his desperate need for Christ.

- “Hand this [unrepentant] man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 5:5)
- “All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.” (Jesus Christ, John 6:37, 39)

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ARE INTERDEPENDENT, NOT CODEPENDENT. God designed us to live in relationships. Interdependent relationships form when people actively, selflessly, lovingly use their gifts for the mutual benefit of one another while guarding against unhealthy behavior. Codependent relationships are reactive, as people selfishly or dishonestly enable harmful behavior to meet their own needs.

- “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;” (Romans 12:4-6)

- “In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” (Ephesians 5:28,33)

NEXT STEPS

- If you answered yes to 3 or more of the questions in the Codependency Assessment, be honest with yourself about your need for healing from codependency. (Proverbs 28:13)
- Ask Christ to heal you (Romans 10:13). There is hope for healing in Christ. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Christ, learn more at [rprecovery.org/the-gospel](https://www.rprecovery.org/the-gospel).
- Stop focusing on what the other person is doing and start focusing on what you must do to be emotionally and spiritually healthy. Ask a friend to help you establish healthy boundaries that will direct both you and the other person in the relationship to Christ. Truly loving someone else means doing what is necessary to help them realize their desperate need for Christ. (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- Find a Bible-teaching church, like **1st Free Will Baptist Church**, and begin to establish interdependent relationships with Christians who can help you realize your identity in a relationship with Jesus. (Romans 8:35-38)
- Find a safe place that is Christ-centered, like **Restoration Pointe**, where you can confront your codependency, examine your past love addictions, realize your identity in Christ, and learn to establish healthy Christian relationships. (1 John 1:7)