



What Is Codependency?

Many people have heard of the word *codependent*, but they aren't able to define it. What does being codependent really mean?

- **Codependent** people are those who are dependent on another person to the point of being controlled or manipulated by that person.
- **Codependency** is a relationship addiction. A codependent is anyone who is dependent on trying to help someone to the point of being controlled or manipulated by that person.
- **Codependent** “enablers” enable addicts or dysfunctional people in their lives to continue with their addictions without drawing and maintaining boundaries.

*“My people have committed two sins:
They have forsaken me, the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”*

(Jeremiah 2:13)

What Is Dependency?

From conception to death, God created us to be *dependent*, not on another person or thing but on Him alone.

- **Dependency** is a reliance on something or someone else for support or existence.
- **Dependency** can be either negative or positive, such as being dependent on cocaine versus being dependent on Christ.
- **Dependency** can be an addiction to any object, behavior, or person that represents an underlying attempt to get emotional needs met.

*“There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.”*

(Proverbs 14:12)

Common Codependent Relationships

In the examples below, the first person is dependent on the second person and the second person is actually the codependent one in the relationship ... needing to be needed.

- A wife is excessively helpless around her husband ... and the husband needs his wife to stay helpless.
- A husband is excessively needy in how he relates to his wife ... and the wife needs him to stay needy.
- A student is excessively tied to a teacher ... and the teacher needs the student to stay tied to him/her.
- A child is excessively pampered by the parent ... and the parent needs the child to stay in need of pampering.
- An employee is excessively entangled with an employer ... and the employer needs the employee to stay entangled.
- A friend is excessively fixated on another friend ... and that person needs the friend to stay fixated.
- A counselee is excessively clinging to a counselor ... and the counselor needs the counselee to continue clinging.
- A disciple is excessively dependent on a discipler ... and the discipler needs the disciple to stay dependent.
- A spiritual seeker is excessively leaning on a spiritual leader ... and the leader needs the seeker to continue leaning.

When we have a misplaced dependency, we have a misplaced trust. We are excessively trusting in the relationship to provide more than God intended. The Psalms describe a misplaced trust. ...

*“Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.”*

(Psalm 20:7)

God Wants You to Depend on Him

- **To totally rely** on Him, not on people or things or self-effort. (Psalm 73:26)

- **To believe** that He will meet all of your needs. You can safely reveal your hurts, your fears, and your needs to God. (Isaiah 58:11)
- **To trust** in Him to take care of your loved ones. (Psalm 62:8)
- **To rely on Christ**, whose life in you will enable you to overcome any destructive dependency. (1 John 4:4)

The Codependent Relationship Profile

Both ...

- **Are in denial**
- **Have difficulty establishing** healthy, intimate relationships
- **Have difficulty setting** boundaries
- **Have one other addiction** other than the relationship
- **Have a false sense** of security
- **Become jealous** and possessive
- **Control** and manipulate
- **Struggle** with low self-worth
- **Violate** their consciences
- **Experience** extreme ups and downs
- **Fear** abandonment
- **Feel a loss** of personal identity
- **Feel trapped** in the relationship

“I find more bitter than death the [person] who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains.”
(Ecclesiastes 7:26)

Stages of Childhood Development

God bestows on parents the major responsibility of nurturing their children so that they will not be love-starved—an emotional state that sets them up to “look for love in all the wrong places.”

- 1. The Helpless Stage**
Babies need to bond with their parents because they are helpless and totally dependent for all of their basic needs.
- 2. The Pushing Away Stage**
Toddlers need to begin to push away from their parents as a way of exploring their environment and testing boundaries.
- 3. The Conflict Stage**
Young children need to learn proper ways of resolving conflict as they begin to test their parents’ rules.

4. The Independent Stage

Preadolescent children need to grow in independence, but they still need direction and support from their parents.

5. The Sharing Stage

Adolescents need to learn mutual give-and-take and even sacrificial sharing from their parents as they begin to pursue involvement within their own groups.

Children who grow up being emotionally needy and who are not allowed to learn the skills necessary for forming healthy, adult relationships never learn healthy independence. They have difficulty speaking the truth, asking for what they want, and setting boundaries.

They become codependent adults who are addicted to unhealthy relationships because they never learned to think as healthy adults. ...

“Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. ... but in your thinking be adults.”
(1 Corinthians 14:20)

The Road to Freedom

Recognize that you are overly dependent on another person, then choose to place your dependency on God. (Mark 12:30)

Examine your patterns of codependent thinking. (Acts 24:16)

Let go of your “super responsible” mentality. (Exodus 18:17–18)

Extend forgiveness to those who have caused you pain. (Colossians 3:13)

Appropriate your identity in Christ. (Galatians 2:20)

Set healthy boundaries. (Proverbs 27:12)

Exchange your emotional focus for a spiritual focus. (Psalm 119:35–37)

Key Verse to Memorize

One of the best Scriptures in the Bible that can be applied to codependency is Galatians 1:10. It redirects our focus from the people around us to God, whose approval and pleasure we must seek foremost.

The apostle Paul is emphatic about our priority relationship and declares his disinterest in pleasing men. Like Paul, we must put “first things first” or else our relationships will never have the peace and fulfillment that God desires for us. ...

*“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)

Key Passage to Read

Galatians 6:1–5

Questions and Answers

“How can I know whether I’m an enabler?”

You are an enabler if you perpetuate another’s destructive behavior by protecting that person from painful consequences that could actually serve as a motivation for change.

Ask yourself, How many lies have I told to protect the reputation of someone with a destructive habit? The Bible has strong words to say about those who protect the guilty.

*“Whoever says to the guilty, ‘You are innocent,’
will be cursed by peoples and denounced by nations.”*
(Proverbs 24:24)

“What is wrong with people depending on people?”

We should have a healthy “interdependence” on others in the sense that we value and enjoy each other and love and learn from each other, but we should not be totally dependent on each other. Essentially, an interdependent relationship involves a healthy, mutual give-and-take where neither person looks to the other to meet each and every need.

Many people, however, have a misplaced dependence on others. These relationships are not healthy, for God intends for us to live in total dependence on Him.

*“But this happened that we might not rely
on ourselves but on God.”*
(2 Corinthians 1:9)

“Is a friendship codependent when two friends depend on one another?”

No, if the friendship is interdependent (reciprocal with balanced sharing), then it is healthy. If the friendship is codependent (out of balance), then it is unhealthy.

“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”
(Proverbs 27:17)

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