

The Truth About Codependency



Wake Up Recovery
with Sherry Gaba, LCSW



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Understanding Codependency

Codependency is an often overused and misunderstood word. It is important to understand that codependency is not, in itself, a mental health condition. Rather, it is a learned behavior. It is often developed when children are in a home where codependency exists within the family.

In a codependent relationship, one person gives everything to the relationship while the other person continually takes. It is unhealthy for both, but ultimately the person willing to give up their independence, their happiness, and their sense of self-worth to maintain the unhealthy relationship suffers the most. These individuals are at higher risk for depression, anxiety, and other types of mental health issues. There are often addiction issues in the relationship that can go hand in hand with the toxic relationship.

Additionally, in most codependent relationships, there is some form of abuse. This can include physical or sexual abuse, but always includes emotional and verbal forms of abuse. Codependency can be a learned behavior for children in the family, but it can also happen to adults entering into relationships, even without a history of abuse in their family of origin.

Signs of Codependency

There can be several different signs of codependency. Remember, this behavior is often something that is learned in childhood, so the codependent individual may feel it's the accepted way to be in a relationship. It is familiar and a part of their understanding of the world around them.

The most common signs of codependency include:

- Extreme anxiety or fear about being separated from the other partner in the relationship, even for short periods of time.



- One partner assumes the role of a “caregiver” and not a partner. This can include doing everything for the other person despite getting no appreciation or no recognition for the efforts. It may also result in driving an otherwise “positive” and “healthy” partner away.
- You find you are unable to talk about yourself in terms outside of the relationship. In other words, your self-esteem is completely dependent on the relationship continuing, no matter how destructive it may be.
- Needing things to be perfect. Often people that are prone to codependency want to create the perfect relationship and blame themselves when this isn’t the case.
- Lack of ability to set boundaries with others. When a codependent person meets someone they instantly remove all boundaries in an attempt to create the relationship, or they may have very rigid boundaries that make it impossible to feel a sense of connection with other people.
- Extreme sensitivity to the moods and emotions of the partner. The codependent person responds to even the slightest criticism or negativity as a personal attack.
- An extreme need to please everyone, but in particular the partner. In this situation, a person with codependency issues may engage in behaviors they find distasteful or offensive just to attempt to please the partner.
- High need for full control over people in their life. Sometimes people with codependency issues use alcohol or drugs as a way to escape from the constant need to be in control.
- Obsessing about the relationship. This includes spending hours going over conversations, second-guessing actions, and trying to read into the behavior of the partner.
- Denial of the issues. People with codependency don’t listen when friends and fam-



ily express concerns about the relationship. They often minimize or deny the abuse and simply cut people out of their life who are trying to help.

Recognizing the signs of codependency is often very difficult. Typically, it will take a dramatic event such as the partner leaving or a traumatic type of event to have a codependent person seek help.

Help for Codependents in Relationships

The most important thing for a person to realize is that getting help to change the internal perception of a relationship is critical to making behavioral changes. People that are codependent can learn to have healthy, happy, and positive relationships, but it will take counseling, time, and the willingness to learn how to love yourself and be comfortable as an individual.

Typically, there will be several aspects to breaking the codependency cycle, including:

- **Addressing Family Dysfunction** – Being able to see how codependency was a factor in the family of origin is often critical. This is something typically addressed through counseling or therapy.
- **Responsibility** – It's important for a person that is codependent to learn to take responsibility for her or his own behavior, and to recognize that the other person also has to take responsibility for their behavior. This is a dynamic shift as a codependent person is used to taking responsibility for the whole relationship and everyone's behavior.
- **Building Self-Esteem and Banishing Shame** – Most people with codependency issues also feel very high levels of shame about themselves and their ability to live up to those impossible, perfect standards they have internalized. Learning to see yourself for your talents, gifts, and abilities and giving up those impossible standards is critical.



- **Learning about Partner Choices** – Codependents often choose the same type of partner over and over again. This can include finding someone to “fix” or “to save” only to find out time and time again this is impossible and the relationship is doomed to fail. It is critical for a codependent person to take a break from being in a relationship and learn about finding emotional support with their friends and family rather than the dysfunction of the codependent relationship.
- **Learning to Be Alone and Happy** – Similar to learning how to choose productive, positive partners, a person with codependency issues needs to learn the value of being their own best friend. Finding hobbies, groups, activities, and developing their own passions and interests breaks the need to rely on that flawed partner to provide these in life.
- **Trauma and Grief Recovery** – Most people with codependency issues have unresolved grief and trauma in their lives. Often this is from past relationships and it is never addressed, creating a constant trigger or reactivation of these feelings in each relationship they enter. In many situations, people go from one abusive relationship to another, which provides an ongoing source of trauma that is devastating.

Counseling is Critical

It is important to realize that codependency is not something that can be stopped just by becoming aware of its presence. Working with a counselor or therapist who has experience helping those with relationship or love addictions, which is another term for codependency, can be a critical part of changing your thoughts and behaviors around a relationship in the future.

Just as codependency is a learned behavior, it is possible to replace those negative behaviors and thoughts with positive choices. And, learning a more effective way to develop relationships will give you the ability to make better choices in partners in the future and to find a relationship that is mutually beneficial and satisfying, which is what everyone deserves in his or her life!

The Recovery Coaching Advantage

Of course, it's easy to read information on codependency like this and understand it on an intellectual level. But, to create real change, one must be willing to not internalize this information, but take action to create the change you seek, as well as have a system of support and accountability in place for when the going gets rough.

This is one of the reasons why [recovery coaching](#) can be instrumental in providing you the guidance and support you need to succeed.

Why recovery coaching? Well, as discussed above, codependency is intimately linked with addiction. In fact, codependency itself can be thought of as relationship or love addiction. And, just like one needs to work through a process of recovery from drugs and alcohol – or gambling, or shopping, or any other type of addiction – those who are codependent also need to go through their own recoveries.

I know I said some type of counseling or psychotherapy is vital to recovering from codependency, and I firmly stand behind that belief. However, this doesn't mean you still don't need support and accountability once you've been through counseling.

Rather than looking at the issues that led you to being codependent, a recovery coach is a practical guide who can help you make the best choices and develop effective coping skills for real-world problems going forward.

Unfortunately, hiring a personal recovery coach can be an expensive proposition, costing you up to \$5,000 or more!

Thankfully, there's no need to spend THOUSANDS of dollars on expensive personal coaching or other self-help programs. We'll do it all together, within [WakeUpRecovery.com!](#)

The Wake Up Recovery Community offers a complete RECOVERY COACHING system and COMMUNITY, including a comprehensive ten-module program that can teach you all the tools and processes you need to successfully create balance and effective, profound

change in your life, as well as provide you the support, accountability, and encouragement you need to succeed!

For more information, I encourage you to visit the following link...

<https://wakeuprecovery.com/become-a-member-co1/>

I look forward to welcoming you to our community and seeing you inside!

With love and gratitude,



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