

# WHAT IS CODEPENDENCE?

- My good feelings about who I am stem from being loved by you.
- My good feelings about who I am stem from receiving approval from you.
- Your struggle affects my serenity. My mental attention focuses on solving your problems or relieving your pain.
- My mental attention is focused on pleasing you.
- My mental attention is focused on protecting you.
- My self-esteem is bolstered by solving your problems.
- My self-esteem is bolstered by relieving your pain.
- My own hobbies and interests are put aside. My time is spent sharing your interest and hobbies.
- Your clothing and personal appearance are dictated by my desires as I feel you are a reflection of me.
- Your behavior is dictated by my desires as I feel you are a reflection of me.
- I am not aware of how I feel. I am aware of how you feel.
- I am not aware of what I want - I ask what you want. I am not aware - I assume.
- The dreams I have for my future are lined to you.
- My fear of rejection determines what I say or do.
- My fear of your anger determines what I say or do.
- I use giving as a way of feeling safe in our relationship.
- My social circle diminishes as I involve myself with you.
- I put my values aside in order to connect with you.
- I value your opinion and way of doing things more than my own.
- The quality of my life is in direct relation to the quality of yours.

[www.alive-again.org](http://www.alive-again.org)

## ADULT CHILDREN OF DYSFUNCTIONAL HOUSEHOLDS

### The Problem

Many of us found that we had several characteristics in common as a result to being brought up in a household with an alcoholic, workaholic, or other addictive behaviors.

We had come to feel isolated, uneasy with other people, and especially authority figures. To protect ourselves, we became people pleasers, even though we lost our own identities in the process. All the same, we would mistake any personal criticism as a threat.

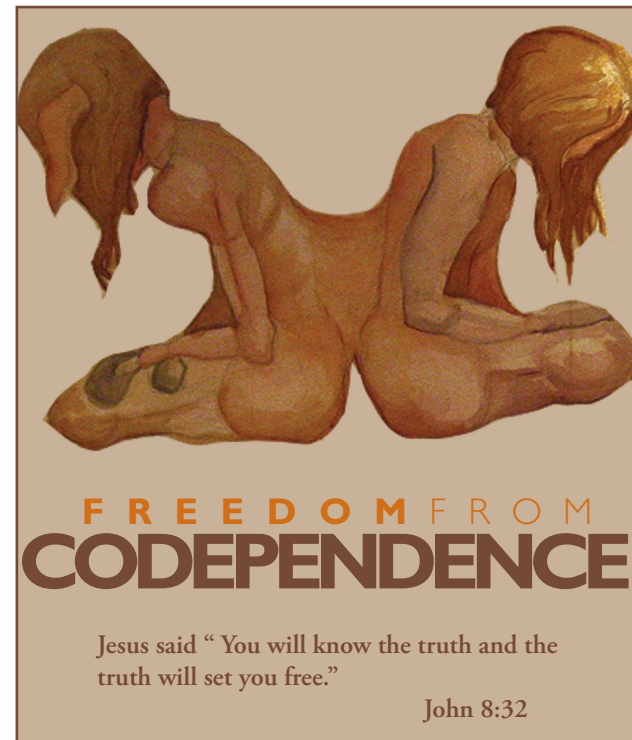
We either became alcoholics ourselves or married them or both. Failing that, we found another compulsive personality, such as a workaholic, to fulfill our sick need for abandonment.

We lived life from the standpoint of victims. Having an over-developed sense of responsibility, we preferred to be concerned with others rather than ourselves. We somehow got guilt feelings when we stood up for ourselves rather than giving in to others. Thus, we became reactors, rather than actors, letting others take the initiative.

We were dependent personalities – terrified of abandonment – willing to do almost anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to be abandoned emotionally. Yet we kept choosing insecure relationships because they matched our childhood relationship with alcoholic and/or dysfunctional parents.

These symptoms of the family problem of alcoholism made us “co-victims” – those who take on the characteristics of the alcoholic without necessarily ever taking a drink. We learned to keep our feelings down as children and kept them buried as adults. As a result of this conditioning, we confused love with pity, tending to love those we could rescue. Even more self-defeating, we became addicted to excitement in all our affairs, preferring constant upset to workable relationships

This is a description, not an indictment.



Would you like to be free from fear of rejection, free to face reality and free to love yourself, love others and love God?

Would you like to learn how to develop responsibility, balance and discernment in your day-to-day activities?

With the help of God through the Twelve Steps and the work of the Holy Spirit, we can be free to participate in His will. Join us at Alive Again as we learn the difference between codependence and compassion, between neediness and mutuality, and between shame and dignity.

Adapted from “The Recovery Devotional Bible”



# COMPLIANCE PATTERNS

The following inventory can help you in the recognition process as you seek to determine the level compliance patterns in your life.

Check the statements that apply to you:

- \_\_\_ I assume responsibility for other's feelings and behaviors.
- \_\_\_ I feel guilty about others' feelings and behaviors.
- \_\_\_ I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.
- \_\_\_ I am afraid of my anger, yet sometimes erupt in a rage.
- \_\_\_ I worry how others may respond to my feelings, opinions, and behavior.
- \_\_\_ I have difficulty making decisions.
- \_\_\_ I am afraid of being hurt and/or rejected by others.
- \_\_\_ I minimize, alter or deny how I truly feel.
- \_\_\_ I am very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.
- \_\_\_ I am afraid to express differing opinions or feelings.
- \_\_\_ I value others' opinions and feelings more than my own.
- \_\_\_ I put other people's needs and desires before mine.
- \_\_\_ I am embarrassed to receive recognition and praise, or gifts.
- \_\_\_ I judge everything I think, say, or do harshly, as never "good enough."
- \_\_\_ I am perfectionistic.
- \_\_\_ I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.
- \_\_\_ I do not ask others to meet my needs or desires.
- \_\_\_ I do not perceive myself as a lovable and worthwhile person.
- \_\_\_ I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or others' anger.

If you checked 9 or more boxes, there is a strong possibility that you have struggled with periods of codependent behavior, whether you are aware of it or not.

(Adapted from "The Anger Workbook"  
written by Dr. Les Carter and Dr. Frank Minrith)

# CODEPENDENCY & CHRISTIAN LIVING

## On the surface, codependency messages may sound like Christian teaching...

"Codependents always put others first before taking care of themselves."  
(Aren't Christians to put others first?)

"Codependents give themselves away."  
(Shouldn't Christians do the same?)

"Codependents martyr themselves."  
(Christianity honors its martyrs.)

Those statements have a familiar ring, don't they?

Then how can we distinguish between codependency, which is unhealthy to codependents and their dependents, and mature faith, which is health?

## Codependency says...

- I have little or no value.
- Other persons and situations have all the value.
- I must please other people regardless of the cost to my person or my values.
- I am to place myself to be used by others without protest.
- I must give myself away.
- If I claim any rights for myself, I am selfish.

## Jesus taught the value of the individual.

He said we are to love others equal to ourselves, not more than. A love of self forms the basis for loving others. The differences between a life of service and codependency take several forms.

## Motivation differs.

Does the individual give his service and himself out of free choice or because he considers himself of no value? Does he seek to "please people"? Does he act out of guilt and fear? Does he act out of a need to be needed (which means he actually uses the other person to meet his own needs; the helpee becomes an object to help the helper achieve his own goals).

Service is to be an active choice. The person acts; codependents react.

Codependents behavior is addictive rather than balanced. Addictions control the person instead of the person being in charge of their own life.

Codependents have poor sense of boundaries; they help others inappropriately (when it creates dependency on the part of the other rather than moving that person toward independence). They have trouble setting limits for themselves and allow others to invade their boundaries.

A codependent's sense of self-worth is tied up in helping others; Christianity says that a person has worth simply because he is a human being God created. One's self-worth is separate from the work one does or the service one renders.

Codependents have difficulty living balanced lives; they do for others at the neglect of their own well-being and health; Christian faith calls for balanced living and taking care of oneself.

Codependent helping is joyless; Christian service brings joy.

Codependents are driven by their inner compulsions; Christians are God-directed and can be free from compulsiveness, knowing God brings the ultimate results.