CODEPENDENCY

UNDERSTAND | Recognizing when care becomes self-neglect

WHAT IS CODEPENDENCY?

Codependency is a learned relationship pattern in which a person focuses so much attention and energy on someone else that they lose contact with their own needs, health, desires, and sense of self.

THE CENTRAL PATTERN

THE OTHER PERSON

Their health
Their safety
Their feelings
Their needs

MYSELF

My health
My safety
My feelings
My needs

The warning sign is care that repeatedly requires self-erasure.

WHAT THE PATTERN CAN CREATE

ONE-SIDED RELATIONSHIPS

A person may remain in relationships that are emotionally destructive, abusive, or chronically unequal.

LOSS OF SELF

Repeatedly placing another person's welfare above one's own can weaken identity, health, and personal boundaries.

WHO CAN BE AFFECTED?

The pattern may affect a PARTNER | PARENT | SIBLING | FRIEND | CO-WORKER

THE TERM HAS BROADENED

Originally used for partners or family members of a person with chemical dependency, codependency is also used to describe similar patterns around chronic physical or mental illness and within dysfunctional family systems.

CODEPENDENCY

RECOGNIZE | How the pattern develops and what it can look like

HOW A DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY CAN SHAPE THE PATTERN

In a dysfunctional family, fear, anger, pain, or shame may be ignored or denied. Family members can learn survival strategies that protect them in the moment but create unhealthy patterns later.

1 PRESSURE
Addiction, abuse, chronic illness, fear, anger, pain, or shame.

→

2 SILENCE
Problems are denied, avoided, or never confronted.

→

3 SURVIVAL
Feelings are repressed and personal needs are disregarded.

→

4 PATTERN
Detachment, mistrust, control, and weakened boundaries become familiar.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

A person may identify with some of these patterns without identifying with all of them.

RESPONSIBILITY & RESCUING

- Feeling responsible for other people's actions.
- Confusing love with pity or rescue.
- Doing more than one's share, repeatedly.
- Feeling hurt when efforts go unrecognized.
- Guilt when asserting personal needs.

APPROVAL & ABANDONMENT

- Depending heavily on relationships.
- Doing anything to avoid abandonment.
- Needing approval and recognition.
- Fear of being alone.
- Difficulty adjusting to change.

CONTROL, TRUST & BOUNDARIES

- A compelling need to control others.
- Difficulty trusting self or others.
- Problems with intimacy or boundaries.
- Chronic anger.
- Difficulty identifying feelings.

COMMUNICATION & CHOICE

- Poor communication
- Lying or dishonesty
- Difficulty making decisions
- Rigidity or resistance to change
- Losing contact with one's own desires

CODEPENDENCY

RECOVER | Reconnecting with feelings, needs, boundaries, and choice

THE FIRST STEP IS UNDERSTANDING THE PATTERN

Change begins when the pattern becomes visible. Education about addiction, family systems, and enabling can turn confusion into informed choices.

A PRACTICAL RECOVERY PATH

1 LEARN
Understand codependency, addiction cycles, and how patterns enter relationships.

2 LOOK BACK
Explore early family experiences and connect them to present behavior.

3 FEEL
Reconnect with emotions that were buried, denied, or avoided.

4 NAME NEEDS
Identify personal needs, desires, limits, and values.

5 SET LIMITS
Stop caretaking that enables harm; practice saying no and being loving yet firm.

6 BUILD SELF-RELIANCE
Make decisions, seek support, and practice healthier relationship patterns.

TREATMENT AND SUPPORT MAY INCLUDE

EDUCATION
Understanding the pattern

GROUP THERAPY
Learning with others

INDIVIDUAL CARE
Working on personal history

FAMILY WORK
Reshaping dynamics

HOPE LIES IN LEARNING MORE

Reaching out for information and assistance can help a person build a healthier, more fulfilling life.