

Codependency

Time to cut the cords and stop enabling.

No More Excuses!

The flag is a symbol of freedom and unity in America. The Statue of Liberty is a symbol of our freedom. If we allow God to mold us like clay, we can learn personal freedom. This freedom comes through the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. As we trust in God, we can have strongholds in our lives broken. We can be free and find deliverance from addictions and codependency.

His forgiveness is always readily available. The hard part is breaking old habits. Your situation didn't come to pass overnight and will not be mended overnight. In the following pages you will learn what codependency is. You need to know what it is so you can learn how to detach from those situations. When you understand what relationships are healthy and which ones are unhealthy, you will be on your way to emotional healing. These relationships may exist among family, friends, someone you are dating or a spouse. The Bible speaks of the sins of generations being passed down, but those cycles can be broken. It is your generation for change. It may not be generational. It may be acquired.

Codependency involves being a caretaker of people who can't handle or solve their own problems. Often these situations are relationships with alcoholics or drug abusers. Many of these result in mental, emotional, or physical abuse. Instead of functioning as a caretaker, enabling that person will only make it worse. Tough love is needed. You can have compassion, but you must be firm for your loved one to have any chance at recovery.

Christ has compassion for us on a regular basis. People will never learn to stand on their own two feet if you carry them everywhere. To detach from a codependent relationship means to allow a person to realize that they are responsible for themselves. They need to work and learn the pride of providing for themselves before they can provide for a family. They also need to acquire a whole range of problem-solving skills.

Remember change comes from within. You may influence another person, but you will not change them. Change is a personal choice. It is time to stop

playing mommy and cut the apron strings. It is time for the person who has been dependent on you to grow up and you must allow them to do so. Be a friend to them but not an escape route. Above all, pray for your friends and loved ones in this situation. Pray for God to give you the knowledge and wisdom needed to assist them in making the changes that will put them on the road of recovery and do not assist them in staying lost in their addiction.

CODEPENDENCY: SYMPTOMS & MYTHS

The following information is by Kay Marie Porterfield. She wrote the book “Coping with Codependency.” To learn more about her book and other writings make sure to visit her website! www.kporterfield.com (2003)

(I was granted permission to use this in my Book Mold Me Like Clay)

CODEPENDENCY SYMPTOMS:

The opposite side of granting control of our lives to other people is trying to seize control of their lives. If we do not respect our boundaries, we cannot respect theirs. We codependents may not punch people or even threaten them, we’re much too nice for that. We may not call them names, but we are experts at bossiness. We always seem to know what the people around us should be thinking and what they should be doing. If we don’t tell them outright, then we manipulate them into being the way we want them to be. We don’t do this because we are bad people, but often because we are insecure people ourselves. Controlling others makes us feel wanted and needed and like we are on solid ground. Too often, trying to control others becomes a means of survival as we learn to deal with our own dysfunctional families.

MANIPULATION TACTICS CODEPENDENTS USE:

- People pleasing: When we tell people what we think they want to hear no matter what we are really thinking and feeling. We are manipulating them

into liking us. We pretend to be something we are not in order to avoid conflict and prevent people from rejecting or leaving us.

- Being instantly intimate: Sometimes codependent people crave closeness so much that we overwhelm people by crashing through their boundaries. We try to spend every minute we can with them. We share our problems with them whether they want to listen or not. We demand absolute loyalty.

- Care taking: We confuse caring about people with taking care of them. Often, we try to help people when they neither want nor to need our help. Other times we may hook up with people who really do need help and we give so much of it that we keep them dependent on us.

- Fixing: After a while simply taking care of people and trying to meet their needs is not enough. We go a step further in invading their boundaries by trying to change or fix them. Some of us become part-time counselors. Others become reformers. We are experts at nagging, pleading, cajoling, and whining and when people complain, we tell them that we are doing it for their own good.

- Playing guilt games: instead of owning up to the anger we feel when our attempts at manipulation fail codependents become hurt and sad. We usually make sure people around us know how bad they have made us feel and try to make them feel guilty for hurting or disappointing us.

CODEPENDENCY MYTHS:

- “I must have been born this way.” Codependents are made not born. Hiding from self and depending on things outside for our own self esteem were lessons we learned in childhood. Since our codependency is something learned one lesson at a time, we can unlearn it one lesson at a time.

- “Give me time; I’ll outgrow this.” All teenagers experience some of the symptoms of codependency some of the time. Rather than moving through the hard lessons of the teen years’ codependents stay stuck there. If your youth seems far more painful than that of most teenagers you know, if you feel unhappy with yourself most of the time, you can take a chance on letting your codependency cure itself or you can take charge and do something about it now. Codependency is not just another growing pain.

- “Codependency is a disease with no cure.” The word codependency sounds pretty serious, as though it was a fatal curse or incurable disease. It is not! Codependency is a survival skill, a set of relationship patterns and attitudes that you learned. You can unlearn them. Codependency is a set of coping habits that no longer work for you. Breaking bad habits takes effort, but it can be done.

•“Why does everybody pick on me?” Since codependents blame themselves for everything that goes wrong in the world. You may feel that just being labeled a codependent is another way of finger pointing. It is not! You didn’t ask to be raised in a family that trained or taught you how to be codependent. Choosing to remain stuck in codependency is a conscious choice for which you are responsible.

•“I must be crazy.” Absolutely not! As a codependent you may do things that make no sense to people outside of your dysfunctional relationship but make perfect sense to your codependent loved one. As you move toward independence and leaving home, as you form relationships with friends, classmates, teachers, bosses, coworkers, boyfriends and girlfriends, it becomes painfully obvious that codependency is not working. It no longer meets your needs. It is making you miserable. Feeling bad is not the same as being crazy. Calling codependency craziness is a way of giving into it and getting out of doing something about it.

Coping with Confidence: by Kay Marie Porterfield offers practical help to young adults who want to break free from codependency. Another excellent book by Kay is **Violent Voices**.

After reading all the information on codependency you might recognize symptoms that resemble your situation. Not all the characteristics are bad if used properly. It is when these traits become obsessive that there is often a problem. Often people with control issues become codependent. It is easy to do since the addictive personality needs a caretaker. The controlling person takes over the care taking.

Where do you go from here? I am going to cover a situation, detachment from the situation, and healthy resolution of that situation. Ask yourself if your own feelings depend on others liking you? For example, you go to a new job. At this job there are sixty employees. Fifty-five of these employees think you are the greatest. Five think you are the biggest pain ever. The five are ruling your thoughts. Why? Because you need to be liked! Everyone wants to be liked. Face it, from school years to your older years there has always been someone to be a thorn in your side. Get over it! If you like yourself and you know you are doing your best, be content with that. Where there is room for improvement, improve! Whoever is a constant pain to you, pray for them. Remember you are out to change yourself, not others. Many times, someone may be jealous of you or your success. It doesn’t mean something is wrong with you just because others wag their tongues.

Let's take a close friend that you think is your best friend ever. You feel great when they are happy with you. You know they like you. Then your friend has an off day and is in a horrible mood. This so-called friend starts pointing out what they think are your faults. How do you feel now? If the way you feel is altered, creating a bad self-image, something is wrong. If this is a one-time thing from your friend, you can write it off to a bad day. It will take forgiveness. If this person puts you down on a regular basis you may need to detach from that person. It hurts to pull away from someone you thought was a friend or from a painful relationship. In time you will feel better, especially if you learn from the situation and don't get into another one.

Remember misery enjoys company. I had two very close friendships that brought much pain. One was a worldly party time friendship and the other one was a friend in the church. I say this because you can be hurt by people anyplace. To learn to like or love someone else you need to learn to like or love yourself first. There is a fine line between love and conceit. Be happy with who you are. In God's eyes we are all equal. A humble heart is a beautiful thing. You can be humble and confident. Your actions will always speak louder than words. If you have trouble understanding how to love yourself, here are some pointers:

- Take care of your body. Proper nutrition and exercise give you a great feeling of wellbeing.
- Stop putting yourself down. Have a positive outlook on life. Ask yourself if the glass is half full or half empty? Positive being half full. Everyone has things they want to change about themselves, whether they admit it or not. Remember to focus on the positive and improve on the rest. Don't let negativity rule you.
- Be patient and gentle with yourself and nurture yourself. Think of raising a child. It takes a lot of patience, gentleness, firmness, and you have to nurture them. Pamper Yourself!
- Remind yourself how well you are doing.
- Forgive yourself! If you have asked God for forgiveness, He has forgiven you. We are often hardest on ourselves and satan likes to put people on guilt trips. Follow God's example, when He forgives you, your transgressions are removed as far as the east is from the west. They are gone! It is time to forgive yourself. When satan reminds you of your past remind him of his future!
- Replace bad thoughts with ones of joy.

•Remember everyone is tempted. Even Jesus was tempted when He went into the garden to pray. The difference was He didn't give into the temptation. He spoke the Word of God over the temptation to the tempter. (Know your Bible!) The Word is powerful and living. When temptation comes, if at all possible, remove yourself from the situation. If you can't leave the situation, try to change your thoughts. (Think of ways temptation comes and how to change that situation to a positive one. We will share about this in study time.)

•Keep a strong support system. Find family, friends, church members or coworkers that will help you maintain a healthy lifestyle.

•Love yourself now!!! Stop putting it off. Pamper Yourself. Buy a new outfit, get a new haircut, start a diet if needed. Get exercise. Learn to rest and relax. (Come up with a list of ways to relax, to boost your self-esteem and feel good about yourself. If in a group, share only those ideas you feel comfortable for others to hear.)

Ask yourself the following questions. These are all things that can affect your life as a codependent.

•Do you focus on solving others' problems and not your own?

•Do you have trouble being at peace when you are worried over other people's struggles?

•Do you focus on pleasing and protecting someone else?

•Do you manipulate others to do things your way?

•It's fine to feel good from assisting others but is your actual self-esteem artificially boosted by helping others? Your self-esteem should come from within.

•Do you put your own interests and hobbies to the side to do what everyone else wants? Where is your identity? Friends should take turns.

•Do you try to dictate what others wear because they are a reflection of you? Remember everyone is unique in their own way.

•Do you seem to forget how you feel or what you want in life? It is time to get in touch with your feelings. It is great to help others. As Christians we are called to be servants and help others. In the process, do not forget to take some time for yourself. Remember who you are.

•Do you still have dreams, or did you trade them in for everybody else's dreams? It is time to have dreams of your own and to set goals for yourself.

•Does fear of rejection cause you to say or do things that go against what you believe in or what you feel is right?

•Does another person's anger dictate your actions?

- Do you feel you have to give gifts all the time to be secure in your relationships?
- Do you leave your other friends behind as you involve yourself with someone?
- Do you put your morals and values away to connect with someone else?
- Does the quality of your life depend on someone else's?

Questions to help you with awareness and to know areas you need to work on.

It is time to be aware of what is going on around you. Awareness means getting our needs met without infringing on the rights of others.

- What has it cost you in the attempt to control others?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
- List some personal behaviors / feelings that you can control in order to keep yourself safe from others.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
- List examples of how you are controlling or attempting to control others.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
- How effective have your attempts to control others been? What has been the outcome of these situations?

•List two examples of something you have done for someone in the last two weeks that they could have and should have done for themselves.

1.

2.

•List all positive things you have done for yourself in the last week.

Learn to Set Boundaries!