



# Codependency

**Codependency describes unhealthy relationships in which individuals use one another to get their own emotional needs met in a manner that harms each other and the relationship.**

Codependence develops in love-deficient relationships where internal brokenness exists. Someone struggling with codependence (often unknowingly) looks to another person to fill his or her need for love or significance, rather than looking to God.

Codependent relationships develop patterns where God is given a back seat while individuals use one another to meet their own emotional needs. These patterns often involve denial and enablement of sin, conditional love and affection, weak boundaries, and a sacrifice of personal identity to maintain the relationship. An “emotionally weak” person needs to be connected to someone “emotionally strong.” However, the caregiving “strong” person, is actually weak because of his or her need to be needed. God designed us to live in relationships and experience him through them. But, only God can satisfy our needs for love and significance. He calls us to give our hearts to him fully, worshiping him alone. When satisfied with his perfect love, then we can love one another like God loves us—selflessly and honestly.

## Codependent Characteristics include:

- Loss of personal identity
- Feelings of low self-worth
- Difficulty setting boundaries and violations of conscience
- Fears of abandonment or of being trapped in the relationship

## Biblical Insights

**You are significant to God.** God designed you fearfully and wonderfully to bear his image. He made you for a purpose. You matter so much that Jesus suffered and died to pay for your sin to offer you eternal life. Your value was set by the price of Christ’s blood on the cross. You are precious.

- “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27)

## Codependency Assessment

If you wonder whether you struggle with codependency, honestly answer the following questions:

- 1 Is your attention focused on pleasing the other person?
- 2 Do you spend a lot of time trying to solve the other person’s problems or trying to protect him/her?
- 3 Do you regularly set aside your own interests or hobbies for the other person’s interests or hobbies?
- 4 Do you value the other person’s opinion and way of doing things more than your own?
- 5 Are you more aware of how the other person feels than your own feelings?
- 6 Are your feelings about yourself tied to the love and approval you receive from the other person?
- 7 Do you feel better about yourself when you are able to relieve the other person’s pain or problem?
- 8 Does fear of rejection or fear of another’s response determine what you say or do with him/her?
- 9 Do you set aside your values in order to connect with that other person?
- 10 Is your quality of life and happiness in direct relation to another’s quality of life and happiness?

- “For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13)
- “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

**Allowing a relationship or a person other than God to determine your significance is idolatry.** What God thinks about you and about life is what matters most. Giving yourself away to someone to the point that you are no

longer whole in Christ in order to earn or keep his/her love is idolizing that relationship.

- “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3)
- “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:10)

**You are not the Savior.** If you are working harder at someone’s recovery than that person is willing to work, your self-worth may be tied to your ability to help—a need to be needed. Christ changes hearts.

He alone is sufficient to free people of struggles. Continually rescuing/excusing someone from pain caused by his sin, may be very thing preventing him from recognizing his desperate need for Christ.

- “... you are to deliver this [unrepentant] man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 5:5)
- “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.” (Jesus Christ, John 6:37, 39)

**Healthy relationships are interdependent, not codependent.** God designed us to live in relationships. Interdependent relationships form when people actively, selflessly, lovingly use their gifts for the mutual benefit of one another while guarding against unhealthy behavior. Codependent relationships are reactive, as people selfishly or dishonestly enable harmful behavior to meet their own needs.

- “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...” (Romans 12:4-6)
- “In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it... let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” (Ephesians 5:28,33)

## Next Steps

- If you answered yes to 3 or more of the questions in the Codependency Assessment, be honest with yourself about your need for healing from codependency. (Proverbs 28:13)
- Ask Christ to heal you (Romans 10:13). There is hope for healing in Christ. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, learn more at [regenerationrecovery.org/freedom](http://regenerationrecovery.org/freedom).
- Stop focusing on what the other person is doing and start focusing on what you must do to be emotionally and spiritually healthy. Ask a friend to help you establish healthy boundaries that will direct both you and the other person in the relationship to Christ. Truly loving someone else means doing what is necessary to help him realize his desperate need for Christ. (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- Find a Bible-teaching church and begin to establish interdependent relationships with Christians who can help you realize your worth and identity in a relationship with Jesus. (Romans 8:35-38)
- Find a safe place that is Christ-centered, like a re:generation group, where you can confront your codependency, examine your past love addictions, realize your worth and identity in Christ, and learn to establish healthy Christian relationships. (1 John 1:7)

## Additional Resources:

- Find testimonies, articles, and other helpful resources at [regenerationrecovery.org/codependency](http://regenerationrecovery.org/codependency).