



the portage path behavioral health reference guide to: **Codependency**

Codependency is a pattern of relating that is characterized by living through or for another, controlling others, attempting to fix other peoples problems, and intense anxiety around intimacy. It occurs when someone (spouse, parent, sibling, co-worker, or friend) allows another persons addicted or dysfunctional behavior to consume their own thoughts, feelings, or behavior. Melody Beattie, author of Codependent No More, reports that codependency is an addictive behavior and mental pattern that affects as many as 80 million people.

Symptoms of codependency include controlling behavior, distrust, perfectionism, avoidance of feelings, and caretaking behavior. Stress-related physical illnesses, such as gastro-intestinal disturbances, colitis, ulcers, high blood pressure, depression, and hyperactivity have also been known to plague a codependent person. Mental health professionals believe that it is important to be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of codependency in order to avoid any permanent psychological, physical, or emotional damage.

Signs & Symptoms

- Difficulty having fun.
- Hyper-sensitivity to criticism.
- Rigidity and need to control.
- Constant seeking of approval and affirmation, yet having a compromised sense of self.
- Lack of self confidence in making decisions; no sense of power in making choices.
- Isolation and fear of people, resentment of authority figures.
- Dependency upon others and fear of abandonment.
- Tendency to look for “others” to care for or fix.
- Confusion and sense of inadequacy.
- Belief that others cause or are responsible for his/her emotions or choices.

Codependency is often learned from other codependent family members. Beth Randall, a licensed professional clinical counselor at Portage Path Behavioral Health says that families with codependency problems commonly set-up rules which promote codependency. See if you can identify with the statements below, or if these statements seem like rules that are/were followed in your home:

Others needs are more important than my needs.

I believe that it is selfish to take care of myself.

Don t talk, don t trust, don t feel.

If I do not take care of someone else, bad things will happen to me.

I feel it is my job to fix other peoples problems, such as my mom s, my dad s, and/or my spouse s/partner s.

The allaboutcounseling.com website reports that these kinds of rules can constrict and strain the free and healthy development of self-esteem and coping skills. As a result, children can grow up to experience behavioral problems such as poor problem-solving skills, and difficulty handling life changes or adverse situations.

Treatment for codependency has been referred to as liberating. Mental health professionals educate their clients about the behavior pattern and teach them how to empower themselves with assertiveness, listening and communication skills.



Treatment for Codependency

Paula A. Gore, Ph.D., a professor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City reports that, Codependency is treatable, and with the appropriate treatment there is hope for individuals that are struggling with this disorder.

Before receiving treatment for codependency, a person must realize that codependency treatment involves the deep exploration into early childhood issues and their relationships and current codependent actions and behaviors. There are two main approaches to receiving treatment for codependency: self-help, and psychotherapy. Codependents Anonymous is an example of a self-help group program for recovery from codependency, using a 12-step model. Individual psychotherapy has been known to benefit a person who is in need of a more private and professional treatment setting, allowing for the exploration into other personal issues. Psychotherapy can also involve the use of treatment in a group setting.



Checklist for Codependency

- from Melody Beattie, author of *Codependent No More*

ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO SEE IF YOU MAY BE STRUGGLING WITH CODEPENDENCY. IF YOU ANSWER YES TO MANY OF THEM, CONSIDER SEEKING A PROFESSIONAL OPINION.

- Do you feel insecure and guilty when someone gives to you?
- Do you feel compelled to help people solve their problems or by trying to take care of their feelings?
- Do you feel responsible for other people--their feelings, thoughts, actions, choices, wants, needs, well-being and destiny?
- Do you find it easier to feel and express anger about injustices done to others than about injustices done to you?
- Do you feel empty, bored and worthless if you don't have someone else to take care of, a problem to solve, or a crisis to deal with?
- Are you often unable to stop talking, thinking and worrying about other people and their problems?
- Do you lose interest in your own life when you are in love?
- Do you stay in relationships that don't work and tolerate abuse in order to keep people loving you?
- Do you leave bad relationships only to form new ones that don't work, either?

If you have identified with the issues discussed in this flyer and you're ready to take the next step toward feeling better, visit our web site or call Portage Path and find out how we can help:

Web Site www.portagepath.org

Appointments 330-253-3100
800-828-4508

If you feel you're in emotional crisis and you need someone to talk to, call our free 24-hour, 7-day crisis hotline:

Support Hotline 330-434-9144
888-434-8878



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