

# Typical Characteristics of Co-Dependence

Taken from the CODA Newcomers Handbook  
Copyright ((1) 1994 go-Dependents Anonymous, Incorporated and its licensors – All Rights Reserved

The following list is collected from individual experiences. It is offered as a way of identification. These are behaviour patterns which individuals claim as their codependant traits. Few of us have all these traits but most of us identify with some of them.

## Codependents typically:

- Are not aware of how they feel
- Have difficulty identifying their feelings.
- Have difficulty in expressing their feelings.
- Tend to minimise, alter or even deny the truth about how they feel.
- Give power over their own feelings to others.
- Do not know that it is okay to talk about problems outside the family.
- Do not know or believe that it is good to share feelings, rather than to deny, minimise or try to justify them.

## Also co-dependents generally:

- Are not aware of what they want.
- Have difficulty in asking for what they want.
- Are more concerned with what others want.
- Find it easier to ask what others want.
- Tend to put other people's wants and needs before their own.
- Look to other peoples wants or desires in determining what to do or say.

## As such co-dependents tend to:

- Focus their attention on pleasing the other person.
- Focus their attention on protecting the other person.
- Focus their attention on solving the other person's problems.
- Focus their attention on relieving the other person's pain.
- Focus their attention on manipulating the other person (to do things their way).

## Also, in general, co-dependents

- Have difficulty acknowledging good things about themselves.
- Are perfectionists, and tend to place too many expectations on themselves and others.
- Tend to judge everything they say or do, harshly, by someone else's standards.
- Tend to feel that nothing they think, say or do is "good enough"

## In relationships. Co-dependents typically:

- Have difficulty forming and/or maintaining close relations with others.
- Have to feel "needed" in order to have a relationship with another.
- Do not know or believe that being vulnerable is a means to greater intimacy.
- Do not know or believe that asking for help is both okay and normal.

## Often Codependents

- Are more aware of what others feel.
- Assume responsibility for other people's feelings.
- Allow their serenity to be affected by outside influences.
- Allow their serenity to be affected by the other person's struggles.
- Allow their serenity to be affected by how others feel.
- Allow their serenity to be affected by how others behave.
- Condition feeling good about themselves on being liked by others.
- Condition feeling good about themselves on receiving approval from others.
- Bolster their self-esteem by trying to solve other people's problems.
- Bolster their self-esteem by trying to relieve other people's pain.
- Look to other people's feelings in determining what to do or say.

## Accordingly, in relationships, co-dependents may tend to:

- Value the other person's ideas and ways of doing things more
- Diminish their social circle as they become involved with
- Try to control the other person's, dress and behaviour feeling that these things are a reflection on them.
- Feel overly responsible for the other person's behaviour.
- Fear the other person's anger', fear being hurt and/or rejected by the other person.
- Let these fears dictate what they should say or how they should behave.
- Use giving as a way of feeling safe in a relationship.
- Put aside their own hobbies and interests and spend time sharing the interests and hobbies of the other.
- Question or ignore their own values in order to connect with the other person.
- Let the other person's actions and attitudes determine how they should respond or react.
- Remain steadfastly loyal, even when such loyalty is unjustified and personally harmful.
- Controlling others by not listening to them or by discounting their opinions and 'values