

What is Co-Dependency?

Many of us struggle with the questions: What is co-dependency? Am I co-dependent? We want precise definitions and diagnostic criteria before we will decide.

Recovery begins with an honest self-diagnosis, and the acceptance of our inability to maintain healthy and nurturing relationships with others and ourselves. Begin to recognise that the cause lay in long-standing destructive patterns of living. These patterns fall within two general categories: compliance – pleasing others, and control – manipulating others.

Following is a checklist of characteristics, behaviours and attitudes. It might be useful to use the notations – Always, Usually, Sometimes, Never.

CHECKLIST	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
CONTROL PATTERNS				
I must be “needed” in order to have a relationship with others.				
I value others’ approval of my thinking, feelings, and behaviours over my own.				
I agree with others so they will like me.				
I focus my attention on protecting others.				
I believe most other people are incapable of taking care of themselves.				
I keep score of “good deeds and favours”, becoming very hurt when they are not repaid.				
I am very skilled at guessing how other people are feeling.				
I can anticipate others’ needs and desires, meeting them before they are asked to be met.				
I become resentful when others will not let me help them.				
I am calm and efficient in other people’s crisis situations.				
I feel good about myself only when I am helping others.				
I freely offer others advice and directions without being asked.				
I put aside my own interests and concerns in order to do what others want.				
I ask for help and nurturing only when I am ill, and then reluctantly.				
I cannot tolerate seeing others in pain.				
I lavish gifts and favours on those I care about.				
I use sex to gain approval and acceptance.				
I attempt to convince others of how they “truly” think and “should” feel.				
I perceive myself as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.				
COMPLIANCE PATTERNS				
I assume responsibility for other’s feelings and behaviours.				
I feel guilty about others’ feelings and behaviours.				
I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.				
I have difficulty expressing feelings.				
I am afraid of my anger, yet sometimes erup in a rage.				
I worry how others may respond to my feelings, opinions and behaviour.				
I have difficulty making decisions.				

I am afraid of being hurt and/or rejected by others				
I minimise, alter or deny how I truly feel.				
I am very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.				
I am afraid to express differing opinions or feelings.				
I value others' opinions and feelings more than my own.				
I put other people's needs and desires before mine.				
I am embarrassed to receive recognition and praise, or gifts.				
I judge everything I think, say or do harshly, as never "god enough".				
I am perfectionistic.				
I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.				
I do not ask others to meet my needs or desires.				
I do not perceive myself as a lovable and worthwhile person.				
I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or others' anger.				

*** THE PROMISES OF RECOVERY**

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will skip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realise that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialise if we work for them.

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