

SOME COMMON QUESTIONS:

Q: What is the difference between CoDA, Al-Anon and Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA/ACoA)?

A: Al-Anon and Adult Children of Alcoholics are Fellowships for those who are spouses, family members or significant others of alcoholics. CoDA is a Fellowship for those who have difficulty in maintaining healthy, functional relationships with others, regardless of whether those others have alcohol, drug or other problems. Members of CoDA may also be members of these other Twelve Step Fellowships.

Q: Can you recommend any books about codependence? or a therapist/hospital/treatment center that treats codependents?

A: Those are good questions, ones that suggest you are really seeking recovery. CoDA is a Twelve Step program for spiritual recovery and doesn't endorse any other program or literature. You are encouraged to read other CoDA Conference endorsed booklets and publications like this one. You are also encouraged to listen to the stories of CoDA members in recovery.

Q: Do you have to believe in God to belong to CoDA?

A: No, but as we attend meetings and listen to CoDA members describe their recovery, we hear them describe a relationship with a Higher Power, and notice that those who maintain a regular connection with this power experience what we seek – recovery. The form of this Higher Power is left for each of us to discover, whether it be unconditional love, divine intelligence, God, nature, music, an image of an ocean, river or tree, or our own CoDA home group. The point is that in the beginning of our time in CoDA we become willing to entertain the possibility that there is something that can do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

THE TWELVE PROMISES © of Co-Dependents Anonymous

I can expect a miraculous change in my life by working the program of Co-Dependents Anonymous. As I make an honest effort to work the Twelve Steps and follow the Twelve Traditions...

1. I know a new sense of belonging. The feelings of emptiness and loneliness will disappear.
2. I am no longer controlled by my fears. I overcome my fears and act with courage, integrity, and dignity.
3. I know a new freedom.
4. I release myself from worry, guilt, and regret about my past and present. I am aware enough not to repeat it.
5. I know a new love and acceptance of myself and others. I feel genuinely lovable, loving, and loved.
6. I learn to see myself as equal to others. My new and renewed relationships are all with equal partners.
7. I am capable of developing and maintaining healthy and loving relationships. The need to control and manipulate others will disappear as I learn to trust those who are trustworthy.
8. I learn that it is possible for me to mend – to become more loving, intimate, and supportive. I have the choice of communicating with my family in a way which is safe for me and respectful of them.
9. I acknowledge that I am a unique and precious creation.
10. I no longer need to rely solely on others to provide my sense of worth.
11. I trust the guidance I receive from my Higher Power and come to believe in my own capabilities.
12. I gradually experience serenity, strength, and spiritual growth in my daily life.

GOD

Grant me the

SERENITY

to accept the things

I cannot change,

COURAGE

to change the

things I can, and

WISDOM

to know the difference.

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Am I Codependent



Co-Dependents Anonymous

WHAT IS CODEPENDENCE?

Many of us struggle with these questions: What is codependence? Am I codependent? We want precise definitions and diagnostic criteria before we will decide. Co-Dependents Anonymous, as stated in its Eighth Tradition, is a nonprofessional Fellowship. We offer no definitions or diagnostic criteria for codependence, respectfully allowing psychiatric and psychological professionals to accomplish that task. What we do offer from our own experience are characteristic attitudes and behavior patterns that describe what our codependent histories have been like.

We believe that recovery begins an honest self-diagnosis. We came to accept our inability to maintain healthy and nurturing relationships with ourselves and others. We began to recognize that the cause lay in long-standing destructive patterns of living. We have found these patterns fall into five major categories: denial, low self-esteem, compliance, control and avoidance.

The following checklist is offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation. It may be particularly helpful to newcomers as they begin to understand codependence. It may aid those who have been in recovery a while to determine what traits still need attention and transformation. We suggest that it might be helpful to think of the notations always, usually, sometimes, or never as one evaluates each item on the checklist.

PATTERNS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CODEPENDENCE

These patterns and characteristics are offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation. They may be particularly helpful to newcomers.

Denial Patterns:

Codependents often . . .

- have difficulty identifying what they are feeling.
- minimize, alter, or deny how they truly feel.
- perceive themselves as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.
- lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others.
- label others with their negative traits.
- think they can take care of themselves without any help from others.
- mask pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.
- express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.
- do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom they are attracted.

Low Self-esteem Patterns:

Codependents often . . .

- have difficulty making decisions.
- judge what they think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.
- are embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.
- value others' approval of their thinking, feelings, and behavior over their own.
- do not perceive themselves as lovable or worthwhile persons.
- seek recognition and praise to overcome feeling less than.
- have difficulty admitting a mistake.
- need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and may even lie to look good.
- are unable to identify or ask for what they need and want.
- perceive themselves as superior to others.

- look to others to provide their sense of safety.
- have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.
- have trouble setting healthy priorities and boundaries.

Compliance Patterns:

Codependents often . . .

- are extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.
- compromise their own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.
- put aside their own interests in order to do what others want.
- are hypervigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.
- are afraid to express their beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.
- accept sexual attention when they want love.
- make decisions without regard to the consequences.
- give up their truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.

Control Patterns:

Codependents often . . .

- believe people are incapable of taking care of themselves.
- attempt to convince others what to think, do, or feel.
- freely offer advice and direction without being asked.
- become resentful when others decline their help or reject their advice.
- lavish gifts and favors on those they want to influence.
- use sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance.
- have to feel needed in order to have a relationship with others.

- demand that their needs be met by others.
- use charm and charisma to convince others of their capacity to be caring and compassionate.
- use blame and shame to exploit others emotionally.
- refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.
- adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes.
- use recovery jargon in an attempt to control the behavior of others.
- pretend to agree with others to get what they want.

Avoidance Patterns:

Codependents often . . .

- act in ways that invite others to reject, shame, or express anger toward them.
- judge harshly what others think, say, or do.
- avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a way to maintain distance.
- allow addictions to people, places, and things to distract them from achieving intimacy in relationships.
- use indirect or evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation.
- diminish their capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use the tools of recovery.
- suppress their feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable.
- pull people toward them, but when others get close, push them away.
- refuse to give up their self-will to avoid surrendering to a power greater than themselves.
- believe displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.
- withhold expressions of appreciation.