

Is that the reason I try to take care of people too much and cannot say “no”?

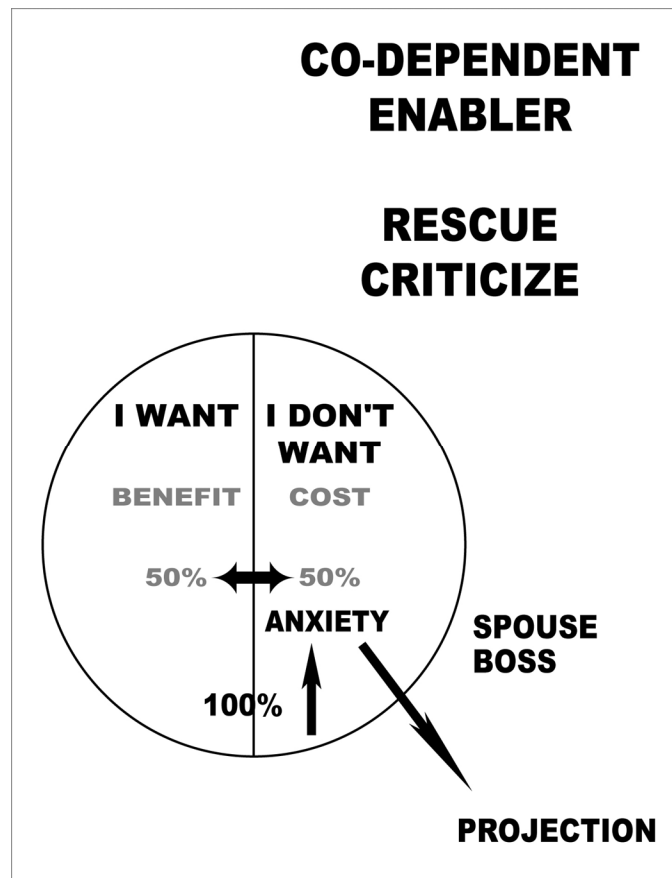


Learn what codependency is and how to treat it to develop healthy relationships.

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Is that the reason I take care of people too much and cannot say "no"?

This is a booklet on Codependence and Enabling. I want to give you a brief description about what it means to be a codependent. The definition I use is the state of *dis-ease* or disease, in which a person does not have a true sense of themselves, who they are, and therefore have grave boundary problems. This lack of knowledge and authenticity results in a compulsive need to take care of other people, and/or to be over-involved with others to the point that the true needs of the self are neglected or even unknown. This often leads to the uneconomical tendency to take care of other people in a forlorn hope that the person that was helped will eventually take care of the caregiver, in a way not only particular to the caregiver's wants, but exactly when and how the caregiver wants it, which is an impossibility.



Codependent Enabler, Rescue, Criticize

Codependence is the tendency to over control others. There is a very noble, unselfish, and authentic desire to help other people, but there is

also a selfish component to codependence. Codependence was first identified by alcohol and drug addiction treatment specialists. Traditionally, the only people who were seen in substance abuse therapy were the people who were chemically dependent. The thought in the middle 1970's was that if you just fixed the person who was addicted, they could be put right back into their milieu, with their family, and they would remain sober. Now, looking back on it that was a tremendously naïve and innocent way to think. What often happened when the chemically dependent person returned home was their spouse, who for years, had been trying to persuade the addict, unsuccessfully, to quit using for them wasn't as happy as the addict expected. What the alcoholic said when they returned home was, "Honey, do you realize that I needed to quit drinking?" And the codependent would feel very angry that for years they tried to get them to see that knowledge without success. There was often a subtle desire from the spouse to sabotage the treatment. Even though the co-dependent did not like what was happening with the alcoholic or drug addict, they were used to that particular system, they bought into that particular system, and in some ways, had their own neurotic needs to have the system remain the same.

They often would act in ways that put the alcoholic or the drug dependent person into stress, and eventually, that addict used again. This wasn't something that was done consciously by any means, but it was something that often happened subconsciously. There was significant and legitimate anger that had been so long repressed by the person who had to live with an alcoholic that it was perfectly understandable that that is what would occur.

Eventually, substance abuse counselors realized that the codependent needed treatment in his or her own right, with their own program, so drug addiction programs started to invite them into the system. They began to work with them right alongside the alcoholic or drug addict, so that when the addicted person came home, the system itself was changed, which was critically important. It is also important to realize that people who are codependent usually grew up in alcoholic or chemically dependent families and learned directly from their family of origin how they should act, and they were simply just repeating was taught.

In the early 1980's therapists realized that a person could be codependent even if they did not have a relationship with an addict. It is important to know that it is a good thing to help other people and that it