

Codependency Personality Traits

Below is a list of personality traits that persons who are codependent often possess. To really understand the true nature of a codependent personality, we need to realize that the codependent personality is different from the personality of non-codependent personalities in three ways:

1. **Extreme:** Many people have some of the traits listed below. Codependent personalities have these traits much more so than other people
2. **Inflexible:** This personality is extreme and highly resistant to attempts to have them change their behavior/traits. They are much more into changing others than they are into changing themselves.
3. **Maladaptive:** This simply means that these traits interfere with the persons ability to live and function normally in relationships with others

Common traits of codependent persons include:

- The codependent is driven by one or more compulsions (alcohol, drugs, physical abuse of others, eating disorders, sexual addictions).
- The codependent is bound and tormented by the way things were in the dysfunctional family of origin; parents who were alcoholic, controlling, violent, abusive, very cheap, even when they had money, or were superficial/judgmental.
- The codependent's self-esteem (and immaturity, frequently) is very low.
- The codependent is certain his or her happiness hinges on what others think, do and feel.
- A codependent feels inordinately responsible for others: happiness, feelings, thoughts, actions – even the ability for the other person to stay out of trouble.
- The codependent's relationship with a spouse or "significant other person" is marred by damaging, unstable lack of balance between dependence and independence.
- The codependent is a master of denial and repression – especially when dealing with unhealthy family issues of childhood such as violence, lack of love, abuse, etc.

<http://icreatehabits.com/blog/handouts/> 

- The codependent worries about things he/she can't change and may well try to change them; whether the spouse stops drinking, areas of our life we expect to fail, etc.
- They keep letting others hurt them
- Foremost, a codependent's life is punctuated by extremes: relationships are either hot/cold; love is more like a love/hate relationship; we act either perfect or are super critical toward our loved one.
- A codependent is continually looking for the something that is lacking or missing in their life: lacking enough money, sex, attention, love or acceptance of others.
- They don't trust themselves or others


Below are 4 basic types of codependent personalities: caretaker, rescuer, controller and enabler. Some of the more characteristic qualities are also listed under each type.

1. Caretaker:

- think and feel responsible for other people's feelings, thoughts, actions
- may feel anxiety, pity and guilt when other person has a problem
- anticipate other person's needs
- wonder why others don't do the same for them
- try harder to please others than themselves
- feel safest when giving to others
- are often attracted to needy people
- believe others are making them feel crazy
- feel guilty when others give to them

2. Rescuer:

- tend to rescue others from daily responsibilities (does not include rescuing from problems with alcohol/drug dependence/abuse)
- have difficulty saying no to the needs of others; they often say yes when they mean no
- attempt to fix the feelings/behaviors of others; speak for others and solve their problems
- prevent others from learning how to live on their own
- tend to suffer the consequences for others
- not ask for what we want, need and desire
- doing more than our fair share of work after our assistance is requested
- doing something for someone although that person is capable of and should be doing this for her/himself

Written by Don Wasson, MFT, Human Services professor. Available for educational purposes at <http://icreatehabits.com/blog/handouts/> 

3. Controllers:

- are often the spouses of alcoholics/drug addicts; sometimes the addict is the controller
- attempt to control the events and others through various types of manipulation: guilt, coercion, threats, violence and being passive-aggressive
- think that they know best how things “should” turn out; they know the “right” way
- they tend to feel controlled by events and people; i.e., they live in “external” locus of control
- they usually assume the “I’m OK – You’re not OK” psychological position
- unable to see or deal with their own fear of how they have lost control in their lives
- get easily frustrated and angry with people

4. Enablers:

- engage in the “most” destructive forms of helping
- they act in ways that allow the alcoholic/addict to continue their abusive ways of living; they do things that make life easier for the alcoholic/addict
- personality traits are similar to those of a rescuer – except here we are dealing with doing things for the alcoholic/addict that literally “enables” the person to continue using their drugs/alcohol without having to face the consequences for their actions/behaviors – similar when spouse/parent covers for persons engaging in criminal behavior
- they cover up/lie for their partner/child/parent
- they end up feeling very unappreciated when the alcoholic/addict does not appreciate their efforts