WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CODEPENDENT?

What happens if someone pushes a doorbell? The doorbell rings. When the stove is left on high, the water boils over. From very young we learn our actions have consequences. Sometimes these are pleasant, but sometimes they are not. When we do not like them, we may argue, resist, and complain, but consequences come anyway, rudely intruding without permission. The results of our actions are often predictable, whether we like them or not.

Codependency is a type of dysfunctional helping relationship where one person supports or enables another person’s addiction, alcoholism, poor mental health, immaturity, irresponsibility, or under-achievement.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Have you found yourself in a codependent relationship in the past? Write your experiences where you rescued someone or worked too hard in the relationship. Describe how you felt, acted, and believed. Give details about how you viewed yourself in the relationship. Were you dishonest? Were you covering for someone else’s addiction? Include specific examples that reveal the difficulty of changing the enabling behaviors. Has someone else rescued you or enabled your addiction? Give examples.

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________
EXAMINING CODEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS - WORKSHEET 1

SIGNS OF CODEPENDENCY

Look through the list below and check those that apply to you.

☐ Undervaluing yourself and overvaluing others
☐ Feeling trapped or powerless in a relationship
☐ Constantly seeking approval
☐ Covering up someone’s dysfunctional behavior in an effort to protect the relationship
☐ Having difficulty or inability to say no
☐ Being unwilling to set limits
☐ Having low self-esteem
☐ Constantly worried about other people
☐ Being unsure of your own goals, desires, or needs
☐ Seeing yourself as weak or passive
☐ Feeling motivated or manipulated by guilt
☐ Believing you haven’t done enough
☐ Continually putting others first
☐ Having difficulty expressing your needs
☐ Being reluctant to share your feelings
☐ Having difficulty trusting others
☐ Consistently having self-doubt
☐ Having trouble making decisions
☐ Being reluctant to express your opinion
☐ Looking to others for your emotional stability
☐ Feeling abandoned or rejected
☐ In an effort to avoid conflict or disapproval, allowing someone else’s opinion and choices to count more than your own

THE DESIRE TO HELP AND RESCUE

“How can I get my friend to change? They keep doing self-destructive things. I keep trying to help.” This dilemma is at the heart of co-dependence. Rescuing someone from difficulties they created continues the codependent pattern. To begin changing this pattern, you need to change your part in it. The more you care for someone, the harder it is to let consequences happen without trying to reduce or prevent the damage.

Did someone once rescue you from the consequences of your behavior?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
EXAMINING CODEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS - WORKSHEET 1

How might they have considered themselves helpful?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

What consequences did you avoid?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Have you tried to lighten the consequences for someone or rescue them from their situation?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

What was the goal of your rescuing efforts?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
EXAMINING CODEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS - WORKSHEET 1

What were the consequences to yourself and others?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________