

# Letting Go: Recognizing Codependent Behavior

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OR...

*Why they can't let go.*

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“It is better to know some  
of the questions ---  
than all of the answers”

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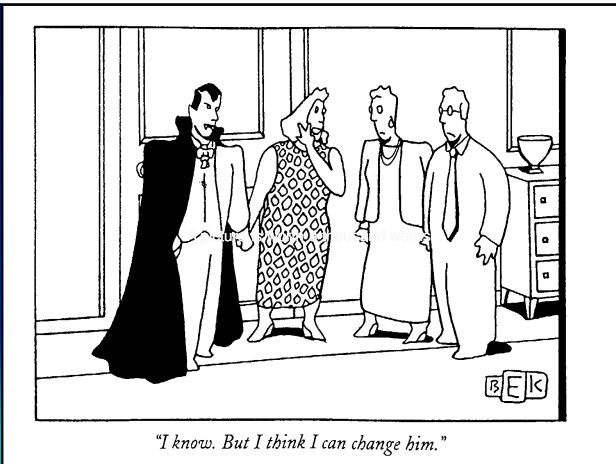
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## Codependency

- “Codependency Operationalized”
- A picture is worth a thousand words!!



## Codependency: Origin of the Concept

- Prior to the term “*chemical dependency*” family members and spouses of alcoholics were called *co-alcoholics*
- When the term “*chemical dependency*” began to be used, spouses were called *codependents*

## Codependency: Roots

The codependency movement has its roots in the theories of German psychoanalyst Karen Horney (the first feminist psychoanalyst)

In 1941 she proposed her theory that some people develop a “Moving Toward” personality style

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(cont.)

Codependents tend to “move toward” and attach to a personality that is somewhat “vulnerable and needy”

Karen Horney believed that this behavior was a way of dealing with a deep seeded anxiety and insecurity

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## Codependency: The Process

These individuals move “toward others” to “try to help them,” but the real goal of the interaction is to gain their approval and affection and subconsciously “control them” using a very dependent and manipulative style of behavior

“ I’m only trying to help you”

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(cont.)

Dr. Horney believed that this style of interaction seen in codependency is a reaction to dysfunctional parenting.

In childhood, these individuals had critical, indifferent, rigid, abusive, or unavailable parents

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(cont.)

They develop a helping stance, and try to get approval through their “behavior” rather than feeling valued just because they exist.

“Approval from Others”  
is more important than respecting themselves

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## Codependency

The term is attached to a person who is involved in a highly dependent relationship with an individual who requires “extra care or vigilance” – such as (but not limited to) an addiction.

It could be applied to any dysfunctional relationship or situation

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Timmen Cermak MD, a Neurologist and Psychiatrist, proposed that Codependency be listed as a personality disorder in the DSM

He reasoned that when specific personality traits become excessive and maladaptive and cause significant stress and dysfunction it warrants the status of a personality disorder

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However, it has not been recognized by the American Psychiatric Association for inclusion in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, as a personality disorder or any other Axis I or Axis II diagnosis

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### Codependency: Definition

Even on a broader scale – there is “no accepted definition” of Codependency

In 1989, 22 leaders in the field convened at a national conference and came up with a tentative definition of codependency

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## A “somewhat” accepted definition

Codependency is a pattern of painful dependence upon compulsive behaviors and approval of others to find safety, self-worth and identity. It is developed in childhood

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## Definition (cont.)

Just as the definition of the term is not agreed upon by those in the field, the symptoms are also varied and not “agreed” upon by all

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## Codependency

Codependents present as  
unselfish  
virtuous  
martyr – like  
faithful  
“turn the other cheek” despite personal humiliation

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Because the presentation of the codependent is such a “positive” list of qualities - Its important to distinguish what codependency is not:

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### Codependency Is Not Caregiving

Caregiving comes from abundance

Codependency “caretaking” comes from need and deprivation

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### Codependency Is Not Kindness

It is natural and satisfying to be kind and helpful to others

Codependents don’t have a choice – they “can’t say no”

Are you giving from a place of self-esteem or from guilt, fear or insecurity

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## Symptoms of Codependency

- Shame
- Low self-esteem
- People pleasing
- Guilt
- Fear

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## Shame

According to Karen Horney, shame develops in childhood as a defense against the child's anger at the parent's unfair treatment:

- an inner sense of being diminished or feeling insufficient as a person
- the premise that one is fundamentally bad, inadequate, defective unworthy – not fully valid as a human being

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## Authors who addressed Shame

- Freud – (1942) defined shame as a reaction formation against exhibitionism
- Erickson – (1950) shame and doubt is the second nuclear conflict" its resolution leads to self esteem and autonomy
- Piers and Singer – the implied threat of shame is abandonment
- Wurmser (1981) it is the anxiety connected with exposure, humiliation and rejection

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## Current authors who have written about Shame

- Gershen Kaufman: *Shame: The Power of Caring*
- John Bradshaw: *Healing the Shame That Binds You*

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## Gershen Kaufman

“shame breaks the interpersonal bridge”  
it prevents intimacy because the individual fears revealing his “true self” which he/she believes is flawed and unworthy

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## John Bradshaw

- Shame at some levels can be healthy
- Healthy shame teaches us about our limits and helps us set boundaries
- Individuals struggling with shame cannot set boundaries

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“Everyone needs a sense of shame but no one needs to feel ashamed”

Frederick Nietzsche

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## Self Esteem

Reflects how you think about yourself

With codependents self esteem is “other defined”

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## Signs of low self esteem

- Never enough
- Defer to others
- Overly sensitive to criticism
- Deflect praise
- Dislike attention

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## People Pleasing

- Desperately try to accommodate others
- Need others to validate them
- Need others to accept them
  
- The more you look outward for validation the greater is your estrangement from the self



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## Guilt

- A feeling about what you have “done”
  
- Codependents are “Always sorry”



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## Fear

- Fear is the underlying emotion motivating manipulation and control



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## Masterson

- Masterson in his theories about the “disorders of the self” addressed the issue of abandonment
- “Abandonment Depression” he says is at the core of the development of personality disorders (codependency) and addiction.

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## Codependency

Beyond families, friends, and loved ones:  
Codependency is also seen in individuals in  
the helping professions

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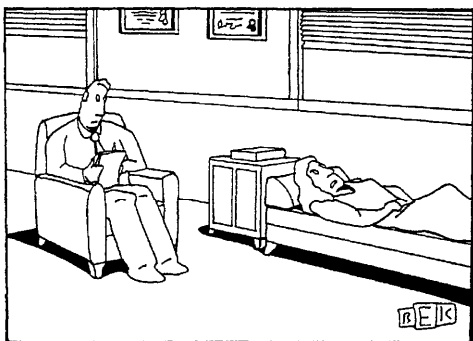
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*"Well, I do have this recurring dream that one day I might see some results."*

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- In the therapeutic process symptoms that may indicate the therapist is working from a codependent stance:
  - \* “working harder than the client”
  - \* “burnout”



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### Codependency and Narcissism

There is a strong relationship between Codependents and Narcissists

Narcissists seek relationships with subservient individuals who will reinforce their feelings of superiority and power



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### Codependency and Narcissism

- A codependent partner is ideal for the Narcissist.....
- Codependents have a tendency to get involved with a narcissist in toxic relationships



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## Connection to Addiction

- When addicts break their addiction, they then must deal with their emotions
- They must face the relationship and intimacy problems they have avoided via their addictions

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## In Recovery

Many of the issues they must confront are the underlying problems of codependency  
They are asked to make a list of their  
Character Defects

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## Character Defects

- Frequently identified character defects include:
  - People pleasing
  - Isolation – a function of shame
  - Controlling behaviors
  - Perfectionism

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Character defects seen in addicts are the same as the behaviors seen in CODEPENDENCY

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## Working the Steps

Provides a framework for making changes to the behaviors that if not dealt with will lead back to addictive behaviors

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## The five things people get addicted to

1. A drink
2. A drug
- 3 A cookie (food)
- 4 A person
5. A behavior

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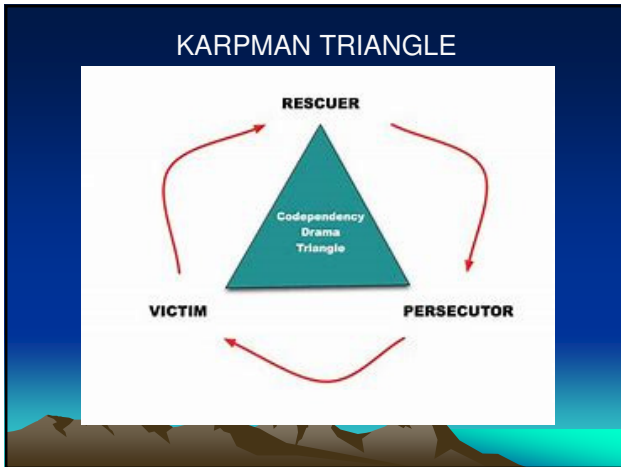
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- ### Karpman Triangle
- Comes from transactional analysis
  - “I’m Okay, You’re Okay”
  - “Games People Play”
  - Eric Berne
  - Futile interactions
  - Problems remain unsolved

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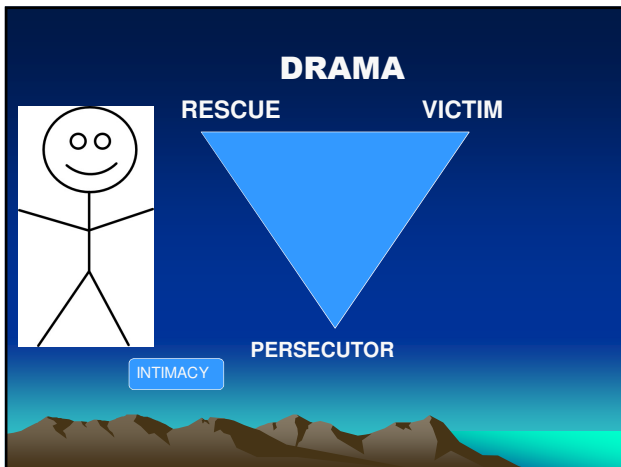
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## Melody Beattie

- A seminal figure in codependency literature:

*Codependent No More*  
*Beyond Codependency*  
*Language of Letting Go*

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## Codependency Quiz

Can be used in any type of relationship:

<http://www.codependencynomore.com/codependency-quiz-2/>

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(cont.)

- 60 questions
- Self-administered
- Scoring instructions

*If your score is....*

*Below 20* You have Little Need for Concern

*21 - 30* Moderate Need for Concern.

*31 - 45* Moderate to Severe Need for Concern.

*46 or over* Severe Need for Concern & Intervention

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## Codependency Quiz

- The Friel Co-Dependency Assessment Inventory

<http://www.mhankyswoh.org/Home>

- Also 60 questions
- Same scoring system
- More of a self-assessment

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## Another self-assessment

- Spann-Fischer
- 16 questions
- 6-point Likert scale
- Answer questions about self

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Clean Laundry

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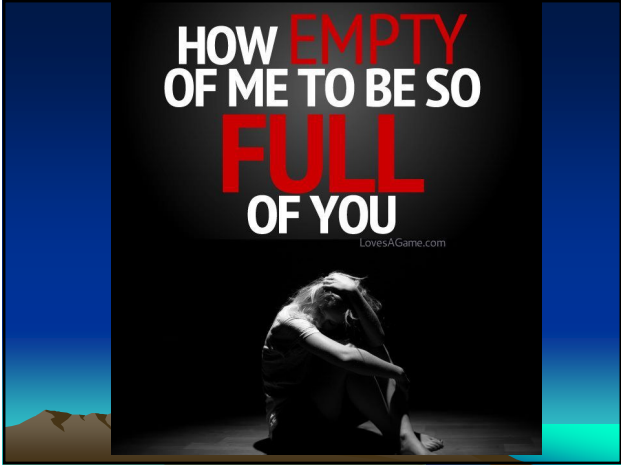
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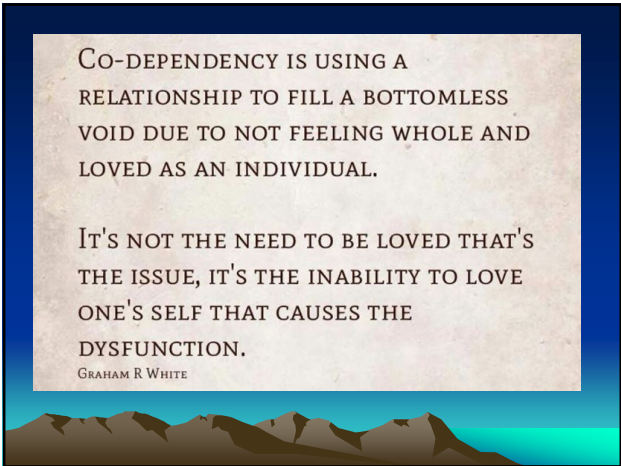
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CO-DEPENDENCY IS USING A  
RELATIONSHIP TO FILL A BOTTOMLESS  
VOID DUE TO NOT FEELING WHOLE AND  
LOVED AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

IT'S NOT THE NEED TO BE LOVED THAT'S  
THE ISSUE, IT'S THE INABILITY TO LOVE  
ONE'S SELF THAT CAUSES THE  
DYSFUNCTION.

GRAHAM R WHITE

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A FINAL THOUGHT...

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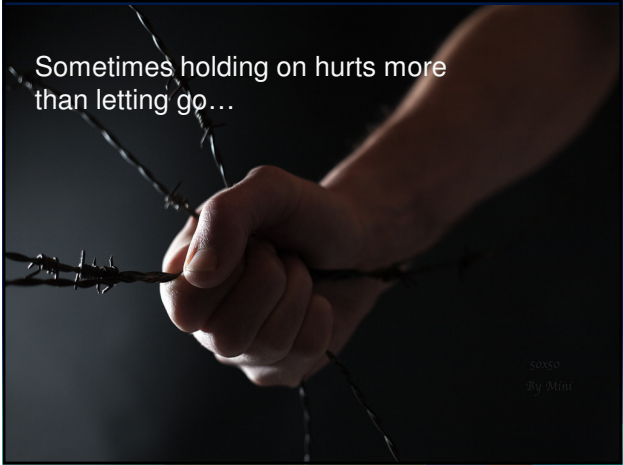
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