

ROLES IN ADDICTION

Family Role 1, The Addict

The person with the addiction is the center, and though the key to alcohol and drug addiction recovery, not necessarily the most important in family recovery. The "world" revolves around this person, causing the addict to become the center of attention. As the roles are defined, the others unconsciously take on the rest of the roles to complete the balance after the problem has been introduced. Recovery many times on this person.

Family Role 2, The Hero

The **Hero** is the one who needs to make the family, and role players, look good. They ignore the problem and present things in a positive manner as if the roles within the family did not exist. The Hero is the perfectionist. If they overcome this role they can play an important part in the addiction recovery process.

The underlying feelings are fear, guilt, and shame.

Family Role 3, The Mascot

The **Mascot's** role is that of the jester. They will often make inappropriate jokes about the those involved. Though they do bring humor to the family roles, it is often harmful humor, and they sometimes hinder addiction recovery.

The underlying feelings are embarrassment, shame, and anger.

Family Role 4, The Lost Child

The **Lost Child** is the silent, "out of the way" family member, and will never mention alcohol or recovery. They are quiet and reserved, careful to not make problems. The Lost Child gives up self needs and makes efforts to avoid any conversation regarding the underlying roles.

The underlying feelings are guilt, loneliness, neglect, and anger.

Family Role 5, The Scapegoat

The **Scapegoat** often acts out in front of others. They will rebel, make noise, and divert attention from the person who is addicted and their need for help in addiction recovery. The Scapegoat covers or draws attention away from the real problem.

The underlying feelings are shame, guilt, and empty.

Family Role 6, The Caretaker (Enabler)

The **Caretaker (Enabler)** makes all the other roles possible. They try to keep everyone happy and the family in balance, void of the issue. They make excuses for all behaviors and actions, and never mention addiction recovery or getting help. The Caretaker (Enabler) presents a situation without problems to the public.

The underlying feelings are inadequacy, fear, and helplessness.

Addiction and the Family

Healthy Family System:

Self worth is high.

Communication is direct, clear, specific and honest and feelings are expressed. Rules are human, flexible and appropriate to change.

It is natural to link and be open to society.

Each person has goals and plans to get there, and should be supported by the family.

Rules in a dependent or addicted family:

Dependents use of drug is the most important thing in a family life.

Drug use is not the cause of family problems, it is denial which is the root.

Blaming others, don't make mention of it, covering up, alibis, loyalty of family enables.

Nobody may discuss problem outside the family.

Nobody says what they feel or think.

Family Roles Lead to Codependency

Addiction and the Family Roles How the They lead to Codependency

The parts played by family members lead to codependency. Members make decisions concerning what the other person needs. Codependency leads to aversion and lack of self orientation in a situation where an addiction is present. Ultimately people "become" the part they are playing.

Signs and Symptoms of Codependency

Codependency involves a habitual system of thinking, feeling, and behaving toward ourselves and others that can cause pain. Codependent behaviors or habits are self-destructive.

We frequently react to people who are destroying themselves; we react by learning to destroy ourselves. These habits can lead us into, or keep us in, destructive relationships that don't work. These behaviors can sabotage relationships that may otherwise have worked. These behaviors can prevent us from finding peace and happiness with the most important person in our lives... ourselves. These behaviors belong to the only person we can change.. ourselves. These are our problems.

The following are characteristics of codependent persons: (We started to do these things out of necessity to protect ourselves and meet our needs.)

CareTaking

Codependents may:

1. Think and feel responsible for other people---for other people's feelings, thoughts, actions, choices, wants, needs, well-being, lack of well-being, and ultimate destiny.
2. Feel anxiety, pity, and guilt when other people have a problem.
3. Feel compelled - almost forced - to help that person solve the problem, such as offering unwanted advice, giving a rapid-fire series of suggestions, or fixing feelings.
4. Feel angry when their help isn't effective.
5. Anticipate other people's needs.
6. Wonder why others don't do the same for them.
7. Don't really want to be doing, doing more than their fair share of the work, and doing things other people are capable of doing for themselves.
8. Not knowing what they want and need, or if they do, tell themselves what they want and need is not important.
9. Try to please others instead of themselves.
10. Find it easier to feel and express anger about injustices done to others rather than injustices done to themselves.
11. Feel safest when giving.
12. Feel insecure and guilty when somebody gives to them.
13. Feel sad because they spend their whole lives giving to other people and nobody gives to them.
14. Find themselves attracted to needy people.
15. Find needy people attracted to them.
16. Feel bored, empty, and worthless if they don't have a crisis in their lives, a problem to solve, or someone to help.
17. Abandon their routine to respond to or do something for somebody else.
18. Overcommit themselves.
19. Feel harried and pressured.
20. Believe deep inside other people are somehow responsible for them.
21. Blame others for the spot the codependents are in.

22. Say other people make the codependents feel the way they do.
23. Believe other people are making them crazy.
24. Feel angry, victimized, unappreciated, and used
25. And other people become impatient or angry with them for all of the preceding characteristics.

Low Self Worth

Codependents tend to:

1. Come from troubled, repressed, or dysfunctional families.
2. Deny their family was troubled, repressed or dysfunctional.
3. Blame themselves for everything.
4. Pick on themselves for everything, including the way they think, feel, look, act, and behave.
5. Get angry, defensive, self-righteous, and indigent when others blame and criticize the codependents -- something codependents regularly do to themselves.
6. Reject compliments or praise.
7. Get depressed from a lack of compliments and praise (stroke deprivation).
8. Feel different from the rest of the world.
9. Think they're not quite good enough.
10. Feel guilty about spending money on themselves or doing unnecessary or fun things for themselves.
11. Fear rejection.
12. Take things personally.
13. Have been victims of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment, or alcoholism.
14. Feel like victims.
15. Tell themselves they can't do anything right.
16. Be afraid of making mistakes.
17. Wonder why they have a tough time making decisions.
18. Have a lot of "shoulds".
19. Feel a lot of guilt.
20. Feel ashamed of who they are.
21. Think their lives are not worth living.
22. Try to help other people live their lives instead.
23. Get artificial feelings of self-worth from helping others.
24. Get strong feelings of low self-worth - embarrassment, failure, etc...from other people's failures and problems.
25. Wish good things would happen to them.
26. Believe good things never will happen.
27. Believe they don't deserve good things and happiness.
28. Wish others would like and love them.
29. Believe other people couldn't possibly like and love them.
30. Try to prove they're good enough for other people.
31. Settle for being needed

Repression

Many Codependents:

1. Push their thoughts and feelings out of their awareness because of fear and guilt.
2. Become afraid to let themselves be who they are.
3. Appear rigid and controlled.

Obsession

Codependents tend to:

1. Feel terribly anxious about problems and people.
2. Worry about the silliest things.
3. Think and talk a lot about other people.
4. Lose sleep over problems or other people's behavior.
5. Worry.
6. Never Find answers.
7. Check on people.
8. Try to catch people in acts of misbehavior.
9. Feel unable to quit talking, thinking, and worrying about other people or problems.
10. Abandon their routine because they are so upset about somebody or something.
11. Focus all their energy on other people and problems.
12. Wonder why they never have any energy.
13. Wonder why they can't get things done.

Controlling

Many codependents:

1. Have lived through events and with people that were out of control, causing the codependents sorrow and disappointment.
2. Become afraid to let other people be who they are and allow events to happen naturally.
3. Don't see or deal with their fear of loss of control.
4. Think they know best how things should turn out and how people should behave.
5. Try to control events and people through helplessness, guilt, coercion, threats, advice-giving, manipulation, or domination.
6. Eventually fail in their efforts or provoke people's anger.
7. Get frustrated and angry.
8. Feel controlled by events and people.

Denial

Codependents tend to:

1. Ignore problems or pretend they aren't happening.
2. Pretend circumstances aren't as bad as they are.
3. Tell themselves things will be better tomorrow.
4. Stay busy so they don't have to think about things.
5. Get confused.
6. Get depressed or sick.
7. Go to doctors and get tranquilizers.
8. Become workaholics.
9. Spend money compulsively.
10. Overeat.
11. Pretend those things aren't happening either.
12. Watch problems get worse.
13. Believe lies.
14. Lie to themselves.
15. Wonder why they feel like they're going crazy.

Dependency

Many codependents:

1. Don't feel happy, content, or peaceful with themselves.
2. Look for happiness outside themselves.
3. Watch onto whoever or whatever they think can provide happiness.
4. Feel terribly threatened by the loss of any thing or person they think proves their happiness.
5. Didn't feel love and approval from their parents.
6. Don't love themselves.
7. Believe other people can't or don't love them.
8. Desperately seek love and approval.
9. Often seek love from people incapable of loving.
10. Believe other people are never there for them.
11. Equate love with pain.
12. Feel they need people more than they want them.
13. Try to prove they're good enough to be loved.
14. Don't take time to see if other people are good for them.
15. Worry whether other people love or like them.
16. Don't take time to figure out if they love or like other people.
17. Center their lives around other people.
18. Look for relationships to provide all their good feelings.
19. Lost interest in their own lives when they love.
20. Worry other people will leave them.
21. Don't believe they can take care of themselves.
22. Stay in relationships that don't work.
23. Tolerate abuse to keep people loving them.
24. Feel trapped in relationships.
25. Wonder if they will ever find love.

Poor Communication

Codependents frequently:

1. Blame.
2. Threaten.
3. Coerce.
4. Beg.
5. Bribe.
6. Advise.
7. Don't say what they mean.
8. Don't mean what they say.
9. Don't know what they mean.
10. Don't take themselves seriously.
11. Think other people don't take the codependents seriously.
12. Take themselves too seriously.
13. Ask for what they want and need indirectly - sighing, for example.
14. Find it difficult to get to the point.
15. Aren't sure what the point is.
16. Gauge their words carefully to achieve a desired effect.
17. Try to say what they think will please people.
18. Try to say what they think will provoke people.
19. Try to say what they hope will make people do what they want them to do.
20. Eliminate the word NO from their vocabulary.
21. Talk too much.
22. Talk about other people.
23. Avoid talking about themselves, their problems, feelings, and thoughts.
24. Say everything is their fault.
25. Say nothing is their fault.
26. Believe their opinions don't matter.
27. Want to express their opinions until they know other people's opinions.
28. Lie to protect and cover up for people they love.
29. Have a difficult time asserting their rights.
30. Have a difficult time expressing their emotions honestly, openly, and appropriately.
31. Think most of what they have to say is unimportant.
32. Begin to talk in Cynical, self-degrading, or hostile ways.
33. Apologize for bothering people.

Weak Boundaries

Codependents frequently:

1. Say they won't tolerate certain behaviors from other people.
2. Gradually increase their tolerance until they can tolerate and do things they said they would never do.
3. Let others hurt them.
4. Keep letting others hurt them.
5. Wonder why they hurt so badly.
6. Complain, blame, and try to control while they continue to stand there.
7. Finally get angry.
8. Become totally intolerant.

Lack of Trust

Codependents:

1. Don't trust themselves.
2. Don't trust their feelings.
3. Don't trust their decisions.
4. Don't trust other people.
5. Try to trust untrustworthy people.
6. Think God has abandoned them.
7. Lose faith and trust in God.

Anger

Many Codependents:

1. Feel very scared, hurt, and angry.
2. Live with people who are very scared, hurt, and angry.
3. Are afraid of their own anger.
4. Are frightened of other people's anger.
5. Think people will go away if anger enters the picture.
6. Feel controlled by other people's anger.
7. Repress their angry feelings.
8. Think other people make them feel angry.
9. Are afraid to make other people feel anger.
10. Cry a lot, get depressed, overact, get sick, do mean and nasty things to get even, act hostile, or have violent temper outbursts.
11. Punish other people for making the codependents angry.
12. Have been shamed for feeling angry.
13. Place guilt and shame on themselves for feeling angry.
14. Feel increasing amounts of anger, resentment, and bitterness.
15. Feel safer with their anger than hurt feelings.
16. Wonder if they'll ever not be angry.

Sex Problems

Some codependents:

1. Are caretakers in the bedroom.
2. Have sex when they don't want to.
3. Have sex when they'd rather be held, nurtured, and loved.
4. Try to have sex when they're angry or hurt.
5. Refuse to enjoy sex because they're so angry at their partner.
6. Are afraid of losing control.
7. Have a difficult time asking for what they need in bed.
8. Withdraw emotionally from their partner.
9. Feel sexual revulsion toward their partner.
10. Don't talk about it.
11. Force themselves to have sex, anyway.
12. Reduce sex to a technical act.
13. Wonder why they don't enjoy sex.
14. Lose interest in sex.
15. Make up reasons to abstain.
16. Wish their sex partner would die, go away, or sense the codependent's feelings.
17. Have strong sexual fantasies about other people.
18. Consider or have an extramarital affair.

Miscellaneous

Codependents tend to:

1. Be extremely responsible.
2. Be extremely irresponsible.
3. Become martyrs, sacrificing their happiness and that of others for causes that don't require sacrifice.
4. Find it difficult to feel close to people.
5. Find it difficult to have fun and be spontaneous.
6. Have an overall passive response to codependency - crying, hurt, helplessness.
7. Have an overall aggressive response to codependency - violence, anger, dominance.
8. Combine passive and aggressive responses.
9. Vacillate in decisions and emotions.
10. Laugh when they feel like crying.
11. Stay loyal to their compulsions and people even when it hurts.
12. Be ashamed about family, personal, or relationship problems.
13. Be confused about the nature of the problem.
14. Cover up, lie, and protect the problem.
15. Not seek help because they tell themselves the problem isn't bad enough, or they aren't important enough. Wonder why the problem doesn't go away.

Progressive

In the later stages of codependency, codependents may:

1. Feel lethargic.
2. Feel depressed.
3. Become withdrawn and isolated.
4. Experience a complete loss of daily routine and structure.
5. Abuse or neglect their children and other responsibilities.
6. Feel hopeless.
7. Begin to plan their escape from a relationship they feel trapped in.
8. Think about suicide.
9. Become violent.
10. Become seriously emotionally, mentally, or physically ill.
11. Experience an eating disorder (over - or under eating).
12. Become addicted to alcohol or other drugs.

What is Codependency?

These patterns and characteristics are offered as a tool to aid in self evaluation. They may be particularly helpful to newcomers as they begin to understand codependency and may aid those who have been in recovery a while determining what traits still need attention and transformation.

Denial Patterns:

- I have difficulty identifying what I am feeling.
- I minimize, alter, or deny how I truly feel.
- I perceive myself as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well being of others.

Low Self Esteem Patterns:

- I have difficulty making decisions.
- I judge everything I think, say, or do harshly, as never "good enough."
- I am embarrassed to receive recognition and praise or gifts.
- I do not ask others to meet my needs or desires.
- I value other's approval of my thinking, feelings, and behaviors over my own.
- I do not perceive myself as a lovable or worthwhile person.

Compliance Patterns:

- I compromise my own values and integrity to avoid rejection or others' anger.
- I am very sensitive to how others are feeling and feel the same.
- I am extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.
- I value others' opinions and feelings more than my own and am often afraid to express differing opinions and feelings of my own.
- I put aside my own interests and hobbies in order to do what others want.
- I accept sex when I want love.

Control Patterns:

- I believe most other people are incapable of taking care of themselves.
- I attempt to convince others of what they "should" think and how they "truly" feel.
- I become resentful when others will not let me help them.
- I freely offer others advice and directions without being asked.
- I lavish gifts and favors on those I care about.
- I use sex to gain approval and acceptance.
- I have to be "needed" in order to have a relationship with others.

Review:

Symptoms of Codependency:

- Inability to know what "normal" is.
- Difficulty in following a project through.
- Difficulty having fun.
- Judging self, others without mercy.
- Low self esteem, often projected onto others. (eg: Why don't *they* get their act together!)
- Difficulty in developing or sustaining meaningful relationships.
- Belief that others cause or are responsible for the codependent's emotions.

(Codependents often use language like "you make me feel _____", or "I was made to feel like _____")

- Overreacting to change. (or intense fear of / inability to deal with change.)
- Inability to see alternatives to situations, thus responding very impulsively.
- Constantly seeking approval and affirmation, yet having compromised sense of self.
- Feelings of being different.
- Confusion and sense of inadequacy.
- Being either super responsible or super irresponsible. (Or alternating between these.)
- Lack of self confidence in making decisions, no sense of power in making choices.
- Feeling of fear, insecurity, inadequacy, guilt, hurt, and shame which are denied.
- Isolation and fear of people, resentment of authority figures.
- Fear of anger or bottling anger up till it explodes.
- Hypersensitivity to criticism.
- Being addicted to excitement / drama. (Chaos making.)
- Dependency upon others and fear of abandonment.
- Avoidance of relationships to guard against abandonment fears.
- Confusion between love and pity.
- Tendency to look for "victims" to help.
- Rigidity and need to control.
- Lies, when it would be just as easy to tell the truth.

Characteristics of Codependency

Following is a commonly used list of characteristics of codependency.

1. My good feelings about who I am stem from being liked by you
2. My good feelings about who I am stem from receiving approval from you
3. Your struggle affects my serenity. My mental attention focuses on solving your problems/relieving your pain
4. My mental attention is focused on you
5. My mental attention is focused on protecting you
6. My mental attention is focused on manipulating you to do it my way
7. My self-esteem is bolstered by solving your problems
8. My self-esteem is bolstered by relieving your pain
9. My own hobbies/interests are put to one side. My time is spent sharing your hobbies/interests
10. Your clothing and personal appearance are dictated by my desires and I feel you are a reflection of me
11. Your behaviour is dictated by my desires and I feel you are a reflection of me
12. I am not aware of how I feel. I am aware of how you feel.
13. I am not aware of what I want - I ask what you want. I am not aware - I assume
14. The dreams I have for my future are linked to you
15. My fear of rejection determines what I say or do
16. My fear of your anger determines what I say or do
17. I use giving as a way of feeling safe in our relationship
18. My social circle diminishes as I involve myself with you
19. I put my values aside in order to connect with you
20. I value your opinion and way of doing things more than my own
21. The quality of my life is in relation to the quality of yours

Characteristics of Codependent People

- a. We have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility and it is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves. This in turn enabled us not to look too closely at our faults.
- b. We "stuff" our feelings from our traumatic childhoods and have lost the ability to feel or express our feelings because it hurts too much.
- c. We are isolated from and afraid of people and authority figures.
- d. We have become approval seekers and have lost our identity in the process.
- e. We are frightened by angry people and any personal criticism.
- f. We live from the viewpoint of victims and are attacked by that weakness in our love and friendship relationships.
- g. We judge ourselves harshly and have a low sense of self esteem.
- h. We are dependent personalities who are terrified of abandonment. We will do anything to hold onto a relationship in order to not experience painful abandonment feelings which we received from living with people who were never there emotionally for us.
- i. We experience guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.
- j. We confuse love and pity and tend to "love" people we can pity and rescue.
- k. We have either become chemically dependent, married one or both, or found another compulsive personality, such a workaholic to fulfill our own compulsive needs.
- l. We have become addicted to excitement.
- m. We are reactors in life rather than actors.

Conclusion:

The goal in alcohol and drug addiction recovery is to bring each member as a whole into a situation where the problems can be dealt with. Individual talents and abilities should be integrated into the situation, allowing emotional honesty about the situation, without guilt or punishment.

*** The overall goal in overcoming codependency is to make each person whole.**

People become familiar with and dependent on the role they play in families. In overcoming the family roles, you will begin to overcome issues, and what could be classified as the addiction to the role. While the conquering of the substance is important to the person with the addiction. A point to remember is the substance(s) is not the key to family recovery, removing the underlying roles are.

In beginning recovery, each family member must become proactive against the addiction to the role, and learn to become their true self. The goal is for each to person to become independent, and then approach the substance addiction recovery as a group of individuals, rather than as people playing a part. Whole, independent people can freely contribute to the recovery of the person overcoming the addiction, while a person playing a part can only perform the role.

Starting Points:

Begin with yourself.

Find, and write a list of your strengths and weaknesses. Build on what you have.

Let go of trying to be perfect and realize all people have some weaknesses.

*** A true person utilizes strengths, while building up their weaknesses.**

Addiction recovery for the codependent role, is tough. You must be personally honest and decide what you like or dislike. This may be as simple as defining how you wish things were, without playing the part, and adding support or friends in areas, or as encompassing as rethinking the path of your life.

Refraining from forcing yourself to engage in activities, because of the codependency, is important to successful recovery from the addiction. There are many resources for codependent roles and overcoming these roles. Please, be honest in deciding if you have an addiction to a specific role in a relationship and find resources to help you in your recovery.

As you begin to understand, breaking the family role should become easier. Remember to be understanding of others also.

Are you codependent?

- Do you feel responsible for other people--their feelings, thoughts, actions, choices, wants, needs, well-being and destiny?
- Do you feel compelled to help people solve their problems or by trying to take care of their feelings?
- Do you find it easier to feel and express anger about injustices done to others than about injustices done to you?
- Do you feel safest and most comfortable when you are giving to others?
- Do you feel insecure and guilty when someone gives to you?
- Do you feel empty, bored and worthless if you don't have someone else to take care of, a problem to solve, or a crisis to deal with?
- Are you often unable to stop talking, thinking and worrying about other people and their problems?
- Do you lose interest in your own life when you are in love?
- Do you stay in relationships that don't work and tolerate abuse in order to keep people loving you?
- Do you leave bad relationships only to form new ones that don't work, either?