

ARE YOU A CO-DEPENDENT PERSON?

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It has been said that every person with an alcohol or drug abuse problem affects the lives of at least four other people: their spouse or partner, parents, children, co-workers, friends. Just as alcoholism tends to run in families, children who grow up with an alcoholic or addict are far more likely to fall in love with, marry, or go to work for another addicted person. What do we mean by co-dependent behavior?

1. We feel responsible for other people's feelings, thoughts, actions, choices, wants, needs and well being.
2. We tend to "stuff" our feelings, or have lost the ability to feel or express our feelings.
3. It is easier for us to be concerned with others rather than ourselves. This in turn has allowed us to neglect our own needs and ignore our own shortcomings.
4. We say "yes", even when we want to say "no". We experience guilt feelings when we stand up for ourselves instead of giving in to others.
5. We judge ourselves harshly, and have a low sense of self-esteem.
6. We have difficulty trusting people and developing intimacy in our relationships.
7. We confuse love and pity, and tend to "love" people we can pity and rescue.
8. We are terrified of abandonment. We will do anything to hold on to a relationship in order not to experience painful abandonment feelings which we may have received from living with people who were never there emotionally for us.
9. We take life too seriously, and have trouble having fun.
10. We have developed our own compulsive behaviors, such as overeating, compulsive spending, workaholism, or addiction to prescription medications or alcohol.
11. We have become addicted to drama. We feel bored if we don't have a crisis in our lives, someone else's problem to solve, or someone to help.
12. We are reactors in life rather than actors.

How many of these statements are true for you? Even if you are not presently living with, working with, or spending time with someone with an alcohol or drug abuse problem; and even if you didn't grow up with an alcoholic or addict in your family; if you recognize yourself in the above statements, you may be a co-dependent. You can benefit from attending Al-Anon, or groups like Adult Children of Alcoholics. You may also benefit from individual counseling.