**Codependency.**

**What is Codependency?**

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**What is Codependency?**

Codependency is an emotional and behavioral condition, passed down from one generation to another, which affects an individual’s ability to have a healthy, satisfying relationship. It’s a set of maladaptive, compulsive behaviors learned by family members in order to survive in a family that is experiencing great emotional pain and stress. Codependency is usually rooted during a person’s childhood, making the individual develop dependencies on people whether it be their moods, behaviors, well-being or love.

Originally, codependency was a term used to describe partners in chemical dependency, persons living with or in a relationship with an addicted person. Now, the term has been broadened to describe any co-dependent person from any dysfunctional family.

Characteristics of codependent people include an extreme need for approval and recognition, a compelling need to control others, lack of trust in themselves and/or others, fear of being abandoned or alone, problems with intimacy and boundaries, poor communication skills, difficulty in making decisions, a tendency to become hurt when people don’t recognize their efforts, confusion between love and pity, and an unhealthy dependence on relationships; among others.

**What Causes Codependency?**

It's commonly considered that individuals who suffer from codependency lived in systems (families) with guidelines that restrict growth, flexibility and freedom to some level. The system (usually mother, father and relatives) is created around and in reaction to problems such as alcohol addiction, psychological illnesses or some other problem or secret. The following are some rules in families that may contribute to codependency:

* It's not okay to discuss problems
* Don't believe in your intuition or other people
* Unpleasant thoughts should not be freely expressed
* Keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself
* Communication is best when it is indirect
* Use another relative as a messenger between two others
* Always be excellent, strong, right and ideal - or at least act like it
* Make us extremely pleased beyond realistic expectations
* Don't be selfish
* Do as I say, not as I do
* It's not okay to be playful
* It's not okay to shine or excel too much
* Do not rock the boat
* Guard the household secrets

**Frequently Asked Questions About Codependency.**

**How is Codependency Diagnosed?**

Because codependency has been so broadened, there’s is no easy way to diagnose a codependent. However, codependency is often diagnosed in people with restricted family systems and an “addiction” to a narcotic, person, relationship, job, etc, in which the person is dependant on either the relationship or the substance for their well-being. The basic psychological and emotional symptoms of codependency may consist of any of the following: stress, depression, anxiety; nervousness; irritability; alternation between lethargy and hyperactivity; loss of self-esteem; fear of becoming independent; dysfunctional relationships with family members, close relatives, friends, and coworkers; isolation; emotional pain or numbness; or even suicidal thoughts. In addition to this emotional issues, supporters of the idea that codependency is a personality disorder find that codependents may also suffer from chronic physical conditions. These may consist of gastrointestinal disorders, colitis, ulcers, strong headaches, migraines, nonspecific skin rashes and skin problems, high blood pressure, and other stress-related physical ailments.

People who suffer from codependency usually find it hard to “be themselves”. They have low self esteems and are constantly looking for anything outside themselves to make them feel better. Some try to feel better through alcohol, drugs or nicotine - and become addicted. Others may develop compulsive behaviors like workaholism, gambling, or indiscriminate sexual activity.

Aside from obsessive-compulsive habits such as perfectionism or workaholism, individuals experiencing alcohol or drug-related codependency often experience a treadmill existence. Whether or not they achieve their objectives, they feel the need to achieve more and always feel void and unsatisfied regardless of what they achieve.

The following are some typical symptoms of those who suffer from codependency:

* Difficulty to know what "normal" is.
* Struggle to have fun..
* Critical, harsh judgment of themselves, and others.
* Belief that others are responsible for their emotions.
* Impulsive behaviors.
* Feelings of being different.
* Sense of inadequacy.
* Being either super responsible or super irresponsible. Can alternate between these.
* No sense of power or confidence when in making decisions.
* Resentment of authority figures.
* Bottling anger up till it explodes.
* Hypersensitivity to criticism.
* Addicted to excitement and/or “drama”.
* Dependency upon others, fear of being abandoned.
* Tendency to look for "victims" to help.
* Need to control.
* Tendency to lie.

**What is the Prognosis for Codependency?**

In most cases, codependency will only get worse with time. However, there is a solution, and it all depends on the individual suffering from codependency, how invested they are in their treatment and their abilities to cope. It takes a lot of work, and input from the individual, close family members and the support group, but with the right treatment and the right state of mind, codependency can be overcomed.

**How Can Friends and Family Help?**

The most important thing during a codependents recovery process is their friends and family support. It is important that they all, including the sufferer learn, investigate and educate themselves about the disorder and their addiction and how it affects their relationships. The more codependency is understood, the better everybody can cope with its effects.

**When Should a Client enter a Treatment Center?**

As mentioned before, Codependency not only affects the emotional and psychological aspect of an individual’s life, but also has physical manifestations. A person should enter a treatment center when the obsessive-compulsive thoughts have got to an uncontrollable level, when suicidal thoughts have appeared, when the individual can’t commit to having healthy relationships and when the stress and anxiety is affecting the individual at a physical level.

### How does PCH Treatment Center treat Codependency?

Treatment focuses on helping patients getting in touch with the feelings that have been buried during childhood as well as reconstructing a new family dynamics. In addition, treatment includes education, experiential groups and individual and group therapy in which individuals rediscover themselves. The most common therapeutic approach is based on the 12-step program initiated by Alcoholics Anonymous, this because codependency is treated as an addiction.