



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Dependent personality disorder

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Dependent personality disorder

Dependent personality disorder is a mental condition in which people depend too much on others to meet their emotional and physical needs.

Causes

Causes of dependent personality disorder are unknown. The disorder usually begins in childhood. It is one of the most common personality disorders and is equally common in men and women.

Symptoms

People with this disorder don't trust their own ability to make decisions. They may be very upset by separation and loss. They may go to great lengths, even suffering abuse, to stay in a relationship.

Symptoms of dependent personality disorder may include:

- Avoiding being alone
- Avoiding personal responsibility
- Becoming easily hurt by criticism or disapproval
- Becoming overly focused on fears of being abandoned
- Becoming very passive in relationships
- Feeling very upset or helpless when relationships end
- Having difficulty making decisions without support from others
- Having problems expressing disagreements with others

Exams and Tests

Dependent personality disorder is diagnosed based on a psychological evaluation. The health care provider will consider how long and how severe the person's symptoms have been.

Treatment

Talk therapy is considered to be the most effective treatment. The aim is to help people with this condition make more independent choices in life. Medicines may help treat other mental conditions, such as anxiety or depression, which occur along with this disorder.

Outlook (Prognosis)

Improvements are usually seen only with long-term therapy.

Possible Complications

Complications may include:

- Alcohol or substance use disorder
- Depression
- Increased likelihood of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Thoughts of suicide and suicide

When to Contact a Medical Professional

See your provider or a mental health professional if you or your child has symptoms of dependent personality disorder.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org [<https://988lifeline.org>] . You can also call 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK). The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential support 24/7, anytime day or night.

You can also call 911 or the local emergency number or go to the hospital emergency room. DO NOT delay.

If someone you know has attempted suicide, call 911 or the local emergency number right away. DO NOT leave the person alone, even after you have called for help.

Alternative Names

Personality disorder - dependent

References

American Psychiatric Association website. Personality disorders. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR), Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association Publishing; 2022.

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