

Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence

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The following checklist is offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation. It may be particularly helpful to newcomers as they begin to understand codependency. It may aid those who have been in recovery a while to determine what traits still need attention and transformation.

| Denial Patterns

- Have difficulty identifying what they are feeling
- Minimize, alter, or deny how they truly feel.
- Perceive themselves as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others
- Lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others.
- Label others with their negative traits.
- Think they can take care of themselves without any help from others.
- Mask pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.
- Express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.
- Do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom they are attracted.

| Low Self-esteem Patterns

- Have difficulty making decisions.
- Judge what they think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.
- Are embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.
- Value others' approval of their thinking, feelings, and behavior over their own.
- Do not perceive themselves as lovable or worthwhile persons.
- Seek recognition and praise to overcome feeling less than.
- Have difficulty admitting a mistake.
- Need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and may even lie to look good.
- Are unable to identify or ask for what they need and want.
- Perceive themselves as superior to others.
- Look to others to provide their sense of safety.
- Have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.
- Have trouble setting healthy priorities and boundaries.

| Compliance Patterns

- Are extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.

- Compromise their own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.
- Put aside their own interests in order to do what others want.
- Are hypervigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.
- Are afraid to express their beliefs, opinions, and feelings when they differ from those of others.
- Accept sexual attention when they want love.
- Make decisions without regard to the consequences.
- Give up their truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.

| Control Patterns

- Believe people are incapable of taking care of themselves.
- Attempt to convince others what to think, do, or feel.
- Freely offer advice and direction without being asked.
- Become resentful when others decline their help or reject their advice.
- Lavish gifts and favors on those they want to influence.
- Use sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance.
- Have to feel needed in order to have a relationship with others.
- Demand that their needs be met by others.
- Use charm and charisma to convince others of their capacity to be caring and compassionate.
- Use blame and shame to exploit others emotionally.
- Refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.
- Adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes.
- Use recovery jargon in an attempt to control the behavior of others.
- Pretend to agree with others to get what they want.

| Avoidance Patterns

- Act in ways that invite others to reject, shame, or express anger toward them.
- Judge harshly what others think, say, or do.
- Avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a way to maintain distance.
- Allow addictions to people, places, and things to distract them from achieving intimacy in relationships.
- Use indirect or evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation.
- Diminish their capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use the tools of recovery.
- Suppress their feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable.
- Pull people toward them, but when others get close, push them away.

- Refuse to give up their self-will to avoid surrendering to a power greater than themselves.
- Believe displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.
- Withhold expressions of appreciation.

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