

COMMON PROBLEMS FOR CO-DEPENDENTS

The following is a list of some common problems for co-dependents. It is not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of problems, but most co-dependents will readily recognize and resonate to the patterns:

1. Difficulty in accurately identifying feelings: Am I angry, sad, hurt, or what? Am I truly depressed, or disappointed, or appropriately sad? Am I really frightened, or is my fear just an act?
2. Difficulty in expressing feelings: I feel angry, but it isn't safe to let other people know; Anger is not okay; I feel depressed, really down, but I can't talk with anyone – they wouldn't understand . . . they might think that I was weak.
3. Difficulty in forming or maintaining close or intimate relationships: I want to be close to others, but I'm afraid of being hurt or rejected; I'm not bright enough (good-looking enough, rich enough, etc.) to run with that crowd.
4. Perfectionism – unrealistic expectations for self and others: I never do anything right, I just screw up everything I do; If I can't paint a perfect picture (write a poem, dance perfectly, etc.), then I just won't do it at all; If he/she really loved me, he/she would have done it better.
5. Rigidity in behavior and/or attitudes: I'm too old to change; Even though I'm not happy with my life, I don't know any other way to do things (like being a man, being a woman, raising a child, having sex, or getting to heaven), and that's my way; It was good enough for my parents and it's good enough for me.
6. Difficulty in adjusting to change. I'll never forgive him for making me move away from our old house; He's not really going to stay sober, so I'm not going to open myself up again; I don't know why things have to keep changing anyway.
7. Feeling overly responsible for other people's behavior and feelings: It's my fault Sue killed herself. If only I had. . . ; I can't leave her – she'll never be able to handle it; I should apologize to my friends for what Frank said to them yesterday.
8. Constant need for others' approval in order to feel good about self: Just tell me what you want from me and I'll do it if it will make you happy; I'll never be able to show my face around here again if I don't get accepted to the university; Maybe if I become a doctor like my dad, he'll be proud of me.
9. Difficulty making decisions: I can't decide, I don't want to make mistakes; When I have to make hard choices, my mind just freezes up and my brain feels numb and paralyzed.
10. Feeling powerless, as if nothing I do makes any difference: It's a no win situation. No matter what I do, I lose; What's the point in putting myself out, no one will remember.
11. A basic sense of shame and low self-esteem: When I make a mistake, it's just another example of what a worthless person I really am; I come from a screwed up family, so there must be something wrong with me.
12. Avoidance of conflict: If I tell him how I feel, he might leave me; I have to act as if I agree or they will get angry at me.

Reviewed 7/09