



Codependency - Caring Too Much

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Often people do not know how to handle their emotions. They may choose to avoid or numb them with alcohol, drugs, gambling or excessively doing any number of behaviours such as shopping or eating. They often become "dependent" upon these in order to cope with their emotions and get through the day. Family and friends who care about them may be affected in an unhealthy manner or even develop a sole purpose in life of trying to change the loved one. They can become "codependent" on the situation. In fact, the person who suffers from codependency usually does not feel valuable unless s/he helps that person to change.

Florence Littauer, a popular author claims "Strengths carried to extreme become weaknesses". It is wonderful to give to others and help them with their problems. If you feel that you are giving "too much", however, you may be suffering from codependency. When a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviours affect another person's thoughts, feelings and behaviours in an unhealthy manner outside help is usually needed. I frequently work with people who are so focused on the needs and problems of others that they do not recognize their own needs and are therefore unable to have them met. Their self-images may suffer greatly and they may find that they are losing touch with themselves and their values. Psychologists help individuals to know their limits, develop healthy boundaries, enhance relationships and meet their own needs. They often serve as a helpful mirror reflecting back to the client and assisting with beautifying the image. If you are wondering what is "wrong" with one or more of your relationships, you may wish to talk about this with someone who will be objective and caring. I think you'll be glad you did!