

11 Signs You Might Be In A Codependent Relationship

by TERESA NEWSOME

Are you a rescuer? Do you find yourself attracted to drug addicts, heartbroken folks, the lonely, or those in need of a little fixing? And when you find them, do you pour your whole self into them? Then you're probably in a co-dependent relationship. Which might feel good, but is, in fact, the opposite of healthy.

Co-dependent relationships were my bread and butter as a Domestic Violence Victim Advocate and Planned Parenthood Certified Responsible Sexuality Educator. There's almost nothing more toxic than a deeply co-dependent relationship. Unfortunately, they were also the most common types of relationships I dealt with. They ran the gamut from partners that were just too dependent on each other, to partners that were dangerously enabling.

So what exactly makes a relationship co-dependent? Shouldn't you want to help your partner, take care of your partner, and help your partner with their problems? Of course. But the difference between a healthy relationship and a co-dependent one is that one person is doing all the loving, all the fixing, and taking all of the responsibility for their partner's happiness. That role becomes an identity that takes the place of the person's real self. And while the person doing all the work may feel important or needed, they very rarely feel truly fulfilled and happy. Check out these other signs to make sure you're not giving of yourself to an unhealthy degree. And if you are, seek help right away. No shame in therapy.

1. Your Family Hasn't Seen You Solo In Forever

Codependent people feel like they can't live without each other. They often go everywhere together. They don't say "I" anymore, they say "we." They don't hang out with their friends and family solo anymore. They are a totally fused unit. This isn't healthy. Even married couples spend time apart and are capable of seeing their family and friends without each other. Being in a co-dependent personality often means losing some of your individual identity and forming a new, joint identity.

2. You Handle Their Scandal

Your partner should be able to lean on you when life gets tough, not pawn their life off on you. If you're in a co-dependent relationship, you'll try to solve all their problems, do all the difficult things they don't want to do, make all the tough decisions, and complete tasks they should really be completing themselves. You do it out of love, but it's really a form of enabling. You're making them feel good in the moment, but in the long run, you're helping them to avoid developing the skills to do hard things and deal with their own lives.

3. You Feel Responsible When They Screw Up

Because, really, if you were there for them, or helped them more, or did more impossible things that no person could or should ever do, then none of this would have happened. The real truth is that you are not responsible for your partner's actions and decisions. And the consequences of those actions and decisions are theirs to experience. It's hard to not think that people are judging or blaming you when

your partner does wrong, but what other people think doesn't matter as much as you probably think it does. Your partner is their own person.

4. You've Done Things That You Shouldn't Have

People in co-dependent relationships do a lot of things they don't want to do, and shouldn't do. They buy drugs for their partners. They make excuses for their bad behavior. They do illegal or immoral things under the guise of keeping their partners happy. They know they shouldn't, but they do these things anyway. It feels like helping in the moment, but it's just more enabling.

5. You've Lost Touch With Your Feelings

When someone asks you how you feel about something, and you're deep in the trenches of a codependent relationship, you won't know how you feel. Instead you'll think in terms of "how would my partner feel about this?" You're so busy pleasing and putting out fires that your own feelings are buried. One of the most important first steps in recovering from co-dependency is to get back in touch with your true feelings.

6. You Give Out Free Passes

If you do something wrong, it's kind of like the end of the world. But when your partner does something wrong, it's OK. You forgive them. You give out all kinds of free passes and put up with all kinds of bad behavior. And your partner gets to treat you pretty much however they want because it's all about their happiness anyway. This is a dangerous game to play because those free passes can quickly escalate into illegal or violent activity.

7. You'd Die Without Your Partner

A lot of people who are deeply in love say they'd die without their partner, but codependents mean it. They don't have anything outside of the relationship anymore that brings them joy or happiness. They might be so intertwined with their partners that they honestly don't even know how they would survive, where they would go, or how they would function without them. They're the very definition of a tangled web.

8. You Do Most Of The Loving

Codependent relationships can appear (and often feel) like intense love from both partners, but the reality is that you do way more of the loving and caring. You love and please your partner more than you love and please yourself. You might even get great satisfaction out of being the care taker, the loving partner, and the problem solver. Unfortunately, it's never healthy when one partner does more than their fair share.

9. You Feel Too Guilty To Leave

People in codependent relationships know there's something wrong. There's always an undercurrent of dis-easy, worry, anxiety, or shame. But codependents often feel trapped. They feel like bad people if

they abandon their partners. They feel like their partners can't survive without them. And they feel like they don't even know what their identity would be if they weren't in the relationship. It's hard to stay and it's hard to leave. So many people end up staying.

10. You Don't Know What To Do When Someone No Longer Needs Rescuing

If you're a professional rescuer, caretaker, person who loves broken people, there's often a turning point in the relationship where your partner doesn't need you anymore. You don't know what to do when you're not needed. You don't know how to not rescue or take care of someone. You might lash out, face depression, or create chaos so that there are more problems for you to solve. Or you might move on to someone else who is more broken. But being on your own or in a normal, healthy relationship is not really on your radar.

11. You Live In A Cage Of Anxiety

Even when things are good, you're anxious. Anxious that they're too good. Anxious that you're not doing enough. Anxious that your partner isn't happy, or that they're going to ask something of you that you don't want to do. Anxiety in a relationship doesn't always mean co-dependence, but you'd be hard-pressed to find a co-dependent relationship that isn't full of anxiety. It's a natural side effect when the emotional well-being of two people is one person's responsibility. It's a tough cross to bear.