

CO-DEPENDANT QUESTIONNAIRE:

Any relationship that involves addiction seldom has moderation at its foundation; it usually involves extremes, such as one partner being the giver and one partner being the taker.

Here is the quiz*:

Do you feel like you give and give in your relationships but you get very little back? Are you always trying to save somebody or rescue somebody that doesn't have their life together?

You may be co-dependent.

Take the quiz in this article and find out. In a relationship between two emotionally healthy adults, the roles of giving and receiving help are balanced. Both people offer help and receive help from each other in approximately equal amounts.

However, there are some people who always take on the role of being the helper, no matter what relationship they are in. These people give, and give, and they always seem to get involved with people who have very serious emotional problems, such as addiction. And they exhaust themselves trying desperately to save the other person, even at tremendous cost to their own health. These people have friendships that focus exclusively on trying to solve the problems of their friends.

We sometimes call this quality "codependency", and we may label people who are obsessed with helping others "co-dependent". A person who is co-dependent will tend to have relationships with people who have a lot of problems emotional, social, familial and financial. The co-dependent person may spend much of their own time, money, and energy helping other people who have problems, while ignoring the problems in their own life. Why would somebody be co-dependent? A person who is co-dependent often suffers from a deep sense of worthlessness and anxiety, and tries to derive a sense of self-worth by helping or rescuing others. A person who is co-dependent may not know how to relax and feel comfortable in a friendship where both people are equals and the relationship is based on enjoying each other's company.

Co-dependent people may even feel anxious if someone they have been helping gets their life in order and no longer wants their help. The co-dependent person may immediately look around for someone else they can "save". If you frequently take on the role of helping the people who are your friends, how can you tell if you are acting out of genuine kindness and concern, or whether your behavior is in fact co-dependency? When is it healthy to put the needs of other people first, and when is it unhealthy? There aren't really any hard and fast lines between the two.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself to see whether your "helping" behavior may actually be co-dependency:

1. Do you have a hard time saying no to others, even when you are very busy, financially broke, or completely exhausted?
2. Are you always sacrificing your own needs for everyone else?
3. Do you feel more worthy as a human being because you have taken on a helping role?
4. If you stopped helping your friends, would you feel guilty or worthless?
5. Would you know how to be in a friendship that doesn't revolve around you being the "helper"?
6. If your friends eventually didn't need your help, would you still be friends with them? Or would you look around for someone else to help?
7. Do you feel resentful when others are not grateful enough to you for your efforts at rescuing them or fixing their lives?
8. Do you sometimes feel like more of a social worker than a friend in your relationships?
9. Do you feel uncomfortable receiving help from other people? Is the role of helping others a much more natural role for you to play in your relationships?
10. Does it seem as if many of your friends have particularly chaotic lives, with one crisis after another?
11. Did you grow up in a family that had a lot of emotional chaos or addiction problems?
12. Are many of your friends addicts, or do they have serious emotional and social problems?
13. As you were growing up, did you think it was up to you to keep the family functioning?
14. As an adult, is it important for you to be thought of as the "dependable one"?

If you answered "yes" to a lot of these questions, you may indeed have a problem with co-dependency. This does not mean that you are a flawed person. It means that you are spending a lot of energy on other people and very little on yourself. If it seems that a lot of your friendships are based on co-dependent rescuing behaviors, rather than on mutual liking and respect between equals, you may wish to step back and rethink your role in relationships. If you suspect that your helping behavior is a form of co-dependency, a good therapist or counselor can help you gain perspective on your actions and learn a more balanced way of relating to others.

There are many excellent books available on the subject of co-dependency, such as "Codependent No More" by Melody Beattie. Attending support groups such as Al-Anon can also help you reduce the stress of codependent relationships, and get you to focus on your own life instead of endlessly trying to rescue all those around you.