

Recognizing Patterns and Characteristics of Codependency

The following checklist is offered as a tool to aid in self-evaluation. Read the list of statements and check which ones sound familiar.

Discuss: Which pattern(s) do you most often fall into? What would freedom look like in this area?

Denial Patterns

Codependents often...

- 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.
 - Fail to recognize the unavailability of those to whom they are attracted.
-

Low Self-esteem Patterns

Codependents often...

- 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 over their own beliefs and feelings.
 - Struggle to see themselves as lovable or worthwhile.
 - Seek recognition and praise to overcome feeling less than.
 - Have difficulty admitting mistakes.
 - Feel a need to appear right and may lie to look good.
 - Can't identify or ask for what they need or want.
 - See 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

Codependents often...

- 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.
 - Fear expressing beliefs, opinions, and feelings that differ from others.
 - Accept sexual attention when they actually 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

Codependents often...

- Believe others are incapable of taking care of themselves.
 - Try to convince others what to think, feel, or do.
 - 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.
 - Need to feel needed to have a relationship with others.
 - Demand that others meet their needs.
 - Use charm or charisma to convince others of their capacity to be caring and compassionate.
 - Use blame or shame to manipulate others.
 - Refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.
 - Adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to get their way.
 - Use "recovery talk" in an attempt to control the behavior of others.
 - Pretend to agree with others to get what they want.
-

Avoidance Patterns

Codependents often...

- Act in ways that invite rejection, shame, or anger.
 - 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 appreciation or affection.
-

Source: Co-Dependents Anonymous, *Patterns and Characteristics of Codependence* (CoDA Fellowship Services, 1986).