

Codependent Relationships: Beliefs, Attributes, and Outcomes

Codependent relationships are characterized by an excessive dependence on another’s approval for one’s sense of identity and self-worth.

Other signs of codependency include:

- Difficulty finding satisfaction in other life domains besides one’s relationship with another.
- Remaining with one’s partner despite identifying maladaptive behaviors in them.
- Putting another’s needs and desires above one’s own at the expense of personal well-being.

This checklist defines codependency, outlining some of the key beliefs it often entails.

Use it to further your understanding of how codependency can manifest in common behaviors, both in relationships and general life. This list includes common short- and long-term outcomes of codependent behaviors.

Checklist

The left-hand column of this checklist looks at “healthy” beliefs, attributes, and outcomes. The right-hand column contrasts these with their codependent counterparts.

	Healthy	Codependent
Definition	<p>A relationship in which both parties have a sense of being their own, separate person.</p> <p>Each owns their own beliefs, feelings, decisions, actions, and maintains responsibility for their self-worth and happiness.</p> <p>A functional balance is upheld between each party’s own personal and professional lives.</p>	<p>A dysfunctional relationship in which one or both individuals feel extreme amounts of dependence on the other, along with responsibility for their feelings and actions.</p> <p>This may involve enabling maladaptive behaviors such as substance abuse, self-neglect, and/or other harmful tendencies.</p>
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Taking responsibility for one’s own actions ■ Maintaining a sense of self-worth without need for the other’s approval ■ Having balanced expectations about offering and receiving advice from the other ■ Mutual reliance, balanced give-and-take between partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Excessive sense of responsibility for the other’s well-being ■ Over-reliance on the other’s approval for a sense of identity or self-worth ■ Unreasonable expectations about what one’s partner should do, think, or feel ■ An imbalance between giving and receiving, providing support

	Healthy	Codependent
Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Empowering others to help themselves ■ Establishing and maintaining healthy personal boundaries ■ Openness and acceptance of partner's opinions, beliefs, and actions ■ Supportive, encouraging ■ Provides help and assistance where appropriate ■ Practicing suitable self-care, making time for one's own interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Performing unnecessary duties that one's partner is capable of fulfilling, creating dependency ■ Merging or enmeshment of emotions and identity to the detriment of personal growth ■ Harsh judgment of the other's feelings, beliefs, or behaviors ■ Resistant, demanding, or over-controlling ■ Withholding, restrictive, or resistant attitudes and behaviors ■ Difficulty making own decisions, taking care of oneself
Outcomes	<p>Mutually supportive relationships nurture the personal growth and flourishing of both parties involved.</p> <p>Each partner receives help and guidance, experiences their own feelings, sense of self, valuing and upholding their own beliefs.</p> <p>Feelings of security and safety, as well as emotional health and physical well-being.</p>	<p>Codependent relationships perpetuate self-destructive behavioral and emotional tendencies.</p> <p>Partners may feel anxious, trapped or isolated, and may fear judgment, rejection, or abandonment.</p> <p>Over-reliance on the other, or on the relationship, for one's sense of self or well-being.</p>