
Some Definitions of Co-dependence

- 1) . . . an exaggerated dependent pattern of learned behaviors, beliefs and feelings that make life painful. It is a dependence on people and things outside the self, along with neglect of the self to the point of having little self identity.

(Smalley, S: cited in Wegscheider-Cruse, 1985)

- 2) . . . preoccupation and extreme dependence (emotionally, socially, and sometimes physically) on a person or object. Eventually, this dependence on another person becomes a pathological condition that affects the co-dependent in all other relationships. This may include . . . all persons who (1) are in a love or marriage relationship with an alcoholic; (2) have one or more alcoholic parents or grandparents; or (3) grew up in an emotionally repressive family . . . It is a primary disease and a disease within every member of an alcoholic family.

(Wegscheider-Cruse, 1985)

- 3) . . . ill health, maladaptive or problematic behavior that is associated with living with, working with or otherwise being close to a person with alcoholism (other chemical dependence or other chronic impairment). It affects not only individuals, but families, communities, businesses, and other institutions, and even whole societies.

(Whitfield, 1984, 1986)

- 4) . . . an emotional, psychological, and behavioral pattern of coping that develops as a result of an individual's prolonged exposure to, and practice of, a set of oppressive rules — rules which prevent the open expression of feeling, as well as the direct discussion of personal and interpersonal problems.

(Subby, 1984)

- 5) . . . a disease that has many forms and expression and that grows out of a disease process that . . . I call the addictive process . . . the addictive process is an unhealthy and abnormal disease process whose assumptions, beliefs, behaviors, and lack of spiritual awareness lead to a process of nonliving which is progressive . . .

(Schaefer, 1986)

Growth of Co-dependence

1. Invalidation and repression of internal cues, such as our observations, feelings and reactions
2. Neglecting our needs
3. Beginning to stifle our Child Within
4. Denial of a family or other secret
5. Increasing tolerance of and numbness to emotional pain
6. Inability to grieve a loss to completion
7. Blocking of growth (mental, emotional, spiritual)
8. Compulsive behaviors in order to lessen pain and to glimpse our Child Within
9. Progressive shame and loss of self-esteem
10. Feeling out of control. Need to control more
11. Delusion and projection of pain
12. Stress-related illness develops
13. Compulsions worsen
14. Progressive deterioration
 - Extreme mood swings
 - Difficulty with intimate relationships
 - Chronic unhappiness
 - Interference with recovery from alcoholism/CD and other conditions