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CODEPENDENCY – A LEARNED BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

“A Co-dependent person is one who has let another person’s behaviour affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person’s behavior.” – Melody Beattie.

Keywords: Co-dependency, Co-dependent etc.

INTRODUCTION

Supporting the loved one and the need to provide them with the best is natural. Nevertheless, the desire to care can become harmful to self and associated if dealt at extreme conditions.

Co-dependency is defined as the behaviour of supporting the companion, family or acquaintance in any form of addiction through constant support and defense by shielding against the consequences. It refers to the mental concept of an unhealthy association shared with family, friends or companion.

Co-dependent personality disorder:

This disorder is defined as a pattern of behaviour that affects the relationship by causing the affected to rely excessively on the addicted person to fulfill their emotional needs such as self-esteem, happiness, etc.

Initially the term “co-dependent” is used to describe the persons living with. But up-to-date identifications of “Co-dependency” refers to a broad category characterized by obsession and extreme dependency – emotional, social, and sometimes physical on the other person¹.

Though developments in the field of psychiatry have improved in identifying the categories of co-dependency, it is still widely understood or judged only among the families that are subjected to substance abuse.

The underlying problem with co-dependency is that during the process of ensuring the mental fulfillment of the co-dependent, they fail to pay attention to themselves resulting in identity failure².

As of date, the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) 5th edition refers only to the dependency personality disorder and nothing to the Co-dependency personality disorder.

The major signs of co-dependency include the following,

Low self-esteem,
Low levels of narcissism
Familial Dysfunction
Depression
Anxiety
Stress
Low emotional expressivity
Other signs may include but not limited to the following,
Hard time saying NO
Poor boundaries
Emotional reactivity
Feeling compelled to take care of people
Urge to control other people
Trouble communicating honestly
Fixating on mistakes
Need to be liked by everyone
Feel to be in relation
Issues with intimacy
Confused state between love and pity
Displaying fear of abandonment

Identifying a healthy and a co-dependent relationship:

Sense of autonomy, independence, and the ability to maintain their own identities while still being connected to their partner are the core features of a healthy association.

While in a co-dependent affiliation, one person may lose their own needs in order to please the partner to ensure that they do not lose their sense of self. In a co-dependent condition, a disparity of power leads to one person being overly directing or overriding.

Ways of overcoming co-dependency:

Building self-esteem:

Low self-esteem is a commonly associated symptom of co-dependency^{3,4}. Building self-esteem is considered to be the crucial step in counselling interventions⁵.

Improving Boundaries:

Unaware of one's own boundaries in a relationship is often another reason for people to fall under co-dependency personality disorder leading to excessive will to satisfy partners' needs, at the expense of

one's own personal needs and individuality.

Encouraging self-care:

It is important that the person with co-dependent tendencies shall learn to prioritize their self-care, needs, and happiness⁶.

CONCLUSION

It is significant for one to learn to love the self, build self-esteem and set clear boundaries in relationships. One's constant evaluation of him/her in the relationship & self-aware of the boundaries and attention to the self can help prevent co-dependency personality disorder.

“Whether it's an alcoholic father whom you want to cut ties with, an annoying friend with whom you have a long history, or an overbearing boss, associations are complicated and in many cases unavoidable” – Fisher.

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