

# Recognizing Unhealthy Dependence

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**We've all seen or experienced the problems that accompany emotional over-dependence (depending on other people in ways that are unrealistic, unfair, and irresponsible).**

We've all experienced that overly attached friend or clingy partner. Many people inaccurately associate dependence with weakness and insecurity, so in turn, avoid placing any form of reliance on others.

The problem with this thought is that we need each other. We need to learn how to practice healthy, responsible interdependence with other people if we are to live effective, happy, and fulfilled lives.

Mutual dependence is a core necessity of life. But most people rebel against any implication of dependency because it contradicts the commonly embraced notion that we should be complete within ourselves and free from the need of others.

Most people will have experienced examples of unhealthy dependence in the context of their day-to-day interactions, either personally or even professionally. It is common for people to experience hurt or disappointment when they place unfair expectations upon other people in ways that are unrealistic, irresponsible and/or disempowering.

**HOW WOULD WE BECOME AWARE OF UNHEALTHY DEPENDANCE?**

**1) Some people commit to a lifestyle of passivity (i.e. Being**

**Passive):** These people wait for other people to make life happen for them; doing little or nothing to create or sustain their relationships.

**2) Some people take more than they give:** If two parties in any relationship are not both committed to investing 100% into the relationship, then one person will end up giving more than the other, one person becomes comfortable with receiving more than the other, and the relationship, in turn, becomes imbalanced. When one party consistently benefits more from any relationship, over time, mistrust can override the relationship, which opens the door for bitterness and resentment.

**3) Some people embrace victimhood:** Blaming one's problems and insufficiencies on society, God, or other people, and taking insufficient responsibility for making things right in your life is an excellent way to lose respect, admiration and affection from others.

**4) Some people rely on others for things that they are more than capable of ascertaining for themselves:** Like a man who assumes he can only be happy when he's with his partner. In healthy dependence-based relationships, individuals take full responsibility for their happiness and fulfillment in life.

**5) Some people become dependent on other people or processes to offset the adverse effects of what they commit their time to.** Like an unemployed man who stopped looking for work, became severely bored, and chose to subdue his sorrows with alcohol and watching pornography.

**Have you ever heard the saying that hurt people hurt people?**

If not, have a closer look at someone you know who acts destructively in the context of his or her relationships. Look closer to see if they might have been hurt in some way by another.

As previously mentioned, people try their best not to 'need' anyone else due to the affiliation they have made between dependence, weakness, irresponsibility, and insecurity.

But the thing is, as social beings, and we need relational nurturance as much as we need food, water, air, shelter and warmth. We need to receive it, and we also need to give it. Without this degree of balance, our lives are guaranteed

to become massively out of sync and also devoid of fulfilment. So, we must learn to depend in healthy ways and avoid the pitfalls of imbalanced, irresponsible dependence.

When we each take responsibility for our emotional health and well-being in life, we mature and grow in ways that become more appealing and attractive to those others we interact with. When we choose to take full responsibility for ourselves, we become free from the need of anything from others, which in turn, opens our eyes to recognize better the opportunity to give, and also to receive.

### **Healthy Dependence is Interdependence**

The most robust expression of relational dependence is healthy interdependence: where one person becomes a source of reliability for you, and resultantly, you, in turn, become a source of assurance for them. Each party in a relationship takes responsibility for their own mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Each generates strength and happiness in themselves, to provide strength and happiness for the other.

In this sense, healthy independence becomes an essential factor in support of strong relational dependence between any two people.

The only sustainable option for wholeness and well-being in any expression of relationship, personal, intimate or professional, is a state of healthy interdependence and mutuality. Relationships like this will keep all parties strong, accountable, fulfilled and more readily willing to invest even more into them.

### **QUESTIONS FOR SELF REFLECTION**

(Watch out for these signs that you might be in a codependent relationship)

**Q1)** Are you unable to find satisfaction in your life outside of a particular person?

**Q2)** Do you recognize unhealthy behaviors in your partner but stay with him or her in spite of them?

**Q3)** Are you giving support to your partner at the cost of your own mental, emotional, and physical health?