

Enabling and Codependency

Enabling

What Enabling Provides a Family System

- A person enables for various reasons, often having little to do with the person suffering from a substance use disorder.
 - Most people understand enabling a substance abuser often takes away their ability to face consequences.
 - The question is not so much what is the enabling providing for the substance user, it is moreso what is it providing to the enabler?
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Common Manipulations that Encourage Enabling

These are the four most common manipulations a substance user applies to the primary enabler to encourage them to continue their enabling.

- Guilt
 - Fear
 - Hope
 - Victim
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Guilt

Continued

- This is an attempt to coach family members.
 - Addicts can say some hurtful things while exercising guilt upon a vulnerable family.
 - Families scared and wakened are often taken over by emotions and may even start to believe what the substance user is saying is true.
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Fear

Continued

- The addict and alcoholic attempts to have you believe that if there are changes there will be consequences to the family, themselves or others.
- Some common manipulations are if you try to intervene, set rules and boundaries, or make them move out or go to treatment, they will:
 - hate the family forever
 - be homeless
 - go to jail
 - never talk to you again
 - commit suicide

This is when families can start to believe that their enabling is keeping them safe and it has to continue or else.

Hope

Continued

- With this manipulation your leads you to believe they can or will stop on their own. They may offer you a variety of plans they “will” do at some point.
 - This is meant to keep families in a state of wait and to back off any attempts of taking the necessary steps to change themselves.
 - Sadly, most families believe them despite all the failed attempts or no attempts at all.
 - The family hopes for a consequence such as an arrest, a new partner, a job or for that right person, place or thing to come along that will make this all go away.
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Victim

Continued

- This is where the substance user attempts to have others feel sorry for them.
 - This is also where they seek to create a diversion and to blame others such as a spouse, a difficult job, a judge or law enforcement or earlier traumatic experiences as a justification for their behaviors and substance use.
 - When addicts and alcoholics are resentful, they feel justified to use substances in the hopes others will be harmed emotionally by their actions.
 - Some may have heard the saying where resentful alcoholic or addict victims drink or ingests poison waiting for the person with whom they are resentful at to perish.
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At Family First Intervention, we understand how difficult it can be to see what has happened within the family system. One of our many goals is to educate those affected by addiction and help them see how the whole family shifts and why.

Codependency

Codependency

- A person abusing alcohol or drugs does so with the highest form of selfishness.
 - They often put their wants and needs before anyone or anything.
 - As the person allows their wants and needs to be the priority, some family members and others may start to make the need to comfort them the priority. As the substance abuser puts others second, the same people put them first. How does this happen?
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Codependency Can Hurt a Whole Family

- Whether it be love, time, or attention, we only have so much of ourselves to give in a day. Offering the majority of yourself to one person can cause resentment and conflicts with other members of your family.
 - It is helpful to try and identify the reasons behind the codependency. Through intervention training and continued counseling most come to realize they were not codependent enablers solely with the hope of saving their loved one; they were equally if not more so seeking to fulfill a need for themselves.
 - When reading the examples, please try to recognize why you're doing it rather than what you're doing.
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You Feel Responsible For Others

- You believe if not for your support they would be worse off than they are (you're helping them).
 - You think and feel responsible for other people.
 - You feel anxiety, pity, and guilt when other people have a problem.
 - You feel compelled to help the person solve the problem.
 - You feel frustrated when your help isn't effective.
 - You often anticipate other people's needs
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Your Own Feelings are Less Important and Not Being Met

- You try to please others instead of yourself.
 - You wonder why others don't help you the way you help them.
 - You have less a problem providing help and have a difficult time asking for help.
 - You find yourself saying yes when you mean no, doing things you don't really want to be doing, doing more than your fair share of the work, and doing things other people are capable of doing for themselves. (People Pleaser)
 - You don't know what you want and need or, if you do, you tell yourself that what you want and need is not important.
 - You find it easier to feel and express anger about injustices done to others, rather than injustices done to you.
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Your Feelings of Worth and Contribution are Dependant on Others

- You feel safest when giving.
 - You feel insecure and guilty when somebody gives to you.
 - You feel sad because you spend your whole life giving to other people and nobody gives to you.
 - You find yourself attracted to needy people.
 - You find needy people attracted to you.
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You are Always at the Mercy of Someone's Drama or Neediness

- You abandon your routine to respond to or do something for somebody else.
 - You overcommit yourself.
 - You feel hurried and pressured.
 - You feel bored, empty and worthless if you don't have chaos, a crisis in your life, a problem to solve, or someone to help.
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You Feel Powerless

- You believe deep inside that other people are somehow responsible for you.
 - You blame others for the situation you or your loved one is in.
 - You say other people make you feel the way you do.
 - You believe other people are making you crazy.
 - You feel angry, victimized, unappreciated, and used.
 - You find other people become impatient or angry with you for all the preceding characteristics.
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Codependency is not a moral failing or the characteristics of a bad person. It is often earlier or current trauma, life experiences, and learned behaviors that are the cause. It is almost never the current situation as the sole cause of the enabling and codependency. As with addiction, it is helpful to identify the reasons behind the behavior and learn new coping strategies.

Attention to one Person's Addiction Affects Many Other Relationships

To help begin the process, it could be beneficial to understand some basic effects of relationships. It can be said that when two or more people become connected in a relationship of any form (work, romance, friendship, or family), those in the relationship will do one or more of three things:

- A person will assume some of the qualities of the other.
 - A person will assume a role that complements the qualities of the other.
 - A person will assume a role that acts counter to the qualities of the other.
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The Most Important Thing to Understand

- When two people connect or enter into a relationship of any type, then both parties are changed as a result of that connection. In other words, all parties have been changed to some degree as a result of being connected and/or in a relationship with someone who has become dependent upon drugs or alcohol.
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Addiction Codependency can create the fear of change and letting go of old behaviors.

- Alcoholics and addicts aren't the only ones who avoid intervention and treatment. Families often avoid intervention and therapeutic confrontation. The reasons behind their behaviors are far and wide as are the various reasons families state "it will never work" or "they will never go".
 - The core reason families are fearful is, they see the intervention more about what they will be giving up over what it will be providing them and their loved one.
 - With any other medical concern that requires immediate or near immediate remedy, families would not behave or respond the same way as they do with addressing an addiction.
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When we start to protect the feelings of another individual, we often realize at some point we were trying to protect our own feelings. Being emotionally connected to the ups and downs of another can take away our identity, integrity, happiness, and individuality we once had.

Intervention Gives an Unbiased Professional Perspective

- If you've avoided confronting your loved one with a professional intervention about their addiction and the need for treatment, it could be a result of you protecting your own feelings and role in the family system. When you look at all of the trouble, heartache, and consequences drug and alcohol abuse brings to someone, you may often ask yourself why they do it. Although the reasons people abuse drugs and alcohol are endless, the question is what is it providing that is so great that they would allow it to continue even in the face of extreme consequences? After all, the drugs and alcohol are providing them with something so powerful that they are willing to sacrifice anything and everything to get it.
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