



The Family Recovery Foundation
FIX YOUR FAMILY
MODULE 4

Understanding Codependency II
Manipulation / Enabling / Self Esteem

Codependency is a behavioral and emotional condition in which an individual consistently prioritizes the needs, feelings, or problems of others—often to the detriment of their own well-being—this helps to maintain connection, control, or stability in a specific relationship.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify common emotional manipulations
- Understand how codependency impacts self-esteem and mental health.
- Explore the cycle of enabling behavior and its consequences.

1. The Web of Manipulation:

- **Emotional Exploitation:** Guilt trips, threats, playing the victim – Discuss specific examples.
- **Minimizing and Denial:** "It's not that bad" or "I can quit anytime I want." "You just don't like to have fun." - Explore how this impacts self-esteem.
- **Love Bombing:** Excessive affection to gain trust or manipulate behavior.

Activity:

- Group discussion: Share real-life examples of manipulation tactics and their effects.

2. Codependency and the Erosion of Self-Esteem:

- Discuss how codependency fuels enabling behavior to "fix" the addict.
 - The Need to Control
 - I am of value if I am helping you
 - Avoids own issues
 - Fear of abandonment
 - Illusion of helplessness
 - Creating roles of dependency
- The addict's behavior chips away at self-worth and confidence.
- Codependency isolates and hinders personal growth.

3. The Enabling Trap:

- Define enabling behaviors and their consequences for the addict and the family.
- Explore how enabling perpetuates the addiction cycle.
- Discuss the guilt and fear that often fuel enabling behavior.
- How does self care change the story.

4. Bottom Line:

At its core, codependency is a pattern of emotional reliance, control, and self-neglect in relationships, often rooted in a deep **fear of abandonment** or a need for **external validation**. *It typically develops when someone's sense of self-worth becomes tied to taking care of, managing, or fixing another person—especially in dysfunctional or addictive dynamics.*

Core Elements of Codependency

(Understanding the Pattern Without Self-Blame)

Codependency is not a personality flaw.

It is a **relational adaptation** — a set of strategies learned to stay connected, safe, or needed in relationships.

This section is about **recognition**, not diagnosis.

Awareness creates choice.

1. Over-Responsibility

Feeling responsible for another person's emotions, choices, or well-being

Over-responsibility often sounds like:

- “If they’re upset, it must be my fault.”
- “If I don’t help, something bad will happen.”
- “I should be able to make this better.”
- “Maybe if I _____, then it would not have happened.”

This pattern develops when emotional safety depended on managing others’ reactions. While caring is healthy, **carrying another person’s internal world is not.**

Healthy responsibility ends where another person’s choices begin.

2. Control Disguised as Help

Trying to manage or “fix” others to feel stable

This can look like:

- Giving unsolicited advice
- Monitoring someone’s behavior
- Anticipating problems before they happen
- Feeling anxious when others don’t take your guidance

Control is often mistaken for love when unpredictability feels unsafe. Helping becomes a way to regulate your own anxiety rather than support true growth.

Support allows choice.
Control removes it.

3. Self-Neglect

Ignoring personal needs, boundaries, and emotions

Self-neglect often shows up as:

- Saying yes when you mean no
- Minimizing your feelings
- Delaying rest, care, or expression
- Feeling disconnected from your own needs

When relationships require you to disappear, resentment and exhaustion follow. Healthy relationships make space for **both people**.

Your needs are not a burden.
They are information.

4. Fear-Based Attachment

Staying connected out of fear rather than safety

Fear-based attachment may include:

- Fear of rejection or abandonment
- Fear of being “too much”
- Fear of conflict
- Fear of being alone

This keeps people in relationships that no longer feel mutual or safe. The nervous system learns that connection must be earned or maintained through sacrifice.

The Root of Codependency

It often stems from childhood experiences, such as growing up in an environment with addiction, emotional neglect, or inconsistent caregiving. The nervous system learns that love = being needed, and over time, that becomes the unconscious pattern in relationships.

Breaking Free from Codependency

- Learning healthy detachment (loving without controlling)
- Developing self-worth outside of relationships
- Setting and enforcing boundaries
- Recognizing that love does not require self-sacrifice

- Seeking support, therapy, or self-work to rewire old patterns

Codependency is not just about being overly caring—it's about losing yourself in someone else's dysfunction and believing that control equals love. Healing starts with self-awareness, boundaries, and reclaiming your own identity.