

Codependent Relationships vs. Authentic Relationships

As we continue on our paths of recovery from codependence, we learn to differentiate between unhealthy, dysfunctional relationships and authentic relationships. We look at past behaviors and patterns and compare them with how we engage in present relationships. The following chart shows aspects of codependent relationships and authentic relationships. Our goal to ultimately sustain a healthy relationship includes building a friendship first, keeping a promising relationship moving forward, retaining our identity, boundaries, and values, and learning to share with another person.

Codependent Relationships

Due to my dysfunctional upbringing, I gravitate towards emotionally unavailable, needy partners who will likely be addicted to drugs, alcohol, gambling, sex, etc.

I accept sex when I really want affection. I'm afraid you won't stay around if I don't give you what you want.

I talk with you for hours about our traumatic pasts. We both come from dysfunctional families. I feel as if I have known you all my life. You are my soul mate.

I want to spend all my free time with you. I blow off friends and family obligations. I feel incomplete without you.

I put on a façade in order to gain your approval. I believe if you knew the real me, you would reject me.

I quickly become enmeshed in your life. The more indispensable I am to you, the more secure I feel. I believe you won't leave me.

Together, you and I make up a whole. When you're not around, I feel as if something is missing.

Authentic Relationships

I am attracted to your thoughts, ideas, personality, sense of humor, the way you present yourself, and our common interests.

Because I am in recovery, I no longer rush into relationships. I want to develop a friendship first, before taking the relationship to the next level.

I take my time getting to know you. I want to make sure you're emotionally available, capable of loving and respecting me, not just during the "honeymoon" phase, but consistently, over a period of time.

I value my time with friends and family and continue to pursue my interests. In addition, I look forward to the time we spend together.

I'm not afraid to be emotionally intimate with you. I'm willing to show you the real me.

I remain my own person. By practicing healthy boundaries and expressing my needs directly, I avoid being engulfed by you.

We come together as two separate people who encourage each other's personal growth and process.

Codependent Relationships

I take my identity from you. I am preoccupied with all the details of your life: your friends, your work, how you spend your time away from me.

You become my primary focus. My happiness depends on you. You are my "higher power."

I fear being abandoned by you because, as a child, someone I loved abandoned me. I'm afraid of being alone.

I am jealous, possessive, and controlling. I listen to your phone conversations, read your email, and go through your pockets. I don't trust you.

I use whatever means necessary including lying, manipulating, and evading to get what I want from you.

I am addicted to the chaos and drama in our relationship. It reminds me of growing up in my family of origin. When things are going well, I am waiting for the other shoe to drop.

I am uncomfortable if you don't approve of what I'm doing, wearing, or saying.

I focus on your negative traits and tell you how you should change.

If our relationship ended, I would feel depressed, angry, hopeless, and scared. In order to avoid these feelings, I would desperately seek a replacement as soon as possible. I would blame you for the breakup.

Authentic Relationships

I remain self-assured with my own identity. I value my accomplishments, make my own decisions, and approve of my behaviors.

My happiness and joy are a result of the relationship I have with my Higher Power. I am able to share my happiness with you.

I realize I am an adult, capable of taking care of my needs. Therefore, I can never really be abandoned. My Higher Power is always present to love and guide me.

I turn my will and my life over to my Higher Power. I no longer have to be in charge. I accept that whatever happens in my life is for my ultimate good. I trust my Higher Power.

I am realistic about our relationship. I realize that a healthy relationship involves give and take, negotiation, and compromise.

We share love and happiness. We value and appreciate the peaceful times in our lives.

I am okay with myself, character defects and all. I love and accept myself as I am.

I focus on your positive qualities and accept your character defects. I remember why I fell in love with you.

If our relationship ended, I would feel sad. Before getting into another relationship, I would take time to grieve the loss. To avoid making the same mistake again, I would try to figure out what went wrong. My self-worth would remain intact and I would still care about you.