

## **COMMON PROBLEMS FOR CO-DEPENDENTS**

The following is a list of some common problems for co-dependents. It is not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of problems, but most co-dependents will readily recognize and resonate to the patterns:

1. Difficulty in accurately identifying feelings: Am I angry, sad, hurt, or what? Am I truly depressed, or disappointed, or appropriately sad? Am I really frightened, or is my fear just an act?
2. Difficulty in expressing feelings: I feel angry, but it isn't safe to let other people know; Anger is not okay; I feel depressed, really down, but I can't talk with anyone – they wouldn't understand . . . they might think that I was weak.
3. Difficulty in forming or maintaining close or intimate relationships: I want to be close to others, but I'm afraid of being hurt or rejected; I'm not bright enough (good-looking enough, rich enough, etc.) to run with that crowd.
4. Perfectionism – unrealistic expectations for self and others: I never do anything right, I just screw up everything I do; If I can't paint a perfect picture (write a poem, dance perfectly, etc.), then I just won't do it at all; If he/she really loved me, he/she would have done it better.
5. Rigidity in behavior and/or attitudes: I'm too old to change; Even though I'm not happy with my life, I don't know any other way to do things (like being a man, being a woman, raising a child, having sex, or getting to heaven), and that's my way; It was good enough for my parents and it's good enough for me.
6. Difficulty in adjusting to change: I'll never forgive him for making me move away from our old house; He's not really going to stay sober, so I'm not going to open myself up again; I don't know why things have to keep changing anyway.
7. Feeling overly responsible for other people's behavior and feelings: It's my fault Sue killed herself. If only I had. . . ; I can't leave her – she'll never be able to handle it; I should apologize to my friends for what Frank said to them yesterday.
8. Constant need for others' approval in order to feel good about self: Just tell me what you want from me and I'll do it if it will make you happy; I'll never be able to show my face around here again if I don't get accepted to the university; Maybe if I become a doctor like my dad, he'll be proud of me.
9. Difficulty making decisions: I can't decide, I don't want to make mistakes; When I have to make hard choices, my mind just freezes up and my brain feels numb and paralyzed.
10. Feeling powerless, as if nothing I do makes any difference: It's a no win situation. No matter what I do, I lose; What's the point in putting myself out, no one will remember.
11. A basic sense of shame and low self-esteem: When I make a mistake, it's just another example of what a worthless person I really am; I come from a screwed up family, so there must be something wrong with me.
12. Avoidance of conflict: If I tell him how I feel, he might leave me; I have to act as if I agree or they will get angry at me.

*Reviewed 1/07*