

Many of us deal with conflicts and feelings of emptiness that began in our childhood. Many of us were raised in families where compulsive addictive behaviors were practiced, where our parents were workaholics or perfectionists, where there was compulsive spending, rage-aholism, etc. In some cases there has existed drug or alcohol abuse. Some of us have lived with sexual abuse, a most hideous form of compulsion.

Whatever our situation, we are here today because we have finally decided to admit that we are “codependent,” dependent on other fallible mortals, instead of depending directly upon God. We are beginning to realize that we have used others by either being too dependent on them, or keeping them too dependent on us, to give us a sense of identity, self-worth, or a reason for living.

Thus we have learned to endure life rather than to live life. Through applying the twelve principles found in the steps of *Heart t' Heart* in our daily lives and relationships, both present and past, we begin to experience a new freedom from this destructive imbalanced form of addiction to others. Each of us is growing at our own individual rate as we learn to relate correctly with our Heavenly Father and Savior. We in *Heart t' Heart* have come to realize that our relationship with God is the most important one of all and must be functioning well before any other relationship will function.

No matter how traumatic your past or despairing your present may feel, there is hope for a new way of life. Through living these principles and concepts, we can guarantee you will find the strength within to be what God intended you to be – precious and free.

Ht'Heart The Twelve Steps of *Heart t' Heart*

1. We admitted we were powerless over compulsive addictive behaviors* – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others still suffering from the effects of compulsive behaviors and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

*Any problem may be inserted here, in place of “compulsive addictive behaviors.”

Permission to use the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by A.A. World Services, Inc.

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Speaking *Ht'Heart* on Codependency

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Typical Characteristics of Codependents

Codependency, while not new to "anonymous" circles, has recently come into its own. This is largely due to the efforts of Melody Beattie and others, who after experiencing recovery from what they thought was their original addiction, discovered there was still something more from which to heal. Many people feel, and those of us at Heart t' Heart agree, that codependency is actually the original "dis-ease" or addiction that caused us to become involved in other compulsive/addictive behaviors.

Fortunately (and we thank the grace of God for this), the twelve steps that help us heal from other negative behaviors also offer healing from this one. Simply defined, codependency is an addiction to other people – their thoughts, feelings and actions. Another definition (more common in LDS and other religious circles) is fearing man more than God. Listed below are some of the typical characteristics of codependents.

1. We assume responsibility for other's feelings and/or choices.
2. We have difficulty identifying our own feelings: happiness, pain, anger, joy, sadness, loneliness, etc.
3. We have difficulty expressing our feelings.
4. We tend to be fearful that our feelings or needs will be belittled or rejected by others.
5. We tend to minimize, alter or even deny the truth about our feeling or needs.
6. We tend to put other's feelings and needs ahead of our own, not allowing there to be a healthy balance with our feelings and needs.
7. Our fear of other's feelings (especially anger) determines what we say and do.
8. Our serenity and attention is determined by how others are feeling or by what they're doing.
9. We do not realize that feelings are not good or bad, that they just are.
10. We question or ignore our own conscience, our own values, in order to connect with significant others – trusting and obeying their feelings or opinions more than our own.
11. Other people's actions or desires tend to determine how we respond or react.
12. Our sense of self-worth is based on other/outer influences instead of on our personal witness of God's love and esteem for us.
13. We have difficulty making decisions and are frightened of being wrong or making a mistake.
14. We are perfectionistic and place too many expectations on ourselves and others.
15. We are not comfortable acknowledging good things about ourselves and tend to judge everything we do, think, or say as not being good enough.
16. We do not know that it is okay to be vulnerable and find it difficult, almost impossible, to ask for help.
17. We do not know that it is okay to talk about problems outside the family, thus we leave ourselves and our families stranded in the troubles they are experiencing.
18. We are steadfastly loyal – even when that loyalty is unjustified and often personally harmful to us.
19. We have to be needed in order to have a relationship with others.

Codependency

An Age Old Problem

Many people puzzle at this newly coined concept of codependency and wonder why, if it is such a universal malady, it is not addressed in the scriptures. The fact is that "codependency" or in other words, fearing (respecting) men (others) more than God, is one of the most prevalent issues addressed in the scriptures. Even the single most difficult and painful form of codependency, recovery from the almost unconscious influence (traditions) of our parents, is spoken of frequently.

Scripture study clearly shows that codependency is an issue of agency. It is a confusion of boundaries. Where does our stewardship or responsibility end and another person's begin? Just whose salvation do we have the power to work out?

The following is just a partial list of scriptures which examine these issues and supports President Benson's statement that, "We should put God ahead of *everyone else* in our lives." (Italics original. *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 4)

Fearing Man More Than God:

Psalms 3:1-3	Psalms 27: 1, 3
Jeremiah 1:8	2 Nephi 8:7
D&C 3:7	D&C 5:21

Confusion of Boundaries:

Matthew 13:21	Gal. 6:4-5
Alma 29:4	Helaman 14:30-31
Ether 12:37	D & C 1:11

Traditions of Our Parents:

Psalms 27:10	Matthew 19:29
Alma 30:25	Helaman 16:20
D & C 123:7	Moses 6:54