

JOINT EVENT

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Issues and goals in the treatment of dependent personality disorder (co-dependence, or co-dependency)Sam Vaknin^{1,2}¹Southern Federal University, Russia²Centre for International Advanced and Professional Studies (CIAPS), Nigeria

Like dependents (people with dependent personality disorder), co-dependents depend on other people for their emotional gratification and the performance of both inconsequential and crucial daily and psychological (ego) functions. They seek to fuse or merge with their significant others. By becoming one with their intimate partners, codependents are able to actually love themselves by loving others. Co-dependents are needy, demanding, and submissive. They suffer from abandonment anxiety and to avoid being overwhelmed by it they cling to others and act immaturely. These behaviours are intended to elicit protective responses and to safeguard the relationship with their companion or mate upon whom they depend. Co-dependents appear to be impervious to abuse. No matter how badly mistreated, they remain committed. In extreme co-dependence, this fusion and merger with the significant other lead to in-house stalking as the co-dependent strives to preserve the integrity and cohesion of her personality and the representations of her loved ones within it. This is where the “co” in co-dependence comes into play. By accepting the role of victims, codependents seek to control their abusers and manipulate them. It is a Danse Macabre in which both members of the dyad collaborate. The co-dependent sometimes claims to pity her abuser and cast herself in the grandiose roles of his saviour and redeemer. Her overwhelming empathy imprisons the codependent in these dysfunctional relationships and she feels guilt either because she believes that she had driven the abuser to maltreat her or because she contemplates abandoning him.

Biography

Sam Vaknin is the author of "Malignant Self-love: Narcissism Revisited" and other books about personality disorders. His work is cited in hundreds of books and dozens of academic papers. He is Visiting Professor of Psychology, Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia and Professor of Finance and Psychology in CIAPS (Centre for International Advanced and Professional Studies). He spent the past 6 years developing a treatment modality for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Over the years, with volunteers, it was found to be effective with clients suffering from a major depressive episode as well.

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