



**EHN CANADA**

# Working with Codependency

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# Presentation Objectives

- Definition of codependency
- Identify the symptoms and characteristics of the codependent relationship
- Prodependence (a model coined by Dr. Rob Weiss)
- How to develop healthy behaviours
- How to set and maintain healthy boundaries
- Importance of self care / recognizing your own needs
- Questions and answers

# Codependence Defined

Codependence is a trauma-based theory of human dependency which, by definition, states that those who partner with an active addict do so as a form of trauma repetition—putting themselves in a relationship where the other person’s needs will eventually exceed and overwhelm their own. These caretakers, by definition, demonstrate their trauma-based low self-esteem and desperate desire for approval by seeking out and becoming deeply attached to such troubled people, feeling that they can resolve the addict’s problems. There can be excessive emotional or psychological reliance on a partner, typically one who requires support on account of an illness or addiction.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awH0vvg1X1o>



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# Characteristics of Codependency

- Caretaking
- Low Self Worth
- Repression
- Obsession Controlling
- Denial
- Dependency
- Poor Communication
- Weak Boundaries
- Lack Of Trust
- Sex Problems

(Codependent No More – Melodie Beattie)



# Five Core Symptoms of Codependence

Core Symptom 1: Difficulty Experiencing Appropriate Levels of Self Esteem

Core Symptom 2: Difficulty Setting Functional Boundaries

Core Symptom 3: Difficulty Owning Our Own Reality

Core Symptom 4: Difficulty Acknowledging and Meeting Our Own Needs and Wants and Being Interdependent on Others

Core Symptom 5: Difficulty Experiencing and Expressing our Reality Moderately

(Facing Codependence – Pia Mellody)



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# Boundaries

Loved Ones of Addicts Find themselves doing one or more of the following:

- Taking care of things that are the addict's responsibility, not theirs
- Doing things they don't want to do because they feel like they have no choice
- Meeting the addict's needs without the addict asking for help
- Forcing their assistance on the addict, even when that assistance is not wanted or needed
- Giving and giving but never receiving

(Prodependence by Robert Weiss)



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# Boundaries (continued)

- Focusing more on the problems of the addict than on their own problems
- Focusing more on the feelings of the addict than on their own feelings
- Making excuses for and/or covering up the problematic behaviour of the addict
- Becoming indispensable to the addict as a way of keeping the addict close
- Trying to control the addicts' behaviour as a way of keeping the addict safe



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# Prodependence Defined

*Prodependence* is an attachment-based theory of human dependency which, by definition, states that those who partner with an active addict are loving people who may be caught in circumstances beyond their ability to healthfully cope.

Moreover, their desire to help the addict and all related actions toward helping the addict demonstrate nothing more than a normal and healthy attempt to remain connected to a failing loved one while facing extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

(Prodependence by Robert Weiss)



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# Prodependency

- Describes attachment relationships that are healthfully interdependent
- One person's strengths support the vulnerabilities of the other and vice versa
- Challenges the codependence model which can feel negative for many caregiving loved ones of addicts, as if the caregiver is responsible for the addiction because he or she is loving too much, or not in the right way, or for selfish reasons

(Prodependence by Robert Weiss)



# Prodependence approach

- Celebrates and takes healthful advantage of a caregiving loved one's need and willingness to support and stay connected with an addict
- There is no shame or blame, no sense of being wrong, no language that pathologizes the caregiving loved one
- Instead there is recognition for effort given, plus hope and useful instruction for healing

(Prodependence by Robert Weiss)



# Prodependence as a Model

Prodependence is a new model for treating loved ones of addicts

- takes a vastly different approach, looking at addiction not from a trauma perspective, but from an attachment perspective.
- Instead of viewing the loved ones of addicts as the inevitable victims of a traumatic past that has caught up with them and is now repeating itself in their adult lives—mostly in their relationship with the addict they're paired with, prodependence views them as valiant individuals struggling to love another person even in the face of addiction.
- With prodependence, there is no shame or blame, no sense of being wrong, no language that pathologizes the caregiving loved one. Instead, there is recognition for effort given, plus hope and useful instruction for healing.

(Prodependence by Robert Weiss)



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# Codependent versus Prodependent

## Traits (Pro)

Codependent Traits	Prodependent Traits
Enmeshed	Deeply Involved
Externally Focused	Concerned about the welfare of others
Enabling	Supporting
Fearful	Concerned
Lacking healthy boundaries	Eager to care for a loved one
Can't say no	Chooses to say yes
Obsessed with the addiction	Determined to protect the addict and family



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# Codependent versus Prodependent

## Traits (Pro)

Codependent Traits	Prodependent Traits
Living in Denial	Unwilling to give up on loved one
Angry	Fearful of further loss with no control
Controlling	Trying to be heard
Fearful	Concerned
Hypervigilant	Anticipating problems



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# Prodependent Treatment for Loved Ones of Addicts

- Assess for mental health pathology (depression, anxiety, PTSD, mood disorders, and the like) and safety of all concerned.
- Validate and celebrate prior attempts to rescue, save, heal, and otherwise help the addict.
- Educate about the nature of addiction and the stress it can place on loved ones.
- Provide ongoing support and encourage group support.
- Identify times and situations where a loved one's actions have led to a less than ideal outcome and redirect toward more effective assistance.
- Work to improve the client's efforts at self-care; exercise, recreation, spirituality, peer support, creativity, etc.
- If, over time, the client seeks deeper understanding of his or her trauma history, that door can be opened, but only after the crisis stage has passed and the client's life is stabilized.

(Prodependence, Dr. Robert Weiss)



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# How to Develop Healthy Behaviours

- Self Reflection on Boundaries that are related to various aspects of a relationship – Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Financial
- Work with a Therapist that can assist you to work on boundaries and self care; look for an open, empathetic individual who will work with you toward your health and well being
- Attend 12 Step Meeting or Groups

# References/Resources

Facing Codependence by Pia Mellody

Breaking Free by Pia Mellody

Codependent No More by Melodie Beattie

Prodependence – Moving Beyond Codependency by Robert Weiss

Alcoholics Anonymous: <https://www.aa.org>

Adult Children of Alcoholics: <https://adultchildren.org/>

SANON: <https://sanon.org/>

Al-Anon: <https://www.al-anon.org>

Codependency Anonymous: <https://codacanada.ca/>



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# Sex & Love Addiction Program

EHN Canada is a leader in the treatment of compulsive sexual behaviours since 2002

**Treatment approach is based on the Recovery Zone Model pioneered by Dr. Patrick Carnes:**

- Led by Certified Sex Addiction Therapists
- 6-week residential program available at our Bellwood (Toronto, ON) and Edgewood (Nanaimo, BC) facilities
- Treat co-occurring addictions, including substance use disorder
- Individual and group therapy
- Programming incorporates CBT and DBT
- Included support for families and partners

**Patients learn:**

- Sexual addiction psychoeducation
- To examine and address triggers and compulsions
- To improve sexual impulse control
- To explore core issues of trauma



# Family Program

Support and education for loved ones

- 3 half-day sessions available online or in-person at a clinic location
- Presentations, workshops, and counselling sessions to help understand the addictive behaviours of a loved one
- Acknowledging the impact of addiction on the family
- Setting healthy boundaries
- Self-care and compassion

Also available:

Specialized couple sessions to address betrayal trauma





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**Thank You!**

Any questions?

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