

Video 39: Misconception of Codependency (Transcript)

written by Wes Penre, July 7, 2018

There are so many terms and labels floating around out there when it comes to narcissistic relationships and on the subject of narcissism in general. It doesn't make it easier because psychology and psychiatry are confused about this as well, in our opinion. Given that neither I nor Ariel has any formal education on either subject, we do have first-hand experiences, and these are what we want to share for the viewer's consideration.

What is an empath? The most common definition of an empath is a person who can easily put him/herself in another person's shoes and understand how that person feels and what he/she is going through; an empath can imagine him/herself being the other person in a given situation, and can consequently feel empathy for the other person. In an emotionally healthy person, this is a high state of awareness because ultimately, we are all ONE, and the empath can tune into that and relatively easy relate to others and understand them. It's only when the empath is experiencing life in a long-term abusive environment that empathy starts getting out of control. The empath's ability is now taken advantage of by the narcissist, who feeds from the empath's caring nature. In his/her usual manner, an empath is trying to put him/herself in the other person's shoes, but when he or she notices that he/she can't relate to the narcissist's way of thinking and manners because it's alien to him/her, he/she tries even harder, and then takes the narcissist closer into him/herself, in order to know the narc better, and the abuser can feed from this. An abused child also often develops empathic and extrasensory abilities by escaping into a "higher" spiritual state, in order to dissociate from the abusive environment. Therefore, such a child develops the ability to understand others, based on that this empath recognizes his or her own wounds and vulnerabilities in the other person.

Now, let's take a look at the term "codependency." This is where it's starting to get a little shady and in fact, quite confusing. The psychiatric

definition of codependency is someone who is excessively needy and dependent on others (ref: DSM-5). However, in the latest “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual fifth addition” (DSM-5), codependency is no longer listed as a psychiatric disorder and has been replaced with “Dependent Personality Disorder” (DPD). It was found that someone who is codependent often acts this way in a certain relationship, but might not act the same way in another, while someone with DPD is always acting needy and dependent on others, regardless of whom they are with. The first problem with this is all the labels, and how the psychiatric field is quick to label symptoms as disorders. Something to consider here as well is that a great many people who become psychologists and psychiatrists are either narcissists or “codependents,” and they are wittingly or unwittingly drawn to this field of work in order to understand themselves better. There is nothing wrong with that, but if they are not aware of this, it colors and limits their research, and if they don’t have the full understanding because of their own inability to address their own issues, they project themselves onto their clients. Once you’re diagnosed with a disorder, you are told that something is wrong with you, and you’re put in a box with certain parameters that are determined by those who claim to have a full understanding of the “**disorder.**”

All these labels are just different shades of the same thing—it all originates in childhood abuse—it just depends upon the abused child’s reaction to the abuse what is going to be his or her life path. Therefore, Codependency (CD) and Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD), the way we’ve discussed them so far in this video, are still one and the same, and it’s not a disorder; just a coping mechanism that anyone in an abusive situation develops.

Consequently, both DPD and CD are coping mechanisms and not illnesses or disorders in the sense the psychiatric field defines illness and disorder. It is very important to emphasize this because if we don’t understand that, little healing will take place. Similar to how psychiatry wants to put people’s emotional states in boxes and accordingly divide and separate things even more, those who have suffered through narc abuse, or are currently suffering through it, are now trying to put themselves in one of these boxes. “Am I an empath or a codependent?”

Some codependents are manipulative in order to get what they want—attention or otherwise, but not all of them are, regardless of what professionals and some life coaches say. Many of them are instead withdrawn, quiet, and solitary, in order to not affect others with their mood swings and insecurities. They don't want to be a burden to others and affect other people's lives with their own "negative" emotions. It's all just about different coping mechanisms for the same kind of abuse—narcissistic abuse.

Another misconception we've seen is on the subject how to set up healthy boundaries. We have seen how people think that setting up boundaries also means that we should only think of ourselves and not get involved in other people's emotions. If someone has a problem, it's his/her problem, not ours, so we should leave that person alone and not give him/her our advice and support. We are here to develop our own selves, and because the other person is on a personal path, he/she shouldn't be interfered with.

This leads to more separation. Being human on this planet means, first of all, that we all have codependency in us, we are all empaths, and that we all are capable of feeling compassion, unless we are narcissists or score very high on the narcissistic scale. Even in the latter case, we inhabit all these traits, although deeply suppressed. Putting labels on us separates and fragments us even more. Ariel and I are aware of that we need to use words in order for us all to have some common understanding of things, and words sometimes include labels, but it's very important to understand that these labels are only there to explain a certain trait in human behavior and not to put people in a certain category.

Although it's true that we are on our own personal spiritual path, we are also ONE, and by helping another, we also help ourselves. It doesn't mean we should solve other people's problems, but it's quite appropriate to assist someone in need, if that person calls for it or otherwise shows that he/she needs support and assistance. This is where compassion comes into play. An empath feels compassion towards his/her fellow man, while someone who is not empathic at all does not. That doesn't mean that the non-empathic person has stronger boundaries; it only

means that this person doesn't care about others—he or she has no compassion and is therefore either a narcissist or someone high on the narcissistic scale, as discussed **above**.

To expand on the term codependency and add the term dependency to this discussion as well; in a narcissistic relationship, a narcissist and his/her target are both codependent. The narcissist depends on his/her target in order to get supply, and in terms of achieving this, the narcissist needs the targeted person to become dependent on him/her—it can be financially or otherwise. Thus, a codependent relationship is formed. However, when such a relationship breaks up, the target might meet someone else, who is very empathic and thus, not a narcissist, and his or her codependency will diminish and eventually even disappear by itself in some cases. And this brings us to “dependency,” which is also being put in a negative light.

“Dependency” doesn't need to be something negative, either. What determines whether a relationship is based on negative or positive dependency is based on the dynamic of the relationship. If one or both parties are negatively affected by the dependency on each other, it is not a healthy relationship, but if both parties are getting enhanced from such a relationship, it is healthy. Teal Swan, in her video, “Codependency Has Nothing To Do With Dependency,” takes an example of how she's met couples who can be together for many, many years 24/7 and constantly be enhanced by each other's presence, while others can't spend more than a short time with each other, before they need to get away from each other's immediate presence. In the former relationship, which also totally corresponds with Ariel's and my relationship, is dependency a negative thing or a positive thing?

So, why do we bring up this? We think it's important that we don't put each other inside boxes and put too many labels on things, because if we do, we limit ourselves into believing that there is something wrong with us and that we are supposed to act and react according to what has been termed under the umbrella of a certain label, when it's all just emotional reactions and coping mechanisms for what is at the bottom of the absolute majority of all so-called psychiatric “disorders;” narcissistic

abuse! We are either a narcissist or a target for one or many of them. If you are a narcissist, you don't respond to therapy, and you don't genuinely change, regardless of your environment. In spite of how loving and caring the environment is, a narcissist always sees a threat to his or her survival. No love and compassion from others can change a narcissist. A codependent can, with the correct guidance, always change. That's the difference. We are only codependent as long as we are in a narcissistic/codependent environment or relationship. Once we break out of it and change environment, we are no longer codependent but on our path to healing. We could call such a person a "healing codependent," which would be more accurate. When Ariel and I talk about codependents, we will refer to those who are still in an abusive relationship or are trying to break out.