

Enabling Behavior? Are you being held hostage by your loved one's addiction?

Enabling behavior is born out of our instinct for love. It's only natural to want to help someone we love, but when it comes to certain problems -helping is like throwing a match on a pool of gas.



- Enabling behavior means something positive. It's our natural instinct to reach out and help someone we love when they are down or having problems.
- However, when we apply it to certain problems in living - addiction, chronic financial trouble, codependency, certain forms of chronic depression -- *enabling behaviors have the reverse effect of what is intended.*

Definition of Enabling: In the true sense of the word, to enable is *to supply with the means, knowledge, or opportunity to be or do something -to make feasible or possible.*

Can Am Recovery Resources bring awareness by educating individuals and families that are suffering from “cycle of addictive coping skills”, to improve relationships to gain constructive communication, personal healing and to create healthy boundaries. Enabling is defined in an unhealthy relationship as "to make

possible; to make able." Typically family members and friends only want to help their loved one who is suffering from addiction. However, the way they help the untreated person in their life can be counterproductive, damaging. Often they are unaware they are even doing it. Examples of enabling include:

- Overlooking the problem that their loved one is suffering from addiction and not doing anything about it.
- Giving money to the friend or family member who suffers with addiction.
- Providing assistance when the addict asks for help in situations they got themselves into from using drugs or alcohol.
- Being in denial when the addict coaxes and manipulates their family.
- Being in denial or unaware of drug seeking behavior.

Enabling Symptoms include: Controlling behavior, distrust, perfectionism, avoidance of feelings, intimacy problems, care-taking behavior, hyper vigilance, denial, and physical illness related to stress. It is believed that we become codependent through living in systems (families) with rules that hinder development, flexibility and spontaneity. Some general rules in families that may contribute to codependency are;

- It's not okay to talk about problems
- Don't trust your instincts or other people
- Unpleasant feelings should not be openly expressed
- Keep your feelings to yourself
- Communication is best when it is indirect
- Use another family member as a messenger between two others
- Always be good, strong, right and perfect - or at least act it
- Make us proud beyond realistic expectations
- Don't be selfish
- Do as I say, not as I do
- It's not okay to be playful
- It's not okay to shine or excel too much



- Do not rock the boat
- Disaster is always lurking just around the corner, so tread lightly
- Guard the family secrets
- You should feel guilty or scared to say "no"
- Pretend there are no problems
- Nice people are boring
- If we disagree with each other, we are attacking or abandoning each other
- Control others by manipulating with threats, fear, guilt or pity
- If you need attention, be overly dramatic to get it
- Set off others' emotional temperatures to see how you feel
- If you control things and people you will be safe

When “loving too much” becomes hostage taking by loved ones!!

- Repeatedly bailing them out of jail, financial problems and/or other "tight spots" Giving them "one more chance" - then another and another
- Ignoring the problem - because they get defensive when you bring it up or your hope that it will magically go away
- Joining them in the behavior when you know they have a problem with it - Drinking, gambling, etc.,
- Joining them in blaming others - for their own feelings, problems, and misfortunes
- Accepting their justifications, excuses and rationalizations - "I'm destroying myself with alcohol because I'm depressed".
- Avoiding problems - keeping the peace, believing a lack of conflict will help
- Doing for them what they should be able to do for themselves -
- Softening or removing the natural consequences of the problem behavior
- Trying to "fix" them or their problem
- Repeatedly coming to the "Rescue"
- Trying to control them or their problem

Addiction and Codependent Relationship - Match your signs of Enabling?

Early Stage:



- Relief Using or Enabling - Comfort eating, spending, working or "helping" someone with their problem in order to avoid an internal focus and experience the "payoff".
- Increase in Tolerance - for the behaviors of the problem person.
- Preoccupation - with the problem person or persons
- Loss of Control - over emotions or behavior (Excessive eating, yelling at the kids)
- Continued Use (of enabling behavior) Despite Serious Negative Consequences - to yourself as well as them

Middle or "Crucial" Stage:

- Family Problems - Drama Triangle or a variation of it that I like to call the "Punishment/Forgiveness Cycle"
- Social Problems - Embarrassment, avoiding parties where they may be "too much temptation" for your partner.
- Emotional Problems - Depression, anxiety, chronic stress
- Financial Problems
- Legal Problems - Domestic disturbances
- Occupational or Academic Problems - Loss of concentration due to preoccupation with the problem person or persons

Late or "Chronic" Stage:

- Physical Deterioration - headaches, stomach problems, stress disorders, etc.
- Serious Physical Withdrawal Syndrome - cannot stay away after a break-up or separation
- Obsession - preoccupation increases until it takes the majority of your thoughts
- Loss of Social Supports - stop seeing friends and begin to isolate, other people give up trying to get you to see what you are doing
- Collapse of the Alibi System - can no longer make excuses for yourself OR the problem person
- Drinking, Using Prescription Meds, Eating, Working, etc. to keep functioning or "feel normal"