



Karen Gardinier

Codependency & Control



By Karen Gardinier



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Codependency and control are remarkably similar. If you are familiar with codependency at all you know it can be tough. In fact, people who suffer from codependency often suffer as much as the Alcoholic/Addict, if not more. The actions and consequences of the Alcoholic/Addict are blatantly apparent to all involved. With codependency it is much different. It is difficult to see the actions of the codependent however, the consequences are very apparent to everyone. You might not be able to see the consequences, but you most definitely will feel them.

Your actions may seem like helping, caring, unselfish concern for others, but when your actions do not create the results and or responses you expected, then you feel terrible. You may feel angry, or you may feel used and betrayed. You may feel like wielding more control to let everyone know you are in charge or you may become the victim in attempts to get others reaction.... whatever reaction that might be. Any reaction is better than no reaction.

It is impossible to see it in yourself. These types of relationships usually have a long history. I will give you an example. I met somebody who was trying to take a stand on his codependency. He was determined to do things differently with his son, an addict. He a doctor, an awfully expensive doctor, to draft up a contract between he and his son who was a chronic relapser. It was extremely specific about what he was going to do, and what the son was going to do. In a nutshell, the father had set up his part to be about providing the money and his son to stay sober.

The father contacted me and had asked me if I would join this meeting. He wanted me to go over the contract and join him and the Doctor in confronting his son with the contract aka. They had a couple of other specialists in the field that they wanted to have present as well. They were going to have this meeting orchestrated to tough love this guy into sobriety.

I declined. I explained to the father that this was not helpful at all. This was just a different way to control his son dressed up in a contract. I pointed out that if money could have fixed this problem it would of years ago. I pointed out that his son was forty years old, an adult. Enough already. I explained that the contract seemed to be more for himself than his son. A way to relieve some guilt.



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I explained if he really wanted out of this codependent toxic relationship he needed to walk away. I told him that if he needed to stop helping and let his son decide what he wanted to do and suffer the consequences of those decisions. I knew this would be too difficult to just stop helping after he had set up this dependency years ago. So I suggested he back up slowly, He could inform his son that he would continue to help for 30 more days, pay for his rent for 30 days, or whatever it was he was paying for, his medical, his telephone, whatever it was he was helping with, do it for 30 days. Perhaps he felt he needed to give him 60 days or 90 days, whatever amount of time made him more comfortable. Go ahead and pay for that for that time. Then he should tell his son that he is paying for that amount of time and then he is done. That is it. He is on his own. Period. Whether he gets sober or not. No strings attached. "Listen, I'm paying for these 90 more days. And you are done. That is it, you're on your own. Do not call me for anything. Do not ask me for anything. We're done." It is paid for.

I also suggested he paid for those things directly. Do not pay the alcoholic to pay them. Pay the landlord directly, or AT&T directly, or whoever it is, do not give the money for the addict to pay out. You will be eliminating possible resentments and setting up a possible Victim scenario again.

You decide whatever makes you feel alright about ending this cycle of codependency. Perhaps you would rather decrease the help slowly like paying 100% of his bills the first 30 days and then paying 75% of his bills the second month, 50% the third month, 25% the 4th month....you get it. You decide what makes you feel comfortable and that makes it okay, because you must be okay with whatever is going to happen.

When that time frame is over then that is it. Block their number. Walk away. That is it. They are on their own. I am not talking about leaving a kid in the lurch. I am talking about a forty-year-old man with a wife and kids taking care of his family. He needs to man up and do what he must do. There is no reason at all for someone to get sober if someone is going to take care of them.

This will not be easy for the alcoholic-addict, and they are going to get mad or upset. Just remember that you are the one that set this up this financial dependence, most likely years earlier, and now you want out. You are upset and disappointed that they are taking your money but not acting the way you want.



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Can you see the difference in the two options for the son? Can you see the codependency and the control? The contract was an attempt to try to get the son to do what he wanted for a cash payoff. The suggestion I made was a decision, a plan and follow through regardless of what the son decided to do.

A contract or an ultimatum is going to set up resentments. The son will most likely not be able to stay sober. The father will be angry. The best course of action is love. It will look like, I love you. I am going to do this for 30 more days, 60 more days, maybe 30 minutes, maybe 30 seconds. I am done. Done is done. You can put lipstick on a pig, it is still a pig. If you are done, and if it's killing you, walk away. Your child is an adult. Your spouse is an adult. There are resources available. They can get help. Someone else can help them. If you are killing yourself trying to help someone, back up, quickly. Let God in. Let the universe in. Someone else runs the show.

If you are controlling this situation, if you are walking around with a plan of how your tough love is going to cure this person, you do not get-tough love. You do not get it. It is difficult.

It takes a lot of God to do this, a lot of support. If you need support, call your local Al-Anon. There is a meeting somewhere today in your neighborhood. Google it, al-anon.org. Just Google Al-Anon, Nar-Anon. Go to a meeting today. Those people will save your life. And if you are done, you're done. It could be the thing that saves your alcoholic-addict's life. I know that sounds crazy. I know you think that there is no way someone can get sober without your help, but they do it every day. People all around the world are getting sober, and they do not even know you. So, the same can go for your loved one.