

CO-DEPENDENCY



- You might want to think about re-examining when you start referring to friends as “caseloads”
 - **VERONICA KAMERLING - EXPERIENCED CARER**

TITLE OF PRESENTATION

- “Is Co-dependency in Families a Potential Barrier to Service User Recovery and a Good Relationship with Professionals?”

AIMS OF THE PRESENTATION

- To understand what co-dependency is
- Why families may become co-dependent
- To share carer and service user perspectives on how damaging co-dependency can be
- How professionals might view co-dependent families
- How might professionals manage co-dependent families?

ABOUT ME

- Mother of 3 children
- 1 son Henri 42 and 2 daughters
Henrietta 40 and Vanessa 38
- Both daughters had an Eating Disorder
- My late brother had schizophrenia
- Late husband had colonic cancer
- Eating Disorders & Carers

MY WORK

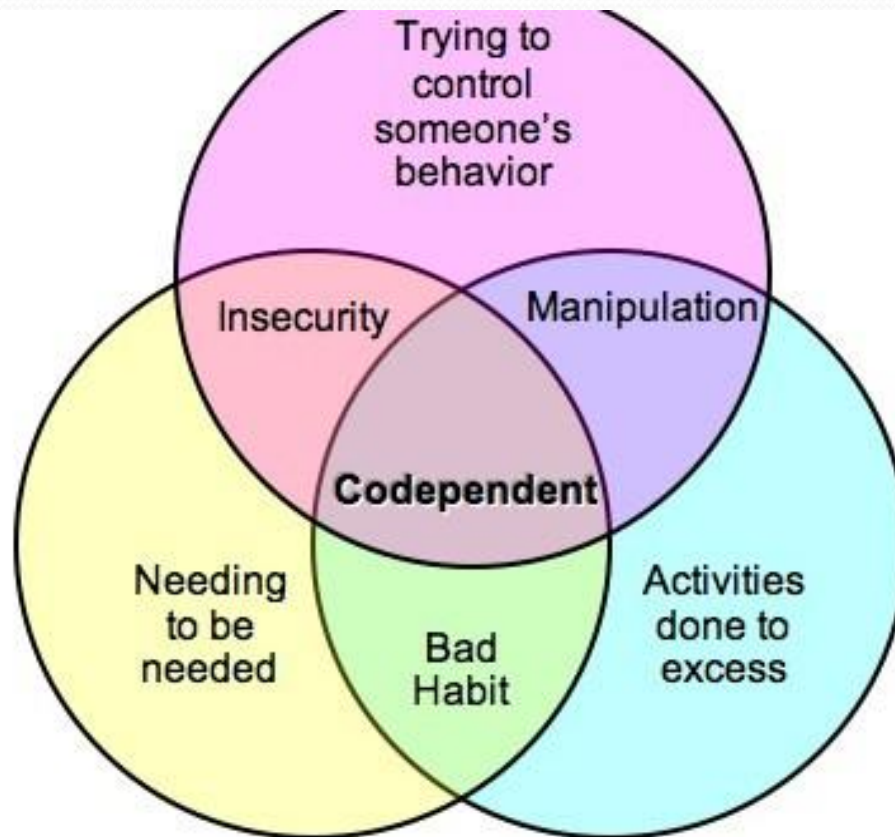
- Royal College of Psychiatrists QED-Aims-PEC - ED Exec
- Central and North West London Trust Carers Council
- Care Quality & Performance group at ED clinic
- Training Professionals Carers & Service Users
- Various Advisory Groups

MY FAMILY



A DEFINITION OF CO-DEPENDENCY

- “Co-dependency can be defined as any relationship in which two people become so invested in each other that they can’t function independently anymore. Your mood, happiness and identity are defined by the other person
- In a co-dependent relationship there is usually one person who is more passive and can’t make decisions for themselves and a more dominant personality who gets reward and satisfaction from controlling the other person and making decisions about how they will live.”



WHAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF CODEPENDENCE?

- **Interdependence** which is staying true to one self while living harmoniously in the community; having boundaries that are firm yet flexible; and knowing when and how to give help but also knowing when to say no. It is also about the occasional sacrifices where you do over extend yourself to another (i.e. taking care of a sick friend) but do so with consciousness and compassion (not martyrdom) with the knowledge of when to pull back before it negatively affects your own health, family or financial state.

VANESSA'S STORY

- Anorexic at 14
- Treated as inpatient on paediatric unit
- Went as inpatient at Eating Disorder Clinic
- Group/family/individual therapy with good food programme
- Aftercare for 3 years
- Psychotherapist - confidentiality
- Finished school
- Gap year
- Northumbria University
- Found flat job and friends

HENRIETTA'S STORY

- Bulimic/binge eater at 16
- Went to same school as Vanessa
- Obsessive worker- A levels
- Gap year – became very depressed
- University/ France
- Secretarial Course
- Flat and job
- Life was chaotic – suicide attempt

HOW DID MUMS' CO-DEPENDENCY MANIFEST ITSELF? HENRIETTA IN HER OWN WORDS

- Talking about the illness all the time, how terrible I felt. Was allowed to be very self piteous and manipulative.
- Never let me suffer the full consequences of my actions
- If I binged, or felt depressed I would spend days lying around in bed, aimlessly watching the TV
- Financially bailing me out with debts/overdraft
- Funding things such as personal trainers etc which I believed would get me better.
- Sorting out social events with friends, courses, jobs etc. Rather than being a gentle support, both she and my father became a complete crutch and it was though I couldn't function without them.
- My mother's own eating habits, her views on weight/shape impacted on me.

HENRIETTA'S OWN WORDS

- Mum's compulsive helping was literally smothering me and undermining any chance I had of getting into recovery.
- If I was not allowed to follow my own path and make my own mistakes I would never learn.
- It had massively impacted on my self esteem and my ability to develop my own identity. I wasn't able to feel I had achieved anything for myself.

HENRIETTA & FIRST STEPS TO RECOVERY

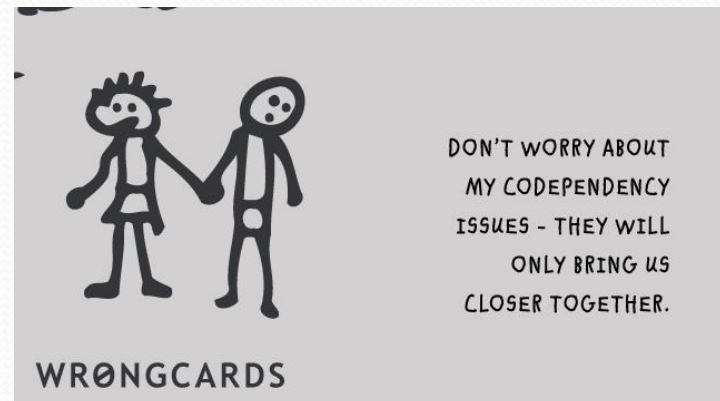
- Over the years, I have been able to identify a number of things which helped me to get into recovery.
- First and foremost this began with addressing my relationship with my family, in particular my mother which had really broken down by this stage.
- My treatment centre suggested opening up the lines of communication in the form of a letter.
- I wrote a letter to mummy spelling out how I felt about our relationship, warts and all. Of course, I felt guilty and knew it would be very painful for but I had to do it for me and for her.
- I had to point out that I needed to be free to make my own choices without being judged or criticised. I needed to disentangle myself from her.

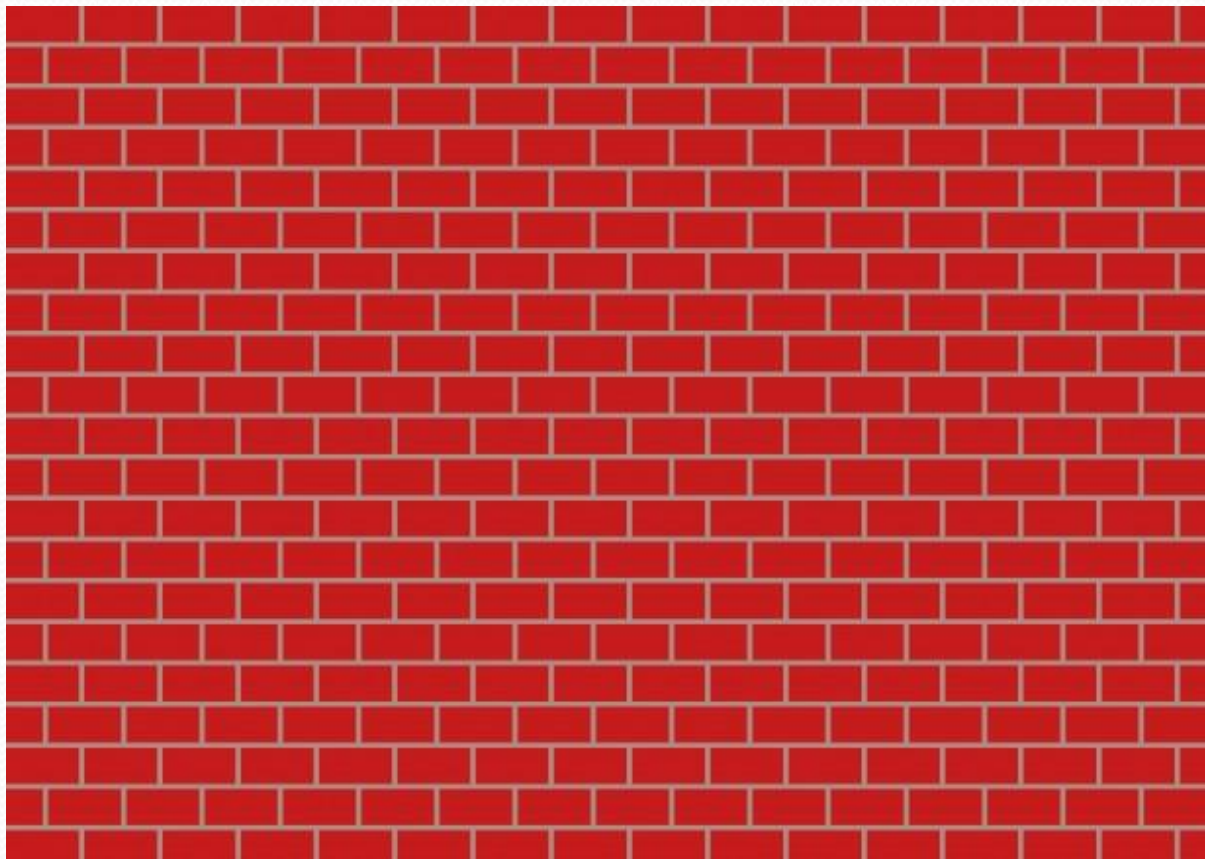
PROFESSIONAL RESPONSES

- How do you react?
- Is it too big a subject to bring up?
- Nervous about saying anything to Carers as regards letting go?
- Do professionals become co-dependent on those they are looking after?

CARERS' RESPONSES TO PROFESSIONALS

- One of fury
- I know how to look after my own daughter
- I can't just stop looking after my daughter
- It is all going fine here
- We understand each other – she is my best friend!
- If I don't do this she will not eat and then she will die





EXERCISE

- As professionals how do you work with families when you recognise that they may be co-dependent or behaving in a co-dependent manner?
- Is there a need to say something?
- What would you say?
- How would you say it?
- What do you think works and why?

EXERCISE

- A family member is telling you that she is at her wits end as she is doing everything to try and help her daughter including looking for the best treatment centres the best jobs and somewhere to live.
- She never enjoys anything with the rest of the family who are quite upset with the amount of time and attention given to the daughter with the mental illness.
- For all her helping the daughter does not seem to be getting any better.

WHAT MAKES SOME OF US CO-DEPENDENT?

- Something in our early childhood
- Co-dependents may have been neglected, blamed, abused, betrayed, or rejected in childhood, and these traumas get reactivated by current events
- OR
- Due to your lives being so entwined or living at close proximity with someone due to your caring role could mean you become co-dependent.
- Low self-esteem



"It goes back to being pulled out of the hat."

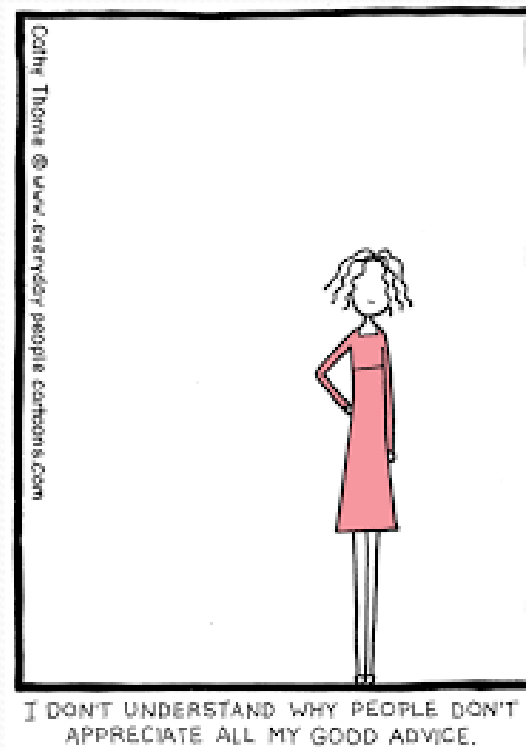
THINGS WE FOUND HELPFUL

- Letter from Henrietta
- Insistence from the Clinic that Henrietta and I didn't see each other for awhile although it was very painful
- Suggesting that I do my own treatment programme for co-dependency
- Doing my own programme alongside Henrietta

KEY POINTS

- The damage I was doing in terms of Henrietta's recovery
- How much better I felt having done my own treatment
- How damaging co-dependency was to both the relationship with my daughters and also with my friends
- How it has brought the family together in a healthy way
- Understanding that there was a need to take risks in changing one's behaviour
- Working collaboratively can lead to good recovery outcomes

- I don't understand why people don't appreciate all my good advice!



“Is Co-dependency in Families a Potential Barrier to Service User Recovery and a Good Relationship with Professionals?”


“IF NOTHING CHANGES THEN NOTHING CHANGES”






QUOTE

- **"Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations"**

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- Co-dependency is the lack of having a life
 - A Co-dependent does not have a life
 - A Co-dependent in recovery is getting a life
 - A recovered Co-dependent has a life
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- Ref: Melody Beattie

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- What is the one thing you will take away from this afternoon that has been helpful?
 - Give me one or two things that you will do differently after this morning

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING



- Veronica Kamerling
- Eating Disorders & Carers
- Mobile: 07733 260475
- veronica@talktalkbusiness.net