



**Emotional  
Dependency  
or  
Emotional Freedom**

## **What Is Emotional Dependency?**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Are you emotionally dependent? You might want to go through this checklist to find out.

I cannot feel lovable and worthy without another's approval.

I need a lot of attention from certain people to feel that I am okay.

I don't trust my own feelings. I need others to validate my feelings.

I am afraid of rejection. I isolate, try to be perfect, agree with others, give myself up or shut down, along with many other things, to avoid rejection.

I am afraid to be alone.

I often feel empty inside.

I am often anxious around others.

I am often jealous in my relationships.

I take others' uncaring behavior toward me personally.

I get angry when others do what they want to do instead of what I want them to do.

People have told me that I am too needy.

I don't know what to do with myself when I'm not around others.

I'm fine when I'm alone, but I get tense and anxious around others.

I often find myself blaming others for my feelings - my anger, emptiness, insecurity, anxiety and so on.

I believe that my good feelings should come from someone else loving me.

I believe that my safety and security should come from someone else.

\_\_\_I can't have fun unless I'm with someone else who knows how to have fun.

\_\_\_I am often anxious or depressed, guilty or shamed, hurt or angry.

This is certainly not a complete list, but you get the idea. You are emotionally dependent when you are not taking full, 100% responsibility for your own feelings - compassionately nurturing your life feelings of loneliness, helplessness over others, heartache, heartbreak, sorrow and grief - and for not learning about how you are treating yourself and what you are telling yourself that is causing your wounded feelings of anxiety, depression, victim hurt, guilt, shame, anger, jealousy and so on. You are emotionally dependent when you are not defining your own inner worth - instead, making others' approval and attention responsible for your sense of worth.

When you are not taking responsibility for your own feelings and for defining your own worth, then you are dependent upon others to do this for you. This is being a victim of others' choices. This is emotional dependency.

The opposite of emotional dependency is emotional freedom. You attain emotional freedom when you decide to learn how to take 100% responsibility for all your own feelings.

Taking responsibility for your own feelings means:

- You compassionately embrace core painful life feelings - loneliness, helplessness over others, heartache, heartbreak, sorrow and grief - and learn how to manage these difficult feelings, so that you don't have to avoid them with your various addictions. As long as you use addictions to avoid these feelings, instead of learning to compassionately manage them, you will continue to be emotionally dependent. These feelings are being caused by others and circumstances, but it is up to you to learn to lovingly manage them without closing down and turning to addictions.
- You learn to explore the feelings that you create with your own thoughts and actions - your anxiety, depression, victim hurt, guilt, shame, anger, jealousy, rage, envy and so on. As long as you believe it is others' choices, rather than what you are telling yourself and how you are treating yourself, that is causing these

feelings, you will be emotionally dependent. You will see yourself as a victim until you take full responsibility for how you are creating these painful feelings with your own self-abandonment.

Being emotionally dependent is a hard way to live. Discover your personal power by learning how to take responsibility for your own feelings, and becoming emotionally free.

## **Moving Beyond Emotional Dependency**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Are you ready to be your own person? Are you ready to move beyond neediness and into emotional freedom? Are you ready to stop needing others to make you feel that you are okay? Are you ready to learn to fill yourself with love and define your own worth?

I hope so! Being emotionally dependent is not fun!

When you are emotionally dependent, you set yourself up to be a victim of others' choices. If others are loving and caring, then you feel good, but if others are rejecting, you feel bad. You place your emotional wellbeing into others' hands, rather than taking responsibility for your own feelings and defining your own worth. Do you really want to go on living this way when there is another, far more fulfilling way to live?

I, like most people, grew up being emotionally dependent. I spent years feeling the anxiety that comes from needing others' approval to feel lovable and worthy. I spent years feeling the inner aloneness that comes from self-abandonment. And I spent years in therapy trying to find out what was wrong and what to do about it. Yet I never learned, in all my reading and all my therapy - and all the years I spent in school getting my Ph.D. in psychology - that the cause of all my problems was self-abandonment.

As I look back on my growing-up years, I see that there was not one person in my life that wasn't role modeling self-abandonment. Both of my parents were deeply emotionally dependent, as were my grandparents, aunts and uncles, and family friends. Nothing in books, in the media, or in school ever taught me how to attain emotional

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freedom - how to take loving care of myself so that I was not emotionally dependent on others' approval, love and attention. I was run by my desire to have control over getting approval and avoiding disapproval.

Life is totally different, now that I know that it is not only my responsibility to give myself the love and approval I used to seek from others, but it is my right and my privilege. I was taught that it was selfish to take loving care of myself - that being a good person meant sacrificing myself and taking care of others instead. I was taught that my good feelings about myself had to come from others' approval. I was told that if I loved and valued myself, I was being arrogant. "Who do you think you are?" Wow, what awful conditioning many of us experience.

I, like you, am a child of Divine Love, here to fully express the love, gifts and talents that I am. Within me - and you - is an incredible soul, the spark of the Divine within me, the part of me - and you - that is created in the image of God. It is my privilege, and yours, to take loving care of this soul - to nurture a healthy body as the house for my soul, to choose the thoughts and actions that create peace and joy within, to not indulge in thoughts and actions that create distress, and to making loving myself and others my highest priority.

When you choose the intention to learn to be loving to yourself and others, rather than the intention to control getting love and avoiding pain, you will learn how to move beyond emotional dependency and into emotional freedom. It is your moment-by-moment intention that determines your level of emotional dependency or your level of emotional freedom.

## **Emotional Dependency or Emotional Responsibility**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Emotional dependency means getting one's good feelings from outside oneself. It means needing to get filled from outside rather than from within. Who or what do you believe is responsible for your emotional wellbeing?

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There are numerous forms of emotional dependency:

- Dependence on substances, such as food, drugs or alcohol, to fill emptiness and take away pain
- Dependence on processes, such as spending, gambling or TV, also to fill emptiness and take away pain
- Dependence on money to define one's worth and adequacy
- Dependence on getting someone's love, approval or attention to feel worthy, adequate, lovable and safe
- Dependence on sex to fill emptiness and feel adequate

When you do not take responsibility for defining your own adequacy and worth or for creating your own inner sense of safety, you will seek to feel adequate, worthy and safe externally. Whatever you do not give to yourself, you may seek from others, or from substances or processes. Emotional dependency is the opposite of taking personal responsibility for your emotional wellbeing. Yet many people have no idea that this is their responsibility, nor do they have any idea how to take this responsibility.

What does it mean to take emotional responsibility, rather than be emotionally dependent?

Primarily, it means recognizing that your feelings of anxiety, depression, guilt, shame, anger, aloneness, jealousy, irritation and so on (what we call in Inner Bonding 'wounded feelings') come from your own thoughts, beliefs and behavior, rather than from others or from circumstances. Once you understand and accept that you create many of your own feelings, rather than your feelings coming from outside yourself, then you can begin to take emotional responsibility.

For example, let's say someone you care about gets angry at you.

If you are emotionally dependent, you may feel rejected and believe that your feelings of rejection are coming from the other's anger. You might also feel hurt, scared, anxious, inadequate, shamed, angry, blaming, or many other difficult feelings, in response to the other's anger. You might try many ways of getting the other person to not be angry, in an effort to feel better.

However, if you are emotionally responsible, you will feel and respond entirely differently. The first thing you might do is to tell yourself that another person's anger has nothing to do with you. Perhaps that person is having a bad day and is taking it out on you. Perhaps that person is feeling hurt or inadequate and is trying to be one-up by putting you one-down. Whatever the reason for the other's anger, it is about them rather than about you. An emotionally responsible person does not take others' behavior personally, knowing that we have no control over others' feelings and behavior, and that we do not cause others to feel and behave the way they do - that others are responsible for their feelings and behavior just as we are for ours.

The next thing an emotionally responsible person might do is move into compassion for the angry person, and open to learning about what is going on with them. For example, you might say, "I don't like your anger, but I am willing to understand what is upsetting you. Would you like to talk about it?" If the person refuses to stop being angry, or if you know ahead of time that this person is not going to open up, then, as an emotionally responsible person, you would take loving action in your own behalf. For example, you might say, "I'm unwilling to be at the other end of your anger. When you are ready to be open with me, let me know. Meanwhile, I'm going to take a walk (or hang up the phone, or leave the restaurant, or go into the other room). An emotionally responsible person gets out of range of attack, rather than trying to change the other person.

Once out of range, the emotionally responsible person goes inside and explores any core painful feelings (feelings that result from others and circumstances rather than from your own thoughts and actions) that might have resulted from the attack. For example, perhaps you are feeling lonely as a result of being attacked, and helpless over the other person. An emotionally responsible person embraces the feelings of loneliness and helplessness with understanding and compassion, holding them just as you would hold a sad child. When you acknowledge and embrace the core feelings of loneliness, heartache, heartbreak, and helplessness over others, you allow them to move through you quickly, so you can move back into peace.

Rather than being a victim of the other's behavior, you have taken emotional responsibility for yourself. Instead of staying stuck in feeling angry, hurt, blaming, afraid, anxious or inadequate, or in the core painful feelings of loneliness, helplessness or heartache, you have moved yourself back into feeling safe and peaceful.

When you realize that your feelings are your responsibility, you can move out of emotional dependency. This will make a huge difference within you and with all of your relationships. Relationships thrive when each person moves out of emotional dependency and into emotional responsibility, and Inner Bonding is a powerful process for doing this.

