












Chapter 8: Dependency and Conformity

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Overview



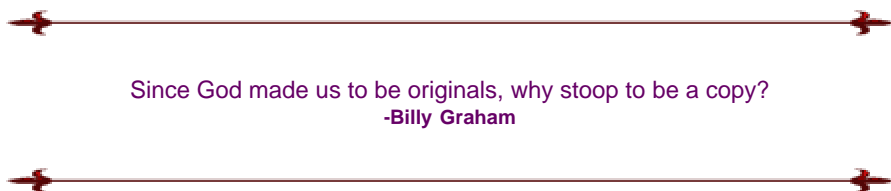
The last four chapters focused on behaviors and emotions that hurt us and demand our attention--bad habits, stress, sadness, and anger. The emotional pain pushes us to do something about these problems. The concerns of this chapter--dependency, conformity, and indecision--may be comfortable and less pressing for change. For example, being nice and doing what we are told or what our friends want us to do may be the easiest course for us to take. It may not be the best, however. Likewise, putting off a decision may be easiest, but we might be better off carrying out a reasonable plan of action. Going with our feelings may be easier than carefully weighing the pros and cons.

So, in some respects, a helpful discussion of dependency may first need to "shake you up" or make you uncomfortable (like chapter 3) before you are motivated to make tough changes in the direction of self-reliance and self-direction. If we unthinkingly accept hand-me-down values or traditions, we should be concerned. If we "go along with the crowd" or drift along without planning our lives, we might benefit from a little worry. If we feel terribly inadequate without a partner, we might cope much better with life if we stayed single long enough to become comfortable with our aloneness and independence.

We will review the studies that show how conforming and obedient we tend to be. It is scary, but there is hope. For instance, humans in developed countries are probably becoming more self-reliant,

independent, self-directed, and tolerant of opposing views. How do we infer this? Several studies have been done (Remley, 1988). In one, sociologists asked mothers in the 1924 and in 1978 what traits they wanted their children to acquire. In 1924, the three most important traits were "loyalty to the church," "strict obedience," and "good manners." All three are aspects of conformity! 54 years later in 1978, mothers considered the most important traits of children to be "independence (thinking sensibly for themselves)," "tolerance (of others)," and "social mindedness (accepting responsibility)." All aspects of autonomy! Keep in mind these are the values of mothers of young children; we don't know how successful those mothers were in teaching those values. But I consider the world moving in the right direction (although autonomy could degenerate into self-centeredness, competitiveness, isolation, and greed). Despite the progress, this chapter will make it clear to you that, as a species, we are still appallingly conforming, passive, and obedient. Perhaps we have just found new masters and Gods.

If you are motivated to be more decisive, assertive, or self-directed, this chapter discusses several useful self-help methods: self-rewarding independence, extinguishing fears of being alone, practicing decision-making and assertiveness, and gaining insight into your passive-dependency. If you consistently subordinate yourself to others, it is likely you will eventually feel inferior and resent them. Don't take the easy way out. It is important to be "your own person."



Definition of terms

Dependency is having needs that you can't--or feel you can't--meet by yourself. An infant is obviously dependent in most ways. Later in life, as a teenager, we may need our parents less and less in several areas: safety, socially, economically, affectionately, etc. Thus, we as adults become more independent although it is normal to always need others in certain ways. But if as children we have overprotective, overcontrolling or authoritarian parents, we are in danger of remaining overly dependent for our age. The *dependent personality* is conforming, compliant, passive, suggestible, sensitive to what others want, yielding to other's opinions, needy to have others like us, and generally pleased to be taken care of. Many of these traits are "nice" but you can clearly see that the dependent personality is designed to encourage others to be protective, controlling, demanding, and nurturing. Thus, dependent people are usually in a reciprocal relationship with someone who is controlling (a "control freak") or

someone who is over-protective (a "rescuer" or codependent). Indeed, that is the essence of a dependent adult: they want to have someone support and take care of them (Bornstein, 1992).

As a generic term, dependency also implies being weak and fearful, indecisive, insecure and somewhat helpless, naive and inexperienced, and overly sensitive. Even these negative traits include many behaviors that suggest putting other's preferences, needs, and wants before your own. That is, it is assumed that you let others guide what you will do because you want and need their approval, control, support, or love. Thus, conformity, compliance, passivity, and non-assertiveness are often major aspects of dependency. These behaviors and attitudes are not powerless; in fact, they affect others powerfully, e.g. being unmotivated irritates people, being helpless and in trouble prompts others to try desperately to help, etc.

Conformity is when we change our behavior or opinions due to real or imagined pressure (not direct requests) from others. This includes behaving in traditional ways or according to cultural or familial customs, so we all conform. *Compliance* is when a direct request is made of us and we agree to do it. *Passivity* is when someone else takes action involving us or against us, and we do not object or resist; we are submissive or inactive. *Non-conformity* or *non-compliance* or *passive resistance* is when we are independent, resist these pressures, and "do our own thing." *Anti-conformity* or *rebelliousness*, on the other hand, is stubbornly doing the opposite of what you are told to do, even if it isn't too smart. For instance, a teenager might avoid homework, stay up late, and use four-letter words to defy his/her parents, not because he/she thought these things were wise or in his/her best interest. The constant rebel is no more free than the conformist.

Due to the enormous attention given to addiction in the last 15 to 20 years, some new concepts have developed. Obviously, a drug addict or an alcoholic is dependent on drugs or alcohol. But, many other out-of-control behaviors have been included in the addictions: gambling, shopping, working, sex, promiscuity, eating, socializing, compulsive cleaning, etc. These are needs that may dominate us and we comply. *Codependency* is another new label, although an old idea. It is when you are addicted to an addict (or any needy person), i.e. you lose yourself (ignore your needs) by becoming dedicated to helping an addict overcome his/her addiction. Codependency develops in stages: first, you may participate with the addict (drinking, shopping, working); then, realizing the strength of the other person's addiction, you go along "just this once" to keep peace; finally, the addict is obviously unable to stop him/herself but you now deny the destructiveness of his/her addiction as well as deny that you have lost control of your life too. The codependent is extremely dependent. They long for approval and recognition of their sacrifices; they do, indeed, tolerate awful circumstances, including abuse; they fear being on their own. They feel constant, dreadful responsibility for controlling someone else (saving them) and they blame themselves (not the addict) when

things go wrong. Sometimes they are sad, sometimes mad; it is a "sick" situation (see later discussion).



For peace of mind, resign as general manager of the universe.
-Larry Eisenberg



How Dependent Are We? What Makes Us So Dependent?



Psychologists have done a lot of research about the attachment of infants to their mother or primary caretaker. Three styles of attachment are described: secure, avoidant (unemotional), and preoccupied (very emotional). The infant/young child's attachment pattern influences the adult's attachment styles. Within adults, the "secure attachment" involves trust and positive, comfortable feelings. The "preoccupied attachment" also involves a lot of emotions, both positive and negative, but the dependent person is often obsessed with maintaining the relationship, using various emotions and actions to keep the lover's/caretaker's attention.

There are two types of "avoidant attachment": (a) the "dismissing avoidant" is self-confident, self-reliant, and doesn't feel the need for a relationship. This unemotional independence is thought to sometimes be a defense against liking or needing someone which would expose them to rejection or hurt. (b) The "fearful avoidant" clearly wants to have a close relationship but is well aware of a lack of trust and fears of abandonment. Thus, they don't let themselves get close. They constantly feel frustrated--wanting what they can't get. Consequently, they have lots of negative emotions--anxiety and depression--without many positive emotions.

As teenagers we are very dependent on our parents and friends. We rely on parents for food and shelter, for transportation, for financial support, and so on. We rely on friends for social activities, advice, emotional support, companionship, etc. As workers, we rely on the supervisor for guidance, colleagues for friendship, the company for our salary, etc. As lovers and spouses, we rely on our partner for emotional support, meaningful discussions, physical affection, fun, financial security, and a family. As consumers we rely on farmers for food, seamstresses for clothing, laborers for our houses, cars, and appliances. As citizens we rely on the government and politics for

many things we could do ourselves (Lederer, 1961). Of course, we are dependent. So what?

If an 18-year-old becomes so homesick he/she can't leave home, that's a problem. If a 16-year-old can't fix his/her own meals and do his/her own laundry, that's a problem. If a 14-year-old has to be socializing all the time, that's a problem. If a 20-year-old can't find the time to follow politics and vote intelligently, that's a problem. If an adult isn't capable of being self-sufficient if he/she were suddenly on his/her own, that's a problem. If a lover feels he/she couldn't live or "wouldn't know what to do" without his/her partner, that's a problem. There are lots of ways of being dependent, some good and some bad.

Now, let's explore some specific ways we are dependent, i.e. by being overly conforming, compliant, or obedient, and see how dependent we are.

Conformity

If you look at how similarly we dress and fix our hair, you'd have to say we are almost all conformists. Consider the few males who wear skirts, aren't they considered weird? Being considered odd is such powerful social pressure that few of us males would think of wearing a skirt, even as a Halloween costume. You might say, "So what? It's a trivial matter." Better think again. Wolf (1990) says women are "prisoners of impossible standards of beauty." American men and women spend billions and billions for stylish clothes, cosmetics, hair stylists, new model cars, fashionable houses and so on. Being "out of style" is socially unacceptable, like men wearing skirts. Part of the motive is to gain status by following new trends. Part of the motive is simply self-aggrandizement; thus, American women spend more on beauty and fitness aids than on social services and education (Rodin, 1992). There are better uses for the money spent on status and the self.

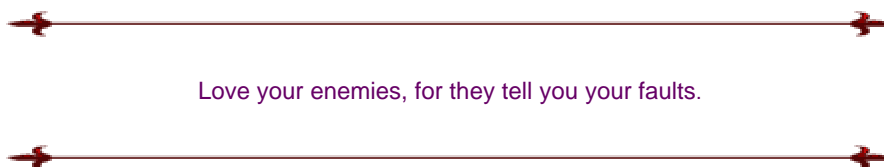


He tried to be somebody by trying to be like everybody, which makes him a nobody.



Research findings also suggest we are very eager to please others by conforming. A famous experiment, involving easy judgments about the length of lines, by Solomon Asch (1958) found that almost 75% of the people tested gave at least one wrong answer in order to agree with others (who were confederates of the experimenter and intentionally gave wrong answers). The typical subject gave the wrong answer in order to conform with the group opinion about one-third of the time.

Most of us know how difficult it is to disagree with three or more people when they all see things differently than we do. We also know (and research affirms) that we don't always believe what we say to others. Example: you are with a group of friends and one of them is considering buying a car and asks how you like Fords. One person says, "They really look nice" and another comments, "They have a good repair record and don't rust out." Even if you don't care for Fords, the chances are you will make a favorable comment in spite of your private opinion. This is even more true if you are in a group of older people or one that includes experts or your boss. In general, if we are interested in pleasing or impressing the other group members but feel we are only moderately accepted by them at this point, we are more likely to conform. If we are very secure with the group or don't care, we can speak up (Aronson, 1984). Self-actualizing people are non-conformists; they think for themselves (Maslow, 1970).



Studies of group behavior also add to our understanding of conformity or compliance. Groups are usually superior to individuals in solving puzzles or problems in an experimental setting, like how to get three missionaries and three cannibals across the river in a 2-person boat without the missionaries ever being outnumbered (Deaux & Wrightsman, 1984). Yet, when emotions, politics, and personalities get involved, groups often make bad decisions. Janis & Mann (1977) have studied several unfortunate governmental decisions, like the invasion of Cuba (which Kennedy favored) and the expansion of the Vietnamese war (which Johnson favored). Janis believes that group members become too eager to please or agree with a powerful leader or too eager to avoid controversy and arrive at a speedy solution. In the process they overlook important information and discourage different opinions. This faulty thinking, motivated by needs to please and conform, was called *groupthink* by Janis. Watch for this in your groups. See method #11 in chapter 13 for ways to counteract these errors in decision-making.

Compliance and obedience

There is not only a personal need to agree with others but strong pressure exerted by the group on any person with different opinions to comply with the majority. Promises, arguments, and threats are used to get agreement. If someone steadfastly refuses to agree with the group, he/she is frequently rejected and ignored. Usually the more deviant group members (those taking an extreme position) and the entire group move in the direction favored by the majority. This has become known as group *polarization* (Deaux & Wrightsman, 1984). It

can be thought of as a "jump on the band wagon" effect or "go along with the majority" effect. However, we do not yet know under what conditions private opinions are actually changed, if they are, in these more complex situations. Perhaps as we learn more about a certain opinion and argue for it, we come to believe it more. Perhaps we just don't want to make waves. Perhaps we "know which side of our bread is buttered." It's all compliance.

There are other specific conditions in which we tend to comply with direct requests. For instance, once we have granted one request, we are more likely to comply with another request. So a salesperson will make a small request first: "May I ask you a few questions?" and "May we sit down?" Finally, "May I order you one?" This is called *the "foot in the door" technique*. Another approach is *the "door in the face" technique*: first, someone makes a very large request of you and you say "no" (that's the door in the face). They graciously accept your refusal and then a few days or weeks later the same person approaches you with a much more modest request. You are more likely to comply this time than if you had never been approached. Thirdly, there is *the old "low ball" technique*: first, get a person to agree to some unusually good deal, then change the conditions and the person will still agree to the new conditions. For example, a car salesperson might offer you a fantastic deal or a teacher might request some help. Once you agree, then the sales person "discovers" a mistake and raises the price or the teacher tells you it's a dirty job at 7:00 AM, but you still go through with the agreement.

Deaux and Wrightsman (1984) summarized the research that shows independent people are more intellectually able, more capable leaders, more mature, more self-controlled, and more self-confident. Conforming people are self-critical, have lower self-esteem, and have stronger needs to interact with others socially. Don't get suckered into bad deals.

Obedience to authority

The most impressive and appalling studies in this area were done by Stanley Milgram (1974). They are famous studies. Milgram's intent was to see how much harm ordinary people would do to another person if directed and urged to do so by an authority (a psychologist asking them to shock a person when he/she gave a wrong answer in a learning experiment). Actually, *no one was shocked* but the subjects obviously believed they were hurting another participant in the experiment. The shock was to be increased with every mistake. To do this there were 30 switches at 15-volt intervals labeled as follows: Slight shock (15-60 volts), Moderate shock (75-120 volts), etc. on up to Extreme-intensity shock (315-360 volts), DANGER--severe shock (375-420 volts), and XXX (435-450 volts). Most of us would assume that our friends and relatives wouldn't do such a mean, dangerous thing. Certainly, we wouldn't. Especially if the person being shocked in the next room started moaning (at 75 volts) and then yelling, "Hey, that really hurts" (at 120 volts) and then at 150 volts, "Experimenter,

get me out of here! I refuse to go on!" At 180 volts the victim cries, "I can't stand the pain." Later, there are agonized screams after every shock and he pounds on the wall pleading with you...and finally at 330 volts the subject falls silent. When the shocker wants to stop the psychologist simply says, "Please continue" or "You must go on." What do most people do?

Amazingly, 65% of the subjects went all the way to 450 volts! In fact, *every one* of the 40 subjects administered at least 300 volts! Milgram wrote, "Many subjects will obey the experimenter no matter how vehement the pleading of the person being shocked...It is the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority that constitutes the chief finding of this study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation." The subjects administering the shock were not sadistic monsters nor very angry nor prejudiced against the learner nor indifferent (they appeared to be very stressed).

So, why or how do we humans do such things? Milgram says the subjects (1) became absorbed in pleasing the authority and doing their assignment just right, (2) denied their responsibility, "the experimenter was a Ph. D." or just like Lt. Calley or Adolf Eichmann, many of the subjects said, "I wouldn't have done it by myself, I was just doing what I was told," (3) started to believe that the experiment was vitally important and that the pursuit of truth is a "noble cause" (even though someone has to suffer), (4) blamed the victim, "he was so stupid and stubborn he deserved to get shocked," and, most importantly, (5) just couldn't bring themselves to act on their values and defy authority.

This deference to authority is a serious problem, not just in terms of kowtowing to government officials, but also to "experts," doctors, bosses, owners, authors, and many others who are eager to tell you what to do.

Socially instilled obedience

Milgram's reasons sound mostly like excuses for our immoral attempts to curry favor with an important person. Considering the great stress the subjects experienced and the fact that they were only paid \$4.00 for one hour of work for *an experimenter they would never see again*, there must have been some other very powerful needs to please the psychologist. What, then, are the real reasons we are so ineffective and intimidated by authority? I suspect it is due to years of indoctrination (internalization) by the people and institutions most dear to us--parents, schools, religion, government, etc. Most of the time conformity and obedience are helpful and morally good. The same trait, unquestioning obedience, that produces the *good* child at home, the *good* church member, and the *good* student at school may also have produced the calloused and cruel abuse in the Milgram study, in Nazi Germany, in the Vietnamese war, etc. We must learn to be "good" *and* to think for ourselves.

Research (Head, Baker, & Williamson, 1991) indicates that persons diagnosed as "dependent personality disorder" tend to come from families that had rigid rules, including "do not express your emotions openly" and "don't be independent--do what you are told, follow the family traditions, obey your parents." Hitler's father was the unquestioned authority in his family; Hitler re-created his family situation and established himself as the unquestioned authority of the Fatherland. Every dictatorial authoritarian must have dependent, compliant followers. Unfortunately, neither authoritarians nor dependent people get much practice at functioning independently as equals.

In the process of growing up we are exposed to enormous pressures to be compliant or conforming. Examples: (1) Parents often demand obedience, "Do it because I say so!" This may continue even after the "children" are 18 or 20 years old. Overprotective parents produce frightened, dependent children. (2) Peers reward going along with the crowd. (3) Teachers expect you to do the assignments, not plan and carry out your own education. (4) We are expected to get married and we are led to believe that love and marriage will solve most of our problems; we depend upon and long for all these benefits from marriage. (5) Government regulates much of our lives; it is drilled into us to follow the law. Have you ever been driving at 3:00 AM and noticed that you stopped and waited for all the red lights to change even though no other cars were around? (6) Religions tell us what to believe "with unquestioning faith" and, indeed, avoid and strongly discourage doubts and questions. Can you imagine a religion studying the psychological needs underlying the development of myths and religions? (7) The media encourages passive observation and glorifies persons in high authority. Independent thinking is hardly rewarded, e.g. there are 30 to 40 candidates for president every four years, but how many get a chance to share their ideas? Two, maybe three. (8) The military teaches, "Yours is not to wonder why, yours is but to do and die." (9) At work, the employees, even after 20 or 30 years, do not make decisions but wait on the bosses to tell them what to do. And finally, (10) our friends, in most cases, only remain friends so long as we agree with them on major issues. "To have friends, you have to get along." We are taught well to be submissive followers. To truly think on your own and to do your own thing can be very scary.

The continuation of a society depends to some extent on compliance. Forty years ago, writers claimed that the pressure to conform was increasing. William Whyte (1956) in *The Organization Man* contended that "getting along with others" and team-work were replacing the Protestant Ethic of individual effort and hard work. David Riesman (1950) in *The Lonely Crowd* described three common ways we conform socially: (1) we are *tradition-directed*, that is, social customs and beliefs, especially in the form of social pressures, determine what we do. (2) We are *conscience-directed*, that is, we have internalized our parents' morals and ideals so that we are controlled not by our reason but by our sense of guilt. (3) We are *other-directed*, that is, we are sensitive to what our friends and associates think and feel and we try to please or impress them.

Riesman saw America as becoming more and more other-directed. Certainly Milgram's subjects went to great lengths to please the experimenter.



The Calf Path

One day, through the primeval wood,
A calf walked home, as good calves should;
But made a trail all bent askew,
A crooked trail as all calves do.

(The poem goes on to describe how a dog followed the calf's path the next day, then later some sheep, and over the years many other animals followed the path. Eventually, the path became a trail followed by men, then a road with a village along side which grew into a city. The author concluded:)

A hundred thousand men were led
By one calf near three centuries dead...
For thus such reverence is lent
To well-established precedent...
For men are prone to go it blind
Among the calf-paths of the mind,
And work away from sun to sun
To do what other men have done...

-Sam Walter Foss

From *Desk Drawer Anthology*, a group of poems collected by Franklin D. Roosevelt.



Harvey, Hunt, and Schroder (1961) found four types of people: (1) rule abiding, tell-me-what-to-do types (30%), (2) rebellious, don't-tell-me-what-to-do types (15%), (3) cautious, what-do-you-think-I-should-do types (20%), and (4) self-directed, I'll-get-enough-information-and-decide-for-myself-what-to-do-types (5-7%). It's shocking that so few fall in the last category (especially since most of us think of ourselves as independent). The more recent data (cited in introduction) provides some hope that we are gradually learning to think for ourselves.

Social-emotional needs and dependency

If we are willing to seriously hurt someone to please an authority we will know for only an hour, one has to wonder how strong our dependency is on parents, friends, and loved ones. Harry Harlow (Harlow & Harlow, 1966) did an impressive series of studies demonstrating that baby monkeys need mothering. Unless the monkeys received some kind of love in the form of being held, stroked, and played with, they developed abnormally, i.e. they became scared, hostile, self-destructive, and sexually inept. Human infants also need loving care; they may die without it (see chapter 6). Bowlby (1969) found the infant's first attachment was to mother and then to others. These early needs and emotional bonds are powerful and possibly innate. Can it be that this same kind of desperate clinging dependency persists as adults?



In the movie, *This is Your Life*, two children, about 8 and 10, are asked by their single mother: Would you rather have your Mom in the next room contemplating suicide for the next week or have your Mom in ecstasy all alone in Hawaii? We all know the children's answer.



Takeo Doi (1973), a Japanese psychoanalyst, describes a unique Japanese word--*amae*--which refers to the longing of an infant at the breast to have every whim attended to, to be enveloped in indulgent love, to feel at one with the mother. Doi says such a feeling continues into adulthood. It is being so dependent and needy that one is very careful not to disrupt such a warm, giving relationship; thus, the Japanese are dutifully apologetic. It means being so close to another person that one can be self-indulgent without embarrassment. It means seeking unconditional love, love you receive just by existing (what Fromm called "Mother's love").

The Japanese are more aware of these dependency needs, partly because they have the word (*amae*) and partly because their culture does not emphasize (as much as ours does) individual freedom and self-reliance. They are willing to stay close and subservient to their parents; they are inclined to become attached to the company they work for, giving conscientious work and expecting life-long support from the company.

In the last chapter, we discussed the conflicts between teenagers and their parents. Both anger and dependency are involved. Later in this chapter we will consider the lingering dependency ties with parents even after we "grow up."

Our need to be accepted

Otto Rank (1932), an early student of Freud, said it was important to assert one's own "will." He believed that most neuroses develop because people do not have the courage to be themselves; instead, they suppress their true selves in order to please others. Many others agree. Moustakas (1967) calls conformity a self-alienating process by which he means that we cut ourselves off from our own feelings, dreams, talents, and potential because we want to be liked. Other peoples' fears of being "different" cause them to reject us if we are "different" and unique. Thus, it is our fear of being rejected (by conformists), that causes us to lose our own freedom and independence.

Fritz Perls wrote a popular poster which reflects our common struggle to get free of domination by others:

"I do my thing, and you do your thing. I am not in this world to live up to your expectations and you are not in this world to live up to mine. You are you, and I am I, and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful. If not, it can't be helped."

Love and dependency

Songs, poems, and novels attest to our desperate yearning for love. Psychologists talk about it too (Fromm, 1974; Maslow, 1970; Shostrom, 1972; Peele, 1976). Mature love, according to Fromm, does not say, "I love you because I need you," but rather "I need you because I love you." Romantic love is referred to as D-love by Maslow. D-love is based on one's deficiencies, on one's weakness, as in popular songs: "I'd be lost without you" or "Since you left me baby, my life is over." We need someone else to make us feel adequate or whole and secure. B-love is mature, unselfish love, i.e. based on a love of the "being" of the other person. The self-actualized person wants but does not desperately *need* love, so the loss of love to them is regretted but not traumatic. If our loved one decides to leave us, it probably means they are growing and/or trying something new. We could wish them well instead of being crushed. We are crushed because we feel so needy. Maslow's theory suggests our reaction to the loss of love depends on how we look at it and our self-esteem (see chapter 6).

D-love is like an addiction to drugs: we get hooked on someone we can't do without because of our own inadequacies (Peele, 1976). How common is this? Some form of "social dependency" (a lover or friends) is the addiction of two-thirds of middle class teenagers; lower classes use drugs and alcohol, according to Peele. More mature love--B-love--is the opposite of interpersonal addiction. As a weak, needy person in deficiency-based love we are absorbed by this one relationship; it is our whole life.



"If a person loves only one person and is indifferent to the rest of his fellow men, his love is not love but a symbiotic (dependent) attachment, or an enlarged egotism."

-Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*



After the infatuation is over, how can you tell if it is mature love or addictive dependency? Ask yourself these questions (Peele, 1976):

1. Is each lover mature and confident of his/her own worth and ability? Are they independent? Are they each comfortable alone?
2. Are both continuously improved by the relationship?
3. Do both have outside interests and relationships?
4. Is the love relationship integrated into his and her life rather than being an isolated part of life?
5. Is there no jealousy of the lover's success, growth, and new interests?
6. Are the lovers also genuine, honest, close friends?

When our obsession with another person causes us to neglect our own needs and priorities, to neglect our own life, you need to cure your love addiction. Bireda (1990) addresses this problem directly.

Germaine Greer (1971) in *The Female Eunuch* points out that some lovers like their partners to fail or to have a weakness because a scared, inadequate person is more likely to stay dependent on them. Likewise, making yourself indispensable to your partner, i.e. making him or her dependent on you, may be harmful to the relationship in the long run. She says the question to ask is: "Do I want my love to be happy more than I want him/her to be with me?" If your answer is yes, it's probably mature love. If it is no or "I'm not sure," watch out for clinging dependency.

If your life centers almost entirely around your loved one, naturally breaking up will be agonizing and take a long time. Of course, growing and mature people often go different directions; parting will be regretted and painful for them too, but not a long-lasting emotional disaster. In those cases where love suddenly turns to hate, it suggests that the person was thinking more of him/herself than the lover all along.

One of the fantastic experiences of life is being deeply in love--obsessed with someone, thrilled by them, wanting to touch them all the time. Maybe the desperate need for love can't be escaped. There is a saying, "Love is nature's trick to insure the species." The deep internal feelings of love are so similar all over the world, it isn't likely we learn to love from the movies. Of course, we are often hoping for more from love than a relationship and sex. So often we hope that love and marriage will solve many or all of our anxieties and problems (Gordon, 1976). As we will discuss later, traditional women have wanted economic, social, and emotional satisfaction; traditional men have wanted all the comforts of home, admiration, and emotional support. (Non-traditional men and women expect less from their

spouse.) When our expectations are not met by our lover, we have problems (disappointment and anger).

Being familiar with these theories--and that is all they are--may make us more aware of the emotional dependency and unreasonableness involved in "blind" love. This awareness can help us cope. If deep, intimate love cannot exist without certain kinds of dependencies, maybe we can anticipate those needs and handle them. Judith Bardwick (1979) and Marion Solomon (1994) say that lovers are always dependent. To them dependency merely means mature lovers need affection and affirmation as being good, capable people. Lovers do not need to be insecure, self-doubting, and helpless. But dependency is a part of intimacy. They say mature lovers need both closeness and also distance; they need emotional connections and also autonomy. This is called an *interdependent relationship*.

Without a long-term commitment to a love relationship, Bardwick says we are in danger of feeling insecure, finding little meaning in life, and longing for unconditional love (Mother's love or *amae*). I think love may be a basic human need, like safety or being touched or sex. I think there is some inevitable pain when love is lost (at least, it seems true for most of us). Thus, people in love *are not independent* in the sense that they can just easily walk away (angry lovers perhaps can). Healthy people in love *are independent* enough that they can, with conscious effort, walk away from a very unhappy, restrictive relationship. Having formed a couple, each person should, of course, remain free to have his/her own interests, friends, and activities. So, lovers need to be independent and dependent.

A student shared with me this beautiful, poignant message:



Being Your Own Person

After a while you learn the subtle difference between holding a hand
and chaining a soul,
And you learn that love doesn't mean leaning and company doesn't
mean security,
And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts and presents aren't
promises,
And you begin to accept your defeats with your head up and your eyes
open, with the grace of a woman, not the grief of a child,
And learn to build all your roads on today because tomorrow's ground
is too uncertain for plans and futures have a way of falling down
midflight,
After awhile you learn that even sunshine burns if you get too much,
so you plant your own garden and decorate your own soul instead of
waiting for someone to bring you flowers,
And you learn that you really can endure,
That you really are strong and you really do have worth,
And you learn and learn... with every goodbye you learn.
-An unknown lover



There is so much more we humans need to know about dependency and love, jealousy, submissiveness, painful rejection, anger, etc. Chapter 9 helps us understand ourselves and relationships; chapter 10 deals with love and sex.

Reactions to social influence

When someone or a family or a social-cultural group tries to influence you, there are several ways you can respond. You can argue and rebel. You can go along with the idea or request or tradition, in which case there are three types of reactions you can have (Aronson, 1984):

1. *Compliance*, as we have seen in the Asch and Milgram studies above, is agreeing with the request or idea in order to get some payoff, perhaps just to avoid unwanted consequences. Thus, family members may gather at Mom and Dad's every Sunday, because the parents would be hurt if the children didn't. Likewise, students do homework to avoid a low grade. People do hard labor for money. Take away the grading system or the pay, and the work won't be done. Underlying compliance, in this case, is power--the ability to reward and punish.
2. *Identification* is where you want to be like someone else and, thus, do and think what they do. Thus, if your favorite aunt is a singer, you may study hard on your voice and guitar lessons in order to be like her. If your father is a republican, you may vote that way because you identify with him and respect his political views. Underlying identification is an attraction--having adopted the other person's ways and values because of the appeal of the person, not because of the validity or morality of his/her ideas. If you start to dislike that person, your actions, ideas, and values may change.
3. *Internalization* is based on the desire to be right. If you hear a speaker who seems knowledgeable say something that makes good sense to you, you are likely to accept these ideas as your own. This is the strongest and most permanent reaction to social influence because our motivation to be right is powerful. You keep these opinions until they are proven wrong.

If we are hoping to change some behavior or belief acquired via social influence, it would clearly be helpful to know if it was acquired because it paid off or because of identification or internalization.

Gender Issues: A Woman's Place---

In addition to needing love, as we grow up we identify with older people, primarily of our own sex, and internalize many of their attitudes and values. Anne Schaefer (1981) asked people to first describe God and humankind in relation to each other, then describe males and females. She got these responses:

| <u>God</u> | <u>Humankind</u> | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> |
|--------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|
| male | childlike | rational | emotional |
| powerful | sinful | powerful | weak |
| all knowing | weak | brave | fearful |
| ever present | dumb | good | sinful |
| eternal | mortal | strong-like | children |

The conclusion? It would appear that in the eyes of many people, males are to females as God is to humankind. That is, man is regarded as superior and women as inferior. If these sexist beliefs are internalized by boys and girls at an early age, what an awful burden for both sexes. Given this image of differences between the sexes, no wonder men are always competitively striving for superiority. No wonder women accept subservient, self-depreciating roles.

Where does this idea of male superiority come from?

Anthropologist Boyce Rensberger (1979) suggests that humans started pairing because two could care for the offspring better than one and because physiologically we evolved into sensual beings interested in full-time sex, not just when the female is in heat like other animals. In addition, human males seem to be more interested in co-parenting if they are confident that they are the biological father; this can only be known if the female has only mated with them; thus, pair-bonding and love evolved as a method for the species to survive and thrive. Sex (enjoying it frequently), a bigger brain, and uprightiness (to carry food to our family) may also have been vital to the development of human life in which males and females lived in pairs.

The history of gender roles

But, when, how, and why did males become dominant? Interesting questions. We don't know the answers. Apparently some primitive form of humans existed 4 million years ago, but the current human brain developed very recently, perhaps only 35,000 years ago. It is thought that humans lived in groups of 15 to 25 until 12,000 to 15,000 years ago. These groups wandered long distances looking for available food. About 10,000 BC, some groups learned to cultivate crops, stored grain, developed weapons for killing larger animals, domesticated animals, settled in one place, and built more permanent shelters. The

settlements grew larger. Some historians believe that 10,000 years (300 generations) ago women were the leaders and the gods of some larger groups. Mother earth and females were obviously the magical sources of life and, thus, closer to God. But, according to Rensberger, in a more settled existence where goods and wealth could be accumulated, well beyond what one could carry, there developed a strong relationship between meat-eating and male dominance. Men were the hunters because they were stronger, didn't have children to suckle, and were more expendable. The more meat provided the tribe by the men, the more the men were revered, the more economic and political power men accumulated, and the more dependent and submissive became their wives. We still speak of "bringing home the bacon." This historical scenario may support one contention of feminists, namely, that women will have to become economic, political, and religious equals of men before they will be regarded by society as individuals of equal status.

There are other theories about the source of male chauvinism. Even before anthropologists developed their theories, Freud was impressed both with the power of love-sex drives to dominate our lives and with the male feeling of superiority over women. He, being a male, thought young girls might feel inferior because they don't have a penis and because they may fear it had been cut off as punishment for being bad. That's an unlikely explanation of why males feel superior and females feel inferior, compared to continuously being told by your entire culture that boys are better and girls are nice but not as able or as wanted as boys, which continues to be said long after the men of a society have stopped risking their lives to hunt lions. (Besides, why don't men feel inferior because they don't have breasts?)

Traditional roles and the Women's Movement

There was an enormous amount of feminist literature written in the 1960's and 1970's (Friedan, 1963; Greer, 1971; Janeway, 1971). It rebelled against the 5,000-year-old stereotypes for men and women. I won't try to summarize the feminist literature but its focus was on the importance of equality between the sexes, including being against male chauvinism (feeling superior or "god-like") and female subservience or dependency. Men and women should read and take to heart this literature. Schwartz (1970) is typical of the early assertiveness literature. These writers point out how much more is involved than the emotional need for love (as discussed above) or the need for sex discussed by the anthropologists. The feminist writings clarify how *tradition* has dictated male and female sex roles that control much of our lives--our interests, our work assignments, our attitudes towards ourselves and others, our status, our love lives, our dreams and aspirations, and almost everything about our lives. As we have seen, people tend to conform to other peoples' ideas of what is right or how things ought to be. For example, only men are supposed (according to "old" tradition) to strive for economic and political power, e.g. to become chief of the tribe or president of the country or CEO of

the company. Only women are supposed to be homemakers and full-time caretakers of the children (this is really slow to change).

Indeed, tradition in America (until the Women's Movement) had a notion of the ideal or "perfect" marital relationship. For traditional women, it is being loved and taken care of by a successful, good man (Dowling, 1982; Willis, 1981). He goes to work and makes good money to provide for the family. He knows about finances, cars, repairing the house, and makes the major decisions. She doesn't just feel dependent on him, she is truly dependent on him. For example, if she, like a good wife, puts him through medical or business school by working as a secretary and he later leaves her because she no longer shares his interests and intellect, she can't financially take care of herself and the children. She is not self-sufficient. However, he can perhaps earn well over \$200,000 a year. That's not equality.

What does the traditional husband need? He wants to be successful, to beat out his competitors for money and advancement. It's stressful and he wants a haven from the "rat race." His haven includes a loving, devoted, admiring wife who cares for his basic needs--food, clean and pressed clothes, good sex, a comfortable social life, a neat, clean home, etc. She takes care of the kids and their problems; she is in awe of his achievements and nurtures his ego when he's down; she keeps their love relationship going smoothly. She is indispensable too. If she finds the homemaker life frustrating and seeks an exciting career--and in the process finds a better, more egalitarian relationship--he is crushed. He loses a home, a cook and maid, a wife, and the children. Although he felt superior to "the little wife," he isn't totally self-sufficient either; he feels lost inside the empty house alone.

Dependency in marriage

We are all dependent (interdependency is discussed above). There is nothing wrong with that as long as it doesn't place us in a position of feeling inferior or of being unable to cope //we are left alone, as in the marriage situation described above. Overly-dependent people put themselves, often unconsciously, in situations where they are helpless or feel helpless in order to get others to take care of them, like children. Often dependent people will refuse to take responsibility for managing their own lives, as long as someone else will. If you feel you can't survive on your own, you are dependent in the worst sense of being incompetent or helpless. Such a situation is scary, if and when you permit yourself to think about it. Even if you are a liberated woman and not helplessly dependent on a male, it may be difficult or impossible to find an exciting career, so you are dependent on the business world for employment. The unemployed can tell you how scary that dependency is. Furthermore, the employed woman often has to care for the children and manage the household because her husband is hung up on the old ideas of what is woman's work (and/or because it's easier to watch TV than to bathe the kids). Indeed, one survey of 50 two-career couples with children found that the wives

worked 15 hours more each week than the husbands! Hochschild (1989) helps such couples avoid these unfair gender roles.

How are women coerced and/or lured into the vulnerable passive-dependent role? Willis (1981) says (1) women are promised the reward of security and little responsibility, (2) social pressures are exerted on females to do what is expected of women and mothers, and (3) women are subtly encouraged to avoid the stress of asserting themselves and competing in an aggressive world, especially since they aren't considered well equipped or prepared for "a man's world." A woman may give up being self-directed because she realizes she has been placed by others in an "inferior class," where her being strong, decisive, successful, and a leader are discouraged. Gradually, the idea of being independent, capable, and self-sufficient becomes scary (in Freudian terms she is castrated) and being dependent, protected, and compliant seems much safer and easier.

Letty Pogrebin (1980) says our current sexual stereotypes give children two basic messages: (1) *boys are better* and (2) *girls are meant to be mothers*. The underlying purpose is to motivate boys to excel--"be the greatest!" However, since most boys fail to be as successful as they had hoped, their frustration is relieved by exerting their superiority over women. Furthermore, since women are meant to be mothers, women cannot fulfill their roles in life without first attracting a man; this creates enormous concern in women about sex appeal and attractiveness. Too often the woman's self-esteem comes from how good a man she can attract, rather than from within herself or from her own achievements. Pogrebin believes males have sold the boring, menial job of childrearing to women by glorifying motherhood. On the other hand, she thinks the Women's Movement has made careers more appealing than homemaking, at least for the middle-class, well educated elite. Consequently, it is predicted that 25+% of women between 25 and 29 will not be married but will have careers. Gradually the old traditions are changing. And why not? Men aren't the only ones capable of "bringing home the bacon." And, women aren't the only ones capable of "taking care of the kids."

Feeling inferior and super responsible at the same time

Being considered by society to be inferior to men, some women may simply accept being helpless and become a "Door Mat" (Namka, 1989). Other women may try to over-compensate by trying to become everything to everybody, by feeling super responsible, by taking charge, by loving and giving too much, by pleasing everyone, by becoming "Superwoman." Thus, there is a spate of books about women doing too much for others while forgetting their own needs (Norwood, 1985; Bepko & Krestan, 1990; Leman, 1987; Braiker, 1989). Low self-esteem and shame are thought to underlie this self-depreciatory behavior. Bepko and Krestan say there is a "Goodness Code" for women: be attractive and sexy! be ladylike! be unselfish and thoughtful! be sure everyone is getting along! be competent! and don't be uppity or a bitch! These rules are so pervasive that they seem to

"come natural" to women. But part of being "good" is believing you have never been good enough. So, built into women's roles is a mechanism for creating self-doubt, insecurity, and a tendency to take on too much.

Likewise, our culture encourages women to seek perfection in terms of attractiveness. As Rodin (1992) observes, the beauty contest goes on and on. Women worry about their looks, feel vain, and, in turn, are ashamed of how much their bodies mean to them. It is almost immoral if you don't diet and exercise; it is impossible to look perfect all the time; it becomes a trap.

Willis (1981) notes that even "liberated" women are frequently in conflict about other things, such as dependency and assertiveness. Examples: an aggressive business woman acts like an emotional teenager in sexual relationships; a strong, powerful, dogmatic anti-ERA female speaker declares that women's place is in the home being taken care of by a man; an egalitarian female wants a challenging career but feels guilty when she isn't the main caregiver with the children and makes more money than her husband; a feminist demands equality but doesn't want to be drafted into combat like men. Many women are still struggling with these dilemmas.

Expectations of boys and men

High expectations of men can be enormous burdens for them too (Farrell, 1975). Remember, they are to be God-like, omnipotent, and successful. Examples: Real men are expected to be tough--"big boys don't cry"--and fearless. Men, in turn, become demanding of others too, inclined to criticize and direct or advise rather than empathize. They are supposed to be logical and practical, not emotional and idealistic. They are expected to pretend to be women's equals except whenever they "have to put their foot down" to avoid doing housework or to keep her at home. They must be successful in their trade and have a superior answer to all problems at all times. They must look confident and impress people. They must be aggressive and approach attractive women. And, they must, of course, be a sexual powerhouse--a "stud." Taken altogether those are impossible standards to meet. Anyone (including the liberated female) compelled to be so competitive and so superior has become an unhappy slave to a demanding stereotype (more about this in chapter 9).

What about innate dependency needs?

Sex-role stereotypes and social pressures may not be the sole causes of dependency. Indeed, emotional dependency may not be learned at all, it may be a basic need. Eichenbaum and Orbach (1983), psychoanalytic therapists, argue that males and females have innate dependency needs--needs for love and emotional support. In terms of these needs, men hide their needs more than women but women are raised to meet those needs in men. In short, women learn to be

depended upon, not dependent! According to this theory, women may be economically dependent and mechanically (fix the car) dependent, but they are trained to deny their needs and become the emotional and interpersonal caretakers and controllers of the family. The entire family depends on mother; she is the family organizer and therapist. But, there is no one to take care of mother's emotional needs. Certainly men aren't trained in our culture to attend to feelings and to discuss emotional interactions at length.

If we grow up in a nurturing, loving family which gives us self-esteem and teaches us self-reliance, we are fortunate. However, if our innate dependency needs were unmet as a child, we may grow up yearning for the impossible--a soul mate who will love us constantly and make us whole. Many wives provide this emotional support; many husbands do not. Thus, self-sacrificing women look needy. And bewildered men wonder, "What does she want?" According to Eichenbaum and Orbach, much of the dependency problem in marriage goes back to basic deficiencies in the mother-child relationship. The push-pull in mother-daughter relationships is especially strong; for the daughter it involves needed love and unwanted control. Boys, starting at 4 or 5, can reject some of the emotional involvement with mother as they identify with father; girls don't have that way out of a consuming relationship with a powerful person (mother). Sometimes the intimacy with a lover at age 20-25 revives in a woman the old dependent, push-pull struggles she had with her mother. Sometimes intimacy with and dependency on a good spouse is scary (reminding us of our need for mother), sometimes dependency keeps us in a bad relationship. Sometimes we think we are secure and independent but it is a childhood facade, the bravado of a 9-year-old boy. We all need love, which is something our hormones prove to us at 13 or 14 years of age. We can't escape our biology; our "nature" helps explain our behavior but we can learn to handle these needs and drives.

Women are making progress

Partly because of the Women's Movement and partly due to economic necessity and fewer children, substantial progress is being made in the status of women (Sacks & Rubin, 1982). In 1970, 38% of women had some college. In 1980, 63% have some college. In the late 1980's, about half the BA's and MA's (in all areas) were earned by women and 45% of the Ph.D.'s went to women. By 1995, 75% of BA's *in psychology* went to women, 70% of MA's, and 60% of Ph.D.'s were awarded to females. In 1970, 4 in 10 white women worked for wages; in 1980, 5 in 10 did, and in 1990, 6 in 10. 20 years ago women earned only 65 or 70 cents for what a man got a dollar for, but recent surveys show that they now earn 85 to 95 cents for a dollar's worth of men's work. Low paying service jobs are still dominated by women, however. One third of the children under 6 had wage earning mothers in 1970; in 1980, one half had wage earning mothers; in the 1990's about 70% of these mothers worked outside the home. In 1970, one third of the women between 20 and 24 were not married; in the 1980's, more

than one half were not married at that age. Still about half of all marriages end in divorce.

As more and more women break away from the stereotype of marriage, homemaker, and motherhood, women in general will be freer to choose their own life-style, including not marrying, not having children, having children with parenting shared equally, or having children with one parent--the male or the female--doing most of the child-rearing. In spite of dogmatically held personal biases, so far as we know, all would be equally good options in a society free of antiquated stereotypes. The child needs care and love; gender of the lover doesn't matter to the child. (There is evidence that children benefit from having both a male and a female caretaker.)

An independent person will not only decide about life-style but he/she will be self-sufficient. That doesn't necessarily mean earning half of the income but it does mean being *capable of earning* an adequate income if you needed to do so. It means being socially and emotionally strong enough to live alone and/or find another partner if you needed or wanted to do so. It means having a fair division of labor, and the knowledge and skill as well as a positive attitude towards your partner's duties so that you could easily exchange or take over his/her role. Great personal security comes from knowing you can handle problems that might arise.

There's an old joke: Where does an 800 pound gorilla sleep? Anywhere it wants! Likewise, what is a woman's (or a man's) place? Whatever she wants it to be! Yet, there are powerful forces opposing women being equal; men, being competitors, like their superior position and are threatened by talk of change; already successful women, hoping to keep their status, may not welcome more competition from other ambitious, capable women; the women themselves, wanting good relationships, are hesitant to be assertive and seek advancement. However, since unequals are not likely to be true friends, both men and women have much to gain from being equals (Miller, 1976).

Assertiveness and Our Excuses for Not Acting



In the 1960's and 1970's the Women's Movement blossomed, not just in books but in millions of families. Women went back to school, got jobs, and asked their husbands to help with the housework and the child-care. One big strength of the movement was the personal support available to women from friends or from consciousness-raising groups. These groups preached equal rights--the right to be treated with respect and have an equal voice in all family decisions, a right to have and express your own feelings, a right to be listened to and taken seriously, a right to set your own priorities, a right to get away

from the children for a while or develop a career, the right to have a social life independent of their husband, a right to say no without feeling guilty, etc. (Bloom, Coburn, & Pearlman, 1975). More importantly, perhaps, the consciousness-raising groups encouraged and coached each intimidated and dominated group member. Every small step in each life was discussed and practiced in these groups: how to get a job and how to share more equally child care duties, cooking, cleaning, financial decisions, etc. Remarkable changes were made in many families. Some men resisted but most profited from a happier, more confident, more interesting, and more self-sufficient partner.

The next step in human liberation flowed naturally: several books on assertiveness training appeared, starting with Alberti and Emmons (1970) who wrote, "If you must go through life inhibited, bowing down to the wishes of others, holding your own desires inside you, or conversely, destroying others in order to get your way, your feeling of personal worth will be low." Assertion training is not just a method for overcoming insecurities and submissiveness. It is a philosophy of life involving self-respect, self-confidence, self-direction, and meeting one's own needs and values without offending anyone's dignity or violating anyone else's rights (see method #3 in chapter 13). That sounds perfectly reasonable and harmless, doesn't it? So, what keeps us from standing up for our rights? We have our excuses.

Just like the Asch and Milgram studies of conformity, Moriarty (1975) documented how reluctant we are to confront a person who offends us or is inconsiderate of us. Only 5% of college students studying for an exam insisted that a neighbor turn down loud music. Another 15% asked the neighbor nicely once to turn it down (which did no good). But 80% said nothing and put up with the disruption. Likewise, loud neighbors in a library were asked to be quiet by only 2%, 23% moved away, and 75% simply endured the disturbance. Most of us just don't want to make waves. What are our excuses?

You will remember that we tend to have excuses for not living up to our values (chapter 3), for procrastinating (chapter 4), for being hostile to others (chapter 7) and now for being passive. Here are several common excuses for not asserting ourselves (Bower & Bower, 1976). See if the shoe fits:

1. "Maybe I'm overreacting--I'll be quiet." You have a right to expect quiet in a library or movie or dorm or your own house, so admit your frustration to yourself and firmly insist on quiet. You have lots of rights.
2. "Everybody has rights." Yes, but *their* rights end where *your* rights begin. This comment is just an excuse for not confronting the aggressive, thoughtless person. Stand up for your rights.
3. "Oh, well, it won't happen again." This may be true but it is an excuse. You should be assertive (a) for your own self-respect and (b) to help the offender be more considerate of others.

4. "I don't want to make a scene." Tactful and rational assertiveness should not degenerate into a loud fight. If you are being overcharged or under serviced, it is your civic duty to point out the unfairness and request better service.
5. "They'll get mad at me." Could be, many people have learned to intimidate others by getting angry. But look at it as another manipulation that doesn't need to upset you and does represent a silly, unfair way of controlling you and others. Don't get angry, just be firmly assertive.
6. "Why haven't others complained?" Like 1 this thought raises our self-doubts. Remember the studies in this chapter that show how very conforming and passive people are. Suppose the napkins in a bar degrade women and when you express your disapproval to the manager, he says, "No one else has ever complained. In fact, many people think they are funny. Maybe you've got a hang up." Don't let this insult put you on the defensive. Tell him that just because most customers don't say anything doesn't mean they like the putdown of women. And to prove your point, if he doesn't change the napkins, tell him you will write a letter to the editor of the local paper asking people's opinion of his attitude towards women. If you are in public and in doubt about how others feel, conduct your own poll but word your question so that people taking no action appear to support your position. For example, suppose you would like the loud music to be turned off at a picnic, you might ask everyone: "How many here want to listen to the radio?" rather than "How many want to turn the radio off?" That way all the non-responders, for whatever reason, look like they do not want to listen to the radio.
7. "I can't do anything about it." This helpless attitude is the major cause of compliance. It is a self-putdown. It is also a condemnation of "the system" which is seen as unchangeable. Blacks, women, and other minorities "went along" for a long time. Victims give power to the oppressor by doing nothing. Do something! Write letters, talk to the owner or manager, ask a politician to change things, start a group to correct some situation, etc. Chapter 13 gives detailed suggestions for being effectively assertive. The first task, however, is to deal with your excuses and decide that you have a right to take action.

Breaking Away From Parents



Our emotional ties with our parents are stronger and often more complex than with anyone else. We have already discussed how vital love and care are to our physical and psychological well being; we are totally dependent for a few years. According to Cindy Hazan of Cornell University, by age 5, we have started to prefer to play with friends rather than with Mom and Dad, but we want to be with our parents when we are upset, and Mom and Dad are counted on for security.

Between 11 and 16, we prefer to be with friends and we seek support from peers when we are upset, but parents are still providing us with basic security. By age 17, most of us are enjoying friends more and seeking support when feeling down more from friends than from parents; moreover, over 50% feel friends (more than parents) will be there when we need help. In the 1980's, more and more college students have expected their parents to pay for their college education, at least to the BA level. In hard economic times, many college graduates return to live with their parents until they get a job. So, becoming independent of our parents is a 18 to 25 year process. Even after becoming independent, powerful emotional ties remain forever.

For most of us, loving a child is one of life's most beautiful experiences; giving someone life and helping them mature give profound meaning to our life. Letting go of the loved child or parent can be very hard. As Evelyn Bassoff writes, "A mother's tasks are to create a unity with her child and then, piece by piece, dissolve it." But all the ties can't be dissolved. Mom and Dad are embedded inside us forever; they have enormous power over us. But we have some ability to choose which ties to keep and which to drop.

The process of leaving home is, for some, easy, smooth, and exciting; both parents and children are ready for the child to mature and become independent. Obviously, if the relationship has been enjoyable, both children and parents will miss the closeness and good times but realize "we can't go back." For others, leaving home is a trauma or "just too hard," either for the child or the parent, so the young person stays in or near "home." For others, they have to get away; leaving home is an emotional necessity for the child, the parent, or both. In short, there are a variety of problems when leaving home and during the years thereafter. See chapter 9 for a general discussion of family relations and for generally useful references.

In recent years, there has been an avalanche of books about abuse within the home and how to deal with the after effects (see chapter 7). But there also has been some attention paid to the other end of the spectrum, namely, being too loving, too protective, too indulging, too smothering. These are parents who simply want their children to become happy, well adjusted adults but they want it too much or give too much in the process. Some parents worry constantly about their child; they will do anything for their child (forgetting themselves, their spouse, their own career, friends, other needy people); they become frantic when the child has a problem; they are crushed if the child rejects them or their values. In their desperation, such parents may become demanding dictators, demeaning critics, indulging protectors, smothering best friends, needy don't-abandon-me parents, and so on. All designed to bind the child to them tightly. There are books for over-involved parents and their children (Ashner & Meyerson, 1990; Becnel, 1990), for mother-daughter relationships (Bassoff, 1989; Caplan, 1989), for mothers when their children become troubled

(Brans, 1987), and for young adults who are emotionally tied to a parent (Engel, 1991) in what is called "emotional incest" (Love, 1992).

In chapter 7, there is a description of how anger can make it easier for dependent 18-year-olds to leave home when the parent-child bonds have been too tight, too confining, too uncomfortable. For the one third of us who leave home under a cloud of stress and conflict, the strained relationship with Mom and Dad often continues to be a problem. Howard Halpern (1976) and Harold Bloomfield (1983) have discussed ways to cut loose from *and* make peace with our parents, not as angry teenagers (as discussed in chapter 7) but when we are adults. What an important thing to do! Here are some of suggestions, mostly from Halpern.

Many people in their 20's and 30's still get sucked into emotional traps and/or need their parents' approval, so much so that they can't be themselves. How does this happen? Inside us all, no matter our age, is an inner child, a left-over from childhood. The inner child contains many needs and wants--many of them primitive, self-serving, and even self-destructive. Parents still have an inner child too. While parents want their children to be capable and happy, there is another part of them that continues to see their children (even when they are 20 or 30) as weak, naive, and needing guidance. The inner child inside mom or dad may be saying "don't grow up, don't leave me." Some of these parents may resent a strong, independent child who is successful or chooses a different life-style or religion or politics or spouse than they would have preferred. To keep such parents from being upset, hurt, or angry, the little child within us may keep secrets from them or respond with "I need you too" or be overly nice and accommodating to them while harboring resentment. The best way to respond to such parents is to *bypass their child and address their adult part* which wants you to be mature and independent: "It's time for me to live alone" or "Instead of coming home, I've decided to do something else for Christmas this year." Make the interaction adult to adult by giving your reasons in a straight forward manner. Part of your parents may be very pleased you have "grown up" (in spite of their inner child's needs). They may object; consider their reasoning and make *your* decision.

Halpern helps us recognize these parent-child "song and dance" routines we utilize as long as the child within (us or the parents) is in charge rather than the inner adult. It is a safe bet that you are overly attached to a parent if after 20 you react with anger, guilt, fear of their reaction, or self-pity when you think of a parent. One of the toughest parent roles for a child to handle is *the sacrificing martyr*. The classic is a mother who says, "If it weren't for you children, I wouldn't have suffered so. You forget all I've done for you. And now everyone forgets their dear old mother." Often such a mother felt unloved and unlovable as a child. The mother's inner child is angry, frightened, and demanding. Now she thinks she can get love from her children only by force, primarily guilt. Her message to the son or daughter is, "If you don't do what I want, I'll feel terrible, all because you are so selfish

and hurtful." To stop this "song and dance" the son or daughter has to say, "No, I won't do what you are asking, and it's your choice, mother, to suffer or be happy." You can't rescue your mother or father from her/his unhappy childhood. You can carefully explain your reasons for your actions, showing that you considered their wishes, that you love them, but you have a life of your own.

Having a weak, dominated parent may be a problem but even more serious is *a dominant, aggressive, authoritarian parent*, often a father. He/she feels like he/she owns the child. Often the child has been "bought off" with cars, clothes, college, vacations, a nice wedding, etc. The controlling parent's technique for keeping the child (even if 20 years old) down is to keep him/her dependent and insecure. This is often done by belittling the 20-year-old "child." "Be little" and helpless is the dominant parent's message. As a child or young adult, your inner child may fight, surrender, or join the tyrannical parent. The child who was a *fighter* may have had a bitter childhood and then marry someone gentle and passive only to resent the partner's lack of strength and to miss the joy of battle. The *surrenderer* may have been dominated and frightened as a child; they often become underachievers and generally unhappy failures crushed by the overwhelming parent. The *joiners* grab a little of the power by becoming aggressive like the parent or by joining the family business. They never challenge the authoritarian parent and, thus, are never free. The escape from all three of these problematic solutions is to first recognize the scared, angry, threatened little kid inside the authoritarian. How did he/she get that way? Was he/she a spoiled, pampered child? Or a child who got little attention without demanding it? Then decide what you can do: become aware that your inner child is frightened of the parent's inner child. Your reasonable adult will have to take control and end your defiant or "I'm worthless" or imitator song and dance. Be an assertive independent person and plan your own life; be the equal of the strong, critical, distrusting, controlling parent.

Another type of domination is by *a saintly parent* who tells you exactly what to do, feel, and think because it is "good" or "the right way" or "God's word" or "what must be done." Breaking this parent's rules causes shame, a feeling that we are bad or sinful, and arouses an appropriate concern that our parents won't like us. Eventually, you may have serious troubles: you feel imprisoned, in conflict about what is right and wrong, rejected by others for being so rigid and judgmental, or burdened with lots of psychosomatic complaints. What can you do? Start questioning some of the old rules, using your own reason and life experience. Next recognize there is a scared child inside your saintly mother or father, i.e. that super-confident voice of authority is simply a little child inside saying, "my mommy (daddy) says..." and repeating what he/she heard from his/her saint (your grandmother or grandfather who repeated her/his saint's rules, etc.). Decide your own values (see chapter 3) and just hope your saint can accept you as an independent person who carefully plans his/her own life.

Other parents, according to Halpern, are unloving and narcissistic (self-centered). Others are over-loving and seductive (Oedipus and Electra Complexes). All have their own internal needs that drive them. If you are unloved, the major task is to learn to love yourself, recognizing your parent has a defect in his/her ability to love but it is not your fault. Seductive involvement with the opposite sexed parent causes trouble: guilt, anger, and jealousy; it alienates the same sexed parent and may interfere with establishing more mature and satisfying love relationships. For every problem, Halpern's solution is to learn to recognize the dynamic interaction between your needy, insecure inner child and your parent's inner child. Then deal with your parent in an independent adult manner. Reference to Transactional Analysis in chapter 9 should be helpful in understanding these dynamics. Sometimes a therapist is needed to gain this kind of insight.

Each of us develops and/or were assigned a role within our families. Often we grow up disliking several of the roles we adopted in our family. These roles may even continue whenever we return home years later. Some of these roles are: the clown that everyone makes fun of, the cute doll, the family failure or sad sack or black sheep, the one who always has a problem, the family genius or business success, the rescuer or therapist, mother's or father's helper, etc. You may be uncomfortable with the role the family continually assigns to you. But even if you like it (e.g. the doll or the genius), often you are only encouraged to interact in the one assigned way, as though that is all you are. It may take considerable awareness of what's happening and effort to interact differently in order to break out of your assigned family role. Life is bigger than just one role or one relationship with one parent. Breaking away from parents means being free to grow and develop new roles and relationships, as well as establishing good, new, and different relationships with both parents. Perhaps Halpern's book should be called "helping parents grow up."

Codependency: Over-Involvement in Someone Else's Problems



The term codependency, as first used in the alcohol treatment field, meant any person whose life was seriously affected by an alcoholic. Now the meaning has evolved and expanded. A codependent person today has two problems: (1) a disastrous relationship with an addict or compulsive person and (2) a disabling personal problem of his/her own, namely, an obsession with controlling or curing the other person which leads to frustration.

People who are codependent care a lot; they devote their lives to saving others who are in trouble. Sounds wonderful! But that isn't the full story. Codependency is *caring run amuck*. Melody Beattie (1987) describes codependents as angry, controlling, preachy, blaming, hard

to talk to, subtly manipulative, amorphous non-persons, and generally miserable. Not exactly angels of mercy. They have tried so hard to manage someone else's life--to "save" them--but they failed, and sooner or later their life crumbled into bitterness, despair, guilt, and hopelessness. They became martyrs, tyrants, people-pleasers, clinging vines, distraught parents, 24-hour-a-day caretakers, etc. They have lost control of their lives.

Naturally, these "rescuers" are attracted to people who certainly need lots of help, such as alcoholics, drug users, con artists, habitual criminals, sex addicts, mentally ill, physically ill, and, perhaps, most unsuspectingly, selfish, irresponsible, troubled children or ambitious workaholics who need someone to support them while they "do their thing." The codependents of alcoholics have an organization to help them, called Al-Anon (call AA for information). Self-help groups for other types of codependents are available in some cities (call Codependents Anonymous at 602-277-7991). But codependents often do not recognize their responsibility for their own problems; they see only their gallant efforts to help an ungrateful, troubled person whom they now blame for all their misery. They don't see the choices they have made. Much has been written about co-dependency recently (Bradshaw, 1988; Kellogg, 1987; Wegscheider-Cruse, 1990).

The basic traits of codependents--caring and helping--are very commendable. However, the obsession with solving another person's problems becomes problematic (if their cures don't work). The codependent's basic personality problems seem to be excessive other-centeredness, i.e. needing others to be happy; a lack of clear-cut "boundaries" between them and the addict, leading to assuming responsibility for another's life; low self-esteem, self-criticism, excessive guilt, and shame; anger, nagging, and threats; denial of one's own problems and need for love; unwarranted optimism about changing others; depression and an inability to accept reality. Some theorists say *shame* is the basic cause for addictions and for codependency.



When codependents die, they see someone else's life flash before them!
-Timmen Cermak



Beattie (1987) says *recovery from codependency is simple: detach yourself* from the other person, take responsibility for managing only your own life, and be good to yourself. Then she writes two books describing how to do that (the usual: build self-esteem, become assertive, overcome the barriers to intimacy, set goals, handle your emotions, etc.).

Detachment from another person does not involve rejecting the person, it is rejecting your feeling responsible for them. As Beattie explains, "detachment is caring without going crazy." To become detached from another person requires a clear notion of who *we* are, what *our* purposes are, and what limits we place on *our* involvement in another person's life. Being able to detach involves "having well defined boundaries." The boundaries between people may be very vague and fluid, especially in very close relationships, e.g. a mother or father may "feel for" a son as he struggles with a physical handicap or a daughter as she goes through the loss of her first love. A spouse may feel great pride as his/her partner gets promoted or graduates with honors. Our identification with our children or spouse may be so great that we "live their lives with them," experiencing their joys and problems ourselves. The boundary between their life and our life may be weak; in which case, their life invades our life; as a codependent, another person's life becomes our life...and we try to fix it.

Very dependent people have vague boundaries; they feel the need for others to "take over" and make them feel sufficient and whole. People who have been raised to be caregivers--or to feel unworthy of love unless they give a lot more than they get--tend to believe they should be strong and "take over" and take care of other people's problems (weak boundaries). If we have been controlled by someone, it may be unclear to us what parts of us are ours to control and what parts someone else has a right or needs to control (weak boundaries). Of course, our original bonds with our parents (involving weak or strong boundaries and major or minor control over us) have powerful effects on our relationships throughout life.

If a 25-year-old child or a spouse constantly gets into trouble, say some illegal activity, the weak-boundaried, codependent parent or spouse would continue to respond with dread and excuses for each offense (almost as if he/she had committed the crimes) and feel compelled every time (probably thinking "I can't let this ever happen again") to do everything possible to buy the best legal defense to avoid punishment. On the other hand, the strong-boundaried, detached person would have regrets but hold the other person responsible for his/her illegal behavior, let him/her fend for him/herself, and let them take the consequences. It isn't a matter of codependents loving the other person more than detached people; rather, it is differing degrees of enmeshment or confused identification with the other person. It is a matter of trying to control someone else's life.

If you are a codependent and overly involved in running someone else's life, you need to withdraw and detach yourself. This is done by "setting limits" or "setting a boundary" with this person. In this way you clarify what you will and will not do for another person; you establish your rights and set the limits of your commitment to the other person (even if you feel you should do everything for them). Explain to the person you have been worrying that you have done all you can, that they must now care for themselves, that they probably

need professional help as well as a support group, that you have, do, and will love them deeply, but you want to make the best of your own life. Then, get started immediately focusing on improving your own life. Find useful, interesting, important things to do (see chapter 3). Have some successes and some fun. (Be sure you don't go looking for another addict to take care of.)

How can you tell the difference between codependency and just being a good, caring person? Probably by your degree of involvement and the amount of pain you feel. Examples of codependency: If you only think and talk about someone else's problem, have a long history of unsuccessful efforts to rescue him/her or change his/her behavior, and always feel "I have to do something" to help a particular person, you are codependent and need to detach. If you have been terribly upset for months with a person's problems (or with a series of people with similar problems) and are thinking "I can't go on living like this" but you do, you are codependent and need to detach. If your lover has drained you of all your assets or your spouse has had repeated affairs or abandons you while "working at the office," and you are "going out of your mind" trying to hold on to him/her, you are codependent and need to detach. If you react with horror to the suggestion that you get out of this mess which is destroying your life, saying "Oh, my God, I couldn't do that; I care too much," you are codependent and need to detach.

If our self-concept is low and has weak, unclear boundaries, we may (a) be dependent, taken over, used, or manipulated by others, or (b) feel so identified with a needy person that we are compelled to take over and manage the other person's life. In the beginning, the codependent looks like a strong "savior" but in the end they feel crushed. If our boundaries are thick walls, no one can get close to us and we aren't open to change. Ideally, our boundaries will be strong enough to resist unreasonable, destructive demands (no matter how flattering they seem at first) but flexible enough to let in freely given intimacy and love. More self-esteem (chapter 14) and assertiveness (chapter 13) are needed if our boundaries are overly weak or overly strong. In therapy, codependents are repeatedly told the Three C's: You didn't *cause* it; you can't *control* it; you can *cure* it! In short, you can stop supporting the addict's sickness and get a healthy life of your own.

Mental health professionals are rather critical of the addiction and codependency concepts. For one thing, psychologists often feel parents are unfairly blamed for these problems (and the shame-based inner child), rather than the environment or our culture. Other critics point out that women suffer most of the codependency and women are blamed for these problems, i.e. the victim is blamed. Also, critics point out that caring and loyal codependents are extremely controlled by others and, yet, the recommended treatment by writers in this field is often a 12-step program which teaches "I am helpless" and turns over all the remaining control over their lives to a "higher power." Instead, perhaps, they need to *take control themselves* of their lives and

relationships. For more criticism of the codependency concept, see Tavis (1992) and Solomon (1994). The latter author attacks the emphasis on being independent by citing the benefits of mutual dependency or caring in love relationships. Healthy giving and loving support should not be confused with unhealthy codependency.

Melodie Beattie's books are considered "fairly good" by professionals, but many other books about codependency are not respected, especially if they take a very spiritual approach (Santrock, Minnett & Campbell, 1994). More help might be gotten from books about assertiveness and communication (chapter 13), interpersonal relationships (chapters 9 & 10), life-planning and decision-making (chapters 2, 3 & 13), building self-esteem (chapters 6 & 14), and anger or abuse (chapter 7).

Believing You Are in Control of Your Life: Becoming an Internalizer



In order to feel independent and free and responsible for what happens, you must see yourself as having some control over the situation, over your own behavior, and over the outcome of the situation. Otherwise, you see yourself as helpless and at the mercy of the "powers that be" or fate or chance. We have already discussed self-efficacy, i.e. faith in your ability to handle a specific situation, in chapters 4 and 5 (also see method #9 in chapter 14). That is important but doesn't need to be repeated here; however, the concept of internal or external locus of control does need to be briefly described because it is another important aspect of passivity and dependency.

Some people believe they are in almost complete control of what happens in their lives. They are called "internalizers" because they assume the locus of the controls over their lives to be internal, i.e. inside them (or inside the space ship you are in charge of). Likewise, Humanists and Existentialists believe that we are internalizers and have choices to make that determine what happens to us. Thus, we are responsible for our future and for what we feel.



Self-discipline is when you tell yourself to do something and you don't talk back.
-W. K. Hope



Other people believe they are not at all in control of what happens to them (these people feel like they are merely riding a space ship controlled by a control center far away). It seems to them that external forces, such as other people, fate, luck or chance, are responsible for what happens to them. Such people are "externalizers." At first, it may seem like externalizers would be hopeless, scared, and paranoid. Some are but others are optimistic and blissful because they believe "things happen for the best," life is guided by a kind fate and/or by God's will, or a benevolent God is looking out for them.

Many learning theorists, such as B. F. Skinner, believe that forces in the environment (including previously learned response habits based on rewards and punishment) determine what happens in our lives. This eliminates free will (meaning an undetermined choice--one which is of our doing at this moment and not explained by the environment or our past experience). Yet, many if not most people *feel as if* they make "free" choices and are in control. How could we get the belief that we are directing our lives if everything were determined by external factors (which I don't believe)? Because it "seems like" we are planning and directing our lives, at least some parts of it. I believe that is an accurate perception, but, in addition, research has shown that in certain circumstances there is a remarkable tendency to believe we are in control when we aren't. For instance, Langer (1975) sold \$1 lottery tickets. One half got a randomly selected ticket; the other half got to select their own ticket. Then she asked them how much they would sell their ticket for. The first group would take on average \$1.96. The second group wanted an average of \$8.67, presumably asking much more because they believed it was more likely to win. So it is quite possible to believe you are in control when you aren't. (And, as we saw in Seligman's helplessness research in chapter 6, the opposite may be true too: dogs and many humans too may believe they are out of control when they aren't. More on this later.)

Why might a person believe they have control when they haven't? This view provides hope (of winning the lottery, etc.) and makes the world less scary and more predictable and comfortable. Indeed, considerable evidence suggests we are more effective, more responsible, and happier when we feel we are partially in control, i.e. have made the decisions and carried out the plans for changing things (Deaux & Wrightsman, 1984). But, of course, it is usually impossible to know exactly how much of our good fortune is due to our efforts and how much is due to others, fate, or chance. It is, to some extent, a matter of "beliefs."

Several years ago Julian Rotter developed a simple but now famous personality test for measuring internalization-externalization, called the I-E Scale. It asks these kinds of questions in order to measure your beliefs about your control over life events:

1. Are most unhappy events in your life the result of bad luck or your mistakes?

2. Does it pay to prepare a lot for tests or is it impossible to study for most tests?
3. Can ordinary people influence the government or do a few people in power run things?
4. Do good friendships just happen because the chemistry is right or do friendships happen because both people are making attempts to get along?
5. Does it pay to carefully plan things out in detail or do most things just work out as a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow?
6. Is what happens to you mostly your own doing or are most things beyond your control?

Once you understand the concept, the internalizer answers are obvious, so you can get a good idea of how you would score on such a test.

What does being an internalizer or externalizer have to do with dependency? If we consider our internal cognitive processes, such as thoughts, skills, and decision-making, to be unimportant in determining what we do, it seems unlikely that we would become resourceful, self-reliant self-helpers. If we thought external forces ruled our lives, we'd do little but look for help from others, human service agencies, employers, government, God, or fate. Perhaps we'd adopt an Eastern philosophy that says the universe is unfolding as it should and our lot is to quietly, serenely accept whatever happens.

Beier and Valens (1975) have taken an attributional approach to this issue and described five common *targets of blame when things go wrong*: (1) other *people*, especially parents, siblings, friends, teachers, bosses or traits in others involving selfishness, hostility, stupidity, prejudice or other forms of maladjustment or malice; (2) *forces* beyond our control, such as the government, a lack of money or time, or fate; (3) *ourselves*, in the form of self-blame for physical appearance, size, inability, nervousness, temper and so on; (4) *objects*, such as defective or unreliable equipment--the late train, a computer error, etc.; and (5) *social-psychological circumstances*, including deprived or traumatic childhood experiences, poverty, poor parents, poor education and so on. These targets of blame, including self-blame (internal), become reasons for doing nothing because we see the problems as beyond our control. Surely this is one way to become pessimistic and passive.

On the other hand, believing we are in control of the situation has a powerful impact on our behavior. We try harder. Pain and fears aren't as disruptive if we believe we can control them to some extent. A dramatic but gruesome illustration of this was done by Curt Richter with rats. Wild rats are very good swimmers, being able to stay alive for 80 hours or so in water. However, if they are restrained so they can't escape and frightened right before being put in the water, many will die after a few minutes of frantic swimming. By the way, they don't drown; they just suddenly stop swimming and die. It is as if they

give up. Yet, if just a few seconds before dying the rats are permitted to escape from the water, the next time they are put into the water they will swim 40 or 60 or 80 hours. They apparently have learned to have hope. We all need hope.

The little I-E Scale has resulted in extensive research (Lefcourt, 1976; Phares, 1976). Internalizers try harder to change their environment and to change themselves. This involves being more perceptive, gathering more information, remembering it better, and using more facts and care in decision-making about how to cope. Internalizers may be less likely to blindly follow orders; they are more likely to realize there are choices to be made and rely on their own judgment. Of course, when internalizers fail, it is harder for them to say "it isn't important" or "it's someone else's fault" than it is for externalizers. Yet, externalizers are more anxious (lack of hope?).



Strong people make as many and as ghastly mistakes as weak people. The difference is that strong people admit them, laugh at them, learn from them. That is how they become strong.

-Richard Needham



Remember, regardless of how little confidence you have now in your self-control, there are some internalizer beliefs and some externalizer beliefs in all of us. Furthermore, how we see ourselves (internalizer or externalizer) may depend upon the situation and on whether we are considering successful outcomes or failures. Most importantly, as we gain self-control skills we become more confident internalizers.

There is a tendency, supported by research, to think of internalizers as being healthy and externalizers as being maladjusted. There is some logic to this; however, Rotter believed *extremes* in both directions were unhealthy. *Internalizers may overestimate their control* (there is no guarantee that an internalizer will be competent and some situations are unchangeable) and may be disappointed when they don't get what they wanted--and/or they may feel especially guilty and sad about failing. *Externalizers overlook their opportunities to influence* the situation and may feel unnecessarily helpless. Ideal, as I see it, would be to maximize your control where possible and, at the same time, increase your acceptance of the unavoidable (the Serenity Prayer).

It should be noted that other overlapping factors are important in accounting for our lives, in addition to the internal or external locus of control. For example, there are stable and unstable factors, like intellect is fairly stable but mood is changeable. Weiner (1980)

concluded that stable factors influence our expectation of success even more than the locus of control. Naturally some of the internal factors are not stable--our talents and skills will vary from task to task, our effort or mood will fluctuate too, etc. Also, as one can see, there is a question about which factors are controllable (or intentional) and which are not, e.g. perhaps you can control how hard you try but you can't control other peoples' motivation or their ability.

As one might imagine, internalizers and externalizers prefer different kinds of therapy--and probably different kinds of self-help methods. Both respond to rewards but externalizers are not very motivated by the threat of punishment (Deaux & Wrightsman, 1984). Internalizers prefer a therapy in which they can actively participate and from which they can learn how to handle their own concerns. They probably incorporate self-help ideas easily because that is their natural inclination: "how can I use this to mold my world?" Externalizers prefer a therapy that is directive or authoritative (Lefcourt, 1976). They have greater difficulty seeing the relevance of self-help and remembering to use the information. Once used successfully, however, the self-help methods should be self-reinforcing, even in an externalizer.

The explanation we have of our world is complex--but it is important in understanding how we react and feel about our lives, our selves and our future. Lefcourt (1976) says, "...man must come to be more effective and able to perceive himself as the determiner of his fate if he is to live comfortably with himself." To cope, you need to feel responsible and more in control.

How to become an Internalizer

One way, if you had a choice, is to be born into a warm, protective, nurturing, middle or upper class family which models success and encourages independence and self-reliance. Other ways involve learning through experience and training that you can change things, that you have the ability to self-help and influence others, that the future is partly your responsibility. There is evidence that applied psychology courses and workshops, personally useful books, self-help projects, personal growth experiences, and certain skill-oriented therapies increase the internal orientation. This book is designed to give you control over your life, i.e. help you be a realistic internalizer.



To accomplish great things, we must not only act but also dream, not only plan but also believe.

-Anatole France



Learning Independent Decision-Making

You can readily see the extent that our parents, institutions, culture, and peer groups and our own needs and history make decisions for us and control us. But, if you aren't making decisions, you are dependent. It is not simple to decide how and when to take charge of our lives. To many young people it seems that they must defiantly oppose everyone telling them "how to do things" or else cave in to the pressures from all sides. Fortunately, there is a middle ground because one person can not decide everything entirely on their own and, besides, many external influences incorporate the "wisdom of the ages" that should not be contemptuously rejected (Campbell, 1975). The middle ground is making our own decisions as best we can and as often as we can, but accepting established customs or well informed opinions in situations where we can not make a decision for ourselves.

When we are overly compliant, it means we are (1) discounting our own decision-making ability, (2) denying the possibility that each situation is unique warranting an individualized decision, and (3) accepting the foolish notion that traditional social practices are based on all there is to know about the human condition. Surely, social attitudes about the "right thing to do" in 2105 will be as different as current attitudes are from 1905. However, no matter how logical it is to make your own decisions and be less conforming and more responsible, it isn't possible in every instance nor is it easy.

Some of the most poignant words I have ever heard were about making hard decisions and carrying them out. See [The Paradoxical Commandments](http://www.paradoxicalcommandments.com/) (<http://www.paradoxicalcommandments.com/>) by Dr. Kent M. Keith.

How do we learn best? The Personal Growth Model

There are many ways to make a decision. Some people are so unsure of themselves that they try to think what dad or mom (or some other respected person) would do. Other people put off making a final decision. Deciding to do nothing is still a decision. Many people quickly make decisions, not bothering to gather much information. Some people seek advice from a favorite source or two. A few people know where to get relevant, reliable information, consider the pros and cons, and cogently make decisions. Some deciders gather such great volumes of facts that they get bogged down in the process.

Decision-making involves acquiring knowledge and comparing alternatives. It should help you to consider four decision-making or

education models: (1) *self-directed, personal growth model*, (2) the *traditional education model*, (3) the *medical model*, and (4) the *super-guru model*. *Traditional* educators assume that the students know little about the subject and the teacher knows a lot. So, the teacher, having a full pitcher of knowledge, pours each student's empty glass full. Teachers oriented towards *personal growth* recognize that students have knowledge to share with the teacher and other students, i.e. they have pitchers of knowledge too. Each student in the self-directed personal growth model seeks out new knowledge and awareness for their own reasons, then they share that information so it can be used in life by others.

The *medical model*, like the traditional teacher, assumes that the expert--the doctor--has all the knowledge and makes all the decisions. The doctor diagnoses the problem, decides how to treat it, does the treatment, and tells you when you are well. The personal growth facilitator does not try to "cure" a "patient," instead he/she helps the other person acquire new needed skills or new outlooks for coping better. Medical model treatment starts with sickness and ends with a cure; growth may start with sickness or wellness and fosters improvement which never ends.

The *super-guru* model assumes that a guru--a therapist, teacher, writer, preacher, etc.--has the answer, a blueprint for living. In contrast, the growth model assumes that the good life is more complicated than a simple prescription. In self-direction, optimal, creative growth involves the creation of your own values, dreams, and skills, and the avoiding of internal barriers to progress (Elliott, 1973).

As you can see, gathering information--and the way you go about doing that--is closely related to decision-making. In some situations, you may need a teacher who will simply pour out the facts you need. At times, where the decisions are very technical and you have no training, you must surrender your decision-making to an expert. Most of the time, though, you are better off gathering the needed information, listening to the opinions of others, and doing your own evaluation of the pros and cons for different alternatives. Granted, this is work, not the "easy way."

The major decisions of our lifetime

As we're growing up, we make few major decisions. (Some made impulsively are mighty important, though, such as teenage pregnancy.) But, rather suddenly as a young adult, say 18 to 25, we are often confronted with several major decisions. We may have no one to advise us or we may get conflicting advice. If you ask young people, "What are the most important decisions you will ever have to make?" you get these answers: (1) whom to marry, (2) what career to choose, (3) when to have children and how many, and, occasionally someone mentions, (4) what values and morals to live by. Notice that all these decisions tend to be made relatively early in life, although marriage and children are being delayed more and more.

Ask students what decisions are most carefully and logically made, and they wisely admit: what car or sound system or house to buy. Ask what decisions are made under the greatest social-emotional pressure, and they say: sex and its unwanted consequences, like having an abortion or giving up the child or getting married prematurely. Ask what decisions are made almost accidentally, and they say: whom to date, choice of major (career), and getting pregnant. Clearly, there is a lot of room for improvement in decision-making.



I'm 47 years old and I've figured out what I don't want. All I have to do now is decide what I want.

-Anonymous

If you want a place in the sun, you must leave the shade of the family tree.

-Osage saying



Barriers to careful decision-making

It seems that the most important and pressured decisions are made with the least objective thought. The most careful choices involve cars, sound systems, and houses, where there are lots of technical facts and research, even though there isn't much difference between manufacturers, such as General Motors and Chrysler. In contrast, there are enormous differences among partners, careers, planned and unplanned children, etc.; yet, our selection process is sloppy where the range of choices is great. Why? Largely because strong needs and emotions interfere. As we have discussed, the strong needs for sex and love push us into marriage and/or parenthood. We may spend years in high school, college, and graduate school preparing for a career without even one day of actual work in our chosen field. Furthermore, we may have initially selected that life-long career because we liked one teacher (totally unrelated to the work). Likewise, chapter 3 tells us that the values guiding our lives are often hand-me-downs or pushed on us by parents, friends, or our subculture.

There are many stumbling blocks to good decision-making (Wheeler & Janis, 1980). First of all, we may *deny there is a problem* or assume there is no solution *or grab the first solution* that occurs to us. Or, instead of hastily making decisions, we may *postpone* making them. Kaufmann (1973) called this decidophobia, an incapacitating fear of making decisions.



When you have to make a choice and don't make it, that is in itself a choice.

-William James

Secondly, we *may not consider the long-range consequences* or values we want to achieve. More often, we overlook possible solutions because our thinking is inflexible or defeatist. People often *feel inadequate and this interferes* with good decision-making. For example, we are afraid to "date around" even as a teenager because we don't want to lose the current boy/girlfriend or we avoid dating certain people "because he/she wouldn't go out with me." We don't even consider certain careers "because it costs too much money to go to medical school" or "because I couldn't handle the math" or "because I get all upset by other peoples' problems." These are all self-putdowns. We must master the fears that interfere with good decision-making. We can do that (Marone, 1992).

What is more mortifying than to feel that you have missed the plum for want of courage to shake the tree?
-L. P. Smith

Thirdly, we do not take the time to fantasize about the best and the worst possible outcomes for each alternative in order to consider the advantages and disadvantages. We *do not gather all the information* (How will you and others be affected by each alternative? How will you and others feel about you?) and expert opinion needed for a wise decision, because we don't know how or don't want to bother. Often, it is wishful thinking that the solution will be quick or our intuition will give us an easy answer. Fourthly, we do not know how or take the time to gather the information needed to *carefully weigh all the alternatives*. Deciding is a complex process.

Fifthly, many of us *do not develop a careful plan for accomplishing our goals*; thus, undermining our efforts to change. It is common for people--even smart college students--to believe that deciding where to go is all they have to do to get there, e.g. they set a final goal but develop no specific action plan. They say, "I want to get all A's next semester" but give little thought to getting there. The wish or hope is there but the commitment to a realistic day by day plan is not. Perhaps we don't think detailed plans are necessary to achieve our difficult, long-range goals. Not only are there no plans of attack, there are no contingency plans in case things go wrong either. For example, the premed student, who gets such poor grades for *four* years that he/she can't get into Medical School, responds with "Oh, my God, what am I going to do now?" There must be some reason why we have such

inadequate plans for our lives; we plan our spring breaks in Florida in more detail than we plan our careers.

Lastly, Wheeler and Janis say there are two common reactions when things go wrong: *immediately assuming the worst and impulsively adopting the opposite approach*. Examples: Two people decide to break up after their first disagreement. A couple has saved money all their lives until one middle-aged child "borrows" several thousand dollars for a boyfriend who disappears. They decide to spend all their money on a big home and travel. Both examples could be serious errors. Avoid making major decisions when you are very emotional. Let things settle. Figure out why things went wrong. With new knowledge and understanding, make decisions and plans again.

If we can recognize the smoke screens and barriers caused by our own emotions, we will be in a better position to make good decisions. Like other problems associated with dependency, it is helpful to have considerable experience before making major decisions (like who to marry), good skills so that one is assured of eventual success (like finding another lover) even if this effort fails, specific ideas and plans to make it work (not just "live happily ever after"), and generally a positive attitude towards ourselves (I'm a good, considerate, well organized person).

It is so sad to hear a 45-year-old person say, "I've never liked my work, but it's too late to change." Or a 25-year-old mother may say, "I married John because I wanted to get out of the house" or "because I got pregnant" or "because he was the basketball star but I knew he resented my being smarter." Or a 30-year-old father may say, "I married Jill because she was a knock out before she gained 30 pounds having three kids, now we have nothing in common except the children." It won't do much good to advise a person in love to "wait," because the emotions involved are overwhelming. But, learning about your self through personal growth and mastering the art of rational decision-making before "falling in love" could prevent a lot of human misery. It might take weeks or months of careful work to make a good decision about your career or partner but it is worth it (see Freud's comment below). Consult with experts and friends. See method # 11 in chapter 13 for detailed decision-making procedures. See chapter 10 for partner selection and chapter 14 for building self-esteem. How could one hope to become self-reliant and self-actualizing without becoming a good decision-maker? Decision-making is not merely a knack or a gift, it is a learnable skill and hard work. It may require intuition too, but logic, information, judgment, and mature emotional reactions are all involved.



When making a decision of *minor* importance, I have always found it advantageous to consider all the pros and cons. In *vital* matters, however, such as the choice of a mate or a profession, the decision should come from the unconscious. The important decisions of our personal life should be governed by the deep inner needs of our nature.

-Sigmund Freud



It has been said that the best way to decide what to do is to ask: "What seems right to do?" Don't ask, "What feels good?" or "What gets me the most?" or "What is the obvious choice?" When the decision is difficult, there is no one obviously correct choice. There will be clever arguments against every choice. So, as much as possible, do the right thing.

A student shared with me something like this; I modified it some. The original writer is unknown.

- When you have worked very hard to build something valuable, your contributions will be dismissed as soon as you are gone.
 - Work hard and build anyway.
- When you are empathic and caring, people will say you are manipulative and politicking.
 - Care and do good anyway.
- When you are seeking excellence, you will encounter closed minded, self-centered, and unchangeable people.
 - Seek excellence and achievements anyway.
- When you are active and optimistic, you will be criticized as being an unrealistic idealist and opposed.
 - Be positive and constructive anyway.
- When you seek noble ideals and strive to reach grand goals, you will be swamped with indifference, meanness, and greed.
 - Revere love and truth anyway.

Extreme Dependency and Pathology



Dependent Personality Disorder

Some dependent people, called Dependent Personality Disorder, are so disabled and restricted that they can hardly function alone. For others the disability is less severe, e.g. there are people addicts who must be with someone almost all the time--for some only one person will do (e.g. a parent, spouse, friend, or child), for others anyone will do. In other cases, there is a compulsive "dependency" of sorts but it isn't considered a disorder, such as a highly effective workaholic or a teenager constantly listening to music. People can become addicted to or, at least, dependent on many other specific activities, such as sports or exercise, sex, religion, social activities, hobbies, TV, reading, music, cleaning, dressing, and so on. If you feel insecure and

inadequate, then you are more likely to depend on someone or repeat some activity over and over that you are sure you can do. Feeling so inadequate that you feel you can't handle your life must be a miserable existence.

Masserman (1943) proposed that psychological problems, e.g. hypochondria, were a panic reaction to being powerless or feeling unable to cope. He believed almost any neurotic reaction, such as anxiety, social withdrawal, depression, etc., no matter how ineffective, was more comfortable than doing nothing about the real stresses we face. So, being tense or sad is better than being weak and dependent. It is interesting to note that feeling helpless or inadequate has been involved in every emotion we have discussed thus far—stress, depression, anger, and, now, dependency.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV-R* describes a diagnosable disorder called "dependent personality." The characteristics are:

1. Passively allows others to assume responsibility for major areas of life because of fears or inability to function independently (e.g., lets spouse decide what kind of job he/she should have).
2. Subordinates his/her own needs to those of persons on whom he or she depends. This is to avoid conflicts and to avoid having to rely on self (e.g., a dependent or codependent person might even tolerate an abusive spouse).
3. Lacks self-confidence (e.g., sees self as helpless, stupid).

Research spanning 30 years (Greenberg & Bornstein, 1988) suggests that a dependent personality is at risk of depression, alcoholism, obesity, tobacco addiction, and a variety of physical and psychosomatic disorders (note all the "oral" activities). In spite of having many psychological problems, dependent people show a strong tendency to *believe that their problems are somatic* and, consequently, they seek professional help for physical problems or see their depression as a "chemical imbalance." When under stress, dependent people generally seek out others, rather than withdraw. For unknown reasons, if a girl is dependent as a child, there is a tendency for her to remain consistently dependent from early childhood throughout adulthood. On the other hand, passivity and dependency in boys and men are not nearly so stable or predictable. Possibly, we are just more accepting of passivity in women and make fewer efforts to change them.

What are the more common dynamics of dependency? You might see yourself or your friends in some of these speculations:

1. A person may become almost totally helpless, which, as noted in chapter 6, is a basis for feeling depressed. Therapists have observed that a dependent personality often precedes a depressive reaction.

2. Dependent people manipulate others. Getting people into doing things for us may be a self-deceptive way to deny our helplessness or a way to prove our charm or cleverness and/or others' gullibility or weakness. Correspondingly, many people love to have someone depend on them and look up to them; thus, they are easily manipulated: "I just have to be nice and flatter Mom or cuddle up to Daddy and they'll do anything for me." The last example is harmless enough, but the manipulation can involve "playing hard ball." For instance, an effective way to get care and attention from our parents or loved ones is to make bad decisions, be indecisive or irresponsible, and get in trouble. Dependent people learn that weakness and passive defiance are very powerful and difficult to deal with: "I'm powerful, I can drive them up a wall" or "They don't have any choice but to take care of me!" Like an attention-starved child, some dependent people act as though it is better to get in trouble than to be neglected. Sometimes, governmental systems encourage dependency: "It is better to have a baby and go on welfare than to stay in school and have to look for a job." If anyone cares about you, being "down and out" and helpless are powerful ways of getting help. Certainly, being compassionate is commendable, but compassion must strengthen the weak, not further weaken them.
3. Dependency may stem from an insatiable need for love or a need to prove one's importance: "Give me more proof you really love me" or "I want Mommy to love me more than she does anyone else in the world, even more than Dad" or "I want you to love me totally, like my Daddy did." We all have needs to be babied and cared for, of course. And, perhaps, we are all a little resentful that we aren't loved and nurtured enough (for our inner child). But it is only in extreme cases where we constantly demand proof of love.
4. Some psychologists point out the similarity between the fear in dependency and the fear in agoraphobia, which is a fear of being away from home and in crowds or open spaces where we have no support. Both can be intense fears that debilitate us.
5. Martyrdom and masochism may, in some cases, also be closely related. The subservient person who neglects him/herself while serving others "hand and foot" may feel taken advantage of and lead a life of suffering--that's a martyr. Shainness (1984), a female psychiatrist, has written a book, *Sweet Suffering*, describing the tendency of some women (and men) to fear authority and to put themselves down to such an extent that it becomes a form of masochism (an enjoyment of pain and degradation).
6. A common reaction to dependency is anger. Others may respond hostilely to our dependency and we may resent the dependency we see in others. Wouldn't you hate to be weak and considered rather helpless all the time? As we saw in chapter 7, sometimes long-term subservience results in a sudden outburst of violence but more likely it will result in continuing passive-aggressiveness ("I won't do anything as long as you're bugging me"). A resentful child or a disgruntled

employee or student will passively (quietly) resist, e.g. the child will procrastinate ("I'll do it as soon as this TV program is over" but forgets), the worker just doesn't pay much attention, and the student pretends to like the teacher but talks about him/her behind his/her back.

Naturally, having someone constantly expect you to take care of them, especially if you feel they could care for themselves, will become irritating (unless you are a needy codependent). It may not be as obvious, but the weak, dependent person is also likely to subtly resent someone who always has more or is more capable or better organized. Resentment is associated with dependency in all directions, including feeling like a victim as we discussed in chapter 7.

7. Mutual unassertiveness or an un verbalized compromise may be the easiest but not the best arrangement. For example, students implicitly strike a bargain with teachers, such as "if you don't make me assume responsibility for planning and controlling my own learning, I'll tolerate your dull lectures over the textbook. Make it easy for me to get an A or B and I'll not criticize your teaching." A labor union and the management might compromise like this: "I'll let you have the money and status of being the boss if my workload is easy and if I *don't* have to learn about the business, make decisions, or take any other responsibility for running this business." Avoiding responsibility is almost always a form of dependency. If one person *accepts* responsibility (a boss or one spouse in child care or one sex in military combat) and another person *avoids* responsibility, it is hard to assume those two people are equals.
8. Dependency seems to be related to alcoholism, perhaps both in the beginning of the process (dependent needs lead to drinking) and at the end of the process (the disabilities of alcoholism force us to be dependent). Dependency is also related to cigarette smoking; the reasons aren't known.

Dependent people as psychotherapy patients

The dependent person is prone to a variety of physical and psychological disorders. Given the same degree of poor health, dependent people are far more likely to seek treatment than independent people. And, they behave differently from non-dependent people in treatment, e.g. dependent personalities react more positively toward the doctor and comply more fully with doctors' orders; they are more perceptive of treatment procedures and other people; they request extra help and useful information about themselves; they stay in treatment longer (Bornstein, 1993).

The dependent person is in many ways an ideal patient: quick to come in, observant, cooperative, positive, eager to get treatment, eager to please, etc. The problem is that dependent people will resist

terminating this nurturing relationship with a caring, giving authority figure. They often get worse or have a crisis near the end of therapy.

How will a dependent personality react to self-help? An interesting but unresearched question. Probably they would much prefer to interact with a supportive professional than with a self-help book. They may be drawn to a self-help group and become a perceptive, active, helpful group member. But, as in a relationship with a therapist, they are likely to resist making real changes in their lives and may be very reluctant to leave the group. Regardless of whether you are in therapy or doing self-help, you have to confront your dependency. Dependency has many payoffs; you must be willing to give them up before much self-improvement can be made.

Now we will turn to the self-treatment of passivity and dependency.

Methods for Becoming More Self-Reliant and Independent

The *major self-help methods* in this problem area are: assertiveness training, problem-solving, and decision-making skills training, building self-esteem, and gaining insight into the causes of our dependency. As in the other chapters, the methods will be discussed by levels.

Level I: Learn and reward new behavior; avoid people caring for or directing you

If you have learned to be a follower or to be submissive and indecisive, you might try the following.

Reward your own independent goal setting, planning, and action. This involves more than reading a self-help book like this one. Just reading does not necessarily involve taking responsibility for changing nor does it prove that you can actually improve yourself. You must initiate a plan of action and carry it out successfully before you can truly believe you are capable and independent (method #16 in chapter 11). Practice self-control over and over, using different methods, until you believe you can change things. Several behavior modification studies, using positive reinforcement, have reduced dependent, helpless behavior (Hickok & Komechak, 1974; Harbin, 1981).

Independent behavior can be learned from models. For example, Goldstein, et al. (1973) tape recorded 30 situations and illustrated independent and dependent responses to each situation: You and your partner arrive home late. You are searching for your

keys but can't find them. Your partner says, "Why did you have to lose your keys now?"

Independent response: "Well, where are *your* keys?"

Dependent response: "Do you remember where I put them?"

Or: A friend asks you to buy a particular gift for her mother while you are downtown. However, you buy a different present because the one she wanted was sold out. She says, "I think it's ugly!"

Independent response: "Then *you* should have gone yourself."

Dependent response: "I'll exchange it for you."

The subjects were rewarded for choosing the independent response as what they would actually say. After this brief exercise, the subjects (dependent males and females) selected more independent responses during the post-test than they did during the pretest, but it is unknown if they changed in real life.

A self-helper could make up his/her own situations and think up good independent or assertive responses. You can practice the independent responses either overtly or covertly (imagining how you would handle the situation). It is more effective if you improvise and add your own details as you rehearse (Kazdin & Mascitelli, 1982). It would also be helpful to develop self-instructions designed to prompt, guide, and reward independent action and assertive decision-making (method #2 in chapter 11).

As you come to recognize your passive-dependent thinking, e.g. externalizer thinking, poor decision making, and excuses for being conforming and unassertive, use relapse prevention methods to avoid reverting to weak, passive-dependent responses (method #4 in chapter 11). Expose yourself repeatedly to situations where it is tempting to "just go along" or where someone will take care of you, *but* don't give in, make your own decisions, do what you think is best, and take care of yourself.

If you depend on or defer to specific people, avoid those people so you have to be self-reliant. Piaget (1991) has written about how to stop people from running your life.

Level II: Confront fears; vent feelings; face long-term consequences

If you are inhibited by self-doubts and fears, if it is stressful for you to confront others, if you feel unable to control the situation, if you'd just rather let others decide, if you are in awe of people in authority, if you enjoy being cared for and "helped," there are several things you can do.

Fears and self-putdowns keep us weak and submissive. As we learned in chapter 5, to overcome them, fears need to be confronted --faced and conquered, perhaps by desensitization (methods #6 or #8 in chapter 12) or simply by carrying out the scary but desired behavior over and over. Thought stopping (method #10 in chapter 11) can curtail the self-putdowns.

Passivity. Passive, compliant, dependent people hold back most of their negative emotions because they fear alienating the people on whom they are dependent. They suppress feelings "to keep the peace." They rationalize being quiet and overly nice. They may avoid "feelings" so much they are not even aware of the emotions raging inside of them. The outcome of the suppression may be unfortunate; sometimes such people are said to be "emotionally constipated." Their emotional dishonesty may on the surface enable them to appear well adjusted and self-controlled but they may be hurting inside. Moreover, the unhappy situation will continue if no action is taken. Before a person can become assertive--or even happy--he/she may have to reclaim and tune in to the emotions inside. A variety of therapies (Ramsey, 1978; Pierce, Nichols & DuBrin, 1983) have suggested ways of relearning how to emote, how to become whole again. Try venting your feelings, as described in method #10 in chapter 12.

Remind yourself. Since dependency is comfortable, you may need to constantly remind yourself of the unwanted long-term consequences of remaining unchanged: resentment of being dominated and/or weak, low self-regard, no life of your own making, loss of respect from others, the unfairness of people taking advantage of you, etc. Make yourself unhappy with your conformity, dependency, and passivity.

Improve your ability to cope. The feeling of helplessness can only be countered by improving your ability to cope and your awareness of that ability. By willfully changing your environment and your own behavior, you start to see yourself as a self-helper, not as helpless.

Expect only gradual changes. Most of the time we can't suddenly become decisive, assertive, and independent. Failures and backsliding are part of learning; don't awfulize and be overly critical of your mistakes. Be gentle but firmly assertive with yourself.

Level III: Becoming skillful.

Level III: Learn problem-solving, assertiveness, communication skills

If you feel you can't make decisions or stand up for yourself, skills are needed to be independent, decisive, and self-assured. The self-help methods at this level are probably the most useful, powerful, and relevant to counteracting passive-dependency.

David Weikart has researched the long-range effects of early childhood education which emphasizes independent thinking (in 4-year-olds!), problem-solving, and sharing their self-help plans and progress with others. Ten years later, at age 15, these students had better family relations, more part-time jobs, less delinquency, less drug use, and a greater sense of personal control than similar students taught obedience and conformity in preschool (Remley, 1988). Don't overlook the importance of skills and attitudes. If ordinary 4-year-olds can learn this stuff, so can dependent, insecure adults.

Make your own decisions. Making your own decisions is obviously vital to "being your own person." The importance of these skills has already been discussed in this chapter and the detailed steps for making decisions are given in method #11 in chapter 13. Teaching personal problem solving skills, much like in chapter 2, has been shown to be effective with dependent clients (D'Zurilla & Goldfried, 1971).

Be tactfully assertive. Being tactfully assertive is the crux of effective relating (Jakubowski & Lange, 1991). Assertion is the opposite of conformity, passivity, blind obedience, etc. discussed above. If you can't meet others, speak your mind, express your feelings and preferences, ask others to explain themselves, give and accept compliments, talk about yourself, and disclose your real self to others, you need assertiveness training as described method #3 in chapter 13. Also see self-disclosure training in method #6 in the same chapter.

Research has shown that it is important to identify the exact situations where you have trouble being assertive. A person is seldom unassertive in all ways, just in certain areas. There are six common problem areas: (a) objecting to being taken advantage of, (b) expressing positive feelings, e.g. praise or affection, (c) wanting to approach someone, (d) complaining about a service, (e) expressing a different opinion, and (f) refusing an unreasonable request. You need to practice giving specific responses in troublesome situations relevant to you, because practice in one area doesn't help in other areas. If possible, also get feedback from someone who can provide a model of assertiveness for you and reinforce your good responses.

Furthermore, the assertiveness training needs to be modified according to the reason for your problem, for instance (a) you might not know when it is appropriate to be assertive, (b) you may be afraid of what might happen if you became assertive, and (c) you may not know how to be assertive (MacDonald, 1975). Chapter 13 deals with each of these problems, but you must diagnose your own needs and situation.

Please note: no matter how skillful you become, the other persons' positive reaction to your new assertiveness is not guaranteed. Indeed, they may become aggressive, walk out on you, or have some other unwanted response. Be prepared. Also, there is some evidence that

the untrained spouse of a person in assertiveness training becomes *less* effective and *more* anxious socially (Kolotkin & Wieliewicz, 1982). So, as you gain communication skills, be sensitive to any difficulties your partner is having. Perhaps both of you need assertiveness training, e.g. your partner may need to tell you "no, you can do it all by yourself."

Practice is necessary. In learning any skill, as you know, practice is necessary. You can practice new ways of relating with others by imagining yourself saying and doing specific things, but better than that, you can actually practice new ways of acting with a friend or in a group or class, and, eventually, in the real situation. Role-playing is one of the best ways to start if you have a good friend or a helpful, understanding group you are comfortable with. See method #1 in chapter 13. Eisler, et al (1974) successfully treated passive-avoidant husbands with critical wives by role-playing common fight scenes and teaching the husbands more assertive ways of responding. Note that in this study, as mentioned above, assertiveness training using other situations (not related to their marital problems) was *not* helpful, so practice the exact behaviors you need to learn.

Learn leadership skills. As Benjamin Franklin observed, "All mankind is divided into three classes: those who are immovable, those who are movable, and those who move." Only the movers--the leaders--are growing and changing things. If you are tired of being a follower, a cog in a wheel, a hired hand, then you need to take the initiative and learn to lead, to move things along. By learning leadership skills you are preparing to move into more responsible positions (see method #15 in chapter 13). These traits are also discussed in chapters 9. You may first need to get out from under the control of others before you can become your own boss (Piaget, 1991).

"I" statements. Anyone who has a problem relating to another should be familiar with "I" statements. The overly dependent person should become an expert in communication, noting exactly how he/she influences others and gets them to meet his/her needs. "I feel _____" statements can certainly be used to maintain our own dependency, but they can also be the most effective and tactful way of asserting oneself and being independent. See method #4 in chapter 13.

The low key, compliant, unassertive person will profit from knowledge and communication skills, such as persuasion methods, as well as assertiveness. The more knowledge and experience you have, the more appropriate solutions you will be able to conceive. But, how and when you present those ideas--the effectiveness of your communication--will largely determine how influential you are. See method #16 in chapter 13.

Level IV: Set life goals, build esteem, correct irrational ideas, find support

If you have few values and goals of your own, if you feel inadequate and helpless, if you believe fate or other people are guiding your life, if you truly believe others are more important than you, if you only want to sacrifice and support others, it is not possible to be an independent, self-reliant, self-actualizing person.

Guiding principles. To be self-directed requires certain guiding principles --a personal philosophy of life--that are constantly used. Our major life goals and objectives should be clear to us. See chapter 3. Ask yourself: What needs to be changed in my family, my school, my job, my town, or the world that I'm not helping with? Do I have my priorities straight? Why am I not asserting myself? Are these answers valid or excuses? How can I remove the barriers preventing me from doing what I think I should? Most of us probably need a mission or a cause to spur us into action.

Stand up for your rights. One of those principles-to-live-by is that "all persons should be dealt with as equals." This isn't just a nice quotation; it is something you must really believe and act on to be assertive. You have equal rights within a marriage, a family, a friendship, an organization, within school and a place of employment. If you find yourself discriminated against, you have a right, indeed an obligation, to stand up for your rights and the rights of others. Insist on being equal, not superior or inferior.

Build self-esteem. A good self-concept and self-acceptance greatly facilitates independence. How can you be self-directed if you think you are unimportant, stupid, or bad? Why would anyone follow you if you didn't have confidence in your ideas and like yourself? There are many methods for building self-esteem (Canfield & Wells, 1976; Susskind, 1970) and for correcting the irrational ideas that lead to excessive self-criticism (chapter 14). You need some self-confidence before you will allow yourself to manage even a small part of your life. As confidence grows, you can take control of more and more.

The development of a "can do" spirit is not just changing your thinking. The fact is that self-confidence is gained by practice, from *doing*, from trying out one's skills and succeeding. It is vital to try to do for yourself, to work alone and enjoy being by yourself, to give help as much as you get help, to speak out and stand up for your ideals against opposition, etc.

The correction of self-critical ideas is facilitated by understanding the source of your ideas. For instance, Wolfe and Fodor (1975) use Rational-Emotive therapy in assertiveness training groups for women. As the group members re-experience and/or role-play recent unassertive episodes, they try to remember "early childhood messages" and "what they were thinking in the recent situation." The

focus is on the old internal belief systems (irrational ideas) that interfere with expressing yourself, usually self-putdowns:

Irrational beliefs

- a. "I shouldn't hurt anyone's feelings, especially my parents. I must visit them over the holidays; if I don't, they'd say I was being mean and uncaring."
- b. "It is better to avoid trouble. If I complain, it will just create tension."

Early messages (female socialization) that cause the ideas above:

- a. Women are supposed to take care of others' needs before their own.
- b. If I'm real good, other people will take good care of me and love me (the Cinderella story).

Ideas which challenge the above beliefs:

- a. Is it really "hurting others" to consider my own needs and preferences equal to others' needs? I am equal!
- b. Who said life is easy? Who believes that justice always comes to the person who is good and quiet? Challenging tradition and "the way it's always done" may be stressful but beneficial and fair.

Many of these irrational beliefs lead us to expect a catastrophe to occur if we are assertive. Thus, these erroneous ideas stop us from acting. We can discover these ideas we carry constantly in our own heads are not true (but only by taking risks).

Furthermore, by learning many other new self-help skills and attitudes, by using these skills for self-improvement, you can change your self-concept to being decisive, effective, fair, self-sufficient, self-controlled, likable, skilled, and considerate of yourself and others.

Defeatist attitudes can also be reduced. Defeatist attitudes and corrected by honest self-disclosure--by learning that others are like us, that our feelings, opinions, hopes and problems are accepted by other people, and that some of our self-critical ideas are wrong. Supportive groups or friends or therapists are very helpful for getting through the initial steps of self-doubt and intimidation (Millman, Huber, & Diggins, 1982). Having fantasies of coping effectively by yourself can overcome self-doubts associated with dependency. But remember, you must behaviorally become independent before you are "cured."

Level V: Seek origins of your dependency, conformity, and master-slave relations

If you are passive and dependent because you are too immature or irresponsible to manage your own life, realizing that should be sobering and provide motivation to change. If you are weak and helpless so you will be taken care of or attractive to dominant men or nurturing women, you have settled for a dependent, subservient way of life, perhaps without carefully weighing the long-term pros and cons. If your helplessness is to punish yourself or to frustrate someone else or a way of saying "don't expect much of little old me," an awareness of those payoffs might be painful but liberating, allowing you to make better use of your capabilities.

Recognize there is a child in all of us that wants to act impulsively and delights in being nurtured and pampered.. A more mature, rational part of us has to regulate the child so that it gets indulged occasionally but doesn't dominate our lives. It helps to be in touch with the child. See chapters 9 and 15.

Recognize that the inner child gets its way by providing us with excuses for being passive-dependent rather than strong-assertive (see earlier discussion). The inner child shuns positive thoughts about ourselves (it is "arrogant" or "selfish" or "contrary to God's will") and encourages weak, needy thoughts. The inner child is selfish and insensitive to the needs and rights of others ("it's not my job," "nothing can be done," "it's the victim's fault," and "I'm too busy right now"). Detecting our rationalizations and childish needs are a major part of becoming self-controlled. Refer to Snyder, Higgins and Stucky (1983) for a complete discussion of excuses.

Observe the antecedents and consequences. Observe the antecedents and consequences (method #9 in chapter 11) of your submissiveness, your deference to authority, or being a martyr. Look for the payoffs. Try to figure out the origin of this behavior --did you have a dominant parent? or a dysfunctional parent? Were you taught that good girls (or boys) should be quiet and obedient? Were you the "caretaker" as a child? Were you the "spoiled" child? Are you angry and afraid to let feelings out? Are you self-punitive and/or enjoying your suffering?

Also record your thoughts that lead to submissiveness or "going along to avoid conflicts" and so on. Some people think that many of us attempt to "read other people's minds" and then do what we think they want. The trouble is we are frequently wrong (when mind reading) and, consequently, we may end up *doing things with other people that no one wants to do*, just because no one said, "I don't think I want to do that."

Read about the dynamics of dependency. Insight can come from reading about the dynamics of dependency --the need to be

cared for, the fear of authorities, a way to exercise power, a hostile using of someone, seductiveness, etc. Unconscious motives are easier to understand in others but that understanding can, with patience, be applied to ourselves. Several excellent references are cited in this chapter, such as Halpern (1976), Piaget (1991), and Shainness (1984). Thoele (1994) offers encouragement to be your own person.



On a morning talk show, J. R. of Dallas fame said: "Many women say, 'My father--or my husband--is just like you!' and when I say, 'Doesn't that bother you?' they respond, 'Oh, no, I love it.'" They love the male arrogance and domination of others?



Become more sensitive to the relationships that often have a master-slave aspect to them: parent-child, teacher-student, husband-wife, boss-employee, male-female, seducer-seducee, authority-client, minister-parishioner, doctor-patient, coach-player, senior-junior, urban-rural, wealthy-poor, smart-dumb, attractive-ugly, etc. There is no reason those can't be equal relationships or, at least, more equal than they have been. Remember Frederick Douglass's famous cry to slaves: *The power of a tyrant is granted by the oppressed*. Furthermore, as the military says, familiarity between unequals breeds contempt. So, be everyone's equal.

Final Comments



While I have chosen to deal with dependency in a separate chapter, it is an area with close ties with other emotions and personality traits. In many ways, conformity and compliance may just be the calm, tolerant, flexible end of the anxious, hostile, rigid dimension. Perhaps conformity is, in many cases, simply adapting easily to others' needs and whims. In other ways, the weakness of dependency and the selflessness of conformity seem the opposite of self-actualization, i.e. joyfully finding your real self and maximizing your potential (see next chapter). Like most aspects of personality, compliance and dependency are very complex and different from person to person.

Perhaps the greatest overlap is with depression (chapter 6) because dependency is closely tied to helplessness. Like "learned

helplessness," the dependent, compliant person sees no alternative way out. They need to learn to say to themselves, "I can handle this myself" or "I don't have to agree with everything someone else says." They need to challenge self-limiting ideas, such as "I could never do this without _____'s help," or "I'd be scared to move a long way away from my family" or "Oh, I'll never make it without all the good luck I can get." Take charge. Test your ability. See if you can't accomplish much more than you have thought you could. Build your optimism and self-confidence (see methods #1 and #9 in chapter 14).

Because shame is thought to underlie the addictions and codependency, there is a strong tendency in this area to blame parents ("dysfunctional families," "toxic parents," etc.) for our problems. There is also great emphasis on 12-step treatment programs. Certainly, understanding the origin of our difficulties is useful, but instead of merely parent bashing, we would profit more from recognizing our reaction to parental anger, fears, over-protection, domination, punishment, abuse, emotional disturbance, etc. Not all abused, neglected kids have problems; some find ways to adjust. We need to understand *our* reactions to good and bad circumstances; then become survivors and copers.

Some therapists believe blaming our parents and going to 12-step groups are not as helpful as it could be. These critics (Tessina, 1993) say the emphasis is unduly on past troubles and misdeeds--not on new skills, new views of the situation, new expectations and goals, new plans for changing your life. No doubt that is true--it would be delusional to believe that current 12-step programs will remain the best possible treatment for the next 50 years. But 12-step programs serve many people well (at low cost); they are a good "first effort," a place to start, and they provide many effective procedures. Researchers need to find additional treatments to add to the 12-step programs. Unfortunately, some people's devotion to and *dependency on old methods* as well as a fear of change may inhibit the development of even better treatment methods in this area. Research is just good thinking.

Bibliography

References cited in this chapter are listed in the [Bibliography](#) (see link on the book title page). Please note that references are on pages according to the first letter of the senior author's last name (see alphabetical links at the bottom of the main Bibliography page).
