

Cyber Truths By E-mail

19. *Replacing Apprehension With Love* (December 22, 2005)



Restoration Ministries International

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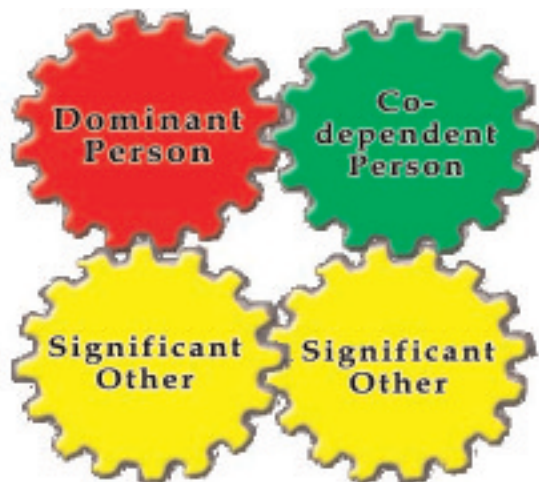
Dear Friends,

Right after the holidays each year a lot of phone calls or e-mails get sent by people who bad mouth the very ones they spent the holiday with. This shouldn't be!

One of the features we have observed after the holidays is the rise in slander among Christians. It begins when relatives or friends, who have ongoing apprehension with each other, get together over the holidays. They do the "holiday event" with smiles, but afterward the holidays the slander and gossip begins. Sound familiar? It is all too familiar for many Christian families. It's as if they spend a Christmas without Christ. Sounds ludicrous, doesn't it?

The reason for the slander and gossip is that so many live with unresolved apprehension concerning certain family members and friends. In our book, *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation*, we write about co-dependency.

Co-dependency looks like a set of gears in motion (see below).



It begins with the driving gear, the Dominant Person. They are the person whom others have to avoid or tiptoe

around. The behaviors of the Dominant Person control others, but no one wants to confront them.

People who have an underlying apprehension or fear when they know they have to interact with a dominant person are the Co-dependents. They don't want anything said or done that may set off the dominant individual. They convince the others involved to stifle their input too. These Significant Others who could help in a productive way fail to step in and speak up.

Often, the co-dependent person is so desperate to avoid confrontation with the dominant individual that he or she actively discourages admonishment by the Significant Others. The longer that discomfort and avoidance are practiced, the more deeply entrenched fear and non-confrontation become. In families and close relationships, two possible responses are likely:

- Others will be entrapped in the co-dependent relationship,
- or
- They will be forced to flee the relationship in order to maintain their own identity, respect, and values.

Co-dependent relationships look like gears meshed together.

If any of the people who are gathering with you this holiday season have apprehension about each other, then you have co-dependency. We have never seen co-dependency without the influence of strongholds. But, even with the strongholds demolished, the ruts of behavior still need to be confronted.

Let's review this one more time: The motion of the gears is driven by the dominant person's unconforted behavior, ideas, or opinions. If you are the co-

dependent person, you fear the emotional tension brought about by confrontation. You may withdraw and isolate yourself in an emotional prison. Or, you may even offer excuses and go as far as defending the dominant person's behavior. Affected by your fear and denial are the significant others, children or close acquaintances who are in close relationship with you. They may want to confront or admonish the one who is controlling everyone else, but they are also fearful of the emotions the confrontation may generate. And if they care deeply about you, they may excuse your defensive actions as a co-dependent person.

Good News of Great Joy!!!

See next page for a tool you can use with those who are coming for the holidays. Actually, you can use it anytime apprehension with others is present. We trust it will be a blessing, and that you and those who gather with you will experience Jesus in your time together.

Your servants,

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

Replace Apprehension With The Fullness Of Jesus

Make copies of this sheet for each person you'd like to help escape apprehension and co-dependency. After everyone has a copy, review the nature of each character (below) who is involved in the apprehensive relationship. Then ask everyone to fill in the names on the gear they believe each person represents.

In order to discuss everyone's input in a healthy way, designate a moderator who will give everyone a chance to give speak without fear of verbal attack. One of the *significant others* is a good choice. If you're the moderator, make sure everyone is fully heard. Allow no rebuttals until a person has finished speaking and you give permission for someone else to speak. Remember, the goal of this exercise is to bring the *fullness of Jesus* into your relationship.

The Cast of Characters

Dominant Person. The one whom others have to avoid or tiptoe around.

Co-dependent Person. The one who fears the emotional tension brought about by confronting the Dominant person. Withdraws and isolates himself in an emotional prison. May even offer excuses for the Dominant person and defend his controlling behavior.

Significant Others. Children or close acquaintances whom the Co-dependent person prevents from confronting the Dominant individual. They may want to confront or admonish the one who is controlling everyone else, but they too may fear the emotions that confrontation may generate.

In order to stop the gears from turning, everyone involved must confront the reality of the situation, confess their part in it, repent before God, and look for God's ways to relate righteously to each other.

