

Slaying the Dragon of Addiction.....LOVE

Tony De Marco

Did I put the word 'LOVE' in the title? I made a mistake. I meant 'CO-DEPENDENCE'. How could I confuse the two words, they are not even similarly spelled? It is quite easy, as thousands upon thousands of women and men continuously confuse 'LOVE' with 'CO-DEPENDENCE'. Everyone knows about the 3 major addictions, Alcohol, Drugs, and Compulsive Gambling but little about less obvious behaviors that have not been included in the DSM-IV, The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. There are many forms of co-dependence but we shall focus on co-dependence involved in relationships. Purely and simply, many people think that they stay with another person in a relationship because they are in love with that person rather than being dependent upon (addicted to) behaviors occasioned by that other person's own behaviors, shortcomings, or addictions. It is realized that not all persons that remain in harmful relationships are co-dependent, for there are other reasons for remaining, such as children, and a myriad of economic reasons. But there is a goodly number that stay in these harmful relationships for co-dependent reasons.

How can a woman want to continue being addicted to her own negative behaviors, continuing to live with a man who brought about the co-dependence? It didn't start out that way. It may have started out that the woman tried to 'rescue' the man, to help him overcome his behaviors, shortcomings or addictions. And then the rescue attempts and help became a daily habit, such as asking or pleading with the man to quit drugs, or giving him money to buy drugs while swearing that it was the last time that she would do so, or closing her eyes when he used thereby enabling him to continue and get worse, or for reasons other than drugs or alcohol, tolerated when he stayed home from work, or constantly threatening to leave him because of his laziness or lack of attention, and thinking that she is a martyr for putting up with him, or feeling sorry for herself and being on the pity pot, or looking down on him thereby feeling superior, or thinking that he needs her, or thinking that he will harm himself without her, or thinking that she may overcome his problems, or thinking that he will change and really give her the love that she needs, and thinking that all of this is love. And then when nothing that she does is helping the man, she starts feeling 'guilty', develops a giant lack of self-confidence, and low self-esteem; then she begins to feel the ravages of an addiction that the man suffers.

I have found that certain clients have a pre-disposition for becoming co-dependents, which pre-disposition was environmentally crafted during childhood. Patterns show their disconcerting 'faces' time and time again over a period of years working with clients that are not necessarily in the office for co-dependence, but as surely as there exists addictions, these patterns point to present problems and issues such as the above-mentioned low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, along with co-dependence, etc. If I were to name some family structures in which the pre-disposition was created, one family would be comprised of at least one parent who was an addict, another family would show parents that were disciplinarians ala the military...very non-forgiving, and setting rules that were ridiculous; another family would be one where the parents had a distinct lack of attention and affection for one child or all of their children; one of the biggies is an overbearing mother, an over protective mother, a thought and act stifling mother. I think of it as a lack of nurturing....you may say that an over-protective mother nurtures to extremes, however I have found that too much of anything

has the tendency to turn into the opposite....and therefore I would like to say that all of these described family actions have the effects of a lack of nurturing.

The pre-disposition hides itself but grows until it becomes full blown co-dependency. Sometimes it manifests itself in the person being a 'people-pleaser' or a man-pleaser'. She needs compliments and thanks for her being nice, and helpful and concerned, which compliments and thanks assuage the feelings of low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence under which she suffers. Let's bring the scenario into one of marriage or living-together. In some form or manner each has pledged their love by word or deed or insinuation or suggestion at one time or the other, so the woman feels that she has finally found someone who can satisfy the needs brought about in childhood. Now, you must always remember that we humans that suffer from past, youthful experiences usually look at the past situations with the mind of the child at its age when involved in the past situation. And even though we are older, we still process those happenings and similar happenings with that child-mind. Then the man becomes physically or verbally abusive, or addicted to a substance or a behavior, and the woman tries to rescue him, etc day after day after day, until the repetition turns into co-dependence (addiction really) and she cannot jump off the merry-go-round for fear of losing what comfort she receives from the care giving. Comfort you say, well substance abusers believe that they are receiving comfort from the substance until it turns around and bites them in the posterior, the same as the co-dependent is 'bitten'. I used the feminine gender to discuss scenarios of co-dependency because research surveys have shown that the far greater incidence of co-dependency rests with the female. However, each one of us probably knows a man or men that are also co-dependent upon their significant other in some for or the other. This is what your client brings into the office. What do we do about it?

1. Educate them about co-dependency. They probably will not believe you at first, for they feel that it is love, but you'll wear them down. One word of caution: never advise them to leave their significant other. You are not qualified. Your goal is to restore their self-confidence and elevate their self-esteem, make them strong so that they may make the right decision and then carry out that decision. Their change of attitude and actions in the relationship may very well save the relationship.

2. Review their past consciously and subconsciously. Expose the demons to the light so that they go away. Desensitize them with techniques that alleviate and eliminate the negative emotions connected to the past happenings, while preserving the happenings as learning experiences so that they become buffers to prevent them from happening again. Examine their present actions now that they have a better understanding of what made them 'tick' in the fashion they did. They will enlighten themselves as to the reasons for their behavior and recognize the futility of that behavior. None of this is easy, but you must persevere session after session.

3. Have the client set her short term goals and long term goals and imagine them as a 'fait accompli'.

4. Use Affirmations for Releasing and Letting Go of the Past and for the Future, such as:

I fully realize that the past is the past and I only permit past experiences to make me stronger, more positive and full of life.

I release all feelings of sadness, limitation, fear, and negativity

I now wholeheartedly let go of relationships that are complete so that all parties benefit, while maintaining relationships that are worthwhile.

I now let go of that which has no purpose in my life.

My joyous future is up to me and completely in my hands.

Each person presents different histories which require various techniques that cannot be fully considered by the hypnotist until the client's conscious and subconscious stories start to unfold. The above is a generalized overview of relationship co-dependence and a brief description of a bit of the hypnotic work that we can do....without frills, and with the assumption that our basic hypnotic procedures, are just that....basic, and not necessary to elucidate here.