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Is This Love or Emotional Dependency?

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

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Is This Love or Emotional Dependency?

Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

One of my clients, whose ex-girlfriend recently broke up with him, asked me the following question:

"I think I still love her, but is this love or just emotional dependency? Many times I ask myself if falling in love comes from the wounded self because (for me at least) it feels as if I can't live without the other person. When I give love from the heart I don't expect anything back, but when I fall in love I think this is a different energy."

Falling in love can come from two different inner states. When you fall in love from the wounded self - the ego self - you are in love with how the other person loves you. You are handing over to the other person the responsibility for your self-worth and wellbeing, and if he or she does a good job of attending to you in the way you want to be attended to, then you may say you are "in love." However, it is not so much the person you love, but how he or she loves you. When it feels as if you can't live

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without the other person, it is emotional dependency. The part of you that is "in love" is really a child or adolescent who is needy for love because you are not giving love to yourself or to others. There is an emptiness inside that you expect someone else to fill, because you are not taking responsibility for your own feelings of self-worth. You are attaching your worth to another's love, which is why you can't live without that person.

When you fall in love as a loving adult instead of as a wounded, needy child or adolescent, your need for the relationship is totally different. As a loving adult, you have learned how to fill yourself with love and define your own worth. Instead of needing someone to fill you and make you feel lovable and worthy, you already feel worthy and full of love. You experience this inner fullness because you have learned how to take full responsibility for your own feelings and needs, and you have learned to fill yourself with love from a Divine Source. This fullness overflows and you want to share this love with

another person, another loving adult who is also filled with love. Your desire is to share love rather than to get love.

The kind of person you will pick will be totally different when a loving adult is choosing than when your wounded self is choosing. The people we pick have a similar level of woundedness and a similar level of emotional health. Obviously, the more you have done your inner work to connect with Divine Love and bring that love within to take loving care of yourself, the more you will be attracted to someone also does this.

When you pick from your wounded self, you will pick someone whom you believe wants the job of filling you up. The problem is that the other person may be attempting to fill you up in the hopes that you will also fill up him or her. Two people who each want to get love rather than share love will eventually find themselves very disappointed with each other. They will each blame the other for not loving them in the way they want to be loved. When relationships break up, it is often because one or both partners are not taking responsibility for their own feelings and self-worth and are blaming the other for their resulting unhappiness.

If you are so attached to someone that you feel you can't live without that person, try learning to give to yourself and others what it is you want from this person. Your job is to become the person to yourself that you want the other person to be. Then you will be able to be "in love" rather than "in need." You will be able to love another person for who he or she is rather than for what this person can do for you. Instead of needing to get love, you can give love from the heart for the joy of it and feel filled in the giving.

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is the best-selling author and co-author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?" and "Healing Your Aloneness." She is the co-creator of the powerful Inner Bonding healing process. Learn Inner Bonding now! Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course: <http://www.innerbonding.com> or <mailto:margaret@innerbonding.com>. Phone Sessions Available.

Emotional Dependency or Emotional Responsibility

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By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

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

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

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

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

Primarily, it means recognizing that our feelings come from our own thoughts, beliefs and behavior, rather than from others or from circumstances. Once you understand and accept that you create your own feelings, rather than your feelings coming from outside yourself, then you can begin to take emotional responsibility.

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

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

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

The next thing an emotionally responsible person might do is move into compassion for the angry person, and open to learning about what is going on with the other person. For example, you might

say, "I don't like your anger, but I am willing to understand what is upsetting you. Would you like to talk

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about it?" If the person refuses to stop being angry, or if you know ahead of time that this person is not going to open up, then as an emotionally responsible person, you would take loving action in your own behalf. For example, you might say, "I'm unwilling to be at the other end of your anger. When you are ready to be open with me, let me know. Meanwhile, I'm going to take a walk (or hang up the phone, or leave the restaurant, or go into the other room, and so on). An emotionally responsible person gets out of range of attack rather than tries to change the other person.

Once out of range, the emotionally responsible person goes inside and explores any painful feelings that might have resulted from the attack. For example, perhaps you are feeling lonely as a result of being attacked. An emotionally responsible person embraces the feelings of loneliness with understanding and compassion, holding them just as you would hold a sad child. When you acknowledge and embrace the feelings of loneliness, you allow them to move through you quickly, so you can move back into peace.

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

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

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