

## Enabling or Rescuing

Helping is doing things that others can't do for themselves. Enabling is doing for others what they can and should do for themselves. Codependents help their loved ones avoid the natural (and negative) consequences of their addiction (or mental illness or other impairment). This may temporarily keep the peace, but ultimately prolongs the problems.

When you enable, you over-function, are overly responsible, or work harder than the other person in the relationship. In turn, s/he under-functions.

Enabling prevents your loved one from experiencing the full impact of his/her poor choices, dangerous, illegal, or immature behavior. And when there are few negative consequences, people are less motivated to change. These problematic behaviors can continue for long periods of time in part because a codependent enables them. Codependents become stuck in a dysfunctional pattern of enabling, controlling, and resenting.

Enabling doesn't mean you're responsible for your loved one's poor choices. On the contrary, you are only responsible for your behavior and your loved one is entirely responsible for any poor choices s/he makes. Enabling comes with loving intentions, a genuine desire to help, and a desire to feel in control in an out of control situation.

These are some common reasons for enabling:

- You worry about your loved one physically hurting him/herself or others
- You worry about your loved one getting into trouble
- You're afraid of conflict
- You don't know how to set boundaries
- You're afraid your loved one will leave you, shame you, take the kids, ruin your finances, etc.
- You truly want to help, but feel powerless