



## PERSONALITY DISORDERS

### DEPENDENT PERSONALITY DISORDER

#### What it is:

Dependent personality disorder is characterised by an excessive need to be taken care of, and obsessional fears of being separated from loved ones or caregivers. Individuals with this personality disorder typically have great difficulty making every day decisions for themselves, such as what to wear or what to order in a restaurant. They often also require a loved one or caregiver to take responsibility for their decisions in major areas of their lives, such as where they should stay, or what their career should be. The individual will typically require a great deal of reassurance and advice from others, and may be wary of expressing disagreement with others for fear of losing their support or approval.

Individuals with dependant personality disorder may have difficulty doing tasks or activities on their own, as they lack self-confidence in their own judgment or abilities. They may even deliberately not learn how to perform certain tasks, so as to keep themselves dependant on others.

Individuals with this disorder often feel helpless and uncomfortable when they are forced to be alone, and they may have recurring fears relating to losing a loved one or caregiver that they are dependent on. If a relationship that they were dependent on ends for whatever reason, they will typically seek to find another relationship to replace that source of support as soon as possible. A diagnosis of dependant personality disorder will not typically be made in children or adolescents, for whom dependent behaviour is developmentally appropriate. Cultural norms and values in different societies should also be taken into account before making a diagnosis.

#### Common symptoms:

1. Difficulty making insignificant everyday decisions without excessive advise or reassurance
2. Needing others to be responsible for major life decisions or areas
3. Being unable to voice disagreement with others due to a fear of loss of support or approval
4. The individual is unable to do or initiate tasks on their own due to a lack of self-confidence
5. Feeling uncomfortable or helpless when alone

6. The individual has obsessional and unrealistic fears of losing a loved one or caregiver due to the belief that they are unable to care for themselves
7. Immediately seeking out a new relationship, if a relationship with a loved one or caregiver ends



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### **Causes:**

Chronic physical illness or separation anxiety in childhood may be an increased risk factor for the development of dependant personality disorder later on in life.