

INTER-DEPENDENCE DAY – BEYOND THE DICHOTOMY OF “CO-DEPENDENCE V. IN-DEPENDENCE

Do you experience confusion about what is the ‘right’ thing to do as opposed to that which is ‘wrong’? Have you been struggling with achieving ‘success’ only to end up being a ‘failure’. You, along with many others, have become caught in the trap of dichotomous thinking. Because we live in a world of dualities – such as night /day, male/female, and good/bad – our thoughts & decisions tend to be polarized along an either/or continuum which like the swinging pendulum, sends us to extreme opposites in a situation rather than placing us in the centre. The effect of this over time creates disharmony and leads to dysfunctionality in our lives which we experience as stress, blockage and emotional and physical pain. One place where this dynamic is found for most of us is in relationships as the dichotomy of “**Co-dependence vs. Independence**”.

We are **Co-dependent** when, in our neediness, we experience ourselves through the thoughts, feelings, opinions and beliefs of others. This occurs due to our mistaken belief, often subconscious, that we are inherently incomplete and therefore incapable of experiencing ourselves as healthy, vibrant and whole beings without the input and approval of our friends, family and intimates. Acting on this belief, our life becomes a journey fraught with often desperate attempts at seeking approval from outside ourselves at any cost, and when this approval is not forthcoming, we end up paying for it by feeling lost, devastated and worthless.

Typically, in reaction to these feelings and the pain that they engender, we mistakenly catapult ourselves to the opposite end of the pendulum by deciding to become totally “**In-dependent**”. We assuage our bruised egos by convincing ourselves that we no longer ‘need’ anyone anymore & that we can, & must stand on our own two feet! Thus, we get on with our lives & take control, often busying ourselves with activities which separate us from the now offensive state of intense neediness characteristic of co-dependence. Society even supports us in this position by applauding (and celebrating with great pride) our new found freedom, as the words & sentiment behind the hit song in the late 70’s by Gloria Gaynor entitled “I will Survive” attests.

But rather than delivering true liberation & healing from our pain, eventually being In-dependent only entrenches our pain more deeply by further isolating us and reinforcing our feelings of unworthiness & loneliness which we experienced when we were in our Co-dependent state. What further complicates matters is that additional feelings begin to surface such as those of abandonment, confusion & outright disillusionment. And so, we swing back to our familiar former state of Co-dependence in order to escape the pain of isolation attendant in being In-dependent. Ultimately, this unending cycle of Co-dependence vs. In-dependence continues unless we become aware enough to pose the question, “Is there a way through this predicament?”

The answer is, yes! For one, we must realize that we have been stuck within a cycle in which both Co-dependence & In-dependence are essentially different sides of the same coin. We must see that the comfort and support we sought from these two positions could not be since Co-dependence is premised on an absence of self worth & In-dependence is premised on a false

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sense of self-worth. Thus, to break out of this cycle and go beyond to a more healing position requires us to realize that in essence, we are truly **Inter-dependent** beings.

Inter-dependence is a state of being in which we recognize that we prosper & grow when we share with each other our talents, gifts and service! Through Inter-dependence, we go beyond the either/or split or dichotomy into a place of knowing that we are valuable and worthy beings who can ask for, and offer support without feelings of shame, embarrassment or self-aggrandizement. With Inter-dependence, there is no more room for our Egos to play havoc with our feelings. Instead, we celebrate in the spirit of clean giving & receiving, knowing that it is in our sharing & heartfelt service that we grow into complete, harmonious and joyful beings.

Inter-dependence teaches us that although we are individual, we are not separate. It recognizes that we can assist each other in attaining healthy, centered relationships which offer mutual support and allow us to be who we are. Personally, having experienced both Co-dependence as well as In-dependence, I have finally settled in the center of the pendulum – a place beyond the emotional rollercoaster which often depicts how my relationships have most often been experienced. Now only if I can remember to stay here!