

HOW IT FEELS TO BE CHEMICALLY DEPENDENT

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Chemically dependent people tend to be very special and sensitive people—basically shy, basically passive, basically modest, and under it all basically good. They sometimes perceive the sensitivity that is part of their nature as a weakness, and out of shame about this weakness they will use chemicals that seem to magically relieve the pain for a while. When the cover the chemicals provide betrays them, which it always does, this creates a desperate and anxious situation. They change from being sensitive and kind to behaving in ways that are crude, boisterous, haughty, coarse, insolent, angry, and even abusive.

Living takes a tremendous amount of talent and energy. It is this talent and energy that I want you to know about, and to see in yourself.

Most chemically dependent people hold jobs, go to school, drive cars, keep up homes, and make decisions—all under the most incredible pressure to appear “normal”. Did you know, for example, that 95 percent of all alcoholics live at home and go to work every day?. Did you know that most chemically dependent people don’t have to use every day or even every week? Did you know that most chemically dependent people have stopped using, often several times, to prove to themselves and others that they do not have a problem? Did you know that it takes twice as much energy to deny the illness as it does to deal with it?.

Chemically dependent people are human beings, first and foremost. It is our ability to feel that separates us from the animal. It is our ability to feel that often starts the chemical use in the first place. And it is our ability to feel that keeps it going.

Chemically dependent people may be able to deny how much they using, but they cannot deny the bad feelings that accompany them everywhere. The survivors of this disease are those who admit to these feelings and learn how to deal with them constructively. That is where their talent and energy come into play.

The feelings expressed in this book are not cause for alarm or shame. Rather, they are cause for celebration and acceptance.

Evelyn Leite

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To be chemically dependent is to feel guilty and inferior for no apparent reason, and to feel angry at friends and loved ones much of the time.

To be chemically dependent is to feel afraid of the dark, afraid of heights, afraid of crowds, afraid of closed-in rooms, afraid of life. It is to feel other nameless fears tugging at your insides. It is to feel that all eyes are on you when you walk into a public place. It is to feel that people are talking about you, plotting against you, laughing at you. It is to deny your feelings and pretend you don't care.

To be chemically dependent is to never tell the truth when a lie will do. It is to change the details of a story to protect your ego or shore it up.

To be chemically dependent is to have a fragile, super-sensitive ego, one that cannot bear dirty looks and dissenting words, so it is important never to appear to be wrong or imperfect, and never to admit to being confused or uninformed. It is to convince yourself that if there are things you don't already know, they probably aren't worth knowing.

To be chemically dependent is to have large measures of false pride and self-centeredness. This false pride tells you that you are always right. This self-centeredness leads you to believe that the world revolves around you and owes you something.

To be chemically dependent is to perpetually be on the defensive. It is to interpret even the simplest and most offhand remark as a personal attack. It is to be easily hurt or damaged or injured by circumstances that other people are able to cope with. It is to make a concerted effort to keep yourself from hearing things you don't want to hear.

Mood-altering chemicals are true to their name: they alter your mood. In doing so, they also alter emotional makeup so that emotional growth is difficult if not impossible. It doesn't matter how much willpower or self-control or strength of character you think you have. You don't control chemicals; they control you.

To be chemically dependent is to secretly judge everyone you know because you're convinced that they're always judging you. It is to resent anyone who thinks differently from you or has different beliefs. It is to approach every conversation or encounter with a closed mind. It is to scorn or despise any one who dares to challenge or cross you.

To be chemically dependent is to hang on to the past and make constant references to how badly you were treated back then or how good you used to have it. It is to persuade yourself that people you once cared deeply about have changed and are no longer worthy of your care. It is to discover that things that were once important to you (hobbies, sport, friends) are too much trouble.

To be chemically dependent is to blow up about little things and congratulate yourself for having the nerve to tell someone off. It is to accuse innocent people of trying to put one over on you, and to let people who really do take advantage of you off the hook by treating them nicely so they won't resent you or reject you.

To be chemically dependent is to self-righteously drop any friend or family member who hints that your drinking or drug use might be a problem. It is to seek out other people who will accept you, appreciate you, look up to you, and admire you – even if you don't enjoy their company, even if you have nothing in common with them, even if you don't trust them. It is to seek out younger and younger friends and single friends with no family responsibilities. It is to feel contempt for anyone who likes you.

To be chemically dependent is to make sure that the people you associate with are your intellectual inferiors. It is to find fault with anyone you consider to be better or more successful than you. It is to sneer at anyone who follows in your footsteps. It is to avoid people who might question something you say—and, when they do, to believe that they're trying to make you look stupid. It is to especially avoid people who cannot be conned or manipulated.

To be chemically dependent is to accuse your spouse or other loved ones of telling lies about you or failing to understand you. It is to be sure that your spouse has found someone else.

To be chemically dependent is to say no to a drink or a drug one day and then turn right around and celebrate that victory by going on a binge. It is to look forward to the next occasion when you can drink or use, or to plan an occasion or a specific time when you'll be expected to drink or use. It is to anticipate going out of town so you can drink undisturbed by guilt or family pressure, it is to pick fights with your loved ones so you have an excuse to drink. To be chemically dependent is to have an excuse for *everything*.

Alcohol and drugs are emotional crutches. Remember that crutches are useless when it comes to running, dancing, and climbing mountains.

To be chemically dependent is to sometimes stare into space and wonder what's wrong with you. It is to find fault with everybody and everything and to always be looking for "the angle". It is to interpret other people's concern as rejection and criticism. It is to go off on flights of fantasy in which you always emerge the good guy or the hero.

To be chemically dependent is to feel tired, depressed, bored, and lonely—even in a crowd, even in the midst of your family. It is to feel miserable and moody and empty of energy and to blame your lack of energy on your spouse, your kids, your parents, your employer, or the world in general. It is to seek physical reasons for the way you feel—to visit your doctor again and again, to try any “cure” as long as it doesn’t involve giving up drinking or other drugs. If it means you can take pills, so much the better.

To be chemically dependent is to be unsure of who you really are or what you really stand for. It is to move from one set of beliefs to another and from one set of behaviours to another.

To be chemically dependent is to have moments when you hate everybody and feel that everyone hates you. But mostly it is to hate yourself.

To be chemically dependent is to have high blood pressure at an early age. It is to have memory lapses and blackouts. It is to sometimes fear and sometimes believe that you are losing your mind. It is to poison your body and feel physically unfit no matter how much you exercise.

To be chemically dependent is to be in transit. It is to travel around a lot. It is to move from place to place, job to job, house to house, friend to friend. It is to search for that *something* that is missing in your life, that *something* that will make you feel better. It is to suddenly decide that your house or apartment, city or town, job or company, co-workers, boss, neighbours, kids, partner, parents, dog, etc., are to blame for all of your problems, and to just as suddenly decide to leave one or all of them behind.

To be chemically dependent is to build walls around yourself. High, thick, impassable walls that keep your feelings trapped inside.

To be chemically dependent is to be on the lookout for good times and friends to share them with – and then to discover that the good times aren’t good anymore and the friends aren’t really friends.

To be chemically dependent is to start using with a limit in mind and then push that limit further and further. It is to go out for one drink and stay for a dozen. It is to make deliberate plans to monitor your using and keep it in check so you can prove to yourself that you don’t have a problem. It is to eat lots of food or butter or antacids, or drink lots of milk or cream to coat your stomach, or load up on B vitamins ahead of time. It is to try again and again to drink or use without losing control. It is to watch people around you drinking and using and wonder why they seem to be handling it better than you.

To be chemically dependent is to feel sick and tired most of the time. It is to know deep down that you’re stuck feeling this way unless you can get your hands on a drink, a pill, affix, a joint, a snort. It is to know deep down that you’re a prisoner.

To be chemically dependent is to forsake your sense of discretion. It is to suddenly blurt to your boss at a party all the details of your personal life or the lives of your co-worker. It is to betray secrets and destroy relationships. It is to make nasty cracks in public about your spouse—to get a laugh, to get attention, to get sympathy. It is to disregard the feelings of others.

To be chemically dependent is to decide that it would be fun to crawl into a car, a boat, or a plane, and take off into the wild blue yonder, free of all responsibilities and whinging partners. It is to telephone friends or public officials at weird times of the night. It is to get anybody who will listen to you out of bed for a chat or a chewing out. It is to call someone you never seen and (haven’t seen in years) and insist that he or she drive hundreds of miles to see you or to show up drunk or high on that person’s doorstep.

To be chemically dependent is to be the last of the big spenders when trying to impress people you don’t care, and the biggest of sufferers when dealing with your creditors. It is to scream about the cost of food or taxes or your child’s school supplies while running a bar tab or charging pills or booze to an account. It is to borrow money from family members or friends to pay bills and then find money for a bottle, a six-pack, or a night on the town to celebrate freedom from those bills.

To be chemically dependent is to drink or use at home or somewhere else while your kids are performing in a school function—and be mad at them afterward for “making” you feel guilty. It is to miss work because of a hangover and tell yourself you deserve some pleasure out of life. It is to limit your social life to functions that include alcohol or drugs. It is to drink three or four stiff charges before you go, or to smoke a joint on the way, just in case there isn’t enough of what you want where you’re going.

To be chemically dependent is to wonder why the people you are drinking with are drinking so slowly: they have one to your three! It is to insist that people who don’t use “loosen up” and have a little of whatever you’re having. It is to be angry with and uncomfortable around the former drinking or drugging partner who’s decided to go straight.

To be chemically dependent is to ride an emotional roller-coaster- to switch from friend to enemy without notice, to be happy-go-lucky one moment and furious the next, to lash out at someone who offends your sensibilities. It is to be the innocent that everyone picks on. It is to be persecuted by police officers. It is to believe that other people will hurt you if you let your guard down.

To be chemically dependent is to send mixed messages to your family. It is to let them know in words and actions that they are simultaneously the most important *and* the least important people in your life.

To be chemically dependent is to live in an undisciplined way while dishing out discipline to others.

To be chemically dependent is to be quiet and reserved when sober or straight, and loud and rowdy when drunk or high. It is to switch from one personality to another within minutes. It is to profess your undying affection for people you've just met and wouldn't ordinarily look at twice, and turn your back on people you've been close to for years.

To be chemically dependent is to live in self-imposed isolation. It is to feel unwanted, uncared for, and unappreciated. It is to live on the fringes and never fit in anywhere. It is to feel a terrible loneliness in the pit of your being that no amount of alcohol or drugs can ever appease.

To be chemically dependent is to plan ahead—so you won't have to drive home, or go to work in the morning, or answer to an angry partner or a disappointed child. Or, if you do have to go to work in the morning, you go – even if you're hung over that you can hardly walk, even if you have to sneak a drink after you get there to make it through the day.

To be chemically dependent is to point with pride to your house or car and say *See, I haven't lost everything, so I can't possible be chemically dependent.*

To be chemically dependent is to deny that your drinking or using is different from anyone else's. It is to seek out people who drink or use like you (or more than you) so you can believe you are normal.

The words I need are suspect and may be the first indication of a problem with alcohol or drugs. "I had a hard day.....I need a drink" "I feel awful.....I need a little pick-me-up." "I'm nervous about doing that presentation.....I need something to calm me down.

To be chemically dependent is to have an incurable illness that is always fatal if allowed to run its course. Its side-effects and accomplices are misery, loneliness, depression, suicidal thoughts, and feelings of worthlessness. It destroys mental and emotional stability. It makes a fool of you. It destroys reliability and reputations. It turns lives upside -down and inside-out. It is the single largest health problem in this country today.

Further resources on this subject from RecoverOz include

[**The Addictive Personality**](#) by Craig Nakken

[**Addictive Thinking**](#) by Abraham Twerski

[**The Selfish Brain**](#) by Robert L Dupont

[**Everything you need to know about Chemical Dependence**](#)

(the complete guide for families) by Vernon Johnson

We have many other books and videos. Go to [**www.recoveroz.com.au**](http://www.recoveroz.com.au)