

CRIBB<S> NOTE - JULY 4, 2010

Independent. Co-dependent. Dependent. Interdependent. They sound similar but they are not the same. What do they mean and how are they different?

According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 'independent' means, "not subject to control by others;" "self-governing;" "not requiring or relying on others as for care or livelihood;" "refusing to accept help from or to be under obligation to others."

A lot of attention is given this week to 'independence' as we celebrate the nation's separation from England in 1776. Being 'independent' is highly valued in our society. But, there may be some traps hidden within our desire not to depend on others.

Wikipedia defines "co-dependent" as an undesirable state of being with "a tendency to behave in overly passive or excessively caretaking ways that negatively impact one's [relationships](#) and [quality of life](#)."

That moves us to "dependent." Webster says, "Determined or conditioned by another; relying on another for support." This definition avoids judgment. At any given time or circumstance, anyone may become dependent on another person. It happens.

So far, we have briefly identified the assumed attractive qualities of "independence," the undesirable character of "co-dependent," and the neutral definition of "dependent." So, how is "interdependent" defined?

The online Encarta dictionary describes interdependent as "mutually depending on each other: unable to exist or survive without each other; relying on mutual assistance, support, cooperation, or interaction among constituent parts or members."

Why don't we have a holiday to celebrate Interdependence Day? Don't we need each other to survive? Of course we do. Everyday we rely on others for almost every aspect of life. Yet, this valuable basis for relationships is not lifted up with the same fanfare as independence. In fact, we can easily slip into a mind-set of pushing our children out into the world as radical independents without a life-line to tether them to family or community.

In the final days of Jesus' ministry, he instructed his disciples to take care of each other. He told them "to love one another." He encouraged them to remain interdependent and to guard against becoming independent, co-dependent or dependent.

We really do need each other and must be careful not to fall prey to the traps of "not relying on others;" becoming "excessively caretaking that negatively impacts relationships;" or having our lives "determined" by someone else.

Interdependence allows us to recognize the gifts and contributions of others. We show mutual respect and graciously offer our talents as a source of blessing and benefit. When we love someone, we give them room to make mistakes and grow without judgment.

Interdependence does not mean all things are equal, but each one has an opportunity to share and receive whatever is available between them. After all the hoopla about independence, let's make time to practice and celebrate interdependence. We need to figure out what it truly means to love one another.

-Pastor Art Cribbs