



June 2008

## Codependency in the Workplace

By Rhona Charney

### Asserting Yourself Can Make All The Difference

**W**hat is codependency, what does it mean and how does this apply to the workplace?

The term codependency was originally developed in the addictions field in reference to familial reaction to an alcoholic (later expanded to any addict) in one's midst. A common definition encompasses the idea that one is codependant if one's sense of well-being has to be fulfilled mainly through relationships with others because of a paucity of one's own inner resources.

According to Hendricks and Hendricks (Conscious Loving: The Journey To Co-commitment) codependency is "*An unconscious agreement that results in an entanglement with another person rather than a relationship where both parties are equal*" and "*it occurs when your behaviour is determined by someone else's and you become subordinate to others and thereby not true to your own feelings.*"<sup>1</sup>

How is a codependent created? Does your behaviour at home and in the world outside reflect on how you behave at work?

The more dysfunctional our family of origin, the more rigid, habitual, extreme and prescribed are the roles that we are groomed to perform in order to ensure homeostasis in a chaotic family system. An alcoholic/drug addicted system must, by its very nature, be dysfunctional. Everyone must pitch in to save the family break-up. Each member develops behaviours that are 'other' oriented. These behaviours are geared to rescue, mediate, and work as a cover up for another person's shortcomings, and in the process, the family member ignores self. Each person is reacting to the alcoholic with little consideration for their own needs.

What are some of the characteristics you



should look out for in yourself and how can you recognize if you are a codependent at work?

Some of the characteristics and signs to watch for include:

- If a relationship with a peer, subordinate or a boss is consistently unfulfilling and you do nothing about it.
- If you allow the behaviour to continue unabated and don't assert yourself.
- If you tend to be indirect and unable to express your feelings particularly in the face of conflict.
- If you don't recognize your boundaries and allow others to overstep them.
- If you give away too much of yourself by not being able to say no, or do for others when you'd rather not, or do things only to please others without considering yourself.
- If you take responsibility for the actions of others and make excuses for their behaviour to cover up.

Codependents have good intentions. They are trying to take care of a person who is experiencing difficulty but find that after an initial sense of reward the behaviour takes on a life of its own and begins to feel compulsive, choiceless, helpless and self defeating. They become martyrs and benefactors to an individual in need. Their repeated rescue attempts allow the needy individual to continue on a destructive course and become even more dependent on the unhealthy care taking. This exacts a huge toll on the giver with painful and confusing repercussions.

The price one pays for codependent behaviour includes:

- Work overload
- Resentment
- Anger

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## ... Codependency *continued from P. 1*

- Second guessing oneself – not sure what is right or what to do
- Staff splitting – gangs for and against
- Bullying those who are “hard hearted” and are taking a stand against the offender
- Preoccupation with the situations, not being able to work/function properly
- Feeling like a “rat” for reacting, feeling immobilized, helpless and stupid
- Creating and living in a bad atmosphere
- Feeling a loss of control

### A Typical Scenario

There is a person at work who is driving you crazy. He is unreliable and you don't know what to expect from him. Half the time he is productive and the other half he lets you down. You know something is wrong and suspect drugs or alcohol (late lunches, slurred speech, alcohol on breath, missing Mondays, aggressiveness and defensiveness etc.) but don't necessarily know what it is. You and others are constantly putting out fires and covering up for this person's behaviour. You are getting fed up, feeling guilty, getting moody and bad tempered at work and taking it home with you. Your own feelings are getting tangled up with those of the other person. When, or if, you confront the person, things get better for a while and then - boom - it's back to the same thing again.

What can you do about this situation? If this is a colleague:

1. Stick to work issues and job performance, don't try to diagnose or solve the problem
2. Be assertive
3. Look at patterns of behaviour, e.g. lateness
4. Document everything
5. Use consequences, e.g. “do something about this problem or I will report

- your behaviour”, and mean it
6. Stop enabling the person to get away with poor job performance and get into deeper trouble

Enabling is good intentions with bad results. Drugs victimize everyone including the people who care. So, in a nutshell, you need to **STOP**:

1. Covering up
2. Accepting excuses
3. Feeling guilty
4. Accepting unacceptable behaviour
5. Taking on the other person's responsibilities
6. Trying to solve problems you are unqualified to solve

***Stop enabling the person to get away with poor job performance.***

If you are the employer/manager:

- Stop enabling
- Examine job performance and patterns
- Avoid personal problems
- Avoid blaming or using guilt tactics
- Refer them to a professional to deal with their personal issues
- Let them know the consequences of poor performance
- Set job performance goals that must be attained
- Present the bottom line
- If performance does not improve, follow disciplinary steps according to company policy
- If unionized, enlist your union representative's support

No one wants to be a snitch, but it's to everyone's advantage, and cost effective, to get a person the help they need. Employers need to be educated regarding how to respond and what to do. Employees need to be assured that they won't lose their job if they get help.

### A personal note

Codependency is serious and can threaten your mental well-being and job stability. Though it is incumbent upon you to get the addict help, it is equally important for you to take care of yourself. If you relate to the above, you need help. Make sure you get it.

*Rhona Charney, MSW, RSW, is a therapist at Bellwood Health Services.*

### References:

- 1) Hendricks, Gay and Hendricks, Kathlyn: Conscious Loving: The Journey to Co-Commitment. Bantam Books, 1990.

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***Honesty, without gentleness, is nothing but brutality ...  
Gentleness, without honesty, is nothing but sentimentality.***

***- Fr. Emmerich Vogt***

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If you have comments, or wish to have your name removed from the mailing list, please contact (416) 847-0752, or email [jteran@bellwood.ca](mailto:jteran@bellwood.ca).

## *Bellwood Alumni*

### *“Celebrating The Freedom Of Being Well”*



*Alumni Christmas Party 2007*

**Coming ...  
Tuesday, June 17**

### **The Annual Bellwood Alumni BBQ**

Alumni and their families are invited to join Bellwood staff for a fun evening of fellowship, good food, music and entertainment for the kids.

RSVP by June 13 to Melissa DeZilva at [mdezilva@bellwood.ca](mailto:mdezilva@bellwood.ca), or call (416) 495-0926, Ext 301. Please indicate the number of people in your party, including the number of children, their ages and gender.

## **The Gordon Bell Foundation for the Prevention of Addiction**

The **Gordon Bell Foundation for the Prevention of Addiction** sponsored its *“Making Choices Conference”* at Pleasantville Public School in Richmond Hill on April 9th. Over 100 grade seven and eight students participated in the event. The conference was designed to educate students on the consequences of the choices and decisions they make on their lives and the lives of people around them.

The conference opened with an inspiring talk by Adrian Smith of the Toronto Argonaut Football Club. Students then

attended three workshops of their choice. The workshops covered issues such as alcohol, drugs, gambling, teen pregnancy,

healthy relationships, healthy nutrition, and stress management.

Research shows that school-age children are being exposed to alcohol and drugs at an earlier age. Targeting grade seven and eight students will provide them with the information they need to help them make informed decisions when they reach high school where alcohol and drugs are prevalent.

Over 350 Ontario students have now attended a *“Making Choices Conference”*.

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The Gordon Bell  
Foundation  
for the  
Prevention of Addiction

[www.gbfaddiction.com](http://www.gbfaddiction.com)

## *Bellwood's Board of Directors An Update*

The Board of Directors of Bellwood Health Services Inc. is pleased to announce that Roderick M. McLeod, Q.C. has accepted the appointment as Chairman of the Board. Rod has been a member of the Board of Directors for several years and has provided leadership and direction on governance, strategic initiatives and government relations. As Ontario's healthcare system is transforming, Rod, in his new role, provides Bellwood with the ability to carry on the strong leadership from the past to meet the challenges of the future. Rod is dedicated to Bellwood's mission and to helping individuals find their way into treatment and recovery.

Rod is Counsel to Miller Thomson, barristers and solicitors, specializing in Regulatory Litigation and Governmental Affairs. He played a key role in creating Canada's leading judicial precedent with respect to Environmental Due Diligence. He negotiated Ontario's Acid Rain Regulations with the CEOs of Inco, Falconbridge, Algoma Steel and Ontario Hydro. He was also Counsel for the Mayor, the Municipality and Councillors during the Walkerton Water Inquiry.

In addition, Rod is a Mediator with Alternative Dispute Resolution Chambers in Toronto and Chairman of OLAP, the Ontario Lawyers' Assistance Program. He is in high demand and Bellwood is grateful that he has chosen to dedicate his time and expertise to us.

From 1977 to 1987, Rod held the positions of Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister in the Ministries of Environment, Solicitor General and Attorney General. Past positions include Chair, Board of Governors, Seneca College of Applied Arts & Technology, and Trustee, Executive Committee Member of the Markham-Stouffville Hospital Board.

Rod is married to Mary Anne. They have three grown children and five grandchildren. He likes to travel and is an avid golfer who, on occasion, has graciously invited me to join him in a tournament. Needless to say, he is a very tolerant man!

As a friend of Bill W. and a Bellwood alumnus since 1992, Rod is very familiar with Bellwood's operations and the challenges of recovery. His dedication to addiction and mental health treatment is a benefit to all who require care and to all the caregivers.

Welcome Rod, and thank you!

*M. Linda Bell  
President and CEO  
Bellwood Health Services Inc.*

### **Bellwood also welcomes Alan Bottomley to the Board**

Alan Bottomley graduated from the University of Toronto in 1974 as a young, aspiring engineer (BASc) with a specialty in geophysics. However, after considering opportunities to explore the North West Territories looking for oil and gas or become a famous weatherman, he switched gears and joined Price Waterhouse (PW) to become a Chartered Accountant. Alan spent 33 years at PW

(now PricewaterhouseCoopers - PwC) and was a partner for 21 years. During that time, he was exposed to hundreds of different companies - all sizes, private and public, and all major industries. Alan developed a very broad and deep business perspective. He held a variety of senior management roles in his last 15 years at PwC, including office managing partner and national HR partner, and also participated on a number of management committees.

Alan now has his own consulting business specializing in strategic planning, leadership development and coaching and continues to act as an executive coach for many PwC partners.



**Roderick M. McLeod, Q.C**

Alan was previously on the Board of directors of the Donwood Institute which furthered his interest in the addiction field. He is excited about working with Bellwood and helping the organization and its people achieve their highest potential in this important field.



**Alan Bottomley, BASc, CA**

## Bellwood's Volunteer Program

### IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO BE OF SERVICE

I believe that most former clients can remember what it was like to walk through Bellwood's blue awning for the first time. Feelings were extreme; everything from terror, shame and guilt to a sense of relief. For me, the first person I saw had a smile on their face – something I had not seen for some time from my family and friends. That person was a volunteer.

Throughout my treatment I was fortunate enough to meet a number of Bellwood's volunteers and through them I realized that I was not alone anymore. Although we are all individuals, some "stories" hit really close to home.

When I finished my last treatment, one of my goals was to "give back" to others who had made the brave decision to change their lives and seek help. In October of 2004, I had an interview with Susan Barnes, Bellwood's Supervisor of Volunteers. I was extremely nervous, but I could not have felt more welcome and appreciated as I did that day.



I was fortunate enough to work in a number of departments at Bellwood. It gave me the opportunity to gain experience and work with many very talented people. All were very patient and appreciative, and I felt very validated; giving me a great sense of "self-worth". The staff helped me gain the self-confidence to realize that part of my journey included the desire to be part of the Bellwood

team. I am happy to announce that as of April 28, 2008 - exactly four years and four days after my graduation date, I started my first day at Bellwood as an Addiction Counsellor.

I cherished my time as a volunteer as the position gave me the opportunity to see the enormous transformation that fellow clients make throughout their stay at Bellwood. I have never felt so proud and so self fulfilled.

For those who can relate to this story, I cannot say enough positive things about what being a volunteer can bring to your life.

It truly is *"a privilege to be of service"*. - Stephanie B.

## Join Our Volunteer Team!

Bellwood is fortunate to have a group of dedicated people who offer their time, energy, experience and wisdom to volunteer on a regular basis. Some of our volunteers have been a committed part of the Bellwood team for many years, being there for their jobs week after week without fail!

We always welcome new volunteers, whether recent graduates, seasoned alumni, family members or friends, or concerned and caring individuals from the community. If you think that volunteering at Bellwood could benefit you as well as the Bellwood community, we would be glad to hear from you. All you need is four months uninterrupted post-graduation sobriety (or one year of proven sobriety if you were not a Bellwood client), a strong recovery program, willingness and honesty.

**For more information about how you can become a Bellwood volunteer and be a part of someone's recovery, contact Susan Barnes, Supervisor of Volunteers, at 416-644-6341, or email [sbarnes@bellwood.ca](mailto:sbarnes@bellwood.ca).**

## ... Gordon Bell Foundation *continued from P. 3*

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to help bring this valuable conference to more public schools, please forward a cheque, made payable to:

**The Gordon Bell Foundation for the Prevention of Addiction**  
1020 McNicoll Avenue, Toronto, ON M1W 2J6  
Attention: J. Laird

*A special thank you to Bellwood volunteer, Karen G, for her dedication and assistance in helping organize the conference!*



*Muskoka Wildlife Centre staff taught students attending the "Making Choices Conference" how the choices they make can impact nature and the environment, while Bellwood's Linda Bell and Janet Lansche consider the merits of a new pet!*



### *Coming Soon ...*

#### **Outpatient Group for Alcohol Treatment**

Bellwood will be offering an evening outpatient group for individuals dealing with alcohol abuse or dependency. The group will be facilitated by a Bellwood physician and Bellwood therapists and will include intensive therapeutic and educational components.

The program will begin in late summer. Please watch our web site, [www.bellwood.ca](http://www.bellwood.ca), for more information.

Bellwood offers a number of other group-focused treatment programs on an outpatient basis:

##### • **Eating Disorders**

- Bulimia/Binge Eating Treatment Group
- Family Education Program

##### • **Sexual Addiction**

- 10-Week Groups
- Women's 10-Week Groups
- Intensive 5-Day Treatment Program
- 10-Week Groups for Partners
- Education Evenings
- Intensive 5-Day Treatment Program for Partners

**For further details about any of these programs, visit [www.bellwood.ca](http://www.bellwood.ca) or call (416) 495-0926.**

## Professionals in Residence Days

*Addiction treatment information seminars for health care and corporate professionals*

Designed for:

- Physicians & Nurses
- Psychologists, Social Workers, Therapists, Addiction Counsellors
- Occupational Health & Employee Assistance Professionals
- Human Resource Representatives
- Disability Coordinators

Meet our staff, and learn about our comprehensive treatment programs and how Bellwood can be a resource for treatment and education.

#### **Upcoming 2008 dates are:**

**June 26**  
**September 25**  
**October 21**  
**November 27**

To register, contact Jennifer Teran at [jteran@bellwood.ca](mailto:jteran@bellwood.ca), or call (416) 847-0752, toll free (800) 387-6198, Ext 302.

## Who's New At Bellwood

**Stephanie Banfield**, Addiction Counsellor; **Larena Dowsett-Cooper**, Administrative Assistant; **John Fenn**, Casual Program Assistant; **Ann Kerti**, RPN; **Wendy Lee**, Fitness Relaxation Instructor; **Kristal Lewis**, Therapist; **James McHugh**, Recovery Counsellor; **Carole McPherson-Scott**, RN; **Zisca Shillingford-Mendes**, Medical Records Secretary; **Jennifer Towndrow**, Casual Program Assistant.

We say good-bye to **Terry Simpson**. Terry began her career at Bellwood over seventeen years ago as a nurse on the fourth floor. She eventually moved to the Intake and Assessment Department where, as both a counsellor and department manager, she provided hope and encouragement to many individuals and families seeking new lives free from addictions. We wish Terry much happiness and many years of adventures in retirement.