

# Autonomy Inventory

Rate yourself on each item using the following scale:

1: Not really like me at all 2: I do this a little 3: That's pretty common for me 4: Yes! I do this all the time.

1. I often say yes to things that I don't really want to do. (Codependency)
2. I'm the person who is always going out of her/his way to make others happy. (Codependency)
3. I hate contention and will do what I can to avoid conflict at all costs. (Codependency)
4. I tend to take on the interests of the people who I am spending time with (Codependency)
5. I sometimes feel responsible for other people's moods. (Codependency)
6. I tend to judge myself by how I think other people see me. (ESP)
7. I worry a lot about disappointment or not living up to other people's expectations of me (ESP)
8. When I look in the mirror, I find things that I dislike about my appearance. (ESP)
9. I feel a need for approval from virtually everyone in my life. (ESP)
10. I never seem to measure up to the standards I set for myself. (ESP)
11. I often feel unsure when others are not around to help me make a decision. (Choices & Motivation)
12. It sometimes feels like other people are calling all the shots in my life. (Choices & Motivation)
13. **I have long-term goals that I have set for myself, and I consistently do things that move me towards those goals.** (Choices & Motivation)
14. It's easier to get myself to do things when I'm up against a deadline (Choices & Motivation)
15. I usually need a lot of encouragement from others when starting a big job or task (Choices & Motivation)
16. **When I have free time, I have a clear idea of what I want to do with it.** (Authenticity)
17. It's hard for me to figure out my own personality, interests, and opinions. (Authenticity)
18. **I have several interests that I get really excited about** (Authenticity)
19. **I tend to be very sure of myself and stick to my own preferences even when the group I am with expresses different preferences** (Authenticity)
20. I'm sometimes confused about who I really am (Authenticity)

## Scoring:

Bolded items are worded positively and should be reverse scored meaning 1=4, 2=3, 3=2, and 4=1, so change those scores now. Add up your scores for each of the 4 sections.

Higher scores on Codependency and Externalized Self-Perception are both antithetical to autonomy. Authenticity and motivation are both important parts of autonomy but higher scores on this inventory will indicate low levels of these.

Where did you score the highest? Read through that section below to understand what might be happening for you and what you can do about it.

### **Externalized Self-Perception:**

Maybe you've heard the phrase to stop "shoulding" on yourself? The things that we think we "should" do or who we think we are "supposed to" be can have a powerful influence on the way we behave.

If you are worried so much about what others are thinking of you, it's hard to do the things that matter to you or to be the person you want to be. If you always feel like you are falling sort of other people's expectations, you're also probably not going to let other people get very close to you because they might discover your weaknesses. Instead of living in the moment, you become disconnected with yourself and almost try to "watch" yourself live life to see how you're doing.

For example, struggling with body image is usually tied to living up to some idealized standard that society has for your appearance. But when you focus on what you look like, you lose touch with what you *feel* like. It's easy to lose control of your own sense of autonomy when you let other people's expectations dictate how you live your life and when you lose your autonomy, you decrease your ability to develop yourself in ways that matter to you. So, the counsel to stop "shoulding" on yourself is a good one.

See if you can spot some ways that you are doing this and challenge yourself instead to do your best in ways that are *not* tied to other people's ideals.

### **Codependency:**

Codependency is characterized by an inability to function without relying on someone else to make you feel good about yourself. We all really want to feel loved and appreciated, and sometimes we seek those feelings by going out of our way to try to get other people to convince us that we are good enough.

Maybe that means we feel responsible for other people's moods because if they are mad or sad, maybe that means we've fallen short as a friend or a spouse. Or we feel like we have to go out of our way to make someone like us or meet their approval so that we can feel good about ourselves. (In other words, we tie our self-worth to what other people think of us. People-pleasing is a classic example of emotional codependency.)

Codependency can also look like needing other people to regulate our own emotions rather than finding healthy coping strategies for hard days. If, when I am stressed, I lash out at others, this is a big sign of codependency because I am making someone else take on my mood.

Codependency is extremely common and is the opposite of autonomy, but starting to recognize it in your own life can help you break out of unhealthy patterns and become more autonomous. This has the power to help you develop strong and connected relationships with others because relationships that balance autonomy with being in a relationship are the strongest.

## **Authenticity:**

Shakespeare's been teaching us for hundreds of years: "to thine own self be true." But sometimes this is easier said than done. In a world that constantly bombards us with other people's opinions and a play-by-play of their life in images and videos, it can be really easy to get confused about who *you* are and what *you* want for yourself.

You might find that your personality gets swallowed up in others' or like you've got no clear idea of who you really are and what you like to do. Not feeling that you can be your authentic self with others is closely tied to both externalized self-perception and codependency. Often, we are more worried about pleasing others than we are about figuring out who we are and working on developing ourselves in important ways.

When we act inauthentically, we are giving away our own autonomy and allowing others to dictate who we are. As you learn to de-couple your thoughts and feelings from others' you will be more able to show up authentically in your interactions.

## **Choices and Motivation:**

Does it seem like one of the most common struggles in a human's life is bridging the gap between what we want for ourselves and making the choices that get us there?

We *want* to be healthy and strong, but it's easier to hit snooze on the alarm rather than get up and head to the gym. We *want* to try new things and explore new talents, but it's scary to get out of that comfort zone and it's easier just hang out and watch YouTube. And sometimes, it's easier to let other people just tell us what to do than to take ownership of our own life and our own goals and get ourselves up off the couch to do those things.

As it turns out, autonomy is actually closely tied to having the motivation to do the things that you want for yourself. When you feel free to make choices on your own and have confidence in those choices (in other words, when you've got a sense of autonomy), you're more likely to feel motivated to work towards your goals.

So, developing a sense of autonomy can be a great way to help yourself move towards the things that matter to you. Start by trying making decisions that feel right to *you*. Set some goals for yourself and do small things that move you towards them. And work on the other three areas of autonomy and see how those help your motivation as well.