



In human relationships an *enmeshed* person can't distinguish the difference between their needs, feelings, opinions, and priorities and their partners or that of fellow family members. Forever adjusting their own behaviour to ensure those in the enmeshment system remain contented . We don't want any body upset do we?

This way the individual may believe they are actually fulfilling the Christian ethos of "do unto others as they would do unto you."

In relationship therapy exposure of this condition we may discover either, both or all parties have had a significantly undernourished circumstantial, childhood.

"We're enmeshed when we use another individual to express our identity, sense of value, worth, well-being, safety, purpose, and security. Instead of two people present, we become one identity.

More simply, enmeshment is present when our sense of wholeness comes from another person.

We hear enmeshment phrases everyday such as, "I'd die without you," "You're my everything," "Without you, I'm nothing," "I need you," or "You make me whole." Many of us find our identity and self-worth by becoming the mate, parent, or friend of a successful and/or prestigious individual, or we find the need to fix and caretake individuals to give us a sense of purpose.

Enmeshment doesn't allow for individuality, wholeness, personal empowerment, healthy relationships with ourselves or others, and, most importantly, a relationship with our Higher Power."

**Enmeshment ranges from mild to extreme.**

It is the polar opposite of two people being *independent* - meaning neither has a strong with (emotional attachment to) the other.

A middle option is an interdependent relationship, where each person has a clear, stable identity and personal boundaries, and a healthy bond with the other. These promote relating together as co-equal partners out of conscious choice, vs. unconscious compulsion ("I can't live without you!")

A reasonable common experience in relationship therapy occurs when two individuals come together after being raised in completely different family backgrounds.

One of our simplest examples to understand family of origin influences is the simple study of language. Yes we naturally speak the language of our Mother's 'tongue'. There are so many aspects to this rich and emotionally complex subject of a Mother Tongue. One thinks of childhood and the intimate quality of first expressions and of how this child language returns to us near death.

One thinks of the fragile and robust ways in which language shapes the transactions of thought and acts as a compass for our perceptions and feelings.

Then there are the reverberations of loss when a language with its registers of knowledge disappears from the world, as when a giant tree is felled in an ancient forest.

So when we have an enmeshed family environment the nucleus of this psychological interdependency is 'held' by collective focus on this hub, generally the parents or in many cases the Patriarch or Matriarch characteristic dominates the enmeshment of connection.

When that parent dies the entire family senses the gaping loss due to the continuing 'vacuum effect' of the formerly enmeshed space now left by the deceased. As with the example of the large tree in the forest the effect is identical within the family.

With time the individual branches of the family take on their own identity however in the early stages there is an intense sense of loss often creating significant demand and exposure on the entirety of the system.

Within the enmeshed family system there is often a misconceived belief that the collective is a close and loving family when in fact there is a coexisting undercurrent of interdependency where all individuals carry a loss of individuality due principally to a totally undernourished environment.