

# More than relationships: Co-dependency extends to all areas

*Editor's note: John and Anne are composite characters based on typical cases of chemical dependence and co-dependence.*

By Robin Lowe  
Staff Writer

Early morning before class, John gets ready for the day. He shaves, brushes his teeth, reviews his notes, then makes himself a drink.

A little orange juice with a shot of vodka to get him through the morning. It's no big deal, he thinks.

John has a drinking problem. He represents one of many college-age Americans who depend on alcohol or some other chemical to fill a void in their lives.

DeeDee Laurillard, a certified clinical social worker who works with Student Health Services in health education, said several signs mark the distinction between a social drinker and a problem drinker.

Social drinkers drink slowly, know when to stop, never drive after drinking and respect and obey laws concerning alcohol, she said.

Having a social drink with friends turns into a problem when the drinker drinks mainly to get drunk, relies on alcohol to solve problems and to give self-confidence in social situations, undergoes personality changes while drinking or causes harm to himself/

herself or others.

John falls into the problem-drinking category because he needs that morning drink to help him cope with the stress of his classes, and he harms other people.

When classes are over, John goes back to his apartment, has a few more drinks and calls his girlfriend, Anne. He tells her to come over.

Soon after Anne arrives, she realizes that John has been drinking. She confronts him with the problem, telling him to find help or find another girlfriend.

John begins to get angry and defensive. He insists he does not have a problem.

Anne becomes upset and tries to leave, but John blocks the door and throws her down. He hits her and calls her names.

When she finally regains the strength to leave, Anne vows the relationship is over, and she will never see him again.

But a few days later, the whole scenario repeats itself. It's a continuous cycle.

While many understand the profile characteristics of a heavy drinker, others may not be familiar with Anne's role in the problem.

Anne enables John to continue his drinking and abuse by not acting on her promise to leave. She enables him to treat her badly, even though she knows it's not what she wants. Anne is co-dependent.



The term co-dependence has been thrown around a lot in the media. Most people associate the term with a person's continuing tolerance of his/her mate's abusive behaviors. While the most common form exists in relationships with others, people can become co-dependent on food, chemicals, shopping, perfectionism and even stress.

Elizabeth Adams, a psychotherapist at the Pathways Center for Counseling and Psychotherapy, offered another definition.

"Co-dependency is a pattern of pain-

ful dependency on compulsive behaviors and on approval from others in an attempt to find safety, self-worth and identity," she said.

Adams estimates that 87 percent of the American population is co-dependent on something. "It happens naturally in our society."

People who are co-dependent commonly evaluate themselves on the basis of external factors, Adams said.

In other words, people who are co-dependent devalue their own reality in an attempt to find meaning and value in

their lives. This longing stems from a lack of identity and spiritual barrenness, Adams said.

This lack of identity usually has its roots in the person's family, where there has been extreme rigidity and bad communication, Adams said. Often, people who become co-dependent later in life come from a chemically dependent family.

Both Anne and John's problems evolved from a need to fill a personal, internal gap; both are self-destructive, but John's problem is biochemical, and Anne's is psychological.

"There is a difference between a spouse who chooses to stay with a problem drinker and those spouses who have grown up in a chemically dependent family, where they don't recognize their own feelings or know how to express them," Adams said.

"These kids grow up and find themselves in (detrimental) relationships, and they don't know how to feel. For example, when these people are faced with the lying and denial associated with alcoholics, they view this as normal because it happened in their family also. This (acceptance) can lead to co-dependence."

Adams compared co-dependency to a mirror turned outward and said co-dependents' interactions were based on pleasing others instead of themselves.

"People stay in these toxic relation-

ships because they don't know who they are," she said. "When a person finds themselves continuing to tolerate behaviors that they don't ordinarily approve of, or they wouldn't recommend to their friends, then they need to ask themselves if maybe they're co-dependent."

Females are more likely to exhibit the signs of co-dependence than males because they tend to put too much emphasis on other people's opinions without checking out their own feelings first, Adams said.

In many cases, she said, it might be premature to label a college student as co-dependent, because most of them look to their friends for identity and are just discovering who they are and what they like.

"However, it's easy to get stuck in a co-dependent stance if the person limits themselves and doesn't explore their options," she said.

For example, Anne and John have dated since their freshman year. She spends all her free time with him and has a bleak social life.

Now, in her senior year, Anne can't fathom taking a job someplace John wouldn't live. She always puts his happiness before hers, therefore limiting her options.

Both chemical dependence and co-dependence can be cured with the help of trained professionals, but if the underlying co-dependence is not treated, the relationship will still suffer, Adams said.

"Psychotherapy can help address the issue of identity through nurturance," Adams said.

The key to successful therapy is achieving a balance between body, mind and spirit, Adams said. "... either by nurturing the identity through meditation, a group activity or a personal relationship with a higher power."

Adams suggested familiarizing yourself with the problem if you felt you might be co-dependent on a destructive relationship. She recommended several self-help books, including Anne Wilson Shafe's "Escape from Intimacy: When Society Becomes An Addict."

Although there are no co-dependency support groups on campus, a chapter of Co-Dependents Anonymous meets in the Triangle, and a number of professionals in the area specialize in individual therapy, Adams said.

"At (the college) age you're moving from dependence to independence," Adams said. "In order to ensure this freedom, students need to learn to trust their instincts and pay attention to internal cues."

## 'Machinal' shows never-changing societal pressure on the individual

By Martin Scott  
Staff Writer

In this age of enlightenment, it is surprising to see a play about a dysfunctional family based on life 70 years ago, a time that seems to have no bearing on contemporary life.

Yet Lab! Theatre Director Walt Spangler feels that by bringing the 1928 Sophie Treadwell play, "Machinal," to life, he can illustrate the universality of society's pressure on the individual.

As a piece of American Expressionist Theater, "Machinal" can be expected to act as a catalyst for thought. With the main characters only referred to by generic titles, such as "Young Woman" (Jen Davis), "Husband" (Clint Curtis), and "Man" (Nolan North), the effect encompasses all levels of society.

The play itself takes place through the eyes of Young Woman. When the play begins, she is living at home with her mother, and out of this setting her problems arise.

Her mother refuses to communicate with her. Yet when Young Woman tells her mother that she has met someone, the only thing the mother can say is "Does he know that you have a mother to support?" She is pressured by her mother into marrying him.

The character of Young Woman is essentially tender and compassionate,

while the surrounding world is harsh and unforgiving. As a result, she must compromise her own desires and conform to the roles that society dictates.

Young Woman feels compelled to play the roles of a wife and a mother even though she really has no internal desire to do so. To be expected, she finds freedom from these constraints in the arms of Man. It is only with him, away from a husband who she does not love, that she can truly be herself. Yet, the affair cannot last, for she forces Man away from her by trying desperately to hold onto him. In this instance, she, too, is a product of her society.

The conclusion of the play is quite dramatic. There is a shocking outcome as a result of Young Woman's attempt to free herself from society's constraints. Unfortunately, this attempt may be her last.

With "Machinal," Walt Spangler adds another successful production to his directorial career that includes last spring's Lab! production of Ibsen's "Ghosts." Spangler says he has been heavily influenced by such directors as Peter Greenaway and Antje Lenkeit. Spangler has spent two of the last five years in Germany as an apprentice to Lenkeit.

Spangler says he hopes that "the audience's perception of reality will be somewhat jolted" and that "they would

realize if in fact they are living by convention ... because others expect them to live that way." Spangler is very enthusiastic about this production's ability to reach his audience.

Assisting Spangler are Emily Ball, lighting director, who worked closely with him on his previous production of "Ghosts," and Byron Kaiser, dramaturg, who is acting as a consultant to the director.

According to a piece written by Kaiser, he contends, "The forces of convention which imprison the Young Woman continue to vex us all today, indiscriminate of gender."

In addition, Davis, who has appeared in the Department of Dramatic Arts fall production of "Ghost on Fire" and the Lab! production of "Endgame," lends her talents to the lead role as the Young Woman. Davis says, "By playing this role, it has made me more introspective into my own situation in society."

While "Machinal" presents feminist issues, Kaiser says, it transmits a message of universal pertinence: We must examine the norms and expectations of society if we are not to lose our individuality in them.

The Lab! Theatre will present "Machinal" at 4 and 8 p.m. Sunday, April 5, and Monday, April 6, and at 5 p.m. Tuesday, April 7. Admission is free.

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**Campus Calendar**  
FRIDAY  
1 p.m. Juggling Club will meet at the flagpole between South Building and Wilson Library. Rain/cold location: Carmichael Ballroom.  
3:30 p.m. Graduate Art Students Association will hear Dr. Larry Silver of Northwestern University speak on "Dieter Bruegel and the Culture of Early Capitalism" in 117 Hanes Art Center.  
6:30 p.m. FOCUS will have a potluck dinner for graduate students and a discussion of the "Four Spiritual Food Groups" at 413 Granville Road. Rides from Craige at 6:10 p.m.  
Juggling Club will host a juggling festival in Carmichael Ballroom until midnight today, from 10 a.m. to midnight Saturday and from 11 a.m. to midnight Sunday.  
SATURDAY  
UNC Water Ski Club will host the UNC Ski Mites Intercollegiate at Young's Pond in Angier, today and Sunday. Information: 933-3312 or 929-8720.  
SUNDAY  
6 p.m. WKYC FM's talk show will feature Black Student Movement President Michelle Thomas and Campus Y Co-chairman Scott Wilkens. Call 962-8989 until 8 p.m.  
7:30 p.m. Institute of Latin American Studies presents "XICA DA SILVA," the legend of a black slave who rose to power during 18th Century Brazil, in the Union Film Auditorium.  
ITEMS OF INTEREST  
Delta Sigma Theta is offering a \$500 women's scholarship. For applications contact Sharyn, 933-5741, or Cassandra, 933-5274.  
Cellar Door Literary Magazine needs your prose, poetry, photo, music and graphic submissions by April 3 for the spring '92 edition. Forms are available at the Union Desk or 216A, Union Suite B.  
Carolina Week by Week is looking for pictures of campus life. Send your black-and-white or excellent-quality color photos by April 18 to: Carolina Week by Week, Dean of Students Office, CB #5100, OI Steele Building, Carolina Campus.  
Yucky Yack is taking yearbook portraits in 213 Union from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. until April 16. Come to 213 Union to schedule an appointment.  
Stugfest Double Elimination Softball Tournament to benefit Ronald McDonald House will be April 3-5 on Carmichael Field. Call 929-8940 to register your team.