

tendencje autodestrukcyjne oraz usprawiedliwiają zaprzestanie poszukiwań nowych rozwiązań i uniemożliwiają szukanie pomocy poza rodziną.

Dla niektórych pacjentek jest potrzebny trzeci etap terapii czyli głębsza psychoterapia problemów osobistych, których źródeł często należy poszukiwać w wychowaniu się w rodzinach dysfunkcyjnych.

Jerzy Mellibruda, Zofia Sobolewska  
**A theoretical concept and therapy of co-dependence**

### Summary

The paper presents search for a new theoretical approach to the problem of co-dependence and an outline of a concept of psychotherapy of people with this problem. The authors define co-dependence as an established form of participation in a long-term, difficult or destructive life situation due to pathological behaviors of the partner, considerably limiting the co-dependent individual's freedom of choice, resulting in a deterioration of his/her own status and hindering any improvement of his/her standing.

Co-dependence is construed as a psychological trap. Thus, it includes such a type of response to a highly stressful relationship with the alcoholic partner that results in a progressively growing involvement in the situation. The co-dependent individual attempts to introduce changes for the better, but his/her actual behavior very often results only in an aggravation or stabilization of the situation.

The therapeutic strategy in the first stage consists in an analysis of the family environment and of relationships of the co-dependent person, as well as in revealing the rigid and self-defeating patterns of his/her functioning. Important interventions at this stage consist also in providing emotional support and in education on alcohol problems and co-dependence.

In the second stage the co-dependent patient seeks a better understanding of the sources of persistence and stability of these patterns and undertakes active attempts to change his/her functioning. The therapeutic work is focused on the patient's beliefs concerning self, his/her marriage, family, relation between man and woman, the order of the world, life goals, etc., that not only strengthen the patient's sense of helplessness, loss, fear of change, self-defeating tendencies, but also justify giving up the search for new solutions, and prevent his/her seeking help outside of the family.

For some patients a third stage is necessary, i.e. a deeper psychotherapy of personal problems frequently originating from their being brought up in a dysfunctional family.

**Key words:** co-dependence / psychotherapy / theoretical approach