Codependent No More

How to stop controlling others and start caring for yourself (a summary by Pat Evert)

- Introduction
Codependents are experts in taking care of others, but not taking care of themselves. They cannot see themselves or feel their own emotions. They cannot say ‘no’ to anything but fun in their lives. Responsible and dependable, but inside are empty and despairing. So absorbed in others’ problems, but not their own. Greatly hurting and in need of help and comfort.

- What is codependency? And who’s got it?
- Jessica’s story - Hurt and enraged by her exhusband for all the lies, feeling betrayed by God who allowed it. She had carried the burden of the family and an irresponsible alcoholic. She had become a bitter bitch. They thrived on yelling arguments. She always felt she had lost, arguments and outcomes in the family. Sleeping with him was strained. She had shut down emotionally, felt trapped. Her love was dried up and brittle. She had lost control. No longer willing to tolerate any more.
- Others’ stories - Quietly falling apart on the inside, feeling lost, feeling used, but very defensive of their spouses. Always giving, but rarely receiving. Feeling guilty, cannot say no. Cannot leave a poor marriage. Lost in the moods of others, so they try to improve their feelings.
- Codependency - An excessive reliance on other people for approval and a sense of identity. In its broadest definition, a codependent is someone who cannot function from their innate self and whose thinking and behavior is instead organized around another person.
- Codependent characteristics - inability to tolerate being alone, chronic feelings of boredom, overwhelming desire acceptance and affection, manipulator, low self worth, unhealthy clinginess, a victim mentality, saying yes when they mean no, try to please others, attracted to needy people, overcommitted, blame others for their victimhood, difficulty in making decisions, have many shoulds, feel unlovable, afraid to be themselves, controlling, feel inadequate, feel their opinion doesn’t matter, apologize for bothering people, martyrs. In being truly recovered one feels empowered like an author of their life and actions.
- **The basics of self-care** - allow others to be who they are and want to be. Take care of yourself, rather than others.

- **Detachment** - To be attached to another is to detach from yourself, and will become obsessed. Worrying is wasted energy, it will drain you. It is scary at first. Detachment is not a cold, hostile robotic withdrawal. The codependent needs releasing them in love. To keep their hands off the responsibilities of others. It is present moment living, accepting the reality of what is. What should be, is. We love and care without being hurt or feeling guilty. Grieve your losses and live with enthusiasm. **Love yourself.**

- **Don't be blown about by every wind** - Don't forfeit your peace because of another. You don't have to react in fear. **Don't give up your power overly caring what others think.** Rejection is not a reflection of your worth. Don't reject yourself. Take care of yourself.

- **Set yourself free** - They suffer in loud silence. They manipulate to get what they want. My clinging or trying to control them will only bring me frustration and block my higher power from changing the situation. Yourself is the only the one you can change. There comes a time to let go.

- **Remove the victim** - There is a cycle of rescue -> persecute -> victimize. We rescue people from their responsibilities, then get mad at them for not being what we want them to be, even ungrateful. Then we see ourselves as hurt victims. This fosters self hate. Our only responsibility is for ourselves, not others. We rescue because we don't feel good about ourselves. Care taking breeds anger. It's okay to keep some care for ourselves. **If you can't feel good about something you are doing, don't do it.** Don't do for someone when they can do it for themselves.

- **Undependence** - Can I live without this person? Can I take care of myself? Yes! Needing people too much becomes a problem. So is incessant approval. We even abandon ourselves. No one can make me feel complete, but myself. We will tolerate abuse and insanity to keep this one in our lives. We settle for too little. Emotionally stuck can be so powerful. We need be centered and secure in ourselves. **Being undependent is a healthy need for people we love, without being harmfully dependent on them.** Otherwise we may smother and stifle the one we are dependent upon. We will drive them away. We have given our power to them. We can miss out on living our own life. Why do we doubt our innate ability to take care of ourselves? It's due to unfinished business.
- **To become undependent...** first become less dependent, then undependent.
  1) **Grieve the unfinished business** of your childhood. That feeling of being unlovable. To no longer seek someone to love you.
  2) **Nurture and cherish that child in you.** Listen to the child and comfort him.
  3) **Stop looking for happiness in others.** Get centered in yourself. You don't need their approval, only your own.
  4) **Learn to depend on yourself.** Always be there for yourself.
  5) **Depend on God too.** He is always watching over your life. We abandoned ourselves.
  6) **Strive for undependence.** You're scared, but you do it anyway. Power comes from feeling our emotions. One day at a time, don't worry about the future.


- **Live your own life** - The surest way to go crazy is to get involved in others’ business and the quickest way to become sane and happy is to tend to our own affairs. Constant suffering does not need to continue. There is an enjoyable and worthwhile life for us. Take care of yourself. I am responsible for my well being, for how much I enjoy life and every aspect of my life. I will also consider the rights of all those around me. To allow them to live as they choose. Give yourself what you need. Our needs are important. **Ask, ‘what do I need to do to take care of myself.’** Listen to your perfect self. Become your counselor, care taker and best friend.

- **Have a love affair with yourself** - We dislike ourselves, we even hate ourselves. We think we are stupid, inferior, unlovable. We pick on ourselves endlessly. The only way we can be worth something is if we are sacrificially serving. Low self worth appears to be a central attribute to the rest of our faults. We enter self antagonism with ourselves. Stop and give yourself a big hug. We are just what we should be, perfect. The real abhorrent characteristic is our self hatred. I am the greatest thing that happened to me - believe it! **It's what we tell ourselves is what makes the difference.** I'm not any different than anyone else. Honor yourself. **Practice selfishness in the highest, noblest sense of that word, which requires enormous independence and courage.** Write down what you feel about yourself, what you like and dislike about you.

- **Learn the art of acceptance** - We can accept or resist the present situation. We might lose the one we love, or their respect. Or the trail of injustice that comes into our lives. Or the loss of dreams. Chemical dependency kills slowly but thoroughly. Accept reality? If things are ever to be different we must accept it. **We cannot change who we are until we accept who we are.** My higher power does not seem to intervene in my circumstances until I accept it. The grief process has five stages:
  1. Denial, much fear and refusal to accept reality, obsessing, lying
  2. Anger, venting emotion
3. Bargaining, attempts to prevent the inevitable,
4. Depression, we begin to acknowledge it, pain
5. Acceptance, we were at peace, and adjust to the new, we have grown
It is a necessary process. We cannot avoid it. Be gentle with yourself, this is tough.

- **Feel your own feelings** - When I repress my emotions my stomach keeps score. We are told not to listen to our feelings, but we need listen to them. Work with your feelings. How important are feelings? **The emotional part of us is important.** We experience love thru our feeler. Fear, anger and grief warn us of a problem. They clue us in as to who we are and the passion of our heart. They also can trick us, making the issue bigger than it actually is. Feelings are energy. They don't go away, they linger. To repress them will make us insensitive and unable to feel them. **Without them our growth is limited.** Allow the feeling to pass thru your body. They don't need to control us, but if you don't deal with them responsibly they will control you. Others cannot make us feel, nor can they fix the feeling. Feelings are indicators. Many times they remain longer, due to our thoughts. It's okay to feel happy, or sad. Invite feelings into your life and then take gentle care of them.

- **Anger** - With substance abuse anger can become a large part of our life, even our life. No one can stand the insanity, including the alcoholic. Sobriety is a great help, but might not heal the relationship. Then the codependent has to heal. Anger is an okay emotion. Quite often it accompanies grief. We may say something we don't mean, or worse we may say what we mean. **You deserve a medal for having gone through this.** How do we deal with such a potent emotion. It will take time and work to get over such anger. Feel the emotion. You don't need to justify it. Acknowledge the thoughts that come with anger and evaluate these thoughts. What is our anger trying to tell us? Don't let it control you. Don't talk to a drunk when drunk. Discuss it when he is sober. Talk to people we trust. Physically burn off the anger. Be gentle with yourself, you will make many mistakes. Keep a journal regarding your anger and what you learn from it.

- **Yes, you can think** - I have difficulty making decisions. Some people are paralyzed and unable to decide. You can think. It is okay to make mistakes. We might learn even more through the mistakes. Learn to love and trust yourself. You can change your mind, even repeatedly. It's normal and necessary. Get peace before you decide. Stop worry and obsession. Feed your mind healthy thoughts, read for growth. **Say good things about yourself instead of degrading things.** We can become comfortable with our minds. Who makes your decisions for you?

- **Set your own goals** - **There is magic in setting and accomplishing goals.** Life is more than something to be endured, just reacting. We can plan. Success requires heart and soul passion. There is more than driving aimlessly thru life. Goals are fun. Energy is increased. Goals cure boredom and many illnesses. Things come to us and begin to happen when you surrender to a goal. It works it's way into your subconscious mind and you react with clarity. What do we want to happen in our
lives? Turn it into a goal. Write them on paper. Commit these to God. Check off goals you have fulfilled. Trust in God’s timing. Do it on character defects. Don’t give up even if you have been working on a goal for years. Make it a goal to change many of your codependent characteristics.

- **Communication** - Are you trying to manipulate your spouse to get what you want? Do you bully, badger and threaten. Am I afraid to tell you who I am? Is it okay to be who I am? Can I say no when I mean it? It's okay to say no. I also need to receive no from others without crumbling. Express feelings honestly. Listen well without trying to fix it. Learn to say, ‘this is what I want from you.’ I love you, but I love me too. Learn your limits, this is as far as I go. I'm sorry you are having that problem, I cannot fix it. Listen to what is said and not said. Be who you are and speak the truth.

- **Work a twelve-step program**
  1. Admit powerlessness, surrender to the truth, accept it
  2. Trust your higher power can save me, I am a spiritual being
  3. Surrender even if it feels like death, it's the way of liberation
  4. Fearless moral inventory, in love and honesty, grow in change
  5. Confession, forgive
  6. Ready for change?
  7. Humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings
  8. Reflection
  9. Restitution
  10. Admit when you are wrong
  11. Prayer and meditation,
  12. Carry this message to others, love self and others,

  Working the program - go to a meeting. Open up. Learn a new way, new habits. Healing, growth will come in the right time.

- **Pieces and bits** - Because of much crisis in our lives we can become addicted to and create more drama in our lives. We may crave some of the old excitement.
  **Expectations are best relinquished.** Examine and discuss them with others, then let go and see how things turn out. They are clues to what we want. Note these expectations belong to me and are not reality. Fear of intimacy - some would rather be alone than have the pain of loving, feeling trapped. We don't risk abandonment or initiating intimacy. **Love and closeness challenge our greatest fears.** We withdraw emotionally or run. It's okay to feel fear of closeness and also to enter closeness. We can love without losing ourselves. Are we needing more intimacy, but holding back? Why?
  Financial responsibility - each must be responsible for their upkeep. Financial dependency on one can lead to emotional dependence.
  Forgiveness - maybe the pain persists. Make certain the abuse does not continue. We need be loving, gentle and forgiving with ourselves. It comes in time.
by Melody Beattie

The frog syndrome - kissing a frog might transform the frog, but it could make you a frog. Fun - difficult to enjoy life when you dislike yourself. Learning to have fun is a necessary part.

- **Boundaries** - this is how far I will go or allow you to go. You can spoil your day or life, but I won't allow you to spoil mine. Mean what you say, don't return the old ways. Boundaries take time and energy but well worth it.
  Physical care - exercise, diet, hygiene and grooming. Taking care of our emotional needs to keep our health.
  Professional help - if considering suicide, experiencing physical abuse. Trust yourself when you go to professionals. You can always change therapist if they are not helping you. **Hugging increases endorphins. The more good we believe about us the better we behave.**

- **Trust** - It is difficult to know when to trust someone. **We can trust ourselves to make good decisions.**

- **Sex** - Many have problems with sexual intimacy. We may withdraw emotionally, lack trust, lack desire, angry and hurt. Sex will reflect the overall tone of the relationship, just another duty. Stop blaming and hating ourselves. Ask what am I feeling? **Trying to get love thru sex doesn't work.**

- **Learning to live and love again** - As we get healthier love will be better. If we believe we are important we will succeed. Learning to love without getting entangled. Finding the balance in everything, letting go of expectations and knowing that we are important. HOW, honesty, openness and willingness to try. **Love and trust must be allowed to heal in their own time.** Love yourself and know you are worthwhile. Those old feelings may surface from time to time, don't be afraid. We can learn to live and love again.