

7 Ways to Avoid Codependency in Your Relationships - Worksheet

What is codependency?

Codependency is a broad term and it can manifest in a variety of ways. Below are some of the most common symptoms of codependency. You don't need to have them all to consider yourself codependent. I find it's helpful to think of codependency on a spectrum – some of us experience more symptoms and distress due to our codependent traits than others.

Which of these symptoms of codependency do you have?

- You feel responsible for other people's feelings and choices; try to rescue, fix, make them feel better, or solve their problems.
- You feel frustrated and resentful when others don't want your help or advice.
- You derive a sense of purpose from taking care of others.
- Your relationships can have an obsessive quality.
- You have difficulty accepting help.
- Your fear of abandonment and rejection result in people-pleasing and tolerating mistreatment.
- You're hard-working, overly responsible, and may give to the point of exhaustion or resentment.
- You have perfectionist tendencies.
- You have trouble saying "no", setting boundaries, being assertive, and asking for what you need/want.
- You routinely prioritize other people's needs and wants above your own; don't practice self-care routinely and feel guilty when you do.
- You're afraid of conflict.
- You have difficulty trusting and being emotionally vulnerable.
- You suppress or numb your feelings and absorb other people's feelings.
- You have low self-esteem, feel unlovable, or not good enough.
- You want to feel in control and have a hard time adjusting when things don't go according to plan or the way you want.

How to avoid codependency in your relationships

1) Instead of denying your own needs, prioritize self-care.

Self-care is the foundation of our emotional and physical health. This includes adequate sleep, exercise, solitude, reflection, spiritual practices, socializing, pursuing hobbies and interests. As codependents, we often sacrifice our own needs in order to take care of others. When we do this, we're likely to get sick, irritable, resentful, impatient, disconnected from ourselves, and possibly depressed and anxious. We need to create balance in our lives by meeting our own needs first and giving to others when we're able to do so without sacrificing our own wellbeing.

What do you need? (If you're not sure, pay attention to how your body feels, your thoughts and feelings.)

What's one thing you can do today to meet that need?

What other acts of self-care can you commit to doing this week?

2) Instead of compulsively trying to fix or take care of others, let others make their own choices.

Codependents tend to have big hearts; we care a lot and don't like to see people suffer, but we also tend to be controlling. We need to remember that we can't control others; we can't make them change or get help, even when we have their best interest at heart. And often, trying to force our solutions on people, only makes things worse.

Who or what do you need to detach from?

What's happened in the past when you've tried to fix/help this person or problem?

What can you say to yourself to help you release control and let others make their own choices?

3) Instead of seeking approval from others, value yourself.

Codependents tend to look to others for validation and approval. When we do this, we give our power away; we allow others to determine our worth instead of deciding for ourselves. We can build our self-esteem and learn to love and value ourselves by noticing our strengths, forgiving ourselves for our mistakes, and most importantly, remembering that love doesn't have to be earned; we are all inherently worthy and important.

What are some of your strengths? What do you like about yourself?

Write a positive affirmation that validates your worth.

4) Instead of judging and criticizing yourself, practice self-compassion.

We set unrealistic expectations for ourselves, expect ourselves to be perfect, and then berate ourselves for falling short. We deserve to treat ourselves with the same loving kindness that we show others when they're struggling.

What are you struggling with right now?

What would you say to a friend who was struggling with the same issues?

Now, say the same thing to yourself.

What loving act would you do for your struggling friend? (A hug, time alone, homemade treat, a self-help book, etc.)

Using this as inspiration, what loving act can you do for yourself?

5) Instead of people-pleasing, develop a stronger sense of self.

As codependents, we tend to let relationships define us -- we lose our own identities and give up what's important to us. We can avoid this by reconnecting with our interests, goals, values, and friends. We can make time to do what's meaningful to us, rather than deriving our worth from being someone's spouse, parent, or best friend – or doing what will make other people happy.

What are your interests and hobbies? (If you're not sure, just brainstorm some ideas.)

What are your personal goals?

How and when can you explore some of your interests and goals?

6) Instead of being a martyr, ask for help.

Most codependents hate asking for help. We don't want to appear weak and would much prefer the superior role of helper. But it's not realistic to do everything yourself and not need anything from others. Asking for help is normal and necessary and it can reduce exhaustion and resentment which can plague us when we feel like we have to do it all ourselves.

What do you need help with?

Who could you ask to help you?

Even though it's difficult, would you be willing to try asking for help? Why or why not?

7) Instead of letting people take advantage of your kindness, set boundaries and be assertive.

Boundaries create safety in relationships; they communicate your expectations and how you want to be treated. Contrary to popular belief, boundaries aren't selfish or unkind. It's healthy to communicate your needs and let people know what's okay and what's not okay.

What boundaries do you need right now?

If this is a boundary that you need to communicate to someone, try writing a script and reading it out loud to yourself to see how it sounds. Make sure it clearly states what you want/need, it's direct yet kind, and it's not blaming or judgmental.