

How to Change Codependent Thinking that's Keeping You Stuck

Symptoms of Codependency

- Self-criticism
- Putting everyone else's needs before your own (lack of self-care)
- Low self-esteem, feeling inadequate or worthless
- Unsure of who you are, what's important to you, or what you like
- Fear of abandonment, rejection, being alone
- Sensitive to criticism
- Conflict-avoidant, passive
- Lack of boundaries or feeling guilty when setting boundaries
- Overly responsible, take responsibility for other people's problems (some codependents are the opposite – very irresponsible)
- Difficulty tolerating emotions, lack of awareness of your emotions
- High need for validation or approval from others (people-pleasing)
- Spend a lot of time and energy trying to help, fix, or rescue troubled people in your life
Feel responsible for everyone else's happiness

What is codependent thinking?

Codependent thinking is based on fear and low self-worth. It tells us we need to be perfect, self-sacrificing, and low maintenance, that we shouldn't have needs and shouldn't ask for anything, that we should tolerate mistreatment because if we don't, we'll end up alone. These thoughts lead to feelings of guilt, shame, and resentment, and to behaviours such as people-pleasing, enabling, giving unwanted advice or nagging, and being passive-aggressive.

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Challenge your codependent thoughts

When you notice a codependent thought, try to challenge, and replace it with a more helpful, healthy, and accurate thought by asking some of these questions. You can add any additional questions that help you reframe your thinking to the list.

- Is this thought helpful?
- Is it accurate? How do I know?
- Is there another way I can look at this?
- Is this a thought or a fact?
- Am I overgeneralizing?
- Is this my responsibility or problem?
- Am I discounting my needs or feelings?
- Is this thought based on low self-esteem or fear or shame?
- Is this what I really think or is this what someone told me I should think (or belief or feel or do)?
- What would someone who isn't codependent think or feel?
- Can I tolerate someone being upset with me?
- How can I take care of myself?
- What do I need right now?
- How do I feel? What are my feelings telling me?

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Challenging

Codependent Thinking

- Everything's my fault. —→ I'm only responsible for my thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- It feels scary when I can't control everything. —→ I can cope with whatever happens.
- I don't want to let anyone down. —→ It's okay to say "no".
- I have to do everything myself. —→ I can ask for help.
- I need others to validate my worth. —→ My self-worth doesn't depend on other people's approval.
- It's my job to keep everyone happy. —→ We're all responsible for our own feelings. I can't make someone happy (or unhappy).
- There's one "right" way to do things. —→ My way isn't the only way.
- If I don't take charge, this family will fall apart. —→ I can't control everything.
- I need to rescue people; I can't let them suffer. —→ It's not possible for me to fix everyone and everything.
- I shouldn't have any needs. I shouldn't spend money or time on myself. —→ Doing things for myself is healthy, not selfish

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