

Codependency & Coffee



with Sharon Martin and Michelle Farris

Notes from Video #1

What is codependency?

- Focus on other people's problems, can get obsessed with helping/fixing/rescuing.
- Enabling - doing for others what they can do for themselves, give advice, nag, control.
- Prioritize other people's needs and wants at the expense of your own, think your needs/wants don't matter or aren't as important as other people's.
- Quick to take the blame for things you didn't cause or couldn't control.
- Experience high levels of shame.
- Put others needs ahead of your own.
- Neglect yourself for approval and use that approval to esteem yourself.
- Attract people who have lots of problems, who tend to be more self-centered, alcoholic or chaotic in their own life.
- Hide your true self for fear of disapproval (or don't know your true self).

**I'm caring for people all day long - my aging parents, my children, my students.
How do I cope with the guilt of not being able to take adequate care of everyone?**

- Guilt is feeling you've done something wrong.
- It sounds like you're giving and giving, doing the best you can.
- We all have limits. No one can do everything.
- When we give a lot, we need to replenish ourselves by making self-care a priority.
- To reduce feeling guilty, remember that we all have limits, you're not doing anything wrong. Perhaps, shift from "I should be doing more" to "I wish I could do more."

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How do I accept my emotions and express them in a healthy way? How can I learn to sit with my negative emotions?

- Codependents don't like to feel negative emotions. They're afraid of upsetting others or not being liked.
- Eventually, they can't ignore them anymore - we get sick or show signs of depression or anxiety.
- Pain is a great motivator; we don't change unless we get sick and tired of doing the same thing and expecting different results.
- It takes courage to feel but when we actually do feel the feelings, they pass and provide relief.
- Seeing the benefits - expressing feelings decreases stress, helps us feel closer to others, helps us feel more complete and able to live in the present.
- Codependents stuff their feelings because they fear disapproval.
- Start by using "I statements" and naming the specific behavior.
- Soften the blow by "assuming the other person's good intentions"

My parents are very intrusive and critical. How can I set boundaries with them?

- Boundaries aren't about telling others what to do. They can include communicating what you want/need. They are requests, not demands, that others can choose to follow or not.
- Boundaries are guidelines for how you will handle a challenging situation.
- I statement: I feel hurt and unloved when you comment on my weight or what I'm eating. Please don't say anything about my food choices or weight.
- What will you do if they continue to criticize? Consider your options - go home or ask them to leave, take a break in another room or go to the store/play with the kids or pets, limit contact, continue to point out when they are hurtful.
- Give yourself permission to set boundaries.
- It's not your job to manage their feelings or reaction.
- Who can support you?
- Practice self-care -- you're doing something new and challenging.

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How do I trust my intuition with relationships?

- Start recognizing what your intuition looks like - a feeling in your stomach or a voice saying "that's not a good idea".
- We all have times where we should have listened to ourselves - use those experiences to learn more about yourself.
- Look back at past situations where you didn't trust yourself but you were right. How did you get those messages?
- Start paying attention to that feeling or voice within. With practice, your confidence will grow. Next time, follow that voice and see what happens.
- Once you learn to trust yourself and your perceptions, it will be easier to trust your intuition in relationships.
- It also helps to recognize your relationship patterns. For instance, do you tend to attract people with lots of problems? Do you tend to get into relationships that are all about the other person but not you?
- Go back into a past relationship and find the red flags - what were they and at what point did you need to pay attention to them?

How do I stop worrying about what others do or don't do?

- Worrying doesn't lead to change, it just sucks up time and energy.
- Determine what's in your control and what isn't -- and focus on what's in your control (that's the best use of your time and energy).
- To stop worrying - distraction, journaling, talking to a supportive person (therapist, group, friend), prayer, meditation, exercise, change of scenery (go out for a walk), music, mantra (I release my worries to God/the universe. I trust that Jane will do what's right for her.)

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How do I stop being a doormat without hurting someone's feelings?

- This is the codependent person's greatest challenge! To express their needs without hurting anyone.
- Speaking up IS a risk because we can't predict how someone is going to react.
- There are a lot of kudos being a people-pleaser, such as being the hero, the one people rely on. People LOVE that so understandably, it's hard to give up.
- But relationships aren't satisfying when we can't advocate for ourselves.
- But people don't change until the pain is greater than the fear.
- Start with the people you feel safest with because they are more likely to support you.
- Being a doormat means that our focus is on someone else so recovery requires redirecting that focus back onto ourselves.
- To stop people-pleasing we need to focus on self-care.
- Watch your negative assumptions that being honest about how you feel will cause problems - FEAR (False Evidence Appearing Real).