

# Codependency & Coffee



with Sharon Martin and Michelle Farris

## Notes from Video #2

### **What's the difference between being a codependent and an enabler?**

- Enabling means doing something for someone that they can do for themselves, allowing them to remain in their dysfunction or immaturity; you protect them from unpleasant consequences, because you're worried and don't want them to suffer.
- Enabling is one possible symptom of codependency. Codependency is a bigger construct that includes a variety of other symptoms. It's an unhealthy focus or even obsession with other people, trying to please them, worrying about them, trying to help/rescue/fix them. Codependents have low self-esteem, hence the need to please and for external validation. Codependents get their self-worth by pleasing and helping.

### **What's the difference between being a codependent and an empath?**

- Both codependents and empaths are deeply attuned to other people's feelings and absorb the energy around them. For codependents, we learn this as a survival skill -- we become hypersensitive, an anxiety type response, to our surroundings for protection. An empath has a strong natural ability to sense how other people feel, but it's not a trauma response like codependency.
- Empaths don't feel responsible for creating or fixing other people's uncomfortable feelings (such as anger or sadness).
- Empaths also don't necessarily lack self-esteem or a sense of self, therefore they don't engage in people-pleasing, fixing, or need external validation.

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## How do you know when you are helping too much?

- Codependents are known to be incredibly giving and generous. They are the ones you can rely on without fail. But at some point, this generosity becomes overwhelming. Instead of wanting to give, they feel like they “have to give” which creates resentment and feeling burned out over time.
- When over-giving becomes a pattern, relationships start to feel more like obligations than mutually beneficial relationships. That’s when neglecting yourself starts to become a habit. You put everyone else’s needs ahead of your own. Feeling resentful or wishing you could say no is your signal to stop.
- Paying attention to our feelings will help to determine what our personal boundaries are. Disregarding your own needs is at the core of a codependent’s pain.
- Doing for others what they can do for themselves is where the line of recovery starts especially with people close to us including adult children.
- Another reason the codependent person helps is to avoid their own anxiety. Codependents get anxious when other people are hurting so they try to help them to avoid their own discomfort. It’s very difficult for them to separate somebody else’s emotions from their own. You might think you are calming the other person down but really trying to calm yourself down.
- The goal in codependency recovery is to learn how to give in moderation so it doesn’t cause you to neglect yourself or your own obligations. You can still be a giver but notice where your giving starts to feel overwhelming or too much. Learning how to trust your own perceptions is key!

## How do I start to heal or change codependent patterns?

Healing codependency usually involves:

- Knowing who you are, what you think, feel, and believe (strengthening your sense of self)
- Setting boundaries and being assertive
- Building self-esteem or feeling good about yourself
- Self-care (meeting your own needs)

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## What are some specific things I can do to start healing/changing?

- Consider attending Al-Anon or CODA. If you want something more private, try group counseling or individual therapy. Doing this work alone makes it much harder than it needs to be.
- There are plenty of good books out there- like *The New Codependency* by Melody Beattie and Sharon's book *The CBT Workbook for Perfectionism* to help you understand the process of recovery.
- Find a sponsor for one on one support and working the steps. Lasting recovery happens when we can open ourselves up to sharing our stories with another person without the fear of being judged. A lot of people go to meetings and get relief but those that work the steps with a sponsor make more significant progress. It's easier to leave the program when you have no real connections.
- Also recovery is not a race, it's a daily practice of learning how to love yourself while still loving others.
- Consider online courses as a self study to boost knowledge and get more targeted help.
- Seek counseling when you've experienced abuse or traumas that require more support.