

Codependency & Coffee



with Sharon Martin and Michelle Farris

Notes from Video #3

Can I recover completely from codependency?

- A therapist told me years ago that while you may never be completely free of codependency, there will come a time when the pain doesn't rule your life anymore.
- Codependency takes years to develop but that doesn't mean it will take years to heal. I know people who have been in recovery for 30 years and they still go to meetings and work the program not because they have to but because they don't want to lose what they've got from working the program. It's easy to forget when you're trying to recover in isolation.
- Consider this - if you stopped working out, you will likely gain weight - maybe not a lot but over time you'll notice. It's the same for personal growth. If you stop taking care of yourself your life begins to get more stressful.
- Recovery is a one day at a time thing. It's not about being perfect or getting to a place where you don't have any issues. It's about being willing to wake up and practice the tools again.

What do I do if I'm not ready to set boundaries?

- First, it's okay to not be ready. Give yourself permission to not set a boundary. Part of recovery is learning how to be gentle with yourself - like you would a close friend or small child.
- Remember that setting boundaries is not a beginner's task in early recovery. Usually it takes awhile to figure out what you need and decide what you want to do next.
- Not setting boundaries doesn't mean you can't take action. For instance when someone hurts your feelings but you're not ready to speak up - focus on what you can do to take care of yourself. Talk it out with someone you trust or do some journal writing about what this brought up for you. Self-care is the first step in setting boundaries.
- Be aware of what is your responsibility and what isn't. For instance, your well-being is your responsibility. Other people - no matter how close they are to you can't anticipate your needs. Boundaries will determine what you will do next - not what someone else is going to do next!

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Can you give examples of codependent or enabling behaviors and their healthy counterparts?

- Instead of saying yes to every request and doing things you don't want to do consider your own needs and interests, allow yourself to say no and be selective without feeling guilty.
- Instead of giving unsolicited advice or trying to change people ask if someone wants your suggestions or help.
- Instead of doing everything yourself, ask for help.
- Instead of setting impossibly high standards, criticizing yourself for even the smallest mistake or imperfection, treat yourself like a friend, give yourself compassion, accept that you don't have to be perfect.
- Instead of walking on eggshells, speak up for yourself, your opinions and needs matter, remember not all conflict is bad.
- Instead of letting others mistreat you (say mean things, borrow money without repaying, leaving a mess and expecting you to clean it up, violating your boundaries), set limits and tell people what's not okay and what will happen if they continue.
- Instead of stuffing your feelings, notice them, express them in healthy ways .
- Instead of enabling (pouring out alcohol, calling in sick for them, cleaning up after them), set limits, practice self-care, work on managing/tolerating your worry and anxiety.

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I understand what the problem is. Now how do I fix it? I recognize the traits within myself but I don't know how to fix them.

- We have to change both our thinking and our behavior.
- The behavior is sometimes easier because it's observable and measurable. But our thoughts and actions are inter-connected and often it's our negative, distorted thoughts that prevent us from changing our behavior.
- We have to believe that we're worthy of respect, self-care, fulfilling relationships and so forth. One way to change this is by repeatedly telling yourself that you're worthy. You get to decide how you feel about yourself/what you believe about yourself rather than letting the old tapes dictate.
- The how isn't a one-size fits all because different things work for different people.
- You can start with the examples I just gave on the previous page and identify a specific action that you can do to start changing.
 - How do you start setting limits? Identify what you'll allow and what you won't. Communicate your request respectfully. Identify what you'll do if the boundary is crossed. Recognize what's in your control and what isn't. Follow through. Practice.
 - How do you notice and express your feelings? Sit with a list of feeling words 3x/day, name your feelings, notice where/how they feel in your body. Identify and try a healthy way to express your feelings (journal, I statement, exercise, art)