



Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself

Melody Beattie

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The healing touchstone of millions, this modern classic by one of America's best-loved and most inspirational authors holds the key to understanding codependency and to unlocking its stultifying hold on your life.

Is someone else's problem your problem? If, like so many others, you've lost sight of your own life in the drama of tending to someone else's, you may be codependent--and you may find yourself in this book--Codependent No More. The healing touchstone of millions, this modern classic by one of America's best-loved and most inspirational authors holds the key to understanding codependency and to unlocking its stultifying hold on your life. With instructive life stories, personal reflections, exercises, and self-tests, Codependent No More is a simple, straightforward, readable map of the perplexing world of codependency--charting the path to freedom and a lifetime of healing, hope, and happiness. Melody Beattie is the author of Beyond Codependency, The Language of Letting Go, Stop Being Mean to Yourself, The Codependent No More Workbook and Playing It by Heart.

Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself Details

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From Reader Review Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself for online ebook

Lara Heisler says

Found this really helpful. I bet it could help you, too. In fact, I will loan you my copy. Even if you don't want it. Or I could buy it for you, even though I can't afford it. Don't walk away! I'll give you \$20 if you read it. I know it will help you. You need help. Don't worry about me. I'm fine. Now.

Betsy Boo says

What I learned from this book? Good grief! I learned soooooo much! This book opened my eyes to the path toward self-discovery, self-love, and learning how to deal with difficult relationships. I very highly recommend this book, not just for people who live with an alcoholic, but for anyone who is trying desperately hard to fix a bad relationship, whether it's with your spouse, your parents, your children...with anyone you love. I learned how my upbringing has the power to wreck my current and future relationships if I let it. I learned how to let go of the unfixable...that the only person I have any control over is myself. I learned that I can let go of all that free-floating guilt that I never earned. What a relief! The tenets of this book are so simple...you wonder why you didn't think of them yourself! But the truth is, Ms. Beattie writes in such a simple, straight forward way that even though you may have heard much of this before, you never really processed it. At least that was my experience. I wish I had read this book years ago!

Marie says

As an adult child of alcoholic parents I am giving you forced "advice" to read this book. Ha! Just a little codependent joke. I just started to read this...it's heavy and hard to stomach at times, but definitely going to help me. I try to spend a little time with it every couple of days with a journal. So far it's been an amazing read. While it seems like I have a lot of work to do--it's all for the best. I have young children, and don't want to pass this stuff on...so I'm diving in and hopefully a better version of "me" will come of it!

Kirby says

It's sort of hard to rate self-help books so I'm just going to rate this one on how helpful it was to me in particular. I would say it was 50% helpful. Simply reading its descriptions of codependency was really instructive. Lately, I've been hearing the word codependent used a lot, and most people are not using it correctly (for example, I've heard several people use it to describe couples who can't go out without each other, and that's not really what it means). Codependency has a very wide definition, but the best way that I understand it after reading this book is that codependent people let the negative behaviors of those around them affect their own feelings and behaviors in a negative way. As a result, codependents become controlling, moody and often adopt a martyr syndrome that never fixes anything. The book, which is geared towards family members of alcoholics, clarifies a lot of these unhealthy behaviors and gives tips on how to be self-aware and how to manage our emotions, which I find to be helpful, even if it's not groundbreaking

scientific work or whatever.

Not helpful: the content was pretty repetitive after awhile, and there was too much talk about God for my taste, especially towards the end. She snuck it into the beginning in a way that many self-help books do ("It helps to find a spiritual power of some sort, whatever your beliefs"), but by the end, she was quoting Bible verses and throwing around tons of "Put your trust in God" verbiage that just made me feel like barf, no thanks.

Still, this book is a great introduction to codependency. I would recommend it to anyone who has a family member or loved one who is alcoholic, compulsive or just generally hard to be around.

Rhonda says

Quite the enlightening book...

Although I am not dealing specifically/only with an alcoholic, there are other controlling behaviors that this applies to. Not necessarily a chemical or substance dependency. Anything that affects your behavior that you find yourself trying to control situations to avoid that behavior.

Favorite Quotes:

A codependent person is one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior.

But, the heart of the definition and arecovery lies not in the 'other person'---no matter howmuch we believe it does. It lies in ourselves, in the ways we have let other people's behavior affect us and in the ways we try to affect them: the obsessing, the controlling, the obsessive 'helping', caretaking, low self-worth bordering on self-hatred, self-repression, abundance of anger and guilt, peculiar dependency on peculiar people, attraction to and tolerance for the biazrre, other-centeredness that results in abondonment of self, communication problems, intimacy problems, and an ongoing whirlwind trip through the five-stage grief process. p 36

The word 'react' is important here. However you approach codependency, however you define it, and from whatever frame of reference you coose to diagnose and treat it, codependency is primarily a reactionary process. Codependents are reactionaries. They overreact. they underreact. but rarely do they 'act'. p 38

Detachment is based on the premises that each person is responsible for himself, that we can't solve problems that aren't ours to solve, and that worrying doesn't help. We adopt a policy of keeping our hands off other people's responsibilities and tend to our own instead.

We try to live happily---focusing heroically on what is good in our lives today, and feeling grateful for that. We learn the magical lesson that making the most of what we have turns it into more. Detachment involves "present moment living"--living in the here and now. We allow life to happen instead of forcing and trying to control it. we relinquish regrets over the past and fears about the future. We make the most of each day. We trust that Someone greater than ourselves knows, has ordained, and cares about what is happening. We undersatnd that this Someone can do much more to solve the problem than we can. So we try to stay out of His way and let HIM do it.

Detaching does not mean we don't care. It means we learn to love, care, and be involved without going crazy. p 62,63

A good rule of thumb is: You need to detach most when it seems the least likely or possible thing to do. p 65

When we attempt to control people and things that we have no business controlling, we are controlled. We forfeit our power to think, feel, and act in accordance with our best interests. Never forget that alcoholics and other troubled persons are expert controllers. We have met our match when we attempt to control them. we lose the battles, We lose the wars. We lose our selves---our lives. You didn't cause it; you can't control it; and you can't cure it. p 80

For each of us, there comes a time to let go. You will know when that time has come. when you have done all that you can do, it is time to detach. Deal with your feelings. Face your fears about losing control. Gain control of yourself and your responsibilities. Free others to be who they are. In so doing, you will set yourself free. p 82

Codependents are oppressed, depressed, and repressed. Many of us can quickly tell what someone else is feeling, why that person is feeling that way, how long they've felt that way, and what that person is probably going to do because of that feeling. Many of us spend our lives fussing about other people's feelings. We try to fix people's feelings. We try to control other people's feelings. We don't want to hurt people, we don't want to upset them, and we don't want to offend them. We feel so responsible for other people's feelings. Yet we don't know what we are feeling. If we do, we don't know what to do to fix ourselves. many of us have abandoned or never taken responsibility for our emotional selves. p 142

Carolyn says

If only I had read this book 10 years ago... I might not be in the mess I'm in now.

This is a good book for those in crisis mode. When you're beaten down and feeling trapped and you don't know what the hell is wrong with you, you need this book, which tells you over and over and over again: You're okay, you're a good person. You're okay, you're a good person. You're okay, you're a good person...

I stumbled upon this book a little late. I had already had my crisis, realized I needed to change my life and started taking steps in the right direction. Therefore, about half of the book I didn't need. I could see myself 5 or 10 years ago in a few chapters, 1 or 2 years ago in others. It made me a little angry that I had to go through some of the things I went through via trial and error, without the aid of this little self-help book. I could see how helpful it would have been if I had had it then. If you already know what co-dependency is, this isn't the book for you. This is a book for those who are struggling and have no idea what the hell is wrong with them. We all know these people. They don't know yet that they need help, but they do.

Help them. Give this book to someone you love.

Kayla Perry says

When the author said she didn't come at this from a scientific background I was willing to overlook that until she got to the traits of codependency. If you're going to write a long list with multiple categories and then proceed to contradict yourself (sometimes within the same category) it's going to lower your credibility for me substantially (ex: Under Misc: "Codependents are extremely responsible" and right beneath it "Codependents are extremely irresponsible". This is not the only example either, btw.)

Also the heavy emphasis on 12-steps and God was really off-putting to me. I think the title of this book should have reflected the fact it was primarily geared towards alcoholics and/or children of alcoholics. The fact that she mentions other groups doesn't matter much if 90% of the book is spent referring to codependents as people who have encountered some form of addiction. After the lists, I actually put this one down but I did skim ahead a bit to see if anything else was of interest to me (nope).

After reading other reviews on here talking about how she puts therapy down I know this book is definitely not for me. I will search elsewhere for literature on codependency.

Emma says

A very helpful and important book about co-dependency. The author speaks kindly and is supportive and there are lots of practical suggestions too. My criticisms would be that it seems very dated in places, and she does like to use the word "God" when I would've preferred her to use Higher Power, however, that should not diminish the significance or importance of this book. There is no mention of CoDA either, so I am guessing as an organisation, it did not exist when the book was written. It's a good start, for those who feel definitions and explanations of the term and actions around co-dependency are needed and is very helpful. Recommended

Christine Hernando says

I decided to read this book because so many of my clients are reading or have read it. I figured it would be a good idea to know what they're reading, especially since these clients regard it so highly but seem to be making little progress. Now I know why. What a load of crap. If the author of this book is to be believed, everyone is codependent. Furthermore, she perpetuates victimhood: it's not my fault I'm codependent. It's a natural, understandable reaction to my childhood, adulthood, blah blah blah. There are so many better self-help books out there. This is one of the last ones I would recommend!

Maranda (addlebrained_reader) says

This is the book that started it all. I know it is cliché but, this book has changed my life and my thinking...

I was talking to my father on the phone one day and I was explaining to him how I have no problem exercising and eating right when Otty is gone but I can't seem to keep it up when he is home. My father then asked me if I wanted to know what that was called...he told me it was called co-dependence and that I should start learning about this by reading a book called Co-dependent No More. I pretty much ran out right away and purchased the book.

Now, I have never been a big advocate for self-improvement books, but I have to say that this book was very enlightening. Co-dependency has a different definition for everyone. This book made me delve into my own retched thoughts and confront them head on.

This book made me realize that I have a voice and an opinion and both matter just as much as the next person. I realized that I can make decisions and not have to worry if my opinion is what other people may think or want. My opinion is exactly that...my opinion. It is okay to have an opinion that is different than someone else's.

I also learned that I need to detach myself from the people in my life that cause me harm...emotionally, physically, doesn't matter...

Though I may not struggle with an abusive alcoholic, I still struggle with the internal doubts and feelings of self worthlessness. I have learned that I do not need to immerse myself so deeply in someone else's life that I lose myself. I can keep my individuality while sharing my life with another. If we have conflicting views...that's alright.

When I first read this book, I figure that I would not post my feelings about it because they were too personal. However, now having some distance from the book and being able to employ the lessons I have learned, I am able to share myself with others.

I am not perfect and it is absolutely acceptable for me to let other people know this. Maybe, by sharing these thoughts, someone else might be inspired to read this book and better themselves as well.

Juliana says

Taken from my blog at [http://blog.geekuniverse.org/2008/02/...](http://blog.geekuniverse.org/2008/02/)

In case it isn't already clear, I'm talking about two separate books here. One book is titled "Codependent No More" and the other is "Beyond Codependency." I picked them up at the library after hearing the term codependent used in The Emotionally Abusive Relationship. I've been interested in learning about the concept in the past and never gotten around to it.

So what is codependency? The term was coined originally to describe spouses of those dependent on alcohol or other drugs. For example, we'll say a woman is married to an alcoholic husband. The husband, dependent on the alcohol, is hampered in his ability to overcome alcoholism because of his codependent wife.

This does not mean the wife is an alcoholic and it does not mean she approves of the alcoholic's behavior. It means that her warped way of coping with that stress actually enables her husband's problem. She might try to ignore the problem, or try to solve the problem herself, or cover up for her husband--but whatever her behavior, she is actually taking responsibility for his behavior or her shoulders. She is an enabler--she makes it easy for him to be an alcoholic. When the problem gets worse and worse and the wife doesn't understand why, she's bound to feel hopeless, helpless, angry, stressed and probably bitter.

The term is now used in a more broad sense: you can use the term (or concept or ideas or paradigm, if you

don't feel the need to use the latest pop culture terminology) to describe one who feels compelled to help others to the point of hurting themselves and the intended compassionate recipient. The best line is these two books is that codependents do "all the wrong things for all the right reasons."

One of the most interesting, and least explored, concepts covered in the chronology or pattern of behavior. Here's my take:

First, the codependent is essentially a victim of somebody else's addictive or destructive behavior. As such, they are to be pitied and helped.

Next, the codependent tries to figure out how to cope with a situation that is not their fault and they have no control over. The natural instinct is to try to gain some control over the situation. But instead of doing it the healthy way--controlling themselves by setting boundaries and knowing how to enforce them--they try to control the other person by "helping" them in various ways.

Lastly, when the problem gets worse and worse, the codependent becomes angry, bitter and dejected as a result of their failed attempts to gain some level of control over a situation that was already impossibly difficult to deal with. It is at this point that a codependent becomes an ugly force to be reckoned with. As they bounce between the second and third phase, they may play a Jekyll & Hyde game appearing intensely angry and controlling at some moments and at other moments seem to be the kindest, most giving person possible. It is at this stage that the original victim can become abusive.

At first, most people will be naturally drawn to a codependent because of the codependent's ability to give and give and give and give. When it eventually becomes apparent that the charitable behaviors are actually a warped way of controlling the world around them, a psychologically healthy person will turn the other direction and run as fast as they can. They will be able to sense inherently that their boundaries are being infringed on in a subtle and destructive manner.

I spent a lot of time pondering the conflict between charity and codependency, and wondering if I could really bring this book in line with my religious views. I'll save that for a separate blog entry. I also pondered my own tendency toward codependency. Did I learn behaviors that have been passed down through the generations? Or do I have some trauma I am dealing with in my life? Whatever the answer, my New Year's Resolution is to stop worrying about other people and learn to love and accept myself. So far, it's feeling fabulous and I think it is helping me to be more charitable toward others, rather than less charitable.

Okay, enough of explanations. I thought the concepts covered in these books were eye-opening and instructive. I think it's a great paradigm to explore. However, I think a better book could be written. Codependent No More is essentially the Go To book about codependency. I found it well written, but somewhat rambling and repetitive. (Somewhat like this blog?) Just as I found myself intrigued by a concept, the author would go into some lengthy story that only partially made sense to me, as somebody who has never dealt with an alcoholic or chemically dependent person. I actually enjoyed Beyond Codependency more because it dealt more with solutions to the problem than lengthy descriptions. Once I "got it," I "got it" and was bored with further detail in the first book.

I found myself wishing for a book that was written for a wider audience and in more broad terms, with less focus on the alcoholism angle. As it turns out, I found the perfect book by accident. I saw a book at Deseret Book titled "I Don't Have to Make Everything All Better" and was reminded of the codependency angle. So I

bought it on a whim. It's exactly what I didn't realize I was looking for and it'll be up next in this four-part series of Self Help book reviews.

For more information about codependency:

According to Mental Health America (some random website I found online, which described it better than most) the symptoms of codependency are:

An exaggerated sense of responsibility for the actions of others

A tendency to confuse love and pity, with the tendency to "love" people they can pity and rescue

A tendency to do more than their share, all of the time

A tendency to become hurt when people don't recognize their efforts

An unhealthy dependence on relationships. The co-dependent will do anything to hold on to a relationship; to avoid the feeling of abandonment

An extreme need for approval and recognition

A sense of guilt when asserting themselves

A compelling need to control others

Lack of trust in self and/or others

Fear of being abandoned or alone

Difficulty identifying feelings

Rigidity/difficulty adjusting to change

Problems with intimacy/boundaries

Meowbie says

I knew this was a classic of the genre, but I found myself unimpressed by it. Maybe I came at it with the wrong expectations? I was thinking of "co-dependency" in a more generic sense — say, the way a married couple can be enmeshed and lose their boundaries with each other. Beattie's book instead seems dated to me, bound up as it is with the classic origins of the term "co-dependence" in the partners of alcoholics.

For me, the constant references to alcohol and Al-Anon grated on me, as did mentions of her religious persuasion. Yes, she nodded to spirituality, but in the end, this was an unabashed God-led Twelve-Step book. This was not what I came for. I was also unimpressed by her denigration of therapy.

I have preferred Pia Mellody's *Facing Love Addiction* for better coverage of this topic. I'm also keen to read

Leslie Irvine's *Codependent Forevermore*, which is an even-handed critique of CoDA and the recovery moment in general.

For any men reading this review (I can't imagine there will be too many), I will give my strongest recommendation to Dr Robert Glover's *No More Mr Nice Guy*, which is essentially a co-dependence book aimed at men.

Jim says

An eye-opening book that reveals many behaviors one adopts to handle living with someone with addiction problems, or as in my case, mental-health issues. I never realized the extent to which my relationship warped me, to some level my fault for allowing it to happen, but the book also presented a lot of ways to come to an understanding of what it means to be a codependent and also ways to combat and correct behavior. I didn't completely like the religious angles that much, though they will be good for some people, and at times it seemed as though there was an awfully large umbrella for which people could be defined as codependent. But I learned from this book and took a step in the right direction in trying to regain control of my life.

Dana Baker says

I thought I knew everything there was to know about co-dependency, but this book took it above and beyond my prior misconceptions. For anyone who has experienced emotional martyrdom and excessive guilt surrounding self-care issues, this is a necessary read! Beattie breaks down unnoticed learned behavior that's passed down through generations, behaviors that are often a result of living with an alcoholic parent or person with dysfunctional coping mechanisms. Although I wasn't directly affected by addictive issues in the family, growing up a triplet created some of the exact same self-sacrificing behavioral patterns that are talked about in this book. It's pretty amazing for anyone who has struggled to figure out why they often put others first but feel guilty taking care of themselves.

Jennifer says

practicing what I preach.

I gave it three stars because I read the entire book, and I'm still codependent. I was sort of hoping this would like, cure me. Fix all my issues, sort of like the knight and shining self-help book I've always been waiting for. But it didn't immediately read my mind and meet my needs, and I was crushed. I thought, maybe if I am a better reader, it will be a happier book and then all my dreams will come true. So I tried to be perfect, I ignored all its flaws, and I put all its needs first ... Everything. Nothing worked. I became angry and embittered, became passive aggressive, made empty threats. I was ten different kinds of needy. Then one day, I had enough, and I gave up. I set some boundaries, started to detach with love and take care of myself. I learned how to stop controlling self-help books and start caring for myself.
