

# Guide to Codependency

Building  
the life of freedom



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# IS THIS FOR YOU? LET'S SEE.

*Do you tend to lose yourself in a relationship, do you shut off the rest of the world when you are in a relationship?*

*Do you often feel like you put more into your relationship than your partner (or past relationships), you are always there for them, but they are not there for you?*

*Do you make your partner your entire universe and you neglect other areas of your life like your friendships and hobbies?*

*Do you find it very hard to say No to people?*

*Do you feel the need to help everyone around you?*

*Do you often neglect your own needs and wants for the sake of other people's needs and wants?*

*Are you trying to change your partner or are you living with the thought "he/she is going to change and then we'll be happy"?*

*Do you struggle with knowing what you want in life in small things and in big things (you are used to other people making a decision and you simply follow)?*

**If you answered these questions as a YES,  
this codependency guide is for you.**

# IS THIS FOR YOU? LET'S SEE.



Chances are that you answered at least SOME of these questions as a YES. And the truth is ALL OF US have codependent tendencies to some extent. Things like poor boundaries and people-pleasing and not knowing what you want are very common for many of us.

But some of us are on a higher scale of codependency - when our behavior patterns become too damaging for our lives. We may keep entering toxic destructive relationships, again and again, we may lose friendships or have problems in our careers, all because we fall more and more into our unhealthy codependent habits.

So why do we become codependent?

# WHY?



There are many reasons for codependency, which is probably why it is **SO COMMON.**

We develop our attachments in our childhood and it all depends on how our relationship with our parents or caregivers was, as well as the relationships between the parents themselves and the overall environment in which we were growing up.

One of the main characteristics of that environment being emotional instability. Parents fighting, frequent and unexpected change of mood, unsafe environment (emotional or physical abuse, substance abuse) as well as one or both parents being unavailable (physically not there or emotionally unavailable, cold).

As kids, we need the love and care of both parents to develop healthy attachments with people. And if our needs are not being met, if our feelings are constantly neglected, we grow up still trying to “deserve” that love from people around us, that love that we didn’t get in our childhood. And for that we are ready to ignore our needs and wants, we go above and beyond to please people around us, we hold on to our partner for the sake of not being alone because being alone, “abandoned” and “rejected” recreates the same feeling that we had when we were kids when we didn’t receive the love that we needed from our parent.

# WHY?

Other possible scenarios could be children of people who struggle with substance abuse, mental health, or chronic illness. Or parents who are too busy fighting with each other and their whole focus is on that, as they themselves are codependent on each other. A child in such an environment can learn that his value is in being a caretaker, in keeping things together. Like if the life of this household depends on him - if he stops taking care of parents, siblings, or house chores, everything will fall apart.

When this person grows up, they continue living with a feeling that people around them all depend on their help, and without them, everything will indeed fall apart. They become these people who are over caring and over-controlling, who run around taking care of brother's problems, parents' problems, son's problems and in fact they create such relationships where people around them indeed are consumers and they are used to get that person to solve everything for them and they don't have to take the responsibility for their problems.

Try to analyze your childhood and the relationship dynamics in your family.

How did your parents (or one parent or other caregivers such as grandparents) show up for you and how did they show up for each other?

Do you see any similarities with what's described above? Write down your findings:

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# CODEPENDENT'S TRAITS

## How else does codependency show up in our lives:

- Controlling behavior
- Jealousy (towards a partner, but also can be with friends or family members)
- Emotional rollercoaster in relationship
- Manipulation and threats, such as "I'm going to leave you!" but never actually doing it
- Trying to change the partner
- Not knowing what we want
- Putting needs of others above our own
- Giving the relationship much more than what we get in return

## Things that we do or say as codependents:

- Rarely making our own plans without our partner and feeling guilty when we do
- Controlling the partner trying to change them and then saying "I only do/say it because I care about you"
- When somebody asks what do we want to do/eat/watch, we say "I don't know, up to you"
- Often cancelling or changing our plans to adapt to others
- "I'm doing everything for you and you don't ever appreciate it!"
- "I'm so sick of doing everything for everyone!" but continuing doing it again and again
- Not being able to say No when somebody asks for help even if it's inconvenient and spoils our own plans

# CODEPENDENT'S TRAITS

## Things we FEEL as codependent

- Feeling abandoned and hurt when a partner leaves to do smth without us or goes for a trip without us
- Feeling triggered when a partner does something “fun” with other people without you
- Feeling hurt when somebody doesn’t want your help or involvement in something
- Feeling terrified of an idea of a partner leaving you
- Feeling incredibly anxious when a partner is closed off and ignores us (for example after a fight), can’t stand “the silence” and thinking “it’s better to argue than to not talk at all”
- Feeling guilty when we make our own plans without a partner

Continue this list by analyzing different situations in your life when you felt triggered.

What was it? What did you feel in those moments?

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## ANOTHER SIDE OF CODEPENDENCY - COUNTERDEPENDENCY

OR

**"I'M NEVER GOING TO LET ANYONE CLOSE TO ME EVER  
AGAIN"**

Counterdependency is a typical state when we refuse to let anyone close to us, we refuse to get attached to anyone for the fear of repeating the mistakes of the past. "Men/women are all the same, I'm done with it. I'll never date again! I'm not going to let them hurt me again."

This mindset might actually seem more healthy on the outside when instead of being consumed by relationships and sacrificing everything for everyone, a person finally starts to live for themselves - they may focus on their career or start travelling etc. Compared to when the same person barely had any life outside of the relationship in the past, this new version looks much better, right?

Well, if they live with a mindset of "I'm not going to let anyone close to me ever again", this is NOT the end of codependency. In fact, it's just a flip side of the same coin. Because the only reason we don't want to let anyone close to us is because we are afraid that IF WE DO, then we will fall back into the same pattern of giving up everything for other people. Which means we are not healed yet. A healthy mindset would be focusing on ourselves and having a stable ground to be able to have HEALTHY attachments to people without neglecting our own life.

It is, however, normal and even useful to limit your new relationships for a certain period of time, once you finally become aware of your codependent tendencies. You want to spend some time healing and focusing on yourself without distractions to avoid slipping back before you are ready. This may look like this: "I just went through a (another) painful breakup and in this relationship I gave too much and neglected my needs and wants for too long. So now I commit to focusing on myself and my healing in order to build healthy patterns and for that I want to avoid starting a new relationship for A WHILE."

# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

## Therapy/Coaching

If you have an opportunity to go through therapy or hire a coach to help you go through the healing process, that would be extremely beneficial. I myself went through months of therapy when I realized that I had codependency issues and that was a very important part of my journey. I learned a lot of things that I can never unknow, which is why I want to share them with others. Apart from that, I learned a lot from reading books on the topic, living alone for the first time, and just going through my own transition and doing things differently for the first time. I'm happy to say that on the other side of that transition not only do I now know my worth and my needs and desires (and I actually follow them) but I also built a new healthy attachment with the same partner whom I had a codependent relationship with.

*So if you're thinking of hiring a coach to help you in this journey, you're welcome to send me an email at [yourbettertoday@gmail.com](mailto:yourbettertoday@gmail.com) or send me a DM on my Instagram @yourbettertoday to book a FREE discovery call to see if we are a good fit for each other.*



# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

## Becoming aware

The most important step of recovering from codependency is becoming aware of our unhealthy patterns. We have to take responsibility for our behavior in the past and realize that it was OUR CHOICE to enter those toxic relationships, it was us who neglected our needs and wants when we were adults, it was us who put all the energy onto others instead of taking care of ourselves. We were doing it unconsciously, because of our childhood conditioning, but still, it was us who were making those unconscious choices when we became adults.

However, it's very important to remember - taking responsibility DOES NOT MEAN FEELING GUILTY AND BEATING OURSELVES UP for the past choices. Taking responsibility means understanding that we were unconsciously acting in ways that weren't serving us in the best ways. And now we can make a decision to do everything in our power to change those unconscious patterns in order to act differently and have healthy relationships in the future.

Although it also needs to be said that grief and sadness is a totally normal part of the healing process, as we will think of all those missed opportunities, wasted times, lost relationships etc. And it will be sad that we only became aware of our codependency now. But it's okay. The important thing is that you are here now. And now you can do things differently.

***“The important thing is that you are here NOW.  
And NOW you can do things differently.”***

# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

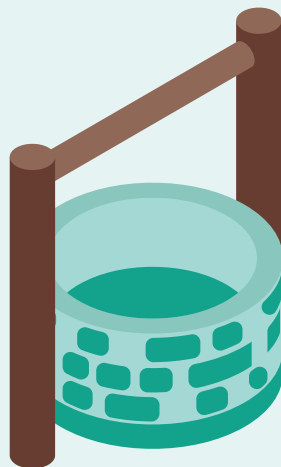
## Shift the focus from others to yourself

We are often conditioned to believe that focusing on ourselves is selfish. Religious messages are often interpreted in that way - sacrificing yourself for others is the only right way to live. If you're thinking about yourself, you're selfish and arrogant. That's not exactly true.

Think about it for a second. How can you HELP others if you cannot help yourself? How can you GIVE to others if you don't have anything yourself? What good can you leave to the world, if inside you are resentful, anxious and full of guilt?

You need to fill your own well, and then you'll be able to give water to others.

### How do you fill your well?



# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

## Filling the well

Practical steps will look different for everybody. But the main idea is to start getting to know YOURSELF outside of your relationships. Ask yourself. If you didn't have a partner or family to be with right now, what would you be doing? Start thinking FOR YOURSELF. Ask yourself small things like "what do I really want to do this weekend?" "What do I really want to eat right now?" and do these things.

It will be hard at first. You may have spent years adapting to others instead of living your own authentic life. You neglected all your wishes and desires and at some point they stopped coming to the surface. But you can get back to them. Start small. And it will be easier and easier to understand your desires.

Make a list of all the things that come to your mind, that you've been thinking about doing for ages but always had an excuse to not do them.

- go to a dancing class
- go to the cinema
- take a weekend trip
- continue the list for yourself...
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And start doing those things.

# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

## Filling the well

Start a new hobby or some kind of new activity that fulfills you and that you can do regularly. Something that will anchor you and what will represent “time for you”. For me this thing happened to be yoga. Even when I didn’t have time to do other things that I enjoyed, I always did yoga and it represented self-love for me, it was like a reminder that I’m on a healing journey and I’m taking care of myself now.

It could be a daily walk in nature, a new sport or exercise routine, guitar classes, learning a new language which you thought about a long time ago but never started. Now is the time.



# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

## Quality time with yourself

As codependents, we actually struggle with being alone, as we have a strong need to be needed and when we are left by ourselves, it can feel empty. Which is why many people start new relationships as soon as they leave their previous one. Or why codependent people are always the first ones to run and help family members, a partner, friends...it's almost like they are waiting to be called. Because then they get that feeling that they are needed.

It shouldn't be like this. Social interactions are extremely important for humans, there is no doubt. But we should be able to be comfortable on our own and do things that we want to do alone if it happens that occasionally we don't have company.

To get used to being comfortable by yourself, start doing things that you don't usually do by yourself. Watching TV shows at home alone doesn't count as quality time by yourself. Cooking an elaborate meal just for yourself could be. Going for a trip alone could also be one. Or having breakfast in a cafe, that you always pass by, could be one. The point is that something that you would normally only do with your partner or friends, you CAN do it alone. You don't have to sit and wait for anyone to make it worth doing something that you want to do.

It will be very uncomfortable at first but soon enough you will get used to it and you will even enjoy it. (I was living alone for a year during my healing journey and now that I'm back to living with my partner, I still continue having "dates" with myself when he is not around and i love it!)

# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

## Living by yourself

If you actually have a chance to live by yourself - that would be amazing for your healing. For example, if you just left the relationship where you were living with your partner and now you get to live alone - take this opportunity to finally live the way you want and do all the things that YOU want - waking up whenever you want, listening to the music that you want, cooking what you want, watching movies that you want. Experiment with this and get to know what it is that you like and dislike and how you want to live.

If you don't have a chance to live by yourself and you're still with your partner, let them know everything you found out about your codependency. Acknowledge that you had unhealthy behaviors in the past and that you want to change them. And ask them for their patience and support. Let them know that in order for you to heal, which is going to be beneficial for both of you, you need to focus on yourself and recreate your life.

If you see codependent patterns of your partner, don't try to teach them and change them. This is the time to focus on YOUR life. And only yours. It's possible that seeing your example and how you're improving your life, your partner will want to change as well. Or you will see that the relationship you are in is actually harmful for you and you will leave it.

# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

## Other ideas

Other “small” habits that I was practicing during my healing process are these:

- Journaling (morning pages) - writing a stream of consciousness on paper
- Reading books on spirituality, self-help etc
- Doing inner child work - buying/doing silly things that my inner child would love such as eating a Kinder Surprise or roller-blading
- Meditation
- Listening to self-love affirmations on youtube

There is no way of knowing if each one of these habits separately would have a big impact on my healing, but I'm sure that the mix of all these things definitely contributed to my improved self-awareness and well-being.



# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

## To sum up

The main idea of healing codependency is prioritizing your own needs and wants instead of wants and needs of people close to you. That includes saying NO when your partner wants you to adapt to them without listening to your opinion. Saying NO when a friend or a partner wants you to deal with their problems for the 10th time. Making your own plans when your partner wants you to stay home. And so on.

That also means the opposite. When your partner or friends make their own plans without you, when somebody doesn't want your advice or help, when your partner doesn't agree with you or doesn't want to do something that you want them to - you should be okay with it, because that's their choice.

*Allowing yourself to do the things that YOU need or want and not feeling guilty for it will allow you to accept it when people close to you do the same FOR THEM.*

# Prioritize YOU

# HEALING CODEPENDENCY

I really hope that your healing journey starts now and that you are fully committed to going on that path. I hope that these few pages gave you some guidance and understanding of what you're dealing with.

Codependency holds us back in many ways and can really affect different areas of our lives from relationships to careers and money. Once you uncover your codependent tendencies and go on with your healing, you can start rebuilding your life. Choosing a new career path, starting a business, increasing your income - these are only some of the things you can reach or change once you focus your energy on **YOURSELF** and what **YOU** want instead of others!

And it can be quite overwhelming to think about everything at once. If you need the help and guidance of a coach to help you in this journey - send me an email at [yourbettertoday@gmail.com](mailto:yourbettertoday@gmail.com) or send me a DM in my Instagram (@yourbettertoday) to book a **FREE** discovery call to see if we are a good fit for each other.



## **Polina Shakhova - Accredited Transformation Coach**

I help people break out of a codependent mindset, get to know their true desires, and build a life of freedom, happiness and fulfillment!