



## Strategies for Healing Codependent Behavior

By Renée Siegel

Healthy loving and nurturing can cross the line and become codependent behavior. And every addict has a knack for finding the codependents of the world because they assist the addiction, help it to stay alive, and many times are unaware they are participating in the continuing of the addictive progression.

In order for codependency to be arrested, the codependent MUST return the focus back to the self. Here are some guidelines in the form of questions that can be helpful to assist the recovery process.

1. Am I being honest with myself and others?

If I were to be completely honest with myself, I would have to acknowledge there is an addiction that I am helping to perpetuate. Practice speaking your truth with those you can trust.

2. Am I talking firmly and setting appropriate boundaries?

How often do I make threats to do something that I do not carry out? These boundaries need to be promises that are realistic and that I can carry out. Practice saying no to activities that you do not want to participate in.

3. Am I taking care of myself?

Am I identifying my own physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs and doing something about making sure they get addressed? Exercise, keep a journal and pray regularly.

4. Am I learning to have fun and laugh again?

There is very little humor in the addictive process. Learning to find humor in life helps one to feel lighter and to move into self forgiveness. Mistakes have been made, but it is time to move on and to find some fun! Watch a funny movie.

5. Am I practicing spending time alone?

As codependents we have spent time caretaking others and we have seen this as our job and role in life. We have ignored the need for downtime. Take a warm



bath, listen to some soft music, take a walk or just listen to the birds in your yard.

6. Am I clear about what I can and cannot control?

The Serenity Prayer reminds us to accept the things we cannot control and to have the wisdom to know the difference between what we cannot control and what we can. Practice just being in control of yourself.

7. Am I taking control of what I need to?

You'll be surprised just how much happiness that can be created in your life by just worrying about what you can control.

8. Have I identified the supports I need in my life for sustained recovery, i.e. meetings, friends and family?

When we feel resentment we have a tendency to share it with the world, not considering that some of those with whom we share do not have a clue how to support us and may in fact begin to dislike our addict, just to prove that they are on our side. Use discrimination to find supportive people in your life. The fellowship is a great place to start because the guidelines encourage self-focus versus bad-mouthing the addict, no matter how unfortunate your circumstances are.

9. Am I safe; physically, legally and financially?

It may take a while to understand that you have been operating from an unsafe and worried place. You have ignored your physical safety, and the financial and legal concerns that have arisen from the addiction. Seek out support from a shelter, legal counsel and financial advisor to help direct you to appropriate self care.

10. Have I set priorities and goals for myself?

Our focus has been on others for so long that the notion that we have not only a right but responsibility to set priorities and goals has evaded us. If you are unclear about how to create goals for yourself, take baby steps and plan for tomorrow and then for one week from now until you can see more clearly what



needs to be done to get your life back on track. Enlist the assistance of a sponsor or therapist to assist you.

#### 11. Do I have hope for the future?

We are not only powerless over the addict and the disease, but oftentimes we feel hopeless about the future when we review what has happened. If you have had a religious or spiritual positive experience in your past, become involved again. If not, try being open to allowing one to develop through prayer, meditation, seeking spiritual counsel or just being amazed with nature.