

The New Codependency: Help and Guidance for Today's Generation

By Melody Beattie

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In *Codependent No More*, Melody Beattie introduced the world to the term *codependency*. Now a modern classic, this book established Beattie as a pioneer in self-help literature and endeared her to millions of readers who longed for healthier relationships. Twenty-five years later concepts such as self-care and setting boundaries have become entrenched in mainstream culture. Now Beattie has written a followup volume, *The New Codependency*, which clears up misconceptions about codependency, identifies how codependent behavior has changed, and provides a new generation with a road map to wellness.

The question remains: What is and what is not codependency? Beattie here reminds us that much of codependency is normal behavior. It's about crossing lines. There are times we do too much, care too much, feel too little, or overly engage. Feeling resentment after giving is not the same as heartfelt generosity. Narcissism and self-love, enabling and nurturing, and controlling and setting boundaries are not interchangeable terms. In *The New Codependency*, Beattie explores these differences, effectively invoking her own inspiring story and those of others, to empower us to step out of the victim role forever. Codependency, she shows, is not an illness but rather a series of behaviors that once broken down and analyzed can be successfully combated.

Each section offers an overview of and a series of activities pertaining to a particular behavior -- caretaking, controlling, manipulation, denial, repression, etc. -- enabling us to personalize our own step-bystep guide to wellness. These sections, in conjunction with a series of tests allowing us to assess the level of our codependent behavior, demonstrate that while it may not seem possible now, we have the power to take care of ourselves, no matter what we are experiencing.

Punctuated with Beattie's renowned candor and intuitive wisdom, *The New Codependency* is an owner's manual to learning to be who we are and gives us the tools necessary to reclaim our lives by renouncing unhealthy practices.

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Editorial Review

Review

"'Codependent' is in the dictionary because of Melody Beattie. Her book is required reading." -- Christine Stapleton, *Palm Beach Post*

About the Author

Melody Beattie, one of the seminal figures in the recovery movement, is the author of the international bestseller *Codependent No More*, which has sold over eight million copies and been translated into more than a dozen languages. An expert on codependency, Beattie has written fifteen books, including include *Beyond Codependency*, *The Language of Letting Go*, and *The Grief Club*, and lectures worldwide. She lives in Southern California. For more information visit her website at www.melodybeattie.com.

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SECTION ONE

Crossing Lines and Getting Back over Them Again

1 • Taking Care of Ourselves

I know what it's like to lose yourself so badly that you don't know if there's a *you* or ever was one. I spent thirty years not knowing what boundaries were and another ten learning to set them. I gave until I was depleted and needed someone to take care of me. I threatened, begged, hinted, and manipulated to get what I wanted. I was convinced that I knew what was best for other people. I got so busy teaching them their lessons that I forgot to learn mine.

Within minutes of meeting a man, I was sure I'd met my soul mate. A few hours later, I'd fantasize about the wedding. That's how it happened on television. Isn't that how it happened in life? I'd spend two years trying to get into a relationship, and the next five trapped, clawing my way out. I obsessed until my head ached. Literally, it hurt. I didn't know what feelings were. Whenever I said I felt something, people said, "Don't feel that!"

Like millions of other women and men, I was victimized as a child. Instead of holding the perpetrators responsible, I blamed myself. *There's something wrong with me*, I thought. I didn't see the bad things that happened to me happening to anyone else. Feeling like we caused the problem is a legitimate stage of grief. Feeling ashamed is normal when we've been abused. Blaming ourselves is a survival skill. It helps us feel in control when life doesn't make sense and being abused doesn't make any sense at all.

Besides, aren't women supposed to suffer? We sacrifice ourselves. I became a martyr. I thought taking care of other people was my job. If I took care of them, I hoped they'd return the favor and take care of me. But that didn't happen. People expected me to take care of them once I started that pattern. There were many reasons I didn't take care of myself. The word *no* wasn't in my vocabulary. Good people were selfless. Loving myself was out of the question. Selfish! But the biggest reason I didn't take care of myself is that I didn't know how to.

Many of us didn't (or don't) know about self-care. It wasn't written about in books or talked about in school.

We get user manuals for simple products, but we don't get a handbook for life. We stumble through complex situations, figuring things out for ourselves. Controlling and taking care of others -- the entire package of codependent behaviors -- become survival tools, living skills that we think will keep us safe. Then one day these behaviors turn on us. Our relationships and lives stop working and we don't know why. By then these survival behaviors are habits. They're all we know how to do.

If I had the years back I spent worrying about how the things I couldn't control were going to turn out, I'd have a third of my life to live over. That would be a life in which I wouldn't feel responsible for everyone or feel guilty all the time. I wouldn't waste energy controlling, enabling, and obsessively rescuing people -- the "helpful" things codependents do that don't really help. I'd let people take care of their responsibilities and I'd take care of mine. I wouldn't let people hurt me. I'd set boundaries -- say *no*. I wouldn't do only what other people wanted me to do; I'd do what I wanted, too. This time my giving would come from my heart, and my helping would actually help. I wouldn't judge everything that happened as wrong, including what I did, said, thought, and felt. I'd let life unfold, people be who they are, and I'd let myself be me. This time, I'd have the courage to experience true love.

I'd trust my intuition. If something didn't feel right, I'd know it probably wasn't. If I felt sad, I'd cry. If I felt angry, I'd feel that. I wouldn't ignore emotions until I imploded in illness or exploded in rage. I'd get out of my head and into my heart. I'd deal with my and others' feelings without all the drama; as much as possible I'd handle uncomfortable situations with diplomacy and tact. I wouldn't feel obligated and trapped. I'd know I had choices -- whether that means choosing attitude, gratitude, meditation, or prayer. Instead of protecting myself with fierce independence, I'd ask for help. I wouldn't be controlled by people and external events. My control center would be where it belongs -- in me. I wouldn't let other people's approval determine whether or not I approved of myself. I'd be energized by nature, God, and Life. I wouldn't drain other people, and I wouldn't let them drain me so much that my battery would die.

My relationships would be equal ones. I'd share power instead of one of us controlling and the other being controlled. I wouldn't have to create chaos to feel alive; I'd know I'm real. As one friend reminds me, instead of running headfirst into trouble, I'd go around it whenever I could (without resorting to denial). I know the value of peace. I'd create beauty, be of service, and have fun. I'd live and love at the same time. I'd admit my mistakes. But I'd also appreciate what I did well and let myself enjoy success.

This time I'd know what it means to love and take care of myself.

2 • How to Use This Handbook

To prepare for writing this handbook, I reread books I wrote years ago: *Codependent No More* (1985-86), *Beyond Codependency* (1988-89), *The Language of Letting Go* (1990), and *The Codependents' Guide to the Twelve Steps* (1990). I was surprised by how much I have changed. I barely recognized who I am now compared to who I was back then.

When I first wrote about codependency, I couldn't get the word past my computer's spell-checker. Most of the world didn't recognize the word yet either. For a book originally rejected by twenty publishers ("Nice idea," they said, "but there aren't enough codependents to make publishing the manuscript worthwhile"), *Codependent No More* -- strictly by word of mouth -- became a best-seller. It hit the lists and is still a backlist best-seller. My Beverly Hills internist read it as part of his medical training. It's part of many school and college curriculums. Therapists recommend it to patients. Thousands of people give it to family and friends. It's read in treatment centers, recovery groups, and by people around the world searching for how to make the pain from self-neglect stop. The subject of codependency and how to recover from it struck a universal nerve.

Naming that pain was like discovering fire -- a fire that people still discover each month as thousands begin the journey we started back then.

"We're part of a groundswell movement that's come into its own time," I wrote in *Beyond Codependency*. "Media and public attention may subside. But recovery from codependency is more than a fad. We started the journey of self-care and self-love. We're not stopping now."

Those words were prophetic. Concepts such as letting go, detachment, setting boundaries, and self-care mainstreamed. They worked their way into the culture. Ideas previously unknown or talked about only by small groups of recovering people are now discussed almost anywhere, from coffee shops to TV. Ideas that originated with the codependency recovery movement are now how millions of people -- whether or not they're in recovery -- live.

Four of the fourteen books I've written are devoted to codependency I didn't think I'd ever say this, but those four aren't enough. I'm writing this book to clarify confusion, discuss new information, write about how codependency has mutated, address new support options, and remind us about what we learned.

Although I've changed significantly since writing *Codependent No More*, I still step in codependent puddles. I might get hooked into someone's stuff, let their problems control me, over-engage, or start reacting instead of taking right action. I'll let family conditioning affect me, neglect to set boundaries, or shut down emotionally. There are times I have to slam on the brakes, STOP, and remember to take care of myself. I don't sink in quicksand like I used to, but sometimes I revert to survival mode. That's yesterday's news.

I don't call that *relapsing*. Caring about people we love, feeling victimized when we're betrayed, giving our all to people we love, or wanting to control people because we're watching them destroy themselves and hurt us doesn't mean we're sick. These are natural reactions. Codependency is about normal behaviors taken too far. It's about crossing lines.

This book is written for beginners and those further down the taking-care-of-themselves road. It offers practical help for people recovering from chemical dependency when they bottom out from codependency, usually after being sober anywhere from seven to ten years. The seven-year mark for recovering alcoholics and addicts is a widely accepted but unofficial recovery rule of thumb. After people stop drinking, they discover there are many things other than alcohol and drugs that they can't control, a rite of passage that could be dubbed "the Second Great Surrender." We let go of all illusions of control.

I also wrote this book for people who want to learn more about behaviors such as setting boundaries or dealing with feelings, but who don't want or need to go to treatment, therapy, or attend recovery groups. You don't have to label yourself codependent and embark on a grand transformation to benefit from this book. Instead you can learn about specific behaviors that will help you take better care of yourself. This book complements my other writing, but the material in here is fresh. This is an upgrade, building on and enhancing the work I did before, like when Windows evolved from DOS. This book can be used with my other books or by itself.

The material is divided into sections, the sections into chunks. It's structured like a shopping mall directory. Locate the spot that says YOU ARE HERE and you'll see how to get where you're going next. Section Two - - Breaking Free from the Control Trap and Getting Some Grace -- offers alternatives to codependent behaviors. Secti...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Martha Furman:

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Marvin Smith:

The reserve with title The New Codependency: Help and Guidance for Today's Generation includes a lot of information that you can understand it. You can get a lot of profit after read this book. This particular book exist new know-how the information that exist in this reserve represented the condition of the world today. That is important to yo7u to be aware of how the improvement of the world. This specific book will bring you with new era of the glowbal growth. You can read the e-book on the smart phone, so you can read the item anywhere you want.

Brenda Fairfax:

The New Codependency: Help and Guidance for Today's Generation can be one of your starter books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this guide has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The copy writer giving his/her effort to set every word into delight arrangement in writing The New Codependency: Help and Guidance for Today's Generation however doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource details that maybe you can be one among it. This great information can drawn you into fresh stage of crucial imagining.

David McCabe:

That guide can make you to feel relax. This particular book The New Codependency: Help and Guidance for Today's Generation was colorful and of course has pictures on the website. As we know that book The New Codependency: Help and Guidance for Today's Generation has many kinds or category. Start from kids until adolescents. For example Naruto or Private eye Conan you can read and think that you are the character on there. Therefore not at all of book usually are make you bored, any it offers up you feel happy, fun and unwind. Try to choose the best book for you personally and try to like reading in which.

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