

There is SO much confusion about co-dependency!! I thought I had to be “nice” to fit the co-dependent label. I thought co-dependents had to be big people pleasers. I didn't typically do things I didn't want to do, like babysit people's kids, but my co-dependency showed up in other ways. During conversations I hated uncomfortableness so I had to fill in awkward spaces. I was generally mad at someone in my life at all times. I fluctuated from being pissed off at someone and then felt guilty about being angry. This was usually when things didn't go my way and my needs weren't being met in the relationship. What I didn't realize is that it was MY responsibility to meet my own needs and to assert my rights. I wasn't actually being “nice” when I was being co-dependent. I was putting unrealistic demands on my relationships and I was being unkind to myself and therefore it damaged my self-worth.

Warning signs you may be co-dependent and could use some healthy boundaries:

- You truly believe you are responsible for other people's feeling and often feel guilty or angry about it.
- You obsess and worry about other's responses or lack of response.
- You fantasize about what you should've said and feel angry that you didn't say anything.
- You often say “I'm sorry” and excessively explain why you did something or why you can't do something.
- You think putting yourself first sounds incredibly selfish.
- It sounds terrifying to disagree with others that we want approval from because they might get mad at us.
- You're passive and then aggressive and it feels so scary to be assertive.
- You value other people's opinions more than your own.
- You often feel resentful at others.

Solutions:

1. Become aware of co-dependent habits you have and how they show up. Make a list on paper. For example, do you overanalyze everything you do? Awareness is the first step. Make a list of how the co-dependency is showing up.
2. Substitute the words “thank you” for “I'm sorry.” It literally works in every sentence and it's amazing because words are powerful and you are taking your power back. “Thank you for inviting me to coffee but I won't be able to make it.” You don't have to explain yourself. It may feel rude at first but you are being kind to yourself.
3. Reframe the words you speak to yourself. For example, “What if they get mad?” is changed to “I have a responsibility to myself.”
4. Find your warning signs, likely these signs will show up as feelings of anger, guilt or resentment. These feelings are there to tell you something!

Remember practice, practice, practice and kindness to yourself FIRST and then others. This will not happen overnight. Make the process fun and experimental and please don't beat yourself up as you practice this. Write down your progress and experiences.