

Recognize Unhealthy Boundaries

- » Examine your current boundaries. How do other people treat you? Your response to their behavior tells them whether or not what they are doing is okay. Below is a list of some unhealthy boundaries:
 - › Going against personal values or rights in order to please others.
 - › Giving as much as you can for the sake of giving.
 - › Taking as much as you can for the sake of taking.
 - › Letting others define you.
 - › Expecting others to fill your needs automatically.
 - › Feeling bad or guilty when you say no.
 - › Not speaking up when you are treated poorly.
 - › Falling apart so someone can take care of you.
 - › Falling "in love" with someone you barely know or who reaches out to you.
 - › Accepting advances, touching and sex that you don't want.
 - › Touching a person without asking.
- » If you recognize these things coming up in your life, go back to the setting boundaries section and rework them. Once you recognize an issue, you have the power to change it.

Set Internal Boundaries with Yourself

- » Internal boundaries protect our own thoughts, feelings and behaviors. We have the power to choose these. When we set clear internal boundaries, we become responsible for ourselves. We define who we are. When we don't have internal boundaries, others can define who we are and we feel powerless.
- » What other people say about you is not necessarily true. When we have poor internal boundaries we take what others say about as the truth without questioning it. Remember this statement from when you were a kid: "I'm rubber and you're glue, what you say bounces off of me and sticks to you." This statement reflects a universal truth. What other people say about you is really more of a reflection of who they are, not who you are. When someone makes a statement about you, ask yourself the following questions:
 - › How much of this is true about me?
 - › How much of this is true about the person making the statement?
 - › Is there any action I need to take? Set a boundary? Take responsibility for my actions?
- » **Make yourself a priority.** It is not selfish to take care of yourself. Have you ever ridden on a plane and heard the flight attendant explain the safety precautions to take if the cabin loses air pressure and masks drop from overhead. If you are traveling with a small child, who do you put the mask on first? People with codependent tendencies usually say the child first. But the answer is yourself. If you do not take care of yourself first, you may not be conscious to help care for that child. The same is true in life. The more you care for yourself the more you will have to give to others.

Reading Resources

~~Codependent No More: How To Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself~~ by Melodie Beattie

Boundaries by Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud

Facing Codependence: What It Is, Where It Comes from, How It Sabotages Our Lives by Pia Mellody

Breaking Free: A Recovery Workbook for Facing Codependence by Pia Mellody and Andrea Wells Miller

Love is a Choice Workbook: Recovery for codependent relationships by Dr. Robert Hemfelt and Dr. Frank Minirth

Handout compiled by Teresa Kleffner, MSW, LCSW. St. Louis Counseling and Wellness. www.stlcw.com