

CODEPENDENCY — *to* — CONSCIOUS CONNECTION

An Essential Guidebook to
Jumpstart Your Journey



WENDY E. CRANE, LMFT

Codependency to Conscious Connection:

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Journey**

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www.solflowerwellness.com

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Sol Flower Wellness

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The case examples provided are fictional composites. Any similarities to actual persons, living or dead, are coincidental.

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*For all the brave souls who have ventured to find a way
out of toxic cycles and expand into a life of freedom and
for all those who are ready to take that leap.*

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Introduction

Your only direction in life is forward. However, you may find yourself stuck or at a crossroads, unsure of your direction or how to get moving again. What do *you* want, and how long has it been since you or anyone asked that question? This guidebook is packed full of tools, steps, and strategies to help you calibrate your inner compass. You will be clear about your next steps once you are attuned to a new direction. I encourage you to take one action at a time, practice the tools, and gradually notice that you feel more empowered, your voice is strong and clear, you are attracting healthy, fulfilling relationships, and you are moving forward.

You may be wondering if you need this book. Let's begin with a few questions: Are you fed up with feeling stuck, lost, disconnected, empty, or drained? Do you find yourself repeating the same patterns in relationships and wondering when you will finally feel fulfilled? Is most of your time spent caring for others while wondering when it will be your turn to relax and let someone take care of you? Are toxic relationship cycles interfering with your ability to give and receive love? Have you found yourself at the end

of your relationship or marriage and are scared of where to go from here?

Imagine fully trusting yourself and releasing all patterns of settling and self-betrayal. How would your life expand if you began to prioritize yourself and focused on connecting to your own personal power? What might happen if you became so vigilant about self-care that you could fill your own cup and give to others from your overflow? What if you could communicate so clearly that others understood you on a deep level and you felt seen and heard in the majority of your interactions?

If you have asked yourself any of these questions, I want you to know that you are not alone. These questions arise from being stuck in a coping pattern that may have served you at one time in your life but is no longer working. I imagine you may have found this resource because, deep down, you know it is time to leave toxic cycles behind and explore a new path.

As a marriage and family therapist in private practice, I have helped hundreds of individuals and couples over the last twenty years. Through thousands of hours together, strategies and tools have emerged to help you become more vigilant about your well-being and develop a conscious, clear, and intimate way of connecting within your relationships. But keeping such information within my office can only be so helpful. This guidebook is a consolidation of the essential tools needed to move you from feeling stuck to feeling free and able to experience a deeper connection with yourself and others.

How to Use This Book

If you are interested in discovering more about yourself, learning how to release old patterns that no longer serve you, and collecting practical, effective tools to integrate into your life, you are in the right place. I am here to serve as your guide and introduce you to the concepts of codependency, conscious relationships, sustainable self-care, and an entire section at the end if you are going through a divorce or are rebuilding after one. Read the chapters that apply to you, or read the entire book from cover to cover. Each chapter builds on the previous one but also stands on its own.

At the end of each chapter, you will find a journal prompt. I encourage you to use a journal as you work through each chapter. Write down your thoughts and reflect, take notes of what resonates with you, and allow the prompts to assist you with becoming present and recognizing what you need from yourself to move forward.

Whether or not you attend therapy with me, with anyone else, or not at all, you now have access to these skills and tools whenever you need them. I encourage you to practice on your own. Revisit

the pages that resonate most with your situation or the skill set you need to strengthen. Practice often. If you have a partner, get them their own copy so you can grow together. Share it with your friends and family to offer ways to make your connections even healthier and your conversations more productive. And if you need more support, reach out to me or a local therapist or coach in your area. My website also contains deeper dives into these topics and other ways for you to grow and expand. You are worthy and deserving of love, and you are so much stronger than you realize. I hope that what I share with you will provide clarity to *jumpstart your journey* of growth and expansion and free you to build a fully sustainable, fulfilling, and joyful life.

Break Free from Drama and Empower Yourself

Before you can know where you are going, you first need to understand where you are and how you got here. Self-inquiry is always a good place to start. You may have chosen this guidebook because you've been struggling in relationships or may currently be in a relationship that leaves you swirling or feeling like you are riding a roller coaster. Or maybe you refer to yourself as a "people-pleaser" or "a giver" and are exhausted from always putting everyone else before your own well-being. Many of these patterns fall into what most therapists and self-help spaces will refer to as *codependency*. This term has drifted into the mainstream through the years, so I'm sure it is not unfamiliar, although you may still wonder exactly what it means or if it applies to you.

Have you ever wondered if you were codependent? Perhaps you have read a lot about codependency or even explored counseling or coaching to tackle its impact on your life, but you are still not sure. To gain a deeper understanding, explore the questions below. Allow yourself to reflect on your role in current and past relationships as you open up to the potential truth of these statements. This is just for you. Being honest with yourself will help you get clearer about where you are and prepare you for your upcoming journey as you continue to explore this guide. Please read each question carefully and answer as truthfully as you can.

Am I Codependent?

1. Do you often lie or withhold information to prevent your partner's negative reactions?
2. Do you exaggerate the truth to elicit a reaction from your partner?
3. Do you feel that you are nothing without a relationship?
4. Do you fear being alone?
5. Do you believe that your partner won't make it without you or that you may not make it without them?
6. Do you base your identity on anyone else besides your true self? (i.e., partner, kids, family members, co-workers, etc.)

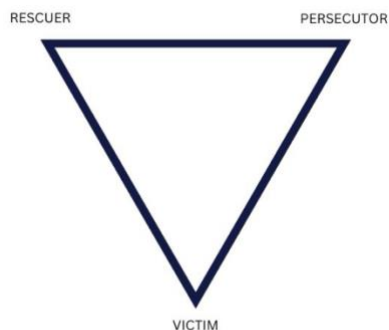
7. Are you afraid that if someone knew the *real you*, they would leave or reject you?
8. Is it common for you to experience resentment or feel drained in your relationships?
9. Do you refer to yourself as a *giver* who seems to be surrounded by *takers*?
10. Is it common for you to experience your relationships as one-sided—you are always there for everyone else, and no one seems to be there for you?
11. Were you responsible for things beyond what was age-appropriate while growing up?
12. Were you raised by a parent(s) who struggled with addiction (alcoholism or other addictions), mental illness (i.e., schizophrenic, bipolar, depression, anxiety, narcissistic or borderline personality disorder), or otherwise smothering, neglectful, or abusive behaviors?
13. Did you have to subvert your needs to make room for another family member who seemed to have more important needs than you?

If two or more of these questions apply to you, you may benefit from learning more about codependency and codependency recovery. Keep reading for a deeper dive into these topics and discover tools for breaking out of these cycles. You deserve more peace and joy in your life. Relationships don't have to be painful or a constant

struggle. You can release these patterns and learn a new way.

Let's begin our journey from here.

Free Yourself from the Codependent Patterns of *The Drama Triangle*



The drama triangle is a concept developed by Stephen Karpman and further explained in his book *A Game Free Life*. As shown above, the triangle has three roles: victim, rescuer, and persecutor.

If you struggle with codependency, you may play one or all of these roles in your relationships or move between

roles at different times. You might also act out these roles within yourself. However, you will tend to lean toward one primary expression.

Maybe you learned how to survive in your family of origin by participating in this drama. These coping mechanisms were developed to protect you but eventually became unhealthy ways of relating to others. They may have served you once but are now blocking you from achieving and sustaining healthy, conscious relationships. You might be wondering what it takes to stop participating in these toxic cycles. Understanding your part in this dynamic is the first step toward bringing these unconscious patterns into your conscious awareness. The next is to step out of the triangle and recover your life.

Are you ready to finally break free?

Below are descriptions of each role and the strategies for moving into a new way of interacting. Notice which role(s) you relate to and if you recognize any of your family members, partners, friends, or other people in your life.

Victim: *Poor me. The world is against me. Life is hard. I'm always in a crisis. I need help. I seem to always be in some type of drama, hardship, or emergency. Somehow, I always find others to help me. Someone else will take care of things. Someone or something else is responsible for*

what is happening to me. I am not responsible for my experience.

Victims seek out someone to rescue them from life, which feels like a constant struggle with obstacles at every turn. They tend to lean on others to meet their needs and may fear stepping into life entirely alone. Many victims are taught to depend on family members as a sign of loyalty. They appear helpless, but when others respond by assuming they are unable to accomplish something without help and constantly step in, it reinforces the belief that they *are* helpless. Eventually, almost every aspect of their lives is managed by others. This may lead them to view their helpers as controlling, which builds resentment and may shift them into the persecutor role. Then, when others let go, another emergency shows up—a never-ending pit of need exists.

Victims may wonder if they are truly capable of taking care of themselves. Boundaries are blurry to them, so it becomes difficult to recognize where they end and others begin. They lack a solid sense of self and may be confused about survival if they don't have someone else to take care of them.

Recovery from the victim role begins when you are willing to claim 100 percent responsibility for your life. You must be ready to face the consequences of what you have created and set boundaries with those you have allowed to enable your helplessness. It is also vital to seek

support as you help yourself. Asking for help and assuming that others exist to help you without you having to ask are two different things. To break this pattern, you must discover and claim your own personal power and surround yourself with others who empower and encourage you.

It is also essential to develop confidence in yourself, release shame and beliefs of unworthiness and powerlessness, and let go of your identification with your helplessness. You will learn to claim your space in the world and realize your capabilities, dreams, and desires.

Rescuer: *I'll help you. I don't have any needs except to be needed by others. I am considerate and dependable. You can lean on me. I am capable and want to help at all costs. Even if that means I lose myself.*

Rescuers are the helpers of the world. They tend to be everyone's friend and the one everyone leans on. You can always count on a rescuer. They lack strong boundaries and tend to say "Yes" to everything, even when they secretly want to say "No."

Eventually, the rescuer will wonder why no one seems to be there for them. They end up feeling drained and resentful, ultimately feeling like a victim. They may also become critical and impatient, withdrawing or withholding their love to get noticed for their hard work. This moves them into the persecutor role.

Recovery from the rescuer role begins when you become willing to develop healthy internal and external boundaries through crystal-clear communication. You will learn to release the belief that you are responsible for everyone else and reclaim the knowing that you are responsible only for yourself. With this clarity, you can empower others to care for themselves and believe they can do this without your help. It also frees up more energy for you to focus on your own self-care.

The mantra for a recovering rescuer is: “I am 100 percent responsible for what I create in my life, and I hold others responsible for running their own lives.”

Other work includes releasing the need to control others, the need to be needed, and being identified with your helpfulness. You will learn to open up and let others in without being consumed by their needs. You will learn to establish healthy boundaries, understand your own limits, and respect the limits of others.

Persecutor: *Why can't anyone do anything right? I'm right, and I have all the answers. If everyone else would just follow my way, everything would be fine. No one will do anything around here unless I'm constantly on their back. If I don't say anything, nothing gets done. I am angry and resentful.*

Persecutors tend to be critical and verbally aggressive and seek to control others with their criticism and

manipulation. Both the victim and rescuer roles can eventually become the persecutor if they feel wronged. However, for others, this may be a primary role.

There tends to be an inner struggle with vulnerability and allowing others to get too close. Persecutors lack healthy boundaries, abuse their power, and project their needs and emotions onto others. They assume that others should follow their lead and feel justified in their leadership capabilities. Yet, this is not expressed from a place of confidence but rather from a fear of losing control if they release the reins for a moment. They will become the rescuer if they feel they can get something done faster by doing it themselves and will eventually feel like a victim when others pull away or refuse to appreciate their leadership.

Recovery from the persecutor role begins when you become willing to own your part in how you violate others with your words and actions. You will work to release responsibility for carrying others and let go of the blame and resentment you lean on to justify your actions. You then open your heart to a more vulnerable, honest, and feeling-centered way of being.

Recovery from codependency leads to a life of peace, joy, balance, and abundance. You free yourself from the constraints of the drama triangle with more room to be authentic in your relationships. You stop operating from the false beliefs that you are helpless, responsible for

everyone else, or must always be in control. You then start operating from the truth that you are capable, powerful, and responsible for yourself, and everyone else is able to take care of themselves in whatever way they choose. You develop a strong voice, clear direction, healthy boundaries, worthiness, confidence, and humility that allow the masks of the drama triangle to fall away and your true self to shine through.

Create Clarity with a Clear “Yes” and a Clear “No”

A crucial step in releasing codependency is to reclaim your personal power and stand in your truth. One of the simplest ways to do this is to understand the concept of *a clear “Yes” and a clear “No.”* As you may have noticed, every role in the drama triangle lacks healthy boundaries. Boundaries are the way out of the triangle. Developing a clear “Yes” and a clear “No” is a vital building block in the foundation for healthy boundaries. The more adept you become with this skill, the easier it will be to identify when you are stepping back into the triangle and how to step back out.

If you tell the truth and present yourself authentically at all times, your relationships will improve because the people you are connecting with will have the opportunity to experience the real you.

If you are currently in a relationship and the drama triangle has been or is still active, or you have a history of codependent or toxic relationships, it is imperative to develop skills to identify your own needs and wants more effectively. This will help you communicate more clearly and allow others to know and understand you better. You will feel less drained and resentful when you stop betraying yourself by not saying exactly what you mean.

Even though you will still encounter sadness, disappointment, or loss in your life, having a clear “Yes” and a clear “No” will create more opportunity for understanding and less opportunity for drama. So, you might be asking, “What does a clear ‘Yes’ and a clear ‘No’ look like?”

A clear “Yes” is an exclamation with clarity and enthusiasm. I once had a client share with me a great litmus test. He said, “If my answer can’t be ‘Hell yes!’ then it is ‘No.’”

How clear is that? This does not mean that you will never venture out of your comfort zone, try something new, or give any of your time to others. However, it does mean that you need to evaluate *before* you respond to any request whether you can give your “Yes” as a *free gift*—with no resentments, attachments, expectations, or leftover discomfort inside you.

The next time someone asks something of you, pause, take a deep breath, and check in with your body. You may feel these conflicts in your solar plexus area (in the center of your torso just below your rib cage). This is an energetic space of integrity and personal power and is often referred to as your gut. Is there a heaviness there, a shaking, or a queasiness? If there is, tune in and see if there is a message for you. The key is to listen to and follow that inner knowing that arises for you.

If you say “Yes” when your body says “No,” you have just abandoned yourself. However, if the “Yes” comes through clearly after your evaluation, go with that. You are then participating from your 100 percent authentic self.

If you say “No” and ignore the voice inside of you screaming, “Go for it! The time is now! You are ready!” you have again abandoned yourself. But if the inner messages sound like, “This isn’t right! This goes against everything I stand for!” and you don’t honor your “No,” you have, you guessed it, abandoned yourself.

You may be talking yourself out of your “No” with messages like, “I don’t want to rock the boat. Maybe if I just do _____ this one time, my partner will change. What if my family member can’t handle my answer and freaks out? I am terrified of conflict and will avoid it at all costs.” So, you say “Yes” instead, and this happens repeatedly.

See how easy it is? It is automatic until you bring this pattern into your awareness.

You may wonder how it's possible to find this type of clarity in every situation. You may want to say "Maybe" or "I don't know." Here's the thing: If you go a bit deeper into the moment, you will always have a clear answer for that moment. Your willingness or unwillingness to participate in an activity, conversation, or behavior pattern may change with further information, time, or personal growth. It doesn't have to be static. However, make sure you are congruent by matching your words with what you are feeling at that moment.

As you begin to work with this tool, give yourself permission for an answer of "I don't know" to become "No, for now." Allow that to be enough for the moment. You can always change your mind with more information or time. To create the clarity you seek, allow it to be one or the other—"Yes" or "No."

When you find yourself wanting to answer more vaguely, take a moment to evaluate the reason behind your vagueness. Are you attempting to avoid conflict? Are you afraid of what others will think of you? Are you afraid you will be abandoned if you share your honest desire? Being honest is a risk, but there is a much higher chance of fulfillment and intimacy with honesty and integrity than when holding on to a lie.

Telling your partner, friend, child, or parent “No” may be uncomfortable and scary, but in the end, they will handle it to the best of their ability, and you will feel relief. Remember, stepping out of the drama triangle means you are not responsible for how they respond, and you trust that others are able to handle their own reactions.

When you listen to your inner knowing and follow it despite any fear or doubt, you begin to trust yourself and know that you have your best interests at heart. Feeling your fear and still moving forward is the true meaning of courage. The path ahead will come into focus as you take one step at a time.

Breaking out of codependent patterns takes practice, practice, and more practice, especially if you have been disconnected from your true feelings for a long time. It *is* possible to create more awareness of these patterns and begin to make changes. Tell your friends and family you are working on this and ask for support; they can help you identify when you are abandoning yourself. Have fun with discovering your voice. Along the way, the gift you give yourself and those around you will far outweigh any initial discomfort.

Give yourself permission to be messy with this—learning a new way of being is not a perfect process. Do your best in every moment to honor and speak your truth, and trust your intuition, inner knowing, and gut instinct. Committing to practicing a clear “Yes” and “No” will

make it easier to recognize when you betray or abandon yourself. You are calibrating your inner compass, which detects when you drift off course.

Release yourself from the expectation that you need to figure it all out. A term I use frequently with clients is “course correct.” You are *always* free to change direction *at any time*. All you have to do is engage in the present moment and listen to that little voice inside who is always right. Before you know it, you will feel clear the majority of the time, your relationships will improve, and your outside life will align with your inner dreams.

Congratulations, you are breaking free from codependency! You are well on your way to creating the life you want and deserve.

Now that you know how to create healthy boundaries, can be more clear about your wants, and have strengthened your voice to communicate more clearly, you are ready to explore conscious, healthy connections. The next chapter will assist you with outlining a framework for a conscious relationship so that you can expand your current partnership or prepare for the next one. Before you move on, take a few moments with your journal to reflect on what you have learned so far. And if you are wanting more, please follow the link below to head over to Amazon and purchase the rest of the book or ask me for a copy the next time you are in my office!

Reflections for Your Journal

- Review the codependency quiz and expand on the items describing your experience. What are you coming to understand more about your relationship history?
- What role do you relate to most in the drama triangle? Where do those closest to you fit? Identify an instance or relationship where this dynamic plays out. Begin to explore your part in that dynamic. What do you do, think, or say that perpetuates the pattern? Imagine what stepping out of that role might look like or require from you.
- Identify a recent time when you said “Yes” when you wanted to say “No.” What was preventing you from answering honestly? What were you afraid of? Is this more difficult with a particular person in your life? Begin to observe yourself as you go about your day and see where you are able to be congruent and authentic and where you struggle. Give yourself the assignment to say “No” more often and observe what happens.

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About the Author



Wendy E. Crane is a licensed marriage and family therapist in Central Florida and the owner of Sol Flower Wellness. Wendy provides individual, couples, and family therapy, hypnotherapy, and online coaching programs. She combines her clinical training with certifications as a hypnotherapist and Kripalu yoga teacher to offer an approach to mental health and well-being that integrates mind, body, and spirit. Her specialties include codependency recovery, divorce recovery, and couples counseling. She lives near Orlando with her forever husband in their quaint College Park cottage and is filling her empty nest with writing and learning new ways to expand her creativity. You can learn more about Wendy and her offerings at www.solflowerwellness.com.

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