

Empathy vs Codependency

Today's podcast is about empathy vs codependency.

A couple of very misunderstood concepts today are empathy & codependency.

Some things I've read about empathy haven't been overly accurate. In fact, some make it sound like being empathic is some sort of weird psychic power when it is nothing of the sort. Some people also seem to think having empathy means that you have no boundaries, & are completely self sacrificing 1000% of the time. According to Merriam Webster's online dictionary however, empathy means: *"the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner."* Empathy is a good thing to have, since it enables you to be kind to others.

Codependency isn't like empathy. It isn't concerned about what is best for others or how you can help people. It's about enabling bad behavior. Also according to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, codependency means: *"a psychological condition or a relationship in which a person is controlled or manipulated by another who is affected with a pathological condition (such as an addiction to alcohol or heroin)"*. Codependency says, "Let me make this situation pleasing to you" whereas empathy says, "How can I help you to help yourself to do what is best for you?"

Although both of these words clearly have very different meanings, some people confuse them, using them interchangeably either from a point of being naïve or being manipulative. With narcissists, it's almost always manipulative. Narcissists don't care if someone empathizes with their pain, but they do care about having a victim who is willing to overlook their abusive ways & enable their toxic behavior. Narcissists may claim their victim is lacking in empathy when what the narcissist really wants from the victim is codependency. Many victims of narcissistic abuse are empathic people, & unless they know better, they will be hurt by the narcissist's accusation. Rather than have the narcissist think they are heartless, sometimes empathic people enable the narcissist's toxicity in an attempt to get the narcissist to think they are good people & earn the narcissist's favor.

If you realize that you have codependent tendencies or are in a codependent relationship, you're not alone. It happens to many victims of narcissistic abuse. The good news is you don't have to stay that way. You can unlearn these unhealthy behaviors!

As always, I recommend starting with prayer. Ask God to show you what you need to change & how to make appropriate changes.

Also learn what you can about empathy & codependency. Learning what you can will help you to see when you're being empathic & when you're being codependent.

Don't forget to learn about boundaries, too. You'll need to gain a good sense of boundaries & know effective ways to enforce them. To help you get started, I created a free online book study course about boundaries. It's available on my website at: www.CynthiaBaileyRug.com

I know this probably sounds pretty overwhelming & hard to make the healthy changes you need to make, but really, it's easier than you might think. Once you recognize progress in yourself, it encourages you to keep on doing what you're doing. Also know that you'll feel a lot of guilt when you begin to change your codependent ways. That is totally normal. When it happens, rather than give into ask yourself if you truly have a reason to feel this guilt or not. Chances are excellent that you'll recognize that you have no valid reason for the guilt.

I wish you the best with making these healthy changes!

Thank you for listening to my podcast!