

Co-dependency

I've recently realized that my boyfriend is codependent. Should I let go of the relationship, because it would be detrimental for my health in the long run, or is it possible to help him break free from codependence?

—Mary

Dear Mary

Well, there's good news and bad news. The bad news is that codependence requires two people in order to exist. So I'm afraid that you're in this with your boyfriend; he can't be codependent on his own and if you're with him, then you're the other codependent party.

The good news is that you can heal yourself, once you understand what's going on. You can't heal your boyfriend but you can refuse to play the codependent game; if you do, you'll either move on to something better or you'll heal and grow with your current partner (if he decides to take responsibility for himself).

Codependence is all about meeting each other's needs, rather than meeting your own and letting the other person be responsible for theirs. To break this cycle, you must let go of any care-taking of your partner—such as trying to “help him break free from codependence”. Make a list of all the ways in which you tend to take responsibility for him (even if it's only giving advice or suggesting solutions). Keep this list handy and remind yourself that every time you try to fix, care for, or take responsibility for him, you are playing the codependent game—and stopping yourself from having the love you want.

Neediness and insecurity are what make us codependent—and cause us to attract a similarly needy partner. Taking care of your own emotional and physical needs and boosting your self-confidence will help to set you free.

*Olga Sheean is a relationship coach and therapist who specialises in addressing the negative subconscious programming that runs—and often ruins—our lives. She is the author of *Fit for Love—find your self and your perfect mate, the ultimate guide to healthy, loving relationships and personal empowerment*. www.olgasheean.com*