

The Joy of Not Caring

If the title of this article offended you, or you were immediately intrigued by the idea of feeling good about not caring, this might just be for you. The idea sounds wrong, but strangely appealing. After all, we have to care don't we? Maybe. Maybe not. It depends. How's that for clearing things up?

Maybe this will help. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do others take you on guilt trips on a regular basis?
- Do you ever get the feeling some think you are responsible for their happiness? Have you taken responsibility for their happiness?
- Do you often feel guilty, but are not sure why?
- Do you feel you usually invest more time and effort in relationships than the other person?
- Are you often left feeling resentful and unappreciated in regard to someone you have tried to help or love?

If you answered "yes" to most of those questions you could be a "co-dependent" individual. Codependent people usually make their relationship(s) more important than themselves. Co-dependent people are not bad people, in fact they often appear to be the best kind of people—they just have few boundaries in regard to how far they will extend themselves. They also can be guilty of overstepping the boundaries of others and trying to take control of what is not theirs to control.

Progression (simplified):

1. People start by caring intensely about too many things or about a particular problem regarding someone else.
2. The person "over cares" and constantly tries to "fix" or make things better in the relationship.
3. In doing so, the person becomes burned out and resentful, but are trapped in being the one everyone depends on, blames, and looked to for rescue.
4. Bitterness sets in and the preverbal straw finally breaks the camel's back.
5. They stay stuck, or the pendulum swings to the other extreme, and they start to feel as though they care about nothing.

Balance is the only solution for such a dilemma—knowing what to care about and what to let go.

Now for an explanation of what I mean by the "joy of not caring." When caring too much is a way of life for someone. When change takes place and proper boundaries are established and observed, at first, that person might feel guilty or as if she does not care, or not care enough. In reality, the person may be caring at the appropriate level. It just feels unnatural. It is important not to assess what is appropriate by one's feeling, but by one's actions. Are they balanced? Are everyone's boundaries being respected? Is this an emotionally healthy place?

If balance has been achieved, the key is to embrace a new sense of what is normal even if it feels like not caring. The joy of having good boundaries and balanced concerns is so new, at first, it feels almost like not caring, yet there is a joy about it. Nothing is wrong; it's just the way people with good boundaries feel all the time. Go ahead, *find the proper balance* and feel the joy!