How to Change
Codependent Thinking
that's Keeping You Stuck

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Symptoms of Codependency

- Self-criticism
- Putting everyone else's needs before your own (lack of self-care)
- Low self-esteem, feeling inadequate or worthless
- Unsure of who you are, what's important to you, or what you like
- Fear of abandonment, rejection, being alone
- Sensitive to criticism
- Conflict-avoidant, passive
- Lack of boundaries or feeling guilty when setting boundaries
- Overly responsible, take responsibility for other people's problems (some codependents are the opposite – very irresponsible)
- Difficulty tolerating emotions, lack of awareness of your emotions,
- High need for validation or approval from others (people-pleasing)
- Spend a lot of time and energy trying to help, fix, or rescue troubled people in your life
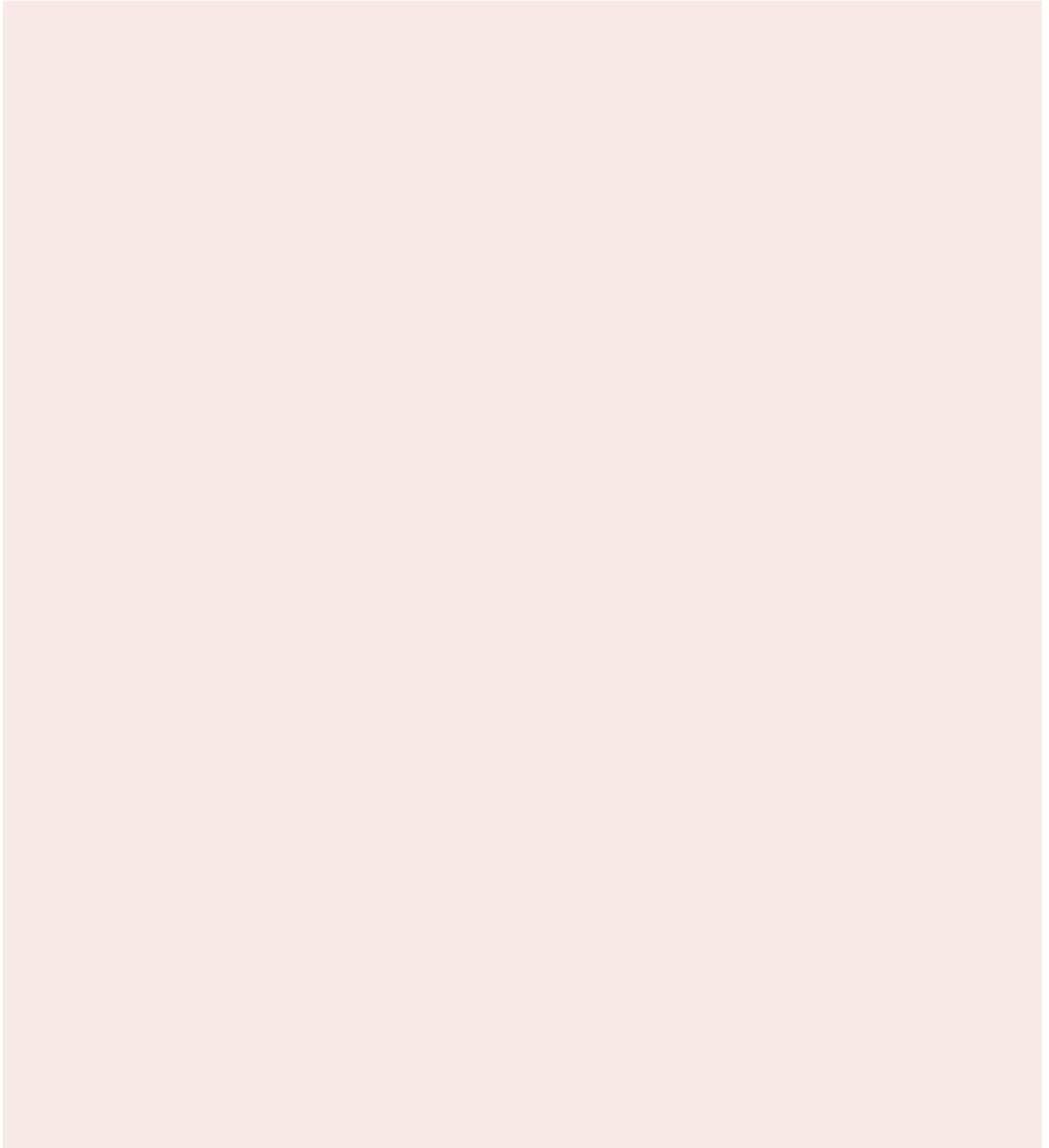- Feel responsible for everyone else's happiness

What is codependent thinking?

Codependent thinking is based on fear and low self-worth. It tells us we need to be perfect, self-sacrificing, and low maintenance, that we shouldn't have needs and shouldn't ask for anything, that we should tolerate mistreatment because if we don't, we'll end up alone. These thoughts lead to feelings of guilt, shame, and resentment, and to behaviors such as people-pleasing, enabling, giving unwanted advice or nagging, and being passive-aggressive.

List some of your unhelpful codependent thoughts or beliefs.
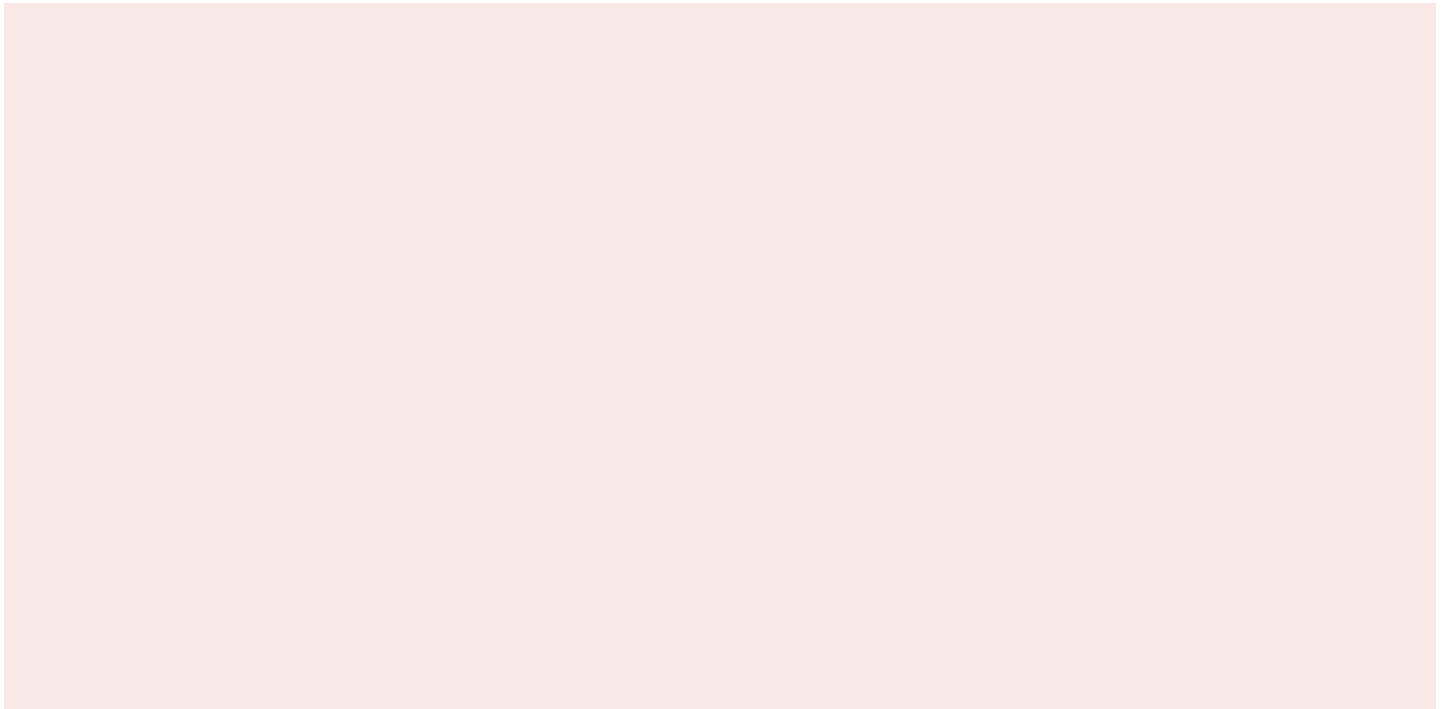
How do you think these thoughts or beliefs developed? Where/how did you learn to think like this?

What problems do these codependent thoughts/belief cause? How do they keep you stuck in codependency?
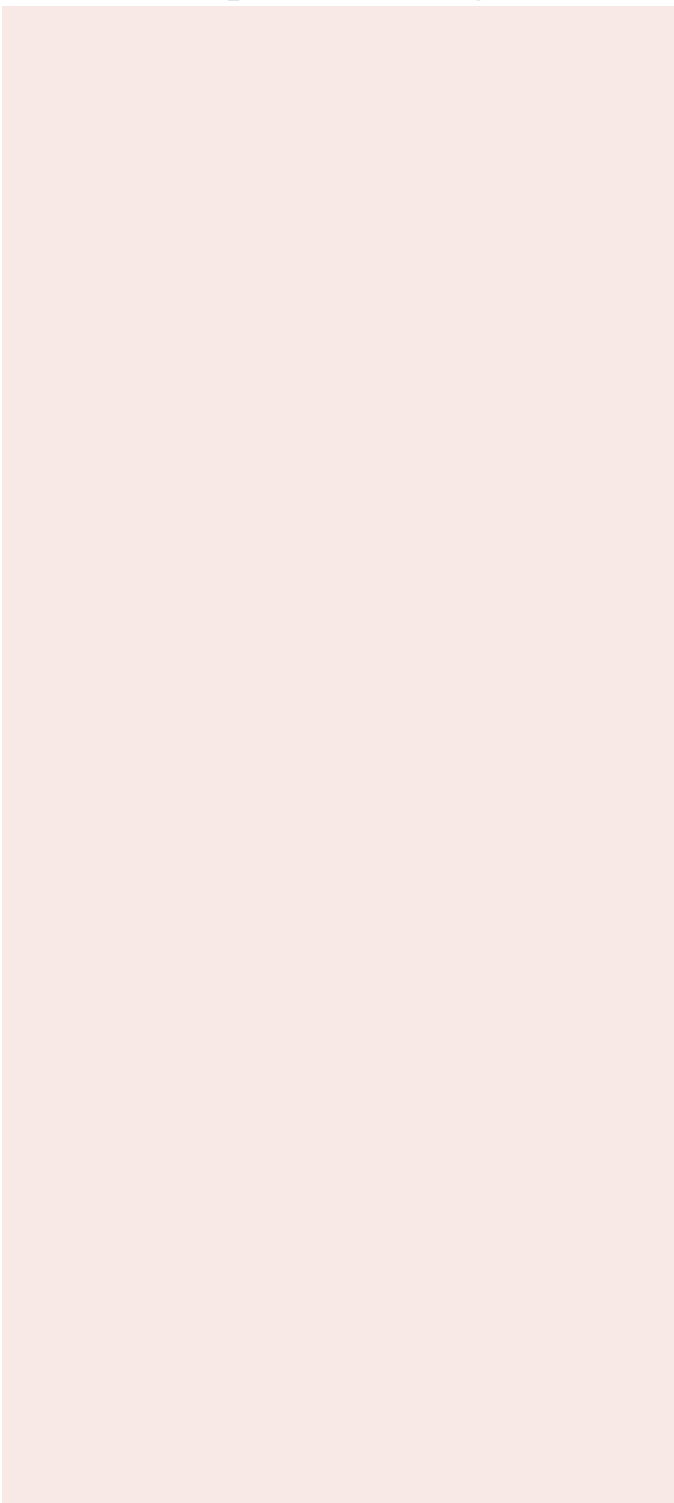
Challenge your codependent thoughts

When you notice a codependent thought, try to challenge and replace it with a more helpful, healthy, and accurate thought by asking some of these questions. You can add any additional questions that help you reframe your thinking to the list.

- Is this thought helpful?
- Is it accurate? How do I know?
- Is there another way I can look at this?
- Is this a thought or a fact?
- Am I overgeneralizing?
- Is this my responsibility or problem?
- Am I discounting my needs or feelings?
- Is this thought based on low self-esteem or fear or shame?
- Is this what I really think or is this what someone told me I should think (or belief or feel or do)?
- What would someone who isn't codependent think or feel?
- Can I tolerate someone being upset with me?
- How can I take care of myself?
- What do I need right now?
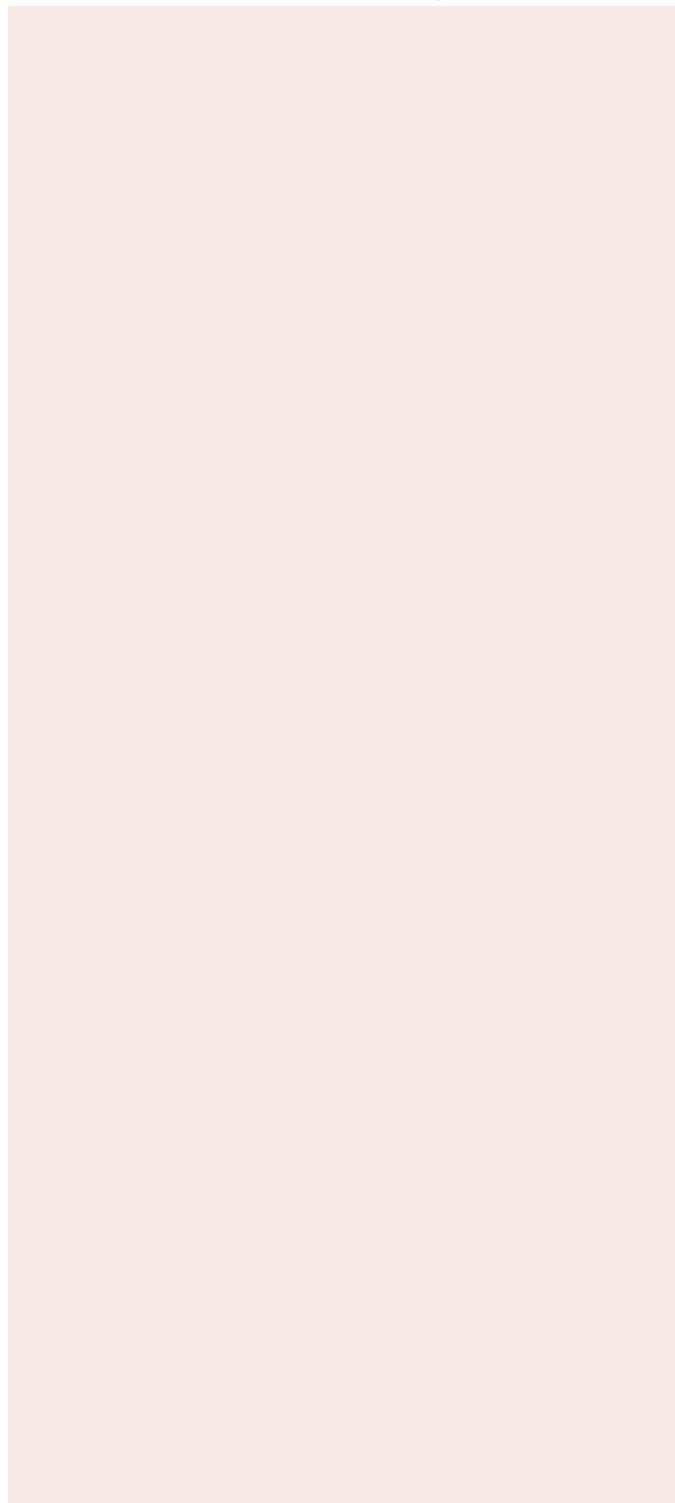- How do I feel? What are my feelings telling me?

Try writing some more helpful, healthy, and accurate thoughts to replace your codependent thoughts.

Codependent Thoughts	Healthier Thoughts

Final thoughts

Changing your thoughts takes a lot of practice, so be patient and give yourself plenty of grace for the slip-ups you'll inevitably make. Remember, these thoughts are well established and most of them are unconscious. So, to begin, just focus on bringing them into your awareness. Then, as you notice them, try not to judge them. Simply say, "That's a codependent thought. How can I think about this in a different, healthier, more helpful way." As, I said, this will take practice and hard work. But, I know you can do it! Small steps do add up for big changes if we keep practicing.

Learn more

The ABCs of Codependency Recovery. If you haven't already, be sure to get your copy of the ABCs of Codependency -- my special offer for those who watched Avaiya University's Overcoming Codependency video series. It's available <u>HERE</u> (https://livewellwithsharonmartin.com/abcs-of-codependency-recovery/) and use promo code "avaiya" for 20% off.

Healthy Dependency vs. Codependency (https://livewellwithsharonmartin.com/healthy-dependency-vs-codependency/)

17 Ways to Validate Yourself (https://livewellwithsharonmartin.com/validate-yourself/)

It's Time to Stop Blaming Yourself for Everything (https://livewellwithsharonmartin.com/stop-blaming-yourself-with-self-compassion/)

The Need to Please: The Psychology of People-Pleasing (https://blogs.psychcentral.com/imperfect/2020/01/the-need-to-please-the-psychology-of-people-pleasing/)

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Everything's my fault. ➜ I'm only responsible for my thoughts, feelings, and actions.

It feels scary when I can't control everything. ➜ I can cope with whatever happens.

I don't want to let anyone down. ➜ It's okay to say "no".

I have to do everything myself. ➜ I can ask for help.

I need others to validate my worth. ➜ My self-worth doesn't depend on other people's approval.

It's my job to keep everyone happy. ➜ We're all responsible for our own feelings. I can't make someone happy (or unhappy).

There's one "right" way to do things. ➜ My way isn't the only way.

If I don't take charge, this family will fall apart. ➜ I accept that I can't control everything.

I need to rescue people; I can't let them suffer. ➜ It's not possible for me to fix everyone and everything.

I shouldn't have any needs. I shouldn't spend money or time on myself. ➜ Doing things for myself is healthy, not selfish.