

Codependency - How to Stop Suffocating Others

Are you one of the many people trying to stop controlling and suffocating your mate? Here are some practical recommendations to follow: First, give no unsolicited advice. Do not tell your spouse what to do, just as you would not advise any equal adult friend without being asked. Do not comment on his/her hygiene practices or routines, clothing choice, driving, telephone behavior, eating idiosyncrasies, parenting (unless abusive), etc.. Secondly, do not take responsibility for things that are not yours in the relationship. You are likely doing many more tasks than your spouse and it may be difficult for you to let go of some of them. Once you and your spouse agree on what you both feel is a fair division of tasks, do not remind, hound, or ask your spouse about things that she/he has agreed to do. If the lights must get turned off because a bill has not been paid by that spouse, so be it. Do not rescue your spouse by stepping in, and do not rob him/her of the learning experience of failing. Thirdly, be sure you have many of your own interests and hobbies to occupy your time so that you do not have as much energy available to over-monitor your spouse. Lastly, try assuming that your way is *not* necessarily the best way to do things. Assume that your spouse has something to teach you in every interaction. When bringing up an issue, use words such as, "How do you feel about..." or "What do you think of..." to show your openness to feedback and a differing opinion. Finally, get some good books on codependency at your library or on the internet (there are even great tapes on these issues you can listen to while you commute!). These will help you identify the dynamics in your family of origin that helped train you to anticipate the needs of adults around you and take responsibility for things that you should not. This will help you look at how you are replicating your history in the present and will make it easier to stop.