



Are You a Rescuer or Enabler?

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sometimes people have been hurt so badly that they don't want to face it. Instead, they use their compassion and skills to help other people rather than deal with their own pain. Perhaps you have been doing some of the following:

1. Caretaking - Are you doing things for other people that you should be doing for yourself? Remember the flight attendant who states "In the event of an emergency a mask will fall from the ceiling. Put it on yourself first and then help the person beside you"? Well, you shouldn't be waiting for an emergency to do this.
2. Fixing - If your self-image is tied to another person you are in trouble. When that person does well, you feel better about yourself and when the other person does poorly, you feel terrible. You can't fix other people and you definitely are wasting time trying. Develop a good self-image that is not based on other people's behaviours or choices.
3. Control/Manipulation - Maybe your "perfect" way isn't perfect for the other person.
4. Enlightenment - There is an old Chinese proverb that states "After the enlightenment comes the laundry". You can talk and try to educate other people over and over again but there comes a time when they need to do their own laundry.
5. Affection, Sex, Attention - These should not be given or received with the wrong motives in mind. Think "mutually-beneficial".
6. Codependency - Do you help other people to make rotten choices? Are you trying to nag, coax or force them into doing well even when they aren't willing or able?
7. Buying- The Beatles made a hit song called "Money can't buy me love". They were right. Giving gifts and supporting other people will never guarantee that you will get what you want. Give up the bribing.
8. Forgiveness - Telling people that they are forgiven over and over and over again might not help them to make the changes that they need to make. If you are forgiving to let go of your hurt and resentment, then go for it. But if you are just trying to make them happy, think again.
9. Compliant - Are you a chameleon that changes and adapts to everything around you? If you are, then people likely take advantage of you a great deal of the time. That isn't healthy and certainly won't bring you any happiness in the long term.

As children we were taught to be kind and thoughtful. Most people, however, were not taught about the importance of having healthy boundaries that include knowing where I stop and you begin.

People who rescue or enable others don't have healthy boundaries, never really get their own needs met and, over time, feel resentful and victimized.

Don't let that happen or continue to happen in your life. Instead, focus on taking care of yourself and ensuring that you have embraced ways that offer you good balance in every area of your being.