



# **Your Healthy Self:** *Skills for Working with Codependent Behaviors*

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# *Preface*

*This power point is a free-standing book. It is for people who are interested in learning about codependency and are ready to work on their codependent behaviors. It is designed to offer a great deal of information and treatment ideas in a short period of time. It is a compilation of material I have studied and published over the past 20 years.*

*This power-point book may be accessed at any time by any one at [www.nancyjohnston.com](http://www.nancyjohnston.com). Feel free to use it and pass it on. Additionally, I offer workshops to professionals and clients on this power-point book to teach, discuss, and delve further into this material for self growth. Comments and conversations about this material are welcome at the same web address.*

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*July, 2015*  
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# *Table of Contents*

<i>Codependency</i> . . . . .	4
<i>Self and Others</i> . . . . .	15
<i>A Path to a Healthy Self</i> . . . . .	24
<i>Visual Tools</i> . . . . .	25
<i>Goals</i> . . . . .	31
<i>Skills</i> . . . . .	37
<i>Facing Illusions</i> . . . . .	42
<i>Detaching</i> . . . . .	50
<i>Setting Healthy Boundaries</i> . . . . .	63
<i>Developing Spirituality</i> . . . . .	78
<i>References</i> . . . . .	104

# What is Codependency?

## *Codependency*

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Codependency is about over-functioning in someone else's life and under-functioning in your own.

It means you are centering your life around someone else's life and not taking care of your own life.



*Codependency*

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# Over-Functioning in Someone Else's Life

What does this mean?



## *Codependency*

We may be **over-functioning in someone else's life** when we carry these behaviors too far:

- Giving
- Fixing
- Care-taking
- Helping
- Serving
- Thinking for others
- Speaking for others
- Taking over
- Controlling
- Doing for the other person what they need to do for themselves

## *Codependency*

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Over-functioning in someone else's life limits the other person's growth, keeping them from being capable and responsible. Though its intent may be to help, this type of over-involvement ultimately hurts the healthy development of the other person.



*Codependency*

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## Under-Functioning in Your Own Life

What does this mean?

## *Codependency*

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**Under-functioning in your own life** may include any of these behaviors and their consequences:

- Self-neglect, including neglect of your health, money, work, and friendships
- Failing to consider yourself in decisions and planning
- Development of physical and/or psychological problems, including anxiety and depression
- Development of ethical and legal problems, including lying, misrepresentation, bankruptcy

## *Codependency*

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Under-functioning in your own life limits your growth, keeping you from being capable and responsible. Though your intent may be to help others, your under-functioning on your own behalf ultimately hurts the healthy development of your Self.



## *Codependency*

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Codependency can cause us to lose our Self  
in someone else.

## *Codependency*

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Al-Anon, the 12-step fellowship for family and friends of alcoholics, suggests that our own recovery depends on keeping the focus on our Self and not the alcoholic.



## *Codependency*

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Our recovery is about developing a healthy Self.



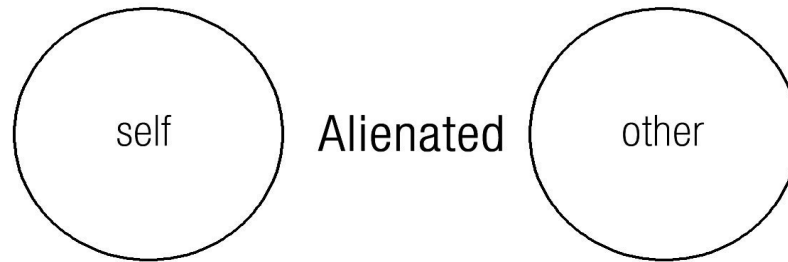
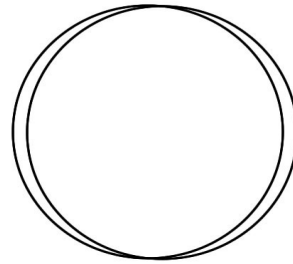
A spiral-bound notebook with a light-colored, textured cover. The spiral binding is on the left side. The text is centered on the cover.

# **Self and Others**

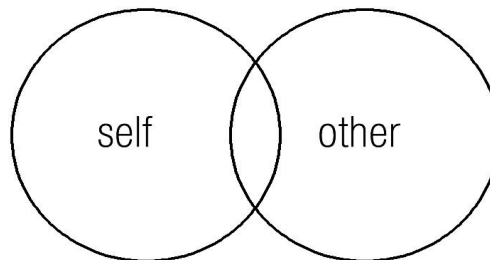
Ways to Think about Self  
and Your Self in Relationships

# Relationships

Enmeshed



Healthy



## *Self and Others*

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Each of the circles in the diagrams on the previous slide represents an individual Self. Each of us has a Self. That Self may be represented by a circle that is of a size that fits you, and that circle may have a smooth, clear boundary or may be thin and/or broken.

## *Self and Others*

Looking at the top diagram, you see an **Enmeshed Relationship**. This is a relationship that stays pretty stuck with each person holding onto the other and little space for consideration of Self and the Self of the other person. Notice the overlapping circles which stay in this position for the most part eclipsing each individual.

## *Self and Others*

The second diagram represents an **Alienated Relationship**. The circles show that the individuals in the relationship do not intersect. They do not share themselves with each other. They may pass each other, be in the same room with each other, but they do not come together in meaningful ways. They keep their distance from each other.

## *Self and Others*

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The third diagram shows the circles or people overlapping some, yet not completely. In this case, the individuals are able to both share themselves and keep a separate sense of Self. This is called a **Healthy Relationship**.



## *Self and Others*

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This diagram of a **Healthy Relationship** does not remain static. Rather, it is dynamic, as the individuals are able to move toward or away from each other as needed and desired.

## *Self and Others*

Remember, each circle or person has its own boundaries. In this **Healthy Relationship**, these two circles can intersect and cross each other as much as is mutually agreed upon. So the circles can range from nearly completely overlapped to completely separated depending on the expressed needs of each person and mutual respect between them.

## *Self and Others*

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This **Healthy Relationship** is dynamic. It allows for change and flow. It is dependent on having two individuals aware of their separateness and togetherness and wanting to foster their self *and* their relationship in this way.

The image shows the cover of a spiral-bound notebook. The cover is a light beige or tan color with a fine, woven fabric texture. A silver metal spiral binding is visible along the left edge. The text is centered on the cover.

# **A Path to a Healthy Self**

Ways to Think about our Path

## *A Healthy Self – Visual Tools*

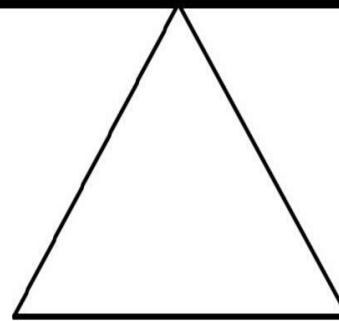
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Remembering that if we are not mindful we can over-function in someone else's life and under-function in our own, we want to change our behaviors so there is **a better balance between care of Self and others.**

Self  
(internal)

Other  
(external)

- Needs
- Wants
- Feelings
- Thoughts
- Actions
- Spirit



- Needs
- Wants
- Feelings
- Thoughts
- Actions
- Spirit




## *A Healthy Self – Visual Tools*

It can be useful to think of codependency in terms of codependent **behaviors** rather than the label/noun: codependent. When we consider this loss of Self in someone else from a behavioral point-of-view, it helps us to see more clearly what we may want to change in order to better find this balance of Self and others.

## *A Healthy Self – Visual Tools*

These codependent **behaviors** may include:

- Giving
- Fixing
- Care-taking
- Helping
- Serving
- Hard working
- People pleasing
- Thinking for others
- Speaking for others
- Taking over
- Controlling
- Doing for the other person what they need to do for themselves
- Conflict avoiding



## *A Healthy Self – Visual Tools*

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Many of our codependent behaviors are not unhealthy in and of themselves; we just carry them too far.

# Giving/Fixing/Caretaking

OK

- Make offers within your resources (\$, time, energy)
- Make offer/accept the other person's acceptance or rejection of your offer
- Make suggestion(s) and leave them alone

Going Too Far

- Make offers outside of your resources and carry them out (causing debt, exhaustion, losses)
- Force your offer on the other person, insist
- Insist upon your suggestions and/or actually carry them out for the other person

The image shows the cover of a spiral-bound notebook. The cover is a light beige or tan color with a fine, woven texture. A silver metal spiral binding is visible along the left edge. The text is centered on the cover.

# **A Path to a Healthy Self**

**What are our Goals?**

## *A Healthy Self – Goals*

A research study (Dear, Roberts, and Lange, 2005) looked at 11 commonly used definitions for codependency and found **4 core features** in those definitions:

- 1- External focus
- 2- Self-sacrificing
- 3- Interpersonal control
- 4- Emotional suppression



## *A Healthy Self – Goals*

With these 4 core features of codependency in mind, we can establish **4 goals** for the development of our Self Health:

- ↑ Internal Focus vs. external focus
- ↑ Self Care vs. self-neglect and over-care of others
- ↑ Self Control vs. efforts to control others
- ↑ Emotional Expression vs. denial and suppression

## *A Healthy Self – Goals*

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Notice how these 4 core features of codependency and the resulting 4 goals that can help us develop our healthy Self are expressed as **behaviors**:

- Bring the focus to your Self
- Take care of your Self
- Manage and control your own life
- Express your Self

## *A Healthy Self – Goals*

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With these visual tools, goals, and behaviors in mind, we are ready to work on finding a **better balance between care of our Self and care of others**. This balance is always changing, because life is always changing. But we want to learn the importance of finding and acting on that balance situation-by-situation, day-by-day. This is how we develop our healthy Self.



## *A Healthy Self – Goals*

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So what are some things we can learn and do to find this balance between self and others that can foster our Healthy Self?

# **A Path to a Healthy Self**

**Four Areas of Skill Development**

*Signs along the Path offering  
Guidance and Strength*

## *A Healthy Self - Skill Development*

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The four areas of skill development are:

- Facing Illusions
- Detaching
- Setting Healthy Boundaries
- Developing Spirituality

## *A Healthy Self - Skill Development*

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Though these four areas of work appear in an ordered list, they can be used in any order at any time. As we develop skills in each area, we may find that we are Facing our Illusions but not Setting Healthy Boundaries. We may be Detaching but have forgotten to connect with our Spirituality.



## *A Healthy Self - Skill Development*

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For these reasons, I have come to present the names of these skill sets in a circle, acknowledging the need to know all of these categories of help, to see them as road signs to remind us and guide us, and to use them in any order needed.



**Facing  
Illusions**

**Detaching**

**Developing  
Spirituality**

**Setting  
Healthy  
Boundaries**

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# **Skill Development**

## Facing Illusions

## *Facing Illusions - What does this mean?*

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- This means allowing our Self to see what is true about our Self and our situation.
  - Are we living on hope that things will change?
  - Are we accepting unacceptable behaviors?
  - Do we believe we are helping when really we are hurting the situation, enabling it to continue?
- Facing illusions is about working through our denial of what is and coming to terms with that.

## *Facing Illusions – Skills: Finding the Reality*

- Find the reality of/the truth about:
  - your Self
  - the other person
  - your situation
- What are you *really* feeling, thinking, and experiencing with this other person?
  - How are they acting? What are they doing?
  - How are you acting? What are you doing?

## *Facing Illusions – Skills: Accepting Reality*

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- Allowing your Self to come through your denial and see and accept these realities is important to moving forward with your own life.
- Allowing our Self to see and accept the truth of our Self and our situation will likely cause us to experience the **grief process**, because this is about a loss – the loss of our hopes, dreams, and beliefs.

## *Facing Illusions – Skills: Accepting Reality*

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The **grief process** (Kubler-Ross, 1969) includes:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

## *Facing Illusions – Skills: Accepting Reality*

- About this grief process:
  - You are likely to experience any and all of these emotions as you allow reality to set-in
  - These emotions are not necessarily experienced in this order nor are you likely to be finished with one and move onto another. Don't be surprised if this variety of feelings arises in you at a various times.

## *Facing Illusions – Skills: Accepting Reality*

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- It is important to allow your self to experience these emotions.
- Allow other people who understand you to support you as you go through this process of coming to terms with reality and letting go of illusions.



## *Facing Illusions – Skills: Accepting Reality*

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Moving through this process of finding and accepting the realities of Self, other, and situation gives us a healthy foundation, based in reality, for making decisions and learning to take care of our Self.

*>Take a moment to connect with one piece of reality in your current life and notice how you are feeling about that.*

# **Skill Development**

## **Detaching**

## *Detaching – What does this mean?*

- Detaching is about learning how to get some emotional distance from what's going on with a relationship or situation you are involved with.
- It is not about leaving, ending, or divorcing.
- Rather, it is about developing skills that enable you to:
  - See things more clearly and completely, and
  - Respond, not React

## *Detaching – Skills: Self-Awareness*

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- Become aware of what entangles you with this other person:
  - Are you trying to please them? Keep them happy?
  - Are you trying to avoid conflict? Do you not want them to be mad with you?

## *Detaching – Skills: Self-Awareness*

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- Do you want to control a situation or control what the other person does?
- Are you afraid of what will happen if you can't please, manage, or control someone else?

## *Detaching – Skills: Self-Awareness*

- The roles we took on in our family of origin likely contribute to what entangles us now. Were you a Hero? a Mascot? a Lost Child? (Weigscheider-Cruse, 1989); a Responsible Child? A Placater? (Black, 2001).
- And/or we learned to over-function in someone else's life because that was modeled for us by a major attachment figure.

## *Detaching – Skills: Self-Awareness*

- And/or our relationship as a young child with our major attachment figure(s) did not help us to develop secure attachments in our adult life (Miller, 1981).
- By becoming aware of the qualities that make you vulnerable to losing your Self in someone else, you can then use this self-awareness to not let those tendencies, for example to please, avoid, or control, effect your behaviors and emotions as much as they have in the past.

## *Detaching – Skills: Self-Awareness*

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*>Take a moment and consider your basic tendencies which may make it hard for you to let go in a healthy way of helping, fixing, care-taking, and/or controlling someone else.*



## *Detaching – Skills: Respond, don't React*

- Learning to respond and not react is a skill which helps us to center our Self and clarify effectively.
- With self-awareness in mind, we want to quietly listen and observe what the other person is saying and doing.
- We want to observe them as objectively as possible, removing our personal reactions and history so as to see them as if we were watching a show or movie. Pause. Go slow. Take<sup>57</sup> it in.

## *Detaching – Skills: Respond, don't React*

- Then we process what we are observing and formulate a response that is honest and reflects consideration of Self as well as the other person.

*> Take a moment to review these steps to responding. Then try them in a safe, easy situation, for example if you are in a conversation where someone is telling you about something that happened at their home or work. Listen. Observe. Pause. Consider. Respond.*

## *Detaching – Skills: Line-down-the-page*

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A tool I use frequently is the line-down-the-page. As I explain to my clients, this is a simple vertical line that indicates where you end and where the other person begins. It is not a wall or barrier; it is simply a way to acknowledge that we are each separate beings. With this image in mind, we can use the line in these ways:

## *Detaching – Skills: Line-down-the-page*

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- We can go to the line and offer our ideas, suggestions, opportunities, kindnesses to the other person,
- And it is important to then just leave them on the line. If we try to push them over the line or try to pull the other person onto our side of the line, we likely to cause trouble for our Self and the other person.

## *Detaching – Skills: Line-down-the-page*

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- Similarly, if they place something on the line, we do not have to pick it up or push it back without due consideration of our Self first. And then we respond honestly.

## *Detaching – Skills: Line-down-the-page*

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*>Take a moment and consider a situation in which you may be trying to get someone to do something or act in some way. Imagine the line-down-the-age and picture your Self simply placing your ideas and desires on that line between you and the other person and then stepping back, leaving your offerings on the line to be taken or not.*

The image shows the cover of a spiral-bound notebook. The cover is a light beige or tan color with a fine, woven fabric texture. A silver metal spiral binding is visible along the left edge. The text is centered on the cover in a black, serif font.

# **Skill Development**

## Setting Healthy Boundaries



## *Boundaries – What does this mean?*

- We just looked at the line-down-the-page exercise. That is a good introduction to boundaries as it highlights the fact that there is a place where you end and the other person begins.
- Boundaries are about clarifying that line for our Self. They are not about creating walls but rather about developing a clear sense of who we are and where we stand and acknowledging the same for the other person.



## *Boundaries – What does this mean?*

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- Setting boundaries means establishing some limits for your Self of what you will and won't tolerate in a particular situation.
- Setting boundaries means that you are able to listen to your Self, know your limits, and firmly assert those limits to your Self and the other person.

## *Boundaries – What does this mean?*

- Setting boundaries is really a healthy, friendly thing to do. It helps us to know the parameters of our relationships and interactions.
- Our children need boundaries and limits. So do the adults with whom we interact. And we often need to set limits with our Self.
- Daily we are given many opportunities to practice setting and keeping our boundaries.

## *Boundaries – Skills*

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Here are two sets of skills for setting healthy boundaries. It is important to separate these skills as we are inclined to react rather than respond when setting boundaries. Healthy boundary setting comes from centering in Self first and then interacting with the other person:

- Listening to your Self
- Interacting with the other person

## *Boundaries – Skills: Listening to your Self*

- **Slow down.** Before we try to set a limit that is true for us and that we can live with, it is important to pause, take a breath, take a break, and connect with you.
- **Listen to you.** You may hear the voice of the other person strongly and clearly in your mind. Now is the time to quiet that and listen to 4 parts of you that are giving you information to help you.

## *Boundaries – Skills: Listening to your Self*

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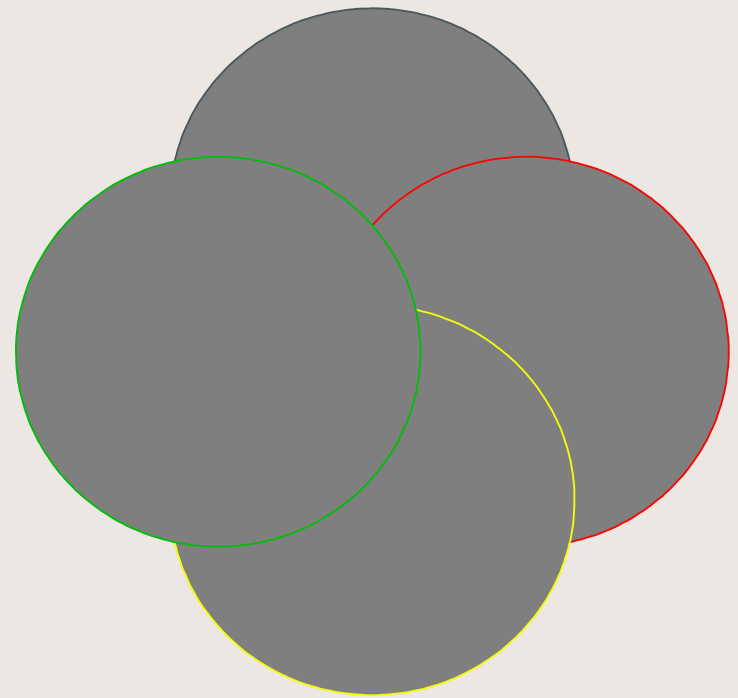
- **Listen to Four Areas of Self.** There are at least four areas of Self for you to listen to. Each can be a source of information to help you decide what boundary to set. These areas are:
  - Physical
  - Cognitive
  - Emotional
  - Spiritual

## *Boundaries – Skills: Listening to your Self*

- It is easy to consider one or two of these parts of our Self and not even listen to other parts.
- Healthy boundaries are best set by listening to all 4 areas of Self and then discerning the limit you want to set. Your head may say one thing but your body is giving you another message. It is important to learn to listen to and respect all of these internal messages as you decide

## *Boundaries – Skills: Listening to your Self*

- The diagram to the right illustrates these 4 areas of Self with each circle representing a part of Self and the intersections of these circles showing the integration of these aspects of Self.



## *Boundaries – Skills: Listening to your Self*

- **Create an “I” statements.** After listening to these parts of your Self and weighing the messages against each other (e.g. one part says “yes” another indicates “no”), create a statement that begins with “I” to express the boundary you are deciding on. For example:
  - “I can not afford to do that.”
  - “I can give your two hours each week to work on that.”



## *Boundaries – Skills: Listening to your Self*

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- **Edit your “I” statement.** Make sure it is what you mean before you say it to the other person.
- **Rehearse your “I” statement.** Say this out loud to your Self or to a someone who is supporting you in your work for your Self.

*Each of these steps is to help you know what is true for you.*

## *Boundaries – Skills: Interacting*

- **State your boundary.** After all the preparation to establish your boundary, you are then ready to state it to the other person. So state it to them. In doing so:
- **Say things once.** Saying what we need to say and then stopping has real strength and cleanliness. Granted, sometimes clarification may be needed, but after that, be careful of your impulses to explain or defend the boundary you are setting.

## *Boundaries – Skills: Interacting*

- **Stick with your limits.** It is important that you have set a limit you really mean and can live with. Otherwise, you will be giving the other person a message that you can be persuaded to let go of a boundary that you had decided was important to you.
- **Remember your reasons for this boundary.** This remembering can hold you in your place, the place you worked hard to find as you set your boundary.

## *Boundaries – Skills: Interacting*

- **Learn when to stop.** There is definitely an art to knowing when to stop a conversation. Stopping at the right time increases the chances of keeping our center, making our point, and ending the conversation in a healthy way.
- **Stop.** We can save our Self and the interaction if we say what we want to say, talk about it with centeredness, tune in to when to stop, and then stop.

## *Boundaries – Skills*

*>Take a moment and consider a boundary you may need to set in your current life. The boundary may be with someone else or with your Self.*

*>First use the skills in Listening to You. What do you believe is the boundary you need to set?*

*>Then imagine using the skills in Interacting to talk with the other person about your boundary. Which of those skills appeals to you? Which of those skills may challenge you?*

The image shows the cover of a spiral-bound notebook. The cover is a light beige or tan color with a fine, woven fabric texture. A silver metal spiral binding is visible along the left edge. The text is centered on the cover.

# **Skill Development**

## Developing Spirituality

## *Spirituality – What does this mean?*

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- Spirituality, as presented here, is about the concept of a power greater than your Self, a concept central to twelve-step programs.
- It involves the recognition that we are not the ultimate power in our lives.
- It involves the realization that we are not in full control of everything.



## *Spirituality – What does this mean?*

- Spirituality, as presented here, is about the application of the Serenity Prayer in our lives.
- It is about learning what we can control and taking responsibility for that.
- And it is about learning to see and be willing to accept when things are not in our control and let them go by turning them over to this greater power.



## *Spirituality – What does this mean?*

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- This development of spirituality is personal. It is for each of us to decide our acceptance and understanding of this concept of a higher power.
- You can certainly let go of things you can not control and stop there, not adding the belief in a higher power.

## *Spirituality – What does this mean?*

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- For those who choose to believe in a higher power, that power may be based in your religious beliefs or it may be in any number of things including nature, relationships, silence, or through feelings and experiences you have

## *Spirituality – Skills*

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Here are two sets of skills for developing spirituality, remembering spirituality is personal and therefore yours to explore and experience for your Self:

- Openings to spirituality
- Beyond the openings

## *Spirituality – Skills: Openings to Spirituality*

- **Slow down.** Yes, once again this is offered as a skill to develop. We go so fast in our lives. Our days and hours are filled with things we want to do/have to do/think we have to do. Connecting with our spiritual Self is made possible by stepping away from our rush.

## *Spirituality – Skills: Openings to Spirituality*

- **Breathe.** Bring your focus to your breath. This focus brings us back to our Self. We are bringing our physical and mental selves into accord. We are regaining contact with the internal.
- **Quiet your mind.** Focusing on your breath can help to quiet your mind. Focusing on your breath can instantly bring you out of your head and into the present moment. As your mind chatters, over and over return your focus to your breath.

## *Spirituality – Skills: Openings to Spirituality*

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- **Sit in silence.** Silence can be restful. Silence can be our friend. A break into silence is a direct invitation to come back to our Self, to listen to nothing other than our breathing and to notice, only notice, our physical and emotional sensations.

## *Spirituality – Skills: Openings to Spirituality*

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- **Be in the present.** Quieting our mind and body helps to come to the present moment. We often are in the future or the past rather than the present. Being in the present moment, we can discover such a richness of senses and emotions, a richness that can be both spiritual and a tap to deeper spirituality.

## *Spirituality – Skills: Openings to Spirituality*

*> Take a moment to practice these skills in opening to spirituality. Take several moments. Find a quiet place where you may be undisturbed for 10-15 minutes. Then, sit down and start following your breath, allowing your breath to be your focus. As your mind chatters, gently return your focus to your breath and the sensations of being in the present moment. Don't **think** about being in the present. **Be in/experience** the present – whatever it may be.*



## *Spirituality – Skills: Beyond the Openings*

- **Discover your higher power.** Our task is to slow down, quiet our pushing and pulling, and set out to hear, feel, and experience the constant presence of our higher power. Discovering your higher power is up to you. Choosing to do so helps with the healthy acknowledgment that you can not completely rely on your own resources, that you are not fully in charge or fully responsible for any number of things.

## *Spirituality – Skills: Beyond the Openings*

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- **Let go of things you cannot control.** A theme of our work to develop a healthy Self is to learn what we can and can not control. This lesson is two fold: control what is in our control and let go of what we cannot control. Spirituality is an arena into which we let things go that we cannot control, an arena in which we place our trust and faith – not faith that things will happen as we want them to, but faith that life will unfold as it will and we can live with what happens.

## *Spirituality – Skills: Beyond the Openings*

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- **Practice these things.** Reading and studying this material is very important. Practicing it and applying it in your daily life is what will ultimately make the difference in developing your healthy Self.

## *Spirituality – Skills: Beyond the Openings*

- **Practice** means to try some or all of these ideas in order to learn how to do them and/or to improve your ability to do them.
- **Practice** also means making these ideas a part of your daily life. It means incorporating them into the way you greet your day, your relationships, and the world.

## *Spirituality – Skills: Beyond the Openings*

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- **Daily practice** of our spirituality can calm us, re-center us, and clear our brains. It can provide our anchor in the storms we encounter. It can help us to create a lovely and strong Self.

## *Spirituality – Skills: Beyond the Openings*

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*> Take a moment to consider what has been said here about having spirituality in your life. If you already are connected with your spiritual Self, take another moment to intentionally connect with your higher power. If the concept of having a spiritual Self is not in your experience, take another moment to imagine what your life might be like with spirituality.*

A spiral-bound notebook with a light beige, textured cover. The spiral binding is on the left side. The text is centered on the cover.

# Summary

Your Healthy Self



## *In Summary*

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- Our goal is to develop a healthy Self.
- Codependent behaviors can have us out-of-balance in our focus on Self and others.
- Finding that healthier balance is constantly our mission. Each day and each situation we encounter invites this Self work.



## *Indexed Summary for Visual Tools*

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- We have **visual tools** to help us find this balance, this connection with our healthy Self:
  - *Relationship Circles* . . . . . 16
  - *Self/Other Balance Scale* . . . . . 26
  - *Behaviors on a Continuum* . . . . . 30
  - *4 Areas of Self* . . . . . 71

## *Indexed Summary for Skill Sets*

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- We have **skill sets** in four areas to help us find this balance, this connection with our healthy Self:
  - Facing Illusions
  - Detaching
  - Setting Healthy Boundaries
  - Developing Spirituality

## *Indexed Summary for Skill Sets*

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### – **Facing Illusions**

- *Finding the Reality*. . . . . 44
- *Accepting Reality*. . . . . 45

### – **Detaching**

- *Self-Awareness*. . . . . 52
- *Respond, don't react*. . . . . 57
- *Line-down-the-page*. . . . . 59

# *Indexed Summary for Skill Sets*

---

## **– Setting Healthy Boundaries**

- *Listening to Your Self* . . . . .68
  - *Slow Down* . . . . . 68
  - *Listen to You* . . . . .68
  - *Listen to Four Areas of Self* . . . . . 69
  - *Create an “I” Statement* . . . . .72
  - *Edit your “I” Statement* . . . . . 73
  - *Rehearse you “I” Statement* . . . . .73

# *Indexed Summary for Skill Sets*

---


## **– Setting Healthy Boundaries**

- *Interacting* ..... 74
  - *State your Boundary* .....74
  - *Say Things Once.* .....74
  - *Stick with Your Limits* .....75
  - *Remember Your Reasons* .....75
  - *Learn When to Stop.* ..... 76
  - *Stop.* .....76

## *Indexed Summary for Skill Sets*

### **– Developing Spirituality**

- *Openings to Spirituality* . . . . . 84
  - *Slow Down* . . . . . 84
  - *Breathe* . . . . . 85
  - *Quiet Your Mind* . . . . . 85
  - *Sit in Silence* . . . . . 86
  - *Be in the Present* . . . . . 87
- *Beyond the Openings* . . . . . 89
  - *Discover Your Higher Power.* . . . . . 89
  - *Let Go of Things You Cannot Control* . . . . . 90
  - *Practice These Things.* . . . . . 91

A silver metal spiral binding is visible along the left edge of the page, with the wire looping through a series of holes.

*Well Wishes to You and Your Work  
as You Connect with and Develop  
Your Healthy Self*

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