BUILD BETTER Boundaries
Learn To Be Kind Without Being Codependent
WORKBOOK
SAMPLE
Hello and welcome to your Build Better Boundaries Sample Workbook!

This free, 20-page workbook is a sample of the exercises in the full version.

I hope this helps you (or someone you know) to process through the painful effects of codependency and personal boundary issues.

Take a deep breath, start at the beginning, and go for it!

If you’d like to check out the full version, you can find it by clicking the image below:

Full Version

If you have any questions, feel free to reach me directly at brian@codependencynomore.com.

Keep Moving Forward,

Brian Pisor
Codependency No More
www.codependencynomore.com
# Self-Evaluation & Family of Origin

With a check mark, indicate how frequently each item occurs or has occurred.

## Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rarely (or Never)</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My self-esteem is invested in my ability to help others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m more invested in others’ needs than my own needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have anxiety and boundary distortions around intimacy and separation</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m enmeshed in relationships with addicted or impulse-disordered individuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>I rely on denial to cope with stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>I suppress emotions and then have outbursts</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m anxious or depressed</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m on guard to detect threats</td>
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<tr>
<td>I abuse alcohol or chemical substances</td>
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<tr>
<td>I suffer(ed) physical or sexual abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>I endure stress-related medical illnesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>My good feelings stem from approval from others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I focus on pleasing or protecting others</td>
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<tr>
<td>My self-esteem is bolstered by relieving someone else’s pain or solving their problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of rejection determines what I say or do</td>
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<tr>
<td>I give so I can feel safe in a relationship</td>
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</table>

## Family History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Rarely (or Never)</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There were bipolar, borderline personality, or other major mental health disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>There was passive-aggressiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>We didn’t share our feelings openly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents made us feel guilty as punishment</td>
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<tr>
<td>One or both parents abused drugs or alcohol</td>
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<tr>
<td>We were supposed to keep our opinions to ourselves</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents put children in the middle of arguments</td>
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<tr>
<td>We were expected to be perfect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication was / is difficult or strained</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rarely (or Never)</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
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<tr>
<td>There was physical violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>We harbored resentment towards each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>One or both parents were workaholics</td>
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<tr>
<td>There was trauma in our household</td>
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<tr>
<td>We were forced to keep secrets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children were forced to take sides between parents</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotions were tense</td>
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</table>

Take note of the all items marked “Sometimes” or “Frequently”. These are indicators of codependency or an increased likelihood of having codependent relationships.

“Normal” family life can be an elusive term. Until we gain exposure to circumstances outside our own family, we assume ours is “normal”. If you’re struggling to understand how your answers compare to a normal healthy family dynamic, read on.

**Healthy Family Dynamics**

**My Family Communicated And Listened To Each Other**
- Both parents shared feeling freely with each other
- Both parents shared in discipline and decision-making
- Family members listened and responded to each other
- We encouraged individual feelings and independent thinking
- We didn’t partake in hurtful talk
- We participated equally in family discussions
- We dealt with conflict immediately and did not let it linger

**My Family Affirmed And Supported Each Other**
- Both parents had good self-esteem
- Each family member encouraged the others
- My family didn’t pressure members to succeed or be perfect
- We had loyalty for each other in the face of opposition

**My Family Taught Respect For Others**
- Family members respected individual differences within the family
- Family members showed respect to those who chose different lifestyles
- We respected individual decisions
- We respected those outside the family
- We respected each others personal property
My Family Had A Sense Of Trust
- Both parents were able to trust each other
- We did not embarrass each other for our own amusement
- We apologized and forgave each other when trust was broken
- Both parents and children were trustworthy

My Family Had A Strong Sense Of “Family” and Traditions
- My family treasured our history, heritage and roots
- We gathered together with extended family for holidays
- We valued and respected members of all ages

My Family Respected Each Other’s Privacy
- Rules became more negotiable as we got older
- Sexuality was recognized, but it was never the basis for prejudice or favor
- Family members respected each other’s friends, confidence and alone time
- Parents helped children move toward independence

My Family Admitted To and Sought Help With Problems
- My family expected problems and realized they are a normal part of life
- We sought outside counsel when conflicts required extra help
Emotion Diary

It’s time to become aware of your emotions, especially if you tend to deny or suppress certain emotions. Get used to feeling fully, and objectively describing key emotions.

Exercise:

Each day for a week, record an emotion. Pick either or all of the following: 1) the strongest emotion of the day, 2) the longest lasting emotion of the day, 3) the most painful or troubling emotion of the day. Objectively analyze that emotion and describe it. Record on additional paper if necessary or you may use your phone.

Date _____________ Emotion _____________________

What Caused It? __________________________________________________

Describe It In Detail: _______________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Date _____________ Emotion _____________________

What Caused It? _________________________________

Describe It In Detail: _______________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________
How Old Are You On The Inside?

Sometimes we get “stuck” at a certain age. In Episode 2 of the Codependency No More Podcast, Jennifer Beall explains this concept, and often we need to revisit and heal our “inner child” (explained in Episode 4 by Dr. Nicholas Jenner). Getting stuck can lead to more and more interpersonal problems the older you get.

Exercise:

Think about yourself and how you tend to respond to intense emotional situations involving you and other people. Which of following do you identify with most?

**Emotional Infant**
- I look for others to take care of me
- I have great difficulty entering into the world of others
- I need instant gratification
- Other people are there to help me meet my own needs

**Emotional Children**
- I’m content and happy as long as I have what I want
- I unravel quickly from stress, disappointment and trials
- I tend to take things personally
- I get hurt easily
- I complain, withdraw, manipulate, take revenge or become sarcastic when I don’t get my way
- It’s hard for me to discuss my needs and wants in a calm, mature and loving way

**Emotional Adolescents**
- I tend to be defensive
- I’m threatened and alarmed by criticism
- I keep score of what I give so I can ask for something in return
- I deal with conflict poorly, often blaming, appeasing, going to a third party, pouting, or ignoring the issue entirely
- I’m preoccupied with myself
- It’s hard for me to truly listen to someone else’s pain, needs, or disappointment
- I can be critical and judgmental
Emotional Adult

- I can clearly, directly and honestly ask for what I need or want
- I recognize, manage and take responsibility for my own feelings
- I can state my own beliefs and values under stress without becoming adversarial
- I respect others without having to change them
- I give others room to make mistakes without criticizing
- I appreciate people for who they are and not what they can do for me
- I can accurately assess my own limits, strengths, and weaknesses and freely discuss them with others
- I’m deeply in tune with my own emotional world and can enter into the feelings, needs, and concerns of others without losing myself
- I have the capacity to resolve conflict maturely and negotiate solutions that consider the perspectives of others

If you identify most with anything other than the Emotional Adult, then you may need to explore your inner child. Think back to the time frame of your life you identify with most, and consider any traumas or extremely emotional periods you experienced within that time frame. If you could go back to that same time period, what would you tell that younger version of yourself that you needed to hear at the time? Or, what bottled up emotion was left unexpressed at that time?
What’s Your Role In The Family?

One approach to self-discovery involves identifying your role in the family. It’s been proposed that there are six roles that codependents and their family members tend to play. By discovering the role with which you identify, you can eventually stop “feeding” your negative behavior patterns.

Exercise:

Read the characteristics under each of the roles below. Put the initials of the member of your family whom that characteristic describes. If it describes no one, leave it blank.

The Addict

_____ The entire family life revolves around this person.
_____ Each codependent role has been taken on in order to “make sense” of, and handle, the dysfunction in the everyday life of the family.

The Hero

_____ Often the oldest child.
_____ Devotes time and attention to making the family look “normal” and without problems.
_____ By overachieving and being successful in school, work or social activities, feels he or she can mask or make up for the dysfunctional home life.
_____ Seen by others as kind, helpful and positive. But not inside...
_____ Often feels isolated inside, and unable to express his or her true feelings.
_____ May have difficulty with intimate relationship later in life, and may suffer from illness related to stress.
_____ Often a workaholic as an adult.

The Scapegoat

_____ Often the second born.
_____ Frequently seems defiant, hostile or angry.
_____ Perpetually in trouble at school, work or in social situations.
_____ General negative behavior turns the focus away from the addict or alcoholic in the family.
_____ May react to the attention that The Hero child receives.
Often turns to high-risk behaviors as a way to express inner feelings of emptiness.
May experiment with drugs or alcohol, and may become sexually active at an early age or get into frequent fights.
Can be very clever, a leader in his or her own peer groups.
Often the groups that he or she chooses to associate with are gangs or other groups that do not present healthy relationships.

The Mascot

Often the youngest child in the family.
The court jester, trying to get everyone to laugh.
Unconsciously use humor to improve the atmosphere in the dysfunctional household, as well as turn the focus away from the addict or alcoholic.
The rest of the family may actually try to protect this person from the severity of addiction, and whatever other problems exist within the family.
A negative consequence is that this person may run away from problems, even as an adult, or continue to use humor to focus away from problems.
Becomes anxious or depressed when things aren’t in constant motion.
This hyperactivity makes it hard for them to concentrate very long on any one particular thing, and this can make school or work difficult.
Sometimes he or she turns to drugs or alcohol to help them “slow down” or handle anxiety.

The Lost Child

He or she disappears, becomes a loner and / or is very shy.
Feels like a stranger or outsider, not only in social situations, but also within the family.
Often feels ignored, like he or she doesn’t matter.
His or her way of handling The Addict is to draw away from interaction with family members.
Often has a rich “inner life”, but because of the lack of interaction, he or she doesn’t have a chance to develop important social and communication skills.
Avoids trouble, even when he or she truly needs something.
Sometimes develops physical problems, such as asthma or obesity, in order to gain attention, never realizing what he or she is doing.
May never marry or even have an intimate relationship.
The Care-Taker

Another descriptive role for this person is “enabler”.
Feels like he or she has to keep the family going.
Constantly takes on The Addict’s problems and responsibilities.
Often frustrated about needing to take on the responsibilities of others, but never sees that he or she may actually be able to help The Addict by choosing not to help.
The martyr of the family, and often supports not only the addictive behavior of The Addict, but also the codependent roles that everyone else is playing.

Adapted from the Codependent Relationships and Family Roles at www.recoveredfamily.com
“Do The Opposite”
Method For Dealing With Triggers

One way to deal with triggers and painful emotions is to firmly plant yourself in discomfort by doing what feels LEAST natural to you in that moment – the opposite of what you feel like doing. You can change your emotion by changing your action.

FEAR

- Do what you are afraid of doing.
- Approach events, places, tasks, activities, people you are afraid of.
- Do things to give yourself a sense of control and mastery.
- When overwhelmed, make a list of small steps or tasks you can do. Do the first thing on the list.

GUilt OR SHAME

- Repair the transgression.
  - Say you’re sorry; apologize.
  - Make things better; do something nice for the person you offended (or for someone else if that is not possible).
- Commit to avoiding that mistake in the future.
- Accept the consequences gracefully.
- Then, let it go.

SADNESS OR DEPRESSION

- Do things that make you feel competent and self-confident.

ANGER

- Gently avoid the person you’re angry with rather than attacking. (Avoid thinking about him or her rather than ruminating.)
- Do something nice rather than mean or attacking.
- Imagine sympathy and empathy for the other person rather than blame.
**Observing & Describing Triggers**

Select a current or recent triggering moment and fill out as much of this sheet as you can. If the prompting event for the emotion you’re working on is another emotion that occurred first (for example, feeling afraid prompted getting angry at yourself), then fill out a second sheet for that first emotion. Print out or copy as many sheets as you need to describe all of your triggers.

Emotion Name: ____________________________  Intensity: (0-100) _____

Prompting Event (For my trigger: who, what, when, where? What started it?)

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Interpretations (Beliefs, assumptions, appraisals of the situation. How did I “take it”?)

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Body Changes and Sensing (What am I feeling in my body?)

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Body Language (What is my facial expression? Posture? Gestures?) What else do I notice about my physical presence?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Action Urges (What do I feel like doing? What do I want to say?)

_________________________________________________________________
What I Said Or Did (In the situation – Be specific.)

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

What's The After Effect (What effect did the emotion have on me; my state of mind, other emotions, behavior, thoughts, memory, body, etc.)?

_________________________________________________________________
Retreat, Rethink, Respond

A beginner’s tactic for dealing with triggers, “Retreat, Rethink, Respond” will allow you to process through your triggers with less pressure, and increase your chance of short-circuiting a Negative Behavior Pattern.

Exercise:

Whenever you experience a trigger, take the following steps:

Step 1 – Retreat

- Remove yourself from the situation completely. You could excuse yourself for as long as you need. It could be 5 minutes, or an entire day if needed.

Step 2 – Rethink

- Strip the situation down to just the facts, analyze, and plan an appropriate response. Remove your judgments and emotions completely until you can objectively evaluate the situation.

Step – Respond

- Re-enter the situation and respond accordingly. You could even prepare your response in writing to help you stick to the facts and get your point across. If you find yourself triggered again in the heat of the moment, you may need to retreat again if possible.

The main point of this tactic is that it’s okay to give yourself time to react to a trigger. In fact, at first it’s encouraged to stop your normal emotional responses in their tracks when you recognize triggers.
Name Your Treasures

A crucial step to enforcing your personal boundaries is knowing exactly what you’re protecting. So ask yourself these three questions:

1. What exactly do I want to protect? (Is it your time, money, emotions, body, possessions, dignity, health and well-being?) Name all the things you want to protect below:

__________________  ____________________  __________________
__________________  ____________________  __________________
__________________  ____________________  __________________
__________________  ____________________  __________________
__________________  ____________________  __________________

2. Now pick your top treasures, and describe how you want them treated:

Treasure 1: _________ should be treated _________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

Treasure 2: _________ should be treated _________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

Treasure 3: _________ should be treated _________________
______________________________________________________
3. Now, for each treasure, what will YOU do to protect it?

Treasure 1: __________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

Treasure 2: __________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

Treasure 3: __________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

For each treasure, take a moment and envision the “usual” circumstance that happens when your treasure is abused. However, replace the usual outcome with the new outcome you would like instead. Spend 2 or 3 minutes for each treasure. The next time these circumstances happen, practice treating your treasures the way you envisioned.

Hint: here are some times when you may want to practice. Be assertive when:

- You are tired of saying “yes” when inside you want so badly to say “no”.
- You are being hurt or disrespected by others.
- You are tired of someone else driving you crazy.
- The pain of living without someone is less than the pain of living with someone.
- You stop doing what others want you to do and start doing what you want to do.
Cultivate Your Support Network

As you progress toward long-term recovery, it will be vitally important that you have a strong support network. Research shows that those in recovery are much more likely to “stay the course” when their social networks promote their recovery.

**Exercise:**

For starters, divide your friends and acquaintances into two camps.

**Commiserators**

These are the people who reinforce your complaints, gripes and negative views no matter what. They are not objective. They will validate anything you wish. We have a tendency to go to these people when we feel beat up and we just need to vent without being challenged. It’s okay to vent at times, but it can be dangerous to associate with these people in moments of real weakness when you really need objectivity.

Who are the Commiserators in your life? List them below.

________________________________________  __________________________________

________________________________________  __________________________________

________________________________________  __________________________________

________________________________________  __________________________________

________________________________________  __________________________________

________________________________________  __________________________________
Accountability Partners

These are the people in which you can put your full trust. They are “safe”; you can tell them anything without feeling judged, and know that they will keep it in confidence. True Accountability Partners will be objective, and kindly challenge you when your thoughts and conclusions need to be challenged. They will mirror your statements back to you so that you can re-evaluate your thinking if necessary. Out of care and love for you, they will hold you accountable to the standards and progress you’re seeking, even when it’s difficult.

Who are the Accountability Partners in your life? List them below.

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

Who are some other “safe” people in your life? These people may not be close to you right now, but you trust them, and you see them as people with whom you could cultivate friendships as you transition to a healthier version of YOU.

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

________________________________________  ____________________________________________

________________________________________  ____________________________________________
Now that you’ve listed your Commiserators, Accountability Partners and other “safe” people in your life, take some proactive measures to start trimming the weeds and sewing new seeds. Some actions you could take right now include:

1. Deleting from your phone the numbers of your Commiserators so that you won’t be tempted to commiserate with them when you’re at low points.
2. Contacting two or three of your Accountability Partners to let them know that you’re serious about making some changes in your life. Tell them that you’ve taken a course on building better relational boundaries, and that you’d like to connect over coffee to tell them about it, that you appreciate their friendship and would love to see if they could help you stay accountable.
3. Making a call, sending an email or text to that group of friends that tend to bring you down, to let them know you can’t make it to hang out this week.
4. Contacting a person on your “safe” list to do something fun this weekend. Go to brunch, have a dinner party and invite them over, go shopping together, ask them to be your exercise partner.
5. Blocking the Facebook posts of all of your Commiserators from showing on your news feed.
6. Envisioning your new life absent of Commiserators and abundant with healthy friends and Accountability Partners as you consistently strive towards a better version of you.