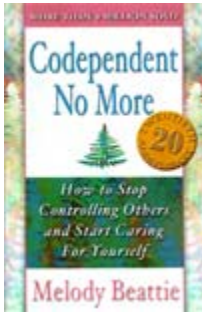


## After 20 years, 'Codependent No More' still going strong



Except for the gold seal on the cover that announces its 20th anniversary, Melody Beattie fans will notice no difference in the recent edition of her much-loved book, "Codependent No More." That is no accident.

"I've seen many a person at book signings put their arms around Melody and weep, telling her, 'You saved my life.' People often buy three books at a time to give away. They'd have a fit if we changed it," said Rebecca Post, editorial director at Hazelden, publisher of the book.

Post said there is still a "rawness" to "[Codependent No More](#)" that contributes to its tremendous staying power. It has sold four million copies to date, and it made the *New York Times* bestseller list in 1986 and stayed there for three years. "Since the book was first released, a whole new generation of people is now struggling with the issues Melody addresses," said Post. "It's a reminder that this book is timeless."

"I thought the book would sell maybe 900 copies, so when I felt afraid to speak out about what I had to say, I consoled myself by saying, 'I might as well say what I think. Only 900 people are going to read it anyway,'" said Beattie.

On the surface, the word "codependent" may seem positive. After all, being sensitive to another's feelings and caring for others are qualities we admire and try to embrace ourselves. But taken to extreme, these behaviors become harmful. Beattie says that codependents are people who become so obsessed with other people's feelings and behaviors that they lose sight of what they themselves are feeling or how they themselves are acting. Giving up this illusion of control is an integral step in achieving a healthy balance in relationships.

When Beattie wrote "Codependent No More," she was the mother of two children, a recovering chemically dependent person herself, and recently separated from an active alcoholic. "Writing the book helped her look at her own life more clearly," said Post. "She realized she just couldn't fake it anymore. She was already in the fold of Al-Anon, so she could show readers how to live the Al-Anon program and how it really does work."

"There were many books out there about how to help an addict or alcoholic," said Beattie. "But nobody was talking about how an addict impacts the lives of the people around him or her, and how crazy you can become when you love someone who is addicted. Even though I was sober, I didn't know how crazy I could get until it happened to me." She followed her convictions, marched to the Welfare Department to ask for financial help, and then retreated to her laundry room to crank out her now-famous book.

"Codependent No More" is a primer for people of all ages and experiences. It is simply written, and includes instructive life stories, Beattie's personal reflections, exercises, self-tests, and a wealth of information on how to identify and recover from codependency.

Melody Beattie has millions of loyal fans, because they know that she gets it. Since the publication of her blockbuster, she has demonstrated over and over again that she knows recovery is a journey, not a destination, and that she and the other travelers on the path of recovery are far from perfect. It is her lack of pretense and her wealth of intuitive wisdom that endears her to long-time fans and new-found friends alike.

"I hope nobody thinks that I mean don't be giving, loving or nurturing, because that's being

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codependent," she said. "And I hope people don't interpret the book to mean that I'm calling people sick or that the years spent behaving codependently is wasted time.

"Being loving, giving and nurturing are the keys to healthy living. The secret is knowing when, how much, and to whom we want to give. True recovery is trusting ourselves, following our heart, not a book of rules. And no part of our lives is wasted time. It's a magical journey, and each step of the way, life is teaching us what to learn. Codependents aren't sick. We just needed--and sometimes still need--a little help remembering to love, trust and nurture ourselves."

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Alive & Free is a health column that provides information to help prevent substance abuse problems and address such problems. It is created by Hazelden, a nonprofit agency based in Center City, Minn., that offers a wide range of information and services on addiction. For more resources, [email](#) or call Hazelden at 800-257-7810 (outside the US 651-213-4200).