



On Rejection  
Sensitive  
Dysphoria,  
Codependency,  
& Identity

# Stages of Losing Contact with the Core Self

## Early Relational Trauma

1

Needs are ignored, punished, or shamed. Authentic expression feels pointless or even dangerous.

As authentic attempts to meet needs fail, the rejections begin to wall off access to the Core Self.

## Rejections Accumulate

2

## Masks Form

3

Person survives by experimenting with various masks as reactions to volatile or unresponsive people.

Masks shield Core Self from abuse, scorn, & neglect, but the person becomes a mirror of others.

## Core Self Is Further Distanced

4

## Codependency

5

Only the reactive masks have access to others, so a person's existence is defined by the behavior, moods, & acceptance of others.

# Formation of Identity Masks

Identity masks are worn to shape the behavior of others. Even if an identity is true to the Core Self, masks make a person seem more or less:



POPULAR	😊	FUN	SMART	😊	EDUCATED
		DISABLED	OPPRESSED		DEDICATED
SOCIAL	☹	NEUROCLASTIC	ANGRY	MAGICAL	
	RELIGIOUS	FASHIONABLE	♡		NORMAL
STABLE		MATURE	POLITICAL	☹	RESPONSIBLE
	😊	RICH		INDEPENDENT	☹
BRAVE		SEDUCTIVE		MASCULINE	
♡	QUALIFIED		VULNERABLE		SKILLED



# Disconnection from our Core Self

Eventually, we lose contact with our Core Self so that no identity feels real. Identities become more like outfits to put on & wear in different settings the same way we change clothes.

We mask as someone new in every situation & context

Who we are in the moment depends on the moods & behaviors of people around us

We do not realize that others are not also wearing identities like clothing

We have learned that boundaries get us in trouble, so we don't set them

We are then shocked & feel rejected when others set boundaries

We think people who know themselves are performing & see boundaries as rude

# Identities as masks are Identity Cages



# Markers of Codependency

Obsessive about  
others' & own  
behavior

Sees own &  
others' worth as  
conditional

Tries hard  
to be needed &  
to fix others because  
love feels like a  
reward for good  
behavior

Feels empathic  
because identity  
masks rely on  
others' emotions

Falls in love quickly but  
also can immediately  
hate someone for  
minor offenses

Needs a lot of  
reassurance, attention,  
& validation from  
others to feel worthy

# Relationships & Codependency



## Dangerous Relationships

Often exploited by people who see them as an easy target because they are afraid to set boundaries or say "no"



## Martyrdom and Resentment

Taking a passive role of servitude & giving too much, then feeling like a martyr when others do not reciprocate



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## Other-directed life

Goals, feelings, & desires are responses to others & not reflections of own identity or needs



## Chaos & drama

Criticizes & blames self or others for minor problems, harshly judges self & others, & manipulates to make self the victim



# Reconnecting to the CORE SELF

The Core Self is not lost, just disconnected. It is the internal voice asking, "Who am I?" and the source of grief beneath the masks. Try to focus on that voice and connecting with your Core Self..

## LOCATING THE CORE SELF 01

Identity is the whole tree-- the roots, trunk, leaves, and fruit. Masks are the parasitic vines of unhealthy relationships and trauma. Begin to remove the vines one at a time when it's safe to do so.

## 02 DROPPING THE MASKS

## LEARN TO SET BOUNDARIES 04

Boundaries are more effective than masks at protecting the Core Self and prevent you from focusing externally to depend on others to meet your needs and maintain your autonomy.

## LOSING VALUE JUDGEMENTS 03

Dissociating from the Core Self means a person sees behavior as identity, then strives to be perfect and push others to never make mistakes. You are not your behavior.



# Claiming your **IDENTITY**

Ask yourself,  
"Am I doing this  
because I want to  
do it, or because I  
am afraid of  
rejection?"

Know that you  
do not have to  
accept harm for  
the comfort of  
others.

No one tells  
you who you are.  
You tell them who  
you are. Who you  
are does not  
depend on  
others.

Take small  
risks, gradually,  
that allow you to  
be who you are &  
build the courage  
to be disliked.

Work on  
discovering your  
Core Self without  
an audience until  
you know what  
you love & who  
you are.

# Co-dependence

I never develop my own passions or refine my skills because I am living for others

I am jealous & resentful of other people's joy, success, & material possessions

I do not make decisions without people-pleasing & say "yes" when I want to say "no"

I cannot make mistakes because other people will reject, hurt, & abandon me

I become like the people around me & agree with them to fit in & avoid conflict

I manage relationships by controlling or submitting, giving too much or taking too much

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# Interdependence

I take the time I need to discover my passions & develop my skills to be fulfilling to me

I do not need to win or be centered in order to find value in experiences

I set boundaries & decline to participate if something feels wrong to me

Mistakes are a healthy part of growth & an opportunity to learn & evolve

I do not lose my values or reduce myself to be accepted & don't need others to approve

I give & receive in mutual ways that benefit both me & the people in my life