



25<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
EDITION

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**5 MILLION**  
COPIES SOLD!

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How to Stop Controlling Others  
and Start Caring for Yourself

MELODY  
BEATTIE





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### **Editor's Note**

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*It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves, and it is not possible to find it elsewhere.*

—AGNES REPPLIER,  
*The Treasure Chest*





*For helping make this book possible, I thank:*

*God, my mother, David, my children, Scott Egleston, Sharon George, Joanne Marcuson, and all the codependent people who have learned from me and allowed me to learn from them.*

**THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ME.**



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## A TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE FROM MELODY BEATTIE

Since I wrote this book, I've been to the top of the mountain, walked through the dark tunnel of my son's death, reached the Light at the end of the tunnel, and given others hope when I got there. I've also put on as many years as this book has. It still carries the same message, one I stand behind and often need to remember myself.

I know when to say no and when to say yes. I take responsibility for my choices. The victim? She went somewhere else. The only one who can truly victimize me is myself, and 99 percent of the time I choose to do that no more. But I need to continue to remember the key principles: boundaries, letting go, forgiveness after feeling my feelings—not before, self-expression, loving others but loving myself, too.

There have been cycles in how this book's messages have been received and applied. For a while, some people grew tired of working on themselves. Medications have helped many people deal with very real symptoms of depression and anxiety—but for others, those same medications can conveniently mask the discomfort that could have pushed them to get help. Even cell phones can mask the pain behind obsessions: people don't have to stay home and become uncomfortable waiting for him or her to call—they can bring their phone and their obsessions with them and act them out anywhere, anytime. We've learned to become therapeutically correct and cover our insecurity with all the right lingo. But many of us have started to see how severe the consequences of these behaviors could be. That cycle is ending.

It's clear now that codependency isn't a fad, as some people once claimed. It's come full circle. As family illnesses, from alcoholism to Alzheimer's disease, continue to become openly discussed by more

people, so does the number of people seeking help for codependency increase. This little book still has more work to do.

Don't give up hope. It took many of us twenty years or more to acquire these protective behaviors we umbrella with the word *codependency*. It may take as much time as that to let go of them. I don't know why Life chose me to be the messenger for this, but I'm grateful for the work I've been given to do. Thanks for letting me be of service.

Happy twenty-fifth birthday, *Codependent No More*.

With love and gratitude,  
Melody Beattie

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE 2001 FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

*Taking care of myself is a big job.  
No wonder I avoided it for so long.*

—ANONYMOUS

The year was 1986. Pioneers such as Janet Geringer Woititz, Robert Subby, and Earnie Larsen were trying to convince people that the non-drinking person in a relationship with an alcoholic got just as out of control, was in just as much pain, and needed just as much healing as the alcoholic.

Al-Anon groups across the country and the world were quietly trying to bring hope and healing to this same group of people: the codependents.

The message carried by all the pioneers of codependency recovery was the same: Not only can we lovingly detach from other people and take care of ourselves, it is our primary responsibility in life to do that.

To a world that believed in control and victimization, this message was revolutionary. So was the word *codependency*.

My computer refused to recognize *codependency* as a legitimate word as I tapped out the manuscript that was yet to be entitled *Codependent No More*.

Addictions and recovery sections did not yet exist in bookstores.

Codependents were having a difficult time finding the help and healing they needed.

Ground was just being broken.

Now it's 2001.

The World Health Organization reports an increase in illicit drug use. The National Association for Children of Alcoholics reports that about 43 percent of the U.S. population has been exposed to alcoholism in their families. And about one out of every eight

American adult drinkers consumes alcohol problematically or alcoholically.

These figures don't include the number of families affected by physical or mental illness, sexual addiction, abuse, neglect, and the myriad of problems that can lead people to cope by behaving codependently, giving themselves and their loved ones less of a chance for living a full life.

My laptop computer now recognizes and offers a suggested spelling for the word *codependency*. The world recognizes it, too. The word, or at least the symptoms and the treatment, appears regularly in novels, television shows, movies, and normal conversations between ordinary people. The addictions and recovery section at the bookstore is overflowing.

The purpose of this preface is simple: I want to say thank you. First, I want to thank the numerous experts and authors who brought groundbreaking information to people who were still suffering. These individuals include Janet Geringer Woititz, Earnie Larsen, Sandra Smalley, Pia Melody, Robert Subby, Brenda Schaeffer, Gayle Rosellini, Mark Worden, Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse, Terence Gorski, Terry Kellog, Patrick Carnes, John Bradshaw, Rokelle Lerner, Anne Wilson Schaefer, Robin Norwood, and Charles Whitfield.

I also want to thank organizations such as Al-Anon and Codependents Anonymous, and publishers such as Hazelden, that bring their healing philosophies and words to millions of people.

I want to thank each person who has the courage to push through and past the set of coping behaviors we've come to label as codependency—who learn what it means to take care of themselves.

“Nobody taught me how to take care of myself,” a fifty-year-old woman told me recently. “I didn't have enough money to go to therapy, but I had enough to buy a book.”

*Codependent No More* has had several different jackets since Hazelden originally published it in 1986. But many people, including me, remember with fondness that original book with a bright yellow cover and black lettering.

Happy fifteenth birthday, *Codependent No More*.

And thanks to all of you for naming that pain and making an extraordinary miracle an ordinary one.



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE 1992 EDITION

Back in the early eighties, when I first envisioned writing a book about codependency—when I was desperately struggling to sort through my own pain—I vowed that if I ever figured out what happened to me and what I needed to do to get better, I'd write a book about it. That book, I decided, would be warm, gentle, nonjudgmental, nontechnical.

It would be kind. Because that's what I needed—information and kindness. I needed help with my healing process from my codependency issues.

About five years later, I sat down to write that book. Just separated from my husband of ten years, I went on welfare for four months, to help me support myself and my two children, Nichole and Shane, while I wrote *Codependent No More*.

When I wondered how I, a nonexpert, could write a book like that, I took comfort by telling myself that it was okay to say what I thought because only a few people would read it anyway. I also spent a great deal of time on the introduction, striving not only to introduce the book, but to introduce the concept of *codependency*—the word—to a world that, for the most part, had not heard about it.

Now, another five years later, I've been asked to write an anniversary preface to a book that has sold over two million copies.

"What do I put in it?" I asked my editor and friend, Rebecca Post, from Hazelden.

"Tell about the changes that have happened—to women, to people in our country, to *you*, since you wrote that book," she suggested.

"Hmmm," I pondered. "What changes have happened besides the Persian Gulf War, the breakdown of communism in the Soviet Union, and the Hill-Thomas hearings?"