

**Do Some Autism
Awareness
Campaigns and
Therapies Foster
Codependency
and Unhealthy
Relationships?**

#RedInstead



Many Autism Orgs Encourage Relational Sabotage

Most autism organizations ran by non-autistic people encourage “dealing with” autism— not autistic people— by framing autism as a word to describe behaviors and traits that are inconvenient or unpopular.

They use the most gentle language to encourage parents and professionals to embrace harmful codependency that will damage relationships and harm family dynamics.

Traits of codependent relationships versus healthy relationships

Codependent

- One person is a martyr who always sacrifices
- Obsession with other people's behavior, appearance, or reputation
- Thrives on boundary violations
- Extremely critical
- Controls others

Healthy

- Shared responsibilities and mutual investment
- Not seeing the other person as an extension of the self
- Encourages and respects personal boundaries
- Embraces authenticity even if "weird"
- Values autonomy

Traits of codependent relationships versus healthy relationships

Codependent

- Encourages perfectionism
- Conditional interactions (first, then; reward-and-consequence driven)
- Increases control and oversight to force change
- Keeps data and receipts on behavior
- Entangled identity— others' achievements and challenges become their property

Healthy

- Encourages personal satisfaction
- Gives according to the occasion, not as a way to control
- Sets boundaries and does work on self
- Lives in the moment
- Has an identity separate from others' challenges or successes

Traits of codependent relationships versus healthy relationships

Codependent

- Needs external validation
- Demands compliance; dislikes being told “no”
- Makes others responsible for their feelings
- Encourages performative “righteousness”
- Manipulates to control behaviors
- Cannot accept being wrong or imperfect

Healthy

- Validation from results and personal satisfaction
- Values consent and encourages honesty
- Manages own feelings by setting boundaries
- Encourages authenticity and accountability
- Asks for boundaries and communicates honestly
- Takes accountability and accepts imperfection

**Giving too much,
difficulty
accepting
reciprocity**

**Does not set
boundaries;
easily taken
advantage of**

**People-
pleasing;
automatic
compliance**

Signs of
CODEPENDENCY

**Cannot cope
with being
imperfect**

**Oversharing or
shutting down**

**Fear of speaking
the truth**

The Autistic Neurotype is more vulnerable to toxic codependency

Because of our differences, we are more likely to be targeted by people who focus on behavior and are oriented to value normalcy and the status quo.

Academia and high profile autism orgs have normalized teaching harmful codependency to autistic kids “for their own good.”

This will damage the self-worth and mental health of autistic people who need safety to get to know themselves and room to advocate for their needs.

If emotional wellness, self-knowledge, and autonomy are not the focus, that should be a red flag.

Exploitation of parents and kids

If an org or therapy provider encourages unhealthy codependency, they are hurting both parents and children and manipulating parents by appealing to their trauma (especially generational trauma).

If you have been taught what to say to parents to reassure them that it's in a child's best interest to be coerced, to have their emotional boundaries and consent ignored, to control them, to dismiss their emotions or ignore them, to take data and micromanage behaviors— then you were conditioned to normalize codependency.

If you need to normalize codependency because your therapy depends on relational abuse to get results, then your approach is going to set your clients up for a world of pain.

@NeuroClastic



Codependency increases vulnerability to: predators, exploitation, automatic compliance, self-doubt, relational abuse, addiction, depression, social anxiety, unstable relationships, poor body awareness, rejection sensitivity, and emotional instability. Autistic people deserve better than to have toxicity normalized as a “gold standard” of care.



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