



IT'S TIME TO STOP WISHING FOR A BETTER PAST

Straight Outta CoDA:

Experiencing fear and shame as children: (CoDA third edition page 19)

“As children, our identity as well as our relationships with our higher Power, ourselves and others were damaged *each time* we were abused or neglected. We felt shame and naturally feared its reoccurrence, yet we allowed our sense of self and well-being to be shaped by those who abused and neglected us. As children, **WE HAD NO CHOICE**. We learned survival skills in order to cope. We controlled or avoided potentially volatile circumstances. We cast away our childhood, tried to become little adults or rebelled. Many of us didn't understand our actions because they were often instinctive. When we felt overwhelmed or stressed out, we relied on what we knew best to survive”.

If we could have left those skills behind us we would have, but these skills were all we knew- what else *could* we use? Don't you wish you could go back and do it all over again, knowing what you know now?

How are you going to alter the facts of your past-- by wishing?

WISHING

It is a useless waste time for me to keep wishing I had a different upbringing. *All the wishing I can do will not alter anything that has already happened.*

MY PAST WILL NOT CHANGE.

ACCEPTANCE

Accepting something doesn't mean it's acceptable. Acceptance does not equal "agreement" or "approval". But ultimately, what else is there but acceptance?

MY PAST WILL NOT CHANGE.

On the worksheet:

Column one: Remember an event that left a mark on you.

Column two: How did you feel when it occurred?

Column three: What did you take away from that event?

Column four: Specifically, what pattern did you use to keep yourself safe?

Column five: After dropping that pattern, (illusory safeguard)- how would you handle this today?

All those childhood hurts are in my past, and **MY PAST WILL NOT CHANGE**. Neither the events that happened nor my reactions to those events will ever change. They are etched in stone. None of those things are happening today, so the only time they hurt us is when we think about it.

Here's what I know: If I'm not practicing **acceptance**; I'm practicing either: Control, Low Self Esteem, Denial, Compliance, or Avoidance- there are no exceptions. (Don't take my word for it- give this some thought).

So how do I apply my recovery to my relationships? (page 124 third edition) We know our past is just a set of facts that make up our story, and we can now use what we learned in the present to manage our daily lives, and to help other people.

As soon as you can, try to appreciate that your past is over now, but it had a purpose. Use it to learn what healthy relationships **DON'T** look like, this is your gift to yourself.

There's no need for wishing anymore- **you are free!**

Denial Patterns- Codependents often:

- have difficulty identifying what they are feeling.
- minimize, alter, or deny how they truly feel.
- perceive themselves as completely unselfish and dedicated to the well-being of others.
- lack empathy for the feelings and needs of others.
- label others with their negative traits.
- think they can take care of themselves without any help from others.
- mask pain in various ways such as anger, humor, or isolation.
- express negativity or aggression in indirect and passive ways.
- do not recognize the unavailability of those people to whom they are attracted.

Low Self-esteem Patterns- Codependents often:

- have difficulty making decisions.
- judge what they think, say, or do harshly, as never good enough.
- are embarrassed to receive recognition, praise, or gifts.
- value others' approval of their thinking, feelings, and behavior over their own.
- do not perceive themselves as lovable or worthwhile persons.
- seek recognition and praise to overcome feeling less than.
- have difficulty admitting a mistake.
- need to appear to be right in the eyes of others and may even lie to look good.
- are unable to identify or ask for what they need and want.
- perceive themselves as superior to others.
- look to others to provide their sense of safety.
- have difficulty getting started, meeting deadlines, and completing projects.

Compliance Patterns- Codependents often:

- are extremely loyal, remaining in harmful situations too long.
- compromise their own values and integrity to avoid rejection or anger.
- put aside their own interests in order to do what others want.
- are hypervigilant regarding the feelings of others and take on those feelings.
- are afraid to express their beliefs, opinions, feelings when they differ from those of others.
- accept sexual attention when they want love.
- make decisions without regard to the consequences.
- give up their truth to gain the approval of others or to avoid change.

Control Patterns-Codependents often:

- believe people are incapable of taking care of themselves.
- attempt to convince others what to think, do, or feel.
- freely offer advice and direction without being asked.
- become resentful when others decline their help or reject their advice.
- lavish gifts and favors on those they want to influence.
- use sexual attention to gain approval and acceptance.
- have to feel needed in order to have a relationship with others.
- demand that their needs be met by others.
- use charm and charisma to convince others of their capacity to be caring and compassionate.
- use blame and shame to exploit others emotionally.
- refuse to cooperate, compromise, or negotiate.
- adopt an attitude of indifference, helplessness, authority, or rage to manipulate outcomes.
- use recovery jargon in an attempt to control the behavior of others.
- pretend to agree with others to get what they want.

Avoidance Patterns-Codependents often:

- avoid emotional, physical, or sexual intimacy as a way to maintain distance.
- allow addictions to people, places, and things to distract them from achieving intimacy in relationships.
- use indirect or evasive communication to avoid conflict or confrontation.
- diminish their capacity to have healthy relationships by declining to use the tools of recovery.
- suppress their feelings or needs to avoid feeling vulnerable.
- pull people toward them, but when others get close, push them away.
- refuse to give up their self-will to avoid surrendering to a power greater than themselves.
- believe displays of emotion are a sign of weakness.
- withhold expressions of appreciation.

	#1 Here's what happened:	#2 I felt I was:	#3 What did I take away from this?	#4 Specifically-what pattern did I adopt?	#5 How would I react to the same exact situation today?
1)	Bill pretended he liked me-the whole school knew it was a joke	unlovable	I'm not good enough on my own merits- I'll have to try harder	Low Self Esteem: "do not perceive themselves as lovable or worthwhile persons"	Don't you already have a girlfriend Bill? (he did- she was in on the joke)
2)	Mom made me tell the truth about the bike, and I ruined Christmas	stupid- always wrong	I didn't gauge her mood correctly- I'll have to try harder	low self esteem: "look to others to provide their sense of safety" (in an empty cupboard)	Mom- are you sure you want me to say this out loud?
3)	Boss dressed me down for being late in front of the girl that's late everyday.	Less than- the boss clearly prefers the other girl to me.	Life is fair for everybody but me- I'll have to try harder.	Low self esteem: "have difficulty admitting a mistake". (I was late- it doesn't matter what the other girl does).	You're right- I'm late. I'll try not to let this happen again.
4)					
5)					
6)					
7)					
8)					
9)					
10)					