



A FREE THE SELF™ GUIDE

# RESTORING SELF-TRUST

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THE MISSING PIECE TO THRIVING BEYOND  
CODEPENDENCY

MARSHALL BURTCHER





# A Word From Marshall

**This guide is occasionally updated. Last update: 11/27/2021 @ 4:39pm**

**I would love to hear your experience of the guide, as it will help me improve it for you and others. Share your experience here: [Feedback](#)**

Welcome. I'm grateful for a bit of your time and your consent to offer some of my insight and approach into truly, deeply, ending codependency's influence in your daily life, relationships, and well-being.

Below I share a bit about my journey in resolving my codependency and what I needed to make that a reality. **Jump to page 6 if you're hungry to jump right into how I make that happen.**

You're here because you've gone through a profound series of repeating experiences with someone who you love or loved. You had given yourself to them, trusted them, and allowed them into your life. This person may be your parent, a sibling, a friend, or a significant other. That matters, because your relationship to them matters or mattered to you.

Yet, their behavior and actions towards you may have brought you massive pain, distress, and despair. You may feel crazy, foggy, and uncertain if what you've been through is even real. You may be thinking you're crazy, that you're the problem, or you did something that caused them to be this way.

This is normal.

Yes. Normal.

I see you. I believe you.

Why?

Because I went through this myself with my own parents and a religious culture I grew up in.



You may *feel* crazy, but you are *not* crazy. What you've been through *is* crazy.

You may feel like the cause, the problem, and the burden. What you feel, though, actually tells the story of what you've *been through*. Those feelings of shame, guilt and fear are normal responses to being lied to, gas-lit, attacked, put down, name-called, blamed, controlled, and discarded repeatedly – things you never earned and never deserved.

Put in other words, you feel what you do because of what you've experienced. That is one of the prime signals of reality for you. You wouldn't be feeling this way, much less reading this guide, had you not gone through something deeply altering, painful, and shattering.

Secondly, their behaviors, their abuse, their antics have pushed you to give up yourself, your needs, your wants, even your sanity and safety. And yet you are here seeking a way to get free, find relief, and maybe even some happiness. Am I on target here?

This is utterly courageous. It speaks to a part of you that hopes in a different future for yourself. That hope is valid.

If you're like me, I was very skeptical about such promises and claims – especially from people who were running companies or promoting themselves (like I am currently).

I welcome that skepticism. Its OK to feel that way if you do. You have very valid, real reasons for feeling that way and thinking that way. Perhaps you're like one of my students who had been to 22+ counselors seeking a way out of the pain, confusion, shame, and guilt with no success. Or you're like myself: you've read hundreds of self-help books, watched countless hours of YouTube videos, hours of therapy and even healings, and nothing changes.

Here's what I learned in my own healing: I wasn't the problem. My efforts were not the problem.

The same applies to you. You are not the problem. Your efforts are not the problem.

What is the problem?



It is 3 things:

- The wrong knowledge and focus
- The wrong practices and tools
- The wrong supports

This showed up as therapy, life-coaching, and self-help trying to get me to *behave* differently.

Here are some of my favorite efforts I was told to do (these sound familiar?):

- Stop people-pleasing and love yourself!
- Get some boundaries!
- Know what you want!
- Love yourself!
- Let go of the past!

It wasn't till I was 5 years into efforting myself to death (I started in August 2007 and my shift happened in February, 2012) I found what was *actually* necessary.

What was it?

I had to *feel* differently about *me* before I would sincerely *behave differently toward me and others*. This meant I had to stop trying to model the behaviors (fake it till I made it) and had to start really understanding myself, shifting how I related to myself, and then parent myself into those new behaviors.

To make this happen, I needed:

- The Right Knowledge
- The Right Practices
- The Right Support

This guide is your first step into discovering the right knowledge, right practices, and right support for ending codependency and beginning care, well-being, and happiness in your daily life.



Thank you for that chance to contribute to your healing and liberation. You can find additional support from me here:

- My Website: [Free The Self](#)
- [My Facebook Page](#)
- [The Thriving Beyond Codependency Community](#)
- [My YouTube Channel](#)
- [My Instagram](#)

To your well-being and happiness,

*Marshall Burtcher*



## First, You Need To Understand What Codependency Does For You

Most of us have been taught that codependency is either a disease, an identity, or a flaw in our character. We're "made" this way.

This is false.

Codependency is primarily one thing: A strategy.

It is a strategy that many have used to:

- Feel safe
- Feel connected
- Have a sense of purpose, value, or identity
- Get needs met to some degree
- Feel like they belong

What shifts in your thinking and body when you consider looking at your codependency this way?

For many, they feel lighter, more hopeful, and less shameful. Sometimes, though, other emotions will surface. Whatever shows up for you is OK, normal, and valid. There is no right answer here. There is only the lived experiences we all have and share.

Codependency emerged from a specific type of injury you experienced. Every person that deals with codependent habits (like people-pleasing, rescuing, being emotionally enmeshed with others, having no boundaries, feeling unreal, tolerating abuse and neglect, so forth) has experienced this same injury. Healing this injury heals codependency.

What is that injury?

It is the distrust you feel towards your experience, perceptions, feelings, wants, and needs. This happened through repeated attacks on your sense of legitimacy, often happening when you shared feelings, needs, wants, boundaries, a thought or desire, or asked for something. This made you start questioning, and eventually distrusting, your



natural *legitimacy*.

What is legitimacy?

It is the validity or realness of a thing. Basically, when something is legitimate, it is also seen as inherently real, valid, and genuine.

When a person's sense of legitimacy or reality is repeatedly attacked, they begin to question:

- If what they experienced was real
- If they can trust their own perceptions
- If their feelings are valid and "correct"
- If what they needed or wanted was valid, correct, or good
- If they can trust their own senses and awareness

This feels deeply threatening to the safety and survival of the person as their trust in their own senses and recall is being dismantled and attacked. This leads to the activation of the body's four primal defense responses: Fight, flight, fawn, or freeze. Let's look at each briefly:

- **Fight:** The fight response shows up when your brain believes it can defeat or neutralize a threat. This shows up as aggressive behaviors & assertive behaviors. The body experiences a high state of arousal and activation (commonly called Sympathetic response). This can show up as heart rates climbing, adrenaline pumping, you sweat, and you want to fight, yell, scream, and get physical sometimes. It can manifest as being very clear, direct, and assertive about a boundary, a need, a want, or being very persistent and driven towards a desire or goal
- **Flight:** The flight response shows up when your brain determines it can escape the threat rather than fight it. This shows up as a racing heart, trembling, pale or flushed skin, and a desire to withdraw, run, or hide from the threat (real or perceived).
- **Fawn:** The fawn response is better known as "the please-and-appease" response. This is where the brain determines it cannot fight or escape the threat, but it can appeal and please it so the threat doesn't harm the person. This is usually a temporary strategy, where it buys time for the brain to either escape or neutralize



the threat. This, though, is frequently not the case, especially for children of abusive, neglectful parents or persons involved in toxic, chaotic, and abusive relationships. When the person cannot escape or neutralize the threat, their fawn response develops into codependent habits.

- **Freeze:** The freeze response is the last option the brain has at its disposal. It chooses this option when it believes playing dead is the best option to survive an encounter. This shows up as feeling your breath stop, feeling frozen or paralyzed, numbing out, collapsing in on yourself, and feeling hopeless and powerless

These responses are chosen at the primal, limbic level of the brain without your involvement. You *discover* what the brain chose as the best survival strategy by how your body and brain respond to the threat (for example: when you feel triggered, this is you discovering your body's response to what you're experiencing).

Codependency is a result your brain created by choosing a combination of freeze and fawn responses to threats. This freeze-fawn combination became a loop in how you respond to others and reality, manifesting as:

- People-pleasing
- Numbness
- Lack of boundaries
- Feeling lost, empty, unreal
- Feeling unloved and unworthy
- Fixing and rescuing behaviors
- Emotional enmeshment
- Emotional avoidance
- Toleration of abuse and neglect
- Confusing love with pain

These habits are trying to accomplish three primary needs we all have as human beings. I call these three needs, "The Three Necessities". They are:

- Necessity One: Safety
- Necessity Two: Connection
- Necessity Three: Identity

Let's explore each a bit.





## The Three Necessities

### ***Necessity One: Safety***

Safety is our first and most primal and primary need. Safety allows us to rest, to explore, to discover. It allows difference, problems, and conflict to be understood and harmony, understanding, and connection to develop. Safety allows us to develop our sense of power, identity, and belonging in the world.

There are three types of safety we have:

- **Physical safety:** This includes having reliable shelter, food, water, as well as reliable social shelter, connection, and protection. Financial and personal capabilities are also aspects of this safety.
- **Emotional safety:** This involves feeling secure and safe having emotions, acknowledging the sensations we experience, sharing those feelings and sensations, receiving them from others, and contributing them to others. Needs, wants, and boundaries are respected and valued here.
- **Relational safety:** This is where we experience connection, intimacy, play, support, and companionship that feels safe and acts safe. We experience our needs, wants, feelings, and person being seen, loved, and valued. Boundaries are respected. Differences understood. Conflicts resolved in care and love. We feel safe being attached to others and relying on them, and them relying on us.

Without these 3 safeties, we cannot grow into who we are, we cannot nurture and be nurtured, and we cannot thrive.

### ***Necessity Two: Belonging and Connection***

Connection is the second primal need we have. Connection is a mental and emotional sense of belonging and presence with others. It promotes our safety and the development of our personal sense of Self. It is the means to fulfilling needs and wants and experiencing life.

Connection feels warm, open, inviting, and safe – unless the individuals on the other side of the connection are abusive, neglectful, unavailable, or otherwise transactional in how



they relate.

Human beings do not survive without connection with other human beings. A threat to this connection will quickly drive a person to compromise their well-being in order to survive if they are not well resourced with a variety of connections.

This is why children of abusive households struggle deeply to leave relationships. They've faced the often paralyzing fear of being isolated and discarded and know the dread it creates. This is where the "Better-than-nothing" fantasy is birthed into their reality.

Codependency attempts to create connection and maintain it by regulating and pleasing the other person so they'll feel secure in that connection (aka securely attached). This is how the Fawn Response mentioned above manifests itself in a person's behaviors.

Without reliable, safe connection, codependency will prevail.

### ***Necessity Three: Worth & Identity***

Safety and connection allow a person to discover and develop their personal sense of Self, or Identity. Identity is one's definition and conception of who they are to others, the world, and themselves. This includes how they interpret their body, their thoughts and feelings, their wants and needs, and their skills and impact in the world.

Abuse and neglect prime a person to distrust their value and conclude that they are not worth being loved as they are. This injury to one's sense of value motivates the please and performance aspects of codependency. This is where one learns to:

- Prove themselves worthy
- Earn love through pleasing and conforming
- To keep the boat steady (no conflict!)
- To fear difference and limitation
- To fixate on performance and outcome as a measure of worth (aka perfectionism)
- To depend on other people's judgments (approval and rejection) as the definition of their current worth
- To define themselves according to the standards and expectations that pleases others



This is ultimately how one loses themselves and finds themselves feeling lost, empty, and loathing their personal life.

## What If...

What if these three necessities can be fulfilled without codependent behaviors?

It is this question that led to me being in your life today. It's what got me exploring life *beyond* codependency. I asked myself many, many questions during this exploration. Questions like:

- What if I could feel safe and valued without pleasing them?
- What if my value and their rejection aren't connected?
- What if abusive behavior is never an acceptable response to someone or something?
- What if my needs aren't burdens?
- What if my worth wasn't actually conditional on my performance or how pleased someone was with me?
- What if conflict wasn't violent?
- What if I trusted myself a bit more?

That last question... "What If I trusted myself a bit more?"... it was the last piece in my healing.

My exploration of this question created a deep, crucial shift in my healing.

My personal work on feeling safer being myself, having boundaries, saying no, saying yes, feeling what I felt, needing what I needed – all that was working, yet it lacked a sense of certitude, grounding, and safety I hadn't been able to figure out.

Real self-trust changed that.

## Self-Trust

What is self-trust? My definition is this: "A strong confidence in the legitimacy of my being".



This type of self-trust includes a conviction in the validity and legitimacy:

- Of your emotions
- Of your needs
- Of your wants
- Of your perceptions
- Of your experiences
- Of your limitations and capacities
- Of your skills and talents
- Of your inherent value

This type of self-trust, in a literal sudden way, took all my growth and rooted it into a solid sense of reality. Instead of quietly questioning of I was right to feel, do or be what I was feeling, doing, or being, I experienced a definite certitude that what I was feeling, doing, and being were utterly legitimate and valid. My mind went quiet and my body rested.

It did this because self-trust is the original, natural ground we all develop from. It is your first, natural state to trust yourself.

Here's why I say this:

To be able to get your needs met, you had to trust in the legitimacy of your impulse to cry, to squeal, to wiggle, to crawl, to walk, to babble, and to eventually master words, actions, and impact on your world around you.

It was *self-trust* that made that happen.

What were you trusting exactly?

The very thing that abuse and neglect attacked: Your legitimacy.

In codependency, doubt and distrust in your legitimacy replaces self-trust and confidence, creating the codependent habits you've been surviving through.

Let's look at this visually:



## RESTORING SELF-TRUST

The Missing Piece To Thriving Beyond Codependency

BOUNDARIES, STRONG SELF OF SELF, ASKING AND RECEIVING, HEALTHY COMMUNICATION, RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS

INTERDEPENDENT RESULTS

CREATING ↑

SELF-TRUST

LEGITIMACY CHOSEN, NURTURED, AND FOLLOWED

GET FILTERED THROUGH ↑

THE 3 NECESSITIES

SAFETY · CONNECTION · IDENTITY

PEOPLE-PLEASING, AVOIDING CONFLICT, PERFECTIONISM, FIXING/REGULATING OTHERS, ENMESHMENT

CODEPENDENT RESULTS

CREATING ↑

SELF-DOUBT

ABUSE, NEGLECT, HARM TO SELF-TRUST & LEGITIMACY

GET FILTERED THROUGH ↑

THE 3 NECESSITIES

SAFETY · CONNECTION · IDENTITY

This shows that self-trust or self-doubt are the filters that govern what kinds of behaviors we end up doing in order to get our needs, wants, and The Three Necessities fulfilled.

This is why I see codependency is a survival strategy rather than a disease or identity.

It is also why freedom from codependency is inevitable for you.



You see, healing from codependency is actually:

- Cultivating your trust in your natural sense of boundary
- Nurturing your trust in your natural sense of legitimacy
- Caring for your nervous system and its capacity, regulation, needs, and wants
- Expanding you into your sense of curiosity and exploration
- Building your resources around connection, relationship, belonging, purpose, and rest
- Empowering your sense of discovery of who you are

**These all come from restoring your natural state of self-trust.** Without self-trust, the programmed sense of self-doubt will filter all of your healing, growth, and development, causing you to slow your progress, relapse more frequently, and even feel defeated, frustrated, and lost in your own healing.

Is this the missing piece in your healing?

### If You've Been...

- Stuck in therapy
- Relapsing through codependent habits
- Feeling like you're always going back to "square one"
- Feeling discouraged, upset, stuck in your efforts
- Not feeling or seeing persistent growth and healing
- Doubting yourself, your feelings, your perceptions, your experiences

My bet is that self-trust has not been cultivated within you yet. For me, I didn't even understand what self-trust was till a few years ago, and only by accident. This is because self-trust was often remarked on in passing, but never made a prominent focal point of my healing and development practices.

In fact, it was often *assumed* I was trusting myself. I was not.

That became my next journey: learning what self-trust is and how it actually feels and works in real life. This taught me how to cultivate self-trust in a way that makes it last.



## Cultivating Concrete Self-Trust

Cultivation of solid, reliable self-trust is a delicate, perpetual practice that involves several simple steps. I say simple because they are straight-forward. That doesn't necessarily mean they are easy.

It can be challenging to trust ourselves, especially at first. Self-trust has likely been associated with painful, traumatizing consequences due to your past experiences of trusting yourself and getting harmed by another for it.

This impact requires us to approach self-trust from a position of gently exploring your experience of self-trust, regulating and caring for what shows up, and resuming that gentle exploration.

To make this gentle as possible *and* as powerful as possible I start cultivating self-trust by exploring the legitimacy of one's reactions to trusting themselves.

A person considering trusting themselves may experience a variety of reactions in their body. These can include:

- Panic
- Numbness
- Sense of being frozen or paralyzed
- Relaxation
- Slowing of the mind
- Release of tension in the body
- A sense of groundedness
- Confusion
- Resistance or discomfort to feeling trusting

All of these, and whatever else might show up, is actually *legitimate*. Here's why:

The responses of your body tell the story of what you've been through. They're the narrator of your past experience. They do not signal something is wrong with you.

For example: When I started exploring self-trust, I had a couple of reactions to it: I braced for "what was coming next" and I found my mind getting narrow. I *didn't* trust I



was safe trusting myself.

You might think there is no way out of this. I did until I started to trust in the legitimacy of those reactions.

This is where I experienced my body relaxing and regulating naturally. *Of course I was feeling those sensations. My body was getting ready for what happens next based on its prior experience.* There was nothing wrong with me or my reaction.

What shifts for you if you trust, just 10% more, that the reactions you have to trusting yourself are legitimate and rational?

Take a moment and see what you notice in your body's sensations and your mind's thoughts. What is different for you?

Take a moment for this to settle, as nervous systems take more time to respond to a question than our mind does. Listen for any change in how relaxed or tense your body feels. That is often the easiest signal to catch.

Many times people aren't sure what is different, and that is OK. This is an exploration, not a test, and there are no wrong or right answers. There's only what you're aware of right now.

Here are shifts people commonly experience while exploring that question:

- A little less tension
- A bit more confidence
- A sense of relaxation
- An increase in openness
- Some relief and tears that come with it
- A bit more peace of mind

These reactions, along with whatever shows up for you, are as legitimate as your previous reactions. This is because your body's responses are always *right* once we understand the context they're coming from. This is first principle of Self-Trust.





## Self-trust Principle One: Innate Legitimacy

Innate Legitimacy means all that you experience and are aware of is inherently valid, real, and trust-worthy in its correct context. This means that all your reactions and responses have an origin and are not random anomalies. For survivors of abuse, neglect, and harm (narcissistic or otherwise), that origin includes the traumatic events they've experienced.

Trauma created in our bodies strong states of reaction to common stimuli. Basically, we feel like we react to many different, common events throughout our day, even when the current situation is not the same context as the prior event. This is basically what "triggers" are: reactions to a current situation based on a prior series of semi-related events.

For example: I used to have strong anxiety when I would go through the drive-through at a fast-food place and would have to order for my parents and siblings. This anxiety stemmed from the anger my parents would display if I made mistakes of any kind. This context of mistakes equating being punished and having love withdrawn makes my anxiety sensible in this situation.

This anxiety also showed up for years after I left home. I would resist the drive through because I didn't want to feel that anxiety – yet I wasn't ordering for my parents and siblings. I was ordering for me or my kids or a different person. This was a safe space, but I was still being activated.

My reaction in this new context was not incorrect. It was still *legitimate* because of my past experience. The difference is that it was not *relevant* to the current context as I was with different people doing a similar activity. I asked myself, "Maybe I could feel differently about ordering food within this new context?"

As I gently explored this new context and began to trust both my new context and my old reaction's legitimacy, my anxiety faded into indifference and I could then trust that new response of indifference to be also *legitimate for that context*.

This is why your reactions are always legitimate even if they don't make sense to your current context. This is also why you can grow and shift your reactions based on context rather than trying to be a certain way universally (which is neither healthy or realistic as different situations require different reactions and responses to ensure your well-being).



## Your First Self-Trust Practice

Now, let's take what you've learned and put it into a gentle practice.

All my self-trust practices are built on a concept called "titration". Titration means to "receiving in small amounts over time". Its much like getting into the pool gradually. First its the toes, then a leg, then a littler deeper into the water. This allows you to gradually adjust to the experience – or put another way – regulate.

Self-trust *must be titrated*. This allows the nervous system to adjust on its terms and not move you into a deep activation of your freeze, fawn, flight, or fight responses. This will help you feel safer and more open to experiencing self-trust again.

Your first experiment in self-trust is exploring the legitimacy of your reactions to trusting yourself.

This helps you work with what is immediately relevant and real for you and helps you avoid trying to fix any responses or reactions you have – as they're all valid, real, and legitimate.

To make this easy, I have created a short MP3 called "Self-Trust Tool #1: Restoring Trust In The Legitimacy Of Your Reactions."

Here are the practice instructions:

- Once a day, listen to the ["Self-Trust Tool #1: Restoring Trust In The Legitimacy Of Your Reactions" MP3](#)
- Record your experience below
- Reflect on it throughout the day and record below what you notice
- Do this for the next two weeks

The tracking chart is on the next page.



<b>DAY #:</b>	<b>REFLECTIONS AFTER THE PRACTICE</b>	<b>RESULTS FROM DAILY REFLECTION</b>
<p>Once a day, listen to the <a href="#">"Self-Trust Tool #1: Restoring Trust In The Legitimacy Of Your Reactions"</a> MP3</p> <p>Record your experience and daily reflection.</p> <p>Do this once a day for 30 days.</p>		



## Your Next Steps

The journey to your satisfaction has begun. You will have to navigate the 3 phases of this journey – Survival, Healing, and Creation – to realize more peace, freedom, and satisfaction in your life.

My work is designed to help you do just that. Read below on how I make this happen!

### ***Stay On Track***

Is it your time to stop surviving and start actually healing? The FOUNDATION Trainings is designed to help you make it feel safe enough to stop being codependent and start speaking up, saying no, loving yourself, and living from your power. If you're ready for confidence, peace, and healing, click here to learn more: [The FOUNDATION Trainings](#)

### ***Stay Connected***

#### **Connect With My Community**

Start building your support network by joining my free Facebook Community, Heal Your Codependency With Marshall Burtcher™. You'll be connected to over 1600+ other survivors all focused on learning and mastering the work of well-being and thriving beyond their codependency.

This will get you support, guidance, and help you see and feel you're not alone in your journey and experience.

You can join here: [The Community](#)

#### **Sign Up For My Workshops on Healing Codependency**

Learn how to heal codependency and enjoy more well-being, peace, and love in your life and get your opportunity to join me live in healing your codependency. Go Here: [The Workshop](#)

Now, go practice your self-trust cultivation homework and we'll connect in my next email!

#### **Connect With Me**

Follow me on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and my podcast, "Heal Your Codependency



with Marshall Burtcher” on Apple, Google, Spotify, and other podcast providers. Here are the links:

- My Website: [Free The Self](#)
- [My Facebook Page](#)
- [My YouTube Channel](#)
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- [My Podcast](#)

Warmly,

*Marshall Burtcher*

*Your Mentor In Healing Your Codependency*

**P.S. I would love to hear your experience of the guide, as it will help me improve it for you and others. Share your experience here: [Feedback](#)**



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