



# HOW TO HANDLE MONKEYS ON YOUR BACK

## A CODEPENDENCY PROBLEM

### We All Have Monkeys

Monkeys are our responsibilities that belong solely to us. That's OK. Out of kindness (or sometimes codependency) we take on others' monkeys. We can handle it...for a while.

### Codependency

Melody Beattie defines a codependent person as "one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior." When we take on other people's monkeys, 2 dynamics are at play:

1. You want to please that person. If you can please him/her then you can make certain (control) that they like/love you. You derive your sense of self-worth from others.
2. The other person desires to be pleased and gladly "allows" you to take their monkeys (responsibilities.)

### Too Many Monkeys

Other people may get too comfortable when you continue to juggle their monkeys. Over time you will become burdened and less productive. You may feel angry and resentful. Your efforts to "please" didn't work out as planned.

### Give Those Monkeys Back

Use Assertive Communication to get those extra monkeys off your back.

1. Use "I" messages to state that you will no longer handle the monkeys that belong to the other person.
2. You may be met with resistance and attempts to force/guilt you into keeping them.
3. Re-state your "I" message.
4. If unsuccessful, inform them that you are releasing their monkeys by a set time. Then do it.

### Relationships May Change

Depending on the effect of giving back other people's monkeys, relationships may change. They may remain unchanged or become stronger (healthy.) If the relationship is damaged or broken, it may be a codependent relationship. Remember, however, that your decision to assert yourself has set healthy boundaries and improved your self-respect!