

Out of Darkness and Into the Light

No relationship is perfect. No person is without fault. No marriage is without its challenges. But how do we know when a challenging relationship crosses the line into an abusive one? And why do so many people choose to remain in an abusive relationship? Clear answers are often elusive but June Hunt, a bestselling author and founder of Hope For The Heart, gives readers a roadmap toward understanding.

Hunt is the author of six new booklets with Aspire Press, a division of Rose Publishing. In *Verbal & Emotional Abuse*, she says the reason many women remain in abusive relationships is *fear*. “Unhealthy relationships” she says “generally reflect an inability to understand and work within appropriate boundaries.” These poor boundaries are often a result of a victim trying to keep the peace. The sad reality, however, is that no matter how hard a victim tries to assuage the anger of her abuser, it never lasts.

The cycle of abuse often starts in childhood and then worms its way into adult relationships. The definition of what constitutes a normal family becomes warped in the mind of the victim. They often marry someone who mirrors what they saw play out within their own home. The paradox of abuse is the abuser is often an insecure person trying to control others through manipulation or anger. In her booklet, *Codependency*, Hunt helps us see how abandonment and enmeshment issues form the engine for this dysfunctional behavior. “Codependent people may appear capable and self-sufficient, yet in reality they are insecure, self-doubting, and in need of approval,” says Hunt.

The good news is people can and do change if they want to. In Hunt’s characteristic style of practical writing and biblical counsel she offers clear definitions, helpful checklists, and sensible advice for those caught in the toxic whirlpool of abuse or dependency. “No one escapes the pain of a broken heart,” says Hunt. “You do have choices. You can have boundaries. You can have healing.”

For the codependent, Hunt says the core problem stems from a person who has not fully matured. That’s both good news and bad. Changing one’s codependent behavior is possible but often difficult. “Codependency does not flow from an unchangeable personality flaw or some genetic fluke,” says Hunt. Rather, it is rooted in immaturity that has transformed into an unhealthy lifestyle. “Moving away from the pain of codependency,” explains Hunt “is a matter of choice and commitment.”

When codependency keeps us locked in relationships that are abusive, they have crossed the line. When we place more energy in maintaining the peace, we are not honoring God and His purpose for our lives. He seeks wholeness. He desires to release us and transformation from our past. Since emotional abuse strikes at the very core of who we are, and leaves no visible bruises, it often has lasting effects. “Begin to redefine your own, separate identity by daily choosing to live according to God’s will,” says Hunt and He will meet you in your pain.