

# When Helping Doesn't Help

## Software Testing As Codependent Behavior

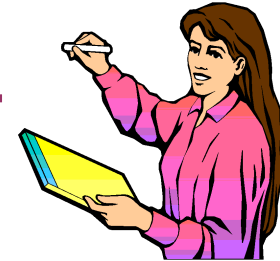
Lee Copeland

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# Carla's Story

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**Carla is an elementary school teacher and the thirty-five-year-old daughter of a professional family.**

**From 6 to 8 A.M., Carla worked at a day-care center. From 8:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M., she taught grade school. From 2 to 6 P.M., she taught at an after-school latchkey program.**

**To save a woman from being sent to a nursing home, Carla had moved in with an Alzheimer's victim. So at 12:30, Carla rushed home to make lunch for her roommate. At supper time, Carla rushed home again to make supper for her roommate.**

**Several years earlier, while working at the state prison, Carla had befriended, then fallen in love with, an inmate. After washing the supper dishes, Carla hurried to the prison to visit him. At 9 P.M., Carla dashed home to put her roommate to bed.**

**In her spare time, Carla volunteered forty hours each month to the county mental health center. And she taught Sunday school.**

# **Carla's Story**

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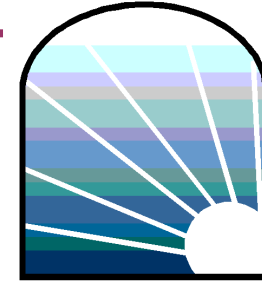
**Besides those volunteer activities, Carla had offered use of her home, rent-free, to a family she met at the prison visiting room. She was able to do this because she had left her home standing when she moved in with the Alzheimer's patient.**

**“The relatives of the woman I lived with got angry at me for telling them how sick she was and how much care she needed. My boyfriend was mad at me. My bosses were upset because I kept getting sick and missing work. And the woman living in my house got angry because when she began working, I started asking for rent money.**

**“I thought I was doing everything right. I was doing everything people expected of me. I was being good to people. One thing I couldn't understand was why everyone was mad at me,” Carla says. “The other thing I couldn't understand was why I felt crazy and wished I was dead.”**

# Origins

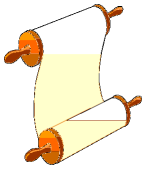
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- **Alcoholics Anonymous was formed in the mid 1930's.**
- **Support groups for the wives of alcoholics began in the 1940's and 1950's.**
- **During the 1970's, social scientists began describing common patterns of behavior seen in the spouses of alcoholics.**
- **The term *codependency* was originally used to describe an unhealthy pattern of coping with life as a result of being involved with someone who was chemically dependent.**

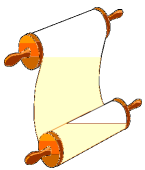
# Definitions

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**A stressful learned behavior associated with an unhealthy focus on the needs of others and/or attempting to take responsibility for the ... behavior of others.**

**- Brian DesRoches**

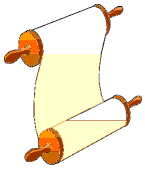


**We begin tolerating abnormal, unhealthy, and inappropriate behaviors. Then we go one step further, we convince ourselves these behaviors are normal.**

**- Melody Beattie**

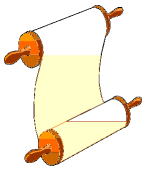
# Definitions

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**An agreement between people to stay locked in unconscious patterns to ... limit each others' potential.**

**- Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks**



**Codependency is a way of getting needs met that doesn't get needs met. We do all the wrong things for the right reasons.**

**- Scott Egleston**

# Common Themes In The Definitions?



# Karpman's Drama Triangle

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A rescuer is a person who takes care of other people's responsibilities.

**Rescuer/  
Enabler**

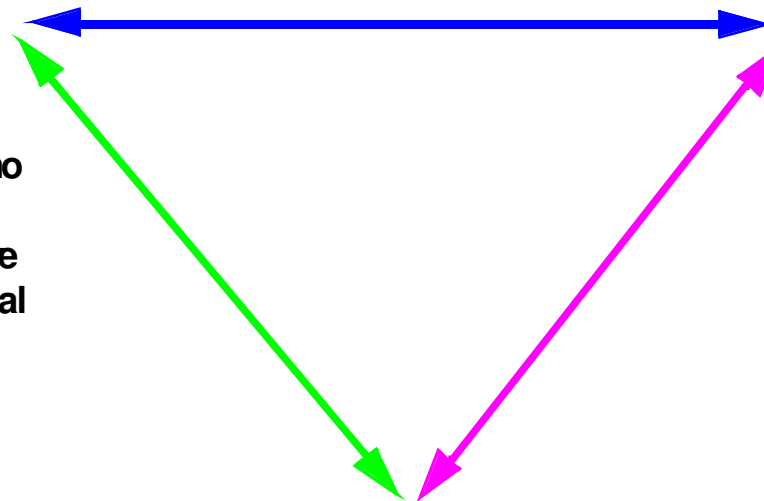
An enabler is a person who (usually unconsciously) facilitates the destructive behavior of a dysfunctional person.

**Persecutor**

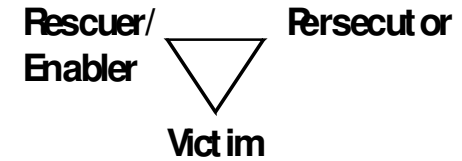
Become resentful and angry at those we have so generously helped.

**Victim**

Feelings of hurt, sorrow, shame, self-pity. We've been used (again) and we're unappreciated (again).



# Favorite Testing/Codependency Stories



Their Irresponsible Behavior	Our Codependent Response

# Boundary Problems

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- **Lee's personal boundaries:**
  - **I will not allow anyone to abuse me or my family.**
  - **I will not knowingly believe lies.**
  - **I will not allow chemical abuse or criminal behavior in my home.**
  - **I will not rescue people from the consequences of their irresponsible behavior.**
  - **I will not lie to protect people from the consequences of their behavior.**
  - **If you want to act crazy, that's your business, but I won't join you.**

# Boundary Problems

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- **People will become angry with us for setting boundaries. Why?**
- **How can we deal with their anger?**



# Boundary Problems

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- **Revise Lee's boundaries to apply to software testing:**
  - **I will not allow anyone to abuse me or my family.**
  - **I will not knowingly believe lies.**
  - **I will not allow chemical abuse or criminal behavior in my home.**
  - **I will not rescue people from the consequences of their irresponsible behavior.**
  - **I will not lie to protect people from the consequences of their behavior.**
  - **If you want to act crazy, that's your business, but I won't join you.**

# Conclusion

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- **If you would like me to solve all of your problems for you my e-mail address is:**

**lee@sqe.com**