

ARE YOU A RESCUER?

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We live in an age where there is a growing awareness of the need to be mindful of others, and to think of what is good for the community as a whole. Helping others is a necessary part of this and sets up a system of reciprocal support for yourself and others.

However, there is a difference between helping and rescuing. Helping implies being aware that someone needs something and trying to assist them in some way. It does not involve taking responsibility away from the other person through the help you give. Healthy helping also recognizes that others have the choice as to whether they want to use your help or not.

Rescuing implies deciding what someone else needs and taking over responsibility for sorting them out. It is a one up / one down position even if that is not the intention of the rescuer. It feels to them as if they are helping but the process doesn't really empower the person being helped.

Rescuing does not involve consulting with the others about what they need from you but rather deciding for them. As such it implies that beneath your kindness you maybe be satisfying a need to feel effective.

Helping is enabling. The person who rescues does not necessarily enable others. People who are rescuers tend to need others to need them.

Many people help have gone through their own suffering, which becomes a source of wisdom, healing and inspiration for others. This wounding leads to transformation and the ability to be of service. But only if one is consciously aware of one's own issues.

The rescuer generally has not recognized or attended to their own suffering in the same way. The way of dealing with their issues and gaining a sense of self worth is through helping others. They tend to be attracted to people who represent the wounded part of themselves and rescue them instead of dealing with their own difficulties.

Helpers tend to have clearer boundaries. There is not so much of themselves that is tied up in making others lives better. They are effective in that they have experienced pain and use this as a bridge of empathy to understand others. But they are better equipped to assist others in healthier ways.

Because rescuers tend to have poorer boundaries – *“phone me any time of the day or night,”/ “nothing is too much as long as you are ok,”* they are at risk to try harder and harder with people who do not take responsibility for their lives. The rescuer does not necessarily recognize when enough is enough and can encourage passivity and expectations from others to sort things out. They can become worn out and resentful towards those who don't make progress under their ministering. They tend to be over involved.

Anything that is a substitute for dealing with your own pain can become compulsive or addictive and you can lose sight of when it is working against you or harming you.

Signs that helping others is not helping you:-

- you are exhausted by others problems
- you don't say no when you can
- you don't share the load - this person/organization is YOUR project
- you begin to resent them for not making the progress in the problem despite your help
- you tell others what to do
- most of your friendships are formed around you helping
- you don't ask others to help you in return

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- you insist that you have dealt with your own issues totally.
- you will help anyone at any time and believe that this is a good thing
- your worth and identity are formed around being a helper
- you feel empty when there is not a crisis going on that you are involved in sorting out.