

# The Importance of Letting Go Of Responsibility For Others' Feelings and How to Accomplish It

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It is a commonly held belief that we are responsible for the emotions of those around us and must always make them happy and comfortable. They think saying or doing the right things can prevent others from feeling negative emotions. No one wants their loved ones to feel hurt or uncomfortable, but taking responsibility for their feelings is not helpful.

By trying to control the feelings of others, we rob them of the opportunity to manage their emotions and perceive their agency and self-efficacy. Trying to take responsibility for your loved one's feelings sends the unintended message that we do not believe they are competent enough to deal with their own emotions. Attempts to be responsible for someone's feelings can lead to their frustration, feeling controlled, and minimized.

Letting go of the need to take responsibility for others' emotions is crucial for a number of reasons.

1. We cannot control the emotions of others, no matter how hard we try. People will always have thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that may differ from ours. Attempting to control others wastes energy and can lead to disappointment and pain.
2. In the long run, trying to shield others from painful experiences can lead to frustration, disappointment, and negative feelings. Additionally, it may cause them more pain by not allowing them the opportunity to process negative and uncomfortable emotions. We all need expertise in effectively dealing with feelings, grief, loss, or disappointment.
3. Finally, we aren't the ones usually fixing others' problems. Intimacy is about being genuinely yourself in a relationship and allowing the other person to do the same. Trying to fix their feelings is not accepting them. You may not intend to create an unhealthy

dependency and foster a sense of helplessness and disempowerment, but you may do that by taking control. When we try to do the feelings work of others, we rob them of the opportunity to manage their own emotions.

Instead of trying to take responsibility for others' emotions, our focus is best applied to providing support and empathy. When we allow people to manage their feelings, we respect their autonomy and competence. Listening and being present for them fosters healthy and empowering relationships that promote genuine emotional connection and growth. Our job as intimate partners is to be responsible to them rather than for them. Being accountable to them involves being genuinely ourselves and allowing them to do the same.

Culturally the notion that we should take responsibility for others' feelings is constantly reinforced. This behavior is deeply rooted in erroneous beliefs or "cognitive distortions" (as labeled in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy). Thoughts or assessments of a situation lead to feelings. Those assessments and emotions lead to behavior. You can eliminate the need to take responsibility for others' feelings. To eliminate a behavior, consider the beliefs and feelings that drive it. The connection may only sometimes be noticeable. Stopping the behavior may be more challenging than it seems, but it can be done. Recommendations for eliminating the need to take responsibility for other's feelings follow:

1. The belief that you are responsible is a problem. Many potential cognitive distortions contribute to hanging onto the idea that you are supposed to fix your loved one's feelings. The belief that you're responsible for their feelings is one of the most common cognitive distortions. Just recognizing that you have this erroneous belief and that this belief is causing problems in your relationship is the first step in solving that problem. Another mistaken assumption is that you must always keep your loved ones happy. A similar belief is that your partner's problems are your problems and that you must always try to solve them is just as destructive in a relationship. Just as you have challenges and problems to resolve, your partner has issues to deal with. Some problems are individual, and some are relationship problems. Ask yourself the

question, "Whose job is this?" Relationship problems are a joint effort, and both parties are responsible for resolving any issues together. You may even have the irrational fear that if you don't fix their problems or take responsibility for their feelings, they won't love you anymore. However, it's important to remember that your partner's love for you is not conditional on you solving their problems. These irrational beliefs can lead to guilt, anxiety, inadequacy, and even resentment when things don't go as planned. You can't control how others feel, and trying to do so can cause more harm than good. Our behavior impacts our loved ones. But remember that their emotions belong to them. They get to decide how they feel and what to do about it. Don't believe the myth that you must fix everything to be loved. Just know that it is possible to let go of the need to be responsible for others' feelings.

2. Step up your listening efforts and improve your skills. To let go of responsibility for others' feelings, practice active listening. "Active" means listening without judging or interrupting them and letting them express their thoughts and feelings without trying to change them. Active listening ensures that people feel heard, respected, and validated, which helps them process their emotions. Active listening involves listening for understanding, not just getting the gist of what they are saying so you can share your solution. Instead, listen to what happened, what they're feeling, thinking, and want to do with the situation or their emotions. Active listening leads to empathy, which involves understanding and sharing feelings without taking them on as your own. Empathy is essential for healthy relationships because it shows support and compassion while allowing others to own their emotions. Remember, empathy doesn't mean you have to fix the problem; it just means you're there to support them.

3. Be still and pay attention to your feelings. If you find yourself habitually taking responsibility for other people's emotions, practicing mindfulness can be a great tool to help you let go of that need. Mindfulness is all about being present at the moment and observing your thoughts, feelings, and sensations without any judgment. When you practice mindfulness, you'll find that you can better regulate your emotions, communicate effectively with others, and respond to them more compassionately. Self-regulation skills, allow you to be more non-judgmental and empathetic, which helps

your loved ones feel heard and understood. Mindfulness also allows us to develop more insight into our triggers and feelings, which enables us to improve self-regulation. Practicing mindfulness also reduces stress and negativity, leading to more positivity and fewer conflicts in our relationships. When fully present, we can listen more attentively and respond appropriately instead of being preoccupied with the past or future. Mindfulness promotes self-awareness, allowing us to slow down and consider how we want to react to events in the present. This self-awareness can help you break free from old, unconscious habits and shift them in positive ways so that instead of being responsible for others' feelings, you are more able to focus on your own and make conscious choices that can lead to healthier relationships overall.

4. Take responsibility for your solutions. To let others manage their feelings, focus on establishing and communicating your boundaries while paying attention and adhering to others' boundaries. Setting and communicating our boundaries helps others take responsibility for their actions and emotions while promoting mutual respect, trust, and healthy relationships. If we don't know how to set boundaries, we probably don't know how to adhere to others' boundaries. We take responsibility for others' feelings, which can be mentally and emotionally exhausting, yet expect them to be responsible for our feelings. We must draw a firm line between our emotions and others' burdens. Anyone can experience compassion fatigue. When a loved one is ruminating about their distress, sometimes it is appropriate to let them know that while we support them in their endeavor to work through the issue, we can only attend or listen for so long before we run out of compassion. Instead of telling them to get over it or not feel it, we can make a decision about the amount of time and energy we spend on it and let our partner know the boundary. Most people prefer that you let them know your boundary before something comes up rather than deal with eye-rolling or other body language that says, "I have reached my compassion limit." Remember, establishing boundaries eases the emotional burden of both people, increases resilience, and decreases physical responses to stress. It can also help empower others.

5. Be engaged while empowering others to find their solutions. Empowering others to manage their emotions involves supporting them by allowing them to talk through the event, identify and verbalize their feelings, and come up with potential solutions. When we allow individuals to take ownership of their feelings and decisions, they become more self-assured in dealing with life's challenges. Encouraging your loved one's self-reflection is essential to releasing the need to take responsibility for their emotions. To promote self-reflection and empowerment, listen objectively, ask open-ended questions about their feelings, thoughts, and potential solutions. Don't make suggestions unless they ask you. Keep in mind, that even if they do ask you, they may not follow your suggestion.

6. Keep learning about yourself and how to let go. Letting go of the responsibility for how others feel can be challenging, especially if you've been in the relationship for a while or have feelings of insecurity about the relationship. Getting help from a therapist or support group can make it easier. Cognitive behavioral therapy is excellent for challenging negative thoughts that lead to unhealthy emotional reactions. A therapist or coach can help you replace negative beliefs that get in the way of healthy relationships. And a support group is there to provide a safe space to talk about your struggles and find support from others going through the same thing.

It's crucial to stop feeling responsible for other people's feelings if you want to have a healthy relationship. It isn't easy, but several practices can help, such as active listening, boundary-setting, empowering others, and mindfulness. Following these suggestions, we could enable others to manage their feelings while offering care and support. When we let go of controlling other people's emotions by listening, empathizing, and supporting them to find solutions, we create a dynamic environment where intimacy, effective communication, and acceptance can grow.