

*How to*  
**Stay Sane**  
**When Life**



*Isn't*

Claudine  
Struck

**10**  
Self-Care  
Tools for  
Renewing Your  
**Mind**

## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THIS BOOK

"I suffered from co-dependency with my husband for years, without really knowing what it was, or why I was so depressed. Once I read Claudine Struck's words, I knew immediately what was holding me back in my own life. I also knew I had to work on dealing with my sadness and anger if I wanted to get better. Since I've started using these techniques, my husband and I don't argue as much. I find I have more hobbies and interests outside the home. It's amazing how I've made new friends and branched out by using these tips. I used to feel lonely, I used to overeat, and I often felt unloved. Now I realize I can do whatever I want – it's all up to me! I want to tell you how useful Claudine's work really is. I wish every woman would read this and free themselves from codependency and stress. My only regret is that I didn't have this guide years ago!"

**Heather M.** *Vancouver, Canada*

"Wow! I love this book! If you've ever felt a little stressed or overwhelmed, then read this brilliant book by my friend Claudine Struck! It can change your life!"

**James Malinchak**

Co-Author, *Chicken Soup for the Athletes Soul*, Co-Author, *Chicken Soup for the College Soul*, "Two-time College Speaker of the Year!", Featured Star in the Blockbuster Movie, *PASS IT ON*, [www.malinchak.com](http://www.malinchak.com)

"Your book is fantastic. Thank you. I love reading it in small bits at a time."

**Diana Duncan**

"My name is Shannon O'Hara and I'm an international consultant in New York City. I came across Claudine Struck's books and I was fortunate enough to read them. It was really a transformation for me. I have embraced her methodology and her self-care tips which are truly remarkable. In New York's stressful and competitive environment, one thing that I feel many of us are lacking is a mind, body and spirit connection. I will recommend this book to all of my friends because it has had such a positive impact on my life in a very short period of time. Well done Claudine! Thank you!"

**Shannon O'Hara**

"I read Claudine's books and found them easy to read and quite accessible for people who want to make small changes and not feel overwhelmed in the process."

**Laura Meiselman**

"I had a lot of problems with school and really wanted to do anything and everything possible to successfully complete my year as a teacher. After reading Claudine's books, I decided to implement some of the suggestions in her books. I could not go through another year with the severe physical, emotional and mental stress that I had been having. I implemented the 'song'. Then I implemented the 'smiling' and saying 'good morning!'. I continued by being generous to everyone, writing positive notes to people who were doing good things, being nice and complimenting them. I went through an amazing transformation. The books helped me to stay on course and to stay focused."

**Everan Collins**

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# INTRODUCTION

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I contemplated a title for this book for some time. How could I, with clear conscious and in only a few cogent words, reach out to people suffering from codependency? And share the great news I have that will help them to minimize the effect of their compulsion? Well, the first thing I did was assign myself to coming up with a list of words that expressed my thoughts and feelings regarding codependency. And not surprisingly, the word “insanity” appeared on the list several times. It definitely was no surprise!

I consider insanity to be a very misunderstood term and concept in our society. We often associate it with someone who simply isn’t “normal” or someone who does “crazy” things. The gamut of insanity runs from people talking to themselves in public to violent serial killers. I would bet you can attest to how insanity can set up shop in a life that appears “normal”

from the outside, when on the inside there is nothing but turmoil. Albert Einstein defined insanity as: “Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

You know what I’m talking about here. Yes? You smile and pretend that everything in your life is good, but when you’re alone, you hurt. You don’t understand why you hurt, so you cry or scream or just lash out with misdirected anger. Deep-seated unhappiness abounds. But understand: this too is insanity. As life for the codependent is rarely, if ever, sane.

What causes the insanity? This may be the most important question this book has to ask you. But first, let us examine how codependence manifests itself and reveals its presence in such obvious and conspicuous tones. For once we understand the complete nature of codependence, we will clearly grasp the insanity of it.

There are essentially five main symptoms that researchers identify as being always present in the life of a codependent. The principal symptom is the inability to conceive of one’s own self-worth in an appropriate or positive light. This translates into low self-esteem. Your own. And this unfortunately can either mean an inferiority complex, or even feeling and expressing a greater deluded sense of superiority.

Another highly-recognized indicator of codependence is the failure to set up external and internal boundaries. These are boundaries that offer protection and definition of your existence. Among other things, the absence of these boundaries affects your control over your own personal levels of intimacy and emotion.

This failure to identify the personal, physical, intellectual, emotional, and social elements of your being is a symptom of codependence that can negatively influence your perception of self and cause you to lead a life of falsehood and self-deception.

Neglecting to realize your personal needs and allowing the needs of others to take precedence is another common

symptom of codependence. And certainly one that can lead to a life of insanity. This is not to say that dedicating your life as a personal servant or caregiver to someone of lesser station will define you as being a codependent. Love and charity are almost always exceptions to every rule. However, in the case of subservience or self-deprecation, such behavior threatens your very livelihood when it causes you to disregard even basic needs for survival.

The four above-described symptoms of codependence typically escape the scrutiny of others. But the loss of self-control—which eventually presents itself—is a symptom that seldom remains invisible for long. Emotional outbursts and public displays of excessive aberrant behavior are always noticed by others. No matter how subtle might seem the conduct and/or speech of a codependent. In the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social aspects of one's being the taking of extreme measures or expressing extreme behavior of any kind is a secret and extreme symptom of codependency that reveals itself to everyone you know, eventually. Codependents are very talented at keeping secrets. But like the other negative by products of their condition, this too is a serious detriment that takes its toil over time.

If you recognize these symptoms in your own life, your body is undoubtedly producing an excess amount of stress hormones in response to such behavior and inner turmoil. Left unchecked and unmanaged, this situation can lead to serious health consequences. It can also cause or influence one to incur serious additions, such smoking, excessive eating, and alcohol and drug abuse. It is estimated that stress alone accounts for as many as 90% of all doctor visits. It might seem nice to keep physicians employed and continually earning great salary. But the terrible cost is to your physical health and state of mind—is there any positive reason you can think of?

Well, despite all these dire tidings, you can now take heart! Because I do indeed have good news for you, and soon enough things will begin to look up for you. So listen up, and don't turn off or out. Let me share this very good news I have for you.

It is news of hope. And it's very simple: You no longer have to settle for the insanity in your life. *How to Stay Sane When Life Isn't: 10 Self Care Tools for Renewing your Mind* was written especially for you, someone who needs to be awakened to realize this universal truth: That you, too, deserve to be validated, appreciated and loved! And, to accentuate this cosmic truth, included at the end of various tools are a number of wonderful true stories by and about individuals who each experienced an epiphany of renewed strength and hope, and freed themselves of the terrible restraints their prior lives had upon them.

Please understand that accepting this realization is the first step in making a positive change in your life. Next, you will knowingly engage in activities that spawn the release of endorphins. These neat neurotransmitters, also referred to as mood enhancers, have been found to improve immunity, lower blood pressure, and reduce stress and the damage stress causes. *How to Stay Sane When Life Isn't* is a compilation of easy tips and simple devices that you can use and make part of your life's daily routine. In effect, this book can transform your life. And do so in many tremendously healthful, positive and beneficial ways.

## MY AWAKENING

Painful contractions during the fifth month of my second pregnancy were more than enough for my doctor to order me to stay in bed. And stay there, focusing on nothing but lots and lots of bed rest. Therefore, while my body rested, my

mind went into overdrive. My connection to my spirit seemed non-existent. One thing I immediately did was presume that my husband needed my immediate assistance in actualizing his new photography business. I quickly determined that this period of bed rest would be perfect for commencing duties as his marketing director. Within the next few months the hours I spent working in the business doubled. And gradually so did my financial support. Suddenly, his business was flourishing. But our marriage started failing. Naturally, I began to rack my brain trying to figure out how so much good had caused so much bad. And naturally, I also blamed myself. What was I doing wrong?

The arrival of our new baby was nearing, and I was riddled with angst and self-doubt. At a time when happy images of the birth of my new baby boy should have been occupying my thoughts, I was suffering with feelings of bewilderment, fear, regret and resentment.

Unfortunately, the vicious cycle of “What’s wrong with me?” and self-blame continued after our baby’s uncomplicated arrival. My every effort to receive the love and appreciation I longed for was met only with disdain and unexplained resistance. Instead of eliciting care and affection as well as needed support, even with menial tasks like housework, my husband’s resistance continued. And of course, slowly fueled resentment, thus creating more emotional distance and dependency.

In my fog of codependence I pondered what more could I do, considering all that I had already done. Sullen, depressed and bewildered, my mind and spirit felt shattered. I suggested therapy to my husband, and he acquiesced, so we attempted to work through our various relationship problems with this regimen. And once we began the therapy, only then could we really learn how much we hadn’t seen or known previously. Soul mates in our misery, we discovered ourselves as soul mates in the quagmire of our family of origin, bonded in the trauma of our past.

## APPROACHING RECOVERY

The journey of codependence is an insidious disease that appears normal and wonderful to the world outside. Inside, there is self-abandonment and neglect. There is also not knowing normal behavior nor appropriate boundaries, and lacking a sense of simple propriety. Some codependents are hyper-responsible and overly reliable. Codependents believe that they can control people, places and things. This is an illusion and part of the survival process, which may have begun working for them as a child.

The ideal support scenario is one where people help one another get through life's problems and difficult times. Whether it is with family, friends, or co-workers, support should always involve a balance of effort. The codependent unknowingly creates an imbalance in the relationship by masking his own needs to meet those of others. "I can help..." is a common phrase proclaimed by the codependent. The desire to help is a way to validate one's existence. This can result in becoming an obsession, even to the point that life seems futile and meaningless without someone to save.

We are hard wired to believe that our mission is to save half the people we know while taking care of the other half. Somehow this misleadingly creates the illusion of being whole and worthwhile. It is a vain attempt to escape other feelings, particularly that annoying little one called PAIN! The essence of this pain lies in character defects such as envy, resentment, arrogance, judgementalness, and cynicism, to name a few. Lack of self-worth and low self-esteem are two well hidden defects which become glaring after sometime on this journey.

The list of defects can be rather long. Society doesn't really teach us their detriments nor the destruction such defects can cause. They are, like many other forms of behavior and

human characteristics, easily learned and adapted to, while all the time appearing far too normal. Later, when we unconsciously sign up for the thorough self-examination we need, we horrifically learn we can no longer consciously exist with this perspective. Truth, and a desire for deeper meaning, becomes our new and most exigent *modus operandi*. But what the heck. *C'est la vie*, as the saying goes. That's life!

The imbalance of support created by codependents is often tied to addiction. Not their own, but of someone close to them. Maybe a parent or sibling was an alcoholic or maybe they married someone who is addicted, or has a friend who has a serious addiction problem. In fact, Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary defines codependence, or codependency, as:

“A psychological condition or a relationship in which a person is controlled or manipulated by another who is afflicted with a pathological condition (as an addiction to alcohol or heroine); dependence on the needs of or control by another.”

Mental Health America, a national non-profit organization dedicated to promoting mental well-being in the U.S., describes codependency as:

“An emotional and behavioral condition that affects an individual's ability to have a healthy, mutually satisfying relationship. It is also known as ‘relationship addiction’ because people with codependency often form or maintain relationships that are one-sided, emotionally destructive and/or abusive.”

We are all different in how we react and behave in situations. Maybe you're not sure if you are codependent. Maybe the signs aren't so clear. Consider the following red flags established by WebMD:

- You become obsessed with fixing and rescuing needy people
- You are easily absorbed in the pain and problems of other people
- You are trying to control someone or someone is trying to control you
- You do more than your share — all of the time
- You are always seeking approval and recognition
- You would do anything to hold on to a relationship
- You fear being abandoned or outcast

Society simply doesn't teach us the detriments of these traits. These defects are learned and can over a whole lifetime appear normal. However, when we embark on the journey of spiritual renewal, we can no longer live from this perspective. A desire for honesty and discovering the purpose for our lives does indeed become our new primary focus and most important activity. For it is here that we can actually pursue a path of self-renewal.

## THE PATH OF SELF-RENEWAL

After many years of therapy, I have come to learn and accept challenges as an opportunity for self-discovery and growth. I am still amazed that old patterns continue to creep in. But they serve to only remind me that this is a lifetime journey.

Every passing day and moment is a gift called the present. A cliché perhaps, but oh, so true! The people we come in contact with are our teachers who assist us in seeing and deciphering ourselves clearly. We are in training, or in boot camp,

so to speak. And the course is to become grounded and develop into mature adults who are able to speak truth without fear, face the world with confidence, and stand amidst all our gifts of life and take the lessons well, while learning to live with clear intention and focus.

Instead of being ashamed of our past, we must view our life's history as a great treasure trove. It reveals our lineage and what has been handed down to us and to others generation after generation. It is a tremendous asset, and one that keeps us directed towards obtaining a better life for our family, friends, community, country, and of course, for our very selves. There are many commendable and precious rewards for traveling this odyssey of awareness and choosing the path of most resistance. In fact, this inestimable pursuit and formidable journey may well indeed irrevocably alter future generations to come.

*How to Stay Sane When Life Isn't* is about taking action, which can come or be effected in many different but equally-productive forms. No single relaxation technique is best; many are effective when practiced regularly. And will result in a positive shift in your body, state of mind, and spirit. Plus, all the techniques are interrelated. For example, to practice yoga or singing, which are tools from the body book, one has to focus on breathing, which is a mind tool.

It is about moving out of the unconscious way of living, which leads to unconscious results. Moving from impulse to reason, and from reaction to levelheaded response. And becoming intentional and conscious-filled with every action. Meditation, massage, stretching, stress reduction and emotional release all contribute towards dissolving bad body armor, opening up the heart, and strengthening while softening the body.

Webster's Dictionary defines the word tool as "something regarded as necessary to the carrying out of one's occupation

or profession.” The tools that are presented in this book are to support the generation of new healthy pathways within the brain. *How to Stay Sane When Life Isn't* will facilitate retraining the brain, body, and spirit to transform unconstructive thinking and destructive ways of being into positive thoughts and actions.

The body responds in some very predictable fashions during stressful times: The fight or flight reaction from our sympathetic nervous system usually immediately kicks into action. For the CODE RED sirens are blaring and screaming off the chart! Reaction must be swift and survival-oriented. Thus, in response to such extreme stress, the heart rate accelerates, breathing hurried and weak, muscles grip and gasp, and other physiological systems, such as the immune and digestive, may even suddenly shut down.

Though conscious or unconscious, the body provides us essential feedback. It is palpable and even measurable. And in a state of real emergency such feedback can be life-threateningly helpful. Or vital information received too late, or a case of too little too late. No matter, what you must now consider is the state of your existence. For existing in this state of seriously recurrent stress does regularly and in ever-increasing concentration debilitate our human mind, body, and spirit.

Avoiding stress is seldom possible. Learning to cope and bring your system back into balance by activating the relaxation response to stress is the wisest option. The alternative is to allow the stress to manage you. Consider this alternative: When the resting, digest parasympathetic nervous system is activated implementing a tool of choice, the body responds by slowing and deepening breathing, slowing the heart rate, stabilizing blood pressure, and loosening and relaxing the muscles. In addition to these soothing physical effects and the long-term benefits of them, research has discovered that there is also an increase in energy and focus. In effect, illness,

fatigued, natural aches and pains and other physical challenges are minimized and remarkably ameliorated. Moreover, there is an increase in life motivation and social attitude, as well as a conspicuous improvement in all life areas of productivity and increase in problem solving capabilities.

Self-care has become the new mantra. When things are tough, take care of yourself. When life is fabulous, take care of yourself. You are the most important person you need to know best. You are in the process of giving birth to yourself. Nourish yourself, get adequate rest and cherish this time. In childbirth we know relaxing during a contraction eases the process. We can apply that same concept in our work towards the birth of our new self. Instead of holding on tight during the obstacles, use the tools presented in this book to get you through with an easy, gentle grasp. And hold on with a sense of self-sufficiency that resonates from that calm but firm resolve inside you.

As you embrace these tools and wrap your arms around your entire being, in acceptance, everything around you will start to change. As a dormant seed lies in the earth for a period of time until the elements nurture it towards fruition, you too will gradually begin to stretch to reach the light, while moving farther and farther away from that which has been the darkness.

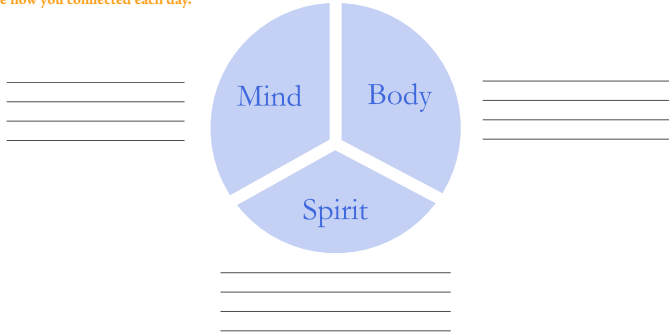
My sincerest hope is that *How to Stay Sane When Life Isn't* will become your proverbial toolbox from inside which you reach daily for those inimitable instruments to rebuild, renew, and restore your life.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

As pleasingly just mentioned, *How to Stay Sane When Life Isn't* is a toolbox for your mind, body and spirit to enable you to properly handle and cope with stress. And do so with ...

Describe how you connected each day.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



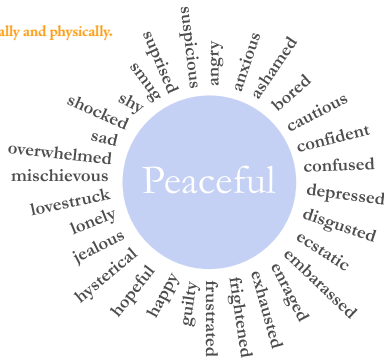
Check the box for each thing you felt.

- Did I lose control of my temper?
- Was I resentful or filled with self-pity today?
- Did I criticize, blame or put others down?
- Did I seek the help I need from my Higher Power?
- Did I work on any of my defects today?



The labyrinth is a walking meditation; an alternative is to use your finger. Find your way to the center and follow the path out again.

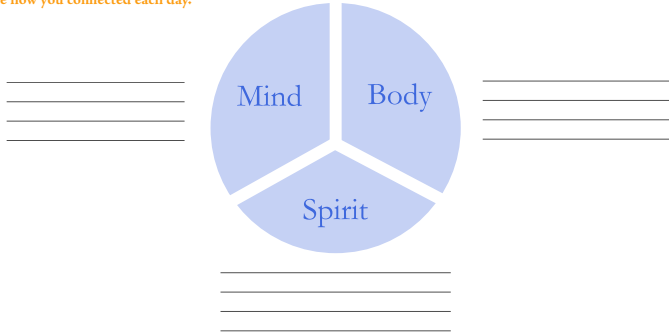
Circle how you feel emotionally and physically.





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## WRITE TO CLAUDINE STRUCK

I hope reading this book has altered your life!  
I would love to hear from you. Please share  
how this book has affected you.

Claudine Struck



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## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Claudine Struck is available for speaking engagements at any conference or school.  
For more information, Please contact:

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