

the best of *you*

Break Free from Painful Patterns,
Mend Your Past, and Discover
YOUR TRUE SELF IN GOD

Dr. Alison Cook

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

The Best of You

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Chapter 1

What Do You Want?

A Brave New Direction

Reflections

1. What is a challenging relationship or situation that you are currently facing?
2. Regarding this situation, consider the question, “What do you want?”
3. Notice what comes to mind. As an action step, consider the following exercise.
 - Make a list of eight to ten statements, each one starting with “I want.”
 - Don’t censor yourself.
 - Don’t be surprised if the statements are contradictory.
 - Don’t worry if any of the statements feel selfish or selfless. Simply notice and write it down.
 - Invite God to join you in this process of observing what you wrote.

Chapter 2

How Did I Get Here?

The Cocktail of Codependency

Reflections

1. Consider a challenging relationship or situation. It might be the same one you identified at the end of chapter 1.
2. What are “old ways” you have picked up related to that situation as a result of childhood wounds, church messages, or cultural conditioning? For example:
 - It’s better to stay small.
 - I shouldn’t feel angry or sad.
 - My voice doesn’t count.
3. What is a new message God might be inviting you to consider instead?

Chapter 3

How Do I Find My Way Out?

Observing Painful Patterns

Reflections

1. When you look at the chart of codependency, where do you see yourself in it?
 - Do you see codependent tendencies in yourself? If so, what keeps you from moving toward healthy dependence on others?
 - Do you see counterdependent tendencies in yourself? If so, what keeps you from moving toward healthy dependence on others?
2. When have you noticed shaming messages? Start getting curious (vs. critical) about those messages. For example, consider:
 - What's an early memory of shame?
 - How did you cope with shame at the time?
 - In what ways does shame show up in your life today?

Chapter 4

What Am I Really Like?

Seeing Yourself as God Does

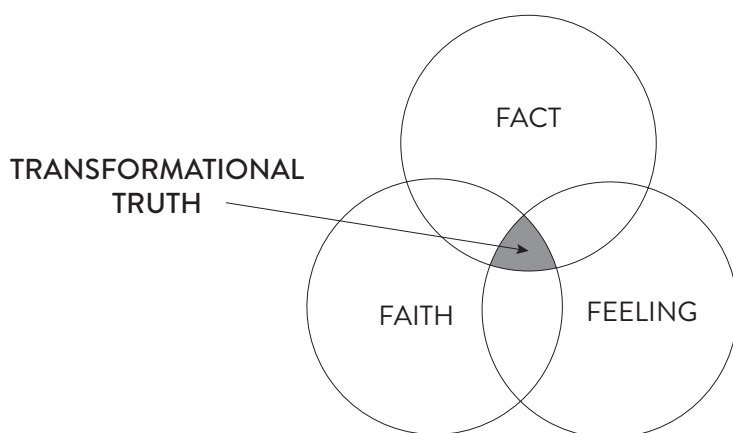
Reflections

1. When have you felt safe with someone? Who or what makes you feel seen?
2. When did you last feel a sense of purpose or confidence in yourself?
3. What do you like about yourself?
4. What is your sense of how God sees you?

Chapter 5

How Do I Find *My* Voice?

Learning to Trust Yourself



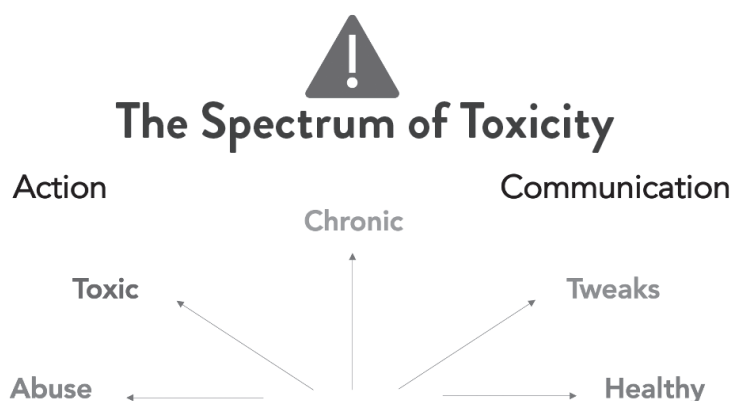
Reflections

1. Find a picture of yourself as a young child. What do you feel toward that young child? If you notice anything other than curiosity or compassion, turn your attention to those feelings and get curious about them instead. Where do you think those other feelings came from?
2. Turn back to that picture of the younger you and reflect on how God sees her—as someone who is beautifully and wonderfully made. What is it like to become aware of that younger version of you through the eyes of love, care, and compassion?

Chapter 6

But Won't They Be Mad?

The Secret to Setting Boundaries



Reflections

1. Consider the spectrum of toxicity. Where does one of your challenging relationships fall?
2. In the context of that relationship, what is a yes you want to say to yourself or to your own healing?
3. What is a boundary you must set as a result?

Chapter 7

What If My Parents Drive Me Crazy?

Healing Childhood Wounds

Reflections

1. Consider the six steps to recover from toxic parenting. Which one resonates the most with you right now?
2. What is one commitment you can make to yourself this week?
3. Write out a plan for how you will honor that commitment to yourself.

Chapter 8

How Do I Find Friends Who Get Me?

Creating Authentic Connection

Reflections

In his beautiful book *The Voices We Carry*, hospital chaplain J. S. Park described a profound exercise to help you discover what you need.⁷ The following is an adaptation of his work.

To increase self-compassion, think of yourself in the third person. Now, consider the following questions:

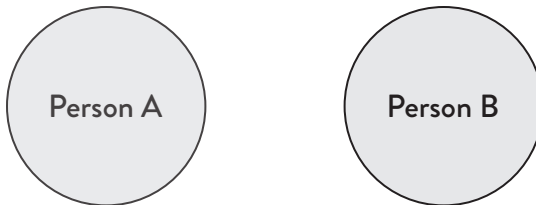
- What qualities does [insert your name here] most need in a friend?
- What qualities does [insert your name here] bring to her friends?
- What steps does [insert your name here] need to take to discover the friendships she craves?

Chapter 9

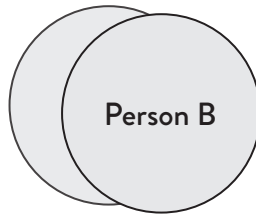
Can I Get Someone to Change?

Drawing New Boundaries
in Old Relationships

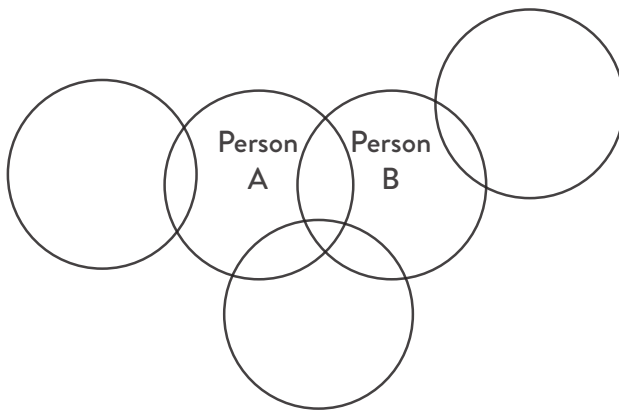
Autonomous Relationship



Codependent Relationship



Harmonious Relationship



Clarify the Deeper Longing

I feel _____ when _____ .

I long for _____ in our relationship.

Examples:

- I feel frustrated when we don't check in about our evening plans. I long for more emotional connection in our relationship.
- I feel abandoned when we don't team up on parenting challenges. I long to share parenting decisions in our relationship.
- I feel anxious when we go weeks without talking. I long for more consistency in our relationship.

Reflections

1. When you're frustrated in a relationship, do you tend to blame others (criticism) or blame yourself (guilt)?
2. What comes up for you as you consider the deeper longing that you have for your relationship?
3. Is there one relationship in particular where God might be nudging you to speak up for yourself in new ways?

Chapter 10

Why Doesn't God Just Fix Everything?

Healing Your Relationship with God

Reflections

1. What did you notice inside as you read the section on spiritual abuse? Are there any spiritual practices you've been avoiding as a result of a spiritual wound?
2. Consider the following questions:
 - Where do you feel most alive?
 - Where do you sense love?
 - Where, and with whom, do you feel safety?
3. Have you felt a sense of hiding behind God? In what way might God be nudging you to take a brave step?

Chapter 11

How Will I Know I've Arrived?

Envisioning the Best of You

Reflections

1. Imagine the best of you in the future. It could be one, five, or ten years from now. Choose whatever increment of time feels helpful to you.
2. How would the future version of you understand the current situation you are facing?
3. How would *she* respond in this situation?
4. What qualities does that version of you have readily available to her? (It might be wisdom, confidence, strength, courage, calm, kindness, or playfulness.)