

AI-04662 Morbid Dependency vs Resignation

Summarize the main key points of Chapter 10,11. Extract relevant information and create a study materials for me to read and reference.

Absolutely. I reviewed **Chapters 10 and 11** of *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization* and organized them into a study guide rather than simply giving you a page-by-page summary.

The two chapters are closely connected: **Chapter 10 examines dependency through surrender to another person; Chapter 11 examines resignation through withdrawal from people and from active participation in life.**

Study Guide — Chapters 10 & 11

CHAPTER 10 — MORBID DEPENDENCY

1. The central idea

Horney describes the **self-effacing person** as someone whose solution to inner conflict increasingly revolves around **love, surrender, dependence, and merging with another person.**

Love becomes much more than companionship. It is unconsciously expected to provide:

- Protection
- Support
- Affection
- Understanding
- A sense of worth
- Meaning
- Salvation from loneliness
- Relief from responsibility
- Relief from having to face a hostile world

The person therefore begins to see love as the answer to almost everything.

2. The deeper motivation: surrender and unity

The most important insight in Chapter 10 is that dependency isn't adequately explained by simply saying:

"This person needs to be loved."

There is a deeper drive:

The person wants to surrender the self and merge with another person in order to experience a unity that he or she cannot find internally.

This is why the dependency can become extraordinarily intense.

3. Why rejection hurts so much

The self-effacing person's **lovableness becomes central to self-worth.**

Therefore:

Rejection of my lovable qualities → rejection of me → worthlessness.

This produces extreme sensitivity to rejection and abandonment.

The person may develop internal **"shoulds"**, such as:

- I should always be understanding.
- I should never be jealous.
- I should never resent anyone.
- I should be forgiving.
- I should make the relationship work.
- I should make my partner love me.

These demands collide with hidden **claims**, such as:

- I deserve exclusive devotion.
- My weakness should make others love me.
- My suffering should earn me consideration.
- My self-sacrifice should be appreciated.

The person becomes trapped between **"I should..."** and **"I deserve..."**.

4. Why certain people become irresistible

A fascinating part of the chapter is Horney's explanation of why the self-effacing person can become **"spellbound" by strong, arrogant, detached, or aggressive people**.

The dependent person sees qualities in these people that he/she has suppressed in themselves:

- Independence
- Self-sufficiency
- Assertiveness
- Power
- Confidence
- Aggressiveness
- Mastery

In effect:

"You possess the qualities I have denied in myself."

The dependent person can then try to experience those qualities **vicariously through the partner**.

The paradox

The very person who appears capable of "saving" the dependent person can ultimately become the person who destroys the dependent person's self-esteem.

This is why Horney's model is so psychologically interesting.

5. The destructive relationship cycle

The clearest model from Chapter 10 is:

Self-effacing person

↓

Needs love and surrender

↓
Chooses/idealizes strong partner
↓
Partner provides excitement, strength, protection
↓
Dependent person increasingly organizes life around partner
↓
Partner becomes emotionally rejecting or contemptuous
↓
Rejection creates anxiety
↓
Anxiety increases clinging
↓
Clinging irritates/repels partner
↓
Partner becomes more rejecting
↓
Dependent person tries harder to please
↓
Self-blame increases
↓
Resentment develops
↓
Hate/vindictiveness emerges
↓
Self-hate increases
↓
More dependence / more self-degradation
The relationship therefore becomes a **self-reinforcing vicious circle**.
Horney emphasizes that morbid dependency is not a static condition but a **process**, with different forces becoming dominant at different times.

6. Total absorption

One of the most recognizable signs of morbid dependency is **the disappearance of the individual's independent life**.

The partner becomes the center of existence.

Other things decline:

- Career
- Work
- Friends
- Family
- Children
- Personal interests
- Self-development

- Self-recognition

The person's question gradually becomes:

"What does he/she need?"

rather than:

"What do I need? Who am I? What do I want?"

Horney describes this loss of independent interests as a major part of the process.

7. Idealization

The dependent person often **idealizes the partner**.

Why?

Because the partner has become the person to whom the dependent individual has delegated his/her pride.

The partner becomes:

strong → superior → powerful → right

while the dependent person becomes:

weak → subordinate → accommodating

The dependent person may eventually see the world through the partner's eyes, making separation extremely difficult.

8. The turning point

Eventually, the promised fulfillment does not arrive.

The dependent person wanted:

surrender → unity → love returned → salvation

But the partner does not provide the final piece: **reciprocal love**.

Then the psychological system begins to break down.

The person may experience:

- Anxiety
- Despair
- Resentment
- Anger
- Hate
- Vindictiveness
- Self-contempt
- Feeling exploited
- Increased clinging

The person may simultaneously **love and hate** the partner.

9. "Love" can become a struggle for victory

A particularly important insight:

The desire to make the partner love them can gradually become a **vindictive triumph**.

It is no longer simply:

"I want to be loved."

It becomes:

"I will make you love me."

The victory itself becomes psychologically important.

But there is a paradox:

If the person finally succeeds, the triumph may destroy the original fascination.

Why?

Because the psychological goal was not simply love. It was also **conquest, validation, and restoration of pride**.

10. The "sink or swim" point

Eventually the individual reaches a critical point.

One direction is **self-destruction**:

- Giving up
- Neglecting oneself
- Losing interest in life
- Destructive behavior
- Severe deterioration

The other direction is **movement toward independence and health**.

Breaking away is difficult because the person has sacrificed so much of their independent life and is frightened by being alone.

Horney describes this as a struggle between competing forms of pride and dependency.

11. The key conclusion of Chapter 10

Horney explicitly warns against reducing morbid dependency to one explanation.

It is **not simply**:

- Sexual masochism
- Sadism
- Parasitism
- Symbiosis
- Self-destructiveness
- Self-hate
- Pride

All of these can participate.

The crucial point is:

Morbid dependency is a dynamic process.

And underneath the negative aspects is a positive longing:

the desire for total surrender and unity through merging with another person.

CHAPTER 11 — RESIGNATION: THE APPEAL OF FREEDOM

Chapter 11 introduces Horney's **third major neurotic solution**.

The first two broadly involve **moving toward something**:

- Mastery/power
- Love/attachment

Resignation is different.

It involves:

Withdrawal.

Instead of fighting the inner conflict, the person essentially says:

"I don't care."

The person withdraws from active participation in life and obtains a superficial sense of peace.

12. Healthy resignation vs. neurotic resignation

This distinction is extremely important.

Healthy renunciation

A person may legitimately decide:

- I don't need everything.
- Ambition isn't everything.
- Material possessions aren't everything.
- I can accept limitations.
- I can simplify my life.
- I can pursue deeper values.

This can produce wisdom and growth.

Neurotic resignation

The person instead gives up:

- Striving
- Desire
- Initiative
- Growth
- Participation
- Emotional involvement

The goal becomes:

"Don't bother me."

It is therefore not genuine peace.

It is **peace achieved by shrinking life**.

13. The "onlooker" at life

One of the most important concepts in Chapter 11:

The resigned person becomes an observer of his own life.

Instead of participating:

Life happens → I observe it.

Rather than:

Life happens → I engage → choose → act → grow.

The person can become extremely perceptive about himself while remaining unchanged.

This produces an interesting paradox:

Self-awareness without self-transformation.

Horney describes someone who may understand himself intellectually yet remain completely uninvolved in changing his life.

14. Aversion to effort

The resigned person doesn't merely lack achievement.

He may actually **reject effort itself**.

He may have:

- Good ideas
- Talents
- Creative potential
- Ambitions in fantasy

But turning those possibilities into reality requires:

initiative + effort + persistence + discomfort

And that is precisely what he avoids.

So:

Potential remains potential.

15. The "inspiration" trap

A classic example from the chapter:

A person might imagine:

"I could write a great book."

But the actual work of:

- organizing ideas
- writing

- revising
- concentrating
- finishing

is unpleasant.

So the person waits for **inspiration**.

The imagined achievement becomes a way of avoiding the actual effort required to achieve it.

This is a useful distinction for studying the chapter:

Fantasy achievement ≠ actual achievement.

16. Restriction of wishes

This may be the deepest mechanism of resignation.

The person gradually learns:

"It is safer not to want."

Why?

Because wanting creates:

- vulnerability
- disappointment
- effort
- conflict
- attachment
- responsibility

Therefore:

No strong wishes → no strong disappointment.

But there is a cost:

No strong wishes → no strong goals → no effort → no growth.

Horney identifies two central neurotic claims:

1. Life should be easy, painless and effortless.

2. I should not be bothered.

17. Detachment

The resigned person protects himself through **emotional distance**.

He can enjoy:

- Casual relationships
- Temporary relationships
- Helping others

- Intellectual interests
- Nature
- Art
- Religion

But he tries not to become deeply dependent or emotionally entangled.

The difference from the self-effacing person is crucial:

Self-effacing	Resigned
Moves toward people	Moves away from people
Needs love	Avoids emotional dependence
Wants merging	Rejects merging
Surrenders self	Protects self
"Love me"	"Don't need me"
Emotional involvement	Emotional distance

18. The hidden positive value: FREEDOM

This is arguably the most important insight of Chapter 11.

At first resignation looks purely negative:

withdrawal → inertia → detachment → lack of desire

But Horney discovers something positive underneath it:

The person is protecting an autonomous inner life.

The individual wants freedom from:

- Control
- Pressure
- Expectations
- Influence
- Competition
- Ambition
- Intrusion

The person wants to remain **himself**.

This explains the chapter title:

Resignation: The Appeal of Freedom

19. The paradox of freedom

Here's one of the most important ideas to remember:

The resigned person wants freedom...

...but often doesn't know **what to do with freedom**.

Freedom becomes defined negatively:

Freedom FROM

rather than:

Freedom FOR

For example:

Freedom FROM:

"Don't tell me what to do."

But not necessarily:

Freedom FOR:

"I know what I value, and I choose to pursue it."

Horney points out that because the person has suppressed his wishes, he may actually **not know what he wants**.

20. The three outcomes of resignation

Horney ultimately describes three broad directions.

A. Persistent resignation

The person maintains a restricted but relatively functional life.

They may work, help others, and function reasonably well while remaining detached.

B. Rebellion

The suppressed desire for freedom becomes active.

The person begins saying:

"I will live according to myself."

This can release creativity and energy.

But rebellion can be:

- constructive/liberating
- destructive/aggressive

C. Shallow living

The person moves farther and farther away from his inner life.

This produces:

- Superficial relationships
- Distraction
- Fun-seeking
- Money/status fixation
- Cynicism

- Loss of convictions
- Emotional shallowness
- Drifting
- Lack of direction

21. The tragedy of shallow living

This is a particularly powerful part of Chapter 11.

Horney argues that these people may **look superficial**, but their underlying psychology can be much deeper.

Their dreams and unconscious material may reveal:

- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Self-hate
- Hate toward others
- Despair
- Buried emotional intensity

The apparent shallowness can therefore be a **flight from depth**, rather than an absence of depth.

THE BIG PICTURE

Chapter 10 vs. Chapter 11

Dimension	Chapter 10: Morbid Dependency	Chapter 11: Resignation
Basic strategy	Move toward another	Move away
Core solution	Love/surrender	Withdrawal
Primary need	Unity	Freedom
Relationship	Merge	Detach
Self	Give self away	Protect self
Other people	Needed	Potentially intrusive
Main fear	Rejection/abandonment	Involvement/coercion
Main danger	Dependency	Inertia
Hidden problem	Can't stand alone	Can't fully participate
Positive fantasy	"Someone will save me"	"Nobody will control me"
Neurotic result	Loss of self in another	Loss of self through withdrawal
Health direction	Own yourself	Engage yourself

THE DEEPEST CONNECTION BETWEEN CHAPTERS 10 & 11

There is a beautiful symmetry between them.

Chapter 10

"I will find myself by merging with you."

Chapter 11

"I will preserve myself by staying separate from you."

But both can fail to produce the **real self**.

Why?

Because in both cases the person is attempting to solve the inner conflict indirectly.

Chapter 10:

I solve myself through another person.

Chapter 11:

I avoid the problem by withdrawing from life.

The healthier direction implied by Horney's overall framework is:

I develop myself from within.

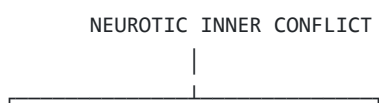
HIGH-VALUE CONCEPTS TO MEMORIZE

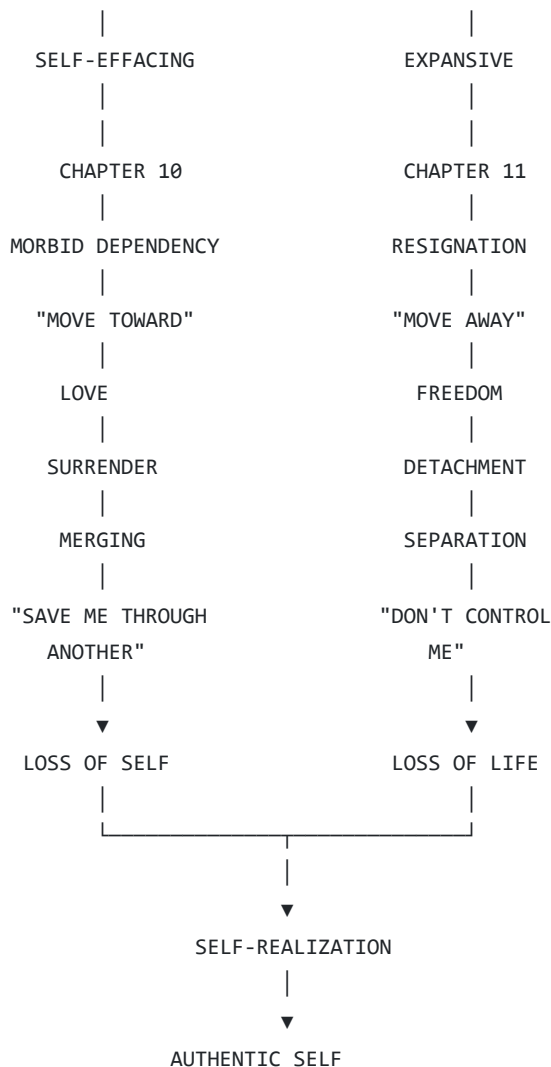
If you only memorize **15 ideas**, make them these:

1. **Morbid dependency is a process, not a static condition.**
2. Dependency cannot be reduced to masochism.
3. The self-effacing person seeks **surrender and unity**.
4. Love becomes a vehicle for escaping loneliness and worthlessness.
5. Rejection becomes an attack on the person's entire sense of self.
6. The dependent person may become **spellbound by strength and arrogance** in others.
7. Idealization allows the person to **delegate pride to the partner**.
8. Dependency creates a **vicious cycle of rejection → anxiety → clinging → further rejection**.
9. The dependent person may eventually alternate between **love, hate, resentment and self-hate**.
10. **Resignation is withdrawal from the inner battlefield.**
11. The resigned person becomes an **onlooker at life**.
12. Resignation suppresses **wishes, initiative, effort and striving**.
13. The resigned person seeks **freedom from** interference more than freedom **for** meaningful action.
14. The positive core of resignation is the desire to preserve **autonomy and inner integrity**.
15. Resignation can develop into **persistent resignation, rebellion, or shallow living**.

MEMORY MAP

Use this as the mental model when reviewing the chapters:





The crucial insight is that **both strategies are attempts to escape the original inner conflict rather than resolve it**. Chapter 11 explicitly describes resignation as immobilizing both the expansive and self-effacing drives, while also putting a brake on the natural movement toward self-realization.

QUESTIONS TO TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Try answering these without looking back.

Chapter 10

1. Why does love become so disproportionately important to the self-effacing person?
2. What does "total surrender" accomplish psychologically?
3. Why is rejection experienced as more than ordinary disappointment?
4. Why can arrogant or aggressive people become especially attractive?
5. What does the dependent person psychologically "borrow" from the powerful partner?
6. How does idealization maintain dependency?
7. Explain the rejection → anxiety → clinging cycle.
8. Why does resentment eventually appear?
9. Why can the person simultaneously love and hate the partner?
10. Why does Horney reject the idea that morbid dependency is simply masochism?

Chapter 11

1. What does Horney mean by "resignation"?
2. How does healthy renunciation differ from neurotic resignation?
3. What does it mean to become an "onlooker" at one's own life?
4. Why is effort itself threatening to the resigned person?
5. How does suppression of wishes produce inertia?
6. What does the resigned person mean by "freedom"?
7. Why is freedom primarily "freedom from" rather than "freedom for"?
8. Why does Horney call the resigned person a **subdued rebel**?
9. What are the three possible outcomes of resignation?
10. Why can apparently shallow people actually possess considerable buried emotional depth?

ONE-SENTENCE SUMMARY OF EACH CHAPTER

Chapter 10:

Morbid dependency occurs when a self-effacing person attempts to solve inner conflict by surrendering the self to another person and finding unity, worth, and salvation through that relationship.

Chapter 11:

Neurotic resignation occurs when a person attempts to escape inner conflict by withdrawing from striving, desire, involvement and active living, while secretly protecting an intense need for freedom and inner autonomy.

The phrase I'd use to remember both

Chapter 10: "Lose myself in you."

Chapter 11: "Lose myself by withdrawing from life."

And the larger Horney question behind both chapters is:

How do I stop escaping myself and actually become myself?

That question connects directly to the book's central theme of **self-realization**.

How do I stop escaping myself and actually become myself? List 22 ideas to ponder.

Here are **22 ideas to ponder**, distilled from the themes in Chapters 10–11 and Horney's larger question of self-realization. I've phrased them as reflective principles rather than prescriptions.

22 Ideas to Ponder: Becoming Yourself

1. **Stop asking, "What should I be?" Ask, "What do I actually want?"**

Notice the difference between an authentic desire and an inherited *should*.

2. **Notice where you are escaping rather than choosing.**

Withdrawal, distraction, dependency, overwork, fantasy, and indifference can all become ways of avoiding yourself.

3. **Don't confuse peace with the absence of conflict.**

A quiet life isn't necessarily an authentic life. Resignation can produce peace simply by eliminating striving.

4. **Learn to tolerate wanting something.**

Wanting creates vulnerability. But eliminating your wishes to avoid disappointment also eliminates direction.

5. **Ask what your "I don't care" is protecting.**

Indifference may conceal something you care about deeply—freedom, dignity, autonomy, recognition, or fear of failure.

6. Distinguish freedom FROM from freedom FOR.

Freedom from interference is only half of freedom. Ask: **"What do I want my freedom to make possible?"**

7. Don't make another person responsible for completing you.

The fantasy that someone else can provide your worth, meaning, protection, or unity can become morbid dependency.

8. Don't make detachment your identity.

Independence can quietly become another form of armor: *"Nobody can control me because nobody gets close enough."*

9. Stop borrowing your identity from other people.

Dependency says, *"Tell me who I am."* Conformity says, *"Tell me what matters."* Becoming yourself requires discovering both.

10. Let yourself be affected.

Authenticity requires some emotional exposure. If nothing can hurt you, nothing may be important enough to move you either.

11. Choose participation over observation.

The "onlooker at life" can understand life intellectually while remaining outside of it.

12. Trade fantasy for small acts.

The person you imagine becoming is less important than the person your repeated actions are creating.

13. Accept friction as the price of growth.

A life organized around avoiding pain, effort, conflict, and inconvenience gradually becomes smaller.

14. Examine your "shoulds."

Ask of every major obligation:

"Do I genuinely choose this, or am I obeying an internal authority?"

15. Protect your autonomy without becoming isolated.

Real autonomy doesn't require emotional exile. You can belong to others without disappearing into them.

16. Don't confuse rebellion with freedom.

Saying *"I won't do what you want"* is still allowing someone else's expectations to define your behavior. Genuine freedom asks what **you** want.

17. Recover your curiosity about yourself.

Ask: *What makes me feel alive? What repeatedly irritates me? What do I envy? What do I avoid? What do I keep postponing?*

18. Pay attention to what you repeatedly abandon.

A pattern of starting and quitting may reveal fear of commitment, effort, failure—or fear of discovering what you actually want.

19. Don't let "being yourself" become another idealized self.

Even authenticity can become a performance: *"I must be completely independent, completely authentic, completely free."* That can become another tyranny.

20. Make room for your real self to surprise you.

You cannot fully know yourself in advance. Some aspects of yourself emerge only through living, choosing, experimenting, and acting.

21. Move from "being" toward "becoming."

Horney's resigned person emphasizes simply *being* rather than attaining and growing; self-realization requires allowing yourself to develop.

22. Eventually, stop escaping and start inhabiting your life.

Don't surrender yourself to someone else. Don't retreat into an ivory tower. Don't float along with the stream. **Want something. Choose something. Risk something. Care about something. Build something. Become someone you recognize as yourself.**

The question I'd keep at the center

"If I stopped trying to avoid discomfort, satisfy expectations, impress anyone, depend on anyone, or protect myself from disappointment—what would I actually choose to do with my life?"

That question gets very close to the heart of Horney's idea of moving from the **idealized self** toward the **real self**: not becoming some perfect version of yourself, but gradually discovering and expressing what is genuinely yours.

Where is the line between Morbid dependency (md) and Resignation (r)? To become myself, what amount of (md) or (r) to have? Zero or it is a spectrum. Enlighten me.

Yes — **this is exactly where Horney becomes much more interesting than a simple "MD bad / R bad" model.**

The short answer is:

You don't need zero dependency or zero resignation to become yourself. You need enough autonomy that neither dependency nor resignation is running your life.

And I would **not** think of MD and R as two substances that you have a measurable amount of. Think of them as **directions your psyche can move in when confronted with inner conflict.**

1. First: MD and R are not the same thing as ordinary human behavior

This distinction is crucial.

Horney is **not saying**:

- needing someone = morbid dependency
- enjoying solitude = resignation
- loving your spouse = dependency
- wanting peace = resignation

Those are normal human experiences.

The problem begins when a psychological strategy becomes the **organizing principle of your life.**

Morbid dependency says:

"I need you in order to be okay."

Neurotic resignation says:

"I don't need anyone or anything because I won't allow myself to need."

And authentic selfhood moves toward:

"I can need you without losing myself, and I can be alone without withdrawing from life."

That's a huge difference.

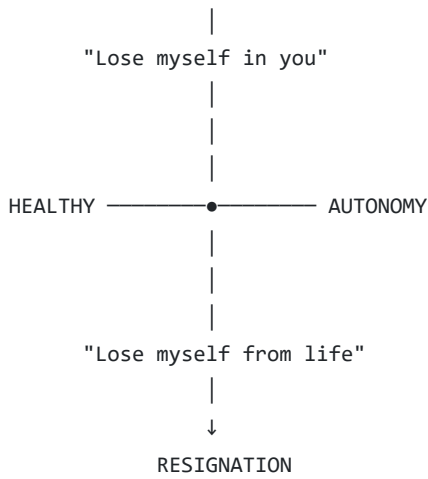
2. Think of it as a spectrum — but with TWO different axes

I wouldn't put MD ↔ R on a single straight line.

A better model is:

DEPENDENCY





But even that is incomplete.

Because **dependency and resignation can coexist**.

Someone can be:

▮ "I don't need anybody."

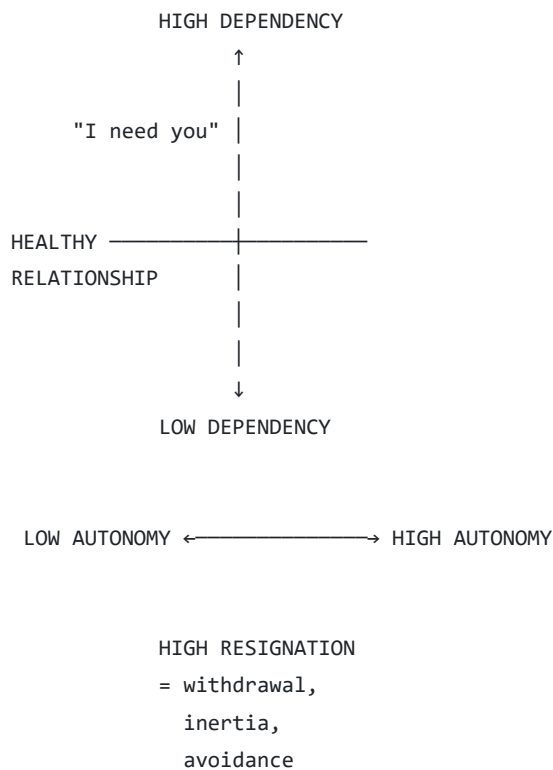
while secretly being enormously dependent on approval.

Or:

▮ "I'm completely independent."

while their entire identity is organized around avoiding emotional vulnerability.

So I would use **two dimensions**:



The goal isn't to reach "zero" on everything.

The goal is to increase **autonomy, aliveness, choice and self-realization**.

3. Here's the line I think you're looking for

The line isn't:

"How much MD can I have?"

It's:

"Who is in charge?"

That's the test.

If I love my wife deeply and my relationship matters enormously to me:

Healthy.

If I think:

"Without her I have no identity, no worth, no meaning."

That's moving toward **morbid dependency**.

If I enjoy solitude, don't care much about social approval, and don't need constant stimulation:

Healthy.

If I think:

"I don't need anybody. I don't want anything. Nothing matters enough to risk disappointment."

That's moving toward **resignation**.

4. The paradox

This is the beautiful part.

Healthy autonomy does NOT mean:

"I need nobody."

It means:

"I can need somebody without becoming nobody."

And:

Healthy independence does NOT mean:

"Nothing matters to me."

It means:

"Things matter to me, but they don't own me."

That's a profound distinction.

5. Horney's Chapter 10 gives us one side

The self-effacing person seeks:

love → surrender → merging → unity

The problem isn't love.

The problem is:

using another person to solve the self.

Horney says the dependent person seeks unity through merging because he cannot find that unity within himself.

So consider these two statements:

Healthy

"I love you, and my life is richer because you are in it."

Morbid dependency

"I need you so that I can be somebody."

The first adds to the self.

The second **outsources the self**.

6. Chapter 11 gives us the opposite danger

The resigned person says:

"I don't want to be controlled."

That sounds healthy.

And sometimes it **is** healthy.

Horney actually identifies something valuable underneath resignation:

the preservation of an autonomous inner life.

The person wants freedom from pressure, influence, competition, intrusion and coercion.

That desire is not pathological.

In fact, **autonomy is part of becoming yourself**.

The problem is what happens next.

7. Freedom can become another form of escape

The resigned person can gradually move:

"I don't want anyone controlling me."

↓

"I don't want anyone influencing me."

↓

"I don't want to need anyone."

↓

"I don't want to want anything."

↓

"I don't want to make commitments."

↓

"I don't want to make an effort."

↓

"I don't want anything badly enough to risk discomfort."

↓

"I don't care."

That's resignation.

And Horney's insight is brilliant here:

The person thinks he is protecting freedom, but eventually he may be protecting himself from **life itself**.

She describes the resigned person as a subdued rebel whose withdrawal can eventually become inertia, loss of direction and shallow living.

8. So how much MD should you have?

Healthy amount: enough to love and depend without surrendering yourself.

You should be able to say:

"I need people sometimes."

"I want companionship."

"I care what happens to people I love."

"Their loss would hurt me."

"I can ask for help."

But also:

"I remain myself."

"I can disagree."

"I can survive disappointment."

"I can function alone."

"I don't have to earn love by abandoning myself."

That's **interdependence**, not morbid dependency.

9. And how much R should you have?

Enough detachment to preserve your autonomy, but not enough to abandon participation.

Healthy:

- "I don't have to please everyone."
- "I don't have to compete."
- "I don't have to chase status."
- "I can say no."
- "I can enjoy solitude."
- "Other people's opinions don't determine my life."

Excellent.

But:

- "Nothing matters."
- "I don't need anyone."
- "Why bother?"
- "Life should be effortless."
- "I don't want anything badly enough to struggle."

Now you've crossed toward resignation.

Horney specifically describes the neurotic resigned position as shrinking, restricting and curtailing life and growth.

10. Here's the sweet spot

I would call it:

CONNECTED AUTONOMY

Not:

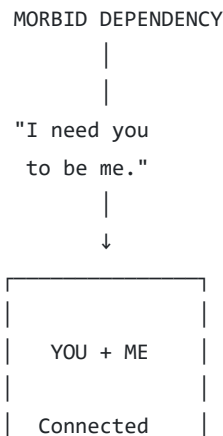
Dependency

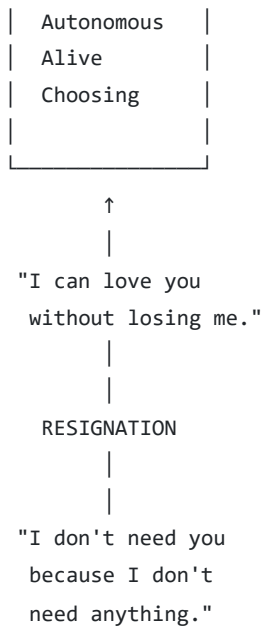
and not:

Isolation

but:

Connection + Autonomy





11. There is another word I would add: ALIVENESS

This is especially important in Chapter 11.

Horney describes how resignation can eventually suppress the very aliveness the person was trying to protect.

That's the paradox:

You withdraw from life to protect yourself...

...and eventually have less life to protect.

This gives us another diagnostic question:

"Is my independence making me more alive or less alive?"

That's an extraordinarily useful question.

12. The same question works for dependency

Ask:

"Is this relationship making me more myself or less myself?"

If relationship produces:

more courage → more honesty → more curiosity → more generosity → more creativity → more freedom

you're probably moving toward health.

If it produces:

more fear → more appeasement → more self-abandonment → more obsession → more helplessness

you're moving toward dependency.

13. And ask the same question about solitude

"Is my solitude making me more myself or less myself?"

Healthy solitude:

solitude → reflection → restoration → creativity → engagement

Resignation:

solitude → withdrawal → inertia → avoidance → indifference → emptiness

The **external behavior can look identical**.

That's why Horney's psychological model is more subtle than simply observing what someone does.

14. The ultimate test: CHOICE

Here's perhaps the most useful concept to take away from these chapters.

Ask:

"Am I doing this because I choose it, or because I am compelled to escape something?"

For example:

I don't socialize.

Why?

"Because I genuinely enjoy solitude."

Potentially healthy.

Or:

"Because people are exhausting and I don't want anyone to need anything from me."

Potential resignation.

I spend enormous amounts of time with my partner.

Why?

"Because I love being with her."

Healthy.

Or:

"Because being alone makes me feel worthless."

Dependency.

Same behavior.

Different psychological engine.

15. This gives us a better definition of "becoming myself"

I don't think Horney's goal is:

ZERO DEPENDENCY + ZERO RESIGNATION

That would itself become another rigid **"should."**

Instead:

More choice.

More ability to say:

I want.

I don't want.

I choose.

I decline.

I love.

I leave.

I stay.

I commit.

I change.

I rest.

I work.

I need help.

I can stand alone.

I can belong without disappearing.

That's much closer to psychological freedom.

16. And there's an important Horney paradox

The person in resignation says:

"I must be myself."

But Horney points out that this can actually mean defending either the **neurotic self** or the **idealized self**.

The deeper task is to let go of the neurotic, glorified version of yourself so that the real self can emerge.

So:

Becoming yourself isn't defending who you currently think you are.

It's discovering who you are **underneath the defenses**.

17. My "MD / R" test for everyday life

You could actually use this as a little mental dashboard:

Question	MD direction	Healthy	R direction
Do I need others?	"I can't be okay alone."	"I can need and love."	"I don't need anyone."
Do I need solitude?	"Don't leave me."	"I enjoy my own space."	"Leave me alone."
Do I want something?	"Give it to me."	"I genuinely want it."	"Wanting isn't worth it."

Do I handle conflict?	"I'll surrender."	"I'll engage honestly."	"I'll withdraw."
Do I make effort?	"I'll do anything for approval."	"I'll work for what matters."	"Why bother?"
Do I love?	"Complete me."	"Join me."	"Don't get too close."
Do I have freedom?	"Don't abandon me."	"I choose."	"Don't interfere."
Who determines my life?	Others	Me, in relationship with reality	Nobody—but possibly inertia

18. So is it a spectrum?

Yes—but not a simple one-dimensional spectrum.

Think of MD and R as **two possible defensive directions** around the same fundamental problem:

How do I deal with my inner conflicts without losing myself?

MD attempts:

Solve myself through another person.

R attempts:

Protect myself by withdrawing from involvement.

Neither requires complete elimination.

Instead, the healthy movement is toward:

AUTHENTIC AUTONOMY

where:

- I can connect without merging.**
- I can separate without isolating.**
- I can need without becoming dependent.**
- I can be independent without becoming detached.**
- I can care without being controlled.**
- I can say no without withdrawing from life.**
- I can tolerate discomfort without escaping.**
- I can want something without being possessed by it.**
- I can change without losing myself.**

The question I'd give you to carry around

Not:

"How much MD or R do I have?"

Instead:

"Where in my life am I surrendering myself, and where am I withdrawing myself—and what would it look like to remain fully myself while staying engaged?" ↻

That's, in my view, much closer to the heart of Chapters 10–11.

And perhaps the ultimate formulation is:

Don't aim for zero dependency.

Aim for interdependence.

Don't aim for zero detachment.

Aim for autonomy.

Don't aim for zero conflict.

Aim for the capacity to remain yourself while experiencing conflict.

Don't aim for a perfectly protected self.

Aim for an alive self.

That last distinction may be the most important one of all. Horney's resigned person can protect autonomy so aggressively that the person eventually loses the depth, direction and emotional aliveness that autonomy was supposed to protect.