

EXPLORING PEOPLE-PLEASING TENDENCIES

What do we mean by people-pleasing?

When we experience an emotional need to please others at the expense of our own needs.

What could people-pleasing look like?

- Taking on requests from others, even when we don't want to
- Feeling guilty and/or having difficulty saying No
- Feeling responsible for other peoples' emotions
- Being agreeable no matter what
- Avoiding conflict, urge to over-explain yourself
- Experiencing overwhelm when being asked to do something
- Communicating needs passive-aggressively
- Harboring resentment for saying Yes
- Hastily accepting blame when something goes wrong
- Having trouble acting according to beliefs/values
- Feeling like you have little or no free time
- People tell you they love that they can always count on you to pitch in
- Your quality of work has decreased because you're taking on too much
- You feel emotionally drained, stressed, and/or burned out

 What are some other indicators of people-pleasing tendencies?

NOTE: Most of us desire to feel safe and live in harmony with those around us, which is not a bad thing. However, if we are acquiescing to the desires of others at the expense of our own health, it may be beneficial to take a closer look at these tendencies.


Where could people-pleasing tendencies come from?

Being punished for not performing up to expectations and/or praised for performing perfectly.

Prologued periods of operating in survival mode when pleasing others was required to stay safe (emotionally, physically, etc.).


Fear of abandonment at any point in development, perhaps due to having to hide a part of yourself you perceive to be rejected, learning that your needs are "too much."

Observing people-pleasing behavior in parental/authority figures, influence from the dominant culture we grew up in.

 What other factors could contribute to current people-pleasing tendencies?

TIPS TO ASSERT YOUR NEEDS/BE MINDFUL ABOUT PEOPLE-PLEASING TENDENCIES

| | |
|--|---|
| Remind yourself that you have a choice. | It may feel like automatic behavior, but it can be interrupted. |
| Self-sooth. | Actively engage in coping skills that help you remind yourself you did nothing wrong. |
| Be explicit about your priorities and goals. | Articulating what's important to you makes it easier to say No to something that doesn't align with that. |
| Communicate boundaries clearly. | Some people may resist or fall away because they are used to you catering to them. |
| Use time blocking. | Let people know you can participate, but only until a certain time. |
| Identify when you are being manipulated. | Excessive flattery may indicate someone is taking advantage of your people-pleasing tendencies. |
| Do a self-check | Is this my responsibility? Could I be taking away a growth opportunity from someone else by doing this? |
| Create a mantra. | "I'm not for everyone – and that's okay;" "A No to them is a Yes to me;" "No is a complete sentence;" "I'm the guardian of my time and energy." |
| Instead of "maybe" or "I don't know," say No with conviction. | "Unfortunately, I'm at capacity." "I have plans that day, but thank you for thinking of me." "I'll have to pass on that project." |
| If you're not ready to say No, ask for time. | "Let me get back to you on that." "I will check my calendar when I get home." |
| Sit with discomfort. | People-pleasing may be a way to mitigate the intense discomfort of rejection, judgment, abandonment. Sitting with those feelings may give them less power over you. |
| Start small & celebrate progress. | Practice asserting your needs with safe members of your support network who will cheer you on. |

 What are some other ways you've been able to assert your needs?

EXERCISE: Brainstorm ways to assert your needs by toning down people-pleasing tendencies.

- 1) What is one people-pleasing behavior you would like to address?

- 2) What are 2-3 ideas for how you could actively assert your needs by deferring less to the wishes of others?

Adapted from <https://psychcentral.com/health/tips-to-stop-being-a-people-pleaser#tips>