

## Do You Have the People-Pleasing Syndrome?

Pleasing other people—who could find fault with that? Isn't it a good thing to consider the needs of others, to be gracious, to be nice? By all means! But for many, the *desire* to please becomes an addictive *need* to please others, even at the expense of their own health and happiness. It takes a toll on health, relationships and quality of life, and it drowns out the inner voice that may be trying to protect us from overdoing it.

“As a people-pleaser, you feel controlled by your need to please others and addicted to their approval,” writes Harriet B. Braiker, Ph.D., in *The Disease to Please*. “At the same time, you feel out of control over the pressures and demands on your life that these needs have created.”

Take this quiz to see whether you can benefit from learning to say no to others more often—and yes to yourself.

1. I put others' needs before my own, even when the cost to me and my own happiness is great.
2. If someone needs my help, I can't say no. In fact, I often find it difficult to say no. And when I do, I feel guilty.
3. To avoid reactions I'm afraid of, I often try to be who others want me to be, to agree with them, to fit in.
4. I keep my own needs and problems to myself; I don't want to burden others with them.
5. It's my job to make sure everyone else is happy.
6. I always have a smile on my face and an upbeat attitude, even if I feel sad or angry or hurt.
7. I go out of my way to avoid conflict and confrontation; it's better just to keep the peace.
8. I am often on the go, rushing to get things done. When I take a moment for myself, I feel selfish, indulgent and guilty.
9. I should always be nice and never hurt others' feelings.
10. I'll do whatever it takes to get someone to stop being mad at me.
11. I hold back from saying what I really think or from asking for what I want if I think someone will be upset with me for it.
12. I want everyone to like me...all the time.
13. I feel like a failure if I've displeased anyone.
14. If I don't make others happy, I worry that I'll be alone and unloved forever.

15. I will change my behavior, at my own expense, to make others happy.
16. I spend a lot of time doing things for others, but almost never ask anyone to do things for me.
17. If I ask people for help and they agree, I'm sure they must be giving out of obligation; if they really wanted to help, they would have offered without my asking.
18. It's difficult for me to express my feelings when they are different from someone I'm close to.

The motivations for being a people pleaser are varied and usually quite unconscious. Transforming these patterns requires that we understand our pleasing behaviors and motivations, and heal the childhood wounds that usually underlie people pleasing. Please don't hesitate to call if you would like to explore this or any other issue.

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