mindhealth FACT SHEET

PEOPLE-PLEASING · FINDING YOUR YES AND NO

People-pleasing

Being kind is a strength. Being unable to say no is a cost.



Over-giving
Others' needs first, always

No boundaries
Saying yes when you mean no

The resentment
Drained, then guilty

01 When kindness becomes a cost

People-pleasing is more than being nice: it's a way of managing anxiety by keeping everyone else happy, often at your own expense. It usually grows from learning that approval meant safety, or that your needs came second. In the moment, saying yes relieves the fear of disappointing someone; over time it leaves you depleted, resentful, and unsure what you even want.

02 Why "no" feels dangerous

If you fear a boundary will cost you the relationship, "no" feels risky, so you over-give and hope it's noticed. But people can't respect limits they never see, and constant yes teaches them there aren't any. Learning that most people can handle your "no", and that the right ones will stay, is how the pattern loosens. Disappointing someone occasionally is part of any honest relationship.

03 What genuinely helps

- Pausing before the automatic "yes"
- A kind, clear "no" without over-explaining
- Noticing and naming your own needs
- Tolerating the guilt that follows a boundary
- Therapy to reach the roots, when it runs deep

A PRACTICAL STORY

From over-giving to an honest answer



THE CYCLE

The pleasing trap



Yes to everything leads to overload and quiet resentment. A kind "no" breaks the loop.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Find your no

1. Pause: "let me check and come back"
2. Say no without a long excuse
3. Let the guilt come, and pass

"No" is a complete sentence.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If putting everyone else first is leaving you drained or resentful, a psychologist can help. Ask your GP about a Mental Health Treatment Plan for Medicare rebates.

DID YOU KNOW?

The phrase the disease to please was popularised by psychologist Harriet Braiker's 2001 book of the same name.

Braiker, The Disease to Please, 2001

THE KEY TAKEAWAY

You can be kind and have limits. In fact, the kindest relationships have them.

Need support right now? Lifeline **13 11 14** · Emergency **000** — available 24/7. More options: **mindhealth.com.au/urgent-help**

TALK TO US WHEN YOU'RE READY

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