

The background of the page is a warm-toned photograph of a wooden desk. In the top left, a light-colored pen lies diagonally across a small, closed notebook. To the left of the central text box, a cluster of small, light-colored flowers with green leaves is visible. In the top right corner, a glass of water with a green stem is partially shown. The central text is contained within a white rectangular box.

the
**PEOPLE
PLEASER
SELF-
REFLECTION
GUIDE**
**UNDERSTANDING
PEOPLE PLEASING AND
IT'S CONSEQUENCES**

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What is People Pleasing?

Surprisingly, people pleasing is not actually anything to do with pleasing people. It's not an attempt to please people or make them happy.

At the core of people pleasing lies a deep-rooted fear of our own discomfort. We prioritise others' happiness to avoid facing our own unease.

Self-reflection: When was the last time you pleased someone at a cost to yourself? Think deeply about why you made that choice. What was the real reason you carried out that behaviour?



Signs of People Pleasing

- Inability to say no
- Constantly saying yes to people at a sacrifice to yourself.
- Over apologising
- Apologising all the time, even when you've not actually done anything that needs to be apologised for.
- Putting others first
- Always putting everyone else's needs before your own, sacrificing your time and wellbeing.
- Hiding your opinions
- Being scared of expressing your own opinion, agreeing with others even when you completely disagree.
- Fear of conflict
- Avoiding disagreements or difficult conversations at all costs, even when important issues need to be addressed.
- Seeking constant validation
- Needing approval from others to feel worthy, and basing your self-worth on what others think of you.
- Taking on too much responsibility
- Volunteering for extra tasks or shouldering burdens that aren't yours to carry.
- Feeling responsible for others' emotions
- Believing it's your job to make everyone happy and feeling guilty when someone is upset.
- The common thread in all these signs is sacrifice - you're constantly giving up your needs, wants, time, and wellbeing for others. This pattern of self-sacrifice is the core of people pleasing behaviour.

The Difference Between Kindness and People Pleasing



1 True Kindness

Being kind because you genuinely want to help others. It comes from your heart and isn't a sacrifice to you.

You can be kind while still setting boundaries and taking care of yourself.

2 People Pleasing

Feeling that you must be kind all the time, no matter what. It's driven by fear and obligation rather than genuine desire.

You sacrifice your own needs and feel guilty when you don't please others.

A kind person can have bad days and still be a good person. People pleasing doesn't allow you to have bad days or be human - you have to be nice all of the time or you feel bad, which is impossible.

Common Fears Linked to People Pleasing

1 Fear of rejection

Being scared that people might reject you, not want anything to do with you, or not invite you out again.

2 Fear of not being good enough

Constantly worrying that you don't measure up to expectations, driving you to overachieve and seek validation through excessive helping and compliance.

3 Fear of abandonment

Being deeply afraid that people will leave you or withdraw their affection, often stemming from early experiences where you felt abandoned or neglected.

4 Fear of criticism

Being terrified of someone saying something bad about you because of how it made you feel when you were criticised in the past.

5 Fear of conflict

Being afraid of getting into a disagreement with somebody, often due to past experiences where conflict felt unsafe.

6 Fear of Not Being Liked

Being anxious about others having negative opinions about you, leading to behaviours aimed at ensuring people have a positive impression of you.

These fears often develop from past experiences that leave our brain stuck in survival mode. People-pleasing becomes a safety behaviour to protect us from feeling bad and triggering the fear.

Some of the Consequences of People Pleasing

1 Sacrificing Your Needs:
Putting everyone else's needs before your own, neglecting personal priorities.

2 Academic/Career Impact:
Risking failure in school or work by prioritising others over your responsibilities.

3 Financial Consequences:
Accumulating debt by being unable to refuse lending money to others.

4 Emotional Exhaustion:
Experiencing burnout from continuous efforts to please everyone.

5 Damaged Relationships:
Building resentment when consistently prioritising others over your authentic self.

6 Being Taken Advantage Of:
Becoming a target for exploitation due to difficulty saying no.

7 Loss of Identity:
Losing connection with your true self as your identity becomes defined by external approval.

The Benefits of Overcoming People Pleasing

1 Authentic Relationships:

You'll build connections based on mutual respect rather than obligation. People will know the real you, not a version created to please others.

2 Reduced Anxiety:

The discomfort of saying "no" will fade as your brain learns there's no danger. That knot in your stomach before social events will dissolve.

3 More Energy:

Stop exhausting yourself monitoring others' needs and gain energy for what truly matters to you. Many feel "lighter" within weeks of practice.

4 Increased Self-Worth:

Develop internal validation instead of seeking others' approval. Your self-worth strengthens with each boundary you maintain.

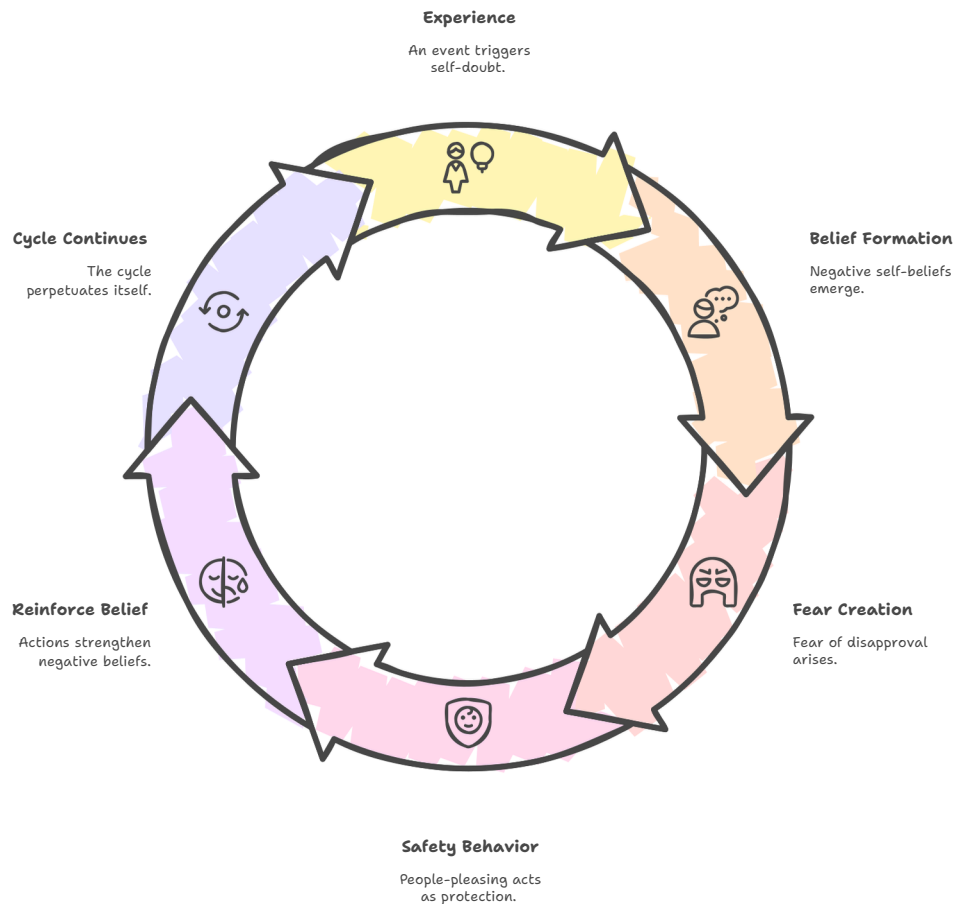
5 Improved Boundaries:

Recognise when discomfort is just resistance to change. With practice, setting boundaries becomes your new normal, like any essential habit.

6 Greater Resilience:

View mistakes as growth opportunities, not evidence of unworthiness.

The People Pleasing Cycle



Made with Napkin

You have an experience

→ You form a belief about yourself:

“I’m not good enough.” “I’m a failure.” “I’m unlikable.” “I’m a bad person.”

This belief creates a fear

→ For example: “I fear being disliked.”

Your brain tries to protect you

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→ So it develops people-pleasing as a safety behaviour to avoid rejection or disapproval.

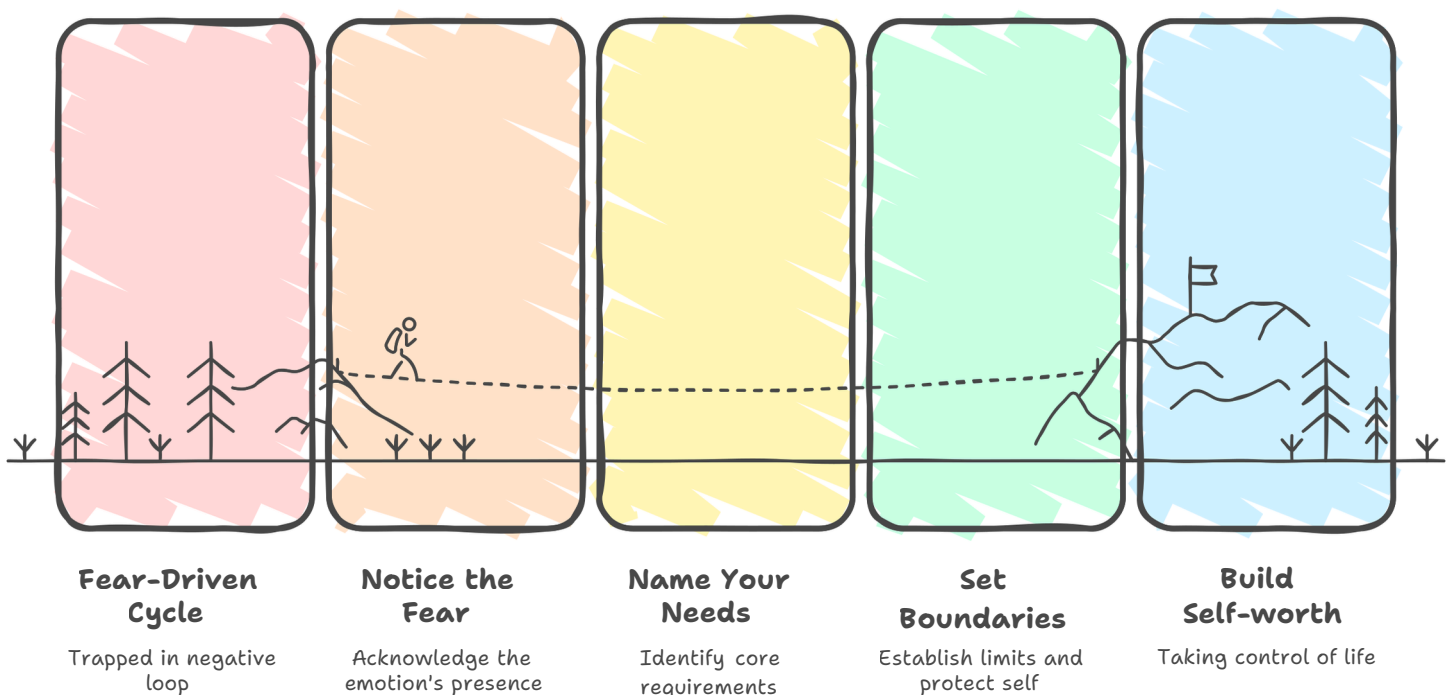
You please others

→ You say yes when you mean no, avoid conflict, seek approval — all to avoid activating the fear.

But this reinforces the belief and keeps you stuck in a low sense of self-worth and feeling fearful

→ And the people-pleasing continues, keeping you trapped in the cycle.

How To Break The Cycle



ARE YOU A PEOPLE PLEASER?

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DATE

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DATE

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper designed for writing. It features ten horizontal blue lines spaced evenly down the page. On each side, there are two vertical red lines that create margins. The top margin is wider than the bottom margin. There are also small red tick marks at the ends of each horizontal line where they meet the vertical margin lines.