

People Pleasing

Introduction

In this unit, we will explore people-pleasing as it pertains to women with ADHD.

First, we will look at how these patterns might have emerged in your life. Then, we will explore how your people-pleasing can change, paying some attention to how the Flourish model can help.

Finally, we will learn some specific ways to say no, which is part of the **antidote** to people pleasing.

Defining People-Pleasing

People-pleasing is a behavior pattern where you regularly prioritize others' needs at your own expense, often to receive acceptance and approval.

People-pleasing behaviors could include:

- Not expressing your needs
- Apologizing for no reason
- Feeling responsible for others' happiness
- Not voicing your personal beliefs at your own expense
- Persistently putting others' comfort before your own, even when there is a cost to you

As a result of people-pleasing you may experience burnout, exhaustion, and resentment

The Roots of People-Pleasing in Women with ADHD

Many women with ADHD adopt people-pleasing behaviors as a coping mechanism.

People pleasing is one of the "old skills" in our model.

It emerges in adhd girls due to overwhelming societal pressures, personal experiences, and internal emotional dynamics.



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The Search for Acceptance and Approval

Young girls with ADHD frequently resort to people-pleasing to obtain approval and acceptance.

Feeling judged and like they're falling short in areas of life where other girls may be excelling, they learn that pleasing others is an effective strategy to garner approval and circumvent criticism.

Does this resonate with you?

It's important to know that the people-pleasing part of you has learned to protect and help you, much like the silenced part. It developed as an intelligent, intuitive survival strategy during your younger years.

Certain behaviors we've adopted can sometimes outgrow their usefulness as we mature. Unfortunately, the people-pleasing part, once so helpful, can become overactive and even disruptive in your adult life, putting you out of balance and causing stress. Let's look at how.



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The Downside of People-Pleasing

While people-pleasing behaviors can sometimes feel rewarding, they can also have significant downsides. By continually attuning to others' needs over your own, you may find yourself experiencing the following:

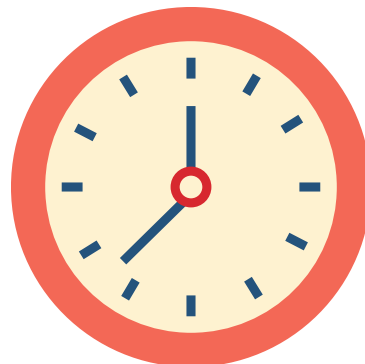
Difficulty Setting Boundaries: People-pleasers often find it challenging to say no due to fear of disappointing others, leading to increased stress and anxiety.



Neglect of Self-Care and Mental Well-being: Continual focus on others' emotions and neglect of personal needs can result in a harmful imbalance, potentially manifesting as burnout and depression.



Struggles with Time and Commitment Management: Prioritizing others over personal responsibilities can compound existing time management issues, especially for those managing ADHD.



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The Downside of People-Pleasing

Anger and Resentment in Relationships: The inability to assert personal needs can create resentment and difficulties within relationships.

Emotional and Physical Burnout: Continual overextension without adequate self-care can lead to burnout.

Increased Vulnerability to Exploitation: A tendency to people-please can make one more susceptible to being taken advantage of in relationships.

Inauthenticity: Constant people-pleasing can create a disconnect between external behaviors and internal feelings, resulting in a lack of authenticity.

As we talk about working on people-pleasing, it's essential to note that the aim is not to get rid of pleasing or caring for others, but rather to find a balance so that these actions don't harm you.

Let's explore ways to recognize, negotiate with, and gently change some of your people-pleasing behaviors if you choose to.



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Recognizing and Balancing Your People-Pleasing Part

There's a crucial difference between freely choosing to help others and falling into people-pleasing out of fear or needing approval that becomes harmful to self-care.

Being helpful, kind, and considerate of others is a positive trait, often encouraged by spiritual teachings worldwide. The problem arises when the act of pleasing others starts to harm you.

Using Skills of Self-Awareness to Discern People Pleasing

One way to help you discern when you are being kind versus doing harmful people-pleasing is to ask,

"Am I pleasing others at my own cost?".



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If you choose to work on this, you should have this question written down or posted somewhere to prompt you throughout the day.

If you feel like you need more help answering that question, you can go even deeper with these questions:

- Are you doing something because you want to, or feel you have to out of fear?
- Are you giving up the crucial time for your work or personal tasks you need to make others happy?
- Are you doing things you're not comfortable with to please others?
- Are you doing more for a person or relationship(consistently and over time) than they do for you?
- Do you feel angry, resentful, or guilty about the things you are doing? These are often clues that things are off and it's time to set a boundary. Not signs that you are bad or wrong.
- Do you feel good or bad when you are doing things for another person or other people?



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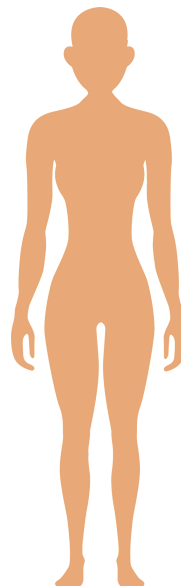
Using your body to decode whether you're in pleasing mode

Your body can be a valuable resource in helping you understand whether you're acting from a place of kindness or a fear-based desire to please others.

Ask yourself:

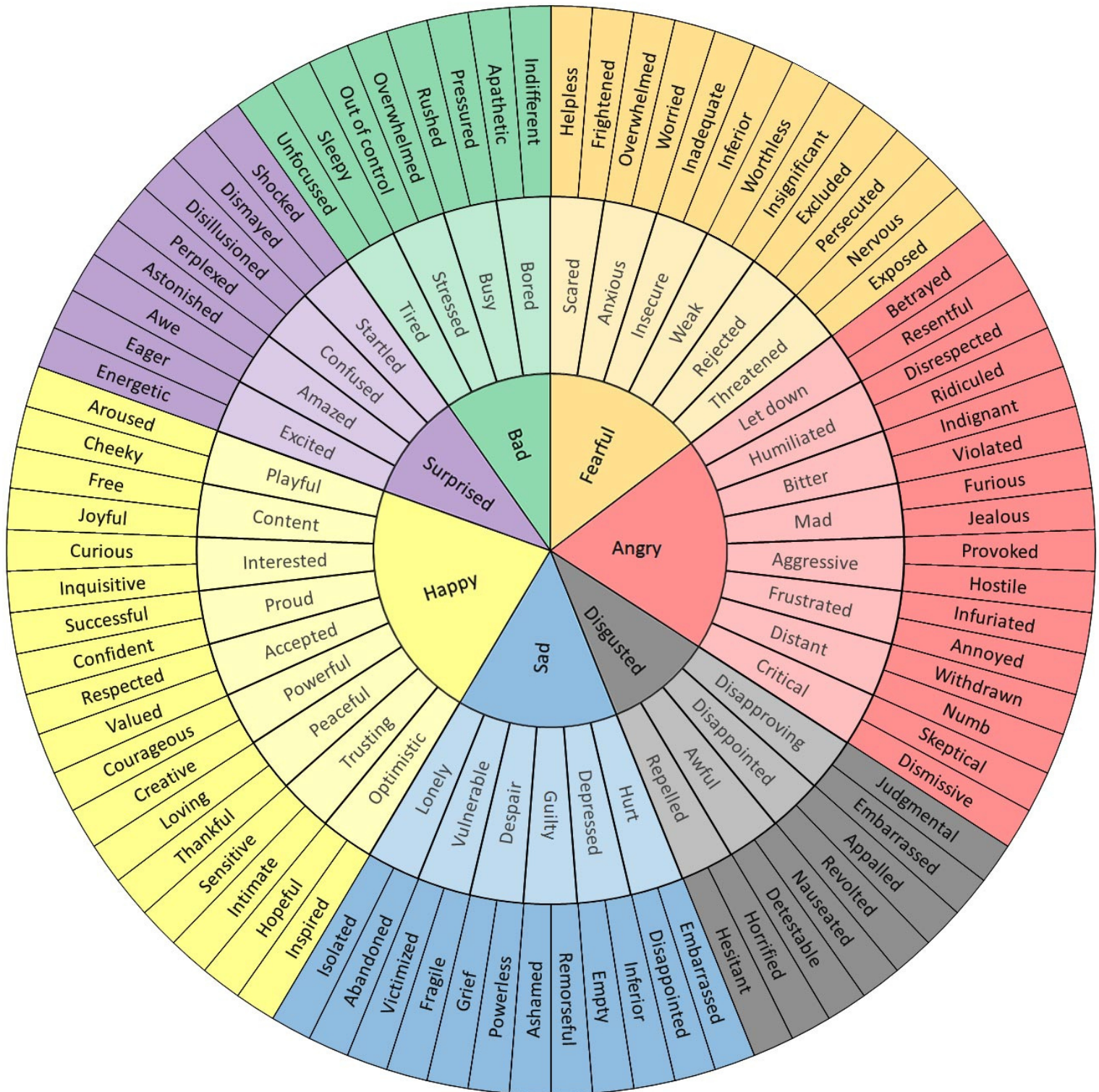
"Am I being genuinely kind (which should feel good), or am I pleasing out of fear (which won't feel as positive)?"

To answer this, tap into your body's signals.



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Using your body to decode whether you're in pleasing mode



People Pleasing

Using your body to decode whether you're in pleasing mode

Remember our unit on emotions? We discussed how bodily signs provide critical clues for decision-making and problem-solving.

For instance, if you're people-pleasing, you might notice discomforts like a sick feeling in your stomach, tight fists, or chest tension (it varies for everyone). You can understand and listen to your emotions more effectively by learning to interpret these signals.

Recognizing bodily signals and emotions can be a daunting task, especially since society often undervalues the importance of emotions. If you struggle, you aren't alone.

But you can learn how to do it even if you have trouble. Practice makes perfect. Use the feelings wheel and the body picture to begin practice!



BODY FEELINGS WORDS

tingly open clenched tight loose heavy knotted
swirly itchy fidgety

Eyes feel stinging
blurry or focused

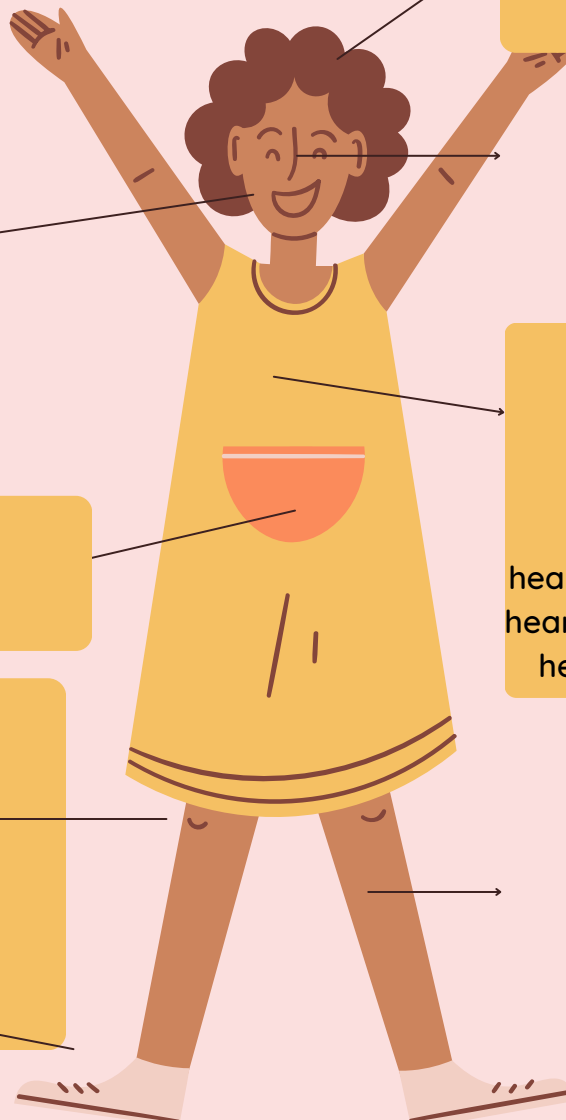
Head can feel buzzy,
neutral, clear, dizzy
swirly, heavy

Jaw can feel
clenched or tight

Stomach can feel
fluttery, calm,
neutral, knotted,
nauseous

Chest
feels tight
fluttery
heavy
open
heart beating fast
heart beating slow
heart stopped

Legs can feel
heavy, tingly like
they want to run
like they are
stuck
like they are
numb



credit to Dr. Megan Neff for this idea



Flourish
A group for ADHD Women

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Using your body to decode whether you're in pleasing mode

As a woman with ADHD, you have likely been disconnected from your body in various ways, which is where these signals originate. In fact, all people in Western society have.

Remember, we learned in units 3 and 4 that our emotions serve as navigational tools, offering insights about the world around us and guiding our decisions. We also learned that these emotions are experienced physically.

Your emotions function as an intuitive guide, signaling when your pleasing part may be overactive. Observing how your body reacts in certain situations and being mindful of the signals it gives you is a practical way to be aware of when you may be pleasing more than you want to. Learning to start to tune in to your body can start to develop self-trust.



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Why does disembodiment happen?

There are several reasons why women with ADHD might become disembodied or disconnected from their bodies.

Sensory Processing:

Everyone takes in information from their surroundings through senses like touch, taste, and sight. For women with ADHD, their brain might process these sensations differently. They could be more sensitive to certain things or less aware of them than others. This difference can cause a disconnect between what they physically feel and the emotions they tie to those feelings. For example, a tag on a shirt might be extremely bothersome to a woman with ADHD, but not to someone else.

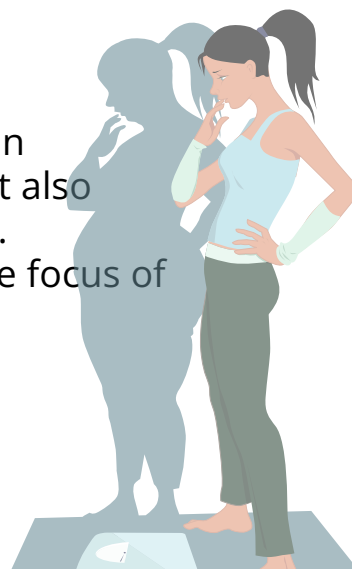
Secondly, 'masking,' often encouraged during childhood, leads to a disconnect from the body's signals and needs. To fit societal norms, women with ADHD might suppress their instinctual responses, causing them to lose touch with their physical cues over time.

Thirdly, to cope with the stress or trauma that often coexists with ADHD, women might disconnect from their feelings and bodily sensations. While this helps manage distress, it can also lead to a feeling of being detached from their bodies.

Societal Pressure:

Society's rigid beauty standards can cause women with ADHD to dislike intensely and even hate their own appearances. Feeling they don't fit these ideals, they may experience a profound disconnect from and mistrust of their bodies.

In light of these factors, reconnecting with your body becomes an empowering step toward developing self-trust and confidence. It also enhances your comfort level with interpreting emotional signals. Understanding and valuing this connection is vital and will be the focus of our exploration in upcoming modules



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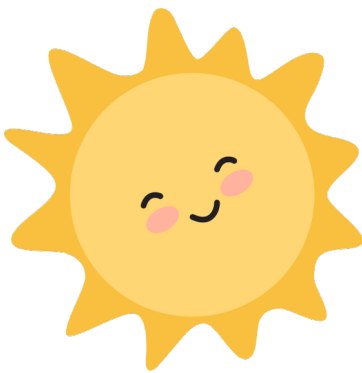
Learning New Self Skills: Saying No

Your people-pleasing tendency might make saying "no" challenging, so shifting away from this familiar coping strategy may involve mastering this new skill. Learning effective ways to say "no" can help you prioritize your needs and well-being, avoid resentment and burnout, and foster more genuine, balanced relationships.

Here's how:

- It stops you from taking on too much, which helps lower your stress levels.
- It protects you from being taken advantage of by others.
- It makes room for activities and tasks that you truly want to do and enjoy.
- It gives you more control and builds your self-confidence.

Learning to say "no" can greatly improve how you stand up for yourself.



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Learning New Self Skills: Saying No

Key elements of saying no include:

When communicating, it's essential to be mostly honest, concise, and calm and friendly. It's also best to avoid excessive apologies or making excuses.

A word on apologies.

Your words, time, and energy are precious—no apology is needed. You don't owe an apology when you choose to say 'no' or establish limits that serve your wellbeing.

Phrases for Assertive Refusal

When you're learning to say "no," it can be helpful to have some prepared responses to lean on. Here are some you might find helpful:

1. "How nice of you to think of me, but I'm stretched too thin now to take this on."
2. "I wish I could assist, but my current obligations won't allow me to dedicate the necessary time."
3. "I appreciate your consideration, but I can't add anything else to my plate right now"

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Learning New Self Skills: Saying No

4. "I would love to help, but I'm not able to commit to this right now."

5. "It's unfortunate, but I just can't fit this into my schedule now."

6. "Thank you for your offer, but I won't be able to make it this week."

7. "I'm really flattered that you asked, but I can't manage any more commitments this week."

8. "I wish I had the bandwidth to help, but I simply don't have the capacity right now."

9. "I'd love to assist, but my current workload won't allow me to."

10. "Thank you for thinking of me, but I'm unable to commit to this task (activity) at the moment."

11. "Oh darn, I wish I could, but I've got something else going on."

12. "I wish I could, but I have a lot on my plate now."

13. "That sounds fun, but I can't make it this time."

14. "I'd love to, but I've already made plans. Maybe next time!"

15. "Thanks for the invite, but I need to take a rain check."

16. "I'm really tied up at the moment, so I'm going to have to pass. Enjoy!"

17. "I can't this time, but keep me in the loop for the next one!"

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Learning New Self Skills: Saying No

The Broken Record Technique

This technique involves calmly and firmly repeating your refusal.

Let's use the example of a colleague insisting you take an extra project.

Here's how you might use the technique:

Colleague: "Could you take on this extra project for me? It's not too big."

You: "I appreciate your offer, but I can't add anything else to my plate right now."

Colleague: "But it really isn't that much extra work."

You: "As I mentioned earlier, I can't manage any more commitments at the moment." or repeat the exact phrase, "As I said, I can't add anything else to my plate right now."

Colleague: "Are you sure? I could really use your help."

You: "As I stated before, I'm unable to assist with this."

To stop you from giving in to people who pressure you like this, prepare yourself ahead of time with people you know will pressure you by reminding yourself you will be using this technique.

Is there anyone you think this technique might work on in your life?



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Learning New Self Skills: Saying No

Refusal Strategy: The Power of "I Don't" vs. "I Can't"

This strategy is handy when dealing with persistent individuals or salespeople.

The distinction lies in the strength of conviction that "I don't" presents over "I can't." Saying "I can't" may sound like an excuse and potentially invite a debate or negotiation, whereas "I don't" implies a personal rule or standard, showing that you stand firm in your decision.

For example, when a cashier offers you a store credit card you don't want, saying, "I don't get store credit cards," comes off as a more decisive refusal than "I can't get a store credit card right now." The can't opens up opportunities to sell the card to you or convince you.

Similarly, if you're invited to an event on a weekday, and you've made a personal rule to reserve weekdays for work or rest, say, "I don't go out on weeknights," which is more assertive and decisive compared to "I can't go out this weeknight."

This refusal method exhibits conviction and firmness, making it less likely for others to challenge your decision.



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Tips for Practicing Saying 'No'

Practice in Low-Stakes Situations:

1. Begin using your new strategies where the stakes are low, making you feel less anxious.

Example: It's easier to decline a request from a stranger than from a coworker.

Develop Anchor Phrases for Common Scenarios:

2. Create go-to scripts to use in frequent situations.

Examples:

"No, I don't buy from salespeople."

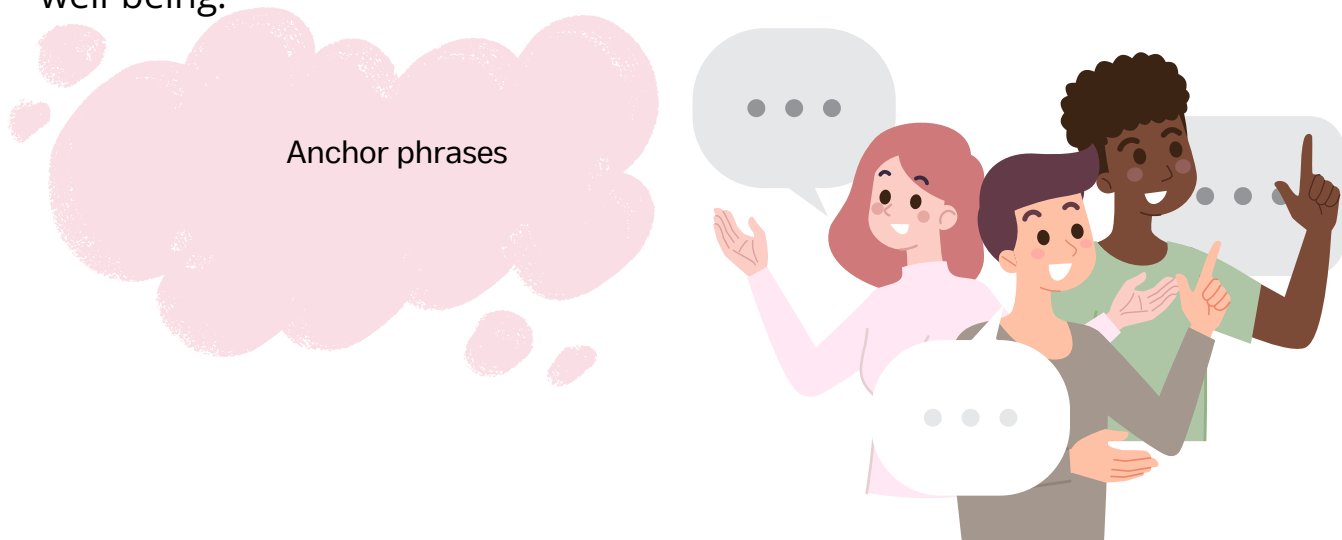
"No, I don't go out during the week."

"I wish I could, but I have a lot on my plate right now."

3. Rehearse these phrases until they become automatic responses. This reduces decision-making time and prevents you from agreeing just to be polite.

Benefits of Practicing:

Regularly practicing these tips will help you become more comfortable with saying 'no,' allowing you to better protect your time, energy, and emotional well-being.



People Pleasing:

Self Compassion For Difficulties With No

Considerations Surrounding the Act of Saying 'No'

It's important to remember that the capacity to say 'no' can be influenced by various factors.

Trauma can occur if your 'no' is continuously disregarded or disrespected. If you've experienced trauma, it can be harder to say no but also very healing to begin the process. As always, be gentle and kind to yourself; it is not an easy or quick process to learn these skills.

Systems benefit from you not saying no.

Oppressive systems, unhealthy family dynamics, or harmful work environments can often benefit from your inability to assert boundaries or say 'no'.

Improving your assertiveness skills and ability to say no can be an essential part of healing, but there may be pushback; remember to consider the circumstances in which you are practicing your nos and check in for a sense of safety.

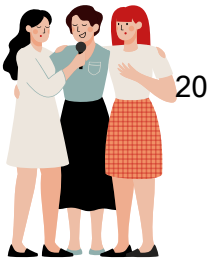
Your Body is Key to the Process

Physical sensations and emotional cues are crucial in boundary setting and saying 'no.' While logic and reason can support this process, they shouldn't be the only factors considered.

Practicing and mastering the saying 'no' can alleviate the stress associated with overextension and promote better management of executive functioning issues.

However, societal norms and expectations, especially for women, often discourage self-prioritization. Therefore, working on these skills can be challenging but ultimately empowering and beneficial for personal well-being.





People Pleasing Group Activity

The words 'yes' and 'no' are instrumental in self-advocacy, self-care, fostering self-confidence, and building self-trust. They enable us to set personal boundaries, express our needs, and make choices.

Experience the Joy of a Genuine 'Yes'

Recall a time when you said 'Yes' freely and felt the joy and happiness that a genuine 'Yes' provides. This can be anything at all, a fun activity, a project you took on, a day you spent alone. Something you invited into your life and agreed to. Take a few minutes to describe this experience. Share it with the group, and think about the physical and emotional responses you have when you think of saying yes to the experience.

Think about a time when you felt obligated to say 'Yes' due to a desire to please others. Share this experience with your group and discuss the physical and emotional responses you had.

Asserting Boundaries with 'No'

Can you recall a time when you said 'No' and felt empowered? It can be anything at all, from being assertive in a relationship to calling in sick when ill, to choosing one dress over another. Can you tune in to anything going on in your body? What was that experience like? Can you share that with your group?

Discussion and Reflection

After each member has shared their experiences, discuss as a group the power of 'Yes' and 'No'. Reflect on the importance of saying 'Yes' or 'No' authentically.

Weekly Reflection:

Throughout the next week, practice mindfulness of your "Yeses" and "Nos". Pay attention to the situations in which you say them, and your feelings and bodily reactions when you do. Note any patterns or insights that emerge. Bring these observations to our next meeting for discussion.



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Learning New Self Skills: Saying No

Extra Credit:

Deepening the Understanding of 'Yes' and 'No'
For those of you looking for additional exploration and growth, consider these steps to delve deeper into your relationship with the words "Yes" and "No." This work will help you further your understanding and provide valuable insights for our future group discussions.

Reflect on Your Conditioning

Consider how personal experiences and societal conditioning may have shaped your relationship with "Yes" and "No." **1. Have you been conditioned to say "Yes" at the cost of your own well-being?**

Acknowledge Disregarded Boundaries

2. Recall instances where your "No" has been disregarded or violated. How have these experiences impacted your current behavior and ability to assert boundaries?

The Weight of 'Yes'

3. What does it feel like to always say 'Yes' out of worry to please others? Describe these feelings in detail, noting both physical and emotional responses.

Remember, it's perfectly okay to say "No" when you need to, and it's equally okay to say "Yes" when you genuinely want to. The goal is to honor your feelings, needs, and boundaries.

4. Does anything resonate from this unit as beneficial to incorporate into your life? Any specific ideas or techniques? I encourage you to keep a journal where you can begin to add things that might be important to you!

