

- Personality

Build better boundaries Take your time

Understanding people-pleasing can make you feel less stressed.

The Week - Junior · 12 Apr 2024 · 19

Have you agreed to help someone when you don't really want to? Trying to please others because you're afraid to say no isn't the same thing as being kind.



What does people-pleasing mean?

Doing a good deed like helping your friend with their homework or sharing a snack can make you feel happy. Studies show that kindness is good for your wellbeing. However, if you often agree to things you don't want to do, or feel guilty saying no, you could be falling into a people-pleasing trap. It's not always easy to tell when this happens but one clue is that it's difficult to stop. Pleasing other people may feel good for a short while but the feeling doesn't last. This is why it's a good idea to set limits on what you'll do for others. These are called "boundaries".

Why are boundaries important?

Spending too much energy on someone else can stop you doing things you want or need to do. Research has found that trying to please others can leave us feeling stressed and uncomfortable. We can also feel angry and frustrated with ourselves and our friends. "There's nothing wrong with being kind to other people," says Dr Toru Sato, an author and expert in thoughts and feelings, but we need to be sure we're doing it out of kindness, not because we're

worried about what other people think.

How to set clear boundaries

Taking on so much that you end up letting others down doesn't make you a better friend. The youth mental health charity YoungMinds says boundaries include taking time alone

when you need it and being able to explain your needs. If saying no feels hard, practise with small things, like if someone offers a straw in a restaurant. This can help you feel more confident. Thinking about how to say no also helps, YoungMinds says, and allows you to communicate what you want clearly and calmly. Remember, you don't need an excuse to say no; you don't owe anyone an explanation. The good people in your life will respect this boundary.

When someone asks you to do something, give yourself time to think about it before answering immediately.

Put time aside every day just for you and spend it doing something you enjoy, like reading a book or listening to music.

It can be scary speaking out but avoiding others instead may harm your friendships, so try to be honest about how you feel.