People Pleasing

In this unit, we will explore people-pleasing.

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

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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Development of People Pleasing

The Search for Acceptance and Approval

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

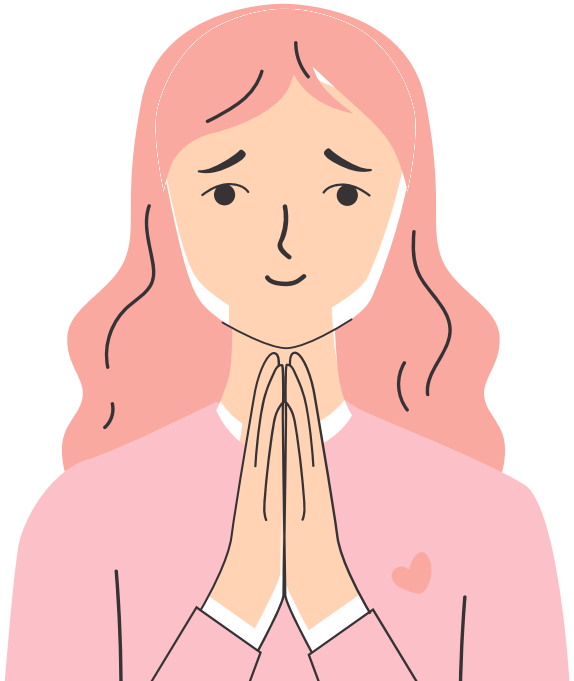
Feeling judged and like they're falling short in areas of life where other girls may be excelling, they learn that pleasing others is an effective strategy to garner approval and circumvent criticism.

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 other's 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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people pleasing

Learning How to Balance Your People Pleasing

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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people pleasing

Using Your Self-Awareness

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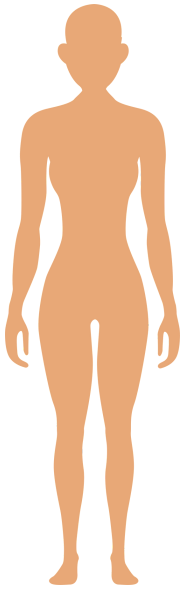
Using your body to decode whether you're in pleasing mode

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:

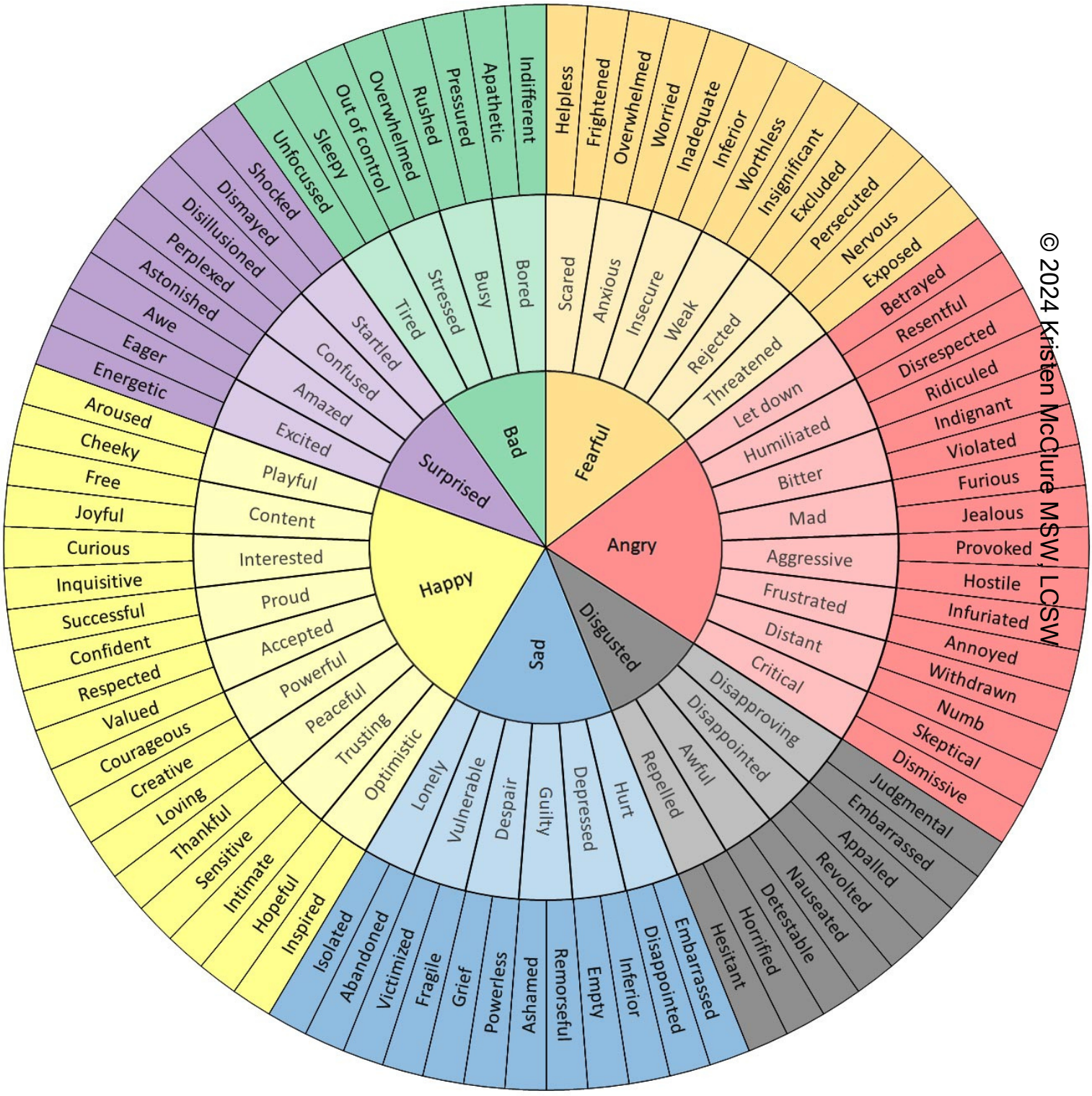
"Am I being genuinely kind (which should feel good), or am I pleasing out of fear (which won't feel as positive)?"

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



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The Feelings Wheel



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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!

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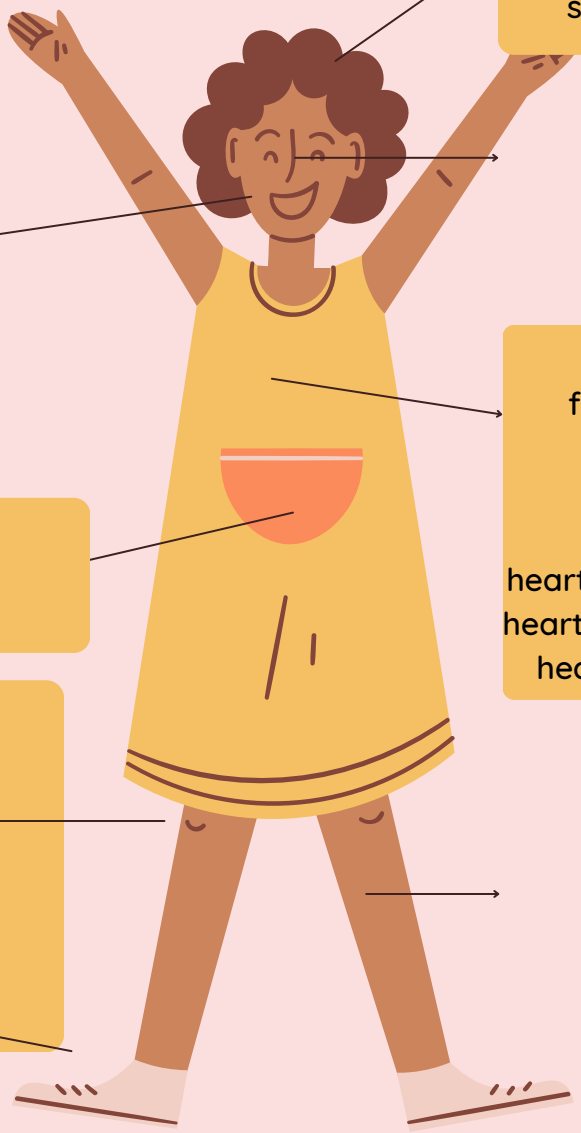
BODY FEELINGS WORDS

tingly open clenched tight loose heavy knotted

swirly itchy fidgety

Eyes feel stingy
blurry or focused

Head can feel buzzy,
neutral, clear, dizzy
swarmy. heavy



Jaw can feel
clenched or tight

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

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

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

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people pleasing

credit to Dr. Megan Neff for this idea

Flourish
A group for ADHD Women

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

Many of us, including you, have likely become disconnected from our bodies in various ways. Yet, it's important to remember that our bodily signals are where emotions and feelings originate. This disconnection is a common experience, especially in Western society.

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?

For ADHD women, this sense of disconnection or detachment from the body can feel particularly pronounced. Let's take a closer look at some of the reasons this happens and explore how it impacts daily life—and, more importantly, how reconnecting with your body can help build self-trust.

Sensory Processing Challenges

We all rely on our senses—like touch, taste, and sight—to understand the world around us. If you're a woman with ADHD, your brain might process sensory information differently. You may find yourself more sensitive to certain sensations or, in some cases, less aware of them. This mismatch can create a disconnect between your physical experiences and the emotions tied to those sensations.

For example, something as small as a shirt tag might feel unbearably irritating to you, even if it's barely noticeable to others. Over time, this heightened or dulled sensory processing can make it harder to stay in tune with your body's needs.

The Impact of Masking

Many ADHD woman are taught from a young age to "mask" their natural behaviors in order to fit societal expectations. This might mean suppressing instinctual reactions or ignoring bodily signals, like hunger or fatigue, to appear more "typical." Over time, masking can weaken your connection to your body, making it harder to recognize and respond to physical cues.



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Why does disembodiment happen?

Coping with Stress and Trauma

As an ADHD woman, you may face stress, rejection, or even trauma, which can lead you to disconnect from your feelings as a way to cope. While this strategy might offer temporary relief, it can also leave you feeling detached from your body and emotions in the long term.

Societal Beauty Standards

On top of these challenges, rigid societal beauty standards can create intense pressure to look a certain way. If you feel like you don't fit these ideals, it's easy to experience frustration or even self-loathing. This mistrust or dislike of your appearance can deepen your disconnection from your body.

Why Reconnecting with Your Body Matters

Rebuilding a connection with your body is an empowering step toward self - trust and confidence. It helps you interpret emotional signals more clearly and feel more comfortable in your own skin. Understanding and valuing this connection is essential—and it's something we'll dive deeper into in upcoming modules.

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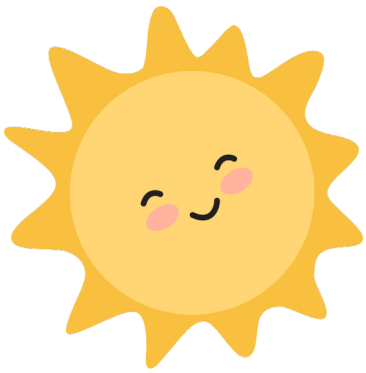
Learning New Self Skills: Saying No

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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Saying No Phrases

Key elements of saying no include:

☑ Be honest, concise, and calm while being friendly.

☑ Avoid excessive apologies or making excuses.

A word on apologies.

Your time energy and boundaries are valuable—you don't need to apologize for protecting them. Setting no or **setting limits to support your well-being is entirely valid and does not need to be justified.**

Phrases for Assertive Refusal

"Thank you for thinking of me, but I'm stretched too thin right now to take this on."

"I wish I could help, but my current obligations won't allow me to dedicate the necessary time."

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

"I'm choosing to prioritize my time differently at the moment."

"I'll have to decline; I need to reserve my energy for other things."

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Saying No

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Low Stakes Family Situations

Family Scenarios: Saying No While Managing People-Pleasing

Family situations often amplify people-pleasing tendencies because of emotional ties and long-standing dynamics.

These scenarios illustrate how you can practice saying no (in low stakes situations)in ways that are firm yet kind, helping you prioritize your well-being to AVOID BURNOUT without straining relationships.

Attending Family Events

Relative: "You have to come to the dinner—it won't be the same without you!"
Response: "Thank You. I appreciate the invitation, but I'll have to miss it this time."

Being the "Go-To" Person

Family Member: "You're so good at cooking can you cater the family reunion?"
Response: "Thank You!' I'm glad you thought of me, but I can't take on something that big right now."

Reflection Exercise:

Consider a time when you found it hard to say no in a family situation. What made it difficult?

_____
_____ _____
_____

How could you handle a similar scenario differently using the examples above? Write down a few responses that feel natural and empowering to you:

_____ _____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

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The Broken Record Technique

Now that you've learned key elements of saying no and explored phrases for assertive refusals, let's take it a step further. Sometimes, simply saying no once isn't enough—especially when dealing with people who push or pressure you.

The Broken Record Technique is a practical method to help you stay firm. It's simple but effective: calmly and consistently repeat your refusal, no matter how many times a person tries to persuade you.
Here's how it works:

Example: A Colleague Asking for Help

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."

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

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

By staying calm and repeating the same message, you make it clear that your decision isn't open to negotiation.



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Preparing to Use This Technique

If you know someone who tends to pressure you, practicing this technique in advance can be helpful. Remind yourself that you don't need to justify or over - explain your refusal. Instead, focus on staying calm and consistent.

Reflective Exercise

Think about situations where you've struggled to hold your boundaries in the past.
Is there someone in your life who might push back when you say no?

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How could the Broken Record Technique help you respond in those situations?

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Write down specific scenarios or people where you'd like to apply this approach:

_____ _____
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_____

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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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Gradually Practicing Strategies

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:

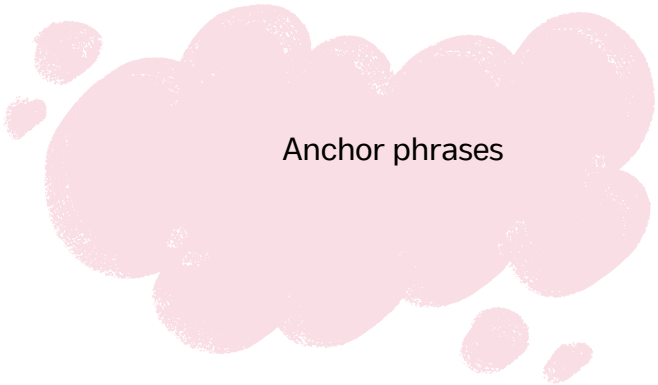
2. Create go-to scripts to use in frequent situations.
Examples:

"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.





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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.

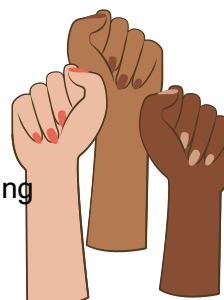
Your Body is Key to the Process

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 over extension 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.

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People Pleasing Reflection

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.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The Obligation of Yes

Think about a time when you felt obligated to say 'Yes' due to a desire to please others.

Describe this experience. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Share the physical and emotional responses you have when thinking about this _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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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 one dress over another.

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Can you tune in to anything going on in your body now thinking about it?_____ _____
_____ ____ _____
_____ ___ _____
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Reflect on the importance of saying 'Yes' or 'No' authentically.

Weekly Reflection:

Throughout the next week pay attention to the situations in which you say yes and no and your feelings and bodily reactions when you do. Note any patterns or insights that emerge .

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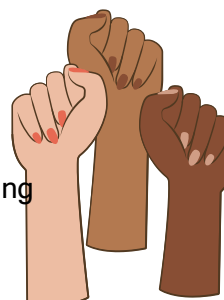
Additional Reflections
Reflect on Your Conditioning

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

._____ ____ _____
_____ ____ _____
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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. Ask Yourself: Does anything resonate from this unit as beneficial to incorporate into your life?

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