

The People-Pleasing Cycle

People-pleasing often begins as a way to feel safe, accepted or valued. Over time it can become a cycle that leaves you exhausted, resentful and disconnected from yourself — but understanding it is the first step to changing it.

1 NOTICE A NEED

You sense someone else's need, expectation, or unspoken opinion.

2 PEOPLE-PLEASE

You put their needs first — say yes, agree, or go along — even when it doesn't feel right.

3 SHORT-TERM RELIEF

You feel accepted, avoid conflict, and gain a moment of safety or approval.

4 BUILDING PRESSURE

Your own needs, feelings and boundaries get pushed aside as tiredness or resentment builds.

5

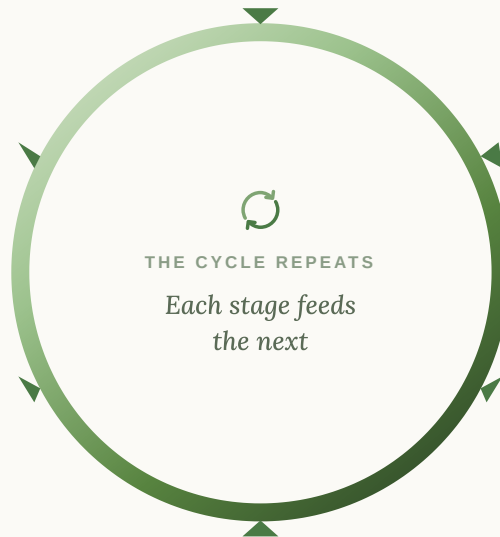
LOSS OF SELF

You feel disconnected from what you want or value; self-worth depends on approval.

6

INCREASED ANXIETY

You worry about disappointing others or fear rejection — and the cycle begins again.



Breaking The Cycle

1

NOTICE THE PATTERN

Become aware of when people-pleasing shows up in your thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

2

PAUSE AND CHECK IN

Ask yourself: what do I need right now? What feels right for me, not just for them?

3

PRACTISE SMALL STEPS

It's okay to pause, say no, set a boundary, or take time to think. Each step builds a more authentic you.

Common People-Pleasing Behaviours

Saying yes when you want to say no

Apologising unnecessarily

Avoiding conflict

Taking responsibility for others' feelings

Over-explaining decisions

Seeking approval or reassurance

A Kinder Perspective

People-pleasing is usually a learned strategy, not a character flaw — often developed for good reasons, such as a wish to feel safe, loved or accepted. With awareness and practice, you can learn to honour your own needs while still caring about others.

"You can care about others and still care for yourself."

SOURCES

Braiker, H. B. (2001). *The Disease to Please: Curing the People-Pleasing Syndrome*. McGraw-Hill.
Walker, P. (2013). *Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving*. Azure Coyote.