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# HOW TO SAY NO

Learn How to Easily Say "No" Without  
Feeling Guilty, Take Control of Your Life,  
and Kick the Disease to Please Others

## Table of Contents

<i>A Quick Note from the Author .....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Chapter 1 - Have you got the Disease to Please?.....</i>	<i>4</i>
Being door-stepped .....	4
Whose life is it anyway?.....	4
People-pleasing .....	5
People-pleasing: top twenty traits .....	6
Distinguish between being a helpful person and being a doormat .....	7
Disease to Please checklist.....	7
How did you score?.....	8
Addictive behaviour.....	9
<i>Chapter two - Living free of the Disease to Please.....</i>	<i>9</i>
Choosing when to say 'yes' .....	9
Choosing when to help .....	11
Knowing what you want .....	13
<i>Emotional literacy .....</i>	<i>15</i>
Power of decision .....	17
<b>Resources .....</b>	<b>18</b>

## A Quick Note from the Author

Hi, I'm Linda Hill, and thanks for checking out my book on "How to Say 'No'".

I used to be please people and had a hard time saying "No" to others. I've dedicated the past decade to learn the best ways to stop being a people pleaser, and figure out the reasons behind what makes us the way we are.

Now I write books teaching others how to overcome "people pleasing" as well. Everything I say in this quick guide comes from my own personal experience implementing these methods.

So without further ado, let's get right into it!

## Chapter 1 - Have you got the Disease to Please?

### Being door-stepped

The doorbell rings. You're rushing to get out of the house for a special night out with friends; time is scarce and you're under pressure. Your pasta is boiling furiously on the stove and you have still to shower and get changed. You wonder whether to leave the door, but it could be something important.

On the doorstep is a slick young man with a clipboard who smiles, flashes his ID and starts rattling off a sales pitch about a new telephone company. You find yourself pretending to listen, door ajar, with your mind on all you have to do to get out of the house on time. Each time you think he's about to pause, you take a breath to speak, but his sales pitch slides on to the next point, and the next. You begin to feel desperate - you want to shut him up *but you don't know how*.

You try to butt into his well-oiled pitch and even consider slamming the door in his face, but every time you try he smiles sweetly and says, 'Yes, I can see you're busy, and I'll let you go, but just one more thing...' and off he goes again. Clearly he's been trained by Super-techno Sales Inc.: he's got to keep the patter going and he's got to close the deal. Anyway, part of you begins to get drawn into his sales pitch, almost against your will. It's only when you smell burning (oh no, my best pan!) and your mobile starts doing a wild fandango as your friends are making sure you're coming, that you're able to extricate yourself. However, as you are closing the door the door-stepper moves closer, trying to pin you down: can he come back later? Tomorrow? Would you like a leaflet, a brochure, a cold call from his colleague? Do you have email? By now you are about to commit murder, scream, pull your hair out, shout fire, *anything* to get rid of him.

When you eventually slam the door, loaded down with tariffs, brochures and phone numbers, you find mayhem in the kitchen and it's too late to shower. In fact, you're late for everything...

### Whose life is it anyway?

So why is it so hard to say, 'Stop, I don't have time for this', or, 'I don't buy things on the doorstep. Goodbye' (in frosty *Weakest Link* tones)? Of course, some people are very adept at closing the door on unwanted visitors - but this book is not for them. This book is for the thousands of us who find ourselves giving away our time, our energy, our money, our very selves, when, or perhaps *especially* when, we don't actually want to. The door-stepping scenario happens every day, in every way: political canvassers, religious fanatics or charity volunteers. It's easy to feel horribly trapped on your own doorstep or

phone by someone trying to sell you something, or paying attention to someone when you don't want to.

There you are, running along your own track, going about your business, then suddenly someone wants you to do something for them, to buy something or agree to their agenda. Or maybe they want you to listen to them: their problems, their sales pitch, even the gories about their stomach ulcer. You don't really want to be rude or thoughtless, but you also don't really want to be thrown off your own track. However, you can find yourself contorting into a double-back flip-flop loop-de-looper somersault trying to help, or listening until your ears drop off rather than being able to say a simple 'no' or extricate yourself from the situation. Back to our door-stepper at the beginning of this chapter.

What else could you do to handle the situation? Here's an action replay, with you acting decisively differently: The doorbell rings. You're rushing to get out of the house for a special night out with friends: time is scarce and you're under pressure. Your pasta is boiling furiously on the stove and you still have to shower and get changed. You wonder whether to leave the door, but think it might be something important. On the doorstep is a slick young man with a clipboard who smiles, flashes his ID card and starts rattling off a sales pitch about a new telephone company. 'Sorry,' you say, looking him directly in the eye, 'but I haven't got time for this now.'

He looks disgruntled, but continues charmingly, saying, 'Yes, I can see you're busy, and I'll let you go, but just one more thing ...' 'No,' you say, decisively, with a polite smile and looking him straight in the eye yet again, 'I have to go. Goodbye.' You close the door, with him protesting, 'Just take a leaflet...'

Consequently, you eat your pasta, change and get out the house on time to have a great evening with your friends.

When you come home, there's a sales brochure on the mat which you can read at leisure or simply put in the bin.

So what stops you acting decisively and confidently, as in the action replay above?

The reason?

You are probably a people-pleaser.

And...

You probably also find it hard to stand your ground with persuasive or bullying people.

And... You don't like to offend or seem rude.

And...

You probably want to be liked. Very much.

## People-pleasing

I'll admit it, I've been a terrible people-pleaser most of my life. Like a deranged good fairy, I get a kick out of being helpful, thoughtful and kind. I can find myself saying 'yes' before I think about the consequences. My arm shoots up,

almost with a will of its own, volunteering me for all sorts of things I haven't got time for: organising the school fair, decorating friends' houses, helping heartbroken girlfriends, shopping for a sick neighbour, looking after someone's goldfish when they're away, or meeting an extra, impossible, deadline for work. Inevitably, I get a wonderful 'high' while performing these tasks and I love the 'thank you' at the end (if there is one), but I usually overstretch myself and burn out, and end up feeling resentful after doing my good deeds. I also can end up feeling confused as to why I volunteered to help someone else out when my own life is full of unfinished business, half-done chores and unfulfilled dreams. I don't think I'm alone.

### People-pleasing: top twenty traits

If you're a people-pleaser you'd rather pull your own teeth out manually than say 'no' to people, because:

- 1 you hate to let people down;
- 2 you feel responsible for everything and everyone;
- 3 you fear you may disappoint them if you don't do what they ask;
- 4 you feel, secretly, that other people just aren't as competent/ capable/ helpful as you are;
- 5 you get a kick out of being helpful;
- 6 being helpful gives your life meaning;
- 7 you double-guess people's needs before they ask;
- 8 you'd feel guilty if you didn't please others;
- 9 you find it easier to give than to receive;
- 10 it fills your time, gives you something to do;
- 11 you'd rather help someone out than help yourself;
- 12 you firmly believe people-pleasing makes the world go round;
- 13 you're a bit of a busybody, although you wouldn't like to admit it;
- 14 you have impossibly high standards which only you can meet;
- 15 you're addicted to helping others;
- 16 you feel good once you have been helpful (having earned your spiritual Brownie points);

17 it fits in with your religion, philosophy, value system, to put others before yourself; 18 you don't like to bother people with your problems; 19 you can't bear to hurt others and would rather hurt yourself; 20 you want to make everyone happy. If any of the above rings true for you, you are probably a people-pleaser. The issue will be to work out the extent to which you are. This chapter is going to look, in more detail, at what people-pleasing actually is, where it comes from, and how it works. By the end of it, you should be able to identify more accurately whether you have the Disease to Please and what effect it may be having on your life.

### **The Disease to Please: symptoms**

On the surface it would be easy to think the world would be a better place if we were all people-pleasers. Imagine it: people would stand up for the elderly or pregnant on buses and trains, children would never be bullied and nobody

would have to cry alone, as others would rush to their defence or to put their arms around them.

Indeed, as children most of us have been told to be 'nice' and 'polite' to people, especially strangers or the elderly. As grown ups, many of us strive to be good citizens and neighbours, model workers, firm friends, loyal lovers or family members.

### **Distinguish between being a helpful person and being a doormat**

However, there is a need to distinguish between playing your part in your neighbourhood, at work, in relationships or in your family and being a chronic people-pleaser. It is important to understand the difference between being a helpful person and being an utter doormat. Of course, because each of us is unique, a list of symptoms may not cover your entire experience, but some things are generic to people-pleasers.

### **Disease to Please checklist**

Having read thus far, perhaps you are still wondering if you have the Disease to Please. Take a moment to read the following checklist of key symptoms. Be as honest as you can with yourself as you read.

Do you:

1 feel wonderful, almost 'high', when you please people, and afterwards often feel resentful, irritated, critical, annoyed, even used?

2 do things for others out of a sense of duty or obligation?

3 feel you 'ought' or 'should' do things for people?

4 sometimes feel you live a 'Jekyll and Hyde' existence: presenting a 'nice' face to the world, a 'nasty' face to those closest to you?

5 get preoccupied with other people's problems and worry about them a lot, puzzling out how you could be helpful to them?

6 attract friends who are 'prima donnas' and/or 'the walking wounded'?

7 convince yourself that other people's needs come first, that others are worse off than you, that you are pretty lucky in life and need nothing and no one really?

8 feel over-responsible for everything and everyone? Thank goodness you're around, otherwise nothing would ever get done; thank heavens you were there when something happened, otherwise, who knows, disaster may have struck...



9 feel very critical of people who are incapable? You almost hold them in contempt, but you would never, ever, show it, especially to them.

10 make friendships and relationships which seem to repeat patterns - you're always the strong one, the others are users or useless, or you feel used and the other takes too much? You get disappointed in people fairly quickly, as a consequence.

11 become very enthusiastic about a new relationship or friendship, but then it all seems to go horribly wrong and, surprise, surprise, it ends up like the last time, even though it looked so different and promising at first?

12 feel very lonely and isolated deep down, but find it hard to admit? So you fill your time with useful, helpful activity.

13 let people's needs dominate your life: your family, your children, your husband, your friends, your colleagues and casual acquaintances (people down at the gym, your neighbours, etc.)? Do they all seem more important than you?

14 never seem to get the things on your own personal agenda done? You've wanted to change jobs, get married, get divorced, move house, start a business, or learn a new skill for years, but you haven't got round to it yet, because you haven't got the time...

15 find it hard to be honest about your feelings or straight in your dealings because you want absolutely everyone to like you — so you simply can't offend anyone?

16 always seem to spend more when you go out with friends or a partner you drive them home, or listen more than they do, or host meals, or organise things, or bail them out financially, and you wonder why; and although you seem to do it all. Actually, deep down you actually think it's really unfair?

### How did you score?

If you have 0—5 'yes' answers to the above, you need to watch out for your people-pleasing tendencies, but are doing quite well in setting boundaries. If you have 5—10 'yes' answers, you jump in a bit too fast, perhaps are overly concerned with other people's problems and try to please others too much. Take time to think about your own needs and how to meet them for yourself.

Between 11 and 16 'yes' answers? Oh dear. You are definitely a chronic people-pleaser, and I'm afraid your confidence is probably quite low. Pleasing people is a way of life and you probably feel very awkward indeed about having or doing anything for yourself.



Keep reading this book. It will be useful at this point to note down in your notebook or on your computer file how much of a people-pleaser you think you are. As you read the book you may find yourself having fresh insights, rethinking your behaviour and making decisions. Note these down. It is easy to 'forget' what you have understood as your psychological patterns take over again and push you back into operating on automatic.

If you want to change how you behave, you will first have to acknowledge and accept what you actually do. Hopefully, by the end of this book you will be in more of a position of *choosing* what you do, rather than being a people-pleasing robot, fuelled by guilt and unworthiness.

Hopefully, too, you will be systematically building your self-esteem and confidence and putting yourself at the centre of your own life.

### Addictive behaviour

Finally, when the Disease to Please rules your life it can be an addictive behaviour. This means you feel you can't do anything but behave as you do, but you are often, deep down, really quite unhappy about how your life is going. Underlying all of our everyday emotional addictions there are usually painful feelings which we try to keep at bay. These feelings stem from our childhood experiences, and before you can begin to say 'no' effectively in your life it is important to understand a bit more about what might be making saying 'no' feel impossible. To this end, we will now turn to the deeper, but quite common, psychological reason for avoiding saying 'no': the addiction to helping others.

## Chapter two - Living free of the Disease to Please

### Choosing when to say 'yes'

The telephone rang one bright sunny morning recently and I was offered some interesting work which was very poorly paid and didn't really suit my schedule. The work would have been quite demanding and I would have ended up almost paying to do the job. I opened my mouth to say 'yes', absolutely on automatic. After all, one of the credos of self-employed life is that you say yes to everything, every time, everywhere. My mouth stayed open, but I paused. I don't know why. Somewhere, deep in the back of my mind, I heard a little voice saying, 'Don't take it, you don't want it, it will only be trouble, it's not worth it, turn it down.'

Suddenly, out of my mouth I heard a voice say, 'Thank you very much for offering me the job, but I won't be able to do this one. It's not enough money, I'm afraid, although I would love to do it. Come back to me if I can help in the future in any way with other projects.' It was a very amicable phone call and I skipped round my office afterwards feeling utterly liberated. What was the outcome? The company phoned back an hour later and offered me double the money to do the job.

I thanked them graciously and still found myself saying, 'I'll think about it,' buying myself an hour's thinking time. I asked myself, once off the-phone, do I want to do this job, is the pay enough for the trouble involved? I found myself thinking, on balance, yes, that I would do it. I rang back and the deal was struck. What a wonderfully rich, emancipating experience it was to be in the position of choosing. I had been under the cosh of the Disease to Please for so long that I believed I had to say 'yes' automatically to everything in order to succeed and survive. What I learned on that bright sunny morning was that if you really sound confident and successful, if you have the courage to turn things down or suggest other terms and say 'no', and you handle people well, you might even find things work out better for you.

I found that I could choose to say 'yes'. I didn't have to be an automaton. I also learned that 'no' could be a very powerful word, if said in the right way. I went up in the estimation of the company involved because I was felt to be powerful (after all, only people with lots of work can turn work down). I also went up in my own estimation, because I felt I had exercised some choice over my life.

Take a moment to think about your own life. Where would you like to feel you could say, 'I'll think about it'? What would it be like for you not to say 'yes' automatically, and to whom? What would have to change in your attitude and behaviour?

Remember the Four 'Yes' Hooks: in other words, the four main emotional reasons which can lead us into saying 'yes' instead of 'no'.

**The Four 'Yes' Hooks are:**

**1 You want to be NICE.**

**2 You want to be LIKED/LOVED/RESPECTED.**

**3 You FEAR LOSING friends, lovers, family, work and social position, success, money, material goods.**

**4 You feel you DONT HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY 'NO'.**

In order to get yourself off the Four 'Yes' Hooks you would need, therefore, to adopt a new attitude, as follows:

**1 not be nice** (at least not all the time, and not fear not being nice);

**2 not care if people didn't like, love or respect you** (at least not care if everyone didn't — you'd be more choosy about whose opinion really mattered);

**3 not fear losing people or things if you said 'no'** (you'd have the confidence to expect someone or something else to come along);

4 feel you had the right to say 'no' if you wanted to.

### **Seven steps to freedom of choice**

Step 1 towards curing the Disease to Please is to take the above four points seriously and to heart. If you do, your self-esteem will grow, your self-worth will blossom. You will be in a position of choosing, which is extremely empowering and liberating. Believe me, I know. In fact, you are in a position of choosing what you do with your life, and if you want to cure the Disease to Please you will have to start right now, by choosing to give up saying 'yes' automatically. You will need to take risks and learn to buy time to think, in order to learn to say 'no'.

### **Choosing when to help**

Underneath the smiley masks the people are still people, full of complex feelings, good and bad moods, and are as mixed up as the rest of us. Nobody can be that happy and helpful all of the time (you should listen to what they say in the back rooms of the restaurant). But you, in your life, you are not here to be a Happy Helper to everyone.

That is not your sole role in life, and even if it seems it is, your life will be fairly poor in quality and content if you live for collecting your spiritual Brownie points. I am not saying don't be a loving daughter or son, or a caring husband or parent, or a good neighbour or citizen. I am saying that every human being has their own needs, and to deny your own is to deny that you are human. You can help others, of course you can, as long as it is healthy caring, with strong emotional boundaries, and therefore something you do as a *real choice*. Otherwise, you are at risk of being an empty Happy Helper, and even a codependent person, who has very unhealthy, addictive relationships based on guilt and control (see Chapter 3 for more on this).

Step 2 towards living free of the Disease to Please is: you need to be able to *choose* to help. How can you do this?

- Resign, right now, from Compulsive Carers Corp.** Your life membership is terminated, the corporation has gone bust - it wasn't really working in the state it was in;

- Acknowledge you have your own needs and wants** – put attention on sorting out your own life;

- Wait until people ask you for help** – stop jumping in and interfering, or obsessing about other people's lives and problems. Give people the chance to come towards you when they are ready and be prepared for them not to approach you at all;

- Stop being a saviour, a saint, a martyr.** Nobody really likes people like this; it makes them feel uncomfortable, awkward and beholden;

•**Give other people around you more responsibility to help - not only themselves, but others.** You'll be surprised how many other helping hands are around, if you let them have a go. They may do things differently than you would, but others are usually there to help — if you let them;

•**Learn to ask for help yourself when you need it.** If you always seem self-sufficient you can't really have mutually satisfying relationships with people. A bit of genuine give and take never goes amiss;

•**Weed out dead-end relationships.** If you are letting yourself be drained by friendships or relationships past their sell-by date, give them up. Why continue?

### **Building your self-confidence**

The best cure for the Disease to Please is step 3: building your self-confidence. It won't happen overnight, but it will happen if you decide to do the following:

•**Accept yourself:** you are who you are. You need to accept that you are who you are and that it is absolutely fine. An enormous amount of time, energy, effort and anxiety goes into *not* accepting ourselves in terms of physical appearance (body, height, weight, hair and skin colour) and personality. You can do a lot to maximise your natural physical qualities and you can do a great deal to get the best out of yourself. However, the first crucial step has to be: accept yourself as you are. Paradoxically, only then can things actually change for the better;

•**Try this exercise:** look in the mirror and instead of being critical of your looks and body, notice five things you like. Note them down. There will be parts of your appearance which please you. Then note down five aspects of your personality you like (for instance, you are warm, thoughtful, fun, etc.). Stick these ten good attributes on your bathroom mirror on a Post-it note and remind yourself every time negative thoughts come into your mind about yourself;

•**Put yourself first:** no, it's not selfish, no, it doesn't mean you are a bad person or unlikeable. It's OK to put yourself first and think about what you really want and need. If you don't, you simply cannot have real relationships with people. If you adopt a doormat mentality, or a Nice Person Mindset, you will not really be true to yourself. Putting yourself first means that you can negotiate with others from a position of strength, where you can say 'no' when things don't suit you. I am not advocating narcissism or selfishness as a 'me, me, me' credo — of course we all have to come second sometimes, especially if we have children.

But if you are someone caught up in the Disease to Please, then you will have to learn to put yourself first. Who knows, you might even get to-like doing it in time.

•**Love yourself unconditionally:** we can spend a great deal of time criticising ourselves. If you don't learn to love yourself, then other people will not be able to love you. Nobody loves or likes someone who is constantly down on themselves. It is very irritating to tell someone you like them and they reply, 'Yes, but I'm a terrible person really.'

You have to learn to take compliments (as well as give them) and to love yourself for having faults, being imperfect, being human. Love yourself and others will be able to love you; love yourself and you will be able to say 'no'.

•**Let go:** stop being a control freak. Stop trying to make everyone do what you want or see things the way you do. You may be a Happy Helper because you think everyone else should be (goody-two-shoes mentality); you may say 'yes' and expect everyone else to, too. Well, everyone is different. Let go of trying to control people or the outcome of situations. Accept that things happen beyond your control. Let life come to you and be open to it. Your confidence will build as you are able to deal with things and people as they are.

To recap about Step 3 in giving up the Disease to Please, your confidence will build if you can:

- accept yourself;
- love yourself;
- put yourself first;
- let go.

What difference would it make if you accepted and loved yourself completely? What would it feel like to put yourself first? What would you need to let go of to do that? How would it feel to be confident in the knowledge that you are completely fine, even if you are imperfect?

This is Step 4 on your road to recovery from the Disease to Please. Jot down your first thoughts in your notebook for future reference.

### Knowing what you want

We can easily become 'yes' men and women if we don't know what we want in life for ourselves. You can become like a fine feather, floated in any direction by the wind, simply because you haven't decided which way you are going.

Someone offers you something or asks you to do something and you say, 'Yeah, why not?' Are you choosing? Or is it just a reaction to something being placed in front of you?

Drifting is fine - for feathers, teenagers, even twenty-somethings but by the time you reach your thirties you ought to be in the driving seat in your own life.

I don't mean you ought to be a dot.com millionaire YouTube star or married with kids, but I do mean you ought to be pursuing your life goals because, after all, you only have one life and it would be a bit of a shame to waste it. Plus, the less you know about what you want, the more you can fill up your life with doing things for others - so knowing what you want can be a great antidote to the Disease to Please.

How can you know what you really want? You need to take time out to think about your life and where it is going. Also to assess your skills, your abilities, your education, your experience, your wildest dreams and your ability to relate and work with people. Ask yourself: what do I really want out of my life? If there is a resounding silence echoing back, you might find it helpful to talk to a counsellor or life coach, who could help you think in a more focused way about yourself.

This is especially important if you feel you are at a dead end, doing a boring job, have underachieved, or are in a marriage or relationship which is going nowhere. You might be tempted to have children to fill the emptiness, but on the whole it is a good idea to have children once you know who you are and where you are going, otherwise the job of parenthood will be an utter nightmare (and it wouldn't be much good for the children, either). Step 5, or knowing what you want, can be aided by doing the following:

- Become separate from your parents and family of origin:** this doesn't mean rejecting them, but it does mean separating from them physically, emotionally and psychologically. Look at their life and lifestyle. Is that what you want? Or do you want something different? Do you want to be like them or do you want something else? If so, what is it? Allow yourself freedom to dream, to think, to articulate your feelings and ideas. You may not want to follow in their footsteps, or-you may.

Fine, if it is your choice, but if you say 'yes' to taking over the family business or having children because it is expected of you, you may not be living your own life, but rather living a life so your parents can enjoy it vicariously. You might also be rebelling against your parents by doing the complete opposite of what they want you to do.

Ask yourself, is this a choice or a reaction against their expectations? All this links back to building your confidence, as you have to put yourself first, and you need to let go of family obligation, duty and guilt.

- Set your own life goals:** allow yourself to think widely about what you want in your life. It may not be possible to be an astronaut or a pop star or to scale Everest, but many things are more within your grasp than you think. Many people are dissatisfied with the jobs they have ended up with or the partners they have settled for. You don't have to settle for less, but you do have to think about what you want for yourself and pursue it actively. Don't be a passive moaner about your life: 'be an active go-getter, deciding what you want, and go and get it. Even if you fall short of the mark you aim for you will probably get further than if you hadn't tried at all.

•**Grow up:** stop expecting someone else to sort everything else out for you. Adopt the attitude and behaviour of a grown up. Your life is in your hands, only you can take responsibility for you. No one else is responsible for the shape your life takes or the decisions you make or the actions you take. Yes, things will happen - accidents, crises, unforeseen events. It comes down to how you handle what life throws at you. If you can act like a grown up by finding out and pursuing what you want, then you will be in a far stronger position to resist and recover from the Disease to Please.

## Emotional literacy

Feelings are feelings, and they are there for a reason.

Step 6 is about learning to recognise, feel, accept and work with your feelings, and you will be much more in charge of your life. People who deny their true feelings end up very distorted and unreal. People-pleasers in particular flatten out their wants, needs and desires and, instead, lavish on others what they would really like for themselves (while denying it for themselves). This means you'll need to straighten out emotionally if you want to live free of the Disease to Please, and these simple steps could help you on your way:

•**Accept your feelings:** learn to recognise your feelings and accept them as part of being human. Don't run away from difficult or 'bad' feelings, learn to work with them.

•**Allow your feelings space in your life:** cry when you need to, acknowledge and handle your anger, notice when you're bored. Everyday addictions are an attempt to blot out feelings, and if you can allow yourself to be a sentient person you will gain in strength and power.

•**Handle your own and others' emotions:** if you can learn to 'read' your emotions and other people's, you will not be pulled into agreeing with things when you don't want to, nor will you acquiesce to keep the peace. If they get angry, they get angry — that's their feelings; if they try to guilt-trip you, it won't work, because you will be able to analyse what is going on. In terms of emotional literacy, understanding how feelings work will enable you to build appropriate psychological boundaries. This kind of knowledge is power.

## **Become your true self**

Here is the final step - Step 7 - towards becoming your true self. This is not just one step, but an ongoing process, which may take months, years, even the rest of your life. It is not a quick fix, but it is something you can work at over time. It is inevitable that as you give up the Disease to Please you will have times of backsliding. There will be moments when you say 'yes' and then think,



'Damn, why did I say that?' There will be people who stomp on you, and you let them, and later you may feel, 'Hell, why did I let them do that?'

Stop.

Take a moment.

Think for a minute.

Step 7 involves the following:

•**Accept you will make mistakes:** you are human, you're not a machine. You will inevitably slip back and make mistakes, no matter how hard you try. Accept this is part of the process. You can backtrack by noticing what has happened. You can go back to someone and say, 'You know I agreed to organise the community street party? Well, I wasn't thinking about all my commitments at the time. Could we discuss it again? You can decide to go ahead this time, and learn your lesson for next time.

Or you can go back and renegotiate your position: 'You know I said I'd pay for the curtains? Well, I'll have to ask you to go halves with me. I've had a good look at my finances and it would be better for me if we could split it.' It might be a bit embarrassing, you may have a bit of a tussle with the other person or people, but you can go back and correct things if you want to. Accepting you're human and therefore fallible - is the most important thing here.

•**Take time to think:** over and over and over again you will feel railroaded into saying 'yes'. Give yourself the time you need to think. Thinking goes on all the time in our unconscious minds. Give yourself a break and your thinking will emerge all on its own. You might find decisions emerge in dreams and daydreams - note them down if they do. Pay attention to yourself and trust the process.

•**Enjoy your life:** learn to meditate and tune in with your feelings. Take time out from your busy schedule for a walk or to garden, do some exercise, paint a picture, take some photos, play with children, see a film, listen to music, have fun with friends, make love and enjoy solitude. If you put your attention in the present, and stay in touch with yourself, and enjoy whatever you do as much as you can, you will be in a far better position to turn things down if you don't want to do them. You will be in a position of choosing, of being your true and authentic self.

•**Doormat no more:** you no longer have to please and appease to give your life meaning. You and only you are at the centre of your life, and that is as it should be. Give up being a doormat and you will gain in stature and grace. You will be well on your way to becoming your true self, even if you have no idea, right now, what that might be. To recap, to live free of the Disease to Please:

- Step 1:                   give up the Four Yes' Hooks;
- Step 2:                   choose when to say 'yes';
- Step 3:                   build your self-confidence;
- Step 4:                   accept yourself completely;
- Step 5:                   know what you want - and go for it;
- Step 6:                   become emotionally literate;
- Step 7:                   become your true self.

### **Power of decision**

There is power in positive mantras, so use mantra against powerlessness, because it reminds you of who is in the driving seat in your life. Not your mum or dad, your boss or partner, your friend or sister.

*It's my life, I'm in charge, and I can decide what I want to do, with whom and when.*

This is a great thing to say to yourself when you are drawn to' say 'yes' instead of 'no'; it's a wonderful thing to take a moment to remember when you feel you want to run away, instead of confronting someone who is expecting you to be a doormat.

You can remember and act on the knowledge: *It's my life, I'm in charge, and I can decide what I want to do, with whom and when.* Repeat daily, morning, noon and night, and who knows, you may well be living completely free of the Disease to Please sooner than you think. You have only one life, after all. Isn't it time you lived it to the full? Just for you...

## Resources

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dontdo/201708/10-signs-youre-people-pleaser>  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/distressed/201704/5-ways-stop-being-a-people-pleaser>  
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<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201512/6-signs-youre-selfish>  
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<https://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/why-cant-i-say-no.aspx>  
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[https://www.oprah.com/relationships/how-to-stop-being-a-people-pleaser\\_1](https://www.oprah.com/relationships/how-to-stop-being-a-people-pleaser_1)