

People-Pleasing & Fear of Disapproval

Understanding overaccommodation, resentment, guilt, and the difficulty of letting others be disappointed.

What people-pleasing protects against

People-pleasing may reduce fear of conflict, rejection, anger, criticism, or abandonment. It can be adaptive in unsafe environments and later become automatic even when directness would be safe.

Common costs

- Saying yes while feeling resentful.
- Changing opinions to match the room.
- Overexplaining boundaries.
- Taking responsibility for other people's feelings.
- Difficulty knowing what you actually want.

Practice

- Pause before answering requests.
- Use short, respectful no's without a courtroom defense.
- Let another person have disappointment without immediately fixing it.
- Ask what you would choose if approval were not guaranteed.

Try this reflection

Where are you managing someone else's reaction at the cost of your own limits?

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.