

Ep #22: How to Stop People-Pleasing



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Ep #22: How to Stop People-Pleasing

You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 22. Today I'm going to teach you how to stop people-pleasing. You ready? Let's go.

Welcome to *The Less Stressed Lawyer*, the only podcast that teaches you how to manage your mind so you can live a life with less stress and far more fulfillment. If you're a lawyer who's over the overwhelm and tired of trying to hustle your way to happiness, you're in the right place. Now, here's your host, lawyer turned life coach, Olivia Vizachero.

Hi, how's it going? I am so excited for this episode; this is one of my absolute favorite topics to talk about. A big reason that I love it so much is that I used to be such a horrific people-pleaser in my past life, before I found coaching. I have made so much progress in my own life in this area. I'm excited to talk to you about people-pleasing, and to teach you how to stop doing it, so you can make that same kind of progress yourself.

When I learned the concepts and the tools that I've been teaching you throughout all these podcast episodes, I really transformed my behavior. It allowed me to break this habit that I had of people-pleasing. Hopefully, by listening to this and applying what I teach you in this episode, you're able to start doing that for yourself, too.

Now, before we dive in, I'm going to ask a favor of you. Chances are, you may know a people-pleaser. It's probably pretty likely that you know someone that's always putting themselves last, self-sacrificing, putting other people's needs before their own. If you do know that person, someone like that, if that sounds familiar, I want you to do me a favor and just send this podcast episode to them.

Send it to someone who you think would really benefit from listening to today's content, just go give it a share. Honestly, I just want to tell you, a podcast episode changed my life. I've told you guys that before. So, you sharing this episode with someone could totally transform someone else's life just by you doing that. You can shoot it to them in a text or an email. Or, if you really want to share the wealth, share it on one of your social media channels and help lots of people not just one person.

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I really want to get this podcast into the hands and ears, I suppose, of as many people as possible. I just love thinking about the ripple effect of the work that I do when people share the content that I produce with the people closest to them, the people that are really important to them in their lives. It's just so incredible for me to think about. Please, and thank you very much, in advance, for turning someone you know on to this episode.

Now, let's get down to business. Last time we talked, I laid the foundation for the next several episodes that I'm going to release. Right now, we're talking about the three P's: People-pleasing, Perfectionism, and Procrastination.

I told you in the last episode that before I dove deep into each one of these topics, I wanted to talk and tell you all about the three qualities that you want to make sure that you exhibit, as you approach each one of these topics. You want to make sure that you are resourceful, patient, and coachable.

Now, if you haven't listened to that episode, yet, I want you to make sure that you go back and tune into it. You don't have to drop what you're doing right this second, finish this episode first. But that episode really is helpful. It might be actually one of my favorite episodes to date, that I've done so far.

I want to make sure that you get that foundation, and you're able to check in with yourself, make sure you have those three qualities: Resourcefulness, Patience, and Coachability. So that you're able to apply those skill sets, those qualities to the topics that we're about to cover.

Now that I've laid that foundation, it's time to dive in to the first P: People-pleasing, which I suppose it's technically two Ps, but work with me here, we're talking about people-pleasing. What is people-pleasing? People-pleasing is when you say or do something at your own expense, in order to gain favor or approval from the person on the receiving end of your words or actions.

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Normally, you're engaging in whatever behavior that you're engaging in, out of guilt or fear. You feel guilty, you think that you should be doing what you're doing. Or, you feel afraid that if you don't people-please the person there's going to be some negative outcome.

Ultimately, when you do this, when you're operating out of fear and trying to avoid the guilt by doing what you'd rather do, and you people-please instead, you ultimately put that other person's needs and desires above your own.

Now, when you hear me say that people-pleasing is putting another person's needs or desires before your own, it may sound kind of altruistic to do that. People-pleasing might not sound all that bad. After all, what's wrong with being nice to people and trying to help them out or make them happy? Right? It sounds like a pretty good thing that you might want to do.

But people-pleasing generally goes beyond being thoughtful, helpful, or kind. Instead, it involves editing or altering what you say and what you do for the sake of another person's feelings or reactions. You're doing it at your own expense, making yourself more uncomfortable in order to make someone comfortable.

You know, I used to do this constantly, prior to me finding coaching. But I don't know that I always had a term for this behavior before I found coaching. I don't think I would have identified myself as being a people-pleaser, I just thought that I was being dutiful, dedicated, a really caring employee and a caring friend. I would have kind of chalked it all up to that.

But that wasn't what was going on. Instead, I was people-pleasing. I was constantly sacrificing myself and my own well-being, for the sake of others. That's a really great way to figure out if what you're doing constitutes people-pleasing or not. I want you to check in with yourself and see, how does what you're doing feel to you? Does it feel like love? Like you're being helpful? Like you're doing a great thing? Or, does it feel like self-sacrifice? Does it feel like self-abandonment?

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That's a really good way to identify whether what you're doing is intentional, and serving you, and a great thing. Or, if it really is people-pleasing, and it's not setting you up for success. It's not you exhibiting self-care towards yourself.

Another really good litmus test here is for you to ask yourself; does doing what I'm doing feel like a lie? That's what people-pleasing ultimately is, it's lying. You'd prefer to be saying or doing something else entirely. And, if it was solely up to you, and you weren't exposed to someone else's reaction or judgment, you'd behave differently.

But because you have a perception of how someone else will think or how they'll feel and what they'll do as a result of that, you do what they asked you to do. Or maybe, they didn't even ask you, so you just do what you think that they would want you to do, if they haven't asked. You're doing it, again you're lying, in your words or actions instead of saying or doing what you would if no one else had an opinion about it.

Now, you may be listening to this episode and as soon as you saw the title of it, you knew this one was for you. You're like raising your hand, "Olivia, I'm a people-pleaser," and if that's the case, that's awesome. You're in the right place, and I'm going to teach you how to stop.

But maybe that's not you. I have quite a few clients who don't realize that they're people-pleasers; they don't identify with that label. They were kind of like I was before I found coaching, they just thought that they were being a good employee, or a good friend, or a good spouse, or a good sibling, or a good daughter or son, right? They don't identify as people-pleasing.

But during the course of our work together, they really do learn that they are a people-pleaser, and they start to gain some awareness that they may not have had prior to our coaching relationship. If that's you, if you're like, "I don't think I'm a people-pleaser. I'm not totally positive. Maybe I am," I have a couple questions for you that I want you to answer, that may help you identify some of your people-pleasing tendencies.

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Here are the questions: When do you have a difficult time saying no? When do you say yes, when you want to say no? Where do you martyr yourself? Where do you ignore your own needs?

Where are you sacrificing yourself for someone else's sake? Where aren't you doing what you want to be doing in your life? What do you keep doing because you feel guilty? Where do you fear that by turning people down, you'll make them think that you're mean or selfish?

When was the last time you agreed to do something that you don't like to do? Or, that you didn't want to do? Where in your life are you doing things to earn other people's approval? Where's your behavior apologetic?

Where are you taking the blame even when the problem isn't your fault? What are you doing that's causing you to neglect yourself? Where in your life are you pretending to agree with people even though you feel differently?

What conversations are you not having right now, that you know you probably need to have? Where in your life are you avoiding conflict? Were in your life would you do things differently, if no one had an opinion about what you did?

It's kind of a long list of questions, but I really wanted it to be a comprehensive list that allows you to see certain scenarios in your life from a different angle, a different perspective.

A lot of those questions seem pretty similar to one another, but they're just ever so slightly different to introduce some nuance. and allow you to identify some more subtle people-pleasing in areas where you may not have otherwise spotted it.

Now, if you came up with some answers that you think might be examples of instances of people-pleasing, that are coming up for you in your life, I just want to offer one small caveat; it may not be people-pleasing. Like I said earlier, people-pleasing is always a lie.

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And, it's always going to feel like a lie. It's always going to feel like self-abandonment and self-sacrifice. Where you're putting yourself at a detriment for the sake of benefiting someone else.

You want to start there, check in: Does it feel like love, or does it feel like a lie? Does it feel like love, or does it feel like self-abandonment and self-sacrifice? Now, if you have a hard time discerning whether what you're doing feels like that or not, here's one more question you can ask yourself.

When you catch yourself saying or doing something, and you think you might be engaging in some people-pleasing, ask yourself; what are your reasons for doing whatever it is that you're doing? Or, saying whatever it is that you're saying?

Identify your reasons for why you're taking that particular action, or why you're refraining from taking a particular action, and then ask yourself; do I like my reasons? If the answer's yes, you like your reasons for taking whatever action you're taking, then it may not be people-pleasing.

If you don't like your reasons, it probably is people-pleasing. So, that's another hard and fast way to check if what you're doing constitutes people-pleasing or not.

Now, let's talk about some common examples of people-pleasing. I think the most popular example of people-pleasing is when you do stuff that you hate, in order to avoid other people feeling uncomfortable. Whether you think they're gonna feel disappointed, or angry, or frustrated, or annoyed, or hurt, whatever the case may be, you say yes to stuff when you really want to say no.

Maybe someone asks you to go to their two-year old's birthday party, and you'd rather not. I'm putting it nicely, right? Instead of saying no, and not going because you really don't want to go, you go anyways. Or, you go home during the holidays to see family, even though you really don't want to because you don't get along with your family, or whatever your reasons are. You do things that you don't like to do.

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Maybe you're involved in your kid's school organizations because you feel like you should do those things to be a good parent, but you really don't enjoy it, and it just takes away from the quality of your life. So, you're doing some stuff that you hate.

This is also going to come up for you at work. Maybe you take on tasks or assignments because a client asks you to or a supervisor asks you to, and you hate working on those types of projects, but you keep taking them and you keep saying yes, because you're afraid of how the other person will respond. That is textbook people-pleasing.

Another example of this is where you overcommit yourself when you don't have the bandwidth to take something on. This can happen at work. If you say yes to an assignment that you really don't have time to tackle, people will also come to you and maybe they seek out your help, and you feel guilty telling them that you don't have the bandwidth.

So, you drop what you're doing, and you help them instead of helping yourself. You overcommit yourself and say, "Sure, I can help you," even though you really don't have the capacity to do that.

Maybe you volunteer, when someone asks you to host Christmas or Thanksgiving, and you really don't have the capacity to do that either, but you overcommit yourself and agree to do it. Or, you just pack too much into a weekend; maybe you get three different invitations, and you agree to do all three activities even though it's a little bit of a stretch, and you don't quite have the capacity to fit all three things in.

Speaking of volunteering for things, a lot of times my clients will people-please by volunteering themselves to help with something, even when they haven't been asked. They do it because they're telling themselves the story that the person wants them to volunteer or that if they were a good employee, or a good friend, or a good family member, they would volunteer, they'd help out.

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They think just because I could it means I should pitch in and lend a helping hand. Even though, if no one had an opinion about it, you'd probably say no; they wouldn't do it, they wouldn't volunteer, they wouldn't offer up their time. That's a little bit sneakier type of people-pleasing, there.

Another example of people-pleasing is lying about what you want, or you're like, "Sure that sounds great. Absolutely." But in the back of your mind, you're like, "Oh, my goodness, this sounds terrible. I don't want to do this at all." But you're not willing to be honest about what you want, because you fear the repercussions of your honesty. Right? That's people-pleasing, too.

This came up for me when I decided to take a job in big law. I really had no genuine interest of going and being a commercial litigator. That wasn't why I went to law school. I never had any interest in working for a big firm. I'd always just wanted to do criminal defense.

But I started to get in my own head about the opportunities that were available to me, and that I was going to miss the boat on OCI's and summer associate positions, and all that good stuff. And then finally, when I got an offer for both a summer associate position and a full-time offer, after I took the bar exam, I said yes.

Even though I was kind of lying to myself about wanting that job. I didn't want to go there; I wanted to do something else. I wanted to be a criminal defense attorney. But I had strong opinions about other people's opinions. I really didn't want to disappoint some people that were really close to me, family members, friends of mine, who thought it'd be really foolish of me to turn that job down.

So, instead of being really honest with myself and the other people in my life about what I wanted to do, I just people-pleased them. I cared more about not making them uncomfortable, and what their opinions of my decisions were, than I did trusting my own gut.

Maybe you've done that yourself. A lot of my clients actually went to law school because they were people-pleasing parents who told them, "Hey,

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you got to pick between being a doctor or a lawyer. You get to pick, but you got to choose one of those two.”

Maybe they wanted to do something completely different, but they ultimately people-pleased because they were afraid to disappoint their parents, or they were worried that there would be some other negative repercussion. They lied about what they actually wanted.

Another instance where people-pleasing comes up is when you don't advocate for a preference. You have a clear preference in your head, but you don't speak up about it, you don't advocate for yourself. This can be on a grand scale, or it can also be on a really small scale.

A small example of this is when you have a preference about where you go to dinner, or what you eat for dinner. Instead of speaking up about it, you just act like you don't have a preference, and you keep the peace, so to speak. You just say, “I'll have whatever you're having. I'm fine with whatever you choose,” even though you're really not fine.

You just want to be agreeable. You don't want to be “difficult” because you think people will judge your being difficult, and that they'll be uncomfortable or put out by it. That's another example of people-pleasing.

A few less obvious examples of people-pleasing: One includes going back on a commitment that you've made to yourself, because you're prioritizing someone else's needs or desires, and you want to make them more comfortable. You minimize what you've already committed yourself to.

A great example of this would be like, deciding not to drink or you're on a diet. Instead of sticking to your plan to not drink at an event, or to stick to the food that you decided earlier that day you were going to eat, you deviate from your plan. You go back on that commitment that you made to yourself, in order to prioritize someone else's comfort.

Maybe you committed to yourself that you would go work out at the gym, and someone asks you to do something, and you drop that commitment

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that you made to yourself, in order to attend to their needs instead. So, that's another example of what that might look like.

Ask yourself: Do you do that? Does that come up in your life? Do you pack out on commitments you make to yourself, in order to prioritize other people's needs? If so, do you want to keep doing that?

Other small examples of people-pleasing: Not voicing your opinion when you disagree with someone. Or, avoiding conflict. Or, avoiding "difficult" conversations you know that would probably be really beneficial, if you were direct and had a conversation with someone, about something that you have some tension around.

But instead of speaking up and clearing the air, and having the disagreement and flushing all of that out, you just keep quiet; you avoid the conflict, you try and maintain the peace, you just want to be agreeable, and you never have the discussion.

Some other really specific examples of people-pleasing, just so you can see some of the micro ways that we people-please: Not taking a vacation because you're worried that someone else is going to be angry if you do, or disappointed. Or, they're going to feel overwhelmed because you're not around to do the work. That's an example.

Not asking for help is another example of people-pleasing. If you're doing it because you feel guilty or afraid that there's going to be a negative repercussion if you ask for help.

Underbilling and undercharging are two more great examples of the micro ways we people-please. We feel guilty, we're worried about what we're billing so we underbill or undercharge. And not marketing yourself, so you don't make other people uncomfortable is another big one.

I hear from clients all the time, when I'm working with them on developing their books of business, that they don't want to post on their social media

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feeds, maybe on LinkedIn™, like I do, because they don't want other people to be annoyed with their content and to clutter someone's feed.

They don't want to just make anyone else uncomfortable by their marketing efforts, with their marketing efforts. So, they choose to not show up, they choose to not do it because they want to avoid that other person's discomfort. Meanwhile, they're ignoring the fact that there may be other people who are desperately waiting for them to show up and talk about what they do. Because there are people that need their services.

Those are a bunch of examples. I wanted to give them to you so you could start spotting your own people-pleasing behavior. That is not an exhaustive list of people-pleasing. We do this in so many different ways.

Now that you know what it looks like, I want to talk about why we do it. Why do we people-please. Here's the big picture: Ultimately, you're people-pleasing because you're trying to control how other people feel. You might be trying to keep the peace, to make sure that everyone stays comfortable. You want people to like you. You also want to avoid conflict. Those are the main reasons that we people-please.

I also want to highlight for you, people-pleasing is a bit of a survival mechanism. Now, it's a dated one; it served us when we were hunters and gatherers. It was a way to make sure that we were well-liked, and we got to stay in the circle of trust, so to speak, with our tribes. It kept us safe. It was a way that we didn't get ousted from our groups, and it kept us in everyone's good favor.

We just haven't evolved past the point of having this be ingrained within us, for that survival mechanism. It also serves us a lot when we're younger. When we're growing up, with our parents and other authority figures, people-pleasing normally serves us really well. We get rewarded for it; we get praised for it. Again, it's feeding in to people-pleasing being that survival mechanism, or having that survival instinct that we're acting from.

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It's also really important to note that people-pleasing feels good. Just temporarily, usually, but it does feel good temporarily. That's important to pay attention to, as well. People-pleasing really does feel amazing in the moment, because you get to tell people what they want to hear or what you think they want to hear, and then you get the response that you want to get from them. So, you get that praise, you get that reward.

Your brain releases just a little bit of dopamine, a little bit of adrenaline; it feels good to you. You get to feel needed, and significant, and helpful, and accomplish, and all of those positive emotions that we really crave as human beings. You're trying to control how other people feel. You want people to like you, part of that is a survival instinct, but good news is we get to override it. It does temporarily feel good when we people-please. Those are the big picture reasons why we do it.

At a more granular level, though, this is what's actually going on. You've heard me say this a bunch of times already, but the reason that we do anything that we do, that doesn't serve us, the reason that we're ever engaged in a negative behavior, is always because of one of two problems: A thought that we're thinking that doesn't serve us, or a feeling that we're unwilling to feel, and so we resist, avoid, or react to it. Instead of, just allowing it to be with us and come along for the ride.

When it comes to people-pleasing, the problem thoughts that come up for people look something like the thought; I could help so I should help. If you're thinking that thought you might feel obligated, and then you will help, you'll offer to help. You might think thoughts about what a good blank does; what a good employee does, what a good lawyer does, what a good supervisor does, what a good friend does, what a good spouse does.

You might have a lot of rules for yourself, or manuals about what a "good" fill in whatever role you're identifying with in that moment; what good versions of those roles do. So, a good friend would say yes, when someone asks them to go to a birthday party, or go to dinner, or come over and help them move.

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You also might be thinking 'have to,' 'need to,' or 'I can't' thoughts; I have to do this, I need to do this, I can't say no. Those thoughts are always going to drive you to say yes and people-please, because you feel really constricted, like you don't have any say in the matter. Now, I've mentioned this before, those thoughts are never true.

There are only four things you ever have to, or need to do; Eat sometimes, drink some water, breathe, and sleep infrequently. I'm all for the more sleep, the better. I've really pushed the limits on sleep in a past life, and I don't recommend doing that. But those are really the four things you ever have to do.

Everything else is optional, but we'll tell ourselves; I have to do this, I need to do this, I can't say no, I don't have another option. Then we feel really limited and we act in accordance with that limiting thought. Even though it's a lie; you do have agency, you're just blinding yourself to it. Those might be the thoughts that you're thinking, there might be other ones.

What I want you to do is start to mind your brain when you're people-pleasing, or right after you people-please, and you catch yourself and say, "Oh no, I just people-pleased. I see what I was doing there." I want you to track it back and find the problem thoughts that drove you to take that people-pleasing action.

Were you thinking: I could help, so I should help? I can help, so I should? Were you thinking a good blank would say yes to this? A good blank would do X, Y and Z? Were you thinking; I have to do this, I need to do this, I can't say no?

If you were, we're going to need to change those thoughts, in order to get you to not people-please. You can just flip some of those thoughts around. You can choose to think instead; just because I can help, doesn't mean I should help.

I also like to think about it this way; I like to think that you're in the best position, the most appropriate position, to decide whether or not you should

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do something. Oftentimes, we'd like to outsource this to other people. But really, it's your job. You're the person who's well positioned to decide whether you should say yes, or say no to something. I like thinking about this as; it's my job to decide whether I should do this or not, no one else's.

I also love believing that you can be both; you can be a good friend, a good employee, a good lawyer, a good spouse, a good sister, daughter, brother, son, whatever, good parents, you can be a good whatever and say no, those two things aren't mutually exclusive. Both can be true.

I love reminding myself that I don't ever have to or need to do anything. I absolutely can say no. I have all the agency in the world; I always get to choose. Those are some really impactful powerful thoughts that helped me not people-please.

I want you to think what would you need to think, in any given scenario, in order to not people-please? In order to do what you want to do, instead of doing what you don't want to do for the sake of other people's comfort?

Sometimes I just choose to tell myself that it's not my job to make other people comfortable. That's their job. My job is to make myself comfortable. It's other people's jobs to make other people comfortable. I'm supposed to worry about myself, they're supposed to worry about themselves. Nothing has gone wrong if I choose to do that, it's totally okay.

Now, there's always problem thoughts that you're thinking, or the second part, negative feelings that you're unwilling to feel. With people-pleasing, we definitely see discomfort avoidance come up here. Right? You start to feel a negative emotion when you think about not people-pleasing, when you think about saying no, when you think about doing what you want to do, instead of doing what you think the other person wants you to do.

And, feelings like, feeling guilty, or worried, or selfish, or irresponsible might come up. Your natural tendency, your natural inclination is to run for the hills, and avoid those emotions. We avoid feeling guilty, we avoid feeling

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afraid or worried, we avoid feeling selfish and irresponsible, by people-pleasing.

We take those people-pleasing actions and engage in that behavior, instead of just feeling our negative emotions, and taking the intentional non-people-pleasing action that we want to take. Right? So, what's the solution there?

You've got to gag-and-go through the discomfort. I know I'm always bringing it back to that concept, but it really is so ubiquitous in our lives, that the answer is you just got to feel your feelings. You've got to feel guilty, at least at first, and say no, anyways. You've got to feel a little worried, scared, apprehensive that there might be some consequence from you pushing back and saying no, and that that's okay.

You want to just take intentional action and feel these feelings, anyways. Now, if you're a horrific people-pleaser, I really want you to just take a second and think about your answer to this question. What would be different or better about your life if you were willing to feel guilty, worried, afraid, selfish, or irresponsible, and not people-please, anyways? If you were willing to feel that discomfort, and do what you wanted to do, regardless of how it feels?

If you're anything like me, your life would probably be completely different. Now that I'm on the other side of this, and I've learned how to feel my negative feelings and take intentional action in spite of them, which means I don't people-please, I just feel uncomfortable, and I do what I want to do anyways, everything has changed significantly for me.

Now, I also want to add, the discomfort is just temporary. When you stop people-pleasing, and you start living your life the way you want to be living, it instead of living it how you think other people think you should be living it, you get the reward of living a life that you actually like. The guilt, the worry, the fear, feelings of selfishness or irresponsibility, they tend to dissipate pretty quickly.

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Because instead of doing shit you hate, you get to do what you want to be doing. The guilt comes on the front end, the worry comes on the front end, but then you get the reward of spending your time how you want to spend it; being in integrity with yourself. And that, feels really good. It's just a little discomfort in the beginning, that you have to gag-and-go your way through. Once you do that you get the reward of living in alignment with how you want to live.

Now, again, we've got problem thoughts and negative emotions we're unwilling to feel, you want to take some time and just look for and become aware of the thoughts that you're thinking that caused you to people-please, and the feelings that you're unwilling to feel that also drives you to people-please.

With that awareness, you get to decide if you want to keep maintaining the status quo. Do you want to keep being a people-pleaser? Or instead, do you want to change those thoughts and think something else? Do you want to allow yourself to experience those negative emotions, and not people-please in spite of and despite them? Once you have that awareness, you get to decide if you want to change.

If you do want to change and you want to stop people-pleasing, let's talk about some best practices for you to go about doing that. First and foremost, you've got to change your thoughts and feel your feelings. That's always the foundational answer.

But you also have to get rid of the mistaken belief that you control how other people feel. That is the primary reason we people-please; because we give ourselves a little too much credit, and we think that we control other people's emotions.

This is a big breaking news flash for you, if you believe that you control how other people feel. I want to be the one to tell you, that's not true. You actually don't control how other people feel. Now, this was absolutely transformational for me when I learned it.

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I really believe that thought work, which is the kind of work that I'm teaching you throughout the course of this podcasts, the coaching work that I do with people. We identify the thoughts and how they create your results, and what we need to think instead, and how they impact our feelings and all the action we take. We call that thought work.

I believe that there are layers to thought work. The entry level layer is learning that circumstances are neutral, and that our brain serves us up thoughts about them. And, that our thoughts are what cause our emotions, all of the feelings that we feel. And then, they drive our actions and produce our results. Thoughts create results.

When you learn that, you become so empowered because, the best news ever, you get to control what you think, you get to curate what you think. That's the entry level to thought work: You become aware that circumstances don't cause your feelings, you cause your feelings with your thoughts.

Now, the next layer of thought work is when you start to realize that if that's true for you, you are not a unicorn; that is also true for every other person on the face of the earth. That circumstances don't cause their feelings; their thoughts about circumstances are what caused their emotional experience.

Your actions, what you say or do, is just a circumstance in their model. Your actions, your behavior, what you do or don't do, doesn't cause that other person's emotional experience. It's their thoughts about your actions that cause their emotional experience. And, it's their responsibility to manage their thoughts, to manage their emotional experience in this world; that is not your job.

We know this is true because if you've ever tried to cheer someone up, and you haven't been able to do it effectively, it's not because you weren't well intentioned, it's because the other person didn't change their thoughts. When you took whatever action you did, in order to try and cheer them up.

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So, they still felt the exact same way, despite your best efforts to change how they feel.

This was mind blowing for me. This, when I learned it; that other people's feelings are not caused by my actions, that it's their thoughts that cause their feelings. It was as if someone came down and wrote me a permission slip, to go live my life the way that I wanted to live it.

Because I finally got to put down the fear that I felt that I was going to disappoint people. That my actions, that certain behavior I was going to engage in by not people-pleasing, was going to disappoint others. When I learned that their thoughts are what caused their feelings, I realized, it very well may be true that they feel disappointed, but not because of my behavior.

They feel disappointed because of their thoughts about my behavior. Because they have some expectation that I act a certain way. It's their expectation that causes their disappointment. It's their expectation, that causes their frustration. But for that expectation, they wouldn't feel whatever negative emotion they feel.

It's their job to curate their expectations of other people. It's not my job to live up to their expectations. Once I started to really internalize that message, everything started to shift for me. I started to give myself permission to stop people-pleasing, be honest about what I wanted in my life, and to start acting in accordance with that.

If this seems very striking to you, if you're like, "What in the world is she talking about? We don't cause other people's feelings of disappointment?" I promise you, that's true.

I just want you to take a second and think about a time where you were recently feeling disappointed. Identify the circumstance; what were the facts? Strictly, the facts that everyone would agree upon in that scenario? Maybe someone said they would do something with you, and then they

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canceled. And, you felt disappointed. It's only because you were thinking a thought that made you feel disappointed.

What's another thought you could think about that exact same set of facts? Maybe something happened in the world. A scenario that you encountered, and you felt disappointed about that situation, because you were thinking a thought that it should have happened differently, or it shouldn't have happened to that way. Again, it's your thought, it's the expectation that you had, that it go one way when it went the other, that causes you to feel disappointed.

I want you to think about friends of yours or family members, or colleagues that you encounter; think about a time where one of them felt disappointed, and they communicated that to you. I want you to identify the facts; what's the circumstance that they were encountering? And, what were their thoughts about it?

You want to get good at separating the facts from the story that you're telling about them, so you can see how you create your own disappointment, how you create your own anger, or frustration, or annoyance. Then, you can start to see how other people do the exact same thing. Their emotional experience in the world, is on them, it's not on you.

Now, not everyone is going to do a great job of curating their emotional experience. They might be blaming their circumstances. They're allowed to blame their circumstances. Regardless of whether they blame them or not, does not mean that their circumstances are what are causing their feelings. That's not the case. It's always their thoughts causing their feelings.

But they're allowed to blame their circumstances, and you're allowed to let them and not people-please, even when they do that. I want you to think about those thoughts that cause disappointment, and really embrace this concept that; you don't cause other people's disappointment, ever

From there, here's what you need to do: Once you've embraced that truth, that your thoughts cause your feelings, and their thoughts cause their

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feelings, and that your actions don't cause anyone's emotional experience. Once you've embraced that, from there, I want you to always acknowledge, when you're presented with a situation where you're tempted to people-please, that you always have a choice.

I want you to acknowledge your agency, and then identify all the choices that you have, list them all out. What do you want to do in that moment? Identify your choices, and then identify why you want to choose any of those particular choices.

You want to get really clear on your reasons for taking any particular course of action. Then ask yourself; do I like those reasons? If you do like your reasons, amazing. Sounds like you're not people-pleasing. Go ahead and act in accordance with that decision, with those reasons, follow through on that.

But if you answer no, you don't like your reasons for taking whatever action you're inclined to take, it's because you're probably people-pleasing. You want to go back to the drawing board, and identify what you actually want to choose, authentically.

If you're being really honest with yourself, then choose that, and identify the feelings that you would have to be willing to feel, in order to take that action and not people-please. And then, do that. Take that action. Don't people-please; follow through, feel your negative feelings, allow the discomfort, and do what you want to do regardless.

Couple other things that you can do if you're really prone to people-pleasing. This is a great area to practice making decisions ahead of time, and to practice constraint. You can also, if you're prone to a knee-jerk yes, when someone asks you to do something, memorize a phrase or a response that you can say every time someone asks something of you, to buy yourself a little bit of a time buffer.

Instead of a knee-jerk yes, say, "You know what? I probably can, or I might be able to, but I need to check my schedule. Just let me get back to you. I'll

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call you right back.” Just say whatever you need to say to buy yourself a little bit of time, in order to make a decision, without all of the pressure that comes from being in the moment, as soon as you get that request.

I also want you to redefine the meaning of “good,” when it comes to those roles that you have, those identities that you have. So, what does it mean to be a good lawyer, a good friend, a good family member, a good spouse, son, daughter, a good partner, a good associate, any of those things?

Can you redefine “good” to be more inclusive of what you want to do, so that you don't have to people-please, in order to qualify as a good insert, whatever the blank is.

Make sure and catch yourself that you're not conflating ‘could’ with ‘should.’ That's another easy hack. If you think, “I could do it,” that doesn't necessarily mean you should do it. You want to make sure you interrupt yourself if you tend to conflate the two.

Last but not least, I want you to remember there's always discomfort both ways when we're people-pleasing. There's the discomfort that we feel from saying no and not people-pleasing; that guilt, worry, fear, selfishness, irresponsibility that we experience.

Then, there's also the discomfort that comes from people-pleasing. Normally regret, resentment, frustration, annoyance, anger, all of that. FOMO: missing out on what you actually want to do.

Remember, there's discomfort both ways. I highly recommend, if you have to experience discomfort either way, you choose the route that gets you spending the time how you want to spend it. Do what makes you happy in the long run, if either way, you're going to be required to feel some discomfort involved.

Now, final note for you; I want to just turn you on to this: If you want to become someone who does not people-please, I want you to ask yourself;

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when the roles are reversed, how do you respond? Do you like it when people, people-please you?

If you answered, “Yes, I do like it. I appreciate when people, people-please me.” I, myself, used to be a little bit of a pusher if someone would tell me no and I really wanted them to do something with me, like go to dinner, or go on vacation, or help me out with a project at work, or stay late. I used to expect them to people-please me, and I would be pushy, in order to get them to cave.

I would try and attempt to guilt them into doing something. People can't ever guilt us; we guilt ourselves. And, that's why we people-please. But I would make every best effort to guilt other people. Sometimes they would cave, and I would love it.

If that's you, you've got to be really honest with yourself here. If you want to become someone who does not people-please, you need to be willing to accept when people, don't people-please you. It's how you operate from a place of integrity.

If you're more accepting and nicer when people don't people-please you, you'll be kinder to yourself when you want to resist the urge to people-please, and follow through with what you ultimately want to do. Instead of what you “think” you should do.

Make sure you're willing to be on the receiving end of someone's no, if you want to get better at communicating no's yourself.

I hope this was helpful. That's what I've got for you this week. We will continue talking about the three Ps in the next episode. Have a beautiful week.

Thanks for listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast. If you want more info about Olivia Vizachero or the show's notes and resources from today's episode, visit www.TheLessStressedLawyer.com.