

Is that people-pleaser, you?

Free yourself of the need to be liked by others, and pay more attention to how you treat yourself



ETHICS AND YOU

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Remona was always late in joining her friends at any function because it was she who undertook all the boring chores like checking on the delivery of food and number of waiters or whether the flowers and decorations were in order. It was not that she was asked to take the responsibility. She just volunteered in order to be helpful. It made her feel needed and vaguely important. She also hoped that everybody would be pleased with her. Indeed pleasing people was her chief strategy at home, at work, and in society as a whole.

Does she remind you of anyone you know? She might. She is one of a large section of humankind who feel a disproportionate anxiety when they either disappoint or anger someone. She is what we might call a people-pleaser. What about a return for Remona? Who do you think goes out of his or her way to please her?

This article is not about the ethics of how you treat others but about how you treat yourself.

Aim to please

From early childhood, we are told that if mother / father is pleased with your behaviour, that's good for you. And indeed it

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Beware: Tear up the Good Guy Contract!

might be. But some of us gradually and subconsciously adopt this as a personal outlook towards everyone in our lives which also radiates into a social plan. To check whether we have this mild disease of pleasing others – even if we don't really want to – we have to examine a few pointers.

Is it difficult for you to get through the day if you've had even a minor argument with someone, especially someone you are fond of? "My blood pressure must be up..."; "I wish I hadn't said that"; "Now

what will she think of me?" – These are the thoughts that haunt you during daylight hours. Night time is spent lying awake worrying tiredly about these same things and perhaps how you might retrieve the situation even if you know you were within your rights to have said or done something.

Another kind of person wonders constantly how she might manipulate others into liking her or being pleased with her. Perhaps, even encourage others to see her as a victim. Anything to get attention, sym-

pathy, and some affection. The actions of such persons are fuelled by how everything they say or do will cause others to view them.

An article in *Psychology Today* by Alex Lickerman described this condition as the Good Guy Contract – a contract you write with yourself. Maintaining this contract takes up a great deal of your time because you suffer when others don't like you.

How about tearing up this contract and saving time and stepping out of the great need to influence others to like you? Think how much more effective a leader you would be if you made decisions for the right reasons and not because your chief goal in life is to please everyone.

Once you hit the road to recovery, you will form more genuine friendships based on mutual regard. So far, you have been telling yourself that you need the goodwill of others to pad up your self-esteem. Freed of the need to be liked, you will become more genuinely sensitive and also avoid dramatic fights based on imagined slights and minor rejections.

Remember, that being unable to say "no" usually leads to a mountain of resentment which can easily explode and crush you and your acquaintances. Think of the damage you can avoid and how much happier you can be. Think of the damage to yourself you can reverse.

Cancel that contract you signed with yourself!