



HOW TO DITCH PEOPLE-PLEASING WITHIN YOUR FAMILY DYNAMIC

By Ellen Scott, <https://metro.co.uk>

It's natural to want to make your parents proud of you, your siblings like you, and to crave all your relatives' approval.

But sometimes, this desire can tip too far into the realm of people-pleasing, leaving you sacrificing your own happiness for the sake of your family's sign-off.

Recognising this pattern can be tricky. Changing it, even more so.

To help us through this process, we chatted with Tracy Secombe, the author of *From People Pleaser To Soul Pleaser* and a coach who works to help people connect with who they're really meant to be.

Ahead, she breaks down some signs of people-pleasing within the family dynamic and shares how to get freedom from the tendency.

Signs you're people-pleasing within your family dynamic

How can you tell if you're a people-pleaser in the family setting? Tracy reveals some common signs:

- You constantly worry about what your family members think
- You second-guess every decision you make, feeling like you need to get your family's view first
- You always say 'yes' to whatever your family requests of you, even when you want to say 'no'
- You feel like you can't say how you really feel or what you really think because your family won't agree
- How you feel is dependent on how your family members feel – if they're struggling with something, you feel as bad as they do
- You experience growing resentment towards your family, but can't express it
- You hate conflict and avoid it at all costs
- The idea of your family disapproving of something you do or being unhappy feels absolutely devastating
- You look at your life and feel like so much of it isn't made up of what you want, but what your family wants

Why people-pleasing happens in the family

People-pleasing can happen in all our worlds, from work to relationships, but it's especially common in the context of family.

That's because we tend to have learned these people-pleasing tendencies via our upbringing, through our families.

'People-pleasing usually starts in the family, so this is where it can be the most likely place for us to do it, or end up rebelling against it, when we grow up by dreading or even avoiding family get-togethers,' Tracy tells Metro.co.uk.

'Many of us learn at a young age to keep one or both of our parents happy.'



‘This will depend on how stable our parent’s emotions are. If they react negatively to our behaviour and we feel strongly affected by that, we start to try to behave in ways that elicit positive emotions from them.

‘At a young age, we can interpret our parent’s emotions as approval or disappointment, which is where the habit is formed.

‘In other cases, the parent is not capable of parenting, and so one of the children will parent the other children and even the parent.

‘This huge responsibility causes them to feel they are responsible for how other people are feeling, which causes them to put other people’s feelings before their own. This becomes exhausting, leaving you feeling depleted.

‘The other reason some people take on the people-pleasing role within the family is that they model it. They see one parent people-pleasing the other parent (or everyone else), and they mimic this behaviour. This is another way that we subconsciously please our parents, is by being like them.’

How to stop people-pleasing in your family

Work out what your values, wants, and needs are separate from your family.

Persistent people-pleasing can leave you with a weakened sense of self. The first step in overcoming this is reconnecting with who you are.

‘Before we can begin to be open and honest with our parents, we need to do this for ourselves,’ Tracy says. ‘Journal about what is important to you, what you love, what you care about, and what you want to spend your time doing.’

Consider where your family’s expectations come from.

Start to challenge the expectations your family has of you. Are they realistic? Are they fair?

Tracy says: ‘Understand that our parents’ expectations of us are often a reflection of their expectations of themselves – and these are often the same expectations that their parents had of them.

‘Usually, our parents have the best intentions when they set these expectations, believing that it is in our best interest to meet them.

‘However, no one else can choose our life’s path for us. This is up to us, and the sooner we can lovingly share our dreams and aspirations, values, and priorities with our parents, the better our relationship with them will be.

‘This will allow us to respect their opinions while honouring our own.’

Let go of your attachment to your family’s reactions.

You can’t control how someone reacts to something you say or do.

‘The only thing you can control is your intention and delivery,’ Tracy notes.

Go for acceptance, not approval



‘In my opinion, love is acceptance,’ Tracy says. ‘The best way family members can love each other is to fully accept each member of the family as they are.’

‘When we accept each other, the tension leaves the room, and we are free to be ourselves and celebrate our differences.’

‘There is a wonderful opportunity for deep connection when everyone feels that they can be respectfully open and honest with each other.’

Notice when you’re people-pleasing

Tracy tells us: ‘To stop people-pleasing with family, start by noticing when you are doing it.’

‘Check in by asking yourself – why did I do that, or why did I say that, or not say anything? If the answer is that you wanted to keep the peace, keep someone else happy or avoid upsetting someone – then check in with how you feel about it.’

‘Sometimes, you’re okay with doing something because you know it will please someone else, and it pleases you too. The change is warranted when it’s causing you to feel unheard or resentful.’

Start to challenge the urge to people-please

Once you start noticing people-pleasing tendencies, you’ll start to preempt the action.

Next time you spot yourself about to people-please, take a moment to pause, exit the situation, and come back to it knowing what you actually want to do – whether that’s saying ‘no’ to a request or expressing your genuine thoughts rather than keeping the peace.

‘You can plan how to approach the subject differently,’ Tracy says. ‘Most people change this pattern of behaviour gradually over time, so be gentle with yourself.’

‘Start with the easier examples before you tackle the situations that feel very challenging.’

‘It’s worth the effort to be able to live the life you choose, rather than one designed by the people around you.’

Tracy Secombe is a coach who specialises in helping people shift from people-pleasers to Soul Pleasers, and the author of *From People Pleaser To Soul Pleaser*.

For more information, visit: www.tracysecombe.com