

#107: Stop People Pleasing



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Marissa McKool, MPH

[Redefining Rest for Public Health Professionals Podcast
with Marissa McKool, MPH](#)

#107: Stop People Pleasing

Hey you all, I'm Marissa McKool, and you're listening to the *Redefining Rest Podcast for Public Health Professionals*. Here we believe rest is your right. You don't have to earn it, you just have to learn how to take it and I'm going to teach you. Ready? Come along.

Hi friends, how are you? I am so glad to be back recording since my sabbatical. For those of you who maybe are new here, I took all of April off and wasn't working, no email, no social media, no recording the podcast. But now I'm back and I have some amazing, amazing episodes in store for you, including today's around stopping people pleasing. But also next week I'm teaching you how you can take your very own sabbatical no matter your job title, the organization you work for. So you can take two weeks, three weeks, a month off.

After that I have some other exciting episodes including how you can take a social media detox to really disconnect as we all know from kind of the addictive nature of Instagram and Facebook and especially TikTok. So if you're new here, welcome and make sure you hit that subscribe button so you don't miss any of these upcoming episodes.

Now, last week we talked about how to make more money in public health, the main secret that no one in the field talks about, that's not told at any negotiation workshop. And this week we're talking about how to stop people pleasing. Both of these topics were actually requests of my LinkedIn community. So if you don't follow me or you're not connected with me on LinkedIn, go ahead, connect with me, follow me, just search Marissa McKool. I'm very active there. I post a lot of free teachings and free coaching. And I'd love to be connected with you.

And before we jump into today's episode I just want to remind you, I have a new free 15 minute masterclass on how to delegate to reduce your workload. It's completely free, delivered right to your inbox and it's only 15 minutes. You can watch it in less than your lunch break. In this video I

[Redefining Rest for Public Health Professionals Podcast
with Marissa McKool, MPH](#)

#107: Stop People Pleasing

teach you how delegation solves your biggest problem, including if you're not even a supervisor, no matter who you are. If you supervise staff or lead a committee, or you're just an employee that works on your own, you'll learn why delegating feels so difficult and so uncomfortable and what to do about it.

You'll learn three reasons you aren't delegating right now and five simple steps to delegate with confidence so you can reduce your workload and get time back. So go check it out, it's at mckoolcoaching.com/courses. And there'll be a link in the show notes so you can go sign up and grab that free course. And actually you know what, it does relate to today's episode because one of the main reasons you are not delegating is because of your people pleasing habit. Here is what people pleasing looks like. Apologizing all the time when you didn't even do anything wrong. And I do this too.

And I have been really aware of it and I have been kind of looking out for it in kind of community, in myself, how this occurs. And one interesting observation, this is out of the work context, but I've been noticing a lot. So at grocery stores or department stores, clothing stores, when it's tight and there's not a lot of space and you either bump into people or you're trying to pass each other. What I have observed in me and others is that people who present or socialized as women will say, "I'm sorry", or, "Sorry, can I move past you?" And again, I do this too.

But then I've noticed men, people socialized as men or present as men often say, "Excuse me." They don't say, "I'm sorry." They just say, "Excuse me." And this has been really interesting to observe because I do think this has to do with the way we are socialized by our perceived gender or by our gender identity, which we'll talk about more in a second. The other way people pleasing kind of shows up is being so worried of what others are going to think that you over-edit yourself, over-edit your thoughts. So you might reread an email draft five times before you send it.

#107: Stop People Pleasing

Or even, I used to do this all the time, you'd reread the email after you've sent it, even though it's already out there in the ethos. I used to do this all the time, especially in academia. Or you spend so much time in meetings in your mind trying to craft out exactly what you want to say and how you want to say it and in what order that you either end up not saying it at all. Or what you actually say isn't authentic to you. It's not really what you wanted to say.

Another way this looks is saying yes when you really want to say no, not delegating your work to your direct or passing tasks along to the committee you chair or prompting other people in a team meeting to take on work. And you just volunteering constantly to take on work or saying yes when you're asked to. And you do this because you're thinking, I don't want to burden them. Or you're worried of what they'll think. That they'll think you can't handle your job. Or you tell yourself, I should be able to do it all. You end up putting everyone before you.

You're always on and available for your colleagues, you're checking your emails on your days off. You're responding to requests when you're at a conference. You're scheduling your week based off of everything else first, your kids, work, and what everyone else needs and you just get the leftovers which is not very much. Which is why so many women in public health end up overwhelmed, exhausted and burnt out. And you get stuck in this people pleasing cycle, the cycle starts with feeling guilty. You feel bad for saying no.

For example, one of my former clients, she had a boss who would often ask her, "Hey, can you cover for me in this meeting or can you present in my place?" And a lot of times these meetings or presentations were outside of my client's normal business hours. She might have had personal plans with friends or cooking dinner or helping kids with their homework. I remember one time specifically we were coaching on this and it was one of her kid's birthdays.

#107: Stop People Pleasing

And they were going to do something after work. And her boss said, “Hey, I’m going to be on a flight, can you cover for me in this really important meeting with all these important executives?” And she always felt bad saying no, worried what they’ll think, and your brain starts to go, it will impact your career, you’ll burn bridges, they’ll think you’re not a team player, that narrative that starts to show up. So then you say yes and then you do the thing. And listen, it’s fine, the world didn’t end. You might not have loved it but you keep moving forward.

So that's why part of you doesn't think in the moment when you're doing it, it's that big of a deal. But you didn't get to do what you wanted to do, what was best for you, what you had planned. And eventually you end up feeling resentful, like the client I was talking about. She was getting so annoyed and frustrated with her boss for continuing to ask her, “Hey, can you cover for me?” But what happens is you still don't say no, even though you're feeling resentful because that guilt is still there. The guilt almost turns into resentment but the guilt doesn't go away.

And so then out of the guilt you continue to say yes and you stay in the cycle and the resentment builds and it's so hard to get out of. Listen, I'm talking from firsthand experience. This was one of the cycles I was stuck in before I started coaching. This is one of the cycles so many of my clients are stuck in. And here are a few reasons why you're stuck in the cycle, why you people please.

The first is you don't trust yourself. You've been socialized and even trained your whole life to second guess yourself and view others as the authority, as the expert, as the person who knows better. This is why after you speak up in a meeting, you spend the next hour replaying what you said in your head. That is such a mental drain. It's why you ask 10 other people's opinions before making a decision, which wastes so much of the time you could be using for yourself. It's also why you ping-pong in your head 100 times before making a decision.

#107: Stop People Pleasing

With one of my clients, we started calling this kind of affectionately to make it a little less serious, her brain having a party. But not one of those fun parties that you're enjoying, one of those ragers where you're ready to go to bed but no one will leave and it's really hard to kick them all out. That's what we would call this constant ping-ponging where the brain is saying, "You'll burn bridges." "No, I know I need rest. I'm neglecting my family." And then your brain goes, "No, they'll be upset with you." That thing in your head, that constant tug and pull.

You put so much pressure on yourself and then you doubt yourself and you put yourself last. The other reason is that you get your confidence from external validation. External validation means you get your approval, your ability to be proud, or to like yourself from what others think about you. So when others disagree, you might change your mind. You don't feel good about yourself or your report or your draft manuscript until someone else reads it and says it's good. You get crushed by criticism, even constructive feedback.

The third reason is you believe your success depends on what others think, that if you say no, you will burn bridges or you'll never get a chance like this again. And I've talked about this before. This is such common advice in public health. I even have a podcast episode on it, on why the advice, always say yes is terrible advice. We're taught this so much. But what ends up happening is you believe, I can't say no. I'll never get a chance or I'll burn bridges and you believe you doing what's right for you will sabotage or hurt your career.

Under that is the belief that it's not you who creates your success or your future, it's others, what others think of you, what they offer you. So you constantly worry what they think. You try to make decisions for them to make them happy, to make them like you. And this doesn't just happen at work.

#107: Stop People Pleasing

A lot of the folks I work with, the women I coach we talk about how this shows up in their personal life, trying to people please family members, even if you don't want to go to that family barbecue, you still go because you don't want them to be upset with you or think negative things, even though you really don't want to, that's people pleasing. This even shows up with strangers. This happens to me all the time.

You have a plumber come to the house or you're on the phone with a credit card customer service and they offer you something. Maybe it's something you don't even want, like hey, here's an extra service that costs money or hey, I can do this instead. And you don't really want it but you say yes because you feel bad, you're worried what they will think. This happens all over. When we have a brain that tends to people please, doesn't just happen in one area of our life, not just work. It happens in family and friends and with strangers and all over the place.

But I want to say, it makes total sense you people please and put others first. There's nothing wrong with you. This makes total sense. It makes total sense you don't trust yourself to make decisions or to be confident in them or have your back if other people have different opinions. Because this is exactly what the patriarchy and hustle culture wants. When you people please you spend all your energy, your mental and emotional worrying about others and doing for others and putting others first rather than doing for yourself.

And you end up overworking, not having time for herself, not having the energy to do the things you want including rest. You don't have the capacity to show up authentically loud and proud to speak your mind even if it ruffles feathers. You don't take up space, you keep yourself small. That is a win/win for these systems of oppression. And they keep you in this cycle where you're people pleasing to try to feel better which results in you overworking and burning out and not doing what you want to and not being authentic.

#107: Stop People Pleasing

And then you continue to people please to try to feel better from that overworking, not being authentic. And you just get stuck here. The reason this makes sense is because you have been socialized by hustle culture, especially by the patriarchy if you're socialized as a woman to people please, to put yourself last, to believe your worth and value depends on what other people think of you. To think your success is dependent on how much you do for others. That's why it makes so much sense.

You have been socialized and trained and it has been modeled and engrained from media, from family, from schools, from all over to engage in people pleasing. You are taught the lie that it'll make you feel better, that it will help your success and all these other things. When the truth is you end up drained. You end up feeling like shit quite honestly and you end up stuck.

One of my teachers calls people pleasing, lying and manipulative which sounds harsh. But I want you to think about it this way. When you go to a friend's camping weekend, when you really wanted the weekend to catch up on home chores, you say yes even though you would rather stay home. Are you being honest with them? No. When you don't assign tasks to your committee members and you do all the work yourself, because you want to make a good impression and not burden anyone.

Are you allowing the committee members to decide what they think of the work, of you, of you as the leader on their own? No, You're trying to manipulate who they see, so you hope that they will feel a certain way or have certain thoughts about you. When you people please you don't show up as your true self. You lie about who you are, that's the most ironic thing. If you get validation from others when you're people pleasing they're actually not validating the true you. They're validating some version of you you're putting out there, a fake version.

#107: Stop People Pleasing

If other people have positive thoughts or feelings about you when you're people pleasing, their thoughts aren't really about you, it's about that fake version of you, that fake façade, that mask that you're putting on. In order to stop pleasing people, it's actually very simple. All you have to do is start being honest, honest about who you are, your desires, your wants, your likes, your dislikes, your answers, what you say. And you start with being honest with yourself first and then with everyone else.

Now, just because I said it's simple, doesn't mean it's easy. If it was easy we would all be doing it. It's not. You can do it, 100%, I'm not saying you can't do it. I'm just being totally honest with you that it takes work and it's uncomfortable because right now you don't trust yourself. You don't know how to cultivate confidence internally without relying on others. And your brain will continue to worry what others think. Doing the work of being honest and no longer people pleasing requires you to do the inner work on yourself, to grow, to learn how to trust yourself, to learn how not to care what others think.

To learn how to put yourself first. To learn how to be honest even if someone disagrees or they get upset. And in a world that has taught you almost since birth not to do that, that work is hard. And in a world that continues to promote people pleasing, that is hard, but it is doable. It is possible and it's so worth it. And every single one of you listening can do this. There's no exceptions, all of you can stop people pleasing and start living more authentically and feeling better about yourself and your life because it will be aligned with who you are and what you want.

You will save so much time and energy, feel so much better from that alignment, that alignment between your internal self and how you show up externally. And recently, I'll share a place I've been doing this work on myself. This is lifelong work. I've done this in work. I've done this in family. And now I'm really working on it in my friendships. There is a whole host of

#107: Stop People Pleasing

socialization women get around friendships which I won't go into today, but people pleasing is a big one of them.

And I've probably been people pleasing in my friendships for as long as I can remember. But the past year or so I've been really evaluating how I show up in certain friendships, who I am. Am I being authentic? Am I being honest what I want? And the truth was, with some of my friends I was fake as fuck. I was staying friends with people I didn't want to be friends with and avoiding really ending that friendship. Or I was showing up as a different version of myself, not sharing my thoughts and my opinions.

I've started to show up more as my true self in these friendships, sometimes it's meant ending friendships that I don't want to continue, which includes often other people feeling hurt and feeling sad or feeling mad. And that's okay, they can have those feelings. Sometimes it's meant speaking my mind when I disagree in friendships where I usually haven't. And it can feel scary to your nervous system. When I've been doing this, my brain still worries what other people are going to think, what so and so's friend is going to think about me doing this.

My hands might get sweaty when I'm typing that text or my heart beating fast when I'm sharing, "Hey, I don't want to be friends anymore." But I do feel so much better, even with my nervous system reacting, even with those physical sensations, even with my brain being a jerk. I feel better because I'm no longer spending so much time and energy pretending to be someone I'm not, or worrying what others think or giving time and energy to a friendship I don't want to engage in anymore.

Because I am being honest with myself and then with other people as needed, you don't always have to do that, sometimes it's just about being honest with yourself. But because I'm being honest, I actually feel relief. I feel so much pride. I get to enjoy the friends, I am more conscious about and choose actively to have in my life so much more. I get to enjoy those

#107: Stop People Pleasing

friendships more because I'm being my truest self. I have more connection and deeper relationship because I am honest, even if it's uncomfortable sometimes, even if other people have different thoughts and feelings about it.

And most importantly, I create a more honest relationship with myself, a deeper connection with myself and who I am. So as I said, stopping your people pleasing tendency is simple. It's about starting to be honest with yourself. But that doesn't mean it's not going to be uncomfortable because it will. It doesn't mean you don't have to focus on changing your thought patterns, because you do, but you totally can.

And one of the ways you can start doing that is by taking my free course, How to Delegate to Reduce Your Workload because in that 15 minute video you'll get to your inbox. I talk a lot in more detail how you can apply this at work, specifically around delegating. A lot of you aren't delegating your work responsibilities, whether you have a team you supervise or you lead a committee because of these people pleasing tendencies. So in that video I walk you through actual steps to really become more honest and work through that discomfort so you can do this.

And I promise you, if you just start in one area of your life to practice, to build the skill of ending people pleasing and being honest. If you just start in one small area of your life like delegating and you are able to do it there, it is so much easier to be able to then do that with family and then do that with friends, and then do that with your partner or whoever else in your life, even strangers. So I want you to start with this piece, how to delegate. Go to mckoolcoaching.com/courses, sign up. It's free, It gets delivered to your inbox and it will give you concrete steps to help you do this.

Alright you all, so with that, I'm going to let you go. Make sure to subscribe if you're new here so you don't miss next week's episode on how to take a

#107: Stop People Pleasing

sabbatical no matter your job title, no matter your salary, no matter your organization and I'll see you all then. Bye everyone.

If you found this episode helpful then you have to check out my coaching program where I provide you individualized support to create a life centered around rest. Head on over to mckoolcoaching.com, that's M-C-K-O-O-L coaching.com to learn more.