

# Stress Bytes Newsletter

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## “WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!”

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## The Perils of People Pleasing

Are you a people pleaser? Do you feel guilty or “selfish” when saying, “no” to other’s requests? Do you put everyone else’s needs ahead of your own in the hopes that they will like you or they will put your needs as their top priority? Do you worry about hurting other people’s feelings if you cannot do what they want you to do? If so, you are a people pleaser and are probably on the way to depression, anxiety, or resentment.

Eleanor Roosevelt was once quoted as saying, “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” If you are a people pleaser, it’s likely you struggle with low self-esteem. If you will inconvenience yourself to try to please others, you don’t value your own goals and priorities. If you don’t respect the use of your own time, no one else will either.

I’ve said it before, but it bears saying again: ‘No’ is the most powerful word in the human language. When you can comfortably say, “No” to requests for your time, energy, ideas, and money,

you gain the respect of others because you respect yourself and have good boundaries.

You are not a people pleaser when you have a solid “No” and a solid “Yes.” What I mean by that is that you can stick to your guns and hold to your “Yes” or “No.” When you can’t yet say, “No” comfortably, there’s no joy in the giving. Eventually you will feel burdened and resentful of the responsibilities you’ve taken on. You may want to blame or be angry at the other person who pressed you for your help, but you really did this to yourself. No one held a gun to your head when asking you to bake cookies for the church bake sale or coach the Little League again this year. Sure, they may have used flattery, i.e. “but you’re so GOOD at this!” Or, they may have used guilt, i.e. “but there’s NOBODY else to do this!”

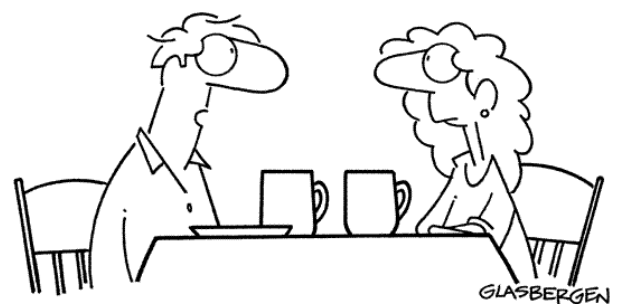
Rather than succumb to the pressures of flattery or guilt, you could practice saying “No” gracefully. To flattery,

you might respond, “Yes, you’re right. I am good at this; however, I want to give someone else an opportunity to shine while I take on other challenges.” To guilt, you might respond, “I know you’ve come to rely on me, and I am sure that when I step aside someone else, equally as capable, will step up to the challenge. Have you thought of asking \_\_\_\_\_?” Or, if someone just makes a straightforward request,

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“Honey, when you say we can’t communicate... what exactly do you mean?”

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## The Perils of People Pleasing —cont'd

but it's at a time that's inconvenient for you, you might respond, "I'd love to help, but this is not a good time for me, as I already have plans." And, if you are not busy and you just don't want to comply with a request, you could always say, "I know you need help, but I am unable to help at this time." PERIOD. You don't need to make something up to justify when you don't want to help. Not wanting to is reason enough. If they press you as to why you can't help them, you can just repeat yourself, "I'm sorry, but I cannot help you."

If you are a people pleaser and you say "Yes" to a request, when the resentment builds up because you said "Yes" when you wanted to say, "No," you don't have a solid "Yes." To cope, you may back out of your commitment at the last minute, do something passive-aggressive, like "forget," or fulfill the request, but do so while being in a bad mood or do so poorly. It is better to have a solid "Yes" and "No" on the front end than end up disappointing people or appearing unreliable.

The other thing I want to say about people pleasing is that when we are sacrificing our own needs for those of others, that is NOT love. It is co-dependence. Putting others first at the continual expense of ourselves is not good for us. Giving to others, when it is not returned or reciprocated, is not a healthy relationship. It is servitude. There I said it!

Yes, of course, we want to please the people we love and who love us in return. However, when you are giving to others out of love, giving *becomes* receiving. It is not motivated by a desire to "give to get." Giving in this way is a true gift and requires no reciprocation. The joy in giving comes both from a sense of abundance, of having lots to share, and the joy in the pleasure it will give the other. You are both enhanced and fulfilled by the giving.



**"Our love keeps getting stronger and stronger...  
like a piece of old cheese."**

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## Get Rid of Stress by Getting Rid of Clutter

Are you a clutter bug or have difficulty throwing things away? Living with clutter can be stressful. It's not just about having a neat home to look at. If your home or workplace is orderly and tidy, your stress will be lower. Why? Because you'll be able to find things more easily, thus saving time and money because you won't go out and buy things that you already have. Often people whose surroundings are filled with clutter are filled with guilt about it too. So eliminate the clutter and eliminate the guilt. An organized, tidy and beautiful environment is relaxing. Plus, you can have people over for company.

There are two things that lead to a person having a lot of clutter in their environment. The first is what we learned. I grew up in a large family, so we learned early on to keep things tidy. We learned the value of having a routine for cleaning. Every Saturday morning, once we were old enough, we'd have to vacuum and dust our rooms before we could go out to play. We made our beds every morning. We put our dirty clothes in the hamper, never on the floor, and took it to the laundry room when it was full. We learned to fold the laundry and put clean clothes in our closet or bureau drawers as soon as they came out of the dryer. We cleared the table at the end of every meal and washed, dried, and put away the dishes. Groceries were put away as soon as they were brought into the house. Mail was opened and sorted immediately. Things didn't sit and wait until later. "Everything has a place and everything in its place," was my Mother's motto.

I took it for granted that everyone lived this way. I know people who learned to be messy and disorganized in the same way that I learned to be neat and organized. They learned behaviors and attitudes that can be summed up as, "I'll take care of that later" or "what does it matter if I take care of my things or not" or "if I can't find it, I'll just buy a new one."

A second cause for having a lot of clutter and difficulty organizing one's environment is Attention Deficit Disorder or ADD. Characteristics of ADD include: difficulty concentrating, distractibility, impulsive behavior, excessive daydreaming, and a proclivity for procrastination. It manifests outwardly in difficulty keeping your environment organized, difficulty finishing a thought to its logical conclusion. In conversation, people with ADD will get off and a tangent, then tell you infinite detail about that, then switch topics to something else that doesn't even seem connected.

My ADD clients talk about having stacks of unopened mail, being late for appointments or for paying their bills, unbalanced checkbook leading to overdrafts, having piles of clean and dirty clothes lying mixed up on the floor, and having so much "stuff" filling up their homes that they literally would have to make a path through their living rooms. Consequently they were too ashamed to invite people to their homes. Without knowing that they have a treatable syndrome, often times people with undiagnosed ADD think they are lazy or stupid and suffer from low self-esteem.

Fortunately, you can learn strategies to organize your environment. These are similar strategies that someone who grew up without a mother like mine can learn. There are so many tools to help you get and stay organized. The simplest tool is making short "ta da" lists. When you complete a task, cross it off the list and say "Ta Da!". Then throw away the list when you're finished. Don't have several lists going at one time. It will overwhelm you. Many ADD people make long lists, then get distracted and don't finish them, thus feeling discouraged. When you finish a task, give yourself a compliment. Doing "work" without a reward isn't a lot of fun. Remember to reward yourself.

Another idea for organizing your life and environment is purchasing a filing system, date book, clothes hamper, hangars, and see through bins to store things. Find or create a way to label your shelves and bins at home and just put the stuff that belongs there into the bin. Then when you use something from that shelf or bin, return it there as soon as you're done using it. Don't throw it on the floor or dining room table and tell yourself you'll put it away later. Chances are you won't. **Continued on page 4**

