

People Pleasers, Problem Daters

Why Really Nice People Don't Get Second Dates

By Frank Kermit, Relationships



At the heart of every great people pleaser is the best of intentions of wanting to be liked by the other person. And that is why people pleasers, as “nice” as they are, are never fully trusted by the target of their affections.

When someone wants to please a person, that is OK, provided that the person feels the attention is earned. The problem is that a people pleaser is “too nice” by nature. People pleasers see themselves as being appropriate, while their dates feel a vibe of insincerity. In the minds of potential partners, no one is that nice, unless there have ulterior motives. In fact, that is the paradox of the people pleaser. They don’t want the other person’s money, resources, or even material possessions. All they want is to be liked.

Because people pleasers want to be liked so badly, they allow themselves to be disrespected. One of the principles to make any relationship work is that it **MUST** be more important to the person to want to be respected by your potential partner, instead of being liked. If all you know how to do is to be liked, you will get **ATTENTION**, but you will struggle to find any long lasting and legitimate intimacy. No one loves a person that does not have his or her respect as well. People will “like” a people pleaser, but people will never fully “respect” nor “trust” a people pleaser. Without respect and trust, there can be no love. There can be “like”, even “lust” in some cases, but never a love that leads to commitment.

At the source of a people pleaser, is fear: The fear of confrontation, the fear of being abandoned, and the fear of being mean or insulting. That is why people pleasers lack boundaries. Without proper boundaries, a people pleaser does not have to deal with any of that unpleasantness nor do they have to act in ways in which they might self identify with their own abusers who were mean or insulting to the pleaser. Unfortunately, that repeating behavior pattern can only lead to attracting and being attracted to people that would continually take advantage of the people pleaser.

The skill of people pleasing can, but not always, be sourced to emotionally abusive upbringings. Depending on the severity of the mental and emotional abusive, the people pleaser skill set is likely what allowed a number of children to survive unhealthy family environment where unpredictable adult temperament behaviors ran rampant. A child learns to be a people pleaser in order to appease and maintain the peace with emotionally unhealthy adults. When that child grows up, they take those behavior patterns; they now associate to attachment, and get stuck in emotionally unhealthy relationships. When a people pleaser is actually with someone that appreciate them without the unreasonable expectation of having to be pleased every step of the way, a people pleaser will often not be able to recognize that as an emotionally healthy dynamic and will often find themselves feeling empty.

There are good qualities to being a people pleaser. Being a people pleaser is a great quality in the correct context. On the job, the characteristics of a great people pleaser make for excellent customer care service. Some of the most independent self-employed workers are amazing people pleasers. So are people who excel at being support staff.

But in romantic relationships, being a people pleaser will only net you the kinds of partners who are too insecure to manage a partner who understands how to prioritize the needs of the relationship, the needs of the partner and the needs of the people pleaser.

There is a difference between being a giving person and being a people pleaser. A giving person gives what they can without giving up so much, that they themselves end up sacrificing their own needs. For example, a student has an exam to study for the next day, and gets a call from her boyfriend to come over because he is feeling a little lonely. The giving person weighs the options of her own need to study, and her desire to keep her boyfriend happy. In the event that the boyfriend's request is not dire (they can see each other after her exam) and her own need for study is very important, a giving person would put her own needs in priority. It does not take away from her being a giving person; it just means she can acknowledge what is more important at the moment. A people pleaser however, would want the approval of her boyfriend so badly, that she would jeopardize her exam, just because she wants to keep her boyfriend from being slightly upset. See the difference?

Why does it not work in relationships? Let's say you are on a date, and your date asks you a common date question, such as why did you choose your current profession, what is your favorite meal, or are you looking to try and have sex with me tonight?

A people pleaser will ONLY give the answers that they think the other person WANTS to hear...but not the answer they would actually want to give. This leads to unrealistic expectations on both parts. The people pleaser expects that EVERYONE behaves like a people pleaser, and thus doesn't factor in how misleading they are actually being on a first date. The potential partner, who is unaware of the people pleasing behavior pattern, takes what is being communicated at face value...only to discover at a later time, the person they are dating is not what they thought.

It does not stop there. People pleaser will please others to the point of feeling anger and resentment for doing things they initially agreed to do, because they feel they cannot say no. Eventually, the pleasers...EXPLODE! Partners get the brunt of the explosion, and end up feeling resentful too, because they are not mind readers. And rightly so, however part of being a surviving people pleaser is the anticipation of the dysfunctional emotional cues of the adults they grew up with. The biggest mistake that people pleasers make is the assumption that everyone had to survive childhood acting a like a people pleaser.

To simplify why people pleasers do not generate trust in relationships, here is a symbolic analogy: people pleasers are just like sheep. You can trust a Sheppard to be a good Sheppard as long as there is a value for value relationship going on (respect). You can trust a wolf to be a wolf, because you can acknowledge the good and bad in a wolf, and the wolf never tries to be anything other than a wolf (trust). But you can never trust a sheep. Sheep are too afraid of confrontation, run in whatever direction someone makes them run in, and will always bow down (Baa down?) to a more dominant character. You can never trust a sheep as long as someone more intimidating comes by to turn the sheep away from you.

So the next time you are on a date, and you end up in a situation where you need to communicate and or enforce a boundary, and you have a choice to make: Speak your mind and don't be a sheep.

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