

## 9. Stop Trying to Please Everyone



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kori Linn**

## 9. Stop Trying to Please Everyone

This week, we're talking about people-pleasing, what it is, why we do it - you may be surprised - and how people-pleasing blocks us from building the satisfying work-life of our dreams.

You are listening to Love Your Job (Before You Leave It), the podcast for ambitious, high-achieving womxn who are ready to stop feeling stressed about work and kiss burnout goodbye forever. Whether you're starting a business or staying in your day job, this show will give you the coaching and guidance you need to start loving your work today. Here's your host, Career Coach, Kori Linn.

Hey y'all. It is almost Christmas when this podcast comes out, so that's exciting. Merry Christmas if you're celebrating, happy holidays as well. So I think it's kind of perfect that this podcast is coming out around the Christmas and the winter holiday giving time because gift giving I think is a time when a lot of us are tempted to people-please.

So even though this podcast episode is about work, I think it's really relevant for personal stuff too. And I know in my life, there have been a few times where my girlfriend has gotten me a present and she's worked really hard to try to pick out something she thought I would love and I didn't love it.

And every time that happens, I would have to have a little conversation with myself inside my head because I'm a recovering people-pleaser too. So there's always part of me that's like, pretend you like it, don't let her find out you don't. It's like I don't want her feelings to be hurt if I don't like the present.

But I always kind of have a little pep talk with myself where I'm like, no, I want a satisfying, honest relationship with my girlfriend, so I would rather tell her if I don't like the thing. Because first of all, that's the truth, and I want her to know who I really am. But it also sets us up, both of us, for success later.

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So it does require some courage to say I don't like something. And I don't want her feelings to be hurt, but I also know that then we have this opportunity for real connection where I can talk about what I do like, or where I can explain why the thing wasn't a good fit for me. And I think it's a perfect example because it shows a lot of the stuff that comes up for us when we feel tempted to people-please.

But before we dig all the way into the topic of people-pleasing, I do want to read a review to you. So this review is from Dannare, I'm not sure about pronunciation, so apologies if I'm pronouncing that wrong. And the review is called "Great practical content."

And it says, "Love the practical and empowering content from career coach, Kori. From learning about burnout to setting better boundaries, the content is actionable and helpful. Can't wait for more episodes." Thank you so much, Dannare. I am so appreciative of the review and there's more where that came from for you and for all my listeners.

And everyone else who hasn't written a review, I'm still trying to get just a few more reviews. Once we get up to 50, I'm going to do my drawing for my giveaway, so that's really exciting. But you also want to be in that drawing, so scoot on over to [korilinn.com/podcastlaunch](http://korilinn.com/podcastlaunch) to find the details, which includes screenshots for how you can leave a review and how you can then enter the giveaway to win my prize. It's awesome, you're going to want it. More details about that at the end of the episode.

Okay, so let's dig into people-pleasing. First of all, I'm just going to tell you right now, this episode might be a little bit longer than some of my other episodes because there's a lot of nuance in here that I want to discuss and I don't want to rush through it because I think when we get a really thorough understanding of it, it's really helpful.

But let's just start by asking this. Have you ever caught yourself people-pleasing at work? Maybe your boss asked you to take a project and you'd really rather not, but you find yourself saying, "I'd love to!" Maybe you have

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a peer who wants to remote co-work with you and you keep saying yes, even though you don't enjoy it at all, and actually, you get less work done, but you just don't want to say no because you're afraid she'll think you're a bitch or unfriendly or whatever.

Or maybe you're finding that you have difficult feedback to give someone but you keep not giving it to them, even though it would totally help them do a better job and move up in their career, but you're too afraid that they'll be hurt or upset by the feedback.

The way most of us talk about people-pleasing and even that label that we use for it of pleasing makes it seem like it's something nice that we do, like this behavior is really about making other people happy, even if we have to suffer a little. Many of us received social conditioning that directly taught us to do this behavior.

Taught us to try to please other people and to avoid upsetting them if at all possible. And even as we learn lessons like don't lie as kids, we also learned lessons like don't hurt anyone's feelings and always tell your grandmother you like what she cooks, even if you actually hate it.

Then on top of that, as adult womxn, we've also learned another set of ideals such as ask for what you want and stand up for yourself and smash the patriarchy. And all of that means that most of us are trying to simultaneously follow different sets of social conditioning that are actually in direct conflict with one another.

So basically, it comes down to make sure everyone else is happy and okay at all times, but also stand up for yourself and don't you dare take any shit from anyone. And when I lay it out like that, I'm sure it's easier to see that it's impossible to do both of those things at the same time, and yet when we have those playing out in our subconscious, that is what we try to do. We try to do both of them at the same time.

And if we don't realize what's happening, that we have these two different sets of ideals going on, it can be confusing to understand why we're doing

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what we're doing when it comes to people-pleasing. So let's take a look at what people-pleasing actually is.

People-pleasing is trying to make other people like you or be happy with you. And in the workplace, this of course extends to your work as well. Wanting people to like you, wanting them to approve of you, wanting them to think that your work is excellent.

And sometimes, when we want others to think we're amazing or that our work is the best, we try to make that happen through our actions and how we show up in the workplace. So sometimes that looks like you doing something you don't want to do or wouldn't otherwise do because you want to impress somebody.

Sometimes it means doing something you normally would do, but rather than doing it out of genuine desire in this instance, you're doing it to try to create a specific outcome, namely that the other person is pleased, or that they like you.

And if you're anything like I used to be, you might even do this without realizing you're doing it. Maybe under the guise of just being nice, or just being a cheerful person.

So let's look at an example. Let's say it's 5:30pm and you've been working since 8am and you're about to log off for the night. But then your boss Slacks with just one little thing. And in the real world where you're in a different room, probably a room in your home, remote working, you groan and you're totally like, "No, I don't want to do this last-minute request, it can wait until tomorrow."

But instead of telling your boss like, "Hey, I'm logging off, can I handle it in the morning?" You shoot back like, "Sure thing!" And "I'll get that right over to you!" You're not as excited as your exclamation points are pretending you are, but for some reason, that's how you feel like you need to act. So it's how you act.

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Why are you showing up the way you're showing up in this interaction? The answer is because you want your boss to like you and because you're trying to ensure that outcome via your behavior, instead of telling your boss the truth, that you'd prefer to do the task first thing tomorrow, you act like it's the highlight of your day to work late and do the thing now.

Now, I know not all of you are as over the top with your people-pleasing as that, and it can be subtle. But I really was pretty over the top with my people-pleasing. So I want to give you that example so you can see it in a really extreme way.

Here's what's interesting too. Could I ensure that my former boss liked me by doing those kinds of things? Of course not. But I was trying to make working with me as fun and smooth as I could for him because I was so deeply afraid of being disliked or having him have any negative emotions remotely in my direction, as if I could control that.

And while I wasn't trying to lie to him, let's be honest, that is actually what I was doing. When we say I'd love to when we don't mean it, that is lying. And it's this specific kind of dishonesty that exists at the heart of people-pleasing.

We aren't telling others the truth. We're hiding the truth and serving them what we imagine they want to hear instead. On top of that, here's something else I discovered about this behavior that we refer to as people-pleasing. Generally, when we try to do this, we don't just lie to others. We also lie to ourselves.

Allow me to explain. When we people-please, most of us don't tell the truth to the other person, right? We don't say, "Hey, I'm actually logging off right now, can this wait until the morning?" Like my earlier example. Instead, we gloss over our own feelings and say, "Yup, sure thing," or even express some kind of over-the-top delight like I used to do about the thing that we actually do not want to do at all. Because we think behaving this way will

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get us more of what we want, whether that's being liked or getting promoted or whatever. So that's lie number one.

Even if you haven't been calling your people-pleasing behaviors lying, you probably knew that you weren't exactly telling the truth to the other person. But that's not the only lie. There's also lie number two, and that's the lie we tell ourselves about why we told lie number one. Lie number one being the lie to the other person.

So most of us think that the reason we're people-pleasing is because we want the other person to be happy and think we're good employees, et cetera, et cetera. And there may be some truth to that. But there's another factor at play. One that you may not be aware of.

The other reason that we aren't honest with people is because - drum roll please - we don't want to feel the discomfort we would feel if we told the truth. When we anticipate that the other person might not like what we have to say, that's uncomfortable for most of us. We might even get a little sweaty thinking about it.

We choose to do this behavior we call people-pleasing instead so that we can avoid and ignore that discomfort. And just like we tell two lies, one to ourselves and one to the other person, we try to avoid that discomfort twice as well.

We try to avoid the discomfort of telling the other person the truth because of how we think we'd feel if we did, and we also avoid the discomfort of telling ourselves the truth and having to come to terms with what we're really doing.

Instead of telling ourselves, hey, I don't want to feel uncomfortable, we gloss it over and pretend that doing this behavior, pretending to do things we don't want to do, or rather pretending to like doing things we don't want to do is a nice thing, something that results in joy for others, rather than seeing it for what it is. An avoidant behavior that is inherently dishonest.

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Here's the other problem to add to the already cringey reality of this thing we call people-pleasing. And I keep referring it that way because it's not actually about pleasing other people, as we are hashing out right now. So I think sometimes even calling it people-pleasing isn't wise. It doesn't help us see what we're really doing.

So like I was saying, here's the other problem to add to the cringey reality of this behavior pattern; it doesn't work. We can't control what other people's thoughts and feelings are about us no matter how hard we try, no matter what we do. We can't make people like us. We can't make people think that our work is good.

And the funny thing is most of us actually learned this as kids and we know on some level that it simply doesn't work. But we still try to do it this way because trying is often easier than choosing to face our own discomfort instead.

And the way we try is by overworking because like we talked about a few episodes ago, a lot of us equate our worthiness with our work productivity. But as you've probably discovered, it doesn't work. Because when we people-please and overwork until we're burned out, it's no fun for us, it doesn't lead to better work performance over the long haul, and it leads to burnout.

Here's another problem with people-pleasing. When we do this, we're also taking the authentic version of ourselves offline, where no one can like us, or even get to know us. When we do these behaviors called people-pleasing, which really is to say when we lie, then the self we present to the world is not our actual self.

It's a fake version of us. It's what and who we think we need to be, not what and who we actually are. When we achieve this way, our achievements feel terrible. They feel like a lie because they actually are based on a lie.

When we aren't willing to be the real version of ourselves and navigate the world as our actual selves, we also rob ourselves of the chance to connect



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authentically with others. People at the office may love us, but that actually makes us feel worse because we know they don't know us.

We don't believe they would like us quite so much if we actually told them the truth. At this point, you may be wondering, if now you have to take an oath to always tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And the answer to that is only if you want to.

From a coaching point of view, what I'd invite you to do is to start by telling the truth to yourself, no matter what you do or say on the outside. If you want to keep people-pleasing, at least be honest about what you're doing in the privacy of your own mind.

Ask yourself, why do I want to say yes when I mean no right now? What am I trying to accomplish by pretending I like this more than I do? If I actually felt safe to be honest, would I want to? What would that entail? Figure out what you're trying to accomplish by people-pleasing. Figure out what your reasons might be to do that behavior. Then decide if you like those reasons.

If you're holding your opinion back because you're not ready to share it with the world, at least tell yourself the truth about what you're doing and why. It's not for me to say whether it's important if you tell the truth out loud. You get to decide. And I believe that it's important to have space inside your own head to have realizations without forcing yourself to share them before you're ready.

That being said, you may find that you simply didn't know you were avoiding discomfort, and once you see that you are, that's enough to change your habits. You may decide that you don't want to change how you show up at work, but that you do want to change how you show up in your marriage or your family.

One of the things I love most about coaching is that it's not one size fits all. You get to choose how you want to incorporate this teaching into your life.

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But what I do want you to for sure see by the end of this episode is the truth about what people-pleasing is and why we do it.

I want you to see what the behavior is actually about underneath its cheerful name, and then I want you to decide on purpose if you want to keep doing it or not. But once you see people-pleasing for what it is, you're also going to see where it's blocking you from creating the career you want.

Once you see that saying yes when you mean no is something you've learned to do, but not something you have to keep doing, you have options. Once you realize that people-pleasing is a way we avoid our own discomfort, you can decide if you want to keep making that choice.

Creating the life we want often is uncomfortable and a lot of people will never build the life they want because when they bump into that discomfort, they back the fuck away from it. But what if you were willing to feel it instead? What if you were willing to feel it and keep going?

When we understand that discomfort doesn't have to stop us, then we can ask for anything, we can go after anything, we can work to build the life that we want step by step. And it's not that just trying things differently or just asking for what we want means we'll get it right away.

A lot of times, we won't. But when we are able to tolerate our own discomfort at work and in life, then we can keep going. We make it okay for ourselves to ask for what we want, to say what we really mean, and doing these things is so important when you want to create anything in your life that you don't already have.

I'm going to say that again in a slightly different way. Asking for what you want and saying what you mean are skills. And when it comes to building a work life you love, they're both essential. It's not your job's job to add meaning and delight to your life. It's your job. Only you can do it.

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And knowing how to tell the truth and how to ask for what you want are two things that can help you go from dreaming of a new way of being to actually living that new way.

And listen, if you want some personalized help implementing this, I've got good news for you. To celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away just a few deep dive strategy sessions with yours truly.

I want to be very clear; these are not consult calls. They are 90-minute sessions where we are going to unpack what's going on with you and your career, and then we come up with a point-by-point plan for how to get you to where you want to go.

I know exactly what it's like to leave an amazing job and launch a six-figure business, and I can walk you through what that might look like for you. And if you're not interested in launching a business, we can focus on your particular career objectives, whatever they may be, such as getting a raise, getting a promotion, anything you want.

I'm going to give away just three of these sessions. In order to be eligible, all you need to do is subscribe, rate, and review the show on Apple Podcasts.

It doesn't even have to be a five-star review, although I of course hope you love the show. What I really, really would love is your honest feedback so that I can create a show that will blow your mind and help you change your life every week.

You can visit [korilinn.com/podcastlaunch](http://korilinn.com/podcastlaunch) to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I will be announcing the winners really soon, as soon as we get 50 reviews. And listen, if you don't want to do the giveaway but you want some help right away, I am accepting new clients in January. So swing on over to my website and learn more about that, [www.korilinn.com](http://www.korilinn.com). Alright y'all, have a great week. Bye-bye.

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Thank you for listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It. We'll have another episode for you next week. And in the meantime, if you're feeling super fired up, head on over to [korilynn.com](http://korilynn.com) for more guidance and resources.