PEOPLE PLEASING

People Pleasing Worksheet: 6 Free Printable Exercises

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A people pleasing worksheet is a set of written exercises that help you notice when and why you say yes to things you don't want, and practice responding differently. This page has six: an inventory, a guilt audit, a cost-benefit analysis, a boundary script builder, a values check, and a weekly reflection. Start with the first and go in order.

A people pleasing worksheet sounds like something a therapist hands you on a clipboard before disappearing for ten minutes. And honestly, that's sometimes exactly what it is. But when a worksheet is well-designed, it does something powerful: it forces you to slow down and notice the patterns you've been running on autopilot. That's the part most people skip. They know they're a people pleaser. They just haven't mapped out exactly how it shows up, what triggers it, and what it costs them.

This page gives you a series of practical exercises you can work through on your own or with a therapist. They build on each other, so starting from the top is ideal. If you want a broader understanding of people pleasing (/people-pleasing/) as a pattern, that pillar guide covers the full picture. This article is about doing the work.

Why a people pleasing worksheet actually helps

Knowing you're a people pleaser doesn't change the behavior. If knowledge alone were enough, every self-aware person would have fixed this by now. The gap between understanding and change is bridged by structured practice. That's what worksheets are for.

Writing forces specificity. It's easy to think "I people please at work." It's much harder (and more useful) to write "When my manager asks me to stay late on Fridays, I say yes even though I resent it because I'm afraid she'll think I'm not committed." The second version gives you something to work with. The first one just makes you feel bad.

Worksheets also create a record. When you track your patterns over a few weeks, trends emerge. You might discover that you people please far more with authority figures than with friends. Or that your biggest trigger is guilt, not fear of conflict. Or that Tuesdays are your worst day because of your weekly team meeting. These specifics matter because they tell you where to focus your energy.

If you're not sure how deep your people pleasing runs, the People Pleaser Test (/quiz/people-pleasing/) can give you a quick baseline before you start.

Exercise 1: The people pleasing inventory

This is your starting point. Over the next week, notice every time you say yes when you want to say no, agree when you actually disagree, or do something to avoid disappointing someone. Write each instance down using this format:

Situation: What happened? Who was involved?

What I did: How did I people please?

What I actually wanted: What would I have done if I felt completely safe?

What I was afraid of: What did I think would happen if I said no or expressed my real opinion?

How I felt afterward: Did I feel relieved? Resentful? Numb? Tired?

Don't try to change anything this week. Just notice and record. The goal is data, not transformation. Most people are stunned by how many times per day they override their own preferences to manage someone else's feelings.

Here's an example entry:

Situation: Coworker asked me to cover her shift on Saturday.

What I did: Said "Sure, no problem!" immediately.

What I actually wanted: To say no. I had plans to hike with a friend.

What I was afraid of: She'd be annoyed with me, or she'd think I wasn't a team player.

How I felt afterward: Annoyed at myself. Dreading Saturday. Cancelled on my friend and felt guilty about that too.

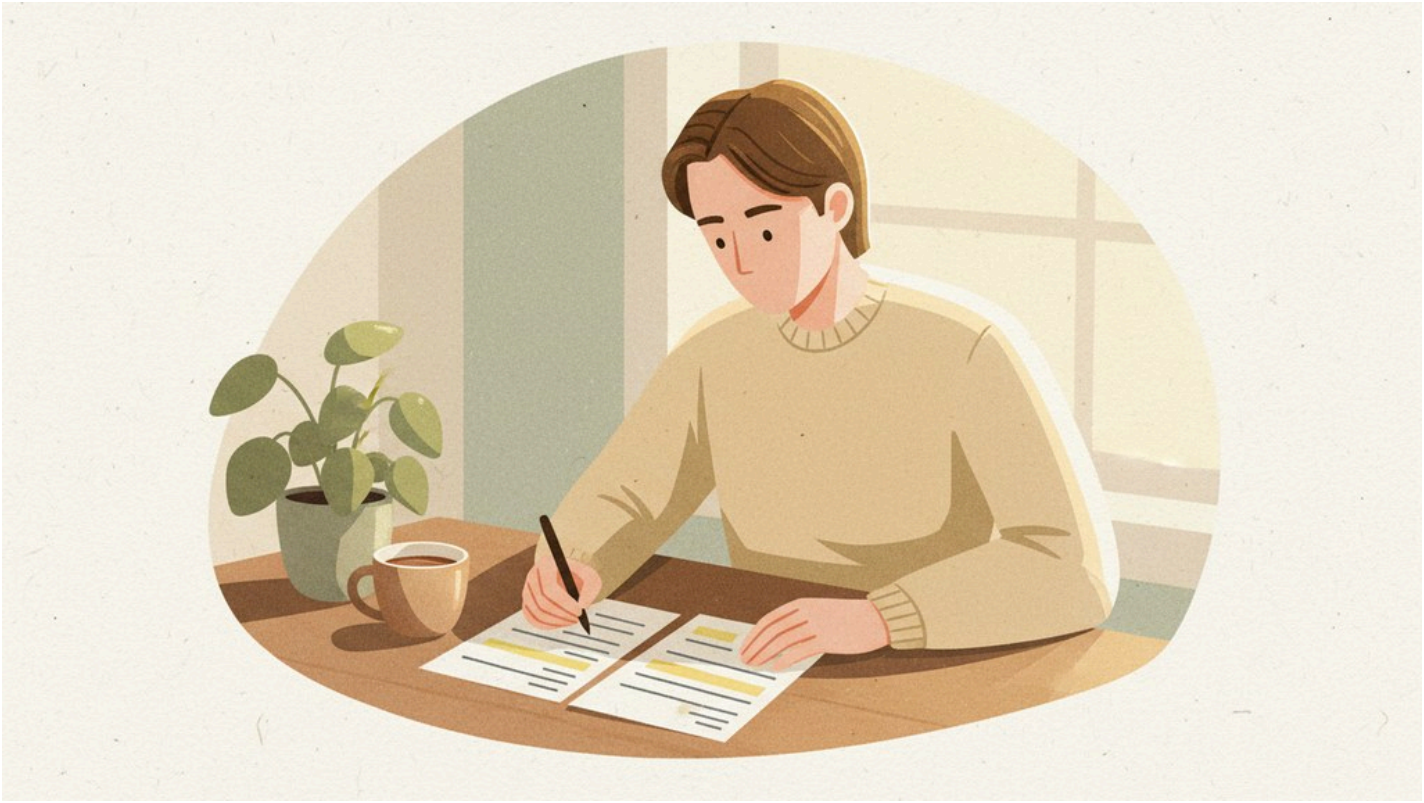
After a full week, read through your entries. Circle the ones that bother you most. Those are your starting points.

Exercise 2: The guilt audit

Guilt is the fuel that keeps people pleasing running. This exercise helps you separate legitimate guilt (you actually did something wrong) from manufactured guilt (someone else's disappointment triggered your alarm system).

Go back to your inventory from Exercise 1. For each entry, ask yourself these questions:

1. Did I actually do something harmful, or did I just fail to meet someone's expectation?
2. Was the expectation reasonable?
3. Would I judge a friend for doing what I wanted to do?
4. Is this guilt about my behavior, or about someone else's emotional reaction?



Most people discover that the vast majority of their guilt falls into the “manufactured” category. You feel guilty not because you did something wrong, but because saying no activated a deeply held belief that your job is to keep everyone comfortable.

Write a short statement for each manufactured guilt entry. Something like: “I am allowed to say no to covering shifts that conflict with my plans. Her disappointment is not evidence that I did something wrong.”

These statements feel awkward at first. That’s fine. You’re building a new internal script to compete with the old one. The old script has had years of practice. The new one needs reps.

Exercise 3: The cost-benefit analysis

This exercise is borrowed from cognitive behavioral therapy, and it works. For each people pleasing behavior you identified, create two columns.

Column 1: Benefits of people pleasing in this situation

Be honest. There are real benefits. The person is happy with you. You avoid conflict. You feel temporarily safe. You maintain the relationship. You get praised for being helpful. None of these

are imaginary.

Column 2: Costs of people pleasing in this situation

Also be honest. You lose time. You feel resentful. You cancel things you care about. You exhaust yourself. You teach the other person that your boundaries don't exist. You lose respect for yourself, bit by bit. You never find out what would actually happen if you said no.

When you see both columns written out, something shifts. The costs almost always outweigh the benefits, and the benefits are almost always short-term while the costs are long-term.

This is also where the psychology behind people pleasing (/people-pleasing/psychology/) becomes relevant. Understanding why your brain defaults to this pattern makes it easier to challenge it, because you stop blaming yourself and start seeing it as a learned response that can be unlearned.

Exercise 4: The boundary script builder

Now you're ready to practice the actual skill. Pick three situations from your inventory where you want to respond differently next time. For each one, write out:

The situation: (Keep it specific.)

My old response: (What I usually say or do.)

My new response: (What I want to say instead.)

My backup response: (If they push back, what will I say?)

Here are some templates to work from:

For requests on your time: "I appreciate you thinking of me, but I'm not available for that. I hope you find someone who can help."

For unwanted advice or opinions: "I hear you. I'm going to handle it my way, but I appreciate the input."

For emotional dumping: “That sounds really hard. I don’t have the capacity to support you with this right now, but I think talking to a therapist could help.”

For family obligations: “I won’t be able to make it this time. I’ll catch the next one.”

Notice that none of these include a lengthy explanation. People pleasers tend to over-explain because they feel they need to justify their no. You don’t. “I can’t” is a complete sentence. “I’m not available” doesn’t require footnotes.

Practice saying your new responses out loud. It sounds silly, but your mouth needs the practice as much as your brain does. The first time you try to say “I can’t do that” to a real person, it helps enormously if your vocal cords have already formed those words a dozen times in front of your bathroom mirror.

Exercise 5: The values alignment check

People pleasing often disconnects you from what you actually value. You spend so much energy on everyone else’s priorities that you lose track of your own. This exercise reconnects you.

List your top five values. Not what you think you should value. What you actually value. Common ones include freedom, creativity, health, deep relationships, honesty, adventure, financial security, personal growth, family, solitude, contribution.

Now look at your calendar and commitments from the past month. How much of your time went toward your values, and how much went toward managing other people’s feelings?

If the ratio is heavily skewed toward other people, that’s the clearest evidence that people pleasing is stealing your life. Not dramatically. Not all at once. Just a little bit each day, in ways you barely notice until you add them up.

For each value, write one specific commitment you want to make this week that honors it. Just one per value. Small and doable. “I value health, so I’m going to keep my Wednesday gym session this week instead of cancelling it because someone wants to grab lunch.” That’s it. One small act of alignment.

Exercise 6: The weekly reflection

Do this every Sunday for at least four weeks. It takes ten minutes and it's the exercise that ties everything together.

Answer these four questions in writing:

1. How many times did I people please this week? (Estimate is fine.)
2. How many times did I catch myself and choose differently?
3. What was the hardest moment this week?
4. What did I learn about myself?

The magic is in the trend line, not any single week. In week one, you might catch yourself zero times. By week four, you might be catching yourself three or four times. That's massive progress, even if you still slip up constantly. Awareness always comes before change.

Some people find it helpful to pair this reflection with a ready-made script. The Scripts Generator (/scripts/) gives you word-for-word phrasing for the harder conversations, sorted by relationship and situation, so you are not starting from a blank page.

When a worksheet isn't enough

Worksheets are a tool, not a cure. If your people pleasing is rooted in childhood trauma, an abusive relationship, or severe anxiety, a worksheet alone won't resolve it. It can be a great complement to therapy, but it shouldn't be a substitute.

Signs you might need more support:

- You can identify the pattern but feel physically unable to change it (shaking, nausea, panic when you try to say no).
- Your people pleasing is connected to a specific relationship that feels unsafe.
- You've been working on this for months with no progress.
- You experience intense shame or self-blame when you set a boundary, even after practicing.

A therapist who specializes in codependency (/codependency/) or boundary work can help you address the root causes that worksheets can't reach. This isn't a failure. It's just recognizing that some patterns need more than paper to untangle.

How to actually use these exercises

Print them out, or open a dedicated notes file on your phone. Don't try to do all six exercises in one sitting. Start with the inventory (Exercise 1) and spend a full week on it before moving to Exercise 2. Give each exercise at least a few days of attention.

The people who get the most out of worksheets like these are the ones who treat them as an ongoing practice, not a one-time activity. Your patterns didn't form overnight. They won't dissolve overnight either. But they will shift, slowly and then all at once, if you keep showing up and doing the work.

If you want to understand how people pleasing connects to anxiety (/people-pleasing/and-anxiety/) or shows up in relationships (/people-pleasing/in-relationships/), those guides go deeper into those specific dimensions.

Frequently asked questions

Can I use these worksheets without a therapist?

Yes. These exercises are designed to be self-guided. Many people make significant progress working through them independently. That said, a therapist can help you dig deeper into the "why" behind your patterns, especially if you find yourself stuck or overwhelmed. If you do work with a therapist, bringing your completed worksheets to a session gives them valuable insight into your specific triggers and patterns.

How long does it take to see results from these exercises?

Most people notice increased self-awareness within the first week. The ability to catch yourself in the moment and choose a different response usually starts around week two or three. Actual lasting change in your relationships and default patterns typically takes two to three months of consistent practice. This isn't a quick fix. It's a gradual rewiring of deeply ingrained habits.

What if I feel worse before I feel better?

That's normal and even expected. When you start paying attention to how often you override your own needs, it can feel discouraging. And when you start setting boundaries, the people around you may push back, which is uncomfortable. This temporary discomfort is a sign of growth, not failure. You're disrupting a system that everyone around you has gotten used to. It recalibrates, but it takes time.

More worksheets and workbooks

If this one helped, the other practice pages here work the same way, one skill at a time:

- Setting boundaries worksheet (/boundaries/worksheets/): name your real limits and plan the conversation that protects them.
- Codependency worksheets (/codependency/worksheets/): sort out whose feelings are whose and where you end.
- Saying no worksheet (/saying-no/worksheets/): break the automatic yes and build a no you can actually say.

- Assertiveness workbook (/assertiveness/workbook/): a longer, module-by-module build for speaking up over several weeks.

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