

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

KAREN EHMAN

When Making
Others *Happy*
Is Making You
Miserable

**HOW TO BREAK THE PATTERN
OF PEOPLE PLEASING AND
CONFIDENTLY LIVE YOUR LIFE**

FOREWORD BY LYSA TERKEURST

New York Times Bestselling Author



A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN BOOKS

When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable

Copyright © 2021 by Karen Ehman

Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Zondervan titles may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, fundraising, or sales promotional use. For information, please email SpecialMarkets@Zondervan.com.

ISBN 978-0-310-34758-3 (softcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-34763-7 (audio)

ISBN 978-0-310-34759-0 (ebook)

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.Zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Scripture quotations marked AMP are taken from the Amplified® Bible. Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987, 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org).

Scripture quotations marked CEV are taken from the Contemporary English Version. Copyright © 1991, 1992, 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked CSB® are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible®, and CSB®, are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible®. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org).

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation. © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Any internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by Zondervan, nor does Zondervan vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

The author is represented by Meredith Brock, Proverbs 31 Ministries.

Cover design: Alison Fargason Design

Cover photo: Jamie Grill Atlas / Stocksy

Interior design: Denise Froehlich

Printed in the United States of America

Quiz: What Is Your Approval Rating?

Often, we may catch a news report that gives a politician's approval rating. This is the result of a poll taken to determine what percentage of the people surveyed are satisfied with the job the person is doing. Time for us to take our own poll. However, this one has a slightly different twist.

Read through the following statements and note the number that best describes you, using the key below. Then, total up the numbers to see where you fall on the approval rating scale.

5	4	3	2	1
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1. I have trouble expressing my honest opinion when someone asks me what I think of their outfit, hair, new shoes, etc. . . . _____				
2. If I'm in a group deciding where to eat and the majority of people have already weighed in wanting restaurant A but I want restaurant B, I will just go along with their choice rather than tell them the truth. _____				

3. In a group setting where a leader is asking for volunteers for a task, I will make sure to be one of the people to sign up to do a job or provide food. _____
4. I am hypersensitive to being corrected by others. _____
5. I second-guess myself when I start to wonder what someone else might think of my decision. _____
6. When people, especially strangers, are talking about politics—and are on the opposite side of what I feel is an important moral issue—I will just keep my opinions to myself rather than tell them what I believe. _____
7. I get uncomfortable even with the illusion of dissatisfaction from others. _____
8. When in a group setting and asked to give my opinion, when I'm finished talking, I hope others will chime in and agree with me. _____
9. If you looked at my life, you would characterize me as someone who is overcommitted. _____
10. When I meet someone new, I hope that after our encounter they like me. _____
11. I fear being exposed for my real thoughts because I might be considered an imposter. _____
12. If I am being totally honest, I have to admit that there are times I lie because I fear getting a negative reaction from someone else, and so I say what I know they want to hear. _____
13. I might want to speak up and say something that does not please a person with whom I am talking, but I am afraid of losing them as a friend. _____

14. I don't have trouble expressing my honest opinions with my immediate family members, who already love me, but I do have trouble expressing opinions to someone outside my family who has the option of liking me or not. _____
15. If I sense that someone does not like me, it bothers me. _____
16. A person who knows me on a surface level would say I am an extremely reliable and helpful person. _____
17. I have a strong desire for verbal praise, whether spoken or written digitally in an email, text message, or on social media. _____
18. I say yes to some things that create more work for me rather than say no and risk disappointing or upsetting the person doing the asking. _____
19. I give compliments I do not really mean. _____
20. My desire to make others happy ends up making me at least slightly miserable. _____

Grand Total: _____

Alright. How did you do? Let's see where your grand total places you.

81–100: You really don't sabotage your life by being an immense people pleaser. Good for you! You will still benefit from this book; however, you might want to pass it on to a major people pleaser when you're finished reading, because you most likely won't have to refer to it again—but they might need to read it yearly!

61–80: You are probably about average on the people-pleasing scale. Sometimes you fall into this tendency, but other times you are completely comfortable expressing your honest opinion and not being overcommitted. Bravo! Although you definitely have room for improvement, more of us need to be like you.

41–60: People pleasing and being addicted to the approval of others is a minor problem in your life. You probably struggle with it when it comes to certain people but not when it comes to others. You can learn to make progress, fearing less and less what certain people think.

31–40: Yep. Approval addiction is definitely an issue for you. Most likely it has caused you grief and sadness, but you can't seem to stop doing it. Buckle up, honey. We've got some changes to make.

21–30: Welcome to the "Make Them Happy!" club, of which I am a charter member. People like us. They really like us! They think we're capable. And so helpful. Our schedules are full, but our hearts are often empty. Time to stop seeking the approval of others and start trusting God instead.

20: Sweet sister, call me immediately! We need to stage an intervention! You have an even lower score than this people-pleasing pro! (I was once about a 27 but when I retook the assessment just now, I'd improved to a 53. *Progress!*)

Resources

For Dealing with a Narcissist

If you are in a relationship with a truly narcissistic person, I strongly suggest you seek out a Christian counselor in your area by visiting ccn.thedirectorywidget.com. Additionally, a helpful resource is *Understanding and Loving a Person with Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Biblical and Practical Wisdom to Build Empathy, Preserve Boundaries, and Show Compassion* (The Arterburn Wellness Series) by Steve Arterburn, David C. Cook Publisher, copyright 2018.

Personality Type Resources

Discovering and exploring our unique personality blends can be key to understanding some deeper reasons that we people-please. Start with any of these practical books to learn more about your distinctive temperament:

Wired That Way Personality Profile: An Easy-to-Use Questionnaire for Helping You Discover Your God-Given Personality Type by Marita Littauer and Florence Littauer, Revell Publishers, copyright 2019

The Sacred Enneagram: Finding Your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth by Christopher L. Heuertz, Zondervan Publishers, copyright 2017

The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery by Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile, IVP Books, copyright 2016

The Path Between Us: An Enneagram Journey to Healthy Relationships by Suzanne Stabile, IVP Books, copyright 2018

Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type, 2nd ed., by Isabel Briggs Myers and Peter B. Myers, Davies-Black Publishing, a division of CCP, Inc., copyright 1995

Seven “Stop It!” Statements for People Pleasers

Here are some go-to phrases for you to ponder, and even commit to memory if you would like. They will help you realign your thinking when you start to wander down the path of people pleasing. They are ready to be photocopied, cut out, and placed where they will be seen often, such as the kitchen sink, bathroom mirror, or vehicle dashboard.

Every *need* is not
necessarily your *call*.

Don't take on more than
you can *pray* for.

Their *happiness* is
not your assignment.

You don't need their
permission
to do God's will.

Stop making *their* feelings
your responsibility.

You don't owe them an *excuse*
for why you said no, but you
will owe *God* an explanation
for why you said *yes*.

You can still say *yes*
to the friendship while saying
no to a friend.

Truth Bombs for Memorization

For your convenience, here again are the verses from chapter four on being truthful. They have been designed for photocopying and cutting out to keep in a prominent place such as your car dashboard, the kitchen sink, a bathroom mirror, or even in an envelope in your purse.

“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (COLOSSIANS 3:9–10).

“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (EPHESIANS 4:25).

“LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart” (PSALM 15:1–2).

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ” (EPHESIANS 4:15).

“Lying lips are detestable to the LORD, but faithful people are his delight” (PROVERBS 12:22 CSB).

“I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity” (1 CHRONICLES 29:17).

“Truthful words stand the test of time, but lies are soon exposed” (PROVERBS 12:19 NLT).

“These are the things you must do: Speak truth to one another; make true and sound decisions within your city gates” (ZECHARIAH 8:16 CSB).

“Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry” (PSALM 34:12–15).

“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community” (PROVERBS 6:16–19).