



Episode 3 - People-Pleasing

Welcome to the managing your smart mind podcast with me, Else Kramer, a.k.a. Coach Kramer.

Today, I'm going to talk about something all humans do - not the specifically smart ones: people pleasing.

And it all ties back to the primitive programming I talked about on an earlier podcast: **our brain thinks we're going to die if we get cast out of the tribe.**

If we rock the boat.

If we speak up.

If we say no.

Now if you believe that saying ‘no’ is going to kill you, then people-pleasing is a pretty smart strategy.

And if you stood out a lot growing up, it was probably what kept you relatively safe.

But unchecked people pleasing hollows the core of who you really are, and eventually leads to burnout and even depression.

So what does people-pleasing look like? Here are a couple of examples.

Someone jumps the grocery queue to get in front of you, says ‘you don’t mind, do you’, you do, but you just smile politely.

A colleague or manager asks you to take on an extra project - you're so smart, you do this in half the time anyway. You know you already have more than a full workload, but you still say yes.

You’re incredibly unproductive after 3pm - you’d much rather stop working around that time and start again after 7pm. You’re confident you can get your work done, but you decide that even asking for this will make you weird or entitled or both, so you keep forcing yourself to at least seem productive in the afternoon.

An assistant or contractor is late on delivering a project but instead of speaking up, you let it slide.

The school asks you to organize their annual charity do. You have neither the time nor the inclination, but you feel like you can’t say no.

You’re speaking at an event, and the organizers have invited you to a pre-event dinner with sponsors, local dignitaries, etc. You know that you won’t have the bandwidth for this, that if you want to deliver an amazing keynote you need to spend the evening alone in your hotel room. But you’re afraid to upset people, so you join anyway.

A restaurant has added an extra pound to the bill for charity, you don’t like it, but you’re afraid to make a fuss (this example comes from my amazing friend and

colleague, Jane Gunn, btw - I'll leave a link to her LinkedIn article about this in the show notes).

Someone makes an inappropriate remark to you or someone else - and you don't speak up.

You want to apply for a promotion, but your manager has told you that there is no you are indispensable, if you leave now everything will fall to pieces. You decide to stay for another six months. And another. And another.

What all of these have in common is that you're out of integrity with your deeper self.

And because of that, these interactions tend to leave you with a kind of hollow, disappointed feeling - despite the praise or appreciation you may get from others.

You're showing yourself that you do NOT have your own back.

That you don't stand up for yourself and your needs.

And this, in turn, undermines your confidence.

Not in one go, but day by day, all that people pleasing adds up.

It can even lead you to believe that you don't know what you really want (more about that in a later episode).

Some of my clients don't even realize they're people-pleasing, and it may be the same for you.

So how do you know?

Because sometimes you DO want to strategically say yes to request.

Do things you don't particularly want to do.

So how do you separate the two?

It's the way you feel.

When I say yes to something I don't particularly feel like doing, but I KNOW and LIKE my reason for saying yes, I feel solid.

I probably won't feel elated, joyful, excited - I may even feel a little bit anxious.

But I feel solid in myself and my decisions.

If, instead, I'm people pleasing, I may feel a quick hit of relief - but after that usually a sense of disappointment washes over me. I may also feel resentment towards the person making the request and blame them for the way I feel.

AND I will probably create lots of drama in my mind around how hard it's going to be, how I don't have the time, energy, etc. but I'll just have to make it work.

Massive energy drain.

Now I'm not saying that it feels good to say NO when people make requests, or to speak up instead of staying silent.

I can be terrifying - I regularly have a very elevated heart rate, a massive desire to run away and hide, to be somewhere else.

But I know that's just primitive programming.

And I know the cost of people-pleasing, so I'm willing to feel that discomfort.

It's the price I'm willing to pay for being in integrity with myself, and strengthening my self-confidence.

Are you a people-pleaser?

Then here is how you stop. And remember, there is probably a lifetime of conditioning going on here, so go easy on yourself. Rome wasn't built in a day.

1. Start noticing all the requests and expectations you're unconsciously complying with. Whether it's calling your mum, doing overtime at work, picking up groceries for a needy neighbour: do you actually WANT to do this? Or are you just people-pleasing?
2. Once you have your awareness, start deciding. Is this a 'yes', or a 'no'? And do I like my reasons?
3. Communicate your new decision.
4. Stick with it: don't let yourself be dissuaded, guilty, manipulated into doing something.

Now communicating a loving 'NO' can be hard.

And it's not just your mind, you can have an intense physical freak out.

Sounds fun, right?

And yet this discomfort is exactly what you need to feel to stay in integrity.

So instead of avoiding it, expect it.

Welcome it in.

Notice and name it.

You won't die - it will just *feel* awful.

Doing this is the gateway to freedom, and total self-trust.

If that is something you'd like to work on with an experienced coach, I can help you.

Reach out to me via my website, coachkramer.org, or send me a message on LinkedIn.

If there is a specific topic you'd love to see covered on this podcast, or someone you'd love to see interviewed, please let me know on: podcast@elsekramer.com.

And if you liked this episode I'd love for you to leave a review so more people can find the podcast and learn to manage their smart mind.