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Turn People-Pleasing Behaviors Into Self-Protective Ones

See what looks familiar in the first column. For those items, find alternative examples for what to do or say in the second column. As you go through the list, make notes of thoughts and feelings that come up—you may want to talk these through with a trusted friend or your therapist.

Try to add any behaviors and alternatives in your life that aren't listed here. (We've left space for that!)

People-pleasing behavior	Self protective behavior	Notes: How does it feel when I choose self-protection? How can I remember to choose self-protection in the moment?
Blaming yourself for someone else's actions	Remind yourself that every adult is responsible for their own choices. You shouldn't have to police yourself in order to control someone else.	
Problem-solving without being asked to	Express empathy for the problem, and ask the other person what they think is the best path forward.	
Holding onto unhealthy relationships for fear of being alone	Spend time doing things you enjoy, and trust that you will meet people in the process of being kind to yourself.	
Struggling to make decisions without permission	Ask yourself what you would choose if it were impossible to ask someone else's opinion.	
Believing you're incapable without help	Think of one time you've handled something for yourself, and write it down. Keep it handy for future reference!	
Saying yes when you want to say no	Remember that you can say no while still expressing care. If someone has an issue with you saying no, they may struggle with boundaries, themselves—that's not your fault.	
Keeping quiet to avoid arguments	Offer your opinion in a take-it-or-leave-it manner, using "I feel" statements.	
Valuing others' feelings more than your own	Are you fundamentally less of a human than this other person? No? So why don't your feelings matter as much?	